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LOCUS HORRIDUS

ANSIE ROMANE VERSO IL MONDO NATURALE

a cura di
MADDALENA BASSANI – RIA BERG

ROMA 2024

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Indice

Ria Berg, Direttrice Institutum Romanum Finlandiae, *Prefazione* 7

Maddalena Bassani – Ria Berg, *Introduzione* 9

I. Letteratura e archeologia della natura *inamoena*

Paolo Carafa, *Il mondo naturale nei paesaggi antichi creati dall'uomo* 17

Alessio Ameduri, *L'eruzione dell'Etna in Virgilio (*Aen. *3, 570–84). Una catastrofe 'da manuale'* 37

Leah O'Hearn, *Etna in the Breast. Ovid, Volcanoes, and the Violence of Erotic Desire* 49

Giuseppe Lepore, Poseidon *e le 'terre molli'. Ansie acquatiche e tentativi di stabilizzazione dei terreni paludosi* 63

Jacopo Turchetto, Inamoena Cappadocia. *Luoghi inospitali e acque magiche in Anatolia centrale* 75

II Letteratura della natura *horrida*

Francesco Berardi – Marco Presutti, *La metafora del* locus horridus *nei manuali retorici tra impressioni visive e percezioni sonore* 89

Antti Lampinen, Lucus horridus. *Emotional Responses to 'Northern' Holy Groves in Lucan and Tacitus* 101

Elina Pyy, Densa noctis in umbra vi potitur votis. *Forest imagery and landscape description in the rape of Deidamia in Statius' Achilleid* 117

III Incontri *horridi*

Maddalena Bassani, Un horridus *Gerione alle Aquae Patavinae. Nuove ipotesi per il cippo policefalo da Este* 133

Nathaniel Fleury Solley, *Ecological Awe in a Horatian Diptych (*Odes *1, 22–1, 23)* 157

Miika Remahl, *Lion Encounters and Hostile Environments in Lucan's* Pharsalia *and Statius'* Thebaid 165

Eleonora Voltan, Iamque adeo scopulos Sirenum. *Il mito di Ulisse e le sirene nella pittura parietale romana* 181

IV L'*horridus* dietro casa

Ria Berg, *Bringing the Wilderness into the Domus.* Loca horrida *in Roman Domestic Decor* 197

Simone Foresta, *L'orrida assenza e il felice ritorno del* princeps*. La natura nell'elaborazione augustea tra ansie e rinascite* 219

Stephanie Wyler, *Killer Creepers. The Uncanny of Nature in Dionysiac Roman Images* 235

Francesca Mermati – Luca Di Franco, *Domare l'*horridus*. Il paesaggio flegreo da immaginifica ambientazione sacra ad elemento del* luxus 247

V Permanenze e ritorni

Marco Giglio, *La Grotta del Cane ad Agnano. Un* locus horridus *antico?* 273

Paola Zanovello, Draco *e il culto del serpente nel nord Africa romano* 283

Diana Spencer, *Rome's Unquiet Ghost? The Death and Resurrection of Nero in Suetonius and Piranesi* 295

Ermanno Malaspina, *Epilogue:* Horridus/Inamoenus *from a Landscape Typology to a Way of Life?* 313

Elenco degli autori 325

Etna in the Breast.
Ovid, Volcanoes, and the Violence of Erotic Desire

Leah O'Hearn

In antiquity, the 'fires of love' were a common motif, but volcanic fire was a more unusual metaphor for erotic desire. It first appears in Theocritus' *Idyll* 2, where Delphis persuades Simaetha that the intensity of his love matches hers by claiming that "often Eros kindles a flame that blazes more than Hephaistos on Lipari" (Ἔρως δ' ἄρα καὶ Λιπαραίω / πολλάκις Ἀφαίστοιο σέλας φλογερώτερον αἴθει· 133–34). Catullus took up the idea, comparing the double-edged *cura* given to him by Amathusian Venus to Mount Etna's fires: he tells his addressee, "[you know] in what manner she scorched me when I burned as much as the Trinacrian crag" (*in quo me torruerit genere, / cum tantum arderem quantum Trinacria rupes…*, 68b, 52–53). Ovid returns to the comparison in the *Remedia amoris* (491–92), Sappho's letter to Phaon (*epist.* 15, 12), and the *Metamorphoses* (13, 868–69). This chapter will explore why it held such interest for the author beyond being a hyperbolic expression of desire's intensity by exploring these examples of the metaphor and related imagery of volcanic fire in erotic contexts. It will consider the *horridus* qualities of the volcanic environment – aspects that cause fear, anxiety, and even tremors – and the relationships between this place and the inner tumult of characters who 'erupt' with desire.[1]

