

The Ovidian Soundscape: The Poetics of Noise in the *Metamorphoses*

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation aims to study the variety of sounds described in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and to identify an aesthetic of noise in the poem, a soundscape which contributes to the work's thematic undertones. The two entities which shape an understanding of the poem's conception of noise are Chaos, the conglomerate of mobile, conflicting elements with which the poem begins, and the personified Fama, whose *domus* is seen to contain a chaotic cosmos of words rather than elements. Within the loose frame provided by Chaos and Fama, the varied categories of noise in the *Metamorphoses*' world, from nature sounds to speech, are seen to share qualities of changeability, mobility, and conflict, qualities which align them with the overall themes of flux and metamorphosis in the poem. I discuss three categories of Ovidian sound: in the first chapter, cosmological and elemental sound; in the second chapter, nature noises with an emphasis on the vocalicity of reeds and the role of echoes; and in the third chapter I treat human and divine speech and narrative, and the role of rumor. By the end of the poem, Ovid leaves us with a chaos of words as well as of forms, which bears important implications for his treatment of contemporary Augustanism as well as his belief in his own poetic fame.

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Preface: Initial Soundings

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* may be regarded, in a particular sense, as an extremely noisy work. While the mind's eye is captivated by the spectacle of the shape shifting and varied transformations of gods, people, and the natural world, if one attempts not only to look at the poem's changeable universe but also to listen to it, then the cacophony of the *Metamorphoses* becomes strikingly audible to the attentive ear. Housed within the narrator's all-encompassing *deductum carmen* are the voices of gods and humans, animals and birds, and human voices that become animal or bird voices. There are sounds of wind, water, and thunder. There are voices telling stories, laughing, crying, screaming, and prophesying. While instances of such sounds and situations are present in many ancient poems, the quick transitions and juxtapositions of such a variety of noises are a hallmark of Ovid's style in the *Metamorphoses* and call attention to the layers of meaning in the poem. This dissertation aims to explore not the landscape but the soundscape of the poem, in its variety of noises and the times and places in which they are heard; and to examine how this soundscape contributes to the thematic undertones continually sustaining and complicating the poem's messages, just as the somber notes of predestination that are heard throughout Virgil's *Aeneid*, or the random collisions of Lucretius' atoms, contribute fundamentally to the meanings of those works.

Noise in the ancient world, and in Ovid, has been studied from a rich variety of angles and with an assortment of focal points. The sense of hearing and the role played by vocal and non-vocal noise in texts have enjoyed greater attention in classical studies in the last few decades, as evidenced by Hans-Georg Niklaus' 1994 study of cosmological sound, *Die Maschine des Himmels: Zur Kosmologie und Ästhetik des Klangs*; Maurizio Bettini's 2008 book *Voci:*

Antropologia sonora del mondo antico, a study of the characterization of different types of animal and human vocal sounds in ancient literature; and more recently, Shane Butler's 2015 exploration of ancient sound theories, *The Ancient Phonograph*. These works aim to answer the question of how the ancient Greeks and Romans aimed to understand and interact with their surroundings through vocal and audible means. Works such as these take into account the sociological, psychological, and physiological backgrounds and implications of speech, hearing, and verbal interpretation in the ancient mindset, as well as their literary deployment.

The particularities of Ovidian sound are most often studied in connection with his portrayal of the politics and psychology of speech and speech loss or deprivation (for example, Bartolo Natoli's recent book *Silenced Voices* (2017); Lynn Enterline's *The Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare* (2000); and Denis Feeney's 1992 article "Si Licet et Fas Est: Ovid's *Fasti* and The Problem of Free Speech Under the Principate"); also with regard to the wordplay and "linguistic acrobatics"¹ between the level of the word and its meaning that become apparent when the poem is read aloud – an approach exemplified in Frederick Ahl's 1985 *Metaformations* and renewed in Garth Tissol's 1997 book *The Face of Nature*; and in terms of the significance of the many narrative voices in the *Metamorphoses* (for example, Alessandro Barchiesi's "Voices and Narrative Instances in the *Metamorphoses*" (2001), Stephen Wheeler's *Narrative Dynamics in Ovid's Metamorphoses* (2000), and Gianpiero Rosati's "Narrative Techniques and Narrative Structures in the *Metamorphoses*" (2002)).

This dissertation aims to take a step toward a broader understanding of Ovidian noise by looking at the thematic links among the varied types of noise that occur in the *Metamorphoses* – human and non-human, verbal and non-verbal. Like Ovid's poem, my study begins in Chaos and

¹ Rosati (1983) 153.

ends with Augustus and the poet. My discussion is arranged in three complementary parts, each building from and referring back to the others with appropriate echoes: in Chapter 1, the sounds of the poem's cosmology; in Chapter 2, the sounds of the natural world; and in Chapter 3, the sounds of the human and divine realms. Through close readings of significant passages, not least with reference to epic models provided by Virgil and Lucretius, I attempt to trace thematic threads through the poem that lead to the suggestion of an Ovidian poetics – even an aesthetic – of sound in the *Metamorphoses*. This study will thus link together aspects of the audible world in the poem that have previously tended to be studied separately, notable among them the evocation of the landscape and the speech/silence dichotomy; and this approach will serve in turn to demonstrate the significance of all these sonal aspects together in supporting the poem's general themes of fluidity and change.

The *Metamorphoses* begins with Chaos, and ends with Augustan Rome and the poet's declaration of his own immortality. This apparent progression from cosmic disorder to Roman order, however, is only partially supported by the events, and the erratic soundtrack, of the fifteen books between these two points. It has been frequently noted² that Chaos continues to be an underlying presence in the poem, a phenomenon discernible in many episodes from the consecutive creations and destructions of the world in Books 1 and 2, to the fluidity of form that makes metamorphosis possible, to the destructive immortality of villainous characters such as Procne's brutal husband Tereus, and so on. Yet by the end of the poem, the contemporary Roman world is depicted as apparently flourishing and perpetually stable under Augustus, and the unalterable immortality of the poet is confidently declared. People no longer change into animals and plants, the Olympian gods do not descend to run amok on earth (though imperial

² See, for example, Myers (1994) 44; Tissol (1997) 195; Wheeler (1999) 32; Beagon (2009) 289; Zissos and Goldenhard (1999) 35-9. This point will be elaborated throughout the dissertation.

politics now makes motion heavenward possible), and no one rearranges the forest glades with a strum of the lyre. Where is Chaos now? Many scholars have demonstrated the ways in which Ovid undermines or rejects any neat, closural gestures of the end of the poem, and they have often pointed in particular to Pythagoras' speech on the changeability of all things, including empires, as a major proponent of instability and resistance to closure towards the poem's close.³ Yet the troublesome characteristics of Chaos, its unpredictability, its contradictory nature, and its irrepressibility are as readily *heard* in the closing books of the poem as they were in the beginning, if perhaps not as readily seen. Chaos, I argue, undergoes a partial transformation itself, and makes one of the first and one of the last transitions in the poem – not so much a leap from disorder to order, but a change from formlessness to encompass form, and then from form to encompassing sound.⁴ On this approach, the apparent certainties of the Augustan message as celebrated at the poem's climax are challenged, even undermined, by the chaotic properties that continue to infiltrate and underscore the text.

The figure of Fama, and the extended description of her house in Book 12, as I hope to demonstrate, are crucial to the poem's ability to make this leap, and crucial also to an understanding of the status of sound – both verbal and non-verbal – in the poem. Classical literature's most famous evocation of Fama, the fury-like creature in the *Aeneid*, hovers over Ovid's depiction, but the Ovidian Fama is a far cry from her Virgilian predecessor. In a *domus* styled as a miniature cosmos, Fama presides over an ever-moving, disorderly mob of sounds and voices, enacting and filtering her own chaotic universe of noise and narrative. I am much indebted to Philip Hardie's 2012 book *Rumour and Renown* as well as his shorter treatments of

³ On the ambiguous closure of the poem, see especially Hinds (1987) and Barchiesi (1997). On Pythagoras, see, for example, Myers (1994) 45; Gladhill (2013) 301; Beagon (2009) 289.

⁴ Gladhill (2013) neatly points to the merging of Chaos and Fama, an idea upon which I will elaborate.

the various literary iterations of the Fama personification, and to Nancy Zumwalt's 1977 study of the Ovidian Fama, for many of the points of my discussion, as well as Gianni Guastella's recent book *Word of Mouth: Fama and its Personifications in Art and Literature from Ancient Rome to the Middle Ages* (2017). Bill Gladhill's 2013 article pointing out the cosmological echoes in the Fama ecphrasis and the ecphrasis' representation of aspects of Roman republican politics offers another significant point of departure for my study. Chaos and Fama function as loose structural axes within the work, and each entity, I will argue, is responsible in part for the operations of the poem's myriad sounds, and therefore provide an important clue for the overall thematic interpretation of the poem's soundscape.

The first chapter examines the role of sound in the poem's cosmology, and the link between the four original elements and the first emergence of noise. I begin with a discussion of the poem's concept of chaos in the cosmogony as the origin for its sounds, and the cosmogony's relation to other literary creation accounts, particularly that of Lucretius, as well as Ovid's treatment of the subject in the *Fasti*. From there, I trace the development of sound and speech as produced by the elements, especially earth, air/wind, and water, a development which reaches its fullest expression in the figure of Achelous, who links elemental noise to narrative speech. The chapter culminates in a discussion of the verbal and thematic links that Ovid creates between cosmological chaos and the ecphrasis of the House of Fama in Book 12; this discussion proposes a parallelism between the workings of the physical world and those of the sonal world. In conclusion, we turn to the speech of Pythagoras in the closing book, which treats cosmological themes, but frames them as products of *fama*, whose accuracy and veracity as a source of information the poem repeatedly throws into doubt. Pythagoras thereby links the closing of the

poem to its beginning, but fuses the poem's pervasive narratological themes to the cosmic material.

Having examined the significance of noise, speech, and narration in relation to the cosmological underpinnings of the *Metamorphoses*' world, we turn in the second chapter to a discussion of the workings of sound in the natural world, not on the cosmic level but on a more limited scale. After a brief overview of the spectrum of landscape noise that is audible in the poem, and of the changeability and instability inherent in that landscape, I focus my discussion on two particular aspects of noise in the natural world: first, the vocalizations of reeds, and second, the vocal activity of echoes (and of Echo herself). These two features provide interrelated examples of the more general trends of sound that emerge in the *Metamorphoses* as a whole; hence I seek to show that a change in sound is often a marker of metamorphosis; that the personality of a metamorphosed individual is still audible in the new sounds; that sounds in the landscape are often plaintive, contentious, or rebellious, thereby exhibiting properties reminiscent of chaotic conflict rather than of pastoral harmony.

We begin with the querulous musical reeds, which first enter the poem in Book 1 with the metamorphosis of the nymph Syrinx, and which Pan subsequently uses to create the first pan-pipe. The reeds and pipe music resurface twice towards the end of the poem, in the story of Midas in Book 11 and the story of Galatea and Polyphemus in Book 13. The reeds and pipes exhibit similar qualities in each episode, even as they change and develop in register over the course of the poem. The reeds, I argue, come to represent a voice-like refrain of chaotic dissent that inheres in so many of the features and figurations of the natural world, thereby defying external attempts to control or organize them.

The echo-phenomenon works in concert with the reeds to multiply, promulgate, and amplify their sound. We shall see how echoes function in the reed episodes, and how the idea of echoing allows for the reflection and refraction of sounds and episodes throughout the poem. Ovid's personification of Echo demonstrates the willful and unstable qualities of language, as she repeats but redefines Narcissus' words. I will aim to demonstrate that the personified Echo fulfills a role in the natural landscape similar to that which Fama performs in the realm of human affairs and language: both receive and send back sounds, but may transform or interfere with their meaning in the process. Echoes, because they affect both verbal and non-verbal sound, serve as a link between the noise of nature and the noise of human society, and thus provide a footing for my transition into the third and final chapter.

My theme in the third chapter is human and divine speech. The poetics and politics of speech and narrative in Ovid are very well treated topics that boast a very large bibliography, and I hardly attempt to offer a comprehensive treatment of the topic in general. Rather, I seek to place speech and other modes of human and divine communication in the framework of sound as laid out in the first two chapters: in particular, I argue that Ovidian sounds exhibit properties stemming from the chaos with which the poem began, and that this audible chaos is depicted most conspicuously in the House of Fama. With this frame in mind, I begin with the origins of speech and its development through Ovid's myth of ages as recounted in Book 1, with particular emphasis on the state of human noise in the Iron Age. In the *Metamorphoses*, speech is something that both humans and gods struggle to implement effectively, and an examination of some of the many speech-centric episodes in the first two books of the poem provides a mixed array of divine and mortal successes and failures with verbal communication. Words' meanings are not firm but ambiguous and changeable, and they do not always have the desired effect upon

the listener. The cumulative effect of these episodes, I argue, is to suggest that words in the poem exhibit an agency, or at least an unruliness, that marks them as a fundamental constituent within the chaotic instability of the *Metamorphoses*' world.

From these early instances of speech difficulties, I turn later in Chapter 3 to the gods' punitive reactions to human speech, with a focus on Diana and Minerva, and the role of rumor in influencing the action of a growing number of episodes. Towards the middle of the poem, however, we will see that mortal voices pose louder and more pointed challenges to the gods, and that mortal sound begins to supersede divine sound as the poem becomes increasingly anthropocentric in its subject matter. A discussion of the Philomela episode as a turning point in the poem's portrayal of mortal sound is followed by an overview of the varieties of mortal speech that come to be displayed in the second half of the poem, from persuasion to prophecy to disingenuous storytelling. The progression in mortal speech from emotive (and often victimized) responses to the gods' behavior to more widely varied and effective modes points to both a growing complexity in language as well as a gradually maturing mortal facility in maneuvering with speech. Speech is still an ambiguous entity, but mortals adapt themselves more and more to its use, and to its manipulative capacities. This progression is accompanied by a noticeable dwindling in the frequency, authority, and efficacy of the Olympians' voices.

From this examination of speech we turn once more to Fama and her house, with the emphasis this time on her implications for the characteristics of human narrators and their narratives, especially in regard to the epic stories which make up the last few books of the poem. Fama is a representation both of rumor and of the literary tradition that precedes her manifestation in the *Metamorphoses*, and Ovid makes plain her dubious relationship to the truth, thus pointing up the biases of individual narrators. In the swirling variety of speech acts and

associations that Fama and her domus are seen to encase and embody, we may find a striking thematic similarity to the elemental and landscape noises discussed in the first two chapters: speech is resistant to control, on the part of both its speaker and its hearer; speech is capable of carrying contradictory meanings at the same time, and blurs the boundary between truth and falsehood, in a manner reminiscent of the blurred boundaries of chaos; and speech shares the chaotic characteristics of instability and changeability with the other features of the poem's world.

Augustus always looms in the background of Ovid's work; in my epilogue, I address the poet's closing prayer to the emperor, and his own claim of eternal fame in the poem's sphragis. In the soundscape of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid has created a world born of Chaos and ruled by Fama, whose agenda is the spread of information, indifferent to an emperor's wishes for or against. Ovid's Fama will spread what she knows, for good or ill, whether Augustus wants her to or not, and in that realization lies Ovid's truest hope of lasting fame.

Chapter 1

The Resounding Cosmos: Chaos, Fama, and the Cosmology of Noise

In this chapter I attempt to trace the connections among Ovid's conception of Chaos in the *Metamorphoses*, the elements of his cosmology, and the sounds of those elements, and to demonstrate the way that elemental noise becomes a bridge relating the Chaos of the cosmogony with the ecphrasis of the House of Fama toward the close of the poem. With the cosmic connotations in the description of Fama's domus, I suggest that Ovid sets up an alternative cosmology of sound there, and ultimately reminds us that his, and any, poetic cosmos is created through Fama's workings. The sonal development that can be traced across the poem from the noises of elemental strife to the sounds of narration provides a framework with which to consider Ovid's understanding of the purpose and function of sound in his poetic world as a whole.

Listening to the House of Fama

Towards the beginning of Book 12 of the *Metamorphoses*, as the Greek fleet prepares to sail to Troy and rumors of their marshaling spread, there is an ecphrasis of the House of Fama (12.39-63). Fama, an active participant in the poem's world and the instigator of many of its characters' actions,¹ is given a description that concentrates in detail on the location and acoustic properties of her dwelling:

Orbe locus medio est inter terrasque fretumque
caelestesque plagas, triplicis confinia mundi; 40
unde quod est usquam, quamvis regionibus absit,
inspicitur, penetratque cavas vox omnis ad aures:

¹ For example, Fama spurs Jupiter to send the flood in Book 1; spreads the tale of Actaeon's death in Book 3; sends Minerva to visit the Muses in Book 5 and then to challenge Arachne in Book 6; and encourages Deianira to embark on the chain of events that will bring about the death of Hercules in Book 9. The third chapter will explore these episodes in detail.

Fama tenet summaque domum sibi legit in arce,
 innumerosque aditus ac mille foramina tectis
 addidit et nullis inclusit limina portis; 45
 nocte dieque patet: tota est ex aere sonanti,
 tota fremit vocesque refert iteratque quod audit;
 nulla quies intus nullaque silentia parte,
 nec tamen est clamor, sed parvae murmura vocis,
 qualia de pelagi, siquis procul audiat, undis 50
 esse solent, qualemve sonum, cum Iuppiter atras
 increpuit nubes, extrema tonitrua reddunt.
 atria turba tenet: veniunt, leve vulgus, euntque
 mixtaque cum veris passim commenta vagantur
 milia rumorum confusaque verba volutant; 55
 e quibus hi vacuas implent sermonibus aures,
 hi narrata ferunt alio, mensuraque ficti
 crescit, et auditis aliquid novus adicit auctor. (*Met.* 12.39-58)

Fama, we are told, dwells in the very center of the world, in place situated between the land, sea, and sky (12.39-40).² From this lofty, central space she is able to spy on and into every region (*inspicitur*, 12.42), and every voice comes to her ears (12.42).³ The house has no doors, but is fully open to receive all sounds, and made of bronze so that they constantly reverberate through it (12.44-7).⁴ Nothing but sound moves within it, and there is never any respite from the sounds, never any silence (*nulla quies intus nullaque silentia parte*, 12.48). The varied voices flit and roam about as if they were a physical, disorderly mob filling up the space (12.53-5). Truth and falsehood become jumbled together, and the degree of fiction grows as each new teller adds something to the story: *hi narrata ferunt alio, mensuraque ficti/crescit, et auditis aliquid novus*

² Hardie (2012, 160) notes that the middle of an ecphrasis is a position of power and significance. The cosmological significance of the location will be explored later in the chapter.

³ Fama seems to have the omnipresence of the Homeric Sun (Hardie 2012, 161). Kelly (2014, 77) however, argues that it is the house that sees and hears, not Fama herself, as Ovid deconstructs the corporeality of Virgil's Fama.

⁴ Hardie (2012, 162 n.3) draws a comparison to the cave of the Sybil in the *Aeneid*, a place similarly open to allow for the passage of significant utterance. Ovid's *domus*, however, does not confine itself to the pronouncement of divine prophecy, but spreads rumor and narrative with indifference.

adicit auctor (12.57-8). The tales grow and change as they pass through this space, and Fama herself makes no effort to differentiate, approve, or disprove the voices;⁵ rather, they come and go by their own power, as individual, unrelated instances of perception and invention, under Fama's watchful eye.

Yet despite the abundance and incessant motion of the voices, the place, surprisingly, is not clamorous; instead, it sounds like the murmuring of ocean waves, or thunder rumbling in the distance (12.49-52).⁶ This constant hum of voices at the seams of the world is compared to the naturally occurring, non-human sounds of water and thunder,⁷ which are two of the first sounds to have come into being when the world was first created in Book 1. In fact, Fama's home as a whole has a ring of familiarity about it, for it is an echo of an entity from an earlier point in the poem – it suggests a reconfiguration, with sounds instead of elements, of the primal Chaos with which the poem began. Fama's location at the intersection of earth, sea, and sky recalls the poem's cosmogony and the initial tripartite division of the world. This hollow space where the elements convene is filled with every type of noise, positioning sound as a material closely tied to the elements and associated with their chaotic convergence. In a constant cycle underscoring the elemental nature of sound, the world's voices all pour into and out of this point where the world divides into its separate parts.

The fractious variety of the individual voices moving within the *domus* is reminiscent of the image of Chaos which begins the poem – a single mass of disjointed, opposing forces – and

⁵ Gladhill (2013, 303-7) notes the similarity in the noises' behavior to the movement of *clientes* in the atrium of their *patronus*, as well as to the noise and motion of the Forum, a point which will be taken up below. Zumwalt (1977, 212) notes this Roman *atrium* aspect as well, and suggests "that Fama cannot be relied upon to deal responsibly with information."

⁶ Gladhill (2013, 309) interestingly posits that this description of the rambunctious sounds of *Fama's* house indicates that they are focalized through the far off palace of Jupiter, just as the forum might sound from the house of Augustus, and thereby suggests a distancing and disconnect between the authority and his subjects.

⁷ Hardie (2012, 94) notes that "Fama, in Virgil and elsewhere, has strong associations with storm and wind," thus connecting her with turbulent elemental forces.

acts as yet another example of the continuous process of change and rearrangement that the world has been undergoing throughout the eleven books that have led up to this point in the poem's turbulent chronology. These voices at the heart of the world are mobile and disorganized, constantly enacting an interplay of tension and friction between falsehood and truth, and are at odds with the seemingly balanced division of earth, water, and air which surround them. This image neatly embodies a major theme of the *Metamorphoses* – the constant interchange and struggle between forces of order and disorder. Though the cosmos in Book 12 is a larger, noisier, more varied, and more populous place than it was at its first creation in Book 1, the qualities of disunity and conflict that were there at the outset, before the creator god attempted to make an orderly universe out of Chaos, are still very much present – an ironic constant in a poem whose stated subject is change.⁸ The description of Fama's house makes apparent, and audible, what the *Metamorphoses* has been suggesting all along: Chaos is never decisively subdued; rather, it changes and carries on in new forms, like so many other figures and features of the world. In effect, the noises and voices of the world, which emerged from the dissolution of jumbled, discordant Chaos, are re-echoed in the jostling din of the House of Fama – the physical elements of Chaos reimagined as vocal elements.

The *Metamorphoses*' Chaos and its Echoes

The association of the House of *Fama* and its sounds with Chaos and its elements invites the reader to recall the opening passages of the poem and remember that Chaos must be the origin of the world's noises as well as its physical properties. Sound in the *Metamorphoses* comes into existence during the first creation of the world in Book 1. Chaos as a whole seems to

⁸ As McKim (1984-5, 100) puts it, the poem employs a cosmos “whose most striking constant is metamorphosis in defiance of Reason and in violation of the fixed scheme set up by the higher nature.”

be silent; the first sound of the poem is the poet's own voice in the four-line proem. Before it is separated into its constituent parts, the universe is one undifferentiated mass:

ante mare et terras et quod tegit omnia caelum
unus erat toto naturae vultus in orbe,
quem dixere Chaos, rudis indigestaque moles
nec quidquam nisi pondus iners congestaque eodem
non bene iunctarum discordia semina rerum. (1.5-9)

This initial formlessness, a conglomeration of ill-fitting parts (*non bene iunctarum discordia semina rerum*, 1.9), is nevertheless described as a single face, a *vultus*, and a *vultus* perhaps implies a mouth. The narrator, whose own voice (like Fama) exists outside the cosmos he describes, explains that there is not yet any Titan, Phoebe, Tellus, or Amphitrite (1.10-14), but only the elements of land, sea, and air, unstable elements at that:

nullus adhuc mundo praebebat lumina Titan
nec nova crescendo reparabat cornua Phoebe
nec circumfuso pendebat in aere Tellus
ponderibus librata suis nec bracchia longo
margine terrarum porrexerat Amphitrite.
utque erat et tellus illic et pontus et aer,
sic erat instabilis tellus, innabilis unda,
lucis egens aer; nulli sua forma manebat... (1.10-17)

Not yet distinguished and personified, the elements simply exist in one voiceless mass. Paradoxically, they lack their most defining characteristics – the earth is unstable, the sea unswimmable, and the ether has no light – and they are unable even to keep their shape (*nulli sua forma manebat*, 1.17). Yet within and despite this bodily sameness (*uno corpore*, 1.18), there is total lack of harmony:

obstabatque aliis aliud, quia corpore in uno
frigida pugnabant calidis, umentia siccis,
mollia cum duris, sine pondere habentia pondus. (1.18-20)

The elements are *discordia* (1.9), getting in each other's way (*obstabat*, 1.18), and in fact battling one another (*pugnabant*, 1.19).

While this innate instability will serve as the basis of the changeable universe depicted throughout the *Metamorphoses*, the initial differentiation of matter by the *deus et melior...natura* (1.21) reveals the first inklings of personality and individuality in the natural features of the world, characteristics which will prove to be more lasting than the forms they inhabit. Once the elements are set apart in their proper places (1.21-31), the god begins to divide and differentiate the various features of the earth and water and their climate (1.32ff). As this differentiation occurs, the first sounds begin to develop. The creation of various bodies of water and landscape features such as forests and mountains brings about a sense of increasing motion in the world (*rapidisque tumescere*, 1.36, *pulsant*, 1.42, *surgere*, 1.43). While some of these movements imply sounds by association, such as the wind swelling the sea, or the waves beating the shore, the first sound to receive a full description is thunder: *...consistere.../iussit et humanas motura tonitrua mentes/ et cum fulminibus facientes fulgora ventos* (1.52-4). The thunder is introduced with reference to its future ability to frighten or awe the as yet non-existent humans. After thunder come the winds (1.56), whose blasts (*flamina*, 1.59) must be segregated into different quarters to keep them from wreaking destruction, so great is their natural discord: *...quin lanient mundum; tanta est discordia fratrum* (1.60). Thus, the first sounds in nature both emanate from the elements (water, fire, and air), and are loud noises associated with fear and strife, particularly

human strife (*discordia fratrum*, 1.60). At its origin, sound is presented as one of the ways in which the truculent discordancy of Chaos manifests itself.

Ovid's Chaos and his creation myth, neither purely scientific nor purely mythological,⁹ draw on a long line of literary and scientific cosmogonies, in comparison with which their particularly Ovidian qualities become more salient. Ovid turns away from the Hesiodic conception of Chaos as a stationary, gaping abyss of nothingness (though keeping the suggestive name),¹⁰ and adopts instead the model influenced by later poets and philosophers of a mass containing all the elements of the cosmos, which separates out into distinct parts. In this passage, Ovid does not, as he frequently does in the *Fasti* and at times in the *Metamorphoses*, explore separately the varied versions of the story, asking the reader to pick one; rather, he blends together different, sometimes contradictory, philosophies. The Stoics' divine *natura* operates together with Epicurean atoms and the Empedoclean forces of love and strife. At one moment earth, air, water, and fire are battling for position, at the next it is the properties of cold, heat, dryness, and wetness.¹¹

Lucretius: a Cosmological Echo

One of the philosophical texts to which Ovid's cosmogony, opening as it does with this scientific and didactic cast, directly alludes is Lucretius' account of the formation of the world in

⁹ Barchiesi (2005) 145.

¹⁰ *Theogony* 116.

¹¹ The rationale for the apparently confused mix of scientific and philosophical background Ovid employs in this passage and in its Book 15 counterpart, the speech of Pythagoras, is much remarked upon by scholars, who approach the matter from a variety of viewpoints. Two schools of thought in recent work are (a) that Ovid seeks to provide a respectable theoretical framework for the poem, whether in seriousness or out of interest in generic flexibility (eg. Myers 1994), or (b) that he seeks to undermine philosophical explanations of the world in favor of mythical ones (e.g. McKim 1984-5). Feeney (1998, 46) remarks that "the authority of philosophy dwindles to the point of becoming just another voice." Wheeler (1995) posits the theory that the cosmogony is meant to be an ecphrasis taking the Homeric Shield of Achilles as a model. Barchiesi (2005, 145-8) gives an overview of the scholarship in his commentary on the passage.

the *De Rerum Natura*. As the major didactic epicist in Latin, and an important influence for Virgil, Lucretius forms a vital link in the chain of literary tradition with which Ovid continuously seeks to engage for his own innovatory ends, and in fact we shall see that Ovid returns to Lucretius throughout the poem, not only in the cosmogony. Lucretius describes an initial mass of battling atoms, which gradually separate out into like elements and take their appropriate places according to their nature. Like the *Metamorphoses* account, Lucretius begins with a list of the things that did not exist in the first stages of the world, namely the sun, stars, sea, sky, earth, and air:

Hic neque tum solis rota cerni lumine largo
altivolans poterat nec magni sidera mundi
nec mare nec caelum nec denique terra neque aer
nec similis nostris rebus res ulla videri... (*DRN* 5.432-5)

Lucretius, in keeping with his rationalism, ignores the divine personifications of these elements and lists them without any of the mythological embellishment that Ovid adds.

For Lucretius, like Ovid, the *discors concordia* is the central characteristic of the world's origin. His words *moles* and *discordia* to describe the conglomeration of atoms are picked up by Ovid, and he describes the mass of atoms as a storm of moving, clashing parts:

sed nova tempestas quaedam molesque coorta
omne genus de principiis, discordia quorum
intervalla vias conexus pondera plagas
concursus motus turbabat proelia miscens,
propter dissimilis formas variasque figuras
quod non omnia sic poterant coniuncta manere
nec motus inter sese dare convenientis (*DRN* 5.436-42)

Lucretius' atoms, though disparate and disjointed like Ovid's elements, are far more mobile and violent. The analogy with a *tempestas* implies a degree of all-encompassing motion, and perhaps noisiness, that is not so apparent in Ovid's account. While the *Metamorphoses*' Chaos is a place of great turbulence, Ovid turns the image of the epic battling (*proelia*) of Lucretius' tiny and fierce atoms to a more bizarre one of a group of large objects awkwardly jostling for elbow room in an uncomfortably small space, squeezing against and amongst each other and changing shape.

As we would expect, there is no *deus* for Lucretius, but only *natura* to set the process of differentiation in motion. As the *DRN* seeks to explain, there is no divine program superintending the cosmos, but only the arbitrary and natural motion of atoms through the void. Through their constant clashing, the atoms randomly begin to find other like atoms and join together of their own accord. Ovid replaces Lucretius' Epicurean *natura* with a vaguely Stoic¹² *deus et natura* who mold their materials with intent and infuse them at times with intelligence. Contrary to the dispassionate *natura* by whose laws and without whose interest Lucretius' cosmos independently forms, Ovid's creator sets his will against that of the warring elements, pulling them apart and setting them out, inaugurating a conflict and power struggle that persists throughout the poem.¹³ The behavior of Lucretius' atoms is frequently personified, but whereas the personification and individuality of the pieces of Ovid's nature come to suggest intelligences in them, this technique in Lucretius serves to emphasize the randomness of *natura*'s movements and the lack of any central organizational plan.¹⁴ Thus Lucretius' sounds arise randomly, as a result of the movement of the atoms, while Ovid's frequently originate in some individually

¹² See for example McKim (1984-5, 99) on Ovid's nod to Stoicism by equating Nature with the divine.

¹³ As Lively (2002, 38-9) notes, the creator *deus* is soon set at odds with the other gods of the poem, who are sources of change and disorder.

¹⁴ As Myers (1994, 57) points out, "for Lucretius the homogeneity of existence at all levels guarantees the order of the universe; for Ovid this discloses its instability."

meaningful way. Nevertheless, the images of conflict and random creation occurring without reference to a deity, which the Lucretian allusions bring to bear on the *Metamorphoses*, are instrumental to setting the tone of arbitrariness that infuses Ovid's cosmos.

Ovid's Two Chaoses

A significant intertext for the *Metamorphoses* 1 creation account is the episode of the god Janus in Ovid's own *Fasti*.¹⁵ Ovid further explores the themes of Chaos and creation with an allusive dialog between the two related accounts of the formation of the universe in the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti*. Both involve a Lucretian formless mass of elements separating out into individual parts, yet the *Fasti* account is narrated to the poet by the god Janus, who identifies himself as that same primeval Chaos, now reshaped as an anthropomorphic deity:

me Chaos antiqui (nam sum res prisca) vocabant:
aspice quam longi temporis acta canam.
lucidus hic aer et quae tria corpora restant,
ignis, aquae, tellus, unus acervus erat.
ut semel haec rerum secessit lite suarum
inque novas abiit massa soluta domos,
flamma petit altum, propior locus aera cepit,
sederunt medio terra fretumque solo.
tunc ego, qui fueram globus et sine imagine moles,
in faciem redii dignaque membra deo. (*Fasti* 1.103-112)

¹⁵ Ovid states in *Tristia* 1.7 that the *Metamorphoses* was complete, though unpolished, at the time of his exile in AD 8, and in *Tristia* 2.1 that he has written twelve books of the *Fasti*. These lines have prompted two famously vexed questions: where does the composition of the *Fasti* fall chronologically relative to that of the *Metamorphoses*, and what happened to its other six books? It is possible that the *Fasti*'s second half was not lost but rather never completed. Whether the *Fasti* alludes to the *Metamorphoses* or vice versa, is difficult to say, though it is undeniable that the two poems share themes and subject matter at many points (see, e.g. Hinds 1987, 10-11 on the relative dating of the poems). I am inclined to agree with the school of thought that posits some overlap in the composition of the two poems. Even if the *Metamorphoses* was complete before the *Fasti* was begun, it is perfectly plausible that Ovid had his calendar poem already in mind while at work on his poem of changes. The proposal of a specific chronological order for the two poems is not necessary to the purposes of my argument however; but only a belief that Ovid was demonstrating his interest in approaching a similar topic from two different angles across the two poems.

Both the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti* refer to Chaos as a shapeless *moles* containing all four elements of the cosmos and they describe its division as the result of a *lis*.¹⁶ Whereas the Chaos of the *Metamorphoses* is a silent, single face (*vultus*), the *Fasti*'s Chaos ceases, via a metamorphosis, to be a *sine imagine moles* (1.111) and gains both a face (in fact, two faces) and limbs (*in faciem redii dignaque membra deo*, 1.112). He is remade as an informative and talkative deity whose most marked characteristic is his ability to look both back and forward at the same time – two opposing viewpoints in one place, a condition which he himself suggests is a remnant of his previous form (*confusae quondam nota parva figurae*, 1.113). That Chaos/Janus still exists as a single form, once all the elements of which he was constituted have been removed to separate spheres, is another, more paradoxical, marker of his contradictory nature. Some of that initial matter remained in place to create the notable physical form of the god, a form which Janus explains as being perfectly suited to his function: *accipe quaesitae quae causa sit altera formae/hanc simul ut noris officiumque meum* (1.115-16).

Janus proudly describes his job as doorkeeper in the heavens, who controls the movement of both natural and human processes, and for whom even Jupiter must wait to come and go:

quidquid ubique vides, caelum, mare, nubila, terras,
omnia sunt nostra clausa patentque manu.
me penes est unum vasti custodia mundi,
et ius vertendi cardinis omne meum est.
cum libuit Pacem placidis emittere tectis,
libera perpetuas ambulat illa vias:
sanguine letifero totus miscebitur orbis,
ni teneant rigidae condita Bella serae.

¹⁶ Lehoux (2012) discusses the Roman practice of referring to nature with legal vocabulary (chapter 3, passim), a figurative signification of nature's orderly processes.

praesideo foribus caeli cum mitibus Horis
(it redit officio Iuppiter ipse meo) (*Fasti* 1.117-26)

Thus, in the *Fasti*, a metamorphosed Chaos (who has chaotically blurred the boundary between the two poems by his metamorphosis) willingly superintends the order of the elements, of which he was once composed, and the turning of the natural seasons as well as the human seasons of war and peace. Janus once comprised *quidquid ...vides*, and now, separated from it, he controls its motion. The use of three first person referents in as many lines (*nostra, me, meum*, 1.18, 19, 20) suggests Janus' pride in his power, while the impersonal quality of *libuit* (1.21) and the passive *miscebitur* (1.23) imply an arbitrariness, and a degree of chaos, in the deployment of war and peace, or at least imply Janus' indifference to either outcome. The concept of *miscebitur orbis*, "the world will be mixed up," certainly hearkens back to the unruly disorder of Chaos, and its use in the future tense is a foreboding of an eventual return to that disorder, in the context of war. That the metamorphosed Janus presides at the gates of heaven beside the *Horae* is another reminder of the nearness of Chaos, even in the most ordered, stately realm.¹⁷ Janus' smug remark that even Jupiter depends upon him to be able to come and go is humorous – Ovid gives the image of a great man impatiently waiting for his doorkeeper, at least in the doorkeeper's mind. Nevertheless, despite Janus' self-important manner, the image puts in our minds the ironic suggestion of Jupiter's being in some respect at the mercy of Janus. No one would believe that Janus really wields more power than Jupiter; yet if Janus chose not to open the door, would Jupiter then find himself embroiled in a Chaotic battle with the "supreme guardian of cosmic order"?¹⁸ Ovid's Jupiter is rarely a proponent of self-control and noble behavior, and that his

¹⁷ There are allusions between this passage and that of the ecphrasis of the palace of the Sun in Book 2 of the *Metamorphoses*, in a context where a return to Chaos is very near at hand. See, e.g. Feeney (1999) 24-5; Zissos and Goldenhard (1999) 47.

¹⁸ Hardie (1991) 60.

questionable visits to earth (which certainly in the *Metamorphoses* are chiefly for the purposes of seduction or cosmic destruction) should be overseen by a semi-reformed Chaos is another example of Ovidian irony. In the *Metamorphoses*, where the only unchanging principle is that everything changes, the image of Chaos, albeit metamorphosed,¹⁹ hovering at the celestial door would be an ominous one.

The *Fasti*'s Chaos, in Janus' account, dissipates more easily than that of the *Metamorphoses*. While maintaining the image of one heap (*unus acervus*) of elements, there is none of the jostling, hostile movement within that mass that marks the Chaos of the *Metamorphoses*. Though the *Fasti* account uses the same vocabulary of legal action to occasion its separation (*lite*), the elements are peaceably removed to new domains (*novas domos*) in their own proper places (*proprior locus*). As if looking back and summarizing his beginnings in the *Metamorphoses*,²⁰ the *Fasti*'s Chaos/Janus is able to narrate his own history, which is one with the history of the world. His narration occurs now that he has been made orderly and is in the service of Rome, as well as the Olympians, for he begins both the Julian calendar itself and its explication. The god does not merely speak; rather he proposes to sing his history: *acta canam* (1.104). Thus, Chaos has become not only a god firmly entrenched in the divine bureaucracy but a Callimachean didactic poet as well, who proposes to set forth the origins of the world and its customs. By this account the potential for producing not only sound but *organized* speech and narrative was present in the very foundations of the cosmos, and needed only the breaking apart of the initial mass of matter to be heard; but the resulting sound is subject, like the material elements, to the need for orderly arrangement. That Chaos/Janus can speak in verse, and acts in

¹⁹ Though this too is a paradox that Ovid has created: that something shapeless could change its shape.

²⁰ As Hardie (1991, 52) notes, "the sequence of the Janus episode is also an outline in miniature of the plan of the *Metamorphoses*, *prima ...ab origine mundi...ad mea tempora*."

the opening book of the *Fasti* as a replacement for the usual Muse, suggests that sounds, even poetic sounds, shift easily, like shapes, between disorder and order.²¹

In each account, ‘Chaos’ is a name bestowed in the distant past by a nameless plural entity, the voice of tradition: *quem dixere Chaos (Met. 1.7); me Chaos antiqui...vocabant (Fasti 1.103)*. Even when Chaos finds a voice and language, as the god Janus, it describes itself through the popular tradition that has grown up around it – why the people call him Janus, and the other names that he sometimes bears: *inde vocor Janus...modo namque Patulcius idem/et modo sacrifice Clusius ore vocor (Fasti 1.127-30)*. The interest in Janus’ multiple names suggests his origins as a mixture of disparate parts as well as inaugurating the *Fasti*’s interest in aetiology and its pattern of interviewing deities and witnesses to discover the variety of possible origins of names and Roman customs. Yet at the same time, the emphasis on naming demonstrates that Chaos’ identity comes in large part from *Fama*. Janus speaks self-deprecatingly of his names (*nomina ridebis, 1.129*) and with a gently mocking *scilicet* explains the unsophisticated ancient wish to assign different names to different functions: *scilicet alterno voluit rudis illa vetustas/nomine diversas significare vices (1.131-2)*. Dismissive though he is of the anonymous *antiqui*, their words give definition and delineation to the multiple aspects of Janus.

With the interrelated cosmogonies of the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti*, Ovid sets up a circle of allusions musing on the nature of Chaos and speech. In each poem, Ovid conceives of a Chaos that shifts in form, but keeps at least some of its disorderly characteristics. By positing a Chaos that is not merely an origin but a continual presence in the universe, the poet ironically creates a hindrance that prevents the creation story from progressing successfully to its

²¹ Lively (2002; 29, 36) through the lens of ‘chaos theory’ discusses chaos’ role as the material from which order comes, and thus imputes that it always contains the potential for order. Order and disorder are then not opposites, but complements.

conclusion – do the divine principles of order truly triumph if Chaos remains recognizably present? The elegiac cosmogony of the *Fasti* is a smoothed and trimmed version of the epic cosmogony in the *Metamorphoses*, but the overall image of the first stages of creation is the same – a mass of elements which disperse like the contents of Pandora’s Box to their own corners of the world – sharing imagery and vocabulary with Lucretius and each other. Thus, each of Ovid’s Chaoses may be read as representing a different facet of the same phenomenon, as if positing alternate poetic modes of harnessing Chaos. The *Fasti* offers a Chaos that has undergone a metamorphosis into a “peculiarly Roman god”²² and which, though retaining some of its Chaotic properties, presents itself as a useful, knowledgeable, and non-threatening member of the pantheon even if the fact of its original identity leaves open the possibility of a return to disorder. This prospect of a resurgence of Chaos is suggested in part by the common occurrence in Ovid’s treatment of metamorphosis elsewhere, that the altered subject frequently retains many of its pre-transformation characteristics.

The Chaos of the *Fasti*, a poem which is so deeply concerned with issues of right and wrong speech,²³ self-transforms into an authoritative poet, a *vates* who serves as the first interlocutor for the *vates operosus* composing the poem, and who provides an account of the creation of an orderly cosmos, like Silenus in Vergil’s sixth Eclogue or Orpheus in Apollonius’ *Argonautica*. As Janus gives his own personal history (which is in fact a cosmic history) and that of Rome’s development into an orderly society with a calendar, he expresses a mixture of his own subjective knowledge and popular opinion. The words and conventions of the *antiqui* form a significant part of his information, and Chaos thus becomes a mouthpiece for the workings of

²² Hardie (1991) 54.

²³ As Denis Feeney (1992, 6) notes, “the question of what may be said, and when, and by whom, is one of the poem’s key thematic preoccupations.”

Fama, who runs rampant in the *Metamorphoses* and is associated with Chaos there as well. Here in the *Fasti*, Fama is contributing to the growth and development of the Roman state, and contemporary understanding of its origins and customs, through the passing along of often-unattributed or varied aetiologies.²⁴

The Chaos of the *Metamorphoses* is unspeaking, but is nevertheless closely bound with sounds and speech – particularly, as this dissertation aims to demonstrate, the freely moving sounds of Fama. While Janus represents a Chaos that has metamorphosed into a single, speaking figure, the *Metamorphoses*' Chaos remains, I argue, a metamorphic agent throughout the poem. The unstable elements which made up Chaos go out to form the cosmos, but retain that original instability that makes the *Metamorphoses*' world so changeable. The mobile, changeable elements make sounds, even speech at times, and their behavior is mimicked by sounds and speech throughout the poem. In the echoing portrayals within the *Fasti* and *Metamorphoses* Ovid presents a double-natured Chaos: the Chaos that is an object of metamorphosis becomes a speaker of ordered speech, while the Chaos that makes metamorphosis possible has no single voice of its own, but infuses into the sounds of the cosmos it generates.

Flood, Fire, and the Lament of Earth: the Beginnings of Elemental Noise

After Chaos is divided up and the elements and physical features of the *Metamorphoses*' world “lurch fitfully into being”²⁵ and move off into their respective places, the more nuanced products of creation, living beings, with all their attendant noises, begin to arise, and the narrative of the world's progression through time can begin to take its course. Yet the elemental

²⁴ Zumwalt (1977, 212) points out that “a tradition may be validated or destroyed by its antiquity, or it may be incapable of validation because of its antiquity.”

