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**Boundaries and Pleasure in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*:
A Critique of Augustan Marriage Legislation**

By

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Undergraduate Thesis for Lee Honors College

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Abstract

Love, sex, and pleasure are all themes that surface frequently throughout Ovid's corpus. But these are not exclusively Ovidian themes: they warranted great attention from the emperor Augustus as well, albeit for different reasons. While Ovid entertains these themes in ways that reflect prevailing attitudes of pleasure for pleasure's sake, Augustus attempted to recover traditional, practical conceptions of love and sex in an effort to further strengthen his control over the burgeoning Empire. In many ways, each man's treatment of love and sex is a reaction to the other's conflicting attitudes. The enactment of Augustus' marriage legislation (*leges Iuliae*) rendered love and sex as matters of the state, targeting the licentiousness of the Roman elite in particular. As a consequence, they breached the boundary separating legal and amorous affairs. Ovid weaponizes Augustus' transgression of this boundary in select myths of his *Metamorphoses* to communicate his disapproval of the *leges Iuliae* and their prioritization of practicality over pleasure. In doing so, Ovid is able to articulate the tension between Ovidian and Augustan conceptions of love and sex, highlight Augustan hypocrisy, and ultimately fashion narratives that not only denounce Augustus' antiquated and utilitarian marriage program, but also celebrate the inherent preeminence of pleasure.

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Introduction

In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid criticizes Augustus for his legislative agenda (*leges Iuliae*) on account of their attempt to control human desire by way of a prioritization of practicality over pleasure. By rendering love and sex as matters of the state, the *lex Iulia de ordinibus maritandis* and the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* were enacted in a joint effort to strengthen the Roman upper class. As a result, the state transgressed the boundary that securely separated public and amorous affairs. Belonging to the equestrian class and known for his fondness of amorous and tongue-in-cheek subject matter, Ovid would have been keenly aware of the threat that this prioritization would have posed to his beloved lifestyle and poetic career. Consequently, Ovid weaponizes the transgression of boundary in select myths of his *Metamorphoses* to stand in opposition to the precedent of the *leges Iuliae*; that is, to emphasize *pleasure* over practicality.

By the time Ovid was able to communicate such sentiments through the *Metamorphoses*, shifting attitudes about pleasure's preeminence in all matters of love and sex had gained great headway at Rome. Originally, marriage had been an institution for the sake of producing children.¹ Perhaps unpleasant, marriage was considered "a necessary evil" to which all Romans must submit.² This perspective he conveyed most clearly in an excerpt from a speech delivered by Quintus Metellus in 131 BCE: '*In ea oratione ita scriptum fuit: "Si sine uxore possemus, Quirites, omnes ea molestia careremus; set quoniam ita natura tradidit, ut nec cum illis satis commode, nec sine illis uno modo vivi possit, saluti perpetuae potius quam brevi voluptati consulendum est"*'³ ('In this speech it has been written thus: "If we were able, O Romans, to get along without wives, all of us would be free from this trouble [marriage]; but since nature has ordained it thus, that it is neither possible to live comfortably with them nor at all without them, we must be more mindful of our long-term well-being than brief pleasure").⁴ In

¹ Frank 1975: 42

² Field 1945: 405

³ Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 1.6.1-2

⁴ All translations are my own. Latin and Greek texts from Perseus Digital Library-Tufts University.

fact, Augustus would later cite this oration as precedent for his actions in the face of strong public backlash against the laws. However, a new type of love, which embraced passion and pleasure to an unprecedented extent, developed at Rome alongside the popularization of Roman love elegy in the first century BCE. Young men of the nobility in particular had grown tired of the older conceptions of marriage as a duty unto the state and instead opted to prioritize love and pleasure. Relishing their *urbanitas* (urban sophistication), they abandoned the pursuit of military honors and other conventions of traditional Roman culture. Propertius, relieved by the failure of Augustus' first attempt at marriage legislation in 29 BCE, captures these progressive attitudes well: *nullus de nostro sanguine miles erit /.../ tu mihi sola places: placeam tibi, Cynthia, solus: / hic erit et patrio nomine pluris amor* (No soldier will come from my blood...you alone please me: let me alone please you, O Cynthia: this love means more to me than continuing my line).⁵

But these progressive attitudes eventually gave way to troubling realities. By the end of the Republic, aristocratic women, who had also subscribed to the new, pleasure-concerned conceptions of love, were known for their divorces, adulteries, and resistance to bearing children.⁶ In addition to failing to reproduce at stable rates, the upper class (senatorial and equestrian) had suffered grave losses as a result of civil war and the proscriptions.⁷ Conservative Romans had grown averse to this new type of love, viewing it as a form of self-indulgence and hardly compatible with the discipline and dutifulness of their ancestors which had won the Romans their power and control.⁸ The deterioration of traditional morality was greatest among the Roman elite, and it was them that Augustus had in mind as he developed his moral reforms.

⁵ Propertius *Elegies* 2.7.14, 19-20

⁶ Frank 1975: 43

⁷ Field 1945: 399

⁸ Frank 1975: 43

The primary objective of the *leges Iuliae* (18 BCE) was to strengthen the senatorial and equestrian classes — the “back-bone of the Augustan state.”⁹ The *lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus* incentivized marriage between members of the same social class with the ultimate goal of increasing reproductivity. At the same time, it penalized intermarriage between members of different classes. For example, citizens could not marry non-citizens, senators could not marry freedmen, and freedmen could not marry slaves.¹⁰ This was enforced by once again making marriage a duty to the state. All Roman men between the ages of 25 and 60 and all Roman women between the ages of 20 and 50 were expected to marry. In addition, all men and women within these age limits who had been widowed or divorced were expected to remarry promptly. However, such persons could be exempted if they had produced three legitimate offspring (for free-born persons) or four legitimate children (for freed-persons).¹¹ A complex set of punishments and rewards were also used to enforce the law. This involved denying certain individuals their right to inherit (e.g. unmarried individuals (*caelibes*) could inherit nothing, those married but childless (*orbi*) could only inherit one half, etc.)¹² and their admittance to plays and festivals.¹³ The *lex Papia Poppaea* was a later emendation to this law (9 CE). This law continued to discriminate against unmarried and childless persons but also extended its reach to the equestrian class.¹⁴ There exists evidence that an earlier form of this law, the text of which no longer exists, among other provisions, had extended the reach of the laws to the equestrian class by 4 CE.¹⁵ This suggests that Ovid’s own class would have indeed been affected by the laws prior to the completion of his *Metamorphoses* in 8 CE. On the other hand, the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* had narrowed its focus to the criminalization of adultery and contained a complex list of stipulations regarding how adultery should be prosecuted. Above all, husbands

⁹ Field 1945: 399

¹⁰ Frank 1975: 45

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Field 1945: 402

¹⁴ Ibid., 403

¹⁵ Ibid.

were obligated to prosecute their wives when they suspected or witnessed adultery.¹⁶ In fact, if the husband failed to act, he could be prosecuted for effectively “pimping” his wife (*lenocinium*).¹⁷ When the husband failed to act, the onus fell upon the wife’s father. Fathers and husbands were also allowed to kill the adulterers under specific circumstances.¹⁸ For example, fathers could kill the woman caught in adultery provided that he surprised adulterers, the act occurred in his house or his son-in-law’s house, and that he killed the adulterous man at the same time.¹⁹ The husband could only kill his wife’s lover if they were of a certain (less honorable) class (e.g. freedmen, actors, pimps).²⁰ However, the husband could not kill the spouse; this “privilege” was reserved for fathers alone as it was reasoned that they would act less rashly under such circumstances (*pietas paterni*).²¹

The *leges Iuliae* were an effort to return Rome to its original, utilitarian type of love as a way of reaffirming the *res publica restituta* (restored Republic) and renewed Golden Age that Augustus was thought to have ushered in. In doing so, however, Augustus overstepped the bounds of his power, disregarding the boundary that divided legal and amorous affairs. Boundary was a core Roman value, included among and co-dependent upon others such as control, order, separation, pattern, and restraint.²² In fact, the importance of boundaries has precedent all the way back in Rome’s legendary past: Romulus killed Remus for jumping over his wall, an affront to the boundaries he had established for what would become the city of Rome.²³ At this point in Roman history, Augustus’ transgression is tantamount to an affront on Ovid’s beloved lifestyle (*prisca iuvent alios, ego me nunc denique natum / gratulor: haec aetas moribus apta meis* / Let ancient times delight others, I am glad that I was born now: this age

¹⁶ Reid 2016: 187

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 188

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 188-9

²¹ Ibid.

²² Curran 1972: 87

²³ Livy *Ab Urbe Condita* 1.7.2

suits my nature best).²⁴ Thus, I argue, Ovid cleverly conveys his preference for pleasure over practicality by manipulating boundary transgression to threaten Augustus' power.

Transgression is defined as “violating a formal rule and/or moral principle, crossing a boundary of acceptable conduct, or exceeding a social limit.”²⁵ Much attention has been given to the subject of transgression, including the attention of Nietzsche, Durkheim, Mary Douglas, Foucault, Freud, and Bakhtin.²⁶ Moreover, in several cases, “transgression...involves sexuality.”²⁷ The relationship between sexuality and transgression is understood by acknowledging the destabilizing effects that both sexuality and transgression are capable of producing; that is, much like transgression, “sexuality [stands] opposed to order and control.”²⁸ The dichotomy between order and transgression/sexuality mirrors the relationship between Augustus and Ovid, the traditional and the modern, the serious and the cheeky — making boundary transgression such an effective mode for conveying anti-Augustan sentiment. Ovid makes use of both physical and conceptual boundaries, with physical boundaries often giving discernible form to the abstract nature of conceptual boundaries, to voice his disapproval of the marriage legislation that Augustus championed.

Much of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is tied together by the common theme of pleasure over practicality. The transgression of boundaries, represented in various forms, acts as the mode by which pleasure is achieved. To demonstrate this, I have selected the myth of Pyramus and Thisbe in Book IV, the conjoined myths of Mars/Venus/Vulcan and Sol/Leucothoe/Clytie in Book IV, and the myth of Pomona and Vertumnus in Book XIV for analysis. This thesis is organized with the intent of highlighting the common themes that cut across the selected myths, but to do so in a way that retains a semblance of each myth's chronology. Chapter I introduces frustrated desire as the prime conflict of the myths, reflecting the challenge that arose between the

²⁴ Ovid *Ars Amatoria* 3.121-2

²⁵ Langman 2007: 1, Jenks 2003

²⁶ Langman 2007: 1-4

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 2

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 3

conflicting Augustan and Ovidian notions of love and sex. Chapter II outlines the Augustan themes of each myth that serve to clarify the direction of Ovid's criticism. Finally, Chapter III elucidates Ovid's messages of the primacy of pleasure and analyzes the opposing and destabilizing forces they project onto Augustus' legal reforms.

Chapter I: Frustrated Desires

Ovid exploits the theme of frustrated desire as an instrument for critiquing Augustan marriage legislation. It features prominently throughout the *Metamorphoses*, but among the myths that feature this theme, the selected myths are unique in the ways in which frustrated desire is represented and articulated through boundaries. This chapter seeks to outline the boundaries Ovid has employed at the onset of the myths and the examples of frustrated desire that they generate. Through these examples of frustrated desire, Ovid alludes to the conflicts between Augustan notions of love (i.e. practicality, *leges Iuliae*) and Ovidian notions of love (i.e. pleasure).

Perhaps nowhere else in the *Metamorphoses* does the theme of frustrated desire created and communicated via boundaries appear more prominently than it does in the myth of Pyramus and Thisbe. This chapter will focus on the first boundary established by Ovid as it plays a significant role in the developing conflict between Ovidian and Augustan notions of love — specifically, whether or not it has a functional role to play within Roman society. Almost immediately, the audience is informed that Pyramus and Thisbe are forbidden to wed:

*notitiam primosque gradus vicinia fecit,
tempore crevit amor; taedae quoque iure coissent,
sed vetuere patres*²⁹

Nearness facilitated their first steps towards acquaintance, with time their love grew; and they would have joined their marriage torches by law if it were not for their fathers who forbade it.