Such conjunctions between human emotion and the natural environment have tended to come under the critical labels of simile on the one hand (I burn like a volcano with desire) and 'pathetic fallacy' on the other (the volcano burns with desire). First coined by John Ruskin in his essay *Of the Pathetic Fallacy*, the phrase has come to mean "the attribution of human emotion or responses to animals or inanimate things, esp. in art and literature" (*OED* s. v.) with the added suspicion that this attribution rings false. Recent works informed by Material Ecocriticism have been revisiting Ruskin's essay and re-evaluating his understanding of the distinctions between subject and object, person and environment, to stress the plurality of agencies evident in his opening arguments that objects such as the gentian plant with its brilliant cobalt flowers always have the power to produce the sensation of blue, irrespective of whether a person is looking at it.[2] The volcano burning with desire is, therefore, not a false attribution of human emotion to an unfeeling phenomenon but a recognition of the vitality of matter and its agency. The statement "I burn like a volcano" acknowledges fundamental commonalities between human and nonhuman agents.[3]

---

1 A reviewer warns me that the landscapes under study are not *horridi* but *inamoeni*. I am not wedded to the term *locus horridus*, modern as it is. These Ovidian passages are not formal ekphrases (*est locus*…) but looser depictions of volcanic phenomena. My interest lies in exploring how and why a natural place that typically causes fear and anxiety is being applied metaphorically to the human emotion/appetite of erotic desire (and vice versa). Studies such as Malaspina (1994) and Mauro (2021) have sought to categorise different variants of the *locus inamoenus*, of which the *locus horridus* is taken to be one and – quite specifically – an inversion of the *locus amoenus* (following Petrone 1988). I recognise that these passages differ from that definition but find *horridus* a more appropriate term for volcanoes than *inamoenus*.

2 E.g., Arsić 2017 and Rozzoni 2021.

3 Material ecocriticism is defined as "the study of the way material forms – bodies, things, elements, toxic substances, chemicals, organic and inorganic matter, landscapes, and biological entities – intra–act with each other and with the human dimension, produc-

I shall begin by briefly exploring mythological and scientific ideas about volcanoes, emphasising that the monstrosity of these places infuses both forms of discourse. I shall then examine volcanic imagery in erotic contexts in Ovid's work and argue that this image of nature at its most wild and terrifying held poetic appeal because of its suggestion of latent violence. I endeavour to show that volcanic fire, as an image that is emblematic of Roman anxieties about the natural world, appeals to the broader Ovidian worldview that desire always has the potential to tip into violence.

Loci horridi: Volcanic Environments of the Mediterranean

Volcanic eruptions have had tangible impacts upon the environment and peoples of the Mediterranean, and they attracted a variety of explanations in antiquity. Volcanoes were the forges of Hephaistos – Theocritus draws on this myth to locate the divine blacksmith's workshop beneath the largest of the Aeolian islands off Sicily's northern coast when the feckless Delphis likens his desire to Lipari's fires (Theoc. *id.* 2, 133–34). Volcanoes down the southern coast of Italy from the Bay of Naples to Mount Etna were thought to weigh down the hulking body of Typhoeus (Pind. *Pyth*. 1, 15–28), the son of Earth and Tartarus who was defeated in battle with Zeus after he sought to take the Olympian's place as ruler (Hes. *Theog*. 853–68). The literary tradition conflated him with the giant Enceladus (Callim. *Aet*. 1, 35–6; Verg. *Aen*. 3, 578–82 and 4, 179; Ov. *Pont*. 2, 2, 11–12, *am*. 3, 12, 27).[4] Descriptions of these monstrous figures focus on their anger, madness, or sheer potential for violence as they toss and turn beneath their mountainous prisons.

Though there was no term for 'volcano' in Greek or Latin, the phenomenon was conceptualised generically.[5] Discussing Mount Etna, Pliny the Elder comments that it is "not only here that nature rages, threatening the lands with combustion" (*nec illo tantum natura saevit exustionem terris denuntians*, *nat.* 2, 236). He describes some phenomena that would be considered volcanic today and others that would not, including a string of locations in modern Turkey, like Mount Chimaera, where tar or petroleum bubbles to the earth's surface and catches fire. Pliny concludes that "in so many places, by so many fires, does nature burn the lands" (*tot locis, tot incendiis rerum natura terras cremat*, *nat.* 2, 238).

