Ioannis Ziogas

The Topography of Epic Narrative in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

When a geographical name enters the world of poetry, it is assimilated into the narrative milieu of a specific context. It ceases to be merely a signifier and interacts with the plot of the narrative. This chapter focuses on the literary topography[1] of geographical names in Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* and is divided into two parts. The first part examines the narrative dynamics of ancient etymologies and the way in which the meaning of geographical names is enmeshed with the characters and plot of a tale. The second part deals with the interplay between epic narrative and geographical setting, focusing on a number of geographical displacements in the *Metamorphoses.* Far from approaching literary space and geography as a decorative backdrop against which the main action takes place, I look at space as an important player in Ovid's narrative.[2]

Geography and Etymological Wordplay

Lycaon

In the 1st Book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* Jupiter recounts his visit to Arcadia and his sojourn in Lycaon's inhospitable palace. The god travels from North to South and wanders through the main three mountains of Arcadia. The order of the mountains in Jupiter's catalogue follows his itinerary:

> *Maenala* transieram latebris horrenda ferarum
> et cum *Cyllene* gelidi pineta *Lycaei*;
> $\qquad\qquad$ (*Met.* 1.216 – 17)

> I had crossed Maenalus, dreadful for its lairs of beasts, and then Cyllene and the pine-groves of frozen Lycaeus.

Ovid's catalogue reflects two lines from the proem to Vergil's *Georgics:*

---

1 For a theoretical approach to literary space, see Baak 1983. For the 'narrativization of space', see Introduction (this volume).
2 For an analysis of the interaction between landscape and narrative in Augustan poetry, see Leach 1988, 309 – 466.

ipse nemus linquens patrium saltusque <u>*Lycaei*</u>
Pan, ouium custos, tua si tibi <u>*Maenala*</u> *curae,*
adsis

(Verg. *G.* 1.16–18)

You yourself, Pan, guardian of sheep, leaving the woods of your father and glens of Lycaeus, stand by, if you care for your Maenalus

The learning of Vergil's readers is put to the test as they are invited to identify Pan's *patrium nemus*. The question is both mythological and geographical. According to a certain tradition, Pan was the son of Mercury (Hermes) and Penelope.[3] Thus, the *patrium nemus* is on Cyllene, Mercury's mountain on which his mother, the Pleiad Maia, gave birth to him. Ovid responds to Vergil's riddle and lists Cyllene in his catalogue of Arcadian mountains.

The order of the mountains is worth noticing since Ovid's catalogue is an intertextual mirroring of Vergil's passage.[4] Three names in two lines create a triangle in the *Georgics* (Cyllene-Lycaeus/-Maenalus), which Ovid turns upside down (Maenalus/-Cyllene-Lycaeus).[5] Ovid's inversion of the Vergilian catalogue may be symbolic. The pastoral Arcadia of Vergil's poetry has been transformed into an inhospitable region inhabited by wild beasts. While in Vergil Pan tends his sheep on Maenalus, Ovid's Maenalus is *horrenda* as Jupiter visits the lairs of wild animals. Far from being an idyllic utopia, Ovid's Arcadia is not inhabited by leisured shepherds, but is rife with predators.

Commenting on *Georgics* 1.17, Servius points out an ancient etymology for Maenalus:

Maenala mons Arcadiae, dictus ἀπὸ τῶν μήλων, id est ab ouibus, quibus plenus est
(Serv. *G.* 1.17)

Maenala: mountain of Arcadia, called ἀπὸ τῶν μήλων, that is 'from sheep', with which it is full.

Vergil hints at this etymology since he introduces Pan as an *ouium custos* who cares about *Maenala*. By contrast, Ovid focuses on the lairs of wild beasts that live on Maenalus, suppressing Vergil's etymology. At the same time, the mention of feral life in Arcadia foreshadows the etymological connection of Lycaeus with

---

3 Servius Danielis (*ad loc.*) cites Pindar for this tradition.

4 The 'mirroring technique' in catalogues of proper names in Homer, Vergil, and Ovid is deftly analyzed in Kyriakidis 2007, 52–66. Kyriakidis (2007, 63) notes that "Ovid exploits the mirroring technique above and beyond what Homer and Virgil did." See also Kyriakidis (this volume).

5 Both catalogues describe a god's travel; while Jupiter crosses (*transieram*) Maenalus and Cyllene, and ends up in Lycaeus, Vergil urges Pan to leave (*linquens*) Cyllene and Lycaeus.

wolves (λύκοι).[6] Jupiter moves from Lycaeus to Lycaon's palace as the description of the Arcadian landscape provides a suitable background for the tale of Lycaon, the king who, quite appropriately, inhabits a land of wolves.[7]

The Arcadian mountains mentioned in *Metamorphoses* 1.216–17 do not merely provide Jupiter's itinerary, but anticipate central aspects of the following tale. Maenalus' etymological relation to μῆλα and Lycaeus's etymology from λύκος blend the setting of the story with the name and the metamorphosis of its protagonist. The impious king plots to kill Jupiter and finally morphs into a wolf. Lycaon flees into the countryside and attacks the flocks (*solitaeque cupidine caedis/ uertitur in pecudes, Met.* 1.234–5). Eventually, Jupiter deprives the metamorphosed Lycaon even of his bloodthirsty lust for sheep. The father of the gods has Lycaon's outrage in his mind when he causes the deluge, which confounds the boundaries between land and sea, animals and fish. In the chaos of the flood, we catch a glimpse of a wolf swimming with sheep (*nat lupus inter oues, Met.* 1.304). Thus, the narrative thread, which begins with the implicit etymologies of Maenalus and Lycaeus and continues with Lycaon attacking the flocks, is picked up in the deluge.

Geographical references are appropriated for narrative purposes in the tale of Lycaon. The wicked king slaughters, cooks, and serves a Molossian hostage (*Met.* 1.226–30). The Molossians lived in Epirus, far from Arcadia. How the Molossian stranger ended up in Lycaeus and what his name was we are never told,[8] but this information seems to be of little importance. What really matters in the tale are the connotations of the hostage's geographical epithet. Frederick Ahl points out that the Molossians were famous in antiquity for their dogs.[9] More often than not, the substantive *Molossus* means a Molossian dog rather than a Molossian man.[10] In particular, the Molossian is a large shepherd-dog, as Aristotle points out (Τὸ δ' ἐν τῇ Μολοττίᾳ γένος τῶν κυνῶν τὸ μὲν θηρευτικὸν οὐδὲν διαφέρει πρὸς τὸ παρὰ τοῖς ἄλλοις, τὸ δ' ἀκόλουθον τοῖς προβάτοις τῷ μεγέθει καὶ τῇ ἀνδρείᾳ τῇ πρὸς τὰ θηρία, Arist. *HA* 608a30). Closer to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Vergil advises shepherds to take care of fierce Molossian dogs, which

---

6 *Ferarum* and *Lycaei* are vertically juxtaposed at the end of two consecutive lines. This position may suggest the etymology of *Lycaeus* from λύκος (cf. Maltby 1993, 271; Cairns 1996, 22; O'Hara 1996a, 60).

7 The number of the lines in the *Met.* may also point to the *Georgics*. Vergil's catalogue at *G.* 1.16–17 is alluded to at *Met.* 1.216–17.

8 The sacrifice of the Molossian is probably Ovid's invention. In Apollodorus (*Bibl.* 3.98–9), the sons of Lycaon slaughter a native boy (ἕνα τῶν ἐπιχωρίων παῖδα) and then Zeus kills Lycaon and his sons with his thunderbolt (cf. *Met.* 1.230–1).

9 Ahl 1985, 70–1.

10 Dog's head appears on the coins of the Molossians. See Ahl 1985, 70.

will defend the sheep from attacks by wolves (*G.* 3.404 – 8). The Molossians are natural enemies of the wolves and Lycaon kills the Molossian before he directs his rage at the flocks.

In the tale that describes the first human metamorphosis in Ovid's epic, geographical and ethnographical names create a fascinating interplay between the landscape and the characters of the story. Before Lycaon's formal metamorphosis, we read the story of a wolf-man (Lycaon) who rules on the wolf-mountain (Lycaeus) and kills a shepherd-dog (Molossian). The etymologies and the connotations of geographical names suggest another narrative dimension to Jupiter's story of human outrage. The two mortal characters of the tale are animal-like and the setting is appropriately the mountain of wolves.

