

CHAPTER 2

Wavering Identity

In artistic terms, the weaving contest between Arachne and Minerva ends in a draw. Even the most hostile possible judge, Minerva herself, can find no fault with her rival's tapestry. But art does not count for everything, and the fact that Arachne has so ably vindicated her abilities fails to prevent her tale too from becoming another example of the folly of rivaling the gods. The tapestry may be perfect but Minerva destroys it¹ and beats the girl with her spindle. Unable to endure this indignity, Arachne hangs herself. Minerva at that point feels pity, but her sympathy manifests itself strangely, as she turns the girl into a spider and assures her that this penalty will travel down through her whole line. The extraordinary dynamic of this ending, with its many unexpected twists and oscillations between stiffening revenge and relaxation into sympathy, helps focus the tale's concern with the power of art in a very material sense and with how the capacity to produce such perfect representations relates to status. At first, art and power may seem caught up in a cycle of conflict that is literally unbreakable. Art represents the crimes of the gods. The gods destroy the tapestry, but only to have their jealous vengeance represented in the very act by another artistic "text," Ovid's own poem, which in consequence exposes itself and its author to retribution. However, certain elements of the narrative complicate this battle between "art" and "reality." First the goddess is herself an artist. Indeed, the instrument of her vengeance is the very tool of her art, the boxwood spindle with which she has produced her own weaving. Such a light object—boxwood was proverbial for its use to make toys and known as the wood from which Catullus fashioned the ship that brought him home from the East, a metaphor for poetry in the slightest vein (4.13)—could not have inflicted such damage were it not for the aspirations of the human artist Arachne. She herself recognizes no clear distinction between the realms of art and power and uses her skill to advance her

¹ The motion from "criticism" to revenge hangs on a pun in the term *carpere*, noted by Feeney 1991.192, which can mean both criticize and, literally, pluck apart. This verbal similarity could suggest an essential continuity between what the goddess does as connoisseur, and what she does as outraged divinity, or it could signal that her power comes with a shift from the metaphoric and figurative to the literal and physical.

status, specifically to achieve immortality herself despite her low birth (6.12–13). The overlap between art and power also emerges in the way that each artist's tale gives its distinctive "spin" to her own experience. Minerva's emphasis on divine vengeance provides a narrative and social template for interpreting the punishment of Arachne as the justified and inevitable return for an inferior's hubris: Arachne's catalog of crimes of divine passion offers a rubric under which her own life story, as it turns out, could be easily classed.²

In this chapter, I explore the consequences of the complex relation between social authority and artistic representation sketched here for Ovid's act of literary creation. By stressing the interactions between personal status and artistic roles, I hope to replace an old model of Ovid's self-representation as enacting a clear-cut, indeed timeless, battle between the resistant artist and all-powerful tyrant with a more specific and complex picture of the pressures and constraints acting on the writer in a society where the emperor was already an artist and the artist uses his text as a way of pursuing an immortality very like that sought by the *princeps* himself. The argument frequently returns to differing manifestations of the double vision sketched out in the first chapter. Like the spectators for Arachne's own artistic productions, we keep one eye on what the artist makes, and another on the very real act of creation itself. Sometimes the grand fictions the poem discloses seem to be the artist's way of controlling and containing empire as well as emperor; at others, the comparative triviality of the artistic product is balanced by the recognition of the real stature of the artist. Thus, whatever it is that Arachne may portray on her tapestry and despite the fact that she works with "fluff,"³ the very act of weaving assimilates her to the gods who created the world.⁴ Indeed, the uncertain shifting between work and world both produces and reflects the status of the literary artist in late Augustan Rome, where, I suggest, every act of creation depends on a process of recontextualization with the power to limit as much as to exalt.

² Indeed, Ovid suggestively questions the bounds between representation and reality by leaving the phrase "divine crimes," *caelestia crimina*, hanging in his account of Minerva's revenge, 6.131. The words could stand in apposition to the content of the pictures, which provides a kind of justification for Minerva's anger; or to the pictures themselves, suggesting how the very act of rivaling the god as a weaver makes art itself a crime; or finally to the actions of Minerva, making her own anger a fit continuation of Arachne's work. For a complementary critique, strongly differentiating art from power in the episode, see now Oliensis 2004.

³ Note the emphasis in the description on such proverbially worthless and insubstantial material as wool and clouds, as well as the lightness of her thumb and the tiny of her tools, spindle, and needle.

⁴ Parallels noted by Feeney 1991.191 and Wheeler 1995.

The role of metamorphosis and the emphasis on fictionality it brings take on a new aspect in this discussion. We have seen how, by inviting the audience to redraw the boundaries between fact and fiction and give assent to the poet's representation of the cosmos in priority to the world of experience, the marvelous elements of Ovid's narrative at once claim and deny a new seriousness for *fabulae* in relation to a variety of discourses ranging from more conventional epic to the public speech of the politician. A consequence of this will be to turn the poet himself into an unstable figure whose identity, like those of the characters subjected to metamorphosis, undergoes a continual transformation from servile to imperial, depending on the perspective from which his art is viewed. In this way, the shifting shape of the poet allows Ovid, again in the context of a work that seems most remote from the social context of Augustan Rome, to explore the position of the artist with a complexity that rivals that of the *Satires* and *Epistles* of Horace. Thus, where Fränkel coined the phrase "wavering identity" to describe the psychological fluidity of the characters within Ovid's poem, I reapply it here to the external, social identity of the author.

To begin the argument, I want to return to the link between fiction and authorial status discussed at the end of the preceding chapter by offering a reading of the *Metamorphoses*' conclusion. By referring to its own status as a work of art (*iam opus exegi*, 15.871), the poem marks its transition from the reality represented within the text to the reality within which the physical text exists. Ovid simultaneously seems literally to surpass himself by rivaling the real figure of Augustus even as that emperor stands on the verge of further ascent towards divinity. Out of this abundant material, which has prompted some of the most penetrating recent readings of the *Metamorphoses*, I focus only on the last 135 lines, describing what is arguably the poem's last metamorphosis, the catasterism of Caesar and its imagined sequels, the apotheosis of Caesar's successor Augustus and the immortality that the finished poem will give to Ovid himself. My point is to demonstrate how the different kinds of finality the poem claims for itself sketch a paradoxical and shifting relation between reality and representation centering on the figures of the emperor and poet. The second half of the chapter then relates this mutual emulation to the broader reception and dissemination of artistic representations in Augustan Rome and its political ramifications. This will be "fleshed out" in turn by analyses of scenes of rivalry between gods and human artists in the poem, especially Marsyas's flaying by Apollo and Daedalus's flight from Minos through the imitation of bird's wings. Read with an interest in the social contexts of artistic production in Augustan Rome, these tales take on new significance for understanding the poet's ambiguous self-fashioning as creator and imitator.

I. IMITATIONS OF IMMORTALITY

I start by offering a basic road map of the poem's final book as a whole and the structure of its last narrative. Book 15 begins just after the death of Romulus with a question about succession that, as Philip Hardie has shown,⁵ links the poem's narrative with the central political preoccupation of the time: who will come next? But the glance toward Rome and the future prepares for another regression, as the destined second king Numa abandons his fatherland to visit the Greek city of Croton, and the narrative is taken over by an inset tale describing that city's foundation (15.11–59). The reason for Numa's journey is a desire to supplement his knowledge of the rites of his own native place with an understanding of the nature of things as a whole, and for that he turns to the Greek philosopher Pythagoras. Pythagoras does not disappoint, giving a speech of more than four hundred lines (15.75–478) that can only be described as totalizing. This longest speech in the poem moves from a comprehensive picture of the functioning of the cosmos, based on perpetual flux and the transmigration of souls, to a prophecy of Rome's metamorphosis into the "head of the world." Numa leaves Pythagoras in order to fulfill his own historical destiny, which takes up four lines, one one-hundredth of the space dedicated to the meeting with Pythagoras. Then another Greek refugee, Hippolytus, takes center stage as he vainly attempts to console Numa's divine consort after the king's death with the account of his tragic fate before being reborn as the Italian god Virbius (15.493–546). The six hundred years between Numa's death and the assassination of Caesar provide only two narrative episodes. The first of these, the tale of Cipus (15.565–621), who selflessly withdraws from Rome after miraculous horns, a sign of his future kingship,⁶ sprout on his head. Just as it is unattested in the main historical narratives of early Rome and has no fixed date, this story stands outside the main stream of Ovid's narrative: Cipus's amazement at his new horns merely offers a point of comparison for Hippolytus's response to Egeria's transformation into a spring. The advent of the god Aesculapius (15.622–744), the next tale, by contrast is more solidly anchored both in the historical record—it can be dated to 292 BCE⁷—and in the architecture of the poem because it follows a formal evocation of the muses, who also guarantee its truth. But if these features should make the tale seem more real than its predecessor, the narrative itself requires yet another retreat to Greece, and the ambiguous god enters Italy by way of the home of Circe, who turns men into beasts.

⁵ Hardie 1997.

⁶ For a darker view of the Cipus story, see Barchiesi 1997a.186–87.

⁷ Noted by Barchiesi 1997a.188.

Imported Aesculapius provides a foil for Caesar, Rome's homegrown god (15.745–851).

This brief schema makes clear how the final book highlights the play between contrasting pairs on the level of style and content: Greece versus Rome, history versus myth, movement into the present versus a retreat into etiological legend, narrative versus digression.⁸ The difficult relationship between these opposing terms especially comes to the surface when the elaborate internal speeches of fantastically displaced characters like Pythagoras and Virbius bump up against the Roman historical events within which they are interwoven. Thus, Pythagoras's rejection of animal sacrifice, which would seem to make the natural philosophy he espouses irreconcilable with Numa's native rites, leads to Numa's return to Rome to institute sacrifices.⁹ Virbius's speech has no discernible consoling effect on Egeria.

The narrative's continual feints and retreats from Roman history to the world of Greek legend, and its reliance on so many dubious voices, have guided a number of different scholars toward the view that the final book demonstrates a triumph of textualization. The bulk of space taken up by other voices in the poem, which, as Stephen Wheeler has observed, completes a trend throughout the work of giving an increasingly large proportion of the text over to internal narrators, opens up a series of *mises en abyme*, inviting increasing speculation about the reliability of any reported fact or interpretation.¹⁰

Perhaps the most striking example of this deferral of authority comes with the figure of Pythagoras, whose words are explicitly described as "learned but not believed." The climax of that performance comes in another act of ventriloquism, as Pythagoras predicts the future glory of Rome and the apotheosis of its ultimate founder, Aeneas, by recounting the prophecy of the Trojan seer Helenus. Such crucial assertions about Rome's destiny not only occur as the poet reports a meeting that historical chronology ruled impossible (the Roman king Numa lived some hundred years before Pythagoras came to Italy) but also rely on the philosopher's own misremembering of words he heard when he was literally someone else.¹¹ Pythagoras seems to be misremembering because of the difference between his version and the direct report of Helenus's prophecy in the

⁸ In a sense the whole book is a digression—the second word *interea*, "meanwhile," locates its starting point as a turning away from the apotheosis of Hora, time herself (14.851) whose distinctive Romanness is marked by her "conjunction" with Quirinus.

⁹ Galinsky 1998.317 shows that Ovid gives no endorsement to the minority view, represented in Plut. *Numa* 8.8, that Numa's sacrifices too were bloodless.

¹⁰ Wheeler 1999, esp. 162–65.

¹¹ This analysis of Pythagoras's speech as a deconstruction of poetic authority was developed by Hardie 1997.185–87.

Aeneid, which Ovid has him cite.¹² Thus, the moment that signals the fallibility of Pythagoras report also encourages us to transfer its model of imperfect reproduction from the philosopher's speech to the poet's text, because Ovid is here varying his "authoritative" model. When the content of the poem matters most, in the sense that it comes closest to describing directly the immediate present and, more than that, to becoming prophecy itself by looking to the future, the text exposes its own reliance on mere words. The victory of Ovidian narrative falsehood over established tradition and the authority of texts like the *Aeneid* takes another form in the very obvious and well-documented transformations of emphasis as Homer and Vergil are Ovidianized through the later poet's foregrounding of the erotic and of verbal play.¹³ It is not just that this manipulative fancy pits Ovidian fiction against history and tradition, but, as Hardie has stressed,¹⁴ the Ovidian model infects all those previous stories: words are all there ever were, and Ovid's impossible Pythagoras comes to seem a paradigm of all utterance claiming to be true.

This tendency to view Ovid's poem as leading to a progressive "writing of the world," where the supreme power of the poet comes from breaking the ties between representation and reality even as the text shows its ability to engulf everything, has elements to attract many modern readers. It lends itself to easy politicization, especially for those with an anti-Augustan sensibility, as the master of the world has his domain and, as we shall see, his very identity snatched away by the master representer. At the same time, this reading evokes an idealized separation of art and politics: the poet's victory means becoming a book. But, as so often with Ovid, there is another side to this picture, one that presents a very much less optimistic view of the encounter of text and world and acknowledges the impossibility of the one ever dispensing with the other. Ovid's exposure of imperial fictions to poetic deconstruction will be balanced by an anxiety that he has made himself emperor of nothing, that the type of immortality he creates for himself depends entirely on his own words, that is, on keeping the reader's perspective located within his literary horizons. And the book is too full of examples of the irrelevance of its most impressive verbal performances to its historical "plot" for the loss involved in such a victory to escape notice.

An example of such play between omnipotence and powerlessness comes again in the final book's opening line: *Quaeritur interea, quis*

¹² *nate dea*, 15.439 ~ *nate dea*, *Aen.* 3.374. Helenus's speech in the *Aeneid* conveys nothing of the ultimate destiny of Rome but focuses on the necessities of Aeneas's coming voyage. For further inconsistencies between Pythagoras's "citation" and its Vergilian source, see Hardie 1997.188.

¹³ See Tissol 2002 for a recent treatment of this subject.

¹⁴ Hardie 1997.

tantae pondera molis / sustineat tantoque queat succedere regi ("Meanwhile there is a question about who will support the weight of so great a task and be able to succeed so great a king"). The present tense is entirely compatible with the narrative's own time frame as a historical present describing speculation after the death of Romulus. But there is nothing to keep it from being felt as a true present either, especially when we learn that the subject of the inquiry is succession. Kenney observes the ring composition that links this initial mention of Numa as successor to Romulus with Augustus as successor to Caesar.¹⁵ Yet hearing a reference to present speculations dramatically breaks into the neat textual preserve such a ring would mark off. What is being asked about "now" is not who will succeed Caesar but who will succeed Augustus. In the case of Numa, prophecy can indeed come to the rescue with a report, predictive of truth, that acquires immediate acquiescence¹⁶ because it is simply "history in the future tense." And if the present tense of *quaeritur* does suggest that this question has become a matter of interest to Ovid's readers, it is a powerful testimony to his narrative accomplishment: so absorbed are they in the flow of the narrative, driven by a desire to learn "what next," that they forget they already know.¹⁷ But once we look outside the circle of the poem, the stakes for prophecy become much higher. What will happen after Augustus is still an open question, which the poet is powerless to answer. This aspect of the book's opening also finds a corollary at its conclusion, not in the confident narrative of Caesar's deification, but in the prayer for Augustus's.

This final section of the book itself directs attention to the persuasive and representational capacities of speech and offers its many different sketches of the ways in which words relate to things as possible models of the Ovidian text. The promise that with the deification of Caesar the poem has finally escaped its interest in exiles and transference to discover an autochthonous god in the present tense, one who needs no explanation or etiology, is immediately thwarted. Caesar's divinity appears very much not to rely on his own authority, and correspondingly opens the door to yet another series of literary regressions, as the end of Ovid's poem seems to become the beginning of another epic—the *Aeneid*. The apotheosis of Caesar, then, will be performed by language in two related senses.

¹⁵ Kenney 1986.459–60.

¹⁶ This despite the inevitable suspicions of falsehood that the word *fama* brings after the ecphrasis in book 13 and its analysis by Zumwalt 1977, Feeney 1991.247–49, and Hardie 1997.194 and 2002c.236–38.

¹⁷ For another example of a "metanarratological" what next in the poem, see Wheeler's (1999.91–93) reading of the transition between books 2 and 3.

First and most notoriously, it relies on an obvious and tautological gambit on the part of Augustus who has made his father, a relationship that is itself not a natural given because Caesar became his father only by posthumous adoption, a god so that he could himself be something more than mortal.¹⁸ In this respect Caesar's metamorphosis into a star, flying higher than the moon and "dragging its fiery hair along a vast track" (*flammiferumque trahens spatioso limite crinem*, 15.849), may put us in mind of another of the poem's opening metamorphoses, featuring the hair of a maiden who flees slower than the sun. As Daphne's own metamorphosis conceals what made her distinctively memorable to glorify the god Apollo, so here Ovid ensures that the deification of Caesar is anything but a memorial to him, for the personal accomplishments for which a Roman leader would claim to be remembered, *bella* and *res gestae*, are made subordinate as grounds for immortality to the fact of having Augustus as his son (15.748). Essentially, Caesar's problem also bears a close resemblance to Ovid's: how much will his own poem's conquest of the world, or more precisely transversal of the conquered world, redound to his own glory, and how much will it become a vehicle for Augustus's? And Augustus himself wears a double aspect anticipating his position in much of what follows. He is at once a figure for the poetic capacity to make something out of nothing, and he is the figure of real power who stands very much at the pole of reality as against representation.

The second way in which the ending addresses the role of language in accomplishing Caesar's apotheosis is in some ways more conventional: apotheosis is itself at once miraculous and foreign—being distinctly based on the practices of Hellenistic monarchs, as the allusions to Callimachus's *Coma Berenices* never lets us forget¹⁹—and Roman and historical.²⁰ Correspondingly, the representation of apotheosis relies on an unlikely combination of Roman religious and legal imagery and the language and conventions of heroic epic. It replicates on the level of genre the larger problem that the ending as a whole addresses: what happens when a hexameter epic capable of accommodating the most miraculous tales of a foreign mythology reaches the present?

In the first instance, the two generic codes remain in tension with one another. Augustus's own act of self-aggrandizing god-making leads us directly to Venus begging for the aid of other gods to defend her descendant on the basis of past wrongs she has suffered. The gesture has many antecedents and seems to take us back to the unwarlike Aphrodite of the

¹⁸ Feeney 1991.210–11.

¹⁹ Barchiesi 1997a.196; Knox 1986.75–76.

²⁰ See Feeney 1991.218–19.

