choisissent pour lui communiquer l'inspiration, mais d'une collectivité qui, une fois en possession du divin présent, peut en quelque sort se passer de la déesse.' Whether this justifies his conclusion that the gift 'n' est plus divine que par son origine; pour le reste il est entièrement humain' is not self-evident.

58. See Kleingünther (n.16 above); Thraede (n.16 above); T. Cole, *Democritus and the Sources of Greek Anthropology* (Philadelphia 1967).

59. See nn. 11 and 13 above for further references. The principal instance in which the teaching of skills bears no negative connotations is that of the centaur Kheiron, who serves as tutor to both Asklepios (*Pyth.* 3.45f.) and Jason (*Pyth.* 4.102; *Nem.* 3.53-55). Here, however, it is a matter of transaction between an immortal and heroes, and also involves 'total' and 'lived' education. Although it is praised, the teaching practised by such athletic trainers as Melesias (*Ol.* 8.59-64; *Nem.* 6.64-66), Orseas (*Isth.* 4.78-80) and Ilas (*Ol.* 10.16-21) is expressly regarded as ancillary, the refinement of talents themselves considered innate.

60. See Bunn (n.45 above), 23-25: 'So let us define models as tools whose utility has been extended and so transformed that they are no longer means to a different end but are mirrors of the problematic end itself. For the increasing application of an effective tool to wider areas of endeavour renders it a model by reason of its near universality: the principle of the Egyptian astronomer's *gnomon* gradually becomes transformed into the cosmic law [i.e. the "golden section"] of the Great Pyramid; the rope knotted lengthwise into ratios of 3-4-5, used as a measuring tool by Mesopotamian surveyors, becomes a Pythagorean model for the chord music of the spheres; a device such as a watch becomes a model for a mechanistic universe.'

61. See A. Köhnken, *Die Funktion des Mythos bei Pindar* (Berlin 1971), 117-53, esp. 138-47, and 'Perseus' Kampf und Athenes Erfindung', *Hermes* 104 (1976), 257-65, and references therein. Fennell (n.2 above), 276, suggests that *oulion* at line 8 in reference to the plaint of the Gorgons might mean 'varied' or 'shifting' rather than 'dismal'; on this see Köhnken, 136.

62. See for discussion and further references Solmsen (n.12 above), esp. 487-92; W. Theiler, *Zur Geschichte der teleologischen Naturbetrachtung bis auf Aristoteles* (Zürich 1924); R. Walzer, *Magna Moralia und Aristotelische Ethik* (Berlin 1929), 31ff.; J. Wild, 'Plato's Theory of *Tekhnē*: A Phenomenological Interpretation', *Ph.&Phen.R.* 1 (1941), 255-93; Lloyd, *Polarity* . . . (n.41 above), 274-90.

63. C. Mitcham, 'Philosophy and the History of Technology', in G. Bugliarello (ed.). *The History and Philosophy of Technology* (Urbana 1979), 163-201 at 186.

THE SIMILE OF THE FRACTURED PIPE IN OVID'S METAMORPHOSES 4

Carole Newlands

When Pyramus, the romantic hero of Ovid's tale of 'Pyramus and Thisbe' (*Met.* 4.55-166), mistakenly assumes his beloved Thisbe is dead and thus kills himself beneath a mulberry tree with a sword, Ovid punctures this moment of tragic pathos by a simile comparing the blood spurting from Pyramus' wound to water gushing from a broken pipe (4.119-24):[1]

> demisit in ilia ferrum,
> nec mora, ferventi moriens e vulnere traxit
> et iacuit resupinus humo: cruor emicat alte,
> non aliter, quam cum vitiato fistula plumbo
> scinditur et tenui stridente foramine longas
> eiaculatur aquas atque ictibus aera rumpit.
>
> he plunged the sword into his groin,
> and straightaway, dying, he drew it from the seething wound
> and lay back on the ground: the blood spurts high
> exactly as when a pipe, split open from corrupted lead,
> ejaculates a long stream of water through the tiny
> hissing aperture and bursts upon the air with its blows.

