

PART THREE

Ovid and the Visual Arts

CHAPTER 6

Faith in Images

In the first book of his poems from exile, Ovid explicitly compares his *Metamorphoses* to a visual representation, claiming in fact that his poem provides a “greater” image of the poet than any sculptural depiction: *carmina maior imago* (Tr. 1.7.11).¹ This is but one of the many connections between Ovid’s great work and the arts of painting and sculpture. For not only has the poem provided by far the most significant repository of subjects for artistic representation of any text in the Western tradition other than the Bible, but links have often been perceived between Ovid’s highly visualized descriptions and the preexisting masterpieces of classical painting and sculpture. Thus, the final tableau of the second book, as Europa’s clothes billow out behind her while the bull on whose back she sits makes for Crete, has seemed to leave the captured maiden in precisely the attitude she will maintain in numerous ancient paintings.² Conversely, Ovid’s next damsel in distress, Andromeda, first appears in the poem precisely as she was depicted in painting until a viewer,³ Perseus, literally enters the picture to rescue her from a fate worse than death.

As these last examples already suggest, the relationship between the text and works of painting and sculpture is far more complex than the simple problem of reciprocal influence that originally prompted study of “Ovid and the Visual Arts.” Rather, the poet seems explicitly to thematize the visual dimension of the poem, inviting readers to measure the capabilities of verbal and visual representations against one another. Such a procedure per se will hardly be surprising in an ancient text. Comparisons of poetry and painting were a rhetorical commonplace, and any ancient narrator would have learned early in his rhetorical training how to add visual vividness to his account of events. Ecphrases, in its modern meaning of verbal representations of visual artifacts, provided elaborate occasions for epic writers to articulate by comparison and contrast their own artistic aims, as Ovid does with unsurpassed complexity in the account of the tapestry competition in book 6. But the poem’s choice of metamorphosis as subject gives a special dimension to its evocation of the visual.

¹ On the representation of the *Met.* in *Tristia* 1.7, see esp. Hinds 1985.21–27.

² Laslo 1935.424–28; see also Barkan 1986.7–18, Solodow 1988.210, and Wheeler 1999.154.

³ *Met.* 4.673. Hardie 2002c.183–85.

Rosati's demonstration of the spectacular elements of metamorphosis obviously facilitates the assimilation of Ovidian narrative to works of art, but in an interesting double sense.⁴ As recent work on ecphrasis has stressed, the older critical distinction between static ecphrasis, stopping the story even as it portrays an unmoving image, and the dynamic properties of the framing narrative is one that is constantly violated.⁵ So Ovid's techniques of visualization both make the reader witness to a narrative process, as change seems to take place before her eyes, and confronts her with the unchanging product of metamorphosis—the tree, the flower, and in many cases the statue—that marks the end of change. These two ways of, literally, seeing metamorphosis open out different perspectives on the poem that introduces these objects to view, perspectives that replicate and intensify the hermeneutic challenges posed by metamorphosis itself. The first stresses the horizons of the narrative, showing the reader a long past event that acquires presence by virtue of being seen. The second by contrast locates the viewer in the familiar world of believable, everyday objects but asks her to see them with new eyes.

If we move from considering the effect of Ovid's techniques of visualization to ask then about the relationship implied between Ovid's texts and the visual arts, another related set of contrasts emerges between a metaphoric connection, which explicates the text while stressing its difference from the world of images, and a metonymic one, where the narrative itself seems to become one of the gallery of visual representations. Statuary and painting function as metaphors for Ovid's poem, as Philip Hardie has described, precisely through their ability to conjure up absent presences while marking that absence. The phenomenon of a literary account of an artistic image doubles the distance between the reader and whatever reality lies behind the description; yet, at the same time, the internal representation of the work of art creating a physically real presence of its vanished model stakes a positive claim for how the literary text can indeed make something out of nothing. Ovid gives an even greater immediacy to this effect by, for the most part, refusing to segregate ecphrastic description from his narrative by introducing a work of art to be described. "We are both stimulated to 'see' the events, and asked to believe in the reality of what we see. Seeing is believing; pictorial illusionism and verbal fictionality are forced into an unusually close symbiosis."⁶ The last phrase of Hardie's analysis points to the special, metonymic quality of visual art for Ovid, the sense that the text itself no longer simply

describes scenes visually but has come to acquire the solidity and reality of artifacts. Its leap into presence reifies not only the events signified but also the very visual images that signify them. Alison Sharrock's discussion of the relationship between metamorphosis and visual representation illuminates another important area of overlap, again brought into focus by the theme of metamorphosis. Every visual work of art possesses the same double dimension of stasis and movement as Ovid's text, and both are complicated by the image of metamorphosis. The visual image, like the product of metamorphosis, is always both what it is—stone, paint, ivory—and what it represents, as the flower is always also Hyacinthus. More important, the material has taken on this double nature precisely through a process of transformation under the creating hand of the artist.⁷

Sharrock's observation that every work of visual art has its own metamorphic qualities, that the viewer mentally initiates a transformation from the material object to what it signifies, is the starting point for my argument here. The suggestion that the poem reproduces for its readers the experience of viewing physically present works of art, as in the preceding chapters I argued it did for ritual performances like drama and sacrifice, provides another crucial link between the poem and the material realities that constituted Augustan culture. For the "real presence" conjured up by Ovid's poem through visual vividness is not merely an abstract ontological paradox but a way in which the poem speaks about, and speaks as, an essential constitutive element of Roman identity. Several of the poem's images, among them the statue of Niobe that is discussed at the beginning of the next chapter, had direct visual equivalents prominently displayed in the public spaces of the Roman city, and even when such images are absent, or undiscovered,⁸ the dynamic of viewing that the poem develops and draws on conjures up a response that is not simply an aesthetic one.⁹ Rather, as recent research in the Roman reception of art has suggested, the act of viewing potentially brought into play questions of nationality, history, class, and political allegiance, as well as providing a context for religious experience. My aim in this part of the

⁴ Leach 1988.440–66, working independently from Rosati, also draws particular attention to the way in which metamorphosis provides for visualization and makes this the basis of her own comparison between Ovidian narrative technique and the visual arts.

⁵ Fowler 2000.64–85.

⁶ Hardie 2002c.174.

⁷ "Raw material becomes a work of art by a process which characterizes the artist as metamorphic worker and makes metamorphosis a powerful signifier of art, indeed a self-reflexive representation of or metaphor for artistic activity. Works of art may be static, but artistry is in a constant state of flux." Sharrock 1996.104. A similar expression of the inevitable connection between metamorphosis and the visual image is found in Barkan 1986.17–18.

⁸ Viarre 1964.35: "Il est très rare qu'on puisse établir une entière correspondance entre une oeuvre d'art déterminée et une passage d'Ovide."

⁹ Viarre 1964.144 asks a similar question but provides a different answer, one focusing on the magical elements of metamorphosis.

argument is to point to ways in which Ovid's text explicates how visual artifacts can indeed acquire such potency and how his poem both shares in that power and intervenes in the way that images are seen.

Before proceeding, though, I want to make clear that I do indeed know the difference between a text and an image, and that I am aware that Ovid's materialization of his text can take place only in the mind's eye.¹⁰ Those epiphanic moments when image and text appear to merge always happen in counterpoise to a skeptical awareness of the art of words that resists deception. In fact, the opposition between narrative and image contributes as much to Ovid's effect as assimilating one to the other. But the text's ultimate incapacity to undergo physical metamorphosis finds a powerful compensation in its ability to inscribe itself on actual monuments, as, for example, the poet makes the stone Niobes that populate Augustan temples tell his story.

One factor that has until recently slowed appreciation of the dialogue between Ovid's textual images and the Roman visual environment has been, broadly speaking, the emphasis in the study of ancient art on connoisseurial questions of style and identification that have tended to isolate individual works of art from their cultural context. The familiar tendency to read through surviving Roman works to recover lost Greek models has also inevitably detracted attention from the complex reception of such images at Rome. But new shifts in the priorities of art historians have revealed that the act of viewing in Rome involved a network of decisions about how and what to see, affecting and affected by questions of education, class, religion, and politics. I have already given one example, in chapter 2, of how more audience-oriented approaches to understanding the power of images in Augustan Rome can reveal new parallels and exchanges between Ovid's poem and Augustan images on the political level. Now it is time to explore in greater detail some of the many alternatives ways of viewing in Augustan Rome to see how the tensions among them focus on questions very similar to those raised by Ovid's text.

¹⁰ Another interesting recent attempt to relate Ovid's poem to the contemporary visual environment is that of Gros 1981. While Gros laudably rejects efforts to find signs of reciprocal influence between the poem and contemporary painting and sculpture, he goes on to imagine a too-impenetrable barrier between literary and visual art. Thus, rather than positing any dialogue between text and image, Gros attributes any similarities of compositional technique to the general aesthetic principles of the age. His final reading of the compositional effect of the *Metamorphoses* as generating a tension between the vividness of the details and the larger narrative impulses of the work (365–66) offers a useful way of reading the poem, and his comparison to the style of the Hellenistic baroque temple design which was even then being replaced by the more message-driven style of Augustan monuments, remains suggestive, even though recent art-historical work has made this opposition in styles less extreme than it once appeared.

One immediate justification for making the connection between Ovidian fictional technique and the reception of the visual arts is that there was no cultural sphere in which the authority and effects of illusionism were more intensely debated. Vitruvius, in a passage well known to art historians, attacks the growing taste for the kind of wall painting that we designate Third Style: earlier painters, though they included mythical subjects (*fabulae*, 7.5.2), had nevertheless produced illusions that gave the appearance of reality. The new painters, by contrast, produce “monsters rather than sure images drawn from definite things” (*monstra potius quam ex rebus finitis imagines certae*, 7.5.3). Such *monstra* not only distort appearances by exaggerating proportions so that columns seem thin as tendrils but also produce hybrids, “slender stalks having half images, some drawn from human heads, others from the heads of beasts.” When Vitruvius condemns these paintings on the grounds that “these things neither are nor were nor will be” (7.5.4), he uses exactly the criteria that rhetoricians used to discriminate *fabulae* from other forms of narrative: They represent neither things that are nor things that might have been. In fact, the hybrid forms that exemplify the new style for Vitruvius provide a precise visual corollary to the impossible metamorphosis narratives of Ovid's poem.

But it is more than a similarity in content that links contemporary painting to the *Metamorphoses*. Not only do these visual monsters mix parts of different animals to produce things that never were; they simultaneously make it hard to distinguish where representation ends and begins. Where Second Style painting had offered more easily readable images distinctly framed within an illusionistic décor,¹¹ here it is impossible not only to find any reality described by the paintings but also to tell where illusion starts and stops. The columns and architectural details that had served as frames now themselves seem to come to life with recognizable animate shapes. This is perhaps what Vitruvius's reference to *certae imagines* implies, certain from the point of view not just of what they represent but also of the boundaries of the represented image. Such paintings complicate the relationship between levels of representation and simultaneously, as Ovid's poem does, question the priority of any external reality, or narrative, over the crafted image itself. Indeed, such a lack of boundaries allows the viewer an enormous freedom to alternate between seeing recognizable verisimilar figures emerge from the image and seeing them reduced to elements in an architectural design. Again Vitruvius's language is suggestive: “Minds darkened by weak judgments

¹¹ Though see the important reminder of Leach 2004.88 that even here there is no question of actually deceiving the viewer into taking the image as real.

are not strong enough to put to the proof what is able to exist with both authority and reason in decoration" (*iudiciis autem infirmis obscuratae mentes non valent probare quod potest esse cum auctoritate et ratione decoris*, 3.5.4). This complex sentence implies the difficulty of maintaining not only the coexistence of authority and rationality but also, through foregrounding the phrase *quod potest esse*, a leitmotif of part 3, the coexistence of reality with its artistic depiction. The reference to authority here is also telling; by asserting the canon of reality, Vitruvius combats the desire to apportion merit on the basis of art alone. As we have seen in the case of Ovid, so for the visual artist, the creation of fictions can draw attention to the artifact itself and so give a prestige to the craftsman that Vitruvius would deny him.

Jaś Elsner has used Vitruvius's polemic as a tool for understanding the experience of the viewer in the Roman house and to argue that the confrontation with visual illusion itself becomes the locus for the spectator to define a social self. Starting from the connection elsewhere in Vitruvius between visual decorum and social hierarchy, Elsner suggests a link between the subversion of realistic representation and the overturning of political order, which such representations both symbolize and perpetuate. But beyond the association of aesthetic and social control, Elsner's work is especially valuable for suggesting how the process of viewing illusion, irrespective of the content of the image, grants the viewer a new independence from preexisting social positions: because the challenge for the viewer is no longer simply the discovery of a "prior, fixed, and natural reality," a more "complex" act is required, one that engages predominantly viewer and image, without reference to externals.¹² Even Second Style paintings, Elsner suggests, that operate within the accepted rules of verisimilitude, can raise the question of "the 'reality' of the real world itself" and allow the viewer "to see it as merely a set of constructions."¹³

According to this account, the effects of visual illusionism per se in forcing its audience to question the priorities of reality "outside" and "inside" the represented image bear a close similarity to the effects of Ovidian fiction as initially described in the analysis of the Io narrative, which itself depends on the reception of a visual image. Another point of contact between Elsner's understanding of the sociopolitical effect of visual illusions and the reading of *Metamorphoses* we have developed so far is his emphasis on how illusionism deconstructs the very possibility of realism, and indeed of "reality" as a category. So we have seen in the beginning of chapter 2, and this is a point that has also been developed

elsewhere in Ovidian scholarship, that Ovid not only questions the priority of the fictional over the real but also makes a figure like Augustus a metamorphic artist in a way that seems to invite the reader to transfer the strategies developed for interpreting the *Metamorphoses* to other sorts of artistic representations which have more at stake in the claim to offer access to a "real reality."¹⁴

In the next chapter I return to the act of vision itself to argue through a reading of the Perseus episode that viewing images instantiates the kind of radical identification of the self as social participant that we saw in the sacrificial spectacles of chapter 3. But first I want to turn away from the question of illusionism to draw attention to other "political" aspects of the reception of the visual arts that also find parallels in the ambiguities of Ovid's poem. Specifically I suggest that certain essential properties of the work of art in Roman eyes, above all its innate foreignness, also affect the Roman viewer's experience in ways that explain the tension between poetic narrative and visual image within the poem.

