Two Rivers and the Reader in Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 8[*]

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SUMMARY: This paper examines the experience of the reader as she negotiates Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, reflecting and responding to the complexity of the narrative in the process. The central book of the poem is the perfect point at which to explore the interrelationship of narrative and reader: both are in the ideal position to look forward and back. Where has this story (as well as the reader) come from? Where is it (as well as she) going? Both by its placement and by the narrative repetitions it enacts, *Metamorphoses* 8 invites the reader to make meaning from and so to navigate the labyrinth of the text.

THE *METAMORPHOSES* LUXURIATES IN ITS OWN NOVELTY, making virtues of narrative discontinuity and ruptured expectations. At the same time, this novelty is brilliantly controlled—a delicate balance between style and structure

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permits narrative patterns to stand in for continuity and predictability, giving the poet greater freedom to experiment with narrative techniques even as his reader acquires a new competence in making meaning from these techniques. Attempts to isolate a dominant and central theme or pattern in the poem have therefore of necessity faltered, because Ovid makes it clear from the outset that any attempt to find a dominant theme, whether in a book, or a group of books, or in a certain percentage of the poem, invites self-subversion. Thus, Otis's famed four movements, while perhaps of some didactic value, tell us little about either the poem as a whole or its individual episodes.[1] Wheeler's recent monograph on narrative dynamics in the *Metamorphoses*, as well as my work on narrative patterns in the *Fasti*, suggests that the links embedded by Ovid in his text are interactive and interdynamic, and do not invite a "simple" reading (whatever that would be) of his poems.[2] The processes of comprehension and of making meaning are evidently complex and demanding features of reading. In this essay, I shall pursue what I call "embedded" reading, a practice we all engage in especially when we read for pleasure (as opposed to reading for "the facts"). As readers, we look backwards and forwards for guidance and direction, in search of meaningful patterns;[3] for his part, Ovid is always concerned to "embed" his reader into the poem so that these patterns will be accessible. The task of the embedded reader—the "ideal first-reader," to use Winkler's term[4]—is to negotiate the tensions between the details of a particular episode and the trajectory of the narrative as a whole.

The term "embeddedness" that I use here is usually attributed not to a reader but to a text. Embeddedness features prominently in discussions of

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[1] Otis 83–90.

[2] Wheeler 2000; Boyd 2000.

[3] See Iser 54–55 on the metaphor of 'flowing' to describe narrative: "This whole process [i.e., of reading] represents the fulfillment of the potential, unexpressed reality of the text, but it is to be seen only as a framework for a great variety of means by which the virtual dimension may be brought into being. *The process of anticipation and retrospection itself does not by any means develop in a smooth flow* …. If one regards the sentence sequence as a continual flow, this implies that the anticipation aroused by one sentence will generally be realized by the next, and the frustration of one's expectations will arouse feelings of exasperation. And yet *literary texts are full of unexpected twists and turns, and frustration of expectations. Even in the simplest story there is bound to be some kind of blockage*, if only because no tale can ever be told in its entirety. Indeed, it is only through inevitable omissions that a story gains its dynamism. Thus whenever the flow is interrupted and we are led off in unexpected directions, the opportunity is given to us to bring into play our own faculty for establishing connections—for filling in the gaps left by the text itself " [my italics]. Cf. also P. A. Miller 1994: 1–6 and 53–57.

[4] Winkler 14.

mise en abyme, i.e., one narrative within another that reflects the whole of the narrative by duplicating its essential features.[5] In this essay, I extend the standard connotation of embeddedness by attributing it to the reader who is located within the narrative through the process of reading itself. This reader both reflects and responds to the complexity of the narrative in the course of her journey through the text—indeed, the text is the reader's journey, and vice versa.[6]

My focus is on *Metamorphoses* 8, the book at the center of the poem.[7] In a fundamental essay on the structure of the *Metamorphoses,* Crabbe (1981) made Book 8 the focus of her study on the basis of its pivotal placement in the poem, and asserted the operation of a thematic symmetry between the beginning, middle, and ending of the *Metamorphoses.* Her reading emphasized the continuity of motifs—bird transformations, descriptions of forests, destructive fires both literal and metaphorical, e.g.—used by Ovid to give the multifarious poem some continuity and thematic unity. I want to extend her approach with a more dynamic purpose, namely, to look at how the types of parallels and patterns she detected shape the reading experience. The central book is the perfect point in the poem at which to expect the embeddedness of both narrative and reader: both are in the ideal position to look forward and back, becoming at this point in the text both the objects and the subjects of the narrative.[8] In *Metamorphoses* 8, we are far from the cosmogonic (re)organization of divine and human affairs with which the poem had (repeatedly) opened;[9] we are also far from the verge of history upon which the poem closes. Looking both forward and backward is central to the experience of being in the middle: Where has this story (as well as the reader) come from? Where is it (as well as she) going? This book suggests by its placement a set of answers that allow the reader to make meaning from the juxtaposition of episodes Ovid presents.

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[5] The standard discussion is by Dällenbach; see also Bal.

[6] On the idea of reading/writing a poem as a journey, cf. Clare passim, esp. Ch. 1; at 261 Clare cites Goldhill 287, describing Apollonius's *Argonautica* with an image very suggestive for this study: "the journey of narration and the journey of the narrative are constantly and in a most self-conscious manner intertwined by the poet." Cf. also Volk, who observes the centrality of the journey metaphor to self-conscious (didactic) poetic discourse.

[7] Cf. also Giangrande; Hutchinson 337–52; and Sharrock 104, noting the centrality of the Daedalus episode to the *Ars* as well.

[8] I am adapting here Dällenbach 70, describing the "retro-prospective reflexion" of the centrally located *mise en abyme.*

[9] Wheeler 2000: 10–47.

1. BACKWARDS AND FORWARDS

Ludwig's interpretation of the *Metamorphoses* posits a forward movement through time as the organizing principle of the poem—from the beginning of time in Book 1 to Ovid's own present in Book 15.[10] Complementary to this movement through time are movements through narrative space—most obviously, from Greece to Rome—and through narrative themes in which a focus on the gods and their deeds and misdeeds gradually gives way to an almost exclusive emphasis on the human experience, from love to war and almost everything in between. Such readings give the poem a pleasing sense of wholeness and smooth its rough edges by offering a progressive *Metamorphoses*, in which things keep getting better and better—the divine violence and manipulative power of the early books become history, as humans increasingly manage their own destiny.

Other elements in the *Metamorphoses*, however, hint at a less unambiguously smooth and progressive narrative design. In fact, Ovid sometimes returns to a character or story with which or with whom we thought we were done, and so reminds us that history is something more than a passage through time; rather, history inheres, and ancient events have modern consequences. An example of this occurs when, soon after Daphne has been transformed into the laurel (1.548–67), we are reminded of the place of the laurel among Apollo's accoutrements (2.600, the Apollo and Coronis episode).[11] In Book 1 itself, we learn that the universe and the world's place in it must be created repeatedly—a sequence that continues at least into Book 2, as Phaethon yet again throws the cosmic order into upheaval.[12] Progress forward through time is not in fact a given, at least not without qualification. Rather, the narrative sequence of history is quite flexible, at least in the *Metamorphoses*—thus, in a notorious instance, the story of Hercules' birth appears immediately after a long narration of his torment and immolation on Mt. Oeta, and subsequent apotheosis (9.159–272, death; 9.281–323, birth).[13] Any sense that the reader might have had that Hercules' involvement in the poem was finished once his death was described must necessarily be revised in light of the subsequent

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[10] Ludwig, following Varro fr. 3 Peter on the divisions of time, divides the poem into three main units (Urzeit, Mythologische Zeit, and Historische Zeit); these are then further subdivided by Ludwig into 12 units.

[11] See also 10.92 (*innuba laurus* included among trees charmed by Orpheus); 12.165; and 15.634.

[12] See Wheeler 2000: 37–46 and Zissos and Gildenhard, the latter of whom offer a reading of temporal discontinuity and its implications not only in the Phaethon episode but throughout Book 2.

[13] On the Hercules narrative, see Wheeler 1999: 135–39.

narrative, which culminates in Alcmene's splendidly anachronistic description of his birth: as Hercules is restored to the narrative, he takes his reader along with him backwards in time even as the narrative moves her further forward in the poem. For the reader, these distortions of linear sequence are disorienting: what is she to expect next? Is there any predictable progress to be made in the narrative/reading process? Is there a pattern in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and must any such pattern be meaningful? The detection of a pattern also involves the activation of memory, and this is the second important characteristic of the embedded reader—she brings to a reading of the *Metamorphoses* memories of other texts, with other patterns, and searches there for help with understanding the present text.

I suggest that in Book 8 Ovid creates a model for further reading—he had already done so at length in Book 1 in the process of launching his reader on her journey through the poem,[14] and now he offers the reader a place to pause and reflect upon her progress thus far. Intertwined with this didactic goal is an implicit reassertion of Ovid's poetic aims and methods, as he too looks back at the progress of the *Metamorphoses* so far and forecasts its future course. This is thus also an important meeting place for poet and reader, as they consider the respective (and retro-prospective) processes in which they are engaged and their relationships to each other.

The repeated (but changing) appearance and involvement of rivers in the book, as features of both the narrative and metanarrative of the *Metamorphoses*, provide a framework for my discussion and a model for the interplay of reader and Ovidian text. The course taken by these rivers parallels—indeed, it determines—the course taken both by characters within the poem and by the poem's reader in pursuit of the narrative. Like the rivers in Ovid's poem, the two rivers in my title do not make an appearance on every page of this essay; yet their subterranean influence on their surroundings—in this case, the substance of my discussion—is inescapable.