Iliad (an odd defender of Caesar, *Marte praecipuum*) and perhaps even to the “Viennese” Venus, begging her son for aid in the *Argonautica* of Apollonius.²¹ A more specific and interesting parallel, though, is Juno. As Venus here catalogs past sufferings to present herself as uniquely unable to protect those she loves, Juno begins the *Aeneid* (1.37–49) and punctuates its halfway point (7.294–322) with the complaint that she alone among the gods cannot avenge the wrongs done to her. Seeing Venus speaking the language of her enemy and referring precisely to that enemy while doing so (15.774) add to the effect of returning to an earlier narrative world: we are watching an *Aeneid* where the roles are inverted, and we are watching it in reverse. But what is most striking about Venus’s speech is its rhetorical success. Juno famously failed to win the aid of the gods and so was forced to “move Acheron.” Here Venus does move the gods (*superosque movet*, 15.780), but that successful act of persuasion is rendered vain (*nequiquam*, 15.799) because it comes up against another kind of language, the official Roman-sounding decrees (*decreta*) of the fates (a word never used in the *Aeneid*).

The generic confrontation is repeated in Venus’s next effort. With an insistence on repetition perhaps emblematic of heroic epic as a genre, after the failure of the omens to avert disaster, Ovid’s narrative seems to double back on itself by returning to a distraught Venus rummaging through a bag of conventional epic tricks, now preparing to whisk away her favorite concealed in a cloud (15.803–6). Venus’s proposed rescue of Caesar here implies the continuity of a pattern of epic action—she rescued Paris this way in *Iliad* 3, Aeneas in *Iliad* 5, and again wrapped her son in a cloud to protect him from the Carthaginians in *Aeneid* 1. To be sure, miraculous rescues of mortals by the gods are not uncommon in Homer, and the terms in which the personal intervention of Aphrodite is described in the scenes she recalls do not place an undue strain on the narrative conventions of the *Iliad*. Any competent reader of Homer would be able to understand them, and they do not seem, at least from the scholia, to have attracted any lightning bolts of skepticism. But the application of such epic devices to recent Roman history invites one to look at these conventions from outside, to imagine them applied to the experiences of the way things are.

Bound up with the question of the plausibility of such divine interventions is their effectiveness as panegyric. Describing a human achievement as the result of divine intervention can magnify the human actor, implying that his deeds are godlike, or perhaps simply that he is of sufficient stature to be a concern to the gods; conversely, it can have a deflating effect: the human hero cannot do it on his own. The latter interpretation will

be all the more likely when the hero involved is not achieving victory but sneaking away from defeat and is also a Trojan.²² We may thus ask how flattering an epic rescue of this sort would have been for Caesar.²³ Again, under pressure from real historical circumstances, Venus’s language fails to persuade. A gesture that might glorify the hero of an epic poem seems both to threaten the upward course of Roman history and to take on a different rhetorical valence when applied to a real person.

History quite literally blocks the course of Venus’s plans in the form of Jupiter’s speech. Not only does he contrast the way things might have been in the *Iliad* with the way things will be in first-century Rome, giving a résumé of Augustus’s career in lines 15.820–839 that includes the most recent history treated anywhere in the poem, but he validates his account with an appeal to the Fates’ “public records office” (*tabularia*, 15.810), an image that belongs much more to the realm of Roman political affairs and indeed is just the sort of place to which a historian might have recourse. The shift from “epic” description to historical prophecy comes to involve much more than the question of the right literary register for representing figures like Caesar and Augustus; it also has to do with a shift in the kind of authority the text claims for itself and the kind of representation it offers. Here, a curious difference emerges from the corresponding prophecy of Roman glory delivered at the beginning of the *Aeneid*: Ovid’s Jupiter seems far more concerned to establish his speech as the record of an externally verifiable reality. Vergil’s Jupiter speaks of “unrolling the fates’ mysteries” (*fatorum arcana volvere*, *Aen.* 1.262), an image that compares the foretelling of the future to the reading of a scroll but does not necessarily require a preexistent “book of fate.” “Unrolling the fates” could simply be a metaphor for narrating the future—moving forward in time, as if toward the end of a book. In any case there is no question about the force that will actualize that future; it is none other than the will of Jupiter himself: “I have given Rome empire without end.” Thus, for all the legitimate insistence from Vergilian scholars that Jupiter is himself textualized, no more than a character among other characters, and that there is no absolute guarantee for the reader that the god speaks the truth, rhetorically the effect is powerful indeed—the prophet himself is the one who will make (has already made—*dedi*) his words true. In Ovid’s case, though, Jupiter’s role is quite different. His first words, “Will you alone surpass the fates?” imply that not even he has such a power.

²² See Feeney 1991.53–54.

²³ Cf. Bömer’s (1986 ad loc) citation of the argument that a comparison to Paris, and to Aeneas himself under these circumstances would have instantiated precisely the kind of Trojan legacy the Julians would have wanted to avoid. My point is not that Ovid is himself casting veiled aspersions at Julius but that he is considering the implications of what this rejected language would have been.

²¹ The phrase comes from Johnson 1976.43.

Correspondingly his own authority, in the sense of his role as author of the speech, depends on another text. And not only is this text not metaphorical, but Jupiter takes some pains to establish its own existence and indelibility, as though any threat to the material substance of the inscription also imperiled the future that it predicted. So too, Jupiter's words stress the fidelity of his speech to that real inscription: "I myself have read it, and 'notated' it in my mind, and I shall report it" (*legi ipse animoque notavi et referam*, 15.814–15). If the world is indeed made text in Ovid's poem, then, as the technical scribal language of this passage suggests, it is also the case that the text dictates the world, and the highest authority comes from being an accurate reporter of it. The father of the gods has become an antiquarian.

But on every level Jupiter's speech leaves questions unanswered in ways that alert us to the impossibility of any such total grounding of authorial responsibility. Most obviously, he remains very much an epic figure and so draws attention to the continuity of Ovid's work as hexameter epic. His words also seem to stop at the very edge of what is knowable as history in Ovid's time: is the culmination of the prophecy he records that Augustus would live to a ripe old age, which was already a fact when Ovid wrote these words, or is it his divinization, which requires some real knowledge of the future (15.838–39)? And as Jupiter emerges as very much a poetic creation, so his role as mere reporter of the indestructible text of the fates, as opposed to inventor and rhetorical manipulator, also requires some qualifications. For all the insistence on the primacy of an absolutely determinative text, the more real that text becomes, the less accessible it is: Venus is allowed immediately to confirm Jupiter's report by autopsy: *intres licet ipsa sororum tecta trium* ... (15.808–9). She may have this power—and it is very suggestive that at the end of Ovid's poem the power of the gods is specified not as their ability to change fate but as their access to an accurate account of what fate will be—but we obviously have no such recourse. The word fate of course derives from the root that means "speak," and for every attempt to fix the Fates' decrees as an unchangeable text, speech they remain.

The tension between the facticity guaranteed by the Fates' written record and the way the truth it professes is qualified when those "*tabularia*" are refashioned as the speech of a character in an epic poem provides insight into the complex relationship between Ovid's epic telling and the world of historical reality, particularly the central "fact" it records: that Julius Caesar became a god. The poet says of Caesar's deification that "it was not so much his wars ending in triumph, and his domestic achievements [*resque domi gestae*] and the speeding glory of his accomplishments that turned him into a new star and trailing comet as his offspring" (15.747–50). Already in this passage the language of

historiography (*bella, res gestae*), not to say of reality (*res, rerum*), bumps up against a distinctly Ovidian miracle, metamorphosis (*vertit*) into a star. As subject of that verb, *vertit*, Augustus here becomes at once the cause and perhaps the author of the metamorphosis Ovid narrates. This seemingly simple statement, though, offers many handles for skepticism. First, how was it exactly that Augustus was responsible for the deification? In human, historical terms, he was perhaps the agent of it, but Ovid's language makes us think not of the particular act of deification as of its grounds: being Augustus's father was the most divine of Caesar's actions. And both of these possibilities in turn cry out for qualification. First, it was not strictly speaking Augustus who declared Caesar a god, but all of the triumvirs acting together (Dio 47.18.3–19.3). And though Augustus had been formally adopted as Caesar's son, the biological sense of *progenies* draws attention to the fact that this offspring was himself the product not of nature but of an official act. Ultimately, of course, as Hardie emphasizes,²⁴ the treatment of Caesar's divinization reveals a tautological "poetics of divinity" by which Caesar makes the son who makes him a god in order that he himself should not be of mortal birth.

Ovid's narrative, however, significantly occludes the central facts behind this mutual exaltation society. He never acknowledges the adoption of Augustus or the official proclamation of Caesar's divinity. Rather, he tells the story as an epic poet would, with the gods as actors and agents. It is no longer Augustus (not to speak of Antony or Lepidus) who made Caesar a god, but Jupiter, and while the end result was to magnify Augustus further, again the aim belongs to the god, not to the man. We might take this purposeful avoidance as itself contributing to an ironic intent: by not referring to these proclamations Ovid presents the story that results from them in a way that draws attention to its own constructedness. But this is not all there is to it. An alternative reading might stress instead how Ovid's version exalts rather than exposes the fact-making power of words. Just as he moves away from recounting the stuff of history (not only decrees of adoption but also Caesar's *res gestae*, and indeed the whole annalistic history of the republic, as he proceeds not from consul to consul but from apotheosis to apotheosis), so he naturalizes the products of that history by presenting a story that makes them result not from mere convention but from the way things are. Caesar may have declared Octavius his *filius*, but Ovid makes him his offspring (*progenies*). And Caesar may have been proclaimed a *deus*, but it is left for a poet (with a long history of learned panegyric behind him) literally to turn him into a star. And in narrating the story this way, the epic poet also confuses the priority of the historical and epic narratives. We may say that Ovid

²⁴ Hardie 1997.189–95.

writes this story because political authorities at Rome have prescribed Caesar's divinization, and Ovid's acknowledgment of this—significantly expressed, as Hardie notes, through the literary language that makes Augustus Caesar's *maius opus*²⁵—reveals the extent to which he defers to their precedence. Yet the story he tells, like every other aetion, claims priority to the reality that records it; Ovid tells us not that Caesar became a god but how and why he did, and the real causes are to be found not in historical *Realpolitik* but in a poem whose miracles precisely resist its translation into fact. If Ovid has acknowledged the historical prompt for his poetry in Caesar's *acta*, he has simultaneously refashioned the emperors themselves into his own image as poets. A similar generic tension between history and epic also shapes the dynamics of the work's reception: the unbelievable aspect of Ovid's narrative can either expose the fictionality in what history proclaims as true (that Caesar is a god and Augustus a *divus filius*) or, reading from the poetic inside out, provide the right language for making such claims and supplant history as the way to describe succession, which is wholly at home in the unhistorical world of Ovidian poetry. This example illustrates how the juxtaposition of epic and historical registers allows Ovid at once to intervene in political discourse and explicitly to stage that intervention by drawing attention to the various ways of positioning his poetry in relation to history.

Jupiter's speech also calls attention to the shuttling between historical representation and epic fiction, and the importance of these alternations for reading the poem's politics, because it contains the poem's most explicit presentation of the emperor Augustus:

... *natusque suus, qui nominis heres
inpositum feret unus onus caesique parentis
nos in bella suos fortissimus ultor habebit.
illius auspiciis obsessae moenia pacem
victa petent Mutinae, Pharsalia sentiet illum,
Emathiiue iterum madefient caede Philippi,
et magnum Siculis nomen superabitur undis,
Romanique ducis coniunx Aegyptia taedae
non bene fisa cadet, frustra erit illa minata,
servitura suo Capitolia nostra Canopo.
quid tibi barbariam gentesque ab utroque iacentes
oceanum numerem? quodcumque habitabile tellus
sustinet, huius erit: pontus quoque serviet illi!
Pace data terris animum ad civilia vertet*

*iura suum legesque feret iustissimus auctor
exemploque suo mores reget inque futuri
temporis aetatem venturorumque nepotum
prospiciens prolem sancta de coniuge natam
ferre simul nomenque suum curasque iubebit,
nec nisi cum senior meritis aequaverit annos,
aetherias sedes cognataque sidera tanget.*

(15.819–39)

... and his son, who as heir of his name will also bear the burden of his murdered parent, will, as a mighty avenger, count us on his side in war. The walls of besieged Mutina, conquered under his auspices, will seek peace. Pharsalia will experience him, and Thessalian Philippi will twice be drenched in slaughter, and the great name Magnus will be bested on the Sicilian waves, and the Aegyptian wife of a Roman commander, too confident in her marriage, will fall and will have threatened in vain that our Capitol would be a slave to her Canopus. Why should I number barbarity for you and the nations east and west? Whatever habitable territory the earth supports will be his, and the sea will be his slave. And once peace has been achieved on earth, he will turn his attention to civil laws and, as the fairest author, will propose legislation and by his example will guide morality, and providing for the future and for his descendants to come, he will order the offspring born from his sanctified wife to bear his name as well as his cares. Nor will he reach the heavens and the stars that are his kin until as an old man he will have made his years equal to his achievements.

Not only do Jupiter's words bring Augustus's accomplishments before the reader, but Augustus himself emerges as a speaker within the passage, as Jupiter's language comes very close to the emperor's own account of his deeds. The passage in lines 832–34, as has been long noted, approximates the phrases of the *Res Gestae*, which would be inscribed on Augustus's mausoleum and in many other prominent places throughout the empire.²⁶ The poem's incorporation of this language, in the context of a

²⁶ See discussion in Hardie 1997.192. The chronological problem involved in such "allusions" has never quite been solved. Fairweather 1987.193, on echoes of the *Res Gestae* in *Tristia* 4.10, presumes that Ovid would have had access to none of the drafts of Augustus's *elogium* before it was inscribed after his death and that both texts have a common source in Augustus's autobiography of 25 BCE. But this solution would not account for either of the echoes in the *Metamorphoses* (RG 8.5, as a reference to laws passed by the emperor would itself seem to postdate 25 BCE. On the second echo, at 6.195, see chapter 7, section 1; again the reference is to a historical event, the deaths of Gaius and Lucius much later than the date of the autobiography). Without being able to prove it, I consider the possibility either that

²⁵ Hardie 1997.191.

speech within a speech and thus doubly embedded in the uncertainties of epic representation, has seemed the ultimate mark of its power to make everything a part of its own text. But the immanence of the emperor in the real-world context of the poem has the power to change everything. At precisely the moment when he becomes one of the most remote of the poem's figures, separated from the actual audience by two levels of reported speech (the narrator reporting Jupiter's words), he also possesses a presence that differentiates him not only from the mythological characters of the early portion of the poem, and even from its now dead and/or deified historical personages, but especially from the very god, Jupiter, whose conventional power as prophetic god adds luster to his deeds. The penultimate passage of the poem ends with a prayer that Augustus's stay on earth may be further prolonged, before he "aids those entreating him as an absent divinity" (*faveatque precantibus absens*, 15.870). When he does so, he will join a set of gods that includes both central figures of Roman cult, like Vesta, and figures whose deification the poem itself has narrated, like Romulus/Quirinus, and the protagonists of the poem's strictly mythological tales, like Jupiter himself. But until that moment, he occupies quite a different realm, as the poem's only god whose presence is achieved by something other than representation.

This presence complicates the all-encompassing sweep of Ovidian narrative. Now, rather than becoming a character like any other and having his *Res Gestae* become, in Hardie's words, "just another kind of text to quote," in a context that has highlighted the distance between all texts and reality, Augustus becomes the reality that guarantees the text. We can read the *Res Gestae* through the lens of epic utterance, or we can see the real inscription as giving an extraordinary affirmation of the correctness of Jupiter's prophecy, one that lifts this particular speech to a whole new plane. But such exaltation comes with a price, because words gain such authority only by borrowing it from the emperor.

This positioning of the emperor inside and outside of the text emerges in other ways in the speech. It is no accident that the particular passage of the *Res Gestae* quoted stresses the overlap between the emperor's role as representation and as representer. Augustus both culls all of history for examples worthy of imitation and, partly perhaps by doing so, offers himself as an example to be imitated. As Ovid's pairing of the verb *reget* with the instrumental *exemplo* suggests, the emperor's power to com-

the earlier versions of the *Res Gestae* were more public than Fairweather suggests or, more likely, that the final version of the inscription contains language already familiar from the official self-presentation of the *princeps* sufficiently plausible to make the similarity to the *Res Gestae* in this passage worth discussing.

mand itself closely coexists with this ability to perpetuate images. But by positioning this quote at the culmination of his survey of Augustan accomplishments, Ovid also locates this movement into representation, so to speak, with the point at which the real emperor's life ends and the present gives way to the future.²⁷

The evocation of the metamorphosis theme in the passage also raises questions about the historical emperor's superiority to the world of representation. Augustus's principate effects a change that is at once global and present, tempting one to read it, as we saw in the preceding chapter, as the historical phenomenon that the poem's very emphasis on transformation allegorically figures. Indeed, the many different ways in which the poem has taught us to view change open out contrasting responses to Augustus's accomplishments. The pacification of the world, carefully segregated into its components of land, sea, and sky, recalls the ordering of chaos with which the poem begins. Similarly, Augustus, exercising divine "providence," aims for this ruling process to extend into the future as well, (15.834–35) so as to plant change itself solidly in the past and make the future preserve the quiet face of its final results. At the same time, such peace is brought about only through the chaos of civil war, which, as the *iterum* in line 824 stresses, implies the possibility of repetition. Against an image of the world where change is viewed as something that is over, the account of civil wars reintroduces a cosmos where everything flows. The poem itself begins with a sweeping account of the world we know that bears all the signs of finality, but by a few hundred lines into the second book, this ordered cosmos will twice have lapsed into chaos.

While reiterating the larger question of the finality of change, Jupiter's prophecy of imperial Rome also introduces the same kind of narratological problems as other metamorphoses: how much do we see transformation from the distant perspective of hindsight, and how much does the persistence of a recognizable identity between before and after allow for a kind of narrative absorption that resists the unidirectional flow of history?

