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Dismemberment, Distraction, and Disjointedness: The *Metamorphoses* as Anti-Epic

by

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments 3

Introduction: What is Anti-Epic? 4

The Story of Arachne

- **Introduction** 7
- **Analysis** 8
- **Conclusion** 25

The Story of Actaeon

- **Introduction** 27
- **Analysis** 29
- **Conclusion** 49

The Battle of the Lapiths and the Centaurs

- **Introduction** 51
- **Differences from Arachne and Actaeon** 52
- **Epic Mockery** 53
- **The Grotesque and The Comical** 72
- **Purposeful Pandemonium** 78
- **The Language of Love and War** 93
- **Conclusion** 99

Conclusion: Anti-Epic in the *Metamorphoses* 101

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Introduction: What is Anti-Epic?

> "Everything changes but the essence of everything is unchangeable, so nothing changes; the universal hazard that constant, mindless mutability promotes allows for only illusory patterns, but beneath the idiotic flux there is nonetheless to the patternless directionless mess we call the universe a pattern and direction: *ab auro ad ferrum*." [1]

Perpetual change creates sameness, and within this sameness, there is direction, pattern, and constancy. This is, in essence, the by-no-means simple message embedded within Ovid's *Metamorphoses.* His bizarrely constructed epic, lacking both linear narrative and protagonist, draws upon patterns much more fundamental to the human condition than narrative archetypes. It demonstrates that even in a world of perpetual change, there is an essential constancy of being—Arachne, the weaver, becomes a spider and thus maintains her most important attribute across the lines of physical form; Actaeon, transformed into a deer, retains his human hunter's mind and thus suffers even more intensely the consequences of becoming the hunted. The more important question is posed, however, by the story of the battle between the Lapiths and the Centaurs, and that is, in the greater picture, are these changes even significant? On an individual level, these stories of metamorphoses are singular and disturbing. From a more panoramic view, they are the norm. Change is a constant, and, as in the battle of the Lapiths and the Centaurs, when things change quickly enough and chaotically enough, change may even become boring and monotonous. All stories are at their core about metamorphosis—people growing and changing or failing to do so and suffering the consequences.

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[1] W.R. Johnson, "The Problem of Counterclassical Sensibility and Its Critics," *California Studies in Classical Antiquity* 3 (1970): 123-151, 142.

Ovid's epic acknowledges this underlying sameness of theme and makes it painfully repetitive. It defies the emotional involvement normally associated with plot development by sheer force of numbers (it is difficult to care over and over again as different and unrelated people go through life changing experiences). In doing this, the *Metamorphoses* is set in direct opposition to its epic predecessors, making it the definitive anti-epic—in the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Aeneid*, one cares deeply for the journeys and ethical developments of Achilles, Ulysses, and Aeneas; in the *Metamorphoses*, one cares less and less throughout the story for the much more serious changes experienced by its glut of protagonists.

Apart from this very fundamental difference between Ovid's epic and those written by Virgil and Homer, Ovid makes it explicit that he is writing an anti-epic through his mimicry and distortion of many essential epic devices and themes present in traditional epic. Johnson writes, "Counter-classical poetry suggests that we mistrust […] the world of affirmation and celebration that classical poetry offers us, and it accomplishes this artistically by altering the traditional forms and themes of classical poetry, whether slightly or radically, whether gently or sardonically."[2] In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid includes catalogues, speeches, landscapes, and blushes, among many other things, all done in the epic tradition, but with a twist. Unlike in the epics of Virgil and Homer, Ovid sidesteps and disregards such themes as right and wrong, and devalues those subject matters, which would seem important, while describing at length those which might appear trivial. In this thesis, I will analyze three stories from Ovid's epic, all of which prove Ovid's intent to write not an epic in the style of

[2] Johnson, "Counterclassical Sensibility," 127.

Virgil and Homer, but an anti-epic in a style purely his own.

Chapter 1: Pallas and Arachne

Introduction

In line two of the story of Pallas and Arachne, the narrator comments about Pallas Athena, "she had commended their just anger" (*iustamque probaverat iram*).[3] This idea of just vs. unjust anger is a theme throughout the *Metamorphoses* and is the primary concern of the story of Pallas and Arachne—specifically, the story asks the question, is Athena's anger at Arachne for challenging her prowess in weaving justified? Although this question is the focal point for the story, Ovid fails to answer it. He further fails to convey a moral judgment, either explicitly or implicitly, in favor of Arachne or in favor of Athena. This failure to determine who is right and who is wrong is common in the *Metamorphoses*, in contrast with other epics, where the righteous party is generally clearly distinguished. Here, Ovid does not intend the reader to know for sure in which situations the god's anger, or even human anger, is just, and in which situations the anger is entirely unreasonable and disproportionate. In this case, the *iustam* itself is ambiguous—the moral judgment, that is that the anger is just, could be Athena's or it could be the narrator's. Because of purposefully ambiguous wording in cases such as this, the reader is at a loss to know on what basis his or her own moral judgments can be made.

The manner in which Ovid portrays the story's two main characters, Athena and Arachne, seesaws through the story. Arachne begins young and irrational, but demonstrates her skill, and in the end, is pitiable, even if she has committed sacrilege.

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[3] Publius Ovidius Naso, *Metamorphoses*, ed. William S. Anderson (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 6.2. All translations included in this paper are my own unless otherwise noted.

On the other hand, Athena begins her interaction with Arachne with her metamorphosis into an old woman. This action is seemingly somewhat reasonable, if Athena were simply trying to exact an apology from Arachne; however, the reader knows from the "introduction" in lines 3-4 that Athena will demand that Arachne be punished no matter what Arachne says. Therefore, because of Athena's all-consuming desire to be praised, she uses an unnecessary and complex deception and then goes on to accept a challenge the outcome of which she has already decided. Finally, Athena goes on to reveal at the end of the contest the same kind of overwhelming anger shown by Arachne in the story's beginning. Ovid presents a situation, which fits into the ancient story pattern of heroes who challenge the gods and suffer for it; however, the characters in his story demonstrate emotions that are petty and entirely human, and thus not necessarily appropriate for epic.

In addition to the un-epic and un-heroic emotions demonstrated in the Pallas and Arachne tale and Ovid's refusal to clearly delineate which protagonist is right and which protagonist is wrong, Ovid also deliberately chooses to emphasize and expand upon parts of the story that in traditional epic would be overlooked. Simultaneously, Ovid glosses over the aspects that would generally be considered the most important. Ovid's writing is distinguished by these odd choices, as well as by his "lily-gilding," that is his apportioning of details to subjects not necessarily worthy of so much detail.

Analysis

The story of Pallas and Arachne begins from Athena's viewpoint. Having just heard about the mistreatment of the Aonian Muses, Athena, who is referred to as "Tritonia" and is thus given a regal, epic quality from line 1, is ready to embark on a

story about her own mistreatment.[4] She provides the segue into this story (which is told by a third person narrator, and not by Athena herself): "it is not enough to praise: let me also be praised, and not allow my divinity to be spurned without punishment" (*laudare parum est; laudemur et ipsae / numina nec sperni sine poena nostra sinamus*).[5] By line four of the episode, the outcome of the tale has been made clear, or at the very least anticipated: this will be an instance of Athena wreaking vengeance upon one who has spurned her. But Ovid has chosen his words very carefully; as a narrator, he has passed no judgment on either Athena's vengeance, or on Arachne's insult—he has simply stated what will happen. It is clear that Athena believes that she has been spurned, and that the appropriate reaction to this insult is to punish the one who has affronted her; however, by having this short, four-line introduction come from the perspective of the goddess directly, Ovid sets up the story while avoiding having to demonstrate an opinion of his own, which, the reader will see, is a recurrent theme. Thus, when the possibility arises for Ovid to appear one-sided, he counteracts with someone else's perspective, that is, he quotes Athena's own words without comment.

In response to his own cleverly impartial beginning, Ovid seems to demonstrate initial (albeit short-lived) favor for Athena and dislike for Arachne, when he starts to tell the story in earnest after line five. Ovid writes, "she was not famous for her hometown, nor for her parents, but she was famous for her art" (*non illa loco neque origine gentis/ clara, sed arte fuit*).[6] Here Ovid accents the things that Arachne

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[4] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.1.
[5] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.3-4.
[6] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.7-8.

is not famous for, i.e. where she was born and her parents. The only word that is used to describe what she is good at is "art," (*arte)* which, although very important to someone like Ovid, is not very specific. Ovid continues for three more lines to expound upon the lowliness of Arachne's birth, giving a brief and not-at-all marvelous family history, including details like her father's lowly occupation. By beginning in this way, Ovid is prompting the comparison to Athena and accenting Arachne's lack of any noble or divine heritage on which to challenge the goddess. Even as Ovid begins to discuss Arachne's fame as a result of her art in lines 11-13, he qualifies his admission of her positive repute, "nevertheless she had gained a memorable name through the Lydian cities because of her artistry," (*Lydas tamen illa per urbes/ quaesierat studio nomen memorabile*) with the statement, "although she, having been born in a small home, was living in little Hypaepa " (*quamvis/ orta domo parva parvis habitabat Hypaepis*). [7] Although Arachne's humble origins might seem to add to the impressiveness of her artistic talent, Ovid never states this, and as a result, it seems even more unusual, and not necessarily acceptable, for her to pose any challenge to Athena. Ovid has inundated the reader with a list of qualities about Arachne, which are at best neutral. He has then mitigated his only positive statement with a reminder of these potentially negative qualities.

However, Ovid does not appear one-sided even subtly for too long. With line 14, Ovid begins to transition into a purely positive description of Arachne: "in order that they might gaze upon the admirable work, often the nymphs of Mt. Tmolus forsook their vine gardens and often the Pactolian nymphs forsook their waves "

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[7] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.11-13.

(*huius ut adspicerent opus admirabile, saepe/ deseruere sui nymphae vineta Timoli,/ deseruere suas nymphae Pactolides undas).*[8] Ovid accents that Arachne has the great honor of being respected for her weaving not only by mortals, but also by nymphs from several different locations, who admire her so much that they leave their homes in order to look at her work. He further enumerates, "Not only was it delightful to look at the finished garments; but also, (to look at them) while they were being made; so much beauty was present in the art " (*Nec factas solum vestes spectare iuvabat;/ tum quoque, cum fierent: tantus décor adfuit arti*).[9] These nymphs are interested not solely in the final product that Arachne crafts, but, because she is so talented, they are interested in the process. These lines are a clear compliment to Arachne, but at the same time, they bear a reminder of the insult being dealt to Athena—the nymphs are other immortals, who are praising the work of this mortal girl, so much so that they abandon they sacred homes to watch her work. Athena could easily perceive this as offensive, because both the nymphs and Arachne are not showing appropriate deference.

Following line 18 and his assertion that "so much beauty was present in the art," Ovid embarks on his first foray into excessive, anti-epic description. Everything that needed to be said about the beauty of the process of Arachne's weaving was already said in lines 17-18. As a result, Ovid's five-line detailed description of the different components of weaving comes across as more than a little jarring and out of place. Ovid writes, "Whether she was gathering up the rough wool in preliminary balls, or she was bringing up the work in her fingers, and striking the fleece

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[8] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.14-16.
[9] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.17-18.

repeatedly, softening the clouds with her long pulling; whether she was turning the smooth spindle with her light thumb, or embroidering with a needle, you would have know she was a student of Pallas"(*Sive rudem primos lanam glomerabat in orbes,/ seu digitis subigebat opus repetitaque longo/ vellera mollibat nebulas aequantia tractu,/ sive levi teretem versabat police fusum, seu pingebat acu, scires a Pallade doctam).*[10] By mentioning actions such as creating balls of yarn, and preparing the wool, Ovid seems to be introducing relatively plebeian tasks into a presumably epic story in defiance of what his audience would consider appropriate. Furthermore, it seems odd that one would know the teaching Pallas from these actions, as it is unlikely that the goddess has to do many of these things for herself.

The last four words of this weaving description, *scires a Pallade doctam*, further complicate the passage.[11] This change to the second person is odd—who is the you here? And what does Ovid mean in this context by "a student of Pallas?" The you is presumably either the reader or anyone who has looked on Arachne's tapestries; however, it is ambiguous. In addition, as far as we know from the story, Pallas did not teach Arachne; Ovid either means to imply that Arachne was divinely inspired, and anyone looking on her work would know this, or he simply means to pay her a very strangely worded compliment, that is that her work is so good it looks to be (but is not) inspired by the goddess. The next line, "nevertheless, she denied this, offended by so great a teacher," (*Quod tamen ipsa negat, tantaque offensa magistra*) seems if not to dispel this idea of divine inspiration, at least to minimize it. [12] Arachne is

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[10] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.19-23.
[11] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.23.
[12] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.24.

offended that she would be thought inspired by Athena, presumably because it takes away from her own talent and artistry—in this way, she demonstrates a certain degree of hubris in rejecting divine inspiration as a negative thing when compared to individual accomplishment. Thus, Ovid opposes his own judgment to create a confusing juxtaposition of compliment and rejection.

Following this, Ovid finally reaches the main premise of the story. Arachne says, "Let her battle with me, there is nothing which having been conquered I would refuse" (*'certet' ait 'mecum: nihil est, quod victa recusem'*). [13] This challenge by Arachne is only given one line, which stands in stark contrast to the four potentially unnecessary weaving lines prior to it. Ovid here has chosen to emphasize what is unimportant, and to quickly gloss over what is crucial. Also notable, is the fact that this is only the second instance of direct speech present in the story. Interestingly, this second instance seems to stand in opposition to the first in lines 3-4, spoken by Athena. Here, Arachne is clearly spurning Athena rather than praising her (*laudemur et ipsae/numina nec sperni sine poena nostra sinamus*); at the same time, she seems to be willing to accept the punishment she will receive for this action.[14] Finally, these two lines accentuate a fundamental difference in what the two protagonists believe the story is about: Arachne thinks that it is about a competition with regards to artistry, while Athena thinks it is about the right of a goddess to be praised appropriately.

The simplicity and brevity of this line containing the premise of the story (from Arachne's perspective) are further accented by the artful tricolon in the

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[13] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.25.
[14] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.3-4.

following two lines. This tricolon is dedicated not to anything major or permanent, but rather to describing Pallas impersonating an old woman. Ovid writes, "Pallas takes the shape of an old women and she adds false grey hairs to her temples, and weak limbs, which she supports with a walking stick " (*Pallas anum simulat falsosque in tempora canos / addit et infirmos, baculus quos sustinet, artus*).[15] Here there is description upon description—there is even a clause dedicated to how Pallas sustains her fake old limbs. The detailed nature and the triviality of these two lines must again be compared with the brevity and the importance of the one prior to them.

Following her metamorphosis into an old woman, Pallas in her new form sets out a well reasoned and logical argument condemning Arachne's hubris against this goddess. First, Pallas establishes why she should be heard "Greater old age holds not only things which should be fled from: experience comes with advanced years" (*Non omnia grandior aetas, quae fugiamus, habet: seris venit usus ab annis*).[16] She then gives a recommendation (or rather an order) based on this fact, "Do not spurn my council" (*Consilium ne sperne meum*).[17] Significantly, this recommendation incorporates the word *sperne*, the same word Pallas used in line 4 (*sperni)* to describe what she would not allow to be done to her. Next, she proves that she is knowledgable about Arachne's particular situation, when she says "let the greatest fame be sought by you amongst mortals because of your weaving skill" (*tibi fama petatur / inter mortales faciendae maxima lanae*). Finally, she provides a last recommendation and a prediction based on her expertise and her knowledge of the

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[15] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.26-27.
[16] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.28-29.
[17] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.30.

situation, "yield to the goddess, and, rash one, ask with your own words as a suppliant for forgiveness: she will give forgiveness to you asking " (*cede deae veniamque tuis, temeraria, dictis / supplice voce roga: veniam dabit illa roganti*).[18] This long and well-reasoned speech from Pallas, who has not spoken since the first few lines of the story, must be juxtaposed with the last and only thing we have heard from Arachne: a youthful, rash challenge against a powerful goddess. Ovid creates here subtle associations based on age. Pallas takes the form of an old woman, for the only part of the story where she is acting entirely reasonably; Arachne in contrast is young, and in keeping with the audacity of youth believes herself to be invincible in challenging a higher power. Thus far in the story (with the exception of the introduction), Ovid makes it clear who is in the right and who is in the wrong, and which of the two protagonists is acting more rationally.

Arachne's response to Pallas' argument only reinforces the misguided nature of Arachne's choices. Ovid provides a vivid contrast between the reasonably worded approach of Pallas, and the irrational, physical reaction of Arachne. Arachne must visibly restrain herself, and is described as "scarcely holding back her hand" (*vixque manum retinens*). She makes no effort to hide her emotions or to be subtle in her response to Pallas: "she, showing dark anger on her face, replied to Pallas with such words" (*confessaque vultibus iram/ talibus obscuram resecuta est Pallada dictis*).[19] Pallas' methodical, logical argument is met with unbridled emotion, and fierce anger. Furthermore, Arachne's first move, once she has started speaking, is to insult the wisdom of the elderly by equating being old with having failing mental faculties,

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[18] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.32-33.
[19] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.35-36.

saying "You come, helpless and worn out by long old age and it is harmful to be alive for too great a time" (*Mentis inops longaque venis confecta senecta. / et nimium vixisse diu nocet*).[20] Because Ovid has already set up the juxtaposition of the wise old woman vs. the emotional, rash maiden, the reader is supposed to see this insult as offensive idiocy on the part of Arachne.