2. THE RIVER IN THE LABYRINTH

Typically, Book 8 is described, in a metaphor borrowed from the visual arts, as a triptych, with three main narrative panels: the love of Scylla for Minos; the Calydonian boar hunt; and the narrative entertainment of a group of heroic guests at the home of Achelous.[15] The triptych metaphor, however, while pedagogically useful as a mnemonic device or for purposes of visualization, is limited as an interpretive tool: it does not do a very good job of account-

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[14] See Wheeler 1999: 8–33.
[15] See the commentary of Hollis 1970, and Crabbe esp. 2276–78.

ing for what the so-called subsidiary or minor stories (subsidiary or minor in the sense that they depend on but do not fundamentally alter the triptych design) contribute to the whole, nor for differences in narrative levels. And yet it is exactly here that I think Ovid wants to hold his reader's attention, i.e., on questions about the relationship(s) between adjacent stories, their sequencing, their narrators, and their audiences. Indeed, there is a discernible tension between the order and symmetry of the triptych template on the one hand and the rich but also disorderly series of tales treated in Book 8 on the other, a tension that allows—or forces—the reader to relinquish control of the narrative to Ovid. Where exactly is the story going, and how does it get there? Ovid gives his reader some clues—just enough, I would suggest, to keep her in the game, and to make her want to see where the narrative is headed; yet Ovid also uses surprises and unexpected shifts in the sequence of events to keep his reader in suspense. The changes in perspective that these shifts often entail keep the reader "in" the poem, working to make sense of what she already knows. An analogy for this process can be found in a cleverly written mystery novel, where much familiar, even stock material and established character-types are interlaced with surprises, tricks, clues, evidence withheld or revealed; the reader must frequently re-evaluate her own status as reader by wondering whether she has already tripped over an important clue, or whether a certain detail of the narrative, perhaps introduced casually, will later have bearing on the mystery. To some extent, the mystery reader identifies with the detective; indeed, the reader becomes a detective, gathering information and trying not to conclude the investigation before a crucial bit of evidence decides everything; at least in some mystery novels, the reader identifies most closely with one of the characters, particularly when the device of a first-person narrator is used, and so experiences all the biases, insights, and blind spots of this narrator; and all the while, the reader is in the power of the author, who decides how much to reveal, and how, and when, and where. I do not want to take this analogy too far—after all, rarely does a story in the *Metamorphoses* contain much in the way of real mystery—but I use it to heighten our awareness of the fact that there are in the *Metamorphoses* elements of novelty and suspense that Ovid enhances by his manipulation of narrative patterns and of memory.[16]

Ovid provides a representation of this alternative model for the poem's design and its comprehension through the story of Daedalus, a prototype for the great artist whose masterwork, the labyrinth, almost traps the master himself (8.159–68):

[16] For an elaborate and rewarding elaboration of the detective-fiction analogy here proposed, see Winkler esp. 57–98.

Daedalus ingenio fabrae celeberrimus artis
ponit opus turbatque notas et lumina flexa
ducit in errorem uariarum ambage uiarum.
non secus ac liquidis Phrygius Maeandros in undis
ludit et ambiguo lapsu refluitque fluitque
occurrensque sibi uenturas aspicit undas
et nunc ad fontes, nunc ad mare uersus apertum
incertas exercet aquas, ita Daedalus implet
innumeras errore uias uixque ipse reuerti
ad limen potuit; tanta est fallacia tecti.

Most renowned for his talent in the builder's craft, Daedalus sets up the project and confuses the recognizable signs, and with the twisted duplicity of various paths leads the eyes into confusion. In the same way, the Phrygian Meander plays in the liquid waters, and with dual gliding flows and flows back again, and as it looks at the waters approaching runs into itself; now it urges on the uncertain streams to their source, now again to the open sea. Just so does Daedalus fill the countless paths with confusion; indeed, he himself was scarcely able to return to the threshold, so great is the deceptiveness of the edifice.

The structure designed by Daedalus for the Minotaur is complex and confusing, in the first place meant to trap a monster; but as Daedalus's own experience implies, the labyrinth can confound even its own designer and master artisan, not to mention the other visitors and viewers who wish to observe and explore his work. The difficulty of maintaining an objective grasp of the labyrinth's architecture challenges even the most observant, and has the potential to trap any visitor.[17]

Some scholars have focused on the characterization of Daedalus here as the master craftsman who, like Ovid the poet, creates an elaborate object and is almost outdone by it himself, and whose deceptive *ars* results in an eventual and inestimable failure.[18] Nonetheless, while these features are an important part of Ovid's narrative, equally important (if not more so) is the description of the created object itself (*opus,* 160), the labyrinth with its countless twists and turns and misleading routes in and out of the structure. Ovid emphasizes in his description of the labyrinth two complementary features: the many misleading routes it offers (*uariarum ambage uiarum,* 160; *innumeras … uias,* 167) and the consequent wandering these paths make inevitable (*ducit in errorem,* 161; *errore,* 167).[19] There is also a subtle

[17] For illustrations of the labyrinths known from the ancient visual arts, see Kraft.

[18] Leach, however, excludes Daedalus from her general discussion—see 139 n.32.

[19] Rosati 1983 esp. 95–129 is fundamental on the deceptiveness of "appearances" in Ovid, although his emphasis is on the deception of characters within the narrative, en-

change in perspective in the course of this description: Daedalus begins on the outside of the labyrinth, as the brilliant engineer who oversees the design and construction of this project: the verbs *ponit*, *turbat*, and *ducit* (159–60) put him in charge. But when the description of the labyrinth continues in lines 166–68, a subtle shift has taken place: now the emphasis is on what is within the labyrinth, and Daedalus is inside his own project, so deep within in fact that he is disoriented and can hardly find the way out himself (*uixque ipse reuerti / ad limen potuit*). In other words, Daedalus, himself a prototype of Theseus, is embedded in the labyrinth; and his experience has become analogous to that of Ovid's reader, who has begun the reading process on the outside of the poem, so to speak, but who has gradually and inexorably been compelled to enter the poem, and so has become lost within it, not knowing how to move outwards again.[20]

If we take the parallel between Daedalus and Ovid as a given here, the reading I have just suggested may seem somewhat confusing—I have suggested that Daedalus is by turns like both the poet and the reader of the *Metamorphoses*. Yet this doubling of perspective is exactly what we should expect from a labyrinthine reading experience—from time to time, we share in the poet's sense of control, while at others we become, like Daedalus, subjects, confused ones at that, within the framework of the narrative. Doob captures this ambiguous experience in her description of the doubleness of ancient and medieval labyrinths:

> … [Labyrinths] presume a double perspective: maze-treaders, whose vision ahead and behind is seriously constricted and fragmented, suffer confusion, whereas maze-viewers who see the pattern whole, from above or in a diagram, are dazzled by its complex artistry. *What you see depends on where you stand*, and thus, at one and the same time, labyrinths are single (there is one physical structure) and double: they simultaneously incorporate order and disorder, clarity and confusion, unity and multiplicity, artistry and chaos. They may be perceived as a path (a linear but circuitous passage to a goal) or as pattern (a complete symmetrical design). *They are dynamic from a maze-walker's perspective and static from a privileged onlooker's point of view.* Their paths are linear, but—since many ancient and medieval labyrinths are round—their pattern

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gineered by Ovid with the complicity of his reader. On the various perspectives evoked by the word *error*, see Kenney ms. on 8.167.

[20] An application of this approach in some ways similar to my own is that offered by O'Hara 1993 discussing Dido as "interpreting character" in the *Aeneid*. Like Virgil's Dido, Ovid's Daedalus models for the reader the hermeneutic skills needed to understand the (narrative) journey. For another approach to the literary labyrinth as *mise en abyme*, see Theodorakopoulos, and cf. Gaisser.

may be circular, cyclical; they describe both the linearity and the architecture of space and time. They may be inextricable (if no one can find the exit) or impenetrable (if no one can find the center). Our perception of labyrinths is thus intrinsically unstable: change your perspective and the labyrinth seems to change…[my italics].[21]

Doob's emphasis on perspective is essential to my discussion, since it illustrates how Ovid has been able to create in Daedalus a character who has the double perspectives of "maze-walker" and of "privileged onlooker." This model for understanding the labyrinthine experience can be easily extended to embrace our experience as readers, for whom the *Metamorphoses* has both a static structure (fifteen books of hexameters narrating innumerable mythological tales, each of which comes to an end in turn and is replaced by another until a final satisfactory ending is achieved) and a dynamic one (characterized by stories whose endings do not coincide with book-endings,[22] odd repetitions and reversals and gaps, unanticipated and sometimes preposterous links between stories, and a general sense of there being no predictable end). It is important to recognize that our sense of which of these structures dominates is determined at any given time by our relationship to the poem, i.e., by how deeply we are embedded in the reading of the poem or not; and also that it is at least on occasion possible to have double vision, to be both inside and outside the *Metamorphoses*—both *actor* and *auctor*, to use Winkler's phrase[23]—as Daedalus and Ovid are both inside and outside the *opera* they have created. This double vision is also suggested by a clever bit of etymological wordplay that has recently been noted by Pavlock: in describing the route of the river Meander with the words *ludit* and *ambiguo lapsu,* Ovid glosses the word *labyrinthus* itself, and so implies that his poem is "characterized by an easy flow and light wit," as opposed to the poetic *labor* which had provided both an etymology for the labyrinth in the *Aeneid* and a metaphor for Aeneas' journey.[24] As I shall show in the following discussion, however, the nature of the poetic labyrinth in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is both playful and laborious, and simultaneously so: it is the tension between the two readings of the labyrinth that keeps the reader engaged and eager to proceed.[25]

[21] Doob 1.

[22] See Holzberg.

[23] Winkler.

[24] See Pavlock 144–47; on the Virgilian etymology for *labyrinthus*, see O'Hara 1996: 166; Doob 95–100, 227–53.