In the case of this particular passage, the figure who brings such questions to a head is Augustus. For beyond being the force, at once poetic and divine, that produces change, the emperor himself undergoes metamorphoses, transformed from the mere avenger of his human father to one who shares his immortality. In terms of the historical Augustus, the most obvious transformation, perhaps, comes at the moment of the pacification of the earth, when he "turns his mind" to internal matters and to the future: that very phrase *animum . . . vertet* makes the emperor's

²⁷ Hardie 1997.193–95.

mind the object of the poem's most common verb for "change."²⁸ Also very relevant to this process is the issue of naming. Changes of titulature from Octavius to Caesar Octavianus, to Augustus, to, presumably, Divus Augustus (contrast Divus Iulius in Jupiter's closing line 15.842), provided one of the most powerful ways for the emperor himself to demarcate the different phases of his life. But as we have learned to ask how much of the past self survives in any new shape, the language of the passage, which abounds in references to naming, raises the question of how final the "word" can really be. In addition to becoming Augustus, an unprecedented honorific title all his own, the *princeps* must also become another Caesar, both in name and, by staining the Thessalian plains again with slaughter, in deed. In addition to the possibility of reading back to Caesar through Augustus, the references of any of the titles Augustus takes on turn out to be very fluid. When Octavian distinguishes himself from the other triumvirs, by becoming the only (*unus*) heir of Caesar, he also takes on the immediately juxtaposed *onus* of a slaughtered man (*caesi*, as opposed to the tale of the comet, *caesaries*, that manifests his divinity in the sky, *caelum*). And the repetition of the slaughter in Thessaly adds an equally unwelcome active element (*caede*) to the assassination that defines what it means to be a Caesar.²⁹ In summary, as the producer of change it is Augustus who, like the gods in the poem's first lines, has created the changes that the poet merely records. But as a figure undergoing change, Augustus is bound up within the text of the poem; he has become part of its subject matter rather than its source, and our interpretation of him is subject to its rules.

To this point, we have seen the question of priorities between poetic representation and historical reality played out through an insoluble generic struggle between epic fiction and historical reality. The way we read this struggle has important consequences for the political status of Ovid's

²⁸ Ninety-two examples; see Anderson 1963.2. And the composition of a peaceful world undertaken by Augustus as *auctor* begins with a textual transformation that echoes Ovid's own beginnings: in the poem's first lines the enjambed *corpora* forces the reader to reconstrue the grammar of the sentence. Here a similar enjambment marks an important transformation in the reader's expectations. We might expect the adjective *civilia* (15.832) to modify the noun *bella*, but here as peace comes to the world, civil wars are rewritten as civil laws, *iura*.

²⁹ These puns on the name of Caesar are treated in detail by Ahl 1985.86–91. There is perhaps no better sign of the emperor's subordination to textuality than the changes the poet rings on the very titles the emperor uses to define himself—the celebration of the authorizing power of the written word contrasts with a destabilization of meaning that comes about precisely through puns. Yet the paradox, as we shall see, is that, as Augustus's words move beyond his control, there is no one the emperor resembles so much as the poet himself, whose own position of poetic maker will be constantly threatened by the danger that his words merely echo another's.

text in part because the two cast such different lights on Augustan accomplishments. These accomplishments either are themselves caught up in a matrix of changeability and misrepresentation or emerge as the supreme truth Ovid's poem works to reflect. Additionally, the extent to which we read Augustan reality through Ovid itself demands reevaluation of the relative prestige and control wielded by the author. This politics of textualization, so to speak, gives a new color as well to the ending's interest in the issue of succession. It is not just that the ultimate expression of mortal power, whether of a poet or a prince, is the ability to escape the condition of mortality by self-perpetuation, but successor and predecessor, as imitation and model, each define and limit the status of one another. We observe this process at work in the case of Julius and Augustus. In a positive reading, both sustain one another's reputation without any regard for their own. Thus, Caesar's new status as star not only glorifies the dictator by making him conspicuous but also makes the father bear witness that his son's accomplishments are greater. As an "eye in the sky," he "testifies that the good deeds of his son surpass his own and rejoices to be conquered by him" (15.850–51). Augustus, by contrast, forbids his own deeds to take priority over his father's, but the free speech of the evaluators refuses to acknowledge this priority. Yet Ovid's phrasing here is so fraught with paradox that it cannot but suggest the very rivalry whose possibility it has so explicitly precluded. Can the leader famous for the phrase *veni, vidi, vici* really rejoice to be conquered (*vinci gaudet*, 15.851), or does the suggestion that he can do so drive a further wedge between the real Caesar and the one commemorated? In the case of Augustus, the very existence of dissenting speech flatters the restorer of the republic, yet its one overt appearance in the closing panegyric makes disobedience the means only of further praising the emperor.

As the voice of the narrator becomes the mouthpiece for *libera fama* by indulging in his own comparisons between father and son, the reference to *tituli* (15.855, at once "honors" and, specifically, "inscriptions") reminds us how much the emperor dictates Ovid's poetic procedures. The comparison enacted in the passage is one that Augustus himself invited and indeed gave as the purpose for the erection of galleries of inscribed statues in his own forum: in an edict of his own, he claimed to have set up the statues, "so that against the [standard] of these men, as if an exemplar, both he himself while he lived and the *principes* of coming ages would be measured by the citizens" (Suet. *Aug.* 31.5). Here, too, the past is given a guiding power over the future, and even the present. But what would it look like from the future? What if one of Augustus's successors similarly surpasses his own virtues?

The dynamics of imitation addressed here is crucial to my investigation of the links between art and social status represented in and involv-

ing Ovid's text. We have seen the issue played out in parallel sequences both by the emperor as successor to Julius and Romulus and Aeneas—all, incidentally, figures literally present in the Forum of Augustus—and by Ovid in relation to Vergil and Homer. But it also affects the relationship between the two spheres, as the very account of Caesar's yielding to Augustus makes clear. Ovid catalogs a number of mythical fathers whose renown was surpassed by their children: Atreus's by Agamemnon, Aegeus's by Theseus, and Peleus's by Achilles. The culmination of the catalog comes with Saturn and Jupiter, as Ovid points out with the phrase, "that I might use exemplars matching [the comparands] themselves." This interesting borrowing of the emperor's own term, *exemplar*, makes it clear that not only father and son are being compared here; the poetic comparison is set against its historical original. Here again we should note how specifically different Ovid's set of models is from those selected by the emperor in his forum. All of Ovid's pairs come from the world of poetry and myth, and indeed the last image may well be read as more antagonistic to the imperial self-image than any that have gone before: Jupiter, precisely because he is an immortal, cannot naturally and peacefully succeed his father but must overthrow him. This mythological parallel thus threatens to supplant the panegyric tendencies of the preceding lines, even as Jupiter does Saturn. Such a rivalry between image and reality, as a poetic succession myth obtrudes into the very Roman space of the forum signals again the mirroring between poet and emperor as Ovid shifts from spectator in the forum, indulging in the free comparison facilitated by the *princeps*'s own constructs, to the role of imperial successor seeking to match the virtues there depicted. By a parallel metamorphosis, the very comparison allows Augustus figuratively to supplant his own father: the simile begins with Augustus in the role of Jupiter as son, but its validity is affirmed with the final flourish that Jupiter and Augustus—as both their names necessitate—each act as *pater et rector*.

Before turning to the poet's epilogue, let me give a brief summary of the ways that emperor and poet function to define one another in book 15. The poet "writes" the emperor in the sense that he incorporates both Augustus and Augustus's representation of himself within a verbal construct whose authority continually slips away, which has no proof of what it says except in the saying. But viewed a different way, the emperor gives precisely that proof: if the real-world power of Augustus is taken as a given—and the strict illogicality of this move might not have seemed so inevitable in the predeconstructionist days when the emperor sat on the Palatine—then his emergence from the text and the congruence that develops between his own monuments and inscriptions and the poem's language lend the poet's words an extratextual support that the literary tradition itself cannot. To read the text from within, with the emphasis

on its own constructive powers, means seeing the emperor anew as a character in this all-embracing narrative: Ovid is the master of this world, although, appropriately we only see that after, when we look up from the text, but it is a world whose truth and reality must constantly slip away. On the other hand, to start with a recognition of the real presence of the emperor and to judge Ovid by whether, as the poet puts it, he "uses examples matching the realities" anchor the poet's representation in the solidity of the here and now, but it is Augustus who plays the god. Correspondingly, neither quite departs from the sphere of the other, so that the rubrics of literature and life cannot ever be fully disengaged: we never stop looking at Ovid's words or Augustus's from inside the tradition of hexameter epic. But we never look at them merely that way.

As the text's narrative self-referentiality generates this ambiguity about whether the poet and his work have become everything or nothing, so too does the curious play between script and speech in the poem's famous epilogue:

*Iamque opus exegi, quod nec Iovis ira nec ignis
nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere vetustas.
cum volet, illa dies, quae nil nisi corporis huius
ius habet, incerti spatium mihi finiat aevi:
parte tamen meliore mei super alta perennis
astra ferar, nomenque erit indelebile nostrum,
quaque patet domitis Romana potentia terris,
ore legar populi, perque omnia saecula fama,
siquid habent veri vatum praesagia, vivam.*
(15.871–79)

And now I have wrought a work that neither the anger of Jupiter, nor fire, nor the sword, nor devouring age will be able to wipe away. Whenever it wills, let that day which has power over nothing but this body end the uncertain span of my life. Nevertheless, with the better part of myself I shall be born above the stars, eternal, and my name shall be indestructible. Wherever Roman power extends over conquered lands, I shall be spoken of by the people, and if the predictions of singers have any truth, I shall live in speech through all ages.

In having "completed a monument," Ovid advances a double comparison, both to the literary model Horace (C. 3.30.1), whose own claim to immortality he has emulated and updated with the initial *iam* ("Now *that's* a monument"), and to the inscribed monuments of the emperor, which the account of Julius's apotheosis has put in play. In particular, though, the language invites analogies between Ovid's text and another piece of writing contained within it: the inscription in the house of the

fates that guarantees the apotheosis of Caesar and predicts the Augustan present:

*cernes illic molimine vasto
ex aere et solido rerum tabularia ferro,
quae neque concursum caeli neque fulminis iram
nec metuunt ullas tuta atque aeterna ruinas;
invenies illic incisa adamante perenni
fata tui generis.*

(15.809–14)

You will see there on a vast construction the records of events in bronze and solid iron, which dread neither the clashes of the sky nor the wrath of the thunderbolt nor, as they are secure and everlasting, any collapse; and you will discover there, inscribed in ageless adamant, the destiny of your race.

At first, the poem may again seem to struggle to become as resistant to the elements as the adamant letters of the fates, even to be the very text described there. And yet another perspective reveals an important difference that places the two on either side of a crucial divide. Ovid's poem will not be destroyed by iron or time, but fate's inscription is iron and time. Not only, then, does the poet's work not partake of the same kind of materiality, but the inscription's very substance seems to emblemize some of the forces that threaten to destroy Ovid's text. In retrospect, this opposition should not surprise us, because poets traditionally favorably compared their works to physical monuments to stress that words lasted longer than marble or bronze. Time has legitimate power only over this *corpus*, but what *corpus* is that? Just the poet's physical body, and not the "body" of his work, a disembodied body? So too, when we read of the poet's indestructible name, we wonder whether it is materially indestructible, harder even than the adamant letters of the fates, or whether it is indestructible precisely because there is nothing there to destroy. The name is only there because the poet says it is—quite literally, because Ovid's immortalization epitomizes the poem's self-authorizing fictions. His life depends on nothing other than his own prophetic voice containing something of reality. And that is precisely what we are not sure it does.

Of course, it is possible, even obvious, to read the scripted and spoken as complements: no physical text, no prompt for speech. No speech, and the text is never reanimated in the now. And, as the word *corpus* especially suggests, no speech can totally break the thread that ties it to the physical world. The slighter that thread becomes—paper instead of iron—the more liable it is precisely to destruction. But by following up Ovid's hint at the opposition between the two ways of conceptualizing

his work, we perceive more clearly how the ending brings to a fitting culmination the essential paradoxes of its poetics. It is most powerful when it is nothing, when it lives only on breath and the shifting doubleness of *fama*.

This much more guarded evaluation of the triumph of the book at the poem's close stands in contrast to the optimistic readings even of those very critics who have themselves drawn greatest emphasis to the poem's preoccupation with the limits to any text's power. Feeney, for example, argues that the lines show the poet committing himself entirely to the slippery world of literary *fama*. It is the poet's words, as the last line makes clear, that alone guarantee his immortality, but this puts him on the side of the masters of language, as opposed to those who rely on *fama* to preserve their deeds.³⁰ Hardie too promotes the kind of self-produced immortality Ovid projects for himself over the emperor's claims to live on through deification and through the production of an heir like himself, a process that requires a control over future *fama* that no one can possess, except of course the poet who puts the very words in his readers' mouths.³¹ His position acknowledges that Ovid's trick works only if "the World has been completely reduced to Text"³² but perhaps downplays the poem's ambiguity about such a reduction: "The matchless poet at the very end, with no anxiety about *his* succession, stands in pointed contrast to finding an imperial successor."

The sense of a poetic trumping of the "historical" immortality of the divinized emperor comes above all from Ovid's vow to be carried above the stars; if Caesar was star quality, so to speak, Ovid has surpassed him. But other elements of the ending set out a set of likenesses and differences to the imperial gods that qualify such a view. Both poet and emperor are to achieve the tricky state of the absent presence. But the emperor works in part through monumental complexes like the Forum Augustum as well as inscriptions like those on his mausoleum. If Ovid shows these artifacts to be less reliably predictive of the precise terms fame will use to record the emperor, they at least make him impossible quite to ignore. The poet's material presence is much harder to pin down. Ovid's final account of his completed *opus* has been claimed to approximate such imperial constructs,³³ but another glance back at the Horatian in-

³⁰ "Ovid presents himself as a new repository for the *Fama*, which future generations will inherit. Some of the inhabitants of the House of Fame suffer oblivion; but Ovid will live, as his last lines defiantly proclaim, with the final verse containing a last ironic explosion of the doubt over the truth of words." Feeney 1991.248.

³¹ Hardie 1997.194.

³² Hardie 1997.194. "Augustus' problem, we may grant, is more difficult."

³³ Wickkiser 1999.

tertext complicates this impression. Horace unambiguously spoke of his text as a *monumentum*; Ovid employs the much broader *opus*, making the building metaphor less insistent, if still available. The physicality of the poet's *opus* diminishes further when we notice Ovid's transference of the specific properties Horace gave to his. The *monumentum* of the lyric poet was to be lofty (*altius*) and eternal (*perennis*); Ovid appropriates for his *opus* some of the proofs of this longevity—resistance to time, for example—but when these particular adjectives appear, back to back at the end of line 875, the point of reference is no longer the *opus* itself but the “eternal” soul of Ovid that rises above the “lofty” stars as it leaves the world behind.

My point is that the Ovidian ascent is alternatively imperial, borrowing the language and means of imperial self-propagation, and poetically insubstantial, consisting, as Feeney and Hardie describe, of a self-produced *nomen*. Script and speech, which as images symbolically spell out this opposition, do so functionally as well. The reception of the text as written artifact gives it “presence” but highlights the separation of audience and author.³⁴ By contrast, the absorbed hearing of the text succeeds in bringing the author to life, but with the prospect of a much less certain future. The two words that frame the epilogue, *iam* and *vivam*, help to put these alternatives into play. For the absorbed reader, the idea of *iam* becoming the now of her present provides one of the most compelling examples of Ovidian magic, as the temporal horizon of the audience merges with the speaking voice of the author at the point of his own metamorphosis. Yet just at the moment that that voice proclaims its immortality, it stops. If this model of reception, depending on reading the poem from within, marks *vivam* out as the ending, a consciousness of the material artifact of the text highlights a different kind of metamorphosis that can indeed make the end of the work its own beginning.³⁵ The epilogue marks the moment at which the production of the poem ends, and the life of the poem as a completed written text begins. In this case, though, the value of the *iam* changes to that of a marker for a single historical point, now in the past, in which the present object was created.³⁶ The presence of the text increases with the absence of the author, and vice versa. Like any other metamorphosis, the poem's ending invites opposed reading strategies, which cast very different lights on what the poet has achieved. The two conceptions may indeed be easily reconciled, but in holding them apart for an instant, we gain a clearer

³⁴ This point is anticipated in Farrell 1999.128–33, and see Hardie 2002c.97.

³⁵ See too Barchiesi 1997a.195, especially on the anagram *incip*, marking first five lines of the poem's *envoi* (15.871–75), which thus begin to be a beginning, but only in their written, not their oral, form.

³⁶ On *iam*, cf. Feeney 1999.30.

sense of the extent to which fiction and empire inevitably define one another throughout the work.

II. RECEPTION AND SOCIAL IDENTITY

The poem's ending, as the preceding section has shown, highlights the degree of assent granted to its fiction as a political question not merely through incorporating real political figures and their words into its own dubiously reliable matrix of representation but because the continual balancing of the material reality such a figure as Augustus conjures up against the evanescent manipulations of fiction brings to the fore an evaluation of the kind of authority we grant to the poet himself. Now it is time to deepen the significance of this question of priorities by making our own transition from work to world. I want to suggest that the kind of interpretative choices required of Ovid's audience really do imitate and reproduce the hermeneutic challenges that lay at the core of the political impact of the emperor's actual monuments. The threatened imperial appropriation of Ovid's poem that comes about when we see Ovid as imitator of an Augustan reality thus finds its corollary both in the poem's reinterpretation of actual monuments of the emperor as artist and also in the very recentering on his own work of an aesthetic experience that was anything but apolitical. This competition between imperial artist and artistic emperor, which already elides the boundaries between power and art, will also help us understand Ovid's concern with artistic priority as something more than a literary preoccupation with the anxiety of influence. Rather, status and social capacity in Augustan society can be mapped by artistic roles, by the extent to which one is a producer, an imitator, or a reader of images. The figure of the poet, therefore, the extent to which he emerges from his own “changed forms,” becomes, like the disguised Io, one in which contemporary audiences could also recognize themselves.

The conception of the emperor as himself the practitioner of a cosmic poetics is one whose force would have escaped no contemporary. Crafted images like the map erected by Agrippa depicting the shape of the world occupy prominent positions in the imperial city. The emperor's own account of his accomplishments, the *Res Gestae*, is studded with geographic references that summon up an image of the ordered empire as the prime monument of Augustus's accomplishment.³⁷ And this geography was not just something for the reader to imagine. The *Res Gestae*, inscribed at the entrance to the mausoleum of the imperial family, formed part of an

³⁷ Nicolet 1991.15–27.

even larger monumental complex whose function as a representation of cosmic order was made explicit by the dominating presence of a giant obelisk, spoils of the victory over Egypt that literally united the world by ending the schism between East and West. The shadow of this obelisk served as the marker on a solar meridian and also formed the visual organizer for a complex of monuments, including the emperor's tomb and the Ara Pacis.³⁸ As Ovid's poem seems to call the cosmos into being by representing it, so the emperor's depictions of the world in Rome recall his literal shaping of territory through conquest, administrative organization, and building programs. For beyond iconographic associations of imperial power with the ordering of the world, his mark was apparent in the actual landscape of empire, from the straight roads that gave shape to provincial domains to the apportionment of the land belonging to colonies in rectilinear plots.