Occurring at the climactic moment in the story that Otis compares to *Romeo and Juliet* in its 'intensity of passion',[2] this technological simile strikes a highly discordant note with its blunt reminder of a practical world quite different from the idyllic rural setting in which Pyramus is dying. Compounding the grotesque nature of this simile is its rather overt sexual symbolism.[3] Pyramus' manner of dying suggests a gigantic orgasm. He plunges his sword into his groin (*ilia*, 119); his blood 'ejaculates' on high (*eiaculatur*, 124) with the accompanying violence of the sexual act (*ictibus . . . rumpit*, 'bursts . . . with its blows', 124); the blood produces a new colour in the fruit that are described as 'offspring' (*fetus*, 125). Moreover, *vitiato* ('corrupted', 122) is a word commonly used as a metaphor for the act of defloration. In its violence of imagery and choice of the specific words *emicat* ('spurts high') and *ictus* ('blows'), the simile is clearly reminiscent of the opening of Lucretius' diatribe against love in Book 4 of the *De Rerum Natura*.[4]

This technological image, with its crudely sexual and anti-romantic associations, colours Pyramus' dying moments with an apparently inappropriate bathos. Ovid's humour, if humour it is, seems misplaced here. The simile has provoked the harsh condemnation of G. Karl Galinsky, who claims that it proves Ovid's 'delight in the cruel, the macabre, and the gory'.[5]

Defenders of Ovid, on the other hand, have tried to find a rational explanation for the simile that does not detract from Ovid's artistic merits. Michael von Albrecht, for instance, claims that Ovid needs this technological image in order to make the metamorphosis of the mulberry tree's fruit credible.[6] The blood dyes the white berries of the mulberry tree red; since the tree is, moreover, lofty (*ardua*, 90), Ovid uses an image that will help make realistic the high trajectory of blood necessary for the staining of the fruit. Yet this suggestion is not very convincing, since Ovid goes on to provide a more plausible explanation for the metamorphosis. The roots of the tree, drenched in blood, also dye the berries, so they do not need to be sprayed (126f.). Von Albrecht makes a further suggestion, that the simile marks a return to epic objectivity at a moment of tragic pathos.[7] He ignores its jarringly comic force that invites the reader to view Pyramus' demise not dispassionately but with an uncomfortable sense of the ridiculous.

Otis provides a response completely different from von Albrecht's, namely that the simile reveals Ovid's mock-epic technique.[8] Yet the conventions that Ovid seems to be mocking here are those of romance, rather than of epic. While such mockery may seem inappropriate to the story, it is, as we shall see, quite appropriate to the character of the story's narrator.

The story of Pyramus and Thisbe is the first of the tales told by the daughters of Minyas while they sit at home spinning in defiance of Bacchus, whose rites are being celebrated outside. In its original form, the story seems to have been set in the countryside, in a remote part of Cilicia; Pyramus and Thisbe were lovers who were turned into a river god and a nymph of a spring.[9] The story that Ovid has the unnamed daughter of Minyas tell, however, bears the ingredients not of local legend but of romance, the fictive prose tales of *erōtika pathēmata* that became popular in the Hellenistic world.[10] The story begins by linking the names of the two lovers as if in a title to a romantic love story (55).[11] The lovers have lost their divine status and are ordinary humans, distinguished only by their exceptional beauty (55f.). They live not in the country but in the exotic Eastern city of Babylon, built by Queen Semiramis (58), the heroine of the popular Ninus romance. This is an early, fragmentary work concerning the love and marriage of the Babylonian queen and her Assyrian suitor, a couple who, despite their royal status and historical importance, act like lovesick teenagers.[12] As a further reminder of this romance, Pyramus and Thisbe meet at Ninus' tomb, which Ovid displaces over two hundred miles from Nineveh to just outside the city walls of Babylon.[13]

At first, the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe proceeds in accordance with the conventions of romance. Their love is star-crossed, for their parents refuse to let them marry (60f.). With the typical ingenuity of lovers, Pyramus and Thisbe find a way to talk — through a hole in the dividing wall of their houses — and subsequently manage to escape from their homes. However, their plans to meet outside the city walls are foiled by the sort of unforeseen event that is a staple of Hellenistic romance. A lioness, who has just killed

some cattle, approaches Thisbe while she is waiting for Pyramus. As Thisbe runs away, she drops her cloak, which the lioness bloodies with her mouth (96-104). Pyramus of course finds the bloodied cloak and jumps to the conclusion that Thisbe is dead (107-115); in despair he plunges a sword into his body (119f.).