At the same time, Ovid subverts the bucolic depiction of Arcadia.[11] Theocritus' *Idylls* and Vergil's *Eclogues* take place on Maenalus and Lycaeus. Those mountains are inhabited by pasturing sheep and singing shepherds (cf. *Ecl.* 10.15 – 16). The Maenalian verses, in particular, refer to the genre of pastoral poetry (cf. *incipe Maenalios mecum, mea tibia, uersus./ Maenalus argutumque nemus pinusque loquentis/ semper habet, semper pastorum ille audit amores/ Panaque, qui primus calamos non passus inertis*, *Ecl.* 8.21 – 4). Ovid's Arcadia is far from peaceful and idyllic. As the focus shifts from the shepherds and the sheep to the wolf, Ovid's narrative transforms a landscape with a specific generic identity. This shift is signaled by the inversion of Vergil's catalogue of Arcadian mountains in the proem to the *Georgics.* Vergil invokes Pan, the patron deity of bucolic poetry, to help him sing of fields and flocks, while Ovid's Arcadia is a wilderness inhabited by bloodthirsty beasts.

Not out of Cythera

As we have seen with *Molossus*, a geographical epithet can be chosen not because the poet wants to bring up a certain place, but because the meaning of the name is significant for the narrative. Venus' epithet Cytherea, for instance, refers to Cythera, the island on which Venus was born (cf. *Cytherea Venus ab insula quae numero tantum plurali dicitur,* Serv. *A.* 1.657). However, an alternative etymological explanation of Venus' epithet has little to do with the Ionian island. In the *Etymologicum Magnum,* we read that Aphrodite is called Κυθέρεια

---

11 Segal (1969, 74 – 85) argues that Ovid systematically undermines pastoral motifs in the *Metamorphoses.* See also Segal 1999. Hinds (2002, 130 – 4) argues that Ovid perverts the combination of idyllic setting and idyllic action, which is more or less what pastoral offers, thus making his landscapes anti-pastoral.

because she conceals love affairs (παρὰ τὸ κεύθειν τὸν ἔρωτα, *EM* 543.40).[12] Ovid alludes to this etymology in the narrative of Leuconoe, which deals with the loves of the Sun. Venus avenged the Sun because he revealed her adulterous affair with Mars, and Ovid uses the epithet *Cythereia* for the first time in the *Metamorphoses*:

> *Exigit indicii memorem <u>Cythereia</u> poenam*
> *inque uices illum, <u>tectos</u> qui laesit <u>amores</u>,*
> *laedit amore pari.*
>
> <div align="right">(Met. 4.190–2)</div>
>
> Cytherea did not forget and punished the informer and in turn she harmed him, who had harmed secret loves, with an equal love.

The Sun's offense consists in revealing Venus' secret love-affair and *tectos...amores* is an etymological analysis of *Cythereia* (<Κυθέρεια>... ἢ <u>κευθόμενον</u> ἔχουσα ἐν ἑαυτῇ <u>τὸν ἔρωτα</u>, ἢ <u>κεύθουσα</u> <u>τοὺς ἔρωτας</u>, *EM* 543.40).[13] By betraying her adultery to her husband, the Sun deprives Venus of the meaning of her epithet. The tryst of the goddess who conceals love-affairs has been disclosed first by the Sun and second by Vulcan, who traps the adulterers *in flagrante* and exposes them to the gods (*Met.* 4.176–89). Far from remaining secret, Venus' affair becomes the most notorious story in the entire heaven (*haec fuit in toto notissima fabula caelo, Met.* 4.189). The widespread fame of Venus' adultery and the goddesses' embarrassing exposure before all the gods challenge Cytherea's divine power to guarantee the secrecy of lovers. The etymology of Cytherea from κεύθω and ἔρως has been annulled.

Ovid's allusion to the etymology of Cytherea is not a fleeting display of Alexandrian learning, but plays a crucial role in Leuconoe's narrative. Venus inflicts a similar love upon the Sun (*laedit amore pari, Met.* 4.192); her revenge is not merely that she makes the Sun fall for Leucothoe, but that his love for the girl will not remain secret. In the course of the tale, the Sun morphs into Eurynome, Leucothoe's mother, and urges the maids to leave him alone with the girl. His concern about the secrecy of his rape is apparent in his words (*"res" ait "<u>arcana</u> est;... thalamoque deus <u>sine teste</u>*[14] *relicto, Met.* 4.223–5). Despite his dissimulation, Cly-

---

12 For this etymology in Homer, see Tsitsibakou-Vasalos 2003.

13 For Cytherea's etymology from κεύθω, see Barchiesi 2005b, 274; for this etymology in the *Aeneid,* see Paschalis 1997, 50–3.

14 I am tempted to see in *deus sine teste* a lascivious pun on *testis* ("witness" or "testicle"). On the tendency of Latin poets to pun on *testis*, see Adams 1982, 67. In Ovid, the Sun is a god *sine teste* since he transformed himself into a woman (Eurynome). But once all witnesses are gone, he resumes his virile form and assaults Leucothoe sexually.

tie, the Sun's jilted lover, divulges the Sun's adultery and informs Leucothoe's cruel father (*uulgat adulterium diffamatamque parenti/ indicat*,[15] *Met.* 4.236 – 7). As a punishment, the father buries his daughter alive.[16] Cytherea's revenge has been completed. Since he failed to cover up his adultery, his beloved girl is literally covered under the earth. They say, Leuconoe reports, that the Sun has not seen anything more painful after Phaethon's death (*Met.* 4.245 – 6). Thus, the etymology of Cytherea from κεύθουσα τοὺς ἔρωτας is central to Leucothoe's narrative. The Sun negates the meaning of Venus' epithet and the goddess avenges his offense. She kindles love in the Sun, but does not help him keep it secret. As a result, Leucothoe, the Sun's love, is buried alive and Venus' revenge suggests a grim meaning of her epithet Cytherea. By contrast, the goddess' geographical association with the island Cythera plays no role in Leuconoe's tale.

Ovid also alludes to the etymological relation of Cytherea to κεύθω in the deification of Caesar. Reacting to the assassination of her descendant, Venus plans to hide Caesar in a cloud:

> tum <u>uero Cytherea</u> manu percussit utraque
> pectus et Aeneaden molitur <u>condere</u> nube
> <div align="center">(Met. 15.803 – 4)</div>

> Then in truth Cytherea struck her breast with both hands and strove to hide the scion of Aeneas in a cloud.

Venus' attempt to cover Caesar (*Cytherea-condere*) points to the etymology of Cytherea from κεύθω. Ovid uses *uero*, a standard etymological marker in Latin literature,[17] in order to draw our attention to this implicit etymology. Since *uero* can be read as a comment on Venus' epithet, *uero Cytherea... molitur condere* can mean "Cytherea, true to her name, plans to hide Caesar".

---

15 Clytie's malicious revelation (*indicat*, *Met.* 4.237) echoes the Sun's disclosure of Venus' adultery (*indicii*, *Met.* 4.190).

16 Interestingly, this punishment recalls the punishment for Vestal virgins who lost their virginity.

17 Maltby (1993) deals with etymologies signaled by *uerus*. He points out (Maltby 1993, 268) that 'etymology' is derived from Greek ἔτυμος ("true"), and that the Latin equivalent for ἐτυμολογία is *ueriloquium* (proposed by Cicero). See also O'Hara 1996a, 75 – 7. In *Am.* 3.9, Ovid uses *ex uero* as an etymological marker (*flebilis indignos, Elegia, solue capillos:/ a, nimis ex <u>uero</u> nunc tibi nomen erit*, *Am.* 3.9.3 – 4); Ovid alludes to the etymology of elegy from ἒ ἒ λέγειν.