Pliny would die while attempting to rescue friends from the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 CE, an event which had a sobering impact upon the Roman literary imagination.[6] Earlier eruptions in the Mediterranean's long volcanic history likely brought the theme to greater prominence during the late Republic and Principate. Ovid was greatly influenced by depictions of volcanic activity by Virgil and Lucretius. In Book 3 of the *Aeneid*, as the Trojan refugees approach the Cyclops' shore, they see Mount Etna erupting:

> *portus ab accessu ventorum immotus et ingens*
> *ipse, sed horrificis iuxta tonat Aetna ruinis,*

---

ing configurations of meanings and discourses that we can interpret as stories" (Iovino – Oppermann 2014, 7). The school extends work by physicist Karen Barad and philosopher Bruno Latour (among others) to emphasise the communicative capacity of more-than-human agents as well as the idea of distributive agency – things happen in the world because of a community of agents/actors, whether they are human, sentient animal or other living organism, or impersonal like electricity, bacteria, information networks, or indeed, volcanoes. Considering ancient beliefs in portents (natural events that 'tell' you something) and the vitality of the natural environment in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, I think this approach may be a promising one for better understanding the relationships between human and nonhuman in his work, though I share some of the reservations outlined by Clark 2019, 111–36. Cf. Segal 1969, 89 on the "imaginative vitalism" of nature in the *met*.

4 Callimachus calls the giant Briares at *hymn* 4*,* 141–14.

5 On volcanoes as a conceptual category in ancient thought, see Bedon 2004 and Hine 2002.

6 E.g., Stat. *silv*. 4, 4, 78–86, and 5, 3, 205–8; Mart. 4.44, and see Newlands 2010, and chapters in Augoustakis – Littlewood 2019.

interdumque atram prorumpit ad aethera nubem,
turbine fumantem piceo et candente favilla,
attollitque globos flammarum et sidera lambit;
interdum scopulos avulsaque viscera montis
erigit eructans, liquefactaque saxa sub auras
cum gemitu glomerat, fundoque exaestuat imo.
fama est Enceladi semustum fulmine corpus
urgeri mole hac ingentemque insuper Aetnam
impositam ruptis flammam exspirare caminis,
et fessum quotiens mutet latus, intremere omnem
murmure Trinacriam et caelum subtexere fumo. (Verg. *Aen*. 3, 570–82)

"There is a harbour, unmoved by the winds' approach and vast in itself, but nearby Etna thunders with terrifying shocks, and sometimes hurls to the sky a black cloud, smoking with a pitch-black whirlwind and white-hot ash, and it lifts balls of flame and licks the stars; sometimes, belching, it brings up rocks and the torn-off entrails of the mountain, and with a groan it amasses molten stone under the sky and boils up from its lowest depth. The story goes that the body of Enceladus, half burned by a thunderbolt, is crushed by this mass and giant Etna placed above him breathes out his flame when its furnaces are broken, and as often as he shifts his tired side, the whole of Trinacria shakes with a roar and the sky is covered with smoke".[7]

The scene of Etna licking, belching, and groaning transfers the myth of Enceladus into the material environment and prefigures Achaemenides' account of the Cyclops, whose huge form strikes the stars (*ipse arduus, altaque pulsat / sidera*, 619–20), who lives in a vast, dark cave (*vasto Cyclopis in antro*, 617; *intus opaca, ingens*, 619), and whose gruesome diet leads him to belch gore (*saniem eructans*, 632).[8] This *locus horridus* imbues the narrative with fear by depicting a terrifying natural event with awesome mythical dimensions.

Philosophers had long discussed volcanic activity among phenomena such as earthquakes and lightning that provoked fear and wonder in equal measure. Lucretius offers a classic example of the fear caused by active volcanoes when he recounts an eruption of Etna:

nunc ratio quae sit, per fauces montis ut Aetnae
expirent ignes interdum turbine tanto,
expediam. neque enim mediocri clade coorta
flammea tempestas Siculum dominata per agros
finitimis ad se convertit gentibus ora,
fumida cum caeli scintillare omnia templa
cernentes pavida complebant pectora cura,
quid moliretur rerum natura novarum. (Lucr. 6, 639–46)[9]

"Now I shall explain the reason why fires are exhaled sometimes in so great a whirlwind through the jaws of Mount Etna. For a fiery storm, after breaking out with no ordinary destruction and having reigned throughout the fields of Sicily, turned to itself the eyes of neighbouring peoples, when, perceiving all the regions of the

7 Text of Virgil: Mynors 1969. All translations my own unless otherwise indicated.

8 See too Leroux 2004, 59 on these points. Ameduri, in this volume, suggests that the Enceladus myth at lines 578–82 may console: see his chapter for further bibliography.

