

Fama Novi Fontis: The Sexual Curiosity of Minerva in Ovid's Metamorphoses V

The embedded narratives in Book V of the *Metamorphoses* prompt close readers of the text to be more conscientious to each narrator's audience. The most immediate layer of narration is, of course, Ovid himself, within whose narrative storytelling by an unnamed Muse, Calliope, and Arethusa are contained. This paper will consider Minerva—a goddess known for her *virtus* and allegiance to male heroes—as audience to Arethusa's account of her own rape (V.562-642). Using John Heath's reading of Ovid which theorizes the characters of the poem may also be attentive (or not so attentive) readers of its events, then after four sexually violent books of the *Metamorphoses*, Minerva too is curious about understanding her sexuality within a poem obsessed with sexual trauma. She arrives on Helicon as an elegiac *discipula amoris* of the Muses, her *magistrae amoris*. Thus, Arethusa's narrative is an *exemplum* of female desire for Minerva, an *exemplum* she ultimately rejects in Book VI.

The work of Luce Irigaray and Judith Butler will significantly inform my discussion of Minerva's sexual curiosity, specifically in regard to gendered narrative and the "maleness" of language. Sexual experience in the poem is predicated upon inequality, and the language of sexual experience/assault creates a strictly binary sexual identity: desirer and desired, pursuer and pursued, catcher and caught. The various levels of narration in Book V, however, confuse traditional narrative structure and create a more fluid, less linear composition appropriate for Book V's location in female, "othered" space. This moment of "othered" space created by the entwinement of female speakers allows Minerva to reflect upon how female sexuality only exists as a resignation to the binary power dynamics of the poem. Ultimately, in Book VI, her awareness of the poem's sexual politics is the catalyst for her attempt to subvert the binary limitations of a phallographic narrative.

Bibliography

- Ahl, Frederick. 1985. *Metaformations: Sound and Wordplay in Ovid and Other Classical Poets*. Cornell.
- Anderson, William. 1997. *Ovid's Metamorphoses: Books 1-5*. Norman: University of Oklahoma.
- . 1972. *Ovid's Metamorphoses: Books 6-10*. Norman: University of Oklahoma.
- Barchiesi, Alessandro. 2005. *Metamorfosi Ovidio, Libri I-II*. Roma: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla.
- . 2002. "Narrative Technique and Narratology in the *Metamorphoses*." In *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*. Cambridge.
- Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Curran, Leo. 1984. "Rape and Rape Victims in the *Metamorphoses*." In *Women in the Ancient World: The Arethusa Papers*. State University of New York Press.
- Fantham, Elaine. 2004. *Ovid's Metamorphoses*. New York: Oxford.
- Fedeli, Paulus. 1994. *Sexti Properti: Elegiarum Libri IV*. Teubner.
- Fowler, Don. 2002. "Masculinity Under Threat? The Poetics and Politics of Inspiration in Latin Poetry." In *Cultivating the Muse: Struggles for Power and Inspiration in Classical Literature*. Oxford.
- Fredrick, David. 1997. "Reading Broken Skin: Violence in Roman Elegy," In *Roman Sexualities*. Princeton.
- Greene, Ellen. 1998. *The Erotics of Domination: Male Desire and the Mistress in Latin Love Poetry*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins.
- Hallett, Judith. 1997. "Female Homoeroticism and the Denial of Roman Reality in Latin Literature," In *Roman Sexualities*. Princeton.
- Hardie, Philip. 2002. *Ovid's Poetics of Illusion*. Cambridge.
- Heath, John. 1991. "Diana's Understanding of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*." *Classical Journal* 86:233-243.
- Irigaray, Luce. 1991. *The Irigaray Reader*. ed. Margaret Whitford. Oxford: Blackwell.
- . 1985. *This Sex Which Is Not One*. trans. Catherine Porter. Ithaca: Cornell.

- James, Sharon. 2010. "Ipsa Dixerat: Women's Words in Roman Love Elegy." *Phoenix* 64:314-44.
- Jardine, Alice A. 1985. *Gynesis: Configurations of Woman and Modernity*. Ithaca: Cornell.
- Joseph, Lawrence. 1994. "Pyreneus and the Muses." In *After Ovid: New Metamorphoses*. New York: The Noonday Press.
- Lyne, R.O.A.M. 1980. *The Latin Love Poets: From Catullus to Horace*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- McKinley, Kathryn. 2001. *Reading the Ovidian Heroine: Metamorphoses Commentaries, 1100-1618*. Leiden: Brill.
- Nagle, Betty Rose. 1984. "Amor, Ira, and Sexual Identity in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*." *Classical Antiquity* 3:236-255.
- Richlin, Amy. 1992. *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome*. Oxford.
- Rimell, Victoria. 2006. *Ovid's Lovers: Desire, Difference, and the Poetic Imagination*. Cambridge.
- Salzman-Mitchell, Patricia. 2005. "The Fixing Gaze: Movement, Image and Gender in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*." In *Gendered Dynamics in Latin Love Poetry*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins.
- Segal, Charles. 1998. "Ovid's Metamorphic Bodies: Art, Gender, and Violence in the *Metamorphoses*." *Arion* 5:9-41.
- . 1969. *Landscape in Ovid's Metamorphoses: A Study in the Transformations of a Literary Symbol*. Wiesbaden: F. Steiner Verlag.
- Sharrock, Alison. 2002. "An A-musing Tale: Gender, Genre, and Ovid's Battles with Inspiration in the *Metamorphoses*." In *Cultivating the Muse: Struggles for Power and Inspiration in Classical Literature*. Oxford.
- . 1991. "Womanufacture." *Journal of Roman Studies* 81:36-49.
- Sichtermann, Barbara. 1986. *Femininity: The Politics of the Personal*. trans. John Whitlam. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.

Walters, Jonathan. 1997. "Invading the Roman Body: Manliness and Impenetrability in Roman Thought." In *Roman Sexualities*. Princeton