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(POETIC) LICENCE TO KILL: APOLLO, THE PYTHON, AND NICANDER'S *THERIACA* IN OVID, *METAMORPHOSES* 1

The identification of the quarrel between Cupid and Apollo at *Met.* 1. 452–73 as a Callimachean *recusatio* has become a noted feature of scholarly discussion on this passage. Cupid and Apollo's encounter stands as a favoured starting point for the ongoing analysis of generic interplay within Ovid's sprawling work; this is hardly surprising, given its consideration as a programmatic, exemplary triumph of elegy over epic.[1] Although genre studies on the *Metamorphoses* have represented an enduring presence in Ovidian discourse since Heinze's pioneering work,[2] genre's evolution into what some deem a

[1] Most critically for this vast topic, see W. S. M. Nicoll, 'Cupid, Apollo and Daphne (Ovid, *Met.* 1. 452ff.)', *CQ* 30 (1980), 174–182; and, in following, L. Morgan, 'Child's Play: Ovid and His Critics', *JRS* 93 (2003), 74; P. E. Knox, *Ovid's Metamorphoses and the Traditions of Augustan Poetry*, *PCPhS* suppl. 11 (Cambridge, 1986), 14–18; K. S. Myers, *Ovid's Causes. Cosmogony and Aetiology in the Metamorphoses* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1994), 62–3; A. Barchiesi, 'Venus' Masterplot: Ovid and the Homeric Hymns', in P. R. Hardie, A. Barchiesi, and S. E. Hinds (eds.), *Ovidian Transformations. Essays on Ovid's Metamorphoses and Its Reception*, *PCPhS* suppl. 23 (Cambridge, 1999), 112–26; P. R. Hardie, *Ovid's Poetics of Illusion* (Cambridge, 2002), 45–50; R. Armstrong, 'Retiring Apollo: Ovid on the Politics and Poetics of Self-Sufficiency', *CQ* 54.2 (2004), 528–50; J. Miller, *Apollo, Augustus, and the Poets* (Cambridge, 2009), 338–49. For the programmatic nature of the episode, see N. Holzberg, 'Apollos erste Liebe und die Folgen: Ovids Daphne-Erzählung als Programm für Werk und Wirkung', *Gymnasium* 106 (1999), 317–26; his discussion of genre is on pp. 323–4 and synthesizes nicely the crossing of epic and elegy in the *Metamorphoses*.

[2] Genre studies also experienced resurgence after Hinds's reappraisal of R. Heinze, *Ovids elegische Erzählung*, *Berichte der Sächsischen Akademie zu Leipzig, Philologisch-historiche Klasse* 71.7 (Leipzig, 1919) in S. E. Hinds, *The Metamorphosis of Persephone. Ovid and the Self-Conscious Muse* (Cambridge, 1987); for Hinds's review of the literature, see pp. 99–114. J. Farrell, 'Dialogue of Genres in Ovid's "Lovesong of Polyphemus" (*Metamorphoses* 13.719–897)', *AJPh* 113.2 (1992), 235–40, provides a good introductory discussion and bibliographic review. See also K. S. Myers, 'The Metamorphosis of a Poet: Recent Work on Ovid', *JRS* 89 (1999), 191–4, for an overview of Ovidian scholarship trends; A. Keith, 'Sources and Genres in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 1–5', in B. W. Boyd (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Ovid* (Leiden, 2002), 235–69, on genres and sources for the first third of the poem; S. J. Harrison, 'Ovid and Genre: Evolutions of an Elegist', in P. R. Hardie (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid* (Cambridge, 2002), 79–94, on Ovidian 'supergenre'; and J. Farrell, 'Ovid's Generic Transformations', in P. E. Knox (ed.), *A Companion to Ovid* (Chichester and Malden, MA, 2009), 370–80.

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pet scholarly obsession within studies of the poet has garnered both admiration and revilement.[3] Given the multiplicity of discussions prominently featuring this very episode, it would not seem unfair to deem any addition superfluous. However, adding to the surfeit of analyses is exactly my intention here, with the view that there are yet a few elements that have gone unremarked or underexplored, and that such elements can illuminate further the complex interplay between epic and elegy here on display. Namely, I will suggest that the dynamic created by the difference in accounts of the Python's slaying (Ov. *Met.* 1.441–4 versus 1.456–60) has not been appreciated fully for its role in the debasement of epic poetry that leads into and consequently informs the programmatic myth sequence of Apollo and Daphne, and that this dynamic finds an overarching explanation by supplying reference to a passage from Nicander's *Theriaca*. Using Nicander as a literary source, coupled with recognition of both the fictive touches and the weighted literary critical language that Apollo retrospectively applies to his deed, allows us to reinterpret this passage and provides a further example of Ovid's careful strategies of narrative and tone.

Apollo the Hunter

The interaction between Cupid and Apollo that motivates Apollo's chase of Daphne ostensibly represents the correction of Apollo's attempted incursion into 'grand' epic, signified by his slaying of the Python. Summarily, in generic terms, it emblematizes the victory of elegy over epic.[4] However, just how 'epic' is this deed in its actuality? If we look at the composite picture, it appears that the deed only becomes 'epic' in its recounting by Apollo to Cupid – an instance of the god of poetic inspiration exercising some measure of poetic licence. The narrator's account of the deed is as follows:[5]

[3] See W. S. Anderson's review of Hinds (n. 2) in *Gnomon* 61 (1989), 356–8, who calls the question of genre's constraints and mechanisms an 'artificial problem'.

[4] Y. Syed, 'Ovid's Use of the Hymnic Genre in the Metamorphoses', in A. Barchiesi, J. Rüpke, and S. Stephens (eds.), *Rituals in Ink. A Conference on Religion and Literary Production in Ancient Rome* (Munich, 2004), 100–2, provides a clear summary of the relevant poetic mechanisms at hand, with the additional point of Apollo's appropriateness as a participant given his presence in the majority of the Callimachean-style *recusatione* in Augustan poetry, stemming naturally from his role in *Aetia* 1.

[5] Text is from Tarrant's OCT; unless otherwise indicated, translations are mine, and are meant to be loose rather than rigidly literal.

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hunc deus arquitenens, numquam letalibus armis
ante nisi in dammis capreisque fugacibus usus,
mille gravem telis exhausta paene pharetra
perdidit effuso per uulnera nigra ueneno (Ov. *Met*. 1. 441–444)

The bow-bearing god, who had never before made use
of fatal weaponry, unless upon fleet red deer and roe deer,
destroyed this ponderous beast with a thousand arrows,
near emptying his quiver, venom pouring blackly from the wounds.

