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Narrative Nefas and the Taboos of Incest and Bestiality in Ovid's Metamorphoses

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Abstract

This thesis explores the taboos on incest and bestiality, as they are presented in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, from a psychoanalytic and narratological perspective, through the lens of *nefas* ('unspeakability'). I argue that taboo has a destructively transformative effect on Ovid's poetic language and that, in bringing incest and bestiality to the page, the fabric of the epic warps and ruptures.

I begin with a detailed study of *nefas*, its role in the Roman world generally and within the Ovidian corpus specifically; I then outline the taboos on incest and bestiality in the Augustan world and how their position as unlegislated crimes informs Ovid's approach to them through the lens of *nefas*. In Chapter 2, I explore two 'spectres'—Oedipus and Pasiphaë—who are absent from the text of the *Metamorphoses*, but who 'haunt' multiple figures in the poem and, so, make their absence present. My third chapter focuses on Byblis and her love for her twin brother, Caunus; in particular, I explore how unspeakable *nefas* runs up against the episode's concern with speech, in the form of Byblis' letter and monologues. Chapter 4 uses Kristevan notions of abjection to examine Myrrha, who sleeps with her father, Cinyras; I show that she is an ambiguous figure to whom polarities like 'good' and 'bad' do not apply. In Chapter 5, I analyse how Arachne's tapestry—full of images of bestiality—interacts with the epic as a whole; Arachne becomes an avatar of Ovid's super-ego, who critiques her creator for not telling the stories that she explosively creates. My final chapter groups three narratives which are concerned with aesthetics—Cyparissus, Io and Europa—in order to develop Chapter 3's findings about the relationship between desire and aesthetics.

Narrative *Nefas* and the Taboos of Incest and Bestiality in
Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

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List of Abbreviations

Classical authors' names and works are abbreviated as in LSJ for Greek authors, and as in the *OLD* for Latin authors, unless specified differently below. Biblical texts are abbreviated in the customary manner. Throughout this thesis, all translations are my own; they are studies in literalism, not to be judged for their artistic merit.

Ach. Tat. <i>Leuc.</i>	Achilles Tatius, <i>Leucippe et Clitophon</i>
Adesp. <i>Diff.</i>	Adespota, <i>Differentiae</i> .
<i>Aegr. Perd.</i>	Anonymous, <i>Aegritudo Perdicæ</i> .
AP	<i>Anthologia Palatina</i> .
<i>Apoc. Esdr.</i>	Pseudo-Ezra, <i>Apocalypsis Esdrae</i> .
Ar.Byz. <i>Arg. Hipp.</i>	Aristophanes of Byzantium, <i>Argumentum vel Hypothesis Hippolyti</i> .
BNJ	<i>Brill's New Jacoby</i> .
BNP	<i>Brill's New Pauly</i> .
Calp. Flacc. <i>Decl.</i>	Calpurnius Flaccus, <i>Declamationes</i> .
CGL	Loewe, G. & Goetz, G. eds., 1889. <i>Corpus Glossariorum Latinorum</i> . Leipzig: Teubner.
Cinn. <i>Eth.</i>	Cinnamus, <i>Ethopoeia</i> .
CLE	Bücheler, F. ed., 1895-1897. <i>Carmina Latin Epigraphica</i> . Leipzig: Teubner.
Cledon. <i>Ars</i>	Cledonius, <i>Ars Grammatica</i> .

<i>Coll. Alex.</i>	Powell, <i>Collectanea Alexandrina: Reliquiae Minores Poetarum Graecorum Aetatis Ptolemaicae, 323-146 A.C., Epicorum, Elegiacorum, Lyricorum, Ethicorum</i> , 1925.
<i>Corn. Sev.</i>	Cornelius Severus, <i>Fragmenta</i> .
<i>CP</i>	<i>Carmina Priapea</i> .
<i>Dracont. Rom.</i>	Dracontius, <i>Romulea</i> .
<i>DSM-V</i>	American Psychiatric Association, 2013. <i>Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-5</i> . Arlington (VA): American Psychiatric Association
<i>E. Aeol.</i>	Euripides, <i>Aeolus</i> .
<i>E. Erech.</i>	Euripides, <i>Erechtheus</i> .
<i>E. Hipp. Cal.</i>	Euripides, <i>Hippolytus Calyptomenus</i> .
<i>EM</i>	Ernout, A., Meillet, A & André, J., 2001. <i>Dictionnaire Étymologique de La Langue Latine: Histoire des Mots</i> . 4 th ed. Paris: Klincksieck.
<i>Eup. Pol.</i>	Eupolis, <i>Poleis</i> .
<i>Fab. Pict.</i>	Fabius Pictor.
<i>G&L</i>	Gildersleeve and Lodge, <i>Gildersleeve's Latin Grammar</i> (3 rd ed.), 1903.

Gai. <i>Ed. Prov.</i>	Gaius, <i>Ad Edictum Proviciale</i> .
GL	Lindsay, E. -M. et al. eds., 1965. <i>Glossaria Latina, Vols. I-V</i> . Hildesheim: Georg Olms.
Greg. Nyss.	Gregory of Nyssa.
Hdn. <i>Pros.</i>	Herodian, <i>De Prosida Catholica</i> .
Lac. Plac. <i>ad Theb.</i>	Lactantius Placidus, <i>Commentarius in Statii Thebaida</i> .
LIMC	1981-1999. <i>Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae</i> , Zürich & Munich: Artemis & Winkler Verlag.
LSJ	Liddell and Scott, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> .
Manc.	Helvius Mancianus.
Manil.	Manilius, <i>Astronomica</i>
Mar. Victorin. <i>Ars</i>	Marius Victorinus, <i>Ars Grammatica</i> .
Min. Fel. <i>Oct.</i>	Minucius Felix, <i>Octavius</i> .
Mod. <i>Pand.</i>	Modestinus, <i>Pandecta</i> .
Myth. Vat.	Anonymous, <i>Mythographi Vaticani</i> .
OLD	<i>Oxford Latin Dictionary</i> .
Papin. <i>Adult.</i>	Papinianus, <i>De Adulteriis</i> .
Paul. <i>Sab.</i>	Paulus, <i>Ad Sabinum</i> .
Ph. <i>Spec. Leg.</i>	Philo of Judaea, <i>De Specialibus Legibus</i> .

Phaedr.	Phaedrus, <i>Fabulae</i> .
Pherecr. <i>Tyr.</i>	Pherecrates, <i>Tyrannis</i> .
Plaut. <i>Truc.</i>	Plautus, <i>Truculentus</i> .
Plaut. <i>Truc.</i>	Plautus, <i>Truculentus</i> .
Plut. <i>Quaest. Rom.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Quaestiones Romanae</i> .
Plut. <i>Soll. am.</i>	Plutarch, <i>De Sollertia Animalium</i> .
Poll. <i>On.</i>	Pollux, <i>Onomasticon</i> .
Pompei. <i>Comm. Don.</i>	Pompeius, <i>Commentum Artis Donati</i> .
Porph. <i>ad Carm.</i>	Pomponius Porphyrio, <i>Commentarius in Horatii Carmina</i> .
Prisc. <i>Part.</i>	Priscian, <i>Partitiones XII. Versuum Aeneidos Principalium</i> .
Procop. <i>Gaz. Comm. in Is.</i>	Procopius of Gaza, <i>Commentarii in Isaiam</i> .
Ps.-Apul. <i>Mund.</i>	Pseudo-Apuleius, <i>De Mundo</i> .
Ps.-Charisius, <i>Syn.</i>	Pseudo-Charisius, <i>Synonoma Ciceronis</i> .
Ps.-Lac. <i>Plac.</i>	Pseudo-Lactantius Placidus, <i>Narrationes Fabularum Ovidianarum</i> .
Ps.-Ov. <i>Liv.</i>	Pseudo-Ovid, <i>Consolatio ad Liviam</i> .
Ps.-Prob. <i>ad G.</i>	Pseudo-Probus, <i>Commentarius in Vergilii Georgica</i> .
Ps.-Sen. <i>HO</i>	Pseudo-Seneca the Younger, <i>Hercules Oetaeus</i> .

Ps.-Sen. <i>Oct.</i>	Pseudo-Seneca the Younger, <i>Octavia</i> .
Ps.-Virg. <i>Aet.</i>	Pseudo-Virgil, <i>Aetna</i> .
<i>RE</i>	Pauly, Wissowa, Kroll & Mittelhaus eds., <i>Realencyclopädie der classischen Alterumswissenschaft</i> . 1894–.
<i>S. Inach.</i>	Sophocles, <i>Inachus</i> .
Sen. <i>Ag.</i>	Seneca the Younger, <i>Agamemnon</i> .
Sen. <i>Herc.</i>	Seneca the Younger, <i>Hercules Furens</i> .
Sen. <i>Ira</i>	Seneca the Younger, <i>De Ira</i> .
Sen. <i>Marc.</i>	Seneca the Younger, <i>Consolatio ad Marciam</i> .
Sen. <i>Oed.</i>	Seneca the Younger, <i>Oedipus</i> .
Sen. <i>Phdr.</i>	Seneca the Younger, <i>Phaedra</i> .
Sen. <i>Phoen.</i>	Seneca the Younger, <i>Phoenissae</i> .
Sen. <i>Thy.</i>	Seneca the Younger, <i>Thyestes</i> .
Sen. <i>Troad.</i>	Seneca the Younger, <i>Troades</i> .
<i>SHA</i> (Lampr.) <i>Heliogab.</i>	Lampridius, <i>Historia Antonini Heliogabali apud Scriptores Historiae Augustae</i> .
<i>SHA</i> (Treb.) <i>Gall.</i>	Trebellius Pollio, <i>Historia Gallienorum Duorum apud Scriptores Historiae Augustae</i> .

SSR	Gianotti, G. ed., 1990-1991. <i>Socratis et Socraticorum Reliquiae, Vols. I-IV</i> . Naples: Bibliopolis.
Tert. <i>Uxor</i> .	Tertullian, <i>Ad Uxorem</i> .
<i>ThesCRA</i>	2005-2006, <i>Thesaurus Cultus et Rituum Antiquorum</i> . Los Angeles (CA): Getty Publications.
<i>TLL</i>	<i>Thesaurus Linguae Latinae</i> .
<i>TrGF</i>	Kannicht, R. & Snell, B. eds., 1981. <i>Tragicorum Fragmenta Graecorum, Vol. II</i> . Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
Ulp. <i>Adult.</i>	Ulpian, <i>De Adulteriis</i> .
WH	Walde, A & Hofmann, J. B., 1938. <i>Lateinisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch</i> . 3 rd ed. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter.

Statement of Copyright

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Moving from my academic parents, I thank my actual parents, for a childhood of love and learning. For introducing me to the world—especially critical theory—and supporting me as I move through it. For reading so many drafts of so many things across so many years, I am grateful.

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of the greatest academic—and humanistic—influences on my life and for that, I am endlessly grateful. I thank Sigmund Freud and Julia Kristeva: they are truly the academic architects of this thesis and the way it works through desire, taboo, language and the messy business of people. I am indebted to Constantine Cavafy. He has been my constant companion throughout my adulthood and in understanding him, I understand myself, and Ovid. He is my ἡδονή:¹

Ἐκεῖνα πού δειλὰ φαντάσθη μαθητῆς, εἶν' ἀνοιχτά,
φανερωμένα ἐμπρός του. Καὶ γυρνᾷ, καὶ ξενυχτᾷ,
καὶ παρασύρεται. Κι ὡς εἶναι (γιά τὴν τέχνη μας) σωστό,
τό αἷμα του, καινούριο καὶ ζεστό,
ἡ ἡδονὴ τὸ χαίρεται. Τὸ σῶμα του νικᾷ
ἔκνομη ἐρωτικὴ μέθη· καὶ τὰ νεανικὰ
μέλη ἐνδίδουνε σ' αὐτήν.

Κ' ἔτσι ἓνα παιδί ἀπλὸ
γένεται ἄξιο νὰ τὸ δοῦμε, κι ἀπ' τὸν Ὑψηλὸ
τῆς Ποιήσεως Κόσμο μιὰ στιγμὴ περνᾷ κι αὐτὸ—
τὸ αἰσθητικὸ παιδί μὲ τὸ αἷμα του καινούριο καὶ ζεστό.

What he nervously dreamed as a schoolboy is revealed
Openly to him now. He wanders about, stays out late
And gets carried away. And, as is right (for *our* art),
His blood, young and hot,
Is the delight of pleasure. His body is overcome
By illicit erotic intoxication; and his young limbs
Give into it utterly.

¹ C. P. Cavafy, 'Πέρασμα'. Text from Savidis 2020.

Like this, a simple boy
Becomes worth looking at, and he passes through the Exalted
World of Poetry for a single moment, this
Sensitive young man with his blood, young and hot.

On the matter of queerness, this thesis is dedicated to the queers—named and unnamed—who have moulded me with their friendship. I owe so much to every single one of them that these flat words will fail to capture. To Michael, for his patience, love and companionship; to Dom, for their wit, fashion and poetry; to Duane, for everything too much all the time; to Will, for so much fun (and for letting me win the school Latin prize); to Elliot, for his drama and his laugh; to Chris, for their puns and their willingness to read anything; to Sasha, for her humour, her time and her love of colour; to Martina, for their wryness, their passion and their tentacles. To Esther, for more support than she knows, for being the first person in the Department to make me feel welcome and for an unswerving commitment to chaos. To Sophie, for her friendship and company, for delighting in calling herself my editor and for putting up with more rants about psychoanalysis and Foucault than any sane person should.

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1 – Introduction

1.1 – The Work at Hand

‘My name is Love.’

Then straight the first did turn himself to me
And cried, 'He lieth, for his name is Shame,
But I am Love, and I was wont to be
Alone in this fair garden, till he came
Unasked by night; I am true Love, I fill
The hearts of boy and girl with mutual flame.'
Then sighing, said the other, 'Have thy will,
I am the love that dare not speak its name.'

— Lord Alfred Douglas, 'Two Loves', 66-74.

This is not a thesis about homosexuality; it is, however, a thesis about loves that dare not speak their name and even loves which have no name to speak of. Shame, love and speech are of central concern to my thesis, which explores the presentation of incest and bestiality in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* from a psychoanalytically and narratologically informed perspective, through the lens of the Latin concept of *nefas*, or 'unspeakability'.

The narrator of 'Two Loves' encounters two youths in a pastoral landscape, both claiming to be Love; the first accuses the second of being, in fact Shame, and the second reformulates his initial identification with Love as 'the love that dare not speak its name'. This second love, then, finds an identity between two polarities (Love and Shame) which has something of each extreme—it is love, yet love too ashamed to speak—but is not a simple amalgam of the two. We understand 'the love that dare not speak its name' to refer to a type of love (i.e. homosexuality), that is not just a

combination of Love and Shame, but also something else. As I discuss below, I consider Ovidian taboo an abjected entity, caught ‘in-between’, something not wholly one thing, nor wholly another, but a synthetic object that is inconceivable and incomprehensible in language.

This thesis explores the incomprehensible *nefas* as a motif which recurs through Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, and which captures the crises of communication that the taboos on incest and bestiality bring to language. *Nefas* has been used as a tool for unpacking Neronian and Flavian literature,² but it has not been systematically applied to the *Metamorphoses*. I explore six narratives in the *Metamorphoses*—in order, those of Byblis, Myrrha, Arachne, Cyparissus, Io and Europa—through which *nefas* resonates on linguistic and thematic levels. The unspeakable *nefas* is forced into language throughout the poem and the result is destructive to its poetic fabric.

1.1.1 – A Methodology of Approaching Taboo

My analysis of Ovidian presentations of incest and bestiality is indebted to two mutually informative hermeneutic layers, which I explain in turn. The first layer, psychoanalysis, especially that of Freud and Kristeva, comprises a hermeneutic worldview that pervades this thesis and the second, narratology, is used to explain how taboo is psychoanalytically evaluated in the *Metamorphoses*. Put simply, I employ Freudian psychoanalysis to establish a theory of taboo and Kristeva offers two related modes of interpreting it—abjection and the semiotic pulse—which I argue are especially pertinent to Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.³ Narratological models of diegesis and

² E.g. Motto & Clark 1984; Venini 1994; Estèves 2005; Ganiban 2007; Tola 2009; Mazzoli 2012; Mowbray 2012; Tola 2016; Ndiaye 2017.

³ Classics and psychoanalysis have a fraught history; see especially Lev Kenaan 2019, 9–14; Oliensis 2009, 1–13. See also Brown 1957; duBois 1988; Selden 1990; Armstrong 2005; Bowlby 2007. Literary psychoanalysis has made headways in the field of Latin literature, for instance in the works of Micaela Janan (1988, 1991, 2007, 2009, 2012), Philip Hardie (2002, 2004) Ellen Oliensis (2001, 2009), Ellen

ecphrasis are then shown to be the means through which this psychoanalytic evaluation unfurls. These two layers work together to reveal the Ovidian discomfort with representing taboo topics in literature; narratological features, like ecphrasis, mark the points at which Ovidian discomfort bursts through.

1.1.1.1 – Layer 1: On the Couch

In 1913,⁴ Sigmund Freud laid out his psychoanalytic approach to what he calls the “ungeklärte Probleme der Völkerpsychologie”,⁵ namely the issues of ‘taboo’. For Freud, taboo is deeply concerned with issues of the ‘sacred’ and the ‘forbidden’;⁶ he drew it from a flawed understanding of Polynesian cultures,⁷ concluding that taboo is a powerful force of interdiction that spreads between people like contagion.⁸ This thesis follows Freud in his conclusions about taboo’s prohibitive power, but I do not subscribe to his processes or methodologies.⁹

O’Gorman (2004; Zajko & O’Gorman 2013a), Alessandro Schiesaro (2003) and Paul Allen Miller (2004; Miller et al. 1998; Miller & Shankman 2006). For the impact of Classical studies on the formation of psychoanalysis, see Miller 2007, 2021; Zajko & O’Gorman 2013b.

⁴ Freud 1991.

⁵ Freud 1991, 49.

⁶ The Freudian conception of *noa* as a converse of *tabu* (Freud 1991, 66) is neither a wholly accurate representation of Polynesian culture (see Steiner 1967, 36, who points out that *tabu* and *noa* are not in any sense oppositional, but are merely mutually exclusive), nor something which finds direct correlation in Roman culture. The closest (though inaccurate) approximation would be *fas*, for which, see below.

⁷ Freud 1991, 66: “*Tabu* ist ein polynesisches Wort, dessen Übersetzung uns Schwierigkeiten bereitet, weil wir den damit bezeichneten Begriff nicht mehr besitzen”. ‘Taboo’ first entered English as a result of the colonial voyages of James Cook. See Cook & King 1793, 332: “the word *taboo* is indifferently applied, either to persons or things; as, the natives are *tabooed*, the bay is *tabooed*, &c. This word is also expressive of anything sacred, devoted or eminent” (English standardised). Cf. Cook 1821, 461–2. The etymology of Proto-Polynesian **tabu* and Proto-Oceanic **tabu* is difficult to reconstruct, although it survives in many modern Polynesian and Oceanic languages, such as Tongan *tapu*, Fijian *tabu*, Maori *tapu*, Hawaiian *kapu* and Malagasy *tabaka*; see Brodersen 2019, 3–4; Steiner 1967, 31–6. Though these words are different and culturally specific, there is an overarching semantics of ‘forbidden’, ‘polluted’, ‘sacred’, and ‘ritual’.

⁸ Freud 1991, 66–124. These ideas were not uniquely Freud’s (as he points out at Freud 1991, 45): the notion of taboo (*vel sim.*) as hierarchical may be found in Frazer 1911, 131–7 and contagion-centric theories originate with Robertson Smith’s work on Old Testament and Semitic religion (e.g. Robertson Smith 1969, especially 422–3); see Steiner 1967, 59–67.

⁹ A note on my use of early sociology. Throughout this thesis, I make use of theorists such as Durkheim, Freud and Lévi-Strauss, for their conclusions on incest and exogamy, but wish to mark my distance from their more problematic political and academic beliefs on topics of taboo. Much early sociology looks to what it terms ‘primitive’ or ‘savage’ societies—such as Polynesian peoples—to explore incest, as it suggests that they are less sociologically developed than Western societies and give an accurate

Freud integrates taboo into his broader understanding of psychoanalysis, especially the so-called Oedipus complex: he argues that totemism and taboo are derived from the ur-guilt of killing the *Urvater*,¹⁰ and spread thence through societies as a sort of mass trauma.¹¹ Eventually,¹² Freudian ‘taboo’ would become relevant to his notion of a tripartite psyche. This model sees the division of the self into three categories: the id is a mass of instinctual drives—wholly in the unconscious—that are not mediated through rationality; the super-ego is the moral aspect of the self, derived from external authority figures and existing in both the conscious and the unconscious; and the ego is the part of the self that mediates between id and super-ego—between basal instinct and cultural morality—which is situated mostly in the conscious mind.

This thesis is interested in the role of the super-ego in Freudianism as it pertains to Ovid and his culture; particularly, in how the pressures of taboo construct the super-ego and how this manifests on the Ovidian page. The super-ego is that part of the Freudian psyche which represents the sublimated repressions stemming from the Oedipus complex: the psychic manifestation of the ur-paternal voice commanding ‘thou shalt’ or ‘thou shalt not’.¹³ The forces which generate a super-ego are the interdictions of Roman culture. These operate on three overlapping levels: the legal,

impression of humankind in the pre-modern state of nature. This is both racist and academically lazy. It is also based on two false assumptions: that incest is universally experienced and prohibited in the same way across space and time, and that isolated societies such as Polynesia are closer to an imagined state of nature, and thus can be used to explore these universal truths. I am not engaged in a work of sociology and make no universalising claims about the nature of taboo. Modern sociologists, in contending with issues like incest, make use of very different research methodologies to those of their founding fathers (see Leavitt 2013).

¹⁰ Freud 1991, 201-17.

¹¹ Later trauma theorists would pick up on the idea of mass trauma, e.g. Morrison 1998’s “learned cultural shame” (*passim*, especially 35-8). Trauma theory is relevant to this thesis, but I will not be using it as a primary hermeneutic; the theory is often said to have begun with Caruth 1996, and is well explored with regard to mass trauma in the African-American experience in Brooks Bouson 2000. For an overview of its use in literary criticism, see Radstone 2007.

¹² Although the tripartite psychic apparatus pervades most Freudian psychoanalysis, it is most clearly realised in Freud 1923.

¹³ Freud 1923, 31-47.

through which the Roman state prohibits; the religious, through which divine law and custom prohibits; and the social, through which cultural norms (i.e. the *mos maiorum*) and interpersonal communication prohibit. These forces permeate the Ovidian self and manifest in his literary production on conscious and unconscious levels as *nefas*. What results is a literary struggle between the creative, Ovidian, ego and the pressures of the super-ego; from this struggle is born the discomfort around taboo narratives in the *Metamorphoses* and the traces of this conflict are clearly visible in the texture of the narrative.

To interpret the presence of this conflict in the *Metamorphoses*, I turn to Julia Kristeva's development of Freudian taboo into the two forces of abjection and semiotic pulse. The abject is that which is neither subject nor object: it is the in-between space that becomes tabooed by its resistance to the binary of self and other.

As Kristeva says:¹⁴

Quand je suis envahie par l'abjection, cette torsade faite d'affects et de pensées que j'appelle ainsi, n'a pas à proprement parler d'*objet* définissable. L'abject n'est pas un ob-jet en face de moi, que je nomme ou que j'imagine. [...] De l'objet, l'abject n'a qu'une qualité—celle de s'opposer à *je* [...] Un certain « moi » qui s'est fondu avec son maître, un sur-moi, l'a carrément chassé. Il est dehors, hors de l'ensemble dont il semble ne pas reconnaître les règles du jeu.

When I am besieged by abjection, this braid—composed of affects and thoughts—which I thus name, does not, strictly speaking, have a definable *object*. The abject is not an object placed in front of me, which I label or imagine. [...] The abject has only one quality of the object: that of not being

¹⁴ Kristeva 1980a, 9; I translate her formatting, but not her wordplays.

I [...] A certain “ego” which has merged with its master, a “super-ego”, has completely driven it off. It is exterior, beyond the unity whose rules of the game it does not seem to recognise.

This abjected ‘in-betweenness’ is exactly the taboo which is found in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*,¹⁵ as I argue in Chapter 4, characters like Myrrha are caught between stable polarities. The ego (“moi”) runs into conflict with the super-ego (“sur-moi”), and the abject (*nefas*), outside these polarities, does not hear the prohibiting commands of the latter.

The second string of Kristevan psychoanalysis which is central to this thesis is the semiotic pulse. Kristeva builds on earlier Lacanian psychoanalysis to propose a dichotomy between the symbolic and the semiotic.¹⁶ The symbolic comes to stand for the mother, culture and language, while the semiotic is the structuring principal of masculinity and the law. Together, these forces create rhythm, with the stream of the symbolic being given pulsing, rhythmical structure by the force of the semiotic. Kristeva uses solar metaphors for the semiotic:¹⁷

Le soleil—l’instance du langage parce que « couronne » de la poussée rythmique, structure limitative, loi paternelle limant le rythme, le tuant en grande partie, mais l’appelant aussi à se faire jour [...] à se dire. [...] il ne reste que le combat éternel avec le soleil, au cours duquel, « je » sera successivement le soleil et son combattant, la langue et son rythme, jamais l’un sans l’autre, et la formulation poétique durera tant que dure le combat. [...] sans [l’instance du soleil], le rythme informulable coulerait,

¹⁵ For the abject as taboo, see Kristeva 1980a, 24: “l’abjection persiste comme *exclusion* ou tabou (alimentaire ou autre) dans les religions monothéistes, en particulier le judaïsme, mais glisse vers des formes plus « secondaires » comme *transgression* (de la Loi) dans la même économie monothéiste”.

¹⁶ See especially Kristeva 1977, 357–69 but also any of the essays anthologised in Kristeva 1980b.

¹⁷ Kristeva 1977, 363.

grognant, et finirait par se terrer ; c'est en se mesurant à l'instant de la langue limitante et structurante que le rythme devient combattant et formule, transforme.

The sun—language's authority because it is the “crown” of rhythmic pulse, limiting structure, fatherly law filing down the rhythm, killing it in large part, but also calling on it to come to light [...] to express itself. [...] all that remains is eternal combat with the sun, during which, “I” will be the sun and its combatant in turn, language and its rhythm, never one without the other, and poetic utterance lasts as long as the combat does. [...] without [the sun's authority], the unutterable rhythm would flow, grumbling, and end up grounding itself; it is in measuring itself against the authority of limiting and structuring language that the rhythm becomes a combatant: expressing, transforming.

To superimpose—loosely, for the fit is not perfect—Kristeva's categories on those of Freud, I will see the semiotic in language as a projection of the culturally-constructed super-ego; the emergence and rupture of psychic awareness of transgression in literature is the super-ego pushing a poet's pen. This creates moments of tension within the text, in which language (the symbolic), seeking to comprehend the abject (that which is neither the self nor the other), runs up against the forces of the semiotic or the super-ego, the imbibed and incorporated scripts of society which prohibit abject transgressions. These moments cause narrative rupture, moments at which language or structure disintegrate. For instance, in my analysis (§3) of Byblis' love for her brother, Caunus, I show how Byblis' methods of communication (speech and epistolography) disintegrate and fail when confronted by taboo.

1.1.1.2 – Layer 2: Art, Narrative and Ecphrasis

Having established the centrality of psychoanalysis to my conception of taboo, I turn to one of its most influential descendants in critical theory: narratology.¹⁸ The field of narratology is vast; therefore, I here outline the most important aspects for this thesis, which concern diegesis and ecphrasis.

In Gerard Genette's schema,¹⁹ diegesis represents the 'story',²⁰ the events of a narrative which take place wholly within it. Outside this frame is the realm of the extradiegetic, where lives the 'real world' artist, creating their art. Within diegesis, we may find metadiegesis, which refers to narratives created within the realm of the diegetic. To provide an example from my fifth Chapter, Ovid, the extradiegetic artist, writes a diegetic narrative in which Arachne and Minerva engage in a weaving competition and both women craft metadiegetic narratives on their tapestries. In the context of the *Metamorphoses*, this last category (metadiegesis) is frequently termed *mise-en-abyme* or 'inset narrative'; both labels have value, but I use metadiegesis precisely because it demonstrates the mirroring between these internal processes of artistic production and the diegetic creativity of Ovid. Indeed, I frequently return to the mirroring between Ovid and his internal narrators.

Metadiegetic space creates opportunities for diegetic commentary on the world of the extradiegetic;²¹ the very prefix 'meta' implies the power of metadiegesis to move through and around the polarities of diegesis and extradiegesis. At times in this thesis,

¹⁸ Narratology has been much more easily accepted by Classical studies than has psychoanalysis; see Fowler 2001; de Jong 2014; Schmitz 2007, 43–62. For its application to Latin epic generally, see Hardie 1997. For narratological studies of the *Metamorphoses*, see e.g. Heinze 1919; Otis 1970; Nagle 1983, 1988, 1989; Hinds 1987; Solodow 1988; Keith 1992a; Sara Myers 1994; Tarrant 1995; Wheeler 1999; Zissos 1999; Wheeler 2000; Barchiesi 2002; Rosati 2002; Nikolopoulos 2004; Barchiesi 2006a.

¹⁹ See Genette 1980, 228.

²⁰ Termed *histoire*; see Genette 1980, 27 n. 2

²¹ See a version of this argument at Rosati 2002, 286.

I see this wandering quality of metadiegesis as a manifestation of the abject. In Chapters 3, 5 and 6, I demonstrate how certain diegetic Ovidian characters (namely Byblis, Arachne and Jupiter) are able to use metadiegetic art (see below on ecphrasis) to comment on the extradiegetic Ovid. I suggest that these characters are agents of the super-ego: the ego of Ovidian narration is challenged by multiple internal figures who—in different ways—problematise the Ovidian presentation of incest and bestiality.

Central to this use of metadiegesis is the product which is diegetically created; this is always described, on the diegetic level, through ecphrasis. Ecphrasis has traditionally been understood to be the process by which artistic objects are described in literature;²² famous examples from the ancient world, like the respective shields of Achilles (Hom. *Il.* 18.478-608) and Aeneas (Virg. *Aen.* 8.617-731), abound. However, I follow the recent turn which sees ecphrasis as encompassing all passages which describe a self-conscious process of artistic production;²³ indeed this bravura quality is essential to highlighting the metadiegetic processes at play in ecphrasis. Ecphrases—literally ἐκ + φράζειν (‘out’ + ‘to speak’)—offer opportunities for the play of secrets, speech and disclosure (see §1.2). Of the three ecphrases on which I focus—Byblis’ letter, Arachne’s tapestry and Jupiter’s bull—only one (the tapestry) could be a traditional ecphrasis; however, it is precisely because of the bravura focus on creativity in Ovid’s description of Byblis’ letter and Jupiter’s bull disguise that I include them within the category ‘ecphrasis’.

²² See e.g. Spitzer’s definition of ecphrasis as “poetic description of a pictorial or sculptural work of art” (Spitzer 1955, 207). For an overview of the role of ecphrasis in Classics, see Elsner 2002; Squire 2015, 2009, 139–46; Zeitlin 2013. See especially Fowler 1991.

²³ See Smith 1980, 1995; Webb 2009.

In Chapters 2, 4, 5 and 6 especially, I am concerned with Ovid's plays of allusion, which are a narratological intertextual feature.²⁴ By 'plays of allusion', I mean the ways in which Ovid selectively includes and omits various versions of myths; at times he creates a polyphony of different versions of the same myth.²⁵ Sometimes Ovid tells different versions in different poems—or even within the same poem—but more frequently, his allusions are to his literary forebears. Ovid's pointed silence on some versions becomes a sort of absent presence, which encourages reading between the literal lines of the poem, in search of hidden references.

1.1.2 – Structure

Following this introduction, this thesis comprises five chapters, equally divided between the topics of incest and bestiality. In the remainder of this chapter, I outline the constitution of the super-ego's aversion to incest and bestiality from a combination of social, legal and religious interdictions. I first argue that *nefas* is the best Latin term to describe 'taboo', especially because of its focus on 'unspeakability', before turning to an explanation of incest's status at Rome; I begin with an etymological study of *incestum* and move to exploring the legal and literary context for incest in the *Metamorphoses*. Finally, I explain my terminology relating to bestiality and argue that it was a category legible to the Romans through the *exemplum* of Pasiphaë.

Chapter 2 explores the intertextual memories within the *Metamorphoses* of two figures, each totemic for their own taboo: Oedipus and Pasiphaë. Neither figure receives a full treatment in the epic, but both exist just behind its surface, as I explore.

²⁴ The *locus classicus* for Ovidian allusion is Hinds 1987, 1998. See also Tarrant 2005; Geue & Giusti 2021, especially Hardie 2021. That *intertextualité* was a word first coined at Kristeva 1969, 113 evinces further connections between my hermeneutic layers.

²⁵ See Graf 2002, 115. Myths in the ancient world were exceptionally fluid and multiple different versions could coexist. The survival and popularity of the *Metamorphoses* sometimes creates the incorrect impression that Ovid's versions are authoritative; see my p. 228 n. 753.

Oedipus is an unseen wanderer in Ovid's 'Thebaid' (Books 3 and 4), who is repeatedly invoked through references to vision and journeying. Pasiphaë survives in the poem in the acrotic speeches of multiple Ovidian heroines, bringing to each of them her distinct quality of *furor*. Pasiphaë's *furiosus* acrotis will manifest in my discussion of Byblis and Myrrha, especially the former. Together, Oedipus and Pasiphaë pulse through the *Metamorphoses*, repeatedly felt, but unmentioned; their absent presences mark Ovidian discomfort with the taboos for which they are totems. The marked absences of these narratives anticipate my arguments, especially in Chapter 5, on the narrative attention given to the omission of taboo themes—the literal silencing and occasional disclosure of *nefas*—from the epic.

Next come two chapters on incest. Though different in hermeneutics, both chapters conclude with the impossibility of defining the incest taboo in literature. In Chapter 3, I explore the myth of Byblis' incestuous love for her brother, Caunus, in Book 9. In particular, I focus on issues of diegesis, art and communication. I argue that Byblis' focus on artistic verbal production and its failure to achieve her ends highlights the unspeakability of *nefas*; through her failure to utilise the very tools of Ovid's literary art to realise her desires, Byblis comes to confront Ovid in his own arena, unable to put incest into language. Chapter 4 focuses on the other major incest narrative of the poem, Myrrha's love for her father in Book 10. I demonstrate that Myrrha is a wholly abjected figure, always caught in between; through an analysis of four motifs—*pietas*, criminality, naming, and the employment of Euripides' *Hippolytus*—Myrrha is revealed to be trapped between apparently stable polarities. In this, she represents the failure of dialectical analysis to pinpoint the ambivalence of *nefas*.

The final two chapters, on Ovid's presentation of the bestiality taboo, develop especially my comments on ecphrasis in Chapter 3 to explore zoophilia's relationship

with the realm of the aesthetic. Chapter 5 explores the complex role that Arachne's tapestry, in Book 6, plays within wider Ovidian discourses of artistic production. I argue that Arachne becomes a figure in contention with the extradiegetic Ovid, who deploys intertexts to question the authority of her author intratextually; in short, Arachne repeatedly signals her correspondence to Ovid's own mythic narratives, while stressing her dissent from his version of events. Arachne discloses the bestiality narratives which Ovid is now revealed not to be telling and thus restructures our interpretation of the whole epic. In Chapter 6, I continue with the theme of aesthetics to explore three Ovidian narratives in which appearance is central to the poem's conception of zoophilia: Cyparissus, in Book 10; Io, in Book 1; and Europa, in Books 2 and 3. Like the ambiguated Myrrha of my fourth Chapter, each of these stories has, at its centre, an ambivalently beautiful animal which resists polarising definition. The result is a discomfort with the inherent eroticism of bestiality which persists across the epic.

1.2 – Constructing the Super-ego from *nefas*

Having established what I mean by 'taboo', I turn now to its presence in Roman culture. Freud proposes *sacer* as the Latin equivalent of *tabu*,²⁶ but I suggest that *nefas* is more apposite and carries a stronger sense of negativity and prohibition (below). *Sacer* is often positive, relating to correct ritual practice and protection by a deity.²⁷ There are levels of *sacer*'s meaning which are proximal to the sense of *tabu*, for example, when it means 'detestable',²⁸ or in the legal pronouncement *sacer esto*;²⁹ it can also carry a sense of divinely appointed inviolability.³⁰ However, while such

²⁶ Freud 1991, 66.

²⁷ See *OLD* 1674 s.v. "sacer".

²⁸ E.g. Plaut. *Poen.* 90; Virg. *Aen.* 3.57; Catull. 14.12.

²⁹ For the formula *sacer esto*, see Bennett 1930.

³⁰ E.g. Prop. 3.16.11; Virg. *Aen.* 11.591; Luc. 3.124-5.

meanings are not uncommon in Latin literature, they do not represent a Roman reader's first reaction to encountering the word *sacer*. Moreover, such connotations of *sacer* are not commonly employed by Ovid, who far more often uses it in the primary sense of 'holy' or 'sacred to' (e.g. *Met.* 3.156, 3.621, 8.752).³¹

Nefas and its cognates *nefandum*, *nefarius* and *nefastus*, however, is directly attributed to sexual behaviour and is a closer approximation than *sacer* to the force of *tabu*, in literature generally and in Ovid specifically. The *TLL* glosses this shade of *nefas*' usage as "amor illicitus, adulterium, stuprum sim."³² Sometimes the sexual crime described as a *nefas* is a specifically religious transgression,³³ or a general sex crime, which could be otherwise glossed as a *stuprum* or an act of sexual *impudicitia*;³⁴ however, commonly, when applied to matters sexual, *nefas* clearly connotes incest.³⁵

Defining *nefas* is notoriously difficult: it is the opposite of *fas*.³⁶ The *TLL* defines it as *id, quod non fas est, expiatione vel purgatione eget*.³⁷ This includes a wide range of non *fanda* things, including:³⁸ the disruption of things designated as sacred (i.e. *sacra*), such as temples, statues, rites, priests or animals (*TLL* 9.3.436.16-437.45, 437.66-72 s.v. "nefas"); a range of actions considered *contra naturam*, *contra mores*, *impia* or

³¹ The only possible negative Ovidian usage is *Pont.* 4.9.30.

³² *TLL* 9.3.441.48 s.v. "nefas".

³³ E.g. a Vestal Virgin having sex is described as a *nefas* at *Liv.* 22.57.2-4 and Tertullian tells us that it would be a *nefas* for the pagan *pontifex maximus* to remarry (*Uxor.* 1.7.5).

³⁴ E.g. *Hor. Carm.* 3.24.24, 4.5.22; *Ov. Her.* 8.113; *Curt.* 5.7.2; *Juv.* 2.127.

³⁵ E.g. *Nep. praef.* 1.4; *Ov. Ars am.* 1.284; *Sen. Controv. exc.* 5.8.3.2; *Sen. Ag.* 30-1, *Herc.* 387, *Oed.* 661, *Phoen.* 231, *Phdr.* 143, 254, 724, 913; *Mart.* 6.39.14, 14.75.1; *Quint. Inst.* 9.2.83.5. *Nefas* is also applied to incest in legal texts: *Dig.*, (*Gai. Ed. Prov.*) 23.2.55, (*Paul. Sab.*) 2.8.2.9.3, (*Mod. Pand.*) 38.10.4.7. Uses of *nefas* in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* will be discussed in more particular detail below.

³⁶ Authors often take advantage of the two concepts' oppositionality by employing them contrastingly in close proximity: e.g. *Tac. Hist.* 2.56.1, 3.51.1; *Hor. Carm.* 1.18.10; *Virg. G.* 1.505; *Ov. Met.* 9.551-2; *Liv.* 6.14.10; *Sen. Oed.* 1023, *Thy.* 138-9; *Sen. Controv.* 1.2.8; *Sil. Pun.* 14.92; *Juv.* 13.237-8; *Manc. fr.* 1=Val. Max. 6.2.8.

³⁷ *TLL* 9.3.436.12 s.v. "nefas".

³⁸ See also *TLL* 9.3.437.46-65 s.v. "nefas" (gaining an understanding of the world which goes beyond what is allowed for humans); *Id.* 9.3.437.73-438.12 (entering the Underworld while still mortal); *Id.* 9.3.442.8-22 civil war; *Id.* 9.3.442.23-36 that which is beyond divine purview. I only discuss meanings of *nefas* which are pertinent to Roman paganism; for its uses in Christianity and Judaism, see *TLL* 9.3.438.13-70 s.v. "nefas".

scelesta (TLL 9.3.438.70-440.61 s.v. “nefas”), particularly as directed at family members (TLL 9.3.440.65-441.25 s.v. “nefas”).³⁹ Therefore, I take *nefas* to be the closest approximation of Freud’s ‘taboo’ in the Latin language.

Nefas, then, designates any act or event which crosses an unwritten barrier for what is appropriate;⁴⁰ at times, this is certainly connected to Roman religion, such as when it is considered a *nefas* to profane sacred things, but at least as often, *nefas* seems to describe something beyond Roman religion.⁴¹ This is evinced by how *differentiae*, *synonyma* and *glossaria* define *nefas* through triangulation: some of the most common words it is associated with are *scelus*,⁴² *inlicitum (vel sim.)*,⁴³ ἄθεμιστον⁴⁴ and *piaculum*.⁴⁵ All these words capture a sense of transgression but the nature of that transgression is different and we may divide it into three types: social, religious and legal. *Scelus* is an ambiguous term in itself: it carries a sense of both social and legal contravention,⁴⁶ so using it to gloss *nefas* suggests that our theme is a term describing the contravention of socio-legal provisions. However, *piaculum* directly connects

³⁹ *Nefas* is also used of events which do not constitute an explicitly performed *nefas*, such as premature deaths; see TLL 9.3.442.47-443.22 s.v. “nefas”.

⁴⁰ Cf. *nefas*’ use as an exclamation at Catull. 68.89; Virg. *Aen.* 7.73, 8.688, 10.673; Ps.-Virg. *Aet.* 43; Hor. *Carm.* 3.24.30, 4.6.17; Sen. *Ag.* 35, *Troad.* 1086; Luc. 2.507; Stat. *Silv.* 2.7.100; Ps.-Sen. *HO* 1232.

⁴¹ ‘Religion’ is a notoriously sticky term in connection with Rome, and this thesis does not attempt to unpack it. It is a wide-ranging series of practices, beliefs and institutions which defy simplistic definition; see, e.g., Rüpke 2007, 6: “What is described as “Roman religion” ... is of an astonishing variety. Various are the phenomena ... Various are the social functions”. I use the term merely to differentiate from those cultural practices which are largely non-religious, such as criminality.

⁴² Ps.-Charisius *Syn.* 425.27-8; *CGL* 123.25, 260.48, 324.43, 367.57, 377.8-9, 497.19; *GL* 3.58.19-20, 5.91.8, 5.298.125. *Nefas* is actively distinguished from *scelus* at Cic. *Parad. St.* 3.26 (*nefas* is that which *non licet*, whereas *scelus* is that which *non oportet*) and Adesp. *Diff.* 25.3 (*nefas* is *abominatum*, whereas *scelus committitur*); i.e. *scelus* (often) pertains to the mortal world of law and criminality, while *nefas* carries a stronger sense of natural law. For a discussion of *scelera* which relate to a *nefas*, see my §4.2.

⁴³ *Nefas* is *inlicitum* at *CGL* 354.15-16, 367.57; *GL* 5.91.8, 5.298.125, it is both *inlicitum* and *non licet* at *GL* 1.196; 1.387.185-95 and is *non licet* at Cic. *Parad. St.* 3.26.

⁴⁴ Charisius *Gramm.* 1.40.11; *GL* 2.233.17.

⁴⁵ Ps.-Charisius *Syn.* 425.27-8; *CGL* 367.57, 377.8-9. A range of other words are equated to *nefas* in the *differentiae*, *synonyma* and *glossaria* (see Figure 1.1) but those I list are the most common and cover the main range of senses.

⁴⁶ The *OLD* notes that the “orig. idea in this and its derivatives has been taken to be of a religious taboo incurred by guilt” (*OLD* 1701 s.v. “scelus”); this general sense of ‘moral wickedness’ eventually became combined with ‘crime’, see *OLD* 1701 s.v. “scelus” 2a.

nefas with matters religious: a *piaculum* is formally a propitiatory sacrifice or offering to atone for a religious crime or to seek permission for a certain action from a god,⁴⁷ and by extension, it came to mean the sort of impiety which might necessitate such a sacrifice.⁴⁸ The final point of the triangulation towards *nefas*' meaning is the sense of social or moral prohibition which is captured in the words ἀθέμιστον and *inlicitum* as well as the phrase *non licet*; all three of these convey a sense of traditional prohibitions inherited from subliminal cultural didacticism. Cicero best captures this in his discussion of the verb *licere*:⁴⁹

quid vero magis vituperandum quam id facere quod non liceat? licet autem nemini contra patriam ducere exercitum; si quidem licere id dicimus quod legibus, quod more maiorum institutisque conceditur. neque enim, quod quisque potest, id ei licet, nec, si non obstatur, propterea etiam permittitur.

What, indeed, is to be more severely blamed than to do that which is *non licet*? It is *licet* for no one to lead an army against the state; if by *licere* we mean that which is passed down to us by the laws and by the practices of our ancestors. For it is not *licet* for a man to do whatever he is capable of, and just because nothing stands in his way, that does not mean it is permitted.

Cicero understands *licere* to refer to both those behaviours inherited from the *mos maiorum* and that which is laid down in laws. The sense is that Roman citizens have an inherent knowledge of *quae licet* and *quae non licet*, transmitted to them osmotically by existence in the Roman system. So, through the attempt to triangulate *nefas*' meaning from these three angles—legal, social and religious—we can see how it is a form of prohibition that partakes in each of these aspects of life but which also,

⁴⁷ E.g. Cato *Agr.* 139, 140; Cic. *Leg.* 2.27; Liv. 8.10.12; Hor. *Carm.* 1.28.34; Ov. *Met.* 6.569.

⁴⁸ E.g. Fab. *Pict.* ap. Gell. *NA* 10.15.10; Plaut. *Truc.* 2.1.13; Liv. 39.47, 5.52; Virg. *Aen.* 6.569; Tac. *Ann.* 1.30; Plin. *Pan.* 37.

⁴⁹ Cic. *Phil.* 13.14.

perhaps, extends beyond the power of any individual sphere through being a composite of them. As can be seen from Figure 1.1, *nefas* occupies a central space between the three realms of behavioural prohibition, not only combining but compounding the interdictive power of each:

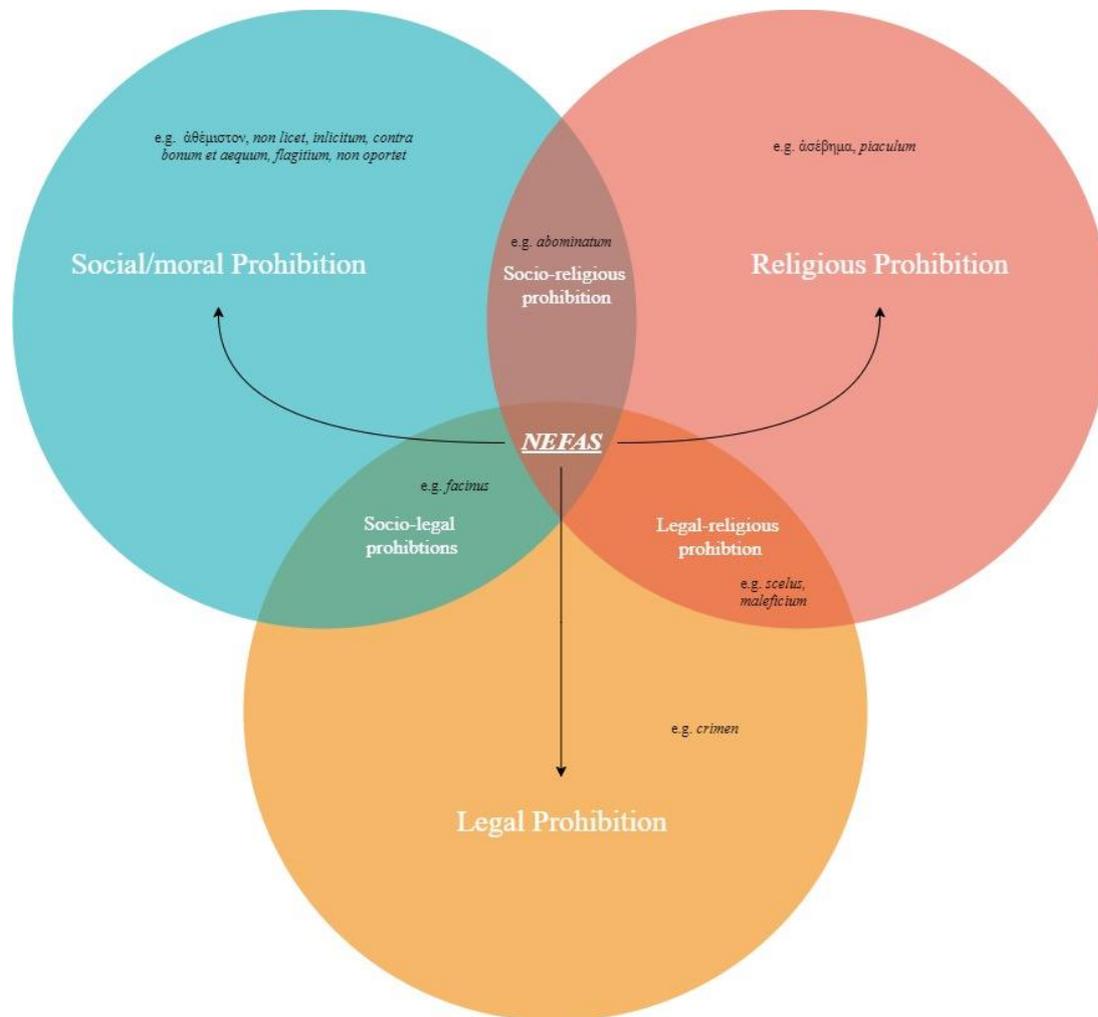


Figure 1.1: The intersecting spheres from which/to which *nefas* transmits its power.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ This thesis is a literary study and there is not space here to perform the sort of anthropological and sociological enquiry required to assess whether the tripartite institutions of prohibition (society, religion and the law) are the result of a primordial taboo of *nefas* or whether *nefas* conversely draws its power from the intersection of the spheres. Freud 1991 would argue the former and my arrows indicate this sort of relationship. What matters is that it consists of a powerful force of prohibition.

Nefas, then, connotes a powerfully authoritative prohibition which constitutes the nexus of religious, social and legal cultural mechanisms for controlling behaviour; this is the force which I suggest generates the Ovidian super-ego.

The centrality of (*ne*)*fas* to Augustan culture and, consequently, the force that it has in the *Metamorphoses*, may be seen in the concept of (*ne*)*fasti dies*, or holy days on which certain actions were or were not practiced (my bold font represents a focus on themes of speech):⁵¹

ne tamen ignores variorum iura dierum, 45

non habet officii Lucifer omnis idem.

ille **nefastus** erit, per quem tria **verba silentur**:

fastus erit, per quem lege licebit agi

nec toto perstare die sua iura putaris:

qui iam **fastus** erit, mane **nefastus** erat; 50

nam simul exta deo data sunt, licet omnia **fari**,

verbaque honoratus libera praetor habet.

So that you are not still unaware of the laws of the various days, 45

Not every morning is possessed of the same duties.

That day will be *nefastus*, on which the three **words are silent**:

It will be *fastus*, the day on which it is allowed to act with the law.

Do not think that the rules endure for the whole day:

The day which is now *fastus*, in the morning was *nefastus*; 50

For as soon as the entrails are given to the god, it is *licet to say* all things,

And the honoured praetor has access to free **speech**.

⁵¹ Ov. *Fast.* 1.45-52. See also Var. *L.* 6.29-31 with [Spencer 2019, 282 n. 45, 423-4](#). Cf. an almost identical description at Macrobius 1.16.14; Macrobius omits references to the etymological connection between *fastus* and *fari*. In a much briefer description, Festus implicitly supports the etymological relationship (s.v. “fastis”).

In this description, Ovid repeatedly draws attention to the vocal aspects of *(ne)fas*, not only in the content of what he says but also in the language he uses to express it. In antiquity, it was posited that *fas* and *nefas* were derived from *fari* ('to speak')⁵² and this resulted in regular wordplay on the connected meaning of the words: *[nefas] hic illic iungitur cum verbis dicendi fortasse in lusu verborum, sc. sec. originem vocis a fari ductam*.⁵³ Ovid creates a focus on the concept of the voice, in direct opposition to the sorts of prohibitions governed by *(ne)fas*. In Varro's passage on the *dies nefasti* (*Ling.* 6.29-31), we also see evidence of the intersecting power of *nefas* which I discussed above: it is something connected to the legal sphere, which may be seen in the presence of the *praetor*, the *Comitium* and reference to the *legis actio*,⁵⁴ but also to the religious, as is clear from the references to *piacula* and the powers of the *rex*.⁵⁵ Ovid's *Fasti* was composed contemporaneously to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*,⁵⁶ so it is of particular interest to this thesis that, precisely when he was writing about the instances of incest and bestiality which will be my study's main focus, Ovid was also

⁵² E.g. Prisc. *Part.* 6.117: *[a fando] putant quidam etiam fas et nefas dictum esse, quod iustum est dici vel tacero*. Priscian proves the conceptual proximity of *(ne)fas* and words associated with speech when he claims that the reason that *fas* has no genitive is because it would be too easily confused with the forms *fatis*, *faris* and *fassis* (*Inst.* 8.5). See also Adesp. *Diff.* 56.3: *inter facinus et nefas et scelus: facinus a fatur dicitur, nefas abominatum est, scelus committitur*. Cf. Paul. *Fest.* s.v. "fascinum". See Maltby 1991, 407.

⁵³ *TLL* 9.3.436.12-13 s.v. "nefas".

⁵⁴ *Legis actiones* comprise the earliest form of Roman civil procedure and were intricately linked with the *formula*, which was spoken at the beginning of civil trials, see Kocourek 1922; Michels 1967, 61-2; Schiller 1978, 188-218. For the use of the *tria verba* by the praetor during *legis actiones*, see Kocourek 1922, 438-9.

⁵⁵ For *rex* (especially *rex sacrorum vel sim.*) referring to a high priest rather than a king, see e.g. Cic. *Dom.* 38; Plin. *HN* 11.186; Ov. *Fast.* 2.21; Liv. 9.34.12.

⁵⁶ The date of the *Fasti* is debated. Many scholars point to the interrelations of narrative choices and themes between the *Fasti* and the *Metamorphoses* to suggest they are broadly contemporaneous: e.g. Bömer 1957, 15-17; Otis 1970, 21-2; Williams 1978, 56; Hinds 1987, 10-11; Fantham 1998, 2-3; Holzberg 2002, 39; White 2002, 14. In addition, Ovid's treatment of the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti* in his *Tristia* regards both poems as incomplete, but at an advanced state of realisation at the time of Ovid's exile: e.g. Ov. *Tr.* 1.1.117-18, 1.7 (*passim*), 2.63, 2.549-60 (with Ingleheart 2010, 98-9, 391-2), 3.14.19-24. I subscribe to the belief that both poems were being edited coevally with the composition of the exile poetry, for which, see Kovacs 1987. It is harder to divine which was published first (Bömer 1988). Green 2004, 28-9 suggests that we are textually encouraged to read the *Metamorphoses* before the *Fasti*. I follow Hinds 1987, 10-11, 42-4, 72-7 in focusing on the ways in which the two texts interrelate and encourage concomitant reading and cross-referencing.

constructing a lengthy text about issues of *(ne)Fasti*.⁵⁷ What both the Varronian and the Ovidian evidence provide is a sense of the central importance of the concept of *(ne)fas* to the daily lives of Romans in the age of Augustus. Some 58 days of the year were marked with N in the pre-Julian calendar, distinguishing them as *dies nefasti*,⁵⁸ demonstrating that concerns with issues of *fas* and *nefas* were not rarities but regular occurrences.

I now outline the stages by which, at Rome, a physical deed becomes unspeakable language, or *nefas*. At the etymological core of *nefas* is a concern with themes of speech, of the unspoken and of the verbally disclosed: a *nefas* becomes so because it is something which has been, is being, will be or ought to be concealed. *Nefas* is predicated on a fear of speech and an anxiety around disclosure: *nefanda* must not be *fari* or they risk becoming *fama* and thus incurring extreme social damage on the original perpetrator of the *nefas*.⁵⁹

This can be seen in many of the myths under consideration in this thesis: Byblis' (§3) principal anxiety revolves around her love letter to her brother, Caunus, a letter with which she can admit her passion without making it public knowledge (*Met.* 9.516: *littera celatos arcana fatebitur ignes*), but the eventual revelation of the letter to Caunus, the moment when the letter's content *fatur* and its potential to become *fama* increases, is precisely the moment of Byblis' downfall. Myrrha's (§4) love for her father, Cinyras, remains an undisclosed desire until the *murmura verborum* (10.382) of her monologue reach the ears of her nurse, initiating a series of disclosures and

⁵⁷ As in the above n., this thesis makes extensive use of Franz Bömer's commentaries on the *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti* (1969, 1976a, 1976b, 1977, 1980, 1982, 1986, 1957, 1958). Bömer was a committed and early member of SA and NSDAP (de Lorent 2017 s.v. "Franz Bömer") and I would choose not to refer to him if his were not the most comprehensive treatment.

⁵⁸ Michels 1967, 61.

⁵⁹ For *fama*, see Hardie 2012, especially 1-47, 150-77.

revelations which culminate in Myrrha's expulsion from her home. Arachne's (§5) tapestry, especially in Ovid's highly linguistically structured ecphrasis of it, may, diegetically, be a visual disclosure of male gods' varied zoomorphic rapes, but it is conveyed to the audience as a damning catalogue of Ovidian poetry, rendering that which it is *nefas* for a mortal to know *fama*. *Nefas* in the *Metamorphoses*, then, is both created and compounded by the dynamics of conversation, the processes by which secrets become known and by which an action committed at the personal level becomes socially validated as a crime. This is perhaps clearest in the myth of Tereus, Philomela and Procne (discussed further at §4.2.1), where Tereus attempts to mask the *nefas* of raping his sister-in-law, Philomela, by cutting out her tongue, preventing her from disclosing the crime and rendering it *fama*.⁶⁰

I now turn to how *nefas* is used in Ovid's writing. The words *nefas*, *nefarius* and *nefastus* occur 63 times in the Ovidian corpus; over half of these occur within the *Metamorphoses* (32 instances), with the *Fasti* having the second highest number of instances at 13.⁶¹

⁶⁰ For more on the themes of speech, silence and *nefas* in the myth of Philomela, Procne and Tereus, see Libatique Forthcoming.

⁶¹ The uses of *nefas* and its cognates outside the *Metamorphoses* are at: *Her.* 5.40, 8.113, 11.102 (*nefandus*), 12.59 (*nefandus*), 14.16 (*nefandus*); *Am.* 3.6.49, 3.9.44; *Ars am.* 1.284, 1.739, 2.107; *Fast.* 1.47 (*nefastus*), 1.50 (*nefastus*), 2.35, 2.44, 2.140, 2.473, 2.711, 2.850 (*nefandus*), 3.325, 3.705, 3.860 (*nefandus*), 6.616 (*nefandus*); *Tr.* 2.338, 3.9.16 (*nefandus*), 4.4.65 (*nefandus*), 4.10.101; *Pont.* 1.9.3, 2.2.16, 4.11.8; *Nux* 109 (*nefandus*). All instances are *nefas* unless otherwise specified.

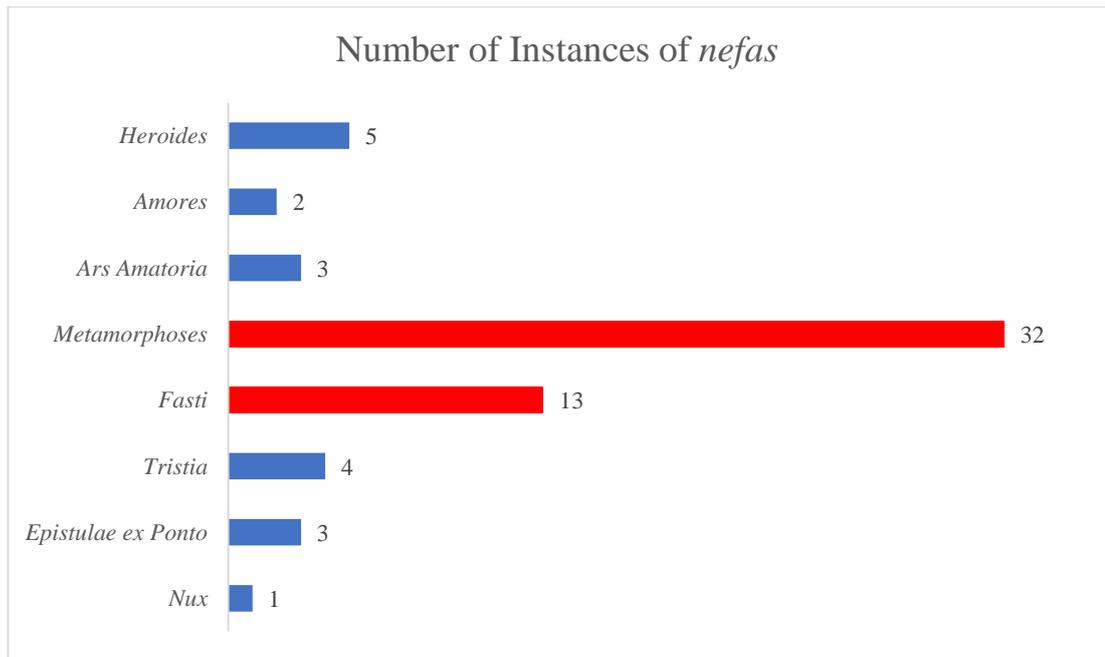


Figure 1.2: Graph showing the number of occurrences of *nefas* in each work of the Ovidian corpus.

The quantity of instances of *nefas* in the *Metamorphoses* when compared to the rest of the corpus suggests that Ovid's *carmen perpetuum* has a unique focus on taboo themes. Indeed, even when one analyses the number of occurrences relative to the number of lines of each poem (Figure 1.3), the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti* display uniquely high instance of usage:⁶²

⁶² The value for Ovid's *Nux* skews the data, as the poem has only 182 lines, making the single occurrence of *nefas* appear significant proportionally. The *Nux* is unlikely to have been written by Ovid, although it is often transmitted alongside his other poems (Tarrant 1983, 285-6); it clearly references the *corpus Ovidianum* repeatedly, which can be an argument for or against (Lee 1958) Ovidian authorship. Scholars who believe the *Nux* is by Ovid (e.g. Pulbrook 1985) are in the minority. The work is ancient (Knox 2009, 212-13) and I include it in these statistics.

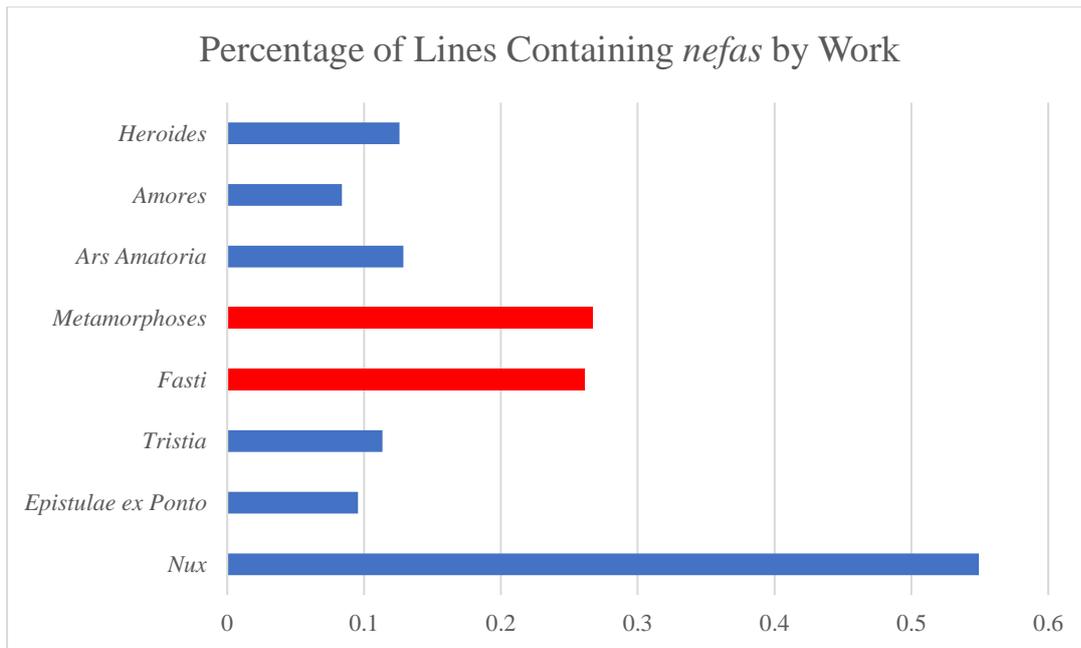


Figure 1.3: Graph showing the percentage of lines in each Ovidian work containing *nefas*.

The increased presence of *nefas* in the *Fasti* and the *Metamorphoses* is not surprising. These two works stand out from the rest of the Ovidian corpus for several reasons,⁶³ but, here, I focus on narration. All other extant Ovidiana has, as its principal narrative agent, a lyric ego; this is clearly not always Ovid, the real historical man, and sometimes it is not even ‘Ovid’, the artistically constructed figure,⁶⁴ but it is always an ‘I’. The *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti* have narrating egos and both are introduced in explicitly first-person terms,⁶⁵ but neither could be characterised by the same dependence on first-person narration as can the rest of the corpus. Therefore, although the voices of Ovidian personae resound throughout these two works, they are the voices of narrators,⁶⁶ not of lyric egos through whom the emotional development of the poetry is conveyed. This is of central importance when considered in light of the

⁶³ These reasons include: their simultaneous composition, their liminal identity between obviously pre-exilic and obviously post-exilic works, their grander generic status and their focus on aetiologies and unfiltered mythography rather than individual narratives.

⁶⁴ I.e. in the *Heroides*, where the poet (mostly) adopts the voice of mythical heroines.

⁶⁵ Ov. *Met.* 1.3-4: *meis .../ mea ... tempora*; *Fast.* 1.2 *canam*.

⁶⁶ Cf. the *Metamorphoses*’ narrators who are often understood as stand-ins for Ovid: e.g. Arachne (see §5.1) and Orpheus.

etymological connections between (*ne*)*fas* and words associated with speech; it is in two poems which display a unique modality of Ovidian narrative voice that Ovid is able to engage most profoundly with the unspeakable crimes of *nefas*.

I turn, at last, to the *Metamorphoses*. Ovid's most prolonged and complex meditation on the theme of *nefas* is careful about the deployment of this loaded word. As stated above, Ovid uses *nefas* in the *Metamorphoses* on 32 occasions (see Figure 1.4),⁶⁷ but these instances are not randomly scattered through the epic; they form clusters, areas of the text with a particular focus on matters *nefaria*.

⁶⁷ Ov. *Met.* 1.129, 1.392, 2.505, 3.731, 6.524, 6.540, 6.585, 6.601, 6.613, 7.71, 7.427, 8.86, 8.439, 8.483, 8.766, 9.372, 9.551, 9.626, 9.633, 10.228, 10.307, 10.322, 10.352, 10.404, 11.70, 13.203, 13.952, 15.075, 15.111, 15.127, 15.174, 15.785.

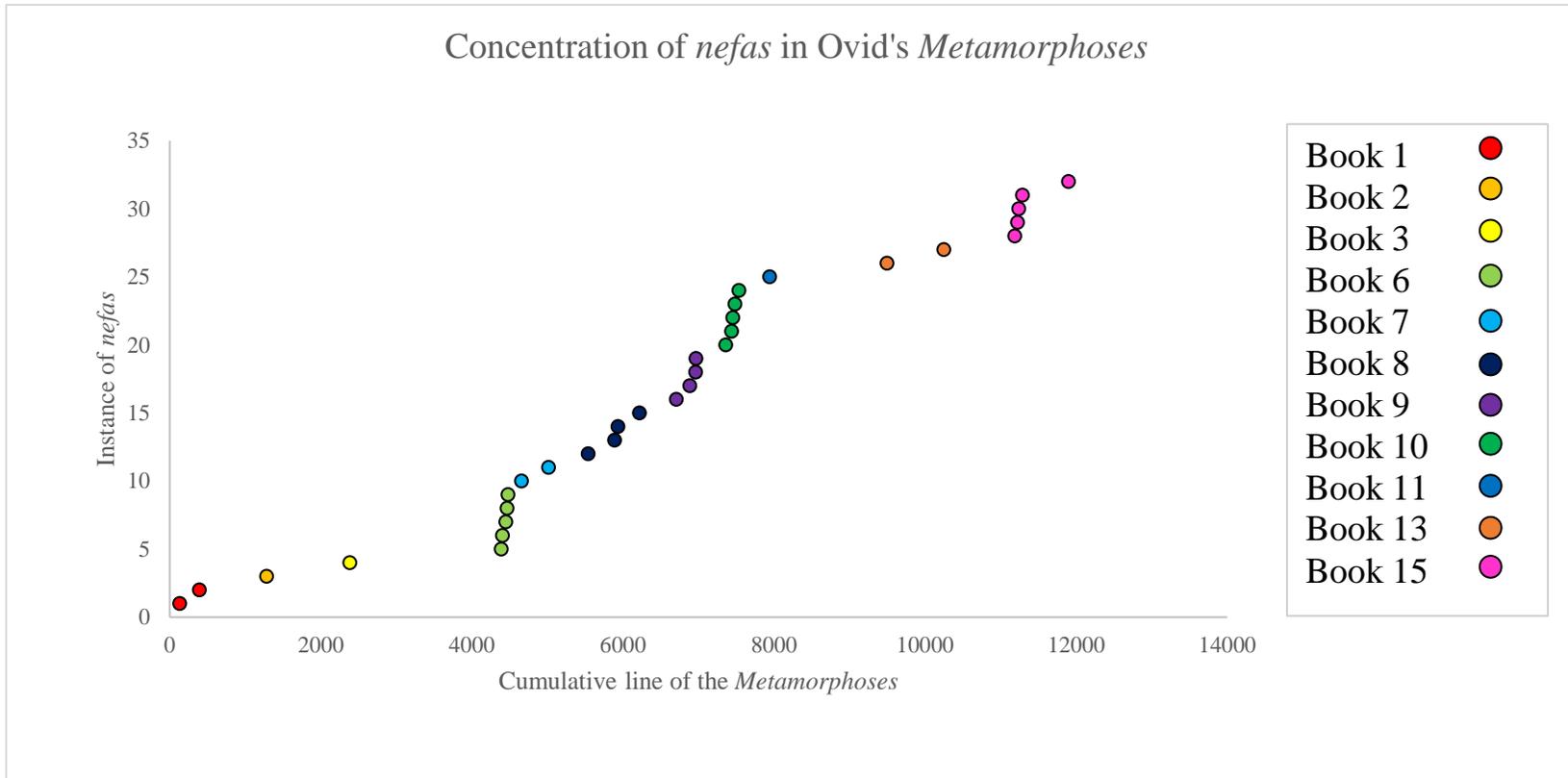


Figure 1.4: The concentration density of *nefas*' uses in the *Metamorphoses*.

Nefas is present across the text of the *Metamorphoses*—indeed, its first instance is at the very beginning of the first book and the final instance is fewer than one hundred lines from the end of the epic—but is particularly concentrated in its middle. The central five books account for 63% of the *Metamorphoses*' uses of *nefas* and there are three clear concentrations, where *nefas* occurs multiple times within the space of very few lines; there is also a fourth dense cluster in the fifteenth book.⁶⁸ The three clusters in this central portion represent three particular areas of interest for this thesis: Tereus' dealings with the sisters Philomela and Procne (*Met.* 6.401-674; discussed at my §4.2.1), Byblis' love for Caunus (9.450-665; my §3) and Myrrha and Cinyras (10.298-524; my §4).

These clusters represent evidence for my psychoanalytic approach: the focus on the key word *nefas* at these moments of highest tension, in which issues of incest especially are under the Ovidian microscope, represents an almost neurotic obsession with the word. This becomes even clearer when examining the words which surround and support the instances of *nefas*, such as *fari* etc.; these taboo episodes comprise accumulations of lexis relating to speech and the unspeakable which precisely centre the crisis of communication in the minds of the audience. This plays out in terrible irony as the narrator, whether Ovid or an internal speaker, vocalises in written form

⁶⁸ The cluster of four instances in Book 15 are all in the voice of Pythagoras, as he decries the eating of meat as a *nefas* and promotes vegetarianism. Here, the killing and eating of animals is atypically a *nefas* because of the specific religious-philosophical context of Pythagoreanism, whereas such an act is ordinarily conceptualised as normal (see Bömer 1986, 278). This is a sort of *nefas* not wholly unlike the other examples I discuss in this thesis, as it still relates to the Kristevan abject; Feldherr 2010, 151 claims “to consume flesh is potentially to consume not “another” but a member of the same species as you”. However, my focus is sexual *nefas* and I therefore omit discussion of Pythagorean vegetarianism. For Pythagoras' speech in general, see Viarre 1964, 223-88; Segal 1969a; Little 1974, 1978; Hardie 1995.

the unspeakable *nefas*, communicating it to new ears.⁶⁹ *Nefas*, Rome's 'taboo', is the perfect vehicle for exploring how psychological pressures cause language to disintegrate.

1.3 – Incest

1.3.1 – What is a Family?

Incest, at first, seems to be something easily defined: one can imagine a definition which says something to the effect of 'romantic or sexual relations with a family member' but such a definition runs up against several difficulties. First is the changing definition of 'family': Roman families were delineated differently to modern ones, consisting of a grouping simultaneously narrower and broader than the modern, 'Western' family.⁷⁰ The Roman *familia*,⁷¹ building on the Greek οἶκος, describes a range of social groupings, configured differently according both to the individual circumstances of a *familia*'s members and the chrono-geographical norms at the time and place of the *familia*'s existence.

The precise compositions of Roman *familiae* are impossible to reconstruct;⁷² indeed, scholarship on the size and composition of Roman households, especially in the Roman West, has tended to rely on almost exclusively on epigraphic evidence,⁷³ which is problematic for a number of reasons, not least the inherent biases of representation—there is a certain wealth barrier to epitaphic commemoration—and

⁶⁹ Epic texts, and especially the *Metamorphoses*, are exceptionally oral literary forms, enhancing the 'vocalisation' of *nefas*; see Wheeler 1999, especially 34-65. N.b. that 'epic' is a literally 'wordy' genre, with etymology in Greek ἔπος.

⁷⁰ Indeed, as Dixon 1992, 1-19 outlines, the differing delineations modern scholars have applied to the Roman family are as instructive about how those scholars viewed 'family' in their contemporary society as they are about the make-up of Roman family groupings, e.g. a focus on the so-called 'nuclear family' in the 1940s and '50s.

⁷¹ I use *familia*, rather than *domus* to emphasise my focus on the interconnectedness of the people, rather than the space which they occupy. However, as I explore below, *domus* in Latin is a very capacious term.

⁷² Huebner 2011, 73-9.

⁷³ Huebner 2011, 80-3. See e.g. Saller & Shaw 1984's influence on Gallivan & Wilkins 1997; Lassen 1997; Sigismund Nielsen 1997.

the difficulties of deducing real Roman life from commemorative representation.⁷⁴ These caveats understood, Huebner’s studies of Roman Egypt—a contemporary and provincial example,⁷⁵ but not where Ovid was writing, at Rome—demonstrate that Egyptian households very commonly consisted of at least one ‘nuclear family’ (two parents with pre-adult children).⁷⁶

We should recognise the difference between a ‘family’ and a ‘household’: a household may contain groups of people from one or more families and a family is likely to extend beyond the physical constraints of a single dwelling-place.⁷⁷ There are two main ways in which sociologists and historians define a family relation: consanguinity and affinity. Consanguineous approaches focus on the biological ties of reproductive relation, that is to say the ways in which persons are related directly through their genetic lines, often described using metaphors of ‘blood’.⁷⁸ Affinity, however, describes the formation of familial ties dependent on social ties, such as adoption or the nursing of children who may, or may not, be genetic offspring.⁷⁹ The Romans

⁷⁴ See, e.g., Bodel 2001, 38; Hope 1997, 113–14; Hopkins 1987, 115.

⁷⁵ Huebner 2011, 2013, 2017. For incest in Roman Egypt, see also Strong 2005. None of the incest myths in this thesis take place at Rome, but all are coloured by the ethics of Ovid’s contemporary Rome (see my pp. 131–3, 168).

⁷⁶ 43.1% of households in the census were ‘nuclear’, with 15% being nuclear families with an additional kinsperson (e.g. an aunt or uncle) and a further 21% of households containing more than one nuclear family living together. Huebner 2011, 77–8 stresses that, because this 21% of households represented a larger number of actual occupants than the nuclear groupings, 40% of Egyptians lived in households containing more than one nuclear family, compared to only 35% living in mono-nuclear households. See also Bagnall & Frier 2006.

⁷⁷ Indeed, as Harders 2012, 191 argues, “both terms, the Greek *oikos* and the Latin *domus*, refuse to specify the strategies of affiliation to this group”.

⁷⁸ The Romans were fond of haemic metaphors for family relations, e.g.: Cic. *Off.* 1.54, *Leg. agr.* 2.1, *Fam.* 12.14.7; Virg. *Aen.* 8.142; Livy 6.40.6; Tac. *Ann.* 2.3; Suet. *Aug.* 40.3; Ov. *Met.* 9.466; Sen. *Ben.* 1.11.4; Petron. *Sat.* 80.6. For more examples, see *OLD* 1689 s.v. “sanguis” 7–10. This sort of metaphor also exists in ancient Greek, e.g.: Hom. *Od.* 8.583, 4.611, *Il.* 19.111; Pi. *N.* 11.34. For more on Greek relationship dynamics, see below.

⁷⁹ The debate between these two positions has been, for the past half millennium or so, hot. In brief overview: historically, arguments from consanguinity have been favoured (see an overview in Peletz 1995), and were vociferously defended by Gellner (e.g. 1960) before more modern notions of social affinitive relations became mainstream (e.g. Schneider 1984, 1980).

utilised what may be seen as a combination of these two approaches,⁸⁰ enjoying family metaphors from biology (see n. 78) but also employing social structures, such as widespread adoption or enslavement,⁸¹ in which kinship bonds may be created socially.

While I am reluctant to draw hard lines around the perimeter of the Roman *familia*, one of the forces which creates individuated kinship groups is the incest taboo; as Durkheim proposes, “l'exogamie est solidaire du clan”.⁸² By forbidding endogamy (marrying within the social group), family members are forced to practice exogamy (marrying outside of the social group), creating the boundary between the in-group and the out-group. Thus, we may imagine the *familia* as defined more or less by Roman prohibitions on incest, to which I now turn; this refers to a fairly large grouping, constituted of both ‘blood’ relatives and affines; see Figure 1.5.

1.3.2 – What is Incest?

1.3.2.1 – Incestuous Etymologies

Incest, then, is a form of endogamy within a kinship group, but what were the more precise ways in which the Romans classified incest? I begin with an etymological study of the word before examining its use and meanings in Latin literature and outlining the legal and literary status of incest at Rome.

⁸⁰ Wilgaux 2011, 217 argues that Greek notions of kinship were rooted in “the biological facts of procreation”. Wilgaux’s view is somewhat salient in the literature and contradicts arguments by, e.g., Harders 2012.

⁸¹ Enslavement lies beyond the purview of this thesis, but the term *famula* for enslaved people points to their inclusion within the *familia*, if on decidedly unequal terms; see Penner 2012.

⁸² Durkheim 1896, 9.

*Incestum*⁸³ is formed from the combination of *in* and *castus*, meaning literally ‘not pure’.⁸⁴ This sense, in turn, stems from *castus*’ origin in *careo*,⁸⁵ by which it means ‘exempt from’ or ‘lacking in [defilement]’; this connection to purity has led etymologists to hope for an etymology in καθαρός,⁸⁶ which is disappointingly untenable.⁸⁷

Perhaps more relevant for my thesis are the technically ‘incorrect’ etymologies for *incestum* provided by Roman commentators which, despite their philological inaccuracy, nevertheless highlight the ways that this term was conceptualised. *Incestum*, Festus argues, *a Graeco trahitur. nam illi facinus dicunt ἀνήκεστον*.⁸⁸ The attempt to derive this patently Latinate word from Greek is telling: it casts *incestum* as something foreign and exoticised, with all the negative connotations that ‘eastern profligacy’ conjures for the Romans.⁸⁹ Ἀνήκεστον is also a noticeably looser and more negative term than Latin’s *incestum*,⁹⁰ whose meaning is fairly precise, at least in origin (see below). By allying *incestum* and ἀνήκεστον, Festus makes the word’s

⁸³ I use *incestum* throughout this thesis, but there are two nouns in Latin, *incestum*, *-i* and *incestus*, *-us*. I use *incestum* to avoid confusion with the adjective *incestus*, *-a*, *-um*, despite the latter form being more common in the Latin texts of my period. Within references to *incestum*, the words ‘and its cognates’ should be supplied. See also the verb *incestare*.

⁸⁴ See EM 104 s.v. “castus”; WH 180 s.v. “castus”. As I argue below, the use of *incestum* changed over time, and may not have meant ‘incest’ during Ovid’s lifetime, a fact which renders most of our etymologies and glosses—which are exclusively late—problematic. Despite this, it should be noted that late sources recognise *incestum*’s origin in *castus*: Mar. Victorin. *Ars* 10.7-8: *castus facit incestum, non incestum*. See also Isid. *Orig.* 10.148.

⁸⁵ The adjective *castus*, *-a*, *-um* is formally derived from *castigo*, *-are*; EM 104 s.v. “castus” explains this double origin by suggesting that there were once two adjectives **castus*, and that **castus* (from *castigo*) became confused with **castus* (from *careo*) and took on part of its sense.

⁸⁶ E.g. Curtius 1879, 138.

⁸⁷ See WH 180 s.v. “castus”.

⁸⁸ Paul. Fest. s.v. “incestus”.

⁸⁹ The East as exotic and effeminate Other is a constant presence in Roman texts; see e.g. Isaac 2004, 257–323; O’Rourke 2011; Giusti 2017, 2018a, passim, especially 88-147. For incest as ‘eastern’, see n. 554.

⁹⁰ Ἀνήκεστος, as an adjective, is often applied to incurable wounds and sicknesses (e.g. Hom *Il.* 5.394, 15.217; Hdt. 1.137) or more generic evils (e.g. A. *Ch.* 516; S. *OT* 98, *El.* 888). See LSJ s.v. “ἀνήκεστος”.

meaning seem even worse and stronger than the examples which may be found in extant literature.

In a different vein, in his scholia to Statius' *Thebaid*, commenting on the lines [*Venus fertur*] *soluisse iugalem/ ceston* (5.62-3), Lactantius proposes that the *ceston* (a girdle) is called thus *quia copula et matrimonio vis est, quia adeo quae pro adulterio perpetrantur 'incesta' dicuntur, quasi quod non vinctum fuerit sit incestum*.⁹¹ Thereby, he ties *incestum* to the Greek κεστός, literally 'woven', which suggests that *incestum* is something not bound, presumably by the rules and prescriptions of society. This casts *incestum* as extra-societal, outside those realms governed by law and *mores*.⁹² The sense of *incestum* being something which defies constraint will be explored in more detail later in this thesis. These etymological explanations of *incestum* serve to indicate that, to the Romans, *incestum* was a powerfully taboo subject, rationalised as something unbound and uncontrollable by earthly laws.⁹³

1.3.2.2 – Towards an Ovidian Meaning of *incestum*

I have so far refused to define *incestum* beyond saying that it refers to an impure thing; this is deliberate and its ambiguous referent (legally and socially) connects it to unspeakable *nefas*. I propose that, in the earliest times, *incestum* referred to the religious crime of a Vestal Virgin sleeping with a man.⁹⁴ This is a specific use of the

⁹¹ Lactant. *In Theb.* 5.62-3.

⁹² Lactantius' implicit association between the *ceston* of Venus and moral matters is made more convoluted by how the *ceston* is a somewhat erotic garment, designed to attract men, see Bonner 1949. Bonner also connects the *ceston*, which he identifies as a sort of saltire-shaped harness to be worn over the naked body, with the magic of knots in the Roman world and their connection to taboo; see Wolters 1905.

⁹³ The question of legality will be discussed below. It should be noted that controlling incest by law and prosecuting perpetrators under law are subtly different things; for the latter, see my §4.2.

⁹⁴ Latte 1967, 49 makes a case for *incestum* referring to ritual impurities in general before narrowing to sexual impurities in particular. However, my argument is not concerned with whether *incestum* exclusively described sex with a Vestal Virgin from its first use, more that it meant this consistently and long before it meant 'incest' in our sense and, as I explain below, this secondary sense emerged at some point vaguely contemporaneous with Ovid's life.

term, for which we have multiple testimonia,⁹⁵ and it fits nicely with the word's sense of opposition to ritual purity; this use of *incestum* was technical and strongly established. The date at which *incestum* took on the sense of 'incest' is debatable; by the mid 1st century CE, Seneca uses the word and its cognates with this force.⁹⁶ The sticking point is establishing when *incestum*'s meaning changed. We may take Seneca's tragedies as the *terminus ante quem* for the word clearly designating incest, as it is there that we first find a density of unambiguous usages with this sense and the sense continues in later writers; however, the transition to this point is not tidy.