²⁵ Gildenhard and Zissos (2004) 47.

turmoil of the initial Chaos is only dispersed, not eradicated or even fully subdued, and the work of the creator *deus* to separate and arrange the material of the cosmos proves to have been a false start.²⁶ Twice within the first two books a catastrophic elemental convergence nearly destroys the nascent world, and it must be repaired and reorganized – first after the flood brought on by Jupiter with the help of Neptune to punish humanity for Lycaon’s crimes, and again after the Sun allows Phaethon to drive his chariot, with the result that Phaethon crashes to earth and precipitates a global conflagration. As many scholars have noted, the propensity of the world to be both overwhelmed and reformed so easily and so often speaks to its origin in the fluidity of Chaos, and hints that any subsequent appearance of stability is illusory or temporary.²⁷ Equally striking and indicative of the influence of Chaos, however, is the role of the gods not merely in the world’s reconstructions, but also as Chaotic agents of its destruction as well.²⁸ The actions of Ovid’s gods, as has been frequently noted,²⁹ tend to exemplify vengeance, selfishness, and carelessness, rather than a sense of divine judgment and reason. In these early instances and throughout the poem they prove to be forces for disorder as much as they are for order. Ovid’s creation account forgoes a Hesiodic Theogony, and offers no explanation for the origins of most

²⁶ Myers (1994, 44) among others notes that the “overall tendency” in Books 1 and 2 is from cosmos to chaos and order to disorder, rather than the other way around. McKim (1984-5, 99-102) discusses the replacement of the philosophically-based *deus* with the mythical Olympians, and notes that Ovid makes no attempt to explain where the *deus* went or to align him with Saturn or Jupiter. O’Hara (2007, 108) also notes the unexplained vanishing of the creator god and emergence of the Olympians.

²⁷ See, for example, Myers 1994 (44), with Tarrant 2002 (349-51). Segal (2001, 94) notes that the *Metamorphoses* “depicts the precariousness rather than the stability of the world order and displays multiple and divided points of view rather than a unitary vision.” Gladhill (2013, 301) points out the return of chaos at “the moment of cosmic dissolution.” Lively (2002, 37) notes that “just as the primordial chaos bore the potential for stability and order, so the ordered cosmos bears the potential for instability and disorder.”

²⁸ As Wheeler (1999, 32) notes, “...the reader watches as the philosophical and ideological closure of the cosmogony is undone by passions, both mortal and divine, that confuse the elemental categories originally defined by the demiurge.”

²⁹ Segal (2001, 94) discusses Jupiter as the clearest example in the poem of the instability of the gods: “Jupiter has the fullest and most powerful potential for a unified and unifying vision of the cosmic order; and so it is inevitable that he should play a major role in Ovid’s deconstruction of that vision.” Anderson (1989) focuses on Jupiter’s questionable behavior in the Lycaon and flood episodes.

of the Olympian gods. Rather, they are gradually brought onstage as the episodes involving them occur. Not present at the initial creation, they too must be conceptual offspring of Chaos, and at the forefront of the creations and destructions of the first two books are the gods associated with or personifying the elements and the divisions of the cosmos – Jupiter, Tellus, Neptune, and Apollo.

Soon after the initial labors of the creator *deus et melior natura*, the world begins to degenerate through the succession of ages – each generation of humans is worse in some respect than the one before,³⁰ until the Iron Age population, exemplified by Lycaon, proves too rebellious for Jupiter to bear, and he determines that they must be destroyed. Not content to aim his wrath at the particular individuals responsible for the personal outrages against him, Jupiter, after destroying Lycaon’s palace and witnessing his metamorphosis into a wolf, decides that total upheaval is necessary. The god’s first inclination is chaotic destruction: rather than sending a well-aimed thunderbolt at Lycaon himself, he rains lightning down upon the entire palace, destroying it, the people in it, and even the household gods. Similarly, when he decides that the entire human race must be eradicated, he chooses a method that will not merely destroy the people, but everything else as well.

Even Jupiter does not view the one creation of the cosmos as the final reality – he seems to realize that within the apparent cosmic order there is an intrinsic possibility for a process of elemental destruction and reconstruction, which he may set in motion at any time. Jupiter is not identified with the creator *deus*, and so his quick decision to destroy and remake the world is not so much a marker of his divine authority as his own Chaotic origins³¹ and propensities. As god of

³⁰ Lively (2002, 37-8) suggests that “humans are the most unpredictable element” and come to be an embodiment of chaos, as does Tarrant (2004) 352-4. The chaotic behavior of humans will be treated in detail in Chapter 3.

³¹ The traditional, Hesiodic succession story of the gods ending in the triumph of Zeus/Jupiter is indeed characterized by a cycle of strife between earth and sky.

the sky, Jupiter has ready access to two of the elements: fire, as lightning, and water, as rainstorms. Yet as he prepares to ignite one sort of chaos on the earth (*erat in totas sparsurus fulmina terras*, 1.253), he fears another – that so much lightning may set the sky on fire as well (*timuit ne forte sacer tot ab ignibus aether/ conciperet flammam longusque ardesceret axis*, 1.254-5). That even Jupiter fears not being able to regulate the effects of his lightning bolts points to the power and danger of chaos still lurking in creation, to some extent outside the gods' control.

When Jupiter therefore decides on water as his means of undoing creation, he carefully chooses from among the winds the one that will be most helpful to his purpose. The winds, relegated to their four separate quarters by the creator *deus* at the initial creation of the world because of their chaotically contentious nature, are here described according to the Virgilian model, as being penned in the cave of Aeolus. While seeking to unleash a chaotic storm upon the earth, Jupiter ironically must first set the elements of his storm in order by letting free only one wind, since the others will, by nature, work against it, undoing its effects. Notus, the chosen wind, is himself an emblem of mixed elements, for though he personifies a blast of air, his wings, face, and body are dripping with water (1.264-6). When he presses upon his clouds to unleash the rain, there is a crash (*fit fragor*, 1.269), and thus the storm and flood begin.

With its coming signaled by that loud and violent noise, the rain inundates the earth, and Neptune, god of the sea, calls upon the terrestrial waters, the rivers, to aid the celestial ones (1.275-80). As they heed the god's command to unleash their waves and overflow their banks, the earth is overwhelmed by water from above as well as from within. The narrator points out the loss of distinction between earth and sea: *iamque mare et tellus nullum discrimen habebant* (1.291). As many have noted, this mixing of earth and sea signals a return to Chaos, as wind and

water together overwhelm the land, and Ovid adds general confusion to the elemental upheaval with fanciful descriptions of bewildered animals swimming along where fields used to be, or being swept into trees, bereft of their natural and proper habitats (1.293-308). As he made the decision to reinitiate Chaos, Jupiter, seeing that his plan has succeeded and only two pious humans have survived, decides to reinitiate the creation (1.324-8). He removes the clouds, so as to create separation again between sky and earth, and makes a show of demonstrating that each is returned to its proper place: *nubila disiecit ... et caelo terras ostendit et aethera terris* (1.328-9). The sea, though not under Jupiter's particular jurisdiction, nevertheless follows suit, and Neptune bids the waters to go back to their places.³²

The movement of the elements is combined with sound, both in their surging together and in their separation. Just as the chaotic beginning of the flood was marked with the thunderous crash of the rain clouds breaking open, the end of the flood is marked by Triton's sounding of the *bucina*, the sea god's conch shell, used here to alert the waves and rivers that they must recede: ... *conchaeque sonanti/ inspirare iubet fluctusque et flumina signo/ iam revocare dato* (1.333-5). The thunderclap of the clouds that released the rain seems to arise from a clash of wind and watery clouds, and is reminiscent of the thunder and rushing water which were the first sounds when the elements flew to their separate places at the world's formation. The *bucina*'s sound has a natural origin as well, and one related to the same two elements – the effect of air moving through the ocean-born shell. The loud and echoing call of the shell both signals and initiates the conclusion of this resurgence of Chaos, but the sound itself carries across air, land, and sea, and is heard and obeyed by all the waters, terrestrial as well as oceanic:

³² As has been often noted, this scene is meant to be reminiscent of Neptune's calming of the storm in the beginning of the *Aeneid*, though here Neptune is himself also responsible for causing the turmoil. See, for example, Barchiesi (2005) 193.

omnibus audita est telluris et aequoris undis/ et quibus est undis audita, coercuit omnes (1.341-2). The conch takes up air in the middle of the sea (*quae medio concepit ubi aera ponto*, 1.337), a line which itself hints at the mixing of elements), and as the Triton blows into it, the sound is perceived as a voice which fills the shores (*litora voce replet*, 1.338). This voice, traversing and heard by the tripartite divisions of the world, now restored to their places, is reminiscent of the commands of the creator *deus* who differentiated the elements in the initial Chaos. The voice is not bound to any one cosmic sphere, but it contributes to their movement and separation even as it travels among them.

Besides the call of the conch, however, the newly reformed world, its elements separated and stilled, is entirely silent. The winds and waters have been momentarily calmed, and there are no animals and only two people to make a sound. Through the efforts of Deucalion and Pyrrha to interpret the oracle of Themis, the world is repopulated from stones – a reminder of the chaotic mutability of matter – and through the generative properties of the earth herself, animals, monsters, and various living things reappear. This new creation cannot last for more than a few hundred lines, however, as the beginning of Book 2 brings about the next destruction and reconstruction of the world. This time, the descent to and emergence from Chaos is not a deliberate effort of divine vengeance, but an accident of divine ineptitude, whose effects dangerously impinge upon the realm of the gods as well.

Book 2 opens with an ecphrasis of the palace of the Sun, whose shining entrance, carved by Vulcan, contains a depiction of the orderly arrangement of the world and the tripartite division of the cosmos: *aequora caelaerat medias cingentia terras/ terrarumque orbem, caelumque quod inminet orbi* (2.6-7). Surrounding the throne of the Sun are personifications of all the measures and demarcations of time – the Hours, Days, Years, Seasons (2.25-30). These

images call to mind Janus' depiction in the *Fasti* of his place at the gates of heaven, presiding with the *Horae*.³³ Yet the sun god himself, who sets in motion and maintains this orderly progression of time through his methodical daily passage across the sky, carelessly swears, without thinking of the consequences, to grant any wish to his son Phaethon, who is demanding proof of his parentage. Phaethon chooses the worst possible gift, when he asks to drive the Sun's chariot for a day. As Phoebus warned his son, the horses are eager to fly according to their own wishes and are difficult to control: *sponte sua properant; labor est inhibere volantes* (2.128). *Sponte sua* is an unsettling hint of what is to come: an expression of unbidden activity, the phrase was most recently used to describe the earth's spontaneous creation of creatures and monsters after the flood. In addition to the task of controlling the horses, the chariot must maintain a steady course through the middle zones of the sky, in order to maintain the proper temperatures on the earth and avoid scorching either sky or land (2.129-40). Thus the orderly distribution of the world and the processes of time so pleasingly represented on the Sun's temple doors appear in fact to amount to a tenuous state of being, dependent solely on the ability of the Sun to drive his chariot on any given day, and subject to the god's personal whims or misjudgments.

That an earthly mortal should seek to usurp the Sun's sphere is the first rumbling of the return of Chaos, and the disastrous inability of the boy to control his father's horses as they fly then brings about a full return to the idea of Chaos as the elements battle each other and fire engulfs the world, land and sea and sky. The warmth from the fiery chariot wakes the chilly northern constellations, stirring the monstrous animals into movement (2.171-200). The world's climate and weather are thrown into confusion, as the northern places melt, snowy mountaintops are burnt, the ground cracks open, rivers dry up, forests, fields, and cities are destroyed, and

³³ Feeney 1999 (24-5) and Zissos and Gildenhard 1999 (47) discuss in detail the relationship of the ecphrasis of the Sun's palace to the opening cosmogony.

deserts appear (2.210-259). The light and heat reaches even into the underworld: *penetratque in Tartara rimis/ lumen et infernum terret cum coniuge regem* (2.260-1). Significantly, the surprise and dismay of the divinities and demi-gods is expressed aloud by the earth herself.

Amidst the havoc of Phaethon's fiery ride, Tellus, feeling the sea and river waters drying up and contracting into her depths, lifts her face into the smoke and heat and calls upon Jupiter to stop the conflagration. The baffling image of the earth having a single face to lift is compounded by the presence of a voice as well.³⁴ Tellus expresses the fear that everything will revert to the state of primal Chaos: *si freta, si terrae pereunt, si regia caeli,/in chaos antiquum confundimur* (2.298-9).³⁵ Tellus references the three-fold division of earth, sky, and sea that began the first formation of the world, was restored after the flood, and had adorned the Sun's temple.

However, in that primal Chaos Earth was not personified and had no voice – there was no Tellus, only *tellus* (1.12-15). It was the metamorphosis of Chaos into the visible cosmos that gave Tellus and the other divine elemental personifications their voices. Besides general destruction, a return to *antiquum chaos* would entail a loss of identity for her and for all the other elements and features of the natural world who were released by the initial dissolution of Chaos. Even a tendency toward Chaotic blurring of boundaries requires that there be extant boundaries to blur. Though it is their nature to be mobile, in conflict, and blending together, separation to their own associated spheres of influence gives them personality and distinction. With their former rapid motion stilled by removal to and settlement in their own segments of the world, the development

³⁴ Tellus is the first of several components of the natural world (including the river Achelous and the mountain Tmolus) whom Ovid describes with a paradoxical conflation of their natural and anthropomorphic characteristics.

³⁵ *antiquum chaos* is the phrase that Janus uses in the *Fasti* to describe his former existence. Zissos and Goldenhard (1999, 35) note that the use of temporal language in Tellus' plaint indicates that time is one of the cosmic orders threatened by Chaos.

of a persona and its attendant voice allows the elements to satisfy their natural inclination to cross into the others' spheres by the vicarious movement of the sound of their voice.

Ironically, held together in that one turbulent but quiet mass, the elements were under a more complete control than after their dismissal to their own spheres – conflicting and jockeying for space, perhaps, but quiet and contained. Freedom from the unified mass has given them a new, audible, means for expression of their divisive natures. Tellus' vocal complaint to Jupiter is itself an expression of the continuing strife among the elements that existed in that *antiquum* Chaos and the second Chaos of the flood – the earth is still at odds with the sky,³⁶ but in the current mode of *novum* Chaos, she is able to employ the sound of her voice, and though her speech is a demand for a return to order, it is ironically still a demand for change and a challenge to Jupiter, a challenge which implicates her as an aspect of Chaos still extant and active in the cosmos. Now, however, she makes conflict vocally, rather than through motion. Jupiter's response is significantly audible as well: he puts an end to Phaethon with his trademark thunderbolt, and thunder was the first stated sound during the initial ordering of Chaos. Noise has become an accepted mode of expressing, enacting, and now repressing conflict.

The voice of Tellus is carried over land and sky to be heard by Jupiter, and bids him to bring about the end of the fiery destruction, much as the sound of the conch shell is carried through sea and air to bring the flood to an end. Ovid, like Lucretius,³⁷ treats sounds and voices as airy but physical things that can traverse spaces, not merely in one sphere of the cosmos but in all of them. Noises are tied to the movement of the elements and the cosmic spheres, both their conflict and their separation. Just as sound first came into being with the initial dispersing of the

³⁶ Tellus' complaint is in keeping with the Hesiodic model of conflict between Mother Earth and the sky, or Jupiter, sometimes expressed in her random generation of monsters, giants, etc (e.g. Fama). See Barchiesi (2005) 258-9.

³⁷ Lucretius explications of sounds and language in Books 4 and 5 of the *DRN* will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 2 and 3.

first Chaos at the world's creation, signaling the free movement of air, water, and the fearsome bolts of thunder, so sounds continue to be a part of the elements' comings and goings, moveable and changeable as the physical elements are. Though Phaethon's fire is the last major devastation of the earth in the poem, and the last general threat of total Chaotic dissolution, the properties of conflict, change, and motion that define the elements' behavior continue to be visible and audible in the poem.

Vocal Elements and Chaotic Narration

Having examined the noise that attends the elements and their chaotic blending and separating, we will look ahead to the status of such noise further on in the poem. Book 8 marks the halfway point of the *Metamorphoses*, and with its preponderance of cosmological themes, as it contains numerous references to elemental spheres and their activity,³⁸ it thus offers a useful stopping point to consider the state of elemental sound at this stage of the poem's progression. The cosmological rumblings which began the poem are heard again in its middle, but this time they are more subtly interspersed with the actions of mortal characters, whose adventures and misadventures frequently occur at the meeting points of earth, air, and water, and involve crossing or blurring the boundaries between those elements. The book contains a variety of loosely connected episodes, which mainly revolve around the effects of Minos' naval battling, the Calydonian boar hunt, and the river Achelous' hospitality to Theseus and his companions.³⁹

³⁸ Crabbe (1981, 2274-2325) lists the appearances of the four elements in Book 8, as well as Book 8's revisiting of plot points and themes of Books 1 and 2.

³⁹ Boyd (2006, 176), in discussing the structure of the book notes the "discernible tension between the order and symmetry of the triptych template on the one hand and the rich but also disorderly series of tales treated in Book 8 on the other."

The book opens with the stories of Scylla and Daedalus, tales that involve a disconcerting dissolution of the restrictions governing both the elements and human behavior. The Scylla episode opens with a description of Megara's musical wall, with a tower above, from which the girl throws stones to make the wall resound, or watches the battles going on below:

Regia turris erat vocalibus addita muris,
in quibus auratam proles Letoia fertur
deposuisse lyram: saxo sonus eius inhaesit.
Saepe illuc solita est ascendere filia Nisi
et petere exiguo resonantia saxa lapillo,
tum cum pax esset: bello quoque saepe solebat
spectare ex illa rigidi certamina Martis. (8.14-20)

Ovid recounts the legend by which the stone wall gained its odd property of sound: Apollo set his lyre down there as he was helping to build the wall, and the sound of the lyre remained. The walls are given the epithet *vocalis*, suggesting that their sound is not merely noise, but has more modulated qualities, as does a voice. That voice belongs to Apollo's lyre, whose sound is implanted in the wall (*inhaesit*, 16). The sound of the lyre appears to exist independently of the instrument itself, and can be heard in the meeting of two objects quite unlike a lyre: a stone and a wall. The digression about the sonorous tower wall, which has no bearing on the plot of the episode, serves to recognize a known phenomenon of the place,⁴⁰ but it also positions an uncanny, unexpected noise at a convergence of the three main elements. The coastal wall and its turret create a point of intersection between land, air, and water. The sound itself has a double origin in both a natural object – stone striking stone – and a divinely crafted musical instrument – Apollo's lyre. Yet it is also a transgressive noise, and one that in logical terms should not occur –

⁴⁰ According to Pausanias (i.42.1) it was still a tourist attraction in Ovid's time (Melville 1986, 420).

a stone usurping the crafted sound of a lyre. Like the elemental noises at the beginning of the cosmos' existence, this sound is formed by an essentially chaotic act, a collision between stone objects. Scylla amuses herself during peacetime by throwing stones at the wall to bring out the sound, but during wartime she turns her attention to the more forceful collisions of armies.⁴¹

The unfolding of the episode illustrates confused boundaries between elemental divisions as Scylla comes to be shuttled between them. Scylla, who was once amused by the pleasing but unexpected sound of the *muri vocales*, conceives an unnatural passion for her father's enemy, Minos. After she betrays her father for Minos' sake, Minos curses her so that neither sea nor land will accept her, and so she must take to the air as a bird. Similarly, later on in Book 8, Daedalus and Icarus, finding passage over land and sea blocked to them by Minos, move skyward in an attempt to flee from their island prison. Daedalus' transgression of nature is punished with the loss of his son, as Scylla's transgression of filial piety is punished with the loss of her home and humanity. These episodes first draw attention to the tripartite division of the elements by naming the separate spheres at crucial moments, and then they erase the dividing lines by showing the characters moving freely among them: Minos brings the havoc of war wherever he goes in his ships; Scylla stands on her rock, leaps into the sea, and goes back to the air; and Daedalus and Icarus soar over the islands on false wings. The hints of Chaos in the transgressive actions of Scylla, Daedalus, and Icarus are quickly restored to a semblance of order by Scylla's metamorphosis into an animal whose nature is to be airborne; by Icarus' death; and by Daedalus' permanent return to land.

⁴¹ Anderson's (1972, 335) interpretation, that the purpose of the wall within this story is to demonstrate Scylla's "innocent pleasures" before the "corruptions of passion" come to her, provides the connection between the interlude about the tower and the main plot of the episode itself.

The episode of Meleager and the hunt for the Calydonian boar in the middle of the book continues the theme of the transgression of familial and natural boundaries, and it is illustrated above all with the element of fire. The monstrous boar which Diana sends to punish the people of Calydon for omitting offerings to her is a raving beast with fire flashing from its eyes and spewing from its mouth (*sanguine et igne micant oculi.../fulmen ab ore venit, frondes adflatibus ardent*, 8.284, 289). The blazing of fire and foam from the boar's mouth is accompanied by a fearsome noise: *fervida cum rauco latos stridore per armos/spuma fluit...*(8.287-8). These blasts of air and flame that set fire to leaves and cause widespread destruction to the fields recall Phaethon's fiery disaster, and with the comparison to the lightning bolt (*fulmen*) they are associated with that earliest and most elemental of sounds. The path of fiery destruction wrought by the boar is combined with its strident noise to produce an echo of the elemental chaos of Books 1 and 2. When Meleager, after successfully hunting the boar with his friends, meets his death at the hands of his mother, fire imagery is again combined with a contentious noise. Meleager has quarreled with and killed his uncles after the hunt, and his mother Althaea struggles to choose between her mutually exclusive duties as a sister and a mother. At last deciding in favor of vengeance for her brothers, she burns the log that the Fates gave her at Meleager's birth, and with which his lifespan is destined to be concurrent. As the log burns it lets out (or seems to) a pained groan: *aut dedit aut visus gemitus est ille dedisse/stipes et invitis correptus ab ignibus arsit* (8.513-14). The ambiguous sound of the log is echoed in Meleager's simultaneous death pains: *cum gemitu...vocat* (8.521). The chaos of Althaea's moral quandary is matched by the blurring of the line between man and log, with both Meleager and the log bound by not only the same fiery fate, but also the same grim sound.

The Elements at Home: Achelous

The blurred and crossable boundaries of the elements dominating the first sections of the book pave the way for the noisy and transgressive movements of an element itself in the episode of Theseus and Achelous, which fills the last third of this book and begins the next. In the figure of Achelous, Ovid plays with the anthropomorphic qualities of river gods:⁴² Achelous is at once the teeming water overflowing its banks and creating an impasse for Theseus and his friends, and at the same time a convivial host, helping them pass the time while they are delayed. The behavior and speech of Achelous are far removed from the mad rushing of the waters during the creation and the flood in Book 1, and Tellus' (the first speaking, personified element) anguished cries during the conflagration in Book 2. An uncontrollable wave but a god who can choose when to flood, a destructive flood but a friendly host, a babble of flowing water but an effusive storyteller – the river is both amusing and complex, and a representation of the vociferousness and changeability of the elements. Beyond the ambiguity between his anthropomorphic and watery forms, moreover, Achelous is an agent of metamorphosis, a shape-shifter himself, and a narrator of metamorphic tales. In the figure of this river who occupies a central position in the poem, the Chaotic combination of elemental matter, sound, and change are manifest.

As many have noted,⁴³ water, often a focal point in Ovid's landscapes, is the exemplary element or symbol of metamorphosis, in its fluid movement and its ability to reflect images and distort them. Achelous, certainly, asserts himself as the all-encompassing feature of his landscape, and is also its primary describer. Achelous embodies both the dangerous and benign

⁴² Fantham (2009, 15-16) notes that "rivers were both sacred and inclined to be more anthropomorphic than most Italian numina." Anderson (1972, 381-9) in his commentary on these lines frequently points out the passages where Ovid plays on the duality of Achelous' form.

⁴³ See, for example, Hinds (2002) 145; Jones (2005) 7-17.

qualities of water at once,⁴⁴ as well as its metamorphic properties, thus enacting within the text his own form of metamorphosis into water. He poses a hazard to Theseus and his companions, as he himself cheerfully acknowledges, but he is also the respite offered in return, providing rest, refreshment, and storytelling entertainment until the flood subsides:

Clausit iter fecitque moras Achelous eunti
imbre tumens. “succede meis,” ait “inclite, tectis,
Cecropida, nec te commite rapacibus undis!
...
Tutior est requies, solito dum flumina currant
limite, dum tenues capiat suos alveus undas.” (8.549-51; 558-9)

Admitting that his waves are too *rapaces* to cross, Achelous invites the travelers to enter his home instead. He uses the language of borders and custom – the maintainers of social order – to describe his immoderate waters overflowing their appropriate bounds (*solito...limite*), and looks to the flood’s end as the time when their riverbed will again “capture” the wayward waves (*capiat suos alveus undas*), though he makes no indication that he can impose order on himself or speed up this process.

As Achelous describes the effects of his flood, his imagery recalls, on a smaller scale, the upheaval caused by the flood ordered by Jupiter in Book 1. As if he has read the earlier flood account, Achelous echoes but tones down the epic scale of Jupiter’s destruction:

Ferre trabes solidas obliquaque volvere magno
murmure saxa solent. vidi contermina ripae
cum gregibus stabula alta trahi, nec fortibus illic
profruit armentis nec equis velocibus esse.
multa quoque hic torrens nivibus de monte solutis
corpora turbineo iuvenalia vertice mersit. (8.552-57)

⁴⁴ Crabbe (1981, 2290) notes that in the latter part of Book 8 “water is by turns both destructive and benevolent.”

Landscape features, buildings, and animals are all washed away together, unable to withstand the rush of the water, no matter how strong or quick they are. While the first flood, being universal, involved the destruction of various architectural and agricultural human works as well as the semi-humorous intermixing of all sorts of animals in the water, Achelous' flood affects only the local livestock, rocks, and trees. The humor in Achelous' flood lies not in the bizarre juxtaposition of befuddled seals and deer and birds, but in his claim to the authority of an eyewitness (*vidi*, 553), and the self-referential *hic torrens* (556): naturally he has seen and can vouch for these effects, because he himself was there, embodied in the waves.⁴⁵ Achelous calls attention to the noise made by the water roaring along with rocks and branches (*volvere magno/murmure saxa solent* 552-3), as he makes use of a more civilized and orderly noise (though a noise that will prove to be prone to ambiguity), narrative language, to describe it.

While his waves ravage the countryside, Achelous entertains his inadvertent guests in a damp but decorative grotto, complete with nymphs to serve food and wine (8.562-73). When one of the company asks about the group of islands he can see in the river, Achelous regales them with a tale of metamorphosis. The islands had once been nymphs, followers of Diana, who had forgotten to include Achelous in their ritual offerings. Taking his cue once again from Jupiter's punitive use of water, he flooded, and overwhelmed them; in their place, islands appeared in the water:

Intumui, quantusque, feror cum plurimus umquam,
tantus eram pariterque animis inmanis et undis

⁴⁵ Anderson (1972, 382) draws attention to the wit in these lines. Feeney (1991, 233-4) notes that while the interest in the duality of river-gods' forms is a "basic habit of thought" for the Greeks and Romans since Homer, the situation's potential for humor, though seen to some extent in Callimachus, is "a field of display which Ovid makes all his own."

a silvis silvas et ab arvis arva revelli
 cumque loco nymphas memores tum denique nostri
 in freta provolvi. fluctus nosterque marisque
 continuam diduxit humum pariterque revellit
 in totidem, mediis quot cernis, Echinadas undis. (8.583-9)

The repeated first-person verbs and references to *noster fluctus* indicate the river's insistence on his own agency in the events. The flood that precedes the metamorphosis of the Echinades is, like the first flood in Book 1, a result of divine wrath at a perceived sacrilege,⁴⁶ but is scaled down and does not seem to be ordained by the authority of Jupiter or Neptune; instead, Achelous implies that the decision to unleash himself in flood is his own. Achelous is matter-of-fact and unapologetic concerning his actions, as is fitting for an injured deity.⁴⁷ The image of this flood, presumably as full of noise and rushing as his current flood, is countered by his lofty speaking style,⁴⁸ involving neat correlative and parallelisms (*quantus...tantus; a silvis silvas et ab arvis arva*), a witty Ovidian zeugma (*pariterque animis inmanis et undis*), rhymes, and alliteration.⁴⁹ As he did when first welcoming the travelers, the river describes his wild, noisy, and destructive behavior with a deliberately constructed narrative that on the one hand underlines the paradox between his two simultaneous forms; but on the other hand, Achelous' narrative ease and self-promotion suggest that the art of punitive flooding is not the only technique he has learned from Jupiter's and the other gods' examples in the beginning of the poem. Like Jupiter speaking to the council of gods before the flood, Achelous is telling stories, in which he is the protagonist, to a

⁴⁶ The current flood, having the same effects on the countryside, seems to be the random result of rain (*imbre tumens*) and unrelated to any god's immediate feelings.

⁴⁷ Anderson (1972, 385-7) remarks on Achelous' cheerful manner of discussing his wrath and violent behavior.

⁴⁸ Barchiesi (2001, 51-2) notes that the flooding river has a similarly overflowing speaking style. Besides serving as a locus for metamorphosis, bodies of water and rivers are, of course, also common metaphors for varieties of poetic and rhetorical style. Jones 2005 (51-9) discusses the tradition, particularly as expressed in Quintilian. Hinds (1987, 19) draws attention to the Callimachean references in play with the swollen river narrating tales in a grandiose style.

⁴⁹ As Tissol (1997, *passim*) discusses, this sylleptic wordplay is the hallmark of Ovid's style in the *Metamorphoses*.

captive audience, and attempting to establish his own version of events in the minds of his hearers (a category which not only includes Theseus and friends, but also includes the poem's readers). But the Ovidian Jupiter is a violent personality and a practiced liar, who uses first speech, and then force, to gain his ends. The trustworthiness of speakers, especially divine speakers, comes into question repeatedly throughout the poem,⁵⁰ and there is no reason to suppose that the smooth-talking Achelous is any less ambiguous with relation to facts than he is with relation to his form.

Having shown his metamorphic powers in being the instigator and location of the nymphs' transformation into islands, Achelous proceeds to explain the different set of circumstances that turned the nymph Perimele into another island in his waters. Perimele had inadvertently attracted the love of Achelous and thereby also the wrath of her father, who threw her into the water. In this instance, Achelous sought help from his ruling deity Neptune, who turned the girl into an island (8.600b-610). Achelous, as water, a mobile and fluid element, is the location for two metamorphoses. He himself does not cause the change, as he takes care to state, but he provides both the setting and the narration – which is the reader's only information – for each metamorphosis.

Though he takes no responsibility for transforming other beings, Achelous can change his own shape, and he certainly shapes his own narrative. He likens his abilities to that of Proteus and other shape-shifters, a talent which he uses to segue from his story of Erisychthon, whose daughter could change form, to his own ill-fated battle with Hercules, in which, in the form of a bull, he lost a horn. Achelous stage-manages the scene and manipulates his hearers into asking

⁵⁰ This point will be taken up more thoroughly in the third chapter.

for the story. After boasting of his shape-shifting capabilities, and then drawing attention to his missing horn so that Theseus asks about it, Achelous pretends to be unwilling to tell the story:

‘armenti modo dux vires in cornua sumo –
cornua, dum potui. nunc pars caret altera telo
frontis, ut ipse vides.’ gemitus sunt verba secuti.
Quae gemitus truncaeqe deo Neptunius heros
causa rogat frontis, cui sic Calydonius amnis
coepit, inornatos redimitus harundine crines:
‘Triste petis munus. quis enim sua proelia victus
commemorare velit?...’ (8.882 – 9.5)

The expressive groaning that follows the too studied *cornua sumo/cornua dum potui* with its direct address to the audience leaves Theseus little choice but to give the desired response: a request for another story. Here too Achelous forces an extra degree of theatricality into the scene by pretending not to want to recount the story he has palpably led his hearers to expect. The passage lightly prefigures the episode of Nestor in Book 12, another irrepressible talker who also (genuinely) expresses the wish to leave a Hercules story unspoken. However Achelous’ blatant shaping of the “narrative instance”⁵¹ also draws attention to the artificiality and subjectivity that Ovid makes a part of so many narratives in the poem.⁵² It is easy enough to imagine Theseus and his companions rolling their eyes at Achelous’ self-importance; just as it is easy enough to imagine that Achelous might have broken his horn by tripping over a river rock, and wishes to spread a story that will give more glory than the true one:⁵³ as he himself states, *magnaue dat*

⁵¹ Barchiesi (2001) coins the term.

⁵² As Rosati (2002, 292; 301) notes, through the multiplicity of internal narrators “Ovid reflects on the problem... of the relationship between the intention of a narrator and the reception of the narrator’s story by its audience.” In relation to the Achelous passage, he remarks that narration in the *Metamorphoses* is always selective. Williams (2009, 163) reminds us that “our accumulated experience of the *Metamorphoses* conditions us always to tread warily, to suspect complication, to resist the plain reading...”

⁵³ Achelous’ battle with Hercules is a part of the mythic tradition well before Ovid, but Ovid, by making Achelous so eager to tell the story, I would argue, throws it into suspicion.

nobis tantus solacia victor (9.7). Achelous, like Ulysses later on, is a figure who wins the day by crafted speech, not by action.

The super-metamorphic Achelous narrates a large section of Book 8 and the beginning of Book 9 (he overflows from one book to another), occupying a significant place in the movement of the poem into its second half. He reiterates in many ways the poem's ever-present themes of change and storytelling, but also points to an increasingly complex interrelationship between the elements, their sounds, their mobility, and the narratives surrounding and stemming from them. As an element which is naturally fluid and changeable, but at the same time as a deity able to change into other, non-watery forms, and as one who provides the conditions for the metamorphosis of others, Achelous is uniquely suited to understand and narrate metamorphosis, and to control his words just as he controls his shape. As a speaker and sonorous being, he marks a turning point between the mad rushing noises of water flowing here and there at the bidding of one of the Olympians, and the agency of an element who is sometimes able to choose the times of his floods, and able to flow with words as well as water.

Achelous gives the impression of being an element constantly wavering between instability and stability – water and god, flooding and still, flowing and speaking. In his amalgamation of order and disorder, he therefore stands as an echo of the interaction between chaos and the *deus* who separated chaos in Book 1. The figure of Achelous provides a sense of what Chaos looks and sounds like in the world of Book 8, far developed from the barely articulate, emotive elemental noise of Book 1, but still moving unpredictably and mixing, at times violently, with the other elements. Yet Achelous' main role is that of a narrator, and a locale and instigator for storytelling about metamorphosis. His flowing speech is his most

marked characteristic, and in his speech he unites elemental noise and activity with the nuanced sounds and doubtful truthfulness of language.

The Tiber and Virgilian Echoes

Ovid's nearest epic model for a hospitable, speaking river is Virgil's Tiber in Books 7 and 8 of the *Aeneid*. In order to understand better what Ovid accomplishes with his Achelous it will be useful to explore some aspects of Virgil's use of the knowledgeable, speaking river. Book 7 marks the beginning of the Trojans' dealings with the local people of Latium, and deals with the movement of information and rumor between and about the two peoples, covering the progress of the Trojans up the river from the coast and the set piece of the fury Allecto's violent and divisive activity. As the Trojans and Italians hear of each other's activities and prepare for war, Book 8 opens with Aeneas seeking respite from the cares of his distressing circumstances. After the chaos of Book 7's sowers of discord, Fama and Allecto, the Tiber provides the first of Book 8's divinely inspired prophecies about the future orderly grandeur of Rome. The Trojans had steered their ships into the Tiber from the sea, glad to find a peaceful, welcoming river (though not yet knowing its identity) and respite from sea storms; and now the river god himself appears to Aeneas in a dream, easing the hero's worries with reassurances and promises that his labors will eventually result in a positive outcome.

Yet while Achelous forces a detour and delay upon his guests, the Tiber aids both Aeneas and the *Aeneid*'s narrative to move forward on their way. Described in the typical guise of a river god, an old man with blue robes and reeds in his hair, the Tiber rises up from the leaves on the bank and addresses Aeneas as he rests by the water:

huic deus ipse loci fluvio Tiberinus amoeno

populeas inter senior se attollere frondes
 visus (eum tenuis glauco velabat amictu
 carbasus, et crinis umbrosa tegebat harundo)
 tum sic adfari et curas his demere dictis (Aen.8.31-5)

Despite the fact that the river, as is later made clear, is partially flooding, the image of the god is full of calming attributes, befitting the purpose of his apparition. The stream is *amoenus*, a tone enhanced by the inclusion of shady trees and reeds (*populeas...frondes; umbrosa...harundo* 8.32; 34) and a bluish color scheme (*glauco* 8.33). While Ovid largely ignores the physical description of Achelous himself in favor of a detailed depiction of his grotto, Virgil fully recounts the god's reedy and anthropomorphic appearance, enforcing the delineation between god and water that Ovid chooses to blur and complicate.⁵⁴

The god's stately appearance, with all the traditional attributes of a river deity, is mirrored in his stately speech. He addresses Aeneas with dignified reference to his ancestry and his quest (*O sate gente deum, Troianam ex hostibus urbem /qui revehis nobis aeternaque Pergama servas...*, Aen. 8.36-7), and assures him that he has found his destined home (*hic tibi certa domus, certi (ne absiste) penates*, Aen. 8.39). The Tiber god then goes on to prophesy Aeneas' future success in Latium, and promises to help him make his way up the river's channel: *ipse ego te ripis et recto flumine ducam, /adversum remis superes subvectus ut amnem.* (Aen. 8.57-8). Not until the end of his speech does he identify himself as the Tiber, and proclaim the river's present and future significance:

ego sum pleno quem flumine cernis
 stringentem ripas et pingua culta secantem,
 caeruleus Thybris, caelo gratissimus amnis.

⁵⁴ Ovid's emphasis on place rather than person is perhaps influenced by Virgil's emphasis on person rather than place.

hic mihi magna domus, celsis caput urbibus exit. (*Aen.* 8.62-65)

The Tiber's stately candor stands in strong contrast to Achelous' wandering narratives and ambiguous truth-telling. Tiberinus then sinks back to the bottom of his stream (*dixit, deinde lacu fluvius se condidit alto/ima petens...*, *Aen.* 8.66-7). Virgil acknowledges the dual nature of river gods by both having the Tiber refer to his waters as a separate entity that Aeneas may overcome, as in line 58, but also identifying himself in the first person as the stream which Aeneas can see flowing before him. Virgil's Tiber is a deity with a solemn significance, whose speech aligns with the fated action of the poem. The Tiber, as one more announcer to Aeneas of the heavenly plans for him,⁵⁵ acts as a link between the Italian landscape, its history, and the future glory of Rome. With his exposition of his identity and his role as the *caput* for the city, the Tiber inextricably connects Rome's location with its destiny, suggesting a divinely favored unity of place and purpose.

In keeping with this purpose and his prophecy, the Tiber duly abates his flood during the night so that Aeneas and his men can travel easily up river:

Thybris ea fluvium, quam longa est, nocte tumentem
leniit, et tacita refluxens ita substitit unda,
mitis ut in morem stagni placidaeque paludis
sterneret aequor aquis, remo ut luctamen abesset. (*Aen.* 8.86-9)

The Tiber's stream acts not as an impediment to Aeneas, but as an aid that facilitates his fated meeting with Evander and his visit to the site of the future city of Rome. Like Achelous, the Tiber has been *tumens*, but Virgil's language emphasizes the calm, and especially the quiet, of the receding flood (*tacita, mitis*). The Tiber's waters are as well-regulated as his speech. Once

⁵⁵ The flow of a river is a frequent symbol for the flow of time; see Jones (2005) 104-5.

the Tiber has made his heartening prophecies to Aeneas, he becomes a silent promoter of their completion.

Ovid's own version of a speaking Tiber, also drawing on Virgil's, appears in Book 5 of the *Fasti*, where the river is called upon to explain an arcane ancient ritual that involves tossing straw effigies of old men from a bridge into the water. The Tiber is the chosen authority in this instance because of his age and knowledge of the earliest days of the city: *Thybri, doce verum: tua ripa vetustior Urbe est;/principium ritus tu bene nosse potes.* (*Fasti* 5.635-6). To emphasize this age and authority, Ovid uses the Greek form of the Tiber's name, *Thybris*, which Virgil had in fact introduced into Latin poetry.⁵⁶ The narrator asks the river to "teach" (*doce*) the true story – a verb appropriate for a speaker in a didactic poem, but perhaps also a nod to the river god's role of instructor to Aeneas concerning the Arcadians he would encounter at Pallanteum, whose help he should seek (*haud incerta cano. nunc qua ratione quod instat/expedias victor, paucis (adverte) docebo,* *Aen.* 8.49-50). As Virgil's Tiber is a source of pertinent information for Aeneas, so Ovid's Tiber is the natural consultant for the history of the ritual. Ovid describes his Tiber rising up out of the stream as if with an abbreviated version of Virgil's depiction, choosing the reedy hair as the primary point of recognition: *Thybris harundiferum medio caput extulit alveo/raucaque dimovit talibus ora sonis* (*Fasti* 5.637-8). Ovid's well-known love of generic self-consciousness is apparent in his using a condensed description of the epic Tiber in his elegiac poem, but the portrayal of the river god's speech is a further compressing of Virgil's Tiber. The stately prelude to speech is absent, and the god's voice is even described as having an unpleasant sound (*rauca* – does this quality cheekily imply a long period of disuse, from Aeneas' time to the present?). Rather, the Tiber appears, answers the question without any address to the

⁵⁶ Gransden (1976) p.88 n.64.

narrator, and promptly retreats back under the water (*hactenus, et subiit vivo rorantia saxo/antra; leves cursum sustinuistis aquae, Fasti* 5.661-2). Perhaps the Tiber of the *Fasti* has grown tired of giving directions and answers over hundreds of years, or else he has learned to pare down his responses to save time. However, since we see the *Fasti* poet conversing with the river in real time,⁵⁷ it seems that Ovid is here presenting the ‘true’ Tiber, and thus by implication exposes the fictitious embellishment of Virgil’s elegant river.

In a further departure from Virgil’s Tiber, Ovid’s river makes no reference to the divine favor of which Virgil’s boasted, but instead states his authority on the basis of the age and autopsy that the narrator had credited him with at his invocation:

haec loca desertas vidi sine moenibus herbas:
pascibat sparsas utraque ripa boves,
et quem nunc gentes Tiberim noruntque timentque,
tunc etiam pecori despiciendus eram. (*Fasti* 5.639-42)

With only a passing reference to his current importance (line 641), the Tiber fixates on the former rusticity of the region, reducing the noble simplicity of Virgil’s landscape to the more humorous image of occasional cows grazing on the bank paying no respect to the great river. With his verb *vidi*, the Tiber, like Achelous, acknowledges his right to speak on the subject. Like Virgil’s Tiber, he is an expert in local history, but he is not a prophetic figure, nor does he claim any knowledge of or involvement in divine plans for the city. Ovid’s Tiber is willing to reminisce and tell a story when called upon, but no more. Ovid places his speaking Tiber in the *Fasti*, where his Virgilian role as an expounder of Roman lore is more fittingly put into action, rather than the *Metamorphoses*. In the *Metamorphoses*, the Tiber appears generally as part of the

⁵⁷ See Volk (1997) on the “poetic simultaneity” of the *Fasti*.

scene-setting, and does not take an active or speaking role. In his epic, Ovid chooses other, sometimes more obscure, figures to proclaim the coming glory of Rome, and veers well away from a repetition of the *Aeneid*'s material in the concluding books of the poem.

The *Fasti*'s Tiber is a comically flattened revision of the *Aeneid*'s, making the Virgilian Tiber's qualities conspicuous by their absence. The Tiber becomes dull in Ovid's telling, as if it has been reduced to one role and one purpose – by historical and political necessity, it may not partake in the vagaries that propel the *Metamorphoses*. Greek rivers, like Achelous, are free from these restrictions. In comparison to the Ovidian Tiber, Achelous provides a subtler foil to Virgil's river, while also playing up some of its key associations. With Ovid's Tiber as a backdrop, Achelous emerges as a river whose points of contact to and divergence from Virgil's Tiber emphasize his relevance to the propagation of both elemental and narrative sound in the poem, as well as the Chaotic overtones of those sounds. While Virgil's Tiber places himself in the role of divinely favored poet and prophet (*haud incerta cano; caelo gratissimus amnis, Aen.* 8.49; 64), Achelous recounts tales of his *own* adventures. He carelessly creates a hindrance to Theseus and his companions with his flood and his stories, while the Tiber propels Aeneas along, encouraging him verbally in a moment of indecision and making the channel passable for his oarsmen. Achelous is a markedly autonomous, and self-centered,⁵⁸ speaker, offering his stories and hospitality freely, though leaving his waters unchecked, and displaying little interest in where his guests have been or where they are bound.

