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# Introduction

Ovid begins the *Metamorphoses* by explicitly stating his theme of transformation: "In nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas / corpora" ("My spirit impels me to speak about forms changed into new bodies" [1.1-2]). The governing principle of change is manifested most obviously in the metamorphoses of human bodies to lower forms of life.<sup>1</sup> But it also applies to "forms" in almost every sense in this inventive poem that sweeps widely from cosmogony to the supremacy of Rome under the rule of Augustus. Furthermore, as he announces the almost impossible scope of his project, Ovid implies a major paradoxical aspect of his poem: it is simultaneously lengthy (*perpetuum*) and polished (*deductum*).<sup>2</sup>

Major studies of Ovid have recently illuminated the importance of paradox in the *Metamorphoses*. On the level of style, Ovid employs paradox, along with puns and syllepsis, as a microcosmic version of the constant flux that is the very subject of the poem.<sup>3</sup> On the ontological level, the poet creates a dynamic of absent presence, especially in episodes where a character is motivated by a futile desire for a loved one.<sup>4</sup> Ovid even plays with the paradox of the poet as both bard who is delivering an oral performance to his "narratorial audience" and implied author who is clearly producing a text for a sophisticated readership.<sup>5</sup>

On the level of character, considerable critical attention has been paid to the particularly paradoxical figure of the weaver Arachne who in book 6 challenges Minerva to a contest and, incurring the goddess's anger, is transformed into a spider. Arachne shows that talent is not tied to class yet proves to be obtuse at interpreting the significance of the goddess's tapestry. On the one hand, this young woman of low social status, the daughter of a dyer, produces a work of the highest elegance

and refinement; on the other, she ignores the clear message in her divine opponent's weaving that mortals pay a heavy price for offending the gods.

This episode illustrates a tension between a "centripetal" pull toward a moral point of view consistent with epic as a high, "official" genre and a "centrifugal" pull toward empathy with the young woman as an artist and a victim of divine anger.<sup>6</sup> In spite of her hubris, Ovid to some extent identifies with Arachne whose weaving, as many scholars have observed, has strong affinities with his poem. My purpose here is to point out how Arachne may serve as a paradigm for other highly flawed characters who also, in paradoxical ways, function as surrogates for the poet.

In her behavior with Minerva, Arachne exhibits a surprising intransigence. Having angrily rebuffed the goddess in disguise as an old woman, she refuses to yield even when Minerva reveals herself (24–51). She makes no effort to spare the goddess's feelings when she weaves into her tapestry an allusion to a desecration of Minerva's own temple.<sup>7</sup> Vergil's brief but compelling account of the foolish Misenus in *Aeneid* 6 is but one of numerous examples in epic of the importance of observing the distinction between divine and human and of deferring to the gods. Playing on his conch, the trumpeter calls the gods to a contest and then pays for his hubris, for he is said to have been drowned by the sea god Triton (156–78). Vergil does not explain why Misenus challenged the gods to a musical contest but characterizes him as mad (*demens* [172]) to do so. Here, Arachne's impiety is bound up with a hubristic belief that her talent is, in effect, self-generated.<sup>8</sup> When Minerva transforms her into a spider, Arachne's fate is ironically apropos: the spider seems to weave from nothing but itself.<sup>9</sup>

Ovid's ekphrasis of Arachne's tapestry, however, shifts the focus away from moral criticism of a flawed individual. The aesthetic appeal of Arachne's work seems clear: its erotic subject matter of gods who adopt disguises in order to rape women is rendered through free-flowing scenes, with the settings sketched out in some detail and the characters marked by individualized features. The poet indeed exclaims that Envy could find no fault with her work ("non illud carpere Livor / possit opus" [129–30]).<sup>10</sup> As critics have observed, her tapestry is a graphic analogue of Ovid's loosely structured narrative emphasizing amorous subjects.<sup>11</sup> Arachne's weaving manifests a sophisticated aesthetic analogous to a Callimachean *carmen deductum*.<sup>12</sup> The human weaver thus shares Ovid's own preference for the refinement of the Hellenistic poet Callimachus.<sup>13</sup> Her tapestry, then, is a *mise en abyme* of

the *Metamorphoses*, a "miniature model" mirroring much of the poem's content and illuminating ways by which the narrative operates.<sup>14</sup>

The poet, I believe, reinforces his affinity with Arachne by implying a literary analogue for Minerva's work as well. The material of the goddess's tapestry is arranged in a formal and balanced way. Its central scene represents her victory over Neptune in the contest for patronage of Athens, in the presence of all the Olympians, and each of the four corners contains a myth depicting the punishment of human impiety through metamorphosis into nonhuman form (70–102). Though clearly elegant, Minerva's weaving reflects a stylistic classicism and emanates with a sense of power and privilege that the poet of the *Metamorphoses* does not espouse. Both the aesthetics and the ideology represented by Minerva, however, are in accord with the *Aeneid*, as manifested in miniature form by the shield of Aeneas in book 8.