9 Text of Lucretius: Munro 1900.

> sky smoky and glittering, they filled their breasts with trembling anxiety about what new things nature was preparing."

Lucretius demystifies the workings of Etna in an effort to dispel such fears (6, 647–702), but volcanic places remain full of terrible sights, smells, and sounds. In demythologising writers such as Lucretius and others who reenchant the environment, they maintain a seemingly unbreakable connection with monstrous violence.[10]

Dangerous Places for Love in the *Metamorphoses*

Ovid's longest descriptions of volcanoes appear in the *Metamorphoses*, an unsurprising fact given the extent to which the poem deploys imagery of nature as meaningful settings for stories of transformation. In his pioneering work *Landscape in Ovid's Metamorphoses*, Charles Segal (1969, 12) commented that "The external landscape corresponds to an inner landscape, a realm where normally repressed impulses are made visible and possible". He was talking about the *locus amoenus*, a highly artificial domain where libidinal pressures may be released, and although he recognised that this space had "chaotic and violent" aspects, he focused on its aesthetically pleasing dimensions and its role as a unifying motif. Volcanic environments are never pleasant or positive in the *Metamorphoses*, even when Pythagoras uses Etna as one of his examples of how everything in nature is subject to change – Etna will not erupt forever (15, 340–55).[11] Pythagoras' first hypothesis reproduces the monstrosity of Typhoeus or Enceladus in a new quasi-Stoic guise:

> *nam sive est animal tellus et vivit habetque*
> *spiramenta locis flammam exhalantia multis,*
> *spirandi mutare vias, quotiensque movetur,*
> *has finire potest, illas aperire cavernas…* (Ov. *met.* 15, 342–45)

> "For whether the earth is an animal and lives and has breathing holes that exhale flame in many locations, and it can change its airways, and as often as it moves, can close these caverns, open up those ones…"[12]

Instead of the local terror caused by a Titan in Sicily, Pythagoras posits the unsettling vision of an entire earth that can open pathways to fiery chaos anywhere it chooses. Although condensed versions of Lucretius' explanations for volcanic activity follow (Ov. *met*. 15, 346–55; cf. Lucr. 6, 647–702), the glimmer of an animated, dangerous earth never quite leaves Pythagoras' account. His final explanation speculates that Etna's fires are caused by fuels such as sulphur and bitumen and that when the earth stops providing these foods, "her voracious nature will lack her own nourishment, and she will not bear hunger and, deserted, she will desert her fires" (*naturaeque suum nutrimen deerit edaci, / non feret illa famem desertaque deseret ignis*, 354–55). There is slippage between Etna, the earth, and fire in Pythagoras' account of the volcano so that it is not clear which is the subject of these final lines, but they seem to take us back to the animal earth who moves and changes her form at will.

Earlier depictions of Mount Etna in the *Metamorphoses* similarly emphasise its monstrous, terrifying aspects. Two of these appear in narratives of erotic desire. In Book 5, following the tale of the Gigantomachy

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10 For Virgil's remythologisation of Lucretius' Etna, see Gale 2000, 120–23.

11 cf. too *met*. 15, 296—06, likely a reference to the eruption of Methana near Troezen in the 3rd century BCE.

12 Text of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: Tarrant 2004; *Ars Amatoria* and *Remedia Amoris*, Kenney 1994; *Heroides*, Knox 1995.

told by a daughter of Pierus (318–31), Calliope takes up the story, maintaining her predecessor's focus on Typhoeus. The muse introduces Sicily as the place where Pluto abducted Proserpina and makes Mount Etna a site of desire and violence before the narrative locates the abduction at a *locus amoenus*, Lake Pergus near Henna (385–92).[13] She describes Typhoeus pinned down by the island's three points. Mount Etna weighs down his head:

> *sub qua resupinus harenas*
> *eiectat flammamque ferox vomit ore Typhoeus.*
> *saepe remoliri luctatur pondera terrae*
> *oppidaque et magnos devolvere corpore montes:*
> *inde tremit tellus, et rex pavet ipse silentum,*
> *ne pateat latoque solum retegatur hiatu*
> *inmissusque dies trepidantes terreat umbras*. (Ov. *met.* 5, 352–58)
>
> "On his back under this mountain, fierce Typhoeus throws up sand and vomits flame from his mouth. Often, he strives to push away the weight of the earth and to roll the towns and huge mountains with his body: then the ground trembles, and the king of the silent ones fears lest the land be thrown open with a wide gash and daylight, let in, scares the fluttering shades."

