

*PROSPICIT OCCASUS, INTERDUM RESPICIT ORTUS:*  
A METAPOETIC JOURNEY THROUGH OVID'S PHAETHON,  
*METAMORPHOSES* 1. 748-2. 400.

by

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## ABSTRACT

The question of the *Metamorphoses*' genre has largely been replaced by analyses of how the various genres react against each other within the hexameter framework of the poem.<sup>1</sup> How Ovid instructs his reader to see how he breaks down strict generic divisions within the poem is, I shall argue, explicated by the literary symbolism in the most extensive single story in the poem, that of Phaethon's destructive commandeering of the Sun's chariot (*Met.* 1. 748-2. 400).

In the Introduction, I shall make a case for undertaking a metaliterary reading of the episode. I shall then argue (Ch. II) that the ecphrastic palace of the Sun and the chariot which Phaethon is to ride embody Virgilian standards of epic (Ch. II) and Ovid's own previous prescriptions for poetry (Ch. III) which Phaethon's ride deliberately flouts. This flags Ovid's generic leap forward from his earlier poetry. I shall examine how the Phaethon narrative reacts specifically against two pieces of Ovid's previous programmatic poetry, *Am.* 2. 1 and the Daedalus and Icarus narrative from *Ars* 2, to turn the story of Phaethon into a perverse Gigantomachy (Ch. IV). I shall demonstrate how Gigantomachy can be used negatively as hubris and positively to represent artistic innovation to show that the Phaethon narrative simultaneously fulfils the promise in *Am.* 2. 1 to write a Gigantomachy and inverts its traditional attributes to assert the productive power of Ovid's mixing of genres.

References to Ovid's apology for his elegiac poetry in the *Remedia* will show how Ovid pre-empts the critical opprobrium he might expect this experimental poetry to attract, and at the same time vaunts the high quality of the result of that experimentation (Ch. V). By showing how Phaethon's catasterism into the constellation Auriga is under

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<sup>1</sup> Goldenhard & Zissos (1999b) 163, with nn. 8 & 9.

erasure, I shall demonstrate how the initial lack of confidence in the project of the *Metamorphoses*, represented by Phaethon's ultimate failure, is overturned by the contrasting fate of Hippolytus and Ovid's own super-catasterism in the *sphragis* in Book 15 as part of a growing movement throughout the poem away from written verse to the disembodied poetic voice.

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## EDITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Except where otherwise noted, all Latin text is derived from the most recent Oxford Classical Text, with the exceptions of Lucretius and Propertius, which are taken from the most recent edition in the Loeb Classical Library. Any translations are my own (except where otherwise noted). Beyond standard reference works, the following commentaries are referred to by author's surname alone:

Anderson, W. S. *Ovid Metamorphoses Books 1-5* (Norman & London 1997).

Barchiesi, A., *Ovidio Metamorfosi* Vol. 1 (Milan 2005).

Bömer, F., P. *Ovidius Naso Metamorphosen I-III* (Heidelberg 1969).

McKeown, J. C., *Ovid Amores* 3 Vols. (Liverpool 1991-7).

Moore-Blunt, J. J., *A Commentary on Ovid Metamorphoses Book II* (Uithoorn 1977).

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Unexpected but sincere thanks are, finally, due to Ted Sumpster: *where can we live but days?*

I.P.R.

*Green College, Vancouver, British Columbia.*

*1<sup>st</sup> March 2009*

## DEDICATION

FOR JEM

in memoriam

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my friend James Naylor, without whom life and Classics would have been poorer places in the past, and will be in the future.

te praesens mitem nosset, te serior aetas,  
scripta uetustatem si modo nostra ferunt.

Fancy a grown man saying hujus hujus hujus as if he were proud of it it is not english and  
do not make SENSE.

## I. INTRODUCTION: 'MAY I RETURN TO THE BEGINNING'

### *Joseph and his Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat*

With sufficient imagination and manipulation, practically any line of Latin poetry can be wilfully contorted to be given a metapoetic meaning. While there is no doubt that Latin poets engaged in the language of metapoetry, that is, using a stylized language to talk about the poetry they are writing while writing it, it is important to make a case for interpreting whole, extended passages as metapoetic.<sup>2</sup> This is especially the case given that each individual episode in the *Metamorphoses* is in itself a perfectly enjoyable story, the pleasure from reading which should be in no way diminished by the distractions of seeking out examples of the poet's cleverness simply to prove one's own.

Let us begin by justifying our search for metapoetry in Ovid's rendition of the story of Phaethon: that is to say that Ovid in some way assimilates himself, or rather, the poet of the *Metamorphoses*, with the character of Phaethon. Ovid asks the reader to make this link in 1. 775, where Clymene instructs her son Phaethon to seek out the Palace of the Sun to confirm his solar parentage with the words,

si modo fert animus, gradere et scitabere ab ipso.

*Met.* 1. 775

This inevitably recalls the very first line of the *Metamorphoses*:

in noua fert animus mutatas dicere formas

corpora;

*Met.* 1. 1-2

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<sup>2</sup> Metapoetic analyses on Ovid include Leach (1974) on ecphrases, Rosati (1983) on Narcissus and Pygmalion and Harries (1990) on Arachne. For metapoetry in Ovid in general see esp. Rosati (1979).



These are the only two occurrences of the phrase *fert animus* in the *Metamorphoses*, and they fall in the same metrical position. Commentators have been proud to show that they have seen this repetition: Bömer *ad* 775 is happy simply to write ‘I 1’. Anderson *ad* 775 attempts a more detailed interpretation, saying ‘Phaethon is invited to have the same ambition as the epic poet beginning on his demanding task’, but this analysis shies away from assimilating the character to the poet, and does not invite the reader to consider how this ‘ambition’ is implemented beyond this superficial resemblance. Barchiesi, in his note on the first instance of the phrase at 1. 1, sees the repetition at 1. 775 similarly ‘in un contesto che sottolinea il valore di impulso irrefrenabile’. Again, this comment aligns Phaethon and Ovid’s activities in terms of ambition, but does not go so far as to identify the two; rather, his chief concern is to explain how the unexpectedness of finding this prosaic phrase in such a prominent position in a poem parades Ovid’s boldness from the very start.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Ovid employs this phrase with its basic meaning of ‘exerting great mental strain’ at *Her.* 13. 85-6:

nunc fateor – uolui reuocare, animusque ferebat;

substitit auspicii lingua timore mali.

*Her.* 13. 85-6

While it will become clear below (Ch. IV. ii) that Phaethon and Ovid’s mutual boldness is a key linking factor, this would be to overlook the simple point that Ovid has taken this

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<sup>3</sup> Both Bömer and Barchiesi *ad* 1. 1 chart the phrase’s chief use in prose before Ovid to suggest ‘striving’ (e.g. Sall. *Cat.* 58. 6; *Iug.* 54. 4), and then its appearance in epistolary poetry e.g. Hor. *Epist.* 1. 14. 8-9, ...*tamen istuc mens animusque / fert et auet* (Bentley; *amat* codd.) *spatiis obstantia rumpere claustra*; Ov. *Her.* 13. 85 below. Lucan’s reprisal of the phrase at *BC* 1. 67 shows that after Ovid it had become cemented in the poetic tradition.

prosaic phrase and used it to represent his impetus for poetic activity at *Met.* 1. 1, and has subsequently applied it to the character Phaethon, asking the reader to perceive the latter as a poetic creator too.

Other factors encourage us to see the second use of the phrase as having a poetic sense like the first. Firstly, consider Ovid's other precedent for it:

fert animus propius consistere: supprime habenas,

Musa, nec admissis excutiare rotis.

*Ars* 3. 467-8

This couplet introduces Ovid's section on letter-writing as a means of communicating directly with lovers before he moves onto the next section of the poem which, in Gibson's analysis of *Ars* 3, deals with 'advanced instruction'.<sup>4</sup> On one level, the epistolary instruction he is about to give invites him to use the phrase *fert animus* precisely because it had been previously employed in epistolary poetry.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, the couplet as a whole suggests that Ovid is struggling to keep his poem 'on track', and that by 'drawing nearer' (*propius consistere*) to the subject in hand he is regaining control of his poem.<sup>6</sup> The mental effort connoted by *fert animus* is here explicitly linked with the process of poetic composition by being conjoined with an apostrophe to the Muse who is depicted, as Phaethon will be in the *Metamorphoses*, driving a chariot, which represents the path of the poetry book.

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<sup>4</sup> Gibson (2003) *ad* 467-98.

<sup>5</sup> See n. 3 above.

<sup>6</sup> Ovid's discursiveness and consequent reassertion of his control is a common feature of *Ars* 3; cf. 3. 747-8, *sed repetamus opus: mihi nudis rebus eundum est / ut tangat portus fessa carina suos*, where Ovid uses the passage of a ship instead of a chariot as a metaphor for the poem. While this maintains the front of the poet who knows what he ought to be doing, I shall argue that Phaethon represents Ovid embracing discursiveness as an organizational principle.

The 'chariot of poetry' making its passage safely from the beginning to the end of the poem is by no means Ovid's invention: in Latin poetry alone it has precedent at the start of the sixth Book of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* (6. 47, 92-5) and as the 'turning point' in the middle of Virgil's *Georgics* at 2. 541-2, where it is combined with the image of the ship of poetry making its safe course.<sup>7</sup> These didactic precedents make the image suitable for Ovid's erotic treatment of the didactic genre, and it is found frequently in the *Ars Amatoria* to plot the progression of the poem;<sup>8</sup> indeed, the successful closure of Book 3 is represented by Ovid stepping down from his chariot, which here is drawn by swans (3. 809-10). First, this pleasingly associates the ending of the poem with Venus who commissioned the book at its start (*Ars* 3. 43-56), who drives a swan-drawn chariot at, for example, Hor. *C.* 3. 28. 13-15 and *Met.* 10. 708-9. Secondly, it is used as a symbol for elegiac poetry at Propertius 3. 3. 39-40 where Calliope instructs Propertius, *contentus niueis semper uectabere cyncis, | nec te fortis equi ducet ad arma sonus.*<sup>9</sup>

Ovid, therefore, frequently uses the safe course of a chariot to represent the successful composition of an elegiac poem, and this act has been associated with the phrase *fert animus* at *Ars* 3. 467-8. When *fert animus* is found in line 1 of Book 1 of the *Metamorphoses* announcing a feat of poetic composition, and is then found again at 1. 775 prefacing a chariot ride which fulfils Ovid's fears for his Muse in *Ars* 3 that the chariot will go off course, the reader is encouraged to note that Ovid is again talking about the composition of the poem being read, and that he is representing himself in a substantially different way: the picture is of the poem going out of control, and the chariot never reaching its final destination successfully. Moreover, he has done so using a

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<sup>7</sup> See Ch. II. iv. below.

<sup>8</sup> See Ch. II. iv. below with n. 48.

<sup>9</sup> Gibson (2003) *ad* 809-12.

device which has previously represented the path of his elegiac poetry.<sup>10</sup> The precedent for this phrasing and imagery in *Ars* 3 compels the reader to investigate what Ovid is saying about his new poetry in the *Metamorphoses* in relation to his earlier works by reusing – and undoing – this motif: this will be the chief concern of this thesis.

Even without the couplet from the *Ars* to illuminate Ovid's activity, Holzberg is able to come to the same conclusion that 'it only seems logical to read the narrator's brief account of Phaethon's journey directly before the book ending as a metapoetical allusion'.<sup>11</sup> In following Lactacz' interpretation of *Met.* 1. 2-4 as 'Gods...blow a fair wind for my undertaking and guide my poem from the very beginnings of the world continuously down from the main to the harbour of my own home', he sees the nautical navigational implications predicated upon the first *fert animus* as being in alignment with Phaethon's chariot-driving predicated upon the second, seeing both, rather loosely, as being on journeys. While these two modes of transport are evidently interconnected throughout Ovid's works as symbols for the poem,<sup>12</sup> and will indeed be linked within the Phaethon narrative in the similes at *Met.* 2. 163-6 and 2. 184-6,<sup>13</sup> it seems unwise to privilege the obscure seafaring interpretation of 1. 2-4 over the various other more readily apparent meanings of *deducite carmen* simply to create stronger links between the two instances of *fert animus* than their repetition already provides.<sup>14</sup> While Holzberg cites the *Ars* 3. 467-8 example, he does not explore it.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Of course, he has, so far, only written poetry in elegiac couplets, except, one imagines, the lost tragedy *Medea*, which presumably did exist.

<sup>11</sup> Holzberg (1999) 90.

<sup>12</sup> The image of the ship as the vehicle for the poem appears persistently in Ovid, e.g. *Ars* 1. 771-2, 2.9-10, 3. 26, 99-100, 499-500, 748-9 (on which see Gibson (2003) 3-5), *Rem.* 70, 577-8, 811-12.

<sup>13</sup> Discussed at Ch. V. i below.

<sup>14</sup> The most illuminating discussion of the proem is still Kenney (1976).

<sup>15</sup> Holzberg (1999) 88-92.

If his self-referential hints were not enough, Ovid instructs the reader to look back to the beginning of the poem at the end of the first book. In the final line of Book 1, Ovid describes Phaethon embarking on his journey thus: *patriosque adit impiger ortus* (1. 779). *Ortus* here is a word exploding with multi-valency: at one level it clearly refers to the location from which his father, the sun, rises in the mornings (*OLD* s.v. 1b), as used by Clymene at *Met.* 1. 774 (*unde oritur*). At another, it refers to Phaethon's 'paternal origins', (*OLD* s.v. 5). At a third, it simply means 'the beginning' (*OLD* s.v. 3). In one way this looks forward to the 'new beginning' of Book 2, which, despite coming in the middle of an episode, commences with an ecphrasis of a building, a device employed by Virgil on two occasions to provide an opening for a new phase in his poetry, at *Geo.* 3. 1-48 and *Aen.* 6. 14-37.<sup>16</sup> By drawing attention to the 'beginning' of the next book by ending the first book with the word 'beginning', but continuing the story after the book division with an ecphrastic interruption rather than a narrative continuation, Ovid draws attention to the way in which he has deliberately divided the poem and is 'beginning again'. The significance of this 'new beginning' will be discussed further below. Inevitably, however, the word 'beginning' must point the reader back to 'the beginning', that is, of the poem, and Ovid's own embarkation on his *magnum opus*.

Following Ovid's instructions, this thesis will explore how Ovid employs the tropes of metapoetry in the prominent Phaethon story, the longest in the work at 432 lines, to display how the *Metamorphoses* marks a new beginning in his poetic career, and how, in particular, he demonstrates his departure from the model for Latin *epos*, Virgil.

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<sup>16</sup> On the notion of the ecphrasis marking a new start, despite not being the start of the story as a whole, see Brown (1986) 212.

## II. THE PHYSICAL MANIFESTATIONS OF EPIC

### II. i. THE PALACE ECPHRASIS

Book 2 begins with the ecphrasis of the palace of the Sun.<sup>17</sup> Rhode dismissed these initial eighteen lines as ‘nihil...nisi lumen quoddam orationis epicae’.<sup>18</sup> Since then, however, many successful studies have shown how the palace of the Sun acts as a normative background against which the transgressive acts of Phaethon are cast into relief. Bass notes, on the narrative level, that ‘the reliefs...depict the universe which Phaethon is soon to set ablaze,’<sup>19</sup> highlighting the repetition of *Doridaque et natas*, stable at 2. 11, in disarray at 2. 269, and the references to fish at 2. 13 and 2. 265-6 to show that the peaceful security of the scene depicted on the palace doors is undone by the conflagration which ensues from Phaethon’s flight.<sup>20</sup> Brown extends this by introducing the idea that the ecphrasis’ ‘function...is to provide an image of the Sun’s benign maintenance of universal order whereby the extent of the disorder caused by Phaethon can be gauged’.<sup>21</sup> In drawing parallels to the description of the physical creation of the world in Book 1, he notes that both Books 1 and 2 begin with a vision of a well-designed, accurately demarcated universe from the point of view of an omnipercipient creator god,

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<sup>17</sup> I am careful throughout to refer to Phaethon’s father as ‘the Sun’ or ‘Phoebus’, but not ‘Apollo’, following Ovid’s own practice in the telling of this story. See Fontenrose (1940) for detailed analysis of the relationship between Apollo and the Sun-god in Ovid, esp. 433, on the Sun never being called Apollo.

<sup>18</sup> Rhode (1929), 11, quoted at Bass (1977) 403. For other dismissals of the ecphrasis see Fraenkel (1945) 86, Galinsky (1975) 97.

<sup>19</sup> Bass (1977) 404. He adds in n. 2 that the ‘seemingly facile and redundant addition of *quod imminet orbi* (describing the sky) at 2. 7 is a further anticipation of later events, since we can take *imminet* in its more sinister sense of “threatening”.’

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Leach (1974) 141 n. 43, citing Bartholmé (1935) 74-80, on the ecphrasis’ ‘symbolic relationship to the narrative as a foreshadowing of the world that Phaethon will see in his journey and fall’. Wise (1977) 46 notes the presence of *Proteus ambiguus* at *Met.* 2. 9, but suggests that this suggests ‘a cosmic capacity for ordered flux’, which is a contradiction in terms. Rather, even Proteus, who always changes, has been rendered stable in this representation of the universe; Phaethon’s flight will release his capacity for change again in the course of destabilizing it.

<sup>21</sup> Brown (1987) 215.

whose order breaks down to confuse the divisions between land and sea (in Deucalion's flood) and land and sky (in Phaethon's ekpyrosis). Brown sees the 'idealistic conception of the universe' depicted on the palace as a 'foil to Ovid's own sense of reality' (217) and concludes that 'the formalistic tendency of art runs against the Protean nature of reality', suggesting that the episode looks forward to a work which will 'foreground the strangeness and flux of experience' (220).

This analysis certainly highlights Ovid's embracing of disorder and confusion in a repeated pattern through Books 1 and 2, but there is room to develop what sort of order and what sort of disorder are under discussion. Gildenhard and Zissos have demonstrated that the well-ordered description of the units of both linear and cyclical time balanced on either side of the Sun's throne at 2. 25-30 depict the Sun as a 'divine patriarch of time', since it is only by predictable movement of the Sun that time can be quantified.<sup>22</sup> In contrast to this temporal order, Phaethon's narrative is riddled with temporal disorder. They point out how the mechanics of the alteration to the Sun's path disrupt time when the Moon sees her brother's horses below her own at 2. 208-9 (36), and how the grief Phaethon's death creates in his father results in the eradication of the means of telling the time with the disappearance of the Sun for a day (37). By showing how bizarre it is that the Sun is eclipsed just for a day, but in the meantime (*interea* 2. 381) Phaethon's sisters have been mourning for four months (2. 344), they suggest that, at the end of the narrative, time is 'radically fragmented' (39). To their examples should be added Ovid's anticipation of the future in the episode, especially 2. 219, *nondum Oeagrius Haemus* and similarly 2. 245 *arsurusque iterum Xanthus*, which suggest that once something 'happens' in the narrative of the *Metamorphoses* as a whole, at any other point in the

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<sup>22</sup> Gildenhard & Zissos (1999a) 33; O'Hara (2007) 114-15.

poem it can be deemed to have happened. Feeney, in his discussion of time and the description of the Sun's throne, points out that this temporal regularity is relatively 'new' in the poem since the creation of the world at the beginning of Book 1, and that Phaethon's destruction threatens to cast the world backwards in time *in chaos antiquum* (2. 299).<sup>23</sup> This playing with time is part of fulfilling Ovid's own agenda to bring the poem down to his own times in line 4 of the proem: the phrase *mea tempora* implies his own personal take on 'time' as well as the times he was then living in.<sup>24</sup>

## II. ii. THE PALACE OF THE SUN AND *GEORGICS* 3

What these studies do not consider is the additional role the ecphrasis might play as a normative literary background which enshrines the standards of 'high genres' of poetry, particularly those set by Virgil.<sup>25</sup> Firstly, let us consider the most basic arc of Phaethon's story: a chariot ride starting from an ecphrastic palace and finishing in a river. This follows the same outline as Virgil's metaphorical activity for his proposed move from didactic to epic in *Georgics* 3:

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<sup>23</sup> Feeney (1999) 24-5. The other common strand of interpretation of the doors, tangential to my concerns, is that of the political reading, on which see n. 29 below.

<sup>24</sup> There is a debate as to whether Phaethon notices any of this. Phaethon's haste to get through the doors (*quo simul...uenit et intrauit...protinus ad patrios sua fert uestigia uultus*, *Met.* 2. 19-21) in contrast to Aeneas' gaze at ecphrases, e.g. at *Aen.* 1. 494-5, suggests to Herter (1958), 57 and Wise (1977) 46 that Phaethon ignores the reliefs. Leach (1974) 141 n. 43 offers a more nuanced suggestion that Phaethon's terror at the sight of the Scorpion partly stems from the misleading symmetry on the doors which represents the unrealistic divine vision of the universe. See also n. 34 below.

<sup>25</sup> I am careful here not to call these standards those of a specifically hexameter epic poem, as it will become clear that Ovid is including tragedy, a non-hexametrical but still generically 'high' form of poetry, in this category.



et uiridi in campo templum de marmore ponam  
 propter aquam, tardis ingens ubi flexibus errat  
 Mincius et tenera praetexit harundine ripas.  
 in medio mihi Caesar erit templumque tenebit:  
 ille uictor ego et Tyrio conspectus in ostro  
 centum quadriiugos agitabo ad flumina currus.

