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# Death by Elegy: Ovid's Cephalus and Procris*

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SUMMARY: This paper examines how Ovid manipulates the elegiac trio of love, art, and disease/wounding/medicine. In particular, it argues that the stories told by, to, and about Cephalus and Procris in the *Ars Amatoria* and *Metamorphoses* reify the clichés of elegy, showing art—like love—to be both deadly and salvific. These themes parallel the affairs of Apollo and the poet's own narrative autobiography.

Lureen: HALP, NURSE—I BEEN BIT BY A BUG!! MY HEART IS RACIN', MY FACE IS FLUSHED AN' I'M RUNNIN' A FEVER!!
Nurse: GO ON HOME, LUREEN!! DOC'S TOLDJA A DOZEN TIMES ... TH' **LOVE BUG** AIN'T A TREATABLE CONDITION!!
—John Rose, "Snuffy Smith" (2/12/09)

THE IDEA THAT LOVE IS A WOUND OR DISEASE IMMUNE TO MEDICAL TREATMENT, still thriving in modern culture, assumes many guises in Roman poetry.[1] Virgil gives us the tragedy of Dido, who nurses Cupid's poison in her veins until it consumes her very life; Ovid gives us the comedy of his own wounding by Cupid's arrow, which wrenches him away from epic to erotic poetry (*Am.* 1.1). He never did recover. The episode that opens and largely defines his poetic career is but one of many in which love and disease/wounding/medicine participate in a *ménage à trois* with art. Ovid inherited this trio from the elegiac tradition, as in Propertius's allusive couplets[2]:

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[1] Knox 1986: 15–16 traces the Alexandrian and Roman elegiac sources for the metaphor; Miller 2009: 345 lists some of its appearances in ancient love poetry.

[2] It is probable that both couplets allude to Gallus: see Tränkle 1960: 22–23; Ross 1975: 67–68.

crede mihi, non ulla tuae est *medicina* figurae;
nudus *Amor* formae *non amat artificem.* (1.2.7–8)

Believe me, there's no *medicine* for your appearance;
naked *Love has no love for* the *artist* of beauty.

omnis humanos sanat *medicina* dolores;
solus *amor* morbi *non amat artificem.* (2.1.57–58)

*Medicine* brings healing to all human pains;
*love* alone *has no love for* the *artist* of disease.

The very titles *The Art of Love* and *Remedies for Love* show how central and self-conscious was Ovid's manipulation of this theme—and the "remedies" he offers, predictably, fail.[3]

Love defies the art of medicine, but is it healed or harmed by the medicine of art? Throughout the *Metamorphoses* and other works, "real" hunts, "real" woundings, and "real" diseases are assimilated to the figurative attacks and illnesses of erotic poetry; this deadly and pervasive love often is abetted by—or culminates in—artistic representations. As has long been recognized, the focus of much of this play with art, love, and medicine is Apollo, the god of poetry and healing (*Rem. am.* 76, 251–52), who becomes the foiled elegiac lover, replaying near the beginning of the *Metamorphoses* (1.452–567) Ovid's own defining encounter with Cupid at the beginning of the *Amores*.[4] What has not been sufficiently discussed, however, is the way Apollo is mirrored in the narratives of Cephalus and Procris, placed prominently at the end of the *Ars Amatoria* (3.685–746) and in the middle of the *Metamorphoses* (7.490–8.5).[5]

I shall argue that Ovid's treatment of this notorious couple, especially when read in conjunction with his Apollo narratives, encapsulates his conception of the relationship between love and art—the theme not only of the *Ars Amatoria*, but also of Ovid's overarching narrative autobiography. Most readings of the

[3] See, e.g., Brunelle 2000/1; Fulkerson 2004; Rosati 2006; Boyd 2009.

[4] See, e.g., Nicoll 1980; Knox 1986: 14–18; Hardie 2002: 45–50; Putnam 2004/5: 72–74; Barchiesi 2005: 206–7; Miller 2009: 343. See Armstrong 2004 on Ovid's systematic rivalry with Apollo throughout his poetry, "a conspiracy of one against Apollo, and a conspiracy with both poetic and political ramifications" (528).

[5] Anderson 1990, building on the more technical case put forth by Murgia 1986a and 1986b for *Ars* 3 postdating *Met.* 7, argues that the *Ars* 3 version of Procris's death reflects "Ovid's conscious corrections of inconsistencies and imprecisions of scene in *Met.* 7" (143). Gibson 2003: 37–43 rebuts Murgia's arguments systematically, however, and Miller 2006: 90–93 persuasively discusses how the *Met.* version alludes to the *Ars* version.

Cephalus narrative in the *Metamorphoses* see it as a series of set-pieces, with the couple's tragic love story having little to do with the plague at Aegina that precedes it or the fox hunt (itself preceded by the death of the Sphinx) that interrupts it. I suggest instead that these pieces, put together, form a coherent whole. Two interlocking ideas unite them: that erotic love, especially in its manifestation as erotic poetry, can be lethal; and that the victims can survive only by being transmogrified into works of art. This paradox of erotic art as both the cause of death and the sole defense against it parallels, not coincidentally, Ovid's story of himself. Because of his erotic poem, he was exiled, a state he figures as a symbolic death; and yet he survives through his own metamorphosis into a poem destined to live forever (a prophecy that has, so far at least, come true).

My paper begins by discussing the theme of fatal erotic ambiguity in Ovid's two accounts of Procris's death ("1. *Nec cito credideris*: The Tragedies of Procris"). It then demonstrates how Apollo's loves in the *Metamorphoses* all have significant similarities to the Cephalus narrative, especially in the deaths and artistic transformations of the love objects ("2. Apollo and the Hazards of Art"). Next, it shows how what seems an irrelevant interlude in Cephalus's story—the death of the Sphinx and the Teumessian fox hunt—is connected to the framing narrative by the themes of fatal poetic ambiguity and erotic pursuit ("3. The Plagues at Thebes"). Finally, it offers a radically new reading of the episode narrated by Aeacus *to* Cephalus, showing that this apparently unrelated tale in fact adumbrates the erotic ambiguity that causes Procris's death: the description of the Aeginetan plague, I argue, employs almost exclusively the idiom of elegiac "lovesickness" ("4. The Plague at Aegina"). It concludes with some reflections on how this complex fugue on love, death, and art relates to Ovid's narrative of his own life as an elegiac hero ("5. *Obsuntque auctoribus artes*").

## 1. *NEC CITO CREDIDERIS*: THE TRAGEDIES OF PROCRIS

A discussion of Cephalus and Procris should start by foregrounding the central mischief of Ovid's treatment: Ovid has chosen to make a paradigm of conjugal bliss out of a couple traditionally known for a bizarre and sordid array of adulterous behaviors.[6] According to Apollodorus (3.15.1), after marrying

[6] Gibson 2003: 357 catalogues the ancient sources. Green 1979: 23 observes that Ovid "would have been hard put to it to find a more squalid legend in the entire mythical corpus when putatively searching for innocence, pathos, and marital fidelity." While this is unquestionably true about the Cephalus/Procris *tradition*, readers disagree about how much from these earlier versions Ovid wishes us to read into his own. Segal 1978:

Cephalus, Procris was bribed with a golden crown to sleep with one Pteleon; detected by her husband, she fled to Minos, who was suffering from a curse inflicted by his jealous wife Pasiphae that caused him to ejaculate wild beasts (*thēria*)[7] into any woman who shared his bed. In exchange for another bribe—a preternaturally swift dog and unerring spear—Procris cured his condition with the "Circean root" and enjoyed the fruits of his newfound health before (in fear of Pasiphae) returning to Cephalus. (Ovid reminds us, at *Rem. am.* 453, that "Minos lost his fire for Pasiphae in Procris.") Hyginus (*Fab.* 189.6–8) has Procris disguising herself as a young man, going hunting with Cephalus, and using the dog and javelin he covets as bribes to get him to submit to the sexual treatment "which boys are accustomed to give." Cephalus, meanwhile, is famously the lover of the Dawn goddess (*Ars am.* 3.84; cf. *Am.* 1.13.39–40, *Her.* 4.93–96, 15.87–88). Whichever version one follows, all feature an assortment of adultery, bribery, disastrous hunting, seduction, and disguise.

