RED AND WHITE IN OVID'S METAMORPHOSES: THE MULBERRY TREE IN THE TALE OF PYRAMUS AND THISBE

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Throughout the *Metamorphoses* Ovid draws special attention to the colors red and white. Red (*rubor, rutilus, rubesco, puniceus, purpureus,* 'red' or 'purple') is, of course, the color of blood,[1] of a blush,[2] of ripening fruit,[3] Tyrean dye,[4] and the sky at dawn.[5] White is the color of marble,[6] ivory,[7] lilies,[8] and the sky at noon.[9] If we examine this pair in *erotic* contexts, however, we will find that white is associated with innocence and chastity, with the frigid absence of sexual feeling and with emotional and physical death. Red is associated with *pudor,* that sense of shame that afflicts the innocent whose eyes have just been opened to erotic reality, and with the heat of violence, both the violence of feeling (*furor*) and the violence of rape.

Perhaps one of the most familiar examples of this color contrast and its erotic associations occurs in the story of Pygmalion and his ivory maiden, in Book X. Ovid is emphatic that the statue is ivory (X.247-48: *niveum . . . ebur,* 'snowy ivory'; 255: *ebur,* twice) and that the ivory is white. Her ivory flesh, however, is so lifelike that the sculptor fears she will bruise. He dresses her like a real woman, adorns her with countless gifts, and makes her recline on a couch covered with red-dyed spreads (X.267: *conlocat hanc stratis concha Sidonide tinctis*). Here the red coverlets must reflect not only the value of the gifts, but also the heat of Pygmalion's own growing and only half-admitted passion (X.252-53: *miratur et haurit/pectore Pygmalion simulati corporis ignes,* 'Pygmalion marvels and in his breast drinks in fires for the imitation body'). When the statue does finally begin to come to life, the first sign is the appearance of warmth (X.281: *visa tepere est,* 'she seemed to grow warm'; X.284-85: *ut Hymettia sole/cera remollescit,* 'as Hymettian wax softens in the sun'), next the pulse of blood in her veins (X.289: *saliunt temptatae venae,* 'the veins, tested, jump'). He kisses her and she awakens: *sensit et erubuit* ('she felt them and blushed', X.293). The two verbs go together as naturally as the more common *vidit et incaluit* ('he saw and grew hot'), the experience of the more aggressive partner in such affairs. After her arousal to life, particularly to sexual life, the maiden is rapidly married and gives birth. With the first blush comes her full awareness as a sexual being.

The experience of Narcissus in Book III is quite similar. When first he sees his reflection in the cold, silver pond (III.407: *nitidis argenteus undis,* 'silver with its shining waters'; 412: *silvaque sole locum passura tepescere nullo,* 'and a thicket which let no sun warm the place') he is transfixed by his own beauty: *haeret ut e Pario formatum marmore signum* ('he stays there like a statue made of Parian marble', III.419). Almost immediately, however, his marble whiteness is infused with color, and he admires not only the smooth paleness of his neck, *eburnea colla* ('ivory neck', III.422), but also the gentle blush of his skin: *et in niveo mixtum candore ruborem*

('and redness mingled with snowy white', III.423). From a cold and unfeeling statue who, Ovid has told us, spurned all lovers, he has become a living and hotly passionate boy (III.430: *uritur,* 'he burns'; 464: *uror amore mei, flammas moveoque feroque!* 'I burn with love of myself, I inflame and am inflamed!'). We see him as the first blush of feeling steals over his ivory complexion, just as we saw Pygmalion's statue come to life.

Later, when he has discovered his disastrous error and grieves for his unattainable love, he beats his breast with marble palms (III.481: *marmoreis percussit pectora palmis*) and his flesh takes on a rosy hue:

> pectora traxerunt roseum percussa ruborem,
> non aliter quam poma solent, quae candida parte,
> parte rubent, aut ut variis solet uva racemis
> ducere purpureum nondum matura colorem.
>
> (III.482-85)

> His breast, when struck, took on a rosy flush,
> As apples often do, which white in part,
> In part are red, or as grapes not yet ripe
> In speckled clusters, acquire a purplish tint.