*Geo.* 3. 13-18

Virgil proposes to build a temple<sup>26</sup> and then drive chariots<sup>27</sup> to a river. That this temple is representative of epic is demonstrated by its location adjacent to a large river as opposed to a trickling Callimachean stream.<sup>28</sup> Ovid's palace of the Sun is akin to Virgil's temple of Caesar since, as Keith points out, the Sun's palace is meant to put the reader in mind of the temple of Palatine Apollo, which lay adjacent to Augustus' house on the Palatine. This is demonstrated by the dialogue between the description of the palace and Propertius' description of the temple which highlights the chariot of the Sun upon its roof: compare Prop. 2. 31. 11 *Solis erat supra fastigia currus* with *Met.* 2. 1-3 *Solis erat...fastigia*.<sup>29</sup> Phaethon's chariot ride is evidently not as glorious as Virgil intends his own to be, but crucially both take their starting points as ephrastic buildings and end at

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<sup>26</sup> Thomas (1983) calls this a 'metaphorical construct standing for a future poetic project of epic proportions' (177-8) but in (1988) *ad Geo.* 3. 13 points out that the idea of temples as representative of types of poetry may have been Callimachean in origin, as *Aet. inc. lib. fr.* 118 Pf. 'seems to describe two temples, one well-finished, the other not, in terms elsewhere used to describe care, or lack of it, in the writing of poetry.' The *Geo.* ephrasis is widely viewed as looking forward to the *Aeneid* (so Thomas (1983) 180); for a recent attempt to disagree see Morgan (1999) *passim*.

<sup>27</sup> Compare *quadriiugos Geo.* 3. 18 with *Met.* 2. 168, *quadriiugi*.

<sup>28</sup> This image is derived from Callimachus' description of the filthy Euphrates at *Hymn* 2. 107-12. On the Callimachean poetics of rivers and their transcription into Roman poetry see Jones (2005) 54-9.

<sup>29</sup> Keith (2007) 16-18; she also suggests that the interior ephrasis of the throne is meant to put one in mind of an audience with the Emperor. Barchiesi and Bömer *ad loc.* point out the dialogue with Prop. 2. 31 (N.B. this is not noted by Boyle (2003)). Horsfall (2000) *ad Aen.* 7. 170-91 points out that the Virgilian parallel below also bears a likeness to the Palatine architectural scheme.

rivers. These locations are part of the Phaethon tradition before Ovid;<sup>30</sup> but the similar termini of the journeys suggest, in part, that Ovid is deliberately setting the Phaethon story in a scenario which has previously signified the creation of Augustan epic poetry as the next stage in a didactic poet's career. This encourages the reader to question the nature of the relationship between Ovid's post-didactic *epos* and Virgil's: is Ovid's ecphrasis of a suitably epic building? Is the chariot ride a similarly triumphant consequence of it?

## II. iii. EPIC ARCHITECTURE

Zooming in more closely, that the architecture of the palace reinforces epic impressions<sup>31</sup> is shown most clearly by the first line of *Met.* 2:

regia Solis erat sublimibus alta columnis

*Met.* 2. 1

An ecphrasis of a building will inevitably recall several epic descriptions of palaces and temples in a tradition going back to Homer,<sup>32</sup> but the closest verbal resemblance is to the palace of Latinus at *Aen.* 7. 170-1:<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> While it is uncontroversial that Phaethon does end in a river, which one is still a contentious issue, revolving around whether the Eridanus can be identified with the Po (*Padus*). The Eridanus is named as the river at Eur. *Hipp.* 735-7 and at Ap. *Rhod. Arg.* 4. 596, but Pliny records that Aeschylus in his *Heliades* located the Eridanus in Spain and identified it with the Rhône (*NH* 37. 2. 31), although fr. 71 N (=104M = *An. Gr.* Bekker p. 346) where the women are called Ἀδριαναί would suggest it was the Po (on the river in the *Heliades* see Diggle (1970) 27-32). Lucan at *BC* 2. 408-10 equates the Eridanus with the Po.

<sup>31</sup> Segal (1971) 335; Brown (1986) 211.

<sup>32</sup> E.g. *Il.* 13. 21-2 (Poseidon), *Od.* 4. 71-5 (Menelaus), 7. 84-102 (Alcinous). In particular, Knox (1988) 542 compares *Met.* 2. 2 with *Od.* 4. 71-3, the bright façade; the decorated double doors *Met.* 2. 4 with *Od.* 7. 88-90, *Arg.* 3. 223, *Aen.* 6. 14-19; and Hephaestus' involvement with *Od.* 7. 92. One should also note that the Sun's palace in the Euripides' play was golden, ἀστερωποῖσιν δόμοισι χρυσεῖσι (Eur. *Phaeth.* 238).

tectum augustum, ingens, centum sublime columnis

urbe fuit summa, Laurentis regia Pici

*Aen.* 7. 170-1

As Ovid's palace is framed by reliefs representative of the activities related to the palace (thus Brown and Gildenhard and Zissos), so Virgil's temple is similarly surrounded by icons representative of ancient Italian culture, namely Italus, Sabinus, Saturn and Janus (*Aen.* 7. 177-82), which will be combined with Trojan culture as the result of Aeneas' conquest: thus Virgil endows the palace's architecture with a teleological significance, displaying stable cultural artefacts which will remain a fixed presence in what becomes Rome. The allusion to Virgil's epic encourages the reader to view the reliefs on Ovid's palace doors as similarly pregnant with significance. The fact that these values are undermined by the following action rather than enshrined by it demonstrates that Ovid is working against the teleological structure of Virgilian epic, and instead embracing greater fluidity.<sup>34</sup>

Further illumination is provided by an elegiac intertext, Propertius 3. 2. Propertius contrasts the immortality of his poetic voice with the temporary existence of great pieces of architecture. Before giving the specific examples of the wonders of the world which will collapse — the pyramids, the temple of Jupiter at Olympia and the Mausoleum (19-21) — he generalizes about the type of architecture he is excluded from:

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<sup>33</sup> Bömer, Barchiesi *ad loc.*

<sup>34</sup> Knox (1988) 542 is right to point out, in addition, that 'Virgil is careful in his description of the temple at Cumae [*Aen.* 6. 14-19] to portray images on the temple carving that are relevant to the experiences of the Trojans through whose eyes the scene is viewed,' but is quite wrong to say that 'Ovid's sun palace has no psychological connection with the experience of Phaethon, who does not even pause to consider it.' It is quite clear that Phaethon does look at the images, for it would otherwise be impossible for him to be frightened by them: *ipse loco medius rerum nouitate pauentem | Sol oculis iuuenem...uidit* (*Met.* 2. 31-2).

quod non Taenariis domus est mihi fulta columnis,

nec camera auratas inter eburna trabes...

...at Musae comites et carmina cara legenti,

nec defessa choris Calliopea meis.

Prop. 3. 2. 11-12, 15-16

Propertius' elegiac Muse is therefore contrasted with precisely the type of palatial architecture which is presented at the beginning of *Met. 2*, suggesting that the opening of *Met. 2* should not just put the reader in mind of epic verse, but verse that is antipathetic towards elegy. It encourages the reader to consider whether Phaethon is suitable for entering such architecture: whether he is justified in a confident entry into the world of epic, or not.

Against this background must be set Ovid's own previous poetry. In *Amores* 3. 1, Ovid depicts himself receiving overtures from two allegorical female figures, Elegia and Tragoedia, who attempt to persuade him to write the kind of poetry they represent. This is a novel rendering of the Callimachean opposition between *λέπτον* and *πάχυ* poetry familiar from the prologue to the *Aetia*.<sup>35</sup> Ovid chooses Elegia, but says in the final four lines of the poem (67-70) that after he has taken the short time to fulfil the demands of Elegia, the *labor aeternus* (68) of Tragoedia will follow. Part of Elegia's speech involves making a concession to Tragoedia which underlines the mutual exclusivity of tragedy and elegy in the same poem.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Wyke (2006) 173.

<sup>36</sup> Elegia has already alluded to the irony of both Tragoedia and herself appearing in *this* poem by highlighting how Tragoedia is having to fight against Elegia using Elegia's own unequal lines at *Am.* 3. 1. 37-8. On the mutual exclusivity of different genres in the same poem see Ch. III. i below. For a later example of a poet in a 'low' genre opposing himself to tragedy as representative of 'high' genres, see *Juv.* 6. 634-8.

non ego contulerim sublimia carmina nostris:

obruit exiguas regia uestra fores.

*Am.* 3. 1. 39-40

In the hexameter line of the couplet, Elegia states that her own poetry is incomparable with the ‘towering poetry’ of Tragoedia; she concretizes this statement with the pentametrical observation that ‘your palace eclipses tiny doorways’.<sup>37</sup> In the immediate context of *Am.* 3. 1, the ‘tiny doorways’ to which she refers suggest those that are opened as a result of elegiac blandishments in the *paraclausithyron* poems (*Am.* 3. 1. 45-6) – not that Ovid (e.g. in *Am.* 1. 6) has so far been successful in employing this technique. Indeed, doors are very much vital to the apparatus of the elegiac genre, as Elegia explains at *Am.* 3. 1. 45-54: they have to be opened, their guards have to be evaded, and public declarations of love have to be inscribed on them in elegiac verse. These furtive and personal activities are made to contrast stylistically with the *regia*, and the majestic, public activity it connotes. In an address to Tragoedia, *regia* implies the stage building used in tragedy, representing the palace of the illustrious royal protagonists of those plays.<sup>38</sup> Recalling this earlier instance of the word *regia*, its appearance as the first word of *Met.* 2 might put the reader in mind of a tragic setting for the forthcoming story. This would remind the reader that Ovid’s version of the story of Phaethon is ultimately derived from a Euripidean tragic model, the now fragmentary *Phaethon*.<sup>39</sup> While there

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<sup>37</sup> The translations are from Wyke (2006) 179.

<sup>38</sup> Lee (1962) 170; Wyke (2006) 180.

<sup>39</sup> While only tangentially relevant to this paper, Ovid’s debt to the Euripides tragedy has been the subject of a great deal of discussion, which also includes Nonnus’ version of the story in the *Dionysiaca* (38. 105-434) and Knaack’s suggestion (in ‘Quaestiones Phaethontaeae’ *Philologische Untersuchungen* 8 (Berlin 1886)) that a lost Hellenistic epyllion has to be reconstructed to explain the shared features between Ovid and Nonnus: a piece of Teutonic speculation that has generated an enormous amount of unnecessary work. The relationship between Ovid, Nonnus and the putative Hellenistic epyllion is dealt with most recently by Knox (1988), building on Diggle (1970) 180-200. The relationship between Ovid and Euripides is

are numerous other *regiae* throughout the *Metamorphoses*, this particular *regia* is designed to recall that from *Am.* 3. 1 by virtue of the fact that it is the only *regia* in the poem to be described in relation to the adjective *sublimis*.<sup>40</sup> Comparably, the temple of Jupiter is described at 7. 587 thus: *templa uides contra gradibus sublimia longis*,<sup>41</sup> and Anaxarete's house is described in similar terms at 14. 752: *et patulis iniit tectum sublime fenestris*, but nowhere else is *sublimis* combined with *regia* in Ovid.

The adjective *sublimis* is a literary-critical marker for high genres of poetry (*OLD* s.v. 7c). Its use in *Am.* 3. 1, where it is combined with *carmina*, is clearly designed to recall the final, also programmatic, poem of *Am.* 1, where the two words are juxtaposed within a description of the poetry of Lucretius:

carmina sublimis tunc sunt peritura Lucreti,

exitio terras cum dabit una dies.

*Am.* 1. 15. 23-4

Ovid, then, does not use *sublimis* to denote tragedy exclusively, but rather uses it as a general term for the 'higher' genres of poetry, both hexameter epos (Lucretius) and tragedy (*Am.* 3. 1. 39).<sup>42</sup> In a similar vein, while the task *Tragoedia* wishes to set for Ovid is evidently a tragedy, reinforced by references to the standard trappings of the tragic

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examined by Diggle (1970) in the same passage, and has been most recently re-examined by Ciappi (2000), who also considers more fully the role of Aeschylus' *Heliades* and gives the most thorough survey of secondary literature on the topic (118-21) which would be pointless to reproduce here. Phaethon appears in other places in Greek literature. On Phaethon in the *Argonautica* see Byre (1996). On references to the Phaethon myth in the *Lament for Bion*, which might particularly have influenced the following stories of the Heliades and Cynus, see Paschalis (1995) 619-21 (*pace* Huyck (1987) 218 n. 5).

<sup>40</sup> It is, however, noteworthy that the human characters who possess a *regia* are all tragic figures, namely Athamas at 4. 468 and Cadmus at 4. 470 and 6. 171. Otherwise it is gods who inhabit *regiae*, Apollo at 1. 515-6 and Dis at 4. 438.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *Her.* 20. 105: *in templum redeo gradibus sublime Dianae*.

<sup>42</sup> For a history of the term as a literary-critical marker, see Brink (1971) *ad* Hor. *Ars* 165.

poet, the *palla*, *sceptrum* and *cothurnus* (*Am.* 3. 1. 11-13), Ovid phrases it in Virgilian terms as well. Tragoedia gives Ovid his instructions in language from the *Aeneid* at *Am.* 3. 1. 24, *incipere maius opus*. This recalls Virgil's announcement at the opening of the second, martial half of the *Aeneid* at 7. 44, *maius opus moueo*. Ovid recapitulates this frame of reference for his forthcoming shift to tragedy in the final words of *Am.* 3. 1: *a tergo grandius urget opus* (70). The shaking of the head at 31-2 recalls Zeus at *Il.* 1. 528-30, employing the epic lexeme *caesaries* and formula *terque quaterque*.<sup>43</sup> Thus in considering the character of Tragoedia we should not be too strict in pigeon-holing the poetic realm into which she is trying to lure Ovid as strictly that of tragedy; rather she can be taken to represent the higher genres of poetry in general. This begs the question why Ovid chose Tragoedia specifically as the figure for higher poetry. Besides the fact that Ovid is generally reckoned to have been working on his lost tragedy *Medea* at approximately the same time as the *Amores*,<sup>44</sup> this could well be ascribed to the fact that the character of 'Epos' could never have been portrayed as a female figure, as required for the poem's setting as a travesty of the *Hercules in biuio* scenario.<sup>45</sup>

In the opening line of *Met.* 2, then, the *regia* is not only literally 'high on lofty columns', but also representative of higher genres of poetry through its association to *Am.* 3. 1 in its unique combination with the adjective *sublimis*. Specifically, numerous

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<sup>43</sup> Reitzenstein (1935) 63-4; Schrijvers (1976) 421; Bömer *ad Met.* 1. 179-80.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *Am.* 2. 18. 13-14: *sceptra tamen sumpsit, curaque tragoedia nostra | creuit, et huic operi quamlibet aptus eram*.

<sup>45</sup> U. Fleischer, *Zur Zweitausendjahrfeier des Ovid*, Ant. u. Abendl. 6 (1957) 44-8 makes the bizarre suggestion that Tragoedia stands for 'tragic and heroic epic' and that at line 29, *Romana Tragoedia* stands for 'römisches National-epos'. His view is convincingly rebutted by Schrijvers (1976) 408-9, who argues that Tragoedia is simply standing for tragedy, while pointing out that in many places epic and tragedy would be indistinguishable from each other in their descriptions without context, e.g. Hor. *Ars* 73-4, *res gestae regumque* (epic), Hor. *S.* 1. 10. 42-3 *regum facta* (tragedy). Schrijvers makes the point that Epos could not be a feminine allegorical figure. For *Am.* 3. 1 as a travesty of the *Hercules in biuio* motif, see Schrijvers (1976) 407-24 esp. 407-13, Wyke (2002) 131-7.

allusions to Virgil put the reader in mind of Ovid's epic predecessor. The impact of the opening of Book 2, then, is to show Phaethon's movement into an architectural realm representative of a genre of poetry to which Ovid had previously opposed himself. The whole setting encourages the reader to question whether Phaethon should enter with confidence or trepidation.

## II. iv. THE EPIC CHARIOT

The chariot ride departs, then, from an epicized starting-point. I shall now demonstrate that the chariot itself is also representative of epic poetry. The chariot was used as a marker of the progress of the poem from a very early stage in the Greek literary world, being found first in Greek lyric,<sup>46</sup> and then in philosophical didactic poetry, where it is found at Parmenides fr. 1 (D-K), and Empedocles 131. 3 (D-K), from where it is adopted into Latin poetry by Lucretius at 6. 92-5.<sup>47</sup> From there, it becomes a staple element of the Latin didactic epic poem, as at *Geo.* 2. 541-2. Its presence in Latin literature is reinforced by its Callimachean credentials from the *Aetia* prologue (fr. 1. 25-8 Pf.). It is found very frequently in Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*, at 1. 39-40, 263-4, 2. 426, 3. 467-8 and 809-10,<sup>48</sup> and *Fasti*, at 1. 25, 2. 360, 4. 10 and 6. 585-6.<sup>49</sup> Propertius' fondness for the image, as, for example, at 2. 10. 2, 3. 1. 9-14 and 4. 1. 69-70,<sup>50</sup> confirms its general popularity in the

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<sup>46</sup> Henderson (1979) *ad Rem.* 397-8 cites Theognis 249-50, Simonides 79. 3-4, Bacchylides 5. 176-8, Choerilus fr. 1 Kinkel, Pindar *Ol.* 6. 22, 9. 81 *Isth.* 2. 2, 8. 62, *Pyth.* 10. 65.

<sup>47</sup> And also at 6. 47. On the transfer of the image into Lucretius see Henderson (1970), 739-42.

<sup>48</sup> Also *Rem.* 397-8. It should be noted that in two instances the image is not a progress image, but rather emblematic of elegiac poetry itself. *Ars* 1. 264, *imparibus uecta Thalea rotis*, suggests the 'uneven' lines of the elegiac couplet (cf. *Am.* 1. 1. 3-4, 17-18; 3. 1. 8); *Ars* 3. 809-10, *cygnis descendere tempus, | duxerunt collo qui iuga nostra suo*, has a swan-drawn chariot as at Prop. 3. 3. 39-40.

<sup>49</sup> Kenney (1958) 205-6.

<sup>50</sup> For the image in Propertius see Luck (1961), 135-7.



Augustan era. The chariot image can thus be used for the progress of any type of poem, and does not automatically connote an epic or elegiac one.

Firstly, the reader should not be confused by the fact that when Phaethon mounts the chariot it is described as a *leuem...currum* (*Met.* 2. 150). The adjective *leuis* here is not performing its function of denoting poetry that is ‘intended for amusement, light, not serious’ (*OLD* s.v. 14), and thus, often, neoteric or elegiac; this meaning of *leuis* will, however, confusingly come significantly into play at *Met.* 2. 159, 161 and 164 when describing Phaethon himself.<sup>51</sup> Here it is simply used in the sense of being ‘light in weight, especially as adapted for swift movement’ (*OLD* s.v. 1b), just as Ovid describes chariots with the adjective *leuis* at *Met.* 5. 645, 10. 717, *Her.* 4. 45 and *Ars* 1. 4. In the first two cases, the chariot in question is nothing more than a quick mode of transport used by Triptolemus and Venus respectively; in *Her.* 4, Phaedra wishes to spin the chariot around to emulate Hippolytus. In the *Ars* example, this could have a metapoetic connotation, as it is used in combination with a description of ships to explain how love, like ships and chariots, must be controlled by *ars*:

arte citae ueloque rates remoque mouentur,

arte leues currus: arte regendus amor.

*Ars* 1. 3-4

This comparison in turn refers to Ovid’s *ars* in handling his elegiac poem in the following lines, in which Ovid calls himself the Automedon or Tiphys of love (*Ars* 1. 5-8). The metaliterary sense is weakened here, however, by the fact that *leues* comes in a position

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<sup>51</sup> See Ch. V. i. below.

parallel to *citae* in the previous line, implying its meaning ‘swift’.<sup>52</sup> The surrounding context in which the poet is described as a chariot-driver or navigator introduces at the beginning of the work the chariot / ship image as a marker of the progress of the poem which is to be so prominent,<sup>53</sup> rather than stressing the elegiac quality of the work at hand; the elegiac nature of the chariot of the *Ars* is stressed later by the reference to its ‘unequal wheels’ at *Ars* 1. 264, and not here.<sup>54</sup> Therefore *leuem...currum* can be discounted as an elegiac marker for the chariot at *Met.* 2. 150.

This distinction is important because the ecphrastic description of the chariot puts one in mind of epic grandeur. The description as a whole recalls the chariot which carries Athena and Hera in Homer, which is described at *Il.* 5. 722-32 as being endowed with precious metal fittings similar to those on the chariot of the Sun.<sup>55</sup> Its creator also links it to the greatest ecphrasis in Roman epic, the shield of Aeneas; compare *Met.* 2. 106, *Vulcania munera, currus* with *Aen.* 8. 729, *clipeum Vulcani, dona parentis*. This puts the chariot in a long line of epic artefacts constructed by Vulcan / Hephaestus going back to the shield of Achilles in *Iliad* 18. The fact that the chariot of the Sun had not hitherto been associated with Vulcan<sup>56</sup> allows us to conclude that Ovid is self-consciously linking this ecphrasis with those epic precedents, and also suggests that it is a deliberate link to the creator of the doors of the palace of the Sun,<sup>57</sup> who is named as Mulciber at *Met.* 2. 5;

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. Hollis (1977) *ad loc.*: ‘The epithets applied to ships and chariots, ‘*citae*’ and ‘*leues*’, gain in point because mobility and fickleness are notorious qualities of Love whom Ovid must control.’

