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Orpheus' Poesis: Internal Narration in Book 10 of Ovid's Metamorphoses

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Internal Narration in Book 10
of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

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by
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Acknowledgments

As the *Metamorphoses* holds its host of voices through whose hubbub Ovid's own can be heard emerging, this project holds so many echoes of thoughts and language which belong to others but, at some unnoticed moment, came to be mine too. I have learned to speak about the ancient world by speaking like my models and to them I want to try to indicate my gratitude,

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Introduction

In book 10 of Ovid's Metamorphoses, the poet Orpheus appears and begins to sing a series of myths. In this project I explore the relationship that Ovid establishes between this poet's own life and the songs he sings. I will argue that Orpheus' sequence of stoies effects a process of self-reflection which, when analyzed from beginnng to end, contain a marked progression of the poets attitudes. Within a universe defined by mutability, Orpheus becomes the paradigm for internal change, for self-motivated transformation.

The first chapter will be structured around two prior studies of Orpheus' persona and poetry, those of Eleanor Leach and Patricia Johnson. Each discusses the successes and failures of Orpheus' poetry as a means to elucidate Ovid's ideas about the nature of poetry, its purpose and its relationship to the natural world; each takes a different measure of the weight of Orpheus' poetic voice against Ovid's voice. I will defend the independence of Orpheus' poetic persona against its full subsumption into Ovid's own. Over the course of my engagement with these authors, I will develop my own theory of Orpheus' relationship with Ovid and thereby construct a metric to define successful poetry with the context of Ovid's depictions of art.

In the second chapter, a survey of other internal narrators will situate Orpheus' song-cycle within the context of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to reveal the peculiar nature of Orpheus' song as well as its commonalities with other instances of internal narration. The structure of Orpheus' song and the relationship which it establishes with its audience will be seen as a merging between traits of two common types of internal narration: that of the song-competition and that of the private soliloquy. The examples discussed here will be used to substantiate the metrics for poetic success in the *Metamorphoses* that were constructed in the previous chapter.

The idea of poetic success will also be used to guide my examination of the motivations of these internal narrators in choosing what myth to sing and how to structure its composition.

In the third chapter, Orpheus' song-cycle itself will undergo a close reading in order to uncover what it can say about Orpheus' own perspective on his past. I will start from a structural observation that the composition of his song-cycle can be dissected as a sequence of pairs of myths. In each pairing and then across the arc of the whole, Orpheus will be shown to develop and reconsider his own views. In conclusion, I will place Orpheus' body back into the environment of the poem and his voice into comparison with Ovid's.

Literary and Historical Context for Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* first encountered its Roman public in 8 AD, during the later years of Augustus' governance. The literary generation before Ovid had redefined and reinvigorated Roman literature. History by Livy and poetry by Vergil, Horace and Propertius had attempted to lift Latin to the great heights attained before, in the Romans' eyes, only by Greek. That self-conscious undertaking had transposed into the culture of Latin letters the aesthetic tension between the grand epic form and the miniature lyrical poem that had grown so contentious within the Hellenistic schools of Alexandria.

Ovid was heir to that tension, and it manifests itself throughout his oeuvre. Ovid's aesthetic sense developed from an early-career disposition for the pithy and concise towards an increasing willingness to explore various longer formats. His inventive approaches to form led him to employ new poetic structures to accommodate sequences of individual myths within a continuous narrative. He focused on a single calendar year to structure an etiological survey of

all the festivals in the *Fasti*. The *Metamorphoses* traverses the entire span of the universe's history through an unbroken chain of myths of change. Narratives with Callimachean concision are compartmentalized and assembled to suggest larger thematic patterns. Much of the delight of Ovid's poem comes from watching him join episode to episode in so many systems of interrelation.

Orpheus' Place within the Whole of the *Metamorphoses*

Ovid's architecture rewards microscopic analysis and macroscopic study equally. Robert Coleman classifies various of Ovid's method's of interrelation between myths, calling attention to the overarching temporal organization as well as the discrete sequences of myth organized by geography or family.[1] All of Ovid's internal narrators are grouped under the heading of the inset technique with Orpheus as the most complex elaboration upon that type.[2] Coleman recognizes Orpheus' song as at once a site of distinct thematic concerns with a concentrated, self-contained composition and also a constituent and vital element of the poem that surrounds it.

The period of Orpheus' presence occurs at a significant juncture of the poem. Ovid builds his poem around episodes of artistic creation, placing at the boundaries between each third of his fifteen-book poem a lengthy episode of internal narration. Orpheus appears in Book 10 at the juncture in the poem where Ovid transitions from totally mythological tales to stories from the ambiguously mythico-historical pasts of Greece and Rome. As a poet, his vocabulary of myth is much like Ovid's has been up to that point. As Ovid switches to new subject matter, Orpheus functions to cap off the preceding period.

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[1] Coleman 1971: 464.
[2] Coleman 1971: 466.

Among the artists depicted in the *Metamorphoses*, Orpheus stands out for the great proportions of his presence. A lengthy period, nearly 620 lines, is spent by Ovid in the guise of Orpheus— more than he spends in the voice of any other secondary narrator. Substantial elaboration is also granted to myths of Orpheus' own life told in Ovid's voice. Ovid composes 150 or so lines to support Orpheus' words, narrating his descent to the Underworld and subsequent death. The whole span of Orpheus' presence can be modeled by the image of an arc composed of three blocks. Firstly, Ovid renders the myths that tell the stories of Orpheus' marriage and his failed *katabasis* to restore Eurydice. The central keystone is the song-cycle which Orpheus sings in his own voice. On its other side, Ovid tells the story of Orpheus' death at the hands of scorned bacchants.

Synopsis of the Myths Told by and about Orpheus

In order to establish the sequence of events that will be referred to throughout this study, I will first summarize the frame narrative around Orpheus' song-cycle and then give in some detail the contents of the myths which he narrates himself.

Ovid begins Book 10 with the ill-omened arrival of Hymen, the god of marriage, summoned by Orpheus (10.1-7). His bride[3] is almost immediately dispatched by a snake bite and Orpheus begins to mourn her (10.8-11). With alacrity Ovid moves the narrative down to the Underworld where Orpheus faces Persephone and Pluto, and begins a legalistic speech,[4] arguing for Eurydice "as a gift on loan" (pro munere poscimus usum, 10.37). He promises to die if the gods refuse him (10.38-39). The reactions which this speech triggers from the denizens of the

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[3] The name of Eurydice is not spoken until 10.31.
[4] 10.17-39.

Underworld are comically overblown. Orpheus' words are somewhat stilted but the audience responds with tears and real emotion.

Granted his wife back on the condition that, until he has led her to the upper world, he may not to turn his eyes back onto her, Orpheus begins his ascent with Eurydice behind (10.50-52). Orpheus, *ne deficeret, metuens avidusque videndi* ("fearing lest she had gone and greedy for a look," 10.56),[5] does look back at her and loses his wife again.

 Orpheus resolves to try again but, in his second attempt, he cannot even make it past the infernal boatman (10.72-73). Orpheus now exiles himself to the barren peaks of the Rhodope mountains and he forswears the love of women, showing his preference for young boys instead and causing many women misery over their dashed desires for him (10.76-85). After three years, Orpheus returns and strikes up his lyre again. He begins to sing on a sunny, naked hill but his song summons trees to shade him. Ovid catalogues these trees in detail (10.86-108).

The last tree to be mentioned among Orpheus' grove is the Cypress. Ovid uses its aetiology as a sort of tonic chord upon which Orpheus's song-cycle will play variations. In this story, Cyparissus, a young boy beloved of Phoebus, falls in love with a stag. The boy then tragically casts an errant spear and kills the stag. To respect his grief, Apollo transforms the boy into the Cypress, tree of mourning (10.134-135).

In this context, Orpheus begins to sing the song that will occupy the hundreds of remaining lines of Book 10. When Book 11 begins, Orpheus is unmoved though the world around him has changed. A crowd of maenadically raging angry married women has found him guilty of contempt against them. The magic of Orpheus' song protects him for a time but soon

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[5] My translation.

enough their shouts drown him out and the poet and his audience are left in mutilated pieces (11.7-43). After Orpheus' death the birds, beasts, stones, woods and river banks mourn Orpheus' death. His song continues, however, even in death. Orpheus' lyre and head sing on eternally.

Between the myth of the *katabasis* and the scene of his death, Orpheus' song-cycle, links together eight myths. After a small proem, Orpheus briefly tells of the love that Jupiter had for Ganymede and the boy's subsequent assumption to the ranks of the gods (10.155-161). He passes onto another love affair between human and divinity. Phoebus and Hyacinthus hunt together until the god's incommensurate strength leads to an accident and Hyacinthus is struck dead. In mourning Phoebus transforms the boy into the flower (10.162-219). The Cerastes and Propoetides follow: a compressed pair of stories of divine punishment of mortal outrage. The Cerastes are given horns and the Propoetides are petrified (10.220-237). Orpheus then tells the story of Pygmalion, a sculptor who falls in love with his own statue. His imaginary love is made real by Venus when she transforms the eburnean girl to flesh and blood (10.243-297).

Two descendants of their union, a father and daughter, Myrrha and Cinyras, are the subject of Orpheus' next story. Myrrha falls in love with her father and, through the initiative of a crafty nurse, the daughter is placed in her father's bed without his realization of her identity. Soon enough though, Cinyras discovers her and chases her into exile (10.298-518). After her transformation into a myrrh tree, Myrrha gives birth to Adonis, the child of Cinyras. This boy's beauty captures Venus' attentions and she descends to earth to accompany him in his hunting pursuits (10.519-559). In a moment of rest, the couple lies down together and Venus tells her beloved the story of Hippomenes and Atalanta, in order, she says, to warn him against the dangers of pursuing more violent and cruel game-animals than he he can handle.

Atalanta was a woman of the woods who refused marriage. Her protection was her speed: she challenged every suitor to a race. If he won, he married her; if he lost, he was executed. The boy who beat her, Hippomenes, had Venus' help. After Hippomenes forgot to show his gratitude, Venus punished the pair by compelling them to defile a shrine of Cybele and then turning them into more of Cybele's lions (10.560-707). Orpheus then returns to Adonis and Venus. In his goddess' absence, Adonis goes after a boar and gets gored in the groin. Venus returns to find him dying. In mourning she transforms him into a flower as fragile and ephemeral as human life, the anemone (10.708-739).

History of Orpheus' Identity

Ovid's bracketing stories about Orpheus were not, in general outline, novel. An ancient reader would have known well the figure of Orpheus and most likely many of the myths commonly told about him. Both stories told by Ovid were adapted from patterns which can be traced to Orpheus' earliest history. A brief outline of their ancestries will be useful for juxtaposing Ovid's play, in the construction of his own Orpheus, with the precedents and the expectations of his readers.

In his earliest forms, Orpheus seems to have risen to prominence in a mystical and agricultural setting. Orpheus was a civilizing and transcendent hero-poet whom the Greeks of the 6th and 5th centuries treated as the historical source of a variety of cultic practices and texts.[6] Orpheus' voice could literally be read through these religious texts. As a prophet whose god was Dionysus, Orpheus inducts his followers into that god's worship.[7] Furthermore, Orpheus' life

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[6] Many of these survive. In these, Orpheus addresses a variety of gods. See Athanassakis and Wolkow 2013.

[7] W.K.C. Guthrie writes in his study of ancient Orphic religion, *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, "To the question 'who was the god of the Orphic religion?' there can be but one answer—Dionysos" (1952: 41).

reenacted the events of that god's life. Two events stand out. Dionysus was said to have traveled into the underworld to restore his mother Semele.[8] In another story central to Orphic dogma Dionysus was dismembered and eaten by Titans.[9] Orpheus' rescue of Eurydice and the mutilation of his body by bacchants transfer these myths into heroic, semi-divine terms.

The Dionysian resonance suggests an original form of Orpheus' *katabasis* that more closely resembled the archetype followed by the descents of other great heroes (Hercules, Theseus, Odysseus). The human hero goes beyond death in order to bring to light the secrets of human fate. Eurydike's name suggests an original identity far more weighty than that of the sylvan maiden whom we find in Ovid. Her name means, etymologically, something like "wide-ruling," an epithet that would have been far more appropriate for the queen of the Underworld than for Orpheus' cipher-like human lover. If Orpheus had originally been a hero who led Persephone out of the Underworld, then the eschatological and agricultural symbolism of these myths is clear. Just as Orpheus' fragmented body scattered over the fields suggests a human-sacrificial ritual of disseminating the seeds, Orpheus rescues Eurydice to end Ceres' mournful winter, bring back spring and attune his followers to the natural cycles of the soul's rebirth.

Already in the most immediate surviving precedent for Ovid's version of the Orpheus myth, Orpheus' *katabasis* has been taken out of that cultic context. Vergil's telling of the *katabasis*, written a generation before Ovid's, concludes the *Georgics* by heightening Orpheus' semi-divine status even as it removes some of its cultic significance. This Orpheus hovers like a god or numinous divinity above the last section of Vergil's poem, meting out justice. But his

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[8] Guthrie paraphrases Diodorus' mention of Orpheus wherein he is compared to Dionysus who "raised his mother Semele from Hades and gave her a portion of immortality" (1952: 61).
[9] Guthrie 1952: 32.

Orpheus does not transcend worldly concerns but rather links the cultivation of order in agriculture with the cultivation of civic and poetic order. The myths that bracket Orpheus' song read like an expansion of the 74 lines[10] in which Vergil, speaking as Proteus to Aristaeus, explains that the cause of the curse that lies on Aristaeus' bees is Orpheus' revenge for the beekeeper's attempted rape of his wife. The four preceding books of agricultural instruction are given a spiritual parallel in the final myth of Orpheus' life. Vergil's Orpheus is at once the pastoral poet of the wild natural world and the archetypal lyrical lover. Ovid has appropriated this dual identity but further drained the principal characters of their semi-divine overtones.

Noticeably absent from Ovid's rendition are the other important spheres of action in which Orpheus' character had participated in other earlier myths. The heroic and the cultic Orpheus are strongly suppressed. Ovid excludes all mention of Orpheus' heroic role in the voyage of the Argonauts.[11] After Orpheus' death there is brief mention made of Orpheus' cultic significance. Both Apollo and Bacchus are seen to pay final respects to the *vates* who straddled their domains. Orpheus refers to Phoebus once briefly in his song as his father and the parent does intervene once after his son's life has ended. Apollo shields the decapitated but still keening head of Orpheus by petrifying a snake which rears to strike it.[12] Bacchus redoubles this show of divine recognition and respect a few lines later by lignifying the bacchants who dismembered Orpheus, who is described as *sacrorum vates suorum* or "priest of Bacchus' rites."[13] Thus

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[10] Ver. *Geor.* 4.453-527.
[11] When Ovid gives his version of that myth in Book 6, there is scant mention of anyone apart from Jason and Medea. Only Zetes and Calais, the sons of Boreas, are singled out from a crew which otherwise forms an indistinct crowd. See 6.711f.
[12] v. 10.167; 11.58-50.
[13] 11.67-70.

Orpheus, at the end of his myth, is resolved into the thematics of an Apollonian-Dionysian

opposition. This polarity is not strongly present within the myths told by and about him.

Nor do the speeches of Orpheus suggest a figure elevated above normal human wisdom.

In fact, Charles Segal insists that the single most distinct contribution of Ovid to the myth is the

insistent humanizing of Orpheus.[14] Ovid has transplanted this myth of human access to the divine

sphere out of the caverns of mystic experience into a shallow topsoil and shaken away the

theological or philosophical implications which clung to it. Orpheus becomes a figure motivated

by and dedicated to personal pursuits and not to cultic, heroic service to his followers. Rather

than signifying a turn away from ethical and theological concerns, however, this feature of

Ovid's Orpheus signifies a turn *inwards* by which these concerns lose their prescriptive intent

and orientation towards an audience of disciples. Instead, Orpheus, in his song-cycle, directs his

ethical and theological intelligence inward to analyze his own behavior.

Theoretical Context

This study will build upon a theoretical apparatus that began to be developed in the

1970's in response to Brooks Otis' ambitious study *Ovid as an Epic Poet*.[15] Otis studied the

Metamorphoses as a whole, finding Ovid to be a master architect who a balanced the

arrangement of every tale, often in ring composition. Otis saw in this structural analysis the key

to combating the reputation of the *Metamorphoses* as poem of disarray and haphazardness, and

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[14] Segal writes, "Ovid replaces the heroic and tragic *humanitas* of Virgil with a humbler, less heroic *humanitas*" (Segal 1989: 56).
[15] Otis 1968.

to understanding the overall movement of the poem.[16] Borrowing his boldness, other scholars attempted similar large-scale readings of Ovid's poem. But Otis' subjection of Ovid's poem to his rigid and precise thematic grids proved to obfuscate other aspects of Ovid's strategies of arrangement.