In Vergil's ekphrasis, the center scene depicting the battle of Actium and its aftermath (675–728) highlights Octavian, aided by Apollo, Neptune, Venus, and Minerva, against Marc Antony and Cleopatra, supported by the dog-headed god Anubis. Traditional, Olympian order validates Octavian and the Romans and brings down Cleopatra and her eastern forces. Surrounding scenes on the periphery reinforce the values embodied in the central panel. Like the punishments on Minerva's tapestry, they are represented in what appears to be a highly structured manner (though the shield, of course, has no corners), with the rescue of the Capitoline from attack by the Gauls on the top, the punishment of the conspirator Catiline, who is contrasted with the lawgiver Cato, in the underworld on the bottom, and exemplary scenes from the kingship and republican history on the facing sides.<sup>15</sup> Ovid thus suggests that Minerva's and Arachne's tapestries are microcosmic versions of two very different epic poems. By setting these two tapestries in opposition to each other here, the poet implies that the *Metamorphoses* unfolds in a dynamic tension with the *Aeneid*.

Even in her metamorphosed state Arachne embodies paradox. On the one hand, the spider endlessly weaves webs that are the product of automatic, mechanical impulses.<sup>16</sup> The spider's work, furthermore, elicits none of the individual acclaim awarded to the woman herself.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, although Ovid states nothing specific about the nature of the spider's web here, earlier in the poem, the internal narrator Leuconoe compared the fineness of the net by which Vulcan caught Venus and Mars in adultery to the most delicate threads and to the spider's web (*aranea*) hanging from a wooden beam (4.178–79).<sup>18</sup>

To some extent, the image of the spider's web conveys the Hellenistic stylistic refinement that in general characterizes the tales of the daughters of Minyas in book 4.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, although the woman pays the price for her hubris, Ovid suggests that even in her transformed state as a lowly spider she retains a symbolic defiance. For, by harking back to Leuconoe's narrative, the poet associates the spider's web not only with the artful cunning of Vulcan's trap but also with the story as narrated by a female who does not share Homer's emphasis in *Odyssey* 8 on the punishment that even a god must pay for adultery.<sup>20</sup> The spider's web in this poem is thus a paradoxical symbol, representing harmony through its symmetry but closely connected to females who represent centrifugal forces undermining traditional social norms.

By aligning himself with Arachne as artist and distancing himself from Minerva, Ovid raises questions about the fate of the poet and of his work as well. It does not appear that Arachne uses her weaving skills specifically in order to criticize the gods for assuming disguises to rape women. Whereas the goddess's tapestry conveys a strong message, the human weaver's does not. The brilliance of its design and the beauty of its execution appear to predominate over any moral underlying its content.<sup>21</sup> Yet Minerva not only transforms Arachne; she also destroys her tapestry.

Ovid's poem itself contains numerous amorous narratives likewise involving the gods (and their human equivalents) and potentially exposing them to ridicule. The poet in this episode thus implicitly situates himself in the position of Arachne vis-à-vis authoritarian powers and suggests that his own work is subject to such forces. However, in his epilogue at the end of book 15, Ovid boasts that his poem will be invulnerable to the "anger of Jupiter" ("Iovis ira" [871]). The *Metamorphoses*, of course, was spared the fate of Arachne's tapestry. But the poet himself did not escape the wrath of a "god" when he received the order of *relegatio* from Augustus, banishing him from Rome for the rest of his life.

In the five chapters that follow, I explore major characters who supplement Arachne's function as a surrogate for the poet. Although only Orpheus among them is a bard, the others in various ways perform activities that have analogues in the poetic sphere. They engage in a lament (Narcissus), deliver a powerful monologue (Medea), act as a dramatic storyteller (Achelous and Orpheus through his own surrogate narrator Venus), deliver a persuasive speech in competition (Ulysses),

and, in the manner of Arachne, produce a material work that has a close affinity with the design of Ovid's epic (Daedalus).

Ovid connects each of these characters with social customs or institutions that represent the centripetal movement of epic in validating traditional mores and values. But the poet also moves in a centrifugal direction, for these characters blur boundaries, often hubristically, by undermining operative social norms and traditional antitheses between feminine and masculine, weak and strong, fluid and stable. Ovid further destabilizes central epic values through the ways by which these surrogates are connected to his poetics; he enacts problems related to the status of the image, the generation of plots, the matter of repetition, the opposition between refined and inflated epic style, the reliability of the narrative voice, and the relation between rhetoric and high epic style. Although he often appears to espouse a Hellenistic aesthetic, Ovid reveals through these surrogates a poetics governed by tensions, not least between traditional epic and the low genre of elegy. Ultimately, the principle of instability affects his poetics as well as his vision of the universe.

