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“Undercurrents in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*: Hercules; Pygmalion; and Myrrha”

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Abstract

This study looks at three episodes in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, namely the Hercules episode in Book 9 and the Pygmalion and Myrrha episodes in Book 10. These episodes are connected by the fact that, in each, the superficial interpretation of the text interacts with the tale's underlying meaning and thus invites reassessment of that tale. This is a recurring feature throughout the *Metamorphoses*.

The first chapter looks at the Hercules episode. It begins with a study of Ovid's sources for the tale of Hercules and Deianira and is followed by a discussion of the episode itself. The central argument is that despite the amatory facade of the tale, the narrator systematically establishes Hercules' lack of amorous interest in Deianira.

The second chapter examines the Pygmalion episode. It looks at recent critical interest in the implicit eroticism of the episode and further contributes to this area of discussion. This study has two parts. In the first, Venus' contribution to the erotic undercurrent in the tale is discussed. In the second, the relationship between Pygmalion and the Iphis episode in Book 9 is examined.

The third chapter discusses the Myrrha episode which immediately follows that of Pygmalion in Ovid's epic. The central argument of this chapter is that Ovid deliberately establishes a ritual undercurrent of sacred marriage in the tale. This Cyprian cult practice was an important feature of the Myrrha-Cinyras legend and examination of this aspect in the Ovidian adaptation begins with an examination of the relevance of this ritual motif to that legend generally. This is followed by a discussion of how Ovid deliberately establishes the sacred marriage as a backdrop to his own incest tale. This depends on the creation of an undercurrent of marriage and on the religious atmosphere which exists alongside it.

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1 - Introduction

Critical approaches to the *Metamorphoses* fall into two categories. On the one hand are general studies of the type presented by Otis,¹ which seek to explain and to comment on the whole of Ovid's epic. These provide something of an overview and explicitly treat the epic as a single, coherent entity. On the other hand are more focussed studies which, more limited in scope, examine specific episodes or specific themes within the epic. By way of an example, this approach has taken the form of an examination of the figure of Venus in *Metamorphoses* 5.² In recent times, criticism has tended more towards the latter approach, for the panoramic view of Otis and others, though valuable in itself, has proved less attractive, indeed less satisfactory, in the face of a need to understand more fully the detail of Ovid's text, for such a broad-based approach cannot fully do justice to the layers of meaning implicit in the individual episodes of the *Metamorphoses*.

This increased interest in the detail of Ovid's text informs my own approach to the *Metamorphoses*, for in this study I will examine three individual episodes, namely the Hercules episode in Book 9 and the Pygmalion and Myrrha episodes which appear together in Book 10. My approach will be to provide a close study of these episodes primarily as self-contained units. At the same time, I will take account of their place in the larger context of the *Metamorphoses* and, where it is relevant to my discussion, will take account also of their interaction with other episodes in the epic.

The three episodes which I have chosen to examine here may appear an unusual combination, for there is no obvious similarity between them. Hercules is an epic hero who becomes engaged in various conflicts in his desire to acquire and to retain Deianira as wife. Pygmalion is a Cyprian king who, failing to find a female worthy of his attention, creates his own in statue form: this statue, through Venus' intervention, is ultimately brought to

¹ B.Otis, *Ovid as an Epic Poet* (Cambridge, 1966).

² P.J.Johnson, "Constructions of Venus in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* V", *Arethusa* 29 (1996).

life. Myrrha, whose tale immediately follows that of Pygmalion, realises her incestuous love for her father and, with the aid of her nurse, succeeds in consummating that desire. I would note, and would do so with a reasonable degree of confidence, that no other study discusses these particular episodes together. Undoubtedly, the Pygmalion and Myrrha episodes are an obvious combination and clearly offer much scope even for a comparative study. This depends on the fact that these tales appear alongside each other in Book 10 and are both part of the same internal narrative (Orpheus' song). In addition, both have their origin in Cyprian cult practice and in the Ovidian version share a Cyprian setting which reflects this. Likewise, both have at their centre the experience of perverse *amor*.

Treatment of Pygmalion and Myrrha within the same study is not, therefore, surprising: their appearance in a study alongside Hercules is perhaps more striking and as such requires explanation. There are no obvious points of comparison between these three tales. Where Pygmalion and Myrrha indulge in unnatural *amor*, Hercules is interested in Deianira explicitly in the context of marriage; where Pygmalion and Myrrha are part of the erotic world of Cyprus, Hercules, by virtue of the conflicts in which he becomes involved over Deianira, recalls the world of heroic epic. I would suggest, however, that the similarity of these tales lies not in their content per se, but in their structure, for in all these tales the narrator establishes an undercurrent which undermines the explicit meaning of the tale and invites a reassessment of it. (This is a recurring feature throughout the *Metamorphoses* and as such contributes to the continuity of Ovid's "carmen perpetuum" (*Met.*1.4).³) For reasons such as this Ovid has been styled a poet of illusions and certainly this instability of meaning is a reflection of the unstable physical world of the *Metamorphoses*.

Discussion of the undercurrent in a tale and of its interaction with the superficial reading offered by the narrator originates in the study of narrative technique. In view of the large number of fictional narrators and internal narratives within the *Metamorphoses*, this

³ The question of whether Ovid's epic is continuous or a collection of isolated episodes is a popular point of discussion. The motifs of metamorphosis and of *amor* function to provide thematic unity alongside this 'stylistic' unity.

text has proved particularly appropriate for the full application and development of narratological theory. (Where my discussion throughout this thesis involves reference to narrative techniques, I draw primarily on pre-existing constructions, in particular those found in Nagle and Sharrock.⁴) Especially relevant in respect of my discussion of textual undercurrents is Sharrock's construction of the implied reader and the 'resisting' reader, which she employs in her discussion of the Pygmalion and Myrrha episodes. She defines the implied reader as the one who takes at face value the interpretation indicated by the narrator. She defines the 'resisting' reader as the one who recognises the superficial interpretation but who takes note also of those aspects of the tale which challenge that reading. She proposes that synthesis of the implied and 'resisting' readings results in a 'super-reading'.

Modern criticism has proved sensitive to the co-existence and interaction of the superficial and the underlying meanings of a text, as is evident in recent approaches in Pygmalion scholarship. A popular line of inquiry in this respect is discussion of the erotic undercurrent in this episode which contrasts with the superficial absence of an erotic dimension. In part, this 'resisting' reading has been a reaction to, and a development of, the implied reading of the tale, such as that identified by Otis, which regards Ovid's Pygmalion as an absolute departure from the obscene eroticism of the original Pygmalion legend. In the case of Pygmalion, then, my discussion of the creation of an erotic backdrop in the tale will constitute a development of advances already made in this area. I will look at the specific role of Venus in contributing to the eroticism of the scene. Certainly, reference to Venus features in any discussion of the eroticism of the Pygmalion tale by virtue of the goddess' role in the highly erotic legend of Pygmalion, but generally my treatment will comprise a more comprehensive account of the way in which the narrator systematically maintains

⁴ B.R.Nagle, "Byblis and Myrrha: Two Incest Narratives in the *Metamorphoses*", *CJ* 78 (1983) 301-15; "Erotic Pursuit and Narrative Seduction in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*", *Ramus* 17 (1988a) 32-51; "Ovid's 'Reticent' Heroes", *Helios* 15 (1988b) 23-39.
A.R.Sharrock, "The Love of Creation", *Ramus* 20 (1991a) 169-82; "Gender and Sexuality", in P.Hardie (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, (Cambridge, 2002) 95-107.

Venus' influence throughout the episode. The second part of my discussion of Pygmalion will involve a comparison of the tale with that of Iphis in *Metamorphoses* 9. This will likewise contribute to an understanding of the erotic undercurrent of the episode available to the 'resisting' reader.

The Myrrha tale, despite an initial reluctance on the part of Ovidian scholars, has increasingly been subjected to the process of resisting reading. Typically, this centres around the question of Myrrha's responsibility in the tale of incest. The implied reading elicits horror and disgust at the desire and behaviour of Myrrha. 'Resisting' readings seek to mitigate this response in highlighting the sympathetic attitude of the narrator, Orpheus and the responsibility of other characters in the tale. My own approach to the tale likewise seeks to identify a 'resisting' reading through discussion of how the narrator establishes an undercurrent of a sacred marriage ritual in the episode. I will suggest that this ritual undercurrent invites a reassessment of Myrrha's motivation, for the context of hierogamy is one in which eroticism is closely intertwined with piety. Thus the perverse female libido which Orpheus explicitly holds responsible for Myrrha's activity, when it is viewed against this ritual backdrop, becomes intermingled with the theme of piety. This reduces emphasis on sexual depravity as Myrrha's motivation for the affair and so invites the reader to resist and reassess Orpheus' superficial picture of Myrrha. This ritual aspect has hitherto been identified in critical discussion of the episode but only so far as the *hieros gamos* is assumed to be a backdrop to the tale because it is a backdrop to the Myrrha-Cinyras legend.

The theme of sacred marriage, being part of the Pygmalion legend, has similarly been assumed as a backdrop to the Ovidian Pygmalion tale. Regarding Pygmalion, however, attempts have been made to understand how Ovid integrates this ritual context into his adaptation. Regarding Myrrha, no such attempts have been made. In this thesis, I will discuss how Ovid deliberately establishes this ritual undercurrent and will emphasise the

fact that although the Cyprian *hieros gamos* exists as an undercurrent both in Pygmalion and in Myrrha, this feature is integrated into the text in two distinct ways.

The Hercules episode, in contrast to Pygmalion and Myrrha, has received only limited critical attention. Partly as a result of this, the process of identifying underlying readings has made little impact on interpretation of this episode. Where the episode has been discussed, this has typically been done in the context of the epic backdrop or the Augustan undercurrent of the *Metamorphoses* in view of Hercules' identity as an epic hero and as an Augustan symbol. That Hercules becomes involved in two conflicts and that he is associated with the Augustan conclusion of the *Metamorphoses* through the motif of apotheosis explain this critical focus. As I will argue, however, this reading does not take account of the erotic context of the Hercules episode. Indeed, central in the episode itself is Hercules' struggle to gain possession of Deianira in an amatory conflict, so that awareness of this context serves to undercut or at least provide an alternative to the epic/Augustan facade which Hercules automatically denotes. (Hercules' conflicts with Achelous and Nessus demonstrate both epic and amatory features.) My discussion of the Hercules episode will examine the tale in its erotic context and within that context, will examine how the two narrators of the tale (Achelous and Ovid) explicitly prepare the audience for a tale of *amor* (the implied reading). I will examine, and this will constitute the main focus of the chapter, the ways in which Hercules' amorous interest in Deianira is systematically undermined and will propose that this causes the audience to question both the function of Hercules within this amatory sphere and the validity of the superficial interpretation. I will suggest that this 'resisting' reading, which challenges the narrator's facade, has interesting implications for our interpretation of Hercules.

2 - Hercules

(I) Introduction

The figure of Hercules appears at various points throughout the *Metamorphoses*,⁵ but makes his most prominent and extended appearance in Book 9. When this book opens, Achelous, the river god, continues to entertain the heroic guests to whom he had offered hospitality towards the end of Book 8. Theseus, one of his guests, asks the reason why the god has only one horn and thus provides Achelous with the opportunity to relate the tale of his encounter with Hercules.⁶

Achelous begins his account with a preamble which sets his tale in the context of a contest for the hand of Deianira, a contest in which all other suitors abandoned their claim to the girl in their reluctance to enter into competition either with himself or with Hercules (4-13). He records the arguments proposed by each suitor to commend himself as Oeneus' son-in-law (14-26) and continues with a description of the physical combat which followed this verbal altercation (27-84). This conflict, in which Achelous assumes various forms and is defeated by Hercules in each, results in Achelous' broken horn (85-6). Thus with this postponed reference to the loss of his horn, Achelous returns and finally addresses Theseus' question about the cause of his deformity, which had been the occasion for the river god's narration of this tale. The epilogue to Achelous' tale comes in the form of the appearance of this horn as a cornucopia filled with fruit and flowers (87-92). The scene ends when the guests depart and Achelous disappears into his river (93-7).

The transition to the second scene is marked by the change of narrator. The scene begins when the narrator assesses the damage which Achelous suffered, in the form of a

⁵ Two of these appearances are aetiologies (7.408-19; 15.12-49); two record his heroic activity as he rescues Hesione (11.211-15) and fights Nestor's brothers (12.536-76); one is a passing reference to Ulysses' mission to retrieve Hercules' arms (13.399-403).

⁶ This is a typical format for the introduction of a story. It appears as an introduction to Cephalus' tale of Procris which is narrated in response to Phocus' question about his spear: "cur sit et unde datum, quis tanti muneris auctor" (7.686).

broken horn, and compares it with the complete destruction which Nessus experienced at the hands of Hercules (98-102). Nessus' amorous interest in Deianira is immediately indicated and explains his approach to Hercules with the offer to transport Deianira across the river (103-10). Hercules accepts this offer and hands over Deianira (111-2). As he is making his way across the river, Hercules hears Deianira scream, and is alerted to Nessus' attempted violation, which he halts by shooting an arrow at him (113-28). Fatally wounded by this arrow, Nessus presents Deianira with his blood-stained cloak, assuring her that it will serve to rekindle love (128-33).

The third section of this episode begins a number of years later. Hercules is returning home after a long absence and Deianira hears the rumour that he is bringing with him the girl with whom he has become involved (134-40). Deianira, distressed by this possibility, considers the courses of action open to her (141-51). Ultimately she decides to make use of the love-charm which she received from Nessus (152-4) and entrusts it to Lichas for delivery (155-7). The scene ends when Hercules ominously puts on the poisonous cloak (157-8).

The final section of this episode begins with a description of the torment which inflicts Hercules after he has put on Deianira's cloak and as he is offering sacrifice to Jupiter (159-75). When the agony reaches the point where Hercules can bear it no longer, he addresses Juno and prays for relief (176-204), extending his prayer with an account of his various labours. The suffering Hercules then sees Lichas, the instrument, if not the agent of his destruction, and in his rage, throws him from the cliff. This results in the metamorphosis of Lichas into a rock (204-29).⁷ As Hercules prepares a pyre for himself (229-41), the scene shifts to Olympus and to the anxiety felt by the gods for him. Jupiter assuages this divine anxiety with the assurance that Hercules will survive this experience and consults with them as to whether they agree with his proposal that Hercules should

⁷ This incidental metamorphosis precedes the more significant transformation of Hercules' apotheosis.

himself be made a god (241-58). The gods agree to this and the scene returns to Hercules on Mount Oeta (259-61). This section concludes with a description of Hercules' purification by fire, the removal of his mortal part and the completion of his metamorphosis into a god with his entry into heaven (262-72).

Relative to the other major tales in the *Metamorphoses* - major in terms of length, that is - the Hercules episode has received only limited critical attention. Where it has been discussed, this has been done, in general, in the context either of the epic backdrop (Nagle; Otis; Galinsky) or of the Augustan conclusion (Otis; Galinsky) of the *Metamorphoses*. Both approaches naturally suggest themselves. As regards the former, the fact that Hercules was the archetypal hero who had undertaken extensive heroic activity immediately aligns him with the other heroic figures who appear in the *Metamorphoses*. The fact, moreover, that Hercules himself had a traditional role in epic (though not as the central hero) ensures that the epic heroes of the *Metamorphoses*, such as Odysseus, Achilles and Aeneas, appear naturally to provide a context for the discussion of this figure. In the *Odyssey*, Hercules is used as a foil for Odysseus (*Od.* 8.223-5; 21.11-41), in the *Iliad*, for Achilles.⁸ Apollonius too used Hercules in his *Argonautica*, though the comparison of Jason with Hercules contributes to Apollonius' criticism of his anti-hero rather than commendation. Neither Jason nor Hercules emerge in a favourable light. In the *Aeneid*, Vergil systematically identifies Aeneas with Hercules. Therefore, discussion of Hercules has taken place alongside discussion of Ulysses, Ajax, Aeneas and Achilles,⁹ though certainly these heroic figures of the final section of the *Metamorphoses* do not possess their Homeric or Vergilian heroism.¹⁰ The world of mythological epic created in the *Metamorphoses* synthesises elements from the *Iliad* (Centaur-Lapith battle in *Met.* 12), the

⁸ See G.K.Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme. The Adaptations of the Hero in Literature from Homer to the 20th Century* (Oxford, 1972a) 9-14.

⁹ For further association of Hercules with Ulysses, see W.C.Stephens, "Two Stoic Heroes in the *Metamorphoses*: Hercules and Ulysses", in N.I.Herescu (ed.), *Ovidiana* (Paris, 1958a) 273-82.

¹⁰ Nagle (1988b) 23 discusses the difference between the Ovidian heroes and Homer's Odysseus and Vergil's Aeneas in respect of their different narrative abilities.

Odyssey and the *Aeneid* (Achaemenides; Macareus; Circe in *Met.*14) and is a world in which we might reasonably expect to find Hercules.¹¹

The epic material of the *Metamorphoses* is more in evidence in the final section of that text. It has generally been accepted that the *Metamorphoses* is divided into two sections (*amor* and warfare), with the division occurring around Book 11.¹² I would not argue that any absolute division exists, for epic heroes appear in the first section and tales of *amor* continue in the second, but still I would propose that discussion of a ‘more epic’ final section is valid since in the final books we are more frequently presented with epic action and heroic figures. In view of the greater emphasis given to epic material in the final books, this has meant that the final section of the *Metamorphoses* has typically provided the context for discussion of Hercules as epic hero. In fact, Hercules appears in *Metamorphoses* 15 (1-59) in an epic-style tale, reminiscent of Evander’s Hercules tale in *Aeneid* 8. (In this tale, Hercules contributes to the foundation of Croton.) Since this functions both to provide a link between Hercules in Books 9 and 15 and to recall Hercules’ epic appearance in the *Aeneid*, this likewise facilitates discussion of the Hercules-Deianira episode in the context of the ‘epic’ final section.

As for the tendency to discuss the Hercules episode in light of the Augustan conclusion of the *Metamorphoses*, this too would seem entirely reasonable not only because the Hercules episode is thematically linked with the Augustan portion of the epic, through the motif of apotheosis, but also because the figure of Hercules had been established as something of an Augustan symbol, particularly through the efforts of Horace and Vergil who styled Augustus as the successor of Hercules.¹³

¹¹ For Ovid’s reduction of traditional epic plots into briefer episodes in the *Metamorphoses*, see S.Harrison, “Ovid and genre: evolutions of an elegist”, in Hardie (2002) 79-94, at 87-8.

¹² H.Fränkell, *Ovid. A Poet between Two Worlds* (Berkeley, 1945) 101 and Otis (1966) 278 place the division at *Met.*12 ; S.M.Wheeler, *A Discourse of Wonders. Audience and Performance in Ovid’s Metamorphoses* (Philadelphia, 1999)138, and C.P.Segal, “Myth and Philosophy in the *Metamorphoses*: Ovid’s Augustanism and the Augustan Conclusion of Book XV”, *AJP* 90 (1969a) 257-93, at *Met.*11.194 .

¹³ Ptolemy Philadelphus (Theocritus’ patron) and Alexander (Galinsky (1972a)117) were also styled as Hercules.

That Ovid intended Hercules' apotheosis to be a significant feature of his account may be assumed in view of the prominence which he gives to it.¹⁴ He draws attention to this aspect not only through his lengthy treatment of it, but by inverting the chronology of his tale in following his account of Hercules' 'death' with an account of his birth. Hercules' apotheosis (and Ovid deliberately styles it as a deification in contrast to the portrayal in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, a source for Ovid's version of the Hercules-Deianira myth, of Hercules' torment simply as death) accordingly provides a distinct thematic link with the concluding books of the *Metamorphoses* where once again the movement from the human level to the divine is present. That the motif of apotheosis is a significant feature of this final section depends on the fact that Ovid includes three examples of it (Aeneas 14.581-608; Romulus 14.805-28; Julius Caesar 15.745-850). The association between Hercules' deification and the later apotheoses in the *Metamorphoses* is enhanced through the recurrence of such details as divine assistance and purification. The figures rewarded with deification are further associated by the fact that each played a prominent part in the history of Roman settlement: Hercules defeats Cacus; Aeneas settles in Italy; Romulus builds Rome's first walls; Caesar refounds Rome and, more significantly, provides Augustus as his heir.

These two areas of discussion are not mutually exclusive, for a clear overlap of the Augustan and the epic material is not only possible, with both aspects being prominent in the final section of the *Metamorphoses*, but is surely invited, particularly in Ovid's adaptation of Vergil's *Aeneid*. Ovid's "*Aeneid*" certainly contributes to the epic content of the *Metamorphoses* because the theme of Aeneas' struggles had recently received an epic treatment in the hands of Vergil. In view of the fact that Vergil's *Aeneid* had come to be regarded as a promotion of Augustan values and, as such, as essentially Augustan, its reworking here contributes also to Ovid's incorporation of Augustan material.

Critical attention would seem, therefore, to agree that the Hercules episode is

¹⁴ For the relevance of the apotheosis motif, see Stephens (1958a) 277.

closely associated with the epic and Augustan material which appears throughout the *Metamorphoses*, and would agree that this episode benefits from discussion in the context of these themes. Opinion differs, however, over how the Hercules episode specifically and the epic and Augustan material generally function within the *Metamorphoses*. As regards the Augustan dimension, interpretation falls into two categories, for the Hercules episode and the Augustan material are regarded either as a serious exposition of Augustan values or as a parody of Augustan symbolism: the difference in approach to the Hercules episode specifically depends, in large part, on the different interpretations of the entire Augustan content as a genuine reinforcement or as a parody of Augustan values. The former view is proposed by Otis. He attributes the inclusion of the Hercules episode to Ovid's need to include in his epic poem, material typical of traditional epic (heroes and battles) and to the attention owed to Augustus and achieved through the inclusion of Augustan themes and symbols. (Apotheosis was an important aspect of Augustan propaganda, this being the anticipated outcome for the *princeps*. Hercules' apotheosis is implicitly used to justify the deification of Augustus, as it had been used by Livy (1.7.15) to justify the deification of Romulus.)¹⁵ Otis argues that, since Ovid did not delight in heroic material and its inclusion here was not a matter of personal choice, his treatment of Hercules is somewhat cursory and, in consequence, this episode does not become fully integrated into the text. He acknowledges the comic elements of the episode¹⁶ and, although unable to reconcile them to his 'serious' interpretation, nevertheless concludes that the Hercules episode is both a genuine, though half-hearted, and therefore disappointing, celebration of Augustan values.

The same approach is evident in Otis' interpretation of the extended Augustan section in the later books of the *Metamorphoses* which include Ovid's "*Aeneid*" and the apotheoses of Romulus, Aeneas and Julius Caesar. In reference to these also, he proposes that Ovid would not have chosen such material in the absence of external political influence

¹⁵ For political pressure on Augustan poets to write epic, see Harrison (2002) 79. Cf Horace Ode 3.14.

¹⁶ Otis (1966) 200.

and that his essential lack of interest in these topics is implied in his half-hearted treatment of them. As with the Hercules episode, however, Otis continues to attribute to Ovid a serious intention and detects no hint of parody or subversion.

Galinsky,¹⁷ on the other hand, although he too regards the Hercules episode as part of Ovid's Augustan contribution to the *Metamorphoses*, differs from Otis in arguing that both the Hercules episode specifically and the Augustan content of the concluding books generally constitute a parody of Augustan issues rather than a genuine endorsement of them. His interpretation of the Hercules episode as a parody of Augustanism consists essentially in his view that Ovid's portrayal of Hercules in the *Metamorphoses* is an irreverent adaptation of Vergil's portrayal of Hercules (and Aeneas) in the *Aeneid*. The fact that the *Aeneid* had come to be regarded as quintessentially Augustan meant that parody of it was, by extension, parody of Augustanism. The figure of Hercules was important in the *Aeneid*, for throughout that epic a close link is drawn between Aeneas and Hercules. Vergil consistently styles Aeneas as a second Hercules (both by emphasising the enmity of Juno towards both and in characterising Aeneas' toil as versions of Hercules' *labores*) and points towards Augustus as the successor of both. Hercules, then, in view of the Augustan significance which he had acquired in the hands of Vergil, was a suitable instrument in Ovid's intended parody both of the *Aeneid* itself and of the Augustan values which it celebrated.

Clearly, then, opinion varies as regards the tone and purpose of the Augustan undercurrent of Ovid's Hercules episode, as demonstrated in the contrasting opinions of Otis on the one hand and Galinsky on the other. Nevertheless, there appears to have been something of a consensus that whatever its ultimate purpose, the Hercules episode exists in close relationship with the Augustan material of the *Metamorphoses* and can clearly be interpreted in that context. This same distinction between Ovid's serious or irreverent purpose is equally valid in any discussion of the epic/ heroic material of the

¹⁷ G.K.Galinsky, "Hercules Ovidianus (*Met.*9.1-272)", *Wiener Studien* 85 (1972b) 93-116.

Metamorphoses and of the Hercules episode. Again Otis proposes the former view, arguing that Ovid included serious epic material with the purpose of giving weight to the central part of his epic. Nagle and Segal counter this with the argument that Ovid uses the epic content to undermine the original epic gravity of this material, even if his treatment does not constitute straight-forward parody. There has, however, been agreement that the Hercules episode has an epic/ heroic dimension and is, in consequence, associated with the heroic episodes of the *Metamorphoses*.

The tendency to interpret the Hercules episode in light of the heroic or Augustan backdrop is, therefore, both natural and valid. My argument in this chapter is not that such an approach is invalid, for Ovid certainly intended interaction on both these grounds, but rather that it is too limited. (It is limited thematically, for the Hercules episode has themes other than those of epic or Augustan significance; it is also limited in scope, for the epic/ Augustan material is largely confined to the final section, but the Hercules episode interacts with tales in the first section, of which it is a part.) That an interpretation which views Hercules exclusively against the heroic or Augustan backdrop is restricted and incomplete may be illustrated through consideration of Segal's treatment of the Augustan material of the later books, for he separates them from discussion of the Augustan question which provides the usual backdrop for consideration of these scenes. He discusses them outwith the context of the superficial Augustan framework (he accepts that there is an Augustan framework, but dismisses it as a facade)¹⁸ and outwith the question of Ovid's epic or political responsibilities. The basis of his approach is to reinterpret these scenes in the context of the tales of erotic *amor* which surround and interrupt them and thus to provide a more complete examination of them. He challenges the view that the epic/ Augustan content is to be taken seriously and in emphasising the eroticism of scenes such as that of Circe (14.242-434), which occurs in the course of Ovid's "*Aeneid*" and draws attention away from the epic potential/ pretensions of that section, proposes that there is no real

¹⁸ Segal (1969a) 292.

change either of subject matter or tone in the concluding books.¹⁹ He argues that the scenes of gravity, heroism and apotheosis in Books 11-15 benefit from discussion in the context of these erotic tales, for the setting of these scenes would suggest that Ovid sought to undercut the overt Augustanism. (Otis, in contrast, proposes that these scenes function to lighten the epic gravity.) Such an approach, which recognises the complete context of these Augustan scenes and the erotic nature of that context, allows these episodes to be integrated more fully into the scheme of the epic, aligning them with the preferred Ovidian tone and subject matter.

Segal argues, then, that an epic/ Augustan interpretation of the final section of the *Metamorphoses* cannot fully explain Ovid's intentions here, in consideration of the erotic tone which co-exists in that section and which undermines any serious Augustan interpretation. The same is true of the Hercules episode, for in view of the tales of *amor* which surround it, an epic/ Augustan interpretation can only partially explain its meaning. In the immediate context of the Hercules tale, despite the overt moralising function of the preceding tales of Baucis and Philemon (8.618-724) and Erysichthon (8.738-878), a sense of eroticism is created even here, for the violation of Erysichthon's daughter is recounted, as too is Achelous' defilement of Perimele (8.590-610) and the tale of Scylla's erotic desire also appears (11-151). Even earlier there are the tales of Cephalus and Procris (7.794-862), Medea (7.7-403) and Tereus and Procne (6.424-674). The Hercules material²⁰ is immediately followed by the tale of Dryope (9.324-93) in which the young girl is violated by Apollo, and this same book also contains the account of the incestuous desire of Byblis for her brother (9.454-665) and the Iphis tale with its erotic undercurrent (9.666-end). Book 9, in which the Hercules tale appears, is, moreover, followed by Orpheus' song, a collection of tales with indecent *amor* at their centre, which occupies the whole of Book

¹⁹ For a more recent discussion of the interaction of epic and erotic in the final books of the *Metamorphoses*, see Sharrock (2002) 95-107.

²⁰ Following Hercules' apotheosis, there is an account of his birth. This is clearly part of the Hercules material but is not part of my discussion here.

10. The fact, moreover, that the Hercules episode is part of the first section of the *Metamorphoses* and that this first section is characterised by its erotic material (observing the division of books into typically amorous and typically martial) again suggests the validity of this approach. These tales of *amor* in the *Metamorphoses* will provide a backdrop to my discussion here.

My approach in this chapter is to consider the Hercules episode in the context of its amatory setting and to examine the importance of this erotic dimension for interpretation of the tale. The focus of my discussion within that context will be to identify the superficial interpretation of the tale and the underlying reading which challenges it and to discuss this in terms of the model of the implied and 'resisting' readings which I have outlined in the introduction. In general terms, the implied reading may be defined as that which the narrator explicitly offers to his audience; the 'resisting' reading as that which the attentive reader, through sensitivity to textual undercurrents, forms as an alternative to the implied reading. In employing this model in my discussion of the Hercules episode and, specifically, to the discussion of the Hercules episode in its amatory setting, I will suggest that the episode is set up as a tale of *amor*, that Hercules is set up as *amator* and that this is the implied reading of the tale. I will suggest that Achelous, as narrator of the first section of the Hercules episode, is primarily responsible for this implied reading through his emphasis on the fight as an amatory contest, a situation which typically possesses an erotic dimension. I will suggest that when Ovid replaces Achelous as narrator and narrates the remainder of the episode, he sustains the implied reading established by Achelous, again through the manipulation of the expectations of the audience in the use of typical erotic situations. Both narrators explicitly provide models for reading an amorous tale.

The main focus of this chapter, however, will be to identify the various ways in which the figure of an erotic Hercules is consistently undermined so that the narrator, having created the facade of an amatory tale and having surrounded it with tales of explicit

amor, thwarts his audience's attempts to discover an erotic Hercules through his deliberate portrayal of the hero as failing, in this amorous setting, to respond amorously to Deianira. This betrays the inadequacy of the models offered by the two narrators and as such constitutes a 'resisting' reading. This will be the application of the implied/ 'resisting' reading construction in my discussion of the Hercules episode.

The use of this construction as a means of interpreting the Hercules episode is not, however, perfect, for the interaction between the implied and 'resisting' readings is not as obvious as it is, for example, in the Myrrha episode. In that episode, the implied/ 'resisting' model (the implied reading of Orpheus' disgust and the 'resisting' reading of his sympathy) functions so effectively because the reading which the narrator, Orpheus, desires his audience to adopt is made so explicit that it cannot be avoided and this is achieved, partly because the Myrrha tale draws attention to itself through its conspicuous position at the centre of a 'song within a song' (and Orpheus' song is the longest internal narrative in the *Metamorphoses*), partly in view of the prolonged establishment of the implied reading (18 lines): Orpheus, the archetypal singer, does not begin the tale proper until he has carefully and at length established the horrified response he desires from his audience. As regards the Hercules episode, the application of the model of the implied/ 'resisting' reading is not so immediately obvious (partly in view of the fact that the narrators (Achelous and Ovid) do not intrude so explicitly to direct the reader) and indeed without the example offered by the Orpheus narrative, may not be identified at all. Nevertheless, I would suggest that the transfer of this process of reading to the less explicit example of the Hercules episode is a valid approach in view of the fact that the 'resisting' reading generated in the Orpheus narrative encourages the reader/ audience to be alert to 'resisting' readings in the other narratives of the *Metamorphoses*.

In this chapter, then, I will discuss the Hercules episode within the context suggested by the *Metamorphoses*' tales of *amor*, rather than in the context of the Augustan

or epic backdrop of the final books. Where I discuss the epic/ Augustan episodes, in particular Ovid's Aeneas-Turnus conflict, I will do so with consideration of their amatory dimension. This chapter will fall into two sections. In the first, I will discuss earlier versions of this Hercules myth, as found in Bacchylides, Sophocles and Ovid's own *Heroides*, and will indicate the changes which Ovid made in his *Metamorphoses* version. I will argue that Ovid's alteration of his sources was designed to emphasise the figure of Hercules rather than Deianira, who had been the central focus in all earlier accounts and thus to draw attention to male rather than female activity. I will then discuss the contribution of the Hercules episode to the *Metamorphoses* and will hope thereby to assess Ovid's choice of the Hercules-Deianira episode in particular from the vast corpus of Herculean legend.

In the second section, I will examine the way in which Ovid builds up his characterisation of Hercules as uninterested in, indeed opposed to, amorous influence. This will involve a close examination of the episode itself and will be the main body of the chapter. I will examine each section in turn (Hercules-Achelous; Hercules-Nessus; Deianira's monologue; and Hercules' apotheosis) and look at how Ovid consistently suggests the lack of *amor* in Hercules' approach to Deianira. This is the 'resisting' reading which challenges the picture of an amorous Hercules created by Achelous. In conclusion, I will propose possible reasons why Ovid sought to portray Hercules in this way, comparing Hercules with those other figures in the *Metamorphoses* who likewise reject the concerns of *amor*. In view of the prominence of the theme of *amor* in the *Metamorphoses* and of the figure of the amorous male and in consideration of the fact that in this text, the construction of masculinity revolves around the experience of *amor*, the deliberate omission of such a dimension in the Ovidian Hercules must be significant.

(II) Ovid's Treatment of his Sources

Ovid's principal sources for the Hercules-Deianira myth in the *Metamorphoses* were Bacchylides, Sophocles' *Trachiniae* and his own earlier version in the *Heroides*.²¹ In this section, I will first summarise these earlier versions of the Hercules-Deianira myth, before discussing both the similarities between them and the changes which Ovid makes in his *Metamorphoses* version. I will argue that the purpose of those differences was to alter the focus of the myth and so to centralise the heroic Hercules rather than the amorous Deianira.

In Bacchylides 16, Hercules, having sacked Oechalia, is devoting his spoils to Zeus. Deianira learns of Hercules' infidelity and fears his intention of marrying Iole whom he has already sent to his home. Her jealousy prompts her to form a plan. The precise nature of her plan depends not only on her amatory jealousy but on her acceptance of a centaur's gift at some stage in the past. An extant fragment (fr 64) which provides further detail of the Hercules-Deianira myth (Nessus' attempted abduction of Deianira and his destruction by Hercules' club) may be Bacchylidean but the authorship is by no means certain and has been variously attributed to Bacchylides, Pindar and Simonides.²²

Bacchylides provides only a partial account of the Hercules-Deianira tale, for the general context of the myth is not explicitly recounted. This version begins at a late stage in the tale when Deianira has learned of Hercules' infatuation with Iole and is on the point of deciding which course of action to follow. The initial part of the myth, in which Hercules fought with Achelous in order to win Deianira, is not mentioned here and Hercules' subsequent encounter with Nessus is not directly narrated but is referred to as the background explanation of Deianira's acquisition of the love-charm which she decides to send to Hercules. The hero's ultimate demise, the result of Deianira's plan (the formation

²¹ Briefer versions are found in Diodorus Siculus 4.36.1-5 and Apollodorus *Lib.*2.7.6.

²² A. Burnett, *The Art of Bacchylides* (London, 1985) 196.

of which is the central focus of this account) is likewise only implied through the ominous language used to describe Deianira's plan. To a large degree, Bacchylides relies on the prior knowledge of the audience to supplement his account by providing independently the narrative detail which he does not. Burnett attributes the incomplete narrative to Bacchylides' literary purpose. As far as the narrative detail of the myth is concerned, she writes

...that is knowledge that the poet and the audience already share... But how could a woman's mind have the power to destroy? That is the question that the poet has set himself to answer in the space of thirteen lines.²³

The focus in Bacchylides, then, is that crucial moment when Deianira formulates her plan and in so doing precipitates Hercules' destruction.

Sophocles' *Trachiniae* begins at a point in the story slightly before Bacchylides' version of the myth. When the play begins, Deianira recalls the turmoil which she experienced prior to her marriage to Hercules when Achelous had sought marriage with her and compares this with her present anxiety over the safety of Hercules who has been absent on numerous campaigns. Deianira sends her son, Hyllus, in search of his father, then addresses the chorus and informs them that when Hercules left for his present adventure, he did so as if he knew he would not return, a belief which depended on a prophecy received from a sacred oak at Dodona. A messenger informs Deianira that Hercules has conquered his foes and is returning home. While Hercules sacrifices to Zeus, he has sent his captives from Oechalia in advance. Deianira, surveying these captives, singles out Iole as the one most deserving of pity but when she learns that Hercules intends to marry this girl, she is distraught and forms a plan which she confides to the chorus. In the revelation of her plan to the chorus, she refers to her earlier encounter with Nessus and reveals that she intends to use the love-charm which he gave to her in order to rekindle Hercules' passion for her. She smears this potion onto a robe which she has made for Hercules, discovering the destructive power of the potion only after she has sent the robe to her husband. Hyllus

²³ Burnett (1985)126.

then enters to confirm that Hercules is dying and to rebuke Deianira for his murder. Deianira, in the face of this condemnation and in the knowledge of the consequences of her actions, kills herself. Following Deianira's death, the dying Hercules appears on stage, raging against Deianira and against his defeat by a woman. Hyllus, having learned of Deianira's innocent intention, informs Hercules, who thereupon shifts responsibility for his death from his wife to Nessus. The play ends when Hercules makes Hyllus promise both to build a pyre for him on Mount Oeta and to marry Iole.

Sophocles' *Trachiniae* works broadly within the same time-frame as Bacchylides. The latter captures the precise moment when Deianira decides to send the love-charm to Hercules: in Sophocles this decision is the moment of climax, for the first part of the *Trachiniae* moves towards Deianira's decision, while the second part unfolds with a description of the consequences of that decision, both for Deianira and for Hercules. The moment of decision is not dramatised and this reflects the fact that the emphasis in Sophocles is less on the actual decision than on the forces which lead Deianira towards that course of action and her subsequent reaction to it.

Sophocles extends the time-frame of Bacchylides' version but still he does not present the entire Hercules-Deianira legend from beginning to end: the action of the play begins shortly before Deianira's decision to send the robe to Hercules and concludes shortly after Hercules has received and been destroyed by it. Although Hercules' encounters, first with Achelous, then with Nessus are referred to by Deianira in the course of her various speeches (6-26; 553-85) (the Achelous episode is also referred to by the chorus, 504-30), still they are not themselves part of the dramatic action. Sophocles chose, then, to depict the latter stages of the Hercules-Deianira myth.

A certain division is apparent in the Sophoclean version, for Hercules does not enter onto the scene directly until Deianira has killed herself, though he is present indirectly throughout the play by virtue of Deianira's frequent reference to him, both in her

monologues and in conversation with others. Prior to Hercules' entry, the emphasis is upon Deianira's feelings: her fear for Hercules' safety; her joy at the thought of his imminent return; her devastation, jealousy and fear for her position as wife when she discovers Hercules' intention of marrying Iole; her regret at Hercules' destruction. Sophocles' picture of Deianira is sympathetic. Following her death, Hercules enters in the final quarter of the play, by which point he is dying and his only emotion is rage, first at Deianira, then at Nessus. He does not have Deianira's complexity of character and emerges, to some extent, as a caricature of physical strength and masculine aggression. Sophocles' negative portrayal of Hercules is most evident in the savagery (violent and lustful behaviour) which he attributes to him. In the course of the play, there is no visual, verbal or physical contact between Hercules and Deianira.

As the tale appears in Ovid's *Heroides*, the Hercules-Deianira relationship is again portrayed within the time-frame presented in Bacchylides and Sophocles. *Heroides* 9 takes the form of a letter composed by Deianira and addressed to her absent husband. The letter begins with Deianira's reference to the rumours which have reached her concerning his infatuation with Iole. She lists his heroic achievements and contrasts them with his present ignominy, commenting on the irony of a situation in which a man who has conquered innumerable savage forces (beasts and men) is himself conquered by a woman (73-118). (This is a recurring notion in the *Trachiniae* where Hercules' past victories are contrasted with his present defeat by Iole. This anticipates Hercules' ultimate defeat by Deianira: it is precisely this female victory which the Sophoclean Hercules, who can understand victory only in terms of physical force, cannot comprehend.) Throughout, there is an extensive juxtaposition of past glory and present shame. Deianira recalls Hercules' previous liaisons, in particular his dalliance with Omphale, and highlights his willingness in these affairs to accept a submissive female role. In the final third of the letter, there is a transition from what Deianira has heard through rumour to what she knows as fact (119). Deianira has seen

Iole and fears that Hercules intends not simply to indulge his amorous appetite with her but also to love her legitimately as wife (131-6). (She fears being usurped in her position as legitimate wife.²⁴) Deianira expresses her physical distress at this possibility and with a certain nostalgia remembers two earlier occasions when Hercules loved and fought for her (with Achelous and Nessus (137-42)). Deianira then reports that she has heard a rumour that Hercules is dying as a result of the poison in the cloak which she sent to him and she rebukes herself for the lengths to which she has gone in order to preserve her marriage, though at the same time proclaiming her innocence in having failed to understand the nature of Nessus' gift (143-52). After a brief self-analysis and self-condemnation, she resolves to die and addresses in farewell her father, sister, brother, native land and, finally, her husband and son (153-68).

The same stage of the Hercules-Deianira myth is presented in the *Heroides* as in Bacchylides and Sophocles. The letter is written after Deianira has learned of Hercules' infidelity (perhaps is inspired by this discovery) and explores the emotions which this evokes in her. There is no clear moment of decision in which Deianira determines to send the cloak to Hercules but certainly before she concludes the letter, Deianira is aware of Hercules' destruction. Despite the similarity of form between Deianira's letter and the tragic monologue,²⁵ Ovid is not motivated here by dramatic concerns, for there is no crucial moment of dilemma and decision and no real action to speak of. Rather, he is interested in the range of emotions experienced by the female in the period following the discovery of her husband's infidelity.

Before discussing the Ovidian adaptation of these versions in the *Metamorphoses*, it may prove useful to discuss briefly the points of similarity between the Bacchylidean, the Sophoclean and the *Heroides* versions of the myth. Firstly, the central focus of these three accounts is the part of the myth which centres around Deianira's discovery of

²⁴ For Deianira's concern for her status as wife, see H. Isbell (tr.), *Ovid Heroides* (London, 1990) 76.

²⁵ For the similarity between the *Heroides* letters and the dramatic/ tragic monologue, see L.P. Wilkinson, *Ovid Recalled* (Cambridge, 1955) 86-95.

Hercules' infatuation, her reaction to it and Hercules' consequent death. Certainly, within this similar time-frame, there are differences of presentation, dependent largely on difference of genre. Bacchylides, in his dithyramb, chooses one particular moment of crisis when Deianira decides to send a love-charm to Hercules; he omits narrative detail entirely, depending on the knowledge of the audience and being concerned primarily with the significance of the moment of decision. This depends on the function of the dithyramb to create a moment of electric and powerful emotion which the singers might capture and extend to the audience.²⁶ Ovid, in view of the epistolary form of the *Heroides*, likewise concentrates on a static moment when Deianira is reacting to the knowledge of Hercules' affair with Iole. The basic narrative detail is presented incidentally through the comments of Deianira but again a certain familiarity with the myth is anticipated. In Sophocles, the dramatic nature of the account means that the tale unfolds before the audience, beginning just before Deianira learns of the infidelity, so that there is a greater sense of narrative progression here. Still Sophocles' version, though certainly fuller in terms of narrative information than either Bacchylides or Ovid's *Heroides*, does not provide a comprehensive narrative account of this myth, for the earlier incidents of Hercules' encounters with Achelous and Nessus are referred to but are not fully reported. Nevertheless, the narrative from the point just before Deianira is informed about Iole to the point of Hercules' death is complete.

A further point of similarity between the three accounts is the fact that Deianira is the principal focus in each. This is, perhaps, inevitable in the Bacchylidean and *Heroides* versions in view of the presentation in each of a static moment which has no narrative progression. Therefore, Bacchylides, in centralising the moment of Deianira's decision, focuses entirely on Deianira and the forces which influenced her. Ovid, in focussing on Deianira's correspondence, concentrates exclusively on her emotions (her sense of abandonment, her fear that Hercules will divorce her, her outrage that Iole should be

²⁶ Burnett (1985) 15.

present before her). The dramatic nature of the *Trachiniae* offered Sophocles greater opportunity for the treatment of different characters, but there too, Deianira is prominent and dominates the first three-quarters of the play. The emphasis throughout much of the play is the development of Deianira's feelings. Only after her death does the focus shift to Hercules, though even then, he is present more briefly and the development of his character is minimal, his emotions largely restricted to savage rage.

These three versions, then, are similar both in their treatment of the events following the marriage of Hercules and Deianira and in their emphasis on the figure of Deianira. In the *Metamorphoses* version of this myth, Ovid alters his focus and I would argue that this is designed to centralise the figure of Hercules. Ovid incorporates into the *Metamorphoses* aspects from all of these earlier versions, but differs from his sources in highlighting such elements as were marginalised in the earlier accounts. Accordingly, he redresses the relatively limited attention given to the events which preceded Deianira's discovery of Hercules' infidelity. He provides a fuller description of the background to the events in Bacchylides, Sophocles and his own version in the *Heroides*, developing in particular Hercules' encounters with Achelous and with Nessus. Whereas in earlier versions these incidents were referred to only in passing, Ovid describes them directly and at length in the *Metamorphoses*.

The effect of highlighting the Achelous and Nessus episodes is to remove Deianira from the central position she held in earlier versions and to replace her with Hercules: the silence and anonymity of Deianira in these scenes merely function to complete this process. This, along with Ovid's extended account of Hercules' apotheosis, deliberately directs our attention towards Hercules. Ovid gives relatively greater attention to Hercules' demise, for he reserves for it a greater proportion of his text than Sophocles (and it is not even included in the Bacchylidean or *Heroides* versions). This change of focus from Deianira to Hercules underlines the movement from the female experience of *amor* to the

active male struggle to acquire the female.

Ovid chooses scenes in which we would more naturally see or expect Hercules as the prominent figure. These are scenes which involve male activity such as conflict and competition. Hercules is likewise the obvious focus in the scene of his apotheosis. The choice of scene is, moreover, combined with Ovid's lack of development of the figure of Deianira, even as far as these 'male' scenes would allow. In Hercules' conflict with Achelous, Deianira remains silent; in the Nessus scene, when she is about to be violated, she certainly screams, but she is given no direct speech, nor does she emerge from the mould of the typical female. In the scene where she might have been allowed to develop, in the course of her monologue, Ovid denies this and even here, her comments are standard and she is not given any depth or individuality. This Ovidian scene, in which Deianira learns of Hercules' infidelity, is essentially the scene which we find in Bacchylides and, in extended form, in Sophocles and Ovid's *Heroides*. In the *Metamorphoses*, however, this section is greatly contracted and Ovid does not develop Deianira's character in the brief monologue which he gives to her. There is no psychological development in the Ovidian Deianira such as we find in Sophocles or in the *Heroides* and the scene effectively acts as a transition to the account of Hercules' apotheosis. Deianira's monologue identifies her as the instrument, albeit unwilling and unaware, of Hercules' destruction.²⁷

The brevity of this section itself signals Ovid's general lack of interest in Deianira in this version, but this is made even more evident in his juxtaposition of Deianira's brief monologue both with the extended account of Hercules' apotheosis and with the extended speech which Hercules gives in the course of his transformation. This reverses the relative emphasis of Sophocles' version, for in the *Trachiniae*, the greater part of the play centralises the plight of Deianira and this is followed by the more condensed and restricted (and unsympathetic) description of Hercules' destruction. The redistribution of emphasis

²⁷ Cf removal of Salmacis from text following her role in the metamorphosis of Hermaphrodite (*Met.*4.380).

in the *Metamorphoses*, therefore, highlights once again the general movement away from Deianira towards Hercules in Ovid.

In the *Metamorphoses*, then, Ovid expands upon earlier versions of the Hercules-Deianira myth in widening the chronological scope of his account. His adaptation of the myth represents a significant change of focus from that of earlier versions. This movement entails a movement away from the female perspective and its emphasis on the experience and emotions of love, to the male perspective and its emphasis on the attainment of *amor* and the female through conquest.

As regards why Ovid should have chosen to present the Hercules-Deianira myth in particular, given the extensive choice of Hercules legends available to him, this may, in part, be answered through an examination of its contribution to the structure and meaning of the *Metamorphoses*. I will briefly discuss three ways in which the Hercules-Deianira episode functions within the framework of the *Metamorphoses* as a means of illuminating Ovid's choice of this Hercules myth.

Firstly, the Hercules-Deianira episode enters into close dialogue with the Meleager episode which is narrated in Book 8 in the context of the Calydonian boar hunt (8.270-525). A key theme of that tale, which it shares with the Hercules episode, is the destruction of the hero by a female agent. This thematic similarity suggests association between these episodes. Meleager is defeated by a female on two scores, for he is first overcome by his experience of *amor* for Atalanta; and is ultimately defeated by his mother, Althaea, when she seeks to avenge the death of her brothers, who had been killed by Meleager in amorous rage. In the Hercules episode, although Deianira does not deliberately destroy her husband, still she causes Hercules' demise when she sends a poisonous cloak to him.

Beyond the thematic similarity of destruction through female agency, the two episodes are associated not only through the description of each hero's torment and

destruction in terms of fire and burning but by the fact that in both episodes, the account of the hero's death is accompanied by an account of his birth. More specific association between the two episodes depends on the fact that Meleager and Deianira were brother and sister. In Bacchylides 5, an epinician ode, the connection between the three figures of Meleager, Hercules and Deianira is made explicit when Hercules, visiting the underworld, meets Meleager. In the course of their conversation, Hercules inquires if Meleager has a sister who shares his beauty, thus learning of Deianira, and promises to marry such a girl. Therefore, Ovid's choice of the Hercules-Deianira myth specifically and the links which he draws between his Hercules and Meleager episodes may invite us to recall the Bacchylidean scene.²⁸ In view of the interaction of the Meleager and Hercules episodes, in terms of theme and familial relationship, it may seem reasonable to suppose that, to some extent at least, Ovid's choice of the Hercules-Deianira episode was influenced by its potential unity with the Meleager episode.

A second way in which the Hercules-Deianira episode contributes to the epic, and one which I have already noted, depends on its provision of a thematic link with the later books of the *Metamorphoses* through its presentation of Hercules' apotheosis. For this aligns it thematically with the later apotheoses of Romulus, Aeneas and Caesar and their Augustan significance. Indeed, the fact that Ovid deliberately styles Hercules' demise as deification in contrast to Sophocles' depiction of it merely as death would suggest that Ovid was concerned to prefigure the later apotheoses, even if Hercules suffers rather ingloriously and unheroically at the hands of Deianira. The choice of the Hercules-Deianira episode can, therefore, likewise be explained as Ovid's concern to treat within the Hercules episode an Augustan motif which he was to develop in the final books.

A third way in which the Hercules-Deianira episode contributes to the *Metamorphoses* is the commentary which it provides on Ovid's version of the *Aeneid* in

²⁸ Burnett (1985) 110: "The meeting of the two heroes in the nether world was surely Bacchylides' invention, his greatest single stroke of genius."

*Met.*14 and, by extension, its commentary on Vergil. In particular, the Hercules episode comments on the Aeneas-Turnus struggle for Lavinia. The reason we might assume Ovid's Hercules episode to prefigure his own version of the Aeneas-Turnus struggle in *Metamorphoses* 14 depends on the fact that arguably in the *Aeneid*, Vergil had used his Hercules episode in Book 8 as an anticipation of the Aeneas-Turnus struggle in Book 12. Vergil's systematic alignment of Aeneas with Hercules and the extended account of the Hercules-Cacus struggle suggests that this scene is important in the epic and facilitates the comparison with the Aeneas-Turnus conflict.²⁹

Ovid emulates Vergil's practice of using the Hercules episode to prefigure his Aeneas-Turnus, but his choice of the Hercules-Achelous episode as a means of doing so reduces the Aeneas-Turnus conflict to the struggle for possession of the female.³⁰ It functions in this way because in Vergil, although the Aeneas-Turnus struggle is superficially a struggle for the female, Vergil reveals its underlying political significance in prefiguring it with the Hercules-Cacus conflict whose explicit concern is for the public goal of imperial settlement. (There are, of course, other indicators of the public, altruistic relevance of Aeneas' struggle, but the Hercules-Cacus scene functions in this way also.) In Ovid, the Aeneas-Turnus conflict is likewise presented as the struggle for possession of a female but since this is prefigured by the Hercules-Achelous scene, whose principal concern is similarly the possession of a female, the Hercules episode in the *Metamorphoses* functions to reinforce the Aeneas-Turnus struggle as essentially a struggle for the female rather than to cut through this external representation to expose the underlying imperial significance.

The Hercules-Cacus episode, then, defines Lavinia, for as the goal of the Aeneas-

²⁹ See Galinsky (1972a) 142. For Hercules-Cacus as Octavian-Antony, see Galinsky, *Augustan Culture* (Princeton, 1996) 223. Hercules appears in an epic-style tale at *Met.*15.1-59, though more briefly. In view of the lengthy treatment of the Hercules theme in Book 9, it is likely that this is the central Hercules episode in Ovid's epic.

