

OVID'S ERYSICHTHON (*METAMORPHOSES* 8.738-878)

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines Ovid's treatment of the Erysichthon narrative at *Metamorphoses* 8.738-878. It is a specific narratological commentary which, in particular, examines the intertextual relationship between Ovid's Erysichthon narrative and that of Callimachus in his *Hymn to Demeter*. Chapter One provides a general overview of the passage by reviewing other accounts of the myth, considering the placement of the narrative within Book Eight of the *Metamorphoses*, and finally, by exploring the role of the narrator and the structure of the narrative. Chapters Two, Three and Four provide detailed literary criticism of Ovid's work. These chapters comprise a specific narratological commentary on Erysichthon's crime, the reaction of others to his behavior, and his punishment.

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## CHAPTER ONE: AN OVERVIEW

### Other Accounts of the Myth

If one leaves aside the possible influence of non-literary versions of the Erysichthon myth,<sup>1</sup> there are several literary references to the figure or narrative of Erysichthon besides Ovid's.<sup>2</sup> Chief among them is Callimachus' version of the myth in his sixth hymn to Demeter (24-115) in which a young Erysichthon chops down a poplar tree which is sacred to Demeter in order to build a banqueting hall. He does so, in fact, over the objections of Demeter herself who appears in the form of her own priestess Nicippe. Demeter, having been brutally rebuffed, inflicts insatiable hunger on the boy whose hunger soon excels his parents' ability to provide sufficient food and drink. His father, Triopas the son of Poseidon and Canace, and his mother are too horrified and ashamed at their son's condition to allow him to attend the banquets of others. The reader last sees Erysichthon in desperate straits, begging for food at the crossroads. Obviously, Callimachus' hymn contains a number of differences from the account found

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<sup>1</sup> On the sculptural precedents of the myth: see Lawrence 213f. on the frieze of the Hellenistic altar at Pergamon; Roscher, s.v. Erysichthon 1384; Vian 92; and for evidence from the frieze of the Siphnian treasury at Delphi and the Milo vase see 110 and 142f. In particular, see McKay 91ff. and Griffin (1) 55ff. on the possible influence of the non-literary precedents on the literary versions of Callimachus and Ovid respectively.

<sup>2</sup> On the sources of the myth generally, see Hopkinson 18ff.; Wilamowitz 34ff.; McKay 5ff.; Schwartz 265ff.; Hollis 128ff.; Müller 65ff. and Bömer 232ff.

in Ovid, especially the total absence of the striking autophagy with which Ovid's account ends and the absence of Erysichthon's daughter Mestra. Since the relationship between Callimachus' account and that found in the *Metamorphoses* will be examined in more detail in chapter 2, here it will suffice to point out that it seems to be Callimachus, not Ovid, who deviates from the norm in excluding Mestra's connection to the Erysichthon narrative.

Very early on Hesiodic fragments 43 (a)<sup>3</sup> introduce the girl as the daughter of Erysichthon. Like other sources for the Erysichthon narrative which will soon be discussed, the fragments which comprise 43 (a), in particular, are lacunose and cannot, in some places, be reconstructed with any certainty. Still, the Hesiodic fragments do establish that Mestra provides for her father by being sold,<sup>4</sup> that she had the power to change into animal form and that Sisyphus, who had been promised a bridal gift which included animals, has a quarrel with Aithon.<sup>5</sup> The story in 43 (a) also includes evidence for a sexual relationship between Mestra and Poseidon which is referred to in Ovid's account (8.850ff.), though in the Hesiodic fragment it seems to follow, not precede, the shape shifting she does on her father's behalf.<sup>6</sup> The crime of tree-felling is not represented<sup>7</sup> but the fragments do seem to establish the existence of a nickname for

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<sup>3</sup> Merkelbach and West 27f.

<sup>4</sup> Hopkinson 19 says this is implied by the fragmentary line 10 which includes περν[.

<sup>5</sup> Might this quarrel be in connection to a proposed marriage to Sisyphus' son, Glaucus (53, 82), which Mestra avoids? This would provide a very early precedent for the notion of Mestra worming out of the undesirable arrangements her father makes for her, a notion that figures prominently in Ovid's version as the reason for her metamorphoses.

<sup>6</sup> Although the original order of the various fragments of 43 (a) is not entirely clear.

<sup>7</sup> At least not in the fragments which remain.



Erysichthon; Erysichthon was also called Aithon because of his αἶθων λιμός.<sup>8</sup> Hellanikos provides an early confirmation of the association between Erysichthon and Aithon, "Ἑλλάνικος. . . Ἐρυσίχθονά φησι τὸν Μυρμιδόνος, ὅτι ἦν ἄπληστος βορᾶς, Αἶθωνα κληθῆναι."<sup>9</sup> Here, unusually, Erysichthon's father is identified as Myrmidon.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Lycophron<sup>11</sup> supports the association between Aithon, the father of a crafty girl who helped assuage her father's hunger, and Erysichthon, though it does so indirectly.<sup>12</sup> A scholiast on Lycophron<sup>13</sup> explains the narrative and the alternate name Aithon quite neatly. This nickname, however, is problematic. Since it is the name assumed by Odysseus at 19.193, it is unclear whether the fifth century satyr play *Aithon*, which Achaëus composed, refers to Erysichthon at all.<sup>14</sup> In addition, apart from

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<sup>8</sup> The connection between Aithon and Erysichthon will become important in some of the testimonia which follow. Perhaps Aithon began as an independent character from Erysichthon (thus McKay 8f.). It is possible that the Erysichthon/Aithon who appears in the Hesiodic fragments is a conflation of two stories: one about a ravenously hungry Erysichthon who had offended Ceres and another about a ravenously hungry Aithon who had a daughter named Mestra. The notion of such a conflation is appealing since 'burning' does not seem to have an obvious association with hunger, even to a poet. At any rate, the Hesiodic fragments provide a *terminus post quem non* for the conflation, if it exists.

<sup>9</sup> From the first book of his *Deukalioneia* which is cited by Athenaios at *Deipn.* 10.416 (b). This is then repeated by Aelian *V.H.* 1.27 and by Eustathius on *Il.* 862.7ff.

<sup>10</sup> McKay 8 proposes that since the offense took place in Thessaly and since folk-tales are "notoriously prone" to withholding proper names in favor of ethnic titles, some source(s) must have originally called Erysichthon the son of "the Thessalian." This, he suggests, was then associated with Myrmidon as the eponymous hero of the Myrmidons and thus Myrmidon came into competition with Triopas as the father of Erysichthon.

<sup>11</sup> 1393 - 1396.

<sup>12</sup> Although the name "Erysichthon" does not appear, Aithon is called "Γατομοῦντος" which is a reference to the etymology of Erysichthon (a plougher is some kind of "earth-render").

<sup>13</sup> Fragment 43 (b).

<sup>14</sup> Hopkinson 20.

references to Aithon which are connected clearly to either Odysseus or Erysichthon, several others cloud our view.<sup>15</sup>

To complicate matters, Antoninus Liberalis<sup>16</sup> makes brief mention of Aithon, but as the father of a daughter named Hypermetra.<sup>17</sup> He does, however, include the useful detail that the girl took on a male form, a detail repeated in Ovid's version.<sup>18</sup> The source for Antoninus Liberalis' reference is not at all clear.<sup>19</sup> Similarly unclear is the source for the reference to Aithon found in the Suda which does not mention Erysichthon, but does mention Aithon in connection with the crime of tree-felling. This reference in particular, far from settling matters, has raised yet more vexing questions for scholars interested in

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<sup>15</sup> Theognis 1209; the parasite at Martial 12.77; the *ai-to* (Aithon?) of Linear B who owes rams; an Erysichthon in Phigaleai in Arcadia, *IG* 5.2.425; an Erysichthon in Delos, *IG* 11. 1054; as the name of one of Hector's horses, *Il* 8.185; as the name of one of Aktaion's dogs, *Hyg. fab.* 181; as the name of the eagle that plagues Prometheus, *Hyg. fab.* 31.5; as an adjective to describe animals as at *Il* 2.839 or warriors as at Aesch. *Sept.* 488, Soph. *Ai.* 221 and 1088 and Eur. *Rhes.* 122. There is too the Argive phratry of the Αἰθωνίδαι in an inscription published by Vollgraff 270. This is a representative, not an exhaustive, list. See also McKay 11ff. for further discussion.

<sup>16</sup> 17.5.

<sup>17</sup> Robertson (2) 10 points out that the name Μήστρα is appropriate for a bride since it means 'she who is wooed.' Antoninus Liberalis' variation of Ὑπερμήστρα then makes perfect sense for a perpetual bride.

<sup>18</sup> 8.853ff.

<sup>19</sup> At the start of the chapter (in which Antoninus Liberalis is talking about Galateia) an ascription links the story to Nicander's *Heteroiumena*. There are several complications here. Firstly, the ascriptions ultimately seem to come from a work by Pamphilos, see Wentzel 2572f. Secondly, the fact that one source is mentioned does not mean that only one is used (see Vollgraff 28). Finally, even if the story of Galateia in Antoninus Liberalis does come from Nicander that does not mean that the reference to Mestra has the same derivation. For a general discussion of these points (to which I am indebted), see McKay 28f.

the Erysichthon/Aithon tradition.<sup>20</sup> There is also the account found in Diodorus 5.61 in which Triopas (Erysichthon's father), not Erysichthon, is guilty of tree violation.

Finally, there is the account of an interesting folk-tale which was told to Jacob Zarraftis by Hadzi-Yavrouda, an elderly woman on the island of Cos.<sup>21</sup> Although the tale contains a number of striking similarities to Ovid's own version (such as the felling of an oak which is inhabited, a dying curse, an attack by hunger personified as a grotesque woman, the sale of children and ultimately death by autophagy), the origins of this story too are dubious. It cannot be said whether the tale antedates Ovid's version (and was known to him), whether Ovid's account (or another account) has influenced the folk-tale itself, or whether the two versions share a common (now lost) source.<sup>22</sup> Here, as always, it is entirely possible that other important versions of the Erysichthon narrative were once in existence but have not been preserved for analysis. Apart from the Erysichthon tradition, there are also numerous other literary and epigraphical<sup>23</sup> examples of tree

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<sup>20</sup> For example, the Suda calls Aithon either Ἡελείου if you follow Wilamowitz 40 (who follows Toup) despite the fact that there is zero evidence for an Elean Aithon, or Ἡλίου if you follow Zielinski's explanation on 14 n.3, which presents its own rather obvious problem *viz.* that Erysichthon's father is not Helios, though it is not hard to see how Burning might be the offspring of Sun. See Robertson (3) 399. As McKay 14 quite rightly points out, the passage is very suspicious in associating Erysichthon with Helios since the Rhodian version (Diodorus Siculus 5.61.3) of the descent of Triopas makes him the son of Helios. This, together with the fact that this passage alone ascribes Erysichthon's crime to Aithon, makes the Suda's reference smack of a later "leveling of versions."

<sup>21</sup> Dawkins (1) 334ff.

<sup>22</sup> For discussion of the folk-tale generally see McKay 33ff.; Felhling 185ff.; Otis 427; Hollis 130ff. The folk-tale might, in fact, be derived from Ovid's own story (through the Greek translation by Maximus Planudes): see Kenney (1) 57.

<sup>23</sup> See Dittenberger, *SIG* no. 986 and no. 736.78ff., II 408; no. 685.80ff., II 278; Jordan and Perlin 154ff. on the protection of sacred groves; CIL 1<sup>2</sup>.366; CIL 1<sup>2</sup>.2872; CIL 1<sup>2</sup>.401. Cato also records an apotropaic prayer which should be recited before tree-

violation and its consequences to be found, such as those in the works of Virgil, Apollonius of Rhodes, Herodotus, Lucan and elsewhere in Ovid.<sup>24</sup>

### Erysichthon and Book Eight

In principle I agree with Edgar Glenn's basic assertion that "the *Metamorphoses* is an artistic whole, a coherent entity into which each part fits meaningfully."<sup>25</sup> The meaning of individual narratives, such as the Erysichthon narrative, relies at least in part

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felling: *lucum conlucare Romano more sic oportet. porco piaculo facito, sic verba concipito: "si deus, si dea es, quoniam illud sacrum est..." Agr. 139.* As Thomas 263f. points out, the formulation reveals that the prayer is to be offered even if the feller does not know whether or to whom the tree is sacred. While every tree is not necessarily numinous, any tree might be. In fact, this reverence for trees and ritual caution in their felling is not unique to the Greeks and Romans. See Henrichs on Manichean and Indian tales which warn against killing trees and, more generally, see Frazer, Part 1, vol. 2, 7ff.

<sup>24</sup> Virgil: the Polydorus episode at *Aeneid* 3.19ff. is an obviously parallel example. See Thomas 261ff. and Reckford 57ff. on tree violation in Virgil. Apollonius of Rhodes: *Argonautica* 2.475ff. in which Phineus relates the pitiable condition of a friend who cut down a tree. Recently, Murray 207ff. and a forthcoming work by Cuypers have posited that the Apollonian story is indebted to the Callimachean Erysichthon story and that Ovid perceived a metapoetic allusive relationship between these and fused the two versions in his own. As in other scholars, these examine each of the versions in isolation well but fail to provide a convincing specific examination of the connections between Ovid and Callimachus or Apollonius. Thomas, 264 n.10, suggests that it may be from Apollonius' narrative that Ovid takes the species of his tree, an oak, not Callimachus' poplar. Herodotus: At 6.75 the mental illness of Cleomenes of Sparta and his subsequent suicide are explained: διότι ἐς Ἐλευσῖνα ἐσβαλὼν ἔκειρε τὸ τέμενος τῶν θεῶν. Lucan: see *B.C.* 3.399-452 where Julius Caesar is unflatteringly depicted clearing a sacred grove in order to provide timber for the siege of Massilia. See Phillips 296ff. on ways in which Lucan associates Caesar's actions with Erysichthon's. Ovid: See the shepherd's prayer at *Fasti* 4.747ff., especially lines 751-755.

<sup>25</sup> Glenn vii.

on the meaning of the narratives which surround it. Thus, it is important to determine in what ways the Erysichthon episode fits into Book Eight and to give a general overview of the passage and its place within the whole of the work. This will not only help to illuminate the fullest meaning of the text, but will also demonstrate Ovid's skill in combining seemingly disparate material in a cohesive and engaging manner.

One of the ways Ovid unifies the poem is by his use of theme. Most generally, the concept of change loosely ties all the narratives of the *Metamorphoses* together. More specifically, the Erysichthon episode is related to the other episodes in Book Eight thematically. As Glenn argues extensively, *pietas* (and its opposite) is a recurring idea in Book Eight.<sup>26</sup> Erysichthon's impiety (which is manifest in his refusal to make offerings to the gods and his sacrilegious mock-sacrifice of the tree) is related to the religious *pietas* or *impietas* of many of the other characters in Book Eight. Furthermore, throughout Book Eight a lack of proper respect for the gods is closely connected to a poor sense of familial duty (which is manifest in Erysichthon's shameful treatment of his daughter). Earlier, Scylla's willingness to abandon and betray her father (*di facerent sine patre forem!* 72) is followed quickly by her hubristic willingness to deny the authority of the gods (*sibi quisque profecto / est deus*, 72f.).<sup>27</sup> Similarly, Ariadne turns from her family to help Theseus (152 - 182). When the goddess Diana's altars do not receive due care she unleashes the Caledonian boar for this slight (...*'at non impune feremus, / quaeque inhonoratae, non et dicemur inultae'*, 279f.), and Ancaeus dies for his hubris

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<sup>26</sup> Glenn 101ff.

<sup>27</sup> Unless otherwise specified all line references in the text are to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Book Eight. I shall cite the Latin from Tarrant's 2004 *O.C.T.* of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

(401). Meleager shows his disregard for his duty to his family by giving Atalanta the spoils of his victory and then murdering his own uncles when they protest (425ff.). Daedalus manages to display both religious and familial *impietas* in a single act. He kills his own nephew Perdix by throwing him off Minerva's sacred citadel (250ff.). Glenn's point is well taken. The issues around religious and familial duty are an important part of Book Eight and one of the recurring themes which unify the work and tie the Erysichthon episode to others within the book. Still, *pietas* - both religious and familial - occurs throughout the *Metamorphoses* and is not the singular hallmark of Book Eight as Glenn suggests. A glance at Book Six, for example, reveals that narratives concerned with the acknowledgement of the authority of the gods (*pietas*) abound outside Book Eight in the *Metamorphoses*, as the stories of Arachne (6.1 - 145), Niobe (6.146 - 312), the Lycian peasants (6.313 - 381) and Marsyas (6.382 - 400) attest. Similarly, the narratives of Philomela (6.401 - 674) and Boreas (6.675 - 721) reveal that the importance of proper relation to one's family members is as much a theme of Book Six as it is of Book Eight. Thus, the Erysichthon episode is also related thematically to many of the other narratives of the *Metamorphoses* beyond Book Eight. The strong presence of these themes throughout the *Metamorphoses* (not solely in Book Eight) is a unifying feature in the text which, granted, Ovid uses especially effectively in Book Eight.

Furthermore, Book Eight contains other important and unifying themes. In particular, one sees clearly the painful complexity of human life and morality and that this complexity is frequently especially heartrending for the poem's female characters. The figure of the suffering woman, which Glenn identifies as the unifying theme of Book

Nine, is also a major feature of Book Eight.<sup>28</sup> Ariadne must face a difficult decision, ultimately choosing to help Theseus, and it is to her *desertae et multa querenti* (176) that Bacchus must bring help. Althaea too is in an excruciating dilemma. Ultimately she sacrifices her son to her brothers' shades and herself to her son's and is thus *impietate pia* (477). Meleager's sisters mourn their brother's death pitifully, throwing themselves on his tomb and wetting it with their tears (533ff.). Perimele's own father throws her off a cliff into the sea where she is changed into an island (590ff.). Erysichthon's daughter is another such suffering woman. Mestra is forced to shape-shift in order to extract herself from the unwanted marriages her father has arranged for his own repulsive benefit.

It is, however, the story of Philemon and Baucis (611 – 724) which is most closely related to the Erysichthon episode and its characters. Its placement, immediately preceding the narrative of Erysichthon, makes the similarities and contrasts between the two passages especially noticeable and effective. The narratives contain a number of neat and noteworthy parallels which add interest to Book Eight. Often, though not always, these parallels contain a clever twist.<sup>29</sup> Both stories have two central human characters who are kin, husband Philemon and wife Baucis in the former episode, Erysichthon and his daughter in the latter. Similarly, each narrative has two divine protagonists, Jupiter and Mercury who are traveling together (626f.), and Ceres and Fames whom the fates forbid even to meet (785f.). Both narratives show metamorphosis in a positive light. It is a reward from the gods for Philemon and Baucis' *pietas* and a form of compensation for

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<sup>28</sup> Glenn 115ff.

<sup>29</sup> Simpson 5 notes that *Metamorphoses'* theme of change extends to the form and structure of the poem itself with its repeated use of variation of mood, tone, subject and even of details within and between its narratives.

Mestra. Both stories involve deception of humans. Jupiter and Mercury disguise themselves and deceive their human hosts until they reveal their true identities at 689, just as by Neptune's gift Mestra disguises herself and deceives her master before she too returns to her true form at 870. The unfailing wine at the table of Philemon and Baucis (679f.) would certainly have been a welcome counter to Erysichthon's unfailing hunger. Erysichthon's stomach, though repeatedly filled, only becomes more empty because of his consumption (*semperque locus fit inanis edendo*, 842), while the couple's wine mixing bowl, though its contents are repeatedly consumed, spontaneously fills anew (*interea totiens haustum cratera repleti / sponte sua per seque uident succrescere uina*, 679f.).<sup>30</sup>

In general, the tone of the Erysichthon episode is a conspicuous change from the sympathetic and moral tone of the Philemon and Baucis narrative, which is nevertheless kept light by Ovid's inclusion of quaint and humorous elements. The tone of the Erysichthon passage seems even more dark and grim by way of contrast with Philemon and Baucis' neighboring narrative. At the most basic level, one is struck by the goodness of the couple. Philemon and Baucis are described in only the most favorable of terms. The very first word which introduces Baucis, preceding even her name, is *pia* (631). This is a far cry from the constant editorializing intrusions which describe Erysichthon as *sceleratus* (754), his hand as *impia* (761). His deed of cutting down the tree is *nefas* (766) and a *scelus* (774), and his axe cruel (*saevamque*, 766). These connections between the narratives, both the corresponding and the contrasting elements, show

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<sup>30</sup> Crabbe 2293.