From this brief description, the reader learns that Apollo had never before used his arrows (*letalibus armis*) except against the quarry of red deer and roe deer (*dammis capreisque*). The learned reader recognizes this as an allusion to the first martial exploit of the young Ascanius (*tum primum bello celerem intendisse sagittam / dicitur ante feras solitus terrere fugacis / Ascanius*, 'Then for the first time it is said that Ascanius aimed his swift arrow in warlike pursuits, before then accustomed to frightening skittish beasts', Verg. *Aen*. 9.590–2).[6] After Ascanius kills Numanus Remulus, Apollo restrains him and imposes a set of cautionary boundaries upon the youth (*Aen*. 9.653–6) in an admonitory fashion reminiscent of a *recusatio*.[7] In fact, Ziogas argues persuasively that Ovid read the Virgilian Apollo's warning on precisely this literary plane of meaning and so uses this episode as direct inspirational material in the staging of his own metapoetic argument between Apollo and Cupid. The cautious Virgilian Apollo, in restricting the actions of Ascanius – who is throughout the epic a Cupid-like character – bolsters an epic programme, while Ovid's Cupid forces Apollo from an epic to an elegiac realm, consequently reversing the pattern of poetic priority established in the *Aeneid*.[8]

Hunting Nicander in the *Metamorphoses*

The generic balance of epic and elegy is easily identifiable when framed by the poetic mechanism of a *recusatio*. However, this balance is

[6] For discussion of the two passages see Morgan (n. 1), 75–6. Miller (n. 1), 156–7, reads the speech of the Virgilian Apollo to Ascanius at *Aen.* 9.953–6 as a god possibly remembering his own first martial exploit, which further connects the two passages. For his remarks on the passage's relevance to Ovid, see Miller (n. 1), 342.

[7] See also P. R. Hardie, *Virgil. Aeneid. Book IX* (Cambridge, 1994), ad 654–5.

[8] I. Ziogas, 'The Permanence of Cupid's Metamorphosis in the Aeneid', *Trends in Classics* 2 (2010), 168–70.

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destabilized here if one accepts the possibility of a unrecognized source for the narrator's account of the Python's death. A passage of Nicander's *Theriaca* supplies a further point of reference for the god's experience – a supplement that can imbue the encounter between the archer god and the mischievous Cupid with a very different tone.[9] After describing the threat that the viper poses to men, both after the sloughing of its skin and escaping the trampling hoofs of deer, Nicander elaborates upon the relationship between deer and serpents:

> ἔξοχα γὰρ δολιχοῖσι κινωπησταῖς κοτέουσι
> νεβροτόκοι καὶ ζόρκες· ἀνιχνεύουσι δὲ πάντη
> τρόχμαλά θ᾽ αἱμασιάς τε καὶ ἰλυοὺς ἐρέθοντες,
> σμερδαλέῃ μυκτῆρος ἐπισπέρχοντες ἀυτμῇ (Nic. *Ther.* 141–4)

For Red deer and Roe cherish a special anger towards long reptiles and track them down, exploring on every side stone-heaps, walls, and lurking-places, following hard after them with the dreadful breath of their nostrils.[10]

If we consider Ovid's specific designation of *dammis capreisque* a textual reprisal of Nicander's νεβροτόκοι καὶ ζόρκες, the heroic feat of slaying the Python experiences an irreverent reduction to the level of accidental exploit: Apollo, pursuing his customary prey, stumbles unsuspectingly upon the Python because of the natural enmity between deer and

[9] A. Barchiesi, *Ovidio. Metamorfosi. Vol. I, Libri I–II (traduzione di L. Koch)* (Rome and Milan, 2005) ad 459 notes Nicander as a potential source to account for the description of Python as *pestifero. . .uentre*: 'la descrizione, come non di rado per immagini di serpenti nella poesia latina, richiama Nicandro, *Theriaca* 296'. Even though the Nicandrian description that I argue Ovid is alluding to is of a viper, as opposed to specifically about a/the python, this need not be a rate-limiting factor in determining potential source material or poetic inspiration; likewise, the snake described at 296 that Barchiesi references is the *haemorrhoos*. However, Nicander has also been identified as a possible source of inspiration for some of the connective textual material between the death of the Python and the beginning of the Apollo and Daphne narrative: A. S. Hollis, 'Ovid, Metamorphoses 1,455ff: Apollo, Daphne, and the Pythian Crown', *ZPE* 112 (1996), 69–73, references the lines of the *Alexipharmaca* descriptive of laurel (198–200) and its mention of one variety as the first plant to garland the Delphian locks of Apollo as potentially inspirational for *Met*. 1.450–1, *nondum laurus erat, longoque decentia crine / tempora cingebat de qualibet arbore Phoebus* ('not yet was there the laurel, and Phoebus used to garland his temples, flowing with long locks, from whichever tree pleased'). The overlap of material with another Nicandrian work further strengthens cause to be thinking of this specific Hellenistic poet at this juncture of Ovid's epic.

[10] Text and translation from A. S. F. Gow and A. F. Scholfield, *Nicander. The Poems and Poetical Fragments* (Cambridge, 1953). For other passages citing this relationship, see the sources collected by F. Overduin, *Nicander of Colophon's Theriaca. A Literary Commentary* (Leiden, 2014), ad loc., with the addition of Lucr. *DRN* 6.756–66.

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snakes. As the young god tracks the deer, the deer themselves are in fact tracking snakes, culminating in a surprise encounter and a panicked near-emptying of the god's quiver. If the pattern of 'long reptile' and deer seems less than secure to link these two passages and to thereby import the foundation of Nicandrian knowledge that Ovid uses to indulge his brand of very literary humour, there are a few contextual points of support that can reinforce this connection.

First, to establish a basis of secure knowledge of Nicander's *Theriaca*, we know that Macer was an important poetic influence upon Ovid from the autobiographical *Tristia* 4.10: *saepe suas uolucres legit mihi grandior aeuo, / quaeque necet serpens, quae iuuet herba, Macer* ('Often Macer, more advanced in years, read to me of his own birds, and the snakes who wrought harm, and the plant remedies which helped', 43–4).[11] This couplet alludes to Macer's *Ornithogonia* and at least one, if not two, works of Nicandrian adaptation. Scholars unproblematically identify the *quaeque necet serpens* as an encapsulation of Macer's own *Theriaca*, and Hollis further argues that *iuuet herba* alludes to a separate *Alexipharmaca*, presumably also influenced by Nicander.[12] Macer's position as the first in a list of poets that Ovid mentions adds further emphasis to his importance and influence. Although Hollis calls Nicander's work 'the most dreary verse from the Hellenistic age', the passage in question (*Ther.* 141–4) nevertheless shows Nicander's desire to engage with the lexical innovations that verse can allow, particularly with the coinage νεβροτόκοι. Found only here, it represents one of three words for deer that Nicander uses (along with ζόρκες and ἐλάφων previously in 139).[13] Nicander also experiments with a reversal of perspective and expectations by attaching the adjective σμερδαλέος to the breath of the deer (σμερδαλέῃ…ἀϋτμῇ, 144), rather than to the snake. The adjective is a 'standard epithet of monsters', and is found at Hom. *Il.* 22.95 to depict the frightening gaze of a snake; Nicander attaches it to a different sense (sound, rather than sight), and transforms the relationship between hunter and hunted as found in Homer, casting the deer as hunter.[14] The poetic dynamic created by

[11] See also n. 9 above for the supposition of Nicandrian knowledge applied descriptively to the Python.

[12] A. S. Hollis, 'Aemilius Macer, *Alexipharmica*?', *CR* 23.1 (1973), 11.

[13] For the poetic effects of this learned variation, see Overduin (n. 10), ad 142.