Typhoeus is a latent threat to the surrounding landscape and human civilisation (*oppida*, 355), but he is an alarming presence even to those already dead and the king of the underworld, whose fears of exposure hark back to Homer: as the gods prepared to fight, Poseidon shook the earth, causing Hades to cry out for fear that it might break open (Hom. *Il*. 20, 56–65; cf. Verg. *Aen*. 8, 241–46). In Ovid's redevelopment, Pluto emerges to check Sicily's foundations. It is then that Erycinian Venus sees Pluto and urges Cupid to make him fall in love with his niece (362–84). Mount Etna's main narrative role is to get Pluto out of the underworld so that he can be shot with Cupid's arrows, but its rugged terrain performs an additional function.

Pluto's fear lest light enter his dark realm through a cleft in the earth is highly suggestive of the rape that follows. This penetration of light into dark spaces anticipates the *Phoebeos ... ictus* (*met*. 5, 389) from which the lake's forest glade will provide protection: critics have noted how these phallic rays portend the forthcoming sexual violence.[14] The word *hiatus* strengthens these connotations of sexual penetration as the term could refer to female genitalia.[15] Before the treacherously pleasant Henna traps Proserpina, Etna prefigures the narrative's sexual violence and creates an atmosphere of foreboding.[16] Supporting this reading is the fact that Ovid departs from his version of the story in the *Fasti*, where Mount Etna only enters the narrative once Ceres is searching for her daughter. To aid her search, she

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13 Hinds 1987, 26 draws attention to the generic nature of the pleasant landscape surrounding the lake ("the concentration on these elements [scil. 'lake, trees, flowers, and cool shade'] immediately suggests that the writer is working very much in a literary tradition of stereotyped beautiful landscapes…"), but he appreciates (pp. 27–8) that Ovid's description may incorporate specific details about Henna: its flowers (5.390–1) are also noted at Cic. *Verr*. 2, 4, 107 and Diod. Sic. 5, 3, 2–3. On Ovid's stylised *loci amoeni*, see too Segal 1969, 5–9.

14 See Segal 1969, 54; cf. Hinds 1987, 30–33. Parry 1964, 277 comments more broadly that in Ovid's pastoral landscapes "The sun frequently is suggestive of danger, a source of violence and destruction."

15 Cf. Mart. 3, 72, 5: *infinite lacerum patet inguen hiatu*; Priap. 12, 13: *qui tanto patet indecens hiatu*; Claud. *carm. min*. 43, 7: *spurcos avidae lambit meretricis hiatus*; see Adams 1982, 95–96. See too Salzman-Mitchell 2005, on *coit* at Ov. *met*. 5.410 and on 420–24, when Pluto strikes and penetrates Cyane's pool with his sceptre.

16 See Segal 1969, 18 and Parry 1964, 275–82, who comments at p. 278: "Raw sexual passion is most appositely indulged against a background of virginal wilderness, the harsh untrodden terrain where elemental human appetency and crude nature are in closest conjunction."

lights her torches in the volcano's fires (*fast.* 4, 491–94; cf. the same moment at *met.* 5, 441–43). The presence of Etna in the story at this early juncture heightens the sense of danger by foregrounding the theme of impending violence.

Similar themes emerge in Book 13, where Mount Etna's most famous inhabitant, Polyphemus, attempts to woo the sea-nymph Galatea. In a parodic reworking of Theocritus' *Idyll* 11, Ovid marries the themes of bucolic and elegiac love with the violence of the epic monster.[17] Although the story unfolds near the volcano, its main setting is a rocky shore. Galatea recalls that she was reclining in the lap of her lover Acis beneath a rock when she heard Polyphemus singing from high on a cliff (778–89). Up until this point in the story, Polyphemus has been apparently softened by love, but he concludes his song with an eruption of passion:

