

OVID'S CEYX AND ALCYONE: THE METAMORPHOSIS OF A MYTH

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WHILE MANY OF THE LOVE STORIES in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are spiced with the Hellenistic seasoning of incest, treason, rape, and violence, there are a few narratives of mutual love, even married love, which the poet has treated with a special sensitivity. As Brooks Otis has noted,¹ these increase in scale and seriousness from the brief tragedy of errors of Pyramus and Thisbe through the fatal jealousies of Cephalus and Procris, to the ripe devotion of Philemon and Baucis (a counterpart of Deucalion and his Pyrrha); but the longest and most tender of these love-stories is that of Ceyx and Alcyone.²

And yet as Ovid tells their story, it is in many ways extraordinary. There are precedents enough for the tragic separation of a loving couple. Already in the *Iliad* there is the tender scene at the last parting of Hector and Andromache, a prototype which may have influenced Ovid's portrayal of the departure of Ceyx and of Alcyone waiting in innocent expectation of his return. Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* depicts the love of Panthea for her husband Abradatas and her grief and suicide at his death in battle, and Parthenius includes two such tragedies among his more lurid tales of unnatural passion.³ Hellenistic tales often complicated the course of true love with misunderstandings such as the misplaced

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¹Brooks Otis, *Ovid as an Epic Poet*² (Cambridge 1970) 269–272 (henceforward referred to by the author's name alone). His discussion of this episode (231–277), with some reassessment in his concluding chapter (353 f., 363, 366, 373), is fundamental and will be assumed in this paper except where disagreement is stated. Quotations from *Metamorphoses* will be from M. Haupt and R. Ehwald, *P. Ovidius Naso: Metamorphosen* (Zurich 1966).

²Otis 263 f., 277. See *Met.* 4.55–166 (Pyramus and Thisbe); 7.690–862 (Cephalus and Procris); 8.620–720 (Baucis and Philemon); 1.318–415 (Deucalion and Pyrrha). The Ceyx and Alcyone episode is concentrated in 11.410–748, but prepared by related material as early as 270.

³For Panthea and Abradatas see Xenophon *Cyr.* 5.1; 6.1.31–34, 45–47; 6.4.2–11 and 7.3.4–16. There is a tender scene of parting as she equips him and follows his chariot on his way to battle (6.4); after his death she blames herself for surviving him and stabs herself over his body (7.3.10–14). According to Parthenius Clite (28) hanged herself after the death of her husband Cyzicus, and Arganthonie (36) pined away for her dead lover Rhesus. Leucone (10) is killed by her lover Cyanippus as a result of the same sort of error as Procris.

jealousies of Cephalus and Procris, or Leucone and Cyanippus; in other narratives the lovers were separated by captivity, the fate of Panthea and of Parthenius' Herippe.⁴ Such features in the narratives of Ovid's predecessors foreshadow the evolution of the Romance,⁵ in which misunderstandings, attempted suicide, captivity, and shipwreck are recurring motifs. But apart from the shipwreck of the Ninus Romance,⁶ unfortunately without context, there are no precedents for the separation of Ceyx and Alcyone by his voyage and shipwreck, and no other metamorphosis that transforms and reanimates a long-drowned corpse. The nearest parallels occur in Ovid's own writings, in the death of Protesilaus overseas and his phantom return to visit his wife, and in the drowning of Leander by storm as he crossed the Hellespont to his beloved Hero;⁷ for on the morning after his last fatal crossing, she finds his corpse, swept by the tidal race onto the shore.

Can we distinguish the basic form of the legend? Alcyone may have an older history than Ceyx: certainly Homer refers to her, once only, at *Il.* 9.561–562 as “she whom her father and lady mother called Alcyone . . . because her mother, suffering the fate of the grieving halcyon, wept when far-striking Phoebus Apollo ravished her.” The earliest association is with lamentation, and the halcyon continues throughout ancient literature to provide an example of female lament alongside Philomela/Procne grieving for Itys, or Niobe for her children.⁸

The first allusion that suggests a lost mate as the object of her grief occurs in a lyric of Euripides' *Iphigenia among the Taurians*: “O bird, who by the rocky reefs of the sea sing your mournful dirge, a cry easily

⁴Herippe (8) was captured by a Gaul and slain by him when she tried to betray her husband. Panthea too is originally separated from Abradatas by captivity (*Cyr.* 5.1).

⁵On the evolution of the Romance from earlier genres see Ben Edwin Perry, *The Ancient Romances* (Berkeley 1967) 149–180; on the special features of the Romance see A. Heisermann, *The Novel before the Novel* (Chicago 1975) chs. 1–4, especially pp. 52–60.

⁶In the third fragment, discovered after publication of Gaselee's Loeb edition and quoted, complete with translation, in Perry (above, note 5) 162 f. Note that Ninus clearly survives unharmed.

⁷For Protesilaus cf. Ovid *Her.* 13 and Otis 236 f. on the relationship between Ovid's treatment of the two myths; for Hero and Leander cf. *Her.* 18 and 19. The influence of the story on Ovid's version of Ceyx and Alcyone has been pointed out by H. Tränkle, “Elegisches in Ovids Metamorphosen,” *Hermes* 91 (1963) 459–476 (on the finding of the corpse, see 469–470). Protesilaus was important in Latin poetry before Ovid; only a few fragments survive of Laevius' *Protesilaodamia* (Morel 13–19) but compare Catullus 68.73–86 and Propertius 1.19.7–10, where Protesilaus is used as a symbol of the power of love over death.

⁸In later writers this associates the mourning bird with Ceyx by name; cf. Moschus *Epitaphium Bionis* 38 ff.; Ovid, *Her.* 18.81 f. *Alcyones solae, memores Ceycis amati / nescio quid visae sunt mihi dulce queri*; Sen. *Ag.* 680–682 *Alcyones / Ceyca suum fluctu leviter / plangente sonent*.

understood by the understanding, since you bewail your spouse in unceasing laments" (1089 f.). There is no indication of the partner's fate; he may be dead or missing, and there is no suggestion that he shares her metamorphosis. He is also unnamed, a fact which gains significance from the distinct and persistent tradition of the plural "Halcyones,"⁹ whose nesting time was associated with the days of calm on winter seas, Virgil's *dilectae Thetidi alcyones* (*Georg.* 1.399). Why does the nesting couple bear the name of the female?