[14] See Overduin (n. 10), ad 144, quoting A. Karanika, 'Medicine and Cure in Posidippus' *Iamatika*', in M. A. Harder, R. F. Regtuit, and G. C. Wakker (eds.), *Nature and Science in Hellenistic Poetry* (Leuven, 2009), 44, and Overduin (n. 10), 96; E. Sistakou, *The Aesthetics of*

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this play with expectations would certainly have appealed to the tastes of Ovid, who continually toys with his reader in games of complex narrative misdirection. The verbally unexpected exchange between hunter and hunted in the Nicandrian passage provides an appropriate contextual overlap to consider as a backdrop to the exchange between Apollo and Cupid, in which Apollo accuses Cupid of trying to usurp his realm of power and control, only to fall prey to the mastery of the lesser god. This exchange of power is also spatially depicted: after their verbal exchange, Cupid flies to the top of Mount Parnassus to shoot his arrows:[15]

> *dixit et eliso percussis aere pennis*
> *inpiger umbrosa Parnasi constitit arce*
> *eque sagittifera prompsit duo tela pharetra*
> *diuersa operum...* (*Met.* 1. 466–9)
>
> *So he spoke and striking out,*
> *energetically winged upon the air,*
> *made a stand upon shady Parnassus' height*
> *and drew forth from his loaded quiver two darts*
> *of different purpose...*

According to most mythological coverage of the encounter, Parnassus is the mountain that the Python so recently occupied (the unnamed *monte* of 440), and so Cupid's chosen position of attack speaks to literally and metaphorically 'topping' Apollo by taking over the space so recently cleared by the god.[16] Painting Apollo as an accidental hero is

Darkness. A Study of Hellenistic Romanticism in Apollonius, Lycophron and Nicander, Hellenistica Groningana 17 (Leuven, 2012), 209.

[15] W. R. Nethercut, 'Daphne and Apollo: A Dynamic Encounter', *CJ* 47.4 (1979), 339, illustrates this move as 'usurp[ing] Phoebus' position of eminence'. His analysis also looks at the difference between the narrator's account of events versus those presented by the figures involved, but on the completely different basis of metricality and the use of heterodynes and homodynes: see esp. pp. 337–8.

[16] For the background to the myth of Python and its collected sources, see D. Ogden, *Drakon. Dragon Myth and Serpent Cult in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford, 2013), 40–8. Cf. esp. Callim. *Hymn* 4. 90–4, whose use of περιστέφει (93) to describe the Python's nine coils enwreathing the mountain may lurk imaginatively (beyond the evidence of *Aet.* fr. 89 Pf., describing Apollo's crowning with Tempean laurel after the Python's death) in the background of Ovid's transition to speaking of what foliage Apollo was accustomed to garlanding himself with after his institution of the Pythian games to commemorate his deed (*nondum laurus erat, longoque decentia crine / tempora cingebat de qualibet arbore Phoebus*, Ov. *Met.* 1.450–1). It might be contextually relevant to note Callimachus' use of θήρ ('beast, monster') twice to further qualify descriptions of the Python. In the *Hymn to Delos*, it is first a ὄφις μέγας ('giant snake', 91), and then a θηρίον αἰνογένειον ('beast with dreadful jaws', 92), while, in the *Hymn to Apollo*, it is a δαιμόνιος θήρ / αἰνὸς ὄφις ('miraculous beast / a dread snake', 100–1). Both descriptions have the adjective αἰνός in common,

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also tonally consistent with the way in which the god is represented throughout the *Metamorphoses*: that is, as a generally hapless figure lacking in self-knowledge and self-control.[17] The origin point of this less-than-dignified literary portrait of the god is generally traced to the moment of his besottedness with Daphne, culminating in the humorous self-hymn of *Met.* 1.504–25. However, we also see Apollo as a figure who cannot learn from his mistakes, especially in the tales of Coronis from Book 2 and of Hyacinthus[18] and Cyparissus in Book 10.[19] Viewing his narrative repackaging of the Python's death as evidence of his own abuse of poetic licence presents a coherent picture of Apollo as a likely figure of narrative ambiguity and metapoetic commentary from the moment of his entrance into the poem.

There are a few more considerations that can be made in attempting to connect this passage of the *Metamorphoses* to Nicander. Nicander's poem is far from straightforwardly 'scientific' and, as we can see from the second part of the proem (8–20) and other digressions (such as 343–8, 483–7, 902–6), he is concerned with the integration of mythological and aetiological poetry into the fabric of his didactic poem. Likewise, the *Metamorphoses* passage that segues into the narrative of the Python's birth describes the regeneration of life after the flood (*Met.* 1.416–37) and details, as Myers notes, a 'process Ovid explains to us with didactic precision and technical scientific language'.[20] Although the tone and language is scientific and didactic in a way that is most reminiscent of Lucretius,[21] the narrative progression from this creation scene into the Apollo–Daphne myth presents a combination of scientific and mythological material also observed in the proem of the *Theriaca*. Lucretius is certainly not the only poet from whom to borrow a scientific, didactic voice and vocabulary, and Nicander's unapologetic blend of mythical

which stands as the Greek equivalent of Ovid's *terror* (1. 440). Overduin (n. 10), notes the indebtedness of *Ther.* 141 and 143 to Callimachus, which gives further weight to Ovid combining influences and reading the Python as a Nicandrian θήρ. On the poem's title and the sense of θήρ, see also Sistakou (n. 14), 211.

[17] On Apollo's characterization in the *Metamorphoses*, see L. Fulkerson, 'Apollo, Paenitentia, and Ovid's "Metamorphoses"', *Mnemosyne* 59.3 (2006), 388–402, and the collected bibliography there.

[18] Also a tale briefly narrated by Nicander at *Ther.* 902–6, and cross-referenced at Nic. *Georg.* fr.74. 31–32 G-S, on which see Sistakou (n. 14), 205, and Overduin (n. 10), ad loc.

[19] On the similarities between Apollo's slaying of the Python and Coronis, see Miller (n. 1), 352–3.

[20] Myers (n. 1), 44.

[21] See the commentaries of F. Bömer, *P. Ovidius Naso Metamorphosen. Kommentar* (Heidelberg, 1969–86), and Barchiesi (n. 9), ad loc.

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and scientific material in the *Theriaca*'s approach to the natural world would certainly have held appeal for Ovid. In fact, despite the Lucretian language, we might be tempted to see the direct address to the Python that introduces the snake into the space of the poem as a joke on Nicander that points to the *Theriaca* as a source, and further informs the scientific information to be supplied from reference to this text within the narrator's account of the Python's death:

> *Illa quidem nollet, sed te quoque, maxime Python,*
> *tum genuit, populisque nouis, incognita serpens,*
> *terror eras: tantum spatii de monte tenebas.* (Ov. *Met.* 1.438–441)
>
> *Even though she wanted not, she then bore you too, gigantic Python,*
> *a serpent unknown to the new populace, you were a terror,*
> *for you were occupying such a great space of the mountain.*

The Python is the last creature listed of the beings born after the flood; in other words, the final entry in a small catalogue. Catalogue poetry is a feature of didactic, especially Hesiodic didactic,[22] and the *Theriaca* is no exception, comprising a catalogue of poisonous creatures. The direct address to the Python is emphatic, and takes over the entirety of the narrator's description of the being: the Python is a *terror* because of his vast size (*maxime, tantum spatii de monte tenebas*), and was hitherto unknown (*incognita serpens*). We can also consider this direct address and assumption of 'live' speech in the context of didactic, a form which demands an addressee, often in a combination of forms implicit, internal, or external, and one that employs a fictive façade of actual speech.[23]

Looking cumulatively at this compressed set of allusions to didactic form and content, we might read this as Ovid playing with the didactic conventions of Nicander's *Theriaca*. Addressing the Python as the *incognita serpens* pokes fun at the *Theriaca*, inverting the parameters of that poem's teaching: not only is the venomous serpent itself the 'addressee', the recipient of this 'live' speech, but it is called *incognita*, which, as a negation, calls attention to the very purpose of didactic – to gain knowledge. Ovid's playful inversion of didactic boundaries therefore further sets in motion the tone we should use to approach the narrator's account of the Python's slaying, one of deflation and humour.