No text has been more important for setting the traditional agenda of Roman art history than Pliny the Elder's treatments of painting and sculpture, virtually the only narrative of art history to survive from antiquity as well as an indispensable guide to the works of Greek art on display in the imperial city. But simply to mine Pliny for such information risks overlooking the fascinating example Pliny offers of how one Roman reads art history. For Pliny embeds details about specific works of art in a larger narrative of Roman cultural history in such a way that to focus on the formal qualities of the works described, as art historians have traditionally done, is already to have taken one side in a larger debate about what matters in a work of art.¹⁵ One place where these alternatives are easiest to observe is in his famous discussion of the Roman house, where Pliny contrasts the display of ancestral monuments like *spolia* and ancestor portraits with the luxurious images merely bought by the wealth of new owners (35.5). The old images gained value as historical markers in a double sense: their very presence commemorated the deeds by which they were won, and as representations they provided reminders of the virtues of the past. By contrast, the new images, made by foreign artists (*externorum artificum*, 35.6), are predominantly material objects (*materiam conspici malunt*, 35.4). But the anxieties here revealed about the social effects of a connoisseurial reading of works of art, in which foreign artistry and imported material occlude the representation of Roman virtues, provide but one aspect of Pliny's own contradictory view of viewing. This tension becomes obvious in the very fact that it is precisely the

¹² Elsner 1995 (quotes from p. 58).

¹³ Elsner 1995.74. See also the development of Elsner's reading of illusionism in Leach 2004, esp. 89.

¹⁴ Especially Hardie 1997 and 2002c.

¹⁵ For a full account of Pliny's motives as art historian, see esp. Isager 1991.

aspects of works of art that he here makes symptomatic of decline that structure his own treatment of them. Painting and sculpture find a place in Pliny's work only because of the materials from which they are made and within each excursus are cataloged according to the artist who has produced them.

The other side to Pliny's view of images appears precisely from consideration of the context where Pliny locates his polemic against modern tastes in home decoration. This emerges in fact from a very formalist perspective on the decline of verisimilitude in portrait painting, the result, Pliny claims, of a general breakdown in the cultivation of the self that makes moderns worthy of and interested in being represented (35.4). The faulty emphasis involved in contemplating works of art only as material objects becomes both a cause and an effect of this phase in the development of art history. This suggests that a reading of works of art that stresses the Roman historical context is not the only frame that can be used to combat the forces of corruption. Rather, Pliny's project involves the "conquest" of art history by making it a metaphor for Roman imperial decline. As the ideal styles of representation, which in turn focus on creating a vivid and lifelike image, constitute a golden age in the history of art corresponding to the historical periods before Rome itself was corrupted by luxury, so the artists themselves become not simply adjuncts to the material value of their products in the modern luxury market but examples in their own right. Their efforts to impose order on natural matter in a way that makes it a signifier of virtue parallel the achievements of the images' Roman conquerors, and perhaps of Pliny himself.

Hence a defense of art history as a scholarly discipline, as well as a pronounced ambiguity that shows itself in a number of Pliny's discussions, depending on whether "actual" Roman history or its reflection within the discipline of art history takes priority. For example, the first foreign paintings are publicly displayed in Rome after the conquest of Corinth, a moment that both marks one of the great triumphs of Roman history and serves as a canonical watershed for the invasion of foreign luxury. Correspondingly, the conqueror Mummius's attitude toward captured paintings enshrines what from one perspective seems a laudable old Roman reluctance to value foreign works of art per se and from another a distant and almost barbarous Philistinism. When a foreigner, Attalus of Pergamon, offers an exorbitant sum for a famous picture of Liber, Mummius calls the picture back and places it in the temple of Ceres, "having suspected that there was some virtue in it of which he was ignorant" (35.24).¹⁶ If the initial reluctance to view the work as anything other

than booty and the resulting decision to make the work public once its value is known illustrate a traditional ethos,¹⁷ the inability to detect virtue (*virtus*) in the form of a painting seems a defect from the point of view of Pliny's own time, and this defect emerges all the more clearly from a paired anecdote in which a German barbarian shows himself equally ignorant of the worth of painting when, asked what value he would put on a picture of an aged shepherd, he answers that he would not even want the shepherd himself as a gift (35.25). A point of view that sees the value of art only in terms of the social status of the figure it commemorates, just the one that ought to prevail in the Roman house, now defines the barbarian. Another point of conflict comes when Pliny seems to condemn contemporaries not for an excessive interest in foreign works but rather for ignorance of them: "At Rome, the multitude of works of art, and the effacement [of their titles], and especially the huge mass of business and obligations keep all from contemplating them, since such wonderment belongs to men of leisure and requires tranquillity" (36.27). Here the very accumulation that might have been taken as a sign of expansion and splendor has a negative effect on viewing the works of art in their own terms. And the opposition between duty and leisure makes it very unclear whether industry and offices are to be praised or blamed. Is the ideal to have leisure for edifying study or to have something better to spend one's time on?

This brief overview of Pliny's attitudes toward the reception of art thus shows how the contradictory values of "art history" itself, to apply an anachronistic term, depend on the balancing of conflicting framing narratives, one oriented toward the Greek original, the other toward the Roman appropriation of it, with neither ever quite able to escape the other. But his analyses also make clear the striking extent to which the experience of any actual work of art, even prior to the kind of iconographic interpretation discussed in chapter 2, could be complicated by the tension between content and context. Should one see the painting Mummius erects as an adornment of a Roman temple, or as an intrinsically valuable Greek masterpiece whose position in Rome tells the story of her triumph over the East, or as a reminder of Mummius's own public spirit? Or does one concentrate on the qualities of the painting itself, or on the story of Dionysus and Ariadne that it told?¹⁸ The problem is all the more acute in this particular case because the painter in question, Aristides, specialized in conveying the emotional states of his subjects, and indeed one of

my argument. See Gruen 1992.124–29 and Bergmann 1995.88, n. 18.

¹⁷ On the "private" display of art masterpieces as a symptom of *luxuria*, see Bergmann 1995.

¹⁸ Assuming that the painting of Liber mentioned in 35.24 is the same as the Dionysus and Ariadne once on view at the temple of Ceres at 35.99.

¹⁶ Because I am interested here only in recovering imperial attitudes toward the visual arts, the fact that this event is extremely unlikely to have occurred makes no difference to

the most celebrated of his works showed the horrific image of a baby attempting to suckle its dead mother after the sack of a city.¹⁹ And far from being an inevitable, and accidental, aspect of viewing works of art, the “battle” between Greek and Roman seems to have been deliberately emphasized by contexts of display. Bettina Bergmann has persuasively shown that the opposition between Greek original and Roman imitation has very little value for describing any actual work of art but that Roman contexts of viewing themselves conspired to give the illusion of an appropriated Greek masterpiece. Thus, the décor of the Villa Farnesina creates the impression of a public picture gallery through the elaborate framing of individual panels within the frescoed decoration. As Bergmann suggests, the owners of this luxurious villa could easily have afforded actual ancient paintings.²⁰ The preference for simply imitating them in part reflected on the status and attitudes of the owner, because the appropriation of works of art in private spaces was symptomatic of excessive grandeur and frequently attracted the attention of moralists. But beyond that, the display doubly makes illusionism the medium that brings such political questions to the fore by making the viewer choose between seeing or not seeing the luxury that would be implied by a real private gallery, as well as between seeing or not seeing the Greek vistas as framed or perhaps overshadowed by the Roman context of display.²¹

The kinds of issues that Roman artistic display seems deliberately designed to generate have an immediate relevance to the “double vision” experienced by the reader of the *Metamorphoses*. In this case too, the overall narrative thrust directed toward the present and the triumph of Rome contrasts with the profusion of individual episodes overwhelmingly devoted to foreign subjects—which inevitably overlap with the content of famous Greek painted panels—to raise the question of whether the poem is indeed an epic celebration of the Roman “now” or a reanimation of a lost past. The connection between assent to illusion and the adoption of the victim’s point of view so tellingly developed in Arachne’s tapestry would also have several corollaries in the experience of viewing actual works of art. Not only would the framed panels be overwhelmingly Greek in subject matter; they would also have been often portrayed as spoils of conquest. What is more, the capacity to create illusion was precisely what makes the Greek artists themselves masters, according to

¹⁹ Interestingly, Pliny notes that this painting itself was taken as booty by Alexander, the sacker of Aristides’ own native city of Thebes, 35.98.

²⁰ Bergmann 1995.105.

²¹ For another important discussion of how viewing Greek objects in the contexts of Roman houses draws attention to issues of social and political hierarchy, see Fredrick 1995, esp. 279.

the veristic standards Pliny adopts (though the exposure of the power to create illusion diminishes the efficacy of that illusion).

These considerations give new significance to Ovid’s placement of the visual tableau of Europa at the juncture of books 2 and 3. Beyond emphasizing the contrast in his own work between motion and stillness, the “painting” suggests the thematic content of this opposition and also relates it directly to the experience of the visual arts. On a purely narratological level, this moment in the poem draws particular attention to the tension between the large frame and the individual episode.²² Europa herself is quintessentially the figure of the refined short poem; the version of the Greek poet Moschus forms a self-contained whole of 165 lines whose narrative is shaped purely by the erotic maturation of Europa, a young girl who in the first line is visited by a dream of the goddess of love and, in the poem’s very last word, becomes a mother.²³ But set in the frame of a larger narrative, this Europa-centric view comes into conflict with larger historical forces, as her brother goes off eventually to found a city whose fortunes will occupy Ovid for the next book and a half and which prefigures the foundation of Rome itself.²⁴ Thus, while Europa’s progeny and kin are essential to the development of the poem, Europa herself is not. Indeed, the static image of the tableau offers us our last glimpse of her. The moment when Europa becomes a “painting” then raises precisely the same kinds of interpretive questions that actual paintings of Greek maidens would have done in the context of Roman atria. And like the images that depict her, Europa herself is described as booty (*praedam*, 2. 873).²⁵ The linkage to visual artifacts thus takes on a special significance because this generic crux comes at a point in the poem that highlights conquest and cultural transmission. The abduction of Europa from Herodotus onward has marked an epoch in the exchange between East and West, and the coming of Cadmus to Greece that it sets in motion not only anticipates the geographic shape of Ovid’s epic but brought East-

²² The word *sinuantur* is itself crucial in pointing to this tension, for while its pictorial dimension highlights the miraculous qualities of painting, because the s-shape which it denotes is the ephemeral product of the winds, it also represents a vice from the point of view of narrative economy. Thus, Quintilian 2.4.3 requires a narrative to be neither arid and starved nor *sinuosa* through recherché descriptions, of which this perhaps is an example.

²³ See the comparison of the two versions in Barkan 1986.12–18. Note also, however, the “cosmic” dimension of Europa’s dream in the personification of the two continents who fight for her; Moschus 2.8–9.

²⁴ This effect is, of course, accentuated by the placement of the narrative at the join between two books, on which see Wheeler 1999.90–93.

²⁵ In this context, it is important that there were no less than three Greek representations of Europa in Pompey’s triumphal portico: statues by Pythagoras and Mikon (Tatian *Graec.* 33) and a painting by Antiphilus (Pliny 35.114). See Kuttner 1999.347, n. 8, and 370.

ern arts, including writing, to the West. Ovid here, among other things, signifies the reshaping of Greek literary “artifacts” into Roman epic in a gesture that collapses the distinction between maiden, image, and text.

This kind of collapse is also evident from the role of Europa as narrative focalizer in this image, and here emerges a second important connection between reading and viewing in the episode. As we saw in chapter 1, the phenomenon of metamorphosis can itself effect a disjunction in point of view between a metamorphosed figure (often a victim) and a spectator (sometimes an amorous pursuer). Here a similar kind of tension emerges but with a telling difference. Within the narrative, Europa has not been changed into anything; it is only Ovid’s figuring her as a painting that creates an awareness of different kinds of visual response. And yet this refashioning of Europa as image responds to an emphasis on viewing within the tale. Unlike Io, her natural foil, who having been turned into a cow becomes herself a deceptive image to be read, Europa is presented as the viewer of a work of art. (Ovid’s ecphrastic technique, and explicit comment that “you” could compare the bull’s horns with things made by hand [2.855], ensures that we see the disguise too in artistic terms.) By functioning as an internal spectator, Europa becomes an available analogue for the reader within the story, a possibility that already complicates the easy treatment of her as “spoils,” the perspective that helps code her tale as part of a triumphant march to the West. This capacity of Europa to focalize the victim’s point of view typifies her when she emerges again, now explicitly as a visual image, as the first figure on Arachne’s tapestry, where, as we saw, her deception by the bull overlaps with Arachne’s deception of the viewer and, thanks to the narrator’s reuse of the ecphrastic “you,” of the reader of the text: “You would think it was a real bull and a real sea” (6.104). Again, Europa offers a conduit for “seeing in” that juxtaposes deception by artistic illusion with adopting a point of view locked within the frame of the representation.

But it is not just that Ovid’s technique here accentuates the visual dimension of his own poem, making it like a picture in the responses it evokes and the way it invokes them. By turning Europa into a painting, and by keying the particular “visual” options he makes available closely to recognized ways of viewing actual works of art, he highlights the issue of artistic reception, deconstructing the increasingly charged processes by which his readers interpreted artistic images. This is one aspect of what Ovid gains by explicitly connecting his scenes to works of art, rather than simply relying on the visual disjunctions metamorphosis itself brings with it. Another is to give greater presence to the transformations he described, creating an overlap between image and text that comes perhaps as close as a literary artist can to projecting described objects into the physical space of the speaker.

To show how the Europa narrative exemplifies this double process, let me begin by backing up my claim that the different points of view opened out by the narrative correspond to recognized alternatives for viewing art objects. Europa’s response to the bull is precisely the naive reading of images practiced by the barbarian who valued the painting of the ancient shepherd only by the real image represented. She is the spectator so totally absorbed by verisimilitude as to be unaware of the artifice that tricks her. Indeed, she is induced even to suspend her knowledge of the real world by the force of illusion; she knows that “real” bulls are not gentle (2.860), but the monstrous hybrid²⁶ produced by Jupiter so wins her over that she comes to believe in the mythical bull as gentle lover. Ignoring the strictures of Horace at the beginning of the *Ars Poetica*, Europa is perfectly prepared to allow an artist to place jewel-like horns on a bull’s body. One consequence of this way of viewing is that she is so absorbed by the real presence of the bull that she misses the real presence in the bull. As in the case of actual works of art we posited a disjunction between an awareness of the painting as an object in its own right and of the larger social hierarchies its context suggests, so her way of seeing blinds her to the power of Jupiter.

The alternative perspective in this passage comes from the narratorial voice and emerges in the connoisseurial approach his description takes to the crafted bull, praising both its color, and, by implication, the workmanship that went into it.²⁷ He ensures that we are aware of the process of craft as well as its object, of the real frame that exposes the artist’s illusion. And yet before we readers congratulate ourselves too much on not being tricked into taking Jupiter’s disguise as a real bull, let us make sure that we are equally cautious about taking it for the art image that it is compared to by the narrator. For the horns, after all, are not made by hand but are real horns, made so by a god. Thus, if Europa’s perspective demotes Jupiter to a bull, the “Plinian” narrator reduces him to a man and tempts us to lose the “wonder” in the presence of a miracle that Europa herself feels, if for the wrong reasons (*miratur*, 2.858).

