

**Pestilence "Pestis" in Ovid's Metamorphoses**  
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This paper shows how Ovid asserts himself and his poetry as agents of healing by highlighting the failure of traditional healers in the pestilence "Pestis" narratives of the Metamorphoses. Part of Ovid's adaptation of the pestilence topos is to assert a vision of Caesar as a polyvalent "healer" who subsumes several Egyptian and Greco-Roman healing mechanisms in the portrayal of his death and catasterism in the pestilence narrative of Metamorphoses 15.

The paper demonstrates that Ovid, in the Metamorphoses, responds to Vergil's attempt to reinvigorate Roman poetry with a therapeutic power by positioning his pestilences in the Metamorphoses in chaotic, transitional and liminal shifts from one type of government or world order to another. Toward the end of the final book of the Metamorphoses the pestilence at Rome is healed immediately prior to the final political transition in the poem - from Republic to Empire. I suggest in this paper that Vergil's *bugonia* in Geo. 4 is an important intertext for Ovid's portrayal of Caesar's death as a source of healing for Rome in the final scene of the poem. In this scene Ovid blurs the lines between Caesar's metamorphosis into a star and the metamorphic qualities of two miraculous animals that also function as symbols of Egyptian kingship: the phoenix and the *bugonia* ox. In this way, Ovid continues the work of Vergil in Romanizing aspects of Egyptian culture and finding a space for Roman poetry as a therapeutic model that is equally as powerful as Alexandrian therapeutics. Ovid differs from Vergil, however, in his emphatic depiction of himself as a healer whose therapy rivals that of Caesar's.

**The Poet as Physician:**

Ovid is much more explicit than Vergil about the poet's role as Physician.<sup>(1)</sup> In the *Remedia Amoris* Ovid calls himself a "doctor poet," *vates medens* (77):

*Publicus assertor dominis suppressa levabo  
 Pectora: vindictae quisque favete suae.  
 Te precor incipiens, adsit tua laurea nobis,  
 Carminis et medicae, Phoebe, repertor opis.  
 Tu pariter vati, pariter succurre medenti:  
 Utraque tutelae subdita cura tua est.*

(Rem. Am. 73- 8)

As your public deliverer, I will lighten hearts dominated by masters: each one of you receive the rod of liberation! First of all, I pray to you, Apollo, (may your laurel protect me) inventor of

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(1) On the role of Vergil as Physician, see Geo.III.440–73, IV. 251–80.

the assistance of music and medicine. Help poet and healer alike,  
since the labors of both are your concern.

The actual remedy Ovid prescribes is thoroughly medical. The poet tells the sick lover to suppress his or her desire by avoiding the onion, bulbous, and colewort (also known as rocket), eruca, because they are aphrodisiacs (Rem. Am. 794-99).<sup>(2)</sup> Pliny corroborates Ovid's claims about bulbous and eruca, claiming that they increase the desire for mating (H.N. 10.181).<sup>(3)</sup> One way to avoid getting aroused, according to Ovid, is to suppress the sex drive by taking anti-aphrodisiacs. He advises his lovesick reader to take rue, ruta, because it is good for the eyes (Rem. Am. 798-802). Pliny clarifies this somewhat obscure suggestion, noting that rue is not only good for the eyes, but it also cures "wet dreams" and curbs sexual desire, again confirming Ovid's correct usage of the plant.<sup>(4)</sup> After warning his "patients" to avoid the libido-promoting onion and colewort, and to stay virtuous by taking rue, Ovid shifts his prohibition of aphrodisiacs to wine, claiming that lovers could cure their desire by either getting completely drunk, thus bypassing the phase of tipsiness most conducive to love-making, or avoiding wine all together (803-10). What is ingenious about Ovid's transition from rue to wine is that rue can prevent hangovers if taken in a decoction before heavy drinking.<sup>(5)</sup> In this way, Ovid playfully gives the antidote that curbs the very effects of alcohol that he claims will destroy the sex drive.

This type of botanical-medical wit comes to full fruition in the *Metamorphoses*, where Ovid endeavors to establish his therapeutic credentials in an epic context. This is important groundwork to lay before analyzing the pestilence narratives in the *Metamorphoses*, because it establishes the context for those narratives: the image of Ovid as "healer" is contrasted with the lack of healing in the pestilence at Aegina in Book 7 and with the divine healing of the Roman pestilence by "Caesar as Asclepius" in Book 15, which Ovid essentially caps in the following epilogue in his claim to be above Caesar in the stars.

In the *Metamorphoses* medicine operates in a complex semiotic system in which Ovid often turns a troubled human or nymph into a botanical plant that has the medical properties to heal or diagnose the very condition that plagued the person prior to the transformation. After Myrrha turns into a myrrh tree (10. 481-518), her baby is born violently from mid-trunk (which roughly corresponds to the genital area on a

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(2) These are the very same plants that Ovid recommends the lover to try in the *Ars Amatoria* precisely *in order to increase* the sex drive (A.A. 2.421).

(3) Juvenal uses *eruca* in an erotic context (Juv. 9.134a). Dioscorides (2.170) also refers to rocket as an aphrodisiac, claiming it is also good for digestion.

(4) Plin. H.N.20.135;139. Pliny also says that rue causes abortions (H.N. 20.143). Soranus similarly includes rue as an abortifacient (1.65). One of Mithridates' recipes to protect himself against poisoning included twenty rue leaves (H.N. 23.149).

(5) See Plin. H.N. 20.136.

human), recalling the use of sap from the myrrh tree to treat swollen genitals.<sup>(6)</sup> The word Ovid uses to describe the fissure through which Adonis bursts, *rima* (10.512), in fact, can refer to the female genitalia.<sup>(7)</sup> Another example of Ovid's *materia-medica* game is Hyacinthus, who dies in the prime of his youth, *prima fraudate iuventa* (10.197), while the flower hyacinth preserves youth.<sup>(8)</sup> Ovid uses this medical subtext to show that he can turn Hyacinthus into a mirror copy of Apollo, who exists in a perpetual state of divine youth. Ovid writes that Apollo tried to heal Hyacinthus' wounds with medical herbs, but the wound was incurable (*immedicabile vulnus*, 10.189), yet Ovid's display of botanical wit here suggests that he perhaps knows something more than Apollo himself about botanical medicine.<sup>(9)</sup> In another instance, Narcissus, while he stares at the pool, is drained of his vigor and *vires* (3.492), and narcissus is a plant that Pliny says owes its name to the Greek *νάρκη*, *torpor*, since this is the effect of the plant.<sup>(10)</sup> In these botanical metamorphoses, Two other examples concerning botanical lore are particularly relevant to the discussion of Ovid as a botanical healer. In Book 1, before Jupiter had flooded the world because of the impiety of the human race, the poet says that, at humanity's most depraved point, stepmothers plotted death for other family members with the plant aconite, *aconitum* (Met. 1. 147). This plant, according to Pliny, is the most deadly poison available, and he comments on its use in a famous Republican political scandal (H.N. 27.4).<sup>(11)</sup> Yet aconite is precisely the herb that Vergil says in the *Georgics* does not exist in Italy: in the *laudes Italiae* (2.152), Vergil emphasizes that Italy's landscape is so healthy that aconite does not grow there. The absence of aconite in Italy, in other words, is indicative of golden-age prosperity and peacefulness. Ovid's mention of it in Met. 1, by contrast, is highly marked in a Roman context, since the council of

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(6) See Plin. H.N. 26.81. Herodotus claims that the Persians used myrrh to treat wounds during the invasion of Greece, 7.181. Myrrh is also the most frequent ingredient mentioned in the Greek magical papyri, partially because it is an important component of the ink used to write ritually important words: "Many recipes call either for writing 'with myrrh,' or 'myrrhing' a paper, where writing is clearly meant. Other examples provide recipes for ink in which myrrh is an ingredient." Li Donnici 2001, 68. Perhaps the significance of myrrh as an essential ingredient in ink is not lost on Ovid, since Orpheus, the consummate poet, is the one who sings the story of Myrrha in Book 10, but Ovid is the one who writes it down. Myrrh is also used in the magical papyri as a "*pudenda* poultice." Li Donnici 2001, 68.

(7) For example, Juv. 3.97.

(8) See Plin. H.N. 21.170.

(9) *Immedicabile vulnus* evokes Vergil's *telum immedicabile* (*Aen.* 12.858), a poisoned Parthian arrow that Vergil uses as a metaphor for the advent of the Fury, who brings disease, *morbos* (12.851), to the battlefield.

(10) H.N. 21.5. McCartney 1927, 327, has explored the concept of "verbal homeopathy" in medical writers, showing that often cause and effect mirror each other linguistically. For example, Pliny says that eating a hare, *lepus*, confers grace or charm, *lepos*, for nine days. Another example: Galen claims that the disease *καρκίνος*, "the crabs," gets its name from the resemblance it has with the animal, and *καρκίνος* were able to cure *καρκίνος*. McCartney 1927, 327.

(11) Cf. Nic. *Alex.* 51 also notes its extreme toxicity. Marcus Caelius accused Calpurnius Bestia of poisoning his wives with aconite (Plin. H.N. 27.4).

the gods that Jupiter calls in order to discuss the remedy for human impiety takes place on the "Palatine of heaven," *Palatia caeli* (1.176). Ovid, then, reintroduces back into a Roman setting the most poisonous plant on earth and the one which Vergil had eradicated from Italy in the *Georgics*.