Ovid's creative genius and add intellectual appeal. Of course, they are also significant from a more functional standpoint. They serve to further unify the whole of the text by creating links, if small ones, between individual narratives and characters, and moreover they invite the reader to compare the main characters - an activity which most certainly increases the impact of the Erysichthon story.

In every way Erysichthon is made more odious by comparison with the couple. They are devoted to one another. They are equals in terms of their age (*parilique aetate*, 631), their contented frame of mind (*nec iniqua mente*, 634), their shared poverty (*paupertatem... / ...leuem* 633f.) and their willingness to both serve and be served (*idem parentque iubentque*, 636); and the emphasis there is on their easy togetherness (*tota domus duo sunt*, 636) and long term mutual devotion (*sunt annis iuncti iuuenalibus*, 632). This is infinitely sweeter than Erysichthon's wildly dysfunctional family life, a situation which is entirely his own doing. He and his daughter are not well matched - she deserves better (*non illo digna parente*, 847); recall that Baucis has specifically been called worthy of her husband: *femina coniuge iusto / digna* (704f.). Erysichthon gobbles up his family's fortune (*patrias opes*, 843f.) and at last, reduced to a wretched poverty (not the lightly borne humble asceticism of Philemon and Baucis) he sinks to selling his own daughter. This is his penultimate resort (taken well before he chooses to sacrifice his own well-being) and he certainly decides on this without consulting his daughter. In contrast, Philemon confers briefly with Baucis (*cum Baucide pauca locutus*, 705) before revealing their shared wishes for future arrangements (*iudicium...aperit commune*, 706). Erysichthon, it seems, is not keen on taking into account the feelings, welfare and

opinions of others. He not only ignores his familial obligation to his daughter, but also refuses to listen to a member of his party who counsels against felling the sacred tree (repaying the man's concern with decapitation at 769). He disregards the personal pleadings of the hamadryad (771ff.). How different is the reaction of Philemon and Baucis when their guests reveal their identities! Most outrageously, Erysichthon brags that he would cut the tree down even if it were the goddess Ceres herself (755f.).

This kind of flagrant disregard for the authority of the gods is itself one of the major distinctions between the characters in the two narratives. Erysichthon is at heart a man who spurns the authority of the gods (*numina diuum / sperneret*, 739f.) and his unwillingness to offer even burnt *odores* (740) contrasts well with the couple's selfless willingness to serve the gods their only goose, *minimae custodia uillae* (684). Similarly, Erysichthon's disgusting, desperate and indiscriminate over-eating is made more obvious by its proximity to the careful preparation Philemon and Baucis undertake for their humble meal. The couple each contribute - from pulling out a bench (639), to propping up the table's short third leg (661) and setting out their nicest dishes (668ff.) and their simple foods and wine (664ff.). Even the couple's poverty seems dignified. Their faces and company remain pleasant (677ff.), unlike the hideous desperation of Fames' poverty (799ff.). Their good characters mean that their poverty can be born lightly. Conversely Erysichthon's wealth certainly does not protect him from the consequences of his moral depravity.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Anderson 392.

Both narratives end with the death of the main character(s). For the couple, death means the happy fulfillment of their own wishes. Erysichthon's death too is the fulfillment of his wish but that is the twisted result of his own desire to eat. The couple dies together, as they have lived; Erysichthon does so alone. Philemon and Baucis are humans who in death become gradually trees, a process reversed in the tree-felling scene of the Erysichthon episode when the tree gradually takes on human characteristics, groaning, paling, trembling, bleeding and at last speaking (758ff.). Philemon and Baucis' fate as trees with votive wreaths hanging from the boughs (722f.) is also still fresh in mind when Erysichthon's votive laden tree is introduced as his victim only twenty lines later at 743. Erysichthon's already shocking violence is made all the more monstrous by this association of his victim with two such sympathetic characters.

Following the episode of Philemon and Baucis and immediately preceding that of Erysichthon is an intermediary section (725-737) in which the first episode is brought to a clear end (*desierat*, 725), its emotional effect acknowledged (*cunctosque et res et mouerat auctor*, 725), and the river god's role as a narrator is reasserted (*Calydonius amnis / talibus adloquitur*, 727f.). Achelous mentions single metamorphosis and its permanent effect by way of an introductory segue (728f.). This looks both backwards to the single permanent metamorphosis of Philemon and Baucis into trees (and that of their humble home into an impressive temple) and, in a strange way, forwards to the irreparable change of form Erysichthon will undergo by autophagy. The narrator then moves on to what will be a major interest in the next tale - multiple and therefore temporary metamorphoses. This clearly anticipates the multiple shape-shifts of Mestra in

the upcoming Erysichthon passage. Achelous lists Proteus' numerous incarnations, including human (*iunuenem*, 732), animal (*leonem*, 732; *aper*, 733; *anguis*, 734; *taurum*, 734), non-animal (*lapis*, 735; *arbor*, 735) and elemental forms (*faciem liquidarum...aquarum*, 736; *ignis*, 737). Several of these forms predict Mestra's own incarnations. She too will assume a man's form (*formamque...uultumque uirilem*, 853) as well as animal forms (*equa*, 873; *ales*, 873; *bos*, 873; *ceruus*, 873). Most strikingly, Proteus is pictured as often assuming the form of a tree (*arbor quoque saepe videri*, 735). The association with the surrounding narratives is pointed. A tree, the form which has enshrined pious Philemon and Baucis in the preceding narrative, conceals a powerful god here and will be Erysichthon's victim only a few lines hence.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to forming intratextual links with the surrounding narratives, this intermediary section forms intertextual associations with the work of both Homer and Virgil. Several of Proteus' changes (*viz.* lion, serpent, boar, water, fire and tree) echo the description of Proteus given at *Odyssey* 4.415ff. and 4.456ff. and this enhances the figure's epic, godly importance here. In addition, several other features of the Homeric Proteus narrative relate, albeit subtly, to the Erysichthon passage. Menelaus himself, like Erysichthon, fails to make the appropriate offerings to the gods and suffers the consequences - in his case a delay (*Met.* 8.740; *Odyssey* 4.351ff.). The seaside setting of the Odyssean narrative, complete with heroic fishermen (4.369), relates to the beach setting in which Mestra transforms herself into, of all things, a fisherman (853ff.). The

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<sup>32</sup> Spencer 95 sees that trees are used in both stories to develop the theme of piety / impiety. The trees in the Philemon and Baucis tale are objects of worship, while for Erysichthon a tree is the "object of profanation."

setting allows quite naturally for the appearance of Neptune in both narratives (*Met.* 8.851; *Odyssey* 4.385). Most notable, however, is the important role of the father-daughter relationship in the stories. In the *Odyssey* it is Proteus' daughter Eidothee who rescues the hero by means of deception. She teaches the men to deceive her own father by hiding themselves (quite literally) in animal form. In contrast, in the Erysichthon episode it is the daughter Mestra herself who must be saved from her father's plans by means of deception and transformation into animal forms.

Similarly, one cannot help but think of the famous depiction of Proteus in Virgil's *Georgics* 4 where another parent-child interaction is taking place (between Aristaeus and his mother) and where Proteus, as here, does not fail to provide dazzling transformations (*ille suae contra non immemor artis / omnia transformat sese in miracula rerum, / ignemque horribilemque feram fluviumque liquentem*, 4.440ff.).<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the two texts share a thematic interest in the punishment of a wrongdoer. Aristaeus, like Erysichthon, has caused the death of an innocent female figure (Eurydice) and is punished for his transgression. Aristaeus' actions, though less willfully violent than Erysichthon's, also result in the pleadings of a chorus of Dryads for justice (4.460ff.) and ultimately in a destructive punishment (*haec omnis morbi causa, hinc miserabile Nymphae, / cum quibus illa choros lucis agitabat in altis, / exitium misere apibus*, 4.532ff.). These literary connections to the *Odyssey* and the *Georgics* are not obvious, nor do I wish to make too much of them. They do however, add intellectual interest to the passage, showcase Ovid's allusive powers, form subtle links between the Proteus

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<sup>33</sup> Della Corte 168 mentions that Ovid presents the Proteus of Virgil's *Georgics* here but does not explore the meaning of this connection.

passage and the Erysichthon narrative and underline the impressive power of the Proteus character in this intermediary section.

In fact, throughout this linking section the multiple shape-shifter himself is given prominence. Here the narrator points to Proteus, in particular, as an *exemplum* and lists some of his ever-changing forms (730ff.). Proteus is not only named immediately but addressed by the god in a striking apostrophe (*ut tibi...Proteu*, 731), given a dignified and decorous descriptive phrase (*complexi terram maris incola*, 731) and repeatedly invoked throughout his short description (*tibi... Proteu... te... te... eras... te... poteras... eras*; in total eight times in the seven lines devoted to him 731-737). Proteus' strength is further underscored by his explicit description as violent (*uiolentus*, 733) and frightful (*timerent*, 733), descriptions which will most certainly fit Ceres as the deity of the upcoming Erysichthon passage. The description of Proteus ends with the remarkable antithesis of his transformation from water into its natural opposite, fire (*undis contrarius ignis*, 737).<sup>34</sup> In addition, by naming the form of flowing water (*faciem liquidarum...aquarum*, 736) Achelous, who currently enjoys the influential position of narrator, subtly connects Proteus to himself (*flumen eras*, 737). The whole sketch of Proteus underlines his power and by extension the power of the gods - the very power which Erysichthon will test and to which he will ultimately be forced to submit. This cannot help but contribute to the real tension of the following narrative.

Having thus rhetorically inflated the strength and importance of the multiple shape-shifter through Proteus, Achelous will then almost immediately dismiss Mestra the

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<sup>34</sup> Anderson 402. Also, this same antithetical transformation occurs in both the *Odyssey* 4 passage and the *Georgics* 4 account.

multiple shape-shifter he purports to be introducing, not returning his attention to her for more than one hundred lines. Similarly, the narrator never calls the daughter by her own name (Mestra) but by epic periphrasis (*Autolyçi coniunx* and *Erysichthone nata*, 738). Thus by this bridge section, as by the short introduction to the girl, he undercuts the importance of the daughter in her own narrative, a narrative that reads like the story of Erysichthon. But this is, after all, supposed to be a tale about her. It is Mestra, not Erysichthon, who is one of the ones “*quibus in plures ius est transire figuras*” (730). This impish maneuver is typical of Ovid.<sup>35</sup> He uses the short bridge section (725 - 737) to good effect: providing an interesting transition from one story to another, from one narrator to another, from one type of metamorphosis to another and by this clever literary sleight of hand he switches the character one expects to be the focus of his attention (the daughter) for yet another (Erysichthon).

### The Narrator

Throughout the *Metamorphoses* Ovid uses narrators to mediate the diegesis and metadiegesis he so artfully weaves.<sup>36</sup> As Barchiesi has pointed out, these different narrators within the *Metamorphoses* are not necessarily such distinctly drawn characters as one finds in Petronius’ *Satyricon*, for example.<sup>37</sup> Ovid does not strain excessively for

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<sup>35</sup> Anderson came to a similar conclusion independently at 402.

<sup>36</sup> I shall follow Barchiesi (who follows Genette) in taking metadiegesis to mean narrative which appears within a narrative.

<sup>37</sup> See Barchiesi 49f., on whose introductory remarks I rely.

realism in his internal narrators. He does not distinguish the voices of his narrators, one from another, by obvious or extended affectation. Instead, the narrators of the *Metamorphoses*, though different characters, exhibit similar tendencies in their style, meter and diction. This both enhances the feeling of continuity among the various narratives and narrators and limits somewhat the extent to which one can, strictly speaking, consider the *Metamorphoses* truly polyphonic. Still, as Barchiesi notes, Solodow does not capture the whole truth in saying that “there is basically a single narrator throughout, who is Ovid himself.”<sup>38</sup> It is true, obviously, that Ovid is the ultimate voice at work. The author puts words in the mouths of his narrators, but this is always the case (with any author and his characters) and it can be no accident that Ovid’s ultimate narrative direction assumes the form of internal narrators with such Protean variety. The identity of the narrator is an important part of the narrative, related closely to the other conditions from which the narrative emerges such as its spatial and temporal setting. Thus, it will be worthwhile to examine the manner and extent to which the narrator of the Erysichthon episode affects the meaning of the passage.

The river god Achelous is the narrator of the Erysichthon story. He, like Ovid’s numerous other narrators, is an internal narrator and thus a character with his own motivations, feelings and personality which are reflected in his story’s meaning, content and message. Similarly, the identity of his listeners and their interactions with Achelous and his narrative will be significant. The river god has invited his listeners, including

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<sup>38</sup> Solodow 38. Certainly there are circumstances in which it seems irresistible to equate the author and narrator such as Catullus *Carmen* 16, or Ovid’s mention of his *carmen et error* at *Tristia* 2.207.



Theseus, Pirithous, Lelex and others who had impressed him (*quosque alios parili fuerat dignatus honore*, 569), to enter his home as guests for their own protection and comfort until his swollen waters which block their passage go down. He has treated them well, offering food and wine in jeweled cups (571ff.) as well as a reception that is both warm (550-9) and genuine (*laetissimus hospite tanto*, 570). The setting of the conversation, a dinner-party, described in terms which recall expected features of the Roman dinner-party,<sup>39</sup> will add a particular piquancy to the food-related stories which follow. The Erysichthon story with its grotesquely detailed ecphrasis on hunger is told at a sumptuous dinner!<sup>40</sup>

In response to Theseus' query (575f.) Achelous first tells the history of the islands which lie nearby. He relates that when the nymphs neglected to invite him to their sacred feast and dances his waters swelled in rage and he swept the insolent nymphs away and divided what had previously been a single land mass into several islands. Beyond these, there lies the island that was once the narrator's love-interest, Perimele. Her father objected violently to the union and threw his own daughter off a cliff into the sea. Achelous then appealed to Neptune who caused an island to form from the woman's body. These stories introduce what will be an important theme of both the Philemon and

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<sup>39</sup> The guests recline on couches like Romans at 566, enjoying food and wine out of fancy cups which have been brought by female (in this case nymph) attendants at 571ff. The cave even has *atria* (562), a particularly strange word for a dark cave since the center of the Roman *atrium* was open to the sky, as Hill 233 points out. Due 80 also sees the modernizing of the setting. The cave, he argues, seems to be "*mutatis mutandis* a Roman *villa marina*."

<sup>40</sup> Due 80 also notes that two other stories which Achelous tells at his dinner party are food-related. There is the simple dinner at the home of Philemon and Baucis and Achelous' own story of losing his horn which becomes a *cornucopia*, and this just before one of his servants brings in the *mensa secunda*.

Baucis episode and the Erysichthon episode - the importance of proper respect for the gods. It reveals the danger of neglecting one's duty to the gods (the nymphs had forgotten to invite him to their celebration 581f.) and the impressive power of the gods to punish (as Achelous punished the nymphs) and to save (Neptune, once called upon, saves Perimele too). These ideas will, of course, be central to Achelous' point in the Erysichthon story in particular where Erysichthon also disrespects a god and is punished and where Neptune steps in to save Mestra. Most of his listeners react favorably (*factum mirabile cunctos / mouerat* 611f.). Pirithous alone, failing to catch the cautionary meaning of Achelous' tale, objects.<sup>41</sup>

His objection is two-fold. Firstly, he questions the veracity of the tale (*ficta refers*, 614) and secondly he accuses Achelous of overestimating the power of the gods to cause metamorphosis (*'nimiumque putas, Acheloe, potentes / esse deos' dixit, 'si dant adimuntque figuras.'*, 614f.). The two stories which follow seem designed to address these objections in turn.<sup>42</sup> Lelex primarily tackles the first with the Philemon and Baucis story. In response to Pirithous' skepticism, he states expressly that the story is intended to elicit belief (*quoque minus dubites*, 620) and he stresses his ability to vouch personally for the truth of the tale (*ipse locum uidi*, 622), even providing a description of the occasion on which he witnessed evidence of the story's truth (*nam me Pelopeia Pittheus /*

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<sup>41</sup> Hill 234 notes how "wholly appropriate" it is that Pirithous, *Ixione natus* (613), the son of a notorious sinner, should be the blasphemer.

<sup>42</sup> Otis 171, Boillat 103, and Glenn 111 all see that the Baucis and Philemon tale and the Erysichthon tale are told in response to Pirithous' accusations, though they do not explore the implications of this. Similarly, Wheeler 234 n.10 says that Pirithous' attitude "foreshadows Achelous' tale of Erysichthon" though he (surprisingly) does not discuss the impact of Achelous' audience on his tale.

*misit in arua suo quondam regnata parenti*, 622f.). Following his account of Philemon and Baucis' transformation he returns to this line of argument, offering both a current temporal (*adhuc*, 719) and specific spatial (*illic*, 719) location for their tree.<sup>43</sup> He appeals again to his own authority as a witness (*mihi*, 721; *uidi*, 722), to the direction of the Bithynian peasant (719) and to the credibility of reliable elders [*non uani (neque erat cur fallere vellent) / narrauere senes*, 721f.].

Achelous then addresses primarily the second of Pirithous' objections (that Achelous gives the gods too much credit for metamorphosis) in his presentation of the Erysichthon episode. The Erysichthon narrative (as I have argued above) is only partly about the multiple shape-shifter Mestra. Rather, its focus is on the impious crime of challenging the authority of the gods and the swift and terrible punishment which surely follows. This is so because it suits its narrator's purpose here - to offer a story which counters Pirithous' second objection and which threatens the man in certain, though indirect, terms. As narrator Achelous offers his listeners a story which closely mirrors the story which is unfolding between himself and Pirithous. Just as the nymphs failed to properly respect a god's power, Pirithous is now failing to show respect and Erysichthon too will be shown to disrespect a god (and be severely chastened). Erysichthon is an exaggerated Pirithous and acts as a threatening example of the power of the gods to destroy such people. Pirithous' tone in objecting to the river god's original story is mocking (*inridet*, 612) and aggressive (*ferox*, 613) and it reflects his general disregard for the gods (*deorum / spreter erat*, 612f.). Here too he resembles Erysichthon who is

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<sup>43</sup> The placement of *illic* at the end of the line adds emphasis.

himself scornful, violent and no respecter of the gods. The stunned reaction of Pirithous' companions (*obstipuerunt omnes*, 616) is echoed *verbatim* at 765 when Erysichthon's company witness his first strike at the tree.<sup>44</sup> In both cases the phrase appears in an emphatic position at the start of the line. The story of Erysichthon (unlike the Philemon and Baucis episode in which Lelex strives for credibility) is not focused on proving its own veracity. Achelous offers a tale which is more incredible than the two which precede it - it entails multiple, not just single metamorphosis. Instead, Achelous clearly ascribes the power of metamorphosis to the gods and emphasizes the awesome power of the gods to punish those who ignore their authority, depicting Erysichthon as the counterpart to Pirithous and Ceres as his own harshly punishing counterpart. She is seen in a powerful godly capacity, giving assent to prayer (*adnuit*, 780) and displaying violent (*concussit*, 781) anger.

More generally, the fact that the narrator is also a god means that he will have a natural sympathy for both the minor divinity (the tree nymph) who is Erysichthon's victim and Ceres, the goddess whom Erysichthon slights. As a god Achelous will not be well disposed to Erysichthon (a man whose crimes can be expected to remind the narrator of the slights he has himself suffered at the hands of the nymphs). It is clear from the Hercules narrative that follows (9.1f.) that Achelous is sensitive about upstart mortals (like the nymphs, Perimele's father, Erysichthon and Hercules) who overstep their bounds in their relations with the gods (*turpe deum mortali cedere*, 9.16). It is, at least in part, for this reason that Achelous' narrative has its particular focus. The narrator's

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<sup>44</sup> Murray 235 also sees this echo.

unfavorable description of Erysichthon and his crime which culminates in the dramatic murder of the nymph reflect the god's disdain for those who question the authority of gods. This is followed by a long and detailed description of Erysichthon's punishment. Achelous lingers on this point both to threaten Pirithous and so that he (a slighted god) can savor the moment in which another *deorum spreter* gets his comeuppance. In all this Achelous, spicing up his story with amusing witticisms, certainly shows no pity for Erysichthon whose crimes place him beyond sympathy (782f.). This most certainly reflects Achelous' position as a god and gives his story a comically gloating, mocking and malicious tone not seen in Callimachus' account.