The ancients knew of a human couple, Alcyone and Ceyx, and the bird-pair came early to be associated with them. Thus Probus, commenting on the Virgilian reference, knows two myths about different women called Alcyone, and knows them from Ovid.¹⁰ He attributes to Nicander the tale that made her the wife of Ceyx who mourned her lost husband, and there is another, internal reason to consider Ovid's account in *Metamorphoses* 11 as an adaptation of Nicander; the voyage (surely a late component in the myth, since early Thessalian society was land-based) is made by Ceyx to consult Apollo of Claros, the local deity of Nicander's home town Colophon.¹¹ The Nicandrian story is also the most likely basis for the version transmitted by Lucian in which the grief of the widow causes her transformation, which is inspired by divine compassion. I quote Lucian's account in full:

They say that the daughter of the Greek Aeolus lamented her young husband, Ceyx the Trachinian, son of the morning-star, handsome child of a handsome father, out of longing for his love, then through a god's will she became winged like a bird and flew about all over the sea seeking him; but though she wandered over all the world, she was not able to find him.
(*Halcyon* 1)

Hyginus' account has also been taken as evidence for Nicander, but his report is too brief to determine which version of the story he has used:

Ceyx Hesperi sive Luciferi et Philonidis filius cum in naufragio periisset, Alcyone Aeoli et Aegiales filia uxor eius propter amorem ipsa se in mare praecipitavit. qui deorum misericordia ambo in aves sunt mutati quae alcyones dicuntur.
(*Fab.* 65)

Apart from the identification of the mothers Philonis and Aegiale, this

⁹The halcyons are named without allusion to Ceyx by Alcman fr. 26; Simonides (*PMG* ed. Page) fr. 3; Aristophanes *Aves* 251 and 298, and, in an apparent resurgence of interest, by the Alexandrians: Ap.Rhod. 1.1084 f. (he describes the female ἀλκυονίς as λιγυρή ὀπίθεσπιζούσα); Theoc. 7.57; Moschus, cited above, and *A.P.* 9.363. The Kerulos is associated with them in Alcman, and treated as a kind of mate in Ar. *Aves* 299, and Aristotle's *Historia Animalium* (on which see J. Pollard, *Birds in Greek Life and Myth* [London 1977] 96-97, and G. K. Gresseth, "The Myth of Alcyone," *TAPA* 95 [1964] 88-98); it may also be intended by Moschus to be associated with the halcyon pair.

¹⁰Probus comments (ed. Keil, p. 44) *varia est opinio harum volucrum originis. itaque in altera sequitur Ovidius Nicandrum, in altera Theodorum. Putatur enim Ceyx, Luciferi filius cum Alcyone Aeoli filia, mutatus in has volucres.* He goes on to report the version of Theodorus, in which Alcyone was the promiscuous daughter of the robber Sciron, saved by metamorphosis when her father threw her into the sea.

¹¹Cf. Haupt-Ehwald on 11.410. Otis (234) wrongly reports Ceyx's destination as Delos.

could as easily derive from Ovid himself as any Greek source: the name Lucifer reflects *Met.* 11.346 (*Lucifero genitus*) or 572, and Hyginus goes on to give special attention to the peaceful nesting of the birds (described at *Met.* 11.742–750).¹² Yet the actual metamorphosis is so abridged that it is not clear whether Alcyone threw herself into the sea in the absence of Ceyx, or at the sight of his body, nor how, if she drowned herself away from him, they were united before or after metamorphosis.

The shipwreck in Ovid and Hyginus is the most probable occasion for the separation of the lovers across the sea in Nicander also. But once they were separated, how did Alcyone learn of Ceyx's death, and what became of his body before its transformation? I hope to show in this paper that it must be Ovid's initiative which brings the beloved corpse of Ceyx back to a wife in human form, and permits their simultaneous metamorphosis.¹³

Ovid suggests no prior offence by the couple, and makes their transformation an act of divine pity and recompense for their misfortune. But Apollodorus¹⁴ attests a quite different characterisation of the couple. They are said to have brought divine punishment on themselves for calling each other Zeus and Hera. Indeed this must be a very old story, since Julian¹⁵ without naming the characters speaks of a tale in Hesiod about a couple who took upon themselves the names of Zeus and Hera. The motif is found attached to other mythical figures in Hellenistic sources.¹⁶ Both Ceyx and Alcyone are named in the papyrus fragment about the daughters of Aeolus assigned by Merkelbach and West to

¹²On Hyginus' use of Ovid see H. J. Rose, *Hygini Fabulae* (Leiden 1933) preface xi, and the notes to *Fabulae* 134 and 183. Hyginus is probably drawing on Ovid for the associated tale of Ceyx's brother Daedalion and Chione; cf. *Fab.* 200 with *Met.* 11.300–345. Rose notes that Hyginus is mistaken in identifying Alcyone's mother as Philonis, since he himself in *Fab.* 200 gives Philonis as an alternative name for Chione. (See also note 49 below.)

¹³The basis of this argument is established by Tränkle (above, n. 7) 469–470, but I believe it is possible to extend the implications of his hypothesis to other elements of Ovid's narrative.

¹⁴*Mythographi Graeci* (ed. Wagner [Leipzig 1926]) 1.21 (=1.7.4): 'Ἀλκυόνην δὲ Κήρυξ ἔγημεν Ἐωσφόρου παῖς. οὗτοι δ' ὑπερῆφάνειαν ἀπώλοντο. ὁ μὲν γὰρ τὴν γυναῖκα ἔλεγεν Ἥραν, ἡ δὲ τὸν ἄνδρα Δία, Zeus δὲ αὐτοὺς ἀπωρνήσας καὶ τὴν μὲν ἀλκυόνα ἐποίησε, τὸν δὲ κήρυκα. On this variant and later sources see Tränkle (above, n. 7) 467, notes 2–9, and Otis 421–423. I have not been able to consult J. Dietze, *Komposition u. Quellenbenützung in Ovid's Metamorphosen*, Festschrift zur Begrüssung der 48. Versammlung deutscher Philologen und Schulmänner in Hamburg (Hamburg 1905).