The portions of Ovid's poem offered in internal narration would seem to be excellent ground for Otis to show the presence of microcosmic models for his theory of the whole. In fact Otis' apologetic bent, which sought to defend Ovid's artistry as purposeful and unified, led him away from a serious consideration of the plurality of voices in which Ovid speaks. Study of these voices and their relationship with Ovid's own was taken up in the subsequent decades.

In the first chapter, Eleanor Leach and Patricia Johnson are the two scholars against whose theories I will construct my own. Here, a brief analysis of Betty Rose Nagle's theory in her essay "Byblis and Myrrha: Two Incest Narratives in the 'Metamorphoses'" will be used to underscore the key assumptions which my narratological foundation shares with that of Leach and Johnson. Nagle's study of the twinned incest episodes of Byblis and Myrrha delivered, respectively, in 'Ovid's' and Orpheus' voice, closely tracks Orpheus' changing attitude toward this tragic heroine, contrasting it with Ovid's consistently sympathetic perspective. Nagle shows how "Orpheus' initial hostility does turn to sympathy by the end of the episode."[17] Her study succeeds in showing how Ovid enacts contrary and coexistent attitudes towards the sin of incest within his poem by telling similar stories through different narratorial personae.

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[16] William Anderson, in his review of Otis' book, summarizes its thesis: "The *Metamorphoses* is a meticulously planned poem, whose balanced, symmetrical structural units enabled Ovid to develop his themes and progress ingeniously towards his goal" (1968: 94).
[17] Nagle 1983: 310.

Her particular analysis is important for two reasons. In the first place, Nagle's reading compares Orpheus' voice on an equal footing with Ovid's. The critical place that she advances from assumes significant independence for Orpheus. Nagle recognizes that not only recall Orpheus' *katabasis* but also "reflect the state of his mind."[18] In the second place, Nagle emphasizes changeability in Orpheus' attitude, in contrast to Ovid's. Nagle, however, confines herself to a consideration of only one song within Orpheus' song-cycle and one outside it. Therefore she does not trace the transformations of Orpheus' attitudes across the whole of his song.

The importance of viewing Orpheus' song-cycle as a whole is conveyed well by Robert Coleman in his essay "Structure and Intention in the Metamorphoses." He writes, "each of the stories [in Orpheus' song-cycle] is enhanced by the patterns of similarity and contrast established by the immediate sequence; each serves to focus attention on one or more aspects of the plight of Orpheus himself—the death of a loved one, the punishment of impiety, conversion to homosexuality with its concomitant attribution of depravity to woman's love, and transformations that exhibit a special relationship between life and death."[19] The significance of this sequence is doubled when Coleman's hypothesis merges with Nagles'. Each myth indeed focuses "attention on one or more aspects of the plight of Orpheus," but the attention in question is not only our own, that of Orpheus' audience. Orpheus' himself focuses and refocuses his own attention throughout the song-cycle to consider and reconsider his own past.

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[18] Nagle 1989: 114.
[19] Coleman 1971: 470.

1. Orpheus' Poesis

The Relationship between Orpheus and Ovid

Patricia Johnson, in her study *Ovid before Exile*, and Eleanor Leach, in her article "Ekphrasis and the Theme of Artistic Failure in Ovid's Metamorphoses," each attempt to determine the relative success or failure of Orpheus' poetry. Their studies each produce their own metrics for the success and failure of poetry and imply different basic ideas about what Ovid believes poetry should do in the *Metamorphoses*. By examining the theories of the relationship between Orpheus and Ovid, and of Orpheus' own narratorial persona, that underlie each of these studies, this chapter will construct a new metric of success for Orpheus' poetry that pays heed both to Ovid's own implied ideas about the potential power of poetry and to Orpheus' own intentions for his poem. An expanding portrait of Orpheus' character will suggest a new reading of Orpheus' song which explores the implications of reading the sequence of his song-cycle as an expression of his own concentrated and self-reflective narrative control.

Before launching into dialogue with Johnson and Leach, I will establish a framework for discussing the narratorial dynamics within Ovid's poem. The exposition of Orpheus' narratorial identity cannot proceed in isolation from the soundscape of other voices which comprise Ovid's poem. Foremost among these voices is the one identified with Ovid's own: when Ovid seems to speak directly in *propria persona*. Alessandro Barchiesi describes the environment of the *Metamorphoses* as "a narrative world …[which] suggests a multiplicity of voices striving to get out of control."[20] According to Barchiesi, the narrator in this world, although he has great authority, renounces a certain responsibility, whereas in the *Aeneid*, "the author, the plot and Fate

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[20] Barchiesi 1999: 113.

tend to be perceived as co-operative forces." The *Metamorphoses* lacks that sense of a "masterplot."

Ovid's projection of himself into the poem—the 'Ovid' who is constructed from the text—will be distinguished by the use of bracketing apostrophes from the historical Ovid who constructed the poem. Ovid and 'Ovid' are entities only to be distinguished though and not separated. This is necessary in order to clarify how Ovid establishes Orpheus' voice and 'Ovid's' through individual processes of development. Ovid utilizes these fractures in the narrative persona to show that his 'Ovid' ultimately shares the same "fragmentary" perception as any human within the *Metamorphoses*. 'Ovid' and Orpheus are only two voices among the many within the hubbub and flux of Ovid's world.

Ovid establishes a relationship between his own narratorial persona and that of Orpheus which is by turns distant and united, euphonic and dissonant. In the context of Book 10, 'Ovid's voice appears at times in juxtaposition and at times in unison with Orpheus.' During the myths of Orpheus' life which precede the song-cycle, an inflection of scorn combines with dramatic irony in the way that Orpheus' actions are narrated: together, these effects on the part of the master-narrator put Orpheus in an position of isolated objectification. That attitude changes when Orpheus begins to sing his song-cycle. He delivers his poetry in a tempo, technique and style which are nearly identical to that of 'Ovid.' In the same way that 'Ovid' is identified with the creator of the text, Orpheus becomes identified with the Ovidian subject who defines the world of the poem. Isolated objectification is transformed into conscious subjectivity.

Due to the suddenness of the shift out of objectivity into subjectivity, Orpheus' unification with 'Ovid' casts into doubt the assumption that the song-cycle can be usefully

studied as a product of Orpheus' persona. The poetry issuing from Orpheus might be seen in

disassociation from Orpheus, simply as the product of the narratorial 'Ovid'[21] commandeering

Orpheus as a mouthpiece. Indeed this was essentially the reigning assumption until recently.

Orpheus and the other internal narrators were supposed to have been introduced as thin foils

across Ovid's flickering lamp. Betty Rose Nagle, in cataloguing prior understandings of Ovid's

purpose in using internal narrators, concludes that scholarly appraisals of internal narration had

until recently been concerned only to reveal Ovid's hand in placing certain tales in another

narrator's voice; the internal narrator had not been granted, in the scholarly imagination, the

agency to make their own choices.[22]

The Changing Registers of Orpheus' Speech

The three components of the narrative arc of Orpheus' presence in Ovid are each colored

by a change in Orpheus' voice. The transformations of his speech each signal different aspects of

his character. When Orpheus first begins to speak, he addresses the chthonic deities in a

rhetorical style. That speech succeeds in its purpose and Eurydice is returned to him. When he

loses her once more, Orpheus is struck dumb and compared to mute stone. The song-cycle,

which follows after a transformative period of grief wherein Orpheus takes up pederasty, is

delivered in an entirely different register. Orpheus no longer speaks like a freshly trained orator;

he speaks in the same style as does the narrator of the *Metamorphoses*. The tenth book ends and

brings Orpheus' song to a close. With the eleventh book, Orpheus reappears, unmoved from the

moment that he began to sing his song. A sudden onrush of angry *nurus* (daughters-in-law),

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[21] In distinction from the historical Ovid for whom Orpheus is obviously a simple mouthpiece.

[22] Nagle cites Hermann Fränkel and Brooks Otis in particular. Otis' explanations are largely "structural and thematic and not interested primarily in narratology. "Fränkel's reasoning seems to be—it is a brutal tale, *therefore* Ovid has Nestor tell it—not—it is a brutal tale *because* Ovid has Nestor tell it." Nagle 1983: 301-302.

jealous of Orpheus' new homosexuality, finds him there and, after drowning out his song with their cacophony, murder him by dismemberment.This is the final period of Orpheus' life and in it he splits apart in two. While his spirit goes below in happy (and silent) reunion with Eurydice, his body remains on earth. His voice has transformed again. Wailing on even after death, Orpheus' head and lyre flow together. Orpheus is no longer coherent and Ovid no longer transcribes his speech. *Flebile nescio quid* ("Something tearful, I know not what," 11.52)[23] is all the description that Ovid offers.

These two transformations have very different consequences for Orpheus' song. The first is followed by a great expansion of the symbolic power of Orpheus' poetry and the second precipitates a total drainage of content. Ovid shows Orpheus becoming first a poet equal to his own Ovidian style and ability, and then in turn a hollow body who resembles less the instrumentalist than the instrument. The only surety for the fate of human figures in Ovid's world is the constant change. In Orpheus, the first index of these changes can be read in the way that his ability to speak transforms.

Orpheus' inability to make himself understood by Ovid is expressed in narrative terms by a new impotence. The failure of Orpheus' voice to ward off the Bacchic attack is repeated after his death by the above-mentioned threat of the snake which only Apollo's intercession forestalls. In some versions of the myth, Orpheus' disembodied head acquired such powers of divine inspiration that Apollo's oracular preeminence was impinged upon. Ovid's Orpheus, on the other hand, is definitively nullified after his death.

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[23] My translation.

Although the transformation of Orpheus' speech proceeds in tandem with the development of his character, the incongruity between Orpheus' different vocal registers—particularly between the underground rhetorical presentation and the song-cycle—poses a significant hermeneutical challenge to the unity of Orpheus' persona. The divergent nature of Orpheus' two main speeches seems in fact to fragment his character, leaving behind multiple disconnected and antipathetic units. Before Orpheus' mythical dismemberment, it is his narrative persona that exhibits signs of distending tension.

Working in opposition to these cracks in Orpheus' persona, various narrative markers in the text function to contextualize and explain Orpheus' changing register of speech. To begin with, the first and second speeches are delivered in vastly different performative contexts and with different intended effects. There is no judge to be persuaded when Orpheus sits among the trees. Instead, Orpheus sings for himself in a mythological register that only he need understand. This narrative marker suggests that Orpheus' song changes in accordance with the audience.

In addition to performative contrasts, Ovid interposes between each new form of Orpheus' speech a period of muteness for Orpheus' character. There is the stupor that comes over Orpheus in his grief and then, in Book 11, there is the forced silence beneath the Bacchic onrush. The stupor allows one to assume the presence of internal changes which gestate and develop until Orpheus is able to bring them into poetry and show them forth outwardly. The forced silence acts to symbolize the counteracting violence which defeats Orpheus' voice. Ovid also marks changes in Orpheus' voice with periods of silence that act as buffers between each new type of speech.

The final and most significant narrative marker comes in the words that Ovid places in Orpheus' own mouth. Orpheus himself demonstrates awareness of the change taking place in his voice at the outset of the song-cycle. After a brief invocation of the gods, Orpheus offers a sort of *recusatio* on the familiar Augustan model:

> "ab Iove, Musa parens, (cedunt Iovis omnia regno)
> carmina nostra move! Iovis est mihi saepe potestas
> dicta prius: cecini plectro graviore Gigantas
> sparsaque Phlegraeis victricia fulmina campis.
> nunc opus est leviore lyra…."
> 10.148-152

> "O Muse, my mother, let my song begin
> with Jove (he is the king of everything).
> I've often sung his power before: I've told
> the story of the Giants; in solemn mode
> I chanted of those smashing lightning bolts
> that on Phlaegrean fields were hurled by Jove.
> But now my matter needs more tender tones…."[24]

This *recusatio* does not specifically address the change we have been discussing. The words that Orpheus has previously spoken in the *Metamorphoses* do not fit into this mold. Ovid seems to be referring beyond his poem to the older, more religiously grounded Orpheus of tradition. Ovid places this song of Orpheus in juxtaposition to the poetic products which were usually ascribed to him, theogonies and ethical tracts.

When Orpheus recuses himself from his former poetic customs, the muse whom he addresses is his mother, Calliope. As early as Pindar and Terpander she had been recognized as Orpheus' parent and therefore his natural patron. By Ovid's day, she had come to be associated,

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[24] All Latin text in this project, except for that from the Georgics, has been drawn from the Packard Humanities Institute online Latin library. Translations of the *Metamorphoses*, unless otherwise noted, are taken from Mandelbaum's 1993 edition.

in the allotment of different genres to different muses, with the specific provenance of epic

poetry and rhetorical eloquence. This pairing makes her a natural patron of Ovid as well, whose

present poetic endeavor blends those two poetic attitudes so fully. Indeed, Ovid himself will

invoke her in association with this poem later in his career. In *Tristia* 2.1 Ovid is in the process

of making the case to Augustus for the harmlessness of his poems, specifically the

Metamorphoses.

> et vacuo iubeas hinc tibi pauca legi,
> pauca, quibus prima surgens ab origine mundi
> in tua deduxi tempora, Caesar, opus!
> aspicies, quantum dederis mihi pectoris ipse,
> quoque favore animi teque tuosque canam.
> ...
> inter tot populi, tot scriptis, milia nostri,
> quem mea Calliope laeserit, unus ego.
> *Tr*. 2.1.558-568

> If only you would, briefly, revoke your anger
> and read, at your leisure, those few lines—
> really a few—in which, beginning with the Creation,
> I bring the work down
> to your own times, Caesar, you'll learn what guidance, what inspiration
> you've given me, with what warmth I treat you and yours.
> ...
> After writing so much, I'm the only one out of thousands
> done down by my own Muse [Calliope].[25]

Not only does Ovid indicate that he held Calliope in the place of honor when he wrote the

Metamorphoses, he invokes her here again at a moment of rhetorical pleading, not unlike

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[25] Green 2005: 40.

Orpheus' pleading before the chthonic deities. Ovid sees Calliope as an advocate in endeavors of rhetorical persuasion.

If we can assume that Ovid's later identification of Calliope as his own muse was true during the time he wrote the *Metamorphoses*, then this prelude of Orpheus' which sits at the juncture between poetry spoken in Ovid's voice and poetry in Orpheus' acts within the contexts of both Orpheus' life and the poem as a whole. In these lines, Ovid addresses himself to Calliope to acknowledge the change in his poetic persona in the same breath that Orpheus signals a remarkable switch in his own poetic register. Thus the following sequence of mythical loves is distinguished from the preceding speech which Ovid gave in Orpheus' voice.

From Orpheus' perspective, this *recusatio* functions to establish him as a self-aware poetic agency within the text. Orpheus' self-awareness and Ovid's embedded markers of change do not, however, act more as surface effects that acknowledge the change in Orpheus without themselves accounting for it and explaining it. Instead Orpheus' development is largely shaped by shifts in Orpheus' narratological placement relative to 'Ovid.'

Orpheus as Exemplary Poet

Patricia Johnson, in her study *Ovid Before Exile*, begins by asserting Orpheus' own awareness of his change from one poetic style to another. His consciousness of the poetry he is singing is the very point of the whole sequence. She begins from the observation that "Orpheus' first song, for which Ovid has earned much censure, is the only complete success enjoyed by a performing artist in the epic."[26] Johnson goes on to propose that "Orpheus' *poesis* is based

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[26] Johnson 2008: 98.

neither on ethical or aesthetic consideration, as we might expect from the legendary

super-*vates*… but on a canny appraisal of his audience's power, tastes, and expectations; it is,

fundamentally, a political strategy.... When the poet is able to clearly define and identify his

audience, the result is success; otherwise, the results are unpredictable, to say the least."[27] To

understand Orpheus' song is to understand the respective conventions of the environment where

he is singing.[28] Johnson situates Orpheus' speeches in two recognizable settings: the forum of the

underworld and the outdoor theater where Orpheus' song-cycle unfolds. Orpheus is successful

when he adjusts his poetry for the pallid chthonic royals but fails when he neglects to account for

the audience of married women who take offense at his poetry of pederastic love.[29] Her theory

that Ovid considers poetic success to consist of the ability to modulate one's speech in

accordance with the tastes of the audience assumes that Ovid considers Orpheus' success to be of

any poetic value.

The tone in which the katabasis is delivered, however, resists Johnson's reading of

Orpheus as an exemplary poetic-figure. Orpheus does not assert himself as a paradigmatic voice

of the poet in this section. Far from suggesting that the passage contains Ovid's notion of the

most successful attitude for a poet in a violent world, Ovid is careful to phrase Orpheus' first

speech and the stories which surround it so as consistently to undercut the whole pattern of the

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[27] Johnson 2008: 98.