[22] See Overduin (n. 10), 29–30.

[23] On which in the context of the *Theriaca*, see Overduin (n. 10), 36–44, whose introductory discussion of didactic shaped my overall thinking on these features in the Ovidian passage.

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We may yet proceed one step further and apply a note that Ogden makes in discussing the Python's name:

> One might have thought that the Greeks would have been keen to relate both the names of Pytho and Python to πυνθάνομαι, "enquire, learn", and related terms, but the connection only surfaces late in the tradition, with the 12-century [*sic*] AD *Etymologicum Magnum* suggesting a relationship with πεύθεσθαι as a secondary alternative to the πυθω (etc.) derivation.[24]

Despite Ogden's admission that this connection is only recorded officially in the late tradition, it is yet tempting to think that Ovid was sensitive to this didactic possibility lying latent in the Python's name.

The verb is also one used to guide the attentions of readers within the didactic tradition: Nicander uses the older, poetic variation of this verb to signal a new portion of his teachings (πευθέο, 700; see also πεπύθοιο, the aorist optative form, at 935).[25] Ovid may also here purposefully signal Nicander's potentially surprising lack of reference to the mythological Python: Ovid's miniature, joke *Theriaca* redresses this wrong by including him as the addressee, alerting him to 'learn' with wordplay upon his very name.[26] Taking all of these stylistic and

[24] Ogden (n. 16), 151 n. 17. The literary tradition for seeing verbal wordplay in the Python episode probably goes back to its first named appearance, where Simonides plays upon Apollo's well-known epithet (Ἕκατος, 'the far-shooting') with the number of arrows used to kill the Python (ἑκατόν, 'one hundred'): see *ibid.*, 43. Likewise, Miller (n. 1), 340, notes the play on Apollo and ἀπόλλυμι ('to kill, destroy utterly') with Ovid's *perdidit* ('to ruin, destroy completely'). This feature is also observed in the Virgilian episode which provided further inspiration for Ovid's narrated account of the Python's death, where Ascanius' becoming Iulus is etymologically connected to *iobolos*; his killing of Numanus with an arrow can indicate a possible reading of *tum primum. . .celerem intendisse sagittam / dicitur. . .Ascanius* (9.590–2) as describing that Ascanius was at that time first called 'the one who shot the quick arrow', or, in short, 'the bow-shooter' *(iobolos/* Iulus); see G. A. Nelsestuen, 'Numanus Remulus, Ascanius, and Cato's *Origines*: The Rhetoric of Ethnicity in *Aeneid* 9', *Vergilius* 62 (2016), 84–5 n. 19, following J. O' Hara, *True Names. Vergil and the Alexandrian Tradition of Etymological Wordplay* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1996), 220–1. The names or epithets of Apollo and Ascanius are therefore both sites of etymological wordplay; it is possible that Ovid is inspired to reverse this direction of interest to the Python himself, making his name (not Apollo's) the locus of learned wordplay. E. N. Genovese, 'Serpent Leitmotif in the Metamorphoses', in C. Deroux (ed.), *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History III* (Leuven, 1983), 152 and n. 29, notes the overarching symbolism of snakes in the *Metamorphoses*, especially bracketed by the Python and Aesculapius, but also mentions the possibility of seeing Pythagoras' name as 'Python-speaker' (especially in verbalizing *rite deum Delphosque meos ipsumque recludam*, 'accordingly, I will disclose my own Delphi and the god himself', 15.144), in the context of seeing his speech as a poetic reprisal of Ovid's opening of creations in Book 1. Such etymological play further deepens an appropriate focus on Python's name as it first appears.

[25] See Overduin (n. 10), ad loc. and p. 84.

[26] The injunction for the *incognita serpens* to learn also represents a witticism upon the Delphic maxim Γνῶθι σαυτόν ('know thyself'), appropriate here for the connection of the Python to the seat of the Delphian oracle.

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verbal cues together, it seems that the description of the Python that precedes the narrative of his death prepares the reader to supply reference to Nicander's *Theriaca* by allusion to didactic form and content, in a way both learned and humorous.

Target practice and Ovidian irreverence

If we examine other passages featuring the progression of targets that capture the attention of archer deities, Ovid's humorous allusion to an accidental discovery of the Python gains further support as a satisfactory angle of interpretive approach. Slaying the Python out of strict necessity makes Apollo's heroism less straightforward; at best, he is accidentally heroic. If we compare the Apollo of *Iliad* 1, we can see a noticeable progression in his targets: imprecated by Chryses to punish the Danaans with his arrows, he directs his aim first at mules and swift dogs, before finally turning his eyes to the men themselves:

> οὐρῆας μὲν πρῶτον ἐπῴχετο καὶ κύνας ἀργούς,
> αὐτὰρ ἔπειτ᾽ αὐτοῖσι βέλος ἐχεπευκὲς ἐφιεὶς
> βάλλ᾽... (Hom. *Il.* 1.50–2)
>
> *Mules he approached first with attack, and quick-paced dogs,*
> *but then upon men themselves he turned his piercing shafts,*
> *and they hit home.*

Likewise, in Callimachus' third *Hymn*, the poet asks Artemis ποσσάκι δ᾽ἀργυρέοιο, θεή, πειρήσαο τόξου; ('How often, goddess, did you test out your silver bow?' *Hymn* 3.119) and then proceeds to list her targets:

> πρῶτον ἐπὶ πτελέην, τὸ δὲ δεύτερον ἧκας ἐπὶ δρῦν,
> τὸ τρίτον αὖτ᾽ἐπὶ θῆρα. τὸ τέτρατον οὐκέτ᾽ †ἐπὶ δρῦν †[27]
> ἀλλά μιν εἰς ἀδικων ἔβαλες πόλιν, οἵ τε περὶ σφέας
> οἵ τε περὶ ξείνους ἀλιτήμονα πολλὰ τέλεσκον,
> σχέτλιοι... (Callim. *Hymn 3*. 120–4)
>
> *First upon an elm, second you let loose upon an oak,*
> *and third upon a wild beast. But the fourth was no oak –*
> *you targeted the city of unjust men, who wrought offensive injustice*
> *upon citizens and strangers alike, wicked ones...*

[27] On the textual crux at 121, S. Stephens, *Callimachus. The Hymns* (Oxford, 2015), ad loc., notes that the missing word should be a verb, and suggests ἔπαισας 'did you sport'. This idea of sporting/playing like a child would further link it to the context of Apollo's first exploit.

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Common to both passages is the stratified progression in targets: Apollo aims at animals before beginning to decimate the ranks of the Greeks, while the sequence of Artemis' targets is even more progressively developed, beginning with the arboreal world before advancing to the animal. Only after this intermediary level is broached does the human sphere appear. The lack of progression given to the Ovidian Apollo prior to his encounter with the Python is therefore notable – he has only honed his archery skills on red and roe deer. The lack of advancement in these targets further emphasizes his unpreparedness to defeat the Python. This is the only instance in the poem in which the god is depicted as hunting with his bow – unlike his twin, Apollo is not traditionally a hunter god, and his bow is emphatically not a hunting weapon, which makes close scrutiny of this passage merited.[28] The choice of two types of deer is a pointed, poetic choice that becomes validated with the added information of the enmity between deer and snakes – knowledge that a reader well versed in Hellenistic didactic would be able to supply after reading Nicander.