If this coalescence between representation and represented reality lends even greater authority to Augustus's deployment of cosmic imagery, another issue involving the status of imitations can undercut its message. For Augustus occupies the curious double position of creator and artistic subject here—again like Ovid—providing the ultimate authority attesting to his own power. What does it mean to link the conquest of Egypt to the proper ordering of time? That the event has a role to play in some cosmic scheme preordained by some higher power, or that Augustus himself is that power? Is he the architect, or the subject, of the cosmic plan? Both ideas can exalt; both can even be made compatible with one another, but they need not be. And if they are not they reveal the same fact that Ovid's own accounts of Augustus make more explicit, the emperor's own role in the creation of the mythical props for his authority.

How far this kind of oppositional reading was pursued by any individual viewer is of course an unanswerable question, but the very possibility of constructing such an interpretation reveals that the presentation of imperial power through visual images was a much more uncertain business than used to be imagined. Far from constituting mere propaganda, valuable because it reveals the public image Augustus chose to present, the artistic and architectural projects of the period, amounting to an almost total transformation of Rome's visual environment, make the reception of images increasingly the locus for a complex dialogue about the nature of the Roman state. Participation in this act of viewing—inevitable for anyone with eyes, Roman or barbarian, free or slave, male or female—both depended on and defined position within the civic sphere.

Recent scholarship has illuminated a number of aspects of this process that were truly dialogic, that involved not just the projection outward of

a prepackaged self-image, but the definition of that image on the part of a number of participants. Paul Zanker,³⁹ for example, has stressed that the very production of Augustus's image was not monolithically controlled from the center but the result of a collaborative effort on the part of artists, patrons, poets, and moneyers, each of whom may or may not have been following trends or trying to give the *princeps* what he wanted, but who could also fashion the emperor as they wanted him to be. And these images, whatever their origins, far from merely representing reality or a version of it, could also come to constrain and shape it.⁴⁰ Even one of the monuments that most transparently reflected Augustus's authority, the Forum of Augustus with its exemplary statues of the great men of the republic, exerts its own pressure on the emperor's behavior. In principle, the virtuous deeds recorded in the forum may appear subsumed by the accomplishments of Augustus, as his forum provides the locus for their display; they enshrine qualities that he has already made his own. But as we saw in the preceding section, the emperor's own account of the purpose of these monuments, disseminated by edict, puts things quite differently: there he claimed to have set up the statues, "so that against the [standard] of these men, as if an exemplar, both he himself while he lived and the *principes* of coming ages would be measured by the citizens." The emperor's words here may be regarded as a backhanded assertion of his own excellence. He, after all, would not have set the test unless he could pass it. Yet, of course, the emperor was absolutely right: every laudatory monument put in place raises the stakes for his own behavior. If in the eyes of its viewers that behavior falls short of the imperial public image, the whole elaborate edifice becomes an indictment rather than a glorification of his reign.

As this last point reveals, conceptions of how the "power of images" worked in Augustan Rome depend in turn on an understanding of how the meaning of images is fixed. Those who consider that the image means what the author or producer says it means and that viewers who interpret it differently are getting it wrong naturally tend to view Augustan self-representation more as the unidirectional sending of a coherent message. And coherence and clarity have become the hallmarks of Augustan culture in contrast to the multiplicity of competing systems of visual language typical of the collapsing republic. Others, who make the reader-recipient the arbiter of meaning, open the door to a much wider range of responses and portray the reception of images as a bargaining process that allows for whatever the presenter may have intended a work to say

³⁹ Zanker 1990.265–74.

⁴⁰ See Feeney 1992: the literary corollary of this view of artistic representation will be found particularly in Kennedy 1992.

³⁸ See Heslin 2007, esp. 15–16.

to be potentially subjected to revision, inversion, and mockery. Attempts to combine a recognition of the multiplicity of an audience's responses with a belief that there does exist a basic, agreed-upon sense of what an image means at first seem to provide a sensible and productive alternative to either extreme position. In particular Karl Galinsky has argued for a model of "authorial" control in Augustan culture based closely on the emperor's methods of exercising political power.⁴¹ As the *princeps* eschewed offices and privileges that would have directly compelled obedience, relying instead on the esteem and authority he enjoyed to make his subjects participants in the aims of his regime, so as an "author" he employs sophisticated and complex representations of his ideals that communicate on many levels. Thus, the viewers work out for themselves what the intention of the image is, guided by their own knowledge and experience, which have in turn been attuned to the visual and mythical language the emperor uses.

For example, the great portico of the Danaids, erected in 25 BCE as part of the temple of Apollo on the Palatine, confronted its viewers with statues of the fifty daughters of the Greek king Danaus killing their bridegrooms and cousins, the sons of Aegyptus, whom they had been compelled to marry. By its nature an ambiguous story, it becomes all the more so in its immediate political context, five years after the defeat of an Egyptian queen who was also, inconveniently, the ally of a Roman triumvir.⁴² While the most common interpretation makes the Danaids the heroes of the episode, beating back foreign aggressors as Augustus's troops had overwhelmed the Egyptians at Actium, another places emphasis on the Danaids' own impious act: like Cleopatra herself, these women become unnatural monsters demanding punishment. As Galinsky sees it, the image, despite the potentially troubling overtones of making the instruments of justice violators of the institution of marriage, was chosen precisely because of the nuanced view it gave of the civil wars as a necessary but tragic action made right by subsequent expiation. The surrounding imagery in turn helps guide the audience toward this reading by portraying the victorious god Apollo himself in the act of pouring a purificatory libation.

Galinsky's interpretation has the great virtue of acknowledging that the image can be interpreted in many ways, and surely the subject was not chosen at random by Augustus. But I do not share his confidence that every viewer would have put the many pieces of the puzzle together

in the way he describes to arrive at an intended meaning, nor do I want to disregard the validity of viewpoints that fail to do so. The very violence of the story, as well as its deployment of the language of race and gender—contradictory as they are here—can act to polarize rather than reconcile ambiguities. To explore a few possibilities, a woman viewing this image might feel a particular identification with the Augustan victory in seeing its agents compared to other women defending their own purity. Conversely, one who recognized the Danaids themselves as guilty might find herself identifying with the victims of imperial power or continue to view things from the perspective of their punishers. An Egyptian in the Danaid portico might feel the full hostility of the scene, and perhaps the very sight of this monument will confirm his own recognition that he is indeed an outsider in the emperor's city. On the other hand, we might imagine a newly manumitted freedman of eastern extraction, eager to claim an identity as a Roman, willingly, even obliviously, acquiescing in the punishment of the sons of Aegyptus. Even a viewer who applies her intellect in the way Galinsky intends and recognizes the complex, conciliatory meaning of the image may be unable or unwilling to view the scene from the point of view of its imperial author rather than from the embedded perspective of the victim. Nor can we count on the power of context to put her on the right track. On the contrary, rather than assuming that a complex series of interlinked images will smooth over whatever interpretative cracks appear in a single element of the program, one could argue instead that once alternative perspectives are opened up, they tend to destabilize even images that were once clear and unproblematic.

To revise Galinsky's formulation of how Augustus's authority operates through images, we might say that in making sense of a monument like the Danaid portico, an authorial point of view, a viewer's understanding of what the author intended the image to signify, emerges in potential tension with other readings that can reflect the position of the individual viewer—for example, gender, status, attitudes—but can also be prompted and shaped by the points of view of the various characters depicted within the image, such as a Danaid doomed for her valor.⁴³ Rather than imagining viewing as the intellectual decoding of an author's meaning, however complex and equivocal, we may think of it as a dynamic process in which the individual viewer defines and revises his position in relation to authority through identifying and rejecting the perspectives that

⁴¹ Galinsky 1996, esp. 149–55, 222, 231.

⁴² See the discussion of Galinsky 1996.220–24, who reviews previous scholarship on the significance of the image.

⁴³ Contra Galinsky 1996.222: "Instead of simple and obvious 'messages,' Augustan art (and poetry) asks for the intellectual participation of the viewer or reader and for their scrutiny of alternative interpretations *in order that the intentions of the creators may be understood all the more thoroughly*" (emphasis added).

the work of art makes available. And rather than invariably offering a guiding hand toward hermeneutic concord, the intentions of the imperial author are themselves there to be accepted or rejected. Accepting them, far from simply making the viewer understand a policy position, co-opts him into an imperial poetics of remaking the world. Acknowledging the political and astronomic significance of Augustus's obelisk requires both the simple transformation of lines and symbols into signs and the re-projection of the resulting mental image of order onto the cosmos. The depictions of the emperor Augustus, to take another example, ceased to age in the twenties BCE. By the time Ovid was writing the *Metamorphoses*, therefore, there would have been a considerable gap between the appearance of the now very old emperor and the classicizing portraits of a young man sacrificing or addressing his troops. To overcome that gap, to see the latter images as Augustus, is in a very real sense to impose a different order on reality, exalting the timeless crafted image above change and decline.

By contrast, the rejection or modification of this point of view is an assertion of the viewer's own power to act as author, fitting both the image and the extratextual intentions that produced it into his own interpretative schema. Thus, the author of the Augustan forum himself becomes one of his own statues in the sense that the viewer constructs an image of him by measuring him against a reading of the exemplary monuments. Or, in the case of the Danaid portico, the interpretations suggested by the points of view made available within the monument become potential rivals to the designs of the creator.

We can see an example of the battle between the shaper and the viewer of images to act as author in the elegiac poet Propertius's account of his own responses to Augustus's temple of Apollo:

*Quaeris cur veniam tibi tardior. aurea Phoebi
porticus a magno Caesare aperta fuit.
tota erat in spatium Poenis digesta columnis,
inter quas Danai femina turba senis.
hic equidem Phoebus visus mihi pulchrior ipso
marmoreus tacita carmen hiare lyra;
atque aram circum steterant armenta Myronis,
quattuor artificis, vivida signa, boves.
tum medium claro surgebat marmore templum,
et patria Phoebo carius Ortygia:
in quo Solis erat supra fastigia currus,
et valvae, Libyci nobile dentis opus;
altera deiectos Parnasi vertice Gallos,
altera maerebat funera Tantalidos.*

*deinde inter matrem deus ipse interque sororem
Pythius in longa carmina veste sonat.*

(Prop. 2.31.1–16)

You ask why I am late in coming to you. The golden portico of Phoebus was opened by great Caesar. The whole extended on columns of Punic marble, among which was the female throng of old Danaus. Here the Phoebus of marble seemed to me, more beautiful than himself, to open his mouth to sing, though the lyre was silent. And the herd of the artist Myron stood around the altar, four cows, living statues. Then, dearer to Phoebus than his native Delos, the temple rose in the middle, of bright marble. On it, above the pediment, was the chariot of the sun, and double doors, noble construct of Libyan ivory. One door lamented the Gauls cast from the summit of Parnassus, the other the death of Niobe, and the deaths mourned by Niobe, Tantalus's daughter. Then, between his mother and his sister, the Pythian god sounded songs, in a flowing garment.

Appropriately for an elegiac poet, Propertius's account of the temple is softened in a number of ways.⁴⁴ First he repeatedly feminizes the scene: the Danaids appear neither as avengers nor as criminals but simply as a female throng filling the portico;⁴⁵ so too, the cult statue itself, dressed in effeminate eastern style, stands "between his mother and sister."⁴⁶ The one attempt the poet makes at interpreting narrative elements of the temple's program, the twin paneled doors that depicted the defeat of the Gallic attack on Delphi and the punishment of the Tantalids, reveals the adoption of a characteristically sympathetic perspective. Rather than see examples of divine punishments against human transgressors, Propertius describes the images as expressing pity not only for the dead children of Niobe but, through a striking enjambment, for the barbarian desecrators of Apollo's shrine. A final distinctive element of Propertius's response to the temple is his emphasis on the creative power of art. Apollo himself is preeminently a poet, the god who holds the lyre and ends the poem by beginning his own song; no mention here of the purifying libations the cult statue pours with one hand. The description of the statue as more beautiful than the god himself, coupled with the emphasis on the deceptive reality of the "living statues" of Myron's cows, help make of the temple a celebration

⁴⁴ Cf. Gurval 1995.129–31.

⁴⁵ Though line 26 of the subsequent poem, about the punishment of beautiful women becoming a fable, combined with the reference to Phoebus, perhaps gains more point when read with the Danaids in mind.

⁴⁶ As Propertius has sandwiched the poetic representation of the temple between two poems explicitly addressed to his elegiac mistress? The arrangement and, crucially, poem divisions are, however, especially uncertain here.

of the powers of artifice.⁴⁷ But far from allowing an absorption into the depicted scenes that might, as I suggested before, signify an acquiescence to the powers of the temple's imperial maker, here the creators of wonders remain specifically artists, and even the god himself, rather than being assimilated to the victor of Actium, appears as a figure for the poet.⁴⁸

Propertius's implicit assimilation of the Augustan Apollo to the image of the elegiac poet points to another facet of the complex politics of artistic representation in the new empire. As the viewers themselves become "authors" or producers of images, like Propertius here crafting his own text out of the temple's iconography, what we had previously imagined as a bipolar dialogue between author and observer becomes but the first step in a chain of representations that extend outward and downward through Roman society. If we turn from thinking of 2.31 merely as Propertius's public reading of the emperor's program to consider the role of his own reader in making sense of that text, the relationship between the emperor and poet comes to look different again. Mutual dependence takes the place of a potentially adversarial encounter. Propertius himself now has a stake in broadcasting and glorifying the imagery of the temple even as he projects his own claims about its meaning. Duncan Kennedy had pointed out in connection with verbal "propaganda" how even the regime's opponents are co-opted into disseminating the language of power,⁴⁹ and this phenomenon occurs even more clearly in the realm of visual imagery.

Ovid himself in the *Metamorphoses* uses a portrayal of the same god, Apollo, and references to the same monument, in an episode that suggests the complex relationship between his own epic and this imperial poesis. Whereas in chapter 1 I discussed the Daphne and Apollo episode (1.452–567) as an example of how the concluding metamorphic image perpetuates the thematic tensions within a narrative, here I look specifically at the relation between poetic and imperial authority in the passage, how the poet's reading interferes in the reception of the temple's imagery even as the poet becomes notably someone other than his generic self when he speaks as the emperor's god. Following right after Apollo's defeat of the monstrous serpent Python, an event that had already been employed as a mythological symbol for the victory at Actium,⁵⁰ the sudden deflection of the narrative toward amatory pursuits has been taken as a programmatic rejection of the bloated matter of high epic in favor of a typically Ovidian fusion.⁵¹ Apollo's chastening of Cupid for usurping his weapons

and that god's demonstration of his power over the conqueror of Python by wounding him with love's arrow recall the initial scene in Ovid's first collection of poetry, the *Amores*. There Ovid himself was embarking on an epic only to be diverted toward amatory elegy by the arrogant love god who, shooting the poet with his arrow, makes him fall in love.⁵² That episode, in turn, varied the prototypical scene of turning away from extended narrative on lofty themes in the prologue to Callimachus's *Aitia*, where it was Apollo himself who appeared to the ambitious poet and warned him to "feed his sheep fat but keep his muse slender."

But the recurrence of such a scene here does not necessarily imply the same abrupt generic shift. Rather than simplifying interpretation of the Daphne episode by asserting the poet's own allegiance to a particular set of aesthetic and ideological preferences and so preparing the reader to see in the origins of the laurel an obtrusion of erotic concerns that debunk its imperial associations, the competition between Apollo and Cupid crystallizes a contrast between different points of view on what follows.⁵³ And if Cupid wins the battle of the bow, it is not quite so clear that he takes the laurel as well. In fact, as the episode progresses, the programmatic implications of the *Amores* passage are themselves called into question. There it was a formal property of the poetry that above all testified to love's victory, the short pentameter that serves continually to distinguish elegiac from epic meter. But here of course the poem continues in hexameters. More important, it is Apollo himself who is given the last word in the episode. Initially love's triumph alienates the figure of Apollo from his typical attributes: he is the god of prophecy but cannot foresee the outcome of the chase; he is the god of medicine, but there is no cure for love. But Apollo's final account of the laurel's future shows him returning to full prophetic form. Indeed, Apollo makes the laurel a celebration of precisely those aspects of his godhead that both his defeat by Cupid and Daphne's rejection of him had called into question: his beauty, his skill as a poet,⁵⁴ and his archery! By associating the laurel emphatically with victory, like his victory over Python, he restores the narrative and ideological trajectory that had been almost shut down by his defeat at the hands of Love.

We of course may resist smoothing over the elegiac seam—the fresh start at the words *primus amor Phoebi* (1.452) that decouples the laurel from the Python story and so breaks the epic sweep from primeval myth to imperial present. Yet Apollo's reepicization of the elegiac opening offers an alternative point of view, one made more attractive by the fact

⁴⁷ So too Welch 2005.91–93.

⁴⁸ See Gurval 1995.265–66.

⁴⁹ Kennedy 1992.

⁵⁰ Buchheit 1966.91–92; Nicoll 1980.181.

⁵¹ The conclusion of Nicoll 1980.

⁵² *Am.* 1.1, the parallels between this poem and the episode in the *Met.* are further developed by Nicoll 1980.

⁵³ For the political implications of generic "polyphony" as an act of rebellion against the monologic code of epic, see the important article of Farrell 1992.

⁵⁴ Daphne is notably unmoved by the hymn Apollo addresses to her in lines 1.514–24.

that he does accurately prophesy the laurel's future symbolic functions. And as is not the case in its models, where the poet himself is a character in the *recusatio* drama (cf. Callim. *Aet.* 1 fr.1.21–24; Verg. *Ecl.* 6.3–5; *Amores* 1.1), Ovid's position here remains unclear, and this avoidance of the subjective in turn helps characterize the passage as epic. The traditional function of the scene as marking a decisive generic break combined with his own elegiac origins ought to put Ovid on the side of Cupid. But it is Apollo who takes on the role of the warned and defeated figure usually played by the poet in a first-person *recusatio* narrative.⁵⁵ At one level then, this hermeneutic battle pits the god who has presided over Ovid's own prior poetic accomplishments against the established symbol of Augustus's military supremacy. On another, though, as in Propertius's reconstruction of the Palatine temple, it is the significance of Apollo himself that is at stake. Will his cult associations with victory remain in control of the narrative or will his lyre be stolen by the once elegiac poet?