²⁹ *Metamorphoses* 4.59-61

Ovid employs a wall common to both of their houses (*paries domui communis utrique*) to reify the lovers' isolation from one another.³⁰ Moreover, the shared wall highlights their proximity (*vicinia*) while simultaneously emphasizing their mutual unattainability, the ultimate source of their frustration. Perraud notes that Pyramus and Thisbe apostrophize their shared wall (they would say, "Jealous Wall, why do you stand in the way of lovers?")³¹ to dramatize its obstructive presence and that, at the same time, *paraklausithyron* also functions to heighten the agony of the lovers' isolation.³² *Paraklausithyron*, from *παρακλαίω* (to lament beside) and *θύρα* (a door), was a poetic motif of Hellenistic origins that was particularly popular in Augustan love elegy. It concentrates the fundamental components of love elegy — the shut-out lover, his mistress, and some obstacle which he must overcome — into a single image. Ovid reworks this Hellenistic device to accommodate not only a more inviolable barrier (a wall rather than a door, which can be opened), but *two* shut-out lovers, thus augmenting the typical frustration that the device is meant to convey. Even still, echoes of its traditional use persist: as the lovers attempt to bargain with the wall (*quantum erat, ut sineres toto nos corpore iungi / aut, hoc si nimium est, vel ad oscula danda pateres?* / How great it would be if you let us be joined by way of our whole bodies or, if this is too much, if you opened wide enough for kisses to be given!),³³ one recalls the more barefaced employment of *paraklausithyron* in Ovid's *Amores*, in which he stands outside his mistress' gate imploring her guard to open the door just wide enough that he can slip through (*quod precor, exiguum est — aditu fac ianua parvo / obliquum capiat semiadaperta latus*).³⁴ Even though the wall is meant to prevent their love from maturing, it instead seems only to increase the erotic tone of the narrative. Pyramus and Thisbe become *exclusi amatores*

³⁰ *Met.* 4.66

³¹ *Met.* 4.73-7 ("*invide*" *dicebant "paries, quid amantibus obstas?"*)

³² Perraud 1984: 136

³³ *Met.* 4.74-5

³⁴ *Amores* 1.6.3-4

(shut-out lovers) in both a literal sense because of the wall's obstruction and figuratively as a result of the use of *paraklausithyron*, or, perhaps it is more accurate to say, *paraklausitoichon*.³⁵

Ovid continues to curate an erotic tone with the use of language of physical desire: capturing the breath of the other's mouth (*captatus anhelitus oris*)³⁶, to be joined by way of their whole bodies (*toto...corpore iungi*), kisses to be given (*oscula danda*), gave kisses to their own side although they would never reach the opposite (*partique dedere / oscula quisque suae non pervenientia contra*).³⁷ Moreover, the repeated use of fiery imagery further develops the theme of desire: nocturnal fires (*nocturnos...ignes*)³⁸ function doubly as starlike imagery and symbols of the lovers' passions, which endure throughout the night; the lovers continue to burn by way of lovesick minds despite their fathers' prohibitions (*quod non potuere vetare, / ex aequo captis ardebant mentibus ambo*);³⁹ and the more their passion is concealed, the more the fire having been covered blazes (*quoque magis tegitur, tectus magis aestuat ignis*).⁴⁰ These lines are particularly significant in the way they develop tension between Augustan and Ovidian notions of love. The wall, acting as the physical equivalent of the *patres'* edict against marriage, serves as a boundary that frustrates the desire of the young lovers. However, despite its imposition, the wall fans the flames of their desire as the tale progresses as opposed to extinguishing it. In other words, stronger passion is borne out of frustrated desire. Ovid draws attention to the fact that desire is only heightened when it is concealed (*tegitur, tectus*) or obstructed (*obstas, vetuere, vetare*). Desire and the pursuit of pleasure do not abate in response to attempts to control it; rather, it perseveres (expressed via *paraklausithyron*) and grows (*magis tegitur...magis aestuat*). Practical, conservative — that is, Augustan — notions of love do not

³⁵ As in παρακλαίω (to lament beside) and τοίχος (a wall)

³⁶ *Met.* 4.73

³⁷ *Met.* 4.79-80

³⁸ *Met.* 4.81

³⁹ *Met.* 4.61-2

⁴⁰ *Met.* 4.64

feature here. Instead, Ovid establishes a narrative that challenges Augustan practicality and indulges Ovidian pleasure.

Immediately following the myth of Pyramus and Thisbe, Ovid presents another myth of frustrated desire, but develops it in a different direction as if to demonstrate the range of frustrations that the marriage legislation generated. Sol discovers that Mars and Venus are having an affair (*adulterium Veneris cum Marte*) and promptly informs Vulcan, the husband of Venus.⁴¹ Caught by her husband and the other gods, Venus, whose desires had now been frustrated by the Sun, exacts a punishment on Sol that is mindful of his misdeeds (*exigit indicii memorem Cythereia poenam / inque vices illum, tectos qui laesit amores, / laedit amore pari*).⁴² The boundary that had allowed Venus to indulge her desires was that which separates the private and public spheres. The frustration of her desires occurred due to the dissolution of that boundary, evidenced by Sol's eavesdropping and the presence of the other gods, which will be addressed in later chapters.

The boundary between the public and private will be explored more later as well; for now, the focus remains on the frustrated desire that this (lack of) boundary generates. Venus' revenge on Sol, inspired by her thwarted desires, closely parallels Cupid's revenge on Apollo in the myth of Apollo and Daphne in Book I of the *Metamorphoses*. Insulted by Apollo (1.454-465), Cupid avenges himself by making Apollo the victim of unrequited love (1.466-476). Sol retains a close relationship with Apollo, who in turn has a strong association with Augustus. Moreover, already in the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid has invited comparison between Sol and Apollo; the epithet, *Phoebus*, had been applied to Apollo in the myth of Apollo and Daphne⁴³ and is also used to describe Sol in the myth of Phaethon.⁴⁴ In addition, Augustus had historically been given both Apollonian and solar attributes: Augustus' mother had believed he was the son of Apollo,

⁴¹ *Met.* 4.171-4

⁴² *Met.* 4.190-2

⁴³ *Phoebi* 1.452, *Delius* 1.454, *Phoebe* 1.463, *Apollineas* 1.473, *Phoebus* 1.552, *Paeon* 1.565

⁴⁴ *Sole* 1.750, *Phoebo* 1.751, *solis* 1.766, *Sole* 1.770, *Solis* 2.1, *Phoebus* 2.24, *Sol* 2.32, *Phoebe* 2.36, *Phoebo* 2.110, *Solem* 2.394, *Phoebus* 2.399

while his father (Octavius) had dreamed that the sun had risen from her womb; Octavius had also dreamed that his son had appeared to him wearing a solar diadem and riding a chariot pulled by twelve horses, an image that Ovid alludes to later in this myth (*axe sub Hesperio sunt pascua Solis equorum* / beneath the Hesperian skies lie the pastures of Sol's horses).⁴⁵ Other accounts claim that infant Augustus had escaped his crib and been found atop a lofty tower gazing up at the sun; that when he returned to Rome following Julius Caesar's assassination, a halo had formed around the sun; and that his eyes, because they shone so brightly (he liked to believe that they had some sort of divine radiance (*divini vigoris*)), people that had met his gaze would lower their faces as if they had just looked into the sun (*fulgorem solis vultum summitteret*).⁴⁶ Also by this time, Augustus himself had curated a strong relationship with Apollo, whom he considered his patron deity.⁴⁷ The wide applicability of *Phoebus* here reflects an awareness of the variety of cultural associations between Augustus, Apollo, and Sol, and also creates an intentional ambiguity that Ovid will exploit in order to continue a thematic demonstration of the conflict between Augustan and Ovidian notions of love. This is possible because these associations work in conjunction with another set of close associations. Much like Sol parallels Apollo of Book I and is in turn capable of representing Augustus, Venus here parallels Cupid and can also be interpreted as a representation of Ovid. Both Venus and Cupid are erotic deities and hold powerful positions in the world of love elegy, the genre with which Ovid gained mass popularity. For example, it was Venus who directed Ovid to teach about the art of love (*me Venus artificem tenero praefecit Amori*)⁴⁸ in his *Ars Amatoria* and Cupid who thwarted his attempts to transition from the genre of elegy to epic by lasciviously stealing away

⁴⁵ *Met.* 4.214

⁴⁶ For full details of all these accounts, see Suetonius *Divus Augustus* 79, 94-5.

⁴⁷ Zanker 1988: 48-53

⁴⁸ *Ars Amatoria* 1.7

a foot of his verse, converting his dactylic hexameter (meter of epic) to elegiac couplets (meter of love elegy).⁴⁹

Therefore, when Venus (Ovid) punishes Sol (Augustus), Ovid is claiming and continuing a theme of the superiority of Ovidian love over Augustan love. Apollo in Book I exemplifies the Augustan ideal of *virtus* (courage, manliness) following his slaughter of the monstrous Python, while Sol acts as a defender of Augustan *pudicitia* (sexual virtue) by thwarting Venus' extramarital affair. However, neither virtue is able to withstand the power of desire. Sol is overcome and tormented by desire (*nempe, tuis omnes qui terras ignibus uris, / ureris igne novo / no doubt, you who warm all the lands with your fires, will burn with a new fire*).⁵⁰ In fact, much in the same way Sol had caused frustrated desire, he now becomes afflicted with it:

*quique omnia cernere debes,
Leucothoen spectas et virgine figis in una,
quos mundo debes, oculos. modo surgis Eoo
temperius caelo, modo serius incidis undis,
spectandique mora brumalis porrigis horas;
deficis interdum, vitiumque in lumina mentis
transit et obscurus mortalia pectora terres.
nec tibi quod lunae terris propioris imago
obstiterit, palles: facit hunc amor iste colorem.*⁵¹

And you, who ought to observe all things, look upon Leucothoe and transfix your eyes, which you should transfix upon the world, on a single maiden instead. At times you rise too early in the Eastern sky, at others you sink into the sea too late. As you delay to gaze upon her longer, you extend the length of winter days. Sometimes you withdraw, your mind's affliction dims your light and, obscured, you frighten the hearts of mankind. You did not fade because the image of the moon, being closer to the earth, stood before you: it is love that saps your color.

⁴⁹ ...risisse Cupido / Dicitur atque unum surripuisse pedem /.../ Sex mihi surgat opus numeris, in quinque residat: / Ferrea cum vestris bella valete modis! / Cupid is said to have laughed and snatched one foot away...let my work rise in six feet, fall in five: farewell iron wars and your meter! (*Amores* 1.1.3-4, 27-8)

⁵⁰ *Met.* 4.194-5

⁵¹ *Met.* 4.195-203

His desire proves so strong that he neglects his duties; that is, instead of doing what he *should* (*debes...debes*), Sol instead is transfixed by Leucothoe. As a consequence of this trance, he throws the world into disarray by rising too early or setting too late, confusing the seasons with too much or too little light. The internal conflict between duty and desire manifests itself in his change of color: while Rhorer has observed Ovid's use of the color red to convey passion and eroticism, Sol pales (*palles*), perhaps to suggest the frustrated nature of his desire.⁵² This internal conflict epitomizes the conflict between Ovidian and Augustan love. The Augustan preoccupation with *pudicitia* has instigated Sol's frustrated love, the frustration of which is characterized by the incapacitation that ironically prevents him from upholding another, arguably more significant, Augustan virtue: duty (*pietas*).⁵³ Ovid, through Venus, shrewdly attacks the notion of love as a duty. Rather than emphasizing *pudicitia* and duty, Venus' (Ovid's) attack on Sol (Augustus) encourages one to yield to the power of desire. Ovidian desire again eclipses Augustan practicality.

Ovid fashions a narrative of frustrated desire communicated via boundaries once more in the tale of Pomona and Vertumnus, the final love story of the *Metamorphoses*. Pomona, despite her many suitors, shuns men and fences herself within her orchard (*pomaria claudit / intus et accessus prohibet refugitque viriles*).⁵⁴ Ovid's use of *claudit* suggests the presence of some type of blockade or enclosure, which would function as a boundary, a clear demarcation between Pomona inside (*intus*) and those on the outside who must gain entry (*accessus*). By imposing this boundary, Pomona frustrates the desires of her suitors, who in turn are forced into the role of *amatores exclusi*. Altogether, Ovid creates a tale that is abundant in reminiscences of love elegy and also capable of subverting Augustan notions of love, which sought to redefine the sexual mores of the citizens of Rome.