The presence of aconite in the antediluvian race is strikingly contrasted by the first postdiluvian, healing botanical: laurel. Ovid's first metamorphosis after the flood highlights botany and its relevance to Augustan politics: he turns Daphne into the quintessential Augustan plant laurel, a potent botanical with a host of medical properties, some of which seem to cohere with the narrative of the story.<sup>(12)</sup> Ovid emphasizes that Daphne (1.450-568) wants to remain a perpetual virgin, yet succumbs in mid-metamorphosis to Apollo's embrace, and laurel is used, among other things, as a contraceptive and abortifacient.<sup>(13)</sup>

It is laurel's anti-venom property, however, that is relevant to Apollo's slaying of the monster Python at Delphi immediately prior to his pursuit of Daphne. As Apollo boasts to Cupid about his defeat of the monster he emphasizes the snake's diseased nature. It was pouring forth its poison, *venenum* (1.444), and its body spread disease across the whole countryside: *qui modo pestifero tot iugera ventre prementem/stravimus innumeris tumidum Pythona sagittis*, "I [Apollo], who just now slew the fat Python with innumerable arrows as it was infecting so many acres of land with its disease-bearing belly" (1.459-60). Apollo similarly boasts to Daphne concerning his disease-fighting abilities: *inventum medicina meum est, opiferque per orbem / dicor, et herbarum subiecta potentia nobis*, "The art of medicine I gave the world, and all men call me 'healer'; I possess the power of every herb" (1.521-2).<sup>(14)</sup> This contrast between the diseased nature of the snake and the healing nature of Apollo

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(12) See Ogle 1910, 278 - 311.

(13) Plin. HN. 23.153. Soranus (1.65) also lists laurel as an abortifacient, claiming that it is one of the more gentle ones. The fact that Ovid would highlight an abortifacient in the first erotic encounter of the poem frustrates the expectation that this union between god and nymph would result in conception and birth, as amorous adventures of Jove - the paradigm of the Olympian procreator - usually do. See Barchiesi 2005, *ad.* 1.452. Of course, the explicit message in turning Daphne into laurel is to highlight the use of laurel as a symbol of Augustan peace, as Ovid makes clear (*Met.* 1.560-5). Dio Cassius says that the hanging of laurel on Augustus' door on the Palatine, an image that Ovid alludes to at *Met.* 1.560-5-was an honor granted to him after his salvation of the state (53.16.4). Yet it is undeniable that frustrated and un-generative love is also an important theme in Ovid's use of *sterilem amorem* to describe Apollo's desire (1.496). On the other hand, laurel was also used to promote fertility: Sidonius Apollinaris, a fifth-century C.E. writer, claims that Caesar was born "while laurel blazed," (*Carm.* 2.120). That laurel would be used to promote childbirth (as it functions in Sidonius' reference) and at the same time function as an abortifacient or contraceptive is not unusual, von Staden 1993, 23-56, discusses this same dual nature of preventing *and* promoting childbirth with the *agnus castas*, "chaste tree," a plant that functions in ways similar to laurel.

(14) Ovid's own "power over herbs," however, suggests that Apollo's boast that he is the supreme botanist is not as secure as it might seem.

is important for how we read the metamorphosis of Daphne, since Ovid differs from his Callimachean model in an important way regarding the Python story.

In the Callimachean version of the Apollo/Python story, Apollo purifies himself in the river Peneius after destroying the snake and immediately takes a sprig of laurel to wear, a purification that would be expected after risking contagion from such a killing (Frs. 86-89 Pf.).<sup>(15)</sup> In the *Metamorphoses*, however, this purification is conspicuously missing—Apollo kills the snake and then immediately pursues Daphne. The reason for the absence of the ritual, I suggest, is that the metamorphosis of Daphne into the laurel tree provides the means of purification: one of the basic properties of laurel is as a purification against, and antidote to, the poison of snakes.<sup>(16)</sup> Thus, Ovid alters the narrative pattern of his model by innovating through the use of medical lore. Ultimately, laurel works on a pharmacological level as a purifier, a protector from pestilence, and an ironic enforcer of Daphne's virginity, in addition to doing the ideological work of representing Augustan peace in its role as the sentinel shrub, standing guard on either side of Augustus' front door on the Palatine.

Ovid's own claim to being a healer who is skilled in medical botany must be contrasted with two other prominent doctors in the poem, and I suggest that we can read his self-characterization as healer within the context of the national-health crises that begin and end the poem—both. The epic is framed by two doctors, as it were, who heal the world and the state respectively: in Book 1 Jupiter is described as a surgeon, cutting away infection when he destroys the world with flood waters (1.190-1) and in the fifteenth and final book, Asclepius saves Rome during the pestilence of 291 B.C.E., immediately before a brief panegyric of Caesar and Augustus that end the poem.<sup>(17)</sup> Ovid, then, situates himself within a distinguished group of healers.

In Ovid's epilogue, however, we are left with an image of the poet himself, flying above the stars, his Callimachean rejuvenation through therapoetry complete. In this programmatic ending, Ovid fuses his physical corpus together with his poetic corpus, in his claim that he will not die because his poetry will live forever on men's lips:<sup>(18)</sup>

iamque opus exegi, quod nec Iovis ira nec ignis  
nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere vetustas.

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(15) See Paus. 2.7.7-9; 2.30.3. See Barchiesi 2005 ad *Met.* 1.453, Hollis 1996, 69-73. It is interesting that Apollo bathes in the river Peneius, because Daphne is the daughter of Peneus: *Daphne Peneia* (*Met.* 1.453).

(16) Laurel as an antidote against snakes: Plin. HN. 23.154; Nican. *Ther.* 574; Cass.Fel. 67; Theod. Pris. Eup. F. 24.74. Ogle 1910, 302, suggests that the Pythian priestess chews laurels since the *omphalos* was thought to be directly above the grave of the Python. Delphic laurel, in particular, protects against pestilence (Plin. H.N. 23.157).

(17) Hardie 2002, 198, has noticed the book-marking effect of these two medical images and compares Jupiter's "*remedium*" of *Met.* 1.190-1 with Livy's complaint, *nec vitia nostra nec remedia pati possumus* (*praef.* 9).

(18) See Farrell 1999, 127-41.

cum volet, ilia dies, quae nil nisi corporis huius  
 ius habet, incerti spatium mihi finiat aevi:  
 parte tamen meliore mei super alta perennis  
 astra ferar, nomenque erit indelebile nostrum,  
 quaque patet domitis Romana potentia terris,  
 ore legar populi...

(Met. 15.871-79)

Now I have completed my task, such a work as neither the wrath of Jove, nor fire nor sword nor the devouring old age can destroy. Let, when it will, that day, that has no claim but to this body, end the span of my uncertain life. Yet I'll be borne, the better part of me, above the stars, immortal, and my name shall be indestructible. Wherever through conquered lands the Roman power extends, my words shall be upon the lips of men.

This is an important statement of metapoetic allegiance. Just as Callimachus was rejuvenated by meeting his Muse at the beginning of the *Aitia* and then set forth a new program of slim, healed poetry, so Ovid indicates in the epilogue to the *Metamorphoses* that he is rejuvenated, but in a different way. He will live forever through his poetry, even though his body, like Caesar's, may die. For Ovid, this is the ultimate form of healing poetry. Callimachus begins the *Aitia* in the proem with his poetic rejuvenation / initiation and explication of a new aesthetic, but Ovid ends the *Metamorphoses* with his own, Romanized version of Callimachean rejuvenation. His last lines may also point to rejuvenation, since it is possible to read the incomplete acrostic "incip," from the verb *incipio*, "to begin," in the ending of his poem: <sup>(19)</sup>

Iamque opus exegi quod nec Iovis ira nec ignis  
 nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere vetustas.  
 cum volet, ilia dies, quae nil nisi corporis huius  
 ius habet, incerti spatium mihi finiat aevi:  
 parte tamen meliore mei super alta perennis                   875  
 astra ferar, nomenque erit indelebile nostrum,  
 quaque patet domitis Romana potentia terris,  
 ore legar populi, perque omnia saecula fama,  
 siquid habent veri vatum praesagia, vivam.

Ovid's treatment of pestilence and the mass destruction of human life, as we will see, stand in stark contrast to his persona as medical botanist and the claim in his epilogue that his "body" will not be destroyed. Vergil's last line of the Noric pestilence is the image of *ignis sacer* eating away at the body, *artus...edebat* (*Geo.* 3.566), whereas Ovid claims that devouring old age, *edax...vetustas* (*Met.* 15.872), will

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(19) Barchiesi 1997, 195.

not eat away at and destroy his poetic "body." This blurring of the boundary between bodily pestilence and textual pestilence sets the context for Ovid's engagement with Vergil's bugonia and the issue of regeneration after pestilence, because, as we will see, Ovid envisions his own poetry as the "bugonia like" mechanism that ensures his own rebirth.

### **Pestilence in Metamorphoses**

Ovid's pestilence narratives in the *Metamorphoses* are typically viewed as responding to the Lucretian pestilence topos, but the remainder of this paper will set for the ways in which Ovid assimilates and responds to Vergil's presentation of pestilence. This response to Vergil points to a similar concern with repopulation and regeneration not only of Roman poetry but also of Roman culture after the conquest of Egypt, though Ovid is much more explicit about Callimachean rejuvenation throughout and differs markedly from Vergil in his presentation of Caesar.