The narrator is, of course, specifically a river god and this too has its effect on the narrative. That a river god tells a story which has a sea-side setting (with the daughter on the beach in the garb of a fisherman) seems fitting, as does the appearance of Proteus (in the preamble) and Neptune in a benevolent capacity, both watery deities like Achelous himself. Similarly, at 835f. the insatiability of Erysichthon's hunger is conspicuously described by a simile in which it is compared to the ability of an ocean to absorb the flow of water from rivers. Just as the ocean is never full, neither is Erysichthon. Of course, his hunger is also like fire, water's natural elemental opposite, in that it is continually seeking something to consume. Erysichthon's punishment is on a level with Achelous as a destructive force of nature. Ironically, the god is himself a river in flux (*imbre tumens*, 550) and in this state he too admits to having swept away trees in his wake (552ff. and 585) though this does not have the sacrilegious force of Erysichthon's tree-felling. That the narrator is a river whose route is famously full of twists and turns and who is now

also in flood may be reflected in the narrative's unexpected twists,<sup>45</sup> such as the turn from the multiple shape shifter Mestra to Erysichthon or the unexpected autophagy. Finally, Achelous' personal history, which he has just related to his listeners, affects his narrative. Considering that he lost his beloved Perimele at the hands of her father, Achelous must have a special disdain for Erysichthon as he too causes the unnecessary suffering of his daughter Mestra. The manner in which Achelous presents the Erysichthon narrative reflects all these features of his own experience, nature and background. The Erysichthon narrative, then, is more than casually related to the identity of the narrator who shapes its force and content.<sup>46</sup> Ovid's choice of Achelous as narrator is subtle and clever and makes the Erysichthon episode itself much more effective.

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<sup>45</sup> Later the properties of the Achelous river will be represented in Achelous' transformations into a snake (his winding water) and a bull (his raging water) according to Keene 80.

<sup>46</sup> More subtly, others have related the interactions of these narrators and their listeners to Ovid's possible sources. Kenney 28 sees intertextual play in the especially favorable reaction of Theseus to Lelex's story (725f.). If Philemon and Baucis are meant to recall aged Hecale's warmth and welcome in Callimachus' *Hecale*, Theseus may be reacting well since he himself is the hero of the model of the Philemon and Baucis episode. This is only an effective interplay if the *Hecale* is the immediately recognizable source of the tale. This connection has been suggested previously by Hinds (2) 19 while Griffin (2) 62ff., for example, has argued effectively for the presence of other influences in the narrative. On the most basic level, one need only see that as the most heroic of the guests, Theseus is the most properly affected by the stories. The more dignified and upright characters such as Theseus and Lelex (*animo maturus et aeuo*, 617) react most favorably to stories of the power of the gods while the basest and most morally suspect character (Pirithous) reacts unfavorably. More subtly yet, and perhaps too subtly, Barchiesi 52 sees the swollen river as an important and specifically Callimachean symbol which itself introduces a whole set of self-conscious references to literary theory and genre to "create a field of contradictory tensions." To be fair, Barchiesi himself acknowledges the limits of this approach. It is preferable, I think, simply to acknowledge that the identity of the narrator and the conditions under which his story is presented are intended to affect the reception of that story by both his own audience and Ovid's.

## Structure

As I have noted, within the larger structure of the whole *Metamorphoses* the Erysichthon episode is placed centrally. Its position (right next to the Philemon and Baucis narrative) highlights the themes of reward and punishment, *pietas* and *impietas*. Brooks Otis, arguing that “quite insufficient attention has been paid to the position of both *Baucis-Philemon* and *Erysichthon* in the schema of the poem” says that the paired narratives remind the readers, at the midway point of the work, of the similar reward and punishment tales to which they were introduced at the start of the work such as Lycaon, Deucalion and Pyrrha.<sup>47</sup> More specifically, within the Erysichthon narrative itself it is necessary to examine the question of structure and its influence on the progression of the episode.

The Erysichthon passage can be divided into three main sections which neatly form a tricolon crescendo.<sup>48</sup> The first section (738-76) is primarily concerned with Erysichthon’s crime. Comprising a short introduction to Mestra, and a more detailed description of the tree, and finally culminating in the murders of a member of Erysichthon’s party and of the tree itself in rapid succession, the first section lasts 39 lines. Following Erysichthon’s crime is a section which describes the reactions of others to Erysichthon’s offense (777-822). This includes the Dryads’ embassy to Ceres, the

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<sup>47</sup> Otis 45.

<sup>48</sup> Lafaye 135 thinks that Ovid's story like Callimachus' is composed of only two parts: *le crime et le châtement*.

Oread's trip to Scythia, her encounter with ghastly Famine and finally Famine's own trip to Erysichthon's abode. Again, the action builds in importance towards the end of the section (with the memorable ecphrasis of Famine and her visit to Erysichthon's home coming last). This second section, the reaction of others, takes up 46 lines, a slight increase in length and impact over the first part. Finally, the third segment completes the tricolon crescendo. Greatest in terms of length (56 lines, from 823-878) and narrative force, this section includes the lingering description of Erysichthon's punishment (which reflects the narrator's purpose in responding to Pirithous' impertinent denial of the power of the gods), the progression of his uncontrollable hunger towards the sale of his daughter (and her consequent metamorphoses) and finally his absurd and repulsive suicide. While other factors may also affect the narrative,<sup>49</sup> the familiar structural device of the tricolon crescendo offers the passage a subtle sense of continuity and contributes significantly to the build-up of narrative tension for the episode's *dénouement*, the unexpected and (strictly speaking) unnecessary death of the protagonist. Additionally, Ovid provides some connection among the three parts of the crescendo by repeating a selection of words and concepts throughout the narrative, such as the name of Erysichthon himself, and words related to crime, hunger and water, for example.

Finally, it is worth noting that following the closure of the Erysichthon episode, the focus returns to the narrator, Achelous, for a few lines before Book Eight concludes.

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<sup>49</sup> Galinsky 12ff., for example, argues that the frequent setting-changes effect a "unity of imaginative association" in which one recognizes a natural logic in the progression of the narrative from setting to setting. It is only natural, for example, that the dryads should leave the grove and seek Ceres or that Hunger should leave her abode to find Erysichthon asleep in his. The effect is, as he puts it, "...not one of strict coherence. But neither is it chaotic."



In these final remarks the narrator directs his listeners' (and the reader's) attention back to the concept of the multiple shape shifter (this time using himself as the example). This recalls both the introduction to the Erysichthon episode (725-737) in which he points to Proteus' power for multiple metamorphoses and the multiple metamorphoses which Mestra has just undergone. The association is reinforced by Achelous' specific mention of certain forms he is apt to take, such as that of a serpent (which Proteus, a fellow water-deity, assumes at 734) and of a bull (like Proteus at 734 and Mestra at 873). Thus, in addition to the tricolon crescendo, by returning to Achelous and the multiple shape shifter, Ovid uses a ring structure which provides a neat frame for the Erysichthon narrative. Naturally, this also provides a convenient segue into the aperture of Book Nine.<sup>50</sup> This kind of structural control supports the unfolding of the narrative (without being intrusive) and is an efficient and effective aspect of Ovidian *ars*.

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<sup>50</sup> By returning attention to the narrator, Ovid is able to move to the aperture of Book Nine through a *transitio per absentem*. This is a transition in which the narrator notes the absence of a person or thing (in this case Achelous' horn at 883) and then segues to a story which explains that absence. While Solodow (who explains the term at 43f.) does not apply the term to this passage in particular, he points to its frequent appearance throughout the *Metamorphoses*.

## CHAPTER 2: ERYSICHTHON'S CRIME

### The Introductions

The story begins, quite naturally, with the introduction of Mestra and Erysichthon. As I have argued, the daughter's importance in her own story is undercut by both the brevity of the reference to her and by the narrator's failure to name the girl.<sup>51</sup> Interestingly, even at this early stage of the narrative, within the first sentence of the daughter's introduction, Ovid signals to the reader that the essential conflict of the upcoming narrative has been successfully resolved for the heroine. Since *habet* (739) can certainly be a true present, the daughter must survive her father. Rather than continuing to shape-shift to get herself out of unwanted situations, Mestra is now settled as the wife of one husband, Autolycus. The couple is a good match – both with god-given powers of deception – hers (shape-shifting) from Neptune, his (thievery) from Hermes.<sup>52</sup> The mention of her husband Autolycus, who will be the maternal grandfather of that great deceiver Odysseus, strikes an epic note, as does the patronymic periphrasis *Erysichthone nata* (738). The *Odyssey* cannot, however, be Ovid's source for this genealogical association as it gives Amphithea as the name for Odysseus' maternal grandmother and the wife of Autolycus.<sup>53</sup> Following line 738 and the first two words of line 739, a single sentence, which serves as the introduction to both the new narrative of Erysichthon and to

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<sup>51</sup> Bömer 240 argues that the litotes in Mestra's introduction (*nec minus...*) inflates her importance by putting her in a league with Proteus, a master of metamorphosis.

<sup>52</sup> *Odyssey* 19.394.

<sup>53</sup> As Anderson 403 points out.

the character of his daughter; she is not mentioned again until 847, some 108 lines later. Instead, the focus shifts to Erysichthon and his crime. From the very start Erysichthon is described as someone who spurns the authority of the gods. His impudence recalls the dismissive attitude Pirithous has shown to Achelous and contrasts sharply with the reverential piety of Philemon and Baucis. Since this is a cautionary tale for Pirithous, in this introduction, as in the narrative which follows, Erysichthon's hubristic attitude is the central feature of his character. It is his defining characteristic and the tree-felling is his defining deed. Thus, both the verbs which describe the tree-felling (*uiolasse*, 741 and *temerasse*, 742) stress the sacrilegious impiety of his action. This action contrasts well with Erysichthon's ritual inaction in not offering burnt fragrance (740). His crimes, then, are both of omission and commission.

Finally, it only remains to introduce what will be Erysichthon's victim, the tree. It too is introduced in a serious tone. Note the three spondees in 743 which give the tree a certain *grauitas* as do its age (*annoso*), its stature (*ingens*) and its strength (*robore*). Several other things also serve this purpose, such as the hyperbole (*una nemus*, 744) which is strengthened by its emphatic position at the start of the line and by the fact that it creates an enjambment<sup>54</sup> and the ritual objects which are attached to the tree (*uittae...tabellae / sertaque*, 744f.). In addition, the tree is an oak, unlike Callimachus' poplar, and this point too is significant.<sup>55</sup> Here, others<sup>56</sup> have seen verbal echoes of the

<sup>54</sup> Anderson 403 mentions the effect of the caesura.

<sup>55</sup> Thomas 264 n.10 suggests that Ovid may owe the change from poplar to oak to Apollonius of Rhodes. At *Argonautica* 2.475ff. Phineus relates the pitiable condition of a friend who cut down an oak tree and was punished. While this identification of the oak

epic oak-tree simile at *Aeneid* 4.441ff. in which the enduring strength of Aeneas is compared to an oak:

*ac uelut annoso ualidam cum robore quercum  
Alpini Boreae nunc hinc nunc flatibus illinc  
erueri inter se certant; it stridor, et altae  
consternunt terram concusso stipite frondes;*

The oak then, is a symbol of long life, survival and strength. The polysemy of *robur* (it means both oak and strength) highlights this point.<sup>57</sup> To this I would add that a crown of its leaves is the reward for saving a Roman citizen's life:

*...summi tum munera pili  
Laelius emeritique gerens insignia doni,  
seruati civis referentem praemia puerum.*<sup>58</sup>

The irony is pointed. Erysichthon will kill a very symbol of survival. The symbol for having spared a life will not itself be spared. This underlines the savage violence of Erysichthon's actions.

Similarly, the tree holds tablets which are left as reminders (*memores*, 744) and proof (*argumenta*, 745) of prayers answered, and these commonly commemorate an

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in a narrative which has parallel elements may be useful, such an identification alone does not sufficiently explain the effect of the change in the Erysichthon narrative.

<sup>56</sup> Such as Della Corte 171, Hollis 132f., Keene 72 and Anderson 403. Van Tress 186 points out that Virgil's oak tree simile is itself an allusion to the Homeric oak tree simile at *Iliad* 12.131ff. Ovid takes the oak out of the simile and makes it part of the narrative itself.

<sup>57</sup> *OLD* s.v. *robur* 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

<sup>58</sup> Lucan's *De Bello Ciuili* 1.356ff. which Anderson 404 also cites.

escape from danger. The speaker of Horace's *Ode* 1.5.13ff., for example, has escaped shipwreck:

...me *tabula sacer*  
*uotiu*a paries indicat *uuida*  
*suspendisse potenti*  
*uestimenta maris deo*.<sup>59</sup>

Presumably it is just such tablets which hang on the tree here. Again, the presence of these monuments which must at least in part acknowledge escapes to safety underscores the irony that the tree itself will not escape. Furthermore, these demonstrate that the tree is not only sacred to Ceres but also serves a ritual purpose, i.e. holding the *uittae*, *tabellae* and *serta* often found on a temple wall or altar. The tree is itself a kind of sacred space, consecrated to the goddess. This is supported by the self-referential<sup>60</sup> anaphora (*saepe...saepe*, 746f.) which also emphasizes the significance of the tree as the usual haunt of the dryads and as an important site for festive dances. By *ulnas* (748) Ovid exploits the literal meaning of the measurement for a pun.<sup>61</sup> The girth of the trunk is 15 ells but since the ell equals the span of a person's outstretched arms, it is easy to imagine a dual meaning here. The wood nymphs, with their outstretched hands joined (*manibus*

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<sup>59</sup> We might also look to Horace's *Odes* 2.13 and 2.17 for a role-reversal. There, the tree almost fells the man!

<sup>60</sup> 'Often' appears often.

<sup>61</sup> An ell or fathom (*ulna*) is equal to the span of a person's outstretched arms according to the *OLD* s.v. b, though there seems to be some confusion among scholars as to its precise length. Bömer (who cites Kiessling-Heinze) takes the *ulna* as equal to the length of a forearm, i.e. 45 centimeters. Hill 237 sets the maximum length of the ell at 45 inches. Neither of these measurements, however, is supported by the use of *ulna* at Pliny *NH* 16.40.76 nor by its use in Servius' comments on Virgil's *Bucolics* 3.105. Both Pliny and Servius make it clear that the ell must equal the space between a person's outstretched hands. Anderson 404 seems close to seeing the existence of the pun, though Bömer 244 categorically rejects even Anderson's tentative association between the ell and the arms of the nymphs as "eine unglückliche Vermutung."

*nexis*), encircle the circumference of the tree in *literally* fifteen arms' lengths.<sup>62</sup> The correlative hyperbole of 749-750 further exaggerates the importance of the tree. Similarly emphatic, the poetic word order of the lines allows for both chiasmus (*silua...hac, silua...herba*) and balance (*silua sub hac...herba sub omni*).<sup>63</sup>

All this contributes to establishing a deceptively high and serious tone for the introduction to Erysichthon's story, an introduction which belies the dark humor of the narrative which follows. Ovid plays the literary tease here: preparing his reader for a certain kind of story, he then, without warning, delivers an altogether different kind of tale. In addition, the inflated importance of the tree in this introduction will add to the dramatic impact of its demise and emphasize Erysichthon's wanton violence.

### Ovid and Callimachus on the Introduction

The change of tree species (from Callimachus' poplar to Ovid's oak) which I have mentioned is not the only difference between the two versions. Callimachus' hymn does not include Mestra and does not have the same thematic interest in metamorphosis. Furthermore, it does not have the exactly the same sort of narrative frame as Ovid's version since it is so closely tied to a hymn, and to ritual.<sup>64</sup> The two narratives, however,

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<sup>62</sup> See Tissol 22f. on the frequency and use of the pun in the *Metamorphoses*.

<sup>63</sup> Hollis 135.

<sup>64</sup> Galinsky 6, however, says that Callimachus pictures himself and the reader among the middle-class housewives in the streets of Alexandria who are expecting the procession of the Sacred Basket of Demeter. It is, he says, because these women tell the story of

do both benefit from a narrative frame which is appropriate to the food-related myth of Erysichthon. For Callimachus the ritual action of the hymn's setting provides this. The faithful followers of Demeter have cultivated and harvested the land and are about to turn from fasting to a celebration of Demeter's bounty, while faithless Erysichthon violated Demeter's sacred grove (which should have been left untouched) and consequently suffers a hunger which is like an endless fast which no bounty can satisfy.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, in Ovid's version Achelous tells the story of Erysichthon (who challenged a god and can now get no satisfaction from banqueting) at a banquet to an audience which includes a man who has challenged the power of the gods (Pirithous).

Later, the reader will see that Callimachus' Erysichthon is a younger man, a man with parents, not children. In particular, Ovid differs from Callimachus in his narrative focus and in the pacing of his tale. While the beginning of Callimachus' Erysichthon story (6.25ff.) takes care to describe the impressive grove in detail, mentioning specifically its density, the species of its trees (pines, large elms, pear- and apple-trees), its water supply and its special significance to Demeter, Ovid begins with an introduction of Erysichthon and his wickedness. The choice means that Erysichthon and his crime are foregrounded by Ovid in a way they are not by Callimachus. Ovid speaks of the whole

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Erysichthon that the Hymn to Demeter yields to "bourgeoisification" where it might have inspired awe and solemnity. Certainly, Galinsky is right in suggesting that the narrative frame of Callimachus' Erysichthon story must have an effect on the tale. I am not nearly so sure about where and how Callimachus might have pictured himself and his reader. Furthermore, despite Callimachus' greater interest in social mores in his Erysichthon narrative, the story of Demeter towering high above her adversary and reducing him to a desperate beggar at the crossroads is not entirely lacking in awe-inspiring effects. On the ritual background of Callimachus' Erysichthon narrative generally see Robertson (1) 164ff.; Robertson (2) 10ff.; Robertson (3) 369ff. and Burkert 135.

<sup>65</sup> Bulloch 99.

grove less than he does of the tree in particular<sup>66</sup> (although the tree is itself *una nemus*, 744), and when he does talk of the tree he is simultaneously talking of Erysichthon violating it. This brings Ovid's reader into the action of the narrative more quickly and the pace heightens the dramatic effect of the passage early on. Instead, Callimachus describes the grove first and then Erysichthon's companions, carefully including the details of their total number (ἑείκοσι), age (ἐν ἄκμῃ), size (ἀνδρογίγαντας), strength (ὅλαν πόλιν ἀκριος ἄραι) and equipment (ἀμφότερον πελέκεσσι καὶ ἀξίναισιν ὀπλίσας). Next he turns his attention to the tree (like Ovid's tree, it is tall and a site for nymphs<sup>67</sup>) for a mere two lines (6.37f.) before he comes, at last, to the violent tree-felling itself (6.38f.).<sup>68</sup> Ovid drops the attendants quickly and gets on to the more important tree and dwells on it. This builds up the *gravitas* and sacredness of the tree (with few other potentially distracting details) and helps to bring out Erysichthon's sacrilege.

Still, there are aspects which the two versions share. In Callimachus' hymn, after a review of the goddess' suffering the narrator claims to turn her attention to something

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<sup>66</sup> Spencer 85 considers that Ovid's choice to elaborate on the tree itself has an "expansive...effect" and that he "outdoes" Callimachus' description. In contrast, while Callimachus elaborates on "how the grove was established, its different kinds of trees and how it became sacred to Demeter (6.24-30), Ovid collapses all that into the adjective *Cereale*...(741)." He does not examine the function of such expansions or diminutions.

<sup>67</sup> Galinsky 7 notes that the sacredness of Ovid's tree does not allow the nymphs "sporting at noontide" as in Callimachus' hymn (6.38). Instead, the nymphs in Ovid lead festive dances there.

<sup>68</sup> Van Tress 172ff. talks about Callimachus creating a *locus amoenus* in the grove. Still, Hopkinson 5 is right to point out that the peace of the grove in Callimachus is subtly undermined very early on by a violence latent in Callimachus' language. The arrow at 6.26 foreshadows the entrance of a violent weapon into the grove. Similarly, it is subtly off-putting that the water 'boils up' (ἀνέθουε, 6.29) from the ditches and that Demeter loved the place 'madly' (ἐπεμαίνετο, 6.29). Note too that the prefix on ἐπεμαίνετο is intensificatory, which heightens the effect. There can be no arguing, however, that this is a much more indirect method than Ovid's and that it has subtle effects.



more pleasant (κόλλιον, 18f.) viz. Triptolemus and the art of agriculture and then Erysichthon. But this, like Ovid's introduction, must be very misleading. The story of Erysichthon in Callimachus can hardly be called a pleasant one, unless one finds comedy<sup>69</sup> or personal literary enjoyment in it.<sup>70</sup> Callimachus' Erysichthon account is ostensibly embedded in a hymn to Demeter which, for obvious reasons, is concerned with presenting a sympathetic picture of the goddess. However, even as a testament to the awesome power of the goddess, it is her (most unpleasant!) power to punish harshly which is emphasized in Erysichthon's story.

