

## MAKING THE MOST OF MARSYAS

ANDREW FELDHERR AND PAULA JAMES

Ovid's account of Marsyas at *Metamorphoses* 6.382–400 invites completion. The tale itself is but partially told and demands to be supplemented by other texts and other tales within the *Metamorphoses*. This task, in turn, as the following essays will argue, involves the reader in juggling contradictory judgments on the tale's protagonists and the nature and purpose of the narrative itself. Given the many different paths available through the episode's complexity, we thought it appropriate to present in the same place two different readings of the passage.

A further word about the genesis of this project may be helpful for the reader. The authors of these pieces met at a conference and discovered that they were both working on Ovid's Marsyas and shared many similar interests in the *Metamorphoses* as a whole. Both of our readings were animated by the belief that the debate about the role of violence in the passage had occluded other important motifs and issues. Specifically, Andrew Feldherr relates the theme of dismemberment to the generic ambiguity of the episode and to issues of imitation. Paula James, drawing on the remarkably varied network of associations that the figure of Marsyas came to assume in Roman culture, demonstrates links to other tales in the *Metamorphoses* that both integrate the passage more closely into the work and supply contrasting frameworks for understanding it. Each of us has been influenced by the other, but our essays make their own points and are designed to be read on their own—hence some repetition in citation. Our offering them together also has a methodological point: the *Metamorphoses* is not a poem that invites consensus or scholarly closure; even critics working with largely shared assumptions will track their own paths through it, and this variety, privileging as it does the interpretative role of the audience, seems to us to give a much more complete picture of how the

poem has always affected its readership than any monologic response, however subtle and wide-ranging.

Sic ubi nescio quis Lycia de gente virorum  
 Rettulit exitium, satyri reminiscitur alter  
 Quem Tritoniaca Latous harundine victum  
 Adfecit poena. "quid me mihi detrahis?" inquit;  
 "A! piget, a! non est" clamabit "tibia tanti!"  
 Clamanti cutis est summos direpta per artus,  
 Nec quicquam nisi vulnus erat: cruor undique manat,  
 Detectique patent nervi, trepidaeque sine ulla  
 Pelle micant venae; salientia viscera possis  
 Et perlucentes numerare in pectore fibras.  
 Illum ruricolae, silvarum numina, fauni  
 Et satyri fratres et tunc quoque carus Olympus  
 Et nymphae flerunt, et quisquis montibus illis  
 Lanigerosque greges armentaque bucera pavit.  
 Fertilis inmaduit madefactaque terra caducas  
 Concepit lacrimas ac venis perbibit imis;  
 Quas ubi fecit aquam, vacuas emisit in auras.  
 Inde petens rapidum ripis declivibus aequor  
 Marsya nomen habet, Phrygiae liquidissimus amnis.  
 (*Met.* 6.382–400)

So when someone from the Lycian race recalled the death of men, another made mention of the satyr, whom, beaten in a competition with the pipe of Minerva, the son of Leto punished. "Why do you strip me from myself?" he said. "Ah, I repent! A flute is not worth so much!" But as he cries out, the skin is ripped away from the tips of his limbs, and there is no part of him that is not a wound; blood flows from all sides, the muscles lie exposed, and the pulsing veins shine with no hide over them. You could count the dancing organs and the sinews glittering in his breast. Him the country-dwelling fauns—woodland powers, and his brother satyrs, and Olympus, beloved even then, and the nymphs lamented. So did whoever grazed wool-bearing sheep or horned herds on those mountains. The fertile earth grew wet, and, damp, gathered their

fallen tears, and drank them into her own deepest veins.  
And she shot them, turned to water, into the open air,  
whence a river, hurrying to the sea through sloping bed,  
keeps the name Marsya, clearest of Phrygian streams.”<sup>1</sup>

## FLAYING THE OTHER

ANDREW FELDHERR

“**W**hy do you strip me from myself?” cries Marsyas as Apollo begins to punish the satyr he has beaten in a musical contest by flaying him alive. As many commentators have observed, Marsyas may be losing his skin, but his words have lost none of their rhetorical luster.<sup>2</sup> The mannered expression, together with such touches as the observation to the audience that “you could count” the organs as the flesh is peeled away,<sup>3</sup> have made this scene a crucial test case for investigating the poem’s attitude towards its potentially grotesque and disturbing subject matter. Thanks to the readings of Garth Tissol and Charles Segal, we can see now that the text’s own glittering surface invites something more than mere “detachment.” Rather than indulging an imagined taste on the part of his audience for aestheticized depictions of violence, the poet’s account seems to highlight the discontinuities that result from different ways of seeing the tortured satyr.<sup>4</sup> If wit focuses attention on the text’s rhetorical “skin,” it points out as well the poor fit between form and substance that intensifies the effect of both.<sup>5</sup> In this

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1 Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are our own.

2 Anderson 1972.202: “Marsyas is talking with most unlikely sophistication here about the fact that his skin is being ripped from his body.” Cf. also Bömer *ad loc.*

3 An effect described by Segal 1998.34.

4 Tissol 1997.125–30 strongly reacts against the claims of Wilkinson 1955.159 and Galinsky 1975.135–38 that Ovid’s “delight” in cruelty and overt shifts in tone prevent his depictions of violence from engaging the emotions of his audience. For Segal 1998.34, the passage’s incongruities point ultimately toward the realm of aesthetics: “Ovid’s little scene upsets the traditional categories. He makes us ask whether he is just aiming at shock effects, or experimenting with a range of stylistic registers, or enjoying a display of a ‘baroque’ or ‘anti-classical sensibility’ that jumps abruptly from one mood or genre to another. None of these is to be excluded; but Ovid uses these vivid details of the body to raise the question of what constitutes ugliness and beauty.”

5 For a different view of how Ovid’s text creates the possibility for strongly contrasting responses in its audience, see Williams’s reading of the episode, 1996.82–83. He presents

essay, I want to focus on other elements of the narrative: its emphases on the motifs of division and imitation that can help to particularize the “double vision” that Tissol and Segal describe. My goal is to relate Ovid’s poetic technique in describing the satyr’s death to a larger set of alternatives available for reading the poem as a whole and, ultimately, for understanding Ovid’s place in the literary and political culture of his time.<sup>6</sup>

I want to begin with the obvious, the theme of division. The division of the subject that Marsyas’s brief speech emphatically connects with his torture has several analogues in the construction of his narrative. The tale itself has been dismembered. Nothing is said here of Athena’s invention of the flute, Marsyas’s discovery of it, or the proud challenge to Apollo that inspires the god’s vengeance. And a reference to this suppressed material comes in the very lament of the satyr: when Marsyas, with plangent, elegiac *a*’s, declares that the flute is not worth the torture, he echoes the words with which, according to the *Ars Amatoria*, Minerva cast the instrument away after seeing a reflection of her swollen visage “non es mihi, tibia, tanti” (3.505).<sup>7</sup> But the *Ars* passage suggests another level of division that is important to the story, the division of the speaker’s own voice. The point of that passage is how anger renders the face unrecognizable, so that if an angry woman looks in a mirror, she will not know her own visage. This sense of self-alienation, so appropriate, after all, in a scene where the

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the voyeuristic delight elicited by the combination of detailed description and neutral detachment as ultimately undercutting any tendency for compassion on the part of the audience.