If this suggestion that Ovid uses the Europa episode to deconstruct the contemporary ways of viewing is right, then it is appropriate that her

²⁶ See Barkan 1986.13. For the problems of viewing hybrids in Augustan art, see Elsner 1995.57–58.

²⁷ There is thus a telling difference between the ecphrastic second-person verbs used in the account of the Arachne tapestry (*verum taurum, freta vera putares*, 6.104) and in the description of the bull (*quae contendere possis / facta manu*, 2.855–56): the first focuses on verisimilitude, and as a result makes the reader not just a viewer of a work of art, but a viewer within a work of art. The second draws attention to craft and keeps the reader aware of the artificiality of the image. Both are equally deceptive, the first suggesting that a crafted bull is real, the second that a real bull is crafted.

deception should have involved the false representation of a bull. For among the most beguiling of those images in which the artist seemed to have surpassed the boundaries of craft, and among the most important subjects for ecphrastic writers of the Hellenistic and Roman periods, was an artificial cow first erected as a votive offering on the Acropolis by the fifth-century BCE sculptor Myron.²⁸ So lifelike was this cow, according to the epigrams it inspired, that herdsmen tried to drive it off, calves tried to nurse from its bronze udders, gadflies tried to sting it, and bulls tried to mount it. The very act of viewing such a cow prompted meditation on the relative powers of art and nature, expressed in the paradox that nature seemed to have become dead and art to have come to life.²⁹ So its sculptor emerges alternately as a Prometheus giving new life to statues and, ironically, as a liar who never sculpted the cow at all but simply drove it off from a herd or waited until it turned bronze from age. In another poem, though, the ultimate unreality of the cow points out the artist's own deception in the power of his craft, or, as the poet puts it, art has "raped" him (τέχνη σε βιάζεται, *AP* 9.798.1). Europa's misprision concerning the bull thus places her in a long tradition of literary viewers. But the tables have been turned in a supremely Ovidian gesture, for this bull is real, or at least it seems so in the world of Ovid's narrative. The deceived viewer here turns out to be right after all, and in place of the sculptor who inevitably falls just short of a divine capacity to create life, the artists are either, in the case of Jupiter, literally divine or a yet more marvelous (or dishonest) craftsman who has produced for the reader an image much more real than Myron's while working with a much less substantial material than bronze. And these reorientations are necessary for a reader himself to move from the static image of a painted Europa to the dynamic world she experiences as a figure within the text.

The hybrid nature of Ovid's account and its doubling of interpretative strategies emerge most clearly in the final tableau itself. For one of the tragic aspects of Ovid's Europa narrative, and a powerful contrast to Moschus's treatment of her, is that she remains trapped within the static image. Europa never reenters the narrative after this final moment. By contrast, Moschus goes on to describe her maternity, as does Ovid in his *Fasti* (5.617). And while the third book begins by describing Jupiter as

²⁸ Steiner 2001.28, n.70. Also Kuttner 1999.363.

²⁹ See, most clearly the late poet Julian of Egypt:

Πόρτιν τήνδε Μύρωνος ἰδὼν τάχα τοῦτο βοήσεις.
 "Ἡ φύσις ἀπνοός ἐστιν, ἢ ἔμπνοος ἐπλετο τέχνη."
 (*AP* 9.793)

shedding his deceptive disguise and admitting his identity, this event occurs in a subordinate clause, merely providing a temporal frame for the start of Cadmus's story, and there is no reference to any response on the part of Europa to his revelation, as though she were now an inanimate image rather than a viewing subject. And just as we have previously described how Europa's point of view offers access to the depicted world, so within that final tableau her own gaze is fixed resolutely backward, toward the Asian shore, girlhood, and book 2. One of her hands, however, holds the horn of the bull. Stephen Wheeler has detected a metatextual pun here: for *cornua* can mean not only horns but the knobs at the end of the book roll.³⁰ Thus, while as maiden the image looks back, she also mimics the reader in, perhaps, reaching out for the next book roll to continue the narrative (or stressing the end of this one?). This tension between the anticipation of things to come, keyed to the reception of the poem as text, and a desire for regression becomes all the more marked because of the familiar difficulty in rewinding scrolls to go back to an earlier passage. In contrast both to the spatial freedom provided to the viewer by actual visual display and to the backward glance of Europa, reading was an activity that by its nature kept you moving forward. The final image, then, not only echoes the oppositions between context and content, forward-looking narrative and arresting image, but places Ovid's text itself at a moment of transformation, as text engenders image, and that image seems literally to become text. For the horn-book roll equivalence is primarily a verbal pun, an effect that emerges more from reading than from visualizing an image. Thus, the reader hovers between seeing the book as horn or horn as book, as the real presence of the book grotesquely appears in the "painted" image, and reabsorbing the image into the poem's linguistic mode of communication.

I. PYGMALION

The final point of my introduction illustrated how the narrative that ultimately yields the painted Europa disorients the ways in which a Roman viewer might have approached just such an image. The contrasts between absorptive viewing and one alert to the artificiality of the work of art, though, involved more than purely aesthetic priorities. Contrasting conceptualizations of the capacities of the artist like those studied in the second chapter are also at work, as well as the importance of artistic recep-

³⁰ Wheeler 1999.92–93, citing for the Ovidian use of "horns" to suggest the ends of a book roll, Barchiesi 1997a.187. On the book and the bovine in general, see now Ishøy 2006.

tion as a sphere for measuring the relative capacities of man and god, as the craftsman's skill seems at once to represent and to conceal the workings of superhuman forces. This last element of viewing wears a more mundane aspect in the Roman awareness of the power of art to focus attention alternately on the skill of the artist whose hand has wrought the image and on the power and wealth of the patron who has appropriated it. In this next section I want to develop further the political element of artistic reception and its significance for the poem. Using another of Ovid's prominent engagements with the paradoxes of viewing, the Pygmalion episode of book 10, I aim to bring the issues of artistic reception into the same orbit as the accounts of public religious spectacle put forward in part 2. In their different ways, both absorption in mythological scenes and a fascination with the crafts of almost overwhelmingly Greek artists can offer distractions, in the fullest sense, from the contexts in which such works were displayed. They form a bridge to an experience of otherness at the heart of Roman practice that bears comparison to the identifications with actors, captive barbarians, and sacrificial victims potentially set in motion by the triumphs, spectacles, and sacrifices we have met before. My point is not that either the "absorbed" or the connoisseurial responses to images are ipso facto "subversive," but rather that the challenge these works of art raise for the viewer can also be integral to formulating a sense of her place in the community that mounts such a display.

As a link between issues of artistic reception in the abstract and their specific function in a contemporary Roman context, I want to return to the cattle of Myron. If generations of poets found Myron's heifer a good device for thinking about viewing in the abstract, other representations of cattle by the same artist occupied a place of prominence in the social and religious landscape of the city. As Propertius's account of his visit to the Palatine reminds us, four Myronian cows lowed around the altar of Apollo on the Palatine: *atque aram circum steterant armenta Myronis / quattuor artifices, vivida signa, boves* (2.31.7–8). These lines show Propertius's engagement with the poetic tradition surrounding the sculptor's famous heifer: the opposition between the contrasting oxymorons, "artificial cows" and "living statues," mirrors the paradox of animate art and lifeless nature developed, for example, in the later poems of Julian of Egypt.³¹ But Propertius's response to the poem also suggests two elements of their placement that charge the cows with additional and more specific significance. First, the poet points out that, as indeed was also the case at Athens, the cows are located around an altar, making them, to those who "recognize" them as real, inevitably also sacrificial victims. Ovid's Pythagoras shows sacrifice as an abomination precisely by

animating a bovine victim "outstanding in form" (*praestantissima forma*, 15.130), imagining her as seeing, not just being seen. Myron's veristic statues by (almost) coming to life potentially acquire a subjectivity that makes them more than simply wonders of art. While it is true that nothing in Propertius's description suggests that the cows become focalizers for the scene in the way that the heifer does in Pythagoras's attack on sacrifice, this presentation of the object as animate enables such a move. More important, there is a parallel between the shift in response generated by the statues and the Pythagorean victim that points to an analogy between the viewing of art objects and the visual dimensions of sacrifice.

The second significant element in Propertius's treatment of the statues involves the way he uses them to define his own reading of the many interpretative possibilities offered by the temple, specifically to give weight to the status of the artist as opposed to the imperial author behind the temple. Indeed, Myron is the only nonmythical mortal individual other than Caesar named in the poem. How much attention do we give to the artist, how much to the emperor? As I suggested before, the tension between Propertius's "elegiac" reading of the monument and its celebration of military victory draws out a tension within the visual program of the temple complex. The god who cast down the Gauls from Parnassus and wrecked Antony's fleet is shown holding the lyre of the poet. The balance between the violent power of Apollo and his connection to the arts of peace—a dichotomy that again affects the reading of Myron's cattle either as celebrating the accomplishments of the sculptor or as victims about to fall on the god's altar—itself bears a resemblance to the questions the bull raised in the mind of Europa. For that maiden too had been particularly troubled by the difficulties of accounting for the bull's own mild and unwarlike nature (2.859). As Ovid puts it, *maiestas* and *amor* do not easily coexist (2.846–47).

One of the passages where Ovid most transparently invokes the parallel between his own literary fictions and the interpretative problems posed by artistic representation comes in the account of the sculptor Pygmalion falling in love with his own statue, a tale that in Ovid's hands has become nothing less than a foundational myth for realism in the visual arts. Here occurs the famous description of "art lying hidden by its own art" (*ars adeo latet arte sua*, 10.252), a phrase that has seemed both to offer a programmatic statement about Ovid's own conceptions of illusionism as an art whose ultimate effect is to disappear in its own fictions and to relate directly to contemporary aesthetic concerns about artistic images.³² It comes in the description of the statue created by Pygmalion,

³¹ See now the discussion in Welch 2005.92–93.

³² Though *ars* in Latin does not connote forms like painting and sculpture as transparently as its English derivative but rather refers to all technical abilities.

so lifelike that “you” would think it real (10.250). And “you” would not be the only one, for the sculptor himself conceives a passion for his statue and in every way treats it as though it really were the maiden it represents. He adorns it in clothes and jewels, lays it in his bed, and whispers endearments to it. Eventually the goddess Venus grants his secret prayer and turns the ivory statue into flesh. When the story is presented in this way, the tale seems almost to provide the fable of which *ars latet arte sua* is the moral: the story of how realistic art transcends its own essential artificiality to become what it represents. And in one of the most important recent readings of the episode, Rosati has argued that this artistic ideal and the narrative that illustrate it reveal Ovid’s participation in the cult of artificiality shared with the sophisticated and urbane audiences of the early empire, for whom the highest praise of any work of art was as a superior reality, surpassing the natural world rather than imitating it: “The work of art must not, then, allow deception to appear or betray its artifice. The naturalism Ovid promotes is not that unmediated, naïve and everyday naturalism based on nature, but a second, new naturalism, attained in artificiality and fiction.”³³ In contrast to this exaltation of fictions supplanting reality, I argue that both the quote about *ars* and the narrative in which it is embedded enhance the interpretative reciprocity between visual and literary illusionism not by revealing a shared artificiality but by revealing instead how both create the same tension between the epistemological priorities of reality and representation. And in this case Ovid has literally tied the interpretation of his text to the decision the reader makes about whether to accept the reality of a visual illusion.

In context, the line about the deceptive power of art belies its own force. For Ovid, far from simply participating in the capacity to create artificial realities, exposes that capacity, just as he does elsewhere through the self-referential claim to be creating lies and fictions, and thus seems to locate his own reader’s perspective outside of the wonderment of the engaged viewer. *Latet* means to lie hidden and can indeed be used of something like a concealed weapon whose danger and force escape notice,³⁴ and the phrase itself belongs most properly to a “how to” book for the budding artist or speaker.³⁵ But Ovid has brought art out into the open

³³ Rosati 1983.80.

³⁴ For this sense of *lateo* see the examples in *OLD* s.v. § 1.

³⁵ Often this expression has been compared to the lover’s art of flattery and insinuation described at *Ars Amatoria* 2.313–14: *si latet ars prodest; adfert deprensa pudorem / atque adimit merito tempus in omne fidem* (Rosati 1983.80). This parallel might at first impel us to take the phrase in *Met.* 10.252 at face value. But even in the *Ars* passage, the art is calling attention to itself. *Ars* is after all the title of the poem. So too if we think of the poem

and, by pointing out its own deceptive capacities, done what no speaker should do to the actual audience he wishes to “trap.”³⁶

The tension between viewing art as art and the possibility of taking art as reality informs both the content and the structure of the Pygmalion story, where the making of the statue symmetrically balances its “deconstruction” or conversion into the reality it seems to be. Nor would it be a fair description to claim simply that Pygmalion is caught up in the reality effect of illusionism; rather he experiences an exquisite tension between wanting life to be like art and wanting art to be alive, between prioritizing an ideal artistic conception and a reality to which it aspires. Pygmalion is famously introduced as a misogynist, who has chosen to live as a bachelor because of his revulsion from the immorality of the Propoetides, a group of women who have been turned to stone through their shamelessness, and his creation of the statue is sometimes connected to his longing for a woman to love. This last assumption is both unsupported by the text³⁷—Pygmalion never makes this miraculous sculpture as an ideal surrogate he simply happens to make it while (*interea*, 10.247) living as a bachelor³⁸—and misleading in that it already loads the deck in favor of *natura*, implying that a real woman is what Pygmalion wanted all along. On the contrary, Pygmalion’s response to “real” women is itself strongly aestheticized from the beginning. What Pygmalion turns away from are not real women but, as the order of the narrative hints, already stone representations of women, and his aversion is explicable as much on artistic as moral grounds: he is offended by *vitia*, a term that connotes not only the vices of women but the flaws of works of art. Indeed, the passion he feels is not for the ideal girl that the statue represents but for the simulated body, the statue

as read not only by the men to whom it is ostensibly addressed but by women as well, the whole nature of the seduction described becomes much more complex, with the women appearing less as the duped victims they ought to be than as connoisseurs appraising, as the poet-teacher does, the performance of his pupils.

As Solodow 1988.216 (with 254, n. 31) and Stroh 1968.580, n. 43, observe, the sentiment also resembles a precept used in rhetorical education, that the orator’s artifice should never appear (Quint. 1.11.3, 4.2.127). But it is one thing to meet such a statement in rhetorical handbooks yet quite another in works addressed to the very audience toward whom the speaker’s *ars* is to be directed.

³⁶ Cf. Elsner 1991b.161, who notes a complementary problem with taking the phrase as a simple statement of the triumph of art over nature: that art can triumph over nature only by ceasing to be seen as art. “... its very nature as art must be abandoned for it to be recognized as real.”

³⁷ So also Schönbeck 1999.301–2.