³⁰ This might be compared with the trivialisation of the Hercules-Cacus episode in Prop. 4.9: on this poem, see W.S.Anderson, "Hercules Exclusus: Propertius IV.9", *AJPh* 85 (1964) 1-12, and Galinsky (1972b) 115.

Turnus struggle, she is thus equated with the goal of the Hercules-Cacus altercation. Therefore, she is not seen as female in an amatory dimension, but as territorial settlement in the political dimension. In the *Metamorphoses*, Lavinia is likewise defined by the Hercules-Achelous episode and is thus equated with Deianira, the goal of that struggle. The choice of the Hercules-Achelous conflict for possession of Deianira deliberately recalls the superficials of the Aeneas-Turnus conflict and restricts it to this superficial level. The competition for the female becomes the entire substance of the conflict in the Hercules-Achelous and the Ovidian Aeneas-Turnus episodes on account of this, lacking the essentially political implications of the Vergilian Aeneas-Turnus struggle or of the Vergilian Hercules tale which prefigures it. Ovid, therefore, removes the public imperial aspect of Aeneas' struggle with Turnus, for Lavinia acquires no public significance in view of the fact that the Hercules-Achelous struggle is given no such public significance. Instead the emphasis in Ovid's "*Aeneid*" is on the desire for personal glory, not only suggested by the similarly personal motivation in the Hercules-Achelous scene, but explicitly revealed in Ovid's account of it:

nec iam dotalia regna,
nec sceptrum soceri, nec te, Lavinia virgo,
sed vicisse petunt deponendique pudore
bella gerunt... (*Met.*14.569-72)

As I will discuss later,³¹ this emphasis on the personal dimension does not necessarily imply that amatory concerns are central.

In effect, then, the choice of the Hercules-Deianira episode seems to have been influenced by the potential it allowed for unity with other episodes. I have referred to three examples of this thematic connection. The Hercules-Deianira episode is closely associated with the Meleager tale primarily on the grounds of the destruction of the hero. It is associated with the concluding apotheoses in view of Ovid's emphasis on the deification of Hercules. The Hercules-Deianira myth functions, moreover, as something of a commentary

³¹ See p48-52.

on Vergil's *Aeneid* and his own *Metamorphoses* version of it. For Ovid, like Vergil, uses his Hercules episode as a means of illuminating the Aeneas-Turnus conflict (his own and that of Vergil) and of revealing the essentially personal motivation which he considers to be central in the Aeneas legend.

(III) Ovid's Treatment of Hercules

(i) Hercules-Achelous

The first section of the Hercules-Deianira episode is narrated by Achelous and records the conflict which took place between Hercules and himself for possession of Deianira. From the beginning of the episode, Achelous as narrator prepares the audience (internal and external) for a tale of *amor* in two ways. Firstly, by means of his earlier tale of Perimele, in which he indulges in erotic *amor*, Achelous establishes for himself an erotic reputation. To some extent, this prepares the audience for a similar erotic display in his next tale. Indeed, the transition to the Hercules tale is effected through the theme of metamorphosis as expressed in the tale of Erysichthon's daughter. The fact that this female's ability to change shape is closely associated with her sexuality (this ability was granted as compensation for her rape by Neptune) and that Achelous forges a connection between himself and this female likewise establishes certain expectations in the audience. Secondly, Achelous as narrator explicitly directs his audience towards a tale of *amor* in the opening lines of his narration, for with the reference to Deianira as "pulcherrima virgo" (9.9) and to the numerous suitors who hope to win her, features which are typical of the amatory contest, he indicates that the tale he is about to tell is of this type of the amatory competition in which lustful males compete for the desired female and he invites us to interpret it along these lines. The reader, therefore, anticipates an emphasis on the traditional erotic appetite of Hercules.³² This is the implied reading of the tale, for the narrator explicitly and deliberately provides a model for reading the following tale.

³² For discussion of this aspect, see p73-5.

Despite the superficial appearance of this conflict as an amatory competition for a female and despite the expectation of erotic male lovers which this raises in the audience, I would argue that Hercules' lack of amorous interest in Deianira is established in this scene. This is the 'resisting' reading of the tale, for it invites the reader to question the amatory interpretation presented by Achelous, and it would appear to be established in three ways. Firstly, the amatory contest is deliberately styled so as to emphasise the competitive rather than the amatory dimension. While this competitive element may be true of all such amatory contests (Atalanta etc.), Ovid uses the context of the competition in this case as a means of subordinating the potential amorous dimension. He achieves this in two ways, for firstly, Deianira emerges exclusively as the prize rather than as the female love-object and secondly, Hercules and Achelous emerge as competitors rather than as lovers. The competition, the struggle and the reward (and its meaning for the male ego) are in the foreground and are not obscured by anything which might betray amorous interest.

The second way in which Hercules' lack of *amor* is suggested lies in the fact that, since this competition has marriage as its outcome, Ovid uses this context of marriage to give prominence to the father-in-law/ son-in-law relationship rather than the male-female one, and does so through the identification of the competitors as potential sons-in-law rather than as potential husbands. That marriage is the outcome, moreover, means that this competition is less explicitly erotic than the extra-marital competition for a female which has an erotic encounter specifically as its goal. Thirdly, the various forms which Achelous assumes (snake and bull) have connotations of sexuality, so that Hercules' defeat of him in these forms represents, or can be viewed as, his defeat of *amor*.

a) The Conflict as Competition

The first way in which Hercules' lack of *amor* for Deianira is suggested depends on the portrayal of the rivalry between Hercules and Achelous, and the amatory competition

in which they become involved, in such a way as to emphasise the competitive rather than the amatory dimension. This is achieved in two ways. Firstly, it is achieved through the description of the conflict in terms of an epic duel. In view of the fact that this epic terminology does not function here merely as a metaphor for the male conflict, as it does in elegy, it serves to subordinate, to some degree, the amorous concerns of the males to their heroic/ competitive interests. Secondly, prominence is given to the competitive aspect of the scene through the portrayal of Deianira as the prize of this struggle. The effect of these two aspects is the removal of the action from the amatory sphere, for when Hercules and Achelous become primarily competitors in the male competition rather than rival suitors in an amatory contest, they are denied amatory motivation and when Deianira becomes the anonymous prize, she is, to some extent, denied her role as female love object and thus the amatory dimension is further muted.

The language of wrestling and military engagement is prominent in this scene and is central to the narrator's depiction of the amatory conflict as an epic duel, for it conveys the physical combat which occurs between the two opponents and emphasises its genuine competitive aspect. When Achelous begins his account, he introduces his tale of amatory conflict in the epic mode, styling himself and Hercules as epic warriors engaged in an epic duel:

... quis enim sua proelia victus
commemorare velit? referam tamen ordine, nec tam
turpe fuit vinci, quam contendisse decorum est,
magnaue dat nobis tantus solacia victor. (4-7)

The picture of competitive physical combat which emerges from this use of epic, military language is further enhanced through the comparison of Hercules and Achelous first with wrestlers,³³ then with bulls:

bracchiaque opposui, tenuique a pectore varas
in statione manus et pugnae membra paravi.
ille cavis hausto spargit me pulvere palmis,

³³ Theocritus includes wrestling as part of Hercules' education (*Id.*24.115-23).

inque vicem fulvae tactu flavescit harenae.

non aliter vidi fortes concurrere tauros,
cum, pretium pugnae, toto nitidissima saltu
expetitur coniunx: spectant armenta paventque
nescia, quem maneat tanti victoria regni. (9.33-6; 46-9)

The bull simile was commonly used to describe physical combat³⁴ but its use here is particularly significant for two reasons, for it echoes Sophocles' comparison of Hercules and Achelous to bulls in the *Trachiniae* (507ff) and was certainly designed to parody Vergil's use of it in reference to the Aeneas-Turnus conflict (*Aen.*12.716-24).³⁵

The same language of military engagement and physical combat appears in elegy, where it alternatively defines the lover's struggles with his rivals and with his mistress. The Propertian *amator* envisages the conflict with his rival as a military duel in which he would be willing to inflict or suffer death:

non ob regna magis diris cecidere sub armis
Thebani media non sine matre duces:
quam, mihi si media liceat pugnare puella
mortem ego non fugiam morte subire tua. (2.9.49-52)

Both Propertius and Ovid compare themselves with epic warriors such as Ajax, Diomedes, Agamemnon and Ulysses:

Non ita Dardanio gavisus Atrida triumpho est,
cum caderent magnae Loamedontis opes;
nec sic errore exacto laetatus Ulixes,
cum tetigit carae litora Dulichiae; ...

quanta ego praeterita collegi gaudia nocte: ...

pulsabant alii frustra dominamque vocabant:
mecum habuit positum lenta puella caput.
haec mihi devictis potior victoria Parthis,
haec spolia haec reges, haec mihi currus erunt. (2.14.1-4; 9; 21-4)

In the background of Propertius' glory here are the disgruntled rivals whom he has defeated.

³⁴ F. Bömer, *P. Ovidius Naso. Metamorphosen. Buch VIII-IX* (Heidelberg, 1977) 288.

³⁵ Cf *Am.*2.12.25-6.

Both Achelous and the elegiac lover use this language to define an amorous conflict, though the lover/ poet's use of this language differs from that of Achelous in being used exclusively as a metaphor. In elegy, this language explains the conflict between the lover and his rivals and between the lover and his mistress. Although it styles this conflict as a competitive engagement in the mode of an epic duel, in reality the *puella* does not actually feature as a prize, for she is the opponent of the lover, just as much as any male rival (as in *Amores* 1.7). Accordingly, possession of her is not the ultimate aim of the lover: despite his protestations to the contrary, the lover seeks erotic activity in the form of a night with the beloved (Prop.2.14) rather than permanent possession of the female.³⁶ Furthermore, the notion of physical combat, implicit in this language, is only partially valid, for only on occasion does the *amator*'s struggle with his mistress or with his rivals descend to the physical level.³⁷ The lover/ poet compares himself with the epic warrior only to define and distinguish himself as a lover and to highlight his superior status.

In elegy, then, the use of military/ heroic language and the styling of male rivalry (or the male-female struggle) as an epic duel is clearly a metaphor. The use of exempla from epic mythology underlines the distance of Ovid's world from that mythological world and clearly exposes the function of this language as metaphor. In the mythological setting of the *Metamorphoses* and in the epic context of Achelous' banquet, however, Achelous' use of this epic language is more ambiguous and the line between literal and metaphorical application, distinct in elegy, is less obvious here. As a result, the epic language cannot be regarded as a straight-forward metaphor and this functions to undermine the tale as a straight-forward tale of *amor*. The epic setting (assembled heroes; banquet story-telling) allows for the possibility that the language might be interpreted literally and that the Hercules-Achelous conflict might be read as a genuine epic duel. The military language, the

³⁶ P.Veyne (D.Pellauer tr.), *Roman Erotic Elegy. Love, Poetry, and the West* (Chicago, 1988) 103: "The poetry of passion and that of possession remain separate".

³⁷Tibullus uses *proelia* of quarrels; Propertius, in addition, uses it of love-making and of the struggle to gain the mistress' favour. For further discussion, see D.Fredrick, "Reading Broken Skin.Violence in Roman Elegy", in P.A.Miller (ed.) *Latin Erotic Elegy* (London, 2002) 457-79.

desire for personal glory,³⁸ the bull simile, the anticipation of the Aeneas-Turnus duel and the presentation of Deianira as a trophy would seem, moreover, to be in accord with this expectation. The difference between this situation and the genuine epic duel depends on the amatory backdrop of the Hercules scene. As regards Homeric duels, insofar as they are part of the Trojan War which is being waged for the return of Helen, they have an amatory backdrop, but in effect, this aspect is distant and Helen does not constitute, even symbolically, the prize of the duel.³⁹ In the Hercules-Achelous conflict, despite having essentially the same motivation (the desire for valour), Deianira clearly symbolises this and thus renders the amatory dimension more immediate (implied reading), even if this dimension remains secondary and does not imply the amatory desire of the competitors ('resisting' reading). Nevertheless, the presence of Deianira allows the language to be interpreted as a metaphor (as it is in amatory elegy) and for the tale to be read as an amatory conflict, this being the implied reading of the tale. The amatory contest is an important motif in the *Metamorphoses* and the Hercules-Achelous conflict is something of a hybrid between the epic duel and this amatory competition and this prevents any absolute reading of the conflict either as an epic duel or as an amatory competition. In view of this, it would seem reasonable to suppose that in Achelous' tale, if the epic language does not function to define the Hercules-Achelous confrontation as a genuine epic duel, it at least undermines any reading of it as a simple amatory contest. This is a 'resisting' reading of the tale, for it functions to challenge the facade of the amatory competition which Achelous as narrator offers. Thus it differs from the elegiac situation, in which the use of military language clearly confirms and explains the erotic dimension.

The portrayal of the conflict between Hercules and Achelous as a competition, in particular as an epic duel, underlines Deianira's role as the prize of that conflict. As such,

³⁸ Cf motive for participation in the Calydonian boar hunt: "coiere cupidine laudis" (8.300).

³⁹ For omission of Helen from Ovid's account of the Trojan War, see A.Keith, "Versions of Epic Masculinity in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*" in P.Hardie, A.Barchiesi and S.Hinds (edd.), *Ovidian Transformations. Essays on Ovid's Metamorphoses and its Reception*. Cambridge Philological Society. Supplementary Volume 23 (Cambridge, 1999) 214-39, at 230.

she is equated with the military trophy, such as the armour which Ajax acquires as the prize of his duel with Hector (*Il.*7.236-358). The narrator's characterisation of Deianira confirms this definition. Deianira's failure to resist her role as trophy depends on the fact that she is given no voice in this scene and in being denied a voice is thus denied the power to object. Although Deianira's presence is suggested through the comments of others, she does not actively participate in the scene. She is referred to only briefly by Achelous as a means of explaining his encounter with Hercules and of establishing a context for it. Throughout the scene, she remains silent and by virtue of this is associated with the numerous other silent females of the *Metamorphoses*. My discussion here does not admit extended consideration of the question of the female voice but I would simply make two points relevant to my discussion of Deianira. Firstly, the silent female is typically the rape victim (the potential victim who flees (Callisto, 2.450; Io, 1.637-50) or the actual victim who is silenced by the male in order to prevent exposure (Philomela, 6.549-62; Cyane, 5.425-8)) and, as Sharrock highlights, often in the *Metamorphoses* "... the voice and sexuality are violently entwined."⁴⁰ Certainly this would appear to be the case. I would, however, suggest that when the male does not explicitly desire the female as erotic object but rather as a trophy, with male prestige rather than erotic desire as motivation, as we find with Deianira (and Lavinia), the silence of the female is more closely related to her status as object, rather than specifically as erotic object, though in both cases her silence denotes her lack of power. (The 'resisting' reading of Hercules' lack of erotic interest in Deianira generates the 'resisting' reading of Deianira merely as object/ trophy.) Deianira's silence, then, confirms her role as the guaranteed prize for the victor. Secondly, I would suggest that the silence of the female is part of the restriction which prevents the female from identifying herself. Therefore, as regards Deianira, when the male identifies her as the prize in a competition, she cannot redefine herself.⁴¹ Certainly Deianira's monologue in the third

⁴⁰ Sharrock (2002) 100.

⁴¹ For Daphne as ornament and, therefore, as prize, see M.Boillat, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide: Thèmes majeurs et problèmes de composition* (Frankfurt, 1976) 44.

section of this episode superficially redresses this, but the standard nature of her emotions similarly comply in denying her individual identity.⁴²

Deianira, then, as an example of this type,⁴³ is different from the elegiac mistress who, in having both voice and power, can prevent herself from being simply the prize: though she assumes this role, it functions only partially to define her. (An erotic encounter with the elegiac mistress is the lover's prize and, by extension, the mistress herself is his prize. The mistress also resists the male and in that sense is the competitor who can withhold the reward.⁴⁴) Certainly the elegiac mistress, like the silent female, is a male construct, designed to reflect and to define the male character, and, like her, cannot permanently resist the male approach. However, she is not a one-dimensional character, even though she is still a female type, and when she yields to the male, this is clearly styled as a matter of choice and not the consequence of her lack of power and failure to resist. (In elegy, the male is powerless by virtue of his role as slave through the *servitium amoris* conceit.)

In two ways, then, the Hercules-Achelous conflict is styled as a literal competition, both through the portrayal of Deianira as the guaranteed and unresisting prize of the conflict and through the portrayal of the actual conflict as a genuine competition, in particular as an epic duel. (Undoubtedly, there is some overlap between these two points, for the lack of erotic interest suggested by the epic language is, to some extent, responsible for the interpretation of Deianira as object/ trophy.) This practice of emphasising the Hercules-Achelous conflict as a literal competition serves really to remove the rivalry from the amatory sphere. The element of competition becomes the exclusive focus and the entire outcome is concentrated in the male struggle. Any amatory dimension is subordinated when the two males become competitors rather than lovers. This depends on the fact that, as in

⁴² For further discussion of this issue, see L. Enterline, *The Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare* (Cambridge, 2000) 70; 139.

⁴³ See C.P. Segal, "Ovid: Metamorphosis, Hero, Poet", *Helios* 12 (1985) 49-63 at 58-9 for the establishment in the *Metamorphoses* of types rather than individual personalities.

⁴⁴ For mistress as prize, *Am.* 1.5 ; 1.13; for mistress as opponent, *Am.* 1.7; *Prop.* 2.1.13.

epic warfare, the desire for personal glory and prestige is "... the characteristic motivation of heroic action in the *Iliad*, as it is enunciated in the 'heroic code' explained by Sarpedon to Glaucus (*Il.*12.310-28, especially 325-8)."⁴⁵ The amatory dimension is further muted when the female, in being accorded the role of prize, to an extent, loses her gender and ceases to function as love object. This reflects the epic practice of placing the female "... in the Iliadic role of female prizes awarded in recognition of epic valour."⁴⁶ In this competition, stripped of its amatory significance, the female serves only as a symbol of the male victory and as a celebration of it and to that extent, any other prize (armour etc.) would function just as well.

b) Competition for Marriage

The second way in which Hercules' lack of *amor* for Deianira is suggested in this section depends on the fact that the Hercules-Achelous conflict is set in the context of marriage, for it is Deianira specifically as wife which the victor will win. It is not the fact that this episode is concerned with a marital rather than an illegitimate relationship which accounts for Hercules' lack of amorous response here, since Ovid's portrayal of marriage in the *Metamorphoses*, as I will discuss, reveals the presence of *amor*, even if it does not show the same level of eroticism as the epic's illegitimate liaisons. Rather, the lack of *amor* in the Hercules-Achelous scene depends on the way in which Ovid uses the context of marriage in order to define Hercules and Achelous primarily in their relationship with Deianira's father, Oeneus, rather than with Deianira herself and thus to emphasise them in their role as potential sons-in-law and not as potential husbands. The context of marriage effectively confines the action to the male arena (as does the context of competition)⁴⁷ and to the essentially male contract of marriage through the emphasis on the male relationship

⁴⁵ Keith (1999) 223-4.

⁴⁶ Keith (1999) 239.

⁴⁷ Atalanta (10.560-707) intrudes into both of these male arenas of marriage organisation and competition.

between Hercules, Achelous and Oeneus.

This discussion comprises three sections. In the first, I will make some general observations on the portrayal of marriage in the *Metamorphoses*. In the second, I will compare the Hercules-Achelous struggle with that of Perseus and Phineus which is likewise set in the context of marriage. Finally, I will compare the Hercules-Achelous conflict with the Aeneas-Turnus conflict as it appears both in Ovid and in Vergil.

Marriage in the *Metamorphoses*

Since, in the *Metamorphoses*, the examples of marital love are far outnumbered by the illegitimate liaisons which occur at frequent intervals between unmarried men and girls, those episodes where married love is central must be important in considering Ovid's portrayal of a competition which has marriage rather than an erotic liaison as its outcome. Particularly relevant is the Perseus-Phineus episode (*Met.*5.1-235) which, like the Hercules-Achelous tale, has a conflict and marriage at its centre. Before comparing these thematically similar episodes and considering the difference in *amor* between them, a brief comment on the general portrayal of marriage in the *Metamorphoses* may prove useful, as a means of demonstrating that, since married relationships in this text typically involve some form of *amor*, the marital context of the Hercules-Achelous scene is not responsible for the lack of *amor* in that episode.

The brief erotic encounter, by virtue of its frequent repetition, becomes the standard pattern of love in the *Metamorphoses* and was certainly Ovid's preferred subject matter. Nevertheless, married love does find expression and is indeed portrayed more positively, perhaps, than one might anticipate. The example of Tereus and Procne is an obvious exception. One may have expected a more equivocal representation of married love in consideration of the elegiac attitude which regarded marriage as an obstacle to the elegiac

ideal of 'whole' love.⁴⁸ Yet the elegiac lovers, despite their rejection of marriage, acknowledged that it had desirable qualities, such as *fides*, and therefore described their affairs in these terms,⁴⁹ with Catullus employing this language when the terminology of erotic discourse was insufficient to express his feelings. In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid emphasises and commends precisely those qualities which the elegiac lovers admired and had celebrated in their extra-marital situation, but does so in their original context of marriage.

In the *Metamorphoses*, Deucalion and Pyrrha (1.313-415), Baucis and Philemon (8.618-724), Ceyx and Alcyone (11.383-748) and Cephalus and Procris (7.794-862) are examples of affectionate, mutual love within marriage. In each instance, the emphasis is upon the dependence, comfort and companionship which marriage offers and even the suspicion in the Cephalus and Procris episode is described as stemming from the love and concern which existed there between husband and wife.⁵⁰ Significantly, these marriages are portrayed not in the initial stages of the married relationship but rather as they appear a number of years after marriage has taken place. This focusses attention on the husband and wife rather than on the establishment of the male contract between father-in-law and son-in-law. Certainly these examples of married love are not as explicitly erotic as the other scenes of *amor* in the *Metamorphoses*, partly because erotic satisfaction is neither the primary nor the exclusive goal of marriage, but still they are shown to possess amorous sentiment.⁵¹

⁴⁸ R.O.A.M. Lyne, *The Latin Love Poets* (Oxford, 1980) argues that 'whole love' was not expected in marriage (17-18).

⁴⁹ *foedus*, Cat.76.3; *fides*, Cat.76.3; *Am.*1.3.6; *Tib.*3.4.4; *Trist.*5.14.41; marriage terminology in *Prop.*2.6; *Tib.*1.3; 1.5.21ff; Cat.68.70-6 compares Lesbia with Loadamia, the exemplary wife.

⁵⁰ E.M. Glenn, *The Metamorphoses: Ovid's Roman Games* (University Press of America, 1986) 99-100 comments that this relationship is portrayed through the nostalgia of Cephalus and is, therefore, partially distorted.

⁵¹ For erotic married love and Venus as guardian of it, see M. Detienne, *Les Jardins d'Adonis* (Paris, 1972) 120 and J.M. Frécault, *L'Esprit et l'humour chez Ovide* (Grenoble, 1972) 256. Cf also the positive portrayal of marriage in Cat.64 (Pelesus and Thetis) (Lyne (1980) 34).

This, then, is the generally positive portrayal of marriage in the *Metamorphoses*⁵² and we may regard it as a backdrop to the Hercules-Achelous competition which has marriage specifically as its outcome.⁵³ The married relationship allowed for the possibility of *amor*, but the marriage contract between father-in-law and son-in-law equally allowed for the possibility that the female and *amor* might be overlooked and it is this which Ovid exploits in the Hercules-Achelous scene.

Hercules-Perseus

A comparison with the Perseus episode may, therefore, prove instructive, for in that episode, as in the Hercules one, Ovid presents the arrangement of marriage in the context of a conflict, but with the difference that Perseus clearly responds amorously to Andromeda. Since the Perseus episode is close thematically to the situation in the Hercules-Achelous scene, it may illuminate how Ovid deliberately uses the context of marriage and competition in the Hercules episode to point towards a lack of *amor*.

The suggestion that a close comparison between the Perseus and Hercules episodes is invited depends largely on the fact that Perseus' fight with Phineus for possession of Andromeda is essentially the conflict which we find in the Hercules-Achelous section. This alignment on the grounds of thematic similarity is enhanced through detail. Perseus is deliberately compared with Hercules in the scene where he encounters Atlas. When the hero asks Atlas for a place to rest, he is refused thus:

...memor ille vetustae
sortis erat; Themis hanc dederat Parnasia sortem:
“tempus, Atla, veniet, tua quo spoliabitur auro
arbor, et hunc praedae titulum Iove natus habebit”.

... huic quoque “vade procul, ne longe gloria rerum,
quam mentiris” ait, “longe tibi Iuppiter absit!” (4.642-5; 649-50)

⁵² Fränkel (1945) 100; for contrasting view, see Glenn (1986) 95. Ovid also explores married love in several of the *Heroides* letters (1;13); in most of these letters, the female considers marriage to have taken place.

⁵³ The contrast of permanence (marriage) and brevity (*liaison*) is likewise present.

The son of Jupiter who will steal the golden apples will be Hercules, not Perseus. The description of the sea-monster as a snake⁵⁴ (4.714-20) and the reference to Perseus' struggle with it as a *labor* (739) recall two prominent motifs from Herculean legend (both are also present in the Hercules-Achelous scene) and further associates these heroes.⁵⁵ Perseus is again associated with Hercules in one of Hercules' later appearances in the *Metamorphoses*. In Book 11, Hercules rescues Hesione from a sea-monster just as Perseus here rescues Andromeda. In that respect, the action of the Hercules-Hesione scene more closely resembles Perseus' activity than the Hercules-Achelous or the Hercules-Nessus scenes, though there is still the same contrast in the amorous interest of Hercules and Perseus, for Hercules reveals no amorous interest in Hesione, demanding the horses of Loamedon, Hesione's father, as a reward for his service, rather than Hesione herself.

The male attitude towards the female in the Perseus-Phineus and Hercules-Achelous episodes is likewise similar, for Hercules, Achelous, Perseus and Phineus (as well as the father of each girl) regard the female as a possession. Deianira is the prize which Oeneus can give and which Hercules and Achelous can win and the language of the Perseus-Andromeda episode clearly suggests the status of Andromeda as male possession and prize (*mea*, 4.703; *praemia*, 4.757; 5.25; *mea coniunx*, 5.229).⁵⁶ This attitude unites many of the males in the *Metamorphoses* and is clearly not exclusive to the males of the Hercules and Perseus episodes.

The description of Andromeda, which refers to her as ideally beautiful (4.676), in its very vagueness, aligns her with the standard type of beautiful female, of whom Deianira

⁵⁴ The snake motif is present in this section also in the tale of Medusa's head with its snaky hair (4.787-end), and in the attribution of the existence of snakes in Africa to the drops of blood which fall from this head as Perseus carries it through the air (4.614-20).

⁵⁵ The Hercules-Achelous conflict is narrated at a banquet; the Perseus-Phineus conflict takes place at a (wedding) banquet. Cf setting of Centaur-Lapith battle at a wedding feast (*Met.* 12.189-576). In Otis' division of the *Metamorphoses* ((1966) 84-5), Perseus provides the epic panel of the second section (3-6.400); Hercules the epic panel of the third (6.401-end 11).

⁵⁶ Keith (1999) 239.

is an example.⁵⁷ Both are the most beautiful girls which their respective countries can offer. This is a standard motif throughout the *Metamorphoses* and may be concerned not only with defining the female as a type, but of raising her value in amatory terms and, to an extent, explaining the amatory reaction of the male. Deianira and Andromeda (and Andromeda's mother) also behave in a similar fashion, for in the face of danger they scream but their actual words are not reported (Deianira screams at Nessus, not at Achelous, but still she behaves in the same way as Andromeda).

The difference between these two episodes consists in the fact that Perseus explicitly reveals an amorous response towards Andromeda, such as we do not find in Hercules or Achelous, so that Andromeda thus becomes both love object and prize. The balance created here between the female specifically as love-object and the female simply as object is closer to the elegiac situation and the greater sense of *amor* is the result of this.

quam simul ad duras religatam bracchia cautes
vidit Abantiades, nisi quod levis aura capillos
moveat et tepido manabant lumina fletu,
marmoreum ratus esset opus; trahit inscius ignes
et stupet eximiae correptus imagine formae
paene suas quaterne est oblitus in aere pennas.
ut stetit, "o" dixit "non istis digna catenis,
sed quibus inter se cupidi iunguntur amantes, (4.672-9)

The difference in the amatory content between the Perseus episode (where it is prominent) and the Hercules (where it is absent) depends on the fact that, despite the importance of the father-in-law/ son-in-law relationship in both, for the arrangement of marriage is the central theme in both, Ovid centralises this in the Hercules episode, whereas he postpones and effectively subordinates it in the Perseus. In the Perseus episode, the male-female amatory relationship (672) is established in advance either of the father-in-law/ son-in-law relationship (691) or of the competition for the girl (both against the sea

⁵⁷ Also Coronis (2.542-3); Herse (2.722-5); Medusa's original exceptional beauty (4.794); Prop. 2.25.1; Theocr. *Id.* 18 for Helen's unique beauty; Hippodamia (*Met.* 12.216-7). In *Heroides* 3, Briseis anticipates that Achilles will marry the most beautiful Greek woman (71-2). The notion of Andromeda possessing the beauty of a statue is a variation on the familiar topos of the perfect beauty of the statue, such as we find in *Pygmalion*.

monster (706) and against Phineus (5.1)).⁵⁸ Perseus, moreover, directly addresses Andromeda in order to discover the reason for her imprisonment and a certain dialogue occurs between them, even if Andromeda's contribution is recorded only indirectly by the narrator. The father-in-law/ son-in-law relationship is not ignored, for Perseus delays his encounter with the sea monster and his rescue of Andromeda in order to commend himself as son-in-law to Andromeda's father (695-703). This is, however, set alongside, indeed after, the establishment of Perseus' *amor* for Andromeda and the father is not even directly identified as Cepheus until after Perseus has defeated the monster and secured the girl for himself.⁵⁹ Both Hercules and Achelous, in contrast, emerge primarily as potential sons-in-law of Oeneus. (They are also competitors but even in this context, relationship is implied with Oeneus rather than with Deianira.) As a result, this relationship is prominent and the suitors are seen only in relation to Oeneus and not to Deianira. This is true even if Oeneus' presence is only implied. (Oeneus is not explicitly named and is identified only as *socer* (11) and *Parthaone nate* (12). In part, this echoes the epic style of address, but the reference to him as father-in-law may also function to establish him as a symbol.) In this situation, Deianira emerges as the symbol of the male contract rather than as wife or love-object. Whether Hercules and Achelous are competitors or potential sons-in-law, and they are in fact both, still Deianira continues to lack identity and effectively remains a trophy. The male-female relationship essential for *amor* is muted and is replaced entirely with male characters so that the competition for marriage is restricted to the male arena and to the contract between father-in-law and son-in-law.⁶⁰ In this situation, *amor* is neither possible nor desirable.⁶¹

⁵⁸ The initiation of Mercury's desire for Herse is similarly described (*Met.*2.708-36).

⁵⁹ The location is initially identified as Cepheus' kingdom (669) but it is thus described well in advance of Perseus' encounter with Andromeda and the connection between Andromeda and Cepheus is not there made explicit.

⁶⁰ Cf *Met.*6.424-8, for marriage as male alliance. See S.Treggiari, *Roman Marriage. Iusti Coniuges from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian* (Oxford, 1991) 109.

⁶¹ M.L.Stapleton, *Harmful Eloquence* (University of Michigan Press, 1996) defines sex as an impersonal contract (22).

Hercules-Deianira and Aeneas-Lavinia

The situation in which two males compete for marriage inevitably recalls the conflict between Aeneas and Turnus for marriage to Lavinia. As I have already discussed, there are a number of aspects which suggest an association between these episodes⁶² (verbal echoes; bull simile), but the thematic similarity of competition for marriage is certainly the most obvious. On this basis, the Aeneas-Turnus conflict is also associated with the Perseus-Phineus, for they are variations of the same theme, though there is, of course, the distinction that the *amor* of the Perseus episode does not feature in the Aeneas-Turnus conflict.⁶³ In the Vergilian Aeneas-Turnus episode, the centralisation of the father-in-law/ son-in-law alliance and the consequent emphasis on male concerns is, as in the Hercules-Achelous tale, responsible for the apparent absence of amatory motivation.

Regarding this, I will first examine the lack of *amor* in Vergil's portrayal of Aeneas' struggle for Lavinia and discuss the way in which the emphasis on the arrangement of marriage in the male arena contributes to this. This being so, I will suggest that Ovid's technique for the subordination of *amor* in the Hercules episode is similar to that used by Vergil in his treatment of Aeneas' struggle for marriage to Lavinia. I will then compare this with the similar lack of amorous motivation in Ovid's own version of the Aeneas-Turnus struggle in the *Metamorphoses*. In thus establishing the similar absence of *amor* in these three scenes (Ovid's Aeneas-Turnus and Hercules-Achelous; Vergil's Aeneas-Turnus), I will thereby suggest that Ovid's commentary on the Aeneas-Turnus struggle does not consist in undermining the *Aeneid* through the suggestion that Aeneas' motivation was primarily amatory rather than political, but rather through the suggestion that Aeneas was, more accurately, motivated by personal rather than public interests. This is important, for it undermines the assumption that Ovid's treatment of Vergil's Aeneas-Turnus scene

⁶² See p30-2.

⁶³ Otis (1966) 159 compares the Perseus-Phineus and Aeneas-Turnus conflicts on the basis of the similarity of Cepheus and Latinus.

involved a removal from the political to the amatory sphere.⁶⁴

When the second half of the *Aeneid* begins in Book 7, the reader is soon made aware of the fact that Aeneas and his men have at last reached the land promised to them by fate (7.112-29; 310-6). Alongside this, it is explicitly prophesied, even before Aeneas reaches Italy, that marriage with Lavinia has been divinely ordained as a means of securing a Roman foundation in Italy (7.58-101). Clearly, then, the proposed marriage is established as a matter of political gain both for the father-in-law, Latinus and for the son-in-law, Aeneas and, additionally, of territorial gain for Aeneas, nor is the question of the need for an amatory attachment even considered, for this is exclusively a male contract. Certainly, a definite value is placed on Lavinia in her role as the instrument of alliance but she is never viewed as anything more than this, and certainly not as love object. The description of her beauty⁶⁵ is not an indication of amorous interest (just as it is not in Achelous' reference to Deianira's beauty), for the main point of the description is to highlight her purity rather than her erotic potential. Moreover, that Lavinia is not regarded as love object is highlighted once again when Turnus rages against the proposed marriage of Aeneas and Lavinia, not on amorous but on political grounds ("saevit amor ferri et scelerata insania belli,/ ira super", 7.461-2). For when Allecto appeals to his injury, her emphasis is upon the material loss which Turnus will sustain in the loss of Lavinia and it is his lust for war and his anger at the affront to his pride which explain his ultimate resort to war.

Vergil, then, restricts the amatory dimension through the centralisation of male characters and through his definition of marriage as a male contract. In Ovid's Hercules episode, this practice likewise ensures that the amatory potential is relegated and undeveloped. In Ovid's version of the *Aeneid*, the absence of *amor* is likewise in evidence. The battle between Aeneas and Turnus is explained thus:

Faunigenaeque domo potitur nataque Latini,
non sine Marte tamen. bellum cum gente feroci

⁶⁴ Cf Nagle (1988b) 29-30; Galinsky (1972b) 97.

⁶⁵ *Aen.* 12.64-70.

suscipitur, pactaque furit pro coniuge Turnus.

... nec iam dotalia regna,
nec sceptrum soceri, nec te, Lavinia virgo,
sed vicisse petunt deponendique pudore
bella gerunt,... (Met.14.49-51;569-72)

The Ovidian Aeneas, like his Vergilian counterpart, is unconcerned with issues of *amor*. Here, however, the lack of *amor* does not depend on the narrator's emphasis on the father-in-law/ son-in-law relationship rather than on the male-female, but instead on the explicit statement that Aeneas and Turnus were interested exclusively in victory and in the personal glory attendant on it.

In these three episodes, then, the absence of amatory motivation is established. Clearly, then, the movement from the *Aeneid* to the *Metamorphoses* ought not to be defined as the movement from the political to the amatory, but rather from the public to the personal: the Vergilian Aeneas is interested in victory for the sake of empire and this victory is symbolised by Lavinia; the Ovidian Aeneas and Hercules are interested in victory for the sake of personal glory and these victories are symbolised by Lavinia and Deianira. Galinsky⁶⁶ argues that the Ovidian Hercules and the Vergilian Aeneas differ because in the *Metamorphoses*, the girl is the prize, while in the *Aeneid*, the prize is *imperium*. I would propose, however, that in both cases the girl is the prize and the difference lies in what the girl and the victory symbolise. The female, whether on the public or the private level, functions exclusively to constitute and symbolise the male victory. Ovid places the Hercules conflict on the personal level and thereby suggests that the Vergilian conflict was essentially a personal matter. This denial of public relevance cuts at the very heart of the *Aeneid* and its Augustan significance.

A brief examination of Ovid's Venus may illuminate his treatment of Hercules. Venus, like the *Aeneid*, Aeneas and Hercules, was an Augustan symbol, "the *magna mater*

⁶⁶ Galinsky (1972b) 97.

of the Julians”⁶⁷ and “Aeneadum genetrix”.⁶⁸ In the *Aeneid*, her contribution to the foundation of Rome is emphasised (not only as mother of Aeneas but through the assistance which she gives him)⁶⁹ and she emerges primarily in this imperial role. In the *Metamorphoses*, a definite shift is evident, however the change is not from imperial to amatory but, as with Aeneas and Hercules, from public to personal, for she is no longer concerned with the universal Roman empire, but with her own personal empire. The clearest expression of this is in Book 5 where the use of political language underlines her continued imperial role.⁷⁰ The fact that her subjects are lovers is irrelevant, even misleading, and functions simply to define the character of her empire, but it ought not to detract from her essentially imperial motivation. In the *Aeneid*, Venus uses her amatory influence to inspire Dido with love but this does not signal that her interest is primarily amatory. With Venus, then, as with Hercules and Aeneas, Ovid signals the movement from the *Aeneid* to the *Metamorphoses*, defining it as the movement from wide-ranging public significance to more limited personal desire and thus reveals his interpretation of Vergil. The amatory content simply sets it in the context of the *Metamorphoses* and is used to provide a context for the personal level.

The Hercules-Achelous conflict is a version of the Aeneas-Turnus struggle. Central in each is the competition which has marriage as its outcome. Despite the assumption that Ovid intends to characterise the Aeneas-Turnus struggle as essentially an amatory brawl in making this the essence of the Hercules-Achelous struggle, there seems to be no evidence that Hercules is amorously interested in Deianira. Instead, Ovid seeks to redefine the Aeneas-Turnus struggle as personal rather than public. In Vergil and in Ovid, the lack of *amor* depends, at least partially, on the fact that the arrangement of marriage, being a male contract, centralises the father-in-law/ son-in-law relationship and thus subordinates the

⁶⁷ Johnson (1996)130.

⁶⁸ Lucretius *De Rerum Natura* 1.1.

⁶⁹ Venus assists Aeneas in *Met.*14.572-3.

⁷⁰ Johnson (1996) further defines Venus' imperial character in her appearance in Book 5.

amatory dimension through the omission of any male-female interaction.

That the centralisation of the father-in-law/ son-in-law relationship both in the *Metamorphoses* and in the *Aeneid* at least partially contributes to the lack of *amor* in confining the action to the male arena may be seen in consideration of the amatory responses of Achelous and Aeneas in situations where marriage and the male contract are not central (or even present) and where, therefore, the male-female relationship takes precedence. This is evident in the contrast in Achelous' attitude towards Deianira on the one hand and Perimele on the other (8.573-610). In this earlier episode, which Achelous relates to the gathered crowd of guests, the narrator not only records his erotic interest in Perimele but explicitly indicates his erotic activity with her:

ut tamen ipse vides, procul, en procul una recessit
insula, grata mihi; Perimelen navita dicit:
huic ego virgineum dilectae nomen ademi; (8.590-2)

In this earlier scene, Perimele's father is present, just as the presence of Deianira's father is implied in the Hercules-Achelous scene, but insofar as a relationship between Achelous and Perimele's father is established (based on rage at violation, not on desire for formal alliance), it is postponed until after his amorous interest in the female has been represented (and satisfied). This is similar to the early establishment of *amor* in the Perseus-Andromeda episode. However, since Achelous does not appear to be interested in Perimele as wife, he is not, therefore, interested in Hippodamas as father-in-law. The male relationship, which is prominent in the arrangement of marriage, is not relevant here. The scene of Achelous and Perimele is the same type of temporary, erotic liaison indulged in by Apollo and Jupiter and in it Achelous emerges as the standard type of male lover. He displays here a significant degree of eroticism which is absent from his approach to Deianira, for he approaches the female directly in this instance, rather than her father, and is primarily interested in her. Perimele retains her role as female love-object. Certainly Achelous may praise Deianira as an outstanding beauty (9.8-10), but this is the limit of his

reference to her and must be designed primarily to highlight the value of the prize rather than to reveal any erotic interest in her. After all, having described his conflict with and defeat by Hercules, Achelous makes no indication that he has been troubled or disappointed by his loss of Deianira.

The same contrast is found in the *Aeneid*, for the explicit *amor* which Aeneas demonstrates towards Dido may be contrasted with his much more practical approach towards Lavinia. Aeneas' earlier erotic potential highlights further, through contrast, his attitude towards Lavinia. It is not particularly that the change in *amor* depends on the movement from illegitimate love to marriage. Rather, the movement is from the personal (Dido) to the public (Lavinia) sphere and in this second situation, male alliance and not male-female union is central. Similarly, Hercules' non-amorous approach to Deianira is distinct from his implied erotic interest in Iole (though is similar to his lack of amorous interest in Hesione).⁷¹

c) Hercules' Defeat of Achelous

The third way in which the lack of *amor* in the Hercules-Achelous conflict is suggested can be seen if we look more closely at the nature of Hercules' defeat of Achelous.

... tum denique tellus
pressa genu nostro est, et harenas ore momordi.
inferior virtute, meas divertor ad artes,
elaborque viro longum formatus in anguem.
qui postquam flexos sinuavi corpus in orbes,
cumque fero movi linguam stridore bisulcam,
risit,...

...et summo digitorum vincula collo
inicit:...

sic quoque devicto restabat tertia tauri
forma trucis. tauro mutatus membra rebello.

...depressaque dura

⁷¹See p73.

cornua figit humo, meque alta sternit harena.
nec satis hoc fuerat: rigidum fera dextera cornu
dum tenet, infregit, truncaque a fronte revellit.
(60-6; 77-8; 80-1; 83-6)

When he realises he is losing, Achelous alters his form, becoming first a snake, then a bull. Both these creatures have erotic connotations: this being so, when Hercules crushes Achelous in each of these forms, to an extent he is crushing the sexuality which they represent. Hercules is compared to a bull and a snake, though is not actually transformed into either.

The river god first assumes the form of a serpent which was recognised as a symbol of sexuality. It appears as such in Orpheus' song, for when the newly married Eurydice is bitten on the ankle by a snake (10.10), there are definite erotic overtones (she is walking in the grass, as Proserpina similarly does) and certainly the same must be true of the comparison of Salmacis to a snake as she embraces Hermaphrodite (4.360-3). Achelous then transforms himself into a bull. Certainly the earlier comparison of Achelous and Hercules with bulls, which functions to align the Hercules-Achelous conflict with the Aeneas-Turnus conflict, serves to anticipate Achelous' metamorphosis into one here.⁷² However, when Achelous actually becomes a bull and is not simply likened to one, his form assumes additional significance. For in the context of the *Metamorphoses*, the bull is Jupiter's favourite erotic disguise and as such comes to represent erotic inclination.⁷³ The Europa tale in Book 3 is such an example, for in assuming the outward appearance of a bull, Jupiter thereby seeks to seduce and to experience physical love with Europa. Indeed Mack characterises Europa's trepidation as stemming from "... her fear of the sexual power that this god-bull represents...".⁷⁴ In part, the erotic connotations of the bull may be explained by the sexual significance attributed to the horn.⁷⁵ When, therefore, Hercules breaks

⁷² Galinsky (1972b) 97.

⁷³ Cf Apollonius' description of Hercules as a bull, raging at the loss of Hylas (*Arg.* 1.1261-72).

⁷⁴ Sara Mack, *Ovid* (London, 1988) 103. Cf *Am.* 1.3.21-4.

⁷⁵ See p165-6. For cornucopia in an erotic context, see Kallikteros in W. Barnstone (tr.), *Sappho and the Greek Lyric Poets* (New York, 1988) 246.

Achelous' horn during the altercation, this constitutes his conquest of the bull, thus reinforcing and indeed completing Hercules' defeat of *amor* initiated by his crushing of the serpent. Since the snake and bull represent male love specifically, Hercules' defeat of Achelous may imply the defeat of Achelous' virility.

It is, of course, possible that we have here indication of Achelous' amorous interest in Deianira, for in these forms the river-god denotes eroticism. However, in view of the fact that there is no other indication of Achelous' interest in Deianira and since he does not express any disappointment when he loses her to Hercules, I would argue that these transformations are not designed to reveal Achelous' desire for Deianira but rather that, through them, Achelous becomes a symbol or a personification of *amor*. That Hercules is not also reduced to this depends on the fact that he does not literally become a snake or bull, as Achelous does, and so is different from him. When Achelous becomes a symbol of *amor*, through the assumption of the form of erotic symbols, Hercules' defeat of him becomes a symbolic representation of the defeat of *amor*.

(ii) Hercules-Nessus

Following Hercules' defeat of Achelous and his marriage to Deianira, Hercules enters into another conflict, this time with Nessus. This change of scene is marked by a change of narrator, for Achelous as internal narrator is replaced by Ovid who, as external narrator, recounts the remainder of the Hercules episode. Ovid as narrator maintains the implied reading of Hercules as lover established by Achelous. In large part, this is achieved in the Hercules-Nessus section, through the erotic context of the attempted rape of Deianira and the facade of male lust which this creates, for this situation, which is effectively a variation on the amatory contest described by Achelous, likewise sets up certain expectations of the amorous attitude of the competing males. The explicit reference to the erotic motivation of Nessus contributes to this interpretation. This constitutes a

continuation of the implied reading of an amorous Hercules.

I would, however, argue that in this section, as in the previous section, the picture of Hercules as lacking any amorous interest in Deianira is further enhanced and that thus the 'resisting' reading continues to interact with the implied. This is achieved primarily through the contrast of Hercules and Nessus. (The explicit erotic character of Nessus both contributes to the implied reading of the tale and, in view of the fact that he is contrasted with Hercules, contributes also to the 'resisting' reading of Hercules' lack of *amor*.) Hercules' attitude towards Deianira, established in the earlier conflict with Achelous, is reinforced in his reaction to Nessus' attempted violation of her, for he continues to view her as the trophy for which he competed with Achelous. The lack of amorous interest implied in this attitude is made more explicit when it is contrasted with the overt eroticism of Nessus. In his establishment of Nessus' eroticism, Ovid relies not only on his own portrayal of Nessus within the episode in Book 9, but on the typical figure of the centaur: his own portrayal of centaurs in Book 12 (in the Centaur-Lapith battle) and the general picture of them in literature contribute to the character of Nessus here. Since the centaur symbolised erotic *furor* and since Nessus is a version of this type, Hercules is contrasted with and opposes not only Nessus but this type generally. This functions to distinguish Hercules from the amorous motivation of this standard figure. In this section, I will discuss the characterisation of Hercules and Nessus in Book 9 and the contrast in erotic interest established there. I will then discuss the further characterisation of Nessus with reference to the portrayal of centaurs both in *Metamorphoses* 12 and in literature generally and the eroticism attributed to him in view of his identity as a centaur.

Throughout this section, Nessus is established as an erotic *amator* and the narrator immediately makes clear the centaur's amatory interest in Deianira:

at te, Nesse ferox, *eiusdem virginis ardor*
perdiderat volucris traiectionem terga sagitta. (9.101-2)

This is the first indication of a movement away from the essentially non-amorous situation

of the Hercules-Achelous conflict. The reference to *ardor* indicates the nature of Nessus' interest. In addition, reference to the arrow (*sagitta*) is somewhat ambiguous, for at this initial stage, the agent is not identified. Certainly we assume that it is Hercules and this is soon confirmed, but momentarily it may serve to recall Cupid, this being the typical activity and the typical weapon of that god.⁷⁶ The close association of *ardor* (Nessus' love) and the arrow allow for this ambiguity. (The subtle comparison of Hercules and Cupid may be continued in the reference to the poison-tipped arrows of Hercules which may recall those of Cupid in Prop.2.12.19.) Other aspects of the tale function to enhance this picture of Nessus. That he presents Deianira with a gift (*munus*) aligns him with the elegiac lover and the elegiac practice of giving gifts. That he hopes to seize love violently (resorting also to deception) aligns him with the typical amorous aggressor of the *Metamorphoses*.

In contrast to his treatment of Nessus, the narrator distinguishes Hercules from the elegiac lover and from the *Metamorphoses* lover and thus from the amorous concerns of both. While Hercules' desire to keep hold of Deianira in the face of Nessus' challenge might point towards a certain interest in the female, the narrator clearly indicates that his concern stems from the desire to retain his prize, the symbol of his virility and success, rather than his wife/ love-object. The key issue is that of possession not *amor*. Indeed the narrator even suggests that the prize itself is less important than Hercules' ability to secure victory through the conquest of his opponents. This can, perhaps, be seen in Hercules' willingness to entrust Deianira to Nessus for transportation across the river, but his refusal to yield possession of his bow and arrows. (Nessus is not interested in these but in Deianira.) This is because, although he is undoubtedly interested in Deianira as his prize, she is merely the outward symbol of his victory, the trophy indicative of personal glory, whereas his bow and arrows are the instruments of his conquest and as such promise his continued ability to

⁷⁶Cf *Met.* 1.452-76; 5.365-84; for *arcus* of Cupid: Prop.1.7.15; 1.9.21; *R.A.* 139-44; arrows of Cupid, Tib.2.1.

secure victory.⁷⁷ (Galinsky attributes Hercules' relinquishing of Deianira to Nessus to the fact that he "... is too preoccupied with playing the role of the undaunted hero".⁷⁸) The contrast here is between Nessus' interest in Deianira as love-object and Hercules' interest in her as the symbol of his victory.

Following this introduction to the Hercules-Nessus conflict, the narrator records Hercules' address to Nessus as he prepares to flee with Deianira and this too reveals Nessus' amorous inclination towards Deianira and contrasts it with Hercules' own attitude towards her:

..."quo te fiducia" clamat
"vana pedum, *violente*, rapit? tibi, Nesse biformis,
dicimus. exaudi, *nec res intercipe nostras*.
si te nulla mei reverentia movit,⁷⁹ at orbes
concubitus vetitos poterant inhibere paterni. (120-4)

This statement continues to draw attention to the difference in passion between Hercules and Nessus. Hercules points out the similarity of Nessus' behaviour and that of Nessus' father, Ixion, one of the archetypal sinners of ancient literature.⁸⁰ Ixion was punished by Jupiter for his attempted violation of Juno, his punishment consisting in being endlessly turned on a wheel. Through this comparison, Hercules implicitly attributes to the son the erotic motivation of the father. Hercules also rebukes Nessus as *violente*, an epithet which has the suggestion not only of stolen love which violates the female (and brings harm to the father), but of love which violates marriage and therefore brings harm both to father and to husband.⁸¹ Nessus is, therefore, not simply styled as a lover, but more specifically, as the amorous aggressor who actively takes love. This figure recurs throughout the

Metamorphoses, but whereas Jupiter and Apollo endeavour first to seduce the female and

turn to force only when their seduction fails, Nessus does not disguise his preferred

⁷⁷ Cf Callisto (*Met.*2.438-40) who delays to retrieve her bow and arrows. Cf *Met.*13.399-403.

⁷⁸ Galinsky (1972b) 99.

⁷⁹ Cf Pygmalion's statue as a goddess: "et, si non obstat reverentia, velle moveri" (10.251).

⁸⁰ *Met.*4.461; 12.505-6; *Apoll. Epit.*1.20; *Tib.*1.3.73-4.

⁸¹ The father may be explicitly present or only implied. Cf *Cat.*62.39-47 for the diminished worth of a violated daughter. Lucretia (*Livy* 1.57-9) and Verginia (*Livy* 3.44-8) are the archetypal examples of this.

method of love.⁸²

Hercules' use of this epithet likewise reveals his own attitude towards Deianira. As far as Hercules is concerned, he is the principal victim of Nessus' attack and the epithet *violente* establishes and defines the relationship between these two males. This would suggest that Hercules does not view Nessus' crime as essentially amorous, for he does not see it essentially as a violation of the female Deianira. This does not mean that Nessus' motivation was not amorous and indeed Hercules implicitly admits as much, for he compares Nessus' behaviour with that of Ixion, but rather that this is not Hercules' principal consideration. That Nessus' interest is actually erotic may be assumed not only through the erotic picture of him already established, but through the typical erotic motivation of the rapist in the *Metamorphoses*.