- 6 Another avenue for relating the flaying of Marsyas to the problem of authorship is taken by Theodorakopoulos 1999.156–57, who sees the satyr’s punishment as a complete loss of form that predicts both his loss of the powers of expression and his inability to leave behind any material trace except through the responses of spectators.
- 7 Murgia 1986 argues that the imitation works the other way around and that *Ars* 3, in fact, postdates *Met.* 1–6. This re-dating, based on applying the procedures used in textual criticism to literary imitation, remains controversial. Even if it is accepted, I would contend that, given Ovid’s penchant for *a posteriori* revision (see Hinds 1985 and Tarrant 2002.27–29), such imitation essentially amounts to a rewriting of the earlier text as well and so fully justifies our reading the Marsyas episode through the lens of *Ars* 3. The third version of Minerva’s outcry, at *Fasti* 6.701, “‘ars mihi non tanti est; valeas mea tibia,’ dixi,” in the context of Minerva’s account of the origin of the Quinquatrus festival, with its witty underlining of Ovid’s self-citation through Minerva’s *dixi*, does not directly contribute to my reading of the *Met.* passage except to the extent that it further highlights the intertextual life of Minerva’s expression and plays again on the possibility of hearing it as Ovid’s. This last point takes on greater significance if we imagine *Fasti* 6 as a post-exilic work and Ovid’s *Ars* as responsible for the poet’s *relegatio* (as does Barchiesi 1997.90).

speaker and his face are literally to be divided, also appears in our inability to identify the speaker. The cry of the satyr comes after the barest narrative introduction, without any proper indication of who is speaking. Since the story is told by an anonymous internal narrator, even after the *inquit* in line 385 makes us sure that we are dealing with direct speech, it is still not immediately clear whose cry this is, Marsyas's or the intervening narrator's. More importantly, the words that the satyr uses are emphatically not his own. They cast the satyr in the role of the goddess Minerva, an inadvertent borrowing that has the double effect of distancing the audience from the represented character and of reminding us of the intervention of the supreme controller of the narrative, Ovid, who is the author of both speeches. In this sense, the satyr really has lost the capacity for self-representation, and we might be tempted to reinterpret his initial words as: "Why do you strip the 'me' from me?"

The disarticulation of Marsyas as speaker, then, becomes clearest when we hear his speech as an imitation of a previous model, an imitation that potentially deflects our understanding of the satyr's words from his intentions. But it is, of course, imitation that has been Marsyas's problem all along. The lowly satyr appropriates the instrument of one Olympian god and uses it to rival another. And Minerva herself had thrown away the flute precisely out of revulsion at a distorting imitation, the grotesque reflection she sees mirrored in the stream. Within the structure of the *Metamorphoses* as well, the satyr assumes his characteristic function of alienating *Doppelgänger*. His whole narrative emerges as a kind of satyr play after a trilogy of tales, those of Arachne, Niobe, and the Lycian peasants, all focusing on the divine punishment of mortal rivals, but now, as the transition makes explicit, it is a satyr who plays the tragic role (6.382–83):

Sic ubi nescioquis Lycia de gente virorum  
Rettulit exitium, satyri reminiscitur alter . . .

When someone from the Lycian race had told of the death  
of men, another recalled the [death of the?] satyr . . .

So far, the text's interest in imitation seems to confirm the satyr's status as a distorting mirror inevitably lowering the tone of the divine original. But such a reading depends upon our viewing Marsyas from within the global hierarchies that put Apollo and Minerva on the top and the satyr on the bottom. Apollo's actions within the text, the punishment that the

narrator's arrangement foregrounds, powerfully underline such a perspective, rebuking the satyr's efforts at parity by casting them as parody. This divine strategy is also that of the author himself, who condemns Marsyas as a parodist by putting in his mouth Minerva's words from the *Ars*. But if, on the contrary, we allow the satyr's own words and point of view to guide our reading, then the priority of the divine model over its "satyric" parody is no longer so secure. Let us take, for example, the satyr's imitation of Minerva. Rather than making himself ludicrous by giving expression to his pain through words that summon up Minerva's comparatively trivial cosmetic anxieties, we might rather say that Marsyas's anguish over the loss of his skin only reinforces the frivolity of the goddess's concern over her face. Again the episode offers us two incompatible perspectives, in one of which Marsyas is seen from without as a figure in a cosmic scene controlled by the gods and in a text manipulated by the poet, but in the other, the grotesque musician reverses such hierarchies. Marsyas's radically different point of view becomes all the easier to recognize when we recall that he is not, in fact, a conscious imitator. In most stories, including the version told in Ovid's *Fasti*, Marsyas simply finds the flute and emphatically reinvents the art of playing it for himself. This misguided sense of his own priority, of course, applies also to his relationship with his poet-creator Ovid: Marsyas has never read the *Ars*. It is only when he is conceived of as a figure within the narrative, rather than a subject in his own right, that his words become parodic.<sup>8</sup>

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8 In this context, it is noteworthy that the tale of Marsyas elsewhere appears as a polemical tool in literary debate. Rawson 1987.4–6 suggests that Marsyas's role in the origin of the flute, which Pindar *Pyth.* 12.22–27, for example, praises as an invention of the goddess Athena, comes into prominence when flute playing itself comes under attack in the fifth century. Hence Athenaeus 14.616E records the response to the dithyramb *Marsyas* of Melanippides, which was written to ridicule flute playing, by the instrument's defender Telestes of Selinus. Telestes (fr. 805 Campbell) denied the tale of Athena's rejection of the flute and its subsequent recovery by Marsyas as "foolish slander of the chattering bards." Even more striking is Apuleius's later use of Marsyas as an index of response to a whole range of highly charged cultural antitheses in *Florida* 3.6–14. There Marsyas, "with his wild face, crude, hairy, muddy-bearded, covered in thorns and bristles," competes with an Apollo who is the epitome of all things civilized and ordered—a rustic hick against a scholar (*agrestis cum erudito*, *Flor.* 3.6). The entire contest is staged by the gods as a joke. But Marsyas, who does not perceive that he is a source of mockery ("non intellegens se deridiculo haberi," *Flor.* 3.8), proceeds seriously to praise his own squalor and to mock Apollo for his beauty and eloquence, calling these attributes "charms inappropriate for virtue, but fitted for luxury" ("blandimenta nequaquam virtuti decora, sed luxuriae accommodata," *Flor.* 3.12). Like Ovid's Marsyas, Apuleius's is trapped in a context in

The alternative perspective that allows Marsyas to be “re-membered” emerges explicitly in the narrative, just after the description of his torture, with the entry of a new and sympathetic internal audience and the corresponding introduction of a new generic lens through which to view the action, that of bucolic.<sup>9</sup> Previously, I described Marsyas’s tale as a satyr play, and, as T. P. Wiseman suggests, there were powerful connections between Vergilian bucolic and satyrs: the first named character in *Eclogue* 1, Tityrus, bears the name of a type of satyr.<sup>10</sup> One important difference, though, is the ideal homogeneity of the bucolic world, where everyone appears as a herdsman and the differences in status that, in other genres, make satyrs ambiguous imitators of their betters are diminished. Suddenly, instead of seeing a lone satyr in the world of the imperial gods, we have put him back in the context where he belongs, amid a community of nymphs, fauns, and herdsmen. Here Marsyas is mourned by “brother satyrs” and dear Olympus—not the Olympus of Apollo and Minerva, but the lover and student of Marsyas. The earth absorbs their falling tears and, reversing their trajectory, sends them back up into the world again in the form of a new river, named Marsya, the “clearest of Phrygian streams.” Indeed, at this moment, the pure poetry of the bucolic makes its own little cosmos<sup>11</sup>: like the *Metamorphoses*’ description of the origins of the world, the account of the stream’s genesis manages to touch on the realms of land, sea, and sky (*terra*, 6.396; *in auras*, 6.398; *aequor*, 6.399). And the anti-Apolline nature of such an act of creation is suggested by its similarity to the birth of Apollo’s archrival Python, himself spontaneously produced by the earth after it had been

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which, unwittingly, he can only be a figure of ridicule. Thus the Muses, who in this version are the judges of the contest, respond to Marsyas’s upside-down system of values with laughter, and reinforce their own appraisal of Marsyas with a punishment that likens the satyr to a bestial monstrosity (he is skinned like a “two-footed bear,” *Flor.* 3.13). But coexisting with the traditional account of Apollo’s victory, as James points out below (p. 91), is a version that seems to take Marsyas a little more seriously, accusing Apollo of cheating, significantly, by playing his lyre upside down and demanding Marsyas do the same with his flute (Hyg. *Fab.* 165 and Apol. *Bibl.* 1.4.2; see Rawson 1987.14).

