

*for Dan
with thanks!
Alison.*

BRILL'S COMPANION TO OVID

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CHAPTER EIGHT

SOURCES AND GENRES IN OVID'S *METAMORPHOSES* 1-5¹

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Two German philologists set the parameters of scholarly discussion of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* at the beginning of the twentieth century. Hugo Magnus's 1914 edition of the *Metamorphoses* at last made a "scientific" text of the poem available to scholars and inspired further research into the textual tradition of the poem,² while the 1919 publication of Richard Heinze's *Ovids elegische Erzählung* established the fundamental interpretive framework of the poem for the rest of the century. In an elegant study of the twin Proserpina narratives of *Metamorphoses* 5 and *Fasti* 4, Heinze argued that the version in the *Metamorphoses* constitutes an essay in the diction, style, and thematics of high epic, while the *Fasti* presents a less elevated account of the rape conforming to the stylistic principles of elegy. These findings he extended to the poems in their entirety, to conclude that the question of genre is a central preoccupation of both texts and that the *Metamorphoses* displays a consistent generic alignment with epic, the *Fasti* with elegy. Heinze's focus on the question of genre has been accepted by the majority of scholars who have since studied the *Metamorphoses*, up to and including the 1987 publication of Hinds's no less important re-examination of the Proserpina narratives.³ So influential has Heinze's argument been that even those scholars who reject his conclusions have in the main worked within the framework of his analysis by concentrating their studies on elegiac motifs in the *Metamorphoses*.⁴ Contemporary scholarly attention to issues of

¹ I am grateful to Barbara Weiden Boyd, Dan Curley, Ingo Gildenhard, Stephen Hinds, and Stephen Rupp for their comments on earlier versions of this chapter.

² On its reception, see Lenz (1967); Tarrant (1982). Anderson's Teubner edition has superseded Magnus (1914). Richard Tarrant's forthcoming OCT is eagerly awaited.

³ Hinds (1987a). Heinze's formulation is accepted, e.g., by Wilkinson (1955) 149-50, 279; Bernbeck (1967); Otis (1970) 49-59.

⁴ Tränkle (1963); Knox (1986a) 9-26.

genre in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* has coincided with a renewed interest in *Quellenforschung*, as critics have investigated in detail how the literary antecedents of individual episodes simultaneously engage and challenge the generic norms of epic.⁵ This chapter testifies to the continuing influence of Heinze's work by taking as its subject Ovid's creative exploitation of sources and genres in the first five books of the *Metamorphoses*.

1. Epic

It has often been suggested that Ovid chose to write the *Metamorphoses* in dactylic hexameters, the meter in which epic poems were composed in classical antiquity, in response to "the impulse of the *Aeneid*."⁶ Yet while Virgil may have been the most immediate spur to Ovid's epic production, the whole of the classical epic tradition informs his essay in hexameter poetry. Examination of the proem has confirmed the poem's general pretensions to epic status and particular debts to the *Aeneid*:

In noua fert animus mutatas dicere formas
corpora; di, coeptis (nam uos mutastis et illa)
adspirare meis primaque ab origine mundi
ad mea perpetuum deducite tempora carmen (1.1-4).

My mind moves me to tell of shapes changed into new bodies; gods, inspire my beginnings (for you have changed even those) and spin a fine thread of continuous song from the first origin of the world to my own times.⁷

von Albrecht has demonstrated the specifically epic characteristics of the diction and tone of this passage.⁸ He identifies epic antecedents for the opening words in the Homeric phrase ὅππῃ οἱ νόος ὀρνύται ("wherever his mind urges," *Od.* 1.347), with which Telemachus char-

⁵ Knox (1986a); Hinds (1987a); Farrell (1992); Myers (1994a); Gildenhard and Zissos (1999b).

⁶ Galinsky (1975) 14. The view is common: see, e.g., Wilkinson (1958); Bernbeck (1967); Otis (1970) 1-3; Due (1974) 36-41. On Ovid's debt to Virgil, see Bömer (1959); Lamacchia (1960); Bernbeck (1967); Döpp (1968) 104-40, (1991); Tissol (1993); Esposito (1994); Baldo (1997); Hinds (1998) 104-22.

⁷ I cite the text of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* from Miller, except at 1.2 where I read *illa* with Anderson. Translations are my own.

⁸ von Albrecht (1961).

acterizes the decision of the bard Phemius to sing "the Achaeans' return from Troy" (*Od.* 1.326-27), and two similar formulations about the bard Demodocus.⁹ The stylistic elevation of the infinitive *dicere* is confirmed by reference to the Virgilian vocabulary of epic program in which it repeatedly appears (*Ecl.* 4.54; *G.* 3.46, 4.5; *bis*, *Aen.* 7.41-42).¹⁰ Virgil also employs the substantive *coepta* ("beginnings," *G.* 1.40, *Aen.* 10.461; cf. *Culex* 25), and the verb which governs it, *adspirare* ("inspire," *Aen.* 9.525; cf. *Ciris* 99), in programmatic passages.¹¹

Despite these prominently signalled debts to Homeric and Virgilian epic, many critics have been reluctant to accept that the *Metamorphoses* belongs to the genre of epos, and certainly Ovid's professed subject matter, *mutatas . . . formas* (1.1), is far from the heroic themes of the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and *Aeneid*. Latacz, however, has drawn attention to the parallel between Ovid's subject and the themes of didactic epic.¹² The phrase *mutatas . . . formas*, by which title Ovid elsewhere refers to his poem (*Tr.* 1.1.117, 1.7.13, 3.14.19), is especially close to that which opens the *Theriaca* of the Hellenistic Greek poet Nicander (μορφάς τε σῖνῃ τε, "shapes and wounds," *Ther.* 1), whose *Transformations*, no longer extant, was undoubtedly an important model for the *Metamorphoses* though its loss makes it difficult for us to assess Nicandrian influence in detail.¹³ In addition, Myers has identified a linguistic debt to didactic epos in Ovid's opening prepositional phrase (*in noua . . . corpora*, 1.1-2).¹⁴ She notes the frequency with which didactic epics (and the Homeric hymns) open with such phrases, and we may compare in particular the *incipit* of Cicero's Latin version of Aratus's *Phaenomena* (*a Ioue Musarum primordia*, Cic. *Aratea* fr. 1; cf. the opening of Orpheus's song at *Met.* 10.148: *ab Ioue, Musa parens*).

Ovid comments on the innovation of his poetic endeavor in his opening words, *in noua fert animus*, which can be read autonomously

⁹ ὅππῃ θυμὸς ἐποτρύνῃσιν αἰδεῖν (*Od.* 8.45); Μοῦσ' ἄρ' αἰδὼν ἀνήκεν αἰδέμενοι κλέα ἀνδρῶν (*Od.* 8.73, where Μοῦσα replaces θυμὸς). von Albrecht (1961) 274 concludes that "Ovid's *animus* enters the epic with the claim of the Homeric θυμὸς."

¹⁰ von Albrecht (1961) 269-72. On the literary critical implications of the Virgilian passages, see Conte (1992).

¹¹ Due (1974) 95.

¹² Latacz (1979); cf. Myers (1994a) 5-6.

¹³ On Ovid and Nicander, see Lafaye (1904) 46-65; Vollgraff (1909); Kraus (1942) 1938-40, 1943 [= (1968) 105-8, 112]. On the popularity of metamorphosis as a theme in Hellenistic and neoteric poetry, see O'Hara (1996a) 179-80 n. 6.

¹⁴ Myers (1994a) 6 n. 14.

to mean "my inspiration bears (me) on to new things."¹⁵ The novelty of the poem's subject-matter is complemented by the poet's new excursion into hexameter verse, a metrical innovation underscored in the parenthetical comment *nam uos mutastis et illa* (1.2). The medieval variant *illa*, first adopted by Lejay in his 1894 school edition of the *Metamorphoses* and defended in the following century by Hartman, Luck, and Kenney, among others, is currently accepted as the correct lemma.¹⁶ On this reading, the parenthesis pointedly credits the gods with transforming not only the changed forms which constitute the poem's subject-matter but also Ovid's verse-form itself, since they have metamorphosed his poetry from elegiac couplets into dactylic hexameters. This metaliterary aside on the poet's innovation in meter revisits and reverses the opening scene of the *Amores*, where the god Cupid steals a foot from the second line of Ovid's projected epic and thereby sets him on an elegiac course (*Am.* 1.1–4). The parenthesis thus implies a rejection of elegy in favor of epic.¹⁷ Its self-referential commentary on the literary aims of the *Metamorphoses* is buttressed by Ovid's use of *forma* and *corpora* (1.1–2), which in stylistic discussion can refer to literary "forms" and "works" respectively:¹⁸ the poet undertakes to transform the diverse literary forms of his sources into the hexameter body of his epic.

The last two lines of the proem emphasize this new commitment to epos. The Lucretian phrase *prima . . . ab origine mundi* (1.3 = Lucret. 5.548; cf. *ab origine prima*, Lucret. 3.331, 5.678; Virg. *G.* 3.48, 4.286) explicitly introduces the didactic tradition of cosmogonic epic (going back to Hesiod and Empedocles, and including Lucretius's *De rerum natura*) into the Homero-Virgilian matrix which dominates the opening lines of the poem. Scholars have also noted the parallel with Ennius's project in the *Annales*, originally conceived as a fifteen-book historical epic treating events from the foundation of Rome down to the poet's own day.¹⁹ Finally, Ovid's claim to undertake a "con-

¹⁵ Kenney (1976) 46.

¹⁶ Lejay (1894); Hartman (1905) 83–84; Luck (1958); Kenney (1976) 46–50. The reading is accepted by Anderson (1993); Tarrant (1982) 351.

¹⁷ Wheeler (1999) 19, however, notes the paradox that "[i]n programmatic terms, Ovid's explanation of the origin of his hexameters lends support to critics who underscore the continuing elegiac tendencies of the *Metamorphoses*." Cf. Knox (1986a) 9.

¹⁸ For *forma* in ancient literary critical discussion, see *TLL* 6.1.1072.19–71; for *corpora*, see *TLL* 4.1020.62–1021.39. Cf. Keith (1999a).

¹⁹ Hardie (1995); Feeney (1999).

tinuous song" (1.4) has long been recognized as an espousal of grand epic in its ironic adaptation of Callimachus's tendentious refusal in the *Aetia* prologue to produce "one continuous song" (ἐν ἅεισμα διη-
νέκός, *Aet.* 1, fr. 1.3 Pf.).²⁰

The range and precision of Ovid's references to the classical epic tradition in articulating the program of the *Metamorphoses* establish the poem's generic alignment with epos. Quintilian provides valuable corroborative evidence in his discussion of Greek and Roman authors, for he includes Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in his discussion of Latin epic (*IO* 10.1.88) and treats under the rubric of epos, in addition to Homer and Virgil, the poets invoked by Ovid in his proem: Hesiod, Nicander, Ennius, and Lucretius. Recent discussions of genre and allusion in Latin poetry, especially Virgilian and Ovidian poetry, have distinguished between an "example model," the particular source to which an author alludes in a specific word, phrase, or scene, and the "code model," the representative of the "rules and codifications" of the genre in which an author writes.²¹ This work supplies a theoretical basis for Due's observation that Homeric epic is the ultimate model for Ovid's literary project in the *Metamorphoses*.²² Despite the essentially Hesiodic (catalogue)²³ character of the *Metamorphoses*, Homer, as the fountainhead of epic, and Virgil, his Roman heir, remain for Ovid "the representative[s] of the institution of epic poetry itself."²⁴ By invoking not only Homer and Virgil but also Hesiod, Ennius, and Lucretius so prominently in his proem, Ovid signals that the *Metamorphoses* will combine the traditions of heroic and didactic epos in a comprehensive culmination of the genre.²⁵

Ovid implicitly confirms the generic classification of the *Metamorphoses* as epic by opening the poem proper with a cosmogony (1.5–88), a philosophical subject traditionally considered the most elevated poetic theme and therefore the subject best suited to the most elevated

²⁰ Kraus (1942) 1943 [= (1968) 113]; Herter (1948) 145; von Albrecht (1961) 278; Otis (1970) 45–46.