When Arachne has finished her tirade against the disguised Pallas, the goddess reveals herself to the girl. The nymphs (who have come to gaze upon the work of Arachne) then worship Pallas, reacting with the conventional and appropriate amount of piety: "The nymphs and the Phrygian women worship the goddess" (*Venerantur numina nymphae Mygdonidesque nurus*).[21] Here, significantly fewer lines are devoted to the nymphs' adoration of Pallas than were devoted to the nymphs' adoration of Arachne, which on a surface level seems like another example of Ovid's disproportionality. Conversely, this might simply be a demonstration that the nymphs' adoration of Athena is immediate and unqualified—it needs no further explanation. Furthermore, the disparity in lines is made up for by the difference between the words *admirabile* and *venerantur*.[22] While *admirabile*, the adjective used to describe Arachne's weaving, means "remarkable" or "astonishing," *venerantur* means "worship." So while the nymphs adore Arachne, and admire her work, they worship Pallas instantly upon her arrival.

Arachne reacts to Pallas' arrival in a way that would have been considered traditional and in fact expected by Ovid's ancient Roman readers: she blushes. As

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[20] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.37-38.
[21] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.44-45.
[22] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.14, 44.

will be the case with Diana's blush in the story of Actaeon, Arachne's blush is a demonstration of her shame or *pudor.* While these two blushes are described very similarly, both being likened to the dawn (*ut solet aer/ purpureus fieri, cum primum aurora movetur,* in the case of Arachne, and qui color […] / *nubibus esse solet aut purpureae aurorae* in the case of Diana") their motivations are clearly quite different.[23] Diana's blush is more simply explained—her status as a *virgo* has been violated by Actaeon's seeing her undressed. Arachne's blush is more complicated. Robert Kaster in his article, "50 Ways to Feel Your *Pudor*," cites many different causes for *pudor* in ancient Rome, several of which might apply to Arachne in this particular instance. The first of these is relatively straightforward, Kaster notes, "being mocked by a deception, or being required to acknowledge publicly [one's] dependence on another," as two different causes for *pudor*.[24] Arachne has just been deceived by Pallas in disguise as an old woman, and prior to this, she has been asked to attribute her talent at least in part to the goddess, so both of these justifications apply. Kaster goes on to cite, "pursuing self-interested ends at the cost of social obligations" and "indulg[ing a] "swollen ego" with "self-seeking falsehood," as further causes for *pudor*.[25] This example is also applicable—Arachne has a social obligation, in that religion was a major part of society, to respect Pallas as the goddess of weaving and to praise her for this; however, Arachne is instead seeking praise for herself and flattering her ego, thereby dishonoring the goddess. As a result

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[23] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.47-48.
Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.183-184.
[24] Robert A. Kaster, "Fifty Ways to Feel Your Pudor," in *Emotion Restraint and Community in Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 37.
[25] Kaster, "50 Ways to Feel Your Pudor," 44.

of these self-serving and sacrilegious actions, Arachne would be right to demonstrate *pudor*. Finally, Kaster gives one more example, he writes, "[one] can promote [oneself] at the expense of another […] [one] can make [one's] own false or excessive claims on others' respect for [one's] competence, achievements, or the like."[26] Arachne's claims about her competence and achievements are not false, but they are excessive, and as Pallas is a goddess, who should rightly be worshipped, Arachne's claims to individual success are at Pallas' expense. Thus, Arachne's *pudor*, which results in her *rubor*, is justified for multiple different reasons.

This blush on first reading seems to be quite characteristically epic; however, Ovid's description of the blush sets it apart and the specific features Ovid chooses to accent discredit Arachne's seemingly appropriate display of *rubor*. Arachne's blush is a sign of good character, as may be seen by its inverse. Julia Dyson writes of the incestuous Myrrha, "Myrrha's power to blush deserts her as she is about to perform a wicked sexual act: on the threshold of her father's bedroom, 'color and blood flee, and the spirit abandons her as she goes.'"[27] Thus, the ability to blush is a sign that one is not wicked or evil, but has an appropriate sense of shame. Ovid however writes, "but nevertheless, she blushed and suddenly, redness tinged her unwilling face and again vanished" (*Sed tamen erubuit, subitusque invita notavit/ ora rubor rursusque evanuit*).[28] The features of Arachne's blush, which Ovid chooses to accentuate, are its brevity and Arachne's unwillingness to display it. Thus, it is as if Arachne in her

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[26] Kaster, "50 Ways to Feel Your Pudor," 45.
[27] Julia T. Dyson, "Lillies and Violence: Lavinia's Blush in the Song of Orpheus," *Classical Philology* 94, no. 3 (1999): 281-288, http://www.jstor.org/stable/270407, 287.
[28] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.46-47.

youth and immaturity is rejecting her acceptable and socially proper reaction in favor of the pursuit of praise and false dignity. Ovid thus artfully complicates the blush and sets it apart from expectations.

Following her blush, Ovid uses two parallel and strangely paradoxical verbs to depict Arachne prior to the contest, she "stands firm" (*perstat*) and "rushes" (*ruit*), and a tricolon to depict Athena, "for the daughter of Jove did not refuse nor did she warn further or now delay the contest" (*neque enim Iove nata recusat/ nec monet ulterius, nec iam certamina differt*).[29] His description of Arachne makes her seem odd and unbalanced, while the description of Athena is firm and steady. Ovid follows these opposing descriptions with the phrase "without delay" (*haud mora)*.[30] Even though this phrase refers specifically to the speed with which the contest is begun, it holds a certain level of irony—the reader is over 50 lines into the poem, and the contest has not started yet; in addition, Ovid has just dedicated a tricolon to describing a list of things that Athena does not do. They paradoxical nature of his use of the phrase *haud mora* continues further. From lines 53-58, there is another extended description of the process of weaving: "both of them were set up in different places, and they extended twin webs with graceful threads (the web was joined with a yoke, a reed separated the wrap); each put in a medium woof with sharp rods, which their fingers disengaged, and the teeth from the piercing, cutting comb struck amongst the foundation threads" (*constituunt diversis partibus ambae/ et gracili geminas intendunt stamina telas/ (tela iugo iuncta est, stamen secernit harundo);/ inseritur medium radiis subtemen acutis,/ quod digiti expediunt, atque inter stamina ductum/*

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[29] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.50-52.
[30] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.53.

percusso paviunt insecti pectine dentes).[31] This description seems excessive, since it is not describing any particularly fantastic or innovative art done by the two weavers, but rather it is a description of basic, necessary actions, which most in the ancient world would probably either know or find unnecessary. Ovid is delaying further and purposefully creating an inorganic digression on the subject of a technology.

In lines 59 and 60 as the women make their final preparations to begin the contest, Ovid makes clear his neutrality to the protagonists of the story. The two women are equated—both hasten (*festinant*), both are forced to gird themselves from the labor (*cinctaeque ad pectora vestes / brachia docta movent*), and both disguise how much work they are putting into it through their skill (*studio fallente laborem*).[32] Although earlier in the story Arachne is portrayed as abrasive and childish, and Athena is portrayed, at least in her guise as an old woman, as reasonable, here the two are described identically. Ovid wants the reader to know for sure that these two women are at least technically on par.

Lines 61-63 provide a false beginning to the description of tapestries. Instead of actually describing what is being woven, Ovid embarks at line 63 on an extended simile depicting the colors present in the weavings. Although clearly these colors are grand, they are still dedicated a surprisingly large number of lines, especially when compared with the lack of description about subjects like the brilliance of Athena revealing herself as a goddess, or later in the story, the epic tales depicted on the tapestries. This simile's only function seems to be to create a slow transition into talking about the content of the tapestries, and while this transition is

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[31] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.53-58.
[32] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.59-60.

characteristically Ovidian in that it leads the readers from point A to point B by confusing them so much that the forget where they started, it is not necessary in this particular situation (i.e. a transition could be much more simply constructed).

In line 69 the subject matter of Athena's tapestry is finally revealed. Ovid writes, "the old contest is drawn out on her tapestry" (*vetus in tela deducitur argumentum*); in this case, the old contest being referred to is the contest to become the patron of Athens.[33] This is the first place where Athena and Arachne are actually differentiated in terms of their weaving practices, having been described identically up until this point. In his description of Athena's work, Ovid continues to use simplicity where one would expect ostentation, he writes, "sua quemque deorum/ inscribit facies: Iovis est regalis imago."[34] Here rather than expound upon the features of the gods Athena has woven, as would seem appropriate, he instead simply chooses to say (paraphrasing) "she wove them with their features: Jove was the regal one." Ovid intentionally does not emphasize what he is expected too—he chooses only to describe three of the gods she has woven and creates a type of description directly opposed to that which he has used in his elborate similes. In addition, when Ovid describes Athena's rendering of Poseidon's attempt at becoming the patron god of Athens, one of the center points of the story Athena is telling, his description is as brief and direct as possible (paraphrasing): "He stood. He struck the harsh rock. A channel sprung up and he made it his pledge."[35] Athena is the only goddess who gets a detailed physical description and even hers is not flowery and poetic, but rather a

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[33] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.69.
[34] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.73-74.
[35] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.75-77.

list of things she is wearing, "a shield," (*clipeum*) "a spear with a sharp point," (*acutae cuspidis hastam*) "a helmet" (*galeam*) and "the aegis," (*aegide*) that seem to function like insignia and so to mark her status.[36] Furthermore, Ovid makes a point of saying that Athena gives (*dat*) all of these things to herself (Ovid does not give them to her). While this mostly makes Athena appear to be self-advertising, it also absolves Ovid of any favoritism towards the goddess. Finally, Ovid writes "mirarique deos." Here within her tapestry, all the gods admire what Athena has done; however, Ovid has made it clear in his description of this tapestry that he himself has no particular admiration for Athena's work. He does not consider most of Athena's work worthy of extended description, and one is reminded that it is the work of Arachne that he called, "opus admirable"[37] not that of Athena.

However, even though Ovid seems to have hinted at which work he believes to have more value, he makes this fact immediately irrelevant to the outcome of the contest. In line 83 he writes, "in order that her rival in praise might know from the examples what sort of prize she might hope for on account of such dreadful daring " (*Ut tamen exemplis intellegat aemula laudis,/ quod pretium speret pro tam furialibus ausis*).[38] The guise of a contest is transparent and Athena is already showing Arachne the type of thing that is going to happen to her because she has challenged a goddess—actual skill is not really important. Athena is fixated on her right to be praised, and this is further demonstrated in the stories Athena chooses to place as examples in the corners of her tapestry—while all of them have to do with angering

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[36] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.78-79.
[37] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.14.
[38] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.83-84.

the gods, none of them have to do with contests based on skill. Ovid is hinting at the fact that Arachne is not the only protagonist of the story whose emotions are petty and childish and he is again emphasizing that what the story is about for Arachne is not what it is about for Athena.

Additionally in describing these four stories, Ovid makes another choice that is typical of the *Metamorphoses*. He chooses to dedicate 5 lines to the story of Antigone, having dedicated 3 to each of the other transgressions in Athena's corners.[39] This story is no more important than the other three, and in choosing to emphasize it unnecessarily Ovid is observing the principle of *varietas*, a standard idea in classical poetics stating that if one has a sequence of equivalent expressions, one should make sure that stylistically and syntactically they are treated differently. Here one story is treated differently, while the other three are all treated exactly the same in terms of the number of lines dedicated to them.

In line 103, Ovid finally begins his description of Arachne's tapestry, and he is immediately more flattering saying, "you would have believed it was a real bull, a real ocean" (*verum taurum, freta vera putares*).[40] He praises the realism of Arachne's depictions of divine/mortal interactions in comparison with the ideological content of Athena's weaving. Furthermore, Arachne's tapestry is considerably less focused (and thus more to Ovid's taste) than Athena's. Arachne depicts a copious number of events and it becomes unclear in Ovid's description whether he is giving an actual laundry list of the events represented in her weaving, or whether at some point he simply

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[39] The Antigone mentioned here is not that familiar tragic heroine appearing in Sophocles' play by that name, but a much more obscure figure about which very little is known.
[40] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.104.

begins to describe events like those present. This is made all the more confusing by what appears to be a entire lack of spatial organization in the tapestry. Ovid goes on for 25 lines about Arachne's work; however, when he is done the reader is left with a swirl of colors and stories, and without any actual mental image of what the piece might look like. In contrast with Athena's work, for Arachne's tapestry the reader has no sense of spatial orientation.

The description of Athena's reaction to Arachne's tapestry is crucial to making the story anti-epic, and to cementing Ovid's role as a neutral narrator who is defining neither character as being right or wrong (but rather both characters as being immature, and ridiculous). Ovid writes, "the golden haired warrior grieved at her success and tore the painted garment, a heavenly crime" (*Doluit successu flava virago/ et rupit pictas, caelestia crimina, vestes*).[41] Here Pallas is depicted with the same unreasonable, physical anger that Arachne showed at the beginning when she was told not to challenge the goddess. This creates a sort of circularity within the story, and at the same time alienates the reader somewhat from Pallas' perspective, just as the reader was made to find Arachne unsympathetic. In addition, the use of the verb "doluit" conveys a very different sort of anger than Pallas displayed with "iram" in the second line of the story—instead of the proud, almost regal anger or a goddess, Athena is more "peeved" or "irked" at Arachne's success. Finally, Pallas' physical anger continues as she strikes Arachne in the head with her shuttle—this petty action from a god against a mortal (which seems strangely akin to a cat fight) is further alienating and makes the story seem entirely unepic and frankly undignified.

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[41] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.130-131.

Finally, having demonstrated no interest in describing the beautiful, regal gods and goddesses, Ovid shows his interest in the grotesque in the last few lines of the story. Arachne's metamorphosis into a spider hints at a strange fascination (which will be widely expanded upon in the later episode of the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs) with physical detail. He describes her head and body shrinking, "defluxere comae, cum quis et naris et aures,/ fitque caput minimum, toto quoque corpore parva est," and her new legs growing, "in latere exiles digiti pro cruribus haerent."[42] The story is finished with such vivid description, that one feels as if one's own body is slowly constricting into a spider's tiny form.

Conclusion

In the end, the story of Pallas vs. Arachne leaves the reader with a sense of vague dissatisfaction. Arachne represents herself to be childish and arrogant, and as a result not particularly worthy of the reader's sympathy or support; on the other hand, Pallas comes across as obsessive in her need to be praised, and immaturely cruel in the manner through which she punishes her opponent. Ovid paints a picture in which neither protagonist acts rightly or admirably. He appears during the story to be setting up a moral framework, which will result in some sort of judgment being passed on the characters, and then subsequently, he thwarts this process by never letting it run its course (i.e. by never letting judgment be passed or served). Ovid further sets himself apart through the details of his writing, primarily through those subjects which he treats as important. He defies traditional expectations in the story of

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[42] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.141-143.

Arachne, as he does in the *Metamorphoses* as a whole, about what deserves extended description, and what deserves only a brief mention.

Chapter 2: Actaeon

Introduction

On one hand, like the story of Pallas and Arachne, the story of Actaeon and his unfortunate encounter with Diana also deals with the idea of just vs. unjust anger on the part of a god against a mortal. On the other, unlike in the story of Pallas and Arachne, in the story of Actaeon Ovid on a surface level seems to convey a clear moral judgment in favor of Actaeon. The scenario is one familiar to tragedy in which a mortal commits an unwitting transgression against a god and is punished disproportionately; however, even while Ovid portrays Diana as unreasonable, he draws parallels between Actaeon and Diana, with the violence of Actaeon's sport (hunting) being as extreme as Diana's reaction to Actaeon seeing her naked. Even though much of Ovid' s language indicates sympathy for Actaeon, he portrays Actaeon as having committed a triple transgression: first, against the mountain with bloodshed (143), next against the secluded grove (175-6), and finally against Diana's nakedness. As a result of these transgressions, Actaeon can never be innocent. Still, unlike the story of Arachne, the story of Actaeon is less about demonstrating that neither of the protagonists is a decent epic hero or heroine (although flaws are easily apparent in both the actions of Actaeon and those of Diana) and more about Ovid's distinctly unepic style and literary devices. As usual, in the end Ovid poses questions of morality only to steer away from them, saying "to some, the goddess seemed more violent than just others praise her, and call worthy of strict virginity" (*aliis violentior*

aequo/ visa dea est, alii laudant dignamque severa/ virginitate vocant) and then refraining from giving his own opinion. [43]

In the story of Actaeon, even more so than in that of Arachne, Ovid obsesses over the minutiae of the language he uses. He runs the entire gamut of rhetorical devices, including but not limited to tricolon, hyperbaton, oxymoron, chiasmus, hysteron proteron and others. Additionally, even while separating himself in many ways from epic, Ovid retains some things common to the epic tradition, including his descriptions of both time and place. Within these more traditional epic descriptions, Ovid frequently treats the epic elements in ways that are unepic, revisiting subjects he has already adequately described and not giving sufficient time to subjects that deserve more attention (something which he did a fair amount of in Arachne). In addition, repetition and parallelism are commonly used throughout the story. Within the first ten lines, Ovid uses four separate words to depict blood and gore (thus demonstrating lexical *varietas*, while at the same time hammering home his theme), and he mentions fortune as a central issue twice. Ovid draws many important parallels both within his own text and between his text and the epic genre, some notable ones being between the violence of Diana and the violence of Actaeon's hounds, between the violence of Actaeon's sport and Diana's violence, between the catalogue of hounds and epic catalogues, and lastly between the final battle between Actaeon and the hounds and more traditional epic battles. Finally, Ovid repeats two themes that are commonly addressed in the *Metamorphoses,* that is, the disturbance and inversion of

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[43] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* 3.251-253.

relationships between man and nature and the unnatural separation of the human mind from the body.

Analysis

The story of Actaeon begins with a single tricolon, which encapsulates the entire rest of the plot: "your grandson was the first cause of grief to you Cadmus amongst so many favorable things, and foreign horns added to his brow and you, dogs, satisfied by the blood of your master" (*Prima nepos inter tot res tibi, Cadme, secundas/ causa fuit luctus, alienaque cornua fronti/ addita, vosque, canes, satiatae sanguine erili*).[44] Here, by revealing the story's trajectory at its inception, Ovid eliminates any potential for building a story based purely around plot development; he directs the appeal of his narrative away from the outline of the plot and toward the story's literary qualities. To show his dedication to the literary aspects of his narrative, Ovid uses two literary devices in these first three lines; the lines themselves are a tricolon and there is an apostrophe of Cadmus and the hounds. By revealing the story's plot in this way, Ovid seems to be hinting at his own opinion that the development is rather simplistic and does not deserve that much attention. In giving up the end at the beginning, he removes any potential that the narrator will be someone who is personally involved in the unfolding of the story, or that the reader himself will become emotionally concerned, hoping to know and caring about how the plot will turn out.