There are two earlier examples of *incestum* where the sense can certainly be interpreted as 'incest', but they are fairly divorced from one another and predate the bulk of our evidence; I suggest that these should both be seen as outliers, where *incestum*'s incestuous meaning is created on an *ad hoc* basis or may not even obtain. Indeed, it is entirely plausible that it is on the basis of these instances and, perhaps, others like them which do not survive, that the later technical meaning of incest developed. First is a fragment of Cinna's epyllion, the *Smyrna: at scelus incesto Zmurnae crescebat in alvo*.⁹⁷ The *Smyrna* dates from the late Republic,⁹⁸ and tells the story of Smyrna, or Myrrha, which is retold by Ovid in Book 10 of the *Metamorphoses* (see my §4), who falls in love with her father, sleeps with him in disguise and

⁹⁵ E.g. Livy 2.42.11, 4.44.11, 8.15.8; Sen. *Controv.* 1.3 *passim*, *Con. ex.* 6.8; Plin. *HN* 28.12; Juv. 4.9; Suet. *Dom.* 8.3

⁹⁶ E.g. Sen. *Apocol.* 8, *Phdr.* 560 (possibly), 1185, *Oed.* 21, 645, 1026; Ps.-Sen. *Oct.* 521; Luc. 8.693; Stat. *Theb.* 1.234; Mart. 14.75.1; Tac. *Ann.* 6.19.1 Cf. the word *incestificus*, which is only in Seneca (*Phoen.* 223) and is, presumably, a Senecan coinage (see Billerbeck 1988, 39). *Incestificus* is how Oedipus self-identifies in the *Phoenissae*; between the word being attributed to one of the most famous perpetrators of incest from the classical canon and the lack of specific supporting glosses, a Senecan audience was clearly expected to infer 'incest' and not 'sacrilegious sex with a Vestal Virgin' or even 'religious impurity more broadly defined'. The uniqueness of this line's construction (see Frank 1995, 142) gives particular prominence to Seneca's invented term.

⁹⁷ Cinna fr. 9. For the variant spellings of Smyrna/Zmyrna/Zmurna, see Hollis 2007, 29–30; for the relationship to the name Myrrha, see my n. 586. I use 'Smyrna' unless a certain editor prints Zmyrna/Zmurna in an edition.

⁹⁸ The *Smyrna* is clearly newly published when it is honoured in Catull. 95.

conceives the child, Adonis, with him. The word *incestus* here is usually understood as ‘incestuous’;⁹⁹ however, it seems more likely to me to describe Smyrna’s womb (*alvus*) as impure or defiled. The sense clearly stems from Smyrna’s incestuous sex with her father, but it does not seem in keeping with contemporary idiom for *incestum* to mean ‘incest’ here. In addition, the fact that the adjective is ascribed to a womb, not the act itself, seems especially odd.¹⁰⁰ Terms gain currency with specific sense, before becoming applicable to transferred circumstances (e.g. *incesta nuptia*, see below): only eventually would one expect to see *incestus* used in such an abstract or metaphorical manner.

A similar case may be made against the other use of *incestum* where it apparently refers to incest, in Virgil’s *Aeneid*: *hinc Sthenium petit et Rhoeti de gente vetusta / Anchemolum thalamos ausum incestare novercae* (10.388-9). The direct object of the verb is a place, which seems far closer to *incestare*’s meaning ‘to defile a place’ than to its more technical sense of ‘perform incest with a person’.¹⁰¹ Indeed, Virgil’s contemporary Velleius Paterculus uses *incestum* in such a way as to imply it did not mean incest at that time; he describes Clodius Pulcher as *infamis etiam sororis stupro et actus incesti reus ob initum inter religiosissima populi Romani sacra adulterium* (2.45.1). The presence of *incestum* so close to an actual act of incest suggests that, for Velleius Paterculus, *incestum* did not imply the same thing as a *stuprum sororis*.

⁹⁹ E.g. Hollis 2007, 15, 39; Courtney 1993, 219; *TLL* 7.1.894.40-1 s.v. “incestus”.

¹⁰⁰ *Incestus*, -a, -um is ascribed (if rarely) to ‘incestuous anatomical features’ in later Latin (as with my earlier examples, after Seneca), e.g. Calp. Flacc. *Decl.* 22 (*oculos ... incestos*); Tert. *Apol.* 9.18 (*incesti sanguinis*). The *TLL* (7.1.89442-3 s.v. “incestus”) also lists Luc. 10.105 (of Cleopatra’s *facies*) as an example of this motif, though perhaps unconvincingly; presumably her beauty is implied to be incestuous because of her marriages to her brothers Ptolemy XIII Theos Philopator and Ptolemy XIV. Holmes 1989, 82 and Berti 2000, 103 both take *incestus* in the Lucan passage as simply a synonym for *impudicus*.

¹⁰¹ See Harrison 1991, 172.

I mention these two examples to argue that Ovid did not have access to the meaning of *incestum* as incest and that when the word occurs in his works, they necessarily mean different things. Ovid only uses the word *incestum* on four occasions, each of which clearly does not refer to incest. Ovid's first use of *incestum* is at *Am.* 2.2.48: *vidi ego compedibus liventia crura gerentem, / unde vir incestum scire coactus erat.* In context, it is clear that Ovid is using *incestum* in an exaggerated fashion, to refer to cuckoldry.¹⁰² At *Met.* 4.388, the adjective *incestus* is applied to the *medicamen* which Mercury and Venus mix into Hermaphroditus' pool, whose effect is to soften (*mollescat*) men who enter the pool. In the *Fasti*, Ovid calls an unchaste Vestal *incesta* (6.459) in a description of the punishment for such women: viviseulture. Finally, at *Tr.* 2.503, Ovid describes the sound effects of mime as *incestae voces*, clearly referring more to adultery than incest.¹⁰³ One must ask, then, why, if he had access to a technical term for incest, Ovid would not have made greater uses of the valences of a word like *incestum* in the multiple incest narratives which occur across his oeuvre? Indeed, it is on this basis that I conclude that there was no technical term for incest in Ovid's lifetime; the issue of nomenclature is of central importance to the following discussion of the legal status of incest.

1.3.3 – A Legal History of Incest

The legality of incest is of particular interest to a study of that taboo in Ovidian literature, as Ovid himself was a trained lawyer. Had there been extensive legal prohibitions on incest in Augustan Rome, Ovid would undoubtedly have mined them in his presentations of incest;¹⁰⁴ we must imagine, then, that there were not. In this

¹⁰² See McKeown 1998, 49.

¹⁰³ Indeed, Ps.-Charisius *Syn.* 217.24-5 implies that for Cicero too *incestus* had a meaning less strong than incest.

¹⁰⁴ For Ovid and the law, see Ziogas 2021, especially 346-83 (on incest).

section, I demonstrate not only that incest was not a legal category at Rome, but that positive proscription was undesirable.

For Foucault, the creation of socio-legal categories constitutes the moment at which they come under the law's power of prosecution.¹⁰⁵ In this, Foucault was anticipated by Seneca the Younger:¹⁰⁶

praeterea videbis ea saepe committi, quae saepe vindicantur. pater tuus plures intra quinquennium culleo insuit, quam omnibus saeculis insutos accepimus. multo minus audebant liberi nefas ultimum admittere, quam diu sine lege crimen fuit. summa enim prudentia altissimi viri et rerum naturae peritissimi maluerunt velut incredibile scelus et ultra audaciam positum praeterire quam, dum vindicant, ostendere posse fieri; itaque parricidae cum ea lege coeperunt, et illis facinus poena monstravit; pessimo vero loco pietas fuit, postquam saepius culleos vidimus quam cruces.

In addition, you will see that those crimes are committed often which are often prosecuted. Your father sewed more men into the sack in five years than we believe to have been sewn up throughout all of history. Much less did children dare to commit a *nefas* as long as it was a sin unregulated by the law. For with the greatest wisdom, the most high-minded men, most experienced in the nature of things, preferred to ignore the crime as incredible and located beyond the limits of boldness, than to show that it could be done in punishing it; and so parricides came into being along with the law [that named them so], and the punishment revealed the crime to them; indeed, then *pietas* was in the worst place after we saw sacks more often than crosses.

¹⁰⁵ Foucault 1976, 58–60.

¹⁰⁶ Sen. *Ben.* 1.23.1. See also Cicero on Solon: *sapienter fecisse dicitur, cum de eo nihil sanxerit quod antea commissum non erat, ne non tam prohibere quam admonere videretur* (*Rosc. Am.* 70).

Seneca is here discussing parricide, drawing a distinction between a moral, unspoken crime (*nefas*) and a positive, legislated crime (*crimen*). He argues that in legislating a crime, a lawgiver gives it name and definition, rendering it a delineated practice which bad people can emulate. Seneca's use of *nefas* adds weight to his point; in the pre-legislative age he imagines, children did not dare to commit the *nefas ultimum* (i.e. parricide) but in the context of giving names to crimes, the nebulous unspeakability of the *nefas* is precisely the point. This reflects an earlier comment in Plato's *Laws* (8.838a-d) that one of the most effective ways of preventing a behaviour in a populace is not to legislate against it but to turn public opinion against it through the use of cultural artefacts. His specific example is incest, which he sees to be prohibited by a νόμος ἄγραφος (8.838b):¹⁰⁷

τὸ δ' αἴτιον ἄρ' οὐ τοῦτ' ἔστι, τὸ μηδένα ἄλλως λέγειν αὐτά, ἀλλ' εὐθὺς γενόμενον ἡμῶν ἕκαστον ἀκούειν τε λεγόντων ἀεὶ καὶ πανταχοῦ ταῦτα, ἐν γελοίοις τε ἅμα ἐν πάσῃ τε σπουδῇ τραγικῇ λεγόμενα πολλάκις, ὅταν ἢ Θυέστας ἢ τινὰς Οἰδίποδας εἰσάγωσιν, ἢ Μακαρέας τινὰς ἀδελφαῖς μιχθέντας λαθραίως, ὀφθέντας δὲ ἐτοίμως θάνατον αὐτοῖς ἐπιτιθέντας δίκην τῆς ἀμαρτίας

Indeed, is this not the reason: that nobody speaks of these things [incest *vel sim.*] in other ways, but that each of us, from the day we are born, hears this opinion always and everywhere, equally in comedy and often in serious tragedy, whenever they bring on stage a Thyestes or an Oedipus, or a Macareus having just secretly had sex with his sister, each seen willingly inflicting his death as justice for his sin.

¹⁰⁷ Pl. *Leg.* 8.838c. See also S. *Ant.* 450-7 on ἄγραπτα νόμιμα as apposed to positive laws.

Plato specifies that these most serious crimes against nature need not be proscribed legally because everyone will learn that they are prohibited through cultural osmosis; that is to say, ἄγραφοι νόμοι construct a super-ego. The weight of public opinion, he claims, establishes τὸ βεβαιότατον ... περὶ τοῦτον τὸν νόμον.

This, then, is the principal problem facing the Classicist trying to reconstruct the legal history of *incestum*.¹⁰⁸ as I have argued, it was a crime without a technical name in Latin until sometime in the early-to-mid first century CE. There is equally no specific technical term in ancient Greek,¹⁰⁹ with incest being included under the broader designations γάμος ἀνόσιος and γάμος ἀσεβής.¹¹⁰ In terms of Greek law, restrictions varied across the Greek world:¹¹¹ in Athens, a citizen could marry his half-sister, if they shared a father, but not if they shared a mother,¹¹² whereas in Sparta, the opposite rule may have been true.¹¹³ Plato, via Socrates, (*R.* 5.461b-c) recommends that, in the ideal city, incest of this type would not be allowed if it were progenitive but seems permissive of it if there are no offspring;¹¹⁴ hypothetical laws proposed for a utopian city do not provide evidence for actual legislation at Athens. Xenophon, via Socrates,

¹⁰⁸ For a far fuller discussion and exegesis on incest in Roman law, see Moreau 2002.

¹⁰⁹ The term μητροκοίτης appears in Hippon. fr. 12.2 and *Apoc. Esdr.* 28.28, clearly meaning ‘sharer of the mother’s bed’ but it is not attested anywhere else (see below). Later, Christian Greek would establish a series of technical terms, such as θυγατρομιξία (e.g. Greg. Nyss. *Contra Fatum* 56.11; Origenes *De Principiis* 4.2.2). For Greek incest generally, see Glotz 1899; Rudhardt 1982; Cox 1989-1990; Wilgaux 2011.

¹¹⁰ Even these terms are unspecific: γάμος ἀνόσιος means incest at *S. OC* 945-6 and may suggest incest—or even bestiality—at *Ar. Ra.* 850 (see my p. 64 for more on this line). Ἀνόσια [...] ῥητά describe incest at *S. OT* 1289. However, γάμος ἀνόσιος also designates impure couplings such as adultery (*E. El.* 600, 926-7). Γάμος ἀσεβής may refer to incest at *A. Suppl.* 10 (although there are textual issues, see Sommerstein 2019, 96-7), where it describes the forced marriage of the Danaids to their cousins, the sons of Aegyptus; cousin-marriage does not seem to have been considered a punishable form of incest in Greece or in Ovid’s Rome (see below).

¹¹¹ See Karabélias 1989.

¹¹² *D.* 57.20; *Ph. Spec. leg.* 3.22; *Pl. Them.* 32; *Min. Fel. Oct.* 31.3. Wilgaux 2011, 226 asserts that the same practice was permissible in Sicily and Macedonia.

¹¹³ This is asserted by the Jewish philosopher Philo (*Ph. Spec. leg.* 3.22) but there is no earlier testament to it. For more on half-sibling marriage in the Roman world, see Rowlandson & Takahashi 2009, 106-8.

¹¹⁴ Contextually, this passage comes immediately before Socrates defines family in terms of age-groups, rather than through biology or even affinity as normally understood (*R.* 5.461c-d).

(*Mem.* 4.4.20-3) talks of incest as something proscribed by ἄγραφοι νόμοι and ὑπὸ τῶν θεῶν κειμένοι νόμοι, which are both characterised as universal and not enshrined in the law codes of specific cities.¹¹⁵ There is a clear distaste for incest in Greek literature, especially Attic tragedy (for which, see §1.3.4), but it does not seem to have been legally prohibited.

If we can make no confident claims about the legal status of incest before or during Ovid's lifetime, what, then, can we say? Marriage between second cousins had initially been prohibited by a *vetus mos* at Rome,¹¹⁶ but, over time, had become acceptable and, eventually, marriage with cousins was also permissible.¹¹⁷ By the late Republic and early Empire, it seems that cousin marriages were not even subject to excessive gossip: when Cicero lambasts Mark Antony about his marriage to his cousin Antonia, the negative force of the imputation seems to be Antony's divorce of Antonia and pursuit of a new wife (Fulvia), not the consanguinity of Antony and Antonia (Cic. *Phil.* 2.38).¹¹⁸ Whether cousin marriages—between either first or second cousins—were ever directly against the law or simply against *veteres mores* is unclear.

The earliest concretely datable legal reference to incestuous marriage is between Agrippina the Younger and her uncle, the emperor Claudius, in 49 CE. In a speech attempting to persuade the senate that the uncle-niece union of Claudius and Agrippina was perfectly acceptable (Tac. *Ann.* 12.5-6), Vitellius admits that such couples are a

¹¹⁵ Cf. Araspas at Xen. *Cyr.* 5.1.9-11, who defines love as something governed by free will, using the example of incest as a love in which men can choose not to indulge (5.1.10); he claims, in passing, that there are laws against incest, but they are only enforceable because men have the capacity to reject love, unlike, for instance a law against thirst, which men cannot reject.

¹¹⁶ Livy 20 fr. 12a: *P. Cloelius patricius primus adversus veterem morem intra septimum cognationis gradum duxit uxorem. ob hoc M. Rutilius plebeius sponsam sibi praeripi novo exemplo nuptiarum dicens seditionem populi concitavit, adeo ut patres territi in Capitolium perfugerent.*

¹¹⁷ Tac. *Ann.* 12.6: *et sobrinarum [et consobrinarum] diu ignorata tempore addito percrebuisse.* See also Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 265D: ἀλλ' ὅψε συνεχώρησαν ἀνεψιαῖς συνοικεῖν.

¹¹⁸ Other notable figures married their cousins, especially in the early empire. There seem to be no harsh critiques of e.g. Augustus' daughter, Julia, marrying her cousin, Marcus Claudius Marcellus; surely such an author as Suetonius (*Aug.* 63) would have reported this as scandal if it could be viewed as such.

novelty (*nova*) but argues that they were *neque lege ulla prohibita*. Vitellius, perhaps, ought not be believed;¹¹⁹ Claudius had to convince the senate to pass a *senatus consultum* permitting this sort of incestuous marriage.¹²⁰ Whether this was a law providing legal backing to the union or legislation which overturned a previous law forbidding uncle-niece marriage is unclear; nevertheless, the proximity of this sort of relationship to other forms of incest made them unpopular.¹²¹

However, this is not to say that there were never legal restrictions on incest at Rome, or that they remained elusive for the whole of Roman history: the *Digest* of Justinian contains extensive legislation on incest. The *Digest*, collated in the early sixth century CE, contains writings by much earlier jurists; however, almost none of them were writing at the same time as Ovid. Even those jurists who were writing in or before Ovid's lifetime contributed nothing to the discussion of incest;¹²² the earliest comments in the *Digest* on this subject are from the second century. Indeed, that late-Republican political and literary interest in incest (§1.3.4) is met with contemporary juridical silence on the matter perhaps implies that incest was not a legal category in the decades before Ovid was writing. Therefore, again, evidence for the legal status of incest in Ovid's lifetime is impossible to reconstruct.¹²³

¹¹⁹ See Shaw & Saller 1984, 434.

¹²⁰ See also Gai. *Inst.* 1.62: *fratris filiam uxorem ducere licet: idque primum in usum uenit, cum divus Claudius Agrippinam, fratris sui filiam, uxorem duxisset: sororis vero filiam uxorem ducere non licet. et haec ita principalibus constitutionibus significantur.*

¹²¹ Tacitus tells us that only Alledius Severus took advantage of the new law on uncle-niece marriage (*Tac. Ann.* 12.7). Suetonius (*Claud.* 26.3) says something similar, stating that only a freedman and a *primipilaris* took up the opportunity. The specificity of the law underlines its use in unique circumstances: men were only permitted to marry the daughter of their brother, not the daughter of their sister (Gai. *Inst.* 1.62).

¹²² The jurists in the *Digest* who either predate Ovid or were his contemporaries are (chronologically): Quintus Mucius Scaevola, Alfenus Varus, Gaius Aelius Gallus, Marcus Antistius Labeo, Massurius Sabinus.

¹²³ The Augustan moral legislation of the *leges Iuliae* does not seem to have mentioned incest *qua* incest, although there were possibly references to incestuous adultery; see Moreau 2002, 344-8.

Despite the impossibility of reconstructing the specific ways that the law interacted with incestuous relationships during the Augustan era, Moreau reminds us that “il n’ya pas lieu d’interpréter ce silence de la loi à propos de l’inceste comme une tolérance ou une indifférence à ce délit”.¹²⁴ Therefore, in Figure 1.5, I have reconstructed the legal restrictions on incest, as defined by the jurists in the *Digest*, as it does not seem impossible that such prohibitions held sway in the Augustan period, even if they were not enshrined in formal law. The relations are all defined in relation to a central man (in green) and those in red could have no *connubium* with him.

¹²⁴ Moreau 2002, 347.

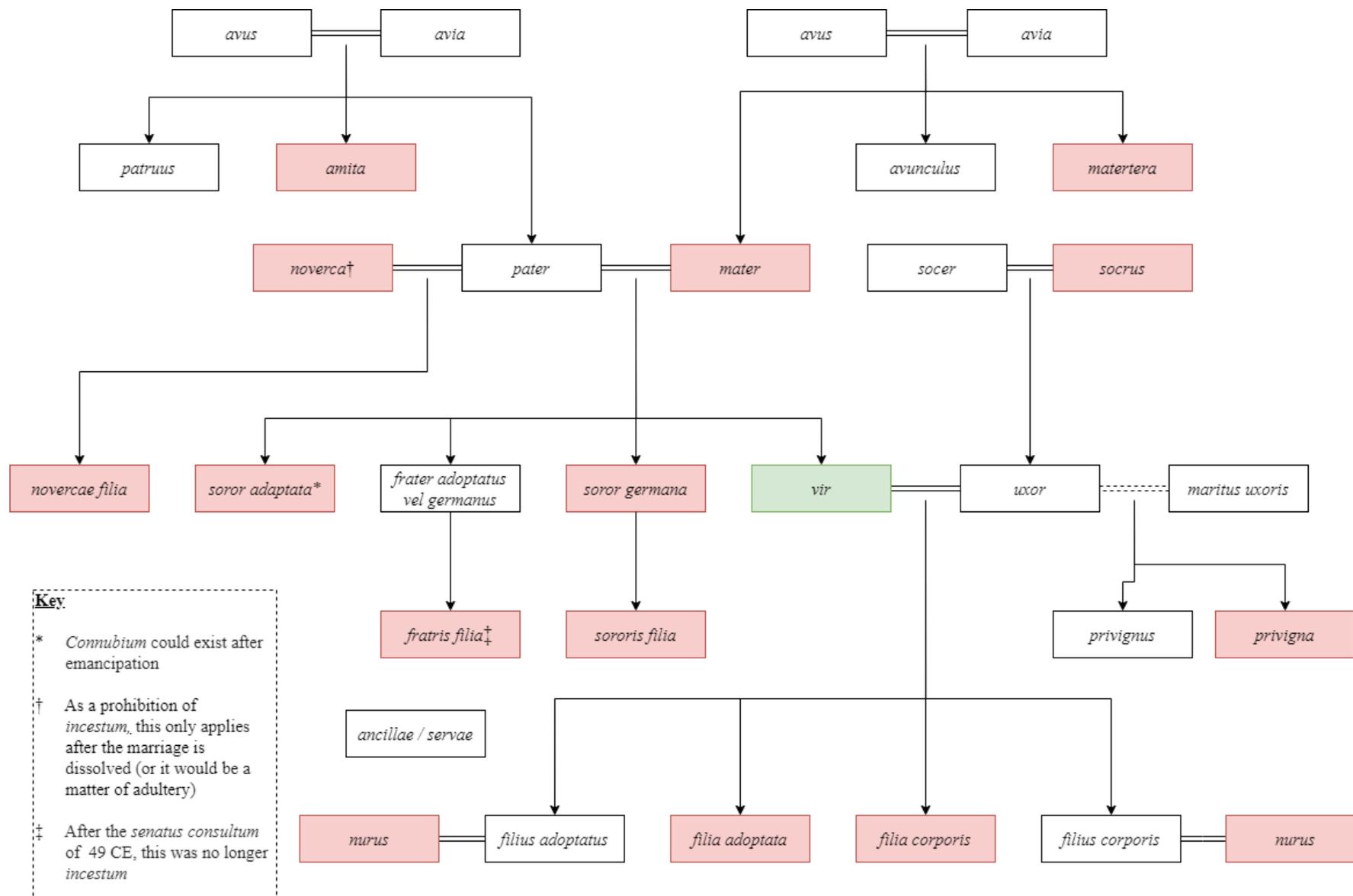


Figure 1.5: A family tree, showing which family members were not marriageable, according to the Digest.

1.3.4 – A Literary History of Incest

Having explained what little the law of Ovid’s day has to say about incest specifically, I now turn to the other font of moral teaching: pre-Ovidian literature.¹²⁵ In the interests of concision, my comments are necessarily brief. An early emergence of incest as a marked category is within Attic tragedy,¹²⁶ where it is crucial to the plot of, for instance, Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus* (see §2.1) and features in several other plays.¹²⁷ Generalised distaste for incest is presented throughout extant tragedy.¹²⁸ Incest was also used as invective in the Athenian lawcourt: it was not as the basis for accusations—incest not being a legal category—but added colour to legal speeches,¹²⁹ and other invective efforts against prominent Athenians.¹³⁰

In the Roman context, Comedy represents an important *locus* of incestuous narratives. The genre is littered with near-misses: storylines in which one party desires a relationship which, unbeknownst to them, would be incestuous, only for the potential relationship to be dismissed by the plot’s conclusion, usually through the contrivance of a ‘reveal scene’.¹³¹ The Catullan corpus, an important referential reservoir for

¹²⁵ Literature’s role as a moral teacher is largely based on its ability to offer *exempla*, positive and negative, for which, see Langlands 2018. See, e.g., Sen. *Ep.* 120 *aliqua benigna facta, aliqua humana, aliqua fortia nos obstupescerant: haec coepimus tamquam perfecta mirari* (120.5) and, perhaps more specifically on how to derive moral teachings from something ethically negative, such as incest: *mala interdum speciem honesti obtulere et optimum ex contrario enituit* (120.8).

¹²⁶ Cf. Hippon. frs. 12. 70.7-8 (with Pörtulas 1985; Rosen 1988, 35–7) which are earlier.

¹²⁷ Incest features in the plot—that is to say in the action of the play, not in allusions to other narratives—of the following Attic tragedies as a marked category: S. *OT* (Oedipus-Jocasta), *Tr.* (Hyllus-Iole), *OC* (Oedipus-Jocasta, by implication); A. *Suppl.* (the Danaids-the Aegyptids); E. *Hipp.* (Hippolytus-Phaedra; only explicit in a now missing version, for which see §4.4), *Ph.* (Oedipus-Jocasta). Incest featured heavily in several plays which are now fragmentary: e.g. A. *Oedipus* (Oedipus-Jocasta); E. *Aeolus* (Macareus-Canace), *Oedipus* (Oedipus-Jocasta).

¹²⁸ E.g. A. *Suppl.* 8-10; E. *Andr.* 173-7.

¹²⁹ See Aesch. 1; Lys. 14.28-9, fr. 8; Is. 7. See now Cox 1989; Krenkel 2006, 479–86.

¹³⁰ E.g. Eup. *Pol.* fr. 221 (on Cimon), reflected at Plut. *Cim.* 4.5, and Antisthenes *ap.* Ath. 5.220c=SSR V-A 141 (on Alcibiades the Elder).

¹³¹ E.g. in Plautus’ *Epidicus* (Telestis-Stratippocles; see Keyes 1940; Goldberg 1978; Slater 2001), *Curculio* (Planesium-Therapontigonus) and *Rudens* (Palaestra-Daemones). The same sort of narrative features in two Greek new comedies of Menander: the *Periceiromena* and the *Georgus*. See also Plaut. *Poen.* especially 103, 1296-1306 (with Franko 1995).

Ovid,¹³² repeatedly engages with themes of incest, especially in the final, elegiac third of the *libellus* as it is preserved.¹³³ Twelve poems out of the corpus' 116 feature incest or incestuous themes to varying degrees.¹³⁴ Catullus' contemporary, Cicero, regularly uses incest as invective,¹³⁵ especially in his legal speeches against Clodius Pulcher.¹³⁶

Thus, when Ovid was composing the *Metamorphoses*, his first public would already be imbued with cultural—if not legal—associations with incest; it is on these that he plays and it is from their discourses that he constructs his incest taboo.

¹³² See e.g. my pp. 131-3.

¹³³ The *Catullfrage* of the ordering of poems within the *libellus* is beyond the scope of this thesis; however, I am sympathetic to those who argue that the text as we have it is largely structured as Catullus intended. For an overview, see Skinner 2007.

¹³⁴ Catull. 59.1, 64.403-4, 67.19-30, 74.3, 78, 79, 88, 89, 90, 91.5-6, 95 (tangentially, through reference to Cinna's *Smyrna*), 111.4. See Watson 2006; see also Harrison 1996; Hickson-Hahn 1998, 11-19; Rankin 1976.

¹³⁵ See Geffken 1973, 21, 35-6; Hickson-Hahn 1998, 19-25.

¹³⁶ Cic. *Cael.* 32, 36, 38, 78, *Sest.* 16, 39, *Dom.* 92, *Mil.* 73, *Har.* 9, 27, 38, 39, 42, 59. Cicero also mentions Clodius' incest in other writings: *Att.* 2.1.5, *Fam.* 1.9.15, *Q. fr.* .2.3.2. Plutarch would later pick up on Cicero's comments and report them: *Cic.* 29.4-5, *Lucull.* 38.1, *Caes.* 10.5. See Watson 2006, 45.

1.4 – Bestiality

Bestiality refers to sexual relationships between humans and animals. There are numerous contiguous terms used in non-Classical scholarship, such as zoophilia, zooerasty, zoosexual and even zoosadism. However, bestiality is radically underexplored in Classical scholarship; to date,¹³⁷ Robson’s 1997 chapter ‘Bestiality and Bestial Rape in Greek Myth’ is the only other extended analysis of this theme,¹³⁸ although many others have examined specific instances in particular texts or visual sources.¹³⁹ Robson is mostly invested in tracing mythological bestiality to ritualistic roots: he posits a relationship between the coming-of-age rituals that young Greeks went through—such as the *Arcteia* at Brauron—during which they dressed and lived as animals for a period, and the myths in which gods and humans have sex while one or more party is in the form of an animal. His is a valuable discussion, but my primary concern is not seeking an aetiology for the stories in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* but rather in analysing how they figure in the wider framework of *nefas* or taboo.

An important distinction must initially be drawn between two types of bestiality from the ancient world: [1] ‘real’ bestiality and [2] mythological bestiality narratives. My use of the word ‘real’ describes two orders of ‘realness’, both in terms of the realness of the non-human animals in this type of bestiality and the fact that such relationships are not explicitly mythological. There is a third, in-between, category of realness, which describes accusations of bestiality used to blacken the character of an individual—mythical or mundane—where the accuracy of the allegation is less the

¹³⁷ Malheiro Magalhães 2022 will be published after the submission of this thesis and could not be consulted.

¹³⁸ Robson 1997, 65: “there has been no literature on the subject of bestiality in Greek myth”. See also Hindermann 2011 and Haskins 2014, 31, both of whom confirm that Robson’s chapter was still the only sustained piece at the time of their articles.

¹³⁹ E.g. Hindermann 2011; Korhonen 2012; Williams 2013; Haskins 2014; Fisher & Langlands 2015; Franco 2017.

point than its invective power to defame;¹⁴⁰ such invective power stems from the taboo on bestiality.

‘Real’ human/non-human-animal¹⁴¹ relations are widespread and well attested in Roman literature of the first century CE onwards, especially in the writings of Pliny the Elder, Aelian and Plutarch.¹⁴² From these three authors and several others, we receive several dozen stories in which humans and animals partake in sexual—and even romantic—relationships,¹⁴³ which represent a different order of relationship to most of the mythological stories in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* because the animals in them are not temporarily metamorphosed gods. However, these narratives are not without similarity to Ovid’s mythical bestiality. Such accounts of ‘real’ bestiality are also attested from Roman visual and material evidence, such as the famous statue of *Pan and a She-Goat* found at Herculaneum in 1752,¹⁴⁴ and the wide array of Roman oil lamps which depict sex scenes between human women and male animals.¹⁴⁵

1.4.1 – What Is an Animal?

The Pan statue provokes an important question: where are the boundaries between the anthropomorphic and the zoomorphic? Almost all interactions that could be described as ‘bestiality’ in Ovid’s poem feature a human girl and a male god, transformed into

¹⁴⁰ See especially the Inverse Birth Motif, in which an individual is accused—by implication—of being the product of bestial sex; e.g. E. *Bacch.* 987-90, Catull. 64.155-7 and, especially, Ov. *Met.* 8.120-5. For a fuller catalogue, see Pease 1935, 314–19. See my pp. 287-8.

¹⁴¹ This terminology is the most accurate, as it recognises that humans are animals. However, the language is unwieldy, and henceforth, I use ‘human-animal’ to denote ‘human/non-human-animal’.

¹⁴² E.g. Plin. *Nat.* 2.26, 8.13, 8.14, 8.61, 9.24, 9.27; Plin. *Ep.* 9.33; Ael. *NA* 1.37, 2.6, 3.46, 6.15, 6.63, 7.39, 8.10; Plut. *Soll. anim.* 972D-F, 984E. See now Hindermann 2011; Korhonen 2012; Williams 2013.

¹⁴³ Williams 2013, 234–9 catalogues the instances of these human-animal relationships.

¹⁴⁴ Whether an interaction between Pan and a she-goat can technically be called bestiality depends on the extent of Pan’s humanity; I discuss such cases below. Nevertheless, the statue is an erotic depiction of sex between an animal and a humanoid figure. The statue was originally located in a semi-public space, towards the south-east of the large pool in the Villa of the Papyri (see Barrow 2018, 155). For scholarship on this statue, see Neudecker 1988, 154; Marquardt 1995, 207–12; Stähli 1999, 389–93; Mattusch & Lie 2005, 155–6; Fisher & Langlands 2015; Barrow 2018.

¹⁴⁵ For these lamps, see Bailey 1980, 70–1; Johns 1982, 110–11.

an animalistic form, meaning that there are very few interactions posed between humans and ‘actual’ animals. Indeed, this dynamic is the norm for bestiality in mythological literature more broadly and Robson has suggested that there are three main categories of bestiality in ancient mythographic literature: [1] a god in the guise of an animal rapes a human girl; [2] a god rapes a girl who is in the guise of an animal and [3] a god, disguised as an animal, rapes a girl, also disguised as an animal.¹⁴⁶ The major exception in mythology is perhaps ancient bestiality’s most famous representative, Pasiphaë, who lusts after a ‘real’ bull, not a god in the guise of a bull (see §2.2); one could also compare Cyparissus’ love for a stag in Book 10 of the *Metamorphoses*, to which I return in §6.1.

‘Animal’, for the purposes of this thesis, is a category describing external appearance and not an ontological state;¹⁴⁷ bestiality becomes, then, a transgression dependent on the aesthetics of sexual union, regardless of whether either—or both—participant is ‘really’ a human or god underneath. Therefore, the Jupiter-bull which Europa desires (2.858-67) is, aesthetically, as much an animal as the bull that impregnates Pasiphaë (*Met.* 8.155-8, 9.735-40).

There is also an issue of human-animal hybrids, such as the Pan in the statue referenced above: are hybrids to be counted as humans or animals?¹⁴⁸ There is only one instance in the *Metamorphoses* where this issue rears its head:¹⁴⁹ the case of Jupiter and Antiope, which features as part of Arachne’s tapestry. Jupiter approaches

¹⁴⁶ Robson 1997, 74. At pages 74-5, Robson catalogues examples of these three types and, at 83-9, he briefly narrates each myth, giving a list of its major testimonia in classical literature.

¹⁴⁷ Plenty of characters in the *Metamorphoses* are ontologically animalistic (e.g. Lycaon at 1.163-252) but sex with them pre-metamorphosis would not be aesthetically bestial.

¹⁴⁸ Barrow 2018, 153 discusses the numerous ways that Pan transgresses various boundaries: e.g. zoomorphic vs. anthropomorphic, human vs. divine. For more on Pan’s ‘mixanthropy’ and the significance of his caprinity, see Aston 2011, 109-20, especially 115-20.

¹⁴⁹ Although, cf. my comments about Io at §6.2.2.

and rapes Antiope—a human girl—in the form of a satyr (*addidit ut satyri celatus imagine pulchram / Iuppiter implerit gemino Nycteida fetu*, 6.110-11), half man, half goat.¹⁵⁰ It seems to me that the context informs how ‘bestial’ Jupiter’s satyric costume is; as I discuss later in this thesis (§5), the Arachne episode constitutes the most concentrated treatment of bestiality, and it is within this context that Ovid has placed this reference to Jupiter and Antiope. I suggest, therefore, that we should interpret this satyr as a participant in bestiality. There is a similar issue in Book 12 of the *Metamorphoses*. Cyllarus and Hylonome are two centaurs in love, and the way that Ovid describes them, especially Cyllarus, is highly sexualised (12.393-418). This is a different category of desire to bestiality, as it is between two creatures of the same species, but the aesthetics of it focus a zoophilic gaze in ascriptions such as *nec equi mendosa sub illo / deteriorque viro facies; .../ sic tergum sessile, sic sunt / pectora celsa toris* (12.399-402). As readers, we are encouraged to look upon not only Cyllarus’ attractive human features (hair, beard, neck, arms, torso), but also his distinctly equine features with an eroticising eye. In both instances of zoophilic hybrids—although only the first can truly be described as bestiality—the animalistic aspect of the hybrid compels a reader to downplay those features which might humanise the hybrid.

¹⁵⁰ Whether Ovid originates the presentation of Jupiter as a satyr in this myth is debatable. The only pre-Ovidian version which could potentially hint at bestiality is Euripides’ *Antiope*, and even then, this interpretation is based on a textual conjecture. Fragment 210 of the lost tragedy reads οὐδὲ γὰρ λάθρα δοκῶ / θηρὸς κακούργου σχήματ’ ἐκμιμούμενον / σοὶ Ζῆν’ ἐξ εὐνήν ὥσπερ ἄνθρωπον μολεῖν. The reading of θηρὸς in the second line is Schmidt’s (1886, 451–2), replacing Nauck 1856, 335’s φωτός. Nauck was unconvinced and in the second edition preserved φωτός over θηρὸς (1889, 423), although he notes Schmidt’s emendation. Later, Erbse proposed φηρὸς in place of θηρὸς or φωτός (see Mette 1981, 76), which pushes Jupiter’s satyric form even harder. Authors after Ovid standardly depict Jupiter as a satyr in this scene. This is clearest in Cephalion (*BNJ* 93 fr. 5), who claims Euripides wrote of a satyr (ὁ γὰρ σοφώτατος Εὐριπίδης ποιητικῶς ἐξέθετο δράμα, ὡς ὅτι ὁ Ζεὺς εἰς σάτυρον μεταβληθεὶς ἐφθειρε τὴν Ἀντιόπην) but is also present in Dracont. *Rom.* 2.24, Σ A.R. 4.1090 and *Aegr. Perd.* 47.

1.4.2 – Bestiality vs. Zoophilia: The Language of Loving Animals

So far, I have largely used ‘bestiality’ to denote the sorts of human-animal relationships which feature in this thesis; however, a range of terms prevail in the existing scholarly literature. Throughout this thesis, I use only bestiality and zoophilia, and consider these two words to have distinct meanings. This sort of terminology is the preserve of legal and psychiatric academic writing,¹⁵¹ as these are the primary angles from which bestiality is studied. Therefore, some of the concerns of sociological studies into the contemporary world—such as self-identification as a ‘zoo’,¹⁵² or how zoophilic tendencies relate to mental illness—¹⁵³ do not apply to the ancient world.¹⁵⁴ Bestiality is a neutral term, describing the act of human-animal sex, without necessarily indicating a directionality of desire. It can therefore be applied productively to the sorts of relationships which make up the majority of the bestiality narratives in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, i.e. the scenes in Arachne’s tapestry.

The term ‘zoophilia’ was first used in the late 19th century by Krafft-Ebing,¹⁵⁵ and now describes a non-specific attraction, directed from humans, towards animals.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, zoophilia is an accurate description of only very few of the human-animal sexual encounters as presented in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, those which will be discussed in Chapter 6 (i.e. Cyparissus, Io and Europa). There is an issue of personal

¹⁵¹ See for instance, Ranger & Fedoroff 2014, 421: “zoophilia is a psychiatric condition, whereas bestiality is a legal term”.

¹⁵² ‘Zoo’ is a term favoured by those who self-identify with their attraction to animals; see Ranger & Fedoroff 2014, 422.

¹⁵³ According to the *DSM-V*, zoophilia is an example of an ‘other specified paraphilic disorder’ (American Psychiatric Association 2013, 705, disorder 302.89) and its treatment as a medical condition is standard in modern psychiatry.

¹⁵⁴ For some recent legal and psychiatric studies on zoophilia in the modern world, see Miletski 2000; Aggrawal 2011; Holoyda & Newman 2014; Ranger & Fedoroff 2014.

¹⁵⁵ Krafft-Ebing 1965, 365-7. Krafft-Ebing also used ‘zoerasty’ (1965, 704-5) to describe cases of zoophilia which were, to his mind, pathological in nature.

¹⁵⁶ See Aggrawal 2011, 77 for a categorisation of the ‘types’ of zoophiles based on his own research into the types of necrophiles (Aggrawal 2009).

agency at the heart of using a term like ‘zoophilia’. Almost all of the relationships which I will place under this heading are unique instances of zoophilic desire in the human or god’s life (i.e. zoophilia does not seem to be a repeated behavioural pattern),¹⁵⁷ so I will avoid talking of characters like Pasiphaë as ‘zoophiles’ and will instead describe their desires as ‘zoophilic’.

1.4.3 – Pasiphaëism and the Ontology of Bestiality

I have yet to identify whether the category ‘bestiality’ had any meaning to the Romans themselves. As with incest, the category is not defined by law,¹⁵⁸ and there exists no Latin—or Greek—word which directly connotes our sense of bestiality.¹⁵⁹ It is definable by the same sort of loose terminology pertaining to sexual misdemeanour as incest:¹⁶⁰ for instance, the same passage of Aristophanes cited earlier in this chapter (ὃ Κρητικὰς μὲν συλλέγων μονωδίας / γάμους δ’ ἀνοσίους εἰσφέρων εἰς τὴν τέχνην; *Ra.* 849-50) may use γάμος ἀνόσιος to refer as much to bestiality (i.e. the depiction of Pasiphaë in Euripides’ fragmentary *Cretes*; see Appendix) as to incest (i.e. Canace and Macareus in his largely lost *Aeolus*).¹⁶¹

However, I argue that, although the Romans had no simple, single term by which they could connote bestiality, the figure of Pasiphaë functions as a totemic figure for the taboo in much the same way as Oedipus is the archetypal practitioner of incest, becoming, eventually, the totemic figure for Freud’s notorious ‘Oedipus complex’. As I argue in Chapter 2, Pasiphaë, like Oedipus, operates as a spectrally present absence

¹⁵⁷ Jupiter engages in several sexual relationships in which bestiality is at play, but only one partner (Io) is explicitly said to be attractive to him in a zoomorphic form.

¹⁵⁸ Lang 2009, 47-9.

¹⁵⁹ Hindermann 2011, 3.

¹⁶⁰ See, for instance, Ovid’s reference to Pasiphaë, where her union with the bull is simply an *opprobrium* and *foedum ... adulterium* (*Met.* 8.155-6); at *Her.* 4.57, the language of *crimen* is used of Pasiphaë’s offspring, the Minotaur.

¹⁶¹ On the valences of these lines, see Dover 1993, 298-9.

throughout the *Metamorphoses*, whose non-appearance in the epic is striking, especially given Ovid’s developed treatment of her at *Ars am.* 1.289-326.¹⁶² Indeed, Hindermann calls Pasiphaë the “„Ahnherrin“ der Zoophilie”,¹⁶³ and it is this totemic, progenitive aspect of the Pasiphaë figure which I wish to develop here.¹⁶⁴ In Book 10 of his *Metmorphoses*, Apuleius presents a graphic sex scene between a *matrona* and the novel’s protagonist,¹⁶⁵ Lucius, who is, at that point, metamorphosed into a donkey (although his human identity is unknown to his bedfellow). The sex scene is preceded by the arousing of the *matrona*’s interest:

fuit in illo conventiculo matrona quaedam pollens et opulens. quae more ceterorum visum meum mercata ac dehinc multiformibus ludicris delectata per admirationem adsiduam paulatim in admirabilem mei cupidinem incidit; nec ullam vaesanae libidini medelam capiens **ad instar asinariae Pasiphaae** complexus meos ardentem expectabat.

In that little gathering, there was a certain *matrona*, who was wealthy and influential. Who, having paid to catch a glimpse of me in the same way as the rest of them, and having taken pleasure in my various performances, through her constant adoration of me, little by little, fell into a wondrous desire for me; and taking no cure for her insane lust, she passionately awaited my embrace, **in the fashion of an ass-loving Pasiphaë.**

The phrase *ad instar asinariae Pasiphaae* indicates that it was possible—for Apuleius at least—to conceive of the *instar Pasiphaae* as something attributable to quite

¹⁶² See §2.2: Ovid’s Pasiphaë narrative in the *Ars amatoria* should not be taken as evidence that he considered the story exhausted.

¹⁶³ Hindermann 2011, 23.

¹⁶⁴ See the widespread appearance of Pasiphaë in visual culture: Alexandridis 2017.

¹⁶⁵ The graphicness of the scene depends on whether one is to include the so-called *spurcum additamentum* in Apuleius’ narrative. The current *opinio communis* is that the passage is Mediaeval and cannot be Apuleian; see Zimmermann 2000, 433-9; Hunink 2006. The content of Apul. *Met.* 10.21-22 is sufficiently graphic without enhancement by the *spurcum additamentum*.

different circumstances. In Lucius' story, the animal is a donkey, not a bull; the woman is a *matrona*, not a queen; the intercourse takes place in the comforting environs of an urbane bedroom (Apul. *Met.* 10.20), not outside in a field; the act is (ostensibly) consensual and unprovoked by divine intervention, not spurred on by a god's whim. So then, the only feature shared between Apuleius' *matrona* and Pasiphaë is their taboo desire for penetrative sex with an animal; Apuleius must add a qualifying adjective (*asinarius*) to outline the differences, but the nature and directionality of desire is understood from *instar Pasiphaae*.

It is not only in Apuleius that such generalising comments are made through the figure of Pasiphaë. In Martial too, she figures as a sort of totem:¹⁶⁶

iunctam Pasiphaen Dictaeo credite tauro:

vidimus, accepit fabula prisca fidem.

nec se miretur, Caesar, longaeva vetustas:

quidquid fama canit, praestat harena tibi.

Believe that Pasiphaë was joined to the Cretan bull:

We have seen it; the old story has some weight.

And, so that venerable antiquity does not boast about itself, Caesar,

Whatever gossip sings of, the arena reproduces for you

As with the case of Apuleius' *matrona*, Martial's Pasiphaë stands as an emblem for bestiality. The myth of Pasiphaë had become so popular by Martial's lifetime that it was a regular feature of Roman dramatic arts, such as mime,¹⁶⁷ so its inclusion in the *Liber Spectaculorum* is unsurprising. However, Martial's poem seems to imply that actual bestial sex, not simply an acted facsimile of it, was portrayed in the arena, which

¹⁶⁶ Mart. *Spect.* 5.

¹⁶⁷ See Coleman 2006, 62-4. See also Coleman 1990, 63-4.

goes beyond the implication of previous literary presentations.¹⁶⁸ Martial's claim that the contemporary performance of the Pasiphaë myth proved the *fides* of the *fabula prisca* almost suggests a reification of the mythological scene, bringing it firmly into the quotidian world of Domitianic Rome. In so doing, through her performance of the myth of Pasiphaë and the bull on stage, the unnamed woman embodies and becomes Pasiphaë through recreating the act which defines what I term Pasiphaëism.

Pasiphaëism is a word that would be unrecognisable to the Romans, but it is my attempt to capture what seems to me to be a theoretical reality in Latin literature: the definition of bestiality as something pertaining thematically to Pasiphaë. Just as we, today, may call something tangentially incestuous 'Oedipal', even if the particulars of the scenario do not describe a son killing his father and marrying his mother ahead of a dramatic self-blinding,¹⁶⁹ so I argue the Romans could conceive of bestiality as Pasiphaëism.

¹⁶⁸ Nero apparently performed *pyrrhicae*, which incorporated the Pasiphaë myth (see Suet. *Ner.* 12.2). Lucilius may cryptically allude to sexual bovine arena punishments in the veiled threat τί ποῖ τὰ ὄρα (AP (Lucill.) 11.160); see Nisbet 2003, 56.

¹⁶⁹ For but one instance, see the title and content of Devlin 2005: "acting out the Oedipal wish", which describes relationships between fathers and daughters in twentieth-century America, despite the fact that a different psychoanalytic term, the Electra Complex (see Jung 1915, 69), would be more apt.

2 – Spectres of the Past

In Chapter 1 (§1.3.4), I briefly outlined the literary history of incest, in order to establish the sort of cultural weight it would carry for Ovid's first, Augustan audience; in this chapter, I demonstrate how two figures from that literary history—Oedipus and Pasiphaë—are intertextually present in the *Metamorphoses*, precisely because of their absence.¹⁷⁰ Neither of these figures receives a full treatment in the *Metamorphoses*—although Pasiphaë can be found in Ovid's other works—yet they pervade it as spectral absent presences whose impact on the text is deeply felt.

That Ovid omits these mythological narratives from the *Metamorphoses* would not be an interesting observation, if it were not for the fact that these two figures are also, I suggest, totemically and paradigmatically representative of their respective taboos: incest and bestiality. The question therefore arises of why Ovid, who produces versions of far more obscure myths of incest and bestiality, chooses not to engage with Oedipus and Pasiphaë more directly or prominently. It is not even difficult to imagine where in the *Metamorphoses* these narratives might neatly fit: Oedipus would be perfectly at home in the early, Theban narratives of Books 3 and 4, and Pasiphaë could slot in (un?)comfortably amid the Cretan stories at the beginning of Book 8.

The modes of Oedipus' and Pasiphaë's spectrality are slightly different, so I treat them separately, but the overall effect is much the same for both. For Oedipus, my approach is more traditionally intertextual: I explore the ways in which Ovid's Theban cycle (Book 3 and half of Book 4) interacts with matters Oedipal on several levels. I assess how two themes from Attic—principally Sophoclean—tragedy (vision and travel)

¹⁷⁰ N.b. Pasiphaë and Oedipus are reasonably close relations (fourth cousins by marriage); the connection between their more closely related ancestors—Europa and Cadmus—is stressed by Ovid (*Met.* 3.1-5).

resonate throughout Ovid’s ‘Thebaid’, recreating Oedipal dynamics of exile and blindness in ways which fill the conspicuous gap left by Ovid’s omission of a typical Oedipus narrative. Finally, I show, particularly in my discussion of Theban delusion, how Ovid encourages readers to detect and interpret the spectral Oedipus’ absent presence in the *Metamorphoses* by following metapoetic signs in the narrative texture. In following these *signa* correctly, Ovid’s readers are contrasted with characters within the poem, such as Semele and Pyramus, who are unsuccessful interpreters of signs, as they fail to follow the clues presented to them; Semele, Pyramus *et al.* are examples of how not to read Ovid’s *carmen perpetuum*. In my somewhat different exploration of Pasiphaë, I demonstrate the ways in which, in the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid draws on the version of Pasiphaë he had already narrated in the *Ars amatoria*. In particular, I show how the Pasiphaë of the *Metamorphoses* lays just below the narrative surface, breaking through at ‘narrative weak-points’, created by moments of tension and the nexus of interrelated key concepts, such as monstrosity, *fama* and Crete. I also demonstrate how Pasiphaë haunts a particular type of Ovidian, mostly female, character: the *furiosa*. Having argued that Pasiphaë is totemic for Ovidian female *furor*, I illustrate how she, particularly in the form established in the famous monologue from Euripides’ *Cretes*, spectrally possesses the *furiosae* of the *Metamorphoses*.

2.1 – The Spectre of Oedipus

iterum vivere atque iterum mori

945

liceat, renasci semper ut totiens nova

supplicia pendas.¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ Sen. *Oed.* 945-7.

You must live again and die again,

945

Repeatedly reborn to pay new penalties

Over and over.

Oedipus is dead, and Ovid has killed him. Yet, ghosts walk in the *Metamorphoses*, and Oedipus is no stranger to being a νέκυν ἔνερθεν (E. *Ph.* 1544; see below) who has some presence still in literature. Oedipus has become an archetype for many things—Thebes, incest, tragedy itself—but my primary concern in this section is Oedipus' relation to spectrality and the ways in which he haunts Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, despite his absence. In the tragic tradition at Athens, Oedipus haunts more extant plays than any other single character;¹⁷² his notoriety and its inextricable connection to tragedy as a genre has been discussed since ancient times,¹⁷³ as may be seen in this fragment from the *Poesis* of the fourth-century BCE comedian, Antiphanes:¹⁷⁴

μακάριόν ἐστιν ἡ τραγωδία

ποίημα κατὰ πάντ', εἶ γε πρῶτον οἱ λόγοι

ὑπὸ τῶν θεατῶν εἰσιν ἐγνωρισμένοι,

πρὶν καὶ τιν' εἰπεῖν ὥσθ' ὑπομῆσαι μόνον

δεῖ τὸν ποιητήν. Οἰδίπουν γὰρ † φῶ

5

τὰ δ' ἄλλα πάντ' ἴσασιν· ὁ πατήρ Λάιος,

μήτηρ Ἰοκάστη, θυγατέρες, παῖδες τίνες,

τί πείσεθ' οὗτος, τί πεποίκεν.

¹⁷² Oedipus' principal drama—i.e. his realisation of his twin crimes of incest and patricide—is the plot of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*. However, the tragic consequences of this moment haunt also Sophocles' *Oedipus Coloneus* and *Antigone*, Aeschylus' *Septem contra Thebas* and Euripides' *Phoenissae*, *Supplices* and *Bacchae* (for Oedipus' presence in this last play, see Zeitlin 1990, 135–9). Numerous non-extant or fragmentary Attic tragedies staged or probably staged Oedipal dramas: e.g. Aeschylus' *Oedipus*, *Epigoni* and *Sphinx*, Sophocles' *Epigoni*, Euripides' *Oedipus*, *Antigone*; see also Burian 2009, 100–1 for other Attic *Oedipi*.

¹⁷³ E.g. S. *OT* is, for Aristotle in the *Poetics*, the Attic tragedy *par excellence*.

¹⁷⁴ Antiph. *Poesis* fr. 189.1–8.

Tragedy is a blessed genre of poetry

In every respect, indeed the plots are

Already known to their audience,

Even before someone gives them voice: the poet need only

Make mention. For, if I say ‘Oedipus’

5

The audience know all the rest: Laius, his father,

Jocasta, his mother, his daughters, some sons,

What he is going to suffer, what he already has.

As Antiphanes suggests, Oedipus is the *primo uomo* of tragedy:¹⁷⁵ the first figure to appear in his catalogue, both in importance and order. As Antiphanes also elucidates, he is principally associated with his family and the associated familial misdeeds of the House of Laius.¹⁷⁶ Indeed, as Zeitlin has shown, Laius, Oedipus and the tribulations of Oedipus’ children (especially Antigone, Eteocles and Polynices) comprised the thematic—if not chronological—central episode in the three narrative units which make up Theban mytho-history on the Attic stage;¹⁷⁷ the other two are Cadmus’ pursuit of his sister, Europa, and founding of Thebes and the circumstances surrounding Semele’s pregnancy with Bacchus and the god’s later return to Thebes and subsequent treatment at the hands of Pentheus.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Cf. e.g. “Oedipus is the paradigm of the tragic man” (Zeitlin 1990, 144); “Oedipus, that paradigm of the Theban tragic man” (Gildenhard & Zissos 2000, 140). For the pre-tragic versions of the Oedipus myth, see Markantonatos 2012, 41–52.

¹⁷⁶ This must be a tragic association; what is known of the pre-tragic epic, *Oedipodia*, suggests that Oedipus was sometimes more associated with the Sphinx, and may not even have slept with Jocasta (see the *Oedipodia*’s *Nachleben* in Paus. 9.5.10 and Ps.-Apollod. 3.55). Some pre-tragic texts recount the incest narrative: Hom. *Od.* 11.271–280. Oedipus’ interaction with the Sphinx was also a common concern of early Latin writings; see Edmunds 2006, 57.

¹⁷⁷ Establishing chronology in mythology is a fool’s errand, but Cadmus, as founder, would have been Thebes’ first king, followed by his grandson, Pentheus (Ps.-Apollod. 3.36: Πενθεὺς δὲ γεννηθεὶς ἐξ Ἀγαυῆς Ἐχίονι, παρὰ Κάδμου εἰληφώς τὴν βασιλείαν). After a series of other kings (see Ps.-Apollod. 3.40–48), Cadmus’ great-grandson, Laius ruled, then his son, Oedipus. Thus the ‘House-of-Laius-episode’ in Theban mytho-history would have been, chronologically, the final part; this chronology would not, of course, prevent Ovid from addressing the Labdacids, given the ways in which Ovid uses time, as Janan 2009, 159 reminds us.

¹⁷⁸ Zeitlin 1990, *passim*.

Oedipus, then, is a very important figure in Attic tragedy; how do I justify my claim that Ovid has killed him? Oedipus is almost wholly absent from the narrative of the *Metamorphoses*—at least at a first impression—and makes no appearance within Books 3 and 4. There are two references to him in the text: a brief mention in Cephalus’ story about the Teumessian Fox (*carmina Laiades non intellecta priorum / solverat ingeniis*);¹⁷⁹ and the epithet applied to Thebes by Pythagoras: (*Oedipodioniae quid sunt, nisi nomina, Thebae*).¹⁸⁰ Neither reference mentions Oedipus’ most famous action:¹⁸¹ his incest with Jocasta. Both references are also tangential, avoiding identifying Oedipus by name: an adjective applied to Thebes’ walls (*Oedipodioniae*) and a patronymic which focuses attention on Oedipus’ father, not himself (*Laiades*). Indeed, Cephalus’ reference is extremely allusive: the patronymic *Laiades* has no parallel in Latin literature (though what it signifies is clear enough) and Cephalus’ use of *carmen* to mean ‘riddle’ is an Ovidian invention, whose meaning is only reserved for the Theban Sphinx’ riddle in later literature.¹⁸² Despite these two allusions, Oedipus *qua* Oedipus does not appear on-stage during the *Metamorphoses*.¹⁸³

Indeed, Oedipus does not appear much in contemporary literature;¹⁸⁴ “between Varro and Seneca [...] references to the Labdacid myth are few”.¹⁸⁵ Moreover, perhaps of greater significance than a quantitative lack of references to Oedipus is the fact that

¹⁷⁹ Ov. *Met.* 7.759-60.

¹⁸⁰ Ov. *Met.* 15.429. See also the passing reference to Polyneices and Eteocles at *Met.* 9.405: *fientque pares in vulnere fratres*. See Hardie 1990, 225 for Ovid’s subtle use of the three Theban civil wars, in particular through use of the word *vulnus* (*Met.* 3.123, *Tr.* 2.319; cf. the same word of the Colchian civil war at *Met.* 7.141-2).

¹⁸¹ Note that Antiphanes’ comments about Oedipus (n. 174) list his family interactions as the primary associations an audience might make, not his intellect or solving of the Sphinx’ riddle.

¹⁸² Bömer 1976b, 385; see Sen. *Oed.* 101-2.

¹⁸³ Ovid makes a brief allusion to Oedipus as a patricide at *Tr.* 1.1.114 and Oedipus is presumably the referent of *Ib.* 259-60: *ne plus aspicias quam quem sua filia rexit, / expertus scelus est cuius uterque parens* (see Gordon 1992, 104-5).

¹⁸⁴ For a discussion of all known ancient Latin *Oedipi*, see Edmunds 2006, 57-64 and Boyle 2012, liii-iv; as Edmunds demonstrates, there were a few Republican Oedipus narratives. For Roman visual depictions of Oedipus, see Boyle 2012, liv.

¹⁸⁵ Edmunds 2006, 59.

those references which are preserved—in quotation or in *testimonia*—are in obscure, or possibly non-existent, authors and texts; Oedipus’ is clearly not a narrative which was popular with an Augustan readership. This lack of *Oedipi* has led some commentators to go as far as suggesting that there was something fundamentally un-Roman about the myth, even as they outline precisely those features that make the myth ripe for Ovidian invention:¹⁸⁶

Das griechische Spiel von Wahrheit und Schein, von Erkennen und Nichterkennen war nicht geeignet, ein Gefäß für römische Gehalte abzugeben. Auch der Oedipus-Mythos als solcher stand den Römern fern.

The Greek game of truth and illusion, of perception and non-perception was not well suited to be a vessel for Roman content. Thus, even the Oedipus-myth was alien to the Romans.

From Suetonius, we learn that Julius Caesar had written a tragedy entitled *Oedipus*, but that Augustus later suppressed its publication (*Jul.* 56.7). Suetonius does not explain why the emperor had Caesar’s *Oedipus* repressed—given that it is mentioned in the same breath as two apparently uncontroversial works (one about Hercules and one which was a collection of aphorisms), it was probably not because of its subject matter—but almost no other Oedipus narratives survive from the period of Augustus’ reign.¹⁸⁷ There were two *Thebaid*s,¹⁸⁸ written by ‘Ponticus’¹⁸⁹ and ‘Lynceus’,¹⁹⁰ which

¹⁸⁶ Lefèvre 2014, 349.

¹⁸⁷ It is tempting, though perhaps foolhardy, to ascribe importance to the lack of Augustan *Oedipi*. In an age of—often incestuous—dynastic marriage-politics, perhaps the story of an incestuous ruler was distasteful; perhaps, however, the story was simply not in vogue. Leo 1878, 158 suggests that the lack of Augustan *Oedipi* is due to a Roman revulsion for *incesta conubia*.

¹⁸⁸ Given that ‘Ponticus’ is clearly an epicist and that ‘Lynceus’ may be a pseudonym for Lucius Varius Rufus (see n. 190), a tragedian, these two *Thebaid*s were plausibly of different genres. Varius is most closely associated with tragedy, having written a popular *Atreus*; Horace suggests he was also an epicist (*S.* 1.10.43) and panegyricist (*Carm.* 1.6), but his involvement in these genres has left fewer traces.

¹⁸⁹ Prop. 1.7.1-2, 16-17. ‘Ponticus’ is probably a pseudonym and the *Thebaid* referenced may not have actually existed; see Heslin 2011, especially 53-4.

¹⁹⁰ Prop. 2.34.33-46. ‘Lynceus’ is almost definitely a pseudonym, probably for Lucius Varius Rufus; see Cairns 2006, 296–300 for the identification and bibliography.

do not survive, but which may have told the story of Oedipus' incest;¹⁹¹ Varro had also written an *Oedipothyestes* at the end of the Republic, of which a single line survives,¹⁹² but whose focus must have been the shocking crimes of Oedipus and comparing them to the cannibalism of Thyestes.¹⁹³ In terms of surviving Augustan literature,¹⁹⁴ Oedipus' appearances are limited to four Ovidian cameos: *Met.* 7.759-60, 15.429; *Tr.* 1.1.114 and *Ib.* 259-60.

Thus, to return to Zeitlin's diagnosis of the tripartite structure of tragic Theban myths, it becomes notable that, although Ovid pays close attention to the Cadmean founding of Thebes (*Met.* 3.1-137),¹⁹⁵ and to Bacchus' homecoming (3.253-315, 511-733), he omits the Oedipal episode.¹⁹⁶ Gildenhard and Zissos have demonstrated how Ovid's Narcissus episode (*Met.* 3.339-510), itself an odd bedfellow to the rest of the Theban mythology in these books,¹⁹⁷ resonates so much with Oedipal themes and with the narrative contours of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* that it conspicuously takes the place of an Oedipus narrative, inverting Sophocles' grander narratives of perverted passion which causes political strife—Oedipus' incest—in favour of private, literally introverted passion, which operates on the microcosm of the individual—Narcissus' self-love.¹⁹⁸ Indeed, they are not the only scholars to have noticed this glaring omission by Ovid; Loewenstein, Hardie, Janan and Giusti also comment on the absent presence

¹⁹¹ Notably Propertius' discussion of both Ponticus and Lynceus' *Thebais* focuses entirely on their presentation of the Theban civil war: Oedipus and Jocasta do not feature.

¹⁹² Var. *Men.* fr. 347: *per idem tempus Oedipus Athenas exul venire dicebatur, qui consolaret.*

¹⁹³ Edmunds 2006, 59.

¹⁹⁴ A Propertian simile features Jocasta—unnamed—interceding between Polynices and Eteocles (2.9.49-50), but not Oedipus himself. Hyginus mentions Oedipus several times (*Fab.* 67-70A, 76, 242, 243.8, 253, 254.1), but he is probably post-Ovidian (see n. 587).

¹⁹⁵ For Ovid's use of sources in the *Thebaid*, see Fabre-Serris 2011.

¹⁹⁶ In focusing on Cadmus' family but stressing the ways in which they mirror some of the Labacids' crimes, Ovid's depiction of Cadmean Thebes invokes Oedipal Thebes; see Janan 2009, 58–59.

¹⁹⁷ E.g. Otis 1970, 130 calling the Echo-Narcissus episode "extraneous" to the other Theban narratives; see also Gildenhard & Zissos 2000, 129.

¹⁹⁸ Gildenhard & Zissos 2000, especially 133.

of Oedipus,¹⁹⁹ though, like Gildenhard and Zissos, their focus is principally on how the Sophoclean Oedipus haunts specifically the tale of Narcissus. I build on these analyses, suggesting that Oedipus' spectral presence may be felt more widely in Ovid's Theban narratives through two interrelating motifs:²⁰⁰ first in his role as an archetypal and eternal exile, then in Ovid's emphasis in Books 3 and 4 on themes of sight and blindness.²⁰¹

2.1.1 – Oedipus Errans

τί μ', ὦ παρθένε, βακτρεύμασι τυφλοῦ	
ποδός ἐξάγαγες ἐς φῶς	1540
λεχήρη σκοτίων ἐκ θαλάμων οἰκ-	
τροτάτοισιν δακρύοισιν,	
πολὶν αἰθεροφαῆς εἶδωλον ἦ	
νέκυν ἔνερθεν ἦ	
πτανὸν ὄνειρον; ²⁰²	1545
Why, daughter, have you led bed-bound me	
With a cane for my blind feet,	1540
Out from the shadows of my chamber	
And into the light with your most wretched tears,	
Me, a clear and airy spectre or	

¹⁹⁹ Giusti 2018b, 43; Hardie 1988, 86, 2002, 164; Janan 2009, especially 156-84; Loewenstein 1984, 33-56.

²⁰⁰ The motifs of blindness and wandering are inherently interdependent, and occasionally concurrent; see, for instance, Oedipus' cameo in the *Ibis*, where he appears in a catalogue of blind characters, many of whom are led through their wandering by assistants (*Ib.* 259-65). Both motifs are also ubiquitous—and much more explicit—in Seneca's *Oedipus*, with which I do not deal here at length because of its later date; indeed, Ovid make mark an intermediary between these tropes' emergence in Attic tragedy and hyper-development in Senecan tragedy.

²⁰¹ These interlocking motifs could reflect folk etymologies of Oedipus' name: οἶδα—not etymologically sound, but often played on; see Goldhill 1986, 217-19; Murray 1997, 8—and πούς. He is the (un)seeing footman.

²⁰² E. *Ph.* 1539-45.

A dead man from down below or

A winged dream?

1545

So says Oedipus to his daughter, Antigone, after she has called him out from his palace-prison to witness the recently deceased corpses of his sons and wife. These are his first words in Euripides' *Phoenissae* and they evoke the facet of Oedipus' characterisation with which I am concerned in this section: Oedipus as a spectral exile, always moving and never settling in a single place.²⁰³ In the *Phoenissae*, Oedipus has been locked in the palace by his sons, Eteocles and Polynices, to hide the shame of his crimes, causing him to cast curses down on them (63-8). As he emerges towards the end of the play, he considers his own reality, deliberating whether he could be some unreal phantom rather than a living human.²⁰⁴ I propose that we read Oedipus as he describes himself: a πολὺν αἰθεροφαῆς εἶδωλον who haunts Ovid's *Metamorphoses* spectrally. I explore the spectral Oedipus through the ways in which his exilic character is divided between the exiles of Ovid's Thebaid (Books 3 and 4) in a sort of literary παραγμός, which renders the Ovidian Oedipus ubiquitous, but hidden.

Exile is comfortably at home within the narrative contours of the *Metamorphoses*. Throughout the epic, multiple characters embark on exiles,²⁰⁵ whether voluntary or forced,²⁰⁶ in configurations which eerily conjure Ovid's own exile to Tomis.²⁰⁷ Indeed, exile features not only on the level of narrative, but permeates the narration and

²⁰³ See Zeitlin 1990, 132 calls Oedipus' life "a search for a home—or more precisely, a place where he might be at home, where he might truly belong"; see also Shields 1961, 72 n. 21. Notions of wandering pervade Sophocles' Oedipus, both on levels of plot and imagery: see, e.g., *OT* 67 πολλὰς δ' ὁδοὺς ἐλθόντα φροντίδος πλάνοις.

²⁰⁴ See Mastrorarde 1994, 580–1 for the spectrality of Oedipus self-description in these lines. Cf. Walker 1997, 198's "notion of exile as a 'living death'".

²⁰⁵ E.g. Io (*Ov. Met.* 1.587-667, 724-33), Cadmus (3.1-9), Medea (7.350-403), Byblis (9.635-65), Myrrha (10.476-89), Pythagoras (15.60-2).

²⁰⁶ Note that I use 'exile' in this section interchangeably of people who are formally 'exiled' from their homeland by the powers-that-be and of people who wander excessively or become lost.

²⁰⁷ Indeed, the centrality of exilic narratives within the *Metamorphoses* is a persuasive argument for the poem's (at least partial) composition after Ovid's own exile; see Harrison 2007, 135.

becomes a type of geographical and psychological—if not corporeal—metamorphosis within the epic, a “part of the narrative grammar of the *Metamorphoses*”,²⁰⁸ which serves to bring unity. Wandering in the landscape of the *Metamorphoses* is an exilic enterprise.²⁰⁹

Because Ovid’s landscape is (at least in part) a symbolic landscape, entrance into it constitutes a separation from the familiar, from the sheltered world of civilization and society, and brings a meeting with the unknown and unpredictable [...]. The character is often separated from home [...] or companions [...] or finds himself in a generally unfamiliar and hostile place.

There is a particular and noticeable glut of exilic characters and narratives wandering in the Theban hinterlands in Books 3 and 4:²¹⁰ Cadmus (twice), Actaeon, Bacchus, Acoetes, Lycabas and Ino.

The Ovidian Thebaid begins and closes with wanderings:²¹¹ at the opening of Book 3, Cadmus is sent by his father, Agenor, on a mission to find Europa (*Met.* 3.1-9), who had been abducted by Jupiter (2.833-75). Agenor *poenam, si non invenerit, addit / exilium* (3.4-5), casting the threat and presence of exile over the entire episode; Cadmus wanders from Tyre *profugus*, with the whole world *pererratus* (3.6-7),²¹² before briefly stopping in Delphi to consult the Oracle (3.8-13) and then following a white heifer to the site of the Thebes-to-be (3.14-27). After his defeat of the Ismenian Dragon and founding of the city, Ovid again deploys the language of exile to

²⁰⁸ Harrison 2007, 136

²⁰⁹ Segal 1969b, 18.

²¹⁰ The Theban wandering theme begins with Europa’s journey from Tyre to Crete (*Met.* 2.832-75), which is the initial cause of Cadmus’ wanderings.

²¹¹ For a visual and spatial analysis of the Cadmus episode, see Kirstein 2015. Exile in the *Metamorphoses* begins with Cadmus’ ancestor, Io, who is termed a *profuga* at 1.727.

²¹² Both *profugus* and *pererratus* are loaded with exilic force and—both here and at *Met.* 4.565-8—echo Virgilian descriptions of Aeneas (e.g. *Aen.* 1.2, 6.532); see Anderson 1996, 339-40; Harrison 2007, 135.

characterise Cadmus: *iam stabant Thebae, poteras iam, Cadme, videri / exilio felix* (3.131-2). The narration then abandons Cadmus, recounting the several smaller stories of this Thebaid, many prominently featuring exilic notions, before we return to the figures of Cadmus and Harmonia, beset by the trauma of the last one-and-a-half books of Theban misery. This misery is such that they leave Thebes—*exit / conditor urbe sua* (4.565-6)—and embark on a journey which thematically and lexically picks up on Cadmus’ initial ctistic exile from Tyre: *longisque erroribus actus / contigit Illyricos profuga cum coniuge fines* (4.567-8). Thus, Ovid’s Theban narratives are rounded by exiles and wanderings, and the reader of the Ovidian Thebes is forced to see the city as a way-marker—a milestone which serves as the point of narrative focus in myriad journeys.

Of all Ovid’s Theban characters, Cadmus is the best parallel for Oedipus in his role as repeated exile.²¹³ Like Cadmus, Oedipus journeys to Theban lands as a young adult in a quasi-exile (*Met.* 3.6-23;²¹⁴ *OT* 774-99) and, *en route*, commits a sacrilegious murder which curses him for the rest of his life; for Cadmus, this is the slaying of the Ismenian Dragon (*Met.* 3.31-95) and for Oedipus, this is the parricide of his father, Laius, (*OT* 802-13). Both men then rule Thebes for some time, marrying a powerful woman (Harmonia; Jocasta) and producing four children (Autonoë, Agave, Ino, Semele;²¹⁵

²¹³ I cite Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Oedipus Coloneus* in my comparison with Cadmus, but much of the plot is also told in Euripides’ *Phoenissae*, in Jocasta’s opening soliloquy (1-88) and in Oedipus and Antigone’s decision to leave Thebes (1703-15).

²¹⁴ One can read Pentheus’ harangue at *Met.* 3.538-9 (*vosne, senes, mirer, qui longa per aequora vecti / hac Tyron, hac profugos posuistis sede Penates*) as referring to Cadmus (with Bömer 1969, 579; *contra* Anderson 1996, 392); if so, it again terms him a *profugus* and has clear Aenean echoes (cf. Virg. *Aen.* 1.375, 3.325, 6.355).

²¹⁵ Elsewhere (e.g. Ps.-Apollod. 3.26, 3.39), Cadmus and Harmonia have other children—crucially Polydorus (father of Labdacus and, thus, ancestor of Oedipus) and Illyrius, eponymous ancestor of the Illyrians—but Ovid only mentions these four daughters, making line 3.134’s double plural *natas natosque* a little odd. Janan 2009, 160: “Labdacus alone goes missing from Cadmus’ grandchildren; with him go his descendants, a *damnatio memoriae* most achingly notable in the case of Oedipus”; Janan neglects other grandchildren attributed to Cadmus and Harmonia (e.g. Illyrius), but it is irrefutable that a grandson like Labdacus’ absence is more deeply felt than a less well known descendant, such as Rizon (see Hdn. *Gr.* 3.1.27.15, 3.2.731.7).

Eteocles, Polynices, Ismene, Antigone), who all suffer the effects of their fathers' respective curses. Following horrendous family tragedy,²¹⁶ both men leave Thebes in self-imposed exile (*Met.* 4.563-70; *OT* 1451-8),²¹⁷ before settling into a new land and assimilating with it in some kind of ctistic transformation.²¹⁸ Ovid's Cadmus, then, is a cipher for Sophocles' Oedipus; the shapes of their narratives closely tessellate, and their wandering paths cross in the city of Thebes.

Whilst other Ovidian Thebans do not map onto Oedipus' wanderings as neatly as Cadmus, the numerous exiles of Books 3 and 4 are, like Oedipus, focused on the city of Thebes. First Actaeon, while hunting in the Boeotian forests, loses his way; he accidentally intrudes on Diana's bathing place *errans* into the *nemus ignotum* (3.175). After Diana has turned him into a stag, he is left in a state of confused *aporia*, unsure of what next step to take in his wandering: *quid faciat? repetatne domum et regalia tecta, / an lateat silvis? pudor hoc, timor impedit illud* (3.204-5).²¹⁹ There is a change in the very landscape to signify the change in Actaeon's relationship to his Theban homeland: the exile no longer walks the beautiful, passive space of Ovid's ecphrasis of Gargaphië (3.155-62),²²⁰ but is reoriented *vis-à-vis* the landscape, which is now a

²¹⁶ N.b. Ovid and Sophocles apply the same *sententia* to Cadmus and Oedipus respectively: *sed scilicet ultima semper / exspectanda dies hominis, dicique beatus / ante obitum nemo supremaque funera debet* (*Met.* 3.135-8); ὥστε θνητὸν ὄντ' ἐκείνην τὴν τελευταίαν ἰδεῖν / ἡμέραν ἐπισκοποῦντα μηδέν' ὀλβίζειν, πρὶν ἂν / τέρμα τοῦ βίου περάσῃ μηδὲν ἀλγεινὸν παθῶν (*OT* 1528-30). See Ingleheart 2006, 74 n. 5. The *sententia* is not exclusively tragic (see Bömer 1969, 486), but its Theban loading in Sophocles makes Ovid's reference overtly dramatic.

²¹⁷ Janan 2009, 221 suggests that Cadmus cannot be an Oedipus *avant la lettre* because his exile (as punishment for bringing a curse upon Thebes, like Oedipus) would imply that the complexities of Ovid's Thebes could be solved by having him leave the city. We need not read Cadmus as a scapegoat, exiled for expiation, and Ovid does not cast him as such; instead, Cadmus plays a role in the larger network of Theban travellers.

²¹⁸ At the close of the *OC*, Oedipus undergoes an apotheosis (1586-666) which brings κλέος to Athens (1518-41). Upon arriving in Illyria, Cadmus and Harmonia become snakes, entering the woods of the region (*Met.* 4.563-603); their importance to Illyria is stated more overtly in those versions where their son, Illyrius, becomes the eponymous ancestor of the Illyrians (e.g. *Ps.-Apollod.* 3.39).

²¹⁹ To this last sentence of line 3.205, compare observations on the psychology of exile as a painful coexistence of paradoxes (e.g. Walker 1997, 197-8).

²²⁰ Frequently, Actaeon is seen as 'defiling' the passive and feminine-coded landscape of Gargaphië in a parallel of the rape Diana fears he will perpetrate (e.g. Segal 1969b, 43-5). If so, I contend that the

threatening space, whose topology has turned foe (3.225-31, 239).²²¹ Actaeon's orientation to Thebes has transformed and he can no longer return to the Oedipal city,²²² driven from it by his *pudor* (3.205).²²³

Another exilic figure who looms large in the Ovidian Thebaid is Bacchus. Ovid focuses on Semele's conception of the god and her death at the hands of Jupiter and then, later, on the various characters who defy Bacchus' divinity and are punished for this impiety: Pentheus, the Lydian sailors and the Minyades. Bacchus, as often in literature,²²⁴ is a travelling figure for Ovid; after his birth at Thebes, he is hidden in India, where he grows up (3.314-15), which imbues his eventual return to Boeotia with notions of wandering. Indeed, as Bacchus is the third of our Theban exiles, we are already primed to consider him through this lens and the further—admittedly subtler—Oedipal parallels emerge under such scrutiny. Like Oedipus, Bacchus was exiled from Thebes as an infant and put into the care of foreigners and his close family remain ignorant of his existence until his return. Bacchus is foreign to his Theban homeland, being *novus* (3.520) and a *novus deus* (4.417-18); when he first arrives in Thebes, he appears suddenly, and in the present tense, accompanied by his customary Maenads: *Liber adest festisque fremunt ululatibus agri* (3.527). Pentheus calls the new arrival an *advena* (3.561), and care is taken to point out that Thebes is not the first stop on

landscape also parallels Diana in becoming increasingly violent and retributive; violence is already present, even before Actaeon's transgression: *mons erat infectus variorum caede ferarum* (3.143).

²²¹ To borrow terminology from spatial theory, this is a shift from *Gestimmten Raum* to *Aktionsraum* (see Haupt 2004); for this sort of analysis applied to Ovid's Thebaid (especially the Cadmus episode), see Kirstein 2015.

²²² N.b. the largely absent presence of Thebes itself in these narratives; as often in the *Metamorphoses* (see Hardie 1990, 224), the plot unravels almost exclusively in the woods and fields surrounding a city (Thebes) and not within the city itself; see Kirstein 2015, 212. See my comments below about the assimilation of Oedipus with the city of Thebes itself.

²²³ The resonances between Actaeon's story and Ovid's own exile are pronounced even in the *Metamorphoses* and are made explicit at *Ov. Tr.* 2.103-10; see Ingleheart 2006, 69–76.

²²⁴ E.g. in *E. Ba.*, where Bacchus' status as wanderer is stressed from his opening monologue (1-63) and restated in his later appearance, disguised as the ξένοϛ (233-518), something in which Zeitlin 1990, 135 detects Oedipal traces.

his Hellenic tour, as he has already visited Argos (3.559-60).²²⁵ Once this foreigner has travelled to Thebes, he becomes the primary architect of the disasters which the Thebans suffer: a vehicle for the parricides of Agave (3.711-33) and Athamas (4.512-19),²²⁶ which surely reminds audiences of the most famous Theban parricide, whose ghost hangs over his relative Bacchus' Theban journeys.

Two further narratives of wandering serve perhaps less thematic goals than Cadmus or Actaeon, but nevertheless keep the themes of exile and migration present across Ovid's *Thebaid*: Acoetes and Lycabas. Acoetes is the captain of a ship of Lydian sailors, who takes the role of Bacchus-as-ξένοϛ in Ovid's retelling of Euripides' *Bacchae* (a narrative trick which already imbues him with intertextually charged wanderings), being brought before an angered Pentheus and forced to explain the Bacchic rites. Acoetes provides a lengthy inset narrative (3.582-691), in which he tells the story of Bacchus' transformation of the Lydian sailors into dolphins. Acoetes' journey across the Mediterranean is beset with unintentional wanderings: the route should be Lydia to Delos, but the crew end up on Chios (3.597-9).²²⁷ Once there, they meet a beautiful *puer*, who is Bacchus in disguise; the *puer* asks to be taken to Naxos, but Acoetes' wicked crew instead take him in the opposite direction—perhaps back to Lydia?²²⁸—meriting their delphine punishment. Thus, there is at least one—and perhaps two—diversions (to Chios and to Naxos), neither of which takes the Lydian

²²⁵ This detail is a subtle change from E. *Ba.* 13-22, where Bacchus notes that Thebes is the first mainland-Greek city he has visited, despite stops at several near-Eastern locales.

²²⁶ Bacchus does not directly inspire Athamas, but Ino's nursing of the young Bacchus is Juno's motivation for commanding Tisiphone to drive him mad in a deliberately Bacchic fashion (*Met.* 4.428-33).

²²⁷ It is unclear how deliberate the stop on Chios is; Chios hardly seems far enough from Lydia to make for a sensible overnight stay, being only c. 78 miles from Smyrna by boat; Ovid seems to make some comment on the distance from Chios to Delos (c. 194 miles) by their (ironic?) proximity in his Latin: *forte petens Delon Chiae telluris ad oris / applicor* (3.597-8).

²²⁸ At the point of the mutiny, Naxos is to the right of the ship (3.640), meaning that the ship must be facing south or south-west; one of the mutineers, Opheltes, orders the ship be steered *laevam* (3.641), i.e. away from Naxos and, eventually, back to the Lydian coast.

sailors too far from their charted course to Delos, before an attempted total rerouting and eventual return to Naxos. We are led to imagine that Acoetes journeys with Bacchus from Naxos to Thebes, completing a lengthy and winding journey. Amid these Mediterranean wanderings—whose unintentional telos remains Thebes—Acoetes gives a brief vision of yet more exile in his sketch to the mutineer, Lycabas:²²⁹

fuit audacissimus omni
de numero Lycabas, qui Tusca pulsus ab urbe
exilium dira poenam pro caede luebat. 625

Most brazen of the lot, Lycabas
Was frenzied, the man who had been driven from the Tuscan city
And was suffering exile as the penalty for a wicked murder. 625

Lycabas is an exile and wanderer who has made a career out of journeying; this is fitting for a man whose brief three-line narrative likens him to two Virgilian exiles: Aeneas and Mezentius. Line 624, especially in its second half, evocatively recalls the *incipit* of the *Aeneid*—*arma virumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris*—in a parallel unrecognised by commentators. The close of both lines is structured very similarly and, in an un-Ovidian turn, they scan identically and correspond in the play of -t- and -p- sounds (*Troiae* becomes *Tusca* and *primus* becomes *pulsus*),²³⁰ which (initially) casts Lycabas as an Aeneas figure, an exile driven from his fatherland; it is only in line 625 that we see how anti-Aenean Lycabas is. A more recognised parallel is between Lycabas and Mezentius,²³¹ another Tuscan exile who committed *caedes*,

²²⁹ Ov. *Met.* 3.623-5.

²³⁰ Ovid's hexameter is famously un-Virgilian in its scansion; see Duckworth 1966, 80–1.

²³¹ See Anderson 1996, 400; Barchiesi & Rosati 2007, 228; Harrison 2007, 135.

Then, at last, the mother was stirred up

(This was caused either by grief or the sprinkled potion), 520

And she howled and fled, out of her wits and with her hair streaming

And carrying a little one, you, Melicertes, in her bare arms

...

A crag loomed over the sea; the lower part was hollowed out 525

By the waves and protected the covered water from the rain,

The cliff stood upright and projected its edge over the open sea.

Ino's journey is short in terms of the number of lines which Ovid devotes to it, but it is no mean feat:²³⁴ on foot, it is 54 miles from Thebes to the Isthmus, which is around three days' travel under normal circumstances.²³⁵ Ovid perhaps alludes to the physical challenge of the distance Ino has run in the comic aside *vires insania fecerat* (4.528). Ino's flight might initially seem unconvincing as a migration in the same vein as those discussed earlier in this section, but Ovid takes care to repeat the journey through a different focalisation:²³⁶

Sidoniae comites, quantum valere secutae,
 signa pedum primo videre novissima saxo

Ino's Tyrian companions, having tracked her as far as they could,
 Saw her freshest footprints on the cliff-edge

The Theban women re-treading Ino's footsteps also encourage readers to re-tread the journey they have just witnessed. Indeed, Ovid's deployment of metapoetic footstep

²³⁴ Ovid had presaged Ino's wanderings in the catalogue of maledictions thrown at her and Athamas by Tisiphone—*erroresque vagos* (Ov. *Met.* 4.502)—and in the brief description of Athamas hunting her like an animal: *utque ferae sequitur vestigia coniugis amens* (4.515).

²³⁵ Cf. E. *Med.* 1284-5: Ἴνώ μανείσαν ἐκ θεῶν, ὅθ' ἠ Διὸς / δάμαρ νιν ἐξέπεμπε δομάτων ἄλαις; Mastronarde 2002, 371 is, I believe, wrong to underplay the exilic resonance of ἄλαις, especially in light of the clear parallels which the chorus adduce between Ino and Medea, who will herself shortly enter into exile (E. *Med.* 1384-5).

²³⁶ Ov. *Met.* 4.543-4.

imagery reinforces that we, as readers, are also treading in footsteps already trodden; we follow (*secutae*) the route, as far as our guide, Ovid, lays out the *signa* for us.²³⁷ The audience-perspective sharply jolts from Thebes to the Isthmus, back to Thebes and then, again, to the Isthmus in a dazzling display of metatextual travel. Of course, the same route, from Corinth to Thebes, had been walked by a different Theban royal: it was on this same journey that Oedipus had also committed an act of parricide, killing his father, Laius.²³⁸

All roads, then, lead to Thebes—at least in Ovid’s *Thebaid*. Books 3 and 4 are dominated by various forms of travel, exile and wandering; characters embark on journeys for a variety of reasons and end up in a variety of places but there is one consistent milestone: Thebes. Though he is not its founder, surely no other mythical figure is as associated with Thebes as Oedipus; in many ways, he is embodied in the city and its repeated strife.²³⁹ All of the exiles explored in this section travel to or from Thebes (except Lycabas) and all do so in a way which is reminiscent of Oedipus’ own Theban travels. No single character walks exactly the same route as Oedipus—although Cadmus shares the most parallels—but, as a collective, they all embody aspects of the Oedipal exile. It is as if Ovid takes the Oedipal exile and scatters it between his Theban characters; no single character might make a reader think of Oedipus but, taken as a whole, all the journeys are haunted by his ghost. Oedipus walks

²³⁷ That Ovid calls Ino’s footsteps *signa pedum* (and not *vestigia*) sharpens this metapoetic interpretation; footsteps-as-signs metapoetically recall didactic, such as *Lucr.* 3.3-4: *te sequor, o Graiae gentis decus, inque tuis nunc / ficta pedum pono pressis vestigia signis*. For this metapoetic interpretation of footsteps in Latin poetry and further examples, see Meijer 2021, 122–31, building on Gee 2013, 88–90.