Ovid situates pestilence imagery in the *Metamorphoses* in three key locations: in the beginning, middle, and end positions of the *Metamorphoses*. The pestilences in Book 1, roughly the middle of Book 7, and at the end of Book 15 emphasize the theme of a breakdown of political order and the transition from one type of government (or at least "world order") to another, a fact that can be contrasted with the rigid order given to the positions of the pestilence narratives. The "pestilence" in Book 1 that Jupiter must "cure," taking the guise of a surgeon (1.125-62), is caused by wars in which people kill their own kind and violate guest-host relationships with the gods—a symbol of the golden age—and is resolved by the creation of a new race of people after the flood. Book 7's pestilence at Aegina (7.523-613) is set in the context of the rise of Minoan sea power, indicating a transition to thalassocracy in the Mediterranean.<sup>(20)</sup> Finally, the pestilence of Book 15 (626-744) is set in the context of the violent transition from the Rome of the Republic to the Rome of the Caesars and the creation of a new "race" of people, those living under the happy star of Caesar who

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(20) Juxtaposed with the story of the *Argonautica* that precedes Minos' visit to Aegina and the ensuing pestilence narrative in Book 7, it seems as if the fall of the golden age is an important theme in Book 7. This "inverted golden-age" imagery is, in fact, a recurrent theme in the first half of the book. It begins with the image of the Argo cutting the sea, *iamque fretum Minyae Pagasaea puppe secabant* (7.1), which evokes the image of sailing in the description of the iron age's fall from grace in Book 1, *vela dabat ventis (nec adhuc bene noverat illos) navita* (1.132). Catullus' *Carmen* 64 begins with the image of the Argo as the first ship to ever sail the sea, thus Ovid's image of sailing in Book 1, though it doesn't mention the Argo, can be assumed to indicate Jason's ship. At *Tristia* 3.9.7-8, Ovid explicitly says that the Argo is the first to sail the sea. The idea of inverted golden age fits with pestilence imagery as well. Gale 2000, 225, has argued that Vergil, in his Noric pestilence in Book 4 of the *Georgics*, creates a "grim parody" of the Golden Age by appropriating the golden-age topos of the cow who does not fear the lion and inverting it: "wolves do not attack sheep, deer roam freely without fear of dogs, and snakes die". Only because the predators have died of disease can the prey be relieved of their fear. Ovid evokes similar imagery, as well, in his Aeginetan-pestilence narrative of Book 7 and in the flood narrative of Book 1.

will never again see war and pestilence. The rest of this paper will argue that Ovid uses the pestilence topos in the *Metamorphoses* as a tool for responding to Vergil's model of rebirth after pestilence and Callimachus' model of rebirth through poetic rejuvenation. Ovid differs from his models, we will see, in that he puts an end to the historical cycle of devastating pestilences that we see repeated from the earliest human communities to the end of the Roman Republic (*Geo.* 3,4; *Met.* 1, 7, 15). Furthermore, the poet also suggests that recurrence of pestilence as a specific literary topos has also ended, since there is no further need for regeneration. Ovid's poem is pitched to be the final in Roman regeneration, since he rejuvenates the world of myth and history through his *carmen perpetuum* about new, *nova* (and rejuvenated), *corpora* (*Met.* 1,4;1).

Ovid employs the theme of miraculous repopulations after a total destruction of life in the pestilences of Books 1 and 7, in which the human populations of the prediluvian world and Minoan-age Aegina are destroyed. In the third-century B.C.E pestilence at Rome in Book 15, there is no annihilation, because the senate intervenes in time and stays the pestilence by importing the healing god Asclepius to Rome. Barchiesi notes the enormity of this event as a marker of Roman cultural appropriation of Greek cults:

Moving from Greece to Italy, [Asclepius] fills a final void in the Roman pantheon and seals the ancient epoch in which *nulli cura fuit externos quaerere divos* (*Prop.* 4.1.17). The next step, as will be clear a few verses later, is the birth of the divinity *in situ*. Asclepius is the last importation from Greece, and his arrival on the island [Tiber] is like a sign of completion for Roman culture.<sup>(21)</sup>

Asclepius not only functions as a bookmark for the sections of the *Metamorphoses* dealing with Republican history and the aetiology of religious cults, but he also functions as a sign of literary closure. Ovid refers to the god in his manifestation as a snake by the name *Coronides*, "son of Coronis," and the *coronis* is a snake-like mark used in book rolls to mark the end of the work.<sup>(22)</sup> Ovid's use of the polyvalent healer as one of the final three figures of the poem (Asclepius, Caesar, and Augustus), thus, conflates poetic production (and closure) with healing.<sup>(23)</sup>

Yet healing is not in the hands of Asclepius, alone. Asclepius is introduced to Rome by the decree of the Senate to cure the disease, but Ovid blurs the distinction between the god and the human founders of Rome's new age, Caesar and Augustus.<sup>(24)</sup>

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(21) Barchiesi 1997, 189-90.

(22) *Ibid.*

(23) Yet, as Barchiesi 1997, 189-90, shows, the snake is an inherently polyvalent symbol. In this context, it is possible to suggest that the snake is also a closural symbol in a historical sense, since Cleopatra's death - which was seen as the end of the Civil Wars - was attributed to an asp bite. This death-dealing snake was so important as to merit a full scientific investigation by ancient doctors into its specific breed and characteristics.

(24) It is useful to recall an important difference between the importation of Asclepius to Rome and that of the god into Athens. In the Greek importation of the healing god, Asclepius was invited and



All three are healers, not only of the Roman pestilence, but also of the pestilence topos. Barchiesi notes that Asclepius, as *salutifer urbi*, puts an end to *luctibus*, grief, caused by the pestilence (15.743-4), and capitulation to *luctus* is how Lucretius ends his Athenian pestilence narrative (6.1248).<sup>(25)</sup> Yet *salutifer orbi* is an Augustan title, and the semantic correspondence links the healing god and the princeps as symbols of closure in the genealogy of the pestilence topos?<sup>(26)</sup>

This association of Asclepius, and, by extension, Caesar and Augustus, with epic closure and finalization of the pestilence topos can be seen to extend to the pestilence narratives of the *Georgics*, as well. Like Asclepius, the soul of the murdered Caesar also helps effect a cure for the pestilence of the Civil Wars. Part of Caesar's power as a "healer" is that his body is turned into a star that flies to the heavens and hovers over Rome as a protective force (Met. 15. 840-2), an image which echoes Vergil's bees that fly straight to the stars when they die (Geo. 4.226-7).

The overlap between the image of Caesar's soul flying to the stars at death and Vergil's astral bees is part of a wider intertextual engagement between Caesar's death scene and *Georgics* 4. Several aspects of Vergil's bee death in *Georgics* 4 are included in Ovid's account. Both begin their narratives of death by invoking Egypt: Vergil claims, by way of proving that bees have eternal minds (*partem divinae mentis*, Geo. 4.220), that not even Egypt loves its king as much as the bees love theirs (Geo. 4.210), and Ovid, by way of establishing Caesar's divinity, emphasizes the conquest of Egypt (Met. 15.826). Whereas bees are endowed at birth with a divine mind (Geo.4.220), Caesar's *anima* (Met. 15.846) becomes divine through his death. Both souls are released at death (*resoluta*, Geo.4.225; *solui*, Met. 15.845), and both fly (*volare*, Geo.4.226; *volat*, Met. 15.848) to the stars (*sideris in numerum*, Geo.4.227; *caelestibus astris*, Met. 15.846). Finally, while the bees do not engage in sexual reproduction nor do they give themselves over to Venus, *nec corpora segnes / in Venerem solvent* (Geo.4.198), Ovid describes a less sexualized and more maternal Venus, one to whom Caesar's body is wholly given over: [Venus] *Caesaris eripuit membris nec in aera solvi / passa recentem animam caelestibus intulit astris*, "Venus snatched from the body of her own son, Caesar, the new soul and, not allowing it to dissolve into thin air, bore it to the heavenly stars" (Met. 15. 845-6). In this way, by alluding to Vergil's bees in the narrative of Caesar's death, Ovid ascribes the miraculous regeneration of life from death and disease that the bees symbolize to Caesar's catasterism.

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housed by a private individual, the poet Sophocles. Sophocles' reception of Asclepius is the reason the poet was honored with the cult title *Dexion* after his death (see Edelstein 1945, T720, for references). In the Roman importation, a public, rather than private, entity (the Senate) is responsible for the importation.

(25) Barchiesi 1997, 189.

(26) *Ibid.*, 191.

Ovid also connects Caesar's catasterism, we will see, to another supernatural regenerative paradigm: the rebirth of the phoenix (Met. 15.391-407). Hardie has already recognized the importance of the phoenix bird for the politics of Caesarian succession:

Julius Caesar's solution is to fabricate a "natural" son and give him a name which is also his own; this is the fiction of the ideal succession of the same by the same.... Ideally the imperial succession should replicate that of the (selfevidently fictional) phoenix, whose method of self-perpetuation, perhaps surprisingly finds a place in Pythagoras' discourse on universal change (Met. 15.392-407).<sup>(27)</sup>

The connection between the miraculous bird and the emperor, however, is much more programmatic when viewed in the context of other miraculou rebirths. Ovid's approximation of Caesar to miraculous animals, the bugonia bee and the phoenix, is inked with Ovid's program of creating a narrative of Caesar's death that can adequately depict the miracle of regeneration. In the speech of Pythagoras in Book 15 (Met. 15.365-6), Ovid claims that the only difference between the phoenix and the bugonia (among other animals that miraculously regenerate new life) is that the phoenix is the source of its own regeneration. This is an important distinction, because it highlights how similar the bugonia and the phoenix miracles really are.

Ovid describes Caesar in terms that explicitly recall Pythagoras' account of the miraculous phoenix bird. Jupiter in his speech to Venus in Book 15 tells her that Caesar must die: *hic sua complevit, pro quo, Cytherea, laboras, /tempora, perfectis, quos terrae debuit, annis*, "the one on behalf of whom you labor, Venus, has completed the time that he was allotted on earth" (15.816-7). This line connects with another about the phoenix from Pythagoras' speech: *haec ubi quinque suae complevit saecula vitae*, "When this bird has completed five ages of its life" (15.395). Ovid is clear in the speech of Pythagoras about the importance of the phoenix in terms of its ability to spontaneously regenerate itself. After giving many accounts of spontaneous generation, including the famous bugonia, Ovid contrasts these miracles with this more impressive example:

*Haec tamen ex aliis generis primordia ducunt,  
una est, quae reparet seque ipsa reseminet, ales:  
Assyrii phoenica vocant; non fruge neque herbis,  
sed turis lacrimis et suco vivit amomi.  
haec ubi quinque suae complevit saecula vitae,  
ilicet in ramis tremulaeque cacumine palmae  
unguibus et puro nidum sibi construit ore,  
quo simul ac casias et nardi lenis aristas  
quassaque cum fulva substravit cinnama murra,  
se super inponit finitque in odoribus aevum.  
inde ferunt, totidem qui vivere debeat annos,*

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(27) Hardie 1997, 192-3.

corpore de patrio parvum phoenica renasci;  
 cum dedit huic aetas vires, onerique ferendo est,  
 ponderibus nidi ramos levat arboris altae  
 fertque pius cunasque suas patriumque sepulcrum  
 perque leves auras Hyperionis urbe potitus  
 ante fores sacras Hyperionis aede reponit.