Although the Iliadic passage does not contain the same emphasis on youthfulness and the development of the skill of the deity that we find in the Callimachean hymn, the fact that this is Apollo's first address and appearance within the Homeric epic may bear relevance to the Ovidian literary sequence. If we examine how Ovid describes the god, the specific epithet of *arquitenens* also adds to this picture of a lack of secure qualification: commentators note its tone of studied archaism, citing Naevius' *arquitenens…Pythius* ('bow-brandishing Pythian god', *Bellum Punicum* fr. 30 Morel), but tend to neglect the potential tonal discord that results when applying the considerable *gravitas* of such an archaism to the young god about to accomplish his first godlike act. It seems preferable to take it as farcical or tongue-in-cheek, particularly with the proleptic appellation of *Pythius* that comes from awareness of the Naevian line (for he has not yet slain the Python); such an interpretation would be tonally continuous with the humour of this act of killing the Python being understood as accidental.

Apollo, epic narrator

It is critical to remember that it is the poet's account of the Python's slaying that dilutes its epic-heroic tone, and that Apollo makes

[28] See Bömer (n. 21), ad 441: 'Der Bogen Apollos ist also nicht die Jagdwaffe'.

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identifiable changes to his own retrospective four-line boasting recount of the event to Cupid. The passage is as follows:

> *Primus amor Phoebi Daphne Peneia, quem non*
> *fors ignara dedit, sed saeua Cupidinis ira,*
> *Delius hunc nuper, uicta serpente superbus,*
> *viderat adducto flectentem cornua neruo*
> *'quid' que 'tibi, lasciue puer, cum fortibus armis?'*
> *dixerat:* 'ista decent umeros gestamina nostros,
> qui dare certa ferae, dare uulnera possumus hosti,
> qui modo pestifero tot iugera uentre prementem
> strauimus innumeris tumidum Pythona sagittis.
> *tu face nescio quos esto contentus amores*
> *inritare tua, nec laudes adsere nostras!'* (Ov. *Met.* 1.452–62)
>
> *The first love of Phoebus was Daphne, daughter of the Peneus,*
> *a love happenstance did not give, but Cupid's fierce anger,*
> *the Delian god, puffed up with pride from the serpent's recent vanquishing*
> *espied him bending his bow, string drawn back, and said,*
> *What use for you, rascally boy, do proper weapons hold?*
> Those weapons of yours are fitting borne on my shoulders,
> who can give the surety of wounds to wild beasts, to an enemy,
> me, who just recently laid low the swollen Python with countless arrows,
> who burdened so many stretches of land with its pestilential paunch.
> *Content yourself with kindling some love spark or another, and*
> *don't grub after my praise!*

On a less prominent level, there is an exchange between the quantifiable elements of space and arrows: the indefinite *tantum spatii de monte* (1.440) becomes *tot iugera* (1.459), while the *mille…telis* (1.443) become *innumeris sagittis* (1.460).

The god also lays claim to a sequence of targets that the careful reader can easily recognize he has not measured himself against: *qui dare certa ferae, dare uulnera possumus hosti* (1.458). It is generous to call red and roe deer 'wild beasts' (*ferae*), which is the first indication of Apollo's tendency to hyperbole; on the basis of most textual evidence, the *dammis capreisque* targeted by the god are categorically placed outside of the epic realm.[29] However, he moves into the territory

[29] Elsewhere in the Ovidian corpus *capreae* are juxtaposed with *ferae*: when asking Flora about her festivities, the final inquiry of the poet is *cur tibi pro Libycis clauduntur rete leaenis / inbelles capreae sollicitusque lepus?* ('why instead of Libyan lionesses are unwarlike roe deer and trembling hares enclosed in your nets?', Ov. *Fas.* 5.371–2), to which the goddess responds that the places where beasts roam lie outside the purview of her protection: *non sibi respondit siluas cessisse, sed hortos / aruaque pugnaci non adeunda ferae* ('she answered that woods did not fall to her care, but gardens

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of outright fiction with the mention of *hosti*; who is the enemy he refers to? For the Iliadic ruler of Tenedos it would be the Danaans, and for the Callimachean Artemis, unjust men, but this is the first that the reader of the *Metamorphoses* hears of an enemy of the god. Ironically, the enmity between deer and snakes detailed by Nicander is cast as a 'historical enmity',[30] but the mention of any enemy of Apollo should leave the reader questioning the veracity of his account. Apollo seemingly endeavours to establish for himself a more securely stratified pedigree of targets for his arrows to aid the elevation of his deed to a more guaranteed epic status than that granted by the poet in the original account: he does not leave the potential slippage for interpreting it as an accident, as is the case with the Ovidian narrator.

Beyond these details, it is the crucial adjective *tumidum* ('swollen', 1.460) that is applied to the Python that truly changes the narrative tone. Apollo professes his entry into epic territory with the pointed use of this adjective to describe the vanquished Python.[31] This word has a

and fields not under the visitation of warlike beasts', *Fas*. 5.373–4). Here, *capreae* and *ferae* stand as mutually exclusive designations. Virgil also attests to the 'unwarlike' nature of deer, which is dangerously unsettled by love, with *quid quae imbelles dant proelia cerui?* ('what about the battles fought by unwarlike stags?', Verg. *G*. 3.265); in later Latin poets, one also finds *inbelles. . .dammas* ('unwarlike red deer') at Stat. *Ach*. 2.121 and *inbelles dammae* twice in Martial, at 4.74.1 and 13.94.2. Isidore quotes Martial while noting of the deer that it is *timidum animal et inbelle* ('an animal timid and unwarlike'), and etymologizes *dammula* from *de manu* (*dammula vocata, quod de manu effugiat*, 'called a *dammula* because it flees from one's hand'), Isid. *Etym*. 12.22; Achilles further charges Menelaus with having the 'heart of a deer' (κραδίην δ' ἐλάφοιο, Hom. *Il*. 1.225), an indication of cowardice. Collectively, then, the deer that Apollo hunts are decidedly not epic prey. However, perhaps the best argument for seeing a strict division in the narrative accounts of the poet of the *Metamorphoses* and of Apollo on this point is in Apuleius: *die quadam uenatum Tlepolemus assumpto Thrasyllo petebat indagaturus feras, quod tamen in capreis feritatis est; nec enim Charite maritum suum quaerere patiebatur bestias armaras dente uel cornu* ('on a certain day Tlepolemus with Thrasyllus in tow went out for the purpose of hunting, seeking to hunt down wild beasts, so far as to say if there is anything of the beast in roe deer, for Charite was unenduring of her husband tracking down beasts armed with either fang or horn', Apul. *Met*. 8.4.1–4). Inevitably, when the pair do encounter a proper *fera*, a boar, it is introduced first by saying what it is not: *nec ulla caprea / nec pauens dammula nec prae ceteris feris mitior / cerua* ('not any wild goat, nor tremulous little deer nor a doe, more gentle than the rest of beasts', 8.4.12–14). If Apuleius is alluding to the prey of the Ovidian Apollo here, as the combination of *caprea* and *dammula* would indicate, it reveals his recognition that the quarry of Apollo is not one of a true, epic-style hunter, but rather harmless, and implies that the god is learning to master his bow in a lighter, more humorous fashion.