With Pyramus' suicide, the pattern of romance breaks down. It is not unusual in romance for lovers to come close to death. The heroine of Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*, for instance, undergoes apparent disembowelment and decapitation in the course of the story, and yet survives in the end to marry the hero.[14] Error is often combined with attempted suicide. A parallel particularly close to the suicide of Pyramus occurs in an early romance, Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*. Chaereas, convinced that he has killed his beloved Callirhoe, attempts to commit suicide but is rescued at the last moment by his friend Polycharmus. At the same time Callirhoe's 'death' is taken so seriously that she is actually entombed before she eventually regains consciousness.[15] The brush with death, followed by a marvellous 'resurrection' or rescue, occurs so regularly in romance that Heiserman names it one of the most powerful conventions of the genre.[16] But contrary to convention, there is no last minute rescue for Pyramus; his death is real, not apparent. In *The Novel in Antiquity*, Hägg points out that one necessary motif in an exciting love story is a separation that leads, after many adventures, to the happy reunion of the lovers.[17] Readers approaching Ovid's story for the first time may expect that Pyramus and Thisbe will somehow bungle their meeting and become separated. One does not expect their separation to be permanent, nor their suicides to be successful. But instead of a happy reunion in life, they are given a tragic reunion in death, their remains placed together in a single urn. With its word play, *una . . . in urna* (166), the phrase emphasises that the urn is emblematic of the grim unification it effects.

The narrator therefore follows the conventions of romance only to break them at the crucial point when we would expect the adventures of the protagonists to begin. The Babylonian setting and the references to Semiramis and Ninus lead us to expect a happy resolution to the romance like that of the royal pair, but our expectations are shattered. Thisbe, of course, has her marvellous escape from the lioness. When she returns to the meeting-place she is, in a sense, eager to continue the romance narrative by her account of her adventure (130):

> quantaque vitarit narrare pericula gestit.
>
> She intends to tell the story of the great dangers she avoided.

But, unfortunately, the immediately preceding lines have changed the genre. The simile of the broken pipe marks the strategic point in the story when the pattern of romance is arrested. The disruptive nature of the simile reinforces

the dislocation of the story and generic expectations at this point.

According to Due, Ovid's subversion of the conventions of romance is merely an example of his omnipresent irony.[18] The simile of the fractured pipe is not simply ironic, however; it helps illuminate the character of Ovid's narrator here, one of the daughters of Minyas. Contrary to tradition, Ovid makes the sisters unmarried.[19] Thus their refusal to worship Bacchus is part of a larger refusal to indulge the passions. While the rites of Bacchus are being celebrated outside, they prefer to sit indoors and weave, thereby venerating Minerva (38), a virgin and a skilled craftswoman like themselves. Their stories, which all concern unhappy love or tragic relations between the sexes, reflect their pessimism about love and their suspicion of the emotions associated with Bacchus that break beyond the bounds of civilised behaviour.[20] The first sister's disruption of a key moment of pathos in the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe is well chosen as a sign of her own impatience with the fragile world of emotions. The simile is designed to shock and to indicate, from the narrator's point of view, how rash Pyramus' suicide is. Through the surprising overturn of romantic conventions, the narrator justifies emphatically her own withdrawal from passionate experience.

The rather lurid sexual connotations of the simile may seem surprising in the mouth of the chaste narrator, but again they provide insight into her character. Lacking first-hand erotic experience, she typically uses Lucretian imagery that suggests that sexual love is not only wasteful but is also violent and, indeed, repulsive.[21] Pyramus' manner of dying provides, in her mind, further justification for her avoidance of extreme emotion. She puts her faith in the work of her hands and in the virgin goddess who protects her craft, Minerva. Moreover, despite its grotesque implications, the technological nature of the simile would obviously have a strong initial appeal to one who chooses to work skilfully with her hands rather than indulge the passions.

In the frame to the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe, as in the tale itself, Ovid establishes a contrast between the controlled, ordered world within the city and the wild, unknown regions beyond. The vision and understanding of the daughters of Minyas is shown as limited, however.

Before the first narrator begins the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe, Bacchus is presented in a not entirely negative light. When Bacchic worship first comes to Thebes, it is described as a form of savage, animalistic behaviour (3.528-30):

> Liber adest: festisque fremunt ululatibus agri
> turba ruunt, mixtaeque viris matresque nurusque,
> et vulgus proceresque, ignota ad sacra feruntur.
>
> Bacchus is at hand, and the fields are in ferment with the festive howlings:
> the mob rushes, and mixed in with the men mothers and daughters-in-law,
> common folk and nobles, are borne to unknown rites.