Narcissus has offered this demonstration of his grief after describing his mirrored image as food for his passion (III.479: *misero praebere alimenta furori,* 'to nourish wretched madness'), and just so, the more he feels, the more he blushes, like fruit ripening in the warmth of the sun.[10] But as soon as he sees his own image growing rosy and ripe, he can endure his passion no longer, and begins to melt away like wax or frost:

> non tulit ulterius, sed, ut intabescere flavae
> igne levi cerae, matutinaeque pruinae
> sole tepente solent, sic adtenuatus amore
> liquitur et tecto paulatim carpitur igni.
>
> (III.487-90)

> He could bear it no longer, but as yellow wax melts
> In mild heat, or like the morning frost
> In warm sun, reduced by love he wastes
> And bit by bit is worn away by unseen fire.

He loses first of all the color that had indicated his coming to life: *et neque iam color est mixto candore rubori* ('no longer has he the color of red and whiteness mixed', III.491). He dies but his unrequited love survives. Narcissus himself spends the rest of eternity gazing at his reflection in a pool of the Underworld, and on earth, in the place where he first encountered the power of love, a yellow flower springs up in the midst of pale leaves: *croceum pro corpore florem/inveniunt foliis medium cingentibus albis* (III.509-10). Saffron-yellow, like red, is a color connected by Ovid with

the dawn (III.150), and it is traditionally associated with the Roman wedding.[11] Furthermore, *croceus* is, elsewhere in Ovid, a synonym for the color red in general.[12] Even as a flower, Narcissus remains an image of innocence brushed with the fire of passion.[13]

Hermaphroditus is a similar figure, whose first encounter with passion in the person of Salmacis is also described in terms of the contrast of red and white:

> pueri rubor ora notavit—
> nescit enim quid amor—, sed et erubuisse decebat.
> hic color aprica pendentibus arbore pomis
> aut ebori tincto est, aut sub candore rubenti,
> cum frustra resonant aera auxiliaria, lunae.
>
> (IV.329-33)

> A redness marked the boy's face;
> For he knew nothing of love; but the blush enhanced his features,
> Apples hanging on a sunny tree have that color,
> And stained ivory, or the moon red under its pallor
> When bronze instruments clang in vain to bring her aid.

The image of tinted ivory, like Narcissus' marble hands and ivory neck, like Pygmalion's ivory statue, suggests Hermaphroditus' innocence, here made explicit: *nescit enim quid amor* ('for he knew nothing of love'). But the ivory is dyed, and the other points of the simile, the ripening fruit, the eclipsed moon being summoned back to life by the cymbals, suggest his latent and awakening sexuality. The emphasis, however, remains on his rejection of passion, as Salmacis reaches out to clasp his ivory neck, *eburnea colla* (IV.335). When Hermaphroditus sheds his clothes, she becomes still more inflamed and her eyes, like the pool itself, gleam with the sun's heat (IV.347-49). Hermaphroditus remains cool and white: *ut eburnea si quis/ signa tegat claro vel candida lilia vitro* ('as if someone were covering ivory statues or white lilies with clear glass', IV.354-55). Here that whiteness seems still more frozen in its glasslike covering of water. Though Ovid does not again refer to color in the tale, its final word (IV.388) is *tinxit* ('dyed'). As the blushing Hermaphroditus resembled dyed ivory, so his incorporation with Salmacis, his brutal discovery of sexual passion, has been like being dipped in the dye of what Ovid calls (IV.388) *incestum medicamen,* 'an unchaste potency'.

A third parallel figure is Atalanta in Book X. She too, as an unawakened virgin, has an ivory complexion: *tergaque iactantur crines per eburnea* ('her hair is tossed over her ivory back', X.592). Under the admiring gaze of Hippomenes, however, she blushes:

inque puellari corpus candore ruborem
traxerat, haud aliter, quam cum super atria velum
candida purpureum simulatas inficit umbras.
(X.594-96)

And the girlish whiteness of her body reddened,
Just as when a purple curtain across a white hall
Discolors it with simulated shadows.