By limiting my analyses to these particular characters, I do not imply their exclusivity as representatives of the poet. Other prominent characters, to be sure, have programmatic significance. But they are not transgressive to the same degree through boundary violations that resonate on moral and ethical levels as well as in the aesthetic sphere. The Muse Calliope in book 5, for instance, produces a "miniature *carmen perpetuum*" on the rape of Proserpina, reflecting in particular Ovid's own tendency to employ embedded tales of metamorphosis and to explore the success or failure of communication.<sup>22</sup> Incorporating a variety of stories about metamorphosis, the Muse even appears to lend divine authority to the myths recounted by Ovid's own persona.<sup>23</sup>

Calliope, however, is in an important way an antithesis of Ovid as poet: along with her unnamed sister who dismissively summarizes the Pierides' story about the Giants' attempt to overthrow the gods, she is firmly on the side of Olympian authority. She acts in concert with her sister, who in the framing narrative with Minerva expresses outrage at the Pierides' challenge to the Muses (5.300-317) and then describes their metamorphosis into bats as punishment (664-78). Calliope's song incorporates similar punitive transformations: even a young child is turned into a newt, silenced for laughing at Ceres when the goddess was quenching her thirst (446-61). The Muses' transformation of the

Pierides aligns them primarily with Minerva against Arachne in book 6 rather than with Ovid. Although the poet incorporates stories about the powers of the gods to exact punishment, he by no means serves as their mouthpiece.

Pythagoras in book 15 also functions to some extent as a surrogate for the poet. Fundamentally, his speech provides a quasi-philosophical underpinning for Ovid's stories of transformation through his doctrine of metempsychosis. It does so, moreover, in a manner recalling major literary precedents for Ovid's poem: Ennius's Pythagorean dream of Homer explaining his metempsychosis in the *Annales*, Lucretius's recollection of that same vision in *De rerum natura* 1, and Vergil's account of the soul through Anchises' lecture to his son in the underworld passage of *Aeneid* 6.<sup>24</sup> Ovid employs Pythagoras in part as a means of suggesting his own place in the tradition of philosophic-political poetry, analogous to the position of Rome in the world.<sup>25</sup> But he does not engage in a deep exploration of this character so as to suggest a complex association between surrogate and poet.<sup>26</sup>

By its particular focus on the constructed author in the *Metamorphoses*, this study aims to complement recent criticism focusing on the role of fictional audiences in the poem and of the reader and, more generally, to contribute to the body of contemporary scholarship illuminating the ways by which Ovid destabilizes traditional epic narrative. My method involves close attention to the text, including lexical details and tropes by which the poet simultaneously problematizes his surrogates and reflects his own radical position vis-à-vis the values and the perspectives of his predecessors in epic.

On the semantic level, I examine Ovid's plays with diction, especially his incorporation of heavily charged language in unexpected contexts, as a register of style and genre. An important element of my analysis of language is Ovid's manipulation of etymological puns at critical moments as markers of his deviation from conventional epic. Among the major tropes employed by the poet, I discuss his radical use of extended similes for a variety of subversive purposes, for instance, by drawing attention to the problematic nature of images and by evoking tensions between epic and other genres, such as elegy and tragedy. In the hands of Ovid, even the classical rhetorical device of *repetitio* becomes something altogether new, as repetition not only is a key feature of the poem's structure but also serves the thematic function of distancing the poet's major surrogates from their earlier incarnations in epic and tragedy.

The first chapter examines Narcissus's fixation on his own image in book 3. Ovid aligns his story of Narcissus with traditional epic values by connecting it closely to Tiresias's rise to authority as the prophet of Thebes. But by incorporating language and tropes drawn from the low genre of elegy, the poet not only underlines the paradoxical nature of his character but also creates a tension within the language of Tiresias's prophecy itself.

Examining Ovid's exploitation of elegiac conventions in the Narcissus episode, this chapter follows on recent scholarly work exploring the poet's clever play with the underlying assumptions of elegy in the *Metamorphoses*.<sup>27</sup> My focus is on specific ways by which Ovid incorporates elegy so as to expose the paradoxes of that genre's obsession with images. I begin by discussing Ovid's allusions to the physical attributes of the poet-lover's mistress Corinna in the *Amores*, such as her skin, hair, and eyes, suggesting Narcissus's essence as an elegiac image. The chapter goes on to show that, by evoking the voice of the *praeceptor* of the *Ars amatoria*, Ovid calls attention to the importance of images in his didactic elegy, where the pupil is persistently reminded of the need to create illusions so as to deceive the object of desire. I then discuss the youth himself as he adopts the persona of an elegist, recalling the poet-lover Propertius lamenting in a deserted landscape. Narcissus thus paradoxically assumes the dual roles of the elegiac object of desire and the masculine voice of the elegist constructing images of the beloved.