¹⁵See R. Merkelbach and M. L. West, *Fragmenta Hesiodica* (Oxford 1967) fr. 15 and *testimonia*.

¹⁶Compare the garbled tale of Aedon and Polytechnos, quoted by Antoninus Liberalis, *Metamorphoseon Synagoge* (ed. Cazzaniga [Milan 1962]) from Boios' *Ornithogonia*, in which not only the offending couple but their kindred mourners (11.9) are turned into birds. Aedon's father and mother become a sea-eagle (*ἀλκαιοτός*) and halcyon, and then try to drown themselves but are prevented by Zeus.

Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women*:¹⁷ they are described as birds darting and crying over the sea. Their wedding was celebrated in a Hesiodic poem which describes the attendance of Heracles as a guest, but there is nothing in the fragments to give any hint of their future life.¹⁸

If the tale of their metamorphosis as punishment derived from Hesiod, it would certainly have become an established version, and probably familiar to Ovid. Hence Brooks Otis (232 f.) suggested that Ovid knew a version in which Ceyx's shipwreck was punishment for the arrogance of the couple, but had modified it to eliminate the Hesiodic element of guilt, deliberately stressing Alcyone's piety towards Juno as an implicit contradiction of the old tale. I would argue that he cannot have been working with the Hesiodic tradition, since the myth of simultaneous metamorphosis and punishment is incompatible with the separation of the two lovers, which must be implied, even without the detail of the shipwreck, by the wife's quest for, and grief over her lost husband.¹⁹ There can never have been a blending of the two versions. Indeed the only source which combines the motif of boasting with the sea-storm as punishment is not ancient, but a Byzantine scholion on Aristophanes *Aves* 251, preserved in two mss which may be as late as the twelfth or thirteenth century,²⁰ and probably a reminiscence of the myth in Ovid himself.

The Alexandrian combination of erudition and self-conscious innovation seems to have given rise to a great number of variations, offering competing accounts of a single hero's metamorphosis, and assigning the same tale to more than one hero or locality. For the motivation of bird-

¹⁷*P. Oxy.* 2483, fr. 1 col. 2 (= Merkelbach and West [above, n. 15] fr. 16).

¹⁸See R. Merkelbach and M. L. West, "The Wedding of Ceyx and Alcyone," *RhM* 108 (1965) 300–317.

¹⁹Compare from Antoninus Liberalis the simultaneous metamorphosis of Aedon and Polytechnos (11) and the apparently consecutive metamorphoses of Periphas (worshiped by men as Zeus Soter) and his wife (6.3). Metamorphoses of kinsmen are usually simultaneous and in one place; compare the mourning Emathides (9) and the fate of Scylla and Nisus (*Met.* 8.145–150).

²⁰See Otis 422. Eustathius (ed. Van der Valk [Leiden 1976] p. 776) mentions only their *hybris*, and that "Zeus changed the mortals into birds, and to increase their misfortunes compelled them to rear their nestlings in winter." The Homer scholiast (quoted by Merkelbach and West on fr. 15) reports that Zeus in anger transformed them into birds living apart from each other. Only the scholia on *Aves* 251 in the two late mss of Aristophanes give the details of shipwreck: καὶ ποτε ἐν θαλάττῃ αὐτοῦ πλεόντος ὁ Ζεὺς ὀργισθεὶς αὐτόν τε διέφθειρε καὶ τὴν ναῦν. ἢ δὲ ἀγὰν περιπαθῶς ᾠδύρετο τὸν τοῦ ἀνδρὸς θάνατον παρὰ τῷ αἰγιαλῷ, ἣν ἐλέησας ὁ Ζεὺς ἀπαρνέωσεν. καὶ ἐκείνον δὲ εἰς ὄρνεον μετέβαλεν ὃν κηρύλον καλοῦσιν. (text from Dübner p. 216, 34–39). This gives no hint of where Ceyx was metamorphosed, and while it is compatible with Ovid's account, need not imply that the couple underwent metamorphosis together. However the late date of the scholia makes it more likely that they are reminiscences of Ovid, and have no independent value as sources for an earlier version.

metamorphosis we may compare from Antoninus Liberalis' collection Boios' accounts of the punishment of Meropis, turned into an owl by Athene (15), and of Oenoe, whom Hera turned into a crane (16). Mourners were traditionally changed into birds to put an end to their misery, and Ovid himself handles two very similar instances—the semifacetious transformation of the sisters of Meleager in *Met.* 8.580 ff. and the more serious transformation of Memnon's sisters at *Met.* 13.608 ff. Indeed both themes are interwoven in the story of Daedalion, Ceyx's brother, and his lovely daughter Chione, who dared to set herself above Diana. Chione herself was killed by the goddess, but her father after a maddened attempt at suicide was rescued from his headlong fall by the pity of Apollo and became a hawk.²¹ This story is told briefly by Ceyx before he embarks on the final voyage, and offers a contrast with Ceyx's own metamorphosis, not only because it is indirect as opposed to direct narrative, and concerns the suffering of a male and a parent, contrasted with the mourning of the wife Alcyone, but because Ovid makes no use in the story of Ceyx of the theme of boasting and divine retaliation. When we compare Ovid's treatment of metamorphoses with the similar myths reported in synopsis from Boios or Nicander, our respect is only increased for his discrimination, both in selecting versions for adaptation and in the subtle modification of their tone by changes of narrative form, emphasis, or characterisation.