³⁸ Contra Barkan 1986.76 for whom *interea* is “ingenuous,” though I agree with his own emphasis on Pygmalion’s delight in the artificial per se.

as statue.³⁹ And the text is rather uncertain, in this earlier phase, about whether he would even want the statue to come to life. What he secretly wishes to ask of Venus is for the statue to be his wife, and the text makes clear that is not at all the same thing: he dares not say *sit coniunx* ... *eburnea virgo* (10.275), and so he uses the representational capacity of art to hide his real desire and outwardly prays for a wife “like the ivory statue,” *similis* ... *eburnae* (10.276). When he embraces the image, he does not so much want it to come to life as fear its coming to life: “He was afraid lest a bruise appear on the pressed limbs,” *metuit pressos ne veniat livor in artus* (10.258). The phrase brilliantly shows the overlap of the tendencies toward reification and aestheticization. For the term *livor*, translated as bruise and suggesting that the statue has assumed the physical susceptibility of real flesh, last appeared as a term describing the personified Envy acting as critic of Arachne’s tapestry (6.129–30); a bruise would indeed be a flaw such a critic might well attack (*veniat in*), and the pun between *artus* and *ars* heightens this way of reading. Nor when he dresses the statue, offers it gifts, and even lays it on a couch, does this unequivocally imply personification, because all of these things were done to actual statues in the course of religious worship.⁴⁰

The first scholar to treat the Pygmalion episode primarily as an exploration of the dilemmas of realism was Jaś Elsner. Elsner reacted against the traditional interpretation of Pygmalion as above all a paradigm of the miraculous artist by showing how much more attention is devoted to his role as viewer of the statue he has created. Thus, Pygmalion’s experience can tell us at least as much about the audience’s response as about the ambitions of Ovid or Orpheus, who is the immediate narrator of the story. Pygmalion’s desire for the statue to come to life is an exaggerated description of a potential reaction of all observers of mimetic arts and, for readers of Ovid’s narrative, meshes with the desire for the narrative itself to achieve closure—if not with their own infatuation with the ivory maiden.⁴¹ The miraculous fulfillment of Pygmalion’s prayer, however, the metamorphosis of the statue into a real woman, changes everything in

³⁹ Significantly, the statue is described as a representation of a woman only after Pygmalion’s prayer to the goddess, where it is described as the *simulacrum suae puellae* (10.280). This is precisely what it is *not* in the first portion of the narrative, where its *forma* differentiates it from real women: it has the form with which no woman could have been born. This is a particularly interesting shift in light of Liveley’s (1999.212–13) suggestion that the transformation in the statue parallels a similar change in Pygmalion from artist to lover simply by virtue of acting like one.

⁴⁰ Schönbeck 1999.307–8 sees them as reflections of Near Eastern rituals that “subliminally” prepare for the goddess’s epiphany.

⁴¹ Fränkel 1945.44 provides a notorious example of a reader who comes to share Pygmalion’s fantasy (Elsner 1991b.164, Sharrock 1991a.48, n. 62).

Elsner’s view. The superhuman nature of this resolution, precisely because it crosses the bounds of realism, brings the reader up short, exposing the desire for the image to become real as pure fantasy. This is also the point where the reader’s perspective parts company from that of Pygmalion, who becomes himself a figure of fantasy, left behind in the enjoyment of a fairy tale “happily ever after.” Such a reading accords very well with Galinsky’s view of Ovid as an ironist, continually exposing the fundamental unbelievability of his stories and shattering the audience’s absorption in them. *Ars* may have disappeared for Pygmalion, but for the reader the trap has been sprung, and he is out of danger.

Elsner’s examination of the episode in terms of theories of aesthetic response is fundamental to my own reading, but I suggest that Pygmalion and the reader-spectator are at once more distinguishable at the beginning of the episode than Elsner implies and closer together at its conclusion. This makes viewing in the episode a rather more open-ended model for literary reception. It is not quite, as we have seen, that Pygmalion’s treatment of the beloved implies a fantasy of art coming to life; it can also imply the much stranger one of its not doing so. The “you” who would believe the statue had come to life until being apprised of the deceptions of art, in such a reading, would not be the artist, who both knows all about art and wants no such thing—who adores his statue because of its difference from the real. In his discussion of the actual metamorphosis, Elsner claims that “in the moment of miracle, Ovid turns the viewer-reader (until then a participant of Pygmalion’s desire) into a voyeur—the excluded observer of an imagined world that can never be anything but fantasy.” Yet, given that this is a third-person narration and thus the audience is always to some degree externalized, Ovid seems to have worked specifically to make the perspective of Pygmalion available to the reader even at the moment when the statue becomes real. Indeed, her metamorphosis is never explicitly described as a fact by the narrator, who goes out of his way not to say that Venus turned the statue into a real girl. Rather the reader can share Pygmalion’s growing awareness that this change has actually taken place. The poet begins his description of her with the word *visa*, “seemed,” and the person to whom she seemed to grow warm was Pygmalion. Nor does Pygmalion respond as the inhabitant of a world where these things happen every day. His reaction to the miracle is astonishment and disbelief, just what we would expect of an encounter with the supernatural. Here too Pygmalion can be seen as a surrogate for even a skeptical viewer-reader, suddenly confronted with such an event.⁴²

⁴² The simile comparing the statue as it gradually softens to the wax of Mount Hymettus, warmed by the sun, perhaps suggests how the process involves a change in the viewer’s

Of course, the reader's awareness of the criteria of plausibility does not cease to operate either—one can always read this story in the way that Elsner suggests—but the moment of metamorphosis, rather than closing down options and simplifying the reader's position, intensifies the tension between alternative impulses. Both ends of the episode focus on the same contrasts in ways of viewing, between recognizing the artificiality of art and accepting its illusions.

If our acceptance of the miracle is predicated on beholding it through the eyes of Pygmalion, this points to another area of overlap between how one responds to the crafted statue and to Ovid's own text. To make this point, I begin with a simple demonstration of a locus where construing the syntax of the poem raises questions about the extent to which one has accepted the illusions of art. The ecphrasis of the statue begins at line 250 by describing it as the image of a "true" maiden, "which you would believe, if modesty/respect did not stand in the way, to wish to be moved," *quam vivere credas / et, si non obstat reverentia, velle moveri*. As Ovid/Orpheus slips "you" into the role of the viewer of the statue, the text itself exposes and appropriates the paradoxes of such viewing. "Which" (*quam*) is ambiguous; it can refer to the true maiden, or merely to the "appearance" of a true maiden (*facies*). So too the rest of the sentence can remain a connoisseur's appraisal of the image, or an evaluation of what that image represents. Equally double-edged is the qualifying conditional. Who experiences reverence? The viewer, who knows that the statue cannot really come to life, and so does not allow himself really to believe that it has? Or the maiden, who is kept by her modesty from desiring motion, a word that can have a strongly sexual connotation? The question of the statue's motion has thus become a problem of perspective: what was once an objective description of the properties of miraculous statues has moved very much into the eye of the beholder.

A complementary transformation takes place in the treatment of the statue's sight. As the sentence we have just looked at makes clear, what is involved in the viewer's establishment of the statue as real is possession of its own subjective attitudes. If you are speculating about the modesty of the maiden represented, you have already crossed the line. So too in the description of the miracle itself, the moment when the statue comes

perceptions as much as in the material reality of the image. The primary point of the simile is to describe the statue's ability to take on new shapes in response to the pressure of the artist-lover's hands. But the image of soft wax also figures in philosophical descriptions of how the mind comes to accept and retain sense perceptions (see esp. Plato *Tht.* 191c–d). The mind is like a block of wax and images are impressed on it. The expression *ipsoque fit utilis usu* (10.286) also suggests the procedures by which the mind comes to decide which impressions are true, by comparing them with previous experiences.

to life, described as I have suggested in terms of the perceptions of the viewer, focuses on the transition from being seen to seeing. At 281, the statue seems to grow warm (*visa est*); at 294, when the change is complete, she sees (*vidit*: the expression describing her raising her "light" [i.e., eyes, *lumen*] to the "lights" [*lumina*] similarly accentuated the transition from active to passive).⁴³

The emphasis on the statue's ability to see as the culmination of the miracle helps make her metamorphosis the axis on which the entire narrative structure of the episode turns. Here we must remember the implications of watching this change through the eyes of a figure, Pygmalion, whose experience is described not by the main narrator of the poem but by Orpheus, whose song makes up the bulk of the tenth book. Each of these intervening interpreters contributes a discernible color to the way the story is told.⁴⁴ Not only can Pygmalion function as a surrogate viewer, whose possible desire for the transformation is available to the audience, but his own particular reactions to women, his hatred of what he perceives as the vice of the Propoetides, also inform the narrative's emphasis on the statue maiden's purity. This in turn recalls the didactic program of Orpheus's song: "Let us sing of boys beloved of the gods and of how girls, baffled by illicit desires, have earned punishment through pleasure" (10.152–54). Orpheus's rejection of women as erotic objects derives in turn from his tragic loss of Eurydice, and it is not hard to see in the tale of the artist whose prayers are answered and whose gaze brings life rather than condemning the beloved to death the happy resolution that was denied his quest for Eurydice. The strong motives of each of these "focalizers" may help encourage the reader's distance from, and skepticism toward, the miracle. And in fact Pygmalion's perspective, far from providing greater immediacy to the account of the transformation, has increasingly become a focus of critical attention.⁴⁵ But if the coming to life of fictional creations depends on a recognition of their own

⁴³ Still problematic is the question of whether any real subjectivity can emerge from the ivory maiden other than the projection of the viewer/maker's fantasy. In this connection, it is interesting to note Ovid's treatment of the third traditional element in the animation of statues, speech. The ivory maiden remains mute throughout; as Pygmalion's creation, she never gets the chance to speak, but at the very moment of the change, Pygmalion himself suddenly begins to speak, an act "pregnantly" described as "conceiving words" (*concipit l verba*, 290–91—emphasized by enjambment). In addition to highlighting for Ovid's audience the incompleteness of the statue's coming to life, the words may also place Pygmalion in the role of the statue, that is, they remind the reader that he himself is no more than a representation, crafted by Orpheus, who was crafted by Ovid, come to life.

⁴⁴ For the importance of these levels of narration in the poem, with special reference to the Pygmalion story, see Wheeler 1999.154–61.

⁴⁵ See esp. Sharrock 1991a, 1991b, and Lively 1999.

ability to see, then in acknowledging Pygmalion's own point of view we have accepted the vividness of another artistic creation. For Pygmalion is but a representation produced through the medium of Orpheus's song, and Orpheus in turn by Ovid's. Thus, the miracle of the statue's coming to life, remote as it is from the primary narrative, casts a transforming glow on all the intervening levels of representation. On the other hand, looking back at the saccharine description of the ivory statue's first experience of sight, "she saw her lover at the same moment she saw the sky" (10.294), we may decide that it really is too good to be true—again from Pygmalion's point of view. He has not seen what she has seen or seen that she sees, but has simply projected his own fantasies onto a subject who will never come to life because she can never speak in her own words. So too the tale fits Orpheus's own schema a little too perfectly—perhaps he simply made it up?—and, after all, this is nothing but a collection of unbelievable stories put together by Ovid. The ambiguities imposed by the narrative structure thus come to approximate, and to depend on, the dilemma of the realist image.

The Pygmalion episode, therefore, highlights the disjunction between two modes of viewing realist art, both of which Ovid makes available to his reader while also pointing out how that reader's response to images affects his response to the poem as well. Something more, however, is at stake in the Pygmalion narrative than an exploration of aesthetic response or establishing a program for Ovidian fiction. The story also shows how the question of viewing acquires a religious dimension that relates it very closely to the experience of rituals like sacrifice, as its narrative context suggests.

The Pygmalion story comes after two brief and, at first glance, fairly straightforward accounts of metamorphosis as an instrument of divine vengeance, both situated on Cyprus and involving the same divinity, Venus, who works the miracle for the sculptor. In the first instance, she turns the Cerastae into bullocks to punish them for sacrificing visitors at the altar of Jupiter (10.220–37); in the second, the Propoetides are punished for denying the divinity of Venus. They are first made prostitutes and then, as an extension of the same process, turned to stone as a result of their shamelessness (10.238–42). A reader beginning the Pygmalion story might well believe that, as in the narrative complex at the beginning of book 6, she was going to encounter yet another tale of punishment for questioning the priority of the gods set in the same locale.⁴⁶ Indeed, the traditional story of Pygmalion would have fit well in this context, for the

⁴⁶ Compare, for example, the tales of Arachne, Niobe, the Lycian peasants, and Marsyas, all set in Asia Minor.

only recoverable pre-Ovidian versions of the story describe Pygmalion as another violator of the divine, in this case by having sexual intercourse with a statue of Venus.⁴⁷

Both the context of the episode and, quite possibly, prior knowledge of the story thus prepare the reader to pay particular attention to the interactions between men and gods in the narrative and so to be struck by the piety of Ovid's Pygmalion. This piety, of course, also (too?) ideally suits the rhetorical situation of the internal narrator Orpheus, whose entire song is addressed to a goddess, the muse, and carefully observes the hymnic proprieties by beginning with Jupiter. For Elsner, the religious issue in the story was bound up with the question of whether what the statue represents is a mortal woman or a goddess. By leaving this question aside, and by nailing down the mortal identity of the statue through the device of making the agalmatophilic viewer the very creator of the statue, who ought to know whether it is a goddess or a woman, Elsner suggests that Ovid "concentrates the story around the problem of realism which, while it is transgressive in making the marble or ivory flesh, is precisely *not* a problem of the human transgressing the divine."⁴⁸

And yet much in Ovid's tale suggests that the two kinds of transgression are closely linked and that the response to statues indeed involves the boundaries between human and divine. For a start, the belief that the statue is alive and "wishes to be moved" is prohibited by *reverentia*, an emotion very much at home in defining the ideal relations between men and gods. To believe that the statue has come to life would indeed be an offense against the divine. It would be to locate the ability to make reality in the hands of a mortal as opposed to a divine craftsman. As such, the capacity to see a real maiden in the statue connects closely with the capacity to animate metamorphic images described in the first chapter, as well as the seeing of mortal countenances among the divine victims of the gods on Arachne's tapestry, who of course was punished specifically for failing to acknowledge the priority of the gods. At the same time, though, the text is equally adamant in saving the artist Pygmalion from the kind of transgression of which he was guilty in earlier versions of the myth. The bruise that Pygmalion fears will appear on "pressed" limbs offers a transmutation of the familiar story that the statue's lover had indeed left a mark on the object of his desire in the form of a semen stain preserved on the statue itself.⁴⁹ Despite its differences, the evocation of

⁴⁷ For detailed accounts of these other versions, both preserved in the contexts of Christian polemics against pagan image worship, see Elsner 1991b.157–59 and Rosati 1983.54–61.

⁴⁸ Elsner 1991b.158–59.