[25] Another more homely analogy may perhaps help to illustrate what I mean: imagine reading Book 8 of the *Metamorphoses* with a class of capable undergraduates. Their necessarily slow progress through the text ensures that they will be to some extent at least

Ovid's description of the labyrinth also contains another ingredient which suggests this doubleness, the simile of the river Meander, which is quite literally contained within the labyrinth: appearing after three lines describing Daedalus and his masterpiece, the Meander simile invites visualization of a natural phenomenon whose shape and movement are mimicked by the labyrinth, and then yields in turn to a further two-and-a-half lines which turn away from the simile and restore the labyrinth to our view. The Meander simile is "inside" the labyrinth as a textual fragment, offering a vision of a marvelous but natural phenomenon to help the reader comprehend the engineered building. The reader thus has two images to contemplate as models for her reading experience, rather than simply the image of the labyrinth itself; and the details added to the picture by the description of the river help to counterbalance the vertiginous feel of the labyrinth.[26] While the Meander may at first seem disorienting by its lack of clear directionality, at least one thing is clear: the water in its riverbed can go in only one of two directions, forward or back; there is not in its description a sense of endless possibilities, as there would be were the river described, e.g., as flooding its banks, or as having countless tributaries. Each of the three central lines of the simile describes the essentially binary appearance of the water's course: it seems

embedded in the text, like those maze-walkers Doob describes; they have probably lost track of exactly where they are in the poem, and of what has preceded, since *ceteris paribus* there is not a lot of logic inherent in the sequencing of stories. Their teacher, meanwhile, has prepared for them precisely the sort of map they need to make sense of their situation—a diagram or outline of the poem as a whole, listing all the major metamorphoses and indicating when one story is set within another. Yet the teacher also experiences the embedded experience of her students as she works through the text with them, and so has access to a sort of double vision of the *Metamorphoses*, from both inside and outside; she is both maze-walker and privileged onlooker (or both first-reader and second-reader, in Winkler's terminology). On the idea of the schoolroom as an "interpretive community," see Wheeler 1999: 75.

    [26] Bartholomé 79–80 notes that the Meander simile is less complex than the labyrinth ecphrasis in which it is embedded: "Durch diesen Vergleich bekommt der Leser eine klare Vorstellung von den vielen Windungen des Mäander selbst, die nicht so kompliziert und verschlungen sind wie die des Labyrinths. Er ist erstaunt darüber, dass die dunklen, unvorstellbaren Worte der vv. 158 bis 161 durch den Vergleich eine klare Vorstellbarkeit erhalten, dass also auch das Labyrinth mit seinen Windungen nicht so kompliziert sein kann, dass der Künstler sich darin verirren konnte. Man spürt einen kleinen Widerspruch." Bartholomé's insight, however, leads him to conclude that Ovid is describing the labyrinth as he has seen it depicted in the visual arts; the narrative function of the two descriptions plays no role in Bartholomé's study.

to be two-directional[27] (*ambiguo lapsu,* 162), it appears to flow backwards and forwards (*refluitque fluitque,* 162), it seemingly runs into itself (*occurrensque sibi uenturas aspicit undas,* 163), and it appears able to go to one of two places (*nunc ad fontes, nunc ad mare uersus apertum,* 164). It emerges from this pattern that the "thread" or "clue" to negotiating this labyrinth lies within the labyrinth itself.[28]

The Meander simile thus helps to define the boundaries of the labyrinth—there is both a source (*fontes*) and an end (*mare apertum*), linked in what is ultimately a linear manner though by a course which has gone through countless twists and turns. Though it is possible to lose one's sense of direction along the way, it is also possible to persist and reach the point opposite that from which one began. The simile thus serves as a form of "contained" reassurance for the persistent and aware reader—there is indeed an end, though it may not be in sight yet; and the experience of both river and labyrinth, as well as of the poem, is fundamentally linear (although its termination in *mare apertum* implies for the time being at least that that ending may not be quite as closed as she would like). As a symbol of containment, Ovid's simile originates in another "contained" or "enclosed" narrative, the ecphrasis of a cloak to be awarded as a prize in the boat race in *Aeneid* 5. The victor there receives a *chlamys* depicting the rape of Ganymede by Jupiter's eagle; and the scenes embroidered on this robe are surrounded by a double meander border: *chlamydem auratam, quam plurima circum / purpura maeandro duplici Meliboea cucurrit* (*Aen.* 5.250–51).[29] Like the simile, the ecphrasis is a story-within-a-story;[30] and while the Virgilian meander border on the one hand is external to the Ganymede narrative, and the Ovidian Meander on the other hand runs inside the labyrinth, there is in both instances an identification of the meander with linearity, with dual directionality (note Virgil's expression *maeandro duplici*), with containment and order coexisting with uncertainty and apparent aimlessness.

The broader context in which the Virgilian meander appears hints at a further level of intertextual reception of the *Aeneid* by Ovid,[31] since the labyrinth

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[27] Of course, *ambiguus* here also characterizes, or focalizes, the experience of the traveler (or reader) attempting to follow the river's course—the closer one is to the river's course, the more difficult it is to maintain one's sense of direction.

[28] I am indebted to G. Rosati for this felicitous image.

[29] On this ecphrasis, see Boyd 1995: 84–89; Putnam; and Hardie.

[30] On the relationship between simile and ecphrasis, see also Boyd 1995: 79–81, 84–88.

[31] For the connection between intertextuality and reception, see Nappa.

too appears as the subject of a simile in *Aeneid* 5. Virgil is describing the *lusus Troiae* with which the funeral games for Anchises culminate (580-95):[32]

> olli discurrere pares atque agmina terni
> diductis soluere choris, rursusque uocati
> conuertere uias infestaque tela tulere.
> inde alios ineunt cursus aliosque recursus
> aduersi spatiis, alternosque orbibus orbis
> impediunt pugnaeque cient simulacra sub armis;
> et nunc terga fuga nudant, nunc spicula uertunt
> infensi, facta pariter nunc pace feruntur.
> ut quondam Creta fertur Labyrinthus in alta
> parietibus textum caecis iter ancipitemque
> mille uiis habuisse dolum, qua signa sequendi
> frangeret indeprensus et inremeabilis error:
> haud alio Teucrum nati uestigia cursu
> impediunt texuntque fugas et proelia ludo,
> delphinum similes qui per maria umida nando
> Carpathium Libycumque secant.

In three groups, they separated, dissolving the lines of battle into two separate bands equal in size; and having been summoned back, they turned their courses toward each other and carried their spears offensively. Then, facing each other with a space between, they circle now in one direction, now in another; they wind in alternating circles and, bearing arms, they create an imitation of battle. Now they expose their backs in flight, now they turn their spears against their opponents; and now, once peace has been declared, they are carried along together in parade. Just as the labyrinth in lofty Crete is said once to have had a path woven with blind walls and deception misleading in a thousand paths, where undetectable and irretraceable wandering would break the signs for following: not otherwise do the sons of the Teucrians intertwine together their paths in the race and weave flight and battle as a game, like dolphins who cut through the watery seas of Carpathia and Libya with their swimming.

Three teams of Trojan youths meet on the mock battlefield; each team splits into two subgroups (*agmina … diductis soluere choris*) and performs an elaborate war dance,[33] confronting each other in mock battle as they move back and forth between each others' ranks. Their movements are comparable

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[32] Cf. the discussion of this simile and the *lusus Troiae* vis-à-vis Catullus 64 by Theodorakopoulos, esp. 129–34.

[33] See Williams on *Aen.* 5.580f., 583f.; and cf. Weeber for a general discussion of the *lusus Troiae*.

to the relative directions of the two strands of fiber in a textile, the warp and woof that when woven together result in the weft. The language of weaving informs both simile and frame: the youths' action is described by the verbs *impediunt* (585 and 593) and *texunt* (593), and the route through the labyrinth to which their course is compared is described as a *textum iter* (589).[34] In fact, the pattern of the youths' "weaving" in the *lusus Troiae* recalls the woven meander that had appeared in the earlier simile in Book 5; and Ovid confirms the association of the two similes by locating his own Meander within the labyrinth. His inversion of the relationship between Meander and embedded scene also has an intertextual connotation, replicating as it does in miniature the relationship of the earlier epic to the *Metamorphoses*: the alternative narratives Virgil had contained within similes and ecphrases have now become the central narrative of the *Metamorphoses*,[35] and the course of this narrative follows the circuitous route of the river running through the center of the labyrinth. Daedalus himself embodies this intertextual dimension, since he too had been both the subject and the *artifex* of a Virgilian ecphrasis, seen on the doors of the temple of Apollo at Cumae in *Aeneid* 6 (*Aen.* 6.14-33).[36] Ovid tells us that Daedalus's reversion (*reuerti, Met.* 8.167) to the threshold of the labyrinth was achieved with difficulty, but it was achieved nonetheless; like the reader, he emerges only to become implicated in other narratives further on in Book 8.[37] The reader, like the embedded Meander and like Daedalus himself, is repeatedly challenged to move forward even when forward and

[34] See Scheid and Svenbro 35–49 for further discussion of the application of the weaving metaphor to the *lusus Troiae.*

[35] Hinds 1998: 104–7 looks at the *Metamorphoses* as Ovid's "rewriting" of the *Aeneid.*

[36] Here too, the labyrinth occurs in a context which implies that the scene can provide a model for reading, as Virgil describes how Aeneas and his men "read" the narrative on the doors until interrupted by the arrival of the Sibyl: *quin protinus omnia / perlegerent oculis,* 6.33–34. We see in this passage too the doubling of perspective on the part of Daedalus, that turns him from objective master craftsman standing outside his work and observing it to a character embedded in the his own narrative. The bibliography cataloguing similarities is abundant: see e.g. Hollis 1970 and Bömer ad loc., and for more recent treatments, see e.g. Casali.

For a discussion of the labyrinth simile in *Aeneid* 5 and its complement in *Aeneid* 6 as signposts of another type of narrative containment, cf. also P. A. Miller 1995.

[37] G. Rosati has suggested to me *per litteras* an appealing description of the double role of the narrator as "narrator (poet)-as-Daedalus" and "narrator (poet)-as-Ariadne"—i.e., as both creator of the labyrinth and as the provider of the thread to negotiate its twists and turns. This description also models the way in which the narrator functions as both a featured character (Daedalus) and an all but invisible presence (Ariadne) in the book.

backward movements become indistinguishable. She consequently may be lost for a time in the *innumerae uiae* of the textual labyrinth; but as in the case of both the Meander and Daedalus, the eventual outcome—her escape from the labyrinth—is assured.[38]

3. THE CAREER OF DAEDALUS

Daedalus's building of the labyrinth has located us *in medias res.* Ovid's focus on Daedalus's career begins immediately after his completion of the tale of the Megarian princess Scylla, whose doomed love for the Cretan King Minos ended with the transformation of both her and her father Nisus into sea birds. Ovid clearly indicates the temporal relationship between Scylla's drama and the projects of Daedalus on Crete with the rather bare information given in the transitional couplet (155–56):

> creuerat opprobrium generis foedumque patebat
> matris adulterium monstri nouitate biformis;

> The family's shame had grown, and the mother's despicable adultery was revealed by the novel strangeness of the biform creature.