[28] Johnson writes, "The term *theatrum* is applied to Orpheus's natural audience (11.22), and when Orpheus is destroyed in book 11 he is likened in a simile to a stag torn apart in the amphitheater.... This image recalls Horace's complaints to Augustus in *Epistles* 2.1… about the theatrical tastes of the Roman audience, who prefer spectacles to poetry readings" (110).

[29] Johnson: "Orpheus tragically miscalculates the nature, or rather the extent, of his audience. … His plea for daughters and fathers to stay away has not been answered. … Orpheus's audience abruptly changes at the outset of book 11, when the *nurus Ciconum*… spot Orpheus" (112). Johnson dismisses the difficulty posed by the explicit absence of the *nurus Ciconum* from the aural space of the song-cycle by proposing that "they form, in essence, an audience before and after the fact" (113).

myth. Johnson's construction of the marker of exemplarity for poet figures within the world of the *Metamorphoses* actually goes against the grain of Ovid's patterning of the story.

Through analysis of Orpheus' underworld-speech and the frame in which Ovid places it, the validity of Johnson's metric for poetic success within the *Metamorphoses* will be reviewed. The way that Ovid implies his definition of good poetry through the interrelation between his voice and that of Orpheus will emerge in my argument through contrast with Johnson's thesis. When Orpheus begins to speak, his words are not particularly lyrical or inspired. His speech is conventional at best.

> "Si licet et falsi positis ambagibus oris
> vera loqui sinitis, non huc, ut opaca viderem
> Tartara, descendi, nec uti villosa colubris
> terna Medusaei vincirem guttura monstri."
> 10.19-22
>
> "If I may speak the truth to you,
> without the subterfuge that liars use,
> I've not come here to see dark Tartarus,
> nor have I come to chain the monster-son
> Medusa bore, that horror whose three necks
> bear bristling serpents."

Apart from the style, Orpheus' first concern is to distance himself from the heroes who have plundered the underworld in the past. He frames his own venture somewhere between heroic transgressions and the stroll of a simple sightseer whose only threat is that he might see something that he shouldn't. Ovid is pushing his myth out of the heroic and religious context.[30]

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[30] Charles Segal is convinced that "Ovid was deliberately setting out to be 'anticlassical' and antiheroic (1989: 55).

Orpheus proceeds to lay out his claim to Eurydice with a tone-deaf petition for the deities

to remember the love which bound them: he evokes the power of the passion which spurred

Pluto to rape and imprison miserable Proserpina in the underworld.[31] Eventually the speech

concludes with a rash promise.

> "quodsi fata negant veniam pro coniuge, certum est
> nolle redire mihi: leto gaudete duorum."
> 10.38-39

> "But if the Fates deny my wife this gift,
> then I shall stay here, too, I won't go back;
> and you can then rejoice—you'll have two deaths."

The sincerity of this pledge need not be doubted. Instead, what Orpheus will lack is the courage

to carry out this suicide. When Vergil tells this story he elides Orpheus' words and chooses only

to suggest their power by describing the reaction of the Eumenides, Cerberus and Ixion.[32] Vergil

shows that the animal, the human and the divine hellish denizens are all equally affected because

the power of this art is auratic not argumentative. Ovid not only renders the speech itself but

enlarges the catalog of the audience, listing all five famous sufferers and even apostrophizing

Sisyphus sitting on his stone.[33] By giving the full picture of singer, song and audience Ovid

dispels all the mist of mystery and invites us to laugh at the obvious inadequacy of Orpheus'

song.

Ovid endeavors to depict Orpheus in a negative light both through his cynical narratorial

voice and through his motivic patterning of the myth itself. Not only does 'Ovid' treat Orpheus

cynically, but Ovid patterns the story to suggest further the inadequacy of this hero. These

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[31] Ov. *Met*. 10.26-29.
[32] Verg. G. 4.481-484
[33] Tantalus, Ixion, Tityus, the Danaids, Sisyphus as a well as the Eumenides are all stunned by his song (10.41-46).

confluent strategies can be seen through a comparison of these final lines delivered in Orpheus'

own voice with the pair of similes that follow upon the moment of Eurydice's second death.

When Orpheus has just recognized the ramifications of his backward glance, he is compared to

two obscure figures from myth.

> Non aliter stupuit gemina nece coniugis Orpheus,
> quam tria qui timidus, medio portante catenas,
> colla canis vidit, quem non pavor ante reliquit,
> quam natura prior saxo per corpus oborto,
> quique in se crimen traxit voluitque videri
> Olenos esse nocens, tuque, o confisa figurae,
> infelix Lethaea, tuae, iunctissima quondam
> pectora, nunc lapides, quos umida sustinet Ide.
> 10.64-71
>
> And when that second death had struck his wife,
> the poet—stunned—was like the man whose fright
> on seeing Cerberus, three-headed hound
> enchained by Hercules, was so complete
> that he was not set free from fear until,
> his human nature gone, he had become
> a body totally transformed—to stone.
> Or one might liken Orpheus instead
> to Olenus, who took the blame himself
> for his Lethaea's arrogance when she—
> unfortunately—boasted of her beauty:
> Lethaea, you and he were once two hearts
> whom love had joined; but now you are two rocks
> that Ido holds on its well-watered slopes.

These two similes make direct reference to the beginning and end of Orpheus' speech and

cooperate with those passages to weave Ovid's contempt for Orpheus into the symbolic

backdrop of the poem. As John Heath observes, each simile functions "to direct the attentive

reader past Orpheus' artistry towards his inherently unheroic nature."[34] Orpheus had made a point

of distinguishing himself from Hercules so as to paint his initiative in a more diplomatic light.

Now 'Ovid' seizes upon this opening and invokes Orpheus' contrast for an inverse and negative

purpose. Orpheus cannot even be likened to the hero because the hero is one who succeeds.

'Ovid' further mocks the dynamics of vision upon which the tragedy of the myth hinges.

Orpheus' loving gaze at Eurydice and the resulting emotional shock are recast as the inevitable

danger to a timid mortal when he enters the realm of serious and heroic mythical business.

Whether or not this seems fair, 'Ovid' will yet go further in his reduction of Orpheus.

The second simile focuses on Orpheus' shortcomings not as a hero but as a lover. In the

closing lines of his speech, Orpheus had promised to end his life if Eurydice was not returned to

him. Of course she is granted a return, which eventually serves only to highlight the insecurity

and lack of control that will causes her second death. Instead of punishing himself for Eurydice's

death which is now definitively his own fault, his response will be to freeze and take no action.

'Ovid' seizes on that hypocrisy and with intentional inaccuracy compares Orpheus and Eurydice

to a pair of lovers who die together, the man nobly sacrificing himself for the sins of his wife.

Orpheus at this very moment is show himself incapable of such an act. But the biting irony of the

imprecision goes deeper than that. Eurydice has shown no pride in her beauty to offend a

goddess as Lethaea had. The closest parallel sin in the passage belongs rather to Orpheus himself

whose turn backwards defied Proserpina's dictum. If the first simile acts to place Orpheus

squarely in the human sphere, the second demotes him further to an ignoble status among men.

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[34] Heath 1996: 354.

Johnson is wrong, then, to claim that the divergent styles which Orpheus employs mark him as exemplary. Ovid has gone further than to humanize Orpheus' myth; he seems to have trivialized it. The performance of the song-cycle does not *redeem* Orpheus. Even after his song, the final appearance of Orpheus recasts all the previous drama of his myth as pointless human vanity.

> hic modo coniunctis spatiantur passibus ambo,
> nunc praecedentem sequitur, nunc praevius anteit
> Eurydicenque suam iam tuto respicit Orpheus.
> 11.64-66

> And there they walk
> together now: at times they are side by side;
> at times she walks ahead with him behind;
> at other times it's Orpheus who leads—
> but without any need to fear should he
> turn round to see his own Eurydice.

When marital bliss can be so cheerfully recovered in Hell, the pathos of Orpheus' grief and the entirety of his song-cycle are made to seem like self-inflicted pain. The life-or-death gravity of his backward glance is likewise robbed of its significance when both parties have landed in Hell. Pathos gives way to naive flirtation.[35] Ovid seems to seize with relish these chances to deflate the myth itself, even as he, speaking through Orpheus, dwells so long and in so many lines of exquisite poetry on the psychological effects wrought by the *katabasis* and its outcomes.

The trivialization results partly from the narrating 'Ovid' and partly from the words and actions of Orpheus himself. Not only is Orpheus' first speech inferior, but his "standing" with Ovid, his "reputation," is poorer. It is not exactly that Orpheus has lost Ovid's respect; rather the

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[35] Segal takes the opposite view, calling this postscript "the tender, human ending of his story, the reunion of Orpheus and Eurydice," which "shows us that love fulfilled only in a world beyond our own" (1989: 69).

myth of the *katabasis* seems to be less interesting. When Ovid mocks Orpheus, Orpheus is made fully to merit that disdain. Inversely, when Orpheus begins to sing beautifully, it is Ovid's own new excitement for the dramatic possibilities which make possible an utter change in Orpheus, a new depth of feeling.

Perhaps the rendition by Vergil was too recent and authoritative for Ovid to want to commit himself fully to the myth. But I would argue that the distance at which Ovid holds this myth suggests something deeper about Ovid's opinion on the power of poetry which that distance implies and indeed necessitates. Ovid must include the *katabasis* in order to set up the symbolically rich scene of Orpheus in mourning that will result from it, but he undercuts the scene in order to portray its optimism as ridiculous. Poetry, Ovid implies, cannot contest reality; poetry becomes meaningful when it has accepted the reality of the grief which inspired it.

Orpheus as Failed Poet

Eleanor Leach, in her article "Ekphrasis and the Theme of Artistic Failure in Ovid's Metamorphoses," proposes a reading of the arc of Orpheus' story which positions Orpheus as a model of poetic failure, opposite to Johnson's exemplarity model. Through a sustained critique of Leach's reading of the Orpheus sequence, I will propose in this section a framework for an interpretation of Orpheus' song-cycle that further illustrates Ovid's views on the purpose and nature of poetry.

This chapter began with Leach's observation of Ovid's "emphasis upon the personality of the artist."[36] She goes on to argue that Ovid's intention in drawing Orpheus into such high relief

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[36] Leach 1974: 106.

is not to illustrate the single most important skill with which a poet might secure himself in a political world (as Johnson proposes the accommodation to the tastes of the audience to be); rather Leach places Ovid's Orpheus at the head of the sequence of failures by artists and their products to achieve any lasting order within the world. Ovid shows that sooner or later all forms of security and order must break down, sometimes to disastrous effect. "Personal autonomy and the freedom to maintain an orderly vision from a position of personal detachment: these prerogatives of art are denied to the artists of the *Metamorphoses* whose very attempt to control their world leave them the more open to the violence of uncontrolled experience."[37] Ovid's universe refuses to allow the protective satisfaction of art to be anything but temporary.

In the *Metamorphoses*, the "only consistent motivation is unchanging change. No other single thematic pattern governs the world's history from its beginning to the poet's own time."[38] Leach depicts Orpheus as a poet who attempts to defy that principle of flux in his poetry. She analyses the song of Orpheus as his flight, under the cloaking ideality of his artwork, from the complexities of the world and his personal failures within it.

Although Orpheus' self-induced trance leaves him oblivious to dangers beyond the songs' purview, Orpheus, in Leach's reading, does not really cause his demise. Instead, the disaster is inevitable and organic in the very practice of art. She is correct that poetry will inevitably fail if its goal is simply the creation of order. Orpheus' fate exemplifies her model of the progressive disempowerment of the artist and the inverse ascension of humans who use brute force—such as the Bacchants who slaughter him or a hero such as Hercules. Ovid's placement of Hercules in the book immediately preceding Orpheus implicitly compares Hercules'

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[37] Leach 1974: 111.
[38] Leach 1974: 134.

achievement in life and eventual deification to Orpheus' sad fate. This notion of failure was certainly important to Ovid's frame for Orpheus' song-cycle, but it remains to be seen whether or not order through art was Orpheus' sole intention and goal.

The failure of the artist and his art is inevitable for Leach and it can come in many forms. Leach attributes Orpheus' artistic demise to a tension within his psychology between the roles of artist and lover.[39] This conclusion is supported by her reading of Orpheus' song-cycle psychologically. Leach sees the movement from myth to myth within Orpheus' song-cycle as a gradual departure from the productive relationship between artist and artwork to the point where Orpheus subjects himself to the powers of Venus and "places himself in [her] hands."[40] She finds Orpheus to be the paradigmatic example of the artist who loses sight of the nature of his own art. Although Leach remarks upon this tension between allegiance to love and allegiance to art, she assumes that the responsibility for suggesting that contradiction belongs to Ovid and that Orpheus himself is unaware of the tensions within his song.

This sequence of myths responds to the episodes of Orpheus' life like a series of variations on an initial motif; in each iteration a new emphasis is brought out and a new perspective on Orpheus' actions is proposed. But because Leach does not consider that perspective to belong fully to Orpheus himself, she does not trace each and every variation back to the original and examine what it suggests about Orpheus' views on his own past. Instead she reduces Orpheus' song to a complex frame for the Pygmalion myth, assuming, because Pygmalion looks most like Orpheus, that that story contains his central pronouncement on his

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[39] She writes, "Pygmalion has lost all sense of the self-sufficiency of his art. Unable at last to find any solution to the stasis created by the conflict between his art and his personal emotions, he places himself in the hands of Venus" (124).
[40] Leach 1974: 124.

own situation.[41] Having abstracted the story of Pygmalion from the rest of the song Leach argues that Orpheus wants nothing more than to live in the rose-tinted reflection of his own life that his poetry creates.

Leach views Orpheus as distracted and lacking self-awareness, citing the "puzzling discrepancy" between Orpheus' programmatic statement and the actual subject of the songs. It suggests to her "that Orpheus' thoughts and purpose wander as he sings."[42] Leach's Orpheus is supposed to have identified himself with Pygmalion, as his primary fictional surrogate, in a blind grasp at wish fulfillment. Leach only gestures to the complicated architecture of the song-cycle as a whole and does not consider the purpose of each new myth. Taken in the context in which Orpheus places it, Pygmalion's myth cannot seem to present so guilelessly Orpheus' single wish. It is only one stage in a progression of myths.

Synthesis and Conclusion

Ultimately, neither metric that these two critics use to determine between the success or failure of Orpheus' poetry satisfactorily recognizes Ovid's intentions for the Orpheus who sings the song-cycle. Johnson judges poetry by its satisfaction of the audience's desires; she judges the poet on his ability to anticipate those desires. Leach's criteria are derived from the great conflict at the heart of Ovid's poem between order and chaos. She hypothesizes that Ovid sees the

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[41] Leach repeats this often: "The most I think that can be said for the story is that Orpheus considers it ideal." She views Pygmalion as Orpheus' attempt to find the security he could not get in real life. "The story appears to serves as Orpheus' own wish-projection as the one love story that he finds ideal in its embodiment of the final lover's triumph that he himself failed to sustain. His apparent identification with his own protagonist shows how his inclinations are tending from a dissatisfying dedication to art towards a gratifying love." ... "Although [Pygmalion] seems to succeed where Orpheus failed, his singular, escapist love is analogous to Orpheus' own withdrawal from the world of experience into an imaginary world of art where love is treated vicariously" (123-125).
[42] Leach 1974: 122.

attempt by poetry to create order as a futile effort doomed to repeated failure. Certainly the pattern of Orpheus' life supports Leach's conclusion that Ovid held to the joyless principle that art will always fail. But the question left to ask is what Orpheus himself believed; whether he himself saw the world as Ovid did and, if so, how he came to see it that way.

In their appreciation of Orpheus as narratorial persona that Ovid constructed separately from his own, these two critics err in different ways. Johnson's primary interest in the success of the *katabasis* downplays the greater symbolic weight that Ovid places upon Orpheus' second song. Leach makes a dissimilar mistake of focusing too intently on a single story in Orpheus' song-cycle. By reading out from the center of Orpheus' song-cycle, she divorces Pygmalion's myth from its context amidst Orpheus' other myths and thus loses sight of the complexities of each myth's relationship to the poet whom Ovid portrays as its creator. This study will take the same appreciation for Orpheus' artistic sophistication which Johnson allows him and apply it to the part of his story that Ovid develops more fully: the song-cycle.