In other words, Cephalus and Procris are the perfect couple to conclude the *Ars Amatoria*. Nearly all of the strategies the *praeceptor* propounds for erotic conquest are played out in the traditional versions of the poem's final (and book 3's only) mythological narrative. Yet Ovid has transmuted a story of infidelity and treachery into one of connubial harmony and tragic pathos. As the poet declared at the beginning of the poem, "love is to be ruled by art" (*arte regendus amor*, 1.4); there could be no clearer demonstration of the artist's power than this astonishing spin job, a vivid instantiation of the deceptive packaging that forms the poem's central topic. "Don't be too quick to believe" (*nec cito credideris*, 3.685): that is indeed the moral of Procris's story, but not merely in the way the *praeceptor* appears to mean. Ovid wants to show us that, under the influence of art, we readers are as gullible—and vulnerable—as she. The seduction the poem counsels it also performs (see Sharrock 1994).

175 argues that "Ovid has lifted the trivial eroticism of the legend, as it was handled in Hellenistic poetry, to the dignity and tragic stature of a noble and doomed love." Fontenrose 1980, refuting Green's suggestions about Ovid's sly winks to the reader, argues that we should take Ovid at his word about Procris's innocence; see also Fontenrose 1981: 86–111. Sabot 1985 emphasizes Ovid's departure from his predecessors in depicting the couple's ill-starred but sincere conjugal love. Tarrant 1995 largely agrees with Segal 1978 and Fontenrose 1980, concluding that Ovid alludes to some of the tradition's more sordid features "only in such a way as to underline the difference between the earlier form of the story and the one he had chosen to present" (110). Davidson 1997 discusses the widely divergent traditions surrounding Procris, a "fascinating figure ... and one through whom many of the ambiguities perceived in the female and female sexuality are explored" (184).

[7] Antoninus Liberalis specifies that these were snakes, scorpions, and centipedes (41.4), a catalogue that would accord with Nicander's *Theriaca* (see Papahomopoulos 1968: 166).

The tragedy of Procris underscores the dangers not merely of art in general, but of the species of art that is Ovid's specialty, erotic elegy. The *locus* for Cephalus's noontime hunting intermission is exquisitely *amoenus*, providing, in addition to the standard elements of water and grass, some remarkably elaborate shade (3.687–92):

est prope purpureos colles florentis Hymetti
fons sacer et uiridi caespite mollis humus:
silua nemus non alta facit; tegit arbutus herbam,
ros maris et lauri nigraque myrtus olent:
nec densum foliis buxum fragilesque myricae,
nec *tenues* cytisi *culta*que pinus abest.

There lies not far from the purple hills of flowering Hymettus
a sacred spring and ground soft with verdant turf;
a forest—not deep—forms a grove; wild strawberry cloaks the grass;
rosemary, laurel, and black myrtle waft their scent;
there was no lack of boxwood, thick with leaves, nor delicate
tamarisk, nor *slender* laburnum, nor *cultivated* pine.

The penultimate species of tree sports the epithet *tenuis*, a key term in neoteric poetics (see Rosati 1999: 248–53; Wyke 2002: 123). The final species is *cultus*, "cultivated" or "groomed," an incongruous adjective for a tree in a "natural" setting, but calling to mind the excursus on *cultus* earlier in the book (101–28).[8] As Hinds points out (2002: 132), Procris meets her doom partly because she is such a good reader of poetry: her suspicions are fueled by "the landscape's rhetorical *mise en scène* itself, the *locus est*-ness of the *locus amoenus*." Cephalus's ambiguous words form a song, and one sung repeatedly at that (697–98):

"quae"que "meos releues aestus," *cantare solebat*
"accipienda sinu, mobilis aura, ueni."

*He used to sing*, "You who can relieve my heat,
come, fickle breeze, to be received in my bosom!"

Cephalus may be a hunter, but *cantare solebat* and his amorous phraseology also qualify him as a love poet. The persistent association of hunting with courtship in the *Ars* (see Green 1996) makes Cephalus seem like the model student the *praeceptor* seeks to cultivate.

[8] Gibson 2003: 364 observes, "[p]erhaps it would be out of place in *Ars* 3 for anything to be naturally beautiful without the presence of *cultus*."

Procris also behaves in character for Ovid's female pupils. Her reaction to the news of Cephalus's alleged infidelity marks her as the elegiac mistress par excellence (709–10):

*nec mora, per medias passis furibunda capillis*
euolat, ut thyrso concita *Baccha, uias.*

*In a flash*, she darts out in *the middle of the street*, *her hair disheveled*,
in *fury*, like a *Bacchant* whipped up by the thyrsus.

This description of female jealousy conflates two vignettes from Propertius: the woman madly in love will "rush into the middle of the street like a smitten Bacchant" (*sequitur medias, Maenas ut icta, uias*, 3.8.14), and the final appearance of Cynthia, ravishing in her jealousy, is echoed even more closely (4.8.51–52): nec mora, *cum totas resupinat Cynthia ualuas*, / non operosa comis, *sed* furibunda *decens* ("*In a flash*, Cynthia flings the double doors wide open! / *Her hair wasn't done*, but her *fury* was quite becoming"). Though frenzied women are a stock feature of other genres as well (such as tragedy and epic), the combination of *nec mora*, *furibunda*, and disheveled *comae* invites comparison with Cynthia's memorable return. In the case of Propertius, elements of comedy and mime pervade the last two Cynthia poems (4.7 and 4.8), and the story achieves the quintessentially happy ending of a reunion in bed cementing vows of eternal fidelity (despite Cynthia's death in the previous poem).[9] Cephalus and Procris have the opposite trajectory: the comedic and mimic themes of adultery and disguise with which their story traditionally begins[10] build to a quintessentially tragic climax, a flaw and a misunderstanding leading to death.

The finale to the story replays the genre-bending beginning to the poet's career. After Procris recognizes her mistake and rushes out to embrace her husband, he thinks the noise is from a wild animal and hurls his spear. The narrator interjects a strangely personal comment (735–36):

quid facis, infelix? non est fera, supprime tela!
me miserum! iaculo fixa puella tuo est.

[9] On connections between these two exquisite poems, and their multiple literary affiliations, see especially McKeown 1979; Knox 2004; Walin 2009.

[10] On adultery as the most prevalent mimic theme, see Reynolds 1946; on the importance of mime in Roman literature, see Fantham 1989. The adultery mime typically contained three primary characters: the clever wife, the dashing lover, and the cuckolded husband. Cephalus and Procris vary this scenario by having parts #2 and #3 played by the same person.

What are you doing, wretch? She's not a beast, hold back your shafts!
Miserable me! The girl's been pierced by your spear.

This echoes the complaint of the poet in *Amores* 1.1, waylaid from his project of writing epic by Cupid's insidious arrow: *me miserum! certas habuit puer ille sagittas* ("Miserable me! That boy had arrows that hit their mark," 1.1.25). Though the *puella*—a term suggesting an elegiac more than a marital relationship[11]—is the one pierced by the shaft, it is the *praeceptor* who cries *me miserum*, a phrase that evokes the self-pitying lamentation of Ovidian love elegy.[12] It is as if he were reliving, through his female character, the fateful wounding that he had vowed to avenge at the beginning of the *Ars* (1.21–24). Procris's subsequent words continue the play on the wound of love by Cupid's arrow and the actual wound by Cephalus's spear (737–38):

"Ei mihi!" conclamat. "fixisti pectus amicum.
hic locus a Cephalo uulnera semper habet."

"Woe is me!" she exclaims. "You've pierced a friendly heart.
This place is always getting wounds from Cephalus."

The spear merely makes literal the wounds her heart is "always getting"; since at this point her reason for jealousy has evaporated, the "wounds" she means can only be those of love itself. She explicitly assimilates her physical pain to erotic distress—just as her husband's ambiguous expressions of his physical discomfort, which she interpreted as erotic distress, created the situation in the first place. Her dying moment labels her with another term emblematic of elegy, *domina* (743; see Hejduk 2008: 140). Procris has found the clichés of elegy to be, quite literally, fatal.

The episode, then, emblematizes two important Ovidian themes. One is the two-way traffic between literal and figurative language, which can create ambiguities with lethal consequences. Cephalus's song, which in his mind refers to the literal heat arising from summer exercise, refers in Procris's mind to the figurative heat of passion; conversely, her figurative wound by Cupid's arrow (via Cephalus) yields to the literal wound by Cephalus's spear. The other theme is that of art—especially erotic poetry—as both deadly and salvific.

[11] See Dee 1974: 94 on the "very strong and ironic overtones" when Augustan poets apply *puella* to married women.

[12] See the nuanced discussion of Hinds 1998: 29–34. Though the phrase is "a common piece of verbal furniture in a wide range of discursive situations in Latin" (29–30), Ovid appears to make it a sort of trademark for his own brand of elegy, employing it 45 times throughout his works.