#### The Crime (8.751-776)

At this turning point in the narrative, when the focus shifts towards the terrible crime which will lead to Erysichthon's undoing he is called *Dryopeius*, an epithet which has troubled modern editors but which by its root probably reflects his upcoming oak-related crime.<sup>71</sup> Despite the ritual importance of the tree and the impiety of harming it,

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<sup>69</sup> As does McKay 63f.

<sup>70</sup> As does Hopkinson 5.

<sup>71</sup> Here I must deviate from Tarrant's text in reading 'Dryopeius' instead of 'Trioepius.' While modern editors (Tarrant and Anderson included) have almost universally opted for 'Trioepius' here and a similar solution at 872, there is uncomfortably little manuscript support for this (only a single minor MS and a late correction in U). Instead, as Hollis 135 notes, the manuscripts clearly favor 'Dryopeius.' Perhaps editors have been attracted to the patronymic because it is epic (like Mestra's patronymic) or because they, as Griffin (1) 57 suggests, have been influenced by Callimachus' hymn where Triopas, Triopum, and the Triopidae figure prominently. I cannot help noticing that 'Trioepius' is a handy fix for what might otherwise be a strange epithet (it is a hapax in Latin and *Dryopeus*

(underscored by the emphatic placement of *succidere sacrum*, a doubly alliterative<sup>72</sup> juxtaposition at the end of 752), Erysichthon orders his company to cut down the tree. This introduces both the crime and a scene-type which is not entirely unknown to epic.<sup>73</sup> One may compare the tree-felling scene at *Aeneid* 6.176ff. in which *pius* Aeneas' men hurry to chop the trees *haud mora* or the orderly, co-operative effort of the men of Meriones, ἀνήρ ἑσθλός, to chop wood at *Iliad* 23.112ff.<sup>74</sup> In both epic examples the tree-felling is not a crime and the leaders are properly obeyed in a manner which reflects well on the leaders and on their men. The fact that Erysichthon's men ignore him shows his own poor character. Of course, the errant, lazy or disobedient slave is a stock comic figure but here the slaves are righteously reluctant to chop down the sacred tree.

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does not occur anywhere at all). Even good editors can be enticed to forget the principle of the *lectio difficilior*. With some thought, however, it is easy to see how *Dryopeius* might fit into Ovid's version. Griffin (1) 57 himself argues that *Dryopeius* is related to δρῦς (oak) and that since in the ancient world a person's destiny was often tied up with his name, an "Oak Man should be wary of molesting oaks." This is quite sensible and must have been as obvious to Ovid's bilingual audience as it is to us (see Ahl 60ff. on wordplay across linguistic borders in Ovid and others). Weber 209ff. takes it a step further and supposes that the epithet is related to δρύοψ. If this is the case, Erysichthon is a woodpecker by name and conduct. Finally, Hollis 135 notes that in Pliny *NH* 4.28 *Dryopis* is equivalent to *Thessalia*. He thus takes the epithet as a *recherche* synonym for *Thessalus* (which is applied to Erysichthon at 768). In any case (and these explanations are not mutually exclusive) I am convinced there is no reason to ignore the strong manuscript support for 'Dryopeius' despite its initial strangeness.

<sup>72</sup> It contains repetition of both 's' and 'c' sounds.

<sup>73</sup> Hollis 137 lists several other epic descriptions of a great tree being felled: *Iliad* 4.482ff., 13.389ff.; Apollonius of Rhodes 4.1682ff.; Virgil *Aeneid* 2.626. Tree-felling, he says, is the stuff of "time-honoured simile in epic."

<sup>74</sup> See Thomas 266ff. for further discussion of these examples of tree-felling.

Erysichthon then, appears as the moral inferior of even his own servants. This is underlined by *sceleratus* (754), an editorializing intrusion of the narrator which tells the reader plainly Erysichthon's essential function and character in the story: he is a scoundrel. Achelous' portrayal of Erysichthon's character in the passage is quite forceful for Pirithous' benefit.

When Erysichthon's order to chop down the tree is ignored, he takes up the axe himself and vows that he would chop the tree down even if it were the goddess herself. His disorderly syntax at 756-7 (deliberate anacoluthon) betrays the depth of his rage. He has lost control of his temper and of his speech. Furthermore, his hubristic and blasphemous threat against Ceres must be a prelude to disaster. Here, as in so many other places in the *Metamorphoses*, pride comes before the fall.<sup>75</sup> When Erysichthon soon turns his murderous rage on the tree, a quadrisyllabic adjectival form of the goddess' name, *Deoia* (a hapax in Latin and a graecism from Δηώ) gives the tree a dignity befitting the goddess herself. This association between the tree and the goddess further underscores the sacrilege of his actions and introduces the personification of the tree which follows. The repetition of *pariter* in 759 and the spondees in 760 draw the reader's attention to these lines and, accordingly, to the change of the inanimate tree to the hamadryad which they contain. Remarkably, the tree trembles (*contremuit*, 758), groans (*gemitumque dedit*, 758), pales (*palescere.../...pallorem ducere*, 759f.), and suffering from its wound (*uulnus*, 761), it sheds blood (*fluxit...sanguis*, 762). Except perhaps for trembling, these are the immediate reactions of a person, not a tree.

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<sup>75</sup> Hill 142 points out numerous examples of a character's blasphemy preceding his or her ruin: Pentheus at 3.513ff.; Acrisius at 4.611ff.; Arachne at 6.1ff.; Niobe at 6.170ff.

Consequently, Erysichthon's action has the more dramatic feel of a murder, rather than a tree-felling. The transformation is extraordinary and ominous, and the passage's aural and visual impact should arouse sympathy in a sensitive observer. Erysichthon's failure to respond appropriately draws attention to his stubborn lack of feeling and his wanton violence.

In addition to the more literal (not simply literary) personification of the tree, Ovid uses an epic simile to underscore the importance of Erysichthon's attack. While Hollis and others note that the simile is introduced in the epic manner<sup>76</sup> and that it likens the death of the tree to that of a sacrificial bull, no one has given sufficient notice to just how apt a simile Ovid is using. The two victims are comparable in several ways. They are both living creatures and share their size (*ingens*, 763), blood-loss (*sanguine*, 762; *cruor*, 764), and the fact that they have suffered injury (*discussus cortex*, 762; *abrupta ceruice*, 764). Both fall to the ground (the bull *concidit* at 764, just as the tree *corrui*t at 776) and even the instrument of their deaths is the same (the *securis* is an axe used for both chopping trees and for killing bulls at a sacrifice).<sup>77</sup> There is, however, a clear difference. While the sacrifice of a bull at an altar is a pious act of ritual in deference to the gods (the sort of service Erysichthon would certainly be unwilling to perform given his previous refusal to offer even *odores*), Erysichthon's attack on the tree is a perverse

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<sup>76</sup> Hollis 136 points to the introduction of the simile, *haud aliter.../quam*, and its similarity to Virgil *Aeneid* 4.669 (*non aliter quam*) and to the regularity with which bull sacrifice similes appear in epic (e.g. Virgil *Aeneid* 2.223-334 and Homer *Iliad* 20.403-405).

<sup>77</sup> 8.741. Compare the sacrificial bull simile at *Aeneid* 2.223-224: *...fugit cum saucius aram / taurus et incertam excussit ceruice securim*.

<sup>78</sup> Anderson 405 and Van Tress 182f. agree.

act of willful sacrilege against Ceres.<sup>78</sup> The simile then, explicitly compares the similar elements of the two deaths while it implicitly draws attention to the contrasting intentions behind those deaths. The result is irony.

Sensing the iniquity of Erysichthon's deadly intentions, one of his party objects and tries to prevent the quercicide. His good deed does not go unpunished and he is promptly killed. The abundance of the hard 'c' / 'q' (5) and 't' (6) sounds in 769, the 'cutting' line, makes for onomatopoeia. Similarly, the suddenness and rashness of Erysichthon's action is mirrored by the suddenness of Ovid's expression. In one line (768) Erysichthon has turned his attention away from the tree and toward the intervening onlooker. In only two words (*detruncatque caput*, 769) he has decapitated him. The duration of the narrated and that of the narration converge here and are both over in a breath. The effect is especially successful since the focus has been on the tree for the previous 25 lines and will return to the tree for another 7 lines following this interlude (of one and a half lines) in which a man dies! This obviously underlines the relative importance of the death of the tree. *Detruncat* also makes for a pun with *truncus* (747, 761).<sup>79</sup> The use of the pun is complemented by other kinds of dark humor in the situation. For example, the conscientious objector does succeed in preventing Erysichthon from striking the tree but only long enough to get himself killed. Mission temporarily accomplished. Likewise, Erysichthon's curt response to him at 767 is brutal but ironic. Both speaker and listener are about to 'get what they deserve for their piety,' though Erysichthon must not see how his own words rebound. All this conveys a light,

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<sup>79</sup> As Anderson 405 suggests.

playful tone which is incongruous with the dark content of the lines. Richlin has called this sort of tension, between Ovid's violent content and his jocular presentation, "putting a bow on a slaughterhouse."<sup>80</sup> Of course, the joke is not meant to obscure its macabre content. Instead of the "text hiding the grossness with fair ornament,"<sup>81</sup> the pun is funny precisely *because* of this tension. Although Erysichthon is clearly vilified in the tale, Ovid does not give us in this episode a trite or moralizing Sunday-school lesson in which the wicked characters are punished and the virtuous rewarded. The objector, though righteous, is swiftly murdered just as Mestra, though undeserving of her father's shame, will suffer the injustice of being sold.

At last, the tree nymph herself speaks up against the attack. She identifies herself, noting her special personal association with Ceres (*Cereri gratissima*, 771), and with her dying breath offers a prophetic curse for Erysichthon's punishment (772f.).<sup>82</sup> Most others who have written on this passage<sup>83</sup> have identified Virgil's Polydorus episode<sup>84</sup> as the likely source for this scene (yet another epic association), although they have done so without any further comment. It is, I think, worth noting that the two episodes share

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<sup>80</sup> Richlin 58.

<sup>81</sup> Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* 3.2.

<sup>82</sup> The *-orum...-orum* jingle in *factorum...tuorum* (772) is noteworthy. Both Hollis 137 and Hill 237 claim that Augustan poets generally avoided the *-orum ...-orum* jingle and attribute this example to the fact that it occurs in a prophetic curse, citing as analogous the magic spell at Theocritus *Id.* 2.21, 62 and Virgil *Eclogues* 8.80. Still, I can point out that internal rhymes are common in this passage such as *-emque...-emque* at 785 and *-orque...-orque* at 790. Moreover, Ovid even uses a three-fold *-orum* at *Metamorphoses* 13.550 of Hecuba: *non oblita animorum, annorum oblita suorum* (albeit with double elision).

<sup>83</sup> Anderson 406; Galinsky 12; Otis 414; Keene 74 etc.

<sup>84</sup> *Aeneid* 3.19ff.

many features and even verbal echoes. Aeneas (an epic hero to Erysichthon's mock-epic anti-hero?) is preparing to offer a bull sacrifice to a goddess. Through the simile at 763f. Erysichthon is also engaged in a perverse sort of bull sacrifice. Aeneas' unsuspecting victim is a plant too which is first invested with human suffering (it bleeds from its bark as well) before it identifies itself to its attacker in the first person (*nam Polydorus ego*, 3.45) just as Erysichthon's victim does (*nympha...ego sum*, 771). Polydorus speaks with an unexpected voice from within the plant (*uox reddita*, 3.40), and so, too, does the nymph (*redditus...sonus*, 770). The difference in the reactions of the two men demonstrates the essential difference in their characters. *Pius* Aeneas stops immediately (he does not willfully persist), prays to the nymphs (a nymph is *impius* Erysichthon's victim), consults his advisors (instead of chopping their heads off) and keeps his hands free of guilt as he is instructed (*parce pias scelerare manus*, 3.42). In contrast, Erysichthon's hand has already been specifically called a *manus impia* (761). The epithet is transferred of course – the man, not the hand, is impious. Still, this is an editorializing intrusion of the narrator which emphasizes Erysichthon's moral depravity and draws the reader's attention to the difference between Erysichthon and his counterpart in this scene, Aeneas, in a way which is hardly flattering to Erysichthon.

Finally, brought down by numerous axe blows and even by the aid of ropes (Erysichthon spares no effort at getting his job done despite objections), the whole weight of the tree falls. Ovid dwells on this significant moment for three lines (774-776) and gives it extra attention with stylistic flourishes. There are vigorous, speedy dactyls in

774-5. Then, besides the alliterative core of 776 (*prostravit pondere*),<sup>85</sup> the word order and rhythm of 776 is suggestive of the tree's "stately collapse."<sup>86</sup> It begins with *corruit* and then slows with spondees as the end nears. All this makes for a vivid description which adds to the dignity of the tree and the horror of Erysichthon's violent crime.

In fact, throughout this section (751-776) the narrator stresses the crime above all else, by the relative length of the description of the tree and the dramatic build-up to the tree-felling, his repeated use of thematic words like *sceleratus* (754), *impia* (761), *nefas* (766), *saevamque* (766) and *scelus* (774) and even by the frequent appearance of words which describe the axe. At 741 and 754, *securis*, an obvious word for the axe, appears. Then at 742, 751 and 768 the material, iron (*ferrum*), stands in for the axe itself by synecdoche, perhaps for metrical convenience but perhaps also because *ferrum* very commonly means sword. Similarly, at 757 the axe is a *telum*. Although the *telum* is not even, strictly speaking, the same kind of instrument as the axe, it stands in for the *securis* here by metonymy. It may be more metrically convenient than *securim* but since it more usually refers to a spear, its use here helps to stress that in Erysichthon's hands the axe is a weapon, not a tool. Finally, Ovid keeps up his variation in terms for axe with *saevamque bipennem* (766). Now the axe is double-edged and savage. *Saevamque*, like *impia* (761) is a transferred epithet. It must be Erysichthon who is savage but such poetic

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<sup>85</sup> Hollis 138 sees onomatopoeia in what he calls an "impressive accumulation of consonants" in *prostravit* and in the appearance of the 'p', 'd', 't' and 'r' sounds the line. I am unconvinced, though he cites as analogous Ennius' *Annals* 6.183-5 which certainly do contain a clear proliferation of 'f', 'p' and 'r' sounds: *fraxinus frangitur atque abies consternitur alta / pinus proceras peruortunt: omne sonabat / arbustum fremitu silvai frondosai*.

<sup>86</sup> Griffin (1) 60.



devices add interest to the story and focus one's attention on the axe itself. In addition, the appearance of *succidere* (752), *ictus* (757), *repetitaque* (769) and *ictibus innumeris* (775) helps to stress the impending or ongoing action of the crime.

### Ovid and Callimachus on the Crime

In his description of Erysichthon's crime Ovid deviates noticeably from the version Callimachus presented and his variations are not without point. In each of the instances there are discernible and effective results due to the changes. Actually, this section of the narrative contains one of the places where Ovid takes on Callimachus as a predecessor most clearly. When at 755f. Erysichthon vows that he would chop down the tree even if it were the goddess herself, he rivals Callimachus' version in which the goddess did appear. In the *Hymn to Demeter* Ceres was merely ignored, in Ovid's she would have been killed! This signals to the reader not only that Ovid is probably playing on his source<sup>87</sup> but also that he intends his own version to exaggerate Erysichthon's hubristic impiety. Erysichthon's blasphemy at this point and his characterization as a *sceleratus* (754) do not occur in Callimachus and this makes Ovid's Erysichthon seem

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<sup>87</sup> Galinsky 8 calls the remark a "sly note" which shows that Ovid's Erysichthon knows Callimachus' hymn to Demeter.

worse. This is perfectly in keeping with his narrator's purpose: Achelous wishes to show Pirithous the gravity of the crime of challenging a god's authority.<sup>88</sup>

To that end, while Callimachus explains that Erysichthon is gathering lumber to build a banquet hall, Ovid leaves his actions entirely unexplained. This adds to the perception that Erysichthon commits a quite random act of violence against the tree. Callimachus' Erysichthon has a rational motivation (though not a justification) for the tree-felling and will use the lumber for construction; Ovid's Erysichthon appears to be simply destructive.<sup>89</sup> Similarly, Callimachus' Erysichthon is a young man when he commits his crime. He is emphatically called τέκνον three times by Demeter (6.46ff.) as well as παῖς at 6.56. Later, the mention of his wet-nurse (6.95) and the worry of his parents will also have an infantilizing effect.<sup>90</sup> There is no doubt that Callimachus' Erysichthon is also a villain<sup>91</sup> but his youth makes him a slightly more sympathetic figure than a grown man who willfully and knowingly commits murder and challenges a goddess. The young are often impetuous and unthinking.<sup>92</sup> Ovid also makes the significant addition of the hesitating attendants who make Erysichthon seem even more

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<sup>88</sup> Hollis 134 feels that the stress on Erysichthon's impiety makes him a counterpart of Virgil's Mezentius, *contemptor diuum* (*Aeneid* 7.648, 8.7). Mestra, then, would be the counterpart of Lausus. Galinsky 11ff. also sees a correspondence, as does Otis 414. See Murray 220ff. and Tsitsiou-Chelidoni 350ff. for the connection between the Argonauts and Erysichthon (through the death of Amycus).

<sup>89</sup> Spencer 84f. points out that Ovid's Erysichthon (unlike Callimachus') does not mention the banquet hall which would "have provided some excuse for his character's inexcusably brazen act."

<sup>90</sup> Nisetich 230 notes that by 6.100 (βρέφος) the haughty Erysichthon of the early part of the story has been reduced to the dependency of a babe in arms.

<sup>91</sup> Callimachus' narrator, like Ovid's, editorializes on Erysichthon's poor character, calling him evil and shameless (κακὸν καὶ ἀναιδέα, 6.45).

<sup>92</sup> Von Albrecht 315 also considers Erysichthon's youth a "*mildernde Umstände*."

reckless by contrast. They exhibit precisely the hesitation which Erysichthon should, but does not, have. Ovid's changes emphasize Erysichthon's violently impious nature as well as the violence of his actions.

*The Hymn to Demeter* does not have the full personification of the tree nor (consequently) the death-bed speech of the nymph, though the tree does shriek to others (6.39).<sup>93</sup> Ovid adds to that the tree's trembling, pallor, bleeding and speaking, as well as the characterization of Erysichthon's hand as *impia* (761). These features of Ovid's version not only impress on the reader the enormity of the crime but also allow one to connect emotionally to the victim. It is, after all, easier to feel sympathy for a nymph who personally pleads her case than for inanimate vegetation, no matter how sacred it may be. The tree's transformation is also in keeping with Ovid's primary thematic concern: metamorphosis.<sup>94</sup> Having left behind what is supposed to be his example of multiple metamorphoses (Mestra) some twenty lines ago, the narrator presents in the person of the tree a stunning (*obstipuerunt omnes*, 765) alteration. This theme is not, however, a concern which Callimachus particularly shares. Instead of a metamorphosis and the tree's speech to Erysichthon, Callimachus has Nicippe, the public priestess, speak for Demeter (who is speaking for the tree). Ovid chooses to maximize the emotional impact by his directness, while Callimachus includes a priestess, which is more in keeping with the narrative frame and ritual background of his work. It is, I suppose, something of a metamorphosis when Demeter doffs her priestess disguise and reveals her

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<sup>93</sup> Hopkinson 6 sees a sound-effect in the long Doric  $\alpha$ 's of 6.39 which reproduce the sound of the wood shrieking. The effect is vivid, not humorous, and Ovid does not imitate it.

