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EKPHRASIS AND THE THEME OF ARTISTIC FAILURE IN OVID'S METAMORPHOSES

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I

In his review of the first edition of Brooks Otis's *Ovid as an Epic Poet*, William Anderson challenges the notion that structural symmetry is the principle that governs Ovid's narrative design.[1] To propose an alternative view of Ovidian aesthetics, he takes for his example the weaving contest of Arachne and Minerva in Book 6. Minerva's tapestry which depicts her own victory in the contest for the naming of Athens is arranged in a completely symmetrical design. The judging gods stand six on either side of Jupiter; the disputants likewise stand on opposite sides. Each corner of the tapestry contains a panel showing the punishment of mortals who in one way or another have challenged the gods, and the whole is framed with an ornamental border of olive leaves. "The goddess," as Anderson says, "produced a perfect piece of Classicistic art, structurally balanced and thematically grandiose, in support of the established order." With this monumental and authoritarian piece of work, the tapestry of Minerva's rival Arachne contrasts in every way. It is flagrantly asymmetrical and lifelike:

> a swirl of divine figures in unedifying situations . . . one god after another gratifying his lust for a human woman. There is no apparent structure to the tapestry which consists of nine affairs of Jupiter; six of Neptune; four of Apollo and one each of Liber and Saturn. Juxtaposed as they apparently are, they have a cumulative effect, much as Baroque paintings do by contrast with the neatly arranged masterpieces of Raphael.

As Anderson points out, Minerva is unable to achieve a genuine triumph in the contest. Arachne was not deluded in her claims to equal the goddess in skill (6.129-130: *non illud Pallas, non illud carpere Livor / possit opus;* "Neither Pallas, nor Envy could find any fault in this work."). Inflamed by jealousy and indignation, the goddess destroys by force that work of art that her divine talents could not surpass (6.130-131: *doluit successu flava virago/et rupit pictas, caelestia crimina, vestes;* "The

golden haired warrior maiden smarted at her success and tore apart the many colored tapestry, the sky-dwellers' crimes."). The implication, Anderson suggests, of the tale for the *Metamorphoses* as a whole is that symmetrical design is "no prerequisite to Ovidian art; a set of loosely ordered tales can form a masterpiece."

The more one agrees with this suggestion that the style of Arachne's mythological representation is somehow paradigmatic for the *Metamorphoses*, the more one wants to question further. How far should one press the identification of the poet's own aesthetic principles with those of the doomed tapestry? What are the implications of Minerva's action for Ovid's own art?[2]

It has often been remarked that Ovid shows a particular interest in artists and in their works of art, an interest that often manifests itself in the use of words from the vocabulary of the graphic arts but is also apparent in the precise descriptions that allow the postures of his characters to be visualized as clearly as those of statues[3] and his scenes to be envisioned with all the detail of actual paintings.[4] From these points it is further conjectured that he saw the poet and the graphic artist approaching their common task of mimesis with a similar concern for reproducing actual impressions of the real world. Such ideas make his vision seem especially close to that of Arachne whose woven figures are so lifelike as to deceive the spectator (104): *verum taurum, freta vera putares* ("You would think the bull was a real one, that the sea was real"). The story of Europa which provides the context for these words is, of course, one that Ovid has already told in his poem (2.833-875). By his translation of the subject from descriptive narrative into an explicitly visual medium, Ovid seems to be making some self-conscious commentary upon his own artistic methods, but the point, I think, is more than a distinction between symmetrical and asymmetrical principles of organization and style.

The styles of the tapestries are inseparable from their subjects. Minerva's angry response makes this point. On their surface the two tapestries appear to present incompatible views of the gods. The vision of Arachne's tapestry is perfectly in keeping with the world vision of the *Metamorphoses* whose first five books have presented numerous examples of the free and energetic loves of the gods. The reader who is sympathetic to Arachne cannot help but think that Minerva's formal and high-minded depiction of divine power and justice embodies some hypocritical misrepresentation. But of course the goddess's work is also perfectly faithful to the theological ethos of the poem, and her images of divine vengeance have their analogies in such stories as that of Aglauros, Battus, Semele, Actaeon and Pentheus. Both Minerva's and Arachne's versions of mythology and metamorphosis assert the power of the gods: the one as a force of order, the other as a force participating in the flux of nature.

As the creator of the poem, Ovid maintains a vision embracing both points of view. A balance between them is essential to the temper of the poem. Thus it is impossible to identify Ovid's perspective entirely with Arachne's, even when he serves as sympathetic champion of her aesthetics of verisimilitude. All the same, the poet's apparent sympathy is not pointless. Arachne's vision is personal, limited and rebellious; it represents the human artist's determination to assert his version of truth in the face of an uncertain and authoritarian world. And her self-assertion is a failure even as she produces the masterpiece of her work. Both the partial vision of Arachne and her defeat are typical of Ovid's unusual treatment of artists and works of art in the poem.

Stories in which artists figure play an important role in the *Metamorphoses*. Insofar as we can determine from Ovid's existing sources, the poet has made major changes to bring out new themes in these stories and draw them closely into the context of the poem. Some he has virtually invented himself. The full implications of the Arachne incident can best be seen as a part of the continuously problematic relationship of the artist figure to his world in the whole context of the *Metamorphoses*.

The fact that artists and their artifacts are a traditional element of classical literature makes Ovid's unusual treatment of them the more striking. As I shall briefly show, the general background for this subject gives no hint of his individualistic approach. The tapestries of Minerva and Arachne stand in the rhetorical tradition of *ekphrasis* — poetic description of works of art — which had not by Ovid's time achieved its ultimate form as a self-limited rhetorical exercise, but was very much a feature of epic and other forms of hexameter poetry.[5] Shields, cups, woven garments and architectural sculpture all provide conventional *loci* for *ekphrasis*, but this categorical list of visual objects may be expanded to include passages where the song of a bard is summarized in its essential detail.[6] All *ekphraseis* have something about them of the bravura piece, the ornamental digression, but their very conspicuousness prompts the reader to reflect upon their potential relationship to the main current of the poem. Although one could remove these passages from the narrative without doing violence to its continuity, they offer the artist an opportunity to speak *in propria persona* and to make us aware of the self-consciousness of his art through his attention to the fictional artistry of some other creator. With their ability to perceive the relevance of almost all digressions, modern critics have consistently demonstrated that the purely ornamental qualities of ekphrastic passages are subordinate to their thematic importance. Thus the shield of Achilles in whose forging the ancient commentators saw an allegory of creation[7] presents in shining bronze images of cities at war and peace. It is fitting that Achilles should win his supreme victory in this armor which embodies, as fully as any explicit statement in the poem, the fated alternatives of his own destiny: brief glory in war or a homely, peaceful old age. The shield of Aeneas presents no alternatives. Its images of Roman history chart the course of destiny in which the hero must play his inevitable role and illumine the similarity between his own deeds of violence and those of his descendants. The figured cloak that Athena weaves for Jason in the *Argonautica*, as Gilbert Lawall has shown, bears mythological scenes whose common denominator is their foreshadowing of the devious strategies by which the hero will gain the golden fleece.[8] The coverlet on the marriage bed of Peleus and Thetis shows the grimly foreboding story of Theseus' betrayal of Ariadne and emphasizes dark undertones in the joyous wedding scene whose final consequences are to be the destruction of Troy and the decline of man from his pristine heroic stature.

The significance of such descriptions lies in their ability to enlarge the perspectives of the poem by introducing some object that belongs naturally to its own closed world and yet incorporates external material that could not, save through the medium of *ekphrasis*, be admitted into the framework of this world. One might compare them to windows opening upon a world beyond the poem. The cities and men on the shield of Achilles present a cosmic overview, a generalization unavailable to Homer's single-minded characters. These scenes are only symbolically related to the dramatic foreground of the *Iliad*. The cities are not Troy; the warriors not Hector nor Agamemnon. The very anonymity of the shield figures is what makes them serve so effectively as a universalization of the epic's own themes of peace and war. The significance of the figures on Jason's cloak is actually so cryptic that no critic before Lawall had even thought to investigate their meaning. In bucolic poetry the subjects introduced by *ekphrasis* are even more obliquely related to their contexts. The scenes on the decorated cup in Theocritus' first *Idyll* are not really pastoral scenes at all, yet the frozen postures of their figures exemplify the timeless, changeless world created by art in the same idealizing manner as the poems themselves. The figures of Orpheus and the unknown scientist on the prize cups offered by Damoetas and Menalcas in Vergil's third *Eclogue* are even further removed from the rustic world of pastoral, but symbolize the complementary orders of art and agriculture that shape the vision of the pastoral poet. The same obliqueness of subject matter characterizes the verbal works described. The bard at Alcinoös' court in the *Odyssey* tells the tale of the adultery of Mars and Venus, but neither Homer nor Odysseus interprets this story of the gods as a reflection of the hero's own adventures, and Odysseus is hardly able to understand its foreshadowing of his future triumph over the potentially

adulterous situation at home. In the *Aeneid*, Iopas sings of the separate courses of the wandering sun and moon.[9] The figures of Dido and Aeneas are symbolically illuminated, but only the reader can sense the implication that these two monarchs who have known lives of wandering should, like sun and moon, have remained forever apart. *Ekphraseis* of this kind have the function of extended metaphor and are full of possible analogies that the reader explores for himself.

But the tapestries of Arachne and Minerva have no such metaphorical subtlety. They are not, as it were, windows looking towards a world outside of the poem but mirrors of the poem itself. In their miniature, self-contained panoramas of metamorphosis they reiterate the very themes that the poem has already made explicit. A similar kind of internal reflection is produced by those passages where verbal artists make extensive contributions to Ovid's poetic scheme. Both the daughters of Minyas in the fourth book and Orpheus in the tenth are the fictive authors of carefully composed groups of tales and another pair of tales is provided by the contest of the Muses and the nine daughters of Pieros in Book Five. In their artistic self-consciousness these persons stand apart from Ovid's other fictional storytellers who generally contribute only one tale apiece and that of an autobiographical nature.[10] The artist's recitals comprise eclectic combinations of tales that stand out from their narrative framework in their apparent digressiveness from the chronological organization of the poem.[11] But the subject chosen by these self-conscious storytellers is again metamorphosis and their productions are again miniatures of the larger poem. The song of Orpheus imitates Ovid's own organization insofar as it has its own little chronology centered about the inhabitants of Paphos[12] and its own tale within a tale. Ovid makes no perceptible stylistic distinction between these stories related by other poets and those he tells *in propria persona*. Their wit, their descriptive techniques and their narrative pacing are the same as that of the larger poem, and thus many critics have assumed that their speakers are introduced as a mere device for creating variety in the potentially monotonous sequence of transitions from story to story.

But all these episodes have one common element that they share with the episode of Arachne and that is their emphasis upon the personality of the artist, the reasons for his performance and his ultimate fate.[13] In all four cases, the fate of the human artist, regardless of his talents, is disastrous. Here again is a major difference between Ovid's treatment of artists and art-works and that in previous poems where, without exception, the work of art is reverenced for its beauty, the poet's song heard with appreciation and the person of the artist held in honor. Traditionally, the artists associated with *ekphrasis* stand out from their fellow men as possessors of unusual powers of perception or prefiguration. But the

daughters of Minyas are destroyed by Bacchus; the Pierides overwhelmed by the scornful Muses and Orpheus' tales of unfortunate love provoke the wrath of the Thracian women. All are reduced to the level of ordinary men. In the course of the poem the hard fate and failure of the artists stands in particular contrast with the better luck of the heroes that begins with Perseus' triumph over the Gorgon and culminates in the apotheosis of Hercules and a string of subsequent deifications. While the heroes grow more and more capable of holding their own against the powers of the gods and of nature, the position of art grows more and more tentative and the artist becomes a helpless figure at odds with nature and the authority of the gods. One wonders at Ovid's purpose in treating his fictional counterparts so harshly when he has made such an effort to draw them closely into the context of his work.

The combination of Ovid's ekphrastic mirroring of the poem with his attention to the personal history of the artist (that is to say his role within the metamorphic world of the poem) gives the reader a particular vantage point from which to observe the artist's struggle to reproduce and interpret his own world in his work. Since Ovid seldom speaks in a personal voice throughout the poem, but only indirectly through his style, tone and perspective,[14] these artistic figures who are themselves the creators of miniature metamorphoses provide his only major opportunities for explicit reflection upon the problems of creative vision that underlie the shaping of the work as a whole. They are sufficient, I think, to challenge the still persistent image of Ovid as a supremely self-confident artist whose words flowed with careless ease,[15] and even the more recent pictures of him as the sympathetic spokesman for the pathos of love or the spinner of psychologically gratifying fantasies of a Utopian world of nature. As they are adumbrated by the Ovidian artists, the problems of the *Metamorphoses* are those of reconciling personal vision with the nature of reality and of preserving integrity of artistic expression within an authoritarian and uncertain world.