Cephalus is a killer, whether with song or with spear; this model student of the *Ars* reminds us of the dark side of the poem's pervasive hunting imagery. And yet the episode as a whole has the effect of transforming a tale of adulterous treachery into a tragically beautiful love story. The art that the *praeceptor* enjoins his pupils to deploy must always be read against the art deployed by the poet himself. His addictively witty couplets, even when counseling such things as rape and betrayal, have so thoroughly "elegized" the world that no remedy is possible—or desirable (see Brunelle 2000/1). Like love, art is a pleasing plague that can simultaneously kill and cure.

Both of these themes blossom in the Cephalus episode of the *Metamorphoses*. His entrance marks a new movement in this intricate poem of multi-layered narratives: Aeacus conversing with Cephalus is the first narrator in the poem to tell a story *about himself*, and Cephalus, at far greater length, is the second. If Cephalus in the *Ars* is a poet (*cantare solebat*), in the *Metamorphoses* he is doubly so, singing an even more elaborate pseudo-love song to Aura, while also crafting his entire narrative to be a work of art that both moves his listeners to tears (7.863) and reflects positively on the artist. His story is sometimes criticized as, uniquely in the *Metamorphoses*, containing no metamorphosis, other than the fox-hunt digression in the middle. And yet, just as Cephalus and Procris in the *Ars* illustrate the transformative power of art, so the couple in the *Metamorphoses* illustrate the metamorphosis—through Cephalus's powerful *carmen*—of a sordid tale into a thing of beauty, an infamous tart into a tragic heroine. His story divides neatly into three parts, with the first and third balancing each other in length and theme: 1) The Aurora incident with its consequences; 2) the adventures of the hunting dog Laelaps; and 3) the Aura incident with its consequences.[13] Each part, moreover, has its own generic affinities. Like Ovid, Cephalus exhibits expert command of all aspects of his craft.

Part One would appear to be the "epic" portion (see Segal 1978: 186–90). After Aurora seizes him against his will and he resists her advances through love for his Procris (one-upping Odysseus's only partial resistance of Calypso: see Labate 1975–76: 110–13), the goddess's prophecy of marital unhappiness, "*Procrin habe!*" *dixit* "*quod si mea prouida mens est, / non habuisse uoles*" ("Have Procris!" she said, "but if my mind has foresight, you will not wish to have had her," 7.712–13), echoes the Sibyl's words to Aeneas, "*Dardanidae uenient ... sed non et uenisse uolent*" ("The Trojans will come ... but they will not also wish

[13] Pöschl 1959: 334 notes that the first and third parts are almost exactly the same length (68 and 69 verses, narrating the jealousy of husband and of wife, respectively).

to have come," *Aen.* 6.85–86). Like Athena with Odysseus, Aurora disguises Cephalus so he can spy on his own wife, and he finds her a very Penelope ... until she finally wavers just a little at his enormous bribes (see Labate 1975–76: 119). At his outraged revelation of his identity, she flees from him and all male society to become a follower of Diana. After his profuse apology, she gives him Diana's gifts to her, the magical spear and Laelaps, "first having avenged her wounded modesty" (*laesum prius ulta pudorem*, 751)—either a tactful reference to or a deliberate departure from the tradition of her seduction in drag of her own husband (see Tarrant 1995: 105–7). The mention of dog and spear leads into Part Two (discussed below, "The Plagues at Thebes").

With Part Three, a retelling of the events from the *Ars*, Ovid signals his return to elegiac discourse. Cephalus's boast that "she wouldn't prefer the bedroom of Jupiter to my love" (*nec Iouis illa meo thalamos praeferret amori*, 7.801) echoes Catullus's similar boast about his Lesbia in the first two epigrams bearing her name (70.1–2, 72.1–2).[14] Cephalus sums up this portion of his career with the amatory cliché, *aequales urebant pectora flammae* ("equal flames were burning our hearts," 803; see Segal 1978: 196–97). As in the *Ars*, Cephalus's hunting trip brings him to a *locus amoenus*, and his ambiguous pseudo-love song to Aura signals his debt to the earlier version with a verbal echo (*cantare solebam*) and an "Alexandrian footnote" (*recordor enim*)[15]:

"aura" (recordor enim), "uenias" cantare solebam,
"meque iuues intresque sinus, gratissima, nostros,
utque facis, releuare uelis quibus urimur aestus."
forsitan addiderim (sic me mea fata trahebant)
blanditias plures et "tu mihi magna uoluptas"
dicere sim solitus, "tu me reficisque fouesque,
tu facis ut siluas, ut amem loca sola, meoque
spiritus iste tuus semper captatur ab ore." (813–20)

"Aura, please come!" (for I remember) I used to sing,
"and please help me, and enter my bosom, most delightful one,
and wish to relieve the heat that's burning me, as you do."
I may have added perhaps (so my doom was drawing me on)
more sweet nothings, and said many times, "You are my great pleasure,

[14] Catullus's Lesbia poems in elegiac couplets, whether two lines (like poem 85) or 160 (like poem 68), inaugurate in Latin most of the themes associated with the love elegies of Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid; see Hejduk 2008: 9–15.

[15] For bibliography on the "Alexandrian footnote" (in which statements like "I remember" signal allusions to an earlier text), a term coined by Ross 1975: 78, see Casali 2009: 341–43. Miller 2006: 90–93 discusses the Cephalus incident specifically.

you refresh me and caress me, you make me love
the forests and the lonely places, and that breath
of yours is always being drawn in by my mouth."

Ambiguous words (*uoces ambiguae*, 821) indeed,[16] and Procris understandably jumps to the conclusion that her husband is having an affair with one Aura. After all, her own family history and that of Cephalus show an unusual prevalence of personified and salacious winds: Cephalus is the grandson of the wind-king Aeolus (*Aeolides*, 6.681, 7.672), and Procris's sister Orithyia was ravished by Boreas, who, finding prayers and *blanditiae* ineffective, literally blew her away (6.682–710)—a textbook example of "split divinity" (Solodow 1988: 94–96). And one does not need a honed paronomastic sensibility to detect a connection between Aura and Aurora, as the ancients in fact did.[17]

The next day's events continue the mischievous play on erotic *topoi*. Cephalus's apparently epic introduction to the scene, *postera depulerant Aurorae lumina noctem* ("the next light/eyes of Aurora had driven out the night," 7.835), should raise eyebrows (see Fontenrose 1980: 189–90; Tissol 1997: 29; Galasso, Perduano, and Perutelli 2000: 1131): as a newlywed he was propositioned by Aurora, who in her jealous rage at his rebuff (so he tells us) prophesied his marital difficulties (7.711–13), and *lumina* in erotic poetry commonly refers to a fetching pair of eyes (see Pichon 1902: 192). His telescopic description of the day's hunting, *egredior siluasque peto uictorque per herbas* ("I go out and head for the woods and, victorious, on the grass ...," 7.836), has a suspicious ring as well: over what exactly is he *uictor*? The word may be appropriate for the conquest of a worthy competitor like the Calydonian boar in a pseudo-epic episode (8.445, 486, 494), but such hyperbole for a day's hunt of ordinary animals is unparalleled[18]; the poem's other *uictor* in a grassy wood (*herba*, 2.420; *uictor*, 437; *silua*, 438) is Jupiter, proud conqueror of Callisto. Though Cephalus presumably does not intend to say that he was "victorious on the grass" in a sexual sense any more than

[16] Not to belabor the point with an exhaustive lexical study, it is easy to see how Procris's suspicions would be raised by "enter my bosom" (*intresque sinus*), "relieve the heat that's burning me" (*releuare ... quibus urimur aestus*), "sweet nothings" (*blanditiae*), "pleasure" (*uoluptas*), and "caress" (*fouesque*).

[17] Priscian (*Inst.* 3.509.28) observes that "Aurora" derives from "aura": see Maltby 1991: 68. Servius (on *Aen.* 6.445) implies that Cephalus's repeated invocations of *aura* generated *Aurora*'s love for him. Ahl 1985: 204–8 discusses far more extensive wordplay in the episode.

[18] Bömer 1976: 399 notes the strangeness of the word *uictor* used for a hunter; he suggests a model in Aeneas as "victor" over seven deer (*Aen.* 1.192), a scene that has been read as prefiguring epic battles.

he intends to drop hints about his matutinal suitor's advances, that sort of erotic ambiguity just seems to be in his blood.