²¹ Conte (1986) 31, discussed by Hinds (1998) 41–47; cf. Due (1974) 16. Conte (1986) and (1992) and Hinds (1998) engage the related issues of allusion and "genre blending" (*Kreuzung der Gattungen*) first discussed by Pasquali (1951) and Kroll (1924) 202–24, respectively.

²² Due (1974) 21–23; cf. Baldo (1986).

²³ Martini (1933) 29–36; Herter (1948).

²⁴ Conte (1986) 31.

²⁵ Cf. Latacz (1979) 144; Due (1974) 16–24, 28–33, 36–41, 120; Myers (1994a) 1–26.

poetic genre, grand epic.²⁶ The subjects that succeed the cosmogony down to the flood narrative also seem to have been chosen by Ovid to exemplify the conventional themes of high epic,²⁷ and similarly extensive panels of grand epic subjects composed in the grand epic manner open books 2, 3, and 5. Constraints of space do not permit detailed examination here of the Phaethon episode in Book 2, well discussed by Brooks Otis as an instance of high epic.²⁸ Nor is there any need to rehearse Hardie's argument that the themes of foundation epic inform Ovid's "Thebaid" (3.1–4.603), which opens with Cadmus obeying the Delphic oracle's instructions to found Thebes and closes with his self-imposed exile from the city.²⁹ Analysis of Ovid's adaptation of heroic epic in the Perseus narrative of 4.610–5.251, however, will allow us to explore more fully his relationship to Homer and Virgil, the primary representatives of Greek and Latin epic.

Ovid depicts Perseus, preeminent among heroes in Homer's phrase (*Il.* 14.320; cf. Hes. *Cat.* 129.15 M–W), as the quintessential epic hero whose *uirtus* is tested in a series of trials.³⁰ In *Metamorphoses* 4, he is a Herculean hero, first in his visit to the garden of the Hesperides (4.628–62) and then in his conquest of the sea-monster that threatens Andromeda (*labor*, 4.739; cf. Virgil's Herculean Aeneas, *Aen.* 1.10).³¹ Just as the golden apples of the Hesperides' garden will be despoiled by Hercules (4.643–45),³² so Medusa's head is the spoil, won by heroic valor (4.770), which confers on Perseus the lasting renown of the epic hero (*spolium memorabile*, 4.615). Another prize worthy of the hero is Andromeda, both the reason for and the reward

²⁶ On cosmogony as a theme of grand epic, see Innes (1979) and Hardie (1986) 6–84. On Ovid's cosmogony, see Bömer (1969) 15–17; Maurach (1979); Helze (1993); Myers (1994a) 5–15; Wheeler (1995).

²⁷ Heinze (1919) 11–13 [= (1960) 315–17]; Fränkel (1945) 75–76; Otis (1970) 91–101. Kraus (1942) 1944–45 [= (1968) 114–15] lists epicizing passages in the poem.

²⁸ Otis (1970) 108–16; cf. Zissos (1996).

²⁹ Hardie (1990). For discussion of epic themes in an episode of the "Thebaid," see Hardie (1988).

³⁰ Keith (1999b) 221–23; cf. Otis (1970) 145, 159–64; Due (1974) 77–79; Nischke (1982). On a possible epic source, see della Corte (1958). On the Perseus myth, see Schauenburg (1960); Nischke (1982).

³¹ Cf. Hercules' rescue of Hesione from the sea-monster sent by Neptune because of Laomedon's perjury, known already to Homer (*Il.* 20.145–48) and treated by Ovid at *Met.* 11.194–217.

³² Cf. 9.188–90, where Hercules himself mentions this labor.

of Perseus's battle with the sea-monster (*pretium et causa laboris*, 4.739; cf. 4.757, 5.25). If his Herculean deliverance of maiden from monster constitutes proof of Perseus's heroism in Book 4, his Odyssean defense of his bride against Phineus and his retainers in the following book confirms it.

The wedding banquet that closes *Metamorphoses* 4 features Perseus's account of his exploits (4.765–5.2) on the model of Odysseus at the court of the Phaeacians (*Odyssey* 9–12) and Aeneas in Carthage (*Aeneid* 2–3), though on a much reduced scale.³³ The festivities are shattered at the outset of Book 5 by the arrival of Cepheus's brother Phineus, who comes to avenge Perseus's "theft" of his fiancée, Andromeda. Accompanied by a band of armed retainers, Phineus introduces an epic battle scene (*belli temerarius auctor*, 5.8). Brandishing an ash spear like a Virgilian villain (*fraxineam quatens . . . hastam*, 5.9; cf. Mezentius, *Aen.* 10.762; Arruns, 11.767), Phineus claims to avenge a ravished wife (*adsum praereptae coniugis ultor*, 5.10), like the Homeric Menelaus (*Il.* 9.340–41) and Virgilian Turnus (*coniuge praerepta*, *Aen.* 9.138).³⁴

The ensuing battle constitutes a sustained meditation on the action of heroic epic. Bride-theft motivates Homeric battle narrative not only in the *Iliad* but also in the *Odyssey*, and the situational parallels between Ovid's "Perseid" and *Odyssey* 22 are particularly striking. Assisted by a few adherents, Perseus fights Phineus, a single challenger who comes with an armed entourage, for possession of Andromeda in her father's palace during their wedding banquet (5.3), just as Odysseus, assisted by a few adherents, fights a group of armed suitors at a banquet (*Od.* 22.12–14) for possession of his wife in his own palace and conceals their deaths by pretending to celebrate a marriage (*Od.* 23.131–40).³⁵ Minerva even assists her protégé Perseus (5.46–47, 250–51) as Athena aids Odysseus (*Od.* 22.205–40, 297–308).

Ovid also reworks specific details of the Odyssean battle narrative in his "Perseid." A Libyan Amphimedon fights against Perseus (5.75), while a suitor of that name opposes Odysseus (*Od.* 22.242, 277, 284). Among Perseus's victims is Aethion, wise in avian omens but deceived on this occasion (5.146–47), who is modelled on Leodes, the suitors'

³³ Nischke (1982) 81.

³⁴ A trace of the Homeric intertext lingers in Ovid's specification of the spear as ash, like Achilles' (Πηλιάδα μέλιν, *Il.* 16.143, 19.390, 20.277).

³⁵ Nischke (1982) views Odysseus as the model for Perseus throughout Ovid's "Perseid."

soothsayer killed by Odysseus (*Od.* 22.310–29). Ovid's emphasis on Perseus as one against many (*omnibus unum*, 5.149; cf. 5.157) evokes the rhetorical question posed by Homer following the killing of Antinous, with which Odysseus inaugurates the slaughter of the suitors: "for who would think that in the company of men feasting, one man among many (μῶνρον ἐνὶ πλεόνεσσιν), even if he were especially strong, would bring on himself evil death and black doom?" (*Od.* 22.12–14).³⁶

In addition to the Odyssean parallels, the central figures in Ovid's "Perseid" correspond to characters in the *Aeneid*: Perseus, Phineus, Andromeda, and Cepheus reprise the roles of Aeneas, Turnus, Lavinia, and Latinus.³⁷ As wedding turns into war Bellona (5.155–56) replaces Hymenaeus and Amor (4.758–59), in another allusion to Virgil whose Juno invites Bellona to preside over the marriage of Lavinia and Aeneas (*Aen.* 7.318–19). Cepheus decisively rejects Phineus's claim to Andromeda (5.12–29), as Latinus tries to dissuade Turnus from maintaining his claim to Lavinia (*Aen.* 12.18–45), and he characterizes Phineus's motivation as *furor* (5.13), the emotion that animates Turnus throughout the *Aeneid*. Unable to prevent Phineus from attacking Perseus, as Latinus is unable to stop Turnus from mustering troops against Aeneas, Cepheus abandons the banquet-hall (5.43–45) on the model of Latinus overwhelmed by the rising tide of war (*Aen.* 7.591–600). In the opening simile of the book (5.5–7), Ovid reworks a Virgilian simile characterizing Latinus's futile attempt to resist Turnus (*Aen.* 7.586–90).

Drawing on the full range of battle episodes in the *Aeneid*, Ovid refines disparate episodes into a single consummate distillation of Virgilian war narrative. Thus the first episode, in which Perseus kills the lovers Athis and Lycabas (5.47–73), conflates two Virgilian episodes: specifically modelled on a celebrated episode in the Italian war of *Aeneid* 9–12, the night raid of Nisus and Euryalus (*Aen.* 9.176–449), it also alludes to the scene in which Virgil introduces the lovers (*Aen.* 5.286–361).³⁸ Just as the beauty of the youthful Athis (*egregius forma*, 5.49) recalls that of Euryalus (9.179–81; cf. *forma insignis*, *Aen.* 5.295), so the love of Lycabas for Athis (5.60–61) evokes that of Nisus for

Euryalus (*Aen.* 9.182; 5.296).³⁹ Lycabas's cry that Perseus's quarrel is with him (5.64) echoes Nisus's plea that the Rutulians who have overpowered Euryalus restrict their quarrel to him (*Aen.* 9.427–30). Like Nisus, Lycabas sees his beloved's beauty defiled in a brutal death (5.59–60; *Aen.* 9.431–34), and himself falls to his friend's killer, casting himself on his lover's corpse in death (5.69–73; *Aen.* 9.444–45).⁴⁰

Ovid complicates his reworking of Virgil in this passage still further by alluding to other episodes in the Italian war. The Euryalan Athis bears a name which evokes another Trojan follower of Aeneas (Atys, *Aen.* 5.568); his outstanding beauty recalls that of the first victim of the broken truce (*egregium forma iuuenem*, *Aen.* 12.275);⁴¹ and his rich clothing and war gear (5.49–55) are modelled on those of the Trojan Chloereus (*Aen.* 11.768–77), a priest of Cybele whose most famous worshipper also bore the name Athis (Catull. 63). The Ovidian Athis is killed by a crushing blow to the face from a burning log snatched from an altar (5.56–58) on the model of Corynaeus's attack on Ebysus in the last book of the *Aeneid* (12.298–301). Lycabas's vaunt that Perseus will not long enjoy the glory of killing Athis (5.65–66) evokes the dying words of the Trojan Oroles, who tells his killer Mezentius that he will not long glory in his death (*Aen.* 10.739–41).