As we have noted, Achelous generates and combines the movement of water, noise, and narrative in his speech, but Virgil's Tiber too forges a link between the river's movement and a

⁵⁸ Two of Ovid's other speaking river gods, Peneus and Inachus, are similarly narrowly focused in their speech, but on their domestic problems.

particular type of noise. As Prudence Jones notes,⁵⁹ the spread through Latium of the rumors of the Trojans' arrival at the beginning of Book 7 coincides with their entry into the Tiber and movement upstream. Latinus has received prophecies of the coming strangers from the local seer and his father Faunus, and *Fama* takes up the theme as the Trojans moor in the river:

sed circum late volitans iam Fama per urbes
Ausonias tulerat, cum Laomedontia pubes
gramineo ripae religavit ab aggere classem. (*Aen.* 7.104-6)

The Trojans pause to explore their surroundings, but *Fama* continues to move, flying among the local cities. Later, when the Tiber stills his current so that Aeneas and his men may pass through more easily, the sailors *iter inceptum celerant rumore secundo* (*Aen.* 8.90). While the word *rumor* can in this instance be synonymous with *clamor*,⁶⁰ its use evokes the whirl of information, true and false, that has been moving through the region, and recalls the favorable information Aeneas has just received from the Tiber, and suggests that which he will shortly receive from Evander. As a main thoroughfare through the region, it is natural that the Tiber should be a conduit for both people and information, but by making the Tiber himself an authoritative speaker of a momentous message, Virgil suggests a complex link between the dichotomous character of a river and these two types of speech. In its elemental form, the river shuttles people and information by the natural and continual movement of its current; but in its anthropomorphic, divine form, it is an agent of fate and directs its waters and words accordingly. Ovid takes up this connection between the stream and speech most thoroughly in his Achelous. In removing the element of Olympian approval and prophetic speech and replacing it with stories of anger and

⁵⁹ Jones (2005) 65-67.

⁶⁰ Grandsen (1976) 94 n.90-91.

transformation and boastful eyewitness accounts, as well as noting the arbitrary way Achelous chooses his flood times, Ovid makes his epic river as much a force for audible cosmological Chaos as Virgil's Tiber is for cosmological teleology, and reverses, as it were, the Virgilian stream.

Achelous provides an emblem of the state of elemental sound at the middle of the poem. Chaotic figure that he is, he serves to mark a joining and blurring of the boundaries between elemental sound and speech. The transitioning between cosmological sounds and speech acts is a concept which is most fully delineated in Ovid's description of *Fama* and her home in Book 12. In the ecphrasis of the *domus* of *Fama*, Ovid realizes the link that the poem has been suggesting between elements and sounds, by placing *Fama* in an explicitly cosmological context (*Orbe locus medio est inter terrasque fretumque/caelestesque plagas, triplicis confinia mundi...*, *Met.* 12.39-40) and replacing the elements with varied sounds in that cosmology. The cosmological nature of *Fama* as well as the parallels between the description of Chaos in Book 1 and the ecphrasis of *Fama*'s house have been well laid out by Gladhill.⁶¹ The Chaotic properties and elemental associations of the literary figure of *Fama* in Virgil as well as Ovid are discussed by Philip Hardie in his book on *Fama*'s classical and post-classical significance, and in his book on the reception of Lucretius.⁶² Ovid's *Fama* is given her greatest prominence at the point where the poem transitions to Homeric and Virgilian material with episodes from the Trojan War. As Denis Feeney has noted, the Trojan War is generally understood in ancient literature and time-reckoning as the endpoint for the gods' mingling with humans, and he points out that "this is where the onward narrative of the gods stops, where narrative time ends for them, right where

⁶¹ Gladhill (2013) 297-301.

⁶² Hardie (2012) 80-94; (2009) 78-101.

the narrative of human historical time begins.”⁶³ That Fama is emphasized at this point of chronological shift signals a narrative and sonic shift as well, from god-driven activity to human-driven activity.

Chaos and Cosmic Din: The House of Fama Revisited

Fama may mark the beginning of human chronological reckoning, but in the poem’s structure she is the finale in a series of four allegorical personifications appearing through the length of poem. While the portrayals of Invidia, Fames, Somnus, and Fama share characteristics and narrative techniques, Fama’s treatment is rather different from the other three. Each of the first three personifications, which function as “the hitmen of the gods,”⁶⁴ is sent by a deity to enact its effect upon a mortal – Invidia (Book 2) is called upon to punish Aglauros as she interferes in Mercury’s attempts on her sister, Fames (Book 8) to punish Erysichthon for his impiety toward Ceres, and Somnus (Book 11) to send a dream to Alcyone telling her that her husband has died. Each therefore plays a critical role in advancing the plot of the episode in which it appears, and with each Ovid spiritedly explores the techniques of personification and allegory. As Philip Hardie has convincingly argued, each draws to some extent on Virgil’s fury Allecto and his Fama, who are themselves literary kin.⁶⁵ The appearance of both Invidia and Fames is described in great detail; haggard, deathly, and spreading discontent, they bear a clear relation to chthonic, infernal creatures, like Furies. Somnus’ portrayal focuses less on his physical appearance than on his languid behavior, emphasizing Ovid’s technique of picturing

⁶³ Feeney (2007) 117.

⁶⁴ Lowe (2008) 423.

⁶⁵ Hardie (2002) 236; (2012) 152; (2009) 101; (2009b?) 109. Lowe (2008) explores Ovid’s technique in creating personifications in relation to Virgil’s.

each personification as experiencing as well as embodying the effect it produces.⁶⁶ The personifications are pictured as dwelling in increasingly remote and imaginary areas – Invidia lives in a cold hovel at the bottom of a valley, Fames lives in Scythia, but Somnus has a home at the mythical edge of the world and Fama hovers at the difficult to visualize⁶⁷ and geographically impossible intersection of the sea, sky, and earth. Each successive personification delves deeper into mythical and literary geography and history.

Ovid's Fama is only a tangential player in the particular episode in which she is introduced, letting the Trojans know that the Greek fleet is coming, and her physical presence is quite minimally described while all of the ephrastic emphasis is on the space she occupies.⁶⁸ In keeping with the personifications' practice of imagining a literal embodiment of an abstraction, Ovid focuses his descriptive attention on the characteristics of the *domus*, in place of the characteristics of Fama herself, playfully acknowledging the fact that, being a speech act, she can be heard but not seen.⁶⁹ While *fama*, as the force of rumor, oral and literary tradition, and general opinion, has been an active and ubiquitous presence in the world since the first book⁷⁰, the goddess and her location are formally introduced as the poem moves into the epic territory of the Trojan War.⁷¹ Like Somnus, however, who is the nearest to her of the other three personifications, both in purpose and in position in the poem, she is not related in essence to the

⁶⁶ Lowe (2008) 423.

⁶⁷ Tissol (2002) 307.

⁶⁸ Just as he did with his description of Achelous vis a vis Virgil's Tiber, Ovid avoids repeating the descriptive work that Virgil has already done in regard to Fama.

⁶⁹ Hardie (2012) 158.

⁷⁰ Some examples are given in the first note at the beginning of the chapter; Fama's influence among humans and gods will be explored in more detail in the third chapter.

⁷¹ Hardie (2012, 153-9) discusses *Fama's* role as Muse at the beginning of Ovid's Trojan epic, and her generic importance as a synonym for epic *kleos* and literary tradition. See also Hardie (2009, 73) for *Fama's* status as a "goddess of epic." Zumwalt (1977, 212; 219) notes that *Fama* becomes "thematically important" in Book 12, as it begins a series of episodes that will prove to "undermine the very values which provide the foundations for praise as well as for an historical approach to the past."

fatal flaw of a character in the episode in which she appears; rather, the task of the final two personifications is to convey information⁷² through a mixture of truth and falsehood. Fama's departures from the norm established by the first three personifications indicate that she not merely provides an opportunity for one more set piece description, but she also serves a different kind of function in the poem. The most significant variations in Fama's portrayal are, first that she seems to be a strictly autonomous purveyor of her noises, acting without the instigation of a god (and even at times to the gods' detriment), and, second, that she does not embody a quality or state of mind, but constitutes an actively moving and changing phenomenon of verbal communication.

The description of the cave of Somnus, which appears only a couple of hundred lines earlier at the end of Book 11, serves as a useful prelude and counterpart to the ecphrasis of Fama's *domus*. As in Fama's passage, much of the descriptive force lies in its emphasis on Somnus' home.⁷³ Somnus is in many ways an antonym to Fama – Iris addresses him as Quiet, and the most tranquil of the gods (*Somme, quies rerum, placidissime, Somne, deorum/pax animi, quem cura fugit...*, 11.623-4) who brings peace and tranquility to troubled minds, while Fama traditionally is a stirrer of loud discord – and his dwelling is representative of this distinction. The structure of the *domus* of Fama bears certain important similarities to the cave of Somnus, but in other ways the two spaces are antithetical to one another. In both ecphrases, the specifics of geographic location and sound level are paramount.

Est prope Cimmerios longo spelunca recessu,
 mons cavus, ignavi domus et penetralia Somni,
 quo numquam radii oriens mediusve cadensve
 Phoebus adire potest: nebulae caligine mixtae

595

⁷² Zumwalt (1977) 210.

⁷³ While Invidia also lives in a house, it receives very little description.

exhalantur humo dubiaeque crepuscula lucis.
 non vigil ales ibi cristati cantibus oris
 evocat Auroram, nec voce silentia rumpunt
 sollicitive canes canibusve sagacior anser;
 non fera, non pecudes, non moti flamine rami 600
 humanaeve sonum reddunt convicia linguae.
 muta quies habitat; saxo tamen exit ab imo
 rivus aquae Lethes, per quem cum murmure labens
 invitat somnos crepitantibus unda lapillis.
 ante fores antri fecunda papavera florent 605
 innumeraeque herbae, quarum de lacte soporem
 Nox legit et spargit per opacas umida terras.
 ianua, ne verso stridores cardine reddat,
 nulla domo tota est, custos in limine nullus... (Met.11.592-609)

While Fama dwells at the center of the world, in the midst of a busy intersection of elements and sounds, Somnus inhabits a point on its furthest edge, near the mythical race of the Cimmerians. Homer in the *Odyssey* envisions the Cimmerians as living at the shore of Ocean, and this land is where Odysseus must travel in order to find an opening to the Underworld, so that he can converse with Tiresias and other spirits. Ovid does not mention this aspect of the dim and distant landscape, but the chthonic and infernal registers⁷⁴ of the place are still present in the eerie lifelessness of the cave, and especially in the presence of Lethe's gently babbling stream (11.603-4). Lethe's audible presence flowing through the cave creates a significant counterpart to Fama's words that whirl through the *domus*. While both dwellings contain the elemental sound of murmuring water (though in Fama's house it is the combined noise of all the words together that makes this sound, rather than a particular stream), Lethe, as a bringer of forgetfulness, acts in direct opposition to Fama, who acts as an instrument of memory, propagating and perpetuating the world's narratives.

⁷⁴ Ovid's personifications, influenced by Virgil's Underworld, tend to be grouped in places reminiscent of the Underworld. See Lowe (2008) 422.

Somnus lives, not in a house, but in a deeply recessed cave, where the sunlight cannot reach (11.592-5), a very different setting from the openness and extreme penetrability of Fama's home. The most marked characteristic of the cave, aside from its perpetual twilight (11.596), is its nearly complete lack of noise. Ovid enumerates some of the various sounds, mainly animal noises, which are not present, characterizing the cave principally by what is *not* heard there. There is no rooster crowing with the dawn (after all, there is no dawn either), no guard dogs or geese, no other wild or tame animals make a sound; nor is there even a branch crackling on the fire (11.597-600). After three and a half lines devoted to non-existent animal noises, one line is given to the absence of human conversation (11.601). Somnus does not even have a door or doorkeeper, lest the hinge should creak (11.608-9). Instead, *muta quies* lives there (11.602). Fama's house also lacks doors, but the purpose there is to allow sound in rather than to prevent it. While *omnis vox* enters Fama's house (12.42), the only explicitly named sounds are varieties of human speech (12.56-61). These flit in and out and around the *domus* like the varied types of dreams that cluster around the sleepy Somnus. Rather than *muta quies*, there is *nulla quies* there at all (12.48). Fama's *domus* is a bustling urban center, compared to the rustic tranquility of Somnus' cave. The cave is described with reference to some of the characteristics of a Roman *domus* – domestic animals and doorkeepers, human activity – but these features are named because of their absence, and the cave is a cave, not a house. Fama's dwelling, however, is always envisioned as a *domus*, a locus for and partaker in human affairs.⁷⁵ While the power of Ovid's Somnus and the dreams he sends have great influence on the human realm, the god

⁷⁵ Though the extreme openness of the *domus* makes it difficult to distinguish between inside and outside; as Tissol (2002, 308) points out, it is an appropriate expression of chaotic blurred boundaries.

himself lives apart from it. Fama, however, has placed herself⁷⁶ at the very center of the world's business, and continually seeks to surround herself with it.

Ovid's Fama, because she is in part a product of literary *fama* and necessarily carries with her the memory of Virgil's Fama,⁷⁷ is a figure associated with chthonic forces and windstorms, who also dwells at the intersection of the three divisions of the universe and looks and moves freely among them. Ovid fashions his Fama with great awareness of Virgil's, though carefully engaging with it through a pattern of complementary or contrasting characteristics, rather than repetition. Ovid's picture of Fama, while reminiscent, is nevertheless visually quite different from Virgil's. In fact, another effect of Ovid's avoidance of a portrayal of Fama herself, opting instead for a detailed view of her dwelling and her activities, is that the picture of Virgil's Fama is present to some degree in the readers' mind. The Virgilian personification of Fama, however, is more apparent elsewhere in Ovid's personifications of Invidia and Fames, which draw heavily on Virgil's Allecto as well, who in turn is descriptively similar to and associated with Fama and her activities.⁷⁸ The Fama of the *Aeneid* is a swirling mass of eyes, mouths, and wings, "chaotic amorphousness,"⁷⁹ who flies with frightening swiftness through cities spreading fear and ill-will:

Extemplo Libyae magnas it Fama per urbes,
Fama, malum qua non aliud velocius ullum:
mobilitate viget virisque adquirit eundo, 175
parva metu primo, mox sese attollit in auras
ingrediturque solo et caput inter nubila condit.
illam Terra parens ira inritata deorum
extremam, ut perhibent, Coeo Enceladoque sororem

⁷⁶ She "chose" (*legit*) the place (12.43) Zumwalt (1977, 210) notes the intentionality of *Fama's* location, which is situated for the purpose of receiving information.

⁷⁷ Virgil's Fama is "the loudest echo in the room" according to Kelly (2014, 75).

⁷⁸ Hardie (2012) 152.

⁷⁹ Hardie (2012) 80 n.3. Kelly (2014, 76) discusses the difficulty of visualizing the "excessive corporeality" of her form.

progenuit pedibus celerem et pernicibus alis, 180
monstrum horrendum, ingens, cui quot sunt corpore plumae,
tot vigiles oculi subter (mirabile dictu),
tot linguae, totidem ora sonant, tot subrigit auris... (*Aen.*4.173-83)

Fama is at first primarily characterized through her speed. Her motion gives her strength, and with both swift feet and wings, she easily traverses the space from earth to sky. Fama, despite her flight and speed, is a chthonic figure in origin⁸⁰ – the last child of Terra, a product of the Earth’s anger at the Olympians, and sister of the giant Enceladus (whose name means “loud noise”).⁸¹ She is thus a creation and an embodiment of cosmic strife and the primeval conflict between the Earth and the other deities, the conflict among the elements which exemplified Chaos and resurfaced repeatedly in the first two books of the poem. Philip Hardie describes her movement as in keeping with the description of the movement of lightning, particularly in Lucretius.⁸² He notes that “Fama is a rival to Jupiter himself both in her pretension to a cosmic power and as a figurative embodiment of the thunderbolt.”⁸³ In the *Aeneid*, she appears in conjunction with a storm, and flies between sky and earth, setting fire to people’s minds (*incenditque animum dictis* 4.197).⁸⁴

The Virgilian Fama is a pervasively negative force, an implication largely absent from Ovid’s portrayal. She is not only a *malum*, but extremely swift (4.174), and she flies shrieking through land and sky like a bird or a fury (*stridens* 4.185). Ever wakeful, the *Aeneid*’s Fama flies about by night and perches on buildings by day, spreading both truth and falsehood:

⁸⁰ Though her genealogy itself is a product of *Fama: ut perhibent* 4.179. *Fama*’s role as a representative of literary tradition will be treated in the third chapter.

⁸¹ Hardie (2009) 87-92.

⁸² Hardie (2009) 71.

⁸³ Hardie (2009) 78.

⁸⁴ Hardie (2012) 82-3.

nocte volat caeli medio terraeque per umbram
 stridens, nec dulci declinat lumina somno; 185
 luce sedet custos aut summi culmine tecti
 turribus aut altis, et magnas territat urbes,
 tam ficti pravique tenax quam nuntia veri.
 haec tum multiplici populos sermone replebat
 gaudens, et pariter facta atque infecta canebat... (*Aen.*4.184-90)

The indiscriminate circulation of all kinds of news (4.188-90) is echoed in Ovid's depiction of the *domus*, as is the image of Fama sitting in a high place from which she may watch all that goes on below (*unde...inspicitur, Met.* 12.41-2). The Virgilian Fama is portrayed as a tirelessly energetic and active force, influencing human affairs with her alarms (*magnas territat urbes*). She stirs up not merely individuals, but also whole cities. She is a noisy figure as well, with her many tongues and mouths (4.183), enabling her to make a variety of sounds: besides the fearsome, non-verbal screeching (*stridens*), she fills the populace with varied talk (*Aen.* 4.189) and sings out deeds both fictitious and factual (*Aen.* 4.190).⁸⁵

Despite her representation as a wild force of nature, Virgil's Fama is a denizen of cities, looming over human activity. Ovid's Fama, by contrast, dwells in a stationary location where the mobile features are the sounds themselves that pass in and out of her doors. Ironically, Ovid's Fama does not speak herself, though she is the purveyor of all types of noise. The constant hum in the *domus* is the result of all the sounds taken together, and is like distant thunder or waves rather than any individual voice. Like Virgil's with her many eyes and ears, she observes everything from her lofty home and all voices come to her (*unde quod est usquam, quamvis regionibus absit,/inspicitur, penetratque cavas vox omnis ad aures..., Met* 12.41-2). Ovid

⁸⁵ Zumwalt (1977, 211) notes that "despite her evil heritage, monstrous nature, and alleged indifference to truth, however, the news which Vergil's *Fama* spreads is the truth. Furthermore, *Fama* initiates a series of events which further the will of Jupiter and the workings of destiny."

replaces the innumerable eyes, ears, and tongues of Virgil's Fama with innumerable entries into the *domus* (*innumerosque aditus ac mille foramina tectis/addidit et nullis inclusit limina portis...*, *Met.* 12.44-45) and her unsleeping vigilance with the night and day openness of the doors (*nocte dieque patet...*, *Met.* 12.46).⁸⁶ Ovid's Fama does not go forth bearing her noise into the world; rather, the world's noise comes to her. She operates as, so to speak, a cosmic weighing station for sounds,⁸⁷ whereby each one must pass through her doors before being sent off again into the world. Her watchful inquisitiveness has a vast reach – not limiting herself to human gatherings, she keeps track of events in the heavens, sea, and earth: *ipsa quid in caelo rerum pelagoque geratur/et tellure videt totumque inquiri in orbem* (*Met.* 12.62-3). Like the *Fasti*'s Janus/Chaos, presiding over the celestial comings and goings at the gates of heaven with little interest in whether he lets out war or peace, the Ovidian Fama oversees the movement of the cosmic sounds, indifferent to their positive or negative connotation. While Virgil's Fama is a monster who plagues human communities, Ovid's is the inscrutable keeper of a universally functioning system of sound propagation.

The Virgilian Fama's association with the natural forces of thunder, wind, and storm, through her swift motion and chthonic origin in elemental strife, aligns her with the first forces and noises of Ovid's cosmos, and with the discordant characteristics of the newly freed elements of Chaos. In his exposition of the goddess, Ovid has expanded the cosmic associations of Virgil's Fama, adding the third section of the tripartite world to her purview. By removing the elemental associations from the goddess herself to her house, he leaves the figure of Fama as an unseen but all-seeing presence in the place, a watchful spy on the universe's activities. Fama, in

⁸⁶ Zumwalt (1977, 210 n.4) and Lowe (2008, 425) among others note the echo in this description of Virgil's picture of the underworld.

⁸⁷ Gladhill (2013, 300) calls her a "narrative black hole."

the literary tradition that reaches Ovid, is an essentially chaotic presence, uncontrollably moving in all directions to all places. Ovid creates a settled locus for this chaos in the *domus*, where the varied noises come together and interact, just as the material elements of the cosmos did at the beginning of the poem. In Virgil, Fama's lightning bolt qualities and potential for causing mass destruction set her up as an anti-Jupiter, while in Ovid, her position outside any one division of the world and the swirling mass of Chaotic noise that surrounds her and flies in and out of her open house indicate her role as an alternative, and potentially an antagonist, to Augustan order, even as she includes Augustan propaganda in her holdings.⁸⁸ The noise of Fama is the noise of the moving, changeable universe, but also of the *vox populi*.⁸⁹

Pythagoras: Fama Narrates the Cosmos

The *Metamorphoses* returns its attention to the movement of the elements towards the end of the poem in Book 15, with a seemingly comical and wandering philosophical-scientific set piece, the much-debated speech of Pythagoras.⁹⁰ Pythagoras begins with a lecture against meat eating and animal sacrifice, arguing that souls transfer into new bodies after death. From here, he identifies change as the central principle of the universe, and thus seems to sum up the dominating theme of the *Metamorphoses*. The speech offers an alternate interpretation of the varied metamorphoses that have occurred throughout the poem, with its examples of humans and natural objects which have undergone surprising transformations. He lingers especially over the topic of rivers which have unusual features or cause unexpected effects in those who drink or touch their waters. Pythagoras' emphasis on rivers as sources of change recalls the poem's many

⁸⁸ Gladhill (2013, 305-9) likens the noise of Fama's house to the noise of the Forum as heard from the emperor's position on the Palatine.

⁸⁹ Fama's role in human speech will be treated in the third chapter.

⁹⁰ Segal (2001a) provides an overview of the approaches to the passage.

instances of metamorphosis involving river gods and water sources, and Ovid's pervasive interest in water as a setting for transformation.⁹¹ Ironically, Pythagoras leaves Achelous, whose musings on his metamorphic powers extend for much of Books 8 and 9, out of his catalog of change-inducing rivers.

Pythagoras offers a pseudo-scientific rationale for the continued presence of the original Chaos in the contemporary world. He discusses the mutability of the elements themselves, and their propensity to flow from one form to the next and back again:⁹²

haec quoque non perstant, quae nos elementa vocamus;
quasque vices peragant (animos adhibete) docebo.
...
quae quamquam spatio distant, tamen omnia fiunt
ex ipsis et in ipsa cadunt, resolutaque tellus
in liquidas rarescit aquas, tenuatus in auras
aeraque umor abit, dempto quoque pondere rursus
in superos aer tenuissimus emicat ignes.
inde retro redeunt, idemque retexitur ordo;
ignis enim densum spissatus in aera transit,
hic in aquas, tellus glomerata cogitur unda. (*Met.* 15.-237-8; 244-51)

The language recalls that of the creation of the world at the beginning of Book 1, and it draws renewed attention to the essential instability with which the poem began, and which has been enacted in various ways throughout.⁹³ In Pythagoras' view, however, the elements change in a cyclical way, following a pattern of dissolution and resolution into each new form.

⁹¹ Jones (2005, 7-8) notes that "Water as a metaphor for transformation also coexists in myth and scientific thinking," as in Heraclitus' image of the river that is the same yet always changing.

⁹² The Stoic Balbus in Cicero's *De Natura Deorum* offers a more serious exploration of the topic of rotation among elements. The clearest voice behind Pythagoras' impassioned and voluminous speech, however, is Lucretius' narrator. Segal (2001a) demonstrates Ovid's sophistication in appropriating Lucretian language and style to Pythagoras to argue distinctly anti-Lucretian philosophies.

⁹³ Lively (2002, 34), using the language of chaos theory, notes that the Pythagoras episode "may be seen to initiate a feedback loop which influences our interpretation of the start of the poem"

This orderly, procedural view of change is belied, however, by all that has come before in the previous fourteen books of the poem, as well as by Pythagoras' own examples of various general and particular natural phenomena that he intends as support for his theory of the universal changeability of matter. As Mary Beagon notes, Pythagoras' speech is not filled with the scientific citation of particular authorities, but rather consists of stories drawn from general knowledge or hearsay.⁹⁴ Many of his exempla are framed with words and phrases related to traditional wisdom and lore: *plurima...audita et cognita nobis* (15.307); *narratur* (15.312); *cui non audita est...* (15.319); *dixere priores* (15.332); *memorantur* (15.360).⁹⁵ Fama is thus at work in the speech, implicitly and explicitly (*fama est* 15.356), supplying Pythagoras with information about change and metamorphosis, propelling his account. We can hear the *Metamorphoses* itself passing through Fama's *domus* and becoming part of Fama's stream of sources, supplying stories of change.

The speech veers into prickly political territory by extending the principle of change to cities and empires, which throughout history rise but then inevitably fall:⁹⁶ *sic tempora verti/cernimus atque illas adsumere robore gentes,/concidere has* (15.420-22), but then luckily prophesies that this paradigm will not apply to Rome, and that Rome's only experience of change will be to increase:

nunc quoque Dardanium fama est consurgere Romam,
 Appenninigenae quae proxima Thybridis undis
 mole sub ingenti rerum fundamina ponit.
 haec igitur formam crescendo mutat et olim
 immensi caput orbis erit. (15.431-5)

⁹⁴ Beagon (2009) 291-8.

⁹⁵ Segal (2001b, 64) discusses the episodes' relationship to the literary genres of thauma and paradoxography.

⁹⁶ As Philip Hardie (1994, 61) notes, "The historical component of the Speech of Pythagoras fits into a much wider Roman anxiety about change and instability in their state."

These lines contain many nods to the *Aeneid*, and the Fama who tells this tale (*fama est* 15.431) has a literary cast – there is not just general rumor behind this report, but an epic tradition as well. As proof of this thought, Pythagoras goes on to recount the prophecy of the Trojan seer Helenus to Aeneas, a further borrowing from the Virgilian literary tradition, which is again couched in the language of secondhand report:⁹⁷ *sic dicere vates/faticinasque ferunt sortes, quantumque recordor/dixerat Aeneae...* (15.435-7). The future of Rome is laid out through layers of testimony, some unattributed, some literary, some prophetic. Even the grandeur of Rome must rely to some extent on the ramblings of Fama to proclaim its power and its destiny, as the *Fasti*'s Jupiter must rely on Chaos opening the door for him to venture out.

Rome is carefully named as the exception to the rule in Pythagoras' cosmology, but Fama is both the instigator and the propelling force behind this system, one composed of predictable as well as random motion and change, operating separately to the linear teleology of universal and Roman history under Augustus. Fama's universe of change is an odd place for a powerful constant like Rome, and the Augustan theme of order may seem out of place.⁹⁸ Throughout the poem, at moments where cosmological principles are at the fore, Ovid has inserted notable sounds – both nature-noise and speech – into the motions, clashes, and interactions of the elements. The presence of noise becomes one more feature of the cosmos, or rather, “chaosmos.”⁹⁹ The reintroduction of overt cosmic imagery and geography as Fama's *domus* undergoes display implicitly invites comparison with the creation account at the opening of the

⁹⁷ Hardie (2012, 165-6) notes the “play between *Fama* and *fatum*” in the speech. Zumwalt (1977, 219) suggests that while “*Fama* is here supported by the *faticinae sortes* of Helenus,” the juxtaposition of the general wisdom about cities' fates with the high-flown prophecy leaves the outcome in question, since we know that *Fama* is not a reliable truth-teller.

⁹⁸ Beagon (2009, 301-2) notes that “the stability [Augustus] imposes is anomalous in a changeable, fluid world.”

⁹⁹ Lively's term (2002, 34).

poem; and it also provides a view of the state of the universe and its ordering principles at this point in the poem, where the episodes draw nearer and nearer to contemporary time. Fama's rival cosmos is situated at the center of the standard cosmos, and yet it does not belong to any of its three divisions. Instead of disparate elements, it consists of disparate *voices*, and replaces the physical strife and changeability that are symptoms of Chaos with the unpredictability, questionable veracity, and unchecked motion of sounds and speech.

Fama's Chaotic universe, consisting as it does of transient words, stories, and noise rather than tangible nature, can encompass the scientific and philosophical approach to cosmology, as exemplified by Pythagoras' somewhat jumbled explanation of the world's workings. But it can also account for the mythopoetic world which Ovid portrays of speaking elements and sonorous natural objects with their individual metamorphic origins. In a modern world, and even in the final books of the poem, where the kinds of spectacular transformations that make up most of the *Metamorphoses*, and even the witnessed phenomena described by Pythagoras, are not so common, a Chaotic cosmology of sound is more readily discernible than a chaos of forms. As divine intervention, elemental strife, and numinous, animated landscapes fade away before an image of imperial stability, primal Chaos extends into sounds as well as shapes as part of its own metamorphosis, documented through the poem along with all the others. The Chaotic principles of discord and changeability carry on, particularly in human behavior,¹⁰⁰ and it is this shift in the perception of Chaos that the *domus* of Fama embodies. Ovid's Chaos changes from a concrete entity – the quintessential material object, in that it contains the origins of all matter within itself – to an intangible one. Its contents dispersed through the world, Chaos becomes manifest in the mutability, unpredictability, and dissension inherent in creation, and these qualities have

¹⁰⁰ Lively (2002, 37-8) and Tarrant (2002, 352-5) discuss humankind as the new location for Chaos.

themselves taken root in the Ovidian world's noises, whether natural, vocal, or verbal: entities even further removed from the tangible physical realm. As Fama herself is a personified abstraction,¹⁰¹ invisible in her *domus*, so the sounds that make up her realm are the ungraspable counterparts to the natural features and mortal beings descended from Chaos.

The frame of inconsistent natural-philosophical material with which Ovid begins and ends the *Metamorphoses* takes on new implications when read with the *domus* of Fama in mind. What at first appears to be merely an Alexandrian exercise in compiling varied aetiologies,¹⁰² or an interest in generic and "narratological polyphony,"¹⁰³ or even a misguided attempt to give scientific credence to mythical tales of metamorphosis, can be seen as an illustration of the prevalence of Fama in all spheres of human knowledge and activity in the poem. The opening cosmogony in Book 1 is a miscellany of mythological and scientific cosmogonies handed down through the literary tradition: Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Empedocleanism all find a place there, as well as the poetic cosmogonies of Hesiod, Homer, Apollonius, and Virgil. Like the original material of the universe they describe, the various literary models are blended together into one creation account, with no demarcation of sources or concern for placing opposing philosophies in the same account.¹⁰⁴

This miniature Chaos of cosmogonies recurs again in the story of Pythagoras in Book 15, but with a more overt evocation of the workings of Fama. As has been noted, many of Pythagoras' *exempla* are products of hearsay and local legend; however, the entire episode is

¹⁰¹ Lowe (2008, 416, 424) discusses the "ontological ambiguity" of Ovid's personifications, and his interest in literalizing metaphor and concretizing abstraction in his four personifications.

¹⁰² Goldhill (1986, 29-30) discusses Hellenistic poetry's penchant for "a deliberate fragmentation of any divinely inspired, proclamatory, didactic status of the poet's voice into a multiplicity of citations, different levels of enunciation and conflicting or ambiguous attitudes."

¹⁰³ Myers (1994) 21; Segal (2001b, 75) discusses Ovid's "eclecticism in incorporating not just diverse but actually contradictory theories."

¹⁰⁴ Tissol (2002) applies this notion more specifically to the historical material in the last few books of the poem.

enfolded in layers of reported storytelling. Pythagoras' speech is recounted as part of the story of Numa's reign. Wishing to learn about the workings of the universe, Numa travels to Croton, asks the story of its founding from a knowledgeable old man (*veteris non inscius aevi*, 15.11), a story which hinges on the prophetic advice of Hercules, and he joins Pythagoras' students. It is Fama who has nominated Numa to succeed Romulus (*destinat imperio clarum praenuntia veri/Fama Numam*, 15.3-4), and it is through Fama that his return to Rome, after his Pythagorean education,¹⁰⁵ and his acceptance of rule are known: *in patriam remeasse ferunt ultroque petitum/accepisse Numam populi Latialis habenas* (15.480-81). Numa begins his rule with his wife, the nymph Egeria, and the guidance of the Camenae, the Italic Muses (*ducibus Camenis* 15.482). Thus Numa combines two modes of thought, scientific as well as mythopoetic, into his reign as he teaches the new Romans piety and the *artes pacis* (15.484).¹⁰⁶ The Pythagoras episode thus serves as a reminder that Fama is the force supplying cosmological knowledge in the poem, whether from mythology, poetry, or natural philosophy.¹⁰⁷ The poem's cosmological accounts are undoubtedly filtered through the house of Fama: she is the controller and distributor of knowledge about the universe's workings, and thus her home is fittingly placed central to and yet outside the known cosmos. The *domus* in space and function is a fitting emblem of Ovid's newly formed Chaos of noise.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Tissol (2002, 320) notes that the patent anachronism of Numa's visit to Pythagoras plays into the irony of Fama's questionable status as a *praenuntia veri*.

¹⁰⁶ Ironically, the first of the pious skills he teaches the Romans is ritual sacrifice, though Pythagoras had emphatically argued against animal sacrifice. The narrator did warn us that Pythagoras was "not believed" (*ora/docta...sed non et credita...15.73-4*).

¹⁰⁷ Zumwalt (1977, 218) applies a similar idea to the poem's treatment of historical material: "both legend and history (as received tradition, *vetustas*) blend into a continuum inaccessible to such values as truth and objectivity."

¹⁰⁸ Tissol's (1997, 52) characterization of Ovid's linguistic play between the literal and the figurative can apply to the poem's cosmic language: "Ovid does not appear to believe... that language creates reality, but rather that we cannot conceptualize anything w/out language. Consequently we are always vulnerable to it."

Chaotic noise is a feature of both the natural and human worlds, and marks movement and blending between the two spheres. Sonic strife and changeability appearing in metamorphoses involving the natural landscape will be explored in the next chapter, and human sound, where Fama's Chaos reaches its fullest expression, will be explored in the third chapter.

Chapter 2

Sonorous Nature: The Voices of Reeds and Willful Echoes

In this chapter I argue that the individual sounds of the natural world, instead of contributing to a unified sense of place or divine order in keeping with, for example, a pastoral mode, are an audible representation of the Chaos that is always implicitly present in the *Metamorphoses*' world. The fact that so many of the features of the landscape, whether trees and flowers, springs, or animals, are products of metamorphosis makes for an environment filled with individual and varied intelligences and competing or conflicting wills. In particular, tracing the sound of reeds through the poem provides a valuable example of what might be called recurring Chaotic noise, as reeds tend to appear at moments of conflict and to express discontent or dissension. In a series of episodes juxtaposing the music of the panpipe with the metamorphic growth of reeds, I argue, Ovid plays on the disparity between the artistic ordering of nature and the chaotic leanings of nature-noise itself. Lastly, the figure of Echo becomes an important means for the expression of the reeds' and other natural sounds through the landscape and through the poem. In this way, she performs a function in the natural world similar to Fama's in the human realm. In redefining reeds and echoes, motifs of the pastoral world, Ovid creates a landscape whose sound moves with all the fluidity and unpredictability of its shapes.

The Living Landscape

The landscape of the *Metamorphoses* is a marvelous place, at once attractive and forbidding, filled with beauty and tranquility, but also with danger and strife. Shady groves and cool streams may at one moment provide respite from a hot day, and the next become

accomplices to rape or violent death. Nothing, neither the plants, rocks, and water nor the animal and human creatures that move among them, can be trusted to hold its shape – any place and any time may provide the occasion for a metamorphosis.¹ The changeable, fluid, and frequently hostile environment of the poem, a world where the order and harmony that the creator *deus* and Jupiter have attempted to impose are routinely challenged, has its origin in the dispersal of Chaos in Book 1, as we saw in the last chapter. The separation of the warring elements during the cosmogony proves not to alter their nature but only their location, and so it follows that both the animate and the inanimate features of the world created from those elements should exhibit the same propensities. More striking even than its conflicting elements is the ubiquitous presence of individual intelligences scattered throughout and inhabiting the landscape in the forms of animals, plants, and even rocks – the products of metamorphosis.

This peculiarity of the *Metamorphoses*' world has received its share of scholarly attention. In his study of Ovidian landscape, Charles Segal notes the effect of this dynamism: "...this fluid movement...enhances the mythical, suspended atmosphere...all of nature from the gods down to the rivers and flowers, is pervaded by a sensuous life, an imaginative vitalism..."² Leonard Barkan discusses the "peculiarly Ovidian cosmology by which human values are literally infused into the nature of things" pointing to "the metamorphic lesson in cosmology, that the cosmos is animated by a great variety of intelligences,"³ and Garth Tissol draws attention to the violence and grim passion that inhere in the features of the natural world through any given character's metamorphosis at the peak moments of their emotional distress.⁴ Stephen

¹ Hinds (2002, 131) agrees that Ovid's landscape is "anti-pastoral," but notes that the "sense of a threat to harmony immanent in a harmonious setting is a constitutive feature of the landscape tradition at large."

² Segal (1969) 89.

³ Barkan (1986) 33, 35.

⁴ Tissol (1997) 194-5.

Hinds argues that Ovid's achievement in his landscape aesthetic is "to enhance its self-consciousness, to mythologize its origins and accumulate generic associations, to extend the kinds of action which it stages, to exploit its potential for interplay between verbal and visual imagination, and to add a specifically cosmological accent by describing a metamorphic world in which the setting may always be more than just a setting."⁵ A fluid, living landscape is the most apt setting for the metamorphoses that the poem enacts.

The changeability that characterizes the natural world leads to a disconcerting uncertainty as to the ontological status of any object. Rocks, trees, flowers, streams, animals, and birds cover the landscape, but any one of them could have begun as a human or a nymph. The numinous landscape is a characteristic feature of Roman religion and literature,⁶ a feature that in the hands of some poets can illustrate a divinely infused world and a unified Nature; but Ovid fragments this vision through his infusion of frequently troubled mortal personas into the landscape.⁷ This extra vitality in the natural world of the *Metamorphoses*, divine or human, does not, however, tend to contribute to a sense of sympathy, or even interdependence, between humans and nature, the pastoral trope of the pathetic fallacy. Rather, many of the animated features of the landscape, despite having been mortal once themselves, display hostility, or at best indifference, to their fellow creatures,⁸ retaining the state of mind with which they entered their new forms.⁹ So, for

⁵ Hinds (2002) 122.

⁶ Fantham 2009.

⁷ Segal (1969, 88) notes that the constant changeability undoes the coherence of nature: "Nature ceases to exist as an independent entity which brings to the human world an image of some larger, though not necessarily benevolent, order."

⁸ Segal (1969, 82-3) finds that Ovid reduces the pleasant theme of the sympathetic relationship between man and nature to "a purely rhetorical flourish, or even an occasion for irony," while Newlands (2004, 137-8) discusses the way that Ovid's landscapes, particularly those created by Jupiter, deceive other characters and "participate" in their destruction.

⁹ Tissol (1997, 169-95) explores as an act of chaos Ovid's practice of inserting human personality into the natural world in moments of violence and distress throughout the poem. Feldherr (2002, 170-1) notes the tendency of metamorphosis to expose the essential nature of those it transforms.

example, Lycaon and Daedalion continue their violent ways as wolf and hawk; Nisus, changed to an osprey, chases after his treacherous daughter Scylla; and Tereus seeks vengeance as a bird. Cyane, who attempts to help in the search for Persephone, a fellow rape victim, offers a rare example in the poem of a metamorphosed figure seeking to aid a character facing a similar situation.

Rather than creating a sense of sympathy, the presence of so many mortal intelligences in the landscape serves to foster the poem's general sense of instability. The anxiety surrounding the potentially unknown identity and metamorphic origin of natural objects is depicted in some episodes of the poem; so, for instance, Book 1's story of Io, who struggles to make known to her father and sisters that she is not merely a cow but their missing family member; and in the story of Cadmus in Book 3, he predestines his own metamorphosis when he attempts to defend his men by killing a snake that is, unbeknownst to him, sacred to Mars. This uncertainty can have humorous or beneficial effects, as in the tale of Baucis and Philemon, who unknowingly give hospitality to Jupiter and are rewarded for it with a miraculous feast, salvation from a flood, and the right to live together as trees after death. However, no story offers a better exemplar of the anxiety produced by the arbitrary nature of the *Metamorphoses*' world than that of Dryope in Book 9. A pious woman who makes frequent offerings to the local nymphs, Dryope through pure accident picks a flower that houses the metamorphosed body of the nymph Lotis, who was transformed as she fled Priapus' advances. As she herself is changed into a tree as punishment for her unwitting violence, Dryope proclaims her innocence and the injustice of her fate, and warns her family never to let her baby son touch any spring or plant, for fear that it may not be what it seems: *stagna tamen timeat nec carpant ab arbore flores/ et frutices omnes corpus putet*

esse dearum (9.380-1). It is a lesson learned not merely from Dryope's own experience, but also from the very beginning of the entire poem.

The Dryope episode points to the unsettling reality in the *Metamorphoses* that the natural world is littered with living entities which cannot always be perceived or distinguished from the more usual plants and animals that bear the same appearance. Blood from a flower or a groan from a tree may signal the true identity of an object, but often only after the damage has been done. The reversal of the expectation raised throughout the poem, that living beings pervade the natural features of the world, contributes to the sad irony in the story of Cephalus and Procris, also in Book 9. The misunderstanding that leads Procris to believe that the "Aura" Cephalus addresses while out hunting is her rival rather than merely the breeze gains further poignancy because of our larger experience of nature in the poem as a whole: she has every reason to suspect, in the endlessly multifaceted world of the *Metamorphoses*, that there are cavorting nymphs in the forest and that there may in actuality be a divine or mortal consciousness in the air with whom Cephalus could communicate. The irony is that, on this occasion, there is no wordplay or double entendre in the word *aura*, except in Procris' imagination.¹⁰

Yet in addition to the physical changeability and instability of the features of the natural world, the poem's focus on the constant interaction and contention between order and disorder, mortality and divinity, personality and authority is also apparent in the growth and propagation of various types of sounds. The traces of Chaos not only in shapes but also in sounds is perceptible in many of the noises made by the natural world: the inherent hostility of winds, water, and thunderbolts, say, or the sad groaning of oxen constrained by the yoke, or the howling of a wolf. In many cases a new or transformed sound is a striking component of the process, or

¹⁰ An example of Rosati's (2002, 289) observation that Ovid frequently raises expectations with narrative repetition, and then frustrates them.

even the chief tell-tale sign of a metamorphosis; Ovid often takes care to describe the transition from a human voice to an animal cry, or the loss of speech in exchange for the dripping of water, in Niobe's case for example, or the rustling of leaves in Daphne's. Because Ovid frequently demonstrates or suggests the persistence of a person's character into their changed form, many natural sounds come into being or take on new meaning as human personalities are relocated in the natural world.¹¹ The ambiguous quality of the new shapes is apparent in their new sounds as well, as the question of the presence of an individual persona arises: is the imputation of sorrow to a bird's song merely a fanciful perception, or do we hear not just any nightingale but rather Philomela mourning her losses? The easy shifts in meaning that one sound can undergo from moment to moment – a cow lowing is just a cow lowing, until one realizes it is the long-suffering Io instead – points to the presence of Chaotic instability at every level of the landscape. The voice of a metamorphosed being becomes the audible representation of the Chaotically blurred boundary that metamorphosis creates between human and animal or object; for the voice is a marker of an intelligence residing within a different form.

