

Daphne on Display: Botanical Imperialism in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*¹

1. Pollard 2009, 324: Botanical imperialism

Transplantation, natural history composition, and botanical gardening serve three purposes: an economic purpose, allowing for an understanding of the products on which enterprising folk might capitalize; an ideological purpose, suggesting that the fruits of all lands can be cultivated in the dominant center of power; and a panegyric purpose, praising the ruler whose power makes such discovery and contact possible.

2. *Ov. Met.* 1.557–65: Apollo's prophecy for the laurel

cui deus 'at quoniam coniunx mea non potes esse,
arbor eris certe' dixit 'mea; semper habebunt
te coma, te citharae, te nostrae, laure, pharetrae.
tu ducibus Latiis aderis, cum laeta Triumphum
vox canet et visent longas Capitolia pompas;
postibus Augustis eadem fidissima custos
ante fores stabis mediamque tuebere quercum.
utque meum intonsis caput est iuvenale capillis,
tu quoque perpetuos semper gere frondis honores.'

To which the god said, 'but since you cannot be my wife, you will at least be my tree! they will always have you, my hair, you, my kithara, you, o laurel, my quivers. You will accompany Latin generals when 'triumph' a joyful voice will sing and the Capitolium long processions will see; at the door-posts of Augustus will you likewise stand before the gates, the most trustworthy guard, and protect the oak between. And just as my head is youthful with unshorn locks, so too bear forever the everlasting honors of your foliage.'

3. *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* 34.2 (trans. Cooley 2009): Augustus is honored with the laurel

quo pro merito meo senatus consulto Augustus appellatus sum et **laureis postes aedium mearum vestiti publice** coronaque civica super ianuam meam fixa est, et clupeus aureus in curia Iulia positus, quem mihi senatum populumque Romanum dare virtutis clementiaeque iustitiae et pietatis causa testatum est per eius clupeii inscriptionem.

For this service, I was named Augustus by senatorial decree, and **the doorposts of my house were publicly clothed with laurels**, and a civic crown was fastened above my doorway, and a golden shield was set up in the Julian senate house; through an inscription on this shield the fact was declared that the Roman senate and people were giving it to me because of my valour, clemency, justice, and piety.

4. *Ov. Met.* 1.448–51: Before the laurel

hic iuvenum quicumque manu pedibusve rotave vicerat aesculeae capiebat frondis honorem.
nondum laurus erat longoque decentia crine tempora cingebat de qualibet arbore Phoebus.

Here whichever of the youth had won by hand or feet or wheel would receive the honor of an oaken garland. **As of yet there was no laurel** and Phoebus used to wreath his temples, comely with long hair, from any tree.

¹ All translations are my own, unless otherwise stated.

5. Ov. Met. 15.830–31 and 15.858–60: Augustus' primacy

quodcumque habitabile tellus
sustinet, huius erit; pontus quoque serviet illi.'

'Whatever habitable land the earth sustains
will be his; the sea too will be his slave.'

Iuppiter arces
temperat aetherias et mundi regna triformis,
terra sub Augusto est; pater est et rector uterque.

Jupiter rules the heavenly heights and the
kingdoms of the triformed world, the earth is
under Augustus; each is father and ruler.

6. Ov. Met. 1.533–39: The hunting-dog simile

ut canis in vacuo leporem cum Gallicus arvo
vidit, et hic praedam pedibus petit, ille salutem,
alter inhaesuro similis iam iamque tenere
sperat et extento stringit vestigia rostro,
alter in ambiguo est an sit comprehensus, et ipsis
morsibus eripitur tangentiaque ora relinquit;
sic deus et virgo est, **hic spe celer, illa timore.**

Just like when a Gallic hound sees a hare in
an open field, and this one seeks on foot its
prey, that one, salvation; the one, as though
about to fasten on it, hopes to grasp it even
now and grazes its steps with outstretched
maw, the other is uncertain as to whether it's
been caught and wrests itself away from
those very teeth and leaves behind the
glancing jaws. So it is, the god and the girl,
he swift with hope, she with fear.