The explicit evocation of a specific point in the visual landscape of Ovid's readers makes it all the more appropriate that the poetological debate about which god will govern the episode's interpretation should be developed through an emphasis on interpreting visual images. We saw before that the interpretation of the metamorphic sign, the laurel tree, depended on how much the reader was able to accept the subjective perspective of Daphne herself, even at the moment when access to that perspective vanishes. If one focus for dissenting interpretations of actual monuments was similarly the imagined subjectivity of the very figure represented, then the visual dynamics that Ovid constructs within the episode reproduce the tensions on which the political interpretation of actual monuments depended.

The question of through whose eyes images and events are seen, what Mieke Bal in her account of narrative calls focalization, emerges most explicitly in the text in the account of Daphne's request for eternal virginity. And perhaps it is no accident that the imagery of and attitudes toward marriage it evokes so closely approximate those we may imagine for the sculpted Danaids as well:

illa velut crimen taedas exosa iugales
pulchra verecundo subfuderat ora rubore ...
(1.483–84)

She, hating wedding torches as if they were a crime, had colored her lovely face with a modest blush.

⁵⁵ Knox 1986.14–15.

The first of these lines, while still told from the external perspective of the narrator who reports her emotions, nevertheless makes Daphne's own point of view available to the reader: she hates marriage "as if it were a *crimen*." The beginning of the next line, however, marks a sudden shift; its first word, *pulchra*, by emphasizing an external quality of Daphne (as does the other word that frames the line, *rubore*) makes clear that we are now looking at her from without, and the desirability of this appearance of course establishes the tension between what the viewer who responds to the erotic suggestions of the blush wants of Daphne and what she wants for herself, even as the blush itself masks her face. The word *verecundo*, which reintroduces Daphne as "a character focalizer,"⁵⁶ makes this all the more poignant by clarifying that the very physical effect that invites desire springs from the impulse to avoid such desire. In all of these lines we see the narratological working out of a point the poet will make explicit a few lines later: *sed te decor iste, quod optas, esse vetat, votoque tuo tua forma repugnat* (but your own beauty forbids you to be what you choose, and your form fights back against your prayer, 1.488–9). To define Daphne by what she seems to be is to construct for her an identity antithetical to the one that she attempts to realize for herself. And this contradiction foreshadows the crucially different ways in which the laurel itself can be read, as a symbol of Apollonian conquest or as a manifestation of the (absent) victim.

The scene as a whole then leads to an investigation of what, using Galinsky's terms, we might think of as Apollo's authority, his ability to project meaning, which in this case is also to interpose his own powerful presence, through symbolic language. Yet, as in our imagined readings of the visual program of the Palatine temple, his intended meaning exists in competition with other perspectives, the generic and ideological perspective that despite Apollo's claims frames the entire story as the triumph of the erotic figure Cupid, and the recognition in the visual signs Apollo "interprets" of another represented figure whose own point of view can only be uncertainly reconciled to that of the god. But not only does Ovid's text here offer an image that approximates for its readers the tensions animating the act of viewing the actual visual signs in contemporary Rome that result from his tale; the poet correspondingly places himself in an ambiguous relationship with his divine speaker that looks back to his curious redeployment of the *recusatio* scene. There, as we saw, both Cupid and Apollo offer potential figures for the poet. So throughout the episode, Apollo himself hovers between being a speaker who takes over from the poem's narrator even as his distinctive point of view governs the reader's

⁵⁶ For the term, see Bal 1985.102–6.

expectations and desires and being a character who, as framed by the larger narrative, loses his dignity and power.

To start again with the question of point of view, Apollo himself plays the role of spectator at important points in the narrative (cf. 1.498ff.). This repeated use of *videt* constitutes what Bal refers to as a “hinge”:⁵⁷ it still counts as a component of an externally focalized narrative (the poet is after all the one who tells us that Apollo saw), but it also makes available a new perspective (what Apollo saw). Whenever the poet lingers over eroticized descriptions of Daphne, as in the account of how the winds strip her flesh, he invites the reader in every sense to see her as Apollo does. On the other hand, an awareness of Apollo himself as a figure in the chase makes a humorous spectacle of the god. Thus, his impassioned plea to Daphne—itsself an ungainly mix of the tired conventions of love poetry and lofty autohymnography—becomes all the more ridiculous when Ovid broadens the lens to remind us that the words are delivered in the context of the nymph’s flight.⁵⁸

Apollo’s own motives are curiously mixed. Even as a lover, he never ceases to be an artist himself;⁵⁹ the elegiac role he is forced to play does not suit a god of order. His compositional impulse appears not just in his impromptu hymn but also in his treatment of Daphne, whose disheveled and flowing hair he wishes to comb.⁶⁰ It is also responsible for a curious dichotomy in the god’s aims in chasing the nymph. As a lover, his intentions are clear, and the satisfaction of his erotic desire depends on his speeding up the narrative to reach the “climax” as quickly as possible. Yet the god as artist seems to stand apart from the god as character, to act as it were as the external focalizer of his own story. In this sense, what the god wants is above all to slow the nymph down, to freeze her motion and his pursuit into a timeless scene. Thus, when the god promises to “pursue more slowly” if the nymph herself will slow her pace, we should regard it perhaps not only as a ruse, and one that makes the god himself look ridiculous, but as an indication of an essential component of the poetic process, one detectable also in the luxuriating similes with which Ovid himself prolongs the account of the pursuit.

⁵⁷ Bal 1985.114.

⁵⁸ For Apollo’s speech as a hymn to himself, see Fuhrer 1999.357–59.

⁵⁹ For a fuller account of Apollo as artist in the episode, see the discussion of Bretzgieheimer 1994.518–24 who, among other themes, reads the episode as a confrontation between Apollonian *ars* and a Diana-like “raw nature.” The “imitative” quality Bretzgieheimer finds in Daphne herself as *aemula Phoebes* (1.476) would make it interesting to develop her own artistic aspects in relation to Apollo’s.

⁶⁰ A gesture that would simultaneously further fit her to the role of elegiac mistress whose hair was programmatically combed.

Ovid’s dual role in representing the god, framing him within a larger narrative whose self-consciously elegiac tendencies signal a divergence from Apollo’s own way of depicting himself and, at the same time, allowing the god to make the story his own, puts the poet himself very much in the same position as our imagined spectator. The poet is audience for Apollo, struggling to make his own poem out of the utterances and expressions of the god, and at the same time subject to viewing and interpretation by another audience. A kind of equivalence then emerges between the god, the poet, and the reader, each of whose own acts of poesis alternatively testifies to a more powerful governing presence (Cupid, Apollo, Ovid himself) and recontextualizes that presence within an image of the world that he controls—until another audience emerges to “read” it.

Given the close association between Apollo and Augustus himself signaled at the end of the god’s speech, we can also add the emperor to this equation. The laurel was his distinctive attribute, part of his Apolline self-image, and by imposing this version of the Daphne story as an origin for it, the poet offers a new reading of the Augustan symbol that can either subvert or be transcended by its dominant connotations within imperial iconography, just as Apollo’s prophecy may or may not count as the episode’s hermeneutic last word. As in the poem’s final lines, the relationship between poet and emperor hovers uneasily between simile and synecdoche. The controlling artist spinning out his text resembles the imperial author producing images that challenge and define his audience. Yet if the text sometimes seems to exist as an autonomous entity, reshaping all it touches, at others it seems but part of a larger system controlled by the emperor whose real presence continually peeks through the imagery of the poem and whose voice, like that of Apollo within the poem, can come to control our reading of it.

My positioning of the poet narrator of the Apollo episode as an intermediary between the god and audience, and the opening up of a chain of correspondences in which each artist becomes reader and each reader an artist might first seem necessitated by the logic of modern critical interests in the power of the audience, but it taps into an issue that took on tremendous potency in the development of the principate: the scope allowed for individual self-representation. It was not only the emperor who wanted to leave his mark on the world.⁶¹ The great aristocratic families of the late republic engaged in a competition to produce visible monuments of their authority on a scale that would have astonished even a

⁶¹ See esp. Eck 1984.

nineteenth-century American industrialist. These visual assertions of status extended from the construction of vast palaces and public buildings within the city, to the elaborate tombs outside it, to the erection of statues, temples, and gateways in the famous cities of the empire. The relationship between such claims to prestige and the consolidation of imperial authority involved a long series of negotiations in which we can trace several wrong steps. Notoriously Cornelius Gallus, not a Roman aristocrat but a member of the rising class of Italian knights who had attached themselves to Octavian, fell from favor and took his own life as a result, according to one historian, of the self-aggrandizing inscriptions and statues he put up during his tenure in the vital post of prefect of Egypt.⁶² Equally vexed was the kind of display to be allowed triumphing generals, who in the past had left fantastic visual traces of their accomplishments. Under Augustus, the triumph itself became increasingly the prerogative of members of the imperial family. In its place, senatorial generals receive “triumphal decorations” and a statue in the Forum of Augustus. Thus, like Propertius’s persona in 2.31 or the Ovidian narrator in the Daphne episode, but via different mechanisms, their individual fame is partly wagered on the prestige of the emperor’s monuments.

The emperor’s own public imagery constrained personal expression by other means than simply squeezing out the space for rival display. As Paul Zanker has shown, the motifs and decor employed in less public contexts increasingly bear the stamp of imperial imagery.⁶³ Luxury items like carved tables sport the Sphinx that had become a token of Augustus’s Egyptian victory. Even the cheapest terracotta oil lamps featured imperial symbols. Sometimes these borrowings from the language of power seem part of a concerted effort to assert loyalty to the imperial family or to lay claim to the qualities identified with them. This is perhaps the case with the echoes of the styles and gestures of imperial portraiture that appear on the tombs of freedmen.⁶⁴ Other examples of this downward flow of Augustan imagery might result simply from the momentum of fashions or even availability. Did the person who bought the lamp with the image

⁶² Dio 53.23.5; see the discussion in Syme 1960.309–10. Suetonius’s account of the incident (*Aug.* 66.2) places the blame on Gallus’s “ungrateful and churlish spirit” without specifying the manifestations of this ingratitude. *ILS* 8995, an inscription set up by Gallus himself, contains a boast to have been the first to lead any army, Roman or Egyptian, beyond the cataract of the Nile. This may be an example of Gallus’s fatal penchant for self-promotion. Interestingly, and in a way that can tell us much both about the overlap between poetic and political expression and about the double roles of reader and recorder, the one substantial surviving fragment of Gallus’s poetry imagines him as spectator rejoicing to read the *spolia* erected for Caesar’s triumph (for a fuller account of the episode with bibliography, see Courtney 1993.259–62).

⁶³ See Zanker 1990.265–74.

⁶⁴ See the classic study of Kleiner 1977.

of victory astride the globe choose that design over others,⁶⁵ or did he simply take what was on offer?

My point is not the power of style irrespective of the intentions of its viewers and consumers to reflect and transform mentalities; it is rather to show that, whether the motive of those who put such items on display was proud patriotism, irony, or mere convenience, the visual language available to them was itself constrained by status.⁶⁶ Thus, their presentation of themselves to those both above and below them was mediated through imagery that underlined their own place in a larger hierarchy and necessarily drew both its viewers and producers into a dialogic relationship with the imperial center. Furthermore, the overlap between the “voice” of each individual deploying such imagery and that of its imperial *auctor* could be read in turn in a number of ways: it could glorify both, like the statues in the Forum of Augustus where the appropriation of the virtues of the individuals commemorated added luster to the whole complex. Or else the specific context of imitation could orient the spectator in a way that caused her to look at the imperial source with new eyes, most obviously in cases of parody, like the depiction of the archetypal scene of Augustan myth—Aeneas carrying his father Anchises from burning Troy—that gives the protagonists the heads of dogs and erect penises.⁶⁷ Yet another possibility is for the viewer to read the appropriation against the intentions of the appropriator in a way that exposes him as an unworthy claimant to the prestige he seeks. Pompeii offers a particularly nice example of the complexities of an imperial allusion as it travels down the social scale. In a large public building in the forum there, Eumachia, the powerful patroness of the fullers, placed copies of the statues of Aeneas and Romulus from the Forum of Augustus in Rome. These images were copied in turn on the business signs of a more humble fuller, Fabius Ululutremulus. Someone else has carved nearby a graffito reading “I sing of arms and the man, not of fullers and screech owls [*ululae*].” The reference to the originary context of the image strategically aligns the reader against the fuller, excluding him from precisely the claims to status that his choice of signs implies. Again, however, we may react against this

⁶⁵ So Zanker 1990.266.

⁶⁶ Thus, Zanker 1988.10, in a discussion with a somewhat different emphasis: “People knew what they wanted to say, but without a real pictorial vocabulary didn’t have the ‘words’ to express it. They could only manage a garbled hodge-podge of elements drawn from the official state art.”

⁶⁷ See Kellum 1997.174–75 for a thorough and imaginative reading of the image. Especially suggestive in this context is her interpretation of the interplay between the figure of the dog (*canis*) and the first line of the *Aeneid* (*cano*). The shift from “I sing” to “you sing” reflects the alienation of the ideal viewer from the point of view of the poet-narrator of the epic glorification of Aeneas. For an imagined etymological connection between *canis* and *cano*, see Varro *LL* 5.99.

reimposition of status distinctions by sympathizing with the fuller against the snob.

It is important, though, to make clear that the “low-mimetic” imitations that seem to demote or reduce the status of what is imitated cannot be simply understood as a transgressive or somehow “anti-Augustan” act. Rather than being inevitably punished, fools and jesters who imitated the emperor became a distinctive hallmark of imperial self-presentation, performing at such seemingly august occasions as imperial funerals.⁶⁸ We have, for example, the funerary inscription of a man who seems to have been the slave or freedman of the emperor Tiberius, a figure not otherwise renowned for his ability to take a joke, whose function seems to have been precisely to mimic the emperor in speech and gesture.⁶⁹ Similarly, at the funeral of Vespasian a mime portraying the emperor mocked his most famous quality of stinginess by complaining about the cost of the ceremony.⁷⁰ There are many ways of accounting for this phenomenon, starting perhaps with the assumption that the emperors had learned the lesson of the modern celebrity that there is no such thing as bad publicity. We can also see how the emperor’s own reception of these jokes gave him a context for displaying precisely his tolerance, indeed appreciation, of such humor—a democratic gesture of bonhomie that gave a counterweight to the stern and godlike figure he assumes in other contexts—while making clear that the interpretative ball was very much in his court: it was up to him to tolerate the joke or not.⁷¹ All of this is not to suggest that the transgressive potential of such acts was necessarily neutralized, that any reference to imperial lechery and baldness was somehow improbably welcome because of the mysteries of ancient social practice. On the contrary, I suggest that their institutional force depends on the awareness of all concerned that they are playing with fire. That, after all, is what makes the accounts of imperial tolerance sufficiently noteworthy to be recorded.

There is also perhaps another sense in which these occasions played a dialectical role in defining by opposition what the *princeps* was. Imitation, of course, depends on recognizing not only a likeness to the original but a difference as well. So, in this case, the audience would always know that whatever characteristics of the emperor the jester may highlight

⁶⁸ See Purcell 1999.

⁶⁹ ILS 5225. See Purcell 1999.181 and Sumi 2002.

⁷⁰ Suet. *Vesp.* 19, with Purcell 1999.182–83.

⁷¹ Thus, Purcell 1999.187, noting convincingly that Augustus’s involvement with the theater, a place generally considered anathema to traditional morality, dates from precisely the same period as his marriage legislation. His interpretation draws on the thesis of Wallace-Hadrill 1982 that the “public relations” task facing the first *princeps* was primarily to walk the tightrope between authoritarianism and civility.

through exaggeration, this was not after all Augustus himself. And here we come to a crucial element in this representational system: however popular, influential, or wealthy he may have become, the imitator was always essentially a nobody, an actor who by definition fell outside the status hierarchy of Roman citizen society. We may regard this figure in a sense as offering a zero grade for the process of self-definition through imitation that we saw before. Here is someone who cannot be exposed or demoted, because he has no status whatsoever: he can most easily and most absolutely play the emperor because he has no face of his own. This fact, central both to the humor and to the tolerability of the imitation through exaggeration, was important not only to the emperor because it ensured that the audience knew it was dealing with mere mockery, not invective or emulation, but also to the upper classes themselves, who can in turn define their own relation to the imperial center against the role of the mere clown. Witness above all the literature of friendship in which the *amicus*, a title that whatever the realities brought an essential facade of equity, is continually defined against the mere flatterer, or parasite. Especially significant in the literature of the Augustan period is the battle that Horace stages in his *Satires* to make it clear—to those both above and below him—that he is a true friend of the great, not someone who has compromised his own status by playing the part of the clown, which at the same time his position uncomfortably resembles.⁷²

Another Ovidian story featuring the imperial god Apollo addresses the perils and potentials of such imitation in a way that once more highlights the complex interpretative possibilities open to readers of Ovid’s own text. For again the poet will position himself inside and outside the story he tells to assert simultaneously his own control over the text he produces and the powerlessness of the author within the economy of reproductions it describes. The narrative will offer the double possibility of taking its mimetic protagonist as a clown and a nobody, functioning only as a sign for the power of the god, or as a figure capable of being identified with in his own right, in which case his fate aligns the audience against the authority of the gods. The episode in question is the brief account of the punishment of the satyr Marsyas, who picked up the flute invented and discarded by Minerva and, having provoked and lost a musical contest with Apollo, was flayed alive by the god:

*Sic ubi nescio quis Lycia de gente virorum
rettulit exitium, satyri reminiscitur alter,
quem Tritoniaca Latous harundine victum
adfecit poena.”quid me mihi detrahis?” inquit;*

⁷² See Oliensis 1998.17–63 on how Horace in the *Satires* defines his “face.”