This inherent instability in the natural world is noticeable in its sounds as well. Infused with vitality and volition, the noises of the natural world in the *Metamorphoses* change, grow, and frequently decry the restrictions, power, or violence exerted upon them by the creatures or objects that house them, and the deity that brought about the metamorphosis. The audible aspects of Chaos' contention, mobility, and defiance of order are heard at the elemental cosmic level, as we saw in the last chapter, but they are also loud and clear in the fractious individual voices of the smaller objects and creatures that populate the cosmos and are vulnerable to its instability and conflict. So, for example, the impiety of the Minyeides and the Lycian farmers infiltrates the

¹¹ Tissol (1997, 169-72) discusses Ovid's practice of *animi constantia*, whereby mortals do not necessarily lose their consciousness or personality as a result of metamorphosis.

cries of bats and frogs; anger at the gods' injustice is heard in a cow's mooing, a bear's growls, or a dog's barking;¹² crows spread rumors and rivers narrate tales of metamorphosis; the dripping of water or myrrh is a lamentation for a loss. Many of the natural sounds in the poem are bewailing a sorrowful event or railing at the deities who caused it.

Some of these sounds are heard only during the particular tale that introduces them, but other sounds take hold in the poem's landscape and recur well beyond their first appearance. Two sonorous features of the natural world, the whistling of reeds, which is first heard in the figure of Syrinx, and the workings of echoes (and Echo), provide important examples of the Chaotic properties of sound in the *Metamorphoses*. These sounds grow, change, and move throughout the landscape and throughout the poem in ways that often defy or challenge attempts to control or organize them, and thus parallel in the natural world the motion of the human sounds that will fill the House of Fama in Book 12. We will first examine three reed-centric episodes, and then turn to the complementary activity of Echo.

The Chaos of Reeds in Words and Music

The Reeds' Lament: Syrinx

The vocality of reeds first appears early on in the poem, in the story of Syrinx in Book 1, which provides one of the first examples of the way novel sounds infiltrate, populate, and change the poem's landscape, and depicts one of many metamorphoses whose sounds simultaneously commemorate an individual's personal crisis and explain the origin of a natural phenomenon universally experienced.¹³ The brief account of Syrinx' metamorphosis occurs in less than

¹² In the stories of Io, Callisto, and Hecuba, respectively.

¹³ Tissol (1997, 193) suggests that "Ovid invites us to regard everyday phenomena symbolically in the light of the work's aetiological preoccupations, and see behind the outward face of nature an origin in human suffering and passion."

twenty-five lines within the plot of Io's story (1.689-712), as Mercury, at Jupiter's behest, attempts to lull the ever-watchful Argus to sleep in order to kill him and so to free Io.¹⁴ In Mercury's tale, Syrinx, a water nymph, flees the advances of Pan:

‘...Pan videt hanc pinuque caput praecinctus acuta talìa verba refert’ – restabat verba referre,	700
et precibus spretis fugisse per avia nympham donec harenosi placidum Ladonis ad amnem venerit; hic illam cursum impredientibus undis ut se mutarent liquidas orasse sorores;	
Panaque, cum prensam sibi iam Syringa putaret, corpora pro nymphā calamos tenuisse palustres dumque ibi suspirat, motos in harundine ventos effecisse sonum tenuem similemque querenti;	705
arte nova vocisque deum dulcedine captum ‘hoc mihi conloquium tecum’ dixisse ‘manebit’	710
atque ita disparibus calamis compagine cerae inter se iunctis nomen posuisse puellae.	(1.699-712)

As she reaches the marshy riverbank, her flight blocked by the water, she cries out to her sister nymphs for help and asks them to change her form. When Pan reaches out to catch her, he can only grasp the bunch of reeds she has become. As he pants, the air moving through the reeds mimics the sound of her previous plaints: *effecisse sonum tenuem similemque querenti* (1.708). Pan, delighted by the voice (*vocis...dulcedine captum*, 1.709), binds the reeds together into a musical instrument, so that they might be an ever-present means of conversation (*conloquium*, 1.710) with the nymph.

Like Daphne 300 lines before her, Syrinx is a devotee of Diana, flees an amatory god along a river, and calls upon the river deities for assistance through metamorphosis. Like

¹⁴ Fabre-Serris (2003, 186) notes that Ovid is the first to place Syrinx's tale within Io's, and the first to have Mercury disguise himself as a shepherd to conquer Argus. Murgatroyd (2001, 620) makes the point as well.

Daphne, the answer to her prayer is transformation from fleet-footed nymph into stationary plant. Daphne's ordeal and transformation are far more drawn out than Syrinx'; because she is the first in Book 1's series of pursued nymphs, Daphne sets the pattern. However, while Daphne's story is perhaps the more visually impressive of the two, Syrinx' story is more sonally varied. In the Daphne episode, Apollo makes several long speeches, and Daphne two short ones – first, asking her father to allow her to remain unmarried, and second, an impassioned plea to Peneus to change her form. Once transformed into a laurel tree, her voice is lost, though she “seems” to wave her leaves to communicate. Pan and Syrinx' story is largely told via indirect discourse, and there is very little speech. While Pan's statements are directly quoted, however, Syrinx' plea is not. Yet her metamorphosed “voice” is described in detail. Syrinx' own speaking voice is gone, but it is replicated in the plaintive sound of the reeds. The sound is now not a product of her own agency, but dependent on someone else blowing air through the reeds. Yet at the same time her voice has become a new part of the landscape – whenever the wind blows by the river, this new sad music is heard in a remarkably complex form of vocal metamorphosis that takes place before our eyes (or ears) within the text. The reeds produce sound through the action of breath, and in other parts of the poem, through the wind, that highly fractious and contentious element described at some length in Book 1. Yet the sound and the destructive force of the winds are metamorphosed in turn by the reeds into a more tuneful phenomenon or, later in the poem, even into verbally meaningful sound. As the means through which various types of sound, especially music, are created from air, the reeds are not merely the objects of metamorphosis, but they also *themselves* continually generate a form of melodious metamorphosis in nature.

Through her metamorphosis into reeds, Syrinx, who was a part of the semi-divine world of the nymphs and followers of Diana, becomes an inextricable feature of the natural world – a

feature responsible for phenomena audible in the poet's own *tempora* as well as throughout the mythical timeframe of the poem. Even though she exchanges her half-divinity's longevity for the transience of a deciduous plant, Syrinx's metamorphosis gives her a different kind of immortality whereby she recurs perpetually in the environment, as both a physical and an audible presence. In contrast to Daphne's tale, the point of Syrinx' metamorphosis is not so much to explain the origin of Pan's special plant; rather, it explains the origin of a particular quality of natural sound, which Pan coopts in a crafted instrument. Daphne seems to be the first laurel tree, and the wordplay of her name provides an etymological rationale for the aetiology,¹⁵ but there is no indication that Syrinx is the first reed bed.¹⁶ Her name is not given to the object that she becomes; rather, her name is given to the object that first acknowledges the reeds' unique sound and that first attempts to recreate her voice. Reeds may have whistled in the wind before Syrinx joined their ranks, but the introduction of the mournful whistling sound in relation to her metamorphosis creates a permanent alteration in the way reeds and their place in the soundscape of the natural world are perceived: because Pan heard her voice when he breathed into the reeds, the reeds will forever suggest her voice.¹⁷ Through Pan's desire for continued contact with her, her sound is transformed yet a second time through modification into a new musical instrument. In this way Syrinx reclaims a degree of mobility after her metamorphosis that Daphne does not have, for her sound will travel wherever there are reeds and wherever musicians carry their pipes.

¹⁵ Tissol (1997; 53, 172) and Myers (1994; 37-9) discuss Ovid's use of names and etymology as part of his aetiological interest.

¹⁶ Ovid is often unclear as to whether a given metamorphosed object is the first of its kind (see, for example, Barchiesi 2006, 410).

¹⁷ As Feldherr (2010, 25) puts it, "The sound of the syrinx comes literally from the voice of the artist, but at the same time, the music makes us hear voices."

The brevity of the episode stands in ironic contrast to its significance as an action for pastoral poetry more generally.¹⁸ Both the Syrinx story and its frame within the Io story are filled with bucolic figures and situations: there are two Arcadian¹⁹ deities, Mercury (born on Mt Cyllenus) and Pan; Syrinx's metamorphosis is located in Arcadia; there are two herdsman figures, Mercury and Argus (though neither of them is a real shepherd²⁰), passing the time on the hillside with music; such is the background to Ovid's description of the invention of the instrument with which literary shepherds from Theocritus onward make their music. The implication of Syrinx in the origin of pastoral poetry adds an extra dimension to the pastoral trope of the pathetic fallacy. The responsiveness of the natural world to the sorrows and love pains of the shepherds is a common feature in Theocritus and Virgil, and parodied in the *Metamorphoses* in the way Orpheus, for example, arranges trees and animals with his singing (10.86ff).²¹ In the Syrinx action, the reeds provide a sound in response to the sighs of Pan, the central deity of pastoral. The sweetly plaintive noise delights Pan:²² he can hear both Syrinx's former voice, as well as a sound that sympathetically mimics his own frustration. The reeds resound as if like one complaining (*querenti*), though perhaps not so much in sympathy for Pan's denied love, but because in their previous form as the nymph Syrinx, they had cause for complaint themselves. Thus, Pan creates the pipe out of apparently still-sentient reeds, and the sympathy of the natural world – sympathetic because it too has been mortal and endured

¹⁸ See, for example, Barchiesi (2006), Fabre-Serris (2003), Murgatroyd (2001) on the passage's exposition on the origin of pastoral poetry.

¹⁹ Though associated with Hermes and Pan, Arcadia's status as a pastoral locale begins with Virgil (Coleman 1977, 207-209).

²⁰ Barchiesi (2006) 407.

²¹ Newlands (2004, 138) notes that many of Ovid's landscapes are created and cared for by the gods, especially Jupiter. Barchiesi (2006, 422) states that "Ovidian singers are also landscape artists: they rearrange through their performance the appropriate landscape, instead of simply representing it."

²² Serris (2003, 192-3) notes that Pan's reaction to the sound of the reeds follows the example given by Lucretius of early man's invention of music being a response to a wish to imitate the sounds of birds and reeds. Thus the panpipe becomes not only an instrument of pastoral poetry, but the first poetry.

suffering – becomes embedded in the very instrument that forms the poetry about the sympathy of the natural world. Through the figure of Syrinx, sound, setting, and poetry become fused – a Chaotic mingling of disparate commodities that here results in an art form.

The tale of Syrinx is a seemingly simple, even redundant story, in that it follows soon after the Daphne episode and occurs as a sub-story in the Io episode, and repeats the general plot points of those two stories.²³ Its purpose, in fact, within the larger context of the book, is to put its listener, Argus, to sleep.²⁴ The episode is complicated, however, by the narrative frame in which Ovid places it. The story is begun by Mercury in response to Argus' question about the origin of his panpipe. Argus, trying to stay awake despite the pipe's soothing music, asks for an aetiological tale.²⁵ Yet Mercury, whose mission here is not to tell stories but to dispatch Io's guard, naturally ceases to speak as soon as Argus has fallen asleep, and abruptly leaves off in mid-sentence only a few lines into the narrative: *talia verba refert* (1.700). The bulk of Syrinx' story might have remained untold had the poem's external narrator not intervened himself to pick up the threads dropped by the internal narrator. The story is largely told in extended indirect discourse – a reported account of everything Mercury would have said, but didn't. Thus, the story of the origin of the panpipe and Syrinx' metamorphosis is not narrated at all (at least not *viva voce*) within the world of the poem. Argus never heard it, because Mercury never finished it. Syrinx has been doubly silenced, both by her transformation and by Mercury's truncated storytelling. Her voice is somewhat restored, however, by the narrator's explication of what would have been said, much as the reeds and the panpipe mimic her sorrowful cries. Ironically,

²³ As Hardie (2004, 4) puts it, "Notoriously the whole story of Syrinx presents itself to the reader as an impersonation of another story, being a near double of the story of Apollo and Daphne..."

²⁴ Murgatroyd (2001, 621) discusses Ovid's challenge in creating a story that will put Argus to sleep without having the same effect on the reader. According to Barchiesi (2006, 413), "bucolic poetry, Ovid suggests, is by convention walking a thin line between 'laid back' and 'boring.'"

²⁵ Feldherr (2010, 22-3) characterizes Argus as only able to understand the pipe on a surface, tangible level, but unable to hear the voice in it that Pan hears and interprets.

Syrinx, though deprived of speech, comes to participate in the narration of her own metamorphosis and lends her voice to the unfolding of both her tale and Io's; for it is the syrinx pipe that Mercury plays to Argus, and which rouses Argus' curiosity to know its origin. Her story exists both inside and outside the world of the poem, and she transcends the chronological disparity between the story-within-a-story and its frame by appearing both as a character in her own tale and as the musical accompaniment leading to it in the frame story. Syrinx' voice is embedded in multiple layers of the poem, much as it is in the landscape through the movement of the reeds, and in this way she crosses the boundaries of the poem's internal and external modes of narration.

The figure of Syrinx does not disappear after Book 1 but resurfaces in both her reed and pipe forms much later in the poem. The story of Midas in Book 11 and that of Galatea and Polyphemus in Book 13 both prominently feature panpipes and sonorous reeds at significant points.²⁶ Just as the reeds became a transmitter of the sound of Syrinx' personal sorrow, and just as the syrinx came into being for the sake of recreating and propagating that sound, so the behavior of the reeds' sounds through these two later episodes suggests that vocal reeds appear at moments of conflict, and that they therefore constitute a symbol of complaint or defiance. This symbolic import of the reeds is also played upon in Book 8 by Daedalus, a flouter of natural boundaries, whose false wings, by which he means to escape from the tyrant Minos, are described as being constructed like a pipe: *nam ponit in ordine pennas/...sic rustica quondam/fistula disparibus paulatim surgit avenis* (8.189-92).²⁷ That the shape of the wings as they are built should be likened to the syrinx before being likened to the shape of an actual bird

²⁶ See Barchiesi 2006 for a discussion of Ovid's study on pastoral formed by the Syrinx, Midas, and Polyphemus episodes.

²⁷ *Quondam* seems like a winking reference to Book 1, where the pipes first arose.

(as they finally are in line 195: *ut veras imitetur aves*), points to Daedalus' role as an artisan who, not for the first time, strives to innovate upon nature (*naturam... novat*, 189). 'Making nature new' is a result of metamorphosis that has been witnessed many times throughout the poem, and is a process that the reed-pipe also embodies: the nature of reeds was 'made new' by the addition of Syrinx and her plaints to their ranks, and was renovated yet again by the arrangement of the reeds into a musical instrument. Like Pan making an artefact out of the plants for his own personal use, Daedalus makes useful objects (whether cow-costumes or wings) out of nature's materials. Yet the reeds are beginning to develop a distinctive voice in the poem, one that feathers do not have, and the comparison of Daedalus' dangerous and defiant wings to a pipe carries the reader's mind back to the noise and conflict of the metamorphosis that preceded the artistic creation of the pipe. Through the progression of these episodes involving vocal reeds, Ovid traces the qualities of reed-noise and presents it as a recurring example of Chaotic noise in the world of the *Metamorphoses*.

The Pipe, the Lyre, and Speaking Reeds: Midas

The episode of King Midas occurs toward the beginning of Book 11, stemming from the account of the noisy and chaotic death of Orpheus at the hands of the Thracian maenads angered by his portrayal of women. Because Orpheus' music has such power over the natural world, drawing trees and rocks and animals to him, the first stone that the women throw is pacified by the beauty of the poet's singing and his lyre, and falls harmlessly and apologetically at his feet:

alterius telum lapis est, qui missus in ipso
aere concentu victus vocisque lyraeque est
ac veluti supplex pro tam furialibus ausis
ante pedes iacuit (11.10-13)

After this, however, a resurgence of noisy chaos (*sed enim temeraria crescent/bella modusque abiit insanaque regnat Erinys*, 11.13-14) accompanies the maenads' next assault-attempts. *Modus abiit* refers both to a shift in musical register, as the modulated notes of the lyre are overwhelmed by the women's tuneless cries and Bacchic instruments, and to the disintegration of order and peace in the scene.²⁸ Orpheus' singing could have staved off all the subsequent missiles hurled by the maenads (11.15), but their blaring, howling, clashing music overrides his lyre, and since the stones can no longer hear him, they do their damage:

sed ingens
clamor et infracto Berecynthia tibia cornu
tympanaque et plausus et Bacchei ululatus
obstrepuere sono citharae; tum denique saxa
non exauditi rubuerunt sanguine vatis. (11.15-19)

The noises made by the women are characterized with the typical Dionysian markers -- the foreignness of the instruments and the wildness of the vocal accompaniment. Bacchic frenzy can apply to both joyful abandon and more violent contexts, but here Ovid varies the model by giving the sounds themselves an active role among the maenads' weaponry: the clamorous noise makes war on the lyre and Orpheus' voice, so that the women can wreak their violence on Orpheus' body. The unified harmony of Orpheus' single voice accompanied by the single lyre is negated by the conglomeration of disparate sounds mixed together -- shouting, flutes, cymbals, clapping, howling²⁹ -- deployed by the maenads. Unheard, his music can have no effect.

²⁸ Reed in his commentary (2013, 306n.14) ties the phrase to "Dionysian excess."

²⁹ Ovid uses the verb *ululare* elsewhere of women associated with Bacchic activity (cf. Pentheus' relatives in Book 3 or Procne in Book 6), but also of wild animals (cf. Lycaon in Book 1).

Following this loud and chaotic violence, Ovid pursues the trope of the natural world lamenting the loss, and the riverbanks echo back the sound of Orpheus' tongue and lyre that still resound even after they have been thrown into the water (*flebile nescioquid queritur lyra, flebile lingua/murmurat exanimis, respondent flebile ripae*, 11.52-3)³⁰. Though very different in their musical predilections, both Apollo and Bacchus³¹ are incensed at the women's sacrilege in killing the *vates*, and each enacts a punishment involving a metamorphosis: Bacchus turns the wild, screaming maenads into quiet, immobile trees, and Apollo turns to stone a snake that had attempted to eat Orpheus' severed head. The interaction between these different modes of noise appears again in the following episode regarding King Midas.

The violent war of noise and musical instruments that ends in Orpheus' death is echoed, though more gently, by the musical competition between Pan and Apollo upon which Midas intrudes. The book's opening, with Orpheus' destruction and the gods of music and the countryside stirred up by his loss, paves the way for the musically charged story of King Midas, who, despite his lack of artistic taste and judgment, finds himself repeatedly mixed up with the deities of the pastoral world. Since Midas had done a favor for Bacchus by aiding Silenus, Bacchus bestows on Midas a gift of the latter's own choosing. Midas chooses, with disastrous consequences, to have everything he touches turn to gold. Yet he eventually asks Bacchus to relieve him of the gift, and is instructed to submerge himself in a spring that is the source of a river. As often happens in the *Metamorphoses*, rivers are a locus for change.³² Midas shuns his former wealth and takes to the woods and rural places, and becomes a devotee of Pan and the

³⁰ An echo heard also in the repetition of *flebile*.

³¹ Orpheus is named as a priest of Bacchus and a teacher of his rites, a point which, as Reed (2013, 306-7n.16) notes, complicates the dichotomy presented between Apollonian and Bacchic music.

³² For example, Peneus and Ladon in Book 1, Achelous in Book 8, and Pythagoras' catalog of change-making rivers in Book 15.

rustic life. Yet, in keeping with the common pattern of *animi constantia* in Ovid's metamorphoses, his alteration in the river has removed the golden touch but not improved his mind-state, and thus he is destined for yet another problem brought on by his own poor judgment: *pingue sed ingenium mansit nocituraque, ut ante,/rursus erant domino stultae praecordia mentis* (11.148-9). His well-meaning but cloddish nature sets him up as a discordant audience member when he stumbles upon a musical contest between Pan and Apollo on Mount Tmolus,³³ with the mountain himself presiding as judge (11.153ff).

In the figure of Tmolus as already with Achelous, Ovid once again plays on the duality of personifications and deified natural objects. Mountain though he is, Tmolus has anthropomorphic characteristics – he sits on “his own mountain” (*monte suo senior iudex consedit*, 11.157), his hair is crowned by an oak and acorns (*quercu coma caerulea tantum/cingitur, et pendent circum cava tempora glandes*, 11.158-9), and he has to pull some trees out of his ears so that he can hear (*ures/liberat arboribus*, 11.157-8). Presumably the contestants are also standing upon him. Like a river god, he is depicted as a venerable old man with foliage in his hair and a greenish cast (*caerulea*). Tmolus' authority and gravitas are emphasized through such markers as *senior* (157), *sacer* (163), and *sanctus* (172). The mountain is one of the few elemental features of the world, besides rivers, which speak.³⁴ Like Tellus before him, this landmass passes judgment on a deity's performance. In contrast to his physical size and stature, however, Tmolus' comments, though authoritative, are brief and to the point. He quickly gets the contest underway (*in iudice, dixit, nulla mora est*, 11.160-61), and delivers his verdict in one decisive line (*Pana iubet Tmolus citharae submittere cannas*, 11.171).

³³ Griffin (1997, 92) in his commentary on Book 11 notes that Ovid may have invented this contest.

³⁴ Reed (2013, 323-4) compares Ovid's treatment of Tmolus to Virgil's personifications of Atlas and Appenninus in the *Aeneid*, and to Ovid's own personification of Tellus in *Met.*2 (323-4).

The narrator labels the contest an “unequal competition” (*certamen... impar*, 11.156), with the implication that the instruments themselves are not the only mismatched attributes. Throughout the poem, mortal challenges to the Olympians’ skills do not end well for the challenger. Though Pan is also a deity, Apollo’s animosity toward musical competitors was displayed clearly in Book 6 in the story of Marsyas, who dared to contend with Apollo and the lyre with another reed instrument, the flute (6.382-400).³⁵ As scholars have noted,³⁶ the Marsyas and Pan stories complement each other in that the Marsyas episode depicts the punishment but not the contest, and the Pan episode depicts the contest but not the punishment. As this passage is preceded by the Marsyas episode, as well as depictions of other contests between mortal and divine,³⁷ the reader surely already has a presentiment as to the outcome of Pan’s contest. Pan however, not heeding the example of his fellow satyr, has been boasting to the nymphs of the superiority of his own special instrument, the syrinx, over Apollo’s lyre:

Pan ibi dum teneris iactat sua carmina nymphis
 et leve cerata modulatur harundine carmen,
 ausus Apollineos prae se contemnere cantus (11.153-5).

The lyre’s supremacy has been under attack more than once in the poem, most recently during the death of Orpheus, but here, at least, the pipe has a sense of *modus* (*modulatur*), in both senses of the word. There is a limit to the challenge imposed by the pipe – there is no implied threat of violence from Pan (in fact, Apollo is the more dangerous of the two) – and there is a degree of tunefulness that the maenadic instruments do not have. This time it is a “light” song (*leve*

³⁵ Though Apollo himself played the panpipe in Book 2, while disguised as a herdsman.

³⁶ For example, Reed (2013, 322-3); Feldherr and James (2004, 75).

³⁷ For example, the contest between the Muses and Pierides in Met. 5, and those between Arachne and Minerva and Niobe and Latona in Met. 6.

carmen) set against Apollo's songs (*Apollineos cantus*). Pan does not seek to do damage to Apollo with his music, but only to impress the nymphs. The daring aspect of the syrinx here seems unrelated to the circumstance of its origins, until we remember that Syrinx herself vied with Diana in appearance and could have been mistaken for her, were it not that her hunting accoutrements were less luxurious than those of the goddess (1.694-7).

The *cerata harundo* recalls the creation of the syrinx in Book 1: *disparibus calamis compagine cerae/ inter se iunctis nomen posuisse puellae* (1.711-12). After Pan "makes a noise on his rustic reeds" (*calamis agrestibus insonat ille*, 11.161), Apollo settles down with a sweep of his purple cloak and begins to play his finely wrought lyre.³⁸ Pan's preparation and his song are given about two lines; before Apollo even begins his song it takes four and a half lines to describe his laurel-covered³⁹ locks, his Tyrian purple cloak, the gems and ivory on the lyre, and his manner of holding it (11.165-9).⁴⁰ Apollo finally begins to play, and the delighted mountain judges him the winner:⁴¹

...tum stamina docto
pollice sollicitat, quorum dulcedine captus
Pana iubet Tmolus citharae submittere cannas. (11.169-71)

Dulcedine captus is precisely the phrase used to express Pan's feelings at first hearing the sound of the Syrinx-reeds (1.709). Now, however, it is not the *dulcedo* of the spontaneous voice of the

³⁸ Griffin (1999, 116) notes that this episode is replete with the language of Callimachean literary criticism, unfavorable toward Pan and favorable toward Apollo.

³⁹ Daphne too makes a silent reappearance, showing that Apollo's prophecy from Book 1 is being fulfilled.

⁴⁰ The description of Apollo and his accoutrements here is reminiscent of the imagery of Apollo Palatinus, next door to Augustus' house: cf. Barchiesi (2006) 415.

⁴¹ Griffin (1997, 111) notes that this contest follows the rules of music contests displayed in Hellenistic pastoral, and that "the defeat of Pan in musical competitions seems to have been a Hellenistic commonplace."

metamorphosed reeds,⁴² but that of Apollo's studied (*doctus*) artistry. In a further reversal of the Syrinx episode, here it is not a god appreciating a natural and emotive sound, but a feature of the natural world (Tmolus) appreciating a divine, crafted sound. As Orpheus had already proved, it is the lyre, not the syrinx, which can move (both emotionally and physically) rocks and trees. Tmolus, stately in his own massiveness, would naturally prefer the statelier instrument. In any case, if he has looked back to the previous books of the poem, he knows that Apollo must always win. Additionally, as Jacqueline Fabre-Serris has noted, much of the syrinx' charm for its hearers lies in its novelty,⁴³ and at this point in the poem, thousands of lines after its invention, it is no longer a novel instrument. The new sound that could move the monstrous Argus cannot now move the mountainous Tmolus.

Though all other bystanders applaud the mountain's judgment (*iudicium sanctique placet sentential montis/omnibus*, 11.172-3), Midas offers a very vocal dissent (*arguitur tamen atque iniusta vocatur/unius sermone Midae*, 11.173-4).⁴⁴ Midas' poor judgment was proved in the immediately preceding episode of the 'golden touch,' and the narrator unreservedly characterizes him as a fool (*pingue ingenium; stultae mentis*, 11.148-9); this, and the reactions of the other spectators (including the non-reaction of Pan, who does not contest the verdict but simply fades out of the narrative), promote the general sense that the decision is just and Midas' dissent is nonsensical. Though the readers are unable to hear the music, they must assume that Apollo's song was superior. Yet it accords with Midas' character that he should prefer the panpipe, not merely because he is too uncouth to appreciate the divine lyre, but also because his nature draws

⁴² The result of "a random encounter between metamorphosis, nature, and desire" according to Barchiesi (2006, 410).

⁴³ Fabre-Serris (2003, 191).

⁴⁴ Noting the "accumulation" of speech verbs Griffin (1997, 117) suggests that it "indicates that Midas' dissent from the verdict was widely expressed and loud-mouthed."

him to the simpler instrument. The pipe's music, with its rustic beginnings and associations, is perhaps a more widely accessible sound, while the music of the lyre requires more artistic experience and cultivated taste. Yet in the musical hierarchy, the natural simplicity, spontaneity, and emotive quality of Pan's reed pipe must give way to the gleam, grandeur, and art of the official god of music, Apollo. The contest plays out the contrast between *ars* and *ingenium* in music or poetry: anyone can blow through reeds and effect a musical noise, for the reeds produce their own inherent, organic sound, but it takes skill and training to play a lyre, which is a much more 'manufactured' instrument. The *docti homines* of Book 6 of Cicero's *De Republica*⁴⁵ have learned to imitate the music of the spheres through the harmonious arrangement of the strings on the lyre – the lyre makes celestial music, while the reed pipe grows out of the earth.

While the plebeian, querulous reed pipe has formally been ordered to submit to the classical, carefully wrought tunefulness of the lyre, the reed-voice is not ultimately silenced, or even persuaded to defer to authority. Midas, stricken with ass-ears by Apollo for his inability to appreciate good music when he hears it (11.172-7), hides his shame under a headdress so that only the slave who cuts his hair knows the truth (11.180-83). The secret proves too much for the slave, however, and, bursting to tell it, he whispers it into a little hole he has dug in the ground, then covers the hole so as to hide his indiscretion (11.185-9). However, the secret that was planted there, so to speak, grows:

creber harundinibus tremulis ibi surgere lucus
coepit, et, ut primum pleno maturuit anno,
prodidit agricolam; leni nam motus ab Austro
obruta verba refert dominique coarguit aures. (11.190-93)

⁴⁵ Illi autem octo cursus, in quibus eadem vis est duorum, septem efficiunt distinctos intervallis sonos, qui numerus rerum omnium fere nodus est; quod docti homines nervis imitati atque cantibus aperuerunt sibi reditum in hunc locum, sicut alii, qui praestantibus ingeniis in vita humana divina studia coluerunt. (De Rep. 6.19)

This grove packed with trembling reeds seems to have grown literally out of a voice (the slave who told the secret is in fact referred to as a farmer: *agricolam*, 11.192), and an indiscreet voice at that. That words should serve as seeds for reeds is perhaps not surprising in a poem where humans are created from stones, the earth spontaneously produces monsters, and any one being is subject to change into something else at a moment's notice. However, the metamorphosis of the secret into a plant whose vocal ability has already been established points to the significance of the reeds as representing a particular kind of vocalization. In the *Metamorphoses*, the production of reeds seems to happen by any other means than the usual botanical methods of generating new plants. Whenever new reeds arise, they appear as the result of a metamorphosis, and always have something to say. Like Syrinx before them, the barber's reeds produce a new sound when moved by the wind, and by this means they repeat the secret they were not meant to tell. Yet unlike Syrinx, these reeds are not plaintive; rather, having evolved from the mere emotive quality of the Syrinx reeds to be capable of verbal expression, they betray (*prodidit*) their maker and openly reveal (*coarguit*) Midas' disgrace. The reed voice slides easily back and forth between plaintive sound, pleasant musicality, and contentious speech, displaying its origin in the ever changeable Chaos; and reeds seem also to have acquired a certain generic range and flexibility, with different timbres of song according to different kinds of mood, mode, and subject matter. In contrast to the divinely arranged harmonies of the lyre, the reed voice is a continually regenerated reminder of the changeability and discontent of the world's first sounds. This scenario offers yet another instance of Chaos still present, visibly and audibly, in the world.

The Midas episode portrays sound as a physical object that can be planted and covered over, but also spread through the air.⁴⁶ For Midas and his slave, the restraint of sound is of the utmost importance – they are both concerned with concealing a secret – but the description of the House of Fama soon to be encountered in Book 12 shows the futility of attempting to restrict or silence adverse or rebellious noises. The voice of these reeds, repeating the story that was planted in the ground and from which they grew, prefigures the personified speech acts which roam in and out of Fama’s halls. These sounds are both anonymous and mobile, and thus impossible to control or corral. While the initial source of a sound may be silenced – Midas could presumably punish his slave, or destroy the reed bed – once the tale has gone forth into the air it becomes a separate entity, making its way without direction from the original speaker.⁴⁷ Midas’ slave may have attempted to guide his words safely into the ground where they would be contained and do no damage, but by the metamorphic appearance of the rebellious reeds, which transform his voice into their own reedy sound, then to a voice in the wind that cannot be caught or silenced, the words resurface, beyond his or Midas’ control.⁴⁸ The sorrowful, personal complaints of the Syrinx-reeds in Book 1 have, in Book 11, grown to be capable of the active mockery of the local potentate (who had, ironically, preferred their sound to that of the lyre in the contest on Tmolus). Apollo’s *artificium*, his lyre, may be beautiful, but the lively voice of the reeds, only partially corralled by the musical efforts of Pan, and not at all by Midas’ barber, may be more far-reaching.

⁴⁶ Though the reeds betraying Midas were an ancient proverbial lesson about the futility of keeping secrets – see Griffin (1997, 118) for a list of examples.

⁴⁷ A feature of some ancient scientific theories of sound, discussed below. Guastella (2017) discusses the history of the ancient concept of the “winged word” that flies autonomously and irrevocably from its speaker.

⁴⁸ The autonomy of words will be discussed more fully in the third chapter.

A Violent Pipe and Defiant Reeds: Polyphemus and Acis

The reed voice sounds again in Book 13, when the voyage of Aeneas is interrupted by the tale of Galatea, the Cyclops Polyphemus, and Acis. As in the Syrinx and Midas episodes, reeds both appear as an instrument in a musical setting, and arise separately in a natural setting in the context of a metamorphosis. The passage is one of the many episodes, most prevalent in the later books of the poem,⁴⁹ involving one narrative embedded in another, and told by one of the characters rather than the poem's external narrator. In the context of Ovid's version of Aeneas' journey, the ships sail near Scylla and Charybdis and the narrator's attention shifts to Scylla's history. Scylla, at one time, was a nymph who would sit with the others telling stories of her love affairs (*elusos iuvenum narrabat amores*, 13.737). As Galatea listens to these tales, she is inspired to tell one of her own experience, noting that Scylla is lucky that rejection of suitors has not caused her grief (13.740-41). Galatea goes on to recount her unpleasant courtship by Polyphemus, and her doomed love affair with Acis. The passage has, of course, many points of reference to Theocritus 11's 'lovesong of Polyphemus,'⁵⁰ but sonal aspects are prominent in the episode, and reeds again play an important role, both in Polyphemus' song and in the ensuing metamorphosis of Acis.

Unlike Theocritus' Polyphemus, Ovid's Cyclops struggles unsuccessfully to fit his epic frame and behavior into a pastoral and elegiac setting, and plays the accompaniment to his love song on an epically massive (and hence generically suggestive) pipe of 100 reeds (*harundinibus compacta est fistula centum*, 13.784; a normal panpipe generally consists of seven or nine). This befits his great size and epic origins, while also grotesquely magnifying the voice of the syrinx. The sweetly plaintive sound of the newly created syrinx, already demoted to something uncouth

⁴⁹ See, for example, Tissol 2002 (309) for a discussion of this pattern.

⁵⁰ See Farrell 1992 on the complex interactions of the pastoral, elegiac, and epic genres that occur in the episode.

and barbaric (*calamis agrestibus; barbarico* 11.161-2) by the judgment of Mt. Tmolus, now serves to bellow over the seashore and mountains and shatter the region's peace with its echoing. As would be appropriate in a pastoral setting, the landscape responds to the sound of the song, though here it is not the *locus amoenus* of groves and streams, but mountains and sea waves that echo the noise:⁵¹ *senserunt toti pastoria sibila montes,/ senserunt undae* (13.785-6). The land and sea do not “respond” or “resound” in the usual vocabulary of sympathetic landscapes, but are made to “feel” the sound. The ponderous effect of the pipes is emphasized by the repetition of the heavy five-syllable start to each line.⁵² These are powerful *sibila* indeed, to make whole mountains and the sea feel them.⁵³

By Book 13, the reed pipe is no longer a novelty, and its music no longer has the same charm for its hearers. As its defeat on Mt. Tmolus demonstrated, far from being a new and engaging part of the world of music, the pipe has been relegated to a less elevated place in the musical hierarchy, and in the Polyphemus episode it has itself become a source of parody.⁵⁴ In Polyphemus' hands, however, the pipe becomes an instrument of chaotic noise on a large scale – not only is the pipe wildly enlarged in terms of its size, but its voice is also magnified in tone and the extent of its reach.⁵⁵ Echoing the cosmic proportions of the voice of the *bucina* that called back the flood waters in Book 1, the sound of the Cyclops' panpipe seems to cover a vast

⁵¹ Barchiesi 2006 (416).

⁵² Farrell (1992, 248-9) discusses the metrical effect.

⁵³ As Barchiesi (2006, 417) describes it: “the sound effect is...more than the usual echo – not exactly a soft spell, more like rattling wild nature.” He notes that the word *sibila* is used by Lucretius to denote the natural sounds that were imitated to form the first pipe music, but is not used in Virgil for piping. Farrell (1992, 246) discusses the pattern of auresis that the pastoral elements of the episode undergo. (Mt. Tmolus, however, was able to hear a more normally sized panpipe in Book 11.) Creese (2009, 569), also referring to the emphasis on size in the episode, notes that the bigger Polyphemus and his pipe become, the less musical they are.

⁵⁴ See Fabre-Serris (2003, 191) for a discussion of novelty as a central feature of the panpipe. Farrell (1992, 247) suggests that the giant panpipe is not parody for its own sake, but a result of the “confrontation between...two genres.”

⁵⁵ Creese (2009, 566-7) however, suggests that since reeds only come in a few sizes, Polyphemus' hundred reed pipe has many more notes than a standard pipe, but they are the same notes – there is no change in scale. Thus his piping will be “ridiculously high-pitched” in comparison to his voice.

distance over sea and land. The humble pipe thus becomes a purveyor of Polyphemos' disproportionate (at least by the standards of the pastoral or elegiac world) character. The sweetly plaintive quality of Syrinx' voice recreated in the syrinx is transformed here to the raucous volume of Polyphemos' desire.

The Cyclops' bellowing song does not win over the nymph, however, who has been listening to it while hidden away behind the rocks with her lover Acis. When he discovers Acis' presence, Polyphemos, in true epic fashion, throws a piece of the mountain at the youth and crushes him under it (13.882-4). The Cyclops' violence amounts to an eruption of chaos into the harmonious pastoral love scene of Galatea and Acis reclining in the landscape and listening to music (though the music itself is a travesty of the genre). The noise of Polyphemos' wrath intensifies the reaction that the landscape had to his piping – even Mt. Aetna recoils in horror (*clamore perhorruit Aetne*, 13.877). Galatea must flee and is not able to protect Acis from the destructive force of the blow, except to set a metamorphosis in motion. As she watches, the bulk of rock covering Acis cracks open, a reed rises up in the opening, and a resounding stream begins to flow from it:

...tum moles tacta dehiscit,
vivaque per rimas proceraque surgit harundo,
osque cavum saxi sonat exsultantibus undis (13.890-92)

The reinvigoration of Acis' transformed self is prefigured in the liveliness of the images pouring from the rock. The reed is "living" (*viva*), and the rock has a mouth (*os*) that resounds (*sonat*) with leaping water.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Barchiesi (2006) notes the importance of the metamorphosis to the bucolic genre, in providing the Theocritean bucolic landscape of Sicily with its river. The river Acis is also mentioned in Theocritus *Id.*1 (409).

When Acis himself reappears as a river deity, he is crowned with reeds: *incinctus iuvenis flexis nova cornua cannis* (13.894). Reeds are part of the typical garb of a river god, yet in the *Metamorphoses* they have additional registers of meaning. Just as in the Midas episode, the reeds in this passage, associated with natural sound, rise up out of an attempt to bury something: the verb *obruo* is used both of Midas' slave burying his words in the ground (*obruta verba refert*, 11.193) and the Cyclops hurling the rock at Acis (*totum tamen obruit Acin*, 13.884). The vocal reeds become a living (*viva...harundo*) memorial to whatever was covered over, be it words or a body, and restore it to the upper world. While the Cyclops' enormous panpipe projects his song over the sea and mountains, making him look ridiculous,⁵⁷ the newly grown reed more subtly undermines Polyphemus' purpose, by eternally marking the triumphant metamorphosis of his rival in the water echoing from the rock (*os...saxi sonat*).⁵⁸ The reed breaking through the rock enacts visually its aural effect of sounding a continuous note of dissonance against, and beyond the control of, a seemingly more powerful figure. While Acis himself does not speak except for his plea to Galatea and his parents for help, the water of his new river resounds accompanied by the reed marking its source, so that through his metamorphosis he gains a continuous voice that even Polyphemus cannot reach, let alone match.⁵⁹

Significantly, the episode is narrated by Galatea herself. It is a female voice now recounting the music of the pipes and the sound of the reeds as part of her own *querelae* – this time the nymph is not the victim or the instrument, but rather the narrator of her own experience.⁶⁰ In a further narrative turn, Galatea, who was the audience for Polyphemus' song, is

⁵⁷ “These details, like Polyphemus' absurd hundred-reeded pipes, suggest that what Galatea heard was not the sweet music of a conventional Theocritean shepherd, but rather a truly Cyclopean racket.” Farrell (1992) 249.

⁵⁸ Creese (2009, 572) points out that the unmusical noise and shouting of the Cyclops stand in stark contrast to the “symphony of new and musical sound which heralds the rebirth of Acis as a river god.”

⁵⁹ Mack (1999, 55) draws attention to the silence of Acis relative to the speeches of Galatea and Polyphemus.

⁶⁰ Creese (2009, 577) notes that Galatea is in the same position as Mercury in the Syrix episode, controlling her own narrative, and she thereby breaks the ‘pursued nymph’ paradigm.

now the narrator of the same song⁶¹ and the ensuing action. Like Syrinx' transformation narrative, the story of Acis' metamorphosis and the appearance of the reeds is embedded in complex layers of narration. Galatea herself echoes the Cyclops' song and the subsequent chaos in her retelling of the event, and gives these sounds a temporal reach beyond their initial hearing, first to Scylla and the other nymphs, and then to the readers of Ovid's poem.

The Deconstructed Pipe

Each of these three episodes involving an interplay of reed-pipes and reedy metamorphosis presents a variation on a shared theme. In each there is first a passage of music made by pipes and then a passage of other noise made by or associated with the emergence of reeds,⁶² and while the circumstances and effects of the music and noise in each instance are different, all involve, to some degree, themes of conflict, emotion, resistance to control, and narration. The reeds and pipes are thus placed in various degrees of chaotic interaction – with the Midas episode being perhaps the least charged, and the Acis episode the most – whose chaos is embodied in the appearance of a new reed through metamorphosis. Syrinx, in providing both the first portrayal of sonorous reeds and inspiring the creation of the first reed pipe, sets the tone, as it were, for both reeds and pipes. The reeds into which she is transformed make a soft, lamenting sound, and Pan's pipe echoes this sound with its sweetly plaintive notes. Thus, the first sonorous reeds express sorrow at their condition and the circumstances that brought them into being. To Pan, however, the sound is a pleasant reminder of his love. In a pattern of narrative encircling,

⁶¹ Farrell (1992, 264) draws attention to this point, noting the “narrative polyphony” of the scene.

⁶² Barchiesi (2006, 409) comments on this pattern: “the *harundo* is connected to natural acoustic phenomena, a sort of vocalization of the landscape (through wind, or an echoing cave); ...the botanic *mirabile dictu*, while forming the metamorphic coda to a narrative sequence, is preceded by a specific reference to the use of reeds as musical instruments for bucolic song.”

the music of the syrinx is the accompaniment and the instigation for the tale of the syrinx' origins; and so, because the story is only partially told by Mercury to Argus and is finished by the external narrator for the reader, both Syrinx' reed voice and her musical voice are heard outside of her narrative, rather than within it.

In the Midas episode, the separation between pipe and reeds is far more pronounced. The concept of conflict between competing types of sound, raised in the passage detailing the death of Orpheus, is brought more tamely into view in the contest between Pan and Apollo. Here the pipe's personal appeal to Pan is not enough to gain it general praise, especially in the presence of Apollo's more cultivated music, and it must take its place in a hierarchy of instruments and genres. The notion of challenge to authority, however, continues both in Midas' ill-advised dissent to the outcome of the contest, and in the voice of the reeds that grow from the barber's attempt safely to relieve himself of Midas' secret. The secret words become reeds, which broadcast the secret on the wind, and thus the reed voice echoes both the pipe's and the human characters' disregard for authority and timely speech. These reeds are neither musical nor melancholy; rather, they repeat the words from which they grew, spreading them far and wide. While the episode is more straightforward in its narration than the other two, the fact that the reeds themselves become narrators and purveyors of a tale gives the passage a striking resonance and idiosyncrasy.

From the mild and amusing aural complications of the bumbling King Midas, the pipe-reed episodes conclude in the violent noise of Polyphemus. Here, the pipe becomes an instrument not of gentle expression, but of far-reaching, high-volume noise that pummels the landscape. When Acis is crushed and subsequently becomes a river god, a reed rises up to mark the place of his metamorphosis. This reed, unlike the Syrinx and Midas reeds, makes no sound of

its own, but instead stands at the resounding mouth of the stream. The voice of the pipe becomes a fearsome parody of itself, while the reed, though quiet itself, is still associated with a natural sound that continues on unstoppably. The embedded narration of the passage, and the theme of the pursuit of an unwilling nymph which ends in reed-metamorphosis ties the passage back to the Syrinx episode of Book 1.