Although Narcissus cleverly refashions conventional tropes used by the elegiac poet, he also reveals the ludicrousness of his bizarre situation through etymological play, even with the term "elegy" itself, and numerous rhetorical excesses. Finally, I discuss Narcissus's demise and apparent metamorphosis by analysis of extended similes and descriptions that draw attention to the instability of images. In particular, an allusion to the image of ripening grapes in Horace, *Odes* 2.5, reinforces the absurdity of Narcissus's state as a frustrated elegiac lover by evoking the inherent instability of the poet-speaker's desire for the beloved.

The second chapter focuses on Medea, who dominates the action of book 7, betraying her father out of love for Jason, murdering King Pelias, and attempting to poison the hero Theseus. Ovid to some extent adopts the traditional view in Greek epic and tragedy about the dangerous nature of this female but also represents Medea's cunning in ways that associate her with the poet himself. I begin with Medea's monologue on her quandary over helping Jason win the Golden Fleece.

Although she reflects on the underlying moral issues and voices her dilemma in an apparently sympathetic manner, Ovid has Medea subtly assimilate a male voice. Allusions to Euripides' *Medea* and Apollonius' *Argonautica* reveal that this character assumes a dominant role at an earlier stage in her involvement with the hero than implied in the two major Greek versions of the myth. Ovid himself manifests a similar paradox vis-à-vis his Greek predecessors, making himself appear the forerunner of those very poets.

After considering her relationship with Jason, the chapter discusses Medea's deception of Pelias's daughters, who unwittingly kill, rather than rejuvenate, their father and her flight from the kingdom. Ovid significantly plays on the etymology of Medea's name in connection with cunning plots. The narrative then takes the form of a geographical tour that, by alluding to Hellenistic-based myths on the themes of intrafamilial strife and unhappy love, serves as a kind of blueprint for the *recherché* material in the second half of the *Metamorphoses*. The focal myth concerning a proud youth named Cynus is a quintessentially Ovidian narrative in its treatment of erotic and heroic material and in its clever use of etymological play with the name of the youth's mother Hyrie. The extended account of Medea's adventures in book 7, however, implies the paradoxical nature of Ovid's poetics: the commitment to Callimachean principles is reinforced ironically in an episode that threatens to expand beyond proper limits.

The third chapter begins by discussing Daedalus, the architect of the Cretan labyrinth and the inventor of wings for human flight. I explore the paradoxical nature of Daedalus both as artisan and as father, in particular against the background of Vergil's use of this mythical figure as a poignant symbol of humanity in *Aeneid* 6. Reflecting Ovid's rejection of his predecessor's vision of the archetypal artisan, this core episode illustrates the importance of the *Aeneid* as the "exemplary model" for the *Metamorphoses*.<sup>28</sup>

I first discuss the labyrinth as an image of the shifting, circuitous nature of Ovid's poem by pointing out the etymological play which the poet employs to contrast his poem with Vergil's: whereas the *Aeneid* is a highly articulated work in which a series of difficult wanderings and labors moves toward an end sanctioned by fate, the *Metamorphoses* has a loose structure emphasizing the process by which the poet often surprises and sometimes misleads the reader. Ovid extends the implications of the labyrinth by exploring father-son relations in Daedalus's story. First, filling in a gap in Vergil's ekphrasis of Daedalus's artwork,

he recounts Daedalus's invention of wings, the flight with his son, and Icarus's disastrous fall. Then, by shifting the narrative chronologically back to Daedalus's murderous act against his nephew and protégé Perdix, Ovid reveals how Daedalus displays a negative form of repetition through his failure in the paternal sphere.

The chapter then considers book 8 as a microcosm of the *Metamorphoses* in its myriad narrative shifts that work against Vergil's view of the redemptive value of heroic labor. I examine labyrinthine patterns in the Meleager episode: the repetitive nature of the heroes' futile displays of prowess in the hunt for the Calydonian boar and structural and rhetorical forms of repetition conveying the tortuous inner conflict experienced by the hero's mother over her opposing loyalties after Meleager has killed her two brothers.