In light of these critical approaches, my proposal is that Orpheus' song-cycle consists of a reflective contemplation and conscious working through of his own experiences and reactions. This reading would assign to Orpheus, at least in the section of his song-cycle, an artistic agency akin to Ovid's own. The collision of Orpheus' and 'Ovid's' poetic styles need not result in the exclusive dominance of 'Ovid': a dynamic like that which Leach sometimes seems to assume, in which 'Ovid' acts like an occupying and possessing spirit risen from Orpheus' unconscious to control him and expose all his personal paradoxes.[43]

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[43] The closest Ovid comes to using Orpheus in this way is at 10.305-306. Orpheus congratulates himself for his geographical distance from the land of Cyprus. Because the Thracians were known for their wild passions and backwards behavior, these lines seem to show Ovid using his control over Orpheus for a tongue-in-cheek joke about oblivious and hypocritical self-congratulation. See Anderson 1972: 503 for Orpheus as the dramatic type of the "hypocritical moralist."

The approach to be followed in the following chapters will instead see the difficulty in distinguishing between 'Ovid' and Orpheus in this part of the poem, as suggesting a synthesis by which Orpheus' own agency is lifted to the conscious status of 'Ovid's' within the text. When Orpheus adopts the poetic manner in which Ovid presents himself throughout the *Metamorphoses*, Orpheus' speech reaches the highest plateau of poetry possible within the poem; his poetry now acts like 'Ovid's' to define the contents of time and space. When we read Orpheus' song-cycle it appears just as "real" as the world that surrounds it. With this reality, the interior workings of Orpheus' mind are made manifest.

In this endeavor, Orpheus' sole intentions are not, as Leach has portrayed them, to protect himself from the outside world by making it make sense. Orpheus is attempting the same thing that Ovid does with the *Metamorphoses* as a whole. Ovid declares that he will sing a song which moves gradually *ad mea tempora*.[44] Just as Ovid locates himself historically in the vast world of myth by moving temporally, Orpheus enacts a process of self-recognition, moving symbolically inwards and self-wards through a sequence of mythical returns to the events of his life.

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[44] The full line goes *ad mea perpetuum deducite tempora carmen!* (may/ the song I sing be seamless as its way/ weaves from the world's beginning to our day! 1.4).

2. Internal Narrators Compared

<u>Structure and Conflict</u>

In the first chapter, the relationship between 'Ovid' and Orpheus was analyzed in order to locate Orpheus within the narrative space of the poem and his poetry within Ovid's immanent view on the purposes of poetry. The first chapter laid a theoretical groundwork for this reading by considering the nature of Orpheus' narrative persona and the incongruity between two prior metrics for the success of Orpheus' poetry. A link between the first chapter's analysis of narratorial conflict and the third chapter's exploration of Orpheus' internal conflict will here be constructed through the assessment of other episodes of conflict expressed indirectly through the creation of art.

Progressing from the metatextual conflict of the first chapter toward Orpheus' inner tensions in the final chapter, episodes in this investigation will be arranged in a progression according to the nature of their utterance into the space of the poem. On the one hand I will consider speech that is broadcast and oriented by the speaker towards an exterior audience. Ovid will often place multiple internal narrators of this sort in conversation. In audience-oriented speech, the implicit relationship between a narrator's outlook and the stories she tells allows for tension to arise between competing worldviews. The majority of the chapter will be concerned with this form of speech and its uses. On the other hand, I will introduce another type of internal narrator common in the *Metamorphoses* whose private speech, though she does speak it aloud, is uttered for no other audience than the speaker herself. In conclusion, the argument will turn towards Orpheus' song-cycle. The unique position in which this speaker, Orpheus, places himself relative to a real or imagined audience, as well as the unique structure of his poetry, will

be defined as an amalgam of characteristics drawn from both the audience-oriented and the self-oriented forms of speech.

It became apparent that the balance between of narratorial voices shifts throughout Book 10 as Ovid distances himself from the myth or pulls closer. During Orpheus' song-cycle, the closeness of these personae verges on coalescence even as the distinctive individuality of Orpheus paradoxially begins to manifest itself most in his poems. The continuity of style between Ovid's narration of Orpheus' life and Orpheus' narration of his song-cycle does not, however, constitute a unique relationship between 'Ovid' and his internal narrators within the *Metamorphoses*. Internal narrators of mythical metamorphoses do, as a rule, speak as Ovid does while yet having their own concerns. Orpheus is unique, however, among narrators in one important respect. The *Metamorphoses* is replete with persons who recount their past or explain their and their families' misfortunes but Orpheus structures his story, like Ovid does the *Metamorphoses*, as a sequence of diverse stories.[45] It is also less common for a narrator to tell stories in which the speaker himself plays no part.

At the close of the previous chapter I adopted an approach to Orpheus' song-cycle that finds Orpheus to be a consistent and individual narratorial presence with a personally motivated program for his poetry and a good deal of self-awareness. The argument of this chapter will take up Orpheus as a standard against which to consider other internal narrators. Figures who use myths allusively to express morals or who displace their own grief by telling of the travails of

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[45]Possible sequences to be considered as exceptions might be the Muses' recounting of their song against the Pierides and Nestor's narrative of Caenis/Caenus and the Lapiths and the Centaurs in Book 12. In both of these cases, however, the associations between each individual episode are much closer narratively and much less varied thematically. See Nagle 1989: 106, 116.

others offer insight not only on the position of Orpheus within the epic but on Ovid's ideas of the nature of poetry.

Competing Aesthetics, Competing Identities

Contests between artists provide the starting point for this survey. In art-competitions, Ovid sets two internal narrators side by side, allowing their art to speak for them, translating antagonism and antinomy into the art itself. A pair of artistic competitions in Books 5 and 6 models Ovid's strategy of balancing two artworks in a thesis and antithesis relationship expressive of the conflict between the two artists, their ethics and their aesthetics. This effect is achieved whether the narrator speaks through poetry, like Orpheus, or in another medium. When Arachne and Minerva pit their weaving skills in competition, the artwork that each one creates challenges the other's not only on the level of skill or elaborateness. This conflict, and the poetry contest between the Muses and Pierides which is narrated immediately before it, evoke two opposite worldviews and aesthetics.

The mortal and immortal perspectives on the world that Ovid has created in the preceding books is revealed through the art that two representatives create. Arachne is a woman whose art alone marks her as famous.[46] Her need for a "senseless success"[47] over Minerva results from her desire to claim the skill of weaving as hers alone. She refuses to perform the ancient commonplace of humble self-effacement before the gods. When Minerva responds to this challenge and they each take their seats at opposite looms, Arachne engineers an artwork that justifies her rejection of a subservient relationship to the gods. She embroiders her tapestry with

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[46] *non illa loco nec origine gentis/ clara, sed arte fuit…* (...renowned—but certainly/ not for her birthplace of her family... 6.7-8).
[47] *stolidae cupidine palmae* (6.50).

a series of divine rapes which Ovid describes in a breathless list, one following trippingly upon another (6.103-128). By pointing out the crazed depravity of the divine family this mortal questions why these tyrannical gods deserve her deference.

Arachne stands for a bewildered and resentful human experience. She speaks for the frustrated anger of the myriad mourning families whose daughters have been defiled by gods. Ovid has acknowledged their grief throughout the first two books, but the purest expression of his appreciation of its psychological effects is related through Arachne. For example, Arachne harmonizes with the Ovidian narrator by depicting the very same story of Jove and Europa with which Ovid had ended Book 2.[48] Where Ovid only quietly introduces the presence of grief, Arachne demands focus on the gods' injustices and derives her own moral conclusions from it. Sympathy with the mortals is implicit in Ovid's description of the grief of Europa's father Agenor, but outright repudiation of the gods cannot be voiced by an overarching narratorial perspective because Ovid encompasses the attitudes of both participants.

After his ekphrasis on Minerva's tapestry, Ovid describes Arachne's work. The mortal is responding to a tapestry that focused on the beneficence of the gods even as it peripherally warned of their terrible power to maintain the order they have established.[49] Minerva's central panel depicts the presentation of gifts with which she and Neptune vied for patronage over the city of Athens; she brackets this with four minatory vignettes of various gods punishing hybris. Ovid describes these scenes with clarity, distinctness and symmetrical balance:

> ut tamen exemplis intellegat aemula laudis,
> quod pretium speret pro tam furialibus ausis
> quattuor in partes certamina quattuor addit,

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[48] Ovid first tells the story of Europa and the bull at 2.836-3.7. Arachne compresses it at 6.103-107.
[49] 6.70-102.

> clara colore suo, brevibus distincta sigillis.
> 6.83-86

> To these, Minerva added at each corner—
> so that the girl be warned of what awaits her
> audacity—a painted scene of contest.
> each pictured warning had its own bright colors
> and figures—each distinct—in miniature.

Discrete episodes each hold their own purpose and cumulatively remind Arachne of the dominant power structure which shapes the world, while attempting to recast the functioning of those structures as the natural execution of justice. The tapestries thereby serve as oblique and symbolic speech. Arachne taunts and Minerva threatens.

These competitors' statements are not simply statement on power; or rather, the position of each contestant relative to power also determines her position on the aesthetic and formal qualities of the artwork as well. That is, the conflict between a mortal and an immortal becomes the site for Ovid to express an issue of style which he himself would have faced in the composition of his text. Indeed an aesthetic conflict on the level of form aggravates the friction between characters within the text by compounding it with metatextual dissension. There are opposite artistic styles here. Minerva prizes clear, classical and geometric structure. Arachne creates the impression of unstructured experience, an art that is experienced like time itself, passing on imperceptibly. Each of these styles are mixed together in Ovid's poem but here are held apart in dichotomy. Arachne's tapestry is compared to the gradient of a colorful sunset:

> in quo diversi niteant cum mille colores,
> transitus ipse tamen spectantia lumina fallit:
> usque adeo, quod tangit, idem est; tamen ultima distant.
> 6.65-67

> There a thousand different colors glow,
> and yet the eye cannot detect the point
> of passage from one color to the next,
> for each adjacent color is too like
> its neighbor, although at the outer ends,
> the colors shown are clearly different.

The image of a gradual fade between colors conveys a subtle metatextual awareness on the part

of Ovid. It perfectly captures the impression of certain stretches of the *Metamorphoses* where

story after story offers subtle variation upon the same theme. The Hellenistic arrangement of

plundering gods spread across this shimmering ground contrasts with Minerva's classical

orderliness and rigid structure.

Arachne and Minerva have transposed their outlook on the world into aesthetic terms.

'Ovid' however holds back from an aesthetic commitment one way or the other, standing above

both viewpoints.

> Non illud Pallas, non illud carpere Livor
> possit opus: doluit successu flava virago
> et rupit pictas, caelestia crimina, vestes.
> 6.129-130
>
> Not even Pallas, even Jealousy,
> could find a flaw in that girl's artistry;
> but her success incensed the warrior-goddess.
> Minerva tore to pieces that bright cloth
> whose colors showed the crimes the gods had wrought.

The editorializing and intrusive presence which 'Ovid' displayed in relation to the heroic

Orpheus of the *katabasis* is here absent, but the resolution of this myth distinctly prefigures

Orpheus' fate among the Bacchants. Just as a sudden outburst of violence ultimately destroys

Orpheus, Minerva's pretense to order abruptly explodes in turbulent wrath against Arachne. These moments of violence do not necessarily reveal the workings of a clear structure of justice in Ovid's world. Instead this violence represents an inevitable eruption in the regular order and natural progress of the world which Ovid has created. Arachne's transgressive act is not so much punished by an action of divine justice as it is met by another more powerful transgression. The violence which ends Orpheus, on the other hand, does not derive from a deity. Instead it is an expression of the same cruel logic of transgressive act for transgressive act. His outrage against womankind leads to their outrage against him.

Minerva apprehends the subversive value of Arachne's composition. In that sense, Arachne's tapestry is successful as an art-piece: it gets its point across. But this evidence of mortal powers which match the divine must be destroyed. When Minerva loses her temper, her anger is first directed against the artwork, not the artist. As William Anderson phrases it in his commentary to Ovid, "Victory goes to the power of the goddess, not to her art."[50] Minerva's power does not destroy Arachne. On the contrary, Minerva prevents Arachne's self-destruction. Arachne was already attempting to commit suicide by hanging when Minerva, in a gesture which Ovid attributes to pity, transforms her into a spider.[51] Seeing her tapestry in tatters, Arachne is doomed by her self-identification with her artwork. With the artwork's obliteration, the artist is also rent apart.

Minerva prevents Arachne's total dissolution and forces her to practice her art eternally. Perhaps Minerva's act is born of a sympathy for the psychological bond between artist and art-piece. Minerva's transformation of the artist allows for her creation to continue but prevents

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[50] Anderson 1968: 103.
[51] *Pallas miserata* ("Minerva, taking pity," 6.135).

her from ever mounting a similarly threatening art-piece. Arachne, as spider, creates in a benign

mode, outside of the human context, art that is deprived of political or aesthetic content.

Orpheus' own fate recalls Arachne's. The perpetual but indecipherable song which issues from

his severed head translates Arachne's physical product into musical terms.

In the story of the contest between the Muses and the Pierides, which directly precedes

Arachne's story, a similar fate has already befallen the mortal contestants. Minerva has come to

visit the Muses, and as they tell her a story, the Pierides appear suddenly in their new form as

magpies. Their chirps interrupt and redirect the Muses' narration to Minerva. Minerva is struck

by how like the human voice is the cry of these birds.[52] Ovid describes the Pierides' song with

some sympathy: *numeroque novem sua fata querentes/ institerant ramis imitantes omnia picae.*

(There were nine/ who, all aligned, lamented their sad fate;/ whatever sounds they like, they

imitate, 5.299-300). The Pierides are caught in a painful trap, needing to voice their grief but

unable to express themselves. The pathos of this condition is ignored by the Muses, who explain

the transformed state of their competitors with derision.

> "dumque volunt plangi, per bracchia mota levatae
> aere pendebant, nemorum convicia, picae.
> Nunc quoque in alitibus facundia prisca remansit
> raucaque garrulitas studiumque inmane loquendi."
> 5.676-679
>
> "And when they try to beat
> their breasts, they all are borne by flapping wings;
> they fly into the air as insolent
> magpies, the mocking dwellers in the woods.
> yet, though they now are winged, their endless need
> for sharp, impulsive, harsh, derisive speech
> remains: their old loquacity—they keep."

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[52] *Hominemque putat Iove nata locutum* ("The daughter of Jove took it for human speech," 5.298).

The Muses do acknowledge the Pierides' condition of stifled expression but they draw instead a perverse pleasure from it. Just as Ovid had presented with an even hand the opposite perspectives of Arachne and Minerva, he here again offers both sides. And still, in the narrative, no synthesis between the two perspectives is reached. The antagonists never see eye to eye. The two countervailing winds simply blow themselves out. It is apparent from the brief recapitulation which the Muses offer of the song to which the Pierides had challenged them that the same tension as was observed in the contest of Arachne and Minerva existed between these mortals and immortals. The gods triumph in their dispute with the mortals but no resolved and happy equilibrium between human and divine nature is reached. In fact the Muses' intention is only to silence dissent. The very narratorial circumstances of this episode compound that censorship. When the Pierides cannot speak, the only voice to explain what they have endured is the voice of their enemy.

Their contest offers a complementary example of the way in which the form of a poem can itself express an attitude. The Muses tell Minerva how the Pierides sang a slanderous song of the gods all in flight, hiding in Egypt from the insurgent Giants. The much longer song with which the Muses respond is based in large part on the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*. Not only does its narrative show the gods in a positive light as lawgivers, the genre of their song, the very choice of a votive ode to Ceres,[53] over and apart from the actual content of that ode, establishes their art as participating in the cultic construction of the divine order of the poem.

In these two myths, Ovid has aligned aesthetic structures with cosmic dynamics and proposed a radical identification of psychological integrity with the integrity of the artwork. The

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[53] Ovid tells this story elsewhere in the *Fasti* 4.393-620 (Nagle 1989: 108).

nullification of the human is as inevitable and final as is the emptying out of their artwork. When Orpheus' head and lyre wail on after his death, expressing nothing more than *flebile nescio quid*, the fate of his body and his art closely resemble that of Arachne and the Pierides. Orpheus' own amalgam of political and aesthetic content is neutralized. The art of all these creators is reduced, by its transformation into nature, to the inarticulate pathos of the ambient world.

Achelous, Lelex and the Synthesis between Opposed Artists

In Books 8 and 9, the interaction between Achelous and the band of warriors led by Theseus appears like the optimistic obverse of the antagonism between mortal and divine that Minerva and the Muses embody. Unlike the Muses, Achelous assumes a positive attitude toward mortals.[54] He receives Theseus and his companions into his cavernous home for hospitable shelter from a storm. The stories which he tells are themselves acts of generosity. Just as the Muses told their stories to satisfy Minerva, Achelous responds to Theseus' curiosity. Although this is not an instance of competition—Achelous and the men are simply whiling away the time until the storm passes—Ovid utilizes a conflict embedded within the stories his narrators tell to imply the natural potential for hostility to arise between mortals and immortals. The optimism of this passage lies with the success that these stories have in averting the danger and the eruption of violence.