While each episode enacts its own idiosyncratic plot and thematic or generic dynamics, the common thread of a reed voice separated from the musical sound of the reed-pipe points to an exploration in the *Metamorphoses* of the poetics of reeds and their attendant natural sounds. Of the many voices and narrative modes that comprise the poem,⁶³ the many varied voices of the natural world play a significant role, as if perhaps best exemplified in the recurrent voice of the reeds. As voices of complaint, temerity, or defiance, they continually identify themselves as markers of the Chaos that is still present and potently moving in the cosmos. It is perhaps no coincidence that the tale-telling reeds of Midas and the reed marking the juncture of rock and resounding water bookend the ecphrasis of the House of Fama, reflective as they are of that House's function and location. The narrative complexities of the three reed episodes and their emphasis on the widespread nature of a sound or retelling of a story suggest a correlation and an interaction between the motion of both natural and human sounds.

The reed pipe cannot be separated from its heritage in the pastoral genre, and Ovid makes no attempt to separate it. Indeed, the portrayal of the panpipe figures as an integral part of his exploration and blending of genres throughout the poem.⁶⁴ However, he has given the reeds a

⁶³ Farrell (1992, 238), for example, describes the different genres at play as “voices” or “languages” interacting, and notes that the entire poem is “characterized chiefly by this very element of polyphony, of openness to the influence of different genres, stylistic registers, and ideologies.” Barchiesi (2001, 49) however, takes the word ‘polyphony’ in a different way, noting that “Ovid’s style is not truly polyphonic,” as there is little stylistic difference among the poem’s many narrators.

⁶⁴ Barchiesi (2006, *passim*) discusses the pipe and reed episodes in the context of Ovid’s play with the bucolic genre.

vocal register unto themselves, beginning in the person of Syrinx, and extending through the wordy vocalization of Midas' reeds and the resounding sea grotto landscape of Acis' metamorphosis. Thus the reeds themselves continue to metamorphose in song quality and register as the poem progresses. With his portrayal of the voices of and surrounding the reeds themselves, beyond their grouping into musical instruments, Ovid brings a new vocal component to the landscape, as well as to the voice of the pipe. In the *Metamorphoses*, reeds cannot be understood only as a metonym for a pipe or flute, as they might be elsewhere. While the vocabulary of reeds is sometimes used in such a context in the poem, the presence in nearly every pipe episode of natural reeds growing out of the ground compels the reader to remember the other, non-musical register of reed-noise – querulousness, indiscretion, and defiance. The significance of the motif of the sympathetic landscape to pastoral poetry is such that Ovid's engagement with the genre necessarily includes his use of landscape sounds. While the natural world in these three episodes does engage, albeit to varying extents, with the characters, Ovid, in these three juxtapositions of reeds and pipes, enacts the recurring theme of order and disorder, *deus* and *chaos*, that enlivens the poem from the outset. The context of music evokes the idea of *concordia discors*, harmony in discord; after all, the panpipe and even the lyre operate, of course, on the principle of disparate notes arranged so as to produce a harmonious effect. The reed pipe enacts the potential for order and harmony existing in natural noise, but the pipes are constructed from (so to speak) independent-minded reeds. By emphasizing the parts that make up the pipe, (i.e., the sonorous reeds), rather than focusing only on the whole, Ovid fragments the sympathetic pastoral landscape, creating a noisier and less harmonious environment.

Resonabilis Echo

From the noise of the reeds we turn to the figure of Echo, and the echo-phenomenon. Ovid's Echo, because of the significant ways she both reflects and differs from previous literary depictions of echoes, provides a model of the behavior of sounds in the *Metamorphoses*, just as the reeds do. Ovid interweaves his action for the echo with his story of Narcissus; and seems to be the first to have paired these characters.⁶⁵ Echo and Narcissus therefore tend to be studied in conjunction, and in terms of their thematic relationship to one another. The nuanced interconnections between the two episodes, with their emphasis on identity, double images (verbal and visual), and language have received much attention. Here, I will be focusing less on Echo and Narcissus as counterparts to one another, and more on Echo's sound production and her importance as an image of sound production in the poem as a whole.

Though unnamed in any of the reed episodes, and not formally introduced until Book 3, the figure of Echo plays an important role in the spread of the reeds' voice, as well as the movement, growth, and changeability of all other sounds in the early episodes of the poem, and indeed throughout its entirety. Echoing, as a repetition of sound, is an integral part of Syrinx' transformation – the air in the reeds echoes the nymph's voice, and the pipes which Pan creates echo the sound of the reeds. The echo, as a sound as well as a nymph, is a frequent participant in the pastoral tradition where Pan and the syrinx are found.⁶⁶ Before Ovid, echoes are primarily associated with the pastoral landscape. The aural phenomenon of the echo plays an important part in the characterization of the responsiveness of the pastoral landscape: in the *Eclogues*, the groves resound in answer to the shepherd's pipe (e.g.,...*resonare doces Amaryllida silvas, Ecl.* 1.5; *respondent omnia silvae, Ecl.* 10.8), or with the noise of poetically vocal creatures like the

⁶⁵ See for example Hardie (1988) 74, and Hollander (1981) 7.

⁶⁶ Germany (2005) 188.

cicada (*resonant arbusta cicadis*, 2.13). In this environment, the syrinx and echo (or Syrinx and Echo) work in conjunction to create a sonorous landscape, multiplying and extending the reach of the voices of its inhabitants.⁶⁷ The Ovidian Echo borrows from many of the pastoral models, but her characterization in her own episode, and the larger behavior of echoes throughout the poem, gain her a wider reach and sphere of influence. In this way, the workings of echo in the natural world suggestively function as a sonal counterpart to the workings of Fama in the human sphere.

Echo is not a personified character in the *Eclogues*, functioning instead as an audible feature of the poetic environment, but in Greek bucolic or Pan-centric texts she appears as an unseen companion to his piping. In the *Homeric Hymn to Pan*, the echo “moans” (*peristenei*, 19) on the mountain as Pan dances with singing nymphs (19-21), and a more personified Echo figures in the pseudo-Theocritean technopaegnon *Syrinx*-poem. Longus’ *Daphnis and Chloe* recounts the stories of both Syrinx and Echo, though, particularly in Echo’s case, following a significantly different mythical tradition than that used by Ovid. In Longus, as in Ovid, Syrinx is a nymph who flees Pan’s advances and becomes a reed, though she is described as a goatherd who sang all the time, “as she still does” (*oion nun*, 2.34). Echo, in this account, is the daughter of a nymph and a mortal man, who is raised among the nymphs and taught to play all kinds of musical instruments. She shuns her suitors (like Narcissus in Ovid’s account), and angers Pan by stirring both his desire and his jealousy of her musical ability. He maddens the shepherds and causes them to tear her apart and scatter her throughout the earth, even as she is still singing.⁶⁸ The Muses preserved her voice, so that she still imitates all sounds, including the sound of Pan’s

⁶⁷ Morzadec (2009, 311-13) discusses Statius’ post-Ovidian use of both echo and rumor to effect the spread of sound over large distances in the *Thebaid*.

⁶⁸ A plot point aligning her with Ovid’s Orpheus and Cumaean Sibyl, both of whose bodies are outlasted by their voices.

syrinx, which causes him to roam the countryside searching for the invisible source of the sound (3.23). Echo, outside of Ovid's account, tends to be associated particularly with musical sounds and rustic settings. In the pastoral environment, Syrinx and Echo together are the source of an embedded musicality and sentience in the landscape, and point to an inherent numinous quality in that landscape through their suggestion of the presence of Pan and their own origin as nymphs. The music of Syrinx, repeated by the trees and rocks through the workings of Echo, gives the illusion of a common language among living things – gods and humans pipe, and the land responds in kind, in a situation reminiscent of Golden Age harmony.⁶⁹ Ovid's treatment of these two figures, however, creates a less harmonious type of landscape.

The Ovidian Echo⁷⁰ is removed from a strictly pastoral setting, and is not musical.⁷¹ Though she has been implicitly active since the first book,⁷² she is introduced as a personified entity in Book 3, in the story of Narcissus. While bearing some resemblance to Ovid's other personifications (Invidia, Fames, Somnus, and Fama) in that she experiences the quality that she represents, Echo is not merely a physicalized evocation of an acoustic phenomenon but, like Syrinx, she is a distinct persona whose metamorphosis provides an action for the echo-phenomenon. Even more than Syrinx, however, Echo is a figure generally associated with a category of sound rather than with a corporeal presence. The narrator states that at one point in time Echo was indeed a physical entity, not merely a voice: *corpus adhuc Echo, non vox erat* (3.359). The simple verb of being, *erat*, without any words denoting possession, point to the fact

⁶⁹ Gera 2003 (19-33) discusses the belief in a common language among gods, humans, and animals existing in the Golden Age.

⁷⁰ According to Koenen (2004, 709n.35), Ovid is the first extant writer in Latin to translate the Greek 'hwx' as 'echo.'

⁷¹ Hollander (1981) discusses the two different literary Echo threads that carry down into early modern literature: that based on Echo as a musical companion of Pan, and that based on the Ovidian Echo.

⁷² For example, on a textual level in the repeated cosmic creations and destructions in Books 1 and 2, and in the repetition of Daphne's experience in the tales of Io and Syrinx in Book 1; and, on a literary level in the borrowing from Callimachus in the Crow and Raven story of Book 2.

that Echo's very essence is at stake – she was a body but was not a voice, though we know that soon she will be a voice and not a body.⁷³ All the descriptions of the nymph, however, are related to her voice rather than her appearance: *vocalis* (3.357), *resonabilis* (3.358), *garrula* (3.360). While nymphs tend to be defined by their beauty or their likeness to various goddesses – for example, some of the nymphs preceding Echo in the poem, Daphne, Syrinx, and Callisto, are associated with Diana – Echo's prevailing characteristic from the beginning is her incessant speaking. Echo, one of the many characters in Ovid's myths who are echoes of each other in the sense that they are punished for saying too much, loses her ability to speak freely after she chattily detains Juno from interrupting one of Jupiter's trysts. Echo's punishment is never to be able to speak on her own, but only to be able to repeat the last few words of what she hears. Juno's intention is to diminish Echo's power of speech: *'huius' ait 'linguae, qua sum delusa, potestas/ parva tibi dabitur vocisque brevissimus usus'* (3.366-7).⁷⁴ Yet, the side effect is that, while Echo may be frustratingly limited in terms of her own speech, she is able to double the sound and increase the reach of the sounds she hears: *in fine loquendi/ ingeminat voces auditaque verba reportat* (3.368-9).

This evocation of a persona behind the sound of the echo prepares the way for the remarkable “conversation” with Narcissus which follows, but it also establishes a model for the behavior of echoes throughout the poem. We shall see that, like the syrinx, the echo is both the result of a metamorphosis and the agent of the metamorphosis of other sounds. The still-corporeal Echo comes upon Narcissus, who has been separated from his hunting companions in

⁷³ Berger (1996) discusses the issues of ontology of self and other that pervade the Echo and Narcissus tale. Hardie (1988, 77) points out that in Lucretius sound phenomena are explained “on the hypothesis that *vox* is *corporea*; Ovid plays with the paradox of a *corpus* that turns into a *vox*.” Natoli (2017, 48-9) discusses the liminality of Echo's position.

⁷⁴ Natoli (2017, 49) notes the way that this situation destabilizes Echo's language ability: she still has a *vox* and *lingua*, the markers of articulate speech, but only has limited use and control of them.

the woods, and immediately falls in love with him. With the multifaceted reflections and illusions of speech and presence that are about to take place there, the lonely spot becomes a “labyrinth of sounds,” in Gianpiero Rosati’s term.⁷⁵ When Narcissus calls out in search of his friends, Echo repeats the last few words of his statements, imbuing them with a meaning very different from that given by their original speaker. The humor and point of the scene spring from the double-entendres and the fact that the same words can be used to such different effect by the peevish, selfish Narcissus and the lovelorn Echo. When he asks if anyone is there, *ecquis adest?*, she answers the question: *adest* (3.380). When Narcissus asks his missing companions to come meet him, *coeamus*, Echo happily (*libentius*) repeats the word, with erotic rather than logistical intentions (3.386-75). In their last verbal exchange, when Echo rushes forward to embrace him and Narcissus rejects her, Echo manages to repeat Narcissus’ words, imbuing them with precisely the opposite meaning from the one he gave them: *‘ante’ ait ‘emoriar, quam sit tibi copia nostri.’ / retullit illa nihil nisi ‘sit tibi copia nostri’* (3.391-2). Through sheer force of will, Echo manages to alter another person’s speech to aid her own cause. Annette-Emmanuelle Berger notes the significance of the vocabulary used in the passage: Echo awaits sounds but gives them back as words⁷⁶ (*natura repugnant/nec sinit incipiat; sed quod sinit, illa parata est/exspectare sonos, ad quos sua verba remittat*, 3.376-8). Echo’s ability is to take the sounds that come to her, such as Narcissus’ confused utterances, and send them back as her own intentional words, *sua verba*. Her action is in some sense a poetic one, in that she responds to what she hears and imbues it with meaning.

⁷⁵ Rosati (1983, 29): “un campo di multiformi e ambigui richiami, in una sorta di labirinto sonoro.”

⁷⁶ Berger (1996) 631. Natoli (2017, 50) takes the mixture of words denoting articulate and inarticulate speech to be a sign of Echo’s liminal linguistic status.

At the same time, however, the Ovidian Echo's ability not only to reflect words but also to respond to them with a changed meaning is emblematic of the general instability of language in the poem. As we will see in the next chapter, speakers in the *Metamorphoses* often have little control over their words' effects: speeches fail to move their audience to a desired reaction, or are given an interpretation other than that which the speaker intended. This potential for an echo's misrepresentation of an initial sound and that sound's subsequent misinterpretation is not merely Ovidian playfulness,⁷⁷ but part of the Lucretian theory of sound as well. Besides its relationship to the bucolic genre, Ovid's portrayal of Echo is in close dialogue with Lucretius' explication of the workings of sounds and echoes, as well as his discussion of *simulacra*. Leading up to his discussion of echoes, which shares much with his theory of *simulacra*, Lucretius notes the various ways a sound might become distorted, corrupted, or lost on its journey from a mouth to an ear, and his scientific exploration of reflected sounds and images and their interpretive possibilities provides some background for Ovid's treatment of Echo and Narcissus.

The Lucretian world hovers behind many passages of the *Metamorphoses* beyond the explicitly philosophical or scientific sections, as more and more scholars are demonstrating,⁷⁸ and the Echo and Narcissus tale borrows and reimagines much Lucretian material. In order to recognize these borrowings and better understand Ovid's innovatory echo, we must first explore just what Lucretius has to say about echoes and the propagation of sounds. As Mieke Koenen observes, Lucretius devotes a large portion of his discussion of hearing to an explanation of echo, because echoes are a prime example of a phenomenon that could cause us to mistrust the

⁷⁷ The potential for puns in echoes was well exploited by Callimachus and other writers of Hellenistic epigram: cf. Hollander (1981, 24-26).

⁷⁸ Schiesaro (2014) provides a summary of recent work in this trend.

evidence of our senses.⁷⁹ Lucretius too discusses echoes in the context of the pastoral landscape and its musical traditions. According to Lucretius, the echoes prevalent in hilly, forested places caused the local people to imagine that the woods were filled with satyrs and nymphs, and he describes the musically infused surroundings with Pan piping among them:

haec loca capripedes satyros nymphasque tenere
finitimi fingunt et faunos esse loquuntur
quorum noctivago strepitu ludoque iocanti
adfirmant vulgo taciturna silentia rumpi
chordarumque sonos fieri dulcisque querelas,
tibia quas fundit digitis pulsata canentum, 585
et genus agricolum late sentiscere, cum Pan
pineae semiferi capitis velamina quassans
unco saepe labro calamos percurrit hiantis
fistula silvestrem ne cesset fundere musam.
cetera de genere hoc monstra ac portenta loquuntur, 590
ne loca deserta ab divis quoque forte putentur
sola tenere. ideo iactant miracula dictis
aut aliqua ratione alia ducuntur, ut omne
humanum genus est avidum nimis auricularum. (DRN 4.580-594)

With his “honeyed cup” method of poetic truth-telling, Lucretius paints a highly detailed and rather charming picture of a sonorous, numinous landscape, associating the echoes with the calls and music of satyrs, fauns, and Pan dancing about and playing flutes and reed-pipes. He too places echoes and these imagined sounds firmly in a pastoral setting, with an emphasis on musical sounds, though there are also more strident noises (*noctivago strepitu ludoque iocanti*, 4.583) that add a touch of eeriness to the picture. Lucretius gives the common descriptor *dulcis querelas* (584) to the pipe music,⁸⁰ and locates Pan in particular playing his own reed-pipe so that it might continuously pour out the “sylvan muse” (589).

⁷⁹ Koenen (2004) 712.

⁸⁰ This metaphor is one that Ovid literalizes in *Syrinx*, who actually expresses complaints.

From the musical night-wanderings of the mountain-forest deities, Lucretius moves to the delusions of the rustic people who invented the stories about them. Pan, the fauns, and nymphs are just one category of “wonders and portents” that they speak of, and Lucretius delves into the possible motives for such tale-telling: perhaps imagining the echoes are real voices and real music helps people to feel that they are not living in a place abandoned by the gods (591), or perhaps they are indulging the excessive human greed for hearing such things (*avidum nimis auricularum*, 594). Rather than looking into the true causes of the reverberating sound around them, these people ascribe to it a meaning which they themselves choose, and so they hear just what they want to hear. Ironically, the storytellers themselves act as an echo of false information, spreading narratives of woodland deities and tales of their music. Ovid picks up on the links that the Lucretian passage suggests among echoes, nature, music, and narrative, and he brings them to bear on his own explorations of landscape noise in the *Metamorphoses*, by literalizing and mythologizing the sorts of phenomena that Lucretius explains away with *ratio*. In the *Metamorphoses*, it is perfectly plausible to believe one hears the music of Pan and the nymphs rather than merely an empty echo of some mundanely rational sound: in fact we know that Pan wanders the woods playing the syrinx, because we were present at its invention in Book 1, and saw him with it again, playing for an audience, in Book 11.

Lucretius’ account of the echo fits neatly into his exposition of the corporeality of sounds.⁸¹ Sounds, like everything else in the universe, are made of atoms, and thus we perceive sound when the atoms strike against our ears, and we may have sore throats from speaking too much. The individual characteristics of the atom determine the characteristics of the given sound

⁸¹ Koenen (2004, 699-700) discusses the ancient philosophical debate on this topic, noting in particular that Alcmaeon, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Democritus, the Epicureans, and Stoics thought voice was corporeal, while Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle did not.

constituted by and from them, whether rough or gentle, and so on (4.524-48). Words and other sounds can travel over large distances, though the farther they must travel, the more probable it is that they will become jumbled en route, so that it is difficult to distinguish what was said (4.553-562). However, Lucretius notes, since a single speaker can be heard clearly by more than one listener, it must be possible for a single voice to split into many as it goes forth:

in multas igitur voces vox una repente
diffugit, in privas quoniam se dividit auris
obsignans formam verbis clarumque sonorem. (4.565-7)

The theory that words have an innate ability to multiply themselves adds an extra layer of humor and perhaps a pseudo-scientific backing to some of Ovid's sound effects, for example, his description of the reeds growing out of the words planted by Midas' barber.⁸² Yet the mobility and physicality of sounds are essential foundational points for Lucretius' theory of echo production. Since so many voices and noises are flying through the air, some of them never hit an ear but instead are carried off in the wind. Others strike a hard object and bounce back, creating a reflected sound:

at quae pars vocum non auris incidit ipsas,
praeterlata perit frustra diffusa per auras.
pars solidis allisa locis reiecta sonorem
reddit et interdum frustratur imagine verbi. (4.568-71)

The play between *auris* and *auras* emphasizes the randomness involved in the motion of the sound atoms – a sound going into the ear can have a meaningful effect, but a sound going into

⁸² Holmes (2005, 542) discusses the agency that a Lucretian *vox* has, once it leaves the mouth, exemplified in this ability to self-replicate.

the air does so *frustra*. A word bouncing back from a hard surface however, is not merely in vain; rather, it *frustratur*, deceives or disappoints, with the *imago verbi*. The scenario follows the model of the *simulacra* which Lucretius describes in his treatment of vision. These images too, which are continuously emitted from objects, are prone to collision and other accidents on their flight and may therefore become distorted before meeting an eye; this can lead people to believe they have seen monsters or other phantasms, which do not exist in reality. In a similar way, the *imago verbi* provides a glimpse of a voice, but is only a “teasing sound” and may not accurately reflect any real utterance.⁸³

It is the echo’s potential for deception and disorientation that Lucretius seeks to illuminate and undermine in this passage (and these potentials are exactly what Ovid will choose to reify and emphasize). For Lucretius, understanding the logic behind what one hears allows one to face acoustically confusing situations with reason rather than resorting to superstitious storytelling:

quae bene cur videas, rationem reddere possis
 tute tibi atque aliis, quo pacto per loca sola
 saxa paris formas verborum ex ordine reddant,
 palantis comites cum montis inter opacos 575
 quaerimus et magna disperso voce ciemus.
 sex etiam aut septem loca vidi reddere voces,
 unam cum iaceres: ita colles collibus ipsi
 verba repulsantes iterabant docta referri. (4.572-9)

With the first-person *quaerimus* and the description of his own personal experience with echoes (*vidi*), Lucretius emphasizes the familiarity of the phenomenon, despite the isolation of the

⁸³Holmes (2005) 543-44. Holmes goes on to discuss the ambiguity in the relationship of Lucretius’ *imago verbi* to the original voice, the *forma verbi*: is there any difference between them? Lucretius’ analogy comparing them to small flames that come from a single fire (DRN 4.603-8) would suggest that the word and its echo (if not distorted) are interchangeable – as opposed to visual simulacra which are not the same as the object that produces them.

places where it tends to occur. The situation of calling for lost comrades and hearing one's own words come back in order (574-6) is precisely the situation in which Ovid's Narcissus will find himself, though Narcissus will not actually be alone. In fact, Narcissus' confusion in his monologue-turned-dialogue results not so much from the mistaken belief that someone is present answering his call, as from the failure to recognize just who really is present. What is illusion for Lucretius is reality for the Ovidian world, a world which itself constitutes in some ways a distorted reflection of the *De Rerum Natura*.

In another example of the deceptive potential of the multiplication of sound, Lucretius notes the experience of calling out once and having several voices return as they bounce back from multiple hills (577-9). The rational explanation for this is the fact that any *vox* has the ability to self-replicate. For Ovid, this phenomenon of spontaneous regeneration and self-driven movement fits the scheme of chaos in his universe – changeable and unpredictable. But for Lucretius, the insistence on the physical properties of sounds removes echoes entirely from the unstable realm of imagination and mythological beings and sets them firmly as a phenomenon to be understood entirely through reason. Even so, an echo, as Mieke Koenen notes, occupies an 'in between' status for Lucretius: it is a sound that doesn't directly hit an ear, but does not just become dissipated in the air either; instead it functions rather like the unseen supernatural beings in the myths, a distortion of reality, such as Pan and the satyrs, that ignorant people think they hear.⁸⁴ For Ovid, however, Lucretius' theory of corporeal sounds and rational principles are put to the service of his imaginative mythology. While Lucretius would have us understand that the presence of echoes does not indicate the presence of other beings, Ovid would have us imagine

⁸⁴ Koenen (2004) 719.

the *deserta loca* inhabited by a hidden nymph, or at least her voice, giving back our words, and desperately trying to communicate.⁸⁵

Echo: Nature's Fama

The sorrow of Narcissus' rejection causes Echo's body to waste away, and when even her bones have turned to rock, her voice remains, haunting the lonely spots where she used to dwell. Her physical form ossifies and is stilled, but her voice is mobile and active. In part because she only exists as sound, she still has free range in her environment and emotional involvement with those around her. Just as in Syrinx' case, her metamorphosis does not confine her to one specific location or immobile object, but gives her a freedom of movement that is unusual in the *Metamorphoses*. Upon Narcissus' death, she repeats his own laments as well as the laments of the nymphs who mourn him. Echo hovers in the landscape as a noise, and a remarkably sentient one, which actively responds to those around her. While an echo is typically a sign of emptiness – the hollow sound of our own words returning signifies that no one is there to respond – Ovid's Echo suggests presence.⁸⁶

Echo does not merely repeat and revise Narcissus' words at the level of plot in the episode, she becomes a part of its syntactic and semantic structure.⁸⁷ During her ambiguous dialogue with Narcissus, Echo's name or her words come at the end of the line in which she speaks: because she is an echo, she must always have the last word. She cannot choose not to speak, and she cannot stop being an echo, either in the story or in the text.⁸⁸ Her verbal mirroring

⁸⁵ Hardie (1988, 72) discusses the way in which Ovid "pointedly reverses the rationalism of Lucretius' materialist account of the world." I am inclined to take Hardie's view, that Ovid brings specific Lucretian echoes to bear on his own Echo, thereby re-mythologizing the phenomenon and opening up its potential as an active force in the poem.

⁸⁶ Hollander (1981, 12-13) suggests that an echo marks a "scene of inquiry" in a place "empty of human presence," giving the example of the empty landscape echoing back the name of Hylas in Eclogue 6.

⁸⁷ Rosati (1983, 31-2) describes this effect.

⁸⁸ Rosati (1983, 31).

is subtly re-echoed during Narcissus' conversation with his image in the pool with word repetitions and chiasmic arrangements, as if Echo is hiding now not in the scene but at the structural level of the text.⁸⁹ We witness a second metamorphosis of Echo taking place: the dissolution of her body may leave her as nothing but sound, but it also releases her from the plotline of the Narcissus episode into the text itself.⁹⁰ This shared image, as well as her ability to re-imagine the words and stories that she hears, aligns her with the poetic voice,⁹¹ shaping the poem's soundscape with her reflections. Yet rather than working in conjunction with musical deities to aid in characterizing a musical, sensitive, and sympathetic natural world, the echo in the *Metamorphoses* acts as a means of forward and backward reflection for all kinds of sounds at all levels of the narrative. Echo is thus a presence in the poem, though an unnamed one, well before her origin is explained, repeating, multiplying, and increasing the sounds of the poem, and she continues to operate behind the scenes throughout, in much the same way that Fama is at work well before and after her formal description in Book 12.

The literary echo is often understood as a figure for poetic memory,⁹² but Ovid also uses it to reflect images, themes, and words from one part of the poem onto another, back and forth throughout the *carmen perpetuum*.⁹³ The Ovidian Echo sets a pattern for the repetition and reflection of sounds throughout the poem, and also for the functionality of allusion and intertextuality at the structural and thematic level. She is not quite a Lucretian, scientific echo, for as her 'dialogue' with Narcissus has shown, she chooses, to some extent, which words to

⁸⁹ Rosati, (1983, 32).

⁹⁰ Echo's fate is echoed by that of Orpheus in Book 11, whose voice also lingers on, and is in turn echoed by the riverbanks, after his body is destroyed. Farrell (1999, 136-8) notes some instances in the poem, including that of Orpheus, when language or voice are more lasting than corporeal presence.

⁹¹ Enterline (2000, 56-7) notes that Echo is a double for the narrator, recycling what she hears.

⁹² Hollander (1981) discusses echo as a type of literary allusion, from classical times onward.

⁹³ Boyd (2006, 174) notes that this technique creates a sense of 'history' in the poem, bringing back characters and events from the poem's past into its present, and reminding the reader that "ancient events have modern consequences."

repeat and she imbues them with new meaning. Yet she doubles the effect of the voices that she hears, and gives them a wider reach than they might otherwise have had, or than their speaker might have intended them to have. Narcissus' words would have fallen unheard, and would never have been heard, in and by an empty grove were it not for Echo's presence. Given Narcissus' utter isolation as he gazed into the stream, it is perhaps to Echo that we owe our knowledge of the story itself – who else could have repeated Narcissus' words to us?⁹⁴ Midas' barber would have preferred his words to stay underground, but the reed bed repeats them and sends them off on the wind, continuing to tell the story long after its first telling. The echoing waters pouring from the rock where Acis was transformed provide a constantly renewed reminder of his metamorphosis there. Each reed episode is in certain ways an echo of the others, though each has its own purpose and concerns within its own context.

There are other short range echoes through the poem: the series of pursued-nymph tales that recur through the first two books reflect one another with shared imagery and speech types (with some fainter echoes of this plot type at later moments in the poem); the mortal voices (the Pierides, Niobe, Arachne, Marsyas) that challenge the gods' powers and cry out at their punishments through the middle books of the poem; the arguments for and against impious action are echoed among Medea, Scylla, Althaea, Byblis, and Myrrha. We can also hear long range echoes that reverberate from the first to the second half of the poem: the battle sounds of Perseus' skirmish with the suitors of Andromeda in Book 5 are heard again in Nestor's account of the Centauromachy in Book 12. The language of Ocyrhoe's truncated prophesy foretelling the saving actions of Aesculapius recurs in Book 14, as the god travels to Rome. Though Jupiter cut short the prophets' words, Echo seems to ensure that we can hear them yet a second time, but

⁹⁴ Cf. Berger (1996) 630.

with an important change: rather than being the *salutifer orbi*, the god is named the *salutifer urbi*, encompassing the cares of the world in the cares of the city in the *urbs/orbis* wordplay that so delighted the Romans.⁹⁵

Perhaps the most significant long range echo, for my purposes at least, is the echo chamber of Fama's *domus*, itself an echo of primal chaos, which I discussed in the previous chapter. Here the reverberation of all the world's sounds and speech acts makes possible the continued growth and promulgation of those words and narratives. Fama, as we will see in the next chapter, delights in adding to stories, perhaps adding falsehood, thus sending stories back out into the world in a somewhat different form from that in which they arrived. It is the same mutability characterizing the Ovidian echo that allows for the mutability of sounds and narratives throughout the poem. Echo, because she can reflect both verbal and non-verbal noise, is a link between the sounds of the natural world and those of the human world; a natural counterpart to the urban Fama, and whose properties yet make Fama's activities possible. Just as she works in conjunction with Syrinx to spread the sounds of the reeds' dissent across the landscape, so Echo is a part of Fama's activities in the human sphere. We will examine these echoes and the workings of Fama in the next chapter.

⁹⁵ Keith (1992) 84; Goldenhard and Zissos (2004) 61.

Chapter 3

The Sounds of Gods and Mortals: Speech, Rumor, and Narrative

The topics of speech, restricted speech, and silence in Ovid's work are well trodden ground, explored by many well-considered and nuanced studies from theoretical, political, and literary angles. I do not here attempt my own comprehensive study of speech and silence, or anything like a systematic overview of speech in the *Metamorphoses*, but rather I mean to position speech within the poem's broader framework of noise which I have identified in the first two chapters. In this chapter I argue that speech, both human and divine, develops not as an ordering principle in and of civilization, but often and largely for the purpose of deceit and control, and thus recalls the strife, blurred boundaries, and unpredictability that characterize Ovidian chaos. The instability of the relationship of words to their meanings, their potential to express discontent or dissent, deception or anger, and the frequent inability of their speakers, whether human or divine, to control their outcome, all point to the presence of a form of Ovidian chaos in speech. From its first portrayal in the Iron Age to its employment for Roman prophecy, speech in the *Metamorphoses* becomes increasingly complex, as mortal speech begins to exhibit more range and a greater variety of effects than does divine speech. The multiplicity of mortal narrators and narratives in the second half of the poem indicates the Chaotic mingling of disparate voices, and speaks to a growing attention to the workings of Fama in the world, a figure, as the poet states towards the close of the work, who is bound by no laws and observes no authority. Fama's presence is as pointed as Augustus' by the end of the poem, setting her as a messaging system rivaling and perhaps opposite or alternative to the Augustan voice, exemplifying the necessary give and take of order and disorder by which Ovid's world functions.

Finally, the image of the whirling speech sounds of the House of Fama comes to represent the Chaos of the modern age.

The Beginnings of Language and Speech in the Myth of the Ages

To begin to examine Ovid's treatment of speech as one of the world's many sounds, we ought first to consider its origins. Ovid's account of the world's creation strikingly omits any treatment of the development of human society or language. Speech, instead, is an unprompted acquisition, seeming to arise spontaneously for the use of both gods and mortals. The origin of civilization, and its marker, language, is a popular topic among philosophical writers, and one covered by Plato, Lucretius, and Seneca, among others,¹ and might have been expected in the genre of universal history or chronography to which Ovid's poem at first seems to subscribe,² but though Ovid's creation account certainly draws upon various philosophical schools,³ he avoids any direct discussion of human language development.⁴ In a poem about *mutatae formae* from the foundation of the cosmos to the Augustan age, the emergence and interaction of physical places, landscape features, and living things seem to be privileged over the beginnings of human society and its modes of expression. Yet rather than implying a lack of significance in human speech, or any lack of interest on the poet's part, the presumption that language has either

¹ Common threads are that language is a divine gift; that it is an outgrowth of human intelligence and ingenuity; that it is one of the key differentiations between humans and animals; that it is necessary to or makes possible the arts of government and civilization, just as fire precedes technical arts; and that language, whether it is bestowed by the gods or develops from necessity and human ingenuity, has grown corrupted over time, allowing for misinterpretation and deceit, but also figurative language. Gera (2003, *passim*) summarizes various Greek accounts of language development; Campbell (2003, 16-17, 284-313) gives an overview of the theory of language development in Epicurus and Lucretius.

² Wheeler (2002) discusses the poem in this generic category, as does Feeney (1999).

³ See, for example, Myers (1994) and McKim (1984-5) who give an overview of Ovid's engagement with different philosophies. See Chapter 1 for more examples.

⁴ Gera (2003, 153) notes that the discovery of fire tends to be given more attention than language in accounts of the development of civilization, but that articulate language is the typical marker of the difference between humans and animals.

spontaneously occurred or is a preexisting condition becomes meaningful to the poem's treatment of both human and divine speech. Humans and divinities alike must learn and attempt to master speech, and the poem's progression will provide an account of the development, difficulties, and vicissitudes of verbal communication, for both groups.

Gods and mortals are presented as speaking the same language⁵ without any particular indication that mortals received this ability from a divine source. It is not a divine prerogative or gift; rather, it is simply present as a shared characteristic of gods and mortals, a fact of existence in which both may partake. Without a Prometheus or other god bestowing language, fire, or any other useful knowledge upon humans, language may be understood in the *Metamorphoses* simply as one of the many results of Chaos' dispersal. It seems to have existed, like other types of sounds, as a potentiality immanent in the matter that was bound up together with the material elements at the beginning in their shapeless mass, and was released with them when the *deus et melior natura* set about dividing the whole.⁶ Because it is a shared characteristic that lessens the divide between gods and mortals (especially since both gods and mortals struggle with its use and interpretation), speech is a more easily accessible arena for humans to match, rival, or even challenge the gods, and therefore early on in the poem it becomes tied to problems of divine-human control and authority.

While there is no explicit account of human language acquisition, the growth of sounds, from natural sounds to animal noises to speech, can be traced through Ovid's version of Hesiod's

⁵ As opposed to, for example, Homer, where there are several indications that the gods have their own language, as in the different place names used by people and by the gods. Feeney (1991, 202), however, points out the one instance of differing divine and human language in the *Met.*, when the dreams floating around the Cave of Sleep are described. The dream who takes on the shape of various frightening animals is called Phobetor ("Frightener") by humans, but Icelos ("Resembler") by the gods, who have no reason to be afraid of its shapes.

⁶ The elemental nature of sound is discussed in more detail in Chapter 1.

myth of ages.⁷ There is no detailed theogony (rather, the gods seem to arise spontaneously, like all the other features of the cosmos contained in Chaos), but the origin of human beings is given fuller treatment. In fact, Ovid provides two distinct possibilities for their creation, without attempting to choose between them: either the *opifex rerum* (1.79) made them from divine seed, or Prometheus formed them from earth and water (1.80-83). Language is not the key feature that sets them apart from the other animals; rather, it is that humans are intended to walk upright, gaze at the stars, and contemplate higher things: *os homini sublime dedit caelumque videre/ iussit et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus* (1.85-6).

From this lofty image, the narrative moves to the Saturnian Golden Age. This age is marked by what it lacks: no conflict, no cities, no farming or sailing.⁸ The world carries on in an endless spring, where the earth produces food spontaneously, and humans have no inclination to injustice. The sounds of this era are just as pacific. The only noises to be heard, apparently, are the gentle breezes (*placidique tepentibus auris/ mulcebant Zephyri...flores*, 1.107-8) and the dripping of honey from the ilex trees (*flavaque de viridi stillabant ilice mella*, 1.112). Only the absence of human speech, particularly legal speech, is noted: there are no threatening laws posted for people to read, and no need for court cases (*...nec verba minantia fixo/ aere legebantur nec supplex turba timebat/ iudicis ora sui*, 1.91-3).

Ovid's quiet Saturnian age is a unique moment in his cosmic history, characterized by a state of peace and harmony thoroughly unlike both what came before and what will come after. The elements that make up the features of the world were themselves naturally quarrelsome: when they were parts of the vast conglomeration of material that made up Chaos, they were

⁷ Feeney (2007, 115) notes that it is a Roman tendency to speak of a succession of ages, whereas Hesiod wrote of a succession of races. Baldry (1952) had made this point as well.

⁸ Feeney (2007, 116) notes that it is a common feature of Golden Age narratives to describe by absence, listing what did not exist.

unstable and constantly in conflict (*nulli sua forma manebat; obstabat aliis aliud; pugnabant*, 1.17, 18, 19). The dissolution of Chaos by *the deus et melior natura* (1.21) is described in legal terms: Chaos is a *lis* that must be settled, and its warring parts are divided and accorded their own space with a treaty of peace: *dissociata locis concordia pace ligavit* (1.25). This is the very sort of situation that is expressly nonexistent in the Golden Age, which, presumably, represents that very period of peace. For a brief space of time, the old discord is repressed, and all creation behaves pleasantly and righteously of its own will (*sponte sua, sine lege fidem rectumque colebat*, 1.90). Yet even so, there are hints of Chaos lurking in the passage: in the reference to Zephyr, which recalls the previous passage relating to the necessary separation of the winds, because their nature is to be involved in fraternal strife (Zephyr is the only wind present, because he brings the pleasantest weather, but also perhaps because he cannot be together with the others); and chaos is also suggested in the ability of the earth to generate various food-bearing plants without the impetus of agriculture. After all, while this property of random generation is helpful and nourishing at the moment, within a few lines it will bring about the Giants, a race of bloodthirsty humans, and many types of animals and monsters (with the repetition of the phrase *sponte sua*, 1.417).

This age of insipid, stagnant goodness is short-lived, however, and the Jovian age ushers in a far more noisy and emotive state. With thunderous Jupiter in power, the Silver, Bronze, and Iron ages appear in degradational succession. In the Silver Age, Jupiter takes his own turn at molding the world and, like his Virgilian counterpart in the theodicy of the *Georgics* (1.121ff), shortens the spring and adds the other three seasons, creating the need for both houses and agriculture (1.113-124).⁹ Significantly, the beginning of Jupiter's reign witnesses the first

⁹ McKim (1985, 103) notes that it is Jupiter who reintroduces the principle of change into the *Metamorphoses*' recently ordered cosmos by instituting the seasons, the archetypal example of the world's changeability.

directly expressed sounds made by created beings – the sound of oxen groaning under the burden of their yoke and plow (*pressique iugo gemuere iuveni*, 1.124). Virgil presents a similar picture, though he had condensed the four metallic ages into two – a Saturnian and Jovian age. When the Virgilian Jupiter comes to power, he makes the world more difficult, and mandates *labor* and the invention of the various civilized arts of agriculture, sailing, astronomy, and so on. Ovid, however, has removed the paternal motivations and purposefulness from Virgil's account of Jupiter's actions. Whereas Virgil's Jupiter, like a strict father, seems to value hard work and its character-building properties, all of which were absent during the carefree days of Saturn, Ovid's Jupiter seems to have no such plan;¹⁰ rather, once he overthrows his father, the world immediately degenerates (*sub Iove mundus erat, subiit argentea proles,/ auro deterior, fulvo pretiosior aere*, 1.114-115).¹¹ His creation of the seasons sets in motion a domino effect of changes to the norms of mortal life, and leads to the progression of ages, but there is no indication that he has begun this process with any particular purpose in mind, nor does he seem actively to preside over each age and the transitions between them.

Ovid presents the Bronze Age as a short bridge (two and a half lines) between the lost innocence of the Silver Age and the riot of wickedness that is the Iron Age – the Bronze Age denizens are more savage and warlike than those of the age before, but without intentional malice (*proles...non scelerata tamen*, 1.127). With the Iron Age, however, comes *omne nefas* (129), and, most importantly for my purposes, the first expression of man-made sound: the rattling of weapons (*crepitantia concutit arma*, 1.143) is heard together with the speech that is

¹⁰ Segal (2001, 84) notes that rather than acting in accordance with Jupiter's plan, as in the *Georgics*, the people in Ovid's world develop civilization on their own in response to the new, harsher conditions of life.

¹¹ Feeney (2007, 108-9) describes the move from Golden to Iron Age as a move into historical time, where human life is similar to what it is in contemporary time: "according to this way of thinking the movement of historical time has taken human beings out of a state of harmony with nature and locked them into a place in nature unlike that of any other animal."

implied in the *fraudesque dolique/ insidiaeque* which replace *pudor verumque fidesque* (1.129-131), and implied also in the betrayal of human relationships described in lines 144-8. It is ironic that human speech and sounds appear in an age characterized for its unspeakableness, *nefas* (1.129). The sounds developing during the reign of Jupiter, including speech itself, are decidedly contentious, deceptive, and negative.¹²

Jupiter marks his accession first by his own violent display of noise and then by showing himself susceptible to influence by noise. The Gigantomachy and its aftermath, that pivotal moment in solidifying the authority of the Olympians, with Jupiter as their leader, are given only about ten lines (1.150-60). When the Giants, that monstrous feature of the new Iron Age impiety, mount their attack on the heavens, Jupiter destroys the attempt with a crash of his emblematic thunderbolt, which unites violence and fearsome noise (*tum pater omnipotens misso perfregit Olympum/ fulmine et excussit subiectae Pelion Ossae*, 1.154-5).¹³ Saturated in the blood of her offspring, the vengeful Earth brings forth a new race of creatures in the form of humans, whose origin is manifest in their insubordinate and violent behavior:

perfusam multo natorum sanguine Terram
immaduisse ferunt calidumque animasse cruorem
et, ne nulla suae stirpis monimenta manerent,
in faciem vertisse hominum. sed et illa propago
contemptrix superum saevaeque avidissima caedis
et violenta fuit; scires e sanguine natos. (1.157-62)

¹² Jupiter's association with the hardships of the Iron Age is important in Virgil (in both the *Georgics* and the *Aeneid* – see e.g. Thomas (2004) for a study of the golden-to-iron theme in those works) and is thus a theme which Ovid takes up in his own rather problematic portrayal of Jupiter in the poem, made more problematic by the explicit analogies between Jupiter and Augustus. For the comparisons between Jupiter and Augustus with regard to the myth of ages, see especially Feeney (1991) 219-22 and Segal (2001b) 83-6.

¹³ Segal (2001b, 84) suggests that *perfregit Olympum* indicates a display of excessive force.

This second creation of humans happens as a result of the Earth's traditional state of conflict with the sky gods¹⁴ and her unruly propensity for random generation, not, apparently, as part of an orderly divine or Jovian plan. These new humans, a living monument to the Giants (*monimenta*), are a far cry from the *sanctius animal* initially created to contemplate the heavens (1.76). The first humans were either created from divine seed or earth-born – Ovid carefully does not specify – but there is no doubt about the chthonic nature of the Iron Age creation.¹⁵ Jupiter, despite his fresh triumph against the Giants, finds his authority immediately undermined again by the Earth's Chaotic creative properties. The convoluted creation of humans, with their variable origins and propensities, points to their status as ongoing vessels for Chaos.¹⁶ It is therefore not surprising that their speech should come to reflect these variable origins.

The First Speakers: Jupiter and Lycaon, Deucalion and Pyrrha

The current (i.e., Book 1) generation of humans exemplifies Chaos in its violence, deception, and impiety, but the actions and speech of Jupiter suggest that the gods are not so different in character. Jupiter's disproportionately wrathful behavior, coupled with his concern for rumor and employment of persuasive and deceptive speech, signals him as an unpredictable, even chaotic force as well.¹⁷ More prominent in his mind than the Giants' threat to the heavens in the *Metamorphoses* is the conniving impiety of the Arcadian king Lycaon, who undergoes the

¹⁴ Hesiod is a main background for this conflict, which in turn plays into Ovid's portrayal of chaotically warring elements.

¹⁵ Myers (1994, 42-4) discusses the connection between human physiognomy and the makeup of the cosmos, suggesting that the basic instability of the elements mirrors the instability of humans, demonstrated by the multiple anthropogonies.