The final section discusses multiple forms of repetition in the poet's account of the river god Achelous as both host and narrator. Relating the tale of Erysichthon's violation of a grove sacred to Ceres, a story harking back to Callimachus's *Hymn to Demeter*, the river god depicts the man's impiety in a manner replete not only with rhetorical excesses but also with distorted allusions to Vergil's narrative of the fall of Troy and its aftermath. Ovid paradoxically juxtaposes Achelous's story with Lelex's tale of Baucis and Philemon's reception of Jupiter and Mercury, in which the gods respond favorably to the old couple's humble fare and the narrative simultaneously remains faithful to the spirit of the model in Callimachus's *Hecale*.

Finally, I discuss Achelous's labyrinthine narrative style continuing into book 9, where he recounts his contest with Hercules over Deianira largely through misplaced allusions to Aeneas's struggle with Turnus in the last books of the *Aeneid*. Throughout his tale of the river god, Ovid's clever play with the motif of consumption calls Achelous's hospitality as well as his narrative style into question. Achelous is a parody of Ovid by representing pitfalls that the poet, for the most part, avoids as he engages with his major Augustan predecessor.

The fourth chapter examines the archetypal bard Orpheus, who assumes the role of narrator for most of book 10. Orpheus himself includes an extended inset tale told by the goddess Venus to her beloved Adonis, thus drawing attention to the complex function of internal narrators.<sup>29</sup> By explaining the origin of the Adonia, this episode appears to offer the possibility of consolation for loss by a symbolic recovery of the dead but in fact exposes the instability of the bases on which the ritual was founded.

My discussion first considers the self-centeredness underlying Venus's cautionary tale about the metamorphosis of Hippomenes and Atalanta into lions. Moreover, driven by an undercurrent of desire conveyed in part through deployment of language related to valor, her narrative appeals to its immediate audience for the wrong reasons, spurring the aggressive behavior that she presumably wishes to deter. I then turn to the problem of role changing, which suggests the complex nature of the goddess's desire for the handsome youth, and discuss the undertones of incest implied in allusions to the problematic heroine Phaedra, as represented both in Greek tragedy and in Ovid's own earlier epistolary poetry. Ultimately, the manner of Adonis's death and Venus's response to the loss reflect the goddess's self-absorption. An extended simile in an unexpectedly low register and etymological play on the name of the flower that the goddess creates from the youth's blood reinforce the insubstantiality of her efforts to preserve him in a meaningful way.

In giving voice to Venus and then recounting Adonis's disastrous fate, Orpheus seems blind to the narcissistic underpinnings of this tale. The goddess's story evokes the bard's personal experience: the heroic efforts of Hippomenes to win Atalanta in the race have a counterpart in Orpheus's bold descent to the underworld to retrieve his bride Eurydice. By memorializing the youth through the ritual of the Adonia, the goddess shows a self-absorption analogous to Orpheus's ambivalent attempt to preserve Eurydice's memory by his songs in book 10. Ovid, furthermore, implies that the desires of the principal narrator may not in essence be different from those of the flawed characters who fill this poem, and his stance of authority is left open to question.

The fifth chapter examines Ulysses' contest with Ajax over the arms of Achilles. The poet appears to take a point of view in accord with a conservative Roman tradition by suggesting at the end of the episode that eloquence triumphed unfairly over valor. But, through the speech that he attributes to the Homeric hero, Ovid challenges the authority of the great poet of the Trojan War and the values that underlie the heroic world.

First, I examine how the devious Greek hero undermines the stability of the concepts of paternity and lineage, which were essential to traditional heroic identity. Ulysses suggests the superiority of his own family line over that of Ajax by calling attention to his descent from Mercury but suppresses his relation to the archetypal thief Autolycus. As he reveals himself to be a true scion of Mercury, Ulysses mirrors the

poet, who himself identifies closely with this stealthy god in the *Metamorphoses*. I then consider how Ulysses manipulates events familiar to the reader from Homer. The Greek cleverly magnifies his role in the night raid that resulted in the death of the Trojan spy Dolon and the newly arrived ally Rhesus, whose valuable horses the Greeks take as booty. He adapts for his own advantage Homer's description of the warriors vanquished by Odysseus on the battlefield, and he views the significance of a warrior's wounds in contradictory ways so as to privilege himself and devalue Ajax.

To reinforce his claim to be the legitimate heir to Achilles' arms, Ulysses even creates a symbolic kinship with the great hero, especially through clever etymological play, central to Ovid's own technique throughout the poem. Showing a mastery of the epic device of ekphrasis, Ulysses implies a comprehensive understanding of the designs on Achilles' shield by etymological play with the word *caelum*. The hero even appropriates a feat traditionally attributed to Ajax, the rescue of Achilles' body from the battlefield.