Individual details of the battle in Cepheus's halls are also drawn from the night raid of Nisus and Euryalus, which takes place in the aftermath of a drinking party in the Rutulian camp (*Aen.* 9.316–19). Ovid offers a particularly concentrated example in his reworking of the death of Euryalus's last Rutulian victim, Rhoetus, run through by Euryalus's sword as he cowers behind a wine-mixing bowl (*Aen.* 9.345–50). Ovid gives the name Rhoetus to Perseus's first kill, who dies from a spear in his face (5.38–40), but he transfers the detail of the *crater* to Perseus's killing of Eurytus (5.79–84) in a death scene that annotates its debt to Virgil's Rutulian setting when Eurytus belches "red" blood: *rutilum uomit ille cruorem* (5.83; cf. *purpuream uomit ille animam*, *Aen.* 9.349 of Rhoetus).⁴² To Eurytus's death Ovid appends a brief catalogue of Phineus's war dead, among them a Caucasian

³⁶ On the epic theme of "one versus many," see Hardie (1993) 3–11.

³⁷ Otis (1970) 347.

³⁸ Otis (1970) 347–48; Esposito (1994) 37–39.

³⁹ Esposito (1994) 39 notes Ovid's amplification of their love in his rewriting of *Aen.* 5.293–96.

⁴⁰ Cf. Esposito (1994) 40.

⁴¹ Esposito (1994) 38.

⁴² On wordplay in Ovid, see Ahl (1985); Keith (1992a); O'Hara (1996b).

Abaris (5.86) whose name is drawn from the brief catalogue of Rutulians killed by Euryalus just before Rhoetus's death (*Aen.* 9.344). Blood drenches the ground of the Ovidian battlefield (*sanguine, quo late tellus madefacta tepebat*, 5.76) just as Virgil's Rutulian camp runs with the blood of the slaughtered (*atra tepefacta cruore/terra torique madent*, *Aen.* 9.333–34).

The interior of Cepheus's palace, however, is very different from the outdoor settings of Virgil's Italian war. Here Ovid's Virgilian model is the sack of Troy in *Aeneid* 2, and specifically the famous death scenes of Polites and Priam in the Trojan king's palace (*Aen.* 2.506–53). The death of Emathion (5.99–106) recalls this Virgilian intertext especially closely. Old Emathion (*grandaevus*, 5.99), like the aged Priam (*longaevum*, *Aen.* 2.525), has taken refuge at an altar (*huic... amplexo tremulis altaria palmis*, 5.103),⁴³ where he curses the impiety of the battle (5.101–2) in a speech that recapitulates in abbreviated form Priam's condemnation of Pyrrhus's murder of his son Polites (*Aen.* 2.535–43). Emathion is silenced in death by the sacrilegious Chromis, who decapitates him as he clings to the altar (5.103–4) on the model of the Virgilian Pyrrhus, who stabs Priam at his altar (*Aen.* 2.550–53).⁴⁴ Again, however, Ovid complicates his model by drawing on a second Virgilian episode, for Emathion's age and respect for justice (*aequi cultor timidusque deorum*, 5.100) recall the just and aged Italian Galaesus (*seniorque Galaesus... iustissimus unus*, *Aen.* 7.535–36), who is among the first to die in the Italian war.

Ovid concludes the episode with the victory of Perseus over Phineus, which revisits Aeneas's defeat of Turnus at the end of the *Aeneid*. Both Phineus (5.210–11) and Turnus (*Aen.* 12.930–38) regret their rash pursuit of war against a greater foe, and raise their hands in supplication (5.214–15; *Aen.* 12.930–31), acknowledging defeat (Phineus, 'uincis,' *ait*, 'Perseu,' 5.216; Turnus, 'uicisti et uictum tendere palmas/Ausonii uidere,' *Aen.* 12.936–37). Both renounce their claim to the woman for whom they have fought, assigning Andromeda and Lavinia to Perseus and Aeneas respectively (5.219–22; *Aen.* 12.937). Both beg for their lives (5.221–22; *Aen.* 12.931–38), but are nonetheless killed by their victors after a brief speech (5.224–35; *Aen.* 12.947–52).

⁴³ Cf. *hoc dicens altaria ad ipsa tremantem/traxit* (*Aen.* 2.550–51); for further verbal parallels between the two passages, see Bömer (1976) 253–54; Anderson (1997) 509.

⁴⁴ Esposito (1994) 42–43 compares the death of the singer Lampetides (5.113–16) with that of Priam (*Aen.* 2.544–53).

The range of Ovid's debts to Virgilian and Homeric battle narrative in the brief compass of his "Perseid" has suggested to some scholars that the scene is a parody or burlesque of heroic epic, lacking in the high seriousness and sustained plot of Homeric and Virgilian epic.⁴⁵ Yet the very precision with which Ovid has synthesized his Greek and Roman models argues against this kind of reading. Ovid neither parodies nor burlesques high epic, but rather reinterprets the form, intensifying both the brutality of Homer and the sentimentality of Virgil by limiting his war narrative to 250 lines.⁴⁶ He offers oblique commentary on his renovation of heroic epic in a passage describing the amplification of battle in Cepheus's halls:

... ululatuque atria complent,
sed sonus armorum superat gemitusque cadentum,
pollutosque simul multo Bellona penates
sanguine perfundit renouataque proelia miscet (5.153–56).

The halls are full of lamentation, but it is overwhelmed by the clash of weapons and groans of the fallen, as Bellona drenches and pollutes the household gods with much bloodshed, and stirs up renewed battles.

The clash of arms and groans of the fallen exemplify Homero-Virgilian war poetry, which Ovid self-consciously renews in Perseus's battle with Phineus, both doubling and making new Odysseus's battle with the suitors in *Odyssey* 22 and Aeneas's conflict with Turnus in *Aeneid* 7–12.⁴⁷ Just as Homer reshapes traditional material, and Virgil adapts Apollonian, Ennian, and Lucretian epic with constant reference to Homer in the *Aeneid*, so Ovid renegotiates Virgilian epic with an eye to his Homeric model, looking to the preeminent masters of Greek and Latin epos to shape his own essay in the genre.

2. Elegy

Despite Ovid's explicit mobilization of the epic tradition in the *Metamorphoses*, the poem displays a stylistic and thematic polyphony

⁴⁵ Otis (1970) 350; Anderson (1997) 497–519. The charge is commonly levelled against Ovid: see, e.g., Bömer (1959); Horsfall (1979); Latacz (1979) 147–55. It is refuted by Hinds (1987b), (1998) 107–22; cf. Due (1974) 36–41; Baldo (1986); Esposito (1994).

⁴⁶ Cf. Due (1974) 76; Hinds (1987b) 13; Esposito (1994) 101.

⁴⁷ Bömer (1976) 263 notes Ovid's debt to *Aen.* 2.3 ("infandum, regina, iubes renouare dolorem"), where Virgil offers metaliterary comment on his renewal of Homeric epic.

that has been taken to complicate generic categorization. How, for example, can we explain the many amatory episodes in this complex text? Reconsideration of the proem will open up a second strand of generic play in the poem and introduce the erotic narratives of *Metamorphoses* 1–5 into this study.

The second imperative addressed to the gods, *deducite* (1.4), evokes a Callimachean resonance that complicates the poem's high epic pretensions. Due first observed that if the gods accomplished Ovid's request, the result would be a *carmen* at once *perpetuum* and *deductum*, "fine-spun."⁴⁸ Among Callimachus's Roman adherents, the adjective *deductum* enjoyed a certain cachet as a translation of the Greek poet's ideal of refined poetry, τὴν Μοῦσαν . . . λεπταλέην ("the slender Muse," *Aet.* 1 fr.1.24 Pf.), a stylistic principle connoting delicacy and subtlety.⁴⁹ The poetics of λεπτότης are associated especially closely with elegy in Rome (whatever their relationship to the genre in Callimachean poetry),⁵⁰ perhaps because they are enunciated most explicitly in the elegiac *Aetia*. Ovid's expression of a Callimachean impulse at the end of the proem, along with the allusion to *Am.* 1.1.3–4 at 1.2, has therefore led scholars to explore his thematic and stylistic debts to elegy in the *Metamorphoses*.⁵¹

Much discussed in this context is the Apollo-Daphne episode (1.452–582). Fränkel noted "the programmatic character of [t]his first love tale,"⁵² and Nicoll has elaborated its significance in detail.⁵³ The action of the episode arises out of the earth's parthenogenic birth of the monster Python (1.438–50). Ovid emphasizes his huge size (*maxime*, 1.438; *tantum spatii de monte tenebas*, 1.440) and the terror he inspires (1.439–40) in order to underline the epic heroism Apollo displays in

⁴⁸ Due (1974) 95.

⁴⁹ Eisenhut (1961). Gilbert (1976) collects and discusses the evidence in connection with *Met.* 1.4; cf. Kenney (1976) 51–52, and Heyworth (1994) 72–76.

⁵⁰ On this contentious issue, see most recently Cameron (1995).

⁵¹ On Callimachus's *Aetia* as an important model for the *Metamorphoses*, see Due (1974) 19–20; Knox (1986a); Myers (1994a) 15–21, 61–132. On Ovid and Callimachus, see also Diller (1934); de Cola (1937); Herter (1948); Keith (1992a); Tissol (1997). Other scholars discuss elegiac tendencies in the *Metamorphoses* without linking them to the example of Callimachus: see, e.g., Kraus (1942) 1945 [= (1968) 115]; Pöschl (1959); Tränkle (1963), who takes issue with Heinze (1919); Sharrock (1991); Fabre-Serris (1995) 22–36, 247–96, who argues that Gallus is an important model for Ovid's program in the *Metamorphoses*.

⁵² Fränkel (1945) 78.

⁵³ Nicoll (1980); cf. Knox (1986a) 14–19, (1990).

killing him (cf. the god's epic epithet *arcitenens*, 1.441).⁵⁴ The great number of arrows Apollo requires to dispatch Python (*mille grauem telis exhausta paene pharetra*, 1.443) further underscores the monster's epic proportions (*pestifero tot iugera uentre prementem/strauimus innumeris tunidum Pythona sagittis*, 1.459–60) and elevates the contest between god and beast into an epic confrontation on the model of Hercules' contest with Cacus (*Aen.* 8.184–279).⁵⁵

In the aftermath of his feat of arms Apollo exhibits an epic arrogance (*Delius . . . uicta serpente superbus*, 1.454) which is deflated by Cupid, whose arrows transform Apollo from an epic hero into an elegiac lover. The confrontation between Apollo and Cupid, in which the heroic archer denies the licentious demi-god's fitness to handle arms (*'quid'que 'tibi, lasciue puer, cum fortibus armis?'*, 1.456), enacts a literary contest between epos and elegy.⁵⁶ Apollo, the divine patron of epic, demands that Cupid, the divine patron of Ovidian elegy (*Am.* 1.1–4), observe a distinction between their respective spheres, contrasting his heroic glory (*laudes*, 1.462) with Cupid's amatory escapades (*amores*, 1.461). Cupid, however, scorns the distinction and comprehensively bests Apollo by shooting him with one of his own arrows and inspiring in him an unrequited love for the virginal Daphne (1.465–74).