Glaucus' Trip to Circe

Infatuated with Scylla who rejected him, Glaucus travels to the land of Circe in quest of a love potion. Ovid follows Vergil, who located Circe in Italy,[18] and sketches out Glaucus' voyage from Greece to Italy. Glaucus swims past Aetna and the uncultivated land of the Cyclopes, who know nothing about agriculture:

> *Iamque Giganteis iniectam faucibus Aetnen*
> *aruaque Cyclopum, quid rastra, quid usus aratri,*
> *nescia nec quidquam iunctis debentia <u>bubus</u>*
> *liquerat <u>Euboicus</u> tumidarum cultor aquarum;*
> *liquerat et <u>Zanclen</u> aduersaque moenia <u>Regi</u>*
> <u>*nauifragum*</u>*que fretum, gemino quod litore pressum*
> *Ausoniae Siculaeque tenet confinia terrae.*
> <div align="right">(Met. 14.1–7)</div>

And now the Euboean dweller of swollen waters had left behind Aetna, heaped upon the Giant's throat, and the Cyclopes' fields, that know nothing of the plow's use or the harrow, and owe no debt to yoked oxen; and he had left behind Zancle and the walls of Rhegium opposite, and the ship-wrecking strait, hemmed in twin coastlines, which marks the boundary of Sicily and Italy.

Glaucus' Greek origins contrast with the Sicilian landscape, which is inhabited by primordial monsters. The geographical epithet *Euboicus* stresses Glaucus' Greek national identity as he passes by alien and hostile lands. Strictly speaking, Glaucus is from Anthedon, which is not in Euboea, but lies on the east coast of Boeotia;[19] Ovid's geography might be inaccurate at this point (cf. *Euboica… Anthedone, Met.* 7.232; 13.905). The etymology of Euboea, however, is more important than geographical precision in this context. Glaucus comes from the land of oxen (Εὔβοια),[20] a geographical name sharply contrasting with the fields of the Cyclopes, which are unaware of yoked oxen.[21] Ovid's etymological nexus between *bubus-Euboicus* juxtaposes a country that owes nothing to oxen with Glau-

---

18 See Skempis (this volume).

19 Cf. Bömer 1986 *ad loc.*

20 See *EM* 389.2.

21 The framing of *Met.* 14.2 (*aruaque… aratri*) suggests an etymological connection between *arua* and *aratrum* [cf. *aruus et arationes ab arando,* Var. *L* 5.39; *aratrum quod aruit,* Var. *L* 5.135; see Maltby 1991, *s.v. aratrum, aruus*; Myers 2009, 53. See Cairns (1996, 34, 49) for this etymology in Tibullus] and thus stresses the paradox of the Cyclopes' unplowed plowlands. For the framing of a line as an etymological marker, see O'Hara 1996a, 82–6.

cus' fatherland. The characterization of Glaucus as *Euboicus... cultor*[22] further contrasts him with the Cyclopes. Thus, Glaucus moves from a civilized country to a primitive world. The geographical epithet *Euboicus* stresses the polarity between Glaucus' Greek origin and the uncultured landscapes he swims past. Ovid's hero travels through alien and uncivilized territories.

As Glaucus keeps passing over Sicilian regions, Ovid chooses to mention Zancle and Rhegium. Both names are significant in this context. According to Callimachus, Ζάγκλη derives from ζάγκλον ("reaping hook", "sickle") because the sickle with which Cronus hacked off Ouranos' genitals was found there (cf. *Aet.* fr. 43.69–71 Pf.).[23] On the one hand, the name of the Sicilian city contrasts with the land of the Cyclopes, who do not use agricultural tools, on the other, Zancle's association with Cronus' sickle alludes to the golden age, the reign of Cronus/Saturn. In this age, the Earth produced fruit on her own accord and men did not know of agriculture (cf. *Met.* 1.89–112). Framed by a world that brings back the cosmic strife that led to the reign of Cronus, Glaucus' voyage is spatial as well as temporal. The metamorphosed god from Euboea encounters a Theogonic topography in Sicily.[24]

Glaucus passes from Zancle to Rhegium, a city on the shores of the Italian peninsula, opposite to Zancle. Both Zancle and Rhegium allude to primordial ruptures of cosmogonic dimensions since the etymology of Rhegium evokes a primeval era of geographical formation. According to Aeschylus, Rhegium took its name from the earthquakes that broke Sicily from Italy (ὠνομάσθη δὲ <u>Ῥήγιον</u>..., ὥς φησιν Αἰσχύλος... ἀπορ<u>ραγῆναι</u>... ἀπὸ τῆς ἠπείρου τὴν Σικελίαν

---

22 Ovid's *cultor aquarum* interestingly recalls the Homeric formulas ἀτρύγετον πόντον and ἁλὸς ἀτρυγέτοιο. Myers (2009, 53–4) argues that the phrase *tumidarum cultor aquarum* may activate a programmatic reference to the lofty style of epic poetry, which contrasts with Glaucus' upcoming passage through the narrow straits; for *tumidus* as a literary term of inflated or grand style, cf. Cat. 95.10; Hor. *Ars* 94. In elegiac imagery, the poetic ship stays close to the shore (e.g. Ov. *Tr.* 2.329–30; Prop. 3.3.23–4; 3.9.3–4). Thus, the contrast between the high seas of epic poetry and the narrow straits of an elegiac voyage neatly transposes a literary interplay between genres into a geographical setting.

23 See O'Hara 1996a, 31, 35, 56; Sistakou 2005, 244, 333; Myers 2009, 54. Nic. fr. 21 (καί τις καὶ Ζάγκλης ἐδάη δρεπανηίδος ἄστυ); A. R. 4.982–92. See Thomas (1988 *ad G.* 2.405–7), who notes that Varro of Atax revived the debate on Zancle's etymology.

24 The Theogonic background of Sicily is further underpinned by the mention of Typhoeus, who is buried under Aetna (*Met.* 14.1). Myers (2009, 53) ingeniously suggests that *faucibus* (*Met.* 14.1) "is used of the crater of a volcano (*OLD* 3e), but here, through a sort of syllepsis, the literal and figurative senses of *fauces* merge to form a picture of an anthropomorphic volcano and a 'volcanic' monster: 'Aetna heaped upon the Giant's throat' [.]" On Typhoeus, see *Met.* 5.439–53.

ὑπὸ σεισμῶν, Aesch. fr. 402 Radt)[25]. Our source for Aeschylus' etymology is Strabo (6.1.6) and that makes it all the more likely that this aetiological and etymological interpretation was well known in the Roman world. The etymology of Rhegium is also attested in Sallust and other Roman authors.[26] Sallust calls the channel (*fretum*) Rhegium, not the city, and his etymological *aition* is similar to Aeschylus' version. In Augustan epic, Vergil refers to Sicily's separation from Italy in the *Aeneid* (3.414–19) and Ovid's Pythagoras is also aware of this version (*Met*. 15.290–2). Thus, in *Met*. 14.5–7, Ovid's reference to the strait that separates Sicily from Italy implies a topographical aetiology; the ancient geographical division of Sicily from Rhegium lies behind the current geographical formation. Ovid's Glaucus swims past Zancle and Rhegium, two names that refer to primeval geographical strife.

Rhegium is a name fraught with danger and Ovid not only alludes to the etymology of Ῥήγιον from ῥήγνυμι, but also accommodates this etymological connection to his own narrative. With *moenia Regi/ nauifragumque fretum* (*Met*. 14.5–6) Ovid forges an etymological link between *Regium* and *frangere* and thus between the city Rhegium (*moenia Regi*) and the sea Rhegium (*nauifragum fretum*). Interestingly, this is a semantic relation between two words divided (or broken) by meter as they appear at the end and the beginning of two consecutive lines. Although the association of Ῥήγιον with ῥήγνυμι was well known, Ovid's implicit aetiology of this etymology is probably his own invention. Rhegium seems to have taken its name not because of Sicily's breakage from Italy, but because it is an ominous channel that wrecks ships (*nauifragum fretum*). This new interpretation of an old etymology stresses the dangers of Glaucus' voyage as he crosses a channel linguistically bound up with causing shipwrecks. Thus, the etymology of Rhegium functions on two levels: on a diachronic level we are reminded that Glaucus enters an area of geographical instability and primordial earthquakes, while on a synchronic level Glaucus is in danger as he crosses a sea with a particularly ominous name.[27]

---

25 Cf. Bömer 1986 *ad* 15.291–2.

26 *Rhegium dicitur, Sallustius tali ex causa uocari scribit dicens Italiae olim Siciliam coniunctam fuisse, et dum esset una tellus, medium spatium aut per humilitatem obrutum est aquis, aut per angustiam scissum. et inde Ῥήγιον nominatum, quia Graece abruptum hoc nomine nuncupatur.* Sallustius, fr. 4.26, *apud* Isid. *Orig.* 13.18.3. For more examples, see Maltby 1991; Marangoni 2007 *s.v. Regium*. See also Myers 2009, 54.