<sup>53</sup> Hollis (1977) *ad Ars* 1. 39-40.

<sup>54</sup> For unevenly wheeled chariots as markers of Ovid’s elegies cf. *Pont.* 3. 4. 85-6, *ferre etiam molles elegi tam uasta triumpho | pondera disparibus non potuere rotis*.

<sup>55</sup> As noted by Barchiesi *ad* 107-8, Moore-Blunt *ad* 107, Bömer *ad* 106, who points out that the Sun’s chariot is golden or has golden appurtenances at *Homeric Hymn* 31. 15, and Eur. *Phoen.* 2. It is perhaps simply down to common sense that if the yellow Sun were to have a chariot at all, it would inevitably be made of gold.

<sup>56</sup> Barchiesi *ad* 106.

<sup>57</sup> Wise (1977) 49.

Virgil uses Mulciber as a synonym for Vulcan at *Aen.* 8. 724. The precious metals used in its construction also remind the reader of those used to build the palace doors (*Met.* 2. 2-4 ~ 106-7) and its gemstones with those on the Sun's throne (*Met.* 2. 24 ~ 109). The arrangement of the gemstones also mirrors the order and regularity which defined the arrangement of the markers of time around the throne: compare *Met.* 2. 26, *positae spatiis aequalibus Horae* with *Met.* 2. 109, *positaeque ex ordine gemmae*.

As stated above, it is order and regularity that is to be disrupted: by having the vehicle which causes the destruction as a symbol of that very order, Ovid will enable himself to show the epic form being hijacked and turned against itself. The result of Phaethon's ride will be that this vehicle is smashed to smithereens (*Met.* 2. 316-18), destroying the very order with which it was constructed. One notices in contrast to the orderly trails it has previously made through the sky (*manifesta rotae uestigia*, *Met.* 2. 133) that at the end its *uestigia* are widely scattered: *sparsaque sunt late laceri uestigia currus* (*Met.* 2. 318).<sup>58</sup> Thus order is a standard established intentionally to be destroyed. This is brought out by an allusion to the *Aeneid* as Phaethon delights in mounting the chariot in the same way as the Trojans delighted in handling the wooden horse. Compare *Met.* 2. 151-2, *manibusque datas contingere habenas | gaudet* with *Aen.* 2. 239, *sacra canunt funemque manu contingere gaudent*.<sup>59</sup> Bass merely notes the dramatic irony of Phaethon's temporary happiness as he holds the instrument of his own destruction.<sup>60</sup> Beyond this one can see that the chariot is endowed with the credentials of the quintessential epic instrument of destruction, but, in a development from Virgil, it will

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<sup>58</sup> On the metapoetic implications of this change in style of *uestigia* see Ch. IV. ii below.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Icarus at *Met.* 8. 196, *ignarus sua se tractare pericla*.

<sup>60</sup> Bass (1977) 407; this is unnoticed by Bömer; Barchiesi comments *ad loc.* merely that it 'riprende un sinistro momento di gioia nell'*Eneide*'.

self-destruct in performing its deleterious duties against the world. In this way Ovid parades the fact that he knows the epic conventions he will be violating and shows himself to be turning those conventions against themselves.

III. 'SHE GENERALLY GAVE HERSELF VERY GOOD ADVICE, (THOUGH SHE  
VERY SELDOM FOLLOWED IT).'

*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

It has been shown how the palace of the Sun and the chariot embody normative epic values which Phaethon's ride will disrupt. I shall now show how Ovid's previous poetic standards are enshrined by the Sun and his palace to demonstrate not only how he is setting Phaethon's journey against his predecessors' poetic principles, but also his own.

III. i. *OPUS AND MATERIA*

After describing the brilliance of the metalwork on the palace, Ovid writes *materiam superabat opus* (*Met.* 2. 5). On the primary level, in the context of a physical work of art, this can be taken to mean that 'the workmanship [*OLD* s.v. *opus* 6] mastered the artistic medium [*OLD* s.v. *materia* 6]'.<sup>61</sup> However, both *materia* and *opus* are literary-critical terms frequently employed by Ovid.<sup>62</sup> In this sense, *opus* can refer to the product of poetic composition (*OLD* 9c), that is, the Book,<sup>63</sup> and Ovid frequently uses it to refer to the work in hand as a whole.<sup>64</sup> *Materia* generally means 'subject matter' for the poem (*OLD* 7; *TLL* 8. 461. 4-29), with which meaning Cicero opposes the word to 'diction': *de materia loquor orationis etiam nunc, non de ipso generi dicendi* (*Orat.* 119). In this

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<sup>61</sup> As Anderson notes *ad loc.*, 'the superiority of artwork to unworked precious metal was a topos'.

<sup>62</sup> Barchiesi *ad* 2. 5; Brown (1987) 219.

<sup>63</sup> McKeown *ad Am.* 1. 1. 23-4 notes that the word in this sense 'has religious connotations' as the revered final product of the work of a *uates*.

<sup>64</sup> Especially *Am. Epigr.* 1-2 which conceives of the three books of the *Amores* as a unified whole: *qui modo Nasonis fueramus quinque libelli, | tres sumus; hoc illi praetulit auctor opus*. Cf. *Am.* 3. 1. 6 *quod mea, quaerebam, Musa moueret, opus*; *Am.* 1. 1. 24 '*quod*'que '*canas uates accipe*' dixit '*opus*'; *Rem.* 40 '*propositum perfice*' dixit '*opus*'; *Fast.* 4. 16 '*coeptum perfice*' dixit '*opus*'.

simple sense Ovid uses the word at, for example, *Tr.* 2. 321 in his negative enumeration of poems he left unwritten: *nec mihi materiam bellatrix Roma negabat*. Putting these two together could lead us to translate the phrase *materiam superabat opus* as ‘the book as a whole mastered its subject matter’.<sup>65</sup>

It will become clear from comparing it with Ovid’s other uses of *opus* and *materia* in combination that the palace of the Sun stands for the fulfilment of the criteria previously set forth by Ovid for the creation of a successful poem. The way that success or lack of it is defined in these terms can be demonstrated from *Tristia* 2. 321-40, where Ovid explains how he ought to have written a song on the theme of Augustus but did not feel that he had the ability to do justice to the theme:

diuitis ingenii est immanis Caesaris acta

condere, materia ne superetur opus.

*Tr.* 2. 335-6

In this case the configuration is the other way round to the palace of the Sun: ‘to describe the deeds of stupendous Caesar requires a rich mind, lest the work be inferior to the material’. Here the words are employed in their purely poetical sense, although *condere* may retain overtones of the architectural analogy for poetry in which Ovid used *opus* and *materia* in *Met.* 2.<sup>66</sup> In other words, Ovid is suggesting that the mark of a successful poem would be that the raw deeds which inspired it ought not be better than the final poetic

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<sup>65</sup> Taking *superio* at its meaning *OLD* s.v. 3, ‘to be superior to, surpass, excel, outdo’ rather than the more negative meanings 4 (‘prevail over, overcome, defeat’) and 5 (‘deal successfully with, surmount, overcome’).

<sup>66</sup> But of the simple ‘construction’ of a poem cf. Hor. *Ars* 436 *si carmina condas* and esp. Lucr. 5. 1-2 *quis potis est dignum pollenti pectore carmen | condere pro rerum maiestate hisque repertis?* In this case the verb is clearly used in relation to a poem of generically ‘high’ quality.

product in which they are described; by implication they ought to be either matched, or the poetic product should glorify the raw deeds more by being superior to them.

Conscious, however, that ‘hindsight as foresight makes no sense’, we should not forget that Ovid has already claimed to have fulfilled these criteria for the martial epic poem he purported to be writing before he was rudely interrupted by Cupid in *Am.* 1. 1. There he does not explicitly say that the *materia* must be of equal valence as the *opus*, but rather that the *materia* should suit the technical apparatus of the *opus*, viz. its metre:

arma graui numero uiolentaque bella parabam

edere, materia conueniente modis.

*Am.* 1. 1. 1-2

He later remarks on how he does not possess material suited to the lighter rhythm (as opposed to the ‘heavy rhythm’ of the hexameter cited in *Am.* 1. 1. 1) found in elegiac couplets:

nec mihi materia est numeris leuioribus apta

*Am.* 1. 1. 20

It is from this position of unsuitability for elegiac poetry that the first three poems of Book 1 progress. At *Am.* 1. 1. 24, Cupid forces Ovid to accept the *opus* of writing elegiac poetry by shooting him with his arrow: ‘*quod’que ‘canas, uates, accipe’ dixit ‘opus’.*<sup>67</sup> The *opus*, or ‘book of elegiac poetry’ asserts itself immediately, appearing as the subject of the verb commanding the rhythm of the poem, forcing Ovid to bid farewell to the metre that accompanies the wars which were his *materia*:

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<sup>67</sup> For the additional erotic implications of the use of *opus* in this phrase see Kennedy (1993) 59.

sex mihi surgat opus numeris, in quinque residat:

ferrea cum uestris bella ualete modis!

*Am.* 1. 1. 27-8

Thus the *opus* has a technical existence independent of the *materia*: once this is accepted, only the *materia* that suits it can be used within it for successful results. That is, it was impossible for Ovid to write about martial deeds in an elegiac poem.<sup>68</sup> Ironically, he does not acquire the *materia* about which to write his *opus* until the third poem of Book 1, where he commands the girl,

te mihi materiem felicem in carmina praebe:

prouenient causa carmina digna sua.

*Am.* 1. 3. 19-20

So Ovid, with characteristic self-awareness, has separated the ideas of *opus* and *materia* and shown that each *opus*, to be successful, must have the *materia* that is innately suitable to that *opus*' metre and rhythm. Mixing *materia* with an *opus* that is not suited to it appears to be unworkable. This distinction is valid for both the original epic poem and the ensuing elegiac poetry.

Ovid enumerates explicitly what he means by this distinction in a long passage at *Rem.* 357-96, where, in contrast to his feigned reluctance to write elegy in *Am.* 1. 1, he defends his *proterua Musa* by saying that his elegies are perfectly suited to his *materia*:

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<sup>68</sup> Ironically, of course, he will write frequently on the theme of *militia amoris*, thus pretending to flout the generic limitations he has imposed on himself; e.g. *Am.* 1. 9, *militat omnis amans*.



at tu, quicumque es, quem nostra licentia laedit,  
     si sapis, ad numeros exige quidque suos.  
 fortia Maeonio gaudent pede bella referri;  
     deliciis illic quis locus esse potest?  
 grande sonant tragici; tragicos decet ira cothurnos:                     375  
     usibus e mediis soccus habendus erit.  
 liber in aduersos hostes stringatur iambus,  
     seu celer, extremum seu trahat ille pedem.  
 blanda pharetratos Elegia cantet Amores,  
     et leuis arbitrio ludat amica suo.   380  
 Callimachi numeris non est dicendus Achilles,  
     Cydippe non est oris, Homere, tui...  
 ...si mea materiae respondet Musa iocosae,  
     uicimus, et falsi criminis acta rea est.                                     *Rem.* 371-82, 387-8

The higher genres of poetry routinely appear in the hexameter line of the elegiac couplet, and the lower genres in the pentameter, which expresses their essential incompatibility literally in terms of the *modi* and *numeri* to which they are suited.<sup>69</sup> Lines 381-2 are particularly instructive in showing the incompatibility of elegy and epic by stressing that Cydippe, a character from Callimachus' *Aetia* (frr. 70-79 Pf.) would be just as unsuitable in the *Iliad* as Achilles would in Callimachus' elegiac compendium.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>69</sup> With the exception of *Rem.* 379-80.

<sup>70</sup> A similar distinction can apply in prose writing also, e.g. Sallust *Bellum Catilinae* 3. 2, *in primis arduum uidetur res gestas scribere; primum quod facta dictis exaequanda sunt*. Hinds (1987) reminds us that while it shows that Ovid had a 'consciousness of normative poetics' (116), and seems to vaunt his adherence to it,

Ovid often asserts, then, that each *opus* should be written about *materia* innately suited to it. This does not mean, therefore, that when we consider the phrase *materiam superabat opus* at *Met.* 2. 5 that those two words automatically refer to epic or tragic poetry; rather the rule applies to each and every genre and is instrumental in keeping the genres separate. Nonetheless, it is clear that Mulciber's creation at *Met.* 2. 5, when viewed in terms of poetic accomplishment, is shown to be a masterpiece, representative of traditionally well-composed poetry which is not sullied by generic interference. Bearing this in mind, it is significant that Phaethon is described looking at the chariot in terms of its *opus*: *dumque ea magnanimus Phaethon miratur opusque | perspicit* (*Met.* 2. 111-12). Not only does this further link the chariot with the description of the palace, but it reasserts the importance of well-constructed poetry just before the Sun's instructions and the flight itself. It is thus crucial to realize that the wayward path of this *opus* disrupts the *materia* enshrined on the previous *opus* of the palace doors. It should be noted that the only other instance of *materia* in the story comes when the crops provide the 'fuel' (*OLD* s.v. *materia* 1, 4d) for their own destruction: *materiamque suo praebet seges arida damno* (*Met.* 2. 213). Thus the notion of cooperation between the poet and his *opus* and *materia* has been turned on its head as the result of the flight so that, clearly, *materia superabatur ab opere*. As the two *opera* were described in such similar terms, this provides further fuel to the idea that Ovid is turning the form of his poem against itself. Brown notes the similarities in the well-ordered construction of the universe at the start of

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at this stage, one should be aware that the '*Remedia* itself...represents a bold marriage of elegiac norms on the one hand and norms of didactic epos on the other' (117). For consciousness of generic divisions which are to be strictly upheld cf. Hor. *Ars* 73-98 esp. 86-7, *descriptas seruare uices operumque colores | cur ego si nequeo ignoroque poeta salutor?*

Book 1 and the artistic universe at the start of Book 2;<sup>71</sup> the destruction of this latter specifically artistic universe by a kindred epicized *opus* shows how Ovid is openly destroying the normative standards of epicized *opera* from within. How he does this – with an unsuitable charioteer – will become clear below.

### III. ii. IGNORING THE SUN’S ADVICE

The Sun is the guardian of the order and regularity represented by his palace. Thus it comes as no surprise that when he delivers his advice to Phaethon about how to handle the chariot he advises moderation. This moderation is focused on the strong use of the reins:

si potes his saltem monitis parere parentis  
parce, puer, stimulis, et fortius utere loris!                      *Met.* 2. 126-7

Phaethon’s flight can be demarcated into distinct sections based on his use of the reins and it is important to note that the flight is not uniformly unsuccessful. At the very start of their journey, the horses make some progress before they notice that anything is wrong:

corripuere uiam pedibusque per aera motis  
obstantes scindunt nebulas pennisque leuati  
praetereunt ortos isdem de partibus Euros.                      *Met.* 2. 158-60

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<sup>71</sup> Brown (1987) 215-17; O’Hara (2007) 108.

At this point, Phaethon is holding the reins in his hands (*manibusque leues contingere habenas | gaudet Met. 2. 151-2*). At 2. 161-6, the horses notice that the chariot's burden is *leue* (161), and so it leaps into the air *similis...currus inani* (166). Note that it is not the horses that surge up into the air but the chariot itself; it is only when the horses notice that the chariot is somehow gravitating upwards that they leave the beaten path:

quod simul ac sensere, ruunt tritumque relinquunt

quadriugi spatium nec quo prius ordine currunt. *Met. 2. 167-8*

Now Phaethon is still holding the reins but he does not know how to use them: *nec qua commissas flectat habenas | nec scit qua sit iter, nec, si sciat, imperet illis* (2. 169-70). This sets in motion the first heating of the constellations (2. 171-7) – this is unusual, but not actually destructive.<sup>72</sup> It is only when Phaethon reaches the very top of heaven (2. 178) that things start to go wrong. At this point he is borne along like a ship whose helmsman has let go of the rudder, *cui uicta remisit | frena suus rector* (2. 185-6), but Phaethon himself has not yet dropped the reins; rather he is in *aporia*: *nec frena remittit | nec retinere ualet nec nomina nouit equorum* (2. 191-2). It is only when he sees the threatening Scorpion that Phaethon does actually drop the reins – *lora remisit* (2. 200) – and only thereafter when the horses feel them lying on their backs that they finally break loose from any control Phaethon might have been exerting on them, however residually, and cause the torrents of destruction: the torching of the mountains and the scorching of the rivers.

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<sup>72</sup> Note that the focus is on novelty, not ruin: *tum primum radiis gelidi caluere Triones* (*Met. 2. 171*); *sumpsitque nouas feruoribus iras* (*Met. 2. 175*).

The progression in loss of control must be important, and yet at first glance it seems as though there is little difference between the stages; that is, regardless of how tightly or otherwise Phaethon is gripping the reins, from confidently at the beginning, to aporetically in the middle, to finally dropping them, the horses seem to be at liberty to do as they please. What is the difference between their activities before Phaethon drops the reins at 167-8, *ruunt tritumque reliquunt | quadriugi spatium nec quo prius ordine currunt*, and afterwards at 202-4, *exspatiantur equi nulloque inhibente per auras | ignotae regionis eunt, quaque impetus egit, | hac sine lege ruunt?* The only clear difference is the phrase *nullo inhibente* in the latter example, which suggests that even Phaethon's vague grip on the reins, which is likened to a helmsman who has abandoned the rudder and therefore may as well not be holding them at all, suggests at least a semblance of restraint to which the horses respond. If the horses could have behaved as they eventually do if he were still holding the reins, however ineffectually, then there would have been no need for Ovid to have Phaethon drop them.

A search for other instances of rein-drops reveals the importance for including the act of dropping the reins in terms of Ovid's poetry. The only other example is of a hypothetical action, when Ovid imagines what it would be like to be the rider in the chariot race he and his intended are watching in the *Amores*:

si mihi currenti fueris conspecta, morabor,

deque meis manibus lora remissa fluent.

*Am.* 3. 2. 13-14

The phrase *lora remisit* (*Met.* 2. 200) echoes this event.<sup>73</sup> In both cases a visual stimulus is the cause of dropping the reins. In the elegiac example, dropping the reins is seen as a positive action by way of wooing: the girl is deemed more important than winning the masculine competition of the race.<sup>74</sup> Ovid uses it as a gesture of submission to his mistress: he follows up his hypothetical rein-drop by recalling how Pelops almost died because he was distracted by the appearance of Hippodamia, but that he was saved by her love for him, going on to pray that every man may win by the ‘favour of his mistress’ (*Am.* 3. 2. 18). There is evidently no similar redeeming feature for Phaethon, for his aims are not amorous, but epic: he expects and is expected to be the virile helmsman. Phaethon’s performance of the essentially elegiac act of dropping things through surprise betrays his innate elegiac character<sup>75</sup>; the fact that that elegiac response is prompted by icy terror at the cosmic enormity of the Scorpion (*Met.* 2. 200) shows the innovative confrontation between genres at work in this episode.

To see the importance of even the vaguest of grips on the reins, it is necessary to turn to Ovid’s *apologia* for his elegiac poetry in the *Remedia Amoris*. Lines 357-96 of the *Remedia* are a sustained defence against critics of his *Musa proterua* (*Rem.* 362), arguing that each poet’s style should suit his subject matter. He signals the end of his digressive response to envy by using another riding metaphor:

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<sup>73</sup> One should also note that the release of Phaethon’s horses from their stalls uses technical vocabulary borrowed from the field of chariot racing: *pedibusque repagula pulsant. | quae postquam Tethys... | reppulit* (*Met.* 2. 155-7).

<sup>74</sup> Masculinity is a hallmark of epic activity: ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, *arma uirumque*, etc. Furthermore, ‘[e]pic is instinctively drawn to a variety of models of the assertive and authoritative male: the warrior, *dux*, chief god, statesman, helmsman.’ (Morgan (2003) 66, my emphasis).

<sup>75</sup> Sharrock (1994) 181 cites Paris’ reaction to Helen’s skimpy dress (*Her.* 15. 253-4): *dum stupeo uisis – nam pocula forte tenebam - | tortilis a digitis excidit ansa meis* and the fisherman’s reaction to Daedalus and Icarus’ flight (*Ars.* 2. 77-8): *hos aliquis tremula dum captat harundine pisces | uidit, et inceptum dextra relinquit opus*. Also, crucially, should be cited Ovid’s narrator at the appearance of Corinna in *Am.* 2. 1. 17 *ego cum Ioue fulmen omisi*.

hactenus inuidiae respondimus: attrahe lora

fortius, et gyro curre, poeta, tuo.

*Rem.* 397-8

Ovid hereby signals that his quite deliberate digression has been a loss of control of the course of the poem to which he must now return.<sup>76</sup> The point is that Ovid signals his return to the material about which the poem is meant to be using the metaphor of handling the reins more forcefully. Thus when the Sun frames his instructions with the phrase *fortius utere loris* (*Met.* 2. 127), he characterizes the chariot ride in terms of instructions to maintain control over a poem and avoid digressions and detours that Ovid had previously given to himself. Actually dropping the reins rather than just letting them go slack shows how Ovid is self-consciously ignoring, or is unable to heed, his own previous instructions now that he is immersed in his new hexameter poem.<sup>77</sup> In a progression from Ovid's previous poetic models, it implies that the whole of the poem to come will actually be one long digression.<sup>78</sup> What follows of Phaethon's ride will demonstrate how serendipitous digression as an organizational principle is successful amid the chaos it causes and how it reacts against previous models for Latin *epos*.