Although the occasion is festive, the fields are filled with bestial cries and wailings. Celebration of Bacchus' rites draws the people precipitately away from the city, just as love will later propel Pyranus and Thisbe. Furthermore, the people are drawn 'to rites they do not understand' (*ignota ad sacra*, 530). Emotional freedom seems to be based here on an exuberant but dangerous ignorance. Yet though the final scene of Book 3 is the dismemberment of Pentheus (3.701-31), this is balanced by the much longer, attractive tale of Bacchus' youth, where he gives the impious sailors much better than they deserve by turning them into dolphins (3.582-691). Worship of Bacchus is presented as involving abnegation of human reason and ordered existence for the sake of a youthful freedom that is joyous — if uncrossed.

Book 4 continues the ambiguous depiction of Bacchus. The women who abandon domestic work for animal skins and the thyrsus are the *matresque nurusque* ('the mothers and the daughters-in-law', 9) a phrase that makes a sinister recall of 3.529 and the subsequent murder of Pentheus at his mother's hand. Furthermore, their incantatory worship of Bacchus is expressed in verse with a jingling rhyme that suggests the hypnotic effect of the god upon his followers (11-15). Yet these lines are followed by ones in which the Ovidian narrator himself intrudes and sings a personal paean to Bacchus' youth (17ff.). With his direct address to Bacchus, Ovid seems to be espousing the same emotions as the Thebans. The daughers of Minyas may appear as the proponents of ordered, creative activity. They sit sedately within their house, busy with useful work and cloistered from the dangerous freedom of the outdoors. Yet Ovid makes clear that in so doing they are guilty of *impietas* (4). The Bacchic revels are taking place at the 'order' (*iusserat*, 8) of a priest, and so are a form of obedience (cf. *parent*, 9) on the part of the populace, well warned by the example of Pentheus; thus the defiance of daughters of Minyas represents dangerous, thoughtless disobedience.

For their omniscient manipulator, Ovid, the simile of the broken pipe marks the ironic culmination of a pattern that runs through the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe, the opposition between Minerva and Bacchus. With the final triumph of natural life over technological skill, and emotion over reason, this story foreshadows the outcome of the Minyeides' resolute defiance of Bacchus through their physical and emotional exclusion of his powers. The tale of Pyramus and Thisbe serves as a warning tale that illustrates the inadequacy of civilised values and skills before powerful natural forces. It is a warning that the Minyeides ignore to their detriment.

In each of the three stages of the story leading up to the double suicide, there is a marked emphasis on technological achievement which is nonetheless fatally flawed. The city of Semiramis is famed for its wonderful high walls of brick (57f.),[22] yet the chink in the house wall that Pyramus and Thisbe discover represents a *vitium* (67), a fatal flaw in human handiwork. The hole in the wall through which Pyramus and Thisbe conduct their amorous exchanges serves a symbolic as well as a practical purpose. It suggests the triumph of emotion over the boundaries and barriers that human

beings construct to contain the irrational within themselves as well as within the world of nature. Significantly, Pyramus and Thisbe agree to meet outside the city walls (86), for their love is a force that presses outside the restraints of civilised convention.

The place where they meet is a *locus amoenus* that seems on the surface to possess ties with the enclosed urban world that Pyramus and Thisbe have left behind. Their confidence in its apparent safety reveals their ignorance of the world outside the safe confines of their home. One clear sign of human handiwork remains at their trysting-place, Ninus' tomb. In reality, Ninus' tomb was two hundred miles away at Nineveh; the more famous tomb of his queen, Semiramis, was just outside the walls of Babylon. If Ovid confuses Ninus' tomb with that of Semiramis, which was reputedly a magnificent building, a marvel of technological skill,[23] then its presence here is not a melancholy feature but a proud sign of human achievement. At any rate, Ninus' tomb is described as more secure, more domesticated than the dangerous outdoors from which is is somewhat set apart (4.87f.):

> neve sit errandum lato spatiantibus arvo,
> conveniant ad busta Nini.
>
> Lest they should go astray while travelling over the wide terrain,
> they should meet at Ninus' tomb.