(Met. 15.391-407)

These creatures all derive their first beginnings from others of their kind. But one alone, a bird, renews and re-begets itself—the Phoenix of Assyria, which feeds not upon seeds or verdure but the oils of balsam and the tears of frankincense. This bird, when five long centuries of life have passed, with claws and beak unsullied, builds a nest high on a lofty swaying palm; and lines the nest with cassia and spikenard and golden myrrh and shreds of cinnamon and settles there at ease and, so embowered in spicy perfumes, ends his life's long span. Then from his father's body is reborn a little Phoenix, so they say, to live the same long years. When time has built his strength with power to raise the weight, he lifts the nest—the nest his cradle and his father's tomb—as love and duty prompt, from that tall palm and carries it across the sky to reach the Sun's great city, and before the doors of the Sun's holy temple lays it down.

The phoenix goes to the temple of the Sun at Heliopolis in Egypt when it dies, but Caesar is associated with a different star and temple at death, the star of the Roman Capitol. Jupiter makes this clear in his command to Venus to transform her son into a star:

hanc animam interea caeso de corpore raptam  
 fac iubar, ut semper Capitolia nostra forumque  
 divus ab excelsa prospectet Iulius aede!

(Met. 15.841-2)

"Meanwhile, snatch this soul [of Caesar] from his slain body and make it a shining star, so that divine Julius may always look down on our Capitol and Forum from his lofty temple".

Ovid concludes Caesar's list of victories for Rome with the defeat of Egypt which thwarted the enemy's seductive attempt to use Rome as a host to clone itself:

Romanique ducis coniunx Aegyptia taedae  
 non bene fisa cadet, frustra erit ilia minata,  
 servitura suo Capitolia nostra Canopo.

(Met. 15.826-28)

The Egyptian consort of a prince of Rome, trusting in wedlock to her cost, shall fall-vain then her threats to make my Capitol the thrall of her Canopus.

In this way, Caesar's Capitoline star replaces Egypt's Heliopolitan sun-king, though Ovid makes it clear by his comparison of Caesar to the phoenix that part of Rome's victory lies not so much in its resistance to, but in its assimilation of Egyptian elements.<sup>(28)</sup>

Roman assimilation of Egyptian symbols in Caesar's death narrative can also be seen in Ovid's use of the term Canopus (Met. 15.828), which is not a common Latin word. In fact, before its appearance here, it had only been used twice before in Augustan poetry: once in the *Amores* (2.13.7) and once in Vergil's description of the Egyptian bugonia (Geo. 4.287), where he asserts that the ritual originates in Canopus. In Ovid's statement that Rome was in danger of becoming the slave of Canopus, the place of the bugonia's origin, it seems that part of Canopus' threat is that Rome may be metamorphosed into the new capital of uncontrolled bugonic regeneration. Caesar's assimilation of the regenerative power of such miracles as the bugonia ritual and the rebirth of the phoenix suggests that the threat has been, at least in part, contained.

The Egyptian version of the phoenix and its connection with obelisks further suggests a subtext of conquest and cultural appropriation. The Egyptian phoenix, *benu*, is the origin of solar religion at Heliopolis (Iunu in Egyptian), where the temple precinct was called "Domain of the Benu," and is a potent symbol of rebirth. The origin of the universe in the Egyptian cosmology begins with the flight of the *benu* and its lighting on the first solid substance: the *ben ben* stone which arose out of the Nile and is depicted in Egyptian iconography as an obelisk.<sup>(29)</sup> The fact that the famous obelisk transported to Rome in 10 B.C.E. and set up in the Campus Martius near the Ara Pacis was from Heliopolis suggests that Ovid's emphasis on Heliopolis in his discussion of the phoenix in Book 15 is part of an intercultural exchange at the level of politics between Rome and Egypt.<sup>(30)</sup> The parallel of Caesar's birth with images of Egyptian succession of imperial power serve to illuminate the issues of transferal of

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(28) On the connection between Augustus, the Sun, and Heliopolis, see Barchiesi 2005, 238, in his discussion of Ovid's Phaethon passage of *Met.* 1 and 2: "E' possibile che per Ovidio il vero legame tra Apollo e Sole sia la politica religiosa di Augusto e la sua assimilazione selettiva della greca orientale: il principe è rappresentato ai Romani sia dal suo tempio di Apollo Palatino, sia dall'importazione di obelischi dall'egiziana Eliopoli; fra di essi quello che adornava a partire dal 10 a.C. il Circo Massimo (l'equivalente urbano dell'ippodromo cosmico percorso dal Sole e da Fetonte) suggeriva attraverso la sua iscrizione, il culto solare e la sua importanza per Augusto che è insieme nuovo pontefice massimo e successore delle dinastie egiziane di 'Re-Soli' (*ILS 91 Augustuspontifex maximus...Aegyptio in potestatem populi Romani redacta Soli donum dedit*). Di sicuro questa recente tradizione rinforzava il nesso tra potere imperiale, corse del Circo, e culto solare a Roma."

(29) On the importance of the *benu* (sometimes spelled *bnw*) bird for the Greek conception of Egypt, see Stephens 2003, 59-60. The *benu* bird is depicted in Koptos as having arms which are raised to the god Sothis, which is the Egyptian form of the Dog Star, Sirius. The *benu* embodies the light emanating from the sun and is depicted in some tomb paintings as traveling on the solar barque along with Ra' (Quirke 2001, 27-30). The bird is described in the *Book of the Dead* as the soul of Ra' and the one who brings Osiris back to life (*ibid.*).

(30) Plin. H.N. 36.71.

power from Caesar to Augustus that Ovid highlights in Caesar's death and rebirth into a healing and protective star.

For any Roman educated in Egyptian lore the obelisk that Augustus imported from Heliopolis certainly would evoke a connection with the phoenix bird and its close association with the first obelisk / pyramid, the ben ben stone.<sup>(31)</sup> Furthermore, the phoenix's regenerative act encodes a parallel narrative of kingly succession, since the baby phoenix spontaneously regenerated from the father is responsible for embalming and divinizing his father by enshrining it in the temple at Heliopolis, much as Augustus becomes the first in a long line of emperors to divinize his dead "father." In this way, Augustus' Heliopolitan obelisk and the complex associations of Egyptian and Roman mythology surrounding it suggest that Caesar's "phoenix-like" death and rebirth is a part of Ovid's resituating the role of Egypt in Roman epic.<sup>(32)</sup>

### **Phoenix, Bugonia, and Apis**

Now that we have seen that Roman appropriation of Egyptian symbols and succession of kingship are important themes in Ovid's description of Caesar as a type of phoenix, it is possible to understand the animal imagery in a wider context of the biological mechanisms that were thought to govern these miraculous rebirths. The overlap between the bugonia and the phoenix in terms of their biological transformations suggests a fluid link between Caesar, the phoenix bird, and the bugonia.

One way that the bugonia and phoenix rebirths are similar is that they both depend on regeneration from bones. In fact, Hesychius' entry for bougoneon states explicitly that bees are born from the bones.<sup>(33)</sup> Vergil's account of the bees' rebirth agrees with this in his emphasis on the softness of the bones: *interea teneris tepefactus in ossibus umor / aestuat...*, "Meanwhile, the moisture in those softened bones warms and ferments" (4.308-9). Pliny tells us that the phoenix is regenerated from a similar biological mechanism:

*neminem extitisse qui viderit vescentem, sacrum in Arabia Soli esse, vivere annis DXL, senescentem casiae turisque surculis construere nidum, replere odoribus et superemori. ex ossibus deinde et medullis eius nasci primo ceu vermiculum, inde fieri pullum, prince...*

(H.N. 10.4)

He tells us that no person has ever seen this bird eat, that in Arabia it is looked upon as sacred to the sun, that it lives five hundred and forty years, that when it becomes old it builds a nest of cassia and sprigs of incense,

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(31) For the obelisk that Augustus imported from Heliopolis, see *CIL* vi.702; Amm. Marcell. 27.4.12; Strabo 27.805; Plin. HN. 36.71.

(32) Further confirmation that Ovid is especially interested in the phoenix as an important Augustan symbol can be retroactively extrapolated from Ovid's use of another bird with magical powers of rebirth and healing, the ibis, in his exilic poem by the same name. The ibis, however, works as an anti-phoenix, in terms of its base connections with purging and excrement.

(33) See Bettini 1991, 210.

which it fills with perfumes, and then lays its body down upon them to die; that from its bones and marrow there springs at first a sort of small worm, which in time changes into a little bird.

Furthermore, both the bugonia ox and the phoenix are linked with nests filled with herbs and overtones of mummification.<sup>(34)</sup> Vergil instructs that the bludgeoned ox should be laid in a bed of cassia and thyme (4.304), and Pliny tells us that the phoenix also dies and is reborn on a bed of cassia (H.N. 10.4).<sup>(35)</sup> The similarity between the phoenix and bugonia miracles suggests that Caesar-as-phoenix could just as easily fit into the paradigm of Caesar-as-bugonia. Plutarch says that Caesar was killed like a sacrificial bull and that the conspirators were the sacrificers as they all bludgeoned him to death (Caes. 66.10). The correlation is, of course, not neat, since Caesar's death is bloody, and the Egyptian bugonia is meant to be bloodless. The fact that Aristaeus deviates from Egyptian protocol by mixing the Egyptian custom with the Greco-Roman insistence on spilling blood suggests that no such smooth transition need be isolated.

There is a third, miraculous animal, however, that must be analyzed alongside the phoenix and the bugonia's ox-born-bees. The Apis Bull also functions within the context of Egyptian kingship and divine rebirth. The bull is ritually embalmed at death and mourned in Egypt as the instantiation of Osiris and then is miraculously reborn in its next incarnation. Stephens links the bugonia ritual with that of the Apis Bull, suggesting that, through the clash of Roman and Egyptian politics and cultures during and after the Civil Wars, "Egypt in defeat provided a compelling though ambivalent paradigm, generals might become gods. So might bulls, or they might become bees."<sup>(36)</sup>

It seems that we come full circle then, in linking the Apis Bull as a type of bugonia to the phoenix since both animals have royal associations and are symbols of kingship.<sup>(37)</sup> After all, Phaethon at the end of Book 1, who "flies" to the Temple of the Sun in Ethiopia to see the Sun King (just as the phoenix bird flies to the Temple of the Sun at Heliopolis in Egypt to deposit its mummified father at the altar of the Sun King), is closely linked with Epaphus, whose name is derived from Apis.<sup>(38)</sup> That Ovid was aware of the shared features between the two heavenly animals can be supported by Ovid's narrative structure. He ends Book 1 with Io's transformation from a cow into Isis

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(34) Stephens 2003, 60.