The pluperfect *creuerat* locates the offense of Minos somewhere in the past,[39] and the imperfect *patebat* indicates that the Minotaur has already been born, both facts that have already been confirmed by Scylla in her speech cursing Minos (131–37).[40] In this speech, furthermore, the presence of Daedalus on Crete is implicitly acknowledged by Scylla's reference to the wooden contraption used by Pasiphae to seduce the bull (*quae toruum ligno decepit adultera taurum,* 132), though Daedalus is not explicitly named. But another feature of Ovid's transition from Scylla's story to that of Daedalus hints at a certain temporal distortion: the expression *monstri nouitate biformis* used in line 156 to describe the Minotaur. In the preceding episode Minos himself had been quoted as suggesting that there was no *monstrum* yet to be found on Crete (97–100):

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[38] For the labyrinth and the language of weaving as elements of Virgilian *mise en abyme*, see Deremetz; on *textus* as a metaphor for poetic narrative, see Rosati 1999; on the repetitious pattern of the labyrinth as a narrative metaphor, cf. J. H. Miller 1976, and Pavlock 142, who calls the labyrinth "a metaphor for the design of the *Metamorphoses*."

[39] Hopkinson on *Met.* 13.123 notes Ovid's frequent use of the pluperfect to mark a transition from one story to another.

[40] On the probability that 8.136–37 should be athetized, see Kenney ms. ad loc.

'di te submoueant, o nostri infamia saecli,
orbe suo, tellusque tibi pontusque negetur!
certe ego non patiar Iouis incunabula, Creten,
qui meus est orbis, tantum contingere monstrum.'

'O scandal of our age, may the gods remove you from their universe, and may
both earth and sea be denied to you! At all events, I shall not permit so great a
horror to touch the universe which is mine, the cradle of Jupiter, Crete.'

Indeed, the juxtaposition of the phrases *incunabula, Creten* and *tantum ...
monstrum* in Minos' speech could easily be construed as inadvertent allusions
to the Minotaur, born and bred on his stepfather's island; yet in describing
his control of this *orbis*, Minos implies that no *monstrum* yet exists or will be
tolerated while he rules Crete.[41] Scylla's speech corrects Minos, and reminds
both him and us that a *monstrum* has indeed already been born on Crete.[42]
She thus restores the narrative to its straightforward progress, as she restores
us to our status as privileged onlookers of her tale.

There is also a temporal logic in the sequence of events as they are narrated
here: Androgeos has been killed, tribute has been demanded of the Athenians
in recompense, the Megarians ally with Athens, and then Minos goes to war
with Nisus; this last action brings him to Scylla's attention. The paying of
tribute in the form of human sacrifice to the Minotaur of course implies the
preexistence of the Minotaur; it also implies the preexistence of the labyrinth
to contain the creature. Ovid, however, postpones description of the labyrinth
until after the story of Scylla is complete and Minos has returned permanently
to the island of Crete; he thus allows this description a certain independence
from the story of Scylla—it is not embedded in or framed by hers.[43] And it
is here, appropriately, that Daedalus comes to the fore, as Ovid prepares to
make him the featured character in the narrative to follow.

At this point, the expectations of Ovid's reader have been raised—surely
the story of Theseus's defeat of the Minotaur with the aid of Ariadne will
proceed. As privileged onlooker, the reader knows that this should come
next—the context, after all, is a long section of Ovid's poem devoted to
Minos (first introduced at 7.456), itself embedded in a narrative featuring a

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[41] As E. Gowers has pointed out to me, Minos's emphatic '*certe*' at the beginning of
99 anticipates the word '*Creten*' at the end of the line, and so underlines the irony of his
error. A. Sharrock takes this even further with the reminder that all Cretans are liars—thus,
Minos himself may be thought to be lying here even as he asserts his ignorance of the
monstrum.

[42] Cf. Crabbe 2280; Kenney ms. ad loc.

[43] See Rosati 2002: 279–80 on what he calls "internal chronology," i.e., derived from
the arrangement of events in the narrative sequence.

catalogue of Theseus's labors at 7.433–50, including, in anticipation of later events on Crete, Theseus's defeat of the Cretan bull (7.434).[44] The reader thus has been expecting the story of the coming of Theseus to Crete and his assistance by Ariadne in killing the Minotaur for some time now; indeed, the reader of Catullus 64, the *locus classicus* for the story,[45] might well have been anticipating this as the climax of Ovid's Athenian/Cretan cycle.[46] Yet from another perspective, the story has effectively already been told—viz., in the preceding Scylla narrative, which, like the Medea narrative of Book 7 in whose footsteps it followed, had already given Ovid's readers a rich portrayal of the enamored princess who betrays only to be betrayed in turn. Scholars writing about Ovid's storytelling technique here suggest that the abundance of the Scylla narrative itself prevented Ovid from telling the Ariadne story at anything like a similar length; and that in any case, given a choice between Scylla and Ariadne, he naturally chose to emphasize Scylla precisely because Ariadne had already been so fully depicted by Catullus. While these rationales certainly provide a satisfactory approach to Ovid's careful avoidance of repetitious-ness, I believe another rationale can supplement them, that allows us to see Ovid's manipulation of narrative sequence as a result not of constraint but of choice. The Scylla story is, *mutatis mutandis*, the story of Ariadne as well, i.e., two stories at once;[47] as such, whereas the story of Ariadne and Theseus is logically subsequent to the time of the labyrinth's construction, the Scylla story replicating it can be said to occur out of sequence, before the building of the labyrinth as Ovid narrates it.[48]

   After describing Daedalus's building of the labyrinth, Ovid continues with a 14-line summary of the events surrounding the alternative narrative not developed in full: he highlights the Minotaur, the repeated offerings of

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[44] Ovid's inclusion of the Cretan bull in this catalogue is exceptional: see Kenney ms. on 7.434.

[45] And an important model for *Heroides* 10: see Murgatroyd; Knox 1995: 233–35.

[46] Cf. Crabbe 2278: "… the most dramatic meeting between the two cities, that con-tained in the story of Theseus and Ariadne, is fully prepared. But it is told briefly. The use of patronymics instead of their own names for hero and heroine may be a familiar Ovidian conceit but it reduces the famous romance to an insignificant episode in the national confrontation initiated by Aegeus and Minos." See further below on Ovid's use of the patronymic *Aegides*.

[47] Cf. Curley.

[48] Crabbe 2279 calls the play with chronology here "a witty piece of ὕστερον πρότερον." See also Rosati 2002: 277–78 on chronological vs. analogical order of events in the *Meta-morphoses*. Another factor contributing to Ovid's narrative choices here is likely to have been his extensive use of the Ariadne story elsewhere in his verse: episodes in her career are fully developed in *Ars Amatoria* 1, *Heroides* 10, and *Fasti* 3; see Murgatroyd.

Athenian tribute, the help given by Ariadne to Theseus in negotiating the labyrinth, her escape with him, and his subsequent abandonment of her. The scene culminates in the rescue of Ariadne by Bacchus and the catasterism of her crown (169–82).[49] This metamorphosis is marked by the sort of astronomical detail familiar from the *Fasti*, expressed in a manner that suggests the satisfactory completion of the story; typically in the *Fasti*, such events are described as the aetiology for a day's commemoration comes to a close, as for example at *F.* 3.513–16, when Ariadne's catasterism brings a welcome close to an episode in which we learn of Ariadne's betrayal by Bacchus. Here, however, the catasterism of Ariadne's crown is only a partial closural marker, for while her story is over, the larger framing narrative, that of Daedalus, is not. This episode does serve, however, as a directional signal for the reader, who can now be reasonably confident that the Ariadne-episode is over. Meanwhile, Daedalus, who had taken center stage for the building of the labyrinth, is restored to that position by Ovid at the opening of the first hexameter with which the next scene begins, *Daedalus interea* (183).

The continuation of the Daedalus story will take him away from Crete and into regions unknown. Yet the transitional scene Ovid offers to explain Daedalus's desire to leave Crete can also be seen as an extension of the Scylla narrative. The reader's last view of Scylla had been as the *ciris*-bird, flying on the air close to the sea but never touching it (148–49); when Daedalus speaks of his intention to escape, he describes a route that will take him too through the air, and that will avoid both earth and sea (185–87):

> 'terras licet' inquit 'et undas
> obstruat, at caelum certe patet; ibimus illac!
> omnia possideat, non possidet aera Minos.'

> 'Though he hinders me by land and sea.' said Daedalus. 'surely the skies are free; we shall go by that route! Minos may possess everything [else], but he does not possess the air.'

Daedalus' intention is a willful variation upon the metamorphosis of Scylla—her transformation was the only possible resolution for the *aporia* caused by her treachery and Minos's betrayal, whereas for Daedalus flight is the very opposite of *aporia*: if there is no way to escape, Daedalus will make one.

The story that continues is one that would have been familiar to Ovid's readers first and foremost from *Ars Amatoria* 2;[50] and its very predictability

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[49] See also Kenney ms. on 8.177–82.
[50] See the extensive discussion by Sharrock 87–195.

helps to move the narrative forward. On a metapoetical level as well this story serves an important transitional function, allowing Ovid to "escape" from Crete, and eventually to move back to the mainland. When Icarus falls from the sky into the eponymous sea (*aqua, quae nomen traxit ab illo,* 230),[51] Daedalus retrieves the corpse and proceeds to bury his son (234–35). The place of burial is identified as Icaria (*tellus a nomine dicta sepulti,* 235); and while Daedalus's travels have not yet come to an end, this episode has effectively allowed both the poet and his reader to make the transition, in narrative terms, away from Crete, and into the *mare apertum* that was identified in the Meander simile as the ultimate goal of the river.[52] Thus, the narrative sequence now presents the reader with new potential to lose her way, as the course of the first river in Book 8 merges, at least temporarily, with the greater sea.