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[44] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.138-140.

Ovid moves from these blunt introductory lines straight into the placing of blame. He writes, "if you ask properly, you will find in that case [of Actaeon] something which falls to the charge of fortune, you will not find a crime" (*at bene si quaeras, fortunae crimen in illo,/ non scelus invenies*).[45] With this rather odd turn of phrase, Ovid is implying that there is a right way, as a reader, to look at the story, which in turn suggests that he himself has a definite opinion about the rights and wrongs of the tale. He says that what has happened to Actaeon is a *fortunae crimen*. This translates as something which "falls to the charge of fortune" or simply a "crime of fortune." This phrase has distinctly Ovidian qualities to it, as it is an oxymoron. Fortune by nature of its being fortune cannot be charged with anything and cannot commit crimes. Thus, the implication that what has happened to Actaeon is a crime committed by fortune, and not a real crime, is nonsensical. Ovid is, by means of his phrasing, avoiding assessing Diana's culpability. By blaming fortune, something which is amoral and lacking the ability to be responsible, Ovid is sidestepping having to blame either party, Actaeon or Diana, at least for the time being.

Ovid continues in a way that is upon cursory inspection in favor of Actaeon, asking "Quod enim scelus error habebat?"[46] Although this at first appears to be just a discreet jab at the goddess Diana, this seemingly rhetorical question has a more complicated answer. The question itself can be translated on one hand as "what crime did error have?' or on the other hand more literally as "what crime did wandering astray have?" With regards to the first, clearly error can have many crimes, as when men commit crimes, generally they err in some way; however, it is possible that Ovid

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[45] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.141-142.
[46] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.142.

is suggesting something much more complicated, that is, he is posing the question as to whether an action can really be a crime without criminal intent (as in, unintentionally staring at a naked goddess). For the second, the story literally depicts the "crime" of wandering astray—Actaeon enters a place he is not meant to go. But again, when this action is a crime, which we call trespassing, it must usually be intentional and it is markedly different from getting lost (the action Actaeon was in fact doing).

In the next line, Ovid begins to dramatize the narrative by adding visually dark and emotionally stirring description. He writes "the mountain was stained with the slaughter of various wild animals" (*Mons erat infectus variarum caede ferarum*).[47] This is the third tonal change so far in the story, as Ovid began artfully with a tricolon, moved on to linguistic and philosophical complexity, and has now turned almost sinisterly descriptive. These quick changes are further indicative of Ovid's interest more in the writing than in the subject matter of the story of Actaeon. Additionally, this is the second mention of blood in the first five lines (the first being *sanguine*, 140). Thus, as these lines so far have discussed only Actaeon, and have never mentioned Diana, these associations of him with blood and violence hint that Ovid's portrayal of Actaeon may not be altogether positive, although, clearly he is not yet willing to commit to a fixed portrayal of either protagonist.

Subsequent to his initial dramatic description, Ovid makes a rare homage to traditional epic and spends two lines describing only the time of day (cf. Homer's rosy-fingered dawn). He writes, "and now midday had draw together the shadows of

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[47] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.143.

things and the sun was standing apart equally from each end" (*iamque dies medius rerum contraxerat umbras et sol ex aequo meta distabat utraque*).[48] This description adds to the emotionally heightened and darkened state created by the previous line, as midday is a commonly perilous time in epic (referred to as a critic by "the panic hour of noon").[49]

Following the periphrasis of time, Ovid continues two of the trends already present in the story. He first introduces yet another literary device, a hyperbaton; he writes, "when Actaeon calls with his calm voice the young men who are participating in the hunt, wandering throughout secluded glade" (*cum iuvenis placido per devia lustra vagantes/ participes operum compellat Hyantius ore*).[50] Immediately after this, he further accentuates the association of Actaeon and his men with blood and gore when Actaeon says "the hunting nets are wet, comrades, and our swords are wet with the blood of wild animals" (*Lina madent, comites, ferrumque cruore ferarum*).[51] At this point, Ovid has used four different words to convey blood and slaughter, *sanguine* (138) and *caede*(143), and now *madent* and *cruore*, thus demonstrating his own lexical *varietas*. All of these words have somewhat different connotations, and Ovid makes an art out of describing the slaughter surrounding Actaeon and making sure his readers have this association of Actaeon with blood firmly ingrained in their minds. Additionally, he makes a point of using the same last word *ferarum* (wild beasts) to end lines 143 and 148. In this way, Ovid solidifies the association of

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[48] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.144-145.
[49] Charles Paul Segal, "Landscape as Symbol," in *Landscape in Ovid's Metamorphoses* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner Verlag, 1969) 4.
[50] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.146-147.
[51] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.148.

Actaeon with the same sort of violence and wild nature that he himself will later fall victim to.

Ovid next moves on to Actaeon's speech to his men, and another repeated concept, that of *fortuna* in this speech. Actaeon says to his men, "the day has held fortune enough" (*fortunamque dies habuit sati*s).[52] It is clear that Actaeon understands enough hunting has been done for the day, and to continue would be foolish (and indeed it is). Additionally, there is a sort of irony inherent in Actaeon's words, as he, here at the story's beginning, believes his fortune to be favorable. This second mention of fortune in the first eleven lines of the story suggests its importance to the plot as a whole. Giving fortune such an important role is a way for Ovid to avoid having to assign any real blame or moral wrongdoing to either party as the story goes forward.

For the next several lines, Ovid returns to two of the techniques that he commonly uses to make the *Metamorphoses* an anti-epic. He dwells for far too long (two lines) on Actaeon telling his men the simple idea, "we will hunt again in the morning." Subsequently, Ovid has Actaeon discuss for two lines the time of day. This has already been firmly established with a traditional periphrasis by the narrator; Ovid's having Actaeon mention this time again is not however entirely superfluous. It emphasizes that time has not progressed past the noon hour and thus, it is still a dangerous moment to be in the woods. This speech by Actaeon thus entirely avoids more traditionally important matters, like the successes of the prior hunt, and skips straight to the hunt's end—in doing this, Ovid is pointing to the fact the many

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[52] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.149.

subjects which are considered traditionally important in epic stories will be entirely absent from his (notably the hunting successes, and in Arachne, the descriptions of the god's brilliance).

Ovid continues to place emphasis oddly, giving the point of Actaeon's speech (at least to his listeners), which is to take down the gear, only one line. He writes, "stop the current hunt and raise the knotty hunter's nets" (*sistite opus praesens nodosaque tollite lina*).[53] That Actaeon says this so briefly may be much more for Ovid's readers than Actaeon's listeners—it is more important to the readers and to the trajectory of the story to know why the hunt must end and when than it is to know the mechanics of how it will end. Here Ovid not only greatly abbreviates the summation of Actaeon's address, but also includes a hysteron proteron—the men are ordered to raise the hunting nets after they have already ceased to work. With this inclusion, he demonstrates a sort of purposeful carelessness about the mechanics of taking down the hunt. Thus, Ovid ends this initial section of the story, having described none of the actual acts of hunting or taking down the gear, saying only vaguely "the men carried out the orders and suspended the hunt" (*Iussa viri faciunt intermittuntque laborem*).[54] In summation, these are examples of striking brevity with regards to subjects about which Ovid could clearly go on at length. One must consider what Ovid chose to discuss instead of what would have been expected—he discussed the need for the hunt to end, the slaughter that took place, and the ominous time of day. He thus sets the stage for a story not about hunting, but about disaster.

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[53] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.153.
[54] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.154.

Ovid abruptly begins his description of Diana and her nymphs with a tricolon: "there was a valley thick with pine forests, and with sharp cypress, named Gargaphie, sacred to the goddess Diana" (*vallis erat piceis et acuta densa cupressu,/ nomine Gargaphie, succinctae sacra Dianae*).[55] At the very beginning of the story in lines 139 and 140, Ovid began his description of Actaeon with the same device. That he begins both of his character introductions in the same way further hints at the parallel being drawn between the two protagonists.

Following his initial introduction to Diana, Ovid launches into a description of the grove, which is sacred to the goddess Diana and into which Actaeon unfortunately stumbles. This description is interesting for several reasons, the first and most basic being that it is an extended depiction of a location important to a goddess. Such descriptions are typical of epic, but Ovid demonstrates a specific preference for the description of landscape. In fact Charles Segal suggests that in the *Metamorphoses*, there is time and time again, "the recurrence of an almost stereotypic sylvan scenery. A secluded grove, wet water, shade, coolness, soft grass, sometimes rocks or a cavern, are the usual attributes."[56] Segal gives a reason for this reoccurrence, writing, "landscape helps [Ovid] toward a subtle and elegant solution of his poem's greatest problem: unity."[57] Thus, this landscape stands out in the story, and rightly so for it ties Actaeon into the *Metamorphoses* as a whole.

The second interesting aspect of this description is the pure beauty of the grove, i.e. the "spring resounds" (*fons sonat*) and "with light stone, a natural arch is

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[55] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.155-156.
[56] Segal, *Landscape in Ovid's Metamorphoses*, 4.
[57] Segal, *Landscape in Ovid's Metamorphoses*, 6.

made" (*levibus tofis nativum duxerat arcum*).[58] This sort of absolute beauty, when attributed to a place within the *Metamorphoses*, tends to imply that the place will actually turn out to be either sexually charged or dangerous, rather than idyllic and serene—clearly this is the case for Diana's grove in Actaeon. Segal writes, "While these landscapes suggest, on the one hand, a half-real realm of wonderful, if evanescent beauty, they also create the atmosphere in which strange and capricious powers can work their will and fulfill their desires. They symbolize […] a mysterious outer world where men meet an unwelcome and unexpected fate."[59] Finally, just as the grove is described in a way that is typical of beautiful (and dangerous) locations within the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid uses one other peculiar trope of his epic, he writes, " (it was) fashioned by no art: nature had imitated art with its own devices" (*arte laboratum nulla: simulaverat artem/ ingenio natura suo*).[60] Here the grove, something that is naturally occurring, is described as being "fashioned by no art." Ovid is here implying that you would think the arch a manmade work of art because of its beauty, but in fact, nature is imitating man. This inversion of the traditional order and divide between nature and man is a theme within the *Metamorphoses* where men often become part of nature, and here where nature is being likened to something manmade.

Subsequent to his description of the grove, Ovid begins to describe Diana herself. In this depiction, he emphasizes the two aspects of the goddess that are most important to the greater trajectory of the story; the first of these aspects accents her

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[58] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.160-161.
[59] Segal, *Landscape in Ovid's Metamorphoses*, 15.
[60] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.158-159.

similarity to Actaeon, while the second explains her negative reaction to the story's "hero." Thus, Diana is introduced as being "wearied with hunting" (*venatu fessa*) and as having "virgin limbs" (*virgineos artus*). [61] Diana's being a hunter causes her to, in her own way, relate to Actaeon and thus, to choose the perfect and most awful fate for him as a fellow hunter—that is, that he become the hunted. Diana's being a virgin explains her negative reaction to Actaeon seeing her naked, and why she immediately reacts in such an extreme manner.

After his description of Diana, Ovid includes the first of the two catalogues present in the story of Actaeon, a catalogue of Diana's nymphs. This catalogue, more so than the later catalogue of dogs, has an obvious function. The bathing ritual of Diana is described as if it were a ceremony, and the catalogue of the nymphs participating in this ceremony is intrinsically tied to it. However, from a more sweeping viewpoint both of the catalogues in Actaeon's story have a greater function within the *Metamorphoses*—they, by nature of their relatively light-hearted subject matter, poke fun at the more serious catalogues present in traditional epic. Especially in Homer, epic catalogues usually tend to serve a greater purpose in the works within which they are included—they, through their long lists of names and places recognize the story's listeners and include them by association within the tale. Ancient listeners waited eagerly to hear such things as the catalogue of ships, because they felt that through the inclusion of their hometowns and ancestors, there were being included in the work. Ovid's catalogue serves no such greater purpose to the audience or to the narrative, and in this way he differentiates his story from those of Virgil and Homer.

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[61] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.163, 164.

The structure of the catalogue itself communicates the ceremonial nature of Diana's bathing ritual. Ovid begins with details like the number of nymphs it takes to untie Diana's shoes, in contrast with the number it takes aside to receive her robes. Subsequently, he builds up to the more important nymphs, to which he attributes names and distinguishing details. Finally, he describes the most important nymph, Ismenis Crocale, who ties up Diana's hair, and adds the fact that she is "more skilled" (*doctior*) and that, in contrast to Diana, she wears her own hair "loose" (*solutis*).[62] After this description, Ovid includes more of the names of the nymphs, but no more details, as he did for Ismenis Crocale. Thus, just as in a temple ceremony, some priestesses (nymphs) play more important roles than others, and certain numbers of girls are required for specific tasks. Finally, this catalogue serves to delay the point when Actaeon actually arrives, and to build up suspense.

After putting it off for so long, Ovid finally reaches the point where Actaeon comes to the grove. Upon reaching this pivotal place in the narrative, he chooses to remind the reader of the importance of *fortuna*; he writes, "sic illum fata ferebant."[63] Here he uses the word *fata* which, for the Romans, had similar, though not identical, meaning to *fortuna* (there is not the difference between fortune and fate, as the cognates might suggest). By placing this statement where he does, that is right before Actaeon encounters Diana and his fate, Ovid reminds the reader that he is treating what happens to Actaeon as with a matter of fate and fortune, and thus is not placing explicit blame on either character.

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[62] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.168, 170.
[63] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.176.

In describing the initial reaction of the nymphs to Actaeon entering the grove during Diana's bathing, Ovid's language becomes dramatically enhanced and linguistically complex: "when the man was seen, the naked nymphs beat their breasts, and they filled up the entire grove with a sudden shrieking and having surrounded Diana, they covered her with their own bodies" (*viso nudae sua pectora nymphae/ percussere viro, subitisque ululatibus omne/ implevere nemus circumfusaeque Dianam/ corporibus texere suis*).[64] Here the key phrase is "when the man was seen," (*viso viro*) which is accented through hyperbaton. This hyperbaton is in turn entwined with a tricolon (*percussere, implevere, texere*), describing the immediacy and the intensity of the nymph's reaction to having seen Actaeon.

Having been caught bathing, Diana reacts with a blush. Ovid writes, "that color which is accustomed to be in the clouds tinged by the rays of the opposing sun or of the purple dawn, this was present in the face of Diana having been seen without her clothes" (*qui color infectis adversi solis ab ictu/ nubibus esse solet aut purpureae aurorae,/ is fuit in vultu visae sine veste Dianae*).[65] This blush, as is often true in epic and as was mentioned in the previous chapter, is a sign of Diana's virginity, which is being violated by Actaeon's male eyes; however, there is a twist. While Ovid describes Diana blushing like a traditional epic maiden, he uses the same word, "*infectis*," to describe her blush as he did in line 143 to describe the mountains as being stained with blood. Thus, even Diana's blush is given a darker and less innocent side.

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[64] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.178-181.
[65] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.183-185.

Diana's physical reaction to Actaeon's entering the grove is also nuanced. Ovid describes the situation: "nevertheless she stood at an angle to him, and turned her face back" (*in latus obliquum tamen adstitit oraque retro/ flexit*).[66] Presumably her nymphs are circling Diana as she turns away from Actaeon while glancing back at him over her shoulder; however, Ovid adds to the panic of the moment through his own vague description. It is unclear what exactly is meant by Diana's "slanting side" and we cannot discern whether we are seeing a profile of her body, or her back. After this point, Ovid details Diana's actual actions. He describes Diana as "sprinkling his hair with an avenging wave" (*spargensque comas ultricibus undis*.[67] Normally, the fact that Diana must splash Actaeon for lack of a bow (she is after all naked and weaponless) would come across as comical, and here in this first instance it is; however, the use of this word becomes chilling. The next time Ovid uses "spargens" (in the form *sparso*), it is not for Diana to splash Actaeon, but for her to transform him. This fact alone turns the tone of the passage in a darker direction.

Ovid builds up for four more lines the tension to the moment when Actaeon will actually change (and when *sparso* will be used again). He refers to Diana as "the foreteller," (*praenuntia*), and to Actaeon's "future destruction," (*cladis futurae*). [68] Both of these words give an ominous sense of something that is looming in the near (but not immediate) future. In addition, after Diana makes her brief threat, "now it will be pleasing to you to talk about me, seen with my clothing dropped down, if you are able to talk" (*Nunc tibi me posito visam velamine narres,/ si poteris narrare,*

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[66] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.187-188.
[67] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.190, 191.
[68] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.191.

licet), which is itself ambiguously phrased and conceals the extent to which she will take revenge. Ovid adds that she "did not threaten more" (*nec plura minata*), a phrase which he himself ironically uses to take up more space.[69] Thus, Ovid seems to add this to emphasize the ominous nature of Diana's ambiguously brief statement, which itself is arguably even a threat. Essentially, Diana gives no warning of what she is about to do, and as a result, there is nothing Actaeon might have done differently to save himself.

When Actaeon's transformation does finally begin, Ovid gives a blow-by-blow description. He reveals what Actaeon will become in a genitive in the first line, writing that Actaeon has "the horns of a long lived dear," (*vivacis cornua cervi*). [70] In this brief description, Ovid makes no attempt to create suspense as to what Actaeon will turn into (in case the readers have forgotten that they know). The genitive is made even more interesting as a result of the use of "long lived" (*vivacis*). On the surface, this word is nothing if not ironic, as Actaeon's life as a deer ends almost immediately. Alternatively, it may serve to simply imply that Actaeon has been transformed into a mature deer (rather than a baby), and is thus even better for the hunt.