27 This is far from an exhaustive analysis of etymology and geography in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. For more examples, see Michalopoulos 2001. O'Hara (1990) argues that Venus' geographical epithet *Erycina* (*Met*. 5.563) refers not only to the Sicilian setting of the narrative, in which Venus asks Cupid to shoot Dis with an arrow, but also to *ericius*, a word that can refer to an instrument of war and is thus linked to Cupid's arrows. For the etymological association of

Geographical Displacements

From Delphi to Rome

Glaucus' voyage from Greece to Italy signals the *Metamorphoses*' geographical shift from Greece to Rome. Books 14–15 include travelogues of heroes who begin their trips in Greece and end up in Italy: the Greek departure and the Italian destination of Glaucus (*Met.* 14.1–10), Myscelos (*Met.* 15.12–57), and Aesculapius (*Met.* 15.622–745) follow Ovid's little 'Aeneid' which begins in Troy, stops in Greece and concludes in Italy (*Met.* 13.623–14.608).[28] This geographical transition has been anticipated since the first books of the epic. Apollo's entry in the *Metamorphoses*, often referred to as programmatic, is the first instance of Romanization of a Greek myth. I shall now focus on the geographical polarity between Delphi and Rome in this much-discussed episode.

After the miraculous re-creation of the human race by Pyrrha and Deucalion, the Earth produces various species of animals but also new monsters (*noua monstra*, *Met.* 1.437). One of them is the Python, a chthonic snake which is killed by Apollo at the *omphalos* of the Earth. In commemoration of his first epic deed, the god founds the Pythian Games. Then the narrator informs us that the victors of the Games were crowned with oak because the laurel did not exist. Thus, the aetiology of the Pythian Games triggers a narrative that ends with the aetiology of the laurel-tree as Ovid shifts from Apollo's first epic deed to the god's first love. Apollo's unfulfilled passion ends with the metamorphosis of Daphne and his prophecy that the laurel will accompany the Roman Triumph and adorn the doorposts of Augustus. The end of the story does not bring laurels back to Delphi, as we might have expected, but displaces Apollo's sacred tree, which was closely associated with the Pythian Games[29] and the Del-

---

the Mount Haemus with αἷμα ("blood") in Vergil, Propertius, and Ovid, see Hendry 1997. Papaioannou (2007, 54) points out that in *Met.* 12.80–1 (*solamen habeto/ mortis, ab Haemonio quod sis iugulatus Achille*), *Haemonio,* followed by *iugulatus,* echoes the sound of αἷμα. Achilles is eager to slaughter Cycnus, but he will not be able to spill the blood of the invulnerable hero. Further on etymology and geography in Latin epic, see Skempis, Kyriakidis, and Bexley (this volume).

28 Cf. Wheeler 1999, 196–7; Myers 2009, 52.

29 The winners of the Pythian Games were crowned with laurels; cf. ἐν μὲν δὴ Ὀλυμπίᾳ κοτίνου τῷ νικῶντι δίδοσθαι στέφανον καὶ ἐν Δελφοῖς δάφνης, Paus. 8.48.2. Pausanias associates the Pythian laurels with Apollo's love for Daphne, who is referred to as the daughter of the river Ladon (δάφνης δὲ στέφανος ἐπὶ τῶν Πυθίων τῇ νίκῃ κατ' ἄλλο μὲν ἐμοὶ δοκεῖν ἐστιν οὐδέν, ὅτι δὲ τῆς Λάδωνος θυγατρὸς Ἀπόλλωνα ἐρασθῆναι κατέσχηκεν ἡ φήμη, Paus. 10.7.8). Ovid implicitly refutes this version.

phic oracle. As Peter Knox points out, Callimachus in his *Aetia* (fr. 86–9 Pf.) tells of the origins of the procession known as *Daphnephoria,* which brought to Delphi a sprig of laurel from the valley of Peneus.[30] Ovid specifically rejects this aetiology in the *Metamorphoses* right before the story of Daphne (*Met.* 1.448–51), which concludes by associating the laurels with Rome. The story can be read as a systematic attempt to undercut the importance of Delphi. To be sure, the triumphs and victories of the Roman Empire will overshadow the Pythian Games and the *Daphnephoria.*

As is often the case in the *Metamorphoses,* a temporal shift goes hand in hand with a geographical transition; Apollo's mythical slaying of a primordial monster in Greece is followed by the historical triumphs of Rome. The Roman agenda of Apollo comes as no surprise in the age of Augustus,[31] but we should bear in mind that the Pythian Apollo is a particularly Greek god. The Pythian Games were strictly restricted to the Greek world and in Herodotus Croesus calls the Delphic Apollo τὸν θεὸν τῶν Ἑλλήνων (Hdt. 1.90).[32] In fact, the Romanization of the Pythian Apollo is set against a geographical tension inherent in the juxtaposition of Delphi with Rome. The status of Delphi as the earth's umbilicus is well established in Greek literature (see Agathem. 1.1.2) and was well known at Rome. Interestingly, the Romans knew of this geographical view but did not acknowledge Delphi's centrality. Varro dismisses such a belief as doubly false since neither is the oracle in the middle of the world nor is the umbilicus in the middle of the human body.[33] Strabo, whose *Geography* has a Romanocentric worldview,[34] refers to the myth of the Delphi's centrality, but does not seem to subscribe to it; for Strabo, such a claim is a fiction of the past (cf. ἐνομίσθη, ἐκάλεσαν, προσπλάσαντες).[35] The Roman disbelief in Delphi's centrality is cer-

---

30 Knox 1990, 195–6. Callimachus' aetiology of the *Daphnephoria* is replaced by Ovid's aetiology of the Roman Triumph.

31 For Augustus' Apollo and Apollo in Augustan poetry, see Miller 2009.

32 For the Delphic Apollo as a particularly Greek god, see Romm 1992, 63; Romm points out that the two parts of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* proudly relate how the Greeks were chosen as the favored servants of Apollo and the founders of his shrines. See also Chappell 2006. For a tension between the Greek identity of the Delphic Apollo and the universal sway of the Roman Apollo in Vergil's *Aeneid,* see Paschalis 1986.

33 *'o sancte Apollo, qui umbilicum certum terrarum optines'. umbilicum dictum aiunt ab umbilico nostro, quod is medius locus sit terrarum, ut umbilicus in nobis; quod utrumque est falsum: neque hic locus est terrarum medius neque noster umbilicus est hominis medius*, Var. *L.* 7.17. By contrast, Cn. Manlius Vulso calls the Delphic oracle *umbilicum orbis terrarum* in Liv. 38.48.2.