After Achelous has recounted a pair of miraculous transformations of women into islands, one of Theseus' comrades, Pirithous, indiscreetly vocalizes doubt that the gods are really that powerful.[55] His words shock the company.

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[54] 8.545ff.
[55] Achelous' first story begins at 8.575ff. Pirithous expresses doubt 8.599f.

Amnis ab his tacuit. factum mirabile cunctos
moverat: inridet credentes, utque deorum
spretor erat mentisque ferox, Ixione natus
"ficta refers nimiumque putas, Acheloe, potentes
esse deos," dixit "si dant adimuntque figuras."
obstipuere omnes nec talia dicta probarunt …
8.599-604

The river-god was done. The miracle
that he'd recounted stirred the hearts of all
but one—Pirithous, Ixion's son.
He found his friends too gullible; he scorned
such tales; he mocked the gods; he disbelieved
and doubted most ferociously; "But these
are fictions: Achelous, you concede
too much if you allow the gods to be
so powerful, if you think they can give
and take away the forms of things." Such words
shocked all that company—no one concurred….

Immediately after the *faux pas* by Pirithous, Lelex, an older man, counsels him to consider the flood narrative of Baucis and Philemon.[56] The Lelex and Achelous' pair of cautionary tales offer moral rectifications that are similar in intention to Minerva's tapestry. Their songs are not however opposed statements of incompatible worldviews. Instead, each one portrays the same worldview to persuade the implicit opposition of Pirithous. This episode is remarkable for its depiction of an instance of successful persuasion through song.

Through his story Lelex demonstrates the power of the gods and specifically their judicial exercise of that power for judgment on who is morally good and bad. In this story, the relationship between gods and mortals in which the company of Theseus finds itself is inverted.

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[56] 8.606.

Baucis and Philemon, despite their poverty, were the only mortals to welcome Mercury and Jove and for that generosity they are rewarded and spared the death by inundation which all their flinty neighbors suffer.[57] Lelex intervenes with a story that serves both to caution the mortal Pirithous about the dangers of impiety, and to soothe the offended deity. Lelex uses the story to demonstrates to Achelous that he and his comrades are willing to work within a normal polytheistic bond and power structure. Jove is introduced as a paradigm of kindness.

His tactic is ultimately successful since the mortals are allowed to go on their way. First, though, Achelous responds with an aggressive tale of an undaunted sinner who refuses to acknowledge warning after warning. Erysichthon, in Achelous' story, is so hungry to commit violence and injustice that, after his avarice for evil has wrecked his life and led him to enslave his children, he begins to devour his own body. Achelous enters into a dialogue of indirect speech, implicitly acknowledging the cautionary function of Lelex' response and foreshadowing the consequence that would follow its disregard. Achelous seems to exercise the irritation that Pirithous caused through a fictional outlet and exhausts his impulse for action.

This exchange of songs offers a rare example of properly interpreted art. Each participant and the audience of Theseus' men whom they speak before seem to understand one another. When violence suddenly begins to menace this peaceful scene, the narrator's attempt to transpose it into a fictional world succeeds in neutralizing the threat.

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[57] 8.681f.

The Minyades and the Insularity of Art

With a careful narrative inversion of the outcome of the dialogue with Achelous, Ovid shows that the displacement of action into words can also have an opposite and negative effect. Achelous and Lelex curbed menacing danger by containment in song. The Minyades, on the the other hand, discharge too much energy into their fictions and end up idle. They commit a similar sin as Pirithous', doubting a god's power—in this case that of Bacchus.[58] Ultimately their fate bears a close resemblance to Orpheus'. Although Orpheus is punished by rogue Bacchants whom Dionysus disowns and it is Liber himself who makes an example of the daughters of Minyas, the same pattern of demented intensity shattering a shelter of song shapes both myths. Orpheus and the Minyades each sit apart lost in their song, passive and defenseless against the world around them. The Minyades' fate does not involve continual singing. Bacchus refuses them their desired separation, making their cloistered room burst forth as a steamy forest and transforming the women themselves into bats.[59] He does not perceive their sin in the creation of art so much as in the circumstances in which they do it; theirs is a sin of seclusion.

The Minyades craft stories to the same purpose as the god and heroes assembled in Achelous' cave. They pass the time and exchange lessons through myths which model and remodel their own situation. Each of the three stories told by one of the sisters modulates a tension between libido and chastity, exposure and concealment. But as one responds to the other the Minyades become increasingly conservative and terrified of the world beyond their room. Instead of mediating between the wild world and the insecurities of humanity, the songs act to reinforce their fears and increase the Minyades' isolation. Their absence of transgressive

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[58] 4.1-4.
[59] 4.389ff.

behavior itself becomes transgressive. The Minyades' art teaches them to reject the changeful course of nature.

The first unnamed sister begins by expressing a certain amount of prurient curiosity through her stories. She tells the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, two lovers contained within their houses, who can only communicate through a chink in the wall that separates them. Their hidden love compels them to attempt a secret nighttime tryst outside their city. By the story's end, a disgruntled lion and a Shakespearean series of misunderstandings leave the two lovers dead in the dust. It is not the sexual yearning which undoes Pyramus and Thisbe, but the mayhem of a dangerous outside world.

Whether or not this unnamed sister meant precisely to express indirectly her desires and fears through the lovers in the song, her two sisters who sing next interpret her song in that way. The second sister, named Leuconoe, establishes through verbal play a strong narrative surrogate in her own song. She tells a pair of stories which elaborate upon the same themes, balancing the conflicting impulses of libido and chastity by splitting them into different characters. Leuconoe's brief preamble recounts the role of the Sun in exposing to Vulcan and the other gods the love affair going on between Venus and Mars. The central story that follows expands upon that farce familiar from the *Odyssey* and blends it with the dusky world of the previous sister's tale. In Leuconoe's story, two women who respectively exemplify the opposed qualities of libido and chastity are seen by the Sun. The Sun falls for the one named Leuco*th*oe who sits, like Leuco*n*oe, hidden inside her father's house. Meanwhile Clytie pines away, exposing herself to the Sun. The story ends with Leucothoe's father burying her alive in perverse punishment for the Sun's rape of her. Clytie becomes a flower fated forever obsessively to follow the Sun's course. The

similarity of name and occupation between the narrator and her subject suggests that Leuconoe is conceiving of Leucothoe's fate as her own. This story both condemns the curiosity of the first sister while also anticipating the more conservative story that the third sister will tell. Leuconoe points out that love, whether sought or not, will inevitably enter and be one's undoing. She demonstrates through her story an apprehensive presentiment of the sin which will undo her and her sisters and a clear-headed awareness of the double bind in which Ovid places his characters, forever paranoid about walking the narrow road between opposite sins.

The final sister, Alcithoe, is the least ambivalent of the three, coming to rest strongly on the side of conservative fear and sequestration. Her tale of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus inverts the first story of Pyramus and Thisbe. Whereas the first sister told of the tragic impossibility of gaining closeness except in death, Alcithoe imagines sexual union as a nightmare of misshapen bodies and violated barriers. Salmacis ensnares the wandering Hermaphroditus and prays successfully to have her body welded together with his. The first sister's prurient desires are chastised and opposed by competing reorganizations of the same topic.

Salmacis, the lascivious nymph, seems to be a type far removed from the chastened Minyades. In her construction of a backstory for Salmacis, however, Alcithoe insinuates a parallel between the sisters' chastity and Salmacis' vanity.

> nec iaculum sumit nec pictas illa pharetras,
> nec sua cum duris venatibus otia miscet,
> sed modo fonte suo formosos perluit artus,
> saepe Cytoriaco deducit pectine crines
> et, quid se deceat, spectatas consulit undas.
> 4.308-312

> But hardships did not draw her; she took up
> no spear, no colored quiver, and she shunned
> the hunt. Instead, she bathes her lovely limbs
> in her own pool: there, with boxwood comb,
> she often smooths her hair; that she may see
> what best becomes her, she consults the waves.

The retiring vanity of Salmacis, which keeps her from all activity, recalls the Minyades' own abstention from the ecstatic rites of Bacchus (Alcithoe is specified as the first of the Minyades to refuse to engage with Bacchus' orgies).[60] And as the Minyades have been using their stories to envision themselves in varied situations instead of living out in the world, Salmacis similarly chooses to abstain from activity and instead to examine herself in various postures by the mirror of a pool. Her pool and the Minyades' stories facilitate the same vanity of self and refusal of the world. Alcithoe concludes the Minyades' sequence with a tale of vanity which focuses excessively on the self at the expense of one's engagement in the world. Yet her criticism of their actions, as well as Leuconoe's premonition of their fate through her surrogate Leucothoe, ultimately has no power to save the sisters.

Orpheus too dwells on the same themes variously reconfigured, but in his song there is a marked pull in a forward direction. Although the Minyades and Orpheus suffer similar fates defined by the interruption of their speech and the destruction of their art, the art which Orpheus creates has an internal movement unlike that of the Minyades. The development of self-understanding over the course of his song cycle marks the growth of patient acceptance of the law of change which rules the *Metamorphoses*. The Minyades' song is a small ring composition wherein two inverted stories border a central one which itself compares the outer

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[60] 4.1.

two. The opposite attitudes of the outer ones do not collide; they coexist. The result is neither action nor evolved self-understanding.

Self-oriented Speeches as a Pattern for Orpheus' Song-Cycle

In all of the paradigms for internal narration examined so far, narrators have oriented their artwork towards an internal audience and then members of that audience have responded with their own art. My concern has been with interpersonal exchanges of ideas, mediated by the language of myth-making. An abundance of other instances of internal narration fills the *Metamorphoses* but most often these narrators pipe up singly and do not enter into dialogue with others.[61] These other independent speakers tell myths in which they themselves figure or which they see as relevant to their own current situation, and a variety of audiences witness their performances. Orpheus' speech is unique among these mythmakers for the peculiar nature both of his song and of its audience. Ovid describes an audience of trees converging around Orpheus' irresistible voice but the lonesome poet seems to sing to himself and for himself. The song he sings is moreover larger, more varied and more obliquely related to his own situation than other single narrators. In its form, it places individual myths in an oppositional structure that is elsewhere, among Ovid's internal narrators, only realized through the juxtaposition of various narratorial personae.

As I have established in the first chapter, Orpheus himself has a highly fragmented narratorial persona, so it should not be surprising that his speech contains a certain element of civil strife. Comparison of Orpheus' speech to one final class of internal narrator in Ovid's poem

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[61] For a complete list see Nagle 1989 passim.

will, however, help to clarify the nature of that dissension. This classification of speech is

generated by (usually female) speakers in the recurrent trope of self-address. Ovid makes use of

this narrative device on various occasions to dramatize the internal tension produced by

frustrated desires. These speakers do not express themselves through the myth-making that our

other narratorial exemplars have used but rather in a prosaic and argumentative style. Their

verbal engagement with their pain and confusion thus offers both a structural contrast and

thematic resemblance to Orpheus.

A cluster of similarly patterned speeches occupies the books which precede Orpheus'

song. Medea, Scylla, Althaea, Byblis, Iphis all serve as paradigms for the process of coping with

emotions through self-address.[62] Ovid frames their words as speech and inquiry, not thought,

through the use of words like *ait* and *inquit*.[63] Their speeches have similar circumstances of

creation and concerns. Faced with discordant urges, attempting to tame passion and act sensibly,

these speakers retreat to a place apart and speak out, though the addressee is always absent. The

lover, for usually these speakers wrestle verbally with the impediments to the consummation of

their love, speaks to herself, or to a god, or says what she could not say in the presence of the

beloved.[64]

The outcomes of the speeches and the paths which the speakers choose are varied with

typical Ovidian invention but any of them would serve to illustrate the typical contents and

thought patterns which these speeches take. The myth at the end of Book 9 immediately

preceding Orpheus' contains the soliloquy of Iphis. She has been raised as a boy and fallen in

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[62] Medea v. 7.11ff.; Scylla 8.44ff.; Althaea 8.476ff.; Byblis 9.474ff; Iphis 9.276ff.

[63] Medea, *ait*, 7.12; Scylla, *ait*, 8:44; Althaea, *inquit*, 8.479; Byblis, *profatur*, 9.473; Iphis, *inquit*, 9.726.

[64] The one exception is Althaea who tries in her speech to silence the pangs of affection for her son in order to avenge his victims, her own brothers.

love and become engaged to a maiden, Ianthe. Iphis' physical gender is a secret known only to her and her mother but now in the days before their marriage it begins to torture her. She cannot consummate the union. Iphis begins by lamenting her fate and praying for an easy way out.[65] She then considers the nature of the impediment (in this case the mechanics of heterosexual intercourse and the natural laws which she is in violation of).[66] Iphis calculates and weighs various strategies but when those all prove infeasible she painfully admonishes herself to fight down her passions.[67] Finally, she ends in forlorn confusion.[68] This particular episode is exceptional for the eleventh-hour intercession of Isis who answers the prayers of Iphis' mother Telethusa and performs the necessary miracle, changing Iphis' gender. In the other cases, the woman fails to fight back against the passions. They rule her and she does something rash.

Iphis' situation is similar to Orpheus' in that each lament over facts of reality. Eurydice is dead and Orpheus cannot try to bring her back again; Iphis is a woman and she believes nothing can change that. The arc of Orpheus' confrontation with his own situation that will be delineated in the third chapter will follow a similar course as Iphis' does: moving from denial of the existance of a problem to an exploration of possible escape routes and then finally to an acceptance of the situation. Iphis gets a happy ending and, although Orpheus is violently murdered, within the context of his song there are signs that the poet has come to peace with his past.

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[65] 9.726-730.
[66] 9.731-740.
[67] 9.741-759.
[68] 9.759-763.

<u>Narcissus and the Nature of Orpheus' Audience</u>

Ovid plays with the gendered trope of the lover's soliloquy by flipping it on its head with the story of Narcissus. Narcissus' self-love expressed outwardly as love for the other sets him up as a paradigmatic story for one of Ovid's insights into the nature of erotic love, but Narcissus as a speaker occupies a complicated position similar to Orpheus' own. He makes explicit the elided and imaginary audience of the self-oriented speakers discussed in the previous section. His audience is self-constructed. Looking into a pool at his own handsome reflection, Narcissus addresses himself to one who is visually present but physically and existentially absent.

Coexistent with this internally constructed audience is another distanced and silent audience. All the while that Narcissus wonders aloud to himself, the nymph Echo is hovering around him, transmuted into sound. She had loved Narcissus and had had her love repulsed by him. In grief she lost her body and became only the reverberating sound which has no voice of its own. A similar dual audience as surrounds Narcissus' speech encircles Orpheus as he sings his song-cycle. Before Orpheus begins, Ovid describes an audience of trees which converge around his irresistible voice. These stationary beings are given new mobility by the power of Orpheus' song. In a survey of all the transformations in the *Metamorphoses* the overwhelming majority would entail the reduction of human or divine persons to new forms that sit lower in the hierarchy of life. The abilities, such as movement or speech, which define free will and autonomy are consistently subtracted in metamorphosis. Many of the trees which Orpheus attracts had in fact been subjects of metamorphosis earlier in the epic.[69] Orpheus' ability to

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[69] The story of Daphne's transformation into a laurel is narrated at 1.452ff. As a laurel she appears at 10.92. The Heliades are transformed into poplars at 2.340. They are mentioned in Orpheus' audience at 10.91.

convince Proserpina to restore life to a deceased human is seen again, though in smaller form,

when he magically restores movement to the trees around him.

This congregation of trees also serves to connect Orpheus' new song with his previous

pursuit in another way. When Orpheus first sits down to begin his song, Ovid sets the scene:

> umbra loco deerat; qua postquam parte resedit
> dis genitus vates et fila sonantia movit,
> umbra loco venit…
> 10.88-90

> Shade lacked from the place.
> Yet when the poet, heaven-born, would play
> On his resounding lyre, shade came to the place…[70]

Wade Stephens, in his study of the Underworld in Ovid's poem, proposes that the umbra which

Orpheus receives from the trees hints at the chthonic umbra or "ghost" in which form Eurydice

now exists.[71] In this sense, these trees are only a place-holder for the absent Eurydice. In terms of

its performative context, Orpheus' song shifts between two distinct relationships with the

external world. It seems at once to exist within Orpheus' own head and at the same time to find

its addressee in the very landscape, the backcloth of the poem.

The listening, shadowing trees, like Echo, like the Pierides whose condition as

mockingjays prevents them from expressing themselves, and also like Arachne who makes a web

simply because it is all she can do, exemplify the aesthetic condition of nature, brimming with

inspiration and intelligence but unable to speak for itself. Nature, in Ovid, is a cursed place.

There is no immanent and creative genius out there in the world leading the way ahead. Nature

must shadow and wait on the human agent to untie its tongue. Orpheus is such an agent. The

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[70] Mandelbaum adapted.
[71] Stephens 1958: 180.

tension between Orpheus' and Ovid's persona extends this deeply. Orpheus' music pulls nature in the opposite direction, contrary to the overwhelming movement of Ovid's poem.