Moreover, tombs were a regular feature of the sacral-idyllic landscapes that were a common subject in Roman wall-paintings.[24] With its features of tomb, tree and cave, the meeting-place suggests the peacefulness between man and nature found in such paintings. Again, the tomb is a reminder of a pair of lovers, Ninus and Semiramis, who after many adventures enjoyed a happy married love. Characteristically, however, Ovid abruptly shatters the illusion of security.[25] For the meeting-place is not a sacral-idyllic landscape framed upon a wall but is in fact unprotected from the surrounding untamed countryside. It is not goats who seek refreshment here, as in a sacral-idyllic landscape, but a lioness with jaws bleeding fresh from the kill (96-98). Ovid thus draws an ironic contrast between the apparent peacefulness of the setting and the random violence that intrudes upon it. The irrational panicking of Pyramus and Thisbe mocks the royal tomb, which represents human authority and skill. Outside the city walls and the bounds of human restraint, art has no power to protect. In their lack of control, Pyramus and Thisbe lose themselves to the new world in which they find themselves.[26]

The simile of the broken pipe that occurs at the climax of the story concludes the pattern of disjunction between order and passion, art and nature. The description of its faulty lead as *vitiato* ('corrupted', 'flawed', 122) recalls the description of the hole in the wall as a *vitium* ('flaw', 67). In both cases the fissure is 'tiny' (*tenui*, 65 and 123), and yet can act as the symbolical outlet for the outpouring of passion. Although the simile is

grotesque and undercuts the pathos of Pyramus' dying moments, it has a serious point, for it reinforces and concludes the theme of the vulnerability of human technology.[27] Babylon is famous for its lofty brick walls, yet it is through an imperfection in these walls, a tiny hole that has been overlooked in the initial building (65f.), that the lovers can initiate their fatal communication. The tomb of Ninus is another impressive reminder of the builder's art, yet it harbours wild beasts, and the nearby mulberry tree is fertilised by human blood. Human skill at its finest, it seems, is nonetheless fallible; furthermore, art is shown as essentially impotent before the forces of human passion. The simile of the broken pipe is the last reference to human technology in this story, and it represents the failure of this technology in the most striking form. Dyed with Pyramus' blood, the *mora* ('mulberries', 127) bear the anagram *amor* ('love'), and thus symbolise the triumph of the vegetable world, of the Bacchic realm, over human constraint and the virginal world of Minerva. Furthermore, the *mora* ('mulberries') are ironically reminiscent of the *mora* ('delay', 120), the cautionary delay which Pyramus fails to observe, thus causing his own *mors* ('death').[28]

Galinsky sees the simile as virtually existing in its own right and thus epitomising Ovid's preference for a fragmented structure composed of separate, independent elements.[29] On the contrary, the simile of the broken pipe is a pivotal force in the dialectic between Minerva and Bacchus that runs ironically throughout the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe. With the exception of the tale of Mars and Venus (171-89), which shows that the behaviour of the gods cannot be correlated with that of humans, the tales that the daughters of Minyas tell illustrate the triumph of Bacchic forces in nature and in human beings. The tale told by the second sister, Leuconoe, that of the Sun's love for Leucothoe (190-207), contains a clearly ironic warning. Leucothoe is shown quietly spinning with her handmaidens when the Sun god intrudes on her apartment and forces her to submit to his passion (219-33); later she is buried alive under a mound of earth in punishment (234-55). The similarity between the name of the narrator and the heroine of the story suggests a closer connection in fate. This scene of Leucothoe's weaving foreshadows the final one in which the daughters of Minyas are metamorphosed into bats by the avenging power of Bacchus. Like Leucothoe, they are quietly spinning with their maidservants when divine forces put an end to their work and to their human lives (389-415).