II

In the fourth book of the poem, following the tales of conflict between the gods and the House of Cadmus, Ovid introduces the first human artists: the daughters of Minyas. In their refusal to acknowledge the divine lineage of Bacchus, the girls are doomed from the outset. As the episode of Pentheus has just shown, Bacchus has many qualities that are unsettling to those who cherish the civilized life: the dangerously seductive beauty of the *puer aeternus* and a power to draw man into nature against his reason and will. His festival appears as a hiatus in the

order of social activity as his dishevelled, thyrsus-bearing followers run wild with their ecstatic noise (28-30):[16]

> quacumque ingrederis, clamor iuvenalis et una
> femineae voces inpulsaque tympana palmis
> concavaque aera sonant longoque foramine buxus.
>
> (Wherever you approach, the clamor of young men and voices of women unite and the cymbals struck with the palms and the hollow brass resound and the box-wood flute with its long mouthpiece.)

Against this clamorous background, the three young women give their allegiance to the quiet and rational arts of Minerva (32-35):

> solae Minyeides intus
> intempestiva turbantes festa Minerva
> aut ducunt lanas aut stamina pollice versant
> aut haerent telae famulasque laboribus urgent.
>
> (Only the daughters of Minyas remained within disturbing the festival with untimely work of Minerva; either they spin the wool or twist the spindles with their thumbs or stick close to the loom and urge their serving maids to work.)

In Aelian's version of the story the sisters pursue their domestic arts because of their fidelity to their husbands. Nicander seems merely to have suggested that they were somewhat compulsively dedicated to industry for its own sake.[17] Neither account offers any hint of a parallel to Ovid's treatment of the story as a framework for a group of tales. Although they apply themselves to their work like Roman matrons, the sisters decide to shorten the long hours of their isolation from society (37-41):

> "dum cessant aliae commentaque sacra frequentant,
> nos quoque, quas Pallas, melior dea, detinet," inquit,
> "utile opus manuum vario sermone levemus
> perque vices aliquid, quod tempora longa videri
> non sinat, in medium vacuas referamus ad aures!"
>
> ("While others are idle and flock to these fictitious rites, let us also, whom Pallas, a better goddess, holds

> back, lighten the useful work of our hands," she said, "with diverting speech. Let each by turns make some contribution for idle ears that the time should not be allowed to seem long.")

Although the Minyeides regard their fellow women as derelict of duty, the *nos quoque* suggests that they intend to allow themselves a bit of a holiday. Their storytelling thus serves as a legitimized approximation of the escape from everyday life that others find in the rites of Bacchus.[18]

The three sisters are connoisseurs of metamorphic mythology seeking in their choice of stories after the recherché, the *fabula non vulgaris* ("story not commonly known"). The section of the poem containing their narrative is carefully designed as a kind of bravura piece:[19] four tales dealing with the complications and frustrations of secret love and forming among themselves a pattern of contrasts and similarities. Two tragic – or pathetic – stories involving mortals alternate with two comic stories involving gods. The ill-starred Pyramus and Thisbe destroy themselves in their innocence and folly while Leucothoe is buried alive in consequence of her yielding to the sun-god. Mars and Venus are held fast in Vulcan's golden net, but their apprehension provokes no worse consequence than the laughter of the gods. The lustful nymph Salmacis struggles ludicrously to capture Hermaphrodite until the two merge together into one sexually ambiguous form, a permanent image of erotic frustration. As lover and love-object man appears helpless and vulnerable while the powerful gods love guiltily but go unscathed. The emphasis upon divine power and human frailty makes love appear as a forbidden experience for man.

In their attitude towards their subject the storytellers combine a kind of moral primness with a strongly romantic fixation on love. *Tantus dolor urit amantes* (278: "Such sharp indignation singes lovers"), moralizes Alcithoe and her words might be applied to all of the stories told. Passion appears an ambivalent force, both fascinating and fearful, that leads man outside the secure boundaries of civilization into a dangerously uncontrollable world of nature. The naive Pyramus and Thisbe, as Segal has put it, "leave behind the shelteredness of childhood innocence for the dark night of adult life and adult sexuality".[20] The lion that frightens Thisbe and leaves her bloody cloak for Pyramus to discover represents a threatening wildness in this new realm of experience that neither lover is prepared to encounter. Nature in the Salmacis tale takes on strongly sexual overtones when the lustful nymph of the pool turns her beautiful glade into a forest brothel. For her submission to the sun Leucothoe lies buried beneath a mound of earth while her envious sister Clytie becomes a part of the vegetable world always instinctively turning to follow the

course of the sun. Destructive metamorphoses are the consequence of the human lovers' yielding to nature, yet even Mars and Venus are unable to conceal their adultery from the all-seeing eyes of the sun.

The thematic cast of the stories is psychologically appropriate to the circumstances in which they are told. Such reservations about love are precisely what might be expected from devotees of the virgin goddess. At one and the same time the stories provide a vicarious experience of passion and a justification of withdrawal. As artists the Minyeides are observers of love, nature and the power of the gods; both in their weaving and in their narrative they express their resistance to the chaotic force of nature.

Such an escape is not permitted. No sooner are the stories concluded than the influence of the neglected Bacchus falls upon the tellers. As the dissonance of the wild rout draws nearer the Minyeides see their domestic instruments come alive, growing into a tangle of Bacchic vegetation (394-398):

> coepere virescere telae
> inque hederae faciem pendens frondescere vestis;
> pars abit in vites et, quae modo fila fuerent,
> palmite mutantur; de stamine pampinus exit;
> purpura fulgorem pictis adcommodat uvis.
>
> (The looms begin to turn green and the hanging tapestry starts to leaf out with the appearance of ivy. Part meanders off into vine shoots, and the erstwhile threads are changed into leaves and the tendrils spring forth from the loom warp. The purple colors fit their sheen to the painted grapes.)

The late day now poised between light and darkness is suddenly ablaze with torches. The voices of wild animals echo in the darkness, but still the girls resist and flee, hiding themselves in shadow. Bacchus still cannot compel them to participate in the wild enthusiasm of his festival, but instead he punishes them by intensifying their instinct to withdrawal. The Minyeides are changed into bats, natural creatures who shrink from nature's light and cling to the shelter of the civilized world (414-415):

> tectaque, non silvas celebrant, lucemque perosae
> nocte volant seroque tenent a vespere nomen.
>
> (They congregate in houses, not forests, and full of hatred for the light they flit by night, and take their name from the late evening.)

The conclusion that Ovid has given the story is much gentler than that of Nicander and Aelian where the sisters are maddened with Bacchic fury like that of Agave and tear apart Leucippe's own child.[21] Ovid's new ending is precisely suited to his recasting of the tale as a parable of art. Bacchus has paid no attention to the contents of the Minyeides' stories; it is their independence that he cannot tolerate. Yet by allowing them to preserve their instinct for withdrawal as the last vestige of their human identity he implicitly mocks their adherence to a civilized order. Personal autonomy and the freedom to maintain an orderly vision from a position of personal detachment: these prerogatives of art are denied to the artists of the *Metamorphoses* whose very attempts to control their world leave them the more open to the violence of uncontrolled experience. In this respect the story provides a programmatic introduction to the theme of artistic failure. The artist's struggle for autonomy occurs again in the stories of the Pierides and Arachne; his futile quest for order is the chief theme of the tale of Orpheus.

The art of the Minyeides is a personal pastime that offers only a passive resistance to divine power. In the fifth and sixth books where the human artists have emboldened themselves to the point of measuring their skills against those of the gods, Ovid draws a stronger contrast between human limitations and the authority of the gods. By allowing the gods to act as narrators in this section of the poem, he places the human artist in a disadvantaged position that makes his struggle seem the more futile. The stories told by the Muses and Minerva present the human artist as a pretentious rebel pointlessly mocking and vilifying his betters while they boast of themselves as proprietors of a divine art that embodies a truly superior and authoritative vision of the world.

In book five Pegasus creates the fountain on Helicon, an idyllic home for the daughters of memory. As the Muses lead Minerva to their sacred spring she marvels at the charms of the remote *locus amoenus* (263-268):

> ad latices deduxit Pallada sacros.
> quae mirata diu factas pedis ictibus undas
> silvarum lucos circumspicit antiquarum
> antraque et innumeris distinctas floribus herbas
> felicesque vocat pariter studioque locoque
> Mnemonidas.
>
> (She led Pallas to the sacred springs where, marvelling long at the waters made by the blows of a foot, she surveys the groves of ancient trees and the caverns and the grasses brightened by countless flowers and she calls the daughters of Memory equally blessed in their zeal and in their place.)

This fertile grove is easily recognizable as that same arch-symbol of poetic inspiration that poets have long celebrated,[22] yet Ovid's Muses give no indication that human poets are welcome to come drinking and cutting the flowers. The goddesses have withdrawn to their lofty paradise with professions of fear for their safety in the greater world. Their gesture indicates an indifference to human affairs and a refusal of sympathetic commerce with men. Although they are goddesses, they picture themselves as helpless maidens frightened of all things (273-274: *omnia terrent/virgineas mentes;* "everything frightens virgin minds"). Yet the story they tell to Minerva as an explanation of their fears does not show weakness, but the avenging power typical of gods. They speak of King Pyreneus whom they scornfully term *durus* and *ferox,* a conqueror and an unjust tyrant who deceived them with a promise of shelter from the rain. His invitation was gracious enough (282-283: *subiere minores/saepe casas superi;* "Superior beings have often entered humble houses"), yet the Muses see nothing in it but base flattery to which they yielded primarily because it was raining. A gracious return for the king's hospitality does not seem to enter their minds. When the rain stops they are eager to get on their way (285-288):

> desierant imbres, victoque aquilonibus Austro
> fusca repurgato fugiebant nubila caelo;
> impetus ire fuit: claudit sua tecta Pyreneus
> vimque parat.
>
> (The rains had departed, and with the south winds driven off by the west wind the dark clouds fled from the purified sky. There was a move to go; Pyreneus closed up his house and got ready to use force.)

Certain that they are on the verge of rape, the Muses all the same escape easily and take flight from the rooftop with Pyreneus in pursuit (289-293):

> ipse secuturo similis stetit arduus arce
> "qua" que "via est vobis, erit et mihi," dixit, "eadem,"
> seque iacit vecors e summae culmine turris
> et cadit in vultus discussisque ossibus oris
> tundit humum moriens scelerato sanguine tinctam.
>
> (He, like one about to follow, stood high on the rooftop. "Whatever path you take," he said, "mine will be the same," and he cast himself, that madman, from the topmost peak of the tower and fell onto his face and, his bones all shaken apart, dying, he beat the ground tinged with his scoundrel's blood.)

The swift and facile escape indicates that the Muses had no real cause for fear. They knew their powers and could afford to mock their enemy's folly. But the king's final words: *qua via est vobis erit et mihi eadem* ("Whatever path you take, mine will be the same"), in which the Muses find an insinuating leer, actually point to a meaning in the story that they refuse to acknowledge.[23] From their point of view, Pyreneus is *vecors* ("out of his mind"); he has tried to imitate their divine flight. Indignation and scorn cloud the picture of a mortal man seeking poetic inspiration. Rough and uncultivated as he may be (we have only the Muses' word for his character), Pyreneus longs for the society of the Muses. Even his attempt to shut them up in his house suggests his eagerness to capture the grace of art. Such a man must fall on his face. The Muses snatch their delicate persons away and rejoice most indelicately in the bloody details of their enemy's death. For them Pyreneus exemplifies all the crude insensitivity that makes man undeserving of art and thus they justify their retreat from the world.

This story, so heavily colored by the divine point of view that we cannot see the human side of it, clearly forms a prelude to two tales of human artists who challenge the gods. The nine daughters of Pieros whom the goddesses have transformed into magpies will not remain silent in their punishment and invade the very sanctuary of Helicon complaining of their fate. As the Muses explain this intrusion to Minerva with an account of their recent victory over these women, they once more show their scorn of human pretension. The Pierides were *stolidae sorores* who accused the Muses of deceiving the unlearned masses *vana dulcedine* ("with empty sweetness"). In the eyes of the Muses the contest was no real challenge but a mere formality recollected with scorn (315-316):

> turpe quidem contendere erat, sed cedere visum
> turpius.
>
> (Shameful indeed it was to compete, but to yield seemed more shameful.)

The origins of the Pierian story are obscure, but Ovid would once again seem to have his most immediate model in Nicander. If Antonius' sketch is reliable, Nicander's account was factual and unambiguous.[24] The song of the false Muses clouded the world with darkness and left nature inattentive, but the true Muses held nature spellbound and made the

summit of Helicon rise up almost as high as the sky. Whatever songs the contestants may have sung, the Pierides were inferior artists and Nicander was on the side of divine skill. But in place of any such abstract judgment upon the talents of the competitors, Ovid lets the songs form their own contrast. The songs should be regarded as a pair of short epic compositions: a gigantomachy and a tale of the rape of Persephone. Since the Muses are giving the account, they compress the song of the Pierides into a hasty, distasteful summary while their own lengthy contribution is unfolded in all its detail.

The gigantomachy is overtly insulting to the dignity of the gods. According to the Muses, the sisters placed the giants in a false position of honor while extenuating the deeds of the greater gods. Fleeing from the earthborn monster Typhoeus, the terrified Olympians take refuge in Egypt concealing their persons in animal form (325-331). Jupiter turns himself into a goat; Apollo a ram; Semele a kid; Juno a cow; Diana a cat; Venus a fish and Cyllene an ibis. Since there is no other extensive treatment of this same subject in the *Metamorphoses*, the truth of this picture of cowardice and debasement cannot be assessed in terms of Ovid's own mythology.[25] Even the comments of the Muses give no real evidence as to whether this portion of the story should be taken as fabrication or fact. All the same, its contents are very much in keeping with the Pierides' contention that the Muses have deceived man by their *vana dulcedo* ("empty sweetness"), and the song should probably be thought of as a satirical mock-epic intended to expose the hollow nature of divine authority. Its vision of the mutability of the gods is one that the reader of the *Metamorphoses* cannot find wholly surprising or unfamiliar.