Hercules' attitude in viewing Nessus' behaviour as a direct assault on himself, in the form of the violation of his possession (Deianira), originates in ancient attitudes towards rape. Curran explains this attitude:

The suffering of the victim is deemed by others to be secondary to that done to father or husband, since traditionally in Western and other societies, rape is perceived primarily as an offence against the property or honour of men. The rivers of Thessaly, instead of lamenting the fate of Daphne, are worried about her father and whether he should be congratulated or consoled (1.578). Perimele's father found her rape so unendurable that he cast her from a cliff to her death (8.593ff).⁸³

When, therefore, Hercules implicitly identifies Nessus as an intended rapist, he emphasises his own role as husband and the injury which this violation will cause him, thus indicating his view of Deianira as his possession and his fury at the imminent loss of this possession. In viewing the crime as essentially a crime against himself, he effects to remove Nessus from the amatory sphere in forcing him into a relationship with himself rather than with Deianira. Again he imposes a male relationship in place of a male-female and thereby

⁸² Cf Tereus (*Met.*6.424-674); for the theme of narrative seduction, see Nagle (1988a) 32-51.

⁸³ L.C.Curran, "Rape and Rape Victims in the *Metamorphoses*", *Arethusa* 11 (1978) 213-42, at 223. Cf violation of Lucretia (Livy 1.57-9) and Verginia (Livy 3.44-8).

neglects the amatory dimension. (Hercules' refusal to pursue Nessus, instead wounding him from a distance, prevents the scene assuming the form and meaning of an amatory chase.⁸⁴) The role of Nessus as rapist is the same role as that of Achelous in his treatment of Perimele.

Hercules' attitude towards Deianira, implicit in the use of *violente*, is made more explicit in the following line in his use of the possessive pronoun as definition of his relationship with Deianira: "*nec res intercipe nostras*" (122). The reference to her as *res* again suggests that Hercules does not consider himself to exist in a male-female relationship with Deianira. The underlying meaning of this may be illuminated by the phrase used by Meleager's uncle in his address to Atalanta to whom, at the conclusion of the Calydonian boar hunt, Meleager has presented the spoils of the hunt:

pone age *nec* titulos *intercipe*, femina, *nostros* (8.433)

In this context, the prize of the competition is more clearly a trophy in the epic manner, and with this in mind, Hercules' use of similar language in reference to Deianira confirms her status as trophy and Hercules' status as victor.

In the course of this section, then, Nessus is established as an erotic figure, while Hercules' lack of interest in Deianira, beyond the fact that she represents his victory over Achelous and belongs to him, is indicated. On these grounds, Nessus is contrasted with Hercules. The characterisation of Nessus as erotic is continued in two ways, for the picture which Ovid establishes here in *Metamorphoses* 9 is supplemented not only with the image of the centaur in literature and the typical erotic desire of that figure, but also with the picture of centaurs which Ovid himself draws in *Metamorphoses* 12. The effect of this is not only to enhance the eroticism of Nessus and thereby to widen the gulf between him and Hercules, but to establish him as something of a symbol of *furor* and to place Hercules in opposition to this type. Hercules' different priorities emerge from this contrast.

⁸⁴ The erotic connotations of the chase are established early in the epic when Apollo pursues Daphne (1.490-546).

Traditionally, centaurs were considered to possess an uncontrollable *furor*, which manifested itself in wild, disruptive behaviour. Two aspects of the symbolism of centaurs were emphasised. Firstly, they symbolised conflict. Despite the fact that they were also closely connected with educational roles,⁸⁵ Osborne comments that they "...also disrupt the basic civilising activities of commensality and marriage" and that their "...capability for highly cultured behaviour is always finally compromised by conflict".⁸⁶ As a result of this, in literature and in political propaganda, the centaur as a symbol often functions to represent some hostile element (military, social, political). With particular reference to the imagery of the Parthenon sculptures, Osborne explains this function of the centaur:

Usefully non-existent centaurs seem, in the abstract, to offer an ideal 'other' onto whom the favourite real-life other of the moment, Persian or whoever, can be projected.⁸⁷

Secondly, centaurs symbolised erotic *furor*. A.H.Griffiths highlights this:

Their uncontrolled lust, violence and greed for alcohol challenge the hard-won and ever fragile rules of civilisation, which are symbolically reasserted by the victories of Heracles (whose wife Deianira the centaur Nessus tried to rape) and Theseus (who sometimes fights alongside his friend Pirithous in the wedding-fight) over the savage horde.⁸⁸

This dual symbolism (conflict and erotic desire) found its clearest expression in the battle of the Centaurs and the Lapiths which was initiated by the former at the wedding feast of Pirithous and Hippodamia. In this case, uncontrollable lust, enhanced by wine, caused the centaurs to disrupt the wedding when one of their group sought to violate the new bride.⁸⁹

In reference to this battle, Galinsky writes:

In both ancient art and literature, the centaurs are cast as the culprits and their defeat became a symbol of the defeat of animalistic, barbaric forces at the hands of the civilised.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Cf Chiron in *Met.*2.629-34.

⁸⁶ R.Osborne, "Framing the centaur: reading fifth-century architectural sculpture", in S.Goldhill and R.Osborne (edd.), *Art and Text in Ancient Greek Culture* (Cambridge, 1994) 52-84, at 54-5; 84.

⁸⁷ Osborne (1994) 81. Amazons were used in a similar way.

⁸⁸ S.Hornblower and A.Spawforth (edd.), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary. Third Edition* (Oxford, 1996) 309.

⁸⁹ Wine and *amor* are a common combination. Cf Prop.1.3.

⁹⁰Galinsky (1996) 29.

In view of Nessus' identity as a centaur, we perhaps inevitably transfer to him the symbolic significance of this figure and certainly this contributes to his characterisation as erotically charged. Similarly, in view of the fact that conflict was a central part of the centaur symbolism, the archetypal expression being the Centaur-Lapith battle, it is particularly tempting to view the Hercules-Nessus conflict against this backdrop, even to regard it as a version, in microcosm, of that battle. That the figure of Hercules was something of a symbol of civilisation may facilitate a reading of his conflict with Nessus as a version of this battle since essentially both were a conflict of civilisation/ marriage and *furor/ amor*.

That we are invited to view the Hercules-Nessus conflict in this light may be supposed in view of the connection established between the Hercules-Nessus scene in Book 9 and Ovid's own version of the Centaur-Lapith battle in Book 12. This association functions not only to characterise Nessus further but to emphasise the opposition between these two figures and to underline the difference in *amor* as the basis of it. Nestor, who narrates this account, follows tradition in setting the scene of the conflict at a feast arranged to celebrate the wedding of Pirithous and Hippodamia.⁹¹ Hill⁹² comments that there were two separate versions of this conflict, one set at the Pirithous-Hippodamia wedding and one unconnected with that wedding (this was concerned rather with territorial issues). As a means of introducing and explaining his grotesque account of slaughter and injury, Nestor openly holds the centaur Eurytus responsible for the battle and addresses him thus:

nam tibi, saevorum saevissime Centaurorum,
 Euryte, quam vino pectus, tam virgine visa
 ardet, et ebrietas geminata libidine regnat.
 protinus eversae turbant convivia mensae,
 raptaturque comis per vim nova nupta prehensis. (12.219-23)

In this version, Eurytus and his fellow centaurs are portrayed as desiring not only physical

⁹¹ Other versions in *Od.* 21; *Il.* 1.261-71 (Nestor narrates this account too).

⁹² D.E.Hill (ed. and tr.), *Ovid Metamorphoses IX- XII* (Wiltshire, 1999) 208; Nagle (1988b) 30; Diodorus Siculus records two versions, one with Hercules (4.12.3-7) and one without (4.70.3-4).

love with a female, but physical love which disrupts marriage.⁹³ That Nestor explicitly attributes erotic motivation to the centaurs in his introduction and builds upon this picture of *furor* throughout his account, to some extent, reinforces the centaur as a type. This type in Ovid accords with the standard literary representation of the centaur.

The connection between the Hercules-Nessus conflict and Ovid's version of the Centaur-Lapith battle is established in a number of ways. Firstly, Nessus is associated with this battle not only because it involved centaurs and he himself is a centaur, but because he actually participated in it (12.308-9), even if his involvement, or the record of it, is only brief. When, moreover, Nestor does refer to him, it is in anticipation of his future encounter with Hercules:

...ille etiam metuenti vulnera Nesso
"ne fuge! ad Herculeos" inquit "servaberis arcus." (308-9)

We may note, in addition, the familial connection, for Nessus is Pirithous' brother, both being sons of Ixion and being identified as such (9.123-4; 12.210).⁹⁴

It must be important that Hercules too is included in this account for this means that both figures from the conflict in Book 9 are present here. When Nestor concludes his account of the Centaur-Lapith battle, Hercules' son, Tlepolemus, challenges his reliability in recalling that his father had spoken of his own involvement in this battle and that Nestor omits it entirely. Nestor admits his personal injury at the hands of Hercules and continues with an explanation of it (542-76) but makes no reference to Hercules' involvement in the battle which he is narrating. The Hercules tale which occurs here, then, at the conclusion of the Centaur-Lapith battle, is not actually concerned with any part the hero may have played in this battle but is nevertheless closely connected with Nestor's account of it. The role in which Hercules emerges in the epilogue to Nestor's tale is almost identical to the role which he assumes in his encounters with Achelous and Nessus, for his opponent.

⁹³The Trojan War originates in such a disruption, when Paris violates the marriage of Helen and Menelaus.

⁹⁴ Pirithous is earlier identified as Ixion's son when he participated in the Calydonian boar hunt (8.403).

Periclymenus, assumes various forms in order to escape defeat, just as Achelous had done, and Hercules meets this challenge in wounding his opponent with an arrow, just as he had dealt with Nessus. This similarity of role likewise contributes to the association with the earlier episode in Book 9.

The reason for Nestor's failure to record Hercules' participation in the battle appears not to be clear. Two explanations are possible, for Nestor may continue to ignore the hero's participation in the battle either because he maintains his desire for vengeance or because Hercules was not actually involved in it. That he concludes his account thus,

nec tamen ulterius, quam fortia facta silendo
ulciscor fratres; (575-6)

might suggest the former explanation. In tradition, however, Hercules did not participate in this version of the Centaur-Lapith battle, for he was associated with the battle which took place over territorial claims rather than the one set at the Pirithous-Hippodamia wedding. Therefore, the version in the *Metamorphoses*, set at the wedding celebration, should not have included Hercules anyway. (Tlepolemus' mistake in placing Hercules at the 'wedding' battle may have arisen in view of the fact that on one occasion where Hercules attended the betrothal of Hippolyte, he killed a centaur, Eurytion, who was attempting to violate the bride⁹⁵: this situation and the names of the bride and centaur are reminiscent of the Pirithous-Hippodamia wedding.) Nevertheless, whether or not Hercules had been involved in this version (Pirithous-Hippodamia wedding) or in an entirely separate tradition of the Centaur-Lapith battle is, to some extent, irrelevant, not only because Hercules' participation in some version of a Centaur-Lapith conflict provides a further link between the Hercules-Nessus and the Centaur-Lapith conflicts, but because Hercules' presence is superimposed onto the version of the battle in Book 12 (so that Hercules and Nessus are both present in Books 9 and 12), regardless of whether this is accurate.

That the Hercules-Nessus conflict is essentially the situation which we find in the

⁹⁵ Diod. Sic.4.33.1-2.

Centaur-Lapith battle, where marriage is disrupted by uncontrollable *amor*, once again indicates an association between these two episodes. In the earlier episode, the *ardor* of Nessus (101) provokes him to challenge Hercules' marriage: in the later episode, the *ardor* of Eurytus (*ardet*, 221) and, by implication, of all the centaurs (the centaur as a type allows this extension), provokes them into challenging Pirithous' marriage to Hippodamia. This is the same basic situation of the Perseus-Phineus episode and is a variation on the Hercules-Achelous and Aeneas-Turnus conflicts where conflict occurs prior to marriage. What distinguishes the Hercules-Nessus and the Centaur-Lapith conflicts from these others is the fact that the challengers do not have and do not pretend to have any legitimate claim to the female, so that their challenge originates only in their uncontrollable libido. (Although Phineus challenges Perseus after marriage has taken place, his claim depends on the fact that Andromeda was formerly his promised bride.)

In view of the links between the Hercules-Nessus conflict and the Centaur-Lapith battle, quite apart from Nessus' identity as a centaur, it would seem reasonable to suppose that we are to view the Hercules-Nessus conflict, if not as a version of the Centaur-Lapith battle, then at least against this backdrop. Certainly, I do not propose that the Hercules-Nessus scene should be reduced to an exclusively symbolic reading, for its relation to the Centaur-Lapith battle in *Metamorphoses* 12 is only one of many connections which it establishes in the structure of the epic.⁹⁶ (In legend, Hercules had participated in conflicts against the Lapiths as well as the Centaurs.⁹⁷) Nevertheless, I would argue that the Hercules-Nessus conflict as a version of the Centaur-Lapith battle is a significant dimension of that scene and functions to establish both Hercules and Nessus as types, in view of the symbolism surrounding Centaurs and Lapiths (and Hercules). This reinforces both the opposition between these two figures and the different erotic priorities on which it is based. It emphasises the centaur as something of a prototype for the typical amorous

⁹⁶ I have already noted its connection with the Perseus-Phineus episode at *Met.*5.1-235. See p44-8.

⁹⁷ Hercules fights with Lapiths in Diod. Sic.4.37.3; with Centaurs, in Diod. Sic.4.12.3-12; 4.33.1-2.

aggressor of the *Metamorphoses* and therefore functions also to distinguish Hercules, in his opposition to and difference from Nessus, from this standard figure also, once more highlighting his lack of amorous interest. In this section, therefore, Ovid continues to portray Hercules as distinct from the typical *amator*, both in his characterisation of Hercules and through contrasting him with Nessus.

(iii) Deianira's monologue

Following Hercules' defeat of Nessus, there is a certain ellipsis in the narrative as the action of the tale advances by a number of years. In this short section, set some time after the marriage of Hercules and Deianira, Hercules is returning home after a long absence. Deianira hears a rumour that he is bringing with him the girl, Iole, with whom he has fallen in love. She expresses her distress in a speech which lasts only nine lines (143-51) and considers the various courses of action open to her. Ultimately she decides to send Nessus' cloak to Hercules with a view to inspiring him with love for her. This section ends when she entrusts to Lichas the delivery of this gift to her husband.

This section is narrated by Ovid. The scene describes the distress of Deianira when she believes her absent husband to have fallen in love with someone else and as such is a version of the typical *Heroides* situation. In view of this, it is important in sustaining the implied reading of the episode, for when Deianira, like the *Heroides* females, considers the loss of Hercules' *amor* for her, she implicitly assumes Hercules' earlier interest in her and so gives credence to the picture of an amorous Hercules explicitly indicated by the narrators in the first two sections of the tale. Deianira takes at face value the reading offered by Achelous and Ovid in the earlier sections, as can be seen when she considers herself to have been replaced in Hercules' affections by Iole (suggesting that she was once an object of affection to him), and to that extent, she supports and sustains the implied reading.

At this point, then, the imperfections/ limitations of the implied/ 'resisting' reading

model as a means of discussing the Hercules episode become clear,⁹⁸ for in this section the narrator does not clearly set up any expectation of an emphasis on Hercules' traditional amatory reputation (and indeed it is Hercules' lack of interest in Deianira which is the central concern in this section). Insofar as Hercules' amatory interest in Deianira is evident in this section, it depends, to a large extent, on the picture of an amorous Hercules superficially generated in the previous sections and recalled here by Deianira's regret at the change in Hercules' affection and by her reference to his new interest in Iole (this explicitly attributes erotic desire to Hercules and so would appear to lend credibility to Deianira's claim of his earlier interest in her).⁹⁹ In this section, too, however, despite Deianira's suggestion of Hercules' former interest in her (and despite the suggestion of his current interest in Iole) his lack of amorous interest in Deianira continues to be established and, to that extent, challenges the picture of Hercules explicitly offered in the first two sections of the episode and recalled here.¹⁰⁰ Certainly it does not perfectly adhere to the model of the 'resisting' reading, for its interaction with the implied reading is not clear-cut. (Primarily this depends on the fact that there is no clearly identifiable implied reading in this section, for no obvious interpretation is offered by the narrator.) Nevertheless, even if the implied/ 'resisting' model is only partially appropriate here, still discussion of how Hercules' failure to respond amorously to Deianira is continued in this third section of the episode is valid as it contributes to an understanding of the type of Hercules which the narrator seeks to create. Hercules' continued lack of interest in Deianira is suggested in three ways. Firstly, Hercules' absence would seem to suggest a preference for adventures rather than for Deianira. The implications of this are connected not only with the elegiac theme of *militia*

amoris but also with the theme of abandonment which is central in the *Heroides*. Secondly,

⁹⁸ See p19 for discussion of the limitations of this construction in discussion of the Hercules tale but the validity of doing so nonetheless.

⁹⁹ In this section, Hercules is explicitly styled as *amator* in his dealings with Iole. This detail not only supports the implied reading of Hercules as *amator* presented in the earlier scenes but, since his interest in Iole is clearly contrasted with his lack of interest in Deianira, also supports the 'resisting' reading of the earlier scenes which identifies Hercules' rejection of an amatory role.

¹⁰⁰ I will discuss how Hercules' lack of interest in Deianira specifically is suggested, rather than his complete rejection of *amor*, for Hercules emerges as *amator* in his rumoured liaison with Iole.

Hercules' lack of *amor* for Deianira is emphasised through the contrast of his attitude to Deianira on the one hand and to Iole on the other. In particular, this section recalls Deianira's letter in the *Heroides* (dependent on the fact that this scene in the *Metamorphoses* is precisely the focus of the *Heroides* version) and, therefore, recalls the prolonged reference there to Hercules' numerous liaisons. Thirdly, Deianira's decision to resort to a love-charm would seem to be indication of her awareness of Hercules' lack of *amor* for her. Certainly the gift from Nessus may ultimately prove not to function in this way but still it provides insight into Deianira's attitude and reveals that her intention at least was to inspire Hercules with *amor*.

This section of the Hercules-Deianira episode, in which Deianira learns of Hercules' infidelity and decides to send a love-charm to revive her husband's *amor*, is the central focus in Bacchylides, Sophocles and Ovid's *Heroides*. Its brevity in the *Metamorphoses* may be explained precisely by the fact that it had already, indeed recently, been treated. Ovid's extended presentation of the Achelous and Nessus conflicts and of Hercules' apotheosis may be explained as his redistribution of emphasis. Deianira's speech in the *Metamorphoses* is certainly in the mould of her monologue in the *Trachiniae* and in the *Heroides* and of the monologues of Medea, Althaea, Byblis or Myrrha in the *Metamorphoses*,¹⁰¹ for central to it is the dilemma: Deianira, like these other females, is presented with various options but cannot decide which course of action to follow. Yet Deianira's monologue is quite clearly not only shorter than these others, but also depicts only crudely the mental state of its speaker. The depth of expression and the dramatic division of character into two, typical in other monologues, is absent. She cannot decide what to do and is, in that sense, divided, but she does not experience the "cleavage of identity" experienced, for example, by Medea, who is torn between her role as daughter and her role as lover, or by Agamemnon,¹⁰² who separates into father and king when faced with

¹⁰¹ Other female monologues: Ariadne (Cat.64); Dido (Aen.4); Tarpeia (Prop.4.4).

¹⁰² G.Tissol, *The Face of Nature. Wit, Narrative and Cosmic Origins in Ovid's Metamorphoses*, (Princeton, 1997) 56.

the dilemma of sacrificing Iphigenia. The emphasis in Ovid's version of the myth, then, is not upon psychological development, as it is in Sophocles or even in the *Heroides*, but on the series of actions, narrated in such a way as to suggest that it is merely a check-list of standard thoughts, which lead Deianira to send the cloak to Hercules.¹⁰³

However, despite Ovid's departure from earlier treatments of this myth in his decision to minimise Deianira's characterisation, still he, like Sophocles, uses his Deianira to contribute to the meaning of his version of the myth, to comment on and reinterpret earlier versions and to define further the character of his Hercules. In the *Metamorphoses*, then, the scene of the Ovidian Deianira's monologue functions to enhance the picture of a non-amorous Hercules, already begun by Ovid in the first two scenes, just as the Sophoclean Deianira functions to reveal the animal lust of the Sophoclean Hercules.

When this section begins, the first indication of Hercules' lack of *amor* for Deianira comes with the knowledge of his prolonged absence from her. The assumption that this denotes a lack of *amor* depends on the central theme of absence in the *Heroides* and on the use of the *militia amoris* motif in elegiac discourse. As it is represented in the *Heroides*, the departure of the male is equated with the departure of his *amor*, the former being a consequence of the latter. Typically, the female complains of the loss of love, the broken faith and the new amorous pleasure which her former lover will find on foreign shores. Briseis, having been handed over to Agamemnon by Achilles, writes to her lover thus:

alter in alterius iactantes lumina vultum
quaerebant taciti, noster ubi esset amor. (3.11-2)

and asks him

quo levis a nobis tam cito fugit amor? (42)

Phyllis comments on Demophoon's loss of affection for her and styles his departure negatively as being a departure from her rather than towards something else:

¹⁰³ Otis ((1966) 217 attributes the brevity of Deianira's monologue to the fact that Ovid was saving the amatory theme for use in later episodes such as Byblis and Myrrha. The concern not to repeat this theme too often is perhaps part of the explanation, but it is also important that Ovid did not, in any case, desire to develop his Deianira fully, having already done so in the *Heroides*.

remigiumque dedi, quod me fugiturus haberes. (2.47)

Roland Barthes explains the psychology of the female interpretation of departure as abandonment:

Historiquement, le discours de l'absence est tenu par la Femme: la Femme est sédentaire, l'Homme est chasseur, voyageur; la Femme est fidèle (elle attend), l'Homme est coureur (il navige, il drague). C'est la Femme qui donne forme à l'absence, en élabore la fiction, car elle en a temps;¹⁰⁴

When the departure is not explicitly caused by the loss of love, the absence itself causes a loss of *amor*. This is evident in *Heroides* 5, when Paris leaves Oenone and returns from his travels with Helen, having, in the course of his absence, replaced Oenone as his lover. The same is true when Jason returns to Hypsipyle (*Her.*5), having transferred his earlier affection for her to Medea. The experience of Oenone and Hypsipyle is very close to the situation in which Deianira finds herself when she writes to Hercules in *Heroides* 9, for she has not only heard the rumour that her husband has been unfaithful with Iole but has subsequently learned the truth of this rumour when Iole has appeared before her. The *Metamorphoses* version differs in the fact that for the 'resisting' reader (if not for the implied reader) there is no indication that Hercules even originally responded amorously to Deianira, as there is no evidence of this in the earlier scenes with Achelous and Nessus. The implied reader identifies an amatory interest in Hercules' response to Deianira and the *Heroides*-style situation of this scene superficially supports this. For the 'resisting' reader, however, who has recognised Hercules' continued lack of erotic interest in Deianira, these motifs (of abandonment and of new love) which we find in this *Metamorphoses* scene do not function here to signal a change in Hercules' affection towards Deianira, as they would typically in the *Heroides*, but rather once again to present further evidence of his lack of amorous interest in her: the abandonment, set alongside the non-amorous portrayal of Hercules in the earlier scenes of this episode, specifically represents and reinforces the absence of love and not the departure of it.

¹⁰⁴ R.Barthes, *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* (Paris, 1977) 19.

In elegiac discourse, this theme of departure and its equation with the loss of love is part of the *militia amoris* imagery. The elegiac lover explicitly rejects a military life and this is based on two concerns. Firstly, he is convinced that he is by nature more suited to an amatory way of life. Secondly, the lover's rejection of actual military service depends on his refusal to endure the separation from his beloved which this service would entail:

O quantum est auri pereat potiusque smaragdi
quam fleat ob nostras ulla puella vias:
te bellare decet terra, Messalla, marique
ut domus hostiles praeferat exuvias:
me retinent vinctum formosae vincla puellae,
et sedeo duras ianitor ante fores. (Tib.1.1.51-6)

audeat invito ne quis discedere amore
aut sciet egressum se prohibente deo (Tib.1.3.21-2)

Therefore, rather than risk the abandonment of his mistress and have her think he does not love her, the elegiac lover styles his love as a profession comparable to military life and remains at home. From this thinking emerges the figure of the lover/ soldier who is primarily a lover and who is a soldier only in the metaphorical sense that his amatory struggles might be likened to the struggles of the soldier.¹⁰⁵ (The lover is thus both similar to and different from the soldier.) The lover will not accept the military life since absence from his beloved is incongruous with love ("Ferreus ille fuit qui, te cum posset habere,/ maluerit praedas stultus et arma sequi." Tib.1.2.67-8); his alternative is to accept a quasi-military life which does not involve departure and is thus suitable for the experience of love.

The figure of the lover/ soldier, who equates the military life with the rejection of love, may be contrasted not only with the figure of the soldier who, throughout elegy, provides a foil for the lover, but, more specifically, with the figure of the soldier/ husband such as we find in Propertius 4.3. This poem takes the form of a letter which Arethusa writes to her husband, Lycotas, who has been absent on military campaigns for many

¹⁰⁵ Cf *Am.* 1.9.

years. In retrospect, she questions the quality of their marriage (13-6) and at various points in the course of the letter, expresses her fear that Lycotas may be finding new amorous pleasures on his travels (25-8; 69-70). These sentiments, along with the fact that she is writing a letter, align her with the typical female of the *Heroides*. Maria Wyke¹⁰⁶ has discussed the difference in priorities of the lover/soldier and the soldier/husband, for love and presence are set against military conquest and absence. The difference in the identity of the respective females is likewise in evidence, for the elegiac mistress is contrasted with the *matrona*, though Arethusa effectively alternates between these two roles when, in her position as a *matrona*, she refers to and considers herself a *puella*. In the Hercules-Deianira episode, Hercules is only ever present as the soldier/ husband, or at least as the soldier/ potential husband and as such is of the type of Lycotas whose amatory concerns are subordinated to military concerns. It is perhaps more accurate to say that, for both Hercules and Lycotas, it is not their amatory desire generally which is muted, but rather that an amatory attitude towards their wives in particular is not evident. This would explain why these wives fear the potential infidelity of their husbands with other women.

The similarity between Deianira and Arethusa, beyond their identity as abandoned wives, is further suggested in the fact that both send cloaks to their absent husbands. Arethusa makes a cloak for Lycotas and in doing so, aligns herself with the ideal Roman *matrona*, for spinning was the typical characteristic of the ideal wife. Lyne comments on this:

The famous sepulchral motto ‘domum servavit, lanam fecit’ encapsulates a vision of the married woman that was deep and persistent: spinning or weaving (*lanificium*) was typically cited as the proper occupation of the *matrona*...¹⁰⁷

Penelope, the paradigm of marital propriety, participates in this activity in Odysseus’ absence (*Her.* 1.75-80) and when Collatinus and his companions secretly observe Lucretia, she is likewise busily engaged in spinning (Livy 1.57-9). In his *Epithalamium of Helen*,

¹⁰⁶ M. Wyke, “The Elegiac Woman at Rome”, *PCPS* 213 (1987) 153-78.

¹⁰⁷ Lyne (1980) 7.

since Theocritus is styling Helen as an ideal wife, he emphasises her domestic virtues, in particular her skill in weaving (*Id.*18.33-5).¹⁰⁸ Therefore, when Deianira sends a cloak to her husband, she behaves superficially as the typical Roman wife (even if she primarily sends it as a love-charm), looking after her husband's welfare. The fact that she does not herself make the cloak but instead sends Nessus' old one is simply a suggestion that Deianira is a version of the Roman wife, deviating from the ideal rather than representing it. This use of Nessus' cloak is presumably an Ovidian innovation, for in Bacchylides and Sophocles, Deianira receives only a lump of Nessus' blood which she later smears onto a cloak she has made for Hercules. Ovid's departure on this point may, in part, be designed to contribute to his characterisation of Deianira as wife but, equally, it must be part of the scene's visual comedy when we imagine the appearance of the blood-stained, crumpled cloak which Deianira expects her husband to wear as he solemnly sacrifices to Jupiter.

The suggestion is, then, that Hercules' desertion of Deianira points to his lack of amorous feeling towards her. This interpretation depends, in part, on the fact that typically in the *Heroides* and in elegy, the desertion of one lover by another is regarded as signalling the loss of love. In addition, Hercules, through his absence on campaigns, emerges as the soldier/ husband figure, of which Lycotas is an example. This figure represents a variation of the standard elegiac lover/ soldier and points to the contrast of the man who chooses love and remains at home and the man who chooses the military life and is absent.

The second way in which Hercules' lack of *amor* for Deianira is suggested in this section is by means of the contrast in his attitude towards Deianira and Iole. I have already discussed the contrast in Achelous' erotic interest in Perimele and his lack of amorous attention towards Deianira. This is similar to the contrast between Aeneas' erotic desire for Dido and his dutiful approach to Lavinia. The same may be seen here in respect of Hercules. In this section, for the first time, amorous inclination is attributed to Hercules

¹⁰⁸ Cf *Tristia* 1.6.19-28; 5.14.35-40 where Ovid compares his wife with ideal mythological wives and with Augustus' wife, Livia.

and although it is only Rumour which does so, Deianira believes it and the result is a picture of an amorous Hercules:

victor ab Oechalia Cenaeo sacra parabat
vota Iovi, cum fama loquax praecessit ad aures.
Deianira, tua, quae veris addere falsa
gaudet, et e minimo sua per mendacia crescit.
Amphitryoniaden Ioles ardore teneri.
credit amans, venerisque novae perterrita fama
indulsit primo lacrimis, flendoque dolorem
diffudit miseranda suum. (136-43)

A similar picture of Hercules emerges in the *Heroides* version of this myth, though the erotic interest attributed to him there is established more consistently. In that text, Deianira rebukes Hercules for his many liaisons and indicates his insatiable eroticism, implicitly contrasting it with his less amorous interest in her. In particular, she recalls that Hercules had made love to the fifty daughters of Thespius and uses this as indication of the extent of his erotic appetite¹⁰⁹:

... peregrinos addis amores,
et mater de te quaelibet esse potest.
non ego Partheniis temeratam vallibus Augen,
nec referam partus, Ormeni nympha, tuos;
non tibi crimen erunt, Teuthrantia turba, sorores,
quarum de populo nulla relicta tibi est. (47-52)

Deianira's ironic claim to understand and to accept Hercules' appetite and to excuse it is, perhaps, a parody of the Sophoclean Deianira, who does not object to Hercules' liaisons and does not blame him for his infidelity with Iole. Certainly the extent of Hercules' erotic activity is not explicit in the *Metamorphoses* (as it is in the *Heroides*), though it is possible that we are supposed to recall here the earlier image of Hercules established in the *Heroides*. That interaction with the *Heroides* version is likely at this point may, in part, be suggested by the fact that this section in the *Metamorphoses*, in which Deianira learns of Hercules' infidelity and reacts to it, is the period in which the *Heroides* version is set.

¹⁰⁹ Typically sympathy was felt for Hercules; here Deianira distorts it and has sympathy for daughters. Certainly there is exaggeration but still it reflects the extreme appetite which was a traditional feature of the hero.

To some extent, this view of an insatiably erotic Hercules, likewise a significant feature of Seneca's Hercules (the Senecan Deianira is portrayed as "... depicting all of Hercules' supposedly heroic achievements as arising from his sexual desires."¹¹⁰), must have originated in the comic figure of Hercules as a man with an extreme appetite for both wine and food. Propertius (4.9.31-6) implies this connection when he refers to Hercules' incredible thirst in language and in a context which would suggest its erotic meaning.¹¹¹

Galinsky identifies such a Hercules in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*:

In the course of the play it becomes increasingly clear that Hercules does not care about Deianira except for satisfying with her- among many others- his prodigious appetite for sex. Hercules' fight with Achelous simply pitted one monstrous creature mad with lust against another.¹¹²

The eroticism of Hercules was, therefore, a traditional feature¹¹³ and it is possible that through reference to Hercules' supposed interest in Iole, this restricted erotic dimension in the *Metamorphoses* is to be supplemented with the knowledge of the portrayal of this figure in literature generally. (Undoubtedly the facade of the amatory competition created by Achelous at the beginning of the episode sets up an expectation of an emphasis on this traditional picture of a lustful Hercules so that reference to this erotic figure here, through indication of his apparent interest in Iole, accordingly supports the facade (and the expectations) generated by Achelous.) However, even if we do not recall here this literary picture of Hercules, still Deianira's suggestion in the *Metamorphoses* that Hercules should possess amorous feelings for Iole is itself sufficient to attribute to him, in his affair with Iole, an erotic interest which is absent from his relationship with Deianira. Hercules, therefore, becomes *amator*, albeit indirectly through the comments of the narrator and Deianira, and indeed the use of the word *ardor* to describe his emotional response to Iole is the same as that used to describe Nessus' feelings towards Deianira. This attributes erotic desire to Hercules, thus indicating his amorous potential and highlighting further his failure

¹¹⁰ Galinsky (1972a) 175.

¹¹¹ Thirst as erotic: *Met.*3.415; *Theocr. Id.*13.51-3; *Prop.*2.17.5-6.

¹¹² Galinsky (1972a) 47.

¹¹³ Also in *Diod. Sic.*4.37.1; 4-5.

to manifest this in his approach to Deianira. The fact that Hercules' eroticism is merely rumoured is, to an extent, irrelevant, for the ultimate effect is the same since Hercules, whether or not he was actually involved in an erotic relationship with Iole, is viewed in this role. This picture of an erotic Hercules contrasts with the Hercules established in the first two scenes of this episode but since his interest is in Iole and not Deianira and since this reveals a potential for erotic sentiment which is not present in his approach to Deianira, this draws attention to his lack of amorous inclination towards her specifically.

The third suggestion of Hercules' non-amorous approach to Deianira lies in the fact that Deianira found it necessary to send a love-charm to her husband. Although it soon becomes apparent that the love-charm is a poison and that Deianira has been deceived by Nessus (and that Nessus is thus avenged), she is initially unaware of this, as in all earlier versions, and her explicit intention is to inspire Hercules with *amor*:

omnibus illis
 praetulit inbutam Nesseo sanguine vestem
 mittere, quae vires defecto reddat amori,
 ignaroque Lichae, quid tradat, nescia, luctus
 ipsa suos tradit blandisque miserrima verbis,
 dona det illa viro, mandat. (152-7)

Deianira's intention is clear. Faced with an uninterested and unresponsive lover, she resorts to the use of amatory magic. This motif of the love-charm has a well established place in literature. In *Iliad* 14, Hera makes use of Aphrodite's magic in order to inspire Zeus with love for her and, in this case, the purpose of the charm is not simply to increase Zeus' passion for her, but must be connected also with the desire to reduce his passion for others. Simaetha's magic ritual (*Theocr.Id.2*) likewise has this dual function. This type of magic, which was practised by the female, is known as *philia* magic and Deianira must have had in mind this type, with its dual function, in her decision to send Nessus' cloak to Hercules.

The specific nature of the *amor* which Deianira sought to enhance may be understood through the narrator's use of *vires* to describe the love which she seeks to

rekindle. In an amatory context such as we have here, *vis* refers to the male strength or power which is necessary for the active male role in physical love.¹¹⁴ There is, perhaps, the suggestion that it is Hercules' erotic desire specifically which Deianira hopes to renew. The use of *reddat* would seem to point to some earlier state of *amor* between Hercules and Deianira but in the two earlier sections of this episode, there is no real indication of this. It is possible, as I have already noted,¹¹⁵ that Deianira interprets Hercules' encounters with Achelous and Nessus as indication of his love for her (the facade of the amatory contest may indeed deceive any observer, just as it may the external audience and indeed this is the implied reading of these scenes) rather than as a display of masculinity and the desire for conquest and possession ('resisting' reading). Alternatively, Deianira may here momentarily merge with the standard female of the *Heroides*. The standard heroine typically complains of lost *amor* and hopes for the return both of her lover and his love: Deianira echoes this complaint, contrasting earlier happiness with present misery, even if this is not exactly accurate in her situation.

In the next section of this chapter I will discuss the ambiguity of this charm and the contrast between the reality of its function as a poison and its appearance as a love-charm, dependent on the description of Hercules' suffering in terms of elegiac torment. I will suggest that Ovid deliberately obscures the distinction between love-charm and poison. At this point in the episode, however, as Deianira prepares to send the gift, the audience, familiar with earlier versions, expects the charm to function as a poison and indeed the narrator characterises Deianira in such a way as to allow the audience to consider Deianira capable of resorting to such tactics. He does so in the course of her monologue, for in that scene, despite its brevity, she displays a violent reaction when she considers killing Iole. In doing so, she differs from the Sophoclean Deianira, whose placid acceptance of Hercules' infidelity did not undermine or challenge her claim to have poisoned Hercules unwittingly.

¹¹⁴ For the use of *vis* and cognates in the Iphis episode, see S.M. Wheeler, "Changing Names: The Miracle of Iphis in Ovid *Metamorphoses* 9", *Phoenix* 51 (1997) 190-203.

¹¹⁵ See p70.

In the *Metamorphoses*, the violent reaction of Deianira and her removal from the scene before she can even claim her innocence allow for the possibility that she was not entirely deceived: even if she is described as *nescia* (155), this may be more an Ovidian echo of the theme of tragic ignorance, for typically the innocence of a character contributes to the sense of tragedy. Deianira is *nescia* (155); Lichas is *ignarus* (155); Hercules is *inscius* (157) and it is perhaps these epithets which cause Hill to comment that "... Ovid goes out of his way to stress the innocence of both Deianira and Lichas."¹¹⁶ That Ovid's purpose is not serious may be implied in the use of three such epithets in the space of three lines (155-7). In view of the fact that there is precedent in the *Metamorphoses* for female action which results both in transformation of the female into a monster and in male destruction (Philomela and Procne; Scylla) this may further undermine the innocence of Deianira's behaviour here.

The audience assumes the love-charm to be a poison; alongside this, Ovid invites the reader to consider that Deianira may have been aware of this when she sent it to Hercules. This further separates the Ovidian Deianira from the Sophoclean. If Ovid intended to imply Deianira's guilt (appearance and reality are intermingled in this and in all versions), then Deianira lays herself open to the charge of poisoning, not unlike other real and literary wives. N.Purcell writes that

Roman *matronae* had often been thought guilty of *veneficium*, because the charge was actually a natural inversion of a little-appreciated aspect of the tutelary position that the *matrona* held in the *domus*... various recipes are attributed to noble women of the Augustan age including Octavia and Antonia Minor as well as Livia.¹¹⁷

Although Purcell undermines the veracity of these accusations, still the image of the wife who poisoned her husband existed and was enduring, whether realistic or not. Clodia, the sister of P.Clodius, was also famously suspected of having poisoned her husband, Metellus Celer, and Cicero refers to this as part of his characterisation of her as "hanc Palatinam

¹¹⁶ Hill (1999) 142. For the innocence of the Sophoclean and Bacchylidean Deianira, see Burnett (1985) 127; 195. Innocence of Deianira in Diod. Sic.4.38; Apoll.*Lib.*2.7.7. This is in contrast to the guilt of the Senecan Deianira.

¹¹⁷ N.Purcell, "Livia and the Womanhood of Rome", *PCPS* 212 (1986) 78-105, at 95.

Medeam” (*Pro Caelio* 18).¹¹⁸

In literature, Aretaphila of Cyrene,¹¹⁹ forced to marry the tyrant Nicocrates following the murder of her husband, Phaedimus, by him, was caught trying to poison her new husband, but she excused herself in claiming that she was preparing a love-charm rather than poison. This excuse may have been accepted in view of the fact that love potions were often small doses of poison. In allowing Deianira to be regarded as one of this type of the wife who poisons her husband, Ovid once again sets Deianira against the ideal Roman *matrona*, as he has already done with his detail of Deianira sending a second-hand cloak to Hercules. Once again, Deianira is seen to deviate from the ideal.

(iv) Hercules’ apotheosis: Deianira’s love-charm

In this final section, the focus shifts from Deianira and returns to Hercules. It begins with Hercules’ acceptance of Deianira’s gift and continues with a description of the pain which he experiences when the poison in the cloak enters his body. He recalls the labours he has undertaken and contrasts his services to mankind with his apparent lack either of reward or appreciation. The scene is then interrupted by a divine interlude in which Jupiter consults with the other gods as to whether they agree with his decision that Hercules should be made a god. This interlude deliberately disrupts the ‘solemn’ description of Hercules’ suffering, both because it unnecessarily distracts attention away from it and because of Jupiter’s jocular tone. When Jupiter has secured the consensus of the gods regarding Hercules’ deification, the scene once again returns to Hercules, with the result that his suffering is now to be viewed not as the effect of Deianira’s poison, but as the necessary prelude to apotheosis. (The poison and the flames of the pyre function to purify Hercules through the removal of his mortal part.) The scene ends when Hercules enters heaven.

¹¹⁸ Cf Clytemnestra’s murder of Agamemnon, though not through poisoning. Her situation has various points of similarity with that of Deianira.

¹¹⁹ Plutarch *Moralia* 255E- 256C. J.J.Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire* (London, 1990) 81.

In this final section of the Hercules-Deianira episode, the question of Hercules' amorous interest in Deianira becomes less straight forward, for it is unclear whether Deianira's gift functions as a poison or as a love-charm. This ambiguity depends on the description of Hercules' symptoms in a way which recalls both the effects of poison and the effects of love. (As a result, it is unclear whether Hercules experiences the effects of poison or of love.) In earlier versions of the myth, Deianira initially regards Nessus' gift as a genuine love-charm but ultimately her ignorance is exposed when it becomes clear that it is a poison and that it has caused Hercules' death (in these versions, Hercules' destruction is styled as death rather than apotheosis). The actual function of Nessus' gift as a poison is contrasted in these accounts with its supposed function as a love-charm and this gulf is dependent on Nessus' deception of Deianira. In the *Metamorphoses*, however, no such revelation occurs and the audience continues to be in doubt as to the true nature of the gift. The reader who assumes that it is a poison and anticipates its poisonous effects is not disappointed, for the narrator emphasises the physical torment which Hercules experiences in terms which would suggest he had been poisoned. However, in view of the fact that love-charms functioned by inflicting pain upon the beloved, causing a physical reaction similar to that of poison, we must also consider the possibility that it is working as a love-charm. This physical reaction is likewise part of the description of the experience of love, not simply of love-charms so that the narrator, deliberately making use of the language of elegiac discourse in his description of Hercules' symptoms, thus invites us to consider that Hercules has assumed the role of tormented lover¹²⁰ and that, therefore, the gift has already functioned as a love-charm. The effects of poison, of love-charms and of love are ambiguously and deliberately intermingled in this scene, with the result that the implied reading of Hercules as lover and the 'resisting' reading of Hercules as lacking an erotic response to Deianira likewise become intertwined and indistinguishable. (It is unclear whether Hercules begins to experience *amor* or continues to be detached from its influence.

¹²⁰ Propertius (1.13.23-4) styles Hercules' burning on Mount Oeta as his love for Hebe.

experiencing merely the effects of poison.)

In this section, I will discuss how the narrator creates this ambiguity. I will first examine how the various meanings of *venenum* combine to obscure the distinction between poison and love-charm. I will then refer to the extended use of elegiac language in the description of Hercules' torment and will suggest that the literal and metaphorical meanings of this language further contribute to the ambiguity of Deianira's gift. I will then discuss other ambiguities in the language which likewise function to deny any clear or absolute classification of the gift.

The substance in the cloak is explicitly identified as *venenum* (130) and the ambiguity of this word denies any clear distinction between poison and love-charm, for *venenum*, like the Greek *pharmakon*¹²¹, could be used of a poison, a love potion¹²² or a magic charm. In part, this difference in meaning of *venenum* must have depended on the fact that the potions typically used in erotic magic were mild doses of real poison. It is not surprising, then, that the physical effects of poison might be closely aligned with the physical effects of the love-charm in this episode. Faraone highlights the close connection of love potions and poisons :

The frequent crossover, moreover, between love potions and poisons, and more generally between curses and erotic spells- for example, the use of melting wax or bound images in both arenas- signals the easy assimilation of cursing and erotic magic in the ancient world.¹²³

The recurring elegiac comparison of the experience of love with the effects of poison (Prop.2.12.19) may also explain why a love-charm, which initiates love, may be regarded as a poison, for it has the same physical effect on its victim.

The description of Hercules' torment is likewise ambiguous. The first stage of his suffering is described thus:

¹²¹ Cf *Od.*4.228-30 where a combination of these meanings is intended.

¹²² Cf Horace *Sat.*1.8.19-20; *Epod.*5.22; 62; 87; *Ecl.*4.24; 8.95. Medea's use of *venena* (*Met.*7.535) is explicitly as a poison, for she does not give it to Jason, but to his intended bride.

¹²³ C.A.Faraone, "Taking the 'Nestor's Cup Inscription' Seriously: Erotic Magic and Conditional Curses in the Earliest Inscribed Hexameters", *CA* 15 (1996) 77-112, at 82.

nec mora, letiferam conatur scindere vestem:
 qua trahitur, trahit illa cutem, foedumque relatu,
 aut haeret membris frustra temptata revelli,
 aut laceros artus et grandia detegit ossa.
 ipse cruor, gelido ceu quondam lammina candens
 tincta lacu, stridit coquiturque *ardente veneno*.
 nec modus est, sorbent avidae praecordia *flammae*,
 caeruleusque *fluit toto de corpore sudor*,
ambustique sonant nervi, caecaque medullis
 tabe liquefactis tollens ad sidera palmas
 “cladibus”, exclamat “Saturnia, pascere nostris:
 pascere, et *hanc pestem* specta, crudelis, ab alto,
 corque ferum satia. vel si miserandus et hosti.
 hoc est, si tibi sum, *diris cruciatibus aegram*
 invisamque animam natamque laboribus aufer. (166-80)

The emphasis is on his limbs, his bones, the sweating, the burning sensation, the spread of the disease: all these are bodily afflictions and are typical effects of poison. On this level, then, the account, in highlighting the physical distress of Hercules, confirms the reader’s expectation that Deianira has sent poison to Hercules. The effects of the poison in Sophocles, for ultimately there is no doubt in that text that it is a poison, are similarly described and this alignment of the torment of the Sophoclean Hercules and that of the Ovidian Hercules would seem, therefore, to commend our reading of the gift here as a poison.

That a love-charm may have caused the same physical reaction, however, challenges this reading. The ambiguity can be seen in the description of the effects of the cloak in terms of fire and *furor*. These terms denote the physical sensation and mental distress induced by poison and by the love-charm which is a poison. In addition, in view of their use in elegy, they refer to the inner feeling of burning and madness caused by the experience of love. Yet this language not only describes the effects of love and poison but explains the function of genuine love-charms, for the compliance of the beloved is sought through the infliction of physical and mental pain. C.A.Faraone discusses erotic magic and translates thus an incantation which accompanies torture:

Aye, lord daemon, attract, inflame, destroy. burn, cause her to swoon
from love as she is being burnt, inflamed. Sting the tortured soul...
(papyrus XIXa)

He expands on the aspects of torture in referring to the "... combined allusions to burning, flagellation, madness and bondage...".¹²⁴ J.J.Winkler writes that many erotic spells "... employ fire; ... The obvious symbolism of burning passion felt as internal heat and fire occurs also in the commands ('May the soul and heart of Miss So-and-so burn and be on fire until she comes loving to me So-and-so'), XXXVI 81-2..."¹²⁵ It is, therefore, possible to interpret Hercules' symptoms as proof of the efficacy of Deianira's love-charm.

This same language, however, is used in elegiac discourse as a metaphor for the torment of love. Therefore, just as the narrator directs us towards consideration of Hercules' torment as the effects of poison or as the effects of the application of a love potion, at the same time he invites us to regard them as the effects of love. This ambiguity in the Hercules episode depends on the fact that, in elegy, love is thought to have the same effect as poison, for both induce physical and mental symptoms. The similarity, in fact, explains why love as a poison is so appropriate a metaphor. In elegy, love is regarded at the same time as a poison (Prop.1.5.6), a fire, a disease (Prop.1.1.35; 1.5.28; *Am.*2.5.4; Tib.2.5.108-10; Cat.76.20) and a wound (Prop.2.12.12; 2.34.60; 3.21.32; 3.8; 4.8)¹²⁶ in view of the pain which it inflicts upon the lover.¹²⁷ These motifs are included in Ovid's account. The description of Hercules' symptoms is especially reminiscent of Catullus' account of his torment when he sees Lesbia with another man:

lingua sed torpet, tenuis sub artus
flamma demanat, sonitu suopte
tintinant aures, gemina teguntur
lumina nocte. (51.9-12)

Hercules' address to Juno and his prayer for release from his agony likewise recall

¹²⁴ C.A.Faraone, "Aphrodite's ΚΕΣΤΟΣ and Apples for Atalanta: Aphrodisiacs in Early Greek Myth and Ritual", *Phoenix* 44 (1990) 219-43, at 6.

¹²⁵ Winkler (1990) 86.

¹²⁶ Cf *Met.*9.720-1.

¹²⁷ Cf *Her.*4.19-20; 33; 52; *Her.*7.23; Sappho 126; Deianira (*Trach.*445; 491; 544): for this see Galinsky (1972a) 50.

Catullus' reaction:

o Di, si vestrum est misereri aut si quibus umquam
extremam iam ipsa in morte tulistis opem,
me miserum aspiciate et, si vitam puriter egi,
eripite hanc pestem perniciemque mihi.
quae mihi subrepens imos ut torpor in artus
expulit ex omni pectore laetitas. (76.17-22)¹²⁸

Accordingly, through the use of this language, there is confusion over whether Hercules has been poisoned, whether he is experiencing the torment of love (the charm has succeeded in inducing *amor*), or whether he is experiencing the pain attendant on the use of love-charms.

The ambiguity continues in the further inclusion of elegiac language which blurs the distinction between physical and emotional torment and thus between poison and love-charm. The phrase used to describe Hercules' efforts to remove the poisonous cloak (*scindere vestem*) also appears in amatory discourse. Tibullus uses it thus

a lapis est ferrumque, suam quicumque puellam
verberat: e caelo deripit ille deos.
sit satis e membris *tenuem rescindere vestem*.
sit satis ornatus dissoluisse comae,
sit lacrimas movisse satis. (1.10.59-63)

Propertius and Ovid use variations of this phrase:

quod si pertendens animo vestita cubaris,
scissa veste meas experiere manus: (2.15.17-8)
nec te periuro *scindam* de corpore *vestis* (*Am.*2.5.21)

In these instances, the phrase describes the active male role of removing female clothing and thus facilitating the experience of love by rendering the female naked and therefore ready for love. In the *Metamorphoses* episode, *scindere vestem* denotes the same basic action of tearing away clothing and has the same connotations of violence as it does in its amatory setting, for Hercules violently struggles to remove the poisonous cloak from his shoulders. (The violence implied in the verb *scindere* can be understood from its use in the description

¹²⁸ For love as an injury which penetrates to the bone, *Met.*1.472-3; *Cat.*45.16; 66.23; *Prop.*2.12.17; Archilochus frs 84, 85 in J.M.Edmonds, *Lyra Graeca. 2nd Edition* (London, 1928).

of opening wounds and scars.¹²⁹) In the Hercules episode, the main point is the physical pain which this action causes, rather than the attack on modesty which it represents in elegy, where it causes embarrassment and shame instead of actual physical injury. but again the hero's actions are implicitly likened to those of the elegiac lover.¹³⁰

Another important alignment of Hercules' torment with that of the elegiac lover consists in his definition of his sufferings as *labores* (180). The use of this word to describe his torment is almost inevitable, for it is a key element of the Hercules legend and indeed the description here of Hercules' struggle as a *labor* explicitly recalls the traditional labours which Juno had imposed on him, not least in view of the fact that he holds Juno responsible for his present situation too.

Both here and in elegy, the traditional labours of Hercules function as a metaphor for the new struggles of Hercules and the lover. Often the lover's struggle is defined as a *labor*¹³¹ which requires a significant degree of endurance and effort, similar to that required in the military campaigns of the soldier. Implicit in this must be reference to the Herculean labours. The frequency of this motif in elegy may in part be explained by the fact that *labor* was a particularly Augustan virtue¹³² and that the elegists sought to style their amatory lifestyle as a suitable alternative to the military profession.

On several occasions in amatory discourse, the link between the struggles of the lover and those of Hercules is made explicit. Galinsky writes that

... Hercules' labours and other exploits are frequently used as metaphors. For example, a troubled lover, in one of the comparisons typical of Roman comedy, contends that his labours are far greater than Hercules' (*Persa* 1-5)...¹³³

Propertius does so when he advises Gallus on the necessity of keeping guard over a mistress, using as an exemplum Hercules' loss of Hylas:

¹²⁹ Cf *Met.* 14.542-3.

¹³⁰ For physical violence in elegy, see Fredrick (2002). See also p36-7.

¹³¹ Prop. 1.1; 1.6.23; 2.2.22; 2.23; 2.24; Tib. 3.4.65-6; A.A. 2.236; Am. 2.2.11-2 .

¹³² E.W. Leach, "Georgic Imagery in the *Ars Amatoria*" TAPA 95 (1964), 142-65 at 150, notes that *labor* appears 34 times in the *Georgics*, and speaks of "...the familiar Vergilian *labor*...".