²³⁸ Oedipus’ route from Corinth to Thebes was not direct; he had first journeyed to Delphi, meaning that he would not have literally walked on the same roads as Ino. However, the road from Corinth to Thebes recurs repeatedly in Sophocles’ *OT*, and is always defined by its two τέλη, not by diversions: Oedipus recalls his own journey (794-7, 996-7), fantasises about a return trip (823-7) and the messenger actually makes the journey (936, 955-6).

²³⁹ Ovid himself can describe Thebes only by the epithet *Oedipodioniae* (*Met.* 15.429); see also Gildenhard & Zissos 2000, 135 (“Oedipus, the paradigmatic representative of tragic Thebes”); Zeitlin 1990, 134 (“thus the person of Oidipous perhaps crystallizes in purest form the city of Thebes itself”).

all of Ovid’s Theban roads, a πολὺν αἰθεροφάεζ εἶδωλον (E. *Ph.* 1543) who is not on the page, but whose steps are heard in the echoes of every traveller; after all, “whenever Thebes returns to the tragic stage, Oidipous, too, must come back to life”!²⁴⁰

2.1.2 – (Un)seeing Oedipus!

bene habet, peractum est: iusta persolvi patri.

iuvant tenebrae. quis deus tandem mihi

placatus atra nube perfundit caput? 1000

quis scelera donat? conscium evasi diem.

nil, parricida, dexteræ debes tuæ:

lux te refugit. vultus Oedipodam hic decet.²⁴¹

All is well, it is complete: I have paid my father what I owe him.

Darkness is sweet. Which pacified god at last

Veils my head with black cloud? 1000

Who forgives me my crimes? I have escaped all-seeing day.

Nothing, kin-killer, do you owe to your right hand:

The light has fled your eyes. This face befits an Oedipus.

So says Oedipus in Seneca’s eponymous play. His face is streaming with blood, and he has just graphically torn out his own eyes as self-punishment upon coming to a full realisation of his double crimes of incest and parricide (Sen. *Oed.* 952-77). These lines constitute, for Oedipus, a coming-to-terms with his identity: *vultus Oedipodam hic decet* indeed.²⁴² For Seneca, at least, the archetypal mask of Oedipus is the bloodied,

²⁴⁰ Zeitlin 1990, 167.

²⁴¹ Sen. *Oed.* 998-1003.

²⁴² In Senecan tragedy, self-naming is a realisation of the “mythic self”; see Boyle 2012, lxxxiii, 168–9. This metatheatrical self-identification is only strengthened here by the use of *decet*, which often points to such ends in Senecan tragedy: see *Ag.* 52 (with Boyle 2019, 134–5), *Med.* 50, *Troad.* 1003, *Thy.* 86.

blind man. In this section, I focus on how Ovid uses themes of seeing and un-seeing in his *Thebaid* to construct the spectral Oedipus who is both seen and unseen and how pieces of a fragmentary Senecan mask find their ways onto the faces of several of Ovid's Thebans.

Ovid's *Thebaid* is littered with references to seeing, sight, forbidden vision and blindness, as has been noticed by several scholars.²⁴³ Perhaps most obviously, in the story of Narcissus (*Met.* 3.330-510), the notion of seeing and being seen is central, as the Boeotian youth gazes at his own reflection and falls in love with the vision. As Gildenhard and Zissos have demonstrated, the Narcissus episode is extremely evocative of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, and a principal vector of this evocation is the focus on (self-)perception in both narratives.²⁴⁴ Indebted to their exhaustive study, this section explores other Ovidian Theban narratives, exploring the theme of sight in them, with a focus on how this restated theme invokes the spectre of Oedipus; I note, at this early juncture, that few of the vision-centric episodes in the *Thebaid* are direct parallels for Oedipus' story—there are, for instance, no self-blindings—but within the nexus of other Oedipal evocations, the emphasis on matters optic is pronounced and significant.²⁴⁵ There are various types of visual tropes which I discuss in the following order: the positioning of characters between seeing and being seen; voyeurism; blindness and the misinterpretation of visual signs.

²⁴³ E.g. Cancik 1967; Hardie 1988, 86, 1990, 231; Gildenhard & Zissos 2000, *passim*, especially 133, 137; Salzman-Mitchell 2005, 46–66; Kirstein 2015.

²⁴⁴ Gildenhard & Zissos 2000. N.b. behind Ovid's Narcissus episode lies a different version of the myth in which he experiences an incestuous passion for his twin sister (see Paus. 9.31.7-8); the incestuous haunting of Ovid's Narcissus is not exclusively an Oedipal phenomenon, as most scholars would have it. For an analysis of seeing and perception in Ovid's Narcissus episode, see Bartsch 2014, 84–103. For self-perception and its relation to vision in *S. OT*, see Murray 1997, 2–5.

²⁴⁵ I briefly note that the traditional psychoanalytic interpretation of self-blinding—especially Oedipus' self-blinding—is that it is an act of self-castration; see Freud 1955, 408 n. 1 (with bibliography) and, for this approach applied to a range of ancient sources, see Devereux 1973. This is not an interpretation which this thesis pursues.

Before turning to Ovid, I assess how sight manifests in the pre-Ovidian—i.e. mostly Sophoclean—Oedipus. The image of Oedipus blinding himself is either Sophocles’ invention or his elaboration of an underplayed aspect of previous mythography,²⁴⁶ but it is a critical part of the Sophoclean and post-Sophoclean Oedipus. The themes of vision and blindness pervade the Sophoclean Oedipus tragedies on both literal and metaphorical levels and, even before Oedipus’ self-blinding in the *Oedipus Tyrannus*,²⁴⁷ Sophocles plays on his metaphorical ‘blindness’ to the situation in which he finds himself: λέγω δ’, ἐπειδὴ καὶ τυφλὸν μ’ ὠνειδίσας / σὺ καὶ δέδορκας κοῦ βλέπεις ἴν’ εἶ κακοῦ, / οὐδ’ ἔνθα ναίεις, οὐδ’ ὅτων οἰκεῖς μέτα (412-14; Tiresias to Oedipus).²⁴⁸ The contrast drawn in these lines between mental perception and physical sightedness also resonates throughout the *Oedipus Coloneus*, where repeated focus on Oedipus’ blindness and Antigone’s vision—ten distinct references in the first 42 lines—reinforces that he can ‘see’ what she cannot.²⁴⁹ Sight, for the Sophoclean Oedipus, is a metaphor which operates at the level of the interaction between Self and Other: it is the means by which Oedipus constructs an alter-ego, pitting his Self against the Other (Laius’ murderer), but failing to see that these identities are one and the same. Perception, or lack of it, fills the void of the gap between Self and Other. For the Ovidian Thebans I discuss in this section, the various narratives of vision and blindness construct similar (dis)identifications between Self and Other and, as the overabundance of voids swells, a spectral and abjected Oedipus fills the gap.

I return, again, to the introductory character of Ovid’s Thebaid: Cadmus. As Kirstein elucidates, with the introduction of Cadmus, Ovid begins a cavalcade of narratives

²⁴⁶ Markantonatos 2012, 55 *contra* Griffith 1999, 5 n. 18; Mastronarde 1994, 22–3.

²⁴⁷ See Shields 1961, 71; for a psychoanalytic interpretation of eyesight in the *OT*, see Devereux 1973.

²⁴⁸ See also S. *OT* 1273-4: ἀλλ’ ἐν σκότῳ τὸ λοιπὸν .../ ὀψοίαθ’.

²⁴⁹ For this theme in the *OC*, see Shields 1961.

whose connecting thread is “Verbotenes Sehen und seine negativen Folgen”.²⁵⁰ The polyptotic line *serpentem spectas? et tu spectabere serpens* (3.98), with its repetition of *spectare*, encapsulates the beginning of this Theban trope: Cadmus gazes on the serpent, his foe, unaware that he will himself become a serpent, that there is an identification between his Self and the serpent Other, mediated through the prism of vision.²⁵¹ Cadmus’ (dis)identification with the Ismenian Serpent invokes the unseen spectre of Oedipus, who looked for himself and was unwittingly seen by himself. In between *spectas* and *spectabere* is Cadmus himself (*et tu*) and, as we have seen, Cadmus is himself an alter-Oedipus, an abject found between seeing and being seen, between subject and object, between Self and Other.

After Cadmus, with whom the theme of sight is recognisably Oedipal, Ovid’s visual imagery fractures between different characters; some are viewers,²⁵² others viewed, while yet more are engaged in narratives of interpretation. The first and most famous of Ovid’s Theban viewers is Actaeon, who accidentally enters Gargaphië and gazes on the goddess Diana, leading to his cervine metamorphosis. However, Actaeon, like Cadmus, is both the viewer and the viewed; as soon as he enters the glade, he is described as the *visus vir* (3.178-9) and the pivotal moment of his looking upon Diana is one of mutual observation: *is fuit in vultu visae sine veste Dianae* (3.185). Ovid engages the audience in participating in gazing at the naked Diana;²⁵³ having described

²⁵⁰ Kirstein 2015, 219–20.

²⁵¹ See Barkan 1986, 43’s suggestion that Cadmus looks at himself in these lines, as in a mirror. Feldherr 1997, 27–30 ties Cadmus’ self-contemplation into the shifting patterns of viewing and being viewed in the Thebaid.

²⁵² I do not discuss all sexually charged episodes of viewing in Ovid’s Thebaid. The following stories fit the pattern: Actaeon (at Diana), Echo (at Narcissus), Narcissus (at himself), Pentheus (at the Bacchic rites), Sol (at the copulating Venus and Mars), all the denizens of heaven (also at the copulating Venus and Mars) and Salmacis (at Hermaphroditus). Clytië engages in a different sort of viewing, staring at Sol until she transforms into a heliotrope. Sol’s singular gaze at Leucothoë is also a sort of viewing.

²⁵³ See, e.g., Ingleheart 2009, 209–11.

her blushing body in almost ecphrastic terms,²⁵⁴ and having established the sexually suggestive geography of Gargaphië,²⁵⁵ he primes us to read the scene with a decisive slant towards Actaeon's role as viewer of the goddess and intruder on her body. Ovid, however, nevertheless takes pains to remind the active reader that both parties look on each other.

However, Ovid's Actaeon is, principally, a voyeur.²⁵⁶ Even if Ovid's Actaeon does not intend to gaze at Diana, his intrusion into Gargaphië is markedly aggressive in ways which can be read sexually, and her reaction is no different than if she had uncovered a man with more actively voyeuristic intentions.²⁵⁷ The narrative deployment of his voyeurism recalls another Theban character who—in versions not preserved by Ovid—gazes on Minerva: Tiresias. Callimachus recalls Tiresias' almost identical intrusion upon a bathing Minerva (*H.* 5.75-9). In Callimachus' account, voyeurism is the cause of Tiresias' blindness. Mythology affords Actaeon a wide array of transgressions as explanation for his transformation into a deer,²⁵⁸ so it is notable that Ovid preserves the shape of the Callimachean story and the visual theming.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁴ E.g. Ov. *Met.* 3.183-4: *qui color infectis adversi solis ab ictu / nubibus esse solet aut purpureae Aurorae*. The Ovidian Diana reflects representations of this scene in visual culture; see Schlam 1984, 97-8. See also Leach 1974, 135-6 n. 4, 1981.

²⁵⁵ Ovid identifies the *antrum nemorale* in the *extremo ... recessu* of the *vallis* of Gargaphië (*Met.* 3.155-8), as well as a *nativus arcus* (3.160) and *perlucidus fons*, resounding with *tenuis unda* (3.161), all enclosed within a *hiatus*, all features highlighting its wet and vaginal nature; see Ingleheart 2009, 211-12 n. 31; Salzman-Mitchell 2005, 47.

²⁵⁶ My terminology of 'voyeur' is at odds with Ovid's repeated emphasis on Actaeon's innocence in seeing Diana (*Met.* 3.141-2, 3.175-6, 3.253-5)—something both opposed to previous versions in which his guilt (for various crimes) is highlighted (such as Hes. fr. 217a; Ps.-Apollod. 3.31; E. *Ba.* 337-340; D. S. 4.81.4-5), and which probably results from Ovid's own self-identification with Actaeon (see n. 223). Voyeurism is, typically, deliberate sexual excitation, stimulated consciously observing another's nudity. However, the setting for Actaeon and Diana's interaction in Ovid resonates with a sexuality which teases other, non-Ovidian Actaeons who are more unambiguously voyeuristic, especially with the way in which Actaeon 'intrudes' on the vaginally-coded landscape (Ingleheart 2009, 211). Voyeurism is also a more applicable label for other Theban narratives of viewing, such as Salmacis looking on Hermaphroditus, Pentheus climbing Mt. Cithaeron to watch the Maenads and Echo and Narcissus both appreciating Narcissus' nudity.

²⁵⁷ Indeed, nearly every other version of Actaeon involves a sexual offence; see Forbes Irving 1990, 81.

²⁵⁸ For a history of versions of the Actaeon myth, see Schlam 1984.

²⁵⁹ Within Callimachus' Tiresias narrative, a parallel to Actaeon is drawn (*H.* 5.107-16), who had, for Callimachus, committed the same crime as his Tiresias.

Thus, Ovid's Actaeon myth is not only predicated on themes of sight but invokes a longer literary tradition of forbidden vision and its punitive consequences.²⁶⁰

In addition, Callimachus' Tiresias looms large behind the Ovidian Tiresias. In Ovid, Tiresias is blinded by Juno, following a disagreement between her and Jupiter over whether men or women have a better experience during sex; they ask Tiresias as he has experienced both male and female intercourse personally and he sides with Jupiter, confirming that sex is better for women (3.316-38). This affront to a goddess results in his blinding at her hands (which Jupiter attempts to mitigate by also providing Tiresias with the gift of prophecy); the double punishment / reward is identical in Callimachus (*H.* 5.117-28), it seems more out of place in the *Metamorphoses*.²⁶¹ For Callimachus, Tiresias has committed an offense with his eyes, so it follows logically that his eyes would be the punished organ; for Ovid, Tiresias' wrongdoing is non-ocular and far slighter in severity.²⁶² As the reader has been primed by reading the story of Actaeon to think of Callimachus' account of Tiresias intruding on a naked goddess, this version of the narrative also stands behind Tiresias' punishment, as a more plausible cause of Juno's wrath than the trespass at hand. Thus, Ovid's Tiresias (and Actaeon) are punished, one with blinding, for seeing something sexual and forbidden; Tiresias is, despite his ubiquity in Theban mythology, especially associated with the House of Laius and their role within Theban mytho-history, and so his

²⁶⁰ See Anderson 1996, 353. There is a long tradition of blinding as a punishment, specifically for crimes pertaining to sex; see Mader 1995, 304, with bibliography. Ovid's Semele is similarly destroyed by divine power as the result of an ill-fated vision: she wishes to embrace Jupiter *qualis Saturnia* (3.293) and, upon seeing Jupiter in his full divinity, she bursts into flame (3.308-15). See also Leucothoë, whose undoing is her—non-consensual—vision of Sol in his full divinity: *at virgo quamvis inopino territa visu / victa nitore dei posita vim passa querella est* (4.232-3).

²⁶¹ Ovid's version of the Tiresias story is based on a tradition going back to the *Melampodia* (Hes. fr. 275) and Pherecyd. fr. 92, preserved at Ps.-Apollod. 3.69-72, in which there is a more pronounced focus on sight, as Tiresias actively watches for the snakes to return: *πάλιν δὲ τοὺς αὐτοὺς ὄφεις παρατηρήσας συνουσιάζοντας* (3.71).

²⁶² Indeed, Ovid highlights the insincerity of the interaction by the repetition of *iocos* (3.320, 3.332) and his deftly inserted rumour about the (in)appropriateness of Juno's wrath: *gravius Saturnia iusto / nec pro materia fertur doluisse suique / iudicis aeterna damnavit lumina nocte* (3.333-5).

appearance here brings Oedipal themes to the fore.²⁶³ The combined figures of Actaeon and Tiresias parallel the Sophoclean Oedipus in his self-punishment,²⁶⁴ which is explicitly connected to what he has seen by the messenger:²⁶⁵

ἀποσπάσας γὰρ εἰμάτων χρυσηλάτους
περόνας ἀπ' αὐτῆς, αἷσιν ἐξεστέλλετο,
ἄρας ἔπαισεν ἄρθρα τῶν αὐτοῦ κύκλων, 1270
αὐδῶν τοιαῦθ', ὀθούνεκ' οὐκ **ὄψοιντό** νιν
οὔθ' οἷ' ἔπασχεν οὔθ' ὅποϊ' ἔδρα κακά,
ἀλλ' ἐν **σκότῳ** τὸ λοιπὸν οὔς μὲν οὐκ ἔδει
ὄψοίαθ', οὔς δ' ἔχρηζεν οὐ **γνωσοίατο**.

For, having taken up the golden dress pins
From her, with which she had dressed herself,
He lifted them and struck the sockets of his own eyes, 1270
Crying out such words as these, that they would not **see**
Either what he had suffered, or what wicked things he had done,
But would forever **in darkness see** those people on whom he ought not
Have looked and **be unaware** of those whom he ached to know.

Ovid recreates Oedipus in his Tiresias—and, to a lesser extent, his Actaeon—by having a vision-centric punishment applied to a man who committed a crime through what he saw.

This Oedipus-Tiresias issues an Oedipally-charged prophecy to Liriope, mother of Narcissus, saying that the Boeotian youth will only live a happy life *si se non noverit*

²⁶³ Goldenhard & Zissos 2000, 132.

²⁶⁴ The parallels between Oedipus and Tiresias are long established and have roots which go deeper than Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; see e.g. Bernidaki-Aldous 1990, 85; Buxton 1980, especially 23-4.

²⁶⁵ S. *OT* 1268-74. Oedipus says much the same thing in his own words at 1334-5, 1371-4.

(3.348), which, as has been noted,²⁶⁶ picks up on the Delphic aphorism γῶθι σεαυτόν, which is itself cleverly inverted by Sophocles’ Jocasta at the moment of ἀναγνώρισις into a version practically identical to the advice of Ovid’s Tiresias: ὦ δύσποτμ’, εἴθε μήποτε γνοίης ὅς εἶ (OT 1068).²⁶⁷ Ovid’s Tiresias also recalls Sophoclean dynamics in how he speaks to Pentheus.²⁶⁸

“quam felix esses, si tu quoque luminis huius
 orbus” ait “fieres, ne Bacchica sacra videres!
 namque dies aderit, quam non procul auguror esse,
 qua novus huc veniat, proles Semeleia, Liber, 520
 quem nisi templorum fueris dignatus honore,
 mille lacer spargere locis et sanguine silvas
 foedabis matremque tuam matrisque sorores.
 eveniet! neque enim dignabere numen honore,
 meque sub his tenebris nimium vidisse quereris.” 525

“How happy would be, if you were also bereft of
 This light,” he said “lest you see the Bacchic rites!
 For the day approaches and I prophesy that it is not far off,
 On which new Bacchus will arrive, the child of Semele; 520
 Unless you deem him worthy of honour in your temples,
 You will be scattered in a thousand places, torn, and, with your blood,
 You will stain the woods and your mother and your mother’s sisters.
 So it will be! For you will not deem the god worthy
 And you will complain that I have seen too much, even in this darkness.” 525

²⁶⁶ Bömer 1969, 538; Fränkel 1945, 82.

²⁶⁷ See Goldenhard & Zissos 2000, 131–3.

²⁶⁸ Ov. *Met.* 3.517–25.

Tiresias' speech is bookended by references to his blindness and predicts a vignette which Ovid later narrates (3.701-33), and which is itself voyeuristic, as Pentheus climbs Mt. Cithaeron and furtively looks on the Bacchic rites from which he is barred. Sophocles' Tiresias issues similar advice to Oedipus: λέγω δ', ἐπειδὴ καὶ τυφλὸν μ' ὠνειδίσας / σὺ καὶ δέδορκας κοῦ βλέπεις ἴν' εἶ κακοῦ, / οὐδ' ἔνθα ναίεις, οὐδ' ὅτων οἰκεῖς μέτα (412-14).²⁶⁹ In both Sophocles and Ovid, Tiresias foresees his addressee's blindness and invokes it by reference to his own condition. Tiresias in the *Metamorphoses* is, therefore, a stand-in for two roles in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*—himself and Oedipus—and the vehicle by which Ovid draws attention to the ways in which he is recreated is the theme of sight.

The unseen spectre of Oedipus' final visual haunting in the *Metamorphoses* is Ovid's focus on various Theban characters' clouded vision or failure to interpret (supposedly) clear signs. This theme is, as with many of the themes discussed in this section, principally associated with Narcissus, who fails to recognise himself in the pool; however, Ovid invokes the same visual misidentification in the Theban stories of Semele (3.253-315), Pyramus and Thisbe (4.55-166)²⁷⁰ and Athamas (4.564-519).²⁷¹

Missing clear *signa* to disastrous effect is an Oedipal trait;²⁷² throughout the plot of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, the titular king is presented with many signs which he

²⁶⁹ See also S. *OT* 454-6: τυφλὸς γὰρ ἐκ δεδορκότος / καὶ πτωχὸς ἀντὶ πλουσίου ξένην ἔπι / σκήπτρω προδεικνύς γαῖαν ἐμπορεύσεται.

²⁷⁰ I term the story of Pyramus and Thisbe 'Theban'; Pyramus and Thisbe's narrative unfurls in and around Babylon, not Thebes. It is, however, narrated by the Minyades, who are themselves from Orchomenus (some forty miles from Thebes), but whose various tales "thematically cohere with the Theban cycle" (Janan 2009, 7 n. 15). Notably, Ovid never specifies the Minyades' location, eliding the geography between Thebes and Orchomenus; the Minyades' narrative also falls between the bookends of Cadmus' wanderings (*Met.* 3.1-137, 4.563-603), marking them as part of a holistic, Theban unit.

²⁷¹ The same tropes obtain when Pentheus' mother, Agave, cannot recognise him and, mistaking him for a boar, rips him to shreds (*Ov. Met.* 3.707-33); I do not discuss the scene in detail as it is short and markedly similar to Athamas' misidentification of his son, Learchus.

²⁷² See Ahl 2008, 48; Bexley 2016 (focusing on Seneca's later *Oedipus*).

misinterprets,²⁷³ causing him to remain unaware of what is blindingly obvious to the audience—that he is the very murderer he seeks. In his confrontation with Tiresias, Oedipus dramatizes his pursuit of—and failure to apprehend—the clear signs which the seer lays out for him:²⁷⁴

Τε.	ἄληθες; ἐννέπω σέ τῳ κηρύγματι ᾧπερ προεῖπας ἐμμένειν, κάφ' ἡμέρας τῆς νῦν προσαιδᾶν μήτε τούσδε μήτ' ἐμέ, ὡς ὄντι γῆς τῆσδ' ἀνοσίῳ μιάστορι.	350
Οἰ.	οὕτως ἀναιδῶς ἐξεκίνησας τόδε τὸ ῥῆμα, καὶ ποῦ τοῦτο φεύξεσθαι δοκεῖς;	355
Τε.	πέφευγα· τάληθές γάρ ἰσχυὸν τρέφω.	
Οἰ.	πρὸς τοῦ διδαχθεῖς; οὐ γὰρ ἔκ γε τῆς τέχνης.	
Τε.	πρὸς σοῦ· σὺ γάρ μ' ἄκοντα προὔτρέψω λέγειν.	
Οἰ.	ποῖον λόγον; λέγ' αὖθις, ὡς μᾶλλον μάθω.	
Τε.	οὐχὶ ξυνηκας πρόσθεν; ἢ 'κπειρᾶ λέγειν;	360
Οἰ.	οὐχ ὥστε γ' εἰπεῖν γνωστόν· ἀλλ' αὖθις φράσον.	
Τε.	φονέα σέ φημι τάνδρὸς οὗ ζητεῖς κυρεῖν.	
Οἰ.	ἀλλ' οὐ τι χαίρων δῖς γε πημονὰς ἐρεῖς.	
Τε.	εἶπω τι δῆτα κάλλ', ἴν' ὀργίζῃ πλέον;	
Οἰ.	ὅσον γε χρήσεις· ὡς μάτην εἰρήσεται.	365
Τε.	λεληθέναι σέ φημι σὺν τοῖς φιλάτοις αἴσχισθ' ὀμιλοῦντ', οὐδ' ὄρᾶν ἴν' εἶ κακοῦ.	
Τι.	Truly? I call on you to stand to the proclamation Which you spoke earlier, and, from this day forth,	350

²⁷³ E.g. Tiresias highlighting Oedipus' inability to identify his own rage: ὀργὴν ἐμέμψω τὴν ἐμήν, τὴν σὴν δ' ὀμοῦ / ναίουσαν οὐ κατεῖδες, ἀλλ' ἐμὲ ψέγεις (S. *OT* 337-8).

²⁷⁴ S. *OT* 350-67.

And not to speak to these men or to me,
 As *you* are the sacrilegious pollutant to this land.

Oe. So shamefully you have drummed up this 355
 Story, and how do you think you will escape this?

Ti. I have escaped; for I nourish the powerful truth.

Oe. Having been taught it by whom? Not by your art.

Ti. By you! For you forced me to speak against my wishes.

Oe. To speak about what? Speak again, so I understand more. 360

Ti. Did you not interpret me before? Are you challenging me to speak?

Oe. Not in such a way that I claim I understood; but say it again.

Ti. I say that *you* are the murderer whom you seek to find.

Oe. But you will not speak this calamity twice unpunished.

Ti. Indeed, shall I tell you another thing, to anger your further? 365

Oe. As much as you want, as it will be said in vain.

Ti. I say that you, most shamefully, live unawares in a union
 with those closest to you, and that you do not see that you are the evil.

Tiresias is unsubtle in his comments to Oedipus: he repeatedly and without varnish tells Oedipus that he is the very man he seeks and yet Oedipus is unable to see the truth. Tiresias taunts the Theban king, asking οὐκ οὐν σὺ ταῦτ' ἄριστος εὐρίσκειν ἔφους; (440), in the midst of a conversation where Oedipus has proved repeatedly that he is decidedly not ἄριστος εὐρίσκειν. This blindness *vis-à-vis* signs which should be interpretable is especially Oedipal because of the narrative contours of the Oedipal narrative and the repeated stress on the trope of sight and blindness in the Oedipal myth.

This same confluence of visual imagery and inability to interpret *signa* recurs throughout Ovid's *Thebaid*, with the result of widespread Oedipal evocations. Indeed,

the Oedipal loading of the three episodes discussed below introduces the potential for a metapoetic interpretation of the spectre of Oedipus. As I show throughout this section, Ovid invokes and evokes Oedipus through the deployment of visual imagery in general; with the specific haunting of Oedipus' inability to interpret signs, Ovid encourages his audience not to misinterpret the signs which he lays out for us. That is, in invoking Oedipus, Ovid primes us not to be like Oedipus, insofar as we are supposed to see the Theban king who is hidden, but whose presence is detectable if one follows the signs.

In her jealousy over Jupiter's affair with Semele, Juno decides to infiltrate the royal palace at Thebes to manipulate Semele; she disguises herself as Semele's nurse, Beroë, in a typically Ovidian detailed description of transformation:²⁷⁵

surgit ab his solio fulvaeque recondita nube
 limen adit Semeles nec nubes ante removit
 quam simulavit anum posuitque ad tempora canos 275
 sulcavitque cutem rugis et curva trementi
 membra tulit passu; vocem quoque fecit anilem,
 ipsaque erat Beroe, Semeles Epidauria nutrix.

Juno rose from her seat and, concealed in a tawny cloud,
 She came to Semele's front-door and, before removing the clouds, she
 Disguised herself as an old woman and added grey hairs to her temples 275
 And ploughed her skin with wrinkles and supported her bowed legs
 On tottering steps; she also fashioned the voice of an old woman,
 And she was Beroë, Semele's nurse from Epidaurus.

²⁷⁵ Ov. *Met.* 3.273-8.

As with most Ovidian transformations, there is, here, a pronounced focus on the visual aspect and Ovid visualises the change of body parts which denote Beroë's age (white hair, wrinkled skin, bowed legs). The reader is thus introduced to Juno's disguise as a ploy whose success is dependent on Semele's failure to see past a convincing visual image.²⁷⁶ It is not surprising that Semele is deceived by Juno's disguise; it is fairly normal for such divine disguises to succeed in duping mortals.²⁷⁷ However, with the choice of Beroë's name, Ovid reveals a wealth of intertexts which contribute to how an audience reads Semele's failure to interpret the signs that Beroë is, in fact, Juno.²⁷⁸ There are several other characters called Beroë in mythology; perhaps the nearest cousin to our Beroë appears in Virgil's *Aeneid*.²⁷⁹ In Book 5, Iris is sent to Sicily by Juno to convince the Trojans to burn their ships and found their new Troy; she assumes the disguise of Beroë, wife of Doryclus (*Aen.* 5.618-21). However, Iris' disguise is less successful than Juno's, as Pyrgo, a Trojan nurse, sees through it:²⁸⁰

“non Beroe vobis, non haec Rhoeteia, matres,
est Dorycli coniunx; divini **signa** decoris
ardentisque notate oculos, qui spiritus illi,
qui vultus vocisque sonus vel gressus eunti.
ipsa egomet dudum Beroen digressa reliqui

650

²⁷⁶ Cf. Jupiter's disguise at Ov. *Met.* 1.220-1, which also features *signa* which are, there, correctly interpreted by mortals: *signa dedi venisse deum, vulgusque precari / coeperat*.

²⁷⁷ Successful divine disguises in the *Metamorphoses* include Jupiter and Mercury's successful disguises in the story of Baucis and Philemon (8.611-724); Jupiter's disguise as Diana as he rapes Callisto (2.425-31); Jupiter's disguise as the bull before he abducts Europa (2.850-75); Minerva's disguise as an old woman to Arachne and the women of Hypaepa (6.26-42).

²⁷⁸ A Beroë appears at Virg. *G.* 4.341, whose identity is “a complete mystery” (Thomas 1988, 209), beyond being an Oceanid who wears finery. See also the Beroë at Nonn. *Dion.* 42.74-88, who is a natural beauty, receiving a detailed visual description, but whom Nonnus claims never uses a mirror, connecting her to matters visual. It is unclear if there is some shared heritage between Ovid's Beroë and the figure from Nonnus.

²⁷⁹ For the relationship between Ovid's Beroë and Virgil's Beroë, see Ganiban 2007, 106; Hardie 1990, 232; Pappa 2002; Prauscello 2008, 566-7; Wheeler 2000, 88-90.

²⁸⁰ Virg. *Aen.* 5.646-52.

aequam, indignantem tali quod sola careret
munere nec meritos Anchisae inferret honores.”

“Ladies, this is not our Beroë, this is not the Trojan

Wife of Doryclus; pay attention to the **signs** of heavenly adornment

And the blazing eyes; what spirit is in her,

What face and what timbre of voice or what gait as she strolls.

Just now, I left Beroë’s side,

650

Sick and unhappy because she alone was missing

From the funeral and could not give Anchises the rites owed to him.”

Pyrgo, then, sees through Iris’ disguise, distinguishing those aspects in which Iris fails to meet the perfect disguise of Beroë. Ovid plays intertextually with this Virgilian Beroë in the characterisation of his nurse and it is notable that he highlights as realistic—and thus effectively deceptive—several Virgilian *signa* which miss the mark of being visually convincing:²⁸¹ Virgil’s *vultus* (*Aen.* 5.649) becomes Ovid’s *tempora* with their *cani* (*Met.* 3.275), his *sonus vocis* (*Aen.* 5.649) become the other’s *vox anilis* (*Met.* 3.277) and the first Beroë’s *gressus eunti* (*Aen.* 5.649) become the second Beroë’s *tremens passus* on her *curva membra* (*Met.* 3.276-7). Therefore, in invoking this Virgilian Beroë, Ovid leads the reader to conceive of Juno’s disguise as made up of a series of *signa* which a keen viewer would decode to uncover the goddess beneath. Semele is no such viewer; unlike Pyrgo, she cannot see the *divini signa decoris* and her visual powers fail to come to her aid.

In Book 4 of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid has Arisippe, daughter of Minyas, tell the story of Pyramus and Thisbe; it is a story which revolves predominantly around the

²⁸¹ Virgil’s use of *signa* highlights that the features comprise a series of signs that one is encouraged to follow to a conclusion (i.e. ‘Beroë’’s divinity).

misinterpretation of signs,²⁸² as the lovers repeatedly misunderstand the events which unfurl.²⁸³ Ovid plays on this theme from the very beginning of the story; he tells us that the lovers *nutu signisque loquuntur* (*Met.* 4.63) and yet it is precisely their inability to interpret *signa* which leads to fatal consequences.²⁸⁴

Pyramus and Thisbe arrange a rendezvous at Ninus' tomb on the outskirts of Babylon, near a white mulberry tree. Ovid appropriately cloaks the scene in night—*lux, tarde discedere visa, / praecipitatur aquis, et aquis nox exit ab isdem* (4.91-2)—setting the scene for repeated demonstrations of blindness and misinterpretation. Thisbe arrives first and, upon seeing a lioness, fresh from the kill, flees into a nearby cave as the lioness shreds the veil she had left behind, coating it in blood. The first misinterpretation occurs when Pyramus arrives on the scene: he *vestigia vidit in alto / pulvere certa ferae* (4.105-6) and interprets these footsteps as sure signs (*certa*) that his beloved has fallen prey to the lioness.²⁸⁵ Another verb of sight (*repperit*) introduces Pyramus' second misinterpretation as he sees Thisbe's bloodied veil and takes it as further proof of her demise (4.107-8). Pyramus kills himself in grief and his blood stains the formerly white berries of the mulberry tree to a crimson (4.125-6). Thisbe emerges from the cave *ne fallat amantem* (4.128)—a devastating detail given that Pyramus has just been deceived—and searches for her lover (4.129: *oculis ... requirit*). Thisbe recognises the scene (4.131: *cognoscit*), but *facit incertam pomi color* (4.132); she perceives that there is some sign which requires interpretation but cannot determine what the red mulberries mean, leaving her in aporia (4.133: *dubitat*). Even

²⁸² Verbs of sight predominate: *videre* and its cognates occur 10 times, *cognoscere* 3 times.

²⁸³ See Janan 2009, 159 n. 5.

²⁸⁴ See also Pyramus and Thisbe's initial perceptiveness, finding the fissure in the wall which allows them to communicate, but which no one else notices: *id vitium nulli per saecula longa notatum / (quid non sentit amor?) primi vidistis amantes* (4.67-8).

²⁸⁵ See n. 237 on metapoetic *vestigia* as *signa*.

once she has seen a dying body, Thisbe is initially unable to identify her lover, but, *postquam remorata* (4.137), she recognises him and cries out in grief *quis te mihi casus ademit?* (4.142). In a rare turn within this story, she partially answers her own question through visual deduction; seeing Pyramus' empty scabbard,²⁸⁶ she realises that he must have killed himself and that she is, in some way, the cause of his suicide (4.148-52). The story ends with a verbal reminder of the thematic importance of signs, as Thisbe beseeches the mulberry tree to keep its dark berries as *signa ... caedis* (4.160), despite the fact that, as Anderson comments, "Thisbe has not explicitly shown that she knows what has happened to the tree".²⁸⁷

The Pyramus and Thisbe episode, then, dramatises multiple instances of signs being presented to Ovidian protagonists by the poet, which these protagonists fail to interpret, despite seeing them. Like Oedipus, Pyramus and Thisbe stumble through their narrative, unable to follow the signs which are all too obvious to an audience.

The final Theban episode which focuses on visual delusion and, in so doing, calls to mind the spectre of Oedipus is Athamas' murder of his son; the story of Athamas and his wife, Ino, is the penultimate narrative of Ovid's Theban cycle—immediately before the epilogue of Cadmus' transformation—which gives especial weight to its thematic importance. As discussed above, Juno wreaks vengeance on the last happy daughter of Cadmus, Ino, by commanding Tisiphone to cloud the vision of Ino's husband, so that he murders their son, Learchus. Tisiphone pulls two snakes from her head, which, when thrown at the ill-fated couple, cause (among other things).²⁸⁸

²⁸⁶ Anderson 1996, 428: "it seems odd that Thisbe checks the scabbard and sees that it is swordless, but misses the sword".

²⁸⁷ Anderson 1996, 429.

²⁸⁸ Ov. *Met.* 4.502-3.

erroresque vagos **caecaeque oblivia** mentis
et scelus et lacrimas rabiemque et caedis amorem,

Errant wanderings and **oblivions** of the **blind** mind

And crime and tears and madness and love of murder.

Tisiphone curses Athamas and Ino with forgetfulness and blindness, provoking the *scelus*, *rabies* and *amor caedis* which will prove the death of Learchus. In his frenzy, Athamas is prevented from recognising Learchus by his cursed vision; instead, he says to his comrades *hic modo cum gemina visa est mihi prole leaena* (4.514), highlighting his visual misinterpretation through his use of *visa est*.

In this instance, the misidentification takes on additional gravity because it results in a tragedy against the family. Athamas becomes oblivious to his familial bond to both Ino and Learchus; having recategorised them as animal and other, not son and wife, he is able to commit to the unspeakable cruelty of parricide. This invokes the two most critical misinterpretations in the Oedipus myth: Laius as old man on the highway and Jocasta as available widower queen. Oedipus' twin transgressions against the family unit—parricide and incest—are dependent on his misidentification of Laius and Jocasta; indeed, the ἀναγνώριστις of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* is as much Oedipus' re-identification with the nature of his relationship to these two figures as it is his re-conflation of the split self-identities of Laius' killer and Laius' avenger. Through mis-seeing his wife and son, Athamas is possessed by the spectre of Oedipus and carries out a refracted version of the Labdacid's crime.

[2.2 – The Spectre of Pasiphaë](#)

Unlike Oedipus, whose absence is—on a *prima facie* level—almost absolute, Pasiphaë appears in three brief references within the text of the *Metamorphoses* (8.131-55,

9.735-43, 15.500). The lack of an extended Pasiphaë narrative has not gone unremarked; Armstrong, for instance, notes that, for Ovid, “the involvement of Pasiphae and Ariadne in the Labyrinth’s story is emphatically underplayed”.²⁸⁹ Indeed, Ovid’s underplaying in the *Metamorphoses* is emphasised by the prevalence of Pasiphaë in other Ovidian and Augustan literature; she—unlike Oedipus—is a stock figure of the period,²⁹⁰ whose passion for the bull Ovid himself had previously used to embody female *furor* (see below). Burke-Tomlinson argues that Ovid utilises Pasiphaë to demonstrate his artistic virtuosity: he imprisons her within the artistic labyrinth of his *Metamorphoses*, just as king Minos had imprisoned the Minotaur in Daedalus’ labyrinth, with both poem and maze serving as monuments to their creators’—Ovid and Daedalus respectively—genius.²⁹¹ This chapter is indebted in several respects to Burke-Tomlinson’s analysis of Pasiphaë in the *Metamorphoses*, but my conclusions differ from hers. Rather than conceiving of Pasiphaë as imprisoned within the poetic labyrinth of Ovid’s poem, I interpret her as existing just below the surface of the poem’s narrative texture, ready to break free at moments of narrative tension. These instances within the *Metamorphoses* are marked by a preponderance of key motifs associated with Pasiphaë—monstrosity, *fama*, Cretanness—which create ‘narrative weak-points’ at which her spectre is able to burst through. I argue that she is an inevitable spectre who haunts the poem, not only in the three overt references to her, but in the way that female *furor* pervades the epic and the intertextual windows that *furor* in the *Metamorphoses* opens onto earlier Ovidian—and non-Ovidian—works.

²⁸⁹ Armstrong 2006, 137 n.1. See also Blumenfeld-Kosinski 1996, 308; Burke-Tomlinson 2021, 221.

²⁹⁰ Pasiphaë remains a popular figure in the arts throughout the early Empire; see p. 66-7 on uses of Pasiphaë in the Flavian Amphitheatre.

²⁹¹ Burke-Tomlinson 2021.

2.2.1 – Pasiphaë as *Notum Totem*

The longest extant Latin Pasiphaë narrative is found in the *Ars amatoria* (1.289-326).²⁹² It is the climax of a much longer catalogue of women who suffer from excessive *furor* (283-340; see below):²⁹³ Byblis (283-4), Myrrha (285-8), Pasiphaë (289-326), Aerope (327-30), Scylla (331-2), Clytemnestra (333-4), Medea (335-6), Phthia (337), Phaedra (338), Idaea (339-40).²⁹⁴ Within his Pasiphaë narrative, Ovid details how she first saw the bull, became besotted with him, courted him in the fields of Crete, did away with her love-rivals and, finally, had sex with her beloved. Particular attention is paid to the comic potential of a woman preening herself in the meadows (e.g. 1.305: *quis tibi cum speculo montana armenta petenti?*),²⁹⁵ and the taboo sex scene of the bull penetrating Pasiphaë is largely glossed over, despite the length and detail of the narrative.²⁹⁶

Not only is the Pasiphaë story by far the lengthiest contained in the catalogue, but it is also designated by Ovid as a *notus* story (1.297). In a formula reminiscent of epic *incipits* (*nota cano*),²⁹⁷ Ovid casts the Pasiphaë myth as something which should already be well known to his audience—indeed, Pasiphaë’s starring role in Virgil’s sixth *Eclogue* (45-60) would have been close at hand for a reader of the *Ars*²⁹⁸—and,

²⁹² For Pasiphaë as totem of bestiality, see my §1.4.3.

²⁹³ The trope of *furor*—especially female *furor*—in Ovid is well documented; for some recent treatments, see Bielecka 2013; Fabre-Serris 2005, 2016. For male *furor* in Ovid’s love poetry, see Morrison 1992. For my own discussion of *furor* and its connection to *pietas*, see p. 174-5.

²⁹⁴ For summaries of each myth, see Hollis 1977, 92–9.

²⁹⁵ The Pasiphaë myth has great comic potential and Ovid is not the first to exploit it. She had been the subject of several Greek comedies: e.g. Alc. Com. *Pasiphae* (fr.26-8); Antiph. *Minos* (fr. 156); see also Armstrong 2006, 10 n. 31.

²⁹⁶ Cf. §6.2.1.

²⁹⁷ The most direct parallel is Call. fr. 612’s ἀμάρτυρον οὐδὲν ἀεῖδω (see Hollis 1977, 93–4), and Virg. *Ecl.* 6.9 *non iniussa cano*. Ovid’s parenthetical *nota cano* (*Ars am.* 1.297) also remembers epic openings, i.e. Virg. *Aen.* 1.1 (*arma virumque cano*). See also Ovid’s deployment of first-person verbs of singing in other narratives of taboo, such as *Met.* 10.152 and 10.300, and my discussion of them at pp. 218-19 and n. 538.

²⁹⁸ The Pasiphaë myth would also have been known from Euripides’ *Cretes* (see below); Ovid’s choice to give his Pasiphaë a speech reflects the impassioned defence of bestiality (fr. 472e) for which

in so doing, he can compress the central drama (Pasiphaë's union with the bull) into only four lines (1.323-6):²⁹⁹

et modo se Europen fieri, modo postulat Io,
altera quod bos est, altera vecta bove!
hanc tamen implevit vacca deceptus acerna, 325
dux gregis, et partu proditus auctor erat.

And now she demands to become Europa, now Io,
Because one of them was a cow, and the other was carried by a bull!
And yet the leader of the herd filled her up, deceived by a wooden 'cow', 325
And the father was revealed by his offspring.

Thus, in Ovid's only detailed treatment of Pasiphaë, he takes pains to stress how well known the contents of his narrative will be to his audience; Pasiphaë's is a *notus* story, and in content and form, Ovid consciously draws on two near-contemporary accounts (Prop. 3.19 and Virg. *Ecl.* 6) to reinforce to an audience how well known this myth is. The reader familiar with Virgil or Propertius' version of Pasiphaë would recognise the echoes of those accounts in Ovid's text and this act of recognition would mutually bolster renown of all three versions.

The question arises, then, of why Pasiphaë is featured so extensively in the *Ars amatoria* but is almost entirely absent from the main action of the *Metamorphoses*. One could argue that because Ovid has already given an extended Pasiphaë story, he sees no reason to repeat his material;³⁰⁰ however, this argument would not be consistent with the ways in which Ovid frequently uses and reuses the same

Euripides' play was famous. Pasiphaë was *nota* to Ovid's readers from several other sources: e.g. B. fr. 26; Call. *Del.* 310-11; Prop. 2.32.57-8.

²⁹⁹ Reckford 1974, 320 n.15.

³⁰⁰ See also Ov. *Her.* 4.55-8.

mythological figures or episodes in different works. Medea, for instance, receives detailed treatment in at least three Ovidian works: *Met.* 7.1-452, *Her.* 12—and, to a lesser extent, *Her.* 6—and the non-extant tragedy, *Medea*.³⁰¹ *Prima facie*, Pasiphaë's story, with its focus on physical transformation and a complex relationship between external presentation and internal identity, seems an obvious subject for Ovid's epic of change. Ovid even has several extensive Cretan narratives in the *Metamorphoses*,³⁰² and one could imagine a more full-bodied incorporation of Pasiphaë into them.

In truth, Ovid does—however briefly—mention Pasiphaë as a prelude to his much more detailed account of her son, the Minotaur, and the labyrinth in which he is imprisoned (see below). However, notably, Pasiphaë does not emerge as a subject for the Ovidian narrator, but as a rhetorical weapon in the mouth of an internal narrator, Scylla:³⁰³

te vere coniuge digna est,
 quae torvum ligno decepit adultera taurum
 dicordemque utero fetum tulit. ecquid ad aures
 perveniunt mea dicta tuas, an inania venti
 verba ferunt idemque tuas, ingrata, carinas? 135
 iam iam Pasiphaen non est mirabile taurum
 praeposuisse tibi; tu plus feritatis habebas.

Truly she deserved you as a husband,
 That adulterous woman who duped a savage bull with wood

³⁰¹ Cf. other characters treated in both the *Ars* and the *Met.*: e.g. Ariadne (*Ars am.* 1.527-64; *Met.* 8.151-82; also *Fast.* 3.459-516), Daedalus and Icarus (*Ars am.* 2.21-98; *Met.* 8.183-235), Mars and Venus (*Ars am.* 2.535-600; *Met.* 4.167-89), Procris and Cephalus (*Ars am.* 3.683-746; *Met.* 7.661-758).

³⁰² Most notably Book Eight's Scylla and Nisus (8.1-151), Theseus and the Minotaur (8.152-82) and Daedalus and Icarus (8.183-235), but also Miletus (9.440-6), Iphis (9.666-797) and, less directly, Minos' war on Aegina (7.453-89).

³⁰³ *Ov. Met.* 8.131-7.

And bore a hybrid child in her womb. Do my words even
 Reach your ears, thankless man, or do the winds carry them away empty,
 Those same winds which carry away your ships? 135
 Now, now it is no wonder that Pasiphaë preferred
 The bull to you; you are fiercer than he.

Scylla lambasts King Minos for rejecting her romantic advances; she weaponises the *fama* of Pasiphaë's union with the bull and makes it a *nefas* which causes Minos to be *infamis*. Notably, her disclosure is allusive and relies on Minos—and, by extension, Ovid's readers—already being familiar with the details of Pasiphaë's bestial infidelity;³⁰⁴ the line in which Scylla references Pasiphaë by name is not even certain,³⁰⁵ meaning that Ovid's mouthpiece may only have alluded to the perpetrator of the *nefas* by reputation (132-3: *quae torvum ligno decepit adultera taurum / dicordemque utero fetum tulit*). Almost immediately after Scylla's words, Minos returns to Crete; amongst his first actions is to perform a large sacrifice of bulls:³⁰⁶

vota Iovi Minos taurorum corpora centum
 solvit, ut egressus ratibus Curetida terram
 contigit, et spoliis decorata est regia fixis.
 creverat opprobrium generis foedumque patebat 155

³⁰⁴ Minos' family is no stranger to bestial—and especially bovine—relations; his mother (see §6.2.1, 6.2.3), Europa, had been abducted by Jupiter in the guise of a bull (*Met.* 2.833-75) and his great-great-great-grandmother, Io, was transformed into a cow to disguise her own relationship with Jupiter (1.568-746); see my n. 315. This family association with matters bovine is stressed in Ovid's description of Minos as a *dux Europaeus* (*Met.* 8.23).

³⁰⁵ Lines 8.136-7 are excised by Mendner 1939, 51-2, partially because he feels that the overuse of proper nouns in Ovid can be "roh und geschmacklos" (51), when periphrases are clear, as here: "die ausdrückliche und nackte Namensnennung von Pasiphae überrascht geradezu nach 132/3." (52). He also diagnoses a disruption in the narrative flow, caused by *iam iam* (52), which seems a less persuasive argument.

³⁰⁶ *Ov. Met.* 8.152-8. The chronology here is confused; it is unclear when Pasiphaë has sex with the bull. Presumably she does so just before or during Minos' campaign in Megara, as he besieges that city for over five months (*sexta resurgebant orientis cornua lunae / et pendeat adhuc belli fortuna*, 8.11-12), a timeframe which does not include travel to and from Megara or his earlier escapades in Aegina (7.471-865).

matris adulterium monstri novitate biformis;
destinat hunc Minos thalami remove pudorem
multiplicique domo caecisque includere tectis.

Minos offered up to Jupiter the bodies of one hundred bulls
—Once he had disembarked and again walked on Cretan soil—
And he bedecked his palace with mounted trophies of war.
The family scandal had been growing and the filthy adultery of its 155
Mother was made public knowledge by the strange birth of a hybrid monster;
Minos resolved to hide this shame of his marital bedchamber
And to shut it away in a many-winding house of hidden rooms.

The sacrifice of a hecatomb is usually understood as payment to Jupiter for Minos' recent victory in Megara;³⁰⁷ and, indeed, this may well be its primary purpose. Hecatombs are powerfully reminiscent of epic poetry and are ubiquitous in the Homeric poems;³⁰⁸ they have two purposes: primarily, they appease a god,³⁰⁹ with a secondary purpose of fulfilling a bargain made between a human and a divinity.³¹⁰ I argue that Minos' sacrifice here serves both as an appeasement of Neptune (for more on which, see below) and an expiation of Cretan soil, following Scylla's admission of the *nefas*. It should not escape the notice of readers that Minos' supplication to Jupiter is bookended by Scylla's disclosure of Pasiphaë's bovine tryst and the narrator's account of the royal family's shame upon the king's return to Crete, thus implying that there is some connecting thread to the three vignettes. Scylla, in her speech, names the scandal befalling Minos' family—Pasiphaë's sex with the bull—and, Ovid implies by

³⁰⁷ E.g. Bömer 1977, 56: "Er brachte (*solvit*) eine Hekatombe (*centum* ...) als Erfüllung (s)eines Gelübdes".

³⁰⁸ E.g. Hom. *Il.* 1.65, 1.93, 1.142, 1.309; *Od.* 1.25, 3.59, 20.276. See Ingleheart 2010, 106.

³⁰⁹ See many of the entries under *ThesCRA* 1.2.a..1.E.2.425-34 (p. 110-11).

³¹⁰ E.g., Hom. *Il.* 23.144-51 of Peleus' promise to Spercheus that Achilles would sacrifice a hecatomb of cattle and 50 rams upon returning home.

the ordering of events, her disclosure leads to the *fama* of the *nefas* spreading to the people of Crete (*patebat*, 8.155).³¹¹ The disclosure of the *nefas* necessitates Minos to expiate Crete as soon as he lands, before even displaying his war trophies, and his choice of a hecatomb of cattle is both extreme,³¹² showing the severity of *nefas*, and a fitting choice,³¹³ given the particulars of his situation. At first blush, 100 bulls are an appropriate sacrifice for Minos,³¹⁴ whose house and island are interwoven with matters bovine,³¹⁵ but the appropriateness is compounded by a potential intertext between Ovid's text and Euripides' *Cretes*. The impact of the *Cretes* on the *Metamorphoses* with respect to Pasiphaë finds fuller treatment below but, in that play, Pasiphaë's passion for the bull is a punishment from Neptune to Minos, who had neglected to sacrifice a particular bull (E. *Cretes* fr. 472e.21-6). Thus, in the *Cretes*, it is Minos' failure to sacrifice one bull which causes Pasiphaë's bestiality, but, in a typically Ovidian inversion, Ovid has the disclosure of Pasiphaë's union with the bull as the reason why Minos must sacrifice not one, but 100 bulls. Scylla *fassa est* Pasiphaë's secret *nefas* and, in so doing, renders it *fama*, necessitating a thematically and intertextually appropriate expiation by Minos.

³¹¹ Even if *patebat* here refers to the fact that Pasiphaë's child is revealed to be non-human because of his hybridity, rumours of Pasiphaë's unnatural birth and Minos' subsequent commissioning of a large underground labyrinth cannot have gone unnoticed to the Cretan public for long.

³¹² Hecatombs, despite probably being derived from ἑκατόν and βόες, did not have to be made up of 100 animals, and those animals were not always bulls; see *ThesCRA* 1.2.a..1.E.2.425 (p. 110-11).

³¹³ For the Romans, *piacula* were generally the preserve of porcine sacrifices (Ekroth 2014, 330), but there is precedent for hecatombs of bulls as expiatory in Roman poetry: *iussas cum fide poenas luam, / paratus expiare, seu poposceris / centum iuencos sive mendaci lyra / volens sonare* (Hor. *Ep.* 17.37-40, with Watson 2003, 28, 561). Cf. my pp. 30-1.

³¹⁴ Not least in Ovid's lexical play which recreates the name of Minos' unborn adopted son, the Minotaur, in the Latin of *Minos taurorum* (*Met.* 8.152).

³¹⁵ Most notably: Jupiter-as-bull, who steals Europa away to Crete; the bull whom Pasiphaë loves and the wooden cow she uses to deceive him; the Minotaur, with his half-bull hybridity; the bull which kills Hippolytus after he rejects Cretan Phaedra's advances; perhaps even Europa's great-great-grandmother, Io, who was transformed into a cow (see §6.2.2). Bovine imagery is common in all Cretan narratives; see Armstrong 2006, 71-2.

Pasiphaë's notoreity is highlighted by Ovid in several other places, albeit in subtle ways. In his short speech to Scylla, Minos presages the *fama* of his wife's infidelity, and, indeed, the terms in which Ovid will later frame it:³¹⁶

'di te submoveant, o nostri infamia saecli,
orbe suo, tellusque tibi pontusque negetur.
certe ego non patiar Iovis incunabula, Creten,
qui meus est orbis, tantum contingere monstrum.' 100

"May the gods banish you, you disgrace of our age,
From their world, and may both sea and land be forbidden for you.
I, for one, will not allow the birthplace of Jupiter, Crete,
Which is my world, to come into contact with such a monster." 100

The loaded word *monstrum* here refers to Scylla,³¹⁷ and yet there seems a certain irony in the pains Ovid takes to have his speaker forbid the presence of *monstra* on Crete. A *monstrum* defiling the land of Crete would bring to an audience's mind not Scylla, but the Minotaur; indeed, *monstrum* is a word which Ovid—and other poets—apply to the Minotaur on several occasions,³¹⁸ so its force here cannot be inconsequential. In having it be Minos who vocalises the banishment of a *monstrum* from Crete, Ovid makes even clearer his allusion to the Minotaur, as Minos decides *remove* the Minotaur (8.157), just as in these lines he wishes the gods *submoveant* Scylla (8.97). Minos also addresses Scylla as *o nostri infamia saecli*, which brings to the fore his particular focus on *fama* and preserving the good repute of Crete and its royal family.

³¹⁶ Ov. *Met.* 8.97-100.

³¹⁷ Calling Scylla a *monstrum* can be no accident: Ovid has her transform into a sea-bird (*Met.* 8.148-51), but the character of Scylla, daughter of Nisus, is often conflated with the monstrous Scylla who had assailed Odysseus at Hom. *Od.* 12.223-61 and who appears several times in the *Metamorphoses* (7.66-7, 13.730-49, 13.900-14.76). See App. Virg. *Ciris* 54-91. For the Ovidian Scylla's hybridity, see Cowan 2017; Hardie 2009, 118-27.

³¹⁸ The Minotaur is a *monstrum* at Ov. *Met.* 8.156, 8.170; he is also a *monstrum* at Catull. 64.101; Prop. 4.4.41; *CLE* 855.

Just as calling Scylla a *monstrum* brings before the readers' eyes the as-yet-unborn Minotaur, referring to her as the *nostris infamia saeculi* also gives space for—and thus invokes—the *infamia* of a new generation: Minos' stepson, the Minotaur.

The key terms *monstrum* and *fama* come together again in Cretan matters at *Met.* 9.666-7: *fama novi centum Cretaeas forsitan urbes / implesset monstri*. These lines refer to the recent transformation of Byblis into a fountain following the failed seduction of her brother, Caunus, but there must be a certain irony here which has gone unnoticed by commentators. If they discuss the word at all, it is to note that *monstrum* here is essentially a synonym of *miraculum* in the same line;³¹⁹ this is true, but the other, more Cretan, force of *monstrum* should not be ignored here. Crete is an island which has known many *monstra*,³²⁰ even within Ovid's own poem and the force of *novus* is an almost comic touch: 'perhaps the rumour of *yet another* monster would have flooded the hundred cities of Crete'. For Ovid, Crete is an island populated by various *monstra*—Scylla, the Minotaur, Byblis' fountain—and yet only one of these, Pasiphaë's son, would be an audience's primary association with monstrosity on Crete.

The Minotaur and, by extension, his mother Pasiphaë, appear in disguise at multiple points in Ovid's Cretan narratives. Just as the rumours of Pasiphaë's bestial infidelity spread like wildfire through Crete (8.155-6), so Ovid's charged references to the *famae* of *monstra* on Crete recur and re-emerge throughout the *Metamorphoses*. When, in the *Ars*, Ovid claims that he sings of *nota* in incorporating Pasiphaë into the heart of his catalogue of bad women, he does not do so accidentally; Pasiphaë is not only *nota*

³¹⁹ Anderson 1972, 465; Bömer 1977, 473; Kenney 2011, 469.

³²⁰ See *Ov. Met.* 9.735-6, where Iphis compares his own desires for Ianthé to Pasiphaë' love for the bull: *ne non tamen omnia Crete / monstra ferat, taurum dilexit filia Solis*.

within the *Metamorphoses*, but, despite her limited screen-time, she pervades the Cretan narratives, bursting through the *fama* of her son's monstrosity.

2.2.2 – Pasiphaë Furens

I have shown that the spectre of Pasiphaë haunts Ovid's Cretan narratives in the *Metamorphoses* through her associations with the important concepts of *fama* and (*ne*)*fas*. However, as noted above, Ovid's most detailed Pasiphaë narrative uses her as the *locus classicus* for discussing not *fama*, but female *furor*. In this section, I demonstrate how Pasiphaë, as the Ovidian archetype for female *furor*, pervades the *furiosae* women of the *Metamorphoses*—despite not being included as one of them—via Euripides' presentation of her character. She functions as a spectre, haunting each of the women I discuss below and colouring both how they interrelate and the development of *furor* in their myths.

Many scholars note that a group of female characters within the *Metamorphoses*,³²¹ especially in the second half of the poem, receive strikingly similar narrative treatments:³²² they usually suffer a taboo or doomed love which cannot be overcome by normal means; Ovid affords them an extended soliloquy in which they analyse their emotions; and, in almost every case, they fail to reconcile their love with the realities of their narrative worlds, leading to disaster and metamorphosis. The membership of this group varies, but it usually includes some combination of the following: Medea,

³²¹ There is no ambiguity around most of these characters' gender; however, 'female' is probably not the best gender descriptor for Iphis, for which, see my n. 416. I include him in these general lists of 'women' or *furiosae* for concision of reference, not accuracy of description.

³²² Nugent 2008 analyses these characters through the lens of Aristotelian *acrasia* (see my n. 325); Otis 1970, 172–3 sees them as examples of amatory *suasoria*; Curley 2013, *passim*, but especially 176, discusses the ways that these Ovidian figures 'play' each other, highlighting dramatic (read: tragic) and intertextual Ovidian *lusus*; Fabre-Serris 2016, 181–5 discusses Byblis, Myrrha and Atalanta with respect to female *furor*. See also Larmour 1990.

Scylla, Althaea, Byblis, Iphis, Myrrha and Atalanta.³²³ Curley sees these characters as ‘playing’ each other in a dramatic sense, each of them reflecting and restaging scenes from each other’s narratives and interacting with other Ovidian and non-Ovidian texts to weave a tragic narrative fabric into the *Metamorphoses*; particularly, he considers these women to be “all doubles for Phaedra”.³²⁴ I propose another starring role from tragedy whom this cluster of *furiosae* vie to play: Pasiphaë.

Euripides’ largely missing tragedy, the *Cretes*, tells the story of Minos’ acquisition of his Cretan kingdom, his refusal to sacrifice a special bull to Neptune and the god’s punishment for this: Pasiphaë and her bovine desire. The play’s longest fragment contains a monologue by Pasiphaë (fr. 272e.4-41)—spoken to the chorus and her husband—in which she attempts to justify her desire (see Appendix). Pasiphaë’s Euripidean speech is an impressive treatment of moral responsibility; more germanely for my study, it is also reminiscent of the so-called ‘acritic’ speeches of Ovid’s *furiosae* in the *Metamorphoses*.³²⁵ The scene is set almost identically: Euripides’ Pasiphaë has been charged with moral culpability for her taboo sexual desire, just as many of Ovid’s heroines;³²⁶ she appeals to divine inspiration for her feelings, rather than to personal motivation (and indeed, her desire is unwanted);³²⁷ and ultimately, she attempts to exculpate herself from the moral responsibilities of her actions through

³²³ The importance of *furor* to these narratives can be seen in the prominence of *furor* and its cognates in them: *furor* (Ov. *Met.* 7.10, 9.512, 9.541, 9.583, 9.602, 10.355, 10.397), *furiosus* (9.737, 10.370), *furialis* (8.481), *furibundus* (8.107, 9.637, 10.410). This accounts for ≈25% of all uses of *furor* (*et alia*) in the poem, which largely (≈51% of all uses) otherwise applies to men in the *Metamorphoses*; other women, not included in my list of *furiosae* account for ≈21% of all uses. See §3.2 for Byblis’ acritic speech.

³²⁴ Curley 2013, 183 of Scylla, Byblis and Myrrha. Although Phaedra is the most central role that these characters play for Curley, he does also suggest them to be restagings of Dido (176).

³²⁵ I borrow Nugent 2008’s application of Aristotelian *acrasia* to these speeches. For *acrasia*, see Arist. *EN* 1145a.15-1151b.35.

³²⁶ Byblis, Iphis and Myrrha love someone they are not permitted to; Medea, Scylla and Althaea struggle with the consequences of loving in a way which contravenes *pietas*.

³²⁷ Medea (*frustra, Medea, repugnas; / nescioquis deus obstat*, Ov. *Met.* 7.11-12); Byblis (*pugnauque dui violenta Cupidinis arma / effugere infelix*, 9.543-4); Iphis (*si di me parcere vellent, / parcere debuerant; si non, et perdere vellent, / naturale malum saltem et de more dedissent*, 9.728-30).

a conflicting synthesis of logic and passion.³²⁸ I suggest, therefore, that there are deep-running parallels between the speech of Euripides' Pasiphaë and the various speeches of *furiosae* in the *Metamorphoses*. Not least among these parallels is that they are all lengthy and impassioned speeches; their status as spoken word gives an opportunity to Ovid and Euripides to explore their characters' psychological states, complete with all the specious logical contradictions that mental anguish promotes.

What, then, is to be made of the statement that the *furiosae* of the *Metamorphoses* resemble the Pasiphaë of Euripides' *Cretes* in the rhetoric and content of their speeches? To answer this question, I return to Ovid's presentation of Pasiphaë in the *Ars*, and particularly, to the purpose for his extended digression into Pasiphaë's narrative: *furor*. As stated above, the Pasiphaë narrative in the *Ars* is part of a longer catalogue of women; this catalogue is bookended by two couplets which recapitulate its focus on female *furor* (1.287-8, 341-2):

parcior in nobis nec tam **furiosa** libido;
legitimum finem flamma virilis habet.

In us men, passion is lesser and not so **frenzied**;
Manly fire has an appropriate limit.

omnia feminea sunt ista libidine mota;
acrior est nostra plusque **furoris** habet.

All women are moved by this passion;
It is more ardent than ours and has more **frenzy**.

³²⁸ See Nugent 2008.

In reading this catalogue, then, the reader is primed to analyse Pasiphaë and the women who accompany her as embodiments of *furor*.³²⁹ As hers is the only narrative which receives a full treatment, Pasiphaë is positioned as the pre-eminent totem of this *furor*:³³⁰ the other *furiosae* in this catalogue—who vary extensively in notoriety—receive between 1 and 4 lines of exegesis, while Pasiphaë is afforded 38 lines, comprising 66% of the excursus. The reader of the *Metamorphoses* who is already familiar with Ovid’s earlier work, then, is primed to associate Pasiphaë with *furor* and to see her as an archetypal totem for the lengths to which *furor* can push women. On their own, these associations drawn from the *Ars amatoria* may be sufficient to connect Pasiphaë to the *furiosae* of the *Metamorphoses*; however, Ovid’s creation of intertextual memories of Euripides’ *Cretes* activates an even deeper identification between the *furiosae* and Pasiphaë. These *furiosae* are beset by Pasiphaë’s passion and they negotiate their relationship to it using her rhetoric. In short, each of these *furiosae* plays the part of Pasiphaë, acting out a famous instance from her tragic literary past and applying it to their present circumstances.

Therefore, in the *Metamorphoses*, we see a web of characters, each of whom is, to some extent, playing the part of Pasiphaë. In each of these characters, there is a reflection of Pasiphaë; she is metamorphosed into each of them and imbues their

³²⁹ Indeed, Ovid’s readers would also be primed by the similar catalogue of *furiosae* at Prop. 3.19 (although they are there *rabidae*): Pasiphaë (11-12), Tyro (13-14), Myrrha (15-16), Medea (17-18), Clytemnestra (19-20), Scylla (21-4). Underlining indicates that Ovid and Propertius both include this woman in their catalogues. Here, Pasiphaë appears first, but she is not otherwise especially prominent. Hollis 1977, 91 suggests that Propertius is not Ovid’s primary model in the *Ars*, but that he is equally indebted to Virgil’s sympathetic Pasiphaë narrative (*Ecl.* 6.45-60); Fabre-Serris 2016, 172 argues that all three poets (Ovid, Propertius and Virgil) are responding to the introduction of female *furor* as a motif by the founder of elegy, Gallus. See Heyworth & Morwood 2011, 292 for a selection of other Classical and post-Classical catalogues of women’s unbridled sexual appetites. Pasiphaë also features in another Ovidian catalogue, mostly of women, *Rem.* 55-68, where it is the depth of her desire, not its *furor* which constitutes her belonging in the list. There too she is given no notable place: *da mihi Pasiphaen, iam tauri ponet amorem* (63).

³³⁰ Armstrong 2006, 112: “perhaps she has best claim to the status of woman driven to the most extreme behaviour as a result of her uncontrollable sexual desire”.

narratives with the colouring of her taboo love. Between Pasiphaë's pervasion and perversion of Ovid's Cretan narratives as the unnamed creator of the *monstrum* and her transformation into Ovid's *furiosae*, she haunts the epic; she never appears directly on stage and references to her are fleeting and undeveloped, but the absence of Pasiphaë is a constant presence in the *Metamorphoses*.

2.3 – Putting the Spectres to Rest

Ghosts walk in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; behind, beneath, through and over the *carmen perpetuum*, they haunt the text and its narratives, spreading an ectoplasmic aura of *nefas*. Oedipus and Pasiphaë stand in as totemic representatives of their respective *nefanda*: incest and bestiality. Neither of them receives full narrative treatment in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* yet this absence is very far from going unnoticed in the text; indeed, Ovid draws attention to their absences through a variety of techniques, making them still somehow present. I term both characters 'spectres', invisible presences who haunt the *Metamorphoses*' narrative contours, providing a persistent and ubiquitous—though admittedly concentrated in Ovid's Theban and Cretan narratives—ambience of *nefas*.

Pasiphaë's spectral possession of Ovid's *furiosae*, in particular, increases the reach of bestiality and its narrative-disturbing force beyond those tales which directly confront human-animal sexual relations. She imbues the entire epic with the spectral power of *nefas*, looming from behind the speech of every *furiosa* and threatening to break free through the dense nexus of Cretan themes in Book 7. The ghost of Oedipus, on the other hand, haunts a very particular narrative and geographical space: Thebes. He occupies nearly every character in Ovid's Thebaid—some at further remove than others—standing behind every aspect of the Thebaid and half-seen in the interactions between Ovid's Thebans.

I say that Ovid has killed Oedipus because he buries matters Oedipal in the realm of the thematic, disembodied and without an identifiable character. Pasiphaë is an enlivened potential, beneath the surface of the *Metamorphoses*, ready to rupture the text and occupy it more fully; she is a threatening aura, whereas Oedipus bubbles through the narrative pulse of Ovid's Thebes—a ghostly heartbeat which gives life to his Thebes.

3 – Byblis: The Vocalised Nefas

The two longest incest narratives in the *Metamorphoses*, Book 9’s Byblis and Caunus and Book 10’s Myrrha and Cinyras, naturally invite comparison.³³¹ *Inter alia*, they both feature women combatting incestuous desire for male relatives; both are framed by their narrators as warnings;³³² both are of a similar length;³³³ and both end in the female protagonist fleeing her homeland to undergo a metamorphosis which is described with heavy emphasis on her weeping.³³⁴ The principal difference is one of narrative method: Myrrha’s tale is an inset narrative in Orpheus’ song, whereas “roughly half of this [Byblis] episode consists of the main character’s own words, in two monologues, and a letter which constitutes another monologue”.³³⁵

This chapter explores the Byblis story as one shaped precisely by its dependence on narrative techniques—i.e. her letter and monologues—which disturb the texture of Ovid’s poetry. I argue that ecphrasis and diegesis conspire to present Byblis as an opponent to Ovid’s presentation of her; she enters into combative dialogue with her extradiegetic creator to problematise her experience of the incest taboo.

3.1 – Inscribing Incest: Writing Taboo Love Letters

3.1.1 – Ecphrastic Letters

As I stated in §1.1.1.2, I define ecphrasis very broadly; in this chapter, I build on Leach’s argument that ecphrastic scenes are “windows opening upon a world beyond

³³¹ Ovid parallels the two tales at *Ars am.* 1.283-8.

³³² Ovid says *Byblis in exemplo est ut ament concessa puellae* (9.454) and through the persona of Orpheus, states of the Myrrha-Cinyras myth: *dira canam; procul hinc, natae, procul este, parentes* (10.400; see pp. 167-9, 218-19). For the use of Ovidian *exempla*, see Volk 2010, 68–9.

³³³ Byblis-Caunus is 216 lines long and Myrrha-Cinyras lasts for 205 lines.

³³⁴ Byblis’ tears for her unrequited love become an eponymous fountain (9.652-65), whilst, following Myrrha’s transformation into a myrrh tree, her tears constitute the tree’s perfumed sap (10.488-502).

³³⁵ Nagle 1983, 306.

the poem”.³³⁶ This highlights the uniquely osmotic function of an ecphrasis, as something within a narrative, but also something which extends beyond a narrative, able to incorporate the extra-narrative world. The osmotic, ecphrastic potential of Byblis’ letter is underscored by its being a letter, a form in which the relationship between a writer and their audience is foregrounded,³³⁷ configuring Byblis’ literary connection to Caunus as analogous to Ovid’s literary connection to the reader and their extradiegetic world.³³⁸

In order to call Byblis’ epistle ‘ecphrastic’, I must first prove that it is a description of a work of art like a more conventional piece such as Arachne’s tapestry.³³⁹ Ovid demonstrates that Byblis’ letter is a work of art through two mechanisms: intertextual references to his own *Heroides* and a focus on the process of artistic production.³⁴⁰ As the *Heroides* are a series of elegiac epistles, mostly framed as being written by female figures from myth to their male lovers,³⁴¹ they are an apt referent for the Byblis narrative; critically, they are also part of Ovid’s artistic oeuvre. In addition to being artistically constructed epistles, the *Heroides* bear many *comparanda* with Byblis’ letter: some specific points of comparison will be addressed later in this chapter, but a few general remarks follow.

³³⁶ Leach 1974, 104.

³³⁷ See Altman 1982, 212. For the letter as inextricable from ‘literature’, see Derrida 1987, 48.

³³⁸ Ovid is a self-conscious author, and often acknowledges his contemporary audience and their extradiegetic world, most famously at the *Metamorphoses*’ beginning (1.4: *ad mea perpetuum deducite tempora carmen*) and its end (15.878: *ore legar populi, perque omnia saecula fama / ... vivam*). See n. 407.

³³⁹ Cf. the concept in ancient epistolary theory that the success or failure of a letter’s communication of its contents relies on its ισχνότητος (Demetr. *Eloc.* 223); Byblis’ letter is anything but ‘plain’.

³⁴⁰ The relationship between Byblis’ letter and the *Heroides* has long been noted by scholars; see especially Anderson 1972, 449; Otis 1970, 417; Paratore 1970; Tränkle 1963.

³⁴¹ In the three ‘double-*Heroides*’ (16-21), the letter from a woman is preceded by a letter from her male counterpart. The Ovidian authorship of these epistles has been doubted, but I consider them Ovidian (with Kenney 1996, 20–6; see also n. 867). For the *Epistula Sapphus*, see n. 423.

Byblis' epistle ends with the striking suggestion that, should he reject her, Caunus will be the cause of the epitaph on her tomb (9.563); death is a common terminal motif in the *Heroides*, with seven closing on allusions to their diegetic author's death.³⁴² Two epistles even end with specific reference to the words on the heroine's tomb: like the inscription on Byblis' putative tomb, both Phyllis and Dido directly state that their lover abandoning them is the *causa* of their death.³⁴³

Another theme common to both the *Heroides* and Byblis' letter is that the woman writing does so against her will or better judgement, compelled by an external force. In Byblis' monologue preceding the epistle, she argues that *coget amor [ut epistulam scribat]* (9.515), and this external pressure is echoed in the final lines of the letter itself, where she self-identifies as *non fassurae, nisi cogeret ultimus ardor* (9.562). This harks back to passages in the *Heroides* such as Phaedra's claim that [*Amor*] *mihi primo dubitanti scribere dixit* (Ov. *Her.* 4.13). By affiliating Byblis' production with his own artistic output, Ovid clearly conveys that her letter is a work of art in the same vein as his poetic *epistulae*. Indeed, this Ovidian genre of the artistic love letter,³⁴⁴ deployed in both *Heroides* and the tale of Byblis, can be thematised in Phaedra's statement: [*amor*] *ars fit*.³⁴⁵

Ovid attentively focuses on Byblis' process of creative, artistic production.³⁴⁶ Lines 9.517-530 comprise a prolonged and detailed depiction of Byblis as artist in the process of producing artwork:³⁴⁷ her love letter. Jenkins glosses this scene as parallel

³⁴² Ov. *Her.* 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 15; see Alekou 2021.

³⁴³ Ov. *Met.* 9.563: *neve merere meo subscribi causa sepulcro*. Ov. *Her.* 2.148: *ille necis causam praebuit, ipsa manum*. Ov. *Her.* 7.195: *praebuit Aeneas et causam mortis et ense*. This is also an elegiac topos: e.g. Prop. 1.7.23, 1.19.18-19, 2.8.17-28, 2.13; cf. Hor. *Carm.* 3.11.

³⁴⁴ The love letter or ἐπιστολή ἐρωτική would later be fully conceptualised by as a subgenre of epistles at *Epist. Charact.* 72.4-5, 80.33-6.

³⁴⁵ Ov. *Her.* 4.25.

³⁴⁶ For the similarities between the production of visual arts and poetic arts see Quint. *Inst.* 12.10.1-10.

³⁴⁷ For the type of the creative poet in antiquity, see Lieberg 1982. Janan 1991, 245 sees Byblis as an "altera Ovid" in her mimetic reuse of his modes of art.

to a speech-act,³⁴⁸ drawing on the ancient tradition of the letter as an extension of spoken communication. Speech cannot avoid being frozen in the context of its production, which is necessarily also the context of its reception, whereas a letter such as Byblis' is unstable up until the moment it is read in its entirety.³⁴⁹ Anxieties about the need for a letter to be understood *in toto* are prevalent in epistolography,³⁵⁰ demonstrating an awareness of the tension between the directness of speech and the interpretability of the letter form.³⁵¹ Byblis edits and then re-edits her artwork, revealing her need to iron out anything which could be misconstrued and to approach artistic perfection. Her deliberateness is captured by *meditata ... verba*, while *manu ... trementi* (9.521) demonstrates the anxiety at the core of her production; the balance between these states of focus and anxiety is captured in the symmetry of Ovid's golden line.³⁵² Ovid describes the process of her editing in a flurry of nine verbs, showing the frenetic and anxious way that Byblis composes her work:³⁵³

incipit et dubitat; scribit damnatque tabellas;

et notat et delet; mutat culpatque probatque

She starts and doubts; she writes and condemns the tablet;

She scribbles and crosses out; she changes and blames and approves.

³⁴⁸ Jenkins 2000, 442–3.

³⁴⁹ See Demetr. *Eloc.* 224: δεῖ γὰρ ὑποκατεσκευάσθαι πως μᾶλλον τοῦ διαλόγου τὴν ἐπιστολήν. ὁ μὲν γὰρ μιμεῖται αὐτοσχεδιάζοντα, ἢ δὲ γράφεται καὶ δῶρον πέμπεται τρόπον τινά. Farrell 1998, 323 locates Byblis' transgression in the act of writing (i.e. like a speech-act, in the moment of production), whereas Jenkins 2000 casts the writing as a secret confession, only made transgressive by Caunus' reading of it. Cf. E. *IA* 890–5, where Agamemnon attempts to re-write an earlier letter by sending a second; the letter fails at the moment of reception, not inception. See Rosenmeyer 2001, 70 for this theme in Euripidean tragedy.

³⁵⁰ Four of the *Heroides* begin with invocation for the reader *perlegere* (4.3, 5.1, 16.12, 20.3), i.e. to understand the letter in its entirety before making judgement. Cf. *Ov. Her.* 21.109. *Perlegere* is often used in this sense to refer to reading works (especially letters) *in toto*, e.g. at Plaut. *Bacch.* 923, 986, 988, 1027 (as the archaic *pellegere*); *Cic. Fam.* 11.19.1.1; *Cic. Att.* 5.19.1.1, 9.10.10.9, 13.44.2.2; *Sen. Ep.* 46.1.

³⁵¹ See König 2007 for this anxiety in the case of 'real' letters.

³⁵² See Anderson 1972, 455 for this variant on the golden line.

³⁵³ *Ov. Met.* 9.523–4.

This frantic process of production is reminiscent of Pliny’s characterisation of the sculptor Apollodorus “Insanus”,³⁵⁴ whom he terms an *iniquum sui iudicem*, and who *crebro perfecta signa frangens, dum satiari cupiditate artis non quit*.³⁵⁵ Columella speaks of a similarly incessant need for editing in visual artists: *ac ne ... videmus [artifices] laborem suum destituisse*.³⁵⁶ The idea of seeking perfection through repeated revision is also reminiscent of the legends that Ovid’s contemporary, Virgil, wrote only three lines of the *Aeneid* a day for ten years.³⁵⁷ The theme of the poetic artist overtaken by madness in the process of production is evidenced in authors since Archilochus,³⁵⁸ and later becomes thematised in Platonic thought as ἐνθουσιασμός or μανία.³⁵⁹

Byblis’ eventual fate—to be transformed into a fountain—also plays a part in how Ovid reworks the received myth to bolster his conception of her as an artist.³⁶⁰ Janan identifies Book 9 of the *Metamorphoses* as “a hierarchy of narrative aesthetics ... that privileges Same over Other”, constantly circling back on itself; she identifies the figure of Maeander, Byblis’ grandfather and the river *totiens redeuns eodem* (9.541), as the principal realisation of this theme.³⁶¹ Not only is Byblis the offspring of this river by

³⁵⁴ Ahl 1985, 212 sees Byblis’ pose at Ov. *Met.* 9.522 (*dextra tenet ferrum, vacuam tenet altera ceram*) as evocative of a sculptor’s pose.

³⁵⁵ Plin. *HN* 34.81.

³⁵⁶ Columella *Rust.* 1.praef.31.

³⁵⁷ This often-cited statistic seems to be the statistical average output needed to complete the *Aeneid*’s 9,896 lines in 10 years. Cf. Donat. *Vit. Virg.* 21-4, who does not mention Virgil’s output but details the effort and care taken.

³⁵⁸ Archil. fr. 120 casts the poet as composing dithyrambs οἶνον συγκεραυνωθεὶς φρένας. This is not quite the same as Platonic creative μανία as the madness is alcohol-induced; see Murray 1981, 87.

³⁵⁹ Pl. *Ap.* 22a-c, *Men.* 99c-e, *Phdr.* 245, *Leg.* 682a, 719c-d, *Ion passim*.

³⁶⁰ Byblis becomes the eponymous fountain at Conon *BNJ* 26 fr. 1.2; Parth. 11. After Ovid, Nonn. *Dion.* 13.558-61 reports the metamorphosis. Elsewhere, she is strongly associated with the Byblis spring, but is not explicitly its origin: Nic. *ap. Ant.Lib.* 30.4; Σ Theocr. 7.115. Otis 1970, 218 suggests that Ovid’s choice of a fountain is an active choice to represent Byblis’ emotional state; for alternative explanations for the metamorphosis, see Erbse 2003, 339; Salzman-Mitchell 2005, 113, 115.

³⁶¹ Janan 1991, 242-3.

his nymph daughter, Cyanee,³⁶² but she is also conceived by the waterside,³⁶³ by a man who has crossed an ocean to be in her birthplace.³⁶⁴ Ovid etymologically plays with the name ‘Byblis’, alluding to βύβλος (‘papyrus’),³⁶⁵ a plant which springs from the water rather than soil.³⁶⁶ Even her name onomatopoeically conjures the gurgling of a fountain. She is a figure from watery beginnings, who lives a brief spark of a life before returning to her aqueous roots;³⁶⁷ following Michalopoulos’ methodology of etymology in which “Ovidian etymologies are frequently used to account for the outcome of his stories”,³⁶⁸ the existence of a spring called Byblis prepares Ovid’s audience to syncretise the character with the spring, even if they are unfamiliar with that spring’s mythic aetiology.³⁶⁹ Thus, water is her “integrity of the self that remains”,³⁷⁰ and an aspect of her myth which Ovid pushes further than other accounts.

Fountains and springs have been considered a source of poetic and artistic inspiration since Hesiod.³⁷¹ The fact Byblis becomes such a spring inscribes her into this tradition as an artist who is inspired from an internal spring, rather than external waters.³⁷² The Byblis episode is characterised by its use of speech and the literal fluidity of speech was as analogic in the ancient world as it is today. The implied metaphor of eloquent speech being like liquid can be traced back to Homer: for example, Nestor τοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ

³⁶² See Ahl 1985, 212.

³⁶³ *Ov. Met.* 9.450-3: [*Milete*] *hic tibi, dum sequitur patriae curvamina ripae, / ... cognita Cyanee ... / Byblida ... est enixa.*

³⁶⁴ *Ov. Met.* 9.447-8: *fugis, Milete, tua celerique carina / Aegaeas metiris aquas.*

³⁶⁵ See Ahl 1985, 211–12. For the variance between spellings of the city Byblus (Βίβλος and Βύβλος), and -t- and -v- with respect to this word, see *RE* s.v. “Byblos [4]”, 3.1100-104, especially 1103.

³⁶⁶ *Thphr. HP* 4.8.3: φύεται δὲ ὁ πάπυρος οὐκ ἐν βᾶθει τοῦ ὕδατος ἀλλ’ ὅσον ἐν δύο πήχεσιν, ἐνιαχοῦ δὲ καὶ ἐν ἐλάττονι.

³⁶⁷ Whilst her birth and death are hydrous, Byblis’ life is characterised by the traditionally elegiac topos of fire; see §3.2.3.1.

³⁶⁸ Michalopoulos 2001, 9.

³⁶⁹ Michalopoulos 2001, 44. The Byblis spring was located near the city of Miletus (*Paus.* 7.5.10).

³⁷⁰ Giaccherini 2005, 62.

³⁷¹ *Hes. Th.* 1-7; *Pi. I.* 6.74-5; [*Asclep. vel Arch.*] *AP* 9.64; *Ps.-Mosch. Epit. Bion.* 77; *Call. Aet.* fr. 1.2, *Ap.* 105; *Prop.* 3.13; *Hor. Carm.* 1.26; *Virg. Ecl.* 10.1. See Morgan 2009, 135–6; Wilson 1968, 295.

³⁷² The *Metamorphoses*’ characters often transform in ways which represent an aspect of their pre-metamorphic existence; see Segal 1998, especially 14; Watson 2021, 170.

γλώσσης μέλιτος γλυκίων ῥέεν αὐδὴ.³⁷³ Even more explicitly, Cratinus syncretises the poetic word and bubbling springs:³⁷⁴

ἄναξ Ἄπολλον, τῶν ἐπῶν τῶν ῥευμάτων.

καναχοῦσι πηγαί, δωδεκάκρουνον [τὸ] στόμα,

Ἴλισσος ἐν τῇ φάρυγι· τί ἂν εἴποιμ' [ἔτι];

εἰ μὴ γὰρ ἐπιβύσει τις αὐτοῦ τὸ στόμα

ἅπαντα ταῦτα κατακλύσει ποιήμασιν.

5

Lord Apollo, of the words and streams.

Streams splashing, a mouth with twelve springs,

An Ilissus in his throat; what am I to say?

If someone does not stop up his mouth,

He will flood everything with his poems

5

Ovid's *Byblis* composes a letter in elegant hexametric verse; the lines are carefully structured (see below) and betray attentive artistic composition, highlighting the artistry of their diegetic creator, *Byblis*. Therefore, through a variety of different techniques and emphases, Ovid portrays *Byblis*' letter as a work of art, in line with both his own earlier artistic production and commonly held beliefs about the way artists produced their work in the ancient world. Therefore, the bravura elaboration of the letter's conception, production and content are ecphrastic and thus permeable to forces and pressures external to its diegetic content.

³⁷³ Hom. *Il.* 1.249. See Harriott 1969, 88–9, 124.

³⁷⁴ Cratin. *Pyt.* fr. 198.