34 See Clarke 1999, 307–36.

35 τῆς γὰρ Ἑλλάδος ἐν μέσῳ πώς ἐστι τῆς συμπάσης, τῆς τε ἐντὸς Ἰσθμοῦ καὶ τῆς ἐκτός, ἐνομίσθη δὲ καὶ τῆς οἰκουμένης, καὶ ἐκάλεσαν τῆς γῆς ὀμφαλόν, προσπλάσαντες καὶ μῦθον ὅν

tainly related to the remapping of the known world by the Roman Empire. The map of Greek mythology is dismissed and Roman geopolitical propaganda takes its place. The city occupies the center of the inhabited world[36] and Vitruvius describes Rome as the middle of the earth (*inter spatium totius orbis terrarum regionesque medio mundi populus Romanus possidet fines*, *De arch.* 6.1.10 – 11), adding that the temperate region allocated to the Roman people enabled the rise of their empire (*ita diuina mens ciuitatem populi Romani egregia temperataque regione conlocauit, uti orbis terrarum imperii potiretur*, *De arch.* 6.1.11). Obviously, the geographical centrality of Rome invalidates the status of the Delphic oracle as the earth's umbilicus.[37]

By relocating the Delphic laurels to Rome,[38] Ovid acknowledges the shift in the geographical equilibrium. The laurels on the Capitoline hill, the very center of a city often called *caput mundi,* signal that Rome has replaced Delphi as the new center of the world. The association of the laurels with the Triumph is also significant since this essentially Roman ceremony "amounted to a physical realization of empire and imperialism."[39] As conquered peoples from all over the world were parading on the streets of Rome, the citizens could grasp the universal centrality of the city. The power of Rome was both centrifugal and centripetal; the enslaved enemies attested to the wide ranging sway of the city, while peoples from the very edges of the earth were entering Rome. The Triumph spectacularly showed that the Romans extended themselves over the whole globe, while the inhabitants of the globe poured themselves upon the Romans.[40] Ovid's mention

---

φησι Πίνδαρος, ὅτι συμπέσοιεν ἐνταῦθα οἱ ἀετοὶ οἱ ἀφεθέντες ὑπὸ τοῦ Διός, ὁ μὲν ἀπὸ τῆς δύσεως ὁ δ' ἀπὸ τῆς ἀνατολῆς· οἱ δὲ κόρακάς φασι. δείκνυται δὲ καὶ ὀμφαλός τις ἐν τῷ ναῷ τεταινιωμένος καὶ ἐπ' αὐτῷ αἱ δύο εἰκόνες τοῦ μύθου, Str. 9.3.6.

36 For Rome as the geographical and conceptual focal point of the inhabited world, see Clarke (1999, 216 – 17, 228 – 9), who focuses on Strabo. Traiana (1990, 53) argues that Cato and Polybius defined the city as the center of the inhabited world.

37 The illusion of global centrality, the so called 'omphalos syndrome', is employed by almost every imperial power. In Rome the effect was achieved by the network of roads. The names of places they united illustrated the relations between center and periphery (see Whittaker 2004, 78).

38 Paschalis (1986) argues convincingly that the Delphic oracle is conspicuously absent from Vergil's works. In the *Aeneid,* the laurel is associated only with Asia Minor, Delos, and Italy, and the mantic tripod mainly with Delos. Thus, Vergil robs Delphi of its symbols by transferring them to Delos and Italy. Vergil replaces and decentralizes the Panhellenic authority of the Delphic oracle in an attempt to Romanize Apollo.

39 Beard 2007, 123.

40 I am paraphrasing the American Founding Father James Wilson, in an essay originally published in 1790: "it might be said, not that the Romans extended themselves over the whole

of the triumphal laurels brings up a ceremony that underpins Rome's position as the center of the world and thus deprives the Delphic oracle not only of its tree but also of its geographical significance. The Greek procession of the *Daphnephoria* gives way to the Roman Triumph.

Ovid's aetiology polemically replaces Callimachus' association of Thessalian laurels with Delphi, decentralizing Apollo's famous oracle and replacing it with the new center of the world, Rome. But there is more to it. Ovid presents the laurel as the symbol of poetic creation before the transformed nymph adorns Augustus' doorposts. The blurring of poetry and empire is a recurring motif in Augustan poetry. Vergil, for instance, imagines himself leading the Greek Muses as captives for his triumph:

> *primus ego in patriam mecum, modo uita supersit,*
> *Aonio rediens <u>deducam</u> uertice Musas;*
> (Verg. *G.* 3.10 – 11)

> I will be the first to return to my native land, provided that I live, bringing the Muses from the Aonian summit.

Scholars are always eager to remark that the verb *deduco* refers to Alexandrian poetics, but, as Miller points out, the same verb is also a technical term for leading captives in triumphal parade.[41] Likewise, Horace presents himself as a victorious general, a *triumphator*, and has the Muse Melpomene crown him with a laurel wreath. He even calls himself *princeps*, a daring term to use in Augustan Rome (<u>princeps</u> Aeolium carmen ad Italos/ <u>deduxisse</u> modos, *Carm.* 3.30.13 – 14). Ovid's epic enterprise takes part in this imperial discourse. The *Metamorphoses* is the triumphant transposition of Greek myth to Ovid's poetic empire. To put it in Feldherr's words "the poet not only mobilizes reflection on the imperial regime but creates *a new space* for the experience of power. Ovid is not just writing about the emperor; he is, in this sense, writing as emperor."[42] Interestingly, the narrative space created by Ovid pushes Delphi and Rome to the outer edges of the narrative topography and gives a fabulous tale of love and metamorphosis center stage.

Let me clarify my point. In the Apollo episode, the Roman conclusion signals an abrupt temporal and spatial transposition to Rome, a city which appropriates

---

globe, but that the inhabitants of the globe poured themselves upon the Romans." Wilson cites Francis Bacon as a source of this phrase (see Wilson 2007, 211).

41 See Miller 2009, 310 – 12. A point also made in Mynors 1990, *ad G.* 3.10 – 11.

42 Feldherr 2010, 7 (my emphasis).

the geopolitical significance of Apollo's oracle.[43] However, in the tale of Apollo, as is often the case in the *Metamorphoses*, there is a tension between surface form and true structure. On the surface, Ovid replaces a Greek *aition* with a Roman one, but the bulk of his narrative deals with Apollo's love and the metamorphosis of Daphne. The Pythian Games are mentioned briefly at the beginning and the foundation of the Delphic oracle is not mentioned at all. The Roman coda of this tale is equally brief. The Roman conclusion is usually interpreted as the culmination in Ovid's epic trip from East to West. But the narrative frame[44] with its Roman closure is not only the climax, but also the margin of Ovid's tale. The geographical polarity between Delphi and Rome is reflected in Ovid's account as the two cities are located on the fringes of the story; the center is occupied by a tale of divine passion and human metamorphosis. It is a nice touch of irony that two places which claimed to be the center of the world are relegated to the periphery of Ovid's poetic empire.

Fama at Rome

Ovid's readers will look in vain for evidence of Rome's centrality since the *Metamorphoses* tends to destabilize rather than reinforce centers. The only location whose central position is pointedly stressed is not Rome, but the House of *Fama* (*Met.* 12.39–63). The *ekphrasis* begins by locating the House of *Fama* in the midpoint of the universe (*Orbe locus medio est inter terrasque fretumque/ caelestesque plagas, triplicis confinia mundi*, *Met.* 12.39–40). This uniquely pivotal space occupied by the House of *Fama* recalls the description of Rome as the center of the world in Vitruvius' work, which deals with architecture and is thus not irrelevant to Ovid's interest in the architecture of *Fama*'s abode (cf. *inter spatium totius orbis terrarum regionesque medio mundi populus Romanus possidet fines*, *De arch.* 6.1.10–11). Once we acknowledge that the centrality of *Fama*'s domain recalls Rome's geographical position,[45] it comes as no surprise that the house

---

43 Interestingly, Bexley (2009, 461–3, 469–73) argues that in Lucan's *Pharsalia* Delphi's presence in the narrative specifically contradicts Rome's assumed centrality. For Bexley, Lucan's description of Delphi as *Hesperio tantum quantum summotus Eoo* (5.71) implies a greater degree of geographic and poetic equilibrium than Nero's Rome.

44 On framed aetiological narratives in the *Metamorphoses*, see Myers 1994, 61–94.

45 In Lucan, the deified Nero becomes the pivot of the universe and "Rome is only central by grace of Nero's position" (Bexley 2009, 460). Interestingly, the description of Nero's universal centrality recalls Ovid's House of *Fama: orbe tene medio* (*Pharsalia* 1.58) is reminiscent of *Orbe locus medio* (*Met.* 12.39; note that *orbe… medio* falls into the same metrical position in Ovid and

has a distinctly Roman architecture. Nancy Zumwalt is certainly right to point out that *atria* implies a comparison of *Fama's domus* with the house of a prominent Roman. *Atria turba tenet* (*Met*. 12.53) suggests a *turba clientum* (cf. Hor. *Ep*. 1.5.31; Juv. 7.91), who serve *Fama* as their *patrona*. This crowd is a *leue uulgus* (*Met*. 12.53) and thus similar to the characterization of the Roman mob as fickle and irresponsible in political life.[46] Some of the denizens of *Fama's* House, such as *Seditio recens* and *Susurri* (*Met*. 12.61) ring a bell familiar to Roman politics. In the world of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the unidentified murmurs (*paruae murmura uocis, Met*. 12.49; *dubioque auctore Susurri, Met*. 12.61) recall the reaction of the gods in the *concilium deorum* (cf. *confremuere omnes, Met*. 1.199; *murmura Met*. 1.206), in which Jupiter is compared with Augustus (*Met*. 1.205–6) and the gods, implicitly, with the Senate. Thus, the House of *Fama* is located at the heart of Roman politics[47] and Rome is supposedly the center of the world. *Fama's* ability to oversee the entire world and expand her sway to the edges of the earth (cf. *et tellure uidet totumque inquirit in orbem, Met*. 12.63) is reminiscent of the global power of the Roman Empire.