To this image of instability among the powers that govern the universe, the song of the Muses provides an assertive answer, a justification of the ways of the gods.[26] It begins where the other concluded, defending divine power by a celebration of the Olympians' final crushing defeat of the giants. Where the gigantomachy showed the world turned to chaos, this tale shows its return to order. Order comes in strongly in the conclusion where all the threads are tied up in a series of metamorphoses.

The Muses explain the affairs of the gods with an understanding available only to divine minds. Under the influence of a goddess, Pluto falls in love with a goddess and provokes a goddess's anger and grief. The emotions and motives of the divine figures in the tale are never communicated to men. Nymphs and mortals appear only as the faithful, unquestioning helpers of the gods. Those who do not know their place are duly punished: the rude boy who laughs at Ceres' hunger and Ascalaphus who betrays Persephone's eating of the pomegranate in the underworld. Justice comes about through Jupiter's arbitration. The tale begins with an invocation to Ceres the bestower of *fruges* and *leges* and

closes on the same note with Ceres' rewarding of the pious and her gift of the agricultural arts to man. Its obvious moral is that the private affairs of the gods have no lasting detrimental effect upon their provisions for human welfare. In this respect it is a perfect piece of authoritarian art, and quite obviously an example of that *dulcedo* which, in the Muses' eyes, is not *vana*. In its separation of divine and human affairs, it is no more accurate a reflection of the mythological ethos of the *Metamorphoses* than the debased gigantomachy, yet, like the earlier poem, it does not ring wholly false. The nymphs, as might be expected from the honorific treatment given to their kind in the tale, vote in favor of the Muses, but the Pierides clamor for the victory. Perhaps the reader might second them had he been allowed to hear their song in its entirety. Ovid leaves the situation ambiguous. The Muses claim to have punished their rivals less for the impiety of their work than for refusing to accept their inevitable inferiority as human artists.

The ensuing contest of Minerva and Arachne in Book Six makes the discrepancy between human and divine viewpoints clearer by the very fact that its art works present a more recognizable reflection of the nature of metamorphosis within the poem, and, at the same time, a clearer expression of the thoughts and intentions of their creators.

From Minerva's point of view, Arachne is the very epitome of the rebellious upstart, a woman with neither position nor background to recommend her, but only her skill (7-8: *non illa loco nec origine gentis/ clara, sed arte fuit*). As the child of a humble wool-dyer, reared in a small cottage, she comes to cherish ambitions of making her name famous throughout all Lydia (8-12). Her hopes were not ill-founded, for her work compels universal admiration and, like the legendary bards whose songs dazzle nature, she draws the nymphs from grove and stream to marvel at her grace in weaving and the beautiful painting of her needle (15-20). It is in keeping with her pride in her self-made success, that the girl denies any obligation to Minerva's teaching and is ready to prove her autonomy by participating in a contest with the goddess (25). Minerva tricks her in the most appropriate way by disguising herself as a very old woman to speak for the authoritarian point of view. Arachne must confess her dependence upon Minerva and rest content with mortal fame. Such admonitions are precisely calculated to make the ambitious young woman go further in staking her modernity and independence against tradition (37-41).

As the narrator prepares to describe the pictures – for Ovid's voice now supersedes that of Minerva – he pauses for a moment to abstract an overview of the scene. The rival artists and their tapestries blend harmoniously into one continuous panorama of beauty and color. The colors shimmer on the surface of the webs like the hues of the rainbow

qualis ab imbre solet percussis solibus arcus
inficere ingenti longum curvamine caelum,
in quo diversi niteant cum mille colores,
transitus ipse tamen spectantia lumina fallit:
usque adeo, quod tangit, idem est; tamen ultima distant.

(Just as the bow, when the sun's rays have been struck by the rain, is accustomed to paint the long expanse of the sky with its monumental arch in which, since a thousand diverse colors sparkle, the point where the hues overlap deceives onlooking eyes so completely that each is the same as what it touches and yet the far edges are wholly different.)

In the classical tradition, the rainbow is an ominous sign, and the image of transitory beauty in the simile seems to foreshadow the short life of Arachne's tapestry. Yet Ovid's emphasis upon the intermingled shades of the spectrum gives a hint of the thematic contingency of the tapestries. His description of the subtly overlapping colors whose differences are apparent only at the outside extremes of the arch *(quod tangit, idem est; tamen ultima distant)* could easily refer to the artists' two versions of metamorphosis.[27] Only after this point has been made do the pictures spring into separate focus (69): *vetus in tela deducitur argumentum* ("an ancient scenario is drawn forth from the loom"). *Argumentum* has a double meaning, suggesting both the plots of the stories and their function as expressions of opposing points of view. Each weaver has her own ideas to demonstrate.

The contradictory visions of the tapestries as *argumenta* is sharpened by the recurrence of the same gods in each. Minerva lays claim to her inevitable victory by depicting herself as victor in another contest and she portrays her fellow divinities as they wish to appear in the eyes of man. They are arranged in formal postures, impressive in their dignity (72-73): *sedibus altis/augusta gravitate sedent;* "they sit on their lofty thrones with august gravity"). The image of Jove is regal and even the defeated Neptune appears in a gesture of majestic power striking the rock with his trident. With their gifts of sacred spring and olive, he and Minerva are benefactors of man. The subject, as Anderson has pointed out, is that of the Parthenon frieze.[28] In his outline of the composition, Ovid has captured the cold aloofness of that same monumental pediment that places the gods so far above the reach of man. But the moral, for Arachne's benefit, has to do with divine order and justice. Only the arguments of gods, Minerva seems to say, can be settled by peaceable contention. Thus the four corner panels of the tapestry present a facet

of divine justice, showing metamorphosis as the god's punishment of those mortals who challenge their superiority.

But Arachne presents metamorphosis as it serves the erotic whims of the gods. In place of the stationary, regal Jove is the bull who abducts Europa. The lifelike quality of the tapestry suggests truth in the art. Arachne sees through human eyes the shapes in which the gods have been seen by those whom they wished to deceive. The verbs: *elatus; luserit; visus; fallis; luserit; deceperit* underscore the insistent theme. The illusion Arachne creates is that which the gods themselves have perpetrated. One recalls that, only a moment before, she herself has been tricked by a goddess in an impenetrable disguise.

It is hard to imagine the composition of this tapestry. Ovid has deliberately blurred the boundaries of its scenes to give the impression of a cosmic panorama of shifting forms, natural objects set in natural backgrounds (121-122: *omnibus his faciemque suam faciemque locorum/ reddidit*;[29] "she rendered for each thing its proper appearance and the appearance of the places"). Such a spectacle of motion and energy evokes a spirit of artistic play. The fact is that Arachne does not, by her representation, make a moral judgment upon the loves of the gods.[30] It is Minerva's interpretation that makes the subject immoral and trivializes this vast panorama of desire and generation as *caelestia crimina.* By her violent reaction to the success of her rival the goddess betrays the very principle of just and rational triumph that she has illuminated in the center of her own tapestry. Her divine dignity is diminished by her own crime against art.

In its awareness of supernatural power concentrated towards the furthering of the most natural instincts, Arachne's tapestry captures the spirit of the "divine comedy" that forms so large a part of the early books of the *Metamorphoses.*[31] The destruction of the piece invites the reader to look questioningly backwards upon the poem. Should it now be seen through Minerva's eyes as an impious spectacle of *caelestia crimina?* Has Ovid deliberately spun an image that implies the vulnerability of his own work? One can easily be tempted to carry the moral of the story beyond the immediate confines of the situation and to read into this incident a reflection of the rebelliousness and concomitant apprehensiveness of the poet whose own forthright portrayal of human nature constantly pushed at the boundaries of social propriety and dared the tolerance of official moral sanction. Seen in this manner, the incident serves as an example of Ovid's anti-Augustanism. But these external resonances of the tapestries are nowhere near so important as their embodiment of conflicts within the poem itself. As I earlier remarked, it is not Arachne's tapestry alone, but the two scenes in combination that form a mirror of the *Metamorphoses.* Ovid's linking of the two in the

rainbow simile suggests their intrinsic interassociation. That is to say, the poem itself contains principles and perspectives that simultaneously complement and contradict one another, divine vengeance and divine comedy, visions of order and chaos interminglied. Only in the tapestries are these perspectives drawn apart as if for momentary clarification. The very act of separation divides the poem against itself and shows, in consequence, how easily the authoritarian point of view with its demands for reason and order can overwhelm the human perspective. The tapestry of Minerva shows what the poem would be like if the human perspective were excluded: a strangely stiff tale of the god's control of the universe. The limited and fragile human vision is what gives the poem its vitality and its fidelity to the actual life of the world. Arachne's vision is bound to an uncertain and unpredictable world of appearances and her limitation is at once the source of her artistic strength and her fatal weakness. Yet only such an artist as she, doggedly asserting her autonomy and the truth of her vision, can reveal the ironic injustice of divine order. Having been deceived by a goddess in disguise, she has undergone the same experience as the figures in her tapestry and her subsequent death identifies her even more closely with the fate of her work. Her desperate suicide reveals her dedication to her art, and Minerva, professing a questionable pity, transforms her into a spider, a compulsive weaver whose work is always liable to sudden destruction.

In the central portion of Book 6, the brief tale of the flaying of Marsyas provides a grisly reprise of the stories of Arachne and the Pierides with the cruelty of the gods' suppression of the lesser artist carried to a new extreme. In Book 8, Daedalus helps Minos to conceal the shame of his house by constructing a labryinth so complex that he can scarcely find his own way back to the door (167-168: *vixque ipse reverti/ ad limen potuit*),[32] and then, in his longing for freedom, creates the wings that cause the death of his son. Both stories suggest the artist's inability to predict or control the consequences of his own art. But in this central portion of the narrative (Books 7-9) these artists are overshadowed by the more prominent figures of the heroes whose successes are gained through divine favor. The series of their adventures reaches its culmination when Hercules is admitted to the heavens after his fiery death. Preceded as it is by a short divine council that harks back to the scene on Minerva's tapestry, the apotheosis of Hercules is linked with the themes of divine justice and order insofar as it shows that the gods can be as capricious in their benevolence as in their vengeance.[33]

The long section dealing with Hercules is followed by an equally lengthy study of Orpheus, the chief of legendary artist heroes. The lives and accomplishments of the two have certain points of similarity. Each has achieved a measure of control over nature, the one by deeds of

strength, the other by his gentler appeal to nature's instinct for harmony. In spite of their achievements, each is undone by human passions and meets a violent death at the hands of women. The background created by the apotheosis of Hercules would seem to create an appropriate context for an artist's similar triumph over the vagaries of his fate. Yet the ultimate achievement of the artist hero, here portrayed with rueful irony, is far less than that of the hero of force. Where the former is allowed to escape the consequences of his personality, the latter is submerged by his.

The story of Orpheus' failure differs greatly from those of the artists who have preceded him. There is no contest of human and divine skills and no question of defamation of the gods. Rather, Ovid focusses upon the artist's search for order and the relationship between his articulation of emotion and fantasy and the internal order of his experience. It is not, of course, the mere fact of Orpheus' death that constitutes his failure, but rather the manner in which Ovid portrays it. If he had kept to the model set by Vergil in the *Georgics*, the musical glory of the singer would have transcended the vicissitudes of his emotional life. Instead he uses the pattern of Vergil's story humorously – at times in a spirit of parody – to demythologize the magic of Orphic song and illuminate the human personality and limitations of the artist.[34] The songs that Orpheus sings reflect the cast of his mind, an area that Vergil leaves unexplored, and the story moves towards a fatal confusion of art and life. The ancient synthesis of artistic order and natural harmony loses its meaning and the content of Orpheus' poetry becomes the immediate cause of his destruction.

At the outset Ovid makes it clear that the musical genius of Orpheus cannot secure the happiness of his private life. Although he summons Hymen to his wedding, the invocation is futile (10.3: *Orphea nequiquam voce vocatur;* "he is called all in vain by the Orphic voice"). The god comes with bad omens; the smoke of the marriage torch elicits foreboding tears. Upon losing Eurydice, Orpheus weeps as an ordinary mortal; the phrase *vates deflevit* ("the bard wept") suggests the dissolution of musical power in emotion. One recalls that the Vergilian Orpheus mourned his loss in elegiac song. Likewise Orpheus' descent into the underworld is an act of human bravery, yet devoid of the magic that characterizes Vergil's account of the journey. There is none of the continual plaintive music that renders hostile demons motionless and captivates the unfeeling shades. Only when Orpheus has reached the throne of Persephone does he touch the chords of his lyre and begin to sing. Even then Ovid uses the prosaic *ait* ("he said") to introduce his utterance and appropriately enough. Where Vergil has clouded this scene in elliptical mystery, not venturing to find words for the supreme moment

of Orphic inspiration, Ovid spells out the lover's plea. The song, which begins with the famous declaration that the singer has not come to visit the realms of the dead as a curious tourist, is prosy and argumentative (32-39):

> omnia debemur vobis, paulumque morati
> serius aut citius sedem properamus ad unam.
> tendimus huc omnes, haec est domus ultima, vosque
> humani generis longissima regna tenetis.
> haec quoque, cum iustos matura peregerit annos,
> iuris erit vestri: pro munere poscimus usum;
> quodsi fata negant veniam pro coniuge, certum est
> nolle redire mihi: leto gaudete duorum.
>
> (We are in all things owed to you, and, though we tarry a little while, sooner or later we hasten to a single abode. Hither we all make our way; this is our final home and you rule the longest enduring kingdom of the human race. She also when, in old age, she will have lived through her fair span of years will be under your law. I ask the use of her as a kind of gift. But if the fates deny grace for my wife, it is certain that I have no wish to return. Rejoice in the death of two.)