Like Ulysses who subverts traditional accounts of the Trojan War, Ovid persistently challenges the privileged status of Homer and Vergil. The poet implies that his own authority may only be as reliable as the Trojan War hero's ability to convince the Greek leaders to award the arms of Achilles to him rather than to Ajax. As the controlling poet, however, Ovid creates a text that provides the means for understanding the problems at its core, enabling the reader to emerge from his encounter with the poem better equipped to assess the reliability of inherited traditions in literary, social, and political spheres.

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## Notes

### Introduction

1. Segal 1998, 9–41, examines in particular metamorphoses as manifestations of psychological drives and as illustrations of widely held views about gender in antiquity in which the female body is perceived as an object and the recipient of male aggression and the male body is associated with invulnerability.

2. Ovid asks the gods to “lead down” (“deducite” [4]) the poem, employing a metaphor derived from spinning; *deductus*, the participle form of the verb *deduco*, was used to describe a refined Hellenistic aesthetic in the Augustan period. Wheeler 1999, 8–30, discusses these opening lines of Ovid’s poem at length and specifically addresses the metaphor of spinning for refined poetry in the manner of Callimachus.

3. Tissol 1997, esp. 13–15 and 52–61, observes that paradox is especially prevalent in the *Metamorphoses* with respect to characters who are, for various reasons, unable to act. See also Kenney 2002, 76–77, on Ovid’s facility with paradox, implemented especially in forms of double theme and variation.

4. Ranging through Ovid’s elegiac works as well as his epic, Hardie 2002, 143–72 and 272–92, provides nuanced discussions of this theme in the episodes of Narcissus and Ceyx-Alcyone, respectively.

5. See Wheeler 1999, in particular, on the relevance of book divisions to the distinction between the narrator as oral poet and the implied poet as writer of a text and on the narrator’s use of addresses to an unspecific second person, the first-person plural, apostrophes, and rhetorical questions in constructing the fiction that he is performing orally to his “narratorial audience” (Wheeler’s term). Throughout his study, however, he tends to focus more on the audience side of the equation.

6. My use of the terms “centripetal” and “centrifugal” derives from the work of Mikhail Bakhtin on the concept of “dialogism” in narrative. Bakhtin 1981, 272–73, associates the “centrifugal” forces with the powerless, the popular, and

the carnivalesque, with types such as the trickster, and with low literary genres. Here, Ovid makes even Arachne's birthplace symbolic of the low as he sets it in contrast with her *nomen memorabile*: "quamvis / orta domo parva parvis habitabat Hypaepis" ("although she was born in a small home and lived in small Hypaepa" [12–13]). The name Hypaepa in Greek itself connotes restriction, as it means "under the lofty": Ovid reinforces its meaning in the verse by using the device of anadiplosis with *parva parvis*, the first adjective modifying *domo* and the second, *Hypaepis*.

7. Rosati 1999, 251, notes that the young woman includes a particularly thoughtless allusion to the violation of Minerva's temple by Neptune's rape of Medusa (119–20).

8. On Arachne's limitations as evidenced by her arrogance toward Minerva, see Barkan 1986, 2, and Harries 1990, 65. Lateiner 1984, 17, stresses Arachne's flaw of failing to admit the "debt of the artist to something greater than himself"; Barkan 1986, 2, takes a similar position. Leach 1974, 115, suggests that the young woman's desire for widespread fame and her pride in her success are a consequence of her humble background, which leads her to reject a sense of indebtedness and to insist on her autonomy.

9. Referring to her transformed state, Ovid says that Arachne "works at her webs of old as a spider" ("antiquas exercet aranea telas" [145]). The word *aranea* in Latin, significantly, means both spider and spider's web. The phrase, furthermore, points up the aetiological function of the myth by mentioning the Latin word for "spider," which is close to its Greek equivalent, *arachnê* (or *arachnês*).

10. In evoking Envy, the poet may well imply empathy with Arachne. Ovid in the *Amores* brought up the problem of *Livor vis-à-vis* his own poetry (e.g., 1.15.1 and 39), and in his exile poems he returns to this theme (e.g., *Epistulae ex ponto* 3.1.65, 3.3.104, 3.4.74). The poet here appears to recall Callimachus's comments in the *Hymn to Apollo* that Phthonos maligns him because his works do not go on at length. See Hofmann 1986, 233, on the correlation of *Livor* with Phthonos, a figure who is identified in *Hymn 2* with traditional epic and who maligns the refined work of poets like Callimachus.

11. See, in particular, Barkan 1986, 4–5, and Harries 1990, 66–67.

12. Hofmann 1986, 223–41.

13. On Ovid's affiliation with Callimachean aesthetics, see esp. Lyne 1984, 9–34; Knox 1986a, esp. ch. 5, "The Roman Callimachus," 65–83; Wills 1989, 143–56; Keith 1992, 9–20, 43–45; Myers 1994b, 2–5 and ch. 2, "Callimachus' *Aetia* and Framed Aetiological Narratives in the *Metamorphoses*," 61–94.