⁴⁹ The fear of the bruise fascinatingly transposes this earlier kind of staining because it requires an opposite sort of realism. The actual mark on the real statue left by the attempt at intercourse requires no assent to artistic illusion. Its origin may be perverse but it is not mi-

this earlier act of violation serves as a reminder that it is not only through accepting illusion that the boundaries between human and divine can be overstepped. For the Pygmalion who assaults the statue of Venus is perhaps guilty not only because of what the statue represents but because the statue itself is a sacred object. He is not necessarily to be imagined as someone who Ixion-like tried to rape a goddess; he is, rather, like the Cerastae, a defiler of religious rites. In terms of Ovid's statue, which has no sacred aspect, this other side of Pygmalion's transgression suggests a diametrically opposed way in which modes of viewing can violate the boundaries between gods and men, not because the viewer brings the images to life but because he does not, because the man-made artifact has taken over the role that ought to belong to the real—hence Pygmalion's castigation of *natura* (picked up again in the verb *nasci*, used in line 10.248 to differentiate his product from a “natural” one).

In this light what is particularly remarkable about Ovid's version of the story is its scrupulous avoidance of both kinds of impiety. The artist does not create a statue that comes to life; only Venus can do that. Nor has he accepted a substitute, so to speak, by actually consummating his passion for the artifact. Pygmalion's love for the statue as a narrative of courtship comes pretty far before the intervention of Venus. After the preliminaries of gifts and favors, he lays it on his bed and calls it the partner of his couch, but actual *coniugium* comes only after the goddess, and not the artist, has brought the statue to life. Desire then finds fulfillment only in a divinely wrought reality, and the narrative explicitly makes this point. Yet, as we have seen, in doing so it has risked its own authority among its readers. In fact, the role of Venus has proved among the most controversial aspects of the story and has prompted a variety of contrasting readings among recent scholars. For Barkan, for example, Venus's intervention is “merely a grace note” that, far from distracting from the miraculous capacity of human art to create living images, serves perhaps to exalt and dignify it: it is easily read through as a mere trope. Elsner by contrast, regards the intervention as crucial but not so much because it adds theological implications to the act of viewing as because it narrativizes the problems of the reception of artistic illusion, bringing the viewer's fantasy to life.⁵⁰ And these modern responses, while they perhaps do not formulate the issues involved in the same terms, no doubt mirror the hermeneutic challenge and surprise that this moment in particular would

raculous; in fact, the presence of the stain on the statue becomes a reminder that the statue is nothing other than a statue and, as such, cautions the viewer against mistaking it for a real woman/goddess. On the other hand, despite its easy translation into aesthetic terms, the mark Pygmalion fears leaving is one that could never be left on real ivory but requires seeing the statue as what it represents.

⁵⁰ Barkan 1986.76; Elsner 1991b.164–66.

have raised for ancient readers, at the point where the narrative leaves both the plane of events “that might have happened” and the authority of an established literary tradition, if indeed it was an Ovidian addition to a familiar story.

How then, to summarize, does the story comment on the act of viewing visual representations, and how does it link that experience to the reception of the text? It articulates for its reader a set of alternatives for responding to the ivory maiden, assent to illusion and an awareness of artifice, making both available to its reader without unequivocally either exulting in the powers of illusion (as, for example, Fränkel and Barkan) or providing a cold shower in the form of a reminder of the limits of art (Elsner). And it further charges the choice between these resulting views of art with religious and social implications by constructing a story in which the reader is made aware that the rewards of piety could so easily have been replaced by punishment for transgression. For human mimetic craft walks a tightrope here, with either of the views of art in play in the narrative liable to be read as an overstepping of limits. And the juxtaposition of the miracle within the story with the narrative's own embrace of the miraculous both makes the reader's view of visual arts dependent on a decision to adopt or reject the author's fiction and correspondingly makes the statue a paradigm for Ovid's own *ars*, which similarly invites either consciousness of mortal craft or participation in the represented fiction. What keeps art “pious” in the story is above all the good intentions of the audience, including the craftsmen themselves—for one result of making the artist predominantly a viewer in this story is to make other viewers artists, whose own response to the narrative becomes essential both for “bringing the statue to life” and for doing so without violating the limits of the human through hubris or idolatry. And this effect, which so closely resembles the involvement of the viewer in artistic reception described in chapter 2, receives further impetus here in the multiple authorship of the story, nested as it is within the song of Orpheus. Orpheus tells the story in a way that forcibly demonstrates the cooperation of divine power and human craft in suiting the narrative for his own audience. Ovid may be seen as doing so as well, especially when the text is read back through the lens of the exile poetry. But in both cases Ovid makes it easy for the reader to view the whole story through very different eyes, disbelieving the miracle of the transformation as mere fiction, penetrating the Orphic emphasis on the god's responsiveness to the desires of the artist,⁵¹ and seeing through the Ovidian emphasis on the propriety

⁵¹ One interesting way in which the narrator seems to foreclose assent to Orpheus's tale, or at least encourage the reader to think about discrepancies between levels of narration, is by placing the beginning of Orpheus's song just after the story of Cyparissus (10.106–42),

of creation. This chain of human “readers” must in each case work out the implications of Pygmalion’s, Orpheus’s, and Ovid’s creations according to each reader’s own preferences and preconceptions, and such an extended tradition of debate, bridging the difference between myth and present and image and text, becomes an important way in which art retains its religious dimension.

This religious dimension has many aspects. Philip Hardie, building on the text’s suggestion that Venus herself is also directly present in the narrative in the form of a statue, links the debate over the reality of artistic images explored through the Pygmalion episode to their capacity to summon up the real presences of divinities. “The boundary between the suspension of disbelief operative in viewing works of art or reading texts and the worshipper’s faith in the presence of his god is a fluid one.”⁵² In consequence, the reader by accepting the fiction of the statue’s coming to life not only approximates the experience, and indeed the potential doubt, of the worshiper before the image, but opens the door to accepting the gods who animate Ovid’s fictional world no longer as literary creations, the inherently unbelievable gods of myth, but as the present divinities of cult. At the opposite extreme from this we might imagine an interpretation that would treat religion very much as a figure for purely political issues. The gods, with their homes scattered along heaven’s Palatine, as Ovid puts it, become stand-ins for the powers that be, in particular of course Augustus, the most powerful reader of the poem and one with a great deal at stake in protecting the borders between reality and representation from Ovidian incursions. But while there is no legislating on the degree of religiosity involved in Ovid’s deployment of Venus here, by the very fact of raising these possibilities for the reader the poem facilitates a reflection on modes of divine interaction that itself qualifies the poem as a religious instrument.

And the figuration of these theological aspects of the text through questions about the power of images comes into greater relief through a second pattern of more explicitly religious imagery within which the

which has the same basic plot line as Pygmalion and echoes much of its language while also transparently calling to mind the experience of Orpheus with Eurydice. Cyparissus, himself a beloved of Apollo, has made a fetish of a sacred deer and adores it in ways that predict the various adornments and services Pygmalion offers the statue. When he accidentally kills the deer while hunting, he is consumed in grief. But rather than either allowing Cyparissus to die as he wishes, or bringing the lost beloved to life, the god in this story offers a “reality check” by reminding Cyparissus “to lament moderately and in proportion to the material” (*ut leviter pro materiaque doletet*, 10.133). This advice, especially given the artistic connotations of “*materia*,” might well have been offered by Venus to Pygmalion, and if the literary connotations of *materia* are heard, would be a useful caution for Orpheus as well.

⁵² Hardie 2002c.191, whose reading draws in turn on the fundamental article of Gordon 1979 on the religious properties of images in Greek and Roman culture.

Pygmalion story is embedded; this is none other than sacrifice. The experience of sacrifice, like Hardie’s statue of Venus, provides another point of contact between a mythical tale and the immediate realities of religious practice. And sacrifice in turn initiates questions of identification and difference between the participant and the victim that replicate the problems of viewing raised by the artistic image.

The connection of Orpheus’s entire song with etiologies of ritual practice has been observed by several scholars.⁵³ The death of Hyacinthus, the first major tale told by Orpheus, ends with the Spartan festival of the Hyacinthia, and the death of Adonis at his song’s end includes Venus’s proclamation of the Adonia as an annual commemoration of her grief. In the case of Pygmalion’s tale, the explicit etiological motive involves only the name of the island (Paphos, from Pygmalion’s son, 10.297) rather than any cult activity. However, the narrative is preceded by stories that do focus on ritual practice (sacrifice and, perhaps, temple prostitution), and its own narrative climax occurs at precisely the kind of festival whose origin closes the entire “hymn” of Orpheus, an annual festival of Venus.

If the subtle anachronism at work in associating the context for Pygmalion’s story with a ritual that will only come into being to honor Pygmalion’s great-grandson inspires a reader to think about the time relation between present and past implicit in etiology, she will find further encouragement in another pattern of imagery running throughout the episode. The ivory from which Pygmalion makes his statue has recently been taken as emblematic of the unbelievability of the miraculous narrative as a whole.⁵⁴ But what has not received equal attention in these discussions is that this ivory statue is quite literally surrounded by the antithetical material, horn.⁵⁵ In the story of the Cerastae, whose very name means “horned,” the horns of sacrificial victims prompt the goddess’s decision to turn the Cerastae themselves into bullocks. So at the very halfway point of Pygmalion’s story the account of the festival of Venus similarly describes how “the heifers, with spreading horns covered in gold, fell at the altar, their snowy necks struck” (10.271–72). Horns also provide closure as the statue-maiden’s parturition is dated at the time when “the moon’s horns shall nine times have been brought to a full circle” (10.296). The last reference to time may at first seem to have nothing to do with ritual, except that the cyclicity of festivals receives particular attention in both the Hyacinthus and the Adonis stories (*annua*,

⁵³ First noted by Barchiesi 1999.117–19 and developed by Hardie 2002c.92–94.

⁵⁴ Esp. Elsner 1991b, also Liveley 1999.

⁵⁵ Though the linguistic presence of horn, sacrifice, and their various anagrams is observed and analyzed by Ahl 1985.244–45.

10.219; *annua*, 10.727, both emphatic, at the beginning of the line), and the birth of Paphos occupies the same structural position in Pygmalion's story that etiology does in the other two.

If ivory then signifies what is impossibly fictional and remote from everyday experience about the story (an association enhanced perhaps by the traditional use of ivory for representations of the divine), then horn brings it down to earth—or emphasizes that remoteness—by recalling the realities of both the human life cycle and the ritual practices that still today provide the means of contact between mortals and gods. This use of horn to signify what remains the same emerges especially from the Cerastae story, where it is the horns left behind from previous sacrifices that mark the new form of Venus's victims (note *relinqui*, 10.236) and simultaneously define their textual presence in Ovid's poem (*Cerastae*).

But sacrificial ritual works to correlate present and past as more than just an allusion. I argued in the preceding chapter that Ovid's interest in the visual "transformations" between participant and victim in the sacrificial process provides an important area of overlap between the responses evoked by his own visualized descriptions of metamorphosis and the ritual experience of the contemporary reader. In the case of the Pygmalion story the density of sacrificial imagery connects this pattern of seeing likeness and difference with the viewer's response to artistic representations. The account of the Adonia already combines the kind of annual reenactment offered by ritual with the mimetic capacities of art, the language of which is strikingly present in the passage: the Adonia will provide a *mortis imago* as the celebrants enact *plangoris ... simulamina nostrae* (10.726–27). And though sacrifice per se was not a feature of the Adonia, the phrase *mortis imago* offers a link between the mimetic aspects of ritual and this practice, especially if we remember the account of the visual traces of sacrificial victims in the story of the Cerastae. Indeed, within the Pygmalion story itself comes a striking incentive to see the image as victim and the victim as image. While others have drawn attention to the similarities between the ivory statue and the ritual image of "Golden Venus" (10.277), she also shares a strong visual connection with the heifers, both in her costly adornment and, above all, in her snowy whiteness (*niveum* 10.247 ~ *nivea* 10.272).

To understand the significance of such a connection, let us look in more detail at the way in which the visual aspects of sacrifice are described in the Cerastae episode:

*At si forte roges fecundam Amathunta metallis,
an genuisse velit Propoetidas, abnuat aequae
atque illos, gemino quondam quibus aspera cornu
frons erat, unde etiam nomen traxere Cerastae.*

*ante fores horum stabat Iovis Hospitis ara
finlugubris sceleris† quam siquis sanguine tinctam
advena vidisset, mactatos crederet illic
lactantes vitulos Amathusiacasque bidentes:
hospes erat caesus! sacris offensa nefandis
ipsa suas urbes Ophiusiaque arva parabat
deserere alma Venus. "sed quid loca grata, quid urbes
peccavere meae? quod" dixit "crimen in illis?
exilio poenam potius gens in pia pendat
vel nece vel siquid medium est mortisque fugaeque.
idque quid esse potest, nisi versae poena figurae?"
dum dubitat, quo mutet eos, ad cornua vultum
flexit et admonita est haec illis posse relinqui
grandiaque in torvos transformat membra iuvencos.*
(10.220–37)

And if by chance you ask the city of Amathus, rich in metals, whether she would wish to have born the Propoetides, she would say no, as she would for those whose forehead was once made harsh with a twin horn, whence they take their name, Cerastae. Before their house stood the altar of Jupiter, protector of strangers; ... if some stranger should see this altar stained with blood, he would believe that milk-fed calves or young Amathusian sheep were sacrificed there. But it was a guest who had been slaughtered! Offended by these unspeakable rites, nourishing Venus prepared to desert her own cities and the Ophiurian fields. "But how have these pleasant places, how have my cities sinned?" she said. "What is their crime? Rather let the impious race pay the penalty with exile, or with death, or if there is anything between exile and death. And what can that be but the punishment of transformation?" And while she wondered what she should change them into, she bent her countenance toward the horns and was reminded that these horns could be left to those, and she changed their large limbs into muscled cattle.

The substance of this story unites issues from two earlier episodes that have been important in my argument. The motif of divine punishment for the murder of a stranger recalls Jupiter's punishment of Lycaon, the first animal metamorphosis in the poem as a whole.⁵⁶ As in that episode, from

⁵⁶ Orpheus interestingly replicates the first two metamorphosis narratives from the beginning of Ovid's own *carmen*, with the Hyacinthus story replacing Apollo and Daphne, but he does so in reverse order. This reversal, especially given the strongly marked connections between the Daphne story and the genre of elegy, confirms a pattern observed by Janan 1988.114 whereby Orpheus as the epic poet become love poet reverses Ovid's own progression from elegy to epic.

the god's perspective there is an important likeness between the victim and the new form in the transformation from large limbs to the rolls of muscle on the cattle.⁵⁷ But rather than being converted into an unmistakable predator, as Lycaon was, the Cerastae take on the image of the ideal victim of their actions, the cattle that are the proper sacrificial offerings. This substitution for the victim makes their punishment symbolically echo the experience of their own actual victims. For the "stranger" who would think that the blood on the altars was the blood of animal victims is surely about to find himself taking their place—he is another *hospes* ready for slaughter.⁵⁸ This moment when the viewer recognizes himself as the object of his gaze recalls the situation of Cadmus and the snake⁵⁹ and the whole dynamic of the victor seeing/becoming the victim that permeates the Theban narrative of book 3. In the discussion of that passage, I suggested that in a sacrificial context an overidentification with the victim inverted the socializing effect of sacrifice by making the viewer too readily perceive himself not as the agent of collective violence but as its object and hence an outsider. And here we find precisely such a point of view used in an explicitly sacrificial scene where the victim is indeed a stranger to the community. The goddess's transformation of the Cerastae then both replicates their own crime and undoes its damage. We now join in the condemnation of the killers, seeing them as "other" and as legitimate victims, while being assured that their new form indeed signifies who they are at last rather than appearing as an alien imposition. As a result, the possibility of proper sacrifice is restored.