⁵² Rhorer 1980

⁵³ Zanker 1988: 102 ("*Pietas*...one of the most important leitmotifs of the Augustan era.")

⁵⁴ *Met.* 14.635-6

Ovid, much like he did in the myth of Pyramus and Thisbe, utilizes *paraklausithyron* in the myth of Pomona and Vertumnus to both communicate frustrated desires and develop the elegiac style of the tale. Echoes of *paraklausithyron* are detected in the parade of suitors Ovid lists, who, by virtue of Pomona's enclosure (*claudit*), are shut-out lovers. However, Vertumnus, the final and most fervent of all Pomona's suitors (*superat amando hos*)⁵⁵, intensifies the use and effect of *paraklausithyron* in the embedded myth of Iphis and Anaxarete, which he relates to Pomona in an effort to soften her resistance to men and marriage.⁵⁶ The inset myth features an acutely programmatic performance of *paraklausithyron*: Iphis, enamored by Anaxarete, stands outside her door, adorning it with garlands, appealing to Anaxarete's attendants, and lamenting the door's stubborn bolts.⁵⁷ Anaxarete, the exemplary *puella dura* (harsh girl), spurns him and is turned to stone for the hardheartedness that caused Iphis to commit suicide.⁵⁸ These *paraklausithyra* corroborate the suitors' roles as shut-out lovers and at the same time contribute to the myth's broader elegiac style. In fact, the very presence of the inset myth related by Vertumnus carries strong intimations of Alexandrian (i.e. elegiac) influence.⁵⁹ Even the characters themselves, whose names are Greek, offer a sophisticated flair that is quite out of place within the characteristically *unsophisticated*, rustic depictions of early-Roman mythology. Thus, they are indicative of an external influence that is more refined and Alexandrian than would befit a manifestly Roman myth.

Moreover, one finds that Ovid has imbued the text with a range of erotic elements from the outset of the myth that contribute to its reminiscences of love elegy. It is said that Pomona felt no sexual desire (*Veneris quoque nulla cupido est*)⁶⁰, but in many ways the text contradicts this statement. While she shuns all male suitors — thus assuming the role of a *puella dura*

⁵⁵ *Met.* 14.641-2

⁵⁶ Myers 1994: 228

⁵⁷ *Met.* 14.702-10

⁵⁸ *Met.* 14.753-758

⁵⁹ Jones 2001: 361

⁶⁰ *Met.* 14.634

herself — she also augments the erotic tone of the narrative. Apples (*poma*), the objects of Pomona's affection (*rus amat et ramos felicia poma ferentes*) and the fruit from which she derives her name (*unde tenet nomen*), had a known function of being erotic symbols throughout Greek and Latin literature.⁶¹ Examples of the apple's association with Aphrodite/Venus, love, and sex include the myth of Hippomenes and Atalanta, which Ovid recounts in Book X of the *Metamorphoses*, and Catullus 2b.⁶² In fact, the common relationship to apples shared by both Atalanta and Pomona is fitting: both maidens reject marriage and both, as will be discussed in later chapters, are pursued by men of deceptive means. Additionally, many of her suitors are notoriously sexual beings: Pans (*Panes*), satyrs (*satyri*), and Priapus, who is teasingly alluded to one by his defining features (*quique deus fures vel falce vel inguine terret* / the god who terrifies thieves with either his sickle or his phallus).⁶³ In each case, the suitor's presence augments the eroticism of the myth. Finally, the great detail given to the description of Pomona's garden(ing) heightens the sensuality of the myth. Just as Ovid remarks on the luxuriance (*luxuriam*) of the orchard, he makes a point to clarify that her tools are not weapons (*nec iaculo gravis est, sed adunca dextera falce*).⁶⁴ This distinction confirms a deviation from both the conventions of epic militarism and agricultural didactic poetry (e.g. Vergil's *Georgics*).⁶⁵ Instead, the text is purposefully imbued with sensuality and eroticism.

The position of this myth, however, is incongruous with the text that surrounds it. Preceded by a lineage of the Alban kings (14.609-22) and immediately succeeded by the war between Romulus and the Sabines (14.772-804), Ovid has casually glossed over several important moments in Roman history, including Mars' rape of Ilia/Rhea Silvia and the rape of the Sabines. In addition, he truncates Romulus' usurpation of Amulius (also evidently never

⁶¹ *Met.* 14.626-7

⁶² *Met.* 10.560-707 (Venus gave Hippomenes three golden apples with which he would distract Atalanta during their footrace, allowing him to win and take her hand in marriage); Catullus 2b (It ['playing' with his mistress] is as pleasing to me as they say the golden apple was to that swift girl, which loosened her long-tied girdle).

⁶³ *Met.* 14.637-40

⁶⁴ *Met.* 14.628-9

⁶⁵ Jones 2001: 363-7

acknowledging Remus' existence) and the story of Tarpeia.⁶⁶ Overall, Ovid minimizes this momentous time period in Roman mythic history and the erotic tales therein. Two erotic tales of particular importance to Augustus include Mars and Ilia and the rape of the Sabines. The former erotic (albeit violent) tale was a necessary component of establishing a connection between Augustus and Rome's divine past.⁶⁷ Similarly, the rape of the Sabines, although violent, was required to demonstrate a mythical/historical precedent for marriage as a necessity and a practical measure that ensured the longevity of the state. Ovid's elision of an account of Mars and Ilia destabilizes Augustan claims of religious and mythic authority. Yet, it appears as if Ovid has not completely omitted an account of the rape of the Sabines.⁶⁸ This point will be developed more in Chapter III as the conclusions of each myth are analyzed. For now, Ovid has utilized boundary to neotericize — that is, to exert neoteric influence on⁶⁹ — Rome's legendary past as opposed to formulating a traditional, epic (and Augustan) account of Rome's founding. This reformulation afforded Ovid the opportunity to promote Ovidian notions of love, sophistication, and sensuality, while simultaneously neglecting to provide examples of love that substantiated Augustan power.

Chapter II: Augustanizing the Myths

The tension created between conflicting notions of love as expressed by frustrated desire becomes clearer by contextualizing the myths. Ovid's life followed the course of Augustus' rise to and consolidation of power. Therefore, Ovid would have been familiar with the political, religious, and cultural manifestations of the Augustan Age. This chapter explores the

⁶⁶ Myers 1994: 248

⁶⁷ Augustus maintained an association with Romulus (son of Mars and Ilia) due to the fact that Augustus had at one point been a similarly warlike leader, that the Senate had for a time considered referring to him as Romulus, and that twelve vultures had flown overhead when Augustus first became consul — just as they had flown over Romulus to indicate that the Palatine was the hill upon which Rome should be founded (Suetonius *Divus Augustus* 46, 97-8).

⁶⁸ Myers 1994: 375

⁶⁹ Neoterics (from the Greek νεώτεροι, meaning "newer ones" (*poetae novi* in Latin)) were Latin poets who rejected traditional epic themes (e.g. the exploits of gods and heroes, patriotism) for elegant, entertaining, expressive, and shorter (*brevis*) poetry.

different facets of Augustan rule as they appear throughout the selected myths and how they function to condition the audience to interpret the myths as politically subversive.

Explicitly, the myth of Pyramus and Thisbe takes place in Babylon (*quas Oriens habuit / ... / ubi dicitur altam / coctilibus muris cinxisse Semiramis urbem /* whom [Thisbe] the East held...where Semiramis is said to have surrounded her lofty city with walls of baked bricks).⁷⁰ Much remains nebulous about Semiramis, but she was reputed to be a semi-divine woman inspired from the image of the Assyrian queen Sammu-Ramat, with Semiramis being the name ascribed to her by the Greeks. She was the wife of the legendary founder of Nineveh in Assyria, King Ninus. When he died, she proved to be a very strong leader and is credited with much of the architectural development of Babylon.⁷¹ Yet, several parts of the myth's text, including its Babylonian setting, compel the audience to understand this story in a Roman context.

While Semiramis was associated with both Assyria and Babylon, Duke observes that Ovid has established her as decidedly Babylonian, evidenced by the fact that *Babylonian* Thisbe (*Babylonia Thisbe*) resided within the walls Semiramis built.⁷² But this is confused by the fact that the tomb of Ninus, the eventual rendezvous of the lovers, would have been located hundreds of miles away in Nineveh.⁷³ However, as Segal points out, Ovid's landscapes are often "impressionistic rather than realistic."⁷⁴ Moreover, Babylon had greater name recognition than Nineveh and, in many ways, mirrored Rome. For example, Babylonian Semiramis was credited with much of the fortification and beautification of Babylon, just as Augustus was credited with the restoration of Rome. For example, Suetonius reported that Augustus, having built several new ornate temples and restored eighty-two that had fallen into disrepair, would boast that he found Rome a city of bricks and left it a city of marble.⁷⁵ Augustus also built and restored secular

⁷⁰ *Met.* 4.56-8

⁷¹ See Diodorus Siculus' *Bibliotheca Historica* 2.4-20 for full details; Mark 2014 for the relationship between Sammu-Ramat and Semiramis.

⁷² Duke 1971: 325-6; *Met.* 4.99

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Segal 1969: 6

⁷⁵ Suetonius *Divus Augustus* 28.3; *Augustus Res Gestae* 19-20

buildings, and commissioned Agrippa to construct new aqueducts and the city's first public baths.⁷⁶ And like Semiramis, who extended the reach of her empire (ἡ δὲ Σεμίραμις ἔκτισε καὶ ἄλλας πόλεις παρὰ τὸν ποταμὸν τὸν τε Εὐφράτην καὶ τὸν Τίγριν / Semiramis founded other cities along both the Euphrates and Tigris rivers), Augustus also greatly expanded Rome's borders through the annexation of Egypt (*Aegyptum imperio populi Romani adieci*), the establishment of colonies throughout the Mediterranean, and the acquisition of new parts of Spain, Gaul, and Germany.⁷⁷ Furthermore, there are equivalences between the Babylonian and Roman cityscapes and topographies. Both capital cities had large-scale defensive walls, and a comparison between the famously impregnable walls of Babylon and Rome's Servian walls would surely have been flattering to the Romans, who, although they were often left defenseless as they outgrew these walls, considered Rome similarly impregnable. Moreover, like the river Tiber flows southward through Rome, the Euphrates flows southward through Babylon (τοῦ δ' Εὐφράτου διὰ μέσης τῆς Βαβυλῶνος ῥέοντος καὶ πρὸς μεσημβρίαν καταφερομένου).⁷⁸

Ovid has essentially transposed Rome into the East, using Babylon as its Eastern counterpart. This Eastern setting is even more fitting when one considers the myth's content; that is, the East, as the wellspring of excess, eroticism, and effeminacy — the lavish antithesis of Rome — pairs well with the erotic and subversive behavior of the young lovers. And yet, the veiled setting of Rome is brought further into focus when the audience learns who had forbidden their marriage: the fathers (*patres*). This word evokes a defining feature of Roman culture and politics: the Senate. Historically, members of the *Senatus Romanus* had been referred to as *patres conscripti* (enlisted fathers) to acknowledge their role as patriarchs of the state. If *patres* is understood more broadly as “Law,” a connection between the impossibility of their marriage and the prohibition against certain marriages of the *lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus* becomes

⁷⁶ Zanker 1988: 139-40

⁷⁷ *Bib. Hist.* 2.11.1; *R.G.* 26-8

⁷⁸ *Bib. Hist.* 2.8.4

much clearer. A broader interpretation is necessary given that the *leges Iuliae* were not passed by the Senate but rather via the Tribal Assembly⁷⁹, and because Augustus possessed tribunician authority, *patres* might also refer to the *pater patriae* himself.⁸⁰ While the text does not indicate any difference in social class between Pyramus and Thisbe, the *patres* function as embodiments of the oppressive nature of the Law, which attempted to legislate love. The obstructive orders of Law/the fathers and the obstructive presence of the shared wall (*paries domui communis utrique*) in particular impede the lovers' relationship from maturing. The wall actualizes the forced separation of the lovers and reifies the stipulations of the *lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus* that kept the classes isolated.