The third story, that of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis (285-388), deals with an innocent youth adrift, like Pyramus and Thisbe, in the wilderness. He is raped by a nymph and loses his masculine form and identity. Salmacis appears at first as a sophisticated, idle woman who chooses to lounge by the poolside in see-through garments rather than hunt with Diana's nymphs (304-15). Her sudden change to a savage, elemental power intent on rape reinforces Ovid's concern here with the failure of art to protect. Hermaphroditus too is described in similes that suggest he resembles a work of art, such as ivory statues or lillies under glass (354f.); in other words, his

beauty is extremely fragile. In the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe, art exists but is flawed. In the final tale of this series, art appears on the one hand as highly vulnerable; on the other, as manifested in the refinements of Salmacis, it is simply a veneer, a dangerous pretence. The tales that the daughters of Minyas tell reveal a deepening and sinister increase in the forcefulness of nature's powers.[30]

Ironically, the daughters of Minyas seem unaware of the warnings implicit in their stories. They put their trust in the ordering power of their art and in their patroness, Minerva, calling her a *melior dea* ('better goddess', 38), superior to Bacchus. To symbolise their rejection of the physical and emotional freedom of Bacchus, they shut themselves up indoors within the city to perform 'useful handiwork' (*utile manuum opus*, 39). In fact, Minerva cannot save them. Indeed, the Minyeides' art is responsible for their punishment, since dedication to their work insults Bacchus. As the first story clearly suggests, Bacchus is in fact the *melior deus*, the 'better god'.

The simile of the broken pipe should not therefore be dismissed as either a tasteless error or a *jeu d'esprit*. Rather, its function and effect should be evaluated in the context not only of the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe but of the larger tale that encompasses it. By studying the relationship between the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe and its frame, we can see that the simile plays a pivotal function in illustrating Ovid's skill in adapting the story to the character of its narrator. At the same time, it provides a focal point for the contrast between human control and failure, between art and nature, between the forces of Minerva and Bacchus that spans the tale's immediate context to include its narrator and her creator, Ovid.

The simile has a complex function. It suits the character of the narrator, who has a practical mind and wishes to show the folly of emotional extravagance; at the same time it ironically suggests her shortsightedness in putting complete faith in the practical life. With her stubborn, virginal exclusion of the life of the passions and the imagination she cannot act as a prototype of Ovid's ideal artist. She is too limited a character. Even in her metamorphosed state she and her sisters still 'cultivate the indoors, not the woods' (*tectaque, non silvas celebrant*, 414).

According to E. W. Leach, the daughters of Minyas share with the other artists in the *Metamorphoses* the problems of 'reconciling personal vision with the nature of reality and of preserving integrity of artistic expression within an authoritarian and uncertain world'.[31] But the Minyeides' stubborn defiance of Bacchus and adherence to virginity are not presented in such a way as to suggest a personal vision. While they exhibit a strong need for order and control, their handwork is not described as the product of the artist's need for self-expression; weaving and spinning are simply the daily tasks of virtuous women. As Frederick Ahl says in connection with this story, 'It is woman's working obligation, not her artistic avocation, to weave.'[32]

Despite its tragicomic elements, the demise of Pyramus and Thisbe is far more compelling than that of the practically minded narrator who refuses to

continue the romance and deflates the moment of high tragedy with her simile of a plumbing disaster. Ovid's attitude towards the daughters of Minyas, like his attitude towards Bacchus, remains ambivalent. Yet, while the narrator and her sisters may not fully engage our sympathies, nevertheless the problems posed by any creative endeavour of even the humblest kind are articulated in their stories clearly for the first time in the *Metamorphoses*. And by the time we have read of the fate of that other weaver, Arachne, who seems to combine the imaginative power of Bacchus with the technical skill of Minerva and yet is cruelly punished by that goddess (*Met.* 6.1-145), the problem first posed by Ovid within the humorous context of a burlesque of romance takes on a more serious dimension. If Minerva helps neither the average artist nor the exceptional one, where is the artist to turn for protection and support? Human fallibility has fatal consequences in a world ruled by largely unsympathetic, autocratic powers. The simile of the fractured pipe thus has far more than comic overtones. Its function is a complex one that touches upon a deep concern of Ovid throughout the *Metamorphoses*, the frightening vulnerability of human attempts to control and order the world, whether through building walls, constructing pipes, or weaving tapestries.

Cornell University

NOTES

1. All quotations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are from the Teubner edition of W. S. Anderson (Leipzig 1977).