A similar question involving the evaluation of an external form as being like what it represents also appears in the following story, that of the Propoetides, but here the narrative does not inspire such universal assent as it does in the case of the Cerastae. The Propoetides' original crime is denial of Venus' divinity. If the Cerastae destroy the distinction between participant and victim, their crime is the mirror opposite, for they assimilate the goddess and her human worshipers. The goddess punishes their disobedience by driving them to prostitution. The effect of this is perhaps dubious in light of the original offense; for, while the transformation demonstrates the power of the love goddess over mortals, it has the curious result of making them resemble promiscuous divinities still more closely.⁶⁰ The maidens' final transformation into statues is made to

⁵⁷ The recognizability of the victim plays an important role in the next narrative as well, where the petrification of the shameless Propoetides is noted as a "slight change" (*parvo discrimine*, 10.242).

⁵⁸ So Anderson 1972.494.

⁵⁹ Note that Ovid here uniquely deploys the epithet Ophiurian (transparently derived from the Greek *ophis*, "serpent") to describe Cyprus (10.229).

⁶⁰ So a desire to emulate the practices of the gods formed part of Byblis's specious self-exhortation toward sexual transgression (9.497–501).

appear as the natural extension of their shameless nature. Like Lycaon's transformation into a wolf, its aptness is conveyed through the impression that it happens spontaneously, without any intervention on the part of the god, as well as by the explicit narratorial (Orphic) comment that between statues and prostitutes there is but a slight difference. Hence too, perhaps, the rather strange claim that they prostituted their bodies (*corpora*) together with their appearance (*forma*), a phrase that suggestively deploys the programmatic terms of metamorphosis. In the first line of the poem, forms were said to be changed into new bodies. If that formulation allowed for a discrepancy between sign and substance, the insistence on the unity of *corpora* and *forma* here would seem to be a way of insisting that the Propoetides really are what they seem.

And yet, as Genevieve Liveley has recently underlined, the Propoetides were not by their nature shameless, though for the internal viewer Pygmalion this is indeed the root of their crime.⁶¹ Again their exemplary, socially cohesive value comes from seeing the statues as the Propoetides; a quite different evaluation of the goddess's power comes from an awareness that the very behavior their transformation commemorates was imposed as a punishment by the goddess, and that their original crime can be construed as an exaltation of human capacities, which the mortal reader/viewer shares. Seeing a real presence within the stone maiden then involves a recognition of sameness that now has the potential to controvert rather than stabilize hierarchies.⁶²

Questions of how to read metamorphoses, energized by the motifs of sacrifice, color the problems of viewing from the beginning of the Pygmalion story. For what we previously saw as Pygmalion's aestheticizing reading of images, reducing them to nothing other than representational artifacts, here corresponds to a reading of the Propoetides' metamorphosis that privileges final appearances, the shameless prostitutes of legend (cf. *feruntur*), over any internal living presence. Conversely, the reader's potential view of the statue as "real" offers a mirror image of the experience of the imaginary stranger viewing the sacrificial scene left by the crimes of the Cerastae. If such a person would have seen the altar of Jupiter, he would have believed that what he saw was not human; seeing the statue, "you" would believe that it was. There, a sense of security from danger was based on a mistaken assumption of difference; here, desire is kindled by a mistaken impression of sameness. As the stranger's loss of security goes together with a realization of the limits of human crime, a transgression that the Lycaon parallel suggests implies a defiance of the divinity, so here the ultimate frustration of that desire, to accept for the

⁶¹ Liveley 1999.200–204.

⁶² For an extended analysis of how another petrified scornor of the gods provokes similar questions, see the discussion of Niobe in the next chapter.

moment Elsner's reading of the ending, comes with a reminder of the limitations of human power.

My argument, then, is not for a rigidly schematic correspondence between the status of metamorphosed transgressor, sacrificial victim, and work of art. A case could be made that viewing the statue as a sacrificial heifer reveals the violent occlusion of an individual point of view required for an objectivizing perspective on the image as focus of desire.⁶³ A case could also be made the other way, that for the reader who has already seen the statue as human, the recognition of the heifers as like her provides an equivalent alienation from the sense of divine preeminence actualized by sacrifice. (Men can create life, too.) Different readers will be willing to entertain either or both points of view. But what I would insist on is that the Pygmalion episode reveals a degree of overlap between aesthetic and religious judgments that opens out the significance of Ovid's own act of poetic mimesis by at once pointing out and sharing in the capacity of representational art to approximate the effect of cult experience as a locus for defining boundaries between the human and divine.

II. DOMESTIC GODDESSES

The overlap between text and image we observed in the Europa episode points us toward another aspect of the nature of viewing in Augustan Rome that provides an important context for "reading" works of art within the poem. As we have seen, Ovid is by no means unique in asking his readers to visualize his narrative—that was standard rhetorical practice—but when we look beyond the literary context to consider the contemporary visual environment, this reaching out of the text toward the visual answers a tendency on the part of the visual arts to invite narrativization.⁶⁴ This can happen, for instance, when paintings depict scenes familiar from well-known literary narratives,⁶⁵ or, more distinc-

⁶³ This would be an extension of the general readings offered by Liveley and Sharrock (note 45 in this chapter), taking the statue as a figure replicating and exposing the male construction of women.

⁶⁴ For another example of the centrality of an effort to narrativize to the reception of mythological painting, see the suggestive discussion of Leach 1988.309–60.

⁶⁵ Let me be clear that this claim is not to grant the literary priority over the visual, as though images of Achilles were mere illustrations of the *Iliad*, but simply to observe that the images themselves were often of scenes that invited the reader to supply a before and after because of his knowledge of texts. Cf. Kuttner 2003.113: "What to feel and how to identify oneself in the iconic Roman artscape: paradigmatic literatures offered the scripts and the designed landscapes offered stages on which to impersonate these canonic stories." Kuttner goes on to make an observation that has largely inspired the subject of this section: "Story itself may generate lands and waters, as throughout Ovid's *Fasti* and *Metamorphoses*, which inhabited water gardens of the first century B.C." (Kuttner 2003.114).

tively, when the arrangement of pictures within the domestic environment gives a plot and order to a sequence of images that both guide and complicate their interpretation. As an example of the first kind of narrativization, one of the best, if most extreme, examples is to be found in the dining grotto of Augustus's villa at Sperlonga, as analyzed by Ann Kuttner.⁶⁶ This extraordinary complex offered a comprehensive sensory experience in which illusion and reality overlapped: a *triclinium* set in a natural grotto, reached by boat, and overlooking pools where, in place of the mosaic fish that formed a standard decorative motif for such spaces, swam real fish. The inside of the cave offered statue groups of the sack of Troy and scenes from Odysseus's adventures including the encounters with Scylla and Polyphemus, episodes that took place not only by the seashore but at a seashore very near the one viewed by the banqueters.⁶⁷ As Kuttner's reading suggests, here was an environment where the miraculous transformation of natural categories overlaps with the impression of entering a famous mythical narrative.

In addition to conjuring up a temporal narrative onto which static representations open an enticing window, the act of viewing itself can take on a narrative structure as the spectator tracks a path between the images that make up larger visual complexes, even when the scenes depicted do not invoke stages of a single story.⁶⁸ Bettina Bergmann's analysis of the House of the Tragic Poet at Pompeii provides the most telling explication of this element of Roman spectatorship.⁶⁹ The unusually rich and well-preserved painted decoration of this home contained more than twenty "panels" depicting mythological scenes, many relating to the *Iliad*. In the atrium on the left and right of the entranceway stood a now lost nude Venus (possibly with a male lover or possibly posing before Paris) and Jupiter and Juno embracing on Mount Ida. The other four panels in this room showed Achilles sending Briseis to Agamemnon; next to that, Helen fleeing with Paris; and, on the opposite wall, a picture of Neptune and Amphitrite beside a picture of the wrath of Achilles.⁷⁰ While four images, possibly five depending on how Venus was presented, do indeed form part of a Trojan cycle, the grouping of the pictures and visual echoes among the figures make possible more intricate patterns of comparison and contrast, which in turn bring to light thematic issues ranging

⁶⁶ Kuttner 2003.

⁶⁷ Ridgway 2001 provides a convenient survey of the material remains of the grotto and the current state of research. One might also note the recent argument of Andrae 1994 that Ovid's text itself provided the model for the iconography.

⁶⁸ See also Kuttner 2003.103–4 and Leach 2004.142–52.

⁶⁹ Bergmann 1994.

⁷⁰ Only the pictures from the right half of the room are extant, the Helen only partially; the others are reconstructed from nineteenth-century paintings of fragmentary remains. For a discussion of the reconstruction process, see Bergmann 1994.237.

from philosophical exhortations toward the restraint of desire (Juno, not Venus) to Roman foundation myths (Venus, not Juno), to women's rites of passage, here coded and contrasted by status: the divine Juno whose marriage with Jupiter is celebrated in the panel near the entranceway bears a close visual resemblance to the slave Briseis being forcibly separated from her captor Achilles. The central point about all these different combinations is that the story made up about the pictures depends on the visual choices the viewer makes and, more important, on his or her route among the various scenes.

What makes Bergmann's reading of viewing so suggestive for the transformation between poetic narrative and visual image that I am arguing Ovid's poem stimulates is that her model of reception is itself drawn from rhetorical techniques of memory and thus both depends upon and resembles patterns of literary ordering. This is the now much-studied mnemonic device by which, as a part of their rhetorical education, upper-class Greeks and Romans were taught to arrange elements in a narrative or argument by planting imaginary visual prompts in a specific architectural space, frequently a house (*Rhet. ad Herr.* 3.16–24). The sequence that the student adopts as he travels through this space with his mind's feet, so to speak, structures the order of presentation. As Bergmann argues, the way in which houses are conceptualized in this process and the visual experience of viewing real houses reciprocally affect one another: the efficacy of the memory technique depends after all on making imaginary spectatorship as real an experience as possible. The practice of using spatial order to establish connections between visual images dramatically complicates and enriches the disparate elements of a decorative program. The house becomes textual, and it also makes texts real by translating poetic images to the space where the drama of social interactions was played out. One of Bergmann's most telling visual echoes is the placement, in the peristyle, of a sacrifice of Iphigeneia directly opposite the *lararium* where the *paterfamilias* would preside over household sacrifices, creating an inevitable mythical parallel and, one hopes, contrast for the instantiation of status within the actual household.

In the concluding section of this chapter, I want to reverse Bergmann's perspective by going from visual ensembles back to literary ones, by demonstrating how one book of Ovid, the second, ending with the image of Europa previously analyzed, can be read as constructing its own house of memory. Lest from the start this seem a circular project of reapplying primarily literary patterns back from works of art to texts, let me point out that what I am attempting to show is not influence but precisely an overlap that encourages mental transference from one medium of reception to the other. I intend to demonstrate how Ovid uses visual details to generate connections and sequences among the very disparate episodes

of this book much in the way that the decoration of the House of the Tragic Poet does. Obviously literary texts are capable of creating such thematic patterns without asking to be compared to visual artifacts—and Ovid's capacity for sophisticated cross-referencing between his stories requires no further demonstration—nor, as we have seen, does visual vividness imply the conjuring up of full-blown works of art. But if one model of responding to mythical ensembles like the *Metamorphoses* was in fact “memory houses” such as Bergmann describes, then it is valuable as an exercise in imagining ancient reception to try to read the text back through that paradigm. And indeed two of the characters who help frame the book, Callisto and Europa, were present as images in the House of the Tragic Poet itself. The payoff for making such a leap in this case will be to reveal a “domestication” of Ovid's text that not only brings a very remote set of stories “home” to a Roman audience by conjuring up their display in a familiar, everyday setting but also highlights their significance for issues that played out within the very spaces of the *domus*.

So incoherent has the complex of narratives that conclude book 2 seemed that one critic notoriously suggested that Ovid deliberately composed this passage to show how “unsatisfying” mythical stories become when the metamorphosis element is emphasized above everything else.⁷¹ One aim of the following discussion is to turn this judgment on its head by showing how semiotically rich the passage becomes when we start precisely from the visual impressions the stories leave behind. The first half of this book is taken up by Phaethon's attempt to drive his father's chariot and the consequences of his death for his relatives: his sisters, who become poplar trees; his maternal relative Cygnus, who becomes a swan, and his father, who is so enraged at his son's death that he must be cajoled and bullied into resuming his regular function (2.400). As if to contrast with the longest continuous narrative of a single event in the poem, the rest of the book, via the hundred-line account of the rape of Callisto and Diana's transformation of her into a bear (2.401–530), becomes a mosaic of shorter stories whose narrative connections have baffled and fascinated readers.⁷² As Juno flies back into the air, having successfully persuaded Ocean not to allow her rival Callisto, now transformed yet again into the constellation of the great bear, ever to find rest in the sea, the peacocks that draw her chariot prompt the transition to the

⁷¹ Galinsky 1975.95 cited by Keith 1992.2.

⁷² The narratological complexity of book 2 has received a book-length treatment by Keith, who provides a good review of earlier scholarship (1992.1–7). See also Tissol 1997.153–66, the comments of Wheeler 2000.37–40, 48–54, 70–85, and the many perceptive connections observed by Anderson 1996 and now Barchiesi 2005. Gildenhard and Zissos 2004 have recently suggested a thematic explanation of the organization of the book as a part of systematic devaluation of Athens in the poem.

tale of the raven, another bird whose appearance has changed (2.534). The raven was transformed from white to black for revealing the infidelity of Coronis to her lover, the sun god. On his way to complete this fateful mission, the raven is warned about the dangers of bearing bad news to the gods by another black bird, the crow (2.554). The crow had originally been a princess who was transformed into a (white) bird by Minerva to allow her to escape attempted rape by Neptune (2.569–88), but became black when she told her patroness that the daughters of Cecrops in Athens had unwrapped the basket in which she had placed the chthonic child Erichthonius (2.552–68).