The *ekphrasis* of the House of *Fama* conveys the image of a circle as it starts with *orbe* (*Met*. 12.39) and closes with *in orbem* (*Met*. 12.63); the beginning focuses on the central position of her House and the end stresses *Fama's* universal expansion. A geographical center with universal dominion cannot but recall Rome and the allusions to Roman politics buttress this parallel. The interplay between *Fama's* domain and Rome is brought up at the end of Ovid's epic, where the Roman identity of the Ovidian *Fama* guarantees the expansion of his work throughout the globe. In the *sphragis*, the Roman Empire (*quaque patet domitis Romana potentia terris, Met*. 15.877) becomes the vessel through which *fama* effects a temporal and spatial metamorphosis of Ovid's life (*perque omnia saecula fama/ ... uiuam, Met*. 15.878–9). The global sway of the Roman Empire affords space for the innumerable and tendentious voices of Ovid's *fama*.

The Roman origins of Ovid's *Fama* can be further traced in the exile poetry. In *Ex Ponto* 2.1, Ovid is able to witness the Triumph of Tiberius thanks to *Fama*, who brings the news from Rome to the fringes of the empire, where Ovid is exiled

---

Lucan) and *Fama tenet* (*Met*. 12.43: Lucan's *tene* falls into the same metrical position as Ovid's *tenet*).

46 Zumwalt 1977, 211. See also Hardie 2002, 76–7; 2012, 161–2, 174–7.

47 For the politics of the *domus* of *Fama*, see also Gladhill (forthcoming). Gladhill argues that Ovid constructs the inner-dynamics of the *domus* with the imagery of Republican political action, an imagery that invites us to interpret the *domus* of *Fama* as a cosmological forum, modeled on the *forum Romanum*. *Fama's* house and the *forum* overlap the same topographical space – the one is constructed as *locus in medio orbe*, the other as locus *in media urbe*.

(*Pont*. 2.1.19 – 20). The countless peoples (*innumeras gentes, Pont*. 2.1.22) who gather at Rome to behold their leader's face stress Rome's universal dominion, while *Fama*'s trip from Rome to Tomis brings up her Romanocentric vantage point as well as her universal sway. Likewise, in *Pont*. 4.4, the personified *Fama* visits the exiled poet to announce the consular inauguration of Sextus Pompeius. She follows again the same itinerary, moving from Rome to the frontiers of the Roman Empire. In the exile poetry, *Fama* is centrally located at Rome, while her news reaches the edges of the known world.

The interplay between *Fama*'s sway, which expands from her centrally located house to the periphery, and Rome's imperial power brings up a tension between the chaotic voices of rumors and the orderly cosmos vouchsafed by the Roman Empire. Philip Hardie argues that in the *Metamorphoses* there is a contrast between the anarchical voices of *fama* and the Jovian-Augustan order.[48] Examining the political and cosmological dimensions of the *domus* of *Fama*, Bill Gladhill claims that the *ekphrasis* of *Fama*'s house deliberately refers to Chaos.[49] For Gladhill, Chaos and *Fama* share a unique cosmological relationship in the *Metamorphoses* since they are the only entities in the entire poem that can possibly exist outside the threefold division of the cosmos.[50] What is more, Gladhill argues that the *Fama* episode shares a number of important correspondences with Jupiter's *Palatia caeli* (*Met*. 1.176). In fact, the house of *Fama* is a foil for Jupiter's palace: *Fama*'s *domus* is marked by accessibility, fluidity, and perforation, while Jupiter's palace by obstruction and separation. And the *atria* of *Fama*'s *domus,* which are filled with the *turba*, the *leue uulgus*, contrast with the *atria* of Jupiter's palace, which are crowded with *nobiles*.[51] The chaotic hubbub of countless rumors has superseded the authorial voice of a Jovian-Augustan cosmos. *Fama* rules over a world subjected to Rome and thus any imperial attempt to restrain discordant and subversive voices in favor of a single narrative is undermined. Rome's dominion over the world is replaced by *Fama*'s universal power over the word.[52]

---

48 Cf. Hardie 2002, 77; 2012, 166 – 7.
49 Gladhill (forthcoming). Gladhill convincingly compares the description of Chaos (*ante mare et terras et quod tegit omnia caelum/ unus erat toto naturae uultus in orbe,/ quem dixere Chaos, Met*. 1.5 – 7) with that of the *domus* of Fama (*Orbe locus medio est inter terrasque fretumque/ caelestesque plagas, triplicis confinia mundi, Met*. 12.39 – 40).
50 Gladhill (forthcoming).
51 See Gladhill (forthcoming).
52 Cf. Hardie 2002; 2012, 165 – 8.

It has been said that the imagination of the Romans thrived in human space, not in cosmic abstractions.[53] The mindset of Ovid's Roman readers was ready to convert the personified abstraction of *Fama* into physical space and associate the hollow house with the image of Rome and her far-reaching dominion. At the same time, Rome was not only a city occupying physical space, but also an imperial idea, a city without limits and a concept without definition. If Ovid's *Fama* is an abstraction which occupies natural space, Rome is a city which was transformed into a cosmic abstraction.

But let us take a closer look at the narrative moment at which Ovid chooses to introduce the *ekphrasis* of the *domus* of *Fama*. Philip Hardie points out that the *ekphrasis* appears at a point of spatial transition from Aulis to Troy: all *Fama* actually does is to inform the Trojans that the Greek ships are coming to Troy.[54] Spatial transitions often signal a shift in the narrative of the *Metamorphoses*[55] and involve temporal transitions as well. The arrival of the Greek fleet in Troy marks a transition from myth to history since the beginning of the Trojan War was considered as the beginning of the historical era.[56] Nancy Zumwalt argues that the function of the *Fama ekphrasis* at this point is to alert the reader to the exaggerations and the fictionality of tradition at the moment when the *Metamorphoses* are about to move to the historical era.[57] Interestingly, the unreliability of *Fama*'s fictions is associated with the Romanocentric perspective of her reports.

The *ekphrasis* of the House of *Fama* involves a marked anachronism since Ovid has the resident of a distinctly Roman House inform the Trojans of the

---

53 See Whittaker 2004, 70, 84.

54 Hardie 2002, 70; 2012, 153.

55 Barchiesi (1997b, 182–3) argues that the transition from the section of the Gods to the Heroes and from the section of the Heroes to History is mediated by two brief geographical descriptions. First, the Isthmus of Corinth (*Met.* 6.419–21) joins two lands and divides two seas, a space that closes and opens a view of separate realities. Second, the Hellespont (*Met.* 11.194–6), a thin line of sea where two continents almost fuse.

56 The Trojan War is the beginning of history, according to Herodotus (1.3–4) and Thucydides (1.9–12). The Hellenistic scholar Eratosthenes (3rd. cent. BC) dated the Trojan War 408 years before the first year of the first Olympiad (i.e. 1184/3 BC), a date that became canonical. Cato the Elder, in his *Origines*, relates the foundation of Rome to the Trojan War, dating the foundation of the city 432 years after the Trojan War (D. H. *Ant. Rom.* 1.74; fr. 17 Peter). The fall of Troy was the starting point of Ennius' *Annales*. For the historical significance of Troy in Greece and Rome, see Feeney 1999, 14–18; Feeney 2007a, 81–4, 142–5.

57 Zumwalt 1977. Tissol (2002) works on a similar direction and argues that *Fama* casts doubt on Roman history and Augustan politics.