3.1.2 – Byblis’ Letter

Ovid is the originator of the ‘confession by letter’ motif in the myth of Byblis;³⁷⁵ elsewhere, the revelation of her desire is exclusively through oral means.³⁷⁶ For example, Parthenius clearly states that Byblis approaches Caunus in person and discloses her affections with spoken words: τὴν Βυβλίδα φασὶν ... λόγους αὐτῶ [Καύνῳ] προσφέρειν καὶ δεῖσθαι μὴ περιϋδεῖν αὐτὴν εἰς πᾶν κακὸν προελθοῦσαν (11.3).³⁷⁷ Ovid therefore highlights his diversion from the mythographic tradition by giving Byblis a brief line to toy with the idea of oral revelation (514: *poterisne loqui? poterisne fateri?*), before choosing epistolary communication.³⁷⁸ Both *loquor* and *fateor* most naturally refer to oral delivery, and Byblis initially appears to commit to a face-to-face engagement with Caunus, answering her dual questions in the affirmative: *coget amor, potero* (9.515).³⁷⁹ This allows Ovid to allude to alternative traditions of the Byblis myth, before subverting them by having her immediately choose to produce a *littera arcana* to *fateri* her desire (9.516). The double use of *fateor* in the space of two lines seems to be an opportunity for Ovid to allude to the

³⁷⁵ Ovid’s invention of the letter teases out the implications of Byblis’ speaking name (cf. Greek βιβλίον/βύβλος, ‘book’/‘papyrus’; see n.366) and the etymology may be part of the inspiration for Ovid’s emendation of the myth. For similar play in Catullus, see Ingleheart 2014, especially 59. For the potential Ovidian wordplays on Byblis’ name, especially the interplay between *Byblis* and *syllaba*, see Ahl 1985, 211–13. For the Ovidian narrator creating individual truth, see Rosati 2002, 273.

³⁷⁶ Jenkins 2000, 441. Ahl 1985, 211 says that Byblis is the “first person mentioned [in the *Metamorphoses*] as producing a written document”, but she is preceded by two other—notably female (see Wheeler 1999, 55)—writers: Io inscribes her name in the sand with her hoof (*Ov. Met.* 1.649-50), and Philomela’s tapestry is cast as a text (6.576-8). The gendered exception is Apollo’s ‘writing’ *AI AI* on the petals of the hyacinth at 10.215-16). Cf. the *Metamorphoses*’ three dedicatory inscriptions: for Phaëthon (3.27-8), to thank Isis for Iphis’ transformation (9.794) and for Caieta (14.443-4).

³⁷⁷ Although λόγους προσφέρειν seems unusually periphrastic to denote speech, it is attested elsewhere in Parthenius, describing the oral revelation of incestuous love: ἀποτολήσας προσφέρει λόγους τῷ παιδί (17.2). It is also clearly oral at *Lys.* 1.8 ([Ἐρατοσθένης] εἰς τὴν ἀγοράν ... λόγους προσφέρων ἀπόλεσεν αὐτήν), again of an amatory revelation, and *Hdt.* 8.52.2 (λόγους τῶν Πεισιστρατιδῶν προσφερόντων περὶ ὁμολογίης).

³⁷⁸ Byblis’ departure from the tradition of verbal revelation is re-emphasised immediately after Caunus rejects her and she blames herself for writing rather than speaking at *Ov. Met.* 9.585-612, especially 9.601-4: *et tamen ipsa loqui nec me committere cerae/ debueram praesenque meos aperire furores. / ... plura loqui poteram, quam quae cepere tabellae.*

³⁷⁹ This compulsion to write a letter of intra-familial attraction, rather than approach the beloved in person, echoes *Ov. Her.* 4.10-14, where *scribere iussit amor [Phaedrae]* (10) to Hippolytus.

relationship between *fateor* and (*ne*)*fas* and to highlight the communicative aspect of taboo, i.e. that taboo is created and compounded by verbal communication (see §1.2). In addition, there is a dark Ovidian comedy in the fact that a *nefas* is consigned to writing in Ovid, rather than spoken aloud.

Ancient thought on the communicative efficacy of letters was divided;³⁸⁰ Artemon, the editor of Aristotle's *Letters*, argued that δεῖ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ τρόπῳ διάλογόν τε γράφειν καὶ ἐπιστολάς· εἶναι γὰρ τὴν ἐπιστολὴν οἶον τὸ ἕτερον μέρος τοῦ διαλόγου.³⁸¹ However, the dominant mode of thought seems to have been more in line with Isocrates, who is convinced that epistles constitute a poor substitute for oral, *tête-à-tête*, communication, claiming ῥᾶον ἂν τις παρὼν πρὸς παρόντα φράσειεν ἢ δι' ἐπιστολῆς δηλώσειεν.³⁸² Many features render letters less useful than spoken communication, such as the presumed physical distance between reader and writer,³⁸³ and the necessary temporal delay between the construction of a message and its reception.³⁸⁴

It is clear from Byblis' reaction to Caunus' rejection (9.585-612) that she retroactively agrees with the Isocratean view in deeming letters to be relatively inefficient at communicating complex emotions. For Byblis, the attempt to increase her chances of success by writing is doomed from the outset; the decision to reify her emotions in a work of artistic production aligns the narrative with a major unifying theme of Ovid's

³⁸⁰ For the advantages and disadvantages of the epistolary form, see Hodkinson 2007. For ancient epistolary theory more broadly, see Fögen 2018.

³⁸¹ Demetr. *Eloc.* 223; Aristot. fr. 665.

³⁸² Isoc. *Ep.* 1.1.2.

³⁸³ This distance is sometimes exploited for literary ends, such as in Aelian's fictionalised letters between the Menandrian characters, Callipides and Cnemon: Callipides writes letters to Cnemon for fear of physical assault. See Ael. *Ep.* 13-16: τοῦτο γοῦν κεκέρδαγκα τὸ δι' ἀγγέλων σοι λαλεῖν ἀλλὰ μὴ πρὸς αὐτὸν σέ (14). Cf. Penelope's request for a corporeal, rather than epistolary, response from Odysseus at Ov. *Her.* 1.2.

³⁸⁴ See Trapp 2003, 36–7 for the epistolary 'time-lag'. At Ov. *Her.* 6.5-11, Hypsipyle describes how rumour of Jason's exploits has reached her more quickly than would a putative letter from him.

art, namely that, for artists in the *Metamorphoses*,³⁸⁵ the production of art directly presages (and often causes) their failure.³⁸⁶ Similarly, the artistic creations of characters like the Pierides in Book 5, Arachne in Book 6 and Orpheus in Books 10-11 directly lead to their personal suffering. The precarity of the relationship between the creator and their audience is a constant theme in the *Metamorphoses*: by publishing their work (rendering it *fama*), artists expose themselves to the (often fatal) responses of the audience.³⁸⁷

The motif of disastrous artistic failure gains added poignancy if one believes that significant alterations were made to the *Metamorphoses* after Ovid's relegation in 8 CE.³⁸⁸ Characters, such as Byblis, whose art in some way offends authority figures and causes the artist to flee their homeland seem to reflect pathetically Ovid's own suffering after Augustus' displeasure at his *Ars amatoria*.³⁸⁹ There are several scenes which gain new pathos when analysed through a post-exilic lens,³⁹⁰ and Byblis' story is one such: the setting for the tale is Miletus, a city which had a foundational impact on the location of Ovid's exile, Tomis,³⁹¹ heightening the pathetic irony of Ovid's character fleeing the very place to which he was exiled. Byblis' story also ends with her perpetual and unending tears, as she is transformed into a fountain (9.659-65),³⁹²

³⁸⁵ For epistolography as a specifically feminine art, see Spentzou 2003, 123–60; for Byblis as feminine epistolographer, see Westerhold 2018.

³⁸⁶ Leach 1974, 106.

³⁸⁷ For Ovidian letters, especially the *Heroides*, as theatrical spaces, see Curley 2013, 59–94 (especially 86-94 on Byblis).

³⁸⁸ Kovacs 1987, especially 460-5.

³⁸⁹ For art and punishment in the *Metamorphoses* relating to Ovid's own fate, see Johnson 2008; Pavlock 2009, 89–109.

³⁹⁰ There are multiple neat analogues for Ovid's exilic situation. Kovacs 1987, 463–4 analyses Jupiter's anger as a parallel for Augustus at *Met.* 15.871-9, but other tales function just as well; see §2.1.1.

³⁹¹ See Williams 2002, 235. Ovid explicitly draws attention to Tomis' Milesian ancestry at *Tr.* 1.10.41, where he calls it the *urbs Miletis*, and at 3.9.3-4: [*ad Tomem*] *quoque Mileto missi venere coloni, / inque Getis Graias constituere domos?*

³⁹² Cf. Myrrha (10.488-502), Niobe (6.310-12) and Cyane (5.427).

which resembles a pose that Ovid adopts in his unambiguously exilic poetry,³⁹³ such as at *Pont.* 1.2.29: *fine carent lacrimae, nisi cum stupor obstitit illis.*³⁹⁴

Like these other Ovidian artists, Byblis' approach to artistic composition emphasises her conscious knowledge that what she is doing is, in some way, immoral or poses a risk to her.³⁹⁵ The plan to write the letter is conceived at the close of a confusing aporetic monologue, in which Byblis vacillates between justifying her passions and decrying them, even questioning her own sanity at times (9.508-9, *cur haec exempla paravi? quo feror?*). The epistle's purpose is to inspire incestuous affection in Caunus, so that he might become the instigating wooer, and she the passive indulger of his *furor* (9.511-14);³⁹⁶ yet the letter itself will fail in this stated aim, both in content—by centering Byblis' desire and providing no convincing reason for Caunus to fall in love³⁹⁷—and in effect, by inflaming Caunus with rage, not lust. Ovid carefully paints the setting of her epistolary composition: she is in her bed,³⁹⁸ hinting at sexuality, and is *cubito innixa sinistro* (9.518),³⁹⁹ compounding the infelicity of her writing, as the inauspicious left hand holds the wax tablet on which she writes (9.522).⁴⁰⁰ Byblis' pen

³⁹³ Williams 2002, 244.

³⁹⁴ Sara Myers 2014, 12 perceives an additional corollary between Byblis and Ovid's mourning through liquefaction at *Pont.* 1.1.67-8, 1.2.55.

³⁹⁵ Cf. the Pierides' claim that *nec voce ne arte/ vincemur ... nos Emathiis ad Paeonas usque nivosos/ cedemus campis [si victae erimus]* (5.310-12), or the introduction to Orpheus' song: *puerosque canamus/ dilectos superis inconcessisque puellas/ ignibus attonitas meruisse libidine poenam* (10.152-4).

³⁹⁶ Some pre-Ovidian narratives feature Caunus as the pursuer of Byblis, and her stated intention at the end of the monologue may be an allusion to Parth. 11 and the non-extant epic on this theme by Nicaenetus (*Coll. Alex.* fr. 1), probably the *Lycus* (see *BNP* s.v. "Nicaenetus"). Raval 2001, 291 sees this as Byblis reading "an earlier version of her own story in an effort to reconfigure the dynamics of her relationship with Caunus".

³⁹⁷ Byblis acknowledges proleptically the stupidity of her approach by referring to her *amores* as *insani* (*Ov. Met.* 9.519); for the elegiac overtones, see §3.3.

³⁹⁸ She could be reclining on a couch, but *cubito* (518) evokes the idea of a bed by metonymically conjuring *cubiculum*. Cf. the composition of Penelope's letter [*in deserto ... lecto*] (*Ov. Her.* 1.7). Cf. Ovid's instruction for women to write love letters in intimate settings at *Ov. Ars am.* 3.619-20.

³⁹⁹ Cf. the similar language describing Dido at *Virg. Aen.* 4.690: *cubitoque adnexa levavit*. For the intertextuality between Ovid's Byblis and Virgil's Dido, see Jenkins 2000, 443-4.

⁴⁰⁰ Although the pose is a natural one for an assumed right-handed author to take, Ovid's focus on 'leftwardness' seems deliberately pointed. Ovid uses *sinister* and its cognate *laevus* frequently in his

is a *ferrum* (9.522),⁴⁰¹ evoking the word's usual meaning 'sword', and thus the violence that will result from her writing;⁴⁰² readers hear echoes of Canace's incestuous love-letter to Macareus in Ovid's *Heroides*, where the authoress' *ferrum* (11.3) is actually a knife, with which she will kill herself. The parallel lines, the only Ovidian lines opening with *dextra tenet*, are constructed almost identically: in both cases, the left hands hold the mechanism to the authoress' despair, for Byblis, the tablet which will receive her doomed letter and for Canace, the knife poised for her suicide:

dextra tenet ferrum, vacuum tenet altera ceram (Ov. *Met.* 9.522)

dextra tenet calamum, strictum tenet altera ferrum (Ov. *Her.* 11.3)

Before Ovid relates the contents of Byblis' letter, the entire preceding scene has been cast in such a way that it signposts to the audience that Byblis' letter will fail woefully; yet, despite the failure of the epistle to persuade, Byblis' artistic technique is undeniable.

The letter, itself structurally at the centre of the Byblis episode,⁴⁰³ is crafted to highlight Byblis' moments of pathetic prescience: the letter is not only bookmarked by allusions to mortality (9.530-2, 9.561-3), but its exact midpoint (9.547) references Caunus' power to kill Byblis (*tu servare potes, tu perdere solus amantem*).⁴⁰⁴ Death litters the *littera* at emphatic locations, stressing the interdependent causality of her

post-exilic words to describe the Black Sea and, by extension, his own *relegatio*, *Tr.* 1.2.83, 1.8.39, 1.11.31, 2.1.197, 4.1.60, 4.8.42, 4.10.97, 5.10.14, *Pont.* 1.4.31, 2.2.2, 3.8.17, 4.9.119; see Ingleheart 2010, 194–5. The 'left' as inauspicious is a theme originating in augury (e.g. Ov. *Her.* 13.49: *avibus sinistris*). For an overview the bias against the left in ancient literature, see Lloyd 1962, 58.

⁴⁰¹ There is no pre-Ovidian testimonial of *ferrum* meaning pen. Martial uses it with this sense at 14.21.1. See *TLL* 6.1.585.26-8 s.v. "ferrum".

⁴⁰² The completed letter will spill into the margins of the wax tablet (*Met.* 9.564-5), which Raval 2001, 302 (following Tissol 1997, 46) sees as emblematic of the incestuous content's transgression.

⁴⁰³ See Jenkins 2000, 440.

⁴⁰⁴ The capacity of the lover to harm or kill the beloved is a feature of love elegy (e.g. Tib. 1.6 or Prop. 1.9). See Fulkerson 2013 for the suffering lover in elegy.

love, her writing and her death.⁴⁰⁵ The final intimation that Caunus could be the *causa* of Byblis' sepulchral epigraph (9.563) restates the inextricable coupling of death and the written word in the epistle.⁴⁰⁶ The threatening menace of mortality hangs over the episode to remind readers of Ovid's framework that *Byblis in exemplo est ut ament concessa puellae* (9.454); her preconfigured death acts as warning against what happens when one loves *non concessa*.

These nuclei of fatal motifs can be read on two levels: as 'unconscious' pulses through Byblis' psyche, which crystallise into neurotic focuses on traumatic topics, and as deliberately crafted insertions by Ovid into his tale, serving to bolster his argument about the dangerous nature of Byblis' love. It is tempting to favour the latter interpretation, especially given the careful crafting of the letter, which highlights death imagery in a self-consciously bravura way, betraying the involvement of a skilled artist. However, I subscribe to a combined view, in which Ovid's culturally-imbued detestation of incest neurotically peppers his work, mirrored in characters, like Byblis, whose own artistic endeavours are doubly coloured by the neurotic. Byblis' fixation upon her own death is an inevitable product of the society in which her extradiegetic artist lived; the interdictions of taboo force Byblis' eventual artistic failure.

As I have discussed, one of these interdictions comes from law, which is felt throughout the epistle, but at 9.551-5, Byblis overtly rejects its authority over her:

iura senes norint, et quid **liceatque nefasque**
fasque sit, inquirant, **legumque** examina servent.
conveniens Venus est annis temeraria nostris.

⁴⁰⁵ See Ahl 1985, 215 on "the ominous linguistic hesitation between *MORs*, "death," and *aMOR*, "love".

⁴⁰⁶ Jenkins 2000, 445.

quid **liceat**, nescimus adhuc, et cuncta **licere**

credimus

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May old men know the laws and let them ask what is allowed

And what is *fas* and *nefas*, and preserve the considerations of the laws.

Brash Venus / lovemaking is appropriate for our age.

As yet, we do not know what is allowed, and we believe everything

To be allowed.

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These *iura* and *leges* go undefined; the internal world of the *Metamorphoses* seems to exist outside of standard chronological time,⁴⁰⁷ but there is a general sense of temporal progress towards the *τέλος* of *ad mea tempora* (1.4), delineated in the proem. The Augustan age is conceived as always to the fore in the poem's chronologies,⁴⁰⁸ making allusion to concrete social institutions seem to refer more to Ovid's contemporary socio-legal landscape, rather than those of the mythic past; in addition, the laws of historical or mythical Miletus are irretrievable. The appearance of *fas* and *nefas* highlights that the *iura* and *leges* are probably not civic or statutory laws, but rather prevailing moral customs.⁴⁰⁹ Ovid elides the temporal divide between his times and the setting of his myth to establish such moral principles as ubiquitous and categorical, implying that the conventions flouted by Byblis are still in place in early 1st century

⁴⁰⁷ See Musgrove 1998 and Genette 1980 on 'duration' (86-112) and 'anachrony' (35-6). See also Crump 1931, 198-200; Wheeler 2002, 181-91. Other scholars maintain that there is a chronological framework to the *perpetuum ... carmen* (e.g. Cole 2008; Gildenhard & Zissos 2016, 9), but it seems more fruitful to me to consider the *Metamorphoses* as a work with loosely-defined forward-moving chronological trajectory, but numerous coexisting chronologies and temporal ambiguities, as Musgrove suggests.

⁴⁰⁸ Romanisation in the *Metamorphoses* has long been a trend in scholarship, with many pointing to the progression from Ovid's claim to sing a song *ad mea ... tempora* (1.4) to the emergence of concrete contemporary Roman politics in Book 15. See e.g. Feeney 1999; Smith 1994, especially 46, 52-3; Solodow 1988, 82-6; Wheeler 1999, 172-7.

⁴⁰⁹ Cf. pp. 31-2 on *licere*.

CE Rome.⁴¹⁰ Many characters struggle against law and custom in the *Metamorphoses*; Ahl sees this as having an impact on the Latin they speak, claiming that rebelling against society constitutes “a major factor in the determined assault upon fixed forms of words as well as upon fixed modes of thought” (see below).⁴¹¹

In a manner typical of capacious and osmotic ecphrasis, the letter, diegetically written by Byblis, intertextually alludes to Catullus’ *carmen* 5; Byblis’ references literature she could not possibly have read.⁴¹² The theme of reckless abandon in the face of love, which is contrasted with the morality of old men reminds readers of the famous lines:⁴¹³

vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus,
rumoresque senum severiorum
omnes unius aestimemus assis.

Let us live, my Lesbia, and love,
And let us value all the gossip of
Stern old men worth a single *as*.

Carmen 5 rejects the moral precepts of the *mos maiorum*, represented by a group of *senes serviores*; however, Byblis’ rejection of the *mos maiorum* could be seen as a rejection of the distaste of two particular *senes*: Catullus and Ovid.

⁴¹⁰ Legal Romanisation in the *Metamorphoses* occurs throughout; for instance, the emergence of the contemporary Roman Tabularium (record house) at *Met.* 15.810 (see Solodow 1988, 82) or Myrrha’s use of contemporary legalistic lexis in her declamatory speech at 10.320-55 (see Ziogas 2021, 360–82 and my §4.2).

⁴¹¹ Ahl 1985, 213.

⁴¹² See Mayor 2017, 231.

⁴¹³ Catull. 5.1-3. Although Catullus is omnipresent in this scene (and the *Metamorphoses* as a whole), the echoes of his disapproving incest poems (74, 78, 79, 88-91, 111) are particularly pertinent here, especially the brother-sister incest of Lesbia and Lesbius at 79 (see Watson 2006, 44–8).

Of particular interest is that Byblis does not doubt the authority or existence of the *leges*, but simply disputes that they should apply to her;⁴¹⁴ she seeks to free herself from convention, whilst repeatedly reminding herself and her unsympathetic dual audience (Caunus and the wider readership) that she is *au fait* with the idea that doing so may incur repercussions. The self-deception of *cuncta licere / credimus* is especially demonstrative of this: Byblis is so overcome with desire that she proposes lawless anarchy where she and the object of her desire are concerned. Byblis' delusion proleptically configures her eventual demise; by evoking the imagery of moral law, whilst ignoring both its consequences and its application to herself, Byblis pathetically ensures that she will fall victim to the *iura* and *leges* from which she wishes to be free. A valuable comparison here is Iphis,⁴¹⁵ who similarly obsesses over natural law and whose story immediately follows Byblis' (9.666-797). Iphis is socialised as a man, despite being born into what is generally perceived to be a female body,⁴¹⁶ and desires a girl, Ianthe, something which he considers a *[non] naturale malum* (9.730), thinking it would be better to *[petere] quod fas est* (9.748) as *non vult natura* (9.758) Iphis' current love for Ianthe. The striking difference between how these two conflicted characters respond to the pressures of natural law invites a direct comparison: Byblis disregards natural law and is punished horribly for doing so, whereas Iphis treats it as deeply serious and is eventually rewarded with a transitioning metamorphosis, allowing marriage with Ianthe in a hetero-erotic fashion. By narrating Iphis' story immediately subsequent to his Byblis narrative and by closing it (and the whole of

⁴¹⁴ This sort of moral relativism is also present in Byblis' spoken monologue, where she recognises *finge placere mihi; scelus esse videbitur illi* (9.506). The line is based on Ar. *Ra.* 1475 (τί δ' αἰσχρόν, ἦν μὴ τοῖς θεομένοις δοκῆ); itself derived ultimately from a line, spoken by the incestuous lover, Macareus, in the *Aeolus* of Euripides: τί δ' αἰσχρόν ἦν μὴ τοῖσι χρωμένοις δοκῆ (fr. 19);

⁴¹⁵ Anderson 1972, 467, 469 considers the two to be parallel tales.

⁴¹⁶ The debate on terminology to describe Iphis is heated and beyond the scope of this thesis; see Watson 2021. I use he/him/his pronouns for Iphis.

Book 9) with an undeniably positive depiction of Iphis and Ianthe's wedding, Ovid implicitly condemns Byblis' *laissez-faire* approach to natural law, emphasising that she has been deprived of Iphis' happy ending.⁴¹⁷

3.1.2.1 – What's in A Name? Identity Erasure

Names and titles take on central importance in the Byblis episode, as is highlighted by the triple anaphora of her name in three of the first lines of the narrative.⁴¹⁸

Byblida cum Cauno, prolem est enixa gemellam.

Byblis in exemplo est ut ament concessa puellae,

Byblis Apollinei correpta cupidine fratris. 535

She [Cyaneë] gave birth to twin children, Byblis and Caunus.

Byblis is an example for girls that they should love permitted things,

Byblis, seized by desire for her brother, grandson of Apollo. 535

Byblis attempts to subvert this focus on names in writing her letter (9.521-63); she initially adopts a form of anonymity for the beginning of her letter in which the reader is compelled to guess at the author's identity, which is hinted at through subtle allusion:⁴¹⁹

quam, nisi tu dederis, non est habitura salutem, 530

hanc tibi mittit amans; pudet, a, pudet edere nomen!

et si quid cupiam quaeris, sine nomine vellem

posset agi mea causa meo, nec cognita Byblis

ante forem quam spes votorum certa fuisset.

⁴¹⁷ Iphis is also like Byblis in that both are writers. 9.794 consists of a votive *titulus* offered to Isis as thanks for the transformation.

⁴¹⁸ Ov. *Met.* 9.453-5. See Raval 2001, 292-5 Raval 2001, 292-5. See the discussion of family labels at §4.3.

⁴¹⁹ Ov. *Met.* 9.530-4. Cf. the opening of Phaedra's incestuous missive to Hippolytus at Ov. *Her.* 4.1: *quam nisi tu dederis, caritura est ipsa, salutem*. See Raval 2001, 300. Cf. *Tr.* 4.4, 4.5 with Luck 1977, 253.

A health which, unless you grant it, she will never possess, 530
 Your lover sends to you; she is ashamed, so ashamed, to speak her name!
 And, if you ask what I desire, without my name, I wish
 My case could be argued, and I could be unknown as Byblis
 Before the hopes of my prayers were certain.

Jenkins compares her salutation to Lentulus': *quis sim scies ex eo quem ad te misi* (Cic. *Cat.* 3.12).⁴²⁰ For Lentulus, discretion was necessary, as he was a part of the Catilinarian conspiracy and thus had to conceal his identity in correspondence with his co-conspirators; for Byblis, however, identity suppression functions differently. Lentulus seeks to conceal himself from an unintended audience, a potential third-party reader, whereas Byblis seems to want to remain anonymous *vis-à-vis* her intended audience, Caunus. The fact that "Byblis botches it"⁴²¹ by revealing her name so abruptly in the fourth line of the letter suggests an awareness that she cannot conceal her identity forever.⁴²² In this respect, Byblis' letter opens like Sappho's missive to Phaon in the *Heroides*, which asks:⁴²³

ecquid, ut adspecta est studiosae littera dextrae,
 protinus est oculis cognita nostra tuis—
 nisi legisses auctoris nomina Sapphus,
 hoc breve nescires unde movetur opus?

⁴²⁰ Byblis' extended circumlocution expands on the standard letter-opening formula (i.e. *soror Cauno fratri salute dat*); see Anderson 1972, 455. Baca 1971, 33 notes that Ovid had adapted the traditional prose formula in his poetic letters since the *Heroides*; however, this poeticisation never reaches the hyper-complexity of Byblis' epistle.

⁴²¹ Jenkins 2000, 445.

⁴²² Cf. the love letters at Prop. 3.23, which *sine me norant placare puellas ... sine me verba diserta loqui* (5-6). Mayor 2017, 228 reads *sine me* as referring to the lack of identifying information in Propertius' letter, although it may also refer to the physical absence of a lover when writing.

⁴²³ Ov. *Her.* 15.1-4. I take the *Epistula Sapphus* as Ovidian, (with Baca 1971; Kirfel 1969; Showerman & Goold 1977), despite doubts around its authorship. See Kirfel 1969, 102-3: "Ovid spielt hier mit der Nennung des Namens, indem er den Brief mit drei Fragen ... beginnen läßt und den Namen der Absenderin in die zweite Frage kleidet".

As the letters of my eager right hand were examined,
Were they immediately understood by your eyes—
If you had not read their author's name, Sappho,
Would you be unaware from where this brief work comes?

The coyness around identity becomes a sort of flirtation between the reader and the writer, in which the intimacy of the pre-existing relationship between the two is emphasised and enables the receiver to identify the sender. Like Sappho's epistle, Byblis' letter is not an ordinary inept letter from wooer to wooed, such as those Ovid advises his male readers send to their beloveds,⁴²⁴ but one which presupposes a developed prior relationship. The architectures of how Byblis' prior relationship plays out in the letter are dramatically different to the *Epistula Sapphus*; although both stress the close relation between sender and addressee, for Sappho this adds to the intimacy of her relationship with Phaon, whereas Byblis' intimacy with Caunus is precisely the obstacle to a full revelation of identity. However, like Sappho, Byblis seems aware that her identity must eventually be revealed to the recipient of her letter;⁴²⁵ disguising her identity aims at downplaying those aspects of her love for Caunus which mark it as taboo, namely their familial bond.

Byblis' need to veil the incestuous nature of her attraction necessitates that she carefully curate which aspects of her identity appear on the page. In the letter, Byblis only twice uses the language of sisterhood, once in a recognition that she has actively been unsisterly,⁴²⁶ and once in an admission that their blood-relation provides a good pretext to hide their (proposed) sexual union. She claims *dulcia fraterno sub nomine*

⁴²⁴ Ov. *Ars am.* 1.437-86. For Ovidian epistolary instruction, see Farrell 1998, 311-16. Ovid provides advice for women writing love letters (*Ars am.* 3.617-28), though it differs little from the advice to men.

⁴²⁵ See Demetr. *Eloc.* 227: *σχέδον γὰρ εἰκόνα ἑκάστος τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ψυχῆς γράφει τὴν ἐπιστολήν.*

⁴²⁶ Ov. *Met.* 9.539: *oscula sentiri non esse sororia possent.* Cf. Ov. *Am.* 2.5.24-6: *oscula ... / qualia non fratri tulerit germana severo.*

furta tegemus (9.558), marking an (un)conscious shift from her *nomen sororium* and towards the masculine *nomen fraternum*;⁴²⁷ she foregrounds his identity and conceals her own to prefigure their union into a single being. Byblis' decision to conceal her sisterhood is emphasised in the information provided about the first draft of her epistle: Ovid narrates that *scripta 'soror' fuerat; visum est delere sororem* (9.528) which must relate to her attempt and eventual failure to recreate the standard *incipit* for a letter *soror Cauno fratri salutem dat*.⁴²⁸ This deviation from the expected technical formula highlights both the extreme abnormality of the scene and the deliberateness of Byblis' writing. Elsewhere in the letter, she seeks to dissemble her familial bonds altogether, choosing to self-identify as an *amans* (9.531, 547, 561),⁴²⁹ which erases any trace of a sibling relationship.

Byblis' confused identity pervades the entire episode and is inextricable from the muddled identification of her love for Caunus. She decries the conflict of her identity in the pathetic exclamation *o ego, si liceat mutato nomine iungi [tibi]* (9.487). In his narration, Ovid tells us that Byblis *mendaci diu pietatis fallitur umbra* (9.460) and that the result of this deception is that *iam dominum appellat, iam nomina sanguinis odit, / Byblida iam mavult quam se vocet ille sororem* (9.466-7). The physical distancing within the line of *Byblida* and *sororem* demonstrates the distinct separation of her two identities: lover and sister.⁴³⁰ Despite this separation, the identities are interlinked; Byblis herself cannot initially identify whether the source of her love is wholesome sibling affection or incestuous lust. Attempting to discover the nature of her desire drives her to be more brazen: *sed nondum manifesta sibi est nullumque sub illo / igne*

⁴²⁷ Cf. Byblis' earlier comment: *verum nocet esse sororem* (9.478).

⁴²⁸ Anderson 1972, 455. See Raval 2001, 293; Spentzou 2019, 425.

⁴²⁹ *fatens amorem* (9.561) is surely synonymous with *amans*.

⁴³⁰ Raval 2001, 293.

facit votum; verumtamen aestuat intus (9.464-5). Ovid later plays the same trick of physically separating identities within the line, when Byblis' instruction to her *famula* has her delaying reference to Caunus' degree of relation: "*fer has, fidissime, nostro—*" / *dixit et adiecit longo post tempore "fratri"* (9.570-1).⁴³¹

Byblis' dissociation from aspects of her identity is epitomised in the muddled mixing of grammatical persons in her letter. The majority of the epistle is written in the first person, as would be appropriate for the form, but the first two lines are in the third person; although this is standard in letters, following the appropriate (although here transformed) *incipit* detailed above, its combination with other separations and dissonances of identity renders the normal third person formula jarring in Byblis' letter. This results in the uncomfortable way that Byblis self-identifies with the third person subject of *pudet, a, pudet edere nomen!* (9.531). The splitting of her identity into the shameful 'she' (Byblis as sister) and the confident 'I' (Byblis as *amans*), who goes on to preach reckless abandon in the face of taboo love, vocalises Byblis' vacillating identity between sister and lover.⁴³² Byblis casts herself as oscillating between two secure identities, often existing in an abjected grey area. The need to abjectify her identity as something not wholly the Self, nor wholly the Other is very apt for a woman afflicted by abjected taboo. Byblis' identity becomes, in the words of Kristeva, "ce qui ne respecte pas les limites, les places, les règles. L'entre-deux, l'ambigu, le mixte",⁴³³ just as the love from which she suffers is something which operates between sisterly love and normative heteroerotic desire; that is where its

⁴³¹ Cf. the nurse's failure to use *parens* in the Myrrha episode (10.429-30), delayed in the line by Ovid/Orpheus similarly to here: "*vive,*" *ait haec, "potiere tuo"—et, non ausa "parente" / dicere.* Cf. Cicero's pun that he always mistakes whether Clodius is Clodia's brother or husband (*Cael.* 32): *quod quidem facerem vehementius, nisi intercederent mihi inimicitiae cum istius mulieris viro—fratrem volui dicere; semper hic erro.* See §4.3.

⁴³² For the relationship here between *pudor* and silence, see Bonadini 2020, especially 290-4.

⁴³³ Kristeva 1980a, 12.

focus is a man who is both Other to Byblis, but also a part of her Self, by being her twin brother.

3.2 – Speech and Slippage: Aporia and the Neurotic

I now turn to Byblis' two monologues (9.474-516, 9.585-629), which bookend her letter and provide framing and rationale for her expression within it. Like the letter, these speeches allow Ovid to toy with issues of speech and disclosure;⁴³⁴ they also give Ovid an opportunity to explore the aporetic side of Byblis' desire. In her letter, Byblis must write confidently in order to convince Caunus to fall in love with her, whereas private soliloquies permit doubt. The first speech is dense with rhetorical questions,⁴³⁵ in which she constructs, explores and then rejects potential futures for her and Caunus.⁴³⁶ In addition, both monologues are full of anacolutha, aposiopesis, backtracking and free-association of thought, which represent how the anxieties of incestuous taboo affect the consciousness of the afflicted. I first discuss Byblis' use of rhetorical questions, especially in the first monologue, before exploring how Byblis' artistic style is chaotic and aporetic. I finally examine how elegiac themes and lexis are used to legitimise (to herself) her incestuous attraction.

3.2.1 – Aporitic Questioning

Byblis speaks her first monologue (9.474-516) immediately after a passionate sex-dream in which she consummates her desire for Caunus.⁴³⁷ The subsequent soliloquy is something which Byblis *profatur dubie mente* (9.473), with Ovid's use of a

⁴³⁴ See Westerhold 2018, 43–4.

⁴³⁵ Across the soliloquy's 42 lines, there are 18 rhetorical questions. The second monologue features only four over its 44-line duration.

⁴³⁶ Cf. how, in *carmen* 8, Catullus casts himself as both second person addressee (e.g. 8.1: *miser Catulle, desinas ineptire*) and a third person object (12: *iam Catullus obdurat*), amid a stream of rhetorical questions. At lines 14-18, Catullus similarly sketches a series of hypothetical futures for Lesbia's love life.

⁴³⁷ Cf. Europa's sex-dream at Mosch. *Eur.* 1-27; see Morales 2016 on dreams as sites of incomprehensible sexuality. See also Hennebühl 2013, 41–3.

derivative from *fari* evoking ideas of (*ne*)*fas*. This is a sort of failed self-analytic oneirocriticism.⁴³⁸ The dream to which Byblis responds is not unclear: as Ovid narrates in unambiguous Latin, Byblis *saepe vidit quod amat: visa est quoque iungere fratri / corpus et erubuit* (9.470-1).⁴³⁹ However, when Byblis performs dream analysis, she cannot understand the dream or her reaction to it and commences her catalogue of questions with *tacitae quid vult sibi noctis imago?* The dream is not abstract: Byblis' sleeping psyche conjures explicit sexual scenes which reify her waking desires, and yet the dreamer cannot fully conceive of the dream's meaning.

Byblis' failure to come to terms with her incestuous love, despite clearly understanding it on some level,⁴⁴⁰ persists through the rest of the monologue. After an initial—and false—argument that she would prefer not to love Caunus, Byblis delights in the *jouissance* of her desire for her brother for 20 lines, detailing his physical beauty and her passionate response to it.⁴⁴¹ Lines 481-6 represent the orgasmic pleasure of a sex-dream,⁴⁴² and Ovid meticulously details the somatic and mental pleasures which Byblis undergoes as she recounts the throes of her vision.⁴⁴³

Byblis begins the scene with a joke, claiming *testis abest somno* (9.481); from the rest of the passage, *testis* clearly means 'witness',⁴⁴⁴ but at a first reading, and given the

⁴³⁸ Oneirocriticism was extremely popular in the ancient world; see Grottanelli 1999, 147; Hall 2011a on Artemidorus' *Oneirocritica*. Dreams have always been associated with taboo, both in ancient literature and in modern psychoanalysis; Anderson 1972, 452 admits that "Ovid's dramatic sensitivity here anticipates Freud". See Ranucci 1976, 57: "il pensiero dell'incesto è negato nel momento stesso in cui sta affiorando a livello cosciente, ed è trasferito dal piano della realtà al piano onirico, dove può liberamente manifesta". See Becht-Jördens & Wehmeier 2001; Henneböhl 2013.

⁴³⁹ N.b. the enjambment of *corpus* onto line 9.471; by delaying *corpus*, Ovid permits a polyvalent interpretation of *iungere fratri*, playing with the double meaning of *iungo* as both 'joined in kinship' and 'joined in sexual intercourse' (*TLL* VII 2.658.60-659.54 s.v. "iungo). See Ranucci 1976, 60.

⁴⁴⁰ Anderson 1972, 452; Hill 1999, 156.

⁴⁴¹ See Ranucci 1976, 58 on the utility of the oneiric plain as a space for bluntness.

⁴⁴² The female orgasm is rare in Classical texts (see Gibson 2003, 398–9); however, see Hp. *Genit.* 4, Lucr. 4. 1192–1207; the *locus classicus* for the female orgasm is Ov. *Her.* 15.123-134, see below. For dreams as inducing somatic pleasures, see Sen. *Ep.* 102.1.

⁴⁴³ Cf. Sappho's possible self-induced orgasm at Ov. *Her.* 15.131-4. For a discussion of arousal and orgasm in this passage, see Lipking 1988, 69–70; Thorsen 2014, 14–16.

⁴⁴⁴ For the Ovidian motif of a witness to intercourse, see Ingleheart 2021a, 312–16.

intimacy of the scene, the Latin permits a cruder interpretation in ‘testicle’.⁴⁴⁵ In what I argue describes an orgasm in response to a dream, Ovid explicitly alludes to the reality that male genitalia are absent, compounding the unnaturalness of the scene: the sexually overt woman brings herself to climax at the mere thought of a taboo *tête-à-tête* with her brother,⁴⁴⁶ without the implied-to-be-necessary appendage of penis and testes.⁴⁴⁷ In addition, there is humour in the strength of her sexual desire for Caunus being denoted by the precise lack of the organs such desires require for fulfilment.⁴⁴⁸ Byblis, through Ovid, here uses language reminiscent of other Ovidian orgasms; in the *Ars amatoria*, he presents the female orgasm thus:⁴⁴⁹

sentiat ex imis venerem **resoluta medullis**

femina, et ex aequo res iuuet illa duos.

nec blandae voces iucundaque murmura cessent,

795

nec taceant mediis improba verba iocis.

Let the woman feel sex, melted from her deepest innards,

And let that act delight both parties equally.

And may sweet come-ons and pleasant murmurs not cease,

795

Nor may naughty words fall silent mid-play.

The image is very similar to Byblis’ question *ut iacui totis resoluta medullis* (9.484): in both texts, the female orgasm is described as a overwhelming and deconstructive

⁴⁴⁵ OLD 1932 s.v. “testis¹” and “testis²”. Adams 1990, 67 discusses how *testis* is “common in puns” and has a “risqué and jocose quality”; cf. Plaut. *Curc.* 31, *Mil.* 1420, 1426; Stat. *Ach.* 2.152; Phaedr. 3.11.5; Mart. 7.62.6 and *CP* 2.1, 15.7. See also Adams 1990, 212.

⁴⁴⁶ In Classical thought, women were, by nature sexually voracious; e.g. Hes. fr. 211a-b.

⁴⁴⁷ Cf. Ar. *Lys.* 142-3: χαλεπὰ μὲν ναὶ τὸ σιῶ / γυναικῆς ἐσθ’ ὑπνῶν ἄνευ ψωλᾶς μόνας.

⁴⁴⁸ The desirability of testicles in Roman thought is difficult to discern. The Emperor Elagabalus may have sought out men with large testicles (*SHA* (Lampr.) *Heliogab.* 5.4, 9.3); cf. Odysseus’ testicles at *CP* 68.24. All these references rely on reading *vasatus* and *vasum* respectively as metaphorical descriptions of testicles (an interpretation rejected by Adams 1990, 41–3). It is not crucial to my argument whether testicles were a source of attraction, but their absence certainly implies that Byblis is alone.

⁴⁴⁹ Ov. *Ars am.* 3.793-6. Cf. similar phrasing of presumably mutual heterosexual orgasms at *Ars am.* 2.721-8, *Am.* 3.14.21-26. See Ingleheart 2021a.

pleasure taking place in the *medulla*.⁴⁵⁰ Notably, the only other passage in extant Latin which features similar phrasing, in Manilius' *Astronomica*, seems to take the Ovidian metaphor of 'melted innards' and literalise it to describe the phenomenon of non-specified *squamigera* 'squirting out' their *umores*.⁴⁵¹

In addition to the suggestive use of *medulla*, Byblis' dream is thick with sexualised vocabulary: *voluptas* (9.481, 485), *Venus, tener, Cupido* (9.482), *gaudia* and *libido* (9.483) dominate the scene. The reference to *libido* rendering Byblis *manifesta* is reminiscent of another scene in the *Ars amatoria*, where Ovid instructs women to take care when faking orgasms, lest the deception become clear (*ne sis manifesta*).⁴⁵² For Byblis, unlike the *Ars*' unnamed pupil, the moment of climax—and not its absence—is precisely what is made manifest, presumably by some somatic or sonic reaction, perhaps like the *blandae voces iucundaque murmura* of the *Ars*. In addition, *gaudia* seems to have been a technical term for orgasm,⁴⁵³ in addition to simply referring to sexual intercourse, and as Zuckerberg notes, the verbal form *gaudeo* is often a euphemism for the specifically female orgasm.⁴⁵⁴ Byblis' dream of Caunus, then, is highly erotic, in a manner which would have been unsubtle to readers familiar with the ways that such scenes were written. Byblis lays the imagery on thick, highlighting the disparity between her aporia about the nature and significance of her sex-dream and the audience's ability to read Ovid's Latin.

⁴⁵⁰ It seems unnecessary to identify *medulla* with specific organs in either instance; the word refers to the internal parts sensitive to orgasm; see *OLD* 1091 s.v. "medulla" 2b. The image of the damaged or harmed (especially burnt) *medulla* is typical in love poetry at moments of intense (but not necessarily orgasmic) passion: Catull. 35.15, 45.16, 64.93-4, 100.7, *Ov. Am.* 3.10.27, *Her.* 4.15, *Met.* 14.351. See now Segal 1986, 34-5.

⁴⁵¹ Manil. 5.680-1: *umorisque vomit socias per mutua dotes / et fluit in liquidam tabem resoluta medullas*. For Ovid, vaginal orgasm is a wet phenomenon: *ulteriora pudet narrare, sed omnia fiunt, / et iuvat, et siccae non licet esse mihi* (*Her.* 15.133-4).

⁴⁵² *Ov. Ars am.* 3.801.

⁴⁵³ See *Ov. Am.* 2.3.2, *Mart.* 1.34.4, 9.41.8, 11.26.5, *Petron. Sat.* 87, 132, *Auson. Ep.* 115.15, *Calp. Ecl.* 1.14.

⁴⁵⁴ Zuckerberg 2018, 132-3. It seems implausible that this sense was restricted to one gender.

Despite the clear pleasure in which Byblis delights, she once again claims not to understand her desire at line 495: *quid mihi significant ergo mea visa?* This is striking insofar as it comes directly after 20 lines which seem to explicitly answer Byblis' question: the sleeping dream unveils her waking passion, which she clearly recognises but does not fully accept. Byblis becomes a figure unwilling to self-acknowledge, only able to process her desire if she does not explicitly decipher its meaning to herself.⁴⁵⁵ Through Byblis' inability to fully articulate her own mentality, Ovid captures the incomprehensible enormity of the so-called "*Inzestscheu*".⁴⁵⁶

Byblis' incessant questioning seems, at times, to protrude from the text and her diegetic crisis of desire to speak to her existence as a fictional creation.⁴⁵⁷ Several times in the monologue,⁴⁵⁸ Byblis asks questions, seemingly directed at the extradiegetic poet, Ovid, which probe the reality of her self and her diegetic world, in apparent contrast to the outside world of the poet and the audience. For brief moments, she becomes self-aware that she is an artifice of the poet, and one whose narrative and words are being used by Ovid to tell a story. The most explicit instance of this unusual self-awareness comes immediately after Byblis has provided both divine and human *exempla* of incestuous pairings (9.497-9, 9.507). At lines 9.508-9, she asks three questions which highlight her crisis of diegesis:

unde sed hos novi? cur haec exempla paravi?
quo feror?

⁴⁵⁵ Cf. Feeney 1991, 196.

⁴⁵⁶ The title of Freud 1991's first chapter.

⁴⁵⁷ Cf. Hardie 2002, 5-7 on the *puella* of *Am.* 3.12: "she has stepped out of the pages of the *Amores* to become a real person" (7).

⁴⁵⁸ E.g. 9.474-5, 495-6, 508-9. Byblis' monologue also privileges verbs in the passive voice, or verbs of which Byblis herself is the object, creating a sense of her own incapacity to act within the narrative and of Ovid's authorial dominion over her.

But where did I get these examples from? Why did I provide these examples?

To where am I being dragged?

Byblis does not know from where her self-justifying examples originate, and her ignorance incites a rupture in the flow of the narrative, which repositions an audience's relationship to the reality and credibility of the scene they are receiving. Byblis is aware that her diegetic future is utterly reliant on her poetic creator's whims:⁴⁵⁹ he provides the examples of Saturn, Ops, Oceanus, Tethys, Jupiter, Juno and the Aeolids (see below) through her voice, leaving his fictional creation unable to comprehend her own justification. Such questioning problematises her existence outside of the specific scenes Ovid chooses to create for his audience; readers are left hyper-aware of the fictionality of Ovid's fiction, an effect stemming from a nexus of textual taboo emotions.

The rhetorical question *quo feror?* is first attested at Virg. *Aen.* 10.670, where Aeneas is bemoaning his lack of control over battle, but becomes a relatively common phrase in Ovid's first-person writing, where it is used exclusively to self-consciously allude to Ovid becoming distracted in the process of writing.⁴⁶⁰ The incorporation of a phrase which Ovid seemingly or performatively uses to express his personal moments of confusion heightens Byblis' metapoetic artificiality and her relationship to the artificer. We may compare the osmotic potential of ecphrasis, discussed earlier in this chapter: Byblis' self-awareness of her fictionality marks her as a figure notably salient

⁴⁵⁹ Cf. Medea at Ov. *Met.* 7.19-21: *trahit invitam nova vis, aliudque cupido, / mens aliud suadet; video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor.* The lines highlight Medea's textuality, both alluding to her questioning Ovid's authorial decisions and intertextually recalling similar lines in Euripides' version of the myth (*Med.* 1078-80): *θυμὸς δὲ κρείσσω τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων, / ὅσπερ μεγίστων αἴτιος κακῶν βροτοῖς.* See Curley 2013, 5 on "characters who realise they are dramatic characters".

⁴⁶⁰ Ov. *Ars am.* 3.667; *Fast.* 4.573, 5.147. Cf. one of the only surviving lines of Ovid's *Medea* (fr. 2): *feror huc illuc, uae, plena deo,* which itself adapts a line from Ennius' lost *Medea Exul: quo nunc me vortam? quod iter incipiam ingredi?* (fr. 284). Cf. also Medea at *Her.* 12.209: *quo ferret ira, sequar.* See Fowler 1987 on "the rhetoric of desperation"; see too Curley 2013, 147-50 for such rhetoric in the *Metamorphoses*.

to the world of the text, something at once part of the diegesis and of Ovid's extradiegetic reality, and thus as an entry-point for 'real-world' issues into the text.⁴⁶¹ She operates almost like a Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt* in how her aporetic question confronts the extradiegetic creator,⁴⁶² Ovid, and, in so doing, marks her as not having an existence outside of his creation.

This interpretation of Ovid's Byblis sees her as a Kristevan *l'entre-deux*,⁴⁶³ caught between diegesis and extradiegesis;⁴⁶⁴ she becomes a lens through which Ovid's super-ego, forged in the Augustan *milieu*, pours into the text to be magnified and explored.

3.2.2 – Aporetic Inconsistency

incertae tanta est discordia mentis⁴⁶⁵

Ovid's Byblis is consistently inconsistent with her logic and rationale in both of her monologues. She vacillates between opinions and emotions, seemingly at random, creating a sense of confusion and acrasia,⁴⁶⁶ which seems to manifest the cultural anxiety around the emotions she is struggling to verbalise.⁴⁶⁷ At times, it is unclear whether these internal contradictions represent Byblis' conscious desire to repress her taboo emotionality, a neurotic impulse within her psyche to suppress incestuous sexuality or Ovid's own discomfort with his material.

The first example of this in the earlier monologue does not constitute an inconsistency within Byblis' speech *per se*, but rather a discrepancy between how Ovid depicts her

⁴⁶¹ Mayor 2017, 17 on "elegiac discourse" in the *Metamorphoses* as a literary space in which a reader can interrogate the relationship between 'reality' and 'fiction'. See §3.2.3.

⁴⁶² For the *Verfremdungseffekt*, see Brecht 1967, 301; Brooker 1994, 191–5.

⁴⁶³ Kristeva 1980, 12.

⁴⁶⁴ Cf. Rosati 2002, 282, 286 on metadiegesis; see §1.1.1.2.

⁴⁶⁵ Ov. *Met.* 9.630, Cf. Myrrha at Ov. *Met.* 10.445: *tanta est discordia mentis*.

⁴⁶⁶ Cf. §2.2.2.

⁴⁶⁷ See Westerhold 2018, 47–8.

emotional state, and how she interprets it. Ovid summarises Byblis' erotic dream as *saepe videt quod amat* (9.470), which makes sense in the context of her developing love for Caunus and the eventual open displays of passion she will make. However, almost immediately after Ovid's diagnosis, Byblis analyses the dream: *quam nolim rata sit* (9.475). This discrepancy is further problematised when Byblis shortly accepts Ovid's definition of her love, without any clear logical transition: she begins to characterise the dream she recently wished not to be true as *gaudia quanta tuli! quam me manifesta libido / contigit!* (9.483-4). The rest of her first monologue fluctuates between these extremes: at one moment accepting her love for Caunus, at the next repressing it. The composite speech becomes unclear and confused, and by its conclusion she has reached an unconvincing solution: to write her love letter, doomed *ab initio*.

It almost seems that Byblis' purpose in her first monologue is to confuse: as she herself is confused by her feelings, her speech confuses the reader of whose presence she is diegetically unaware (or is she?). She achieves this through hypothesising an unnecessarily complex family tree, at the core of which she wishes to place herself and Caunus as sibling-spouses.⁴⁶⁸ Byblis' family network begins simply with *possim, si non sit frater, amare / ... verum nocet esse sororem* (9.477-8; see Figure 3.6).

⁴⁶⁸ The use of familial language which does not explicitly refer to Byblis and Caunus adds to the confusion. I.e. *cum matre Cupido* (Ov. *Met.* 9.482), *di nempe suas habuere sorores* (9.497) and *Saturnus Opem iunctam sibi sanguine duxit* (9.598). See now §4.3.

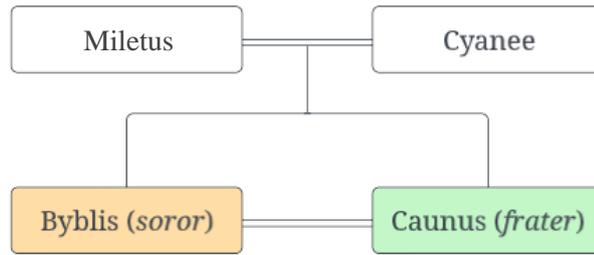


Figure 3.6: Byblis' actual family.

As Byblis' neurosis and aporia increase across the duration of the monologue, so the stable concepts of *soror* and *frater* metamorphose:⁴⁶⁹

quam bene, Caune, tuo poteram nurus esse parenti!

quam bene, Caune, meo poteras gener esse parenti!

How well, Caunus, I could be your father's daughter-in-law!

How well, Caunus, you could be my father's son-in-law!

In these twinning lines, Byblis restructures *soror* and *frater* in relation to their father, Miletus: the *soror* (Byblis) becomes a *nurus*, while the *frater* becomes a *gener* (see Figure 3.7). Both terms dilute the interrelation between Byblis and Caunus, expressing them in terms of *tuus ... parens* and *meus ... parens*, constructing both *parentes* to be different, although in actuality, they are the same man.⁴⁷⁰

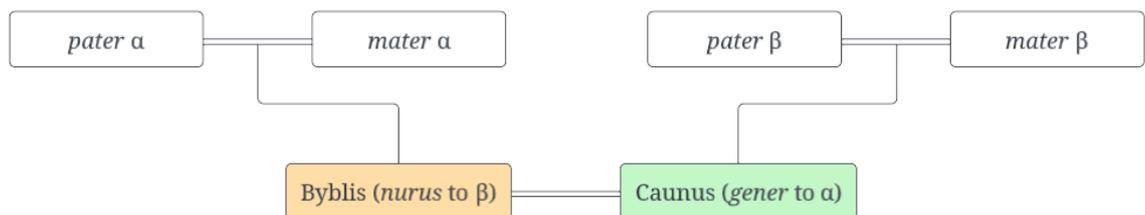


Figure 3.7: Byblis' desired family.

Later, she more explicitly constructs herself and Caunus as unrelated through use of familial lexis: *omnia ... essent communia nobis, / praeter avos* (9.490-1). Byblis' wish for an unreal state of unrelation is a flight of fancy, cut short by more domestic

⁴⁶⁹ Ov. *Met.* 9.498-9. See Wills 1996, 278 with parallels.

⁴⁷⁰ Both terms explicitly refer to marriage, extending Byblis' designs beyond simple sexual union, unlike those of Myrrha; see Ranucci 1976, 61.

vocabulary, as she recognises the inevitable reality of her situation: a woman other than her becomes the *mater* to Caunus' children (9.492), and Caunus will be *nil nisi frater* (9.494). After the brief attempt to reidentify herself and Caunus as the unrelated *nurus* and *gener* of their respective fathers, she resorts to their inevitably being a *germana* (9.510)⁴⁷¹ and a *frater* (9.494, 504, 510). Byblis' anxiety around the nature of her love and her half-hearted wish *nec, nisi qua fas est germanae, frater ametur* (9.510) cause her to theoretically reconstitute the nature of her relation to Caunus, casting them as non-siblings, whose love would be exculpated, before reality shatters the dream.

There is a third facet to the inconsistency of truth in Byblis' monologue, which again pertains to her saliency within Ovid's overarching narrative in the *Metamorphoses*. Byblis alludes to four sets of incestuous couplings in an attempt to justify her own taboo desire.⁴⁷² Saturn and Ops, Oceanus and Tethys, Jupiter and Juno (9.498-9) and the Aeolids (9.507). These are perplexing choices: they all belong to a group of famous incest narratives which Ovid seems—almost consciously—to omit from the *Metamorphoses*, despite the importance of the actors in these myths. The three named couples feature prominently throughout the epic,⁴⁷³ but Ovid actively occludes the incestuous nature of their relation in every scene other than this, with one exception.⁴⁷⁴ The reference to the Aeolids is a little more complex as the three diverse Greek

⁴⁷¹ *Germana* indicates blood relation more powerfully than *soror*, which is often used metaphorically; this adds to the finality of her resignation. See *TLL* 6.2.1915.10-11 s.v. “germanus”: *sensu stricto de iis, qui naturali fraternitatis vinculo continentur*. *Germanus* was not used more loosely until the Christian period (*TLL* 6.2.1918.74-5).

⁴⁷² Although it seems that Byblis initially concludes that her exempla do not justify her love, the writing of the letter suggests she persuades herself.

⁴⁷³ Saturn (*Ov. Met.* 1.113, 6.126, 9.498, 15.858), Ops (9.498), Oceanus (2.510, 9.267, 9.499, 13.292, 13.951, 15.12, 15.30) and Tethys (2.69, 2.156, 2.509, 9.499, 11.784, 13.951). On Oceanus and Tethys, see Watson 2006, 39. Jupiter features in some 100 lines and Juno in around 50.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ov. Met.* 3.265, where Juno says *sum regina Iovisque / et soror et coniunx, certe soror*. The line is reminiscent of *Virg. Aen.* 1.47. Cf. *Sen. Herc.* 1-2.

mythological figures called Aeolus are combined in the *Metamorphoses*, following the schema established by Diodorus Siculus.⁴⁷⁵ Therefore, Ovid mentions several children of Aeolus in his *magnum opus*,⁴⁷⁶ but never explicitly the incestuous Aeolids, famous from the *Odyssey* and Aeschylus' *Supplikes* (see §6.2.2).⁴⁷⁷ This casts Byblis as uniquely aware of other incestuous lovers, providing *exempla* which are not to be found in the epic more broadly, and it is only through her voice that Ovid can discuss characters whose incest he otherwise conceals.⁴⁷⁸ There is also an added sense of irony to Byblis' question *cur haec exempla paravi?*, as, within the diegesis, the examples do come out of nowhere: Ovid has occluded them, despite ample opportunity to elaborate.

The inconsistency of logic persists into Byblis' final monologue, which comes after Caunus has rejected her; across its 27 lines, she assigns and reassigns culpability for the rejection to numerous sources, concluding *haec [omnia] nocuere mihi* (9.613). Oddly, she never blames Caunus for the rejection, maintaining an idealisation of the beloved even up until to the moment when he is threatening her life. If the slave correctly reported Caunus' *ferocia dicta* (9.580-1) to Byblis, containing the threat of *poena morte* (9.579), it seems that her initial *et merito* (9.585) should refer to Byblis accepting her punishment.⁴⁷⁹ However, she seems deluded as to the sincerity of the threat, claiming:⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁵ See *BNP* s.v. "Aeolus". D. S. 4.67.

⁴⁷⁶ Athamas at *Ov. Met.* 4.464-511 and Macareus, whose incestuous affair with Canace features elsewhere in Ovid (*Her.* 11; *Tr.* 2.384) but is absent from the *Metamorphoses*. The syncretic figure of Aeolus himself appears elsewhere in the *Metamorphoses* at 1.262, 4.487, 4.512, 6.116, 6.681, 7.357, 7.672, 11.444, 11.573, 11.748, 13.26, 14.103, 14.223, 14.224, 14.232.

⁴⁷⁷ *Hom. Od.* 10.5-7. Byblis' use of Aeolus, King of the Winds, is perverted in the extended storm metaphor in her second speech (9.589-94), where winds she thought to be her allies turn adversaries; cf. *Hom. Od.* 10.47-55.

⁴⁷⁸ Cf. my comments on Arachne's similar disclosure at §5.

⁴⁷⁹ The metaphorical imagery of *aufferor in scopulos igitur, subversaque toto / obruor oceano* (9.493-4) compounds this.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ov. Met.* 9.613-15.

neque enim est **de tigride natus**

nec rigidas silices solidumve in pectore ferrum

aut adamantam gerit nec lac bibit ille leaenae. 615

For he is not born of a tigress

Nor does he carry hard stones or rigid iron in his heart

Nor too adamant, and he does not drink the milk of a lioness. 615

Byblis inscribes herself into a type-scene, an Inverse Birth Motif, in which women—most famously, Dido (Virg. *Aen.* 4.466-7)—denounce others (typically men who are their lovers) by claiming that they are the offspring of lions, tigers and / or rocks.⁴⁸¹ Here, there is irony in the animalised mother being Cyaneë, who is mother to both Byblis and Caunus. This set-piece of denunciation is usually used in anger, as a rebuke against a man who has caused physical harm to the speaker. However, in contrast to the tradition, Byblis is not angry at her would-be lover, but sympathetic, despite knowing his murderous intent. She is transfixed by the power of her love, unable to realise the danger she is in, and so persists in her wooing. Yet she is somehow correct about Caunus: although she *pigeat temptasse, libet temptare; modumque / exit et infelix committit saepe repelli*, Caunus does not attempt to harm her,⁴⁸² simply leaving Miletus to found his own eponymous city. By having Byblis remain sympathetic to Caunus, deviating from the typical Inverse Birth Motif, Ovid again marks her as different, even from other women in similar situations. Byblis' response is made all the more perverse than the typical unfeminine anger depicted in such scenes because of how she performs a type, the emotion of which she is not feeling. Where Dido is monstrous because of her anger at men, Byblis is even more the monster in her

⁴⁸¹ See Pease 1935, 316–17 for a list of examples. Cf. Ov. *Met.* 8.120-1 (see §6.2.1).

⁴⁸² Cf. Cinyras' violence at the discovery of Myrrha's incest at Ov. *Met.* 10.472-8.

appropriation of the mere aesthetics of feminine rage: she adopts an intertextual role which does not synergise with her internal sympathies for her addressee.

The inconsistencies of Byblis' soliloquies pertain to her mentality and emotional response to her desire fluctuating over the course of her speeches. In addition to such semantic confusions, Byblis' Latin is often chaotically ordered, approaching anacoluthon; this has the effect of dramatising her interior neurosis, creating uncomfortably clunky lines, where meaning is partially occluded. At the moment in her first speech where Byblis realises that Caunus is inevitably her brother, she utters what Anderson calls an "involved" garble:⁴⁸³ *at mihi, quae male sum, quod tu, sortita parentes* (9.493). At a similar apogee of neurotic tension, when Byblis is struggling between deciding whether it was the nature or timing of her revelation to Caunus which resulted in his rejection, she speaks lines rife with grammatical confusion and oscillating perspective:⁴⁸⁴

nonne vel illa dies fuerat, vel tota voluntas,
sed potius mutanda dies?

Surely either that day, or all my desire,
But rather the day ought to have changed?

The brief focus on her *tota voluntas* is swiftly circumnavigated, and she restates her emphasis on *dies*, repressing the culpability of her desire. Byblis' speech becomes a nexus of neurotic linguistic discomfort, in which the 'unspeakability'—literal *nefas*—

⁴⁸³ Anderson 1972, 453.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ov. Met.* 9.598-9. The motif of *illa dies* beginning tragedy (especially ill-fated love affairs) is common: *Ov. Her.* 7.93 (the day of Dido's erotic downfall), *Met.* 2.711 (Mercury falls in love with Herse) and *Virg. Aen.* 4.169-7 (Dido's troglodytic 'marriage' to Aeneas). Cf. Ovid's usage of his own life at *Tr.* 2.109 (the day when Ovid saw the *error* which caused his *relegatio*; see Ingleheart 2006, 2010, 129). Moles 1984, 51 parallels the Virgilian example above with the ἀρχὴ κακῶν motif in Greek tragedy and epic, for which, see, *Hom. Il.* 5.63, 11.604, *E. Aeol.* fr. 32, *Hipp.* 881, *El.* 907, *IA* 1124, *Hdt.* 5.28.1, 5.30.1, 5.97.3, *Thuc.* 2.12.3.

of her desire obliterates her control of Latin.⁴⁸⁵ Such discomfort is not limited to the Byblis episode, and features at moments of heightened neurotic tension when characters are forced to verbalise something beyond their cognition.⁴⁸⁶

3.2.3 – Acceptance through Elegy?

Ovid, the elegist *par excellence*, returns to many of his former elegiac themes and motifs in the Byblis episode. Mayor has convincingly argued that it is insufficient to merely point out elegiac *topoi* in the *Metamorphoses*, stressing that it is a far more productive endeavour to identify the pulse of what he terms “elegiac discourse” throughout the epic.⁴⁸⁷ In this section, I examine how specific elegiac tropes of this ‘discourse’ subversively interact with the Byblis episode to build on the scene’s taboo content with taboo genre play. I take as perverted examples of Mayor’s general pulsing ‘elegiac discourse’ two *topoi*: fire imagery and the power dynamics between the *puella* and *amator*. These examples serve as evidence for the same argument: that “by assuming the role of the active loving subject, Byblis subverts the hierarchical model of elegy” *qua* gender and power structures.⁴⁸⁸ In casting her in this subversive role, Ovid underscores the perverseness of her love.

Let us unpack some of the aspects of elegiac discourse which are most pertinent to Byblis. Mayor makes two claims about elegiac discourse, between which he makes no explicit link, but which, through application to the Byblis myth, seem to me inextricably intertwined. First, he claims that the distinctive mark of elegy is “the

⁴⁸⁵ Ovid claims a similar unity of personal circumstances and poetic ability at *Tr.* 5.1.5-6: *flebilis ut noster status est, ita flebile carmen, / materiae scripto conveniente suae* and 3.14.43-6: *saepe aliquod quaero verbum nomenque locumque / nec quisquam est a quo certior esse queam. / dicere saepe aliquid conanti (turpe fateri) / verba mihi desunt dididicique loqui*; see Stevens 2009, 171–4. Cf. *Tr.* 1.5.53-8. For similar linguistic deterioration (in wildly different contexts), see Young 2015, especially 256.

⁴⁸⁶ E.g. Scylla’s distress about both wanting Aegina to be conquered and not, expressed in three changes of subject in three lines (*Met.* 8.60-2) or Althaea’s vacillatory syntax, especially at 8.503-11.

⁴⁸⁷ Mayor 2017, 13.

⁴⁸⁸ Mayor 2017, 224.

reflection on hierarchy, control and power”, which he traces to peculiarly Roman and imperial notions of domination and subjugation.⁴⁸⁹ Secondly Mayor argues that “elegiac discourse is ...characterised by its contradictory ... nature”.⁴⁹⁰ Byblis provides an excellent synthesis of these two modes, as in her attempt to situate herself romantically *vis-à-vis* Caunus, she finds herself beset by a mass of contradictions (see above). Byblis is by no means the only character in the *Metamorphoses* who acts as a prism through which Ovid recontextualises the thematic pulses of elegy (see §6.1.1.1), but she serves as an extreme subversion and inversion of standard elegiac models.

3.2.3.1 – Burn, Byblis, Burn, Incest Inferno

Fire imagery is a mainstay of the elegiac genre;⁴⁹¹ in various forms, it refers to both the searing heat of passion and the pain that love can bring.⁴⁹² It is also a prominent feature of the *Metamorphoses*’ Byblis episode,⁴⁹³ where it operates as one of the axes of Ovid’s generic interplay between elegy and epic. The semantics of fire are used on nine occasions in the Byblis narrative, almost exclusively in emphatic position at the end of a line, with the majority of these being references to *ignis*.⁴⁹⁴ The first spark features at the very beginning of the tale, where Ovid relates that *illa quidem primo nullos intellegit ignes* (9.457). The ‘burning Byblis’ motif stands as a direct contrast to her watery aspects and represents the bright but destructive nature of her short life.

⁴⁸⁹ Mayor 2017, 13. See also Fitzgerald 1995, 8.

⁴⁹⁰ Mayor 2017, 15.

⁴⁹¹ See, non-exhaustively, Tib. 1.8.7, 2.4.5, 2.6.5; Prop. 2.3.44, 2.30.29, 3.9.45; Ov. *Am.* 1.1.26, 1.2.43, 2.9.5, 2.17.3, 3.1.20, *Ars am.* 1.23, 2.353.

⁴⁹² The most common fire vocabulary discussed in Pichon 1902 are the nouns *aestus* (6), *ardor* (88-9), *flamma* (150) and *ignis* (165-6) and the verbs *ardere* (88-9), *flagrare* (150) and *urere* (301). Cf. Pichon’s repeated claim that each of these words *pro amare aut dolere ponitur*. “Fire imagery ... is typically used in descriptions of intense passion” (Mader 1988, 56).

⁴⁹³ Raval 2001, 301 sees fire imagery (and other amatory topoi such as wounds and diseases) as shorthand for the elegiac norm Byblis is trying to recreate in her letter.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ignis* (Ov. *Met.* 9.457, 465, 516, 520), *ardor* (502, 562), *aestuarum* (465), *flamma* (509) and *igneus* (541).

Other than *amor*,⁴⁹⁵ no word is used more frequently to describe Byblis' passion for Caunus, perhaps best captured in the phrase *intus erat furor igneus* (9.541).

Line 465 contains two fire-words (*igne* and *aestuat*). The verb *aestuar* is glossed as cognate to Greek *καυματοῦμαι*,⁴⁹⁶ connoting both pure heat and the process of warming fluids and the ensuing motion of boiling.⁴⁹⁷ In the case of Byblis, so consistently aligned to aquatic imagery, surely both senses of the word ('blaze' and 'boil') are significant and represent the transition from Byblis' watery origins to her fiery life, and her eventual metamorphic 'death' as an icy fountain. *Aestuar* here takes on especial significance when viewed in against its other uses in the *Metamorphoses*: the verb appears seven times throughout the epic, always at the *incipit* of a dangerous or taboo love affair.⁴⁹⁸ Those who *aestuant* with love in Ovid's poem sit at various points on the spectrum of taboo, from the forbidden passion of Pyramus and Thisbe (4.64), to Iphis' love for Ianthe (9.765),⁴⁹⁹ to the incestuously tinged love of Tereus for Philomela (6.491), to the indisputably taboo passions of Byblis and Myrrha (10.360). That Byblis *verumtamen aestuat intus* (9.465) marks out the beginning of the growing passionate fire which will dominate the next one hundred lines.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁵ *Amor*: Ov. *Met.* 9.461, 9.511, 9.515, 9.519, 9.561, 9.595, 9.653. *Amare*: 9.454, 9.456, 9.470, 9.477, 9.510. *Amans* (substantival) 9.531, 9.547, 9.603.

⁴⁹⁶ *TLL* 1.1112.27 s.v. "aestuo".

⁴⁹⁷ *TLL* 1.1113.43-76 s.v. "aestuo".

⁴⁹⁸ The one exception is Ov. *Met.* 2.250, where it is applied to the evaporation of the Alpheus after the crash of Phaëthon's chariot. N.b. Byblis' grandfather, Maeander, is included in the same catalogue of dried-up rivers (2.246). Cf. the use of the compound *exaestuar* three times: twice with *ira* as its subject (6.623, 13.559) and once of Polyphemus' volcanic passion for Galatea (13.867). *Aestuar*'s sense of 'intense emotion' does not predate its late Republican uses at Catull. 25.12, 63.47, Cic. *QRosc.* 43.3, *Verr.* 2.2.55.7, 2.2.74.10, *Flac.* 47.11, *Har. resp.* 2.2, *Fat.* fr. 15.1, *Fam.* 7.18.1.6, *Ad Brut.* 3.2.3.

⁴⁹⁹ Cf. *aestuar*'s only usage in a non-erotic context at *Met.* 12.515, where it is used of Caeneus' rage, paralleling its use of Iphis' passion in Book 9.

⁵⁰⁰ The repeated reference to interiority in incestuous scenes relates to the Kristevan abject and will be discussed further in Chapter 4 with relation to Ovid's identification of Myrrha with Cinyras' *viscera* (10.465).

The subsequent six fire words are in Byblis' own voice, both in her initial speech and the letter she writes to Caunus.⁵⁰¹ When Byblis conceives of her love as a flame, it seems that she loads it with the most negative aspects of this polyvalent imagery. First her love is a *vetitus ardor* (502), something which burns within her but which she wishes to expel from herself; she similarly commands the flames of incestuous love to be far from her (509, *obscenae procul hinc discedite flammae*).⁵⁰² *Procul hinc* is reminiscent of the Roman custom of warding away *profani* from a religious rite;⁵⁰³ and may, in the right mode,⁵⁰⁴ be as much a 'come on' as an exclusion.⁵⁰⁵ Such ambiguity may be at play in Byblis' use of the phrase, as she wants to both dismiss and delight in the fires of love.

Ignis is used twice of the contents of the love letter Byblis is about to construct at lines 516 and 520. The fiery image is then transferred to Byblis' mental state, first as the *furor igneus* of incest (9.541) and then the *ultimus ardor* (9.562) which drove her to write the letter. Each instance of flame imagery in Byblis' voice emphasizes the damage and pain which incestuous love has brought and will bring to her, bringing a sort of awareness to the subtext of her words, which is largely absent from their content.

The burning and scarring heat of Byblis' fire comes to an icily abrupt end when her slave reports Caunus' rejection of her letter and her love. All at once, the semantic imagery is glacial and in an appropriately spondaic and fractured couplet, with three subjects and two persons in two lines, the raging action of *ignis* freezes:⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰¹ For elegiac language in Byblis' letter, see Gavouille 2006.

⁵⁰² Cf. *Ov. Met.* 10.300: *procul hinc, natae, procul este, parentes*. At *Tr.* 2.303, Ovid again uses *flamma* of quasi-incestuous passion, asking of the *Hippolytus* of Euripides *num quid in Hippolyto, nisi caecae flamma noverca*. The reading of *caecae* is disputed; see Ingleheart 2010, 309–10.

⁵⁰³ Anderson 1972, 502–3. Cf. *Virg. Aen.* 6.258; *Hor. Carm.* 3.1.

⁵⁰⁴ See Ingleheart 2010, 231.

⁵⁰⁵ E.g. *CP* 8.1–5. See also *Mart.* 3.68.

⁵⁰⁶ *Ov. Met.* 9.581–2.

dicta refert. palles audita, Bybli, repulsa,
et pavet obsessum glaciali frigore corpus;

He reported Caunus' words. On hearing that you had been rejected, you paled,
And her body, beset by an icy chill, quivers.

After this, fire imagery is almost entirely absent from Byblis' narrative;⁵⁰⁷ having left its wound, the fire is quenched by ice.⁵⁰⁸ This symbolism transitions smoothly into her metamorphosis to become a spring, where the ice melts into water:⁵⁰⁹

utque sub adventum spirantis lene Favoni
sole remollescit, **quae frigore constitit**, unda,
sic lacrimis consumpta suis Phoebeia Byblis
vertitur in fontem,

And at the gradual arrival of blowing west wind,
Water, which has been frozen by ice, begins to melt with the sun's heat
So Byblis, granddaughter of Apollo, consumed by her own tears
Was turned into a fountain.

The re-emergence of heat in the form of the sun, now external to Byblis herself, brings the Byblis episode to its *dénouement* with a closural (re)circling of themes.

Therefore, Ovid incorporates this topos which is commonly associated with elegy into a novel context;⁵¹⁰ the flame of love, which can be harmful in elegy, but is more often

⁵⁰⁷ Byblis briefly alludes to the god who *urit* her *pectora* at 9.624, but the above quoted wave of ice imagery follows some 35 lines later.

⁵⁰⁸ Cf. the use of the phrase *glaciale frigore* in an Ovidian scene where the sense is opposite to here: the constellation Serpens, traditionally as cold as ice, heats up because of the passage of Phaëthon's chariot (*Met.* 2.173-4).

⁵⁰⁹ *Ov. Met.* 9.661-4.

⁵¹⁰ It is clear that Ovid is teasing out fire imagery's specifically elegiac forces here, but it is widespread throughout classical literature and is not a uniquely elegiac *topos*. For fire imagery relating to love elsewhere, see e.g. Sapph. fr. 31.10, Ter. *Eun.* 72, 438, *Phorm.* 82, *An.* 308, *Haut.* 367.

associated with a desperate unmanly passion, is solely a force for destruction when applied to the tragic tale of Byblis and Caunus.

3.2.3.3 – The Master and the Mistress

Byblis is an active lover, coded male by the conventions of elegiac genre. She performs the inherently male actions of wooing, letter writing and indulging in orgasmic sensuality. Those poses which are effeminising to the male elegist take on new shades of irony when applied to the already female voice of Byblis.⁵¹¹

et color et macies et vultus et umida saepe
lumina nec causa suspiria mota patenti
et crebri amplexus et quae, si forte notasti,
oscula sentiri non esse sororia possent.

Paleness, thinness, features, always wet
Eyes, sighs brought on by no apparent cause
Frequent embraces and kisses which, if you had perhaps
Noticed, can be detected not to be sisterly.

Each of these images finds parallels in androcentric elegy, where the effect is to effeminise the male speaking subject,⁵¹² an effect which is problematised when voiced by Byblis. Byblis-as-dominantly-masculine-lover uses the poses of masculine femininity to weave herself into the male elegiac tradition, all the while highlighting and drawing attention to her womanliness through feminine lexis.⁵¹³

⁵¹¹ *Ov. Met.* 9.536-9.

⁵¹² Paleness (*Prop.* 4.3.28, 1.18.17), thinness (*Ov. Am.* 1.6.5-6, 2.9.14, *Ars am.* 1.733), crying (see James 2003, 103–5), sighing (e.g. *Prop.* 1.3.27, 2.22b.47, *Tib.* 3.6.61) hopeless embraces (e.g. *Prop.* 1.12.5) and vain kisses (e.g. *Prop.* 2.13.29). Some of these images are attributed to elegiac women (e.g. paleness at *Ov. Ars am.* 2.450); it is the deliberate and artificial compounding of them that evokes the traditionally male *amator*.

⁵¹³ On this paradox, see Westerhold 2018, 53–4.

Elegy is a poetics of amatory failure: the *amator* cannot possess his beloved, a fact which is both cause and consequence of his self-effeminising. This necessary failure is compounded in Byblis' voice: Ovid has her adopt a voice of generic non-success and then worsens it by highlighting the unsuitability of her gender for her elegiac words in the first place. Mayor and Raval have tried to see Byblis as a 'bad reader' of elegy, someone who has understood and absorbed its aesthetics without understanding its sentiment,⁵¹⁴ but I contend rather that this is a means by which Ovid grapples with the issue of describing a subject's taboo love. Where men create themselves as passive in elegy for reasons of genre and, at times, comic effect, when Byblis does precisely the same thing, it only serves to exacerbate how inappropriate the scenario is. She is a poet in the wrong genre, assuming the wrong gender dynamics and directing her affections at a wildly inappropriate beloved, a triad whose tragicomic consequences Ovid is able to fully play out, giving Byblis enough poetic rope with which to hang herself in an elegiac noose.

The polyvalence of genre and gender is exacerbated by the role of domination in this scene. The language of the *domina*, or mistress, in elegy is ubiquitous. This mistress exists in a liminal state: she is at once the *puella*, a passive beloved object, and a *domina*, a title which implies control or power over slaves.⁵¹⁵ In elegy, it is the male speaker who can temporarily and contingently construct his beloved as a *domina* since, despite the posturing of *servitium*, he, as a man and creator of poetry, is fully in control, socially and artistically.⁵¹⁶ These axes of gender, already somewhat subverted in love

⁵¹⁴ Mayor 2017, 225–34; Raval 2001.

⁵¹⁵ See e.g. Hallett 1973.

⁵¹⁶ Sara Myers 1996, 1.

elegy by the entirely artistic and conceptual power afforded to the *domina*, become even more confused and subversive in the Byblis episode.

This interplay comes to a dramatic nexus in 9.466: *iam dominum appellat*. Byblis simultaneously allies herself with the persona of the elegiac lover and demonstrates how far removed from it she is. By calling him ‘master’ and performing surface-level subservience to a man, she appears to be giving voice to the often silent *puellae/dominae* of elegy.⁵¹⁷ However, she blends that voice with the poetic voice of a Tibullus or a Propertius, giving rise to an internally paradoxical and monstrous speaking subject, identifying both itself and its beloved as a combination of both dominant and subservient.⁵¹⁸ She captures her own liminal state between masculine and feminine elegiac roles with the statement *plus quam ferre puellam / posse putes ego dura tuli* (9.544-5). As much as she wants to conform to genre and identify Caunus with a masculinised *domina*, she does not cast herself as an appropriately subordinate figure.

Ovid alludes to her role as a genuine *domina* in this context; the title is officially applied to a woman who commands slaves within the household,⁵¹⁹ and Ovid has Byblis do just this when she commands her *famula* to relay the wax tablets containing her letter (9.568-70). Her role as (appropriate) *domina* to the *famula* is re-emphasised at 9.580-1: *ille fugit pavidus dominaeque ferocia Cauni / dicta refert*. Byblis restates, even after unambiguous rejection by her brother, that he *vincetur* (9.616), employing

⁵¹⁷ Cf. *Ov. Am.* 3.7.11 where Ovid’s *puella* tries (unsuccessfully) to arouse him by calling him *dominus*, an intertext which adds a sexual undertone to Byblis’ use of *dominus*. For verbal erotic aids to arousal, cf. *Am.* 3.14.25, *Ars am.* 2.159 and *Mart.* 11.104.11-12.

⁵¹⁸ This paradox is present in the liminality of any elegiac *amator* (see Fear 2005) but is made worse by being in the voice of a woman. See Farrell 1998, 22–3’s comment that for Ovid “the love letter is a kind of psychosexual shibboleth” which is perfectly fine in the pens of men, but is made monstrous when written by women.

⁵¹⁹ *TLL* 5.1.1935.53-1936.35 s.v. “dom(i)na”.

the language of erotic and militaristic domination to restate her hierarchical superiority.⁵²⁰ Byblis is a woman, performing the role of an effeminated male poet, failing at the performance through being too domineeringly masculine, while casting her male beloved in the role of a *prima facie* controlling *dominus*, intertextually betraying his affinity with the feminine elegiac *domina*, which highlights all the more his relative effeminacy.

The complex and polyvalent layers of gender performance in this episode do not only centre on Byblis. Caunus too occupies a confused gender role, even outside Byblis' construction of him. He is largely absent from Ovid's narrative, appearing only briefly on stage when he rejects Byblis' entreaty and flees from Miletus. Caunus' reaction to the letter depicts him as violently active, but also submissively inactive:⁵²¹

attonitus subita iuvenis Maeandrius ira
 proicit acceptas lecta sibi parte tabellas 575
 vixque manus retinens trepidantis ab ore ministri
 'dum licet, o vetitae scelerate libidinis auctor,
 effuge' ait 'qui, si nostrum tua fata pudorem
 non traherent secum, poenas mihi morte dedisses.'
 ille fugit pavidus dominaeque ferocia Cauni 580
 dicta refert.

Stunned by sudden anger, Maeander's son
 Casts down the tablets he had taken, with only a section read 575
 And barely restraining his hands from the trembling slave's face, says
 "While you may, oh wicked author of forbidden lust,

⁵²⁰ Byblis internalises the *doxon* directed at the male readers of the *Ars amatoria* (1.269-70, 343, 470, 478, 485-6) never to stop pursuit of the beloved; see Janan 1991, 247; Mayor 2017, 226; Raval 2001, 304.

⁵²¹ *Ov. Met.* 9.574-81.

Flee. If your death would not drag down my sense of shame

With it, you would be punished with death by me.”

He fled, terrified, and reported the fierce words of Caunus

580

To his mistress.

His first act, upon having read only a part of the letter (*lecta sibi parte*),⁵²² is to violently cast it down, mirroring Byblis’ own, accidental dropping of the tablets at 9.571: *cum daret, elapsae manibus cecidere tabellae*. Whereas the emphasis in the case of Byblis was an accidental slip of the hand, Caunus’ act is marked by the emphatically placed verb, *proicit*. However, the deed’s deliberateness is undercut by the sense of the verb. *Proicere* is indeed a very physical—and *prima facie* active—verb, but its sense is often one which renders the subject the passive agent in an interaction: it can refer to the act of throwing oneself down as a submitting suppliant,⁵²³ or specifically to throwing one’s weapons down before fleeing the battlefield (perhaps presaging Caunus’ own flight).⁵²⁴ The potentially emasculating tones of *proicit* are reversed in line 576, which sees the prince’s anger controlled in a series of five dactyls.⁵²⁵ There is inertia to Caunus’ portrayal in these lines; other than his flight (to which I will return), this is the most action he performs in the episode, and his depiction here is characterised by inaction, restraint and stillness: the complete inverse of Byblis’ activity.

Caunus’ speech, much shorter than either of Byblis’, is ambiguous. It is clearly directed at the *famula* who has brought Byblis’ epistle, whom Caunus says he would

⁵²² Jenkins 2000, 450–1 wonders where in the letter Caunus stopped reading, concluding that it was likely after the revelation of Byblis’ name in fourth line (9.533); if so, Caunus neglects to read nearly all of Byblis’ argumentation. Cf. n. 350 for the need to *perlegere* a letter, understanding it *in toto*, something which Caunus cannot have done if he only read a *pars*.

⁵²³ *TLL* 10.2.1795.36–61 s.v. “proicio”. E.g. Cic. *Sest.* 26; Caes. *BCiv.* 2.5.3; Sen. *Ira* 2.21.7.

⁵²⁴ *TLL* 10.2.1797.7–15 s.v. “proicio”. E.g. Caes. *BGall.* 7.40.6; Luc. 9.26; Stat. *Theb.* 3.643; Sen. *Ben.* 5.2.1.

⁵²⁵ Anderson 1972, 458.

kill if it would not bring disrepute on his own *pudor* (9.578-9). Caunus' restraint from masculine violence restates his inert passivity. However, the entire passage—except the gendered pronoun *qui* (9.578)—feels directed at Byblis herself. Certain words and themes stand out as being far more appropriate to her than the slave, such as *auctor* (9.575), a loaded term in the context of a recently written letter.⁵²⁶ We may push this further: how much of a dent to Caunus' reputation it would really be to kill the *famula* (9.576-7)?⁵²⁷ Sororicide, however, would have been a far greater threat to Caunus' *pudor*.⁵²⁸ Overall, the lines which reference the intertwining of Caunus' fate with that of his addressee seem to match far better the relationship between siblings and putative lovers than between a master and his slave, giving them a sort of double addressee. This emphasises the extent to which the *famula* acts as an intermediary between the siblings. The implication of *dominaeque ferocia Cauni / dicta refert* is presumably that the slave reported Caunus' words *verbatim*: not a challenging feat when only the gender of one relative pronoun would need to be changed. If we take these words to be equally applicable to both Byblis and the *famula*, Byblis may also be implied to be Caunus' *domina* by the narrator, reinforcing that, even after Caunus' furious response, Byblis nevertheless occupies a dominant position.

It is the end of Caunus' narrative in the *Metamorphoses* which most concretely positions him in a passive or effeminate role *vis-à-vis* Byblis. Scholars have

⁵²⁶ *Auctor* means 'author' fairly rarely in Ovid, given its 118 uses in the *corpus*: *Am.* 1. epigr. 2, *Her.* 15.3, *Tr.* 2.411, 2.533, 5.1.68, *Pont.* 3.9.9, 4.13.11, 4.14.40.

⁵²⁷ Roman law afforded slave owners the (in)famous *vitae necisque potestas* against their slaves; *Dig.* (Gai. *Inst.*) 1.6.1.1; Sen. *Ira* 3.40.1-3. According to Gaius, the practice was later made illegal, but would have been in place during Ovid's life. *Vitae necisque potestas* carried negative implications of tyranny; see Cic. *Rep.* 3.23 and Westbrook 1999, 204.