¹³³ Galinsky (1972a) 128.

quae miser ignotis error perpessus in oris
Herculis indomito fleverat Ascanio. (1.20.15-16)

He does so again in reference to the demands which Cynthia makes on her various suitors:

si libitum tibi erit, Lerneas pugnat ad hydras
et tibi ab Hesperio mala dracone ferat,
taetra venena libens et naufragus ebibat undas,
et numquam pro te denegat esse miser: ...
at me non aetas mutabit tota Sibyllae,
non labor Alcidae, non niger ille dies. (2.24A.9-12; 17-18)¹³⁴

Both in the Hercules episode and in elegy, the notion of conquest (*vincere*) is closely connected with that of *labor*. The Hercules episode in the *Metamorphoses* is full of words denoting conquest and the progression of the tale is the progression from one struggle to another (Achelous to Nessus). Even Hercules' apotheosis is described in these terms and is styled as another struggle:

sed enim nec pectora vano
fida metu paveant. istas nec spernite flammis!
omnia qui vicit, vincet, quos cernitis, ignes; (248-50)¹³⁵

In this scene, although Hercules' present torment is not one of his famous labours, it is described in these terms and the traditional *labores* are used as a means of illuminating his present struggle. In elegy, a similar practice is discernible, for the lover/ poet likewise uses the motifs of *labor* (and *vincere*), on occasion with explicit reference to Herculean *labor*, to explain his amatory struggle.

In addition, the actual phrase which the narrator uses to describe Nessus' presentation of the gift likewise invites ambiguity:

... et calido velamina tincta cruore
dat munus raptae *velut inritamen amoris*. (132-3)

Velut can be interpreted in two ways, for it may simply explain the function of the gift (he gives it as a love-charm) or it may point towards Nessus' deception of Deianira (he gives it as if it were a love-charm). Since *velut* appears here only alongside a phrase (*inritamen*

¹³⁴ Cf Prop.2.23.7-8.

¹³⁵ *Am.*2.12.24; 2.18.9-11; 3.11.1-2; *R.A.*462; Prop.2.8; 2.25.35-6; *Her.*3.85; Tib.3.4.75-6. For *vincere* of erotic triumph, Salmacis (4.356), Tereus (6.513), Myrrha's nurse (10.443).

amoris), there is no verb to clarify the narrator's meaning, for an indicative would suggest reality; a subjunctive would suggest appearance (pretence). It would seem that the narrator deliberately avoids defining the gift as a poison or as a love-charm in his refusal to state clearly whether he considers Nessus to be deceiving or genuinely assisting Deianira. In earlier versions of this myth, Deianira's initial consideration of Nessus' gift as a love-charm is ultimately exposed when it functions as a poison and causes Hercules' death. In the *Metamorphoses*, Nessus' gift is never clearly identified either as poison or as love-charm and certainly the narrator's use of ambiguous language, such as in his use of *velut*, contributes to this.

One further consideration may point us towards consideration of Nessus' gift as a genuine love-charm. This depends on the traditional use of hippomanes as a love-charm.¹³⁶ Two types of this substance were used in amatory magic, that taken from the forehead of a new-born foal; and that taken from a mare in heat. Both are taken from horses. If we ask why these extracts were thought to function as love-charms, the answer may lie in the fact that horses were traditionally considered to be erotic animals. In Theocritus (*Id.*2.44-5), Simaetha identifies the hippomanes as a plant which grows in Arcadia and attributes the eroticism of horses to the consumption of that plant.

If we assume that the extracts functioned as love-charms because they retained and transferred some element of the horses' eroticism, this must be interesting in light of the Hercules-Nessus scene. Nessus is part horse and, although not fully equine, the fact that uncontrollable lust was a characteristic feature of centaurs, may lead us to suppose that the animal element was dominant. It is possible, then, that if the hippomanes functions as a love-charm because it retains the *amor* of the horse from which it was taken, then Nessus' gift might similarly be thought to function in this manner in retaining his *amor*. In this respect, we might recall the practice of the warriors at the conclusion of the boar hunt in *Met.*8, who dip their spears in the boar's blood, thereby "... symbolically assuming the

¹³⁶ Tib.2.4.57-60; Prop.4.5.17-18; *Georg.*3.280-3.

boar's potent fighting strength and renewing their manly vigour."¹³⁷ This same notion may underlie Nessus' action and may explain Deianira's readiness to accept his gift as a genuine love-charm.

The fact, moreover, that the cloak is stained with Nessus' blood (*sanguis*, 129; 153 *cruor*, 132) may further contribute to this in view of the fact that "... 'blood' is very often used as a figure for sexuality."¹³⁸ Interestingly, the accounts of Diodorus Siculus (4.36.4-5) and Apollodorus (*Lib.2.7.6*) identify Nessus' gift not as his blood but as his semen mixed with Hydra's blood. Recollection of this detail contributes an additional erotic dimension and further facilitates the interpretation of the gift as a love-charm. In addition, there is a possible connection between hippomanes and centaurs specifically, dependent on geography, for one tradition places the origin of the plant hippomanes in Arcadia and traditionally centaurs belong to the mountains of this region.

(III) Conclusion

I will now briefly consider the implications of this 'resisting' reading of the Ovidian Hercules episode for interpretation of the tale. In considering why Ovid should have consistently established Hercules' lack of amorous interest in Deianira, we may turn to gender studies for an answer. In doing so, I will draw on the ideas and terminology already established in this area and will refer in particular to studies by Sharrock and Keith. I will apply this model to my interpretation of Ovid's Hercules tale.

In the context of the *Metamorphoses*, the typical male figure is a lover. Apollo and Jupiter are examples of this type. It is not necessary here, nor relevant, to define the nature of this interest (whether these males are driven by lust, by love, or by an innate desire for conquest), for the fact that erotic activity is their ultimate goal is sufficient, in the *Metamorphoses*, to define them as lovers. Certainly not all males in this epic are amorous.

¹³⁷ Keith (1999) 228.

¹³⁸ Sharrock (2002) 102. Cf *Am.2.12*.

for figures such as Ulysses and Ajax reveal no such interest, but typically those who find themselves in an amatory situation easily and willingly assume the role of lover.

Hercules, in contrast, rejects this role: even if he is partially redeemed by his implied liaison with Iole, his lack of interest either in *amor* or in Deianira characterises him throughout the greater part of the episode. This has implications for our conception of Hercules' virility. In the increasingly popular area of gender studies, the definition of what constitutes masculinity and femininity is central. No universal definition is possible, for it varies, especially in the movement from one genre or one writer to another. In epic, masculinity is defined and measured "... through political and military achievement...".¹³⁹ In elegiac discourse, the same construction of masculinity recurs, for in the collections of Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid, the masculinity of the soldier is contrasted with the diminished virility of the lover who assumes the subservient female role of slave (*servitium amoris*). In part, the impulse to style the amatory life as warfare must depend on the desire to enhance the virility of the lover.

In the *Metamorphoses*, however, Ovid alters his definition of masculinity, for in that text it depends on the desire for, and participation in, aggressive male love. Sharrock identifies two dimensions of this Ovidian construction in explaining the definition of masculinity in the *Metamorphoses* as dependent both on the male experience of physical love and on male self-control, which she terms autarky. She illustrates this with the example of Jupiter's rapes of Semele and Callisto: "In his loss of control over his sexual power, Jupiter is at once both hyper-masculine and feminised."¹⁴⁰

We may assume, then, that those male figures who resist or reject love are, to a greater or lesser degree, effeminate. The two most obvious examples of the male who resists love are Narcissus (3.339-510) and Hermaphrodite (4.285-388) and it would seem reasonable to suppose that the recurrence in both tales of words denoting effeminacy and

¹³⁹ Fredrick (2002) 464.

¹⁴⁰ Sharrock (2002) 97. Cf Curran's description of rape as "... a grotesque caricature of masculinity." ((1978) 218).

homoeroticism (*mollis*, 4.314; 345; *tener*, 3.450; *semimarem*, 4.381; *semivir*, 4.386) must be a comment on the diminished virility which accompanies the absence of aggressive male eroticism.

The situation in respect of the Hercules episode, however, is not so straightforward. On first sight, Hercules' failure to be aroused by Deianira or to show any amorous interest in her distinguishes him from the aggressive male lover of the *Metamorphoses* and from the virility attendant on the experience of erotic *amor*. This depends on the construction of masculinity in this text. However, it is important to note that the amatory context of the tale (the contest for marriage; Nessus' attempted rape of Deianira; Deianira's monologue) is juxtaposed with a distinct epic dimension, not least through the depiction of the Hercules-Achelous conflict as an epic duel. Implicitly, then, this recalls the epic ideals of masculinity, based on military success and heroic valour, and contrasts them with Ovid's 'amatory' definition of virility. Certainly in the final section of the *Metamorphoses*, which has a greater incidence of heroic activity, traditional epic notions of masculinity come under greater scrutiny, but in the Hercules episode Ovid examines the definition of masculinity through the contrast and interaction of his *Metamorphoses* definition, dependent on desire for and participation in erotic *amor*, with the epic construction, dependent on military *virtus*. The effect of this is to create a Hercules who combines both masculine and feminine characteristics through his victory in his duel with Achelous and through his failure to respond amorously to Deianira.¹⁴¹

This interaction of military and amatory constructions of masculinity means that Hercules' virility is, to some extent, diminished and, in fact, various other aspects of the text would appear to contribute to this. The comparison of Hercules with a wrestler, designed primarily to illuminate his conflict with Achelous, may enhance this picture. This depends on the fact that wrestling was an activity of the Greek gymnasias and was,

¹⁴¹Keith (1999) discusses this issue in reference to the amatory tale of Salmacis and Hermaphrodite (216-21).

therefore, associated with homosexuality.¹⁴² (In Theocritus (*Id.*13), an effeminate Hercules emerges in his homoerotic and uncontrolled lust for Hylas.)

Hercules' encounter with Nessus likewise exposes a certain effeminacy. When he is alerted to Nessus' attempted violation of Deianira, the hero refuses to pursue the centaur, preferring instead to wound him from a distance. In my earlier discussion of this scene, I attributed this action to Hercules' desire not to allow the situation to develop into an amatory chase and, as such, as his denial of any erotic dimension. Thus it functions in the context of the *Metamorphoses*. In view of the epic dimension of the episode, Hercules' behaviour assumes additional significance when we consider that, in an epic context, active pursuit was

... coded as masculine in ancient epic... the bow, shot from a distance rather than handled in close combat, is conventionally the weapon favoured by warriors of dubious masculinity in epic.¹⁴³

Again, therefore, Hercules' virility is undermined.

This finds further expression in Hercules' defeat at the hands of Deianira, for the ignominy of such an unheroic destruction by a female and by poison must certainly contribute to this picture of diminished virility. In epic and in tragedy, a heroic death was part of the construction of masculinity. In these contexts, death by sword or spear on the battlefield by a worthy opponent, such as Hector experiences at the hands of Achilles (*Il.*22.327), was considered an acceptable and heroic demise. This can be understood in Bacchylides' presentation of Meleager's grief at his destruction at the hands of his mother, Althaea (*Bacc.*5). In reference to this, Burnett writes:

And so Meleager weeps forever because his end was woman-made and passive-pathetic, but not tragic.¹⁴⁴

F.Rosslyn points out the recurrence of this theme in Euripides' *Bacchae*, *Agamemnon* and *Oedipus*:

¹⁴² Cf Theognis fr1335-1336 in Edmonds (1928).

¹⁴³ Keith (1999) 227.

¹⁴⁴ Burnett (1985) 144.

What our dramas return to again and again is how heroic the male would be, were it not for the female- female values, female seduction, and the primary female power of the mother.¹⁴⁵

That defeat by a female implies effeminacy in Ovid's Hercules episode may be assumed not only by the epic treatment of it but by the fact that it was considered as such specifically in the *Trachiniae* and in the *Heroides*. In both texts, Hercules' past conquests are contrasted with his defeat by Iole (and, in the *Heroides*, with his defeat by Omphale) and through this, his former masculinity is contrasted with his new effeminacy:

nec te Maeonia lascivae more puellae
 incingi zona dedecuisse pudet?...
Inter Ioniacas calathum tenuisse puellas
 diceris et dominae pertimuisse minas
non fugis, Alcide, victricem mille laborum
 rasilibus calathis inposuisse manum. ...
Haec tu Sidonio potes insignitus amictu
 dicere? non cultu lingua retenta silet? (65-6; 73-6; 101-2)

Your husband may be the best man-at-arms in the world,
But he met his match when he fell for this girl. (*Trach.*488-9)

In the *Trachiniae*, this notion is continued in Sophocles' treatment of Hercules' ultimate defeat by Deianira. This again calls into question the virility of a man who can be defeated by a woman:

One woman, acting as a woman, nothing like a man,
Has downed me, single-handed without even a sword. ...

Others feel pity enough when they see me howling,
And weeping like a girl. ...

Whatever I suffered, I suffered without a murmur.
But this. I've lost my manhood. (1062-3; 1071-2; 1074-5)

In the Hercules episode, then, the hero experiences a feminine and shameful demise on two counts, for Deianira is the agent of his destruction rather than an heroic warrior, and he is poisoned rather than killed by sword or spear in martial combat.

¹⁴⁵ F. Rosslyn, "The hero of our time: classic heroes in post-classical drama", in L. Foxhall and J. Salmon (edd.), *Thinking Men. Masculinity and its Self-Representation in the Classical Tradition* (London, 1998) 183-96, at 196. Cf. *Od.* 11.397.

As regards why Ovid sought to create such a Hercules, the initial assumption may be that through the attribution of effeminacy to this figure, Ovid was concerned to undermine him and thus to comment on the Augustan regime through parody of one of its symbols. This premise, however, is inaccurate, for Ovid does not create a clear-cut picture of effeminacy in Hercules but rather balances or juxtaposes both masculine and feminine. In view of this, I would suggest that, since Ovid does not explicitly parody Hercules, his ultimate purpose here was not to comment on Augustan politics. Rather, I would propose that the ambiguous gender of Hercules is a symptom or a reflection of the world which Ovid has created in the *Metamorphoses*.

In this epic, where boundaries are threatened by imminent metamorphosis, the question of gender stability is as important as that of the stability of external form and in consequence, there are males (Hermaphrodite) and females (Atalanta) who alternate, albeit implicitly, between masculine and feminine.¹⁴⁶ In this same world, even a figure from the masculine world of traditional heroic epic may have his virility undercut when he is transferred into a setting in which gender is constructed along different lines. In regard to the heroes of the *Metamorphoses*, Sharrock formulates this concept in the following way:

Ovid's odd epic poses the problem of the hero by both offering and denying the convention, giving us Aeneadae who can't stand the weather (13.707), for example, and a Perseus who almost forgets to stay airborne when he sees the chained Andromeda (4.677). ... as the Aeneadae are driving their course between Scylla and Charybdis, what we actually hear about is not the manly prowess of the hero, but the transformation of Scylla ...to offer us masculine heroes, and then to retreat.¹⁴⁷

Keith likewise identifies the ambiguous response to Achilles:

... even Achilles, whose victory over Cycnus seems comprehensive, is drawn into this fatal pattern at the end of book twelve when he falls 'in feminine warfare' (*femineo Marte*, 12.610) to one of Paris' arrows.¹⁴⁸

The same is true of Ovid's treatment of Hercules, for this hero too is very much a product

¹⁴⁶ Keith (1999) 226; 239.

¹⁴⁷ Sharrock (2002) 104.

¹⁴⁸ Keith (1999) 239.

of the world of the *Metamorphoses*, though in that episode the ambiguity depends, to a significant degree, on contrast of martial epic and ‘amatory’ epic: the epic duel with Achelous, in which Hercules asserts his masculinity, is also, albeit superficially, an amatory contest, with the result that Hercules’ failure to demonstrate aggressive *amor* undermines the virility which the epic context suggests. Similarly, in the ‘epic’ confrontation with Nessus, the pursuit of an opponent on the battlefield is also, in the context of the *Metamorphoses*, an amatory chase. Therefore, Hercules’ decision not to pursue Nessus means that the effeminacy which this action would suggest in an epic setting is transferred to him but is set alongside the virility which he acquires through his refusal to enter into a hunter-hunted relationship with Nessus, a relationship which, in amatory discourse, is clearly erotic. This is not, of course, unproblematic, for it may be argued that he is chasing Deianira. Nevertheless, this reveals how behaviour or actions which in one context serve to denote masculinity function, in another context, to suggest effeminacy.

Pygmalion

(I) Approaches to Pygmalion

The greater part of *Metamorphoses* 10 is occupied by the song of Orpheus. In the course of this, Orpheus narrates the tale of the Cyprian, Pygmalion. The tale is preceded by the story of the Propoetides (10.238-42) and in view of the fact that the context of an Ovidian tale tends to contribute to the meaning of the tale itself, it is useful to consider the Propoetides episode before turning to Pygmalion. The Propoetides, having refused to accept the divinity of Venus, are punished when the goddess transforms them into prostitutes. In consequence of this prostitution, these females lose all sense of modesty and are ultimately metamorphosed into statues. This tale, despite its brevity (it covers only five lines), has been the subject of much discussion, for there seems to have been some uncertainty as to whether the Propoetides were punished because of their prostitution or whether prostitution was their punishment for neglect of Venus. Dörrie¹⁴⁹ takes the middle ground with his suggestion that while their temple prostitution was sacred and acceptable, they were punished when they took their prostitution outside the temple for their own profit (or enjoyment).

In the context of the whole *Metamorphoses*, the rejection of Venus is generally interpreted as a metaphor for the rejection of or abstinence from love. For in this text, which abounds in amorous engagements, rebellion against Venus does not take the form of independent sexuality- that is, sexual activity of which Venus does not approve- but of abstinence and chastity. The figure of the militant virgin (Diana, Daphne) is typical. Such figures as Atalanta (10.560ff) and Pluto (5.356ff) reject love and are punished by Venus with the involuntary experience of *amor*. There are no instances when Venus punishes deviant love. In consideration of this pattern, it is reasonable to suppose that in the context

¹⁴⁹ H.Dörrie, *Pygmalion. Ein Impuls Ovids und seine Wirkungen bis in die Gegenwart* (Westdeutscher Verlag, 1974) 13.

of the *Metamorphoses*, the Propoetides were punished for their deliberate abstinence from erotic experience and that prostitution was their punishment. The metamorphosis into stone is the external manifestation of their loss of shame and modesty. In light of the historical evidence which attributes to Venus the foundation of prostitution in Cyprus,¹⁵⁰ the Propoetides episode may be regarded as an *aetion* for Cyprian temple prostitution.

Whatever the correct interpretation, the Propoetides tale functions as a preface to the Pygmalion episode. It provides a geographical setting in Cyprus and prepares the audience for the themes of natural/unnatural *amor* and human-to-stone transformation which are central in the Pygmalion tale. It introduces, too, the figure of Venus in an active role which anticipates her similarly active function in the Pygmalion episode.

The story of Pygmalion itself (10.243-97) tells of a Cyprian man who rejects female love entirely, on the grounds that all female behaviour is a variation of the promiscuity and sexual recklessness displayed by the Propoetides (243-6). Instead he turns his attentions toward the creation of a statue of an ideal woman, free from such female flaws, with which he then falls in love (247-9). He marvels at the workmanship which has created a statue which deceives even the creator into thinking it is real (250-8) and he proceeds to treat the statue as an actual mistress (259-69). Frustrated by the lack of response from the statue, he visits the temple of Venus during the festival of the goddess and seeks her assistance (270-9). Pygmalion then returns home to witness the animation of his statue (280-9). The story concludes when, having thanked Venus for her intervention, Pygmalion marries his creation, a marriage which is closely followed by the birth of a daughter (290-7). Only in the final lines is Pygmalion revealed as the king of Cyprus (290).

Prior to Ovid's treatment of the Pygmalion legend, the myth was recorded by Philostephanus of Cyrene (3rd century BC) in his *Kypriaca*, a collection of indecent Cyprian myths thought to have been concerned with aetiology.¹⁵¹ This version is not

¹⁵⁰ Ennius, *Euhemerus* 134-8.

¹⁵¹ A similar book on Cnidus was written by Posidippus, an author of erotic epigrams. Like Philostephanus, he is thought to have been influenced by Callimachus.

extant, though its outline is recorded in two separate accounts by the Christian apologists.

Clement of Alexandria and Arnobius:

So the well-known Pygmalion of Cyprus fell in love with an ivory statue; it was of Aphrodite and was naked. The man of Cyprus is captivated by its shapeliness and embraces the statue. This is related by Philostephanus. There was also an Aphrodite of Cnidus, made of marble and beautiful. Another man fell in love with this and had intercourse with the marble, as Posidippus relates. The account of the first author is in his book on Cyprus; that of the second in his book on Cnidus.¹⁵²

Philostephanus states in his *Cypriaca* that Pygmalion, king of Cyprus, fell in love with an image of Venus, as if it were a woman. It was regarded as holy and venerated by the Cyprians from ancient times. His mind, his soul, the light of his reason, and his judgement were blinded, and in his madness, as if it were his wife, he would lift up the divinity to the couch. Likewise, Posidippus in the book which he mentions he wrote about Cnidus and about its history, relates that a youth of very noble lineage - the name he suppresses - carried away with love for the Venus on account of which Cnidus is renowned, also entertained amatory relations with the statue of the same goddess.¹⁵³

These accounts are similar in a number of details. (This may suggest an accurate representation of the original, though it is possible that one author borrowed the details from the other.) Common to both is the explicit erotic activity in which Pygmalion indulges with a statue of Aphrodite. There is clear reference in both to Pygmalion's intercourse, or attempted intercourse, with the statue and this picture of Pygmalion's explicit erotic infatuation is reinforced by the fact that it is followed in each author by Posidippus' tale of another man's sexual attentions towards 'the Aphrodite of Cnidus'.

In view of the fact that the examples in Clement of Alexandria and Arnobius form part of a Christian attack on the pagan practice of worshipping statues of deities, it is not unreasonable to assume some level of exaggeration in their account of the obscenity of pagan behaviour. Nevertheless, there are reasons to suppose that the original version in Philostephanus was indeed highly erotic. This depends partly on the interpretation of

¹⁵² G.W.Butterworth (tr.), *Clement of Alexandria. Protrepticus* (London, 1919) 4.51.

¹⁵³ G.E.McCracken (tr.), *Arnobius of Sicca. The Case Against the Pagans*. Vol 2 (Maryland, 1949) 6.22.

Philostephanus' version as a representation of a Cyprian sacred marriage ritual; partly on the fact that the portrayal of statue-love in literature was often explicitly erotic.

As regards the former, the Pygmalion legend and Philostephanus' version of it have been regarded as a representation of a Cyprian cult practice in which a sacred marriage was celebrated between the Cyprian king and the goddess Aphrodite, who was intimately associated with the island. Interpretation of Philostephanus in this light depends on a number of factors. Firstly, aspects of the tale itself would appear to point in this direction, for not only is the king of Cyprus involved with Aphrodite, the traditional coupling in the Cyprian *hieros gamos*, but specifically he is involved with a statue of the goddess, one of the typical representations of the divine in such cult practices. The Cyprian setting, in view of its status as a cult centre for the worship of Aphrodite, likewise contributes to this.

In addition, the historical details which we have regarding Philostephanus would appear to support the view of his Pygmalion as a representation of a ritual practice. Miller explains that this interpretation of Philostephanus as an *aetion* is probable in consideration of the fact that Philostephanus, as a pupil of Callimachus, was likely to have been influenced by his teacher's interest in aetiology.¹⁵⁴ The fact, moreover, that Philostephanus tended more towards 'historical' writing than to poetic invention may further imply that his work generally and his Pygmalion specifically had some historical or legendary origin. (The tale of the Propoetides, which likewise appears in Philostephanus' *Kypriaca*, has similarly been interpreted in this light as a representation of the practice of Cyprian temple-prostitution.)

This ritual backdrop would suggest an erotic dimension in Philostephanus, for despite its religious implications, the practice of hierogamy was highly erotic for it involved the sexual union, by whatever means and with whatever degree of success, of a human king

¹⁵⁴ J.M. Miller, "Some Versions of Pygmalion," in C. Martindale (ed.), *Ovid Renewed* (CUP, 1988) 205-14.

(who also functioned in some priestly role) and a divine goddess in statue form. This is, in fact, only one variation, for the *hieros gamos* might involve two deities, such as the sacred marriage of Zeus and Hera which formed part of the Argive celebration of the Heraion; a goddess and a mortal man, as we have here in Pygmalion; or a god and a mortal woman, as was the case with the ritual of Dionysus' marriage to Basilinna. (This wedding rite occurred during the Anthesteria festival in Athens, and the symbolic union of a god and a mortal here was thought to represent the marriage of the mortal Ariadne to the immortal Dionysus.) In any case, in such celebrations a deity could be represented by a statue, a priest/ priestess or a king/ queen.¹⁵⁵ The sacred marriage ritual was typically erotic, but this dimension is heightened both when Venus-Aphrodite, goddess of sexual love, is herself the erotic object and when the celebration takes place in Cyprus, renowned for its an erotic reputation (a reputation in large part dependent on its association with Aphrodite).

A second reason to assume the eroticism of Philostephanus' version of Pygmalion lies in the fact that other instances of statue-love in literature, which were distinct from the Pygmalion myth and from the specific socio-religious implications of hierogamy, were erotically explicit. This might, therefore, point towards the same erotic explicitness in Philostephanus. In other instances of statue-love, the central object of affection was typically, as in the Cyprian *hieros gamos*, the figure of Venus/ Aphrodite. Posidippus (3rd-century BC), in his book on Cnidus which is, like Philostephanus' *Kypriaca*, no longer extant, included the tale of a man who fell in love with 'the Aphrodite of Cnidus'. This tale is cited by Clement of Alexandria and Arnobius, following their accounts of Philostephanus' Pygmalion, and is likewise attributed with the same erotic obscenity. (Philostratus (3rd cent. AD) records a similar tale of a man's infatuation with 'the Aphrodite of Cnidus'. Although his version is not explicitly erotic, the nudity of the statue and the anticipation of a sacred marriage recall the ritual of hierogamy and all its erotic

¹⁵⁵ For further discussion, see Aphrodite Avagianou, *Sacred Marriage in the Rituals of Greek Religion* (Bern, 1991) 180.

connotations.¹⁵⁶) In another example, Clearchus¹⁵⁷ tells of Cleisiphus of Selymbria who becomes infatuated with a statue and tries to have intercourse with it. Athenaeus¹⁵⁸ (2nd-3rd-century AD) includes the same example in his advice to philosophers to abandon any love which it is impossible to attain. The content is explicit:

For he (Cleisiphus), becoming enamoured of the statue in Parian marble at Samos, locked himself up in the temple, thinking he should be able to have intercourse with it; and since he found that impossible on account of the frigidity and resistance of the stone, he then and there desisted from that desire and placing before him a small piece of flesh, he consorted with that. (13.605)

Athenaeus notes that the same tale is recorded by the poet Alexis¹⁵⁹ (375-275 BC), in a play entitled *A Picture*, and by Philemon¹⁶⁰ (4th-3rd Century BC). He also relates a tale found in Polemon concerning a man at Delphi who locked himself up in a temple and had intercourse with a statue of a young boy. (Presumably, if we are not supposed to imagine the facility for actual penetration, we may at least imagine some imitation of sexual intercourse.)

A further variation is found in the tale of Laodamia where the female attempts intercourse with the image of a male (a statue which she has created of her dead husband). Hyginus reveals that Laodamia's concern is partly, if not wholly, erotic:

(famulus) viditque eam ab amplexu Protesilai simulacrum tenentem atque osculantem; aestimans eam adulterum habere Acasto patri nuntiavit... vidit effigiem Protesilai; quae ne diutius torqueretur, iussit signum et sacra pyra facta comburi... (*Fabulae* 104)

Wheeler mentions the existence of a prenuptial rite in Phaestus, Crete "... in which the bride lay with the statue of Leucippus, suggesting a male figure of great fertility."¹⁶¹ (The Leucippus tale in Nicander and Antoninus Liberalis may be an explanation of this ritual.¹⁶²)

¹⁵⁶ F.C.Conybeare (tr.), *Philostratus. The Life of Apollonius of Tyana Vol 2* (New York, 1912) 6.40.

¹⁵⁷ K.Muller (ed.), *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum Vol.2* (Paris, 1848) 314.

¹⁵⁸ C.B.Gulick (ed. and tr.), *Athenaeus. The Deipnosophists Vol 6* (London, 1937).

¹⁵⁹ T.Kock (ed.), *Comicorum atticorum fragmenta, Vol.2* (Teubner, 1880-1901) 312. Alexis was a poet of Middle and New Comedy, and was the teacher of Menander.

¹⁶⁰ Kock (1880-1901) 521. Philemon of Syracuse was a poet of New Comedy.

¹⁶¹ Wheeler (1997) 190-203, at 200.

¹⁶² See p153-5 for Ovid's sources for his Iphis tale.

The intercourse which takes place in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* (11.3) between Lucius and an Isis statue as the final stage of his initiation into her cult is a further example of ritual statue-love. These examples indicate both that the theme of statue-love was not unique to the Pygmalion myth and that the representation of literary statue-love typically had an erotic dimension.¹⁶³

In consideration both of the assumed mythical backdrop of hierogamy (with its erotic content) and of the explicit physical activity typically present in literary statue-love, it would seem reasonable to assume, then, that Philostephanus' Pygmalion demonstrated a similar degree of obscenity. Perhaps inevitably, discussion of Ovid's Pygmalion demands some comment on this aspect of Philostephanus' version and some assessment of its relevance to the Ovidian adaptation. In view of this, the question of Ovid's treatment of the obscenity of the Pygmalion legend has been the subject of much critical discussion. Opinion appears to be divided. Certainly, there can be little doubt that Ovid's Pygmalion lacks the explicit perversity which we might assume was of central significance in, indeed the exclusive focus of, the original legend and there has been a general consensus among critics on this point.¹⁶⁴ From this common premise, however, emerge two different lines of thought, one which assumes Ovid's removal of Philostephanus' explicit eroticism as indicative of an absolute suppression of this dimension; the other proposing that the removal of the earlier explicit eroticism is indicative merely of a change of technique, with the explicit content being replaced and compensated by the establishment of an erotic undercurrent in the tale. These different critical opinions (of Pygmalion as chaste and of Pygmalion as erotic) mark precisely the distinction between the implied and the 'resisting'

reading of the tale. This is the model identified by Sharrock in her discussion of Orpheus'

¹⁶³ Cf Euripides *Alcestis* 456-65. For erotic attraction to a painting, see Aristaenetos 2.10. For this as a theme in Athenian comedy, see E.Kris and O.Kurz, *Legend, Myth and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment* (London, 1979) 72.

¹⁶⁴ I acknowledge the difficulty and the limitations in using such subjective terminology as 'perverse', 'natural' and 'unnatural' in discussion of Pygmalion. In doing so, I am using the terminology which has become standard in discussion of this episode. I will address this matter more fully on p169-75 where I discuss specifically the nature of the love experienced by Pygmalion and by Iphis as a point of alignment between the two tales.

Myrrha narrative and which I have outlined in the Introduction. In view of the fact that my own discussion of Pygmalion seeks to illuminate a 'resisting' reading of the tale, a brief summary of the division in Pygmalion scholarship in terms of the model of the implied 'resisting' reading will provide a useful background here.

On one side of this discussion are those critics who propose that Ovid, in incorporating the Pygmalion legend into the *Metamorphoses*, eliminated entirely the eroticism of his sources and created a chaste and innocent Pygmalion. This argument is proposed by Otis. Otis compares Ovid's version of Pygmalion with that of Philostephanus and argues that Ovid takes a legend of explicit and perverse love but reduces the obscene eroticism of the original legend. Otis goes so far as to term the episode a triumph of piety over moral failure and crime. He proposes that Ovid styles his Pygmalion thus in order to create a clearer contrast between this tale and the series of tales of indecent *amor* which surround it. In particular Otis identifies the contrast of Pygmalion with the following tale of Myrrha (10.298-502) and proposes both that Ovid's removal of the explicit erotic content of the Pygmalion legend serves to enhance the contrast of Pygmalion and Myrrha and that the juxtaposition of Pygmalion and Myrrha further emphasises the chastity of Pygmalion.¹⁶⁵ (For Otis, there are two points of contrast here, for Pygmalion and Myrrha differ in terms of erotic behaviour (activity/ chastity) and in terms of the nature of the love involved (perverse/ natural).) In addition to the contrast of Pygmalion with Myrrha, Otis marks the contrast between Pygmalion and the preceding tale of the Propoetides on the same grounds: the contrast consists in placing physical lust against emotional love; the expression of love through prostitution against its expression through male-female marriage. For Otis, then, Ovid has substituted physical lust and perversity for innocent love and a natural union so that in his opinion the Pygmalion episode can contrast and criticise the forms of love experienced by the Propoetides and Myrrha. Thus, in Otis' view, Pygmalion is styled as an innocent lover whose abhorrence of

¹⁶⁵ Otis (1966) 189ff.

perverse love is finally gratified in the attainment of his beloved in a context of natural love (male-female marriage).

Griffin proposes a similar interpretation.¹⁶⁶ He follows the same line of argument in attributing to Pygmalion a sense of modesty and piety and in styling the concluding metamorphosis as a reward from Venus for his display of *pietas*. He identifies the Pygmalion episode as lacking the erotic interest which characterises much of Ovid's work and, like Otis, argues that Ovid deliberately and completely eliminated the obscene perversity of his sources.¹⁶⁷

This interpretation of Pygmalion as an innocent lover, as presented by Otis and by Griffin, takes at face value the narrator's promise of a tale of chaste love and as such constitutes the implied reading of the tale. Orpheus, as narrator of the Pygmalion tale, is responsible for this implied reading, for he intrudes into the tale and explicitly manoeuvres his audience towards an interpretation of Pygmalion as a tale of innocent love. (This might be compared with his obvious intrusion into the Myrrha narrative and the explicit interpretation of the tale which he offers in that episode.) He achieves this in three ways. Firstly, as a preface to the Pygmalion tale, Orpheus narrates the tale of the Propoetides and the link between the two episodes is explicitly emphasised as a contrast: Orpheus clearly and deliberately juxtaposes the sexual recklessness of these females with the sexual abstinence of Pygmalion and underlines the disapproval felt by Pygmalion for these prostitutes. (It is his disgust at the Propoetides' behaviour which causes Pygmalion to reject all females and which ultimately leads to his creation of the statue.) Secondly, at the end of the tale, Orpheus again intrudes to direct our reading of Pygmalion through the contrast of Pygmalion with another example of female erotic misadventure in the Myrrha incest narrative. Once again, the contrast is made explicit. (This same contrast contributes to Orpheus' establishment of the implied reading of the Myrrha episode too.) Thirdly, the

¹⁶⁶ A.H.F.Griffin, "Ovid's *Metamorphoses*", *Greece and Rome* 24 (1977) 65ff.

¹⁶⁷ Similar interpretations of Pygmalion are found in Wilkinson (1955) and Fränkel (1945) 93-7; 219.

very fact that the explicit erotic activity of the original Pygmalion legend is absent from Orpheus' version of it superficially promises the reader a complete departure from the erotic obscenity of the sources. The removal of Venus as central love object is closely connected with this, for the removal of this goddess as erotic object functions to mark a new (less erotic) direction in the Ovidian tale not only through giving further suggestion of departure from the sources and from their erotic obscenity but in subordinating the explicit eroticism which Venus, as goddess of erotic love, typically denotes. This reading of Pygmalion as a tale of innocent love rewarded is the interpretation offered by the narrator, Orpheus, to the superficial reader and as such functions as the implied reading.

Otis and Griffin, then, in interpreting Pygmalion along these lines, subscribe to the implied reading of the tale, though they do not discuss this picture of Pygmalion as a facade nor do they deliberately define their approach as an implied reading. Nevertheless, Otis' discussion of the tale centres around those features clearly intended by Orpheus to direct his audience towards the view of an innocent Pygmalion (in particular the contrast between Pygmalion and the Propoetides and between Pygmalion and Myrrha) and is clearly the reading which Orpheus makes easily accessible to the implied reader.

In contrast to this interpretation of Pygmalion as an innocent and modest lover, recent criticism, despite starting from the same premise (that Ovid rejected the explicit content of the original myth), seeks to point out the establishment of an erotic undercurrent in the tale rather than deny its existence altogether. This represents a 'resisting' reading of the tale, for it depends on the identification of those implicit aspects of the text which challenge the superficial reading of Pygmalion as a tale of chastity rewarded. It does not reject the view proposed by Otis and Griffin but rather encompasses it, for it recognises the facade of innocence but clearly identifies it as a facade and looks beyond it. The approach of Elsner, Sharrock and Miller, among others, has been to identify such a 'resisting' reading of Pygmalion and this has been characterised by an identification and

discussion of the implicit or subtle ways in which Pygmalion emerges as erotically inclined.¹⁶⁸ Elsner discusses the relationship between the art object and its viewer, between the statue as object and Pygmalion as viewer (rather than creator). In this article, he draws attention to the fact that the greater part of the episode is given over to Pygmalion's reaction (and erotic delight) as he views the statue, while the actual creative process occupies only a few lines (247-9).

Miller argues that Pygmalion is erotically inclined both before and after the animation of the statue and reinforces this through an examination of Ovid's use in this episode of elegiac features (language, character, theme). Sharrock's discussion focusses on the eroticism inherent when the male functions as creator. In line with recent trends, she identifies erotic language and allusion in Pygmalion but endeavours not simply to establish the physical aspect but also to synthesise it with the more traditional (and less popular) view of a pious Pygmalion. This represents a synthesis of the implied and 'resisting' readings. She achieves this by discussing Pygmalion in the context of hierogamy. She argues that hierogamy was both religiously solemn and highly erotic, and thus reveals the dual motivation of Pygmalion (piety and lust). She proposes that the theme of the sacred marriage is a backdrop to Ovid's Pygmalion, by virtue of the narrator's attribution of divine qualities to Pygmalion's statue.

It is interesting to note that Otis' approach to the Cephalus episode (*Met.* 7.690-862) is somewhat similar to such recent 'resisting' readings of Pygmalion. In an earlier version of the Cephalus myth, related by Nicander, the marital relationship is disturbed when Cephalus is seduced by the goddess Aurora.¹⁶⁹ Cephalus thereupon disguises himself and deceives Procris into yielding to him. Procris exacts revenge for this deceit in

¹⁶⁸ J. Elsner, "Visual Mimesis and the Myth of the Real: Ovid's Pygmalion as Viewer", *Ramus* 20 (1991a), 154-68; A.R. Sharrock, "Womanaufacture", *JRS* 81 (1991b), 36-49 and Sharrock (1991a) 169-82.

¹⁶⁹ Otis (1966) 176ff; 381-4 cites various sources for this tale (Hyginus 189; Apollodorus 2.57-9; 3.197-9; scholium to *Od.* 11.321) but indicates that Nicander (recorded in Antoninus Liberalis, *Met.* 41) was probably the principal source for the *Metamorphoses* version.

approaching Cephalus under a male disguise and seducing him into a 'homosexual' liaison. Ultimately they are reconciled before Cephalus accidentally and fatally wounds Procris.

In the Ovidian version of this tale, the eroticism and perversity of Nicander and others is limited. Cephalus fails to corrupt Procris and there is no mention of any homosexual encounter which leads Pöschl¹⁷⁰ (and Otis) to the conclusion that Ovid transformed an originally indecent tale into one of mutual, non-erotic love (implied reading). This is the same movement away from explicit perversity which Otis has identified in relation to the Pygmalion episode. However, in respect of the Cephalus tale, Otis concedes, as he does not for Pygmalion, that there is an undercurrent in the tale which recalls the indecent nature of the earlier version of the myth ('resisting' reading). His argument is that the words *mercede* (688) and *ulta* (751) "can only refer to the indecent proposal we actually find in Hyginus and Nicander"¹⁷¹ and one can only suppose that his failure to see a naked statue (*nuda*) as a clear reference to the Venus/ Aphrodite of Philostephanus' Pygmalion and the significant eroticism of that version might be explained by the fact that an honourable Cephalus (who desires to protect his wife's dignity) and an innocent Pygmalion (who rejects erotic concerns completely) would better complement the structure which he proposes for the epic.

My discussion of the Pygmalion episode will contribute to this process of 'resisting' reading, for it will involve a further development in the establishment of an erotic backdrop. My argument will be twofold: I will propose that both the recollection of Venus throughout the episode and the interaction of Pygmalion with the Iphis episode in *Metamorphoses* 9 are significant factors in identifying the erotic nature of Pygmalion's desire. In the first section of this chapter, I will discuss how the figure of Venus contributes to the erotic atmosphere of the scene. I will suggest that the clear but subtle interaction which exists between Pygmalion's statue and Venus encourages the reader to resist the

¹⁷⁰ Viktor Pöschl, "Kephalos und Prokris in Ovids *Metamorphosen*", *Hermes* 87 (1959) 328-43.

¹⁷¹ Otis (1966)180.

superficial reading of a chaste Pygmalion and the main part of this chapter will involve a discussion of the ways in which the narrator, throughout the episode, makes his audience aware of this divine presence. This close comparison of Pygmalion's statue with Venus/Aphrodite functions to create a sensual backdrop to the tale and sets Pygmalion's approach to the statue in an unmistakably erotic context. The presence of Venus functions thus on three counts. Primarily, the eroticism which Venus transfers to the Ovidian tale depends on the fact that the presence of the goddess in Orpheus' tale recalls her presence in earlier versions of the Pygmalion legend and so recalls the explicit erotic activity in which Pygmalion indulged with a statue of Venus/Aphrodite in these earlier versions. Secondly, the eroticism generated by Venus likewise depends on her specific role at the centre of the Cyprian *hieros gamos* generally of which the Pygmalion legend is typically thought to have been a representation. This ritual was both religious and erotically explicit, for the Cyprian king participated in erotic activity with the goddess.¹⁷² (In view of Venus' traditional association with that ritual, to the extent that I discuss the establishment of Venus' influence throughout the Pygmalion tale, I discuss also Ovid's creation of the Cyprian cult backdrop. My intention is not to discuss the *hieros gamos* backdrop per se, though discussion of Venus clearly overlaps with it.) Thirdly, Venus serves to create an erotic dimension by virtue of her identity as goddess of erotic love generally. My discussion of the presence of Venus in the episode and the interaction between Venus and Pygmalion's statue throughout the tale challenges the superficial interpretation of Pygmalion as chaste, for it proposes that awareness of the figure of Venus in the tale clearly points to an erotic Pygmalion. Accordingly, my discussion constitutes a 'resisting' reading of the tale.

Perhaps inevitably, the figure of Venus/Aphrodite is important to any discussion of the eroticism of Ovid's Pygmalion ('resisting' reading), for the reasons I have already

¹⁷² A reader familiar with the Philostephanus version would appreciate the erotic element without necessarily being aware of its background of hierogamy.

discussed (the general erotic character of the goddess and her erotic contribution to the Pygmalion legend specifically). Typically, the presence of Venus and her contribution to the tale's erotic atmosphere has been discussed in terms of the identification of Pygmalion's statue as Venus. The greater part of this identification of the statue as Venus depends on the assessment of the interaction between Ovid's Pygmalion and that of Philostephanus, and on the identity of the statue as Venus in that earlier version. Elsner suggests that since the statue in the Pygmalion legend was that of Venus/ Aphrodite, the statue in Ovid's adaptation of that legend must also be assumed to be Venus/ Aphrodite. This identification is made in the context of a discussion which examines the change in Pygmalion's identity, from viewer in Philostephanus, to creator-viewer in Ovid. Miller likewise argues that the statue has the same identity in Ovid as in Philostephanus, though she reaches this conclusion in the context of a discussion of the similarity between Ovid's Pygmalion as king of Cyprus and Philostephanus' Pygmalion as king of Cyprus, in contrast to Elsner's emphasis on the difference in the Ovidian figure of Pygmalion.

Sharrock's argument for the similarity of the statue's identity in Ovid and Philostephanus depends on her suggestion that both tales have the same ritual backdrop of hierogamy and that, therefore, a Venus/ Aphrodite statue was relevant to both.¹⁷³ In a sense, I approach Ovid's Pygmalion tale from the opposite side of the argument, for whereas Sharrock discusses the ritual backdrop as a means of identifying the statue as Venus, I discuss how the statue is identified as Venus and how this, in turn, illuminates the ritual (and erotic) backdrop of the tale.

The tendency, then, in discussing the presence of Venus in the tale has been to associate Pygmalion's statue with the goddess. This association, dependent principally upon the consideration of Ovid's Pygmalion alongside Philostephanus' Pygmalion, is made

¹⁷³ In these types of sacred marriage at least one of the partners had to be divine, or, more accurately, the representation of a divinity. It was not necessarily Venus but in the specific tradition of Pygmalion, Venus/ Aphrodite was the divine partner, probably on account of her special relationship with Cyprus.

through identification of a number of similarities between the two versions and the extension of this pattern of similarity to the identity of the statue. This approach is valid and will feature in my discussion of the episode, though the straightforward identification of the statue as Venus which we find in such discussions, does not take into account the pattern of association and differentiation which the narrator establishes between Pygmalion's statue and Venus. In this study, I will discuss the ways in which the narrator sets Pygmalion's statue against the figure of Venus other than through dependence on the identity of the statue as Venus in Philostephanus. I will suggest that this is achieved both through the interaction of Pygmalion's statue with the figure of Venus as she appears explicitly at the centre of Ovid's tale, and through the series of references which recall wider literary and artistic representations of the goddess. Both these aspects are independent of the Philostephanus tale, and are accessible even for an audience unfamiliar with the Pygmalion legend.

In the second part of this chapter, my discussion of the eroticism of the Pygmalion episode will continue through a comparison of Pygmalion with the Iphis tale in *Metamorphoses* 9 (666-797). In Otis' arrangement of the *Metamorphoses* Pygmalion and Iphis are grouped together (though they are not adjacent in the *Metamorphoses*) in the third section and are associated on the grounds that both represent a pious and innocent love.¹⁷⁴ The Iphis episode has not received the critical attention which Pygmalion has enjoyed and although it has been included in general discussions of the *Metamorphoses*, it has been a less popular episode for specific or isolated treatment. Nevertheless, on a more limited scale, a similar trend in interpretation might be noted, with an increased emphasis on the erotic undercurrent of the Iphis episode. (Again it is an undercurrent of eroticism rather than a deliberate and obvious exposition of Iphis' erotic intentions and there is the same

¹⁷⁴ Otis (1966) 66-230.

interaction between the superficial and underlying readings of the tale.¹⁷⁵) Wheeler¹⁷⁶ reveals Iphis as an erotically charged figure who (like Pygmalion) has sought erotic satisfaction before it is either physically possible or socially acceptable. I will underline the similarities of these two tales and will discuss in particular the presence of Venus in the Iphis episode and the effect which this has on the scene's overall eroticism.

(II) Venus in Pygmalion

In this section, I will discuss the ways in which Venus is recalled in the Ovidian text. I will emphasise the continued presence of Venus throughout the *Metamorphoses* version as a deliberate Ovidian device which is designed to ensure that Venus continues to contribute to the overall eroticism of the scene despite her removal as central love object. I will discuss the presence of Venus both as she appears explicitly at the centre of the tale and as she is implicitly recalled through language and literary allusion.

This section will fall into three parts. In the first part, I will briefly examine the figure of Venus. I will discuss her role as goddess of love and, in particular, as presiding deity of sexual relations and will discuss too the erotic connotations of Venus and her evocation, in Ovid, not simply of *amor* generally, but specifically of a more physical form of *amor*. My use of the term 'erotic' throughout this chapter depends on an interpretation of it as referring to the physical, sexual side of love. I distinguish this from the term 'amorous' which, while certainly implying a sexual element, evokes also a love where a greater balance is maintained between the physical and the emotional. My reason for thus establishing Venus as possessing erotic association is that the central section of my argument, which details the explicit and implicit presence of Venus in Pygmalion, works on the premise that Venus conveys a certain eroticism and that Ovid's prominent inclusion of

¹⁷⁵ I do not discuss the Iphis episode in terms of the implied/ 'resisting' model. See p152-3 for an explanation of this.

¹⁷⁶ Wheeler (1997) 190ff.

her is designed or at least serves to enhance Pygmalion's erotic intentions. This is the basis of the 'resisting' reading which I propose in this chapter.

In the second part, I will examine the continuous presence of Venus within the Pygmalion episode and will argue that this contributes significantly to the overall erotic backdrop of the tale. This examination will be in two parts. First I will look at Venus' explicit presence when she appears at the centre of the Pygmalion tale, directs the progress of the story and thus allows a happy conclusion. Thus she functions prominently and directly as divine benefactor. Pygmalion's statue, then, interacts with Venus as she appears directly in the text. I will follow this with an examination of the textual references which implicitly recall Venus as she appears in literature generally, and suggest that Pygmalion's statue likewise interacts with Venus as she is typically portrayed in literature and art. Thus I will suggest that Pygmalion's statue does not interact with the figure of Venus simply as a result of the central role of Venus/Aphrodite in the Pygmalion legend.

In the final part of this section, I will discuss possible reasons why Ovid substituted the Venus statue of tradition if his intention was not to limit the eroticism of the episode. I will address too the question of why Ovid consistently endeavours to forge the association of the girl and Venus throughout the episode, when he explicitly rejects Venus as love object.

(i) **The Character of Venus**

Although in the propaganda of Augustus and in official terms Venus was prominent in her role as originator of the Julian family and in her capacity as *Venus Genetrix*, her place in literature is more generally characterised by her identification as goddess of love. These two aspects in her representation may be illuminated in the contrast of the figure of Venus as she appears in Vergil's *Aeneid* and in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In the former text, the goddess' erotic implications are somewhat muted or at least subordinated to her imperial

role in assisting Aeneas in the foundation of the Roman empire, and at such times as she wields her erotic influence (when she seduces Vulcan and persuades him to create armour for Aeneas (*Aen.*8.370ff)) it is directed towards these imperial concerns. (When she concurs with Juno's request to supervise the marriage of Dido and Aeneas (4.105ff), she does so with the knowledge that this will not prevent the foundation of the Roman empire.) In the *Metamorphoses*, a political and imperially-minded Venus emerges in Book 5. Johnson defines the influence of this Ovidian Venus as "...a correlation between imperial, divine and sexual power... developed in the first third of the *Metamorphoses*."¹⁷⁷ As I have already argued,¹⁷⁸ Venus emerges in an imperial role in the *Metamorphoses* as in the *Aeneid*, the difference being the personal goal of empire in Ovid and the public goal in Vergil. The prevailing erotic atmosphere of the *Metamorphoses*, however, lends a certain eroticism to Venus, even in this imperial role, and indeed the fact that the extension of Venus' empire involves inspiring her potential adherents with amorous inclination means that she is not fully distanced from her erotic character. Her function in the text is essentially the promotion of her erotic influence, even if the ultimate goal is personal glory acquired through political gain.

In referring here to the Venus of the *Metamorphoses*, I am referring to the goddess as she appears in the first two-thirds of Ovid's epic, for in the later books the Ovidian Venus moves closer to the Vergilian figure, though is certainly never the same. Fränkel identifies the different character of the last three books of the *Metamorphoses* and describes the transition which occurs when "... the sway of Venus is terminated and her gallant Mars takes over."¹⁷⁹ In Ovid's "*Aeneid*", Venus ceases to function explicitly as goddess of love but is portrayed instead as goddess of Rome, as she emerges in Vergil's *Aeneid*. Her concern in the later books of the *Metamorphoses* is, superficially at least, with the empire of Rome rather than her own empire of love and in consequence of this, her role

¹⁷⁷ Johnson (1996) 126.

¹⁷⁸ See p51-2.

¹⁷⁹ Fränkel (1945) 102.

is less erotic, though, of course, her eroticism earlier in the same text means that she does not entirely lose this character even in her Roman imperial role. The contrast of the Venus in *Metamorphoses* 1-10 with the Venus of *Metamorphoses* 11-15 echoes, to some extent, the general contrast of the Ovidian and the Vergilian Venus. Although the comparison of Venus in the *Aeneid* and in the *Metamorphoses* (or even of Venus as she appears both in the earlier and in the later books of the *Metamorphoses*) conveys neither the variety nor the complexity of the representations or associations of Venus,¹⁸⁰ it nevertheless reveals two important dimensions of the goddess, as patron deity of Rome (especially Augustan Rome) and as goddess of love. This is the duality which Plato marks in his separation of the goddess into Aphrodite *Urania* and Aphrodite *Pandemia*.¹⁸¹

Yet even within this capacity as goddess of love, Venus has various dimensions, for her interest extends across the broad range of amorous relationships, from protecting marital love and presiding over the arts of love involved in legitimate marriage,¹⁸² to supervising the activities of illegitimate, perverse and extra-marital expressions of *amor*. In respect of the former role, Detienne writes that

Mais l'Aphrodite parfumée ne patronne pas la seule lascivité (makhlosúnè) des courtisanes ... Protectrice du mariage, aux côtes d'Héra et de Déméter, la même puissance représente, sur le plan religieux, cette part de désir sexuel et de plaisir amoureux (aphrodísîa) sans laquelle l'union de l'homme et de la femme, dans le mariage, ne peut trouver à s'accomplir.¹⁸³

This gives some idea of the legitimate function of Venus and her central importance to the issues of fertility and procreation and this aspect must certainly have been fostered given her status as ancestor of Augustus and in consideration of Augustus' interest in encouraging marriage and reproduction. Indeed at the conclusion of the Pygmalion episode

¹⁸⁰ Venus was also closely associated with the issue of fertility (child-bearing; harvest) and was connected both with the sea (Hor *Odes* 1.3.1-6; 3.26.5-6; 4.11.15; *Her.* 16.23-6) and prostitution. (Isis was likewise connected with both the sea and prostitution.) See A. Booth, "Venus on the *Ara Pacis*", *Latomus* 25 (1966) 73-9, for the figure of Venus as a symbol of fertility and originator of the Julian family.