"a! piget, a! non est" clamabat "tibia tanti."
 clamanti cutis est summos direpta per artus,
 nec quicquam nisi vulnus erat; cruor undique manat,
 detectique patent nervi, trepidaeque sine ulla
 pelle micant venae; salientia viscera possis
 et perlucentes numerare in pectore fibras.
 illum ruricolae, silvarum numina, fauni
 et satyri fratres et tunc quoque carus Olympus
 et nymphae flerunt, et quisquis montibus illis
 lanigerosque greges armentaque buccera pavit.
 fertilis inmaduit madefactaque terra caducas
 concepit lacrimas ac venis perbibit imis;
 quas ubi fecit aquam, vacuas emisit in auras.
 inde petens rapidus ripis declivibus aequor
 Marsya nomen habet, Phrygiae liquidissimus amnis.
 (6.382–400)

So when someone from the Lycian race recalled the death of men, another made mention of the satyr, whom, beaten in a competition with the pipe of Minerva, the son of Leto punished. "Why do you drag me from myself?" he said. "Ah, I repent! A flute is not worth so much!" But as he cries out, the skin is ripped away from the tips of his limbs, and there is no part of him that is not a wound; blood flows from all sides, the muscles lie exposed, and the pulsing veins shine with no hide over them. You could count the dancing organs and the sinews glittering in his breast. Him the country-dwelling Fauns—woodland powers, and his brother satyrs, and Olympus, beloved even then, and the nymphs lamented. So did whoever grazed wool-bearing sheep or horned herds on those mountains. The fertile earth grew wet and, damp, gathered their fallen tears, and drank them into her own deepest veins. And she shot them, turned to water, into the open air, whence a river, hurrying to the sea through sloping bed, keeps the name Marsya, clearest of Phrygian streams.

Multiple instances of imitation are at work here, both explicitly within the tale and emerging from the formal properties and position of the narrative. First, the lowly satyr appropriates the instrument of one Olympian god and uses it to rival another. But the tale itself is a repetition in a minor key of the three stories that have gone before, those of Arachne, Niobe, and the Lycian peasants, all of which featured the deaths of humans who had challenged the power of the gods. After a trilogy of tragedies about humans done in by their hubris, we come to a kind of "satyr play" repeating the same plot but now enacted by an ambiguous and potentially ludicrous protagonist. Finally the language in which the satyr

renounces the flute becomes for Ovid's readers another potential parody of the higher gods. For he employs the same phrase Minerva herself uses when she casts away the flute in another Ovidian version of the same tale: *non es mihi, tibia, tanti* (Flute, you are not worth so much to me, AA 3.505).⁷³ And what prompts the goddess's act there is precisely a disfiguring reflection, the image of her maiden cheeks bloated with air, which she glimpsed in the "clear" waters of a nearby stream. Within the stylistic language of the Augustan poets, a clear stream reflecting a bloated image creates a kind of tension between form and content that is relevant to the issues the episode raises in the *Metamorphoses*. Clear streams connote slight forms and refined treatment to which bloating and swelling are anathema. All the more so because the most famous statement of the poetics of pure water comes from the same poet, Callimachus, who made a similar stylistic point by rejecting another poet's "large lady" (Callim. *Aet.* 1, fr.1.12).

Marsyas's various imitations of gods and humans are subject to the same kinds of multiple interpretative possibilities as the appropriation of elements of Augustan iconography by, for example, freedmen and fullers. The satyr's borrowings in every case potentially lower the tone of the image and provide a distorting mirror of the actions of those above him—if, that is, we view Marsyas from within the global hierarchies that put Apollo and Minerva on the top and the satyr on the bottom. Apollo's punishment here underlines this level of divine control and reasserts the incompetence of Marsyas as an artist. In this perspective, Marsyas is reduced in status to an inadequate *lusor*, and the gods are threatened by the suggestion of parity/parody on the part of their imitator. On the other hand, if we allow the satyr's own words to guide our reading, then the radical differentiation of divine model from "satyric" parody is no longer so easy. Let us take, for example, the satyr's imitation of Minerva in the *Ars*, which is usually taken as another way in which the poet alienates sympathy from him. As the niceties of the satyr's rhetorical figures seem

⁷³ Murgia 1986 argues that the imitation works the other way around and that *Ars* 3 in fact postdates *Met.* 1–6. This redating, based on a method of applying the procedures used in textual criticism to literary imitation, has remained controversial. Even if it is accepted, I would contend that, given Ovid's penchant for a posteriori revision (see Hinds 1985 and Tarrant 2002b.27–29), such imitation essentially amounts to a rewriting of the earlier text as well and so fully justifies our reading the Marsyas episode through the lens of *Ars* 3. The third version of Minerva's outcry, at *Fasti* 6.701, "*ars mihi non tanti est; valeas mea tibia,*" *dixi*, in the context of Minerva's account of the origin of the Quinquatrus festival, with its witty pointing of Ovid's self-citation through Minerva's self-citation (*dixi*), does not directly contribute to my reading of the *Met.* passage, except to the extent that it further highlights the intertextual life of Minerva's expression and plays again on the possibility of hearing it as Ovid's. This last point takes on greater significance if we imagine *Fasti* 6 as a postexilic work and Ovid's *Ars* as responsible for the poet's *relegatio* (as does Barchiesi 1997b.90).

incompatible with the gruesome punishment he is even then suffering,⁷⁴ so the fact that he is made to utter words that the goddess spoke when concerned merely about her appearance makes him all the more a figure of laughter—except that, in taking over the goddess's language, he has reapplied it in a context that is more appropriate: Marsyas's anguish over the loss of his skin only reinforces the frivolity of the goddess's concern over her face. Again the episode offers us two incompatible perspectives: In one Marsyas is seen from without as a figure in a cosmic scene controlled by the gods and in a text manipulated by the poet, but in the other the grotesque satyr, as a poet himself, reverses such hierarchies.

In fact, a comparison with the imperial *imitator* instructively clarifies the prominence of Marsyas's authorial independence. Unlike the *imitator* Marsyas refuses to acknowledge the preeminence of the original—this is most immediately apparent in his attempt to rival Apollo but also implicit in the unconsciousness of his imitation of Minerva, whom he has never seen playing the flute and whose speech in the *Ars* he has of course never heard. His is no self-advertising parody; on the contrary, he thinks of himself as an original artist and tries to compete on those terms with a god.

In generating this double perspective on Marsyas, as a transgressor put in his place by his defeat and punishment at the hands of a god, and as a sympathetic figure offering his own organizing view of his experiences, Ovid employs two of the same techniques we saw in the Daphne episode: the manipulation of the reader's position as spectator and play with the traditional imagery of the Callimachean program.⁷⁵ The narrator turns Marsyas into a spectacle, not a man but a wound whose bodily vulnerability testifies to the power of Apollo,⁷⁶ a procedure that requires Marsyas to lose not only his face but his whole skin and to be seen through, as it were, as opposed to offering a recognizable form to display to the world. Exactly contemporaneous with this loss of control over his form, Marsyas loses control over his voice as well; in place of being able to articulate a subjective view of his experiences, Marsyas can only point out the loss of a self—"Why do you strip me from myself, why do you strip the 'me' from me?" This kind of stripping is made more apparent in what follows by the fact that the narrator (and here it is important to

bear in mind that we are dealing not simply with the poet-narrator but with an internal speaker telling the story for his own purposes) gives him words that are not his own. He can only reproduce the language of the goddess and therefore becomes even more of a parody and less of a person. To the extent that any nonhumorous, sympathetic figure of Marsyas emerges, it is so far only through an awareness of this suppression and the kind of adversarial reading that such an awareness provokes.

Things change when sympathetic spectators enter the picture, the fauns and nymphs who mourn Marsyas's death.⁷⁷ The opening out of potential responses to the satyr's death through the introduction of an internal audience coincides with a shift in the generic properties of the story that similarly helps reorient the audience's response to it. Suddenly, instead of seeing a lone satyr in the world of the imperial gods, we have put him back in the context where he belonged, amid a community of nymphs, fauns, and other denizens of the world of bucolic poetry.⁷⁸ And their central function here, preserving the memory of Marsyas through mourning, recalls an essential purpose of bucolic poetry as shaped by Vergil's *Eclogues*: the commemoration of friendship.⁷⁹ (Interestingly, the friend remembered at the end of the *Eclogues* was himself an unfortunate imitator of "Apollo," Gallus.). This bucolic lament quite literally takes the form of an underground tradition: the tears collected by the earth, which eventually overflow into a fountain and seek the sea as the "purest of Lycian streams," an unmistakable symbol of the poetics of slight forms.⁸⁰ At this moment, the pure poetry of the bucolic makes its own little world: like the poem's account of the origins of the world, the account of the stream's genesis manages to touch on the realms of land,

⁷⁷ Another avenue for relating the flaying of Marsyas to the problem of authorship is taken by Theodorakopoulos 1999.156–57, who sees the satyr's punishment as a complete loss of form predicting both his loss of the powers of expression and his inability to leave behind any material trace except through the responses of spectators.

⁷⁸ See Tissol 1997.127 for more on the precise stylistic imitation of Vergilian pastoral here and its imagined impact on its audience. For the role of commemoration as the key to bucolic as the expression of absent presences, see Hardie 2002c.20–21.

⁷⁹ Cf. the discussion by Alpers 1996.92–93 of the pastoral lament as the poetic restoration of a lost world.

⁸⁰ This imagery is given particular energy here by the contrast with the muddy lake in which the Lycian farmers splash about as frogs. For the poetological imagery there, see Clauss 1989 and Myers 1994.83–90. An anonymous commentator on an earlier version of this analysis makes the important point that even the "anti-Apolline" connotations of this embrace of Callimachean aesthetics are open to significant revision. For it is, after all, Apollo himself who tells that poet to keep his muse thin, and the specific topos of poetry as a pure stream was most memorably developed by the god Apollo himself in the closing lines of Callimachus's hymn to the god (Call. *Hymn to Apollo* 105–12). Thus, even if we read an endorsement of poetic refinement in the passage as the triumph of Marsyas's memory over his punishment, the poet still ends up speaking the language of the god.

⁷⁴ Anderson 1972.202: "Marsyas is talking with most unlikely sophistication here about the fact that his skin is being ripped from his body." Cf. also Bömer ad loc.

⁷⁵ For a different view of how Ovid's text creates the possibility for strongly contrasting responses in its audience, see Williams's (1996.82–83) reading of the episode. He presents the voyeuristic delight elicited by the combination of detailed description and neutral detachment as ultimately undercutting any tendency for compassion on the part of the audience.

⁷⁶ See Segal 1998.

sea, and sky. What is more, this imposition of a bucolic order emerges as a recapitulation of the process that gave rise to that other great enemy of Apollo, the Python: there, the earth became the unwitting mother of a grotesque, chthonic brood after soaking up the waters of the flood (1.416–21).

But our temptation to identify the voice of the poet with the clear stream of poetic memory should not be left unqualified. As in the Daphne episode, the deliberate flagging of the language of a particular genre has the ultimate effect of muddying the waters, of forcing us to realize how carefully Ovid has “dismembered” his own poetic voice in the episode in a way that highlights the conflict between different ways of reading and the pressures that he himself is subject too as a prospective imitator. Who is telling this story and why? It is not Ovid, nor is it even “Ovid,” the poet-narrator. Rather, the most immediate narrator is “another,” one of those prompted by the fate of Niobe to “fear the manifest wrath of the gods and all the more zealously to honor Latona with a cult.” In other words, we might expect the narrator to tell the story from the point of view of the outraged god rather than of the justly punished satyr. And not only does the tale function perfectly as a cultic hymn, recalling the power of the god Apollo, but it also explains the initial focus on Marsyas as a mere wound, a pure symbol of the punishing power of Apollo. As in the case of Daphne, the figure of the victorious god emerges with particular clarity from the body of his victim. For the satyr’s exposed organs recall at once the brilliance of the sun (*perlucentes, micant*), the strings of a bow (*nervi*), and the chords of the lyre (*nervi, fibras*).⁸¹ The conversion of the satyr into the god’s instrument, continued through the words *salientia* (used of strings quivering under the impact of the pick) and *numerare* (“to put in meter”), hints at the essential participation of the poet in what he describes; singing of Marsyas and punishing Marsyas become analogous acts in the worship of Apollo.⁸²

How far one should take this anonymous raconteur as an alter ego for the poet of the *Metamorphoses* must always remain an open question, as do the parameters of his song: does the same narrator tell the whole story, even through the very differently inflected account of the

⁸¹ The musical “resonance” of Marsyas’s innards was independently observed by Princeton graduate student Sarah Ferrario, to whom I am grateful for discussions of the episode.

⁸² On the general role of the Homeric Hymns as intertexts in Ovid’s poem, see Barchiesi 1999.

As Philip Hardie points out to me, *per litteras*, this makes it all the more significant that the stream that introduces the contrasting tendency to remember Marsyas’s self, rather than his fate, derives here from the tears of the spectators and not from the actual blood of the satyr. In other versions of the myth, this is indeed the case.

mourning, or does the “poet narrator” take over after *fibras*?⁸³ Another potential poet figure similarly forces the audience to evaluate the position of the author, Marsyas himself. He, like the anonymous speaker, is also a poetic performer and, indeed, a poet whose words can be recognized as those of the “real” Ovid, the poet whose name appears on the *titulus* and who was also the author of the *Ars Amatoria*. Thus, for all Ovid seems to control his text, whether as the actual author, or because he participates with the internal narrator in framing Marsyas as legitimately punished victim, there is also the seed of a subjective authorial presence in the very center of this process of external focalization that places Ovid within the story he tells and so depicts the actual poet as at the mercy of the forces he describes. The multiplication of potential authors here not only helps to make the reader aware of multiple points of view but also allows for various constructions of Ovid’s status and how it affects his poetics. By not being Marsyas, the poet avoids the role of the mere *lusor*, or rather of the impotent rival, and becomes a participant in the manifestation and legitimate exercise of power. But the more he does this, and the more his poetry is taken as an exaltation of the cult of Apollo in particular and of the maintenance of hierarchies in general, the more he seems to fall precisely into that role, to flatter the emperor and to mimic the god.

The tendency for the persona of the poet to collapse into the figure he seems to regard from outside recalls a device familiar above all from Horatian satire, where the resemblance of Horace to figures that he seems to depict only to mock, like Davus and Nasidienus, not only becomes disquietingly revealing about the poet himself but also projects a corrosive effect upward through the social hierarchy, as the patrons and readers whom Horace himself resembles are made uncomfortably aware that they themselves are far from the top of the food chain.⁸⁴ From the other perspective, if we take Marsyas as a sympathetic figure, whose status as an artist we are prepared to endorse, then Ovid’s potential distance from this figure not only lessens the political implications involved in taking on the voice of Apollo’s rival but more importantly reveals that even the autonomous artist is caught up in a larger context that inevitably exerts its pressure over the meaning of his words and, indeed, determines the very modes and language available to him. So too, the *nobilis*, or freedman, can increasingly manifest his own position in the world only through the imagery of the emperor. The poet Marsyas comes to merge with the voice of the god—appropriately, because he is being punished for just that.

⁸³ Tissol 1997.126 draws particular emphasis to the dramatic shift in tone at this point.

⁸⁴ See esp. Oliensis 1997.

III. UPWARD MOBILITY?

So far in this chapter, a close reading of the poem's conclusion has shown how the different ways of construing the priority of Ovidian fiction translate directly into differing views of the authority and status of its poet, especially in relation to that of the supreme author of the Roman imperial cosmos, the emperor Augustus. Then, I offered a broader context for understanding why Ovid should have framed his authorial capacity in this way. The kind of tension between poetic and imperial roles highlighted at the poem's conclusion emerged less as a specifically targeted challenge to the political position of the emperor than as a sign of how the definition of status throughout the Roman social hierarchy was manifested through the borrowing of imperial language and symbols in such a way that both the difference from and similarity to the top of the pyramid emerged from each borrowing. Not only does this speaking through the language of another place each author even more at the mercy of the interpretations of any given reader: it actually breaks down the distinction between reception and authorship, as self-expression becomes inevitably an act of reception and as the reading of the artistic and verbal language of superiors gives scope, in the degree of assent given or refused, for the realization of a social self on the part of the recipient.

Another episode reinforces the radically indeterminate status of the creator in Augustan Rome and also draws a clear link between the social status of makers and the phenomenology of representation: the story of Daedalus and Icarus. Yet Daedalus's story invites reading from below as well as above. Like most studies of how Ovid constructs his social status in the poem, I have started at the top by analyzing the likenesses and differences between poet and emperor. However, the same pattern of overlap and distinction also characterizes Ovid's treatment of his position relative to the figure who stood at the bottom of the social order, the slave.

Tales of transformation and the use of fictions had a particular connection to slaves. I have already suggested in the preceding chapter that the capacity for mutability itself has different implications according to the social status of those to whom it is applied: slaves were by their nature subject to transformation both upward through manumission and downward through a dehumanizing violence that was sometimes figured in images that turned the human slave into a beast. As William Fitzgerald has explored, the slave's mutability and position at the threshold between the human and the bestial make metamorphosis a crucial if sometimes implicit element of the depiction of slavery in Latin literature.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Fitzgerald 2000.87–114.

Fitzgerald's work also suggests how slaves themselves functioned hermeneutically in Roman society to raise broader issues of stability and change very like those put in play by Ovidian metamorphoses. The *Metamorphoses*' obsession with change has seemed to critics to point simultaneously in two directions: on the one hand, it suggests a world genuinely in flux, a perspective that undercuts any claims to a permanent order; on the other, because of the terminal role of metamorphosis in so many of the poem's narratives, it has provoked the claim that only the final forms matter. Change takes place in a miraculous and fictional past that contrasts to the stable world in which we live. The negotiation of these alternatives depends very much on how we regard transformation itself, where a focus on real-world products contrasts with the point of view of those human figures who experience transformation as a total and inexplicable rupture of the world they know. Thus, read from the safe perspective of the present, with the sure knowledge that the stories are fictions, the work becomes more reassuring than it does if we enter into those fictions by identifying with the figures it depicts. Slavery too has the capacity both to affirm and to undermine static hierarchies, and this doubleness again springs from how we view the figure of the slave. As foreign, alien, and animal, the slave provides a naturalizing confirmation of the powers that hold him in bondage. But as flesh and blood human beings, defined perhaps by experience of them as individuals rather than by legal and economic definitions, the very existence of slaves provides the most radical challenge to any kind of social order by pointing out that "we" too could undergo a reversal of fortune that would put us in their place. The reverse metamorphosis of slaves to freedmen undermines social categories not only by signifying that, in the words of Ovid's Pythagoras, *omnia mutantur* (15.165) but also because it suggests a disjunction between appearance and reality since freed slaves can acquire so many of the outward signs of status. But the other side of Pythagoras's dictum, that the soul remains the same, recalls how slavery's changeable nature could in fact make it the ultimate confirmation of aristocratic stability: the mind of the truly noble figure, as stoics in particular remind us, can endure even slavery unchanged.

This resemblance between the signifying power of the slave and of the metamorphic *fabula* becomes all the more striking when we remember that the *fabula* was a characteristic discourse of the slave.⁸⁶ The Tiberian freedman Phaedrus⁸⁷ begins his first book of Aesopic fables with a pro-

⁸⁶ The thematic connections between fable and slavery in Latin literature, and how they shape the use of the fable in the works of Horace and Petronius, are the subject of an important article by Marchesi 2005.

