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By ALAN H. F. GRIFFIN

Callimachus' sixth hymn to Demeter is of considerable importance to the student of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The reason is that it provides us with one of the very few opportunities to put an episode in the *Metamorphoses* alongside what was apparently its chief source. I say its chief source because Ovid's description of how Demeter punishes Erysichthon for violating her sacred grove by inflicting on him an insatiable hunger is very close to Callimachus' outline of the same story and includes a number of undoubted verbal echoes of the Greek poet.[1] Ovid certainly knew Callimachus sixth hymn well. But, of course, there may have been other treatments of the Erysichthon legend, now lost, which Ovid also drew on to a greater or lesser extent. There is a further point to bear in mind. We seem to be dealing in Ovid with two stories, not with a single legend. The first is the story of Erysichthon's sacrilege and punishment, the second is the story of a girl with powers of self-transformation. These two stories may originally have been quite independent of each other, but we find them linked as early as the pseudo-Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*.[2] Callimachus does not use the second story about the transformations of Erysichthon's daughter.

If it is a question of awarding prizes it has to be admitted at the outset that a majority of scholars gives the prize for poetic merit and literary interest to Callimachus rather than Ovid. Brooks Otis writes, for example, 'At first sight a modern reader is tempted to wonder why Ovid wishes to expose himself to such a devastating comparison. Why reduce the charming simplicity – the delicate humanity as well as religious sensitivity of Callimachus – to this absurd pastiche of Virgil?'[3] Even if Brooks Otis's judgement is correct, there is more to literary criticism than simply declaring a preference for one author or treatment rather than another, and this unique opportunity to compare an episode in the *Metamorphoses* with its likely main source should be exploited to the full.

The scholiast tells us that the occasion of Callimachus' sixth hymn was an actual procession at Alexandria which Ptolemy Philadelphus instituted in imitation of an Athenian procession in honour of Demeter.[4] Modern scholars have generally followed Wilamowitz in rejecting this suggestion on the grounds (a) that the hymn is far too general in its description of location and ritual to be tied to a particular place and occasion, and (b) that Callimachus would certainly have

mentioned Ptolemy Philadelphus if the hymn were intended to commemorate a religious innovation the king had made.[5] Whatever the original occasion and motivation of the hymn may have been, it appears to describe the Procession of the Basket which formed part of the Thesmophoria, a festival in honour of Demeter. The goddess therefore figures prominently in the hymn. The story of Erysichthon is a ἱερὸς λόγος within the hymn, a warning that this generally beneficent goddess, like other ancient deities, does not turn the other cheek when anyone slights, offends, or thwarts her.

The Erysichthon story is neatly embedded in Callimachus' hymn. The poem begins by saluting Demeter as her procession approaches. At verse 22 the Erysichthon inset begins and continues to verse 117. The last twenty-one verses revert subtly to the hymn form and provide a concluding section which corresponds exactly to the first twenty-one verses of the poem. The beginning and the conclusion are liturgical rehearsals of Demeter's mighty acts and attributes, and she is also the dominant character of the Erysichthon episode. This is hardly surprising in a hymn written in her honour. A further indication of Erysichthon's secondary position in the hymn can be seen in the rather abrupt end to his story: he is left sitting at the crossroads, begging for crusts and garbage (verses 114–5). Erysichthon fades out to allow Callimachus to concentrate fully on Demeter.

Callimachus makes Erysichthon's crime and punishment stand out clearly, though there is not much descriptive detail of the sacrilege, and the punishment is seen primarily from the point of view of Erysichthon's parents who try to keep up appearances in spite of their young son's disgrace. An interest in children and child psychology is a well known feature of Hellenistic art and literature. Keeping up appearances is also characteristic of the bourgeois lifestyle of Hellenistic cities. We find it, for example, in Theocritus *Idyll* 15 which deals with the petty concerns of middle class housewives in suburban Alexandria. As the first megalopolis of the ancient world Alexandria was the first city to experience what we would describe as suburban pressures. Husbands spent much of the day working away from home; wives became lonely and bored left with the children in the house. The women gossipped behind their husbands' backs and were snobbishly concerned with such matters as accent, social standing, ethnic origins, and keeping up with the Joneses. Some of these features are present in Callimachus' sixth hymn. It is, however, a tale with a very clear moral: a stern warning is delivered with some humorous touches.