¹⁸¹ Plato *Symposium* 180. Plato views these as two separate goddesses whereas Xenophon understands them to be two sides of the same goddess (*Symposium* 8.9).

¹⁸² For Aphrodite in this role, see *Il.* 5.429ff.

¹⁸³ Detienne (1972) 120.

she appears in this role in bringing fertility to Pygmalion's marriage.¹⁸⁴ The statement reveals also that to identify Venus as patroness of legitimate love, does not mean that she cannot be erotic in this role too, but simply suggests that she is not exclusively erotic.

In contrast, elegiac discourse highlights the other side of Venus' amatory role, for the elegiac lover's concern is not with a Venus who patronises legitimate and procreative love but with a Venus who acts as guardian of extra-marital liaisons. Central in this poetry is Venus' specific association with extra-marital physical love. The Propertian, the Tibullan and the Ovidian lovers are concerned predominantly with physical *amor* and the impulse of these poetic collections is towards the satisfaction of that physical desire, the initial step towards which is gaining the favour of the *domina*. When this desire is satisfied on a random basis, the impulse (and particularly in Propertius) changes towards the satisfaction of this desire on a more permanent and stable basis, though the desire continuously has an erotic dimension.¹⁸⁵ Venus' association with erotic love has two effects in elegy, for she not only has an active role in inspiring the *amator* with love, but her background presence contributes to the general eroticism of the collection. As regards the former role, Venus is, in the Propertian and Tibullan collections, immediately established (in the first poem) as the instigator of passion and throughout the collections remains an important influence upon the amatory fates and erotic success of the lovers. As regards her contribution to the overall eroticism of the scene, the identification of Cynthia as Venus functions to make the mistress erotic and to suggest the physical love which Propertius seeks from his beloved. (In Ovidian elegy, Venus is present but less frequently than in other elegiac discourse: instead greater prominence is given to Cupid.)

In the *Metamorphoses*, which draws significantly on the language and scenarios of

¹⁸⁴ In view of this fertility, there may be grounds for refuting the argument that Ovid's Pygmalion represented a sacred marriage, as the Philostephanus version had done, for Avagianou (1991) 194 argues that sacred marriage rituals were infertile and so did not result in pregnancy.

¹⁸⁵ Veyne (1988) 103 discusses Propertian elegy in this respect and argues that the *amator* strives towards the paradisaical ideal of accessible love.

elegy,¹⁸⁶ the erotic influence of Venus recurs. Again this erotic association has two dimensions, for Venus functions not only to inspire characters with the desire for physical love (in particular those figures who resist her influence), but implicitly to contribute to the sensuality which pervades the epic. Venus adopts the former role when she inspires the Sun with love for Leucothoe (4.190ff) in order to punish him for exposing her affair with Mars and behaves in a similar manner when she orders Cupid to subject Pluto to her erotic power.¹⁸⁷ As regards the second dimension, the narrator exploits the erotic features of Venus as a means of establishing an erotic atmosphere in his picture of Diana, the goddess of chastity. This eroticism is generated through the implicit comparison of Diana with Venus. Diana, in the Actaeon tale (*Met.*3.138-252), is naked and is seen emerging from water, an image reminiscent of the Venus Anadyomene image which is generally regarded as the most seductive representation of Venus.¹⁸⁸ (The erotic connection of water may stem from this traditional picture of Venus Anadyomene and is perhaps suggested in Praxiteles' 'Aphrodite of Cnidus' who is preparing to bathe. Aristaenetus makes this connection when he describes a nude girl bathing: "In such a way do paintings represent Aphrodite elegantly emerging from the sea."¹⁸⁹) The effect of this association of Diana with Venus, combined with the fact that water is often the setting in Ovid for erotic experience, is the creation of a scene which promises the type of erotic encounter found elsewhere in the *Metamorphoses*, though this expectation is quickly disappointed. Nevertheless, the purpose (to suggest eroticism) and the effectiveness of the association with the naked Venus are clear.

In the *Metamorphoses*, although Venus continues to patronise illegitimate *amor* and to create the suggestion of erotic activity in various episodes, her scope extends far beyond the patronage of extra-marital love, for we find that her power in this text also encompasses

¹⁸⁶ Examples include the raven as informer in *Met.*2.531ff and Iphis as *exclusus amator* in *Met.*14.698ff.

¹⁸⁷ For Cupid and Venus inspiring love, see W.C. Stephens, "Cupid and Venus in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*", *TAPA* 89 (1958b) 286ff.

¹⁸⁸ The erotic connection with water is perhaps established in the *Metamorphoses* itself by its frequent appearance as the location for erotic activity, in particular, erotic violation. Cf Daphne (1.543ff); Hermaphrodite (4.340ff); Cyane (5.409ff); Arethusa (5.572ff); Scylla (13.900ff).

¹⁸⁹ Aristaenetus *Love Letters* 1.7. Cf also Philostratus *Love Letters* 36.

perverse, incestuous and violent love. She causes the Propoetides to prostitute themselves (10.238-42); she arranges for Pluto to fall in love with and to violate Proserpina (5.362ff); she is responsible for stirring within Myrrha an incestuous passion for her father (10.298-518); and, through her identification as protector of Thrace (as of Cyprus in Pygmalion), she is associated with the violence and barbarity of Tereus' rape of Philomela (6.424-674), Tereus being a Thracian and having a special association with Venus by virtue of his nationality ("sed et hunc innata libido / exstimulat, pronumque genus regionibus illis / in Venerem est." 458-60). This, then, is the character and influence which Venus acquires in the context of the *Metamorphoses*.

Considering both the diverse associations of Venus and the duality of her function even within the role of goddess of love, I do not then argue that Venus always evokes the erotic but rather that Venus in the *Metamorphoses*, and particularly in Orpheus' song, possesses this dimension specifically. In Orpheus' song, she appears not only as the cause of erotic activity when she inspires the Propoetides, Myrrha and Atalanta with passion, but as a participant when she takes Adonis as her lover. We may suppose, then, that the Ovidian Venus, as she appears in the Pygmalion episode, possesses a clear erotic dimension.

(ii) The Explicit Presence of Venus in Ovid's Pygmalion

Venus is present both directly and indirectly in the Pygmalion episode and I will discuss both ways in which she is brought into the tale. Firstly, as to the explicit presence of Venus within the text, there is a clear difference in emphasis between Ovid and earlier representations of statue-love. In Philostephanus' version, Pygmalion is a king who falls in love with a statue of Venus/ Aphrodite. In other instances of erotic agalmatophilia (the technical term for statue-love), as recorded by Posidippus and Athenaeus, the object of desire was similarly a Venus/ Aphrodite statue. In Posidippus' account, the erotic object

was specifically 'the Aphrodite of Cnidus'. In these pre-Ovidian texts,¹⁹⁰ therefore, Venus Aphrodite is explicit as the direct love object and has a physical prominence throughout the tale, even if she remains passive in her statue form. In the *Metamorphoses*, however, Venus is not love object and is not explicitly introduced on to the scene until a later stage after Pygmalion has sculpted, fallen in love with and tried to ravish his girl statue. (The removal of Venus as central love object is part of the establishment of the implied reading of the tale as it is designed to mark a difference between the Pygmalion of Orpheus and that of Philostephanus in terms of erotic interest in the statue.) Venus' direct appearance, therefore, is distinct from that in Philostephanus in terms both of her altered role (no longer love object) and of her postponed entry (at the mid-point of the tale). In effect, Venus enters the Ovidian tale at the point where the earlier versions came to an end. In terms of the lines of the text, it is interesting to note that Venus is explicitly mentioned for the first time at exactly the mid-point of the episode. The story runs from lines 243 to 297 and Venus is directly named at line 270. Her entry is certainly carefully positioned here to mark both the change in Pygmalion's erotic tactics (when he cannot independently find satisfaction, he turns to Venus for help) and the turning-point of the story and, perhaps, to mark the continuation of Ovid's Pygmalion from the point where Philostephanus' version reached its conclusion.

The second half of the episode begins, then, with an emphasis upon the entry of Venus when Pygmalion, frustrated by his failed efforts, attends the festival of Venus and seeks divine assistance and relief. Venus' appearance here is prominent and initiates the action of the second half of the episode. Throughout this section, her influence remains explicit because the rapid succession of her actions and their effects do not allow her to recede from the attention of the audience. The action initiated by Venus is condensed, for in the space of 27 lines she grants Pygmalion's request, receives his thanks, attends the

¹⁹⁰ Philostratus provides an example of post-Ovidian statue-love and here too Venus is present as love object.

marriage of Pygmalion to the girl and is associated with Pygmalion's daughter, Paphos.

There are two direct references to Venus in this part of the episode, both as she appears at the festival being held in her honour and as Pygmalion thanks her for bringing his statue to life. Regarding the former, I will suggest that we might consider Venus to be present at the festival in statue form and will propose that a visual contrast is established between Pygmalion's statue and the Venus statue. I will suggest that this visual contrast might be regarded as indicative of a contrast in the erotic temperament of the two statues. Regarding Pygmalion's address to Venus in gratitude for the animation of his statue, I will suggest that this does not necessarily indicate his awareness of the figure of Venus but may constitute instead an address to his statue as love-object.

When Venus appears directly in the text, there is the suggestion that we are supposed to view her in statue form. This depends on a number of factors. Firstly, there is the fact that, in the Pygmalion legend, Venus was traditionally present in statue form as the erotic object. (This is not the same as identifying Pygmalion's statue as Venus on the basis of the Venus statue in Philostephanus.¹⁹¹) That a Venus statue is to be considered in Ovid may be further suggested by the fact that in Roman religious practice, the presence of a statue of the deity whose festival was being celebrated was common. The statue remained visible to the sacrificing devotee, the intended effect being that the deity appeared to be the ultimate destination of the prayer, both in a physical and in a spiritual sense. There seems to have been, in the mind of the devotee, an interaction between the visible, tangible statue and the intangible presence of the deity.¹⁹² Historical evidence would, therefore, support a reading here which assumed the presence of a Venus statue. In addition, the human-to-stone motif of the Propoetides' transformation and of Pygmalion's own statue (though the

¹⁹¹ Miller (1988) suggests that the Ovidian Venus functions merely to recall the Venus of the Pygmalion legend (with which Pygmalion's statue then interacts) but she does not refer to any direct interaction between Pygmalion's statue and the Ovidian Venus.

¹⁹² J.Elsner, "Cult and Sculpture: Sacrifice in the *Ara Pacis Augustae*", *JRS* 81 (1991a) 50-61. R.Schilling, *La Religion Romaine de Vénus* (Paris, 1954) 280ff, provides a description of the design and decoration of various temples of Venus.

metamorphosis here is the reverse) might suggest that Venus too may be viewed against this stone imagery.¹⁹³

In consideration of this, there is reason to suppose that the figure of Venus in Ovid appears in the same physical form as in earlier versions of literary statue-love but has here a different role for she is no longer the erotic object. (In continuing to be the addressee of the lover's frustrated prayers, however, she retains something of the role of love object since in elegiac discourse, the mistress is often the addressee of the lover's tortured outpourings.) An Ovidian statue of Venus functions not simply to recall and to interact with the statue of Venus prominent in earlier statue-love but to facilitate a comparison here between the girl (Pygmalion's love object in statue form, dominant in the first half) and Venus (the presiding deity in statue form and appearing in the second half). This interaction of the Ovidian Venus as goddess and the Venus of the Pygmalion legend as erotic object is distinct from the interaction of Pygmalion's statue as love-object with the Venus statue of tradition as love object. Certainly the main impulse of the text is towards the alignment of the girl statue with Venus. This alignment may be seen in the initial description of Pygmalion's statue as *nuda* (266) which establishes a similarity between the girl statue and the traditional Venus statue (I will return to this later but it is important to note that, in sculpture, Venus was traditionally represented as a naked form.) The fact, moreover, that the statue is said to possess ideal beauty further aligns her with the goddess, for exceptional beauty is a traditional feature of Venus, though it is not explicitly attributed to her here. Elsner and Miller consider the alignment of girl with the Venus of legend to be established to such a degree that the audience can be in no doubt that Pygmalion's statue is actually a representation of Venus. I would, however, argue that, from a comparison of

¹⁹³ Venus is again connected with this human-to-stone motif when she transforms hard-hearted Anarexete into stone (*Met.* 14.698-764). Venus both punishes those who reject love and avenges those who are spurned. The human-to-stone transformation has already been prominent in the tale of Perseus and his use of Medusa's head (5.30-249). For discussion of this motif in the Pygmalion episode, see D.Bauer, "The Function of Pygmalion in the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid", *TAPA* 93 (1962) 1-21.

Pygmalion's statue with the Ovidian Venus in the text, one crucial distinction emerges which undermines this absolute identification. This depends on the contrast of the statue as *niveum ebur* (247-8) with Venus as *aurea* (277). The contrast consists in a comparison of their physical attributes, which serves not simply to underline the physical difference between them (material and colour), though this is part of the process, but to indicate also their contrasting characters in terms of their erotic attitude. This contrast is more pointed if Venus is viewed in statue form (for that allows a threefold contrast, of material, colour and character), though the effect is not lost without this modification. The presence of Venus in statue form facilitates a contrast which is, in the first instance, visual but which has the suggestion that it is also representative of the gulf between the erotic experience of the girl and Venus.

With regard to the visual aspect of the contrast, Pygmalion's statue possesses snow-white skin. The format of *niveum ebur*, the phrase used to describe the statue's exterior, both emphasises the colour of Pygmalion's statue and confirms her position as a statue. In terms of colour, the white exterior of the statue recalls the white skin which was a traditional feature of beauty. André explains this on the grounds that "Le blanc étincelant a une beauté particulière; une idée de grâce et de charme ..."¹⁹⁴ In the case of the elegiac mistress, the comparison of her skin to ivory employs the adjective *eburneus* or *eburnus*.¹⁹⁵ In the same way, the adjective *niveus* might be used in elegy to compare the colour of the mistress' skin with the whiteness of snow, colour being the point of the comparative description.¹⁹⁶ In the description of Pygmalion's statue, there is an apparently double emphasis upon the colour of the statue with the use of both these notions. However, the element of colour is conveyed primarily by the adjective, *niveus*, while the noun *ebur* underlines the material of the statue (it is made of ivory) and not its colour, although this is

¹⁹⁴ J. André, *Etude sur les Termes de Couleur dans la Langue Latine* (Paris, 1949). Aphrodite's white skin is praised at *Il.*5.297ff, and Galatea's at Theocritus *Id.*11.20.

¹⁹⁵ Cf Propertius: 2.1.9 "sive lyrae carmen digitis percussit eburnis"; *Am.*3.7.7: "eburnea bracchia".

¹⁹⁶ Cf *Cat.* 61.9; 63.8; 64.364.

not a complete division, for there is certainly some overlap of meaning within the phrase.¹⁹⁷

This exposes the superficial identification of the statue with the beautiful female.

When Pygmalion attends the festival of Venus, the colour of his statue is again highlighted in the repetition of colour terms:

 sit coniunx, opto, non ausus, 'eburnea virgo'
 dicere, Pygmalion 'similis mea' dixit 'eburnae.'
 sensit, ut ipsa suis aderat Venus aurea festis (275-7)

The movement from the earlier *ebur* to *eburnea* here (the adjective repeated for further emphasis) perhaps betrays Pygmalion's self-deception that the statue is human and anticipates (and reflects) the ultimate metamorphosis from 'made of ivory' to 'white like ivory'. (When Pygmalion returns from the festival, however, the statue is still *ebur* (283).) The effect of the repetition of the various forms of *ebur*, *eburnea* and *eburna* is that the white exterior of the statue is established and reinforced.

The white exterior of the statue continues to receive emphasis through Ovid's use of additional colour detail. In amatory discourse, the most frequent reference to colour is in the description of the beloved's beautiful white skin and the red blush of modesty. Lavinia (*Aen.*12.64-9), Corinna (*Am.*2.5.33-42), Hermaphrodite (*Met.*4.330-3) and Atalanta (*Met.*10.560-707) are described in this way. In Pygmalion, following the animation of the statue, there is indication of such a contrast, though the difference in colour is not as explicit:

 dataque oscula virgo
 sensit et erubuit (292-3)

The purpose of this postponed reference to blushing aligns the statue with the traditionally modest female and perhaps helps to highlight the absolute whiteness of the statue prior to animation, when blushing was not possible.

Further evidence that Ovid's intention was to emphasise the whiteness of the statue may be taken from the list of presents which Pygmalion gives to the statue. He is

¹⁹⁷ Martial uses this combination of noun and adjective, "niveum ...ebur" (8.50).

said to have given her colourful flowers but only lilies are mentioned explicitly:

munera fert illi conchas teretesque lapillos
et parvas volucres et *flores mille colorum*
liliaque pictasque pilas (260-2)

Lilies are often mentioned in conjunction with roses as a visual image of white skin with a blush of modesty, as in the descriptions of Lavinia and Corinna:

Indum sanguineo veluti violaverit ostro
si quis ebur, *aut mixta rubent ubi lilia multa*
alba rosa: talis virgo dabat ore colores. (*Aen.*12.67-9)

at illi
conscia purpureus venit in ora pudor,
quale coloratum Tithoni coniuge coelum
subrabet, aut sponso visa puella novo.
Quale rosae fulgent inter sua lilia mixtae (*Am.*2.5.33-7)

In both these examples, which make use of very similar language and expression, the white skin of the female is conveyed through the image of the lily. In both cases it is coupled with the rose as a means of highlighting the contrast of white purity and red blush.¹⁹⁸ When the lily is highlighted among Pygmalion's gifts, its symbolic whiteness is recalled, with the effect that the similarity of colour between the lily and the statue is underlined. Since there is no reference to the roses with which the lilies are often coupled in this type of context (as a means of conveying the mix of colour), the absolute whiteness of the statue is highlighted.¹⁹⁹ (Mention is made of coloured flowers and balls but no specific colour is indicated.) Through the combination of *niveum* and *ebur*, the variations of *ebur*, *eburnea* and *eburna* and the association of the statue with *lilia* (the only flower specifically named), the narrator clearly establishes the statue's white exterior.

The whiteness of the statue receives further emphasis when it is contrasted with the golden colour of Venus, for when Pygmalion attends the festival, the goddess is

¹⁹⁸ Cf *Georgics* 4.130-1; Prop. 2.3.9-12; Theocr. 11.56-9; *Hymn to Demeter*, 425ff. Cf contrast of red and white berries in Pyramus and Thisbe episode (*Met.*4.158-66).

¹⁹⁹ The absence of roses denies even the possibility that the statue might gain a hint of colour through reflection. Cf Philostratus the Elder, *Imagines* 1.8 (A.Fairbanks (tr.), *Imagines* (New York, 1931)) 33-5: Poseidon chases Amymone " ...and her natural pallor is illumined by the gold of the pitcher as its brightness is reflected in the water. "

described as *aurea*. That *eburnea* and *aurea* appear in adjacent lines would appear to invite this visual contrast. Traditionally, statues of deities were sculpted in gold or had a wooden or ivory core and were gold-plated. Statues produced by this process of gold-plating were known as chryselephantine. Phidias most famously adopted this technique in his creation of the Athena Parthenos.²⁰⁰ Ovid's description of the lavish gold in temples (*AA*.3.451-2) may refer to the presence of gold statues. The use of the epithet *aurea* as a description of Venus may be a reference to such a golden representation.

A visual contrast between the whiteness of the girl statue and the golden glow of Venus is therefore plausible and, we may assume, is the primary intention of the contrast of *niveum ebur* (*eburnea*) and *aurea*. It is possible to regard this superficial contrast (of material and of colour) as indicative of the contrast of the erotic demeanour and experience of the statues. Generally speaking, these contrasting epithets need not refer to colour at all, but could be exclusively descriptions of character, indicating a difference in temperament. In the case of the Ovidian episode, I would suggest that the colour (visual) element is important, that it is the primary point of distinction and that the erotic distinction is a reflection of this.

That the contrast is not exclusively visual might be seen in an examination of the notions implicit in the use of these colours. As regards the use of white as a character description, the white appearance of a female might be seen as an expression of her emotions and, therefore, as a reflection of her character. The description of Lavinia's white skin in *Aeneid* 12 (64-9), cannot surely be restricted to the visual. The whiteness of her skin becomes tinged with red when her mother speaks with so little constraint about her plans for the marriage of Lavinia and Turnus that it is an affront to her modesty. The suggestion is, therefore, that the original whiteness was designed to convey something of this girl's innocence and purity and not just her external beauty. Of course, if the

²⁰⁰ See Clement of Alexandria, *Protr.*4.46, for the example of Antiochus of Cyzicus who melts down a gold statue and replaces it with a cheaper statue covered in gold-leaf.

description of the white skin of the elegiac mistress is similarly designed to convey some aspect of her character,²⁰¹ it is probable either that something other than the quality of chastity is at point or that we are supposed to recognise the misguided opinion of the male lover in attributing such a quality to his beloved.

In the Pygmalion episode, it would seem that the point of the description is to emphasise not the cold unreceptiveness or disdain of the girl statue in the face of Pygmalion's erotic endeavours, but rather her innocence and purity in terms of erotic touch. This is suggested by the use of *niveus* as a description, for André argues that "La blancheur de la neige évoquait la pureté... de l'innocence de coeur d'un personnage...".²⁰² He continues thus:

Niveus, 'blanc comme neige' est plus chargé d'affectivité qu'*albus* et même que *candidus* parce qu'il représente la blancheur dans ce qu'elle a d'immaculé, de pur, donc d'agréable et de touchant à la fois.²⁰³

That she is said to display *reverentia* (251), in the sense of modesty, would seem to confirm this. Likewise, the nudity of the statue suggests a certain readiness, albeit deceptive.

The epithet *aurea* likewise conveys an aspect of character and not just of appearance. In large degree, this can be understood by the fact that *aurea* was a stock epithet for Venus in literature generally, not just as she appeared in statue form. *Aurea* serves as a description of beauty: since Venus is the paradigm of beauty,²⁰⁴ it is reasonable that she should frequently be described thus. Yet *aurea* does not denote beauty generally, but specifically that beauty which is coupled with seductive charm. This explains the difference in *eburnea* and *aurea* as descriptions of beauty, for they have distinct connotations, the former combining beauty with modesty, the latter, beauty with erotic

²⁰¹ André (1949) 37: "*Candida*, 'probe', 'fidele' est l'épithète fréquente de la maîtresse du poète dans la poésie élégiaque."

²⁰² André (1949) 40.

²⁰³ André (1949) 255.

²⁰⁴ Cf Apuleius *Met.* 10.31 where, in a representation of the Judgement of Paris, the most beautiful girl plays Venus.

charm. This further explains the frequency of this epithet in reference to Venus in view of the goddess' erotic reputation.

Indeed, the epithet is often applied to Venus/ Aphrodite in contexts where she is acting seductively or sensuously. Homer describes Aphrodite as golden in reference to the gifts which she has given Paris (*Il.*3.64). In view of the nature of Paris as erotically motivated and attractive, we may imagine that Aphrodite's gifts to him were, to some extent, responsible for this. The use of golden here may therefore reveal Aphrodite functioning as goddess of physical love. Hesiod refers to her as such in respect of the activity to which she introduces young girls (*Works and Days*, 521). Vergil describes her as "Venus aurea" (*Aen.*10.16) when she is addressing Jupiter with a view to enlisting his aid for Aeneas. Although this is an explicitly rhetorical exercise, the connection between rhetorical seduction and erotic seduction is a common one, especially in the *Metamorphoses*,²⁰⁵ for there is an element of sensuousness in the art of persuasion.²⁰⁶

The eroticism associated with 'golden' generally may be demonstrated in three further examples. Firstly, when Venus is seducing Vulcan, the couch upon which he lies is golden ("thalamo... aureo" *Aen.*8.372-3). Secondly, in one of the Priapic poems, primarily associated with obscene eroticism, a young lover is described as a "puer aureus" (82.40). Thirdly, Propertius calls his beloved "aurea Cynthia" (4.7.85)²⁰⁷ and although 'golden' may, in part, be concerned to highlight Cynthia's beauty, the principal, though not the exclusive point of the epithet in Propertius, in consideration of the erotic motivation of elegy, may be to emphasise and celebrate the potential (and random) eroticism of Cynthia.²⁰⁸

The description of Venus as *aurea* in the Pygmalion episode may evoke these two

²⁰⁵ See Nagle (1988a) 32-51, for discussion of the use of the technique of narrative seduction in the *Metamorphoses*. Enterline (2000) 39 refers to the theme of rhetorical seduction as demonstrated by the erotic and rhetorical interests in Pygmalion's desire to 'move' his statue.

²⁰⁶ For golden as an epithet commonly used of speech, honey, sexual fluids, see P. Friedrich, *The Meaning of Aphrodite* (Chicago, 1978) 79.

²⁰⁷ Cf Horace, who refers to Pyrrha as *aurea* (*Odes* 1.5.9).

²⁰⁸ Cf also Hesiod *Theog.*1004-5 and Homer *Od.*4.14 for golden Aphrodite.

implications of a golden exterior (visual) and a golden interior (erotically enticing and experienced in her character as goddess of erotic love). The contrast with Pygmalion's statue is accordingly two-fold, both with the white exterior of the statue and with the white interior. The visual contrast here (white and gold) as representative of a character contrast may be confirmed by the similar type of contrast at the beginning of the Pygmalion episode between the dark statues of the reckless Propoetides and the white statue of the innocent girl which Pygmalion creates as an alternative to these promiscuous females. This contrast, which functions to distinguish Pygmalion's statue and the Propoetides materially, visually and erotically, would make it reasonable to suppose that the next visual contrast would have the same points of comparison. The three different statue forms (distinct in material, colour and erotic demeanour) are certainly designed to interact and whether we interpret Venus' presence as a statue or simply as a goddess, the three epithets, *silicem* (242), *niveum* (247) and *aurea* (277) are themselves sufficient to allow at least some degree of interaction, if only in terms of erotic temperament.

In the Ovidian tale, then, it is possible to consider the presence of two statues: that of the ideal girl who is given a prominent position in the story as the beloved, albeit inanimate, mistress of Pygmalion; and that of Venus, which was presumably an important part of the Cyprian celebration (it was an important feature in Roman festivals) but which plays much more of a supporting role here. The statue of Venus is not given any detailed physical description beyond what is necessary to establish a contrast with Pygmalion's girl statue (*aurea*) and indeed, even the physical profile of the girl, though lengthy, remains vague and does not depart from the standard terminology and format for the description of outstanding beauty. (Such a challenge is present in visual art where the artist is presented with standard types of representation which he must develop independently according to his preference and artistic skill. To an extent, this is the same challenge which we find in elegy where certain features are required to identify the poetry as elegy, but these are

combined with distinct, individual touches.) As a result, it is all but impossible to picture the features of Pygmalion's statue or to visualise with any confidence her appearance. (I will return to this in relation to the statue's role as ideal girl.²⁰⁹)

Certainly the language of the text invites us to consider her appearance and indeed the very nature of the creation (sculpture, one of the visual arts) would appear to make visualisation more urgent than it is normally in poetry. One may try to picture Corinna through Ovid's details, but will almost certainly try to visualise the statue. Perhaps this might be explained by the fact that the written/ spoken word engages the imagination, while a visual representation requires observation, though not exclusively so. It is perhaps this consideration which prompts Glenn to comment that

Of the art forms, Ovid suggests that sculpture is less interesting and less alive than poetry because it lacks the sequence and movement of poetry and because it is less ambiguous and engages the mind and feelings less.²¹⁰

What we actually have in the Pygmalion episode, however, is a combination of these two artistic media, for although the Pygmalion tale is clearly the written word, it has at its centre a piece of visual art which automatically arouses the audience's visual observation. Therefore the Pygmalion tale, to a degree, synthesises the two processes in a manner not usually found in poetry, where there is only a textual description of the physical object. The textual and the visual interact in Pygmalion, as may be reflected in the use of language (the traditional language of poetry) to describe the visual features of sculpture (*nuda*). Propertius' interest in depicting the beauty of mythological heroines in terms of the visual arts may be related to this greater demand and potential for visualisation.²¹¹ Ovid compares Corinna to Parian marble (*Am.*1.7.51-2) and although the principal purpose of this is to emphasise her pallor, there is perhaps the temptation, however brief, to view her as a statue. The use of *eburnea* as a poetic (textual) description of beauty may even have originated from the visual art of ivory sculptures and the desire to convey this visual aspect

²⁰⁹ See p147-50.

²¹⁰ Glenn (1986) 69.

²¹¹ Prop.1.2.15-22.

textually. Yet although, strictly speaking, the medium of sculpture, in being described textually, becomes subordinate to the poetic/ linguistic medium. the overall effect of the episode is to emphasise the physical, pictorial element. The limited pictorial element of poetry (limited in the sense that it does not convey physical appearance with the same accuracy or definition as painting or sculpture, not in the sense that it restricts the potential for imagination) is combined with the visual character of sculpture. The result is that despite the position of the episode within the poetic context of Orpheus' song, we are expected to forget or at least ignore the fact that sculpture is not actually the principal medium here. Momentarily, therefore, we are meant to look at the sculpture rather than read the poetry, though in effect, it is impossible to separate the two processes.

The next explicit reference to Venus in the text and the one which constitutes Pygmalion's first identification of the goddess, comes after the animation of the statue when Pygmalion is addressing his thanks to Venus:

tum vero Paphius plenissima concipit heros
verba, quibus *Veneri* grates agat ... (290-1)

This reference to Venus may be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, it may be interpreted as a straightforward expression of thanks by Pygmalion to the goddess who has answered his prayers. The sense of gratitude here and the compliance of Venus explain Otis' interpretation of the tale as innocence rewarded, for they are part of the implied reading, prayer and gratitude being features of piety. The 'resisting' reader, however, sensitive to the strong erotic undercurrent in the tale, questions the piety and innocence of Pygmalion and so challenges the view that the animation of the statue was a reward.

A further dimension might be considered here, dependent on the divine qualities which a lover tends to attribute to his mistress and the consequent equation of the erotic and divine mistress with Venus, the erotic goddess. The audience may, to an extent, be prepared to accept that this address to Venus may be a veiled reference to Pygmalion's statue as a result of the implicit identification with and interplay between Pygmalion's

statue and Venus in the episode. (Although my previous point emphasised the contrast between Pygmalion's statue and Venus, a visual contrast of colour and an internal contrast of character, at the same time the statues are similar in their nudity and in their beauty.)

That Pygmalion may here be addressing his statue as Venus does not prove that Pygmalion regards his statue as Venus²¹² or that it is a representation of the goddess (as it was in Philostephanus), but is rather a reflection of a common literary practice whereby mere mortals in love addressed each other by divine titles. Clement of Alexandria presents various examples of this tendency towards divine address in love affairs²¹³ and attributes its origin to the almost archetypal inequality of lover and beloved. This divine association of mistress with goddess is perhaps an extension of the practice in elegy whereby the *domina* is regarded as the mistress who owns the servile male lover. This practice similarly seeks to put the love-object on a level superior to the lover.²¹⁴ The medieval courtly love lyric had this inequality at its centre, as too did the sonnet sequences of Sidney and Spenser.²¹⁵

Further evidence for this practice may be found in the fifth Homeric Hymn, in which Anchises falls in love with Aphrodite and believes that she must be a goddess (*Hymn to Aphrodite* 1.91-106). On this passage Friedrich discards the possibility that Anchises was genuinely aware of her divinity and comments that Anchises' response

... clearly parallels that of Odysseus when he meets Nausicaa - whom he surely did not regard as a goddess- and both responses would seem to illustrate the code of courtship and amatory flattery.²¹⁶

He explains this identification of the mistress with a goddess on the grounds that

The most eloquent way to extol a woman's beauty is to compare her to Aphrodite, as happens to Helen's only child, Hermione (*Od.*4.14) or the captive concubine whose seizure by Agamemnon catalyses

²¹² He regards the statue as Venus in the sense that it is his erotic object and all erotic objects are, to some degree, Venus. He does not consider that his statue is actually the goddess Venus.

²¹³ He discusses also non-amatory examples (*Protr.*4.47ff(121ff)).

²¹⁴ Catullus varies this concept when he reports Lesbia's claim that she would choose no man in preference to Catullus, even if Jupiter were to pursue her (70). This equates the male lover with the god and thus confers upon him a divine status.

²¹⁵ Sir Philip Sidney, *Astrophel and Stella*; Edmund Spenser, *Amoretti*.

²¹⁶ Friedrich (1978) 66-7.

Achilles' wrath in the *Iliad*.²¹⁷

This comparison is based on both the mistress' outstanding beauty and on her superior status in relation to the lover. The equation of the beloved with Venus²¹⁸ is found in Propertius when he refers to Cynthia as "nostra Venus" (1.1.33). His later description of her as "aurea Cynthia" (4.7.85) heightens this association and his explanation of Cynthia's illness as being caused by the jealousy of Venus both associates Cynthia with Venus and elevates her above the goddess:

num sibi collatam doluit Venus? illa peraeque
prae se formosis invidiosa dea est. (2.28.9-10)

Similarly in Vergil's *Eclogues*, Damoetas claims to have a present for his own personal Venus: "Parta meae Veneri sunt munera" (*Ecl.* 3.68). In *Amores* 1.7, moreover, although Ovid does not directly refer to his mistress as Venus, an association is suggested when he refers to her as a goddess and closely compares her to Venus:

pessima Tydides scelerum monimenta reliquit:
ille deam primus percudit; alter ego. (31-2)

By the same method (of comparison rather than direct identification), Cephalus associates Procris with Venus and, like Catullus, establishes a connection between himself and Jupiter:²¹⁹

nec Iovis illa meo thalamos praeferret amori,
nec me quae caperet, non si Venus ipsa veniret, ulla erat (7.801-2)

The purpose here is simply to highlight the divinity conferred by love, rather than the additional dimension of the inequality which occurs when only one lover is regarded as divine.²²⁰ The same tendency is demonstrated in Plautus' *Rudens*. In one scene, Sceparnio encounters Ampelisca whom he rhetorically and sexually refers to as "Veneris effigia"

²¹⁷ Friedrich (1978) 89.

²¹⁸ Venus is the most appropriate name in an amorous context due to Venus' role as goddess of love.

²¹⁹ The name Adonis was often used of the male lover and we may assume this to have stemmed from his position as Venus' lover.

²²⁰ Cf Sappho fragment 187, *Wedding of Andromache*: "and sang of Hektor and Andromache like gods" in Barnstone (1988) 81.

(II.iv.420). Accordingly, it is not difficult to imagine a rhetorical and verbose lover peppering his love-making with cries of 'Venus' which would be more an exclamation to his mistress who generates ecstasy than a genuine address to the goddess .

Taking into consideration both the interplay between Pygmalion's girl statue and Venus throughout the episode and the amatory/ courtship practice of a lover addressing his mistress as a goddess, Pygmalion's address to Venus as he is on the point of love-making (perhaps the traditional point when a name might be mentioned), may be a reference to his statue and thus a reflection of this practice. Yet even if this is not an example of the practice of divine address, still the address to 'Venus' at this point helps to underline Pygmalion's sexual motivation further for we might consider that Venus' position as goddess of erotic love ensures that the name of Venus here betrays his erotic intention. However, the interaction of the statue with Venus in the course of the episode means that uncertainty over the actual identity of the addressee at this point is entirely conceivable.

There are, then, two instances where Venus is identified by name in the text, once by the narrator (at the festival) and once by Pygmalion himself (at the point of love-making). At both these points when Venus is explicitly named, it is in respect of the potential animation and the actual animation of the statue. In the first instance, it is on the authority of the narrator that we learn that Venus is responsible for this transformation since Pygmalion, if aware of Venus' presence, does not directly address her at the temple. He refers generally to *di* (274), rather than specifically to Venus. In the second instance, when he does directly address her in gratitude, moreover, it is possible that it is not the divine Venus but his mistress as Venus to whom he speaks.

(iii) The Implicit Presence of Venus

In terms of Pygmalion, then, there is a certain ambiguity as to how far he is aware of Venus' influence. As far as the audience is concerned, however, on the authority of the

narrator. Venus is explicitly present from the mid-point of the episode and dominates the action of the second half. The narrator, who vouches for, or at least records, her entry and her involvement in the metamorphosis, makes clear Venus' presence at these points but couples this with the suggestion that her influence is to be felt at points in the episode other than those where she appears explicitly. The narrator makes this suggestion through a number of subtle references to the goddess. My discussion of the allusions to Venus in this episode will have two parts. First, I will discuss the interaction of Ovid's Pygmalion with that of Philostephanus, and the recollection of Venus in Ovid which stems from this interaction. Secondly, I will discuss additional implicit references to Venus which do not depend on a knowledge of the Pygmalion legend.

In view of the central role of the goddess in these erotic legends, I would suggest that despite the change of identity of the love object in Ovid, the new girl statue is viewed in terms of Venus, whom she replaces, and thus becomes associated with her and that the explicit removal of Venus does not, in effect, constitute a complete removal of the goddess or of the eroticism which she denotes. (Her removal certainly creates this facade and must have been deliberately designed by the narrator to do so. As such it contributes to the establishment of the implied reading of the tale.) One might even argue that the removal of Venus deliberately draws attention to the identity of the Ovidian statue and sets her against Venus/ Aphrodite who was traditionally central. This is the basis of scholarship on the Ovidian statue as Venus.

In the Ovidian text, the girl statue is not explicitly identified as Venus and while she may be associated with her (in being nude and ideally beautiful), the narrator makes clear the fact that they are distinct. (Any female who is naked and beautiful is, to that extent, like Venus but is not identified as such.) The girl statue is differentiated from Venus at least through visual contrast and the erotic contrast which extends from this. The impulse to identify the statue as Venus, then, apparent in articles by Elsner and Miller, must depend

significantly on the fact that Venus was the love object in Philostephanus. Sharrock explains the tendency to identify the statue as Venus to such intertextuality when she argues that “A variant of the myth does not simply erase the other variants.”²²¹ Therefore, the reader approaching Pygmalion with a previous knowledge of the tradition of statue-love to some extent does so with the expectation that the statue is Venus, regardless of whether there is any textual alignment of girl and Venus. Elsner’s identification of the statue as Venus depends entirely on the fact that Venus was the central love object in Philostephanus. Miller’s argument for the statue as Venus also relies on the role of Venus/Aphrodite (as erotic object in Philostephanus). She discusses Venus in Ovid as functioning to recall Venus in Philostephanus, but does not consider that Pygmalion’s statue interacts with this Ovidian Venus. The suggestion, then, is that a reader unfamiliar with the legend of Pygmalion might not make this identification.

Alongside this desire to identify the statue as Venus, there exists a certain reservation among critics to do so without some qualification. Elsner, for example, argues that the statue is Venus, but qualifies this with the assertion that Pygmalion alone does not make this association. That there should be such uncertainty, magnified by Ovid’s decision to leave the statue nameless and without definite identity, may be explained by the fact that certain Ovidian details prevent a clear-cut identification. As discussed, the colour contrast between Pygmalion’s statue and the Venus statue prevents complete association. (The ultimate metamorphosis likewise undermines the statue’s identity as Venus.)

That criticism has alternately maintained that the Ovidian statue is Venus (Miller), that it is an ideal girl (Sharrock), that it is Pygmalion’s external vision of Venus (Glenn) and that it is Venus to all but Pygmalion (Elsner), reveals the intended effect of the Ovidian substitution: the statue is explicitly not Venus but continues to be viewed in terms of the Venus statue as a result of Ovid’s exploitation of the assumptions of the audience and their awareness of the features of traditional statue-love. Of course, this is only effective for an

²²¹ Sharrock (1991a) 171.

audience familiar with this tradition.

This Ovidian technique has been responsible for the variety of interpretations of the episode in respect of the statue's identity (and indeed of Pygmalion's identity²²²). The reason for this is that when Ovid alters the identity of the love object, he thus draws attention to the statue's identity and raises the question of whether or not it is Venus. Enterline refers to this process as "the generativity of difference" and certainly it would seem that Ovid's deliberate departure from Philostephanus in terms of the statue has indeed been responsible for the wealth and variety of commentary on it. I discuss this aspect further in the next part of this section.

However, the association of the girl statue with Venus is not established solely through the interaction of Ovid with his sources. Quite apart from this reference to Venus in respect of her role in earlier statue-love, there is further indication within the text that Ovid's intention was to set Pygmalion's statue in the mould of the traditional statue of Venus and the figure of Venus generally, outwith this context. These references do not depend on a knowledge of Philostephanus' version but recall Venus' presence, even for those unfamiliar with literary statue-love. Such identification can be seen in Ovid's choice of detail in his physical description of Pygmalion's statue. The statue is described as *nuda* and this is an important feature, for Clement of Alexandria comments on the fact that statues of gods had certain defining characteristics which made them readily identifiable and that in the case of Venus/ Aphrodite it was the appearance of nudity.²²³ Friedrich, moreover, writes that "Aphrodite may have been depicted nude (intermittently) from remote times. In early myth she ... may bare her bosom or even her entire body"²²⁴ and among the nude representations of goddesses he includes the figure of the *Venus Genetrix*.

²²² Pygmalion's identity varies according to that of the statue: if statue is ideal girl, Pygmalion becomes the creator of an ideal girl; if statue is Venus, Pygmalion becomes mortal lover of a goddess.

²²³ *Protr.* 4.50 (131).

²²⁴ Friedrich (1978) 136. R. Turcan, *Religion Romaine. Iconography of Religions Vol 1* (Leiden, 1988) 12 explains the nude depiction of Venus/ Aphrodite: "Suivant les épiclèses, la déesse est nue ou voilée ...".

That Venus/ Aphrodite was typically nude may be further seen in Heyob's statement that many Isis statues were nude precisely as a means of highlighting the association of this goddess with the figure of Venus/ Aphrodite.²²⁵ Even if Augustus sought and attained a form of representation which moved away from the nudity of Greek images²²⁶, still there was not a complete departure, for, as Schilling argues,

Certes, les Romains se laisseront encore séduire par l'image voluptueuse de Vénus anadyomène, pour la décoration de leurs temples.²²⁷

It is, therefore, significant when the narrator describes Pygmalion's statue in this way :

...nec nuda minus formosa videtur . (10.265)

In describing her as *nuda*, he expressly identifies her with this tradition of Venus statues from which he seems keen to dissociate himself in the decision to have a statue which represents the ideal woman in preference to Venus. Pygmalion dresses and decorates the statue so that she is not continually nude and we may imagine that part of the delight consists in the excitement of undressing the statue. This is reminiscent of *Amores* 1.5, where the Ovidian *amator* takes pleasure in undressing Cynthia. Pygmalion's action in dressing the statue may, however, have a further dimension, for it may refer to another common motif of Venus representation: the figure of the draped nude, popular prior to Praxiteles' nude 'Aphrodite of Cnidus', and prominent in the form of the *Venus Genetrix*. The purpose of this drapery was not to conceal the female figure, but to accentuate the physical beauty by highlighting the smooth curves of the female body. The effect is the creation of a statue with the same erotic sensuousness as nude sculptures. Therefore, the two aspects of Pygmalion's behaviour here, dressing and undressing his statue, may function to recall Venus in two forms of her representation and, in view of the

²²⁵ S.Heyob, *The Cult of Isis Among Women in the Graeco-Roman World*, (Leiden, 1975) 49.

²²⁶ Avagianou (1991) 57 attributes the nudity of Greek representation to Oriental influence and types. K.Clark, *The Nude. A Study of Ideal Art* (London, 1956) discusses the emergence of the nude figure in Greek sculpture; C.M.Havelock, *The Aphrodite of Knidos and Her Successors*, (University of Michigan Press, 1995) 118-9 the renewed Roman interest in nude representation following Augustus' removal of Apelles' *Anadyomene* from Kos to Rome .

²²⁷ Schilling (1954) 312-3. Cf A.A.3.224.

sensuousness of both the nude and the draped Venus, serve to enhance further the erotic atmosphere.

Moreover, that the association with Venus is made on these grounds (nudity) underlines the specifically erotic presence of the goddess and her importance to the tale in this respect. The narrator's reference to the nudity of the statue has the effect not only of associating the statue with Venus but of associating it particularly on this erotic basis, for the nudity of Venus is the essential expression of her seductive charm. In addition, the detail of nudity likewise emphasises the erotic nature of Pygmalion's intentions, even at this early stage. For in respect of the nudity of Pygmalion's statue, we might recall the complaint of the nymph, Arethusa, against Alpheus : "quia *nuda* fui , sum visa paratior illi" (5.603).²²⁸ Scylla too conveys this impression to Glaucus:

... et aut bibula *sine vestibus errat* harena
aut, ubi lassata est, *seductos nacta recessus*
gurgitis, inclusa sua membra refrigerat unda
ecce freto stridens, alti novus incola ponti,
nuper in Euboica versis Anthedone membris,
Glaucus adest (13.901-6)

Glenn comments that Scylla "... simply wanders naked along the shore... (This is not the only time in Ovid that nakedness is Venus enough.)"²²⁹ In Pygmalion, then, we are, perhaps, supposed to imagine the demand for sexual activity on Pygmalion's part when confronted with a naked female form and the deceptive readiness (and, perhaps, too the deceptive willingness) of the statue, in her nakedness, to submit. Nevertheless, beyond the eroticism which nudity generally conveys (as a prelude to erotic activity), still the fact that Pygmalion's love object is a naked statue and as such is reminiscent of Venus statues means that Ovid does not escape from the specific suggestion of Venus inherent in the appearance of the naked statue here.

²²⁸ Cf Prop. 2.1.13: "seu nuda erepto mecum luctatur amictu,". Here too, alongside the sexual metaphor of wrestling, nudity is regarded as an important indication of erotic intent. The equation of nudity with sexual activity is repeated later in the same poem (13-6). Cf also *Amores* 1.5.13ff; Aristaenetus 1.7.

²²⁹ Glenn (1986) 178.

The association with Venus is strengthened through further detail. When the statue is immediately described as possessing a beauty which surpasses all other beauty, there is the initial identification with the Venus/ Aphrodite figure who was regarded as the paradigm of flawless beauty, beauty being an important feature of love.²³⁰ (In Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* (4.28ff), Psyche's beauty is compared both with that of Venus and with that of an art object, specifically a statue.²³¹ In view of these two compliments, we may imagine that she is regarded as a statue of Venus. The equation of Psyche with Venus here is only in terms of beauty for there is no amatory dimension at this stage, though, perhaps, it may anticipate her later marriage to Cupid.²³²) The manner in which Ovid expresses the statue's beauty is interesting. He describes it thus:

interea niveum mira feliciter arte
sculpsit ebur formamque dedit, *qua femina nasci
nulla potest*, (247-9)

In referring to the statue's beauty as being greater than that possessed by any woman ever born, Ovid emphasises how far this compliment reaches, for all women are born.²³³ Yet this unusual qualification of the beauty has further significance for it also serves to emphasise the statue's lack of life. There is irony in describing the statue's beauty in terms of how a real woman's beauty might be praised (in saying that it surpasses that of all other women) while at the same time highlighting the fact that the statue is not actually a woman : since the statue is not a real woman (and has not been born), it is perhaps less of an achievement that her beauty should be distinct from, or even surpass, that of a living female.²³⁴ This is

similar to the dual effect of *niveum ebur*, which likewise points towards Pygmalion's love

²³⁰ See *Love Letters* of Philostratus (*Ep.* 12; 34; 56) for notion of love entering the body through the eye. See A.Walker, "Eros' and the eye in the 'Love Letters' of Philostratus", *PCPS* 38 (1992) 132-48.

²³¹ These are common compliments to beauty.

²³² Cf Lucian (A.M.Harmon (tr.), *Lucian Vol 4. Essays in Portraiture* (New York, 1925)) where Lycinus depicts his beloved in statue form in terms of how Aphrodite is portrayed in statue form as a means of expressing her beauty (section 8, 271). Cf *Il.* 19.282 where Briseis' beauty is compared with that of Aphrodite. Also, in Apuleius, in a representation of the Judgement of Paris, Venus offers Paris the most beautiful woman as his wife, the most beautiful woman being her human counterpart, Helen (*Met.* 10.32).

²³³ Cf Prop. 2.25.1: "unica nata meo pulcherrima cura dolori".

²³⁴ The failure of real life to possess the perfection of art is a common literary complaint.

object as human and as a statue.

In addition to these explanations, the phrase may, in fact, be a veiled reference to Venus. Traditionally, Venus is regarded as not being born in the natural way, coming into existence by emerging from the sea-foam (*Venus Anadyomene*). That Venus was famously “not born” in this manner means that the reference here may serve to recall her and to associate her, through comparison, with Pygmalion’s girl statue. That her emergence from water was one of the most seductive images of the goddess means that once again the association here is given further erotic relevance. It is important that Pygmalion’s statue was also not brought to life in the usual way: this is a further point of alignment between the statue and the goddess.

The association continues in the list of gifts which Pygmalion offers to his statue as a means of persuading her to look favourably upon his advances. These gifts do not directly associate girl with goddess, but, to the extent in which they recall Venus, they facilitate the comparison. The practice of giving presents is certainly an allusion to the traditional elegiac custom (though this practice was not unique to elegiac discourse) but the gifts mentioned in the first half of the list here offer an alternative to the expensive offerings of the rich elegiac rival and the poetic compositions of the poor *amator*, though certainly Pygmalion also offers the more conventional gifts of elegiac love:

modo grata puellis
munera fert illi *conchas* teretesque lapillos
et *parvas volucres* et *flores mille colorum*
liliaque pictasque pilas et arbore lapsas
Heliadum lacrimas (259-63)

This first part of the list is reminiscent of the type of presents promised by Corydon in

Eclogue 2:

tibi lilia plenis
ecce ferunt Nymphae calathis; tibi candida Nais.
pallentis violas et summa papavera carpens.
narcissum et florem iungit bene olentis anethi; (45-8)

Various elements in the Ovidian list support a connection with Venus and indeed it is not surprising that amatory gifts should have some significance to and connection with the goddess of love. The reference to *conchas* may recall Venus in alluding to one of her identifications as Goddess of the Sea. It recalls also the figure of *Venus Anadyomene*, as it does in Plautus' *Rudens* when Sceparnio, standing outside a sanctuary of Venus, makes clear the association of Venus with *concha*:

te ex *concha* natum esse autumant. (III.iv.704)

Propertius too makes this identification when he refers to “concha Erycina” (3.13.6). Although Richardson argues that only Propertius makes this association,²³⁵ still the connection is established.²³⁶

The reference to *parvas volucres* is likewise important in recalling Venus here, for Venus/ Aphrodite was associated with a number of birds. Farnell counts partridges, geese, doves and sparrows among the birds sacred to the goddess and certainly this connection with Venus may itself sufficiently explain the function of at least some of these birds as amatory gifts. Bömer writes that “als Gaben der Liebe waren vorwiegend Tauben...”.²³⁷ Graves suggests Venus' connection with doves and sparrows on the grounds that these birds “... were noted for their lechery”.²³⁸ This characteristic is present in Ovid's description:

oscula dat cupido blanda columba mari (*Am.*2.6.56)

In Petronius' *Satyricon*, the connection of Venus with the dove and the dove as an amatory gift are highlighted:

itaque timidissimo murmure votum feci et “domina” inquam “Venus,
si ego hunc puerum basiavero ita ut ille non sentiat, cras illi par
columbarum donabo. (85.5-6)²³⁹

²³⁵ L. Richardson, Jr. (ed.), *Propertius. Elegies I-IV* (UP of Oklahoma, 1977) 372. Polyphemus describes Galatea's skin as smoother than shells (*Met.*13.792) and perhaps this aspect of texture is likewise relevant for the smooth ivory of Pygmalion's statue.

²³⁶ *Concha* appears elsewhere in Propertius as an amatory gift (1.8a.39-40). Cf also *Am.*2.11.13-6.

²³⁷ Bömer (1977) 102.

²³⁸ R. Graves, *The Greek Myths. Vol. 1* (Edinburgh, 1955) 50.

²³⁹ For the dove as an amatory gift, cf also *Met.*13.833; *Theocr.*5.96-7; 132 and *A.A.*2.269 .

The sparrow likewise emerges as a symbol of love and courtship through the famous example of Lesbia's sparrow in the Catullan collection. Birds other than those directly associated with Venus were given as amatory gifts.²⁴⁰ Ovid parallels the Catullan sparrow in a poem in which he mourns the death of Corinna's parrot (*Am.*2.6), though in consideration of the significant element of parody in this lament, it is unlikely that the parrot was genuinely associated with amatory affairs, but rather that Ovid chose a bird which was deliberately unsuitable in this context.

The presence of flowers in this list is, to the modern mind, hardly remarkable, for they represent the archetypal amatory symbol. Flowers were, in fact, an important element of the figure of Venus / Aphrodite. Friedrich explains this association on the basis that

Fruit and flowers work at diverse levels: fruit suggests progeny, flowers the generative organs.²⁴¹

Both these elements are important features of love and marriage. Therefore, despite Bömer's explanation of flowers as amatory gifts on the grounds that "Blumen erfreuen immer ein Mädchenherz",²⁴² many had essentially erotic connotations, in part connected with the motivation of the male giver. The narcissus, representing the male sexual organs, and the poppy, one of the ritual objects of the Greater Mysteries at Eleusis, were particularly identified as erotic flowers, and both are included in Corydon's list, though they are absent from Pygmalion's. The lily is the only flower explicitly identified in Ovid and white is the only colour which is clearly indicated. Both Corydon and Pygmalion include the *lilia* among their offerings²⁴³ which is, in erotic terms, more significant, for Friedrich comments that

In plastic art (but not in Homer) she (Venus/ Aphrodite) is almost stereotypically represented holding a lily.²⁴⁴

²⁴⁰ Cf Prop.3.13.32.