9 See Tissol 1997.127 for more on the precise stylistic imitation of Vergilian pastoral here and its imagined impact on its audience. For the role of commemoration in the bucolic’s distinctive evocation of absent presences, see Hardie 2002c.20–21.

10 Wiseman 1988.10 points out the link between bucolic and the theatrical depiction of satyrs; for *tituroi*, see Aelian *VH* 3.40 and Strabo 10.466.

11 Cf. the discussion by Alpers 1996.92–93 of the pastoral lament as the poetic restoration of a lost world.

dampened by the flood in Book 1 (1.434–40).<sup>12</sup> By means of this underground tradition, then, the clarity of the stream gives an accurate reflection of its source and, finally, for the first time in the text, identifies the satyr by name. At least it comes close: the name Marsyas is the Latin form of the Greek name, a slight variation, and one that invites us to read Ovid's own Latin text as striving to represent rather than occlude Marsyas. We have come full circle from the stream in which Minerva saw her distorted image, as well as from the flute's epithet, *Tritoniaca*, that begins the narrative. Now in place of the stagnant lake that gave its name to the goddess, we have a clear stream that preserves the name of the victim.<sup>13</sup>

But our temptation to identify the voice of the poet with the clear stream of poetic memory should not be left unqualified. For it stands in striking contrast with the explicit generic and moral tendencies of the most immediate narrator of the satyr's death. That anonymous narrator is one of those who, after the misfortunes of Niobe, retell other stories out of fear of the anger of the god and participate all the more zealously in the cult of Latona (6.313–16). This narrator, then, is interested in remembering not Marsyas himself but only his death as an illustration of the power of the gods. And the description he gives of Marsyas's torture doubly recalls the specific context in which it is told: it will literally make the anger of the god visible, and it will equate poetic performance with a cultic act. I suggested above that the passage points to an opposition between the skin and the body of Marsyas. The narrator clearly prefers the satyr with the skin off. He presents Marsyas as nothing but wound, "*nec quicquam nisi vulnus erat*" (6.388). And he shows the "manifest anger of the *numen*" by making the tortured body of the victim particularly transparent to the special capacities of the punishing god: Marsyas's exposed organs recall at once the brilliance of the sun (*perlucentes, micant*), the strings of a bow (*nervi*), and the chords of the lyre (*nervi, fibras*).<sup>14</sup> If this oblique catalogue of attributes seems to

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12 The image complicates the overlap between hymn and bucolic as well as offering another example of the distortions latent in imitation. For as this paper's anonymous referee pointed out to me, the topos of the pure, slight stream as the poetic antithesis to muddy water, which I am here reading as articulating the anti-Apolline strand in Ovid's account, was most memorably developed by the god Apollo himself in the closing lines of Callimachus's hymn (*Call. Hymn to Apollo* 105–12).

13 The clear stream stands in opposition to another muddy lake as well, the one stirred by the Lycian peasants in the preceding episode, where the references to Callimachean poetological imagery are described by Claus 1989.

14 The musical "resonance" of Marsyas's innards was independently observed by Princeton graduate student Sarah Ferrario, to whom I am grateful for discussions of the episode.



recall a cultic hymn, another aspect of the language strengthens that connection.<sup>15</sup> For the conversion of the satyr into the god's instrument continues with the words *salientia* (used of strings quivering under the impact of the pick) and *numerare* (to put in meter). The semantic overlap between the description of viscera throbbing under torture and the language of poetic performance strongly hints at the essential participation of the narrator in what he describes.<sup>16</sup> Singing of Marsyas and punishing Marsyas become analogous acts in the worship of Apollo.

The bucolic flavor of this passage possesses a further significance for understanding the dynamics of generic play and of imitation in the passage, for it points to the episode's evocation of another programmatic confrontation between Apollo and a reed-playing poet that provides an illuminating comparison. I am referring to Vergil's famous reworking of the *Aetia* prologue at *Eclogue* 6.3–8:

cum canerem reges et proelia, Cynthus aurem  
uellit et admonuit: "pastorem, Tityre, pinguis  
pascere oportet ouis, deductum dicere carmen."

When I began to sing of kings and battles, Cynthian  
Apollo plucked my ear and cautioned me: "Tityrus, a  
shepherd should feed his sheep fat but sing a slender  
song."

Here the emphasis is on the synthesis of poetic impulses: the warning god plucks the poet by the ear to recommend the bucolic mode for Vergil's celebration of his friend Varus and endorses the resulting song. Ovid's Marsyas, read as a revision of this scene, gives a much darker picture both of poetic rivalry and of the tensions between poetic genres: a rival god skins a poet alive to insure his own pre-eminence, and the text itself, far from accommodating its honorific aims to the more modest form of the pastoral, ends up split between the bucolic and the hymnic.

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15 On the general role of the Homeric Hymns as intertexts in Ovid's poem, see Barchiesi 1999.

16 For a complementary Roman description of the visual artist engaged in the torture of his subject, see Seneca's *Controversia* 10.5 as analyzed by Morales 1996. That hypothetical case focuses on the accusation that Parrhasius did literally torture the model for his painting of Prometheus. Still, the frequency with which prosecutors fix on the connection between representation and the actual inflicting of pain (Morales 1996.192) testifies to its cultural importance.

I have tried to suggest that Ovid's narrative here stages its own competition between god and satyr by inviting two contradictory but inextricable readings. The opposition between singing figured as remembering the anger of Apollo and singing as remembering the victim Marsyas underlies a number of the interpretative choices the audience of this story must make: whether to hear it as pastoral lament or as cautionary tale, and, to return to the terms of Tissol and Segal, how to balance horror at Marsyas's suffering with detachment. The generic tensions between hymn and pastoral also draw attention to how effectively Ovid has dismembered his own poetic voice in the passage. The story is, after all, recounted by a speaker who is explicitly described as "another," *alter* (6.383). How far do we identify his point of view with Ovid's? Indeed, is the whole account even told in the same voice, or can we detect a new *auctor* in the very different language and attitude revealed after we switch in line 392 from torture to lamentation?<sup>17</sup> Ultimately, these questions bring us back to the dismembered figure at the center of the episode, Marsyas himself. At the beginning of this paper, I read the overt manipulation of Marsyas's language as a device to convey the distance between the controlling poet and the satyr contained within his text. But that is obviously not all there is to it. For Marsyas is a performer as well, and the one sample we are given of his song is an elegiac lament whose author is none other than Ovid.<sup>18</sup>

This image of a dismembered, discordant Ovid fits in well with the current picture of this poet and the cultural enterprise of the *Metamorphoses*. If we ask what it means for a writer in the context of late-Augustan Rome to represent himself in this way, a number of answers readily suggest themselves. Joseph Farrell, in the most influential analysis of the kind of dialogue between genres I find at work in the passage (1992.268), "contrasts" the polyphony of Ovidian poetry with the "monologic" repression of a period increasingly intolerant of dissonant voices. And a similarly political reading is tempting here, with those inclined towards an anti-authoritarian Ovid seeking the true voice of the poet in the bucolic spring of memory that erupts from the internal narrator's Apolline morality tale.