(35) Presumably, the spicy, sweet smell of the herbs mask the decay.

(36) Stephens 2004, 160.

(37) Alföldi 1997, 143-5, discusses how the phoenix bird is a symbol of the new age of the Ptolemies.

(38) Hdt. 2.153; 3.28. The Greek Apis is also connected with healing: " Ἄπις γὰρ ἔλθων ἐκ πέρας Ναυπακτίας / ιατρόμαντις παῖς Ἀπόλλωνος χθόνα / τήνδ' ἐκκαθαίρει κνωδάλων βροτοφθόρων, / τὰ δὲ παλαιῶν αἱμάτων μιάσμασι / χρανθεῖσ' ἀνήκε γαῖα μηγεῖται ἄκη / δρακονθόμιλον δυσμενῆ ζυνοικίαν." "For Apis, seer and healer, the son of Apollo, came from Naupactus on the farther shore and purified this land of monsters deadly to man, which Earth, defiled by the pollution of bloody deeds of old, caused to spring up, pestilences charged with wrath, an ominous colony of swarming serpents" (Aesch. *Supp.* 262-67). On Phaethon and issues of succession of kingship in Augustan culture, see Barchiesi 2005, 231.

and the birth of the son Epaphus (Apis), who is the transitional link between the Io narrative and the subsequent story of Phaethon, a failed phoenix bird, as it were. The fact that Augustus refused to visit the shrine of the Apis Bull (and those of the Ptolemies) when he toured Egypt after his defeat of Antony and Cleopatra at Actium, yet within two decades imported an obelisk from Heliopolis to Rome, suggests a deep-seated tension over how Rome should deal with Egyptian symbols of divine kingship.<sup>(39)</sup>

This tension can be felt in Ovid's allusions to *bugonia* and the phoenix in Caesar's death and *catasterism* in Book 15 and its contrast with the reference to Epaphus, who is the Apis Bull, in Book 1. In highlighting three miraculous Greco-Egyptian animals in the first and last books, Ovid supplements Vergil's model of rebirth through *bugonia*. *Bugonia*, after all, is only one of many miraculous instances of rebirth, according to Pythagoras's speech, and Ovid highlights this by suggesting another parallel for rebirth in the miraculous bird that is even more overdetermined as Egyptian than the *bugonia* ox. This results in a more flexible Ovidian program of rebirth than Vergil's model had allowed. Vergil's Augustus at the end of *Georgics* 4 is rigidly marked as an image of Olympian Jove and a uniter of the furthest boundaries of the empire. Ovid's Caesar, however, is polyvalent, and all aspects of miraculous rebirths are subsumed into his *catasterism*. In Vergil's *bugonia*, furthermore, regeneration is directed more toward poetry and the poet (if we read the bees and honey as a model of poetic initiation), whereas Ovid transforms Caesar himself into a regenerative mechanism. The function of the *bugonia*-style "pinata" that releases honey when it is beaten is transferred to Caesar's own body.<sup>(40)</sup> By inscribing Egyptian symbols within his narrative, Ovid suggests that Roman rebirth depends, in part, on controlling these exotic, Eastern miracles of regeneration through the succession of power from Caesar to Octavian.<sup>(41)</sup>

### **The Pestilence at Aegina in *Metamorphoses* 7:**

Spontaneous regeneration is not always as majestic as it is in the image of bees emerging miraculously from a shriveled ox carcass or a phoenix arising out of a burning pyre. In Book 7 Ovid narrates a pestilence on the island of Aegina, the cause of which suggests Egyptian contagion. Early on in the pestilence, one of the pestilence

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(39) Dio Cass. 51.17.5-6

(40) The pinata ritual and other rituals involving the beating of effigies are perhaps useful anthropological parallels to the *bugonia*, because they shift the focus from the violence involved in the "death" to the release of what is inside the body.

(41) Imperial power, however, is not the final authority in the poem. Poetic power stands as an equally important aspect of imperial identity, according to Ovid. Hardie 1997, 194, points out, "But the poet transcends even the ideal self-replication of the phoenix, finally exempt from the processes of change and decay as he remains true to (the better part of) himself and soars off into a perpetual immortality." I will deal with Ovid's epilogue and how his claim to live forever is also linked with Callimachean rejuvenation at the end of this paper.

symptoms is the presence of snakes, swarming in the soil as they spread disease (7.534-5), an image which evokes Ovid's earlier description in Book 1 of the Nile soil during the repopulation of the earth after the flood as it spontaneously generates all kinds of weird creatures (1.423-38). One of the monsters to come out of this muddy broth is the most famous pestilence-bearing (1.459) snake, Python, which, like the snakes on Aegina, also spreads poison and disease throughout the earth (1.444).<sup>(42)</sup>

This Egyptian presence in the pestilence narrative coheres with the Vergilian and Lucretian models in their attribution of causation to African contagion. Like his models, Ovid indicates that Auster is the cause of Aeacus' pestilence:

principio caelum spissa caligine terras  
 pressit et ignavos inclusit nubibus aestus;  
 dumque quater iunctis explevit cornibus orbem  
 Luna, quater plenum tenuata retexit orbem,  
 letiferis calidi spirarunt aestibus austri.

(Met. 7.528-32)

At first the sky weighed down upon the earth black and unbroken, and the clouds shut in exhausting heat. Four times the crescent moon filled her round orb, four times from her full orb she shrank and waned, and all that weary while the hot South wind blew furnace blasts of death.

This emphasis on Auster (which is also the instrument of destruction in the annihilation of the world by flood at Met. 1.264 in the form of Notus) connects the pestilence at Aegina with Vergil's animal and bee pestilences and suggests a connection with Egypt, given its importance as a source of disease and the origin of the South wind. Ovid, however, does more than merely add a higher body count than Lucretius and Vergil. The swarming snakes in Aegina's fields and their intertextual relationship with Nilotic regeneration at once over-determine Egypt as a source of pestilence and suggest a dangerous component of Egyptian regeneration which contrasts with Vergil's description of it as ensuring *salutem* (Geo. 4.294). All of this emphasis on disease with Egyptian overtones in the Aeacus episode, I suggest, works to adumbrate the pestilence of *Metamorphoses* 15 and the introduction of the two healers to the Roman state, Asclepius and the deified Caesar. Ovid himself draws explicit emphasis to the pestilences' similarities in Books 7 and 15 by referring to both as *dira lues*, "a dire pestilence" (7.523; 15.626). By depicting Aegina as enduring pestilence conditions that

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(42) See Pliny HN. 9.179 for a discussion of the bizarre generation of mice from the mud of the Nile. Pliny claims one can actually see creatures that are half mouse / half mud after the flood waters subside. Ovid describes the same phenomenon of the Nile's spontaneous generation of life forms after the flood (*Met. 1.* 422-37).



are similar to the pestilential conditions which arise from uncontrolled Nilotic regeneration, Ovid, it appears, is building up to a workable model of rebirth through Roman control over Egypt in his portrayal of Caesar's phoenix-like catasterism in Book 15. Several comparisons between Ovid's pestilence topos and Vergil's will help support this claim.

### **Pestilence at Aegina (Met.7)**

As in Caesar's catasterism narrative of Book 15, Ovid is deeply engaged with the poetic and cultural issue of repopulation that Vergil tackles in the *Georgics* 4. For Vergil, pestilence and repopulation is part of a meditation on how the poet fits into the new Roman map after Octavian ends the war and becomes "de facto the new pharaoh of Egypt."<sup>(43)</sup> Vergil has Aristaeus replace the Egyptian ritual for repopulation with a Hellenic version of the same ritual. In Aristaeus' ritual the religious element of sacrifice (with the spilling of blood and propitiation of the nymphs, Orpheus, and Eurydice) suggests that the Egyptian technique must be supplemented by traditional Greco-Roman piety.<sup>(44)</sup> The result is a new population of bees that also symbolizes a new era for poetry, now that Egypt's threat has been thwarted and Caesar and Octavian have ensured a place for the poets' leisure and patronage.

Ovid, however, inverts Vergil's narrative of pestilence and *bugonia*. The most obvious inversion is the shift from animal life changed into insect life (*bugonia* in *Geo.* 4) and insect into animal life (*Met.*7). But the reformulation goes beyond a thematic level. Ovid also evokes Vergil's *bugonia* in his description of the sick as they are dying of the pestilence. Like Vergil's image of the dead oxen lying in a country grove, Ovid tells of corpses lying in the woods, but the only miracle that comes from their decomposition is that other predators will not touch the dead:

corpora foeda iacent, vitiantur odoribus aerae.  
mira loquar: non ilia canes avidaeque volucres,  
non cani tetigere lupi.

(*Met.* 7.548-50)

Foul corpses lie, their stench tainting the air, and -what was wondrous - no grey wolves, no dogs, no hungry birds would touch them.

Furthermore, the bodies of those dying from the pestilence at Aegina suffer from symptoms similar to the biological breakdown of *bugonia* ox. The ox's innards turn into *liquefacta...viscera* (*Geo.* 4.535), and Ovid describes the symptoms of pestilence using the same word denoting liquefaction: *corpora...dilapsa liquescunt/adflatuque nocent et agunt contagia late*, "Bodies perished and as they liquefied

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(43) Stephens 2004, 158.