Ovid places Orpheus at the crossroads of all of these examples, borrowing characteristics from each of there situations. Orpheus' song shares with each of these an identification between the artist and his art. Orpheus' poetry, like that of the two song competitions between mortals and immortals discussed first, manages to enact a dialectical tension despite Orpheus' sole ownership of the song. The outcome of Orpheus' poetry also stands between that of the episodes in the cave of Achelous and in the Minyades' room. Orpheus manages alone, like Achelous and Lelex do in conversation, to effect a successful catharsis through his poetry. And yet his final fate resembles more the Minyades. Ovid shows that the success of Orpheus' poetry in effecting a change in the poet's own mind does not does not necessarily establish a positive outcome.

3. Orpheus' song-cycle

<u>Introduction:</u>

In the second chapter, the various ways in which Ovid creates a discrete and cohesive sequence of myths were analyzed. The argumentative structure of these sequences was explained by their placement in external conflicts within Ovid's narrative. Orpheus' form of myth-making appeared as a translation of the lonely laments of forlorn lovers into the mythological register of these interpersonal song-sequences. Orpheus's poetic practice, like Ovid's own in composing the *Metamorphoses*, allows him to inhabit multiple shifting perspectives which express themselves in a dialectical evolution. Having provided, in the second chapter, various models for the inference of the meaning that internal narrators derive from the myths they tell, this study of Orpheus' song-cycle will now proceed to reread Orpheus' song-cycle from a similar psychologizing lens to ascertain what the progression of its stories suggests about Orpheus' evolving preoccupations and attitude towards his past.

In the lines leading up to the song-cycle, Ovid places distance between Orpheus and himself as 'Ovid.' 'Ovid' begins to hold back from making definite statements on Orpheus' motivations. When 'Ovid' weighs in with an assessment of Orpheus' current state-of-mind, he communicates indecision; commenting on Orpheus' turn towards pederasty, 'Ovid' wonders whether Orpheus has given up on female love (*femineam Venerem*) either because *male cesserat illi/ sive fidem dederat* ("either because something bad happened to him or because he had pledged his heart to one—/ and to no other—woman," 10.80-81).[72] Ovid's alternatives conjure up the antipathetic characterizations of Orpheus' personality which were considered in the first

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[72] Mandelbaum, adapted.

chapter: that alternation between triviality and profundity. 'Ovid' muses whether Orpheus' love was delicate and immature so that when Orpheus' heart is bruised, he flinches weakly away; or else Orpheus' love was so pure and strong that, with its disappointment, he could brook no serious competitors to it. Either way, Orpheus now lives in a numbed state, far from the possibility of true love, practicing a pederasty which Ovid considers inferior to heterosexual love.[73] Ovid opens up new possibilities that are open to question. This ambivalence cues the reader's curiosity when Orpheus begins to speak for himself. The song-cycle which Orpheus sings serves as an internal response to those alternatives.

Dialectical Organization

The autonomy and self-awareness attributed to Orpheus' persona at the end of the first chapter does not coalesce all at once. Instead Orpheus' self-awareness emerges, gradually at first, over the course of his song-cycle. Evidence of this lies in the fact that Orpheus' programmatic statement at the outset of his song-cycle does not provide a precise preview of the contents that will follow. Leach calls this a sign of distractibility and wandering focus and reconstructs Orpheus' contemplative process thus: his initial rationalizing program is discarded when the guilt and pain that he has gathered in the world compel him to seek after a fictional ideal, Pygmalion. But Orpheus' apparent deviation from his declared topic is, on the contrary, a natural evolution as the poet finds his bearings and realizes where his true interests lie.

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[73] Peter Green summarizes Ovid's position well. "Ovid's general attitude toward adult homosexuality is casual, pragmatic, and dismissive." (Green 1982: 355)

<div align="center">odi concubitus, qui non utrumque resolvunt:
hoc est cur pueri tangere amore minus</div>

(I hate sex which does give pleasure to both parties. This is why the touch of boy-love is inferior. *Ars Amatoria* 2. 683-84):

Leach is correct in identifying these first lines with the shallower Orpheus that we have heard from previously. She remarks upon "the argumentative energy that by now has come to appear typical of his personality."[74] The character and style of Orpheus' previous speech to the assembled rulers and subjects of the Underworld holds over into the attitude of his song at its start. Orpheus at first does seem to intend to justify his pederasty to the assembled trees through a rationalization of his dislike for women and a search for mythical divine precedents for the love of boys. His song begins as only another expression of the same shallow logic which characterized his speech before Pluto and seems to confirm Ovid's suspicion that he acts the way he does simply because *male cesserat illi* ("things had gone poorly for him").

> puerosque canamus
> dilectos superis inconcessisque puellas
> ignibus attonitas meruisse libidine poenam.
> 10.152-154

> I sing of boys the gods have loved, and girls
> Incited by unlawful lust and passions,
> who paid the penalty for their transgressions.

After providing two stories of gods falling in love with a human boys it is not until the story of Myrrha and Cinyras that Orpheus offers a story that fulfills the second stated subject. When he finally does, his telling of the myth of Myrrha resists functioning as the negative example of female sin which Orpheus seems to have at first intended.

Over the course of the song-cycle, though, Orpheus moves more and more to correspond to Ovid's alternative account of his motives (*fidem dederat,* "He had pledged his heart to one"). The echoes of his past and the phantom-presence of Eurydice grow stronger as Orpheus' song

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[74] Leach 1968: 121.

progresses. Orpheus' song exposes a general movement of the poet's concerns backwards into his past. From the moment that Pygmalion's myth begins until song-cycle's end, Orpheus turns to face directly the failure of his past. In an attempt to understand his actions, he embarks on a sustained inquiry into the nature of his love and love in general. Orpheus' poem transforms from an attempt to justify his pederasty into an earnest and raw reflective piece.

The argumentative energy that is most manifest in his statement of intent, I assert, does not really disperse as Orpheus enters deeper into his song-cycle and psyche. Instead the programmatic statement signals, through its structure more than through its content, the dialectical dynamic with which Orpheus' song-cycle will delve into the questions that, for Orpheus, surround the mystery of love. The real organizational impulse is revealed not in the two proposed themes themselves but by the oppositional dynamic in which they appear.

Orpheus' externally oriented argumentative bent is gradually absorbed into the structure of the poem, becoming self-reflective. Orpheus is led by this dialectical movement into a self-reflective practice that internalizes the social, argumentative structure of the other previously examined sequences of song. When the first person verbs disappear, the poet is submerged in his poem and begins to speak through a polyphony of conflicting voices which suggest the poet's interior conflicts.

The dialectical form can be seen by arranging his song-cycle in a sequence of mythical pairs which function in thesis-antithesis relationships: (a) Juppiter/Ganymede and Phoebus/Hyacinthus, (b) Propoetides and Cerastae, (c) Pygmalion and Myrrha/Cinyras, (d) Venus/Adonis and Hippomenes/Atalanta. In each pairing except (b) a positive declaration in the first myth is complicated and reassessed by a negative depiction in the second. This structural

perspective and the incremental reading of the song-cycle which it necessitates are not only key

to the argument of this chapter but, I believe, more true to the nature of these particular stories.

Through motivic links, Ovid starts conversations between stories placed very far apart in his

epic, and certainly the stories within this song-cycle would take on new and possibly

contradictory meanings when considered in broader contexts. Their collection under one internal

narrator, however, concentrates the overarching temporal progression of the *Metamorphoses*.

The body of this chapter will comprise a close reading of these myths in order to bring out both

the dialectical relationship between each pair and the forward movement of Orpheus' thought

from pair to pair.

    a.   <u>Juppiter-Ganymede and Phoebus-Hyacinthus</u>

       These first two myths both serve to expand upon Orpheus' first stated theme, *pueri*

superis delecti. In them Orpheus supplies divine paradigms for his pederastic practice. The short

and optimistic initial exposition of the pederastic theme in the Ganymede myth is reiterated and

expanded with further details in Hyacinthus' tale. Orpheus almost immediately complicates

Jupiter's positive portrayal of the possibility of love to succeed between mortal and immortal

men.

       In the entirety of Orpheus' song, only this first myth of Ganymede's abduction by Jupiter

and the Pygmalion story depict love as a successful and elevating force. Ganymede's assumption

to the company of the gods consists of an upward movement to a higher stratum of nature which

parallels the ivory maiden's miraculous animation. Those two myths also share an unswerving

focus on the perspective of the dominant party in the love. Just as the ivory maiden is never

allowed a word, Orpheus mentions nothing of Ganymede's experience.

Leach would like to argue that Orpheus finds Pygmalion as his ideal lover. I would argue instead that Orpheus' yearning for perfection begins and ends with this first myth. After Jupiter and Ganymede, creeping hints of the inevitable tragedy of love imply that Orpheus is no longer willing or capable of blocking out the real dangers and fears of life. Orpheus' concentration on the divine perspective indicates that he has not yet considered the experience of their beloved boys. Since Orpheus' most obvious narrator-surrogate in each of these episodes is the god, he is hereby also turning a blind eye to his own impact on Eurydice. Even as the Hyacinthus myth preserves the homosexual pattern, its tragic ending begins to gesture away from Orpheus' current pederasty and towards Orpheus' past disastrous love. Even the effect that Jupiter love's has on him, himself, is framed so as to define it in opposition to the complications which will, in the other myths, ensue from love.

> et inventum est aliquid, quod Iuppiter esse,
> quam quod erat, mallet. nulla tamen alite verti
> dignatur, nisi quae posset sua fulmina ferre.
> 10.156-158
>
> And something was found which Jupiter desired
> more to be than that which he was.
> "But of all birds, he thought that one
> alone was worthiest; the bird with force
> enough to carry Jove's own thunderbolts."

On its own, this observation that Jupiter wishes to be something other than he is does not suggest anything too insidious about the effect which love has had on him. Jupiter is conscious of the potential indignity of his transformation and preempts this threat to his "dignity" by finding a suitably august bird. Just as Orpheus finds it remarkable that Jupiter, as the most supreme being,

should want to change into anything, Jupiter is aware that any other change would involve a degradation. The unease over the Jupiter's harmless and temporary transformation is the first sign of Orpheus' concern with the effects of love.

Jupiter's self-preservation in the face of love's debasement proves the exception and not the rule for gods who love mortals. Phoebus in the following myth and Venus in the myth that concludes the song-cycle will not manage to avoid a debasing effect that love has on divine lovers. Each of these gods is led by their passions to leave behind their divine offices and to seek instead a place within the life of their beloved. Orpheus introduces Phoebus as a contrast to Jupiter.

> "te meus ante omnes genitor dilexit, et orbe
> in medio positi caruerunt praeside Delphi
> …
> inmemor ipse sui non retia ferre recusat,
> non tenuisse canes…."
> 10.167-172
>
> "My father loved you more
> than he loved any other; even Delphi,
> set at the very center of the earth,
> was left without its tutelary god;
> …
> Not heeding how he was—his higher tasks—
> alongside you, the god did not refuse
> to carry nets, to hold the dogs in leash..."

Phoebus is *inmemor ipse sui* (forgetful of himself). His need to be close to his lover separates him from his divine offices and, what's more, further demeans him to act in a servile role beneath his human lover.[75] His love for Hyacinthus has inverted the natural power dynamic

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[75] Phoebus becomes not so much a fellow huntsman as a servant, carrying the nets and holding the dogs, 10.171-172.

between them. The total control of Jupiter is flipped around into the lover's loss of control in the

face of love. The overwhelming power of love is a theme that returns all throughout the

Metamorphoses, but Orpheus' particular attitude towards it is shaped by his own experience. The

theme implies a recollection of the intensity of Orpheus' love and the doom it brought to his

beloved.

Indeed, Orpheus constructs this story of pederastic love in order to allude to his own

experience of the loss of Eurydice. In the story of Phoebus and Hyacinthus, Orpheus introduces

the alternative perspective which was missing from the affair between Ganymede and Jupiter.

His variation of perspective and the accompanying antithetical sympathy for the beloved lie at

the core of the dialectical movement in Orpheus' first pairing. Orpheus cannot find an escape in

homosexual love from his own past. Its patterns only reassert themselves.

Orpheus recognizes in his second story that the debasing effect of love on Phoebus'

personal identity is finally much less catastrophic than the impact which Phoebus has on the

human beloved. Phoebus' pain is only temporary. Hyacinthus faces a much more disastrous end.

In an interlude between hunting trips, Phoebus and Hyacinthus express their love through the

play of discus throwing. Hyacinthus misjudges the god's powers, when Phoebus heaves a throw

far beyond what a mortal could do.

> "pondus et exhibuit iunctam cum viribus artem.
> protinus inprudens actusque cupidine lusus
> tollere Taenarides orbem properabat, at illum
> dura repercusso subiecit verbere tellus
> in vultus, Hyacinthe, tuos."
> 10.180-185
>
> "—a throw that shows what can be done
> when strength and skill are joined. The Spartan boy

is reckless: risking all for sport, he runs
to pick the discus up. But the hard ground
send back the heavy bronze; as it rebounds,
it strikes you in the face, O Hyacinthus!"

Orpheus' apostrophe to Hyacinthus suggests that his own sympathy is evoked for the boy's fate.

Details of that passage suggest that this sympathy arises when Orpheus finds some resonance

with Eurydice's second death in the accident of Hyacinthus. Hyacinthus runs *protinus* into the

repercussum verber which strikes his face. *Protinus* creates a precise verbal link to Eurydice

(*protinus illa relapsa est*, "headlong she fell back," 10.57). The suddenly reversed direction of

the discus and its deadly blow reenact, in a particularly physical and visceral form, Orpheus'

own suddenly reversed gaze which sends Eurydice back to the Underworld.

In his search for positive precedents in the relations of gods to mortals, Orpheus has

instead found himself narrating a myth which recalls his own crime. Orpheus' song at this point

engages with one of its principal themes, guilt. A sense of the way in which Orpheus' initial

attitude towards his guilt expresses itself through the myths that he tells can be had by comparing

his words to Ovid's. When Phoebus confronts his guilt Orpheus produces an echo of a line given

by Ovid *in propria persona*. Orpheus narrates that:

> "Phoebus ait 'videoque tuum, mea crimina, vulnus.
> tu dolor es facinusque meum: mea dextera leto
> inscribenda tuo est. ego sum tibi funeris auctor.
> quae mea culpa tamen, nisi si lusisse vocari
> culpa potest, nisi culpa potest et amasse vocari?'"
> 10.197-201

>   "Phoebus cries, 'as I confront
> your wound, I witness my own crime—my guilt,
> my grief! It's my right hand that has inscribed
> your end: I am the author of your death.

> And yet, what crime is mine? Can play, can sport
> be blamed? Can having loved be called a fault?'"[76]

Phoebus' impulse to excuse his actions committed under the influence of love, despite their impact on the object of love, borrows an pattern of thought from words which 'Ovid' inserts at the split second when Eurydice is falling back into the Underworld: *iamque iterum moriens non est de coniuge quicquam/ questa suo (quid enim nisi se quereretur amatam?)* ("And as she died again, Eurydice/ Did not reproach her husband. (How could she/ have faulted him except to say that he loved her indeed?)" 10.60-61). Phoebus shows that he will accept *responsibility* but attempts, just as Ovid did for Orpheus, to claim that the mindset of love exonerates him from the full brunt of the accompanying *guilt*. Ovid's words have a cynical air to them which seem to mock and lament the very nature of love. Through this mythical surrogate, Orpheus reproaches himself as Eurydice could not. He fails, though, to move beyond the shallow logic with which Ovid criticized his love earlier. Although Orpheus is moving towards a more direct confrontation with his own failures, he shows here that his understanding has not yet progressed far. Yet, when Orpheus in the next pairing of myths (the Propoetides and the Cerastae) takes up this theme more directly, he demonstrates that his relationship to his guilt is not stagnant. It continues to transform from here.

As Orpheus' depictions of love and guilt progress, his representations of the creation of art follow suit. In Orpheus' song-cycle, as in Orpheus' life, art-making results from feelings of guilt. The sophistic recusal that Phoebus uses on himself does not seem to put the god's remorse to rest. Instead he responds to the lingering sense of guilt by creating art, just as Orpheus is currently processing his own guilt by telling these stories about it. Through Phoebus, Orpheus

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[76] Mandelbaum, adapted.

indicates that his own song will be a transcription of his own guilt. In the lines above, Phoebus

looked upon Hyacinthus' wound and saw the boy's fate as written (*inscribenda*) by his hand.