The association of the chaste blush with shadows is particularly striking. Ovid elsewhere frequently associates *pudor* with shade, twilight or darkness.[14] Here, Atalanta's blush is the first sign of her awakening passion, the first symptom of *pudor* in the face of her unconscious love: *ignorans amat et non sentit amorem* ('unaware, she loves and does not understand her love', X.637).

These general observations about the contrast of red and white in erotic situations lend further poignancy to specific details in the story of Tereus, Procne and Philomela. The contrast first appears, indirectly, in the double simile that compares the raped Philomela to an injured lamb or dove:

illa tremit, velut agna pavens, quae saucia cani
ore excussa lupi nondum sibi tuta videtur:
utque columba suo madefactis sanguine plumis
horret adhuc avidosque timet, quibus haeserat, ungues.
(VI.527-30)

She shakes, like a frightened lamb which, cast wounded
From a grey wolf's jaws, distrusts apparent safety,
And like a dove, feathers wet with her own blood,
Which shudders still and fears the greedy talons which
had her trapped.

Both animals are white,[15] and both are common parallels for the fleeing virgin.[16] The blood-smeared lamb and dove, then, are graphic representations of sexual innocence overcome by erotic violence. This same contrast, with the same significance, occurs more prominently in Philomela's tapestry: *purpureasque notas filis intexuit albis* ('she embroidered purple designs on white cloth', VI.577). Philomela, like Ovid, chooses the colors red and white to communicate her violated chastity. And at the end of the tale, the spot of blood reappears on the breasts of the sparrows Procne and Philomela (VI.670: *signataque sanguine pluma est,* 'their plumage is stamped with blood'), the blood of the innocent child Itys, shed in the *furor* of erotic vengeance.

It is in this context of violent, erotic red and innocent, unawakened white that we must read the story of Pyramus and Thisbe in Book IV. The story is framed by the miracle of the mulberry tree, whose berries have changed from white to blood-red:[17] *quae poma alba ferebat/ut nunc nigra ferat con-*

tactu sanguinis arbor ('how a tree which used to bear white fruit now through contact with blood bears black', IV.51-52) and *nam color in pomo est, ubi permaturuit, ater* ('for the fruit when ripened is black in color', IV.165). We are referred to this miracle several times within the body of the tale as well: *arbor ibi niveis uberrima pomis* ('there was a tree there laden with snowy berries', IV.89); *arborei fetus aspergine caedis in atram/vertuntur faciem, madefactaque sanguine radix/purpureo tingit pendentia mora colore* ('the tree's fruit sprayed with gore is darkened and the roots drenched with blood taint the hanging mulberries with a purplish color', 125-27); *sic facit incertam pomi color* ('still the fruit's color perplexes her', 132). This tree, whose berries change from white to red, is kept constantly before our eyes in a tale which *appears* to concern lovers who die with their chastity intact.

Until this fateful day, the lovers have been content to talk to one another in the daytime, through the crack in their wall. At night, we are told, they would separate (IV.79: *sub noctem dixere 'Vale',* 'at nightfall they said "Goodbye"'), only to come together again at the dawn:

> postera nocturnos Aurora removerat ignes,
> solque pruinosas radiis siccaverat herbas:
> ad solitum coiere locum.
>
> (IV.81-83)

> The next day's dawn had ousted the fires of night,
> And the sun's rays had dried the frost on the grass:
> They met at the usual place.

Since most Ovidian lovers contrive to meet at night, and since in any event one would have thought it easier for them to be unobserved at night, their behavior seems inappropriate. Night and shadow, of course, are proper for *pudor,* but unnecessary for innocence. Pyramus and Thisbe confine their meetings to the daylight hours, when Aurora has taken away the night fires, because they are still chaste and untouched by shame. Though they love, they have yet to experience the real power of erotic desire.