<sup>94</sup> Anderson 406.

true identity (6.57), though it does not have nearly the shocking force of the tree's transformation into a nymph. It is not so unusual for gods to disguise themselves as humans and then later to unveil their true identities. Callimachus gives more attention to the goddess' imposing presence than to the change itself which is speedily expressed (γείνατο δ' αὖ θεός, 6.57).<sup>95</sup>

Ovid clearly uses his model but not slavishly. He makes interesting twists to Callimachus' version. Rather than having Nicippe trying unsuccessfully to dissuade Erysichthon from cutting down the tree, Ovid has an attendant at 765f. do exactly this. Erysichthon's subsequent decision to proceed with the tree-felling (which even his own men found objectionable and shocking) brings out his impiety. Then later, when in Callimachus Ceres speaks, Ovid too has a goddess speak, but a different one: it is the nymph herself who ominously prophesies punishment (instead of trying to dissuade Erysichthon as Ceres does). In Ovid, the second speaker (the nymph) is dying and pathetic; in Callimachus the second speaker (Ceres) is a towering, imposing presence. Ovid's Erysichthon actually uses his axe brutally rather than just threatening to do so as in Callimachus.

Most obviously, Ovid diverges from Callimachus' more serious tone by his use of dark humor and by his quite dramatic presentation of the crime. Though Callimachus

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<sup>95</sup> Spencer 86 argues that Callimachus' Demeter is not given much attention and is "not remote and unapproachable" and that Callimachus "toys with her immanence by having Erysichthon brazenly threaten her directly." This is just not so. At first Demeter is approachable only because she is in disguise. Then, when she reveals her true self (with feet on ground and head towering into the heavens) she is quite impressive. Erysichthon, not Callimachus, toys with her immanence and he pays the price, as the rest of the story clearly shows.

also uses epic associations (such as the Homeric simile at 6.50ff. and the parallels between the conversation of Erysichthon and Demeter and that of Chryses and Agamemnon in the *Iliad*),<sup>96</sup> he does so without any of the irony which Ovid employs. Whereas in Callimachus, these epic features add elegance, in Ovid they struggle against the coarseness of his humor and fit strangely. Ovid manages to outdo Callimachus in his use of so many high-styled conventions while maintaining a decidedly non-epic tone.

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<sup>96</sup> See Gundert 119 for details of the verbal and situational parallels. See also Bulloch 98ff. and Van Tress 171ff. on other Homeric allusions in the *Hymn*.

### CHAPTER THREE: THE REACTIONS OF OTHERS

#### The Reaction to the Crime (8.777-95)

The word which first describes the reaction of the nymphs to the death of the tree is *attonitae* (777). The other dryads, like the onlookers already described at 765, are stupefied. The detail that the dryads are the victim's *germanae* (778) adds to the personification of the tree/nymph (like a person she has a family) and enhances the pathos of the nymph's death. The dryad sisters model the appropriate reaction for the reader. Their reaction confirms the already well established idea that Erysichthon must be punished and the nymph pitied. The dryads mourn like good Romans. They have put on black robes (778), a typical token of mourning, and in Roman form, the dryads concern themselves, not only with their own personal, familial loss, but also with the loss their wider community has suffered (*damno nemorumque suoque*, 777).<sup>97</sup> Rather than taking part in a funeral procession to a Roman burial, however, the hamadryads make an embassy to Ceres. They pick up on the prophecy of their sister in 772 and pray for Erysichthon's punishment (*poenamque Erysichthonis orant*, 779). The abundance of nasal sounds in 778-9 adds to the somber, prayerful effect.

Unsurprisingly, Ceres agrees to grant the prayer. She does so with a nod of her head (*adnuit*, 780), an action which faintly and humorously parallels the movement of the

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<sup>97</sup> e.g. After the death of Quintus Metellus, Cicero discusses both his own personal loss and the loss to the state, at *Pro Caelio* 24.59.

slave's head at 769 and which reminds the reader of Demeter's head towering up to Olympus in Callimachus' version (6.58). The godly nod of assent here, as elsewhere, has the power to shake things up literally and figuratively. For example, Jupiter nods his assent in Ovid's *Fasti* 2.489f., *Iuppiter adnuerat. nutu tremefactus uterque / est polus, et caeli pondera nouit Atlas*. Each god has shaken his/her own jurisdiction, Jupiter the heavens, Ceres the fields.<sup>98</sup> Erysichthon's actions, then, have global repercussions and the association of Ceres with other gods emphasizes her authority. It is interesting too that Ceres' shaking of the fertile fields has such a literal result - it creates Erysichthon's own personal famine. At this moment, when she is acting in such a powerful godly capacity (*adnuit*) and displaying a violent (*concussit*, 781) anger, it seems odd that Ceres is given the epithet *pulcherrima* (780).<sup>99</sup> Perhaps this view of Ceres sets us up for the imminent contrasting picture of Fames and the punishment, which are decidedly unattractive.

Ceres then contrives a punishment awful enough to suit the crime. She will tear him up with hunger (*lacerare*, 784). Again, Ovid makes light with a clever pun. Erysichthon will suffer this punishment both figuratively and, in the end, literally when he tears into his own flesh.<sup>100</sup> Of course, *lacerare* is a powerful, pregnant verb and its other meanings have resonance as well. The punishment will certainly violently torment

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<sup>98</sup> Summers 62, Hollis 139 and Keene 75 describe a similar relationship between Neptune and Zeus and their respective domains: with a nod Neptune shakes the sea at 8.603f., Zeus shakes Olympus at *Iliad* 1.528f.

<sup>99</sup> Anderson 406 thinks the epithet, though unexpected, goes well with the sound patterns. This is true, I suppose, but does little to explain why Ovid has chosen so unexpected an adjective here.

<sup>100</sup> Summers 62 and Anderson 407.

Erysichthon physically and mentally and will ravage his person, possessions and family.<sup>101</sup> The contrary to fact conditional clause at 783 is another editorializing intrusion of the narrator which emphasizes that Erysichthon's punishment is as wretched as his behavior. The man's behavior puts him beyond the bounds of natural human sympathy, not that this narrator seems at all prone to pity Erysichthon. Achelous is relishing this and his statement that Erysichthon does not elicit compassion approaches a comedic statement of the obvious.

Ceres herself, according to Ovid, cannot seek out Fames since Ceres and Fames cannot be together. Of course, this is only the case if the goddesses must always be the full manifestation of their primary associations, that is (small 'c') *ceres* and (small 'f') *fames*. There must be, then, no separation between *Fames*, the figure, and *fames*, the condition. There are other examples of this idea. For example, *Eris*, the figure, is not invited to the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, and it is not until her arrival that *eris*, the condition, appears. Similarly, Iris is sleepy in the presence of Somnus at 11.630<sup>102</sup> and Minerva turns away from Invidia.<sup>103</sup> Still, there are plenty of examples of gods and goddesses whose interaction would not be possible if Ovid's line of reasoning were carefully followed. Would Mars and Venus have been permitted a dalliance? The juxtaposition of the two names of Ceres and Fames within 785, along with the repetition of the 'emque' sounds in the same metrical position (at the start of a foot) wittily emphasize the contrast between their metrical, poetic compatibility and their functional

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<sup>101</sup> OLD s.v. *lacero* 1,3,4 and TLL VII,2.824.43f.; VII,2.825.77f.; VII,2.827.52f.

<sup>102</sup> Anderson 407.

<sup>103</sup> Griffin (1) 60, Anderson 407 and Hollis 138.



incompatibility. If Ceres and Fames can never meet in the narrative, they have at least come together on the smaller scale of the line. This also allows Ovid to introduce another nymph into the story and to have Ceres herself explain the details of her plan for Erysichthon's punishment. This adds to the perception that the goddess is now in full control of the offender's fate, a perception which is important for Achelous to impress upon Pirithous. Even the choice of a mountain nymph has a witty point. Ceres chooses a nymph who is appropriate for the job. A mountain nymph, not one of the hamadryads who is already with Ceres, will seek Fames on Mount Caucasus (797f.). The careful arrangement of words in 787 to form a golden line plays the elegance of expression off the rusticity of the oread (she is *agrestem*).

Ceres begins her remarks to the nymph with a description of Scythia (788). Scythia is a proverbially cold, barren, and uncivilized wilderness for classical authors,<sup>104</sup> our Siberia. This marks the second change of setting in the episode. The first setting is the forest, next the action moves to Ceres' location, and now to Scythia. Such changes of location will continue to mark important turning points in the narrative. Moreover, in order to enhance the feeling of parallelism, the punishment section, like the crime section, includes epicisms. As Anderson points out,<sup>105</sup> the words *est locus* are a standard epic introduction of a geographical description, as at *Aeneid* 1.159 and *Iliad* 6.152 (ἔστι πόλις...). Each author signals the start of the ecphrasis with the stock phrase, then sets the scene and finally, contextualizes it within the narrative.

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<sup>104</sup> Hollis 139.

<sup>105</sup> 407, see also Keene 76.

Interestingly, the conditions and inhabitants of Scythia represent both the causes and effects of famine. In this context *Frigus iners* (790) must mean that it was cold enough to slow plant growth, and like poor soil (*triste solum*, 789), sterile land (*sterilis tellus*, 789), and a lack of crops and trees (*sine fruge, sine arbore*, 789), cold can be one of the causes of famine. John Donne uses a similar motif in Holy Sonnet 10, addressing personified death who, "...dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell." Death, like famine here in Ovid, is depicted as living with its causes. Conversely, pallor (from malnutrition) and trembling (from weakness) are clearly the results, not causes, of famine. *Pallor* and *tremor* occur together elsewhere, though not as personifications.<sup>106</sup> In fact, only *pallor* is commonly personified.<sup>107</sup> I can find no passage besides this one in which *frigus* and *tremor* are personified. Thus, in the description of the punishment, as in that of the crime, Ovid is continuing to use personification in unusual ways. This too helps to make the punishment and crime parallel. Since a surprising personification has played such a major role in Erysichthon's misdeeds, it also features in his punishment. Moreover, the rarity of this use of *Frigus* and *Tremor* coupled with the relative rarity of *glacialis* (788) help to convey the singular, fantastic nature of Fames' abode, as does its placement in the wilds of Scythia.

The repetition of *sine* in 789 stresses the absence of that which is desirable, just as the repetition of 'orque' (*Pallorque Tremorque*) creates a jingle which stresses the presence of that which is undesirable, not unlike the emphatic repetition of 'emque' at 785. By means of the dactyls, the anaphora, the asyndeton and the many 's' sounds of

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<sup>106</sup> e.g. Cicero *Flac.* 10 *quo tremore et pallore dixit!*

<sup>107</sup> As at Livy. 1.27.7, Silius Italicus 13.582.

789, Ceres seems to skip merrily through her description of the gloominess and want in Scythia. It must be her own absence which makes it so and she too will enjoy seeing this deprivation at work in Erysichthon. Happily, his punishment will leave him sad, weak, useless, impoverished and dreadful like Scythia (*triste*, 789, and *iners*, 790, are efficient adjectives with these numerous meanings that apply to Erysichthon).<sup>108</sup>

Only at 791ff. is the exact process of Erysichthon's punishment clear: Fames is to place herself in Erysichthon's *praecordia scelerata*. While Erysichthon is polluted by guilt, his stomach has not been the literal site of profane action. *Scelerata* reads sensibly as another transferred, if comically peculiar, epithet. Erysichthon, not his stomach, is guilty. *Praecordia scelerata* perhaps fits more neatly into Callimachus' version, in which Erysichthon's actions are prompted by a desire to build a banqueting hall. Thus, his crime is motivated by food and his punishment is parallel. In Ovid, the relationship between crime and punishment is less literal, though Fames entering Erysichthon for the axe entering the nymph is apt enough. Certainly, his behavior has been deserving of punishment, but his murder of the nymph is less appetitive than it is senseless and impious. His crime is motivated by a figurative, not literal, 'hunger' for violence and 'thirst' for blood, and especially by his pervasive disregard for the gods, as *sacrilegi* (792) suggests.<sup>109</sup> His stomach (*praecordia*) is the site of his crime against Ceres only in so far as it is the seat of passion in a human (a well attested alternative meaning, to be

<sup>108</sup> OLD s.v. *tristis* 1, 3, 5, 6, 8; *iners* 2, 3, 4, 5.

<sup>109</sup> It is interesting to note that a connection between insufficient regard for the gods and gluttony has been expressly drawn by many others. From the early Middle Ages until at least the early Renaissance the real danger of gluttony was thought to reside in its nature as a form of idolatry in which the offender worships his own belly. See Prose 3ff.

sure).<sup>110</sup> His punishment then, is loosely parallel in that his excessive passion for food reflects his excessive passion for violent destruction. Feeney thus argues that his “ravening hunger mirrors the blind voraciousness of his moral character.”<sup>111</sup> This interpretation, of metamorphosis as a literal reflection of a character’s nature, is in keeping with other examples of metamorphosis in Ovid.<sup>112</sup> As the words which begin 792, *sacrilegi scelerata*, are alliterative, unequivocally negative and emphatically placed.

Ceres lends her chariot to the nymph in order that she may not be daunted by the length of the journey at hand - a comic touch as a mountain nymph can hardly be expected to fear a trip to the mountains, especially when she is helping to avenge a fellow nymph’s recent and cruel death. The use of a borrowed chariot (*dato curru*, 796) calls to mind the fate of Phaëthon whose ill-advised use of a god’s chariot was disastrous. Interestingly, one of the consequences of his chariot ride was the metamorphosis of the Heliades into trees.<sup>113</sup> As with Erysichthon’s victim (whose injury is the cause, not the effect, of the lending of the chariot), the Heliades become hybrid creatures who suffer wounds in their bark (*uulnere*, 2.360) by laceration (*laceratur*, 2.362) and must beg for mercy (*parce, precor*, 2.361 and 2.362). Here, Ceres’ chariot is lent at the goddess’ directive and will be well handled by the oread though this too will result in suffering - Erysichthon’s.

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<sup>110</sup> It is used this way at *Metamorphoses* 11.149.

<sup>111</sup> 243.

<sup>112</sup> Galinsky 13 gives numerous examples which show that people undergo metamorphosis which changes them physically into what they already are psychologically or morally. Clytie (who is in love with the sun god) becomes a sunflower, lustful Jupiter changes into a bull, hard-hearted Anaxerete, into a stone etc.

<sup>113</sup> *Metamorphoses* 2.346ff.

### Ovid and Callimachus on the Reaction to the Crime (8.777-827)

Callimachus' Erysichthon narrative does not include most of the elements of this section of Ovid's version. Since Callimachus' tree does not become fully personified and does not personally call for Erysichthon's punishment, it is not surprising that his tree does not have family members who also demand justice for the death. Ceres herself (first in disguise then in person) is present at the scene of the crime in Callimachus and this naturally obviates the need for anyone at all to make a special trip to involve her. In fact, with Erysichthon's men scared half to death at the sight of Ceres (59ff.) and excused for their part since they were only following their master (61ff.), Nemesis is the only other character who takes an interest in the proceedings at this point by noting Erysichthon's evil words (56). Like Ceres and Fames, Nemesis is a goddess who is intimately related to the concept she represents. Just as Hunger (the figure) will bring hunger (the condition), the mention of Nemesis (the goddess) clearly foreshadows the full manifestation of the vengeance which Demeter will exact on Erysichthon. Unlike Ovid who avails himself of the opportunity to include other characters (such as the dryad sisters, the mountain nymph, Frigus, Pallor, Tremor and Fames), thereby prolonging this section considerably with detail, wit and dark humor, Callimachus presses on to Ceres' rage and Erysichthon's punishment virtually immediately. Ceres addresses Erysichthon personally, insulting him (κούον κούον, 63) and making a thinly veiled threat (64) before she herself administers Erysichthon's swift (αὐτίκα, 66) and terrible punishment in the form of a powerful

burning hunger (λιμὸν / αἰθωνα, 66f.). Here Callimachus most certainly refers to other versions of the tale (his own sources) in which Erysichthon is associated with the nickname Aithon.<sup>114</sup> Ovid will make a similar reference later (at 829) when he speaks of Erysichthon's *incensaque viscera*.

Ovid's handling of the reaction to the crime is noticeably longer and more elaborate since it is, in context, Achelous' handling of the crime. His choice to include other characters as well as travel to other settings (Olympus, Scythia and Erysichthon's bedroom)<sup>115</sup> allows him to place additional emphasis on the horror of the impending punishment (which Achelous must be enjoying) and to build up dramatic tension for the moment when Erysichthon eventually suffers the full force of Ceres' anger. Both authors, however, take care in this section to show Ceres in powerful form, giving her godly consent with a nod in Ovid (780) and towering from earth to Olympus in Callimachus (58).

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<sup>114</sup> Hopkins 136 agrees.

<sup>115</sup> Spencer 83 comments on the geography of Ovid's narrative in comparison to Callimachus'. While the entirety of Callimachus' story takes place in Erysichthon's home and a nearby grove, "Ovid makes his story range over the widest possible vistas, including heaven and earth. The action takes place in a grove sacred to Ceres, on Olympus, in Scythia and the Caucasus, in Erysichthon's house in Thessaly, at the shore, in the air, and in the meadows."

### The Mountain Nymph and Fames 8.796 - 822

The mountain nymph flies at the goddess' command to Scythia and arrives on Mount Caucasus. Like Scythia generally, the Caucasus mountain in particular is typically portrayed as harsh and inaccessible.<sup>116</sup> The form, *Caucason* (798), like others in the passage,<sup>117</sup> is a graecism and adds to the far-flung 'otherness' of Fames and her location.<sup>118</sup> The nymph's next move (*serpentum colla leuauit*, 798) is a matter of some confusion for scholars. The *OLD* indicates that this phrase means that she lightened the weight which was burdening the necks of her team by alighting from the chariot.<sup>119</sup> By this same logic it could, of course, just as easily mean that she unyoked the animals (Gould and Whiteley)<sup>120</sup> or unharnessed them, as Keene supposes.<sup>121</sup> Like Anderson, I find it more likely that Ovid means that the oread "relaxed her hold on the reins and so freed the dragons' necks for a while."<sup>122</sup> If she does merely give her team its head, she remains flying in her chariot (rather than walking) for the remainder of her search for Fames (*quesitamque Famem*, 799), whom she finds not at the mountain top but in a field (*in agro*, 799). This is more sensible. The chariot was, after all, intended to move her easily over the distance to Fames (*neue viae spatium te terreat*, 794) and she seems still to be in her chariot at 813 when from afar she turns and flies high (*egit in Haemoniam*

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<sup>116</sup> As at Cicero *Tusc.* 2.52, Virgil *Aeneid* 4.367, Horace *Carmen* 1.22.7, Seneca *Med.* 43.

<sup>117</sup> Such as *Deoia*, 758.

<sup>118</sup> The Greek form also fits metrically, as Keene 77 points out.

<sup>119</sup> *OLD* s.v. *leuo* 3.

<sup>120</sup> 102.

<sup>121</sup> 77.

<sup>122</sup> 407f.

*uersis sublimis habenis*) in her return to Thessaly. In addition, the nymph's choice to remain cautiously in her chariot helps to convey her alarm at the ghastly appearance of Fames. The nymph's understandable reluctance to approach Fames at 809f. or to remain in her presence for very long (810) has a similar effect. Following lines 809 and 810 Ovid repeats himself, saying that although the oread remains at some distance and does not tarry long, she feels the effects of hunger. Summers condemns this kind of repetition as "worse than wearisome" and claims that it "implies doubt of the reader's intelligence."<sup>123</sup> It does no such thing. Rather, reiteration emphasizes the awesome power of the goddess and shows the degree to which her powers will affect Erysichthon. If she can make her influence felt under these circumstances, how much more irresistible will be her powers when she actually plants herself within Erysichthon's own body! The anaphora of *quamquam* (811) is emphatic. These details demonstrate the ability of the goddess to act over space and time and emphasize the horror of Fames' appearance and surroundings and (consequently) of Erysichthon's punishment and the formidable power of Ceres to punish. They are, of course, also comic.

Regardless, it is clear that the mountain nymph locates Fames and finds her and her surroundings entirely physically unappealing. The goddess is first spotted at 799 *lapidoso...in agro*. The field is stony and therefore must be unfit for the plough or for agriculture generally. In a display of wit, Ovid has Fames, feeling hungry herself, scrounging for fodder. She does not use agricultural implements, but only her own nails and teeth (*unguibus...dentibus*, 800). The elegance of the line, with its careful

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<sup>123</sup> xiv. Of course, Ovid's tendency for immoderation in his poetry was noted by ancient critics too. Seneca accuses: *nescit quod bene cessit relinquere* at *Con.* 9.5(28).17.



arrangement of sounds, plays amusingly against the horrible inelegance of the situation it describes.<sup>124</sup> Quite aside from showing the desperation typical of a famine and the futility of harvesting efforts in such conditions, she is also showing a decidedly un-Roman, uncivilized lack of sophistication, which is quite in keeping with the Roman view of Scythia. Her personal appearance also lacks refinement (to say the least).<sup>125</sup> Her hair is messy (*hirtus*, 801), her face pale (*pallor in ore*, 801) and her eyes sunken (*caua lumina*, 801). Fames is not only unattractive, she also realistically embodies some of the symptoms associated with a starvation diet, such as sore throat (802), rough skin (803), prominent pelvic bones (804), and emaciation (*macies*, 807), as well as the sunken eyes (801) and pallor (801) already mentioned.<sup>126</sup> In all, Fames' appearance, like her nature, is in stark contrast to the description of Ceres (*pulcherrima*, 780).