[30] See Overduin (n. 10), ad 141–4: 'These lines. . .seem to describe an enduring state of hostility between the two, not based on individual encounters, but almost presented as a historical enmity of two peoples at war.'

[31] The Python's designation as such additionally strengthens the ties between the Cupid–Apollo altercation and the Ascanius–Apollo episode of *Aeneid* 9, as Numanus Remulus, the first enemy to fall to Ascanius, is described as *tumidus* (*Aen*. 9.596); see Ziogas (n. 8) 169–71, for further

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notable place in the lexicon of literary critical vocabulary. Often, it has the connotation of misguided bombast and falling short of one's literary goals.[32] Catullus' *tumidus* epic poet, Antimachus (*tumido. . .Antimacho*, 95.10), provides a classic example. In the stylistic realm, Gellius notes in his description of the three approved writing styles (*uberis*, *gracilis*, and *mediocris*, 'grand', 'graceful', and 'middle') that *sic plerumque sufflati atque tumidi fallunt pro uberibus* ('thus oftentimes inflated and bombastic stylists deceived themselves that they belong to the grand manner', *NA* 6.14.3–4), while Pliny finds himself justifying his own literary methodology with the admittance of *quia uisus es mihi in scriptis meis adnotasse quaedam ut tumida quae ego sublimia, ut improba quae audentia, ut nimia quae ego plena arbitrabar* ('because it seemed to me that you had designated certain passages in my writings overblown that I deemed sublime, immoderate which I deemed bold, and excessive which I deemed fully treated', *Ep.* 9.26.5).[33] *Tumidus* is most commonly used to describe a storm-swollen sea, an image that is frequently drawn upon for metapoetic purposes.[34] The inclusion of *tumidus* in such a critical vocabulary allowed its transformation into an epic tag (much like *arma*) in certain frameworks.[35] Although *tumidus* is not

discussion. See also Prop. 4.6.35–6 for its epic tone in accounting Apollo's slaying of the Python, with the discussion of Miller (n. 1), 340–1.

[32] See esp. Quint. *Inst.* 10.2.16, 12.10.12, 17, 73, and 80. For the type of 'literary madness' exhibited by Ovid's Apollo as found in Statius, see M. Leigh, 'Statius and the Sublimity of Capaneus', in M. J. Clarke, B. G. F. Currie, and R. O. A. M. Lyne (eds.), *Epic Interactions. Perspectives on Homer, Virgil, and the Epic Tradition Presented to Jasper Griffin by His Former Students* (Oxford, 2006), 236–9, esp. 237 and n. 91. For literary bombast and its failure to reach the sublime, see Longinus *Subl.* 3 and the notes of D. A. Russell, *Longinus. On Sublimity* (Oxford, 1965), ad loc. For similar instances to the 'tumidity of arrogance' exhibited by the *tumida. . .ira* of Apollo at *Met.* 2.600 or Epaphus' judgement of Phaethon as *tumidus* (*Met.* 1.747), see M. Leigh, *Lucan. Spectacle and Engagement* (Oxford, 1997), 273 n. 102.

[33] See also the similarly inclined passage of Plin. *Ep.* 7.12.4, including the phrase *ut tumidius uideretur* ('as it might seem too pompous').

[34] See *OLD*, s.v. *tumidus* 3; examples in Verg. *Aen.* 1.142, 3.156, 3.356, 5.819, 8.671.

[35] E.g. Prop. 3.9.35–6: *non ego uelifera tumidum mare findo carina: / tuta sub exiguo flumina nostra morast* ('I do not split the swollen sea in sail-bearing craft, but bob amongst safety in a paltry current'). See J. Ingleheart, 'Ovid, *Tristia* 1.2: High Drama on the High Seas', *G&R* 53.1 (2006), 87–8 and nn. 46 and 47, for Ovid's use of *tumidus* at *Trist.* 1.2.24 and the reference to epic summoned by *tumidus*. For *arma* as an epic tag, see A. Barchiesi, *The Poet and the Prince. Ovid and Augustan Discourse* (Berkeley, CA, Los Angeles, CA, and London, 1997), 16 f.; G. B. Conte, *Genres and Readers*, trans. G. Most (Baltimore, MD, and London, 1994), 108 f. Despite its evolution into an epic tag, *tumidus* is also applied to tragedy: see Gell. *NA* 2.23.21, Euan. *de fabula* 3.5, and Hor. *Ars P.* 93–8 with the gloss of ps.-Acro's note on *ampullas* with C. O. Brink, *Horace on Poetry. The Ars Poetica* (Cambridge, 1971), ad loc. The Telchines, the croaking literary rivals of Callimachus, are sea-dwellers (Diod. 5.55.1), the same environment that Callimachus assigns to tragedians (*Iamb* 2.12–31), who speak with the voice of sea creatures; for discussion see M. Poliakoff, 'Nectar, Springs, and the Sea: Critical Terminology in Pindar and Callimachus',

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being used directly within this contextual framework here, it can still be considered as a statement of epic intent.[36]

Apollo's fictions: Tityos and hyper-epic

Apollo's 'epicizing' of the Python's death transgresses the rules of writing poetry familiarly espoused in the tradition of the Callimachean *recusatio* – the rule of adhering to one's appropriate sphere of knowledge, and of not overreaching the poetic arena yielded by inspirational power. An accidental discovery of the Python and a strictly necessary use of his bow, rather than an act of heroic daring, would certainly not constitute an epic deed deserving of song. Apollo, by addressing Cupid and recasting his victory over the *tumidus* Python, tries to carve out a space for himself as an epic poet, in contrast to the Ovidian narrator's distanced, ironic account of the serpent's death. At this juncture, it is appropriate to interrogate further

ZPE 39 (1980), 44; P. Bing, 'The Voice of Those Who Live in the Sea: Empedocles and Callimachus', *ZPE* 41 (1981), 33–6, esp. n. 3. For *tumor* and tragedy see also Quint. *Inst.* 9.4.140.