²⁴¹ Friedrich (1978) 75.

²⁴² Bömer (1977) 102.

²⁴³ Cf Prop 3.13.30.

²⁴⁴ Friedrich (1978) 75. Also *Protr.*2.19 (45).

The *pictas pilas* are thought to be balls of amber, designed for use as a perfume.²⁴⁵ Detienne discusses the importance of perfume to Venus/Aphrodite.²⁴⁶

Following these initial advances, Pygmalion, in the next section of the episode, arrives at the festival of Venus and here too we may detect further reference to the Venus/Aphrodite figure, or at least to erotic imagery generally. The scene is described in this way:

et pandis inductae cornibus aurum
concliderant ictae nivea cervice iuvencae (271-2)

A survey of various goddesses who were synthesised in the later Venus/Aphrodite figure reveals the existence of a common image whereby the female sexual organs are likened to horns and to the new moon.²⁴⁷ I do not argue that the reference to horns is sufficient to denote the presence of Venus, but they are here mentioned as part of the sacrifice at Venus' festival and are described as being covered in gold, an epithet which may point to Venus who is later described as golden. Furthermore, there is a visual contrast here between the gold-covered horns and the snow-white necks of the cows which anticipates the visual contrast between the golden Venus (*aurea Venus*) and the snowy-white girl (*niveum ebur*).

Further reference to Venus may be found in the identification of Pygmalion as *Paphius heros* (290). This reference anticipates the birth of Pygmalion's daughter seven lines later and is further designed to point to Venus,²⁴⁸ for Paphos was Venus/Aphrodite's most famous centre of worship and the conclusion of the tale sees this patronage established. The unusual detail of the father being identified in terms of his daughter rather than vice versa is notable and may be designed to highlight the special relationship forged here between Pygmalion, Pygmalion's daughter and Venus.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁵ Cf Prop.2.2412; A.A.3.361ff.

²⁴⁶ See Detienne (1972) 62; 68-70, for discussion of scent/perfume as a feature of Venus/Aphrodite.

²⁴⁷ Friedrich (1978) 14.

²⁴⁸ Apollodorus (140 BC) identifies Pygmalion as king of Cyprus (*Bibliotheca* 3.14.3-4). In Ovid, Cinyras is the grandson of Pygmalion, through Paphos. Apollodorus provides an alternative descendency.

²⁴⁹ There is possibly, in addition, the notion of Pygmalion's lack of an independent identity. He is identified only as he is reflected in others. M.Janan, "The Book of Good Love? Design Versus Desire in *Metamorphoses X*", *Ramus* 17 (1988) 110-37 discusses the issue of Pygmalion's identity and the use of this epithet (125).

The foundation of Paphos anticipated at the conclusion of the Pygmalion tale reinforces the existing relationship between Venus/Aphrodite and Cyprus and Pygmalion. That there is a temple dedicated to Venus in Cyprus, and that a festival is being celebrated there in her honour, reveal a certain affinity between the goddess and the island. This is revealed not only at the mid-point of the tale when Pygmalion visits the temple but is, in fact, important from the outset. For the Pygmalion episode is prefaced by the tale of the Cerastae and the Propoetides²⁵⁰ (both Cyprian like Pygmalion) in which Venus punishes the neglect and affront to her divinity caused by these people. Yet it is made clear that the relationship which exists between Venus and Cyprus is too significant to be abandoned simply because of the misdemeanours of a few of its inhabitants. She punishes their crime without extending her vengeance to the whole of Cyprus and this episode serves as a transition to the Pygmalion tale with the effect that from the outset, Pygmalion and his people, having been spared by Venus, are numbered among those protected and smiled on by her. In addition, Venus' appearance in this transition passage as punisher of the Propoetides extends into the Pygmalion episode for immediately Pygmalion's disapproval of the conduct of the Propoetides recalls Venus' disapproval of their conduct and thus recalls Venus herself.²⁵¹ Moreover, this disapproval of such behaviour, shared by Venus and Pygmalion, provides the motivation for Pygmalion's creation of his statue. (It also emphasises the contrast between Pygmalion and the Propoetides and so contributes to the implied reading of Pygmalion as a chaste lover.)

At the beginning, at the centre and at the conclusion of the Pygmalion episode, then, the figure of Venus is present. First, she is present implicitly by virtue of her treatment of the Propoetides. The implicit association continues through the recollection of Ovid's sources for the tale and through a description of the attributes of Pygmalion's girl statue which both aligns and contrasts this girl with the figure of Venus. Venus then enters the

²⁵⁰ For discussion of this tale, see p95-6.

²⁵¹ Venus disapproves of their neglect and therefore causes their prostitution; Pygmalion disapproves of their prostitution.

narrative directly to answer Pygmalion's prayer and effect the metamorphosis, before being recalled again through the reference to Paphos.

(iv) **The Purpose of Venus' Presence**

The question arising from this is why Ovid should have substituted the Venus statue of tradition when he so closely aligns the girl statue with Venus (though does not identify her as Venus) and when his intention was not to eliminate the tale's erotic content. The Ovidian tale is certainly less explicit than Philostephanus, but, in recognition of the elegiac undertones of the tale and the recurring influence of the erotic Venus, we may assume that Ovid's departure from this earlier version was not motivated by the desire to suppress this aspect entirely, even if this would appear to be the narrator's deliberate intention. In this final part of the section, I will propose three reasons why Ovid may have departed from his sources on this point. Firstly, I will suggest that the removal of Venus as love-object reflects Ovid's concern to create an erotic undercurrent in the tale rather than a direct display of erotic obscenity, such as we find in Philostephanus. This reflects the Ovidian technique of establishing undercurrents throughout the *Metamorphoses*. Secondly, I will propose that the substitution depended on the narrator's concern to avoid the constraints which a 'Venus' statue would impose upon the artist. Thirdly, I will suggest that the substitution was designed to prevent any definite interpretation of the statue's identity. This is similar to the ambiguity which surrounds Deianira's love charm in the Hercules episode.

Firstly, in view of the strong erotic undercurrent in the Ovidian tale, we may reasonably assert that Ovid was not concerned to eliminate the eroticism of Philostephanus. Instead he may have sought to change the manner in which he might express the erotic inclination of his Pygmalion. His substitution of the Venus statue may, therefore, have been influenced by an interest in subtly suggesting Pygmalion's erotic

activity with his statue, rather than explicitly describing it and indeed in the movement from Philostephanus to Ovid, a movement from explicit to implicit eroticism is clearly notable. The erotic element is less easily established as an undercurrent when Venus is the central love-object. That Ovid seeks to create an implicit eroticism can be seen in a number of ways. It is suggested by the lover's obvious delight in the statue's naked form.²⁵² In addition, Pygmalion lays his statue down on a couch in what may be a prelude to love but the scene quickly changes to the festival of Venus before Pygmalion's activity is described any further:

conlocat hanc stratis concha Sidonide tinctis
 appellatque tori sociam adclinataque colla
 mollibus in plumis, tamquam sensura, reponit.
 Festa dies Veneris tota celeberrima Cypro
 venerat.... (267-71)

Yet even without a full account of what follows, Pygmalion's action in laying the statue on a couch is erotically suggestive in itself as a prelude to love but gains further erotic meaning by the fact that Philostephanus' Pygmalion similarly laid his statue on a couch and that this was clearly portrayed as a prelude to obscene erotic experience. This detail is included in Arnobius' account, though not in that of Clement of Alexandria:

... and in his madness, as if it were his wife,
 he would lift up the divinity to the couch.²⁵³

Arnobius repeats this detail in his following reference to Posidippus' tale concerning the man who fell in love with 'the Aphrodite of Cnidus':

...carried away with love for the Venus on account of which Cnidus
 is renowned, also entertained amatory relations with the statue of
 the same goddess.

In the *Metamorphoses*' version, the lack of specific detail does not suggest the lack of sexual experience, for the erotic activity is coyly alluded to by the reference to an activity

²⁵² The activity in Philostratus' account of one man's love for 'the Aphrodite of Cnidus' is not explicitly erotic but a certain eroticism is suggested merely by the fact of the statue's nudity and the fact that 'the Aphrodite of Cnidus' was regarded as a highly erotic and seductive image.

²⁵³ *Adversus Gentes* 6.22.

which is one of the later stages of the love-making process. Ovid leaves the option of reading beyond the text where the actual description ends and makes the audience aware that although the description ends, the activity does not. Any attempts which Pygmalion may have made at consummation of the relationship are glossed over with the same sense of discretion which Ovid had earlier shown in *Amores* 1.5 where, following his detailed account of Corinna's naked beauty, he discreetly draws a curtain over the events and brings the poem to an end as they are on the point of love-making.²⁵⁴ Lyne attributes this typical elegiac coyness to the lover's realisation that a full account either of the mistress' beauty or of his own erotic activity with her would align his experience with that of the average lover and would therefore run the risk of suggesting that his own experience of love is not unique.²⁵⁵ Pygmalion's rejection of the Venus statue as love-object is a reflection of the more subtle eroticism which Ovid seeks to achieve, for a Venus statue as love object would make too obvious Pygmalion's intentions, not simply because of Venus' general association with erotic affairs, but because it would align the Ovidian Pygmalion too closely with the obscene eroticism of Philostephanus' version, in which Venus/Aphrodite was central.

As regards why the narrator was interested in an erotic undercurrent rather than in any explicit description of erotic activity, one explanation must lie in the notion of the implied/ 'resisting' reading which I have discussed earlier in this chapter and in the question of narratorial reliability (narrative technique).²⁵⁶ Orpheus, as internal narrator of the Pygmalion episode, explicitly directs his audience towards a particular interpretation of Pygmalion as a chaste lover. In order to achieve this, part of his approach has been to remove Venus from the centre of the tale and so to obscure the explicit erotic activity of Pygmalion and the Venus/ Aphrodite statue in the original legend. The presence of elegiac themes, of erotically suggestive behaviour and indeed the recurring reference to Venus

²⁵⁴ Cf Prop. 1.4.13-4; 1.13.18.

²⁵⁵ Lyne (1980) 262.

²⁵⁶ Another explanation must lie in the elegiac preference for discretion in describing erotic activity.

throughout the episode point towards an erotic Pygmalion and function to challenge the facade which Orpheus, as narrator, creates. Whether Orpheus or Ovid is responsible for the creation of this 'resisting' reading, the effect in any case is to call into question Orpheus' narratorial reliability through the contrast of the superficial (implied) and the underlying ('resisting') reading.²⁵⁷ (When the question of Pygmalion's innocence becomes less clear-cut, the contrast between Pygmalion and Myrrha and between Pygmalion and the Propoetides likewise becomes less straight-forward, especially when similar 'resisting' readings of those tales can be identified. I will discuss this further in the next chapter.)

The second explanation which I would propose for the substitution of Venus lies in the fact that the goddess' frequent representation in art and literature imposes certain restrictions on the artist, whereas an unidentified girl might more easily be moulded as an independent creation. Perhaps a reference to this process of creating the female may be identified in the text when the narrator compares the statue's warming body to the malleable quality of wax (283-6). Venus' character in the earlier books of the *Metamorphoses* itself would deny Pygmalion the opportunity of calling such a creation his own.

In choosing an unidentified, ideal girl as art object and, gradually, as love object, Ovid, Orpheus and Pygmalion (there are three levels of creative input in this tale²⁵⁸) chose to work outwith the constraints of sculpture and literature in order both to achieve originality and to create a beloved who would reflect a set of personal ideals rather than a standard set of accepted ideals. That the resulting statue should possess so many of the features generally associated with Venus (ideal beauty) and that it should, throughout the Pygmalion episode, be closely aligned with Venus as she appears in art and literature (nudity), may be explained in three ways. For it is either as a result of the genuine similarity between Pygmalion's ideal and the standard ideal sought in an amatory beloved.

²⁵⁷ The question of narratorial reliability is another recurring theme in the *Metamorphoses*. See p64-5 for a discussion of the example of Nestor.

²⁵⁸ See p150-1 for further discussion of the three levels of artistic influence.

or by the identification of his imagined beloved with Venus, a common feature of amatory discourse, or, finally, by Pygmalion's artistic limitations and his failure to think beyond standard artistic types, that we are ultimately presented with the stereotypical statue. (The general narrator of the *Metamorphoses* might be rebuked for the same failure to think outwith standard types as he presents a series of men and women who conform to various types of behaviour and are often simple caricatures of masculinity and femininity.²⁵⁹) Nevertheless, despite the close identification of Pygmalion's statue with Venus, it should be noted that Pygmalion's intention was not the creation of a Venus statue as love object.

This choice of an unidentified statue which could more fully be the creation of the artist (being, in consequence, less bound by convention), allows Pygmalion (and Orpheus) to explore the concept of creating the ideal woman and of posing the question of the desirable ideal of femininity. In this sense, the episode is reminiscent of the practice in elegy whereby the elegiac *domina* is a male construct and as such is a reflection of his desired ideal.²⁶⁰ Apart from their portrayal as conforming to the social stereotype of the promiscuous and demanding courtesan, Cynthia, Lesbia, Delia and Corinna had a certain individuality, as far as this was possible within a limited poetic genre, for the female, in order to be identified as an elegiac mistress, must necessarily share in some of the typical characteristics of the elegiac *domina*. The differentiating aspects depend on the individual personality of the *amator*/ poet and vary according to his caprice. That Pygmalion's creative process is a reflection of that in elegy may be underlined by the recurring interaction established with elegiac discourse in this episode (list of gifts; lying on the couch). Indeed Anderson²⁶¹ concludes that Pygmalion's statue will come to life as an elegiac mistress (she is already referred to as a *puella* (280)) and anticipates the elegiac

²⁵⁹ To an extent, the narrator might be excused on the grounds that the rapidly moving narrative prevents any full character development (Daphne etc.). However, even in the more developed passages, such as Medea, Byblis or Myrrha, the characters possess features typical of elegy and tragedy.

²⁶⁰ Sharrock (1991b); Wyke (1987) 153-78.

²⁶¹ W.S. Anderson, "Aspects of Love in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*", *CJ* 90 (1995) 265-9 at 269.

character of the girl following animation on the basis of the elegiac characteristics which she seems to possess already in her statue form.²⁶²

A statue of Venus, therefore, could never have been entirely or even predominantly a creation of Pygmalion as it would inevitably evoke the extensive treatment of Venus and indeed of Aphrodite in previous literature. Nevertheless, it should be noted that even although Ovid hopes to depart from the constraints imposed in the creation of a Venus, still Pygmalion's statue does not become his own, original creation for she possesses the standard attributes of poetic beauty, the standard features of the sculpted female and, potentially, the standard character traits of the elegiac mistress.

The creation of a standard female may, however, be the creator's intention rather than the result of his artistic failure, for it may be designed to provide a basic framework onto which the audience fits its own ideals. I have discussed already the way in which the visual nature of Ovidian narrative allows us to picture a Venus statue as part of the festival and as a foil for Pygmalion's statue. I have discussed also the difficulty in comparing or accurately visualising their physical appearance in view of the stereotypical nature of the details: the girl statue has smooth white skin and blushing cheeks and is the ideal of beauty, while the Venus statue has the seductive golden glow of erotic experience and is similarly ideally beautiful (traditionally so, though not confirmed here). The visual nature of sculpture, the artistic medium at the centre of this poetic episode, requires the audience to visualise the statues but the vagueness and generality of the description mean that each individual is invited to apply these standard features of beauty to his own version of the ideal woman. (In a sense, the narrator encourages the audience to co-operate with him in the creative process.) It may be surprising how many forms an ideal woman might take while still conforming to the vague standard features found and described in Pygmalion's statue. In consequence, in the attempt to visualise the girl statue and the Venus statue (the Venus

²⁶² There is much scope for the comparison of the creation of the statue in *Pygmalion* with the creation of Pandora in Hesiod, *Works and Days* 59-105. Sharrock (1991a) 176 conducts such a comparison.

statue here and Venus statues generally), both of which are present in the Pygmalion episode and both of which possess perfect beauty, there may, for each audience member, be very little difference between the two statues in terms of appearance.

The presence of an unidentified statue, then, allows Ovid to examine the question of which feminine attributes (both in character and appearance) are ideally to be sought in a beloved and enables a closer connection between the statue and the elegiac mistress who is likewise a male construct. He explores the use of standard beauty imagery and, through the contrast of the girl statue and the Venus statue, looks towards the practice of sculpture more generally (personal preferences and external influences) and the confinements of artistic protocol (features necessary to identify a statue as Venus). Ultimately, however, Pygmalion's statue conforms to the expectations of sculpture and the ideals of poetry in her appearance and to the standard features of elegiac convention in her character. To this extent, then, Pygmalion's dependence on the conventions of art and literature (and, to a degree, the narrator's similar dependence) undermine the search for originality and expose his artistic limitations.

A third explanation for Ovid's substitution of Venus may be that Ovid sought to deny any straightforward interpretation of his text. I have discussed already the uncertainty over the statue's identity which Ovid's removal of Venus as love object has created, for the very process of substitution draws attention to this issue and makes the audience aware of the Ovidian difference. Accordingly, the statue's identity becomes a matter for discussion. That the statue's identity has indeed been the subject of much discussion and has elicited various explanations and solutions attests to the effectiveness of this technique, termed "the generativity of poetry's differences" by Enterline.²⁶³ Miller explains that the statue is Venus because it must have the same identity as the statue in Philostephanus given that Pygmalion, as king of Cyprus, has the same identity; Glenn

²⁶³ Enterline (2000) 83. This refers to differences both within and between texts. The same technique may account for Ovid's removal of blame from Venus for Myrrha's incestuous passion. See p219-21.

explains the statue as being an exteriorised representation of Pygmalion's own version of Venus; Elsner's solution is that the statue is Venus to the audience but not to Pygmalion.²⁶⁴

Elsner's solution, in fact, gives rise to another important line of inquiry in respect of the statue's identity, for in identifying the two levels of reception, he implicitly identifies the two levels of creation, for in this episode Pygmalion creates the statue and Orpheus as artist sings of the creation. There is, of course, the additional dimension of Ovid as external narrator who likewise influences the meaning of the tale. These various levels of creative impact mean that the audience cannot be sure exactly who is responsible for associating and differentiating Pygmalion's statue and Venus. In this episode we find something of an extension of the interaction between an internal and an external narrator (Pygmalion, Orpheus and Ovid).²⁶⁵

Had the Ovidian statue been explicitly Venus, in accordance with the usual position of Venus as love object in literary statue-love, the commentator would have found little substance for discussion here, beyond the fact that Ovid would, therefore, have been following Philostephanus on this point. Instead Ovid has generated much scholarly discussion in the question of the statue's identity so that his substitution of Venus may be regarded as a deliberate technique employed with the purpose of maintaining critical interest in his text, for an unambiguous text is quickly interpreted and dismissed. To an extent, it is not important whether Ovid actually intended the statue to be Venus, for it is perhaps the ambiguity created through the interaction of the explicit and implicit readings which is his ultimate artistic aim.

Whether the combination of alignment and distinction of girl and Venus is to be attributed to Ovid, Orpheus or Pygmalion, in their common role as artist, the effect is to engage the imagination of the audience through the production of an indefinite, ambiguous

²⁶⁴ Miller (1988) 208; Glenn (1986) 139; Elsner (1991b) 159.

²⁶⁵ Otis (1966) 181 acknowledges this tension when he suggests that it is Cephalus rather than Ovid who is responsible for changing the content of the original tale in order to allow Procris' memory to be untainted.

text which defies any simple interpretation.

(III) Pygmalion and Iphis

As part of my overall interpretation of Pygmalion, which seeks to refute the traditional picture of him as innocent, modest and entirely isolated not only from the erotic misconduct of the Propoetides but from sexual experience in general, I have, in the previous section, emphasised the inherent eroticism of the episode in terms of the significant presence of Venus and the erotic sentiment which she, as goddess of physical *amor*, conveys. The prevailing eroticism functions to inform our interpretation of the precise nature of Pygmalion's amorous agenda with regards to his statue and generates a 'resisting' reading of the tale.

In this section I intend to highlight further the erotic motivation of Pygmalion through a comparison of this tale with the Iphis episode in *Metamorphoses* 9 (666-797). My argument will fall into two parts. Firstly, I will discuss the erotic elements of the Iphis tale with a view to showing that, like Pygmalion's desire for his statue, Iphis' love for Ianthe had a distinctly physical quality and that although the love had not been properly consummated prior to metamorphosis (due to the physical incompatibility which denies intercourse), nevertheless attempts had been made in this direction.

In the second part of this section I will examine the various ways in which the Pygmalion and Iphis episodes are aligned and so suggest that a close association of the two tales is valid. This will include reference both to the position of the tales in the *Metamorphoses* and to the unnatural aspect of the love experienced in each episode. I will argue that the interaction thus established between the two tales, along with the prominent impulse towards physical love in Iphis, serves further to define as erotic Pygmalion's desire for his statue.

Interpretation of the Iphis episode has followed the general trend in critical approaches to the *Metamorphoses*, with the result that attempts have been made to establish the Ovidian Iphis as elegiac and erotic in contrast to the traditional view of her as

innocent and pious. This is the critical development which I have already identified in the interpretation of the Pygmalion episode and which I have discussed in terms of the model of the implied and 'resisting' reading. Broadly speaking, the contrast of the implied and 'resisting' readings in the Iphis episode is the contrast between a facade of innocent love and an undercurrent which establishes Iphis' erotic interest in Ianthe, though undoubtedly, as in my discussion of the Hercules episode, this implied/ 'resisting' model is not perfectly applied here as it is in Pygmalion or in Myrrha. In large degree, this depends on the fact that the narrator, Ovid, offers no clear or obvious direction towards an interpretation of the tale: his contrast of Byblis and Iphis does not extend beyond the contrast of *monstrum* (Byblis (9.667)) and *miracula* (Iphis (9.667)). (A more explicit contrast is made between Pygmalion and the Propoetides and between Pygmalion and Myrrha.) For this reason, my discussion of Iphis will not be concerned in any large degree with the implied/ 'resisting' construction. Instead, I will discuss the erotic backdrop to the tale simply as an undercurrent.

Nevertheless, as in Pygmalion scholarship, disagreement exists between critics as to the exact nature of Iphis' love for Ianthe. (That Iphis loves Ianthe in some manner is not in dispute.) The identification of a chaste love is again proposed by Otis.²⁶⁶ He closely aligns Iphis with Pygmalion on the grounds that both figures, from the innumerable instances of lascivious and perverse behaviour in the *Metamorphoses*, emerge as examples of piety and modesty. He argues that Iphis, like Pygmalion, rejects the option of perverse love with which she is presented and is ultimately rewarded for this decision in her metamorphosis into a man and her consequent attainment of a satisfying and natural love. Again, as in his discussion of Pygmalion, Otis' interpretation of Iphis depends, in part, on his analysis of Ovid's use of his sources for this tale. I will first summarise both the original Iphis legend and the Ovidian version, before presenting Otis' interpretation of the Ovidian innovations.

In view of the similarity of their basic plot, the Iphis tale is thought to be an

²⁶⁶ For a similar interpretation see Wilkinson (1955) 61.

alternative version of the story of Leucippus found in Antoninus Liberalis, though a number of differences in detail are evident. The tale of Iphis in Ovid and Leucippus in Antoninus Liberalis are assumed to have been based on a common Hellenistic model, generally identified as the *Heteroioumena* of Nicander. This work is no longer extant, so that it is impossible to be entirely certain that this was the original source, though notes in the margin of Antoninus Liberalis which identify Nicander as his source for the Leucippus tale have been considered genuine.²⁶⁷ In the tale as we find it in Antoninus Liberalis, the mother, Galataea, brings up her daughter, Leucippus, under the pretence that it is a son, and in doing so violates her husband, Lamprus' order to expose a female child. When this daughter's beauty develops to the point where it might expose her femininity, the panic-stricken mother prays to Leto for assistance and receives it when her daughter is transformed into a son. Thus the divine intervention and transformation function to prevent the father (and their society generally) from discovering both the identity of the child and the deception of the mother.

In the Ovidian version, the tale begins with a description of the character and social status of the Cretan Ligdus (666-73). He regretfully tells his pregnant wife that if she gives birth to a daughter, the child must be exposed (673-84). This order is contradicted by Isis who appears to the expectant mother, Telethusa, in a dream and advises her that she should raise her child, regardless of its gender (684-703). When a daughter is born, therefore, Telethusa, in order to avoid the exposure of her child and in accordance with Isis' decree, pretends that it is a son and brings up the child under this pretence (704-13). When this child, Iphis, reaches a certain age, her father betroths her to Ianthe (714-25). In a soliloquy, Iphis expresses her love for Ianthe and her frustration that this love is not natural and cannot, therefore, be fulfilled (726-63). This is followed by Telethusa's visit to Isis' temple to seek the assistance of the goddess when her own excuses to postpone the wedding are

²⁶⁷ For further discussion of the similarities and differences between Ovid's Iphis and Antoninus Liberalis' Leucippus and for discussion of Nicander as a common source, see Bömer (1977) 469-72; P.M.C.Forbes Irving, *Metamorphosis in Greek Myths* (Oxford, 1990) 21.

no longer effective (764-81). The tale ends when Isis responds to Telethusa's prayer and transforms Iphis into a man (781-97).

In this Ovidian version, the motivation for the metamorphosis is changed by the introduction of an amatory theme.²⁶⁸ In the *Metamorphoses*, Iphis is betrothed to Ianthe and falls madly in love with her. Her feelings are a mixture of fear at the forthcoming marriage²⁶⁹ which will expose her as female and her mother as deceiver (this being the motivation in the Antoninus Liberalis version and presumably in the Nicandrian) and frustration that the love she feels for Ianthe cannot be consummated. Otis²⁷⁰ attributes to Ovid this introduction of an amatory element and explains this innovation as being designed to allow the Iphis episode to be both thematically similar to the amatory tales of the central section of the *Metamorphoses* but also to contrast with them in demonstrating an innocent love. The contrast is based on the fact that Iphis, in demonstrating a love which, in its innocence, receives the divine blessing of the gods, is distinct from the reckless and forbidden loves which surround it. (This is the same basis of the contrast which Otis proposes between Pygmalion on the one hand and Myrrha and the Propoetides on the other.) In Otis' interpretation, Iphis is contrasted particularly with Byblis (9.454-665) with which, he suggests, it enters into a "point-for-point contrast"²⁷¹ but is contrasted also with Tereus (6.486-674) and Myrrha (10.298-518) for both of these figures, like Byblis, become involved in a forbidden love: Byblis and Myrrha possess an incestuous passion and Tereus a passion which is both perverse and violent (and which is portrayed, in fact, as having incestuous overtones²⁷²). They indulge in their unnatural *amor* (Byblis may fail to consummate her passion though she does, at least, entertain and justify it) and are ultimately punished for their transgressions. Thus Iphis is regarded as the innocent

²⁶⁸ Otis (1966) 189 discusses how in Pygmalion, Ovid introduces a miracle into an erotic tale, whereas in Iphis, he introduces an amatory theme into a simple miracle tale.

²⁶⁹ See Avagianou (1991) for trepidation of female entering marriage (fear of pain; of transition).

²⁷⁰ Otis (1966) 188-9; 268ff.

²⁷¹ Otis (1966) 189.

²⁷² This depends on Tereus' jealousy when he sees Philomela embracing her father, Pandion, thus setting his own desire within that context (6.475-82).

counterpart of these expressions of perverse love.

Otis' interpretation is valid up to a point, for certainly it would seem reasonable to assume that the Ovidian amatory element was designed to align Iphis with the prevailing amatory content of the central section of the *Metamorphoses*. It seems less convincing, however, that Ovid intended it to constitute an innocent alternative to the fierce and reckless love of the other episodes. One would hardly suggest that Iphis' reaction to and expression of her dilemma is on a par with that of Byblis, Myrrha or Tereus or that it has the same traumatic repercussions, for the Iphis tale is narrated very much in a lower key than the *Metamorphoses*' grand tales of amorous passion. (Otis marks this distinction in the division of tales into major and minor episodes.²⁷³) While this major/ minor contrast certainly exists between Iphis and Byblis (and Myrrha), nevertheless, this is not to say, as Otis does, that "a point for point contrast"²⁷⁴ of Iphis with these episodes is intended. For Iphis' situation may not receive a grandiose treatment (and contrasts in this sense with the major episodes), but still it has at its centre an unnatural expression of love (female homosexuality) such as we find in the major episodes. It may not, moreover, have the same devastating outcome as Byblis, Myrrha and Tereus, yet Iphis' interest in Ianthe is in the desire for physical love and this unnatural desire avoids exposure only through eleventh hour divine intervention. Although her motivation may not be exclusively erotic, for there is the suggestion of an emotional attachment, the aspect of the tale presented to the audience is predominantly centred upon Iphis' desire for the physical, this being the obstacle to amatory satisfaction.

More recent approaches to the Iphis episode concur with the identification of the amatory theme in this tale as an Ovidian innovation. They differ from Otis, however, in their opinion as to the purpose (and effect) of this change. Wheeler attributes the introduction of an amatory theme to Ovid's desire not simply to align Iphis thematically

²⁷³ Otis (1966) 66ff.

²⁷⁴ Otis (1966) 189 argues this for the Iphis and Byblis episodes.

with the tales which surround it (love theme) but to align it precisely on the grounds of the unnatural physical desire which it shares with these episodes.²⁷⁵ In particular he points out the similarity of Iphis with Byblis and Myrrha, episodes between which Otis marks a contrast. This new approach to the Iphis episode, therefore, looks for the eroticism of the love at the centre of the tale and as such is similar to recent interpretations of Pygmalion, though the discussion of Iphis as erotically inclined has been developed to a lesser degree. In part, the lack of critical attention towards this episode has been responsible for the slower development in interpretation.²⁷⁶ Indeed the replacement of interpretations of Iphis as innocent with Iphis as erotic appears to have taken place in the absence of any thorough analysis of the erotic aspects of the text. Where the Iphis episode has been discussed, in general studies of the *Metamorphoses* more often than in isolation, the focus tends to be on Ovid's treatment of his sources.²⁷⁷ It would seem, then, that this new approach, to some extent, assumes that Iphis is erotic because of the prevailing erotic atmosphere of the *Metamorphoses*. Wheeler's article has been important, therefore, for it not only treats the Iphis episode as a self-contained unit but examines the implicit eroticism of the scene, thus bringing the Iphis episode more closely in line with recent trends in *Metamorphoses* studies. His argument for the scene's eroticism is based on Ovid's choice of names which are considered Ovidian innovations. In particular, he points out the etymological connections of the name Iphis with the Greek $\iota\xi$ (ablative $\iota\phi\iota$) and the Latin *vis*, both of which imply male force and especially, in the context of the *Metamorphoses*, the male power which represents sexual potency. He identifies the recurrence of variations of this word throughout the episode (*vir* (723), *vires* (677; 788), *virgo* (717; 725; 743; 764)) and argues that Ovid, by means of this implicit wordplay, suggests the intimate physical changes involved in the transformation, without crudely describing them. Ahl considers the Iphis episode to contain a certain eroticism and he likewise bases his opinion on the

²⁷⁵ Wheeler (1997) 191.

²⁷⁶ The same is true of the Hercules episode. See p11.

²⁷⁷ See Bömer (1977) 469-72.

etymological wordplay suggested by the name Iphis, though he does not fully develop this point.²⁷⁸ The explicit purpose of Wheeler is not to establish the eroticism of Iphis' desire, but, in highlighting the way in which these Ovidian names suggest the ambiguous nature of Iphis' sexuality, he effectively contributes to this area of discussion, for he argues that the use of the name Iphis for male and female and the recurring wordplay emphasise the tension between Iphis as homosexual and Iphis as heterosexual, and therefore points to the essentially erotic interest of Iphis. Wheeler's article is an important contribution to the current interest in erotic aspects of the *Metamorphoses* and provides a starting-point for such examination in the Iphis episode in particular. My intention in the first part of this section is to present two reasons why the love in this episode may be regarded as specifically erotic and thus to advance the Iphis episode in the direction in which recent trends have taken Ovid's Pygmalion.

Apart from the explicit indication of Ovid's interest in the theme of love, made clear in his decision to include and indeed centralise Iphis' amatory disappointment, there are two elements which function to characterise the love as specifically erotic, both of which are likewise significant in contributing to the sense of the erotic in the Pygmalion episode. These are the language of the episode (both the vocabulary used to describe Iphis' passion and the imagery used to define and condemn it), which is elegiac and suggestive of sexuality, and the explicit and implicit presence of Venus.

As regards the language of the Iphis episode, Ovid describes Iphis' love for Ianthe in language which is highly reminiscent of elegy and I would argue that he does so in order to convey to the audience the erotic nature of Iphis' desire, in view of the typically physical dimension of elegiac love. (Elegiac reference extends beyond mere verbal allusion: the portrayal of Iphis and Ianthe as elegiac characters and the elegiac difficulty in consummating the affair confirm this association.)

²⁷⁸ F.Ahl, *Metaformations*, (London, 1985) 149ff. His discussion also includes reference to the erotically suggestive horns of Isis and the connection of Isis with Io.

The love which Iphis experiences is described in terms of flames and burning. This type of language recurs throughout the episode:

Iphis amat, qua posse frui desperat, et auget
hoc ipsum *flammas, ardetque* in virgine virgo (724-5)

...stultos excutis *ignes* (746)

The love of Ianthe for Iphis is similarly described: "(Ianthe) aestuat" (765). Alongside this imagery of fire, flames and burning is the identification of Iphis' love as a wound (*vulnus*; 721) and a disease (*malum* 730). This language reflects the notion of suffering and is precisely the terminology used by Ovid ("factum modo vulnus habebo" *Am.*1.2.29), Propertius ("fortiter et ferrum saevos patiemur et ignis" 1.1.27) and Tibullus ("ure ferum et torque, libeat ne dicere quicquam/ magnificum posthac" 1.5.5-6) to express their disappointment in trying to obtain the mistress' favour and thus an erotic encounter with her. Certainly this imagery is not exclusive to elegiac discourse but is common to amatory poetry generally²⁷⁹ but in consideration of the elegiac connection established elsewhere, in this episode and throughout the *Metamorphoses*, it seems reasonable to assume that this too is an elegiac reference.²⁸⁰

The use of words such as *fruor* (724), *patior* and *potior* further contribute to the erotic interpretation of Iphis. Adams points out the erotic connotations of these words. He defines *fruor* as relating to the pleasure which a woman gives in intercourse²⁸¹ and *patior* as "the technical term of the passive role in intercourse... common from the Augustan period."²⁸² *Potior* is more explicitly defined as the moment of orgasm (as at Lucretius 4.1076) and Adams cites the use of this word in Iphis as an example of its erotic application. This language functions not only to expose the erotic inclination of Iphis but to suggest the ambiguous sexuality through the use of a combination of words which either refer exclusively to the female role in the sexual act (*fruor, patior*) or to the role of either

²⁷⁹ This imagery has become a figure of speech on account of its frequent appearance in poetry.

²⁸⁰ The same language describes Hercules' torment. See p81-4.

²⁸¹ J.N.Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (London, 1982)198. Cf *Am* 2.9b.46.

²⁸² Adams (1982) 189.

gender (*potior*).

Despite Iphis' complaint of the impossibility of intercourse, there is indication that she not only desires physical love (apparent through the language of the episode) but that attempts have already been made towards sexual satisfaction prior to metamorphosis. The suggestion is that Iphis has already attempted some kind of erotic activity. (Similar attempts are made by Pygmalion when he touches his statue's naked form and lays her down upon a couch with distinctly erotic implications. He too not only desires physical love but has already attempted it prior to metamorphosis.) Iphis' sexual advances towards Ianthe may be understood from the phrase:

non se negat ipsa roganti (752)

Rogo has erotic connotations and implies here a sexual approach. This erotic meaning can be seen in Cyane's rebuke of Pluto in his violation of Proserpina in *Metamorphoses* 5:

roganda,
non rapienda fuit (415-6)

The contrast here is not between a non-sexual approach and a sexual approach, but between gentle sexuality and violent sexuality. In *Amores* 1.8 this sense can again be seen when the *lena* boldly states:

... casta est quam nemo rogavit;
aut, si rusticitas non vetat, ipsa rogat. (43-4)

There is the suggestion that the act of asking represents an erotic approach and challenge to the female's sexual integrity.

Beyond this use of elegiac and erotic language, Iphis' preoccupation with the physical side of love is revealed through the two examples which she provides as evidence of the unnatural aspect of her passion. (Unlike Myrrha and Byblis, she does not attempt to justify her love through her use of exempla but rather seeks to emphasise how unacceptable it is). In the first instance she draws her example from the animal world and lists a number of animals, none of which would experience *amor* for one of the same gender:

nec vaccam vaccae, nec equas amor urit equarum:
urit oves aries, sequitur sua femina cervum.
sic et aves coeunt, interque animalia cuncta
femina femineo conrepta cupidine nulla est. (9.731-4)

Byblis too uses the example of animals as part of her argumentation, but in that episode, it is used as a means of justifying her incestuous love for her brother. For Byblis, the example functions to justify the love by placing Byblis and her passion in the animal world, where her desire would be acceptable, and outwith the constraints of human behaviour. There is, perhaps, an element of this relative valuation in Iphis. (Byblis' passion equates her with animal behaviour and therefore places her love outwith the boundaries of acceptable conduct: Iphis defines her passion as less acceptable than animal behaviour and therefore places her desire even further outwith the boundaries of acceptable conduct.) Nevertheless, apart from the condemnation of her love, which is the principal point of the comparison, there is the important fact that animal 'love' is generally regarded as being purely physical, rather than emotional. (The lack of an emotional or spiritual quality is part of the reason why animal love is considered lower than human love.) The effect of this exemplum is to suggest Iphis' concern for the physical aspect of love.

The second example used by Iphis to condemn her love is that of Pasiphae and her passion for a bull:

ne non tamen omnia Crete
monstra ferat, taurum dilexit filia Solis,
femina nempe marem. meus est furiosior illo,
si verum profitemur, amor. tamen illa secuta est
spem Veneris; tamen illa dolis et imagine vaccae
passa bovem est, et erat, qui deciperetur, adulter.
huc licet ex toto sollertia confluat orbe,
ipse licet revolet ceratis Daedalus alis,
quid faciet? num me puerum de virgine doctis
artibus efficiet? ... (735-44)

This human-animal love continues to reflect Iphis' erotic motivation, for this was explicitly and traditionally the character of Pasiphae's *amor*. Daedalus' assistance in creating a model

of a cow was designed not to make the bull fall in love with Pasiphae but to deceive him into a sexual encounter with her (erotic implication of *passa est*²⁸³). Therefore, when Iphis expresses both a wish that Daedalus might aid her and an understanding that he could not, there is a sense that his assistance would be required only in order to facilitate intercourse, as he had done for Pasiphae, without any concern beyond this physical obstacle.

This myth is referred to in the Scylla episode, first by Scylla herself (8.131-7), then by the narrator (155-68), where there is the same emphasis on the physical intercourse which produced the Minotaur. (Perhaps too, this exemplum has further significance, for Iphis' reference to the *artes doctae* of Daedalus may recall the *artes* of the *Ars Amatoria* (1.25) and the connection established there between Ovid and Daedalus (2.21-98). If this reference is valid, it further contributes to the eroticism of Iphis in view of the explicitly physical love which is the goal of the Ovidian instruction.)

The physical nature of Iphis' desire may be further understood through Iphis' comment on Pasiphae's liaison. She refers to Pasiphae's potential to fulfil her desire (on the basis that it was a male-female love (738-40; 749-50)) and comments that she has no such potential. In view of the fact that the narrator makes explicit the mutual nature of the love between Iphis and Ianthe (in contrast to the unrequited love of elegy), the suggestion would be that Iphis' statement of the hopelessness of her love is a reference to the obstacle which makes physical love impossible. Iphis is already aware of Ianthe's affectionate love for her and her success in terms of 'emotional' *amor* so that the difficulty, then, is how to achieve consummation of that passion. It is understandable that Iphis should in particular be preoccupied with physical love as this is the nature of the obstacle. Iphis' love may not be exclusively erotic, but it certainly possesses an erotic dimension.

This use of vocabulary (erotic imagery and language) and exempla (which set animal love as a standard) is designed to underline precisely the physical nature of Iphis' desire for Ianthe and to imply that there have been attempts, albeit unsuccessful, at attainment of

²⁸³ Adams (1982) 189.

that desire. The presence of Venus in the background of the text further directs our interpretation of Iphis' erotic desire in much the same way as in the Pygmalion episode. Venus, in her role as goddess of physical relations specifically, serves further to define the mood here.

As in Pygmalion, Venus is present both implicitly and explicitly in Iphis, though she is certainly less prominent in this episode. She makes one explicit appearance at the conclusion of the tale when she is present at the marriage of Iphis and Ianthe, following the transformation, though the active role of causing the metamorphosis is not attributed to Venus, as it was in Pygmalion, but rather to Isis:

cum Venus et Iuno sociosque Hymenaeus ad ignes
conveniunt (796-7)

Venus' presence at Iphis' marriage echoes her presence at Pygmalion's marriage:

coniugio, quod fecit, adest dea (10.295)

In addition to this direct appearance, Venus is present in the Iphis episode in two indirect ways. Firstly, Venus is recalled in the text through Iphis' use of the word *Venus* to refer to love in preference to *amor*, though she uses this word also:

“quis me manet exitus”, inquit
cognita quam nulli, quam prodigiosa novaeque
cura tenet *Veneris* (727-8)

tamen illa secuta est
spem *Veneris* (738-9)

The word *Venus* is used here to mean the concept of love rather than the actual goddess. This choice of expression not only allows the ambiguity between the literal and the metaphorical (between the goddess and love) which generally exists when *Venus* is used in this sense but, more significantly, further points to the erotic nature of Iphis' desire.²⁸⁴ In the *Metamorphoses*, *amor* is used more frequently for love than *Venus* and appears to have been used of many different forms of love (familial love; love of wealth etc.), while *Venus* is

²⁸⁴ Adams (1982) 189 argues that *Venus* began as a word for erotic activity and later became the name of the goddess, in contrast to the development of the name of Aphrodite.

reserved exclusively for erotic male-female love. (*Venus* is used fifteen times in the course of the *Metamorphoses* in preference to *amor*. Interestingly, this occurs twice in the Byblis episode (9.553; 639), twice in the Iphis (9.728; 739) and twice in the Myrrha (10.324; 434).) The distinction between *amor* and *Venus* may, I think, be seen in Pomona's statement of her preference for tending her garden rather than having an amorous relationship:

hic *amor*, hoc studium, *Veneris* quoque nulla *cupido* est (14.634)

The difference suggested here between *amor* and *cupido Veneris* would seem to represent the difference between erotic love (physical desire and passion) and non-erotic love (affection). *Amor* is therefore used for enjoyment generally (including erotic love), while *Venus* is preserved for erotic pleasure specifically. Adams,²⁸⁵ moreover, argues that *Venus*, along with *amor* and *libido*, had developed to be used euphemistically of the sexual act itself. The choice of *Venus* in preference to *amor* on two occasions in this episode helps further to establish the character of Iphis as erotically inclined.

The second implicit appearance of *Venus* in this episode depends on the identification of the presiding deity as *Isis* and the association of *Isis* with *Venus*. The identity of *Isis* is established in the course of the episode, firstly, in her appearance to *Telethusa*, by the Egyptian trappings of her entourage and her association with *Io*, then by *Telethusa*'s final prayer in *Isis*' temple. The goddess *Isis* was associated with a number of deities (here with *Io*). *Pomeroy* identifies her with *Astarte* of Phoenicia, *Fortuna*, *Athena*, *Hestia*, *Hera*, *Demeter* and *Artemis*, as well as with *Aphrodite*.²⁸⁶ *Turcan* explains this multiple identification thus:

Déjà l'égyptienne *Isis* avec ses multiples attributs qui font
d'elle une puissance universelle...²⁸⁷

She was frequently connected with the figure of *Venus/Aphrodite* and it is interesting that

²⁸⁵ Adams (1982) 188-9.

²⁸⁶ S.B.Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves* (London, 1975) 218.

²⁸⁷ Turcan (1988) 11.

this association was particularly underlined in the visual representation of Isis, for Isis statues were often nude in order to emphasise this connection since statues of Venus/Aphrodite were typically nude.²⁸⁸

Apuleius too makes this connection when Lucius identifies the figure who appears to him alternatively as Aphrodite (to the Cyprians) and Isis (to the Egyptians), suggesting that they are equivalent (*Met.*11.2). Part of this connection lay in the fertility which both represented and conveyed, particularly in reference to Venus in her capacity as *Venus Genetrix*. Both goddesses were also associated with marriage and married love. Fertility is an important theme both in *Pygmalion* and in *Iphis* for the movement is from an infertile love to a fertile one (statue-love and homosexual love transformed into male-female marital love). They may also have been associated on the grounds of the eroticism of the cult of Isis (Isis was thought to have been once a prostitute, making her worship accessible even to prostitutes, and her temples were often erected near brothels) and the eroticism of Venus as goddess of love.²⁸⁹

Quite apart from the general practice in Roman religion of associating Isis with Venus, the identification of the two goddesses can, perhaps, be seen in the text of the *Metamorphoses* itself, for there is a similarity in the language used to describe Isis in her appearance to Telethusa and the sacrifice of *Pygmalion* at the Venus temple, though certainly this linguistic detail may not be obvious to the casual reader:

pompa comitata sacrorum,
aut stetit aut visa est. inerant lunaria fronti
cornua cum spicis nitido flaventibus *auro*. (9.687-9)

... et pandis inductae *cornibus aurum*
conconsiderant ictae nivea cervice iuvencae (10.271-2)

The detail is, nevertheless, important, in each episode, for the horns of the sacrificial cow may contribute to the sense of eroticism. Its importance in the *Iphis* episode, in particular,

²⁸⁸ Heyob (1975) 49.

²⁸⁹ Venus and Isis were also both connected with the sea and Isis in this role was celebrated with the *Navigium Isidis* ceremony. (Pomeroy (1975) 222).

depends on the fact that horns were an important feature of Isis (because of her association both with Io, who was transformed into a cow by Jupiter and with the moon). Ahl indicates the sexual significance of this representation:

Iphis is transformed into a male by the horned goddess. She becomes, then, horned in a rather more phallic sense.²⁹⁰

The association of Isis with Venus may have been an important factor in the narrator's decision to identify the presiding deity in Iphis specifically as Isis particularly in view of their shared eroticism. There are possibly three further considerations in this choice of identity. Firstly, Isiac temples had become the recognised location for the arrangement and confirmation of betrothals. In view of the prominence of this theme in Iphis (the betrothal of Iphis and Ianthe making metamorphosis more urgent both to prevent exposure and to allow the consummation of that love), it would, therefore, seem appropriate to have Isis as presiding deity.

Secondly, the figure of Isis had become closely associated with female sexuality (again illuminating her association with Venus). According to Heyob, the cult of Isis was subject to a great deal of misrepresentation and was held responsible for a decline in sexual probity, presumably on account of her patronage of female sexuality, though it may simply have fallen victim to the usual official condemnation of foreign religions.²⁹¹ In addition, that the temples of Isis were places where women could meet, that Isis gave to women a certain equality with men (albeit only in the religious sphere) and that her temples were often located near brothels must certainly have contributed to this reputation.²⁹² However, an important part of her worship involved sexual abstinence, a fact bewailed by the elegiac poets, and she patronised married love.

Perhaps, however, an additional dimension of the erotic significance of Isis here will be found in the myth of the goddess. Central to this myth was Isis' marriage to her brother,

²⁹⁰ Ahl (1985) 153. For sexual significance of horns, see Archilochus fr 247 in M.L. West (tr.), *Greek Lyric Poetry* (Oxford, 1993).

²⁹¹ Heyob (1975) 113.

²⁹² See *Am* 2.2.25-6 for Isiac temples as places of sexual licence.

Osiris, who is destroyed by their brother, Set. The pieces of his body are scattered and Isis searches for them, finding all but his phallus. This aspect of the myth perhaps has some significance for the Iphis tale. To the Roman way of thinking, penetration was the essence of sexuality and the practice of sexual activity without any means of penetration was incomprehensible. As I will discuss later, this type of thinking may explain, in part, the gradual acceptance of male homosexuality, in contrast to the total rejection of female homosexuality. When Isis resurrects her husband but without that part which constitutes the difference between male and female and which provides the means of penetration, the relationship between Isis and Osiris no longer has any sexual definition. In effect, the loss of the ability to penetrate conveys upon this relationship a status similar to female homosexuality. One may, therefore, imagine that Isis' sympathy for the frustration of Iphis and Ianthe has been based on personal experience.

A third way in which the identity of Isis may be relevant depends on the interaction of Iphis with Byblis. That the Iphis tale immediately follows that of Byblis and similarly demonstrates an unnatural *amor* invites comparison of the tales. Also, the description of each love as a *monstrum* and the comparison of it to animal love extend this connection. (Otis argues that these points constitute a thorough contrast of the tales.) In the Isis myth, the goddess was married to her brother, concerning which Pomeroy writes that "Their marriage provided the paradigm for the brother-sister marriages common among Egyptian rulers."²⁹³ This is reminiscent of the forbidden love of Byblis for her brother and her justification of her love as the type of behaviour sanctioned by the gods (497-501).

There are, then, a number of explanations as to why Ovid should have chosen to replace Leto (the goddess in the original version) with Isis. The erotic dimension of Isis in her interest in female sexuality, the setting of her temple as the location for betrothal and her presence in elegy make her a relevant deity in this tale. The interpretation of her failure to find her husband's lost phallus as rendering their relationship no longer understandable

²⁹³ Pomeroy (1975) 220.

in a sexual context may further contribute to her relevance here. In the original version of Antoninus Liberalis (and Nicander), the aspects of betrothal and female homosexuality did not feature (in the absence of an amatory theme), so that the substitution of Leto in the original version for Isis in the Ovidian, may have been designed to emphasise more clearly these new Ovidian aspects with which Isis was associated. In addition, the narrator likewise benefits from the association of Isis with Venus who is appropriate in any tale of love.

Ovid's inclusion of an amatory theme establishes love as a central theme in Iphis. That Ovid intended this love to be regarded as specifically erotic is suggested in two ways: by the use of the erotic language of elegy and the choice of exempla; and by the presence of Venus both explicitly and implicitly within the text. These two aspects are important in the Pygmalion episode too and function there also to indicate the physical nature of Pygmalion's desire for his statue. The erotic content of each episode through two different forms of erotic love may be further enhanced through a comparison of the two episodes.

The Pygmalion and Iphis episodes are aligned by the themes of metamorphosis and of *amor* which underlie the entire *Metamorphoses*. In addition, they have in common the fact that the superficial meaning of the text interacts with an undercurrent which challenges the explicit reading of the tale which the narrator offers. As a result, in both instances, the superficial modesty is set against the implicit eroticism. This too functions as a unifying factor throughout the epic and is the link between the three episodes of Hercules, Pygmalion and Myrrha which I examine in this study. In addition to these factors which are repeated throughout the *Metamorphoses*, the Pygmalion and Iphis episodes have three points of more specific association between them. These are the presence of Venus, the nature of the love at the centre of these tales and the position of these tales within the structure of the epic.

Firstly, the appearance of Venus in both episodes, both directly and indirectly, as I

have already discussed, draws these tales into closer comparison. Since Venus' presence in the *Metamorphoses* is not so frequent that it becomes standard, her appearance is, therefore, distinct enough to align the various episodes in which she appears.

Secondly, the position of the two episodes would likewise suggest a close association. Superficially, the tales appear to belong to different sections, for the Iphis tale is narrated at the end of Book 9, while the Pygmalion tale is a part of Orpheus' song which is nominally a new section beginning at the start of Book 10. The constant tension between the internal and external narrators, however, ensures that such divisions are not absolute. What we have, in effect, is a structure which extends across both book divisions and changes of narrator. Janan²⁹⁴ discusses the creation and dissolution of boundaries inherent in forbidden desire (where boundaries become obvious) and metamorphosis (where boundaries are destroyed). The same process is reflected in the text itself, for numerous sections co-exist and intrude upon each other: the structural possibilities are numerous.

One example of this intrusion is the section which is framed by the two major incest narratives of Byblis (9.454-665) and Myrrha (10.298-518). This extends across the two books and across the change of narrator (Ovid to Orpheus). Relevant to my discussion here, however, is the fact that immediately inside these two end-points of Byblis and Myrrha, we have the tales of Iphis and Pygmalion, the one preceded by a tale of incest, the other followed by one. (Between these, there are the much shorter tales of homosexual love and prostitution.) Certainly this is only one solution to the difficulty of finding a valid structure for the *Metamorphoses* and undoubtedly, it is only partial, relating only to this section of the text, but still I would argue that it would suggest a further degree of alignment between Pygmalion and Iphis.