Much like how the preceding myth contains evidence that can connect it with the *lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus*, there is evidence to connect the conjoined myths of Mars/Venus/Vulcan and Sol/Leucothoe/Clytie to the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis*. In the previous chapter, the relationship between Sol, Apollo, and Augustus, in addition to how it features in this myth, was discussed. However, it is also significant that Mars and Venus are the gods on which Sol tattles. One layer of its significance resides in the fact that these two deities are the divine parents of the Roman empire. The second layer resides in the fact that Augustus, who took such a strong stance against adultery, has a divine pedigree that traces its way back to Venus in particular.⁸¹ Therefore, an affair between Mars and Venus bears a threatening force. The first layer functions to question the legitimacy of a law outlawing adultery; that is, why should an ordinary Roman obey such a law if the divine parents of Rome are not held to the same standard that the law demanded? Moreover, Augustus' moral authority on the subject of adultery is made

⁷⁹ Frank 1975: 48

⁸⁰ The honorific title meaning "Father of the Fatherland" given to Augustus in 2 BCE.

⁸¹ Venus was the mother of Aeneas, a Trojan hero who fled from Troy when it fell to the Greeks. After a long journey, he landed in Italy where he would lay the foundations for the prophesied Roman Empire. Iliia/Rhea Silvia was a descendant of Aeneas, who, raped by Mars, gave birth to twins Romulus and Remus. Romulus would eventually found Rome, which would reach its zenith under Augustus. Romans therefore descended from both Venus and Mars. The Julian *gens* traced its lineage back to Venus; Augustus, as the adopted son of Julius Caesar, was thus also a descendant of Venus and Aeneas. For more details, see Zanker 1988. For a version of these events given by a contemporary of Augustus, see Vergil's *Aeneid* Books 1-6.

embarrassingly laughable via Venus' sexual misconduct. In other words, adultery in and of itself was bad enough; adultery involving a goddess of such Augustan significance would have been devastating. Ovid exploits the shiftiness of Venus' image, which had been rehabilitated from that of the promiscuous goddess of love to the "matronly progenitrix of the Julian line," to provide a pointedly subversive message against both Augustus and the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* — and perhaps also to again reinforce Ovidian pleasure over Augustan practicality and propriety.⁸²

The deities that feature here also facilitate Ovid's ability to make allusions to Augustus' own private life and infidelities. For example, the emperor Augustus and his wife Livia were presented in the guise of Mars and Venus as statues in the *Porticus Liviae*.⁸³ This artistic choice may indicate a strong connection between the imperial couple and Mars and Venus. In the context of Ovid's myth, then, what would be the significance of their affair with respect to the imperial couple? For one, it may point to the impropriety of their marriage: Mark Antony had accused Augustus of snatching Livia up too hastily.⁸⁴ In fact, the whole of Augustus' marital history opened him up to charges of indecency and inconsistency with his own *leges Iuliae*. His first marriage with Claudia (stepdaughter of Antony, meant to fulfill their alliance) quickly ended without consummation. He soon married Scribonia, who gave birth to his only daughter, Julia the Elder. It was not long, however, until he divorced her for her incessant nagging ("*pertaesus*," *ut scribit*, "*morum perversitatem eius*"). Finally, he stole Livia, who was pregnant at the time, away from her husband Tiberius Nero.⁸⁵ In a broader purview, this portrayal may also allude to the adultery and vice that plagued the imperial household. This problem was evidently bad enough that Augustus banished his only daughter for committing adultery. In fact, it is reported that Julia's adultery upset him more than the deaths of his two adopted sons and that, whenever

⁸² Milnor 2005: 57

⁸³ Zanker 1988: 139

⁸⁴ Suetonius *Divus Augustus* 69

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 62

her name was mentioned, he would exclaim, “Αἴθ’ ὄφελον ἄγαμός τ’ ἔμειναι ἄγονός τ’ ἀπολέσθαι / Would that I were unmarried and had died childless!”⁸⁶

Whether Augustus’ “presence” in the myth is inferred through Mars (on account of the aforementioned portrait of Augustus and Livia) or Sol, an account of adultery containing so many references to Augustus would have certainly recalled reports of Augustus’ own extramarital affairs. Suetonius reports that not even his friends were able to deny that Augustus committed adultery (*adulteria quidem exercuisse ne amici quidem negant*) — although they claimed it was done for reasons of the state and not personal pleasure — and also recounts Antony’s accusations that, at a dinner party, Augustus had taken a former consul’s wife from him and led her into their bedroom. When they returned, her face was flushed and her hair a mess!⁸⁷ Suetonius even records a letter from Antony to Augustus:

*"Quid te mutavit? Quod reginam in eo? Uxor mea est. Nunc coepi an abhinc annos novem? Tu deinde solam Drusillam inis? Ita valeas, uti tu, hanc epistulam cum leges, non inieris Tertullam aut Terentillam aut Rufillam aut Salviam Titiseniam aut omnes. An refert, ubi et in qua arrigas?"*⁸⁸

“What’s your problem? Is it that I screw the queen [Cleopatra]? She’s my wife. Did I begin this now or nine years ago? And what about you, do you only screw [Livia] Drusilla? You’re admirable if, when you read this letter, you haven’t screwed Tertulla or Terentilla or Rufilla or Salvia Titisenia or all of them! Is it really of that much importance where or with whom you get off?

Now, a word of caution is necessary. The veracity of Suetonius’ histories is often questioned on account of his propensity for the unverifiable (i.e. gossip). “Gossip’ is a dirty word in historical scholarship” and frequently sidelined in favor of verifiable data and documentation.⁸⁹ But gossip also has its virtues: gossip, rumor, that which is said informally and with one’s guard down are “the odd ends and scraps...that nobody ever thinks of recording” but of which the real

⁸⁶ Ibid., 65 (Augustus is quoting Homer’s *Iliad* 3.40)

⁸⁷ Ibid., 69

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Vout 2007: 10

stuff of life is made.⁹⁰ Even in antiquity, a similar posture is maintained by Plutarch: “οὔτε γὰρ ἱστορίας γράφομεν, ἀλλὰ βίους / For I do not write histories, but *lives*.” And within these lives, it is more often a small deed like a passing phrase or jest that gives greater insight into one’s character than their famous exploits.⁹¹ Ovid, too, gives credence to the significance of gossip later in the *Metamorphoses*. In his brief account of the House of Rumor, Rumor (*Fama*) dwells in a palace of resounding brass (*tota est ex aere sonati*) perched objectively upon a summit (*summaque...in arce*) at the center of the world (*orbe locus medio est*).⁹² While this is the place where truths are distorted, the broader implication is that nothing that is said or done anywhere in the universe is able to evade its halls.⁹³ It is not only the notable happenings that pass through, but all of the information that fills the empty gaps and missing nuances that exist between the official recordings of history. And yet, Rumor has a role to play in the well-documented moments of history as well: when the narrative segues into the Trojan War, it is Rumor who spreads the news to the Trojans that the Greek fleets are approaching their shores.⁹⁴ Finally, it is also significant that Ovid’s description of the palace is associated with such a marked lack of boundary. Specifically, the palace transcends the three-sided boundary between the different zones of the world (i.e. the land, sky, and sea) (*triplicis confinia mundi*), has no doors to bar thresholds (*nullis inclusit limina portis*) but instead innumerable entrances (*innumerosque aditus*), and is a site of constant coming and going (*veniunt...euntque*).⁹⁵ Ovid’s proclivity for boundary transgression and this use of “gossip” to contextualize the myth find an interesting communion in the absence of boundaries associated with the House of Rumor.

Nevertheless, Augustus’ reputation as a philanderer stuck with him throughout his life. It is reported that, even as an old man, Augustus still enjoyed deflowering young girls, who were

⁹⁰ Ibid., 5; Vout is quoting Robertson Davies’ *The Rebel Angels* (1991) p.15.

⁹¹ Plutarch *Life of Alexander* 1.2 (ἀλλὰ πρᾶγμα βραχὺ πολλάκις καὶ ῥῆμα καὶ παιδιὰ τις ἔμφρασιν ἤθους ἐποίησε)

⁹² *Met.* 12.39-43

⁹³ *Met.* 12.41-2 (*unde quod est usquam, quamvis regionibus absit, / inspicitur, penetratque cavas vox omnis ad aures*)

⁹⁴ *Met.* 12.64-6

⁹⁵ *Met.* 12.39-40, 44, 53

procured for him by his attendants — and sometimes even his wife.⁹⁶ In sum, it is clear that this myth was carefully selected to not only question the legitimacy of the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis*, but also taunt Augustus with his own hypocrisy.

As can be seen in the myth of Pyramus and Thisbe, it has become clear that Ovid is capable of creating settings that are never too specific, and yet never altogether too remote. Indeed, this myth can also be read in a Roman context. Earlier in the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid referred to the realm of the gods as the “Palatine of the heavens” (*Palatia caeli*).⁹⁷ Thus, Ovid has already established a parallel between Olympus and the city of Rome at large. A little later, one unnamed god, among the many others brought in to witness the capture of Mars and Venus in the act, jokes that he wished to become shameful like them (*sic fieri turpis*).⁹⁸ The other gods laughed (*superi risere*).⁹⁹ If Olympus is a sort of pseudo-Palatine, then these gods, whose attitudes regarding adultery are markedly more permissive than those of Augustus, might very well represent the elites of Roman society. While the indecorous behavior of these gods mirrors the notoriously salacious conduct of the Roman upper classes, there also exists a cultural precedent that supports such a connection: it was a commonplace for the Roman aristocracy to trace their family lineages back to (Greek) gods and heroes.¹⁰⁰

Similar to the pseudo-Palatine of the previous myth, Ovid fashions a proto-Palatine of sorts in the myth of Pomona and Vertumnus. The setting here is Latium (*Latinas hamadryadas*), specifically under the reign of the Alban king Proca (*iamque Palatinae summam Proca gentis habebat. / Rege sub hoc Pomona fuit /* and now Proca held rule over the Palatine people. Pomona lived under this king...¹⁰¹ Latium was the land upon which Rome would be founded and engendered a strong sense of reverence and mysticism. It was the site of Rome’s rustic

⁹⁶ Suetonius *Divus Augustus* 71

⁹⁷ *Met.* 1.176

⁹⁸ *Met.* 4.188

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Zanker 1988: 44; the Romans’ supposed descent from the Trojans afforded them a connection to the Greek pantheon and “a place in the Greek world from time immemorial.”

¹⁰¹ *Met.* 14.622-4; the Palatine Hill, one of the seven hills of Rome, exists within Latium. The Latins were an Italic tribe that inhabited Latium.

beginnings, which were associated with austerity and moral rectitude. These rustic beginnings were therefore important to Augustus as they reflected the virtues of his moral program and gave precedent for them. Moreover, he maintained a familial connection to this geographical area as it was where his ancestor Aeneas had landed in Italy.

Vergil had already established a tradition of portraying Latium as a sort of paradise in his *Aeneid*:

*atque hic Aeneas ingentem ex aequore lucum
prospicit. hunc inter fluvio Tiberinus amoeno
verticibus rapidis et multa flavus harena
in mare prorumpit. variae circumque supraque
adsuetae ripis volucres et fluminis alveo
aethera mulcebant cantu lucoque volabant.
flectere iter sociis terraeque advertere proras
imperat et laetus fluvio succedit opaco.*¹⁰²

And Aeneas, out at sea, discerned a huge forest. Amongst it, the Tiber, by way of its pleasant stream, bursts forth into the sea in swirling eddies full of yellow sand. And various birds, both above and around it, accustomed to its banks and the hollows of its streams, were delighting the heavens with their songs and were flying through the groves. He ordered his comrades to change their course and to turn their prows toward land, and happily proceeded into the shady river.

Ovid not only continues this tradition, but exaggerates it. While he indulges “the Augustan predilection for idyllic landscapes and rustic scenes,”¹⁰³ which recur frequently throughout the *Metamorphoses* and other works of the Augustan Age, it appears as if several elements specific to Augustan art are inserted to reinforce the myth’s Augustan context.

A defining feature of Augustan art were images of fertility and abundance. Augustan art had “virtually no battle scenes or glorification of the ruler” and instead opted to emphasize the blessings of marriage and children — the blessing that Augustan peace (*pax Augusta*)

¹⁰² Vergil *Aeneid* 7.29-36

¹⁰³ Segal 1969: 6

delivered.¹⁰⁴ Yet, these abstract ideas were rather difficult to depict in visual art, so fertile landscapes were used instead.¹⁰⁵ Romans of the Augustan Age would not have been able to avoid reminders of Augustan fertility and abundance, and a prime example of the depiction of such in visual art was the *Ara Pacis Augustae* (Altar of Augustan Peace), specifically a relief panel on its eastern wall of an ambiguous female figure. Her ambiguous identity makes it difficult to discern whether she is *Venus Genetrix*, *Tellus*, *Ceres*, *Pax Augusta*, or a personification of some other Augustan virtue.¹⁰⁶ But no matter her identity, it is clear she is associated with fertility in all of her possible forms.