The Greek elegiac poet Parthenius, widely credited with introducing an earlier generation of Latin poets to Callimachus's poetry, included the tale of Apollo's love for Daphne in the handbook of erotic narratives he dedicated to Gallus (*Erot.* 15), but we do not know what use, if any, Gallus made of the story in his elegiac *Amores*.⁵⁷ Ovid, however, signals the incursion of elegiac material into the realm of epos here with an extensive reworking of the opening poem of his own *Amores*: *primus amor* at 1.452 self-reflexively annotates the elegiac provenance of the episode. Apollo reprises the role of the poet-lover in *Amores* 1.1, who disputes *Cupido's* jurisdiction over poetry (1.456 ~ *Am.* 1.1.5, 1.1.24) even as he falls victim to the god's erotic arrows (1.466–74 ~ *Am.* 1.1.21–26; 1.495–96 ~ *Am.* 1.1.26; 1.519–20

⁵⁴ The epithet, a calque on the Homeric epithet "bow-bearing" (τοξοφόρος, *h. Hom.* 3.13, 126), was introduced into Latin by Naevius (*Bel. Pun.* fr. 30 Büchner).

⁵⁵ Nicoll (1980) 181.

⁵⁶ Nicoll (1980) suggests that Ovid models the contest between Apollo and Cupid on the literary form of *recusatio*. Davis (1983) 31–34 views Cupid as the *praeceptor amoris* of Apollo.

⁵⁷ On the sources, see Knox (1990).

~ *Am.* 1.1.25–26).⁵⁸ The following narrative draws on the diction and themes of amatory elegy, from the conventionally unyielding disposition of the beloved (figured in Daphne's flight from Apollo, 1.469, 474–89, 502–52, 556) to the lover's unsuccessful use of elegiac "flattery" (*blanditiae*, 1.531; cf. 1.504–25, 557–65), vain pursuit of the beloved (1.502–42, 553–67), obsessive fixation on her beauty (1.490–502, 527–30), and inability to cure himself of love (1.521–24).⁵⁹ Even the aetiological framework in which the narrative is embedded, describing the foundation of the Pythian games and origin of Apollo's association with the laurel (1.445–51, 557–67), contributes to the elegiac tenor of the episode, since it gestures towards Callimachus's *Aetia* as a model.

Ovid complicates the elegiac tone of the passage, however, by setting the erotic themes in an epic context.⁶⁰ In his first appearance in the *Metamorphoses*, Cupid is inspired by the savage anger that motivates Juno in the *Aeneid* (*primus amor Phoebi Daphne Peneia, quem non/fors ignara dedit, sed saeua Cupidinis ira*, 1.452–53; cf. *saeuae memorem Iunonis ob iram*, *Aen.* 1.4).⁶¹ Moreover, by contesting Cupid's right to bear epic *arma*, Apollo leaves himself open to challenge on his own ground when his rival lays claim to epic "glory": *filius huic Veneris figat tuus omnia, Phoebe, / te meus arcus' ait; 'quantoque animalia cedunt/cuncta deo, tanto minor est tua gloria nostra'* (1.463–65). The scene illustrates the Virgilian (but perhaps originally Gallan?) maxim "love conquers all" (*omnia vincit amor*, *Ecl.* 10.69), which paradoxically elevates the god of love to the Jovian status of ruler of the universe.⁶²

Ovid bolsters epic content with epic form by introducing similes at points of heightened tension in the amatory narrative. He compares Apollo falling in love with Daphne at first sight, an elegiac topos,⁶³ with stubble or a hedge suddenly catching fire (1.492–95). Epic poets from Homer on characteristically draw on material from the natural world in their similes, a practice Ovid follows here by

evoking an image from Virgil's *Georgics* (1.84–85) where it also appears in a simile (3.99–100): Apollo's elegiac flame of love is thereby drawn into the ambit of (didactic) epic. Recognizing the futility of persuasion, Apollo resorts to the chase:

... sed enim non sustinet ultra
perdere blanditias iuuenis deus, utque monebat
ipse Amor, admisso sequitur uestigia passu (1.530–32).

But the youthful god disdains to waste his flattery further, and as Love himself advised, follows her tracks with lengthened stride.

Ovid underscores Apollo's rejection of elegiac *blanditiae* for epic chase with a Virgilian archaism, *sed enim*,⁶⁴ and a simile likening the god's pursuit of Daphne to a Gallic hound's pursuit of a hare follows (1.533–39). This simile has a long epic pedigree: deriving ultimately from Homer (*Il.* 22.188–93), it is reworked by Apollonius, Ennius, and Virgil (*Aen.* 12.746–55).⁶⁵ Homer and Virgil apply the simile to Achilles and Aeneas in their final pursuits of Hector and Turnus. Ovid's reapplication of the simile to an erotic context likens elegiac conflict to epic duel, an interpretation perhaps not entirely incompatible in its eroticization of epic with the Homeric model, which follows shortly after Hector's internal debate recognizing that an appeal to Achilles in lovers' language is now too late (*Il.* 22.126–28).

Daphne's rejection of love, forcefully expressed in her request to her father that she be permitted to remain a virgin like Diana (*'da mihi perpetua, genitor carissime, dixit/uirginitate frui! dedit hoc pater ante Dianae,'* 1.486–87), assimilates her to the figure of the elegiac *puella* spurning her lover, but her specific formulation complicates this correspondence, for it closely translates Artemis' demand for perpetual virginity in Callimachus's (hexameter) hymn to Artemis (*'δός μοι παρθενίην αἰώνιον, ἄππα, φυλάσσειν,'* *Hymn* 3.6). Indeed, the ancient hymnic tradition, most famously represented by Homer (in the *Hymns*), Hesiod (*Erga* 1–10, *Theog.* 1–115), and Callimachus, provides another important literary context for the Ovidian episode.⁶⁶ Barchiesi has observed that Ovid here reverses the narrative sequence of the Delphic section of the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* (207–15) by transforming the Homeric prelude (Apollo's amours) into his main theme, and the

⁵⁸ Nicoll (1980) 175–76; Knox (1986a) 14–17.

⁵⁹ Nicoll (1980) 177; cf. Due (1974) 113. On elegiac diction here, see Bömer (1969) 146–68; Knox (1986a) 14–19, and (1990) 200–201.

⁶⁰ Cf. Due (1974) 112.

⁶¹ Fränkel (1945) 208 n. 5.

⁶² Due (1974) 112. Cf. Venus's plan to achieve dominion over the underworld by causing the marriage of Pluto and Proserpina (5.362–84), with Otis (1970) 52–59; Hinds (1987a) 103–13, 133–34; Johnson (1996); Barchiesi (1999).

⁶³ Rosati (1997) 173–74, with examples and bibliography.

⁶⁴ Knox (1986a) 29.

⁶⁵ Cf. Hom. *Il.* 10.360–64, 11.292–95; Ap. Rhod. 2.278–83; Enn. *Ann.* 332–34 Sk.

⁶⁶ Barchiesi (1999); cf. Williams (1981); Wills (1990).

Homeric theme (the killing of Python and foundation of the Delphic oracle) into his prelude.⁶⁷ Wills, moreover, has argued that "the content of Ovid's story properly constitutes a hymn to Apollo, with a listing of his attributes from his own mouth: lord of prophecy, the lyre, the arrow, medicine and even Capitoline processions" (1.515–22, 558–65).⁶⁸ Apollo himself praises Daphne, transformed into the laurel, in hymnic *du-stil* at the end of the episode, lauding her association with his hair, cithara, and bow, as well as the Roman triumph, and Augustus's palace ('*semper habebunt/te coma, te citharae, te nostrae, laure, pharetrae;/tu ducibus Latiis aderis/. . ./tu quoque perpetuos semper gere frondis honores!*' 1.558–65). The episode ends with an image of the laurel tree shaking her foliage (*factis modo laurea ramis/adnuat utque caput uisa est agitasse cacumen*, 1.566–67) which evokes the *incipit* of Callimachus's hymn to Apollo (οἶον ὁ τῶπὸλλωνος ἐσειέσαιο δάφνην-νος ὄρηξ, *Hymn* 2.1).⁶⁹ Like the epic framework which opens the episode, the hymnic intertexts elevate the stylistic pretensions of an amatory narrative, and a trace of the sacral context may still be felt in Ovid's use of the religious word *adoleo*, already naturalized in epic (Lucret. 4.1237; Virg. *Aen.* 1.704, 3.547, 7.71).⁷⁰ The generic tension generated by the juxtaposition of epic, elegiac, and hymnic conventions is congruent with the proem's announcement of a poem that aspires to both epic grandeur and Callimachean refinement.

It should be noted, however, that the epic tradition itself supplies Ovid with precedent for including amatory narrative in epos. Critics have adduced in comparison Hesiod's *Theogony* in combination with the amours of the gods in his *Catalogue of Women*, to which the *Theogony* served as preface in antiquity.⁷¹ Recent scholarship has also related Ovid's amatory program in the *Metamorphoses* to Virgil's example in the *Eclogues*, whose song of Silenus (*Ecl.* 6.31–83) has been identified as the primary model for the *Metamorphoses* as a whole,⁷² and in the

⁶⁷ Barchiesi (1999) 116.

⁶⁸ Wills (1990) 151–54, quote at 154; cf. Williams (1981) 251. Wills (1990) identifies Callimachus's *Hymn to Delos* as the specific source of the Ovidian narrative and implies, 155, that Apollo's epithet *Delius* (1.454) may have an arch annotative function like *primus amor* (1.452).

⁶⁹ Wills (1990) 151; Barchiesi (1999) 124.

⁷⁰ On its religious character and history, see *TLL* 1.794.8–30; Lewis and Short (1879) s.v.

⁷¹ Lafaye (1904) 4–7; Ludwig (1965) 83–86; Otis (1970) 48–49, 318; Due (1974) 23–24.

⁷² Knox (1986a) 10–19, (1990); Helzlsouer (1993); Myers (1994a) 7–9; cf. Due (1974) 27–28.

fourth *Georgic*, where Clymene sings to her spinning companions a song that recapitulates the narrative trajectory of Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Catalogue of Women* from chaos to the amours of the gods (*aque Chao densos diuom numerabat amores*, *G.* 4.347).⁷³ In the *Metamorphoses*, the tale of Apollo and Daphne follows a reprise of the cosmogonic motif and announces *amor* as a pervasive theme of the poem.⁷⁴

This is not to diminish the importance of work on elegiac style and content in the *Metamorphoses*, but rather to emphasize that Ovid's use of elegiac themes and sources is itself consonant with his demonstrable engagement with the generic conventions of epic: in addition to the amatory tales contained in Hesiod's *Theogony* and especially the *Catalogue*, we may note Homer's interest in Helen and Penelope; Empedocles' emphasis on Love in opposition to Strife; Apollonius's romance between Jason and Medea; Lucretius's hymn to Venus; and Virgil's Dido narrative. If the extensive engagement of epic with amatory themes is not new in the *Metamorphoses*, what does seem novel is Ovid's self-conscious commentary on his contamination of epic with elegy, "his continual awareness of the system of genres," whether observed, transgressed, or problematized.⁷⁵

The conclusion of the Phaethon episode in Book 2 offers a particularly concentrated set of elegiac reflections on epic action as Phaethon's death transforms the tone and content of the episode from epic to elegiac. The Italian Naiads bury the youth and commemorate him with an epitaph: *hic situs est Phaethon currus auriga paterni/quem si non tenuit magnis tamen excidit ausis* ("Here Phaëthon lies: in Phoebus' car he fared,/and though he greatly failed, more greatly dared," 2.327–28).⁷⁶ Ovid thus incorporates funerary epigram,⁷⁷ a literary form most frequently composed in elegiac couplets, into his polyphonic epic. Although by Ovid's day elegy was most closely associated with amatory themes, its genesis was presumed to lie in funerary lament.⁷⁸ Phaethon's epitaph thus introduces an elegiac inflection

⁷³ Knox (1986a) 12–13; Rosati (1999) 241–43.