⁵²⁸ The story of Publius Horatius' murder of his sister following the clash between the Horatii and the Curatii is complex, but clearly evinces that sororicide was not looked on favourably at Rome, as Publius' sentence was commuted not due to his crime being viewed as insignificant but because of his father's persuasive abilities; see Livy 1.24-6. For the legal ambiguities surrounding Publius' sororicide, see Watson 1979.

distinguished a category of narratives featuring sexual violence in the *Metamorphoses*, often termed the ‘Apollo-and-Daphne-pattern’ after the account in Book 1 of the epic.⁵²⁹ Most of the episodes which fit this pattern feature an aggressive male god and a female object of desire who flees from him;⁵³⁰ the Byblis narrative differs in several obvious ways, and does not end in consummation of the sexual violence.⁵³¹ Most significant is the shift in gender roles for this iteration of the pattern: Byblis is the aggressor and Caunus is the Daphne-like figure. He consummates this role through his final action, flight:⁵³²

mox ubi finis abest, patriam fugit ille nefasque
inque peregrina ponit nova moenia terra.

Then, when there was no end in sight, he fled his fatherland and the *nefas*
And erected new walls in a foreign land.

Caunus’ flight is sudden, he is not even named in the couplet which describes it, and the subject of the previous line had been Byblis. This obfuscates the identity of the fugitive until it is clarified in the masculine pronoun *ille*, before which a reader surely assumes it is Byblis, the woman, who flees, following the pattern of every other Apollo-and-Daphne interaction, including the upcoming flight of Myrrha (10.476-80). This is compounded by it being the *patria*, a word bound up in familial notions, that Caunus flees; we may more readily expect Byblis to flee a symbol of her and Caunus’ shared *pater*. The act of founding a city is a uniquely masculine act,⁵³³ but Caunus is

⁵²⁹ R. Armstrong 2005, 140; Curran 1978, 214, 231; Fabre-Serris 1985, 93, 113; Mayor 2017, 151; Nagle 1988, 32; Nicoll 1980; Otis 1970, 79–80, 104.

⁵³⁰ E.g. Daphne-Apollo (1.452-567), Herse-Mercury (2.708-832) and Callisto-Jupiter (2.405-531), others, like Philomela-Tereus (Ov. *Met.* 6.401-674), maintain the gendered dynamics, though both participants are human.

⁵³¹ The pattern does not necessitate sex: even the eponymous tale of Daphne and Apollo ends with Daphne escaping rape at the god’s hands.

⁵³² Ov. *Met.* 9.633-4. For the topos of ‘Daphne-like’ figures fleeing, see Fabre-Serris 1985, 96–7.

⁵³³ Salzman-Mitchell 2005, 114. Cf. Dido as the founder of Carthage at Virg. *Aen.* 1.340 (*imperium Dido Tyria regit urbe profecta*) and 364-8.

denied recognition for the act through the absence of both city's name (Caunus) and his own name. The partial anonymity of the founder may also allude to the fact that some accounts have the city Byblus as having been named after Byblis; she too places *nova moenia in peregrina ... terra*.⁵³⁴

The intersections of elegiac gender conventions and Byblis' deeply un-elegiac incestuous desire serve to repress how taboo that desire is. Byblis tries to write herself into a tradition that sees her as incongruous to it and so "is shattered by the disjunction between the conventions of erotic poetry and the reality of her own situation".⁵³⁵ The insistence of some academics that Byblis is a 'bad reader' of elegy seems to me to ignore an alternative reading; even a 'good reader' of elegy will not find that genre amenable to successful entreaties of incestuous love. Rather than a failure to understand elegiac discourse, Byblis' use of it seems more like a prism through which she explores the range of gender and hierarchical dynamics available to heterosexual couples. She casts herself and Caunus in multiple roles, each at once masculine and feminine, dominant and submissive, trying to run the gamut of relationship dynamics seemingly available to her and finding that, in fact, none of them is available to her. These amatory and literary conventions fail to be useful tools for Byblis' desire precisely because it is unconventional and if a poetics of taboo exist, it must necessarily not be conventional.

3.3 – Closing the *Byblos*: Written and Verbalised Taboo

In this chapter, I have discussed the verbal aspects of Ovid's presentation of the incest taboo, exploring the specific crises of communication which arise when utterance is given to unutterable crimes. The Byblis episode draws far closer attention to these

⁵³⁴ St. Byz. 188.12.13.

⁵³⁵ Raval 2001, 307.

issues of transmission than does the other major Ovidian incest narrative in the *Metamorphoses*, that of Myrrha, with the notably diegesis-manipulating techniques of letter and soliloquy. These narrative structures provide ideal lenses through which to explore how the taboo on incest causes ruptures and disturbances in Ovid's language on both conscious and unconscious levels. The two seemingly oppositional forces of the conscious and the unconscious coincide in this episode; there are deliberate interactions with the wider Ovidian corpus and genre of Latin love elegy, but the pervading sense of anxiety perhaps operates on less calculated levels.

In Byblis' letter, she is bound by a form which is notoriously inept for communicating strongly felt emotions. By her absence and the fixedness of the written word, she cannot help but fail to transmit her full intention to Caunus. This effect is compounded in her two monologues, which restate to a reading audience that the restraints of language are not restricted to written texts but extend to the spoken word. That which her dreaming subconscious fully understands is incomprehensible to the verbalising mouth, resulting in a confused stream of consciousness which seems to metadiegetically interact with the outside world of Ovid's reality. Byblis is imprisoned by the language she speaks, trying to make sense of something which is senseless in a language which has no word for her desire.

In the Byblis episode, taboo has a perspicuous and destructive on the texture of language. The discomfort, whether intended or accidental, is most keenly felt in those lines which read as "involved",⁵³⁶ such as *at mihi, quae male sum, quod tu, sortita parentes* (9.493), a knot of linguistic anxiety which betrays the performed or actual anxiety of their composer, Ovid.⁵³⁷ Byblis' cycling through and revisiting of Ovidian

⁵³⁶ Anderson 1972, 453.

⁵³⁷ Cf my §4.3.1 on Ov. *Met.* 10.429-30.

intertexts and genres resembles a plumber trying to tighten a nut, running through a full toolbox of spanners and finding that the correct spanner is missing because the nut is, in fact, a Philips-headed screw. The Latin language lacks the tools to create logical linguistic arguments for incest, because it is not a part of the culture that created the language; for all the verbal dexterity and wordplays of the scene, there is something bubbling under its surface. As a speaker and a writer, Byblis confronts the challenge of speaking the unspeakable and finds taboo love to be a crisis of communication, which fails at the moment it is transcribed into language.

4 – Myrrha: The Ambiguous *Nefas*

Ovid's Myrrha, in Book 10, marks a development from the emotionally wrought depiction of Byblis as a hopeless and vain lover. Myrrha has the dubious honour of being the only Ovidian heroine to engage in incestuous sex 'on-stage'. In many ways, her narrative is very similar to that of Book 9's Byblis, but the differences chart a progression in Ovid's treatment of the incest taboo, in which everything is heightened: the scenes are riddled with greater dramatic potential and the range of theatricality is more pronounced, as evidenced by Myrrha's transition from attempted suicide to incestuous copulation in some 87 lines. First, I briefly sketch out the plot of the story, setting it in its context. Unlike the story of Byblis, which is told by a combination of the Ovidian narrator and the internal character of Byblis herself, Myrrha's story descends a layer deeper into the dynamics of diegesis. The bard Orpheus, in his almost book-length *carmen* (10.148-739), includes the story of Myrrha's incestuous passion for her father Cinyras as an example of his self-professed theme:⁵³⁸

puerosque canamus

dilectos superis inconcessisque puellas

ignibus attonitas meruisse libidine poenam.

I sing of boys

Loved by the gods and girls, struck

By forbidden fires and deserving of punishment for their lust

⁵³⁸ Ov. *Met.* 10.152-4. Anderson 1972, 501; Scaffai 1999, 374 argue that Myrrha is the only female character of Orpheus' song to fit into his stated parameters, which ignores the punishments of the Propoetides (10.238-42). The story of Atalanta and Hippomenes (560-708) does not fit a paradigm of *puellae merentes libidine poenam* as the male Hippomenes, as well as Atalanta, is punished for lust, and it is him who initiates sex. It is immediately evident, but nonetheless relevant, to state that Orpheus' use of *puerosque canamus* recalls Virgil's *arma virumque cano* (*Aen.* 1.1) and thus renders Orpheus' song a sort of epic on perverse themes within Ovid's overarching epic of the *Metamorphoses*; see §4.5. Cf. also Virg. *Ecl.* 4.1: *Sicelides Musae, paulo maiora canamus*.

Myrrha's narrative follows immediately from the story of Pygmalion and his unnamed wife/sculpture (named Eburnea for ease of reference), from whose union is born Paphus, who was, in turn, the mother of Cinyras and therefore the grandmother of Myrrha.⁵³⁹ Orpheus begins the Myrrha narrative with an extended apology for its contents:⁵⁴⁰

dira canam; procul hinc natae, procul este parentes 300
aut, mea si vestras mulcebunt carmina mentes,
desit in hac mihi parte fides, nec credite factum,
vel, si credetis, facti quoque credite poenam.

I sing of dire things: be far from here daughters, be far, fathers 300
Or, if my verses soften your minds,
May there be no faith in this part of my story, and do not believe that it happened,
Or, if you do believe, believe too in the punishment for the deed.

He then details how lucky Thrace is not to share in Panchaea's misfortune: to be the home of the myrrh tree (10.304-10). The geography here is ironically polysemous. Diegetically, Orpheus states that Myrrha's incestuous narrative takes place far from his native Thrace, where he is singing his song. The extradiegetic reader must also consider that Myrrha's homeland is also distant from Ovid's Rome, geographically and culturally.⁵⁴¹ Scaffai explores this geographic play, arguing that Thrace was considered wild and untamed by the Romans,⁵⁴² so Orpheus' insistence on the

⁵³⁹ Paphus' gender is feminine in Ovid (10.297: *de qua tenet insula nomen*), but the character is elsewhere is the male father of Cinyras (Hyg. *Fab.* 242.4.2, 270.1.2, 275.7.1). Myrrha's descent from Pygmalion is significant to her story and will be dealt with at pp. 202-4.

⁵⁴⁰ Ov. *Met.* 10.300-3.

⁵⁴¹ See Ziogas 2021, 360-82.

⁵⁴² It is Thracian women who brutally murder Orpheus (*Met.* 11.3-55), marking their homeland brutal by extension. Thrace was especially associated with Bacchus and the unbridled madness of his rites: Hor. *Carm.* 2.727; Ov. *Rem.* 593; Prop. 1.3.5. Thrace had been considered uncivilised since Plato: Pl. *R.* 435e calls the Thracians θυμοειδές; they are one of the πολεμικά σύμπαντα γένη at Pl. *Lg.* 637e. Plb. 27.12 characterises Cotys, king of the Odrysae, as distinctly un-Thracian because of his sobriety and gentleness and Tac. *Ann.* 4.46 casts them as savage and lawless.

inhumanity of incest as being something foreign even there plays up that it is dramatically inhuman when compared with civilised, Augustan Rome.⁵⁴³

From the proem, the narrative begins immediately with Myrrha, burning with lust for her father; Ovid/Orpheus toys with questions about the cause of Myrrha's passion (see §4.2), before giving Myrrha a lengthy monologue in which she analyses her desire (10.320-55). After a brief conversation with Cinyras, Myrrha resolves to kill herself and attempts to do so by hanging herself with a girdle. Her wet-nurse rescues her and offers to assist Myrrha in wooing Cinyras. A prolonged midnight procession to Cinyras' bedroom follows (*Met.* 10.446-66), which clearly evokes and perverts the Roman marriage ceremony.⁵⁴⁴ After symbolically crossing the *limen*, Myrrha consummates her lust with her unknowing father. After two nights of anonymous incestuous sex, Cinyras reveals his lover by means of a lamp and, horrified at her identity, moves to attack her with his sword. Myrrha embarks on a nine-month exile, furthering the *apologia*'s geographic distancing, before settling in Sabaea in modern South Arabia. There she prays for her suffering to end, and an unnamed *numen* grants her wishes, transforming her into a myrrh tree, and thus providing an onomastic etymology for the odiferous plant. As a tree, she finally gives birth to Cinyras' child and Adonis is born.

This chapter explores the ambiguous and abjected incest taboo as it appears in Myrrha's story.⁵⁴⁵ I begin by examining the theme of *pietas*, which is especially and ironically widespread in Myrrha's story; the Roman virtue of familial duty takes on new and disturbing connotations when it is ascribed so consistently to an incestuous

⁵⁴³ Scaffai 1999, 375.

⁵⁴⁴ See O'Bryhim 2008.

⁵⁴⁵ See Spentzou 2019, 431 on Myrrha (and Byblis) as living "in the matrixial borderpsace".

union. I then explore the nature of punishment for incest, focusing especially on two periods in the story: the inception of Myrrha's desire for Cinyras and her metamorphosis. This is also an opportunity to explore notions of the criminality of and punishment for incest in the *Metamorphoses in toto*: I briefly discuss punishment in the Nyctimene episode of Book 2 and the much more extensive tale of Philomela and Tereus in Book 6. In section 4.3, I examine the use of familial lexis in the account, especially the often-repeated tension between *pater* and *filia*, as a means of restating and developing the previous chapter's arguments for the linguistic nature of the incest taboo. Finally, this chapter will tread the well-trodden path of examining the influence and transformation of tragedy, especially Euripides' *Hippolytus*, in the Myrrha episode, bringing to light how Ovid deploys the tragic tradition to emphasise the ambiguity of his Myrrha.

Ambiguity, indeed, is the concept at the core of this chapter; I examine how this account, which at first seems a simply negative portrayal of a wicked girl, is instead a complex series of ambivalences between diametric opposites. All four of the areas I will discuss (*pietas*, punishment, family names and the use of tragedy) create a sense of ambiguity about Myrrha's *nefas* which figures the in-between nature of the Kristevan abject. *Nefas* becomes something not rationalisable in a language predicated on dialectic polarities: Myrrha both is and is not punished and the harsh definites of 'is' and 'is not' cannot capture this abjected ambiguity.

4.1 – *impia virgo*: Piety and Naughty Girls

Pietas is a fundamentally Roman virtue;⁵⁴⁶ it is one which eludes concrete definition,⁵⁴⁷ but for the purposes of this thesis, Fabre-Serris' summation suffices: *pietas* is "l'idéal des sentiments et des comportements d'un individu à l'égard de sa famille, des dieux et de l'État".⁵⁴⁸ It is most commonly associated with the relationships between children and parents,⁵⁴⁹ so it should be of particular note that the motif of *pietas* is consistently deployed throughout Ovid's Myrrha episode. Indeed, Putnam claims that the story of Myrrha is "the most elaborate narrative meditation on *Pietas* and its opposite in the poem".⁵⁵⁰ The words *pietas*, *pius* and their cognates show up 10 times in the narrative,⁵⁵¹ marking the virtue as something actively evaluated under the Ovidian microscope in this episode.⁵⁵² In this section, I show how Myrrha's desire for her father and the subsequent breaking of the incest taboo are demarcated by Ovid as crimes against *pietas* which fall outside the realm of normal society; it often seems in this episode that Ovid is toying with the notion of familial piety and what incest means to it. Myrrha begins her monologue with two contradicting images of *pietas*:⁵⁵³

"di precor, et **pietas** sacrataque iura parentum,

hoc prohibete nefas scelerique resistite nostro,

⁵⁴⁶ Evans Grubbs 2011, 377. One cannot omit reference to Virgil's *Aeneid* here, which constitutes one of the most famous Latin meditations of mythic *pietas* and whose hero is characterised as a *insignis pietate vir* (1.10); for *pietas* in the *Aeneid*, see e.g. Burgess 1971; Moseley 1925; Putnam 1981. The dialectic of *pietas* vs *furor* is also extremely Virgilian, see my n. 563.

⁵⁴⁷ Different authors define *pietas* in subtly different ways. Even in the work of a single author (e.g. Cicero), the word has varying meanings; see Garrison 1992, 9–10.

⁵⁴⁸ Fabre-Serris 2005, 2. Cf. Cic. *Inv. rhet.* 2.161: *pietas, per quam sanguine coniunctis patriaeque benivolum officium et diligens tribuitur cultus.*

⁵⁴⁹ Evans Grubbs 2011, 377. See Prince 2011 for Ovid's of *pietas* in father-daughter relationships.

⁵⁵⁰ Putnam 2001, 176–7; see also Henneböhl 2019; Prince 2011, 59–64.

⁵⁵¹ *Pietas* is at Ov. *Met.* 10.321, 10.324, 10.333, 10.366; *pius* is at 10.354, 10.366, 10.431, 10.451; *impius* is found at 10.345 and 10.469.

⁵⁵² *Pius* is used 36 times in the poem, *impius* 20 times, *pietas* 23 times and *impietas* twice. Thus c. 12% of the uses of *pietas* in the *Metamorphoses* occurs within c. 1.7% of the epic.

⁵⁵³ Ov. *Met.* 10.321–4.

si tamen hoc scelus est. sed enim damnare negatur

hanc Venerem **pietas**:

“Gods, I pray, by both *pietas* and the sacred laws of my parents,

Forbid this *nefas* and drive off my crime,

If indeed this is a crime. Yet, even *pietas* refuses to

Condemn this love.

At first, Myrrha calls on *pietas*, connected with the ancestral, familial laws of her *parentes*, to rid her of the *nefas* that is her incestuous love for Cinyras; however, in a vacillatory change of heart reminiscent of Byblis (see §3.2), Myrrha questions whether this *nefas* is a *scelus* after all. *Pietas* shifts from being a potential apotropaic force keeping incest at bay and becomes a permission for it, something which almost encourages incestuous relations. This is expressed more clearly in Myrrha’s claim that, in places other than her native Cyprus *nato genetrix et nata parenti / iungitur, et pietas geminato crescit amore* (10.332-3).⁵⁵⁴ This is a complete inversion of *pietas* as it is normally conceived and is something which can only be so construed in Myrrha’s own thought process.

Where *pietas* and its cognates feature elsewhere in the myth, in the Orphic narration, they impute judgement onto Myrrha’s love.⁵⁵⁵ the mothers of Cyprus, including Myrrha’s mother Cenchreis, are *pieae* in their holy rituals to Ceres (431), a piety which

⁵⁵⁴ The *gentes* are presumably Persians, who were often thought to practice incest: Hdt. 3.31; Xanth. *BNJ* 765 fr. 31; Antisth. *ap.* Ath. 220c; E. *Andr.* 173-6; *Dialex. Diss. Log.* 2; Str. 15.3.20; S. E. *P.* 3.205; Ph. *Spec. Leg.* 3.13-14; Catull. 90.1-4; Sen. *Phdr.* 906-12; Luc. 8.397-401; Juv. 6.157-9; Min. Fel. *Oct.* 31; Clem. Al. *Paed.* 1.7; Eus. *PE* 6.10.16. These sources are referring—however dismissively—to the Persian custom of *xwēdōdah*, for which, see Kiel 2016, 149–81. See also Moreau 2002, 88.

⁵⁵⁵ Note that in the vacillating perspectives of her soliloquy, Myrrha also calls herself an *impia virgo* (345) but this does not stop her flirtatiously telling Cinyras that she wants a husband *similem tibi* (364). *Similem tibi* recalls Pygmalion’s prayer for a *coniunx similis mea eburnea* (10.274-5), harking back to the incest in the previous generations of Myrrha’s clan. The narrator’s description of Myrrha as an *infelix ... virgo* (10.443-4) opens a window to Pasiphaë, for which see §6.2.1.

takes the form of sexual abstinence, not promiscuity like Myrrha's.⁵⁵⁶ During the procession to Cinyras' bedroom, the star, Erigone, winks out and Ovid alludes to the *pius amor* of the daughter of Icarius who hanged herself upon finding her father's murdered body.⁵⁵⁷ Twice, Orpheus as narrator uses the *pietas* leitmotif of Myrrha and her incest: at 10.365-6, he has Cinyras command Myrrha *esto / tam pia semper*, a darkly comic nod to the audience who have already been schooled to read Myrrha's *nefas* through the prism of piety.⁵⁵⁸ The ironic juxtaposition of Cinyras' belief in his daughter's *pietas* and Orpheus' preceding narrative is reemphasised in the bard's response to the unwitting father: *pietatis nomine dicto / demisit vultus sceleris sibi conscia virgo* (10.366-7). Despite having asserted some 33 lines earlier that incestuous sex increases *pietas*, Myrrha now feels shame at the very mention of the virtue, recognising her desire as a *scelus*. The last use of the motif is perhaps the most disturbing; after the first night of incestuous sex, Ovid describes Myrrha's egress from her father's bed:⁵⁵⁹

plena patris thalamis excedit et impia diro
 semina fert utero conceptaque crimina portat.

Full of her father, she leaves the wedding bed and carries
 Impious seed and conceived crimes in her wicked womb.

⁵⁵⁶ See §4.3.1 for the *festas Cereris*.

⁵⁵⁷ Erigone's *pietas vis-à-vis* her father contrasts with Myrrha's lack of parental piety; see Hill 1999, 179. Traditionally, Erigone's piety for her father was such that she became the constellation Virgo (Hyg. *Poet. astr.* 2.4.5; Hyg. *Fab.* 130; Nonn. *Dion.* 47.256-63), drawing another comparison between the *pia* Erigone and the *impia* Myrrha, who gives up her virginal status in the most impious manner. This contrast is made all the more pointed by the fact that Orpheus consistently calls Myrrha a *virgo*, up until the point that she loses her virginity (itself characterised as a loss of *virgineus metus*; Ov. *Met.* 10.466), ironically crediting her with a sense of innocence: Ov. *Met.* 10.345, 361, 367, 369, 389, 427, 440, 444, 465.

⁵⁵⁸ It is not only Cinyras' words which are darkly ironic; he tenderly touches her face and offers her kisses (10.362). See Lowrie 1993, 50: "Cinyras' ignorance of the inappropriateness of both his actions and his language increases the horror".

⁵⁵⁹ Ov. *Met.* 10.469-70.

The impiety is directly attributed to Cinyras' semen and, by transference, the pregnancy it has caused; Myrrha's womb is *dirus*,⁵⁶⁰ recalling the initial Orphic claim that he would *dira canare* (10.300). Ovid/Orpheus delights in an ecstasy of perversion as Myrrha carries *concepta crimina*, a sylleptic reference to both the recently reified *nefas* of incest and the zygotic Adonis within her.⁵⁶¹ Her pregnancy is emphasised by three collocations highlighting it: *plena patris, impia ... semina* and *conceptaque crimina*,⁵⁶² each of which echoes with incestuously self-replicating assonance and alliteration. The collocations grow conceptually more distant from Cinyras—from his family name to his emanations to their result, her child—as she geographically moves away from him. The notion of *pietas*, then, pervades the scene; it becomes the embodiment of that which incest disrupts, drawing sharp contrast between the *piae* women at the *festas Cereris* and Erigone and the *impietas* of Myrrha's desire and the subsequent pregnancy.

Pietas is often compared with *furor*;⁵⁶³ if *pietas* is the diligent duty to family, state and divinity,⁵⁶⁴ then *furor* is a chaotic madness which holds no respect for such duties or institutions.⁵⁶⁵ Ovid himself had already characterised Myrrha's love for her father as

⁵⁶⁰ N.b. these lines constitute the only textually ratifiable intertext to Cinna's *Smyrna*, which must have been a greater influence than can be reconstructed from the paucity of evidence. Ovid's sentiment seems to echo a surviving line of Cinna's epyllion: *at scelus incesto Zmurnae crescebat in alvo* (fr.9); see Hollis 1984, 2007, 33–4, 68. This line also anticipates the depiction of Myrrha pregnant as a tree: *iamque gravem crescens uterum perstrinxerat arbor* (10.495) and *media gravidus tumet arbore venter* (10.505).

⁵⁶¹ Gebhardt 2009, 327 sees the many uses of the verb *concupere* in the episode (Ov. *Met.* 10.327–8, 352, 403, 470, 503) as programmatic for the narrative and as a play on the legal term *furtum conceptum*.

⁵⁶² Anderson 1972, 514.

⁵⁶³ E.g. Garrison 1992, 6; O'Gorman 1997; Fabre-Serris 2005; Ruiz 2016. The contrast of *pietas* and *furor* is a very Virgilian theme (see Hahn 1931a, 1931b), most famously expressed in the metaphor for a sea storm in the *Aeneid* (1.148–56), where *pietas* soothes a *furiosus* mob. For an analysis of this metaphor and extensive bibliography on *pietas*, *furor* and their interplay in the *Aeneid*, see Ganiban et al. 2012, 173–4, 181–2.

⁵⁶⁴ Ruiz 2016, 68 sees *pietas* as a force of social cohesion, implying that *furor* is a force of disunity.

⁵⁶⁵ In the use of *furor* and its cognates, the etymological presence of the *Furiae*, who bookend Myrrha's narrative (see pp. 181–2), is palpable.

a *furiosa libido* in the *Ars amatoria* (1.285-8; see §2.2.2),⁵⁶⁶ and the imagery of *furor* emerges on several occasions in her treatment in the *Metamorphoses*.⁵⁶⁷ *Furor* is by no means an exclusively feminine vice but Ovid does claim that *furor* is stronger in female lust than in the male equivalent: *omnia feminea sunt ista libidine mota; / acrior est nostra plusque furoris habet* (*Ars am.* 1.341-2). Ruiz has highlighted how the vice of *furor* signifies two things: it is both a disease of the soul and legal category for those whose actions cause them to lose status.⁵⁶⁸ It therefore makes sense to analyse Myrrha's conflict of desire as a conflict between the polar forces of *pietas* and *furor*; indeed, she uses the oppositionality of these two energies to diagnose her father at the close of her monologue: *velle puta; res ipsa vetat. pius ille memorque est / moris—et o vellem similis furor esset in illo* (10.354-5). There is contrast set up between the *pius* Cinyras and the implied *furiosa* Myrrha,⁵⁶⁹ which highlights the importance of *pietas* in maintaining appropriate familial bonds and, by extension, the fact that such a virtue is wholly absent in Myrrha.

The use of *pietas* in the Myrrha episode sets up the terms of her transgression – it is not a flouting of specific legal prohibitions, although Orpheus does play with both juristic language and imagined courtroom scenarios.⁵⁷⁰ Indeed, Myrrha herself argues (correctly) that she is not in opposition to natural law;⁵⁷¹ she turns to examples of

⁵⁶⁶ The catalogue of women overtaken with *libido* and *furor* is a motif from Virg. *Ecl.* 6.42-86 and Prop. 3.19; Fabre-Serris 2016, 172–3 suggests that this motif is lifted from Gallus' *Amores*. Propertius includes Myrrha in his list (3.19.15-16), while Virgil does not.

⁵⁶⁷ Ov. *Met.* 10.355, 370, 397, 410. The maddening *furor* of incest had also pervaded the Byblis episode: 9.512, 541, 583, 602, 637.

⁵⁶⁸ Ruiz 2016, 58. For more on the importance of legal language in the episode, see below.

⁵⁶⁹ Cinyras' *pietas* is a figment of Myrrha's imagination; he is no innocent. See n. 609.

⁵⁷⁰ The full wealth of legalistic language in this episode is beyond the scope of this thesis; see Gebhardt 2009, 321–33; Ziogas 2021, 360–83.

⁵⁷¹ *Contra* Ranucci 1976, 71: Myrrha contravenes “una legge superiore ... di natura”.

incestuous relations between animals to justify her passion in terms of the *ius naturale*.⁵⁷²

humana malignas

cura dedit leges, et quod natura remittit,

invida iura negant.

Human cares

Passed cruel laws, and what nature forgives,

Jealous laws forbid.

The debate is one between the positive legal frameworks of societies—be they mythical Cyprus or Augustan Rome—and the fundamentals of natural law.⁵⁷³ Myrrha establishes the constructed nature of *leges* and *iura*,⁵⁷⁴ casting them as violable and not imbued with the same governing power of *natura*.⁵⁷⁵ She draws her evidence from observing that animals reproduce incestuously,⁵⁷⁶ bringing attention to the contingent force of human laws:⁵⁷⁷

coeuntque animalia nullo

cetera dilectu, nec habetur turpe iuvencae

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ferre patrem tergo; fit equo sua filia coniunx,

⁵⁷² *Ov. Met.* 10.329-31.

⁵⁷³ Gebhardt 2009, 323.

⁵⁷⁴ Cf. Byblis' less juridical argument that *leges* and *iura* have social weight but should not matter for young lovers at *Met.* 9.551-5.

⁵⁷⁵ Myrrha's use of *natura* may refer to the early-Stoic and Cynic arguments that incest could be permissible under the right conditions (e.g. Fabre-Serris 2005, 18; Gebhardt 2009, 323). For Myrrha as espousing a form of Cynicism, see Hopkins 1985, 791; Resinski 2014, 278.

⁵⁷⁶ Equine incest is known from Aristotle: ἀναβαίνουσι δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς μητέρας οἱ ἵπποι καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς θυγατέρας· καὶ τότε δοκεῖ τέλειον εἶναι τὸ ἵπποφόρβιον, ὅταν ὀχεύωσι τὰ ἑαυτῶν ἔκγονα (*HA* 6.22). In Seneca's *Phaedra*, Theseus argues that animals do not engage in incest: *ferae quoque ipsae Veneris evitant nefas, generisque leges inscius servat pudor* (913-14). Kuhlmann 2017, 196 correctly detects comedy in Myrrha (via the Orphic narrator) telling a diegetic audience of animals that animals sometimes engage in incestuous sex.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ov. Met.* 10.324-8.

quasque creavit init pecudes caper, ipsaque, cuius
semine concepta est, ex illo concipit ales.

Other animals come together

With no distinction, and a young heifer does not think it shameful 325
To bear her father on her back; his own daughter may become a horse's wife,
And a billy-goat enters the herd which he sired, and a bird becomes
pregnant with him by whose seed she was conceived.

The deduction of moral-legal frameworks from observance of nature is a part of Stoic οἰκείωσις,⁵⁷⁸ but it is also a common way of providing aetiologies for laws on relationships;⁵⁷⁹ indeed, later legal thinkers' conception of the *ius naturale* is perfectly in step with Myrrha's extrapolation, if not her conclusion, here:⁵⁸⁰

ius naturale est, quod natura omnia animalia docuit: nam ius istud non humani generis proprium, sed omnium animalium, quae in terra, quae in mari nascuntur, avium quoque commune est. hinc descendit maris atque feminae coniunctio, quam nos matrimonium appellamus, hinc liberorum procreatio, hinc educatio.

The *ius naturale* is what nature teaches to all animals: for this *ius* is not peculiar to the human race, but is common to all animals which are born on

⁵⁷⁸ The theory of οἰκείωσις argues (in part) that animals (and young children) are entrusted to themselves by Stoic *natura*, to live in accordance with *natura* rather than their own desires; therefore, that those parts of animal life most in touch with *natura* (and thus furthest from the imposition of human custom) may be emulated. E.g. Cic. *Fin.* 3.62-3; Sen. *Marc.* 7; *Ep.* 5.9, 59.13, 60.2-3, 66.26, 121.19-24; Arr. *Epict.* 1.2.34. For οἰκείωσις, see Engberg-Pedersen 1990; Holmes 2014; Inwood 1984; Pembroke 1971; Striker 1983. Myrrha's use of Stoic οἰκείωσις would not be welcomed by any Stoic, who would argue that she is ignoring οἰκείωσις' primary function of explaining the relation of the self to a community, in which Myrrha's incestuous relations would be unwelcome; for animal *exempla* as being a helpful but not holistic model for deduction, see Manning 1981, 55-6. The model need not necessarily be wholly Stoic, as deducing human modes of existence from the natural world may be found in many ancient worldviews: e.g. Pl. *Phd.* 85a-b; D.Chr. 6.22-3; Plaut. *Truc.* 867-70; Cic. *Tusc.* 5.27.79, 34.98; Hor. *Sat.* 1.32-5, *Epod.* 7.11-14; Sen. *Controv.* 2.1.10.

⁵⁷⁹ See Gebhardt 2009, 324-5. E.g. *Dig.* (Ulp. *Inst.*) 1.1.1.2: *privatum ius tripertitum est: collectum etenim est ex naturalibus praeceptis aut gentium aut civilibus.* Cf. Cic. *Inv. rhet.* 2.160.

⁵⁸⁰ *Dig.* (Ulp. *Inst.*) 1.1.1.3.

the earth or in the sea, and also to birds. From this follows the union of man and woman, which we term marriage, from this, reproduction, from this, education.

Myrrha tries to follow both legislative procedure and Stoic methods of denouncing worldly constructs, drawing on nature to establish a code in which her own incestuous passion is not only permissible, but actively promoted by the underpinning philosophical and legal convention. She constructs, for herself, a world in which her love makes sense, and yet she is caught between worlds. She attempts to marry stable legal approaches to relationships with a somewhat unstable view of matters natural, in which something is morally and socially appropriate because animals do it.⁵⁸¹ Myrrha's two methods are not compatible: she cannot construct private law from nature, whilst simultaneously decrying the ways in which laws are made by people: it is a method doomed to failure.

Pietas in the Myrrha episode stands as a constant reminder of transgression, both social and (by implication) legal. The iteration of this most Roman virtue throughout the narrative delineates the boundary which Myrrha's desires cross. By continually stressing the *impietas* of Myrrha, Ovid/Orpheus reminds the audience of the appropriate qualities of a father-daughter relationship: those of reciprocal *pietas*. This demarcation of appropriateness or criminality leads me to a discussion of how punishment operates in the Myrrha episode; if *pietas* sets up the line which Myrrha has crossed, what are the consequences for having done so?

⁵⁸¹ Gebhardt 2009, 325 asks how much of the *ius naturale* can really be constructed solely from observing nature.

4.2 – Crime and Punishment

Metamorphosis in the *Metamorphoses* can be a source of punishment for a hubristic act, invoked by a god against a mortal.⁵⁸² The story of Myrrha seems, *prima facie*, to have two opportunities where such a pattern could obtain.⁵⁸³ First, the inspiration for her passion for her father and second, the eventual metamorphosis into a myrrh tree. There is also a potential ‘punishment scene’ in which Myrrha unsuccessfully tries to commit suicide in an effort at self-castigation. However, this section explores how Orpheus’ account of Myrrha’s passion and transformation features a transition in culpability. *Ab initio*, Myrrha is represented as fully reproachable for her incestuous lust and it seems that she will be punished for it; however, as the narrative progresses, Myrrha becomes increasingly less culpable and, in the end, she is not punished at all, but honoured by metamorphosis. The section also explores how the story of Myrrha’s crime and punishment re-emphasise the notions of ambiguity and in-betweenness explored in the previous section. Finally, I consider two other episodes in the *Metamorphoses* in which the ambiguity of punishment for incestuous *nefas* is of critical importance: the metamorphosis of Nyctimene for sleeping with her father (Book 2) and the web of punishments at play in the Philomela-Tereus-Procne episode of Book 6.

In order to examine how Ovid exploits the themes of crime and punishment in the Myrrha episode, I first assess how his sources—or the remnants of them preserved in

⁵⁸² E.g. Arachne’s transformation into a spider following her hubristic claim to artistic superiority over Minerva (6.129-45), or Apollo cursing Midas with donkeys’ ears for disrespecting his music (11.174-94).

⁵⁸³ The episode is couched in terms of law and punishment from Orpheus’ *incipit* at 10.153-4: [*canamus*] *inconcessisque puellas ignibus attonitas meruisse libidine poenam*.

later texts—deal with the criminality of Myrrha’s love.⁵⁸⁴ In earlier versions of the Myrrha myth, Myrrha’s incestuous desire is the punishment of Venus. Pseudo-Apollodorus tells us that:⁵⁸⁵

αὕτη κατὰ μῆνιν Ἀφροδίτης—οὐ γὰρ αὐτὴν ἐτίμα—ἴσχει τοῦ πατρὸς ἔρωτα,
καὶ συνεργὸν λαβοῦσα τὴν τροφὸν ἀγνοῦντι τῷ πατρὶ νύκτας δώδεκα
συνευνάσθη.

Under the influence of a madness from Venus—for she had not honoured the goddess—Myrrha conceived of a love for her father, took a nurse as accomplice and lay with her father for twelve nights.

For Pseudo-Apollodorus, Myrrha did not honour Aphrodite in some unstated way and so was punished with desire for her father.⁵⁸⁶ The nature of the dishonour may be clarified in Hyginus’ version:⁵⁸⁷

Smyrna Cinyrae Assyriorum regis et Cenchreidis filia, cuius mater Cenchreis
superbius locuta quod filiae suae formam Veneri anteposuerat. Venus matris

⁵⁸⁴ A Greek tragedy called the *Cinyras* (see J. *AJ* 19.94-5) appears to have told this story. The tragedy certainly predates Ovid as it was performed at the games at which Philip of Macedon was killed: Suet. *Calig.* 57.

⁵⁸⁵ Ps.-Apollod. 3.183-4 = Panyas. fr. 27. The dating of the *Bibliotheca* of Pseudo-Apollodorus is imprecise (the *terminus post quem* is 60/61 BCE, but the *terminus ante quem* is more vaguely before “the beginning of the third century” CE; see Smith & Trzaskoma 2007, xxix–xxx), but his reference to Panyassis of Halicarnassus dates this version of the myth to the 5th century BCE, making it a viable source for Ovid.

⁵⁸⁶ A brief comment on naming. In Latin sources outside of the *Metamorphoses*, Myrrha is most commonly referred to as ‘Myrrha’ (Prop. 3.19.15-16; App. Virg. *Ciris* 237-40; Ov. *Ars am.* 1.285-6, *Rem.* 100, *Ib.* 359-60, 539-40; Ps.-Sen. *HO* 196; Serv. *ad Aen.* 5.72, 10.18). Cinna’s fragmentary epyllion, the *Smyrna*, names her as Smyrna at fr. 9 (and presumably throughout) and references to his poem use this name (Catull. 95.1, 5, 6; Serv. *ad Ecl.* 9.35, *ad G.* 1.288) but beyond this, Smyrna for the girl is only used at Hyg. *Fab.* 58, 242, 271, 275. *Smyrna* is very common for the name of the city (modern İzmir) but is only used of the incense myrrh at Lucr. 2.504. For the spelling Smyrna, over the printing of *Zmyrna* in manuscripts of Cinna’s poem, see Hollis 2007, 29-30. Hollis 2007, 29-30. In Alexandrian and early Imperial Greek, Μύρρα is comparatively rare of the girl (Luc. *Salt.* 58; Lyc. 829; J. *AJ* 19.94) but it is fairly common in Late Antique Greek (e.g. Stob. 4.20b.73; Procop. *Gaz. Comm. in Is.* 2137; Cinn. *Eth.* 32). The use of μύρρα for the incense is extremely common in Greek of all periods.

⁵⁸⁷ Hyg. *Fab.* 58.1. Adonis is *qui matris poenas a Venere est insecutus* (58.3). The dating of the *Fabulae* is almost as tricky as the *Bibliotheca*, but it is probably post-Ovidian; see Smith & Trzaskoma 2007, xlii–iv.

poenas exsequens Smyrnae infandum amorem obiecit, adeo ut patrem suum amaret.

Smyrna, daughter of Cinyras, king of the Syrians and Cenchreis, whose mother, Cenchreis, spoke rather proudly, because she placed her daughter's beauty above Venus'. Venus, pursuing a punishment for the mother, caused a wicked love in Smyrna, such that she loved her father.

The blame for Myrrha's lust is here placed squarely on her mother Cenchreis' hubristic assertion that her daughter's beauty exceeds that of Venus: a perfectly standard form of hubris and one which Ovid exploits elsewhere in the *Metamorphoses*.⁵⁸⁸ It is telling, therefore, that Ovid via Orpheus makes no explicit comment on what seems to have been a well-established tradition of Myrrha's lust stemming from divine retribution, especially when, in previous Orphic stories—those of the Cerastae and the Propoetides—Venus punishes women for similar crimes with metamorphosis (10.220-42). Ovid's omission raises the question of why his Myrrha seems to act of her own accord.⁵⁸⁹ Ovid's Orpheus is clearly engaging with the tradition when he explores potential divine inspirations for Myrrha's lust.⁵⁹⁰

ipse negat nocuisse tibi sua tela Cupido,
Myrrha, facesque suas a crimine vindicat isto;
stipite te Stygio tumidisque adflavit echidnis

⁵⁸⁸ E.g. Niobe's claim that she is as beautiful as any goddess and that the number of her progeny asserts her importance at *Met.* 6.181-3. Cenchreis in Ovid is explicitly a *pia mater*, engaged in religious life (10.431-6); the *festas Cereris* will be discussed at §4.3.1.

⁵⁸⁹ The only other extant version of the myth which also has Myrrha's lust as unprovoked is Ant. Lib. 34, which says: ἡ δὲ πολλὰ ἐμηχανᾶτο πρὸς ἀπάτην τῶν γονέων καὶ ἀνάθεσιν τοῦ χρόνου· δεινὸς γὰρ αὐτὴν ἔρωσ ἐξέμηθεν ἐπὶ τῷ πατρὶ. Antoninus Liberalis does not, however, discuss the issue of provocation at any depth. See also Bruzzone 2012, 76; Resinski 2014, 277; Scaffai 1999, 376-7; Schmitz 2015, 259.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ov. Met.* 10.311-15.

e tribus una soror: scelus est odisse parentem,
hic amor est odio maius scelus. 315

Cupid himself says that his arrows did not harm you,
Myrrha, and clears his torches of this crime;
One of the three sisters breathed on her with a Stygian branch
And puffed-up snakes: it is a crime to hate your father,
This love is a crime greater than hate. 315

Here, a Fury is blamed for causing Myrrha's lust, but the reason for her intervention is silenced.⁵⁹¹ The Furies typically intervene to punish someone who has committed crimes against a family member,⁵⁹² so it seems especially unusual for them to bring about familial strife and incest.⁵⁹³ It is also rare that Furies act of their own volition: they are typically invoked by another divinity or a mortal.⁵⁹⁴

There may be a convincing case for Venus to be the mover behind the scenes in the Myrrha episode.⁵⁹⁵ Firstly, a reader of the *Metamorphoses* who was familiar with previous versions of the Myrrha story would be expecting the involvement of Venus/Aphrodite,⁵⁹⁶ so her prominence in the preceding story of Pygmalion (and indeed all of Orpheus' song) would appear to lend credence to Venus being an *auctor* of Myrrha's lust;⁵⁹⁷ the fact that Cupid is invoked as explicitly *not* the author of

⁵⁹¹ The Furies appear frequently in the *Metamorphoses*, but show up poignantly in the myth of Orpheus: they weep uniquely at his request to return Eurydice from Tartarus (10.45-6), appear twice in his account of Myrrha (here and 10.349) and a Fury is said to rule in the chaotic scene of his death (11.14); this marks the final mention of the Furies in the *Metamorphoses*. The Furies are also invoked at *Met.* 1.241, 1.725, 4.490, 6.430-1, 8.482 and 9.410.

⁵⁹² See Hom. *Od.* 2.134-36; A. *Ch.* 1048-62, *Eu.* 94-177; Ps.-Apollod. 3.87; E. *Med.* 1389.

⁵⁹³ The Furies and their *faces* are often contrasted with the *faces* and audience appropriate for a wedding ceremony, as at Ov. *Her.* 6.45-6, 7.93-6, 11.103-4. See Hersch 2010, 168; Onorato 2006, 535 n. 53.

⁵⁹⁴ See instances at n. 592. Schmitz 2015, 253-5 argues that the lack of deity implies that the Fury is being used as a metaphor for madness here.

⁵⁹⁵ Scaffai 1999, 376-8.

⁵⁹⁶ Cyprus was famously holy to the goddess of love; see Kuhlmann 2017, 197.

⁵⁹⁷ It is Venus who 'rewards' Pygmalion by transforming his statue into a flesh and blood woman at *Met.* 10.270-97 and she is present at his wedding (10.295). Elsewhere in the song, the goddess is

Myrrha's passion draws attention to the fact that the involvement of him and his mother would be expected and finally, the overt parallels to Euripides' *Hippolytus* (see §4.4), create an expectation for the steering hand of Venus/Aphrodite. The Myrrha episode is bookended by appearances by Venus: she and her son reappear at 10.515-43, where Myrrha's son, Adonis, is said to be as beautiful as painted Cupids and becomes the object of Venus' desire, with incestuous overtones. Ovid here seems to be toying with the tradition which has Venus as the originator of Myrrha's woes, without explicitly stating it. This highlights just how far beyond the limits of standard love Myrrha's desires extend: all the clues of tradition, context and geographical location point to Venus as the obvious inspirer of her passion, but Ovid silences this narrative, making Myrrha the victim of an apparently unprovoked Fury.

The criminality of Myrrha's incest can and should be read using a legalistic lens. Scholars have pointed out the extent to which Myrrha's self-justifying soliloquy evokes the Roman genre of declamation,⁵⁹⁸ a genre in which familial relations are central and are often subject to extreme pressures.⁵⁹⁹ Orpheus also begins the scene with the language of legality and punishment, evoking a trial scene (10.301-3; quoted above).⁶⁰⁰ Myrrha's story is framed with an expectation of punishment (*poenam*) and yet the extent to which she will be punished in her tale is at best debatable.⁶⁰¹ Indeed,

important in the transformations of the Cerastae (10.220-37) and the Propoetides (10.238-41), the relationship of Atalanta and Hippomenes (10.544-707, especially 640-51 and 681-90) and her own affair with Adonis (10.524-543, 708-39). Ovid may admit to Venus' involvement in Myrrha's lust in the claim that Adonis *placet et Veneri matrisque ulciscitur ignes* (10.524): save for an inspiration of incestuous lust, for what crime against his mother could Adonis be avenging?

⁵⁹⁸ Fabre-Serris 2016, 185; Ziogas 2021, 367–71. Gebhardt 2009, 322 points out that the debate is structured like a legal procedure, with Myrrha as accuser, defence and judge.

⁵⁹⁹ Gunderon 2003, especially 24-5.

⁶⁰⁰ *Ov. Met.* 10.301-3. See Ziogas 2021, 365–6. For scenes reminiscent of trials in the *Metamorphoses*, see Balsey 2011. See my pp. 175-6.

⁶⁰¹ Kuhlmann 2017, 199 argues that the Orphic narrator is established as untrustworthy from the beginning of his *carmen*, allowing a range of interpretations, despite his clear attempt at hegemonic morality in the prologue to Myrrha's story.

Myrrha is afforded an opportunity for punishment at 10.376-88: having decided that her *furor* is too much to bear, Myrrha sentences herself to death:⁶⁰²

mors placet. erigitur laqueoque innectere fauces
destinat, et zona summo de poste revincta
"care vale Cinyra; causam te intellige mortis" 380
dixit et aptabat pallenti vincula collo.

Death suits. She rose and decided to wind her neck
With a noose, and, after fastening her girdle from the rafter, she said
"Farewell, dear Cinyras; know that you are the cause of my death" 380
And she attached the loop to her paling neck.

The attempted suicide is highly symbolic; she uses her girdle (*zona*) to hang herself: the symbol of female chastity has become the means by which female impiety is punished.⁶⁰³ However, as with other vignettes of punishment in the Myrrha episode, the attempted suicide is undercut: Myrrha's nurse enters and cuts her *alumna* down, preventing the punishment from taking place.⁶⁰⁴ This contributes to the sense that Myrrha is largely blameless for her offense: she attempted to make the chaste choice of *mors* over inappropriate *amor*,⁶⁰⁵ yet the intricacies of the tale deny her this option.

⁶⁰² Ov. *Met.* 10.378-81.

⁶⁰³ Anderson 1972, 509. Death by hanging was the standard form of suicide for women with a sense of guilt in Greek tragedy (see Loraux 1987, 13–17). The *zona* is often employed to achieve it: e.g. Europa's imagination of her father's words at Hor. *Carm.* 3.27.58-60: *potes hac ab orno / pendulum zona bene te secuta / laedere collum*; see Nisbet & Rudd 2004, 334.

⁶⁰⁴ The scene is adapted from E. *Hipp.* 775-88, however, unlike Myrrha, Phaedra's suicide is successful, and Theseus walks in on a corpse, not an attempt.

⁶⁰⁵ Ahl 1985 repeatedly returns to the interplay of *MOR* and *aMOR*: 40, 45, 54 and 215 (where he describes in the Myrrha episode the "omnious linguistic hesitation between *MORs*, "death," and *aMOR*, "love").

Prima facie it would seem obvious to align Myrrha with other Ovidian transgressors whose tales end with a punitive metamorphosis;⁶⁰⁶ however, Myrrha's metamorphosis is precisely in line with the fulfilment of her desires.⁶⁰⁷ Cinyras' attempted filicide (10.475: *pendenti nitidum vagina deripit ensem*) is undermined by Myrrha's flight,⁶⁰⁸ which seems to be supported by the forces of nature: *Myrrha fugit: tenebrisque et caecae munere noctis / intercepta neci est* (10.476-7).⁶⁰⁹ *Munus* evokes a gift of the gods,⁶¹⁰ saving Myrrha from an apparently undeserved end and facilitating her escape from the *poena* promised by Orpheus' introduction.⁶¹¹ Indeed, despite Ovid/Orpheus calling the incestuous union a *scelus* immediately before Cinyras' attempted honour killing (10.474), the tone of the narrative suddenly becomes overwhelmingly sympathetic to Myrrha. She enters an exile, paralleling Byblis' flight in (9.639-56),

⁶⁰⁶ Indeed, some commentators, such as Vandersmissen 2012, 1021, argue that “la valeur punitive de la métamorphose est ici très claire”. Indeed, some commentators, such as Vandersmissen 2012, 1021, argue that “la valeur punitive de la métamorphose est ici très claire”.

⁶⁰⁷ See Berno 2018, 86–7.

⁶⁰⁸ The line is an almost direct quotation from Virg. *Aen.* 10.475 (*vaginaque cava fulgentem deripit ensem*); given that the Virgilian line describes Pallas' failed attempt to kill Turnus, there seems to be a humorous futility to Cinyras' attempt. See Putnam 2001, 178–80. The sexual comedy of such a line must not be overlooked (see Smith 1990, 460); as Cinyras uncovers his bedfellow's identity, he snatches his 'shining sword' (surely *double-entendre* for a penis; see Adams 1990, 19–22) out of the 'sagging sheath' (see Adams 1990, 20, 115). Ovid's change of Virgil's *fulgens ensis* to a *nitidus ensis* brings with it a sense of post-coital wetness (cf. *Ov. Met.* 1.74 where *nitidus* is of wet scales or *Juv.* 6.8 of wet eyes; *OLD* 1180-1 s.v. “nitidus” 2a, 4b). For wet sex, cf. pp. 140-3. For a similar pun, see Plaut. *Ps.* 1181: *conveniebatne in vaginam tuam machaera militis*.

⁶⁰⁹ The question of Cinyras' culpability lies outside the scope of this thesis. The focus is often placed on Ovid/Orpheus' misogynistic view that the transgressor must be Myrrha, but Cinyras not only also engages in incest (including the sensuous touching and kissing at 10.362; see my n. 558) but is also incapable of remaining celibate during his wife's nine-night ritual abstinence: he is hardly the innocent victim of the story. See Fabre-Serris 2005, 21–4; Kuhlmann 2017, 197–8; Salzman-Mitchell 2005, 116. Ahl 1985, 220–4 goes as far as to connect the CIN syllable with κινέω, suggesting a lustiness for sex, as well as faCINUS; he also suggests a more unlikely wordplay with κινυρός, a fairly rare adjective describing 'wailing'.

⁶¹⁰ Cf. *Nep. Att.* 3.3; *Prop.* 2.3.25; *Virg. G.* 1.238, *Aen.* 12.393; *Hor. Carm.* 1.18.7; *Plin. HN* 21.27; *Juv.* 10.358. See Anderson 1972, 515.

⁶¹¹ The *crime passionnel* was a defence (within certain parameters) for a Roman man who had killed his wife/daughter if he caught her in the act of adultery after the *lex Iulia* of c. 18 BCE, which must be the scenario to which Ovid alludes in this scene; see Bauman 2002, 24–6; Richlin 1981, 227–8. N.b. the law allowed a father to kill both his daughter and her adulterous partner, which is not quite what Cinyras attempts here, as he is both father and lover; see *Dig.* 48, especially (*Papin. Adult.*) 48.23 and (*Ulp. Adult.*) 48.24.

going from Cyprus to Saba',⁶¹² poignantly distancing herself from a crime defined by excessive proximity.⁶¹³ Once she has symbolically separated herself from the act and person to whom she was bound, Myrrha, pregnant, utters a prayer for punishment:⁶¹⁴

“o siqua patetis
numina confessis, merui nec triste recuso
supplicium, sed ne violem vivosque superstes 485
mortuaque exstinctos, ambobus pellite regnis
mutataeque mihi vitamque necemque negate!”

“Oh, if any deity is amenable
To those who confess, I have earned and do not deny a miserable
Punishment, but I would not pollute the living while alive 485
Or the dead while dead, banish me from both kingdoms
And deny both and life to a transformed me!”

Myrrha feels total remorse for her taboo-breaking union with Cinyras; she claims responsibility and requests proper divine punishment.⁶¹⁵ However, the request is on

⁶¹² It is implausible, as Anderson 1972, 515 notes, for Myrrha to have travelled from Cyprus to Arabia by crossing fields, as Cyprus is an island; Anderson argues that Ovid is merging two traditions (the Cypriot Pygmalion narrative and the Assyrian legend of Myrrha/Smyrna). However, the inclusion of Panchaea as a waypoint on this journey points to its unreality as much as Myrrha crossing the sea. Traditionally discovered by Euhemerus (D.S. 6.1-11; *BNJ* 63), Panchaea is an island believed to be in the Indian Ocean in the ancient world (D.S. 5.42.3) and so is as mystical a route to Saba' as crossing the sea from Cyprus. Panchaea is functionally another way of saying 'magical kingdom'; see Romm 1994, 196–7. Saba' was a kingdom in the south-west of the Arabian Peninsula, famous from at least the 4th century BCE for its exports of myrrh (Theophr. *HP* 9.4.2) and better known as the Sheba of the Old Testament.

⁶¹³ Putnam 2001, 172–3.

⁶¹⁴ *Ov. Met.* 10.483-7

⁶¹⁵ *Merui nec triste recuso / supplicium* (10.484-5) recalls Byblis' comment at 9.585 (*et merito!*) as well as Orpheus' promise to sing *inconcessisque puellas / ignibus attonitas meruisse libidine poenam* (10.153-4). In many ways, Orpheus parallels Ovid as an exiled author, something which may be reflected in how both narrative voices show pity to Myrrha; for this notion see my §3.1.2 and Putnam 2001. Myrrha's (and Byblis') claiming responsibility and guilt for their transgression resembles Ovid in the exile poetry: e.g. *Tr.* 1.1.67-8, 1.2.63, 1.2.95, 1.5.42, 2.29, 3.1.51, 5.5.63, 5.10.49-50, *Pont.* 1.1.49, 1.1.62, 1.2.96, 1.7.69, 1.10.43. Just as Myrrha's statement of her culpability is undercut by the leniency of her punishment, so too do the Ovidian exilic persona's repeated admissions of guilt seem undercut by the poetry as a whole; see Luck 1977, 19.

her terms: she asks to be transformed, to exist in an *entre-deux*, abjected state between life and death, recalling Venus' meditation on her punishment of the Cerastae that metamorphosis is one such in-between punishment:⁶¹⁶

exilio poenam potius gens impia pendat
vel nece vel si quid in medium est mortisque fugaeque.
idque quid esse potest, nisi versae poena figurae?

Instead, this wicked family pays the penalty with exile

Or with death or whatever is between death and flight.

And what can that be, except the punishment of a transformed shape?

Venus has established metamorphosis as the *poena* for *impietas*,⁶¹⁷ configuring it as something between life and death, which is restated in Myrrha's wish to contaminate neither the living nor the dead (10.485-7).⁶¹⁸ It is not surprising that Myrrha prays to a non-specific *numen*; in the other versions of the myth I discuss below, this is the point in the tale when a deity (Venus or Zeus) intervenes to punish Myrrha. By namechecking divine power (*numen*), Ovid/Orpheus signifies an intertextual awareness of these versions, but by preserving the anonymity of the deity, the personal reasons for Venus or Zeus' punishment are occluded. This self-aware reference to other versions of the Myrrha myth is made more overt by the narrator's almost *verbatim* repetition of Myrrha's wish with the weight of narratorial authority: 10.483-4's *o si qua patetis / numina confessis* becomes 10.488's *numen confessis aliquod*

⁶¹⁶ Ov. *Met.* 10.232-4

⁶¹⁷ Putnam 2001, 176. For *pietas*, see my §4.1.

⁶¹⁸ Cf. Moreau 2002, 51 on *nefas* rupturing stable dichotomies, such as life and death.

patet.⁶¹⁹ Hyginus states that Venus was the cause of Myrrha's transformation, relating the metamorphosis to themes of punishment and clemency:⁶²⁰

cui Venus postea **miserta** est et in speciem arboris eam commutatvit unde myrrha fluit, ex qua natus est Adonis, qui matris poenas a Venere est insectutus.

On whom Venus later took pity, and transformed her into the appearance of a tree, from which myrrh flows, from which Adonis was born, who followed his mother's punishment from Venus.

Whereas Antoninus Liberalis has the punishment be at the hands of Zeus.⁶²¹

καὶ αὐτὴν ὁ Ζεὺς μεταβαλὼν ἐποίησε δένδρον καὶ ἐκάλεσεν ὁμώνυμον αὐτῇ σμύρνα. τοῦτο λέγεται κατ' ἔτος ἕκαστον δακρῦειν τὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ ξύλου καρπὸν.

And Zeus transformed her into a tree and called it Smyrna, the same name as her. It is said that every year, she cries wealth from her bark.

There is, then, perhaps a certain irony in Orpheus' *numen ... aliquod*:⁶²² he occludes the intentionality behind the transformation, and by having couched the scene as a fulfilment of Myrrha's desires (10.488-9: *ultima certe / vota suos habuere deos*),⁶²³ and not the direct intervention of a specific god, Orpheus lessens the sense of

⁶¹⁹ Overlaps between a character's speech and a narrator's parenthetical comment on it are not uncommon in the *Metamorphoses*: e.g. "*pete ... umbras / altorum nemorum*" (*et nemorum monstraverat umbras*) (1.590-1); "*ne fuge me!*" (*fugiebat enim*) (1.597); "*sub illis / montibus*" inquit "*erunt*" (*et erant sub montibus illis*) (2.702-3). Cf. 9.782, which does something similar, though not with speech. See Hill 1985, 188.

⁶²⁰ Hyg. *Fab.* 58.

⁶²¹ Ant. Lib. 34.

⁶²² Cf. Pseudo-Apollodorus' assertion that it was the work of vague 'gods': θεοὶ δὲ κατοικτεῖραντες αὐτὴν εἰς δένδρον μετήλλαξαν (3.183).

⁶²³ Cf. how Myrrha welcomes the transformation as it spreads across her body: *non tulit illa moram venientique obvia ligno / subsedit mersitque suos in cortice vultus* (10.497-8). Cf. the arboreal metamorphosis of Dryope who, rather than sinking her face into the bark, resists (9.351-8).

punishment. Indeed, her story is concluded in a quatrain which reads as a laudatory epitaph.⁶²⁴

quae quamquam amisit veteres cum corpore sensus,
flet tamen, et tepidae manant ex arbore guttae. 500
est honor et lacrimis, stillataque cortice murra
nomen erile tenet nulloque tacebitur aevo.

Although she lost her old feelings with her body,
She still cries, and warm tears drip from the tree. 500
There is even honour in the tears, and the myrrh dripping from the bark
Keeps its mistress' name and will be spoken about forever.

Given that the story of Myrrha begins with a lengthy apology, detailing how horrendous her crime is, it seems odd that it should finish with the sentiment that there is *honor* in her tears. Indeed, as Putnam has pointed out, the phrase *nullo tacebitur aevo* is comprised of some extremely salient vocabulary,⁶²⁵ which gives especial gravitas to the claim. Myrrha has transcended Orpheus' song or even Ovid's *carmen perpetuum* and has entered the realm of *fama perpetua*.⁶²⁶ In progressing through the narrative of Myrrha, there is a journey from ideas of blame and punishment to an almost panegyric finalé. It has been noted how Myrrha's exilic fate reflects that of the *Metamorphoses'* poet and carries in it a metamorphic potential;⁶²⁷ I build on this interpretation by suggesting that the metamorphosis is not only diegetic (i.e. it is not only a concern of metamorphosis for Myrrha herself), but is also an extradiegetic

⁶²⁴ Ov. *Met.* 10.499-502. Scaffai 1999, 378 notes sepulchral overtones and that the authorial voice of Ovid shines through the internal narrator in giving this honour to Myrrha.

⁶²⁵ Putnam 2001, 191. *Tacebitur* is only elsewhere at Cic. *Inv. rhet.* 1.54 and *nullo aevo* is only found twice: Corn. Sev. fr. 13.20 and Luc. 9.986. For the notion of nominal immortality, cf. Ovid's promise that the Byblis-fountain *nunc quoque vallibus illis / nomen habet dominae* (*Met.* 9.664-5) and Ovid's own claim to immortality at 15.871-9. Cf. E. *Hipp.* 1428-30.

⁶²⁶ See §1.2 for ideas of *fama*, *fari* and (*ne*)*fas*.

⁶²⁷ Putnam 2001, 172-4. Cf. the similarly semi-autobiographical exile of Byblis at §3.1.2.

transposition of framing, in which the perspectives of the narrator, his narrative and potentially the audience shift through the act of narration. Myrrha is not only transformed into a myrrh tree but is also transformed with respect to what she symbolises: she starts as a *puella ignibus attonita qui meret libidine poenam* (10.153-4) but becomes a pathetic figure whose final act is characterised by *honor* not *poena*. Myrrha's ambiguous punishment is also underscored by the description of Adonis' birth. Orpheus takes pains to introduce a notion of punishment of parturition (which he will later undercut): the myrrh(a) tree is cast as a traumatised pregnant woman, for despite Orpheus having just told us that Myrrha no longer has her *veteres sensus* (10.499), the abjected arboreal result of her transformation certainly seems to feel:⁶²⁸

at male conceptus sub robore creverat infans
 quaerebatque viam, qua se genetrice relictā
 exsereret; media gravidus tumet arbore venter. 505
 tendit onus matrem; neque habent sua verba dolores,
 nec Lucina potest parientis voce vocari.
 nitenti tamen est similis curvataque crebros
 dat gemitus arbor lacrimisque cadentibus umet

But beneath the bark, a wickedly conceived child had grown
 And was looking for a path by which he could thrust himself out of his
 Abandoned mother; a pregnant belly swells in the middle of the tree 505
 A burden stretches its mother; agonies do not have their usual words,
 And Lucina cannot be called on by the voice of the woman giving birth.

⁶²⁸ Ov. *Met.* 10.503-9. The myrrh(a) tree's liminality between sensitive life and inert death figures Kristeva 1980a, 11's description of the visible corpse: "le cadavre, le plus écœurant des déchets, est une limite qui a tout envahi. Ce n'est plus moi qui expulse, « je » est expulsé. La limite est devenue un objet".

Yet the tree looks like a woman in labour and the distended tree
Gives frequent groans and drips with falling tears

The violence of the scene is underlined by the tension between mother and child: the foetal Adonis wants to burst out of his mother's body, an act which will clearly break it in the process; while playing a dark joke that Myrrha can no longer vocalise her pain (10.506-7), Orpheus draws attention to the sound of birth pangs. Indeed, the absence of Lucina, the goddess who alleviates the pain of parturition, recalls another difficult birth in the *Metamorphoses*: Hercules from Alcmena in Book 9. At Juno's request, Lucina sat outside the room where Alcmena was in labour and prevented the birth, incurring a vivid description of the pain in the mother's own words (9.290-304).⁶²⁹ The initial absence of Lucina from Myrrha's childbirth scene forces a reader to recall Alcmena's harrowing birth and how it was an act of divine punishment from Juno.⁶³⁰ Therefore, *prima facie*, the expectation is for Myrrha's birth too to be plagued with punitively painful suffering; however, immediately after the immediately agonising description above, Orpheus narrates that *constitit ad ramos mitis Lucina dolentes / admovitque manus et verba puerpera dixit* (10.510-11). The pain is undercut by divine succour and what would have been a perfect opportunity to punish Myrrha becomes a second instance of her receiving the favour of the gods after her desiderated metamorphosis.

4.2.1 – Punishment for Incest Elsewhere in the *Metamorphoses*

The (non) punishment of Myrrha takes on additional weight when contrasted with punishment in other scenes of incest in the *Metamorphoses*; I explore now the stories of Nyctimene in Book 2 and Philomela-Tereus in Book 6. Nyctimene is the most apt

⁶²⁹ Ov. *Met.* 9.290-4, 302-4.

⁶³⁰ For the role of birth pangs and Lucina in the story of Alcmena, see McAuley 2016, 123–9.

comparison, as she is one of only two other instances of father-daughter incest in the *Metamorphoses*;⁶³¹ indeed, Ovid would later draw a connection between Nyctimene and Myrrha in his *Ibis*: *filia si fuerit, sit quod Pelopea Thyestae, / Myrrha suo patri, Nyctimeneque suo* (359-60).⁶³² Nyctimene's story is briefly narrated by the crow, Cornix, who is angered that Nyctimene sits in pride of place at Minerva's side as her sacred owl.⁶³³

quid tamen hoc prodest, si diro facta volucris
 crimine Nyctimene nostro successit honori? 590
 an quae per totam res est notissima Lesbon,
 non audita tibi est, patrium temerasse cubile
 Nyctimenen? avis illa quidem, sed conscia culpae
 conspectum lucemque fugit tenebrisque pudorem
 celat et a cunctis expellitur aethere toto. 595
 Yet, what good does it do, if Nyctimene, made a bird
 Through wicked crime, takes up my honour? 590
 The gossip is extremely famous throughout all Lesbos,
 Have you not heard, that Nyctimene disgraced her father's bed?
 Indeed, she is a bird, but aware of her guilt,
 She flees sight and light, and hides her shame with
 Shadows, and is driven from the whole sky by everyone. 595

⁶³¹ Jupiter rapes his daughter Proserpina at *Met.* 6.114: [*Iuppiter implevit*] *varius Deoida serpens*; see §5.1; Ceres is Jupiter's sister, so Proserpina is both the victim of father-daughter incest and the product of brother-sister incestuous rape (6.118-19). See Anderson 1972, 166, 1996, 551. Cf. the brief suggestion of mother-son incest at *Met.* 7.386-7: *dextera Cyllene est, in qua cum matre Menephron / concubiturus erat saevarum more ferarum*; Hyginus elaborates at *Fab.* 253 that Cyllene is not only the name of a hill (as in Ovid), but also Menephron's daughter, with whom he has incestuous sex, in addition to with his mother Blias. Ovid's suggestive phrasing (*Cyllene ... in qua ... Menephron concubiturus erat*) may also allude to Menephron's double incest.

⁶³² This patterning suggests that Ovid casts Nyctimene as the instigator of sexual lust, even when there is no antagonistic internal narrator.

⁶³³ *Ov. Met.* 2.589-95. Nyctimene only appears elsewhere at *Hyg. Fab.* 204 and 253 (briefly). The little owl reappears during Orpheus' death scene at *Met.* 11.25 and *Fast.* 2.552.

Nyctimene's metamorphosis is expressed in terms of punishment; her incest with her father is termed a *dirum crimen* (590),⁶³⁴ for which she is explicitly culpable and for which she is penalised. Read against Hyginus' version of the myth, it becomes clear that agency on Nyctimene's part is an Ovidian invention, as is the notion of punishment: [*Nyctimenen*] *Epopeus pater amore incensus compressit ... quam Minerva miserata in noctuam transformavit* (Hyg. *Fab.* 204). Hyginus casts his Nyctimene as the victim of paternal rape, whom the virgin goddess honours with a transformation that highlights Nyctimene's positive sense of *pudor*.⁶³⁵ Ovid, in contrast, states that Nyctimene is the aggressor as she defiles her father's bed, proleptically configuring other aggressive daughters in the *Metamorphoses*, like Scylla and Myrrha. The intervention of Minerva, who is presumably the author of Nyctimene's metamorphosis, is also omitted here:⁶³⁶ the transformation is abruptly introduced with *avis illa quidem* (593), without any of the dramatic elaboration of Cornix' change (2.580-8). There is an issue of framing here: Ovid's story of Nyctimene is told in the voice of Cornix, the princess whom Minerva had transformed into a crow after her attempted rape at the hands of Neptune (2.568-88); Cornix is perceived as a less important member of Minerva's entourage, and she asks the value of being a *comes inculcata Minervae* (2.588) if she is *post noctis avem* (2.564) in the rankings. Therefore, it is unsurprising that her narrative of Nyctimene is unsympathetic,⁶³⁷ as she holds a personal vendetta against the owl.

Nonetheless, even in this most antagonistic narration, there is some sense that Nyctimene, like Myrrha, is absolved of her crime. She becomes the famous companion

⁶³⁴ Cf. the *incipit* of Orpheus' Myrrha narrative: *dira canam* (10.300).

⁶³⁵ *Pudor* is mentioned twice in the *fabula*: Nyctimene hides in the woods after the rape out of *pudor* and the reason for the little owl's nocturnality is explained as *pudoris causa*.

⁶³⁶ See Keith 1992a, 26.

⁶³⁷ See Anderson 1996, 304–5; Goldenhard & Zissos 2004, 58–9; Hill 1985, 209–10.

of Minerva, inseparable in iconography from her mistress,⁶³⁸ something which even Cornix must concede is an *honor* (590).⁶³⁹ Once again then, the punishment for incest is characterised by ambivalence: the complex polyphony of both antagonistic (Cornix) and less partisan (Ovid) narrators mixed with mythographic transposition of culpability makes unpacking Ovid's Nyctimene almost impossible.⁶⁴⁰ The issue of Cornix' hostile narration in the Nyctimene narrative throws Orpheus' diachronically transformative narration into contrast: Cornix is forced to admit that there is *honor* in Nyctimene's role in Diana's avian court, although it is clear that she does not want to, whereas Orpheus' approach to Myrrha is, by the end of the episode, almost wholly positive, without any sense of Cornix' reticence.

Let us turn now to the story of Tereus and Philomela (6.412-674). The tale is a complex web of crime and punishment but matters punitive again take centre stage: king Pandion of Athens arranges a marital union between his daughter, Procne, and the Thracian king, Tereus. The wedding is described by Ovid in direly ominous terms, but the couple still have a child, Itys.⁶⁴¹ Procne misses her sister, Philomela, so Tereus goes to Athens to ask Pandion if his other daughter can visit them in Thrace. Upon seeing Philomela, Tereus is inflamed with lust, but he conceals it, and Pandion agrees that Philomela can visit Procne. When Philomela and Tereus arrive in Thrace, he takes her to a stone hut and brutally rapes her; Philomela threatens to tell people what he has done (i.e. to *fari* the *nefas*), so Tereus cuts out her tongue and rapes her again.

⁶³⁸ The Greeks seem not to have had any aetiology for the little owl (*γλαῦξ*) which accompanied Athena but imagery featuring it was ubiquitous, including the obverse of Athenian tetradrachms, which themselves became known as the *γλαῦκες* (Philoch. *BNJ* 328 fr. 200).

⁶³⁹ Cf. Ov. *Met.* 10.501 of Myrrha post-transformation: *est honor et lacrimis*.

⁶⁴⁰ For polyphony creating ambiguities of interpretation, see Kuhlmann 2017.

⁶⁴¹ The wedding is subverted, like Myrrha's: both weddings feature *bubones* (Ov. *Met.* 6.432 and 10.452-3); the *bubo* is an omen signifying human suffering, see Ov. *Met.* 15.791, *Ib.* 223-4; Virg. *Aen.* 4.462; Gildenhard & Zissos 2007, 13. The Furies also have a prominent position at Tereus and Procne's ceremony (6.430-1); see Gildenhard & Zissos 2007, 11-22.

Tereus convinces Procne that Philomela had died. A year passes and Philomela is still in the stone hut, unable to voice her trauma, but she spells out what happened on a tapestry, which she conveys to her sister by means of a servant. Procne is resolved to punish her husband (6.585-6: *nec flere vacat, sed fasque nefasque / confusura ruit poenaque in imagine tota est*); she assumes the ritual garb of a Bacchante and rescues Philomela. Procne devises a punishment for Tereus and resolves to murder Itys to punish Tereus; the sisters kill and cut up the boy and turn his body into stew and kebabs. The gruesome meal is fed to the unwitting Tereus; when he discovers the ingredients of his feast, he draws his sword and chases the sisters around the dining room.⁶⁴² The three of them become birds: Procne becomes a nightingale, Philomela changes into a swallow and Tereus is a hoopoe.

There are, then, several angles of criminality and penalty in this tale. Tereus' initial lust for Philomela is described in terms of moral and legal reprehensibility: *libido* (6.458), *vitium* (6.460), *scelus* (6.473). His rape of her is even more strongly characterised in this way: (*dirum*) *factum* (6.533, 6.545, 6.563, 6.574), *facinus* (6.561), *scelus* (6.578), *nefas* (6.601). Tereus' rape of Philomela is also classified as worthy of just punishment (although Ovid will question whether the punishment is excessive): Philomela says to Tereus *quandocumque mihi poenas dabis* (6.544) and Procne refers several times to penalising her husband (6.586, 6.611-19). The sisters' murder and dismemberment of Itys is conceived as a (*triste*) *facinus* (6.623), a *furialis caedes* (6.657, 6.669) and also as something for which Tereus wants revenge (6.671: *poenaeque cupidine velox*). To add to the complexities, Procne defends her actions

⁶⁴² Cf. Cinyras' drawing of his sword when the *nefas* in which he is implicated is revealed at *Met.* 10.475.

with the odd claim that *scelus est pietas in coniuge Terei* (6.635).⁶⁴³ This is made clearer in Figure 4.8:

<u>Scelus</u>	<u>Poena</u>
Tereus' desire for and rape of Philomela.	Eating his son Itys and transformation into a hoopoe.
Procne and Philomela's violence on Itys' body.	Transformation into birds.
Procne's uxorial <i>pietas</i> to Tereus.	[Unclear]

Figure 4.8: The axes of criminality and punishment in the Tereus-Procne-Philomela narrative.

Only one of these axes (the first) is explicitly relevant as a comparison to Myrrha's punishment in Book 10, but I set it in the context of the complex interlinkages of crime and punishment in this myth. For a post-Augustan Roman man, sexual relations with his wife's sister was not explicitly defined as *incestus* but would naturally fall under adultery law.⁶⁴⁴ However, Ovid repeatedly restates the relations of blood and marriage between his characters and transposes Tereus' lust for Philomela into the shape of father-daughter incest: *quotiens amplectitur illa parentem, / esse parens vellet* (6.481-2) and *per superos oro, patrio ut tuearis amore* (6.499). Philomela's own sensual actions *vis-à-vis* Pandion—stroking and kissing—also have a flavour of the incestuous (6.475-82) and *nefas* pervades the episode, occurring five times.⁶⁴⁵ It follows, then, that Ovid paints the union of Philomela and Tereus as stained not only by the obvious *scelera* of adultery and rape, but also by the *nefas* of incest. As with Myrrha and Nyctimene, the perpetrator of incest is punished but there are a number of differences:

⁶⁴³ For *pietas* as be a *scelus*, see D. Libatique Forthcoming.

⁶⁴⁴ See §1.3.3. However, Martial, seventy years after Ovid, claims the rape was *incestus*: *flet Philomela nefas incesti Tereos* (14.75.1); for the dating of Mart. 14, see Pitcher 1985. Sleeping with a wife's sister was explicitly forbidden in other contemporary cultures, e.g. Judaism (*Lev.* 18:18).

⁶⁴⁵ *Ov. Met.* 6.524, 6.540, 6.585, 6.601, 6.613.

Tereus is guilty of more than just incest and his punishment is consequentially greater in magnitude (i.e. he suffers transformation in addition to familial cannibalism).⁶⁴⁶ Unlike in those stories, the victim of the incest is also punished, or is treated in a way which resembles punishment (i.e. Philomela's glossectomy and both sisters' transformation into birds).⁶⁴⁷ This may be seen to be a result of the inverted gender roles at play in the Procne-Philomela-Tereus narrative. Instigators of incest in Ovid are stereotypically female,⁶⁴⁸ so Tereus stands out as unusual in this regard and it does not seem irrelevant that the women in this tale must perform deeds even more monstrous than his coded incestuous rape.

Once again, the matter of punishment and criminality for incest is questioned in the complex interactions of Book 6. Incest is undoubtedly conceived as a *scelus*, deserving of punishment, but Ovid manages to continue his ambiguating of ambivalence. The act which constitutes the *poena* for Tereus' *scelus* is itself a *scelus* which merits its own *poena* (see Figure 4.8); therefore, Ovid creates a sense of relativism between his written *scelera*. The reader of the Procne-Philomela-Tereus narrative cannot uncritically hold that the sisters are the moral victors in this scenario, and they are forced to compare the *poenae* and thus the attendant *scelera*. Ambiguity and a lack of monosemous interpretation characterises the way that Ovidian punishments for incest are depicted; all three examples I have discussed seem initially uncomplicatedly

⁶⁴⁶ See Gildenhard & Zissos 2007, 34, who argue that the scene is more a matter of unequal revenge than 'eye for eye' punishment.

⁶⁴⁷ The avian transformation is both blessing and curse: it saves the sisters from Tereus' wrath but condemns them to metamorphosed lives. This adds to the ambivalence of punishment. Philomela's glossectomy is both a punishment for the words she has already said and a preventative measure for the words she might say in the future.

⁶⁴⁸ Myrrha and Byblis are obvious *exempla*, but Salmacis' assault of Hermaphroditus uses the language of brother-sister incest: *et frater felix et fortunata profecto / si qua tibi soror est* (Ov. *Met.* 4.323-4) and *poscenti nymphae sine fine sororia saltem / oscula* (4.334-5). Scylla's rape of the lock at *Met.* 8.1-151 is also presented in incestuous language, although no sex takes place. Male instigators are entirely divine: Pluto-Proserpina (5.332-71; under the influence of Cupid), Jupiter-Proserpina (6.114), Neptune-Ceres (6.118-19).

punitive but the act of punishment in each is problematised in some way, creating a sense of equivocality which might be unexpected in the handling of a taboo of incest's magnitude.

4.3 – *quot confundas et iura et nomina*: Family Names

As in the earlier account of Byblis' love for her brother, issues of naming and identity play a central role in Orpheus' narration of Myrrha's desire for Cinyras.⁶⁴⁹ However, rather than focusing on the use of proper nouns, as I did in my discussion of Byblis (see §3.1.2.1), this section focuses on the use of familial lexis. Words which denote the interrelations of the Roman *familia* are ubiquitous in this episode;⁶⁵⁰ Orpheus/Ovid continually remind their audiences, both diegetic and extradiegetic, of the bonds between all of the characters encountered, which builds on the transgression of *pietas* as outlined in §4.1. Myrrha vocalises this in line 10.346: *nec quot confundas et iura et nomina sentis?* The question is diegetically rhetorical, addressed to herself but seems to be potentially transferable to her narrator, Orpheus;⁶⁵¹ it becomes, then, an entreaty to Orpheus, asking if he knows how extreme his use of *familiae nomina* is. She is not wrong to ask; as a table of occurrences (Figure 4.9) shows, such words are extremely common in his narration of the Myrrha episode:⁶⁵²

⁶⁴⁹ See Mader 2012.

⁶⁵⁰ Such repetitions are a feature of incest narratives generally; see also S. *OT* 1403-9.

⁶⁵¹ Cf. my discussion of Byblis' self-aware questioning at §3.2.1.

⁶⁵² This scene is unusually thick with such terminology; cf., for instance, the Byblis episode, which is another focused meditation on the bonds of family but contains only 36 such instances as opposed to the 53 in Myrrha's slightly shorter narrative. In addition to the 'formal' descriptors of family relationships in the table, Ovid/Orpheus also uses familial adjacent language in *viscera* and *patria*. Though not strictly a 'family name', *viscera* is used at Ov. *Met.* 10.465 to delineate the proximity of Myrrha and Cinyras' biological bond; cf. its use of Althaea's impiety towards Meleager at 8.478. *Patria* is also not strictly a word describing family bonds, but the paranomastic echo of *pater* is hardly subtle in Myrrha's ironically proleptic wish at 10.341: *ire libet procul hinc patriaeque relinquere fines* (cf. §3.2.3).

<i>pater</i> or <i>parens</i> ⁶⁵³	15
<i>mater</i> or <i>genetrix</i>	8
<i>nata</i> or <i>filia</i>	6
<i>soror</i>	4
<i>coniunx</i> ⁶⁵⁴	4
<i>natus</i>	3
<i>maritus</i> or <i>vir</i> (as husband)	3
<i>alumna</i>	3
<i>infans</i>	2
<i>prolis</i>	1
<i>frater</i>	1
<i>avus</i>	1

Figure 4.9: Frequency of familial lexis in the Myrrha episode.

What is especially significant about this use of labelling is that it captures a large interlocking web of people, some actual characters within the narrative and some fictions within its fiction; the density of such words does not simply describe the interrelations of named characters (i.e. Myrrha as Cinyras' child, Cenchreis as Cinyras' wife, Myrrha as the nurse's foster-daughter) but goes beyond this to create a broader conception of a multiplicity of connections. From the beginning, with Orpheus' invocation (10.300: *procul hinc natae, procul este parentes*), the named daughters and fathers are not Myrrha and Cinyras but the members of Orpheus'

⁶⁵³ Although *parens* can designate a parent of any gender, in the Myrrha episode, it almost exclusively connotes fathers. The only exception is Ov. *Met.* 10.514, where it refers to Myrrha herself as the mother of Adonis. For the potentially duplex interpretation of 10.321 (*precor ... iura parentum*) connoting 'laws of my fathers' not 'laws of my ancestors', see Anderson 1972, 505.

⁶⁵⁴ *Coniunx* is of a wife in every instance except 10.422 where it describes Cinyras as Cenchreis' husband.

diegetic audience and, by extension, Ovid's extradiegetic readers.⁶⁵⁵ This pattern of externalising such language beyond the nuclear family of the narrative is employed on multiple occasions by Orpheus: for instance, there is a concentration of *nomina* as Myrrha attempts to normalise her desires by looking to the alleged practice of other tribes:⁶⁵⁶

gentes tamen esse feruntur,
in quibus et **nato genetrix** et **nata parenti**
iungitur

Yet, they say that there are tribes
In which **mother** is joined to **son** and **daughter** is joined
To **father**.

In addition, some characters' familial identities seem to be emphasised in this melting pot of family identities (e.g. the Furies, who are identified as *sorores* at 10.349).⁶⁵⁷ All of these 'relatives' are creations of Myrrha's rhetoric, not named characters of Orpheus' song. This has the effect of deepening the importance of family language to the scene, making it one of the primary lenses through which the world is conceived in these lines.

As well as the web of *familiae nomina* outside of the 'core cast', the members of Myrrha's direct *familia* are conceptualised in a variety of ways and each takes on many

⁶⁵⁵ See Scaffai 1999, 375 on the comedy of addressing an arboreal audience as fathers and daughters; perhaps we are encouraged to see Orpheus as speaking directly to a Roman audience, with a scarcely present intermediary. Fabre-Serris 2005, 41 outlines that all the characters whose metamorphoses are described in Orpheus' song could be in the audience, as they become flowers, trees, rocks and beasts; it seems unlikely that Myrrha is present, given the lengths that the narrator goes to in order to locate her far from his context at *Met.* 10.304-10.

⁶⁵⁶ *Ov. Met.* 10.331-3.

⁶⁵⁷ It is common to refer to the Furies as *sorores*, but to use such a commonplace in the Myrrha narrative brings closer focus to the familial aspect of the description. For the Furies as *sorores*, with or without an additional descriptor (e.g. *Stygiae*, *Tartareae*), see e.g. *Ov. Met.* 4.451, 6.662; *Stat. Theb.* 5.66, 10.833, 11.415, 12.647, *Silv.* 2.1.185; *Virg. Aen.* 7.327.

nomina. These *nomina* normally identify stable relationships, in which, from an individual's perspective, each *nomen* may only describe a single person and each member of the *familia* can only be described by a single *nomen*: i.e. one can only have one *pater* and this person can only be identified as a *pater*.⁶⁵⁸ Incest confounds this stability, as the identities connoted by *nomina* become complex and polysemous, which contradicts their nature.⁶⁵⁹ The label *pater* does not permit a dual identity as *maritus* and yet this is precisely what incest forces; as a result, such identities begin to break down. This is brought out very clearly in the Myrrha episode as Myrrha herself identifies:⁶⁶⁰

nec quot confundas et iura et nomina sentis?

tune eris et matris paelex et adultera patris?

tune soror nati genetrixque vocabere fratris?

And do you not feel how many laws and names you are tossing together?

Will you be both 'other woman' to your mother and mistress to your father?

Will you be the sister of your son and be called the mother of your brother?

The crisis of these lines is precisely one of polysemy. Definitionally, Myrrha cannot be both the sister of her son and the mother of her brother: such terms are mutually exclusive. Yet her questions to herself can be answered with a categoric 'yes': Myrrha is simultaneously Adonis' mother and his sister, a social, if not biological, impossibility which Ovid stresses with his use of familial lexis in this episode. Indeed, every character in the complex family tree (Figure 4.10), starting with Venus and

⁶⁵⁸ There are some exceptions: e.g. one can have multiple *sorores* or *fratres* and will necessarily have two sets of *avus* and *avia*. Even in such circumstances, they may only fulfil a single function: a *frater* may not also be another family member.

⁶⁵⁹ Cf. a similar idea at Sen. *Herc.* 387: *quid [loquar] geminum nefas mixtumque nomen coniugis nati patris.*

⁶⁶⁰ Ov. *Met.* 10.346-8.

Pygmalion and ending with Venus and Adonis, ends up having multiple identities and attendant *nomina*. For the purposes of this Figure 4.10, I have characterised Venus as engaging in a sexual dalliance with Pygmalion, since she is the feminine aspect involved in Eburnea's 'birth', making her a sort of 'mother' figure, and, in earlier forms of the Pygmalion myth, it is his agalmatophilic sexual activity with a statue of Venus which provokes her rage.⁶⁶¹ I have also represented Myrrha and Cinyras' union as a sort of marriage because of the imagery in which it is presented at *Ov. Met.* 10.446-64.⁶⁶²

⁶⁶¹ See Philosteph. *Hist. De Cypro* fr. 13 and Bruzzone 2012, 68–9.