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<sup>76</sup> Cf. *Ars* 3. 467-8 (quoted in Ch. I).

<sup>77</sup> It is appropriate that Phoebus is the voice that is ignored, as all Apollo/Phoebus' attempts at persuasion are supremely unsuccessful: his two speeches to Phaethon (*Met.* 2. 51-102 and 126-49), and his wooing of Daphne (*Met.* 1. 504-24). For the contrast between Apollo and Mercury's skills of persuasion see Fredericks (1977) esp. 247. For Apollo's ineptitude in dealing with his son see also Fulkerson (2006) 399-400.

<sup>78</sup> For digression as an organizational principle in action see Feldherr (1997) 39-40, where he conceives of the possibility that Book 3 is a *ktisis* narrative of Thebes interrupted by the digressions of Actaeon, Pentheus and Cadmus, rather than an amalgamation of a set of individual if linked tragic tales.

#### IV. PHAETHON'S GIGANTOMACHY

This chapter will demonstrate how Phaethon's breaking of old standards for poetic composition is represented as creative destruction by framing it as a gigantomachic experience.

##### IV. i. IGNORING DAEDALUS' VERY GOOD ADVICE

There is another piece of advice which Phaethon ignores. According to the Sun, the purpose of maintaining control over the chariot is to produce a ride which goes 'through the middle'. The journey is to be neither too high nor too low: *medio tutissimus ibis* (*Met.* 2. 137); nor too far to the right nor left: *inter utrumque tene!* (*Met.* 2. 140).<sup>79</sup> This is a reformulation of the advice which Daedalus gave to his son Icarus in the *Ars Amatoria*. After warning Icarus of the dangers of flying too high and low (*Ars* 2. 59-62), Daedalus delivers his main instruction: *inter utrumque uola!* (*Ars* 2. 63). It is clear that Ovid has tailored the Sun's command at *Met.* 2. 140 to mimic Daedalus'.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Traill (1993), in his treatment of the notorious textual problems at *Aen.* 3. 682-6, demonstrates that Daedalus' and the Sun's instruction here is modelled on the instructions to the Trojans to sail between Scylla and Charybdis. This reinforces the idea that Phaethon is deliberately flouting a set of Virgilian instructions.

<sup>80</sup> For the reoccurrence of these instructions in the Daedalus and Icarus story in *Met.* 8 see n. 98 below. It is of great importance that these instructions are delivered by fathers to sons, and that the sons ignore or are unable to obey their fathers' commands. Obedience to the father, and concentration on dynastic succession, is a hallmark of epic, most obviously in the commands of Anchises in *Aen.* 6 (Fowler (2006) 225; Hardie (1993) 102). This is also related to the position of the poet within the dynasty of epic poets, his 'forefathers'; so Virgil is at pains to emulate *pater Ennius*. Thus having sons fail to obey (for whatever reason) the commands of their fathers, which are Virgilian in origin (see n. 79 above) suggests Ovid's deliberate refusal to conform with Virgilian schemata for his *epos* (Morgan (2003) 66-7; Wheeler (2000) 69 notes the 'increasing loss of parental control over the destiny of their children' as a theme of the second half of Book 1, which further underlines the idea of a descent from suitably epic Lucretian cosmogony, conforming with the forefathers' models, to 'wayward' experimentation. For Virgil's invocation of Phaethon at *Aen.* 5. 105 as a way of raising the question of dynastic succession in the *Aeneid*, see Nethercut



Daedalus' flight is framed as a metapoetic adventure, coming in a programmatic position at the start of the Book. The opportunity to invent flight is described as a *materia* on which to exercise his *ingenium*.<sup>81</sup>

quod simul ut sensit, 'nunc, nunc, o Daedale,' dixit

'materiam qua sis ingeniosus habes.'

*Ars* 2. 33-4

The wings, as the means of flight which he has produced, are described as an *opus* at *Ars* 2. 46, 52 and 65. In a reference to the title of the poem, flying is described as an *ars* at *Ars* 2. 48 and 76.<sup>82</sup> The wings are described in terms of ships: *remigium uolucrum* (*Ars* 2. 45),<sup>83</sup> 'his' inquit 'patria est adeunda carinis' (*Ars* 2. 51), *quaque ferent aurae, uela secunda dato* (*Ars* 2. 64). This links the episode with the progress marker of the ship which defines the course of the *Ars Amatoria*; at *Ars* 2. 9-10, that ship is described as being in mid-ocean, half-way through its journey.<sup>84</sup>

Sharrock interprets Daedalus' ideal *in medio* journey as charting the eroto-didactics of the *Ars Amatoria* as being 'above' subjective love elegy (represented by Daedalus' otherwise unprecedented instruction not to fly too low), but not too high so as to abandon elegy altogether. How she reaches this conclusion will be discussed below. For now, note that, in Sharrock's interpretation, Daedalus is identified with the poet: Daedalus takes the middle path and succeeds in reaching his final destination by

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(1986): his argument is guilty of using 'hindsight as foresight', however, as he has clearly based Virgil's interpretation of Phaethon on the Ovidian account rather than, say, the Euripidean.

<sup>81</sup> *OLD* s.v. *ingenium* s.v. 5 'Literary or poetic talent, inspiration, etc.'. *Ingenium* was 'a quality which continually pervades and informs the *Metamorphoses*' (Kenney (1982) 440).

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Sharrock (1994) 134-6, who highlights the reformulation of some of these phrases in the *Tristia*.

<sup>83</sup> On the Virgilian nature of this description see Morgan (2003) 78, who shows that it signifies an 'epic accoutrement.'

<sup>84</sup> See Ch. I.

following his own advice. Icarus, on the other hand, does fly too high, and dies. Phaethon, who breaks all the instructions by flying both too high and low, is the one identified with the poet of the *Metamorphoses*; by imitating Daedalus' instructions, the Sun becomes aligned with the old instructions of the poet of the eroto-didactic elegy who aimed to fly the middle path, and Phaethon with the poet who is now breaking those instructions. This demonstrates Ovid's progression away from the constraints of his earlier poetics.

This progression is described with reference to aspects of the Gigantomachy, the attempt by the Giants to attack heaven and unseat the Olympian gods.<sup>85</sup> The Gigantomachy signified the ultimately high topic for an epic poem, and one that was most opposed to the Callimachean aesthetic; this derives ultimately from the prologue to the *Aetia*, where Callimachus' statement *βροντᾶν οὐκ ἐμόν, ἀλλὰ Διός* (Callim. *Aet.* fr. 1. 20 Pf.) shows his refusal to participate in the story.<sup>86</sup> Refusal to write a Gigantomachy in favour of the 'lesser' elegiac genre was popularized as a form of *recusatio* especially by Propertius: *sed neque Phlegraeos Iouis Enceladique tumultus | intonet angusto pectore Callimachus* (2. 1. 39-40).<sup>87</sup> Daedalus phrases his refusal to fly too high as a reassurance to Jupiter that he will not be gigantomachic:

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<sup>85</sup> Even in the time of Hesiod, the Gigantomachy, Titanomachy and Typhonomachy were hopelessly confused, with renderings of each story borrowing much from and owing much to each of the others (see West *ad Hes. Theog.* 617). The most comprehensive survey of the various treatments is Mayer (1887).

<sup>86</sup> Innes (1979) 166-7.

<sup>87</sup> Other examples of Gigantomachy in a *recusatio* include Prop. 2. 1. 17-20, 3. 9. 47-8, Hor. C. 2. 12. 6-9, Man. 3. 5-6, *Culex* 27-8, *Ciris* 29-35. In particular one should also note that Orpheus, who is another figure for the poet (Hardie (1993) 105), claims at *Met.* 10. 148-54, as Ovid does in *Am.* 2. 1, to have already sung a Gigantomachy *plectro grauiore* (150) and that he will now sing *leuiore lyra* (152): see n. 148 below. On the allegorical use of Gigantomachy for the rise of Augustus see Hardie (1986) 87-9.

restat iter caeli: caelo temptabimus ire.

da ueniam coepto, Iuppiter alte, meo.

non ego sidereas adfecto tangere sedes;

qua fugiam dominum, nulla nisi ista uia est. Ars 2. 37-40

To avoid the suggestion that this is a reference to any attack on heaven rather than the Gigantomachy specifically, Sharrock points to the general uncommonness of the verb *adfecto* in Ovid, but its high frequency in other Ovidian references to the Gigantomachy.<sup>88</sup> Thus she deems Ovid to be saying that in this work he will not be writing the highest form of poetry, martial epic, signified by the Gigantomachy.<sup>89</sup> It is therefore noteworthy that when the Sun tells Phaethon in the *Metamorphoses* that, if he were to make the attempt, he would be performing an act beyond what is granted even to gods, he uses that same verb, *adfecto: plus etiam, quam quod superis contingere possit, I nescius adfectas* (*Met.* 2. 57-8). Phaethon's performance of this precise deed, simply mounting the chariot, let alone taking it aloft, suggests an act beyond the ambitions of Daedalus up to a higher plane of daring Gigantomachy.

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<sup>88</sup> Sharrock (1994) 137, n. 80, citing *Fast.* 3. 439-40 (quoted on p. 38 below) and *Met.* 1. 152-3, and noting its use to describe the hubristic attempt by Cupid to hijack the *Amores* at *Am.* 1. 1. 13-14. She does not notice in addition *Am.* 3. 8. 51, *qua licet, adfectas caelum quoque* and *Pont.* 4. 8. 59-61, *scimus...sic adfectantes caelestia regna Gigantes I ad Styga...datos*. Silius Italicus seems to have noticed the gigantomachic undertones in his revamping of Ovid's Daedalus and Icarus story: *superosque nouus conterruit ales* (*Punica* 12. 95). Hollis (1970) *ad Met.* 8. 183-259 draws this to my attention; Sharrock (1994) 175 notes that Silius might have deemed this a more appropriate treatment given that his poem was martial epic.

<sup>89</sup> Sharrock (1994) 137-8. She makes the additional point, irrelevant to metapoetics, that the added connotations of Jupiter with Augustus might suggest that Ovid is also not going to write an encomium on Jupiter's achievements in defeating the Giants, i.e. a panegyric of Augustus' martial achievements.

#### IV. ii. WHO DARES, WINS: THE POETICS OF *AUDERE*

To see how Phaethon reacts against the Daedalan model further, it is necessary to look at the end of Phaethon's story, his epitaph:

HIC SITVS EST PHAETHON CVRRVS AVRIGA PATERNI

QVEM SI NON TENVIT MAGNIS TAMEN EXCIDIT AVSIS. *Met.* 2. 327-8

The last word, *ausis*, is of prime significance. Commentators on the *Metamorphoses* note that the substantive *ausum* is a Virgilian invention (*Aen.* 2. 535, *pro talibus ausis*), and is consequently 'vocabulum maxime epicorum' (*TLL* 2. 1258. 66).<sup>90</sup> This is not the only place it or any of the other permutations of *audere* are used in the *Metamorphoses*, but in Ovid it predominantly has the sense of an attempt at an enormous or difficult task which is likely to fail, owing usually to its hubris: thus, for example, the rock which has been hurled at Orpheus seems to repent, *ueluti supplex pro tam furialibus ausis | ante pedes iacuit* (*Met.* 11. 12-13), and Medea in extending the life of Jason's father hopes that Hecate *praesens ingentibus adnuat ausis* (*Met.* 7. 178).<sup>91</sup> Clearly this meaning is appropriate to Phaethon: he attempted something beyond mortal capabilities (*Met.* 2. 56), and failed.

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<sup>90</sup> Bömer, Moore-Blunt *ad loc.*

<sup>91</sup> For *audere* used of an extreme criminal enterprise but not necessarily against the gods, cf. Sallust *Bellum Catilinae* 20. 2 (Catiline speaking), *animus ausus est maximum atque pulcherrimum facinus incipere*.

More significantly, when Ovid talks of the Gigantomachy he generally refers to it with the idea of ‘daring’. Thus at *Am.* 2. 1. 11 Ovid introduces the putative<sup>92</sup> Gigantomachy poem with the phrase *ausus eram*. He returns to the idea of this thwarted enterprise at *Am.* 2. 18 in the same terms, where, in contrast to Macer’s martial epic which is successfully underway, *nos...tener ausuros grandia frangit Amor* (*Am.* 2. 18. 3-4). *Audere* is also used of the Giants’ assault on heaven in the account of the Gigantomachy in the *Fasti*, where Ovid writes *fulmina post ausos caelum adfectare Gigantas | sumpta Ioui* (*Fast.* 3. 439-40). In the *Metamorphoses* itself, *audere* is used of the Gigantomachy in the description of Sicily:

uasta giganteis ingesta est insula membris

Trinacris et magnis subiectum molibus urguet

aetherias ausum sperare Typhoea sedes.

*Met.* 5. 346-8

Earlier, in Book 1, the substantive is used of Lycaon’s attempt to kill Jupiter at *Met.* 1. 199-200, which was, in turn, described at *Met.* 1. 182-4 as being more worrisome than the Giants’ assault on heaven. Given this last instance in particular of a mortal performing an act that is imitative of the Gigantomachy, the epitaphic summary of Phaethon’s achievements puts the reader in mind of a gigantomachic assault.

Into this nexus of uses, *audere* has a history of being used for artistic innovation. It is so used of the artistic hubris of Arachne against Minerva at *Met.* 6. 84: *tam furialibus*

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<sup>92</sup> Some believe that Ovid really did write a Gigantomachy, notably Owen (1924) *ad Tr.* 2. 337. Given the *recusatio* context, and that it is used mostly to set up a joke on *fulmen* (on which see Innes (1979) 167), this seems rather far-fetched.

*ausis*.<sup>93</sup> Virgil prominently uses the term positively of himself in the *Georgics* to express his innovation of a new genre in creating a Hesiodic song for Rome: *sanctos ausus recludere fontis, | Ascraeumque cano Romana per oppida carmen* (*Geo.* 2. 175-6).<sup>94</sup> Thus the act of ‘being daring’ does not necessarily have connotations of failed hubris, but can connote successful artistic innovation. To see where the line is drawn between successful poetic innovation and overreaching, hubristic ambition, one must return to Daedalus and Icarus in *Ars* 2. Daedalus’ project is itself described as ‘daring’ at *Ars* 2. 22, *audacem pinnis repperit ille uiam*. Icarus flies too high and overreaches his abilities, however, because he employs the audacious skill too much: *Icarus audaci fortius arte uolat* (*Ars* 2. 75). In other words, Icarus crosses the boundary between innovation and hubris, and casts into relief his father’s success in steering his middle course.<sup>95</sup> Thus in the *Ars*, enough audacity to innovate and imitate Virgil in inventing a new genre – here, eroto-didactic elegy – is desirable; audacity that is excessive to a gigantomachic extent is undesirable.

We recall that Daedalus’ instructions were aligned with those delivered by the Sun, and that Phaethon’s identification with the poet shows Ovid’s progression away from his old self-restrictions. This suggests that the old Daedalan ‘middle path’ is itself now too low for the Ovid of the *Metamorphoses*. As has often been noticed, the path which the Sun’s chariot on its ideal middle course is to follow is the well-travelled one: *hac sit iter – manifesta rotae uestigia cernes* (*Met.* 2. 133). It is described as such when

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<sup>93</sup> Arachne’s artistic daring will ultimately lead to her destruction as well; although she does not literally almost destroy the world as Phaethon, her tapestry makes an analogous assault on order: whereas Phaethon disrupts the temporal and physical order of the universe, Arachne’s tapestry undermines the divine order which Pallas’ represents. Crucially, of course, both Arachne and Phaethon are to some degree self-portraits of Ovid: Arachne’s pomposity-pricking embroideries, beginning with the abduction of Europa, represent again Ovid’s own defamatory tales of the gods. See Harries (1990).

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Hor. *Ars* 240-2, *ex noto fictum carmen sequar, ut sibi quiuis | speret idem, sudet multum frustra que laboret | ausus idem*.

<sup>95</sup> Sharrock (1994) 133 comes to the same conclusion without noticing the increase in audacity: ‘Icarus’ mistake was that he did not fly between the two, but flew up to the heights of pure hexameter.’

the horses first depart from it: *ruunt tritumque relinquunt* (*Met.* 2. 167). Travelling along the well-travelled path is never a positive step for a Hellenistic or a post-Hellenistic Roman poet, harking back to Apollo's instruction in the proem of Callimachus' *Aetia*, *δίφρον ἐλλῶν μηδ' οἶμον ἀνὰ πλατύν, ἀλλὰ κελεύθους | ἀτρίπτους, εἰ καὶ στεινοτέρην ἐλάσεις* (Callim. *Aet.* fr. 1. 27-8 Pf.).<sup>96</sup> In this respect it is notable that Daedalus' middle path through the sky was not well-travelled, but brand new, and he stresses the necessity of his innovation: *sunt mihi naturae iura nouanda meae* (*Ars* 2. 42). Thus the *Ars Amatoria* is presented as a new, but not over-ambitious departure from Ovid's previous work. In contrast, Phaethon's departure from the well-trodden path can only be interpreted as positive by a Roman poet: thus in this sense his 'daring' is of the innovative artistic variety.<sup>97</sup> But, simultaneously, this goes against the advice of the Sun who framed the enterprise as hubristically audacious. Thus from the perspective of the espouser of the rules for traditionally successful poetry, *ausis* on Phaethon's epitaph suggests that his flight was negatively gigantomachic. But from the perspective of the poet of renewal, this act of 'hubris' against the old poetic order signifies a positive artistic innovation.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> For proudly travelling down the untrodden path in Roman poetry, cf. Virg. *Geo.* 3. 40-1, *interea Dryadum siluas saltusque sequamur | intactos*; Prop. 3. 1. 17-18, *sed quod pace legas, opus hoc de monte sororum | detulit intacta pagina nostra uia* with Quadlbauer (1968) 104-5.

<sup>97</sup> In this respect it should not be forgotten that the paths Phaethon's chariot takes are not only new, but, by the end of the journey, all over the place as the chariot breaks up: *sparsa sunt late laceri uestigia currus* (*Met.* 2. 318) – see Ch. II. iv. p. 21 above. This could indicate the greater scope that digression can have for poetic mastery, beyond merely carving out one new path.

<sup>98</sup> The obvious concern around relating Phaethon's flight to Daedalus and Icarus' in the *Ars* is that the latter is repeated at *Met.* 8. 183-235, and it seems counter-intuitive that Ovid would have wanted to repeat the same message that didactic elegy was his preferred middle ground. Daedalus' instruction *inter utrumque uola* is repeated at *Met.* 8. 206 from *Ars* 2. 63, so the essential tenets are the same. Notable places where the accounts differ for our purposes is that Ovid removes Daedalus' prayer to Jupiter from the narrative; while Icarus' own flight is still audacious (*Met.* 8. 223), it is no longer more audacious than Daedalus'; and *adfecto* is not employed to describe the act of going too high. Thus Ovid seems to have taken care to remove the more overt references to Gigantomachy in his *Metamorphoses* account. Sharrock (1994) 171-3 offers the ingenious solution that the Daedalus story in the *Met.* was (re)written in exile to represent how the *damnosas...artes* (*Met.* 8. 115) caused his demise. This is somewhat confusing upon consideration as it seems upside down: Daedalus successfully escapes from exile, but the son perishes; does Daedalus then represent the *Ars* and Icarus Ovid, who is the victim of it? This marries poorly with Ovid's constant

#### IV. iii. SUPPLANTING THE GODS

While Phaethon does succumb to the same fate as the Giants in the end – being smitten by Jupiter’s thunderbolt – it is important to note that Phaethon is, in some ways, successful. He perversely fulfils the duties of the Sun at *Met.* 2. 329-32 when the light from the fires is enough to see by while the grieving Sun obscures his face and deprives the world of sunlight; *aliquisque malo fuit usus in illo* (*Met.* 2. 332) Ovid comments, ironically.<sup>99</sup> Moreover, he succeeds in supplanting the power of the gods: that is, he is successfully gigantomachic. The effect of Phaethon’s flight is an arson on the earth. This is the very punishment which Jupiter first considered inflicting on the world at *Met.* 1. 253-61 to chastise humanity after the transgressions of Lycaon. That Phaethon is doing what Jupiter would have done is shown by the fact that Jupiter at *Met.* 1. 257 rejects the ekpyrosis as a punishment of Lycaon in case it might burn the *regia caeli*; it is precisely this phrase for heaven which Tellus uses to warn Jupiter that heaven is in danger of being destroyed at 2. 298. As the flood is a grandiose demonstration of the power of the gods over the human race, so Phaethon, regardless of whether it was intentional and despite his

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description of himself as the father of his poems in the exile poetry (e.g. *Tr.* 3. 1. 65). Perhaps then Icarus represents the *Ars* itself, exiled from the public libraries. In any case, if the *Met.* version was an exilic apology for the *Ars* it is surprising that Ovid omitted his stress on the fact that it is not gigantomachic. Perhaps a more revealing observation is that whereas the observers on the ground in the *Ars* drop their fishing-rods in dumbfounded amazement, in the *Met.* they think that Daedalus and Icarus are gods (*Met.* 8. 217-20); this perhaps indicates a step up in the poet’s confidence, that, at the mid-way point, while the flight is still ultimately unsuccessful, the poem is looking more positive than the terrified boy who was out of control before. Morgan (2003) 78-9 suggests that the *remigium alarum* signifies an epic means of propulsion, which Icarus loses by flying too high, presumably similarly to Phaethon’s epic vehicle. The problem with this is that Icarus dies through over-confidence and pleasure in his ability to fly high, whereas Phaethon has to be stopped from continuing his journey over which he has no control. Perhaps Ovid is writing in a warning to himself that, now he has got the hang of the poem, he must not go too far.