The potential for confusion on the part of the reader is mirrored in Ovid's description of the oddly convoluted route of Daedalus and Icarus: "…The pair's destination is ostensibly Athens (cf. 184). But instead they first fly from Crete towards the Cyclades, and then turn eastwards, apparently heading for Miletus. Daedalus finally arrives in Sicily (260). Of course the Icarian sea, and the island Icaria, south-west of Samos, were fixed points in the story, so that some awkwardness was inevitable."[53] I want to focus for a moment on some of the "awkward" components of this journey, keeping in mind some of the expectations the reader is likely to have in trying to make sense of the transitions here. First of all, the etymological aetiology I have just cited, explaining the name of the place of Icarus's burial, comes as an unexpected "extra" after the first and more familiar aetiology for the Icarian sea.[54] At the same time, the allusion to an *Icaria tellus* here invites a certain confusion or conflation, for there is in fact another locale so identified, i.e., the countryside of Attica in which Icarius, discoverer of the vintage, lived, and where he was buried after being killed by his neighbors.[55] Thus, in drawing attention to the Icarian

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[51] Cf. Hom. *Il.* 2.145, Call. fr. 23.3 Pf., and the scholia ad locc. Cf. also Michalopoulos 95–97.

[52] I am indebted to A. Sharrock for this observation made *per litteras.*

[53] Hollis 1970 on 8.220–21.

[54] On the double etymology here, see Hutchinson 342; Ovid also alludes to the double etymology for both island and sea at *F.* 4.283–84, *transit et Icarium lapsas ubi perdidit alas / Icarus, et uastae nomina fecit aquae.*

[55] The story was told by Eratosthenes in his *Erigone*: for a thorough discussion of the story and a collection of the evidence, see Rosokoki and cf. Solmsen, arguing that Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 47.34–264 draws on Eratosthenes. Maera (Canicula) is named by Eratosthenes fr. 16.7 *CA*; by Call. fr. 75.35 Pf.; and by Euphorion fr. 433.7 *SH*. Cf. also the apparent reference to Erigone by Parthenius, fr. 21 Lightfoot (= *SH* 633), and Lightfoot

land in addition to the Icarian sea, Ovid implies a geographical transition that is both more logical and more learned: Daedalus in fact does appear to have arrived in his beloved homeland (*loci natalis amore,* 184) after all.[56]

Implicit support for this supposition now appears in the events surrounding the character Perdix, though not without a new twist in the narrative course for the reader to negotiate.[57] Having already undergone metamorphosis, a partridge observes Daedalus in the act of burying his son (235–36). The partridge Perdix, once a boy, was the nephew of Daedalus; and out of jealousy provoked by the boy's preternatural cleverness, Daedalus hurled the boy from the Athenian acropolis to his death. Pallas Minerva intervened to save the boy, at least in transformed shape; and so the partridge was born (241–59). Two features of this story add to the complexity of the narrative sequence: the evocation of a past event that occurred in Athens (*sacraque ex arce Mineruae / praecipitem misit,* 250–51) effectively brings the reader back to Athens, where she discovers Daedalus busy as usual; and the events narrated in the tale of Perdix in fact antedate the entire Daedalus story that has already been told in Book 8. The juxtaposition of stories here thus enacts the disorienting twists and turns of the labyrinthine Meander—the story of Perdix both precedes and follows that of Icarus, in two separate senses; and the movement of Daedalus

ad loc. On the relationship between Eratosthenes and Callimachus, see Rosokoki 23–24; on the relationship between Eratosthenes and Parthenius, see Rosokoki 95–98. Nigidius Figulus fr. 91 Swoboda shows familiarity with Eratosthenes as well, although the work of Eratosthenes from which the Latin writer derived his knowledge of Erigone remains unclear. Ovid surely knew Eratosthenes' poem: he refers to the constellations Icarus (*sic*) and daughter Erigone at *Met.* 6.449–50; he refers to Maera as *canis Erigoneïus* at *F.* 5.723, and as *canis Icarius* at *Am.* 2.16.4 (cf. McKeown 1998 ad loc.) and *F.* 4.939 (see Fantham 1998 ad loc.); and cf. Erigone beloved by Bacchus at *Met.* 6.125, and identified among the stars at V. *Geo.* 1.33. The star is also referred to as Canicula at Varro *RR* 1.28.2, Hor. *Od.* 1.17.17, 3.13.9, *Sat.* 2.5.39; cf. also Ov. *AA* 2.231 and Janka ad loc., with a collection of other references to Canis/Canicula in ancient poetry (but Janka does not mention the identification with Maera).

[56] Green rejects the association of Attic Icaria with the myth of Icarius father of Erigone, but nonetheless reaches a similar conclusion, viz., that the Icaria reached by Icarus and Daedalus is the Attic deme. Green believes that the bizarre itinerary attributed to Daedalus by Ovid is a result of geographical illiteracy, on the part of Ovid and others, and that the narrative has been made to conform after the fact to the problem. My discussion offers a different solution: Ovid does indeed know his geography, but knows as well that there is some confusion in the tradition regarding Daedalus's journey, and uses this confusion to narrative advantage in *Metamorphoses* 8 (and *Ars Amatoria* 2). On Daedalus' route, see also Rudd 24, and Sharrock 158; cf. Janka on *AA* 2.79–82.

[57] For the relationship of the Perdix story to the fall of Icarus, see Myers 35–36, Faber, and Pavlock 154–57.

from Crete back to Athens, metaphorically a backward movement, is made possible by this asynchronic juxtaposition.[58]

Daedalus's career concludes, at least as far as the *Metamorphoses* is concerned, with his arrival at the court of king Cocalus in Sicily (260–62); Ovid indicates his intention not to pursue Daedalus there, but to remain in Attica, with his resumption of the story of Theseus's triumphant return to Athens after slaying the Minotaur (262–66):

> iam lamentabile Athenae
> pendere desierant Thesea laude tributum.
> templa coronantur, bellatricemque Mineruam
> cum Ioue disque uocant aliis, quos sanguine uoto
> muneribusque datis et aceruis[59] turis honorant.

> Now at Athens, in praise of Theseus, they had stopped paying the mournful tribute. The temples are hung with wreaths, and they call upon Minerva goddess of war along with Jupiter and the other gods, whom they honor with the promised blood sacrifices, the giving of gifts, and heaps of incense.

The resumption of the tale of Theseus, with its emphatic relocation of action in Athens, confirms for the reader that there is a narrative order here, centered primarily on a place, and then secondarily on a character. At the same time, Ovid's return to Theseus is likely to raise the reader's awareness of a "gap" in the story.[60] When she last encountered Theseus, he had with Ariadne's help managed to enter the labyrinth devised by Daedalus, to kill the Minotaur, and to escape from the labyrinth, again with Ariadne's help; no sooner had he carried Ariadne off with him from Crete, however, than he left her abandoned on Dia, lamenting Theseus's treachery (169–76). In the next reference to Theseus, the lines cited above, the reader hears of Theseus's triumphant

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[58] Tissol 104 believes that the placement of the Perdix story in *Metamorphoses* 8 "is meant to qualify and revise the audience's impression of [Daedalus's] part in Icarus's story." While this is certainly true, other narrative considerations can be seen to play an important part as well. As A. Sharrock has commented *per litteras*, the *perdix'* limited interest in flying any great distance also helps to emphasize the transition (back) to an Athenian locale.

[59] Kenney ms. observes on this textual variant, "[E]mphasis on the quantity of incense is pointed and appropriate in the last member of the tricolon; mention of the containers (*acerris*) lacks point."

[60] See Mack 135–42 on "untold stories" in the *Metamorphoses*, especially in relation to Theseus.

return home, and the liberation of Athens from its grisly tribute; Daedalus, meanwhile, has disappeared permanently from the story.[61]

A significant ellipsis has meanwhile taken place in the narrative: namely, the events surrounding Ariadne's curse, Theseus's forgetfulness regarding his sails, and the consequent suicide of Aegeus. This episode had formed an important part of the narrative surrounding Theseus and Ariadne in Catullus 64, concluding Theseus's story just as the intervention of Liber concluded Ariadne's; and the reader's expectation that this story is to follow in Book 8 is certainly raised by the second half of 262, *iam lamentabile Athenae*…. The lines that follow, however, paint a picture of a city rejoicing and celebrating its great hero. It might be possible, of course, to see in this "gap" a revision on Ovid's part of the myth of Theseus, a rewriting that neatly erases a story which would clearly detract from the positive reception of our hero. But the narrative dynamics of the text, as Ovid exploits the model of the Meander rushing back on itself repeatedly, do just the opposite. First of all, consider the two stories which appear in place of the Aegeus story in Ovid's narrative, the stories of Icarus and of Perdix. An important feature of each of these stories anticipates or substitutes for features of the Aegeus story not written by Ovid: in Perdix' case, we have the fall from the Acropolis, and in the case of Icarus, we have the prominent etymological aetiology, developed to explain the name of a part of the sea. Both of these motifs feature prominently in myths surrounding Aegeus; by telling alternative tales with similar motifs within a framework of allusions to the tale of Theseus's encounter with the Minotaur and betrayal of Ariadne, Ovid evokes the story of Aegeus without narrating it.[62]

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[61] He reappears only in a wishful allusion uttered by Iphis, considering the impossibility of her own situation: *'ipse licet reuolet ceratis Daedalus alis, / quid faciet?'* (9.742–43).

[62] On the etymology for the name of the Aegean sea, see Maltby s.v. *Aegeum mare*: Varro (*LL* 7.22 and *Rust.* 2.1.8) derives the name from the Greek word for goats (αἶγες); Hyg. *fab.* 43.2 is the first extant source in Latin for the association with Theseus's father; cf. Serv. auct. on *Aen.* 3.74 (*Neptuno Aegaeo*). Cf. also Catull. 64 241–45 (*at pater, ut summa prospectum ex arce petebat, / anxia in assiduos absumens lumina fletus, / cum primum infecti conspexit lintea ueli, / praecipitem sese scopulorum e uertice iecit, / amissum credens immiti Thesea fato*)—the association of Aegeus with the sea is at least hinted at. See also below, n. 63, on the association of Aegeus with Neptune.