I want to end, though, by suggesting that, alongside the obvious image of direct confrontation with repression, the importance of imitation

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17 Tissol 1997.126 particularly emphasizes the dramatic shift in tone at this point.

18 Within the bucolic context, self-quotation also functions as a reminder of textuality and of the presence of the poet in his fictions, and vice versa. Cf. Menalcas's quotation of *Ecl.* 2 and 3 in *Ecl.* 5, discussed by Hardie 2002c.21.

within the passage and the author's simultaneous positioning of himself inside and outside the story he tells suggest some other ways of understanding the relationship between the author and the authorities. In particular, I want to look at the challenges to Ovidian self-expression from a somewhat broader perspective than the model of an authoritarian policing of dissonant voices (inevitably suggested by the fact of Ovid's exile) seems to require. If we, instead, think of the range of artistic, not specifically literary, products that, by this period, had been deployed to describe the Roman world newly focused on the authority of the emperor, a rather different set of problems emerges. The issue becomes less the danger of saying something to attract the emperor's wrath than the more fundamental one of how to exist as an author at all when so much of the language available to the artist has already been placed within such an overarching interpretative framework. Given this kind of aesthetic dominance, what alternatives existed for a similarly all-encompassing project like the *Metamorphoses* other than a participation that obscures the identity of the author or a rivalry that inevitably reinforces his own secondary status? Can the controlling maker who so explicitly stands apart from the tortured satyr ever really be an *auctor*, or is he, too, condemned to use the words and instruments of the gods? His Apollo, for example, cannot be read in isolation from Augustus's, and the narrative that prompts Marsyas's tale in the poem, the transformation of Niobe, was a key image in the temple of Apollo on the Palatine. To the extent that Ovid can reshape that pre-existing language by, for example, enhancing identification with the victim, that language also threatens to control and deform him. So we have seen that, in the hermeneutic battle between Marsyas and Minerva, the satyr's appropriation of the language of the gods reciprocally transforms the images of both the "author" and the borrower. In this way then, the two contrasting readings of Marsyas's story don't so much offer alternative ways of construing Ovid's stance in relation to Augustus's authority as they describe the inescapable condition of the poet who, even as he seeks to control the language he uses, is also at its mercy. The more we identify the voice of the poet with that of the hymnic narrator, the more he becomes a "nobody"—note the anonymity of this speaker—and, worse, the more he produces precisely the kind of derivative imitation of divine speech for which Marsyas is pilloried. Conversely, to act as Marsyas does on the assumption of his own pre-eminence, which in Ovid's case would be to prioritize the identity "created" from within the fictional world of his text, only reveals how far, in the real scheme of things, one falls short of being a god.

The reading I have given of Ovid's Marsyas may seem, in one sense, to have followed the strategies of virtually all participants in the episode, except perhaps its internal narrator, by retreating from the "visceral" image of torment with which the narrative notoriously begins. I want to conclude, therefore, with some further suggestions concerning the function of violence in the episode, which has itself been treated as a deforming influence externally imposed on Ovid by the nature of his times or the taste of his audience. Tissol has already shown that the tonal shifts in the narrative may be disorienting but do not in themselves diminish the intensity of the reader's response to its violence. His more sophisticated interpretation requires some reconsideration of how the narrative is to be read in connection with actual displays of violence in the arena, for it is precisely the image of the jaded, thrill-seeking spectators of the games that has authorized the presumption that Ovid was indeed aiming to give a kind of pleasure that depends upon emotional detachment (Tissol 1997.125).

First, we should reiterate that it is not only Ovid who is providing a spectacle here; rather, the episode explicitly dramatizes the processes of spectacle and its effects.<sup>19</sup> As Ovid presents it, flaying is, in itself, an act of exposure whereby internal organs are uncovered and lie open to the gaze of a viewer who then becomes a potential intermediary in the description by counting the quivering guts (*detecti patent*, 6.389; *possis . . . numerare*, 6.390–91). One might also argue that lines like *quid me mihi detrahis*, rather than aestheticizing violence or allowing for an escape into the merely textual and rhetorical, enact on a stylistic level the actions they describe and thus bind the linguistic surface more closely to what it represents. The translation of poetry into spectacle emerges in another way when the narrative's audiences learn to see *nervi* rather than just hearing them and to count (*numerare*) with the eye rather than the ear.

For the significance of this thematization of spectacle, we can consider the internal audiences and narrators in the poem. The cautionary narratives that include Marsyas's tale are inspired by a visible example of the wrath of the gods (*manifestam*, 6.313); so the narrator of the story of the Lycian peasants emphasizes his own presence as a spectator of the site of the tale (*vidi praesens*, 6.320) and thus draws attention to efforts at overcoming

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19 See now the discussions, with different emphases, in Hardie 2002b.41–42 and 2002c.316–17.

spatial and temporal distance to convey a sense of the presence of narrated events that can match the *facta* the internal audience have themselves witnessed. Such a dynamic powerfully connects these inner tales to the present of the Ovidian narrator himself and further encourages us to investigate the ways the text bridges the distance between things seen and things told. Conversely, the sympathetic memory of Marsyas is made a material presence by the response of the audience of satyrs and rustics to his death: it wells up from the tears they shed.<sup>20</sup>

The episode's explicit emphasis on the dynamic role of spectacle makes clear the extent to which the violence inflicted on Marsyas both produces the poetic text and, if we as readers accept the points of view of any of the internal focalizers, energizes our own response to the story. Making the connection again to contemporary spectacles like those of the arena, we can see that it is no longer enough to imagine a poet whose aesthetic has been merely acted upon by the experience of being a viewer at such scenes. And indeed, the idea that the games themselves provide only entertainment and diversion has been superseded by an emphasis on their importance as political occasions and by more complex models of their psychological effects on their audiences.<sup>21</sup> The effort to transform poetry into spectacle, and simultaneously to intensify his audience's responses to violence and to harness those responses to divergent conceptions of the work's ideology, thus becomes another way in which Ovid is speaking the imperial language in the episode. But at the same time, the double position of Ovid in the tale, as narrator of Marsyas's death and as Marsyas himself, casts him not only in the role of the imperial producer of spectacle but as the victim, whose person, in turn, mobilizes both the disgust and the admiration of the community.<sup>22</sup>

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20 And here it is important to note, with James, below, and Theodorakopoulos 1999.156–57, that the tears of the spectators, which undergo the only actual metamorphosis in the passage, are superfluous in the other versions of the myth, where the stream Marsyas flows directly from the satyr's blood.

21 In the interest of brevity, and despite the fast growing bibliography in this field, I cite merely Coleman 1990 for an introduction to the politics of the games and Barton 1993.11–46 for a discussion of the combined exaltation and degradation of the gladiator.