The poignancy of the narrative of Ceyx and Alcyone depends on the lovers' innocence. Ceyx is a man of peace,²² democratic (283 f.), a respecter of suppliants (286 f.), and loyal to his brother, for whose sake he makes the last sea-voyage (410–413), even forcing himself to leave a loving wife, despite her pleas and his own inclination (446–461).²³ His suppliant Peleus has offended the sea-goddess Psamathe by the murder of Phocus, but Thetis secures Psamathe's forgiveness for Peleus, and there is no suggestion that the host Ceyx has committed any offence against the deities of the sea. At the same time the reader's sense of moral justice is not offended, because the death of Ceyx will be treated not as malice or retribution from the gods, but as the arbitrary cruelty of impersonal elements.²⁴ Otis complains that the idealisation of the couple has deprived the storm of its justification, but in the evolving tradition of Hellenistic Romance hardships did not need to be deserved, and the ordeals of

²¹Ovid reports a similar rescue-metamorphosis in the tale of Perdix thrown from the acropolis by his uncle Daedalus at *Met.* 8.236–259.

²²Cf. *Met.* 11.270 *regnum sine vi, sine caede regebat* and 296 *cura mihi pax est—pacies mihi cura tenendae*.

²³Cf. 446 *neque enim minor ignis in ipso est*; 451 *non tamen idcirco causam probat*; 461 *quaerente moras Ceyce*.

²⁴Otis 233.

lovers were introduced not as moral consequences but as occasions for heroism and pathos.²⁵ Even in the Trojan cycle some myths, such as that of Protesilaus, do not seem to presuppose an offence by the victim, and if the storm that destroyed the Greek fleet on its return from Troy was incurred by the guilt of Ajax son of Oileus, many that suffered in it were guiltless. So although Ceyx and Alcyone are the children of Lucifer and Aeolus respectively (cf. 444, 561, 570 f.), divinities who might be expected to control the warring elements, the divine parents, like the Olympians, have no power over the storm.²⁶

In everything that precedes the storm Ovid stresses the couple's loyalty. Alcyone first appears distraught with fear at the possibility that her husband may risk his life in the wolfhunt, embracing him in loving anxiety (*pios . . . metus*, 389–390). Like Andromache in Book 6 of the *Iliad* she is full of inspired foreboding and pleads in language reminiscent of Roman elegy, begging him to abstain from battle and save her life in saving his (*animasque duas ut servet in una*, 388).²⁷ When he next prepares to leave, she turns as pale as boxwood (417 f.), like poor Thisbe finding her lover already dead,²⁸ and weeping addresses Ceyx with *piae . . . querelae* (419 ff.), a loving version of the *schetliasmos* by which elegiac mistresses aimed to prevent their lovers from departure.²⁹ But any hint of selfishness is dispelled by her vivid presentiment of danger by sea (*ponti tristis imago*, 427) and her memory of *κενοτάφια*, the empty tombs set up by friends in honour of those drowned at sea—a motif that will return when she learns of his death. So too she ends her plea with

²⁵Heisermann (above, n. 5) 56. If we substitute metamorphosis for “final rescue,” his *schema* of the Romance matches the successive scenes of Ovid's tale: “The first phase . . . generates pitying admiration for the lovers and fear . . . the second . . . fear that they will be separated; the third fear that they will never find each other again; the fourth a growing hope that they will be reunited; the fifth a grateful joy in their salvation.”

²⁶Although both Aeolus, son of Hellen and Orseis and grandson of Deucalion, and his daughter's son Aeolus are at times given the attributes of the Homeric Aeolus, son of Hippotes (cf. Diod. 5.7, and Hyginus 125), Ovid is the only surviving source for Alcyone as child of the King of the Winds rather than the Thessalian king. It is likely that he made the identification knowingly in order to give point to Alcyone's fear of the storm-winds. See Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexicon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, 1.192–195.

²⁷On the elegiac formulation of this and other speeches by Alcyone see Tränkle (above, n. 7) 472 f. He compares with 387 and 700 Propertius 2.20.18 and 28b.39.

²⁸*Met.* 4.134–135. Alcyone's faint may be designed to recall that of Andromache in *Il.* 22.466–467, after she hears of Hector's death.

²⁹Tränkle (above, n. 7) 472 f. compares Propertius 1.6.7–18. For the *longae viae* compare Tibullus 1.2.26 and 1.3.36; 1.9.16 and 2.6.3. On the topoi of the *schetliasmos* in *propemptica* see Cairns, *Generic Composition in Greek and Roman Poetry* (Edinburgh 1972) 15, 138.

words that will undergo a variation when she is faced with the certainty of his death: *me quoque tolle simul: certe iactabimur una;/... pariterque feremus/quidquid erit; pariter super aequora lata feremur* (441–443).³⁰

Ceyx can only swear in ominous words to return "if only the fates will release him" (and the verb *remittent*, 452, carries the secondary meaning of "send back") before the second coming of the full moon. Alcyone's conviction of his doom convinces the reader also, and the sense of inevitable tragedy intensifies as Ceyx is swept out of the harbour, despite his pretexts for delay (*quaerente moras Ceyce*, 461) by the wilful haste of the healthy young oarsmen. The immense storm which develops at this point puts Ceyx out of our minds after this last hint of his reluctance to leave, and does not return us to him until the ship is breaking up and his doom is sealed. While others think of home and dear ones, Ceyx thinks only of Alcyone; *Alcyone Ceyca movet, Ceycis in ore / nulla nisi Alcyone est, et cum desideret unam, gaudet abesse tamen* (544–546).³¹ As he is taken by the poet through a separate personal shipwreck, he swims with Alcyone's name still on his lips (563–564), begging for his body to be brought back to her so that he can be buried by her loving hands. With his last breath he murmurs her name to the waves (567), so that his dying prayer reinforces the oath he swore before departure, foreshadowing a time when the waves will act upon his words and deliver his body up to her.³²

Alcyone, like Andromache at the moment of Hector's death, is unaware of her loss, busy, again like Andromache, or Propertius' Arethusa, preparing new garments to welcome her husband and supplicating the gods for a return that is no longer possible.³³ It is from embarrassment that Ovid's rather Callimachean Juno is driven to disabuse Alcyone. What is needed is a vision of Ceyx to confirm his death, so just

³⁰Add to Tränkle's parallels (473) Propertius 2.26.44 *certe isdem nudi pariter iactabimur oris*.