14. On this kind of *mise en abyme*, see Dällenbach 1989, esp. 96–106.

15. Cohon 1991, 22–30, proposes this model for the organization of the shield in relation to the shield of Athena Parthenos. See McKay 1998, 199–221, for a structure with three concentric circles: the scene of Octavian's triumphal entry into Rome and his review of the conquered tribes before the Palatine temple of Apollo at the center; scenes from republican history arranged in the middle

circle; and scenes from the kingship in the outermost one. He argues that Vergil represents the events on the shield from the perspective of a triumphal parade, incorporating significant monuments located on the route. Hardie 1985, 121–24, connects the scene of Manlius on the Capitoline with the doors of Augustus's temple of Apollo on the Palatine and, 346–76, discusses the shield as an emblem of moral and theological order.

16. Feeney 1991, 193–94, summarizes the negative aspects of Arachne's weaving as a spider: its vulnerability to destruction, its totally symmetrical designs, and (as asserted by Seneca, *Epistulae* 121.23) its lack of status as art.

17. Harries 1990, 71–72, connects the issue of Arachne's desire to attain an enduring *nomen* for herself with two scenes from Minerva's tapestry: the goddess's contest with Neptune to name the city of Athens and the punishment of Rhodope and Haemus for assuming the names of the gods Jupiter and Juno.

18. The connection between Arachne and Leuconoe's image is noted by Rosati 1999, 250–53, citing classical sources for the spider's delicate thread as a model for the weaver's own.

19. See Myers 1994b, 79–80, on the aetiological nature of the Minyeides' tales and their association with a refined Alexandrian poetic style, suggested by the phrase "levi deducens pollice filum" ("drawing the thread with her light thumb" [4.36]). The unnamed sister thus not only unites weaving with singing but also does her work with a "light" touch.

20. Janan 1994, 433–38, explains the lack of a moral interpretation by proposing that Leuconoe's narrative represents a particularly feminine kind of imagination; her use of the spider web's image on this account reflects a sensually oriented imagination in line with an overall defiance of logic in her description of Vulcan's net.

21. Hardy 1995, 145–46, argues that the narrator progressively shifts the focus in his ekphrasis of both tapestries: he moves from Minerva's emphasis on the gods' power to punish mortals to an empathy with human suffering and from Arachne's focus on the females as victims of rape by the gods to the "generative power" of the divinities. Leach 1974, 117, observes that Minerva certainly *interprets* her opponent's tapestry as representing *caelestia crimina* (which can simultaneously mean "divine crimes" and "reproaches against the gods" [131]). Vincent 1994, 381, however, suggests that Arachne's tapestry is a "scandal" in making divine hypocrisy public; it then induces the goddess to respond as a member of her own class and destroy the woman's weaving.

22. See Nagle 1988a, 101–11, referring to the story as a "miniature *carmen perpetuum*." Hinds 1987a, spurred by the magisterial study of Heinze 1919, is a seminal, extended examination of this episode that compares its use of elegiac elements to Ovid's version of the myth in the *Fasti*.

23. Myers 1994b, 164.

24. Myers 1994b, 159–62; Hardie 1995, 204–14; Hardie 1997, 182–98.

25. Hardie 1997, 187–89. Hardie 2002, 6, also points out that Pythagoras

shares with Ovid a particular kind of visualization, “the ability to see things far removed.” Holzberg 2002, 146, observes that Pythagoras’s speech, in reflecting structural elements and themes of the *Metamorphoses*, especially through parallels to Ovid’s account of the origins of the universe, is a “condensed *carmen perpetuum*,” similar to the Muse’s story in book 5 and Orpheus’s song in book 10.

26. Segal 1969, 280–84, underscores Ovid’s parodic purposes in his use of Pythagoras, noting that metempsychosis was the subject of ridicule by intellectuals of the poet’s day and that the emphasis on vegetarianism in the philosopher’s speech evokes a host of satirical jibes against that dietary practice in the Greek and Roman literary tradition.