Much like the goddess of this panel, Pomona is a symbol of fertility. The etymology of her name and her true nature as a hamadryad (tree nymph) prompts the audience to view Pomona as an extension of the Latian countryside, as being synonymous with it.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, her activities further develop a connection to Augustan visual art. Pomona loves branches heavy with bountiful apples (*amat et ramos felicia poma ferentes*), which are reminiscent of popular symbols featured on the *Ara Pacis* like acanthus plants or garlands bearing fruits that would not have been in bloom at the same time, giving the impression of paradise on earth.¹⁰⁸ Pomona's cutting back of luxuriant overgrowth (*luxuriam premit*) also evokes the acanthus plant that featured prominently in Augustan art as a symbol of Rome's unrestrained growth and power. Through her various chores, the natural scenery is developed further: branches (*bracchia*), bark (*cortice*), graft/twig (*virgam*), sap (*sucos*), roots (*radicis*), tendrils (*fibras*), water (*undis*) all feature here.¹⁰⁹

All of the fertile imagery inevitably leads one to the *lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus*, which concerned itself with the fertility and procreativity of the senatorial and equestrian (via the

¹⁰⁴ Zanker 1988: 111

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 158-9

¹⁰⁶ Venus the Mother (a version of Venus that portrayed her in terms of domesticity and fertility); Mother Earth; goddess of agriculture, grain, motherliness; an anthropomorphism of Augustan Peace.

¹⁰⁷ Gentilcore 1995: 111

¹⁰⁸ Zanker 1988: 117, 181

¹⁰⁹ *Met.* 14.629-633

lex Papia Poppaea) classes. The erotic implements of this myth also have the potential to strengthen this association because, after all, procreation necessitates sex. Just as Pomona is made synonymous with the landscape, Vertumnus is made into a cultivator of that landscape. Vertumnus is described as a harvester of crops (*duri messoris*) and as having turned the recently-cut grass (*desectum...gramen versasse*).¹¹⁰ In the latter image, he was wearing a crown of hay (*tempora...faeno religata*), perhaps evoking the aforementioned relief in which stalks of grain reached up to the goddess' eyes as a visual communication of abundance (of crops).¹¹¹ Vertumnus was also said to have been carrying an ox goad (*stimulos...iuvencos*), perhaps alluding to the same relief in which an ox sits below the goddess or the *bucrania* (religious symbols of the skulls of sacrificed oxen) that decorated the altar.¹¹² Gentilcore's observation of the repetition and sexual innuendo of *colere* (to cultivate) intensifies the sexual imagery between Vertumnus the cultivator and Pomona the cultivated.¹¹³

At the same time, it is possible to locate parts of the text that are not as overtly Augustan. Rather, they align much more closely with Ovidian notions of love and sex, which were discussed in Chapter I. As Pomona refuses to let her plants endure being parched and subsequently quenches their thirst, sensuality, comfort, and pleasure all feature more strongly than reproductivity.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, Pomona does not consider these tasks to be work or driven by duty; instead, they were her love and passion (*hic amor, hoc studium*).¹¹⁵ The natural scenery also carries with it reminiscences of what Segal describes as "a pervasive sensuous atmosphere, a mood of luxurious lassitude."¹¹⁶

In the end, Ovid has, in a sense, produced his own piece of Augustan visual art. However, given the erotic undercurrents established here and in the previous chapter, it may not

¹¹⁰ *Met.* 14.643-6

¹¹¹ Zanker 1988: 174-5

¹¹² *Met.* 14.647-8

¹¹³ Gentilcore 1995: 115

¹¹⁴ *Met.* 14.632-3;

¹¹⁵ *Met.* 14.634

¹¹⁶ Segal 1969: 8

be quite as Augustan as initially thought. In the following chapter, the conflict between Pomona and Vertumnus' different erotic presentations will be analyzed and put to bed. For now, Ovid has fashioned a brilliant backdrop upon which he was able to intensify Augustan themes, but also poignantly curate opposition to his marriage legislation and challenge Augustus on his own turf.

Chapter III: The Primacy of Pleasure

Having established the boundaries at play and identifying the Augustan undercurrents of the myths, it is now possible to examine how Ovid utilizes the transgression of boundaries to emphasize the primacy of pleasure. In each myth, pleasure and the pursuit of pleasure are given more attention than the result of any sexual union that occurs. Indeed, they reinforce the Ovidian, not Augustan, notions of love and sex. Ovid therefore uses the theme of the primacy of pleasure to oppose and destabilize the Augustan marriage legislation.

As was mentioned previously, the myth of Pyramus and Thisbe contains perhaps the greatest number of boundaries out of all the myths of the *Metamorphoses*, and it has been established that these boundaries can be interpreted as class boundaries. The several iterations of boundary transgression that feature here can thus be read as a noncompliance with the *lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus*. The first boundary encountered was the lovers' shared wall; this too is the site of the first transgression of boundary.

*fissus erat tenui rima, quam duxerat olim,
cum fieret, paries domui communis utrique.
id vitium nulli per saecula longa notatum —
quid non sentit amor? — primi vidistis amantes
et vocis fecistis iter, tutaeque per illud
murmure blanditiae minimo transire solebant.*¹¹⁷

The wall common to both of their houses had been fractured by way of a slender crack which had developed at one point while it was being built. Through the long ages this defect had been noticed by no one — but what does love not discover? — you

¹¹⁷ *Met.* 4.65-70

lovers were the first to see this crack and make it a passageway for the voice, and through that crack, safe flatteries were accustomed to pass by way of the slightest whisper.

This defect (*tenui rima*) provides the isolated lovers with a way to circumvent the boundary placed between them. This in turn weakens the integrity of that boundary, which had actualized the stipulations of Law (*patres*). That this transgression serves as a subversion of Law is corroborated by the description of its development. The audience learns that it evidently formed long ago — as it had been noticed by no one through the long ages (*nulli per saecula longa notatum*) — while the homes were being built (*cum fieret*). Duke reports that shoddy infrastructure (i.e. wall fissures) was a serious problem in Babylon, and not uncommon in Rome either.¹¹⁸ This connection, in addition to the broader connection between Babylon and Rome that Ovid has crafted, prompts one to view their homes as Roman homes. Given that the Latin word “home” (*domus*) can also function as a metonym of the state, it is possible to interpret their homes as a symbol of Rome itself. Therefore, the crack symbolizes the persistence with which love and desire endured against Augustan social barriers. Moreover, the crack, with respect to the timing of its development, alludes to the key role played by the intermingling of different peoples and classes in the development of the Roman state (e.g. the rape of the Sabine women was an example of intermarriage between Roman citizens and a non-citizen Italic people; Romulus gave asylum to fugitives in an effort to populate Rome, apparently without regard for their social status).¹¹⁹

The erotic quality of the transgression is enhanced by the use of words such as *tenui* (slender, delicate) and *blanditiae* (flatteries, allurements). So too does the thematic interjection, “*quid non sentit amor? / What does love not find?*” It is a meaningful nod toward the primacy of

¹¹⁸ Duke 1971: 325; in his third Satire, Juvenal wrote, “We live in a city supported by weak props...and once they have covered the cleft of an old crack (*rima*), they order us to sleep without worry while we hang from ruins (*Satura* III 193-6).”

¹¹⁹ Livy *Ab Urbe Condita* 1.8-9

love and desire, and how pleasure has the capacity to outwit unfeeling Law. In fact, it is the pursuit of pleasure that initiates the second transgression(s) of boundary:

*tum murmure parvo
multa prius questi statuunt, ut nocte silenti
fallere custodes foribusque excedere temptent,
cumque domo exierint, urbis quoque tecta relinquunt,
neve sit errandum lato spatiantibus arvo,
convenient ad busta Nini lateantque sub umbra
arboris: arbor ibi niveis uberrima pomis,
ardua morus, erat, gelido contermina fonti.¹²⁰*

Then, at first having lamented their many troubles by way of small murmurs, they established a plan: that they might attempt to deceive their guards and slip passed their guarded doorways in the silence of night, and once they are free from their homes, that they might also abandon the rooftops of the city, and lest they lose each other by way of wandering in a wide open field, they should meet at the tomb of Ninus and hide under the shade of the tree: the tree there so abundant with snow-white fruit, the tall mulberry tree, which stood nearby a cold spring.

It is almost as if Ovid were attempting to provoke Augustus with an unrelenting barrage of transgressions: that of their guarded doorways, their homes, and finally their city. The lovers' passion has resulted in a shocking violation of *pietas erga parentes* and *pietas erga civitatem* (piety towards one's parents and state). The latter is particularly significant in that an abandonment of the city walls was tantamount to an abandonment of morality.¹²¹ These transgressions transplant the lovers to an environment of libidinal liberation outside the confines of their city and Law's jurisdiction. The first definitive sign of their newfound sexual freedom occurs when Thisbe loses her veil.

*callida per tenebras versato cardine Thisbe
egreditur fallitque suos adopertaque vultum
pervenit ad tumulum dictaque sub arbore sedit.
audacem faciebat amor. venit ecce recenti
caede leaena boum spumantis oblita rictus
depositura sitim vicini fontis in unda;*

¹²⁰ *Met.* 4.83-90

¹²¹ "Mores and moenia went together" (Zanker 1988: 328-9)

*quam procul ad lunae radios Babylonia Thisbe
vidit et obscurum timido pede fugit in antrum,
dumque fugit, tergo velamina lapsa reliquit.*¹²²

Cunning Thisbe passes through the darkness with the hinge of the door having been turned in her wake, eluding her guards, and, her face veiled, arrived at the tomb and sat beneath the agreed-upon tree. Love was making her bold. But behold! A lioness smeared with the fresh blood of an ox on her frothing jaws comes to slake her thirst in the waves of the nearby spring, whom Babylonian Thisbe saw from a distance in the rays of the moon and, on timid feet, fled into a dark cave. And while she fled, she left behind her veil having slipped from her back.

The veil was a well-known sign of piety. Portraits of Augustus often depicted him *capite velato* (with a veiled head) as a visual marker of the defining virtue of the Augustan Age: *pietas*.¹²³ Moreover, other honorary statues showcasing the male nude were “replaced by the togate figure with veiled head.”¹²⁴ In the story, Thisbe’s veil not only falls off (a symbolic loss of piety), it is torn to shreds by a passing lioness (*inventos forte sine ipsa / ore cruentato tenues laniavit amictus / she tore to shreds with her blood-stained mouth the slender mantle having been found by chance without its owner*).¹²⁵ Interestingly, the lioness was a symbol of the Mesopotamian goddess Ishtar, the world’s first known goddess of love.¹²⁶ In fact, one of Babylon’s famous eight gates was the *Ishtar Gate*, which was preceded by a Processional Way decorated in enamel lions, and it is possible that Ovid might have imagined Thisbe passing through this gate on her way out of the city.¹²⁷ Thus, the lioness here acts as a representation of Ishtar’s presence. Moreover, as a goddess of love and sex, her shredding of Thisbe’s veil heightens the effect of the symbolic the loss of *pietas* and *pudicitia* that followed Thisbe’s abandonment of the city and her advancement into sexual freedom.

¹²² *Met.* 4.93-101

¹²³ Zanker 1988: 128-9

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 239

¹²⁵ *Met.* 4.103-4

¹²⁶ Pryke 2019

¹²⁷ Duke 1971: 325

It is also interesting that Thisbe finds refuge in a nearby cave. In Book IV of the *Aeneid*, the premier text of the Augustan Age, Aeneas and Dido also seek shelter in a cave as a storm approaches.¹²⁸ It is in this cave, under the auspices of Juno, goddess of marriage (*pronuba Iuno*), and Tellus that their “marriage” is consummated. Despite the overriding question of whether or not this “marriage” is legitimate (Dido calls it marriage, while Aeneas is under no such impression¹²⁹), there is a certain erotic element and marital insinuation that became attached to the image of a cave. Nevertheless, this famous “marriage” seriously lacks Augustan quality: Aeneas and Dido pass their days away in indulgence (*luxu*) and disgraceful passion (*turpique cupidine captos*), forgetful of their royal duties (*regnorum immemores*).¹³⁰ Therefore, by inserting a cave into this narrative, Ovid mixes sincerity with subversion. That is, the layered literary tradition of the cave, surely at the fore of the minds of audiences of the Augustan Age, is a nod to Augustus through his ancestor Aeneas. However, it is yet another demonstration that not even the most legendary of Augustus’ own bloodline could idealize his conceptions of love and sex, and complements rather than denounces the sexually impious behavior of Pyramus and Thisbe.