⁷⁴ For the preeminence of love in the *Metamorphoses*, see Fränkel (1945) 78; Otis (1970); Galinsky (1975) 31–40, 97; Davis (1983).

⁷⁵ Conte (1994) 124.

⁷⁶ Translation from Miller (1977) 83.

⁷⁷ On the funerary formula *hic situs est*, see Bömer (1969) 325; Moore-Blunt (1977) 71.

⁷⁸ See Hinds (1987a) 103–4, 160 nn. 13–14, with examples and bibliography. The Roman elegists frequently include funerary epigrams in their verse: Tib.

which Ovid amplifies in the following lines as the dead youth's father, mother, and sisters abandon themselves to grief (2.329–43). The elegiac tone is intensified by Ovid's use of vocabulary drawn from the *sermo amatorius* (*miserabilis, amens, lacrimae, fouit, fletus, querellas*). An elegiac continuity even links the Heliades' lamentation for Phaethon (*querellas*, 2.342; *plangorem dederant*, 2.346) with their plaintive wonder at their transformation into poplar trees (*questa est*, 2.347; *dolet*, 2.352), and underwrites the parallel between the tears the Heliades weep for their brother (*fletus*, 2.340; *lacrimas*, 2.341) and the "tears" of amber that flow from the poplars (*inde fluunt lacrimae, stillataque sole rigescunt/de ramis electra nouis*, 2.364–65).⁷⁹

Almost every episode in the *Metamorphoses* repays analysis in elegiac terms. Teiresias's arbitration of the dispute between Jupiter and Juno at 3.316–38, for example, combines a (pseudo)-Hesiodic and Nicandrian subject, the double sex-change of Teiresias (Hes. *Melampodia*, fr. 275 M–W; Nic. *apud* Ant. Lib. *Met.* 17), with the divine comedy of Homeric epic, the whole couched in the legal rhetoric of Ovid's day;⁸⁰ but in our poet's hands this epic material takes on a distinctly elegiac cast.⁸¹ Having laid aside his (epic) cares, the ruler of the cosmos indulges in frivolous discussion with his consort over which gender enjoys greater sexual pleasure:

forte Iouem memorant diffusum nectare curas
seposuisse graues uacuaque agitasse remissos
cum Iunone iocos et 'maior uestra profecto est,
quam quae contingit maribus' dixisse 'uoluptas' (3.318–21).

Once, they say, Jove, relaxed by nectar, laid aside his weighty cares and teased Juno, at her leisure, with casual jokes; he said, "Your sexual pleasure is, indeed, greater than that which comes to males."

An elegiac theme *par excellence*, *uoluptas* holds programmatic sway over Ovid's *Amores* (Epigr. 3).⁸² The trivial subject of the jocular dispute

1.3.55–56, 3.2.29–30; Prop. 2.13.35–36, 4.7.85–86; Ov. *Am.* 2.6.61–62, *Her.* 2.147–48, 7.195–96, 14.129–30, *F.* 3.549–50, *Tr.* 3.3.73–76.

⁷⁹ Ovid extends the play with elegiac convention in the final pendant to the Phaethon episode, the transformation of his relative Cycnus into a swan, by combining the themes of erotic love and funerary lament: see Keith (1992a) 140–45, with bibliography.

⁸⁰ See Coleman (1990). On legal terminology in Ovid, see Kenney (1969).

⁸¹ O'Hara (1996a) discusses an elegiac poem of uncertain date on Teiresias's (six) sex-changes.

⁸² Ov. *Am.* 1.4.47, 1.10.35, 2.10.25, 3.4.31: see McKeown 2.5–6.

(*lite iocosa*, 3.332), moreover, suggests the frivolous tone of Ovid's wanton elegiac Muse.⁸³ Juno, however, takes Teiresias's adverse verdict more seriously than the joke warrants, and punishes the judge with blindness (3.333–35). Her overreaction can be read on one level as a grand epic disavowal of elegiac levity, in accordance with the relentless anger the goddess displays in the *Aeneid*. Jupiter, however, lightens the punishment, thereby restoring the playful (elegiac) tone of the narrative (*poenam . . . leuauit honore*, 3.338).

Teiresias connects the divine dispute with the following tale of Narcissus (3.339–510), a locus classicus for analysis of erotic themes in the *Metamorphoses*.⁸⁴ The tale is ostensibly introduced to illustrate the seer's acquisition of prophetic power, a *mise-en-scène* that allows Ovid to accommodate oracular discourse to his hexameters: *de quo consultus, an esset/tempora maturae uisurus longa senectae, / fatidicus uates 'si se non nouerit' inquit* ("consulted about Narcissus, about whether he would see a long period of ripe old age, the destiny-dealing seer said, 'if he should not know himself,'" 3.346–48). The participle *consultus* recalls Teiresias's adjudication of the dispute between Jupiter and Juno,⁸⁵ while the seer's response is couched in the enigmatic language of the Delphic oracle whose motto (γῶθι σεαυτόν) he echoes and eroticizes by playing on the sexual connotations of *nosco* and *cognosco*.⁸⁶

In the course of his erotic career, Narcissus assumes the characteristics of both beloved and lover. His beauty makes him sought after by both sexes, but he spurns all advances with the conventional *duritia* of the elegiac beloved:

multi illum iuuenes, multae cupiere puellae;
sed fuit in tenera tam dura superbia forma,
nulli illum iuuenes, nullae tetigere puellae (3.353–55).

Many youths and maidens desired him; but there was such unyielding pride in his slender form, no youths nor maids touched him.

Ovid here adapts a floral image from Catullan (hexameter) epithalamium (62.42–44), itself modelled on Callimachean elegy (*Aet.* 3, fr.

⁸³ *Musa proterua*, *Rem.* 362; cf. *Tr.* 2.354, 3.2.6.

⁸⁴ Kenney (1972) 41; Davis (1983) 84–97; Knox (1986a) 19–23, 32–33; Fabre-Serris (1995) 182–89; Rosati (1997), with bibliography. *Contra*, Heinze (1919) 126 [= (1960) 400]; Bömer (1969) 538.

⁸⁵ Coleman (1990) 573–75 discusses Ovid's characterization of Teiresias as a *jurisconsult*.

⁸⁶ Fränkel (1945) 213 n. 30; Knox (1986a) 20–21.

67.9–10 Pf.; fr. 69 Pf.), in subtle anticipation of Narcissus's transformation into a flower.⁸⁷ The responson of 3.353 and 3.355 heralds the interrelated themes of echo and reflection explored in the episode,⁸⁸ and may also evoke the regular alternation of hexameter and pentameter lines in the elegiac couplet.⁸⁹ The central line comments self-consciously on the elegiac provenance of the theme: Narcissus's delicate beauty (*tenera forma*) is the very embodiment of Ovidian elegiac form.⁹⁰

The scene with Echo, in which she assumes the lineaments of the elegiac lover, illustrates Narcissus's cruelty in the role of the beloved. Echo rehearses the elegiac career of Apollo in Book 1 as she falls in love with Narcissus at first sight (3.370–71), fans the flame of love by tracking his movements (3.371–74), and longs to court him with blandishments (3.375–76). When the opportunity she desires presents itself, their dialogue takes the form of fragments of elegiac discourse embedded in the hexameter texture of the *Metamorphoses*. The elegiac lover longs for the beloved's infrequent invitation to come ('*ueni!*' 3.382);⁹¹ protests her flight ('*quid inquit me fugis?*' 3.383–84);⁹² desires, but only rarely achieves, admission to her presence ('*adest*,' 3.380; '*huc coeamus*,' 3.386);⁹³ let alone sexual congress ('*coeamus*,' 3.387);⁹⁴ but repeatedly hopes for the opportunity ('*sit tibi copia nostri*,' 3.391).⁹⁵ Echo's final transformation from body into voice, moreover, literalizes the elegiac metaphor of wasting away from love (*extenuant uigiles corpus miserabile curae/adducitque cutem macies*, 3.396–97) in a passage that employs the diction of the *sermo amatorius* to sketch the refined poetics of Callimachean program.⁹⁶

Narcissus's habitual arrogance towards his admirers prompts a spurned lover to ask that he too experience frustration in love, a

⁸⁷ Fränkel (1945) 213 n. 31; Davis (1983) 88; Knox (1986a) 21; Rosati (1983) 28 n. 63, (1997) 167–69. On the seductive associations of the narcissus flower, see Rosati (1983) 14–15.

⁸⁸ Hardie (1988).

⁸⁹ Cf. Sharrock (1990); differently, Hinds (1998) 6–8.

⁹⁰ Ov. *Am.* 3.15.1, *Ars* 1.7, *Tr.* 3.3.73, 4.10.1.

⁹¹ Prop. 2.25.2, 3.23.15; Ov. *Am.* 1.11.24, *Her.* 1.2, 19.1.

⁹² Prop. 1.8.38, 1.17.1, 2.30.1–2; Tib. 1.8.61–62, 1.9.74; Ov. *Am.* 2.19.36.

⁹³ Prop. 1.14.23, Ov. *Am.* 2.16.12.

⁹⁴ Ov. *Her.* 19.67, *Ars* 2.615, *Rem.* 33.

⁹⁵ Prop. 2.20.24, 2.33.44, 3.8.39; Tib. 2.3.77: see Bömer (1969) 547.

⁹⁶ Cf. Ov. *Am.* 1.6.5–6, with McKeown 2:126–27. See also Knox (1986a) 22–23, and 26–27 nn. 64–66, on Narcissus's final transformation.

prayer answered by the elegiac goddess Nemesis.⁹⁷ His strange passion for his own reflection results in his simultaneous assumption of the roles of lover and beloved. Like Echo and Apollo, he falls in love at first sight (3.416) and dwells admiringly on his beloved's wonderful beauty (3.418–24). Ovid emphasizes his dual role in the erotic contract through a series of active-passive verbal pairs (*qui probat, ipse probatur*, / *dumque petit, petitur*, *pariterque accendit et ardet*, 3.425–26). Narcissus's monologue rehearses a series of elegiac conceits: the cruelty of the beloved (3.442, 477) who rejects his lover's advances (3.454–56); the lover's recourse to the woods (3.443–45) where he wastes away from love (3.445), his unwanted separation from his beloved (3.446–53), the flame of love (3.464), and the madness of his passion (3.350, 479); lovers' secret signals (3.460), and the death of two in one (3.473).⁹⁸ Knox has shown that Ovid's lexical choices in the episode are consistent with elegiac practice,⁹⁹ and we may note in addition the pervasive deployment of the *topoi* of Callimachean poetics, from the isolation and purity of the pool's setting (3.407–12),¹⁰⁰ to the youth's posture (*paulum . . . leuatus*, 3.440), the barrier separating him from his beloved (*exigua prohibemur aqua*, 3.450), his ripping of his clothing (*deduxit*, 3.480), and his final wasting away from love (*attenuatus amore*, 3.489).