<sup>99</sup> The irony is also present in Phaethon’s impersonation of his father, as Ginsberg (1989) 223-4 points out: Phaethon’s garb is *purpureus* like the Sun’s light, and his hair burns with red flames; these likenesses are ‘obliterated by the fact that Phaethon dies by means of the very fire his father generates.’





Tragedia, when first introduced in *Am.* 3. 1, is described thus: *uenit et ingenti uiolenta Tragoedia passu | fronte comae torua, palla iacebat humi* (*Am.* 3. 1. 11-12).<sup>101</sup> The defeat of Neptune here may therefore remind the reader of the defeat of Tragedia at the hands of Elegia in the contest for Ovid's poetic allegiance in *Am.* 3. 1 suggesting not only that, again, the higher genres have been defeated by a lower, but also that the higher genres by themselves, without interference, are no longer capable of an act of generic daring, as when Virgil used *audere* in the *Georgics* of his generic innovation. Neptune's inability to draw himself forth from his own waters suggests an incapacity to be effective in any environment other than his own, in other words, a lack of adaptability for the way in which control of the poem has wrenched away from the command of the Olympians. The negative way in which Neptune's *ausum* is expressed, in contrast to the positive gloss put on Phaethon's, underlines how what is pathetic for divinity is admirable in the mortal.

More significant in terms of Gigantomachy is the displacement of Jupiter. Commentators note that lines 2. 178-80, where Phaethon drops the reins and thus loses all control of the horses, are an allusion to a Virgilian description of Jupiter:

ut uero summo despexit ab aethere terras

infelix Phaethon penitus penitusque iacentes,

palluit

*Met.* 2. 178-80

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<sup>101</sup> Prior to the *Metamorphoses*, *toruus* is only found in Ovid at *Am.* 3. 1. 12 above, *Ars* 2. 190 (of boars), 309 (Medusa), 453 (a woman) and *Her.* 2. 69 (Procrustes).

et iam finis erat, cum Iuppiter aethere summo  
despiciens mare ueliuolum terrasque iacentis  
litoraue et latos populos, sic uertice caeli  
constitit et Libyae defixit lumina regnis.

*Aen.* 1. 223-6

In the *Aeneid*, Jupiter, after Venus' interrogation, will deliver from this position the great prophecy which will lay out the path of the poem and the future Rome, providing the teleological structure for the epic. Phaethon's brazen usurpation of power is strongly highlighted by this allusion: Phaethon is in the physical position in the sky which, in the *Aeneid*, connotes complete control over the world and the world of the poem. The importance of this physical position in expressing power over the poem is reasserted at *Met.* 2. 306 when Jupiter seeks the same position himself from which to deliver his thunderbolts against Phaethon and bring to an end Phaethon's brief reign: *summam petit arduus arcem*. The Virgilian antecedent, as the introduction to an espousal of a rigorously ordered sequence of events, leads the reader to expect a teleological follow-up. In its place Ovid presents a rejection of order: the horses run *sine lege* (*Met.* 2. 204). While the structure of the *Metamorphoses* is clearly extremely intricately devised – even if we cannot, and never will, agree on precisely how or why it was so designed<sup>102</sup> – the dropping of the reins here, given the Virgilian allusion, may be taken as a rejection of an

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<sup>102</sup> The backlash to Otis (1970) alone has kept half the world's Latinists in business in these hard times of Classical recession. For other *loci* of frustrated expectation see the programmatically labyrinthine description of the river Meander at *Met.* 8. 162-6 with Hollis (1970) *ad loc.*. See Barchiesi (1997) 182-3, however, for a summary of the generally accepted view of the division of the poem into three sections of Gods, Heroes and History.

overt teleology for the poem, beyond the ambiguous *mea tempora* of *Met.* 1. 4.<sup>103</sup> The (disingenuous) suggestion that the course of the poem will be directed by *impetus* (*Met.* 2. 203) allows the reader to contrast the coming experience of the poem with that of reading the *Aeneid*: the reader should not necessarily expect any particular outcome or any political motivation for the work as a whole. The reader is emancipated from the Augustan *Diktat* of a Jovian prophecy.

Phaethon's Jovian command of the poem is hinted at elsewhere. When the Sun tries to dissuade Phaethon from attempting to drive the chariot, he implicitly compares him to Jupiter by pointing out the latter's inability to drive it:

uasti quoque rector Olympi,  
qui fera terribili iaculatur fulmina dextra,  
non agat hos currus: et quid maius Ioue habemus?                      *Met.* 2. 60-2

The Sun finds the natural point of comparison to Phaethon's attempt to be that of a putative attempt of Jupiter, which points out all the things which Phaethon is not. Jupiter is already a *rector*, the ruler of Olympus (*OLD* s.v. *rector* 4b), but this word could also mean 'charioteer' (*OLD* s.v. *rector* 2). Thus in making the attempt to drive the car, Phaethon is described as trying to be greater than Jove than whom there is nothing greater (*Met.* 2. 62) and usurp his position as a *rector* – certainly a gigantomachic act of

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<sup>103</sup> On Ovid's refusal to embrace an overt Augustan teleology in the *Metamorphoses* see Barchiesi (1997) esp. 184-97.

hubris.<sup>104</sup> The Sun repeats the comparison after Jupiter has killed his son, challenging Jove to have a punt at the chariot himself:

ipse agat ut saltem, dum nostras temptat habenas,  
orbatura patres aliquando fulmina ponat!  
tum sciet ignipedum uires expertus equorum  
non meruisse necem, qui non bene rexerit illos. *Met.* 2. 390-3

*Rexerit* recalls Jupiter's role as *rector* of Olympus, demonstrating that for a time Phaethon had attempted to emulate Jupiter's office. Moreover, it demonstrates that for a time Phaethon had *surpassed* Jupiter, not only taking his place but doing something Jupiter would not even attempt. Again, then, Phaethon's gigantomachic assault was at least temporarily, if perversely, successful.

#### IV. iv. REVERSING *Am.* 2. 1

Looking beyond Phaethon's gigantomachic usurpation of Olympian power, it is notable that this episode of *Met.* 2. reverses the structure of *Am.* 2. 1, in which Ovid claims to begin writing a Gigantomachy which he fails to complete. It is my contention that in the Phaethon Ovid fulfils his earlier intention to write a Gigantomachy, while at the same time innovatively reversing its tropes.

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<sup>104</sup> Even if the implication that the *rector* is incapable of being a *rector* is paradoxical!

#### IV. iv. a. AN OPEN AND SHUT CASE

The cue for Phaethon to begin his flight is the appearance of Dawn:

ecce, uigil nitido patefecit ab ortu

purpureas Aurora fores et plena rosarum

atria: diffugiunt stellae, quarum agmina cogit

Lucifer et caeli statione nouissimus exit.

*Met.* 2. 112-15

The arrival of dawn is a standard epic *topos* for propelling the action. Indeed, this dawn may be designed to recall a specific dawn of Ennius, *interea fugit albus iubar Hyperionis cursum | inde patefecit radiis rota candida caelum* (Enn. *Ann.* fr. 557 Skutsch).<sup>105</sup> The appearance of Dawn and the Sun's path across the sky are used by Virgil prominently at *Aen.* 6. 535-8 to stop Aeneas wasting time with the shade of Deiphobus, and at 7. 25-36 to mark Aeneas' arrival at the mouth of the Tiber and the opening of the second, martial half of the *Aeneid*. Independently of these images, however, Ovid uses the arrival of dawn as an anti-elegiac device. In *Am.* 1. 13, Ovid delivers a failed *suasoria* to Aurora

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<sup>105</sup> Moore-Blunt and Barchiesi *ad* 2. 112. Loos (2008) 279 seems to think that Dawn's appearance is delayed, saying that while Dawn appears at *Met.* 2. 112, her actual rising is delayed until after the Sun's instructions to 2. 144. This is not the case. Aurora does rise at 2. 112; this is the cue for him to order the Hours to prepare the horses (2. 118-21) while he gives his final instructions. When those instructions are over he stresses that the flight is now unavoidable by alluding, in ring composition, to the presence of Dawn: *non est mora libera nobis! | poscimur: effulget tenebris Aurora fugatis* (2. 143-4). The appearance of the dawn glow and the sight of the Sun are, of course, not simultaneous. For a perfect explanation of this sequence of events cf. Silius Italicus *Punica* 16. 229-32: *iamque nouum terris pariebat limine primo | egrediens Aurora diem, stabulisque subibant | ad iuga Solis equi, necdum ipse ascenderat axem, | sed prorupturis rutilabant aequora flammis*.

Furthermore, *poscimur* (*Met.* 2. 144) may well have the poetic sense of Hor. *C.* 1. 32. 1, 'we are asked for a poem'. In that case the way that dawn is a cue for an epic poetic episode is stressed – but see Nisbet & Hubbard *ad loc.* for defence of the reading *poscimus*.

begging her not to rise and bring to an end his night of passion.<sup>106</sup> At lines 11-24, Ovid lists the miseries and toils that the arrival of dawn brings, including driving a soldier to take up arms (*Am.* 1. 13. 14), which might be a subtle reminder of the use of this device to counter-act delay in epic.

It seems apparent that the reader is supposed to be reminded of this poem, as the Sun delivers his final instruction that it is time for Phaethon to begin his journey by inverting one of Ovid's commands to Aurora in *Am.* 1. 13, and directly relates that instruction to the appearance of Aurora. The Sun states,

dum loquor, Hesperio positas in litore metas

umida nox tetigit; non est mora libera nobis!

poscimur: effulget tenebris Aurora fugatis.

corripe lora manu, uel, si mutabile pectus

est tibi, consiliis, non curribus utere nostris!

*Met.* 2. 142-6

The two references to the time of day are again echoes of Virgil,<sup>107</sup> encouraging the reader to see the coming action as a necessity of a Virgilian thrust. In support of this temporal necessity, the imperative *corripe lora manu* reverses Ovid's metrically identical plea at *Am.* 1. 13. 10, *roscida purpurea supprime lora manu*.<sup>108</sup> There are no other parallels for the construction '2 s. imp. *lora manu*' until later in Ovid's career at *Pont.* 2.

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<sup>106</sup> McKeown (1989) 337-9 traces this *topos* back to Hom. *Od.* 23. 241-6, where Odysseus wishes to prolong his reunion night with Penelope, and through lyric and Hellenistic elegy to Propertius 2. 18 A. 9-14 and 3. 20. 13-14. Ovid also uses the device at *Her.* 18. 111-14.

<sup>107</sup> *Met.* 2. 143 ~ *Aen.* 12. 74, *neque enim Turno mora libera mortis* (on which as a premonition of disaster see Barchiesi *ad loc.*); *Met.* 2. 144 ~ *Aen.* 3. 521, *rubescebat stellis Aurora fugatis*.

<sup>108</sup> None of the commentators on the *Metamorphoses* or the *Amores* make this connection.

8. 24 in an appeal to Caesar, *iustaque uindictae supprime lora tuae*.<sup>109</sup> Thus in the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid reverses his former elegiac imperative at Dawn's appearance to emphasize the epic temporal thrust, again situating the ride in an apparently anti-elegiac context.

The appearance of Dawn is unusual in a further respect. At *Met.* 2. 112-13, Aurora opens her *purpureas fores*. *Fores* do not in and of themselves have a grandiose or diminutive force in Latin, being cognate with the standard word for 'door' in Indo-European languages,<sup>110</sup> and indeed Ovid uses the word in the *Metamorphoses* frequently to mean the doors of palaces, among all other kinds of buildings.<sup>111</sup> Nonetheless, the word seems to take on greater significance here. Firstly, it is unusual for Dawn to be described in terms of the opening of doors at all. The only similar description comes from Catullus 64, where Aurora is said to emerge from beneath the threshold of the Sun: *Aurora exoriente uagi sub limina Solis* (Cat. 64. 271);<sup>112</sup> even here there is no explicit mention of doors being opened. If Dawn is described as leaving a specific location at all, the usual situation is for her to leave either Ocean (e.g. Hom. *Il.* 19. 1-2, *Od.* 22. 197-8, Theoc. *Id.* 2. 147-8) or the bed of her husband Tithonus (as at *Am.* 1. 13. 1-2; cf. Hom. *Il.* 11. 1-2, *Od.* 5. 1-2, Virg. *Aen.* 4. 484-5). Of the references to Aurora in the *Metamorphoses*, in no instance other than in Book 2 does she depart from any specific location; she generally simply 'puts the stars to flight' *vel sim*.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> *Supprimere* is used in this context elsewhere by Ovid at *Ars* 3. 467 and *Met* 6. 709, but with *habenas*; Virgil uses the simplex *premere* with *habenas* at *Aen.* 1. 63 (of the winds).

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Gk. *θύρα*, Skt. *dvār*, O.H. Germ. *tor*, Engl. *door*.

<sup>111</sup> E.g. 1. 563 (temple of Apollo), 2. 768 (house of Invidia), 2. 819 (house of Herse), 3. 699 (Acoetes' prison), 4. 453 (gates of Hell) etc.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Virg. *Aen.* 6. 255 *primi sub limina Solis et ortus*; Silius Italicus *Punica* 16. 229-30 *nouum terris pariebat limine primo | egrediens Aurora diem*.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. *Met.* 3. 150, 4. 627, 5. 446, 6. 48, 7. 100, 15. 88.



It is my contention that this is the start of the reversal of *Amores* 2. 1. Ovid claims to have been happily working on a poetic description of the Gigantomachy (*Am.* 2. 1. 11-16) when he suddenly gives it up. The reason is that his mistress, apparently having no interest in epic poetry, closed the door on him and left, meaning she would have to be won back.<sup>114</sup>

in manibus nimbos et cum Ioue fulmen habebam,

quod bene pro caelo mitteret ille suo -

clausit amica fores! ego cum Ioue fulmen omisi;

excidit ingenio Iuppiter ipse meo.

Iuppiter, ignoscas! nil me tua tela iuuabant;

clausa tuo maius ianua fulmen habet.

*Am.* 2. 1. 15-20

Closed doors are an obvious point of departure for elegy, since much of the genre is devoted to their reopening by means of a *paraclausithyron*. At the closing of the doors, Ovid undoes the humorous image of himself literally holding Jupiter and his thunderbolts by saying that he dropped them. The image has been set up to create the opportunity for a pun on *fulmen* in line 20: the girl's bolt on the door has more power over Ovid than Jupiter's thunderbolt. Beyond this literal, physical interpretation of 15 and 17, however, lurks a metapoetic statement: in line 15 he had 'in hand' a project about Jupiter and clouds and thunderbolts (*TLL* s.v. *manus* 8. 363. 21-40), and in line 17 he abandons it (*TLL* s.v. *omitto* 9. 583. 29-39). In these senses the section has been compared to Cic. *Att.*

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<sup>114</sup> McKeown *ad Am.* 2. 1. 17-18. Ovid has taken the image from Tibullus: *magna loquor, sed magnifice mihi magna locuto | excutiunt clausae fortia uerba fores* (2. 6. 11-12).

13. 47, *instituta omisi; ea quae in manibus habebam abieci*.<sup>115</sup> Whereas in *Am.* 2. 1 the closing of doors led to the abandonment of the writing of a ‘straight’ Gigantomachy, further references to gigantomachic tropes in the Phaethon narrative suggest that Dawn’s significant opening of doors reverses this motif and heralds the start of a new Gigantomachy; albeit one that is altogether innovative in its exposition.

#### IV. iv. b. TELLUS AGAIN

The *fulmen* of Jupiter is, in the end, resumed in a spectacular fashion. The way in which this reassertion comes about, however, is not a simple act of retribution on Jupiter’s part, but rather comes through the supplication of Tellus. It is not in the tradition of the myth from Euripides, as far as can be told, that Tellus appears as Jupiter’s suppliant.<sup>116</sup> Anderson and Barchiesi both point out, convincingly, that part of the motivation is to have a bathetic substitute for Neptune, in order to undermine the image of his magnificence in *Aeneid* 1. 124-56: in contrast to Neptune’s swift, statesmanlike action comes a *suasoria* from a choking female deity to a god who has apparently not noticed any of this was going on.<sup>117</sup> ‘Mother Earth’ has, however, appeared before in the *Metamorphoses*, albeit under a different name. At *Met.* 1. 151-62, in Ovid’s brief narration of the actual Gigantomachy, it is Terra who, drenched with the blood of her own children, the Giants, breathed life into that blood to create the human race. Later, at *Met.* 1. 393, Deucalion and Pyrrha solve the riddle of the oracle, which said that to

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<sup>115</sup> McKeown *ad Am.* 2. 1. 15, 17-18.

<sup>116</sup> Tellus does appear at Philostratus *Imagines* 1. 11, but Diggle (1970) 204 convincingly argues that this appearance is borrowed from Ovid and not an earlier tradition.

<sup>117</sup> Anderson *ad* 270-1; Barchiesi *ad* 270-1. Jupiter’s taking his eye off the poem underlines Phaethon’s success in assuming his position.

recreate life the bones of the *magna...parens* had to be cast down, by understanding that by the ‘great mother’, ‘the earth’ is meant: *magna parens, terra*.<sup>118</sup> In both of these earlier instances, there can be confidence that *t/Terra* and *t/Tellus* are synonymous. While Deucalion calls the earth *terra* at *Met.* 1. 393, it is *tellus* at *Met.* 1. 416 which spontaneously gives life back to the other animals. While *Terra* is the mother of the Giants in Ovid’s Gigantomachy in the *Metamorphoses*, *Tellus* is their mother at *Amores* 2. 1. 13.

By comparing her role in *Am.* 2. 1 with that in the story of Phaethon, the strikingly different parts she plays suggest that Phaethon’s flight has turned the Gigantomachy on its head. In the Gigantomachy proper, she is responsible for the attack on the heavens, resentful of the Olympians’ treatment of her children, the Titans.<sup>119</sup> At *Am.* 2. 1. 13, Ovid uses Tellus’ role in the Gigantomachy to provide its focus: *cum male se Tellus ulta est*. This lack of success in assaulting heaven is contrasted with her eminent success in preventing a similar attack on the heavens in the *Metamorphoses*. Tellus’ complaints reveal the effect of the transfer of power from the gods’ hands into those of mortal characters: Tellus recognizes that death by fire ought to be Jupiter’s territory, from which he has been deprived, *liceat periturae uiribus ignis | igne perire tuo clademque auctore leuare!* (*Met.* 2. 280-1). The enjambed juxtaposition of *ignis | igne* here foreshadows the similar juxtaposition when Jupiter blasts Phaethon out of the sky at *Met.* 2. 313: *saeuis conpescuit ignibus ignes*. Thus control of fire comes to represent absolute control, and it

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<sup>118</sup> While Tarrant capitalizes *Terra* at 1. 157 and does not at 1. 393, it should be remembered that the ancients would not have differentiated the two in this way. Indeed, Ovid makes the divine personification and the earth itself almost indistinct with his corporeal description of the personified Tellus’ suffering at 2. 283-4 and her departure at 2. 303, *rettulit os in se* (cf. Barchiesi *ad* 272-303).

<sup>119</sup> So Apollodorus 1. 6. 1.

is only by fighting fire with fire that Jupiter can reassert his supremacy over Phaethon who had usurped it.

By stressing that such an assault on the earth ought to have been caused by Jupiter's fire, Tellus exposes the fact that what ought to have been delivered by divine justice is being delivered by accident. All previous Olympian activity has had a reason, however specious: Ovid's description of Tellus in *Am.* 2. 1 shows that Tellus' encouragement of the Gigantomachy had a basis in moral indignation for which she wanted revenge. Similarly, Jupiter's own destruction of the world in the flood was based on vengeance for the attack of Lycaon. Tellus' speech highlights that there is no such vengeful motive for Phaethon's activities, asking what she and his brother, Neptune, had done to deserve such a punishment (2. 285-92). Her expectations are misguided: Phaethon's motivation to mount the chariot was simply desire to do so; the dreadful consequences were unintentional. Tellus' misunderstanding of the situation, pinning the responsibility on Jupiter rather than on serendipity, demonstrates how the divine apparatus has been rendered nearly impotent by the forces of happenstance that have guided the episode. These unravelling forces set Tellus scrambling to directly reverse the role she had taken in the real Gigantomachy. Thus Phaethon's great innovation is both to enact the Gigantomachy and simultaneously turn it on its head.

#### IV. v. OTHER ALLUSIONS TO THE GIGANTOMACHY

There are two other important, brief allusions to the Gigantomachy. The first comes at the very end of the description of the flight over the mountains:

Caucasus ardet

Ossaque cum Pindo maiorque ambobus Olympus

aeriaeque Alpes et nubifer Appenninus.