Pyramus, arriving too late, saw Thisbe’s torn and bloody veil. Assuming that she had been killed, Pyramus resolved to commit suicide.

*quoque erat accinctus, demisit in ilia ferrum,
nec mora, ferventi moriens e vulnere traxit.
ut iacuit resupinus humo, cruor emicat alte,
non aliter quam cum vitiato fistula plumbo
scinditur et tenui stridente foramine longas
eiaculatur aquas atque ictibus aera rumpit.
Arborei fetus adspergine caedis in atram
vertuntur faciem, madefactaque sanguine radix*

¹²⁸ Vergil *Aeneid* 4.160-72

¹²⁹ Ibid., 4.172 (Dido), 4.338-9 (Aeneas)

¹³⁰ Ibid., 4.193-4; Aeneas is even described as building up the empire of Carthage (Rome’s great foe) when he should have been founding Rome (Mercury asks him: “Are you now building up the foundations of high Carthage and constructing the beautiful city of your wife? Hey, you who are forgetful of your kingdom and your affairs!” (*Aeneid* 4.265-7)).

*purpureo tingit pendentia mora colore.*¹³¹

And he prepared himself, plunged his dagger into his guts, and, with little delay, withdrew it from his burning wound as he lay dying. As he lay supine on the ground, his blood spurted high, not unlike when a pipe made of damaged lead bursts and sends out long streams of water through a slender hissing hole that strike the air as they throb. The fruits of the tree assume a dark hue because of the spray of his blood, and the roots soaked with this same blood dye the hanging mulberries a purple color.

This simile is (quite literally) striking, but the audience is left at a loss as to how a simile concerning plumbing predicaments fits into a narrative about two tragic young lovers. One function this simile has is to remind the audience to read this myth in a Roman context in that it evokes an image of Roman engineering feats, namely the Roman water system.¹³² This reminder is conveniently positioned at the climax of the myth; its seemingly irrelevant subject matter is jarring in such a way that it prompts the audience to pay closer attention lest they fail to understand the whole of what Ovid is attempting to say. Indeed, what he is attempting to demonstrate is the act of ejaculation (*ejaculatur*). The pipe simile not only disguises such a flagrant disregard for Augustan *pudicitia*, it simultaneously draws more attention to it. Furthermore, it invites the audience, once Rome has been brought back into the forefront of their minds, to view this act as particularly subversive of the *lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus*. This point becomes clearer when Thisbe later commits suicide. Thisbe finds Pyramus' bloody body, shudders like the sea which trembles when its surface has been grazed by a small breeze (*exhorruit aequoris instar, / quod tremit, exigua cum summum stringitur aura*), and resolves to follow him in death (*persequar extinctum letique miserrima dicar / causa comesque tui / I shall follow you who have perished and I, most miserable, will be said to be both the cause and companion of your death*).¹³³ Sexual and in particular phallic imagery color Thisbe's suicide:

¹³¹ *Met.* 4.119-24

¹³² Shorrock 2003: 626

¹³³ *Met.* 4.135-6, 151-2

having fixed the tip (*mucrone*) beneath her chest, she falls upon his dagger (*ferro*), which was still warm with Pyramus' blood (*caede tepebat*).¹³⁴ Altogether, the lovers' suicides veil a symbolic consummation of their love, thus grossly subverting the attempts of the *lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus* to keep lovers apart.

Before her suicide, Thisbe calls out to their parents, asking that she and Pyramus be interred together (*conponi tumulo non inuideatis eodem*).¹³⁵ Their parents obliged and the lovers were buried together in the same urn.¹³⁶ This is the third and final transgression of the myth and perhaps the most moving; that is, as Thisbe chooses to be joined with Pyramus in death rather than cut off from him in life (*poteris nec morte revelli*), the lovers circumvent the ultimate boundary that separates the living from the dead.¹³⁷ In addition to being a moving testament to the lengths to which frustrated lovers will go to satisfy their desires, this conclusion also bears both a literary and political significance. That is, the request for sharing a funerary urn can be located as far back as Homer's *Iliad*: the ghost of Patroclus asks Achilles that their remains be buried together in the same vessel (ὁμῆ σορὸς).¹³⁸ Though a subject of considerable debate, it is argued that the two comrades were actually lovers.¹³⁹ At the same time, several similarities exist

¹³⁴ *Met.* 4.162-3

¹³⁵ *Met.* 4.157

¹³⁶ *Met.* 4.166

¹³⁷ *Met.* 4.153

¹³⁸ From Homer's *Iliad* 23.83-4, "μὴ ἐμὰ σῶν ἀπάνευθε τιθῆμεναι ὅστέ' Ἀχιλλεῦ, / ἀλλ' ὁμοῦ" ("Don't bury my bones far away from your own, Achilles, but together with them"); *Iliad* 23.91-2, "ὣς δὲ καὶ ὅστέα νῶϊν ὁμῆ σορὸς ἀμφικαλύπτου / χρύσεος ἀμφιφορεύς" ("So let the same vessel enclose our bones, a large golden urn")

¹³⁹ Several classical Greek sources characterized their relationship as homosexual: Aeschylus' lost trilogy *The Achilleis* asserts Achilles was the *erastes* (active partner) and Patroclus the *eromenos* (passive partner); in Plato's *Symposium*, Phaedrus argues the opposite dynamic; in *Against Timarchus*, the politician Aeschines argues that while Homer did not make a homosexual relationship explicit, educated Greeks would have been able to infer it. Intratextually, Patroclus is repeatedly qualified as not only the *ἑταῖρος* of Achilles, but, for example, his *φίλτατος ἑταῖρος* (*most beloved companion*). Furthermore, in Phoenix's story of Meleager, Achilles and Patroclus are cleverly paralleled by the married couple Meleager and Cleopatra — the name Cleopatra itself being a reversal of the same etymological components of Patroclus' name (*πατήρ* and *κλέος*). Finally, there is Achilles' extreme reaction to Patroclus' death, which finds no parallels in the reactions of other heroes in the *Iliad* to their fallen companions. Moreover, Ovid adjusts a literary tradition associated with homosexual love in order to accommodate his heterosexual lovers. This is perhaps additional evidence for a fundamental and sustained acceptance of Achilles and Patroclus as lovers, and a suggestion that Ovid too accepted them as such. See also Fantuzzi 2012, Clarke 1978.

between the suicides of Pyramus and Thisbe and Augustus' political rivals, Mark Antony and Cleopatra. According to Plutarch, believing Cleopatra had committed suicide, Antony (like Pyramus) stabbed himself in his guts (παίσας διὰ τῆς κοιλίας ἑαυτὸν ἀφῆκεν εἰς τὸ κλινίδιον). Deceiving Octavian's guards, Cleopatra, who was not really dead, followed Antony in death (like Thisbe) (τὰς δὲ θύρας ἀνοίξαντες, εὔρον αὐτὴν τεθνηκυῖαν ἐν χρυσοῦ κατακειμένην κλίνῃ, κεκοσμημένην βασιλικῶς). Although Octavian was frustrated by Cleopatra's death (Καῖσαρ δέ, καίπερ ἀχθεσθεὶς ἐπὶ τῇ τελευτῇ τῆς γυναικός) — as this meant he would not be able to showcase her in a triumphal procession for his victory at Actium (μηδ' ἐν ἔμοι περιόδῃς θριαμβευόμενον σεαυτόν) — he agreed to let her and Antony be buried together (ταφῆναι τὸ σῶμα σὺν Ἀντωνίῳ λαμπρῶς καὶ βασιλικῶς ἐκέλευσεν).¹⁴⁰ Therefore, not only does this tragic parallel cause Ovid's audience to unwittingly sympathize with Augustus' political rivals, the man who would become the *pater patriae* (i.e. Augustus), and who allowed these lovers to be buried together, is mirrored in the form of the *patres*/Law of Ovid's myth. It should be noted that Antony and Cleopatra's marriage would not have been legitimate by Augustan standards as Antony was a Roman citizen (despite his Eastern eccentricities), while Cleopatra was Greek/Egyptian — a foreigner and non-citizen. In a sense, then, Ovid makes Augustus inconsistent: if his laws were based on tradition and universality, why were Antony and Cleopatra given so much leeway while loyal Romans were not?

The gods grant Thisbe's second wish: that the mulberry tree under which they perished retains a sign of their tragic love (*gemini monimenta cruoris*).¹⁴¹ Instead of offspring, their love generates a newly-colored fruit (ironically, *fetus*), which advertises the tragic (*luctibus aptos*) consequence of legislated love.¹⁴² The previously white fruit becomes dark and black (*pullos, ater*) — deeper than red to highlight the tragic circumstances of their deaths and perhaps also

¹⁴⁰ Plutarch *Life of Antony* 76, 84-6

¹⁴¹ *Met.* 4.160-1

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

the depth of their demise's erotic nature.¹⁴³ Ovid devotes the greater part of this myth to the theme and pursuit of pleasure, scarcely entertaining any notions of Augustan love. He encourages the audience to sympathize with the victims of unfeeling Law (rather than Augustus/the *lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus*), who themselves mirror the tragic lovers and exemplars of a hedonistic ideal that opposed Augustuan traditionalism — Antony and Cleopatra.¹⁴⁴ As if an afterthought, Ovid indulges the Augustan preoccupation with procreation, though the offspring of these tabooed lovers would certainly not have been satisfying to Augustus and this effort ultimately proved insincere.

In the conjoined myths of Mars/Venus/Vulcan and Sol/Leucothoe/Clytie, it has been established that the most significant boundary at play is that which divides the public and private spheres of Roman life. This boundary is first transgressed by Sol. As the god who sees all things (*videt hic deus omnia primus*), it appears as if nothing can escape his pervading light (*siderea qui temperat omnia luce*).¹⁴⁵ Sol's ubiquity makes him an "unwelcome obtruder," who, aided by his relationship with Augustus, also becomes a personification of the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* on account of the fact that both Sol and the law confuse and overstep the public-private boundary.¹⁴⁶ This transgression is completed when Sol, as an uninvolved and public figure, reports to Vulcan the private happenings of Mars and Venus. Vulcan, the cuckolded husband, is driven to fashion a trap with which to catch the adulterous lovers.¹⁴⁷ Vulcan is consequently acting in accordance with the new law; as the law demanded, he prepares himself to "prosecute" his wife, of whom he suspects adultery.

*ut venere torum coniunx et adulter in unum,
arte viri vinculisque nova ratione paratis
in mediis ambo deprensi amplexibus haerent.
Lemnius extemplo valvas patefecit eburnas
inmisitque deos; illi iacuerunt ligati*

¹⁴³ *Met.* 4.165

¹⁴⁴ Zanker 1988: 61

¹⁴⁵ *Met.* 1.69-72

¹⁴⁶ Parry 1964: 277

¹⁴⁷ *Met.* 4.176-81

*turpiter, atque aliquis de dis non tristibus optat
sic fieri turpis; superi risere, diuque
haec fuit in toto notissima fabula caelo.*¹⁴⁸

When his wife and the adulterer came onto the one bed, they were both entangled, caught in the midst of their embraces by the skill of the former's husband and the new method of imprisonment that he had contrived. Right away, the Lemnian god flung open the ivory double doors and ushered in the rest of the gods. Those adulterers, entangled, lay there shamefully, but one of the gods, who had not been very much troubled, joked that he wished to become shameful like that. The gods laughed, and for a long while this story was the most well-known throughout all of the heavens.