At the conclusion of this most effective argument, it is strange to hear that the bloodless shades wept and Ixion stayed his wheel. While Vergil posits that the rulers of the dead have no human emotions, Ovid contrives the kind of arguments that might appeal to the emotionless. It would be impossible, he seems to imply, for the pure harmony of music to achieve any victory without persuasive content in the song. The singer's art becomes a mere vehicle for his discourse on love. By this emphasis, Ovid has already suggested the fatal power by which the here and now of human desire for affection can overwhelm the potential glory of art for its own sake.

In the *Georgics* it is difficult to separate the human identity of Eurydice from her involvement in Orpheus' music. She is a function of his mythical power, at once the ideal towards which art aspires and the muse that draws it forth. The loss of Eurydice upon the very threshold of the upper world suggests the imperfection that haunts all labors of the human spirit when they are called from realms of imagination into a harsh real world. When *dementia* turns the singer's head backwards to confront the real shade of Eurydice, we see the fallible human nature of the poet overmastering the abstract ideals of his art. But since Ovid's Orpheus is a lover who is also a musician, his Eurydice is a wife as well

as a muse. She is not a projection of his artistic spirit, but a separate human creature whose actions remain unpredictable and uncertain. Ovid rationalizes the fatal backward glance. Orpheus was *avidus videndi* ("greedy for a look"), yet also apprehensive that Eurydice might fail him or fall behind (56: *hic, ne deficiat metuens*). Where Vergil makes the lover's passion betray the artist, Ovid presents the more common human situation in which the successful lover betrays himself by lingering doubts and fears.

After his second loss of Eurydice, Orpheus remains silent on the banks of the underground river feeding his mind on despondent emotion (75) for seven days, while Vergil's Orpheus sings like a sad nightingale robbed of her young. Turning his back on other women, the Vergilian Orpheus sings of his grief for Eurydice, his dedication to love and to art remaining inseparable until his death. Ovid observes that the cause of Orpheus' rejection of *femineam Venerem* ("female love") is uncertain (80-81): *seu quod male cesserat illi,/ sive fidem dederat* ("either because he had had a bad experience or because he had given his faith"). With the argumentative energy that by now has come to appear typical of his personality, he undertakes a campaign against women (83-85):

> ille etiam Thracum populis fuit auctor amorem
> in teneros transferre mares citraque iuventam
> aetatis breve ver et primos carpere flores.
>
> (Indeed he was among the people of Thrace the exponent of transferring love to immature boys and of snatching the brief spring of their youth and its first flowers.)

In this context Orpheus remembers his art and uses it as a kind of argument to justify his rejection of unsettling feminine love. Retiring to a mountain top, he makes himself quite comfortable by calling up a little grove of trees with his song. He informs his mute audience of a deliberate change in his artistic identity (149-154):[35]

> Iovis est mihi saepe potestas
> dicta prius: cecini plectro graviore Gigantas
> sparsaque Phlegraeis victricia fulmina campis.
> nunc opus est leviore lyra, puerosque canamus
> dilectos superis inconcessisque puellas
> ignibus attonitas meruisse libidine poenam.
>
> (Often before I have sung the power of Jove. With

stronger chord I have sung the giants and the conquering thunderbolts scattered over the Phlegraean fields. Now I have need of a lesser lyre and would sing of the boys cherished by the gods and girls overcome by forbidden flames who merited the penalty of their lust.)

As Anderson has pointed out, the actual songs do not precisely conform to the outline, for the only tales of homosexual love are those of Hyacinthus and Ganymede while Myrrha is the chief example of forbidden love.[36] This puzzling discrepancy suggests that Orpheus' thoughts and purpose wander as he sings. The relationship of the tales to the mind of the singer becomes much closer and more intricate than the simple outline suggests.

Like the tales of the Minyeides those of Orpheus form symbolic and thematic parallels within a pattern of off-set symmetry.[37] Three short tales at the beginning lead up to the story of Pygmalion which is followed by the interwoven stories of Myrrha and Adonis, the latter interrupted by Venus' tale of Atalanta. The tragic conclusion of the Adonis story ends the recital. In all of the tales save that of Pygmalion, love is presented as a fatal impulse verging on death. The Pygmalion story stands out by contrast for it is the least closely related to Orpheus' two categories, but rather, as a tale of love and an artist, comes closest to the experiences of the teller himself.

The tales of Hyacinthus and Adonis that open and close the sequence are similar vegetation myths in which the human figures who are objects of the gods' passions are too frail to survive their experience of divine power. Their ultimate transformation into delicate flowers is a final token of their frailty. Apollo mourns guiltily over the dead Hyacinthus whom his healing arts cannot revive. His supernatural energy has been too strong (199-201):

ego sum tibi funeris auctor.
quae mea culpa tamen, nisi si lusisse vocari
culpa potest, nisi culpa potest et amasse vocari?

(I am the author of your death, but what, all the same, is my fault? Unless it can be called a fault to have played, unless it can be called a fault to have loved.)

Adonis, whose boyish beauty resembles Cupid's, is urged to effeminacy by the maternal Venus. He must, she warns him, seek only *tutae praedae* ("safe quarry"); he must be neither brave nor bold. Such repressive solicitude goes contrary to the young man's nature (709: *sed stat monitis contraria virtus;* "but his heroism stood opposed to her warnings") and seems only to stir up the adventurous instinct that sends him in pursuit of the boar. In both of these stories the sorrow of the divine lover who ruefully ponders his own guilt is a vicarious expression of Orpheus' own self-recrimination. Unrestrained passion destroys its own object and robs the beloved of his identity.

In the story of Atalanta and Hippomenes, which Venus tells to Adonis to describe her power, love is also a destroyer of individuality. When Atalanta attempts to preserve her identity as an independent virgin, Venus opposes her and gives Hippomenes the golden apples, an erotic token, to break down her resistance. Yet in the end, Venus' anger destroys the identity of both lovers, for she causes them to mate as wild animals with no resistance to passion. In contrast to Atalanta's self-determination is the weakness of Myrrha, the daughter who loves her father and thus never gains an identity separate from that of her creator. The fact that Cinyras and Myrrha are descendants of Pygmalion and his self-created bride is one indication of dark overtones in this seemingly optimistic central tale. The incestuous love of child for father is only a reversal of Pygmalion's passion for the woman he has created by his art.[38]

The story of Pygmalion is directly preceded by a short account of the impious Propoetides who are punished by unchastity and finally turned to stone. With these women Pygmalion's ideally chaste woman brought forth out of ivory is contrasted. Although the snowy whiteness of the material may rouse all manner of ideal associations, one may recall that gleaming white ivory *(candens elephantum)* in the *Aeneid* is the substance of the gate of false dreams.[39] With the aid of Venus, Pygmalion further transforms his beloved from a lifeless statue into a living woman. The parallel with Orpheus' leading of Eurydice from the underworld is clear. Both in his piety and in his art Pygmalion is similar to Orpheus, and the story appears to serve as Orpheus' own wish-projection as the one love story that he finds ideal in its embodiment of the final lover's triumph that he himself failed to sustain. His apparent identification with his own protagonist shows how his inclinations are tending from a dissatisfying dedication to art towards a gratifying love.

Taking the stony Propoetides as his exemplar of feminine conduct, Pygmalion believes that women are naturally tainted with intellectual vice. Art gives him a refuge from reality and the ivory woman he creates is such a one as nature could never produce (248-249: *qua femina nasci/nulla potest*). Even as he creates her, he begins to love his work (249: *operisque sui concepit amorem;* "he conceived a love for his own work"). The love, at this point, however, is not clearly to be distinguished from any artist's dedication to his skills and to the artifacts he produces.

Pygmalion is an idealist who believes in the superiority of art over nature; yet at the same time the kind of skilled craftsman whose work has a deceptive appearance of actual life (250-252):

> virginis est verae facies, quam vivere credas
> et, si non obstet reverentia, velle moveri:
> ars adeo latet arte sua.
>
> (The face is that of a real maiden whom you would think to be living, and, if delicacy did not interpose some scruple, wanting to move: so skilfully does art conceal itself by its own art.)

So skilfully has Pygmalion's art concealed itself that the art itself soon begins to disappear. The simple *amor operis* ("love of his work") changes to fervent passion (252-253: *miratur et haurit/ pectore Pygmalion simulati corporis ignes;* "Pygmalion marvelled and breathed into his breast passionate flames for the pretended body"). Soon he is thoroughly confused by the nature of his own work (254-255):

> saepe manus operi temptantes admovet, an sit
> corpus an illud ebur, nec adhuc ebur esse fatetur.
>
> (Often he moved his hands towards the work, testing whether it might be a body or whether it was ivory, nor yet would he say that it was ivory.)

At this point ivory has indeed become the stuff of false dreams. As he touches and pokes at his statue, Pygmalion feels guilty for his boldness, and in his confusion woos his lady with presents like a pastoral swain: simple shells and stones at first, then rings, clothes, necklace and earrings. The very gesture, which indeed makes a *meretrix* of the ivory lady, indicates that Pygmalion has lost all sense of the self-sufficiency of his art. Unable at last to find any solution to the stasis created by the conflict between his art and his personal emotions, he places himself in the hands of Venus.

More than one critic has spoken of the transformation of the ivory statue into a living woman as a sanctification of the powers of art.[40] Anderson, in his edition, observes that Pygmalion reaches the point where he cannot remain content with lifeless loveliness, while Segal speaks of Pygmalion's miracle as a perfect fusion of love and art. But the fact is that when Pygmalion becomes a lover he sacrifices his identity as an artist. The most, I think, that can be said for the story is that Orpheus considers it ideal. To the detached reader the courtship scene with its echoes of bucolic and elegiac passion, its extravagant rituals played out before an unyielding, inanimate object can hardly be other than bur-

lesque. Although Ovid's story is certainly more delicate than that older version in which the Pygmalion figure makes love to the statue of Venus, still the erotic overtones are so strong as to suggest that Pygmalion is very close to this pass.[41] The portrayal of his humorless obsession with Ovid's typical comic perspective reveals the limitations of his love.

Pygmalion's passion is only such a version of love as might appeal to the despondent mind of a lover who has failed and in consequence envisions an ideal love as one that is completely secure. Unlike the real Eurydice whom Orpheus has twice lost, the ivory woman has no identity separate from that of her creator. When Pygmalion prays to Venus for a *coniunx . . . similis mea eburnae* (275-276: "a wife resembling my ivory image"), he secretly hopes that the two might be the same. *Similis* suggests not merely the likeness of a woman, but her likeness to Pygmalion himself. The love for a self-reflecting image recalls the passion of Narcissus and it is clear that Pygmalion would fare no better if Venus did not grant his wish. The element of magic that makes the story a perfect fantasy of gratification also makes it irrelevant to the complexities of love in the real world. When the ivory woman awakens, her lover may be satisfied that he is the center of her new universe, the sun, as it were, in her vision of the sky (292-294):

> dataque oscula virgo
> sensit et erubuit timidumque ad lumina lumen
> attollens pariter cum caelo vidit amantem.
>
> (The maiden felt the kisses given, and she blushed and raising her timid eyes to the light saw her lover equally with the sky.)

The story has no setting, no images of the natural or the civilized world to fill out its background. Pygmalion has created a private love object and realized a private love within a world wholly isolated from reality. Although he seems to succeed where Orpheus failed, his singular, escapist love is analogous to Orpheus' own withdrawal from the world of experience into an imaginary world of art where love is treated vicariously.

The last scenes of Orpheus' life call attention to the frailty of the artist's imaginary world. In his withdrawal he still cannot shield himself from the sexual aggression of the Maenads and ironically falls victim to the violent side of that very passion whose violence he had sought to escape. For a moment Ovid shows him again in his traditional role (11. 1-2):

Carmine dum tali silvas animosque ferarum
Threicius vates et saxa sequentia ducit . . .

(With such song the Thracian artist drew the forests and the spirits of the wild beasts and the rocks that followed him.)

In this ideal picture the singer's power is abstracted from the specific content of his songs, yet, ironically, it is only irrational beings who are capable of a pure appreciation of art for its own sake. Even during the violent scene of his death, the music of Orpheus retains vestiges of its influential magic. The first weapons hurled by the Maenads are enchanted by the singer's art and fall harmlessly, like suppliants, before his feet (11. 10-13). Only when their discordant voices have drowned out his music, can the Bacchae make the stones obey their hostile purpose. Then, the spell of his art becomes fatal to the charmed circle he has created (20-22):

ac primum attonitas etiamnum voce canentis
innumeras volucres anguesque agmenque ferarum
maenades Orphei titulum rapuere theatri.