> *ille tamen placeatque sibi placeatque licebit,*
> *quod nollem, Galatea, tibi; modo copia detur:*
> *sentiet esse mihi tanto pro corpore vires!*
> *viscera viva traham divulsaque membra per agros*
> *perque tuas spargam (sic se tibi misceat!) undas.*
> *uror enim, laesusque exaestuat acrius ignis,*
> *cumque suis videor translatam viribus Aetnen*
> *pectore ferre meo, nec tu, Galatea, moveris.* (Ov. *met.* 13, 862–69)
>
> "Nevertheless, he may please himself and, I'll allow – though I don't want to – that he may please you too, Galatea; just let him give me the chance: he'll see that I have strength in proportion to so great a body! I'll drag his still living innards and mangled limbs through the fields and I will strew them through your waves (in this way let him mingle with you!). For I am burning, and a stirred fire blazes up more fiercely, and I seem to carry in my breast Mount Etna, transferred with its violence, and you, Galatea, are not moved."

The volcanic *locus horridus* is metaphorically transferred into Polyphemus' *pectus*. Building up to this moment, his threats against Acis echo volcanic discourse. Acis' 'entrails' and 'torn apart' limbs could be the insides of the mountain (cf. Verg. *Aen*. 3, 575: *avulsaque viscera montis*). Dragging these parts through the fields re-enacts the flow of lava (recall Lucr. 6, 642: *Siculum dominata per agros*; cf. "Etna surging from its broken furnaces to boil over the Cyclops' fields and hurl balls of fire and molten rocks": *Cyclopum effervere in agros / vidimus undantem ruptis fornacibus Aetnam, / flammarumque globos liquefactaque volvere saxa*, Verg. *georg*. 1, 471–73). The fact that Galatea is not *moved* by his erupting emotions upends volcanic norms: the angry monster typically does move the earth around him.[18]

The Cyclopes have long been seen as physical manifestations of volcanoes, with their single round eyes standing for fiery craters and other aspects of volcanic activity.[19] Ovid's Polyphemus is no less entwi-

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17 Polyphemus reappears in his proper epic guise in Book 14, where he roams Etna and tries to hurl rocks at Ulysses' parting ship (181–90). On the blurring of genres in this episode, see, e.g., Farrell 1992; Briguglio 2015, and Labate 2012, for whom the emotion of jealousy is also central to Polyphemus' wild monstrosity.

18 Cf. *quotiensque movetur*, Ov. *met*. 15, 344; Lucr. 6, 667; *Aetna* 92–93; and Sen. *epist*. 79, 7: *Aut ego te non novi aut Aetna tibi salivam movet*.

19 See Bérard 1902, 114–79, who located Homer's Cyclopes in the volcanic region surrounding Naples. See too Sigurdsson 1999, 16. Cusset 2004, 50–51 objects that although the Homeric Cyclopes live in a mountainous place (and mountains were associated with wildness), it is not identified and cannot be connected with volcanic mountains securely (see too Aguirre and Buxton 2020, 47–48); Theocritus' Polyphemus lives at Mount Etna (*id*. 11, 44–8) and, like Ovid's, embodies the mountain: Cusset 2004, 53 comments that Theocritus makes Polyphemus "une sorte de double de la montaigne qui l'abrite".

ned with the natural environment, physically and emotionally.[20] The Cyclops is jealous, and Mount Etna is in sympathy with the terrible intensity of his emotion. In her study of jealousy in Roman love elegy, Ruth Caston (2006, 11) has drawn attention to how often the verb *laedere* ('to wound' or 'to trouble') appears in representations of this emotion.[21] The phrase *laesusque exaestuat acrius ignis* refers to a fire being stirred to make it blaze more and to the wounded flame of jealousy that sparks greater erotic desire. Polyphemus' response to this emotion is not typical of the elegiac tradition: Caston (2006, 93–112) demonstrates that the jealous elegiac male lover rarely gives in to the impulse to retaliate through physical violence against the beloved or the rival. Male lovers who resort to violence, especially against a beloved, are characterised as *rusticus* (Prop. 2, 5, 25; Tib. 1, 10, 51), in contrast with the restraint of the elegiac lover. The Ovidian *amator* departed from this norm by striking his beloved in *Amores* 1, 7 (recalled at *Ars Amatoria* 2, 169–76). It is likely, nonetheless, that Polyphemus' jealous violence against his rival Acis is a component of his *rusticus* character, established earlier in the story.[22] It is also indicative of the extent to which Ovid has blurred the Theocritean lover with the violent epic monster.