[36] The flood that precedes the birth of Python is, however, depicted as a sea (*Met.* 1.292, see also 1.355, 360–1), and Thessaly, the site of Ovid's Apollo–Daphne myth, was once an inland sea, before Tempe was made an outlet for its waters. For the creation of Tempe and the draining of the Thessalian 'sea', see Strab. 9.5.2, Herod. 7.129.3, Sen. *Q Nat.* 6.25.2. A scholion of Pindar (ad *Pyth.* 4.138a) reveals that Poseidon's role in the creation of Tempe is linked to specifically Thessalian cult epithets. Callimachus uses not the sea but a river in flood to convey a statement of literary polemics (*Hymn* 2.105–12), an illustration of literary intent that Ovid similarly employs with the narrative conceit of the flooding Achelous in *Metamorphoses* 8–9; it is possible that the Python, in its swollen state, conjures up this sense of literary polemic through connection not to a storm-swollen sea but to a river in flood. This may be the connective tissue between the Python and another *tumidus* snake of the *Metamorphoses*, the snake that Cadmus slays (*corpus tumet omne uenenis*, 'all his body swells with venom', *Met.* 3.33), which is discovered during a hunt for water. Ovid's depiction of the snake and the subsequent battle is highly reminiscent of the account of the Bagradas river serpent, a snake intimately connected with its river environment. Silius Italicus includes an embedded account of this serpent fight in *Punica* 6, which, as J. Soerink, 'Statius, Silius Italicus, and the Snake Pit of Intertextuality', in G. Manuwald and A. Voigt (eds.), *Flavian Epic Interactions* (Leiden, 2013), 363–5, has shown, is greatly indebted to the Ovidian episode of *Metamorphoses* 3. However, given the fact that Livy apparently handled this very subject in Book 18, it is possible that Silius is merely closing the intertextual loop, knowing Ovid's poetic use of the historical episode for his mythological construction of the snake of Mars. If Cadmus' *tumidus* snake does in fact evoke the Libyan river serpent, then the idea of the *tumidus* snake and rivers in flood may be a shared imaginative resource for both Ovidian episodes, and mutually reinforce this idea. On the Bagradas serpent, see Ogden (n. 16), esp. 66–7: on the relationship between springs and serpents he notes that 'there is. . .a tendency for the *drakon* to be itself fully identified with the spring', pointing to Nicander's account of Lamia-Sybaris as the most extreme case, in which the snake, thrown off Mount Parnassus, becomes the very spring which holds her name (166). As such, we can from this angle consider a Nicandrian Python as *tumidus* because of connections with water sources.

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Apollo's desire to be considered not only a doer of epic deeds but a 'writer' of epic poetry, and to ask whether that can assist in explaining the fictive gaps in his tale. As mentioned previously, one incongruous detail that features in his account is the unexplained and unelaborated *hostis*. The following line could yield an interpretative clue: *qui modo pestifero tot iugera uentre prementem / strauimus* ('who burdened so many stretches of land with its pestilential paunch', 1.459–60). As Bömer notes, *iugera* (nine, to be precise) is typically used as a measure for the expanse of space that Tityos covers, stretched out in the Underworld.[37] Is there any reason here for Apollo to invoke Tityos?[38] According to some accounts, the slaying of Tityos was the first exploit of the young god, when, shortly after birth, he killed the giant who was attempting to assault his mother as she made her way to Pytho.[39] Other accounts place Apollo's slaying of the Python first.[40] Within the epic tradition, Statius links the two events closely (*Theb.* 1.709–11 and 7.349–54), and there is good reason to connect the two: like the Python, Tityos was a nursling of the Earth,[41] either a direct or a foster child, and, as a giant, had a snake-like form. If Apollo is indeed hinting at Tityos as the vanquished *hostis*, a number of possible interpretations arise.

[37] Bömer (n. 21), ad loc. See also Ov. *Met.* 4.457–8; Tib. 1.3.73–4; Prop. 3.5.44; Verg. *Aen.* 6.595–7; also Lucr. *DRN* 3.988 ff. and Stat. *Theb.* 5.550. Horace's hymn to Apollo (4.6.2) mentions Tityos but not Python.

[38] The pairing of an unnamed *hostis* and use of *iugera* may not be satisfactory evidence for all to conjure suggestively the presence of Tityos but, if we look to the poet of the *Aetna*, we may see him picking up on this hybridized description, coupled with Ovid's own use of the Tityos myth to illustrate the power of the poet (*idem per spatium Tityon porreximus ingens*, 'we too stretched out Tityos along a massive expanse', *Am.* 3.12.25). In talking about the poetic fallacy as he writes *hi Tityon poena strauere in iugera foedum* ('these ones have stretched out Tityos over many acres in cruel punishment', *Aet.* 80); the use of *strauere* could indicate an awareness of Apollo's attempt to allude to Tityos in his epicizing account in *Met.* 1.459–60. Beyond this, Servius' commentary on Verg. *Aen.* 9.655 that links Ascanius' exploit to the young Apollo conflates the mythology of the Python and Tityos, citing the Python's sexual offence against Leto, an act more often applied to the giant: *nam ut Apollo puer occiso Pythone ultus est matris iniuriam* ('for when Apollo was a boy he avenged the offence against his mother by slaying the Python'). If we want to see subtle continuity between the account of the narrator and Apollo, with Apollo catapulting the foundational narrative into the realm of hyperbolic bombast in his recap, we can also look back to the notation of Apollo as *arquitenens*; we find Apollo as *pius arquitenens* at *Aen.* 3.75, on which Servius notes, *qui ultus est matrem de Tityo, de Niobe, de Pythone* ('who avenged his mother in the case of Tityos, Niobe, and the Python').

[39] Ephor. 31b.2.535; Men. Rhet. 441sp.

[40] Apollod. 1.4.1. Cf. also Hom. *Od.* 11.576 ff..; Ap. Rhod. *Argon* 1.60 ff; Quint. Smyrn. 3.390 ff.

[41] See Verg. *Aen.* 6.595; Stat. *Theb.* 1.697; Hom. *Od.* 7.342 (also quoted at Strab. 9.3.14); Hom. *Od.* 11.756; Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1. 762–3.

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On one level, if Apollo is trying to further heroicize his act by recalling the slaying of Tityos, he is deviating even further from the appropriate poetic boundaries: by hinting at a gigantomachy (if not *the* Gigantomachy), he is pushing the delineation between epic and hyper-epic, and treading further into bombastic territory.[42] Writing a gigantomachy is precisely what Ovid claims to have been attempting to do when he was halted once again at *Amores* 2.1.11–15: the parallel between the poet of the *Amores* and the Apollo of the *Metamorphoses* becomes even tighter if they are both forced to jettison the shared epic pretensions of a gigantomachy.[43] Ovid's elegiac experience is filtered anew through the person of the young god, and the experience of Apollo becomes a compressed poetic echo of both *Amores* 1.1 *and* 2.1, drawing simultaneously on being cut down to size from both epic and hyper-epic ambitions, and reinforcing the potential to read the opening amatory tale of Apollo and Daphne in some ways as the *true* beginning of the *Metamorphoses*.

[42] As D. C. Innes, 'Gigantomachy and Natural Philosophy', *CQ* 29.1 (1979), 166, summarizes, 'The Gigantomachy is. . .high epic, the most extreme example of the "thundering" style opposed to the slender style of Callimachus.'

[43] As especially outlined by Nicoll (n. 1); see also Myers (n. 1), 61–2. There is a literary parallel to be found in Nicander for this correlation between works which would bring the poetic agendas and positioning of Nicander and Ovid further together: we have an extant fragment of Nicander's *Ophiaca*, a poem whose title suggests that it was about snakes, but focused on mythology and folklore, rather than didactic material. What further differentiates this work from the *Theriaca* is that it was composed in elegiacs. The fragment of secure attribution (fr. 31, G-S) describes how Apollo rid the glades of Clarus of snakes, spiders, and scorpions:

> οὐκ ἔχις οὐδὲ φάλαγγες ἀπεχθέες οὐδὲ βαθυπλήξ
> ἄλσεσιν ἐνζώει σκορπίος ἐν Κλαρίοις,
> Φοῖβος ἐπεί ῥ' αὐλῶνα βαθὺν μελίῃσι καλύψας
> ποιηρὸν δάπεδον θῆκεν ἑκὰς δακετῶν.
>
> *No viper, nor harmful spiders, nor deep-wounding*
> *scorpion inhabit the glades of Clarus, for*
> *Apollo veiled its deep grotto with ash-trees and*
> *purged its grassy floor of noxious creatures*. (trans. Gow and Scholfield)

Nicander was known to be a priest of the Clarian sanctuary of Apollo, and connects himself overtly to Clarus in both the opening of the *Alexipharmaka* (9–11) and the *sphragis* of the *Theriaca* (957–958). What we can perceive in this elegiac fragment is a similar cross-referencing to his other poetic work, the *Theriaca*, which similarly rids the fear and danger of this same set of poisonous creatures through its didactic teachings. In other words, in the elegiac *Ophiaca*, Apollo plays the role that Nicander does in the hexameter *Theriaca*. It seems to me that this self-referential interplay of epic metre and elegy and the use of Apollo to reference or occupy a previous posturing by the poet common to both Nicander and Ovid deserves attention for further threads of connectivity. On Nicander and Clarus, see Overduin (n. 10), ad 957–8 and pp. 5–6. Ovid's Apollo also directly mentions Clarus in his self-hymn at *Met.* 1.516.