McKay's study of Callimachus' hymn stresses its comic elements and argues that they are indebted to Dorian comedy.[6] This may be so, but the comic element does not amount to 'broad farce' as L. P.

Wilkinson suggests.[7] Broad farce would be out of keeping with the dignity of a hymn which takes Demeter's power and divinity seriously.

Ovid's version lacks the humour, the middle class attitudes, family environment, and the personal element found in the hymn. Unlike Callimachus Ovid does not give Erysichthon's father and mother any rôle to play. He does not even mention them: I accept with A. S. Hollis the reading *Dryopeius* ('the Thessalian') found in the best manuscripts at *Metamorphoses* 8.751.[8] The inferior reading *Triopeius* ('son of Triopas') probably comes from Callimachus' hymn where Triopas, Triopum, and the Triopidae figure prominently. *Dryopeius* has nice point in Ovid. Since *Dryopeius* was derived from δρῦς ('oak') Thessalian Erysichthon in the act of destroying an oak is associated with oak through his name. He will progress from destroying an oak tree to killing an oak nymph (dryad) and finally destroy himself through autophagy. In the ancient world a man's destiny was often tied up with his name. The first two acts of destruction by the *Dryopeius* can be seen as hinting at and foreshadowing the third in which destroyer and victim are not merely linked by verbal association, but become identical. I do not think that these cross-language implications would have been lost on Ovid's bi-lingual audience. An Oak Man should be wary of molesting oaks.

In Ovid Erysichthon has a daughter who, like his father and mother, is not named. There was no daughter in Callimachus, but she was called Mestra in the pseudo-Hesiodic version of the legend.[9] Ovid's account of Erysichthon's daughter is essentially the same as that in pseudo-Hesiod where Erysichthon also has an insatiable hunger. He sells Mestra as a prospective wife, but she escapes by changing shape and returning home in her original form. Neptune deprives her of her virginity. Ovid is likely to have known the pseudo-Hesiodic poem which had for him the advantage of containing the theme of metamorphosis. There is no metamorphosis in Callimachus' hymn. In pseudo-Hesiod and in Ovid Erysichthon is an adult whose daughter had Neptune for a lover (*Met.* 8.850–1). The son of this liaison was called Eurypylus in pseudo-Hesiod. Ovid's grown-up Erysichthon is a *contemptor divum*, an unmitigated monster, whose family attachments are ignored or played down as much as possible. He is a very different character from Callimachus' wilful but much loved youth, whose family tree and family environment give the hymn much of its charm.

Brooks Otis's explanation of the different characters of Ovid's and Callimachus' Erysichthon is that Ovid was '"Virgilianizing" Callimachus', giving us 'a bravura epic utterly denuded of concrete substance and environment'.[10] Virgilian echoes and influence are

undoubted,[11] but there appears to be more to Ovid's Erysichthon than a Virgilianized transformation of Callimachus' boy. There is evidence that Ovid may be thinking of Erysichthon in terms of that monstrous character of myth, the giant. The main events of Erysichthon's life, possibly including his autophagy, were fixed in previous versions of the legend: it was in the area of character that Ovid, as elsewhere in the *Metamorphoses*, found most scope for innovation. As a young poet Ovid tells us that he got some distance with writing a Gigantomachy,[12] and the three traits he selects as characteristic of a giant's personality – contempt for the Olympian gods, bloody ferocity, and an impulse to murder[13] – are manifest in his Erysichthon.

Erysichthon's name ('Earth Render') is, of course, appropriate for a giant, since giants, after their defeat by the Olympian gods, were thought to be buried beneath areas of volcanic activity. Is there also a hint of volcanic activity when Demeter assents to the punishment of Erysichthon by shaking the fields with her nod at *Met.* 8.780–1?