(44) Stephens 2004, 157-60.

their effluence spread the infection far and wide" (Met. 7.550-1).<sup>(45)</sup> What was a wonderful miracle in Vergil is cause for further contagion in Ovid.<sup>(46)</sup>

Although Ovid inverts Vergil's description of the miraculous productivity of the bugonia ox in his pestilence narrative, he nevertheless patterns the emergence of the new population of men from ants on Vergil's description of the rebirth of the bees. Vergil says that the newly generated bees are animalia (4.309), at first devoid of feet, trunca pedum primo (4.310), and soon they grow wings, flock together into a crowd, and fly into the air (4.310-11). Ovid's ants are also animalia (7.636), and when Pythagoras briefly describes the miracle of regeneration in Book 15, he calls the life-forms that emerge from rotting corpses animalia as well (15.363). Where Vergil's bees are trunca pedum primo (4.310), Ovid's ants stand rectoque adsistere trunco and shed their many feet, numerumque pedum (7.640-1), as they turn into humans, before gathering in a crowd and hailing Aeacus as king, adeunt regemque salutant (7.651).<sup>(47)</sup> These similarities between the bodily changes of the miraculous ox and the pestilence victims, on the one hand, and the newly formed ants, on the other, suggest that Vergil's bugonia is an important model for this scene, although Ovid's humans are denied the miracle of regeneration of life from putrefaction that the bees enjoy in Vergil. The fact that Ovid invites the reader to expect a bougonic mechanism of rebirth in his allusions to Vergil, but instead thwarts this expectation by relying on a corpse-less regeneration, suggests that part of the Ovidian program of epic poetry deals with the problem of how to regenerate a devastated population. This thwarted expectation of regeneration can only be fulfilled in Caesar's usurpation of the bougonic mechanism in Book 15.

### **Aeacus and Aristaeus:**

Decaying bodies are not the only link between Vergil's and Ovid's pestilences. In Greek and Roman myth and poetry Aeacus and Aristaeus have much in common, including divine, though contested, patrimonies and the ability to heal pestilences. This overlap between the two is especially noteworthy given Aristaeus' conspicuous absence

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(45) The Hippocratic treatise *The Sacred Disease* claims that epilepsy melts the brain and turns it into water (14).

(46) Plutarch commenting on a line of Archilochus, describes the differences between corpses which rot from humidity versus dessication in terms that sound like Ovid's pestilence: " τὴν γὰρ σελήνην ἡρέμα χλαιίνουσαν ἀνυγραίνειν τὰ σώματα, τὸν δ' ἥλιον ἀναρπάζειν μᾶλλον ἐκ τῶν σωμάτων τὸ νοτερόν διὰ τὴν πύρωσιν· πρὸς δὲ καὶ τὸν Ἀρχίλοχον εἰρηκέναι φυσικῶς ἔλπομαι, πολλοὺς μὲν αὐτῶν Σείριος καθαυανεῖ ὄξυς ἐλλάμπων." "For the moon with its slight warmth softens corpses, whereas the sun instead takes up the moisture from corpses because of the burning heat. In light of this Archilochus has spoken scientifically: 'many of them, I expect, will be dried up by the Dog Star's fierce rays'" (Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 658b 1-6).

(47) There is also an interesting link with Vergil's animal pestilence in Ovid's ant miracle. When Aeacus apportions the land to his new subjects, he describes it as *vacuos priscis cultoribus agros* (7.653), and Vergil describes the land devastated by pestilence in *Georgics* 3 as *desertaque regna / pastorum et longe saltus lateque vacantis* (3.476-7).

from the *Metamorphoses*, especially in the Actaeon episode of Book 3, in which genealogical consistency would suggest that he should have been acknowledged as Actaeon's father. As we will see, Aeacus assumes many elements of the Vergilian Aristaeus, and this reworking of the Vergilian model is part of Ovid's program of building toward successful healing and succession models in Caesar's death and transfer of power to Augustus in Book 15.

Both are children of a god (Aeacus: Jupiter and Aegina; Aristaeus: Apollo and Cyrene); both give similar speeches beseeching their parents for help, and both rhetorically question their paternity as children of gods, given their very human sufferings. Aristaeus prays to Cyrene:

"mater, Cyrene mater, quae gurgitis huius  
ima tenes, quid me praeclara stirpe deorum  
(si modo, quem perhibes, pater est Thymbraeus Apollo)  
inuisum fatis genuisti?"

(Geo.4.321-24)

"Cyrene, o my mother, dwelling there deep down beneath this pool,  
why did you bear me for fate to spurn, though sprung from seed divine  
(If, as you say, my father is indeed Apollo Lord of Thymbra)."

Aeacus prays to Jupiter:

"Iuppiter o!" dixi, "si te non falsa loquuntur  
dicta sub amplexus Aeginae Asopidos isse,  
nec te, magne pater, nostri pudet esse parentem,  
aut mihi redde meos..."

(Met. 7.615-118)

"Great Jove, unless it's but a lie that thou didst hold Aegina in thine arms,  
and thou, Almighty Father, art ashamed to be my parent, give my people  
back to me..."

Furthermore, both Aristaeus and Aeacus demand that their divine parents either help them or destroy them and end their suffering. Aristaeus prays to Cyrene:

"en etiam hunc ipsum uitae mortalis honorem,  
quem mihi uix frugum et pecudum custodia sollers  
omnia temptanti extuderat, te matre relinquo.  
quin age et ipsa manu felicis erue siluas,  
fer stabulis inimicum ignem atque interfice messis,  
ure sata et ualidam in uitis molire bipennem,  
tanta meae si te ceperunt taedia laudis."

(Geo.4.326-32)

"Even this crown of my earthly life which skilful husbandry of  
crops and herds and every enterprise has hardly fashioned for me I  
must resign though having you for a mother. Come, yourself with  
your own hands root up my fruitful orchards, bring arson to my

stalls, murder my crops, burn up my seedlings, wield a battle-axe against my vines, if you have grown so sick of what has been my pride".

And Aeacus to Jupiter:

"aut mihi redde meos aut me quoque conde sepulcro!"

(Met. 7.618)

"Give my people back to me, or send me to the grave myself!.

Aristaeus and Aeacus thus demand in similar terms either help or destruction, and they both doubt their paternity. Aeacus in particular is beset by issues of paternity, since his two legitimate sons, Peleus and Telamon, are eventually exiled from Aegina for murdering their step-brother, Phocus, due to jealousy over Aeacus' favor for him. These issues of problematic regime-change and constructed paternities will come to a head in Book 15, where Ovid resorts to creating a fake genealogy to support the comedy of innocence that Octavian is actually Caesar's son.

Aeacus is also a famous healer, and this fact is an important part of his identity in myth as the exemplar of "just kingship." This aspect of his persona further highlights the irony that his kingdom is beset by both incurable (at least by Aeacus' means) pestilence and succession crises.<sup>(48)</sup> Aeacus also cured a major pestilence that beset all Greece, and Diodorus says that the cause of this pestilence was Minos' prayer that Greece should suffer in recompense for the slaughter of his son Androgeos.<sup>(49)</sup> Aeacus' role as a healer fits with his status as the most just king in Greece, which assured him the position of judge of the dead in the underworld. As Carnes puts it in his exposition of Pindar's Nemean 8, one of the many odes about Aegina,

Aiakos... guarantees all that is good for Aigina, both via his role as founder of and paradigm for Aiginetan excellence and through his status as hero, honored by the city and poet for his ability to confer benefits on his modern descendents. ...

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(48) Oenone the original name of Aegina, was also a healer and thus contributes to the overdetermination of pestilence and healing motifs at Aegina. Oenone, like Medea, was skilled in herbs. In Ovid's *Heroides*, Oenone is described in terms similar to Apollo Medicus in *Metamorphoses* 1: *quaecumque herba potens ad opem radixque medenti / utilis in toto nascitur orbe, mea est*, "My skill reaches to every herb and healing root which the fertile earth produces" (*Ep.* 5.147-8). Oenone was the only one who knew how to heal the wound Paris endured in the Trojan War, but she refused to help after he betrayed her.

(49) Diod. 4.72.5. This is an ironic mythological twist, since Ovid has Minos come to ask Aeacus for help in defeating Athens. Apollodorus says the cause of the pestilence that Aeacus cures is Pelops' curse (3.12.6). On Aeacus and his healing of the pestilence, see Paus. 2.29.8. The image of the Athenian pestilence that Minos inflicts on Athens as vengeance for Androgeos' death and the yearly tribute of Athenian youths to Crete to be fed to the Minotaur is the very image that Vergil describes as adorning the temple at Cumae in *Aeneid* 6: *inforibus letum Androgeo; turn pendere poenas / Cecropidae iussi (miserum!) septena quotannis / corpora natorum...* ., "On its doors was depicted the murder of Androgeos and thereafter the Athenians' dreadful penance, the yearly tribute of seven youths, O cruel expiation!" (*Aen.* 6.20-2).

He is renowned not for his deeds but for his inherent qualities, for his very existence. Pindar praises Aiakos not to elevate the hero but to elevate himself—the poet's selection of this worthy subject, combined with the hero's favor, guarantee the validity of his utterance.<sup>(50)</sup>

Like the Egyptian notion of Ptolemy as a source of fertility for the landscape through his just kingship, Aeacus is the Greek paradigm of the just king who secures health and fertile land for his people. In the Aeacus narrative Ovid thus chooses the most just model of kingship as his paradigm of postdiluvian, human repopulation, and it is only fitting that he should do so, since Pindar depicts Aeacus as equated with Jupiter, and Jupiter, of course, is the lynchpin in the first destruction and repopulation of the world.<sup>(51)</sup>

Yet this human/heroic model of pestilence and repopulation is flawed. In the Greek version of the myth "Aiakos and his family exhibit many of the destructive traits (father-son conflict; fratricidal strife; failure of succession) characteristic of autochthony."<sup>(52)</sup> Ovid does not let Aeacus off the hook, either. In Book 11, Ovid explicitly addresses Peleus' crime in murdering his brother (266-81). By portraying the paradigm of earthly kingship as beset by problems of succession and the heroic children of gods as distrusting their paternity, Ovid suggests that a human model of kingship will always be doomed. More specifically, the internecine, family strife suggests that even the most just king cannot stop civil war. A recent commentary on Pindar's Aeginetan Odes supports this view, in its argument that the image of the sons of Aeacus (Peleus, Telamon, and Phocus) praying together in solidarity around the altar of Zeus on Aegina in *Nemean 5* (precisely what they do not do in the other myths) is a reaction to the internal strife on the island at the time of the ode's composition.<sup>(53)</sup> Ovid, as his depiction of Caesar's apotheosis in Book 15 makes clear, shows that only a god can legitimate a successor with the requisite paternity to bless the land with fruitfulness and the people with health.