¹⁶ Tarrant (2002, 354) discusses the human properties of chaos and locates the Iron Age passage as the sign of the "human potential for chaotic behavior." Cf. Myers (1994) 42-4.

¹⁷ His first act in the poem, of course, seems to be tinged with Iron Age impiety – dethroning his father and sending him to Tartarus (*Saturno tenebrosa in Tartara misso*, 1.113 – the passive voice construction leaves some ambiguity as to the agency behind the dismissal of Saturn). Cf. Segal (2001b) 84.

poem's first human metamorphosis. The Lycaon episode contains many important 'firsts' in the poem – the first metamorphosis, the first epic simile, the first divine sounds and speeches – and thus carries a larger paradigmatic significance for the poem.¹⁸ Having reestablished control of the heavens, at least, if not the earth, Jupiter now looks out upon the wickedness of the world and groans (*ingemit*, 1.164) in reaction to what he sees. This is Jupiter's first vocalization, and the first sound made by any of the Olympians. Recalling his bad treatment at the hands of the *contemptor dei*, Lycaon, he is driven to action by his divine wrath (*ingentes animo et dignas Iove concipit iras* 1.166; *ora indignantia*, 1.181) but also demonstrates a level of vindictiveness and scorn for the pious that befits a denizen of the Iron Age. His ensuing speech to the council of the gods advocating the destruction of humankind helps to clarify the tone and meaning of his initial *ingemit*. It is not so much the sound of a superior being disgusted by the behavior of the inferior humans, but rather the acknowledgment of a new threat to his rule,¹⁹ as evidenced by his description of humanity as a more insidious version of the recently defeated Giants (1.182-91).

Jupiter is the first internal narrator in the poem, and his calling a council of the gods evokes comparable divine assembly scenes in Ovid's epic predecessors Homer and Virgil, and therefore occupies a prominent position in the opening book of the poem.²⁰ According to these epic models, his speech at this point ought to assert his supremacy, set the tone of divine discourse in the poem, and make clear the divine worldview that will shape the events to come.

¹⁸ See Anderson (1989, *passim*) and Feldherr (2002, 170-74) for differing views on the programmatic import of Lycaon's metamorphosis; See Feeney (1991, 200, 219-22) for a detailed discussion the significance of the analogy between Olympus and the Palatine.

¹⁹ Anderson (1989, 95) argues that Jupiter comes across not as a force for justice but as a snob who wants to preserve the "private sphere where he and the other gods can exercise their corrupt lusts."

²⁰ Segal (2001b, 80-81) suggests that by situating this opening council around Lycaon and his metamorphosis, Ovid is "restamping the traditionally elevated epic motifs of the *concilium deorum* and the theodicy with his own poem's signature motif of metamorphosis" and that placing the story in Jupiter's mouth gives it weight and "grandeur." Feeney (1991, 200) notes the humor in modeling the council after the Augustan senate – whereas dissent is a usual feature of such council scenes, here the gods only compete in how they agree with Jupiter.

Jupiter does indeed do this, but, as William Anderson has argued, he does so in a decidedly non-Virgilian way that raises questions about his authority.²¹ Indeed, Jupiter's tale comes across not so much as an account of righteous divine vengeance, but as an embarrassing account of being nearly bested by a mortal, who in fact escapes total destruction. Disturbed by rumors of human wickedness (*contigerat nostras infamia temporis aures*, 1.211), Jupiter goes on a fact-finding mission disguised as a human (1.213). When he reaches Lycaon's palace, Jupiter seems not to attempt to use verbal language in his interaction with the Arcadians; rather, he “gives signs” that he is a god (*signa dedi*, 1.220). This proves sufficient for the general populace, who begin to pray, but not for Lycaon, who laughs mockingly at such prayers instead (*vulgusque precari/coeperat: inridet primo pia vota Lycaon*, 1.220-221). Whereas Jupiter, having bypassed the vagaries of language, expects to be recognized by the signs he gives, Lycaon seems to expect deception – he seems to find the gods as untrustworthy as Jupiter has found mortals. He devises a plan to test Jupiter's identity, and thereby find the truth (*mox ait 'experiar, deus hic, discrimine aperto,/ an sit mortalis; nec erit dubitabile verum,'* 1.222-3), involving an attempt to kill Jupiter in the night, and then an invitation to a grisly feast secretly consisting of human flesh. While Lycaon's methods are indeed barbaric, he seeks, even by Jupiter's own account, to bring clarity (*aperto*) and truth (*verum*) to the situation. Whether or not Lycaon actually recognizes Jupiter and is knowingly attempting a grave sacrilege, his action is a bold move to bring Jupiter out of hiding. He certainly seems to know that he lives in a world where deception is widespread.

²¹ Anderson (1989) 93-4. Segal (2001b, 81) also notes that there is “a certain disproportion of emphasis between the tales of cosmogonic creation and an individual Arcadian wrongdoer” and Jupiter's obsession with his punishment. Wallace-Hadrill (1982, 28) takes the more extreme view that “the Jupiter of this story is evidently hysterical.” On the other end of the spectrum, Alan Griffin (1992, 41) finds that Jupiter in the flood episode is “dignified, resolute, concerned with right and wrong, and not without compassion.”

Jupiter's retelling of this experience shows some burgeoning facility with the trappings of formal speech; he uses flourishing phrases, rhetorical questions, and theatrical pauses to influence his divine audience (who are always ready to react with the requisite murmurs of approval or gasps of surprise). Jupiter's control of his audience, however, rests on more than rhetorical finesse. His thunderous nature comes through in the way he uses his own voice either to drown out the sounds of the others, who are not differentiated into individual speakers but rather murmur all together, or to rupture their silence and fill the void himself:

... qui postquam voce manuque
murmura compressit, tenuere silentia cuncti.
substitutit ut clamor pressus gravitate regentis,
Iuppiter hoc iterum sermone silentia rupit (1.205-8)

The Ovidian Jupiter's violent tendencies are portrayed even in the way he takes control of the sound in the room, first forcing a silence (*murmura compressit*), then breaking it (*silentia rupit*).²²

However, in the midst of his narrative control and influence over his hearers, Jupiter shows himself at the same time to be susceptible to the influence of human speech. It is the *infamia* of human crimes that "reaches his ears" (*contigerat...nostras...aures*, 1.211) and spurs his decision to go to earth and see them for himself. These rumors are apparently mortal in origin; after all, the gods seem not to have been aware of the situation on earth until Jupiter calls the council. Jupiter claims to have hoped that the reports would be false (*quam cupiens falsam*, 1.212), but instead finds that the truth is in fact even worse than the rumor (*minor fuit ipsa*

²² Feeney (1991, 200), in discussing the emphasis on Jupiter's wrath, notes the "unabashedly human characterization of the whole episode," and suggests that "divine anger and its power become Ovid's principal medium for testing...the humanity of the divine."

infamia vero, 1.215). Thus Jupiter, while attempting to manipulate the other gods verbally, admits to finding himself maneuvered by anonymous reportage.²³ He indirectly acknowledges the difficulty, inherent to Iron Age language and its chaotic properties, of distinguishing between truth and falsehood. Jupiter does not automatically accept the truth of the rumors he hears, but he cannot discount them either. Ironically, he determines the rumors to be untrue in that they do not represent the true extremity of the situation. In a similar way, the suspicious Lycaon will not acknowledge Jupiter's identity – even the god's apparently non-verbal *signa* are not credible enough. Lycaon's challenge to Jupiter puts him on a par with the Giants, but Jupiter can only respond to the king's mockery and conniving speech, as he did to the brutish Giants, with noise and force – the crashing of the thunderbolt.

Jupiter's speech to the council of the gods implies that he has learned something about the power of manipulative speech from his experiences with earthly rumors and the trickery of Lycaon, yet certain inconsistencies and omissions cast doubt on his truthfulness.²⁴ His prideful retelling of the incident places himself in the most favorable light and his antagonist in the least. Jupiter puts the bulk of his emphasis on his own power and righteous anger, and on the gravity of Lycaon's impiety, and he attempts to downplay his overwrought and inaccurate lightning bolt throwing, which destroyed the palace, its inhabitants (who had, in fact, attempted to worship Jupiter), and even its *Penates*, but missed the man himself. Lycaon's transformation occurs as he flees the wreckage of his home. Through his metamorphosis into a wolf, Lycaon's savagery remains a part of his character, but his crafty speech is replaced with howling (*exululat*

²³ Gladhill (2013, 310-12) notes the way that Jupiter both manipulates and is manipulated by Fama in the Lycaon episode.

²⁴ O'Hara (2007, 116-18) discusses the problems of Jupiter's narrative. For example, what happened to Lycaon's plot to kill Jupiter in the night, if he then serves the human-flesh dinner? Anderson (1989, passim) discusses Jupiter's inefficacy as a rational, credible ruler in the episode.

frustra que loqui conatur, 1.233) – a fearsome noise, but merely emotive. Jupiter, approving²⁵ the new alignment of Lycaon’s character, voice, and outward appearance,²⁶ views this as part of his punishment (*ille quidem poenas...solvit*, 1.209), and does not draw attention to the fact that Lycaon, in his new form, is allowed to continue his bloodthirsty ways.

In destroying the world by flood and reordering it afterwards, Jupiter brings about a more wide-reaching reversal of the characteristics of divine and mortal noise. The interpretive difficulties that will arise from Deucalion and Pyrrha’s consultation with the oracle in regard to repopulating the earth implies that humans are now in a more vulnerable position, speaking in reaction to the events around them, and that the gods have begun to use ambiguous speech. The impious, deceptive, and crafty speech and behavior of the Iron Age mortals posed such a challenge to Jupiter that he felt compelled to destroy them, but Deucalion and Pyrrha, being quite different both in language and character, do not pose this threat. For the moment, after the flood, Jupiter has regained the upper hand, but the Chaotic mobility of speech proves difficult to control, and the new race of mortals will eventually find their way back to their former state of verbal expression and license.

While the Iron Age mortals seem to fall into two categories, the fearfully sinned against and the brazenly sinning, the two humans left alive after the world-destroying flood are the sole exceptions to this state.²⁷ After the flood, the world must be created anew, and the first direct speech by a human comes at this liminal moment between destruction and restoration, as Deucalion and Pyrrha, the two pious survivors, lament their state as the only remaining humans.

²⁵ Whether Jupiter himself is responsible for the metamorphosis is ambiguous, as he does not actually take responsibility for it (Anderson, 1989, 97, Feldherr 2002, 170.)

²⁶ Feldherr (2002, 170-1) argues that metamorphosis is the attempt to “regroup” people into their proper place.

²⁷ Griffin (1992, 51, 53) comments that Ovid may be the first to link the Lycaon story to the Deucalion and Pyrrha story through the flood. The two episodes provide contrasting pictures of the human/divine relationship – “Lycaon is a story of impiety and its punishment, and Deucalion is a story of piety and its reward.”

The now empty earth is thoroughly silenced (*vidit inanem/et desolatas agere alta silentia terras*, 1.348-9), and Deucalion addresses Pyrrha through his tears (*Deucalion lacrimis ita Pyrrham adfatur abortis*, 1.350), describing their situation. Speech and sorrow come together for these parents of the post-flood human race: *dixerat, et flebant* (1.367). The reintroduction of sound as the pair struggle to understand what the gods want them to do begins a new but still problematic mode of verbal communication. The first sounds of the post-diluvian age are an emotional reaction to the brutal destruction wrought by Jupiter. Whereas the first pre-flood mortal who was described in detail, Lycaon, laughed at Jupiter and verbally announced a plot to catch him, Deucalion and Pyrrha, the first post-flood mortals, introduce a mode of mortal vocalization that expresses a distressed emotional response to a situation, and is indicative of mortal helplessness in the face of the gods' overwhelming power. Speech post-flood has not returned to the relatively untroubled state it would seem to have enjoyed (if it had existed) during the Golden Age; rather, it is still closely tied to negative emotion, confusion, and violent power dynamics, though the violence and power now belong to the gods, rather than to mortals.

Deucalion and Pyrrha, even though virtuous and well-meaning, have great difficulty understanding the commands of the gods. Wanting to know what they should do to restore the human race, they consult the nearby oracle of Themis for advice, but her words, the first prophecy in the chronology of the poem and thus, a precedent for all “future” literary oracles, are initially incomprehensible, ordering the two to throw the bones of their mother behind them (1.383). Communication ought to be untroubled between the goddess of justice and the world's two most (and only) virtuous humans, but it is just the opposite. After the initial shock, Pyrrha refuses to comply, but Deucalion at last correctly interprets the command. Operating from the perhaps naïve assumption (we are in an Ovidian Iron Age, after all) that the gods' oracles must

tell the truth (*aut pia sunt nullumque nefas oracula suadent*, 1.392), Deucalion can only conclude that his own grasp of language is faulty, and he must attribute a meaning to the oracle's words that they did not seem to have. Thus even at this new beginning of mortal life, and mortal speech, there is a marked separation between the apparent and true meanings of words,²⁸ causing interpretive difficulties and communicative misunderstandings for even the most just of humans and divinities. The difficulty in interpretation suggests that words too, like the physical elements of the world, are by nature very unstable.

Deucalion and Pyrrha are the children of the Titans Prometheus (“Forethought”) and Epimetheus (“Afterthought”), respectively, two figures who, in Hesiod, were at odds with Zeus. Prometheus was punished for gifting mortals with fire (and in other accounts, all sorts of *techne* and arts, including language), while Epimetheus was offered the treacherous Pandora, and accepted her without thinking of the consequences. Like her father, Pyrrha is impulsive in her speech and behavior, immediately rejecting the orders of the oracle. Like his father, Deucalion is willing to reason out a solution to the problem. That the pair should have difficulty communicating with the divine is at once appropriate and ironic – appropriate because Prometheus in particular was a challenger to Zeus’ rule, and ironic because he is by many accounts a source of language.²⁹ Besides the anti-Jovian predilections of their antecedents, a

²⁸ The relationship between words and their meanings is a major but complicated topic in ancient philosophies of language development. An ideal state – which for example in Plato’s *Cratylus* is attributed to the gods’ language and which both Seneca (Ep. 90) and Lucretius (Bk 5) locate in the earliest origins of language – involves complete likeness between a word and the thing that it denotes. With clear correspondence between words and things, communication is always true and meaningful. This state deteriorates over time as signifiers and signifieds begin to grow apart, and complex language drifts away from signifying tangible objects, owing to the naturally symbolic nature of words. This symbolism also allows for the potential of deceit or misinterpretation, as well as fiction and figurative language. See Holmes (2005, 559-71) for an account of Lucretius’ views on the slippery possibilities of language; Stevens (2008, *passim*) on the importance of human speech as a collection of symbols; Gera (2003, 24-6) and Campbell (2003, 16-17; 294) on the major ancient philosophies’ – particularly Epicureanism and Stoicism – debates and beliefs about the way words relate to the objects they denote.

²⁹ See Gera (2003, 113-32) on Prometheus and other language or culture-givers in ancient myth and philosophy.

central problem for Deucalion and Pyrrha is their difference from the rest of the Iron Age mortals. Being just, pious, and sensitive to suffering, they are an anomaly in terms of both their genealogy and their generation. Part of their linguistic difficulties seems to lie in the fact that their characteristics are so different both from other mortals, and from the gods themselves. They expect honesty, clarity, and transparency from language, as evidenced by their initial, literal interpretation of the oracle, but language under the rule of Jupiter has never exhibited these qualities. It is not until Deucalion allows for misleading, or at best, figurative meaning in Themis' words that he is able to comprehend the oracle.³⁰ Deucalion is able to operate in both linguistic registers, the literal and the figurative. Though a pious person, his verbal dexterity marks the potential for deceit or manipulation, a potential that he will pass on to the human descendants he and Pyrrha create from stones.

The emotional and reactive quality of Deucalion and Pyrrha's speech at the second creation of the world calls to mind the Lucretian account of language development in a way that the Iron Age beginnings of language do not. As we have seen, the *De Rerum Natura* is an important intertext for the *Metamorphoses*, and Ovid will apply Lucretian linguistics in imaginative ways to his own poetic world. Lucretius, adapting Epicurean teachings, states that humans began to communicate with emotive sounds prompted by environmental stimuli, as animals do, and from these sounds gradually developed more sophisticated speech, with particular sounds used to indicate particular objects – *natura* and *utilitas* directing the process:

At varios linguae sonitus natura subegit
mittere et utilitas expressit nomina rerum
non alia longe ratione atque ipsa videtur
protrahere ad gestum pueros infantia linguae,

³⁰ See Holmes (2005, 561-65) on Epicurus' distaste for figurative language, because of its misleading qualities, in her discussion of Lucretius' explanations of speech.

cum facit ut digito quae sint praesentia monstrent.
...
postremo quid in hac mirabile tantoperest re
si genus humanum, cui vox et lingua vigeret,
pro vario sensu varia res voce notaret?
cum pecudes mutae, cum denique saecula ferarum
dissimilis soleant voces variasque ciere,
cum metus aut dolor est et cum iam gaudia gliscunt. (*DRN* 5.1028-32; 1056-61)

There should be no surprise, Lucretius says, that humans began to speak in this way, just as children learn to denote objects with sound and gesture (1031-2) rather than receiving language and the names of things from some single culture-giver. Even animals, though *mutae* (without words³¹), are able to emit different sounds to indicate different emotions, and humans are merely another type of animal, with a more capable tongue (*vox et lingua vigeret*, cf. *daedala lingua*, 4.549).

Lucretius' image of the *daedala lingua* is taken up in Brooke Holmes' article about language in the *De Rerum Natura*. The epithet *daedala*, she argues, is significant because it implies the deliberation, choice, and artifice involved in the more complex regions of language, where the mode is representation of absent things or concepts, rather than immediate or automatic reference to present objects.³² Similarly, Benjamin Stevens argues that the symbolic function of human language, its ability to refer to things and events not immediately present, is what separates it from animals' communication.³³ It is precisely this capacity to use symbols, however, that sets language on the slippery path from "a world of happy deixis" to one where verbal messages may directly oppose the evidence of the senses.³⁴ But while Lucretius alerts his

³¹ See, for example, Campbell (2003) 313.

³² Holmes (2005) 565.

³³ Stevens 2008.

³⁴ Holmes (2005) 571.

reader to be on the watch for this feature of language as a potential danger, Ovid makes the slippage between literal and figurative meaning a hallmark of his style, and highlights instability as one of the defining characteristics of language in the *Metamorphoses*.³⁵

In the Lucretian account of language development, words and their meanings are, in the early stages, exactly aligned, and are only driven apart by time and the gradual corruption of human nature. However, with the exception of the creator god's "*iussit*," signifiers and signifieds in the world of the *Metamorphoses* were never quite in step from the beginning. Golden Age humans seemed hardly to speak at all, existing in a simple and straightforward age without linguistic complexity; but the Iron Age speakers, both pre- and post-flood, prove to be full of trickery and deceit. Indeed, as language (for both humans and gods) takes hold, it comes to be characterized by double meanings and ulterior motives, and is plagued by interpretive difficulty. Even a number of animal noises, though simple and emotive according to the Lucretian model, express an emotion the creature once felt as an articulate human. Deucalion and Pyrrha seem alone in their attempt to adhere to the old fashioned, simple, and honest mode of speech; for even the oracle, the very voice of divine authority, does not. Language in the poem thus begins twice in a more troubled, and more complex, state, and as the fits and starts of the creation stories demonstrate, its path of development through the poem is likewise complex; even as speakers grow more adept, language itself is increasingly difficult to pin down. Far from the Lucretian model of a rational progression from emotional and reactive sounds to more complicated speech, the denizens of the *Metamorphoses*, I argue, live in linguistic chaos nearly from the start.

³⁵ See, for example, Tissol (1997) for an extended treatment of Ovid's use of syllepsis.

The Gods Speak to Mortals: Apollo's Failure and Jupiter's Deceit

Despite the fact that with Deucalion and Pyrrha human speech falls into a more reactive mode and divine speakers tend to have the upper hand in the early books of the poem, divine speech is not, as a result, effective or successful in every instance. Rather, the early efforts of some of the gods at the sort of persuasive, deceptive, or simply authoritative speeches that the pre-flood humans had mastered founder both comically and tragically as their words repeatedly prove unwieldy and difficult to control – either ineffectual, misdirected, or overpowering. Many of the stories which fill the rest of Books 1 and 2, involving some of the escapades of Apollo, Jupiter, and Mercury, are highly concerned with modes of speech.³⁶ These episodes play out various aspects of problematic communication for both gods and mortals, as well as the faulty, changeable nature of both divine and human speech. While the gods speak to mortals and one another with varying degrees of truthfulness and efficacy, the mortals with whom they engage at this point in the poem, being the linguistic descendants of Deucalion and Pyrrha, tend to be limited to shorter emotional outbursts, or are punished for their use of speech.

Significantly, this set of episodes places particular focus on the ironically ineffectual speeches of Apollo: his boastfulness impresses neither Cupid nor Daphne, and his verbal promises do not win the trust of his son Phaethon. For a god of prophecy, Apollo has surprising difficulty foreseeing outcomes or correlating speech to actions. Speech, of course, is the medium for Apollo's oracles, though as Themis has shown, a facility with figurative and complex meaning is necessary for understanding them. The lack of credibility and effectiveness in Apollo's speeches demonstrates the continually Chaotic changeability and questionable authority

³⁶ See Keith (1992) for a study convincingly linking the episodes of Book 2 through the theme of speech.

of post-Golden Age speech, even in the mouths of the gods.³⁷ By contrast, Apollo's brother Mercury shows greater facility with speech, as befits his characterization as a god of trickery and deceit (and, by some accounts, the inventor or bestower of language); and Jupiter, while having a greater range of speech than Apollo, continues to prove himself untrustworthy through its use.

In considering divine speakers' troubles with speech, we turn first to Apollo's first speech. The episode of Apollo and Daphne contains both Apollo's first foray into love (*primus amor Phoebi*, 1.452) and the first love story in the poem. As such it has been read as an *aetion* for the genre of love elegy.³⁸ Apollo the skillful archer, fresh from his triumph over the Python, is bested by the archery of Cupid, whose skills he had belittled. Seeing Cupid flexing his bow, Apollo launches into a boastful, self-aggrandizing speech reminiscent of an epic hero, telling of his abilities and his defeat of the Python (1.456-62). Cupid responds to this epic-style seven line speech with a short, compressed three line rebuttal, a clever and clipped Alexandrian counterpart to Apollo's long-windedness:

...figat tuus omnia, Phoebе,
te meus arcus' ait, 'quanto animalia cedunt
cuncta deo, tanto minor est tua gloria nostra.' (1.463-5)

Cupid immediately realizes his threat by shooting Apollo with a love arrow, which instantly has the desired effect. Cupid's words quickly and fully correspond to action, and their intended result, much like the orders of the *deus* during the creation of the world, or Jupiter's and Neptune's calls to begin the flood. Even the words of Themis' oracle, though initially

³⁷ Tissol (1997, 30-32), referencing the traditions of augury and interpretation of "divinatory wordplay" in discussing divine speech, suggests instead that "[the gods] come between the limits of the words, revealing an extent of meaning greater than what any human listener could have suspected or foreseen." As we shall see, however, Ovid's gods are not always in such control of their meanings, and human speakers will develop this facility for themselves.

³⁸ Nicoll (1980) offers a study of the metapoetic significance of the episode.

misunderstood by Deucalion and Pyrrha, were successfully put into effect. To this point in the book, divine words are closely united with action, directly altering and influencing the landscape and creatures to which they refer.

Daphne's own words, like Cupid's, are minimal but pointed and effective. She makes no reply to Apollo while they are running, but as she feels herself losing ground she makes a short prayer to her river-god father, beseeching his help to change her form and thus destroy the beauty which attracted Apollo: *'quae facit ut laedar, mutando perde figuram!// fer pater,' inquit, 'opem, si flumina numen habetis!'* (1.545-6). Daphne's prayer is clearly an *ex tempore* exclamation motivated by fear, but it is also an instance of straightforward verbal communication between a god and a mortal (or semi-mortal), for just as it ends, the physical change she asked for begins to occur: *vix prece finita torpor gravis occupat artus* (1.548). Ironically, Daphne's pivotal speech results in her eternal silence; as a tree she has no voice, but only shakes her leaves. Daphne "seems" (*visa est*, 1.567) to maintain her communicative ability and nod her branches in response to Apollo's declaration that she will be his tree; along with her physical transformation her voice has metamorphosed into a gesture and presumably a rustling-leaf sound. Ovid does not settle the question of whether Daphne's own volition and persona are still expressed in the movement of the tree. Apollo believes them to be so expressed, but the truth is unstated, and points to a further change in Daphne from clear to questionable communication.³⁹

By contrast, Apollo's speech is markedly ineffectual. Unable to impress Cupid with his boasts, Apollo is also unable to persuade Daphne to accept his advances. Daphne, struck by Cupid's leaden arrow, which causes her to reject love (1.469), flees even the name "lover" (*nomen amantis*, 1.474), as if the word were equal to and as bad as the thing itself; for Daphne

³⁹ See, for example, Farrell (1999, 133-6), and Feldherr (2002, 172-4) on the problem of Daphne's post-metamorphic consciousness.

too considers words and reality closely linked. Yet for Apollo this connection is not so marked; he cannot counter the effects of Cupid's arrow and influence Daphne with his speech. None of his pleading can make her stop running, and the three spheres of power which he boasts of in the hope of impressing her – prophecy, poetry, and medicine (1.515-524) – as well as the profession of his divinity (*Iuppiter est genitor*, 1.517), prove useless in aiding his suit. Ironically, his inability to solve his plight medicinally is the only failure Apollo specifically comments on: *ei mihi, quod nullis amor est sanabilis herbis,/ nec prosunt domino, quae prosunt omnibus, artes!*, (1.523-4). More telling, however, is his verbal inefficacy. Despite being the god of poetry (*per me concordant carmina nervis*, 1.518), he can exert no narrative control over his situation, and in fact cannot even maintain an audience – his intended hearer is running from him with all her might.⁴⁰ Rather than make use of the poetic power with which Orpheus will later be able to move rocks, trees, and animals and to win over the fearsome denizens of the underworld, the god of poetry offers no charming songs or verses to draw the interest of this one girl, but instead makes a petulant and unconvincing rhetorical display. He has been reduced from his divine status as the inspirer and director of poetry to comically playing out the role of the prototypical elegiac lover.⁴¹

Perhaps more striking than his failure as a poet, however (which, after all, is a necessary part of Ovid's play with the origins of his own most frequented genre), is Apollo's failure as a prophet – either he ought to have known what to say, or he ought to have known the pursuit would be unsuccessful in the first place. When Apollo first sees Daphne the narrator tells us:

⁴⁰ An ironic contrast, perhaps to Orpheus, who makes the trees come to him, whereas this future tree is fleeing a poet.

⁴¹ Nicoll (1980, 177) notes that “Ovid's contemporaries would not miss the humor in the idea that the patron of epic and serious poetry should be obliged to abandon his epic pretensions in order to get his hands on the tree which was the symbol of his own poetic craft.”

Phoebus amat visaeque cupit conubia Daphnes,/ quodque cupit, sperat, suaque illum oracula fallunt (1.490-1). The god's own oracular powers, of which he boasts to Daphne (*per me, quod eritque fuitque/estque, patet*, 1.517-18), have "deceived" (*fallunt*) him. Cupid's powers have rendered Apollo's oracular abilities useless (*quodque cupit sperat*) – divine utterances which cannot be trusted.⁴² Though an oracle was superintending the re-creation of the world only one hundred lines ago, now the god of prophecy has suddenly become ridiculous. Only after the chase has ended and Daphne has been transformed does Apollo regain his prophetic powers, and look forward to the time when the laurel will be his symbol and will grace Augustan Rome (1.557-61).

Apollo's difficulty in effectively deploying his words and his failure to gain his desired outcome through speech is countered by the example of Jupiter's pursuit of Io. Like his son, Jupiter begins by attempting to persuade the girl with words. However, Jupiter, older and presumably more experienced in these matters than Apollo, is able to offer a better designed, more wheedling speech than his son, pragmatically suggesting to Io a retreat to a shady spot to escape the heat of the day, and offering his protection as not merely a common god *de plebe* (1.595), but the ruler of the heavens (1.589-96). Persuasion is a necessary skill in the post-Golden Age world, where people are descended from stone and conflict is to be expected. Nevertheless, his persuasions have the opposite effect to the one he intends: Io flees. Yet rather than waste his time with further words that may fail in their purpose, as Apollo did, Jupiter, true to his inherent violence, simply stops talking and uses force to achieve his ends.

Yet Jupiter's use of verbal persuasion, with a large degree of deception (Io obviously realized that she would not be "safe" (*tuta*, 1.594) with him in the grove), shows him to be as

⁴² There is an extra layer of irony in the fact that Daphne's flight is a product of Cupid's leaden arrow, and therefore nothing Apollo could say would induce her to stop. Apollo's speech is thus doubly doomed.

much a part of the fallen, post-Golden Age state of the world as the mortals whom he had maligned and with whom he attempts to interact.⁴³ His behavior to Io, as well as the interaction between him and Juno following the rape, recalls many of the characteristics which formed the description of the Iron Age earlier in the book:

...fugere pudor verumque fidesque;
in quorum subiere locum fraudesque dolique
insidiaeque et vis et amor sceleratus habendi. (1.129-31)

vivitur ex rapto; non hospes ab hospite tutus...
inminet exitio vir coniugis, illa mariti...
victa iacet Pietas... (1.144; 146; 149)

Jupiter here certainly seems to *vivere ex rapto* and display a strong *amor habendi* when he overtakes Io (*rapuitque pudorem*, 1.600).

The language of deception, which came into the world at the onset of the Iron Age (1.130), well after Jupiter had begun his reign, runs rampant in the ensuing passage when Juno questions Jupiter about Io, whom he has transformed into a cow. Seeing the unnatural cloud that Jupiter created to hide his illicit doings, Juno immediately recognizes the signs of her husband's deceit, for she has seen them many times before: *...ut quae/ deprensi totiens iam nosset furta mariti* (1.605-6). Knowing that Juno is coming to investigate, Jupiter turns Io into a cow in order to keep the truth from his wife (1.610-11). A remarkable conversation then takes place, consisting entirely of lies on both sides, each deity pretending not to know the truth about Io, which they both know perfectly well. Juno asks where the cow came from, "as if she didn't know the truth" (*veri quasi nescia*, 1.614), and Jupiter lies (*mentitur*, 1.615) that it arose out of the

⁴³ For example, Ginsberg (1989, 230) notes that the gods of the post-flood world behave like the humans of the pre-flood world. In terms of universal history and genealogy, Jupiter, as the one to expel his father Saturn and bring the Golden Age to an end, is necessarily associated with the Iron Age, but Ovid takes particular pains to associate him as well with human behavior.

earth.⁴⁴ Crafty Juno then demands the cow as a gift, putting Jupiter in a difficult place, torn as he is between *pudor* and *amor* (1.616-19). *Pudor* is conquered (*victus*, 1.619), as is expected in the Iron Age, and he hands Io over so that he may at least continue to look at her (1.620-1). Juno, not trusting Jupiter for a moment (*timuitque Iovem et fuit anxia furti*, 1.623), gives Io over to the guardianship of hundred-eyed Argus.

The scene, with the practiced lies and very human way in which the divine couple navigate their situation, has certain comical aspects; but it also demonstrates the inherent lack of credibility in speech, even, or perhaps especially, at the highest divine level. Even the king and queen of the gods have no qualms about distorting the truth to gain their own personal ends. Though gods, they enact all the wicked behaviors of mortals decried in the description of the Iron Age⁴⁵ -- greed, deception, shamelessness, disruption of family relationships (their own as well as Io's family) -- and their use of speech is an important complement to their impious behavior.

Io's own "speech" is also reminiscent of the post-Golden Age development of mortal sound, for whereas the first animal sound was that of cattle groaning under the weight of the plow (1.124), the first sound we hear Io make is mournful mooing: *et conata queri mugitus edidit ore* (1.637). Her change of form is markedly accompanied by a change of voice, which startles her -- she is frightened by her moos and the sound of her own voice: *pertimuitque sonos propriaque exterrita voce est* (1.638).⁴⁶ Those first Silver Age cattle sounds were described with

⁴⁴ O'Hara (2007, 118) poses the apt question: if Jupiter has lied about Io to protect his actions, why should we believe him about Lycaon?

⁴⁵ As is typical of Ovid's gods. As O'Hara (2007, 108) puts it, the world of the poem is run "not merely by the mythological Olympians, but by a particularly disorderly, unphilosophical, emotional, lustful version of the mythological gods."

⁴⁶ Enterline (2000, 42) describes this type of voice metamorphosis as "extreme alienation of the self from itself [defined] as the moment when a character is startled by the effect of her words or the sound issuing from her mouth."

the word *gemuere* ("groaning" 1.124), a verb which can apply to both people and animals (and Jupiter himself made nearly the same sound in reaction to Lycaon: *ingemit*, 1.164). *Mugitus*, however, is more specifically the sound of cattle lowing (though it too can refer to human utterance). Thus Io's new voice increases her isolation in her new animal body – she does not utter ambiguous sounds, but ones that are particularly bovine. Yet Io's status is decidedly ambiguous. She has all the physical features of a cow, but clearly retains her own previous mental state: she is startled at her voice and appearance (1.637-8; 1.640-1), and clearly knows who she is and what has happened to her, as she struggles to make herself known to her father and fellow nymphs: *...si modo verba sequantur,/ oret opem nomenque suum casusque loquatur* (1.647-8).⁴⁷

Io's voice undergoes a third transformation when she finally hits upon the idea of writing to re-place the spoken words which she has lost: *littera pro verbis, quam pes in pulvere duxit,/ corporis indicium mutati triste peregit* (1.649-50). By ceasing to make noise, she makes herself understood; for while her mooing provided an outlet for her emotional state, it could not convey the narrative she wanted to express. The letters in the dust, words without sound, serve the purpose, however, and Io's father vocally responds to her identification with exclamations about his own troubles (1.651ff). He hangs on to her horns as she groans (*inque gementis cornibus*, 1.651); now that she has been recognized, her noise shifts to the less species-specific groaning. Inachus complains of the new difficulties in communication that the metamorphosis has caused: Io cannot respond in their formerly shared language, *mutua... dicta* (1.655-6), but instead she moos in return (*ad mea verba remugis*, 1.657). Yet despite this lack of shared speech, they have

⁴⁷ Natoli (2017, 54-55; 35) notes that the emphasis on speech loss is unique to Ovid's version of the Io myth, and argues more generally that to the ancient Roman mindset, speech loss represents issues of isolation and loss of human community.

been able to make themselves more or less understood to one another, at least after Io's writing solved the initial problem of recognition. The shifts between *mugio* and *gemo*, as well as the wordplay of *ingeminat* in line 653 as Inachus repeats his cry of *me miserum*, suggest the mutability of sound and the murkiness of boundaries between the particular vocalizations of different beings -- Io and her father are probably making roughly the same sounds, on both sides expressive of grief. In fact Io, through her writing, transfers her speaking voice to her father, as he reads the word that she wrote, and translates it into Latin with his "*me miserum*" (in a bilingual pun on the Greek meaning of 'io').

Io's ability to adapt to her situation and modify her mode of communication to transcend her altered form marks her as one of the more successful mortal users of language in the early part of the poem.⁴⁸ Mercury, in his rescue of Io, will prove himself to be one of the more successful divine speakers. Once Argus breaks up the scene of Io and her father's mutual complaining by taking Io away to another pasture, Mercury arrives at Jupiter's behest, to find a way to kill Argus and free Io. Mercury arrives in the guise of a herdsman, and begins to play his pipe. The "new voice" (*voce nova*, 1.678) attracts the attention of Argus, who invites Mercury to sit in the shade. The falsity of the bucolic situation is part of Ovid's humor in the passage: the music and storytelling have a violent ulterior motive, neither of the speakers is a real herdsman, and the cow is not even a real cow.⁴⁹ Mercury's verbal skill is immediately apparent in the physical effects his words and music have on both Argus and the landscape. He detains Argus and even the day itself with copious speech (*euntem multa loquendo/ detinuit sermone diem*,

⁴⁸ Fredericks (1977, 249) links Deucalion, Io, and Mercury together in terms of their "verbal ingenuity." Cf. Natoli (2017, 56-64), who argues that Io is able to mitigate her dehumanized status by finding a way to communicate with her father and regain her place in the family.

⁴⁹ Lowe (2015, 228), discussing Ovid's Argus as a bucolic parody of epic monsters, notes that all the pastoral elements are false, as does Barchiesi (2006, 407), who finds a comment on the crafted nature of the pastoral genre: "in Ovid there is little doubt that bucolics is a masquerade."

1.682-3), and his singing makes Argus sleepy (*canendo/ vincere...lumina temptat*, 1.684-5). Fighting to stay awake, Argus asks how the pan-pipe came to be. His attempt to engage in conversation fails – his question launches Mercury into a story to which Argus will not be able to respond,⁵⁰ and in fact one which the god will not even need, and perhaps never intended, to finish,⁵¹ as Argus apparently falls asleep eleven and a half lines in.⁵² Mercury moves back into epic mode, with a long narrative followed by violence, but Argus in his shepherd costume can neither speak nor act effectively.⁵³

The embedded story of Syrinx and Pan, partially narrated by Mercury, serves, within the Io narrative, to put Argus to sleep, but it also demonstrates the increasingly convoluted soundscape of the Jovian world, which now includes conversation, studied narration, direct and indirect quotation, music, and natural noise. Mercury's words are merely a means to an end, and he controls them and his listener with far more success than his brother Apollo ever does. A strange mixture of dullness and erotic interest manages to pique Argus' interest but induce him to slumber.⁵⁴ The actual killing of Argus is rather anti-climactic – the battle was really won by Mercury's clever speech, not his sword.⁵⁵ Yet the end of Mercury's story, though unspoken by him, is related by the poem's narrator as what the god would have said, had he continued. Thus, Mercury's words have a life beyond their speaker, whom the main narrator overrides. The words which would have remained unheard in Mercury's thoughts, are brought out and "spoken" by the poet. The tale Mercury was in the process of telling is, fittingly, another story of a voice stopped,

⁵⁰ Lowe (2015) 229.

⁵¹ Cf. Murgatroyd (2001) 622.

⁵² Heath (1991, 236) suggests that Mercury has learned Ovid's narrative patterns, and uses them, by repeating a twice-told plot, to put Argus to sleep.

⁵³ Lowe (2015, 230) discusses the generic implications of Argus' and Mercury's behavior, and Argus' inability to realize himself as an epic monster.

⁵⁴ Murgatroyd (2001, 622) discusses Mercury's (and Ovid's) design in constructing the Syrinx story with a dry and verbose opening leading on to a more exciting ending.

⁵⁵ Fabre-Serris (2003, 192) notes that the speech substitutes for a battle between the two.

altered, and then continued by another speaker. The nymph Syrinx flees from Pan in a repetition of the plot of the Daphne and Io episodes, and as she flees she cries out to her sister-nymphs for help. She is changed into a bunch of reeds on the riverbank, and the wind moving through them mimics the sound of her plaints: *efficisse sonum tenuem similemque querenti* (1.708). Pan, delighted by the voice (*vocis...dulcedine captum*, 1.709), binds the reeds together into a musical instrument, as an ever-present means of conversation (*conloquium*, 1.710) with the nymph.⁵⁶

The success of Mercury's speech in rendering Argus defenseless is countered in the next episode by Apollo's failure once again to gain the trust of a listener, this time his own son, through speech. Phaethon, hurt by the accusation of Ephaphus, that he is not truly the son of Phoebus, begs a sign (*notam*, 1.761, *signa*, 1.764) from his mother proving his divine parentage. The exasperated outburst of his friend Epaphus (the son of Io and Jupiter; apparently quite some time has passed since Apollo's *primus amor*),⁵⁷ who was tired of Phaethon's boasting about his origins (1.751-4), is enough to make Phaethon doubt everything his mother has told him. The line describing Clymene's response to her son's request begins with the word *ambiguum* (1.765), perhaps instilling in the reader a momentary echo of Phaethon's doubt. As the line continues, however (*ambiguum Clymene precibus Phaethontis an ira/ mota magis dicti sibi criminis ...*, 1.765-6), it becomes clear that the only doubt is what emotion is uppermost in Clymene's mind: concern for her son, or anger at the insult to herself?

Clymene proceeds to make a long oath, sworn by the Sun himself, that Phaethon is indeed Phoebus' son (1.767-72). Yet, as if acknowledging that a second-hand account may not be fully satisfying, she ends her speech by mentioning that the palace of the Sun is not far, and Phaethon can simply go and ask the god himself if he likes: *si modo fert animus, gradere et*

⁵⁶ See Chapter 2 for a full discussion of the Syrinx episode.

⁵⁷ The Sun is not always the same god as Apollo, but Ovid uses the name Phoebus for both, thereby linking them.

scitabere ab ipso (1.775). Phaethon, who had asked for a sign, not a verbal assurance, happily takes up this idea and enters the house of his *dubitati parentis* (2.20), an ironic choice of adjective for a god who, as the sun, is the epitome of clarity and who professed himself fluent in prophecy in Book 1. Phaethon again demands a pledge, *pignora* (2.38) – an ambiguous word that may be a physical or a verbal guarantee, which will prove his parentage. Though the flippant accusation of his playmate was enough to throw him into deep doubt and unhappiness, a corresponding verbal affirmation is not enough to reverse these effects. He does not want merely to be told the truth, but requires some kind of proof.⁵⁸ Apollo, like Clymene, gives Phaethon verbal confirmation, but reinforces it with more tangible evidence: he swears that the boy may have any gift he chooses. This offer of the gift, gratifying Phaethon's preference for physical signs over statements, even sworn statements, undermines the credibility of the god's word. The correspondence between words and the reality they are meant to represent cannot be taken for granted, but must be visibly laid out. If even the gods feel the need to provide evidence that their words are true, whose speech can be considered trustworthy on its own?

Phoebus' gift-giving and oath-taking can perhaps be attributed to an excess of fatherly feeling, but he shows remarkable short-sightedness for the god who sees everything (*oculis...quibus aspicit omnia*, 2.32), and to whom the past, present, and future lie open (1.517-18). Faced with a difficult situation when Phaethon naturally chooses the worst possible gift, the opportunity to drive his father's chariot, Phoebus must attempt once again to make his point with verbal persuasion. Ironically, while neither he nor Phaethon seemed to consider his word alone as a true or binding *pignus*, he is in fact held to his word in promising the gift, since he swore by

⁵⁸ Schiesaro (2014, 74-5) delves into the philosophical and specifically Lucretian undertones throughout the Phaethon passage, and notes that Phaethon's skyward journey in search of truth aligns him with Epicurus in the *De Rerum Natura* and Pythagoras in the *Metamorphoses*.

the river Styx, the gods' strongest oath. Phaethon rejects his father's attempt to dissuade him, spurning his words (*dictis tamen ille repugnat*, 2.103), and eventually brings about not only his own destruction but also that of much of the world when he loses control of the fiery chariot. As they did in his pursuit of Daphne, Phoebus' words miss their mark and have an effect opposite to his intentions, though this time with far wider-reaching consequences.

Mortals Talk Back: Use and Misuse of Speech in Book 2

The slippery distinctions between true and false speech and the problems of determining the timely use of speech become central concerns in the poem's second book, as mortal speakers begin to contend with the gods in language. Alison Keith has convincingly demonstrated that the majority of episodes in Book 2 are linked together by the theme of (in)appropriate speech for mortals.⁵⁹ Phoebus' troubles with mastering language (and the dire consequences resulting from those troubles) continue,⁶⁰ this time as a listener rather than a speaker: he is too quick to act on what he hears and punishes truth rather than falsehood. Mercury and Jupiter, however, continue to gain their ends through a combination of deceptive language and force, with Mercury verbally outwitting Battus and Aglauros, and Jupiter deceiving Callisto by appropriating Diana's voice. For their part, mortal speakers begin to learn, through painful consequences that the gods do not experience, the cost of ill-timed or over-confident speech.

In the episode of Coronis, it is not the human woman but the raven and the crow who exemplify the transgressive speech of mortals and the unpredictability involved in attempting to communicate verbally with gods. The story is introduced as an explanation for the raven's color

⁵⁹ Keith (1992). Many of her points are taken up and elaborated by Gildenhard and Zissos (2004).