There are also aspects of her description which are clearly hyperbole, not realism. Ovid humorously describes her belly as a mere place for a belly (*uentris erat pro uentre locus*, 805).<sup>127</sup> This is obviously exaggeration for comic effect. Moreover, the stomach typically becomes distended in cases of severe malnutrition.<sup>128</sup> That her breasts seem to be hanging unsupported and are connected directly to her ribs (since she is so skinny), is

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<sup>124</sup> The word order of *unguibus et...dentibus* is, according to Hollis 140, typical of Ovid.

<sup>125</sup> Anderson 408 contrasts Fames' appearance with that of Roman ladies who have time to improve their looks.

<sup>126</sup> Solodow 198 points to the way in which Ovid's description of Fames concentrates on physical appearance: "Hunger is the very image of a hungry person...The purely external, visual nature of the description stands out more clearly if we consider what is not found in it: Hunger has no inner life, no feelings or thoughts; she is considered entirely by herself, not in relation to anyone or anything else...Essence lies on the surface."

<sup>127</sup> Anderson 408 sees the wit.

<sup>128</sup> Griffin (1) 61.

likewise a comic exaggeration. The alliteration (*pendere putares*, 805)<sup>129</sup> accentuates the humor. In addition, the apostrophe is striking. A direct address in the second person (805) helps to draw attention to the fact that this description is embedded in an act of narrating. As Gerald Prince has pointed out,<sup>130</sup> reference to an addressee constitutes a trace of the narrator in the narrative. The presence of a 'you' suggests the presence of the 'I', the narrating self. This is then, another sign of a degree of intrusiveness and self-consciousness on the part of the narrator, Achelous. In addition, apostrophe, whether part of a narrative or not, is a rhetorical device with considerable impact. It draws in both the direct addressees, Theseus and company who are the river god's audience, and also the wider audience, whom Ovid addresses.

The hyperbole continues at 807, where Fames' emaciation enlarges her joints (*auxerat articulos macies*). Of course, Fames' leanness causes her joints merely to appear larger, not literally to grow as *auxerat* suggests for dramatic and comic effect.<sup>131</sup> The oxymoron created by *auxerat* and *macies* is more subtle than it appears. *Macies* is used, both of thinness or wasting of the human body but also of poverty or barrenness in soil and crops.<sup>132</sup> In a roundabout way both meanings apply here: (most obviously) Fames' skinniness makes her joints appear larger but (less directly) poor soil makes it so too. Similarly, the meaning of *auxerat*, which normally signifies healthy growth in living things, is perverted. Famine does not cause natural growth (such as in crops) but an

<sup>129</sup> Anderson 408 notes the alliteration and apostrophe too.

<sup>130</sup> Prince 9.

<sup>131</sup> Anderson 408 mentions the vividness of this. Gould and Whiteley 102 also explain that the joints do not actually increase in size but only seem larger relatively to her wasted flesh, as does Summers 63.

<sup>132</sup> As at Ovid *Fast.* 1.689; Col. 1.4.3; Plin. *N.H.* 18.199; Stat. *Theb.* 4.702.

abnormal protrusion of the joints on her severely emaciated body. The description of Fames' bones (*ossa arida*, 804) operates in the same way since *arida* can also be used of dry and barren soil (that is, soil which is appropriate to famine conditions).<sup>133</sup> It is also worth noting that it can describe someone who is drained of money, as Erysichthon will be once he has gobbled up his family fortune in a vain effort to satisfy his hunger (843ff.).<sup>134</sup> Similarly, *rubigine* (802) has a pointed double meaning. While it is clearly describing a foul deposit in the mouth,<sup>135</sup> it can also mean rust or a similar blight on corn, vines etc.<sup>136</sup> Thus, in addition to describing Fames' frail condition, *rubigine* also subtly underlines her association with the destruction of the food supply (she is herself suffering from a kind of blight) and also upholds the opposition Ovid is setting up between *Fames* and *Ceres*. Blight is the enemy of grain. *Situ* (802) works in a comparable way.

*Fauces* (802) is occasionally used to refer to the exterior of the throat, i.e. the neck;<sup>137</sup> but here the word's primary meaning, the throat, is surely the most appropriate. Fames' throat is sore and dry from starvation. This detail is significant. So far the description of Fames has read as a summary of what the oread saw (*uidit in agro..uellentem...*, 799f.). This point regarding her throat, however, cannot have been observable to the messenger. Thus, despite the fact that the introduction of Fames' appearance is initially from the perceptual point of view of a given character with Fames'

<sup>133</sup> OLD s.v. *aridus* 2 (d) and 4 and TLL II.565.31f.

<sup>134</sup> As at Mart. *Epigrams* 10.87.5.

<sup>135</sup> Such as tartar, sores etc. at Ov. *Ars* 1.515 and *Met.* 2.776.

<sup>136</sup> Hollis 141 also sees the double meaning of *rubigine* here.

<sup>137</sup> Cels. 3.22.9, Pliny *N.H.* 31.101, Juv. 8.207, Suet. *Jul.* 62.

specific spatial orientation (*in agro*, 799), after *fauces* it is clear that the description is slipping into a more unrestricted, unsituated point of view. Similarly, just as Fames' sore throat is not visible to the oread, her hard skin (*dura cutis*, 803)<sup>138</sup> cannot be felt from the oread's distance. The audience is no longer seeing Fames as the oread saw her. Rather, the narrator is presenting not only her external physical appearance but also the unseen elements of her body which are manifestations of her role in the narrative. In this way the literary depiction of Fames operates at a level beyond the temporal and spatial constraints of the narrative. Lines 801 – 808 are not then, exclusively tied to the viewpoint, character or experience of the oread. This feeling is further enhanced by the directness and independence of the grammar of this section of the description. At 801 Fames' person and behavior go from being both a grammatical and figurative object of a particular character's attention (*quaesitamque Famem...uidit...uellentem...*) to being a grammatical and figurative subject, quite independent of the perceptions of the oread (*hirtus erat crinis...*). In fact, the disassociation here is so effective that the return to the spatial and temporal progression of the narrative must be signaled quite explicitly in 809 (*hanc procul ut uidit...*) where the oread's perceptive position is reasserted (*uidit*) just as the spatial (*procul*) and temporal (*ut*) conditions of the narrative are reestablished.

The description of Fames' personal appearance ends with a poetic periphrasis for the *patella* (*genuumque...orbis*, 807f.). Fames' joints in general, and her knees and ankles in specific, protrude from the body. The description ends at the ankles, having

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<sup>138</sup> Gould and Whiteley 102 explain *dura* by saying that her skin was stretched tight. This makes little sense. Would not it take some corpulence for the skin to be stretched to tightness?

progressed downwards from the top of the head (*crinis*, 801), to the face and neck area (*lumina*, 801; *ore*, 801; *labra*, 802; *fauces*, 802), to the trunk (*uiscera*, 803; *lumbis*, 804; *uentris*, 805; *pectus*, 806; *spinae*, 806) and finally down the limbs (*articulos*, 807; *genuumque*, 807; *tali*, 808). The effect is an almost cinematic pan of her body which certainly adds to the dramatic appeal of the passage.<sup>139</sup> Achelous is taking his time here, intimating every detail in relation to Erysichthon's impending punishment. The description of Fames is deliberately over the top for comic effect. Ovid outdoes his source in this section and the lengthy description of Hunger will be reflected in Erysichthon's prolonged hunger.

At last, the nymph relays Ceres' message (810) and hurries back to Thessaly, here poetically called *Haemoniam* (813). The attention now (re) turns to Fames and her actions. She does what Ceres has instructed. While Ovid is explicit about the opposition of Fames and Ceres (*contraria semper / illius est operi*, 814f.), he implicitly plays up the power of Ceres by showing Fames' submissive obedience to her. The hierarchy is clear: despite her contrary interests, having been given an order (*iussam*, 816), Fames complies immediately (*protinus*, 816). She enters the bedroom of Erysichthon, *sacrilegi* (817). This very term (also in the genitive) is used of Erysichthon in the orders originally to be given to Fames at 792. That the description of Fames' actions so closely mirrors the

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<sup>139</sup> Ovid uses a similar pan in *Amores* 1.5, but of a very different female form. See Barsby 67f. for other examples of techniques familiar to modern filmmakers in *Amores* 1.5. More than a cinematic pan, this may be read as a blazon. A blazon is an itemized erotic description of the beloved's body and is an example of the male gaze dismembering and possessing the female body. Achelous' blazon functions as a comic or parodic blazon (since it is hardly a complimentary description). See Parker 126ff. on the blazon.

description of Ceres' orders also underlines Fames' earnest obedience. In addition, the adjective *sacrilegi* strengthens the perception that Erysichthon's primary crime is his disregard for the authority of the gods. Fames then wraps her two (*geminis*, 818) arms around Erysichthon. The adjective is routinely used of parts of the body which occur together in natural pairs (like eyes) and this is, of course, the primary meaning here. *Geminus*, however, is also used of composite creatures which have a double nature such as the centaur, half human and half horse or the Cecrops, half human and half serpent.<sup>140</sup> This meaning, while secondary, is suggestive of the process at work in 818 - 820. Fames will enter into Erysichthon's own body, suggesting a mini-metamorphosis into a kind of hybrid (*geminus*) creature, half Erysichthon - half Fames.<sup>141</sup> She does so first by encircling Erysichthon with her arms (*amplectitur ulnis*, 818), just as the nymphs once encircled Erysichthon's victim, the oak, with their arms, measuring out its circumference (*circuiere...ulnas*, 748f.). In this way, the punishment Ceres is exacting on Erysichthon also subtly recalls his crime and lends continuity to the narrative.

Next, Fames insinuates herself into Erysichthon via the breath (*inspirat*, 819), just as Cupid at Venus' command breaths his *occultum ignem* into Dido unawares.<sup>142</sup> The echo of Virgil is especially apt. In both cases an otherwise necessary and natural desire (for food or love) is given to a victim and acts as a terrible poison. In both cases the 'infection' is transferred via the breath to an unaware victim. Each victim is embraced as

<sup>140</sup> *Ov.Met.* 12.449 and 2.555; *Man.* 2.552 and 4.785; *Sen.Med.* 641; *Stat.Theb.* 5.707 and *Silv.* 1.4.98.

<sup>141</sup> Anderson 407 says that when Hunger buries herself in Erysichthon she blends their two entities into one in a way that is analogous to the blending of body and earth at 608 or human being and tree at 9.362. He does not, however, comment on *geminis* here.

<sup>142</sup> Virgil *Aeneid* 1.688.

this happens, each scene happens at night, and each time the transfer of desire is completed by a lesser deity (Fames or Cupid) by order of a greater deity (Ceres or Venus). Still, being breathed upon by Cupid in Ascanius' form is considerably less objectionable than having Fames' foul lips and gaunt face anywhere nearby. The result for each of the victims (Erysichthon and Dido) is suffering and, ultimately, suicide. Erysichthon's love affair with food will be as disastrous for him as Dido's affair with Aeneas was for her.

Finally, Fames places the hunger into his veins (*peragit*, 820).<sup>143</sup> The verb is used, in the same metrical position, at 815. This repetition, far from calling for a replacement (such as *spargit*),<sup>144</sup> is typical of the narrative. Ovid also adds to the dramatic, action-packed feeling by making the final lines of this section (814 - 822) one long sentence, with polysyndeton.

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<sup>143</sup> Here I deviate from Tarrant's 2004 *OCT* in reading *peragit* instead of *spargit*.

<sup>144</sup> As Tarrant and Heinsius prefer although, as Anderson 409 notes, it comes only from a few late MSS.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE PUNISHMENT

### The Onset of Hunger 8.823 - 842

Having performed her duty, Fames quits Erysichthon's bedroom and the fertile world (*fecundum deserit orbem*, 821) which is Ceres' domain,<sup>145</sup> and returns to her usual poverty-stricken haunts. Erysichthon, however, remains asleep in his bed. The poetic description of his slumber (823f.) seems lovely for the ugly situation it describes. His sleep itself is expressly described as tranquil (*lenis* is commonly used of quiet, restful sleep),<sup>146</sup> and by a transferred epithet sleep's very wings are peaceful (*placidis...pennis*, 823). The personification of winged Sleep is familiar in both Greek and Latin poetry,<sup>147</sup> but here Ovid adds the pleasant detail that Sleep soothes the sleeper (*mulcebat*, 824) with his wings.<sup>148</sup> Erysichthon's repose, however, hardly seems peaceful, as the juxtaposition of *mulcebat* and *petit* immediately suggests (824).<sup>149</sup> His body has already been invaded by hideous Fames and he is beginning to feel the effects of his punishment. He does not sleep soundly but dreams vividly of finding a meal (*sub imagine somni*, 824) and even shows physical manifestations of restless sleep such as movement (*mouet*, 825;

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<sup>145</sup> As Anderson 821 points out.

<sup>146</sup> Ovid himself uses it of sleep at *Fast.* 4.654. See also *OLD* s.v. *lenis* 1(b).

<sup>147</sup> Such as in Homer *Iliad* 14.231ff. where he is a bird of night; Virgil *Aeneid* 5.861 where he touches Palinurus with a branch to induce sleep; Propertius 1.3.45; Stat. *Silv.* 5.4.16; and (as Hollis 142 remarks) Callimachus *Hymn* 4.23 and earlier still in art.

<sup>148</sup> Perhaps by fanning as Anderson 409 suggests.

<sup>149</sup> Anderson 409 mentions the juxtaposition of *mulcebat* and *petit*.



*exercetque*, 826; and *deuorat*, 827, all suggest activity) and grinding of teeth (*dentemque in dente*, 825). The alliterative proximity of the words for tooth in 825 is especially vivid since it places one tooth on top of another syntactically and thus the form of the expression reflects its content.<sup>150</sup> Paradoxically, his sleep is tiring (*fatigat*, 825). All his unconscious effort is in vain. His mouth remains empty (*uana*, 825), his throat cheated (*delusum guttur*, 826) and his dinner is nothing more than thin air (*tenues...auras*, 827). The juxtaposition of *epulis* and *tenues* (827) underlines the absurdity of the situation, as does the juxtaposition of *inanis* and *edendo* at 842. This is certainly the onset of Erysichthon's excessive hunger and the beginning of a harsh punishment which will end in death. It is hardly the picture of sweet peacefulness one expects from the description of sleep at 823ff. Of course, winged sleep has been implicated in other deaths, such as the death of Palinurus at *Aeneid* 5.854f.

By 828 all calm has been driven out (*expulsa quies*) both metaphorically (that is, Erysichthon awakens) and literally (calm has been expelled alright!). From here on in, Erysichthon will enjoy nothing even close to rest. *Vero* helps to suggest this latter, literal interpretation since it means 'in reality.' Erysichthon wakes up with a mad (*furit*, 828), burning hunger (*ardor edendi*, 828). Of course, *ardor* refers to fire and fierce, burning heat as well as to eagerness and passionate desire (in this case for eating). At 829 it is not necessary to follow Heinsius' emendation of *immensa*que to *incensa*que,<sup>151</sup> though the idea that Erysichthon's stomach is also aflame with hunger (*incensa*que *uiscera*, 829)

<sup>150</sup> Homer uses a similar technique at *Iliad* 1.5 where the names of Achilles and Agamemnon also stand apart (one at the start, the other at the end of the line).

<sup>151</sup> As Anderson 409 asserts. See also Hollis 142f.

would certainly complement *ardor* (828). The idea of a burning hunger conveys something of the consumptive, uncontrolled and passionate nature of his desire. In addition, it recalls the ancient connection between Erysichthon and Αἶθων and his αἶθων λιμός.<sup>152</sup>

Erysichthon's hunger is described in vivid detail. Besides mad and burning, through a transferred epithet it is also greedy (*avidas fauces*, 829) and perhaps immense (*immensaque viscera*).<sup>153</sup> The onset of the man's starvation is clearly punitive. It is tyrannical (*regnat*, 829) and indiscriminate (he wants everything which land, sea or air can provide as 830 with its anaphora so clearly states).<sup>154</sup> Erysichthon's reaction is immediate (*nec mora*, 830), demanding (*poscit*, 831; *quaerit*, 832) and dissatisfied (*queritur*, 831). His hunger even manifests itself in inappropriate places: in the middle of a banquet before laden tables (*appositis...mensis*, 831; *inque epulis epulas quaerit*, 832)<sup>155</sup> he complains of hunger.

In a way, all this seems well in character for Erysichthon and it loosely parallels his earlier criminal behavior. His hunger now is immense as was his victim, the tree. He is now being ruled, just as he himself once ruled tyrannically over his men, ordering them to cut down the tree and killing the man who had the sense and the nerve to object. His

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<sup>152</sup> Van Tress 187 and Hollis 142 also note the connection to Aithon.

<sup>153</sup> I should point out that, in fact, the adjective *avidus* -a -um is not uncommonly applied to mouth, jaws, teeth and the like by Ovid, e.g. at Ovid *Rem.* 209; *Met.* 4.717; *Fast.* 6.145.

<sup>154</sup> The anaphora allows Ovid to link the usual triad of sea, land and air, as Anderson 410 points out.

<sup>155</sup> Bömer 260 notes that this is "eine spielerische Variation des sprichwörtlichen *in medio flumine sitire*" as found at *Met.* 9.761. Hollis 143 too recognizes this as an adaptation of a proverb which describes someone who refuses to see that he is well off.

willingness to sate (or at least attempt to sate) his stomach's demands with anything available from the three locations of earth, land and air corresponds to his indiscriminate anger and violence earlier. Remember that he had been willing to turn his violent hand against any or all of three victims: the tree, his own men, and the goddess herself. He reacts to his hunger now without delay in the same way that he failed to pause and think rationally before cutting down the tree or impetuously decapitating one of his men. Finally, his impious and hubristic reaction to the sacred tree and to Ceres was especially inappropriate given his location: a sacred grove of Ceres. His hunger now seems similarly inappropriate as he is sitting before a banquet. Even the countless torches (*innumerasque faces*) which the fire consumes at 838 remind us (with a sick chuckle) of Erysichthon's *ictibus innumeris* at 775. He was destroying wood there too!

All this however, pales in comparison to the sheer excess of the man's ingestive powers. A quantity which would satisfy cities (832) and a whole people (833) does not suffice for Erysichthon alone. The anaphora of *quodque* stresses the antithesis between the whole cities and lone Erysichthon.<sup>156</sup> As a singular entity (*uni*, 833) his voraciousness makes him a consumptive equal of entire cities and populations in much the same way that the tree's singular age, strength, and size made it equal a grove all by itself (*una nemus*, 744). At 834 the absurd paradoxes describing his hunger begin in earnest. The more Erysichthon stuffs himself the more food he wants. The word *demittit* (834) alone can refer to the action of thrusting medicine or food into the body<sup>157</sup> and, in particular, the phrase *demittit in aluum* (834) describes (rather indelicately I should think) the action of

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<sup>156</sup> Anderson 410.

<sup>157</sup> OLD s.v. *demitto* 3 (b).

stuffing food down into one's stomach. The same phrase is used by Ovid elsewhere to describe Polyphemus' eating habits: *demisit uastam Polyphemus in aluum*.<sup>158</sup> *Deuorat* (827) similarly has the connotation, not simply of eating, but of gulping down one's food.<sup>159</sup> The juxtaposition at 842 of *inanis edendo* also plays up the absurdity of his appetite.