After his song concludes, jealous Polyphemus sees the lovers and bellows threats against them. Galatea recalls: "As great a voice as an angered Cyclops ought to have, he had: Etna shook with noise" (*tantaque vox, quantam Cyclops iratus habere / debuit, illa fuit: clamore perhorruit Aetne,* 876–77). Etna shudders in response to the sheer strength of Polyphemus' roar – the Cyclops is able to move mountains – but it is also another *expression* of the environment in sympathy with the monster's emotions, what Ruskin might call a pathetic fallacy. As angry as a Cyclops, Etna enters the action directly. Polyphemus pursues Acis and "throws a piece wrenched from the mountain" (*partemque e monte revulsam / mittit*, 882–83). The chunk of earth temporarily crushes his rival. The mountain is not named but Etna's presence only a few lines earlier makes it probable that it is the peak in question. The volcano becomes a physical instrument of Polyphemus' violent jealousy, underlining the blurring of boundaries between monster and volcano and Etna's agency in the narrative.

Internal Eruptions in Ovid's Erotic Works

Having explored how volcanoes and erotic desire are intertwined in passages that detail natural environments inhabited by gods and monsters, I shall now turn to some briefer examples from Ovid's earlier works where his focus was more squarely on the human.[23] In Book 3 of the *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid instructs women how to catch and keep a man and advises them about communicating with their lover via letters. If she is not careful, there is a danger that the woman's *vir* will find out about her letters as these can fall into the hands of treacherous slaves. The *praeceptor* warns:

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20 Aguirre and Buxton 2020, 60 make the same point, highlighting the "temperamental affinity, and even identity" between Polyphemus and his environment. Segal 1969, 15 notices how the Cyclops is *ipsis / horrendus silvis* (13, 759–60) and has hair on his shoulders *ut lucus* (13, 845). Cf., how the mountains and waves *feel* his song: *senserunt toti pastoria sibila montes, / senserunt undae*, 13, 785–86.

21 Caston 2006, 11 notes that *livor* (a bluish discolouration, 'bruise' or 'envy') appears in many representations of jealousy, an indication of the emotion's violent potential.

22 See, e.g., his attempts to preen himself at 765–67 where a hoe (*rastrum*) serves as a comb for his shaggy hair and a reaping hook (*falx*) as a razor for his beard.

23 I lack the space to consider another mention of Etna in what may be termed an erotic context at *trist*. 5, 2, 75 (*vel rapidae flammis urar patienter in Aetnae*). *trist*. 5, 2 is addressed to Ovid's wife but this part of the poem, which may be a separate piece, is directly addressed to Augustus.

perfidus ille quidem, qui talia pignora servat,
sed tamen Aetnaei fulminis instar habent.
vidi ego pallentes isto terrore puellas[24]
servitium miseras tempus in omne pati. (Ov. *ars* 3, 489–88)

"He is untrustworthy indeed, who keeps such pledges, but nevertheless they have the likeness of Etna's thunderbolt. I have seen girls pale with terror of that, wretchedly suffering slavery forever."

Etna was considered the source of Jupiter's thunderbolts, whether they were made by the Cyclopes in their forge (*Aetna* 36–40; Cic. *div*. 2, 44; cf. Prop. 3, 17, 21) or comprised the remnants of those thrown by the god in his battle with Typhoeus (Apollod. *bibl*. 1, 6, 3; cf. Ov. *fast*. 1, 573–4). There was a common belief – derided by Cicero at *div*. 2, 44 – that Jupiter used his thunderbolts to punish the wicked.[25] The *praeceptor* briefly invokes the mountain, therefore, to add quasi-religious *gravitas* to the fear of discovery that the woman will experience rather than as a metaphor for her emotional state per se (as we saw with Polyphemus at *met*. 13, 867–69), but the image relies upon the anxieties caused by these fiery forces of the natural world.

A volcanic environment provokes a different kind of erotic anxiety earlier in the poem when the *praeceptor* advises the male would-be lover that gatherings of women make good hunting grounds (*femineos coetus venatibus aptos*, Ov. *ars* 1, 253):

quid referam Baias praetextaque litora velis[26]
et quae de calido sulphure fumat aqua?
hinc aliquis vulnus referens in pectore dixit
'non haec, ut fama est, unda salubris erat.'
ecce, suburbanae templum nemorale Dianae
partaque per gladios regna nocente manu,
illa, quod est virgo, quod tela Cupidinis odit,
multa dedit populo vulnera, multa dabit. (Ov. *ars* 1, 255–62)

"Why should I recount Baiae and its shores bordered with sails, and the water that smokes with hot sulphur? Bringing back from this place a wound in his breast someone said, 'That water was not, as rumour had it, healthy.' What about the woodland temple of suburban Diana and the kingdoms gained through swords by guilty hand? As she is a virgin, as she hates the weapons of Cupid, she has given and will give our people many wounds."