⁶⁰ Fredericks (1977) discusses Apollo's characterization as a "misuser of language" who is repeatedly "a victim of his own carelessness" (245, 247).

being changed from white to black. Apollo's faithful bird, the raven, has witnessed Coronis' infidelity to the god, and is planning to tell him. The crow, who has been punished by Minerva for a similar speech act, attempts unsuccessfully to dissuade him. The raven is addressed by the narrator with the epithet *loquax* (2.535), and becomes the first mortal character in the poem (after the crow, whose story is an inset) to be punished explicitly for its use of speech: *lingua fuit damno; lingua faciente loquaci/qui color albus erat nunc est contrarius albo*, 2.540-41). Having discovered Coronis' *adulterium*, he sets his course to his master in order to reveal the crime as its *index* (2.545-7). The crow, also characterized as an eager speaker with the epithet *garrula* (2.547), inquisitively flies after the raven to learn its errand (2.547-8), then advises the raven not to continue with its plan, offering her own experience as an example and styling herself as a prophet of the journey's outcome ('*non utile carpis*'/*inquit* '*iter; ne sperne meae praesagia linguae*', 2.549-50). She relates a tale wherein she saw the Athenian princess Aglauros look, against Minerva's command, into the crate that held the baby Erichthonius. Having reported this disobedience to the goddess, the crow was not rewarded, but demoted to second place behind the owl in Minerva's favor (2.552-64). The moral of the story, according to the crow, is twofold: that faithfulness to one's patron divinity can backfire (*quid fuerim quid simque vide meritumque require:/invenies nocuisse fidem*, 2.551-2), and that birds ought not to invite trouble with their voices (*mea poena volucres/admonuisse potest ne voce pericula quaerant*, 2.564-5).

The advice goes unheeded, and the raven belittles the crow's forewarning exemplum as a *vanum omen* (2.597). This failure to attend to the story brings about the predicted effect: Apollo shows no gratitude to the raven, but instead despises it for its unwelcome message (*odit avem per quam crimen causamque dolendi/scire coactus erat*, 2.614-15). Apollo, though he was quick to act on the bird's report and kill Coronis, immediately regrets his action (*paenitet*, 2.612) and

considers that the bird's tale forced (*coactus erat*) the knowledge on him, as if he were an unwilling victim of the bird's speech. Like Jupiter being unwillingly drawn down to earth to investigate rumors of human misbehavior, Apollo does not stop to question or verify the raven's gossip, but is immediately affected by it. In return for the information, he changes the bird's color (*sperantemque sibi non falsae praemia linguae/inter aves albas vetuit consistere corvum*, 2.631-2). The raven's self-serving expectations (*sperantem sibi*) lead him to speak in a way that in reality does him a disservice, though he has not spoken falsely (*non falsae linguae*).

Carole Newlands' study comparing the story of Apollo and the raven in the *Fasti* with the episode in the *Metamorphoses* demonstrates the complementary ways in which each myth approaches the issue of "the proper use of language and Apollo's role as arbiter."⁶¹ In the *Fasti*, the raven passage does not involve the Coronis myth, but is an aetiology for the constellations of the Raven, the Snake, and the Bowl. The raven is sent by Apollo to fetch water for a sacrifice, but is distracted by some figs and waits for them to ripen. Having eaten, he returns to Apollo, explaining his delay with a false story of a snake blocking his access to the water, and is duly punished for his lies. Ovid's two raven stories, which give opposite answers to the question of appropriate speech, set Apollo in a self-contradictory position, and place the raven in a position where his speech can never succeed. In the *Fasti*, Apollo punishes him for lying, but in the *Metamorphoses*, he is punished for telling the truth. The *Metamorphoses* places more explicit emphasis than does the *Fasti* on the bird's speech being the cause of his downfall.⁶² The unsettling conclusion is that, for the *Metamorphoses*, truth is not necessarily the requirement for

⁶¹ Newlands (1991, 254). The article is mainly concerned with the Callimacheanism of the portrayal of Apollo in the *Fasti*, but provides a helpful discussion of the problems of speech exemplified by the raven.

⁶² Newlands (1991) 254. The reference at the beginning of the episode to the Capitoline geese (in a list of white birds from whose ranks the raven will be ejected) proleptically reinforces the point, since the geese used their voices well (*vigili voce*) and saved the city. Cf. Gildenhard and Zissos (2004) 53; Keith (1992) 46-7.

or the measure of correct speech (at least from the gods' point of view).⁶³ What is more important is adapting one's speech to the present context – gauging the mindset of one's audience and judging what sort of speech would be more apropos. Thus, it seems speech's potential for changeability in the *Metamorphoses* should complement and befit the changeability of circumstances in the poem's world.

The lesson of the importance of expedient speech is one that both Jupiter and Mercury learn and use to their advantage. In his tour to repair Arcadia after the flood, Jupiter catches sight of the huntress Callisto resting in the shade. In order to gain her trust, he disguises himself as his own daughter, Diana, and addresses her in Diana's voice, speaking about the hunt (2.425-7). Fooled by the image and words of her patron goddess, Callisto immediately and willingly responds, but as soon as Jupiter ceases to speak and begins to act on his desire, he betrays his true identity (*nec se sine crimine prodit*, 2.433). Jupiter chooses the most advantageous disguise and words with which to approach Callisto, but his actions too obviously contradict those words. As he did with Io in the previous book, Jupiter begins with speech but ends with force. His ability with speech alone is not enough to gain him what he wants, but with it he obtains the proximity that enables him to commit his misdeeds.

Mercury, however, continues to show himself to be very comfortable with the conditions of speech in the poem. Building on his success with Argus, outwits the attempted deception of Battus and the verbal challenges of Aglauros, and wins a battle of verbal acuity with each mortal. After stealing a herd of cattle from the inattentive Apollo, Mercury bribes the one witness to the theft, an old man called Battus, to keep the secret. Battus promises, pointing out a stone and stating that the stone will speak before the secret gets out (*lapis iste prius tua furta loquetur*,

⁶³ Newlands (1991, 254) draws the conclusion that truth is not always a good idea in the *Met*, while it is more important to the *Fasti* because of that poem's generic association with Callimachean aetiological poetry.

2.696). Mercury goes away but returns, having adopted a different appearance and voice. Offering a reward, he asks Battus the location of the cattle, which Battus immediately reveals. Mercury laughs, identifies himself (*me mihi, perfide, prodis?*, 2.704) and turns the man to stone, thus bringing the man's false promise to ironic fruition.⁶⁴ Similarly, when Aglauros, driven by Envy, refuses to allow Mercury access to her sister Herse's room, she declares that she will not move from the spot without driving him away first (*hinc ego me non sum nisi te motura repulso*, 2.817). Mercury responds as if she has offered terms to which he agrees (*'stemus' ait 'pacto' velox Cyllenius 'isto,'* 2.818), and immediately turns her to stone, so that she will not, in fact, move from the spot. In each instance, Mercury supplies a second meaning to the mortals' words, which he uses to overturn their expectations and triumph at their expense. As Fredericks describes, Mercury's verbal talents are central to the episodes in which he appears, and he "takes quick advantage of a character careless with language" while being quite careful and adaptable himself.⁶⁵ Mercury speaks very little in these episodes, but his ability to alter his own voice as well as to recognize and act upon the unwitting double-entendres in others' speech prove him *velox* (2.818) both physically and mentally, and mark him as particularly well-suited to function in the unstable (verbally as well as physically) world of the *Metamorphoses*. Mercury's verbal ability is set in sharp contrast to his brother's repeated failures. Phoebus' speeches have too many words and too little influence.⁶⁶

The use of speech, by both gods and mortals, throughout Book 1 and into the following books of the poem often falls into the patterns set in the periods after Jupiter takes charge, where

⁶⁴ Tissol (1997, 35) notes that Mercury is a "god of divinatory double-meaning," able to make a pun out of other character's language.

⁶⁵ Fredericks (1977) 245-7.

⁶⁶ Fredericks (1977, 247) suggests that Apollo drags out his speeches because he cannot think of what to say or adapt effectively to his situation.

vocal expression is driven by discontent, deception, and self-interest. After the flood, human speech, as first evidenced by Deucalion and Pyrrha and carried on thereafter by figures such as Daphne and Syrinx, is often reduced to an emotional expression in reaction to the cruel or deceitful doings of the gods. But while Deucalion naively trusts in the truthfulness and good intentions of the gods, by the time of the later metamorphoses in the first book neither the reader nor the poem's characters have such any such expectation of or from divine speech. Rather, the gods are likely to say whatever is necessary to achieve their wishes and ends, and mortals must make do with the results. Thus, speech and vocal expression from their beginnings are tied to concerns of control and authority. The troubles of Deucalion and Pyrrha, the lies of Jupiter, Juno, and Mercury, the desperate prayers of Daphne and Syrinx, the distrusted oaths of Clymene and Apollo, and the continual failure of Apollo's rhetorical attempts all provide examples of the lack of stability in verbal communication. Speech proves to be challenging, for all speakers, divine and otherwise, both in terms of knowing when to believe or how to interpret another's words, and in making oneself understood to others. Finally, spoken commands, such as those of the creator *deus* or Jupiter, the ability of gods to stop speech through metamorphosis, and the layering of narrative voices in the Syrinx episode, all provide examples of the ways in which sounds and speech are tied to control -- they are both a means of control and a force to be restrained.

Inklings of Rumor: Fama's Early Influence

That the gods frequently seek to stifle what they view as errant speech suggests that even human speech has a reach and a potency that may transcend mortal limitations. While an individual speaker may be punished and silenced, speech that is general and unattributed, rumor or general storytelling, often proves to be beyond the gods' power either to regulate or to ignore.

In the first half of the poem, rumor, or the potential for rumor, repeatedly serves as an impetus to divine action, and the gods' behavior comes under general discussion, with unfavorable judgments going unpunished. While Jupiter's need to investigate human behavior in Book 1 is the first example of a deity influenced by the power of *fama*, Book 3 introduces the first instances of unspecified humans both explicitly discussing the gods' actions and passing judgment on them. This draws attention to Ovid's frequent humanizing of his gods and the blurred boundaries between human and divine,⁶⁷ while also demonstrating the autonomy of this type of speech. We will turn our attention here to Diana and Minerva, two goddesses who are both driven to act by rumor, or the fear of rumor, and who both then become part of the rumor-mill themselves.

The goddess Diana proves to have what seems to be an excessive reaction to mortal speech and an excessive fear of rumor. After Actaeon accidentally sees the goddess bathing, Diana's reasoning in avenging the mistake and her choice of punishment are based on her unwillingness that Actaeon should be able to tell what he has seen:

addidit haec cladis praenuntia verba futurae:
'nunc tibi me posito visam velamine narres,
si poteris narrare, licet.' (3.191-3)

Diana's words are labeled as "forecasting" (*praenuntia*) as she sarcastically foretells Actaeon's imminent loss of speech, for he immediately begins the transformation into a stag. The goddess' concern seems to be not so much that Actaeon has seen her, as that he may tell others what he has seen. Her use of the verb *narrare* suggests her fear of the human capacity not just to speak,

⁶⁷ Feeney (1991, 200-202) discusses Ovid's practice of using the gods as a comparandum for human experience, and his use of emotion as the "principal medium for testing... the humanity of the divine." He notes that "the inevitability of judging divine characters in epic by human standards is...stressed again and again" after the opening council of the gods.

but also to spread speech in the form of repeated stories. Actaeon's violent death, brought about by his own hunting dogs, preserves her from whatever he himself may have told, but ironically the story of the incident still goes forth. After Actaeon's death, people debate the justice of the goddess' actions:

Rumor in ambiguo est: aliis violentior aequo
visa dea est, alii laudant dignamque severa
virginitate vocant; pars invenit utraque causas. (3.253-5)

The story is identified as *rumor*, and indicates that the very outcome that she had hoped to avoid has happened. Actaeon, of course, was unable to speak of it, yet somehow the event has become general knowledge, and the justice of the goddess' actions comes under general review. There is no shock, wonder, or fear generated by the metamorphosis itself; rather, the impersonal rumor weighs Diana's actions and motives dispassionately. Some consider the response disproportionate, while others find it appropriate to Diana's character. Although her wrath has apparently been appeased by the death (*ira pharetratae fertur satiata Dianae*, 3.251-2), even this statement comes from a general report (*fertur*).

Nor are the gods exempt from participation in gossip themselves. The narrator transitions from this episode to the next with the remark that Juno alone does not state whether she agrees or disagrees with Diana, but is merely glad that the family of Cadmus (descended from Jove's onetime love Europa) is suffering (3.256-8). Juno herself comes under an objective review later in the same book for her treatment of Tiresias. Jupiter and Juno call upon Tiresias, who, through a bizarre encounter with a snake, has lived as both a man and a woman, to settle their disagreement as to whether males or females take more pleasure in sex. Tiresias finds in Jupiter's favor, a decision which Juno takes more seriously than is appropriate for a humorous matter (*de*

lite iocosa/dicta Iovis firmit; gravius Saturnia iusto/nec pro materia fertur doluisse..., 3.332-4).

Juno's reaction is given by an impersonal second-hand report (*fertur*) containing a negative judgment.⁶⁸ While Juno can inflict a punishment on Tiresias for his unwelcome statement, there is no way to silence the story and its judgment.

Minerva, like her half-sister, also proves to be susceptible to the influence of *fama*. It is her curiosity concerning the story of Pegasus and the Hippocrene that draws her to visit the Muses on Mount Helicon (*fama novi fontis nostras pervenit ad aures...is mihi causa viae. volui mirabile factum/cernere*, 5.256, 257-8). Having witnessed Pegasus' birth during her sojourn with Perseus (5.259), Minerva feels an interest in the later event, but like her father needing to investigate the rumor of human misbehavior in Book 1, she cannot trust the veracity of the report without confirming it in person. Urania informs her that the tale is indeed true (*vera tamen fama est, est Pegasus huius origo fontis*, 5.262-3), which then leads into another story, as the Muses go on to relate the account of their contest with the Pierides for possession of the fountain.⁶⁹

This story of boastful mortals bested by deities in turn inspires Minerva to take action against Arachne, who has supposedly boasted that her weaving is superior to Minerva's. Again, Minerva is drawn by a rumor – she has “heard” that Arachne considers herself the more skilled weaver (*quam sibi lanificae non cedere laudibus artis/audierat*, 6.6-7). This time, however, she does not arrive with the intention of finding out the truth, but is already intent on Arachne's punishment (*animum fatis intendit Arachnes*, 6.5). Arachne's fame has spread throughout the region, despite her non-aristocratic origins, and it is so great that even the nymphs come down from the mountains to view her work (6.7-16). Arachne's *fama* is a draw that Minerva cannot

⁶⁸ Feeney (1991, 201-2) discusses the passage in the light of Ovid's use of human parameters to describe the gods.

⁶⁹ Rosati (2002, 300-1) discusses this passage in the context of narrative subjectivity in the *Metamorphoses*, noting that the Muses' account is naturally biased in its characterization of the Pierides and the two songs, especially since narrator and audience (Minerva) share the same biases.

ignore, and she seeks to find its source. After the weaving contest when the goddess has punished Arachne with transformation into a spider, another sort of rumor takes flight, not of fame but of narrative. The region buzzes with the story and soon the whole world is talking of it (*Lydia tota fremit Phrygiaeque per oppida facti/rumor it et magnum sermonibus occupant orbem*, 6.146-7). The spread of the tale, with whatever bias or moralizing spin the speakers and listeners may choose to add, provides the transition to the story of Niobe. The narrator tells us that Niobe does not heed Arachne's example and learn to moderate her speech concerning the gods (*nec tamen admonita est poena popularis Arachnes/cedere caelitibus verbisque minoribus uti*, 6.150-51).

The circulating fame of Arachne's weaving and pride brings Minerva's attention to her. The girl's haughty speech is punished (though Minerva herself cannot deny the extreme skill displayed in Arachne's tapestry: 6.129-30), but those who spread the tale go unidentified and unimpeded by the goddess. After the metamorphosis, there is further general talk discussing the event, but Minerva takes no notice of it. The passage does not state the particular words, or the biases, if any, of the *rumor* and the *sermones*, but if the earlier examples of Diana and Juno carry any weight, then it is possible that they contain mixed opinions. This talk goes forth without either Minerva's permission or veto. Having found the cause of the rumor, she stamps it out, but can do nothing about the further talk that she engenders. Of course, this general talk and judgment is the only mortal reaction or recourse possible after an instance of divine punishment, whether that punishment is just or unjust. In each of these stories, Diana, Juno, and Minerva have the ultimate power over the bodies, and lives, of Actaeon, Tiresias, and Arachne; and they exercise that power easily. Mortals can bring the gods' *fama* into question by their chatter – the

Metamorphoses itself serves as an example of the damaged reputations of the gods – but while mortals can make the gods victims of Fama, they can do nothing more tangible.

Jupiter, Diana, and Minerva together exemplify some of the ways that the gods attempt to come to terms with *fama*. Jupiter and Minerva are drawn by a need to determine the truth – they seem to understand the inherent problem in rumor, that its truth cannot be relied upon or ‘fixed,’ but it cannot be dismissed out of hand either. Ironically, the potential for truth in a story is more of a threat than the potential for falsehood. Jupiter is angered to find humanity just as depraved as he had heard, and Minerva is angered to find Arachne so skillful. Diana fears that Actaeon will give an accurate account of what he has seen. The gods listen to rumors, are influenced by rumors, and may even participate in sharing their own opinions, but *fama* is a force that exists outside of their control. They can seek out and stop whatever individual has provided the fodder for a story, but they have no power over the story itself or those who spread it. Though individual humans are punished, and punished severely, for their use or misuse of speech, *fama* seems to exist on a plane beyond the gods’ jurisdiction to discipline (much as Fama’s house, as we have seen in the first chapter, is not part of the tripartite cosmos). In fact, while they obviously are concerned for their honor and consider that it may be jeopardized by what is said about them, (evidenced by their quick and brutal responses to challengers), when a general story takes off and they can no longer find an individual mortal to penalize, they seem to give up. Fama is a force, like the workings of the cosmos, that the gods must contend with and acknowledge, and sometimes use to advantage, but one that is not fully subject to their authority. Because of this, Ovid implies that the gods (and by extension, other authority figures) can in fact be discussed and even criticized by mortals with impunity, so long as the critique is delivered by a generalized voice rather than an individual (and hence more vulnerable) one.

Fama Crescens: Rumor and Narrative

Yet rumor cannot therefore be viewed as systematically supporting the interests of the underdog by chipping away at the reputation of the strong. Ovid's Fama, as we shall continue to see, carries out her program with little concern for the effect, positive or negative, on the parties involved. In Book 9's episode of Deianira and Hercules, just as in the episode of Jupiter and Lycaon, *fama* induces violent action. After Achelous finishes speaking, having related his competition with Hercules for Deianira's hand, the narrator turns to the story of this ill-fated couple, which leads to Hercules' apotheosis. A rumor has reached Deianira, while Hercules is on his way home from Oechalia, suggesting that her husband is planning to leave her for the princess Iole:

victor ab Oechalia Cenaeo sacra parabat
vota Iovi, cum Fama loquax praecessit ad aures,
Deianira, tuas, quae veris addere falsa
gaudet et e minimo sua per mendacia crescit,
Amphitryoniaden Ioles ardore teneri (Met. 9.136-40)

This passage provides the poem's most extended personification of Fama until the ecphrasis of her house in Book 12, and a Virgilian cast is much more prominent here than it is in that ecphrasis. Fama is described as *loquax*, an epithet used of chattering nuisances like the raven in Book 2. Fama's delight in mixing truth and falsehood and in adding things to preexisting tales (138-9) will be revisited in Book 12 in the ecphrasis. This idea is also reminiscent of Virgil's characterization of Fama, combining her tenacity in respect to falsehood as well as truth (*tam ficti pravique tenax quam nuntia veri*, Aen. 4.188) and her joy in stirring people to talk (*haec tum multiplici populos sermone replebat/gaudens*, Aen. 4.18-90). Ovid also borrows here Virgil's

image of Fama's rapid growth and self-nourishment (*mobilitate viget virisque acquirit eundo/ parva metu primo, mox sese attollit in auras, Aen. 4.175-6*). Ovid, looking ahead to his portrayal of Fama as an unreliable source, emphasizes that this growth is based on the spread of falsehoods (*addere falsa; sua per mendacia crescit*), while Virgil's focus, in these lines, is on her fearsome rapidity.

Elsewhere in the poem, and in her extended treatment in Book 12, the Ovidian Fama is an amoral figure in general, indifferent to categories such as truth and fiction or good and bad, and one whose main concern is simply to spread information far and wide. The Virgilian Fama is an explicit *malum* (*Aen. 4.174*), and her strong echoes here in the Ovidian Fama's sphere have two particular effects. First, we are reminded of the destructive potential of rumor, and forewarned of the tragic effect Deianira's belief in the rumor will have; secondly, we are reminded that Fama is not only the voice of rumor, but also the composite of literary history: bringing the most recent past personification of epic Fama into the poem at this point gives the Ovidian Fama another register of meaning. The emphasis on Fama's *mendacia* implies that the rumor Deianira hears is likely false; however, it obviously stems from the branch of the story told in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, wherein Hercules does indeed plan to marry Iole. The Ovidian Fama frequently flickers back and forth among the varied registers of the word *fama*, from fame to reputation to rumor to literary history; and this episode shows us Deianira caught in a web of varied *fama*-threads. It is a rumor, but also the literary tradition that induces her to send Nessus' poisoned shirt to Hercules, and unknowingly to set in motion the chain of events that will lead to his apotheosis. Not only is the literary past of Iole and Deianira in play here, but also Hercules' mythic background: we already know that Hercules will be burned alive on Mount Oeta so that

Jupiter can translate him to the heavens; therefore, Deianira must believe the rumor and send the poisoned shirt.

The Growing Registers of Human Speech: Tereus, Procne, and Philomela

As we have seen, the gods' acknowledgement of the potency of speech is evident both in their attempts to use it for their own ends, and in their quickness to try to restrain it, through metamorphosis or other means. *Met.6* contains a series of stories, one after the other, involving a mortal mounting a vocal challenge to divine superiority, and each challenger is punished with a metamorphosis involving the loss of human speech, and in some cases, a total loss of vocal ability. Arachne, for boasting of her skill at weaving and entering a contest with Minerva, is turned into a spider; Niobe, for offending Leto by boasting of her more numerous children, is turned to stone after seeing them killed by Apollo and Diana; the Lycian farmers are turned to croaking frogs after denying water to the thirsty Leto; and the satyr Marsyas, having challenged Apollo in music, is flayed alive, and his mourners' tears are turned into a river that bears his name. Thus far, the book seems to be following the patterns of mortal speech-insubordination and divine punishment that have been set in the earlier books of the poem; for example as we saw in the series of tales in Book 2 involving inopportune mortal speech, or later on in the cases of the punishments of the daughters of Minyas and the Pierides in Books 4 and 5, whose impious behavior includes extended storytelling. Here in Book 6, however, the vocal rebellions are beginning to come thick and fast with four such tales in quick succession. The growing emphasis

on human speech marks the sixth book as a turning point in the poem, where the balance begins to shift from divine to mortal vocality.⁷⁰

The extended story towards the end of the book, the tragedy of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela, constitutes a turning point in the treatment of human speech in the *Metamorphoses*. This is the first episode without a divine or semi-divine character, thus giving priority to the verbal interactions of the human sphere alone, and as such it paves the way for the anthropocentric (as opposed to theocentric) episodes to come in the later books of the poem. The various problems and inconsistencies inherent in speech that have permeated the poem since the beginning – the wavering of truth and falsehood, effective and ineffective speech, and free and restricted speech – permeate this passage as well. As the three humans in the episode navigate these complications, surprisingly free of divine intervention, whether punitive or supportive, there appears a new sense of potency, and resourcefulness, in human communication, exemplified in Tereus' persistent and persuasive lies and Philomela's ability to circumvent her enforced silence. Yet this resourceful communication, used to both good and bad purpose, is coupled with a shocking brutality of action that makes these mortal speakers into purveyors of the darkest registers of chaos.⁷¹ We will look first at Tereus' Iron Age proclivities, then turn to Philomela's rebukes and expressive tapestry.

The Thracian king Tereus, a descendant of Mars and known for his success in war (*clarum vincendo nomen habebat; genus a magno ducentem forte Gradivo*, 6.425; 427), marries Procne, the daughter of the Athenian king Pandion, as part of a military alliance. The barbarity of

⁷⁰ See for example Feeney (1991, 192-3) and Tarrant (2002, 352) on the transition from divine to human-centered stories at this point in the poem. Boyd (2006, 174) notes that “the divine violence and manipulative power of the early books become history, as humans increasingly manage their own destiny.”

⁷¹ See Tarrant (2002, 352-4) for the passage's revisiting the themes and language of “elemental confusion” that characterize chaos in the *Metamorphoses*.

Thracians is a literary trope, and the cruelty in Tereus' nature is made clear in the episode by his criminal behavior to his sister-in-law Philomela, whom he rapes, locks up in a house in the woods, and deprives of her tongue. Tereus' brutishness is clear and unambiguous, and it is supported by his pattern of deceptive speech, used to gain his cruel and selfish ends. Tereus exemplifies all the *nefas* of the Iron Age described at the beginning of the poem. He is a reminder that, despite the two intervening re-creations of the world (flood and fire), the *Metamorphoses'* world continues to be a part of that dangerous and difficult age. In his cruelty and his attempts to control speech, Tereus is akin to the first Iron Age humans, but these qualities are also reminiscent of the behavior of the gods at times in the early books of the poem, who make mortals the victims of both their desire and their punitive wrath. In the absence of any gods, the selfish tyrant Tereus fills, and perhaps surpasses in cruelty, the role that the divine authoritarians have held. Procne and Philomela, wronged by his deceit and tyrannical actions, are nevertheless able to find ways, verbal and non-verbal, to circumvent his authority. That they do so with relative impunity indicates a new level of power and resourcefulness in human communication.

When Procne, five years after her marriage (6.439), asks Tereus to let her see Philomela, she begins her request with flattery (*cum blandita* 6.440) and with a conditional sentence: *si gratia...ulla mea est, vel me visendam mitte sorori, vel soror huc veniat* (6.440-42). Procne, like a well-trained Athenian speaker, is aware that she must adjust her speech to her audience to attain the desired result – she speaks ingratiatingly (*blandita*), she is self-deprecating about her rights (*si gratia ulla mea est*), but comes to the point quickly and clearly (*vel me ...mitte...vel soror...veniat*), so that her Thracian barbarian husband will at once comprehend her and be placated. Her tactic succeeds, and Tereus goes to Athens to fetch Philomela.

The greeting between Tereus and his father-in-law is ironically described as *fausto ...omine sermo* (6.448); considering the eventual outcome, the “favorable omen” attending the conversation is rendered meaningless. The emptiness of promises, oaths, and other such sacred or binding verbal interactions for Tereus becomes clear with his reaction to the sight of Philomela and his subsequent behavior. Philomela’s entrance sets off in Tereus a storm of desire whose vocabulary is reminiscent of the amours of Jupiter and Apollo in the early books of the poem. Ovid portrays him aflame with love, using a simile very like the one used to describe Apollo’s feelings in the Daphne episode:

non secus exarsit conspecta virgine Tereus,
quam siquis canis ignem supponat aristas
aut frondem positasque cremet faenilibus herbas. (6.455-7)

Tereus burns at the first sight of Philomela like crops under the Dog Star or branches burned for kindling. In Book 1 Apollo also goes up in flames as crops or branches do when he sees Daphne:

utque leves stipulae demptis adolentur aristas
ut facibus saepes ardent, quas forte viator
vel nimis admovit vel iam sub luce reliquit... (1.492-4)

Apollo’s courtship, of course, was largely unsuccessful – he gained a tree but lost the woman. However, Tereus more closely follows the course of action modeled by Jupiter in his rapes of Io and Callisto – he says whatever is expedient, and then uses force to secure his wishes. The narrator’s description of Tereus in this scene places him firmly in the sphere of the Iron Age mortals – he is driven by vice (*vitio*, 6.460), he has no concern for pledges of fidelity (*impetus est comitum corrumpere curam*, 6.461), he dreams of violently abducting Philomela (*aut rapere et*

saevo raptam defendere bello, 6.464), and he is unable or unwilling to control his desires (*effreno captus amore; nec capiunt inclusas pectora flammis*, 6.465-6).

In keeping with this characterization, Tereus also becomes a persuasive liar; and falsehood is a central attribute of Iron Age speech. *Facundum faciebat amor* (6.469) – “love made him eloquent” – and *facundia*, in this instance, is much the same as deceit. Tereus delivers Procne’s message requesting that her sister be allowed to visit her, but is conveying his own wishes as well: *revertitur...ad mandata Procnes et agit sua vota sub illa* (6.468). While pleading on his own behalf, he pretends he is giving Procne’s words, and for extra show he adds tears to his speeches, again as if Procne desired it: *quotiensque rogabat/ ulterius iusto, Procnen ita velle ferebat;/ addidit et lacrimas, tamquam mandasset et illas* (6.469-71). Tereus’ speeches go beyond the *facundia* of *amor*, however; he quickly proceeds from an Apollonian mode to Mercury’s skill with double meaning, and on to what will prove to be a more Jovian breach of *pietas*.

Tereus’ passion leads him to a total disregard for the boundaries governing family relationships – besides ignoring the claims of his wife and the sibling ties he has with Philomela, Tereus wishes he could hold the role of Philomela’s father as well when he sees her affection toward him. This disrespect for appropriate behavior among family members is reminiscent both of the behavior of Iron Age humans described in Book 1, and of the primal dissent and disorder that comprised Chaos⁷² at the beginning of the poem. While Tereus is busily imagining this upheaval, and hiding his true wishes under false words, his father-in-law naively speaks of *pietas* and *fides* and calls upon the gods as witnesses:

hanc ego, care gener, quoniam pia causa coegit

⁷² Tarrant (2002, 352-4) discusses the qualities of human chaos with reference to this episode.

...
do tibi perque fidem cognataque pectora supplex
per superos oro ...
si pietas ulla est, ad me, Philomela, redito. (6.496-503)

An appeal in these civilized terms will have little effect on the brutal king and the charge to Philomela is futile, since its execution will not be in her power. Pandion speaks the language of an earlier age, while Tereus is firmly planted in modern, Jovian, times, when *pietas* has been overruled, and justice has fled the earth (1.149-50). The father's feeble plea to his daughter, *si pietas ulla est, ad me redito*, is particularly poignant in this light. The use of the conditional form gives a voice to the possibility of the alternative, *nulla pietas*, which the rest of the episode will serve to illustrate.

Tereus gives his false pledge of faith to the king (6.506-7), but when he has reached his ship with Philomela the need for deception and *facundia* is past; away from the cultured Athenian court and back in his own jurisdiction, both his speech and his nature together become transparent. '*Vicimus*' exclaims '*mecum mea vota feruntur*' – his warlike (*vicimus*) and single-minded character is evident in his first speech once he has left Athens behind. Tereus' behavior to Philomela on the journey back to Thrace is compared to an eagle hungrily eyeing the hare it has captured:

...nusquam lumen detorquet ab illa
non aliter quam cum pedibus praedator obuncis
deposuit nido leporem Iovis ales in alto:
nulla fuga est capto, spectat sua praemia raptor. (6.515-18)

The simile is reminiscent of Daphne's flight from Apollo in Book I, though the comedic touches which laced that episode are absent here. In that passage, Daphne is compared to a hare and

Apollo is likened to a hunting dog nipping at her heels. In that episode, however, the prey managed to escape; here, there is no hope for Philomela (*nulla fuga*). The eagle to which Tereus is compared is referred to as “Jove’s bird” (*Iovis ales*). The inclusion of Jupiter’s name recalls his own deeds as a *raptor* earlier in the poem, and hints at a kinship between his actions and those of Tereus.

Yet while Tereus bears some similarity to Jupiter in his speech and behavior (which attributes, however, prove to be far more extreme in Tereus’ case and given more extensive treatment than in Jupiter’s), Philomela veers away from the speech patterns set by the early books of the poem. Despite the circumstances that liken her to the victims of divine rapes in earlier episodes, Philomela, unlike many of those before her (such as Daphne, Io, Syrinx, Callisto, Cyane, and others), is able to express her anger to the perpetrator of the crime verbally and at some length, and will eventually take vengeful action. Philomela’s reproach to Tereus both demonstrates an advancement in the extent of human speech, and also draws attention to the contrast in this episode between the vocal mortals and the marked silence of the gods. Philomela is able to say to Tereus what figures such as Io or Callisto were prevented from saying to Jupiter – speech is more free without the divine-human power dynamic in place, and Tereus has no power to transform her shape to stop her speech. Philomela is not, after all, a pursued nymph, but a member of a human society.

Philomela decries the confusion of categories that Tereus has caused, and his Chaotic disregard for law and boundaries (6.534-541). The more striking part of her speech comes at the end, however, when she declares that Tereus will not go unpunished and that she will vocally publish the crime far and wide:

si tamen haec superi cernunt, si numina divum
sunt aliquid, si non perierunt omnia mecum,
quandocumque mihi poenas dabis. ipsa pudore
proiecto tua facta loquar. si copia detur,
in populos veniam; si silvis clausa tenebor,
implebo silvas et conscia saxa movebo.
audiet haec aether et si deus ullus in illo est. (6.542-8)

The repeated references to gods, in conditional phrases, are part of a familiar prayer formula but here carry an additional sense of grim irony in that the gods are silent and have given no indication of their presence throughout the episode. In fact, Philomela will not wait for them to take action but intends to take matters into her own hands, as she herself will speak out and make Tereus' character known (*tua facta loquar*). She will go among people, if she can (*si copia detur, in populos veniam*), but if she is kept in the woods she will fill them with her voice and affect even the rocks with the sound (*implebo silvas et conscia saxa movebo*).⁷³ What Philomela threatens, in effect, is the combined force of *fama* and echo. The story will spread through human communities, or it will resound through the natural world. In either instance, as the poem has demonstrated repeatedly, Tereus will not be able to stop the story once those two entities have taken it up.

Like Diana in her combined rage and fear at Actaeon's potential for tale-telling, Tereus is both angered and frightened by Philomela's threat (*talibus ira feri postquam commota tyranni/nec minor hac metus est, causa stimulatus utraque*, 6.549-50), and so he chooses to silence Philomela before she can begin to spread the story. In one of the *Metamorphoses*' more gruesome scenes, he cuts out her tongue, thereby removing the essential component of her

⁷³ Natoli (2017, 69-70) notes that Philomela's threat of speech suggests both public oratory and pastoral poetry.

capacity for speech.⁷⁴ This tyrannical act of cruelty, however, like those of the gods before him, only partially realizes Tereus' intent. Philomela cannot make good on her threat to make the woods and rocks resound with the story, but like Io, she turns to writing when articulate speech is denied her. Philomela transforms her unspoken words into woven words on a tapestry in order to communicate with her sister. The vocal sound lies latent in the woven representation, waiting to be given voice by a reader, as Inachus gave a voice to Io's word written in the dust. However, Philomela's tale does not immediately become audible, since Procne is so horrified at what she has read that she can find no words to express her feelings:⁷⁵

evoluit vestes saevi matrona tyranni
germanaeque suae carmen miserabile legit
et (mirum potuisse) silet. dolor ora repressit,
verbaque quaerenti satis indignantia linguae
defuerunt; nec flere vacat, sed fasque nefasque
confusura ruit poenaeque in imagine tota est. (6.581-6)

Though unable to speak, let alone sing, Philomela is cast in the role of a poet who has crafted a *carmen* (582) that greatly affects her readership. Procne has no such way with words, and the narrator, in an editorial aside, expresses surprise at her silence, but Procne is indeed silent. The position of *silet* in the center of the line and at the caesura emphasizes its significance. Sorrow stops her mouth, and the words which her tongue seeks are simply not there (*defuerunt*). The specific reference to Procne's searching tongue recalls Philomela's disembodied one. One sister has words but no tongue to say them, and the other has a tongue but no words. Instead, the ultimate expression of moral chaos is uppermost in Procne's mind – her silence is filled with the

⁷⁴ To ancient thinkers, the tongue is the main element of speech, one that distinguishes human vocalization from animal vocalization. See also Holmes, (2005) 538; 560, Stevens (2008) 538-41 for examples.

⁷⁵ Feldherr (2010, 230) notes that Procne in the act of reading becomes a double of Philomela, because she is speechless.

confusion of *fas* and *nefas*. The shared silence of the sisters, though stemming from different causes, is nonetheless laden with meaning. Procne's outrage eventually finds vocal expression in a pseudo-Bacchic frenzy. Choosing to use the rites of Bacchus as cover to free her sister, Procne joins in the raucous procession (*nocte sonat Rhodope tinnitibus aeris acuti*, 6.589) and wild cries (*exululatque euhoetque sonat portasque refringit*, 6.596) as she seeks the hut where Philomela is kept. Ironically, it is this noise, rather than Philomela's own voice, that fills the forest (*concita per silvas turba comitante suarum*, 6.594), thereby presaging Tereus' doom. The frenzied noise audibly prefigures the chaos that the two women will unleash on Procne's household.

The misalignment of verbal intent and the capacity for speech between the sisters is another expression of the presence of chaos running rampant in the passage. As many episodes of the poem to this point have demonstrated, words are difficult to control, for both their speakers and the gods or tyrants who would have them silenced. Words do not always do what their speakers bid them,⁷⁶ and even violence does not always stop their movement. For Philomela, the transformation of spoken words into woven ones preserves their efficacy;⁷⁷ even though Procne cannot repeat them, she can act upon them. Philomela's anguish is transformed twice: first into her woven *carmen*, and secondly into the wild cries of Procne's maenadic imitation. Philomela's silent narration is crucial to the plot of the story, yet we will never know precisely what she wove. The external observation of the narrator gives us the source material from which she worked, but the words themselves are forever hidden in the tapestry. The weaving is an *index sceleris*, which replaces Philomela's tongue as *index*. The woven narrative

⁷⁶ Enterline (2000, 41) notes the "considerable distance between a speaker's purpose and the effect of the sounds that actually fall from his or her mouth."

⁷⁷ Natoli (2017, 76) finds that Philomela's weaving brings her out of the isolation of her speech-loss; Gera (2003, 204) argues that "Philomela's ability to speak thru inanimate matter reflects her superior level of civilization... loss of speech need not mean the loss of language or the ability to communicate by other means."

points to the act that Philomela's voice cannot articulate, and becomes a monument to her voice that Tereus cannot obstruct.

The Achievements of Human Speech: Persuasion

Philomela is presented as a narrator who is in control of her narrative. When vocal expression is taken from her, she finds a new way to publish her tale. She is the first human narrator to this point in the poem not to be punished because of her rebellious storytelling. The capacity for narration, and manipulation of narrative, have been important issues in the poem from its beginning, but they are essential components in the rapidly increasing complexity of human speech in the second half of the poem. The Chaotic propensities of words and modes of speech continue to manifest themselves as the range of human speech and narrative-ability develops. This development goes hand in hand with the growing significance placed upon *fama* as a crucial force in the *Metamorphoses'* world, one that enacts primordial Chaos on the level of human interaction. In this section we will examine some of the ways in which human speakers manipulate others or are manipulated by their words, with particular attention to persuasive speakers.

The first episode of Book 7, following on the heels of Philomela and Procne (after a very brief tale of Boreas and Orithyia to aid the transition) is that of Medea, another murderous mother, whose literary background in Euripides and Apollonius marks her as a character who is as skilled with speech as she is with magic potions. Ovid's Medea draws much from the Apollonian model, and is introduced as a young girl trying to come to terms with her feelings for Jason. Medea is the first of several female characters (for example, Scylla and Althea in Book 8, Byblis in Book 9, Myrrha in Book 10) who embark on a self-searching monologue when faced

with crisis of conscience and action. Each woman eventually persuades herself to embark on a path of impiety and the rejection of social or moral conventions, resulting in tragedy.⁷⁸ Medea and Scylla are torn between love of a foreigner and loyalty to their royal fathers, Althea must choose to avenge her brothers or spare her son, and Byblis and Myrrha debate whether or not to act upon incestuous desire. Most of these soliloquies verbally enact the contortions of a mind that already knows what it wants to do, and seeks to fit its Chaotic desires into the bounds of accepted behavior. Arguments, with varying degrees of logical force or fragility,⁷⁹ can be found in favor of each side of the debate. Thus, in these speeches, words are a vehicle for the expression of both order and disorder, truth and self-deception. These conversations expressing a mind at war with itself, attempting to reconcile conflicting claims, are microcosmic images of the Chaos that permeates the world of the poem. The power of persuasive speech, that can inspire one to alter one's sense of what is right or true, is an example of the metamorphic potential inherent in words. One of the functions of Ovid's frequent play with various styles of rhetorical speech in the *Metamorphoses* is, I argue, a way of bringing to the fore the ancestry of fluid speech in Chaos. As we have seen numerous times throughout the poem, speech proves to be an unstable feature of human experience in that words may mean one thing to the speaker and another to the hearer; they can express truth and falsehood equally well; and they can contribute equally to both *fas* and *nefas* behavior. They are equally suited to conflict and harmony, praise and blame, and move easily between these categories.

Speech used to rationalize or justify an action has been part of the poem's world since Jupiter's speech to the gods about Lycaon in Book 1, but in the second half of the poem, this

⁷⁸ The motif is one that Ovid turns to frequently, and treats most fully in the *Heroides*.

⁷⁹ Feeney (1991, 194-8) discusses the way in which Byblis and Myrrha use the examples of the gods and animals respectively to justify their intended behavior.

type of speech is the purview of mortals. The power of a crafty speaker to sway an audience to his side and to gain his end is exemplified in the verbal contest between Ajax and Ulysses for the armor of Achilles. This debate scene provides a welcome opportunity for Ovid to showcase his rhetorical skill by arguing both sides of an issue, and to renovate an old and well-known story. The competition between brains and brawn, wily wit and straightforward speech makes facility with speech the measure of success for the two epic heroes, and replaces all of their deeds and their previous literary roles with their ability to recount stories of those deeds and roles. The scene is one of several ways in which Ovid presents the Trojan War material without directly narrating any major Homeric events. Each speech, therefore, both showcases the personality of the speaker and represents a compressed summary of epic and tragic tradition relating to the Trojan War.⁸⁰

Ajax opens the debate, but Ulysses has the last word. Each speaker presents the highlights of his military career, his lineage, and a variety of remarks aimed at diminishing the credibility of his opponent. Ajax, as befits a character known for strength above all else, is the more straightforwardly earnest speaker, and his arguments in his own favor and against Ulysses are pointed. From the start of his speech, he recognizes the terms of the debate – that he represents action and Ulysses represents words – and rather naively (in terms of the *Metamorphoses*' world, at any rate) puts his faith in the power of witness-verified action to win out over potentially fictitious narration:

tutius est igitur fictis contendere verbis
quam pugnare manu. sed nec mihi dicere promptum
nec facere est isti, quantumque ego Marte feroci

⁸⁰ Hardie (2002, 37) recounts the way in which “Ovid recasts the famous deeds of epic tradition as verbal skirmishing, with an acute sense for the anachronistic effect of endowing Homeric heroes with the debating skills of the declamation hall.”

inque acie valeo, tantum valet iste loquendo.
nec memoranda tamen vobis mea facta, Pelasgi,
esse reor; vidistis enim. sua narret Ulixes,
quae sine teste gerit, quorum nox conscia sola est. (13.9-15)

For Ajax, Ulysses' words are not merely *verba*, but *ficta verba*, emphasizing the potential for falsehood. He sets these *ficta* against his own *facta*. He acknowledges a certain parity between himself and his opponent – Ajax is as strong in warlike activity as Ulysses is in speaking, and is as weak in speaking as Ulysses is in taking action (13.10-12). Ironically, Ajax asserts that his deeds should not have to be retold (*memoranda*), since his hearers actually saw them occur; but Ulysses' exploits do require narration, since he does everything in secret, without a witness (*sine teste*). This is a short-sighted view for someone who lives in the realm of epic *kleos*: epic glory consists in one's brave deeds being recounted down the generations, thus conferring a kind of immortality. Ajax considers talking about one's feats to be excessive – the doing should be enough. His inability to recognize the value of good storytelling (or perhaps, his reluctance to acknowledge it here since it is Ulysses' strength) puts him at a distinct disadvantage in the world of the *Metamorphoses*, where narrative, often biased narrative, runs rampant and directs our perception of events.