The most grandiose representation of giants in the ancient world was on the frieze of the Hellenistic altar at Pergamon.[14] Ovid could easily have seen this altar in the course of his tour as a student around the great cities of Asia Minor.[15] One of the giants on the gigantomachy frieze is named Erysichthon.[16] Callimachus also gives an indication of knowing about Erysichthon the giant: his description of the youth's twenty companions as 'men-giants'[17] could show this awareness in the learned and allusive manner of the Hellenistic poets. Bodily strength and size are also characteristic of giants. This consideration supports the manuscript readings *immensaque viscera* at *Met.* 8.829 and *altique . . . ventris* at *Met.* 8.843.[18] Erysichthon's single handed ability to hack down an oak twenty-three feet in circumference (*Met.* 8.748–9) is a sufficient indication of giant strength.

The argument that Ovid knew of a tradition that Erysichthon was a giant is strengthened by the identification of the goddess Demeter as his opponent in the Pergamene gigantomachy. Francis Vian, who includes Demeter among the 'divinités auxiliaires' involved in the gigantomachy, describes Erysichthon as 'son adversaire traditionnel'.[19] There is sculptural precedent therefore for a confrontation between Demeter and the giant Erysichthon. Although there is no literary evidence of the involvement of Demeter and Kore in the gigantomachy, Vian draws attention to additional evidence on the frieze of the Siphnian treasury at Delphi and on the Milo vase.[20] Erysichthon's (*Dryopeius*) attack on an oak tree (δρῦς) sacred to Ceres turns into the bloody murder of a dryad (also derived from δρῦς). The longest simile in the Erysichthon episode occurs in this section and describes the bloody slaughter of a bull (*Met.* 8.761–4). Blood and blood-thirstiness were

associated with giants who, according to Hesiod, were the sons of *Ge* ('Earth'), sprung from the blood of mutilated Uranus. Mankind, descended from the giants, inherited their bloody nature, according to Ovid.[21] Erysichthon even envisages axing Ceres herself.[22] This behaviour is not surprising in a giant.

Why did Erysichthon choose to cut down a tree, and why should this act be particularly offensive to Demeter? H. J. Rose found these aspects of the story puzzling and could find no explanation of them.[23] Lycophron (*Alexandra* 1396) implies that Erysichthon violated Demeter's plough-land, rather than her tree, but has nothing to say about motive.[24] Ovid does not ask or answer the questions posed by Rose. The only motive for Erysichthon's crime is apparently his malevolent atheism (*Met.* 8.739–42). But if Ovid had the notion of Erysichthon the giant in mind we can see that it was a particularly heinous crime for a γηγενής ('earth-born') to attack a tree and a tree nymph which also, like giants, spring from the earth. According to Hesiod ash-tree nymphs (μέλιαι) shared the same parentage as the giants.[25] The heinousness of Erysichthon's behaviour is increased when we consider that both tree and tree nymph were sacred to Demeter whose name was derived from γῆ μήτηρ by Greeks and Romans alike.[26] A gigantic hunger is an apt punishment for the earth-born (γηγενής) monster's attack on the domain of the earth goddess (γῆ μήτηρ). When Demeter assents to the punishment of Erysichthon it is not without significance that she wears her hat as goddess of the crops and fields (*Met.* 8.780–1).

If we keep the picture of an Ovidian giant in mind, some of the differences between Callimachus' and Ovid's characterization of Erysichthon appear in a new light. In Callimachus he is an impetuous young man motivated to cut down Demeter's trees by his need of timber to build a banqueting hall for himself and his friends. Callimachus' description of his companions as 'men-giants' (*Hymn* 6.34) probably indicates in a learned fashion that he is aware of the tradition in which Erysichthon is a giant, and by so doing he draws attention to the novelty of his own character portrayal. Callimachus' Erysichthon is quite endearing. His mother, his two sisters, his wet nurse, and his ten maids were certainly fond of him. His father describes him as 'baby' (βρέφος, *Hymn* 6.100), his mother dotes on him (δειλαία φιλότεκνε, 6.83), and even Demeter, whose trees he had begun to cut down, mildly addresses him thrice as 'child' (τέκνον, 6.46–47) and describes him as the son his parents had long prayed for (πολύθεστε τοκεῦσι, 6.47).