The message is pretty clear: Erysichthon's eating is monstrous; his hunger, unnatural. It can hardly be normal to eat like Polyphemus and it is certainly against the natural order of things that eating more should cause one to hunger more. As if to play on this point, the similes which follow (835ff.) liken his unnatural condition to (of all things!) nature. In the first, Erysichthon's hunger is like the ocean which receives streams from the whole earth but is never full. That is to say, his hunger is never satiated and Erysichthon is never full. In the second simile, his hunger is like a fire which grows larger as it burns more fuel and by its increased size is able to burn more fuel at once. That is, his hunger increases as he eats and it does so exponentially. Of course, each of the similes includes words related to consumption which are appropriate either to their literal context (water/fire) or to actual eating and drinking, such as *satiatur* (836) and *ebibit* (836) in the former and *rapax* (837), *copia* (838) and *uoracior* (839) in the latter. In addition, the countless logs (*innumerasque*, 838) which the fire consumes may remind the listener of the countless blows (*ictibus innumeris*, 775) Erysichthon used to fell the tree. Anderson criticizes Ovid's use of two similes here: "To build up the picture even more, Ovid resorts to...doubling the image but thereby weakening, as often, the individual

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<sup>158</sup> *Ibis* 385.

<sup>159</sup> *OLD* s.v. *devoro* 1 (a).

significance of either one.”<sup>160</sup> This is, I think, an unfounded condemnation. Aside from the fact that fire and water are traditional examples of unquenchable consumption<sup>161</sup> and the fact that the use of antithesis is a rhetorical device, the two similes are not a simple doubling of images. They each describe a distinct aspect of Erysichthon’s hunger: the first, its insatiability and the second, its exponential growth. Finally, there are examples from Homer of double or even triple similes which often contrast in some way<sup>162</sup> and no one could accuse him of imagery without impact.

More generally, Anderson is right in identifying a certain lack of moderation in Achelous’ description of Erysichthon’s hunger, though I do not agree that this excess warrants criticism.<sup>163</sup> Rather, I consider it an effective means of showing the extent to which Achelous is enjoying Erysichthon’s undoing. He relishes Erysichthon’s repeated requests for food and his failed attempts to satisfy his hunger. It is true that he repeats himself (after all, what does the snappy phrase *cibus omnis in illo / causa cibi est* at 841f. tell us that *plusque cupit, quo plura suam demittit in aluum* at 834 does not?), but Achelous is taking pleasure in his *Schadenfreude* and laboring the point for Pirithous’ benefit.

Erysichthon’s uncontrolled eating is dehumanizing. His lips (*ora*, 840), not he, receives the foods and he is becoming nothing more than an empty place (*locus fit inanis edendo*, 842). Hunger is overcoming him and he is becoming what she already is: a void, just as Fames’ stomach was nothing more than an empty place where a stomach

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<sup>160</sup> Anderson 410.

<sup>161</sup> As Anderson 410 himself admits.

<sup>162</sup> Hollis 143.

<sup>163</sup> Anderson 409 also complains of Ovid’s overindulgence.

should have been (*erat pro uentre locus*, 805). Lest any pity should steal into the hearts of his listeners, Achelous reminds his audience that Erysichthon has earned his condition by his impiety (*Erysichthonis...profani*, 840). Lest a moment should pass without some amusement, he gives us (by clever juxtaposition and the placement of *simul*) the delightfully disgusting image of Erysichthon shoveling food past his lips at the exact same time that he uses them to ask for more (*accipiunt poscuntque simul*, 841). To add to his former crimes (like murder and sacrilege), he now lacks social graces at the table. He talks with his mouth full - how gauche.

#### Ovid and Callimachus on the Onset of Hunger

The extent to which Ovid plays up the actual transmission and onset of Erysichthon's hunger is striking. To infect him with hunger Ovid has used a dryad embassy, a discussion between Ceres and a mountain nymph, the nymph's chariot-borne quest for Fames, a long distance conference between the nymph and Fames, and Fames' own trip to Erysichthon's bedside. At 823ff. Ovid's description of Erysichthon's hungry sleep (which also does not appear in Callimachus) is not only comic but also exaggerates the hunger felt by his own Erysichthon. In Ovid he is hungry day and night. Perhaps the twilight setting of Callimachus' hymn ( "Εσπερος, 6.7) suggested evening activity to Ovid. Callimachus covers the transmission and onset of the hunger in only a few lines (63ff.) from a single speaker, who is Demeter herself. With these words (ἃ μὲν τόσσ'

εἰποῖσ', 65) Callimachus effects the transmission of hunger into Erysichthon and is free to move on immediately to the onset of hunger and its description. As I have argued, Ovid's choice to include other characters and events in the transmission of hunger is a reflection of the narrator's effect on his story's form. Achelous takes his time to build up the horror of Fames and the upcoming punishment of Erysichthon and when the hunger actually sets in it is no disappointment.

During his explanation of Erysichthon's hunger and its consequences Ovid restricts the audience's attention to Erysichthon more closely than does Callimachus. At first, Callimachus offers a brief explanation of Erysichthon's hunger (66-68), which certainly shares a number of details with Ovid's description. As in Ovid (828ff.), the onset of the hunger in Callimachus is immediate (αὐτίκα, 66) and the hunger itself is called 'burning' (λιμὸν / αἶθωνα, 66f.), a knowing nod to Erysichthon's nickname. By correlatives Callimachus adds that whatever amount Erysichthon eats, he wants that much again (ὅσσα πάσαιτο τόσων ἔχεν ἕμερος αὖτις, 68), a detail which Ovid echoes in 834 (*plusque cupit, quo plura suam demittit in aluum*) and tops with his detailed description of Erysichthon's feeding frenzy.

Following this, however, Callimachus quickly widens the scope of Erysichthon's suffering to include several other characters. He mentions the twenty servants who busy themselves with Erysichthon's food, the twelve servants for his wine (71), Dionysus (70), his parents (73), the Ormenidae (75), Polyxo, the mother of Actorion (77) and an unnamed banquet host (84) and bridegroom (85), before he returns his attention to

Erysichthon's hunger at 87.<sup>164</sup> Ovid's choice not to include other characters at the initial stages of Erysichthon's hunger allows the audience to focus exclusively on Erysichthon and his suffering. In the *Metamorphoses* Erysichthon and his punishment are foregrounded in a way which encourages Achelous' audience to see clearly the connection between Erysichthon's impiety and his own relentless suffering. This is, of course, a more direct method for Achelous to threaten Pirithous, since Pirithous can be expected to fear punishments directed at himself and his own suffering especially.

At 87, however, the focus returns briefly to Erysichthon and a description of his hunger. At this point Erysichthon's stomach is a κακὰ...γαστήρ (88), an odd phrase which Ovid may well use at 791f. when Achelous speaks of Erysichthon's *praecordia.../...scelerata*. In addition, the simile at 89f., which likens food flowing into the man like water into the sea, corresponds well to Ovid's water simile at 835f.<sup>165</sup> As in Ovid, this first simile is followed by another. In fact, it is followed by two shorter similes (91) which take up a single line. This piling up of similes in Callimachus may also help explain Ovid's choice to employ multiple similes to describe Erysichthon's hunger (despite accusations of excess). Ovid reduces the number of similes to two and applies both to Erysichthon's voracity. In addition, he makes the first simile (835ff.) more extreme (now it is rivers from all over the world which do not sate him) and makes the second another good image of insatiable voracity. With his fire simile Ovid puts a spin

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<sup>164</sup> Von Albrecht 318 notes that Callimachus' focus on the negative impact that Erysichthon's punishment has on his domestic affairs also allows Callimachus to bring out an ironic point. Instead of building a new part of his house (the banquet-hall he mentions), Erysichthon destroys his entire household.

<sup>165</sup> Hollis 143.



on the heat similes in Callimachus. Ovid's Erysichthon is more extreme, as are his similes, and his debt to Callimachus is quite clear. The first part of 89 (αἰεὶ μᾶλλον ἔδοντι) suggests so strong a connection to Ovid's *semperque locus fit inanis edendo* (842) that Hopkinson has tentatively proposed emending ἐξόλλετο (88) (an awkward verb here) to a verb which corresponds more closely to *fit inanis*.<sup>166</sup> The picture at 92f. of Erysichthon's body wasting to nothing but skin and bones (and at record speed) seems restrained next to the grotesque description of Fames, which it may have touched off in Ovid. Here, as elsewhere, Ovid has exaggerated Callimachus' version to good effect.<sup>167</sup> The unhappy (and implicit) paradox in Callimachus that Erysichthon cannot attend the very functions he most desperately desires, i.e. feasts, becomes explicit and even more absurd in Ovid. He attends the feasts and in the midst of them seeks others (832), demanding more food as he shovels what he has got past his lips (840f.).

#### Erysichthon and Mestra 8.843 - 870

By now hunger had 'thinned' (*attenuarat*, 844) both Erysichthon and his resources. The verb is aptly chosen since it may refer either to a reduction in value or

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<sup>166</sup> Hopkinson 149 (who says he owes the suggestion to Dr. J. Diggle). Hopkinson is not the only editor to argue for an emendation to Callimachus' text based on its closeness to Ovid's. For a similar argument (though about a different phrase) see Giangrande 214ff.

<sup>167</sup> Müller has commented previously on Ovid's tendency to inflate Callimachus' version and remove it from the reality of daily life and place it in the realm of fantasy with *Übersteigerungen* and paradox. Similarly, Crump 240 finds Callimachus' version more realistic with details such as the parents' excuses, eating the mule, horses and cat, and the exhausted cooks refusing to work.

amount (such as here for the diminishment of Erysichthon's wealth) or it may to refer to becoming thinner and more slender in physique (as Erysichthon himself is now doing). By contrast, Erysichthon's hunger has not diminished. It remains *inattenuata* (844), a *hapax legomenon* which Anderson claims Ovid coined to exploit the word play of the passage.<sup>168</sup> Of course, *inattenuata* is the prefix *in-* plus a past participle, related to the verb *attenuarat* which appears in 844 and this construction (of a verb followed closely by its past participle) is very typical of Ovid.<sup>169</sup>

That Erysichthon's wealth is ancestral (*patrias*, 843) reminds the reader of Erysichthon's father who plays such an important role in Callimachus' version, though he does not appear in this one.<sup>170</sup> In addition, it subtly foreshadows the familial *impietas* which Erysichthon will undertake in selling his own daughter a few line hence. The description of his hunger as *dira* (845) has a similar effect since it commonly refers to bad omens and (when personified) to the Furies,<sup>171</sup> the chthonic powers which seek retribution for wrong-doing against one's family.

The flame of Erysichthon's insatiable appetite is still active (845f.). By *flamma* (846) Ovid not only continues the fire simile of 837ff.<sup>172</sup> but also reinforces the connection between Erysichthon and Aithon through burning hunger. The adjective *implacatae* (845) is a rare word which is applied to his appetite given that the *gula* is

<sup>168</sup> Anderson 411. Hollis 143 also calls this an "Ovidian coinage."

<sup>169</sup> In this passage alone there is also *iubet* (752).../...*iussos* (753) and *dedit...dato* (796).

<sup>170</sup> Anderson 411.

<sup>171</sup> As at Virgil *Aeneid* 4.473. See OLD s.v. *dirus*, *dirae* and *Dirae*.

<sup>172</sup> As Anderson 411 points out.

often regarded as the seat of the appetite.<sup>173</sup> It is especially apt that *implacatae* appears here since when it appears in Virgil (the only other extant occurrence of the word) it refers to Charybdis, another character who endlessly sucks things (in her case, waves) into herself.<sup>174</sup> The rarity of this word combined with the novelty of *inattenuata* helps stress the singular strangeness of Erysichthon's situation. At last, all Erysichthon's fortune has been gobbled down; what was in progress at the close of 834 (*demittit in aluum*) is complete at the close of 846 (*demisso in uiscera censu*). Obviously, *censu* is standing in for the food it buys by metonymy, as Anderson points out.<sup>175</sup> Still, the idea of sending money (*censu*) down into one's gut is striking and comic.

Finally, at 847 the narrator turns his attention to the promised subject of his story: Mestra who remains Erysichthon's unnamed *filia*. She is likable from the very start. We are no sooner told that she deserves a better father (*non illo digna parente*, 847) than she becomes the literal and grammatical object of her father's unholy salesmanship (*hanc quoque uendit*, 848). The phrasing of this is brief, plain and blunt, especially when compared to the descriptions of Erysichthon's hunger which have been effective but hardly economical. Mestra makes an admirable attempt to refuse slavery (*dominum...recusat*, 848) for which dignified conduct she is given the complimentary epithet *generosa*. The double sense of the word (it can mean both noble-spirited and well-born)<sup>176</sup> makes for a pun here. She must be high-spirited because she certainly she

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<sup>173</sup> As at Cicero *Att.* 13.31.4; Sallust *Jug.* 89.7; Horace *Epistulae* 1.6.57; Pliny *N.H.* 10.37 etc.

<sup>174</sup> Virgil *Aeneid* 3.420.

<sup>175</sup> 412.

<sup>176</sup> *OLD* s.v. *generosus* 1, 2.

is not made noble by her association with her father as *generosa* might imply in other circumstances. The verb *recusat* in the final position in 848 (as it had been at 837) helps to draw an important contrast between father and daughter. Mestra is able to do what her father cannot (*non umquam alimenta recusat*, 837): she can refuse when it is appropriate. Instead, Erysichthon has become *inops* (848) and his home has presumably become like the *domos inopes* (822) to which Fames is accustomed.

At 849, without warning, the narrative changes setting. Evidently, the daughter is now on the beach (*vicina...aequora*, 840). As before, this change in location marks an important shift in the story - to Mestra and the scene on the beach. Mestra prays in typical fashion and the fact that 849 is a golden line draws attention to the importance of the prayer and its effects in the story.<sup>177</sup> She first makes the conventional gesture of entreaty in which the arms are outstretched with the hands directed toward the god who is invoked (or a cult object such as a statue associated with the invoked deity).<sup>178</sup> In this case, since Mestra invokes the sea god Neptune, she holds her palms over his realm, the sea (*suas tendens super aequora palmas*, 849). She prays aloud (*ait*, 851), not silently,<sup>179</sup> and omitting a formal invocation of the god (that is, an invocation by cult name, function, qualities etc.), she moves immediately to the prayer proper, her petition, viz. that Neptune save her from enslavement (*eripe me domino*, 850). Mestra addresses Neptune as *qui raptae praemia nobis / uirginitatis habes* (850f.). This is a *pars epica*, an argument

<sup>177</sup> On ancient prayer, its typical formulations and associated conventions see *OCD* s.v. prayer.

<sup>178</sup> As at Ennius *Ann.* 50, *manus ad caeli caerula templa tendebam lacrumans*. Versnel explains that while kneeling was not unknown, it was unusual.

<sup>179</sup> Silent and whispered prayer was reserved for offensive, erotic, magic or otherwise indecent uses: see *OCD* s.v. prayer.

which includes considerations which might persuade the deity to grant the petitioner's request.<sup>180</sup> Mestra reminds the god of his previous ill treatment of her, no doubt to stir feelings of obligation. Elsewhere Neptune grants the wishes of a woman he had raped and the tactic is successful here too (*prece non sprete*, 852).<sup>181</sup> At *Metamorphoses* 12.189ff. Neptune grants a wish to Caenis, a young woman he raped. Interestingly, she chose to become a man, named Caeneus, in order to prevent the possibility of being wronged in this way again. Having been raped by Neptune, Mestra too will undergo a sex change (into the form of a male fisherman) though she will do so to avoid being ill-treated by her father. In general, Mestra's prayer, with its somewhat formulaic elements, serves to make Mestra a more sympathetic character since it reveals that she has already been unnecessarily victimized and since it shows that she, unlike her father, is willing to approach the gods in an acceptable way. The prayer also ushers in (at last!) the section of the story that deals with Mestra's metamorphic ability. Prayer and its conventions continue to be used throughout Mestra's conversation with her master and this lends a certain continuity to the passage. Mestra's *erus* responds to her (in her fisherman's disguise) with another common prayer formula. In 857f. he uses a *quid pro quo* which balances his good wishes that she will have success at fishing (expressed in the *sic* clauses) with his demand that she disclose the girl's whereabouts (*dic ubi sit*, 861).<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> While these usually include reminders of the petitioner's previous acts of piety or previous instances of the god's willingness to help, here Mestra makes her appeal by reminding Neptune of his former crimes (not benefactions). See Homer *Iliad* 1.37ff. for an example which includes the typical elements of ancient prayer.

<sup>181</sup> Anderson 412 points to Ovid *Metamorphoses* 12.189ff. and the sense of obligation gods sometimes feel toward the women they have raped.

<sup>182</sup> Summers 64, Anderson 413 and Keene 79.

Certainly her transformation confuses the master who knows what he saw (*nam stantem in litore vidi*, 860) but must turn to the fisherman repeating himself in farcical bewilderment (860) and with exaggerated courtesy, demand an explanation. This too is responsible for some of the humor of the passage. The *dominus* addresses the fisherman Mestra with a ridiculous epic-style periphrasis. He calls the fisherman *qui pendentia paruo / aera cibo celas, moderator harundinis* (855f.) when clearly *piscator* (in fact, *piscatrix*, if he only knew) would do.<sup>183</sup> Such flowery words for someone who has tricked him (and his own slave) are comically out of place. He then offers his peculiarly detailed wishes for good fishing conditions. He not only wants the fisherman to enjoy calm seas (*sic mare compositum*, 857) (is calm water even necessary for an angler who casts his line from ashore?), but also hopes that the potential catch will be a gullible (*credulus*, 858) and insensible fish (*nullos...sentiat hamos*, 858). All this seems an unusually (and comically) complicated way to say that he hopes the fishing will go well. Moreover, it is ironic that he should be wishing that she will have gullible prey and be able to trick it (since he himself is falling prey to her deceit). Mestra too responds with careful civility, begging his pardon (*ignoscas*, 864) and offering an excuse (*in nullam lumina partem / gurgite ab hoc flexi studioque operatus inhaesi*, 865). The civility of their exchange (given that he is currently seeking to enslave her) is comic, as is the elevated, somewhat elegant, style of his approach (given that he addresses a common fisherman). What is more, the choice to turn her into a fisherman is witty and apt. By becoming an angler she becomes, in a way, what she already is - someone who is meant

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<sup>183</sup> Hollis 145 and Anderson 413.

to procure food (the fisherman for himself, Mestra for Erysichthon). She acts the part well and lures her master (like an unsuspecting fish) into her deceit before he knows what has happened (unlike the fish, he does not sense what is happening even when he is ensnared). Then, in response, at 866f. Mestra prays that the god of the sea will assist her in her craft. It is a prayer with pointedly ambiguous meaning as others have said.<sup>184</sup> Ostensibly, fishing is the *ars* she refers to (and as a sea god Neptune is a perfectly appropriate god to help) but she is also plying another *ars* sponsored by Neptune: her gift of metamorphosis.

The cleverness and good humor of the girl is impressive. Just a moment ago she had been reduced to a shabbily dressed, messy-haired commodity (*quae modo cum uili turbatis ueste capillis / litore in hoc steterat*, 859f.). It is especially amusing that the *dominus* describes her so unfavorably to her face, though he does not know he is doing so. Nevertheless, despite her disagreeable circumstances, Mestra manages to find her own amusement in being asked about herself (*et a se / se quaeri gaudens his est resecuta rogantem*, 862f. - note the witty expression which enhances the humor),<sup>185</sup> in pretending that she does not know her interlocutor (*quisquis es, ignoscas*, 864), and in constructing witty double *entendres*. She continues in this vein by vowing that no man or woman has been standing on the shore except herself (*ut nemo iamdudum litore in isto / me tamen excepto nec femina constitit ulla*, 867f.). Hollis errs in suggesting that although she

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<sup>184</sup> Keene 79; Anderson 414; Solodow 161; Hollis 146.

<sup>185</sup> Summers 64 mentions that a similar thing happens when Jupiter (who is in disguise) is called 'greater than Jove' and *sibi praeferri se gaudet* (2.430).

swears by Neptune, she lies here.<sup>186</sup> She does not. What she says is charmingly truthful even if it does succeed in deceiving her master. There has been no man or woman on the beach *except herself* since she has been both the man and the woman.<sup>187</sup> All Mestra's cleverness (her quick change act to get out of trouble and later her witty repartee) endear her to the reader and make Erysichthon's unjust treatment of the girl seem even more desperate and wicked. Ultimately, vanquished by Mestra's cunning and god-given talent for transformation, the man must turn on the spot and go away fooled (*elususque abiit*, 870) before she returns to her own body. *Elusus* is an efficient word here, as many of its possible meanings apply to the man. He has been tricked, evaded, toyed with, and his awkward questions have been disposed of adroitly by Mestra's repartee.<sup>188</sup>

#### Ovid and his sources on Erysichthon and Mestra 8.843 - 870

Here, more than anywhere else in Ovid's Erysichthon account, it is clear that Ovid diverges from Callimachus' version of events. Callimachus, who is concerned to show a younger Erysichthon who brings social disgrace and financial ruin to his class-conscious parents, does not include Erysichthon's changeable daughter.<sup>189</sup> It is worth

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<sup>186</sup> Hollis 146.