The amatory themes and elegiac style of the episode emphasize Ovid's debt to erotic elegy in shaping a tale for which we cannot identify his specific source(s).¹⁰¹ Particularly vexed is the question of the relationship of Echo's story to Narcissus's, for nowhere in earlier classical literature is the connection between the two extant, although a Callimachean epigram (in elegiac couplets) links a much admired youth with Echo in a subtle articulation of poetic program (*Epigr.* 28 Pf.). Hardie, however, has suggested that the myth of Hylas, a popular subject of Hellenistic and neoteric epic, "helped to shape the Ovidian narrative," for Hylas is another "beautiful boy who wanders until he stops at a fatal pool."¹⁰² Of particular significance for

⁹⁷ On Nemesis, see Murgatroyd (1994) xvii–xviii.

⁹⁸ On the two-in-one motif see Kenney (1972) 42; Knox (1986a) 21–22.

⁹⁹ Knox (1986a) 19–23, 32–33.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. *Aet.* 1 fr. 1.25–34; Call. *Hymn* 2.105–12, with Williams (1978) 85–97. Segal (1969) 45–48 discusses the sexual symbolism of the setting of Narcissus's metamorphosis.

¹⁰¹ Bömer (1969) 537–38; Rosati (1983) 1–20, with bibliography.

¹⁰² Hardie (1988) 77. For the myth, see Ap. Rhod. 1.1207–72; Theocr. 13; Nic.

Ovid's Narcissus is Nicander's version of the Hylas myth in his *Transformations* (not discussed by Hardie), which describes the nymphs' transformation of Hylas into an echo out of fear that Hercules will discover him among them (Nic. *apud* Ant. Lib. 26.4). Nicander thereby makes explicit the connection between Hylas and Echo which remains implicit but audible in other treatments of the myth.¹⁰³

The *locus amoenus* setting of Narcissus's erotic encounter is unusual in Roman elegy, however, and especially in Ovidian elegy, which celebrates the genre's cosmopolitan outlook (*Ars* 3.121–28).¹⁰⁴ More typical in this regard is the urban context in which Pyramus and Thisbe pursue their love affair (4.55–166). Ovid's internal narrator, a daughter of Minyas, opens the tale by emphasizing its metropolitan setting:

Pyramus et Thisbe, iuenum pulcherrimus alter,
altera, quas Oriens habuit, praelata puellis,
contiguas tenuere domos, ubi dicitur altam
coctilibus muris cinxisse Semiramis urbem (4.55–58).

Pyramus and Thisbe—the one the most handsome of youths, the other the most beautiful of the maidens whom the Orient contained—dwelt in neighboring houses, where Semiramis is said to have girt a lofty city with brick walls.

The reference to Semiramis's foundation of Babylon gestures towards the narrative context of the tale in Ovid's "Thebaid," briefly recapitulating the episode's frame in ktistic epic, but the Minyeid highlights elegiac conventions against this urban backdrop.¹⁰⁵ Although the youngsters' love is mutual, their parents' refusal to sanction marriage allows Ovid to sketch their love as an illicit affair prosecuted in the secret signals and clandestine meetings of elegiac lovers (4.61–64, 69–70, 83–88, 93–96). Ovid even includes a miniature paraclausithyron in the speech the young lovers address to the wall that separates them (4.73–77). When, however, the young lovers abandon the conventional urban setting of elegy for the world of untamed nature beyond the city walls, their love takes a tragic turn.

apud Ant. Lib. *Met.* 26; Virg. *Ecl.* 6.43–44; Prop. 1.20; cf. Ov. *Ars* 2.110, *Naiadumque tener crimine raptus Hylas*.

¹⁰³ Ap. Rhod. 1.1248–49; Theocr. *Id.* 13.58–60; Virg. *Ecl.* 6.43–44; Prop. 1.20.48–50. For visual similarities, see LIMC s.v. "Hylas."

¹⁰⁴ Due (1974) 59–61.

¹⁰⁵ Perraud (1983–84); Knox (1986a) 35–37; cf. Due (1974) 126–27.

"Pyramus and Thisbe" is the first of the tales narrated by the daughters of Minyas, who scorn participation in the new rites of Bacchus to stay home and ply their woolwork. Despite their ostensible devotion to the chaste Minerva, the three sisters narrate tales whose keynote is *amor*. "Pyramus and Thisbe";¹⁰⁶ the "loves of the Sun," prefaced by the adulterous affair of Venus and Mars;¹⁰⁷ and "Salmacis and Hermaphroditus."¹⁰⁸ Knox has demonstrated Ovid's pervasive use of the diction, style, and themes of erotic elegy in the sisters' tales,¹⁰⁹ while Myers, noting their aetiological motivation, has related them to Callimachus's *Aetia*.¹¹⁰ The delicate artistry of their textile work, emphasized by the poet (4.34–36, 54, 275, 389–90, 394–98), also reflects their Callimachean subtlety.¹¹¹

Again, however, Ovid complicates the elegiac associations of his themes by setting the tales in the context of Dionysiac ritual and by reworking prominent passages of Homeric epic. Leuconoe's tale of Venus and Mars is the theme of a song performed by the bard Demodocus in *Odyssey* 8 (266–369). Ovid had already exploited the story for elegiac *color* in *Ars* 2.561–88, and here offers a refined Callimachean version of the Homeric tale, abbreviating it and recasting it as a preface to the obscure amatory and aetiological tales that follow.¹¹² Alcithoe too adapts Homer in "Salmacis and Hermaphroditus," for her characterization of Hermaphroditus exhibits points of contact with Odysseus, even before she recasts Odysseus's supplication of Nausicaa (*Od.* 6.149–59) in Salmacis's lewd proposition of Hermaphroditus (4.320–28).¹¹³ Ovid exploits and extends the erotic content of his Homeric models by grafting the codes of Roman elegiac discourse onto them.

Rosati has recently argued that the Minyeid episode as a whole elaborates the themes of Clymene's song in Virgil's Fourth *Georgic*, which we have already considered as a model for Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

¹⁰⁶ On the sources, see Bömer (1976) 33–36; Duke (1971); Knox (1989).

¹⁰⁷ On the sources, see Bömer (1976) 67–69, 75–77, and 95; Castellani (1980); Baldo (1986) 124–28.

¹⁰⁸ On the sources, see Bömer (1976) 100–105; Baldo (1986) 128–29; Labate (1993); Robinson (1999).

¹⁰⁹ Knox (1986a) 35–37, 41; cf. Labate (1993) on Alcithoe's tale.

¹¹⁰ Myers (1994a) 34, 79–80, 152.

¹¹¹ Rosati (1999) 243–48.

¹¹² On the Callimachean stylistic vocabulary in the episode, see Janan (1994) 435.

¹¹³ Keith (1999b) 216–17; cf. Labate (1993) 53–54.

in its entirety.¹¹⁴ This attractive suggestion identifies a Virgilio-Hesiodic model for the Homeric amatory tales narrated by the sisters, and may also account for the novelistic features of the first sister's tale. Drawing attention to the activity of Clymene's audience in the Virgilian passage, nymphs spinning richly-dyed Milesian wool and listening to tales of love, Rosati suggests that "[w]e may also think of 'Milesian tales' to go with Milesian wool, risqué erotic stories."¹¹⁵ The romance *color* of "Pyramus and Thisbe" lends support to this hypothesis, for Ovid exploits conventional features of the ancient novel throughout the episode, from the opening conjunction of the names of the young lovers, their superlative beauty, the fabulous Eastern setting, and the reference to Semiramis (legendary queen of Babylon and heroine of the Ninus-romance), through the initial sketch of the innocence of the love-struck teenagers and the obstacles to their love, to their determination to marry one another, their inadvertent separation, and the apparent death of the heroine.¹¹⁶

3. Tragedy

The Dionysiac context in which the Minyides spin and tell stories complicates the generic interplay in this section of the poem still further, and introduces the final thread of my discussion. The impious daughters of Minyas are otherwise known only from three Greek writers of imperial date,¹¹⁷ although we know that the story was treated by Nicander in his *Transformations* (Nic. *apud* Ant. Lib. 10). The Greek mythographers relate that the three daughters of Minyas were excessively devoted to woolworking and its patroness, Minerva, and reviled the other women of Orchomenus for abandoning the city and going off to the mountains to celebrate the rites of Dionysus; the spurned god grew angry and caused them to go mad, appearing to them successively as maiden, bull, lion, and leopard; at the same time their looms began to drip with milk and wine. In their madness the sisters drew lots to contribute a sacrifice to the god, and when the lot fell to Leucippe, they tore her son Hippasus to

¹¹⁴ Rosati (1999) 242.

¹¹⁵ Rosati (1999) 242 n. 6.

¹¹⁶ Due (1974) 123–27; Newlands (1986); Holzberg (1988).

¹¹⁷ Plut. *Quaest. Gr.* 38; Ant. Lib. *Met.* 10; Ael. *VH* 3.42.

pieces, then rushed off to join the maenads in the mountains, where Mercury finally transformed the sisters into birds. Tales of divinity spurned are frequent in Greek literature, of course, but are particularly characteristic of the mythic material associated with Dionysus and purveyed to the audiences of Greek tragedy; it has therefore been suggested that Aeschylus's lost Dionysiac tragedy *Xantriai* ("Wool-carders") dealt with the daughters of Minyas.¹¹⁸ Since Ovid's only other foray out of elegiac composition was in tragedy, it will prove worthwhile to examine his debt to tragedy in the final section of this inquiry.¹¹⁹

Ovid contrasts the Minyides' impious rejection of Bacchus at the outset of Book 4 with the piety of the Theban women, who invoke the god in lengthy recitation of his titles:

turaque dant Bacchumque uocant Bromiumque Lyaeumque
ignigenamque satumque iterum solumque bimatrem;
additur his Nyseus indetonsusque Thyoneus
et cum Lenaeo genialis consitor uuae
Nyteliusque Eleleusque parens et Iacchus et Euhan,
et quae praeterea per Graias plurima gentes
nomina, Liber, habes . . . (4.11–17).

They bring incense and invoke Bacchus as Bromius and Lyaeus, fire-born, twice-born, who alone has two mothers; to these titles are added Nyseus and unshorn Thyoneus, along with Lenaeus, sower of the festive grape, Nyctelius, father Eleleus, Iacchus, and Euhan, and the very many names besides which you have, Liber, among the Greek peoples . . .

Ovid here assimilates the Theban women worshipping the new god Bacchus to tragic choruses of Bacchantes hymning the god of drama (αἰεὶ Διόνυσον ὑμνήσω, Eur. *Ba.* 71), for they invoke the god in the hymnic style and ritual language familiar from tragedy.¹²⁰ A fragment of Ennian tragedy furnishes a model for the passage: *his erat in ore Bromius, his Bacchus pater; illis Lyaeus uitis inuentor sacrae. tum pariter Euhan <euho euho>*¹²¹ *Euhiu/ignotus iuuenum coetus alterna uice/inibat alacris*

¹¹⁸ Seaford (1996) 26 nn. 6, 8, 9, and 37 n. 49.

¹¹⁹ On tragedy in the *Met.*, see Lafaye (1904) 141–66; D'Anna (1959); Due (1974) 24–25; Currie (1981); Barchiesi (1993) 340–53; Gildenhard and Zissos (1999b); Curley (1999).

¹²⁰ D. Curley notes (*per litteras*) that "Ovid's catalogue of Dionysiac epithets here recalls the *parodos* of Euripides' *Bacchae*, which is itself an annotated history of the god."

¹²¹ On the text, see Jocelyn (1967) 269.