For his part, Ulysses delivers a tale that his audience wants to hear: his mouth opens with the sound that they have been waiting for (*expectatoque resolut/ora sono*, 13.126-7) and his charm does not disappoint (*neque abest facundis gratia dictis*, 13.127). Ulysses defends his known facility with persuasive speech as being a talent he has used for the common good, just as all the other heroes used their own talents (13.136-9). He proceeds to narrate an account of the war, inserting himself into every scene, taking credit for everyone else's actions with such plausible smoothness that his arguments, though sometimes weak, seem quite reasonable. His

occasional praise for the deeds of the other heroes shows a knowledge of his audience and a facility for adapting his words to the occasion. Retellings of the Trojan War are natural to Ulysses: his own epic, the *Odyssey*, is filled with such narrative reminiscences, given to a variety of audiences. Ulysses is essentially a mouthpiece for the Homeric and tragic tradition, giving voice to the epic Fama who was introduced together with the Trojan War in Book 12. Here, however, Ulysses and Ajax give their own version of events to a group of people who already know everything that happened, because they were actors in the same story.

But even an old and familiar story can be rendered interesting by a good speaker, and though both Ajax and Ulysses present a compelling case, the cleverer speech is rewarded, demonstrating the power of verbal craftiness (*quid facundia posset/re patuit*, 13.382-3) over inarticulate action, however bold. As we have seen repeatedly since the poem's early speech-centered episodes, truth is not the key marker of effective or praiseworthy speech; but rather facility with language, attention to timing, and adjustment to one's audience are more valued qualities. In the second half of the poem, it is the mortal speakers who are learning and benefiting from this *facundia*. Mercury may not be labeled as the bestower of language in Ovid's universal history, but it is his verbal acuity from the first two books of the poem that is echoed most clearly in skilled mortal speakers like Ulysses.

The Triumph of Human Speech: Narration

However, persuasion (of the self or of others) is not the only verbal achievement of mortals as their voices grow in the later books of the poem; the *Metamorphoses'* tales are told more and more by internal narrators, some with a particular poetic agenda, in the second half of the poem. Once the river Achelous opens the floodgates, so to speak, the number of

metamorphosis tales recounted by someone other than the central narrator surges. Alcmene and Iole trade stories of metamorphosis as unjust punishment in Book 9; Orpheus narrates the entirety of Book 10, with a nested narration by Venus (telling the story of Atalanta and Hippomenes) within the story of her ill-fated love for Adonis; Ceyx tells the story of his brother Daedalion; and an unnamed old man tells the story of Aesacus in Book 11, to name only a few such episodes.⁸¹

The personification of Fama towards the beginning of Book 12 serves to mark the entry into the Homeric and Virgilian epic material of the Trojan War and its aftermath. While Fama has appeared throughout the poem as a purveyor of rumor and information, her introduction here is a nod to her role as an emblem of the entirety of the preexisting literary tradition. While the description of the House of Fama was discussed at some length in the first chapter, with regard to its cosmic imagery and spatial location, the end of the passage takes center-stage here, with our priority on examining Fama's importance for the status of human noise in the poem. After describing the *domus*' location at the center of the world, its open and resounding structure, and the constant hum of noise emanating from it, the narrator goes on to particularize the sounds within:

atria turba tenet; veniunt, leve vulgus, euntque
mixtaque cum veris passim commenta vagantur
milia rumorum confusaque verba volutant.
e quibus hi vacuas implent sermonibus aures,
hi narrata ferunt alio, mensuraque ficti
crescit, et auditis aliquid novus adicit auctor.
illic Credulitas, illic temerarius Error
vanaque Laetitia est consternatique Timores
Seditioque repens dubioque auctore Susurri.
ipsa quid in caelo rerum pelagoque geratur

⁸¹ Wheeler (1999, 57) suggests that the text is meant to read as a *viva voce* performance.

et tellure videt totumque inquiri in orbem. (12.53-63)

The speech acts filling Fama's dwelling are described as a crowd milling around in the atrium of a house.⁸² They form not merely a large group, but a *turba* and a *vulgus*, the sort of raucous gathering that any poet of Alexandrian leanings would avoid. The words passing to and fro are *mixta* and *confusa*,⁸³ and the three verbs *eunt*, *vagantur*, and *volutant* at the ends of successive lines imply a constant motion. Rumors are mixed with truth, and all of them roll about the room together. The likening to a mob of people, together with their lack of differentiation and their incessant random movements, lends a Chaotic cast to this hub of human sound. Far removed from the stately, harmonious haunts of Apollo on Parnassus or the Muses on Helicon, Fama's home is a crowded mass or mess of endless talking. The place is not overbearingly loud (*nec tamen est clamor*, 12.49), but it is hardly quiet either (*nulla quies intus nullaue silentia parte*, 12.48). Rather, it is the sonal underpinning on which the poem's world turns. Ovid's Fama is not Virgil's screeching fury, but the superintendent of a system that is vital to the progress of the *Metamorphoses*, and, as I believe Ovid suggests, vital to the progress of life outside the poem as well.

However, the next description of the behavior of these sounds is a succinct portrayal of the poetic process. Some of the sounds "fill empty ears with talk" (12.56), a depiction of the spread of rumors, but also of storytelling; yet other speeches "bring narratives to another place, and the measure of fiction grows, and a new teller adds something else to what has already been heard (12.57-8)." This is, of course, a pared-down vision of how poets like Ovid, and Virgil before him, work upon their literary forbears. The *Metamorphoses* itself, with its plethora of

⁸² Gladhill (2013) provides a discussion of the Domus in relation to the sphere of Republican politics and the client/patron relationship.

⁸³ Like the elements of Book 1's chaos.

tales, some new, some old, is a prime example of this cumulative function and/or effect of Fama and narrative, just as its many embedded narrators enact the principle within the world of the poem. However, the mention of the ever-growing “made up” content (*ficti*) points to Fama’s lack of concern with the truth, or of reverence for the lineage of literary tradition. This plays into the characterization of Ovid’s Fama as an essentially chaotic figure, one who blends and blurs speakers and speeches, transforms tales, and sows conflict wherever she goes. Ovid’s treatment of the Homeric characters in Books 12 and 13 demonstrates this free-wheeling attitude towards narrative, particularly in the figure of Nestor.⁸⁴

In the last third of the poem, the presence of many internal narrators and nested stories can make it challenging for the reader to remember who is talking at any given moment.⁸⁵ Nestor’s narrative fits this pattern, while also playing up, to humorous effect, his literary reputation as a persistent talker. Nestor speaks for so long (nearly 400 lines), recounting a variety of events, that it is easy to confuse his voice with that of the main, external narrator (a type of narrative chaos) until someone addresses him. Nestor’s speech comes shortly after the ecphrasis of Fama’s house, after Achilles has bested the invulnerable Cycnus, and the Greek warriors sit at a feast and tell tales of their heroism. As context for the speech, Ovid gives the image of a night spent in reciting events that are of an epic theme (*sed noctem sermone trahunt, virtusque loquendi /materia est; pugnam referent hostisque suamque*, 12.159-160), a constant motif of the *Odyssey*, and one that is appropriate, even called for, in Achilles’ presence (*quid enim loqueretur Achilles,/aut quid apud magnum potius loquerentur Achillem?*, 12.162-3). However, Achilles’ presence is the first problem in the scene. His battle with Cycnus is his chief accomplishment, in

⁸⁴ Zumwalt (1977) gives a thorough discussion of the way Ovid uses Nestor and Pythagoras to exemplify his Fama’s undermining of epic norms.

⁸⁵ Cf. Rosati (2002, 272), who discusses the phenomenon.

this scene (*proxima praecipue domito victoria Cycno/in sermone fuit*, 12.164-5) and in the *Metamorphoses*, though Cycnus is not a Homeric character and the episode is of minimal importance in the scope of the Trojan War. The punchline of the episode is not so much Achilles' victory as Cycnus' metamorphosis into a swan. The story sets the tone Ovid will take with the Homeric epic material in his own epic, and becomes the first indication of the unwieldy movement of his literary Fama.

Cycnus, however, provides the first theme of Nestor's speech – people who cannot be wounded by weapons – and he remarks that he remembers another such person, called Caeneus. Nestor's great age and first-hand experience of pre-Homeric events give him authority as a narrator,⁸⁶ and it is for this reason that Achilles asks him to speak (*dic, age, .../o facunde senex, aevi prudentia nostri...* 12.177-8). Nestor is labelled as *facundus*, a mark of his skilled speech and a nod to his Homeric "honey tongued" persona. He himself acknowledges that although he has forgotten much because of his age, he still remembers a great deal (*quamvis mihi tarda vetustas/multaque me fugiant primis spectata sub annis,/plura tamen memini*, 12.182-4). This is the first hint that Nestor, though he represents tradition, may prove not to relay that tradition all too faithfully.

Achilles has asked about Caeneus' battle history – where he fought, and who conquered him at last (12.179-81), but Nestor approaches this information in a very circumlocutory way. He first describes the metamorphosis of the girl Caenis into the man Caeneus – a wish that Caenis was granted after her rape by Neptune.⁸⁷ In this short (twenty lines) episode, Nestor twice credits *fama* with the story⁸⁸ (*ita fama ferebat; eadem hoc quoque fama ferebat*, 12.197; 200). From

⁸⁶ Zumwalt (1977, 218) suggests that Nestor is "because of his great age, virtually the embodiment of tradition."

⁸⁷ This is perhaps an instance of Nestor choosing his words with his audience in mind: Achilles has had experience with living as a female, and may have a double interest in the story. Cf. Williams (2009) 160, Rosati (2002) 289.

⁸⁸ Though whether as mere transmitter or source is unclear: Zumwalt (1977) 215.

here, Nestor launches into the story of the battle between the Lapiths and Centaurs.⁸⁹ The *Metamorphoses*' Centauromachy surpasses all other literary versions in its length and scale.⁹⁰ As something alluded to in the *Iliad* as a past event, it is "more originary" than even Homeric epic⁹¹ and allows Ovid to outdo his predecessor by privileging the older story (in the mouth of ancient Nestor, no less). Yet Nestor's account is one of the most chaotic, visually and aurally, in the poem, with its tangle of numerous human and hybrid combatants, its shower of varied weapons, and its unceasing cacophony of feasting, weaponry, battle cries, and death throes. The grotesque excess of the episode contributes to its aura of chaotic confusion and also makes a mockery of epic heroism.⁹² Caeneus himself plays little role in the bulk of the episode, and Nestor only returns to him at the very end of his narration (12.459-535), to relate how he killed five and was eventually crushed under a pile of trees by the centaurs, and perhaps became a bird. In another reference to the vagaries of *fama*, Nestor notes that Caeneus' eventual fate is in doubt (*exitus in dubio est*, 12.522). Some insist that he died (*alii sub inania corpus Tartara...ferebant*, 12.522-3), but the seer Mopsus saw a bird fly noisily (*ingenti...clangore sonantem*, 12.528) away from the rubble, and took it as a sign of metamorphosis (12.524-31). This opinion, though the more bizarre of the two, is believed on the strength of Mopsus' prophetic authority (*credita res auctore suo est*, 12.532).⁹³

Nestor's interminable story comes to an end when Hercules' son Tlepolemus speaks up, angered that his father's deeds against the centaurs were not mentioned. Nestor, remarkably,

⁸⁹ Lowe (2015, chapter 5) provides a discussion of the literary history of centaurs and the Centauromachy theme at Rome, noting that to Augustan poets they represent the "pre-social, pre-Roman, and pre-Homeric" (167).

⁹⁰ Lowe (2015) 172.

⁹¹ Lowe (2015) 172.

⁹² Lowe (2015) notes that "Ovid's Centauromachy is a catalog of epic failures, producing a botched and scurrilous version of epic heroism" and compares it to Perseus' battle in book 4 (175).

⁹³ However, as Williams (2009, 160-61) notes, the inconsistencies throughout Nestor's narrative make it difficult to trust the credibility of any of the episode's characters.

admits to having purposely omitted Hercules, out of grief and anger at Hercules' killing Nestor's brothers. Thus Nestor, the trusted voice of epic history, admits that he is not only an occasionally forgetful narrator, but a deliberately selective one as well; we are left to wonder what else he might have left out or altered. In promulgating his own narrative-*fama*, Nestor seeks to delimit Hercules' reputation-*fama*.⁹⁴ With Tlepolemus' remark, Ovid calls attention to Nestor as a demonstration of the unreliability of *fama* as a receptacle and transmitter of tradition. Without it, we might have questioned Nestor's memory, but his motives would not have been in doubt. With this coda to the Centauromachy, however, Ovid makes clear that his *Fama* is as changeable and willful as anything else in the world of the poem, and can operate as much from spite as from a desire to confer glory.⁹⁵

Besides Nestor's biased storytelling, we have already examined Ajax and Ulysses' competing accounts of their roles in the Trojan War. Many of the remaining episodes of the *Metamorphoses* that deal with epic tradition are treated in a similarly disordered way. In particular, the journeying of the Ovidian Aeneas – from Troy to Italy to apotheosis – is sidetracked by numerous secondary stories and narrators. The potential dangers of sailing past Scylla and Charybdis give way, as we saw in Chapter 2, to Galatea's portrayal of Polyphemus, and eventually to Scylla's two metamorphoses. Once the Trojans reach Italy, much of the narration is in the mouths of Greek characters from Homer, who recount their versions of events from the *Odyssey*. Achaemenides, who was abandoned by Ulysses and rescued by Aeneas from the Cyclops' land, tells his ordeal in the cave of Polyphemus to a former comrade, Macareus, who has also found his way to Italy, and who then recounts the misadventures of Ulysses' men in

⁹⁴ Zumwalt (1977) 216. She goes on to state that “what is included in or excluded from the epic tradition depends, in part, on personal bias” (217).

⁹⁵ Zumwalt (1977, 212) convincingly argues that “in Book 12 Ovid will undercut the notion, long fostered by both poets and historians, that lasting *fama* is the reward conferred upon *virtus*, by discrediting both.”

Circe's domain. He repeats a story told to him by one of Circe's maids, wherein the goddess turns Latium's king Picus into a woodpecker, because he spurned her in favor of the nymph Canens. With this doubly embedded narrative, then, the poem returns to Virgilian ground, since Picus figures in Book 7 of the *Aeneid* when Latinus goes to the temple to seek advice.

That Italy is populated with Homeric characters when Aeneas arrives is in some ways an image of the literary tradition on which the *Aeneid* rests, and it is part of Ovid's cheekiness to let so many non-Trojan or Italian voices intrude on Aeneas' quest. However, the technique is also very much in line with the *Metamorphoses*' treatment of narrative in general. As Rosati has remarked, the multiplicity of narrators throughout the poem persistently reminds us that we are listening to stories, filtered accounts.⁹⁶ Subjectivity marks the narratives that spill from Book 13 into Book 14; each narrator is recounting something of interest to himself and his hearer, and none of them has much interest in Aeneas. Ovid reminds us once again of the selectivity that is an inherent part of narrative:⁹⁷ what Virgil chose to omit, Ovid's narrators choose to privilege, and they do so with the same cavalier attitude toward truth and chronology that has been shown to be a significant aspect of the *Metamorphoses*' narrative technique.⁹⁸ The variety of voices and stories – with detours to such places as Circe's magical island with its groaning rocks and metamorphosing animals, and to Pomona's insular garden – gives the impression that the poem is careening or zig-zagging to Rome, rather than methodically drawing near to the destined Augustan era. The steadiness that Augustan themes require is impossible in the polyphony of Ovid's metamorphic world.

⁹⁶ Rosati (2002) 271.

⁹⁷ Cf. Rosati (2002) 297.

⁹⁸ Cf. Rosati (2002), Williams (2009), Tissol (2002) for recent discussions of this topic.

The last great digression and internal voice of the poem comes in the speech of Pythagoras at the beginning of Book 15. While the cosmological aspects of the speech were discussed in Chapter 1, here we turn our attention to Pythagoras' narrative voice itself. The voice which Pythagoras echoes most strongly is that of Lucretius' narrator in the *De Rerum Natura*. The vocabulary used at the beginning of the episode describing Pythagoras and his students has a distinctly Lucretian cast:

... licet caeli regione remotos
mente deos adiit et, quae natura negabat
visibus humanis, oculis ea pectoris hausit,
cumque animo et vigili perspexerat omnia cura, 65
in medium discenda dabat coetusque silentum
dictaque mirantum magni primordia mundi
et rerum causas et, quid natura, docebat,
quid deus, unde nives, quae fulminis esset origo,
Iuppiter an venti discussa nube tonarent, 70
quid quateret terras, qua sidera lege mearent,
et quodcumque latet, primusque animalia mensis
arguit inponi, primus quoque talibus ora
docta quidem solvit, sed non et credita, verbis... (15.62-74)

Pythagoras' ability to approach the heavens with his mind and to have a higher plane of understanding than the average mortal is reminiscent of Lucretius' descriptions of Epicurus; and the language of didactic poetry (*discenda*, 66; *docebat*, 68) accompanies direct echoes of the topics of Lucretius' poem (*primordia mundi*, 67; *rerum causas, natura*, 68). Throughout the rest of the passage, the earnest zeal of the tone, the frequent second-person address to his hearers (e.g. *parcite*, 75; *cernis*, 186; *animos adhibete*, 237; *mihi credite*, 254), and the long lists of *exempla* all serve to signal a Lucretian style.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Segal (2001a, 72-3) discusses in detail some of the Lucretian echoes of the passage. Van Schoor (2011, 128) remarks that "at a high point of Pythagoras' speech ... the language takes on, with exemplary Ovidian hybridity, an

However, Pythagoras' subject matter and arguments, particularly his passionate belief in the survival of the soul from body to body, are antithetical to the Lucretian point of view. In a delightful example of sophisticated Ovidian irony, Lucretius' own words and narrative mannerisms are faithfully echoed by Ovid's Pythagoras in order to express precisely the opposite philosophical credo.¹⁰⁰ The Ovidian Pythagoras' repurposing of pieces of the *De Rerum Natura* to express ideas that the Lucretian narrator would have decried bears the trademark of Ovid's Fama, and is yet another reflection of the instability of language in the poem. As we have seen in the previous chapters, Ovid frequently borrows from Lucretius in order to expound non-Lucretian approaches to comprehending the world (for example, the cosmogony of Book 1 or the mythology of echoes in Book 3). With this technique, he points to the all-encompassing reach of Fama, the "narrative black hole"¹⁰¹ from which nothing escapes. All words, whether rumors or epic poems, are subject to the mobility and mingling of the hive that is Fama's *domus*, and subject to the change that happens there. As Ovid has shown time and time again in the *Metamorphoses*, words are chaotically metamorphic too, and their meaning shifts both easily and without the permission of their speaker.

The ecphrasis of the *domus* of Fama provides a major clue to the nature and behavior of Ovid's narrators, as seen especially in the case studies of Nestor and Pythagoras, but it also provides an explanation for the behavior and effects of reported speech in general. From the self-conscious portrayal of literary production, the passage takes a darker turn with a catalog of

unmistakably Lucretian turn, another yoking of the supposedly incompatible, which is the technique of the *Metamorphoses* throughout." Barchiesi (2001, 298-9) notes that while Ovid sets up the Pythagoras passage with the markers of a didactic poem, he declares at the start that Pythagoras will not be believed, thereby emphasizing didactic failure rather than success. He goes on to say that "Lucretius, the great conceptual and stylistic model influencing the whole episode, is a textbook case of 'disbelieved poetry.'"

¹⁰⁰ Segal (2001a, 77) compares Ovid's treatment of Lucretius in this passage to his general method of constructing a poetic persona with relation to his literary predecessors: "the combination of outdoing Lucretius and contradicting Lucretius while following him so closely calls attention to Ovid's own construction of a poetic persona."

¹⁰¹ Gladhill (2013) 300.

personifications that haunt the space, some with negative, or even sinister, connotations.¹⁰² From Gullibility (*Credulitas*) and careless Error (*temerarius Error*), to empty Cheer (*vana Laetitia*) and dismayed Fears (*consternati Timores*), and finally sudden Rebellion (*repens Seditio*) and Whisperings of unknown origin (*dubio auctore Susurri*), Fama's house is peopled with qualities that promote poor judgment and lead to rash action. These are the more threatening features that the broad concept of *fama* contains. With the exception of *susurri*, these personified features are not necessarily speech acts themselves, but emotions and reactions accompanying reported speech. These qualities emphasize *fama*'s dubious truth-telling and the mindsets that lead to misinformation.¹⁰³ The last two personifications, however, have a distinctly political cast, and suggest Fama's ability to provoke chaos on a large scale.

The *dubius auctor* of the "whispers" (12.61) recalls the *novus auctor* of the narratives in line 58. These *auctores* are significant as being the only speakers mentioned in the passage; otherwise, only the personified sounds are given attention. The lack of an identified source for the various speech acts and personifications is important, first, as acknowledging the un-attributable nature of rumor, and secondly as emphasizing the autonomy of the sounds that roam abroad. As we have seen repeatedly throughout the poem, words and tales take on a life of their own once spoken, and cannot be recalled or controlled by the speaker. The unbridled movement of these sounds, the minimal reference to their speakers, and the greater emphasis on their effects (*credulitas*, *error*, *timor*, *seditio*) all contribute to an image of Fama as a force that acts constantly and with impunity on the world.

¹⁰² Hardie (2009) and Lowe (2008, 422; 425) note the connections between Ovid's personifications here and those of the *Aeneid*'s underworld.

¹⁰³ Zumwalt (1977, 211-12) discusses Fama's unreliability in spreading true information.

Fama herself sits in the *domus* watching everything that goes on everywhere, looking down into the whole world (12.62-3). All-seeing like the Sun, with heaven, earth, and sea in her view like Jupiter, Fama is a rival to the gods in the extent of her influence, an influence which, as I have attempted to demonstrate, extends to the gods as well. This view of Fama presiding over the world's activity is answered by the image of Fama giving flight to Augustus' and Ovid's deeds at the end of Book 15.¹⁰⁴ Fama's presence in the epilogue of the poem has been much discussed. Significantly, however, as I hope to have shown, for Ovid *fama* is not only a name for the revolving concepts of rumor, fame, and literary tradition, but is also the persevering sound of the Chaos from which his world is constructed. In the mode of Lucretius' analogy likening atoms to letters, Ovid too finds correspondence between the physical characteristics of his created world and its verbal expression.

The portrayal of Augustus and the themes of Ovid's epilogue will now provide the theme for my own.

¹⁰⁴ Tissol (2002, 309) discusses Fama's "dominance" in the last four books of the poem, and her function as a "boundary" for the material in those books, featuring prominently in the beginning of 12 and the end of 15.

Epilogue

From her location at the crossroads of the cosmos, the Ovidian Fama peers into all parts of the world and sees and hears everything that goes on. If she were to look back and forth across the poem, toward its beginning and its end, she would see the palace of Jupiter in one direction, and the Augustan Palatine in the other. The analogies linking (i) heaven with the Palatine and (ii) the king of the gods with the *princeps* of Rome that opened the action of the poem in the first book are answered by another analogy between the two rulers in the last book,¹ declaring Augustus the terrestrial Jupiter (15.860). Yet while Jupiter and Augustus together provide a frame and models for the poem's delineation of the divine chain-of-command, it is the pairing of the personified Fama and Augustus that provides an inner frame for the poem's culminating Italic and Roman material. Virgil's Roman epic ended in its twelfth book with Aeneas' victory over Turnus. The Roman part of Ovid's epic, however, might be said to begin in its twelfth book, as Fama spreads the news of the nascent Trojan War, leading eventually to the travels of Aeneas, the rise of Rome, and the victorious, soon to be divine, Augustus. If the first eleven books of the *Metamorphoses* primarily treat the conflicts and competing claims of men and gods throughout mythological and literary history, the last four books, I suggest, treat the potentially conflicting aims of Fama and Augustus in the Roman present. The constant tension between these conflicting aims generates the insinuations and undertones that invest and infest Ovid's closing passages and epilogue.

As we have seen, the world of the *Metamorphoses* is filled with varied and insistent noises, in keeping with its origin in and propensity for chaos, but as contemporary Rome, and

¹ Feeney (1991, 219-22) discusses the importance of the positioning of the two analogies.

Augustus, come into earshot at the end of the poem, there is, in a certain sense, a distilling of that noise and a unification of voice. As Alessandro Barchiesi puts it, “Augustan discourse is naturally directed toward a unifying and totalizing end.”² Book 13 brings some of the figures of Greek epic into the context of Aeneas’ travels, and by Book 14, the scene is transferred to Italy, as if on a narrational trajectory towards Rome and home. In the final book, not only has Greek mythology given way to legends and events of early Rome, but deities and thinkers of the Greek world are conveyed westward to serve the burgeoning city: Pythagoras finds his way to Crotona where he teaches philosophy to Numa; Hippolytus narrates his history and his new life in Italy as Virbius; and Aesculapius, whose birth was part of the narrative of Book 2, comes in state to Rome at the request of the senate and the recommendation of the Sybilline books to save the people from a plague and to dwell thereafter in the city protecting its health. In effect, all the poem’s literary and historical roads are leading to and converging on Rome.³

Toward the end of the closing book, the poet shifts his focus skyward, as, with the apotheosis of Julius Caesar, the concerns of heaven and the concerns of Rome now become explicitly one and the same. The trajectory of cosmic history has arrived at the contemporary Roman moment in spite of the many irregularities and byways in the poem’s chronology, and the varied narrators, narratives, and events of the previous 14 and a half books begin to recede ever further into the background. The only voices that remain belong to those whose business is the formation and foretelling of Rome’s power: Venus, Jupiter, and the poet. In a scene reminiscent of the *Aeneid*’s discussions between the divine father and daughter about Aeneas’ progeny, the fretful solicitude of Venus, as she watches the conspirators preparing to strike her descendant, is

² Barchiesi (1997) 208.

³ Goldenhard and Zissos (2004) give a detailed picture of the process of Romanization of Greek narratives that occurs over the course of the poem.

answered by the paternal tones of Jupiter, who relates to her the destined fortunes of the Julio-Claudians, which he has read about in the archives of the Fates. Venus launches Caesar's soul, comet-like, into the sky, where it finds a seat among the stars.

When Jupiter's voice gives way, the poet's voice resumes to confirm and reiterate what the god has said, and, rising to a paean praising the works and character of the emperor, it predominates down to the poem's conclusion. Ovid's choice of vocabulary in *vix ea fatus erat* (15.843) to close Jupiter's speech aligns the god's voice with the *fata* he has just related, and as the poet describes Caesar's apotheosis and the subsequent elevation of Augustus, so his own voice blends in with and even appropriates that divine authority. The gravity of the subject matter and much of the language at the poem's close are a marked change from the frequent flippancy of the earlier books. As the poem nears its conclusion, the poet seems to take up the Augustan theme as his own, and with elevated language and shared vocabulary between the Jovian prophecy and his own poetic hopes, he seems to look forward to a prosperous future for the city, the emperor, and his own poem.

The closing passage can arguably be read as a rather bland praise piece, necessary perhaps, in the etiquette of the principate, but not fitting well with the rest of the poem. Yet Ovid is still Ovid, even when he writes imperial panegyric, and if we look closely we will not be surprised to find some of the hallmarks of his style and, most importantly, thematic echoes from other parts of the poem here at its end. Let us first consider the main points of the last twenty-five lines. The poet launches into a lofty mode in imagining Julius Caesar's delight at seeing his heir surpass even his own accomplishments; and so Ovid also praises the filial piety of the *princeps*, who would prefer, however, not to be compared in this way to Caesar. Nevertheless, fame cannot be stopped:

hic sua praeferri quamquam vetat acta paternis,
libera fama tamen nullisque obnoxia iussis
invitum praeferat unaque in parte repugnat (15.852-4)

The poet offers a list of examples of famous mythical fathers outdone by their more famous sons: Atreus and Agamemnon, Aegeus and Theseus, Peleus and Achilles. Yet the most suitable *exemplum*, the poet suggests, is Jupiter's ascendancy over Saturn:

denique, ut exemplis ipsos aequantibus utar,
sic et Saturnus minor est Iove: Iuppiter arces
temperat aetherias et mundi regna triformis,
terra sub Augusto est; pater est et rector uterque. (15.857-60)

As in the first book of the poem, when he compared the home of the gods to the Palatine Hill, and likened Jupiter's presiding over a council of the gods to Augustus and the senate, the poet here again forges a parallel between the king of the gods and the *princeps*. He refers to them both as father and ruler of their respective realms, and suggests that they work in concert to govern the cosmos, Augustus overseeing the earth, Jupiter managing the rest.

From here the poet embarks on a prayer calling upon the gods for whom Augustus has a particular interest, a prayer that continues to touch on themes that recur in the imagery and symbolism of Augustus' cultural, religious, and building projects.

Di, precor, Aeneae comites, quibus ensis et ignis
cesserunt, dique Indigetes genitorque Quirine
urbis et invicti genitor Gradive Quirini,
Vestaque Caesareos inter sacrata penates,
et cum Caesarea tu, Phoebe domestice, Vesta... (15.861-5)

The Olympian gods are enfolded into the Julian *familia*, and their influence is now constructed in large part on their connection to Augustus and his ancestors. References to the deified Aeneas (to whom the other gods are merely ‘companions,’ *comites*) and Romulus (called by *Quirinus*, a name he received at his apotheosis), as well as Romulus’ father Mars, who is addressed with the weighty archaic name *Gradivus*, reinforce the notion of Augustus as the scion of a divinely ordained dynasty. Vesta is named as one of Caesar’s family gods, signifying the union of the Roman and Julian hearths, and Phoebus, with his temple next door to Augustus’ residence, is said to be *domesticus* to the *princeps*. The presence of Vesta and Phoebus in Augustus’ own home unites public and private religious practice,⁴ and facilitates the figurative comparison between the celestial homes of the gods and the neighborhoods of the Palatine: the gods now live on the Palatine itself, neighbors of the emperor just as they were once neighbors of Jupiter along the Milky Way in Book 1. The language at once enfolds Caesar and Augustus into the Olympian pantheon and enfolds that pantheon into the imperial household.

After Jupiter is invoked next, a general call goes out to any other god who is properly invoked, and finally the poet closes his prayer with the dutiful hope that Augustus will stay with his earthly subjects for many years yet:

quique tenes altus Tarpeias Iuppiter arces
 quosque alios vati fas appellare piumque est:
 tarda sit illa dies et nostro serior aevo,
 qua caput Augustum, quem temperat, orbe relicto
 accedat caelo faveatque precantibus absens. (15.866-70)

Jupiter, in keeping with the motif of Romanized Olympians, is invoked in reference to his temple on the Capitoline: he dwells in the city, like Apollo and Vesta, but on the hill looking across to

⁴ Feeney (1991) 212-15.

the Palatine. The following line (867) appeals to the gods more generally, laying emphasis on the role of the *vates* in upholding the qualities of *fas* and *pietas* in his poem. The closing of the prayer unites the poet's voice with that of all Augustan well-wishers, all Romans, with the plural possessive *nostro* (868). After the pious wish that Augustus' accession to the heavens may still be some way off, Ovid closes the poem with some remarks on his own poetic achievement and the immortality and celestial home that his poetry will win for him. It seems that Augustus and the poet have, in a sort of poetic symbiosis, brought a neat and positive closure to the series of events that have been ever tending toward this moment in history.

Yet, on closer inspection, everything that Ovid writes in praise of the emperor and his newly divine father is open to an equal and opposite reading, as Stephen Hinds has demonstrated so well.⁵ Hinds draws attention to some of the ambiguities in the passage leading up to the poem's climax in Caesar's apotheosis and its implications for Augustus' status. The *scilicet* in line 752 which introduces the comparison of Caesar's catalog of military victories with his parenting of Augustus creates an interpretive difficulty: ought we to laugh compliantly at the absurdity of believing anything could be more important than fathering Augustus, or should we acknowledge that Caesar's far greater triumph does indeed lie in his military legacy, seeing that there is no direct genealogical link between the two men, only an adoption in Octavian's adulthood? The follow-up in lines 760-61, *ne foret hic igitur mortali semine cretus, / ille deus faciendus erat*, adds to the difficulty. "Lest this one (Augustus) should have therefore sprung from mortal seed, that one (Caesar) had to be made a god" is a statement that can be read straightforwardly or with irony, depending on the reader's own views on the subjects of imperial politics and apotheosis. The apotheosis might be a genuine outcome of the superhuman powers

⁵ Hinds (1987) 25-29.

and divine background imputed to the Julian gens, or it might be a political expediency, whose artificiality is all too tellingly exposed by *faciendus*, to aid Augustus' claim to authority.

The ensuing praise of Augustus himself is similarly compromised with double edged nuance. The problematic suggestions in the repeated comparison of the emperor's reign with Jupiter's have been frequently discussed.⁶ The reference to Jupiter's superiority to his father Saturn is a reminder that we are firmly planted in the Iron Age – does Augustus then also preside over an Iron Age Rome, rather than the revived Golden Age hinted at in official imagery? Jupiter is an instigator of strife in the poem much more than he is a bringer of peace and order: is *this* the Jupiter we are meant to see in Augustus? The removal of Vesta and Apollo to the Palatine may be viewed as a debasing of the Olympian gods into rather conventional-looking penates who are subject to the whims of the more powerful gods, as Lycaon's penates were subject to Jupiter in the first book. Does Augustus superintend their activities now?

The closing of the prayer yields ambiguous readings as well. The poet's reference to himself as a *vates* who calls upon whatever gods it is right and just to summon (*fas, pium*) seems jarring in a poem where the Augustan motif of the *vates* has been largely absent, and where the poet has told with abandon many stories involving what is *nefas* and *impium*, and has given over the narrative reins many times to many other speakers, few of them pure or piously prophetic. The poet's seeming lapse in piety is perhaps dangerously apparent in the final line of the prayer, where, after hoping that Augustus will not go away soon (or hoping that Augustus will not yet be allowed to become a god?), he in fact makes *absens* the final word in the line and final descriptor

⁶ See, for example, O'Hara (2007) 129; Feeney (2007) 135; Feeney (1991) 198-200, 219-22; Thomas (2004) 121-22; Segal (2001) 91-94; Barchiesi (1997) 195.

of the emperor. Barchiesi poses the apt question: “will the emperor’s destiny be a true progress if, after having been *praesens*,...he becomes an *absens* god?”⁷

The most telling ambiguity, however, in my view, and the one most meaningful for my subject, is the depiction of *libera fama* merrily spreading the word of Augustus’ accomplishments against his will:

hic sua praeferrī quamquam vetat acta paternis,
libera fama tamen nullisque obnoxia iussis
invitum praefert unaque in parte repugnat. (15.852-4)

Fama will have her way with Augustus, just as she has with the Olympians, and Augustus will have to put up with Fama spreading his *fama*, whether he likes it or not. Augustus might forbid it (*vetat*), but *fama* is a free agent (*libera*), and liable to no one’s orders (*nullisque obnoxia iussis*), not even those of him who presides as Jupiter on earth (*Iuppiter arces/temperat aetherias et mundi regna triformis,/terra sub Augusto est; pater est et rector uterque*, 15.858-60). The poet implies that Fama’s reports will be favorable – she wants to promote the deeds of the son, deeds that he would be too modest to promote himself, that surpass his father’s – but we know very well, having arrived at this point in the *Metamorphoses*, that *fama* is fickle and mixes truth and falsehood, promulgating good and bad, subjective and objective, report with indifference.

Of course Augustus, a “stage manager of history,” to use Philip Hardie’s term,⁸ used the very system which the Ovidian Fama represents to promote his “ideology of timelessness.”⁹

Through a skillfully arranged collection of architectural, iconographic, and literary symbols,

⁷ Barchiesi (1997, 196). He makes the further point that it was necessary for Aesculapius to be *praesens* in the city to be effective, and that there are some gods, such as Robigo, referenced in the *Fasti*, who are prayed to *in absentia* in the hope that they will stay away.

⁸ Hardie (1997) 141.

⁹ Hardie (1997) 141.

Augustus promoted a message of peace and stability throughout the empire, smoothing away the irregularities of buildings and political institutions alike.¹⁰ The irony of this passage in the *Metamorphoses* is that Augustus, who worked so assiduously for many years to promote wide-reaching messaging about the intent of his reign, who engraved his *res gestae* on a public monument, is here labeled as one who participates in Fama's process unwillingly (*invitum*). Yet if Augustus, or at least the Augustan character as configured in the *Metamorphoses*, has read the poem to this point, he knows that a speech may be well and cleverly crafted; but that, as the poem has shown again and again, speakers – even divine speakers – have little control over what its outcome will be once it leaves their mouth and enters Fama's house.

Bill Gladhill has illuminated the striking likenesses between the *domus* of Fama and the Republican forum: they are both open and easily accessible spaces, both filled with freely moving, sometimes contentious or politically dissenting, speech, and both operate at some distance from the seat of imperial or divine power.¹¹ In light of this comparison, the House of Fama is a most appropriate counterpart to the ordered, methodical arrangement and messaging of the Palatine. I have argued that the House of Fama reimagines the cosmos with sounds and vocalizations that take the place of elements, and that it thus presents an alternative cosmology based on the movement of speech, narrative, and information, one where Fama looks out upon the world with a view that rivals Jupiter's. In the close of the poem, she extends her challenge to the new, earthly Jupiter, spreading her tales regardless of orders. The presence of *Seditio* in Fama's halls lends a strong political note to her soundings, as well as equipping her to give an ambiguous cast to Augustus' *fama*.

¹⁰ Cf. Barchiesi (1997, 208): "Augustus completes and stabilizes all that was in flux, incomplete, open."

¹¹ Gladhill (2013) 305-7.

I have no wish to weigh in on the familiar debate as to whether Ovid's works are politically sincere or subversive in their attitude toward the emperor. Most critics nowadays would agree that ambiguity is the prevailing mode, and that such ambiguity, by nature, allows for the possibility of subversive interpretation.¹² The potential for varied readings of these lines is well recognized. However, a key characteristic of the praise passages at the end of the poem, and the one that matters more for my discussion, is their paradoxical state of containing two opposing meanings at the same time. Throughout the *Metamorphoses* we have seen that Ovid revels in the figurative possibilities of language and its ability to accomplish this very feat: having the potential to mean something quite different to the speaker than to the hearer. Even the *Metamorphoses'* echoes are not always very faithful repeaters of language. Because this slippery quality of language has been established early on in the poem as a part of the *modus operandi* of the *Metamorphoses'* world, the poet can use this moment of unification and distillation of voice to echo the poem's chaotic predisposition for blurring the boundaries between disparate entities, and to demonstrate once more the chaotic possibilities of language. Augustus, in fact, receives the same manner of treatment that Lucretius did in the Pythagoras episode: familiar words of praise can shift to a rather unflattering meaning.

The imperial panegyric, ambiguous though it is, that graces the closing passages of the poem is the final stage in the narrowing and focusing of subject matter that has been in motion throughout so much of the poem's last two books. We reached Italy in Book 14, and Rome in Book 15; Once Augustus has been introduced, commended, and prayed for, what else is there to say? Furthermore, if the day of Augustus' death and entry into the realm of the gods is to be withheld, in keeping with the prayer, time must be slowed, or stopped. Augustus, viewed in the

¹² Cf. Hinds (1987) 25-29.

best light, is a figure who brings order to a chaotic city, restoring the rule of law, simplifying government, and advertising peace and prosperity with a coherent system of written and visual imagery. In the worst light, however, he is a tyrant. In either case, he represents the end of an era as he lays his mark and imposes limits on every sphere of Roman life, from laws to language.¹³ Thus, with the close of the prayer, the quick and vibrant motion of the *Metamorphoses* grinds to a halt. The varied voices and sounds striving for expression fall silent, drowned out by the monotone imperial note. The voice of the *vates*, having done its pious duty, seemingly ought to join them. Yet Ovid does not let Augustus have the last word, and in fact makes himself the poem's final subject. The poet's voice comes forward once more and breaks the silence, bringing with it a presentiment of innumerable other revitalized voices, and stirs up the stillness that the overwhelming presence of the emperor has imposed:

Iamque opus exegi, quod nec Iovis ira nec ignis
nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere vetustas.
cum volet, illa dies, quae nil nisi corporis huius
ius habet, incerti spatium mihi finiat aevi:
parte tamen meliore mei super alta perennis
astra ferar, nomenque erit indelebile nostrum,
quaque patet domitis Romana potentia terris,
ore legar populi, perque omnia saecula fama,
siquid habent veri vatum praesagia, vivam. (15.871-79)

From the communal prayer signaled by *nostro* in line 868, the poet moves to an emphatic first-person account (*exegi, mihi, mei, ferar, legar, vivam*).¹⁴ Yet the reference to the wrath of Jupiter

¹³ Though these limits, as Denis Feeney (1992, 473-5) concisely demonstrates (in the context of freedom of speech), were not necessarily clearly defined, and required constant careful navigation, for both the Roman upper classes and the *princeps* himself.

¹⁴ Segal (2001a, 65) points out that this emphatic first person voice is a “startling departure from epic conventions” and thus encourages the reader to think about the complex “multiplicity of the poetic voices and personae” that make up the “I” of the poet’s voice.

(*ira Iovis*) and its inability to harm the poet's *opus* reinforces the ambiguity of the analogy between Jupiter and Augustus, and positions the poem as a sphere of achievement to rival the emperor's.

The potential conflict between Fama's will and Augustus' authority suggested in lines 852-4 gives way to a form of complicity between Fama and the poet in Ovid's epilogue. Whereas Augustus will unwillingly have his deeds proclaimed by *fama*, the poet puts his trust and his claim to immortality in the hands (or mouth?) of this same Fama. His poem will become an indestructible monument, impervious to the wrath of Jupiter, fire, the sword, or time (*iamque opus exegi, quod nec Iovis ira nec ignis/nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere vetustas*, 15.871-2). Significantly, this imagery closely echoes that which Jupiter used to describe the bronze tablets upon which the Fates inscribe their prophecies for the Julian gens: *quae neque concussum caeli neque fulminis iram/nec metuunt ullas tuta atque aeterna ruinas* (15.811-12). In this way, Ovid appropriates for his own work the immortality of a divinely and imperially sanctioned voice, and also appropriates for himself the one voice that can both "defy" Jupiter's wrath without fear of repercussions and lay claim to prophetic power.¹⁵ Yet at the same time as he proclaims the adamantly unchangeable perpetuity of his *opus*, Ovid announces that will live upon the lips of the intangible, innumerable *populus* who read and discuss his work (*ore legar populi, perque omnia saecula fama/(si quid habent veri vatum praesagia) vivam*, 15.878-9). The final line's reference to the truth of prophets lends a typically Ovidian note of ambiguity, since prophecy in the poem has been shown to have a consistently questionable claim to authority, but Fama's presence in the previous line is, ironically, the more trustworthy guarantor of the triumphant *vivam*. The fluidity of the chaos with which the poem began lives on at its close in the

¹⁵ Segal (2001b) 91.

unpredictable but ever-present flights of Fama. As Ovid knows, one thing that has proven to be a constant in the *Metamorphoses*' uncertain world is that people will talk.

Fama and Augustus look at each other across the span from Books 12 to 15 as if each is laying a claim to direct the story of Rome, Fama looking into the future, and Augustus looking back from his own time into the past. Within the world of the poem, Fama's *domus* stands at the opening of the Roman section, and Augustus' stands at its close. But Fama and her little henchmen (*Seditio*, *susurri*, etc.) have infiltrated every aspect of the narratives of Troy and Italy, drawing tales on winding courses, embedding speakers, adding and omitting characters, and providing varied sources for legends. Ovid's Fama moves inscrutably through the *Metamorphoses*, not in the manner of Virgil's shrieking monster, but providing the undertone as well as the impetus for much of the poem's material. Sometimes she is the instigator of an episode and sometimes the proclaimer of an outcome, but she and her swarm of sounds are an *essential* part of the poem's cosmos.

In the world of the *Metamorphoses*, Augustus' role as a controlling regulator of language is first emphasized by his position at the close of the narrative, and then thwarted by the poet's epilogue and its evocation of the power of *fama*. Ovid's Fama dwells outside the world's boundaries and outside the laws imposed upon it by the gods. It is perhaps a personal issue to the poet – Ovid's exile from Rome does not stop the transmission of his poems,¹⁶ much as Diana's or Tereus' brutality does not prevent stories about them from spreading. Ovid's Augustus, in trying to regulate language and resist Fama's lawless flight, resists the nature of things in the *Metamorphoses*. Augustan language is clear, authoritative, and harmonious, but the *Metamorphoses*' world gives no priority to such characteristics. The Ovidian Fama is relentlessly

¹⁶ And in fact, Ovid's exile poetry promotes new readings of the preexisting poetry, as Stephen Hinds (1985, 435-8) demonstrates.

indiscriminatory. In his epilogue, Ovid has ironically reworked Augustus into a figure beleaguered by the forces of a certain narrational chaos; he is a figure whose activities conflict with the world's workings, attempting to still or reverse its movement and stifle its voices. In contrast, Ovid presents Fama, the audible Chaos, as the one who makes the world go round.

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