His second invocation of aura/Aura confirms this interesting predisposition (837–39):

> "aura, ueni" dixi, "nostroque medere labori!"
> et subito gemitus inter mea uerba uidebar
> nescioquos audisse; "ueni" tamen "optima" dixi.
>
> "Aura, come," I said, "and heal my distress!"
> and suddenly I seemed to hear some kind of groans
> amid my words; yet I said, "come, most desirable one!"

The medical metaphor in *nostroque medere labori* gives Cephalus's "distress" an obvious affinity with the love bug. Unlike the *Ars* version, where Procris instantly recognizes her mistake upon hearing her husband's invocation of *aura*, in this one the hidden Procris's "groans" (*gemitus*) indicate that she has quite reasonably interpreted her husband's words in this way. But given the common use of *gemitus* to indicate the laments or blandishments of elegy (Pichon 1902: 159), Cephalus's statement that he "heard some kind of groans amid my words" carries the ironic secondary meaning that, like his wife, he heard these elegiac strains as well.

Procris's death scene demonstrates that she is as fluent in elegy as her husband. When Cephalus hears what he thinks is a wild beast and hurls his unerring spear, she is wounded, naturally, "in the middle of her heart" (*medioque tenens in pectore uulnus*, 842). As in the *Ars*, her response is *ei mihi*. The phrase's first appearance in Ovid, *ei mihi, quam longe spem tulit* aura *meam* ("woe is me, how far away did the *breeze* bear my hope," *Am.* 1.6.52), followed by an appeal to Boreas, the ravisher of Orithyia, would be especially appropriate to Procris's situation. As one breeze (Boreas) bore away her sister, so another (Aura) bore away her hope (of her husband's fidelity). Seeing her drawing the spear from her breast, Cephalus exclaims, naturally, *me miserum!* (846), like the narrator in *Ars* 3 (736). And Procris's final prayer for her husband's fidelity invokes, as its climactic member (after their marriage pact, the gods, and her own merit), "the love that remains even now, as I die, the cause of my death" (*manentem / nunc quoque cum pereo, causam mihi mortis, amorem*, 854–55). She correctly perceives that she is dying through love, as the figurative heart-wound of elegy becomes literal.

In counterpoint with these elegiac strains, however, readers have correctly perceived the plangent tones of tragedy. Procris's wound to the heart (*medioque tenens in pectore uulnus*) also recalls that of Dido, *infixum stridit sub pectore*

*uulnus* ("the wound hisses, fixed deep in her heart," *Aen.* 4.689: see Segal 1978: 188). Her final words, as Galasso points out (Galasso, Perduano, and Perutelli 2000: 1132), recall the deaths of Euripides' Alcestis (202, 250, 275) and Hippolytus (1456), and "place the woman definitively on the level of the grand heroines of myth and literature" ("collocano la donna definitivamente sul piano delle grandi eroine del mito e della letteratura"). The elegiac lover "dying for love" is, essentially, a comic figure, and it is partly the elegists' ironic distance from their own mournful personae that makes elegy such good fun. But when love leads to actual death, when the figurative *really* becomes literal, then the reader may need to reevaluate the emotional register of the text. The listeners' tearful response indicates that Cephalus has completed the generic metamorphosis of his wife from comic to tragic heroine. Her death, which was caused in part by her husband's poetic art, testifies also to its transformative and transcendent power.

## 2. APOLLO AND THE HAZARDS OF ART

Apollo's unhappy loves in the *Metamorphoses*—which is to say, all of his loves in the *Metamorphoses*—parallel the tragedy of Cephalus and Procris in several ways.[19] Both have a common ancestor in the sphere of elegiac seduction, with its attendant behaviors and metaphors of hunting, deception, bribery, and, above all, art. Like Cephalus—and Ovid—Apollo is a poet of his own amatory misfortunes: Cupid's arrow inspires him to pursue Daphne with speed and with song. And like Cephalus—and Ovid—Apollo shows the interrelationship of love, art, and death.

In addition to his skill in intentional feats of marksmanship,[20] the god shares the hunter's propensity for causing the unintended death of his beloved(s) by means of missiles. In the case of Hyacinthus (10.162–219), whom Apollo inadvertently kills with a discus, art also plays a central role in both the death

[19] On parallels and contrasts among Apollo's lamentations for three of his lost lovers (Coronis, Cyparissus, and Hyacinthus), see Miller 1999.

[20] Apollo's slaughter of Niobe's first son Ismenus bears a striking resemblance to the death(s) of Procris. Compare *Met.* 6.227–28 (Ismenus): "ei mihi!" conclamat medioque in pectore *fixa / tela gerit* ... ("'*Woe is me!' he exclaims*, and bears *in the middle of his heart* / the weapon fixed"); *Met.* 7.842–43: *Procris erat* medioque *tenens* in pectore *uulnus* "ei mihi!" conclamat ("It was Procris, and holding the wound *in the middle of her heart* / *'Woe is me!' she exclaims*"); and *Ars am.* 3.737: "ei mihi," conclamat "*fixisti* pectus *amicum*" ("'*Woe is me' she exclaims*," "you have pierced a friendly *heart*"). Since these wounds to the heart are the only three appearances in extant Latin literature of *ei mihi! conclamat*, we may be justified in supposing that Ovid intends to forge a link between Apollo and Cephalus.

and its aftermath. Apollo's throw "exhibited art joined with strength" (*exhibuit iunctam cum uiribus artem*, 181); but after the boy receives the fatal blow, Apollo the healer finds that his "arts do no good; the wound was unhealable" (*nil prosunt artes; erat immedicabile uulnus*, 189).[21] Apollo expresses his remorse in ars-poetical terms, as if he had "written" the boy's death (198–99):

> "tu dolor es facinusque meum; mea dextera leto
> *inscribenda* tuo est; ego sum tibi funeris *auctor*."
>
> "You are my pain and my crime; my own right hand should be
> *inscribed* with your murder; I am the *author* of your death."

The vocabulary of writing and authorship is recapitulated at the end of the story (Miller 1999: 420), in which the god creates a flower from Hyacinthus's blood, transmuting gore into a thing of beauty (214–16):

> non satis hoc Phoebo est (is enim fuit *auctor* honoris);
> ipse suos *gemitus* foliis *inscribit* et *AI AI*
> flos habet *inscriptum funestaque littera* ducta est.
>
> This isn't enough for Phoebus (for he was the *author* of the honor);
> he himself *inscribes* his own *groans* on the leaves, and the flower
> has *"AI AI" inscribed*, and the *funereal letter* was drawn.

Apollo the "author" has literally "inscribed" his own *gemitus*—again that elegiac code word—with the phrase through which the ancients believed elegy received its name: the genre associated with lament was etymologized as *e e legein* (Hinds 1987: 103), with *e e* a variant of *ai ai*. Like the elegiac poet, Apollo shows himself supremely concerned with memorializing his own grief, turning Hyacinthus into a poem written by himself. The "art" of missile-hurling (athletics being a species of the hunter-warrior's craft) proves fatal; the "art" of medicine proves useless; but the art of poetry, and specifically the *funesta littera* that symbolizes elegy, results in an "honor [that] endures to this generation" (*honorque / durat in hoc aeui*, 217–18).

Though Apollo does not cause the death of Cyparissus, the story of the boy "loved by that god" (10.107), related shortly before that of Hyacinthus, shares the theme of accidental killing with a missile.[22] Cyparissus is in love with a stag who, it seems, is something of a trollop. Not only does it wear the elaborate

[21] Anderson 1972: 490, on *immedicabile*, compares *Aen.* 12.858, where the *telum immedicabile* is a poisoned arrow.

[22] On significant differences between the reactions of divine Apollo and human Cyparissus to killing their beloveds, see Fulkerson 2006.

jewelry against which elegiac lovers and poets counsel their girlfriends (e.g., Prop. 1.2)—gold necklaces, silver headband, pearl earrings—but it welcomes all comers (112–19). The most infatuated of all is Cyparissus, who offers the perhaps redundant love-gift of a flowery garland (123) and enjoys riding it hither and thither like a horse (124; cf. *Ars am.* 3.777–78?). As the stag takes a rest in the grassy shade, invariably the setting for an erotic intermission in the *Metamorphoses*, Cyparissus unwittingly pierces it with his spear, sees it dying of a *saeuum uulnus* (131)—like Procris (*uulnera saeua*, 7.849)—and decides to die himself. Phoebus tries to get him to mourn *pro materia* (133), which we could almost translate "according to genre" (see Connors 1992: 10–12), but Cyparissus chooses instead to mourn permanently. Here both the meretriciousness of the stag and the accidental shooting by its lover recall traits traditionally associated with Procris.