³¹An echo of Ovid's description of Cephalus the lover at *Met.* 7.707–708; *Procrin amabam / pectore Procris erat, Procris mihi semper in ore*.

³²Without denying Ovid's eye for absurdity, when for instance he adapts this motif to his own imagined shipwreck in *Tristia* 1.2.34 *dumque loquor vultus obruit unda meos*, I see no justification in Ovid's language for the amusement of Galinsky (*Ovid's Metamorphoses* [Oxford 1975] 145); contrast O. S. Due (*Changing Forms* [Copenhagen 1974] 147) who recognises Ovid's continued emotional commitment throughout the storm-narrative, while rightly pointing out that irony can coexist with such commitment.

³³Cf. *tantorum ignara malorum* 573 with *Il.* 22.437, and 574 f. with Andromache's preparations at 440–445. For the weaving compare Prop. 4.3.18; so too the *vota* (*utque foret sospes coniunx suus utque rediret/optabat nullamque sibi praeferret*, 580 f.) echo Prop. 4.3.69–70 *incorrupta mei conserva foedera lecti. / hac ego te sola lega redisse velim*. But the fear of infidelity, which is natural in the world of elegy, seems out of place in Ovid's context, when Ceyx's death is known to the readers.

as the offended Ceres despatched a mountain nymph to interview the contagious god of hunger and send him to punish Erysichthon,³⁴ Juno now commissions Iris to contact the god of sleep. A tradition going back to Homer had employed Sleep as Juno's agent of deception in overwhelming Zeus after the great seduction-scene³⁵ and Virgil had given him the added power to simulate a living man and entice the helmsman Palinurus to his death. Could not Sleep have acted directly as Juno's agent to Alcyone? Instead Ovid follows the Hesiodic tradition associating Sleep with the tribe of dreams (*Theogony* 214), and peoples the house of Sleep with *somnia vana*.³⁶ Yet it is not even one of these that is sent to Alcyone, but a specialist, Morpheus, the *artificem simulatoremque figurae* (634), skilled in conveying the gait, expression and even intonation of men, in fact Metamorphosis personified. In an uninhibited vein of phantasy Ovid enumerates the other special impersonators on the team, whose versatility in simulating all creatures and even inanimate objects (639, 642 f.) combines with Morpheus' special acting skills to render all the anonymous dreams of 613–615 superfluous. Next, Ovid sketches in the theatrical transformation as the dream takes on Ceyx's facial features and body, embellishing them with a suitable deathly pallor and sea-water dripping from his locks and beard. With his first words, like a good confidence trickster, he forestalls challenge: "Do you recognise your husband, Alcyone, or has my appearance changed?" As we will see, the allusion to his changed features has a serious resonance that will recall to readers of Virgil tragic ghost-visions of Sychaeus all bloody from his murder (*Aen.* 1.355) and Hector befouled and disfigured from his dragging by Achilles' chariot (*Aen.* 2.272 f.). The imposter reiterates that he is Ceyx's ghost (*pro coniuge coniugis umbram* [660]; *ipse ego fata tibi praesens mea naufragus edo* [668]) and ends with a request not for burial, but for her grief; she is to weep and put on mourning so that she will not send him to Tartarus unwept.

At this point the tender-hearted reader may well feel unease: if Alcyone has been informed unambiguously of her husband's death, yet she has been deceived, and Ceyx's longing for burial at her hands is no

³⁴*Met.* 8.785 f. The chain of commands from Ceres to the Oread to *Fames* is absent from Callimachus' *Hymn to Demeter* (cf. Otis 414–415; Hollis, *Ovid. Metamorphoses Book VIII* 120 f.), Ovid's only known source. Wilamowitz, *Hellenistische Dichtung* 2.44, identified the role of personified *Fames* as an Ovidian innovation, adding "Ovid hat ja mehr solcher Erfindungen." Our chain of command, more complex than that in Book 8, is likely to have been elaborated by Ovid as a result of his satisfaction with the handling of *Fames* in Book 8.

³⁵Cf. *Il.* 14.230–291, 353–361; *Aen.* 5.835–861.

³⁶Compare the *somnia vana* that cluster in the great elm at the entrance to Orcus at *Aen.* 6.283–285 (sleep, *Sopor*, is close by among other *daemones*, cf. 278). In *Aen.* 5.840 sleep comes to Palinurus *tristia somnia portans*.

nearer fulfilment. Why is the trusting wife fobbed off with a false ghost when true friends and lovers since Homer had been granted the comfort and protection of their beloved dead?

The fact is that Ovid's false ghost is the first offspring of the union of two distinct traditions. In the first the dead return to those they love: if they are duly buried they come to warn and advise; if unburied they come to beg for burial. In the second tradition gods throughout the history of epic have deceived men for good or evil through the agency of impersonation and dreams of the living.

Consider first the tradition of the returning dead. When Patroclus came to Achilles (πάντ' αὐτῷ μέγεθος τε καὶ δμματα κάλ' ἔκνυα, / καὶ φωνήν, καὶ τοῖα περὶ χροῖ εἴματα ἔστο [*Il.* 23.66–67]), he was still unburied. Propertius too represents the wraith of Cynthia, her true *umbra* and her own self, as complaining at the inadequacy of her burial, although she had indeed been cremated and passed the door of Hades.³⁷ Not only epic but prose literature is full of such dream-visions of the unburied; compare the Greek tales reported by Cicero of the Arcadian traveller whose ghost warned his friend to recover his body and avenge his death, or that of Simonides and the drowned sailor who appeared to him in a dream to thank him for burial, or Plautus' fiction of Diapontios, the murdered and unburied ghost from overseas, or Pliny's tale of the haunted house.³⁸ Palinurus does not need to haunt Aeneas to secure his burial, since Aeneas meets him in the underworld, but he begs him either for burial (*Aen.* 6.365–366) or supernatural aid in crossing the barrier of Styx.