Consequently their decision to meet outside the city walls at night, although such a meeting would have been easier to arrange in the daylight, when people were normally out and about, and when there would have been no danger of losing the way (IV.87: *neve sit errandum),* represents a change in the nature of their affection, a movement away from the innocent whiteness of the noon sky.

Thisbe, like so many Ovidian females made bold by her desire (IV.96: *audacem faciebat amor*), reaches the appointed spot too soon. She is just in time to meet a lioness. The lion is the image of a violent predator, connected by the poet with the wooing lover[18] and with the erotic figures of Hippomenes and Atalanta, who offended Venus and were aroused by her to defile the sanctuary of Cybele with sexual intercourse.[19] Thisbe escapes

from the thirsty lioness, but leaves behind her cloak to be bloodied in her place. One wonders why the draught of water did not wash the blood from the beast's mouth, and must conclude that for Ovid the bloodied cloak, not just a torn and shredded garment, is more important than logical consistency.

The episode has sexual overtones. By this time in the *Metamorphoses,* we must surely have become alert to the erotic dangers that lurk in forest pools and rivers, dangers that have already overtaken Syrinx, Actaeon and Narcissus and will soon catch up with Hermaphroditus. Thisbe's close brush with the lioness is like a brush with sexuality itself, and the rape of her veil is a symbolic violation of her chastity.[20]

Pyramus finds the bloodied garment and quite properly rebukes himself for arriving late. His first response is the pallor of fear (IV.106: *totoque expalluit ore,* 'he grew pale throughout all his face'), a frequent symptom of approaching death and the opposite of the innocent lover's blush.[21] What will destroy the pair, he exclaims, is night (IV.108: *una duos nox perdet amantes,* 'a single night will destroy two lovers'), a statement whose symbolic truth he can only dimly perceive. He fulfills his desire to be joined with Thisbe by clutching her cloak and killing himself under their appointed tree, leaving his body as prey to the lions he believes to have killed her. His death is like an erotic embrace, as he kisses the garment, plunges his sword in his groin (IV.119: *demisit in ilia ferrum)* and lies back, spent, while his hot blood gushes forth[22] like water from a broken pipe to impregnate the fruit of the tree (IV.125: *arborei fetus)* with its red dye.

Thisbe returns in fear lest she deceive her lover (IV.128: *ne fallat amantem) — fallat* ('deceive') being a word with particular erotic overtones,[23] especially significant here in the context of Thisbe's quasi-erotic brush with the lioness. She grows pale at the sight of her dying lover (IV.134-35: *oraque buxo/pallidiora gerens,* 'her face becoming paler than boxwood') and mingles her tears with his blood, her first attempt at physical union and the parallel to Pyramus' gesture with her cloak. When she discovers his ivory scabbard empty of its sword (IV.147-48: *ense/vidit ebur vacuum),* her impulse, like Pyramus' before her, is to find union in death. The symbol of this union is to be a shared tomb, and its offspring (IV.161: *fetus)* is to be the darkened fruit of the mulberry tree.[24] She stabs herself in the breast with the same sword, still warm with Pyramus' blood (IV.163: *quod adhuc a caede tepebat),* a second reference to the heat of his wound (IV.120: *ferventi . . . e vulnere).* The gods hear her prayers, and the mulberry ever after bears dark fruit.