22 Cf. the very similar reading of the double effect of gladiatorial imagery in the exile poetry by Habinek 2002.60.

## MARSYAS'S MUSICAL BODY: THE POETICS OF MUTILATION AND REFLECTION IN OVID'S METAMORPHIC MARTYRS<sup>23</sup>

PAULA JAMES

### Introduction: Clearing the ground

The scholarly consensus has long been that, with Marsyas, Ovid displays a “delight in grotesque cruelty” (Galinsky 1975.138). This response sets Ovid firmly in his social context, pandering to and partaking of a Roman taste for slaughter. The flaying of Marsyas is presented as a literary spectacle—one more fitting or more familiar in the arena and the games. After all, what other reason could there be for Ovid’s concentration upon the gory and gruesome flaying of Marsyas in the vignette which follows the story of Latona and the boorish Lycian peasants. He dives straight into the punishment via an unnamed narrator. The surrounding circumstances of the story are taken as read. The Marsyas passage of Book 6 does, in truth, seem a sacrifice of the story to the spectacle. The question is, do the amphitheatrical aspects of such poetic visualisations site Ovid firmly in his sociological milieu, an example of his pantomimic portrayal of human agony: “the *barroccismo* of Ovid which may have found favour with Ovid’s contemporary readers” (Due 1974.77). Galinsky points out (1975.134) that Ovid was tuning into a current curiosity about the exposure of the body’s physical essence, something his society could view regularly in the arena. This is one way of contextualising Ovid’s description of Marsyas as skinned and stripped in an obscenely seamless and supernatural way by the god Apollo.<sup>24</sup> Piers Rawson goes so far as to call the passage a clinical dissection, and she argues that this aspect of the myth characterises representations of Marsyas

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23 I wish to thank the British Academy for providing a travel grant to the Roman Bodies Conference, Rome 2001, where this paper was first delivered. The comments and suggestions for further reading I received there were immensely useful.

24 Such interest in an alleged aesthetics of the skinned and dissected body is not confined to the classical period. Gunther von Hagen’s macabre exhibition of “corpse art” is fascinating and attracts people the world over as donors of their corpses as well as spectators at the displays. This “plastination” spectacle includes all kinds of flayed bodies and specialises in metamorphosing cadavers into unlikely shapes, usually specified by the original “owner,” e.g., a sashimied totem pole or a body constructed like a chest of drawers in mimicry of Salvador Dali sculptures.

in the Roman imperial period (1987.13). However, the issue of violence as entertainment is not a straightforward one, and a simplistic sociological interpretation of the phenomenon is not necessarily helpful to our reading of Ovid. Andrew Feldherr engages with this issue (above), integrating the key scholarly approaches to Ovidian voyeurism in his introductory section and, in his conclusion, exposing Ovidian strategies that both implicate and distance the poet from the contemporary taste for spectacle. The following remarks function as a set of complementary observations on the “arena moments” in the poem and the way in which the flaying of Marsyas is located both socially and aesthetically within the Roman cultural perspective.

Garth Tissol (1997.128) gives a thoughtful reading of the Marsyas episode: “Ovid’s violent descriptions, typically deprived of comforting and comprehensible circumstances, become more painful to read the more detailed and specific they are. There is no reason to assume that merely because Ovidian violence is not tragic it consequently lacks ‘true pathos’ and has no real power to move its audience.” However, this approach does not altogether defend Ovid against charges of going with the flow of the times. We have to recognise a mismatch here, in that the development of critical distance in our discussion of the games per se is in danger of disappearing when we encounter allusions to or metaphors of them in a poetic context. I do not wish to deny those aspects of the spectacle that have been observed in this and other stories of violent dismemberment and death in the *Metamorphoses*.<sup>25</sup> I do believe that we should exercise caution in constructing a cultural norm among Ovid’s readership (including Ovid himself) that would conflate a literate and sophisticated audience with an undifferentiated mass attending the games and so assume a straightforwardly shared agenda of visual voyeurism, whatever the medium in question.

In addition, this “Roman” aspect of Ovid sits uneasily in the postclassical ethical and empathetical frameworks we rather like designing for him as if he were a modern, even postmodern, poet in sensibility and psychology. We do not need to “modernize” Ovid in order to defend him against charges of gleeful voyeurism through the medium of poetry. The

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25 For instance, if we compare the death of Marsyas with the fate of Laureolus as described by Martial, we also witness the disintegration of one whose lacerated limbs lived on, dripping gore, and “in all his body, body there was none” (*de Spectaculis* 7.12). Martial may be drawing on the literary “arena moment” to reiterate how a great emperor could recreate and, therefore, validate the old myths.

*Metamorphoses* has a fine line in martyrs, and the victims of the gods are frequently presented in terms of *caelestia crimina* (crimes “conducted by” the gods), but that does not catapult Ovid into the twenty-first century where concepts of mercy or strategies of rehabilitation form part of a powerful but contested rhetoric. Instead, we should be looking for narrative and thematic reasons for Ovid’s “trite” treatment of Marsyas.<sup>26</sup> As Feldherr demonstrates above, the aim is to restore Marsyas to his rightful place within the poem and to explore a number of different narrative registers that his particularised punishment incorporates; in other words, to make the most of Marsyas in Ovid.

### Fragmenting the Artist

Because the flaying of Marsyas is such a short if graphic episode in the sixth book of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, it is understandable that it has not, until now, attracted the detailed analysis enjoyed by prolonged contests between the gods and “others” within the poem. It could be said that Marsyas has received a raw deal at the hands of the commentators as well as from Apollo and, indeed, Ovid. The *in medias res* approach to Marsyas does not necessarily limit opportunities for giving the satyr a sympathetic hearing. However, the reader has to look beyond the immediate context of the episode and bring in other rivals to the gods and their skills in order to “round out” the story and reframe the suffering of its protagonist. The excision as well as the exposition in this narrative deserve greater attention. Feldherr observes that the Marsyas tale itself has been dismembered by Ovid and that the satyr’s strangled cry is an important facet of his self-alienation. There is no “background” to the flaying scene, no reason for Marsyas’s plight, so the reader is forced to piece together the complete narrative from previous knowledge of the myth. One way of “fleshing out” Marsyas is to borrow elements applicable to the impetuous satyr from other episodes within the poem and see what can be constructed from them to make Marsyas a more satisfying story. In this way, we can piece together an authorial judgment upon the act of Apollo, one that is not articulated at the

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26 Kenney is not convinced by over subtle readings of the Marsyas episode: “The ultimate in gruesome wit. More than one critic has tried to justify the treatment on artistic grounds, just as more than one pundit has assured the world that Titian’s picture of the subject offers an uplifting experience to the beholder” (in Melville 1986.411).



appropriate or expected moment in the text. As Feldherr notes, Ovid's representation distances his audience from the character in a number of ways. However, Ovid's concept of narrative control is not an exclusive one; he expects his reader to be part of the *carmen perpetuum* and to find the threads that connect the narratives, however convoluted and drawn out (*deductum*) they are.<sup>27</sup>

Book 6 opens with the story of Minerva and Arachne vying for artistic honours with their weaving skills. The fate of Arachne is told in full and with embellishments, whereas Marsyas is a nasty, brutish, and short moment in the text, followed, however, by a lyrical scene of nymphs and shepherds crying a river over his painful fate. Nymphs are also present in the Arachne narrative, but they appear at the beginning as admirers of the exceptionally talented woman working at her craft. In both stories, nature or nature's *numina* are testaments to the wonder and achievement of the doomed artists. The hunt for motifs by association does not end there. Ovid is not averse, as a rule, to hinting that the gods treat mortals unfairly, and it is relevant to Marsyas's fate that Ovid is sympathetic towards the rival of the weaving goddess. Arachne holds her own in the contest with Minerva; divine wrath arises from the fact that not even Envy could find fault with the tapestry of the mortal adversary.<sup>28</sup>

A version of the Marsyas myth that might have been available to Ovid had he wished to extend the overtly sympathetic treatment he afforded Arachne is that Apollo won the music contest by a cheap trick rather than superior artistry, triumphing because he could play the lyre upside down, which was clearly not an option for the pipes.<sup>29</sup> This would transform the triumph into an ambiguous and eccentric victory for Apollo. Ovid does not mention this feature nor the alternative and more artistically elegant explanation that Apollo's voice accompanying the lyre was decisive—an aesthetic

27 Rosati 1999 has written a stimulating analysis of Ovid's woven text, exploring the sustained metaphors of weaving throughout the *Metamorphoses*.