7. Ov. Met. 1.553–56: Apollo conquers Daphne

hanc quoque Phoebus amat, positaque in stipite dextra
sentit adhuc trepidare novo sub cortice pectus,
complexusque suis ramos, ut membra, lacertis
oscula dat ligno; refugit tamen oscula lignum.

This too Phoebus loves, and placing his right
hand on the trunk he feels her heart still
trembling beneath new bark, and embracing
the limb-like branches with his own arms he
kisses the wood; but the wood shrinks from
his kisses.

8. Ov. Met. 1.548–52: Daphne's transformation

vix prece finita torpor gravis occupat artus;
mollia cinguntur tenui praecordia libro;
in frondem crines, in ramos bracchia crescunt;
pes modo tam velox pigris radicibus haeret;
ora cacumen habet; remanet nitor unus in illa.

Scarcely had the prayer finished when a
heavy torpor seizes her limbs; her soft waist
is girt with thin bark; her hair grows into
foliage, her arms into branches; her foot, just
now so swift, holds fast with sluggish roots;
her head holds a treetop; only beauty
remains in her.

9. Ov. Met. 1.566–67: Daphne accepts her fate?

finierat Paean: factis modo laurea ramis
adnuat utque caput visa est agitasse cacumen.

Paean had finished: the laurel-tree with just-
made branches nodded her assent and the
treetop seemed to move like a head.

10. Ov. Met. 1.544a–47: Daphne's plea

victa labore fugae, spectans Peneidas undas,
'fer, pater' inquit, 'opem, si flumina numen habetis;
qua nimium placui, mutando perde figuram.'

Overcome by the exertion of her flight,
seeing the waters of Peneus, she says 'help,
father! If your waters have power; destroy
through change this form with which I
pleased too much.'

Daphne on Display: Botanical Imperialism in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*
Select Bibliography

- Barchiesi, Alessandro. 2020. "Reading Metamorphosis in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*." In *Metamorphic Readings: Transformation, Language, and Gender in the Interpretation of Ovid's Metamorphoses*, ed. Alison Sharrock, Daniel Möller, and Mats Malm. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cooley, Alison E. 2009. *Res Gestae Divi Augusti: Text, Translation, and Commentary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Flemming, Rebecca. 2005. "Empires of Knowledge: Medicine and Health in the Hellenistic World." In *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*, ed. Andrew Erskine, 447–63. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Francesca, Christopher. 2004. "Daphne, Honor, and Aetiological Action in Ovid's 'Metamorphoses.'" *The Classical World* 97.2: 153–57.
- Habinek, Thomas. 2002. "Ovid and Empire." In *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, ed. Philip Hardie, 46–61. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hardy, Gavin, and Laurence Totelin. 2016. *Ancient Botany*. Sciences of Antiquity. London: Routledge.
- Newlands, Carole E. 2018. "Violence and Resistance in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*." In *Texts and Violence in the Roman World*, ed. Monica R. Gale and J. H. D. Scourfield, 140–78. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- O'Hara, James J. 2007. "Inconsistency and Authority in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*." In *Inconsistency in Roman Epic: Studies in Catullus, Lucretius, Vergil, Ovid and Lucan*, 104–30. Roman Literature and Its Contexts. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Östenberg, Ida. 2009. *Staging the World: Spoils, Captives, and Representations in the Roman Triumphal Procession*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pollard, Elizabeth Ann. 2009. "Pliny's *Natural History* and the Flavian *Templum Pacis*: Botanical Imperialism in First-Century C.E. Rome." *Journal of World History* 20.3: 309–38.
- Sharrock, Alison. 2020. "Gender and Transformation: Reading, Women, and Gender in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*." In *Metamorphic Readings: Transformation, Language, and Gender in the Interpretation of Ovid's Metamorphoses*, ed. Alison Sharrock, Daniel Möller, and Mats Malm. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tarrant, Richard J. 2004. *P. Ovidi Nasonis Metamorphoses*. Oxford Classical Texts. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Totelin, Laurence. 2012. "BOTANIZING RULERS AND THEIR HERBAL SUBJECTS: PLANTS AND POLITICAL POWER IN GREEK AND ROMAN LITERATURE." *Phoenix* 66.1: 122–219.
- Zanker, Paul. 1988. *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, trans. Alan Shapiro. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.