Pyramus and Thisbe, then, is not merely a story of star-crossed lovers, brought to death by cosmic accident.[25] It is rather a tale 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.[26] Paradoxically Pyramus and Thisbe, like so many other lovers in the *Metamorphoses,* share some of the

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problems experienced by the sophisticated Roman lovers of the *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria*. In the beginning their love flourished under ideal Ovidian conditions: they were physically separated but able to communicate through their common wall.[27] Like the elegiac lover in this respect, though unlike him in others, Pyramus and his beloved had been secure within their city and the conventions of citified love. But when they leave behind the safety of that world and seek a union that removes boundaries, they find the only such union possible for them: they are joined in death and transformation. The story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, which concludes the cycle of the Minyeides, makes the same point in a different way. For Hermaphroditus too has ventured into the unknown wilderness (IV.294-95: *ignotis errare locis, ignota videre/flumina gaudebat*, 'he rejoiced to wander through unknown places, to see unknown rivers') and has been seized unawares by an untamed passion. Thus the metamorphosis of the mulberry tree is far from incidental to the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe.[28] Rather it is the central image of a story which speaks to Ovid's abiding concern with the confrontation of innocence and passion in a world where the boundaries of civilization are only the lost dream of an irreclaimable past.[29]

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NOTES

1. In general, blood in Homer and late epic is dark or black, in contrast to the whiteness of the wounded flesh. In lyric genres blood is usually red. See J. André, *Étude sur les termes de couleur dans la langue latine* (Paris, 1949), 327-28 for the relevant evidence from Greek and Latin poetry. In the *Metamorphoses*, blood is usually red: II.607: *candida puniceo perfudit membra cruore* ('she drenched her white limbs in red blood'); V.83: *rutilum vomit ille cruorem* ('he vomits red blood'); VIII.383: *exiguo rubefecit sanguine saetas* ('it reddened the bristles with a little blood'), and elsewhere. But it is also associated with *ater* and *niger* ('black' or 'dark') in the description of the mulberry tree, IV.51-52 and 125-27. See also note 17 below.

2. The red or rose-colored tint to the skin is commonplace in Greek erotic poetry and in Roman poetry after Catullus. See André (n.1 above), 325. In the *Metamorphoses*, see these examples: I.484: *pulchra verecundo subfuderat ora rubore* ('colored fair face with modest red'); III.183-85: *qui color infectis adversi solis ab ictu/nubibus esse solet aut purpureae Aurorae, /is fuit in vultu visae sine veste Dianae* ('the color clouds get, struck and tinged by the sun's angle, or that of the purple dawn, was the one in the face of Diana seen naked'), and elsewhere.

3. *Met.* III.483-84: *non aliter quam poma solent, quae candida parte,/parte rubent* ('as apples often do, which, white in part, in part are red'); VIII.676: *et de purpureis conlectae vitibus uvae* ('and grapes gathered from the purple vines'), and elsewhere.

4. *Met.* X.267: *conlocat hanc stratis concha Sidonide tinctis* ('he arranges her on a bed colored with Sidonian dye'); X.211-12: *desinit esse cruor, Tyrioque nitentior ostro/flos oritur* ('it is no longer blood, and a flower outshining Tyrian purple springs up'), and elsewhere.

5. *Met.* II.116: *mundum rubescere vidit* ('he saw the world redden'); VI.47-48: *ut solet aër purpureus fieri, cum primum Aurora movetur* ('as the sky is known to become purple when the dawn first shows'); VII.705: *quod sit roseo spectabilis ore* ('though she may be conspicuous by her rosy face') — of Aurora; III.183-85 in note 2, above, and elsewhere.

6. *Met.* XIV.313: *niveo factum de marmore signum* ('statue made from snowy marble'). See André (n. 1 above), 340: 'De toutes les variétés du marbre, la blanche était, à l'origine, la plus recherchée. Aussi le dérivé *marmoreus* devint-il un synonyme de *candidus*.' There are in the *Metamorphoses* numerous examples of humans and animals changing into stone or marble

statues who are described as growing pale and bloodless: II.824: *pallent amisso sanguine venae* ('the veins turn pale with loss of blood'); V.249: *ore Medusaeo silicem sine sanguine fecit* ('with Medusa's face he turned it to bloodless flint'), and elsewhere.

7. *Met.* X.247-48: *interea niveum mira feliciter arte/sculpsit ebur* ('meanwhile with amazing skill he successfully carved snowy ivory'); and elsewhere where *eburneus* has the general significance of white.