28 Minerva summons Invidia to punish Aglauros in Book 2.760–86. In spite of her disgust for this creature and the speed with which she leaves Envy's cave, the goddess has possibly prefigured her own moment of *dolor* at her rival's success (6.129–30). The implications of and distinctions between *invidia* and *livor* deserve further study.

29 Rawson 1987.14 cites Hyg. *Fab.* 165 and *Bib.* 1.4.2. Lucian *Dial. Deorum* 16 also refers to a cheating Apollo. Marsyas's punishment, suspended upside down from a tree, evokes the image of the triumphant lyre. See Weiss 1992 and Rawson 1987.52–66 on this ancient artistic (sculptural) tradition—also followed in some post classical works, notably those by Titian.

enhancement denied to the pipe player.<sup>30</sup> The contest between the pipes and the lyre is not resolved by the defeat of Marsyas, at least not in the sequence of the stories as Ovid relates them.<sup>31</sup> Rather, it is replayed both explicitly and obliquely in the fates of Orpheus, Pan, and Midas. Once again, Feldherr's theory of fragmentation and "disarticulation" is borne out and proves a useful tool of interpretation for Ovid's treatment of the dismembered satyr.

### The Divided Self

In the discourse of the arena, Marsyas, who inhabits a half world of beast and man, already a metamorphic mix, could be viewed as a two for the price of one spectacle, both a low grade of humanity and an animal whose flogging or flaying would provide an appropriate public punishment.<sup>32</sup> Within the context of the *Metamorphoses*, Marsyas is counterposed to the unfortunate who acquire alien skins. He loses his satyr hirsuteness as he is flayed. The rapidity and spontaneity of the process is emphasized by Ovid, which is quite different from artistic representations both classical and postclassical where the means and perpetrators of the punishment are in evidence, e.g., the tree, the flayer, and the knife are often featured, while Apollo looks on pitilessly. Ovid's method of description presents the flaying as something relentless and yet agentless. This "natural" corollary to Marsyas's defeat in the music contest ties him in neatly with other victims of traumatic transformation, even though this is a reversal of the type of transformation Ovid's readers are accustomed to: new limbs and new skin covering up old identi-

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30 Diodorus Siculus *Life of Cybele* 3.58ff. Poole 1999.61 highlights "the traditional antagonism, from Plato onwards, between the two kinds of music—the 'lower,' Dionysiac, bodily flute and the 'higher,' Olympian, spiritual lyre." However, Jacopo Sannazaro (1456–1530) poses a distinction between the lowly pipe of Corydon and the flute of Pallas. Hubbard 1998.257–58, in his discussion of Sannazaro, explains that "pastoral is identified specifically as a tradition of cooperative succession, willingly handed down from one poet to the next, whereas Marsyas' flute, discarded by the warlike Pallas, becomes an instrument of hubristic presumption, inasmuch as the satyr challenges Apollo with it. Epic is thus bracketed as an undertaking of lofty ambition, but with considerable risk of failure and defeat, as exemplified by Marsyas' gruesome fate." This interpretation reinforces the shifting polarities of genre in the Ovidian text teased out by Feldherr above.

31 For the chronological conundrums in Ovid and the undercutting of the teleological drive, see Zissos and Gildenhard 1999.

32 How should one visualise the satyr? Matthew Arnold's designation of him as a faun (*Empedocles on Etna*) increases the pathos of his punishment, but the idea of a barbaric and therefore barbarous creature seemed to prevail in ancient literary depictions.

ties.<sup>33</sup> Daphne is the first to be submerged in the foreign material of tree bark, and, subsequently, the sisters of Phaethon find themselves encased as trees, screaming in pain as their mother, Clymene, attempts to rip the new skin from them (*Met.* 2.358–62):

Non satis est: truncis avellere corpora temptat  
Et teneros manibus ramos abrumpit, at inde  
Sanguineae manant tamquam de vulnere guttae.  
“parce, precor, mater” quaecumque est saucia, clamat,  
“parce, precor: nostrum laceratur in arbore corpus.”

It's not enough. She tries to tear the bark away and breaks  
The tender boughs, but from them bloody drops  
Ooze like a dripping wound. “Stop, mother, stop!”  
Each injured girl protests; “I beg you, stop;  
The tree you tear is me.”<sup>34</sup>

Marsyas's loss of his identifying skin is particularly poignant when his scream about being torn from himself is given due weighting, not simply and simplistically passed over as an Ovidian delight in the paradoxical and literal. *Quid me mihi detrahis?* is, indeed, deeply ironic. *Quid me mihi detrahis*, “Why are you tearing me from myself?” is both explicit and allusive in Marsyas's situation. In Book 4, the stories of Narcissus and Salmacis and Hermaphroditus are frustration fables precisely because the characters wish to be separated from themselves and can never have physical relations with the love object, their heart's desire, because what they

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33 Transformations can come out of the blue in the poem, with no god directly cited as responsible for the changes. They are often the result of a personality fulfilling itself by reconciling the exterior with the inner self. The leitmotif of the *Metamorphoses* is the frailty of outward forms, and the universe itself is not immune to fragility. Hence *fiducia formae*, which Ovid uses more than once, always carries dual meanings: belief in one's beauty and faith in one's form. Solodow 1988.157–202 demonstrates just how slippery causation, motivation, and agency can be in Ovidian transformations. Although we know from the mythical traditions that Apollo had Marsyas flayed, this is not a straightforward event in Ovid. On the one hand, Marsyas, we assume, is addressing Apollo with his *quid me mihi detrahis?* But he seems to be surprised at the nature of a punishment that should have been agreed beforehand. Perhaps he is realising, too late, exactly what this terrible skinning means for his identity.

34 This and all subsequent translations are from A. D. Melville's 1987 Oxford version.

have is within, already part of themselves. So, Narcissus falls in love with his reflection and Salmacis wishes for an eternal union with Hermaphroditus, but becomes welded to and one with the object of her sexual desire.

Marsyas goes on to utter another telling phrase about the pipes not being worth the pain (*non est tibia tanti*). In this he echoes the words Ovid attributes to the goddess Minerva in his *Ars Amatoria* 3.505: “non est mihi, tibia, tanti.”<sup>35</sup> Feldherr notes that the reason Minerva becomes disenchanted with her own invention is because of vanity. The goddess reveals more of the story in *Fasti* 6.695–710 and reprises the reason why she discarded the pipes in dismay at her reflection in the stream: she sees her puffed out cheeks as she blows into them.<sup>36</sup> In the *Fasti*, Marsyas is the unnamed satyr who picks up and plays the pipes. There is plenty of pictorial evidence for Marsyas’s encounter with the goddess Minerva. Some of the artistic depictions of the scene indicate that Athena/Minerva is warning the curious satyr away from the pipes she has invented and thrown away. Ovid may leave all of this out in the *Metamorphoses*, but he alludes to this version of the pipes’ provenance by the epithet *Tritoniaca*.

Marsyas is regularly condemned for his hubris towards Apollo by Roman authors.<sup>37</sup> It is possible that elsewhere in his artistic and literary appearances he offends Minerva by heralding her pipes as his own discov-

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35 The echo of Minerva’s cry is noted by Bömer 1969.109. The goddess suffers only a temporary and trivial distortion of her appearance. Marsyas’s transformation, caused indirectly by the pipes, is traumatic.