Such a request was so predictable that when Virgil's Venus summarises for Aeneas the tale of Sychaeus' murder, she implies the whole situation in the epithet of the phrase *inhumati . . . imago / coniugis* (*Aen.* 1.355). The ghost had urgent information to convey, so that Virgil's oblique narrative omits the request for burial, yet it is inconceivable that Dido left him unburied. Throughout the *Aeneid* we also meet dreams of the second type in which the buried dead ask no favours but give needed advice or stimulus to Aeneas in his moments of doubt or inertia. Hector's vision is required to send him out to fight, and justify his flight from Troy, and Anchises' opportune portent is reinforced by the waking vision of Creusa, directing his flight and reassuring him that she has been spared captivity or physical death by the intervention of Cybele.³⁹ Again the

³⁷Prop. 4.7. The dream vision speaks as *umbra*; it is one of the *pia somnia* (88, truthful dreams, or dreams sent as an act of *pietas*?) and can visit him only as long as the shades are released from Hades, until dawn. For the inadequate burial rites cf. 23–34.

³⁸Cicero *Div.* 1.57; Plaut. *Most.* 497–503; Pliny *Ep.* 7.27.5–11.

³⁹*Aen.* 2.772–789. Virgil's language is intentionally discreet. Austin comments on his . . . *oris* (788): "a vague mysterious phrase for Creusa's new, unearthly 'shore.'" Living or dead, the body is no longer on earth.

ghost of Anchises appears to Aeneas in dreams, as he reports in *Aen.* 4.351 f., to drive him away from Carthage and will appear to him once more at Jupiter's command in *Aeneid* 5 to urge him on his destined route to Italy, and depart like a true shade at the approach of dawn.⁴⁰

The dead appear to those they love, either in appeal for burial or to serve the living, and, from a mechanical point of view, to motivate a new phase in the epic action. If the shade of Ceyx had appeared to Alcyone, it would have been to lament his lack of burial, or even to appeal outright for her help, and Ovid's readers would have been led by convention to expect the ghost's return if only to give a last pledge of his love.

Instead he is replaced by an impersonator, a *daemon*, acting indirectly at Juno's command. Traditionally Juno depended on agents to carry out her intentions, and these agents, from Hypnos in the *Iliad* to Iris and Lyssa in Euripides and Iris or Allecto in the *Aeneid*,⁴¹ were malicious and obstructive. But other gods too resort to intermediaries to perform their acts of deception, and personifications such as *Fama* or Allecto, or Ovid's *Invidia* and *Fames*, bring only pain and harm to those they visit.⁴² Homer rarely deals with such personifications, but his Zeus makes use of the agency of the destructive dream (*οὐλος δνείρος*) to mislead Agamemnon, and causes him to break off the campaign against Troy. Although Agamemnon recognises the vision of Nestor which he has seen in sleep as a mere dream, his faith in the veracity of dreams ensures that he will obey Zeus' agent, with disastrous effect.⁴³

One last precedent is a benevolent dream, when the *forma* of Mercury appears to Aeneas on shipboard before leaving Carthage. Like Ovid, Virgil stresses the detailed resemblance of this *forma* to its original, and his description, *omnia Mercurio similis vocemque coloremque / et crines flavos et membra decora iuventa*,⁴⁴ shows that the poet has the linguistic means to present such a dream in subjective terms, as seen by the dreamer, without committing himself to the reality or fraudulence of the vision. The waking Aeneas has already seen Mercury that day (265–278) and the message of the dream is as urgent and salutary as that of the god himself. What matters is not the status of this *forma*, but the utter con-

⁴⁰ *Aen.* 5.722–740. J. B. Stearns, *Studies in the Dream as a Technical Device in Latin Epic and Drama* (Diss. Princeton 1927), does not go beyond the obvious in comment on these episodes. H. R. Steiner, *Der Traum in der Aeneis* (Bern 1952), offers a subtler analysis, but is not relevant to arguments advanced here.

⁴¹ *Il.* 14.230–291; Eur. *HF* 822–873 (the mission is delegated from Iris to Lyssa); Virg. *Aen.* 5.618–653; 7.415–458.

⁴² Cf. *Aen.* 4.179–197 (*Fama*); *Met.* 2.770–812 (*Invidia*); *Met.* 8.739–772 (*Fames*). I owe this point to an anonymous referee of this journal.

⁴³ *Il.* 2.20–34. Agamemnon's reaction is described at 56–59; he repeats the words of the dream at 60–70.

⁴⁴ *Aen.* 4.558–559; the episode is deliberately compressed to 556–570.

viction felt by Aeneas, and on this he acts instantly, rousing his comrades before dawn.

So does Alcyone, and in many ways Ovid's Morpheus can be compared to Mercury. The resemblance is detailed and total, the message true, the effect instantaneous, and Ovid takes pains to stress Alcyone's conviction—in her vain attempts to embrace him,⁴⁵ in her immediate response (*mane! quo te rapis? ibimus una*, 676) and in her long speech, as she moves from the affirmation of his authenticity (*umbra fuit, sed et umbra tamen manifesta virique / vera mei*, 688 f.) to address the departed dream in a *schetliasmos*, renewing her protests at Ceyx's original departure. In 695–708 Ovid recalls and develops 421–444, echoing her treatment of his journey as a personal desertion (695; cf. 423), recalling her wish to go with him (696 f.; cf. 441–443), and identifying his sea-tossed shipwreck with her own vicarious suffering (700 f.; cf. 441). But in death she can accompany him (a motif echoed from Thisbe⁴⁶) and in a last echo she now envisages the cenotaph, like those which terrified her in the past (705–708; cf. 429), in which their names, if not their bodies, may be joined.