*Met.* 2. 224-6

Barchiesi notes *ad* 2. 217-26 that the final mountains in the list, the Apennines, predict the final destination for Phaethon's flight, and that the penultimate mountains, Olympus, Pindus and Ossa are neighbours, unlike the others, but does not draw out their significance to the Gigantomachy. The fact that the mountains piled upon each other by other Giants, Otus and Ephialtes, to scale and assault heaven<sup>120</sup> are juxtaposed with Phaethon's final resting point in Italy suggests the overarching scheme of Phaethon's achievements: after reaching the *summa*, displacing the authority of Jove, he will be made to fall, just as the Giants tried to pile Olympus, Pindus and Ossa on top of each other to attack heaven before being themselves thwarted by the same means.

Aegaeon, a combatant in the Gigantomachy, is depicted at *Met.* 2. 10 in the decorative scheme of the palace not waging war against heaven. Wheeler reads this as a symbol of the 'peaceful aftermath to the flood'.<sup>121</sup> I should add that further it represents how superhuman threats to the prevailing order are at an end by this stage in the poem: any resemblance that mortal combatants show to the Giants' activities will be measured against their standard, and demonstrate again how mortal accident usurps the role of the epic monster.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Ovid had combined the stories of the Giants and Otus and Ephialtes at *Met.* 1. 151-62: *tum pater omnipotens misso perfrigit Olympum | fulmine et excussit subiecto Pelion Ossae* (154-5). Prop. 2. 1. 19-20 makes a similar conflation.

<sup>121</sup> Wheeler (2000) 39-40.

<sup>122</sup> Pace Brown (1986) 218, who thinks that the presence of Aegaeon suggests 'a possible undercurrent of violence', i.e. that could re-emerge. It makes far more sense for a piece of epic architecture glorifying a god

#### IV. vi. CONCLUSION

The preceding sections have examined how Phaethon's flight has appropriated many of the motifs of the traditional Gigantomachy, and turned many of them on their heads. This must now briefly be put in the context of Gigantomachies in Ovid's two predecessors in Latin *epos*, Lucretius and Virgil. Lucretius saw gigantomachic activities as overwhelmingly positive, and as a metaphor for Epicurus' damnation of *religio*:

multa tibi expediam doctis solacia dictis,  
religione refrenatus ne forte rearis  
terras et solem et caelum, mare sidera lunam,  
corpore diuino debere aeterna manere,  
proptereaque putes ritu par esse Gigantum  
pendere eos poenas inmani pro scelere omnis  
qui ratione sua disturbent moenia mundi  
praeclarumque uelint caeli restinguere solem,  
immortalia mortali sermone notantes.

Lucr. 5. 113-21

We should not believe that the structure of the world is divine; rather, as the Giants physically shook the walls of heaven, so we should emulate them and shake the *moenia mundi* with our *ratio* (Lucr. 5. 117-19); this mimics Epicurus' eruption from the *moenia mundi* at Lucr. 1. 72-3. Thus the traditionally impious Gigantomachy becomes

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to exalt the order and rule that the Olympians exert on earth by showing all threats to it pacified, rather than cowering in fear that they might re-emerge. Cf. the decorative scheme on Pallas' tapestry (*Met.* 6. 70-102).

praiseworthy.<sup>123</sup> Ovid clearly embraces the same Lucretian willingness for the separate parts of the world to be thrown together, for this is precisely the effect that Tellus warns Jupiter Phaethon's flight is having at *Met.* 2. 298-9; note also the pointed destruction of city walls at 2. 214. It should not be forgotten that the myths of Phaethon and Deucalion were, for Lucretius, mythological reflections of actual temporary dominance of fire and water, one of which would, eventually, overwhelm the world (*Lucretius* 5. 380-415).<sup>124</sup>

Conversely, Virgil takes a dim view of the Giants, presenting them suffering for their crimes in hell at *Aen.* 6. 580-4. At the end of the storm sequence in *Aeneid* 1, Virgil presents Jupiter intervening to prevent the collapse of the elements of the world, strongly asserting divine order: *ni faciat, maria ac terras caelumque profundum | quippe ferant rapidi secum uerrantque per auras* (*Aen.* 1. 58-9). In contrast to this, Ovid's Jupiter's negligent ignorance of the similar damage Phaethon is wreaking until the last moment, and only then after the tip-off from Tellus, underlines Ovid's rejection of the Virgilian teleological Olympian model. Thus in embracing the Lucretian in presenting Phaethon as gigantomachic, against which Virgil had reacted so strongly, Ovid stresses further his reaction against Virgil in the construction of his new Latin epic poem.

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<sup>123</sup> Hardie (1986) 188-9.

<sup>124</sup> Hardie (1986) 191-2.

## V. FLIGHT INTO TERROR

Phaethon's flight is marked by his inability to follow the old advice of flying the middle path and strongly controlling the reins. Let us now examine the flight as delineated above into two broad sections: the first, in which he has a grip on the reins, and the second, in which that grip has been lost, to see how, in poetic terms, the flight might be further interpreted.

### V. i. 'UP TO THE HIGHEST HEIGHT'

*Mary Poppins*

The section in which Phaethon holds the reins allows him to reach the very top of heaven:

ut uero summo despexit ab aethere terras  
infelix Phaethon penitus penitusque iacentes,  
palluit

Beyond 'becoming Jupiter', reaching the top is of paramount importance for Ovid in metapoetic terms. This is most apparent in his *apologia* in the *Remedia Amoris*. He attributes the attacks of those who criticize his 'wanton muse' to envy:

ingenium magni liuor detractat Homeri:  
quisquis es, ex illo, Zoile, nomen habes.  
et tua sacrilegae laniarunt carmina linguae,



pertulit huc uictos quo duce Troia deos.

summa petit liuor; perflant altissima uenti:

summa petunt dextra fulmina missa Iouis.

*Rem.* 365-70

To prepare the ground for the defence of his didactic love poetry, Ovid establishes himself alongside Homer and Virgil as the victim of jealous attacks because they have reached the *summa*, or the pinnacle of their achievement. The attacks take the metaphorical form of Jupiter's thunderbolts. It is no new idea that those who reach the heights of greatness through ambition can be summarily brought down from them. Lucretius notes the same phenomenon in those who are ambitious in public life. Despite whatever desire they might have for quietude after achieving their aims, he says

nequiquam, quoniam ad summum succedere honorem

certantes iter infestum fecere viai,

et tamen e summo, quasi fulmen, deicit ictos

inuidia interdum contemptim in Tartara taetra,

inuidia quoniam, ceu fulmine, summa uaporant

plerumque et quae sunt aliis magis edita cumque.

*Lucr.* 5. 1123-8

Ovid has made two key advances on this model in the *Remedia*. First, he has changed political ambition to poetical ambition. Secondly, what was a simile for Lucretius<sup>125</sup> has become a metaphor for Ovid. Ovid goes on to say that *liuor* ought to 'burst itself'

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<sup>125</sup> And Livy, *etenim inuidiam tamquam ignem summa petere* (*AUC* 8. 10), and thus, one suspects, generally.

(*rumpere*, *Rem.* 389) because his fame, though great now, will soon become greater still (*Rem.* 389-92); that is, at this stage, the *Remedia* does not represent the *summa* of his poetic talents, even though the envious criticism he has received for it is akin to that received by the utmost achievements of Homer and Virgil. Thus Ovid establishes in a key passage the notion of reaching the highest height of poetic achievement and being blasted down from it by the thunderbolts of envy.

It is therefore crucial that Phaethon does achieve the distinction of reaching the very top. The method by which Phaethon reaches this apogee should be examined: the chariot is capable of reaching the zenith of the heavens precisely on account of its unaccustomed lightness. The chariot commences its upward trajectory only when the horses sense (*Met.* 2. 167) that the car is lighter than usual:

sed leue pondus erat nec quod cognoscere possent

Solis equi, solitaque iugum grauitate carebat...

...sic onere adsueto uacuus dat in aera saltus

succutiturque alte similisque est currus inani.

*Met.* 2. 161-2, 165-6

This takes the chariot straight up towards the constellations after the horses leave the oft-pounded track. It should first be noticed that this is quite different from Icarus' excessive height, which was caused by overconfidence in his flying apparatus: Phaethon's lift is the result solely of his innate levity.<sup>126</sup> This is elucidated by the two ship similes. Before

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<sup>126</sup> *Ars.* 2. 75-6; *Met.* 8. 223, *cum puer audaci coepit gaudere uolatu*. This is where Morgan (2003) errs: Morgan notes the similarities between Phaethon's and Icarus' journeys and disobediences (78-9), but fails to see that Phaethon did not intend to fly wildly about in the sky; indeed, his joy at taking the reins (*Met.* 2. 151-2) suggests that he took the instructions to handle them well on board. Rather, this was an

reaching the top, the car was similar to a ship that was merely unstable by virtue of being too light, and thus one that tends to veer off course (*Met.* 2. 163-4), whereas afterwards the car is like a ship driven forward by an unstoppable wind over which control is impossible (*Met.* 2. 184-6). That is, whereas the earlier situation is characterized by an inevitable, intrinsic instability, the second entails an exterior force overwhelming human ability. Thus the focus shifts from the lightness of the ensemble, that is, its unavoidable, innate qualities, to the incapability of the protagonist to overcome these deficiencies.

Words describing weight are frequently associated with differing levels of ‘seriousness’ between poetic genres. *Pondus* is itself used to describe the ‘gravity or dignity of language’ (*OLD* s.v. 7); for example, *quaecumque* (sc. *uerba*) *parum splendoris habebunt | et sine pondere erunt* (*Hor. Ep.* 2. 2. 111-12). *Leuis* is commonly used to connote ‘lighter’, ‘more flippant’, ‘less serious’ verse (*OLD* s.v. 14), and thus frequently refers to elegiac or neoteric poetry. *Grauis* represents that which is ‘not given to levity or frivolity, grave, serious, earnest, thoughtful etc.’ (*OLD* s.v. 12), and therefore, often, epic.<sup>127</sup> These ideas were invoked in the *recusatio* poem, *Am.* 1. 1, where Ovid claims initially, *arma graui numero uiolentaque bella parabam* (*Am.* 1. 1. 1), and then, disingenuously, tells the threatening Cupid, *nec mihi materia est numeris leuioribus apta* (*Am.* 1. 1. 19). A more striking parallel, however, comes in *Am.* 3. 1, where the ideas of the metaphorical lightness and weight of Tragedy and Elegy are rendered literal.<sup>128</sup> Tragoedia first introduces the notion of pressure by telling Ovid that by writing elegy his material ‘oppresses’ his genius: *materia premis ingenium. cane facta uirorum* (*Am.* 3. 1.

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unintentional result of his innate qualities. Icarus, on the other hand, does deliberately fly too high, enjoying the experience where Phaethon was terrified.

<sup>127</sup> Morgan (2003) 68.

<sup>128</sup> For a brief examination of these themes in *Am.* 3. 1, see Lee (1962) 169-70.

25). Tragoedia does not use the verb with its literal connotations of ‘weighing down’, but suggests that his poetic capabilities are not being stretched to their full potential by his amorous material; it would be paradoxical to have a ‘light’ genre ‘weighing down’ the poet. It is Elegia who throws this insult back at Tragoedia by wittily exploiting its ‘weight’ meaning: “*quid grauibus uerbis, animosa Tragoedia,*” dixit, | “*me premis? an numquam non grauis esse potes?*” (*Am.* 3. 1. 35-6).<sup>129</sup> In exploiting the literal meaning of *premo*, Elegia demonstrates that it is logically only possible for a perennially ‘heavy’ genre to ‘weigh anything down’; she goes on to point out that Tragoedia’s speech being delivered in elegiac couplets, ironically, does precisely this (*Am.* 3. 1. 37-8). Thus Elegia’s contrasting insistence on her own levity, by implication, refutes the accusation that she could be burdensome to Ovid’s genius: *sum leuis, et mecum leuis est, mea cura, Cupido;* | *non sum materia fortior ipsa mea* (*Am.* 3. 1. 41-2).<sup>130</sup> It is similarly Phaethon’s innate elegiac quality of levity which is responsible for propelling him to the *summa*.

Since Phaethon reaches the summit due to the innate qualities of his body rather than his ability or mental fortitude, it is notable that his body is pointedly described as he mounts the chariot: *occupat ille leuem iuuenali corpore currum* (*Met.* 2. 150). There is no parallel in Ovid for the use of *occupare* meaning ‘to occupy a vehicle’ with a complement in the ablative.<sup>131</sup> There is then no particular need for the phrase *iuuenali corpore*, which is the first reference to Phaethon’s body. Ovid does use this phrase to mean simply ‘boys’ bodies’ at *Met.* 4. 40, but as it describes there a transformation of bodies into fish (*uerterit in tacitos iuuenalia corpora pisces*), it is not so striking as

<sup>129</sup> Cf. Ovid’s own later experience of trying to write an Augustan Gigantomachy: *at si me iubeas domitos Iouis igne Gigantas* | *dicere, conantem debilitabit onus* (*Tr.* 2. 333-4).

<sup>130</sup> Cf. Hor. *Ars* 38-9, *sumite materiam uestris, qui scribitis, aequam* | *uiribus*.

<sup>131</sup> *Occupo* is otherwise only found with the ablative twice, both in the phrase *occupat amplexu* at *Fast.* 3. 509 and 6. 126. There are no parallel examples for *occupat...corpore currum* at *TLL* 9. 383. 82-4.

saying that Phaethon occupied the chariot ‘with his boyish body’.<sup>132</sup> As Bömer notes *ad loc.*, this description of the young body is derived from Virgil, who coined *iuuenalis* (as opposed to *iuuenilis*); both instances in Virgil bode well for Phaethon’s chances, as they suggest that there is greater strength than would first appear in the youthful body. Thus Entellus, the victor in the wrestling match, remarks, *cognoscite, Teucri, | et mihi quae fuerint iuuenali in corpore uires* (*Aen.* 5. 475). Later, the phrase is used to conjure pity for the doomed warrior Turnus: *adiuuat incessu tacito progressus et aram | suppliciter uenerans demisso lumine Turnus | pubentesque genae et iuuenali in corpore pallor* (*Aen.* 12. 219-21). There is still no doubt, however, that Turnus is a fighter of the first rank. Thus this description suggests latent might, and is far from negative; indeed, it complements Phaethon’s self-characterization as a young hero.<sup>133</sup>

Given this singular usage, however, it is worth considering the implications of the word *corpus* as a ‘body of poetic writing’. *Corpus* is used frequently to mean a collection of literary writings (*OLD* s.v. 16a; *TLL* 4. 1020. 62-1021. 39), and is so used by Ovid himself, for example in this description of the *Aeneid*: *nec legitur pars ulla magis de corpore toto, | quam non legitimo foedere iunctus amor* (*Tr.* 2. 535-6). If we read *iuuenali corpore* as having connotations of a literary body of text, then the whole phrase could be read as follows: “he mounted with chariot together with his collection of literary juvenilia”. That is, the poet Ovid is embarking on his new epic poetic voyage armed with his earlier work already in the bag, namely, the *Heroides*, *Amores*, *Medea* and pseudo-didactic love elegies. That Ovid considered these works as his juvenilia can be ascertained from a similar description of them in *Tristia* 2, when he claims that he

<sup>132</sup> Cf. 8. 557, *corpora turbineo iuuenalia flumine mersit*; 12. 166-7, *quod iuuenis corpus nullo penetrabile telo | inuictumque a uulnere erat*.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Ch. VI. ii.

attempted a poem glorifying Caesar but was not able to fulfil the challenge properly, thus returning to his earlier, lighter style: *ad leue rursus opus, iuuenalia [sic] carmina, ueni | et falso moui pectus amore meum* (Tr. 2. 339-40).

The parallels to *iuuenali corpore* in the *Aeneid* suggest that this existing *corpus* shows potential to engage in poetic activities which demand brawn, but it is clear from Phaethon's eventual demise that Ovid's existing record is not enough to propel him instantly into the realms of untroubled success in this new genre, be it from his own deficiencies or the envy of others at his bold attempt. However, it should not be forgotten that Ovid had previously described the success of his earlier works in moulding his career in terms of a chariot's journey uphill:

nam iuuat et studium famae mihi creuit honore;

principio cliui noster anhelat equus.

*Rem.* 393-4

In the *Remedia* Ovid describes his progress so far as that of a horse at the beginning of its voyage, its snorting signalling its impatience to progress on its uphill journey.<sup>134</sup> Since Ovid is describing here the same elegiac corpus he will go on to call his *juvenilia*, one can put the pieces of the puzzle together to show that it is not unsurprising that Phaethon's successful vault upwards to the highest height of poetic achievement springs from his success as an elegist – with his success so far, who would not have been proud to boast that Phoebus was his father! It is when he arrives, and finds himself very much in the hexametrical position of impersonating Jupiter that things start to unravel.

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<sup>134</sup> Henderson (1979) *ad* 395.

## V. ii. DOWN, DOWN, DEEPER AND DOWN

### *Status Quo*

It was noted above that the change in the contents of the ship similes suggests a shift from the innate quality of the ship causing it to move about to its inability to withstand outside forces. When the permanent damage to the earth begins to be described, it is notable that it is caused by the horses' unstoppable impulse to fly too low. After Phaethon has completed his assault on the heavens by rising to the top and threatening (and in turn being threatened by) the constellations and dropped the reins, the horses' movements are erratic. They do, at first, remain high up: *alto sub aethere fixis | incursant stellis rapiuntque per auia currum | et modo summa petunt* (*Met.* 2. 204-6). The vast majority of the damage, however, is caused when the horses plunge downwards and scorch the earth (*Met.* 2. 206-71), as the Sun predicted would happen should Phaethon *premere* the chariot.<sup>135</sup> They must be in a lower position than their previous heights by the time that Phaethon is killed, since the chariot runs beneath the moon at *Met.* 2. 208-9, and Jupiter strikes him from above at *Met.* 2. 306. Sharrock's reading of the instructions Daedalus gives to Icarus can clearly no longer apply. Sharrock ascribed the instruction not to fly too low to an instruction not to write merely subjective love elegies like the *Amores*, but rather keep the slightly higher 'middle path' of didactic. She deduces this from the unusualness of the instruction not to fly too low in the story.<sup>136</sup> It is apparent that a chariot and horses which have been described in terms of epic grandeur do not suddenly come to represent fey elegists in their destruction of the world once their elegiac charioteer has relinquished all semblance of command over them. Rather, what is

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<sup>135</sup> *Met.* 2. 135.

<sup>136</sup> Sharrock (1994) 137-9.

relevant is that Phaethon reaches the top on the coat-tails of his earlier career, and then abandons control of the chariot of the poem and lets it run its own course.

This abandonment of control is shown to be creatively destructive. Firstly, one must consider the fact that the results of the flight are described as *gravis*. When Jupiter makes his excuses for having to kill Phaethon with his thunderbolt, he says, *omnia fato l interitura graui* (*Met.* 2. 305-6). At first glance the description of this destruction as *gravis* evidently means that the fate of the earth was ‘serious’, ‘grievous’; but given the earlier emphasis on the uncharacteristic lack of *grauitas* of the chariot’s burden, the reader is drawn into considering the poetic implications of this weight terminology. Most obviously the irony shines forth that a *gravis* fate is dealt out by a *leuis* protagonist. The innate *leuitas* which achieved the poetically positive step of leaving the well-trodden path to reach the *summa*, has led to an unexpectedly epic / tragic outcome: we recall the *grauitas* so strongly attributed to Tragoedia at *Am.* 3. 1. 35-6. Thus the potential for a *leuis* poet to achieve *gravis* results is realized.

When considering what this *grauē fatum* is, it should be noticed that the destruction is not just epic but hyper-epic. The first victims of the fires are the agricultural countryside, its trees and crops (*Met.* 2. 212-13). These are the extra-mural aspects of civilization, of whose destruction Ovid says, in an authorial intervention, *parua queror* (*Met.* 2. 213). In contrast to these trifling victims, intra-mural civilization is destroyed:

magnae pereunt cum moenibus urbes,  
cumque suis totas populis incendia gentis  
in cinerem uertunt

*Met.* 2. 214-16



Great cities, walls, populations and races and their destruction are the topic of standard martial epic poetry; we need only think of the focus of the *Iliad* in the destruction of Troy or the aim of founding Rome and the departure from Carthage in the *Aeneid*.<sup>137</sup> The increase in size and importance to *magnae...urbes* mirrors the increase in task that Virgil establishes when he comes to write the second, martial half of the *Aeneid*: *maior rerum mihi nascitur ordo, | maius opus moueo* (*Aen.* 7. 44-5). The phrase *in cinerem uertunt* recalls Penelope's description of the destruction of Troy in the *Heroides*: *uersa est in cineres sospite Troia uiro* (*Her.* 1. 24). Thus it is remarkable that Phaethon's flight achieves the ideal result of a martial epic in under three lines! The destruction which follows is therefore hyper-epic: the destruction of almost the entire land, sea and sky beyond epic's traditional field of devastation. Thus in not following the standard rules of writing poetry, Phaethon is spectacularly, hyperbolically successful in surpassing expected standards of epic poetry.