Bacchico insultans modo (trag. LII 120–24 Jocelyn). Ovid employs all four Ennian titles of the god in his hymn, and signals his debt by preserving their initial and final positions in his own catalogue. The shape of the Ennian phrase *Lyaeus uitis inuentor sacrae*, though without overlap in diction, serves as a model (perhaps mediated through elegy; cf. Tib. 2.3.63, Ov. *Am.* 1.3.11) for the construction of Ovid's half-line *Lenaeo genialis consitor uuae* (4.14). Even the context of the Ennian lines is relevant, for they are attributed to the tragedy *Athamas*, whose hero is the subject of the episode immediately following the Minyeides' transformation.

Ovid nonetheless drastically curtails the Dionysian elements of the tale: although the sisters' transformation into bats remains the god's punishment for their impiety, they neither go mad nor indulge in Bacchic rending of flesh. Moreover, both their tales and the quiet domestic setting in which they tell them contrast strikingly with the frenzied rites of Bacchus celebrated by the rest of the Theban women. Yet the first of the sisters, at least, deploys Bacchic themes and imagery in her tale as Ovid weaves an intricate web of connections between the inset narrative and its frame.

I have already discussed "Pyramus and Thisbe" in relation to the generic conventions of elegy and novel, but the tale also displays considerable thematic and imagistic overlap with the sphere of Dionysus.¹²² An early example is the superlative beauty of the adolescent lovers (4.55–56, quoted above). Outstanding beauty is a conventional feature of the heroes and heroines of ancient romance, but at the beginning of the book it is Bacchus whose superlative beauty the Theban women hymn, in terms applicable to both sexes (*tu puer aeternus . . . tibi . . . uirgineum caput est*, 4.18–20; cf. 3.607). The first Minyeid rejects the adolescent beauty of the dangerous god of the theater in favor of a beautiful pair of adolescent lovers drawn from elegy and romance, but the ominous presence of Dionysus constrains her narrative increasingly forcefully as it proceeds.

Pyramus and Thisbe decide to elude their parents and meet by night under a mulberry tree near the tomb of Ninus outside the city (4.84–95, 99, 111).¹²³ Nocturnal action is another staple of the romance genre, but the night setting is also a prominent feature of Dionysiac worship, to which Ovid alludes in the god's epithet *Nyctelius* (4.15).

¹²² Curley (1999) 217–20 shows "how fundamental tragic coding is to the episode."

¹²³ On the setting, and its sexual symbolism, see Segal (1969) 50–51.

Outside the comparative safety of the city and their parents' guardianship, the youngsters encounter the terrors of untamed nature, a more obviously Dionysiac theme, in the form of a lioness which comes from the kill to slake her thirst at a nearby spring (4.96–98). Bacchus is associated with wild cats both in the preceding book (3.668–69) and in the hymn that opens the fourth (4.25), and as early as the Homeric *Hymn to Dionysus* the god himself is represented as taking the form of a lion to threaten the sailors who have kidnapped him (*h. Hom.* 7.44–48).¹²⁴ Moreover, the "sure traces of a wild beast" (*uestigia . . . certa ferae*, 4.105–6) Pyramus sees when he arrives at the rendezvous anticipate the "phantoms of savage beasts" (*saeviarum simulacra . . . ferarum*, 4.404; cf. 3.668) whose howling terrorizes the Minyeides just before the god transforms them into bats.

More Dionysiac still is the suggestion of dismemberment (*σπαραγμός*) and eating of raw flesh (*ώμοφαγία*) in Thisbe's torn and bloodied cloak (4.103–4, 107–8), and Pyramus's despairing invitation to the lions to rend and devour his body (*'nostrum diuellite corpus/et scelerata fero consumite uiscera morsu / . . . leones!'*, 4.112–14). Gruesome descriptions of blood and intimations of mangled flesh recur throughout the episode, from the bloody mouth of the lioness to the blood-spattered tree under which Pyramus kills himself (4.125–27, 160–61), and Thisbe's death by a sword still warm from Pyramus's blood (4.163). The most spectacularly bloody scene is the graphic description of Pyramus's self-inflicted death:

'accipe nunc' inquit 'nostri quoque sanguinis haustus!'
quoque erat accinctus, demisit in ilia ferrum,
nec mora, feruenti moriens e uulnere traxit.
ut iacuit resupinus humo, cruor emicat alte,
non aliter quam cum uitato fistula plumbo
scinditur et tenui stridente foramine longas
eiaculatur aquas atque ictibus aera rumpit (4.118–24).

"Now," he said, "drink my blood too!" And he plunged the sword which he wore into his groin, and without delay, dying, drew it from the warm wound. As he lay on his back on the ground, his blood spurts high, just as when a pipe with a crack in the lead is split, and spurts long streams of water through the slender hissing opening, and strikes the air with its jets.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ For Dionysus's association with the lion, see Dodds (1960) xviii.

¹²⁵ On the Lucretian overtones of this simile, see Newlands (1986).

His twitching limbs are still writhing on the bloody ground when Thisbe arrives moments later (*tremebunda uidet pulsare cruentum/membra solum*, 4.133–34).

If Thisbe's apparent death lies fully within the generic parameters of the ancient novel, Pyramus's real death breaks sharply with novelistic conventions to introduce a familiar motif of tragedy, the suicide of a protagonist.¹²⁶ Beyond Dionysus's traditional patronage of the tragic drama, we may relate the manner of Pyramus's death here to two specifically Bacchic contexts. What is generally taken to be a characteristically Ovidian excess in the simile has an intriguing parallel in Ennius's description of the suicide of Ajax in his tragedy of the same name: *misso sanguine tepido tullii efflantes uolant* ("with gushing warm blood the spouting jets fly," Enn. *trag.* XII Jocelyn).¹²⁷ The Minyeid's use of the unpoetic *foramine* (4.123), moreover, recalls the poet's description of the boxwood flute among the paraphernalia of Dionysiac worship (*concauque aera sonant longoque foramine buxus*, 4.30), as does her remark that Thisbe grows "paler than boxwood" at the sight of her mortally wounded lover (*oraeque buxo/pallidiora gerens*, 4.134–35). Verbal details evocative of the rites of Bacchic worship and the larger themes of Dionysiac myth repeatedly intrude into the tale and suggest the god's diffuse penetration of the Minyeides' household long before the decisive revelation of his godhead.

The episode has traditionally been held to constitute a digression from the overarching narrative of the foundation and precipitate decline of Thebes which spans *Met.* 3.1–4.603, because it is set at some distance from Thebes in Boeotian Orchomenus and concerns a family unrelated to the House of Cadmus. But Ovid's play with tragic intertexts relates the episode closely to its context, for the "Thebaid" in which it is embedded comprises a series of narratives drawn from the tragic repertoire: Cadmus, Actaeon, Semele, Pentheus, Athamas, and Ino.¹²⁸ Although Ovid's Theban sequence is framed as a mini-foundation epic, the tales which constitute it exemplify the

themes not of epic but of tragedy, while oracles and prophecies, two kinds of riddling utterance characteristic not only of epic but especially of tragic narrative, articulate the action.

Ovid reworks the opening of the *Aeneid* in his portrait of the exiled Cadmus wandering the Mediterranean before consulting the oracle at Delphi to learn where to settle (3.6–9), on the model of the exiled Aeneas consulting the oracle of Apollo at Delos (*Aen.* 3.84–89).¹²⁹ But he follows even more closely Euripides' account of Cadmus's foundation of Thebes (*Phoen.* 638–75),¹³⁰ and explicitly signals his engagement with tragedy soon after when Cadmus, having killed the snake that attacked his men, hears a disembodied voice prophesy his own transformation into a snake (*'quid, Agenore nate, peremptum/serpentem spectas? et tu spectabere serpens,'* 3.97–98). Spoken by Minerva, this prophecy echoes that given to Cadmus by Dionysus as *deus ex machina* at the conclusion of Euripides' *Bacchae* (δράκων γενήσῃ μεταβαλὼν, *Ba.* 1330). A famous simile in the following scene confirms the generic significance of the allusion. Like Virgil, who marks an important debt to tragedy in the Dido episode by comparing her to characters from the tragic stage (*Aen.* 4.469–73), Ovid signals the central importance of tragic conventions in his "Thebaid" with a simile, comparing the birth of the Spartoi, the Sown Men who emerge from the earth after Cadmus sows the slain serpent's teeth, to the figures represented on the stage curtain which rise from the ground when the stage curtain is raised (3.111–14).¹³¹ The poet thereby "glosses" his literary "operations outside the epic code."¹³²

The tales that follow engage tragic themes and intertexts with increasing intensity. The first of the disasters to come upon the House of Cadmus, Actaeon's fatal fascination with the hunt, recalls the hunts and hunters of the Athenian stage, both literal (Hippolytus, the Eumenides) and metaphorical (Oedipus).¹³³ A series of fatal encounters with the divine—Actaeon with Diana; Semele, Athamas, and Ino with Juno; Pentheus and the Minyeides with Dionysus—dramatizes

¹²⁶ Katsouris (1976); Seidensticker (1982); Zeitlin (1996) 350–52.

¹²⁷ D. Curley adds (*per litteras*), "the spurting blood, in its vivid and fertile richness, evokes the gushing liquids of many kinds found in Dionysiac myths."

¹²⁸ Hardie (1990); Gildenhard and Zissos (1999b) 170–76. For plays on Dionysiac themes, see Dodds (1960) xxviii–xxxiii; Seaford (1996) 26 nn. 8–9; Flower (2000) n. 27. I note in addition Aeschylus's *Toxotides* (on Actaeon), *Athamas*, Sophocles' *Athamas A* and *B*; Euripides' *Ino*.

¹²⁹ Cf. Ovid's reprise of the motif in Pentheus's speech, *profugos posuistis . . . penates* (3.539), with Hardie (1990) 226–27.

¹³⁰ Accius adapted Euripides' play for the Roman stage.

¹³¹ Hardie (1990) 226 n. 14.

¹³² Barchiesi (1993) 353.

¹³³ Euripides alludes to Actaeon throughout the *Bacchae*; see Dodds (1960) 113–14; Seaford (1996) 179. On Ovid's Actaeon episode and its relation to tragedy, see Gildenhard and Zissos (1999b) 172–74.

the conflict between man and god that pervades Athenian tragedy. The quintessential tragic theme of blindness and insight informs every tale in the sequence, including even the otherwise anomalous Narcissus episode.¹³⁴ Finally, the Aristotelian pattern of recognition and reversal structures each episode starting with the framing tale of Cadmus himself, who kills a serpent to found the city of Thebes but ends by going into exile and becoming a serpent.