⁶⁶² See O'Bryhim 2008.

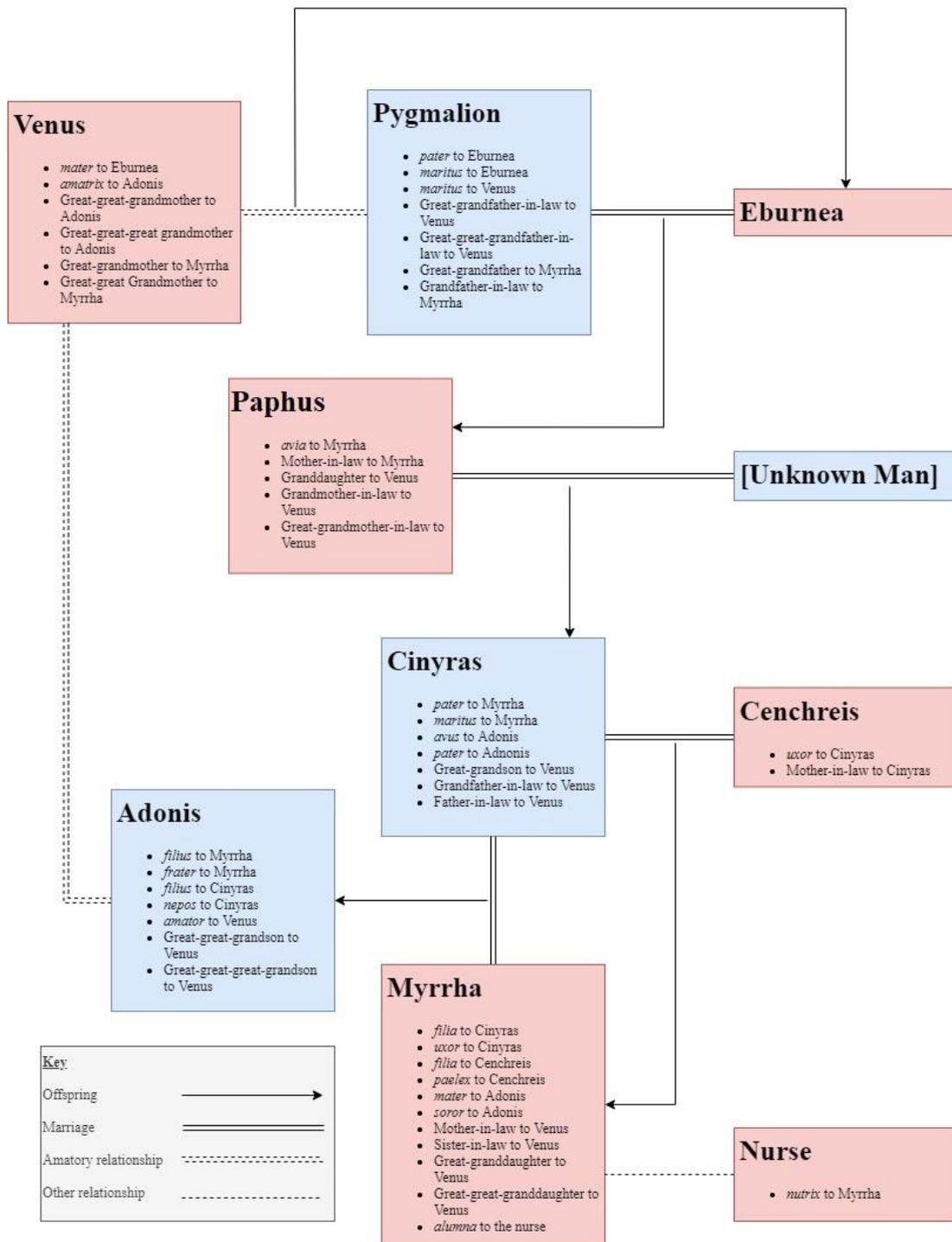


Figure 4.10: Myrrha's family tree, labelled with key characters' nomina. N.b. I have mostly only recorded nomina which represent multiple types of relationships to the same person.

Multivalences such as those depicted in Figure 4.10 utterly destabilise the notion of familial identity: what is the function of Myrrha's identity as a *filia* when she is also a symbolic *uxor* to the same man? In this particular family, such labels are doubly confounded by the twofold incest of Myrrha-Cinyras and Pygmalion-Eburnea.⁶⁶³ this allows Venus to enter the family at two separate points, bookending it genealogically.⁶⁶⁴ The breakdown of the solid lexical meanings of individual *nomina* contributes to breakdown of the conception of the *familia* as a whole:⁶⁶⁵ the entity is defined by sub-structures whose sense is convoluted and so it, in turn, becomes a convoluted and jumbled mess. This confusion of roles and identities reflects the destructive potential of father-daughter incest; as Detienne has shown, such relations cause a 'short-circuiting' of three sets of bonds: father-daughter, husband-wife and

⁶⁶³ To take Pygmalion-Eburnea as incestuous is common in scholarship: Leach 1974, 124; Janan 1988, 125; Hillis-Miller 1990, 10; Elsner 1991, 169; Hardie 2004, 11; Fabre-Serris 2005, 31; Bruzzone 2012, 75; Klein 2019.

⁶⁶⁴ Venus' *affaire* with Adonis is also a double incest: she is attracted to him because of his similarity to her own son, Cupid (*Ov. Met.* 10.515-18), but is, at the same time, either his great-great-grandmother or his great-great-great-grandmother, depending on whether the union of Myrrha and Cinyras counts as one generation or two. On the double incest, see Klein 2019. N.b. sex with grandparents (of any degree of magnitude) was never legally categorised as *incestus*; this should not be interpreted as a tacit permissiveness and is more likely a result of a lack of need for specific legislation.

⁶⁶⁵ This is strongly related to the breakdown of *pietas* in this episode, which is a sort of 'glue' for such bonds. See §4.1. Gebhardt 2009, 323 goes further, stating "Myrrhas Spiel mit den Worten stellt eine potentielle Bedrohung der Vorstellung von Wahrheit überhaupt dar, wie sie durch sprachliche Konvention festgelegt wird".

mother-daughter.⁶⁶⁶ The core aspects of the ‘nuclear family’ are disrupted by this cross-generational act:

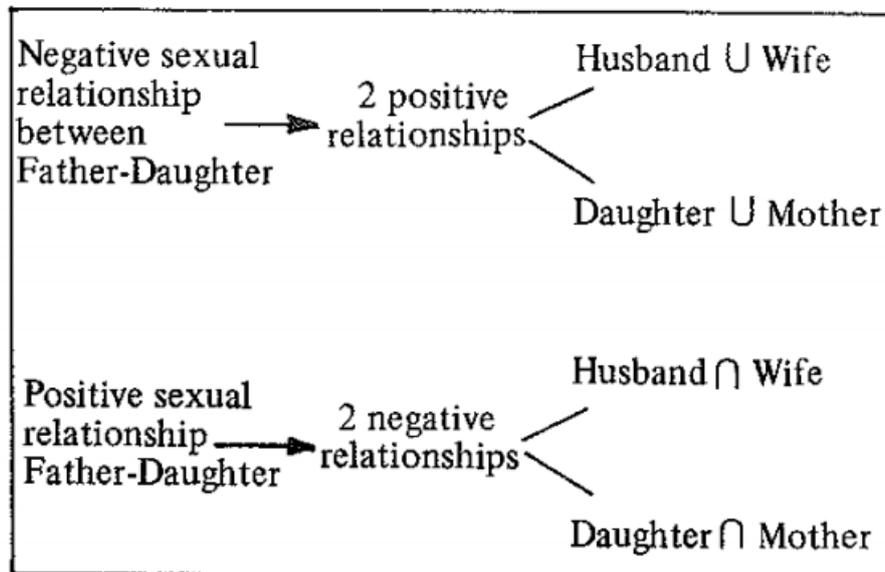


Figure 4.11: The destructive potential of father-daughter incest from Detienne 1994, 53.

4.3.1 – nomina sacra and the festa Cereris

The name-plays in this episode come to a head in the dramatic moment of the consummation of Myrrha and Cinyras’ ‘marriage’. After the nurse has led the young girl to her father’s bedchamber, Orpheus tells us:⁶⁶⁷

cunctantem longaeva manu deducit et alto
 admotam lecto cum traderet “accipe” dixit,
 “ista tua est, Cinyra” devotaque corpora iunxit.
 accipit obsceno genitor sua viscera lecto
 virgineosque metus levat hortaturque timentem.
 forsitan aetatis quoque nomine “filia” dixit,
 dixit et illa “pater”, sceleri ne nomina desint.

465

⁶⁶⁶ Detienne 1994, 82–3.

⁶⁶⁷ Ov. *Met.* 10.462–8.

The ancient nurse took the hesitating girl by the hand and
 Having conveyed her to the high bed, said, as she was handing her over
 “Take her, Cinyras, she is yours” and she joined their cursed bodies.
 The father took his own flesh into his obscene bed 465
 And lessened her virginal fear and encouraged the fearful girl.
 Perhaps, because of her age, he even called her “daughter” and
 She called him “father”, lest their real names be missing from the crime.

The disturbing scene is thick with wordplays and allusions, from the invocation of the marriage formula *deductio in domum mariti in manu deducit*,⁶⁶⁸ to the dramatic word order of 10.465, placing father and daughter metrically together within the *obsceno lecto*,⁶⁶⁹ to the sinister way that Cinyras takes his own flesh (*sua viscera*) into bed with him.⁶⁷⁰ Indeed, Ovid deploys the reflexive *suus* to underline the uncomfortable proximity between the incestuous couple.⁶⁷¹ However, the most spine-chilling allusion comes in the final two lines quoted above. The Orphic narrator, who has thus far reported the entire story in graphic detail, suggests that he does not know the precise details of Myrrha and Cinyras’ bedroom activity.⁶⁷² He instead uses *forsitan* to introduce a sense of doubt and mystery, shrouding the sordid details in potentiality. It is telling which aspects of the story he feels the need to ‘fill in’ with *forsitan*:⁶⁷³ the

⁶⁶⁸ O’Byrhim 2008, 192; for the practice, see Treggiari 1991, 166–8. O’Byrhim 2008, 195 pushes this point further (perhaps too far, see my n. 687) to suggest that Myrrha and Cinyras’ wedding takes place on 2nd August, which would make it a *dies ater* and thus an inauspicious time to start something, such as a relationship. For *dies atri*, see Varro *Ling.* 6.29.

⁶⁶⁹ See Anderson 1972, 514.

⁶⁷⁰ *Sua viscera* is a favourite Ovidian phrase, often reserved for instances of gross impiety between parents and children: Medea’s murder of her children (*Rem.* 59), Tereus eating his son, Itys, (*Met.* 6.651) or Althaea burning the log which brings about her son Meleager’s death (*Met.* 8.478). *Viscera* retains this sense of stressing the connection between parent and child in later authors: it is used in Seneca to refer to Thyestes’ consumed children within him (*Thy.* 999, 1041) and Medea’s potential unborn child, which she considers killing (*Med.* 1013). Cf. the use of *viscera* in a scene with far less *nefas* at Ps.-Ov. *Liv.* 264.

⁶⁷¹ See e.g. Ov. *Met.* 6.99 (with my p. 230), 9.497.

⁶⁷² See Gebhardt 2009, 330; Reed 2013, 256–7.

⁶⁷³ For *forsitan*, see Rosati 2021, 153.

fact that Myrrha and Cinyras may have named each other *pater* and *filia* respectively, an eerily ironic suggestion that Cinyras recognises his bedfellow.⁶⁷⁴

These lines are both comic and disturbing; Orpheus' authorial *forsitan* makes them stand out from the surrounding lines and this may point to a more learned allusion by Ovid. Lowrie suggests that there is something particular about lines 10.431-6 (quoted below) which draws our focus onto a second aspect of Myrrha's taboo:

festae piae Cereris celebrabant annua matres
illa, quibus nivea velatae corpora veste
primitias frugum dant spicea serta suarum
perque novem noctes Venerem tactusque viriles
in vetitis numerant. turba Cenchreis in illa 435
regis adest coniunx arcanaque sacra frequentat.

The pious mothers were celebrating the annual festival of Ceres
The one on which, with their bodies covered with snow white clothes,
They dedicate corn garlands, the first fruits of their harvest
And for nine nights, they counted as forbidden sex and
Contact with men. Cenchreis, the wife of the king was 435
Also among that throng and engaged in the holy secret rites.

Lowrie suggests that in the ritual which Cenchreis and the other Cyprian women perform, there may be a reference to the *sacra Cereri* alluded to by Servius:⁶⁷⁵ *et*

⁶⁷⁴ See Fabre-Serris 2021, 202–3.

⁶⁷⁵ Lowrie 1993. There is much debate as to which festival Ovid refers in lines 10.431-6. The two chief candidates are the Roman *Sacrum Anniversarium Cereris* and the Greek Thesmophoria (or indeed some combination of the two); for the debate, see Lowrie 1993, 51 n. 2. Ovid is the first source to combine Myrrha/Smyrna's incest with a Cerean festival (Anderson 1996, 512); Ceres is strongly associated with damaged parent-child relations, so her worship by *pioe matres* sets up a nice contrast with Myrrha's impiety. I suggest we imagine that Ovid probably had a combination of these rites in mind when writing the scene and is playing on Roman cultural awareness of abstinence as a feature of Cerean festivals. For the *Sacrum Anniversarium Cereris*, see DiLuzio 2020, 108–15; Spaeth 1996, 103–12; Šterbenc Erker 2013, 84–112.

Romae cum Cereri sacra fiunt, observatur ne quis patrem aut filiam nominet, quod fructus matrimonii per liberos constet (*ad Aen.* 4.58). The Cerean ritual is one which foregrounds the relations between a mother and daughter, forbidding even the speaking of *pater* and *filia*;⁶⁷⁶ even if neither Myrrha nor Cinyras are taking part in the *sacra*, their union runs *contra* the ritual practices being carried out simultaneous to their *nefas*, adding to the horror of it. Orpheus' interjection into the scene that 'perhaps' Myrrha and Cinyras broke a second taboo during their incest sets their words in the context of his narrative which has been full of the terms *pater* and *filia* (see Figure 4.9).

Indeed, it further highlights the differences between Orpheus's narration and the speech of individual characters; when Myrrha and the nurse talk, Myrrha is initially unwilling to explain the reason for her suicide attempt but the nurse uttering the word *pater* acts as a stimulus for her to reveal the truth. The nurse begins her questioning of the young girl with a series of potential reasons for suicidality, before reassuring her that all is well in Myrrha's home life (10.395-401); the final comment she makes is *vivunt genetrixque paterque* (10.401).⁶⁷⁷ *Paterque* ends the line and the nurse's speech emphatically; the speaking of the name has a somatic effect on Myrrha who *patre audito suspiria duxit ab imo / pectore* (10.402-3).⁶⁷⁸ Despite having used *pater* several times during her monologue, Myrrha struggles to vocalise the object of her desire in communication with the nurse; she is unable *fari* the *nefas* to another person because doing so would reify her internal desires into something communicable, something which could become *fama* (see §1.2). Myrrha can refer to him obliquely, claiming *o*

⁶⁷⁶ Cf. improper sex at a Cerean festival at Plaut. *Aul.* 35-8, 794-5.

⁶⁷⁷ See Bonadini 2020, 291-4.

⁶⁷⁸ *Suspiria* tie Myrrha into the elegiac tradition of lovers sighing due to separation from their desired partner; see Prop. 2.22b.47; Ps.-Tib. 3.6.61; Ov. *Am.* 2.19.55.

... *felicem coniuge matrem!* (10.422) but she does not use the taboo-bound *pater* until the episode's climax in Cinyras' bedchamber.

Immediately before the reader encounters the sacred festival which Cenchreis and the other *piae matres* are undertaking, the nurse utters her promise to Myrrha: "*vive*" *ait haec*, "*potiere tuo*"—*et non ausa "parente" / dicere* (10.429-30). As Tarrant's punctuation demonstrates, the various aspects of sense in the line are broken up, i.e. there are four contiguous aspects: [1] the nurse's words (*vive ... potiere tuo*), [2] the narratorial comment which explains them (*ait haec*), [3] a second narratorial comment (*non ausa ... dicere*) which explains [4] the unspoken end to the nurse's sentence (*parente*). This line's scansion (spondee-dactyl-dactyl-spondee-dactyl-anceps) is extremely rare in Ovidian hexameters, which makes this line and its dark contents stand out.⁶⁷⁹ In addition to the metrical peculiarity of the line, the jumbled and broken-up syntax in this line enact the anxiety and confusion of the nurse's thought process and her uncertainty about the morality of what she will do.⁶⁸⁰ The present absence of the nurse saying *parente* is resounding in its effect here; the reader is one line from being allusively told the secondary reason prohibiting the speaking of fatherly and daughterly terms, so the fact that Orpheus includes the word *parente* in his song where he claims it was never spoken underscores the taboo-breaking nature of the conversation. This technique is picked up again in the scene where the nurse-as-*pronuba* hands Myrrha to Cinyras in the perverted wedding ceremony, exclaiming *ista tua est, Cinyra* (4.464); *tua* is not accompanied by an expected feminine noun,⁶⁸¹

⁶⁷⁹ The S-D-D-S-D pattern is only Ovid's twelfth most used scansion of hexameters overall, making it an infrequent occurrence, see Costa 1957; for the statistics on hexameter uses in the *Metamorphoses*, see Duckworth 1966, 111.

⁶⁸⁰ Cf. my §3.2.2 on *Met.* 9.493 and 9.598-9.

⁶⁸¹ The nurse's statement is grammatically sound and possessives are used substantivally to indicate family or love relations (see Jolowicz Forthcoming), but given how the line mirrors 10.429, the same effect is being recreated; see Anderson 1972, 511. The situation is, of course, not identical, as the

where a reader might expect either *sponsa* (for the occasion) or *filia* (for the truth of the situation). In both lines 10.429 and 10.464, the deliberate silencing of familial lexis, so widespread in the rest of the scene, adds weight to Lowrie’s suggestion that Ovid is evoking the ritual taboos of the *sacra Cereris* in his presentation of the incommunicability of *nefas* in this scene.

I wish to push Lowrie’s argument further; drawing on the linguistics of taboo established in §1.2, it seems to me that Ovid/Orpheus’ *incipit* to the description of the Cerean rites is significant. He states *festā piae Cereris celebrabant annua matres*, combining two of the concepts I have focused on so far in the chapter (*pietas* and familial language in *matres*). Emphatically positioned the beginning of the line is *festā*, a word whose significance in this scene has not garnered sufficient attention. At the same time as the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid was composing his *Fasti*, a collection of festivals and events in the Roman calendar;⁶⁸² it is therefore full of *festā* and Ovid was not ignorant of the etymological play between *festum* and *fastus*.⁶⁸³ *Fastus* itself etymologically derived from *fas* and means “autorisé par la loi divine ou par le droit religieux”;⁶⁸⁴ it is most commonly used to describe specific calendar days, marking them out as governed by *fas*. Therefore, describing an event as a *festum* is almost indistinguishable from calling it a *dies fastus*. Varro makes the crucial connection between these etymologies and the silence of the nurse: *dies fasti, per quos*

narrator does not inform his audience of precisely what word is missing. For issues of displacement and desyntacticisation in psychoanalytic syntax analysis, see Kristeva 1980a, 228–33.

⁶⁸² Ovid briefly addresses Cerean rites in the *Fasti*, where he claims *alba decent Cererem: vestes Cerialibus albas / sumite; nunc pulli velleris usus abest* (*Fast.* 4.619–20). Cf. *Met.* 10.432: [*festā*] *quibus nivea velatae [matres] corpora veste*. The strong association in both accounts with whiteness and chastity contrasts with the darkness and unchastity of Myrrha’s procession to her father’s *thalamus* (*Met.* 10.446–64); the costume may evoke the famously pure Vestal virgins, who wore all white (see Wildfang 2006, 13–16) and whose virginity is strongly opposed to Myrrha’s sexual activity. The other specificities of Book 10’s *festā* are not recorded in Ovid’s *Fasti*.

⁶⁸³ Paul. Fest. s.v. “fastorum”: *fasti enim dies festi sunt*.

⁶⁸⁴ EM 217 s.v. “fas”.

praetoribus omnia verba sine piaculo licet fari ... contrarii horum vocantur dies nefasti, per quos dies nefas fari praetorem “do,” “dico,” “addico”.⁶⁸⁵ Although the circumstances are different (the nurse is no *praetor*), issues of silence and speech (of *fari* and *fama*) are inherently tied up with the concept of *fasta*. My interpretation of the significance of *fasta* in line 10.431 is supported by the fact that, if Servius’ comment on the *Aeneid* is to be believed, the Cerean rites performed at Rome were commonly known as *sacra*,⁶⁸⁶ not *fasta*,⁶⁸⁷ meaning that Ovid’s renaming of them in the *Metamorphoses* may wilfully evoke the connections of *fas* and *fasti*.

“Myrrha’s second taboo”,⁶⁸⁸ then, may be deeper than initially posited by Lowrie. The fact that Orpheus wryly proposes that Myrrha and Cinyras called each other *pater* and *filia* respectively would indeed break the naming taboo that Servius suggests was inherent to the *sacra Cereri* but the whole *nefas* of incest is brought into sharper focus when contrasted with the *fasta* being carried out by the *piae matres*. As an unspeakable crime, it is poignant for Orpheus to imply that Myrrha and Cinyras *fantur* their *nefas*, wittingly on the part of Myrrha and unwittingly on the part of Cinyras. Indeed, it is in line 10.431 (*fasta piae Cereris celebrabant annua matres*) that all the features of the Myrrha episode I have so far discussed in this chapter come to a head. Every aspect of this line directly contrasts with the furtive exploits of Myrrha and Cinyras: the named family members (*matres*) are acting in accordance with their socio-familial role, performing *fasta* (not *nefas*) with *pietas* (not Myrrha and Cinyras’ *impietas*). The introduction of people who perform this triptych of commendable behaviour (familial

⁶⁸⁵ Var. *L.* 6.29-30. Ovid echoes Varro’s in a paraphrase at *Fast.* 1.47-50 (see pp. 33-4).

⁶⁸⁶ See also Ov. *Am.* 3.10.1; Cic. *Balb.* 55, *Leg.* 2.21; Livy 22.56.4-5; Paul. Fest. s.v. “Graeca sacra”.

⁶⁸⁷ Spaeth 1996, 112 takes the *fasta* to be a separate, Cyprian Cerean rite from the Roman *sacra* but does admit that the two are functionally identical. O’Byrhim 2008, 194 utilises the astronomical position of the stars suggested by Ovid at *Met.* 10.446-51 to suggest that the *sacra Cereris* and the *fasta Cereris* were the same festival; whilst the *sacra* must be a real-world analogue for and influence on the *fasta*, such precisions in Ovid’s fantastical world seem perhaps too felicitous.

⁶⁸⁸ The title of Lowrie 1993.

appropriateness, *pietas* and *fas*) stresses Myrrha and Cinyras' contravention of the triptych all the more dramatically.

4.4 – The Elephant in the Room: *Hippolytus*, Phaedra and the Tragic Tradition

The role of tragedy in not only the *Metamorphoses* but the whole Ovidian corpus has been discussed extensively in Ovidian scholarship.⁶⁸⁹ The Myrrha episode has proven to be a particular focus for such studies, because of its engagement with the themes and narrative of Euripides' *Hippolytus* (and perhaps Sophocles' lost *Phaedra*; see below).⁶⁹⁰ Both stories share some characters (Venus/Aphrodite and a nurse to the female protagonist)⁶⁹¹ and both follow a generally similar progression: a woman is struck by desire for her male relative and, after initial reluctance, confesses this desire to a nurse and the nurse reveals the desire the male beloved. However, it is also striking how many details Ovid changes when metamorphosing the famous *Hippolytus* into the Myrrha episode of his *carmen perpetuum*. These diversions from the extant *Hippolytus* of Euripides have been less remarked on in scholarship and constitute some of the fundamental ways that Ovid's Myrrha is characterised as a figure of ambivalence and ambiguity.

⁶⁸⁹ For some recent examples, see Scaffai 1999; Bruzzone 2012; Curley 2013; Schmitz 2015.

⁶⁹⁰ Bruzzone 2012 argues that the *Hippolytus* resounds through the entire narrative of Pygmalion's family, casting him as Hippolytus due to his chastity and Myrrha as Phaedra; the interpretation seems convincing and Pygmalion, although not perfect, is a far better fit for Hippolytus than the lustful Cinyras.

⁶⁹¹ There are also two more subtextual character connections: Adonis and Orpheus. Adonis does not appear by name in Euripides' play, but Artemis alludes to his death at *Hipp.* 1420-2: ἐγὼ γὰρ αὐτῆς ἄλλον ἐξ ἐμῆς χειρὸς / ὅς ἄ μάλιστα φίλτατος κυρῆ βροτῶν / τόξοις ἀφύκτοις τοῖσδε τιμωρήσομαι. Orpheus' name appears in Theseus' tirade against Hippolytus, where he accuses Hippolytus (illogically in the context) of Ὀρφέα ἄνακτ' ἔχων (953).

Before explaining my statement above, I first briefly discuss the different versions of Euripides' *Hippolytus*.⁶⁹² The *Hippolytus* is “the only certain instance of an Athenian tragedian rewriting a play”;⁶⁹³ the reason for the rewrite seems to have been that audiences reacted poorly to Phaedra in Euripides' first version, which the tradition has afforded the title *Hippolytus Calyptomenus*.⁶⁹⁴ The hypothesis to the extant *Hippolytus* claims ἔστι δὲ οὗτος Ἴππόλυτος δεύτερος ὁ καὶ Στεφανίας προσαγορευόμενος. ἐμφαίνεται δὲ ὕστερος γεγραμμένος· τὸ γὰρ ἀπρεπὲς καὶ κατηγορίας ἄξιον ἐν τούτῳ διώρθωται τῷ δράματι.⁶⁹⁵ The general assumption is that τὸ ἀπρεπὲς καὶ κατηγορίας ἄξιον is Phaedra's willingness to commit adultery and make a face-to-face confession of love to Hippolytus.⁶⁹⁶ It seems that this first *Hippolytus* adapted the most common form of the legend surrounding Phaedra's lust,⁶⁹⁷ so it is notable that Euripides moved away from such an extreme portrayal in the extant tragedy. The extent to which Ovid had access to an extant text of the *Hippolytus Calyptomenus* is difficult to establish. Many have argued that Seneca later based his *Phaedra* on the lost Euripidean play;⁶⁹⁸ whether or not Seneca's *Phaedra* is a straight adaptation of the *Hippolytus Calyptomenus* (or the Sophoclean *Phaedra*), there is sufficient evidence that Seneca,

⁶⁹² For a fuller discussion of the three major tragic sources (the two Euripidean *Hippolyti* and the Sophoclean *Phaedra*), see Barrett 1964, 10–45.

⁶⁹³ Halleran 1995, 24.

⁶⁹⁴ The name is preserved at Σ Theoc. 2.10 and Poll. *On.* 9.50 and must refer to Hippolytus' reaction upon Phaedra's advance: to veil himself chastely.

⁶⁹⁵ Ar. *Byz. Arg. Hipp.*

⁶⁹⁶ A lustful Phaedra in the lost Euripidean play is suggested by Ar. *Ra.* 1043, 1052-4 and the claim in the ancient *Genos Euripidou* that Euripides married Choerila and, upon getting to know of her ἀκολασία, wrote the first *Hippolytus*, ἐν ᾧ τὴν ἀνασχυντίαν θριαμβεύει τῶν γυναικῶν. Other testimonia point to a similar tradition which may or may not be based on the *Hippolytus Calyptomenus*: Asclep. *Tragil.* *BNJ* 12 fr. 28; Serv. *ad Aen.* 6.445, 7.761; Ps.-Apollod. *Epit.* 1.18-19; Ov. *Met.* 15.490-546; Sen. *Phdr.* See Roisman 1999, 398–401 for a discussion of whether Phaedra approached Hippolytus in the lost play. Caution must be taken when ascribing to the lost *Hippolytus Calyptomenus* any plot which is not present in the *Hippolytus Stephanias*; as Barrett 1964, 10 states, there is also a lost *Phaedra* by Sophocles from which ancient sources may have drawn inspiration. There is also the possibility of an individual author adding his own inventions to the Phaedra-Hippolytus myth, with no literary precedent.

⁶⁹⁷ This must be the implication of the character Euripides' claim at Ar. *Ra.* 1052: πότερον δ' οὐκ ὄντα λόγον τοῦτον περὶ τῆς Φαίδρας ξυνέθηκα; see Barrett 1964, 11.

⁶⁹⁸ Friedrich 1953, 110–33; Zintzen 1960; Snell 1964, 23–46; Zwierlein 1987. *Contra* this position: Barrett 1964, 16–17; Lloyd-Jones 1965, 164, 1966, 14–15.

and by extension Ovid, probably had access to the plot (and perhaps the text) of the *Calypomenus* and it could have served as a source for several scenes in the *Metamorphoses*, including his Myrrha episode.⁶⁹⁹

The *Hippolytus Calypomenus* probably featured a Phaedra who is perhaps as close to Ovid's Myrrha as is the Phaedra of the *Hippolytus Stephanias*. Ovid's Myrrha plays the part of a Euripidean Phaedra,⁷⁰⁰ but she is a hybrid of the two different presentations of the character in the Athenian tragedian's plays. All three characters are aware of the sinfulness of their lust,⁷⁰¹ but they process this in different ways. Euripides' first Phaedra seems to have approached Hippolytus in person to confess her love for him, directly attempting to seduce him, whereas the second Phaedra chastely tries to restrain her lust and it is only made known to Hippolytus through the involvement of the nurse who relays the affection against her mistresses' wishes. Ovid/Orpheus' Myrrha exists between these two polarities: at first, she tries to grapple with the reality of her love for her father, eventually resorting to suicide,⁷⁰² before being saved by the nurse, who arranges her face-to-face confrontation with Cinyras. Myrrha, then, is both Phaedras: the chaste woman who would rather hang herself than reify her desires and the bold adulteress who goes beyond the first Phaedra's attempt and succeeds in sleeping with the man of her desires.

⁶⁹⁹ Some direct intertexts between Ovid's Myrrha episode and Euripides' *Hippolytus Stephanias* are recorded at Bruzzone 2012, 77; Thomas 1998, 100–4. There may be as many intertextual references to the *Hippolytus Calypomenus* which are not reconstructable.

⁷⁰⁰ Phaedra is never named in the *Metamorphoses*: she is referred to as the *Pasiphaeia* at 15.500.

⁷⁰¹ I talk cautiously about the 'sin' of the two Phaedras, as it is different to Myrrha's. There is something verging on incest in Phaedra's attraction to Hippolytus (after all, he is her step-son), but the true nature of her transgression is adultery; see Barrett 1964, 12. For incest in Greece, see my §1.3.3. In *E. Hipp. Cal.* fr. 443, Phaedra counts herself as one of οἱ δυστυχοῦντες and considers herself ἐν τοῖσι δενοῖς in fr. 433.

⁷⁰² The suicide is itself another intertextual allusion to Phaedra, who hangs herself in both Euripidean versions: in the *Calypomenus*, it appears that her suicide occurred after (and in response to?) Hippolytus' death (see Barrett 1964, 11; Halleran 1995, 27), whereas in the *Stephanias*, it happens halfway through the play (*Hipp.* 768–75).

I turn to the famous speech from the *Hippolytus Stephanias* in which Phaedra relates the dialectics of αἰδώς:⁷⁰³

εἰσὶ δ' ἡδοναὶ πολλαὶ βίου,
μακραὶ τε λέσσαι καὶ σχολή, τερπνὸν κακόν,
αἰδώς τε· δισσαὶ δ' εἰσὶν, ἡ μὲν οὐ κακή, 385
ἡ δ' ἄχθος οἴκων· εἰ δ' ὁ καιρὸς ἦν σαφής,
οὐκ ἂν δύ' ἦσθην ταῦτ' ἔχοντε γράμματα.

There are many pleasures in life,
Long chats and leisure, pleasant evil,
And αἰδώς: which is duplex, the first αἰδώς is **not bad**, 385
But the other is **the bane of the home**. If the distinction was clear,
These two things would not have the same name.

Curley argues that the two aspects of αἰδώς become translated into the dialectic of *amor* versus *pudor* as expressed in Ovid's *Heroides: qua licet et sequitur, pudor est miscendus amori; / dicere quae puduit, scribere iussit amor* (4.9-10).⁷⁰⁴ I develop this dialectic further; it is precisely the bisecting point between *pudor* and *amor* that Ovid's Myrrha inhabits. If *pudor* is understood as representative of Euripides' second, surviving Phaedra and unbridled *amor* is characteristic of the lost Phaedra of the *Calypomenus*, then Myrrha is an ambiguous hybrid of the two. *Prima facie*, she commits the most unrestrained act of taboo-breaking *amor* that she could in sleeping with Cinyras, but as I have demonstrated in this chapter, Ovid's characterisation of the transgression is notably ambivalent, restraining from harsh admonishment, and taking

⁷⁰³ E. *Hipp.* 383-7. This passage is central to the whole of Curley 2013, but see especially 14-18. For αἰδώς in the *Hippolytus Stephanias*, see Halleran 1995, 44-5.

⁷⁰⁴ Curley 2013, 14-15.

pains to stress that at several points in the narrative (e.g. her attempted suicide and submission to ‘punishment’) Myrrha tries to do the *pudicum* thing.

This hybridisation of versions can be seen also in the character of the nurse, whose presence in the story cements the purposeful inclusion of tragic themes by reminding readers of the repertoire of nurse-characters in Attic tragedy.⁷⁰⁵ Like the Ovidian Myrrha, the Ovidian nurse, or at least the result of her actions, sits in between the extremities of the (putative) nurse of the *Hippolytus Calyptomenus* and the verifiable nurse of the *Hippolytus Stephanias*. The *Calyptomenus*’ nurse may have attempted to prevent Phaedra’s wantonness,⁷⁰⁶ whereas the nurse in the *Stephanias* contrives a plot to disclose Phaedra’s passions to Hippolytus. Ovid’s nurse is far closer to the nurse of the *Stephanias* but goes a step further in succeeding to convince the male beloved (here Cinyras) to sleep with her mistress, by means of a deception concerning identity.

It would be remiss to omit mention of the brief treatment Ovid gives the Phaedra-Hippolytus myth in Book 15 (490-546). After the death of the mythical Roman king Numa, his wife, the nymph Egeria, enters a cave, where she is comforted by Hippolytus.⁷⁰⁷ As consolation, he recounts, in brief form, the tragedy of his own life as a means to lessen her suffering. Ovid does very little with the tale here; the scenes which comprise the majority of (presumably all three of) the Attic narratives are summarised in some 8 lines (15.497-505) and far more time is devoted to a description

⁷⁰⁵ E.g. the παιδαγωγοί in *S. El.*, *E. Ph.*, *Med.* and *Ion*, the τροφοί in *S. Tr.*, *E. Med.*, *Hipp.*, probably the *Andr.* (see O’Neill in Roisman 2013 s.v. “Nurse and Pedagogue/ Tutor (τροφός, παιδαγωγός)”) the πρέσβυς in *E. El.* and the only named nurse-character, Cilissa, in *A. Ch.* Cf. how Ant. Lib. 34 calls Myrrha’s nurse Hippolyta to evoke the *Hippolytus*.

⁷⁰⁶ So argues Barrett 1964, 11. It follows that the nurse of the *Calyptomenus* would be cagier, since her mistress seems to have been more aggressive; without a difference of opinion on how to handle Phaedra’s passion for Hippolytus, it is hard to imagine the function of the nurse in the original narrative. Halleran 1995, 26 correctly points out that the nurse (who was surely a character in the *Calyptomenus*) has left no trace in the extant fragments, save fr. 433, which could be spoken by either her or her mistress: ἔγωγέ φημι καὶ νόμον γε μὴ σέβειν / ἐν τοῖσι δενοῖς τῶν ἀναγκαίων πλέον.

⁷⁰⁷ See also Virg. *Aen.* 7.765-82.

of Hippolytus' death scene (which presumably occurs offstage in all three tragedies). Eventually, Diana transforms him into the minor god Virbius (15.535-44), an aspect of the myth not recounted by the Attic tragedians. What is especially striking about this presentation of the Hippolytus myth proper is how brief and banal it is; compared to transferred 'versions' of its themes, such as the episodes of Myrrha, Medea, Scylla or Byblis, the direct 'translation' of the Euripidean tragedy is almost boring.

We must ask, then, why Ovid adapts the myth of Phaedra via the myth of Myrrha. Myrrha's *nefas* of sleeping with her father is far more extreme (in the Roman context) than the adultery of sleeping with a stepson. Using the story of Myrrha also allows Ovid/Orpheus to describe the shocking extremities of the story: Cinyras actually sleeps with Myrrha, something which Hippolytus would never do, unless his character were utterly changed.⁷⁰⁸ Myrrha allows Ovid and Orpheus to explore the most extreme incident of incest in the *Metamorphoses*, an 'on stage' depiction of an incestuous couple sleeping together.⁷⁰⁹ It is in her hybridity of chastity and wantonness that Myrrha embodies the Roman view on the *nefas* of incest: it belongs to the realm of the uncanny abject. Myrrha is neither Euripidean Phaedra, yet she is reminiscent and emblematic of both, driven by tragic desires to an end which tragedy could not show.

4.5 – Disambiguating Myrrha's Ambiguities

In this chapter, I have discussed how Ovid/Orpheus conceives of Myrrha's incest as something complexly ambiguous, existing between and denying the solidity of oppositional forces. More so than the Byblis narrative of Book 9, the Myrrha episode

⁷⁰⁸ Such an approach has been taken by modern adaptors of the myth, such as Sarah Kane in *Phaedra's Love* (2002).

⁷⁰⁹ The performative aspects of Ovid/Orpheus' scene are further evinced by the word play inherent to *obSCENO ... lecto* (10.465), which may evoke the sentiment behind Varro's folk etymology for the word *obscaenus*: *quare turpe ideo obscaenum, quod nisi in scaena palam dici non debet* (*Ling.* 7.96). For similar Ovidian plays on the performative aspect of *obscaenus*, see e.g. *Tr.* 2.377, 2.409, *Ars am.* 2.583.

is characterised by the way that such polarities (*pietas*, punishment etc.) are emphasised and stressed as important by the narrator, but whose importance is undercut by the narrative. Orpheus can frame the inception of Myrrha's lust in terms of potential causation by the Furies or Cupid or Venus, alluding to other textual versions where this causality is explicit, but the actual plot of the episode undercuts the framing. Myrrha is not described as being punished: she does no wrong until the moment of committing incest,⁷¹⁰ her father-lover is incapable of exacting the violent punishment he intends, and her eventual metamorphosis is more of a reward than a punishment.

Ambiguity in the Myrrha episode brings me back to the issue of framing with which I began this chapter. Orpheus couches his narrative of incest within a proem advising caution to the audience: *dira canam; procul hinc, natae, procul este, parentes!* (*Met.* 10.300).⁷¹¹ The line has been the source of much spilled ink in the literature surrounding Myrrha, Orpheus and the *Metamorphoses* as a whole,⁷¹² but I wish to explore its relevance to the theme of ambiguity. The first two words (*dira canam*) evoke a panoply of intertexts, to name but a few: the *incipit* of Virgil's *Aeneid* (*arma virumque cano*); the beginnings of several of Virgil's *Eclogues* (e.g. 4.1; 6.3); Ovid's programmatic *vera canam ... / este procul, vittae tenues* at *Ars am.* 1.30-1; Byblis' wish *obscenae procul hinc discedite flammae* (*Ov. Met.* 9.509). The performativity of Orpheus' speech is laid on thick, alluding to the many other things about which

⁷¹⁰ Even the description of the act itself is portrayed in such a way as to limit Myrrha's culpability; Schmitz 2015, 262 notes that as soon as Myrrha enters Cinyras' *thalamus*, the verbs used of her becomes passive and she no longer drives the action of the incest.

⁷¹¹ Anderson 1972, 502 points out that *dira canam* is a slight adaptation of the common Ovidian phrase *mira canam/loquar*. Anderson does not note the wordplay in Orpheus' pointed omission being something aurally identical to *Myrrha(m) canam* before he launches into a song about her. For the phrase, see *Ov. Fast.* 3.370, 4.267, 4.326, 6.612; *Met.* 7.549. For the *procul hinc* formula, see my p. 155.

⁷¹² E.g. Gebhardt 2009, 328; Scaffai 1999, 374.

Orpheus could be singing instead of the sad story of Myrrha and Cinyras' incest; the Myrrha story's literariness is drawn into sharp focus. The reader is forced to compare the subsequent narrative to the literary parallels which line 10.300 evokes: they are made to contrast Myrrha to the epic hero Aeneas, to draw lines between the Ovidian persona of Orpheus and the one adopted in the first Book of the *Ars amatoria*. Myrrha becomes a character for whom forensic analysis is the expectation, not the preserve of some bookish Alexandrian; she is a character who plays the parts of many other figures, a performative adaptation of Phaedra, Byblis, Dido, Scylla, Medea and many others.⁷¹³

Myrrha, then, becomes a figure characterised by ambivalence and ambiguity. She is trapped somewhere within a nexus of the literary parallels whom she emulates in story, language and situation. She acts, effecting her own desires, but only by the machinations of Cinyras' lust, the nurse's sedulousness and, of course, the whims of her double narrators, Ovid and Orpheus. These narrators repeatedly set up expectations, of *pietas* and of genre, of stable family relations and of criminality, which are confounded in the body of Myrrha. Because of her abjection, she is a figure who defies the application of diametric polarities such as legal/illegal, *pia/impia*, epic/tragedy, even good/bad. Myrrha shows that the abjected *nefas* is not something which can be understood through a dialectic application of opposites; the abjected *nefas* is something which operates in the space in between space, neither one thing, nor the other, nor both, nor neither.

⁷¹³ Curley 2013, 176: women in Ovid play within "a network of heroines, some Ovidian, some not, each of whom faces the same struggle and becomes in her turn a paradigm for the rest ... Medea plays the part of Phaedra or Dido or Byblis; or Byblis plays Scylla, Myrrha, or Medea". For echoes of Dido in the Myrrha episode, see Schmitz 2015, 265–6. See §2.2.2.

5 – Arachne: Threads of *Nefas* in the Narrative

In this chapter, I build on my argument in Chapter 3 that Byblis' letter functions as a bravura object of osmotic ecphrasis in order to explore the tapestries of Arachne and Minerva from Book 6 of the *Metamorphoses*. Especially in Arachne's tapestry, taboo themes of bestiality emerge as particularly significant. Over half of the *Metamorphoses'* zoophilic narratives occur within this episode and, indeed, do so in the space of very few lines.⁷¹⁴ In addition, Arachne's vignettes of bestiality are the only ones within the *Metamorphoses* which could be termed explicit (i.e. which depict, at any level, sex between a human and an entity presenting as an animal).

Both tapestries reek of allusive play, which operates on a number of levels and allows this episode to function as a metatextual commentary on Ovid's deployment of taboo throughout the *Metamorphoses*. I show how both tapestries—and especially Arachne's—offer us a means of interpreting Ovid's exclusion of bestiality narratives from the rest of the *Metamorphoses*. First, I expand on previous scholarship which explores the (inter)textuality of the two tapestries in order to demonstrate how they open up the narrative viewpoint and allow readers to critique Ovid's omission and inclusion of bestiality narratives. In the second section of this chapter, I focus on the case study of Medusa; the particulars of her story differ extensively in Arachne's version and in the *Metamorphoses'* other, apparently authoritative, account in Book 4.

⁷¹⁴ There are 19 zoophilic unions within the *Metamorphoses*, of which 12 appear in Arachne's tapestry (6.103-28): Asteria-Jupiter, Leda-Jupiter, Antiope-Jupiter, Proserpina-Jupiter, Melanippe-Neptune, Theophane-Neptune, Ceres-Neptune, Medusa-Neptune, Melanthe-Neptune, [unknown]-Apollo (twice) and Philyra-Saturn. Most of the others are addressed in Chapter 6; they are Io-Jupiter (1.587-746), Callisto-Jupiter (2.417-407), Europa-Jupiter (2.833-3.5), Harmonia-Cadmus (4.653-603), Cyarissus and his stag (10.106-42), Thetis-Peleus (11.221-65). Cf. the relationship between the centaurs Cyllarus and Hylonome, which I do not term bestiality; see p. 62.

Finally, I explore how Arachne’s distortion of mythology specifically foregrounds human-animal relations, highlighting the aesthetics of bestiality.

5.1 – Weaving the World Against Ovid

ultima pars telae, tenui circumdata limbo,
nexilibus flores hederis habet intertextos.⁷¹⁵

The outer part of the web, surrounded by a delicate border,
contains flowers, interwoven with woven ivy.

With these lines, Arachne ‘finishes’ her tapestry. At least, this is the point at which Ovid completes his ecphrastic description of the artwork, at which he imposes a narrative closure on a decidedly un-closed work of art. Unlike Minerva, whose tapestry had been bounded by a closural motif of olive leaves (*circuit extremas oleis pacalibus oras / (is modus est) operisque sua facit arbore finem*; 6.101-2),⁷¹⁶ Arachne’s floral finish is without the goddess’ *modus* or *finis*. Instead of such a definitive end to the tapestry, Arachne creates a porous and open-ended pattern, which signals receptiveness to forces beyond the tapestry itself, decorating her *limbus* with a suggestive web of flowers (*flores*) and ivy (*hedera*).⁷¹⁷ As many have noted,⁷¹⁸ the interweaving is enacted in the hyperbatic arrangement of line 6.128, where the *flores* are metrically captured between the *nexilia hedera*, interwoven (*intertexti*) in sense and appearance and cementing even further the repeated parallels between the tapestries of Arachne and Minerva and the written word of Ovid’s—and others’—

⁷¹⁵ Ov. *Met.* 6.127-8.

⁷¹⁶ For Minerva’s tapestry as resembling the sculpture of Classical Athens, especially Phidias, see Voulikh 1998, 434–5.

⁷¹⁷ N.b. the loaded adjective *tenuis*, which invokes Hellenistic—and especially Callimachean—conceptions of poetry; see Rosati 2006, 346.

⁷¹⁸ E.g. Anderson 1972, 167–8; Beer 2018, 76; Vincent 1994, 369–70.

poetry.⁷¹⁹ The plants themselves are redolent of (meta)poetics:⁷²⁰ the ivy evokes frenzy, uncontrolled μανία or Bacchic ecstatic production;⁷²¹ the flowers bring to mind the metapoetic association between poems and flowers.⁷²²

That Book 6's double tapestries serve metapoetic ends is not a revolutionary claim to make. Ovid's use of artists (e.g. the Muses, the Pierides, Arachne, Daedalus, and Orpheus) and artistry throughout the *Metamorphoses* has, for decades, attracted attention for the ways it metapoetically recreates Ovid's own creative process.⁷²³ Books 4, 5 and 6 are especially devoted to such metatextual musings: Book 4's Minyades spin narrative yarns while they neglect the worship of Bacchus by spinning more literal wool; Book 5 is dominated by the singing competition between the Muses and the Pierides (5.294-678). In each instance, an *ars*—spinning, singing or weaving—is given extended narrative attention in a way which clearly allows comparison, comment and critique on the productive similarity between the diegetic *artes* and their extradiegetic creator, Ovid. This metapoetic play comes to a head in Book 6 where the metadiegetic worlds depicted in Arachne and Minerva's tapestries relate quite directly to the diegetic vantage points from which there are woven.⁷²⁴

Also standard in the scholarship on the Arachne-Minerva confrontation is a desire to identify these artists with real, extradiegetic people: most commonly, Arachne is read

⁷¹⁹ Note the rarity of the word *nexilis*, which draws attention to the unfinished finish to Arachne's tapestry; see Anderson 1972, 167; Vincent 1994, 370.

⁷²⁰ Arachne's border has been interpreted variously; for an overview, see Bernsdorff 1997. I note Johnson 2008, 87's suggestion, drawing on Catull. 61.184-8, that the plants hint at men (ivy) and women (flowers), engaged in sex.

⁷²¹ von Albrecht 1972, 72 n. 81; Vincent 1994, 370. Anderson 1972, 162 comments on ivy's association with poets. Cf. my comments about Byblis' ecstatic mode of production at §3.1.1.

⁷²² See, e.g., the preface to Meleager's Στέφανος—*AP* (Mel.) 4.1—which details the different species of flowers (i.e. poems) which make up his garland. The practice is reflected in names for poetry collections: ἀνθολογία and *florilegium*.

⁷²³ See, *inter alia*, Hofmann 1971, 107; Rosati 2006.

⁷²⁴ N.b. how the metadiegetic episodes on Minerva's tapestry—Minerva and Neptune, Haemus and Rhodope, Oenoë (unnamed by Ovid beyond the designation *Pygmaea mater*, but called this at Ant. Lib. 16), Antigone and Cinyras—all relate to her diegetic dislike for Arachne; see O'Bryhim 2014, 295.

as a stand-in for Ovid;⁷²⁵ and / or Minerva’s authoritarianism recreates Augustus’ *imperium*;⁷²⁶ alternatively, both women are avatars of Ovid.⁷²⁷ Such biographical interpretations are seductive, but I do not pursue them in this thesis; of greater interest to me is to conceptualise Arachne—expanding on what I have previously said about Byblis in Chapter 3—as a salient figure who almost emerges from the text of the *Metamorphoses* to confront Ovid. It is frequently—and relatedly—argued that the Arachne-Minerva episode foregrounds themes of artistic competition,⁷²⁸ in which Minerva and Arachne stand as representatives for various poetic genres or movements, most typically that Minerva stands for epic or authoritative and authoritarian poetry, while Arachne is representative of a more neoteric or Alexandrian generic thrust.⁷²⁹ I argue that the mode of artistic competition—coupled with my suggestion above about Arachne as salient interpreter—should encourage us to read Arachne as a competitive literary critic of not only Minerva’s artwork, but also Ovid’s own. Rather than identifying her with Ovid, I see Arachne as a diegetic interlocutor for him, who relates her criticism to the extradiegetic readers via her metadiegetic art.

I return to the intertextually suggestive border of Arachne’s ephrastic tapestry; it, like the rest of her weaving, foregrounds dynamic production,⁷³⁰ as well as the osmotic potential of ephrastic art to subsume other artwork, something hinted at in Vincent’s description of the tapestry as “indefinitely expandable”.⁷³¹ In addition to its mode, the content of Arachne’s tapestry encourages interpreters to explore texts beyond the

⁷²⁵ E.g. Curran 1972; Galinsky 1975, 82–3; Lateiner 1984, 15–16; Hofmann 1985; Harries 1990, especially 65; Kuhlmann 2012, 484; Salzman-Mitchell 2005, 126; von Albrecht 2014, 114.

⁷²⁶ E.g. Harries 1990; Vincent 1994; Oliensis 2004, especially 287; von Albrecht 2016, 96.

⁷²⁷ E.g. Leach 1974; Vincent 1994; Spahlinger 1996, 62–81; Pöschl 1998; Oliensis 2004, 287. Leach 1974, 103–4: “it is impossible to identify Ovid’s perspective entirely with Arachne’s, even when he serves as sympathetic champion of her aesthetics of verisimilitude”.

⁷²⁸ See Pöschl 1998

⁷²⁹ See especially Rosati 2006 and O’Byrhim 2014, 288 n. 1 with bibliography.

⁷³⁰ Vincent 1994, 370.

⁷³¹ Vincent 1994, 371.

beginning of the *Metamorphoses*' sixth book.⁷³² Several narratives on the tapestry invoke stories told elsewhere in Ovid's epic:⁷³³ Europa, Alcmena, Danaë, Proserpina, Ceres, Erigone, and Medusa (whom I treat more fully in §5.2). The first of these, and the vignette with which Arachne begins her weaving, is Europa:⁷³⁴

Maeonis elusam designat imagine tauri

Europam: verum taurum, freta vera putares;

ipsa videbatur terras spectare relictas 105

et comites clamare suas tactumque vereri

adsilientis aquae timidasque reducere plantas.

The Maeonian girl traces out Europa, deceived by the image of a bull:

you would have thought it a real bull and a real strait;

Europa seemed to be looking back at the lands she left behind 105

and to be shouting to her companions, and to be afraid of the touch of the

leaping waves, and to be drawing up her frightened feet.

Arachne's focus is on verisimilitude; she maps out an image so realistic that the waves and bull seem *vera*. This verisimilitude is contrasted with the highly contrived artistry of the vignette, in which the bull is a sort of double *trompe-l'œil*: at one level of deception, the bull is a disguise, taken on by Jupiter,⁷³⁵ and, at a second, it is part of the contrived artwork of Arachne's hand.⁷³⁶ The verbal phrasing of Ovid's ecphrasis of Arachne's weaving draws attention not only to Arachne's presentation of deceptive

⁷³² One should interpret the outward-looking and expanding border to Arachne's tapestry as receptive to Ovidian intratexts and intertexts beyond the *Metamorphoses*. Many of the myths on the tapestry are only interpretable intertextually, as Arachne is allusive and light on precise details; as Beer 2018, 74 suggests, "ein Betrachter, der die Mythen nicht kennt, wird dem Teppich einigermaßen verständnislos gegenüberstehen".

⁷³³ See Kuhlmann 2012, 484; Ziogas 2013, 100.

⁷³⁴ Ov. *Met.* 6.103-7.

⁷³⁵ Cf. how Arachne's Jupiter-bull invokes another ecphrastic bovid: Io at Mosch. *Eur.* 44-9.

⁷³⁶ See Oliensis 2004, 291. See Harries 1990, 70's discussion of the deceptiveness of *imago* in Arachne's tapestry.

truth,⁷³⁷ but also to the situation of her account of the myth within the overall narrative texture of the poem. Arachne uses the phrase *imagine tauri* to designate the Jupiter-bull under Europa, which recalls the only other two instances of this phrase in extant Augustan or pre-Augustan literature: *Met.* 3.1 and 8.122.⁷³⁸ Arachne's tapestry, then, opens on interaction with the rest of the *Metamorphoses*, at multiple levels—verbal, narrative, thematic—setting the scene for the other women for whom she shares authorial responsibility with Ovid. Although Arachne does nothing to alter the story of Europa as told by Ovid in Book 2 of the *Metamorphoses*,⁷³⁹ the reoccurrence of Europa's myth and Ovid's language there for her encourages audiences to read Arachne's tapestry alongside her Ovidian intratexts.

The appearances of Ceres and Proserpina on the tapestry, although each in brief,⁷⁴⁰ encourage a slightly different interaction with Ovid's broader narrative (indeed, a similar sort of interaction to that prompted by Medusa, which I discuss below). With these goddesses, Arachne alters very slightly the narrative presented to us in the previous book, which is itself the creation of a diegetic artist, Calliope. In Book 4, we are introduced to the narrative—broadly lifted from the Homeric *Hymnus ad Cererem*—of Ceres and her raped and abducted daughter, Proserpina, whom Pluto steals away to the Underworld. Ceres appeals to her brother and Proserpina's father,⁷⁴¹

⁷³⁷ Oliensis 2004, 294: “the artist's trick is to dupe the viewer without letting her miss the fact that she is being duped—that she is falling victim, like all the duped women on the tapestry, to an irresistibly potent illusion. [...] Minerva's art lies (because it claims to be the truth) while Arachne's tells the truth (because it flaunts its power to deceive)”.

⁷³⁸ Silius Italicus alludes to Ovid's use of the phrase at *Punica* 14.568. I suggest, building on Harries 1990, 68, that this phrasing prompts Ovid's readers to consider the nexus of bovinely-focused women within the *Metamorphoses*—Europa, Io and Pasiphaë—through an Arachnean lens; see §6.2.1.

⁷³⁹ Cf. Danaë, whose depiction in Arachne's tapestry—*Iuppiter ... / aureus ut Danaen, ... luserit* (Ov. *Met.* 6.111-13)—is not notably different from Ovid's own two references to her beyond an increased focus on deception (*luserit*): [*Perseus*] *quem pluvio Danae conceperat auro* (4.611); [*Danae*] *quam clausam implevit fecundo Iuppiter auro* (4.698).

⁷⁴⁰ Ceres: *et te [Neptunum] flava comas frugum mitissima mater / sensit equum* (6.117-18). Proserpina: [*Iuppiter*] *luserit ... / ... varius Deoida serpens* (6.113-4).

⁷⁴¹ The incest between Jupiter and Ceres is made explicit at Ov. *Met.* 5.564-5: *at medius fratrisque sui maestaeque sororis / Iuppiter ex aequo volentem dividit annum*.

Jupiter, for help with the return of their daughter, focusing on their shared affection for Proserpina: “*pro*”*que* “*meo veni supplex tibi, Iuppiter ... / sanguine proque tuo; si nulla est gratia matris, / nata patrem moveat* (5.514-16).⁷⁴² In the dialogue between Jupiter and Ceres, neither party makes any allusion to the double incest—i.e. Jupiter’s sex with his daughter, herself the product of incest—implied by Arachne in the tapestry. In what Anderson terms “a crushing climax” to the nine rapes of Jupiter,⁷⁴³ Arachne devastatingly discloses the truth of Jupiter’s relationship with Proserpina;⁷⁴⁴ he is no loving father, but an incestuous and bestial rapist who deceived his own daughter into sex.⁷⁴⁵

Alcmena’s cameo on Arachne’s tapestry also encourages interaction with other myths within the epic. Arachne weaves that Jupiter *Amphitryon fuerit, cum te, Tirynthia, cepit* (6.112), compelling an experienced—i.e. not first-time—reader of the *Metamorphoses* to reflect on how this brief appearance compares to Ovid’s more extended exegesis of the same myth in Book 9. There,⁷⁴⁶ the focus is on Hercules’ birth:⁷⁴⁷ he is described variously as the child of Jupiter and Amphitryon,⁷⁴⁸ but Ovid does no more than allude to the precise story of how Hercules came to have two fathers. In narrating his and Hercules’ suit for Deianeira, Achelous dramatises his

⁷⁴² N.b. the repeated use of familial terms in the references to incest in Ceres and Jupiter’s dialogue: *sanguis tuus*, *mater* (5.515), *nata* (5.516, 5.518, 5.524), *pater* (5.516), *maritus* (5.521), *filia* (5.522, twice), *gener* (5.526), *frater* (5.528). Cf. my comments about family names in incest narratives at 4.3.

⁷⁴³ Anderson 1972, 165.

⁷⁴⁴ The *Metamorphoses* does not reveal the chronology of Jupiter’s relationship with Proserpina; she is still a *virgo*—at least according to Calliope—at *Met.* 5.376, before Pluto’s rape of her, but the partiality of Calliope’s narration makes it impossible to know whether Jupiter’s rape had already occurred or not (or, indeed, if they happen within the same ‘timeline’).

⁷⁴⁵ See Ziogas 2013, 101–2 for how the shock of Arachne’s incestuous revelation undermines Calliope’s narrative in Book 5. See also Ziogas 2021, 364, who terms this “one of the most politically charged episodes of the *Metamorphoses*”.

⁷⁴⁶ The story of Hercules is split between sections of narration by Ovid (*Met.* 9.89-272), Achelous (9.4-88) and Alcmena (9.281-323).

⁷⁴⁷ I.e., Alcmena gives an extended description of the birth of Hercules at *Met.* 9.281-323

⁷⁴⁸ Hercules’ Jovian descent emerges at *Ov. Met.* 9.14-15, 9.24, 9.104, 9.222, 9.287-9, whereas his Amphitryonic parentage is shown in the patronymic *Amphitryoniaden* at 9.140.

harangue of Hercules: *matris adulterio patrem petis; elige, fictum / esse Iovem malis an te per dedecus ortum* (9.25-6). This constitutes the closest thing within the *Metamorphoses*—beyond Arachne’s mention—to an explanation of how Hercules can claim both Amphitryon and Jupiter as his father; Achelous characterises Alcmena’s relationship with Jupiter as the *matris adulterium*, placing the culpability on Alcmena, not Jupiter.⁷⁴⁹ Achelous’ misogyny is no surprise to a reader of the *Metamorphoses*, but it points to intratextual discrepancy about the ‘truth’ of how Jupiter came to be Hercules’ father. Ovid’s readers would be intimately familiar with the story, which had been told famously in Plautus’ *Amphitruo*,⁷⁵⁰ and would therefore recognise that Achelous’ passing account is the less canonical of the tellings.

Finally, I discuss the presentation of Erigone on Arachne’s tapestry and its discrepancy from the—equally brief—narrative invoked in Orpheus’ song in Book 10. Arachne weaves *Liber ut Erigonen falsa deceperit uva* (6.125). Given the context, Arachne implies that Bacchus raped Erigone by some deception involving bunches of grapes; however, the story is not recorded elsewhere.⁷⁵¹ In Book 10, Erigone is invoked for very different purposes; as Myrrha makes her fateful journey to her father’s bedroom, Erigone looks on as the *sine qua non* of daughterly piety:⁷⁵²

nox caret igne suo; primus tegis, Icare, vultus,

Erigoneque pio sacrata parentis amore.

The night was without its fire; you were the first, Icarus, to cover your face,

And you, Erigone, sanctified by the dutiful love of your father.

⁷⁴⁹ The plot of Euripides’ *Alcmena* relies on Amphitryon temporarily misunderstanding her relationship with Jupiter as simple adultery; see Ps.-Apollod. 2.4.8.

⁷⁵⁰ Also at Pi. *I.* 7.5-8, Pherecyd. *BNJ* 3 fr. 13 and D. S. 9.4.2-6.

⁷⁵¹ Anderson 1972, 167; Bömer 1976b, 44; Hill 1992, 172.

⁷⁵² Ov. *Met.* 10.450-1.

As I discussed in Chapter 4, Erigone's *pious amor parentis* is a foil for Myrrha's decidedly *impius* love for Cinyras, while Erigone's alter ego as the constellation Virgo comments unfavourably on Myrrha, who is moments from incestuously losing her virginity. And, indeed, it is Erigone's virginity which is brought into question by Arachne's presentation of her, for she is a *virgo* no longer after Bacchus has raped her. Again, then, Arachne weaves a tale which creates a notable gulf between her tapestry and the rest of Ovid's epic; she takes a figure whom he will later use as a paragon of virginity and repurposes her as a rape victim.

With these miniature narratives—Europa, Ceres, Proserpina, Alcmena and Erigone—I argue that Arachne sets herself up as an oppositional storyteller, certainly to Minerva, but also to Ovid himself. By focusing so much at the beginning of the tapestry on the verisimilitude of her art, while simultaneously and repeatedly highlighting her narrative divergence from the rest of the *Metamorphoses*, Arachne weaves distrust of Ovid into his own readers. The notion of the same myth varying between different authors' versions was far from outlandish in the ancient world, but it is unusual for competing narrators within the same overarching narrative to allude to alternative versions of the same myth.⁷⁵³ It is the proximity of these competing narratives within the same epic that forces readers to adjudicate their veracity in disputation with each other. Like Byblis, in Book 9, Arachne speaks metadiegetically to her diegetic creator and comments on his methods of narration, entwining threads of discomfort into Ovid's overall poetic web. She creates narrative rupture in the poem, which prompts

⁷⁵³ Something like this internal presentation of variance can be found in works of more explicit mythography (e.g. Ps.-Apollod., Ant. Lib., Hyg. *Fab.*) or in scholia (see e.g. the Servius passage cited below), but there it self-consciously serves the purpose of comparison and catholicism. E.g. Ps.-Apollod. 2.1.3: [Ἄργος] ὃν Φερεκύδης μὲν Ἀρέστορος λέγει, Ἀσκληπιάδης δὲ Ἰνάχου, Κέρκωψ δὲ Ἄργου καὶ Ἰσμήνης τῆς Ἄσωπου θυγατρὸς Ἀκουσίλαος δὲ γηγενῆ αὐτὸν λέγει. For the overlapping of different mythological perspectives on the same character in the *Metamorphoses*, see Feeney 1991, 228–32; Feldherr 2010, 142–9. For a sort of epistemic dissonance in the literary belief in incongruent mythologies, see Feeney 1993, 239–40.

us to examine the *Metamorphoses* with an Arachnean lens, which reveals truths cloaked, just behind the surface of Ovid's narration.

In discussing Arachne's opposition to Ovid, I do not propose to rehash debates about whether Arachne allies herself to the women of her tapestry,⁷⁵⁴ or to the gods' will to power,⁷⁵⁵ in contrast to Ovid's sympathies for the other side; the competition between Ovid and Arachne is precisely one of narrative truth, where she functions to present an anti-Ovidian narration within the *Metamorphoses* and, hence, to bring into question the mythography as Ovid records it. My argument is not about branding Arachne's narrative as 'true' and Ovid's as 'untrue', but rather concerns how her impact on the overall epic is to provoke doubt and debate about the veracity of narratives, displacing Ovid's authorial authority. Indeed, given the lack of pre-Ovidian supplementary evidence for a great many of the women on Arachne's tapestry—at least in the versions of the myths which Arachne narrates (for the lack of evidence, see above)—I suggest that it is entirely plausible that the myths are, in places, autoschediasms, serving (perhaps) to elucidate the chasm which Arachne creates between herself and her extradiegetic creator, Ovid. In this light, it becomes significant to examine the types of myth that Arachne deploys in order to create this impact. These myths are, in very high degree, myths of bestiality.

5.1.1 – Errant Thread: A Minervan Interlude

Before discussing the presentation of the bestiality episodes of Arachne's tapestry, I briefly show that some of the modes of engagement discussed above with regard to Arachne also apply to Minerva. By this, I want to show that the episode *in toto* (i.e. including Minerva's tapestry) primes readers to interact with the myths in a

⁷⁵⁴ E.g. Miller 1988, 81–2; Salzman-Mitchell 2005, 126, 133, 138.

⁷⁵⁵ Oliensis 2004. *Contra* Leach 1974.

particularly outward-looking way, while also stressing this extrospective modality is an overwhelming thrust of Arachne's tapestry, but merely a partial feature of Minerva's.

On Minerva's tapestry, two figures appear who provoke forensic examination of the cosmos outside of this episode: Antigone and Cinyras.⁷⁵⁶ For Minerva, Cinyras is a grieving father who:⁷⁵⁷

isque gradus templi, natarum membra suarum,
amplectens saxoque iacens lacrimare videtur.

Embracing the steps of the temple, once the limbs of his own daughters,
And lying on the stone, seems to well up with tears.

The reference is an obscure one.⁷⁵⁸ We may follow O'Bryhim in looking to Lactantius Placidus' exegesis of the *Metamorphoses* for an explanation:⁷⁵⁹ [*Minerva intexit telae suae*] *Cinyrae, regis Assyriorum, praeterea filias ob insolentiam ab eadem dea in gradus templi sui lapide mutatas.*⁷⁶⁰ Perhaps this offers little in the way of a solution to the mystery of Cinyras and his daughters' identities, but it gives us a general

⁷⁵⁶ I could also include the myth of Haemus and Rhodope (Ov. *Met.* 6.87-9), who are punished—for referring to each other as Jupiter and Juno (presumably to justify their incest as is related at Ps.-Plu. *Fluv.* 11.3 and Ps.-Lac. Plac. 6.660; cf. *Met.* 9.499)—by being turned into mountains; these mountains feature several times in the poem *qua* mountains (2.219, 2.222, 6.589, 10.11, 10.50, 10.77), but there is no further exegesis of Haemus and Rhodope's pre-transformation incest.

⁷⁵⁷ Ov. *Met.* 6.99-100. N.b. the use of *suarum* which further pushes an initial interpretation of these lines as referring to the incestuous narrative of Myrrha; see pp. 206.

⁷⁵⁸ Commentators assert that the story is unknown: Anderson 1972, 164; Bömer 1976b, 34–5; Hill 1992, 169.

⁷⁵⁹ O'Bryhim 2014, 293–4.

⁷⁶⁰ Ps.-Lac. Plac. 6.660. The Cinyras here and the Cinyras of Book 10 are clearly one and the same: authors refer to the man who had incestuous sex with his daughter Myrrha / Smyrna as the *rex Assyriorum* (Hyg. *Fab.* 242, 270).

impression of the narrative. This is not the only appearance of Cinyras' daughters in conflict with a goddess;⁷⁶¹ Apollodorus says:⁷⁶²

οὗτος ἐν Κύπρῳ ... ἔκτισε ... θυγατέρας Ὀρσεδίκην [καὶ] Λαογόρην καὶ Βραισίαν. αὗται δὲ διὰ μῆνιν Ἀφροδίτης ἀλλοτρίοις ἀνδράσι συνευναζόμεναι τὸν βίον ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ μετήλλαξαν.

In Cyprus, he fathered daughters: Orsedice, Laogore and Braesea. These women died in Egypt, having been forced to sleep with foreign men because of the wrath of Venus.

Minerva's representation of Cinyras, then, probably references a mostly non-extant myth in which his daughters did something—possibly sexual—which offended a goddess—possibly Venus—with the result that they underwent a transformation into temple steps—possibly the temple of Venus at Paphus.⁷⁶³ Experienced readers of the *Metamorphoses*, however, will think first of another myth in which a daughter of Cinyras does something sexual which possibly offends a goddess, ultimately resulting in a transformation: the lengthy story of Myrrha and her father's incestuous coupling in Book 10 of the poem. This is to say that Minerva's deployment of the name Cinyras—especially in connection with his daughters—causes a moment of intertextual shear for the reader: the actual referent is superseded by the more famous myth which is afforded a lengthy narrative later in Ovid's epic.

⁷⁶¹ Ps.-Lac.-Plac. 6.600's *eadem dea* suggests that Cinyras' daughters had offended Juno, but given their father's association with Venus—especially the temple of Venus at Paphus (see below)—, the role of Venus in the Myrrha narrative of Book 10 and the myth at Ps.-Apollod. 3.182, it seems safe to suggest that their *insolentia* in some way involved Venus. Indeed, Venus transforming young women into stone reflects her petrification of the Propoetides for temerity at Ov. *Met.* 10.238-42, a story which—in the *longue durée*—connects to Myrrha's.

⁷⁶² Ps.-Apollod. 3.182.

⁷⁶³ Cinyras is the mythical founder of this temple (see Tac. *Hist.* 2.3), so it would follow that his daughters' bodies comprise the same temple.

Immediately before Cinyras and his daughters, Minerva weaves an image of an Antigone who contended with Juno. This too is an obscure myth, even if its protagonist's name is very familiar. Perhaps the source is Boeus' Hellenistic *Ornithogonia*,⁷⁶⁴ but little concrete can be said about this myth's pre-Ovidian origins.⁷⁶⁵ What is clear is that the daughter of Laomedon is not the most obvious referent of the name Antigone; readers will far more readily think of the famous daughter of Oedipus,⁷⁶⁶ after whom Attic tragedies were named. Indeed, so readily is the name 'Antigone' associated with the Theban princess that scholars have misread Arachne's tapestry as referring to her, even though it clearly cannot.⁷⁶⁷ This confusion is, however, understandable: the first line of the Antigone episode—*pinxit et Antigenen, ausam contendere quondam* (6.93)—could happily refer to the Antigone of tragic fame, who is certainly recognisable by her temerity (*ausam*) and contention with authority figures (*contendere*). It is not until two lines later, when Troy and Laomedon are mentioned, that readers can be confident in identifying this Antigone as a different figure.

The invocation of Antigone, then, plays into the same duplicitous intertextuality which pervades the Arachne episode. Whereas Cinyras' appearance prompts readers to consider another story within the *Metamorphoses*, Antigone brings to mind an iconic figure of Greek tragedy, before renouncing her in favour of a wholly obscure figure.⁷⁶⁸

⁷⁶⁴ See Forbes Irving 1990, 225.

⁷⁶⁵ See Serv. *ad Aen.* 1.27, Ps.-Lac. Plac. 6.600; Myth. Vat. 1.79. The last two add details of Antigone's affair with Jupiter or hubristic boasting about her own beauty respectively. These versions could reflect either improvisation on the *Metamorphoses*' version or a shared earlier version (perhaps Boeus). Scholars have detected references to this Antigone in Augustan poetry, in both cases, I suggest unconvincingly: Prop. 2.28.11 (see Shackleton Bailey 1956, 119 n. 1) and Ov. *Fast.* 6.178 (see Bömer 1976b, 33, referencing Cristofolini, who must be wrong).

⁷⁶⁶ For Sophocles' *Antigone*'s fame in antiquity, see Hall 2011b, 56–63.

⁷⁶⁷ E.g. *TLL* 2.169.55 s.v. "Antigona".

⁷⁶⁸ If this Antigone is based on a story from Boeus' *Ornithogonia*, it is possible that she was also present in Aemilius Macer's work of the same name, which was a source for Ovid (*Tr.* 4.10.43-4), but which only survives fragmentarily.

The names of the figures whom Minerva weaves encourage critical and cross-referential methods of interpretation, spurring a reader into intertextual contemplation precisely because of the bifurcation they instil between apparently clear reference and more obscure mythology.

5.2 – Warping Medusa

[te Neptunum] sensit volucrem crinita colubris
mater equi volucris.⁷⁶⁹

The snake-haired mother of the winged horse
felt you, Neptune, as a bird.

Perhaps the most striking discrepancy between Arachne’s narration and the rest of the *Metamorphoses* is how differently they present Medusa’s rape at the hands of Neptune.⁷⁷⁰ Arachne recharacterises the myth, adding zoophilia which is not elsewhere attested and, therefore, the episode serves as a case study for Arachne’s techniques of narrative distortion and manipulation with respect to bestiality. Indeed, Medusa is a prime target for Arachne; the Gorgon has important resonance in discourses of art and aesthetics, being a much-represented woman, most famous for her gaze.⁷⁷¹ At the close of Book 4, Perseus describes how Medusa, alone of the Gorgons, came to have snakes for hair (4.793-803). Both narrators dwell on the rape itself only briefly, but Perseus focuses at length on Minerva’s reaction to witnessing it, a detail which surely figures importantly in Arachne’s choice to weave Medusa into her tapestry in a competition against the same goddess.⁷⁷² Indeed, the use and abuse

⁷⁶⁹ Ov. *Met.* 6.119-20.

⁷⁷⁰ Ovid also recounts the birth of Pegasus at *Fast.* 3.449-52 and the rape of Medusa at *Her.* 19.129-34.

⁷⁷¹ See Kristeva 2015, especially 31; “Méduse serait-elle la déesse tutélaire des visionnaires, des artistes ?” (quotation from p. 28).

⁷⁷² See Johnson 2008, 85–8’s interpretation of Arachne’s tapestry as a catalogue of pornographic images which shock the virgin goddess, Minerva. The tapestry can be interpreted as a mini-catalogue, a

of vision is central to both accounts:⁷⁷³ in Perseus' narrative Medusa is initially the victim of objectifying, and frequently aggressive and desiring, male gaze—*invidiosa* (4.795), *conspetior* (4.796), *vidisse* (4.797)—before becoming the monster whom no one can behold (4.782-5, 4.800-1, 4.802);⁷⁷⁴ Arachne's tapestry repeatedly makes use of extremely visual language, and the Medusa episode is especially visual, with its evocation of multiple animal forms (see below).

Three discrepancies initially emerge between the two accounts: [1] Arachne seems to imply that Medusa is already snake-haired and the mother of Pegasus at the time of her rape, both features which are the direct result of that incident in Perseus' story; [2] Arachne adds the crucial fact that Neptune was a *volucris* when he raped Arachne, which is totally absent from Perseus' account; [3] in line with the rest of her tapestry, Arachne does not specify the location of the rape, whereas Perseus identifies it as a temple of Minerva.

I assess the third point first. The intratextual thread between Perseus and Arachne's accounts betrays a devastating attack launched by Arachne on Minerva. Perseus' account of Neptune's rape of Medusa is—at least in part—an aetiology for Minerva's aegis, which bears the snaky head of the Gorgon (*Met.* 4.802-3) and the goddess therefore features prominently and is the figure on whom the episode—and the whole of Book 4—closes. Arachne's narrative, on the other hand, weaves Minerva out of the story while simultaneously forcing the virgin goddess to remember and revisualise the desecration of her temple.⁷⁷⁵ As Neptune, in raping Medusa, pollutes Minerva's

condensed epic feature befitting Ovid's epic; see Feldherr 2010, 42; Kyriakidis 2007, 156. For epic catalogues in the poem more generally, see Reitz 1998.

⁷⁷³ I do not focus on themes of vision as they pertain to Medusa in this thesis, except insofar as they concern art and aesthetics; for an interpretation of these themes, see Lovatt 2013, 353–7; Keith 2018, 145–54.

⁷⁷⁴ See Keith 2018, 146–54.

⁷⁷⁵ See Ziogas 2013, 100.

temple, re-evaluating it in Minerva's eyes, so too Arachne reappropriates Minerva's artistic domain—tapestry—and renders it an anti-Minervan space. This is achieved by the whole catalogue of rape, but the particular resonance of Medusa to Minerva must make her presence especially stinging. The omission and its significance to Minerva acts to underline the osmotic force of Arachne's tapestry, which simultaneously is dependent on and re-evaluates the rest of the epic.

Medusa's parentage of the twin brothers Pegasus and Chrysaor dates back to Hesiod,⁷⁷⁶ and they are ubiquitously the children of Neptune, so I do not propose that Arachne is referencing a different myth in which Medusa became the mother of Pegasus by another father. It is, however, notable that Arachne does not draw a direct line between the children and Medusa's rape, as she does for other figures on the tapestry, such as Antiope, Iphimedeia,⁷⁷⁷ and Philyra (the last two unnamed). Indeed, the presence of Pegasus—but not Chrysaor—on Arachne's tapestry further encourages readers to read critically between her account and Perseus', looking for disparities. It is likely that Arachne provides these details—snaky hair and monstrous progeny—primarily as identifiers of an unnamed Medusa;⁷⁷⁸ however, the change serves to make her account stand out all the more.⁷⁷⁹ In addition, the particular way in which Arachne displays the rape enables her to fill the lines with as much animalistic

⁷⁷⁶ Hes. *Th.* 278-88. See also Hyg. *Fab.* 151.2; Ps.-Apollod. 2.42.

⁷⁷⁷ The parentage of the Aloadae points further to Arachne's disruptive narration: the presence of their patronymic suggests that their father is Aloeus (as at Paus. 9.22.6), although more usually, they are the sons of Neptune with Aloeus' wife, Iphimedeia (Hom. *Od.* 11.305-8; Pi. *P.* 4.89; Ps.-Apollod. 1.53; Hyg. *Fab.* 28), with the patronymic referencing their stepfather. However, Arachne suggests at *Met.* 6.116-17 that Neptune took the form of Enipeus in deceiving the Aloadae's mother, which seems to allude to the story of Tyro, admirer of Enipeus, who was impregnated by Neptune in the latter's form (Hom. *Od.* 11.235-59; Hes. fr. 38), and gave birth to Peleus and Neleus, not the Aloadae. This mythological confusion cannot be accidental (as implied by Anderson 1972, 166; see also Bömer 1976b, 41), but surely reveals the layers of distortion wreaked by Arachne's shuttle.

⁷⁷⁸ Many characters on the tapestry—Antiope, Alcmena, Aegina, Proserpina, Melanippe, Iphimedeia, Theophane, Ceres and Philyra—are not explicitly named; Perseus had also not named Medusa in his speech.

⁷⁷⁹ Cf. Ov. *Her.* 19.134, where Medusa is described at the time of Neptune's rape as *et nondum nexis angue Medusa comis*.

lexis as possible—*sensit volucrem crinita colubris / mater equi volucris*—something which would have been difficult to achieve without reference to Medusa’s offspring (and for which Chrysaor would have been little use). The density of animalistic language—especially in the Medusa episode but in the tapestry as a whole—bolsters the aesthetics of zoophilia promoted by Arachne, forcing the language itself to conjure up a menagerie which extends beyond simply the animals into which the gods transform.

An unexpected aetiology is also provided for Pegasus’ wings through Arachne’s use of both *volucer* and *volucris* in close proximity: unexpected because it is implied that he acquires his flying prowess from an avian father, rather than—as one might expect—his equine form, seeing that Neptune is the god of horses.⁷⁸⁰ Given that one might most readily associate Neptune with equine transformations⁷⁸¹—a feature which would be very fitting here—and that no other source records him as taking the form of a bird,⁷⁸² Arachne’s choice of animal here runs against the grain of the audience’s expectation, creating a moment of narrative discomfort.

Significantly, then, Arachne ‘corrects’ Ovid. In Book 4, he appears to suggest that Neptune had raped Medusa while both parties appeared anthropomorphic; at the very least, he mentions nothing bestial there. Arachne weaves a different version of myth, *contra* her extradiegetic creator, Ovid; she discloses the *nefas* which Ovid does not,

⁷⁸⁰ N.b. the tradition of Medusa as Centaur—only preserved in visual sources—which may offer an alternative explanation of Pegasus’ equinity; *LIMC* 4.1 s.v. “Gorgo, Gorgones” 8.A (p. 315). For the equinity of Medusa and the Gorgons, see Topper 2010, especially 109 n. 3. Medusa’s horsiness in other sources would place her in the same category in as those women I discuss in §5.3, but there is not sufficient literary—or visual—evidence to make a substantial argument on this issue.

⁷⁸¹ Neptune uses the avatar of a horse in his role as god of the bowels of the earth (see Bömer 1976b, 42 with bibliography); this is reflected in epithets such as ἵππιος (e.g. Archil. fr. 192), ἵππειος (e.g. Ps.-Luc. *Philopatr.* 6.12), δαμαῖος (e.g. Pi. *O.* 13.66), ἐλάτης (see Hsch. s.v. “Ἐλάτης” 503.19), ζῦγιος (see Hsch. s.v. “Ἴμψιος” 767.12) and his equine offspring, including Pegasus, Arion (Paus. 8.25.7-10) and the very first horse, Scyphius, (Σ Pi. *P.* 4.246; Σ A. R. 3.1244; Tz. *ad Lyc.* 766). See Burkert 1985, 138–9.

⁷⁸² Bömer 1976b, 42.

rendering it visual and verbal on her tapestry,⁷⁸³ an object for public display with an attentive audience, both diegetic and extradiegetic.⁷⁸⁴ The disclosed and now public *nefas* becomes *fama* in the mouths of the women who oversaw the weaving competition.⁷⁸⁵

Lydia tota fremit, Phrygiaque per oppida facti
rumor it et magnum sermonibus occupat orbem.

All Lydia is a-buzz, and gossip about the event travels through the
Towns of Phrygia and fills the wide world with its whisperings.

Ostensibly, the *rumor* which sets Lydia afire is Minerva's punishment and transformation of Arachne but given the particular dynamics of revelation in the preceding episode, in which Arachne's disclosure of the *caelestia crimina* (6.131) constitutes a significant proportion of her wrongdoing, readers of the episode should be alert to the other details of the Phrygian women's *rumores*. Arachne's revelation of the *nefanda caelestia crimina* represents her hubristic error, as she makes public—perhaps even with a liberal approach to the 'truth' (see §5.3)—zoophilic secrets which the gods would far rather stay unspoken.

Medusa, then, is a potent weapon in Arachne's arsenal. On several fronts, the brief Arachnean Medusa episode signals its divergence from the version of the same myth presented elsewhere in the *Metamorphoses*. This divergence creates a narrative friction, allowing audience to read between the warp and the weft to find narrative distortion and questioning of authorial truth; I do not propose that we read Arachne's

⁷⁸³ For Arachne's tapestry as a fundamentally oral project, which brings to the fore ecphrasis' etymology in ἐκ + φράζειν, see Vincent 1994, 373.

⁷⁸⁴ There are several references to the audience of nymphs from Mt. Tmolus and Phrygian women who oversee the competition: Ov. *Met.* 6.14-18, 44-5, 146-7.

⁷⁸⁵ Ov. *Met.* 6.146-7.

Medusa as the authoritative account, only that her version gives space to question Perseus' and Ovid's. In Perseus' mouth the death of Medusa gifts Minerva the *Gorgoneum*, a powerful weapon against her enemies; Arachne's shuttle weaves from the altered narrative threads of Medusa's rape a weapon which she turns on Minerva and the extradiegetic Ovid—disclosure of *nefas*.⁷⁸⁶

5.3 – Spinning Beasts from Men and Lacing Women from Beasts

Having established Arachne as a hostile literary critic within (and against) Ovid's poem, I now probe the particular pertinence of Arachne's approach to the theme of bestiality. As I stated above, the 26 lines which constitute the ecphrasis of Arachne's tapestry also contain 59% of the zoophilic unions within the *Metamorphoses*. Indeed, 81% of the myths depicted by Arachne are zoophilic and no other episode in the *Metamorphoses* is as rich in zoomorphic transformations;⁷⁸⁷ the episode's importance to discussions of gender, divinity, art and metapoetry within the epic has tended to obscure that Arachne's examples of abused women are overwhelmingly the victims of bestiality.⁷⁸⁸ The miniature episodes are densely packed, interwoven with other, non-zoophilic, stories of the gods' unrestrained lust (a feature which helps to compound the obscuration of the bestiality):⁷⁸⁹

fecit et Asterien aquila luctante teneri,

fecit olorinis Ledam recubare sub alis;

⁷⁸⁶ See Kristeva 2015, 31 for artists' reappropriation of the *Gorgoneum* for their own ends: "œuvre-reflet et œuvre-corail. Une généalogie secrète se dessine au fil des siècles entre le pouvoir des Gorgones et l'expérience esthétique. Elle nous fait comprendre que si l'artiste parvient à éviter d'être la victime de Méduse, c'est parce qu'il la reflète tout en étant une transsubstantiation de son sang".

⁷⁸⁷ Lateiner 1984, 16 points out that there are 29 transformations across the episode's 140 lines.

⁷⁸⁸ E.g. Salzman-Mitchell 2005, 61 ("the episode of Arachne opens our eyes to a different viewing and reading of framed description"); Feldherr 2010, 303 (the two voices of Arachne and Minerva "seem to compete as programmatic guides to Ovid's own text"; see also p. 42); Hofmann 1985, 230–4 ("the interwoven structure of Arachne's tapestry is an analogue of the *Metamorphoses*", quotation from p. 231). See also Anderson 1968, 103; Feeney 1991, 190–4; Kuhlmann 2012, 484; Leach 1974.