The narrative now shifts to the consequences of the raven's revelation, as Apollo slays Coronis but snatches away his unborn son Aesculapius to be raised by the Centaur Chiron (2.596–632). Chiron's daughter Ocyroe, a prophetess, in the midst of telling the future of the child, is prevented from continuing by her own transformation into a horse (2.633–75). Chiron calls on the god of prophecy to undo the metamorphosis, but Apollo is not listening, being immersed in a pastoral erotic adventure in the western Peloponnese, in the course of which his cattle are stolen by Mercury. Mercury bribes the only witness, a shepherd named Battus, to conceal the theft, and when Battus tries to double his profits by revealing the culprit to the same god in disguise, he is turned into a statue (2.676–707). In flying away from exacting this punishment, Mercury sees and falls in love with Herse, one of the daughters of Cecrops. He enters her home at night to visit her but is stopped along the way by the same sister, Aglauros, who in the past had received a bribe from Minerva not to reveal the secret of Erichthonius. Aglauros now asks for a monetary reward from Mercury for helping his affair with her sister, and Minerva, disgusted by her mercenary spirit, sends Invidia (Envy) to infect her. As the girl becomes jealous of her sister, she refuses to allow Mercury into Herse's room and, in punishment, is also changed to a statue (2.708–832). At this point, Mercury is called away to assist his father in the deception of Europa, which ends the book.

The boundaries of the book already invite comparison between literary and visual arts in a way that enshrines the opposition between the mobile aspect of metamorphosis as process and its unchanging artifacts. For not only does this section of the poem conclude with the tableau of Europa; it begins with another formal ecphrasis, the description of the cosmos depicted on the doors of the sun's palace. This framing of the book with visual images thus highlights the tension between the stasis of images and the animation of narrative motion—as Phaethon enters the picture of order on the doors only to destroy it. But more than that, it equates the process of beginning the book with entering a *domus*, and so invites the kind of pictorial reading that I am proposing. The conceptualization of the text as domestic space is reinforced elsewhere by its contents. If the

book begins with what is necessarily the most public and exposed part of the home, the doors, its penultimate episode takes place in its least accessible regions (*pars secreta domus*), the bedchambers of Cecrops's virgin daughters, whose arrangement is carefully delineated in the course of Mercury's visit (2.737ff.).

These contrasting views of the home already give shape to the inequalities involved in exchanges between gods and men: mortals approaching the home of a god of necessity do so by the front door, while gods materialize just outside mortals' bedchambers.⁷³ An appropriate mean between the supplicating mortal and the god driven by desire comes in another of the book's domestic visitations. When Minerva summons Invidia, a scene whose very nature confuses vengeance and desire as it blurs the power relations between the goddess of victory and the lowly personification of the emotions of the defeated, the episode's ambiguities are sketched by the description of Invidia's *domus* and the goddess's strange position in relation to it. The home itself is the mirror opposite of the Sun's palace, low as opposed to high and defined by the absence of light and fire (2.760–4). And by contrast to Mercury's easy penetration of the home of Cecrops, Minerva is forbidden to enter here. The motif of the *domus* then already helps point out that Minerva has come to a place where she has no tie of kinship (as Phaethon had to the sun), and in Roman social terms it was for the client to call upon the noble, not for the noble to come knocking on the client's humble dwelling.⁷⁴ So too the contrast with Mercury, who magisterially penetrates the recesses of the house for sexual gratification, highlights the uncertainty of Minerva's relation to Invidia. She is the superior but has come for a purpose that could be construed as giving an order or requesting a favor.⁷⁵ The balance between desire and repugnance, the arrogance of a master and the inferiority of a supplicant, emerges in the sideways glance with which Minerva both sees and does not see Invidia framed through the doorway of the home she will not enter.

If the settings of key episodes focalize events of the book from the perspective of one entering the *domus*, others, like the revelation of Callisto,

⁷³ On the visitor's position within and penetration of the Roman *domus* as markers of status and intimacy, see Wallace-Hadrill 1996.38–61.

⁷⁴ Though cf. Evander's praise of Hercules for not disdaining humble thresholds in *Aeneid* 8.362–65.

⁷⁵ Her situation is further elucidated by comparison with another divine visitation in the book, Juno's trip to the home of Ocean. There the "descent" implied in her visit becomes part of the rhetorical effect, as she wins sympathy for her plight by equating the catastrophization of her rival Callisto with her own degradation and impotence. Note that there it is clearly Ocean who is granted the upper hand in the exchange, as the sea gods are said to approve her request with the Olympian verb *admuerant* (2.531). Minerva by contrast is all business and takes care to frame her request as a terse command accompanied by the minimum necessary detail.

closely recall the kind of scenes one might well have seen depicted there. More important, though, Ovid achieves unity between geographically and thematically disparate scenes through a rhetoric of visual motifs very like those that gave coherence to the decorative programs of domestic interiors. To take Callisto again as an example, the instant where Jupiter sees her visually resembles Mercury's bird's-eye view of the Panathenaic procession that sparks his desire for Herse. Both take place in the kind of landscape beloved of Roman painting—the city view of Athens contrasting with the pastoral setting of Callisto. The visual connection is intensified by the description of Jupiter inspecting the walls of the sky (2.401) and the curved pattern of their journeys. (Again, the depiction of the winged viewer was a common visual motif in mythological painting.) Such a perspective opens out further thematic links both to another high flier, the tragically unwinged son of a god, Phaethon, whose disregard of his father's request contrasts with Mercury's unshakeable *fides* towards Jupiter (cf. 2.837), and to the bird's-eye views of real birds, like the crow and the raven, whose viewing becomes a voyeurism that leads to punishment rather than gratification.

So too, Callisto's meticulously described transformation connects her tale with other metamorphoses in the book: Coroneus's daughter is turned to a crow to avoid rape in another picturesque but contrasting landscape, the seaside, and Ocyroe, who has not suffered sexual violation, undergoes a sudden metamorphosis accompanied by loss of voice that is again meticulously cataloged. And the very animals created by metamorphosis conjure up another set of visual motifs: Ocyroe's metamorphosis into a horse, a form that differentiates her from her biform father, recalls the horses that lead to Phaethon's own demotion from his father as a result of assuming the prerogative of a god. More emphatically, birds, white like the swan and the crow before transformation or black like the raven, provide a similar motif. The Callisto episode thus ends with one of the most breathtakingly far-fetched narrative connections in the whole poem, one effected entirely through references to "painted" birds (*pictis*, 2.533). Juno's chariot is born by peacocks, as recently painted from the slaughter of Argus as the raven has been transformed to black. Perhaps, in looking down at Juno's chariot, a decorative detail outside the main narrative, we experience the equivalent of glancing from the self-contained "panel" of the Callisto story to the ornamental framework that surrounds it, only to discover a further set of visual connectives that unite both into an artistic whole. Indeed, in the House of the Tragic Poet the picture of Juno appeared above a painted peacock in the dado. The effect of the frame leaking into the narrative is further enhanced when birds appear not just as features in the story but in such "decorative" authorial additions as similes. Thus, Mercury, whose visual appearance itself contributes to and

contrasts with the bird motif, is compared to a kite swooping down to snatch the organs burned for the gods at sacrifice (2.716–19).

Alternating with birds are cattle, which both recall the same ur-rape narrative of Io as the peacock and adopt the same color scheme, a gleaming white, as the crow, raven, and swan. Again we find the visual image provocatively echoed in a simile as well as in the main narrative. Thus, Apollo lamenting his murder of Coronis is likened to a heifer watching her calf (milky white) slain by the *victimarius* at a sacrifice (2.623–25)—another unifying link connecting Apollo's vengeance-cum-erotic-misadventure with Mercury's. The book's visual program also includes a pair of statues, Battus and Aglauros, of whom the latter, as off-white, contrasts with the birds and the cattle, while the former, being a shepherd, recalls a popular subject for actual statuary as well as complementing the pastoral element in the book's décor. Finally, we may note that—as in the House of the Tragic Poet portrayals of two contrasting goddesses engaged in sexual activity helped articulate the atrium's decorative program—book 2 offers two contrasting pairs of contrasting pairs: two quintessential virgin goddesses, the pastoral Artemis and the urban Minerva, take on the roles of avengers at the beginning and end of the book, while two celestial sons of Jupiter, who are anything but virginal, become its most prominent seducers.

As the preceding catalog shows, the reader prepared to "see" the scenes depicted in this book, as a Roman reader might well have been prepared to do by his previous experience of many of these stories depicted in visual media, finds prompts for comparison and contrast that place disparate tales in relation to one another and create the kind of open-ended thematic matrix that Bergmann's analysis has revealed in the House of the Tragic Poet. Another impetus toward the same way of reading, and another point of similarity to actual Roman mythological paintings, comes through the blurring of the boundaries of representation. Beyond the Third Style tendency to avoid "bounded" (*finitis*) images was another to present scenes in such a way as to incorporate the viewer into the image. Thus, Bergmann again, analyzing the representation of Actaeon viewing the bathing Diana in Pompeii's Casa del Frutteto, describes how the goddess's unwilling exposure to the viewer's eyes, together with the exaggerated size of the figure in relation to others, bring the painting's audience into the scene. This is but one example of how in the whole visual complex "the division between illusionistic prospects and ... the actual lived space of the viewer dissolves."⁷⁶

But if viewing as Europa means coming to see the bull as a real bull, for Ovid's audience of readers the additional step is required of mak-

⁷⁶ Bergmann 1999.88–89.

ing them see what the narrative suggests are real mythological figures as contemporary representations. Thus, in contrast to reading as Europa, we must also remember the perspective introduced in chapter 1, where we see the entire cosmos depicted in the first book, and its divine population, as sculptural figures.⁷⁷ Not only then will the reader be enticed into the illusionistic world of the poem, but she must be prepared to figure that world as part of her own “lived reality” through the capacity to see its scenes as art. A kind of retrospective viewing of book 2 as a painted image comes in the tapestry scene of book 6. For the resumption of the Europa tale at the start of Arachne’s tapestry is but one of a number of visual links to this book, which, like the tapestries, focuses both on divine punishments for mortal overreaching and on the rapes inflicted by the gods. Minerva’s tapestry after all connects with one of the most viewed prospects throughout the second book, the cityscape of Athens. And the viewer who comes forth to help Minerva find fault with Arachne’s work is the same figure who came to look askance at the great accomplishment of Minerva in book 2, Envy. In that scene she sees the Acropolis “verdant with talents and riches and blessed peace” (*arcem / ingeniis opibusque et festa pace virentem*, 2.794–95): Minerva’s tapestry literalizes those very attributes in “bordering the farthest edges of her tapestry with the peaceable [and presumably green] olive” (6.101).⁷⁸

The overlap between Athens as image and Athens as city becomes yet more complex if we imagine that the “talents and riches” Invidia beholds on the Acropolis included the works of art that made it a famous tourist destination for first-century visitors and if we notice that Minerva’s actions as seamstress bordering her tapestry recall the circular paths of Mercury the divine observer who circles around the city in book 2. Nor is it just in hindsight that the ambiguous representational status of the Athenian landscape stands revealed: the figures of Herse and her sisters are seen from above, twice, by different viewers in the book. First the crow sees them opening the basket in which Minerva has placed the chthonic child Erichthonius; then Mercury spies them as Basket Bearers

⁷⁷ Wheeler 1995.

⁷⁸ Correspondingly, we can see in the multiplicity of animal figures, and the very kind of visual patterning I have described here, an analogue to the compositional devices of Arachne’s own crowded tapestry, which is remarkable precisely for its lack of a single unified narrative.

A final but very important demonstration of the link between the tapestry scene in book 6 and the narratives of book 2 results from Gildenhard and Zissos’s (2004) demonstration of the importance of the crow’s speech in Callimachus’s *Hecale* as source and intertext for the Athenian references in the second book. This internal narrative of Athenian history also featured a scene that Ovid omits but Minerva the weaver magisterially restores—the contest in which she triumphs over Neptune as the presiding deity of Athens (*Hecale* fr. 70.10–11 Hollis).

in the Panathenaic procession.⁷⁹ Because the adult Erichthonius was often said to be the founder of the Panathenaia, this creates a notable anachronism.⁸⁰ But the question of whether to view the daughters of Cecrops as figures in a mythic past or as participants in the historical festival of the Panathenaia becomes even more pressing thanks to Anderson’s suggestions that the women bearing burdens on their heads create a visual analogue to the Caryatids in the Porch of the Maidens, works not only accessible to any contemporary (or modern) tourist to Athens but also later reproduced in Roman domestic art as a way of denoting Athens.⁸¹

But what would be the implications of reading book 2 as a succession of interlocked visual images? One consequence involves the linearity of the reading process. One of the essential points Bergmann makes about the act of viewing in the homes she describes is the freedom it opens up for the viewer in tracking his own path among the representations on display. (Such freedom was not of course absolute but was itself dependent on the viewer’s status and relation to the owner: not every visitor would have access to every room, and many would have had to take on board the interpretations of the host, as we find the guests at Trimalchio’s dinner forced to swallow the freedman’s mythology together with his food.) So in the case of the narrative complex in the second book, such an interpretative model allows the reader to make an almost infinite number of narrative connections between stories whose moral relationship to one another is conspicuously underdetermined by a narrative voice. And while of course texts too generate memories and refer back to themselves, the visual model of reception encourages a process of revision and completion that gives density to these internal references. Thus, if we think again of Europa as a picture, her own backward glance, which within the frame of the narrative is to the celebrations of young women surrounding her on the shore, may inspire the reader to look back along the wall of an imaginary gallery to a similar visual tableau, the moment when Callisto meets Diana accompanied by her nymphs or perhaps, again contrasting the urban and the natural, the daughters of Cecrops at the Panathenaia. And indeed such a visual link would be hardly surprising in a Roman domestic environment, where both Callisto and Europa were common

⁷⁹ If the Panathenaic procession conjures up for a reader the woven peplos that was presented to the statue of the goddess on that occasion, there is yet another embedding of the artistic images described later in the narrative in the literary “fabric” of the book.

⁸⁰ Commented on by Bömer 1969.407. For an analysis of temporal “deviations” in book 2 from a narratological perspective, see Gildenhard and Zissos 1999b.

⁸¹ Anderson 1996.319. The most famous example of domestic Caryatids was at Hadrian’s palace at Tivoli, but see Kuttner 1995.83 for the suggestion that they were already present in Brutus’s villa and for a description of their role in the painted decoration of the Villa Farnesina.

subjects. In this case, the reader might notice that the Callisto story, as Ovid tells it, highlights precisely the scene that is elided in the story of Europa, the simultaneous moment of rape and recognition. This backward glance then would predict a much more distressing future for Europa than one would encounter simply by reading forward with a view toward the blessings of motherhood and the distinction of her offspring.