⁸⁷ Or perhaps his upper-class impersonator; see Champlin 2005.

tective disclaimer not so different from Ovid's insistence on the fictionality of the *Metamorphoses* in the poem he addresses to Augustus. "If anyone wishes to abuse me, because not only wild animals, but even trees speak, let him remember that I am merely jesting with made up stories."⁸⁸ The lines draw an important connection among the work's transformative subject matter, its self-advertising fictionality, and the status of the author. As elsewhere Phaedrus will claim that slaves invented the *fabula* for self-protection, to express what they wanted to say without attracting reproach (*calumniamque fictis elusit iocis*, 3. prol. 37), so here he escapes abuse by a retreat into the unreal. But the speaking beasts do more than reinforce the standard definition of the fabulous as remote "even from the semblance of reality" (Quint., *Inst.* 2.4.2). As the low form of the narratives to follow becomes a lightning rod for the abuse that might otherwise fall on the low-status author, so the fabulous talking trees and beasts, whose surprising capacity for speech belies their form, figure the otherwise inarticulate slaves to whom they have given the same power. But the obvious point in Phaedrus is that the *fabula* can be read not just as the mark of servility but as the means of escaping its constraints. So while the noble is always at liberty to trivialize Phaedrus's texts, by making explicit the essential duplicity of the fable, the poet also alerts his reader to the serious speech that lurks beneath it.

Ovid was certainly no freedman. But this fact does not lessen the significance for his work of the inheritance of *fabula* as a kind of speech that invites double reading and so draws attention to the relative position of author and audience. On the contrary, as in the poetry of Horace, the use of *fabulae* takes on a new level of complexity here because to be seen as speaking *fabulae*—in Ovid's case, to expose a connection between the learned subject matter and epic form of his poem and the slave's use of *fabulae*—in and of itself reveals the author in an unflattering light.

The most striking connection between slavery and metamorphosis in the poem comes in the unnamed figure of Mestra, daughter of Erysichthon, and her story will serve briefly to introduce the use Ovid makes of slaves in the construction of his own persona as artist (8.843–77). As Erysichthon's insatiable hunger drives him to poverty, he resorts to selling his daughter into slavery. Commanded to meet her new owner by the seashore, "this noble girl refuses to have a master" (*dominum generosa recusat*, 8.848) and seeks help from the god Neptune, who had previously seduced her. Neptune "renews her form" by giving her the appearance of an elderly fisherman. Armed with this new resource, Erysichthon

"often gave her to masters, but she, now as a horse, now as a bird, now as cow, now as a hind, would get away and so offer unjust nurture to her greedy father." As the only human figure to possess *transformia corpora* (8.871), Mestra is exceptional in the poem.⁸⁹

This personal mutability also applies to the generic registers her tale invokes, for her miraculous ability is appropriately bestowed on her by a god, but she uses it to turn herself into a variety of lesser forms, the stock low-status character of the fisherman, and a succession of wild animals—all in response to a situation drawn from new comedy, a genre of representation distinguished precisely by its verisimilitude. And this ambiguity applies also to her social position. The text is emphatic that Mestra has already been sold—*hanc quoque vendit inops* (8.848)—and is so a slave. But her ability to change shape lets her escape the reality of this state and preserve her own sense of herself as *generosa*. So too, her multiple capacities for disruption—by violating contracts, by assuming the prerogatives of the gods, and by offering, within the context of the narrative, a renewable resource with the potential to thwart Ceres' punishment of Erysichthon⁹⁰—are all held in check. Not only does Mestra explicitly gain her power from a god, but she has herself paid for it with her virginity, the loss of which would have been one of the prime consequences of enslavement. Finally, her rate of gain cannot keep pace with her father's hunger, and so the moral tale of divine vengeance is allowed to reach its end. In this way, Mestra's preservation of her own identity is molded to be perfectly compatible with the maintenance of every kind of order. Her changeable outward form at once provides a camouflage for an undetectable self and divides Mestra into an inner and an outer being that mirrors her hybrid state. Correspondingly, Ovid's audience possesses the potential for a double reading of Mestra, either as a character humbled and contained by circumstances or as the constant *generosa* unchanged by them. Like the fable itself for Phaedrus, miraculous transformation serves both as a device of the slave and as a figure for her. This double vision of course distances the audience from the viewpoint of the master, who cannot recognize Mestra because he is able only to see her *forma*. But our ability to penetrate Mestra's disguise itself has ambivalent consequences; on the one hand, it ensures that we never take her simply for a slave, but on the other, it removes precisely the capacity to trick and deceive that are her own greatest resource against the fact of enslavement.

The multiple ways of construing identity that Mestra's shape changing highlights take on a special significance because they go together with

⁸⁸ *Calumniari si quis autem voluerit, / quod arbores loquantur, non tantum ferae, / fictis iocari nos meminerit fabulis* (Phaed. 1. pro. 5–7). See esp. Bloomer 1997.77–86 on this aspect of Phaedrus's poetry.

⁸⁹ On this and for a valuable account of Ovid's adaptations of previous versions of Erysichthon's tale, see Fantham 1993. Also Hollis 1970.132–34.

⁹⁰ Fantham 1993.31.

a particularly transparent self-transformation on the part of the authorial voice as well. After finishing with Erysichthon's tale, the narrator resumes as follows: "Why do I waste time on strangers? I too have the power of renewing my body, a power limited in number" (*quid moror externis? etiam mihi nempe novandi est / corporis, o iuvenis, numero finita, potestas*, 8.879–80). Even once we remember that the first-person speaker is in fact the river god Achelous—and this may take a moment because the god has been speaking for more than 150 lines—an Ovidian voice may still echo in the phrase *novandi corporis*, recalling as it does the programmatic beginning of Ovid's poem⁹¹ and also with the pun *finita numero* (a power bounded by, or limited to, meter), as though these transformations stop at the boundaries of the poem. Ovid's shape changing here emerges as the simultaneous impersonation of a slave and a god, but again with complications. For while the "slave" Mestra maintains her freeborn status through the gift of transformation that itself reminds the audience of her possession by a god, the god, although he wields a power for metamorphosis that is his own, sees that power limited in a number of ways. He is restricted to two forms, serpent and bull, and, more important, he resorts to them only in the account of his battle with Hercules, when his *virtus* fails. If shape changing for the god, in contrast to the slave, is a sign of weakness and powerlessness, then it is appropriate that he should bear on his countenance a mark of this disgrace that he cannot conceal. For Hercules defeats Achelous by ripping out one of his horns while the god sports his bull shape. The loss of that horn, the contemporary social aspect of which as a loss of status or *capitis diminutio* emerges from the poet's description of it as a *capitis ... damnum* (9.99–100), remains but imperfectly disguised by the willow crown he bears.⁹² As Ovid then becomes neither quite servile nor divine, the art he practices shifts its connotations as he is seen in each figure, signifying empowerment in the person of the slave but "loss of face" in the person of the god.

The tale of Daedalus and Icarus occurs near the beginning of the same book that ends with Mestra. And again we shall find the shape-shifting capacity of a low-status figure measured against that of the gods. Dae-

dalus's story also obviously invites reflection on the actual status of the work's author. His two most famous works as a craftsman are described in ways that recall the poet's art. Thus, the labyrinth he builds in servitude to Minos to conceal the shameful offspring of Pasiphae is likened to the river Maeander,⁹³ whose poetological genealogy goes all the way back to Homer, and the wings with which he tries to return home to Athens receive a simile comparing them to panpipes. Daedalus is already a figure on whom Ovid has put a personal stamp, having told his story previously in the second book of the *Ars Amatoria*, in a context where his prime characteristic, *ingenium*, resembles the *ars* the author himself needs to chain in love (*Ars* 2.34).⁹⁴ But for our purposes the most significant analogy between Daedalus and Ovid is one that will emerge fully only when the last line of the work has been read: the craftsman's literal flight from the realm of Minos predicts the metaphor with which Ovid will figure his artistic triumph, as he flies above the stars.⁹⁵

Above the stars, though, is precisely where Daedalus does not want to go. He warns his son Icarus not to fly too high and not to look up to the stars but to keep his eyes fixed on his father (8.203–8). Whether we take this scene, coming almost halfway through the entire *opus*, as a trial run for the poet's spectacular final takeoff, as an example of the kinds of limiting prescriptions that Ovid as super-Icarus will superbly overcome, or as an all too accurate prediction of the loss of real presence that comes with a purely poetic immortality,⁹⁶ the passage's evocation of the work's concluding gesture gives it a special significance for understanding the nature of Ovid's poetic ambitions. My own treatment of this much-studied episode will focus not on the abstract questions of artistic failure and success but on how it addresses the issue of the artist's status in terms that reflect both contemporary mechanisms of social ascent and the poem's concern with the relative priority of imitation and reality. Specifically, I want to highlight the indeterminacy of Daedalus's status and the extent to which evaluations of Daedalus are shown to depend very much on the position from which the reader views him and his creations.

⁹³ See esp. Pavlock 1998 and Boyd 2006.

⁹⁴ The comparison of the two Ovidian versions of Daedalus has been a frequent exercise. For the best and most recent treatment, see Sharrock 1994b.87–195. In the *Ars*, Ovid seems to go to extravagant lengths to avoid explicitly making the obvious comparison of himself to Daedalus. Surprisingly, the figure who serves as the analogy for the poet in the transition into and out of the narrative is Minos, who can neither keep love out, nor restrain even a human winged figure as Ovid tries to wrestle with a winged god (*Ars* 2.21–22 and 97–98). This distancing from the conspicuous poet figure and assumption of the position of the master Minos is an interesting parallel to the partial identification between the poet and Daedalus that I discuss later.

⁹⁵ For flight throughout the poem as a figure for creation, see Wise 1977.

⁹⁶ See esp. Oliensis 1997.

⁹¹ Even to the enjambment of *corporis*.

⁹² Indeed, this is another of the places where Ovid's self-representation comes close to the techniques exploited by Horace in the *Satires*. In *Satire* 1.5 the poet and his high-tone friends on their way to Brundisium are amused by a slanging match between two *scurrae*, one of whom bears a scar on his brow, which his rival Sarmentus compares to a ripped out horn. The point, though, is that these two characters who ought to be so different from their elite audience in fact rather resemble them. Thus, for instance, Sarmentus is derided as a freedman (as Horace's father was) and tries to conceal this blemish by having been named a *scriba* (as Horace himself did).

Many kinds of hierarchy are at work in the story of Daedalus and Icarus, such as the ascendancy of fathers over children and the capacities of human beings in relation to gods. On a literary level, these issues come to involve the scope of epic as opposed to elegiac narrative and, more importantly, the relationship of Ovid's work to its Vergilian predecessor. For Ovid here, Icarus-like, represents precisely what in the *Aeneid* the father Daedalus himself was unable to portray on the dedicatory sculptures Vergil has him construct upon his safe arrival at Cumae, the death of his son (*Aen.* 6.14–33). I start, though, with a hierarchical relationship that has played but a slight part in analyses of the episode but would perhaps have been among the most striking to ancient readers, the ambiguous social status of Daedalus himself. On the one hand, he practices an art that literally and figuratively brings him close to the gods.⁹⁷ His skill as a craftsman allows him to imitate them in their transcendence of physical boundaries, in the forging of the crafted cosmos with which the poem began, and in their very capacity for duplicitous imitation. Yet that same ability also marks him out as a *faber* (*ingenio fabrae celeberrimus artis*, 8.159), an un-epic word for craftsman that was also, of course, the designation for a common slave occupation—as indeed the name Daedalus is also attested for slaves.⁹⁸ The figure of Daedalus also interestingly features in the décor of a number of freedmen entertainments in the imperial period. He appears in a wall painting in the house of the Vettii in Pompeii, which, as Barbara Kellum has shown, abounds in metaphorical and mythological references to the state of slavery that the Vettii themselves have just escaped.⁹⁹ Most famously, the chef at Trimalchio's dinner who can himself produce wonders of illusion by sculpting any food out of pork also bears the name Daedalus.¹⁰⁰ This demotion of craft emerges perhaps in the Daedalus episode itself in the figure of the three low characters who look up at the flying figures, for each of them is identified and characterized by the tool of their trade, which in two cases is a literal means of support: the fisherman has his rod, and the shepherd and farmer lean on their staff and plow.

⁹⁷ See Hoefmans 1994.143 on the significance of the word *opifex*, 8.201. By contrast, Leach 1988.448 n. 59, drawing on MacMullen 1974.140, strikingly suggests that the word *opifex* itself bore the stigma of mere craftsmanship and that, far from Daedalus being exalted by comparison to the gods, the gods are tainted by a description they share with Daedalus.

⁹⁸ Bömer ad loc.

⁹⁹ Kellum forthcoming.

¹⁰⁰ *Sat.* 70.3. It is worth noting here how the passage confers a Daedalic aspect also to the chef's freedman master, for Trimalchio points out with pride that he has named the slave Daedalus out of his own *ingenium*. Because this was itself Daedalus's characteristic attribute, Trimalchio's own fashioning of the slave as Daedalus, while intended to elevate both master and cook, ends by lowering Trimalchio too to the level of his servile swine sculptor.

While neither text insists on this aspect of the figure, read against such a background there is enough in the language of both of Ovid's accounts to bring Daedalus's servile relationship to Minos into play. In the *Ars*, the position of Daedalus appears first focalized through the perspective of Minos as that of a guest, *hospes* (2.21). Yet Daedalus justifies his flight with the claim that "there is no other route for me to flee a master" (*qua fugiam dominum*, 2.40). The *Metamorphoses*' Daedalus does not repeat such a bald claim to have been reduced to servitude,¹⁰¹ but the poem picks up on the language of possession that accentuates and prepares for it in the earlier text and gives it a special connection to its own concluding negotiation of status. According to Daedalus in the *Ars*, Minos possesses the land and the sea (2.35); in the *Metamorphoses*, this possession receives further rhetorical accentuation, and the king of Crete comes to possess all (*omnia possideat*, 8.187), if only in a hypothetical clause. Yet Augustus, who does indeed attain such world dominion, finds in the poem's final pages his position described in language that again recalls the personal possession of Minos and reintroduces the explicit language of slavery. For Jupiter says of him that the "the entire habitable world will be in his possession [*huius erit*], and the sea will be his slave [*serviet*]" (15.830–31). While not simplistically exposing Ovid as the emperor's slave, the similarity in phrasing does relate the issue of Daedalus's status to the present relationship that Ovid most explicitly uses to define his own.¹⁰²

The doubleness of Daedalus's position in the narrative, as both slave and free exile, as something more than a man in the godlike nature of his craft and something less than a free man in the necessity that drives him to make use of it, emerges too in the contrast between his two great works in the poem, the labyrinth and the wings. The first is itself a device of enclosure and enslavement for a half man and for the captive Athenian youths.¹⁰³ The wings too have the effect of modifying human nature, making a monster, like the Minotaur himself, that has the characteristics of man and beast, but here the emphasis is on freedom and elevation, by which men come near to the realm of gods. The language describing

¹⁰¹ This perhaps furthers Sharrock's point that the Daedalus of the later poem generally seems to lack the humility of his elegiac forerunner and not to know his place.

¹⁰² The other similarity between the fates of Ovid and Daedalus is of course the exile that each endures. While the postexilic revision of any passage of the *Metamorphoses* must remain unprovable, whatever the intention of the author, the craftsman's situation in Crete would almost inevitably have intensified for any reader after 8 CE the exercise of seeing Ovid through Daedalus.

¹⁰³ Note the presence of *domuit* in line 171, which though it grammatically governs only the Minotaur, also suggests the enslavement of the youths.

both inventions heightens this contrast and relates the opposition between openness and enclosure to the twin themes of freedom and status. The labyrinth not only imprisons; it conceals what would be a blot on the reputation of Minos. By contrast, its existence is a product of Minos's executive will.¹⁰⁴ He proposes, Daedalus disposes. Yet Minos's enclosure of his own disgrace suddenly emerges as the promotion of Minos's reputation (*celeberrimus*) and the means by which he becomes a *dux* (*ducit*, 8.161). The wings by contrast are explicitly designed to exploit the "openings" in Minos's power but bring in images of concealment and enclosure (*vincula pennarum*, 8.226) that reduce Daedalus himself to a hapless figure no longer leading another in escape but lost and in need of guidance (*ubi es? qua te regionem requiram?* 8.232).¹⁰⁵ Daedalus intended the wings to impose a sort of ring structure on his own career by bringing him back to the place of his birth, but the effect has been to define a different origin for him by making the end of his flight recall the experience not of the maker of the labyrinth but of those trapped inside it. And, in fact, like the situation of the slave Mestra, for whom metamorphosis as a route out of slavery seems also a condemnation to endless repetition, Daedalus too, for all his flapping, is doomed to go nowhere by the structure of Ovid's own narrative. We last see him on another island, Sicily, again as a fugitive, placing himself in a subordinate position to yet another king, Cotalus. His end thus recalls the beginnings of his narrative within the poem, as a slave in Crete, not the beginnings of his own life story as a free man in Athens.

Three interconnected points result from this analysis of the nature of Daedalus's creations. First is the transparent relation between social prominence and narrative prominence. Daedalus's emergence to freedom marks an important transition in the subject of Ovid's poem, which ceases to be about the king Minos and comes to center around the craftsman. Yet, as we have seen, the beginnings of this transition are made problematic because the accomplishment of the labyrinth can be read as testimony either to Minos's authority or to Daedalus's *ars*. The battle

¹⁰⁴ *Destinat hunc Minos thalamis removere pudorem / multiplicique domo caecis includere tectis* (8.156–57).

¹⁰⁵ One subtle way of signaling this reversion to the labyrinth was pointed out to me by Philip Hardie (*per litteras*). *Met.* 8.232 recalls *Aen.* 9.390, *Euryale infelix, qua te regione reliqui*. But the imagery of the subsequent lines in turn points back to Vergil's description of Theseus retracing his steps through Daedalus's labyrinth (Hardie 1994.143–44), a passage of which Daedalus is himself also arguably the author in that it occurs in the account of the monument he erects at Cumae. It presents an appropriately intricate network of allusions to retrace in order merely to return to the labyrinth, along the way returning the language that describes Nisus to the context in which it first appeared, not a lover in search of his beloved but a father mourning a son, if we consider the (omitted) climax of Daedalus's memorial.

between ruler and craftsman for preeminence in this portion of the poem thus anticipates the struggle at the poem's conclusion between a focus on Augustus and one on the poetic maker himself. And this fluctuation in the narrative, which will play out in the differing ways in which Daedalus's story is framed within the poem, are reflected by, and in themselves determine, the ambiguities of the figure of Daedalus, especially as they are focused by the question of metamorphosis. To read the story from Minos's point of view is to see Daedalus as violator of his position, an ungrateful guest—relying again on the *Ars* as intertext—or a rebellious slave, while Daedalus presents himself as someone seeking an original freedom and Minos as the hubristic tyrant who violates the boundaries between land and sea. Seeing the master, so to speak, and seeing the slave result in radically different views of the story.