Ovid's focus on the Dionysian themes and primal subjects of Greek tragedy in this section of his poem emerges still more clearly from comparison with the conventional treatment of Thebes in ancient epic. Theban epos seems traditionally to have avoided material associated with the arch anti-Apollonian Dionysus in favor of the more martial themes of the Seven against Thebes and the Epigoni, and Propertius's allusions to the *Thebaid* of Ponticus (1.7.1–2, 17–18) suggest that contemporary Augustan epic shared this bias.¹³⁵ Ovid, by contrast, saturates his Theban narrative with tales drawn from the tragic repertoire and specifically associated with Dionysus, while avoiding the martial subjects of Theban epic.¹³⁶

Ovid's treatment of Pentheus is particularly rich in tragic intertexts.¹³⁷ A popular tragic theme, Pentheus's story was most famously told in Euripides' *Bacchae* which Ovid imitates in a number of places.¹³⁸ Teiresias's warning that Pentheus will regret his contempt for the prophet (3.517–25) functions as a prologue to the episode like that spoken by Dionysus himself in the *Bacchae* (1–63), while Ovid announces the arrival of the god (*Liber adest*, 3.528) with a brusqueness and an economy of phrasing reminiscent of the opening words of Euripides' tragedy (*Ἦκω Διὸς παῖς*, *Ba.* 1). The emphases on Dionysus as a new god (3.520 ~ *Ba.* 219–20, 256–57, 272) and on Actaeon as a standard of comparison for Pentheus (3.720–22 ~ *Ba.* 337–40) are also derived from Euripides.¹³⁹ Indeed, the Ovidian episode as a

whole is modelled generally on Euripides' play, beginning with Pentheus's hostility to the new god (3.531–61 ~ *Ba.* 215–370), his order that the imposter be apprehended (3.562–63 ~ *Ba.* 352–57), and the opposition of Cadmus and the rest of the Thebans to his actions (3.564–65 ~ *Ba.* 330–469). In addition, formal features testify to the influence of tragedy on the shape of the narrative in Ovid's use of diction and metrical effects drawn from the dramatic register,¹⁴⁰ high proportion of direct speech (167 of 223 lines), and temporal abridgement characteristic of tragedy (3.528, 572).¹⁴¹

The centerpiece of the Ovidian narrative, however, Pentheus's interview of Bacchus's adherent Acoetes (3.572–695), replaces the three Euripidean scenes in which Pentheus spars with the Stranger, the disguised Dionysus. Acoetes explains the origins of his devotion to the god: originally a helmsman (3.593–94), he had opposed his shipmates' capture of a divine youth and so was the only member of the crew not transformed into a dolphin by the outraged god. Ovid here rehearses the subject of the Homeric *Hymn to Dionysus*, signalling the allusion by setting the tale in the mouth of the hymn's "rightminded helmsman" (*h. Hom.* 7.49). Like the pirates of the hymn (*ὑποσηνοί*, *h. Hom.* 7.8), Acoetes is a Tyrrhenian (3.576) from "the Maconian land" (*patria Maeonia est*, 3.583), a provenance that annotates Ovid's literary debt to Homer, "the son of Maeon" (*Maeonides*, *An.* 1.15.9).¹⁴² Ovid thus incorporates a hexameter model, the Homeric hymn, into an episode that owes its overall shape to tragedy.

The Homeric hymn, however, does not name the helmsman. Ovid takes Acoetes' name from another tragedy, Pacuvius's *Pentheus*, for which Euripides' play also provided the model. An augmentor of Servius summarizes the plot of Pacuvius's play, which corresponds closely to the action of Ovid's "Pentheus":

Pentheus . . . sent servants to bring [Bacchus] back to him in chains; since they could not find him, they captured one of his followers, Acoetes, and brought him to Pentheus. . . . He ordered him bound

¹³⁴ On Narcissus as a figure for Oedipus, see Gildenhard and Zissos (2000).

¹³⁵ Cf. Statius's *Thebaid*. The archaic Greek Theban cycle consisted of an *Oedipodea*, *Thebaid* (apparently treating the Seven against Thebes), and *Epigoni*: see Lesky (1966) 80–81. In the classical period, Antimachus narrated the story of Oedipus and the Seven against Thebes in Homeric style: see Wyss (1936) and Lombardi (1993).

¹³⁶ On Dionysiac myth as the original subject of tragedy, see Dodds (1960) xxviii–xxxiii; Seaford (1996) 26–52.

¹³⁷ D'Anna (1959); Otis (1970) 371–72; Currie (1981).

¹³⁸ See Bömer (1969) 570–624.

¹³⁹ Bömer (1969) 573–74.

¹⁴⁰ Diction: *actutum* (3.557), with Kenney (1973) 120, Kenney, chapter 2 above, and Barchiesi (1993) 343 n. 13; *lanigeros* (3.585), an Accian coinage (*praetext.* 20); *repandus* (3.680), reminiscent of Pacuvius's celebrated description of dolphins (*Nerei repandirostrum incuruicercum pecus*, *trag.* 352). Unusual scansion: *quem quidem ego actutum* (3.557), with Currie (1981) 2717.

¹⁴¹ Bömer (1969) 586.

¹⁴² On the epithet, see McKeown 2:395–96.

and imprisoned, but when the doors of the prison sprang open by themselves and Acoetes' chains fell off, Pentheus was amazed and went to Cithaeron to watch the rites of Father Liber, and the Bacchants dismembered him when they saw him; his mother Agave is said to have cut off his head first, thinking him a wild animal. (Serv. *auct.* ad *Aen.* 4.469)

In addition to the name of his helmsman, Ovid has taken over the structure of the Pacuvian play for his "Pentheus."¹⁴³ He thus indulges in two of his favorite compositional strategies, alluding to his Euripidean model both directly and indirectly through the Pacuvian intermediary, and epicizing material drawn from another literary genre, here tragedy.

In the confrontation between Pentheus and Dionysus Ovid implicitly inscribes a literary contest between the genres of epic and tragedy. Pentheus overvalues his descent from Echion (3.513, 531, 701), one of the Spartoi sprung from the teeth of the serpent of Mars, and repeatedly contrasts his martial ancestry and morals with Dionysus's softness and effeminacy (3.531–37, 540, 553–56). When Pentheus goes to Cithaeron, Ovid compares him to a horse fired to battle by the war trumpet:

ut fremit acer equus, cum bellicus aere canoro
signa dedit tubicen pugnaeque adsumit amorem,
Pentheas sic ictus longis ululatus aether
mouit, et audito clamore recanduit ira (3.704–7).

As a keen horse rages, when the war-trumpet of sonorous bronze sounds the signal, and he is fired by love of battle, so was Pentheus stirred by the long-drawn cries ringing in the ether, and his anger kindled at the sound of the clash.

The simile, drawn from martial epic (Hom. *Il.* 6.506–11, 15.263–68; Ap. Rhod. 3.1259–62; Enn. *Ann.* 535–39 Sk.; Virg. *Aen.* 11.492–97), stamps Pentheus as a heroic figure, especially in conjunction with the anger that traditionally motivates epic action (3.577, 693). Pentheus, however, is unable to sustain the role of epic hero to which he aspires, for on Mount Cithaeron he finds himself in the theater not of war but of Dionysus: *monte fere medio est, cingentibus ultima siluis, / purus ab arboribus, spectabilis undique, campus* (3.708–9). Ovid's emphasis on the visibility of the setting of Pentheus's demise, continued in the following lines where the watching Pentheus is himself the object

of others' gaze (*hic oculis illum cernentem sacra profanis / prima uidet*, 3.710–11; cf. 3.725), cannot fail to evoke the Greek θέατρον, literally "place for seeing," the setting in which tragedy was staged.¹⁴⁴

The episode culminates in Pentheus's dismemberment at the hands of his mother and aunts, in a mythical enactment of Dionysiac *sparagmos* punningly anticipated in Teiresias's prophecy:

quem nisi templorum fueris dignatus honore,
mille lacer *spargere*¹⁴⁵ locis et sanguine siluas
foedabis matremque tuam matrisque sorores (3.521–23).

Unless you deign to honor him with temples, you will be torn apart and scattered in a thousand places, and you will befoul the woods, your mother, and your mother's sisters, with your blood.

At the end of the episode the poet restores Pentheus to the fold of epic with the application of a famous Homeric simile (*Il.* 6.146–49, 21.464–66) to the scene:

non citius frondes autumn frigore tactas
iamque male haerentes alta rapit arbore uentus,
quam sunt membra uiri manibus direpta nefandis (3.729–31).

The wind does not snatch from a lofty tree its leaves, touched by autumn's chill and now scarcely attached, more swiftly than the man's limbs were torn apart by their impious hands.

Ovid illustrates the close relationship between the genres, attested by Aeschylus's comparison of tragedy to "slices from the banquet of Homer" (Ath. *Deipn.* 8.347c), in an epic "embrace" of the tragic hero's dismembered limbs.

Although Ovid's "Thebaid" is constructed throughout by reference to the genre of tragedy, the intensity of his engagement with the tragic code increases as the narrative moves towards and decreases as it moves away from the death and dismemberment of Pentheus, the central panel of the "Thebaid" and the primal scene that stages the "dramatic basis of Greek tragedy."¹⁴⁶ Moreover, this tragic program is framed by an epic, indeed Virgilian, narrative of city foundation, in Cadmus's foundation of and exile from Thebes. Ovid underscores

¹⁴³ For a different analysis of spectacle in the episode, see Feldherr (1997).

¹⁴⁴ I am grateful to Sarah Sheehan for drawing my attention to the pun. Ovid's implied etymology is proposed by Frisk (1970) 757, s.v. *σπαράσσω*.

¹⁴⁵ Zeitlin (1996).

¹⁴⁶ D'Anna (1959); Currie (1981) 2716–18.

the continuing relevance of epic norms by characterizing Pentheus as a would-be epic hero (cf. the recurrence of the "one against many" theme, 3.513, 715) and by adapting a Homeric hymn at the center of the episode. The ease with which the primal hero of Greek tragedy is assimilated to the epic code suggests Ovid's recognition of thematic overlap between epic and drama.¹⁴⁷

Burrow has observed that Ovid annotates his debt to Virgilian epic in the final episode of the "Thebaid" with a description of the underworld and its inhabitants:

errant exsanguis sine corpore et ossibus umbrae,
parsque forum celebrant, pars imi tecta tyranni,
pars aliquas artes, antiquae imitamina uitae (4.443–45).

Bloodless shades wander, without body and bones; some throng the forum, others the halls of the underworld tyrant, others pursue their erstwhile occupations, imitations of the old life.

The dead who imitate their former life evoke on a metaliterary level the Virgilian traces in Ovid's poem, literary imitations of their former (Virgilian) life.¹⁴⁸ This stimulating suggestion nicely captures Ovid's self-confident play with sources and genres in the *Metamorphoses*, as he thematizes a poetics of transformation in self-reflexive commentary on his models. Ovid adapts a wide array of literary sources from many different genres in the hexameter fabric of the *Metamorphoses*, from the formal alignment of the poem with the thematic and stylistic codes of grand epic through the sustained use of elegiac and tragic codes down to the highly localized use of philosophical, religious, hymnic, funerary, legal, oracular, and novelistic modes. As universal history, the *Metamorphoses* is also a universal literary history.¹⁴⁹ In this we see the subtlety and sophistication of Ovid's foray into epic. By the Hellenistic period Homer was regarded as the fountainhead of all literary genres, a view which enjoyed wide circulation in Roman literary circles long before its canonization in Quintilian (*IO* 10.1.46).¹⁵⁰ A writer of elegy and tragedy, Ovid had already had

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Curley (1999) *passim*.

¹⁴⁸ Burrow (1999) 276.

¹⁴⁹ Lafaye (1904) 89–90; Wilkinson (1955) 450 n. 31; Kenney (1986) xviii; Solodow (1988) 18–19.

¹⁵⁰ Williams (1978) 85–89.

occasion to explore those genres' debts to epic. This process of generic exploration culminates in his comprehensive summation of epos with the return of all literary streams to their generic origin in the *Metamorphoses*.¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ Cf. Galinsky (1998) 326–27.