But when the dawn comes, the grieving widow goes to the shore, not to drown herself, as these last words seem to suggest, nor of course to look for her husband's corpse. How could she expect to find it? Ceyx had asked the waves to carry him, but the shipwreck took place halfway to Claros⁴⁷ and if Juno had any knowledge of his destination, Ovid has taken good care not to raise the issue. There has been no suggestion that his body can ever be returned for burial.⁴⁸ She goes to the shore to recall her last sight of him, but gradually becomes aware of the approaching thing, *nescio quid quasi corpus* (716), in the waters. Skirting the horror inherent in the body's condition, Ovid brings her the moment of recognition: Ceyx has returned, and in her eagerness to reach the body the woman leaps onto the breakwater and becomes a flying creature, a bird whose

⁴⁵On the embrace and its origin in Achilles' vain attempt to embrace the shade of Patroclus see Austin on *Aen.* 2.789 f. Virgil repeats the motif at *Aen.* 6.700 f.; Ovid does not imitate the threefold attempt given by the two episodes of the *Aeneid*.

⁴⁶Cf. *Met.* 4.151–153, *persequar extinctum letique miserrima dicar / causa comesque tui; quique a me morte revelli / heu sola poteris, poteris nec morte revelli*.

⁴⁷Cf. Tränkle (above, n. 7) 469–470. The distance from Trachis to Claros is over 200 miles.

⁴⁸It is interesting that when Chaucer retells this tale in the Book of the Duchess he replaces Ovid's loose connections with a stronger sequence of motivation. Alcyone sends men overseas to look for Ceyx, and only when no trace is found does she beg Juno for a sign "Whether my Lord be Quayke or ded" (121). Morpheus (as Ceyx) asks Alcyone for burial, explaining "for such a Tyde ye mowe hyt fynde the sea beside" (207–208). Accelerating his narrative, Chaucer reports only Alcyone's single cry of despair, and that she died within three days. He leaves the tale without mentioning the metamorphosis of either partner.

beak utters a full lament as it flies beyond human reach to touch the corpse, enfolding it with its wing-spread and vainly attempting to kiss the dead. This leap, the last trace of the suicide leap⁴⁹ which originally features in this as in other myths of water-birds (compare Antoninus Liberalis 11 and 12), has been skilfully reinterpreted by Ovid; he has not only substituted a positive motivation for Alcyone's action, and eliminated any reference to suicide from her return to the shore, but he has anticipated the metamorphosis, so that she is already a bird when she soars to the breakwater, and it is the sea-bird, not the earthbound woman, who takes the significant leap into the alien element.

At the same time, just as the dead or dying Pyramus and Procris are allowed a last moment of consciousness to perceive their beloved,⁵⁰ so, beyond all the limits of fictional possibility, the corpse seems to the bystanders to respond, and the poet vouches for Ceyx's response. Divine pity changes Ceyx too, so that both become birds,⁵¹ and their continued love and parenthood is guaranteed by the poet before he takes leave of the scene.

Such a metamorphosis never was, nor such a bitter-sweet reunion across so many miles of sea. But if Ovid's goal was the reunion of the lovers' bodies, as a precondition for their joint metamorphosis and united happiness in their new kind of life,⁵² we begin to see why he substituted the dream impersonator for the spirit of Ceyx, although his promise before departure and his final prayer must have led Ovid's readers to desire and expect a visit from his *umbra*; in the elegiac tradition, as Tränkle reminds us, *traicit et fati litora magnus amor* (Prop. 1.19.10).

It is not, as Otto Immisch⁵³ once proposed in an extremely persuasive

⁴⁹While suicide may be the natural implication of Hyginus' *propter amorem ipsa se in mare praecipitavit*, his words fairly represent Ovid's narrative. Did Hyginus not intend any suggestion of suicide? It may be relevant that he omits Alcyone from the list of those *quae se ipsae interfecerunt* (263).

⁵⁰The moment of recognition occurs in the death-scene of Pyramus at *Met.* 4.145–146 and of Procris at *Met.* 7.851–862.

⁵¹There may be deliberate tact in Ovid's choice of the generic *alite* to cover the traditionally different species of the Kingfisher—Halcyon (on which see Pollard [above, n. 9] 96–98 and 171) and Tern-Ceyx (see Pollard 73). Many of the aetiological myths quoted by Antoninus Liberalis turn related or married mortals into separate species (e.g., the wife of Periphas; he is turned into an eagle; Zeus, to help her, changes her into a vulture). But while this killed two bird-aetiologies with one story, it is biologically awkward, and in the case of the halcyons not only incompatible with the promised nestlings, but in conflict with the commonest tradition which called both the nesting-birds Halcyons.

⁵²We may see metamorphosis here as fulfilling the same function as the "apparent death and marvellous resurrection" which Heisermann (above, n. 5) 63 identifies as a recurring convention of the Greek Romance.

⁵³"Necare," *RhM* 80 (1931) 98–102.

paper, that the drowned man's soul cannot escape, and is stifled beneath the waves. For the scattered evidence collected by Immisch suggesting belief that the drowned lost all possibility of survival for their souls can be countered by many ancient anecdotes. The unburied corpse of the drowned man is able to appear in Simonides' dream and thank him for burial, and warn him of the danger of setting sail; in the epigrams of the anthology the dead speak almost by the requirements of the genre, but commonly in epitaphs of the speaking drowned these victims are conceived as fearing the physical misery of renewed buffeting or of being eaten by fishes,⁵⁴ if their grave is too near the water's edge. Indeed drowning and physical mutilation on reefs, or by fishes and sea-birds, are among the favourite motifs of ancient curse-literature from Archilochus to the author of the Ovidian *Ibis*.⁵⁵ If ever the Greeks had believed that drowned men forfeited their souls, or had no power to function as ghosts, they soon lost that belief, and Ovid had the double precedent of popular tales and of literary epigram. Had he wanted to write a ghost visitation for Ceyx, he could have delighted his readers with the traditional episode, and of the speech (658–670) not a word need have been changed.