8. *Met.* IV.355: *candida lilia* ('white lilies'); X.212-13: *formamque capit, quam lilia, si non/purpureus color his, argenteus esset in illis* ('it takes the form lilies have, except the one is purplish in color, the other silvery').

9. *Met.* VI.49: *et breve post tempus candescere solis ab ortu* ('and after a short time becomes white when the sun is up'); XV.194: *candidus in summo est* ('at its highest it is white'). See André (n. 1 above), 336: 'Le soleil est avant tout l'astre "au disque d'or" . . . Mais il est aussi dès Ennius le soleil "d'une blancheur éblouissante".'

10. Charles Segal, *Landscape in Ovid's Metamorphoses: A Study in the Transformation of a Literary Symbol, Hermes Einzelschrift* 23 (Wiesbaden, 1969), 46, refers the image of apples and unripe grapes to the traditions of Greek lyric. Though the erotic associations of these fruits are indeed of great antiquity, it is Ovid's contribution to have shifted the focus from their red or purple color to their contrasting tones of red and white.

11. Ovid dresses the god Hymenaeus in saffron-dyed clothes, *Met.* X.1. Anderson notes, *Ovid's Metamorphoses Books 6-10* (Norman, Okla., 1972), 476, note to X.1-3, that 'saffron was the color for Roman brides to wear'.

12. *Croceus* refers to colors from yellow through orange and red. See André (n. 1 above), 154. Hermann Fraenkel, *Ovid: A Poet between Two Worlds* (Berkeley, 1945), 214, note 36: '*Croceus* in line 509 stands for "reddish" in general, not distinguishing a particular shade, as can be seen from Ovid's describing the *crocus* flower as *ruber (Fasti* I. 342; *Am.* II.6.22, next to *Punica; Ars. Amat.* I.104) or *puniceus (Fasti* V.318).' See also Boemer, *Metamorphosen I-III* (Heidelberg, 1969), 570, note to lines 509-10, for additional examples of the poetic treatment of the narcissus as a reddish flower.

13. Bernd Manuwald, 'Narcissus bei Konon und Ovid', *Hermes* 103 (1975), 365-66, argues that the emphasis on red and white in the description of Narcissus is indicative of his beauty alone, and that his loss of color before death merely signals the loss of his beauty. He appears to base his argument upon André, who says of the color red (n. 1 above, 326): 'Le rouge se prête avant tout à l'évocation des sentiments qui s'expriment sur le visage, colère et surtout honte et pudeur, et le thème de la pudeur rejoint celui de la beauté féminine, puisqu'il n'est qu'un charme de plus.' Of the combination of red and white, André says (347): 'La moitié de ses exemples intéressent les tons gracieux du visage, blanc, rose et rouge, du visage féminin surtout . . . Les autres associations ont un caractère en général accidental.' It is the aim of this essay to demonstrate that, in the *Metamorphoses* at least, the other associations of red and white are not accidental, and that Ovid's fascination with this color contrast is more than an interest in physical beauty or a reliance upon poetic cliché. Segal (n. 10 above), 34-35, finds the flower expressive not in its color contrast but in its self-enclosure: 'The detail underlines both the ambiguous irony of Narcissus' "innocence" and the self-enclosed character of his surrender to love.' While I do not quarrel with Segal's interpretation, I would go further to say that the flower represents not only the particular psychic experience of Narcissus but a more general experience of Ovidian lovers who meet passion for the first time.

14. See particularly *Am.* I.5.7-8: *illa verecundis lux est praebenda puellis,/qua timidus latebras speret habere pudor* ('that light should be given to bashful girls, so timid modesty may hope for concealment').

15. I cannot find reference in Ovid to the whiteness of the lamb, though it is called *nitida* ('shining') by Horace (*Sat.* II.3.214) and *candidus* ('white') by Tibullus (II.5.38). According to André (n. 1 above), 338: 'L'agneau est toujours blanc . . .' The dove is termed white in *Met.* XIII.674: *niveas columbas* ('snowy doves'). Again according to André, 339: 'Il n'était pas non plus d'autre pigeon ou colombe que blanc.'