(But first of all the Maenads tore to pieces the glory of Orpheus' theatre, the countless birds and snakes and the line of wild beasts even now held spellbound by his singing.)

The artist is isolated amidst nature. The order he has created is ultimately powerless to defend him. Nature in its fullest sense includes not only the enchanted circle of beasts and trees, but also the Maenads and the violent passions Orpheus has attempted to deny by his art. In the hands of the raging women, nature becomes a means of destruction, for their weapons are their leafy *thyrsii* (28: *non hāec in munera factos;* "not created for such duties"), clods of earth, branches ripped from the trees, and finally the tools abandoned by frightened farmers in a nearby field. This last, wholly Ovidian detail is of course an ironic recollection of Vergil's persistent analogy of farmer and singer as the makers of order in nature. For the first time Orpheus speaks in vain (40: *nec quicquam voce moventem;* "not influencing anything by his voice"). As his lyre floats down the river its song has faded to an indeterminate murmur (*flebile nescio quid:* 52) and no vestige of his enchanting power remains when a wild serpent rises to strike at the severed head cast upon the Lesbian shore.

Thus at last united with Eurydice in the underworld, Orpheus becomes nothing more than an ordinary human lover. Ovid's comic, demythologizing tone returns (61-66):

Umbra subit terras et, quae loca viderat ante,
cuncta recognoscit quaerensque per arva piorum
invenit Eurydicen cupidisque amplectitur ulnis;
hic modo coniunctis spatiantur passibus ambo,
nunc praecedentem sequitur, nunc praevius anteit
Eurydicenque suam iam tutus respicit Orpheus.

(His shade passes into the underworld and recognizes all the places he had seen before, and seeking through the fields of the pious discovers Eurydice and grasps her with desirous arms. Here now they stroll together with their steps conjoined; now he follows her lead, now as leader he goes before her and Orpheus looks back in all security upon his Eurydice.)

The fateful journey that once seemed so full of symbolic implications for the power of the artist has now turned into a lover's game and the fateful backward glance becomes a simple domestic sport. The picture is charming, but hardly representative of a successful union of love and art.[42] Ovid says nothing more of Orpheus' music; he has not, it would seem, brought his lyre on this second journey. Personal satisfaction for the artist seems only to be obtained in a withdrawal from art into love.

III

The picture of artistic failure that emerges from these major ekphrastic episodes[43] is echoed in other minor incidents throughout the poem. In the brutal tale of the flaying of Marsyas, Ovid increases the sense of divine cruelty by omitting the details of the satyr's actual contest with Apollo.[44] All that he shows is the helpless victim crying out in agony that no music was worth such great pain (6.386: *"a! piget, a! non est," clamabat, "tibia tanti"*). With more than his usual grotesque horror, Ovid pictures the trembling veins, the ribs and sinews laid raw. It is all, one senses, a graphic metaphor for stripping the artist of his pretensions and baring the sensitive inner man. Thus Marsyas' desperate protest (385): *Quid me mihi detrahis?* ("Why do you tear me away from myself?").

Throughout the poem love is invariably fatal to the power of the artist. Canens, the wife of Picus, is an Orphic musician said to move rocks and

forests and hold the rivers and swift birds spellbound by her voice (14.337-340). Yet her gentle power is useless when her faithful husband falls victim to the passion of Circe, the sophisticated creator of magical *carmina*. Although Circe cannot prevail over Picus' mind, she can destroy his person. Singing one last grieving song, Canens melts away into nature, knowing nothing in her innocence of the powerful counterforce that has overwhelmed her own magic and broken the order of her world.

Yet if some artists are destroyed for the sake of reciprocal love, others cannot gain love. Even Apollo, the most sympathetic, perhaps, of all the gods in the poem, cannot make his divine art serve his love for Daphne. Under the influence of Cupid's arrows, the god is reduced to utter bafflement, unable to control either himself or the object of his passion. His very confidence in his oracular powers deceives him, for he cannot imagine his own failure (1.491). Although he proclaims himself the fount of poetic inspiration (1.518: *per me concordant carmina nervis;* "by my power songs make harmony with the strings"), his lyric performance here is an impromptu plea panted out as he speeds along in pursuit (503-524) and left unfinished for lack of breath (525-526). Daphne belongs wholly to herself and to nature. She will never appear as the god's artful eye imagines her, with her scattered locks neatly combed (497-498), but can only be glimpsed at a distance, beautiful in motion, her natural grace augmented by the swirl of drapery that flutters behind her in her flight. In her elusive independence Daphne embodies many of the intractable qualities that place real nature beyond the artist's power of control.

When art cannot win love, the artist's creative power is sometimes perverted by jealousy into destructive violence. Such is always the case with Circe, whose *carmina* work her will over nature but never bring her the lovers she desires.[45] But the artist-lover whose failure most strongly exemplifies the futility of art as a civilizing influence is Polyphemus, whose disastrous courtship of Galatea is related by the nymph herself in Book 13. In part the episode is a rather broad parody of its source in Theocritus *Idyll* 11. Ovid makes humorous capital out of a scale enlargement of details to bring out the awkwardness of the Cyclops' gigantic size. Not only does he comb his hair with a rake and play on a pipe of a hundred reeds in place of the usual seven, but also the sound of his singing is so forceful that its physical impact is felt by the mountains and waves. Accordingly, Ovid has also increased Polyphemus' verbosity. At the point where the Theocritean singer has four complimentary similes ("softer than the lamb," etc.) the Ovidian Polyphemus has twenty-three. In this manner all the details of the episode go to create the image of a massive and forceful creature restrained by his dedication to love and a temporary faith in music, and here is where Ovid's Theocritean burlesque begins to serve his portrayal of the personality of the artist.

The Theocritean Polyphemus poem exemplifies the way in which song can temper the emotional torment of love. The solitary Cyclops sings wistfully; yet his song is its own satisfaction. His vision of Galatea is perhaps no more than a fantasy, a woman who appears to him in his dreams; yet even if she can never be won by singing, the lover can keep his fantasy alive by his song. ἐποίμαινεν τὸν ἔρωτα / μουσίσδων (80-81: "by singing he shepherded his love") says Theocritus in conclusion; that is to say he nourished and tended it as one of the facts of his daily life.[46]

But Ovid's Galatea is no fantasy, but a real woman with a real lover, Acis, whom she greatly prefers to the ridiculous Cyclops. The violence that figures in this new version of the story is not merely that of emotion, but rather stems from the savagery of the Cyclops.[47] At first love appears to have reformed his wild nature and prompted an awkward effort to acquire the grace of a civilized man (764-769):

> iamque tibi formae, iamque est tibi cura placendi,
> iam rigidos pectis rastris, Polypheme, capillos,
> iam libet hirsutam tibi falce recidere barbam
> et spectare feros in aqua et conponere vultus;
> caedis amor feritasque sitisque inmensa cruoris
> cessant, et tutae veniunt abeuntque carinae.
>
> (Now you have a care for looks and now a care for pleasing and now, Polyphemus, you comb your stiff locks with a rake and now you are pleased to cut back your shaggy beard with a pruning hook, and look into a pool and compose your wild countenance. Your love of slaughter, your savagery and your immense thirst for blood disappear and ships come and depart in safety.)

In the opening portions of the song, the parody strikes a note of pathos. The awkwardness of the Cyclops' fulsome verses can even rouse the reader's sympathy as he thinks of Galatea laughing in Acis' arms. In its central portions, the poetry comes near to the beauty of its Theocritean original as Polyphemus spins his lovely description of the deep mountain cave that knows no season, the fruits, the flowers and the animals that belong to his pastoral realm. He is quite caught up in a dream of innocent love that is wholly a part of the natural paradise that surrounds him. Towards the end, however, the song breaks away from its model as the Cyclops begins to draw his own portrait in his verse. He boasts of his physical appearance, of the size and strength that give him freedom from the power of Jove. All this is intended for an elaborate com-

pliment. In place of Jove, he worships Galatea whose anger is more cruel than the thunderbolt of the king of the gods. The thought of her anger brings thoughts of her scorn, and accordingly of the lover Acis for whom he well knows he has been spurned. Suddenly the song goes out of control. The pretty compliments are marred by a savage boast (863-866):

> modo copia detur,
> sentiet esse mihi tanto pro corpore vires!
> viscera viva traham divisaque membra per agros
> perque tuas spargam — sic se tibi misceat! — undas.
>
> (Let only the chance be given me, he'll feel what strength goes with my great size. I shall drag out his living entrails and scatter his torn limbs over the fields and on the surface of your own waves — let him thus intermingle himself with you.)

With these words the taming influence of love upon the Cyclops is undone. The fault of the song is not its harmless exaggerations and improbabilities, but its inability to sustain its own fantasy. By a series of associations, the Cyclops has allowed his dream world to dissolve into real life.

Suddenly the song ends. It has in no manner tempered the lover's passion, for he rises from his seat and paces frantically along the forested shore. In a moment the reality he feared is before him. He has spied Galatea with Acis, and his savage boast likewise becomes a reality as he hurls a chunk of the mountain at the hapless lover, turning the peaceful shore into a pool of blood. Instead of taming the Cyclops' wild nature, song has elicited and inflamed his savage fury and destroyed even such a vision of beauty as the Cyclops can enjoy.

With its fatalistic view of the most traditionally idealized form of human endeavor the theme of artistic failure is a sombre element in the *Metamorphoses*, yet Ovid would scarcely have been himself if he did not at least once treat the subject with his characteristic self-parody. In his recent remarks on the structure of the poem, R. Coleman has already pointed out a thematic link between Orpheus' recital and the story of King Midas in Book 11 which follows immediately upon Orpheus' death.[48] The King's gift of making living things inanimate is the reverse of Pygmalion's animation of ivory. But the implications of the story considered as a whole go beyond this limited parallel and the fate of Midas may be linked with that of Orpheus as a humorously metaphorical recapitulation of the artist's dilemma. The story is based upon incidents

in other sources where Midas was variously renowned for his wealth, for his capture of Silenus from whom he learned the wisdom of nature, and for his asses' ears.[49] From the combination of these somewhat incompatible details Ovid has woven one of the most innovative tales in the entire poem whose very originality suggests its deliberate thematic relevance to its context.

King Midas is not a creative artist but a kind of hanger-on of the arts, who can boast of having studied Bacchic rituals under Orpheus. As an amateur and an enthusiast, he is delighted to play host to Silenus and return him safely to the company of Bacchus. But instead of a request for natural wisdom, the traditional feature of the story, he naively conceives the notion of the golden touch (11. 102-103: *effice, quidquid/ corpore contigero, fulvum vertatur in aurum;* "let it happen that whatever I touch with my body be turned into tawny gold"). Ovid does not seem to indicate that greed is Midas' chief motivation. *Fulvum aurum* suggests as much of an aesthetic as a pecuniary craving for gold. When the gift has been granted, Midas can scarcely believe his powers and with child-like joy sets out to prove them upon every object in sight. As leaves, earth, corn, water, door-posts turn to shining gold, Midas seems to see his new power as a form of art capable of transmuting the entire universe (118-119):

> vix spes ipse suas animo capit aurea fingens
> omnia.
>
> (He scarcely grasps his own hopes in his mind, imagining everything golden.)

In creating a world of static, precious objects whose new substance preserves the outlines of their old forms, Midas carries out a travesty of artistic transformation. Quite literally he renders nature immobile. But like his old teacher, Orpheus, the king soon discovers his personal isolation within the world of his own fabrication, for nature transmuted has become an unnatural nature incapable of sustaining human life. In the midst of abundance, Midas encounters famine. There is a touch of pathos in Ovid's picture of the happy, hungry king at the table, discovering with every mouthful of the precious metal the full implications of his transforming powers. The art he longed for proves capable of destroying its practitioner.

When Bacchus has allowed Midas to dissolve his power into nature leaving no more remnant of his perverse dream than a glint of gold in the sands of the River Pactolus, the king veers towards a second extreme.

Leaving his world of artifice he goes in search of an exaggerated artlessness (146-147):

> Ille perosus opes silvas et rura colebat
> Panaque montanis habitantem semper in antris.
>
> (He, full of hatred for wealth, affected the life of the forests and the countryside and of Pan living always in the caverns on the mountains.)

In cultivating a Pan-like primitivism, Midas has not improved in judgment and discrimination (148-149):

> pingue sed ingenium mansit, nocituraque, ut ante,
> rursus erant domino stultae praecordia mentis.
>
> (His nature remained doltish, and just as before, his thick wits were again ready to do their master harm.)

As eaves-dropper and would-be judge in the music contest of Pan and Apollo, he aspires to an honest expression of his taste and commits still another error of discrimination — not to mention diplomacy — in acclaiming Pan's rude piping over the learned strains that pour forth from Apollo's gilded lyre. While even Mt. Tmolus confesses the superiority of the civilized divine artist, Midas must needs be more natural than nature. Once more his simple-minded enthusiasm is his doom. His asses' ears symbolize his solecism and his bondage to the sub-human world.