Ovid's Erysichthon is very different. From the beginning he is the personification of evil. There is no mention of his mother, father, or sisters. He sells his daughter. His attack on Demeter's grove lacks the

excuse that he needs timber for a banqueting hall: it is an act of pure malice. Erysichthon is a *contemptor divum hominumque*. He is not individualized. Callimachus' poplar becomes an oak; Ovid exaggerates its size and the number of nymphs who were able to encircle it. Ovid identifies the oak tree with the nymph who lives in it, and describes how she bleeds and dies from the blows of Erysichthon's axe. His guilt increases with the murder of his servant: he appears totally depraved. His story therefore provides, as Brooks Otis pointed out, a moral contrast and foil to the pious characters of Philemon and Baucis in the immediately preceding episode.[27] There is also a contrast of literary approach: the Erysichthon story can be described as 'epic', the Philemon and Baucis episode belongs to the genre of 'idyll'.

I think we can attribute to Ovid the conception of the story as of one monster (Erysichthon) invaded and taken over by another monster (*Fames*). This stark confrontation puts all other characters into the background. Because of the natures of the protagonists, Ovid could let his rhetorical genius run riot, exaggerating emotions and heightening effects. This should not be regarded, however, as 'Virgilianizing', or aping and parodying Virgilian epic,[28] but as using rhetoric to depict the extreme character traits which belong to monsters like a giant and Hunger.

Some of Ovid's rhetorical effects are worth pointing out. The word order and rhythm of *Met.* 8.776 suggest the toppling and fall of the oak tree. *Corruit* is placed first, and the spondees which follow suggest the tree's stately collapse. The identification of the lost oak tree with a lost sister (*damno nemorumque suoque*, *Met.* 8.777) is a typical Ovidian stylism. Ovid's Demeter is not as magnificent as Callimachus', but the bereaved dryad sisters of the *Metamorphoses* approach the goddess like an Augustan embassy. Demeter's plan to punish Erysichthon is rhetorically conceived (*miserabile, si non/ ... nulli miserabilis*, *Met.* 8.782–3). The oread dispatched by Demeter to summon Hunger from Scythia to Thessaly is described as *montani numinis unam* ('one of the mountain deities', *Met.* 8.786), a good, if somewhat extreme, example of a collective singular usage.

Ovid's *Fames* ecphrasis is introduced by Demeter's *est locus* speech. The goddess uses the conventional epic formula (*est locus*) for introducing a place description.[29] The personification of Hunger which follows is noticable for its macabre realism. Such personifications were, of course, popular with Greek and Roman writers and rhetoricians and Ovid personifies *Invidia*, *Somnus*, and *Fama* elsewhere in the *Metamorphoses*.[30] The realism of Ovid's *Fames* might suggest a model in Hellenistic art, but Ovid grasped the opportunity to produce an eight-line rhetorical extravaganza (*Met.* 8.801–8). Ovid's cleverness is

apparent when he writes *ventris erat pro ventre locus* ('instead of a belly there was a place for a belly', *Met.* 8.805). This impressionistic touch is rhetorically effective, but not anatomically accurate since bellies do not contract, but swell, as a result of extreme hunger.

Grisly descriptions of physical suffering appealed to the taste of Roman rhetoricians and audiences. With Ovid's description of *Fames* we can compare one of Seneca's *Controversiae* (10.4.2) describing a thug who deliberately crippled exposed children so that they would arouse pity as beggars. 'This child has had the joints of his feet torn, his ankles wrenched; this has had his legs crushed. Another's thighs he has smashed, though leaving feet and legs unharmed. Finding a different savagery for each, this bone breaker cuts off the arms of one, slices the sinews of another's; one he twists, another he castrates. In yet another he stunts the shoulder-blades, beating them into an ugly hump, looking for a laugh from his cruelty.' According to Seneca this subject was also popular among the Greeks.