The third way in which an alignment may be suggested lies in the fact that the lovers in both tales are involved in an unnatural form of love. This statement requires clarification, for in the context of a discussion of ancient attitudes towards sexual

²⁹⁴ Janan (1988) 110-37.

behaviour, the terms 'natural' and 'unnatural' require definition. The use of such subjective language necessarily proves difficult in areas such as sexuality and gender where a gulf exists between modern and ancient sensibilities. In part, this difficulty arises from the fact that if we regard as almost synonymous the expressions 'natural' and 'conventionally acceptable', as modern criticism in the area of gender studies tends to do, the different cultural boundaries and conventions in modern and ancient societies generate different concepts of natural and unnatural in relation to them. Winkler underlines this and so points towards the limitations of this terminology:

...almost any imaginable configuration of pleasure can be institutionalised as conventional and perceived by its participants as natural. Indeed what 'natural' means in many such contexts is precisely 'conventional and proper'.²⁹⁵

This means, then, that what any society regards as natural and unnatural will depend on the boundaries constructed by the religious, political and other influences exerted upon (and within) that society.

Nevertheless, despite these limitations, discussion of the *Metamorphoses* and of Pygmalion has been conducted in these terms and indeed this seems unavoidable in a context in which so marginal a form of *amor* as statue-love (marginal in modern terms at least) is central. For this reason, throughout this chapter I have used this terminology which has become standard in Pygmalion scholarship. At this point, since my discussion of Pygmalion and Iphis turns specifically to the question of the nature of the love experienced in each episode, it is, therefore, appropriate to define more clearly the interpretation of these types of love within the specific context of the *Metamorphoses*.

In the *Metamorphoses*, a standard pattern of love is established, by virtue of its frequent representation throughout the epic, and can be identified as male-female *amor*. Within this standard pattern, there is certainly a distinction between what we might term legitimate and illegitimate love, the former being love between a married couple (Ceyx and

²⁹⁵ Winkler (1990) 17.

Alcyone (11.410-748) and Procris and Cephalus (7.690-862) are examples of this type), the latter being an extra-marital liaison (Jupiter and Io (1.583-746) and Apollo and Coronis (2.542-632) are examples of this type). (Both these versions of male-female love have a clear physical dimension, though the marital love is not exclusively erotic.) The extra-marital liaison occurs more frequently than tales of marital *amor*, is typically characterised by incidents of stolen love as found in the rapes of Proserpina, Arethusa and Europa and is, in fact, the first representation of love in the epic. To that extent, it becomes something of a model for the following tales of *amor*. Nevertheless, tales involving married love recur throughout the *Metamorphoses* so that we may reasonably identify male-female love, whether legitimate or illegitimate, as the standard model of love in this text.

Pygmalion, in his experimentation in statue-love, and Iphis, through her involvement in female homoerotic *amor*, therefore, depart from this pattern of male-female love. To that extent, within the context of the *Metamorphoses*, they deviate from the norm and so in that sense may be considered unnatural. A brief survey of Orpheus' song reveals numerous examples of love which likewise deviate from this male-female pattern (animal-love (Cyparissus and the stag); male homosexual love (Orpheus; Jupiter and Ganymede²⁹⁶; Apollo and Hyacinthus); statue-love (Pygmalion)). Immediately prior to Orpheus' song, there is the example of Iphis' female homosexuality. The incestuous desires of Byblis and Myrrha clearly offer a difficulty in that, although they conform to the male-female pattern of love, still they can hardly be interpreted as natural within the context of the *Metamorphoses*. This depends on the fact that, in each episode the narrator (Ovid narrates the Byblis tale; Orpheus, the Myrrha) explicitly exposes these examples as perverse both through explicit condemnation and through styling them as a violation of the boundaries of acceptable conduct.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁶ For discussion of the Jupiter-Ganymede myth as the Roman ideal of homosexual activity, see C.A. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality. Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity* (Oxford, 1999) 56-9.

²⁹⁷ Although the 'resisting' reading of Myrrha exposes the narrator's sympathy for Myrrha, it does not approve of the incestuous *amor*.

Prior to the Byblis episode, there is only one clear deviation from the standard pattern of love in the tale of Narcissus (3.339-510), though possibly Tereus' *amor* for Philomela (6.486-674), in view of its incestuous overtones, might be regarded thus. Between *Metamorphoses* 11 and 15, there are no examples of such love. In the section from Byblis to Myrrha, there are eight instances of unnatural *amor* so that I would argue that this section of the *Metamorphoses* represents the section into which the greatest variety and quantity of perverse liaisons (perverse in terms of the *Metamorphoses*) are condensed. Interestingly, this is the same framework which I have identified as intruding upon the apparently self-contained section of Orpheus' song and which associates Pygmalion and Iphis by framing them with incest narratives.

Within this range of amorous affairs which deviate from the standard pattern of love as it is established in the *Metamorphoses*, there are some forms of love which were acceptable and some which were unacceptable in Roman terms. This is evident in the contrast of male and female homosexuality, both of which are unnatural in the context of Orpheus' song. In reference to male homosexuality, which forms the substance of Orpheus' personal experience following Eurydice's death and of the early part of his narrative (Jupiter and Apollo), Clark speaks of

... the influence of that peculiar institution of Greek life, so earnestly celebrated in the odes of Pindar and the dialogues of Plato, by which the love of two young men for one another was considered nobler and more natural than that between opposite sexes.²⁹⁸

Although male homosexuality per se was not considered unnatural,²⁹⁹ there were, of course, certain restrictions on the practice of male homosexual activity, in particular the expectation for a Roman citizen to adopt only an active role. The principal criticism of this behaviour lay in the notion that a passive male was effeminate and that this was a contemptible state. This stems from the construction of masculinity in terms of active male

²⁹⁸ Clark (1956) 67.

²⁹⁹ Cf Lucretius *De Rerum Natura* 4.1052-6 where it is presented as being as natural as male-female love.

penetration. Juvenal condemns as *monstrum* Gracchus' public acceptance of a subordinate role since it undermines his manhood (*Sat.* 2.143) and Tacitus describes this corrupting Greek influence as "turpis amores" which were polluting Roman life (*Annals* 14.20). Nevertheless, there was a gradual acceptance of male homoerotic activity in Roman life, even if this type of involvement did not become an alternative to marriage.³⁰⁰

In contrast, female homosexuality, an undercurrent in the Iphis story, was vehemently condemned in antiquity. In her discussion of female homosexuality and ancient attitudes towards it, Bernadette van Brooten points out that condemnation of erotic love between women lay in the male ability to understand sexuality only in terms of penetration and "binary opposition".³⁰¹ The potential for penetration in male homosexuality may, to some extent, explain why male homoerotic activity was received into Roman society where female homosexuality was not, though there were, of course, other considerations concerning female independence and procreation.³⁰²

This attitude is central in the Iphis episode, for it is the inability of Iphis to experience or even to imagine fulfilling sexuality in the absence of any means of penetration which is the cause of her frustration. (This is the same attitude that we find in Pygmalion for the lack of satisfaction there likewise depends on the failure to penetrate.) The suggestion is that any love which does not conform to this pattern of opposition and penetration is incomprehensible in the sexual context.

Martial refers to the homosexual tendencies of Bassa in language which echoes Iphis' own description of her love:

mentiturque virum *prodigiosa Venus* (*Ep* 1.90.8)

... "quis me manet exitus," inquit

³⁰⁰ See Treggiari (1991)106.

³⁰¹ B.J.Brooten, *Love Between Women* (Chicago, 1996) 44ff.

³⁰² J.J.Winkler, "Double Consciousness in Sappho's Lyrics" in L.K.McClure (ed.) *Sexuality and Gender in the Classical World* (Oxford, 2002) 39-71 at 40: "...there was available a common understanding that proper women ought to be publicly submissive to male definitions, and that a very great pressure of propriety could at any time be invoked to shame a woman who acted on her own sexuality."

“cognita quam nulli, quam *prodigiosa novaeque*
cura tenet Veneris? (Met.9.726-8)

Iphis condemns her desire as worse than that of Pasiphae and uses the same word (*novus*) which the narrator uses to describe Byblis' unnatural passion. The effect of this is again to portray the unnatural aspect of Iphis' desire by placing it on the same level as the incest of Byblis and the animal love of Pasiphae:

Fama *novi* centum Creteas forsitan urbes
implesset *monstri*, si non miracula nuper
Iphide mutata Crete propiora tulisset. (666-8)

...ne non tamen *omnia* Crete
monstra ferat, taurum dilexit filia Solis,
femina nempe marem. (735-7)

Typically, ancient texts viewed female homoerotic activity as unnatural in view of the lack of penetration involved but clearly this condemnation cannot be fully explained along these lines, for erotic activity such as statue-love, which likewise did not involve penetration, did not invoke the same criticism. Nevertheless, the attitude that penetration was an essential part of sexuality underlies Iphis' dilemma, suggested not only through Iphis' failure to find satisfaction in a love which denies penetration, this being the cause of her frustration.

This illuminates the distinction in Roman attitudes towards male and female homosexuality. The consideration of male homosexuality as natural and female homosexuality as unnatural was closely dependent on social/ cultural perceptions of sexuality and gender and, in particular, on the issue of independent female sexuality. If we accept, then, that the construction of 'natural' and 'unnatural' depended on the observance and violation of cultural boundaries, the literary context of the *Metamorphoses* imposes alternative boundaries, thus causing different attitudes towards various forms of love to be generated within that context. Accordingly, since the *amor* experienced by Pygmalion and by Iphis deviates from the norm established in the *Metamorphoses*, within that context at least, their *amor* may be regarded as unnatural.

Pygmalion and Iphis, then, in the perversity of the love which they experience, are very much in keeping with the predominant sentiment of this section of the *Metamorphoses*. Their symmetrical position within the framework of this section, moreover, points towards an alignment. What distinguishes these episodes from the other examples of unnatural/ deviant *amor* in this section (deviant in the sense that it deviates from the Ovidian pattern of love), however, are the metamorphoses, effected by divine beneficence, which convert unnatural and infertile love into a natural and fertile one. Following metamorphosis, Pygmalion and Iphis become involved in natural love in conforming to the male-female pattern of *amor*. Pygmalion's marriage is clearly fertile, as may be seen in the birth of his daughter. Although the marriage in Iphis is not obviously fertile, still there is the potential for procreation following metamorphosis.

Prior to this, however, the narrator exploits the tension which exists between the essentially unnatural form of love in the episode and the standard of male-female love against which it is set. For throughout both episodes, the unacceptable unions are described in terms of a natural one and this functions on one level to reduce the gulf between natural and unnatural, and on another, to encourage a sense of distaste that the two opposites should be so closely aligned.

The Pygmalion and Iphis episodes may, therefore, be associated on a number of grounds, primarily revolving around the theme of *amor*. At the centre of both is the theme of perverse *amor* in particular, and, more significantly, in both tales we find that the erotic experience of this love is made subordinate to, and interacts with, the superficial reading of the modesty of these figures. The eroticism of the scene is made accessible only to the reader who is sensitive to undercurrents in the text. Recognition of the similarity between these tales may help to illuminate how the erotic undercurrent is established in the Pygmalion episode.

Myrrha

(I) Introduction

Following the tale of Pygmalion, Orpheus continues his song with the tale of Myrrha which he links to the previous episode on the grounds both of genealogy and geography. The tale begins with a narratorial warning that the following story contains disturbing material (300-10). The narrator records Cupid's disavowal of responsibility for Myrrha's situation and instead attributes blame to the Furies (311-14). He continues in contrasting Myrrha's numerous suitors with the one man forbidden to her (314-18) and follows this with an account of Myrrha's monologue in which she acknowledges and condemns her amorous desire for her father (319-55). This monologue is immediately followed by a brief meeting between Myrrha and her father, in the course of which the father seeks to persuade his daughter to marry (356-67).³⁰³ Distressed by this conversation, Myrrha decides to commit suicide and makes the necessary preparations (368-81) but her activity alerts her nurse, who consequently prevents the suicide attempt (382-7). The nurse presses Myrrha to reveal the cause of her distress and, eventually, she sees through Myrrha's ambiguous comments and realises Myrrha's incestuous desire for her father, offering to assist her to consummate that desire (387-430). In keeping with her promise, the nurse approaches Cinyras with the news of a young girl who is enamoured of him and succeeds in gaining his agreement to meet the girl. The fact that his wife is absent at the festival of Ceres provides the opportunity for the affair (431-41). The nurse returns to Myrrha and reports her success (441-5). Having made the initial preparation, the nurse, under cover of darkness, leads Myrrha towards Cinyras' bedchamber and hands her over to him (446-68). When Myrrha's passion has been consummated in the initial encounter and has been satisfied on further occasions (in the course of which she becomes pregnant), Cinyras becomes curious as to his lover's identity, and brings a lamp into his bedchamber

³⁰³ Cf Peneus' repeated demands that Daphne should marry (*Met.* 1.481-2).

in order to discover the identity of his erotic partner (469-73). On discovering Myrrha, Cinyras reaches for his sword and Myrrha flees, wandering through various lands before finally reaching Arabia (474-80). At this point, she prays to the gods for release from her torment and this results in her metamorphosis into a tree (a transformation which Myrrha gladly welcomes), whose myrrh will ensure that she will always be remembered (481-502). The tale ends with the birth of Adonis, the son of Cinyras and Myrrha, from the tree (503-18).

The Myrrha episode in Book 10 has proved to be one of the more popular topics in scholarly discussion of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. This is hardly surprising in view of the fact that it is one of the epic's most prominent tales, drawing attention to itself on a number of counts, but in two ways especially. It does so, firstly, by virtue of its theme, for the treatment of incestuous libido is restricted to two tales in the *Metamorphoses*, namely Byblis (9.450-665) and Myrrha, a significant statistic in view of the large number of erotic encounters in the epic. Nevertheless, its treatment in the latter is certainly more striking not only because it involves a father-daughter, ascendent-descendent relationship rather than a lateral brother-sister one, but because Myrrha's incestuous desire is consummated whereas that of Byblis is not.

The Myrrha episode is likewise conspicuous on account of its position in Orpheus' song. This song itself, one of the longer of the sections narrated by a fictional speaker (Calliope's song spans only 320 lines (*Met.*5.341-661) in comparison to Orpheus' 591 lines), has the Myrrha episode at its centre (in terms of importance, if not its actual position). So to that extent, the Myrrha tale is doubly conspicuous at the centre of a song within a song.³⁰⁴

The prominence of the Myrrha tale to some extent explains the level of critical attention it has received. It has been discussed in the context of its interaction with other

³⁰⁴ K.L.McKinley, *Reading the Ovidian Heroine. Metamorphoses Commentaries 1100-1618* (Leiden, 2001) 34 terms it thus.

tales in the *Metamorphoses* (Iphis (9.666-797) and the Propoetides (10.238-42) in particular) and in the context of a variety of areas of critical study.³⁰⁵ A common line of inquiry, though one that has not been developed to any significant degree, is the relationship which exists between the Myrrha episode and the preceding tale of Pygmalion. The point is made in passing by a number of critics,³⁰⁶ who mark either a contrast or a similarity between the tales (though more commonly a contrast), or who comment on the geographical link between them, terming it artificial and incongruous,³⁰⁷ but fuller discussion appears not to have been forthcoming. Two notable exceptions are Otis and Sharrock: they discuss the relationship between the tales, though they differ in their conclusions as to whether the narrator contrasts or simply compares Pygmalion and Myrrha. This difference depends on interpretation of the individual episodes.

Otis regards the Pygmalion tale as the triumph of “piety over moral failure and crime”³⁰⁸ and the Myrrha tale as representing the lowest level to which the female libido descends in the *Metamorphoses*:

The episode as a whole is meant to complete and lend climax to the female libido and incest motifs. The libido, the consummation of the libido and the metamorphosis-solution, all reach their most extreme and, in this sense, definitive form.³⁰⁹

Otis, therefore, naturally concludes that the episodes are juxtaposed and indeed proposes that Ovid deliberately rejected the obscenity of earlier versions of the Pygmalion legend precisely in order to maximise its contrast with Myrrha.³¹⁰ (Otis proposes a similar contrast between Pygmalion and the Propoetides.) Alternative interpretations, such as I have presented in the previous chapter, which challenge Otis’ view of Pygmalion’s

³⁰⁵ For a study of narrative technique, see Nagle (1983) 301-15; for a linguistic study, see Tissol (1997) 36-42; for a discussion in the context of gender studies, see Sharrock (1991a) 176-81.

³⁰⁶ G.K. Galinsky, *Ovid's Metamorphoses. An Introduction to the Basic Aspects* (Oxford, 1975) 88-9; Janan (1988) 124.

³⁰⁷ As I will discuss later (p191-5), the Cyprian setting is incongruous with Myrrha but not with Cinyras.

³⁰⁸ Otis (1966) 192.

³⁰⁹ Otis (1966) 226-7.

³¹⁰ Otis (1966) 190-1. Otis also argues that Byblis and Iphis exist in the same relationship (189).

innocence, though they do not in themselves exclude the possibility of contrast between Pygmalion and Myrrha (obscene statue-love may still be contrasted with father-daughter incest), they necessarily undermine the absolute contrast proposed by Otis.

Sharrock,³¹¹ on the other hand, presents an alternative interpretation of the Pygmalion and Myrrha tales with the result that she identifies parallels between them. In respect of Pygmalion, she discusses the role of the male as creator and the male construction of the female love-object. She adopts a similar approach to the Myrrha episode and equates Orpheus with Pygmalion as creator of the female, Myrrha. She identifies the reading encouraged by Orpheus and the response of the implied reader, who is supposed to recoil in horror at Myrrha's activity (a reading to which many critics have subscribed) and contrasts it with that of the 'resisting' reader who challenges Orpheus' biased portrayal of the female through recognising the partial responsibility of Cinyras. In this respect, then, the tales are parallel. Sharrock notes a further parallel in identifying the implicit incest in Pygmalion's relationship with his statue, depending on the use of the father-child relationship as an image for that between the creator and the created object.³¹²

Sharrock's interpretation does not refute that of Otis but rather encompasses it, for the difference between the two interpretations depends precisely on the distinction which Sharrock makes between the implied and the 'resisting' reader. She defines the implied reader as the superficial reader who willingly accepts the interpretation which the narrator offers. She defines the 'resisting' reader as one whose interpretation recognises the direction in which the narrator leads his audience but takes into account also those aspects which undermine that reading. At the beginning of each tale, the narrator intrudes to influence our reading, for he indicates Pygmalion's innocence in contrast to the reckless behaviour of the Propoetides, and expresses his horror at Myrrha's behaviour in his

³¹¹ Sharrock (1991a) 176-81.

³¹² This is a popular theme in Pygmalion studies (Sharrock (1991a) 176; Ahl (1985) 214). Incestuous overtones have likewise been identified in the Adonis tale in the comparison of Adonis with Cupid (Galinsky (1975) 102).

dramatic introductory warning. Otis' approach centres on the facade which the narrator creates, for he takes at face value Orpheus' suggestion of Pygmalion's innocence and Myrrha's perversity. This, then, is the reading which is readily accessible and these aspects are certainly part of the portrayal of these characters. Otis' interpretation constitutes the implied reading of the individual tales of Pygmalion and Myrrha and the implied reading of the contrast between them, though he does not consciously present his discussion as such.

Sharrock, in contrast, exposes the narrator in identifying various aspects which undermine the superficial interpretation of Pygmalion as innocent and Myrrha as horrific. This constitutes a 'resisting' reading, for it takes into account not only the illusion which the narrator creates, but the underlying aspects which serve to challenge and undermine it. Thus Pygmalion's innocence is called into question and Myrrha's responsibility is partially diminished. This is the reading which the narrator suggests but does not make explicit.

In spite of the relatively limited discussion of the Pygmalion and Myrrha episodes together, both tales have individually proved popular and have indeed been subjected to the type of 'resisting' reading which Sharrock identifies. This is certainly true in respect of the Pygmalion episode, for increasingly the underlying eroticism of the tale has been emphasised, not least when it has been discussed in the area of gender studies. (The explicit eroticism of the original Pygmalion legend may have facilitated such a reading of the myth in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, but, by the same token, the less explicit eroticism may suggest a departure from the original on this point and may have influenced such interpretations by Otis and Fränkel.³¹³) Scholars have traditionally tended to be somewhat more reticent in their approach to Myrrha but increasingly attempts have been made towards a reassessment of this figure and of her tale. Central to such reassessment is a recognition of the incongruity of Orpheus as narrator. This emerges from the divergence both between his

³¹³ Fränkel (1945) 93. See p101-4.

professed horror at Myrrha's incestuous libido and his extended treatment of the tale, and between the punishment he demands for Myrrha (and which he promises in his programmatic statement at the opening of his song: "...puerosque canamus/ dilectos superis *inconcessisque puellas/ ignibus attonitas meruisse libidine poenam.*" (10.152-4)) and the ultimate *honor* (501) which is attached to her. This has been regarded as indication of Orpheus' implicit sympathy for his heroine and points towards an alternative ('resisting') reading of the tale.³¹⁴ Likewise, the active and dominant role of the nurse has been discussed along similar lines. When such close reading of both the Pygmalion and Myrrha episodes reveals interpretations which were not immediately apparent, the question of the relationship between them becomes more interesting and complex.

My intention in this chapter is to contribute to the 'resisting' reading of the Myrrha episode identified by Sharrock and, by extension, to contribute further to the discussion of the relationship between the Pygmalion and Myrrha episodes. The 'resisting' reading which I will offer will depend on the identification of the theme of sacred marriage as an undercurrent in the Myrrha tale and a consideration of how this undercurrent is established. This backdrop in the Myrrha episode is a continuation of the ritual undercurrent in Pygmalion and thus functions as a link between the two tales.³¹⁵

Identification of this ritual backdrop to the Myrrha narrative functions, to some extent, to reduce the horrified response which Orpheus as narrator superficially demands and thus operates as a 'resisting' reading along the same lines as Sharrock's examination of the tale. It functions in this way in view of the fact that the typical eroticism of the sacred marriage ritual was concerned with the fulfilment of a religious duty rather than with the personal satisfaction of erotic desire. The erotic experience central in ritual statue-love,

³¹⁴ The similarity of language in Orpheus' introduction to the tale and in Myrrha's monologue suggests the narrator's sympathy. Nagle (1983) 301 charts Orpheus' movement from an ambivalent to a sympathetic attitude towards his heroine, reflected in the final responsibility which he attributes to Venus. See also McKinley (2001) 34.

³¹⁵ I will focus primarily on the Myrrha episode, for in establishing the ritual backdrop of that tale, I will at the same time discuss its association with the Pygmalion tale, whose ritual backdrop has been the subject of much discussion.

such as we find in Pygmalion, and in sacred temple-prostitution, arguably a backdrop to the Propoetides tale, was regarded as a matter of duty not an expression of personal interest.³¹⁶ (This was true even if Christian commentators (Clement of Alexandria (*Protr.* 2.13; 2.29; 4.51) and Arnobius (*Adversus Gentes* 6.22)) attributed such activity to depraved sexual desire.) Certainly there is no evidence that incest was part of the Cyprian *hieros gamos*,³¹⁷ so that my argument is not that the ritual backdrop to the Myrrha tale diminishes the reader's distaste through the recollection of a genuine celebration in which incestuous intercourse was typically performed and legitimised as a religious duty. Rather, my suggestion is that in view of the fact that sexual activity in these ritual contexts was regarded as a matter of duty and not of personal desire, a matter of public rather than private interest, the ritual backdrop in Myrrha serves, to some extent, to undermine the interpretation of the tale merely as an obscene incident. To some extent, then, in setting Myrrha's activity against the performance of a sacred marriage, the liaison is transferred to the public sphere and the personal motivation of Myrrha is thus undermined, for erotic desire is intermingled with piety so that the narrator implicitly invites reassessment of the motives and responsibility of Myrrha. This might be compared with Sharrock's interpretation of the ritual backdrop to the Pygmalion tale, for she proposes that since hierogamy was both erotic and pious, Pygmalion's participation in statue-love within that ritual context must contribute to the interpretation of that figure as both erotic and pious.³¹⁸ The ritual undercurrent has a similar function in the Myrrha episode, for it encourages identification of two aspects in Myrrha's motivation, balancing obscene eroticism with pious duty. This mitigates the horrified response which Orpheus explicitly demands from his audience in his dramatic condemnation of Myrrha's monstrous female libido as entirely

³¹⁶ There are conflicting opinions as to whether the *hieros gamos* ritual was concerned with agricultural fertility (Frazer) or with human marriage rites (Avagianou; Farnell) though there appears to be consensus that it was a public celebration undertaken for public benefit rather than personal interest.

³¹⁷ See p186-95 for discussion of the assumption that the incest and the *hieros gamos* motifs are inseparable. I will argue that the *hieros gamos* motif was originally independent of the incest theme.

³¹⁸ Sharrock (1991a) 169-71.

responsible for the incestuous activity. In thus challenging the interpretation which Orpheus as narrator explicitly offers, identification of sacred marriage as an undercurrent in the episode constitutes a 'resisting' reading of the tale.

Like the other factors identified by Sharrock as encouraging a 'resisting' reading of the tale, recognition of the ritual undercurrent in the episode draws attention to the divergence between the tale which Orpheus superficially proposes and the one which he actually presents. The superficial horror which Orpheus generates depends on his promise not simply to present a female who, through her experience of a monstrous and uncontrollable desire and on her own devices, enjoyed an erotic encounter with her father but who received punishment appropriate to such deviant behaviour. At each stage in the episode, however, the narrator invites the reader to challenge this reading, for in giving Myrrha an accomplice (the nurse), and so active and willing an accomplice, responsibility for the crime is divided (Cinyras also takes a share of the responsibility) despite the superficial emphasis on Myrrha as acting independently and with sole responsibility. The undercurrent of the sacred marriage introduces piety as a motivating factor in Myrrha's behaviour and thus reduces emphasis on the depravity of her female libido as the reason for the affair and the horror which attaches to this. Moreover, that Myrrha ultimately receives *honor* and not punishment likewise undermines Orpheus' superficial outrage. All these underlying factors clearly but subtly expose the incongruity of Orpheus as narrator and so encourage the reader, questioning his reliability, to resist the explicit reading of the tale.

This, then, explains how my 'resisting' reading of the Myrrha episode, which depends on the identification of the ritual undercurrent in the tale, develops and contributes to existing readings which resist the implied reading of the tale and encourage reassessment of Myrrha. Certainly such discussion of the ritual backdrop represents a new approach to the tale, though it should be noted that interpretation of the Myrrha-Cinyras legend as a representation of a Paphian/ Cyprian sacred marriage ritual is not itself a new idea.³¹⁹

³¹⁹ See F. Bömer, *P. Ovidius Naso Metamorphosen Buch X-XI* (Heidelberg, 1980) 112-13.

Interpretation of the Ovidian Myrrha-Cinyras tale as a sacred marriage is similarly not a new idea, for Viarre identifies this as a feature of Ovid's incest tale.³²⁰ I would suggest, however, that discussion of this dimension in the Ovidian tale, such as we find in Viarre, has proved somewhat unsatisfactory in view of the fact that identification of the ritual backdrop of the Ovidian Myrrha-Cinyras tale appears typically to be based on an assumption: the Ovidian version has been regarded as a representation of a sacred marriage simply because the legend itself has been regarded as such. Certainly, this must be part of the consideration, for the incorporation of any legend inevitably includes the incorporation of its symbolism and significance. Nevertheless, this does not take full account of Ovid's treatment of his tale or this aspect of it.

That this approach is deficient may be illustrated through considering critical responses to Ovid's treatment of this same aspect in the Pygmalion legend. The critic, in approaching the Ovidian Pygmalion, automatically transfers to it the ritual associations which formed the backdrop to the Pygmalion legend. This is a valid assumption but does not take into account the ways in which Ovid actively recalls this traditional aspect. Ovid deliberately creates this ritual backdrop in a number of ways, both by making Pygmalion's love-object a statue, as it was in the tradition (even if he does not explicitly identify it as Venus, still he associates it with her) and by suggesting Pygmalion's erotic interest in it, obscene eroticism having been a feature of the Pygmalion legend and of the *hieros gamos* ritual generally. (The eroticism attached to the Pygmalion legend was likewise considered a religious duty and not the expression of personal desire.) Ovid deliberately incorporates this traditional religious aspect into the background of his tale, even if we are not meant to consider Pygmalion's intercourse with his statue as itself a genuine representation of the sacred marriage ritual. Such discussion of the religious backdrop is a popular feature of Pygmalion scholarship.

³²⁰ S. Viarre, *L'image et la pensée dans les Métamorphoses d'Ovide* (Paris, 1964) 144; 198. Viarre proposes that Ovid's use of this motif emphasises the immoral aspect of hierogamy.

In view of the fact that the Myrrha-Cinyras legend was regarded as a representation of a Cyprian sacred marriage ritual in the same way as the Pygmalion legend, it has likewise been assumed that the *hieros gamos* again provides a backdrop to the Ovidian adaptation of that legend in the *Metamorphoses*. No attempts, however, appear to have been made, as they have been for Pygmalion, to understand Ovid's deliberate integration of this traditional element into the fabric of his own tale. In this chapter, I will discuss how Ovid achieves this.

A brief explanation of the dual nature of the Myrrha-Cinyras incest tale may prove useful here in illuminating my argument. In brief, for I will discuss it more fully in the next section, the Myrrha-Cinyras tale combines two separate legends, one involving Myrrha and the incest motif, the other involving Cinyras, Cyprus and the *hieros gamos* motif. Interpretation of the Myrrha-Cinyras legend (generally or in Ovid) as a sacred marriage depends on the cult associations attached to the Cinyras legend. My argument in this chapter is that Ovid, in choosing a tale of incest which had been combined, and only recently, with an *hieros gamos* legend, must have intended this ritual aspect to be significant to some degree. In addition, I will go further in proposing that Ovid enhances the ritual backdrop which was part of the Myrrha-Cinyras legend in portraying the Myrrha-Cinyras relationship in the light of the celebration of a sacred marriage ritual. In effect, I will propose that Ovid extends the *hieros gamos* motif to the entire Myrrha-Cinyras episode, even though in origin, it attached only to the Cinyras legend.

This chapter will fall into three sections. In the first, I will discuss Ovid's choice of incest tale. I will identify the two separate traditions of the Myrrha tale and will suggest that Ovid's choice of the Myrrha-Cinyras version marks a deliberate choice of a tale which combined the incest motif with that of the sacred marriage. I will suggest that the figure of Cinyras and the Cyprian setting, being the essence of the *hieros gamos* legend, are sufficient to recall this backdrop in the *Metamorphoses*. (Earlier identification of the sacred

marriage backdrop does not even do this.) I will thereby explain the validity of assuming that this backdrop is relevant to the Ovidian tale and will clarify the misconceptions implicit in this assumption.

In the second and third sections, I will discuss how Ovid adapts this version of the incest tale and incorporates the incest motif more fully into the *hieros gamos* legend onto which it has been grafted.³²¹ This involves two considerations which I will examine individually. I will suggest, in the second section, that the incestuous liaison is styled as a marriage ceremony, thus bringing the incest and hierogamy dimensions closer together and will argue, in the third, that the narrator establishes a religious undercurrent in the episode, though not one specific to the celebration of a sacred marriage, and that this too fulfils the function of contributing to the religious backdrop of sacred marriage and thus further uniting the prominent features of two separate traditions.

(II) Ovid's use of his sources

The interpretation of Ovid's tale of incest as the representation of a sacred marriage ritual has been assumed on the basis that the Myrrha-Cinyras legend generally has this ritual dimension. This assumption is valid, though there appears to be a certain misconception relating to it, that the *hieros gamos* motif depends on the incest tale per se. In this section, I hope to clarify this matter by showing that although two versions of the Myrrha incest tale existed (Myrrha-Thias and Myrrha-Cinyras), the theme of sacred marriage is relevant to only one of these, namely the Myrrha-Cinyras legend. I will propose that this depended primarily, if not exclusively, on the fact that the Cinyras legend independently represented an *hieros gamos* ritual. I will, therefore, conclude that Ovid's choice of the Myrrha-Cinyras version of the incest tale implies a deliberate interest in and inclusion of this motif as a backdrop to the incestuous affair. Cinyras as father and the

³²¹ I say that the incest legend has been grafted onto the sacred marriage one and not vice versa, in consideration of geography, for Cinyras remains in Cyprus, while Myrrha is transferred to Cyprus.

Cyprian setting, responsible for the sacred marriage interpretation of the Myrrha-Cinyras legend, function in Ovid, as in the tradition, to establish this cult dimension.

Three notable versions of the Myrrha tale existed prior to Ovid.³²² The earliest account is that of Panyassis (5th century BC), transmitted through Apollodorus (*Lib.3.14.4*). In this version, set in Syria, the heroine Smyrna neglects her duty to Aphrodite and as a result is punished by the goddess. This punishment consists in being inspired with incestuous desire for her father, Thias, the king of Assyria. With the aid of her nurse, Smyrna consummates her love. On being discovered by her father, she flees, is pursued by him and is ultimately transformed into a tree through the mercy of the gods.

The version recorded by Antoninus Liberalis in his *Metamorphoses* is in most aspects similar to that of Panyassis as reported by Apollodorus, but it differs in three respects. The tale of incest, though again set against an eastern backdrop, is here set in Phoenicia rather than in Assyria (Thias, Myrrha's father, is king of Phoenicia as he is king of Assyria in Panyassis); Aphrodite is not here held responsible for Smyrna's passion; and Myrrha's ultimate transformation into a tree is effected by Zeus rather than by unidentified gods. Although Antoninus Liberalis compiled his series of myths in the 2nd to the 3rd century AD and thus his version is later than Ovid, we may reasonably assume that his version was a reproduction of a version by Nicander of Colophon (2nd century BC). This version would have predated Ovid.³²³ This assumption depends on the fact that Antoninus Liberalis had two main sources for his collection of myths, Nicander (*Heteroeumena*) and Boios (*Ornithogonia*).³²⁴ In view of the fact that he drew on the latter primarily for transformation tales involving birds, we may suppose the Myrrha tale, unconnected with this theme, to have been a Nicandrian tale. It is, of course, possible that

³²² For Ovid's sources for the Myrrha tale, see Otis (1966) 226; 391-2; Hill (1999) 175; Bömer (1980) 111-16; Forbes Irving (1990) 274-7.

³²³ For Antoninus Liberalis' tale of Leucippus as a source for Ovid's tale of Iphis and for Nicander as the original source, see p153-4.

³²⁴ J.L.Lightfoot (ed.), *Parthenius of Nicaea* (Oxford, 1999) 226.

Myrrha came from a different source.³²⁵

A more immediate precursor of Ovid's tale of Myrrha in the *Metamorphoses* was the famous and much-discussed account in Cinna's *Zmyrna*. This version, extant only in fragments, was celebrated as a Roman exemplum of the neoteric epyllion and, we may assume, closely influenced Ovid's adaptation.³²⁶ Attempts have been made to reconstruct this text. This process depends on a number of considerations, ranging from an examination of the extant lines to assumptions based on the typical style and content of neoteric epyllia. Particularly informative has been the pseudo-Vergilian *Ciris*, which records the tale of Scylla and which is thought to be indebted in several respects to Cinna's *Zmyrna*.³²⁷ Taking account of these various strands of inquiry, a great deal can be said about the form and content of Cinna's incest tale. It is, therefore, assumed that this version revolved around a single pathos scene (typical of the neoteric epyllion³²⁸) and that this scene had at its centre a prolonged dialogue between *Zmyrna* and her nurse (a feature in the *Ciris* and, more briefly, in Ovid's *Myrrha* (suggesting a common source), though absent from Ovid's *Scylla* tale).³²⁹ It is considered that the incestuous desire was the result of Venus/Aphrodite's anger³³⁰ and that the tale was set in Cyprus. This depends on a reference in Catullus 95. In that poem, which celebrates Cinna's completion of his epyllion, Catullus remarks that Cinna's work will be read as far as the river Satrachus in Cyprus. This is an obscure reference (in the style of the neoteric poetry which he is celebrating), for it appears only four times in Greek literature (Lycophron 448; Nonnus 13.459; Parthenius frs 23 and

³²⁵ Hill (1999) 175 suggests Pherecydes as Antoninus Liberalis' source for the *Myrrha* tale.

³²⁶ Otis (1966) 391 detects remote echoes of the *Zmyrna* in Ovid's *Myrrha*.

³²⁷ R.O.A.M. Lyne, "The Constraints of Metre and the *Ciris*: a Brief Note", *Latomus* 28 (1969) 1065-7; P.E. Knox, "Cinna, the *Ciris*, and Ovid", *CP* 78 (1983) 309-11.

³²⁸ Otis (1966) 392. It also demonstrated Alexandrian erudition. C.J. Fordyce, *Catullus* (Oxford, 1961) 383: "Cinna's treatment was such that within a few generations it needed a commentary from the grammaticus Crassicius Panga." For features of neoteric style and Cinna's *Zmyrna*, see W.V. Clausen, "The New Poets and their antecedents", in E.J. Kenney (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature Vol.2* (Cambridge, 1982) 178-87, esp. 184-6. For abnormal love as a feature of neoteric style, see McKinley (2001) 34.

³²⁹ P.E. Knox, *Ovid's Metamorphoses and the Traditions of Augustan Poetry*, Cambridge Philological Society Supplementary Vol.11 (Cambridge, 1986) 48-64, at 55. Otis (1966) 226. In Ovid's *Scylla* tale, night is personified as the girl's nurse (*Met.* 8.81-2).

³³⁰ Knox (1986) 55.

24). It has been taken as an indication of the Cyprian setting of Cinna's incest tale.³³¹ In view of the fact that narrative progression was not characteristic of the epyllion, it is unclear how far the scene of consummation was expanded within the framework.

The Cyprian setting of the *Zmyrna* would appear to be a late development, for in early versions of the Myrrha incest tale (Panyassis, Antoninus Liberalis (Nicander) and brief references in Lycophron (*Alexandra* 828-30), Antimachus of Colophon³³² and Cleitarchus of Alexandria³³³) the setting is further east.³³⁴ It is possible that Cinna introduced this Cyprian setting, though there are two possible objections to this argument. Firstly, there is evidence for another version of the tale prior to Ovid which sets the tale in Cyprus, namely that of Theodorus in his *Metamorphoses*, recorded by pseudo-Plutarch (*Moralia* 310F-311A). Little is known of this author. It is possible that he was Theodorus of Gadara, the rhetorician and teacher of the future emperor Tiberius.³³⁵ If this identification is valid, we may assume him to follow Cinna and certainly Bömer appears to date him thus. (A reference in Probus dates him before Ovid.) In addition, it is difficult to be certain that the record of this tale in pseudo-Plutarch, a text of uncertain authorship, was itself an accurate account.

A second objection to Cinna as innovator lies in the fact of Cinna's affiliation with Parthenius of Nicaea (1st century BC). A fragment of Parthenius would appear to suggest a Cyprian setting for his Adonis tale and we may suppose Cinna's choice of a Cyprian setting to have been influenced by this. There is, however, no evidence as to whether Parthenius' Cyprian Adonis tale recorded the birth of Adonis as part of a tale of incest. Two distinct versions of Adonis' birth existed. One version, set in Cyprus, identified

Adonis as son of Cinyras (Apollodorus (3.14.3); Clement of Alexandria (*Protr.*2.13; 2.29;

³³¹ Fordyce (1961) 383; J.P. Wiseman, "Cinna the Poet" in *Cinna the Poet and other Roman Essays* (Leicester UP, 1974) 44-58, at 49, argues that Cinna borrowed this setting from Parthenius.

³³² In Probus on Verg. *Bucol.* 10.18.

³³³ In this version of the incest tale, recorded by Stobaeus (*Flor.*64.36), the father loves the daughter.

³³⁴ For discussion of this, see W. Atallah, *Adonis dans la littérature et l'art grecs* (Paris, 1966).

³³⁵ Two other men named Theodorus are recorded in the *OCD*. These figures are dated much earlier (6th and 5th century BC) and no mention is made of any literary output for either figure.

3.40); Hyginus (*Fab.*142)) and is unconnected with the incest motif. The other version, set in the East, in Syria or Phoenicia (Panyassis; Lycophron; Antoninus Liberalis (Nicander); Antimachus; Cleitarchus), identifies Adonis as the son of Myrrha and the product of Myrrha's incestuous liaison with her father, Thias. Clearly, then, the Cyprian setting of the Adonis tale which we find in Parthenius does not necessarily mean that Parthenius was responsible for the transfer of the incest tale to Cyprus, for he may simply record the Adonis-Cinyras legend rather than the Adonis-Myrrha incest version and certainly the incest motif cannot definitely be attributed to the Parthenius Adonis tale. In view of the fact that we can reasonably assert the Cyprian setting of Cinna's incest tale and in the absence of any conclusive evidence for a Cyprian version of Myrrha prior to Ovid (Theodorus and Parthenius), we may cautiously assume that Cinna introduced this setting. When I continue to refer to Cinna as the innovator, it is with this restriction in mind.

We may go further in assuming the introduction of the Cyprian setting in the Myrrha tale to have been accompanied by the change in the identity of Myrrha's father from Thias to Cinyras. Forbes Irving notes that there is no definite evidence for Cinyras as Myrrha's father until Ovid: no fragment of the *Zmyrna* identifies the father and so cannot confirm or deny this.³³⁶ Nevertheless, I would propose that there are grounds for arguing that identification of Cinyras as Myrrha's father accompanied the transition of the incest tale to Cyprus and I would suggest that the key to this is the figure of Adonis, for he provides a common link between two separate traditions. As regards the Cyprian legend, Adonis was prominently associated with Cinyras. As regards the Eastern incest legend, Adonis was prominently associated with Myrrha.³³⁷ When the incest tale (Myrrha) was transferred to Cyprus, it would seem reasonable to suppose that this was achieved through the synthesis of the two legends rather than through the transfer of the entire Myrrha

³³⁶ Cf Hill (1999) 176 on 10.298: "... of the extant literary accounts, only Ovid's seems to identify Myrrha's father with Cinyras."

³³⁷ Atallah (1966) 35 proposes that the Cyprus-Adonis connection was not made before the 5th century BC. He also suggests that the Adonis legend originated in the east and later moved west.

legend. In that case, since Myrrha is retained as mother of Adonis, we may assume that Cinyras is retained as father.

Ovid, then, had a choice of two different versions of the incest tale (Cyprus and Cinyras; Syria and Thias). His decision to follow the Cyprian-Cinyras version rather than earlier accounts may be considered indicative of his choice of a version which had the *hieros gamos* motif as a feature over one that did not. I would suggest that the sacred marriage ritual was relevant only to the Myrrha-Cinyras version of the incest tale and not to the incest tale generally and that this depended on the fact that the Cinyras legend had existed independently as a tale of cult practice and that this continued when it was combined with the Myrrha incest tale. My discussion of this will fall into two parts, for I will first discuss the interpretation of the Cinyras legend and the cult associations of Cinyras and Cyprus; I will then discuss the interpretation of the Myrrha incest motif in its original context, distinct from the Cinyras legend with which it was later joined. The cult associations of the former legend and their absence from the latter would suggest that the interpretation of the Myrrha-Cinyras legend as a *hieros gamos* ritual depends not on the incest motif but on the religious dimension of Cinyras and Cyprus.

As regards the Cyprian setting, the religious backdrop attached to this depends on the status of Cyprus as a cult centre for the worship of Venus/ Aphrodite.³³⁸ These cult associations are central to the Pygmalion legend, for the tale in which the king of Cyprus engaged in intercourse with a statue of Venus/ Aphrodite originated as a representation of a *hieros gamos* between the king and the goddess. (The king functioned also as priest of Aphrodite.) This ritual is an undercurrent in Ovid's Pygmalion tale, as it would be in any version of the legend, even if Ovid does not explicitly style his version as a sacred marriage. The Cyprian setting of the Myrrha episode, then, in view of its religious associations through the worship of Aphrodite (an undercurrent in Pygmalion alongside the erotic associations of Cyprus), contributes to the religious backdrop of the Myrrha-Cinyras

³³⁸ Bömer (1980) 112.

legend.

Certainly, it has been noted that, at various points in the Myrrha episode, the traditional eastern setting of the Myrrha incest tale intrudes,³³⁹ but while this draws attention to the original setting of the incest tale, it functions also to emphasise the new setting (Cyprus is incongruous with Myrrha and with the incest motif, though not with Cinyras). In whatever way the Cyprian setting may be explained or undermined, it is clear that Ovid deliberately chose one version of the incest legend over another and that he intended an explicit Cyprian setting for his tale of incest.

In addition to choosing a Cyprian version of the tale, in preference to an eastern backdrop, Ovid also chose to identify Myrrha's father as Cinyras rather than Thias. (On both counts, as I have argued, Ovid would appear to be following Cinna's version of the tale.) This detail is important, for the legend of Cinyras, like that of Pygmalion, was closely associated with Cyprian Aphrodite worship. Cinyras is typically associated with Cyprus and he is credited by Apollodorus (*Lib.*3.14.3) with the foundation of Paphos. (Apollodorus also indicates that Cinyras was related to Pygmalion through marriage.) At Paphos was the famous sanctuary of Aphrodite where kings descended from Cinyras served as priests of the goddess.³⁴⁰ As we may gauge from the Pygmalion legend, this service probably involved the king assuming the role of bridegroom and participating in a sacred marriage with the goddess.³⁴¹ This may have taken different forms, for the priest-king in the role of bridegroom may have had intercourse with a statue of the goddess, as in the Pygmalion tradition, or with some human representative of the goddess, such as a priestess of the temple or a temple-prostitute. It is, perhaps, with this religious ritual in mind that Clement of Alexandria, on two occasions (*Protr.*2.13; 2.29), refers to the erotic

³³⁹ Forbes Irving (1990) 275 points out 10.316; 475ff; Otis (1966)392 , 10.307ff; 316; 478; 480.

³⁴⁰ Bömer (1980) 112. J.G.Frazer, *The Golden Bough. Part 4. Adonis, Attis, Osiris. Studies in the History of Oriental Religion Vol. 1* (London, 1914) 42 n5 argues that this can be understood both from literary sources (Pindar *Pyth.*2.15ff) and from inscriptions. According to Clement of Alexandria (*Protr.*3.40), Cinyras and his descendants were buried in the temple of Aphrodite at Paphos.

³⁴¹ Frazer (1914) 49 proposes that these kings assumed the role of Adonis in this ritual.

relationship between Cinyras and Aphrodite: as in his treatment of the Pygmalion *hieros gamos*, Clement takes this practice out of its religious context and styles it merely as an erotic encounter. That both Pygmalion and Cinyras were legendary lovers of Aphrodite within the religious context of the sacred marriage ritual is certainly a notable link between these tales: in view of the fact that Ovid explicitly draws attention to this in emphasising Cinyras as a descendent of Pygmalion, a link highlighted in the reference to Pygmalion as *Paphius heros* (10.290), emphasises their common association with Cyprian Aphrodite worship.³⁴²

The cult associations attached to Cyprus generally and to Cinyras in Cyprus would appear to explain the interpretation of the Myrrha-Cinyras legend as a sacred marriage ritual. That the Cinyras legend was alone responsible for this aspect may likewise be suggested by the fact that when the Myrrha incest motif has been discussed in the context of its original eastern setting, the Myrrha-Thias relationship, there has been no reference to any religious/ cult dimension. In such a context, the incest motif has been variously explained as a symptom of a system of matrilineal succession where the king marries his daughter in order to remain king (Frazer; Graves)³⁴³; as a solar-lunar myth (Krappe)³⁴⁴; and as the use of a motif common in Greek literature (Atallah).³⁴⁵ Only in the context of the Myrrha-Cinyras tale has the incest motif been linked with the theme of sacred marriage and within that context scholars have struggled to reconcile the two elements and to explain the relevance of the incest motif to the celebration of a sacred marriage. Atallah attributes it to the association of Cinyras and Adonis, the erotic activity of Aphrodite with both in Cyprus and the consequent blurring/ confusion of familial relationships.³⁴⁶ He concludes by

proposing that in this lay the origin of the tradition of Adonis' birth from an incestuous

³⁴² In Apollodorus, Cinyras is the founder of Paphos; in Ovid and in Hyginus (*Fab.*142), Cinyras is the son of Paphos (descendent of Pygmalion in Ovid).

³⁴³ Frazer (1914) 44; Graves (1955) 72.

³⁴⁴ A.H.Krappe, "The birth of Adonis", *Review of Religion* 6 (1941-2) 3-17 at 8.

³⁴⁵ Atallah (1966) 51. The most obvious examples are Oedipus and Phaedra. Incest appeared as a recurring theme in Parthenius and was a feature of neoteric poetry.

³⁴⁶ Atallah (1966) 51-2. Clement of Alexandria (*Protr.*2.29) refers to Aphrodite as lover of Cinyras and of Adonis.

liaison. That the incest motif was associated with the sacred marriage ritual only when it became part of a legend of sacred marriage would suggest that the Myrrha-Cinyras legend was regarded as a ritual practice by virtue only of the independent legend of Cinyras and that the incest motif, being a later addition to this legend, as Forbes Irving notes,³⁴⁷ did not contribute to this.

In view of the cult associations of Cyprus and the connection of Cinyras (and his descendants) with Aphrodite in the celebration of a sacred marriage, we easily understand the prominence of the Cyprian-Cinyras dimension in the interpretation of the Myrrha-Cinyras relationship as a sacred marriage. With regard to the fact that the incest motif is associated with this ritual only when it is attached to the Cyprian-Cinyras legend, it would seem reasonable to suppose that, in fact, the sacred marriage dimension depended entirely on Cinyras and Cyprus and that the incest motif did not influence or contribute to this cult interpretation (and indeed there is no evidence for an incestuous ritual in Cyprus). This explains the validity in assuming this backdrop in the Ovidian tale, for it demonstrates why the Myrrha-Cinyras legend was interpreted as a representation of cult practice.

Clearly, then, Ovid's choice of the Myrrha-Cinyras version rather than the Myrrha-Thias involved choosing an incest tale which specifically had the religious backdrop of the sacred marriage ritual. It is not difficult to understand why such a version presented itself to Ovid as the more appropriate option. Apart from inviting interaction with Cinna's account of Myrrha's incest, arguably the most extended treatment of the myth prior to Ovid, it provided an obvious geographical link with the preceding tales of Pygmalion and the Propoetides. The setting of the tale means that the account of Myrrha's incest benefits from the religious and erotic associations of Cyprus. The Cyprian setting, with its erotic associations, provides an appropriate backdrop for the indecent love of the Myrrha episode, as it does for the Pygmalion and the Propoetides, and, to some degree,

³⁴⁷ Forbes Irving (1990) 276. Atallah (1966) 48 also argues that incest was a late addition to the legend of Adonis' birth.

prepares the audience for it.³⁴⁸ It would seem reasonable to suppose, however, that Ovid's choice of this version was influenced primarily by the link which it offered between Pygmalion and Myrrha on the grounds of the participation of both Pygmalion and Cinyras in the cult practices of Aphrodite.

³⁴⁸ For the importance of this in the Pygmalion tale, see Sharrock (1991a) 169.

(III) Marriage

As part of my discussion of how an undercurrent of sacred marriage is established in the Myrrha-Cinyras episode, beyond the fact that it is automatically recalled in Ovid because it was a central feature of the original Cinyras legend, my approach in this section will be to identify the various ways in which the Myrrha-Cinyras liaison is styled as a marriage. Identification of this use of marriage as a model for the incestuous affair contributes to the ritual backdrop in the tale in view of the fact that the format of the *hieros gamos*, a rite designed for the protection of human marriage, was itself modelled on the human wedding ceremony and borrowed its prominent characteristics. The marital backdrop, therefore, recalls the traditional ritual context of the Cinyras legend (for both had the same format) and the role of Cinyras as bridegroom here recalls his traditional role as the bridegroom of Aphrodite.

Throughout this episode, the theme of marriage provides an undercurrent to the incestuous liaison which takes place between Myrrha and Cinyras. This is achieved in two ways. Firstly, Myrrha's incestuous desire is set against the actual arrangement of her marriage. To that extent, marriage provides an undercurrent. This is enhanced when Myrrha decides to pursue her interest in Cinyras, for in choosing him in preference to her suitors, she implicitly styles him as her preferred suitor, the victor in the marriage competition. This causes closer interaction between the liaison and the backdrop of marriage. The second way in which this undercurrent is established depends on the description of the affair in terms of the wedding ceremony. This description extends the backdrop created by the arrangement of Myrrha's marriage. In this section, I will discuss both these aspects and will suggest that they function both to recall the traditional role of Cinyras as bridegroom of Aphrodite and to involve Myrrha in this ritual context. This contributes to the establishment of the theme of sacred marriage as an undercurrent in the tale.

As regards the arrangement of Myrrha's marriage, this dimension is immediately established when Orpheus, following his introductory warning, begins the narrative proper (315) with reference to the various suitors vying for Myrrha's hand. This detail is included in Antoninus Liberalis' version but is only a passing reference: it is not developed to provide an undercurrent for the liaison. (Again, it is unclear whether this featured in Panyassis and Cinna.) Ovid expands this detail and emphasises the fact that some form of marriage competition had been arranged (indicated by the phrase "thalami certamen" (317)³⁴⁹), though the conflict is not directly portrayed, as it is in the Hercules-Achelous competition or in the competition for Atalanta. (Neither is there any indication of the criteria for victory, but the fact that Myrrha is consulted itself constitutes a departure from the standard marriage competition.) Nevertheless, this context immediately sets Myrrha in the role of potential wife/ prize, as it does also with Deianira and Atalanta. (Although the facade of the marriage competition and the expectations which it generates are quickly disposed of in this tale,³⁵⁰ (it is unclear whether any contest actually takes place), nevertheless the context of marriage is retained as a model for the incestuous affair.)