Following the description of Actaeon's physical transformation, Ovid moves to address the issue of whether or not there has been any mental change; this issue of retaining human psychology when in an altered, non-human form is common in the *Metamorphoses* and something Ovid takes a clear interest in. First, Ovid adds to the list of Actaeon's physical characteristics that "fear also was added" (*additus et pavor*

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[69] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.193.
[70] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.194.

est).[71] This emotion of fear that is common between humans and deer (one of the only emotions that is common between humans and deer, though Actaeon himself was presumably not previously fearful) acts as a transition into discussing Actaeon's mental state. Subsequent to this, Ovid writes, "he was marveling at such swiftness in his running" (*se tam celerem cursu miratur in ipso*).[72] That Actaeon marvels at his own swiftness reveals to the reader that Actaeon is not yet aware of the change that has taken place. Actaeon, however, is immediately made conscious of this change in the next line, when he sees his own reflection in the water.

The most important and the greatest consequence of Actaeon's having a human mind in a non-human form is his loss of the ability to speak and through speech, to express the breadth of human emotion. Ovid initially dramatizes this fact through Actaeon's attempt and failure to yell the words "me miserum" and thus to express his own distress.[73] Ovid then goes on to write, "No voice would attend him. He groaned: this was his voice and tears flowed down a face not his own; only his mind remained as it had been" (*vox nulla secuta est/ ingemuit: vox illa fuit, lacrimaeque per ora/ non sua fluxerunt; mens tantum pristina mansit*).[74] This statement is drawn out as long as possible to the point of being repetitive, but at the same time, is strangely formulaic and overly logical: he had no voice → he groaned → groaning was his voice → only his mind remained the same. This effect of human emotions battling with the inability of their carrier to articulate them holds a unique pathos, which Ovid effectively communicates. Finally, as if the reader has not already

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[71] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.198.
[72] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.199.
[73] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.201.
[74] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.202-203.

understood the drama of the situation, Ovid writes, "What should he do? Should he return to his home and the royals roofs, or should he hide in the woods?" (*Quid faciat? Repetatne domum et regalia tecta/ an lateat silvis?*).[75] With these statements, Ovid demonstrates the narrator's presence within the story and the fact that the narrator has at least some measure of empathy for Actaeon. Furthermore, Ovid is explicitly pointing out the problems for a human in a non-human form.

Ovid next launches into one of the most peculiar features of the tale of Actaeon, that is, the catalogue of dogs. This catalogue is significantly longer than Ovid's previous catalogue of the nymphs tending to Diana, and as a result presents an opportune occasion in this essay for a more in depth discussion of the function of catalogues in epic, and how this function is altered and subverted in the *Metamorphoses*. As mentioned earlier, catalogues in epic generally serve some greater function within the story, whether that is to make the readers feel included in the tale or to "elevate a particular piece of action, such as a phase of a battle scene."[76] This means that most catalogues have carefully calculated structures (even if they are calculated to produce the impression of randomness). In his book on catalogues, *Catalogues of Names in Latin Epic Poetry*, Stratis Kyriakidis outlines the many different patterns catalogues in epic may take, he writes, "The patterns we shall be concerned with here are classed on spatial grounds and are the following: a) density in the middle, b) spacing in the middle, c) ascending/descending mode, d) internal

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[75] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.204-205.
[76] Stratis Kyriakidis, *Catalogues of Proper Names in Latin Epic Poetry Lucretius – Virgil – Ovid,* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 9.

balance, e) erratic pattern."[77] This framework is helpful when looking at the catalogue of dogs, which predictably, given the nature of the *Metamorphoses*, does not fit smoothly into any of these categories (even defying classification as erratic).

The catalogue of dogs begins with an introduction, which should not be included in the analysis of the overall catalogue. Ovid writes, "First, Melampus and keen-scented Ichnobates gave a signal with their barking, Ichnobates [was] Gnosian, Melampus [was] from the Spartan race." (*Primumque Melampus/ Ichnobatesque sagax latratu signa dedere,/ Gnosius Ichnobates, Spartana gente Melampus*).[78] These two and a half lines function as an introduction to the greater catalogue—Ichnobates and Melampus are the subjects of the verb *dedere*, while the next twenty-eight dogs will all be subjects of *runt* in line 209. They give the signal, *signa*, that the hunt of Actaeon is about to begin, and thus, that the catalogue of dogs will start in the next line.

Rather than looking at a translation of the catalogue of dogs, it will be more helpful to look at the catalogue deconstructed as it is in Table 1.[79] Each dog is given a name, and some are given adjectives or adjectival phrases.

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[77] Kyriakidis, *Catalogues of Proper Names*, 10. "Density in the middle" refers to catalogues with the greatest number of names per line during the middle lines, while "Spacing in the Middle" refers to the inverse of this pattern. "Ascending/descending" refers to catalogues that either start with many names and gradually decrease in density or catalogues that start with few names and gradually increase. "Intern balance" refers to catalogues that have a consistent number of names per line throughout and "erratic" refers to catalogues that have no discernable pattern with respect to the placement of the names within them.
[78] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.206-208.
[79] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.210-224.

Table 1

Line #	# of names	Names	Descriptors
1	3	Pamphagus, Dorceus, Oribasus	(1) Arcades omnes
2	3	Nebrophonus	(1) valens
		Theron	(1) trux
		Laelape	(0)
3	2	Pterelas	(1) pedibus
		Agre	(1) naribus utilis
4	1	Hylaeus	(1) ferox (2) percussus ab apro
5	2	Nape	(1) deque lupo concepta
		Poemenis	(1) pecudesque secuta
6	1	Harpyia	(1) natis comitata […] duobus
7	1	Ladon	(1) substricta gerens Sicyonius ilia
8	5	Dromas, Canache, Stricte, Tigris, Alce	(0)
9	2	Leucon	(1) niveis […] villis
		Asbolus	(1) villis […] atris
10	2	Lacon	(1) praevalidusque
		Aello	(1) cursu fortis
11	3	Thous	(0)
		Lycisce	(1) velox cum fratre
		Cyprius	(0)
12	0	n/a	(1) et nigram medio frontem distinctus ab albo
13	3	Harpalos	*description in line 12
		Melaneus	(0)
		Lachne	(1) hirsutaque corpore
14	0	n/a	(1) et patre Dictaeo, sed matre Laconide nati
15	3	Labros	*description in line 14
		Argiodus	(0)
		Hylactor	(1) acutae vocis

Of all the patterns mentioned by Kyriakidis, the catalogue comes closest to falling under the heading of "spacing in the middle"—this means that the greatest density of names occurs on the two outer ends of the catalogue, while in the middle the names are set more rarely, and are thereby emphasized. The catalogue starts with a three-

name line, builds down to a series of one-name lines, and then builds back up to lines containing three; however, there is a significant break in the pattern. The only line containing five names appears directly in the center of the catalogue, with seven lines on either side of it. Furthermore, even though all of the one-name lines occur near the middle of the catalogue, one name in each of the three-name lines at the end is given a full line descriptor preceding it, thus making it seem that these names are even more important than those in the one name lines. Thus, while Ovid's catalogue fails to fall under the pattern of "spacing in the middle," which is commonly used in epic, it also is by no means erratic. It has a clear structure, which serves no immediate function other than to bewilder the reader looking for meaning in the order of the names (all of which are unknown, since they are not the names of heroes, but rather the names of dogs).

Finally, Ovid himself makes the catalogue appear purposeless, and causes the reader to be immediately unengaged both through the way he introduces it and through the way he concludes it. Kyriakidis writes, "in the *Metamorphoses*, the frame of, and the surrounding text of a catalogue often suggests to the reader that the things and beings named in a catalogue are of little importance and of an unstable nature."[80] This statement is especially true of the catalogue of dogs. Introducing the catalogue, Ovid writes, "From there, others rushed out, swifter than a rapid breeze" (*Inde runt alii rapida velocius aura*).[81] This statement implies that the entrance of the dogs is fleeting, insignificant, and not particularly powerful (they enter in a disorganized trickle rather than a pack), like a breeze. At the end of the catalogue, Ovid negates its

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[80] Kyriakidis, *Catalogues of Proper Names*, 144.
[81] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.209.

importance even more directly. He breaks off the list, refusing to name "those it would be a delay to relate," and continues, "This crowd followed with a desire for their prey" (*quosque referre mora est. Ea turba cupidine praedae/ […] sequuntur*).[82] Here Ovid implies that to continue doing what he has been doing for the past fifteen lines would create nothing but an unnecessary delay. He then presents all of the dogs together under the heading of *ea turba*, portraying them not as a group of individuals whose names are important, but rather as crowd. These two statements together, as Kyriakidis puts it, draw "all the names to collective insignificance," and leave the reader wondering what on earth the purpose of the catalogue was in the first place.[83]

Following the catalogue of dogs, Ovid moves on to describe the hunt of Actaeon with the detail and artistry, which he poignantly did not dedicate at the story's beginning to Actaeon's own hunting activites. He includes a tricolon: "through cliffs and crags, and unscalable rocks" (*per rupes scopulosque adituque carentia saxa*) depicting the specific sort of rocks the dogs are travelling over, and he adds another set of parallel clauses "where it was difficult and where there was no road, they followed" (*quaque est difficilis quaque est via nulla, sequuntur*) to further expound upon the difficulty of the terrain. [84] Within all of the terrain description, there is no mention of any vegetation, making the chase of Actaeon in deer form all the more pathetic. Then, as if to remind the reader that is it is this hunt he has chosen to depict, while he did not depict Actaeon himself hunting, Ovid writes, "He fled through the places through which he had often followed," (*Ille fugit per quae fuerat*

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[82] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.225-227.
[83] Kyriakidis, *Catalogues of Proper Names*, 155.
[84] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.227.

loca saepe secutus).[85] This phrase stands in opposition to the verb "*sequuntur*," which had the dogs as its subject.[86] Ovid is playing around with notions of leading and following, having *secutus* end line 228, and *sequuntur* end line 227 to make the tension most obvious. He is showing us that, rather than be even-handed, he will only show Actaeon as the followed and the hunted, never the follower and the hunter.

Just before Actaeon is caught Ovid again returns to his focus on Actaeon's inability to communicate. He writes, "he wanted to shout," (*clamare libebat*)[87] which of course is an extreme understatement (it would be significantly more than just pleasing to shout). Ovid goes on to write, "words are lacking to his mind; the air resounds with barking" (*verba animo desunt: resonat latratribus aether*).[88] Here Ovid is accenting the contrast between the words Actaeon would presumably like to call out, and the inarticulate howling which actually fills the air. He is further creating opposition between *verba* and *animo*—Actaeon's spirit/mind can no longer be expressed in words.

Finally, Ovid details the dogs' attack on Actaeon. This description is notable both for its similarities with the descriptions of epic battles and for the fact that none of the dogs mentioned in it were mentioned before in the catalogue of dogs. Within the description, the lines between human and animal are blurred; Ovid likens Actaeon in his deer-state to a human praying and writes, "he turns his head at his name" (*ad nomen caput ille refert*).[89] Unfortunately, even though Ovid presents a persuasive

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[85] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.228.
[86] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.227.
[87] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.229.
[88] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.231.
[89] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.245.

account of how a deer might be able to adopt a suppliant posture, neither the dogs nor Actaeon's fellow huntsmen are able to read his body language. Ovid depicts Actaeon's final wishes with typical Ovidian word play, writing "He would prefer to be absent, but he was present; and he would prefer to see, not also to feel the fierce deeds of his own hounds" (*vellet abesse quidem, sed adest; velletque videre/ non etiam sentire canum fera facta suorum*).[90] Ovid contrasts presence with absence and seeing with feeling in a mannered conclusion that leaves the reader somewhat distanced from Actaeon's plight.

Conclusion

Thus, in the story of Actaeon morality is not really the question. Ovid demonstrates this by concluding with both perspectives, and choosing neither, writing "to some, the goddess seemed more violent than just others praise her, and call worthy of strict virginity" (*aliis violentior aequo/ visa dea est, alii laudant dignamque severa/ virginitate vocant*).[91] As was the case in Arachne, Ovid portrays both characters negatively, with Diana seeming unreasonably harsh and Actaeon appearing violent and blind to the signs of potential excess. Unlike in the case of Arachne, in the story of Actaeon Ovid dismisses the question of morality relatively easily and focuses instead on the intricacy of his language. He creates a narrative that is both tied to traditional epic, and divorced from it through the use of such devices as catalogue and the periphrasis of time. This focus on the anti-epic element, while

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[90] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.247-248.
[91] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.251-253.

present in both Actaeon and Arachne, will become the primary focus in this paper's final tale of the Lapiths and the Centaurs.

Chapter 3: The Battle of the Lapiths and the Centaurs

Introduction

The story of the battle of the Lapiths and the Centaurs differs dramatically from both the story of Arachne and the story of Actaeon; however, all of the ways in which this story is unlike the other two make it the prototype for the concept of anti-epic, and a perfect embodiment of the *Metamorphoses* as a whole. Like the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid's description of the battle of the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs lacks a linear narrative—it is a three hundred line aside in the story of Caeneus told by Nestor to Achilles during Ovid's rendition of the Trojan War. The story mocks descriptions of truly epic battles by portraying the battle between the Lapiths and the Centaurs in language pointedly similar to (though in some ways dramatically different from) Homer's *Iliad*. Ovid thus exaggerates the tropes of warfare and points out the absurdity in the rules of ancient combat. Additionally, unlike in traditional classical literature where love and warfare stand opposed to one another, Ovid conflates the language of love and that of warfare throughout the story, thus blurring the lines between them. Finally, unlike other tales in the *Metamorphoses*, where only one metamorphosis occurs, in the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs objects constantly lose their traditional properties and are thus thought to be things they are not. In addition, all those objects and creatures that might be thought of as having two natures (notably the centaurs) are accentuated throughout the tale and their dualism is perpetually elaborated upon. Because of the nonlinear nature of this story, analyzing it in a blow-by-blow fashion (as was done with the other two stories) does not seem prudent. Instead, it seems best to focus on the specific features of the story that make it anti-

epic and prototypical of the *Metamorphoses*, and to note particular moments in the story when these features occur.

Differences from Arachne and Actaeon

Apart from the obvious differences, such as the story's lack of a linear narrative or a hero or villain, the story of the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs has several other, more subtle thematic deviations from both of the two previous stories discussed. Unlike both the story of Arachne and the story of Actaeon, the story of the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs is not at all concerned with the placing of blame. With Arachne, it is unclear who is at fault—Athena overreacts, but Arachne is youthfully hubristic; the same is true for Actaeon—Artemis acts quickly, and with extreme violence, but descriptions of Actaeon suggest that he may be guilty in his everyday life of similarly violent behavior. In the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs, no such issue of questionable morality exists. The wedding of Pirithous, a Lapith, is clearly defiled by the centaur, Eurytion, when Eurytion drunkenly abducts the bride. Ovid writes, "for he was not able to defend such deeds with words" (*neque defendere verbis/ talia facta potest*).[92] Here it is obvious who has committed the initial crime, and there is no way Eurytion can defend his actions with words. Thus, in the battle of the Lapiths and the Centaurs, moral ambiguity should not be considered an underlying issue of the story.

Not only is the story of the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs unconcerned with morality, but glory interestingly also does not weigh in as a motivating factor for the protagonists. In the story of Arachne, both Athena and Arachne seek as their primary aim glory and praise for themselves through their weaving (although Athena has the

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[92] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.232-233.

additional aim of "revenge," as a goddess who has been affronted). Similarly, Actaeon seeks personal glory through success in the hunt as he foolishly wanders into Artemis' grove.[93] On the other hand, in the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs Ovid has Evagrus question near the beginning of the story "what glory is produced when a boy is slaughtered?" (*puero quae gloria fuso/ parta tibi est?*) The answer is simple: there is no glory available for anyone.[94] Clearly the actions of the centaurs are inglorious, in fact they are despicable, and there is nothing to be gained for the Lapiths except self-defense. Furthermore the story moves through characters so quickly that individual glory in combat is rendered impossible purely by nature of the fact that no one man or centaur is particularly distinguished.

Thus, since the story does not include traditional thematic issues like morality or the pursuit of glory, Ovid dedicates himself to a more involved parodying of epic battle, using the story as a vehicle for this literary mockery. That Ovid does not have to deal with such issues as character or plot development gives him the chance to stretch and experiment with the concept of metamorphoses as a focal point, and to flirt with the extreme boundaries of describing the grotesque.

Epic Mockery

Ovid's depiction of the battle between the Lapiths and the Centaurs has many features in common with depictions of both Homeric and Virgilian epic battles. Some notable examples include: the use of women as spoils; the death of a friend as an impetus for starting a new battle; bragging about an individual's accomplishments/kills in battle; including cursory details for significant participants

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[93] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.174-176.
[94] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.292-293.

in the battle; the presence of catalogues and similes; and the presence of epic speeches. However, although all of these aspects retain similarities in the *Metamorphoses* to their epic counterparts, all of them are in some way twisted, or pointedly differentiated from true epic. Additionally, the story has notably non-epic features, such as the fact that in this battle many of the participants are drunk, and thus much of the violence and the death is uncharacteristically, and inappropriately comical. Finally, the grotesque quality of the description is both epic and anti-epic depending on the model that is taken, that is to say, whether one is looking to Homer or to Virgil as the prototype for describing epic warfare. While Homer's descriptions rival Ovid's in their level of detail, Virgil's refrains from such specifics and from depicting the overly gory aspects of battle.