16. Daphne fleeing Apollo is compared to both the dove and the lamb, I.505-6. Arethusa, fleeing the river Alphaeus, is also compared to the dove (V.605-6) and the lamb (V.626).

17. On the use of words denoting 'darkness' or 'blackness' (*niger, ater*) for the redness of blood see note 1 above. The color of the mulberry is defined in the Oxford dictionary as 'reddish black'. In the Pyramus and Thisbe story Ovid on the *superficial level* emphasizes the blackness of the fruit for a very obvious reason: it stands for mourning and death:

signa tene caedis pullosque et luctibus aptos
semper habe fetus; gemini monimenta cruoris. (IV. 150-51)

Retain the signs of death and always keep your fruit
Dark and suitable for mourning, a memorial of coupled bloodshed.

vota tamen tetigere deos, tetigere parentes:
nam color in pomo est, ubi permaturuit, ater . . . (IV. 164-65)

And her prayers moved the gods, they moved her parents;
For the fruit, when ripened, is black in color . . .

Permaturuit is significant because the mulberry becomes *very* dark only when *very* ripe. When unripe it is white, when almost ripe it is a definite shade of red. Ovid clearly depends upon the reader's knowledge of this process. Pyramus' blood makes the berries *red (purpureo,* 127), this color darkening to a funereal black *(ater,* 165) by the time their bodies are placed upon the pyre (166). On the *symbolic level* it is the reddish aspect that is most important.

18. When Daphne is compared to a lamb or a deer, Apollo is the wolf or the lion (I.505).

19. X.681-707; *cf.* esp. 704. For the particular association of the lioness with Inanna/Istar/Aphrodite, see. T. T. Duke, 'Ovid's Pyramus and Thisbe', *CJ* 66 (1971), 323-24.

20. Segal (n. 10 above), 50, includes the veil among the other, more overt, sexual symbols such as the sword and the gush of Pyramus' blood. The torn veil also represents the violation of a personal boundary, and as such has more than erotic significance.

21. Pallor frequently follows the blush of shame. It is a response of fear and grief, experienced by the beloved who is on the point of being captured (Daphne, I.543: *viribus absumptis expalluit ora,* 'her strength exhausted, she grew pale in the face') and by the lover recently committed to a shameful course. When Medea first conceives her passion for Jason, she blushes (VII.78: *erubuere genae).* Later, when she sees him surrounded by the sown men and is confirmed in her love, she grows pale (VII.136): *palluit et subito sine sanguine frigida sedit,* 'she grew pale and, suddenly bloodless, cold, sat down'). When Byblis first imagines making love to her brother, she blushes (IX.471: *erubuit),* but when she is rejected by him and desperate, she grows pale (IX.581: *palles audita, Bybli, repulsa,* 'you grow pale, Byblis, when you hear you are rejected'). Myrrha, on the threshold of her father's bedchamber, also pales: *fugitque/et color et sanguis* ('both color and blood depart', X.458-59). In a non-erotic context, perhaps the best example of the two states of mind represented by blush and pallor occurs in Althaea as she contemplates the death of her son: *saepe metu sceleris pallebant ora futuri:/saepe suum fervens oculis dabat ira ruborem* ('often her face grew pale with fear of the future crime; often raging anger would lend its own redness to her eyes', VIII.465-66). In an erotic context, the lover who grows pale does so in the face of death, his own (Narcissus, III.491) or his beloved's (Apollo, X.185), as well as in the face of his intended crime (Myrrha). Pallor is the significant mark of the Underworld (IV.436: *pallor hiemsque tenent late loca senta,* 'pallor and cold occupy the rugged tract'), where it is also associated with cold as in the above example of Medea. Pallor is the sign as well of Invidia (II.775: *pallor in ore sedet,* 'a pallor settles on her face') and of Hunger (VIII.801: *pallor in ore).* Invidia and Hunger are manifestations of *cupido,* which leads lovers like Pyramus and Thisbe to seek total possession of one another and which instead often results in death.