Vulcan catches the adulterers *in flagrante delicto*, their entanglement enhanced by the effect of hyperbaton. Immediately, Vulcan opens the ivory double doors of their chamber so that the other gods could bear witness to the adultery. This marks a second transgression of the public-private boundary; that is, private resolution is replaced by public prosecution. Because of this, Vulcan's net thus functions as a symbol of the law's stipulations for the punishment of adultery — a legal trap of sorts. Yet, Ovid does not let this breach of the private sphere, where amorous affairs predominate, support Augustus' moral reforms. Instead, (as mentioned in the previous chapter) an unnamed god jokes, quite inappropriately, that he would not mind becoming shameful like Mars and Venus. Recalling the connection between the gods and the Roman elite made in Chapter II, this joke hints at the promiscuous and noncompliant attitudes that endured among the upper classes in the face of Augustus' marital legislation. Moreover, the joke suggests that it is not *adultery* that is shameful, but rather *getting caught*; that is, it is unclear as to whether the joke ascribes shame to the act of adultery itself or the fact that this was the condition in which they were found out. As a whole, the myth highlights the extent to which licentious attitudes and the pursuit of pleasure endured in spite of the imposition of the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis*.

¹⁴⁸ *Met.* 4.182-9

At that, the myth stops short. Ovid offers no moralizing message and instead forces his audience to sit with the unnamed god's inappropriate joke and the other gods' positive response. Furthermore, there is no indication that Venus feels any remorse or that she ends her affair. Vulcan still remains a cuckolded husband and receives no praise or satisfaction for behaving in the way that Augustus would have liked. The same ineffectual outcome awaits Vulcan/Hephaestus in other renditions of this myth.¹⁴⁹ Ovid, therefore, is just "innocently" respecting an established literary tradition.

Indeed, Venus is not repentant, but infuriated by Sol's meddling. As was mentioned before, Venus exacts revenge upon Sol by causing him to desire Leucothoe. Ironically, Venus and Sol have switched positions. Before, Sol merely eavesdropped on the intimate happenings of the private sphere. Now, however, Venus has placed Sol and his love interest squarely within the private sphere — a place that is constantly subject to the threat of outside (legal) intrusion. Disguised as Leucothoe's mother Eurynome (*versus in Eurynomes faciem genetricis*), Sol enters Leucothoe's chamber (*thamos deus intrat amatos*).¹⁵⁰ As disguised Sol bids Leucothoe's servants to leave, his language augments the privacy and would-be safety of the environment (*res...arcana, secreta*), despite the god's ominous breach of her private dwelling.¹⁵¹ Once they are alone, Sol exposes his true form and strengthens his connection to Apollo by listing his special attributes in a way that echoes Apollo's speech to Daphne in Book I: among a repetitive use of the first person, Sol's self-panegyric, "*ille ego sum' dixit, 'qui longum metior annum, / omnia qui video, per quem videt omnia tellus, / mundi oculus: mihi, crede, places*" ("I am he who measures out the long year, who sees all things, by whom the earth sees all things, the eye of the world: be certain that you are pleasing to me"), finds parallels in that of Apollo,

¹⁴⁹ At Poseidon's behest and promise that Ares will reconcile the situation, Hephaestus releases Ares and Aphrodite. But upon release, Ares fled to Thrace, Aphrodite to Paphos (Homer *Odyssey* 8.265-365). Ovid chastises Sol for missing the opportunity to blackmail Venus for his silence and later asks what Sol gained from tattling as the adulterers now enjoy their affair openly (*Ars Amatoria* 2.559-600). A statue of Venus resided in the Temple of Mars Ultor; Ovid claimed that Vulcan had to wait outside the temple's door (*Tristia* 2.295)!

¹⁵⁰ *Met.* 4.218-9

¹⁵¹ *Met.* 4.223-4

“*per me, quod eritque fuitque / estque, patet / ... / inventum medicina meum est, opiferque per orbem / dicor*” (“through me, that which was and is and will be, is revealed...medicine is my invention, I am called the bringer of help throughout the world”).¹⁵² Sol then overwhelms and rapes Leucothoe (*vim passa*).¹⁵³

Clytie, a jealous former lover of Sol, told Leucothoe’s father (Orchamus) of her adultery with Sol (*stimulataque paelicis ira / vulgat adulterium diffamatamque parenti / indicat*).¹⁵⁴ However, the use of *adulterium* is peculiar in that *stuprum* would have been a more fitting word choice. *Stuprum*, which “defies translation” and “displays a characteristically Roman tendency to blur the distinction between the legal and the moral,” is best rendered as a defilement or an illicit and dishonorable intercourse.¹⁵⁵ Adultery itself is a subset of *stuprum*.¹⁵⁶

*Inter liberas tantum personas adulterium stuprumve passas lex Iulia locum habet...Lex stuprum et adulterium promiscui et καταχρηστικώτερον appellat. Sed proprie adulterium in nupta committitur,...stuprum vero in virginem viduamve committitur, quod Graeci φθοράν appellant.*¹⁵⁷

The Julian law only has a place among the free persons that have suffered adultery or *stuprum*. The law addresses *stuprum* and adultery indiscriminately and *in rather a misused way*. But individually, adultery is committed with married women,...but *stuprum*, that which the Greeks call *corruption*, is committed against virgins or widows.

Justinian’s *Digest* informs modern scholars that the law itself was guilty of a lack of clarity between *adulterium* and *stuprum*. Moreover, it appeared that over time the sexual activity of an unmarried woman came to be assimilated into adultery and treated just as severely: that “...for those of the conspicuous upper classes any intercourse except with a recognized

¹⁵² *Met.* 4.226-8; 1.517-22

¹⁵³ *Met.* 4.233

¹⁵⁴ *Met.* 4.235-7

¹⁵⁵ Williams 1999: 104

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 103

¹⁵⁷ Justinian *Digesta seu Pandectae* 48.5.6

husband was *stuprum*, as severely punishable as adultery during marriage.¹⁵⁸ Outside of this myth, Ovid had a history of using each term ambiguously as well.¹⁵⁹ It can be conjectured that Ovid's interchangeable use of both terms is a reflection of law's own inconsistency, a way to strengthen the myth's underlying commentary on Augustus' infidelities by virtue of his association with Sol, or that it is used for effect and to clarify the direction of his criticism at the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis*. Nevertheless, the very complexity and ambiguity of Ovid's word choice reiterates his main point: that desire is too complex to be handled by the law, that some things exist beyond the grasp of law, that love and sex are not as utilitarian or straightforward as the law would make them seem.

This point is further developed as Orchamus mercilessly (*ferox, inmansuetus*) buries Leucothoe alive, even as she pleads that Sol violated her against her will ("*ille vim tulit invitae*").¹⁶⁰ While this occurs in Persia (*rexit Achaemenias urbes pater Orchamus*), the image of Leucothoe's burial, like the myth of Pyramus and Thisbe, transposes the city of Rome to the East.¹⁶¹ Specifically, it evokes the punishment of a Vestal Virgin who has broken her vow of chastity. The virginal status of a Vestal served as a metonym for the "untouched city of Rome." When her vow of chastity was broken, a Vestal would be buried alive in a below-ground chamber (*Campus Sceleratus*); a convicted Vestal might be used as a scapegoat for the wrongdoings of the Roman people that had stirred the wrath of the gods and her death would be seen as an atonement for such offenses.¹⁶² At the same time, it acts out the complex set of provisions outlined within the law that permitted adultery to be punishable by death. In either case, Ovid is calling attention to the policing of pleasure within important institutions of Roman society. Leucothoe's heart-wrenching insistence of her innocence further calls into question the legitimacy and fairness of this policing; that is, Leucothoe, who did not yield willingly to Sol, is

¹⁵⁸ Fantham 2011: 116, 147

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 119

¹⁶⁰ *Met.* 4.237-40

¹⁶¹ *Met.* 4.212

¹⁶² Parker 2004

punished while Sol is in no way held accountable. In addition to this, Orchamus exhibits the moral inflexibility that had previously driven Sol to report Mars and Venus' affair.¹⁶³ Given Sol's connection to Augustus, this reversal highlights the hypocrisy with which Augustus (Sol) committed adultery — yet for which he was not held accountable — even as he enforced laws that would have been condemnatory of his own actions.

Despite Sol's efforts to scatter the mounds of sand that had crushed Leucothoe's body, he was too late.¹⁶⁴ In recompense, Sol transformed her body into the plant of frankincense, promising that she would touch the heavens (*tanges tamen aethera*).¹⁶⁵ Again, Ovid entertains the Augustan preoccupation with procreation, describing Leucothoe's metamorphosis in birth-like terms (*virgaque per glaebas sensim radicibus actis / turea surrexit tumulumque cacumine rupit* / a sprout of frankincense, while driving its roots deep, gradually rose through the turf and broke through the top of the mound).¹⁶⁶ But this indulgence, too, is feigned (i.e. children are not the product of this birth-like metamorphosis). While incense was an important component of religious rituals (and therefore important to Augustus), it is difficult to reconcile its religious significance with its rather impious aetiology — one that was the ultimate consequence of Sol's (Augustus') transgression of the boundary separating the private/amorous and public/legal. Moreover, much like the myth began, this myth ends similarly to the conclusion of Apollo and Daphne: Daphne was metamorphosed into the laurel tree, an Augustan symbol that also carried vestiges of Apollo's (Augustus') unflattering pursuit of pleasure. In sum, Sol's "telescopic gaze" intruded upon intimate affairs, much like Augustus' law did.¹⁶⁷ Venus, like Ovid, pushes back against this transgression (as both a victim of robbed pleasure and the goddess of

¹⁶³ Janan 1994: 439

¹⁶⁴ *Met.* 4.241-6

¹⁶⁵ *Met.* 4.251 (literally, the smoke of burning incense drifts heavenward; figuratively, it means to achieve immortality)

¹⁶⁶ *Met.* 4.254-5

¹⁶⁷ Parry 1964: 277

pleasure herself), and by the time her punishment has been played out, Ovid has narrated a warning of the disastrous consequences caused by challenging pleasure's preeminence.

In the previous chapters, it was established that the landscape of the myth of Pomona and Vertumnus was imbued with a variety of erotic elements, as were the two characters themselves. However, a conflict exists between their individual erotic natures: Vertumnus is indeed erotic, but in a purposeful, practical, and Augustan sense, whereas Pomona's eroticism is markedly more Ovidian and sensual. This is yet another facet of the conflict between Augustan and Ovidian notions of love that will carry the audience up to the conclusion of the myth.

Described in terms of its fertility and abundance, Pomona's garden takes on a uterine image, while the enclosure that surrounds it functions as a symbol of her virginity.¹⁶⁸ Vertumnus is only able to transgress this boundary when he assumes the guise of someone else (*denique per multas aditum sibi saepe figuras / repperit, ut caperet spectatae gaudia formae* / through his many disguises, he often gained entry so that he might take pleasure in looking at her beauty).¹⁶⁹ In the interaction of this myth, Vertumnus disguises himself as an old woman (*ad simulavit anum*).¹⁷⁰ Interestingly, Vertumnus' use of disguise to achieve his goal parallels Sol's assumption of the guise of Leucothoe's mother to gain easy access to her bed chamber. In both cases, the gods disguise themselves as something familiar or non-threatening. The attention that Ovid gives to these disguises suggests an awareness of their artificiality. Moreover, given the gods' indirect associations with Augustus, it appears as if Ovid is demonstrating an awareness of the artificiality of the restored Republic; that is, Augustus also disguised himself and his Principate as a return to Republican traditions and a renewed Golden Age. It was the familiar and non-threatening nature of this Republican guise that allowed him to

¹⁶⁸ Myers 1994: 229

¹⁶⁹ *Met.* 14.652-3

¹⁷⁰ *Met.* 14.656

push through legislation which attempted to reconfigure sex as a matter of pleasure into one of practicality.

Vertumnus' transgression of Pomona's fence is similarly deceptive; it is a symbolic penetration that will enable him to advertise the virtues of marriage in an appeal to an uninterested Pomona.