Phoebus rewrites, over the writing of the wound, with a new text. First he transforms the boy's

body into a flower and upon its petals the lover's words of mourning, AIAI, are literally

inscribed. Phoebus extends the life which he wrote off by transforming the boy's body into a

surface upon which to make his earlier metaphor of inscription literal.

> "ipse suos gemitus foliis inscribit, et AI AI
> flos habet inscriptum, funestaque littera ducta est."
> 10.215-216
>
> "Phoebus… inscribed upon the petals his lament:
> with his own hand, he wrote these letters—AI,
> AI—signs of sad outcry."

Art not only responds to grief but uses it as raw material. The materiality of Phoebus' writing

does not quite resemble Orpheus' own poetic process, which is oral. Instead Orpheus looks both

out of his poem at the wax and stylus process of writing and forward in his poem to the next

artist, Pygmalion, whose plastic art also blends the beloved's lifeless body with a material

expression of the lover's emotions.

In Phoebus' memorial transformation of Hyacinthus, the natural correspondence between

the creation of art and the miraculous process of metamorphosis is made manifest. The power of

gods to transmute substances is aligned with the artist's power to create or assign meaning to

lifeless objects. This piece of biological art which Phoebus creates mediates between the

incommensurate spans of the couple's lives. As discussed in the first chapter, another of

Orpheus' failures was his breaking of the pledge that he made before Pluto to die if he did not

recover Eurydice. The inability of the lover to die for his beloved has a theological justification here when Phoebus cannot die for his beloved. Through Phoebus, Orpheus proposes that the very song he is singing acts to perpetuate Eurydice, to make everlasting his love in the colors of grief.

b. The Propoetides and Cerastae

In the first pairing, Orpheus introduced the interwoven themes of love, guilt and art which will reappear throughout his song-cycle. But in the myths which follow immediately, the subtle construction of the rest of Orpheus' myths is simplified into raw emotion. These two brief vignettes appear suddenly, as if out of nowhere. Critics tend to dismiss the transition to the twin stories of the Propoetides and the Cerastae as an artless jump. Anderson sees their relation to what came before as one of "sheer antithesis."[77] But the abruptness itself indicates not that Orpheus' attention has wandered or blurred; rather, his focus has tightened. The relationship between love and guilt that was latent in the Hyacinthus episode is outlined by two opposing myths. This is the point at which Orpheus begins to engage directly with the tragedy of his past. The self-defending intentions of Orpheus' first pairing fall away here. The argument of Orpheus' song henceforth is not directed out at some phantom accuser. Over the course of narrating Hyacinthus' story Orpheus recognizes his fixation on the death of Eurydice and begins to analyze it.

 Orpheus first zooms out to describe the Spartan festival which honors Hyacinthus and then pans over to Amathus, a city on Cyprus. The Spartan celebration of Hyacinthus is contrasted with the shame that Amathus endures for having produced the Propoetides and

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[77] Anderson 1972: 493.

Cerastae. The switch to the new Cyprian lands wherein the rest of Orpheus' song will take place gives physical evidence that a new period has begun. He now contextualizes the external world in which these tales transpire in a gesture that I interpret as a sign of self-awareness. The dynamics of social pride and condemnation express Orpheus' emotional reactions to his sudden confrontation by his own guilt. This will both contrast with the private closed-door drama of the Pygmalion myth which follows as well as foreshadow the sudden intrusion of the external forces which terminate Orpheus' song and the poet himself.

The Propoetides and the Cerastae are twinned stories of male and female sin and not, as many have mistakenly read, a pair of female sinners.[78] This distinction is important for the evolving gender dynamics of Orpheus' song-cycle. Womankind has overtly entered the picture and the guilt which seemed to be the woman's fate is shared equally by the male. Their entrance establishes Orpheus' attention back in a heterosexual context and further indicates that Eurydice is behind these stories more than the previous ones. Tellingly, the first appearance of the female is through an accusation. It is not until the completion of the Myrrha myth that Orpheus will move fully away from his inclination to blame femininity for the weakness and perversions of love.

The transgressions for which each of these two groups is punished do not immediately seem relevant to Orpheus' situation beyond the fact that both stem from disrespect to a deity. The Cerastae have polluted the altar of *Juppiter Hospes* with the blood of guests and the Propoetides have denied the divine force of Venus (10.224-228; 238-239). For their crimes and impiety, Venus turns the Cerastae into bulls; for refusing to admit Venus's power, the

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[78]Anderson points out that "*Cerastae* is the plural of a Greek masculine *Cerastes*; several of the scribes did not grasp this point and consistently made these horned men into women" (1972: 493-494).

Propoetides are doomed never to feel but always to act love. The strongest constant in the thematics of both these brief stories is the susceptibility of positive relationships to be abused or reversed into their opposites. This is the central axis upon which their dialectical relationship turns. At the stories' ends, the two groups have committed opposite offenses. The Cerastae have been impermissibly cruel to the guests and the Propoetides have been obscenely receptive of them.

These two myths look backwards and forwards to Orpheus' past transgressions and to his current one. Even as the myth of the Propoetides justifies his current gynophobia it suggests Orpheus' fateful disobedience against Persephone's dictum not to look back. Orpheus uses these two sinning groups as paradigms for the potential for love to lead to tragedy and for the penalties that will result. Orpheus' turn towards his past love for Eurydice is at once a turn away from his current pederasty. These women precisely do not fall under the rubric of *inconcessis puellae ignibus attonitae*. Their crime is opposite. For attempting to get outside of the power of love, they are subjected to its perverse amplification. Orpheus' anxieties about his turn away from Venus are coded within their situation. The story of the Cerastae most resembles the final outcome of Orpheus' love for Eurydice. His relationship with her was assumed to be defined by kindness but he inadvertently dealt violence to her, as the Cerastae dealt violence to the guests they should have received with kindness.

It is strange, however, that Venus should be the one to respond to the offenses of both parties. Of course Venus should be the one to punish the Propoetides' disrespect against her own godhead. Her response to an affront to Jupiter by the Cerastae, on the other hand, is curious. By having Venus occupy the position of Jupiter as lawgiver, Orpheus indicates that she will assume

an expanded role in the remainder of his story. These two myths place Venus firmly in the position of reigning deity. Orpheus begins to engage with the nature of his love through this focus on Venus.

Orpheus began in the Hyacinthus myth to describe the destructive effect of divinities on humans. In these myths, he balances that with its dialectical opposite. The turn to transgressions by humans against the divine is the natural result of the poem's new "groundedness" in the world. Awareness of the physical landscape entails new consciousness of the social context. This awareness will be expressed explicitly later in the Myrrha myth, during her long self-address in which she considers the social and philosophical ramifications for her forbidden incestual love.

These humans are brought into a relationship with the gods that is structurally defined by more than just the vicissitudes of divine emotions. The Propoetides and Cerastae run afoul of the gods in the context of the regular rules for proper interactions between humanity and the divine. In the process of Orpheus' exploration of the nature of love, this pair places it within a rigid religious system that regulates its excess or deficiency. In her own speech, Venus places these sinners within that new context.

> sacris offensa nefandis
> ipsa suas urbes Ophiusiaque arva parabat
> deserere alma Venus. "sed quid loca grata, quid urbes
> peccavere meae? quod" dixit "crimen in illis?"

> Incensed, the generous
> Venus was ready to desert her Cyprus,
> to leave her cities and her plains. "And yet,"
> she said, "these sites are dear to me, these towns—
> what crime is theirs? What evil have they done?"
> 10.128-231

This represents the next variation within Orpheus' song-cycle on the recurrent question of the assignment of guilt. Orpheus now places the question within the new universal context of interrelations between humans, the divine and their shared world. Her analytical attitude condenses Orpheus' own. Outraged at the Cerastae, Venus intends to leave Cyprus, and thereby leave Orpheus' poem. Cyprus is after all her land. She checks herself and specifies that guilt belongs specifically to the Cerastae. Her commitment to remain in the space of the poem and in the role as enforcer of the rules for human conduct with the divine further places her at the motive center of Orpheus' poem.

Orpheus himself ought never to be identified with one single character in any of the myths he narrates. But the overall arc of Venus' presence does serve as Orpheus' meta-poetical reconstruction of his own experience of love. At this point Venus controls the force of love within this world. The movement across the remainder of Orpheus' song advances her gradual transformation from this status as a superior and free actor to one who is helplessly caught within the pull of that same passionate force which she released onto the world.

c. <u>Pygmalion and Myrrha-Cinyras</u>

This pairing is the centerpiece of the song-cycle. Over the course of the two preceding pairs, Orpheus has moved gradually away from his pederastic present back into his tragic past. His argumentative purpose has moved from self-justification to self-reflection. He attempts to understand the love and passion which precipitated his loss, and the ensuing guilt and artwork which have resulted from that tragedy. The myths of Pygmalion and Myrrha function in a thesis and antithesis relationship. The apparently optimistic and ideal presentation of Pygmalion's

consummation of his love for his ivory maiden is inverted by the sinful consummation of

Myrrha's love for her father. Artistic creation and organic creation are set side by side when the

artist's love for his artwork eventually generates a daughter's love for her father.

These two myths and the next one in the final pairing are related by genealogical ties.

When Pygmalion's statue is brought to life, she conceives a child by him. That child, Paphos, has

as son and granddaughter the Cinyras and Myrrha of the next tale. Myrrha's child by Cinyras, in

turn, is the Adonis whom Venus falls in love with. This genealogical chain works in tandem with

the landscape to tie these remaining myths together more closely.

Orpheus transitions from the Cerastae to Pygmalion's myth by depicting Pygmalion's

response to their sin. Pygmalion's shallow and ungenerous logic recalls the first of Ovid's

propositions about Orpheus' motivations. Ovid thought Orpheus acted *quod male cesserat illi*

("because it had gone poorly for him," 10.80). Pygmalion's response is explicitly uncritical,

more mindless than we have seen Orpheus himself to be.[79] If at first it seems that Orpheus is still

trying to justify his misogyny by reference to Pygmalion's response to the Propoetides,

inconsistencies between Orpheus' attitude and Pygmalion's weaken that interpretation. In

keeping with the method of this study, the obvious similarity between Orpheus' own situation

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[79] "Quas quia Pygmalion aevum per crimen agentis
viderat, offensus vitiis, quae plurima menti
femineae natura dedit, sine coniuge caelebs
vivebat thalamique diu consorte carebat."
10.243-246

"Pygmalion had seen the shameless lives
of Cyprus' women; and disgusted by
the many sins to which the female mind
had been inclined by nature, he resigned
himself: for years he lived alone, without
a spouse: he chose no wife to share his couch."

and Pygmalion's myth will be read as a self-critical move by Orpheus, instead of a mockery planted there by Ovid. The related theory, held by Leach, that Ovid shows Orpheus telling the story of Pygmalion in order to show Orpheus as an escapist, one who sacrifices his art for the allurements of love, does not account for the complexities of the relationship between love and art which Orpheus began to develop in the Hyacinthus myth.

In the Pygmalion myth, Orpheus takes account of art as an instrument for pleasure rather than a balm for grief. Both Phoebus and Pygmalion use artwork in order to fill an empty space in the world. For Phoebus this means containing and prolonging his mourning after Hyacinthus. For Pygmalion it is an expression of his desire through his sculpture. Art in either case serves to create a sense of satisfaction that the artist is no longer able to derive from the world. These functions of art are then two sides of the same coin.

Orpheus in this myth is more interested in the inadequacies of art than in its accomplishments. Pygmalion cannot get the satisfaction he wants from his art because what he comes to desire is not the likeness of a lover but the actuality. At the end of the second chapter, I laid out how Orpheus' speech resembles Narcissus' in its construction of the beloved as an audience. Orpheus himself recognizes those failings of art even as the next myth responds with the opposite failings of reality.

The dialectical relationship between these two central myths reveals Orpheus' disappointment by both art and reality. Pygmalion looks beyond art to the enchanting power of the gods. He sees that it is only through a miracle that the latent promise in the perfection of art can be brought to pass. It is the intensity and piety of Pygmalion's love that induces her to grant him his wish. Venus' miracle inverts her punishment of the Propoetides. Orpheus imagines a

world where the boundaries between art and life can be crossed repeatedly with the impetus of love. Over the course of his song, however, this act of kindness, Venus' bending of the rules of the world for Pygmalion's sake, will lead to her own subjection to the power of love. While Orpheus' mother sang the story of the extension of love's domain over the Underworld, Orpheus will show the goddess of love brought low by her own power. Although the gods stand above the laws of nature, Venus, in a sense, is painted as the transgressor of these laws. Usually no one could punish her but in this particular situation, however, Orpheus through the architecture of his song-cycle shows how this aberrant behavior by Venus loses for her her control over her own power of love.

In the myth of Pygmalion, Orpheus imagines a world in which the magical perfection of art is translated into reality. He then shows by the dialectical turn to Myrrha's myth how that happy dream can be inverted. When Pygmalion's statue becomes a real woman, she does not actually improve reality with the perfection of art. Instead her purity and perfection is corrupted by the world she enters. Orpheus makes it clear through the genealogy that it was the sexual union between Pygmalion and his created lady that eventually leads to incest, confusion and tragedy two generations later and, in the third, Venus' own subservience to love.

While Myrrha's myth will develop the theme of guilt much further, in Pygmalion's myth Orpheus shows how art is used to imagine the absence of guilt. Pygmalion creates a body so physically perfect that he becomes convinced of its moral purity. There is no obvious transgression in this myth that would seem to advance Orpheus' relationship with his guilt. That will come in the following myth where the latent transgression of Pygmalion's act is revealed by comparison to Cinyras.

A consciousness of guilt runs deeply through the story of Myrrha. Before it has even begun, Orpheus pulls his audience closer by suggesting that the terrifying sins of this story will infect and leak into their lives.[80] Orpheus then says "*ipse negat nocuisse tibi sua tela Cupido,/ Myrrha, facesque suas a crimine vindicat isto…*" ("O Myrrha, Cupid had/ no part in your undoing—for he says/ his arrow did not strike you; he declares/ his torches innocent," 10.311-312). The personification of love itself wants to deny his involvement in the sin. Much of the story itself is occupied with Myrrha's self-address in which she shows herself torturously aware of her own guilt.

Myrrha tries many arguments to convince herself of the defensibility of her incestuous love. She calls into question the validity of social law and then appeals to nature and the animal kingdom as a place where incest is decent and common. Ultimately, though, none of this reasoning sways Myrrha from her sense of reprobation. Myrrha can neither countenance her love nor escape its pull. She knows what her love will lead her to do. Faced with these impossibilities, Myrrha chooses suicide. Myrrha is the one person in Orpheus' song-cycle with the strength to end her own life. This already sets her up as sympathetic anti-hero for Orpheus.

When her suicide is interrupted and prevented by her nurse, Myrrha relinquishes all control over herself, allowing the old nurse to lead her wherever. The nurse's horror at Myrrha's desires quickly changes into eager complicity. She hatches a scheme to put Myrrha in bed with her father and takes the lead in executing it. On the night of its consummation, Myrrha in confusion, both joyful and fearful, allows herself to be led to Cinyras' door.[81] Orpheus' description of Myrrha's path to Cinyras recalls details of Orpheus' upwards path from Pluto with

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[80] See 10.300ff.
[81] 10.443-445.

Eurydice in tow: the darkness of the night, the placement of Myrrha behind her nurse, led by the hand, and the emphasis on the moment of crossing the threshold as a moment when one's entire condition changes.[82] When Myrrha wishes she could turn back but feels she cannot, Orpheus is playing with the meaning of his own turn backwards. Her inability to turn, like his incapacity to keep from turning both represent the strict force which love forces upon its subjects.

In each of his songs Orpheus finds himself. Although Myrrha on her way to Cinyras at night looks more like Eurydice than Orpheus, at the moment that Myrrha's inability to turn becomes symbolic of Orpheus' own moment of weakness before the power of love, he identifies and sympathizes with her. In the Pygmalion myth, Orpheus closely recreated his own situation. It was clear that he constructed Pygmalion and his statue as a pair of figures with which to comment on his own uses of art. In the Myrrha and Cinyras story, however, Orpheus' identifications within the story are more muddled. As two offspring of the union between Pygmalion and the ivory maiden, Myrrha and Cinyras each contain qualities of both their ancestors and therefore also qualities reminiscent of both Orpheus and Eurydice. Myrrha is Cinyras' creation and yet she is the active lover and the one who offends the gods through her love. Cinyras is the victim here and is led into a transgression unwittingly. When Myrrha is led to Cinyras' door she seems like a Eurydice-figure, but behavior ruled by love resembles more the experience of Orpheus. In Myrrha, Orpheus imagines himself and Eurydice united in one body and one experience. He comes to see their blind march upwards together and the turn which seperated them as an inevitable moment. He understands his own incapacity to turn back as well Eurydice' subsequent departure.

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[82] Cf. 10.53-55 with 10.446-457.