Hunger begins to rack Erysichthon as he sleeps. This situation finds a parallel in an Old Testament simile, 'As when a hungry man dreams he is eating and awakes with his hunger not satisfied, or as when a thirsty man dreams he is drinking and wakes faint, with his thirst not quenched, so shall the multitude of all the nations be that fight against Mount Zion' (*Isaiah* 29.8). There is a difference between Isaiah and Ovid. In Isaiah the sleeper enjoys a tantalizing dream whose pleasure disappears on waking. In Ovid Erysichthon experiences hunger while he is still asleep (*Met.* 8.824–7). On waking his hunger increases. Ovid spares us nothing in the relentless march of descriptive detail. This is an example of ἐνάργεια ('clarity'), much prized by rhetoricians, with verbal fireworks which must have brought the house down when Ovid first delivered lines 825ff., 831, 835–6, and 841ff. In Callimachus Erysichthon ate his father's heifer, the racing horse, the war charger, and finally the farm cat, but this homely fare was not suitable or enough for Ovid's monster.

In spite of the speed of Ovid's narrative he manages to insert a passing allusion to Erysichthon's nick-name in pseudo-Hesiod where he was called *Aethon* ('Burning').[31] The echo occurs at *Met.* 8.828: furit *ardor* edendi. Finally, Erysichthon resorts to selling his daughter in order to obtain food (*Met.* 8.848). *Vendere* applied to a woman implies not only slavery but also the possibility of sexual exploitation. There seems to be no objection in myth to giants' daughters turning out to be nice girls, and Ovid stresses that Erysichthon's daughter is *generosa* and *non illa digna parente* (*Met.* 8.847–8). Her powers of metamorphosis enable her to escape from the predicaments to which her unworthy father exposes her. Ovid's reader, however, knows from the first line of the

Erysichthon episode that his daughter will end up marrying Autolycus (*Met.* 8.738), and therefore has an advance assurance that she will come through her ordeals.

The daughter's marriage to Autolycus might have caused Erysichthon's ruin by depriving him of his means of subsistence. Ovid, however, simply says that Erysichthon's hunger grew more and more fierce. The implication seems to be that the hunger grew to such an extent that the daughter could no longer provide for her father in spite of her repeated metamorphoses. Ovid does not refer to the girl by name, describing her as 'the Thessalian girl' (*Dryopeida*, *Met.* 8.872). Thessaly is the traditional location of the Erysichthon story, and a suitable place of residence for members of the giant tribe.[32] The last act of the Erysichthon story contains some humour and human interest in Ovid. The master who purchases the daughter becomes (not unnaturally) hot and bothered when she undergoes a sex change and turns into a fisherman. The master's pompous questioning of the fisherman extends to five verses and receives a five verse reply.[33] Master and fisherman seem to be playing a polite word game with each other.

We cannot be certain whether or not Ovid was the inventor of the autophagy at the end. Callimachus leaves an unhappy Erysichthon begging for crusts and garbage at the crossroads. Hollis, however, points out that the *Etymologicum Magnum* suggests that Ovid may have had a Greek precedent for the autophagy.[34] Ovid's story fades out abruptly and perhaps not satisfactorily. It is as if Ovid wished to bring this episode, and indeed Book 8 of the *Metamorphoses*, to a rapid conclusion. He leaves us with the bizarre point that Erysichthon nourishes his own body by eating it and concludes on an appropriate note – *diminuendo*.

NOTES

1. The Erysichthon story is found at *Met.* 8.738–878. Verbal echoes of Callimachus occur at *Met.* 8.746; 835–6; 843.

2. See Hesiod, fr. 43 (Merkelbach-West).

3. *Ovid as an Epic Poet* (Cambridge, 2nd ed. 1970), p. 68.

4. *'Ο Φιλάδελφος Πτολεμαῖος κατὰ μίμησιν τῶν'Αθηνῶν ἔθη τινὰ ἵδρυσεν ἐν' Αλεξανδρία, ἐν οἷς καὶ τὴν τοῦ καλάθου πρόοδον· ἔθος γὰρ ἦν ἐν 'Αθήναις ἐν ὡρισμένῃ ἡμέρα ἐπὶ ὀχήματος φέρεσθαι κάλαθον εἰς τιμὴν τῆς Δήμητρος* (Pfeiffer, *Callimachus* (Oxford, 1953), Vol. 2, p. 77).