Midas' comical flight from the golden palace to the wilderness is only a debased version of Orpheus' taking refuge in nature. His stubborn preference for Pan makes him a sympathetic champion of artistic independence in the face of divine authority. Thus his amateurish search for aesthetic pleasure reflects the plight of the genuine artists. Beyond this, Ovid's invention of the "golden touch" gives this story a theme that elsewhere in the *Metamorphoses* is conspicuous by its absence: that of the artist as the recreator of a lost golden age. Once his material golden age has proven a failure, he turns, as many poets have done, to seek a new innocence in the forest. It is symptomatic of Ovid's ironic treatment of the powers of art that this metaphorical focus for artistic idealism should appear only in a burlesque association with the most foolish character in the poem. W. R. Johnson has commented on the way in which the topos *ab auro ad ferrum* (from gold to iron) — the sense of a declining universe — pervades the fabric of the poem.[50] Unlike his predecessor Vergil, Ovid has no bright visions of the way in which the lost ideal might be recaptured. As Pythagoras points out in his philosophical discourse (15. 259-261) the *aurea saecula* are useful primarily as a measure of mutability. Only such a false golden age as the deluded Midas can capture through borrowed magic is possible.

In order to believe in the recoverability of a golden age, it is necessary to believe in man's power to create order in nature, to harmonize society with its natural environment and to impose some pattern on mutability. The human artists of the *Metamorphoses* show that art can have many effects other than that of creating order. It can provide a perilous, self-destructive isolation from reality; it can stir up jealous passions or provoke the anger of the gods. Indeed, the artist is unable to predict or govern the consequences of his own work. No longer can he assume an instinctive harmony with nature, for its chaos of passions and unpredictable forces baffles his intellectual control. Even when his traditional kinship with nature seems to survive — as in the case of Orpheus or Canens — it is no longer a sign of his superior vision, but rather of his helpless innocence, and the nature that responds to his harmonizing spells is all the same at the mercy of the same forces that threaten his own person. It seems hardly accidental that so many of Ovid's artists are women, for this unprecedented characterization emphasizes their frailty and their liability to become the victims of a harsh world. In the midst of capricious gods and irrational forces, unexpected transformation over-rides deliberate artistic creation. Metamorphosis, the physical interaction of force and form, leaves no place for permanent monuments of human intellect or skill. As the order of art slips into the chaos of reality, the artists themselves achieve their only vestige of immortality as birds, beasts and weeping springs: permanent features of a subhuman world. Arachne and the Pierian magpies mindlessly and mechanically carry out the activities by which they had once attempted to achieve autonomy as individual creators.

As I suggested in the opening section of this paper, the images created by Ovid's artists depart from the traditional metaphorical function of ekphrastic description in their mirroring of Ovid's own picture of metamorphosis. The reader who looks to these passages for some assurance of the power and permanence of artistic creation is answered only by a glimpse of the limited perspectives of the poem itself with all its emphasis upon dissatisfaction, uncertainty and mutability. Yet by this very token, the descriptions achieve some of the traditional enlightening function of *ekphrasis*, for they show that even the artist can conceive no better world than that in which he exists.

As the maker of the poem, Ovid does not necessarily share the limitations of his characters and his artistic identity is never so frail. He is the ultimate controller of their destinies, illuminating their errors and foreseeing their inevitable destruction. Yet in this omniscient role he operates under a self-imposed limitation because his vision of nature and human nature allows him to give no better or more satisfying order to his world. He cannot find solutions for the impasse of man and nature;

he cannot reconcile human and divine viewpoints for the benefit of man. The humane creative vision can live with authority and uncertainty only so long as it hardens itself to the necessity of keeping multiple viewpoints in suspension.

Unlike Vergil, Ovid does not attempt to perceive sense and ultimate purpose in the motivations and events he portrays,[51] but rather, uses his wit to elicit the contradictions and improbabilities inherent in the nature of things. In the manner of the visual artist he fixes his reader's attention upon the varied and shifting surfaces that meet the eye. *Facies* and *forma* – the tangible and perceptible – dominate the poem. Its only consistent motivation is unchanging change. No other single thematic pattern governs the world's history from its beginning to the poet's own time. As many scholars have now observed, the sequence of the mythological narratives is recognizably chronological, yet lacks a sense of teleological progress. History unfolds as a series of accidents within a loosely perceived continuum of time. Over and over these accidents repeat themselves as the primal forces of love and anger are released by men and the gods. There are no clues to guide man in his wanderings through the maze of nature, only a constant recycling of forces, the accumulation and release of emotions and tensions.

At the conclusion of the poem, even the poet's formal claim to immortality is stated in terms of these forces that have governed the world of metamorphosis (15.871-879):

> Iamque opus exegi, quod nec Iovis ira nec ignis
> nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere vetustas.
> cum volet, illa dies, quae nil nisi corporis huius
> ius habet, incerti spatium mihi finiat aevi:
> parte tamen meliore mei super alta perennis
> astra ferar, nomenque erit indelebile nostrum,
> quaque patet domitis Romana potentia terris,
> ore legar populi, perque omnia saecula fama,
> siquid habent veri vatum praesagia, vivam.
>
> (And now I have completed a work that neither the wrath of Jove nor fire nor steel nor devouring time will have power to destroy. When it will, let that day which has power over nothing but my body end the space of my uncertain life; still I shall be lifted in my better part eternally above the lofty stars, and my name will be incapable of destruction. Wherever Roman power extends over conquered lands, my words will be on the mouths of the people and through all generations, if poets' prophecies contain anything of the truth, in my fame I will live.)

The language of apotheosis is unmistakable. Ovid does not identify himself with the fragile artists who have fared so poorly in his mythical world, but rather boasts of a power of survival like that of Hercules, Aeneas and the Caesars: the god-favored heroes of force. By this very gesture, he reminds us that they are all persons in a mythical world that his own imagination has created. As *ira Iovis*, even Augustus' own displeasure is relegated to the world of myth. In its final verses the poem stands poised between myth and history. In the real world the poet gains independently that status that the mythical heroes could not achieve without the aid of the gods, and indeed the aid of the poet himself.[52]

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NOTES

1. *A.J.P.* 89 (1968) 93-104. Anderson has developed the remarks made in this review into more extensive interpretive comments in his edition, *Ovid's Metamorphoses: Books 6-10* (Norman, Oklahoma) 151-171.

2. In *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, note 1 above, 169, Anderson implies some conclusions by comparing Minerva's tapestry with "certain surviving examples of Augustan classicistic art," while he assimilates Arachne's work more closely to Ovid's own style by calling it, "freer, more mannered, more dramatic and distorted, less specifically detailed." He conjectures that Minerva would have won a clear-cut victory in the original version of the contest story and thus Ovid would have "changed the story to produce this ambivalent result."

3. Douglas F. Bauer, "The Function of Pygmalion in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*," *T.A.P.A.* 99 (1962) 1-21, catalogues the figures turned into stone in each book and includes references to statues and the materials of sculpture. The topic is also treated by the authors listed in note 4 below.

4. N. Laslo, "Riflessi d'arte figurata nelle Metamorfosi di Ovidio," *Ephemeris Dacromania* 6 (1935) 368-440, and Heinrich Bartholomé, *Ovid und die antike Kunst* (Leipzig, 1935), are concerned with Greek and Roman art as an "influence" on Ovid's descriptive style and much of their discussion has to do with specific works of art, although the latter deals with Ovid's general interest in art as a reflection of his Augustan environment. Pierre Grimal, "Les Métamorphoses d' Ovide et la peinture paysagiste à l'époque d'Auguste," *R.E.L.* 16 (1938) 145-161, deals more theoretically with parallels between Ovid's descriptive and atmospheric effects and those of the paintings of his time and speaks of a general tendency towards a kind of naturalism, a point echoed by Christopher Dawson in his extensive study of the paintings, *Romano-Campanian Mythological Landscape Painting*, *Y.C.S.* 9 (1944: rep. Rome, 1965) 177: "Ovid is the literary counterpart of the landscape and mythological landscape painters; both are at once the products and creators of the artistic taste of their times." H. Herter, "Ovids verhältnis zur bildenden Kunst" in N. I. Herescu, ed., *Ovidiana: Recherches sur Ovide, Publiées à l'occasion du bimillénaire de la naissance du poète* (Paris, 1958) 49-74, concludes that Ovid's pictorial grasp of "die echte oder die mythische Wirklichkeit" need acknowledge no debt to the visual arts, while H. Bardon, "Ovide et le baroque," *Ouidiana*, 74-100, speaks of an imagination that makes the poet's world tangible to the reader. Simone Viarre, *L'image et la pensée dans les Métamorphoses d'Ovide* (Paris, 1964), treats the subject of visual imagination extensively in her first four chapters (1-96), then, after sum-

marizing: "Ovide sculpte des formes et utilise la matière comme un sculpteur; il fait voir les couleurs, des lignes, des paysages dignes d'un peintre; il découpe et monte le film mouvementé de sa vision à la manière d'un cinéaste," she goes on to show how Ovid exceeds the techniques of the visual arts in his portrayal of motion and the dynamic life of nature. See also Antonio Menzione, *Ovidio: Le Metamorfosi: sintesi critica e contributo per una rivalutazione* (Turin, 1964) 265-268.

5. P. Friedlander, *Johannes von Gaza und Paulus Silentiarus und Procopius von Gaza, Einleitung über die beschreibung von kunstwerken in der antiken literatur* (Leipzig, 1912: rep. Hildesheim, 1969) 1-23, discusses the tradition as a series of variations on Homer; A. W. Fairbanks, Introduction to *Philostratus Imagines* (Cambridge, 1931) xvii-xix, remarks on the intermingling of literary and visual perspectives; Bartholomé, note 4 above, analyses the visual composition of Ovidian *ekphraseis* with reference to literary models and ancient works of art. Friedlander's remark that Ovidian *ekphraseis* have nothing new to contribute to the tradition epitomizes the somewhat negative attitude that scholars have often taken towards this phenomenon. The importance of these passages as a vehicle for serious literary statement has suffered considerable damage from the rather conspicuous function of *ekphrasis* as ornamental and recreational digression in oratory. See E. Norden, *Die antike Kunstprosa* (Leipzig, 1909) 285-286; S. F. Bonner, *Roman Declamation* (Berkeley, 1949) 58-59. Although imitation within the declamatory schools is a token of the admiration with which *ekphrasis* in poetry was regarded, it should not be taken to indicate that the purposes of the poets and orators were precisely the same. In recent years the best contributions to our understanding of the literary function of *ekphrasis* have been made within the context of practical criticism (e.g. M. C. J. Putnam, *The Poetry of the Aeneid* [Cambridge, Mass., 1964] 147-150; Gilbert Lawall, *Theocritus' Coan Pastorals: A Poetry Book* [Cambridge, Mass., 1967] 27-31; Leo Curran, "Catullus 64 and the Heroic Age," *Y.C.S.* 21 [1969] 171-192; A. J. Boyle, "The Meaning of the Aeneid: A Critical Inquiry, Part II: *Homo Immemor*, Book VI and its Thematic Ramifications," *Ramus* 1 [1972] 116-119). Some interesting theoretical points have recently been added by George Kurman, "Ecphrasis in Epic Poetry," *Comparative Literature* 26 (1974) 1-13, who stresses the non-rhetorical elements of the tradition: the link with the theme of creation; the power of art to illustrate history, create life and frustrate time; the similarity between *ekphrasis* and the epic simile, and its relationship with prophecy. Only his concluding remarks, that *ekphraseis* may be regarded as "miniature dramas" interjected into the larger frame of the epic poem, seem to me off the point.

6. The similarity between these two kinds of "epic device" has scarcely been given adequate theoretical notice although the modern critic habitually uses the same technique of symbolic interpretation for both. However, L. Castiglione, *Studi intorno alle fonte e alle compozione delle Metamorfosi di Ovidio* (Pisa, 1906: rep. Rome, 1964) 329-331, does compare the episodes of Arachne, the Pierides and Orpheus with the bard songs of Demodocus in the *Odyssey* and Orpheus in the *Argonautica*.

7. Heraclitus, *Quaestiones Homericae*, excerpted in G. Dindorf ed., *Scholia Graeca in Homeri Iliadem*, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1877) vol. 4, 187-191.

8. Gilbert Lawall, "Apollonius' *Argonautica:* Jason as Anti-Hero," *Y.C.S.* 19 (1966) 154-158. The scenes advise Jason to depend upon the power of the gods; make use of magical charms; rely upon the power of Aphrodite; avoid war and utilize his resources of intelligence and trickery.

9. An extensive analysis of the relationship of the song to its context is given by C. P. Segal, "The Song of Iopas in the *Aeneid*," *Hermes* 99 (1971) 336-349.

10. J. M. Frécaut, "Les transitions dans les Métamorphoses d'Ovide," *R.E.L.* 46 (1968) 261-263, observes that the typical situation involves the curiosity of a person who questions, more or less directly, a friend, a host, a passing traveller. Curiosity is often aroused by a chance allusion and the tale-teller is eager to relate to another a marvelous history in which he has participated or which he has witnessed.