Second, the social spectrum that runs from king to slave mirrors cosmic progressions from beast to god and from the underworld of the labyrinth to the sky. And Daedalus's own creations seem by imitation to transgress both the lowest and the highest bounds of the human position within that universe. The labyrinth is like hell—but not exactly like because you can escape from it. Flight makes men almost gods—except for the consequences of falling. And as the limitations of each resemblance reflect positively and negatively on the human state—positively when it allows man to avoid death, negatively when death marks the ending of flight—so the double hybrids within the book, figures who seem caught in an unending metamorphosis,¹⁰⁶ define the human in relation to animal and god. The fact that these are hybrids, rather than creatures undergoing metamorphosis, further highlights this ambiguity, because they can be fit into narratives moving in either direction. The Minotaur can be a man turning downward to bestiality: Daedalus can be a man reaching for divinity.

The third point to stress is the active capacity that Daedalus's imitations have not just to reflect his own status but to transform others'. For as his labyrinthine *opus* (8.160, and another important lexical link to Ovid's "work") is seen as that of a slave glorifying Minos, it also becomes an instrument of enslavement for others. So too, his attempt at flight involves not just self-transformation but aims to be equally uplifting for a second double, Icarus, whose ultimate fall in turn imposes a limit on his father's skill. In just the same way, Ovid's self-definition through this episode is bound up with offering the readers a chance to realize and rethink their own social status by measuring likeness and difference to the various figures in the text.

¹⁰⁶ For the relationship between hybrids and metamorphosis, see Sharrock 1996.

One place where the universal mythical order traced by Daedalus's journey comes most closely into contact with a very specific social order is in the justification and account of Daedalus's invention of wings. The narrator prefaces Daedalus's act of creation with the comment that "he set his mind [*animum*] toward unknown arts and renewed nature [*naturam novat*]" (8.188–89). Besides the further equation between Ovid's work and Daedalus's that comes from the collocation of *animus* with the idea of newness (*in nova fert animus ...*), the final phrase bears an important double signification. Daedalus's flight simultaneously transforms his own specific nature and revolutionizes the entire natural order.¹⁰⁷ Both aspects of the phrase, which itself links personal status to cosmic stability, can impose a negative reading on Daedalus's activity as hubristic transgression. Yet such a view stands in contrast to the inventor's own conception of his natural place. For Daedalus, flight offers not so much reinvention as a return to his *loci natalis* (8.184), a word whose obvious etymology connects it closely to *natura*. By contrast, as we have seen, Minos's obstruction of land and sea bears a close resemblance to the contemporary criticism of the Roman upper classes for violating nature by building over the boundary between land and sea.¹⁰⁸ Is Daedalus unnatural in his desire to escape his position at Minos's court, or is Minos's imposition of limits itself transgressive? When put in such terms, the different views of nature that animate these contradictory readings resemble the alternative uses of the same term, *natura*, in discussions of ancient slavery. On the one hand, slavery could be seen as itself a natural condition,¹⁰⁹ while on the other it was imposed on the slave contrary to the conditions of his birth.¹¹⁰ The figure of the slave as a "hybrid" both like and unlike its masters thus raises the same questions about order as Daedalus's flight does and gives those questions a new bearing for the reader as a member of Roman society.

If Daedalus and his works bear this unsettling capacity to collapse differences between high and low, it stands in stark contrast to the artist's own idealization of his flight and its effects. For Daedalus's instructions to his son Icarus prescribe a middle course as a safe road to his destination. This emphasis on moderation, whose poetological aspects have been thoroughly explored, is also characteristic of the upwardly mobile

¹⁰⁷ See Hollis 1970.59 for the latter meaning.

¹⁰⁸ Most famously in Horace *Odes* 3.1.33–34. See, for the whole conceit, Edwards 1993.143–49.

¹⁰⁹ Arist. *Pol.* 1.2.15.

¹¹⁰ Dig. 1.5.4.1. For the whole debate and its history at Rome, see conveniently Bradley 1994.132–53.

ex-slave.¹¹¹ Phaedrus similarly both advocates and aims for a style of speech that will not attract the scorn of those above by seeming to overreach one's station.¹¹² Yet one of his darker fables, that of the ape and the lion king, points out how the nonnegotiable absolutes of power relations allow for no middle ground. The moral is: "There is the same punishment for those who speak and those who keep silent."¹¹³ So in the case of Daedalus, there is not any middle between being looked up to and looked down on. The metaphor of the road itself will be undone precisely by the devices that he has built into the labyrinth, whose deceptions result from the indistinguishability of roads heading in different directions (8.166–67). This emerges especially from the simile invoking the river Maeander, who "mocks us in his clear waves and with an ambiguous gliding—or fall, *lapsu*—flows forward and backward and meeting himself sees his future waves and drives his uncertain waters now toward his sources and now toward the open sea" (8.162–66).¹¹⁴ This image anticipates Daedalus's tale in the river's apparent deception by its own devices and traces the alternative paths of Daedalus's narrative, which begins as a return to his source but ends on the open sea,¹¹⁵ but it also points out the essential interpretative paradox of the episode that more than any other imprisons Daedalus: the middle road disappears because from different points of view every road looks the same. The moment when the fisher and herdsman catch sight of Daedalus and Icarus and believe that they are gods is interesting not only as a warning to the alert reader of imminent disaster but also because of its emphasis on perspective—literal and social. The spectators looking up at these flying figures themselves occupy low-status, frequently servile occupations: it is only when viewed from "below" that the maker appears as a god.

But it is not only within the narrative that contrasting perspectives literally offer different ways of reading Daedalus. Ovid has himself "nested" the story between two others, those of Ariadne and Perdix, that make his own audience adopt different points of view, which are again represented through the metaphors of altitude. The truly miraculous flight

¹¹¹ Hoefmans 1994.145, by contrast, argues that making such a transgressive figure as Daedalus a spokesman for the virtues of moderation is simply an example of Ovidian irony. Her analysis does not take account of those aspects of Daedalus's situation, in particular his enslavement to Minos, that make him seem an appropriately humble figure to deliver such advice. She goes on to argue that the contrast helps reveal Daedalus's Lucretian perspective, since to an Epicurean there is no danger of hubris.

¹¹² See esp. the analysis of Bloomer 1997.73–109.

¹¹³ *Una enim est poena loquentis et non loquentis*, Phaedrus 4.14.

¹¹⁴ For further discussion of the Maeander simile and its role in the episode, see Pavlock 1998.143–47.

¹¹⁵ For the narratological significance of this river, see Boyd 2006.180–84.

of Ariadne's crown will take it above the stars (8.176–82), precisely the signpost Daedalus uses to warn Icarus of the heights to avoid. If Ariadne keeps us from the error of the fisherman by marking off the truly divine, the ground-nesting partridge, Perdix, the revelation of whose murder has led many readers to see the transgressive side of Daedalus,¹¹⁶ provides a contrast (8.236–59). In comparison to him, Daedalus is guilty of a jealous preservation of status, looking down on Perdix with *invidia* and, appropriately for the symbolic geography of the episode, casting him down from a great height, Minerva's acropolis. But the presence of Minerva, who forms a contrast to the fisherman by allowing us to see Daedalus from the top down, brings another twist. While Minerva's easy gift of wings to the falling Perdix distances her from the human craftsman Daedalus, the reader of Ovid's poem may be reminded more of likeness than of difference. For Daedalus's envy of a younger rival recalls nothing so much as the Minerva's own punishment of Ariadne at the beginning of book 6. So while Minerva gives us a godlike view of Daedalus, the resemblance between the figures makes us see her with different eyes, revealing the unattractively human visage the gods themselves can wear. The stability of a fixed perspective crumbles in the face of a resemblance that reverses the place of higher and lower. As in the Marsyas episode, the goddess who more than almost any other in the poem aims to establish an absolute divine scale for measuring the cosmos is herself undone by an unwonted similarity to an inferior.

We have already seen this mirroring effect at work in the symmetries between the two inventions of Daedalus, but its consequences extend outward to include even the viewer-audience. The opposition I have set up between the godlike Daedalus and the overreaching Daedalus destined to fail reminds us that the narrative itself has given us a pair of flying men, one of whom stays aloft, while the other, Icarus, falls precisely for refusing to follow in the path of his father and leader. If one accepts the authenticity of line 216, this split also initially casts Daedalus himself in a double role, as both actor and spectator of another's efforts: *Et movet ipse suas et nati respicit alas* (8.216).¹¹⁷ Whether or not this spectatorial role is present at the beginning of the flight as well, the fall of the other at its conclusion provides Daedalus with a moment of self-recognition as he now has the opportunity of looking down on himself and recognizing the limitations of his art, which he curses in a verb that itself conveys a downward momentum (*devovit*, 234). At the same time

it makes the figures of the one who falls and of the one who stays aloft identical to the outside viewer. When Daedalus realizes the death of Icarus, Ovid says, dramatically, that “he saw feathers in the water.” These feathers would be simultaneously those Icarus has lost and his own reflected from below.¹¹⁸ Again we may notice that the mirroring of high in low overlaps with a narrative circularity that takes Daedalus back to his original place. For the gesture of “hiding” the body of a deformed son in a tomb looks uncannily like the service performed for Minos in building the labyrinth. And as that moment marked a transition of fame, when concealing Minos's shame became a sign of Daedalus's celebrity, so here Daedalus's own failure goes together with the immortalization of the “lower” successor, Icarus, who reproduces Minos's authority as he gives his name to both land and sea.

But what kind of model does the triangular relationship between *opus*, artist, and viewer sketched within the Daedalus story provide for how Ovid's text works to define both author and audience? I earlier suggested that Daedalus's works, as the products alternately of subservience and liberation, also imposed this state on others: the labyrinth is itself a prison, the wings a source of freedom for Icarus and, to the extent that Ovid in the *Ars Amatoria* does establish a parallel with his own art, for the poet himself. In the case of the bucolic trio that looks up at the flying Icarus, the sight at once gives them a glimpse of and belief in the existence of higher beings, while it confirms the lowness of their actual status. The fisherman, the shepherd, and the farmer look at Daedalus and Icarus that way precisely because of who they are, and the act of gazing affirms that position both for themselves—in the distance they perceive between themselves and the “gods”—and for the literary audience that watches them watching. We might imagine that social status would similarly function to determine perspective in the case of Ovid's historical audience. Perhaps the slave or freedman might have been more inclined to sympathy for a figure whose own craft, as many of theirs did, provides his means of freedom, and whose punishment is to lose the son who, in the case of Roman freedmen, would have consolidated ascent to the ranks

¹¹⁸ A possible objection to this reading is that seawater is not, in fact, a good reflective medium: hence a discussion among Latinists about the plausibility of Corydon's seeing his image in the Ocean at *Ecl.* 2.26–27 that goes back at least as far as Servius and is summarized in Clausen 1994.73, who intimates that in this case the poet's imagination is not limited by physical realities. In support of this position I might note that Joseph Conrad, who had more firsthand experience of the sea than any Vergilian commentator, nevertheless entitled his memoir *The Mirror of the Sea*. For another possible case of Ovid's referring to a reflection appearing on the sea's surface, cf. the discussion of 4.713, in chapter 7, section 2. In the latter case the reference could be simply to a shadow, and perhaps that might be an acceptable compromise here as well.

¹¹⁶ See esp. Faber 1998.

¹¹⁷ Tarrant's (1982.360) argument that the line, which exactly reproduces *AA* 2.73, sits awkwardly in its context within the *Met.* and is therefore a post-Ovidian assertion carries conviction.

of citizens. Or perhaps they more than any other would have been alert to the transgressive nature of Daedalus's flight. The masters, by contrast, might have been secretly pleased to discover in the tale of Perdix a justification for rejoicing in Daedalus's failure and an affirmation of his guilt.

While social perspective may indeed have played such a role in the tale's reception, it is important to remember that, within the narrative, the point of view of the fisherman is obviously shown to be wrong.¹¹⁹ The reason for this is that he and his fellows recognize only difference, not, as Daedalus himself would do in the case of Icarus, similarity—hence, another model of reading suggested by the passage that has the opposite effect from putting each audience member in her place. Not only does it make it possible for each reader to try on different roles, but it challenges any stable assumptions about social difference by pointing out an identity among figures at different levels, encouraging the high to see themselves lowered and the low exalted. In this way again, Ovid's techniques recall the use of servile characters in genres like satire, where the assumptions of a radical separation based on rank is undercut by figures like the slave Davus who sounds too much like his master.

How the text can act on its audience in this way is a subject that occupies us more fully in the next two chapters. Here, though, I want to conclude by asking what picture the Daedalus story gives of the position of its own author. As in the poem's final movement, here too the poet's authority depends on the success and nature of his work as imitation.¹²⁰ In fact, the same imagery of high and low that we have seen energize issues of status within the episode also gives a map for different kinds of creation. The gods make reality, the craftsman copies. This ontological hierarchy takes us from the crown of Ariadne, which really becomes a constellation that only resembles a crown in appearance, to the good craftsman Perdix, whose imitations derive from looking down at fishes, not up at birds, and are themselves free from deception. You would not be mistaken to think that Ariadne's crown was a constellation—it is, and you would never confuse a saw with a sawfish, but Daedalus's wings do blur the bounds between representation and reality. This alternative between viewing imitation as real and its maker as a god and viewing imitation as an artifact and its maker as a craftsman parallels and reaffirms the distinctions we have been describing within the story and suggests how to transfer them to the figure of the poet himself, who is at once a god-like maker of fictions and, when we become conscious of his *ars*, merely pretending to be. Thus, not only is mimesis itself graded according to its

approximation to reality, but how we view the resulting products determines where we place their maker on the scale the text establishes.

We have seen that this connection between imitation and status is not simply a product of Ovid's text but a crucial feature of the construction and evaluation of identity in Augustan Rome. Throughout the social spectrum, upward mobility could be conveyed by assuming the names (in the case of newly liberated freedmen), clothing, hairstyles, and artistic imagery of those above, and it made the acceptance of this refashioned identity dependent on the recognition of similarity rather than difference on the part of others, whose acquiescence in this recognition would itself be conditioned in part by their own positions. Such a point of view also gives a special poignancy to the failure of imitation ever to be what Daedalus's imagery and the episode's emphasis on instruction (*exempla*, 8.245; *praecepta*, 8.208, 243) suggest that it might be, a steady and reliable means of perpetuating sameness without inviting *invidia*, or contempt.

Ovid's own imitation puts him in competition with a host of superiors: with the gods, if we view it from inside the bounds of its own fictions; with epic predecessors like Vergil, if we view it within the literary historical tradition, but also, from an extratextual, social perspective, with the emperor himself. And within the text of the Daedalus episode a flickering resemblance between the poet and a succession of different characters help to sketch the variety of ways in which the poet himself can be seen. It was, after all, Minos whom the poet had chosen in the *Ars* to figure the difficulties of his poetic task; Icarus, whose playfulness (*lusus*, 8.199) obstructs the completion of his father's work (*opus*, 8.200) and whose ambition prevents him from merely following in the path of another, enacts a whole set of cherished artistic principles that also provide a partial picture of Ovid's authorial stance.¹²¹ And to the unstable figure of Daedalus too, Ovid is both like and unlike. The most telling moment of differentiation comes when Ovid compares the anxious Daedalus at the beginning of his flight to a bird teaching its offspring to fly (8.213–14). All Daedalus's labor to make wings seems grotesquely ineffective in comparison to the poet's mimesis, which turns man into bird with a few strokes of the pen.

But Ovid cannot so easily get himself free from the labyrinth of resemblances that he has created. The simile comparing to musical instruments the crafted wings, which at once accentuate order through the placement of feathers arranged from long to short and violate this order by them-

¹¹⁹ See Hoefmans 1994 on how this error mirrors a classic Epicurean theological mistake.

¹²⁰ A similar evaluation of Daedalus's failings as imitator will be found in the stimulating analysis of Barkan 1986.74–75.

¹²¹ On Ovid's cultivation of puerility as a defining quality of his poetic persona, see Morgan 2003, esp. 77–79.

selves rising (*clivo crevisse ... surgit*, 8.191–92),¹²² show Ovid himself as a craftsman forging his own means of ascent. But in this image of the text as Ovid's wings, it is perhaps significant that he has chosen to emphasize the panpipes, a figure for a type of poetry, bucolic, that was rather below epic in literary status. If Ovid's poem is itself set for an upward flight through the genres, perhaps we can try to look down on it as well to see what it is trying not to look like. With its clearly pointed moral, its cautions about overreaching, and its own imperfect transformation of protagonists to animals, this epic *fabula* comes to earth as a narrative not unlike that in which the slave according to Phaedrus masks and reveals himself. And, indeed, the second story in Phaedrus's collection tells of a jackdaw who disguises himself as a peacock, only to face social ostracism when his false feathers fall off. Horace had applied precisely the same fable to a case of literary imitation, when he warns the aptly named high-flier Celsus away from making his reputation by imitating writings "which Palatine Apollo has already received," "lest the crow be laughed at when stripped of his stolen colors."¹²³

¹²² The wing's delineation of and violation of order is particularly interesting in light of the textual crux in 8.190: *nam ponit in ordine pennas / a minima coeptas, longam brevior sequenti*. In the first half of the line the feathers seem to get progressively longer, in the second, shorter ("with the shorter following the long"). Anderson 1972, who does print the line, suggests the possibility of deleting it, following Merkel and Hollis. Tarrant 1982.359–60, who brackets the line in his OCT as an interpolation, adds to a concern with the logic, which within the context of the reading I propose would make sense, an objection to the Latinity of *coeptas* describing the feathers as opposed to the crafted wings.

¹²³ Horace *Epist.* 1.3.15–20. I am grateful to Ellen Oliensis for reminding me of the applicability of this passage. Cf. too the avian imagery representing literary imitation in *Odes* 4.2.

Playing Gods

OVID'S *METAMORPHOSES* AND
THE POLITICS OF FICTION

Andrew Feldherr

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