At the beginning of Homer's *Iliad*, Agamemnon, leader of the Greeks, has been deprived of the woman he has chosen to be his "spoil of war." As a result, he takes Briseis, the woman granted to Achilles, from Achilles, thereby setting off Achilles' famous rage and creating the primary conflict of one of the most famous stories ever told. Thus, it is safe to say that women in their role as "spoils of war" are an important feature of epic. Ovid clearly has it at the forefront of his mind that his story is ostensibly being told by Nestor to Achilles outside the walls of Troy when he writes, "Eurytus seized Hippodame, and others seized whoever they wanted or were able [to seize], and the image was of a captured city" (*Eurytus Hippodamen alii, quam quisque probabant,/aut poterant, rapiunt, captaeque erat urbis imago*).[95] Even before the battle between the Lapiths and the centaurs begins in earnest, the centaurs

[95] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* 12. 224-225.

are carrying off the Lapith women. Ovid purposefully accents this feature of the story to draw the parallel with epic, bearing in mind the obvious difference that the centaurs are in fact not participating in a war, but committing the sacrilegious act of carrying off their fellow wedding guests.

The bizarre use of transitions is a unifying feature of the *Metamorphoses* as a whole, and within the story of the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs, there is one type of transition, which reoccurs over and over again, and which is taken, like the importance of women as spoils, straight from epic. Within battle when one man-on-man fight is finished, it is common to segue into the next fight by having the victor of the first skirmish be attacked by a friend or relative of the vanquished who is trying to avenge the latter's recent death. Homer writes in the *Iliad*, "Ajax, son of Telamon, slew the fair youth Simoeisius, son of Anthemion, […] Thereon Antiphus of the gleaming corselet, son of Priam, hurled a spear at Ajax from amid the crowd and missed him, but he hit Leucus, the brave comrade of Ulysses, […] Ulysses was furious […] and took aim, and the Trojans fell back as he did so. His dart was not sped in vain, for it struck Democoon, the bastard son of Priam."[96] Here we move from battle to battle with one person trying to avenge another, but hitting someone unrelated, thus setting off the anger of this new person's loved ones and so on. Ovid mirrors this device exactly in the *Metamorphoses*, acknowledging this fact explicitly when he has Theseus speak the words, "ignorantly, you dishonor two (men) with one (blow)" (*violesque duos ignarus in uno*).[97] Here Theseus is talking specifically about

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[96] Homer, *Iliad*, trans. Samuel Butler (The Internet Classics Archive, 1994-2009), http://classics.mit.edu/Homer/iliad.4.iv.html, 4.
[97] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.229.

how Eurytus, in injuring the groom, has also injured him personally, because he is the groom's friend. This concept, however, obviously has a broader application—when anyone injures anyone else, the aggressor also hurts that person's friends and relatives, who then have (at least in the ancient world) an obligation to retaliate. In this way an everlasting fight is created (at least until only two men are left standing or all those fighting are strangers). It is typically Ovidian that Ovid states explicitly and succinctly his use of this device, taken so clearly from epic and that his actors are self-conscious about the motives of their actions.

Also typically Ovidian is the way in which Ovid exploits this device and stretches it to the limit of plausibility. Ovid uses the device in the traditional way at line 254 (where Celadon is being avenged) and again at line 366 where he writes, "accept this death tribute, Crantor, dearest of youths," (*inferias, iuvenum gratissime Crantor, accipe*) as Peleus avenges the death of Cantor.[98] However, unlike these two relatively banal usages, at 341 Ovid describes Aphareus avenging the death of Dictys, who has not actually been killed, but rather has just fallen off a mountain. It almost seems here as if Aphareus is trying, as an avenger, to punish the mountain for having killed his friend: "Aphareus was present as victor and he attempted to hurl a rock torn from the mountain" (*Victor adest Aphareus saxumque e monte revulsum/ mittere conatur*).[99] Here it is the rock, which is being described as "torn," and which Aphareus is trying to, "hurl"—it is only after this sentence that we realize he is attempting to use the rock as a weapon. Ovid hints at the absurdity of the device itself—that if a rock is the killer, the rock (a clearly nonliving and blameless entity)

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[98] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.367.
[99] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12. 341-342.

must pay for the crime in order to perpetuate the cycle and keep the story going as long as possible (although who might be there to avenge the mountain is unclear).

Just as in traditional epic, or any war story really, Ovid has the participants in the battle of the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs brag about their accomplishments in war. Alternatively, if the battle's participants are not bragging on their own behalves, but rather are caught up in the heat of battle, Ovid uses his pen to brag for them. However, the deeds Ovid chooses to detail are often strangely inglorious, and frequently not worthy of being recounted as if they were great accomplishments. For example in describing the deeds of the centaur Amycus, Ovid writes, "Amycus, son of Ophion, not at all afraid, was first to strip the innermost sanctuaries of their gifts and he was first to steal from the sanctuary the torches full of waving lights" (*primus Ophionides Amycus penetralia donis/ haud timuit spoliare suis et primus/ ab aede lampadibus densum rapuit funale coruscis*).[100] Rather than being *first* to reach the frontlines, or *first* to draw blood, two things one would expect someone to be renowned for in a fight, Amycus is *first* to defile the sanctuary and *first* to snatch up a wax torch, as if these things are impressive battle feats. Additionally, Ovid mentions how he accomplishes these unremarkable and sacrilegious tasks without fear, thus making fun of descriptions of real battles where doing any action without fear makes the action more heroic.

Just as Ovid singles out inappropriate "first times," many of the actual battles and deaths in the fighting that Ovid chooses to have Nestor describe as exceptional are anything but. For example, Ovid lists the kills of Pirithous, the Lapith groom

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[100] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* 12. 245-247.

whose wedding has been ruined; he ends this list by saying, "but each one gave a lesser title to the victor than Dictys and Helops" (*sed uterque minorem/ victori titulum quam Dictys Helopsue dederunt*).[101] Reading this, one expects that these two men must have been truly remarkable fighters, so the battles about to be described will be the definition of epic. Helops, the latter of the two mentioned, is pierced through the head by a javelin.[102] While this is certainly a gruesome death, it is a relatively "normal" one. Helops is not the first person in the story to die as a result of a javelin—he is not even the first person to be pierced through the head; consequently, we wonder why Ovid has chosen to single him out. The former, Dictys, we have already heard about—he is the man who falls off a mountain to his death; thus, Pirithous is credited with his death only because he happened to be chasing him at the time when he plummeted to his doom. And so, the two men, who will supposedly give greater glory to their murderer, die first unremarkably, and second accidentally. Ovid is clearly making fun of the trope in epic of giving glory to heroes as a result of the stature of those they have killed; since we are given no details about these men other than the manners of their deaths (which are embarrassing), we must assume a certain lack of esteem.

Finally, Ovid also singles out other moments that have no potential for being glorious and, in fact, are shameful; these moments rather than bringing renown, only degrade or have no impact on those involved. For example, in an act of true artistry, Charaxus crushes one of his friends, Cometes, with a threshold, which was too heavy for him to throw. Ovid writes, "He raised the threshold torn out from the ground onto

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[101] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* 12.333-335.
[102] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* 12.335-336.

his shoulders, the load of a wagon, which its weight prevented him from throwing at an enemy: the rocky weight crushed his friend Cometes who was standing nearby" (*inque umeros limen tellure revulsum/ tollit, onus plaustri, quod ne permittat in hostem,/ ipsa facit gravitas: socium quoque saxea moles/ oppressit spatio stantem propiore Cometen*). [103] Later on, Ovid depicts an entire battle only to reveal that in the end, one of the participants flees to avoid being killed; he narrates, "Rhoetus groaned and scarcely tore off the stake from his hard bone and soaked in his own blood, he fled " (*Ingemuit duroque sudem vix osse revellit/ Rhoetus et ipse suo madefactus sanguine fugit*).[104] Thus, unlike in epic, Ovid chooses to zero in on moments of cowardliness and clumsiness rather than bravery and accomplishment.

In both the *Aeneid* and the *Iliad*, it is common when describing significant participants of a battle to include details about their outside lives and about their families. For example, Homer writes, "Forthwith Ajax, son of Telamon, slew the fair youth Simoeisius, son of Anthemion, whom his mother bore by the banks of the Simois, as she was coming down from Mt. Ida, where she had been with her parents to see their flocks."[105] Here we see that the person described is in fact the one who has been slain, rather than the one who is victorious; thus, if we use Homer as a template, a warrior does not have to be victorious to be worthy of distinction. Ovid follows suit when he writes, "Gryneus bore the altar huge with its own fires and threw it into the middle of the line of Lapiths and crushed two, Broteas and Orion: the mother of Orion was Mycale, who was often known to lead down the horns of the

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[103] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.282-284.
[104] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.300-301.
[105] Homer, *Iliad*, 4.

reluctant moon with her singing" (*suis Gryneus inmanem sustulit aram/ ignibus et medium Laiptharum iecit in agmen/ depressitque duos, Brotean et Orion: Orio/ mater erat Mycale, quam deduxisse canendo/ saepe reluctantis constabat cornua lunae*).[106] On the surface, these two situations are identical, that is, the authors are providing identifying details for those who have recently been cut down; however, the situation in Ovid is, as usual, somewhat more bizarre. No actual one-on-one combat was going on, but rather the two men named happened to be crushed be a tree thrown toward a group of Lapiths. Furthermore, it is somehow strange that Ovid chooses to include details only about Orion when he and Broteas have met exactly the same fate. Finally, since these two men are mentioned once, and do no actual fighting, it is odd that Ovid chooses to dedicate three lines to a side note about one of their mothers. And so, the inclusion of significant details about the outside lives of the participants in the battles is something the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs has in common with epic; however, Ovid manages to make this device awkward and disruptive, rather than something which contributes to the general progression of the story and enhances its characters.

We have already seen in both the story of Actaeon and the story of Arachne that Ovid has a fondness both for catalogues, and for similes; likewise, we have seen that these similes and these catalogues have some, but not all qualities in common with the predecessors in epic. Ovid includes both similes and catalogues in the story of the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs and, as in the other two stories, these similes and catalogues are somewhat atypical of traditional epic, but standard practice for Ovid.

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[106] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* 12.260-264.

With regard to similes, it will be useful to look first at both a Homeric simile and a Virgilian simile in order to get a sense of what sort of prototype Ovid is working with. In book four of the *Iliad*, Homer writes,

> "He fell as a poplar that has grown straight and tall in a meadow by some mere, its top is thick with branches. Then the wheelwright lays his axe to its roots that he may fashion a felloe for the wheel of some goodly chariot."[107]

Here young Simoneus has just been pierced by Ajax and is about to die as a result of the wound; Homer's choice of figurative subject matter is both accurate and appropriate for this situation. Simoneus is depicted as a strong, capable young man and thus, is akin to the straight and tall poplar tree, thick with branches (he is in the prime of his youth, and is not declining into old age). Similarly just like the tree, he is unsuspecting of his demise, and is defenseless against a seasoned warrior like Ajax. Ajax likewise is accurately portrayed as the wheelwright (up to a point). The wheelwright's motivation for cutting down the tree is respectable—he must do this to perpetuate his noble craft; likewise, Ajax must kill Simoneus, because he is a weaker opponent in battle and this is how Ajax may continue in his own role. Clearly in the end the simile departs from exact parallelism in favor of poetic description with its talk of chariots, but overall the comparison is easy to accept.

Virgil provides us with a similarly prototypical example, he writes,

> "When Turnus saw the Latins exhausted, and weakened by their military reverse, himself the subject of every gaze, his own promise to them yet unfulfilled, he burned implacably, and unprompted, and raised his courage. As a lion, in the African bush, severely hurt by huntsmen with a wound to the chest, only then rouses himself to battle, tosses his shaggy mane over his neck, in joy, and, unafraid, snaps off

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[107] Homer, *Iliad*, 4.

> the spear some poacher has planted in him, roaring from blood-stained jaws: so the violence grew in Turnus's inflamed heart."[108]

Here Turnus, Aeneas' clearest rival in the *Aeneid* is depicted as a lion. That Turnus would be compared with such a fierce and noble creature is appropriate given that he is represented as a fitting opponent for the epic's protagonist. Turnus, as the lion, is truly roused to fight only after the battle has already been going on for a fairly significant amount of time and he is severely wounded. Virgil wants the reader to have respect for Turnus, but also to recognize that, wounded as he is, it is impossible that he will in the long run be triumphant. Thus, the simile is carefully and accurately chosen to convey this sense.

Ovid's similes are not necessarily so easily interpretable; rather than elucidating the situation, and giving the reader a more vivid image as a point of comparison, his similes often leave one struggling to remember what was happening in the story before the simile began. In the story of the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs, Ovid includes many similes, and therein a spectrum of oddities. In the first at line 248, Ovid writes,

> "Primus Ophionides Amycus penetralia donis
> haud timuit spoliare suis et primus ab aede
> lampadibus densum rapuit funale coruscis
> elatumque alte veluti qui candida tauri
> rumpere sacrifica molitur colla securi. Inlisit
> fronti Lapithae."

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[108] Virgil, *Aeneid*, trans. A. S. Kline (Poetry in Translation, 2002) http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/VirgilAeneidIX.htm, 12.

> "Amycus, son of Ophion, was not at all
> afraid, first to strip the innermost
> sanctuaries of their gifts and he was first to
> steal from the sanctuary the torches full of
> waving lights, and elevating it on high, just
> as someone who strives to break the
> shining white neck of a bull with an axe.
> sacrificial axe, he drove into the forehead
> of the Lapith.

Here Ovid is comparing a centaur, Amycus, who has defiled a sanctuary to someone who is attempting to sacrifice a bull with an axe.[109] The comparison seems counterintuitive—while one is committing an act of sacrilege, the other is performing a religious ritual. The only similarity in the images is that Amycus lifts up the wax torch in a similar motion to one lifting up an axe to cut the neck of a bull. Ovid chooses to use this simile even though the link between the images is a weak one, and the difference between the two situations is obvious, and in truth, more compelling than the similarities. In the tale's next simile, the bizarreness lies not in the actual comparison, but rather in the details Ovid chooses to include. Charaxus has just been stuck in the temple with a burning brand, and Ovid embellishes as follows, [110]

> "Correpti rapida, veluti seges arida, flamma
> arserunt crines, et vulnere sanguis inustus
> terribilem stridore sonum dedit, ut dare ferrum
> igne rubens plerumque solet, quod forcipe curva
> cum faber eduxit, lacubus demittit: at illud
> stridet et in tepida submersum sibilat unda."

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[109] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.245-250.
[110] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.274-279.

> With the consuming flame snatched up, just as a dry cornfield, his hair burned, and his blood branded by the wound gave a terrible hiss, just as often iron ruddy with fire is accustomed to give, which when workmen has drawn out with curved forceps, he sends into a pool: but it shrieks and hisses, submerged in the warm water.

First, Ovid mentions that the hair (which we know is red from a previous description) catching on fire looks like a cornfield going up in flames. This comparison is not altogether unjustified; both are similarly violent images and a cornfield just before harvest season might plausibly have a somewhat reddish tinge. However, the image gains a sort of surreal element when we reflect on how rapidly a cornfield, which is specifically referred to as dry, would go up in flames when compared with someone's hair, which presumably would not have this property of burning so quickly. Ovid moves from this very vivid visual simile onto an aural one, describing how the hissing sound of the blood burning under the brand is akin to the sound of hot iron being plunged into a cold pool. Like the comparison of the raising of the torch to the sacrificing of the bull, this comparison is similarly comparing opposites. Here, the hot object, the brand, is being used as a weapon with the goal of scorching (and presumably heating up) something else. In the image of the iron going into the pool, the goal is for the hot iron to be cooled down. Furthermore, Ovid spends an uncomfortably long time on this comparison, dedicating an extra line (279) to what is already obvious—that the iron hisses when it hits the water. Thus, in these first two similes, Ovid defies the prototype set out for him in epic, and forces the reader to look for similarities in situations that are entirely different from one another; unlike Homer

and Virgil, Ovid seems at points more concerned with demonstrating his ability to describe the grotesque (i.e. branding someone in the neck or describing the act of sacrifice) than with picking accurately figurative language.

Like Ovid's skewed similes, his use of catalogues is similarly taken from the epic genre; however, the catalogues found in Ovid tend to mock those found in Homer and Virgil. This was seen in the catalogue of dogs in Actaeon (which mirrors passages like Homer's catalogue of ships) and is also seen in the several shorter catalogues in the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs. While the catalogues in Homeric and Virgilian epic generally aim to honor the participants in a battle and to give the ancient equivalent of a "shout out" to the poet's readers, Ovid's catalogues have no such grandiose intentions. In fact, the catalogues occurring in the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs story serve instead to shame those mentioned. For example, the catalogue which follows the line, "Rhoetus fled, soaked in his own blood" (*Rhoetus et ipse suo madefactus sanguine fugit*)[111] gives a list of people, who, like Rhoetus, fled. Within this catalogue of unheroic acts, Ovid incorporates details as if he were cataloguing the exploits of heroes, mentioning that Mermeros recently won a contest (and thus he now runs more slowly), that Abas is a pillager of boars, etc.[112] Again at line 350, Ovid incorporates another untraditional catalogue, this time of people Theseus has killed. This catalogue is slightly more traditional in that it at least brings glory to Theseus, and because having a list of someone's conquests in battle is not unheard-of. However, just as in the catalogue of people who fled, Ovid again apportions details strangely to the conquests of Theseus. Here, the oddest example occurs in the final

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[111] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* 12.301.
[112] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* 12.305-306.

line where Ovid writes, "and [he killed] Thereus, who was accustomed to carry home bears seized from the Haemonian slopes, alive and angry" (*Theraeque, Haemoniis qui prensos montibus ursos/ ferre domum vivos indignantesque solebat*).[113] This particular detail serves to entirely distract the reader from the current story in longing to hear a different one, that is, one about someone who is "accustomed to bring home live and angry bears." Thus, Ovid's use of catalogues, like his use of similes, stays true to the unifying thread of anti-epic throughout the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs.

The bizarre notion that it is not unreasonable for a participant in battle to stop what he or she is doing in order to give an extended speech is one that is common to Homer, to Virgil, and to Ovid. However, apart from this rather broad commonality, Virgil and Homer differ greatly in their actual construction of these speeches, and Ovid, writing in the wake of Virgil's *Aeneid*, tends much more towards Virgil's style. Even so, being Ovid, there are marked differences between his speeches and those of Virgil, some of which make it seem almost as if Ovid was writing caricatures of the speeches present in Virgil's work.