One other testimonium, unfortunately quite problematic in nature, would if reliable allow us to date the association of the sea's name with Aegeus's suicide at least as early as the third century BCE: a scholion on Apoll. Rh. *Argon.* 1.831 notes that a certain Nicocrates (presumably to be identified with the author of a treatise on the cult of the Muses on Helicon) offered this etymology (= *FGrHist* 376 F 3b = Pherec. Ath. 43 Fowler). Wendel 346–47 demonstrates that the identification of this source as Nicocrates is highly likely to be the result of a copying error, however, and offers no alternative for the origin of this anecdote.

And finally, there is a curious feature to Ovid's nomenclature in Book 8: Theseus is referred to on 3 separate occasions as *Aegides*, at lines 174, 405, and 560,[63] even though Aegeus himself does not figure in the narrative of the *Metamorphoses* after Book 7.[64] I shall turn presently to consider the function of the second and third of these references; the first occurs precisely when we are expecting the story of Aegeus's suicide to ensue, i.e., as Theseus sets sail from Crete: *protinus Aegides rapta Minoide Dian / uela dedit,* 174–75. The patronymic thus serves to make Aegeus' tragedy a presence in the narrative, even though it is not told by Ovid.

4. OVID'S *THESEID*

Theseus first appears in the *Metamorphoses* at 7.404 (*iamque aderat Theseus*), just after the reader has learned of Medea's flight to Athens and her subsequent marriage to Aegeus.[65] Theseus then remains the focus of the narrative while Ovid tells of Medea's failed attempt to poison Theseus and of the labors of Theseus (7.404–52). The reader quickly loses sight of Theseus thereafter, however, as his adventures are supplanted by the preparations of Minos and Aeacus for war, the plague at Aegina, and the lengthy romance of Cephalus and Procris. Theseus does not reappear in the narrative until Ovid's first use of the patronymic *Aegides*, just discussed above, although allusions to the Cretan *monstrum* by both Minos and Scylla and the general scenario, especially Scylla's infatuation with Minos, ensure that Theseus is not far from the reader's thoughts in the first part of Book 8. In the meantime, a certain expectation of Theseus' starring role at some point in the narrative has been building since his first appearance in Book 7; the reader expects him, like

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[63] The two other occurrences of this patronymic in the *Metamorphoses* are at 12.237 and 343, both in the context of the battle of Lapiths and Centaurs. Ovid appears to have introduced it into Latin poetry, although of course it is found as early as Homer (in the athetized verse *Il.* 1.265: see Kirk ad loc.). It is noteworthy that at the opening of Book 9, Theseus is identified by the epithet *Neptunius*, an alternative which effectively removes Aegeus from the narrative. Ovid clearly knows the two alternative traditions about Theseus's parentage, and exploits them; see also Sourvinou-Inwood 18–21 on Theseus's "double paternity." According to Pherecydes of Athens (*FGrHist* 376 F 3b = 43 Fowler), *Aigaios* is an epithet of Poseidon; and see *Aen.* 3.74.

[64] His last appearance is at 7.454, as Minos and the death of Androgeos are introduced. At 15.856, Ovid makes a passing reference to Aegeus and Theseus in a series of exempla illustrating the son's preeminence vis-à-vis the father, but Aegeus does not figure as a character in the narrative proper of the last book; Theseus's involvement in this book is limited to the story of the demise of his son Hippolytus.

[65] On the features of Hellenistic epyllion in Ovid's Theseus-narrative, see Fucecchi 85–103.

Perseus in Books 4 and 5,[66] to command center stage at least for a time. In fact, however, the reader's expectation is never satisfied; instead, Theseus no sooner materializes, so to speak, in the narrative than he disappears yet again, to be replaced by other characters and stories. We have already seen how rapidly, and to what effect, Ovid narrates the defeat of the Minotaur by Theseus and the ensuing events involving Ariadne (169–82); we have also seen that the story of his father's demise is simultaneously alluded to and suppressed; and as we proceed through the remainder of Book 8, the reader's experience of Theseus as an intermittent 'bit-player' rather than as central character will continue. Further references to him in Book 8 only tend to highlight this state of affairs: the brief allusion to Theseus's return to Athens from Crete and the subsequent rejoicing, at 262–66, does not give way to a fuller development of our hero's career at Athens; whereas we might expect to find at this point a description of Theseus's battle with the Marathonian bull,[67] instead Ovid gives us the Calydonian boar-hunt (267–546). In this episode, Theseus plays only a small role, far inferior to that of Meleager; and in the later scene involving the hospitality of Achelous (547–884), Theseus is one among many guests, but not himself a featured character or narrator.[68]

Ovid opens his narrative of the Calydonian boar hunt by using Theseus as the link between episodes—his defeat of the Minotaur has apparently caused his name to travel throughout Greece (8.267–72):

> Sparserat Argolicas nomen uaga fama per urbes
> Theseos, et populi quos diues Achaia cepit
> huius opem magnis implorauere periclis;
> huius opem Calydon, quamuis Meleagron haberet,
> sollicita supplex petiit prece. causa petendi
> sus erat, infestae famulus uindexque Dianae.

> Report, wandering through the Argive cities, had spread abroad the name of Theseus, and the peoples whom wealthy Greece held implored his help against great danger. With worried prayer, Calydon in supplication sought his help,

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[66] Cf. Keith on Ovid's "Perseid." A similar phenomenon occurs with Hercules in Book 9.

[67] For suggestions of the Marathonian bull story in Book 8, see Crabbe 2289–90, and further below.

[68] Cf. Crabbe 2280 n.31: "Ovid delights in leading his readers up the garden path. We constantly expect a novel version of Ariadne, but do not get it. We wait in vain for any real exploit by Theseus, particularly in Book 8 for the Bull of Marathon, but are cheated of his *magnis periclis.* …" See also Mack 135–42, Hutchinson 337–38, Tissol 155–57, and Rosati 2002: 289 on Ovid's frustration of the reader's expectations; and cf. Ludwig 40–44 (noting Theseus's more or less passive omnipresence in Book 8, but making nothing of it) and Giangrande 18.

though the land had Meleager; the reason for their request was a boar, the at-
tendant and avenger of hostile Diana.

This introduction to the story gives the ostensible starring role to Theseus—he
is not simply listed here among the many participants in the hunt, but rather
is singled out (note the emphatic placement of *Theseos-huius-huius* at the
beginning of three successive lines, and the repetition of the word *opem* in the
second and third of these), and explicitly compared to Meleager; the implica-
tions of this singling-out of Theseus are both that he is acknowledged by all
to be greater than Meleager, and that he will indeed play an important role in
the hunt.[69] But the reader who reaches this point in the narrative is in fact in
for a surprise, since no sooner is her attention drawn here to the expectations
of all Achaea regarding Theseus than he disappears again from view.

Instead of Theseus, it is the boar, introduced in line 272, that takes center
stage, as Ovid describes the origin of the problem and its consequences for the
Calydonian countryside (273–97). And when Ovid turns back to the humans
who are to liberate the locals from this threat, Theseus no longer takes pride
of place. Instead, Meleager heads the defensive team (8.298–300):

> Diffugiunt populi nec se nisi moenibus urbis
> esse putant tutos, donec Meleagros et una
> lecta manus iuuenum coiere cupidine laudis …

> The people scatter, not considering themselves safe unless within the city walls,
> until Meleager together with a chosen band of young men assembled out of
> love of glory…

A catalogue of heroes ensues (301–17), beginning with Castor and Polydeuces
and ending with Atalanta; Theseus is among them, but now takes only fifth
place (303), behind the Tyndarids, Jason, and Pirithous. In this catalogue,
Ovid expends no more care on the description of Theseus than on any of
the other heroes, and like most of the others he does not even receive a full
hexameter's attention; only Atalanta, in fact, is the subject of lavish and de-
tailed description (318–23).[70]

In the following description of the hunt, many of the heroes mentioned
briefly in the catalogue are featured again for a few verses, and some new names
are added to the list. Each of these men in turn attempts valiantly to strike a

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[69] On the emphasis placed by Ovid on Theseus here, see Kenney ms. ad loc. Ovid may
also be exploiting here our expectation of the convention οὐκ ἄνευ Θησέως: see Plut.
Theseus 29.3.

[70] See Horsfall 321–23; for a comprehensive survey of the literary tradition of the
Calydonian boar-hunt, see Grossardt esp. 149–55 on Ovid's treatment.

decisive blow, but each in turn fails; some experience the simple ignominy of failure (e.g., the Tyndarids, 376–77), while others suffer fatal consequences (e.g., Ancaeus, 399–402). Theseus's experience is no exception: motivated by the sad fate of Ancaeus, whose proximity to the boar had doomed him, and eager to look out for his friend Pirithous, he attempts to strike a blow from a distance with his spear; forcefully though it is cast, it strikes only an oak branch in its path and so misses its mark (403–10). It is at this point that Ovid reminds his reader for a second time of Theseus' family story by using the patronymic *Aegides* (405), but any expectation that this might provoke in the reader that at last Theseus will achieve the narrative prominence that would seem to have been suggested by the scene's opening is quickly dashed. With the next line, the reader's attention is drawn to Jason (*Aesonides*, 411), and Theseus' frustrated moment of glory is past. He does not figure again in the narrative of Book 8 until the hunt is long over, Meleager's death has ensued, and the transformation of Meleager's sisters into the birds known as Meleagrides has provided the rationale for this story's inclusion in the *Metamorphoses.*

Before we turn to the next episode in Theseus's Ovidian career, however, several other features of the story just told deserve a second look. First, there is a play on words with the first mention of Theseus in the Calydonian catalogue (303–4):

> et cum Pirithoo, felix concordia, *Thes*eus
> et duo *Thes*tiadae prolesque Aphareia, Lynceus
> et uelox Idas …
>
> … and Theseus together with Pirithous, a happy union, and the two sons of Thestius, and Lynceus and swift Idas, descendants of Aphareus, …