Greeks' imminent advent. Of course, it is not a coincidence that the Roman *Fama* is concerned about the Trojans:

> *Fecerat haec notum Graias cum milite forti*
> *aduentare rates, neque inexspectatus in armis*
> <u>*hostis*</u> *adest.*
>
> (*Met.* 12.64–6)

> She had made it known that the Greek ships with their strong soldiers were coming, lest the presence of the armed enemy be unexpected.

Fama reports that the enemy is coming, so that the Trojans may not be caught unaware, and Ovid employs the technique of embedded focalization:[58] for the Roman *Fama*, the Greeks are the enemy (*hostis*). This is hardly surprising, given the connections between Troy and Rome that feature prominently in the *Aeneid*. The beginning of the Trojan War is not only the beginning of history, but also the beginning of Roman history since the ancestors of the Romans appear as the enemies of the Greeks in the Homeric epics and the Epic Cycle. Ovid's *Fama* sees the war through a Roman lens as she appropriates the Greek tradition of the Epic Cycle.[59] *Fama* seems to travel from contemporary Rome to past Troy, turning the route of history upside down. The stark anachronism that has a Roman rumor inform the Trojans, the ancestors of the Romans, might cast doubt on the Roman appropriation of Greek myth.[60] The narrative of Ovid's *Fama* is overtly tendentious and includes many lies mixed with truth as the dissemination of untrustworthy tales is enabled by the far-reaching sway of the Roman Empire. Thanks to Rome, the whole world is filled with tales that have little to do with reality and this is how Ovid's readers are introduced into the section of Roman history in the *Metamorphoses*.

---

58 Embedded focalization occurs when the primary narrator-focalizer adopts the focalization of a character and the character's opinions, feelings or thoughts about an event are expressed by the primary narrator-focalizer. On the focalization of *Fama* in this passage and the way this focalization creates an interaction between past (focalization through the characters) and present (focalization through the readers), see Hardie 2012, 154.

59 For Hardie, *fama*, κλέος, refers to the chief subject and product of epic. *Orbe-orbem*, the first and the last word of the *ekphrasis*, pun on κύκλος and so refer specifically to the Epic Cycle. See Hardie 2002, 71–2; 2012, 153, 155–6.

60 Surprisingly, *Fama*'s report to the Trojans is precise and concise instead of unreliable and exaggerated as we may have expected after the *ekphrasis*.

From Troy to Thessaly

We can hear *Fama*'s Roman voice already at the beginning of the Trojan War; when Achilles is trying to wound the invulnerable Cycnus, the narrator compares his futile attempts with a bull charging at a cloth (*Met*. 12.102–4). This unmistakably Roman simile turns the readers of the *Metamorphoses* into spectators at the Roman circus.[61] The speeches of Ajax and Ulysses in the *armorum iudicium* (*Met*. 13.1–398) draw on the rhetorical declamations and recall the Roman stage.[62] Still, the Romanization of the Trojan War and the Trojan War itself are undermined by Nestor's long narrative (*Met*. 12.169–535), which focuses on the transsexual Caeneus and the Centauromachy. The beginnings of history give way to a narrative about fabulous beasts and supernatural human beings.

We have moved into the part of the *Metamorphoses* in which the primary narrator gradually recedes into the background and the narrative is taken over by the various characters of the work;[63] Nestor's longwinded speech signals the shift from the primary narrator to internal narrators. The prevalence of internal narrators, who can be compared with the numerous voices in the house of *Fama*,[64] shatters the temporal and spatial focus of the narrative. As we move from myth to history, multiple chronological and topographical displacements complicate the historical trip from Troy to Rome as fabulous narrators of varying authority and credibility decentralize the geography of Roman history.

Nestor's narrative takes up almost one third of Ovid's Trojan War. The old king of Pylos replaces the epic of the Trojan War with the feats of Caeneus and thus substitutes Thessaly for Troy.[65] This geographical shift is all the more intriguing if we take into account that Achilles is Nestor's target audience. Nestor relates an epic battle that takes place in Achilles' fatherland, which the best of the Achaeans left in quest for eternal fame.

But let us first have a look at the setting of Nestor's speech. The king of Pylos recounts his tale at Achilles' dinner party, in which the Achaean chieftains celebrate the recent victory of Achilles over Cycnus. Nestor compares the invulner-

---

61 For the epic simile as a window to Roman reality, cf. *Met*. 3.10–14; 7.106–10, with Albrecht 1981, 2331–5; von Glinski 2012, 106–7.

62 See Papaioannou 2007, 164–6. For the Romanization of Greek Mythology in the *Metamorphoses,* see Albrecht 1981; Solodow 1988, 75–89; Wheeler 1999, 194–205.

63 See Wheeler (1999, 162–3) and the statistics which he provides (Books 1–5: Primary Narrator 2280 lines; Characters 1588 lines. Books 6–10: Primary Narrator 1807 lines; Characters 2199 lines. Books 11–15: Primary Narrator 1641 lines; Characters 2480 lines).

64 Cf. Musgrove 1997.

65 For the myth of Caeneus and Thessaly, see Decourt 1998. For the geography of Troy in Ovid, see Trachsel 2007, 310–24.

able Cycnus to Caeneus, another invulnerable hero from the past, who was born a woman (*Met.* 12.169–75). Achilles is particularly eager to listen to the story of Caeneus and urges Nestor to speak (*Met.* 12.177–81). As Gianpiero Rosati notes, Achilles' curiosity is related to his youthful sojourn on Scyros, and his conceal-ment in women's clothes there.[66] Nestor reinforces this suspicion when he draws a parallel between Achilles and Caenis, by calling the girl Achilles' *popularis* (*tibi enim popularis, Achille*, *Met.* 12.191). Caenis/Caeneus is Achilles' compatriot, an epic hero (originally born a woman), who acquired epic glory on the battlefield. Yet, unlike Achilles he did not have to leave Thessaly and his feats are closely associated with his fatherland.

The issue of Achilles' unfulfilled return to Thessaly looms large in the *Iliad*. The hero has famously to choose between a long and inglorious life home and imperishable glory at Troy; it is either *kleos* without *nostos* or *nostos* without *kleos*:

> εἰ μέν κ' αὖθι μένων Τρώων πόλιν ἀμφιμάχωμαι,
> ὤλετο μέν μοι νόστος, ἀτὰρ κλέος ἄφθιτον ἔσται·
> εἰ δέ κεν οἴκαδ' ἵκωμι φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν,
> ὤλετό μοι κλέος ἐσθλόν, ἐπὶ δηρὸν δέ μοι αἰὼν
> ἔσσεται, οὐδέ κέ μ' ὦκα τέλος θανάτοιο κιχείη.
> <div align="right">(Il. 9.412–16)</div>

If I stay here and besiege the city of the Trojans then my homecoming is lost, but my re-nown will be imperishable: but if I return to my beloved fatherland, my noble renown is lost, but my life will be long and the end of death will not come to me quickly.

Of course, Achilles will die at Troy and never see his longed-for fatherland again. Interestingly, Gregory Nagy notes that the overt Iliadic contrast of κλέος ἄφθιτον with the negation of κλέος in the context of Φθίη is remarkable in view of the element φθι- contained by the place name (cf. Φθίη, *Il.* 9.395, 439; ἄφθιτον. *Il.* 9.413).[67] Achilles will trade Φθίη for κλέος ἄφθιτον since his eternal glory will deprive him of his *nostos*. By telling Achilles the story of the invulnerable hero Caeneus, Nestor effects a narrative shift from Troy to Thessaly, a return trip that Achilles will never make since he is destined to die at Troy. By contrast, Caeneus excelled in battle and gained epic renown while staying in Thessaly.

The geographical focal point guarantees Achilles' interest in Nestor's story. The narrative dynamics between narrator (Nestor) and narratee (Achilles) is fur-

---

66 See Rosati 2002, 288–9. Rosati (2002, 289 n. 53) notes that Thetis in Stat. *Achil.* 1.264 mentions Caeneus as one of the precedents to convince Achilles to don feminine garb.
67 Nagy 1999a, 184–5.

ther nuanced by Nestor's traditional fulfillment of *nostos*. Unlike Achilles, the old king of Pylos will return home after the war and manage to live a long, but not inglorious life. Note that Nestor's name is possibly etymologized from νέομαι ('to return') –[68] *nostos* is for Nestor, not for Achilles.