### **Pestilence and Aetiology**

Setting forth some important structural connections between the *Aitia* and Book 7 of the *Metamorphoses* will show that Ovid is usurping the aetiological mode of "diagnosis" in his meditation on kingship in the Aeginetan pestilence narrative. Ovid sets his model for pestilence further back in history than Thucydides and Lucretius in

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(50) Carnes 1996, 87.

(51) *Ibid.* Aristaeus is also equated with Zeus in *Call. Ait.* 3 (Fr. 75.33 Pf.) and *Pi. Pyth.* 9.63-5, where is also simultaneously equated with Apollo.

(52) Carnes 1995, 11. This mythic persona of Aeacus must be contrasted with his role in Greek cult. The cult of Aeacus at Aegina was instrumental in Athenian politics during the Persian Wars, when the Athenians brought what is thought to be the bones of Aeacus from Aegina to Athens during the wars as a talisman of good luck and fertility (Paus. 2.29.6-9; Herod. 8.64.2). See Nagy 1990, 57.

(53) Pfeijffer 1999, *ad N.* 5.11-16. Perhaps Vergil's depiction of another famous set of brothers, Romulus and Remus, praying together in *Aen.* 1.292 recalls Pindar's description of Peleus and his siblings praying in *Nemean 5*.

their narratives of the Athenian pestilence during the Peloponnesian War (though not as far back as Vergil's pestilence in the age of Chiron and Melampus). Although Ovid opens the *Metamorphoses* with a symbolic "world pestilence," his extended and explicit pestilence narratives in Books 7 and 15 are set squarely within the realm of what would be considered ancient history.<sup>(54)</sup> The pestilence at Aegina in Book 7 is set in the age of Minos, considered by Thucydides as the first imperial thalassocracy and imperial power in the Mediterranean, and the pestilence of Book 15 is an account of the pestilence that actually beset Rome in the third century B.C.E. Ovid begins Book 7 with the story of Medea and Jason and then immediately transitions to Minos' visit to Aegina to seek aid in attacking Athens in revenge for the death of his son Androgeos. Aeacus refuses, claiming an alliance with Athens, and Minos departs, pledging destruction for Aegina's refusal. At this moment, an Athenian ambassador (Cephalus) arrives on Aegina asking for help in defending itself against Minos, and, as he accepts Athens' request for military support, Aeacus tells the story of his island's suffering from the pestilence and the miraculous repopulation of its people from ants.

A crucial aspect in Ovid's choice of Minos as the opening character in the Aeginetan pestilence narrative is that Callimachus begins his first aition with Minos (fr.1.45, Pf.). Fantuzzi and Hunter find great significance in the fact that Callimachus' first aition of the *Aitia* is set in Minoan times:

The *Theogony* brings its story down to Zeus' matings with women of the generation before the Trojan war...Unlike the *Works and Days*, the main body of the poem (*Theogony*) remains very firmly in what it is fair to think of as mythic time. The first aition of Callimachus' poem, however, is set in the time of Minos, the great Aegean king who lived long before the Trojan War, but to whom Thucydides (1.4.1) gives special prominence as 'the earliest man of whom we know by report to have established a fleet' and whose rule marked a turning-point in Aegean history (1.8.2).

Did Callimachus use Minos as a further marker that his poem was to become the standard account of periods covered by oral and written tradition, as Hesiod provided the authority for earlier events? The fact that the story of Minos is followed by narratives of the Argonauts and of Heracles, and that the whole four-book poem finishes with Callimachus' own patrons, Euergetes and Berenice, lends colour to the idea that the *Aitia* is to be seen as a complete 'human' history to match the 'divine' history of the *Theogony*. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* subsequently combines both by moving from chaos to Augustus.<sup>(55)</sup>

This is an important observation, and Ovid's evocation of Callimachus' opening aition in *Aitia* 1 is a significant marker of transition to the inter-regnum, so to speak, of the slippery divide between myth and history. Minos' threat of Aegean domination and the

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(54) According to chronology, Ovid should have included the Minos story in Book 2, after the Europa narrative, since she is his mother, so the fact that Ovid postpones Minos until Book 7 suggests that the episode is highlighted by its intentional middle position in the poem. See Cole 2004, 355-422.

(55) Fantuzzi and Hunter 2004, 55.

Aeginetan pestilence also mark the mid-point in an epic that is chronologically and narratologically headed toward a similar upheaval in Book 15. In the final book of the poem, Ovid transitions from the generation of ancient and legendary Republican heroes such as Numa and Cippus to the reign of Augustus and his containment of threats at home and abroad, especially in Egypt.<sup>(56)</sup> It is significant that each transition (to thalassocracy in Book 7 and to empire in Book 15) is preceded by a pestilence. We have no way of knowing whether Callimachus included a pestilence in *Aitia* 1, but it is safe to say that Callimachus' *Aitia* is an important part of Ovid's treatment of pestilence and repopulation. Callimachean echoes are part of Vergil's program of transitioning into the "Aegypto Capta" section of the *Georgics*, to use the legend of the coin, as is evident in the Callimachean-influenced temple that Vergil erects and the Callimachean allusions throughout the Norican and bee pestilences of Books 3 and 4. Now we can see that Callimachus is similarly part of Ovid's transition into a liminal period in Greek history in which pestilence is not just a convenient device of archaic poets such as Homer anymore. It now has overtones of modern Aegean-wide politics and adumbrates the actual pestilences that beset Athens and early Rome.

One way Ovid explicitly evokes Callimachus in his narrative of Aegina is through the image of control over islands. Callimachus describes Minos in the first lines of the first aition of his poem as yoking the islands of the Mediterranean: καὶ νήσων ἐπέτεινε βαρὸν ζυγὸν ἀνχέει Μίνως, "and Minos stretched a heavy yoke on the neck of the islands" (Fr. 4.1 Pf.). Ovid mirrors this by opening the Aeacus section of Book 7 with a similar image:

ante tamen bello vires acquirit amicas,  
 quaque potens habitus volucris freta classe pererrat:  
 hinc Anaphen sibi iungit et Astypaleia regna,  
 (promissis Anaphen, regna Astypaleia bello);  
 hinc humilem Myconon cretosaque rura Cimoli  
 florentemque thymo Syron planamque Seriphon  
 marmoreamque Paron, quamqu inopia prodidit Arne  
 (Met.7.459-65)

But first by force he [Minos] sought alliances and in his flying fleet, his power's base, he roamed the Aegean sea. He gained Astypalaea and Anaphe, the first by force, by promises the other; he gained low Myconos, Cimolos' fields, those chalky fields, and Syros where the thyme flowers everywhere, Seriphos' level plain and Paros' marble isle, that impious Arne once betrayed.

Ovid continues with the list of islands until he reaches Aegina. The mention of Paros at 15.465 is particularly evocative of Callimachus' first aition, since Minos is on this

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(56) On the tension between kingship and Republican ideals in the Cippus episode, see Barchiesi 1997, 185-7.

island when he hears that his son, Androgeos, is dead: ....]τα [.....]..κῶς ἄν[ις αὐλῶν [ῥέζειν καὶ στεφάνων εὐάδε τῷ Παρίῳ], "... why the Parians want no oboes, no garlands at their sacrifice" (Fr. 3, Pf.). Furthermore, Ovid's mention of Anaphe at line 461 evokes the second aition of Aitia 1, in which Callimachus asks why ritual abuse is part of the worship of Apollo on the island of Anaphe. Callimachus then proceeds to tell the story of Jason and the Argonauts to address the aetiology for the custom.<sup>(57)</sup> It cannot be coincidence that immediately prior to the narrative of Minos and Aeacus' pestilence at Aegina, Ovid had just told the story of Jason and the Argonauts. It is as if Ovid's list of islands proves to be a way of "yoking" Callimachean authority as he retells Callimachus' narrative about Minos, just as Minos sought authority by yoking the islands of the Aegean.<sup>(58)</sup>

Pindar indicates that when Aegina, the paramour of Jupiter, comes to Oenone, the original name of the island, to deliver her son, Aeacus, the island is empty and is only populated when ants are turned into men simply to give Aeacus subjects, not to restore to him a race of men that was already there (Pind. Isth. 8, Ol. 8). By rewriting Pindar's narrative to have Aeacus' population eliminated a stirpe by pestilence, Ovid reformulates the traditional myth, begging the question why he would choose to have a whole generation wiped out only to be repopulated. I suggest the answer lies in the Ovidian subtext that even the best human king cannot be a healer unless he is divine. As Ovid makes clear in Book 15, Caesar is the model head of state who is also a healer.

Although Aeacus is overdetermined in Greek literature as the paradigm of kingly justice, in Ovid's hands, his just nature does him no good, since his sons become fratricides and exiles, his legitimate heirs are scattered, and he grows old and dies. Jupiter, in a speech on Olympus intended to quell the gods' anger that their favorite mortals grow old, uses Aeacus (as well as Minos) as a paradigm of this lamentable state of humanity:<sup>(59)</sup>

quae si mutare valerem,

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(57) See Nisetich 2001, 67.

(58) It is perhaps noteworthy that the image of Minos seeking in vain the aid of islands recalls the difficulties of Leto as she roams the Mediterranean looking for islands to help her give birth to Apollo in Callimachus' *Hymn to Delos*, as well as the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*. Aegina, another of Zeus' paramours, also suffered the fate of having to look for an island on which to bear her son Aeacus, due to Hera's wrath, further suggesting that Ovid's emphasis on Minos' island-hopping is an important evocation of the necessity for legitimate birth stories. What's more, both the myth of Leto's and Aegina's birthings indicate that when they come to the host island, it is deserted (*Hom. hymn. Ap.* 78).