27. See Nicoll 1980, 174–82, on the programmatic significance of Cupid’s rebuke to Apollo after defeating the Python in book 1, which recalls his similar criticism of Ovid for attempting epic in *Amores* 1.1. Knox 1986a, ch. 2, “The Transformation of Elegy,” 9–26, discusses Apollo as an elegiac poet-lover in the story of Daphne and the characterization of Narcissus through elegiac motifs of madness, pride, spiritual union, and physical deterioration. Hinds 1987a, 99–134, demonstrates that, despite Calliope’s concern in book 5 about the elevation of her song, the modulated style of the Muse’s story in fact has much in common with the version of this myth in the elegiac *Fasti*, especially in the use of its charming *locus amoenus* (4.417–30). Sharrock 1991, 36–39, views Pygmalion’s creation of the ivory statue as an analogue of the lover’s construction of the beloved in the discourse of elegy: both sculptor and elegist give life to inert raw material and narcissistically become enamored with the objects of their creativity (or with the creative act itself). Myers 1994a, 225–50, esp. 234–42, discusses the incorporation of numerous elegiac topoi and allusions to Propertius 4.2 in Vertumnus’s tale of Anaxarete. Gentilcore 1995, esp. 116–19, shows that Ovid parodies the elegiac convention of *paraclausithuron* in the tale of Anaxarete: the excluded lover’s threat of death becomes a reality here when Iphis hangs himself, and the mistress’s hardness becomes literal rather than figurative when Anaxarete is metamorphosed into stone. For an overview of Ovid’s use of elegy throughout his poetic career, see Harrison 2002, 79–94.

28. See Conte 1986, 31, on Homer’s function as the “code model” for epic by incorporating the particular elements and devices of the genre and as the “exemplary model” by providing specific passages for imitation. More recently, Hinds 1998, esp. 20–21, 41–45, 49–50, has debated and refined some of Conte’s insights on allusion, especially by considering the role of authorial intention and the adaptability of the code. On Ovid’s relation to Vergil, Tarrant 2002, 13–33, considers strategies of emulation, such as placing particular lines from the *Aeneid* in incongruous passages, incorporating material that calls attention to Vergil’s own problematic use of Homer, and making allusions to characters from the *Aeneid* but transferring them to other individuals.

29. Rosati 2002, 271–304, discusses implications of the prolific internal narratives: chronological vagueness undermines the notion of a guaranteed truth,

even calling into question the stability of the Augustan order, and the appropriation of allusions to earlier poetry suggests Ovid’s desire to establish the legitimacy of his own versions of received myths. Barchiesi 2002, 180–99, noting the carefully motivated appearance of internal narrators in Homer and Vergil, discusses the problem of multiple narrators in the story of Ceres and Proserpina: the principal narrator Calliope gives a privileged position to nymphs as narrator of an inset tale (Arethusa) and as characters (Cyane, the Sirens) in the context of an audience of nymphs judging the contest at hand. Ultimately, as Barchiesi observes, the embedded narratives collectively reflect the difficulty of revealing truth through storytelling and of reconciling a narrator’s intentions with his audience’s comprehension of the tale.

## Chapter 1. Narcissus and Elegy

1. Gildenhard and Zissos 2000, 129–47, develop the thesis that this episode is a substitution for the tragedy of the house of Laius. They show how the episode is linked to the tragedy of Oedipus in its incorporation of an ambiguous prophecy made by Tiresias, a peripeteia in the form of the hero’s change from ignorance to knowledge, paradox as a master trope, and dramatic irony in the lament of Narcissus. See also Hardie 1990, 224–35.

2. See Bushnell 1988, esp. 1–42, on the problem of the ironic and ambiguous nature of oracular discourse as manifested in Greek literature, especially tragedy, and in Athenian society, and 67–85, on Tiresias, whose ambivalent language is contrasted to the riddling of Oedipus and ultimately validated as the conveyor of truth essential to the survival of the city.

3. Knox 1986a, 19–23, discusses the major elegiac topoi applied to the elegiac lover in this episode: the *furor*, as both passion and madness; the concept of oneness with the beloved; the wasting away from passion. Ovid, Knox argues, exploits potential ambiguities of the conventions of Latin elegy, especially by playing literal against figurative meanings, as a means of exploring the pathology of love.

4. Knox 1986a, 21, points out that Narcissus’s pride establishes a connection between him and the unattainable mistress of elegy but goes no further.

5. Ovid has already hinted at the elegist’s self-absorption in book 1, where Apollo’s inappropriate self-flattery fails to have any effect on Daphne, the archetypal *dura puella*. Ironically, Apollo pursues the very image of his twin sister Diana (“nuptaeque aemula Phoebe” [476]). Nicoll 1980, 174–82, discusses the aetiology of elegy in that episode.

6. Rosati 1983, 41–50, has suggested that this powerfully drawn character resembles the poet himself: Ovid, much like Narcissus, marvels at his own virtuosity and creates an art caught up in its own beauty. Picking up on Quintilian’s criticism of Ovid for his *lascivia* (10.1.88 and 93), a lack of poetic restraint, Rosati locates the poet’s self-indulgence in an overflowing imagination,

# The Image of the Poet in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

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