11. For the chronological pattern see Pierre Grimal, "La chronologie légendaire des Métamorphoses," *Ovidiana*, 245-252; R. Coleman, "Structure and Intention in the *Metamorphoses*," *C.Q.* 65 (1971) 461-476. Grimal, 253, points out that the tales of the Muses and Minerva form a kind of entr'acte: legends looking back to former times, while Coleman remarks on Ovid's balancing of straightforward chronological progress against "inset patterns," i.e., groups of stories bound together by thematic associations of similarity or contrast. "In themselves" he observes, "these patterns tend to work against the *perpetuitas carminis* (continuousness of the song) by marking off an internally close-knit unit."

12. Simone Viarre, "Pygmalion et Orphée chez Ovide (*Met.* X. 243-297)", *R.E.L.* 46 (1968) 235-236, observes that the stories from Pygmalion through Adonis trace the history of a family associated with the Cypriot Venus as a vegetation goddess.

13. Although various structural and functional parallels between these stories have often been observed, e.g., Castiglione, note 6 above, 329-331, Grimal, note 11 above, 253-254, they have never been linked as stories of artists. One reason is that the Pierides and Arachne episodes have been taken at their face value as examples of the gods' righteous punishment of impiety. Thus Brooks Otis, *Ovid as an Epic Poet*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1970) 146, sees the dominant themes of the incidents to be determined by the kinds of stories told in the frames. The tales of the Minyeides, Pierides and Arachne are all examples of human offense and divine *ira* (the Pierides and Arachne in their "positive impiety, deliberate *hybris*" offer very serious offenses indeed) while the story of Orpheus is primarily told as a love story. The insert tales in these four episodes do, Otis observes, have something in common. They are all love stories which Ovid inserted primarily for the sake of balancing his amatory theme against the theme of divine anger.

14. The various modes of authorial intervention that M. von Albrecht has discussed in *Die Parenthese in Ovids Metamorphoses und ihre dichterische Funktion, Spudasmata* 7 (Hildesheim, 1964), give myriad insights into the minds of the characters and the frequently paradoxical nature of the situations, yet betray remarkably little of the author's own thoughts or purposes. By addressing both reader and character, he creates a direct relationship between them, while he, as it were, steps aside (see also, Otis, note 13 above, 335-338). Thus Otis, quite accurately remarks (343): "Ovid is not to be ticketed on the basis of any one part of the poem. His own identity is as elusive as that of his characters."

15. E.g., J. M. Frécaut, *L'esprit et l'humor chez Ovide* (Grenoble, 1972) 269: "Le charme des *Métamorphoses* auquel ont été sensibles la plupart des lecteurs, consiste dans un style aux mille nuances que ne se plie aux lois d'aucun genre littéraire, sans être désordonné, dans un jeu aux mille reflets qui ne s'interdit d'aborder aucun des grands thèmes poétiques sans être prétentieux, destructeur ou grotesque."

16. Quotations are from *P. Ovidius Naso Metamorphosen*, M. Haupt, ed., 10 *Auflage*, M. von Albrecht, ed. (Zurich, 1969).

17. Aelian, *Varia Historia* 3.42. Nicander Book 4 in Antoninus Liberalis, *Metamorphoses* 10, ed. M. Papathomopoulos (Paris, 1968). The description here is ἐκτόπως φιλέργοι (10.4-5: unusually devoted to work). In both versions, the sisters are married. Ovid, by making no mention of husbands, puts a stronger emphasis on their similarity to Minerva herself and makes their dedication to the civilized life seem a matter of personal preference rather than duty. In Nicander's version, Bacchus approaches the sisters in the guise of a young girl and urges them to join in the rites. Ovid makes their defiance less direct.

18. The association between weaving and love stories seems to be borrowed directly from Vergil, *G.* 4. 333-346, where Cyrene and her nymphs listen to Clymene's song of the loves of the gods from the beginning of time. From this model, Ovid also takes the suggestion for his inclusion of the adultery of Mars and Venus (*G.* 4. 345-346: *curam . . . inanem/ Volcani, Martisque dolos et dulcia furta;* "the barren love of Vulcan, and the wiles and sweet thefts of Mars"). In its context, Clymene's song contrasts with the unhappy love of Orpheus. Ovid has incorporated the contrast between carefree divine and pathetic mortal love into the structure of the four tales.

19. For various observations on thematic links between the tales see Haupt-von Albrecht, note 16 above, *ad* v. 36, 199 (erotic-actiological character of metamorphoses and Asian settings in first and third tales); V. Pöschl, "L'arte narrative di Ovidio nelle Metamorfosi," *Atti del Convegno Internazionale Ovidiano*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1959) 2. 295-305 (symbolic shadings of individual tales); Otis, note 13 above (three different types of amatory pathos in first, third and fourth); Charles P. Segal, *Landscape in Ovid's Metamorphoses*, *Hermes, Einzelschriften* 23 (Wiesbaden, 1969) 49-53 (use of landscape in first and fourth).

20. Segal, note 19 above, 50.

21. Castiglione, note 6 above, 362-363, comments on Ovid's refinement of the story.

22. Callimachus, *Hymns* 2. 110-112; Lucretius, *D.R.N.*, 1. 117-118; 927; Propertius 3.3.5; 3.1.3.

23. The incident has no known source and the usual conjectures have been made: Pauly-Wissowa vol. 24, 19, *s.v.* Pyreneus, either a Phocian regional tale or the invention of a Hellenistic poet; Röscher, *s.v.* Pyreneus, 3345, the lost original must have been a kind of *Wielandsage* involving the creation of a means of flight. The incident, however, is so perfectly contrived to display the character of the Muses, that there seems no reason at all why Ovid could not have invented it. We can then see in it an inversion of the gracious commerce between the Muses and men to be found in such passages as Hesiod, *Theogony* 80-97 (the Muses' counsel to the rulers of men) or Pindar, *Olympian* 14 (invocation to the Graces of Orchomenos). The only critic who shows any sympathy for Pyreneus' point of view is Viarre, note 4 above, 385, who sees the psychological import of the desire for flight as a manifestation of subconscious impulse.

24. Nicander (Antoninus Liberalis, *Metamorphoses* 9). This version places the birth of the Heliconian spring at the very moment of this triumph of the Muses.

25. Nicander (Antoninus Liberalis, *Metamorphoses* 28) is the oldest extant version, and the myth can perhaps be safely called an obscure one although Porphyry *De Abstinentia* 3.16 alleges that it was told by Pindar. J. Gwyn Griffiths, "The Flight of the Gods before Typhon: An Unrecognized Myth," *Hermes* 88 (1960) 374-376, proposes that it involved an assimilation of the Greek gods to the animal-formed gods of Egypt.

26. Anderson, *A.J.P.*, 102-103, seems to share Heinze's favorable opinion of the tale, suggesting that Ovid has given it certain literary qualities that make it, on his own terms, deserving of victory, namely, a "desultory, asymetrical structure" similar to "the kind of epic structure which Ovid himself chose for the *Metamorphoses*." But Otis, note 13 above, 153-154, noting ironic undercurrents in the tale is not sure that the reader should accept it soberly: "It is rather disconcerting to witness the respectable Muses relating to the respectable Minerva the tale of Pluto's unpremeditated *amor*. Ovid, of course, preserves appearances by an epic tone and decorum . . . but he certainly brings out the humor of the action; the gods who are at such pains to punish criticism are, in fact, only too vulnerable to it. The story of Prosperpina is far more akin to the impious stories of the Pieriae than the somewhat unsophisticated Muses can readily understand."

27. Menzione, note 4 above, 139: "E un'immagine che potrebbe essere simbolicamente applicata al trascolorante monde fiabesco delle *Metamorfosi*."

28. Anderson, *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, ad. 6.72.

29. Laslo, note 4 above, 391, calls it a little gallery. The separate events need not necessarily be imagined as run together; the phrase *suam faciemque locorum* ("the proper appearance of the places") suggests that each incident had its distinctive background. Ovid is probably thinking of a series of pictures like that in the Odyssey frieze. *Suam faciemque locorum* is somewhat suggestive of the language Vitruvius uses to indicate the topographical verisimilitude of the landscape painter's art (*De Architectura* 7.5.2: *ab certis locorum proprietatibus imagines exprimentes;* "forming images in accordance with the peculiar characteristics of places").

30. Ovid clearly makes the point that the artist's intentions are at the mercy of his interpreter. The degree of misunderstanding involved may be illuminated by W. R. Johnson's remarks on the erotic character of the *Metamorphoses*, "The Problem of the Counter-Classical Sensibility and its Critics," *California Studies in Classical Antiquity* 3 (1970) 123-152: "It seems to me not improbable . . . that the *Metamorphoses* is an attack on Augustus' efforts to reform society by means of an artificial religious revival and the imposition of stringent and inhuman moral codes. From this point of view, the *Metamorphoses*' beautiful and original treatment of eroticism, so far from being merely another indication of Ovidian shallowness, constitutes a bold and powerful defense of human nature, human dignity and human individuality in the face of ferocious and arbitrary attempts to control human nature and finally to enslave it."

31. G. Lafaye, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide et leur modèles grecs* (Paris, 1904; rep. Hildesheim, 1971) 102: "ce qu'il aime c'est précisément cette galanterie, dont les auteurs de métamorphoses lui donnaient l'exemple." Otis' remark, note 13 above, 153, that Arachne is to be distinguished from Ovid because her intentions are deliberately blasphemous is not very convincing. The subject is also treated by Leo Curran in "Transformation and Anti-Augustanism in Ovid's Metamorphoses," *Arethusa* 5 (1972) 83-84, where Arachne's work is said to represent Ovid's Alexandrianism.

32. The short description of the labyrinth (8. 160-168) constitutes a kind of *ekphrasis*. In an interesting paragraph, Bartholomé, note 4 above, 79-80, points to a curious contradiction where the *error variarum viarum* ("wandering of the various paths", 161) is compared with the windings of the River Meander, something far less complicated than the labyrinth itself. In the light of this comparison he finds it strange that Daedalus should lose himself inside. From another point of view, one might see the craftsman as having transformed a natural model into something fantastic and baffling. Ovid may be thinking of the fact that the Meander pattern, as developed in artistic decoration, is far more contorted than the natural figure from which it takes its name, yet this concept of transformation through complication has its relevance to the general picture of art in the poem. Daedalus' self-confusion within the labyrinth is a symbolic detail that foreshadows the fatal consequences of his next attempt to imitate nature: the wings. His artistic failure thus falls into the general pattern being unfolded in the poem, but Ovid greatly undercuts the pathos of his story by appending the tale of his jealous murder of his nephew Perdix (8.236-259) directly after the death of Icarus. He is thus not only unable to control the consequences of his art, but also unable to control himself. In the *Aeneid*, Daedalus' creation of the temple doors at Cumae (6.14-33) makes him a true artist, and, as A. J. Boyle has observed, note 5 above, 118-119, his history and his failure are closely analogous to Aeneas' own experience. In the *Metamorphoses* Daedalus is no more than a craftsman and is far less sympathetic than other artists, perhaps because he has served a king, perhaps because Ovid wishes to undercut the dignity of the Vergilian figure.

33. The significance of the apotheosis is still one of the most controversial points in the poem. Hermann Fränkel, *Ovid: A Poet between Two Worlds* (Berkeley, 1945) 211-213, and L. P. Wilkinson, *Ovid Recalled* (Cambridge, 1953) 193, take the apotheosis quite seriously as a token of man's triumph over nature and mortality, but Otis, above note 13, 167, 329-330, is unable to find the clear symbolic significance that he would like to see: "[apotheosis] comes as an oddly perfunctory conclusion to his amatory tragedy . . . how can the gods who caused the suffering now assume an attitude of justice and mercy – no longer amorous and spitefully or rightfully, if mercilessly, avenging but actually benevolent? There is an evident shift of point of view." In the long run, Otis attributes this ambivalence to Ovid's own ambivalence towards his heroic subject, his lack of sympathy with the Augustan world, all of which seems to him to create unresolved problems in the poem. More recent studies are putting the case for Ovid's negativism more strongly. An insight into the peculiarly half-hearted impression given by Ovid's treatment of apotheosis is supplied indirectly by Wade Stephens' point in "Two stoic Heroes in the *Metamorphoses:* Hercules and Ulysses," *Ovidiana*, 273-282, that the tradition of Stoic apotheosis as

recorded by Cicero involves deification by human gratitude rather than by divine intervention. It is just this nobler, more humane perspective that Ovid excludes, making apotheosis a token of the capriciousness of the gods even in their so-called justice. Thus Karl Galinsky, "Hercules Ovidianus (Metamorphoses 9. 1-272)," *Wiener Studien.* 85 (1972) 93-116, brings out all the details that undercut the dignity of Hercules' last moments. This Hercules is the comic strongman, dying in the posture of a banqueter on the pyre. Even as he is en route to join the gods, he denies their existence. After Hercules' death, the succeeding apotheoses become more and more wooden and comic. Galinsky bolsters this point by remarking on the Vergilian identification of Hercules with Aeneas: another vestige of Augustanism that Ovid attacks through his parody. The case is also put by Coleman, note 11 above, 476: "Caesar's translation to the heavens, while it links him with Hercules, Aeneas and Romulus, is after all, no more glorious a consummation than had been granted to Callisto and Arcas. Deification – astrification – what are these but two more varieties of metamorphosis to be treated with as much or as little suspension of disbelief as the rest?"