Since Ovid is well-known for his use of devices to reduce tension, it is natural to look for the motive of this innovation in a desire to offset his reader's sentimental response with a more intellectual pleasure in the element of humour—or perhaps not so much humour, as the sense of intrigue appropriate to ancient comedy. As Brooks Otis has shown, this whole extension to the narrative of the lovers adds immensely to the emotional variety of the story, which becomes a brilliant sequence of shifting moods and setting. After the sentiment of their parting and the dramatic terror of the storm, Ovid's double invention of the drowsy house and person of Sleep himself, followed by the quick-change versatility of the professional dream, not only provides an easing of tension but offers the greatest possible contrast with the intense emotion of Alcyone's reaction. For the invention of this delightful imposter has in no way affected the tone or outcome of Alcyone's vision, and we should seek

⁵⁴The Simonides anecdote of Cic. *Div.* 1.57 (see above, 339 and n. 38) was obviously a classic of popular philosophical writing, but also known to the epigrammatists who have left two anonymous and undatable epigrams, one (*A.P.* 7.77) attributed to the drowned man, and the other (*A.P.* 7.516) to Simonides himself. In the run of epitaphs attributed to the drowned from *A.P.* 7.263, note 267 (Posidippus) and 283 (Leonidas) begging not to be buried too near the water-line. Even the cenotaph is allowed to voice the fears of the drowned man whom it honours; *A.P.* 7.500 (Euhippos). Ovid has drawn the cenotaph motif of 706–707 from just such epigrams. Compare also the drowned speaker of Horace's Archytas Ode (1.28).

⁵⁵For such curses compare Archilochus fr. 79A (whence the similar curse of Horace *Epodes* 10.21–22), Ennius *sc.* 296 ff. (Jocelyn) and Ovid *Ibis* 149–150, 249–254.

Ovid's motive for creating Morpheus not in the incidental wit and imagination of the transitional passage (635–658)⁵⁶ but in the artistic consideration which originally led him to avoid the traditional encounter, and deny the return of Ceyx's spirit. And this, I have been led to realise, is the consequence of the physical return, the restoration of Ceyx's body and ensuing metamorphosis. Just as Ovid must not detract from the climactic value of the return by any hint of how it will take place, so he must not allow Ceyx to address Alcyone before this reunion of bodies. Indeed the soul must not leave the body, for it has to be present in the corpse for the possibility of metamorphosis, which entails metempsychosis. Any visit from Ceyx's wraith would have implied the final reduction of the drowned body to useless matter.

Although there are several transformation myths⁵⁷ in which a corpse vanishes, to be replaced by a bird, or stone, or flower, there is no resuscitation like Ceyx's in ancient literature, outside Ovid himself. For when Memnon, killed by Achilles, is placed upon the funeral pyre, and his mother Eos begs Jupiter for some honour, some *solacia mortis* (*Met.* 13.598), Jupiter sends a miracle. Ovid adds to the traditional transformation of his mourning sisters (13.608 f.) a delayed metamorphosis of the smoke from the pyre, which takes on life (*anima*) from the elements of fire and becomes a living bird. There is no comparable transformation of the corpse in the parallel account of Quintus Smyrnaeus or the earlier epitomators of *ornithogonia*. This is Jupiter's reward for the mother's *piae . . . lacrimae* (13.621 f.).⁵⁸

Ceyx and Alcyone embody undying devotion, and their transformation is represented by Ovid as reward and perpetuation of that love: *fatis obnoxius isdem / hinc quoque mansit amor, nec coniugiale solutum / foedus in alitibus* (743–745). This analysis has, I hope, shown the extensive reshaping of the recorded myth which Ovid undertook to ensure the happy outcome in their second life. He chose to rewrite the original separation tragedy of shipwreck, loss and eternal mourning, bringing Ceyx's body back to the shores of Trachis and sending Alcyone to the shore to find him. This excluded the return of his ghost, for which Ovid substituted the perfect impersonator, motivating his coming by the distaste of Juno for contamination from the vows of the bereaved. In so

⁵⁶Compare Otis's comments (248–250) on the sleep episode and the dream.

⁵⁷Compare from Antoninus Liberalis 1.5 (Nicander Bk 3 = Gow fr. 49) the dove that flies up from where Ctesylla's body has vanished; in 13.6 (Nicander Bk 2 = Gow 44) the corpse of Aspalis disappears, to be replaced by a statue; in 37.5 the corpses of the Greeks disappear by the orders of Zeus and their souls are turned into birds. In 13, as in 33.3, the story of Alcmene's death, there is no question of life being regenerated from the corpse. From Ovid himself, compare the tale of Narcissus, in which a flower appears instead of his body: *nusquam corpus erat; croceum pro corpore florem / inveniunt* (*Met.* 3.509 f.).

doing Ovid retained all the emotion of the dream itself, and was able to represent Alcyone's grief and love in the last phase of the narrative with a pathos that matched and even surpassed her love and foreboding at the outset. Ovid's tale has thus taken on the colouring and structure, at least in part, of the Romance, in which the fears, hardships and sorrows of Ceyx and Alcyone only increase for the reader the sweetness of their rebirth and renewal of *ad finem servatos . . . amores* (750).⁵⁹

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⁵⁸Qu. Smyrnaeus *Posthomericæ* 2.644. Haupt-Ehwald (on 13.576) hypothesize an Alexandrian source for Ovid which combined the motif of immortality from the Aethiopis narrative with the Phoenix legend: cf. Proclus in *Homeri Opera* (ed. T. W. Allen [Oxford 1912]) 5.106. But Ovid himself uses the Phoenix legend in *Met.* 15.392 f., and deserves credit for this invention rather than the imaginary Alexandrian genius of traditional *Quellenforschung*.

⁵⁹Cf. Otis 270: "their sheer devotion effects the victorious metamorphosis." Ovid's deliberate reshaping of traditional metamorphosis literature to stress the value and rewards of piety, in every sense, including true love, is one theme of a lecture given by my colleague Professor Richard Tarrant at Harvard University earlier this year. I am grateful to Professor Tarrant, both for the opportunity to read his lecture, and for many helpful comments and references during the composition of my own paper. Most of what is good in it has been improved by his suggestions; what is at fault is my own.