Going into a detailed description of the differences between the speeches of Virgil and of Homer is outside the scope of the work. It is sufficient to say that the two most relevant variations deal with length and with style, notably the absence or presence of rhetorical influences. Richard Heinze writes,

> "While the fighting rages around the ships, Idomeneus and Meriones meet and hold a long conversation (*Iliad* 13.249-94), which contributes absolutely nothing to the outcome of the battle: this is one example among many of something which Virgil regarded as inadmissible.

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[113] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* 12.353-354.

> The more important of his warriors, meeting on the battlefield, do exchange words before throwing spears: but these are brief utterances only a few lines long."[114]

Homer was much more prone to extended conversations, incorporating a great deal of material and history outside of the battle; Virgil, on the other hand, was more likely to stay focused on present events and to avoid excessive speech (although obviously exceptions exist). These short speeches and exchanges are more common in the *Metamorphoses*, potentially because the book's format as a collection of short stories rather than one continuous tale makes it less likely that any major portion of one story would be devoted to a digression for speech. On the subject of rhetoric in Virgil vs. in Homer, Heinze writes,

> "indicative of the influence which his childhood schooling and the rhetoric-soaked life of his time has on Virgil it seems to me is the general nature of his speeches: almost everything which […] is characteristic of Virgil, particularly when compared with Homer, brings them closer to the *oratio* of the rule-book."[115]

As ancient Romans, Virgil and Ovid were both given very through rhetorical educations. This rhetorical schooling is reflected in both of their writings in a way that it is not seen in the writing of Homer and of the two Ovid was impacted more deeply by this period of training in his late teens.

Thus, two similarities exist in Virgil and Ovid's speech writing, namely that both wrote speeches and dialogues which were relatively pithy, and that both demonstrated in their speeches and dialogues the influence of rhetoric. Given this

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[114] Richard Heinze, *Virgil's Epic Technique,* trans. Hazel and David Henry and Fred Robertson (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993) 318.
[115] Heinze, *Virgil's Epic Technique*, 331.

sameness, more interesting is the difference between the two, namely that Virgil made throughout his writing a clear attempt to disguise this rhetorical influence and Ovid did not. Heinze writes,

> "It is unnatural for a violently upset person to give vent to his feelings in a well-ordered way; with great art Virgil makes it seem as natural as possible, clothes the skeleton of the speech and smoothes out the transitions so that we seem to see not a framework of bones but a living body."[116]

This may be seen clearly in the speech of Numanus in book IX of the *Aeneid*. In this speech, Numanus presents a clear and well-reasoned argument that the Trojans are too effeminate to fight the Italians, and as a result they should surrender. This speech is constructed very carefully in series of parallel clauses; however, the structured nature of these parallelisms is well hidden amongst linguistic flourishes, namely apostrophes, and adjectival clauses. Virgil writes, [117]

> "Non pudet obsidione iterum valloque teneri
> bis capti Phryges, et morti praetendere muros?
> En qui nostra sibi bello conubia poscunt!
> Quis deus Italiam, quae vos dementia adegit
> Non hic Atridae nec fandi fictor Ulixes:
> durum a stripe genus natos ad flumina primum
> deferimus saevoque gelu duramus et undis
> venatu invigilant pueri silvasque fatigant,
> flectere ludus equos et specula tendere cornu."
>
> "Twice conquered Trojans aren't you ashamed to be held by siege and by ramparts again, to be presenting your walls to death? Behold, these men who'd demand our brides through war! What god, what madness has driven you to Italy? Here are no Atrides speaking, no Ulysses, maker of fictions: a race from hardy stock, we first bring our newborn sons to the river, and toughen

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[116] Heinze, *Virgil's Epic Technique*, 327.
[117] Virgil, *Aeneid*, 9.599-607.

> them with the water's fierce chill: as children they keep watch in the chase, and weary the forest, their play is to wheel their horses and shoot arrows from the bow."

In this excerpt, Virgil sets up his speech carefully in balancing pairs: to be held (*teneri)* and to be presenting (*praetendere)*; by siege (obsidione) and by ramparts (*vallo)*; god (*deus)* and madness (*dementia)*; Atrides (*Atridae)* and Ulysses (*Ulixes)*; bring (*deferimus*) and toughen (*duramus*); keep watch (*invigilant*) and weary (*fatigant*); and, wheel (*flectere*) and shoot (*tendere*). He, however, surrounds this clearly discernible structure with language that masks it and makes it less obvious. The apostrophe beginning with "Behold!" (*en*) breaks up the pattern, and details and modifying clauses create a sense of flow throughout—we do not notice the never-ending sets of pairs, because we are focused on feeling the "water's fierce chill," (*saevo gelu*) and contemplating the notion that it is death itself that is attacking the walls (*morti praetendere muros*). Ovid, however, is a different story.

When comparing Ovid and Virgil, Heinze writes, "Virgil remained well aware of the boundaries between poetry and prose; he was not like Ovid, who did not hesitate, in fact was proud, to show at every opportunity that he was a poet who had been trained in rhetoric."[118] Ovid demonstrates this well in the speech he has the centaur Latreus deliver to Caeneus after Caeneus has been on somewhat of a killing rampage. Ovid writes, [119]

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[118] Heinze, *Virgil's Epic Technique*, 331.
[119] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.470-476. Latreus makes reference in this story to the beginning of Caeneus' tale, wherein Caeneus is transformed from a woman, Caenis, into a man after being raped by Poseidon.

> "Et te, Caeni, feram? Nam tu mihi femina semper,
> tu mihi Caenis eris. Nec te natalis origo
> commonuit, mentemque subit quo praemia facto
> quaque viri falsam speciem mercede parasti?
> Quid sis nata, vide, vel quid sis passa columque
> i, cape, cum calathis et stamina pollice torque:
> bella relinque viris."
>
> And must I endure you Caeneus? For you will
> always be a women, to me you will always be
> Caenis. Does the origin of your birth not remind
> you and enter your mind, by what act you
> obtained this advantage and by what price you
> procured the false appearance of a man? Consider,
> what you were born and what you endured, go,
> take hold of your distaff with its wicker basket
> and turn the threads with your thumbs: relinquish
> war to the men.

This speech by Latreus is similar to that of Numanus both in structure and in subject matter; however, it is significantly shorter, and linguistically more transparent. Rather than intercutting the speech with descriptive phrases and structural asides, Ovid frames it with two statements that do not have counterparts, "Will I endure your, Caenis?" (*Et te, Caeni feram?)* and "Leave war to men" (*bella relinque viris*). The pairings in the speech are clearly defined and include: "*femina*" and "*Caenis*;" "*commonuit*" and "*subit*; "*quo facto*" and "*qua mercede*;" "*Quid*" and "*quid*;" and, "*cape*" and "*torque*." By framing the speech with two unpaired sentences that seem to function as opening and closing statements, Ovid makes it all the more obvious how structured the body of the speech is. Thus, Ovid's speech is easily comparable with Virgil's on almost every level, but Ovid makes no attempt to hide his structure or rhetorical upbringing. As a result, Virgil's speech seems natural, and gives the impression of something someone might say without having worked out the words beforehand; Ovid's speech, on the other hand, does not roll off the tongue, and its

placement in the middle of a battle is unrealistic. Thus, Ovid's speech seems, predictably, an exaggerated version of something occurring in traditional epic.

Apart from the above-mentioned factors, all of which both relate Ovid's work in the story of the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs to more traditional epic and demonstrate distinct and identifiable differences between the two, there are several additional aspects of Ovid's Lapiths vs. the Centaurs, which differentiate it entirely from epic. As a basic premise, everyone in the story of the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs is drunk. Ovid writes, "wine was giving them spirits," (*vina dabant animos*) which is an important fact to remember when considering how events play out.[120] The actions taken by both sides in fighting one another are not clean and heroic, but sloppy and confused. The writing as a result goes above and beyond the confusion of a normal battle scene to reflect the chaos of a drunken brawl. In addition, as was mentioned before, the story is not a linear narrative, but rather a very long aside as Nestor tells Achilles the tale of Caeneus; the episode as a result lacks a hero and thus is tied to no one trajectory, thereby defying direction. This lack of direction in turn translates to a story which flits from brief skirmish to brief skirmish, and sometimes forgoes transitions altogether (notably, at line 258, Ovid transitions to a new fight simply through the use of the word "proximus" and lines 393 and 429, he neglects even this gesture). In addition to this lack of transitions, Ovid uses repetition to create a sense of futility. He purposefully lulls the reader into a sense of something akin to boredom, and thereby creates a bizarre feeling of numbness towards the horrors of battle (nothing is so awful when read ten times). Finally, the story includes a general

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[120] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* 12.242.

dissolving of what is considered to be right and wrong. For example, when Phorbas kills Aphidas in his sleep he says, "you will drink wine to be mixed with the Styx" (*miscenda cum Styge vina bibes!*).[121] This statement implies that amidst all the violence, sacrilege and slaughter, Phorbas is focusing in on the fact that Aphidas is passed out drunk and will kill him while he is unaware and asleep. The very fact that Ovid chooses to describe this scene amidst all of the other "battles" makes it seem as if killing a man while he is passed out is no different from crushing someone with an altar, is no different from throwing a javelin—there is no spectrum of morality or a martial code justifying the murders committed, just life and death. This rather extreme instance reminds the reader how much death in this story differs from traditional epic

The Grotesque and The Comical

In his descriptions of battles in the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs, Ovid goes to great lengths to describe the minutiae of situations that are truly grotesque. Interestingly, Ovid's predecessors, and the definers of epic as a genre, differed in how they treated this sort of detail. Richard Heinze observes that, "the first difference from Homer to be observed is that Virgil as far as possible avoids describing complicated wounds and confines himself to the simplest and most obvious types."[122] Thus, in this department it seems that Ovid has more in common with the original writer of epic, Homer, than with his much more recent predecessor, Virgil. Closer to his own time, Ovid's writing is also comparable with that of the young writer of epic, Lucan, who was known for his gory details. Bearing this in mind, Ovid's writing still differs from

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[121] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.322.
[122] Heinze, *Virgil's Epic Technique*, 163.

the work of all three in that when it is at its most grotesque, it is also, paradoxically, often at its most comical. Ovid's descriptions are overdone to the point of being disturbing, but also unmistakably and intentionally funny, unlike the descriptions of both Homer and Lucan, which maintain their serious tone throughout.

As a standard for comparison, it will be helpful to look at a passage from Lucan so that we may see what the grotesque looks like, minus the comical. Lucan writes, [123]

> "tunc neruos uenasque secat nodosaque frangit
> ossa diu: nondum artis erat caput ense rotare
> [...] tunc arte nefanda
> summota est capiti tabes, raptoque cerebro
> adsiccata cutis, putrisque effluxit ab alto umor."

> He severs muscles, veins: and long he takes to break the knotty bones; not yet was it an art to send heads rolling with the sword […] Then by their hideous art the fluid is taken from the head, the brain removed and skin dried out and rotten moisture flowed away from deep within.

Lucan's description of the beheading and embalming of Pompey has not a single funny aspect. He goes into excruciating detail, describing the severing of each component of the neck to the point that, as a reader, you can feel your own neck being slowly split apart. He then continues to make the statement, "not yet was it an art to send heads rolling," which borders on humor, but ends up simply being bitter about the current state of affairs (in Lucan's time, they have practiced executioners).

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[123] Lucan, *Civil War*, trans. Susan H. Braund (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 8:672-3 and 688-91.

Lucan next launches into a description of the mummifying process, creating a grotesque polar tension between the draining of the head and the drying of the skin. Thus, readers come away from the passage feeling somehow dirty, potentially sick to their stomachs, and certainly not like they have just had a good laugh.

Ovid's descriptions bear a certain amount in common with Lucan's, the major difference being that somehow they end up being funny rather than simply horrifying. The first example of an extreme instance of grotesquery occurs at 252, of the death of Celadon: "his eyes sprung out and with the bones of his face broken up, his nose was driven back and fixed in the middle of his palate" (*Exsiluere oculi, disiectisque ossibus oris/ acta retro naris medioque est fixa palato*).[124] Here Ovid details the exact way in which Celadon is mangled beyond recognition: his eyes pop out, the bones of his face are broken up, and his nose is fixed in the middle of his palate. This description is as specific about the body parts involved as Lucan's was; however, it is difficult to imagine how this situation would look (while we can easily see a beheading in our minds eye); thus, it leaves us puzzled rather than massaging our necks. The only part of this that is easily visualized is the eyes popping out, which has an absurdity which defies being horrifying. Apart from being, for lack of a better word, gross and a little bit funny, Ovid is also nauseatingly clever—Celadon's nose is here literally intertwined with his palate in a synchysis.

In the next two lines, describing a different death, Ovid again outdoes himself, writing, "Pellaeus laid low on the ground with the torn away foot of a maple table Pelates with his chin thrown down into his breast and he sent him, spewing teeth

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[124] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* 12.252-253.

mixed with black blood, with a twin wound to Tartarus" (*Hunc pede convulso mensae Pellaeus acernae/ stravit humi Pelates deiecto in pectora mento,/ cumque atro mixtos sputantem sanguine dentes/ vulnere Tartareas geminato mittit ad umbras*).[125] The fatal blow here is given with a torn off, certainly splintering, table leg, an image which alone is enough to cause nightmares; however, Ovid launches into the description of how the assailed's chin snaps against his breast, and how he then proceeds to lose his teeth, which are mixed with blood that is, for some reason, specifically described as dark or black. The mental image provided here, of a centaur spewing black blood and teeth, is monstrous and causes the reader to lose any sense that he or she had of the dying centaur being humanoid. Throughout the story, Ovid harps on the notion of death as a dehumanizing process, and this is but one extreme example.

Ten lines later, Ovid again embarks on a particularly gory description, writing, "Exadius had spoken and he held the likeness of a weapon, which had been the horns of the deer, a votive offering on a high pine. Gryneus was pierced in the eyes by two points and his eyes were gouged out, of which part hung on the horns, and part flowed into his beard and hung with the dried blood" (*Dixerat Exadius telique habet instar, in alta/ quae fuerant pinu votivi cornua cervi./ Figitur hinc duplici Gryneus in lumina ramo/ eriturque oculos, quorum pars cornibus haeret, pars fluit in barbam concretaque sanguine pendent*).[126] It can probably be assumed with relative certainty that one instance of someone's eyes coming out per story is sufficient; however, apparently Ovid does not think so. This instance is, if possible, more graphic than the

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[125] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.254-257.
[126] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.266-270.

last, as here Gryneus loses his eyes as a result of their being pierced by a set of antlers (which his opponent is using for a weapon). Here also the eyes are gouged out, rather than being popped out, and they seem to gain a bizarre liquidity and stickiness upon leaving Gryneus' face. His eyes are described twice as hanging (*haeret* and *pendent*) and once as flowing (*fluit*)—we first get the exceptionally gory image of pieces of Gryneus' eyes hanging from the antlers, and then of his eyes flowing into his beard and hanging there, as if they were food and drink from the recently interrupted feast. Thus, the physical and chemical properties of Gryneus' eyes seem to have been altered by Ovid in a fundamental way for the purpose of making the whole description more interesting, and more gross; this is, however, something that is common throughout the story, and something that will be discussed in much greater detail in the next section.

Over a hundred lines after this instance, Ovid gives what is probably the most disgusting description in the entire tale; however, this description, because it is so repulsive and genuinely gag-worthy, is also probably the most comical in its grotesquery. Ovid writes, "he fiercely leapt forward and dragged his own entrails on the ground and he trod on what he had dragged, and tore what he had trodden on, and also tripped his legs with them and fell with an empty belly" (*Prosiluit terraque ferox sua viscera traxit/ tractaque calcavit calcataque rupit et illis/ crura quoque inpediit et inani concidit alvo*).[127] A wounded man leaps forward onto his own entrails; he then proceeds to walk on his entrails, tearing them as he does so and tripping. Eventually he falls to the floor, as Ovid says, "with an empty belly." Ovid is playing off of a very

[127] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.390-392.

simple, and very common comic trope—it is funny when people trip and fall down. The twist is, it is not usually funny when people trip and fall down on their own innards. This particular description is made all the more pathetic by the fact that the ”warrior,” in doing all of these things, is described as *ferox*; the man depicted clings to his fierceness up until the very end, potentially injuring himself all more because of it. Finally, here Ovid partakes in some of his most clever word play, a fact which itself contributes to the humor of the passage. Ovid uses the rhetorical figure of *gradatio* to enhance the dramatic effect of his description (despite the fact that the actual climax of the tale will not come for a very long time).[128] A pattern and a sense of flow are created by using nouns constructed from the verbs in previous clauses. He pulls *tracta* from *traxit* and *calcata* from *calcavit*. This pattern is truncated by an explicit statement of what is funny about the scene (in case the reader didn't get it), "*illis/ crura quoque inpediit*," "he also tripped his legs with these (his innards)."

These are but a few examples taken from a multitude of the grotesqueries that Ovid includes within the story of the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs (and throughout the *Metamorphoses)*. Ovid pays homage to the tradition started by Homer in his detailed and gory descriptions of battle, and interestingly, it is Virgil, who in this instance differs most in what he does and does not choose to depict when describing battle scenes. Conversely, unlike his contemporary Lucan and his predecessor Homer, Ovid's descriptions incorporate a comic element, which would have been frowned upon by the practitioners of traditional epic, and which is a key part of the *Metamorphoses* as a whole.