36 Female flute players in the ancient world were of dubious character. For the virgin goddess to place pipes in her mouth, with all the erotic overtones that that might imply, would be inappropriate indeed—I am grateful to Dr. Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones (University of Exeter) for this observation. “To play the pipes” refers to oral sex in a number of European languages (e.g., in Spanish, *tocar la flauta*). On the depiction of Athena/Minerva’s femininity and vanity as opposed to her warlike accoutrements in artistic representations of Marsyas (one strand of the Tunisian tradition in mosaics), see Fantar 1986.158.

37 The barbaric aspect of the satyr is emphasized by Apuleius, who roundly condemns him for his aggressive hubris in competing with Apollo, god of the civilised and sophisticated arts: “This inhabitant of barbarous Phrygia, his bestial countenance, savage, bristly wild beard, his body covered in bites and hairs. Such as he was, he dared—sacrilegious rashness—to compare himself to Apollo: a contest between ugliness and beauty, rusticity and knowledge, the beast and the god,” Apuleius *Florida* 3. Rawson argues that the Roman perception of the Marsyas myth, particularly in the literary references, is consistently condemnatory of the upstart satyr. In the contest with Pan, the beauty and sophistication of Apollo is given due emphasis by Ovid: “ille caput flavum lauro Parnaside vinctus / verrit humum Tyrio saturata murice palla / instructamque fidem gemmis et dentibus Indis / sustinet a laeva, tenuit manus altera plectrum / artificis status ipse fuit. tum stamina docto /

ery. Ovid's succinct use of the epithet to denote ownership serves to give precedence at this point in the poem to the Pallas claim.<sup>38</sup> It draws our attention to the dangers of taking up even what the gods discard and claiming them for your own and, in some measure, supports structuralist readings of myths which would view the Marsyas episode as an example of a dangerous exchange between a god and an "other," especially as it involves divine gifts. Hence Feldherr suggests that Marsyas's misguided sense of his own priority is parodic on two counts. First, he is unaware that he mimics the goddess, but then the goddess and her words are the invention of the poet/creator Ovid: "Marsyas has never read the *Ars*!" (above, p. 80)

### Doubling Up

Lurking in the subtext of Marsyas versus Apollo is the question of the ownership or the patenting of an invention. This reinforces the connection between the satyr and the low-born mortal, Arachne, who is worth revisiting for further motifs of guilt by association. Arachne proudly denies that her weaving skill owes anything to the goddess of the art and is humiliated by the assumption that she has picked up anything from the divine weaver herself. As Marsyas does not acknowledge Minerva as the inspiration of the pipes, the reader could supply a reminder to Marsyas similar to the one the anonymous narrative voice gives to Arachne. In other words, we could adapt *scires a Pallade doctam* (6.23) from Arachne's story and apply it to Marsyas and the pipes, *scires a Pallade doctum*, "You would know that *he* had been taught by Pallas." Such is the confidence and arrogance of Arachne that she is blind to the true identity of Minerva, who appears as a wise old woman to warn her against her boasting. The extent to

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pollice sollicitat, quorum dulcedine captus / Pana iubet Tmolus citharae submittere cannas," *Met.* 11.165–71. ("Apollo's golden hair was garlanded with Parnassian laurel. His cloak, deep-dyed with purple, swept the ground and, in his left hand, he held the lyre, inlaid with gems and Indian ivory, while the other hand grasped the plectrum. His whole attitude was that of the artist. Then he struck the strings with his skilled touch and Tmolus, captivated by the sweetness of those strings, bade Pan to yield his reeds to the lyre.") See Griffin 1999 for a detailed discussion of Apollo as superstar in this scene.

38 However, there is more than one claimant to this dubious honour. Ovid himself presents alternatives; for instance, how Pan transformed his beloved Syrinx into a more sophisticated set of pipes, *Met.* 1.690–712. For a discussion of Ovid's playing with an *aiton* and his awareness of the distinct versions of the pipes' origin, see Griffin 1999.104–07.

which these two contestants, mortal and goddess, mirror each other in mood and action is significant to the story and especially to its denouement.<sup>39</sup>

Arachne is the angry mortal ready to strike the disguised goddess at the outset of the narrative, but Arachne herself is the one violently struck down after the competition. The goddess beats her about the head with the boxwood shuttle used for compacting the threads on the loom. Arachne hangs herself from the very beams used to fix the looms. She is changed by the goddess's poison potion into the essential and eternal spinner, the spider, her new form becoming the producer and embodiment of the threads she wove so finely in her human incarnation. Arachne becomes a living loom. The greatest irony and tragedy of her condition as a spider is that she has lost her art but retained her skill, or rather the skill which the goddess Minerva encompassed within her divine identity and which Arachne denied was decisive in her own special talent. D. C. Feeney makes a similar observation concerning the destruction of her artistic integrity (1991.193), quoting Seneca on the activity of the spider which reproduces an unvarying, predetermined, and formulaic artefact. Like other victims of violence and metamorphosis whose human voices are silenced, Arachne will never again "tell" or reveal *caelestia crimina* in a fine-woven tapestry.

The fate of Arachne, who becomes an eternal testament to Minerva's weaving skill, is significant for the punishment undergone by Marsyas. Feldherr convincingly demonstrates how "the tortured body of the victim [is made] particularly transparent to the special capacities of the punishing god" (above, p. 82). The stripping of the satyr's skin from the surface of his limbs leaves his palpitating insides on view. Within this one wound, which becomes his essence, organs and nerves go on throbbing and beating. As Feldherr observes above (p. 82), nouns like, *nervus* (and incidentally *venae*, 6.390) and verbs like *salio* and *numero* (and arguably *mico*, which can be translated as "throb") are strongly resonant of a musical instrument, its sound and vibration, so that the language of the passage describing what remains of Marsyas seems to be mimicking the very lyre that has defeated him. The material that made the lyre could include the carapace of the tortoise, which was dissected to provide the sound box of the instrument.

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39 Hofmann 1986.231–34 argues convincingly that Arachne and Minerva intermesh as well as counterpose each other in terms of the poetic programmes they champion. See also Oliensis 2002, whose work traces the "twinning" of Minerva and Arachne in their actions, poses, and emotions.

If Marsyas's flaying does mimic the creation of the lyre, his destruction is a curious metamorphosis revealing the god's grim humour.<sup>40</sup> It would seem that there is an instrumental metaphor being brought into play in the description of Marsyas's flaying. It is accompanied by the naming of visceral parts, and something musical lingers on in the continued functioning of the body's rhythms. Feldherr describes this in terms of "a cultic hymn" and suggests that the "singing of Marsyas and punishing Marsyas become analogous acts in the worship of Apollo" (above, p. 83). Just as Arachne becomes the living loom, Marsyas becomes, for one brief moment, a living lyre, the attribute of the punitive god.

### Dying Art

Yet in spite of this unequivocal defeat, Marsyas does acquire a potent identity as the river which henceforward carries his name. The universal weeping of the pastoral world turns into his commemorative river; this is characterised by the term *liquidissimus*, denoting the lyrical tunefulness of the element that Marsyas has become. The earth's "veins" are penetrated by the moisture so that she is forced to spurt forth the new water channel ("quas ubi fecit aquam, vacuas emisit in auras," 6.398). Thus Elena

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40 Cerambos, a haughty and insulting shepherd who "devised the shepherd's pipes and was the first of mankind to play the lyre," was punished for his taunting of the nymphs by metamorphosis into a beetle whose head resembles the horns of a lyre made from tortoiseshell. For this myth and a discussion on the vexed question of who invented what, see Celoria 1992.164–66. The *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* describes how the precocious young god killed the tortoise and used its shell to make the lyre.