Some of Apollo's more tangential affairs also show important points of contact with Cephalus and Procris. Like Cephalus (according to his own narrative) and Procris (according to tradition), the god engages in disguise: he wears traditional shepherd garb to court Admetus (*Met.* 2.680–82); Arachne depicts him carrying out his affairs as a rustic, a hawk, a lion, and a shepherd (6.122–24)[23]; and to rape Chione (though Mercury beats him to the punch), he disguises himself as an old woman (11.310). Arachne's tapestry demonstrates that gods disguising themselves for sexual gain is common, but gods resorting to bribery for this purpose is rare: Apollo's tersely narrated courtship of the Sibyl shows a significant parallel with Procris, for he tries to "pre-corrupt [her] with gifts" (*praecorrumpere donis*, 14.134), just as Cephalus in disguise tries to corrupt his wife with *dona* (7.720). When Apollo finds out about the infidelity of Coronis and "pierces her heart with his inescapable arrow" (*indeuitato traiecit pectora telo*, 2.605), repenting at once when she tells him she is pregnant, here too he "plies the medical arts in vain" (*medicas exercet inaniter artes*, 618). Coronis and Procris, the only two women in the *Metamorphoses* accused of infidelity, both experience fatal wounds to the heart, immediately regretted, from unerring *tela* sent by their husbands/lovers.

Apollo plays both sides of the Cephalus and Procris story. Like Cephalus, he wounds his beloved, whom he suspects of infidelity, with an unerring missile. As the god of healing is equally proficient with the strings of both lyre and bow (10.108), so Cephalus is at once love-poet and hunter, singing an elegiac *gemitus* with medical overtones (*nostroque medere labori*, 7.837). But Procris,

[23] Anderson 1972: 167: "But Ovid knows more in this instance than modern scholars, who cannot fix the episodes to which the tapestry refers." For some speculations, see Lightfoot 1999: 160; Hollis 1992: 113.

wounded in the heart, also resembles the god after he is struck by Cupid's arrow, shot, appropriately enough, from Mount Parnassus, the symbol of poetry (1.467). At the end of his long love song to Daphne, including, like so many love songs, a hymn to himself (Feeney 1998: 72), Apollo declares that no art can heal him (1.523–24):

> "ei mihi, quod nullis amor est sanabilis herbis,
> nec prosunt domino quae prosunt omnibus artes!"
>
> "Woe is me, that love is healable by no herbs,
> and the arts that help everyone are no help to their master!"

For Procris, art is not only ineffective, but deadly: a song that melds love and medicine is her undoing.

Procris and Daphne also resemble one another in their departures, both of which display apparent acquiescence and forgiveness unique in the *Metamorphoses*. Daphne, at her moment of (human) death, *appears* to be reconciled to her formerly despised lover when "she nodded and *seemed* to have shaken her top like a head" (*adnuit utque caput* uisa est *agitasse cacumen*, 1.567). Similarly, after reproaching her husband and receiving his explanation, the dying/dead Procris "*seems*, through her better facial expression, to die freed from care" (*uulto meliore mori secura* uidetur, 7.862). With the tantalizing "seemed/seems" (*uisa est/uidetur*), Ovid offers both reassurance and doubt about the women's reaction to their loss of human life. The reader may remember that the chief focalizers here, Cephalus and Apollo, have a vested interest in interpreting these parting gestures in a way comforting to themselves.[24]

The numerous parallels between Apollo and Cephalus, especially in matters of love, art, and disease or death, suggest that Ovid is using the god and the hunter to comment on these themes in a complementary way. Both illustrate the perils of elegiac poetry, where love, and words, can be arrows that pierce the heart. And both show the rewards of such poetry, where words, like the *AI AI* inscribed upon the hyacinth's petals, confer an eternity of praise. Another prominent connection between Apollo/Daphne and Cephalus, where pursuit leads directly to artistic transformation, appears in Part Two of the Cephalus saga, to which we now turn.

[24] See Farrell 1999: 136 on Apollo's ability to "disambiguate [Daphne's] text according to his will."

## 3. THE PLAGUES AT THEBES

Placed at the precise center of Cephalus's narrative, the episode of the inescapable dog and the uncatchable beast is usually regarded as merely a breather between his balanced tales of conjugal espionage, or as the story's token metamorphosis.[25] Even less attention has been paid to the killing of the Sphinx that precedes it (one wonders, indeed, how many readers of the *Metamorphoses* would remember without prompting that creature's cameo here at all). Yet Ovid and Cephalus are not the sort of poets to insert wholly irrelevant digressions into works so carefully crafted. I suggest that both of these insets complement the frame and contribute to the Apollonian themes of love, disease, and art that animate the Cephalus story.

Procris had given her husband two magical gifts, a dog and a spear. The tale of the dog comes first. A beast (traditionally a fox, though Ovid never says so) that harrows both men and flocks is called a "second plague" (*altera pestis*) to Thebes, a successor to the *uates* recently killed by Oedipus (7.759–65):

> carmina Laiades non intellecta priorum
> soluerat ingeniis, et praecipitata iacebat
> immemor ambagum uates obscura suarum.
> [scilicet alma Themis nec talia linquit inulta.]
> protinus Aoniis immittitur altera Thebis
> pestis et exitio multi pecorumque suoque
> rurigenae pauere feram.
>
> The son of Laius had solved the riddles (*carmina*) not understood
> by the wits of those before him, and hurled headlong, unmindful
> of her own ambiguities, the obscure prophetess (*uates*) lay dead.
> [No doubt nurturing Themis doesn't leave such things unavenged.]
> At once a second plague is sent to Aonian Thebes,
> and through their own destruction and that of their flocks many farmers
> feared the beast.

One clue to the significance of these beasts lies in their designation as a first and second *pestis*. This word, perhaps surprisingly, is quite rare in the *Metamorphoses*: it designates elsewhere only the plague at Aegina (7.553) and the torment of Hercules (9.177, 210)—both of which, as I discuss in the next section, are closely linked to the disease of love. A second clue lies in Cephalus's

[25] See, e.g., Otis 1970: 81; Anderson 1972: 311; Galinsky 1975: 151; Segal 1978: 192. Davis 1983: 140, however, recognizes the connection with Daphne and the episode's thematic relation to Procris's death (beast turns to stone, Procris turns to corpse).

description of the Sphinx's defeat as a sort of poetic duel, teasing us again with the theme of deadly art. As Bömer points out (1976: 385–86), *carmen* in the sense of "riddle" is a neologism of Ovid's, and *uates*, used for both "prophet" and "poet," is charged with meaning in Augustan poetry.[26] Calling the Sphinx a singer of "*carmina* not understood" and an "obscure *uates* unmindful of her own ambiguities" sounds suspiciously like a prophecy of Cephalus's own misunderstood song with its "ambiguous words" (*uoces ambiguae*, 821) and deadly consequences. As with Cephalus's mention of the *lumina* of Aurora when setting the scene for his hunting fiasco, his words convey messages to the reader presumably unintended by himself. The lines are an emblem of the riddling *carmina* they describe.

When the second *pestis* arrives, hunters from all around are summoned, a miniature precursor to the epic Calydonian Boar Hunt in the next book. Only Laelaps has anything close to success. The chase is described as a "spectacle" in which the beast is always at the point of being caught but escapes at the last moment (780–86):

> tollor eo capioque noui *spectacula* cursus,
> quo modo deprendi, modo se subducere ab ipso
> uulnere uisa fera est; nec limite callida recto
> in spatiumque fugit, sed *decipit ora sequentis*
> et redit in gyrum, ne sit suus impetus hosti;
> imminet hic sequiturque parem *similisque tenenti*
> *non tenet* et uanos exercet in aera *morsus*.

> I climb to [the hill] and take hold of a *spectacle* of a strange race,
> in which the beast now seems to be seized, now seems to withdraw
> itself from the very wound; nor does the clever one flee
> in a straight line into the open, but *tricks the mouth of its*
> *pursuer*, and goes in a circle, so its enemy can't get momentum;
> that one threatens, and follows its match, and though *like one grasping,*
> *doesn't grasp*, and exercises its empty *bites* on the air.

When neither the pursuer nor the pursued can achieve their desire, the animals are converted into marble statues.

[26] Newman 1967: 106 observes, "At VII, 761, we are taken aback to learn that the Sphinx which tormented Thebes was *uates obscura*—rather a striking witticism, but one which depended for its effect on flouting the awe which the *uates*-concept should inspire." See Hejduk 2009: 46–47 on Ovid's unusually sustained use of *uates* as prophet/poet in reference to himself.