2. B. Otis, *Ovid as an Epic Poet* (Cambridge 1970), 154.

3. I do not, however, subscribe to a sexual interpretation of the story as a whole. In this I differ from C. P. Segal, 'Narrative Art in the *Metamorphoses*', *CJ* 66 (1971), 331-37, who interprets the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe as the fusion of 'a condensed account of two young people passing through the crucial stages of maturation with a symbolical journey into the hidden darkness and danger of that *nox silens* (84) of sexual experience and adult life' (333). Following this line of thought, C. C. Rhorer, 'Red and White in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: The Mulberry Tree in the Tale of Pyramus and Thisbe', *Ramus* 9 (1980), 79-88, sees the lovers' decision to meet at night as a sign of a change in their affection, which is now touched by shame (83). This is to ignore the practical side of the lovers' arrangement, for most importantly of all, they can escape at night unseen. Furthermore, Rhorer describes Thisbe's loss of her *velamina* (101) when she flees the lioness as 'the rape of her veil . . . a symbolic violation of her chastity' (p. 84). But *velamina*, elsewhere *amictus* (104) and *vestem* (107), means cloak, not veil, and the symbolism would work better if the animal in question were male.

4. Cf. Lucretius 4.1049f.: *namque omnes plerumque cadunt in vulnus et illam / emicat in partem sanguis unde icimur ictu* ('For all generally fall towards the wound and the blood spurts towards that part from which the blow struck us'). Two lines later (1052) Lucretius again uses *ictus* as a metaphor for ejaculation. I am grateful to Dr. Stephen Hinds for pointing out this parallel, and also for his many other invaluable comments on this paper.

5. G. K. Galinsky, *Ovid's Metamorphoses* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1975), 153. This simile has provoked a variety of contradictory responses. F. Schmitt-von Mühlenfels, *Pyramus und Thisbe: Rezeptionstypen eines Ovidischen Stoffes in Literatur, Kunst und Musik* (Heidelberg 1972), 22, sees it as one of the features of the story which reveal Ovid's charming humour. Other critics ignore or underplay the violent impact of this simile. Thus for Otis (n.2 above), 155, the metamorphosis, of which the simile is an integral part, is 'slight and inconsequential'.

25. H. Parry, 'Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: Violence in a Pastoral Landscape', *TAPA* 95 (1964), 268-82, followed by C. P. Segal, *Landscape in Ovid's Metamorphoses: The Transformation of a Literary Symbol* (Wiesbaden 1969), show how the ideal landscape in Ovid's epic is inevitably the setting for unexpected violence.

26. While I agree with Rhorer (n.3 above) that the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe is one of 'innocence destroyed by passion, of the dangers that lurk outside the walls of civilization and that threaten lovers who desire to obliterate the physical and spiritual boundaries that separate them' (84), I would broaden the sphere of reference. 'The dangers that lurk outside the walls of civilization' are also within them, and they threaten not only lovers.

27. Segal (n.25 above), 50, suggests that this 'bathetic simile' is 'a self-conscious mockery of the suspenseful and mysteriously symbolic setting which he (Ovid) has created for the first half of the episode'. The simile marks a change in genre and in tone rather than in setting, for it reinforces the technological aspect with its grim parody of the *locus amoenus*.

28. Contrast Thisbe's cautionary behaviour: *sed postquam remorata suos cognovit amores* ('but after she delayed she recognised her love', 137).

29. Galinsky (n.5 above), 128.

30. My view here is contrary to V. Pöschl, 'Mythologie und Dichtung in den Metamorphosen Ovids', *Acta Philologica Aenipontana, Bd. 1* (Innsbruck 1962), 63, who sees the series of tales as representing a progressive upswing in love's fortunes, the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe being the most gloomy. It is hard to interpret the burial alive of Leucothoe, due to jealous, deliberate sniping, as less gloomy than Pyramus' mistaken suicide.

31. Leach (n.19 above), 107. Ovid's concern in the *Metamorphoses* with the problems of the artist's survival has received recent critical attention by V. M. Wise, 'Flight Myths in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*', *Ramus* 6 (1977), 44-59; C. P. Segal, 'The Magic of Orpheus and the Ambiguities of Language', *Ramus* 7 (1978), 106-142; and D. Lateiner, 'Mythic and Non-Mythic Artists in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*', *Ramus* 13 (1984), 1-30.

32. F. Ahl, *Metaformations* (Ithaca and London 1985), 225. In his introduction to chapter 7 ('Nature Imitating Art'), Ahl suggests (237) that the evolution of humans into deliberate artists is a gradual process in the *Metamorphoses*, beginning with Deucalion and Pyrrha, the random throwers of stones in Book 1, and culminating with Pygmalion.