But let us have a closer look at Nestor's tale. The longest part of his narrative deals with the fierce battle between the Centaurs and the Lapiths. At the wedding of Pirithous and Hippodame, the intoxicated Centaur Eurytus abducts the bride and, as a result, an epic battle between the Centaurs and the Lapiths breaks out, which concludes with Caeneus' *aristeia*. Alison Keith notes that the battle between the Centaurs and the Lapiths functions as a narrative doublet of the Trojan War, which it displaces from the center to the margins of Book 12 and overshadows in length.[69] Thematically, both the Trojan War and the Centauromachy feature the violation of hospitality and the abduction of a bride. I think that the wedding of Pirithous and Hippodame further alludes to the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, mentioned earlier by Nestor (*Met.* 12.193–5). Peleus' wedding marks the beginning of the Trojan Epic Cycle since the quarrel among Athena, Hera, and Aphrodite arose there. Thus, Nestor's speech is of particular interest to Achilles since it includes a wedding reminiscent of the wedding of Achilles' parents and a hero reminiscent of Achilles. As Nestor revisits Thessaly, the heroic epic of the Trojan War is transposed into Achilles' fatherland.

Nestor begins with presenting Caenis, the most beautiful girl in Thessaly (*Thessalidum uirgo pulcherrima, Met.* 12.190), whom many suitors wanted to marry in vain. The haughty princess avoids marriage and retreats to the seashore for a solitary walk (*Met.* 12.196) – the landscape already suggests the setting of a rape and Caenis' straying from her father's house to the seashore gives Neptune the opportunity to rape her. The narrative is reminiscent of Tyro's solitary visits to the river Enipeus, which enabled Poseidon to ravish her (Hes. *CW* fr. 30.35 M-W; *Od.* 11.240–1). Within the *Metamorphoses,* Neptune attempts to rape Coroneus' daughter, while she takes a leisurely stroll on the beach (*Met.* 2.572–6). The lonesome walks of desirable maidens by the sea sexualize the landscape as the girls attract the god of the sea.[70]

This sexualization of the landscape is at odds with the main themes of epic warfare and manliness. The seduction of a beautiful maiden by a god is rather linked to the motifs of the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, in which Poseidon is second only to Zeus in his affairs with mortal women. Thus, in the supposedly

---

68 See Tsitsibakou-Vasalos 1997/8, 121–4.

69 Keith 1999, 234–5.

70 Keith (2000, 36–64) argues that Ovid and other epic poets repeatedly feminize and sexualize the landscapes in which they set male action. See also Keith 2009, 361–4; Lindheim 2010.

most Homeric section of the *Metamorphoses,* Ovid casts Nestor as a narrator of female-oriented epic poetry during a feast that celebrates manliness (cf. *Met.* 12.159 – 60). The old king returns to the Thessaly of the old days, when gods mingled with mortals, and revisits the fatherland of Achilles, his target audience, from a Hesiodic vantage point.[71]

The geographical move from Troy to Thessaly in the tale of Caenis results in a gendered and generic shift from the glorious deeds of men to the affairs of mortal women with gods. Interestingly, Robert Fowler argues that the focus of Greek genealogical poetry in its early stage was Thessaly and the Delphic Amphiktyony.[72] The centrality of Thessaly is preserved in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, which lends weight to the Thessalian stemma Deukalion-Hellen-Doros/Aiolos. Therefore, Nestor's reference to Caenis' Thessalian origin locates his tale in the heart of the *Catalogue of Women*. The king of Pylos transforms Thessaly from the homeland of the best of the Achaeans to the geographical matrix of genealogical poetry; he moves from Troy to Thessaly and from Homer to Hesiod.

But there is more to it. The tale of Caenis not only suggests the *topos* of a divine escapade, but also curiously recalls Achilles' solitary walk on the seashore and his encounter with his mother, the sea-goddess Thetis (*Il.* 1.348 ff.). From that perspective, the story of Caenis functions as a foil for the beginning of the *Iliad*. The structural and thematic parallels between the retreat of angry Achilles and the withdrawal of the proud princess are as follows: Achilles is deprived of his mistress, retreats to the seashore, encounters a sea-goddess and asks her a favor, while Caenis turns down her suitors, retreats to the seashore, is raped by the god of the sea, and asks him a favor. The feminized setting of Caenis' rape recalls and subverts the epic topography of *Iliad* 1.

The sexualization of the landscape in the story of the transsexual Caenis is brought up once more right after her metamorphosis into an invulnerable man. Satisfied with his transformation, Caeneus occupies himself with manly deeds in the Thessalian landscape:

> *munere laetus abit studiisque uirilibus aeuum*
> *exigit Atracides Peneiaque arua pererrat.*
> (*Met.* 12.208 – 9)

Pleased with this gift, Caeneus from Atrax left and spent his life in manly pursuits, roaming the Peneian plowlands.

---

71 For the importance of the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* in Nestor's narrative, see Ziogas 2013, 180 – 205.

72 See Fowler 1998, 11– 13; cf. Larson 2000; Rutherford 2005, 99 – 101, 115.

Caeneus accomplishes manly deeds on the *Peneia arua*; while *arua* is a term used as a metaphor for female genitalia,[73] the geographic epithet *Peneia* in this context sets up a lascivious pun on *penis*.[74] Caeneus is a satisfied man wandering through the Peneian plowlands and the pleasure he feels from his new sexual identity is projected upon the landscape of his fatherland.[75] Conversely, the adjective *laetus*, which describes the newly transformed Caeneus, could be naturally attributed to fertile soil or flourishing plants.[76] The vocabulary of Caeneus' transformation blends the identity of the invulnerable hero with the soil of his fatherland. Caeneus has his roots in Thessaly.

Concluding Remarks

Onomastic wordplay has received little attention from linguists. Since a proper name's primary function is to refer without signifying, etymological wordplay is considered a marginal phenomenon in modern linguistics.[77] Be that as it may, the lexical significance of a proper name plays a crucial role in literary studies. In this chapter, I have argued that the etymology of geographical names is closely associated with the narrative dynamics of the *Metamorphoses*. In some cases, the plot of a tale revolves around the etymology of a geographical epithet (e. g. Cytherea), while in others etymologies interact with the main characters of a story and transform its landscape (e. g. Lycaeus-Lycaon). The power of etymologies to metamorphose literary milieux turns the pastoral and idyllic Arcadia into a wolfish dystopia of treachery and violence.

Literary *loci* are intertwined with geographical *loca* in the construction and reconstruction of Ovid's narrative map. Ovidian geography invites the readers to an endless trip of displacement, replacement, and topographical as well as literary transformations. The much vaunted centers of the world (Delphi and Rome) are evoked only to be placed on the fringes of Ovid's narrative, while the central-

---

73 See Adams 1982, 24, 28, 84.

74 Ahl (1985, 134 – 7) suggests a pun on *penis* at *Met*. 1.452 (*Daphne PENEia*). The adjective *Peneius* is very rare: Bömer (1969 *ad* 1.452) notes that it occurs only one more time in Augustan poetry, in Verg. *G*. 4.317. The infrequency of the adjective makes the obscene pun surface more readily.

75 Note the sexual overtones of *munere laetus*. While *laetus* can describe erotic pleasure, *munus* can refer to sexual services (cf. Adams 1982, 164).

76 See *OLD*, *s.v. laetus* 1a (of plants, crops, fields etc.) flourishing, luxuriant, lush. b (of ground, soil) rich, fertile.

77 See Vallat (2006), who argues that proper names have a basis in precise linguistic facts and constitute a coherent group within Martial's onomastic system.

ity of the House of *Fama* replaces the equilibrium guaranteed by the omnipotent Roman empire; the chaotically diffused and randomly scattered power of rumors rules over the Roman world. Troy, a pivotal city in Roman history, is also marginalized by Nestor's long narrative, which takes place in Thessaly. The old king, an incarnation of the tendentious voices of *Fama*'s house, engages in a fascinating spatial and literary interplay between Troy, the city where Achilles is destined to die, and Thessaly, the land where Achilles was born.