Both the chase and its outcome are strongly reminiscent of Apollo's pursuit of Daphne. The famous simile comparing the pair to a dog and its quarry describes a nearly identical cynegetic equilibrium (*Met.* 1.535–38):

> alter *inhaesuro similis iam iamque tenere*
> *sperat* et extento stringit uestigia rostro,
> alter in ambiguo est an sit comprensus et ipsis
> *morsibus* eripitur *tangentiaque ora relinquit.*
>
> The one, *like one about to bite down, hopes to grasp*
> *any second now*, and grazes the footsteps with extended snout;
> the other is in doubt whether it has been seized, and is ripped
> from the very *bites*, and *leaves behind the mouth touching it.*

The use of *similis* with a dative participle in both descriptions (*similisque tenenti* of Laelaps, *inhaesuro similis* of the Apollo-dog) emphasizes the connection between them. It also creates an atmosphere of artistic representation. Both chase scenes (as commentators note) allude to the famous simile of Aeneas pursuing Turnus as a dog chases a stag (*Aen.* 12.753–55):

> uiuidus Vmber
> haeret hians, *iam iamque tenet similisque tenenti*
> increpuit malis morsuque elusus inani est.
>
> The lively Umbrian hound
> keeps opening wide, *grasping any second now, and like one grasping*
> has snapped with his jaws and is deceived by an empty bite.

In his discussion of the Homeric and Alexandrian pedigree of the "like one -ing" figure, Traina 1969: 72–74 points out its frequent use in artistic ecphrases in the *Aeneid* and elsewhere, observing that *similisque tenenti* suggests a chase scene depicted on a tapestry (74).[27] In the case of Ovid's Apollo, the "simile" is bi-layered, as he is *like* a dog that is *like* one about to bite down. The Laelaps description, moreover, is explicitly called a "spectacle" (*spectacula*)—a word that often designates a "show" or "performance" (*OLD* s.v. 2).

[27] E.g., *Aen.* 5.254, *anhelanti similis*, "like one panting," of Ganymede on the cloak depicting his abduction; 8.649, *indignanti similem similemque minanti*, "like one being indignant and like one threatening," of Porsenna on Aeneas's shield. Apollonius's description of Hypsipyle's mantle has two such figures in close proximity: *mogeonti eoikōs*, "like one laboring" (*Argon.* 1.739, of Zethes) and *exeneponti eoikōs*, "like one speaking" (1.764, of the Ram).

In keeping with these artistic hints, both stories culminate in transformations into works of art.[28] For Laelaps, this is literally true, as the pair form two perfectly lifelike marble statues (790–91):

> medio (mirum) duo marmora campo
> aspicio; fugere hoc, illud captare putares.
>
> In the middle of the plain (amazing!) I see
> two marble statues; you'd think this one flees, that one tries to catch.

This recalls the description of Europa on Arachne's tapestry (another sort of erotic pursuit), *uerum taurum, freta uera putares* ("you would think it a real bull, real sea," 6.104), with its similar asyndeton (*hoc, illud*; *taurum, freta*) and chiasmus (infinitive ... infinitive; *uerum* ... *uera*); in both, the reader is invited to experience the astonishing realism of a work of art (*putares*).[29] Similarly, Apollo's pursuit of Daphne ends with her metamorphosis—like Hyacinthus, Apollo's other paradigmatic love (Knox 1990)—into a metaphorical poem (1.549): *mollia cinguntur tenui praecordia libro* ("her soft chest is encircled by slender bark/book"). The appearance of two elegiac buzzwords in the same line, *tenuis* and *mollis* (Rosati 1999: 248–53; Wyke 2002: 123; Hejduk 2008: 120), supports the activation of the double meaning of *liber* as "bark" and "book."[30] "Bold lover, never, never wilt thou kiss, though winning near the goal": like the eternally thwarted "mad pursuit" on Keats's Grecian urn, the two canine chase scenes in the *Metamorphoses* immortalize in art the exhilarating frustration of almost successful capture.[31]

[28] See Pavlock 2009 on the various kinds of "art" in the *Metamorphoses* that reflect on one another and on Ovid's own: not only song, weaving, and statuary, but also magic, rhetoric, and architecture.

[29] See Feeney 1991: 192; Wheeler 1999: 154–55; Hardie 2002: 176; Oliensis 2004: 291. Barkan 1986: 1–18 discusses Europa (especially on Arachne's tapestry) as the quintessential *objet d'art*, a figure "at the center of self-conscious reflection about the nature of image" (8).

[30] Farrell 1999: 133: "The secondary meaning of these words is lost on no one: *tenuis liber* in Ovid's day was a phrase that resounded with the echoes of repeated literary manifestos." Hardie 2002: 46: "She has indeed been converted into a *tenuis liber* (549), 'thin bark' / 'slender book', thus suffering Corinna's fate of becoming that impossible, but most seductive, object of desire, a text, a potent screen for the projection of male fantasy." On elegiac echoes in Daphne's transformation, see Putnam 2004/5: 82–84.

[31] Sabot 1985: 213 connects the fox chase with the unhappy love of Cephalus and Procris: "L'episode de la chasse au renard est peut-être aussi le symbole de cette recherche impossible de l'absolu dans l'amour, de ce désir de possession toujours renouvelé, toujours insatisfait, poursuite san fin, éternisée dans le marbre, par la métamorphose du

We have seen that the twin *pestes* of Sphinx and fox both have important thematic connections with the rest of Cephalus's story: the first showcases ambiguous and lethal *carmina*, while the second forms a clear link to Apollo. For readers of the *Metamorphoses*, of course, these are preceded by a *pestis* proper, the plague at Aegina (523–79). I have chosen to save my discussion of this incident for last, in the hope that my previous arguments about erotic ambiguity in the Cephalus story will have prepared my own readers to appreciate one of the most virtuosic displays of *double entendre* in all of Latin literature.

## 4. THE PLAGUE AT AEGINA

Cephalus's story actually begins when, as an Athenian ambassador seeking aid in the war against Minos, he comes to visit king Aeacus on the island of Aegina. When Cephalus marvels at how many youths are there, so beautiful and so matched in age, Aeacus tells him how a plague sent by jealous Juno had wiped out the population, which Jupiter then replaced with the metamorphosed ants that became the Myrmidons. The description of the plague itself is a set-piece in the tradition of Thucydides, Lucretius, and Virgil, but with a difference: whereas Thucydides' plague bears little resemblance to erotic distress, and those of Lucretius and Virgil show more resemblance but also some contrasts, Ovid caps his predecessors by making *every* symptom, in animal and human, accord with those of the disease called Love.[32] Because none of the symptoms is associated exclusively with lovesickness—the point, after all, is the overlap between love and other illnesses—readers will probably be well into the catalogue before their suspicions are aroused. But when one rereads the passage with an eye to erotic *topoi*, one comes to realize how carefully Ovid has chosen to include only the details that do overlap. A single sneeze, cough, retch, or pustule—as in the case of Lureen detailed in the epigraph to this paper—would have spoiled the joke, and the poet avoids them assiduously.

A brief overview of Ovid's models should suffice to illustrate this negligible or partial overlap of erotic and non-erotic symptoms in the other authors. Thucydides' first two symptoms, fever and reddened eyes, could be attributed to lovesickness, but the rest rapidly depart from the amatory realm: bloody

poursuivant et du poursuivi" ("The episode of the fox-hunt is perhaps also the symbol of this impossible search for the absolute in love, of the desire for possession always renewed, always unsatisfied, pursued without end, eternalized in marble by the metamorphosis of the pursuer and the pursued").

[32] Otis 1970: 176, noting Ovid's difference in tone from his models, points out that "Ovid emphasizes only the *paradoxical suddenness* and *topsy-turviness* of the plague" (italics added). To what other human experience are such terms customarily applied?

throats and tongues, halitosis, sneezing, coughing, discharges of bile, retching, pustules, and ulcers (Thuc. 2.49). Lucretius's plague shares many symptoms with Ovid's (fever, panting, languor, etc.), but also contains a graphic description of the consistency, color, and taste of the diseased phlegm (6.1188–89). A comparison of Virgil's dying animals with Ovid's will reveal how Ovid takes some of Virgil's cues but edits out the details that would not accord with his erotic program. Virgil's bull, for instance, utters *gemitus* as it dies, and its brother's mourning resembles that of a human lover (like Catullus?):

> ecce autem duro fumans sub uomere taurus
> concidit et *mixtum spumis uomit ore cruorem*
> extremosque ciet *gemitus*. it tristis arator,
> maerentem abiungens fraterna morte iuuencum,
> atque *opere in medio defixa relinquit aratra*. (*G.* 3.515–19)
>
> But look—the bull, steaming under the harsh ploughshare,
> collapses and *vomits from its mouth gore mixed with foam*
> and utters its final *groans*. The ploughman sadly goes,
> unyoking the bullock grieving at its brother's death,
> and *in the middle of the work abandons the fixed-in plough*.