The similarity between the first syllable of Theseus' name and the first syllable of the patronymic designating Meleager's uncles is likely to make the reader think, if only momentarily, that there is some connection between the two names.[71] Of course, there is not; yet as members of the family of Thestius end up playing a far more major role in the story that follows than does Theseus himself, their patronymic thus carries with it throughout the story an illusory suggestion of Theseus's prominent involvement. The Thestiadae (434)

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[71] Cf., e.g., the play with names and epithets beginning with *lup-/lyc-* in *Metamorphoses* 1: Ahl 81–87. *Thestius* and its cognates are used only here in the *Metamorphoses*; Ovid elsewhere refers to Althaea as *Thestias* at *F.* 5.305 and *Rem.* 721. While his daughters command a good bit of attention in Greek myth, Thestius himself has virtually no developed personality: see von Geisau 184–85; Gantz 317–39.

challenge Meleager's awarding of victory in the hunt to Atalanta, and he kills them (437–44); their sister Althaea, twice called *Thestias* (452 and 473), wreaks vengeance on her son for killing her brothers; and she invokes the legacy of her father Thestius (487) to justify her actions on her family's behalf. This virtual substitution of Theseus's name with another that is superficially similar but utterly unrelated has the odd result of making literal the metaphor used by Ovid at the opening of this scene to explain the rationale for Theseus's inclusion in the Calydonian hunt: *Sparserat Argolicas nomen uaga fama per urbes / Theseos,* 267–68.[72] Theseus's name has indeed been scattered, in this case through the text of *Metamorphoses* 8. The reader, meanwhile, has been the observer of a narrative sleight of hand, as yet another story has taken the place of the *Theseid* she has been led to anticipate.

When Theseus at last reemerges into the narrative of Book 8, his reappearance marks yet another transition, this time to the episode of Achelous's hospitality. Theseus is on his way home to Athens (547–48):

> Interea Theseus sociati parte laboris
> functus Erectheas Tritonidos ibat ad arces.

> Theseus, meanwhile, having performed his role in the allied effort, was headed towards the Erecthean citadel of the Triton-born goddess …

The description of Theseus homeward bound immediately evokes Callimachus's treatment of a similar journey in the *Hecale.*[73] In that poem, the great hero, having accomplished his civilizing labors, is delayed by a storm and stops on the road back to Athens to enjoy the hospitality of an old woman, Hecale. Callimachus focuses not on the hero's feats, but on the humble story of the old woman, who reminisces about her past at great length; the hero plays only the subsidiary role of audience. Ovid's next lines confirm that he has something similar in store for his Theseus (549–51, 558–61):

> clausit iter fecitque moras Achelous eunti
> imbre tumens. 'succede meis' ait, 'inclite, tectis,
> Cecropide, nec te committe rapacibus undis:
> ....
> tutior est requies, solito dum flumina currant

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[72] Ovid may well have been inspired to effect this punning metaphor by its literal use at V. *Geo.* 4.522, describing the σπαραγμός of Orpheus by the Bacchants: *discerptum latos iuuenem sparsere per agros.*

[73] See Hollis 1990, esp. 5–10 for the plot, and see Rosati 2002: 287. For the general stylistic affiliation of the *Metamorphoses* with the *Hecale,* see Tissol 153–66 and Fantuzzi-Hunter 269–74.

limite, dum tenues capiat suus alueus undas.'
adnuit Aegides 'utor' que, 'Acheloe, domoque
consilioque tuo' respondit, et usus utroque est.

Achelous, swollen with rain-water, obstructed his path and caused him delay in
his journey. 'Famed descendant of Cecrops, draw within my halls, and do not
entrust yourself to the wild waves … resting is safer, until the streams run in
their accustomed path and the riverbed contains its usual shallow waters.' The
son of Aegeus nodded in assent, and responded, 'Achelous, I shall take advantage
of both your house and your advice'; and he took advantage of both.

The flooded river blocks Theseus's way, and advises him to make the best of the
delay by taking advantage of the river's hospitality. Of course, we can expect
the sort of hospitality offered by Achelous to be somewhat more elaborate
than Hecale's: the river-god inhabits an elaborately decorated cavern (562–64),
where his guests—for in fact Theseus is not alone, but is accompanied by sev-
eral *comites laborum,* including Pirithous and Lelex (566–69)—are served by
barefoot sea-nymphs (571–73). This is no humble cottage, and the meal they
are served is not described at all;[74] but the after-dinner entertainment is much
the same as that Theseus experienced with Hecale, viz., his host becomes a
storyteller. The first story Achelous tells is provoked by a question from The-
seus (*maximus heros,* 573), who notices some islands floating in the water and
enquires about their name. Achelous responds with the story of the Echinades,
one of whom, Perimele, is both his victim and his beloved (577–608). At the
end of his tale, the river falls silent, his narrative met by stunned admiration
from all except Pirithous, who challenges the story as fiction ('*ficta refers,*'
614) and doubts the power of the gods to effect such transformations. At this
point, Lelex takes up the narrative challenge, and responds with the story
of Baucis and Philemon (618–724); the ostensible purpose of the story, to
illustrate the power of the gods, is supplemented by the neat way the story
serves as a reverse compliment to his host, for Baucis and Philemon, most
humble hosts, are responsible for the gracious entertainment of two divine
guests. The embedded story thus mirrors its frame, in which a divine host
graciously entertains several guests who, while not exactly humble, have been
put in their place by Achelous's manifestation of his power.[75]

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[74] Probably so as not to compete with the description of the meal offered by Baucis
and Philemon to their guests, to be described by Lelex shortly; but Ovid may also have
thought it prudent to avoid inviting speculation about exactly what sort of meal a river-
god would offer his guests.

[75] On audience reaction to this scene, see Feeney 229–32; cf. Myers 90–91 on the
aetiological framework for the stories told at the banquet of Achelous.

The embedding of these stories serves as reminder of the experience of the reader in negotiating this text. While the lack of importance of Theseus in the preceding story of the Calydonian boar-hunt functioned as a red herring[76] in that tale, the remainder of the narrative was reasonably straightforward; after the twists and turns of Daedalus's travels, the narrative of the boar-hunt is in striking contrast for its straightforwardness. It contains little in the way of flashbacks, other than to set the essential scene; and the major stages of the story—the rampaging of the boar, the hunt itself, the vengeance of Althaea, and the transformation of Meleager's sisters—follow in a predictable, logical sequence. With the stop at Achelous's cave, however, the narrative of Book 8 takes on a different character altogether, and in some ways is much more like what had preceded the boar-hunt, with interrelated stories in no predictable arrangement and juxtaposed narratives taking the place of linear sequence. The enforced stopping experienced by Theseus and companions is a model for the narrative "stopping" experienced by the reader, for whom the frame story now moves neither forward nor backward in time or place.[77] Instead, there is a movement inward, a further embedding of both reader and narrative, as storytelling takes the place of linearity. Ovid has created another narrative labyrinth, with a variety of stories as the *innumerae uiae* confronting the reader; the Meander that ran through the center of the earlier labyrinth narrative is now replaced by the river Achelous, blocking his guests' path in order to make them a captive audience.

After Lelex' tale of Baucis and Philemon comes to an end, the reader is reminded, for the first time in over 150 lines, that Theseus is among the listeners: *Desierat, cunctosque et res et mouerat auctor, / Thesea praecipue,* 725–26.[78] But while the reader might have expected, after Lelex' initiative, that the other guests would take up the narrative and contribute their own stories—Theseus in particular—it is rather to Achelous that we return, and his is the sole voice we hear for the remainder of Book 8, as he describes a number of multiple-shape-shifters (728–884).

In fact, Theseus never does emerge from Ovid's narrative to become the central figure in a scene, rather than a minor or character actor. In the lines reporting his final speech in Book 8—the lines accepting Achelous's hospi-

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[76] I am indebted for the image to Crabbe 2302, who uses it in a discussion of the introduction of Theseus into the narrative at *Met.* 7.404: "The reader is temporarily misled into thinking that this passage is the transition to a second half [i.e., of Book 7] dealing with the exploits of Theseus. Far from it…."

[77] See n. 3, above, for Iser's use of the term "blockage" to describe this effect.

[78] See Kenney 1986: xxviii, Rosati 2002: 287, and Fucecchi 98–99 for the suggestion that the focus on Theseus here is intended to evoke the *Hecale*.

tality, quoted above—Theseus appears as *Aegides* for the last time in Book 8: his deference to the river-god is an implicit acknowledgement of his own subordinate status. At the opening of Book 9, to be sure, he is the object of momentary focus, now with an epithet meant to remind us of the alternative tradition regarding his parentage: *Neptunius heros,* 9.1 (the appearance of this epithet in the place of *Aegides* is a subtle marker for the reader of the transition just made to the next book). But on this occasion his presence is quickly overshadowed by Achelous' story of his battle with Hercules, at the end of which tale the heroes are described collectively as making their way homeward (*discedunt iuuenes,* 9.94). Theseus will only reappear much later in the *Metamorphoses,* when together with Pirithous and the Lapiths he battles the Centaurs (12.226–40 and 341–60), and in a brief description of his role in the fate of his son Hippolytus (15.497–505). The role played by Theseus in the *Metamorphoses* thus admirably approximates the description of such heroic narratives given by Aristotle in the *Poetics* (51a16–35): it is episodic, discontinuous, and lacking wholeness of action.[79] The story of Theseus in the *Metamorphoses,* such as it is, has been arranged in a (mostly) chronological sequence, with his first appearance in Book 7 as the youth who journeys to Athens to claim his patrimony and his last in Book 15 as the father of Hippolytus; but beyond his sporadic appearances there is nothing to interest us in his character. Ovid's *Theseid* in fact surpasses the narrative restrictions as framed by Aristotle, offering as it does a sequence of heroic episodes to which the (ostensible) hero himself contributes little or nothing.