Myrrha's monologue, in which she acknowledges and condemns her incestuous desire for her father, clearly confounds any expectations the audience may have had for a tale of marriage,³⁵¹ for the anticipation of a legitimate marriage (in the form of her suitors) is contrasted with Myrrha's desire for illegitimate and unnatural *amor* (in the form of Cinyras). The facade which the narrator suggests is explicitly contrasted with the reality of Myrrha's desire. A similar contrast occurs at the end of Myrrha's monologue, for her soliloquy, in which she expresses her unnatural desire, is followed by her dialogue with

Cinyras, in which the question of marriage is central, so that once again legitimate and
³⁴⁹ "undique lecti/ te cupiunt proceres, totoque Oriente iuventa/ ad thalami certamen adest:" (315-17).

³⁵⁰ In the Hercules episode this facade is sustained and is responsible, in large degree, for the implied reading of the Hercules-Achelous conflict as a tale of *amor*. See p34-41.

³⁵¹ For deception of Orpheus and illusions he creates, see McKinley (2001) 34-5. Examples of this include the incongruity between Orpheus' programmatic statement and the content of his song and the incongruity between the horror which he professes at the outset of the Myrrha tale and his extended treatment of it.

illegitimate, natural and perverse are juxtaposed.

Until this point, Myrrha's desire for Cinyras has been contrasted with her lack of interest in legitimate suitors and, in consequence, Cinyras has been contrasted with these suitors. In the course of her conversation with Cinyras, however, this opposition becomes indistinct and the contrast less obvious, for the two separate figures of Cinyras and the suitor and the two contexts of illegitimate and legitimate *amor* which they represent, to some extent, become intermingled as Cinyras becomes the answer to his own request that Myrrha choose a husband. In large degree, this depends on Myrrha's exploitation of the ambiguity of language, for, with a degree of consideration not commonly accorded to daughters in this situation in the *Metamorphoses*,³⁵² Myrrha is asked what type of man she would like to marry and, with ambiguity typical of the *Metamorphoses* generally and of this episode in particular, she replies "similem tibi" (364).³⁵³ This obscures the clear division between Cinyras and suitor, apparent at the outset, and illuminates the way in which Myrrha expresses her desire for Cinyras under the cover of the desire for a husband. Thus she implicitly chooses Cinyras as a substitute suitor, for it is only on these grounds that she can formulate her desire. In effect, this discussion of marriage influences how she responds to Cinyras and provides the model for her desired relationship with him. (Restrictions on the mode of expression of female desire and the need to express it in terms defined by the male is likewise a theme in the tale of Echo and Narcissus.³⁵⁴) This sets her in the role of bride and Cinyras in the role of preferred/ chosen suitor.

Myrrha's choice of Cinyras as husband resolves her dilemma between marriage and *amor*. This is an inversion of the traditional division of character, the 'cleavage of identity',

³⁵² Atalanta and Daphne are other examples of females allowed to postpone or avoid marriage, though this only occurs with male approval. Roman practice allowed the daughter to have some influence, albeit limited, in her choice of husband but the permanent avoidance of marriage was unusual. See Treggiari (1991) 16; 134-5; 147.

³⁵³ Cf Pygmalion: "sit coniunx, opto", non ausus 'eburnea virgo' / dicere, Pygmalion 'similis mea' dixit 'eburnae.'" (*Met.* 10.275-6). For the ambiguity of this word in Pygmalion and Myrrha, see Sharrock (1991a) 180.

³⁵⁴ McKinley (2001) 8-9 discusses the dramatic monologue as the male-sanctioned form of discourse for the female.

typical of such dilemmas, where the female separates into two roles, defined by the two different demands on her. (Most commonly, this involves the separation of the female into daughter and lover/ wife when she is torn between father and lover/ husband (Medea; Scylla).) In the case of Myrrha, the contrast is between husband and lover so that she is torn between the role of wife and that of lover. She solves this dilemma, not by choosing one over the other, but by combining the two and thus choosing both. The fact that this same figure is also Myrrha's father contributes an additional level to the traditional dichotomy of character and this depends on the confusion of roles caused by incestuous desire. Myrrha avoids making any real choice in assimilating all three figures and choosing her father-lover as husband. Thus she assumes the roles of wife, lover and daughter. This is implicit and is not consciously expressed by Myrrha.

In setting Myrrha's desire for Cinyras in the context of her rejection of marriage and of legitimate suitors, the narrator implicitly styles Myrrha as bride and Cinyras as bridegroom. This depends on the fact that the context of marriage provides the model and definition for Myrrha's response to Cinyras. (The facade of the typical marriage competition is quickly destroyed but marriage is retained as a context for the liaison.) The narrator develops this in describing Myrrha's liaison with Cinyras in terms reminiscent of the marriage ceremony. This reflects and exposes the interaction of the incestuous affair and the genuine marriage with which it is compared/ on which it is modelled. (It is interesting to note that sacred marriage rituals themselves appear to have been modelled on human marriage. Undoubtedly, the format of these marriage rituals was not universal, but the *hieros gamos* appears to have incorporated such prominent aspects from the human marriage ceremony as the procession of the bride to her new home.³⁵⁵) The narrator styles Myrrha's approach to Cinyras and her erotic activity with him as part of the wedding ceremony:

³⁵⁵ For a more detailed discussion of this, see Avagianou (1991) 201-2 and L.R.Farnell, *The Cults of the Greek States. Vol 1* (Oxford, 1896) 185-92.

Tempus erat, quo cuncta silent, interque triones
 flexerat obliquo plastrum temone Bootes:
 ad facinus venit illa suum; fugit aurea caelo
 luna, tegunt nigrae latitantia sidera nubes;
 nox caret igne suo; primus tegis, Icare, vultus.
 Erigoneque pio sacrata parentis amore.
 ter pedis offensi signo est revocata, ter omen
 funereus bubo letali carmine fecit:
 it tamen, et tenebrae minuunt noxque atra pudorem;
 nutricisque manum laeva tenet, altera motu
 caecum iter explorat. thalami iam limina tangit,
 iamque fores aperit, iam ducitur intus: at illi
 poplite succiduo genua intremuere, fugitque
 et color et sanguis, animusque relinquit euntem.
 quoque suo propior sceleri est, magis horret, et ausi
 paenitet, et vellet non cognita posse reverti.
 cunctantem longaeva manu deducit et alto
 admotam lecto cum traderet 'accipe'. dixit,
 'ista tua est, Cinyra' devotaque corpora iunxit.
 accipit obsceno genitor sua viscera lecto
 virgineosque metus levat hortaturque timentem.
 forsitan aetatis quoque nomine 'filia' dixit,
 dixit et illa 'pater', sceleri ne nomina desint. (446-68)

The scene is reminiscent of the wedding ceremony in two particular ways, for Myrrha's approach to Cinyras recalls the procession of the bride to her new home and the consummation of Myrrha's desire recalls the consummation of the marriage. On both counts, the interaction of the incestuous liaison with the marriage ceremony which underlies it is closely associated with the motifs of light and darkness. This is a central feature of the episode. Before discussing the narrator's interaction of incest and marriage and the purpose of it, I will briefly refer to the importance of the motif of darkness in this episode.

It is notable that the prevailing atmosphere in this episode is one of darkness (daylight is not mentioned at any point). Myrrha's approach to Cinyras, the initial consummation of her *amor* and the continued erotic activity all take place in darkness because the incestuous nature of the affair requires the concealment which darkness

provides.³⁵⁶ The darkness also fulfils three functions here, for it conceals Myrrha's identity and so conceals the incestuous nature of the relationship which depends on that identity: and it ensures that Cinyras remains ignorant of both Myrrha's identity and the crime attendant on it.³⁵⁷ (The darkness maintains the illusion as does the ambiguous language.) Significantly, in a tale in which darkness and deception are prevalent, the climax of the action comes at the point where light is introduced into the scene. Myrrha's incest is intimately connected with darkness, being dependent on it, and, to that extent, it symbolises her perverse desire. In effect, Myrrha's choice of incest is necessarily a choice of darkness and its recurrence throughout the scene, emphasised especially at the point where light is introduced, functions continually to underline this choice and the nature of Myrrha's *amor*.³⁵⁸

Myrrha's liaison is associated with the marriage ceremony in two ways and at each point the theme of light and darkness is prominent in exposing the gulf between the liaison and the marriage which underlies it. As regards Myrrha's approach to Cinyras, the scene would appear to be styled as the procession of the bride to her new home. Whereas Myrrha's movement to her father's bedchamber is merely assumed in earlier versions of the myth, the Ovidian narrator (Orpheus) draws attention to and expands this stage, emphasising the actual physical transfer of Myrrha. The recurrence of marriage terminology in this scene would seem to confirm this view of Myrrha's journey as the marriage procession, known technically as the *deductio in domum mariti*. The appearance and repetition of forms of the verbs *deducere* (462), *tradere* (463) and *accipere* (463; 465) recall the legal formula pertaining to that part of the marriage ceremony in which the bride is handed over to her husband: *in matrimonium ducere/ accipere/ tradere*. According to

³⁵⁶ Unacceptable behaviour typically takes place in darkness, such as Scylla's crime against her father (*Met.*8.81-6) and Medea's sorcery (*Met.*7.184; 192-3). In Apuleius, magic is frequently associated with darkness (*Met.*1.11-12; 3.21).

³⁵⁷ If we note that adultery is a crime, this is a crime of which Cinyras is aware and in which he is complicit.

³⁵⁸ Polar opposites often acquire symbolic significance (light/ dark; right/ left).

Treggiari,

Matrimonium is an institution involving a mother, *mater*. The idea implicit in the word is that a man takes a woman in marriage, *in matrimonium ducere*, so that he may have children by her. He joins her to him by marriage, or by 'his' marriage, or by marriage with himself. He keeps her in marriage, *in matrimonio habere*. Her family may give her into marriage, *in matrimonium dare* or *collocare*. The husband receives her, *accipere*.³⁵⁹

The omens referred to (the notoriously unfavourable omens of stumbling and of the owl³⁶⁰) are not specific to a marriage context (though that of the owl appears in the description of the marriage of Tereus and Procne (*Met.*6.432)) so that their presence in the Myrrha episode functions to contribute to the general atmosphere of momentous activity.³⁶¹

This procession was an important feature of the Roman (and the Greek) marriage ceremony and the use of light/ illumination was a central part of the ritual. Of this procession, Treggiari writes that "It took place by torch light, and these torches are mentioned as symbols of the whole wedding."³⁶² She goes on to explain that this custom, apart from its practical purpose of illuminating the route, fulfilled the symbolic function of publicising the marriage. Clearly, Myrrha's approach to Cinyras, styled as a marriage procession, is distinct from it in that it takes place in complete darkness. This darkness depends on the fact that Myrrha chose incest instead of marriage and here draws attention to that fact. The exclusion of torches (and the absence of substitute torches in the form of stars) ensures the darkness of the surroundings and thus inverts the marriage motif and the purpose of the procession: whereas the bride and her attendants draw attention to the wedding, Myrrha and her attendant conceal it. The description of the passage as "caecum iter", with its mixture of literal and metaphorical meaning (darkness and ignorance), is,

therefore, interesting, for it reflects precisely the secret nature of the affair rather than the

³⁵⁹ Treggiari (1991) 5.

³⁶⁰ *Aen.*2.242; *Am.* 1.12.5-6; *Aen.*4.462; *Met.*5.550; 6.431-2; 7.269; 15.791. For three as a magic number and as a bad omen in Myrrha, see Viarre (1964) 254.

³⁶¹ Omens surround Byblis' incestuous desire also. She is described as ignoring these signs, for although she drops the tablet which expresses her *amor*, still she sends it: "misit tamen" (9.572). This is similar to Myrrha's disregard of the omens which surround her approach to Cinyras: "it tamen" (10.454).

³⁶² Treggiari (1991) 166. Cf *Cat.*61.15; *Apul. Met.*4.26; *Aen.*4.339; *Her.*14.10; *Met.*1.483.

public display central in the wedding ceremony.³⁶³ This emphasises how Myrrha's substitution of marriage for incest has substituted the light typical of the marriage procession for the darkness appropriate to her approach to Cinyras.

As regards Myrrha's initial encounter with Cinyras, there are three reasons to suppose that it is designed to recall a scene of wedding-night love-making. Firstly, the fact that it comes at the conclusion of a journey deliberately reminiscent of the marriage procession, would immediately suggest that we are supposed to regard the erotic encounter in the light of the consummation of a marriage. Secondly, the darkness which surrounds the first incestuous meeting likewise points towards this, for typically wedding-night love-making took place in darkness. On these grounds, Myrrha is aligned with the bride, but this alignment is only ever superficial. The fact that Myrrha's erotic activity continues to take place in darkness after the initial encounter highlights the difference and emphasises the contrast of legitimate and illegitimate *amor*. Thirdly, Cinyras' response to Myrrha is described in terms similar to those used to define Myrrha's response to marriage. The effect of this is to recall the earlier marital context in the scene of unnatural *amor*.

Firstly, then, Myrrha's approach to Cinyras has been set against the procession of the bride to the home of her new husband. When, therefore, she reaches Cinyras, the audience expects the analogy to continue and anticipates the imminent erotic encounter to be reminiscent of the first experience of marital intercourse. Secondly, this expectation is met by the darkness of the scene of erotic activity, for in the context of the marriage ritual, the consummation of the marriage typically took place in darkness with a view to overcoming the reticence of the young bride and the *pudor* which causes it.³⁶⁴ In the Myrrha episode, the same combination of motifs occurs, for Myrrha's hesitation is attributed to her *pudor* and the darkness is described as functioning to overcome both her reluctance and her *pudor*:

³⁶³ A similar phrase occurs following Cinyras' discovery: "Myrrha fugit tenebrisque et caecae munere noctis/ intercepta neci est..." (10.476-7). For *caecus* used metaphorically, see *Met.* 6.472.

³⁶⁴ For consummation in darkness, Plutarch *QR* 65. For reticence caused by *pudor*, *Cat.* 61.79.

it tamen, et tenebrae minuunt noxque atra *pudorem* (454)

... thalami iam limina tangit,... (455)

cunctantem longaeva manu deducit... (462)

Thus Myrrha is implicitly compared with the bride. The narrator describes her as *cunctantem*, as Dido is as she prepares to join Aeneas on the hunt and prepares for her supposed marriage (*Aen.*4.133-4), and suggests that in this behaviour we might see something of the typical behaviour of the bride.³⁶⁵ That she delays at the threshold recalls another motif from the wedding ceremony, the point of transition and the omens associated with it.³⁶⁶

It is possible that the reference to the *nigrae nubes* (449) which conceal Myrrha and her liaison implicitly recalls the wedding veil which constituted a gesture of female modesty.³⁶⁷ This depends on the linguistic association of *nubes* with wedding terminology.

Treggiari comments that

... the verb used of the woman marrying, *nubo*, is related to *nubes*, a cloud, and means literally 'I veil myself'. From this come *nupta*, a married woman, *nova nupta*, a bride and *nuptiae*, the wedding. The event turns on the bride and her veiling.³⁶⁸

The linguistic association exists and in view of the marital context, it is tempting to regard the *nubes* as a further development of the marriage motif, though certainly no obvious connection is made.³⁶⁹

The darkness in this episode, then, recalls both the actual darkness which accompanied wedding-night love-making and the symbolic darkness or concealment

³⁶⁵ Hill (1999) 179 comments on Ovid's use of *cunctantem*: "The introduction of the idea here underlines just how different this is from a marriage."

³⁶⁶ Treggiari (1991) 167. Cf *Cat.*61.159f. Dido also delays at the threshold (*Aen.*4.133). On this line, see R.G.Austin, *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos. Liber Quartus* (Oxford, 1966) 62.

³⁶⁷ This explains the boldness of Iphigenia's unveiling in Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 228-48.

³⁶⁸ Treggiari (1991) 163. For *nubere*, see note on *Cat.*61.8 (Fordyce (1961) 240). An additional line of inquiry may lie in the fact that various aspects of this scene are reminiscent of the wedding-funeral motif: the wedding veil and the veil of mourning; the wedding torches and the darkness; or the wedding torches and the torches of the Furies referred to at 10.313-14; the wedding song and the song of the owl ("funereus bubo letali carmine fecit" (10.453)). Cf *Her.*21.157-72.

³⁶⁹ For the use of the veil to conceal identity and deceive a lover in the context of marriage, see *Fast.*3.690-2.

provided by the bridal veil. In the context of marriage, the veil and the darkness function to relieve the bride's *pudor* and hesitation. In the Myrrha episode, the *nubes* and the darkness are likewise described as relieving Myrrha's *pudor*. It is, of course, true that concern for *pudor* is part of the dilemma of any female who finds herself in an amatory situation³⁷⁰ (as too is the motif of darkness for relief of that *pudor*)³⁷¹ and is not exclusive to the context of marriage. (It is also true that such concern is often merely superficial.) In this scene, however, in view of the marriage terminology, it would seem reasonable to suppose that Myrrha is to be measured specifically against the bride. Despite the suggestion that the darkness functions to relieve Myrrha's modesty, as it does for the inexperienced bride, the fact that Myrrha's erotic activity continues to take place in darkness suggests that virginal modesty can no longer explain the darkness. This exposes the difference between Myrrha and the bride and emphasises the fact that Myrrha's *amor* is completely and permanently dependent on darkness. Myrrha's concern for *pudor* only partially explains her dilemma and indecision and the darkness conceals not only, or even primarily, her *pudor* but rather her identity and the nature of her crime.

The third way in which Myrrha's initial encounter with Cinyras recalls wedding-night love-making depends on the fact that Cinyras' response to Myrrha in this scene echoes the language used earlier in the context of Cinyras' arrangement of Myrrha's marriage. In the initial discourse between Cinyras and Myrrha, the father seeks to persuade his daughter to marry and assumes her reticence to be the result of her fear of marriage:

virginei Cinyras haec credens esse timoris
flere vetat siccatque genas atque oscula iungit; (361-2)

This comment reflects the anxiety of the virginal bride which was a common literary motif.³⁷² Treggiari refers to the literary portrayal of the trauma of marriage for a young

³⁷⁰ Cf *Medea* (7.11-71); *Scylla* (8.44-80; 108-42). The *pudor* of the elegiac mistress is a common complaint of the lover.

³⁷¹ For this motif in elegy, *Am.* 1.5.

³⁷² Deianira, in her opening speech in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, recalls her own virginal fear (*Trach.* 6-8). Treggiari (1991) 106-7 lists various other literary references to this motif.

bride and assumes this to be based on fact, though she indicates that, nonetheless, opinion was divided over wedding-night violence:

Gentleness in wooing a timid bride could be seen as the norm, ... (but) a man might also argue that resistance was feigned.³⁷³

When the narrator repeats this same notion in the scene of consummation, and repeats it, in fact, in very similar language, the explicit marital context of the earlier statement is recalled and is transferred to this context, inviting us to regard Myrrha's fear at this point as that of the young bride:

virgineosque metus levat hortaturque timentem. (466)

This styles Myrrha as bride and Cinyras as bridegroom. The fact that Cinyras does not exactly repeat his earlier statement may be designed to reflect a slight distortion caused by Cinyras' change of role, for he now speaks as lover/husband rather than as father.

Throughout this episode, then, the context of marriage is established as an undercurrent. This depends firstly on the fact that since the arrangement of Myrrha's marriage is a prominent feature (it is of concern to Myrrha, to Cinyras and to the nurse), marriage provides the model for Myrrha's preferred relationship with Cinyras. It depends also on the fact that in order to highlight the gulf between incest and marriage (and thus to expose Myrrha's use of the framework of marriage), the central scenes of the episode recall various aspects of the marriage ceremony. The effect of creating this marital backdrop is to recall the traditional context of the Cinyras legend, in which Cinyras participated in a sacred marriage with Aphrodite. The marital backdrop functions to recall the sacred marriage because the *hieros gamos* was, like Myrrha's liaison, modelled on the human marriage ceremony. Therefore, Cinyras participating in a marriage in the role of bridegroom draws attention to his traditional participation in the sacred marriage and his traditional role as bridegroom of Aphrodite. In addition, by involving Myrrha in this marital setting, she becomes, as 'bride' of Cinyras, more fully integrated into the ritual context of the Cinyras

³⁷³ Treggiari (1991) 168.

legend. In effect, this constitutes the extension of the *hieros gamos* motif to the figure of Myrrha. Identification of this ritual dimension encourages reassessment of Myrrha's erotic motivation, for it sets the liaison in a context where pious activity is intermingled with the erotic and which, therefore, removes emphasis from the depraved female libido which Orpheus proposes as the shameful motivation for the liaison.

(IV) The Religious undercurrent

In this section, my discussion of the establishment of the ritual backdrop in the Myrrha episode turns to an examination of how a religious undercurrent is created in the tale. This contributes to the establishment of the *hieros gamos* as a backdrop in the tale because the religious atmosphere not only recalls the religious/ sacred dimension of the original Cinyras legend but also interacts with the theme of legitimate marriage against which the incestuous liaison is set and on which it is modelled.

In speaking of the creation of a religious undercurrent in the episode, it is necessary at the outset to define the term 'religious'. Broadly speaking, it involves the divine, but this does not adequately explain it, for various cultural and social practices involved the divine but were not regarded as religious matters. This can be seen particularly in the marriage ritual, for although it was protected by a number of deities (Juno; Venus; Ceres) and although the marriage of Zeus and Hera was regarded as a model for mortal marriage,³⁷⁴ it was predominantly a social contract rather than a religious ritual. The sacred marriage was, of course, an exception. (That marriage was not a religious matter in the modern sense explains my separation of the backdrop of marriage and the religious backdrop.) The exploits of the gods in the early books of the *Metamorphoses* hardly qualify as religious in any sense. Perhaps closest to the modern understanding of the term was the experience of the mystery cults which combined belief in the divine with an emotional response/ attachment. In terms of Roman attitudes, I would suggest that the term 'religious' denotes some form of sacred celebration of the divine in the context of a festival or ritual.

With this in mind, my discussion of the religious backdrop to this episode will have two parts. In the first, I will discuss the figure of Orpheus as narrator and the effect which his identity as religious singer has on the tale. Necessarily, an assessment of the use of a particular narrator involves a separation of external and internal narrator, for there is a

³⁷⁴ Detienne (1972) 89.

distinction between the effect which an internal narrator has upon his tale (in terms of personal bias) and the effect which an external narrator has upon his tale in his choice of internal narrator. Nevertheless, as I will be discussing Ovid's choice of narrator, it is important to make this distinction here and to note that any reading of the Myrrha episode ought to take account of the influence of its two narrators, Ovid and Orpheus.³⁷⁵ (Orpheus, as internal narrator, is responsible for the implied reading of the tale in Myrrha and in Pygmalion.) In doing so, I am making use of developments made in this area and, in particular, of Nagle's various contributions to this area of study.³⁷⁶

In the second part of this section, I will discuss the relevance of the setting of this incest tale against the backdrop of the Ceres festival, a backdrop which would appear to be an Ovidian innovation. In particular, I will suggest that the Myrrha episode repeats both the central symbolism and the action of the Ceres myth and the re-enactment of that myth in the religious festival. I will suggest that this backdrop functions somewhat as an embedded narrative, or rather, as an implied embedded narrative, for it follows the action of the principal narrative and provides commentary on it.

The identity of Orpheus as narrator contributes to the religious undercurrent of the tale. The religious associations of this figure depend on the fact that, within the collection of poetry known as Orphic literature (these poems, the product of writers who used Orpheus as a pseudonym, were the essence of Orphic religion), a number of the texts were employed in rituals of mystery cults, such as at Eleusis or in Dionysiac/ Bacchic rites. This aspect becomes central in the Myrrha episode, for Orpheus deliberately draws attention to himself at the opening of this episode and gives prominence to his religious dimension. Having told the tales of Ganymede (155-61), Hyacinthus (162-219), the Cerastae and Propoetides (220-42) and Pygmalion (243-97), Orpheus pauses in his narrative and explicitly addresses his audience. By means of this apostrophe, he draws attention to

³⁷⁵ Knox (1986) 61-2 argues that Orpheus and Ovid are indistinguishable at the end of the song.

³⁷⁶See bibliography for the list of Nagle's works referred to here.

himself as narrator and signals his movement towards what may be regarded as his “maius opus”, much as Vergil’s apostrophe at *Aeneid* 7.37-45 functions to mark such a transition (7.45).³⁷⁷ Orpheus’ identity is emphasised at this point and, to some extent, in fact, redefined, for he is introduced at the beginning of Book 10 in his most famous role as archetypal singer but his prelude to the Myrrha tale, in the form of a religious formula of exclusion, gives prominence to the religious associations of this figure.³⁷⁸ While arguably the religious and poetic aspects of his character are inseparable,³⁷⁹ not least in view of the fact that Orphic religion as such consisted primarily in the collection of poetry known as Orphic literature,³⁸⁰ the first part of his song, with its focus on *amor* (his own and that of others) has partially served to subordinate his religious dimension. (It does, of course, become clear that *amor* continues as the subject of his song.) At this point in his song, however, Orpheus draws attention to himself and presents himself as a religious singer and this functions to establish a religious atmosphere for the Myrrha episode. (To that extent, both Ovid and Orpheus are responsible for the religious undercurrent in this tale: Ovid, through his choice of a narrator who had prominent religious associations; Orpheus, through his deliberate emphasis on those religious associations.)

That the Ceres festival provides a backdrop to Myrrha’s incestuous affair likewise contributes to the religious undercurrent in the tale. It does so in a very superficial way, for it deliberately imposes a religious setting on the episode. The Myrrha-Cinyras affair is conducted during a period of time when a religious festival is taking place. This is, on this level, sufficient to contribute to a religious backdrop for the liaison, as any religious festival

³⁷⁷ Cf *Aen.* 7.44-5: “maior rerum mihi nascitur ordo/ maius opus moveo”. Orpheus’ prologue echoes the warning of the Sibyl at *Aen.* 6.258: “procul, o procul este, profani”. In addition, Myrrha’s approach to Cinyras has been compared with Aeneas’ descent to the underworld, following the Sibyl’s warning: J.T. Dyson, “Myrrha’s Catabasis”, *CJ* 94 (1998) 163-7. Orpheus, the narrator of Myrrha’s tale, famously visited the underworld to retrieve his wife, Eurydice.

³⁷⁸ Knox (1986) 54-5. The uninitiated were excluded from the mysteries at Eleusis. For this cult, see p212-13.

³⁷⁹ C.P. Segal, “The Magic of Orpheus and the Ambiguities of Language”, *Ramus* 7 (1978) 106-42 at 106 argues thus: “The ‘poetic’ Orpheus inevitably overlaps with the founder of Orphism...”.

³⁸⁰ For discussion of the question of the religious associations of Orpheus, see M.L. West, *The Orphic Poems* (Oxford, 1983).

would be. Nevertheless, I would suggest that the Ceres festival in particular has additional relevance for the religious undercurrent of the episode.

The myth of Ceres, which Ovid relates both in the *Metamorphoses* (5.341-571) and the *Fasti* (4.393-620),³⁸¹ involved the violation of Ceres' daughter, Proserpina, by Pluto, her uncle, and her subsequent abduction by him to the underworld, where he is king.³⁸² Ceres, distraught at the loss of her daughter, searches for and ultimately locates her in Hades.³⁸³ Jupiter consents to the return of Proserpina to earth and to her mother, on the condition that she has not eaten anything during her time in the underworld. In view of the fact that Proserpina had eaten pomegranate seeds, she was unable to return to earth permanently, but was obliged to spend part of the year below the earth. Nevertheless, Ceres rejoiced in the discovery and return, albeit temporary, of her daughter. This was the Roman version of the myth of Demeter and Persephone/ Kore.

The figure of Ceres-Demeter was celebrated in a number of religious festivals in the ancient world. Most famous, perhaps, were the Eleusinian Mysteries, a Greek cult in which the goddess Demeter offered immortality to all those who were initiated into her cult. This cult celebrated the rape of Persephone, Demeter's search for her and the mother's joy at the recovery of her daughter. (It is also thought that this cult involved the celebration of a sacred marriage between Zeus and Demeter.³⁸⁴) In the Greek world, Demeter was likewise celebrated in the *Thesmophoria*, principally an agrarian festival: the Roman festival, known as the *Sacrum Anniversarium Cereris*, was, in many respects, the Roman equivalent of the *Thesmophoria*. (This Roman festival, in modern scholarship, is referred to as the *Sacrum Anniversarium Cereris*. It was certainly described thus in

³⁸¹ The account which I give here is the general outline of the myth without the specific detail or ornamentation of either Ovidian version.

³⁸² Avagianou (1991) 113-44 discusses the rape of Persephone/ Proserpina as a myth of marriage initiation.

³⁸³ When Ceres in the *Metamorphoses* learns that Proserpina is in the underworld (5.509-12), her reaction is similar to that of Orpheus on his visit to the underworld in search of Eurydice (10.64). For further discussion of this aspect in the later episode, see J.Heath, "The *Stupor* of Orpheus: Ovid's *Met.*10.64-71", *CJ* 91 (1996) 353-70.

³⁸⁴ H. le Bonniec, *Le Culte de Cérés à Rome. Des origines à la fin de la République* (Paris, 1958) 442 n1.

antiquity, though it appears to have had no definite title: it was variously referred to as the *Sacra Graeca*; the *Sacrum Anniversarium*; and the *Sacra Cereris*.³⁸⁵) Apart from being celebrated at different times of year, the *Thesmophoria* being a sowing festival (autumn) and the *Sacrum Anniversarium* a harvest one (summer), these festivals were similar in a number of details.³⁸⁶ Central to both was that part of the myth which was concerned with Ceres' grief at the loss of her daughter, her distressed search for her and her ultimate discovery. Both also excluded men from participating and were primarily concerned with fertility, both human and agricultural.

The particular festival being celebrated in the background of the action in the Myrrha tale has been identified as the *Sacrum Anniversarium Cereris*, the most important mode of Ceres worship in the Roman world.³⁸⁷ That the deity concerned is specifically Ceres and not Demeter immediately points towards this identification, but it depends also on references in the Myrrha episode which appear to recall notable features of the Roman festival, namely the exclusion of men and a linguistic taboo extending from it. As regards the former (also a feature of the *Thesmophoria*), the participation of Myrrha's mother, Cenchreis, and the indication of exclusively female involvement would appear to be designed to reflect the specifically female worship of the *Sacrum Anniversarium* festival. That Myrrha does not participate in a festival where young girls were expected to celebrate alongside *matronae*³⁸⁸ does not undermine this identification, for Myrrha's absence may simply function to highlight her neglect of her religious duty and to enhance the horror at her alternative activity. It is, of course, necessary to be aware that we ought not to expect in Ovid, or in any fictional author, an accurate representation of a social or religious custom.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁵ le Bonniec (1958) 381-95 fully examines this matter.

³⁸⁶ An additional difference was that the Greek festival, unlike the Roman one, was nocturnal. For explanation of this, see le Bonniec (1958) 414.

³⁸⁷ Detienne (1972) 76-7.

³⁸⁸ As attested by le Bonniec (1958) 421 and Pomeroy (1975) 216-17.

³⁸⁹ le Bonniec (1958) 339-40 refers to the contamination of religious practice in Ovid's treatment of the Ceres myth in the *Fasti*.

As regards the linguistic taboo, it has been considered that the *Sacrum Anniversarium* forbade the use of the terms *pater* and *filia*.³⁹⁰ le Bonniec³⁹¹ explains this unusual restriction in suggesting that *pater* was forbidden since it recalled that male/paternal power which, to all intents and purposes, was excluded from the festival, this male power having been responsible for Proserpina's violation and abduction. He suggests, though more tentatively, the prohibition against *filia* as indicative of the matrons' surrender of the role of mother in deference to the role of Ceres as mother in her search for her daughter. Nevertheless, in whatever way these taboos may be explained, there appears to be agreement that such a taboo existed and was peculiar to this Ceres festival. (The *Thesmophoria*, like the *Sacrum Anniversarium*, excluded men but does not appear to have had any linguistic restrictions attached to it.) The narrator's suggestion that Cinyras and Myrrha may have addressed each other as *filia* and *pater*, apart from the irony it imparts, has, therefore, been taken as reference to this prohibition and the festival has accordingly been identified as the *Sacrum Anniversarium*.³⁹²

In view of the female prominence in this festival and the linguistic restrictions attendant on it, it is not difficult to understand why such a festival would be appropriate in Ovid's tale of incest. The festival functions superficially to provide the opportunity for the incestuous affair to take place, for it guarantees the removal of Cenchreis, Myrrha's mother and Cinyras' wife. In addition, it contributes a further dimension to the violation of the restrictions of language. The theme of the flexibility and distortion of language recurs throughout the *Metamorphoses* and reflects the flexibility of physical form which is the epic's central theme. In tales such as Byblis and Myrrha, however, this notion is redefined when the ambiguity of language proves insufficient to approve the perverse *amor* of the episode, even if it is sufficient to conceal it and deceive (both self and other). A number of

³⁹⁰ Servius Danielis on *Aen.*4.58: "et Romae cum Cereri sacra fiunt, observatur ne quis patrem aut filiam nominet, quod fructus matrimonii per liberos constet."

³⁹¹ le Bonniec (1958) 421-2.

³⁹² For the use of the terms *pater* and *filia* as social metaphors, see J.P.Hallett, *Fathers and Daughters in Roman Society* (Princeton, 1984) 67.

critics have discussed this aspect in the Myrrha episode and note the importance of the use of *pater* and *filia* in the context of the ambiguous boundaries of language and the fixed boundaries of familial relationship. Tissol³⁹³ conducts such a study. Lowrie³⁹⁴ discusses this theme in respect of the additional implications of *pater* and *filia* as a ritual taboo. Detienne³⁹⁵ discusses this along similar lines in proposing that these religious restrictions on the use of *pater* and *filia* are violated during the Ceres festival, with the result that the father-daughter relationship is foregrounded at a time when the mother-daughter relationship, central in the Ceres festival, ought to be dominant.

The Ceres festival, therefore, has interesting implications in a tale of father-daughter incest, for the violation of the boundaries of family and language, inherent in incest, acquire an additional aspect of violation in the context of a religious linguistic taboo. The contrast of the mother-daughter and the father-daughter relationships, likewise inherent in father-daughter incest, is similarly compounded when set against the backdrop of a festival which celebrates the mother-daughter bond. These features of the Ceres festival and of the Ceres myth are, therefore, important: I would go further in suggesting that the action of the myth and of the festival are equally important for the Myrrha episode in the *Metamorphoses*. As a means of highlighting the similarity in this regard, I will discuss the action and the symbolism of the Ceres myth, of Ceres worship and of the Myrrha episode.

As regards the myth of Ceres, this records the mother's distress at the loss of her daughter, her prolonged search for her and her ultimate discovery of her. The central symbolism of this myth is that of light and darkness. In Ovid's account of this myth in the *Metamorphoses*, this imagery recurs: it is apparent in the contrast between the light of the upper world and the darkness of Hades (356-61); between Ceres' nocturnal search and her use of torches for illumination (441-3); and in the comparison of Ceres' movement from

³⁹³ Tissol (1997) 36-42.

³⁹⁴ M.Lowrie, "Myrrha's Second Taboo, Ovid *Met.*10.467-68", *CPh* 88 (1993) 50-2.

³⁹⁵ Detienne (1972) 77-8; 81. For contrast of Ceres and Adonis; grain and spice; marriage and seduction, see Detienne, 2-3.

grief to joy with the sun breaking through the clouds (569-71). In Ovid's version in the *Fasti*, the same imagery is found in the same contexts: Pluto's descent to the underworld with Proserpina is styled as the movement from light to darkness (449-50); and Ceres again illuminates her nocturnal search with torches (4.489-94), expressed here as an action for the use of torches in the worship of Ceres. This imagery is not peculiar to Ovid's versions of the tale but is a common motif attached to this myth: in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*,³⁹⁶ the goddess' use of torches is recorded and Demeter is consistently associated with light.

The action of the Ceres-Demeter myth was dramatically represented in her worship in the context of the Eleusinian Mysteries, for initiates celebrated the goddess by repeating her activity, imitating her grief at the loss of Persephone and searching for her throughout the night with torches:

Les mystères de Cérés sont semblables à ceux d'Isis: toute la nuit, avec des torches allumées, on cherche Proserpine et, quand elle est retrouvée, la cérémonie se termine par des actions de grâces et par un rite d'agitation des torches.³⁹⁷

The worship at Eleusis did not simply re-enact the Ceres-Demeter myth but also borrowed the symbolism attached to it. Therefore, the symbolism of light and dark was prominent in this cult and the literal use of torches, employed in imitation of Demeter, became in addition a metaphor for the immortality of the soul which this cult offered to its devotees. The metaphorical progression from dark to light was reflected in the literal progress from dark to light.³⁹⁸ The *Sacrum Anniversarium* and the *Thesmophoria*, with the same myth at their centre, celebrated those parts of the myth which were the climax and the conclusion of the Eleusinian worship. Inevitably, then, the symbolism of the mystery cult, which was

³⁹⁶ For the relationship of this text to the ritual worship of Demeter at Eleusis, see *OCD* (1996) 1142. At the conclusion of the hymn, there is reference to the darkness of the uninitiated.

³⁹⁷ le Bonniec (1958) 413.

³⁹⁸ The same pattern and imagery was attached to the Isis cult which likewise promised immortality for those who were initiated. Isis was also associated with light (Cf *Met.* 9.688-9). See Pomeroy (1975) 218-22; Heyob (1975). A considerable modern literature has been devoted to the importance of this goddess and of the imagery of light and dark in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* (P.G. Walsh, *The Roman Novel. The 'Satyricon' of Petronius and the 'Metamorphoses' of Apuleius* (Cambridge, 1970); C. Panayotakis, "Vision and Light in Apuleius' Tale of Psyche and her Mysterious Husband" *CQ* 51 (2001) 576-83).

the symbolism of the myth itself, attaches to these festivals also.³⁹⁹ In summary, the action of the Ceres myth involves a mother searching for her daughter and the ultimate discovery is symbolised by the progression from darkness to light. This symbolism is part of the *Sacrum Anniversarium* and the Eleusinian Mysteries, where the dramatic re-enactment of the pattern of search and discovery is likewise symbolised by the imagery of light and darkness, evident in the use of torches for literal and metaphorical illumination.

The action of the Myrrha episode follows the same basic pattern whereby a search results in the discovery of a daughter. Here too, the symbolism of light and darkness is central, for the narrator styles the progression of the tale as the movement from darkness to light and represents the climax of the action as the point where light is introduced into the scene. Myrrha approaches Cinyras in complete darkness. The consummation takes place in darkness. When Cinyras seeks to discover the identity of his erotic partner, he does so by bringing a lamp into his bedchamber. By doing so, he discovers that his daughter is his lover and realises his involvement in an incestuous relationship.

There are, then, three strands of action which follow a common pattern (search to discovery) and employ the same symbolism. Firstly, Ceres' search for and discovery of her daughter is being celebrated in a festival. Secondly, this celebration takes the form of *matronae* participating in a search for Proserpina and sharing in Ceres' joy, a re-enactment which involves Cenchreis, Myrrha's mother, assuming the role of Ceres as mother in search of Proserpina. (Proserpina is the symbolic daughter and ought to have been represented in the ritual re-enactment by Myrrha, her literal daughter.) Thirdly, at the same time as Cenchreis searches for and rejoices in the discovery of Proserpina, her symbolic daughter in the ritual context, Cinyras becomes involved in a search which results in the discovery of his actual daughter. This contrasts not only with the symbolic daughter whom Cenchreis

³⁹⁹ As well as sharing the same symbolism, they also had a common pattern, based on the cycle of death and rebirth in the myth itself. At the *Thesmophoria* and the *Sacrum Anniversarium*, this cycle was applied to the death and rebirth of grain; at Eleusis, to the death and rebirth of the human soul. See Pomeroy (1975) 76.

finds, but with the symbolic daughter Cinyras had earlier assumed his lover to be, implied in the reference to her as *filia*.

This similarity must be important. Indeed, to the extent that the celebration of the Ceres festival and the myth on which it is based repeat the action of the main narrative, it is possible to regard the festival and the myth in the backdrop of the episode as functioning as something of an embedded narrative. More accurately, it might be considered an implied embedded narrative, for the myth is not related in this episode, though it is told at length in *Metamorphoses* 5, where it is an actual embedded narrative.⁴⁰⁰ (It is part of the Muse, Calliope's song:⁴⁰¹ Calliope as Orpheus' mother provides a further link here.)

Typically, a narrative by an internal narrator functions to comment on the main narrative.⁴⁰² In the Myrrha episode (which is itself part of a song by an internal singer), the embedded narrative provided by the Ceres myth likewise comments on the action of the main narrative. It differs from it in two respects and it would appear that these differences, dependent on the incest theme, are primarily designed to emphasise precisely that aspect. Firstly, it differs in the sense that Cinyras, the father, conducts a search, in contrast to the mother, Ceres/ Cenchreis. This centralises the father-daughter relationship in substituting the mother of the embedded narrative with a father in the main narrative. Secondly, it differs in that the discovery of the daughter causes distress rather than relieving it. This draws attention to the devastating effect of the substitution in the transformation of ritual into incest.

In two ways, then, a religious undercurrent is established in the Myrrha episode. This is achieved firstly, by virtue of the identity of Orpheus; secondly, through aligning the action of the episode with the action both of the Ceres myth and of the religious festival

⁴⁰⁰ Accurately speaking, it is an embedded narrative within an embedded narrative. Nagle (1983) discusses the effect of tales by fictional narrators (301-2) and suggests Orpheus' song as a mirror of the *Metamorphoses* (304-5).

⁴⁰¹ On the function of Calliope's song as an embedded narrative and the effect on its 'internal' audience (Muses and Minerva), see Johnson (1996) 144-6.

⁴⁰² See Nagle (1983) 301-2.

which celebrates that myth. This religious backdrop may be explained as being reminiscent of the cult association of Cinyras in his traditional participation in the religious ritual of hierogamy with Aphrodite. Certainly the religious backdrop is not one specific to the celebration of a sacred marriage, but in view of the fact that the religious backdrop is set alongside and interacts with a marital undercurrent, it would seem reasonable to suppose that, in this way, the narrator seeks to set the Myrrha-Cinyras relationship within the framework of the ritual celebration of a sacred marriage which was a central part of the Cinyras legend. That these aspects pervade the entire episode and encompass both Cinyras and Myrrha would suggest the deliberate inclusion of Myrrha within the *hieros gamos* context from which she was traditionally distinct.

(V) Conclusion

Ovid's choice of the Myrrha-Cinyras incest tale automatically establishes a backdrop of a religious sacred marriage in his version. This depends on his choice of the Myrrha-Cinyras legend specifically rather than the Myrrha-Thias version since the theme of sacred marriage was relevant only to the former on the grounds that this motif consisted entirely in the Cinyras legend with which the Myrrha incest tale had been combined. When, on account of its ritual backdrop, the Ovidian Myrrha-Cinyras episode interacts with the preceding tale of Pygmalion, which likewise originated as a representation of Cyprian cult practice, the link is specifically between Pygmalion and Cinyras, both of whom, in legend, were Cyprian kings who, in their additional role as priests of Aphrodite, participated in a ritual sacred marriage with the goddess. The association of Pygmalion and Cinyras on these grounds must have influenced Ovid's choice of this version of the incest tale.

Yet despite this immediate connection of Pygmalion and Cinyras, underlined in the familial connection of these two figures, the fact can hardly be ignored that Cinyras, in the

Ovidian tale, is subordinate to Myrrha, who takes centre stage. That Myrrha is prominent is important, not only because Ovid was primarily concerned with the incest motif in this episode (incest was originally part of the Myrrha legend), but because he thereby hopes to emphasise the active role of Myrrha in the consummation of the incest. (The central section of the *Metamorphoses* displays a number of active females, such as Medea, Scylla and Procne.) In addition, Myrrha's prominence is important, for in centralising the incest motif which Myrrha represents and in setting it against the backdrop of Cyprian cult practice, the narrator transfers the motif of the *hieros gamos* into the incest tale and thus integrates more fully the two separate legends. He does this by styling Myrrha's affair with Cinyras as a marriage ceremony, setting Myrrha in the role of bride and Cinyras in the role of bridegroom. This recalls the traditional role of Cinyras as bridegroom of Aphrodite and brings Myrrha into that traditional context. This is set alongside the creation of a religious undercurrent in the tale. In effect, the portrayal of the Myrrha-Cinyras affair as a wedding ceremony (even if the narrator exposes this as an inadequate model), in the context of a religious backdrop, directs our reading and invites us to regard the scene as reminiscent of a sacred marriage ritual. This functions to attribute to Myrrha both eroticism and piety as motivation and so invites reassessment of the monstrous libido explicitly attributed to her by Orpheus. This mitigates the response of the reader and so serves to undermine Orpheus' narratorial reliability. To that extent, it functions as a 'resisting' reading. In addition, awareness of this ritual dimension reveals a further point of contact between the Myrrha episode and the preceding tale of Pygmalion on the grounds of their common undercurrent of sacred marriage.

My argument, then, is that the Cyprian *hieros gamos* provides a backdrop to the tale of Myrrha's incest as it does for the tale of Pygmalion's statue-love. This, perhaps inevitably, raises the question of why the figure of Venus is, by and large, absent from the Myrrha episode when she features so prominently both in the Cyprian sacred marriage

celebration and in the Ovidian Pygmalion tale which has this celebration as an undercurrent. In the Pygmalion episode, despite the removal of Venus/ Aphrodite from the central position of love-object, the influence of the goddess is continually recalled throughout the episode. This depends on the statue-form of Pygmalion's love-object (in legend, Pygmalion specifically had intercourse with a statue of the goddess), on the comparison of the statue with Venus/ Aphrodite and on the actual role of Venus in animating the statue.

In the Myrrha episode, in contrast, the influence of Venus/ Aphrodite appears deliberately to have been suppressed.⁴⁰³ Indeed, it may be worth noting that in addition to her role in the Cinyras legend (as participant in a sacred marriage with Cinyras, the priest-king), Venus/ Aphrodite featured also in the Myrrha incest legend as agent of Myrrha's perverse desire (Hyginus; Panyassis; Cinna⁴⁰⁴). Although this traditional role as inspiring incestuous passion in revenge for Myrrha's excessive confidence in her own beauty is suggested both at the beginning and at the end of the episode (in the reference to Cupid denying responsibility; and in the reference to Adonis' vengeance on Venus for his mother's perverse passion), it is clear that the narrator of the Myrrha episode, to a large degree, reduces the role of the goddess. The prominence of Venus throughout the greater part of Orpheus' song (Cerastae; Propoetides; Pygmalion; Adonis; Atalanta),⁴⁰⁵ especially in the tales which precede and follow that of Myrrha (Pygmalion and Adonis), serves to emphasise her removal from Orpheus'/ Ovid's incest narrative.

That Venus/ Aphrodite, central in the Cyprian *hieros gamos* and central in Ovid's Pygmalion as a means of recalling that ritual context, is so explicitly absent from the Myrrha episode in which she traditionally had a prominent role, would appear, therefore, to undermine the suggestion that the same ritual practice was important in the Ovidian Myrrha tale. However, I would suggest that the goddess' absence may be easily explained

⁴⁰³ See Knox (1986) 61 for Ovid's suppression of Venus/ Aphrodite as responsible for Atalanta's passion.

⁴⁰⁴ See Knox (1983) for discussion of why this may have been a feature in Cinna's *Zmyrna*.

⁴⁰⁵ The Cyprian setting itself recalls Venus throughout this section in view of the intimate association of Venus/ Aphrodite with the island.

by the fact that in the Myrrha episode, although the narrator seeks to establish the same ritual backdrop as in the Pygmalion tale, he seeks to do so in an entirely different way. In the Pygmalion episode, the ritual undercurrent depends, in part, on the incorporation of the cult practice of statue-love and on the presence of Venus, particularly through the association of Pygmalion's love-object with the goddess. Thus the creation of the ritual undercurrent depends on the presence of Venus, the traditional participant in the Cyprian *hieros gamos*. In the Myrrha episode, the undercurrent depends on the association of the Myrrha-Cinyras liaison as a marriage against a religious backdrop, which was the traditional format of the Cyprian cult. This repeats the model of the Cyprian celebration rather than its participants. In effect, the absence of Venus does not undermine the suggestion that the *hieros gamos* is an undercurrent in the Myrrha-Cinyras tale, for the establishment of that undercurrent depends on factors other than Venus' traditional association with this Cyprian cult practice.

5 - Conclusion

In three episodes, then, I have discussed Ovid's use of undercurrents and suggest that the practice which I have here identified is indicative of Ovid's approach throughout the *Metamorphoses*. The first chapter began with an evaluation of Ovid's use of, and departure from, his sources for the Hercules-Deianira episode and was followed by a close reading of the Ovidian tale in Book 9. This recognised the balance of heroic and amatory in the episode (both aspects depend on Hercules' conflicts with Achelous and Nessus, for these encounters demonstrate both epic and amatory features), but revealed that the expectation of an amorous Hercules which Achelous as narrator generates through the amatory facade is consistently undermined. (The erotic context of the Hercules episode in the *Metamorphoses* likewise informs this expectation.) This operates through the implicit and systematic establishment of Hercules' lack of amorous interest in Deianira. In conclusion I proposed that this undercurrent, which consistently points towards Hercules' lack of amorous interest in Deianira and so challenges the implied reading of the tale (it is, therefore, a 'resisting' reading), has implications both for Hercules as hero and for Hercules as lover. The 'super-reading' produced by the synthesis of the implied reading (or readings, for there is both an amatory and an epic facade) and the 'resisting' reading creates an ambiguously gendered Hercules through the exploitation of the constructions of masculinity associated with the epic (*Aeneid*, *Iliad*, *Odyssey*) and the amatory (*Metamorphoses*, elegiac discourse) prominent in this episode.

In the second chapter, I looked at the Pygmalion episode in *Metamorphoses* 10, with a view to illuminating further the 'resisting' reading of the tale's eroticism. Having established the importance of this as an existing feature of Pygmalion scholarship, I discussed two additional lines of inquiry. In the first part of that chapter, then, I examined the role of Venus in contributing to the erotic atmosphere of the tale. Principally this

involved a discussion of the relationship of Pygmalion's statue with Venus, with whom the statue is both contrasted and aligned. In contrast to earlier criticism, which has discussed the identification of the Ovidian statue as Venus on the basis of the Venus statue in the Pygmalion legend, I discussed the interaction of the statue with Venus as she appears directly in Ovid's text and as she appears generally in literature and in art, though clearly there is an overlap here, for the direct presence of Venus in Ovid must, in large degree, have been influenced by her central role in the Pygmalion legend. In effect, although ultimately my discussion cannot be detached from discussion of the role of Venus in the original Pygmalion legend, my study highlights Ovid's deliberate inclusion of Venus in the text and examines how the association of Pygmalion's statue with Venus/Aphrodite is made accessible to the reader unfamiliar with Philostephanus. In the second part of that chapter, I discussed the interaction of Pygmalion with Iphis, another tale in which superficial modesty is undermined by an undercurrent of perverse erotic activity (though I did not discuss the Iphis tale in terms of the model of the implied and 'resisting' readings). I suggested that the repeated pattern illuminates how recognition of the undercurrent contributes to the meaning of the tale.

The third chapter comprised a discussion of how the narrator of the Myrrha episode establishes the ritual of sacred marriage as an undercurrent in the tale. The Myrrha-Cinyras legend, like that of Pygmalion, was interpreted as a representation of this Cyprian cult practice and as such had been assumed as a backdrop in Ovid. (In the Pygmalion chapter, my discussion of Venus involved reference to this aspect, so that discussion of how Venus is established in the Ovidian tale forms part of the discussion of how the ritual backdrop is created.) In that chapter I discussed the ways in which the narrator deliberately incorporates this dimension, both through the comparison of Myrrha's incestuous liaison with the marriage ceremony, and through the establishment of a religious atmosphere which exists alongside it. I proposed that this ritual backdrop, with its public rather than private

implications, lends a sense of legitimacy to Myrrha's erotic activity with Cinyras, for it suggests that Myrrha is behaving thus, not because of her depraved sexual desire, but rather as part of an erotically explicit ritual. This is similar to Sharrock's discussion of Pygmalion's statue-love against its original ritual backdrop and her consequent definition of his motivation as erotic and pious. This ritual dimension functions in a similar way in the Myrrha episode,⁴⁰⁶ for it intermingles obscene eroticism and piety as the motivation for Myrrha's activity (as it does in Pygmalion) and so contradicts the picture of uncontrollable female libido which Orpheus superficially holds responsible for the crime. Recognition of this narratorial incongruity undermines Orpheus' picture of an horrific Myrrha and encourages reassessment of her motivation and responsibility. This argument, therefore, develops the 'resisting' reading established by Sharrock which seeks to identify the sympathetic response towards Myrrha which underlies Orpheus' explicit disgust.

Identification of this 'resisting' reading likewise reveals a further point of contact between the Myrrha and Pygmalion episodes, for it underlines the common ritual backdrop in both tales. Therefore, the application and development of the process of 'resisting' reading in discussion of the Myrrha episode is important not only as a means of understanding more fully the Myrrha narrative but as a means of illuminating further how this incest tale interacts with other tales in Orpheus' song and in the *Metamorphoses* generally.

⁴⁰⁶ In a sense, it functions in the opposite direction, for in the Pygmalion episode, the ritual undercurrent undermines the superficial picture of piety; in the Myrrha, it undermines the superficial picture of perverse eroticism.

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