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[128] *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.24.34-35

Purposeful Pandemonium: Physical Morphing and Unclear Wording

One of the most important and strangely unifying aspects of the tale of the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs is the sense of pandemonium, which Ovid intentionally creates. This constant chaos and confusion, which mirrors the chaos and confusion in the ongoing battle, is constructed through a purposeful lack of clarity in Ovid's writing and through the constant shifting of characters, weapons, and scenery. Additionally, disorder is created in the story through the fact that at many points objects either lose their traditional properties or the properties of one object become confused with those of another. In this same vein, Ovid continuously draws our attention to the dual and changing natures of objects and characters throughout. Although the actual metamorphosis present in this story is mentioned only in passing, the permanent double nature of the centaurs is alluded to constantly and there are many mini or partial metamorphoses present in the story. Thus, Ovid uses the alteration of object's and people's physical properties and fundamental natures to contribute to the chaos of the story. Because so many things and people are changed in so many different ways, it seems best to have a section describing the changes in physical property and nature and the ways in which these changes create confusion present in the story as a whole. Following this, there will be a discussion of the more general devices used by Ovid to contribute to a sense of pandemonium.

Physical Morphing

Throughout the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs story, there are many different ways in which objects are represented as having divided or shifting natures. Some of these include: situations in which things are hybrid by nature (the Centaurs); situations in

which objects gain life after not having had it previously, i.e. inanimate objects become animate; situations in which objects are used for nontraditional purposes; situations where objects lose their properties, and gain others not generally attributed to them; and finally, situations where objects are confused with or partially meld into other objects. It will be helpful to look at some examples of each of these, in order to appreciate just how confusing a state of affairs is present throughout the tale.

Ovid makes both explicit and subtle reference to the dual nature of the Centaurs on a monotonously frequent basis. Throughout the story, he even goes so far as to have all of those things surrounding the centaurs be doubled. This can be seen as early as the story's first fifteen lines. When Eurytus snatches Hippodame, he is motivated by wine (*vino*) and the sight of the virgin (*virgine visa*); furthermore, Ovid's writes that his intoxication is "doubled by lust" (*ebrietas geminata libidine*).[129] Here Ovid attributes a dual nature even to the centaur's motivations, and his very drunkenness is doubled. This same phenomenon occurs again and again; at one point Ovid describes a centaur's wound as "twin," at another he focuses on the fact that a centaur's two eyes are being pierced by two horns.[130] In this second instance, Ovid is going overboard and focusing on a doubled aspect of the centaurs that is not in any way unique to them, but is something that is doubled for humans and for most other mammals. Apart from simply focusing on the centaur's dual nature for its own sake, Ovid uses this dual nature to accentuate the differences between the centaurs and the men they are fighting. This device sometimes works, but at other points is strangely unsuccessful (as in the case of the two eyes being pierced by two horns). In a

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[129] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.220-221.
[130] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.256-257, 268-270.

particularly successful instance, Ovid writes, "he tramples the man with his hooves" (*Pedibusque virum proculcat equinis*).[131] Here Demoleon, rather than attacking with a weapon, attempts to trample his opponent with his hooves; moreover, when Demoleon is eventually killed Ovid emphasizes that a "single blow" (*uno ictu*), delivered by a man, pierced his *duo pectora*.[132] Here Ovid isolates the most different aspect of the Centaurs – their four legs and four hooves – while associating with the centaur's human opponent a singular nature, through pointing out that he delivers *one* wound to the centaur's *double* breast. Near the story's end, when Caeneus (the man whose fate the entire story has allegedly been leading up to) finally enters, his own dual nature is juxtaposed with that of the centaurs. Here the story descends into chaos as the traits of Caeneus' dual nature (man and woman) are mixed with those of the Centaur's dual nature (horse and man) to leave the reader with no idea of what is going on. Ovid writes, "our people are overcome by one man, and scarcely a man; although he is a man, and we are with our sluggish deeds that which he was (a woman)" (*populus superamur ab uno/ vixque viro: quamquam ille vir est, nos segnibus actis/ quod fuit ille sumus*).[133] It is implied that it is the Centaurs, not Caeneus, who are becoming women and these complicated double natures themselves are becoming switched and substituted.

Apart from the obvious dualism present in the Centaurs, and in the story's raison d'être, Caeneus, there are many other types of situations in which objects and people change form or property in some way—the first of these are situations where

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[131] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* 12.374
[132] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* 12.377.
[133] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* 12.499-501.

inanimate objects gain life and the ability to move (having not previously had this property). The first example of this occurs very near the story's beginning, where Ovid writes, "immediately the banquet was thrown into confusion with the tables swept away" (*Protinus eversae turbant convivia mensae*).[134] Here it is the overturned tables themselves that are committing the action of throwing the banquet into confusion. Normally, one would think this would be the fault of those who uprooted the tables, but Ovid personifies the furniture. This same sort of situation happens again over a hundred lines later, but this time to a tree. Obviously in the case of a tree, life was already present, but here the tree seems to obtain consciousness and again, the ability to act. Ovid says explicitly, "nevertheless, the tree did not fall lifeless; for it cut from the throat the breast and left shoulder of tall Crantor" (*Non tamen arbor iners cecidit; nam Crantoris alti/ abscidit iugulo pectusque umerumque sinistrum*).[135] As the tree loses its life, it gains the ability to lash out in anger—the action of cutting Crantor in half is attributed to the tree, as if it were a final act of defiance and something that the tree did willfully. Finally, in the last hundred lines of the story, Ovid describes the personification of a weapon, "the blow gave a groan on the body of struck marble and broke the fractured blade on the struck skin" (*Plaga facit gemitus in corpore marmoris icti,/ fractaque dissiluit percusso lamina callo*).[136] Here, like a person having run up against a very hard wall, the sword itself gives out a groan of pain. Furthermore, the properties attributed to sword and man are entirely switched—the sword, which is metal and durable, and thus generally used to break

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[134] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.222.
[135] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.361-362.
[136] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.487-488.

other things, is here broken against the body of a man (described as being marble), who would under normal circumstances have been cut in half. Thus, Ovid personifies the spectrum of generally lifeless and inanimate objects from the furniture to the scenery to the weapons. To all of these things, he attributes an increased level of consciousness and the ability to take action.

Apart from objects gaining human qualities, there are a great number of situations in which objects are used for extremely non-traditional purposes, and thereby discard their usual properties. By nature of the fact that the entire story is a battle, all of the best examples of this are of objects that are not generally used as weapons being converted into weapons. The first example occurs twenty-five lines in, Ovid writes, "by chance there was a rough old wine bowl nearby with projecting carvings" (*Forte fuit iuxta signis exstantibus asper/ antiquus crater*).[137] This sentence comes before the actual use of the wine bowl as a weapon and seems to be creating a sense of "foreboding" surrounding the object. Here the wine bowl is described as being *asper*, which initially means rough, but will retrospectively mean cruel when the bowl is used as a weapon. In addition, it is described as having *signis exstantibus*, essentially projecting carvings (not something generally considered ominous, but it is a different story if these carvings are about to hit one in the face). In the description of the wine bowl as being cruel, Ovid is personifying the dishware (as he did with the furniture), and in doing so he is creating a hybrid nature for the bowl. Ten lines later, true to form, Ovid embarks on a list of the dishware, which is converted into weaponry (apparently the wine bowl was only a taster). He writes, "and in the first

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[137] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.235-236.

fight, hurled goblets flew and fragile wine jugs, and curved caldrons, things once fitted for banquets, now for war and slaughter" (*et prima pocula pugna/ missa volant fragilesque cadi curvique lebentes,/ res epulis quondam, tum bello et caedibus aptae*).[138] Here Ovid goes so far as to explicitly state what he is doing, that is, making a list of, "things once fitted for banquets, now for war and slaughter." After this point, Ovid transitions away from the kitchen (probably because all the dishes are broken), and begins to describe the use of other objects as weapons. Potentially the most sacrilegious moment of the story follows as Ovid describes the actions of a Centaur, Gryneus: "Gryneus raised the altar huge with its own flames and hurled it into the middle of the Lapith line" (*suis Gryneus inmanem sustulit aram/ ignibus et mediam Lapitharum iecit in agmen*).[139] Here Gryneus uses an altar, which still contains a burning offering, as a weapon. This image obviously does not lend itself to the comical side of the story, but it does give us an impression of the bizarre gigantisms and the fantastical qualities, which are present throughout the tale. Following this uncharacteristically sinister (although predictably violent) image Ovid embarks on yet another list, this time of other household objects, which may be used as weapons.[140] Finally, an example must be included of a tree being used as a weapon (since whole trees, not branches, are in fact one of the most common assault weapons in the story). Ovid writes, "nevertheless, the tree did not fall lifeless; for it cut from the throat the breast and left shoulder of tall Crantor" (*Non tamen arbor iners cecidit; nam*

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[138] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.242-244.
[139] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.260-261.
[140] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.265-267.

Crantoris alti/ abscidit iugulo pectusque umerumque sinistrum).[141] Ovid seems to be laughably consoling us with an epic cliché, that is, that often, even though weapons miss their marks, they do not fall in vain; here, the tree has not been uprooted for nothing, as it still gets to function as an instrument of death. And so, from dishware, to religious paraphernalia, to foliage, Ovid turns all objects into weapons, whatever their normal uses.

Moving onward, not only does Ovid include examples of the inanimate seeming to be animate, and items gaining uses for which they were not intended, but there are also many example of things changing their physical properties on a much more fundamental level. This manifests itself most often in things that are solid gaining liquidity and vice versa. The first instance is not so much an actual change in property, but rather it is Ovid setting the stage for important shifts that will happen later. Ovid writes, "he vomiting globs of blood, equal parts brain and wine from his wound and from his mouth, and thrown back into the sand" (*Sanguinis ille globos pariter cerebrumque merumque/ vulnere et ore vomens madida resupinus harena*).[142] Here there are two parallelisms created; the first is between brains and wine and the second is between wound and face. This notion of brains as being liquid rather than solid will become more explicit in later examples, but it is first hinted at here. Similarly, the idea that wine is associated and confused with actual body fluids is common through the tale. Finally, that his face and his wounds are related so closely is indicative of the nature of the story as a whole—people are recognized and identified throughout the tale by their wounds, and what happens to them in battle,

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[141] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* 12.361-362.
[142] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* 12.238-239.

rather than being recognized by their individual facial features. Moving on, in a more explicit example of brains flowing, Ovid writes, "his soft brain flowed through his mouth and hollow nose and eyes and ears" (*perque os/ perque cavas nares oculosque auresque cerebrum/ molle fluit*).[143] Here when the victim's skull is cracked his brain begins to pour out through all of the openings in his face, as if it were liquid—Ovid even goes so far as to use the verb *fluit*, to flow. Interestingly, there is a sort of inherent contradiction between the verb *fluit* and the description of the brain as *molle* —*fluit* is generally used for liquids, but the identification of the brain as soft, *molle*, seems to confuse this notion of liquidity (while water is certainly not hard, it would not generally be described as being soft either). A similar, example referred to earlier occurs with someone's eyes, when "Gryneus was pierced in the eyes by two points and his eyes were gouged out, of which part hung on the horns, and part flowed into his beard and hung with the dried blood" (*Figitur hinc duplici Gryneus in lumina ramo/ eruiturque oculos, quorum pars cornibus haeret./ pars fluit in barbam concretaque sanguine pendet*).[144] Here again, the verb *fluit* is used to describe what is happening to the victim's eyes. Eyes, like brains, are not usually thought of as having the capacity to flow like liquid. Ovid cements the notion that this is what these eyes are doing by creating a parallelism between the victim's eyes and his blood—at the end of the description, both are hanging in his beard side by side. Apart from these two examples, a third exists, which describes not just a single solid body part becoming liquid, but rather a whole person. Ovid writes, "amidst so much din without end Aphidas was lying asleep in all his being and unawakened and stretched out on

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[143] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.435-436.
[144] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.268-270.

the shaggy hide of a bear from Mount Ossa, was holding with a wearied hand a mixed drinking cup" (*In tanto fremitu cunctis sine fine iacebat/ sopitus venis et inexperrectus Aphidas/ languentique manu carchesia mixta tenebat,/ fusus in Ossaeae villosis pellibus ursae*).[145] Here Ovid describes a man, Aphidas, who among so much commotion is passed out drunk. Ovid uses three adjectives to describe Aphidas, *sopitus*, *inexperrectus*, and *fusus*. The first two, asleep and unawakened, are redundant, the third, however, is the one of actual analytical importance. Ovid has made reference to the wine glass Aphidas is holding in his hand; consequently, we are momentarily confused when we come to the word *fusus* the literal meaning of which is "poured our," and it does not agree with the wine, but rather with Aphidas himself. Thus, it is Aphidas who has gained liquid properties (like the wine he has finished so much of) and been poured onto the rug. Aphidas is subsequently murdered in his sleep by the centaur Phorbas, and here again Ovid purposefully conflates Aphidas with wine, he writes, "his black blood flowed from his full throat onto the couch and into the wine glass itself" (*plenoque e gutture fluxit inque toros inque ipsa niger carchesia sanguis*).[146] As Aphidas dies, unconscious, his blood fills the wine bowl from which he has previously been drinking; thus, Ovid purposefully confuses Aphidas body as a whole, and his life's blood with wine.

The final example of Ovid's curious use of the inversion of solidity and liquidity occurs during the story's climax. The "point" in telling the tale, that is, to discover the fate of Caeneus, has finally been reached. Caeneus' destiny is to drown, not in water, but under trees, Ovid writes, "but afterwards the weight increases above

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[145] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* 12.316-319.
[146] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* 12.325-326.

his mouth and head, and he does not hold it, meanwhile, breath is lacking from the air which he draws" (*Sed enim postquam super ora caputque/ crevit onus neque habet, quas ducat, spiritus auras,/ deficit*).[147] This description of someone drowning seems relatively typical, that is until we remember that Caeneus is drowning not in water, but underneath trees, which the Centaurs are piling on top of him. Thus, the trees here have gained the properties and the functionality of water. And so, along with objects gaining consciousness and objects being used for purposes other than their intended ones, Ovid also provides many examples of objects and creatures losing their traditional physical properties and gaining the properties of unrelated things.

Finally, apart from the three sorts of situations already discussed, there are many instances of unnatural meldings and joinings, that is, two things becoming one, either metaphorically or literally, when their merger is not appropriate. Additionally, often it is difficult to discern the basic characteristics of these things being joined, and one subject is confused with another where confusion would normally be inconceivable. A clear non-literal example of this occurs when Ovid writes, "Pellaeus laid low on the ground with the torn away foot of a maple table Pelates with his chin thrown down into his breast" (*Hunc pede convulso mensae Pellaeus acernae/ stravit humi Pelates deiecto in pectora mento).*[148] The reader when entering this line immediately sees the phrase, "with the foot torn away." In a story populated by such intense violence, this seems immediately to apply to a person, as in someone has had his foot torn off. It is only in reading further that we realize it is the foot of the table, i.e. the table leg, that has been torn off for use as a weapon rather than someone's

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[147] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.516-518.
[148] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.254-255.

actual foot. In this way, the table here is confused for a man (not something which would usually be expected to happen). The best example of a more literal unnatural joining occurs towards the story's end, when Ovid writes, "Hodites tried to speak with his tongue fixed to his chin and his chin fixed to his throat" (*loqui temptavit Hodites/ ad mentum lingua mentoque ad guttura fixo*).[149] Throughout the story faces and bodies get deformed and mangled in all sorts of interesting ways. Here Hodites' face is transformed into the face of something not at all humanoid, since he is left with, "his tongue fixed to his chin, and his chin fixed to his throat." Thus, his body is joined together in ways that defy functionality and normalcy.

In conclusion, the tale of the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs is full of metamorphoses. These constant changings, shiftings, and meldings of both physicality and purpose contribute to the sense of chaos present throughout the story. Ovid capitalizes on the circumstances of battle to make metamorphoses constant even in a story where the actual event of metamorphosis is so minor.

Unclear Wording

Apart from the perpetual state of change that is present in the story because of the frequency of the metamorphosis of men and objects, Ovid creates a sense of confusion and displacement in his choice of wording. This is done through grammatical ambiguity, through the failure to present names or any distinguishing details for many of the characters, and through purposefully opaque phrasing. Much of the confusion throughout the tale can be summed up in a single line which occurs

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[149] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.457-458.

about halfway through, that is, "The originator is uncertain" (*Auctor in incerto est*).[150] The statement applies on both a macro- and a micro-level—it is hard to remember who started the overall conflict between Lapiths and Centaurs and why; it is also hard to remember on a moment-to-moment basis who began any given fight, and who the fight's participants are. Thus, the story as a whole, as Ovid tells it, is confusing and easily leaves the reader behind.

One of the first examples of a conscious choice made by Ovid to perplex his readers occurs in the story's opening. Theseus has just proclaimed both his loyalty to Pirithous and his intention to avenge the wrong done to by the centaurs; Ovid writes, "he followed the words of the avenger with violent hands and struck his noble breast" (*vindicis ora protervis insequitur manibus generosaque pectora pulsat*).[151] Here it becomes unclear who Nestor, the storyteller within the story, is talking about. Both the Lapiths and the Centaurs may be seen as "following avenging words with violent hands," and both might "strike noble breasts." These descriptions apply to Theseus and the rest of the humans present because they are defending the Lapith groom and bride whose wedding has been ruined by the Centaurs. Conversely, these descriptions apply to the centaurs because Theseus has just verbally attacked them, and they have had their spoils (i.e. the Lapith bride) taken from them. In addition, it is unclear whether the centaur, Eurytus, is following Theseus' words with the violent use of his hands, or whether Theseus is following his own words. Thus, here Ovid creates confusion as to who actually starts the violence that takes up most of the story, thereby setting a precedent for what is to come.

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[150] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.419.
[151] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.233-234.

Immediately following the above line, Ovid momentarily resolves the confusion as to which side begins the post-kidnapping violence. Theseus is referenced by name when he breaks a wine bowl over Eurytus' head, thus making him the first to strike.[152] Unfortunately, Ovid immediately removes this certainty: "His twin natured brothers burn with slaughter […] in the first fight, hurled goblets fly" (*Ardescunt germani caede bimembres [...] prima pocula pugna missa volant*).[153] Here Ovid uses the phrase "in the first battle," or "in the first fight." We already know that this fight is not the first fight, as we have seen Theseus break the wine bowl over Eurytus' head lines earlier (although Ovid may imply that this is not a real *pugna*). Ovid displaces the reader in time, and one is uncertain of the sequence of events even at the beginning of the tale.