5. THE NARRATING RIVER / THE NARRATED RIVER

The narrative "stopping" which I have described above puts the reader in the same position as the heroes entertained in Achelous's cave; like them, she is the river-god's captive audience, not permitted to proceed in a linear fashion with the frame story. This effect is further heightened by the fact that Achelous's very presence in the narrative is highly arbitrary—as com-

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[79] "A plot is not unified, as some suppose, if it concerns one single person. An indefinitely large number of things happens to one person, in some of which there is no unity. So too the actions of one person are many, but do not turn into a single action. For this reason, it seems, all those poets who composed a *Heracleid,* a *Theseid* or similar poems are in error. … Therefore, just as in the other representational arts a single representation is of a single [thing], so too the plot, since it is a representation of an action, ought to represent a single action, and a whole one at that; and its parts (the incidents) ought to be so constructed that, when some part is transposed or removed, the whole is disrupted and disturbed. Something which, whether it is present or not present, explains nothing [else], is no part of the whole" (trans. Janko); and see Fantuzzi-Hunter 270.

mentators are fond of noting, Theseus and his companions have had to go out of the way for this encounter. "In fact, the estuary of the Achelous lies westward of Calydon, so that Theseus would not have to cross it when returning to Athens."[80] If the testimony of the pseudo-Plutarchian catalogue *On Rivers* can be relied upon, however, there may be another explanation for Ovid's narrative sequence here. This essay, which collects stories about the names of rivers and mountains, reports that Thestius, father of Althea, drowned himself in the river Axenus; this river was subsequently called the Thestius, and later became known as the Achelous (*De fluv.* 22).[81] If, as I believe, Ovid knew this story—and, given the fact that Callimachus had written a work on rivers, too, which was either a source for pseudo-Plutarch or shared with the latter a common source, it seems a possibility at least worth entertaining[82]—then the adjacency of the Achelous-narrative to the Calydonian boar-hunt in Book 8 exemplifies a non-linear, analogic sequencing: just as the name of the river Thestius was replaced by Achelous in the tale, so the narrative about the family of Thestius is replaced by the hospitality of Achelous in the *Metamorphoses*.[83] Ovid's narrative experiences a sequential divagation to parallel a geographical divagation—but a divagation that in fact turns out to have a logic all its own. Achelous thus takes on some of the characteristics of the Meander river that ran within the simile of the labyrinth

[80] Hollis 1970 on 8.547–610; cf. Anderson on 8.547–60: "Ovid now links to the events of Calydon a series of stories which, on the surface, seem to have no intelligible connection; and the artificial transition devised by him seems to stress the irrelevance"; Bömer on 8.547–70 adds that perhaps the geographical facts were unknown to Ovid.

[81] For the text, see Müller 2: 637–65; Bernardakis 7: 282–328; and cf. Ziegler 870–71; Grossardt 209–10.

[82] Call. frr. 457–59 Pf. Nicander too seems to have written (perhaps a prose work) on Aetolian topics—see frr. 1–8a Gow-Scholfield: could this be another possible source for pseudo-Plutarch? Support for my hypothesis that Ovid knew of the tradition represented by *On Rivers* is to be found in Knox 2002: 167–70, who makes the parallel suggestion that in identifying a nymph associated with Cybele with the name Sagaris at *F.* 4.229–30, Ovid uses a variant of the name of the river Sangarius that he probably found in the writings of one of the many Hellenistic scholars and poets who wrote about the cult of Cybele, especially its most recherché and obscure features. The works of these writers were probably an important source for pseudo-Plutarch, and if he found the obscure variant Sagaris (and its attendant tale) there, it is equally likely that he found the story of Axenus/Thestius/Achelous there.

[83] von Geisau 184 notes that, aside from the etymological myth known from pseudo-Plutarch, Thestius has only genealogical significance; see also above, n.72. A. Sharrock has suggested *per litteras* that the etymology of Achelous's earlier name—ἄξενος—may lie behind the ambiguous nature of the river's hospitality in Book 8.

earlier in the book, slowing the progress of the maze-walker to a snail's pace and moving her course in a direction that at first seems counter-intuitive. A further analogy to the Meander and its surrounding labyrinth presents itself in the way in which the theme of repetition—*refluitque fluitque*—operates here, both in the 'doubling' of Thestius by Achelous and in the stories told in Achelous's cave throughout the remainder of Book 8. Repetitiousness or doubling characterizes each of these tales.

Let us return to the story of the Echinades and Perimele. This story really consists of two separate episodes, in the first of which Achelous is vengeful, and in the second, both agressor and savior. In the first episode (8.579–89), we learn of five sea nymphs who performed an elaborate sacrifice but forgot to include the river-god in their worship. He retaliated by flooding, drowning the surrounding area and them with it; when the waters finally receded, the five islands now known as the Echinades emerged from the water in the place of the nymphs. In the second part of his story (590–608), we learn that one of these islands, called Perimele, had a special place in Achelous's affections; after he seduced her, her father pushed her from a cliff with the intent of killing her. Achelous caught her, and prayed to Neptune to intercede on her behalf; Neptune consented, and Perimele was allowed to remain swimming, held as an island (the sixth?)[84] in the river-god's permanent embrace. Thus, in answer to Theseus's question regarding the identity of the island, or islands, visible across the water (8.574–76), Achelous offers two answers, in effect, two explanations for the same natural feature.[85]

The narrative doubling experienced by the reader here may be compared to a feature familiar both from the *Fasti* and from some of Callimachus's poetry, where the quest for aetiological information produces multiple answers.[86] Thus, for example, Ovid provides five possible explanations for the etymology of February (*F.* 2.19–46), and three for May (*F.* 5.1–110); and Callimachus draws his reader's attention to the fact that several alternative stories exist regarding the birth of Zeus (*H.* 1.1–5). Achelous, on the other hand, does not draw attention to his own narrative doubling; he simply proceeds from one story to the next. But the results are similar to that produced by the more explicit

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[84] Hollis 1970 on 578 notes that, "Ancient estimates of [the islands'] number vary; according to Herodotus (ii.10) and Strabo (i.59), the area was continually silting up, and the islands being joined to the mainland."

[85] It may be no coincidence that it is exactly at this point of the text of the *Metamorphoses* that a prominent instance of possible "double recension" occurs: see Hollis 1970 on 595ff.

[86] See J. F. Miller 1992.

cases of this phenomenon we find elsewhere, and may help to explain the
vehement reaction Achelous receives from Pirithous: '*ficta refers*' (614).[87]

The doubling effect is even stronger—and more Callimachean—with
the next several stories. First, of course, Lelex tells of the pious hospitality of
Baucis and Philemon, a tale that, as I have already noted, is strongly indebted
to Callimachus's *Hecale* even as it mirrors the frame narrative in which it is
placed, the hospitality of Achelous. Several of the motifs basic to the hospitality
theme[88]—piety and food chief among them—are then met again in the story
of Erysichthon and his daughter Mestra, narrated by Achelous to illustrate his
assertion that some characters in fact have undergone metamorphosis more
than once ('*sunt quibus in plures ius est transire figuras,*' 8.730). This narra-
tive too is strongly Callimachean, modeled in part on the Hellenistic poet's
hymn to Demeter (*Hymn* 6); the juxtaposition of two stories modelled on
Callimachean poems and framed by a Callimachean narrative motif makes
Ovid's intertextuality here pronounced in its self-consciousness.

Of course, the story of Erysichthon and his daughter as told by Achelous
diverges significantly from its Callimachean model in a number of important
respects. First of all, the events surrounding the provocation of the dread Fa-
mes (782–829) make this scene of a piece with Ovid's other personifications,
those of Invidia (2.760–82), Somnus (11.592–615), and Fama (12.39–63),
rather than the dire comedy depicted by Callimachus.[89] An even more ba-
sic difference is clear from the way in which Achelous frames his narrative
about Erysichthon: the daughter's story is the one that illustrates his theme
of multiple transformation (738–39, 843–78), while Erysichthon's provides
the context. And the story of Mestra itself seems to have been available to
Ovid not in Callimachus but in the Hesiodic corpus, where she figures in the
Catalogue of Women (M–W 43).[90]

My purpose here, however, is not to break down individual sources and in-
fluences but to consider the overall effect of this narrative on the reader—and
this is, as I have suggested, to create the effect of doubling back, of taking a
motif already explored and repeating it while ringing its changes. Thus, the
story of Erysichthon and his daughter gives us a couple, *mutatis mutandis,*

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[87] Are we also to imagine that, on a metapoetical level, Pirithous is commenting on
Achelous's almost Callimachean ability to produce alternative or supplementary aetiolo-
gies? Of course, some features of Achelous's self-presentation are decidedly un-Callima-
chean: see Hinds 1987: 19; Barchiesi 57–60; Rosati 2002: 288.

[88] On the hospitality theme in ancient literature, see Hollis 1990: 341–54.

[89] I borrow the term "comedy" from the subtitle of McKay; on the epic character of
Ovid's narrative, see Hollis 1970: 132–33.

[90] See the full discussion of the episode by Brillante.

to match with Baucis and Philemon; and it offers a moral lesson about the destruction of a god's beloved trees immediately after Baucis and Philemon have experienced a transformation into such trees. All of this occurs within the context of two complementary stories about the consequences of hospitality and its violation.

Repetition is the essence of pattern; a pattern once begun is likely to repeat itself until interrupted by an outside motif. In this narrative, even the interruption is repetitious: the story of Erysichthon and his daughter, as well as Book 8 as a whole, closes with Achelous's drawing attention to himself as a fit subject for narrative treatment (879–84), since his own experience as a shifter into multiple shapes replicates both Mestra's and Proteus's,[91] the latter of whose changeability had provided Achelous with an opening exemplum to introduce the longer tale (731–37). Thus, when Achelous ends by making himself both narrator and narrated subject, the narrative doubling experienced by the reader collapses upon itself, like the twists and turns in the Meander, and it becomes even more difficult than previously for the reader to know whether she is "inside" or "outside," i.e., a maze-walker or a privileged onlooker, in relation to the narrative. The labyrinthine experience of Ovid's poem gives the reader an experience analogous to that of Theseus, and of Daedalus before him, looking for a place to enter and to exit the poem; the processes of searching for and of remembering established patterns are the only sure means for negotiating the textual labyrinth.

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[91] On the similarities and differences among these multiple shape-shifters, see Fantham 1993.

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