Yet the detail of "vomiting from its mouth gore mixed with foam" places the bull's death in the realm of martial epic, not elegy. Ovid, on the other hand, retains Virgil's personification of the bull and focalization through the farmer, but he removes anything that could not be a *double entendre* (*Met.* 7.538–39):

> concidere infelix ualidos miratur arator
> inter opus tauros medioque recumbere sulco.
>
> The unhappy ploughman marvels that the vigorous bulls
> collapse right in the act and fall back in the middle of the furrow.

The common use of *opus* for intercourse (Ovid's *amator* wants to die *inter opus*, *Am.* 2.10.36; see Kennedy 1993: 59–60; Adams 1982: 157) and *sulcus* for female genitalia (Adams 1982: 82–84) allows Ovid's description to be applied equally to impotence, a species of erotic distress.[33] While Virgil's *opere in medio* resembles Ovid's *inter opus*, Virgil's additional detail of "abandons the fixed-in plough" effectively eliminates any potential sexual metaphor.

If the description of the plague in animals were all Ovid had given us, of course, there would be little reason to ascribe an erotic subtext to the bull or

[33] The metaphor of "ploughing" and "sowing" for intercourse is ubiquitous; cf. Lucr. 4.1107, 1272. *Medius* can also be used to indicate the genital area (Adams 1982: 46–47).

any of the other unfortunate beasts. Rather, my argument is that, for the alert second-reader, every item has some point of contact with amatory literature. Given the number of symptoms for which this would not hold true, and which are in fact included in the other authors (vomiting, coughing, diseased phlegm, etc.), it seems highly improbable that Ovid would have excluded them all merely by accident. As in Cephalus's songs to *aura*, it is the accumulation of erotic possibilities combined with the absence of erotic impossibilities (like "Come dry my sweat!") that creates the overall effect.

Here, then, is a full quotation of the post-bull "plague in animals" section, followed by a brief summary of possible erotic resonances (*Met.* 7.540–51):

> lanigeris gregibus balatus dantibus aegros
> sponte sua *lanaeque cadunt et corpora tabent*;
> acer equus quondam *magnaeque in puluere famae*
> degenerat palmas *ueterumque oblitus honorum*
> *ad praesepe gemit* leto moriturus *inerti*;
> non aper *irasci* meminit, non fidere *cursu*
> cerua nec armentis *incurrere* fortibus ursi.
> *omnia languor habet*: siluisque agrisque uiisque
> *corpora foeda iacent*, uitiantur *odoribus* aurae.
> mira loquar: non illa canes auidaeque uolucres,
> non cani tetigere lupi; dilapsa *liquescunt*
> *adflatu*que nocent et agunt *contagia* late.
>
> While the wool-bearing flocks are making lamenting bleats,
> on its own, *wool falls off and bodies waste away*;
> the horse, once keen and *of great fame in the dust*,
> becomes unworthy of palms, and *forgetful of former honors*
> *groans before the stall*, doomed to die an *indolent* death;
> the boar forgets to be *furious*, the deer to trust
> in *racing*, the bear to *assault* the doughty herds.
> *Languor takes over everything*. In woods and fields and roads
> *bodies lie there foully*, the breeze is polluted with *scents*.
> I'll speak of wonders: those bodies the dogs, the greedy birds,
> the gray-haired wolves didn't touch; falling apart, they *melt*
> and harm with their *breath* and spread the *contagion* far and wide.

The sheep exhibit a case of peculiarly female lovesickness. *Lana* ("wool") is a metonym for both "clothing" and "the proper occupation of respectable women," especially as opposed to sexual indulgence (see *OLD* s.v. *lana* 2.b, 2.c). While the wicked wives carouse, the paradigmatically virtuous Lucretia is *deditam lanae* ("devoted to her wool," Livy 1.57.9); even more to the point, Ovid's *praeceptor* despises the woman who, rather than experiencing mutual

*uoluptas*, keeps thinking about her *lana* (*Ars am.* 2.686). Thus *lanae cadunt*, "their wool falls off," in Latin as in English, could have connotations of both "their clothing falls off" and "their wool-working falls off (because they are otherwise occupied)." As for *corpora tabent*, the wasting away of bodies through love is a *topos* (cf. Pichon 1902: 273); in Virgil's underworld, Procris herself is among those "whom harsh love consumed with cruel wasting" (*quos durus amor crudeli tabe peredit*, *Aen.* 6.442). The horse, meanwhile, exhibits an indifference to *fama*, *honores*, and victory more reminiscent of certain male heroes. His "groans" have obvious elegiac affinities; Pichon (1902: 168) defines *iners* as *ob amorem inbecillis et inualidus uir* ("a man weak and sickly because of love"; cf. Prop. 3.7.72); and most archly, *praesepe* is a slang term for "brothel" (*OLD* s.v. 1.c). Every word applied to the *acer equus* could as easily be applied to an Aeneas or a Sybaris (as in Hor. *Carm.* 1.8) who has rejected athletic and military pursuits under the influence of lust.

For the rest of the animals, described more succinctly, nearly every word has some parallel in Latin elegiac or sexual vocabulary. *Irasci* is classic behavior for lovers (Pichon 1902: 175); *cursus* is applied to both *amoris impetus* (Pichon 1902: 121) and the sexual act (e.g., *Ars am.* 2.726, *nec cursus anteeat illa tuos*, "let her not finish her race before yours"); and *incurrere* can be used for sexual assault (Juv. 6.336, *seruis incurritur*: see Adams 1982: 176). *Foedus* can refer to obscenity (*OLD* s.v. 4.b); *odores* to perfumes (*OLD* s.v. 3); *contagia* to the contagion of love (e.g., *Rem. am.* 613: see Pichon 1902: 112); *adflare* to "breathing love in" (e.g., Tib. 2.4.57, *ubi indomitis gregibus Venus adflat amores*, "when Venus breathes love into the untamed herds": see Pichon 1902: 79); and *liquescere* to the "melting" of limbs with sexual pleasure (e.g., Lucr. 4.1114, *membra uoluptatis dum ui labefacta liquescunt*, "while their limbs melt, shaken by the power of pleasure"). Aside from *balatus*, *armenta*, and the names of the animals themselves, every word and concept in this passage has a parallel in accounts of erotic distress. I should emphasize again that nothing here belongs exclusively or even primarily to such accounts; my point is that Ovid has left open the possibility, a pile of kindling awaiting a torch.

It is when the plague reaches humans that the symptoms start to bear closer resemblance to an elegiac handbook. A brief catalogue (*Met.* 7.552–64):

> peruenit ad *miseros* damno grauiore colonos
> *pestis* et in magnae dominatur moenibus urbis.
> *uiscera torrentur* primo *flammaeque latentis*
> *indicium rubor est* et ductus *anhelitus* aegre;
> aspera lingua tumet *tepidisque arentia uentis*
> *ora patent auraeque graues captantur hiatu*;
> *non stratum, non ulla pati uelamina possunt,*

> *nuda sed in terra ponunt praecordia*, nec fit
> corpus humo gelidum, sed *humus de corpore feruet*.
> nec moderator adest inque ipsos saeua medentes
> erumpit clades *obsuntque auctoribus artes*;
> quo propior quisque est *seruitque fidelius* aegro,
> in partem leti citius uenit.
>
> The *plague* comes to the *miserable* inhabitants at heavier
> cost and lords it within the walls of the great city.
> At first, *the viscera are heated up*, and *a blush*
> *is evidence of hidden flame*, and difficult *panting* for breath;
> the rough tongue swells and the *dry mouths are opened with warm*
> *winds and difficult breezes are drawn in open-mouthed*;
> *they are able to endure no mattress, no coverings,*
> *but they place their breasts naked on the earth*—nor does the body
> grow cool on the ground, but *the ground heats up from the body*.
> Nor is there anyone to control it, and the savage disaster
> often breaks out on the very healers, and *the arts harm their authors*;
> the nearer each is, and *the more faithfully he slaves* for the sick,
> the more swiftly he comes in for his share of death.