*cultosque intravit in hortos
pomaque mirata est 'tanto' que 'potentior!' inquit
paucaque laudatae dedit oscula, qualia numquam
vera dedisset anus, glaebaque incurva resedit
suspiciens pandos autumni pondere ramos.
ulmus erat contra speciosa nitentibus uvis:
quam socia postquam pariter cum vite probavit,
'at si staret' ait 'caelebs sine palmite truncus,
nil praeter frondes, quare peteretur, haberet;
haec quoque, quae iuncta est, vitis requiescit in ulmo:
si non nupta foret, terrae acclinata iaceret'¹⁷¹*

And he entered her protected garden and, having marvelled at her apples, said "You are much more beautiful still," and gave her a few kisses in praise, of such a kind no true old woman would have given. And, bent over, he reclined on the turf as he looked at the branches weighed down by autumn fruit. There was an elm tree opposite him, adorned with gleaming grapes. After he praised the tree and its accompanying vines equally, he said, "But if the tree's trunk were to stand unmarried, without the vine, it would have nothing besides its leaves by which it might be sought after; and this vine also, which is joined to and rests upon the tree, if it were not married to it, would lie down on the ground.

Vertumnus here gives a very Augustan appeal to the institution of marriage, combining idyllic scenery with an image of the mutual support that marriage can offer, in an effort to mollify Pomona's resistance. Moreover, it echoes the sentiment promulgated by the *leges Iuliae* that an individual (*caelebs, non nupta*) is not as valuable or attractive as a unified couple (*iuncta, requiescit*). When Pomona is still not moved (*exemplo non tangeris arboris huius / concubitusque fugis*), Vertumnus lists a series of famous Greek women (Helen, Hippodamia,

¹⁷¹ *Met.* 14.656-66

Penelope) who, although sought by many, would still not have had as many suitors as Pomona if she had wished to be wed.¹⁷² Finally, he speaks specifically of Vertumnus (himself):

*sed tu si sapias, si te bene iungere anumque
hanc audire voles, quae te plus omnibus illis,
plus, quam credis, amo: vulgares reice taedas
Vertumnusque tori socium tibi selige!*¹⁷³

But if you are wise, if you wish to marry well and listen to this old woman, me, who loves you more than all those others, more than you believe: reject their vulgar marriage torches and choose Vertumnus as the companion of your marriage bed!

Vertumnus continues to press the issue of marriage, now even more explicitly (*taedas, tori socium*). Moreover, it appears as if his passion is getting the better of him in that he gets dangerously close to betraying his concealed identity. He continues:

*tu primus et ultimus illi
ardor eris, solique suos tibi devovet annos.
adde, quod est iuvenis, quod naturale decoris
munus habet formasque apte fingetur in omnes,
et quod erit iussus, iubeas licet omnia, fiet.
quid, quod amatis idem, quod, quae tibi poma coluntur,
primus habet laetaque tenet tua munera dextra!
sed neque iam fetus desiderat arbore demptos
nec, quas hortus alit, cum sucis mitibus herbas
nec quicquam nisi te: miserere ardentis et ipsum,
qui petit, ore meo praesentem crede precari*¹⁷⁴

You will be his first and last love — he devotes his life to you alone. Add to this that he is young, that he has the natural gift of charm and can take on all forms fittingly, and that whatever form will have been ordered — you are allowed to order all things — he will become. That which you both love, those apples cultivated by you, he has first and gladly holds your gifts in his hand! But he does not desire now the fruits plucked from your tree, nor the

¹⁷² *Met.* 14.669-71; Helen, the wife of Menelaus and the most beautiful woman in the world, was abducted by Paris, which thus began the Trojan War; Hippodamia, recently married to Pirithous, the king of the Lapiths, was stolen away by drunken centaurs at their wedding, thus causing the Centauromachy; Penelope was the loyal wife of Odysseus and faithfully turned away suitors while Odysseus was away in Troy, etc.

¹⁷³ *Met.* 14.675-8

¹⁷⁴ *Met.* 14.682-92

herbs with their sweet juices that your garden rears, nor anything except you: pity his passion and believe that he, who seeks you, is begging, in person, through my mouth.

Here, Vertumnus makes indirect references to childbearing, the natural complement of marriage. While apples certainly function as symbols of desire (discussed in Chapter I), there exists a dimension of their symbolism that is more specific to fertility and marriage.¹⁷⁵ Thus, he appeals to the blessings (*munera*) and joy (*laeta*) of the symbolic offspring (*poma*) their marriage can produce. Furthermore, the use of *munera* is significant: a *munus* is a gift that is given as a service, duty, or obligation. Consequently, Vertumnus makes reference not only to the Augustan notion of the blessings of children, but also to the pragmatic (Augustan) conception of marriage and sex as duties. And Vertumnus makes other allusions to procreation: he repeatedly references the fruits (*poma*, *fetus*, *herbas*) that Pomona produces and rears (*coluntur*, *alut*) in what appears to be an extended metaphor for the gestation of offspring in her garden (*hortus*), which has already been established as a uterine symbol. Yet, at the same time, he wants nothing to do with these things (i.e. children and procreation, “the fruits plucked from [her] tree”) — he only wants Pomona (*nec quicquam nisi te*). This is decidedly more Ovidian. He then delves into the inset myth of Iphis and Anaxarete, which has also already been established as a rather Ovidian embellishment of an otherwise Augustan myth. Vertumnus concludes his appeal with a warning to remember this story, lest a late-spring frost singe her blossoming apples or a violent storm shake the blossoms off her trees — another not-so-subtle allusion to the Augustan preoccupation with fertility and procreation.¹⁷⁶ When he realizes that all of this had not moved Pomona (*nequiquam*), he resumes his true form.¹⁷⁷ Glowing like the sun (*solis imago*) when it has overcome opposing clouds and shines unobstructed, he prepares to use

¹⁷⁵ Gentilcore 1995: 113

¹⁷⁶ *Met.* 14.763-4

¹⁷⁷ *Met.* 14.765

force (*vim parat*).¹⁷⁸ Interestingly, both descriptions recall the depiction of Sol, who had also formerly disguised himself, prior to the rape of Leucothoe.¹⁷⁹

But, as it turns out, no force was needed: Pomona, captivated by Vertumnus' true form, developed a mutual passion (*mutua vulnera*).¹⁸⁰ Whereas Cupid's (Ovid's) surer arrow wounded Apollo's heart with an unrequited desire in Book I, Ovid has wounded both lovers here with a mutual desire.¹⁸¹ The tale ends abruptly with the first moments of Pomona and Vertumnus' sexual union, the last image lingering on the audience's mind. Pomona had not been moved to passion by Vertumnus' appeals to marriage and procreation; it was only when she saw him in his true form that she was aroused. She is not guided by the promise of marriage and children, but by sexual attraction and pleasure. In fact, it is almost laughable that Ovid neglects to mention any resultant offspring in light of the meticulous detail with which he described the fertile landscape in which their union occurs. Ovid again offers no moralizing tone (as in the myth of Mars/Venus/Vulcan); he establishes the perfect set-up for Augustan propaganda only for it to be suddenly denied.

As was mentioned previously, Ovid might not have completely omitted an account of the rape of the Sabine women. Much like Livy portrays the Sabine women as becoming good, legal wives to their Roman abductors, "Vertumnus envisions his union with Pomona in terms that suggest marriage."¹⁸² Both accounts also involve coercion and (at least the threat of) violence. In a broad sense, Pomona is a stand-in for the Sabine women, Vertumnus for the Roman men. However, as was pointed out above, Vertumnus fluctuates between viewing Pomona as a means to an end (that end being marriage and procreation in particular) and as someone with whom he can experience pleasure. Furthermore, Pomona is only drawn to Vertumnus out of

¹⁷⁸ *Met.* 14.768-9

¹⁷⁹ *Met.* 4.231-3, Sol assumes his *solitum nitorem* (usual splendor) and Leucothoe is overcome (*victa*) by his brightness (*nitore*); *Met.* 14.768, Vertumnus' image was *nitidissima* (very bright, handsome).

¹⁸⁰ *Met.* 14.770-1

¹⁸¹ *Met.* 1.519-20 (Apollo says: *nostra tamen una sagitta / certior, in vacuo quae vulnera pectore fecit! / ...but an arrow more certain than mine, which has wounded my free heart!*)

¹⁸² Jones 2001: 375; there are many accounts of the rape of the Sabines, though Ovid seems to follow Livy's most closely (perhaps because Livy, too, was an Augustan author).

sexual attraction as opposed to the Sabines, who are swayed by promises of good marriages, children, and Roman matronhood.¹⁸³ Instead of providing an Augustan account of the Sabines, which would highlight the utility of their marriages and establish a precedent for Roman marriage as a practical duty unto the state, Ovid opts to pervert this legend into a tale that glorifies pleasure for pleasure's sake.

Vertumnus dropping his disguise is also significant here. It is not only responsible for inspiring Pomona's mutual attraction, it is associated with an image of Sol. This is odd in that Vertumnus, god of the seasons and change (the name Vertumnus being derived from *vertere*, to turn (the seasons), change), has no direct connection to Sol. Perhaps this manufactured connection is meant as a message to Augustus: to drop the false pretenses of his laws — their traditional guise — and embrace modern, Ovidian forms of love. As the last love story of the *Metamorphoses*, perhaps Ovid is using Vertumnus, the embodiment of change, to suggest to his audience the specific type of metamorphosis about which he has written an entire epic: the metamorphosis of Roman notions of love and sex.

¹⁸³ Livy *Ab Urbe Condita* 1.9.14-5

Conclusion

*non caret effectu, quod voluere duo*¹⁸⁴

What two lovers want does not lack in execution.

~

“Love in Augustan Rome [was] a political matter” and “sex [was certainly] no joke.”¹⁸⁵ On a surface level, Ovid’s work may appear to be nothing more than witty, risqué — devoid of deeper meaning. But it would be a mistake to trivialize his work here. Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, and the selected myths in particular, demonstrate a keen awareness of the political, religious, and cultural shifts that were occurring throughout the Augustan Age, which ran parallel to the better part of Ovid’s own life and career.

This thesis has attempted to demonstrate how Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* is a celebration of the primacy of pleasure and a subversion of Augustan legal heavy-handedness. Far from being devoid of significance — particularly political significance — he weaponizes the transgression of boundaries that contemporary Rome would have observed as a result of the enactment of Augustus’ marriage legislation. In doing so, Ovid shows that desires frustrated by the *leges Iuliae* will inevitably lead to the transgression of social boundaries and curates narratives that threaten to highlight Augustan hypocrisy. Above all, however, he speaks to the primacy of pleasure. This idea is located elsewhere in Ovid’s corpus, too: consider the aforementioned verse from his *Amores*, which asserts that when both parties desire one another, nothing can thwart their pursuit of pleasure — a statement that could certainly apply to the lovers of any of the myths discussed here. Indeed, these selected myths appear to be only his most recent distillations of the idea of the primacy of pleasure.

At the conclusion of Chapter III, I spoke of the possibility that one aspect of Ovid’s myth of Pomona and Vertumnus was to suggest a metamorphosis of Roman notions of love and sex.

¹⁸⁴ Ovid *Amores* 2.3.16

¹⁸⁵ Sharrock 1994: 101,108

It appears as if, to some extent, this metamorphosis came to fruition. While Ovid was eventually exiled by Augustus¹⁸⁶ and the *leges Iuliae* remained intact, later emperors transformed the Augustan precedent in which authority was attained via sexual virtue and modesty into one that allowed power to be derived from pleasure. This new conception of love and sex was predicated upon the idea that “loving like a god [could] make [an emperor] a deity.”¹⁸⁷ This principle was exploited in particular by the emperor Hadrian and his male lover Antinous, who together emulated Zeus and his male lover Ganymede. In addition to imitating a god’s mythological sexual relationships, which more often than not were undertaken for the sake of pleasure rather than Augustan practicality, sex could be weaponized to threaten the masculine authority of others, and thus augment one’s own. Caligula, for example, would steal senators’ wives away from them for sex at dinner parties. Yet, this too may be another imitation of divine sexual exploits; that is, Augustus, who was reported to have done the same, had been deified by the time of Caligula’s reign.¹⁸⁸

Perhaps this metamorphosis occurred as it became increasingly obvious that the Republic had given way to the Empire; with traditional notions of love and sex being farther removed, Ovidian pleasure was able to flourish. No matter, it appears as if love and sex were eventually recognized in *mutatae formae* (new forms)¹⁸⁹ — and that the inherent power of pleasure prevailed over Augustan practicality.

¹⁸⁶ The reason for which being what Ovid would later describe elusively as a “*carmen et error*” (i.e. a poem and a mistake) at *Tristia* 2.207.

¹⁸⁷ Vout 2007: 3, 6, 113

¹⁸⁸ Suetonius *Divus Augustus* 69

¹⁸⁹ *Met.* 1.1

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