In addition to the interpretative freedom it allows—and the immediate presence it evokes for textual figures materializing as wall decoration—this mode of reading also highlights the thematic importance of viewing within the interlocked episodes, where vision itself connects both subjects and objects in ways that model the text's effect on its readers. Such an "infectious" power of viewing emerges most clearly in the figure of Invidia, whose name itself obviously links the emotion of envy with a complicated visual process.⁸² Invidia feeds on visual images. The late gloss that connects the etymology of the term with gazing excessively on the well-being of others (Isid. 1.610) seems fully at work in Ovid's description of her "wasting away from beholding men's happy achievements" (2.780–81). But excessive seeing, which is also a literal viewing askance, as Envy looks with sideways glance at the departing Minerva (2.787), makes the envious herself a visual sign of such grotesqueness that she becomes unseeable, so that Minerva herself must turn away her eyes. (And Ovid's meticulous account of her has its own contagious properties, inviting the reader not to lament the success of superiors but to take visual pleasure in the miseries of the loathsome.) A consequence of the attention Ovid draws to the connection between Invidia and vision is to connect the emotion with a point of view both within the narrative and by implication for the reader/viewer. Not only does Invidia herself see Athens wrong, and here the idea of Athens as a visual or painted tableau seen by a succession of viewers becomes particularly helpful, but she makes those she infects see things differently. Thus, she works on Aglauros by setting a distorted portrait of her sister Herse before her eyes (2.803–5): the phrase *cuncta magna fecit* easily connects misreading as the result of powerful emotion with an optical distortion on the part of the "painter," Envy. The result is to have Aglauros herself turned to an artistic image, a statue that preserves the stain of her contagion. Perhaps by "magnifying" that stain, the reader is invited to enjoy a kind of superiority to Aglauros herself and is thus also viewing invidiously.

Envy's mode of seeing contrasts directly with other alternatives presented in the narrative, most obviously with that of the other viewer of the same Athenian panorama, Mercury. Indeed, Envy's attributes, the spiny staff and

cloak of invisibility, make her appear to the viewer as a visual, or invisible, doppelgänger for the caduceus-bearing god. But if Envy sees everything with a profound sense of alienation, making over all happiness to others, Mercury sees with a proprietary greed (*avidus*) that easily translates desire to fulfillment. Thus, his view of Athens conjures up not satisfactions denied, but satisfactions ripe for the taking. And while hostile viewing distorts Envy and Aglauros by making them ugly, Mercury's complacent gaze translates into a self-satisfied improvement of his own appearance, the slight makeover that gives him greater confidence in his own attractiveness before presenting himself to Herse (2.731–36). And the very pattern of viewing the god adopts has its own significance, both within the text and in the space of the imaginary *domus*. Like Jupiter on the tour of inspection that leads to the fatal glimpse of Callisto, Mercury upon sighting Herse wheels around in a circle. The viewing of Mercury can itself be viewed as like both the divine proprietor's circuit of Jupiter and the obsessive fixation with a single image engendered by Envy, who is again literally a mirror of the god.

The shift between obsessive attention to a single image and the lordly survey of the whole reminds us again of the physical realities of viewing in the space of the *domus*, where itinerary plays a crucial role in determining meaning. But the gods' circular path and their bird's-eye view of the world have a further thematic significance. Bergmann elsewhere points out that Roman paintings commonly depict winged observers and that the bird's-eye view they would have enjoyed was itself a distinctive innovation of Roman painting. One possible way of accounting for the popularity of such a way of looking at landscape is that it reproduces so closely the ideal perspective of mastery and control from which the owner views his property, a point of view that shades easily into a designation of social and intellectual superiority. Thus, in his celebration of Pollius's villa at Sorrento, the poet Statius concludes by linking the lofty situation of the villa to the enlightened outlook of the owner: "We are a worthless crowd, ready to enslave ourselves to goods doomed to fail (lit. fall, *caducis*) and to hope always, but you from the lofty citadel of your mind look down on us wandering about and laugh at human misfortunes."⁸³ And so within Ovid's poem the god's secure elevation and circular motion powerfully contrast with the terrestrial perspectives of mortals. Nowhere is this clearer than in the contrast between Jupiter's circuit and Phaethon,

⁸³ *nos, vilis turba, caducis
deservire bonis semperque optare parati,
spargimur in casus: celsa tu mentis ab arce
despicias errantes humanaque gaudia rides.*
(Statius *Silu.* 2.2.129–32)

See the interpretation of Bergmann 1999.64–65.

⁸² First discussed by Davis 1969.28–38 as summarized in Keith 1992.125–27. On the practical dynamics of *invidia*, see now Kaster 2005.84–103.

who falls from just such a point of view, and for whom the possibilities of return and recurrence suggested by the sun's circular path (visually reechoed in Mercury's curved route) are tragically "foreshortened" by his one-way trip downward.

Finally to this catalog of points of view we may add both the interested gaze of the informer and, more directly connected to our artistic reconstruction of the narrative, the point of view of the victim of the god's sexual aggression, most tellingly adopted by Callisto. Here we begin by viewing her from the god's point of view as an attractive figure in a landscape,⁸⁴ a perspective encouraged both by the generic pastoral scene of which she is a part and by the language of Ovid's own description: her neck rests on a painted quiver (*pictam pharetram*, 2.421; a painting of a quiver perhaps?). But this external view of her becomes more complicated through subsequent scene changes, which Ovid introduces visually with the exhortation to behold (*ecce*, 2.441, as Diana appears; 2.496, for Arcas the hunter). In both of these cases, the figure who is introduced will in turn see Callisto, with devastating consequences, reproducing the pattern first introduced by the spectator Jupiter.⁸⁵ But the effect of inviting the reader to "behold" each new entrance is to disturb the connoisseur's view of her as image by placing the reader within the world of the painting. Thus, when we "behold" Diana, we are at once seeing a common image from Roman wall painting and seeing suddenly as a figure within that wall painting, and as one whose own sense of the truth of images has been traumatically shattered. Callisto, of course, rejects the easy recognition of Diana; Jupiter might again be concealed under her appearance. Again the viewing style of a character within the narrative communicates itself to the reader through the medium of an imagined act of visual reception.

The mental transformation of literary images to visual ones, then, not only gives a new immediacy to the way in which the text enmeshes the reader in a network of overlapping points of view; it also, as the preceding discussion suggests, clarifies the political consequences of such literary focalizations by projecting them into an imagined environment, the public rooms of a distinguished Roman *domus*, that offered a crucial stage for enacting hierarchical social relations.⁸⁶ Before going on to analyze how the thematic issues central to book 2 in particular graft themselves onto the environment of a Roman house, it is worth pointing out very briefly

⁸⁴ For a political reading of the erotic gaze directed to Roman panel paintings, see Fredrick 1995.

⁸⁵ And if any of these viewers had had the leisure or inclination to survey the whole Callisto cycle, their interpretation would perhaps have been different, as is explicitly stated of another potential viewer Juno (*adspiceres utinam ... mitior esses*, 2.435).

⁸⁶ Wallace-Hadrill 1996, esp. 3–16.

how alive the *Metamorphoses* as a whole can be to the political function of Roman homes, and how often Ovid evokes the space of the contemporary house as the imaginary setting for some of his most fantastical episodes. In his first presentation of the Olympians in the poem, Ovid begins by depicting the gods as the denizens of very Roman homes (1.170–75): "This is the way the gods journey to the house of great Jupiter, a kingly dwelling. On the left and right, the atria of the noble gods, with doors open, receive the throngs; plebeian gods dwell in another neighborhood. But here the powerful and famous divinities have set their *penates*. This is the place that, if boldness were given to words, I would not hesitate to call heaven's Palatine." The passage is much discussed as an example of the kind of humorous anachronism that seems to keep Ovid's gods to a contemporary human scale. But what is equally important is the way that it not only builds on Roman ideas of the home as the extension of the public persona of its owner but also prepares the reader to correlate the spaces of the poem's mythical events with contemporary domestic settings, to see the gods at home. One may note that it is not only Invidia among the poem's allegorical figurations who is characterized through a vividly described domestic establishment; Sleep and Fama can boast of the "crowded house" so necessary to the prestige of a Roman noble.⁸⁷ Though the two "houses" are in many way mirror opposites—Fama's full of rumors, while Sleep's is without a sound—the atria of both conjure up the complex semantic and social environment of a Roman reception area. This emerges from the way in which space reveals preeminence: Fama is contrasted to the cheap crowd (*leve vulgus*, 12.53) who surround her, whereas Sleep, a Roman *pater*, reposes on a raised couch surrounded not by chattering masses but by the visual deceptions of dreams. The swirl of insubstantial representations are not at all out of place in a Roman atrium and not only as an analogue for the complex of insubstantial visual images that made up its decoration; this was indeed a real setting for rumor, for envy, and for deceptive dreams. Nor should we forget that Phaethon, the viewer whose entry into the Palace of the Sun plays an important role in establishing the domestic context for "seeing" in book 2, is no mere art lover. Rather his entry into this particular *domus* is motivated by the desire to appeal to its owner in order to raise his own status and make himself at home in the sumptuous palace.

Reading book 2 within the framework of a domestic setting then, beyond explicating its formal structure and modes of signification, offers a new way of relating its concerns to the social tensions of the world in which it was constructed, many of which would have played out under the eyes of the very same characters represented in Ovid's narrative. The

⁸⁷ Wallace-Hadrill 1996.91–117.

most recent and detailed analysis of the political significance of book 2 comes from Alison Keith's book-length study. Keith notes that a constraint on powers of expression connects the two plots most common among its varied episodes: tales of rape leading to metamorphosis, like Callisto's, highlight the loss of the power of self-expression, whereas stories of divine punishment for tale-bearing reveal even more clearly the constraint imposed from above on inappropriate uses of language.⁸⁸ She contextualizes this by invoking the imperial restrictions on freedom of expression imposed by Augustus in the last years of his principate.

But the domestic setting of these scenes allows us to realize that the restrictions on free speech form but one aspect of a much more pervasive conflict between high and low within the second book. And its relevance to contemporary social relations extends beyond the exchange between upper-class poets and princes. Book 2 presents a set of *dramatis personae* strongly contrasted in their status and capacities; nowhere perhaps are the consequences of being an Olympian god presented with greater starkness as the gamut of possible interactions between gods and mortals is explored, from sexual exploitation, to punishment, to efforts at establishing kinship and connection. The sexual appropriation of inferiors, to take one example, is a mark of power relations in the domestic as well as the mythological sphere, as sexual availability decreased in proportion to status. And the master's violation of slaves could doubtless introduce many further disruptions in the relationships within a Roman household. So Callisto's rape entails not only her victimization by Jupiter but also her punishment by Jupiter's wife and alienation from her own particular patron. As Anderson well observes, these are common elements in Roman comic plots, where, as in Plautus's *Casina* whose predatory protagonist is pleased to call himself Jupiter,⁸⁹ the figures involved in these domestic dramas sometimes have their own mythological pretensions.

But for every tale of violation and punishment, there is another—like that of the crow or the raven, or of Battus or Aglauros—in which an inferior attempts to exploit his or her proximity to the great for financial advantage or social promotion or to punish a rival. Like sexual politics, these complex interactions between patron and client, well known to us from satirical and moralizing literature, took place in the atria and *cubicula* of homes like that of the House of the Tragic Poet.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Keith 1992.135.

⁸⁹ Anderson 1996.282.

⁹⁰ Indeed, the image of the Olympian gods as *patroni* is also a crucial element of their first presentation in the poem, where Jupiter's concern for protecting the interests of the rustic demigods "not yet worthy of Olympus" has been seen by Habinek 2002.51 as evoking the traditional duties of a patron toward clients.

At the start of this chapter, I declared that its aims were to show how comparisons to existing artifacts could give greater immediacy and presence to the poet's text and how that text in turn could suggest to its readers new ways of construing their visual environment. So far in this reading of the second book I have concentrated on the first of these goals, showing how the model of viewing employed for the visual reception of mythological scenes both reveals new thematic connections in Ovid's arrangement of similar stories and constructs an environment that gives these themes an immediate relevance for their readers. Now, as the final element in this section, I discuss how Ovid's thematization of viewing in this book can echo and enhance the way in which actual painted images like those in the House of the Tragic Poet were read. There must have been great variety in the extent and manner by which different viewers related the scenes depicted in these elaborate interiors to the self-staging that took place in the rooms they adorned. Insistence on the pictures as a programmatic index of the status and story of the master, like the decoration of Trimalchio's house in Petronius, which introduces the freedman as hero directly into a mythological setting, stands at one pole, appropriating the world of myth for the exposition of here-and-now reality. At the other, we may imagine a mode of reception that stressed the difference between real and painted space, where, as we have seen, the very foreignness of the paintings in terms of both subject matter and artistry expanded the horizons of the viewer and reflected the taste and wealth of the master without necessarily requiring that he be literally put in the picture. It is interesting to imagine the case of a rape of Callisto depicted in the *cubicula* where a master takes sexual advantage of his slave. To what extent and for whom would the analogies in the situations be visible and what would the effects of this viewing be?

Ovid's text highlights above all the varieties of points of view available on such scenes and accentuates precisely how the viewing of images itself reflected differences in position—figuratively as well as literally—among its audience. At the same time, it potentially destabilizes the relationships each viewer enjoyed to the image. So in the case of Callisto, the sight of her as picturesque image ripe for possession, echoing both the way in which a proprietorial viewer might regard the painting itself as property and perhaps the way a "comic" master might enjoy projecting himself into the story by claiming Jovian powers over the nymphs of his household, comes under challenge as entering the picture means seeing as Callisto herself, in a gallery of mythological scenes that are anything but irrelevant or insignificant. Another way in which the book reveals patterns of viewing that might have an impact in the reception of actual images is the treatment of Invidia above all as a visual disorder. The similarities and differences between the point of view of the master and of the "worthless

throng," to use Statius's phrase, must have been an important element in the way that domestic works of art were experienced. For guests and clients, the exercise of looking as a master on the scenes portrayed must have accentuated the realization, as for Aglauros and Invidia, that these scenes speak about and contribute to the contentment of another. In fact, we may see the punishments of Battus⁹¹ and Aglauros as a particularly appropriate response to such viewing, and thus as forming an analogue to the way that Callisto transforms the perspective of the master. If we imagine seeing invidiously as a continual focus on the viewer's alienation from what she sees together with, in the real context of viewing works of art, a reduction of it to its material value, just as the invidious client sees not the bonds that connect him to his patron but the differences between them that reduce "friendship" to a simple economic transaction, then it is appropriate that those who act in response to it should themselves be transformed into material objects that can only be seen and not see.

⁹¹ Battus is never explicitly accused of *invidia*, but it is important that both his status and his own visual activity are carefully delineated. He is not an independent shepherd—in fact, his work consists of watching (*servabat*) the pastures and excellent mares (*nobilium equarum*) of his master Neleus (2.689–90). He is not simply a sharpie out to take advantage of any situation that offers itself, but a social inferior for whom Mercury's request that he deny that he sees the rich herds the god himself is stealing connects closely with the nature of his own perpetual viewing. He spends his days watching someone else's possessions, as Aglauros watches the mental image of another's happiness.

Playing Gods

OVID'S METAMORPHOSES AND
THE POLITICS OF FICTION

Andrew Feldherr

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