When the description of that hyper-epic destruction is made, however, it contains a striking mixture of *grauis* and *leuis* elements. This is exemplified by the way in which the *grauis fatum* is described in the two catalogues of mountains (*Met.* 2. 217-26) and rivers (*Met.* 2. 238-59). Barchiesi *ad* 2. 217-26 gives a full exposition of the nature of the catalogues, commenting both that 'il disordine è un criterio normale nei cataloghi poetici antichi, che evitano di essere liste prosaiche' but also that 'Ovidio porta all' estremo questo effetto'. He notes that the final mountains in the list, the Apennines, predict the final destination for Phaethon's flight, giving notice of a deliberate patterning, but that the rest of the description is a whirlwind ride at random around the mountains of the known

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<sup>137</sup> Cf. *Aen.* 1. 12 *urbs antiqua fuit*: 'the *Aeneid* is a progression from the *destruction* of a city to the *construction* of a city' (Hardie (1986) 196).

world, leaping from Athos in mainland Greece to Taurus in Cilicia, to Tmolus in Lydia and so on. This whirlwind is, of course, deliberately discursive, to represent Phaethon's departure from the beaten track. Thus the extent of the destruction is described in an ultra-discursive way using an epic *topos* which had developed some discursive qualities through its evolution in Hellenistic poetry;<sup>138</sup> the very destruction caused is presented in a dazzling *tour de force*, blending elements taken from both types of poetry.<sup>139</sup>

Furthermore, the combination of gravity unleashed by levity is paraded as a source of literary invention. Between the two catalogues come two permanent changes to the earth which arise from his enterprise:

sanguine tum credunt in corpora summa uocato

Aethiopum populos nigrum traxisse colorem;

tum facta est Libye raptis umoribus aestu

arida

*Met.* 2. 235-8

The first of these changes, that of the blackening of the Ethiopians' skin, is notably contrary to the source for this episode, Euripides' *Phaethon*. In the opening fragment of

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<sup>138</sup> For a structural analysis of these catalogues see Kyriakidis (2007) 46-51, who demonstrates that 'in spite of each part's sinuosity the total is purely erratic' (47), and that this erratic pattern is entirely intentional. She also points out that the only unifying element in these catalogues is the fact that the objects within it are being enumerated at the moment of their destruction by an erratic flight, giving the erratic pattern an interpretive as well as a descriptive role (49).

<sup>139</sup> The catalogue of rivers has a similar quality: while it starts off with random leaps around the known world, it becomes easier to track as he veers from the Nile in the south to the Hebrus and Strymon in the north and then west, to the Rhine, Rhone, Po and Tiber (254-59) drawing him closer to the Eridanus (so Jones (2005) 89). The discursive catalogue of rivers should be compared with the strict structure of Virgil's river catalogue at *Geo.* 4. 366-73, which culminates in the Eridanus (372-3). Jones (2005) 85-8 demonstrates that this catalogue is intricately bound with Clymene's, Phaethon's mother's, catalogue of nymphs at *Geo.* 4. 333-50. Again, it seems, with Clymene's son's catalogue of rivers (to invoke the model of literary parentage), Ovid is directly challenging the rigid structures of his epic predecessor. N.B. the original catalogue of rivers at Hes. *Theog.* 337-70 is notably, if anachronistically, 'Ovidian' in its seemingly random arrangement of Greek and foreign rivers.

that play, Clymene explains that she lives in the first land which the sun strikes after rising, and notes,

καλοῦσι δ' αὐτὴν γείτονες μελάμβροτοι

Ἴω θαεννὰς Ἥλιου θ' ἱπποστάσεις.

Eur. *Phaeth.* fr. 771. 4-5 D

Thus their neighbours are already black in the source text.<sup>140</sup> Similarly, Euripides' Libya is already devoid of moisture; in a messenger speech, in which the flight-instructions to Phaethon are reported, Helios said,

ἔλα δὲ μήτε Λιβυκὸν αἰθέρ' εἰσβαλὼν

(κρᾶσιν γὰρ ὑγρὰν οὐκ ἔχων ἀψίδα σὴν

καίων διοίσει)...

Eur. *Phaeth.* fr. 779. 168-70 D<sup>141</sup>

Thus Phaethon's flight appears to create two of the conditions that were already present in the key source text, the latter of which was a key element of the Sun's instructions for a safe flight. Arguably these are both neat enough metamorphoses to be inflicted by burning and fairly unremarkable in themselves. However, the juxtaposition of the two by Ovid and the contrariness of them both to preludes to Phaethon's flight in Euripides' play suggest a deliberate 'prewriting' of the tragic version and rewriting of the literary

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<sup>140</sup> This has an etymological significance, as Barchiesi points out *ad* 1. 778 and 2. 235-6. Phaethon's name when broken down means 'burning light' from *φᾶος*, 'light', and *αἶθω*, 'I burn'. The Ethiopians' name means 'burnt faces', from *αἶθω*, again, and *ᾤψ*. Thus, he notes, the naming of the Ethiopians at 1. 778 is a fallacious anticipation of their state after Phaethon's ride. By implication Clymene and her family are not black-skinned (Collard (1995) *ad loc.*).

<sup>141</sup> *καίων* Richards: *κάτω* Par *διοίσει* Diggle: *δίεισι* Par *διήσει* Faber.

tradition. By creating the landscape required for the earlier tragedy using a narrative which emphasizes the clash between high and low genres, he implies that this new technique of genre mixing is overwriting the models that inspired it. This stresses the novelty and creativity of the enterprise of the *Metamorphoses*.<sup>142</sup> Such successes resulting from a deficiency is analogous to Ovid's love of elegy because it was flawed: *et pedibus uitium causa decoris erat* (*Am.* 3. 1. 10): clearly this sentiment continues to be expressed in Ovid's hexameter, flawed charioteer.<sup>143</sup>

### V. iii. SUCCESS IN FAILURE

What has been argued so far is that Phaethon's flight automatically propels him to the position analogous to the highest achievement of poetic composition, whence he hands over to serendipity command of the path of the chariot of the poem, which manifests itself as a productive mixture of high and low poetry, satisfying some of the conditions for both: epic destruction on the one hand and innovative trail-blazing on the other. And yet one cannot forget that Phaethon does not come to a good end: he is blasted from the sky by Jupiter's thunderbolts. Here, then, the parallels to the effect of envy on poets from the *Remedia* must be remembered:

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<sup>142</sup> Wise (1977) 51 states that 'these cosmic metamorphoses are clearly fictive accounts of racial history [and] imply the force of the imagination in the real universe'. She has for once touched on a kernel of truth that the artist profoundly changes the world he inhabits, even though Phaethon himself is notably unchanged by it. Her argument that it relies on the 'force of the imagination', however, exposes the contradiction in her thesis. Elsewhere she tries to argue that Phaethon fails in his flight due to his 'inability to conceive truth imaginatively' (50) thus misinterpreting the Scorpion as a real scorpion and unable to conceive of it as anything else. It is hard to reconcile the fact that a charioteer who has no imagination is necessary for the force of that imagination to be unleashed.

<sup>143</sup> On the aptness of Seneca's criticism that Ovid was 'too much in love with his own flaws' (*Contr.* 2. 2. 12) when compared to this passage of *Am.* 3. 1, see Cunningham (1958).

ingenium magni liuor detractat Homeri:

quisquis es, ex illo, Zoile, nomen habes.

et tua sacrilegae laniantur carmina linguae,

pertulit huc uictos quo duce Troia deos.

summa petit liuor; perflant altissima uenti:

summa petunt dextra fulmina missa Iouis.

*Rem.* 365-70

Now the importance of reaching the *summa* before dropping the reins becomes apparent. It is due to the very unorthodoxy of his method that Phaethon can reach the height of heaven. It can therefore be argued that Ovid used the story of Phaethon, for whom this fate was inevitable, as a pre-emption of the attacks against Ovid the *Metamorphoses* might have been expected to attract for this very unorthodoxy: a hitherto witty elegiac poet having an (over-)ambitious go at hexameter epic. By laying it out for his critics, Ovid both shows off his dazzling new poetry, acknowledges his own trepidation in doing so in Phaethon's terror, and defuses the critics all at the same time.

The idea of the early, experimental seeming part of the work attracting envious criticism is reinforced by looking forward to Ovid's *sphragis* in *Met.* 15, where he writes that it is not possible for the *Metamorphoses* as a whole to suffer the same fate as Phaethon:

iamque opus exegi, quod nec Iouis ira nec ignis

nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere uestustas.

*Met.* 15. 871-2

This evidently owes much to Horace's *uale* to the first three books of *Odes*, but the differences in vocabulary are revealing. Horace's achievement is a *monumentum aere perennius* (Hor. C. 3. 30. 1), whereas Ovid's is an *opus*, a word with more explicit connotations of a 'poetic' work. Horace conceives the imperviousness of his monument to attack in terms of the threats to a physical marker: *quod non imber edax, non Aquilo impotens | possit diruere aut innumerabilis | annorum series et fuga temporum* (Hor. C. 3. 30. 3-5). Ovid transforms this metaphor into something more startling: his *opus* will not be the victim of *Iouis ira nec ignis*. This could be translated in one of two ways, as 'which neither Jupiter's anger, nor fire, nor sword, nor biting old age would be able to destroy', or, taking the line break as strong, 'which neither Jupiter's anger nor *his* fire... would be able to destroy.' When read with this latter possibility in mind, Horace's threats have been changed to the motives of Jupiter in the first two books of the *Metamorphoses*. While Jupiter's 'anger' is nowhere a motivation for the destruction of Phaethon, it is his motivation for the flood, which was prompted by the actions of the other gigantomachic character in the opening of the *Metamorphoses*, Lycaon. At *Met.* 1. 166, when Jupiter summons the council of the gods, Ovid writes *dignas Ioue concipit iras*; at 1. 274, before involving the oceans as well, he writes *nec caelo contenta suo est Iouis ira*, the only other instance of the whole phrase in the *Metamorphoses*.<sup>144</sup> *Iouis ignis* is evidently the cause of Phaethon's demise: *intonat et dextra libratum fulmen ab aure | misit in aurigam pariterque animaue rotisque | expulit et saevis conpescuit ignibus ignes* (*Met.* 2. 311-

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<sup>144</sup> It should be noted, however, that Ovid will go on to use *Iouis ira* as metonymy for his own downfall, e.g. at *Tr.* 1. 5. 78, and often. The reuse of this phrase in the *Tristia*, moreover, is often designed to denote Augustus as Jupiter to the exiled Ovid's Phaethon (Warde Fowler (1915) in pursuit of Housman (1915) 37-8). The reception of the Phaethon story in the *Tristia* is deserving of its own complete study, which there was not time to do here; some information on the subject may be gleaned from Evans (1975) 4 n. 8, Nisbet (1982) 53-4, Davisson (1993) 216; for tragedy in the exile poetry in general see the excellent survey of Galasso (1987), which includes Roman tragedy, and Gibson (1999) 30-1.

13); cf. *Met.* 2. 396-7, *missos quoque Iuppiter ignes | excusat*. Thus, while criticism may have brought down Phaethon and the unorthodox poetics he embodies early on, the whole poem has proven that such criticism was unjustified. Not only will the poem withstand the fire and anger of Jupiter, and thus criticism, but the poet's soul will not only reach the top of the sky but soar *above* the stars: *parte tamen meliore mei super alta perennis | astra ferar, nomenque erit indelibile nostrum* (*Met.* 15. 875-6).<sup>145</sup>

The elevation of Ovid's soul at the end of the poem highlights how the traditional catasterism of Phaethon into the constellation Auriga is under erasure. Ovid himself was familiar with this myth, for it is under this name he refers to Phaethon in the *Amores*: *quid referam... | flere genis electra tuas, Auriga, sorores* (*Am.* 3. 12. 35, 37).<sup>146</sup> This catasterism does not occur, of course, in the *Metamorphoses* version, but, at the moment of his death, Phaethon is referred to as *aurigam* (*Met.* 2. 312) and this is the title allotted to him on his tombstone at *Met.* 2. 327, implying that at the moment of his death the reader is supposed to recall his alternative ending. Bömer, in leaving the reason for the

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<sup>145</sup> It is worth noting that Ovid seems to suggest that the criticism of the Phaethon narrative would have been unjustified. Recalling the importance of receiving the instructions from the father as a symbol of literary dynasty (Ch. 4, n. 2), it is my contention that Ovid subverts this trope to show the father's approval – or at least forgiveness – of the son's failure to follow his precepts. The Sun's grief for his son, willingness to forgive him for his crimes, and request that Jupiter put down his *orbatura patres...fulmina* (*Met.* 2. 391-3) could show Ovid suggesting that his literary forefathers would have approved of what he had done, even if they would not have done it themselves.

<sup>146</sup> Galinsky (1975) 49; text as printed in the 2nd Loeb edition of Showerman-Goold (1977). Some controversy surrounds this identification. Diggle (1970) 195 n.1 claims that the catasterism is first explicitly recorded by Claudian, *De VI Cons. Hon.* 172 (whence Nonnus *D.* 38. 424-31?), stating that Kenney is right to print *auriga* at *Am.* 3. 12. 37 in his *OCT* as that line 'proves nothing'. However, recently Loos (2008), drawing on Hollis's observation that catasterism was a favourite Hellenistic form of metamorphosis which was based in an astronomical fascination ((1970) *ad Met.* 8. 177-82), has attempted to use the astronomical elements in the Phaethon narrative to demonstrate the undererasure of the catasterism. Loos makes a lengthy and unconvincing attempt to explain Auriga's position in the sky among the constellations as permanently flouting the Sun's instructions, to do so relying exclusively on coincidences between the Sun's instructions in Ovid and Helios' in Nonnus (282-6). Far more instructive, however, is his citation (287) of Ovid's contemporary Hyginus at *Astr.* 2. 42. 1324-7, *Phaethonta...ab Ioue fulmine percussus in Eridanum deiectus est et a Sole inter sidera perlatus*, which demonstrates that a catasterism was associated with Phaethon from an early date. For the absence of the naming of the constellation, he cites Ovid's account of the creation of the constellation Engonasin: *quem pater omnipotens inter caua nubila raptum | quadriiugo curru radiantibus intulit astras* (*Met.* 9. 271-2).

omission an open question, points out *ad* 2. 312 that catasterism is not a common feature of the *Metamorphoses*, even though in close proximity to Phaethon's story lie several other unwritten catasterisms: those of Cynus (2. 367), Ocyroe (2. 633) and Chiron (2. 652). Nonetheless, there may be a more significant purpose. Phaethon's failure to rise back up to the *summa* of the sky after death, and instead his being cemented onto a written monument which parades his failure to stay in the sky, underlines the damning effect of the *Iouis ignes*; still naming him *auriga*, however, suggests his latent potential to become a constellation. In contrast, Ovid's better part achieves a 'super-catasterism' at *Met.* 15. 875-6 where it flies 'super *alta...astra*', thus fulfilling and surpassing Phaethon's potential to be raised among the stars in completing the daring project.

This movement from a written memorial to a disembodied soul provides further evidence for a reading of the *Metamorphoses* by Joseph Farrell. Farrell argues that the *sphragis* represents the separation of the immortal poetic voice from the poet's mortal 'body', or *corpus*. At *Met.* 15. 873, Ovid concedes that his *corpus* may be destroyed; the phrase *corpus huius* serves a dual purpose to mean both Ovid's mortal flesh and his *corpus* of work which is written on perishable papyrus. Ovid thereby indicates how he is preparing 'to shed his own body and with it the bookish form of his writerly text in order to attain the status of pure, disembodied voice that will establish his reputation as an author for all time.'<sup>147</sup> Farrell details how other characters early in the *Metamorphoses* have been associated explicitly with text to evoke the problematic relationship between the poem's written and spoken forms. He cites the example of Daphne, who, in having her *corpus* transformed into a tree becomes encased in a *tenui libro* (1. 549): thus in being wrapped in bark she becomes to resemble a Callimachean book-roll. Her inability to

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<sup>147</sup> Farrell (1999) 139; cf. Hardie (1993) 94.



speak thereafter he takes as representing the loss of the voice in the process of being written. Io, similarly, is turned into a mute writer who writes about the transformations to her *corpus*; weak victims are compelled to become writers rather than speakers. He goes on to see the death of Orpheus as marking a turning point and a growth in confidence in the poetic voice: here is an example of a poet whose voice outlives his body, the body whose fault it was, by the turn of the head, that he suffered disaster.<sup>148</sup> He notes that the Orpheus story in its construction, briefly overlapping the book division between Books 10 and 11 is ‘the mirror image of the Phaethon cycle which begins only about thirty lines from the end of Book 1 and continues some 400 lines into Book 2.’<sup>149</sup>

By pursuing the links between this set of ideas, the *sphragis* and the Phaethon story, a corollary to Farrell’s argument can be drawn. Whereas Phaethon could have had a catasterism, his death results instead in the burial of a body not metamorphosed beyond being broken up, and his commemoration is written down: *corpora dant tumulo, signant quoque carmine saxum* (*Met.* 2. 326). It is important that Ovid emphasizes the fact that the inscription is made in verse: it is a *carmen*. Thus a dead body is buried and commemorated with another body of poetic text.<sup>150</sup> Using Farrell’s reading, this written

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<sup>148</sup> It is very important to note here that Orpheus is characterized very similarly to Ovid himself in *Am.* 2. 1, where the (traditional) Gigantomachy is abandoned for love elegy: *Iouis est mihi saepe potestas | dicta prius: cecini plectro grauiore Gigantas | sparsaque Phlegraeis uictricia fulmina campis. | nunc opus est leuiore lyra, puerosque canamus | dilectos superis inconcessisque paellas | ignibus attonitas meruisse libidine poenam* (*Met.* 10. 149-54). Firstly, change in genre from *Am.* 2. 1 has been transplanted into hexameters, suggesting again the consistency of Ovid’s essential characteristics as a poet. Note further how Orpheus phrases his love stories using the language of the Gigantomachy, *ignibus attonitas*, making the same combination of Gigantomachy and elegiac tropes that we saw at work in the Phaethon story emblematic of the poem as a whole. This suggests that Orpheus should remind us of the first beginnings of genre mixing in the *Metamorphoses* and thereby chart Ovid’s growing confidence in his project.

<sup>149</sup> Farrell (1999) 137.

<sup>150</sup> Wise (1977) 46-7 offers an alternative explanation. She argues that ‘Phaethon’s initial refusal to use language ends in an incapacity to use language’ (46). Her first premise is based on her flawed reading of Phaethon’s insistence on flying the car as a mistrust of verbal reassurance in deference to physical truths; she fails to note that the Sun offers Phaethon any gift, *munus*, he would like as proof at *Met.* 2. 44-6, and only then does Phaethon conceive of the idea of the flight. Her second observation is merely based on the

entrapment represents the lack of assurance in the early stages of the poem. Before the *sphragis*, however, one might note that another disastrous chariot ride in Book 15 ends in quite a different outcome to Phaethon's: Hippolytus' at *Met.* 15. 506-46. Hippolytus suffers a similar fate to Phaethon: his body is shattered apart in a charioteering accident caused by runaway horses prompted to behave so by fear, which culminates in a river (Phlegethon, *Met.* 15. 532). In contrast to Phaethon, however, Hippolytus claims not only to have maintained a strong grip on the reins (*Met.* 15. 518-20), but also that his strength would have been enough to restrain his horses had the wheel not struck a rock by chance (*Met.* 15. 521-3). In contrast to Phaethon's entombment, Hippolytus is healed by Asclepius (*Apollineae...prolis*, *Met.* 15. 533) and transformed into the god Virbius – 'Twice-Lived'.<sup>151</sup> The re-introduction of deification after that of Romulus (*Met.* 14. 805-28) sets a precedent for the deification and catasterism of Julius Caesar (*Met.* 15. 746-9) and the future deification of Augustus (*Met.* 15. 868-70), but given that the outline of Hippolytus' story is so similar to Phaethon's, but the protagonist's behaviour and outcome so different, there is a sense in which it caps the earlier Phaethon narrative.<sup>152</sup>

When Hippolytus is transformed, he undergoes a change of name: *nomenque simul, quod possit equorum | admonuisse, iubet deponere* (*Met.* 15. 542-3). Thus he becomes dissociated from the exploits of his body and its fate at the hands of the horses,

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fact that Phaethon dies, and thus can no longer speak. Evidently the loss of speech is not the primary focus of Phaethon's death, as the loss of all his limbs; who, indeed, is there for him to speak to? She cites no text for her assertion, but if she is thinking of *nec nomina nouit equorum* (*Met.* 2. 192) this does not actually involve a lost act of speech. She makes no reference to his continuing existence as text, but rather makes the odd suggestion that Daphne's transformation into mute vegetation stems from a refuge she can find in material reality which Phaethon cannot, because he overestimates its importance in relying on material rather than verbal proof of his paternity.

<sup>151</sup> Earlier references to this myth come in the epic *Naupactica* fr. 10c Davies, Callim. fr. 190 Pf., Virg. *Aen.* 7. 765-82 (*OCD*<sup>3</sup>).

<sup>152</sup> For a fascinating discussion of the similarities (extant and plausible) between Euripides' *Phaethon* and *Hippolytus*, see Reckford (1972), esp. 419-27.

and instead is elevated into a distinct, immortal name. This foreshadows the poet's own fate in the *sphragis*, where Ovid will abandon his *corpus* to become an eternal *nomen*. Phaethon, on the other hand, has his name eternalized in a written monument to his *corpus* which commemorates his failure as a charioteer and underlines his lost potential to become a constellation. It is my contention that this elevation in status of the valiant but felled charioteer represents Ovid's own increased confidence in his work. By fulfilling Phaethon's potential rewards in Hippolytus, Ovid rehabilitates the model of the charioteer before he writes the Augustan ending to the poem with the stories of Cippus, Asclepius, Julius Caesar and Augustus himself. Supporting Barchiesi's reading of the Augustan ending of the poem as a codicil, or distinct appendage to the rest of the poem,<sup>153</sup> this section subtly hints that the poem's reputation has elevated the daring charioteer's soul before the politically compulsory Augustan ending. Hippolytus does not attribute his death to Aphrodite / Venus, as one might expect from the traditional story,<sup>154</sup> or to Jupiter, but rather to an unavoidable accident; this suggests that the wrath of the critics which was aimed at Phaethon has been overturned to the more natural process of physical destruction which Ovid will allow in the *sphragis*. The internal critics have been silenced.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Barchiesi (1997) 187-96. Barchiesi's argument is based on the fact that Asclepius is named as *Coronides* at 15. 624, which recalls the marginal symbol of a *coronis*, a snaky line, which marked a post-script or addendum to the work. The ending's 'tacked on' nature is underlined by the astonishingly late invocation of the Muses to tell it, at 15. 622.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. Eur. *Hipp.* 1400-4.