We have seen the use of *me miserum* in elegiac discourse, and *miser* is almost a technical term for the lover "in misery" (e.g., Catull. 8.1, Prop. 1.1.1, Ov. *Am.* 1.1.25; see Hejduk 2008: 17). *Pestis* appears in Catullus's prayer for delivery from love, *eripite hanc pestem perniciemque mihi* ("snatch this plague and pestilence from me," 76.2). Ovid's next few lines, I suggest, begin to set the kindling ablaze. The *Remedia* provides a choice analogue for *uiscera torrentur* when, through the disease of love, "silent flames creep into the viscera" (*tacitae serpunt in uiscera flammae*, *Rem. am.* 105). The tipoff for this reader, however, was "a blush is evidence of hidden flame" (*flammaeque latentis / indicium rubor est*); for the erotic connotations of fiery blushes, though a dozen examples could be supplied, Lavinia's crowns them all (*Aen.* 12.64–66; see Lyne 1987: 114–22). *Anhelitus*, "gasping" or "panting," plays an obvious role in what Pichon calls *res uenerea describenda* (e.g., *Ars am.* 3.803: see Pichon 1902: 86), and the phrasing *auraeque graues captantur hiatu* ("difficult breezes are drawn in open-mouthed") anticipates the end of Cephalus's first hymn to *aura* (819–20). The inability to endure mattress or covers recalls the situation of Ovid's *amator* immediately after Cupid's attack (*Am.* 1.2.1–2). The cleverest symptom, the sufferers heating up the ground with their *nuda praecordia*, alludes archly but unmistakably to the nocturnal tricks of Cynthia and Propertius (4.7.19–20):

saepe Venus triuio commissa, et pectore mixto
fecerunt tepidas proelia nostra uias.

Often our Venus was done at the crossroads, and with breast
on breast our battles heated up the streets!

As for the detrimental effects of "faithful slavery" (*seruitque fidelius*), examples of *seruitium amoris* in the elegists are not far to seek (see Copley 1947; Lyne 1979).

The remainder of the passage focuses on psychological reactions and aberrant behaviors. Some lay aside their *pudor* and drink from any indiscriminate water source, even dying there (567–71); compare Propertius's declaration that, fed up with Cynthia's cupidity, he is ready to find sweet even water from the public trough (Prop. 2.23.1–2), or Ovid's own advice to drink "from the middle of a river" to slake one's (sexual) thirst (*Rem. am.* 533–36). Through *taedia* of their beds, the *miseri* roll their bodies on the ground or flee their homes (572–75); we have already witnessed intolerance of bed (*Am.* 1.2.1–2) and rolling on the ground (Prop. 4.7.19–20), and Propertius 3.21 offers a nice example of escaping love through flight, advice also offered by Ovid (*Rem. am.* 213–14). The sufferers' indifference to what is "useful" (*utile*), since nothing is (566–67), brings to mind the *praeceptor*'s assertion that his "*useful* proposition is to extinguish the savage flames" (utile *propositum est saeuas extinguere flammas, Rem. am.* 53). For other behaviors, such as wandering half-dead, weeping, lying on the ground, and turning exhausted eyes in a last glance (577–79), whether or not specific parallels are indicated (cf. Ariadne, Ov. *Her.* 10.29?; Dido, Verg. *Aen.* 4.691–92?), the amatory potential is clear.

The immediate aftermath of the plague, in which Jupiter replenishes the population by turning ants into human warriors, constitutes the only metamorphosis in the poem in which animals become human (see Pechillo 1990: 39), a reversal of the anthropomorphism of the plague-ridden beasts. Ants, moreover, represent a society that is wholly social, with members devoid of individual identity (see Brenk 1982–83: 15–16) and immune to the ravages of love. The all-male society of Myrmidons is characterized by thrift, avarice, and willingness to labor (*Met.* 7.655–58):

corpora uidisti; mores, quos ante gerebant,
nunc quoque habent: parcum genus est patiensque laborum
quaesitique tenax et quod quaesita reseruet.

You've seen their bodies; the character that they bore before,
they have now too: it's a thrifty race, and enduring of labors,
tenacious of earnings and apt to preserve the earnings they've got.

They resemble, in fact, the bees of *Georgics* 4—another insect society engineered by Jupiter (149), characterized by *labor* and thrifty preservation of their *quaesita* (156–57), and famously lacking in sexual activity entirely (198–99). It would seem that the danger to the inhabitants of Aegina has passed.

The effects of the plague, however, linger in the mind of the reader now attuned to the possibility of amatory subtexts in accounts of physical suffering. And in fact, Ovid's other instances of poisoning or internal combustion also show some suspicious parallels with erotic distress. Meleager, for instance, mocked as an "author captured by love" (*captus amore / auctor*, 8.435–36)—his uncles presumably mean "author of the gift to Atalanta," but the word is telling—finds his insides burning up in a way that could equally describe the pangs of *amor* (cf. 7.554, *uiscera torrentur*):

> inscius atque absens flamma Meleagros ab illa
> uritur et caecis torreri uiscera sentit
> ignibus ac magnos superat uirtute dolores. (8.515–17)
>
> Unaware, and absent, Meleager is burned
> by that flame and feels his viscera being burned by unseen
> fires and overcomes, through virtue, his great pains.

The imagery recalls (among others) both Dido, who "nourishes a wound in her veins and is consumed by invisible fire" (*uulnus alit uenis et caeco carpitur igni*, *Aen.* 4.2), and Ovid's *amator* burning though his "fire" (i.e., "source of heat") is absent (*Am.* 2.16.11–12; see Hardie 2002: 244–45). Similarly, when the centaur Nessus gives Deianira the robe tinged with poison from Hercules' arrow, his claim that it will be an *inritamen amoris* (9.133) may not be entirely false. Hercules' sufferings, though described in terms that exceed the normal symptoms of lovesickness (he is Hercules, after all), such as peeling off his skin to reveal the bones beneath, nevertheless resemble them in many respects: the fire, sweat, and melting marrow are all too familiar (9.161–75). As mentioned above, his torment is twice described as a *pestis* (9.177, 200), the only two appearances of this word in the *Metamorphoses* outside of book 7 (553 of Aeginetan plague; 764 of Sphinx/fox). Finally, when another *dira lues* (15.626 = 7.523) causes bloodless pallor in Latium (15.627), the oracle of Apollo himself informs the seekers that he will be no help to them (638–39). It is his son, Aesculapius, who brings closure to the plague-ridden poem—a snake, appropriately enough, since snakes' poison caused the plague at Aegina (7.534–35).

## 5. *OBSUNTQUE AUCTORIBUS ARTES*

*Obsuntque auctoribus artes*. In the context of the plague, of course, the meaning of this phrase is that the medical arts harm their practitioners by bringing them into contact with a contagious disease. But the plague's virulence also reflects the intractability of love itself, spreading its contagion especially to the "artists" who seek to contain it. A similar contamination pervades Ovid's work. The complacent *praeceptor* of the *Ars*, so confident in his ability to tame and punish the savage boy who wounded him, finds by the *Remedia* that his artful injection of erotic love into every facet of human life has become irreversible. In the *Metamorphoses*, Cephalus the singer of riddling *carmina*, unmindful of his own ambiguities, turns a metaphor of love poetry into a terrible reality. Apollo's athletic art makes him the author of Hyacinthus's death, and when his medical art proves useless, his only recourse is to transform the boy into a poem—just as his immedicable love for Daphne caused her to be transformed into a book.

I have argued that the stories told by, to, and about Cephalus belong to a coherent nexus of reflections on the arts of healing, love, and poetry, the same nexus associated with Apollo. Ovid inherited the idea that art, whether medical or poetic, cannot cure love. His innovation was to take this *topos* to the next level: love can kill, poetry can kill, and love poetry can be deadliest of all. Yet this lethal art can also bring salvation. Like Daphne and Hyacinthus, the victims may metamorphose into objects of permanent beauty; or like Procris, a comic adulteress may metamorphose into a tragic heroine.

Ovid's own life story exhibits a similar ambivalence—*odi et amo*—toward the Muses who caused his symbolic death and immortality.[34] We may never know whether his many tales of artists suffering for their art reflect the extraordinary vision, or revision, of this self-proclaimed *uates* (see Casali 2006; Johnson 2008). Sometimes it seems that, like the hapless adventurers of *Foucault's Pendulum*, he was living out a script he himself had written. As Griffin wisely observes (1985: 3), "not only does literature reflect, at whatever remove and with whatever stylisation, the experiences of life, but it also in its turn affects actual behavior; and can do so with great force." What we can say with certainty, however, is that Ovid's exile is an historical irony crowning the poetic irony he developed throughout his life.

[34] On the questionable truth of some of Ovid's "autobiographical" references, see Holzberg 2006.

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