⁷⁸⁹ Ov. *Met.* 6.108-26.

addidit, **ut satyri celatus imagine pulchram** 110

Iuppiter inplerit gemino Nycteida fetu,

Amphitryon fuerit, cum te, Tiryntia, cepit,

aureus ut Danaen, Asopida luserit ignis,

Mnemosynen pastor, **varius Deoida serpens.**

te quoque mutatum torvo, Neptune, iuenco 115

virgine in Aeolia posuit; tu visus Enipeus

gignis Aloidas, **aries Bisaltida fallis,**

et te flava comas frugum mitissima mater

sensit equum, sensit volucrem crinita colubris

mater equi volucris, sensit delphina Melantho: 120

omnibus his faciemque suam faciemque locorum

reddidit. est illic agrestis imagine Phoebus,

utque modo accipitris pennas, modo terga leonis

gesserit, ut pastor Macareida luserit Issen,

Liber ut Erigonen falsa deceperit uva, 125

ut Saturnus equo geminum Chirona crearit.

She also made Asteria, held by the struggling eagle;

she made Leda, lying beneath the swan's wings;

she added to it so that Jupiter, disguised in the image of a satyr 110

filled up the beautiful Antiope with a twin litter,

how he was Amphitryon when he took you, Alcmena,

as gold he tricked Danaë, as a flame he tricked Aegina,

as a shepherd, Mnemosyne, **as a mottled snake, Proserpina.**

Also you, Neptune, changed into a savage bull, she placed 115

in the Aeolian virgin; seeming like Enipeus, you fathered

the Aloadae, **as a ram, you deceived Theophane,**

and the golden-haired, gentlest mother of the crops
felt you as a horse, the snake-haired mother of the winged horse
felt you as a bird, Melantho felt you as a dolphin: 120

to each of these, she rendered its own aspect and the aspect of its place.

There is Phoebus, in the guise of a country man,
and now he wears the feathers of a hawk, now the hide of a lion
as a shepherd he fooled Issa, Macareus' daughter,
and how Bacchus deceived Erigone with a false bunch of grapes, 125

how Saturn, in the form of a horse, begot the twin-bodied Chiron.

This is a varied miscellany of myths, from the widely attested relationship between Leda and the swan,⁷⁹⁰ to a series of stories which do not leave enough trace in the mythographic record for modern commentators to identify them.⁷⁹¹ In casting her net so wide, Arachne foregrounds both the osmotic potential for her tapestry to incorporate any myth in which the gods abuse mortals (mostly women)⁷⁹² and the dramatic underplaying of myths of bestiality elsewhere in the *Metamorphoses*. Arachne throws wide open the inter- and intratextual windows, inculcating a model of reading which sees her allusions as “strategic departures [which] point to where the reader should look for the action, so to speak, between [...] texts”.⁷⁹³ In this instance, these strategic

⁷⁹⁰ E.g. E. *Hel.* 16-22, 257-9, *IA* 794-800, *Or.* 1385-9. There are several versions of Helen's conception, not all of which involve Jupiter impregnating Leda as a swan (see Allan 2008, 148). Visual culture abounded with images of Leda's cygning rape (*LIMC* 6.1 s.v. “Leda” 1.1 (pp. 232-4)) and Helen's egg-birth (*LIMC* 4.2. s.v. “Helen” 1.A.1-13 (pp. 503-4)). Helen's unusual birth was ripe fodder for Attic comedy; see Allan 2008, 16 n. 81.

⁷⁹¹ E.g. Anderson 1972, 167 *ad Ov. Met.* 6.123: “But Ovid knows more in this instance than modern scholars, who cannot fix the episodes to which the tapestry refers”.

⁷⁹² The person whom Apollo seduces in the guise of an *agrestis* at 6.122 is presumably Admetus, a man; see Anderson 1972, 167.

⁷⁹³ Vincent 1994, 381. Vincent's words address the intertexts between Barthes' *Le plaisir du texte* (Barthes 1973; see §5.4) and Ovid's Arachne episode, but are very fitting for Arachne's own intertextual model.

departures rely heavily on myths of sex between gods in the guise of animals and human women—i.e. on the tropes of bestiality.

Of the zoophilic unions depicted on Arachne’s tapestry, all consist of the same dramatic positioning: a male god in the guise of an animal and a mortal woman or goddess apparently in human form (see Figure 5.11).⁷⁹⁴

Woman	God	Animal
Europa	Jupiter	Bull
Asteria*	Jupiter	Eagle
Leda	Jupiter	Swan
Antiope	Jupiter	Satyr
Proserpina	Jupiter	Snake
Melanippe ⁷⁹⁵	Neptune	Bull
Theophane*	Neptune	Ram
Ceres*	Neptune	Horse
Medusa ⁷⁹⁶	Neptune	Bird
Melantho ⁷⁹⁷	Neptune	Dolphin
[Unknown]	Apollo	Hawk
[Unknown]	Apollo	Lion

⁷⁹⁴ As we do not know the gender of the people whom Apollo duped as a hawk and lion, it is perhaps not accurate to assert that every myth features a female human, especially as Apollo is the only god on the tapestry to engage in a homoerotic union, with Admetus (see n. 792); the identifiable figures, however, fit this mould.

⁷⁹⁵ I identify the *virgo Aeolia* as Melanippe, following Jacobson 1972, but recognise that the attribution is not certain and that this figure is most commonly identified as Canace (or, occasionally, Arne). With Jacobson, Melanippe is the only daughter of Aeolus who has a son connected to cows—the name Boeotus implies bovinity—and in whose mythology bulls play a prominent role; see E. *Melanipp. Sap.* test. 1.11-20.

⁷⁹⁶ See n. 780.

⁷⁹⁷ Although there is no other extant Classical version of Melantho’s story, this constitutes the only time that Neptune—often depicted with dolphins as companions—takes a delphine form himself; “daß er selbst als Delphin erscheint, ist wohl eine Erfindung der Dichter, vielleicht Ovids” (Bömer 1976b, 42).

Philyra*	Saturn	Horse
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Figure 5.12: Women raped on Arachne's tapestry, accompanied by the divine culprit and the zoomorphic disguise they take. * signifies a myth which has different dynamics of zoomorphism in other tellings.

Typically, the figures on Arachne's tapestry are interpreted *en masse*, for the dynamic effects they create in the contest with Minerva; however, some of Arachne's mythographical *lusus* only comes to the fore when the individual myths are assessed discretely. The male gods of the tapestry cloak themselves in overwhelmingly bestial exteriors, creating a repeated and relentless aesthetic of bestiality throughout the tapestry,⁷⁹⁸ in an epic where this type of sex is notably underplayed elsewhere (see §6). The aesthetics created by the gods' methods of rape are notable; as James elucidates, divinities do not need to disguise themselves in order to avoid consequences (as mortals might),⁷⁹⁹ so Arachne's repeated presentation of animalistic forms must serve some purpose other than the exculpatory. James proposes that "it is as though to use a human form would be boring",⁸⁰⁰ in a move which places perhaps too much emphasis on the gods' own rationalising of their actions; I, instead, interpret these animalistic aesthetics as a distinct feature of Arachne's disclosure and oppositionality to the rest of Ovid's text.

Myths are unstable and the sorts of details I discuss below are those perhaps most liable to variation between different versions, so caution must be applied to my discussion of each of these myths singularly; however, I show that, when taken *in toto*, there is a repeated distortion at play throughout the tapestry, which does not seem to be an accident of differing versions but is a specifically regimented schematic of aesthetics.

⁷⁹⁸ *Contra* Feldherr 2010, 151, who argues that the zoomorphism highlights the humanity of the gods' victims.

⁷⁹⁹ James 2016, 162.

⁸⁰⁰ James 2016, 162.

The myth of Asteria which is best preserved today is the one in which she, pursued by Jupiter, becomes a quail to avoid his advances,⁸⁰¹ and, later, transforms into the island of Delos (under its original name, Ortygia);⁸⁰² indeed, Ovid's Arachne is the only ancient source to make reference to a version in which it is Jupiter, not Asteria, who transforms into a bird, and there is no allusion to Asteria's own transformation. Thus, it seems most likely that Arachne's Asteria is in human form at the time of her rape,⁸⁰³ in an inversion of the standard mythography, instantiating an aesthetic in which the male, animal aggressor rapes female, human victim.

We see this pattern repeated across the tapestry. For Arachne, Theophane is presumably a human girl when *[Neptune] aries Bisaltida fallis* (*Met.* 6.117).⁸⁰⁴ The act of disguise—and thus deception—is uniquely applied to Neptune and, at least as far as a three-word vignette allows, no comment is made on Theophane's external appearance. Only one other version of the myth survives, in Hyginus:⁸⁰⁵

Neptunus ut eos deciperet, **Theophanen in ovem commutavit formosissimam, ipse autem in arietem**, cives autem Crumissenses in pecora. [...] **ipse autem ut erat aries cum Theophane concubuit**,

In order to deceive them [Theophane's suitors], **Neptune turned Theophane into a most beautiful ewe, himself into a ram** and the people of Crumissa into a flock. [...] **as the ram that he was he slept with Theophane.**

Hyginus' version is much more developed than Arachne's. He provides more detail and gives some rationale for the transformation—to hide Theophane from her

⁸⁰¹ E.g. Ps.-Apollod. 1.21 and Hyg. *Fab.* 53.

⁸⁰² E.g. Call. *Del.* 36-40 and Pi. *Pae.* 5.42-52. Ortygia (Ὀρτυγία) is derived from ὄρτυξ, quail.

⁸⁰³ Bömer 1976b, 38 argues for a human Asteria on grounds of the impracticality of sex between an eagle and a quail: "außerdem wäre eine Vereinigung irgendwelcher Art (auch Liebesvereinigung) zwischen einem Adler und einer Wachtel auch bei kühner Phantasie nicht vorstellbar".

⁸⁰⁴ I say 'presumably' because no information about her form is given.

⁸⁰⁵ Hyg. *Fab.* 188.

suitors—but the most striking difference is that Hyginus clearly states that both Neptune and Theophane were ovine in form at the time of their union. The chronologies of Ovid and Hyginus are troubled,⁸⁰⁶ but, presumably, both authors are drawing on the same tradition and Hyginus' fuller account includes this detail which is absent from Arachne's short-form vignette.

In most extant versions of the myth of Philyra,⁸⁰⁷ she is raped by Saturn before his wife, Rhea, discovers them and he flees, leaving her to wander before giving birth to the Centaur, Chiron; in these versions, it is usually only Saturn who undergoes an equine metamorphosis, and usually after his wife's interruption.⁸⁰⁸ Only in one extant source—albeit one that implies the existence of similar narratives elsewhere—does Philyra also assume the shape of a horse:⁸⁰⁹

et aliter: Saturnus cum Philyram, Oceani filiam, in Thessalia adamasset et cum ea coiret, adventante uxore se in equum, illam in equam convertit, atque ita uterque opprobrium effugerunt. hinc natus est Chiron centaurus.

And in a different version: when Saturn yearned for Philyra, daughter of Oceanus, in Thessaly and when he was sleeping with her, he turned himself into a stallion and her into a mare, because his wife arrived, and both of them fled the scandal in this form. From this was born the Centaur, Chiron.

For Servius, at least, there were versions of this story where Philyra had also been a horse. The currency of these versions is unknowable, but it is clear that the image

⁸⁰⁶ See n. 587.

⁸⁰⁷ For an overview and exegesis of Philyra and her importance to her son, Chiron, see Guillaume-Coirier 1995.

⁸⁰⁸ See A. R. 2.1231-41; Virg. *G.* 3.92-4. Elsewhere, Saturn is in horse form during the rape: Titanomach. fr. 9; Hyg. *Fab.* 138. Brief allusions—like V. Fl. 5.152—make clear Saturn's equinity, but not the chronology.

⁸⁰⁹ Serv. *ad G.* 3.93. The *adespotos* version related at *TrGF* 734b.3-9 may hint, I suggest, at Philyra's metamorphosis (because of the repeated forms of μεταβάλλω), but it is too fragmentary to be sure: μεταβλ[ηθ... /]ος Φιλύρα[... /] της 'Ρέας [...].τ[... /].ομόνος εἰ[ς] ἵππον [μετε/βλ]ήθη, ἥ δὲ διὰ τὴν μ[εταμόρ/φ]ωσιν ἀπέτεκεν Χε[ίρων]α ... / τὸ]ν ἵπποκένταυρον.

which Arachne weaves does not positively engage with depictions of Philyra as a horse.

On similarly equine fronts, the story of Ceres' rape at the hands of a horse-formed Neptune is only recorded in one other extant source:⁸¹⁰

πλανωμένη γὰρ τῆ Δήμητρι, ἠνίκα τὴν παῖδα ἐζήτει, λέγουσιν ἔπεσθαί οἱ τὸν Ποσειδῶνα ἐπιθυμοῦντα αὐτῇ μιχθῆναι, καὶ τὴν μὲν ἐς ἵππον μεταβαλοῦσαν ὁμοῦ ταῖς ἵπποις νέμεσθαι ταῖς Ὀγκίου, Ποσειδῶν δὲ συνήσεν ἀπατόμενος καὶ συγγίνεται τῆ Δήμητρι ἄρσενι ἵππῳ καὶ αὐτὸς εἰκασθείς.

For they say that Neptune followed Ceres, when she was wandering around looking for her daughter, out of a desire to sleep with her, and that she, having turned herself into a mare, grazed with the mares of Oncius. Neptune realised that he had been outwitted and, having transformed himself into a stallion, he slept with Ceres.

Pausanias relates this myth as an explanation for Thelpusian Ceres' cult title Ἐρινύς,⁸¹¹ but he also reveals that she traditionally took on the form of a horse in the narrative. In the same region of Arcadia, there was a wooden statue of Ceres, in which she had the head and hair of a horse, almost as if in the middle of a metamorphosis.⁸¹²

Arachne, then, represents bestiality myths which can be divided into three categories: [1] myths in which the gods were always traditionally animalistic in form (Europa,⁸¹³

⁸¹⁰ Paus. 8.25.5. A version of this myth—in which Neptune does not rape Ceres but in which she transforms into a mare to avoid him—is preserved at Ptol. Chenn. 3.

⁸¹¹ See also Paus. 8.42.1, where the Arcadians of Mt. Elaeus call Ceres Μέλαινα but agree with the general narrative of the Thelpusians. See Burkert 1979, 125–9 for the religious significance of these myths of Ceres.

⁸¹² Paus. 8.42.4: [φασὶν οἱ Φιγαλεῖς] κεφαλὴν δὲ καὶ κόμην εἶχεν ἵππου, καὶ δρακόντων τε καὶ ἄλλων θηρίων εἰκόνες προσεπεφύκεσαν τῆ κεφαλῇ.

⁸¹³ See e.g. Hes. fr. 140; Mosch. *Eur.*; Hor. *Carm.* 3.27.25-76; Ps.-Apollod. 3.2-3.

Leda,⁸¹⁴ Proserpina⁸¹⁵); [2] myths which, in other extant sources, contain no bestiality or animals, but have it in this tapestry (Antiope,⁸¹⁶ Melantho,⁸¹⁷ Medusa⁸¹⁸); [3] myths which are elsewhere animalistic, but which Arachne restructures to promote those versions in which the aesthetic of bestiality dominates (Asteria, Melanippe, Theophane, Ceres, Philyra). It is a clear programme within the zoophilic rapes of the tapestry that all myths are rewoven to present the same dynamic of male, animal god and female, humanoid victim, regardless of the dynamics of these rapes elsewhere.

The way in which Arachne's restructuring of these myths is coupled with some extremely graphic descriptions of rape should not be ignored;⁸¹⁹ in presenting divine rapes as especially violent when the divinities take the forms of animals, Arachne weaves together the violence of rape with notions of animal savagery. Neptune's rape of Melanippe is especially visceral; we are told that *te quoque mutatum torvo, Neptune, iuvenco / virgine in Aeolia posuit* (6.115-16). As Johnson says (without outright stating the explicit conclusions forced by Arachne's *in*):⁸²⁰

The preposition is difficult to interpret; *in* with the ablative after *pono* normally signifies placing an object **in** or **on** something else; it certainly does not denote 'accompaniment,' as most translators render this phrase.

⁸¹⁴ See above.

⁸¹⁵ See e.g. Nonn. *D.* 5.562-6.168.

⁸¹⁶ The Ovidian originality of Jupiter committing the rape as a satyr is problematic but probable; see my n. 150.

⁸¹⁷ Only elsewhere at Tz. *ad Lyc.* 208.

⁸¹⁸ See above.

⁸¹⁹ All rape is violence, and scholars—especially feminist scholars—have discussed the rapes of the *Metamorphoses* in terms of their violence and its impact on readers (e.g. Curran 1978; Richlin 1992; Gloyn 2013; James 2016; Libatique 2021). When I discuss the 'especially violent' bestial rapes of Arachne's tapestry, I am addressing the explicit and graphic references to animalistic violence which are less prevalent elsewhere in the epic; cf., for instance, episodes like Jupiter's rape of Io (1.600), where the violence is implicit, and not dramatised by the presence of additional details of brutality.

⁸²⁰ Johnson 2008, 86 (my emphasis in bold).

The subject of *posuit* is Arachne; the weaver places Neptune physically within his victim, Melanippe—a detail recreated by the parenthetical insertion of the god’s name in line 115—re-enacting the most somatic violence of Neptune’s rape. Indeed, many of the rapes on Arachne’s tapestry are coloured by references to animalistic force. Jupiter, as he holds Asteria in his aquiline talons, *luctatur* with his victim, in a manner which highlights both her desire to escape and his brutality;⁸²¹ the same god’s rape of Antiope is embellished with the combined forces of bestiality and violence by means of the words *implerit* and *fetus*. *Implere* “was applied particularly to insemination by the male animal”,⁸²² while *fetus* is frequently used of the offspring of animals, as opposed to humans;⁸²³ *implere* gives Jupiter’s actions a sense of perfunctory cruelty which is intricately interconnected with his animalistic form.

Towards the end of the tapestry, Arachne’s focus alters from depictions of the gods’ animalistic cruelty to a series of rapes in which the victims’ sensory experience is foregrounded. For the first 15 lines of the tapestry, the subjects of the verbs are Arachne or the raping gods, but, in line 117, there is a shift:⁸²⁴

et te flava comas frugum mitissima mater

sensit equum, **sensit** volucrem crinita colubris

mater equi volucris, **sensit** delphina Melantho:

120

⁸²¹ For *luctor* as a sexual verb, see Adams 1990, 157–8; for the verb’s violence here, see Johnson 2008, 86.

⁸²² Adams 1990, 207; often, in the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid uses this animalism to varnish sex with violence (e.g. Peleus and Thetis at 11.265 and Jupiter and Danaë at 4.698) or, in one instance (9.280) perfunctory necessity. Many of the examples at *TLL* 7.1.633.67–634.3 s.v. “impleo” evince this violence.

⁸²³ See *TLL* 6.1.637.52–638.52 s.v. “fetus”.

⁸²⁴ *Ov. Met.* 6.117–20.

And the golden-haired, gentlest mother of the crops

felt you as a horse, the snake-haired mother of the winged horse

felt you as a bird, Melantho **felt** you as a dolphin:

120

The victims take the role of grammatical subjects, and the verb whose action they perform is one of somatic experience.⁸²⁵ The brevity of expression in these lines sees a single, monosyllabic object—*te* (6.117)—referring to Neptune, who rapes all three women, and far more emphasis is placed on the women’s experience of the animals whose forms he takes: *equus*, *volucris* and *delphin*. Latin’s structure allows Arachne to almost entirely occlude reference to the god (imagined as humanoid) in these lines, replacing him entirely—on a syntactical level—with the animals who perpetuate sexual violence against women. Indeed, apposition plays an important role across the tapestry; at the beginning, the gods are described in terms which stress their divinity concealed beneath an animal exterior—*imago tauri* (6.103), *satyri celatus imagine* (6.110)—but increasingly,⁸²⁶ the animal forms are syntactically aligned with the gods themselves through apposition. The subjective focalisation towards Ceres, Medusa and Melantho’s experience of Neptune—who is not presented in disguise but as actually being horse, bird and dolphin—centres their experience of his animalistic violence.

This tapestry, then, is specifically crafted to give a brief explosion of multiple bestiality myths in short succession, drawing on the sources of traditional mythography to reweave myths both famous and little known. That Arachne’s tapestry

⁸²⁵ *Sentire* can refer to both physical sensation and mental or emotional perception; in light of the general violence of the tapestry, it seems to me that the former is more prominent here (with *OLD* 1736-7 s.v. “sentio” 4b). For *sentire* in the sense of ‘experience sexually’, see e.g. Cic. *Phil.* 13.24; Ov. *Tr.* 1.5.19.

⁸²⁶ There are instances of this first type of disguise late in the tapestry (e.g. 6.123-4: *utque modo accipitris pennas, modo terga leonis / gesserit*), and the birds who assault Asteria and Leda are not portrayed in terms of disguise, but the trend holds generally.

is not just an anthology of well-known bestiality myths is significant: she weaves her sources anew, creating a shocking barrage of bestiality, much of which stems from myths which Minerva—and the Roman audience—may not associate with bestiality or with the animal-human dynamics as she represents them. With this narrative dexterity, Arachne is a suitable opponent for Ovid, who also frequently adapts the particulars of his mythographic sources, adding suitable metamorphoses for the needs of his tales. The prodigiousness of the zoophilia on Arachne's tapestry highlights just how little of this sort of mythology there is elsewhere within the *Metamorphoses*. The weaver crafts a catalogue of missed opportunities and of narrative threads which Ovid has chosen not to weave into his epic. These twelve myths represent what could have been twelve long-form narratives under Ovid's pen, but which are relegated to being allusive and brief vignettes under Arachne's shuttle.

5.4 – The Spider in Her Web

In her study of the ancient cultural associations of spiders, Johnston highlights three main 'affordances' of spiders, which can be variously evaluated: [1] weaving webs; [2] parricide (and, connectedly, incest); and [3] uncontrollable lust.⁸²⁷ Arachne exploits all of these in her tapestry in ways which thread their way through the fabric of the rest of the *Metamorphoses*. I have, perhaps, discussed lust and sexuality enough in this chapter, so I focus now on items [1] and [2]. In these concluding remarks, I consider Arachne as a spider at the heart of the poem (or, perhaps, her own web?), whose narrative weaving in Book 6 has implications for the epic as a whole.

In line with Johnston's use of 'affordances', cobwebs have a range of valences, which can be evaluated in a range of ways; perhaps most obviously, webs are a symbol of a

⁸²⁷ Johnston 2009; see pp. 3-6 for a discussion of the term 'affordance'.

spider’s industriousness and cleverness.⁸²⁸ The spider web, when cast over something, indicates neglect (with both positive and negative force); it indicates that something is underused and could be put to more use. Hesiod describes grain storage jars which have been left empty due to poor harvest—εἰ τέλος αὐτὸς ὄπισθεν Ὀλύμπιος ἐσθλὸν ὀπάζοι, / ἐκ δ’ ἀγγέων ἐλάσειας ἀράχνια (*Op.* 474-5)—and Telemachus wonders whether Odysseus’ bed would be coated with cobwebs if Penelope were to forsake it for marriage with another man: Ὀδυσσῆος δέ που εὐνή / χήτει ἐνευναίων κάκ’ ἀράχνια κεῖται ἔχουσα (*Od.* 16.34-5).⁸²⁹ As I have demonstrated, Arachne chooses to wrap her web around a series of myths which prominently feature bestiality, marking that sexual activity as something emphatically underutilised. Arachne’s webs—both woven and spun—highlight bestiality as a narrative choice which Ovid has neglected.⁸³⁰

The cobweb is also a technology of disarmament and entrapment. The spider is an assailant—often a physically weaker assailant—who defeats a stronger foe by ensnaring them. Clytemnestra famously ensnares her husband Agamemnon when he returns from Troy; as the chorus of Aeschylus’ play tell us:⁸³¹

ἰὼ ἰὼ βασιλεῦ βασιλεῦ,

πῶς σε δακρύσω;

1490

φρενὸς ἐκ φιλίας τί ποτ’ εἶπω;

⁸²⁸ Ael. *NA* 1.21: ὡς καὶ τῶν γυναικῶν τὰς μάλιστα εὐχειρας καὶ νῆμα ἀσκητὸν ἐκπονῆσαι δεινὰς μὴ ἀντιπαραβάλλεσθαι. See also Arist. *HA* 622b.23 and Hes. *Op.* 777. For spiders’ intelligence, see Hom. *Od.* 8.279-81; Arist. *HA* 623a.8-9; (Adesp.) *AP* 9.372; Plu. *Mor.* 966F; Philostr. *Im.* 2.28.1; Plin. *Nat.* 11.28.

⁸²⁹ Cobwebs cover weapons and armour in peace time: B. fr. 4.69-70; E. *Erech.* fr. 369; Theocr. 16.96. Webs cover empty meal-tubs at Pherecr. *Tyr.* fr. 142 and mark a stomach as hungry by filling it at Cratin. *Pyt.* fr. 190. See also S. *Inach.* fr. 286; Philostr. *Im.* 2.28.2; Catull. 25.3.

⁸³⁰ Cf. Ovid’s description of Arachne’s post-metamorphosis webs as *antiquas telas* (*Met.* 145), perhaps drawing on the adjective’s capacity to describe unused or defunct things (*OLD* 142 s.v. “antiquus” 3b).

⁸³¹ A. *Ag.* 1489-93; repeated at 1513-17. See also A. *Suppl.* 884-92; *AP* 9.372; Philostr. *Im.* 2.28.3-4. At Xen. *Mem.* 3.11.6, Theodote is advised to ensnare friends like a spider: οἴσθα γάρ, ὡς ἐκεῖναι θηρῶσι τὰ πρὸς τὸν βίον· ἀράχνια γὰρ δῆπου λεπτὰ ὑφηνάμεναι ὅ τι ἂν ἐνταῦθα ἐμπέσῃ, τούτῳ τροφῆ χρῶνται.

κεῖσαι δ' ἀράχνης ἐν ὑφάσματι τῷδ'

ἀσεβεῖ θανάτῳ βίον ἐκπνέων,

Io io, my king, my king,

how shall I cry for you?

1490

What could I say from my loving heart?

You lie in the web of this spider

having breathed your last in an unholy death.

The chorus call Clytemnestra an ἀράχνη; she has disarmed Agamemnon, despite being a physically far weaker party, and the spider is the metaphor through which Aeschylus' chorus communicate her victory. The lines not only point to the power disparity between Clytemnestra and Agamemnon, but they also indicate a level of deceit and trickery in the former's method of entrapment. A similar sort of dynamic is at play in the Arachne episode of the *Metamorphoses*: Arachne ensnares, in her intratextual competition against both Ovid and Minerva, a far stronger opponent, disarming them and positioning her own, weaker self as the victor.

The spider is, furthermore, closely associated with parricide—and, especially, parenticide—in the ancient biological tradition;⁸³² Pliny, for instance, tells us that *phalangia tantum in ipso specu incubant magnum numerum qui, ut emersit, matrem consumit, saepe et patrem, adiuvat enim incubare* (*Nat.* 11.29).⁸³³ Let us consider three things together: the arguments I have made in this chapter about Arachne as a literary competitor; the author or literary producer (*auctor*) as father;⁸³⁴ and Graeco-Roman cultural associations between spiders and parenticide. Indeed, it is no

⁸³² Incest and parricide were conceptually connected in the Roman imaginary (see pp. 50-1); it is, then, fitting that at least two of the rapes on Arachne's tapestry feature incest (Jupiter-Proserpina and Neptune-Ceres).

⁸³³ See also Arist. *HA* 555a.23-5, 555b.10-15; Antig. 87; Σ Nic. *Th.* 715a.

⁸³⁴ *Auctor* can, plastically, be both father (*TLL* 2.1204.30-66 s.v. "auctor") and author (*TLL* 2.1207-1211.34 s.v. "auctor").

coincidence that the critic who coined the idea of *La mort de l'auteur*,⁸³⁵ Roland Barthes, draws on a productive, Arachnean spider in his discussion of text.⁸³⁶

Texte veut dire *Tissu* ; mais alors que jusqu'ici on a toujours pris ce tissu pour un produit, un voile tout fait, derrière lequel se tient, plus ou moins caché, le sens (la vérité), nous accentuons maintenant, dans le tissu, l'idée générative que le texte se fait, se travaille à travers un entrelacs perpétuel ; **perdu dans ce tissu—cette texture—le sujet s'y défait, telle une araignée** qui se dissoudrait elle-même dans les sécrétions constructives de sa toile. Si nous aimions les néologismes, nous pourrions définir la théorie du texte comme une *hyphologie* (*hyphos*, c'est le tissu et la toile d'araignée).

Texte means *Fabric*; whereas we have so far always understood this fabric as a product, a total veil, behind which hides, more-or-less hidden, meaning (truth), we now stress, in the fabric, the productive idea that the text is created, is worked through eternal intertwining. Lost in this fabric—this texture—the subject unravels, like a spider which dissolves itself in the constructive secretions of its web. If we like neologisms, we could term the theory of text *hyphology* (*hyphos* is the fabric and web of a spider).

In restating his arguments for the death of the author, Barthes engages similar language: “**perdu au milieu du texte** (non pas *derrière* lui à la façon d'un dieu de machinerie), il y a toujours l'autre, l'auteur”.⁸³⁷ Indeed, Arachne's intertextual multivocality, her resistance to singular interpretation or authorial catholicism, is itself a deeply Barthesian modality:⁸³⁸

⁸³⁵ Barthes 1968.

⁸³⁶ Barthes 1973, 100–1. For the interplay of Barthes and Ovid's Arachne, see Vincent 1994.

⁸³⁷ Barthes 1973, 45.

⁸³⁸ Barthes 1968, 15.

Un texte n'est pas fait d'une ligne de mots, dégageant un sens unique, en quelque sorte théologique (qui serait le « message » de l'Auteur-Dieu), mais un espace à dimensions multiples, où se marient et se contestent des écritures variées, dont aucune n'est originelle : le texte est un tissu de citations, issues des mille foyers de la culture.

A text is not a line of words, giving off a single meaning, in some theological manner (what we would call the 'message' of the Author-God), but a space with multiple dimensions, where diverse writings—none of which is original—marry and battle: the text is a fabric of quotations, stemming from a thousand centres of culture.

In a spiderly—and fittingly Oedipal—turn, Arachne seats to unseat, and perhaps to kill, her father,⁸³⁹ her author, her Ovid.⁸⁴⁰

Arachne is a spider in the middle of her web; she weaves her narrative against and parallel to Ovid's own. Through her narrative methods, Arachne comments on Ovid's own and highlights the lacunae of his text; where he omits bestiality, she creates a web—a dense narrative focus or trap—which draws attention to his omission. By weaving intertexts through her brief narrative tapestry, Arachne turns eight critical eyes on Ovid and his emphatic underemployment of bestiality. She shoots threads which secure themselves to multiple other distinct moments in the *Metamorphoses* (e.g. the rape of Medusa in Book 4) and, in so doing, pull them inexorably towards the

⁸³⁹ Even on more literal levels, Arachne 'kills' several 'father'-figures in this episode. First, she outdoes her biological father, Idmon, who is a craftsman (Ov. *Met.* 6.9-10), not an artist like her. She draws her fame from her creative prowess, and specifically not from her *pater* or *patria* (*non illa loco nec origine gentis / clara, sed arte fuit*, 6.7-8); n.b. *pater* is also in 6.8. Then, she rejects Minerva (6.24), who initially appears like an elderly grandmother (6.26-7), complete with grandparental admonishment (6.28-33), whose descendants—read: Arachne—are marked as an absent presence (6.39). On parricide more broadly, Arachne's curse will affect her descendants (6.137-8).

⁸⁴⁰ See Ovid's conflation of his bodily *corpus* with his literary *corpus*: *Met.* 15.875-9. See also Hinds 1985, 26; Newlands 1997; Walker 1997, 200; Farrell 1999; Hardie 2002, 297-300.

centre of Arachne's web, distorting the overall warp and weft of the epic's narrative fabric.

6 – Desiring the Beast: The *Nefas* of Unrealised Passions

In the previous chapter, I explored the bestiality myths on Arachne’s tapestry; these encounters are, uniformly, staged as rapes carried out by zoomorphic male deities on anthropomorphic female victims. I therefore used the language of ‘the aesthetics of bestiality’ to describe how human-animal sex is presented on the page, without making any claims about these victims ‘desiring’ the gods *qua* their animalistic forms. In this chapter, I analyse precisely the ways in which certain animals in the *Metamorphoses*—namely Cyparissus’ stag, Europa’s bull and Io—are presented as being valid objects of erotic attention, creating not only an ‘aesthetics’ of bestiality, but zoophilia itself.

My discussion of Cyparissus and his stag first establishes this scene as an erotic one: Ovid presents no explicit sex-scene and does not, *prima facie*, state that the relationship between Cyparissus and his stag is amatory. Through an exploration of the intertexts that Ovid weaves through this episode (especially versions of the Acontius and Cydippe story), I demonstrate that it is, in fact, highly eroticised in ways that compel a reader to see the stag as a love object. I then focus more on the stag’s gendered appearance, demonstrating how Ovid casts him as both humanised and complexly gendered. In section two of this chapter, I explore two ambiguous tales of desire: Io, in Book 1, and Europa, in Books 2 and 3. Ovid explicitly makes both stories rape narratives but, involutedly, pairs this with an attention to bovine-centric desire. For Io, I explore how Ovid combines different versions of the Io myth to produce a hybrid narrative that centres the complexity of Io’s bovine beauty, flirting with a zoophilic erotics that is kept off the page. For Europa, I primarily explore Ovid’s debt to Moschus and assess how he imports the duplex emotions of dread and desire, which reveal a deep Ovidian discomfort with Europa’s—and the readers’—erotic attraction to the Jupiter-bull that is absent from his Moschan source.

This chapter argues that, in varied ways, the three myths—Cyparissus, Io and Europa—construct an aesthetics of bestiality that differs from that seen on Arachne’s tapestry. In their own ways, Ovid’s version of each of these myths simultaneously parades the visual attractiveness of its animal character—both to the relevant diegetic lover and to the extradiegetic reader—while structuring the deployment of its aesthetics to minimise the on-screen presentation of zoophilic sex. The result is a consistent and deep ambivalence, which we may compare with my arguments about Myrrha in Chapter 4, around human-animal sex, a sort of abjected artistic reaction in which Ovid both delights in and is disgusted by these figures.

6.1 – Cyparissus: Dating a Drag Stag

I begin with a character who has received little attention in scholarship,⁸⁴¹ Cyparissus, whose tragic love for a stag is told as an aetiology for the cypress tree’s associations with mourning (10.106-42).⁸⁴² In Ovid’s version of the story—I return to other versions—Cyparissus is an attractive Cean youth who forms a close bond with a miraculously tame stag; in a hunting accident, Cyparissus fatally stabs his beloved stag with a spear and falls into an uncontrollable grief. Apollo seeks to console Cyparissus, but the only divine intervention that the boy wants is to mourn for ever more and he is transformed into a cypress, the symbolic tree of mourning for the Romans.

⁸⁴¹ Most scholarship on Cyparissus explores the connections between his appearance in the *Metamorphoses* and in the visual culture of Pompeian frescoes; for this, see Sauron 2004, 148; Colpo & Ghedini 2007; Ghedini & Colpo 2012. Sergent 1984, 97–123 explores the homosexuality (between Apollo and Cyparissus) and its significance for initiation rites.

⁸⁴² Unsurprisingly, Cyparissus’ relationship with the stag is not often interpreted as sexual or amatory, not least because it is between two male characters; e.g. Otis 1970, 371’s dismissive suggestion that the episode is “concerned with quite non-amatory interests such as Cyparissus’ tame stag”. Cf. Karakasis 2016, 245: “Cyparissus’ *cervus*, is [...] associated with a homosexual affair, recounted as part of Orpheus’ ‘transferring love to tender young males’, *Ov. Met.* 10.83-4: *amorem / in teneros transferre mares*”.

The most obvious romantic pairing in the episode is between Apollo and Cyparissus: it is with them that Ovid opens his version of this myth—*nunc arbor, puer ante deo [Apolline] dilectus ab illo* (10.107)—and he finishes the story with Apollo’s grief at Cyparissus’ transformation (10.141-2). Indeed, the story is often read as mirroring other deaths of attractive young men beloved by Apollo in the poem, like Hyacinthus, whose story begins, in Orpheus’ narration, only 20 lines later (10.162-219);⁸⁴³ this connection is even borne out in later receptions of the story.⁸⁴⁴ Indeed, Cyparissus’ story occurs within an especially homoerotic book of the *Metamorphoses* which,⁸⁴⁵ in addition to Hyacinthus, also includes Orpheus’ founding of pederasty at Thrace (10.83-5), Jupiter’s abduction of Ganymede (10.155-8) and the *incipit* to Orpheus’ song which promises—in phrasing which echoes Apollo’s desire for Cyparissus (see below)—to sing that *puerosque .../ dilectos superis* (10.152-3). Apollo’s role as the most masculine of this triad is established by his introduction via a phrase which defines him in terms of *nervi: deo ... ab illo, / qui citharam nervis et nervis temperat arcum* (10.107-8). Ovid’s clever, chiasmic play on the double sense of *nervus*—both bowstring and lyre string—hints at a third sense which is especially fitting for this setting of three-way homoeroticism: penis.⁸⁴⁶ Apollo has dominant control (*temperat*) over the other two characters of the episode—Cyparissus and stag—the latter *enervior* than the former,⁸⁴⁷ in a way which neatly introduces the sexual plays of the episode.

⁸⁴³ See e.g. Cadili 2007, 25, 34; Fulkerson 2006, 397; Miller 1998, 417; Otis 1970, 185, 371. Sergent 1984, 97–123 suggests an older, mythical connection between Hyacinthus, Narcissus and Cyparissus.

⁸⁴⁴ At Nonn. *Dion.* 11.363-5, Cyparissus is Zephyrus’ consolation prize for the death of Hyacinthus.

⁸⁴⁵ See Makowski 1996, 25.

⁸⁴⁶ Adams 1990, 21, 25. Cf. double-entendres with *nervus*: *CP* 68.33 (*nemo meo melius nervum tendebat Ulixee*); Apul. *Met.* 2.16 (*arcum meum et ipse vigorate tetendi et oppido formido ne nervus rigoris nimietate rumpatur*). A less prurient double sense of *nervus* is also used of Apollo at Ov. *Pont.* 4.8.75-6.

⁸⁴⁷ For *enervis* as representing passive homosexuality, see Williams 2010, 140.

In this section, however, I explore how the relationship between Cyparissus and his stag is charged with eroticism. First, I analyse how Ovid incorporates elegiac tropes into this episode, specifically applying them to the stag, and second, I show how the narrative's intertextual resonances load the text with deeply sexual undertones.

6.1.1 – An Erotics of Intertextuality

6.1.1.1 – Eulogies for Elegies: Remembering the *Amores*

The Cyparissus episode is suffused with the language and topoi of Augustan elegy to an unusual degree, even within the often-elegiac world of the *Metamorphoses*;⁸⁴⁸ however, this has not previously been discussed in scholarship.⁸⁴⁹ Thus, the reader is encouraged to seek out the characters of elegy—especially the *amator* and his beloved—in the episode's characters: Cyparissus, the stag and Apollo.⁸⁵⁰ I argue that this imbues the scene with the frustrated erotics of elegiac poetry and highlights the amatory relationship between Cyparissus (our *amator*) and his stag (our beloved). The tropes begin early: Cyparissus is a *puer ... dilectus* (10.107),⁸⁵¹ which picks up on the elegiac stock character of the *puer delicatus*, the object of elegiac homoerotics *par*

⁸⁴⁸ This episode incorporates a polyphony of generic influences in addition to the elegiac, especially the bucolic; for elegy in the *Metamorphoses*, see Mayor 2017; for bucolics, see Barchiesi 2006b. For the use of Ovid's Cyparissus in the construction of later bucolic, see Karakasis 2016, 235–9.

⁸⁴⁹ Mayor 2017 (e.g.) does not mention Cyparissus. Otis 1970, 352 offhandedly calls the episode elegiac, but leaves it at that.

⁸⁵⁰ The episode's relationship dynamics mirror elegy's, but do not map on perfectly. Most obviously, Apollo is a god, so Cyparissus must be his beloved, not the pursuing *amator* in that relationship; however, *vis-à-vis* the stag, Cyparissus assumes a more dominant role. Readers are primed to see Apollo as the rejected *amator*, whom Cyparissus will not entertain, given the close parallels between this story and that of Daphne (Ov. *Met.* 1.452-567).

⁸⁵¹ Cf. Ov. *Met.* 10.152-3, where Orpheus claims he will sing of *pueros [...] dilectos superis*. The collocation *puer dilectus* occurs in other homoerotically charged Ovidian passages: *Met.* 3.500 (Narcissus); *Tr.* 4.5.1 (a friend of Ovid's); *Ib.* 295-6 (Philip II of Macedon). Cyparissus' name—while clearly aetiological for *cupressus*—may also evoke an Ovidian elegiac character: the female hairdresser Cypassis from *Am.* 2.7; for the onomastics of her name, see McKeown 1998, 152.

excellence:⁸⁵² this figure is especially appropriate in an episode which features three male characters, entangled in a web of love.⁸⁵³

This initial invocation of elegiac themes tracks throughout the episode, especially in the description of the stag's appearance (see below). After the stag's death, Apollo admonishes a grieving Cyparissus, telling him *ut leviter pro materiaque doleret* (10.133). These words are generically loaded: *leviter* and *materia* signal a metapoetic rejection of the *gravis materia* of epic poetry,⁸⁵⁴ in favour of 'lighter' genres. The metapoetic force of *levis*, as opposed to *gravis*, is highlighted further by its employment by Orpheus fewer than 20 lines later, with precisely this force:⁸⁵⁵ *cecini plectro graviore Gigantas / ... nunc opus est leviores lyra* (10.150, 2). However, where Orpheus' *levior* suggests that his song will generically play with Hellenistic epyllion,⁸⁵⁶ I suggest that Apollo's words to Cyparissus invoke elegy and recall Ovid's own metapoetic references to genre, especially in *Amores* 1.1.

In Ovid's programmatic *recusatio* of epic themes, he begins with the *gravis numerus* of epic poetry, claiming that he started writing poetry with *materia conveniens modis*, namely *arma* and *violenta bella* (1.1.1-2). Later in the same poem, he posits that elegiac content—defined as love for a *puer* or *puella*—is precisely the *materia ... numeris levioribus apta* (1.1.19-20). Apollo's words to Cyparissus verbally echo these

⁸⁵² For the *puer delicatus*, see Krenkel 1979; Murgatroyd 1977; Nikoloutsos 2007, 2011; Williams 2010, 166; Verstraete 2012.

⁸⁵³ For homoeroticism as programmatic to Ovidian elegy, see Ingleheart 2021b.

⁸⁵⁴ Connors 1992, 10–11, who sees an allusion to epyllion and epigram, but not elegy. Karakasis 2016, 237, especially n. 65 discusses the generic interplay between epic and bucolic in the Cyparissus episode, nearly, but not quite, bringing elegy into his "generic dialogue". For *materia*'s metapoetic weight here, see Kenney's note at Melville 1986, xxviii. *Materia* is a particularly Ovidian marker of metapoetry (see McKeown 1989, 13); see e.g. *Am.* 3.1.42, *Rem.* 387-8, *Pont.* 3.4.85-6. For *levis*, see e.g. *Am.* 2.1.21, 3.1.41, *Tr.* 2.331-2.

⁸⁵⁵ Connors 1992, 11. See also Miller 1998, 416 n. 5.

⁸⁵⁶ Kailbach-Mehl 2020, 134: "Orpheus wechselt damit das Gattungsregister von einer erhabenen epischen zu einer leichteren kallimacheisch-elegischen Dichtungsform. Dies zeigt, dass der Sänger sowohl hohe epische als auch leichtere alexandrinische Dichtungsformen beherrscht".

lines, and the episode consequently takes on elegiac colouring; the boy's excessive grief is not appropriate for epic and he should thus grieve in a more elegiac fashion (*leviter*).⁸⁵⁷ Apollo's reminder is timely: the episode thus far has been distinctly elegiac, but Cyparissus' grief is putting a downer on things, bringing with it generic forces which are a too *gravia*—too epic—and which Apollo must chase away (not least because of his own, elegiac, interest in the boy).

The landscape in which the Cyparissus episode unfurls (I return to Ceos below), recalls several elegies from Ovid's *Amores*, especially poems 1.5 and 3.5, the latter a poem which also centres animal sexuality.⁸⁵⁸ In the *Metamorphoses*, Cyparissus' stag traverses a *locus amoenus*, attempting to escape the heat (10.128-9; see below); in *Amores* 3.5, a dreaming Ovid sees a cow attempt to flee the oppressive *aestus* of an overbearing *locus amoenus* and settle in a grove. The landscape is generically typical—full of *graminea prata* (3.5.5), *sonans aqua* (3.5.6), *arboreae frondes* (3.5.7, 8) and *herbae immixtae variis floribus* (3.5.9)—but the inescapable *aestus* colours the entire scene with sultry eroticism.

Cyparissus' deer inhabits a similar landscape, presented by Ovid in almost the same order: he first describes *pabula .../... nova* (*Met.* 10.121-2), then how Cyparissus used to lead the stag *liquidi ... fontis ad undam* (10.122), before he notes how the boy wove *varios ... flores* (10.123) for the stag, and, later, the setting's *arborea umbra* (10.129). The topography is identical, although the language used to describe it is different in the *Metamorphoses* and the *Amores*. Even still, there are chimes between *arborea*

⁸⁵⁷ Grieving *leviter* is particularly Ovidian (e.g. *Pont.* 1.9.30; *Ib.* 255); see also Cic. *Att.* 11.6.2.1. Grief can be an epic trope (e.g. Achilles for Patroclus at Hom. *Il.* 18.22-35, 78-93), but elegy is the genre *par excellence* for mourning. For elegiac mourning, see Hor. *Ars* 75; Ov. *Am.* 3.9.3-4, *Her.* 15.7 and James 2003; for Latin *elegia*'s supposed etymology in the Greek funerary call ἔξ λέγειν, see Luck 1982, 109; Keith 1992b, 334-5; Hinds 1998, 31.

⁸⁵⁸ The authorship of *Am.* 3.5 is debated (see McKeown 2013); see his n. 5 for recent contributions in favour of Ovidian authorship, which I find most convincing.

umbra (*Met.* 10.129) and *arboreae frondes* (*Am.* 3.5.7 and 3.5.8) and between grasses interwoven with *varii flores* (*Am.* 3.5.9) and the same *varii flores* being woven between the stag’s antlers (*Met.* 10.123).⁸⁵⁹ Ovid highlights his self-citation with the consciously metapoetic weaving (*texebas*) of *varii flores*, just as Arachne had signalled her tapestry’s limitlessly osmotic intertextual potential by interweaving of *flores intertexti nexilibus hederis* (6.128; see §5.1).⁸⁶⁰

In this elegiac dreamscape, Cyparissus’ stag dies under an elegiac heat that is reminiscent of *Am.* 1.5:

aestus erat mediusque dies, solisque vapore

concava litorei fervebant bracchia Cancri;

(*Ov. Met.* 10.126-7)

aestus erat, mediamque dies exegerat horam;

apposui medio membra levanda toro.

(*Ov. Am.* 1.5.1-2)

This is not the only time that Ovid uses part of the famous incipit from *Amores* 1.5 to signal a change in narration,⁸⁶¹ but the continued echoes, after *aestus erat*, between *mediusque dies* and *mediamque dies* are unparalleled. *Amores* 1.5 is one of the most erotic poems in extant Latin verse, so Ovid’s intertextual reference to it in a scene between a stag and a boy is striking.⁸⁶² In both poems, the loaded position of *aestus*

⁸⁵⁹ Cf. the associations between flowers and boy-love from Greek lyric: Thgn. 1348; Ibyc. fr. 282c(i); Anacr. fr. 1. See Auger 1995. Cf., within the *Metamorphoses*, the use of flowers in pederotically-coloured episodes: Hyacinthus (10.211-19), Narcissus (3.509-10) Orpheus’ invention of Thracian pederasty (10.85). See also the Roman concept of the *flos aetatis* (Williams 2010, 78–85).

⁸⁶⁰ This description of flowers is, itself, constructed of intertexts; see Bömer 1980, 57. The flowers also signal the bucolic—see Karakasis 2016, 238—which is especially relevant for this scene’s echoes of Virg. *Ecl.* 10 (see §6.1.1.3).

⁸⁶¹ I.e. *Ov. Met.* 5.586. Cf. the line end of *Ov. Am.* 3.5.8: *fronde sub arborea sed tamen aestus erat*. For *aestus*’ eroticism, see Pichon 1902, 81–2.

⁸⁶² Frécaut 1968, 350 calls *Am.* 1.5 “le prélude à l’amour”. See also Kennedy 2008.

creates an atmosphere where sultry eroticism predominates and, as Ovid's interpreter reveals in *Amores* 3.5, *quem tu mobilibus foliis vitare volebas, / sed male vitabas, aestus amoris erat* (3.5.35-6). In the heady, bedroom atmosphere evoked by *aestus erat*, the stag takes on traits associated with the feminine beloved of elegy (see below), and, so, in the parallel with *Amores* 1.5, he plays the role of Corinna, the sexy beloved who lies down, ready for penetration (in *Am.* 1.5, by Ovid; in *Met.* 10.130-1, by Cyparissus' spear).

Having failed to escape the *aestus*, the cow of *Amores* 3.5 meets and promptly has sex with a bull. The sex is described obliquely, but unmistakably: *taurus erat comes huic, feliciter ille maritus, / cumque sua teneram coniuge pressit humum* (*Am.* 3.5.15-16).⁸⁶³

In post-coital exhaustion, the bull collapses: *visus erat, somno vires adimente ferendi, / cornigerum terra deposuisse caput* (*Am.* 3.5.19-20). Cyparissus' stag lays down in a similarly elegiac, *aestuusus* scene: *fessus in herbosa posuit sua corpora terra / cervus et arborea frigus ducebat ab umbra* (10.128-9).

Read in isolation, the stag's actions reflect an understandable reaction to too much heat; however, when read alongside the bull's post-coital bedding, or Ovid and Corinna's joint exhaustion at *Am.* 1.5.25 (*lassi requievimus ambo*),⁸⁶⁴ Ovid seems to allow an interpretation in which the stag is exhausted from sex. The sex between Cyparissus and the stag happens between the lines, entirely absent from the text of the *Metamorphoses*, but strongly implied by setting, nuance and intertext. One could read erotically the bucolic landscape, so frequently a *locus* of sexual activity in the poem.⁸⁶⁵

⁸⁶³ The bull *pressit humum*, which recalls unambiguously erotic bedroom scenes, where Ovid marks post-coital bedsheets with *premere torum*: *Ov. Am.* 1.1.15-16, 3.14.32; *Ars am.* 272; *Her.* 10.55-6. On Ovidian *tori*, see Ingleheart 2021a, especially 318.

⁸⁶⁴ Exhaustion is a common sexual metaphor (Adams 1990, 196), so the stag's actions are heavily loaded.

⁸⁶⁵ The vocabulary of 'fields' (i.e. 10.121's *pabula*) is frequently sexualised (Adams 1990, 84), as is the landscape more broadly (Adams 1990, 24, 26-9). See also Watson 2021, 163-4.

In particular, the enjambment between lines 10.121 and 10.122—*tu pabula cervum / ad nova ... ducebas*—encourages speculation about the sexual and zoophilic force of *nova*, brought, as it is, to the forefront of its line and topographically separated from the noun it modifies (*pabula*): these are ‘fresh’ pastures on which the deer may graze, but the domineering power of *ducere* (and its resonance with marital custom)⁸⁶⁶ may prompt readers to see in these *nova pabula* some of the ‘uncanny’ *novitas* of Pasiphaë’s bestiality at *Met.* 8.157 (§2.2).

There is a potential allusion to sex between the stag and his boy in lines 10.124-5 (which immediately precede the oppressive heat and the stag’s collapse), when Ovid invokes the imagery of horse-riding: *nunc eques in tergo residens huc laetus et illuc / mollia purpureis frenabas ora capistris*. Horse-riding is a regular metaphor for sex;⁸⁶⁷ normally, the penetrating party is the horse, and the penetrated is its rider.⁸⁶⁸ However, the axes of activity and passivity do not always match perfectly those of penetration and receptivity: the rider is always the penetrated party, but they can also be the more physically active.⁸⁶⁹ As I have said, the stag is generally the passive partner in this relationship—he is effeminised (see below) and penetrated (10.130-1)—which is somewhat at odds with the *prima facie* implication of this metaphor. However, given Ovid’s reference to himself elsewhere as a *desultor amoris* (*Am.* 1.3.15)⁸⁷⁰ in a scene which is not directly concerned with self-deprecation in the arena of a sexual activity

⁸⁶⁶ See Treggiari 1991, 166–7.

⁸⁶⁷ Adams 1990, 165–6.

⁸⁶⁸ This mostly means that the rider is a woman; see e.g. *Hor. S.* 2.7.50; *AP* (Asclep. *vel* Posidipp.) 5.202, (Asclep.) 5.203; *Ar. Vesp.* 500-2 (note that this scene also takes place τῆς μεσημβρίας), *Lys.* 667-9; *Mart.* 11.104.14; *Apul. Met.* 2.17. The rider is a man—though a penetrated man—at *Petron.* 24.4 and *CIL* 4.1825. At *Juv.* 6.311, a woman can be the horse, but only because she is being ridden by another woman: *inque vices equitant ac Luna teste moventur*.

⁸⁶⁹ See, e.g. *Hor. S.* 2.7.50; *Petron.* 24.4; *Juv.* 6.311.

⁸⁷⁰ McKeown 1989, 70 notes that the sexual sense of *desultor* is brought into sharp focus when read against the *double-entendre* at *Ov. Am.* 3.2.9-10: *sacro de carcere missis / insistam forti mente vehendus equis*.

/ passivity, perhaps, under his pen, the metaphor of riding is more generalised and less schematised on angles of sexual hierarchy. If so, we may read Ovid's use of horse-riding imagery in this scene as broadly sexualised without necessarily suggesting that the stag is a penetrator. The reference to backwards-and-forwards motion (*huc ... et illuc*) may also reflect the vigorous movement of sex, which is a focus of Ovidian sex-scenes.⁸⁷¹

Ovid, then, primes his audience to read the Cyparissus episode through the lens of elegy. In particular, he suffuses the scene with the sexy sultriness of an elegiac *locus amoenus*, in which sexual pleasure may be glimpsed below the narrative surface. Heterosexual elegiac unions between Ovid and his *puella* are metamorphosed into the homoerotic pairing of Cyparissus and his stag. The effect is not achieved through random elegiac intertexts, but through specific allusions to elegies which are especially concerned with matters sexual, an effect which casts the Cean forest as a seductive setting for Ovid's reimagined, zoophilic, bedroom.

6.1.1.2 – Acontius and Cy(dippe/parissus)

The primary literary memory evoked in Book 10's Cyparissus narrative is Ovid's own elegiac career; however, other subtextual narratives add a similarly erotic tone to the episode.⁸⁷² In this section, I discuss some of the amatory literary spectres which haunt the story. Primarily, the Cyparissus episode evokes Callimachus' narrative of Acontius and Cydippe.⁸⁷³ In creating this Callimachean intertext, Ovid imports not only the

⁸⁷¹ E.g. *Ov. Am.* 2.4.14, 3.14.26, *Ars am.* 2.725-34, 3.802 (with Gibson 2003, 401), *Her.* 15.47-8; *Ar. Lys.* 227. See also Adams 1990, 193-5 on the sexual vocabulary of motion.

⁸⁷² See Cadili 2007, 37 on Ovid's expansion of *Virg. G.* 1.20 (*et teneram ab radice ferens, Silvane, cupressum*): "Ovidio avrebbe allora per primo raccolto le suggestioni erotiche e 'catulliane' dell'aggettivo [*tener*], perfezionandole e potenziandole poi con il ricorso all'elegia d'amore per eccellenza nell'ellenismo augusteo", l' 'Aconzio e Cidippe' di Callimaco"; my insertion in square brackets. See also Fusillo 1989, 56; Konstan 2014, 161.

⁸⁷³ *Call. Aet. frs.* 67-75. For the Callimachean resonance, see e.g. Cadili 2007, 34-5; Reed 2013, 192.

specifics of the story, but also the amatory colouring of the narrative which necessarily stains the texture of the Cyparissus episode.⁸⁷⁴ The story was well known to Ovid,⁸⁷⁵ who made it the focus of his final pair of double *Heroides* (20 and 21),⁸⁷⁶ and had referenced it three times in his earlier elegiac poetry. In the *Remedia amoris*, Cydippe's name appears as a metonym for Hellenistic, as opposed to epic, poetry—*Callimachi numeris non est dicendus Achilles / Cydippe non est oris, Homere, tui* (381-2)⁸⁷⁷—while, in the *Ars amatoria*, she is an example of the efficacy of love-letters: *littera Cydippen pomo perlata fefellit, / insciaque est verbis capta puella suis* (1.457-8). Indeed, Callimachus himself is cited by Ovid and the other elegists as a poet who might inspire feelings of love before any other emotion.⁸⁷⁸

The third and final appearance of Acontius and Cydippe (by those names and outside of the *Heroides*) in Ovid's *oeuvre* is in the *Tristia* (3.10.73-8). There, the negation of exilic Tomis—imagined as the Cean forest in which Acontius lived and loved—is a *locus amoenus* very like the one Ovid paints in this episode in Book 10 of the *Metamorphoses*. Indeed, as Acontius and his *locus* are an absent present in the *Tristia*, so, in a different way, they are also absently felt in the Cyparissus episode.

⁸⁷⁴ A slightly altered Acontius and Cydippe story is at Aristaenet. 1.10. The story's inclusion in both Aristaenetus and Ovid's *Heroides*—both collections of erotic letters—as well as the general tradition in Rome of Callimachus as a love poet (see Acosta-Hughes 2009, 238–9; Lightfoot 2009, 233) demonstrates the erotic force that its inclusion brings to Ovid's Cyparissus episode. In Antoninus Liberalis' version (1), Acontius/Hermochares sets up a temple to Venus after Cydippe/Ctesylla's transformation into a dove; see below on Cupid's importance to Callimachus' narrative.

⁸⁷⁵ For Callimachean impact on *Heroides* 20 and 21, see e.g. Kenney 1967; Viarre 1988; Kuhlmann 2005; Acosta-Hughes 2009, 247–49; Thorsen 2019.

⁸⁷⁶ The date of the double *Heroides* is debated; they are plausibly post-exilic works (see, recently, Thorsen 2019, 142 n. 2 with bibliography); as I treat the *Metamorphoses* as equally post-exilic, this (broadly) synchronous composition allows the works to inform one another (with *Tr.* 3.10.73-8 below). The presence of Cydippe in Ovid's elegiac work is definitive proof of precedent for his engagement with the story.

⁸⁷⁷ See Thorsen 2019, 137 on Cydippe's metapoetic understanding of the metamorphic quality of literature.

⁸⁷⁸ *Ov. Ars am.* 3.329, *Rem.* 760 (with Henderson 1979, 132), *Tr.* 2.367-8 (with Ingleheart 2010, 298); *Prop.* 2.34.32, 3.1.1-2, 3.9.43-4.

There are multiple resonances between Callimachus’ narrative and Ovid’s, which are the primary foci of this section. To stay with issues of setting, both narratives unfurl on Ceos and—in particular—in and around the town of Carthaea,⁸⁷⁹ Callimachus’ fragmentary story is missing the scene of Cydippe reading Acontius’ apple,⁸⁸⁰ but Antoninus Liberalis, drawing on Nicander, later locates this critical moment in Carthaea, suggesting that Callimachus may also have done so.⁸⁸¹ Ovid establishes Carthaea right at the beginning of the episode—in the fourth line (if counting from 10.106)—as if to signal to readers the intertextual allusion he is making.⁸⁸² The city of Carthaea only occurs three times in extant Latin literature, of which references, two are in Ovid:⁸⁸³ once in a Plinian catalogue of Cean cities (*Nat.* 4.62), in Book 7 of the *Metamorphoses* and here (*Met.* 10.109). In Book 7, Carthaea is one of the towns which Medea visits on her tour of the Mediterranean.⁸⁸⁴

transit et antiquae Cartheia moenia Cae,
 qua pater Alcidas placidam de corpore natae
 miraturus erat nasci potuisse columbam. 370

She also goes over the Carthaeian walls of ancient Ceos,
 where a father, Alcidas, would later marvel that a peaceful dove could be
 born from the body of his daughter. 370

⁸⁷⁹ Ov. *Met.* 10.109 (*sacer nymphis Carthaea tenentibus arva*) and Call. *Aet.* fr. 75.70-1 (ὥς τε πόληος ὁ μὲν τείχισσε Μεγακλῆς / Κάρθαιαν). At *Her.* 20.222, Ovid sets the scene on Ceos, but does not specify a city; there are some textual issues with this part of the poem, but *Cea* must be correct (Dörrie 1971, 272).

⁸⁸⁰ The importance of thrown apples in this story prompts readers to think of Atalanta and Hippomenes, anticipating their appearance later in Book 10 of the *Metamorphoses* (560-680); Cydippe herself makes this parallel at Ov. *Her.* 21.120-4.

⁸⁸¹ Ant. Lib. 1: αὐτὴν ἰδὼν Ἑρμοχάρης Ἀθηναῖος χορεύουσαν Πυθίους παρὰ τὸν βωμὸν τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος ἐν Καρθαίᾳ ἐπεθύμισεν αὐτῆς. Aristaenet. 1.10 mentions no location

⁸⁸² For the poetic importance of naming in the Acontius and Cydippe myth, see Giuseppetti 2019, especially 58.

⁸⁸³ Reference to the town is also rare in Greek and is usually only recorded in a list of Cean towns (Scyl. 58; Hdn. *Pros.* 3.1.272.11; Str. 10.5.6; Ptol. *Geog.* 3.14.23; *Suda* s.v. “Βακχυλίδης”). See also Ath. 10.456f=Chamael. 34; App. 2.15.105.

⁸⁸⁴ Ov. *Met.* 7.368-70.

Prima facie, there is nothing remarkable about this stop on Medea’s trip; Carthaea is one of sixteen locations over which she flies, and most are accompanied by a short narrative. The name Alcidas and the reference to his—unnamed—daughter becoming a dove point to the myth of Hermochares and Ctesylla —preserved in Antoninus Liberalis (1), but there attributed to Nicander’s lost *Heteroeumena*—which is a version of Acontius and Cydippe with the names changed.⁸⁸⁵ Thus, Carthaea in extant Latin is almost always as the location of an Acontius and Cydippe story. Ovid may even encourage his audience to read between the allusion in Book 7 and the Cyparissus story of Book 10: he intrudes authorially with an uncommon ‘historic future’ (*miraturus erat*).⁸⁸⁶ The unusual quasi-tense gives us a synoptic, temporally-birds’-eye view over the fabric of the *Metamorphoses* and encourages us to construct a full Acontius and Cydippe narrative which will happen in the future from Medea’s perspective, but in the past from Ovid’s; thus, we expect to find this in the later books of the epic, but our expectation is satiated instead by detecting the contours of such a narrative with Cyparissus and his stag.

From the setting, I progress to other parallels. The initial dynamics established by Callimachus are that Cupid had taught Acontius well (presumably in the art of loving) when he was falling in love with Cydippe:⁸⁸⁷ αὐτὸς Ἔρωσ ἐδίδαξεν Ἀκόντιον, ὁππότε καλῆ / ἦθετο Κυδίππη παῖς ἐπὶ παρθενικῆ / τέχνην (*Aet.* fr. 67.1-3).⁸⁸⁸ Callimachus

⁸⁸⁵ At Callim. *Aet.* fr. 75.28, Cydippe’s father is named Ceyx, not Alcidas. Anderson 1972, 283 recognises the allusion to Hermochares and Ctesylla, but does not connect this to Acontius and Cydippe; other scholars (Bömer 1976b, 291–2; Forbes Irving 1990, 232–3; Hill 1992, 205; Kenney 2011, 261) note the allusion to Acontius and Cydippe but do not look forward to Book 10.

⁸⁸⁶ See Bömer 1976b, 292; Kenney 2011, 261. This form of the ‘historic future’ is not found elsewhere in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*; the closest parallels are Ovid’s uses of a future participle to envision the contemporary, Augustan, impact of the aetiological myth he is telling: *motura* (1.55, mortals’ fear of thunder and lightning); 2.538 *servaturis* (swans’ role in protecting the Capitoline). For the proleptic use of this tense in Virgil to envisage Augustan Rome in the mythic past, see Barchiesi 2017, 28, 147 n. 64.

⁸⁸⁷ For the programmatic importance of Cupid here, see Harder 2012, 547–8. See also Giuseppetti 2019, 58.

⁸⁸⁸ Διδάσκω seems especially pederastic here; cf. *Anacreont.* 17.2, 17.41. See Dover 1989, 202; Percy 1996.

opens with a god acting on the male character of his story. The Cyparissus episode also begins with a god's interaction with the male character of our story: *nunc arbor, puer ante deo dilectus ab illo, / qui citharam nervis et nervis temperat arcum* (Ov. *Met.* 10.107-8). In both instances, the homoerotically-coded god acts on the 'male' party, who instead devotes attention on another mortal beloved, who is 'effeminised' *vis-à-vis* themselves.

Another way in which Ovid signals his debt to Callimachus in these lines is through dramatic apostrophe.⁸⁸⁹ Callimachus directly addresses Acontius on four occasions (*Aet.* fr. 75.40-1, 75.44-8, 75.53, 75.74-7);⁸⁹⁰ of these, the final two are most resonant with Ovid's narrative:⁸⁹¹

δὴ γὰρ ἔθ' ὑμέτερον **φῶλον Ἀκοντιάδαι**
 πολὺ τι καὶ περίτιμον Ἴουλίδι ναιετάουσιν,
Κεῖε, τὸν δ' ἡμεῖς ἕμερον ἐκλύομεν

And indeed, your **people, the Acontiades**,
 still live at Ioulis, many in number and honoured,
Cean, and we have heard that your love

εἶπε δέ **Κεῖε**,
 συγκραθέντ' αὐταῖς ὄξυν ἔρωτα σέθεν

And, **Cean**, he spoke about
 your keen love, having mixed in with them

⁸⁸⁹ See Cadili 2007, 35.

⁸⁹⁰ The first two (Call. *Aet.* fr. 75.40, 44) refer to Acontius in the vocative (Ἀκόντιε), just as Ovid addresses Cyparissus in line 10.121 (*Cyparisse*).

⁸⁹¹ Call. *Aet.* fr. 75.51-3, 75.74-5; Ov. *Met.* 10.121-2.

sed tamen ante alios, **Ceae** pulcherrime **gentis**,
gratus erat, Cyparisse, tibi:

And yet, ahead of all the rest, he was beloved by

You, Cyparissus, most beautiful man of the **Cean people**.

Ovid, like his Hellenistic source, calls on his male protagonist in the vocative (Κεῖε = *Ceae*), and refers to his entire family (φύλον = *gens*). In recreating Callimachus' narrative techniques, Ovid imports the romantic setting of the original; both Greek vocatives are followed by references to Acontius' love (ἵμερον and ἔρωτα).

Ovid has treated this story extensively in the *Heroides*, so the overtones of Acontius and Cydippe in Book 10 are not only drawn from Callimachus, but also from Ovid's own work. *Heroides* 20 opens with a command from Acontius to Cydippe—*pone metum!* (20.1); Cydippe's analogue in the *Metamorphoses*, the stag, heeds this well.⁸⁹² The stag is characterised in words which verbally recall Acontius': *isque metu vacuus naturalique pavore / deposito* (*Met.* 10.117-18). Indeed, the absence of *naturalis* cervine fear points to how unnatural this scene is; as *nova* creates an allusion to *novitas* (see above), so *naturalis* invokes the spectre of *innaturalis*.

The figure of Actaeon features in the Acontius and Cydippe narrative of the *Heroides*. In wondering why Diana has caused her woe, Cydippe writes *numquid, in umbroso cum velles fonte lavari, / imprudens vultus ad tua labra tuli* (*Her.* 21.177-8); characterising herself as an Actaeon figure,⁸⁹³ Cydippe imagines she may have acted *imprudens* with respect to the goddess.⁸⁹⁴ Acontius too invokes Actaeon as an

⁸⁹² N.b. the Cydippe of the *Heroides* fails to lay her fear aside, opening her own letter with *pertimui* (21.1). Cf. Call. *Aet.* fr. 74: τί δέ σοι τόνδ' ἐπέθηκα φόβον;

⁸⁹³ Cydippe has been interpreted as having authorial agency (Thorsen 2019); if so, there is pleasant layering between her self-identification with Actaeon, and Ovid's own, for which, see my n. 223.

⁸⁹⁴ See Thorsen 2019, 140–2 on the metapoetic implications of *imprudens* in *Heroides* 21.

exemplum of Diana's rage, claiming *testis et Actaeon, quondam fera creditus illis, / ipse dedit leto cum quibus ante feras* (*Her.* 20.103-4); in Acontius' words, a dichotomy is drawn between Actaeon, a man believed to be a beast, and the real beasts who killed him. Reading against Book 10 of the *Metamorphoses*, we find both characterisations: at his own moment of tragic downfall, Cyparissus is called *imprudens* (10.130), which, in connection with the other parallels and the fact that this is a hunting scene, and that the word *imprudens* refers to a hunter making an error, brings the two stories into conjunction. Similarly, this episode is dominated by the humanisation of Cyparissus' stag (see §6.1.2), so Acontius' man/beast dichotomy returns to haunt the stag, a beast who is treated like a man.

The final parallel I draw between *Heroides* 20-21 and *Metamorphoses* 10 focuses on sickness and Apollo's role as god of healing. In lamenting her lot, Cydippe prays *parce laboranti, picta dea laeta pharetra, / daque salutiferam iam mihi fratris opem* (*Her.* 21.173-4). Cydippe's sickness whenever she contemplates marrying someone who is not Acontius is a key feature of this myth,⁸⁹⁵ so her appeal to be healed by Apollo is not surprising.⁸⁹⁶ After he has penetrated his stag, Cyparissus appeals to the god that loves him, Apollo; Ovid tells us that *gemit ille tamen munusque supremum / hoc petit a superis* (*Met.* 10.134-5). We might initially expect Cyparissus to beg Apollo to heal the stag, and it is only in the tacked on subordinate clause—*ut tempore lugeat omni*—that we learn that this is not the case. Cydippe's *ops* parallels Cyparissus' *munus* and both are requests that go unanswered by Apollo. In both the Cyparissus episode and

⁸⁹⁵ For Cydippe's illness, see Kazantidis 2014; P. Lang 2009; Rynearson 2009.

⁸⁹⁶ Indeed, in Callimachus' version, Cydippe's father, Ceyx, goes to Delphi to ask Apollo about his daughter's illness, and the god has an extended speech on the matter (*Aet.* fr. 75.20-37).

Ovid's Acontius and Cydippe, Apollo is cast as a god who falls short in one of his fundamental spheres of influence: healing.⁸⁹⁷

In the realm of sickness and health, another parallel emerges, which, again, links Cydippe to the stag. Cydippe plays on the image of Acontius as an erotic hunter who has wounded her:⁸⁹⁸

mirabar quare tibi nomen Acontius esset;
quod faciat longe vulnus, acumen habes. 210
certe ego convalui nondum de vulnere tali,
ut iaculo scriptis eminus icta tuis.

I was amazed that your name was Acontius;
Since it makes a wound from afar, you have a point. 210
Certainly I have not yet recovered from such a wound,
When I was struck from a way off by a spear: by your words.

The etymologising pun is that Acontius is—by name and by nature—a sharp man;⁸⁹⁹ by drawing attention to his fatally honed javelin in this way, Cydippe aligns Acontius with his weapon and, thus, the two become conflated on the level of the metaphorical.⁹⁰⁰ As spears are frequently metonyms for phalluses and *vulnera* represent the orifices that those phalluses may penetrate,⁹⁰¹ a clever tripartite play emerges in Cydippe's words: the spearman Acontius ('Speary') throws an apple with words on it—words which are both spear and penis—which causes in her wounds that stand as representatives for the *vulnera* of matters sexual. The same word for spear

⁸⁹⁷ On Apollo's failure to heal in the *Metamorphoses*, see Miller 1998, 415–16.

⁸⁹⁸ Ov. *Her.* 21.209–12.

⁸⁹⁹ An ἀκόντιον (from ἄκων) is a javelin; Ovid glosses the etymology with *iaculum* in *Her.* 21.212. See Kenney 1996, 242; Cairns 2003.

⁹⁰⁰ See also Hardie 2002, 112.

⁹⁰¹ See Adams 1990, 19–22 for the sexual associations with weapons. For *vulnus* in this sense, see Adams 1990, 152.

(*iaculum*) emerges in the Cyparissus episode (*Met.* 10.130), where again it causes *vulnera* which import a sexualised tone;⁹⁰² similarly, the male thrower (here Cyparissus) is identified with the spear on a syntactical level, placed literally between the noun and the adjective which modifies it: *iaculo Cyparissus acuto*. As Acontius is, in some sense, the spear/phallus with which he penetrates Cydippe, so Cyparissus is aligned with his own spear/phallus at the moment that he penetrates his stag.

Throughout this section, I have discussed how the resonances of Acontius and Cydippe in the Cyparissus episode bring an erotic colouring to the narrative, which forces us to conceptualise Cyparissus and his stag as an amatory couple in the same way that we might more readily conceptualise Acontius and Cydippe. In my last example, this general interplay on the level of genre is sharpened by reference to the sex act. The high degree of verbal and situational parallels between Acontius' (figurative) penetration of Cydippe and Cyparissus' (literal but not overtly sexual) penetration of the stag concretises the generic play. The act of sex itself is the ultimate τέλος of the intertextual connection between these two myths; on its own, readers will probably recognise Cyparissus' act of penetration as carrying some sexual overtones, but when read alongside the parallel passage in the *Heroides*, the effect is impossible to ignore.

6.1.1.3 – *omnia vincit Amor*

In addition to Acontius and Cydippe, another intertextual connection imports heavy erotic colouring onto the narrative of Cyparissus and his stag: Virgil's tenth *Eclogue*.⁹⁰³ In the exhaustively sultry Cean heat, the stag lies down erotically (see

⁹⁰² Cf. the mosaic of Cyparissus and the stag found in Ratae Corieltauorum (modern Leicester), where the penetrative weapon is not Cyparissus' spear, but an arrow from the bow of Cupid, who is also present, crystalising the erotic overtones of this myth; see Neal & Cosh 2002, 86–9.

⁹⁰³ For the impact of this *Eclogue* on Ovid, see Fabre-Serris 1995, especially 130.

above); Ovid chooses a notable astronomical reference to evoke this heat: *concava litorei fervebant bracchia Cancri* (10.127). The sun being in Cancer indicates that Cyparissus' tragic killing of the stag occurs at the summer solstice,⁹⁰⁴ explaining the extreme heat of the scene but, just as the heat itself forms a series of intertextual allusions to love elegy,⁹⁰⁵ so the specific zodiacal invocation imports intertextual colouring. The appearance of Cancer evokes a similar line in the *Eclogues*: *Aethiopum versemus ovis sub sidere Cancri* (10.68) This Virgilian line immediately precedes one of the most famous sentiments of Latin poetry—*omnia vincit Amor* (10.69)⁹⁰⁶—and, indeed, all of *Eclogue* 10 is thickly suffused with both erotic energies: the word *A/amor* recurs twelve times.⁹⁰⁷

Eclogues 10 is Virgil's hymn to the originator of Latin love elegy, Cornelius Gallus; by invoking this poem, Ovid calls upon Gallus as synecdoche for the entire elegiac genre. In addition, Ovid's Gallan undertones in an episode set in a *locus amoenus* can be no accident: evidence suggests that Gallus' elegies took their dramatic locations from bucolic poetry.⁹⁰⁸ The pastoral setting of Gallan love poetry may even have been especially associated with homoerotic themes, given the way that both Virgil, in *Eclogue* 10, and Propertius, in poem 1.20, combine the geography of the *locus amoenus* with specifically homoerotic subject matter.⁹⁰⁹ If so, Ovid's invocation of Virgil opens a window onto the homoerotically bucolic world of Gallus,⁹¹⁰ which

⁹⁰⁴ For the temporal significance of Cancer, see Clausen 1994, 310; Coleman 1977, 293; Gee 2013, 161–2 with *Arat.* 34.320: *aestifer est pandens ferventia sidera Cancer*.

⁹⁰⁵ The highly programmatic Prop. 4.1b ends with a reference to Cancer of uncertain force—*octipedis Cancri terga sinistra time!* (150)—which immediately follows Propertius' decision to re-enter the battlefield of love. Prop. 4.1 has an important impact on Ovid's merging of elegy and other genres through the prism of astronomy in his later poetry; see Gee 2000, 23–34.

⁹⁰⁶ The may be a quotation from a lost Gallan pentameter; see Clausen 1994, 310; Coleman 1977, 293.

⁹⁰⁷ Virg. *Ecl.* 10.6, 10, 21, 28, 29, 34, 44, 53, 54, 69 (twice), 73.

⁹⁰⁸ See Fabre-Serris 2003, 192–3. Cf. Heslin 2018, 139–74.

⁹⁰⁹ See Ingleheart 2015, especially 130–3.

⁹¹⁰ On Gallus' presence in *Her.* 20 and 21 (intertexts for the Cyparissus episode), see Hardie 2002, 122–3.

permeates, through the topography, into the the *locus amoenus* of Book 10's Ceos and gilds the similarly homoerotic relationship between Cyparissus and his stag.

6.1.1.4 – Pindaric Pasiphaëism on Ceos

The final intertext I explore which resonates with the Cyparissus episode is Pindar's fourth *Paeon*.⁹¹¹ There are several parallels between the Pindaric poem and our passage: both unfurl on Ceos, and specifically in Carthaea;⁹¹² themes of grief abound;⁹¹³ and the cypress tree has a role.⁹¹⁴ Cadili argues that Ovid combines these three elements to create his aetiology of the cypress tree,⁹¹⁵ but in assessing the zoophilic sensibilities of the relationship between Cyparissus and his stag, I suggest that there may be a fourth Pindaric reference hidden beneath Ovid's intertext. In the mytho-historical portion of the *Paeon*, Euxantius, mythical king of Ceos, is said to refuse shared rule of Crete in favour of remaining on Ceos, which he is owed because of his descent from Pasiphaë (4.35-53). Minos is unnamed here, but Pasiphaë's name is evoked prominently and unusually when Euxantius refuses:⁹¹⁶

πολίων δ' ἑκατὸν πεδέχει[ν

μέρος ἑβδομον

Πασιφ[ά]ας <σὸν> υἱοῖ]σι· τέρας δ' ἔδον εἶ-

πέν σφι·

40

To take a seventh share of the

hundred cities [of Crete]

⁹¹¹ See Cadili 2007, 35–7.

⁹¹² Pi. *Pae.* 4.13-14. This *Paeon* is probably written for the Ceans (Rutherford 2001, 283).

⁹¹³ See Cadili 2007, 37 with Pi. *Pae.* 4.53.

⁹¹⁴ Pi. *Pae.* 4.50-1: ἕα, φρήν, κυπάρισσον.

⁹¹⁵ Cadili 2007, 35–7.

⁹¹⁶ Pi. *Pae.* 4.37-40. The passage is odd because Minos usually only has four children by Pasiphaë—Catreus, Deucalion, Androgeus and Glaucus (e.g. Ps.-Apollod. 3.1.2)—not the six implied by this passage and, Pasiphaë is explicitly not the mother of Euxantius, whose parents are Minos and Dexithea (e.g. B. 1.113-28); see Bona 1988, 83; Rutherford 2001, 289.

with the sons of Pasiphaë; a prophecy he spoke

to them:

40

In line 39, Pindar employs a witty paronomasia which has gone unnoticed by commentators,⁹¹⁷ and on which I suggest Ovid may be drawing in Book 10. The three nouns of the line, in order, are Πασιφάα, υἱός and τέρας. These are nouns which evoke one myth: Pasiphaë's zoophilic union with the bull and her subsequent monstrous (τέρας) son (υἱός).⁹¹⁸ As I have argued in Chapters 1 and 2, Pasiphaë is both totemic of the taboo on bestiality and a figure who haunts the *Metamorphoses* in spectral ways which are rarely obvious *prima facie*. I suggest, then, that Pindar's clever reference to bestiality finds its way, with the other features of *Paeon* 4, into Ovid's Cyparissus episode and underscores the zoophilic attention which the Cean youth devotes on his animal partner.

6.1.2 – The Drag Stag

A key symptom of elegy's infiltration of this episode is the gender play in the characterisation of the stag. Ovid specifies that the deer is male—a *cervus*, not a *cerva*—which is not ubiquitously the case (see below), and which allows him to play with gender presentation in a way which he could not if he had written a female deer. I begin this section by outlining Ovid's intertextual sources, before analysing the gendering forces inherent to the adornments that the stag wears.⁹¹⁹ Finally, I make use of 'drag' as a means of understanding the disjunctive gender presentation of the stag, comparing it to the similar techniques later in Book 10 in Orpheus' depiction of

⁹¹⁷ Unmentioned by Bona 1988 or Rutherford 2001 *ad loc.*

⁹¹⁸ N.b. in context, τέρας must refer to a prophecy, not a monster (see Rutherford 2001, 290), although "il vocabolo τέρας può dare difficoltà" with construing these lines (Bona 1988, 84). See also Housman 1908, 9.

⁹¹⁹ For a general commentary on masculinity and self-adornment, see Ov. *Ars am.* 1.505-24 with Williams 2010, 139-44.

Eburnea. The gender play in this scene is typically associated with humour and absurdity;⁹²⁰ I do not deny that the scene can be read comically but attempts to do so often ignore the subtler plays and significance of the episode.

All other extant versions of the Cyparissus narrative are post-Ovidian, so I make no claim about Ovid's sources;⁹²¹ however, it seems telling that, in some extant accounts, Cyparissus' deer was a doe.⁹²² Either those sources were drawing on a tradition in which the stag was female (with which Ovid could also be toying), or, in responding to the gender play of Ovid's account, they simplify his 'drag stag' into a doe. Ovid describes the stag thus:⁹²³

ingens cervus erat, lateque patentibus altas	110
ipse suo capiti praebebat cornibus umbras.	
cornua fulgebant auro, demissaque in armos	
pendebant tereti gemmata monilia collo;	
bullae super frontem parvis argentea loris	
vinctae movebatur, parilesque ex aere nitebant	115
auribus e geminis circum cava tempora baccae.	
isque metu vacuus naturalique pavore	
deposito celebrare domos mulcendaque colla	
quamlibet ignotis manibus praebere solebat.	

⁹²⁰ E.g. Connors 1992, 9; Fratantuono 2014, 89–95.

⁹²¹ The Cyparissus myth is older than Ovid—there was a temple to the cult of Cyparissus on Cos in the 4th century BCE (see Bömer 1980, 49; Sokolowski 1969, 150)—but the involvement of the stag may be his invention (see Forbes Irving 1990, 260–1) and definitely adapts Silvia's stag at Virg. *Aen.* 7.483–504. Perhaps both Virgil and Ovid draw on a no-longer-extant Hellenistic model; see Bömer 1980, 53; Heinze 1957, 191–2. The Homeric city of Cyparissus (*Il.* 2.519) is probably unrelated, as it is in Phocis, far from Ceos.

⁹²² In different parts of Servius' commentaries on Virgil, the deer is of different genders: it is female at *ad G.* 1.20, but it is male at *ad Aen.* 3.64, 3.680. The deer is male at Ps.-Lac. Plac. 6.685; Lac. Plac. *ad Theb.* 4.460; Ps.-Prob. *ad G.* 2.84 and does not appear in the account at Nonn. 11.363–5. None of the versions which feature the deer have anything like the sustained gender play in Ovid.

⁹²³ Ov. *Met.* 10.110–19.

There was a huge stag, and he cast deep shadows 110
 Around his own head with his spreading antlers.
 His antlers gleamed with gold, and jewelled necklaces, hanging
 Over his forelimbs, dangled from his slender neck.
 A silver *bullā* danced on his forehead, strung with small
 Leather straps; and small, matching bronze spheres 115
 Glinted from both ears, around his hollow temples;
 And without fear, his natural shyness laid aside,
 He would usually frequent houses and offer
 His neck to be stroked by the unfamiliar hands of any old person.

In his characterisation of the stag, Ovid clearly draws on Virgil's presentation of Silvia's stag in the *Aeneid* (7.483-92):⁹²⁴ Silvia's stag is, however, a poor relation to Cyparissus'. Both stags are huge, tame,⁹²⁵ and adorned in human trappings, but in all three areas, the Ovidian stag surpasses its Virgilian predecessor.⁹²⁶ I reference the Virgilian stag to emphasise that Ovid's alterations to the schema bring in specifically elegiac material, absent from his source model.

Cyparissus' stag is bedecked in humanising—and, I argue, feminising—accoutrements, which elaborate on his domestication: not only can this stag be ridden and enter human houses,⁹²⁷ he also has a human sense of style. I assess the adornments in the order they appear in the text precisely because it is the structured ways in which

⁹²⁴ Martial later comically suggests that the stags could be one and the same: *hic erat ille tuo domitus, Cyparisse, capistro. / an magis iste tuus, Silvia, cervus erat?* (13.96).

⁹²⁵ Cf. the different, agricultural 'domestication' in Virgil's *Georgics*; see Geue 2019.

⁹²⁶ Some (Connors 1992, 9; Miller 1998, 416) see humour in these Ovidian additions; there is humour, but not without generic importance.

⁹²⁷ Cf. the argument that the extant Cyparissus myth reflects an older initiation rite, in which the role of the human Cyparissus is transposed onto an animal (Sergent 1984, especially 117-18).

they are deployed that conveys Ovid's chaotically gendered stag: the narrative alternates between masculinising and feminising adornments.⁹²⁸

This begins with his antlers (10.110-12); *cornua* are a frequent metaphor for penises,⁹²⁹ and Ovid emphasises this shade of meaning. The antlers are dramatically oversized, especially in comparison to Silvia's stag. Where the Aenean stag is *ingens cornibus* (7.483)—a description spanning two, brief words, one of which does not grammatically refer to the horns at all—the antlers of the *Metamorphoses*' stag receive two and a half lines' worth of treatment: physically and metrically larger. Like the horny head of the bull in *Amores* 3.5 (*cornigerum caput*, 3.5.20; see above), the deer's antlers stand as demarcations of his phallic masculinity. Also like the bull's horns, these antlers are, in a sense, emasculated: where the bull collapses in post-coital exhaustion (*Am.* 3.5.19-20), Cyparissus' stag's antlers are bedecked in luxurious gold—*cornua fulgebant auro* (*Met.* 10.112)—in a manner which speaks to a certain femininity.⁹³⁰ The phrase is clearly reminiscent of other depictions in Latin of ostentatious display,⁹³¹ but the Latin does not reveal the precise nature of the stag's ornamentation:⁹³² is the gold applied to the horns as a layer, with gold leaf, or does *fulgere* have a more metaphorical sense, referring to the gleam of extensive gold

⁹²⁸ For the feminising of a male beloved in homoerotic elegy, see Ingleheart 2021b, especially 203, 206-8.