34. The tone is aptly interpreted by Charles Segal in "Ovid's Orpheus and Ovidian Ideology," *T.A.P.A.* 103 (1972) 473-494. While Otis, note 13 above, 351, considers the parody chiefly as an undercutting of Vergil's Augustanism, Segal regards it as the means to a new and more individualistic characterization.

35. Orpheus creates a grove of trees to shade his mountain-top retreat. Pöschl, note 19 above, 297-298, shows how the trees in Ovid's catalogue, with their reminiscences of bucolic, epic and elegiac poetry, are an externalization of Orpheus' poetic identity: a summary of the artist's career.

36. Anderson, *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, 493, 501, 517, shows that it is possible to fit the stories to the declared theme, but only through careful interpretation.

37. The varied facets of this interassociation have now been illuminated by many critics. See *inter al.* Fränkel, note 33 above, 96-97; Bauer, note 3 above, 9-21; Otis, note 13 above, 370-372; Anderson, *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, 484-535. Coleman, note 11 above, 466-470, provides a representative summary saying, "Each seems to focus on one or more aspects of the plight of Orpheus himself, the death of a loved one, the punishment of impiety, conversion to homosexuality with its concomitant attribution of depravity to women's love, and transformations that exhibit a special relationship between life and death."

38. As Viarre, note 12 above, 239, points out, Pygmalion asks for a wife *similis eburnae* (276: "like the ivory woman"), while Myrrha declares to her father that she wishes to marry a man *similem tibi* (364: "like you"), and wishes that her father felt a *similis furor* (355: "passion like her own").

39. Viarre, note 12 above, 243-244, points to an association between statues and corpses; the association with Vergil's gates of the underworld would be very much to the point, and as Bauer, note 4 above, 16, remarks, Ovid uses *ebur* 6 times in this short tale as if to be sure the reader noticed what the material of the statue was. Anne Amory Parry's remarks on the association of ivory "with deceptive truth and with Penelope" in the *Odyssey*, "The Gates of Horn and Ivory," *Y.C.S.* 20 (1966) 3-57, might also be taken into acount.

40. With each critic building upon the remarks of his predecessors, there is a kind of inevitable progression in the interpretations of the story. Hermann Fränkel, note 33 above, 96, associated Pygmalion directly with Ovid as a symbol of "the artist's boundless liberty to represent such perfection as nature could never produce." Bauer, note 3 above, 12-14, developed this idea even further, seeing in the transformation of the statue a paradigm of "the poet's resurrection of the heritage of antiquity for the benefit of posterity; a miracle of art." Neither gave much attention to the more obvious and immediate link between Pygmalion and Orpheus which Viarre, note 12 above, 235-246, developed in detail with the indisputable conclusion that "Pygmalion in reanimating the corpse of a loved woman realizes the dream of Orpheus in bringing Eurydice to life." Segal, note 34 above, synthesizes and reinterprets the observations of all three of his predecessors, understanding the intertwinement of the Pygmalion and Orpheus stories as "a metaphorical reflection of the creative and restorative power of his own [Ovid's] art" (491). But it is hard to think that Ovid could imagine himself in Pygmalion's role, begging a goddess to give life to the work he has so proudly created.

41. The most detailed discussion of the sources is in Otis, above note 13, 418-419. Otis himself does not stress the art theme but associates the story with that of Iphis as a "miraculous reward for human love and piety."

42. Segal, note 34 above, 490-494, regards the entire Orpheus story as a "fairy-tale" that Ovid has made truer and more real than the contemporary myths of Augustan ideology, but this conclusion necessitates one's reading of the reunion of Orpheus and Eurydice in the underworld as a wholly fortuitous event and overlooking the disappearance of Orpheus' art.

43. One other extensive ekphrastic passage in the poem, the description of the doors of Apollo's palace (2.1-19), differs from those I have been discussing in that it is a work of divine art, forged by Vulcan, with no piece of human art-work for contrast, and also in that it is not shown in the process of creation. Its debt to the Homeric shield of Achilles and the "Hellenistic" asymmetry by which earth and sea are treated in unequal detail are discussed by Bartholomé, note 4 above, 74-80, who remarks also on its symbolic relationship to the narrative as a foreshadowing of the world that Phaethon will see in his journey and fall. In this context, one may add, its function can be considered ironic. I cannot entirely agree with Herter, note 4 above, 57, that the sculpture has no psychological effect upon Phaethon, even though he does not stop to study it on his way into the palace. The doors present the view of the universe that appears to the minds of the gods, far off, highly systematized, making the course of the sun appear simple with no sense of the perils of the journey. The constellations of the zodiac are neatly arranged, six on each door. The symmetry is unnatural and gives Phaethon no warning of that moment when he will see the great arms and tail of the Scorpion, stretching across the space of three constellations (195-200), the final terror that will cause him to lose all control of the fiery chariot. From the human point of view, the work of divine art presents that same over-exaggerated image of order that characterizes other "official" self-presentations of the gods.

44. Otis, above note 13, 315, sees Marsyas' tale as the last of the sequence of divine vengeance tales that include the stories of the Pierides, Arachne, and Niobe.

45. The sinister and negative qualities of the Ovidian Circe in Books 13 and 14 are brought out by C. P. Segal in two papers: "Myth and Philosophy in the *Metamorphoses:* Ovid's Augustanism and the Augustan Conclusion of Book XV," *A.J.P.* 90 (1969) 269-274; "Circean Temptations: Homer, Vergil, Ovid," *T.A.P.A.* 99 (1968) 419-442. In his opinion, the "Augustan" themes that begin to develop with Aeneas' journey towards Italy are seriously undercut by the depiction of Italy as "Circe's realm of violence and magic." One might add that Circe in her section of the poem functions as an anti-artist, far more powerful than the true artist Canens, and thus gives the impression that Italy, far more than Greece in the earlier parts of the poem, is a country where natural and supernatural forces are wholly hostile to the fragile strivings of art.

46. The more serious aspects of this piece as a poem about the function of poetry are discussed by Helmut Erbst, "Dichtkunst und Medezin in Theokrits 11. Idyll," *M.H.* 22 (1965) 232-236; E. B. Holtsmark, "Poetry as Self-Enlightenment in Theocritus," *T.A.P.A.* 97 (1966) 253-260; Edward W. Spofford, "Theocritus and Polyphemus," *A.J.P.* 90 (1969) 22-35; Anne Brooke, "Theocritus' *Idyll* 11: A Study in Pastoral," *Arethusa* 4 (1971) 73-82. In observing that "Ovid has converted the light comedy of Theocritus into farce," Otis, note 13 above, 287, somewhat underestimates the thematic complexity of both poems, but especially Ovid's total inversion of the Theocritean celebration of art. For such a reversal to take place, it is necessary, as Heinrich Dörrie argues, *Die Schöne Galatea* (Munich, 1968) 54-57, to break the stasis of the Cyclops' continual and futile illusion by introducing a new figure, Acis, to create through jealousy "einen psychischen Ablauf in die Secle des Kyklopen."

Thus Dörrie very plausibly suggests that Acis must be Ovid's original invention.

47. Menzione, note 4 above, 159, sees the hyperbolic qualities of the episode clearly: "Polyphemus is no longer the immature young giant of Theocritus' eleventh *Idyll*, but the dreadful monster of tradition, his song grotesque and absurdly hyperbolic."

48. Coleman, note 11 above, 470. Otis, note 13 above, 192-193, also suggests a comparison between the two stories, calling the tale of Midas a story of aesthetic insensitivity: "Pygmalion is the artist rewarded; Midas is the philistine punished or stigmatized; a reverse miracle. The true artist does not want to turn his world into gold." But of course, metaphorically speaking, the Augustan artist *does* attempt to turn his world into gold.

49. Asses ears: Aristophanes, *Plutos* 287; capture of Silenus: Herodotus 8.138; Xenophon, *Anabasis* 1.2.13; Aelian, *Varia Historia* 3.18; Cicero, *Tusc.* 1.48. Hyginus, 191, gives the same two parts to the story as Ovid does, but reverses their order, thus destroying the thematic progression from art to nature so important to Ovid's tale.

50. Johnson, note 30 above, 142-144. Noting Ovid's development of the *topos* in 1.107-115, he observes: "Presiding over the deterioration is Jupiter himself, and under his rule the rest of the poem will unfold, a mirroring of the disintegration of reality, of the illusion of classical order, and of the viciousness of gods and men to man."

51. The failure of Ovid's commitment to an "Augustan" purpose in his amatory epic that disturbed Otis so greatly that he considered it a flaw in the poem has been taken up by Segal, note 19 above, 71-94; note 45 above; Coleman, note 11 above; Johnson, note 30 above; Curran, note 31 above. In various ways all these critics argue that Ovid's deliberate purpose from the very beginning of the poem included the creation of a negative picture of divine authority – as a kind of allegory of human political authority – and of official mythologies. (Douglas Little's alternative proposition, "The Non-Augustanism of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*," *Mnemosyne* 25 (1972) 389-401, that Ovid was a pleasure seeking poet of Greek fantasy who was simply indifferent to politics, does not take full account of the political consciousness of such episodes as that of Arachne.) In accordance with the several critics who have written on the baroque or mannerist vision of the poem, Bardon, note 4 above, Pöschl, note 19 above, R. Crahay, "La vision poétique d'Ovide et l'esthetique baroque," *Atti del Convegno internazionale ovidiano*, Vol. 1, 91-110, and also Viarre, note 4 above, these exponents of Ovid's anti-Augustanism tend to stress the dynamic and sensuous image of Ovid's "continuum of nature" as the major creative achievement of the *Metamorphoses*. Viarre, 357-444, regards the poem as a celebration of the dynamic inter-relationship of nature and man; Segal, 86-88, places particular emphasis on the moral ambivalence of nature; Curran, 82-88, remarks on Ovid's flaunting of the traditionally Roman desire to keep nature under human control. Johnson's concluding statement on the literary value of "counter-classical" poems captures the general perspective of these new approaches (150-151): "But 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 of the enemies of that order which are within us and that remind us that great virtues can degenerate greatly. We need, that is, not only a poetry of celebration but a poetry of disenchantment."

52. For the *ira Iovis* and the inter-relationship of myth and reality in these stanzas, see Segal, note 45 above, 288-292; Johnson, note 30 above, 147-148. In similar fashion, A. W. J. Hollemin, "Ovidii Metamorphoseon Liber XV 622-870 (*Carmen et error*)," *Latomus* 28 (1969) 460, observes, "Ovid aimed at deprecating the legalized immortality of dynasts as contrasted with the true *gloria immortalis* of free poetry".

53. This paper was composed during my term as a Senior Visiting Fellow at the Center for the Humanities, Wesleyan University, Spring 1974. I wish to express my thanks to Prof. Hayden White, Director of the Center and to Wesleyan University for the highly congenial atmosphere afforded by the Center.

PINDAR'S FIRST PYTHIAN: THE FIRE WITHIN

Timothy Nolan Gantz

'If you speak at the right length, winding together the strands of many themes into one, the reproach of men will be less' (ll. 81-82).[1] And in truth Pindar's First Pythian is filled with complex and conflicting elements twisted into a tightly knit pattern of myth, metaphor, advice, and historical allusion. The listener moves from celestial harmony to the volcano of Aitna, from the sack of Troy to the founding of a new city. He witnesses the battle of Cumae and the strivings of a tyrant for immortal fame. He is lulled to sleep by the lyre, startled awake by grim Typhon and the barbarians of Carthage, made to feel compassion for the sick Philoktetes, and confronted with the incarnate evil of a man who burned his enemies to death in a bronze bull. Yet at the same time, in counterpoint to this rapid succession of images, Pindar polarizes basic themes – music and discord, peace and pain, chaos and foundation – over the widest range his poetry will allow.

Music, of course, dominates the opening passages.[2] The lyre's strains quench the thunderbolt of ever-flowing fire, while the eagle of Zeus folds his wings in slumber and even Ares puts aside the clash of spears to find rest. Cosmic harmony is thus effectively and persuasively illustrated. But the lyre is only one side of the coin – its power to soothe is set against the monstrous violence of those not dear to Zeus, those for whom the voice of the Muses brings pain and terror. Chief among these latter is Typhon, the first of several symbols for disorder employed by Pindar in the ode.[3] As far back as Hesiod, Typhon personifies revolt against the Olympian order, a frightful, misbegotten monster who rises up shrieking with his hundred heads to challenge the newly-established gods until Zeus strikes him down to earth with his thunderbolt and imprisons him beneath Aitna.[4] Through this initial polarization Pindar ranges harmony and the gods on one side, violence and the fearful race of those 'whom Zeus does not love' (ὅσσα δὲ μὴ πεφίληκε Ζεύς, l. 13)[5] on the other. As Norwood puts it, 'Zeus and the other gods are proclaimed lovers of the Lyre, while his and its enemies are creatures of disharmony and chaos'.[6]

But the dichotomy thus achieved is not nearly as clear-cut as it looks. The images Pindar uses in the opening passages are complex and contradictory; they develop an interrelation between peace and violence not always easy to define. Finley, for example, notes that the agents of force among the gods seem only hypnotized, and that there is 'lurking doubt about the security of order'.[7] These ideas catch the basic tension of the