The deluge of names and randomly assigned facts about characters' personal lives that Ovid provides throughout the tale make it impossible to identify any one protagonist. In fact, the quantity of names is so great that it is even difficult to keep a running tally of the characters and at times, to identify who is on which side. Ovid is aware of this fact and at points even uses it comically, writing, "he left the bones in his face jumbled beyond recognition" (*ossa/ non cognoscendo confusa relinquit in ore).*[154] Here the centaur, Amycus, has just driven a flaming torch into the forehead of the Celadon, a Lapith. This is the first (and last) mention of either of these characters. Thus, the description of Celadon as being unrecognizable because of his wound is somewhat funny, since we as readers never knew who he was in the first

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[152] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.235.
[153] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.240-243.
[154] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.250-251.

place. Ovid again exploits this comic element when describing the kills of Pirithous: "but each one gave a lesser title to the victor than Dictys and Helops" (*Sed uterque minorem/ victori titulum quam Dictys Helopsue dederunt*).[155] One would expect, because neither of these two people have been mentioned previously, that Ovid would follow this statement with a description of why killing Dictys and Helops specifically would bring more glory than killing anyone else. However, Ovid does no such thing. In fact, he follows with a description of the deaths of these two men, neither of which are particularly glorious or special. In this way, Ovid seems to be recognizing that his readers are forming no attachments to his characters by including relatively extreme statements like "each one brought lesser glory to the victor" with no follow-up as to why. Finally, possibly the best example of the copious number of names given in the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs, and thus the impossibility of remembering all these names, is near the tale's end. Here Nestor pauses, wondering what he should talk about next. While he is wondering, he blurts out a list of names and deaths completely divorced from any sort of context.[156] Ovid is not-so-subtly forcing his readers to acknowledge that character development is not what his story is primarily concerned with. By making this acknowledgment necessary, Ovid guides the reader to look for alternative focuses that he or she might otherwise have glossed over.

In terms of grammatical complexity, while the story is full of traditional rhetorical devices (chiasmus, parallelism, etc.), one example stands out as the best for Ovid's use of grammar as a way to confuse his readers. Ovid writes, [157]

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[155] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.333-334.
[156] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.449-454.
[157] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.385-389.

> "iaculum torsi; quod cum vitare nequiret,
> opposuit dextram passurae vulnera fronti:
> adfixa est cum fronte manus. Fit clamor, at illum
> haerentem Peleus et acerbo vulnere victum
> (stabat enim propior) mediam ferit ense sub alvum."

> I hurled the javelin; since he was not able to escape it, he blocked a wound to his forehead by spreading out his right hand; his hand was joined with his forehead. There was a shout, but Peleus (for he was standing nearer) pierced him, held fast, with a sword under the middle of his belly, conquered by the bitter wound.

The centaur being described here takes a comically harsh beating. With his hand pinned to his forehead by a spear from Nestor, he is stabbed in the gut by Peleus, One almost pities him by the end of the description, as he is being beaten up and taken down from all sides. The word order here is bizarre, reflecting the confusion of the centaur as he tries to cope with his multiple attackers. There is something which might be called a chiasmus "*haerentem Peleus et acerbo vulnere victum*," with Peleus name placed in the middle of it (as the center of the centaur's problems). As a result of this chiasmus, one gets all of the direct objects and the subject long before we get the verb, which occurs halfway through 389. Here Ovid seems to be spilling out the elements of the sentence at random, until he comes to a stuttering halt at the final statement "*mediam ferit ense sub alvum*." The reader is left reeling from the prior description, and wondering how he or she reached this simple and well-emphasized end.

In conclusion, Ovid's writing seems to convey a sense of purposeful pandemonium. His wording, the deluge of names he provides, and his grammar all contribute, along with the constant physical morphing and doubled natures of the

objects and creatures in the story, to a distinctly unepic and uncontrolled sense of chaos throughout.

The Language of Love and War (a Centaur love story)

The final aspect which has yet to be treated of this very lengthy and under-discussed tale of metamorphosis, is Ovid's conflation within the story of the language of battle and warfare with that of pleasure and beauty. Ovid not only linguistically confuses beauty and pleasure with war, but he goes so far as to juxtapose war with love itself. About halfway through the episode, Ovid breaks the course of the narrative (or at least the sequence) to tell a centaur love story. This love story more than any other specific episode is jarring and unepic—it removes the reader so far from most of the tale that one is aware of Ovid making a conscious choice to unsettle and destabilize. This story finally terminates in the present time of the narrative in yet another battle in which the two centaur lovers are participants. Ovid thus invites the comparison between love and war and demonstrates the obvious differences between the two.

Even at the story's opening before the battle has yet to break out, Ovid has hinted amid the scenes of rejoicing that all will not go well at this wedding. He does this through clever wording and by using language that is generally used to describe fights and skirmishes rather than times of peace and happiness. Ovid writes, "the festive palace was resounding with the mixed crowd" (*festaque confusa resonabat regia turba*).[158] Here the phrase *festa regia* is interlocking with *confusa turba* in a synchysis; thus, the festive palace is intertwined literally with the "mixed crowd."

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[158] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.214.

Interestingly however, "mixed" is not the only potential translation for *confusa*, for it can also mean, "confused" or "disordered." As a result, the festive palace may be seen as being mixed with a disordered crowd, which sounds like a recipe for the disaster to come. Furthermore, although a party might "resound" (*resonabat*), this word is more often used for the clash of weapons and the choice of verb seems odd. Ovid continues with this same language, hinting at what is about to come, in the phrases, "*ignibus atria fumant*," and "*cinctaque adest virgo*."[159] The phrase "the hall smokes with fires," here means that the halls are lit by torches, but it also serves to foreshadow a point soon to come when the hall will be literally on fire. Similarly, the phrase, "the bride is surrounded," here is describing the bride surrounded by her maidens, but again, it hints at the fact that she will soon be surrounded by centaurs and in need of protection. Thus, there are only eight lines of the story depicting the wedding prior to violence breaking out, and three of these eight are devoted to foreshadowing what is to come.

When Ovid does move into the actual tale, he continues to perpetuate the mixing of the language of pleasure and warfare, albeit less intensely. Right as the battle is about to begin, Ovid writes, "Eurytus burns in his breast, as much with wine, as with the sight of the virgin" (*Euryte, quam vino pectus, tam virgine visa,/ ardet*).[160] Here Ovid uses *ardet* to mean that the centaur Eurytus burns with desire for the bride Hippodame; however, the verb *ardet*, which Ovid chooses, is frequently used alternatively to describe things that are literally on fire, as they would be in the middle of warfare. Later Ovid makes explicit use in the context of battle to describe

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[159] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* 12.215-216
[160] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* 12.220-221.

the centaur Gryneus of the language he previously used for merriment, describing him as "looking at the smoking altar with a terrible face" (s*pectans altaria vultu/ fumida terribili*).[161] The word *fumida*, which is here translated as smoking, is cognate with the word *fumant* that was used at the beginning to describe the halls smoking with torches. Finally, just as Ovid described the party at the beginning with a verb that would generally be reserved for battle, he does the same thing at the end with the calls of a bird, he writes, "Mopsus, following equally with his eyes and with his mind, watched him resounding, circling with a great cry" (*Mopsus et ingenti circum clangore sonantem/ adspexit pariterque animis oculisque secutus*).[162] Here the call of a bird is strangely reminiscent of the sounds of weapons clashing—nothing about it is quiet or peaceful but rather the noises are described as "huge" (*ingenti*) and it is "resounding" (*sonantem*). Thus, from the very beginning up until the very end, the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs is a story about war, and the language of war pervades throughout. As a result, the love story embedded within is all the more surprising.

A Centaur Love Story

The love story of Cyllarus and Hylonome is bizarre from its beginning to its end. It is at once a chance for Ovid to show his writing skill in a way he has not previously demonstrated in this episode, and a chance for him to reinforce other primary characteristics of the story as a whole. Within this mini-episode Ovid reminds us again and again of the dual nature of the centaurs, and by the very fact of this episode's existence, of the dramatic difference between his own work and traditional epic.

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[161] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.258-259.
[162] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.528-529.

The story begins, as would be expected, with a tangent. It at first seems that Ovid has just stopped the flow of battle to reflect on the beauty of a particular centaur (and not to tell a whole separate tale). Ovid writes,[163]

> "barba erat incipiens, barbae color aureus, aurea
> ex umeris medios coma dependebat in armos.
> Gratus in ore vigor; cervix umerique manusque
> pectoraque artificum laudatis proxima signis
> et quacumque vir est; nec equi mendosa sub illo
> deteriorque viro facies: da colla caputque
> Castore dignus erit; sic tergum sessile, sic sunt
> pectora celsa toris. Totus pice nigrior atra;
> candida cauda tamen, color est quoque cruribus albus."

> His beard was beginning, the color of the beard was gold, gold hair was hanging from his shoulders onto the middle of his haunches. There was a pleasing vigor in his face; his neck and shoulders and hands and breast and whatever else human (he had) were nearest to the praised statues of an artist; nor was the appearance of a horse underneath this faulty and worse than the man: give a neck and head which were worthy of Castor; thus, his back was for sitting upon, thus his breast was lofty with muscles. All of him was blacker than pitch; nevertheless, his tail was white, and white was also the color of his legs.

This is by far the longest physical description included in the story of the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs. True to form, Ovid divides the description itself into two halves. The first half, including lines 395-399, lists the beautiful traits of the centaur, which would be common with the beautiful traits of a man—these include beard, hair, face, neck, hands, shoulders, and breast. The second half, which is preceded by the statement, "nor was the appearance of a horse underneath this faulty and worse than the man,"

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[163] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* 12.395-403

includes the description of the parts of him he has in common with a horse. Thus, Ovid treats this detailed depiction as another chance to hammer home the dualism inherent in centaurs as a species. Furthermore, Ovid's focus on specific body parts makes the sketch oddly fitting within the rest of the story—the same words appear during the love tale, *cervix*, *umeri*, *manus* and *pectora*, as are present on other pages when Ovid is describing battles. Ovid points to a global fascination with the body, which spans the subjects of love and war and certainly the *Metamorphoses* as a whole.

Following his description of Cyllarus, Ovid begins to turn even more poetic. We are presented with multiple tricolons, and language which is a good deal more flowery and less gory. It is as if Ovid wants to remind us that he can in fact also write beautifully; however, even within this ornate language, Ovid continues to be oblique and purposefully confusing (it wouldn't be fair to lull the reader into a false sense of security). In the first tricolon Ovid writes, "she alone held Cyllarus by flatteries, by loving and by confessing to love" (*blanditiis et amando et amare fatendo Cyllaron una tenet*).[164] In this description of why Hylonome and no other was able to hold Cyllarus' attention, Ovid includes three things, flatteries, loving, and confessing to love. Here Ovid is being wittier than at any other point in the story. Even though this section focusing on love is minor, Ovid zeroes in on something as complicated and involved as the difference between loving and actually confessing to loving. Ovid makes sure to include this statement, which conveys his own personal belief that love is nothing without avowal. The intellectualism within the statement trips up the

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[164] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.407-409.

reader, rather than creating a sense of beauty and flow. Next, Ovid launches into the details of the complicated beauty ritual used by Hylonome each day. This description, which goes on for seven lines, includes the same level of minutiae as the descriptions of battles throughout the rest of the story and the sudden placement of so many different types of flowers into a battle narrative would be perplexing to any reader. Within this listing of daily routine, Ovid includes a second tricolon, he writes, "she entwines (her hair) sometimes with a splash of rosemary, sometimes with violets or roses, and now and then she wears white lilies" (*ut modo rore maris, modo se violave rosave/ inplicet, interdum candentia lilia gestet*).[165] Ovid lists flowers as if they are as important as the men who lie dead in the banquet hall.

Ovid does finally transition back into the battle, haphazardly tying the love story to what is going on at the Lapith wedding. He makes a list of the activities the couple do together (again accenting the notion that they are two in one), writing, "Their love was equal: they wandered together in the mountains, they entered a cave at the same time: and now, equally they had come to the Lapith palace, and equally they were waging fierce war" (*Par amor est illis: errant in montibus una/ antra simul subeunt; et tum Lapitheia tecta/ intrarant pariter, pariter fera bella gerebant*).[166] As a result of the last activity being, "equally they were waging fierce war," we can see the tenuous connection, but it is, at best, tenuous. As Ovid ends his tangent, we see the inherent flaws in a love that occurs in the middle of a battle, and ends with both lovers participating. After Cyllarus is killed, Hylonome ends her own life, and Ovid writes, "when she saw he was dead, with words which the great clamor prevented from

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[165] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.410-411.
[166] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 12.416-418.

reaching my ears, she lay down on the weapon which clung to him, and dying she embraced her husband" (*Ut videt extinctum, dictis, quae clamor ad aures/ arcuit ire meas, telo, quod inhaeserat illi,/ incubuit moriensque suum conplexa maritum est*).[167] This love story ends with a probably moving death speech, which no one, including Nestor, the narrator, can hear over the din of battle; thus, the tale is left without a significant portion of its finale. Furthermore, if we consider the actual weapon Hylonome is falling on it becomes somewhat less romantic—falling on a javelin isn't easy or graceful.

Thus, Ovid presents in this mini-episode a juxtaposition between words and weapons (*dictis* and *telo*), which is meaningful to the story as a whole—words have no place in battle and thus, there can be no protagonist, no character development, etc. There can only be a description of facts and events, and even these are difficult to know in their entirety. This episode more than any other takes the reader outside of the story of the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs. The reader is forced to think about why this miniature romance is taking place within a battle narrative, and failing to find a reason, how this story of the Lapiths and the Centaurs, which is so different than all of the others present in the *Metamorphoses,* is tied together and functions as a whole.

Conclusion

The tale of the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs embodies the anti-epic qualities of the *Metamorphoses* more than almost any other story present in Ovid's work. The story simulates many of the tropes present in epic (catalogues, speeches, etc.), but always with a twist and rarely in a manner of which Homer or Virgil would have approved.

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[167] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* 12.426-428.

Unlike the stories of Actaeon and Arachne, the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs makes no pretense of concerning itself with morality. It is instead about Ovid treating the state of metamorphosis from its most negative and destructive angles, and exploring the pandemonium and disorder this state introduces into the natural world.

Anti-Epic in the Metamorphoses: Conclusion

> "As to that poetic imitation which is narrative in form and employs a single meter, the plot manifestly ought, as in a tragedy, to be constructed on dramatic principles. It should have for its subject a single action, whole and complete, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. It will thus resemble a living organism in all its unity, and produce the pleasure proper to it."[168]

In the above quotation from the *Poetics*, Aristotle details what he believes an epic should do (he goes on later to cite the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as the perfect examples of the sort of text he is describing). In some ways, The *Metamorphoses* does exactly what Aristotle requires, and in one very essential way it diverges. Ovid's epic even more so than the epics of Homer and Virgil "has for its subject a single action": metamorphosis; however, it is unlikely that this is what Aristotle really had in mind, considering that he was probably talking more of a unified plot than thematic commonality. Furthermore, unlike the rise and abating of the rage of Achilles, or the journeys of Odysseus and Aeneas, metamorphosis is an ever-changing topic with no clear trajectory. Though Ovid's epic is divided into many stories and fifteen books, it has no beginning, no middle, and no end—it could go on indefinitely, or be reduced dramatically. In many ways, it is more like a living organism than the sort of tale Aristotle describes—it is constantly mutating and unpredictable.

Thus, when set against Aristotle's definition of epic, the *Metamorphoses* is the definitive anti-epic. It shares some of its core attributes with the poems of Virgil and of Homer, but also departs from its predecessors in many fundamental ways. In the

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[168] Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. S.H. Butcher (The Internet Classics Archive, 1994-2000), http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.3.3.html, 3.23.

story of Arachne, Ovid toys with making an assessment of the morality of the characters and prompts his readers to do so, but then backs away from placing any definitive blame or judgment, thus confusing his own apparent purpose; the reader leaves the story feeling that both characters acted somehow wrongly, and if not wrongly, than certainly in a manner which was both childish and petty, thereby not befitting the moral gravity of epic. Similarly in Actaeon, Ovid paints both characters in a negative light, accenting their violent natures, and drawing attention to Diana's rash actions—but even so, he fails to pass explicit judgment and one is left searching for the "point" of the tale. Finally in the Battle of the Lapiths vs. the Centaurs, Ovid forgoes moral considerations altogether in favor of a blow-by-blow battle narrative where no protagonist or villain is possible; here, metamorphosis itself is the centerpiece of the narrative. Thus, the *Metamorphoses* lacks altogether a hero, like Achilles, Odysseus, or Aeneas, and even on a story-by-story basis, the lines between heroes and villains are either blurred or irrelevant. Ovid makes his narrative more explicitly an anti-epic by borrowing devices from the epic tradition and then twisting them—some notable examples include Arachne's blush, the catalogue of dogs, and Latreus' speech. Ovid further distinguishes his work through its language, including details where no details are necessary, but failing to provide them when they are expected (as in the case of the gods in Athena's tapestry), and by providing descriptions so grotesque that his readers must cringe.

Thus, the swirling and dizzying world presented in Ovid's epic provides a necessary counterbalance to the order depicted by Virgil and Homer. W.R. Johnson says it beautifully, "if we need poems that celebrate the human spirit and the place of

man in the goodness of existence and in the beauty of universal order, we need no less poems that warn us of the enemies to order which are within us and that remind us that great virtue can degenerate greatly."[169] The *Metamorphoses* is the response to the epic, the anti-epic; it reminds us that on the flip side of order, there will always be chaos waiting.

[169] Johnson, "Counterclassical Sensibility," 131.

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