⁹²⁹ Adams 1990, 22. Of Adams' examples, Plin. *Nat.* 11.261 references the penis of an animal—a bear—becoming horn-like (*cornescere*). Primarily, the metaphor applies to the singular, *cornu*, but in the context of this episode, its phallic connotations in the plural cannot be ignored.

⁹³⁰ Typically, the golden antlers are identified as reminiscent of the decorated *cornua* of sacrificial victims—e.g. Ov. *Met.* 7.161—and, thus, as prolepsis for the stag's fate; see Bömer 1980, 52; Reed 2013, 192. However, the word choice *auro fulgere* better evokes Roman concerns around ostentation (see n. 931).

⁹³¹ For *auro fulgere*, see e.g. Catull. 64.44; Cic. *Parad.* 1.13; Lucr. 2.27; Tib. 3.4.37; Var. *Men.* fr. 120-1. These examples all pertain to Roman anxiety around the oriental, the feminine and the ostentatious. Notably, this phrase is often balanced by referenced to silver, perhaps explaining the unusually silver *bullā* below. The golden horns also recall Call. *Dian.* 102: [τῶν ἐλάφων] κέραων δ' ἀπελάμπετο χρυσός; see Reed 2013, 192; Tissol 1997, 133 n. 7.

⁹³² Anderson 1972, 484 interprets this as the deer's antlers being tipped in gold. Cf. Mart. 1.104.4: *mordent aurea quod lupata cervi*. That poem probably engages with our passage, given the similar phrasing of line 7; see Howell 1980, 321.

jewellery? The closest piece of human jewellery would be the golden arm bands, typically worn by women (*armillae*).⁹³³ These *armillae* can also be worn by men; when they are, it is frequently part of a concerted effort to feminise the wearer,⁹³⁴ in a manner reminiscent of how the gold loads the stag's masculine horns with *mollitia*. The antlers, then, are overwhelmingly masculine, but hint at subtle feminisation, a gender hybridity which befits the first accoutrement in our catalogue of gendered jewellery.

The stag also wears a *monile* (10.113). This is a particular type of necklace which is sometimes worn by animals;⁹³⁵ however, it is far more readily associated with women⁹³⁶ and, especially, with the tragic woman, Eriphyle.⁹³⁷ It is regularly employed in the service of effeminising male characters; in an analogy about matching style and content, Quintilian even tells us how jarring the mismatch is when a man wears a such a piece: *ut monilibus et margaritis ac veste longa, quae sunt ornamenta feminarum, deformatur viri* (*Inst.* 11.1.3).⁹³⁸ The *monile* is especially associated with a teratogenic femininity, as harmful to good Roman *matronae* as it is to the masculinity of men.⁹³⁹

⁹³³ E.g. Tib. 1.9.69 (with Maltby 2002, 336); *CLE* 1037.2.

⁹³⁴ Petron. 32; Mart. 11.21.7 (with Kay 1985, 116); Suet. *Ner.* 30, *Cal.* 52. See also Hawley 2007, 105.

⁹³⁵ Horses wear *monilia* at Virg. *Aen.* 7.278 and Suet. *Cal.* 55.3; Apuleius' Lucius—an ass—is bedecked with *virginalibus monilibus* at *Met.* 6.28 and asses are supposed to wear *monilia* made of bread in certain religious customs (Ov. *Fast.* 6.347).

⁹³⁶ The *monile* is worn by women at Virg. *Aen.* 1.64; Ps.-Virg. *Ciris* 170. At Ov. *Met.* 10.264, Pygmalion adds a *monile* to Eburnea as a humanising and feminising touch. At Sen. *Phaed.* 391, Phaedra removes a *monile* to appear less feminine and more like an Amazon. See Isid. *Orig.* 19.31: *feminis vero monilia et catella [geruntur] ... monile ornamentum ex gemmis est, quod solet ex feminarum pendere collo.*

⁹³⁷ Paul. Fest. s.v. "monile": *monile dictum est ornatus mulieris, qualem habuisse Eriphylam fabulae ferunt.* See also Cic. *Ver.* 2.4.39.16; Ov. *Am.* 1.10.52; Serv. *ad Aen.* 4.412.6, 6.445.22; Stat. *Theb.* 2.266; Porph. *ad Carm.* 3.16.11-12; Hyg. *Fab.* 73.2; V Fl. 8.18.

⁹³⁸ For the negative gendering power of jewellery, see Olson 2012, 10, 54–5.

⁹³⁹ Cato's wife Marcia does not wear ostentation like the *monile* at Luc. 2.363 and it is not part of the dress of a modest woman at Ps.-Sen. *Her. O* 659. At Sen. *Med.* 573, a *monile* is part of Medea's fatal gift to Creusa.

In *Heroides* 9, Deianeira lambasts Hercules for his affair with Omphale and paints a colourful picture of him cross-dressing in her court; he prominently wears a *monile* (9.57).⁹⁴⁰ Deianeira's attack is protracted, continuing until line 118, but it begins with the feminising power of the *monile*, set in direct contrast to Hercules' rippling musculature and masculine strength (9.57-60). In the *Metamorphoses*, Athis, an Indian, is orientalised and effeminised, attributes which are thematised in the *monilia* he wears (5.52).⁹⁴¹ Through these Ovidian intertexts especially, the *monile* emerges as a clear signifier of not only femininity, but also feminisation. The *monile*'s presence on the neck of Cyparissus' stag characterises him as highly feminised.

Immediately after the stag's *monile*, we are presented with another piece of highly gendered neckwear: the *bullae* (10.114). The *bullae* is a round pendant worn by Roman boys before entering into manhood;⁹⁴² it is traditionally made of gold and attached to the boy's neck by a leather thong.⁹⁴³ The stag's *bullae*, however, is *argentea* and hangs from the base of his antlers;⁹⁴⁴ these subtle deviations from customary practice perhaps point to the subversive gender play unfurling, but it is equally possible that Ovid sets up a pleasant pattern from gold horns to silver *bullae* to bronze earrings. Regardless,

⁹⁴⁰ On this passage, see Cyrino 1998, 222–3. Thetis' *monile* has a similar feminising effect on Achilles at Stat. *Ach.* 1.329 (see Heslin 2005, 126–9). Cf. the highly effeminate men at Juv. 2.85, who wear *monilia*.

⁹⁴¹ The orientalising power of the *monile* may be seen in it being part of Medea's gift to Creusa (Sen. *Med.* 573) and numerous other references (e.g. Virg. *Aen.* 1.654; Sil. 8.134). For femininity and easternness, see Williams 2010, 148–51. The name 'Cyparissus' itself could point to an Anatolian origin for the myth; see Sergent 1984, 99.

⁹⁴² For an overview of *bullae*, see Goette 1986; for their role in Roman boys' coming of age, see Dolansky 2008; Hutchinson 2006, 83. It has been suggested that *bullae* were worn by triumphant generals (based on Macr. 1.6.9), but this is unlikely; see Stemmler 2003. See Isid. *Orig.* 19.31: *torques autem et bullae a viris geruntur*.

⁹⁴³ Roman girls may have worn a *bullae*-like amulet, but this should not be interpreted as a *bullae* and is never described as such in literature (in the Republic and early Principate); see Goette 1986, 143–5.

⁹⁴⁴ This deviation is noted by commentators (e.g. Bömer 1980, 55–6; Reed 2013, 192), but little is made of it. This is the only instance of a *bullae* being described as silver in extant Latin and it is typically explicitly *aurea*: e.g. Plaut. *Rud.* 1171; Cic. *Ver.* 2.4.124; Prop. 4.1b.131; Plin. *HN* 33.10.2, 27.13.3; Paul. Fest. s.v. "Sardi venales"; Suet. *Tib.* 6.3. Péchoux 2010, 35–7 records some silver Romano-Gallic *bullae*.

the *bullae*'s presence on Cyparissus' stag has proved challenging for scholars: certainly, Cyparissus is the figure in this scene for whom a *bullae* is most appropriate.⁹⁴⁵ The cultural function of the *bullae* is probably connected with fertility,⁹⁴⁶ and may even be related to pederasty;⁹⁴⁷ Plutarch suggests that the *bullae* could be representative of masculine ἀνδραγαθία.⁹⁴⁸ Together, these cultural resonances would characterise the stag as a young man, on the point of entering manhood and precisely in the *flos aetatis* which best befits a *puer delicatus* of homoerotic elegy.⁹⁴⁹

The final adornments of the stag I discuss are his earrings (10.115-16). The stag wears a pair of ovular earrings, probably made from bronze,⁹⁵⁰ which hang from his ears and rest about his temples. Earrings are traditional part of a woman's *ornatus*;⁹⁵¹ Pliny says of Pompey the Great's interest in pearls (clearly metonymy for earrings):⁹⁵²

numquam profecto inter illos viros durasset cognomen Magni, si prima
victoria sic triumphasset! e margaritis, Magne, tam prodiga re et feminis
reperita, quas gerere te fas non sit, fieri tuos voltus?

Certainly, never would the epithet 'the Great' have lasted among those men,
if he had celebrated his first victory in this way! What a thing that your face

⁹⁴⁵ This has led to (e.g.) Reed 2013, 192 suggesting that the *bullae* is transposed from Cyparissus to the stag. Some editors (e.g. Anderson 1993; Bömer 1980) print line 10.115 as *vincta movebatur parilique aetate*, with the suggestion that the difficult phrase *parili aetate* means that the *bullae* is the same age as the stag—i.e. he has worn it since birth, as would a Roman boy (see Anderson 1972, 485; Bömer 1980, 55–6).

⁹⁴⁶ Goette 1986, 134–5; Wrede 1981, 117.

⁹⁴⁷ See Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 288A-B.

⁹⁴⁸ Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 288A.

⁹⁴⁹ The ceremonial removal of the *bullae* crucially coincides with Propertius' first elegiac production (Prop. 4.1b.131-4); see Fear 2005, 17. For the *flos aetatis*, see Williams 2010, 78–84.

⁹⁵⁰ Bömer 1980, 56 suggests that the earrings are pearl, connecting Ovid's use of *baeae* here to Hor. *Serm.* 2.3.241 and *Epod.* 8.13-14, where it is clearly a pearl earring; however, Bömer's interpretation is dependent on reading *parilique aetate*, *nitebant* in line 115, rather than *parilesque ex aere nitebant*. Pearl earrings are more common in literary evidence; indeed, I can find no other explicit literary reference to bronze earrings but they were clearly a feature of Roman daily life (Higgins 1980, 42, 121). Fratantuono 2014, 89's incredulity at the notion of bronze earrings goes too far.

⁹⁵¹ For the relation between *ornatus* and gender, see Shumka 2008, 176–8.

⁹⁵² Plin. *Nat.* 37.15. Pliny also tells us that *in Oriente quidem et viris aurum eo loci gestare decus existimatur* (11.136).

was made out of pearls, o ‘Great one’, out of such a lavish thing, restricted
for women, things which you may not wear?

Elsewhere, Pliny suggests that earrings are a particular focus of women: *nec in alia parte feminis maius impendium margaritis dependentibus* (Nat. 11.136).⁹⁵³ Indeed, Roman men did not wear earrings,⁹⁵⁴ so, like the *monile* discussed above, they have a distinctly feminising force when adorning a male character, like the stag.

The stag’s ornamentation, then, is complex: this is not a case of wholesale feminisation, nor wholesale masculinisation. A male character is partly bedecked in ‘women’s’ jewellery, but also wears the distinctly male *bullae* and is equipped with signifiers of cis masculine cervinity (his antlers). These gender signifiers alternate—masculine, feminine, masculine then feminine again—creating a stratified gendering: not smoothly composite but inharmoniously jarring. The effect is disjunctive and to describe it, I invoke the notion of drag performance; as Butler defines it, “the performance of drag plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed”.⁹⁵⁵ In this case, our performer is ‘anatomically male’—and anatomically a deer—but the externalities of his presentation constitute dissonant gendered signification. To quote Butler again, “what is “performed” in drag is, of course, *the sign* of gender, a sign that is not the same as the body that it figures, but that cannot be read without it”.⁹⁵⁶

⁹⁵³ For jewellery and emasculation, see Hawley 2007, 104–6; Métraux 2008, 277–8.

⁹⁵⁴ Isidore specifies that *harum [inaurium] usus in Graecia: puellae utraque aure, pueri tantum [modo] dextra gerebant* (Orig. 19.31); he does not include details on Roman custom, but the previous quotation comes from the chapter entitled ‘*De ornamentis capitis feminarum*’, so did not conceive of earrings as masculine. Earrings are listed as *ornamenta muliebra* at Dig. (Ulp. Sabinus) 34.2.25.10.

⁹⁵⁵ Butler 1990, 137.

⁹⁵⁶ Butler 1993, 257; their italicisation.

To further support my comments about the stag’s drag-like performance,⁹⁵⁷ I compare another character in Book 10 of the *Metamorphoses* who is not ‘anatomically female’—or anatomically anything—but who has the ‘sign of gender’ imported onto them: Pygmalion’s Eburnea. Eburnea’s adornments mirror the stag’s in a number of ways,⁹⁵⁸ similarly to how other framing narratives in the *Metamorphoses* reflect the narratives they frame.⁹⁵⁹ After he has crafted her, but before she has been given vitality by Venus, Eburnea is adorned thus:⁹⁶⁰

munera fert illi, conchas teretesque lapillos 260

et parvas volucres et **flores mille colorum**

...

dat digitis gemmas, dat **longa monilia** collo,

aure **leves bacae**, redimicula pectore pendent. 265

Her brings gifts to her, shells and smooth little stones 260

and little birds and **flowers of a thousand colours**

...

he gives gems to her fingers and **long necklaces** to her neck,

light earrings hang from her ears and chaplets from her breast. 265

With Eburnea, perhaps, it is more obvious than with the stag. Pygmalion acts with grammatical agency—*fert* (10.260), *ornat* (10.263) and *dat* (10.264, twice), the final three of which emphatically begin their clauses—to load his statue with gender and

⁹⁵⁷ Cf. Sapsford 2022’s analysis of the gendered performance of the *cinaedus*, especially 180-2 on cross-dressing figures.

⁹⁵⁸ Reed 2013, 227 : “sono presenti qui densi richiami verbali degli ornamenti del cerbiatto di Cipresso ai vv. 112-6”; see also Fratantuono 2014, 132.

⁹⁵⁹ See Rosati 2002, 350 on this and my discussion in §5.

⁹⁶⁰ Ov. *Met.* 10.260-1, 10.264-5.

she is left ‘dragged up’ in feminine trappings, performing a gendered aesthetic.⁹⁶¹ In contrast, no one—at least within the plot of the episode—loads these features onto the stag (except the flowers which Cyparissus gives at 10.1123); the accoutrements remain, however, an external *ornatus* which comments on the wearer’s gender. For Eburnea, this *ornatus* is highly feminising—excessive, but consistent in its gendering—whereas, for the stag, the effect is, as I have said, disjunctive.

What effect then, does the chaotic gender of the stag have on the zoophilic erotics of this passage? Firstly, in decorating the stag with signs of gender (and, thus, signs of humanity), Ovid highlights that he is capable of being subject to other—typically human—social forces, like erotic attractiveness. Secondly, and more interestingly, it recalls the complex gender dynamics at play in Roman elegy. In his study of liminal masculinity in love elegy, Fear diagnoses that all Roman elegiac youths are:⁹⁶²

Effeminate, positioned in a kind of gender limbo sandwiched between the womanly *mollitia* that characterised pre-pubescence and pubescence and the *duritia* of achieved adult manhood.

Our stag occupies precisely this sort of liminality between *duritia* and *mollitia*: his mouth is even described as *mollis* (10.125).⁹⁶³ In this *ménage-à-trois* of homoerotic love, the stag is the most unambiguously passive of the three; he is dolled up in chaotic imitation of an elegiac *puella*. The stag’s life climaxes in a moment of penetration which harmonises Cyparissus with the phallic murder weapon (see above). The stag’s penetrability is the icing on the cake that is Ovid’s gendered presentation of him: if

⁹⁶¹ Cf. Ovid’s advice at *Ov. Ars am.* 2.262 for *amatores* to give *parva munera* to their *puellae*; other readers of this passage detect the elegiac colouring for Eburnea, even if they do not for the stag (Anderson 1972, 497; Bömer 1980, 101–2; Fratantuono 2014, 131–3).

⁹⁶² Fear 2005, 23. See also Greene 2005; Wyke 1994, 120.

⁹⁶³ The *mollitia* of the stag’s mouth, especially in conjunction with the purple halter (10.125), is clearly gendered (see Reed 2013, 193); for *mollitia* generally, see Williams 2010, 139–53.

the framing poetry recalls elegiac scenes, the stag looks like an elegiac *puella* and everything consummates in sexualised penetration, then in what ways has the reader not just read an erotic account? Ovid's attention to the stag's *ornatus* inculcates in the reader that this deer is capable of being the object of (homo)erotics and, indeed, that he is desired. Ovid does not have to tell us that Cyparissus desires the stag, because the entire framing of the passage induces the reader to recognise these tell-tale erotic signifiers.

6.2 – Reverse/Cow/Girl: Io and Europa

From one of the *Metamorphoses*' least explored episodes, I move now to two of its most famous: the bovine-themed rapes and abductions of Io (in Book 1) and Europa (in Books 2-3). Both stories rely on interactions between Jupiter and his victim where one or the other of them has the external appearance of a bovid;⁹⁶⁴ the roles of cow and girl are reversed between the episodes, with Io becoming a heifer after Jupiter has raped her and the god transforming into a bull in order to abduct Europa. Where the first section of this chapter focused on how Ovid's weaving of the intertextual fabric of the Cyparissus episode enables him to present a clearly amatory relationship between boy and stag, while maintaining a sort of plausible deniability about 'on-screen' sex, this section finds bestiality between the lines—or even between the Books—of Ovid's epic. I begin with Io, and focus on her hybrid identity between cow and girl. I then move to Europa to explore how Ovid's detailed description of the Jupiter-bull paints him as a highly eroticised figure, whose full sexual potency—the

⁹⁶⁴ Beyond narrative similarity and the family connection between Io and Europa, Ovid's readers could well have detected echoes of Moschus' linking them together through Io's inclusion in his ecphrasis of Europa's basket (*Eur.* 43-62). See Kuhlmann 2012, 476–7.

moment of sexual penetration—is softened by its occurring in the imaginary space between Books 2 and 3 of the *Metamorphoses*.

6.2.1 – Phantasms of Pasiphaë: the Postscript

Although she is not the focus of this chapter, I briefly revisit the figure of Pasiphaë. As a woman who was involved in a sexual relationship with a bull, and who is directly related to both Io and Europa, some clear parallels between the three women present themselves,⁹⁶⁵ especially between Pasiphaë and her mother-in-law, Europa.⁹⁶⁶ These are not parallels from which Ovid shies away: as I discussed in Chapter 2, the Pasiphaë of the *Ars amatoria* specifically ties her identity to these two women (*et modo se Europen fieri, modo postulat Io, / altera quod bos est, altera vecta bove!*; 1.323-4).⁹⁶⁷

On two occasions in the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid points to these women while strongly signalling the presence of Pasiphaë. In Ovid’s description of a hybrid Io (see §6.2.2), whose horny head is a shock to her when she sees its reflection in a river (1.640-2), Ovid remembers his own presentation of Pasiphaë looking into a mirror at *Ars am.* 1.307-8. In the mirror, Pasiphaë sees a human head but *quam cuperes fronti cornua nata tuae* (1.308), which itself recalls the hybrid Virgilian Pasiphaë, who *saepe in levi quaesisset cornua fronte* (*Ecl.* 6.51).

⁹⁶⁵ N.b. the chain of intertexts: Ovid’s Pasiphaë (*Ars am.* 1.286-326) draws on Virgil’s Pasiphaë (*Ecl.* 6.45-60), who draws on Calvus’ Io (*Io*), who, in turn, draws on both Moschus’ Europa (*Europa*) and Aeschylus’ Io (*PV* 647). See Clément-Tarantino & Klein 2017, 92; Fassina 2008, 60; Höschele 2012, 336, 347–8; Morrison 2016, 210. This intertext is activated by the phrase *virgo infelix*, which itself picks up on ὃ μέγ’ εὐδαίμων κόρη (A. *PV* 647; see Höschele 2012, 342) or even the self-address ὄμοι ἐγὼ μέγα δὴ τι δυσσάμμορος (Mosch. *Eur.* 146): Io (Ov. *Her.* 14.3; *Met.* 1.632-3; Calv. *Io* fr. 20), Pasiphaë (Virg. *Ecl.* 6.47, 52). The phrase is also used of several of the Ovidian *furiosae* that I identified at §2.2.2: Medea (Ov. *Met.* 7.17-18; V. Fl. 6.490-1), Myrrha (Ov. *Met.* 10.443-4) and Scylla (App. Vir. *Ciris* 71, 167, 517). App. Virg. *Ciris* 167 anticipates Ovid’s Pasiphaë at *Ars am.* 1.312; the *Ciris* is probably pre-Ovidian, for which, see Kayachev 2020, 5–30. Also, Polyxena (Ov. *Met.* 13.451) and Andromeda (Man. 5.587).

⁹⁶⁶ See Coleman 1977, 192–3 for Europa in Virg. *Ecl.* 6. See Cusset & Vieilleville 2017, 22; Kuhlmann 2012, 479 for similar resonances in Moschus’ *Europa*.

⁹⁶⁷ See also Ov. *Her.* 4.55-8, where Phaedra positions herself in a family legacy of Europa, whom Jupiter loved *tauro dissimulante deum* (56), and Pasiphaë, *decepto subdita tauro* (57).

Pasiphaë also emerges in Scylla's rebuke of Minos in Book 8:⁹⁶⁸

nec Iove tu natus nec mater imagine tauri
ducta tua est (generis falsa est et fabula); verus
et ferus et captus nullius amore iuvencae
qui te progenuit taurus fuit. 125

You were not born of Jupiter, nor was your mother led astray by
the image of a bull (the story of the birth is fake); a real bull,
wild and seized by love for no heifer,
was it who fathered you. 125

It is a common trope to deny the parentage of an enemy,⁹⁶⁹ but Scylla does so in a multi-layered manner. She directly invokes the myth of Europa (*mater ... tua*), but her words are situationally more reminiscent of Pasiphaë.⁹⁷⁰ Indeed, the inclusion of a *generis falsa fabula* encourages complex readings of the passage and, possibly, plays with a *double-entendre*, where *generis* refers both to Minos' birth (from *genus*) and a male rival to his role as *paterfamilias* (from *gener*). As close as the family memory of his mother's liaison with Jupiter must be, as I discussed in Chapter 2, the spectre of Pasiphaë is deeply felt in this scene, and it is difficult not to detect her in so clear a reference to a Cretan woman being seized by love for a bull, where the emphasis is on the monstrosity—literal and / or figurative—of her offspring by this bovine father. In particular, Scylla's use of *imagine tauri* connects this ambiguous reference to

⁹⁶⁸ Ov. *Met.* 8.122-5.

⁹⁶⁹ I term the trope the Inverse Birth Motif; no study of it yet exists, but many examples appear at Pease 1935, 314–19. It is often invective, but cf. Byblis' use at Ov. *Met.* 9.613-15 and my discussion at p. 150 and n. 140.

⁹⁷⁰ Indeed, there is something of a verbal echo between *nullius amore iuvencae* (Ov. *Met.* 8.124) and *nivei amore iuvenci* (Virg. *G.* 6.46) in Virgil's Pasiphaë narrative.

Europa to the two other clearer uses of this phrase in the *Metamorphoses* (3.1 and 6.103).⁹⁷¹

The spectre of Pasiphaë, then, should be deeply felt in my discussion of Io and Europa; just behind these two women lurks the totem of bestiality and the power of this totem feeds into their narratives. Although Pasiphaë will not figure directly in the following discussion, Ovid's treatment of Io and Europa in his pre-*Metamorphoses* poetry has primed readers to see her ghost in these stories.

6.2.2 – Io: Hybrids and Intertexts

The myth of Io, in Book 1 of the *Metamorphoses* (1.568-750), raises the issue of aesthetic bestiality in new ways. Io, daughter of a river god, is desired and raped by Jupiter, before being transformed into a cow by her rapist lest the rape become known to Juno,⁹⁷² Jupiter's wife. The Io-cow is gifted to Juno, and the goddess guards her new charge until, via the machinations of Jupiter and Mercury, she is freed and roams the earth, before settling in Egypt and giving birth to her son by Jupiter, Epaphus. In this section, I compare the aesthetic appearance of Io—pre- and post-metamorphosis—with her appearance in earlier sources, especially Aeschylus' *Prometheus Vincitus* and *Supplices*,⁹⁷³ in order to demonstrate how Ovid's narrative absorbs the intertextual memories of other texts, with the result that Io both is and is not raped as a cow,

⁹⁷¹ See p. 225. Kenney 2011, 319 implies, but does not state, an oblique reference to Pasiphaë in these lines. One of these instances—*iamque deus posita fallacis imagine tauri* (Ov. *Met.* 3.1)—resonates with Ovid's boast at *Rem.* 63: *da mihi Pasiphaen iam tauri ponet amorem*.

⁹⁷² Heldmann 2014 argues that this cannot be Jupiter's real motivation.

⁹⁷³ Aeschylean authorship of the *Prometheus Vincitus* has been doubted; in the interests of concision, I refer to the play's author as Aeschylus. For the debate and recent bibliography on it, see Ruffell 2012, 13–19; Sommerstein 2010, 228–32.

In contrast with Europa, Jupiter’s rape of Io unambiguously occurs while both parties are humanoid (1.599-600); indeed, the transformation into a cow not only follows the rape but is, in some sense, the direct result of it. Jupiter raping Io is an Ovidian invention;⁹⁷⁴ in previous versions of the story (see below), they are mutual lovers,⁹⁷⁵ and the child, Epaphus, is brought about not by sex, but by touch.⁹⁷⁶ The form of the human Io is little described, and there is nothing about her that should obviously draw Jupiter’s eye;⁹⁷⁷ all Ovid says of her—through Jupiter—is that she is *love digna* (1.589). This is especially striking in contrast with the previous episode—Apollo’s pursuit of Daphne—and the inset narrative of Mercury’s rape of Syrinx, where the mortal women’s appearances inspire the gods.⁹⁷⁸

The metamorphosis of Io into a cow is notably underplayed, as if to draw create contiguity between the girl and the cow.⁹⁷⁹ Indeed, even after her transformation, Ovid repeatedly toys with the idea that she is not a cow, as if to stress this continuity; in line 1.621—*vacca negaretur, poterat non vacca videri*—the word *vacca* is twice placed in proximity to words which appear to suggest denying Io’s bovinity (*negaretur* and *non ... videri*). This is not the literal meaning of the sentences, but Ovid’s Latin points to a rejection of Io’s being a cow. The transformation itself is wittily described:⁹⁸⁰

⁹⁷⁴ See Heldmann 2014.

⁹⁷⁵ See especially Ov. *Her.* 14.85-110; A. *Suppl.* 291-315.

⁹⁷⁶ E.g. Mosch. *Eur.* 50-3 and A. *PV* 849-51; both poets elucidate the wordplay between ἐπαφῶν and Ἐπάφος (see Clément-Tarantino & Klein 2017, 100; Höschele 2012, 344).

⁹⁷⁷ Jupiter *videt* Io (1.588; emphatically at the beginning of the line), focalising her appearance as something that he experiences, rather than something Ovid presents to us. *Videt* picks up on Apollo’s erotic seeing of Daphne (*visae*, 1.490) and prefigures Mercury seeing Syrinx (1.699).

⁹⁷⁸ Daphne’s appearance: her hair and neck (Ov. *Met.* 1.497-8), her eyes (1.498-9), her lips (1.499-500), her wrists and fingers (1.500), her arms (1.501) and—by implication—her genitalia (1.502). Syrinx’: 1.694-8.

⁹⁷⁹ This has been read as reversing the probable focus on this transformation in Calvus’ mostly lost *Io*, as Ovid’s attention is on Io’s transformation from cow to girl (*Met.* 1.738-46); see Barchiesi 2020, 26-7; Hollis 2007, 51. Normally, “metamorphosis is final” (Habinek 2002, 52). On contiguity, see Provenza 2019, 212.

⁹⁸⁰ Ov. *Met.* 1.610-13. Cf. 1.644, where she is clearly attractive as a cow: *patitur tangi seque admirantibus offert*.

coniugis adventum praesenserat inque nitentem 610

Inachidos vultus mutaverat ille iuvenecam;
bos quoque formosa est. speciem Saturnia vaccae,
quamquam invita, probat

Jupiter had an inkling of his wife's arrival and 610

Had changed the appearance of Inachus' daughter into a shining cow;
The cow too was beautiful. Juno approved of the form of the cow,
However unwillingly

The word order here is playful, with the participle-noun pair *nitentem .../ iuvenecam* fully containing the hidden girl (*Inachidos vultus*) and a cheeky pronominal reference to Jupiter himself (*ille*): one is led to wonder how fully he had extricated himself from his victim before transforming her.⁹⁸¹ Even the habitually suspicious Juno cannot help but approve of Io's appearance: she is a uniquely impressive specimen. Io's own father later explicitly comments on her potential to elicit sexual attention—albeit from other bovids—poignantly paralleling her human desirability and her bovine desirability.⁹⁸²

at tibi ego ignarus thalamos taedasque parabam,
spesque fuit generi mihi prima, secunda nepotum;
de grege nunc tibi vir et de grege natus habendus. 660

But, unaware, I was preparing wedding beds and torches for you,
And I had a hope first for a son-in-law, then for grandchildren;
Now you will have a husband from the herd and from the herd, a son. 660

The two states—a family of humans and a family of bovines—are directly likened, with no adversative conjunction to distinguish them. Indeed, Inachus utilises the

⁹⁸¹ Anderson 1996, 208 notes Io's inclusion within *nitentem .../ iuvenecam*, but neglects to comment on *ille*. The wordplay is even darker when read against *A. Suppl.* 300-1 (see below).

⁹⁸² *Ov. Met.* 1.658-60.

humanising vocabulary of *vir* and *natus* to describe Io's future mate and the calf,⁹⁸³ in a way which follows from his use of *gener* and *nepos* in the previous line to stress continuity. Inachus is, of course, upset at his daughter's transformation,⁹⁸⁴ but his concern is practical; he is still trying to perform the duty of the *paterfamilias* and find his daughter a *vir*. Inachus puns on the use of *de grege* in Ovid's contemporary Rome to mean 'of common birth':⁹⁸⁵ Inachus laments that his daughter will wed a plebeian, not a bull!⁹⁸⁶ Moreover, transformation has not, in Inachus' eyes, lessened her capacity to win a husband and, even if he must be *de grege*, Inachus will still conceptualise him with humanising vocabulary.

Bovine Io is, then, ambiguous: she is definitely a cow, but through focalised thoughts and comments by other characters (Jupiter, Juno and Inachus),⁹⁸⁷ Ovid shows that she was attractive in the way that we can imagine—but are not told—she would have been pre-metamorphosis. To explore this ambiguity further, I return to the moment of Io's transformation: Ovid tells us that Jupiter transformed the *Inachidos vultus* into a cow (1.611).⁹⁸⁸ Commentators almost ubiquitously opine that *vultus* should be taken as synecdoche for *forma* or *species*,⁹⁸⁹ but to do so ignores a clear intertextual reference

⁹⁸³ Cf. the range of alternative terms for mate and calf that Ovid could have made Inachus say and which he uses liberally elsewhere. Cows' mates are *tauri*; for the terminology for different ages and genders of bovinds, see Var. *R.* 2.5. *passim*, but especially 2.5.6-7. Calves are *vituli* (Ov. *Am.* 3.13.15, *Ars am.* 2.341, *Rem.* 184, *Met.* 2.624, 4.756, 10.227, 15.464, *Fast.* 4.459, 4.637, 4.639, 4.725, 4.733, *Hal.* 2). There is a double irony in Inachus' use of *natus* and *nepos*, as Io will have a human *natus*, born at *Met.* 1.748-9, who will be defined as the *nepos* of Inachus (1.753). Cf. A. *Suppl.* 314 and 41 where Epaphus is called a πόρτις.

⁹⁸⁴ E.g. *me miserum ... / tu non inventa reperta / luctus est levior* (Ov. *Met.* 1.651-3), *nec finire licet tantos mihi morte dolores* (1.661) and *aeternum nostros luctus extendit in aevum* (1.663). See also Curtis 2017.

⁹⁸⁵ See Anderson 1996, 26–7; Barchiesi 2005, 221–2.

⁹⁸⁶ The tone is even more playful if we detect an allusion to Virg. *Aen.* 2.503: *quingaginta illi thalami, spes tanta nepotum*, a line which concerns the marital arrangements of Troy's royal family (Piazzi 2019).

⁹⁸⁷ Curtis 2017, 304: "Io's experience becomes a focal point for the reactions of others"; Curtis' focus is grief, but this sentiment holds true for her beauty.

⁹⁸⁸ Cf. Ahl 1985, 146 on the resonance of *ops* in *bos* (Ov. *Met.* 1.612).

⁹⁸⁹ E.g. Anderson 1996, 208; Bömer 1969, 192.

which Ovid draws to the ambiguous metamorphosis of Io in pre-Ovidian narratives, especially Aeschylus' *Prometheus Vincetus*.⁹⁹⁰ In the Aeschylean play, during Io's lengthy wanderings,⁹⁹¹ she encounters Prometheus, with whom she discusses her past and future, including her transformation and upcoming impregnation and birth (561-886).

Aeschylus' Io is not afforded much physical description: she is a βούκερωσ παρθένος (588) and describes her own metamorphosis as εὐθύς δὲ μορφή καὶ φρένες διάστροφοι / ἦσαν, κεραστὶς δ', ὡς ὄρατ' (673-4). We are to assume that she is a humanoid woman with horns,⁹⁹² not a bovid,⁹⁹³ speaking clear Greek words (something of which the Ovidian Io is explicitly incapable).⁹⁹⁴ The hybrid form is highly practical, given that Io will be played by a human, not a cow,⁹⁹⁵ but Aeschylus' presentation of her is—possibly—the earliest in a tradition of the hybrid Io.⁹⁹⁶ This hybridity emerges in a number of sources; for instance, in Aeschylus' *Supplices*, Io is frequently described as a cow,⁹⁹⁷ but the same chorus who call her a cow later sing:⁹⁹⁸

⁹⁹⁰ Barchiesi 2005, 218 suggests that *vultus* could point to a “versione alternativa della vicenda e dell'iconografia in cui la metamorfosi riguarda solo la testa della fanciulla” but does not name that version.

⁹⁹¹ N.b. Ovid underplays Io's wandering: Juno makes her a *profugam per totum ... orbem* (1.727) and it is an *immensus labor* (1.728), but the locations go unmentioned.

⁹⁹² See Griffith 1983, 198–9. The image—a humanoid girl with horns—is widespread in visual representations of the scene; see Konstantinou 2015; Moret 1990; Provenza 2019, 382 n. 31; Yaloris 1986. See *LIMC* 5.1 s.v. “Io I” (pp. 661-76).

⁹⁹³ Io is usually unambiguously as a cow (i.e. not a hybrid): Hes. frs. 124, 294; S. *Inach.* 269a (probably, the papyrus is lacunose); B. 19.15-45; Mosch. *Eur.* 44-54 (Io explicitly φῦήν δ' οὐκ εἶχε γυναίτην at line 45); Virg. *Aen.* 7.789-92; Prop. 2.28.17-18 2.23a; Ps.-Apollod. 2.1.3.

⁹⁹⁴ E.g. *conata queri mugitus edidit ore. / pertimuitque sonos propriaque exterrita voce est* (Ov. *Met.* 1.637-8); see also 1.647-50 and 1.745-6. On Io's silence, see Curtis 2017, 310–12; Natoli 2017, 54–65.

⁹⁹⁵ See Griffith 1983, 190 on the horned mask Io's actor would have worn.

⁹⁹⁶ Aeschylus is probably the earliest literary source for the hybridity, which also features extensively in loosely contemporaneous artwork; for a discussion of relative chronologies (and a suggestion to move away from chronological models of interpretation), see Konstantinou 2015, 41–3. For Io's hybridity, see Provenza 2019.

⁹⁹⁷ A. *Suppl.* 16-17 (οἰστρόδονος βοῦς), 275 (εὐτεκνος βοῦς), 299 (βοῦν τὴν γυναῖκ' ἔθηκεν Ἀργεῖα θεός). She also grazes bovinely at 42, 50 and 539. Her child, Epaphus, is expressed in bovine terms at 41 and 314-15.

⁹⁹⁸ A. *Suppl.* 565-70. The vignette has been seen as referring to Io mid-transformation, but this cannot be right; see Sommerstein 2019, 248–9.

Indeed, when considering Herodotus' Io-Isis syncretism and Ovid's unstated hybridity, we may turn to Isis' appearance to Telethusa in the *Metamorphoses*' myth of Iphis:¹⁰⁰²

cum medio noctis spatio sub imagine somni
Inachis ante torum, pompa comitata sacrorum,
aut stetit aut visa est. inerant lunaria fronti
cornua cum spicis nitido flaventibus auro 960
et regale decus;

When, at midnight, in the vision of a dream
Inachus' daughter either stood, or seemed to stand, before her bed,
accompanied by a procession of holies. And moon-like horns were on
her forehead, and yellow corn, with a golden gleam 960
and royal splendour.

Clearly this figure—who in the following lines is accompanied by a retinue of Egyptian deities—is intended to be Isis, but Ovid calls her *Inachis*, so the reader is compelled to draw a connection back to Io in Book 1.¹⁰⁰³ Notably, this *Inachis* looks like Aeschylus' Io, with humanoid features, but a cow's horns; as this is the deified Io, we are not seeing the form that Jupiter had given to Io in Book 1 (fully bovine?), but this later episode marks the second instance in the *Metamorphoses* of her hybrid form being implied.

By permitting an interpretation of Io whereby she is a hybrid, Ovid encourages us not to draw too great a distinction between the Io whom Jupiter raped and the one who is

¹⁰⁰² Ov. *Met.* 9.657-61. See also 9.783-4: *imitataque lunam / cornua fulserunt.*

¹⁰⁰³ See also a possible sonic reference to the version, at A. *Suppl.* 300-1, where the Io-cow is mounted by a Jupiter-bull, in the phrase *Inachis ante torum* (Ov. *Met.* 9.958), which aurally figures *Inachis ante taurum.*

gifted to Juno. Heldmann has suggested that Ovid’s narrative interacts with earlier versions in a way which confounds Jupiter’s promise to Juno that he will never sleep with Io (*Met.* 1.734-7); he argues that Juno’s fear of a continued relationship between Jupiter and Io must be an intertextually constituted one, as the god’s actions in the *Metamorphoses* ought not have led her to this conclusion.¹⁰⁰⁴ Staying with these intertexts, we may turn again Aeschylus, and to his description, in the *Supplices*, of the sex between Jupiter and Io; the chorus ask Pelasgus μή και λόγος τις Ζῆνα μειχθῆναι βροτῶ; (295) and he replies κάκρυπτά γ’ Ἦρας ταῦτα τὰμπαλάγματ’ ἦν (296). As in Ovid, Jupiter sleeps with Io in human form and then Io is turned into a cow, although by Juno in Aeschylus (299); however, the Aeschylean Jupiter is not satisfied.¹⁰⁰⁵

Πελασγός: οὐκοῦν πελάζει Ζεὺς ἔτ’ εὐκραίρω βοῖ;

Χορός: φασίν, πρέποντα βουθόρω τὰύρω δέμας.

Pelasgus: And did Jupiter sleep with the fine-horned heifer again?

Chorus: They say that he did, seeming like a cow-mounting bull in form.

The spectre of Jupiter mounting a bovine Io hangs over Ovid’s narrative. Ovid has taken pains to perpetuate contiguity between the raped human girl and the bovine Io and we remember Inachus’ claim that Io must now find a *vir de grege* (1.660); with Aeschylus behind Ovid, we can construct a version where Io has already found a *vir de grege*,¹⁰⁰⁶ which is to say, Jupiter himself.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Heldmann 2014, 341–2.

¹⁰⁰⁵ A. *Suppl.* 300-1.

¹⁰⁰⁶ N.b. the extra comedy this interpretation adds. Inachus’ *double-entendre* with *grex* (see my p. 291) plays on his fatherly concern for the social class of his future son-in-law; Io’s new *vir* is definitely *de grege* (herd), but Jupiter is hardly *de grege* (plebeian ranks), as Ovid has confirmed for us (*Met.* 1.173-6).

Ovid's Io narrative, then, is a hybrid of multiple previous versions. The hybridisation of this myth introduces intertextual para-narratives which exist just behind the Ovidian version as it appears at first blush. Ovid's playing with the tradition allows his Io to be both cow and human, a hybrid who both is and is not raped by Jupiter in bovine form. The aesthetic appearance of the Ovidian characters shift subtly at times and their intertextual predecessors disturb the lines of the *Metamorphoses*, erupting through to ambiguate Ovid's presentation of the Io myth, and to introduce a distinct colouring of bestiality.

6.2.3 – Europa: Art and Deception between Text and Intertext

The story of Europa, related almost in its entirety in Book 2 of the *Metamorphoses* (2.833-3.9), is, in many ways, a mirror-image of her great-great-grandmother, Io's. Jupiter conceives a passion for the Tyrian princess and, in order to act on this passion, he disguises himself as a beautiful bull who convinces Europa to climb on his back so that he can swim with her across the sea to Crete. In Crete, Jupiter presumably rapes Europa (see below), and she becomes progenitor to the island's royal family through her son, Minos. Where my discussion of Io explored narrative elements which Ovid omits in the *Metamorphoses*, for Europa, I concern myself mostly with his additions and alterations. In particular, I contrast Ovid's Europa episode with his source, Moschus' Hellenistic epyllion, the *Europa*.¹⁰⁰⁷ The Europa story will always be an erotic one—a fact unavoidable because of the events that unfurl—but, through comparing Moschus' and Ovid's narratives, it emerges that Ovid has added more

¹⁰⁰⁷ The Europa myth is both ancient and well attested and, as ever, Ovid is in dialogue with multiple versions of the story; however, Moschus is clearly his primary source. For other versions which involve Jupiter's bovine transformation, see Hes. fr. 140-2; Σ Hom. *Il.* 12.292 = B. fr. 10; Hor. *Carm.* 3.27.25-72; Ov. *Fast.* 5.603-20 (with Reeves & Murgatroyd 2005); Hyg. *Fab.* 178; Ps.-Apollod. 3.1. Various epics called the *Europa*—written by Eumelus (Σ Hom. *Il.* 6.131), Stesichorus (fr. 195; Σ E. *Phoen.* 670) and Simonides (fr. 562)—are now lost to us. For an overview of different Europa stories, see Cusset & Vieilleville 2017; Létoublon 2007, 34–6.

sexual overtones than were present in versions which predate him. In addition to increasing the explicitness of the scene, I also demonstrate how Ovid engages pre-Moschan versions of the myth in which it is ambiguous whether Jupiter impregnates Europa as a bull, or with his zoomorphic disguise laid aside.

6.2.3.1 – Fear and Violence in Sidon

Ovid’s Europa narrative tessellates neatly with Moschus’ *Europa*; aside from a few, apparently cosmetic, changes, Ovid’s seems—*prima facie*—to be a straight retelling. However, Ovid’s deviations from Moschus have important implications for the tone of Europa and Jupiter’s interaction in the *Metamorphoses*. One of the most surprising features of the bestiality in the *Europa* is that it is, apparently, mutually consensual; consent to sex is not often emphasised in ancient literature, but Moschus repeatedly stresses that Europa wants the same, sexual result from her interactions with Jupiter as he does, and without apparent coercion on the god’s part.¹⁰⁰⁸ For instance, after an elaborate description of the bull (see below) and his initial advance, Moschus depicts a Europa who immediately reciprocates the Jupiter-bull’s advances: ἡ δὲ μὴν ἀμφαφάσκει καὶ ἡρέμα χεῖρεσιν ἀφρόν / πολλὸν ἀπὸ στομάτων ἀπομόργνυτο καὶ κύσει ταῦρον (95-6).¹⁰⁰⁹

Crucial here is the issue of focalisation: Moschus’ narrative is entirely focalised through Europa’s eyes, which enables access—at least in the literary sense—to

¹⁰⁰⁸ I am cautious in thus describing the Moschan relationship between Jupiter and Europa; men (ancient and modern) are very capable of downplaying rape—see De Boer 2017—but, with Klein 2018, I suggest that it can be productive to use the language of consent to describe Europa’s actions in the *Europa*. See also Kuhlmann 2004, 287, 2012, 473. Although I believe it is right to talk of the Moschan Europa as consenting, many versions of her myth—and certainly Ovid’s—are more explicitly rapes; *contra* Lefkowitz 1993, 24–5, 36–37.

¹⁰⁰⁹ See Kuhlmann 2012, 481 on these lines. See also Hes. fr. 140-2, where Jupiter’s seduction is framed as deceptive—ἀπατήσας (140), δόλοισι (141.2)—but not unwelcome by Europa; see Deacy 2013, 401–2; Lefkowitz 1993, 24–5. See also Reeves 2007a, 88–9 on the underplaying of abduction language in the version at Ach. Tat. *Leuc* 1.1.

Europa’s perspective on the affair.¹⁰¹⁰ Indeed, focalising this particular story through Europa is a recurrent phenomenon:¹⁰¹¹ Horace too tells the story from Europa’s perspective, and gives her a lengthy speech to explain her plight (*Carm.* 3.27.34-66), although his Europa is far less happy with her lot.¹⁰¹² In Aeschylus’ fragmentary *Cares*, Europa is proud of her union with Jupiter and its result—the triplets Minos, Rhadamanthus and Sarpedon—are a source of joy to her: κούκ ἐμέμψατο / τοῦ μὴ ἔξενεγκεῖν σπέρμα γενναῖον πατρός (fr. 99.8-9).¹⁰¹³

In contrast, for Ovid, Jupiter’s “transformation, beauty, and frame of mind are the main focus of the passage”;¹⁰¹⁴ his Europa narrative centres Jupiter, and, thus, not Europa. This change of focalisation means that Ovid cannot include key features of the Moschan narrative, principally Europa’s erotic dream (*Eur.* 1-27), which primes a reader of Moschus to recognise the mutual erotics of his account.¹⁰¹⁵ Rather than opening, as Moschus does, with a scene that casts Europa as capable of erotic desire, Ovid begins the episode with the divine conniving of Jupiter and Mercury (*Met.* 2.833-42), and a focus on Jupiter’s passion, not its object: *nec causam fassus amoris* (2.836).¹⁰¹⁶ The Europa episode is also the *dénouement* of a series of divine rapes and

¹⁰¹⁰ See especially Harden 2011, 93; Klein 2018. See also Reeves 2007b, 112 n. 8. I use ‘affair’, but Heldmann 2016, 84–114 convincingly argues that Moschus’ version suggests that Europa and Jupiter remain together on a longer term basis.

¹⁰¹¹ See Reeves 2007b, 112 n. 8.

¹⁰¹² Horace’s complex Europa ode is a source for Ovid’s Europa, but is not my primary focus; for the complexity of Horace’s version, see Sticker 2014. I suggest tentatively that the particular acrotic mode of the Horatian Europa’s speech and its studied engagement with tragedy (see Harrison 1988, especially 430-2) makes this Europa an ideal progenitor for Ovid’s *furiosae* (see §2.2) who themselves draw on another bull-loving woman: Pasiphaë.

¹⁰¹³ From what survives of the *Cares*, it seems likely that Europa’s speech (fr. 99) is the primary account of her relationship with Jupiter, and that the story is thus focalised through her eyes; however, without the rest of the play to consult, we cannot be sure.

¹⁰¹⁴ Kuhlmann 2012, 483. See also Heldmann 2016, 161, 170.

¹⁰¹⁵ Klein 2018, 109–112.

¹⁰¹⁶ Jupiter’s reluctance to admit the *causa amoris* to Mercury reflects Ovid’s playful refusal to name Europa; see Reeves 2007b and Kuhlmann 2012, 483 for the effects of Europa’s apparent anonymity in the passage.

attempted rapes in Books 1 and 2 of the *Metamorphoses*,¹⁰¹⁷ a position which primes readers to expect rape and violence in this story too, despite the gentler, Moschan intertext behind it.

The narrative focus in Ovid, then, is on Jupiter; this alters how a reader interacts with his approach to Europa. The consenting Moschan Europa shows no fear of the bull: ἤλυθε δ' ἐς λειμῶνα καὶ οὐκ ἐφόβησε φαανθείς / παρθενικάς (*Eur.* 89-90).¹⁰¹⁸ Ovid takes this sentiment and repeats it to the point of instilling doubt about its veracity: in descending to earth, Jupiter actively lays aside the threatening weapons of sceptre and lightning (*Met.* 2.847-9);¹⁰¹⁹ he has, *nullae in fronte minae, nec formidabile lumen: / pacem vultus habet* (2.857-8) and *proelia nulla minetur* (2.859). And yet, Europa is nevertheless frightened—*metuit* (2.860); *paulatimque metu dempto* (2.865); *pavet* (2.873)—and where Moschus' character is happy as she mounts the bull (μεδιόωσα, *Eur.* 108), Ovid's Europa mounts hesitantly (*ausa est quoque regia virgo / nescia, Met.* 2.868-9).¹⁰²⁰ Europa's fear is understandable; where Moschus' bull appears like a work of art, specifically not made for physical labour (*Eur.* 80-3),¹⁰²¹ Ovid's monster hulks with indelicate musculature: *colla toris exstant, armis palearia pendent* (*Met.* 2.854). Europa's fear of the bull resituates Ovid's over-assertion of his innocuity, revealing that she was afraid all along, despite Jupiter's best efforts at disguise.

The ultimate impact is the total recontextualization of the moment of abduction. Moschus' literally picturesque scene, in which Europa is swept over the sea, looking

¹⁰¹⁷ Namely: Daphne by Apollo (*Ov. Met.* 1.452-567), Io by Jupiter (1.568-688), Syrinx by Pan (1.689-712), Callisto by Jupiter (2.401-530) and Cornix by Neptune (2.572-88). After Europa, the *Metamorphoses* moves to its Thebaid section (see §2.1) and although divine rapes continue throughout the epic, Europa marks the acme of this dense catalogue. See Otis 1970, 120.

¹⁰¹⁸ See also Harden 2011, 93-4.

¹⁰¹⁹ Clément-Tarantino & Klein 2017, 93: the bull has “un air et une attitude entièrement pacifiques”.

¹⁰²⁰ Cf. especially Mosch. *Eur.* 103-6: δὴ γὰρ ἀπάσας / νῶτον ὑποστορέσας ἀναδέξεται, οἷά τ' ἐνήγης / πρηγῆς τ' εἰσιδέειν καὶ μείλιχος· οὐδέ τι ταύροις / ἄλλοισι προσέοικε.

¹⁰²¹ For the definition of Moschus' bull against labouring bulls, see Kuhlmann 2012, 480-1; Harden 2011, 96.

back at her companions, her dress swirling in the air (*Eur.* 111-61) is horrifying in Ovid’s telling (*Ov. Met.* 2.870-5). The language becomes violent: Europa is no κόρη (Mosch. *Eur.* 130) or παρθενική (154), willingly going to a quasi-marriage,¹⁰²² but a *praeda* (*Ov. Met.* 2.873),¹⁰²³ abducted from safety and terrified (*pavet ... ablata*, 2.873). The move from stressing Europa’s girlhood and willing innocence to the objectification of *praeda* underscores the violence of the Ovidian abduction.¹⁰²⁴ The refocalised perspective has the literally iconic vignette of Europa’s dress (*Eur.* 126-30)¹⁰²⁵ fluttering in the wind in a wholly positive simile—ἰστίον οἷά τε νηὸς ἐλαφρίζεσκε δὲ κουρήν (130)—recontextualised as *tremulae ... vestes* (*Ov. Met.* 2.875). Ovid does not use *tremulus* elsewhere to describe the motion of fabric,¹⁰²⁶ and its other appearances are negative, indicating frailty or fear,¹⁰²⁷ and, especially, threat.¹⁰²⁸ The image is of a threatened and frightened Europa. In reading the Ovidian account, a reader will see in his *dextra cornum tenet* (2.874) an allusion to Moschus’ τῆ μὲν ἔχεν ταύρου δολιχὸν κέρασ (*Eur.* 126) and to the clear phallicism of that δολιχὸν κέρασ;¹⁰²⁹ the Moschan Jupiter’s horn is in-keeping with the light, suggestive

¹⁰²² See now Heldmann 2016, 84–114. My point is not about Europa’s virginity—in Ovid, she has a *virginea ... manu* (*Ov. Met.* 2.868) and is a *virgo* (869)—but about how Moschus uses the language of virginity to demonstrate Europa’s willing participation in the marriage—νομήματα (Mosch. *Eur.* 159)—as opposed to Ovid’s more violent scene.

¹⁰²³ The neutral-to-positive language used in Moschus of Europa continues after the ocean voyage: she is again κόρη (*Eur.* 165) then μύμφη (165) and finally μήτηρ (166).

¹⁰²⁴ *Praeda* is often used of rape victims and victims of attempted rape in the *Metamorphoses*: Daphne (1.534, in a simile likening her to a hunted animal), Bacchus (3.606, 3.620 Opheltes’ intentions with the disguised god seem suspect), Nisus (8.86), Helen (13.200, she is aligned with *praeda*, but it does not technically refer to her), Hecuba (13.485). The rapist, Pluto, is called a *praedo* (5.521), and Tereus is compared to a *praedator ales* as his rape-plan comes together (6.516-7)

¹⁰²⁵ I call it iconic both because this detail is ubiquitous in Europa narratives (see Bühler 1960, 169–70, 172–3) and because the Moschan description is evocatively visual; for visual representations of the scene, see *LIMC* 4.1 s.v. “Europa 1” 3 (pp. 78-88), with Harden 2011, 100; Webster 1964, 154–5.

¹⁰²⁶ Bömer 1969, 441.

¹⁰²⁷ *Tremulus* describes e.g.: the dying hands of old Emathion (*Ov. Met.* 5.103); Myrrha’s nurse (10.414); the Sybil (14.143); the season of winter (15.212); Hyreius’ hands (*Ov. Fast.* 5.511).

¹⁰²⁸ E.g. *Ov. Her.* 4.43 (Phaedra’s hypothetical hunting spear), *Met.* 8.375 (the spears of the Dioscuri), 9.345 (the threatening branches of the lotus tree that cause Dryope’s transformation), 11.190 (the reeds which reveal the secret of Midas’ asinine ears).

¹⁰²⁹ For the Moschan κέρασ’ phallicism, see Clément-Tarantino & Klein 2017, 101; Deacy 2013, 402–3. For the obscene sense of κέρασ, see Pretagostini 1984.

eroticism of that poem, but, in Ovid’s rendition, surrounded as it is by references to Europa’s fear, this *cornum* takes on darker meanings. Ovid, then, transforms the Moschan image to one which points proleptically to a rape and makes this the close of the Book.¹⁰³⁰

Book 2 ends with the threatening quivering of Europa’s dress and Book 3 opens with Jupiter laying aside his bovine disguise and admitting his identity. It seems that something has dropped out between the Books: reference to the rape itself. If we again compare to Moschus, we see that he makes the union between Jupiter and Europa the final—and harmonious—image of his epyllion:¹⁰³¹

λυσε δὲ οἱ μίτρην, καὶ οἱ λέχος ἔντυον ἽΩραι.
 ἢ δὲ πάρος κούρη Ζηνὸς γένητ’ αὐτίκα νύμφη, 165
 καὶ Κρονίδη τέκνα τίκτε, καὶ αὐτίκα γίνετο μήτηρ.

And slipped off her girdle, and the Horae made her bed.
 She who once was a girl immediately became the bride of Jupiter, 165
 And bore children to Cronus’ son, and immediately became a mother.

Conversely, Ovid occludes this union altogether, relying on the dark closure of Book 2 to allow the scene to unfold in the readers’ minds. In 162-4, Moschus lists three events sequentially: [1] the appearance of Crete, [2] Jupiter’s change in appearance and [3] the sex between Jupiter and Europa.¹⁰³² Ovid inverts this order, preserving [2] then [1] (*Met.* 3.1-2), which leaves [3]—perhaps the most crucial!—unsaid and,

¹⁰³⁰ The end of Book 2 is explicitly closural—see Reeves 2007b, 113, especially n. 11—and yet it is not the end of Europa’s story. See now Wheeler 1999, 90–2.

¹⁰³¹ Mosch. *Eur.* 164–66. Scholars suggest that the *Europa* is unfinished, or that these cannot be the final lines (see Bühler 1960, 201–4), but they must be: see Campbell 1991, 128–30.

¹⁰³² For the phrase λῦσαι μίτραν or ζώνην meaning sex, see Hom. *Od.* 11.245, *h. Ven* 164; (Adesp.) *AP* 7.324; A. R. 1.288; Philostr. *VA* 7.6. See also Bühler 1960, 200.

presumably, preceding the action of Book 2.¹⁰³³ In mirroring the *Europa*'s chronology, Ovid's omission has a crucial consequence: the suggestion that Jupiter rapes Europa while he is still a bull. In his implication of bestiality, Ovid draws on earlier sources where Jupiter had also had sex with Europa as a bull. Hesiod claims οὕτως τε τὴν Εὐρώπην ἀπατήσας ἐβάστασε, καὶ διαπορθμεύσας εἰς Κρήτην ἐμίγη αὐτῇ (fr. 140), which does not specify any change in Jupiter's appearance between the initial deception (ἀπατήσας) and the sex (ἐμίγη).¹⁰³⁴ Similarly, Pseudo-Apollodorus leaves the matter of Jupiter's form ambiguous: ταῦρος χειροήθης γενόμενος, ἐπιβασθεῖσαν διὰ τῆς θαλάσσης ἐκόμισεν εἰς Κρήτην. ἡ δε, ἐκεῖ συνευνασθέντος αὐτῇ Διός, ἐγέννησε Μίνωα, Σαρπηδόνα Ῥαδάμανθυν (3.1). Whether explicitly drawing on the Hesiodic ambiguity or not, Ovid's allusive style here permits a reading in which bestiality is plausible and suppressed in the space between Books.

The closest thing to a sex scene in the *Europa* episode is lines 2.862-7, where the Jupiter-bull gambols with delight at the attention he receives from Europa; I do not suggest that these lines actually depict sex, but the language Ovid uses is deeply erotic. Indeed, these are all words which, in Ovid's poetry, frequently point to sex: *gaudet amans* (2.862),¹⁰³⁵ *voluptas* (2.862),¹⁰³⁶ *oscula dat* (2.863),¹⁰³⁷ *vix ... vix* (2.836),¹⁰³⁸

¹⁰³³ See now Anderson 1996, 339; Barchiesi 2005, 310; Barchiesi & Rosati 2007, 130; Bömer 1969, 445. Cf. Ov. *Met.* 8.122-5 (with my §6.2.1) for Ovid's continued ambivalence towards Jupiter and Europa's union when it re-emerges later in the poem.

¹⁰³⁴ See also Hes. fr. 141, which is equally silent on the issue: πέρησε δ' ἄρ' ἄλμυρὸν ὕδωρ / [...] Διὸς δμηθεῖσα δόλοισι. / [τῇ δὲ μίγη φιλότητι] πατῆρ (1-3). Campbell 1991, 1 suggests that Hesiod mist have made more of the union, which is now lost.

¹⁰³⁵ Cf. Ov. *Met.* 9.483 and my discussion of orgasmic *gaudia* at pp. 140-3.

¹⁰³⁶ E.g. Ov. *Met.* 3.321, 4.327

¹⁰³⁷ *Oscula* are ubiquitous as signs of love in Ovidian elegy (e.g. *Am.*, 2.4.26, 2.6.56, 2.11.46, 2.18.10, 2.19.18), especially in some kiss-centric poems (e.g. *Am.* 1.4, 2.5, 3.7; cf. Catull. 5, 7, 48). However, they are explicitly precursors to sex at *Ars am.* 1.669-72 and elsewhere; see now Ingleheart 2021a, 300-1.

¹⁰³⁸ Anderson 1996, 336 compares these uses of *vix* to other instances of the impatient lover at Ov. *Met.* 6.514, and 4.350.

cetera (2.836),¹⁰³⁹ *latus* (2.865).¹⁰⁴⁰ Similarly, Jupiter's initial arrival in Sidon is marked by *mixtusque iuvenis / mugit* (2.850-1), a phrase which possibly draws on *miscere*'s sexual connotations to imply that Jupiter has sex with the Sidonian heifers,¹⁰⁴¹ before approaching Europa. If we acknowledge this possibility, the Jupiter-bull engages in sex which is aesthetically between bovids, presaging the later—unstated—union between himself and Europa. As with the suppression of the actual sex between Books 2 and 3, the resonant language of sexuality in a passage which cannot actually feature sex also indicates Ovid's reluctance to write zoophilic sex into the *Metamorphoses* directly.

We see, in Ovid's Europa narrative, the same techniques of ambiguity *vis-à-vis* taboo which I diagnosed in the Myrrha episode. The deafening echoes of Moschus' narrative serve to indicate just how anti-Moschan Ovid is in places: Ovid's threatening bull and Europa's fear of him are made all the more palpable by the present absence of their inverse in the *Europa*. Ovid's Europa is abjected between traditions, but it is fundamentally the way that audiences engage with her narrative not through her eyes that erases her agency from the scene, and leaves her a frightened victim of the brutish bull.

6.2.3.2 – Another *Ars amatoria*; or, the *Ars bovaria*

Ovid's bull is large, muscular and aggressive; he is also an elegantly presented animal whose description picks up on the dense ecphrastic play of Moschus' version. The impact of how this plays out is, again, a matter of perspective. In the *Europa*, because the narrative is focalised through the titular girl, the attentive ecphrasis of the bull's

¹⁰³⁹ With Anderson 1996, 336. See also *Ov. Am.* 1.5.25, 3.2.84 and *Ars am.* 1.669 with Ingleheart 2021a, 300–1.

¹⁰⁴⁰ E.g. *Ov. Am.* 2.10.25, *Ars am.* 2.413. See Adams 1990, 49, 90; Pichon 1902, 185.

¹⁰⁴¹ For *miscere*'s sexual sense, see Adams 1990, 180–1. It is a sense often used by Ovid: *Met.* 4.373 (with Bömer 1976a, 129), 5.638 (with Bömer 1976a, 385), 13.866 (with Bömer 1982, 443–4).

beauty is presented as, on some level, how she sees him, and his beauty is the reason for her attraction to him. When Ovid imports the same sort of detail into the *Metamorphoses*, it does not serve to entice Europa, but the audience. As I have said, Ovid's Europa is terrified, not aroused, but the ecphrastic presentation of the bull is, nonetheless, deeply eroticised. The trick is one of having-your-cake-and-eating-it: Ovid preserves the dense eroticism of the scene and focuses on aesthetics and beauty, but also transitions into a more violent gear. We have, then, both of the features of Ovidian zoophilia that I identified in Chapter 5: an aesthetics of bestiality and an animalistic violence.

These aesthetic qualities function very differently in the Europa story than in the Cyparissus narrative: there, the attentive description of the stag demonstrated his potential to be attractive, both to Cyparissus and, by extension, to the reader. In Book 2, the beauty of the bull highlights themes of artistry and deception; there is still a level on which the Ovidian bull's appearance is attractive—it does, after all, have the desired effect of seducing Europa—but that attractiveness is mediated through an evaluation of *ars*. In order to explain the Ovidian bull's artistic appearance, I explore his corollary in Moschus. Moschus' Jupiter-bull is first defined through a series of ἀδύνατα which distinguish him from labouring farm-animals (*Eur.* 77-83), but his physical appearance is the very picture of pastoral loveliness:¹⁰⁴²

τοῦ δ' ἦτοι τὸ μὲν ἄλλο δέμας ξανθόχροον ἔσκε,

κύκλος δ' ἀργύφειος μέσσω μάρμαιρε μετώπῳ·

85

ὅσσε δ' ὑπογλαύσσεσκε καὶ ἴμερον ἀστράπτεσκε·

ἴσα τ' ἐπ' ἀλλήλοισι κέρα ἀνέτελλε καρήνου

¹⁰⁴² Mosch. *Eur.* 84-91. For an overview of Moschus' sources for the bull's appearance, see Campbell 1991, 85

ἄντυγος ἡμιτόμου κεραῆς ἄτε κύκλα σελήνης.
 ἦλυθε δ' ἐς λειμῶνα καὶ οὐκ ἐφόβησε φρανθεῖς
 παρθενικάς, πάσησι δ' ἔρωσ γένετ' ἐγγυὺς ἰκέσθαι 90
 ψαῦσαί θ' ἡμερτοῖο βοῶς

Indeed, although the rest of his flesh was golden,
 A silvery ring glinted in the middle of his forehead, 85
 And his twin eyes smouldered and hurled lightning-love,
 And the balanced horns on his head rose up to meet one another,
 Just like the curved rim of the horned moon when it is divided.
 He went to the meadow and did not frighten the girls
 With his appearance; in all of them arose a desire to approach him 90
 And to touch the lovely bull.

The bull is balanced and gentle. The traits which Moschus emphasises underscore harmonious composition: a perfect circle on the forehead; balanced horns (ἴσα ... κέρα), which are described with mathematical precision (ἄντυγος ἡμιτόμου κεραῆς ἄτε κύκλα σελήνης).¹⁰⁴³ The bull's hyper-perfection is met by his hyper-real colouration; he is mostly gold,¹⁰⁴⁴ with a single patch of silver, in a way which no real bull could be—and which Ovid's bull is not (*Met.* 2.852-3)—but verisimilitude is not the point. As Harden argues, Moschus' description of the bull is ecphrastic, both in its bravura focus on aesthetics and in the specific ways in which it harks back to the more obviously ecphrastic elaboration on Europa's basket (*Eur.* 37-62).¹⁰⁴⁵ In particular, the

¹⁰⁴³ Campbell 1991, 87–8: “perfectly symmetrical” (87), “a technical-sounding ... line, perhaps adapted from a Hellenistic didactic poem” (88).

¹⁰⁴⁴ The bull is ξανθόχροος (*Mosch. Eur.* 84), which some have interpreted as referring to a russet or brown (e.g. Bühler 1960, 132), but ξανθό- must refer to gold when paired with the κύκλος ἀργύρεος of the next line; see Campbell 1991, 85–6.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Harden 2011, 94–5. Moschus activates memory of the basket—which focuses on Jupiter's abduction of Io—at the moment of another Jovian abduction in which bovinity is crucial; see also Hopkinson 1988, 206 “Europa inherits not only the basket, but also the experiences depicted on it”.

bull's metallic colouration is evocative of the constant references to metalworking in that earlier ecphrasis.¹⁰⁴⁶ And yet, for all of Moschus' focus on the idiosyncrasy of his bull, he never goes so far as to question his naturalness (the metaphors of lightning and moon are derived from nature)¹⁰⁴⁷ or to suggest that there is anything threatening or deceptive about the Jupiter-bull.

Ovid's bull, on the other hand, is a work of far more knowing art: we may compare Moschus' statement that Jupiter κρύψε θεὸν καὶ τρέψε δέμας καὶ γείνετο ταῦρος (*Eur.* 89), where the focus is on changing shape and becoming a bull, with Ovid's more deceptive *induitur faciem tauri* (*Met.* 2.850).¹⁰⁴⁸ Γείνετο has become *induitur* and thus is now followed by a distancing direct object—a disguise¹⁰⁴⁹—not a subject complement like ταῦρος, which stresses that god and bull are homoousion. In examining the presentation of Ovid's bull, it becomes apparent that an introduction via *facies*, in the full sense of external appearance as opposed to internal ontology, is wholly appropriate:¹⁰⁵⁰

mugit et in teneris formosus obambulat herbis.

quippe color nivis est, quam nec vestigia duri

calcavere pedis nec solvit aquaticus auster.

colla toris exstant, armis palearia pendent,

¹⁰⁴⁶ Gold features at Mosch. *Eur.* 37, 44, 54; silver at 53. There is also a reference to bronze (54).

¹⁰⁴⁷ See now Kuhlmann 2012, 480–1 on how the bull's definition *ex negativo* of the other, working, bulls stresses the possibility that he could be interpreted as one of them. See also the sonic resonance between the bull's mooing—μυκήσατο (97)—and the Mygdonian flute to which it is compared in the next line (Μυγδονίου); see Campbell 1991, 94. The appearance of the flute evokes powerfully the pastoral.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Ovid's focus on deception suffuses the narrative: Europa is *nescia* (*Met.* 2.869), the Jupiter-bull's footprints are *falsa* (2.871) and his disguise is ultimately *fallax* (3.1). Cf. Hes. fr. 141.2: Διὸς δημηθεῖσα δόλοισι. Cf. Ov. *Met.* 2.425, the only other use of *induitur faciem* in extant Latin, where it is used of Jupiter's disguise as Diana and *facies* is explicitly paired with *cultus*.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Cf. the similarly physical removal of the disguise at Ov. *Met.* 3.1: *posita fallacis imagine tauri*.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Ov. *Met.* 2.851–6.

cornua parva quidem, sed quae contendere possis

855

facta manu, puraque magis perlucida gemma.

He moos and strolls on the gentle grass, a beautiful creature.

He is truly the colour of snow, which the prints of a hard foot have

Not trodden and which the wet south-wind has not turned to slush.

His neck burgeons with muscles, dewlaps hang from his forelimbs,

Little horns too, which you could argue had been crafted

855

By hand, clearer than a pure gemstone.

From the beginning, Ovid stresses that his bull is a work of art:¹⁰⁵¹ where the Moschan bull's colouration was glossed in two words (ξανθόχροος and ἀργύρεος), the whiteness of Ovid's bull fills two whole lines (2.852-3);¹⁰⁵² his muscles are over-large, hulking and hyper-real; the entire passage is stuffed with exclamatory markers, which encourage wonder (*quippe, quidem*), and chief among which is the apostrophe to the audience (*contendere possis*). The sustained focus is not only on the bull's beauty—although this is clearly of central importance—but also on how this beauty is achieved through bravura artifice.

The artistry comes to the fore in Ovid's description of the Jupiter-bull's small, but perfectly formed,¹⁰⁵³ horns, which contrast artfully with the musculature of the previous line.¹⁰⁵⁴ Their size points to careful craftwork—as is stressed by *facta manu*—and where Moschus' bull's horns suggest the harmonious proportions of

¹⁰⁵¹ Solodow 1988, 210.

¹⁰⁵² The use of *vestigia* in these lines may encourage the sort of intertextual interpretation of the artifice which I propose; see my n. 237.

¹⁰⁵³ Jupiter's small horns have confused editors, and other words have been suggested in *parva*'s place (see Housman 1890, 142–3). *Parva* is the reading of the MSS and must be right, even though bulls are normally lauded for their large horns (e.g. Ov. *Met.* 3.20, 12.382; V. Fl. 4.405-6).

¹⁰⁵⁴ With Bömer 1969, 437.

natural beauty, Ovid's indicate a man-made beauty.¹⁰⁵⁵ Indeed, there may be a clever wordplay on *cornua*, which are both an animal's horns and the protuberances on a Roman book roll:¹⁰⁵⁶ Ovid's reference to *parva cornua* would allude to his Jupiter-bull's debt to *parva* Hellenistic poetry,¹⁰⁵⁷ such as Moschus' *Europa*, while simultaneously foregrounding Ovid's literary creativity. Their gemlike translucence calls to mind the *gemmae* of jewellery, which are hand cut and handcrafted; given that the horns are *magis perlucida* than real gems, we may think of the artificial *vitreae gemmae*, worn by plebians,¹⁰⁵⁸ a notion that would pleasingly double the layers of artifice at play. We may also think of cameo images on gemstones, on which the myth of Europa and the bull was frequently carved.¹⁰⁵⁹

If we consider the attentive description of Moschus' bull ecphrastic (and we should)¹⁰⁶⁰ we must even more readily call Ovid's bull the object of an ecphrasis.¹⁰⁶¹ Ovid not only painstakingly describes the physical appearance of a visual entity, but he also repeatedly draws connections between that entity and visual art, in a self-consciously bravura way. The effect is the opposite of Ovid's famous claim *ars adeo latet arte sua* (10.252);¹⁰⁶² Jupiter's—and Ovid's—artistry is fully on show in the way that the art itself manifests. The reader is confronted by this knowing artifice and is encouraged to decode what it means: at first, Europa is deceived by the bull, but the

¹⁰⁵⁵ See however, Housman 1890, 143's concerns about the unnecessary contrast between size and artistry seemingly introduced by *quidem* and *sed* in Ov. *Met.* 2.855.

¹⁰⁵⁶ See Wheeler 1999, 93–4. See Ov. *Tr.* 1.1.7–8; Tib. 3.1.13; Mart. 11.107.1 (with Kay 1985, 285–6). See also Winsbury 2014, 185.

¹⁰⁵⁷ For *parvus* as metapoetic marker of Hellenistic influence, see Crowther 1978, 40–2; Karakasis 2011, 77. *Parvus* with this force is a favourite of Horace: *Ep.* 2.1.257–8, *Carm.* 3.3.72, 4.2.31, 4.15.3.

¹⁰⁵⁸ See e.g. Plin. *Nat.* 35.48, *SHA* (Treb.) *Gall.* 12.5.

¹⁰⁵⁹ E.g. *LIMC* 4.1 s.v. “Europe I” 3.82–7 (p. 81), 3.185–8 (p. 86).

¹⁰⁶⁰ See Harden 2011; Petrain 2006.

¹⁰⁶¹ Scholars do not readily term the Jupiter-bull ecphrastic, but see Barchiesi 2005, 309: “questi appelli alla percezione dell’immagine sono tipici della tradizione dell’ἔκφρασις, in cui l’autore del testo sta elogiando un’opera d’arte”. Wheeler 1999, 154 also describes the narration as being “in ecphrastic style”.

¹⁰⁶² The line's authenticity has recently come under speculation on grounds of sense (Korenjak 2020), but, to me, seems correct and totally legible.

reader cannot be, as we have seen the machinations behind it. Ovid's focus on artistry, as opposed to verisimilitude, forces us to be entranced by the bull's beauty, while never fully seeing a real bull. We see the façade as a façade,¹⁰⁶³ and thus never imagine a real bull or real on-screen bestiality. The disruptive force of this ecphrasis, then, in accretion with my comments in Chapter 5 about the aesthetics of bestiality, creates a flirtatious teasing between Ovid and audience. All the set pieces are present—the bull is beautiful, Europa is deceived, he abducts her to Crete—but the final poetic reality of bestiality is fundamentally denied: sex is constantly paraded in front of the reader, but never happens. In the end, the *nefas* of Europa's bestiality remains unspoken.

6.3 – iamque artem exegi

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how zoophilia warps the *Metamorphoses* through the prism of aesthetics. The three desired animals I have discussed—a stag, a cow and a bull—are, in various ways, aesthetic presentations which reveal narrative distortion. Each of them draws on a wealth of intertexts, from which ecphrastic art is woven; these attractive animal artworks reveal the narrative fabric of the *Metamorphoses* to be a complex patchwork of other artistic descriptions. On some level, these ecphrastic beasts reveal how Ovid's construction of artwork can, itself, be viewed ecphrastically: he displays bravura self-consciousness as he makes his composite depictions, in which the individual components—or sources—are not just detectable but burgeoning from beneath the surface. In seeing Aeschylus' Io behind Ovid's—equally Virgil's stag or Moschus' bull or any other version—Ovid's very methods of narrative creation tear apart the epic fabric as a reader must rend through it to reveal the text(s) beneath.

¹⁰⁶³ Cf. my comments about Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt* at p. 145.

These bodies, then, so artfully described in words are also, contradictorily, ineffable. In order to present the animal bodies which zoophilia desires, Ovid's epic must disintegrate into the recognisable threads of numerous other tapestries, which disturb the warp and weft of his own work. Each individual ecphrastic animal becomes a cacophonic polyphony of narrative references which compete for attention. Bestiality and art, then, are agents of *nefas*: Ovid speaks of desired beasts at the expense of narrative, which is made, in these episodes, porous, distended and threadbare.

7 – Nefas-morphoses

“I am the love that dare not speak its name”. These are the words with which I began this thesis, and I have shown how concerns around speech, shame and love are at the heart of Ovid’s presentation of incest and bestiality. For the Ovidian characters whom I have discussed—Oedipus, Pasiphaë, Byblis, Myrrha, Arachne, Cyparissus, Io and Europa—incestuous and zoophilic loves have no names to utter; these characters repeatedly try to verbalise *nefas* in ways which run aground in the realm of poetry. Through a synthesis of Freudian and Kristevan psychoanalysis with narratological approaches to art, diegesis and omission, I have demonstrated the disturbing and transformative effect that *nefas* has on the fabric of the *Metamorphoses*.

I began with Oedipus and Pasiphaë, who do not feature as actors within the text of the *Metamorphoses*, but whose spectres stand in for the unspeakable crimes for which they are totemic. In different ways, both figures stand as the present absences of *nefas*, muted within the epic. My discussion of Byblis focused on her inability to communicate her love for her brother, Caunus; as she tries to reify *nefas* in the realm of speech (*fari, fateri, fama*), language itself deteriorates. I demonstrated how Myrrha is an ambiguous figure, caught between dialectic polarities, in a way which figures the Kristevan abject: that which is neither subject nor object cannot manifest on the Ovidian page in a simple, monophonous way. Chapters 5 and 6 developed Chapter 3’s conclusions about art and embarked upon a consideration of the aesthetic implications of bestiality on the text. Arachne is an artist at the heart of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and my discussion of it: she enters into dialogue with her extradiegetic creator and critiques his literary omission of bestiality narratives by warping the entire fabric of the epic, pulling it towards her arachnid body in the middle of her web. Finally, in Chapter 6, I explored the duplicitous danger of the aesthetic realm and how bestiality figures within

it: three ecphrastic exegeses throw open intertextual windows which suffuse the artistic bodies of the animals at their core—Cyparissus' stag, the Io-cow and the Jupiter-bull—with polyphony and ambiguity. Singular interpretations shear in these bodies and ineffable *nefas* resists straightforward narration: what is a deer? Man? Woman? Cydippe? Is Io human or cow? In what form does Jupiter rape her? Is he, too, a bovid? Where does the Jupiter-bull sit in a dichotomy between art object and breathing, taurine subject?

The *nefas* concepts of incest and bestiality have a disruptive force on the linguistic fabric of Ovid's epic poem. This disruption takes multiple forms, which is only fitting for an epic about constant change and polyvalency: sometimes we see syntactical disintegration at narrative moments of taboo tension; at others, intertextual spectres of older incest and bestiality narratives invade the *Metamorphoses* and haunt Ovid's narratives, making the poem's fabric porous. At yet other times, characters within the world of the poem, like Byblis and Arachne, take on agency within the text to serve as interlocutors with Ovid himself, bursting through the *Metamorphoses* and engaging with the prohibitions on taboo love. Unspeakable *nefas* is something uncontainable in the container Ovid has built for it: words and poetry are the very tools which *nefas* negates, so linguistic rupture is inevitable.

Appendix: Text and Translation of E. Cretes fr. 472e

(ΧΟΡΟΣ)

οὐ γάρ τιν' ἄλλην φημί τολμήσαι τάδε·

σύ τ'δ' ἐκ κακῶν†, ἄναξ,

φρόνησον εὖ καύψαι.

ΠΑΣΙΦΑ(Η)

ἀρνούμενη μὲν οὐκετ' ἂν πίθοιμί σε·

πάντως γὰρ ἤδη δῆλον ὡς ἔχει τάδε.

5

ἐγ[ώ] γὰρ εἰ μὲν ἀνδρὶ προὔβαλον δέμας

τοῦ μὸν λαθραίαν ἐμπολωμένη Κύπριν,

ὀρθῶς ἂν ἤδη μάχ[λο]ς οὔσ' ἐφαινόμην·

νῦν δ'—ἐκ θεοῦ γὰρ προσβολῆς ἐμηνάμην—

ἀλγῶ μὲν, ἔστι δ' οὐκ ἐκο[ύσ]ιον κακόν.

10

ἔχει γὰρ οὐδὲν εἰκός· ἐς τί γὰρ βροός

βλέψασ' ἐδήχθην θυμὸν αἰσχίστη νόσφ;

ὡς εὐπρεπῆς μὲν ἐν πέπλοισιν ἦν ἰδεῖν,

πυρσῆς δὲ χαίτης καὶ παρ' ὀμμάτων σέλας

οἴνωπὸν ἐξέλαμπε περ[καί]νων γένυν;

15

οὐ μὴν δέμας γ' εὐ.[ca. 8 ll. ν]υμφίου·

τοιῶνδε λέκτρω[ν οὔνεκ' εἰς] πεδοστιβῆ

ρίνον καθίς.[ca. 15 ll.]ται

ἀλλ' οὐδὲ παίδων .[ca. 9 ll.]πόσιν

θέσθαι· τί δήτα τη[δ' ἐμαι]νόμην νόσῳ; 20
 δαίμων ὁ τοῦδε κάμ' ἐ[νέπλησεν κα]χῶν,
 μάλιστα δ' οὗτος οἴσε[ca. 11 ll.]ων·
 ταῦρον γὰρ οὐκ ἔσφαξ[ε.....ηύ]ξατο
 ἐλθόντα θύσειν φάσμα [πο]ντίῳ [θε]ῶ.
 ἐκ τῶνδ' ἐ τοί σ' ὑπήλθ[ε κά]πετείσ[ατο 25
 δίκην Ποσειδῶν, ἐν δ' ἔμ' ἔσκηψ[εν ὤ] —.
 κάπειτ' αὐτεῖς καὶ σὺ μαρτύρη θεοῦς
 αὐτὸς τάδ' ἔρξας καὶ καταισχύνας ἐμέ.
 καγὼ μὲν ἢ τεκοῦσα κοῦδ' ἐν αἰτία
 ἔκρυψα πληγὴν δαίμονος θεήλατον, 30
 σὺ δ'—εὐπρεπὴ γὰρ κάπιδείξασθαι καλά—
 τῆς σῆς γυναικός, ὦ κάκιστ' ἀνδρῶν φρονῶν,
 ὡς οὐ μεθέξων πᾶσι κηρύσσεις τάδε.
 σὺ τοί μ' ἀπόλλυς, σὴ γὰρ ἢ ἔξ[αμ]αρτία,
 ἐκ σοῦ νοσοῦμεν. πρὸς τάδ' εἴτε ποντίαν 35
 κτείνειν δοκεῖ σοι, κτε[ί]ν'· ἐπίστασαι δέ τοι
 μαιφόν' ἔργα καὶ σφαγᾶς ἀνδροκτόνους·
 εἴτ' ὠμοσίτου τῆς ἐμῆς ἐρᾶς φαγεῖν
 σαρκός, πάρεστι· μὴ λίπης θοινώμενος.

ἐλεύθεροι γὰρ κοῦδέν ἠδικηκότες 40
τῆς σῆς ἕκατι ζῆμ[ία]ς ὀλούμεθα.¹⁰⁶⁴

X(O.)

πολλοῖσι δῆλον [ὡς θεήλατον] κακόν
τόδ' ἐστίν· ὀργη[ca. 11 ll.]ις, ἄναξ.

MIN(ΩΣ)

ἄρ' ἐστόμωται; .[ca. 10 ll.]. βοα.
χωρεῖτε, λόγχη[ca. 9 ll. ο]υμένη 45
λάζυσθε τὴν πανο[ύργον, ὡ]ς καλῶς θάνη,
καὶ τὴν ξθνεργόν [τὴνδε, δ[ωμάτων δ' ἔσω
ἄγο]ντες αὐτάς εἶρ[ξατ' ἐς κρυπτ]ήριον,
ὡς μ]ηκέτ' εἰσίδ[ωσιν ἡλίου κ]ύκλον.

X(O.)

ἄναξ, ἐπίσχ[εσ· φρο]ντί[δος] γὰρ ἄξιον 50
τὸ πρ[άγ]μα [...]. δ' ο[ὔ]τις εὐβουλος βροτῶν.

(MI.)

καὶ δὴ] δ[έδοκται] μὴ ἀναβάλλεσθαι δίκην.

CHORUS

¹⁰⁶⁴ Printing ὀλούμεθα, rather than ονούμεθα; see Kannicht 2004, 514.

Indeed, I say that no other woman dared these things

My lord, consider how to conceal~

The effects of these crimes.

PASIPHAË

No longer may I persuade you by denying it;

For now these affairs are wholly laid bare. 5

For, if I had thrown myself at a man,

Trading my body for covert sex,

I would rightly now be indicted as wanton;

As it is—given that I am driven mad by a god’s assault—

I am sick, and my crime is not my choice. 10

For it is not probable: what would I have seen in the bull

To be stung in the soul by the most shameful sickness?

That he was handsome to see in his robes?

That he glowed from his eyes and russet hair

His cheeks shifting to burgundy? 15

Certainly it was not the fine [?] of a bride;

Was it for such a union [...] in an animal

Made of hide [...]

And not for children [...] to make him

My husband; why then am I driven mad by this sickness? 20

My husband’s fate also filled me up with crimes,

And he in particular will bear [...];

For he did not sacrifice the bull, which came as an omen

And which he had vowed to sacrifice to sacrifice to the sea god.

These are the reasons why Neptune undermined you and 25
Punished you, but hurled [...] on me.
And then you yell and call the gods to witness
But you did these things yourself and brought shame on me.
And I—who gave birth and am guilty of nothing—
Concealed the godsent plague of fate, 30
While you proclaimed these things to everyone?
—such decent and fine things to put on display!—
As if you want nothing to do with your wife, the worst of a husband’s
thoughts.
It is you who have destroyed me, for the error was yours;
I am sick because of you. So, either, if you want to kill 35
Me by drowning, kill me—truly, you are capable of
bloodthirsty deeds and murderous slaughter—
Or, if you would love to eat my raw
Flesh, it is right here; don’t leave anything behind as you feast.
For we, who are free and have done nothing wrong, 40
Will be destroyed for the sake of punishing you.

CHORUS

Many think that this trouble is caused by
The gods; lord, [do not be?] angry.

MINOS

Has she sharpened her tongue? [...] She shouts.
Come, spear- [...] 45
Seize this wicked woman, in order to kill her well,

And her assistant, and take them from
The palace and shut them in a hidden prison,
So that they never again look on the orb of the sun.

CHORUS

Lord, control yourself; this matter is 50
Worthy of consideration. [...] and no well-advised man [...].

MINOS

It is truly decided, and punishment will not be put off.

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