For Marsyas to take on a musical body has its Pythagorean dimensions which would, by implication, connect him with the long exegesis of Book 15. Ovid does not in any way focus on the invention of rhythmic intervals by Pythagoras and the theory of harmonic well-being. Current scholarship questions the seriousness of this lengthy semi-philosophical discourse in the final book of Ovid's epic. Nevertheless, Koestler's summary of the musical theories of Pythagoras could have a quirky application to the fate of Marsyas (1959.29):

One of the oldest forms, indeed, of psychotherapy consists in inducing the patient, by wild pipe music or drums, to dance himself into a frenzy followed by exhaustion and a trance-like, curative sleep—the ancestral version of shock treatment and abreaction therapy. But such violent measures were only needed where the patient's soul strings were out of tune—over-strung or limp. This is to be taken literally, for the Pythagoreans regarded the body as a kind of musical instrument where each string must have the right tension and the correct balance between opposites such as high and low, hot and cold, wet and dry.

Theodorakopoulos (1999.156–57) suggests that the onlookers have provided both continuation and closure and “to some degree repair the damage done to Marsyas by Apollo’s violence.” However, she also notes that Ovid has changed the traditional story in which the blood of Marsyas became the river which bore his name (Forbes Irving 1990.304) and concludes: “Marsyas torn from himself sheds blood which disappears, and leaves behind no better part, no *opus*, nothing to preserve him at least symbolically, besides the grief of those who witness or hear of his demise; his name is attached to the traces of others’ mourning, instead of his own suffering.”<sup>41</sup>

This is not the end of the polarization between lyre and pipes in the *Metamorphoses*. In Book 11, the followers of Bacchus, armed with the Berecynthian pipes, drown out the voice and lyre of Orpheus. This could almost be vengeance directed at Apollo for the painful death of the satyr who championed the cause of the pipes in Book 6. The death of Orpheus, narrated in Book 11, is explicitly visualised as an amphitheatrical scene, which gives it an equivocal timbre.<sup>42</sup> Ovid likens the entrapment and *sparagmos* of Orpheus to an arena spectacle. Not only do the Bacchantes catch sight of the poet as he descends into a natural amphitheatre, they themselves are compared to the dogs which savage a stag as part of a morning’s entertainment at the games. The use of both *periturus* and, in line 28, *munera* reinforces the imagery of the arena (*Met.* 11.3–5, 23–28):

Ecce nurus Ciconum, tectae lymphata ferinis  
pectora velleribus, tumuli de vertice cernunt  
Orpheia percussis sociantem carmina nervis.  
...  
Inde cruentatis vertuntur in Orpheia dextris  
Et coeunt ut aves, si quando luce vagantem  
Noctis avem cernunt, structoque utrimque theatro  
Ceum matutina cervus periturus harena  
Praeda canum est, vatemque petunt et fronde virentes  
Coniciunt thyrsos non haec in munera factos.

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41 The highly influential 1974 article by Leach on failed artists in the *Metamorphoses* forces us to rethink Ovid’s attitude towards artistic *Doppelgänger* within his text. Within the poetic fiction, the artefacts of sculptors, singers, and weavers are all either transient or destroyed (or both), but their works live on through Ovid’s text.

42 On the amphitheatrical elements of such descriptions, see now Hinds 2002.139–40.



Suddenly, as he swept his strings  
 In concord with his song, a frenzied band  
 Of Thracian women, wearing skins of beasts,  
 From some high ridge of ground caught sight of him.

...

Next they turned  
 Their bloody hands on Orpheus, flocking like  
 Birds that have seen a midnight owl abroad  
 By day, or in the amphitheatre  
 Upon the morning sand a pack of hounds  
 Round a doomed stag. They rushed upon the bard,  
 Hurling their leaf-dressed lances, never meant  
 For work like that.

Bacchus is portrayed by Ovid as embarrassed by the behaviour of his followers who have torn apart the sacred singer. Indeed, the Bacchantes are punished in turn. Bacchus is also let down by Midas, whose lack of aesthetic judgment is told as the second fable in the same book. Once more the offended deity is Apollo.

The Pan versus Apollo competition compensates us for the *praeteritio* technique Ovid exercises with Marsyas.<sup>43</sup> Pan, who dares to challenge Apollo in this contest, does not suffer consequences other than the humiliation of a clear defeat. The punishment (and the humiliation) is rerouted to Midas, who gains ass's ears as a testament to his poor artistic judgment. An intriguing development in the king's partial transformation is that, ultimately, the reeds make his embarrassing ears public knowledge. In other words, the crude natural material of the Pan pipes sings or talks out of turn to compound Midas's misery. Whatever their origin or final form, these wind instruments are generically associated with and thus counterposed to the lyre across narratives.<sup>44</sup>

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43 Griffin 1999 gives detailed attention to Ovid's reprise of the pipe and lyre contest and the transportation for this purpose of Pan from Arcadia to Lydia. Griffin's assumption about Marsyas's divinity (1999.121 n. 67) complicates the issue of his mortality. I would read the resurgence of the speaking pipes in the form of the tale-telling reeds (in the Midas with an ass's ears episode) rather differently, less as a sympathetic reintroduction of the much maligned pipes and more as a betrayal of Midas, their champion, by the unthinking, crude material of which the instrument is formed.

44 It is perhaps significant that the wings intended to liberate Daedalus and Icarus attract a panpipes simile: "sic rustica quondam / fistula disparibus paulatim surgit avenis," "Just so the old fashioned rustic panpipes with their unequal reeds rise one above the other"

## Conclusion

The Marsyas episode has been viewed as a terrible and fascinating spectacle, an arena interlude, but, in Ovid, the focus on his flaying is richly allusive not just within the boundaries of the text but also in terms of the larger cultural context. It is our loss if we view it simply as a Roman spectator sport. Feldherr notes that the uncertainty of the narrative voice in the story directs us towards an interpretative choice: to hear the story as a cautionary tale (as it seems to start out) or as the pastoral lament which supplies its sympathetic and poetic closure. James suggests that Ovid creates a quirky oppositional dialectic within those stories that involve bodies desperate to be fragmented. There is clearly more than one way of reintegrating Marsyas into an artistic body (i.e., body of artists!), of supplying missing parts of the narrative by borrowing details and motifs from Arachne, Orpheus, and Pan.

Feldherr raises the complex issue of a dismembered and discordant Ovid emerging through the narrative. He argues that the Marsyas narrative can be read as a metaphor for the poet's own inescapable condition. Ovid is at the mercy of Augustan cultural constructs, especially the pre-eminent figure of Apollo in the princeps's religious and aesthetic schemata. This is an ideological dimension which informs the readings of both authors, who regard Marsyas as a reflection of his divine rival. It also enriches the view that Marsyas is part of a larger conflict played out within the poem, that of the punitive-epic register versus the poetic-bucolic, realised through the "barbaric" pipes contending with the "divine" lyre. The very lack of resolution to this generic artistic contest only adds to the ambiguity proposed by Feldherr, that the wielder of the pipes can be viewed both as a protagonist in a crude satyr play but also as transported to a place where "the pure poetry of the bucolic makes its own little cosmos" (above, p. 81).

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(8.191–92). Wise 1976–77.56 concludes: "Because the wings as artifact are touched by this ambiguity, so also is the idea of art as a means of escaping confinement, limitations or boundaries." Icarus plays carelessly and heedlessly with the feathers as his father tries to arrange them into their gradual sequence. The tragic fault of the manufactured wings, likened to the pipe reeds, is that they do not hold together (the sun melts their wax); this constitutes a further failure of material integrity and is simultaneously a symbolic statement about falling from artistic heights.

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