Betty Rose Nagle, in her article "Byblis and Myrrha: Two Incest Narratives in the 'Metamorphoses,'" describes an arc of gradual acceptance of Myrrha's actions and a development of sympathy for Myrrha, especially in contrast with the way that Ovid narrates the story of Byblis in Book 9. Her argument nestles into this reading of Orpheus' whole song-cycle: this story holds the emotional core of his song-cycle in which Orpheus reaches a kind of conclusion in the process of his self-reflection. When Orpheus comes to terms with Myrrha, a figure who incorporates aspects of both perspectives involved in Orpheus' own tragedy, he is in fact reaching a conclusion with himself and his own actions.

Orpheus, at the beginning of Myrrha's myth does not outright condemn her. He begins Myrrha's story with "seduction in the guise of a warning," saying (in Nagle's paraphrase), "if you listen to it, don't believe it happened; if you believe it happened, believe also that it was punished."[83] This communicates the fascination that the story holds for Orpheus despite his moral qualms about its contents. By the time Myrrha has reached her father's doorstep, Orpheus has begun to view her differently. "Although [Orpheus] continues to elaborate the melodrama and will exploit the full horror of the moment of consummation when that time comes, here his sympathy is revealed, when he calls Myrrha *infelix*."[84] Finally, Orpheus' narration of Myrrha's transformation lingers over the girl's own final repentance, her tears and her pleas.

> "'o siqua patetis
> numina confessis, merui nec triste recuso
> supplicium, sed ne violem vivosque superstes
> mortuaque exstinctos, ambobus pellite regnis
> mutataeque mihi vitamque necemque negate!'
> numen confessis aliquod patet: ultima certe
> vota suos habuere deos."
> 10.483-489

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[83] Nagle 1983: 306.
[84] Nagle 1983: 312. Nagle quotes Ovid at 10.443.

"'Oh, if there is some god to hear the plea
of one who knows that she is guilty, I
accept the death that I deserve. But lest
I, in my life, profane the living and,
in death, profane the dead, do banish me
from both these realms; transform me, and deny
both life and death to me.' And some god heard
the girl confess her guilt: her final plea
was answered."

The act of kindness by which Myrrha's wish is granted by an anonymous deity is in fact the

opposite of the punishment that Orpheus at first declared he would depict in his story (*[puellas]*

meruisse libidine poenam, "girls who paid the penalty for their transgressions," 10.153).

When Myrrha begins to transform into a Myrrh tree, she is so eager to escape from life into the

half-state that she leans down into the growing bark as it rises up her body.[85] In this new form,

although she is deprived of her senses, Myrrha can still cry.[86] Orpheus declares *est honor et*

lacrimis, stillataque cortice murra/ nomen erile tenet nulloque tacebitur aevo, ("Even in tears

there is long fame: myrrh, dripping from that trunk, preserves the name/ of Myrrha, mistress of

that tree; and she/ will be remembered through the centuries," 10.501-502). Orpheus' sympathy

for Myrrha is obvious from these lines. When her situation is compared to his own similar one,

this apostrophe take on the tone of a self-address in which Orpheus comments on his own art and

convinces himself that his own song of grief will survive him.

Over the course of the last two myths, Orpheus has confronted himself first with the

overwhelming power of love. Pygmalion's myth shows how the purity of art is undermined by

the love he holds for it because he is led to demand something from it that it cannot give.

Myrrha's myth then reframes Pygmalion's transgressive love in a fully human context stripped

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[85] 10.497-498.
[86] 10.499-500.

of miracles and shows again how love is responsible for transgressions of social barriers. Orpheus, in despair, speaks through Myrrha of the desire to become art himself and to leave behind the world blasted by love. Myrrha's half-state, somewhere between life and death, takes on new meaning in the context of the comparison between divine intercession by metamorphosis and human intercession by art-making. Myrrha seems to wish to be reverted back into the condition of Pygmalion's ivory maiden just as Orpheus himself desires no longer to be the creator but to be the artwork itself. And he will achieve that desire; Myrrha's ultimate fate will much resemble his own. Her senseless tears anticipate the indecipherable keening of Orpheus' severed head. Myrrha's dentrification and Orpheus' lifeless head which resembles his lyre are each manifestations of the transformation of the human into the material of art. Orpheus speaks of Myrrha's *taedia vitae* (weariness of life, 10.482). The burden of Orpheus' entire past and the conclusions that he has reached about the nature of love weigh heavily in Myrrha's myth.

d. Venus/Adonis and Hippomenes-Atalanta

At the close of his song-cycle Orpheus places a final pair of myths that deal explicitly with the dangers of love. That powerful passion which subverted Myrrha's proper role as daughter and Pygmalion's proper role as artist now redounds upon its own patron goddess, Venus. While fondling his mother, Cupid *inscius exstanti destrinxit harundine pectus* ("unaware, scratched her breast:/ an arrow jutting from his quiver chanced/ to graze her," 10.526). Venus is then captured by the love of Adonis, Myrrha's son by Cinyras. Orpheus describes the young boy as *qualia namque corpora nudorum tabula pinguntur Amorum* ("his body/ is like the naked Cupid artists paint," 10.515-516). Venus is then, in a sense, falling in love with her son. The love

of one's own creations is again Orpheus' subject. The line will be recalled later when Venus,

describing Atalanta, a character in her story, tells her beloved Adonis that Atalanta's body looks

quale meum, vel quale tuum, si femina fias ("much like/ my own, or what your beauty, too,

would be, were you a woman," 10.579). Not only is Orpheus dealing with love-of-self

externalized as love-of-other, his access at this point in his dialectic to the very personifications

of love cause all of the characters now to appear with androgynous bodies. After recognizing

himself and Eurydice both in Myrrha, Orpheus see that lovei n its purest forms has both male and

female aspects.

Orpheus finally subjects Venus to the same treatment that his other characters have

endured. Orpheus states explicitly that this boy is to be vengeance for the pain which Myrrha

suffered. *iam placet et Veneri matrisque ulciscitur ignes* ("he inflamed even Venus' love, and

thus/ avenged that dread fire which his mother suffered," 10.524).[87] Having reached a sort of

closure through his telling of the previous myth, Orpheus' final pairing accomplishes a kind of

cathartic vengeance and last statement on the powers of art and the nature of love. In the long

view, Orpheus shows that it was Venus' crossing of the boundaries of between illusion and

reality, her full enabling of Pygmalion's impossible infatuation to become reality in her

animation of *eburna*, that led to her own disempowerment before the powers of love.

In characterizing Venus' infatuation, Orpheus returns to the same patterns he used to

describe Phoebus in love with Adonis. There is the same neglect for her places of worship; It

becomes Venus less than it does Apollo when, dressed up like Diana, she spurs the hounds and

follows Adonis.[88] Even her bold transformation into a huntress cannot convince Venus to hunt

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[87] Mandelbaum, adapted.
[88] 10.529-531; 10.535-537.

big game. She warns Adonis to avoid the more violent animals as well, saying:

non movet aetas
nec facies nec quae Venerem movere, leones
saetigerosque sues oculosque animosque ferarum.
10.547-549

Your youth, your loveliness—the many things
with which you have enchanted even me—
don't move the lion or the bristling boar,
don't touch the eyes and hearts of those fierce beasts.

Venus establishes here what will be the guiding opposition within this final dialectical pair: the comparison between the power of love and the power of natural violence. The force of love which Orpheus has depicted as overpowering throughout his song-cycle is tempered when he places it in comparison to raw natural violence. Venus herself acknowledges that her entire domain, love, amounts to little in the wilds of nature.

When Venus specifies the lions as objects of her particular hatred, Adonis asks for her reasons.[89] Venus then leads him to a spot in the shade of a poplar tree, very like Orpheus' own, and begins to speak.[90] Orpheus employs internal narration just as Ovid does, to focus attention on the psychology of one of his important characters. Orpheus, like Ovid, is also interested in depicting an internal narrator in order to explore his own ideas about the nature of art. This is the final example of art creation in Orpheus' song-cycle and it is the one that resembles Orpheus' own creation most in some respects and least in others. Venus and Orpheus are both storytellers and both seek shade and the natural world for inspiration. The audience to Venus' story, though, is present and her story functions as a warning to prevent her loss. The audience of Orpheus'

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[89] 10.552-553.
[90] 10.555.

story on the other hand is both empty (trees) and absent (Eurydice) and his story functions as a response to loss. Orpheus will show that Venus' attempt to warn her beloved away from dangerous behavior ultimately has no effect. Art is again a failure. Her art fails to prevent disaster just as Pygmalion's failed to satisfy him. Only Orpheus' own song was a success and that success was undone by his own emotions of love.

When Venus begins to sing, she begins by describing a young virgin of the forests, Atalanta. She has received a prophecy which warned her not to marry, for with marriage *teque ipsa viva carebis* ("though you stay alive,/ you will have lost yourself," 10.566). This threat of the loss of personhood will eventually be realized through Venus' angry punishment. It shows again Orpheus' view of the potential for love to radically overcome one's sense of self. The process of Atalanta's undoing begins when she sees Hippomenes.

To protect her virginity Atalanta has instated a running contest: whoever can beat her will be the one to marry her. Hippomenes observes with scorn many men run to their death but when he sees Atalanta's beauty he comes to understand their crazy wager. Hippomenes approaches her with heroic bluster and announces his challenge. Atalanta is then thrown into confusion. She cannot decide if she wants to conquer or be conquered. Venus says of Atalanta that *ignorans amat et non sentit amorem* ("unknowingly she loves and recognizes it not," 10.637). She repeats the epithet which Orpheus addressed to Myrrha, calling Hippomenes *taedia vitae* ("weary of life," 10.625). Of course her usage of the phrase is not as precise as Orpheus'. She misjudges Hippomenes and his brave and wholehearted hopes.

Venus responds to Hippomenes' pious and passionate prayer as she did to Pygmalion's. She grants them both her help and allows their desires to be consummated. Venus propels

Hippomenes to victory by giving him golden apples with which to distract Atalanta. The difference is that Pygmalion is said to have poured out great gratitude to Venus whereas Hippomenes will forget to repay his dues.[91] The two are married and happy until Venus loses her temper at Hippomenes' impious disregard of her help. Like Myrrha, Hippomenes and Atalanta are then led into an outrageous and indecent love. Venus amplifies their voracious sexual appetites but Cybele, the goddess whose shrine they defile with their copulation, is the one to transform the symbolic and religious violation of the actions into the outright violence of lions.

Venus concludes her story with a recapitulation of her warning (*effuge!* "Flee!" 10.707) and then rides off in her swan-drawn chariot. In her absence, Adonis immediately pursues a boar and, though he flees, the boar gores his groins.[92] Orpheus now once again repeats the pattern which he used for Phoebus. Venus is overcome with grief. She wails and moans and *percussit pectora palmis* ("beat her hands against her breast," 10.723). In her final address to his dead body she insists that she will perpetuate Adonis' memory through a feast and his body through its transformation into a flower.[93] She claims as precedent for this transformation Persephone's metamorphosis of Mentha into a mint plant.[94] Orpheus concludes his song-cycle with a description of that flower.

> "brevis est tamen usus in illo;
> namque male haerentem et nimia levitate caducum
> excutiunt idem, qui praestant nomina, venti."
> 10.737-739

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[91] Pygmalion thanks Venus at 10.291.
[92] 10.715.
[93] 10.727-728.
[94] *an tibi quondam/ femineos artus in olentes vertere mentas,/ Persephone, licuit,* "If you, Proserpina, were once allowed/ the metamorphosis of Mentha, when/ you changed that nymph into a fragrant plant," 10.728-730.

> "And yet Adonis' blossoms have brief life:
> his flower is light and delicate; it clings
> too loosely to the stem and thus is called
> Anemone—'born of the wind'—because
> winds shake its fragile petals, and they fall."

In his conclusion, Orpheus imagines a more perfect art—one that respects the fragility of human life. Where Phoebus' petals had carried a memorial of his grief, Venus creates petals that accept only recreate the constant flux of life and death. In Book 5 Orpheus' mother had told the story of Persephone's violent capture by Pluto. At the end of Orpheus' story, Venus resists feeling that she is any less empowered than Persephone. The conquest of Venus by love is called into association with the conquest of Persephone by Pluto.

Seen together this pair of stories serves as a twinned pair of two misunderstandings of love. When Venus says *non movet aetas nec facies ... leones* ("Your youth, your loveliness don't move the lion," 10.547-548), she reveals an awareness of how powerless love can be beyond the sphere of human action. Hippomenes' disrespect towards Venus, which recalls the disrespect of the Propoetides who denied Venus' godhead, betrays an inverse misunderstanding. He misunderstands how powerful love can be within his sphere of action. Orpheus concludes his song with a look out at the angry Bacchants who are appearing on the horizon and a look back at the conclusions of his song. The development of Venus shows in broad strokes how Orpheus is thinking about his own experience of love. He traces his loss of agency before the power of love to the hybris of his attempt to bend the boundaries of the world to accommodate his love. Love at the end of Orpheus' song can no longer escape from the tragic pattern which he observed in his own life. All he wishes for is to pay full heed to his love and to create art that is worthy of it.

At the end of his song and the end of his life, Orpheus is not thinking of art as a more

perfect substitute for the world. He longs instead for a miraculous living art, like that which Venus uses to memorialize Adonis. Her creation, the flower, does not attempt to excise pain. Orpheus is led at the end of his life to an tired weariness an sad conclusion that pain and death are present equally within art and life. Orpheus appreciates the failing of art even as he wishes to become it himself. Orpheus, at the end of his song cycle, exhausts himself and the murdering Bacchants come as a welcome relief.

4. Conclusion

Ovid ends his poem with a series of apotheoses. First he speaks of Julius Caesar who has been transformed to a star, then he prophesies Augustus himself will one day be found among the gods as well. Finally, Ovid claims for his own person a peculiar kind of ascension, one appropriate for a poet. Echoing Horace 3.30, Ovid declares the completion of the *opus*, confident in its survival past all threats; all ravages of fire, time, steel or Jupiter's wrath it could withstand. Filled with abandon by this confidence Ovid says daringly *cum volet, illa dies quae nil nisi corporis huius/ ius habet, incerti spatium mihi finiat aevi* (Now, when it wills, the fatal day (which has/ only the body in its grasp) can end/ my years, however long or short their span, 15.873-874).

His readiness to die and leave his body is founded on the claim that his *nomem*, his *pars melior* (name and better part) will come to be coextensive with Roman power in space and time. The verb which Ovid uses to define his future is *legar* (I will be read). When his body falls away, not Ovid's spirit but Ovid's name will become immortal; not Ovid's poem but Ovid *himself* will be on the Roman people's lips. This rare first person passive form of the verb communicates the poem's final metamorphosis. Ovid claims he will truly become his text.[95]

Within the context of the poem, these claims of transcendance are exceptional. Issuing from Arachne or the Pierides they would sound remarkably hybristic. Although Ovid is here making claims that had become only natural for the confident Augustan poet, this poem itself time and again counters these very sentiments. Indeed the final line of the *Metamorphoses*, acknowledges that doubt: *si quid habent veri vatum praesagia* (if poets' prophecies are ever

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[95] My gratitude to Lauren Curtis for suggesting this interpretation of Ovid's use of *legar* at 15.878.

right, 15.879). Perhaps in its final moments, the poem/poet wonders if its/his fate will resemble much more the fate of nearly all the internal narrators examined in this paper.

Orpheus too, in his final moments, looks beyond his poem and wonders what awaits him. He is struck with a world-weariness and a desire for escape, an escape to be found in the art, in the transformation of the artist into artwork. Through Myrrha' pleas for release and final rest in a half-state between life and death, through Venus' memorial flower for Adonis, which captures itself the transcience of life, Orpheus vocalizes the desire for a new art that is truer to life. But at the same time Orpheus worries. In the transformation of Hippomenes and Atalanta into lions, he recognizes the terrifying and impersonal violence of nature. When Venus warned Adonis that his loveliness and youth would not calm the angry wild world, Orpheus sets up an implicit contrast with his own poetry which once placated even Pluto and is currently relaxing the beasts around him. Orpheus' poem does not contain any specific references to the angry daughters-in-law who will, after a turn of the page or the opening of the next scroll, murder him. Their grievance, his pederasty, is a thing almost forgotten at this point, so far has his song-cycle drifted from that topic. And yet the death of Adonis suggests Orpheus' apprehension of impending violence against which his own powers are impotent.

Ovid has succeeded in his task of bringing the cycle of myth down to his own time. But Orpheus has reached a stopping point too: a kind of peace is depicted in the fluttering petals of Adonis' weak plant. Orpheus' death is necessary for him to be fully sealed within his song-cycle. Before Ovid becomes his book and everything but the singing head and sounding lyre are stripped from Orpheus, each have decided to surrend his song to the world, whatever may come its way.

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