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The narrator says explicitly that Apollo had never before used his arrows except on red deer and roe deer, and so, if we identify the *hostis* that Apollo cites as Tityos, this is a moment of irrevocable divergence between the two accounts. As readers, how are we meant to negotiate this gap? The god might be asking his audience (Cupid and the reader) to supply the appropriate mythological story of the vengeance exacted upon his mother's assailant, but, by doing so, he is aspiring to write himself out of the poem at hand and into his own epic. Prepared by the poet's account, the external audience has no choice but to supply the alternative mythological strain. In consequence, Apollo's poetic credibility is further, crushingly deflated: the alternative myth recounts Artemis as the slayer of Tityos. Callimachus hails her as Ἄρτεμι Παρθενίη Τιτυοκτόνε ('Artemis, Maiden, Slayer of Tityos', *Hymn* 3.110), and Pindar recounts that Tityos was hunted down by Artemis in order that a man should learn to touch only those loves which are within his reach:

> καὶ μὰν Τιτυὸν βέλος Ἀρτέμιδος θήρευσε κραιπνόν
> ἐξ ἀνικάτου φαρέτρας ὀρνύμενον,
> ὄφρα τις τᾶν ἐν δυνατῷ φιλοτάτων ἐπιψαύειν ἔραται.
>
> (Pind. *Pyth.* 4. 90–92)

> *Then a swift bolt of Artemis felled Tityus, whirled from her invincible quiver, so that a man might long to caress only those loves within his possible reach.*

Pindar's version is especially appropriate in light of the events that Apollo's unmerited boasting sets into motion: Apollo will burn with a love that will never be returned, a love that he follows and to whom he says *non insequor hostis* ('I do not pursue you as an enemy', 1.504). Apollo's undeserved foray into epic is marked not only by his label of the Python as *tumidus*, but also by his attempted appropriation of a deed that cannot belong to him.[44] While scholars have correctly identified Apollo's slaying of the Python as mock-epic, or attempted epic, because the distinction between the accounts of the Python's death has not been fully explored, the recognition that it is only in Apollo's address to Cupid that the deed is made 'epic' has been glossed over. With the acknowledgement of Nicander's influence upon the passage,

[44] As Bömer (n. 21), ad 441, notes: 'Der Bogen Apollos ist also nicht die Jagdwaffe – Artemis jagte mit dem Bogen'. The visual arts often illustrate the death of Tityos at the hand of both twins, as described at e.g. Paus. 3.18.15 and 10.11.1; for a poetic reference to such a tradition, see Nonn. *Dion.* 48.395.

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the Python's death becomes an accidental exploit of the young god that is subsequently elevated to inappropriate epic proportions by the god himself. Apollo's unmerited attempts at epic poetry then cause Cupid to intervene on behalf of the poem's elegiac programme; in some ways, Nicander provides Ovid with the antidote for Apollonian hyper-epic.

The mediation of epic tone provided by reference to Nicander also tempers the transition between the tale of the Python and the first love of Apollo that is spoken of as the divide between epic and elegy. This transition has been granted greater continuity by Ziogas, who reads it as a poetic echo of the transition from the Hesiodic *Theogony* to the *Catalogue of Women*: the Python, as the first exploit of Apollo, balances the defeat of Typhoeus as the last foe of Zeus, and Daphne opens the space of poetic and thematic recalibration that comes with the shift from the *Theogony* to the *Catalogue*.[45] The name Python closely resembles Typhon, which brings it closer contact to Typhoeus.[46] Apollo attempting to add Tityos to the mix through *hostis* here strengthens this Hesiodic link, because, as previously noted, some mythological sources place Apollo's slaying of Tityos first, which would provide the similar, necessary balance to the last effort of Zeus, his defeat of Typhoeus.

In this way, even Apollo's attempted diversion of the poetic course on an upwards track is nevertheless subsumed into Ovid's mastery of narrative transition. It is also possible to remark upon Ovid's reliance on Hesiod for a mechanism of poetic continuity in the transition from epic to elegy in light of the Hesiodic influence upon Nicander. Nicander names Hesiod directly at *Ther.* 12, amid the proemial shift, but the verb κατέλεξε ('tell in order, enumerate') marks him as a writer of catalogue poetry, specifically of the *Catalogue of Women*, rather than the perhaps expected, more overtly didactic *Works and Days*.[47] However, the mythological material that Nicander is speaking of, the Titanomachy, is sourced from the *Theogony*. Therefore, Hesiod in Nicander's proem – as it shifts from an overtly didactic opening to aetio-mythological material – is evoked in a way that points to the

[45] I. Ziogas, *Ovid and Hesiod. The Metamorphosis of the Catalogue of Women* (Cambridge, 2013), 66–9.

[46] On which see Ogden (n. 16), 151–2; Ziogas (n. 45), 66, notes the anagrammatic possibilities between 'PYTHOn' and 'TYPHOeus'.

[47] For this reading, see Overduin (n. 10), ad loc.

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different topics of these two works nevertheless by a shared author. In this way, we might also view Ovid's treatment of Nicander: the first extended interaction with the author, as I have argued, is not from his *Metamorphoses* but from the didactic *Theriaca*.[48]

In re-examining the poetic impulses and motivations that contribute to the Cupid–Apollo *recusatio*, it becomes clear that the tension between epic and elegy is even more fraught than previously perceived, and that 'epic' can be appropriated and raised from the slippage between word and deed. From this tension arise notable generic interactions between epic and elegy that characterize the Apollo–Daphne episode. If we are prepared to look at the differences between the tale that the detached Ovidian narrator tells about the Python's death and the version pompously broadcast to Cupid as Apollo basks in its afterglow, we can see that the god has made considerable changes. I would submit that Nicander's *Theriaca* has been an unrecognized literary influence behind this programmatic opening myth sequence, and that supplying knowledge of this passage can lend a satisfactory sense of poetic logic to parsing the differences between the accounts. It allows Ovid to make a joke at the god's expense in casting his feat as an accidental accomplishment rather than a heroic achievement, presenting a deflationary view of Apollo that is consonant with his other depictions in the poem. Ultimately, it represents the intersection of learnedness and irreverence that neatly encapsulates the wit and spirit of Ovidian verse.

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[48] And yet we can observe Nicander's use of μορφάς in the opening line of the *Theriaca*.

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