5. *Hellenistische Dichtung* (Berlin, 1924), II. pp. 43–4; E. Cahen, *Les Hymnes de Callimaque* (Paris, 1930), p. 246; J. Ferguson, *Callimachus* (Boston, 1980), p. 130.

6. K. J. McKay, *Erysichthon: a Callimachean Comedy* (Leiden, 1962), pp. 134ff.

7. L. P. Wilkinson, *Ovid Recalled* (Cambridge, 1955), p. 164.

8. A. S. Hollis, *Ovid Metamorphoses Book VIII* (Oxford, 1970), notes on lines 751 and 872.

9. Fr. 43(a), l. 4.

10. Op. cit., pp. 414 and 203.

11. *Met.* 8.757–8 recall the Wooden Horse at *Aen.* 2.50–53; *Met.* 8.761–4 recall the Polydorus episode at *Aen.* 3.27–30.

12. *Amores* 2.1.11–16.

13. *Met.* 1.160–3.

14. The altar was begun between 180 and 170 B.C. See A. W. Lawrence, *Greek Architecture* (Harmondsworth, 3rd ed. 1973), pp. 213–4.

15. *Tristia* 1.2. 77—78.

16. W. H. Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexikon der greichischen und römischen Mythologie*, Erysichthon 1384; K. J. McKay, op. cit., pp. 91–98.

17. ἀνδρογίγαντας (*Hymn* 6.34).

18. Hollis prefers Heinsius' conjecture *incensaque viscera* at *Met.* 8.829, though admitting that 'the MSS. reading "immensaque" may be right'. Franz Bömer (*Metamorphosen Buch VIII–IX* (Heidelberg, 1977), p. 260) argues in favour of *immensa*. Hollis and Bömer both accept *altique ... ventris* at 8.843. Compare the Cyclops' 'vast paunch' which Ovid mentions at *Ibis* 387, 'ut quos demisit *vastam* Polyphemus in *alvum*'.

19. *La Guerre des Géants: le mythe avant l'epoque Hellenistique* (Paris, 1952), p. 92.

20. Ibid., pp. 110, 142–3.

21. *scires e sanguine natos* (*Met.* 1.162).

22. *non dilecta deae solum, sed et ipsa licebit/sit dea, iam tanget frondente cacumine terram* (*Met.* 8.755–6).

23. *A Handbook of Greek Mythology* (London, 6th ed. 1958), p. 95.

24. Hollis, op. cit., p. 129.

25. *Theogony* 184ff.

26. Cicero, *de Natura Deorum* 2.67: Mater autem est a gerendis frugibus Ceres (tamquam Geres, casuque prima littera itidem immutata, ut a Graecis; namque ab illis quoque Δημήτηρ quasi γῆ μήτηρ nominata est).

27. Op. cit., pp. 413–4.

28. Brooks Otis, op. cit., p. 67; pp. 414ff.

29. Compare Virgil, *Aen.* 1.530.

30. See *Met.* 2.760ff.; 11.592ff.; 12.39ff.

31. Fr. 43(a) l. 5: ἐπώνυμον εἵνεκα λιμοῦ. Compare Callimachus *Hymn* 6.66–67; ἐμβαλε λιμὸν/ αἴθωνα κρατερόν.

32. Giants were born from the earth at Phlegra on the nearby peninsula of Pallene. The gigantomachy took place on Thessalian Olympus whose mass dominated the plain of Phlegra to the west. See Claudian, *Shorter Poems* LII, *Gigantomachia* 66ff.

33. With the epic sounding *moderator harundinis* compare Aeschylus, *Persians* 378–9: κώπης ἄναξ/ ... ὅπλων ἐπιστάτης.

34. *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. αἴθων .... αἴθωνα λιμόν, τὸν μέγαν ἢ ἑαυτὸν φονεύοντα.