(59) In actual Aeginetan history, Athens eventually razed Aegina to the ground (Thuc. 2.27), yet preserved the bones of Aeacus as a talisman of safety and established a cult of Aeacus at Athens (Hdt. 5.80.1).



nec nostrum seri curvarent Aeacō anni,  
 perpetuumque aevi florem Rhadamanthus haberet  
 cum Minoe meo, qui propter amara senectae  
 pondera despicitur, nec quo prius ordine regnat.  
 Dicta Iovis movere deos; nec sustinet  
 ullus, cum videat fessos Rhadamanthon et Aeacō annis  
 et Minoa, queri. qui dum fuit integer aevi,  
 terruerat magnas ipso quoque nomine  
 gentes; tunc erat invalidus...

(Met. 11.266-70)

"If I could alter it, my Aeacus would not be stooping in his last late years, and Rhadamanthus would enjoy the flower of youth for ever and my Minos, too, whom now the bitter burden of old age has brought to scorn, who'll never know again the majesty in which he once held reign." Jove's words were moving. No god could complain when he saw Aeacus and Rhadamanthus and Minos worn with years. Why, in his prime the very name of Minos had struck fear in mighty nations, but by then his strength was failing.

Despite Aeacus' status as a paradigm of just kingship (in the world of the living and as judge in the underworld), he still ages like everyone else. Given the prominence of Callimachus' *Aitia* in Ovid's narrative of Minos and Aeacus, it is likely that Ovid's emphasis on Aeacus' deterioration through aging evokes Callimachus' status in the prologue of the *Aitia* as an ailing old man and his subsequent rejuvenation to health and youth through the Muses and through composing the *Aitia*.<sup>(60)</sup> Posidippus' prayer to the Muses that he be granted a long life and a path to Rhadamanthys as an old man (Pos. 118, Austin and Bastianini) further suggests that Aeacus (as Rhadamanthys' fellow judge in the underworld) is part of a Hellenistic *topos* of poetic aging. In this way, Ovid shows that it takes more than a good king and judge, as Aeacus is, to initiate cultural rejuvenation. As we saw in the discussion of Caesar's catasterism, it takes a Julian. The poet, and by extension, the Muses, are also important sources of therapy and healing. In juxtaposing Aeacus in his prime as a just king in Book 7 and the lamentable Aeacus in Book 9, Ovid prepares the reader for the final, Roman paradigm of government. In this ultimate model, the poet is a powerful ally to the princeps in bestowing health and prosperity (like Callimachus in the prologue to the *Aitia*) through the poet's unique relationship to the Muses.

Vergil set the precedent in the *Georgics* for successful repopulation of the diseased bees through the ritual of an ox that is miraculously transformed by its death into a new life form. Ovid appropriates Vergil's repopulation model by turning stones into people (Met. 1) and ants into men (Met. 7) after annihilation of by pestilences of

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(60) See Nisetich 2001, 61-5.

one sort or another. All of these repopulated races, Vergil's bees, Ovid's stone- and ant-men, are sturdier than the race they replaced and adumbrate, I suggest, the "new race" of Romans that Augustus "creates" after the Civil Wars.

Vergil's bees produced by the Egyptian bugonia are warlike: they shoot into the sky like Parthian arrows (4.312-14). In a similar fashion the bees that are repopulated by Aristaeus' ox ritual seem to be reborn into a warlike, epic world, since they recall the first metaphor of the Iliad: the Achaeans at council are likened to a swarm of bees that cluster like a bunch of grapes (βοτρῶδόν, Il. 2.89) on the spring flowers, just as Aristaeus' bees fly in a swarm straight and cluster at the top of a tree like grapes, lends *uvam demittere ramis* (Geo. 4.558).<sup>(61)</sup>

Similarly, Ovid's description of the humans that repopulate the earth from stones in Met. 1 are imbued with a tough nature:

*inque brevi spatio superorum numine saxa  
missa viri manibus faciem traxere virorum  
et de femineo reparata est femina iactu.  
inde genus durum sumus experiensque laborum  
et documenta damus qua simus origine nati.*

(Met.1.411-15)

In a brief while, by Heaven's mysterious power, the stones the man had thrown were formed as men, those from the woman's hand reshaped as women. Hence we are hard, we children of the earth, and in our lives of toil we prove our birth.

Likewise, the post-Aeacean population of Aegina, the warlike Myrmidons, retain the sturdy nature of the ants:

*Myrmidonasque voco nec origine nomina fraudo.  
corpora vidisti; mores, quos ante gerebant,  
nunc quoque habent: parcum genus est patiensque laborum  
quaesitique tenax et quod quaesita reservet.*

(Met.7.654-7)

I call them Myrmidons, a name to tell in truth their origin. Their build you saw: their traits they keep, a thrifty lot, grasping their gains and hoarding what they've got.

The Myrmidons are bellicose and tough, much like humankind after the flood. This emphasis on the Myrmidons as a hard race that endures labor also could apply to the ethnic stereotype of the Italians and Romans as a tough, laboring stock. The story of Cipus in *Metamorphoses* 15.552-621 demonstrates this well. The Roman Republican Praetor Cipus, who, as Alessandro Barchiesi has shown, adumbrates the tensions over kingship in Caesar's and Augustus' careers, and therefore is an appropriate model of the

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(61) See Farrell 1991, 252.

ideal Republican Roman, is described in terms similar to Aeacus and his new race of sturdy men.<sup>(62)</sup> Both Aeacus and Cippus are hailed as kings in similar language (Aeacus: *regemque salutant* 7.651; Cippus: 'rex,' ait 'o! salve!' 15.581). More importantly, both Cippus' and Aeacus' new race is composed of hard workers. Ovid says that the Myrmidons are men of labor and are *tenax*, and Cippus is described as being able to plow from dawn to sunset (15.619). In this context, the newly created Myrmidons are an ideal race, not only for King Aeacus, but also for Augustus.

The fact that Asclepius and Caesar are both hailed as gods in the following narrative panel (Asclepius, 15.731; Caesar 15.746) in terms recalling Ovid's description of Aeacus and Cippus as kings completes the trajectory from models of kingship to models of divinity. This link between Aeacus, Cippus, Asclepius, and Caesar, then, suggests that kings as a king are consonant with the Augustan "revolution" after the Civil Wars: Augustus is received as savior of Rome after the "pestilence" of war, securing a new, tougher race of Romans.<sup>(63)</sup> In this context Aeacus' Aegina can be seen, then, as a type of Rome, destroyed and renewed with a new government and a disciplined population.

Yet Aeacus' well-documented failures in securing a smooth transfer of power and the internecine strife among his children also highlight the radical and "successful" nature of the pestilence and restoration in *Met.* 15. Caesar and Augustus as "healers" on par with Asclepius have ensured that restoration and repopulation will no longer be necessary, since they have eradicated the foreign threats and remade the Roman population for an age of peace and fertility.

### Conclusion:

Vergil claims in the pestilences of *Georgics* 3 and 4 that the poet knows the techniques to cure animal and bee pestilences and situates these pestilences within the political and mythological contexts of Roman boundary zones.<sup>(64)</sup> Noricum and Egypt are the geographical peripheries which are united by Caesar's triumphs, but the poet displays equal authority in resituating Roman poetry in relation to its now inoculated Egyptian models. We can see this re-"orientation" of Roman poetry at the end of both

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(62) Presumably Aeacus is equally as sturdy and *durus* as the Myrmidons, since he and his sons are the only survivors of the pestilence. Barchiesi 1997, 181ff.

(63) Cippus and Asclepius, in particular, have an important similarity: they both have horns, which scholars have interpreted as a symbol of kingship and divinity. Barchiesi 1997, 181ff., points out that Cippus' twin horns are possibly prefigured by Vergil in *Aeneid* 6, where Romulus is described as having *geminae cristae* (679) and is explicitly associated with divinity. One of the important points Barchiesi makes is that the horns are ultimately hidden under a crown of laurel, thus masking the regal and divine associations. Although Asclepius' *cristae* are not hidden under a crown, the god is hidden in snake form and is cloistered away on Tiber Island. In addition to both Cippus and Asclepius having multiple projections from their heads, they are both described in similar recognition scenes in which an audience calls upon them in veneration: Cippus - " 'rex' ait 'o salve!'" (15.581), and Asclepius - "en, deus est, deus est!" (15.669).

(64) See *Geo.* 3. 440-73, 4.251-80.

the *Georgics* and the *Metamorphoses* where Caesar is cast as an Eastern conqueror in the wake of the ravages of pestilence. For Ovid, the role of the poet as a healer is given much more valence than in Vergil, and, in conclusion, it is useful to revisit his epilogue, since these final lines make it clear that the poem itself is the key to assuring his rebirth after death and a place in the stars:

Iamque opus exegi, quod nec Iovis ira nec ignis  
 nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere vetustas.  
 cum volet, ilia dies, quae nil nisi corporis huius  
 ius habet, incerti spatium mihi finiat aevi:  
 parte tamen meliore mei super alta perennis  
 astra ferar, nomenque erit indelebile nostrum.

(Met. 15.871-6)

Now stands my task accomplished, such a work as not the wrath of Jove, nor fire, nor sword nor the devouring ages can destroy. Let, when it will, that day, that has no claim but to my mortal body, end the span of my uncertain years. Yet I'll be borne, the finer part of me, above the stars, immortal, and my name shall never die.

Ovid makes a connection between the methods of repopulation that end in a successful post-mortem transition to the stars. What other than bees, phoenix birds, and apotheosized gods are in the habit of flying successfully to the stars at death? Phaethon tried and almost destroyed the world in the process. Vergil's bees, Ovid's phoenix, and Caesar (who is also a type of phoenix), and, finally, "the finer part of Ovid" himself are in a league all their own. Yet Ovid sees himself as "above the stars," *super...astra* (15.874-5), suggesting that his poetic "rejuvenation" elevates him, Callimachus-style, to a even higher place than Caesar's star. In this way, Ovid's own poetry is equally as important to the rebirth and healing of the state as Caesar's catasterism.

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