<sup>155</sup> For evidence elsewhere of Ovid's strident exhibition of his anticipation of criticism against him see Casali (1997) and Casali (1998). Ovid was right to anticipate criticism: see Quint. *Inst.* 10. 1. 89, 93; Sen. *N. Q.* 3. 27, Dryden's *Preface* to the *Heroides* (1680), etc. with Morgan (2003) 69-73.

## VI. CONCLUSION

### VI. i. THE STORY SO FAR

Chapter I demonstrates the textual justification for a metapoetic reading of the Phaethon episode in the *Metamorphoses*, in which the character of Phaethon is assimilated to the poet of the *Metamorphoses*. Chapter II demonstrates that the palace ecphrasis gives a strongly Virgilian starting point for Phaethon's journey, and that the Virgilian epic qualities it enshrines are undone in the course of the flight; further, that the epic qualities of the chariot show the epic form being turned against itself by Phaethon's helmsmanship (or lack thereof), thereby parading Ovid's awareness of the traditions he is violating. Chapter III demonstrates that, as well as disturbing Virgilian standards of epic, Phaethon fails to obey the normative standards for poetry that Ovid had established for himself in his previous works, suggesting a new phase in Ovid's career where digression is embraced as an organizational principle. Chapter IV demonstrates how Phaethon's flight goes beyond Daedalus' reluctance to be gigantomachic in his flight in *Ars* 2, how his perverse Gigantomachy is shown in a positive light in poetic terms, and how it is interpreted as hubristic by the divine apparatus, who represent old, Virgilian organizational principles: Phaethon takes the gigantomachic expectations of high epic and subverts them to parade the productivity of light poetry in hexameters. Chapter V demonstrates the poetic consequences of this Gigantomachy, showing the episode to be a pre-emptive counter-attack against Ovid's critics, and showing how the timidity at the novelty of the project in Book 2 grows into supreme confidence by Book 15. It remains to

demonstrate where the episode fits in with what has preceded it in Book 1, and how this comments on Ovid's earlier career.

## VI. ii. THE ROLE OF EPAPHUS

Ultimately, it is the taunt of Epaphus which provokes Phaethon into his disastrous flight. Commentators have been happy to dismiss this transition between the stories of Io and Phaethon as a cunning but arbitrary link. Thus Bömer insists (*ad* 1. 748) that 'Ovid bringt nach der langen Darstellung der Geschichte der Mutter...deren Sohn Epaphus hier zum ersten Mal und, was die poetische Technik angeht, nur kurz und nur aus dem Grunde ins Bild.' Barchiesi dubs it a 'fluida transizione "laterale"' (*ad* 1. 750-2. 365). Beyond this, there is little comment on the stimulus for Phaethon's quest, but rather on the subject of their quarrel, namely, Phaethon's paternity.<sup>156</sup> And yet the transition is worth considering in greater detail.<sup>157</sup>

Otis writes that 'it is...Phaethon's boyish embarrassment and shame that initiate all the action'.<sup>158</sup> This is to omit the crucial role Epaphus plays in drawing out Phaethon's shame that Clymene may be covering up a disgraceful past, since before Epaphus'

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<sup>156</sup> So, e.g. Galinsky (1975) 50-1. Bass (1977) 406 throws out the comment that Phaethon's visit to the Sun is caused by 'his epic concern to discover his true pedigree', purporting to support this with his n. 2, '[i]t is surely no coincidence that at 2. 19 Phaethon is referred to by the matronymic *Clymeneia proles* – at least the identity of the mother is not in doubt.' The matronymic certainly underlines the absence of a patronymic (cf. Epaphus as *Inachides Met.* 1. 753). On the epic concern with dynastic succession (e.g. in the instructions of Anchises in *Aen.* 6) see Hardie (1993) 102.

<sup>157</sup> It should be noted that the two characters were not considered to be entirely unrelated: Vollgraff, *De Ovidi mythopoeia* (Diss. Berlin 1901) 53 noted the proximity between the stories of Phaethon and Epaphus at Hyginus *Fab.* 152 A-154 (Ciappi (2000) 123, who goes on to add, however, that '[l]ipotesi più probabile rimane pertanto quella di un'originale creazione del motivo da parte di Ovidio). For the possibility that the two were linked in the *Heliades* of Aeschylus see Braccisi (1972).

<sup>158</sup> Otis (1970) 109.

intervention he is supremely confident in his paternity.<sup>159</sup> When Phaethon is first mentioned, his key attribute is boastfulness:

Sole satus Phaethon, quem quondam magna loquentem  
nec sibi cedentem Phoeboque parente superbum  
non tulit Inachides ‘matri’que ait ‘omnia demens  
credis et es tumidus genitoris imagine falsi.’ 1. 751-4

*Magna loquentem* (1. 751) is used of boasting, for example at 13. 222 as a taunt by Ulysses of Ajax: *non erat hoc nimium numquam nisi magna loquenti*. As such, the phrase is used universally negatively in Ovid to imply one whose deeds do not live up to his words, and those that do so boast are ill-fated. Compare, for example, the end of Ancaeus just after he was *magniloquo tumidus...ore* (8. 396). Ancaeus espouses a misogynist view of warfare, insisting that a female warrior is incapable of killing the Calydonian boar, for which he is appropriately punished by being impaled by the boar’s tusks through the groin.<sup>160</sup> However, speaking ‘loudly’ is also typical of locution in the higher genres of poetry. Compare, for example, *Am.* 3. 1. 63-4, *altera (sc. Tragoedia) me sceptro decoras altoque cothurno; | iam nunc contracto magnus in ore sonus*.<sup>161</sup> These two senses are

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<sup>159</sup> Noticed in passing by Wise (1977) 44-5, who cites Phaethon’s boasting as evidence of a distrust of the power of language against that of physical artefacts. She invokes pop-psychology to state that ‘if Phaethon himself had been convinced of the truth of his lineage, he might not have found it necessary to vaunt it publicly’. This is a bizarre non-sequitur: if he were confident of it, how else could being the son of a god manifest itself except with pride? The example of Ancaeus below shows supreme confidence and consequent comeuppance. Phaethon’s silence in the face of Epaphus’ antagonism does show insecurity, but hardly the boasting *simpliciter*. Phaethon’s solar ancestry was pervasive in popular, as well as literary, culture: on Phaethon’s association with Mithraism, since Mithras was identified with the Sun-god, see Snyder (1927).

<sup>160</sup> Keith (1999) 227-8.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. *Met.* 9. 31-2 *pudivit modo magna locutum | cedere*.

both felt in all three cases: Ajax, Ancaeus and Phaethon are conceived vocally as heroic, even hyperbolically so, and are situated in a high or epic genre of poetry. The fact that this pose results in doom suggests that the hyperbolic aspects of the epic character are flawed.

*Superbus* and *tumidus* have similar connotations.<sup>162</sup> As in the case of Ancaeus above, *tumidus* has the negative connotation of being proud without grounds. Until he mounts the chariot, Phaethon maintains this heroic posture in his own speech. After Epaphus' taunts he still insists to his mother, *ille ego liber, | ille ferox* (1. 757-8). His brief demand for the chariot is infused with epic language, using an epic compound adjective for the horses:<sup>163</sup> *currus rogat ille paternos | inque diem alipedum ius et moderamen equorum* (2. 47-8). *Moderamen* is an Ovidian coinage for the metrically impossible *moderatio*, but his invented *-men* nouns are elevated in style and nearly exclusively confined to the *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti*.<sup>164</sup> Throughout the preliminaries to the flight itself, indeed, Phaethon behaves with due dignity: of his supplication to the Sun at 2. 35-9, Otis writes that his words 'are in the best epic diction'.<sup>165</sup> These fine words are, however, without foundation in deeds. Phaethon's claim to be *ferox* after his silent blushes betrays how easily he sounds mighty without necessarily being so.<sup>166</sup> It is only

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<sup>162</sup> *OLD* s.v. *superbus* 1a, 1d; *OLD* s.v. *tumidus* 5. N.B. *tumidus* can also connote affected high-flown speech e.g. Hor. *Ars* 94 *iratusque Chremes tumido delitigat ore* (*OLD* s.v. 6).

<sup>163</sup> Cf. *Aen.* 7. 277, 12. 484, Val. Fl. 5. 183. 'It is the only example in this book of the rare, poetic type of compound of two substantives' (Moore-Blunt *ad Met.* 2. 48).

<sup>164</sup> Moore-Blunt *ad* 2. 48.

<sup>165</sup> Otis (1970) 111.

<sup>166</sup> Bass (1977) 407 notes the change from adjectives of self-confidence to those of hopelessness: *inscius* (2. 148), *infelix* (2. 179), *ignarus* (191), *trepidus* (194), *mentis inops* (200), but uses the change only to point out how the reader is thereby meant to develop sympathy for Phaethon's 'hopeless incompetence'. Segal (1971) 335 sees the same change, but only comments on its pathetic qualities.

when his words are put to the test that he is revealed for what he really is: a youth unable to match the weight required to fulfil his father's duties in the expected fashion.<sup>167</sup>

Phaethon's epic self-presentation is consolidated by an allusion to Lucretius' description of Phaethon while he is admiring the chariot at *Met.* 2. 111-12: *dumque ea magnanimus Phaethon miratur opusque | perspicit*. Lucretius dubs Phaethon *magnanimus* at *De Rerum Nat.* 5. 400. As it is used to describe Aeneas at *Aen.* 1. 260 and 9. 204,<sup>168</sup> commentators generally agree that the heroic adjective does not 'heroize' the boy, but rather represents his presumption: 'la natura di Fetonte e il suo disastro deriva da un eccesso di aspirazioni sublimi.'<sup>169</sup> None of the commentators points out that at this point Lucretius is himself parodying the style of the *ueteres Graium...poetae* (Lucr. 5. 405) who sing such myths as though they truthfully explain the predominance of one element at one time or another, *quod procul a uera nimis est ratione repulsum* (406).<sup>170</sup> It is clear that Ovid knew this Lucretius passage well,<sup>171</sup> and so is unlikely not to have noticed its deliberately over-inflated style. In this case, it is not so much an irony that little Phaethon is described in a bombastic way in the manner of a quasi-epic hero while gazing at an extravagant epic vehicle when he cannot live up to its standards. Rather it is a brief homage to Lucretius, who had earlier used inflated diction to ironize the Phaethon

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<sup>167</sup> Thomas (1978) 447-50 makes a similar argument for Ovid himself in *Am.* 3. 1 at 63-4, reading *altera me sceptro decoras altoque cothurno: | iam nunc contracto* (recc.; *contacto* cett.) *magnus in ore sonus*. Showing that *contractus* is equivalent in meaning in poetic terms to *angustus* he exposes the irony in Ovid's tragedian's costume and his easy conversion back to elegy: "[b]ecause Tragedy has decked him out with the trappings of her art..., Ovid begins to utter the sound of tragedy...; yet as a proponent of attenuated elegy, he is unequal to the task – the result: failure through inability to attain the appropriate style for such a genre....Accordingly he is won back by Elegy." (449). Thus the self-presentation of Ovid and Phaethon is again deeply linked.

<sup>168</sup> Moore-Blunt *ad* 2. 111. Bömer *ad* 2. 111 gives a comprehensive history of the epithet in epic poetry, which ultimately derives from Ennius' calque of the Greek *μεγάθυμος*.

<sup>169</sup> Barchiesi *ad* 2. 111; cf. Anderson *ad loc.*

<sup>170</sup> Cf. West (1969) 52-3. Rouse-Smith (1992) 409 n. (c) points out that the Epicureans did not believe in any of the mythical apparatus, or the existence of an everlasting sun.

<sup>171</sup> *Met.* 2. 304 cf. *De Rerum Nat.* 5. 399; *Met.* 2. 398-400 cf. *De Rerum Nat.* 5. 403-4.



myth. As such both Phaethon's self-importance and the expectations of 'normal' epic poetry are subtly shown to be over-inflated: as Lucretius directly dismissed such inflation by the epic poets, so will Ovid himself, in engaging directly with an epic discourse, deliberately subvert the grandiose expectations of the story by emphasizing Phaethon's elegiac credentials.

Crucially, the terms used to describe Phaethon's ego, both *tumidus* and *superbus*, have been used in the *Metamorphoses* only once each before their appearance in the description of Phaethon, and both in relation to Apollo's conquest of the Python and Cupid's subsequent intervention. Apollo describes himself thus: *qui modo pestifero tot iugera uentre prementem | strauimus innumeris tumidum Pythona sagittis* (*Met.* 1. 459-60). The monster's enormous weight and size, and his swollenness demonstrate that Apollo's act is one of the epic culture hero: the reader will inevitably think of Odysseus and the Cyclops, or Hercules and Cacus.<sup>172</sup> Moreover, it is while Phoebus is *uicta serpente superbus* (*Met.* 1. 454) that he spots Cupid lurking with his bow. Given the reappearance of both terms in close proximity in both stories, they recall the description of Apollo and his slain monster when they are read in the description of Phaethon. Both Apollo and Phaethon start from a position of epic boastfulness and are reduced in stature thereafter: Apollo becomes a questing lover, Phaethon a questioning boy. Nicoll has convincingly shown how the Phoebus, Python and Cupid episode reworks *Am.* 1. 1. He points out that Phoebus' slaying of the Python was his first act of *arma* just as Ovid's putative epic poem was his first attempt at poetry, and that the intervention of Cupid transforms Phoebus from a martial protagonist to an (unsuccessful) lover, just as Cupid

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<sup>172</sup> Nicoll (1980) 181. This may have a political aspect, as Propertius 4. 6. 33-6 describes Apollo's appearance at Actium as being in a manner similar to that in which he laid low Agamemnon's camp or slew the Python.

had transformed the martial epic poet into the erotic poet of the *Amores*.<sup>173</sup> Thus Apollo's act of unrelieved martial epic is dismissed in order to demonstrate how the rest of the poem will refuse to deal with martial feats *simpliciter*, but rather will continue Ovid's earlier career in exploring erotic themes, albeit with unexpected protagonists. In this way the grandeur and authority of the gods is also diminished.

When this reading is compared with the reappearance of motifs from the Python episode in the initial description of Phaethon an important picture emerges. Whereas earlier in Book 1 Ovid was imbuing a successful martial epic character with elegiac motives and exploring the consequences, the opposite is happening at the Book's end. Where Phoebus is justifiably *superbus* in his actions, Phaethon's boasts *may* be factually accurate, but they are not proven, and Epaphus' taunts are enough to trigger sufficient doubt that Phaethon blushes (*Met.* 1. 755) and has no response to the accusation of false parentage. Phaethon's claims  $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omega\tilde{\nu}$  have to be proven  $\epsilon\rho\gamma\omega\tilde{\nu}$  by driving the chariot. It is my contention that this 'caps' the sequence of Cupid's interventions in Ovid's poetry. The Ovid of the beginning of *Am.* 1. 1 (and, for that matter, 2. 1, where the intervention is made by Corinna, the material result of Cupid's earlier intervention) is much the same as the Phaethon of the end of *Met.* 1: both are epic *poseurs* with no physical deeds to back up their claims. In *Am.* 1. 1, the intervention of Cupid means that Ovid's claims that he has written successful epic poetry need never be backed up by proof. Earlier in *Met.* 1, the intervention of Cupid means that Apollo's actual epic deeds are never followed through: a note of reassurance that bland martial prowess will not prevail in the wake of the preceding Lucretian cosmology and descriptions of the punishments of the gods. In turn, Epaphus' intervention in Phaethon's pretension of might is a mirror-image of

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<sup>173</sup> Nicoll (1980) 176-7.

Cupid's intervention in Apollo's actual expression of his might. In provoking Phaethon to seek to substantiate his claims, Epaphus acts as an anti-Cupid, encouraging him not to reject his epic posturing but seek out the results of enacting it. In this way, Epaphus acts as a literary critic might challenge Ovid to write the epic poem that he has so often boasted was going so well before he was rudely interrupted by elegy. The revelation that he is under-qualified for the task because he displays the same innate characteristics as the elegiac poet is an expression of Ovid's innate poetic character regardless of what environment it is put into. The fact that he does put himself into that environment, however, and the pyrotechnic effects that move creates, show that the *Metamorphoses* is a genuinely new attempt at a new type of hexameter poetry, opposing his native talent to his full knowledge of the rules of Latin *epos*.

There is one exception to Phaethon's epic posturing, and that is in the physical method he chooses to consolidate his verbal pleas to be allowed to confirm his paternity and to drive the chariot. It is important that this weakness is displayed physically, as it is his physical inability to live up to his words (as well as fear) that will be Phaethon's problem when it comes to driving the chariot. This exception is the childish way in which Phaethon hangs around his parents' necks: *implicuit materno bracchia collo* (1. 762); *quid mea colla tenes blandis, ignare, lacertis?* (2. 100). It is true that this technique also has erotic associations: compare, for example, the way in which Echo wishes to express her desires for Narcissus at 3. 388-9, *egressaque silua | ibat, ut iniceret sperato bracchia collo*. This reading is evidently inappropriate for parental persuasion, but might hint nonetheless at a more tender aspect to Phaethon's character than the ferocity on which he insists. However, a closer, and far more interesting parallel, is with the behaviour of

Cupid in *Aeneid* 1, when he intervenes, disguised as Iulus, to engineer the love-affair between Aeneas and Dido:

ille ubi complexu Aeneae colloque pependit  
et magnum falsi impleuit genitoris amorem,  
reginam petit.

*Aen.* 1. 715-17

Phaethon's suspension from his parents' neck in order to coax them endearingly into behaving as he wants them to is evidently similar in technique and success to Cupid's persuasive activities in Carthage. The key point of comparison, however, is in the different notions of a *falsus genitor*. Epaphus slanderously accuses Phaethon of being *tumidus genitoris imagine falsi* (1. 754), even though the *genitor* in question actually is his *genitor*, whereas Cupid 'satisfies' (*OLD* s.v. *impleo* 10) the enormous love of a man who is indeed not his true father. If Epaphus' taunt is a direct reference to this passage in the *Aeneid* then it is a cruel one, since it suggests that whereas Aeneas was fully duped by Cupid pretending to be his son, the Sun is not only unlikely to be Phaethon's father, but also that Phaethon is woefully unconvincing. This would be an important factor in driving Phaethon to seek to confirm his paternity,<sup>174</sup> and, by extension, for Ovid to seek to establish his rightful place in the genealogy of epic poets. Beyond this, the purpose of this mode of persuasion is significant: Juno wants to distract Aeneas through Cupid from

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<sup>174</sup> This phrase is part of a set of false images in the *Metamorphoses*. At *Met.* 3. 1 Jupiter will reveal himself to Europa *posita fallacis imagine tauri*; others who will be the victims of false images are Actaeon, Pentheus and Narcissus in Book 3 (see Feldherr (1997) esp. 29-30). Epaphus anticipates these characters by suggesting that Phaethon is, like them, unable to see through a front; the fact that Epaphus is factually incorrect leads us to think about other interpretations of the 'falsity' of Phaethon's family ties, and to contrast Phaethon's bold testing of his parentage against those who follow him who fail to test their perceptions.

his teleological epic task of founding Rome using the allurements of love, whereas Phaethon uses the same technique to attempt to perform a virile epic feat. Again, this allusion underlines how both elegiac and epic influences are present in a thrillingly complex coexistence: not only does Ovid generally undermine Virgil's epic tropes in this episode, but at its inception even reverses his elegiac ones to show how every rule of the Virgilian Latin *epos* is being turned on its head.

Unlike in the *Aeneid*, where Cupid, elegy's soldier, comes in disguise and, as is habitual, tricks the protagonists into falling into his trap, Phaethon has none of this dissimulation or trickery: he is open in his requests to drive the chariot, to play epic at its own game, trying to suppress the inadequate likeness to Cupid which Epaphus has raised, belying his native character in an attempt to wear another. In the same way Ovid is not suddenly switching to an elegiac story from a martial one in writing the Phaethon; rather, he maintains the epic pretence right up until Phaethon begins his ascent, and it is only there that the attempt begins to unravel: with hyper-discursive, hyper-epic results. The demand of Epaphus' intervention is to replace that of Cupid in *Am.* 1. 1: to demand he 'has a go' at his much talked about epic despite the tacit understanding of his elegiac character. The fascinating results of this venture, whereby the elegiac character is intertwined with and improves the epic, encourage us to read the rest of the *Metamorphoses* not as a clear-cut distinction between epic and elegiac, but to consider at all times how the two interact and react against each other to produce a new technicolour form of *epos*. By the *sphragis*, Ovid, at least, thinks he got it right.

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