22. *eiaculatur.* For the erotic associations of this word, see P. Pierrugues, *Glossarium Eroticum Linguae Latinae* (Paris, 1826; reprinted Amsterdam, 1965), 190.

23. *Fallere* is a word commonly used for the deception of the elegiac *coniunx* or his agents, the *custodes.* Cf. in this tale IV.85 *(fallere custodes,* 'deceive the guardians') and 94 *(fallitque suos,* 'and deceives her own').

24. We should again note that the mulberries are dark when thoroughly ripe (IV.165: *ubi permaturuit),* like the ripe fruit of the lover's passion (see also note 17 above). Compare the ripening apples in the simile for Narcissus (III.483ff.).

25. Brooks Otis, *Ovid as an Epic Poet* (Cambridge, 1970), 215: 'Pyramus and Thisbe were only the youthful victims of an accident.'

26. Segal (n. 10 above), 49-50, also sees the tale as one which 'involves the confrontation between purity and violence and the loss of innocence'. He sees loss of innocence, however, as the inevitable sacrifice made upon crossing the boundary from childhood to maturity, and points to the maturation of the mulberries as the emblem of this initiation. Again, while I can-

not disagree with this interpretation, I wish to shift the emphasis. The boundary which Pyramus and Thisbe attempt to cross, with such disastrous consequences, is not the threshold of adulthood, but the boundary of the self. Throughout the *Metamorphoses*, it is not just the young and innocent who are destroyed by the erotic obliteration of personal boundaries, but all those who are overtaken by a similar passion. Refined love in Ovid is neither cool white nor fiery red. Rather it is the thoroughly urbane and civilized experience of the elegiac lover, who cultivates boundaries and obstacles and maintains at all cost his self-integrity.

27. I cannot help but compare the crack in the wall to the little opening in the door through which the lover of *Am.* I.6 hopes to slip his body, made thin by his long love. Throughout the elegies, Ovid emphasizes the beneficial aspects of boundaries like the door and obstacles like the *coniunx*. See especially elegies II.19 and III.4. He is also very clear about the importance of some judicious deception between lovers, as in I.4 and III.14. The proper goal of the Ovidian lover is not total possession or even mutual possession, but mutual disengagement, a willingness to submit to the fantasy of love so as to be spared its real torment.

28. Otis (n. 25 above), 155: 'Though the metamorphosis is slight and inconsequential, the theme of mutual love (love too strong to endure separation) is fully developed.' This is precisely the sort of love which Ovid seems to find so dangerous, as witnessed by the pathos of the tale of Ceyx and Alcyone. He himself recommends a little separation now and then (*Ars. Amat.* II.349ff.) and demonstrates how love can not only be made to endure separation but even to profit by it (*Am.* II.12).

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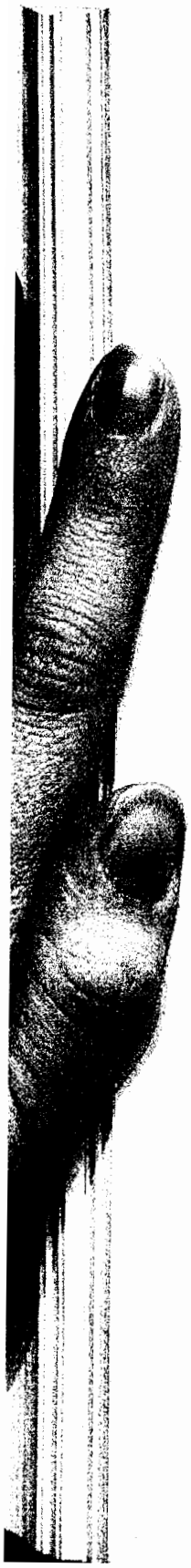

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