<sup>187</sup> Kenney (2) 549 also sees that the essence of the joke is that Mestra tells the "the literal truth."

<sup>188</sup> OLD s.v. *eludo* and TLL V,2.429.56f.; V,2.430.1f.; V,2.431.31f.

<sup>189</sup> Many, many scholars have noticed Callimachus' interest in the social implications of Erysichthon's situation, including Galinsky 6; Anderson 415; Hopkinson 8.



remembering, however, that the exclusion of Mestra's character from the story is probably a result of Callimachus' ingenuity. It is he, not Ovid, who deviates from other extant versions of the tale in this regard. Naturally, it is possible that Callimachus follows closely a source which similarly excludes Mestra and includes Erysichthon's parents but which is no longer extant. In the absence of any evidence for this, however, I am quite willing to believe that Callimachus too can use his sources creatively, making specific changes to the received story to suit his own narrative purposes. Callimachus may well have exerted a considerable influence on Ovid's version (though indirectly) by his own willingness to make such fundamental alterations to previous versions of the tale. In a way, when Ovid strays from Callimachus, his own primary source, he is still acting very much in the tradition of Callimachus' treatment of the Erysichthon narrative. There are, nevertheless, a couple of details which Ovid may take over from Callimachus here too. Certainly, they both show Erysichthon's family suffering for his crime. Ovid chooses to focus on the suffering of a single character (a likeable dependent daughter) for efficiency and to increase the emotional impact. Callimachus includes information on the pain felt by his entire family (his mother, wet-nurse, sisters and father) though they seem to be mostly concerned about avoiding the dual social mortifications of financial ruin and Erysichthon's anomalous behavior. The unsuccessful prayer of Triopas to Poseidon for help may have prompted Ovid to write Mestra's desperate prayer to Neptune for aid, though Mestra's prayer is successful and leads to a lively and entertaining incident.<sup>190</sup> In addition, the list of animals mentioned as food for Erysichthon at Callimachus' *Hymn*

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<sup>190</sup> Spencer 86 notes that both versions of the Erysichthon narrative include a prayer to Neptune and that only one is successful.

6.107ff. (mules, heifer, horses and cat) may have helped to suggest Ovid's list of Mestra's incarnations at 873 which also includes a cow.

The Mestra passage of Ovid's Erysichthon narrative shares a number of more significant details with the Hesiodic account of Mestra. There she is also the daughter of a hungry Erysichthon. In addition, the Mestra of the Hesiodic fragments also shape-shifts into various animals and has had a sexual relationship with Neptune (though the sequence of this is not clear). The Hesiodic fragments also mention a quarrel between Erysichthon and Sisyphus in connection with a proposed marriage to Sisyphus' son Glaucus. It seems possible then, that Erysichthon arranged Mestra's marriage to Glaucus (to collect a bride price) and that she shape-shifted her way out of that. If this is so, it may have suggested to Ovid the idea of Mestra escaping her father's undesirable arrangements. Ovid, however, has made Erysichthon go from arranging marriages for Mestra to arranging servitude to a *dominus* for her. The desperation and depravity of selling one's own daughter is not to be understated. By making Mestra such a likable character (clever, funny and deserving of a better father) Ovid highlights Erysichthon's moral and financial bankruptcy in selling her. As part of Erysichthon's more severe punishment in Ovid, he affects his own family more strongly.<sup>191</sup> Where in Callimachus Erysichthon saddens and embarrasses his family, in Ovid his hunger causes him to sell his own daughter and then use her iniquitously to swindle people out of money.

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<sup>191</sup> Spencer 87 says that Ovid "not only removes the sentimental theme of the supportive (if embarrassed) family. He replaces...[it] with the grossest example of familial dysfunction--Erysichthon's selling his own daughter to feed his gluttony."

The more detailed story of her interaction with the fisherman seems to be entirely Ovid's own and is full of his characteristic wit and tonal range. One can only point to Antoninus Liberalis' source (possibly Nicander's *Heteroeumena*) for the idea that Mestra's metamorphoses include changes of gender. He (identifying her as Hypermestra, the daughter of Aithon) mentions the detail that the girl took on a male form.

The Last Supper<sup>192</sup> 8.871 - 878

Once Mestra has escaped her master, her father realizes, like she herself did at 862 (*illa dei munus bene cedere sensit*), that she can shape-shift (*habere suam transformia corpora sensit*, 871). The rarity of the adjective *transformia* (it occurs in only one other instance at Ovid's *Fasti* 1.373 where it describes Proteus!) is notable. It might convey something of the rarity of her gift.<sup>193</sup> Although transformation is commonplace in the *Metamorphoses*, it is unusual for people to change repeatedly, especially mortals.<sup>194</sup> However, the adjective *transformis* does not take much of a stretch

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<sup>192</sup> I hope the reader will allow this pun (as I think Ovid would), though it, like most puns, is in poor taste. Both scenes do relate to the main character's death and involve the consumption of his body, even if they are very far removed from one another in tone and significance.

<sup>193</sup> Knox 40 argues just this: "the audacious formation [of *transformia*] serves no doubt to underline the special nature of Mestra."

<sup>194</sup> Fantham 22 says that this example of mortal multiple metamorphosis is a first and marks the place at which Ovid begins to explore more complex narratives. He moves from "his simpler routines into more elaborate tales varying the metamorphosis of men by gods with magical stories of multiple change."

of the imagination given the verb *transformare* (which occurs in Virgil, Ovid and elsewhere),<sup>195</sup> whatever the trouble it may have given Maximus Planudes.<sup>196</sup>

Regardless, Erysichthon is quite happy to use his daughter's abilities to his own advantage and repeatedly (*saepe*, 872) hands her over to owners (*dominis Dryopeida tradit*, 872). The patronymic *Dryopeida* reminds the audience that Erysichthon (who has been called *Dryopeius* at 751) is selling his own daughter, as does the word *parenti* in 874. In turn, she changes herself into various animals including a mare, bird, cow and buck for concealment to escape her owner each time.<sup>197</sup> Hollis' suggestion<sup>198</sup> that Mestra's transformations may have been for speed to avoid recapture rather than for disguise is uncharacteristically preposterous. Who would select the body of a cow for fleetness? Moreover, Mestra has already shown that metamorphosis can make for an immediate and artful escape without flight. The repetition of *nunc* and *modo* and the list of her animal forms in 873 emphasize her instantaneous changeability as well as the variety of her transformations. Through this process she indirectly provides food for her father (*praebebatque*, 874). This time Erysichthon himself (not just his jaws, as at 829) is called greedy (*auido*, 874). This criticism, together with the moral judgment *non iusta* (874) marks a change in the narrative's focus.<sup>199</sup> At this point the audience's attention

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<sup>195</sup> Virgil *Georgics* 4.441, *Aeneid* 7.416; Ovid *Amores* 3.12.33, *Metamorphoses* 13.654; Quint. *Inst.* 1.2.30; Hyg. *Fab.* 126.6.

<sup>196</sup> The phrase *transformia corpora*, according to Hollis 146, "utterly defeated" Planudes.

<sup>197</sup> Simpson 348 notes that this use of metamorphosis, for "delightful deliverance", is a first in the poem.

<sup>198</sup> Hollis 147.

<sup>199</sup> Anderson 414 mentions *non iusta* as a moral term which diverts attention from Mestra. Solodow 162, however, thinks that Ovid creates an expectation of a moral in the Erysichthon narrative and then disappoints it.

shifts from Mestra back to Erysichthon and the increasingly devastating effects of his condition. Erysichthon's hunger is an evil force (*uis...mali*, 875) and a grave illness (*gravi...morbo*, 876) which (through his consumption) consumes every available resource (*consumpserat omnem / materiam*, 875f.). The meaning of *omnem materiam* here is amusingly ambiguous. It may refer specifically to all the food that Mestra had provided in 872ff. Secondly, it may refer to Erysichthon having every kind of food, as the meanings of *omnis* allows and line 830 suggests.<sup>200</sup> In this case, the *noua pabula* he will eat in a feeding frenzy is his own flesh. Finally, and most ridiculously, this may be comic hyperbole which suggests that Erysichthon has eaten up all the food in the world and so will turn on himself.

At 876 I deviate from the text of Tarrant in reading *dederatque gravi noua pabula morbo* instead of Tarrant's *deerantque gravi noua pabula morbo*, where *noua pabula* must be taken as the subject of *deerantque*.<sup>201</sup> The manuscript tradition reads *dederatque* unanimously and I remain unconvinced that this line, with its undisputed manuscript support, warrants emendation. However, the suggestion of *deerantque* is a creative one.<sup>202</sup> Anderson, who accepts the emendation, outlines the arguments against *dederatque*.<sup>203</sup> Firstly, he is bothered by the fact that Erysichthon's hunger 'gave' nothing but instead consumed everything, as 875 clearly states. This apparent contradiction, however, is hardly out of line with the numerous other paradoxical

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<sup>200</sup> OLD s.v. *omnis* 6 (b).

<sup>201</sup> Hollis 147 also reads *dederatque* instead of *deerantque* and his comments have influenced my discussion here.

<sup>202</sup> Burmann first proposed *deerantque*. Slater suggested *dedit ipse*.

<sup>203</sup> Anderson 415.

descriptions of Erysichthon's hunger in the passage. Erysichthon complains of hunger at full tables (831), seeks banquets when he is at banquets (832), the more he eats the more he wants (834), his hunger is somehow like both fire and water (835f.), his hunger only feeds his hunger (841f.) and the more he fills himself up with food, the more empty he becomes (842).<sup>204</sup> In this context, it is not at all difficult to accept the notion that his eating everything only gave new fuel (*dederatque...noua pabula*, 876) to his sick desire to eat.<sup>205</sup> Secondly, Anderson says that *vis mali* should be synonymous with *gravi morbo* and therefore the verb must have a different subject. This too, I find unconvincing. Repetition is typical of the passage (Anderson himself has complained of it previously), especially in descriptions of Erysichthon's hunger. Hollis is right: our impulse should be to "explain such difficulties rather than emending them away."<sup>206</sup>

Finally, at 877f. Erysichthon's hunger reaches its zenith. Tearing at his own flesh (*lacero*, 877) he fulfills at last Ceres' order *pestifera lacerare Fame* (784).<sup>207</sup> He embodies the ultimate in paradoxes as he eats himself to death (*minuendo corpus alebat*, 878). Erysichthon, having sacrificed his resources and his daughter's well being, is now sacrificing his own body to meet the unrelenting demands of his hunger.<sup>208</sup> His end is shocking and disgusting (as was his crime, the description of Fames and his appetite). Moreover, Erysichthon's death seems unnecessary. Since he has already discovered that

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<sup>204</sup> Ovid uses such paradoxes freely throughout the *Metamorphoses*. For example, Narcissus cries at 4.466: *inopem me copia fecit*.

<sup>205</sup> See *OLD* s.v. *pabulum* 2 (d) for this meaning of *pabulum*.

<sup>206</sup> Hollis 147.

<sup>207</sup> Anderson 415 notes the echo.

<sup>208</sup> Anderson 415 describes his autophagy as an expression of Erysichthon's alienation from his own body as he is more and more transformed into Hunger.

he can repeatedly sell Mestra his situation should be for the most part stable. Logically, he could continue to sell her and use the money to buy food indefinitely. Nevertheless, Ovid has added the autophagy - a gruesome detail which does not appear in other versions of the Erysichthon myth.<sup>209</sup> This addition to the Erysichthon narrative has several important consequences. It allows the narrator to have the total satisfaction of Erysichthon's actual death (and an unpleasant death at that) and should represent a severe enough punishment to warn Pirithous against Erysichthon-style hubris. In fact, the death of the villain at the end of a narrative offers a strangely satisfying closure for any audience. It ensures the absolute end of the tale as it has been unfolding. We can be confident that we have heard the entirety of the story - with Erysichthon dead there is no longer any reason for Mestra to continue her shape-shifting and this chapter can come to a close. In fact, the man's death is quite a convenient way to end the story. Once the alleged point of the story (Mestra's incarnations) has been handled Erysichthon's character is no longer necessary. Ovid is able to dispense with the character in a speedy (it takes two lines) and memorable manner which reflects his creative flair for the dramatic.

Erysichthon's death also allows for a certain amount of parallelism in his punishment. Just as his attendant and (more importantly) the tree, and nymph, were killed, so too is Erysichthon. The fact that his autophagy is a kind of suicide means that he even dies at the hands of the same person as his victims (his own!). Yes, Erysichthon brings on his own punishment in more ways than one. Both the death of the tree and his

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<sup>209</sup> Though it does feature in the Coan folktale.

own death are violent, shocking and grotesque. Given that Erysichthon has been so clearly portrayed as a dreadfully impious person, it is fitting that he should meet a final and equally dreadful end. Perhaps too, Ovid's thematic interest in metamorphosis plays a witty role here too. By consuming his own limbs Erysichthon also undergoes a strange kind of metamorphosis. He also changes his form. His body goes from whole but hungry to dismembered and lifeless thanks to Ceres and Hunger. This is a sickly amusing twist to a story which is expressly intended to prove the gods' ability to cause metamorphosis. Most obviously, Erysichthon's death is a final opportunity to exaggerate the extent of the man's hunger. Erysichthon's hunger, like his death is violent and unnatural. It controls him in a way that reason cannot. He is unreasonably hungry. Overwhelmed by this desire to eat, he visits his hunger's brutality even on himself, despite any logical objections. Here Erysichthon acts outside the bounds of nature and reason in a way which requires him and the audience to eschew the confines of *vraisemblance* and rationale.<sup>210</sup> We, like Erysichthon, are willing to overthrow the reign of reason to satisfy ourselves. As Erysichthon indulges himself in consuming food, we indulge ourselves in the pleasure of consuming the narrative, whatever its logical complications.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Fantham 31 puts it thus: "Ovid can only end the narrative by violating the logic of Mestra's talent" because Erysichthon's death is inconsistent with that talent.

<sup>211</sup> In fact, there are those who argue that narrative is essentially illogical. It is the consistent application of the logical fallacy which is known as *post hoc ergo propter hoc*. Consider the following two sentences:

It was raining. Anthony got soaked to the bone.

Unless we read the second as being caused by the first simply because it follows the first sentence (*post hoc ergo propter hoc*) we do not have the beginning of a narrative, only two seemingly unrelated sentences. See Prince 36ff. This is not, of course, a definition



### Ovid and Callimachus on 8.871 - 878

Both Ovid and Callimachus pathologize Erysichthon's hunger, though Hopkins overstates it in calling Ovid's 876 (*gravi nova pabula morbo*) a "translation" of Callimachus' 6.67 (μεγάλα δ' ἔστρεύγετο νούσῳ).<sup>212</sup> Ovid has also already echoed line 113 of Callimachus *Hymn* 6 (ἀλλ' ὅκα τὸν βαθὺν οἶκον ἀνεξήραναι ὁδόντες) by his similarly strange image of Erysichthon devouring his *census* (846).<sup>213</sup> Then, while Callimachus ends his version with Erysichthon reduced to begging at the crossroads (thereby exposing his family to shame), Ovid goes considerably farther.<sup>214</sup> Ovid is the only extant literary source which deals with Erysichthon's death.<sup>215</sup> Here Erysichthon's death is the fulfillment of his punishment and of Ceres' specific instructions. In others, it seems, it was punishment enough that Erysichthon live with his hunger. Ovid makes him die of it, and in an especially grotesque and absurdly comic way. This provides a real sense of finality and climax which Callimachus' version does not offer and means that the Ovidian closure has more impact. While the tone of the ending in *Hymn* 6 is reverent and

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of narrative which I would propose should be adopted exclusively. It is, however, a useful way of demonstrating that narrative does not need conform to the formal rules of logic in order to be good.

<sup>212</sup> Hopkins 137.

<sup>213</sup> Van Tress 188 noticed the same allusion independently.

<sup>214</sup> Bulloch 113 says that Callimachus' choice to set the climax of the tale at the public cross-roads is a testament to "the irresistible power not of religion but of scandal." This is, I think, understating Callimachus' portrayal of Demeter's power but his point is well taken.

<sup>215</sup> The Coan folk tale also ends with the offender's death by autophagy.

moralizing, in Ovid it is darkly comic and gloating. The autophagy, like so many details before, shows Ovid's originality in his treatment of the story and reflects his narrator's purpose.<sup>216</sup> Achelous wants to give Pirithous a good scare and the prospect of being vulnerable to this kind of punishment ought to do it. It is certainly ironic that if one of the purposes of the tale is to demonstrate the awesome power of the gods, Erysichthon has been Achelous' very effective (though unwilling) assistant.

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<sup>216</sup> Many ancient authors talk about the idea that the octopus will commit autophagy if sufficiently starved (such as due to winter-starvation). Thus, Hesiod *Op.* 524-6: ἤματι χειμερίῳ, ὅτ' ἀνοστέος ὄν πόδα τένδει ἔν τ' ἀπύρῳ οἴκῳ καὶ ἥθεσι λευγαλέοισιν. οὐδέ οἱ ἥελιος δείκνυ νομὸν ὀρμηθῆναι. Could this idea have influenced Ovid's choice to have a starving Erysichthon eat himself? As an aside, 20<sup>th</sup> century zoological studies have confirmed that autophagy is well known in octopods, see Higham 16f.

## CONCLUSION

An interest in intertextuality is well served by study of Ovid. Many of his texts (in whole or in part) have been examined in recent years and found to be deeply intertextual in important and artful ways. Ovid's use of allusion here, to Virgil and especially to Callimachus, is no exception. Fortunately, the exclusive scholarly focus on authorial intention has given way to a more pluralistic method of interpretation in which the process of reception too may be seriously studied. In this scholarly approach the author and the reader are co-creators who share the pleasure of constructing their text's meaning. Conte expresses it well in saying that the full meaning of allusion in a text is produced once "a sympathetic vibration can be set up between the poet's and the reader's memories when these are directed to a source already stored in both."<sup>217</sup> As such, I have considered it important to examine carefully the ways in which Ovid uses his sources in the Erysichthon narrative.

Others have discussed the tendency of allusive authors to signal to their readers that they are making allusions by using words related to memory and storytelling.<sup>218</sup> Thus Murray has identified Ovid's use of *dicitur* early in the Erysichthon tale (8.742) as

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<sup>217</sup> Conte 35.

<sup>218</sup> Hinds 1.

an 'Alexandrian footnote' which Ovid uses to draw the learned reader's attention to the fact that he is using Callimachus' *Hymn to Demeter*.<sup>219</sup> As I hope is now clear, Ovid uses his sources in a variety of ways. Besides making intratextual allusions (to material within his own *Metamorphoses*), he makes integrative allusions (ones in which he takes over the words, images or ideas of a source and incorporates them in his text). He also routinely uses reflective allusions, or *variatio* (in which he alters or responds to his source). Of these allusions, he often, though not always, tops Callimachus in what is frequently called 'a correction.' Finally, there are clearly occasions in the Erysichthon narrative on which he employs *contaminatio*, a conflation of multiple texts (such as Virgil's *Aeneid* and Callimachus' *Hymn* 6).

As we have seen, Ovid makes more extensive use of personification than Callimachus in his tree, the inhabitants of Scythia, Sleep, and of course in developing with enthusiasm his allegorical picture of Hunger. Similarly, he uses paradox and dark humor much more than Callimachus does and varies the tone of his work considerably. Ovid displays here, as elsewhere, his characteristic penchant for novelty. Finally, Ovid presents his narrative in a way which reflects its narrator and the narrative frame in which it is embedded.

Having provided a general overview of the narrative, its sources and placement within the *Metamorphoses* in Chapter One, I made a more specific study of the text in the following three chapters in which I also considered Ovid's use of his sources. I have endeavored throughout to examine Ovid's sources in relation to Ovid's Erysichthon (not

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<sup>219</sup> Murray 210f.

in isolation or in an attempt to prove the superiority of either Ovid or Callimachus). I have tried to address, in particular, the function of Ovid's allusions in a way that respects the artistic integrity of Ovid's design.

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