Everyone knew that Baiae was *the* place for love: Propertius warns Gallus to keep an eye on his beloved Hylas as he "stroll[s] the edges of the Giants' shore" (*Gigantei spatiabere litoris ora*, 1, 20, 9) lest some nymphs – flesh-and-blood Roman girls on the prowl – steal the boy away.[27] They also knew that the thermal-mineral springs on the Bay of Naples were connected to the area's volcanoes (Str. 5, 6; Vitr. 2, 6). The volcanic subtext of lines 255–58 is clearer still when it is recognised that this passage wryly reverses the impact of Grattius' healing landscapes in the *Cynegetica,* a poem about 'happy arts for hunters' (*laetas venantibus*

24 Following Gibson 2003 ad loc, I prefer *pallentes* to Kenney's (1994) *fallentes*.

25 E.g., Salmoneus was struck down by a thunderbolt for his hubris in attempting to rival Jupiter: Verg. *Aen*. 6, 585–94; Apollod. *bibl*. 1, 9, 7–8; Diod. Sic. 6, 7, 1–3.

26 I follow Hollis 1977, 88 in preferring *velis* to *Bais*.

27 Cf. Cicero's use of Clodia's visits to Baiae to condemn her sexual licentiousness (*Cael*. 35, 38, 47).

artis, 1; cf. Ov. *ars* 1, 253 above).[28] Grattius is advising the trainee hunter how to treat diseases affecting dogs, and one of the avenues for healing is a visit to the same woodland rites of Diana mentioned by Ovid (*spicatasque faces sacrum ad nemorale Dianae*, Gratt. 484).[29] The other is a visit to an apparent *locus horridus*, a sanctuary of Vulcanus at Mount Etna:[30] he describes a vast cavern surrounded by dark woods (*atrae … silvae*, 431) and "streams which have burst from its scorched jaws" (*ruptique ambustis faucibus amnes,* 432). This overtly volcanic locale features stagnant pools of an oily bituminous substance ("still pools lie slick with live oil in their veins": *stagna sedent venis oleoque madentia vivo*, 434), which, along with the god's favour, will treat the mange-afflicted dog and his despairing owner.[31] Grattius' Etna, though a potentially fear-inducing place, has the capacity to heal, but Ovid's Baiae wounds despite its pleasant aspect. The heat of the waters at Baiae evoke the 'fires of love' but, through the passage's metaphors of wounding and ill-health, this volcanic landscape is rendered dangerous.

The *praeceptor* of the *Ars* used volcanic imagery to warn about love's dangers, but in *Remedia Amoris* he turns his attention to recovery. One of the strategies he counsels is that the lover should deceive others, and eventually himself, about his true emotions. Mount Etna is deployed to teach him how to do this:

> *quod siquid praecepta valent mea, siquid Apollo*
> *utile mortales perdocet ore meo,*
> *quamvis infelix media torreberis Aetna,*
> *frigidior glacie fac videare tuae.*
> *et sanum simula nec, si quid forte dolebis,*
> *sentiat, et ride, cum tibi flendus eris.* (Ov. *rem.* 489–94)
>
> "But if my teachings are worth anything, or if Apollo teaches mortals anything useful by my mouth, however much you are roasting in Etna's middle, unhappy one, make it so that you seem colder than ice to your girl: pretend to be sane and, if you really are upset, don't let her see it, and smile, though you would weep for yourself."

The volcanic fires of love act as an external force surrounding the lover as though he were an Empedocles who had jumped into Etna, but the mountain also represents the emotions themselves as they boil away within his breast – much like Polyphemus' did. The *praeceptor* suggests that the emotions are wild things that must be caged, and in this one can perceive not only the shadow of Typhoeus trapped beneath Etna but also a Platonic understanding of the desires and appetites as the 'beasts within'.[32] To achieve rational good health (*sanum*, 493; cf. *qui poterit sanum fingere, sanus erit*, 504), the lover must keep these emotions caged beneath a cool exterior. The contrast between inner fires and icy exterior had been an element of Etna's literary representation since Pindar, who introduced the mountain as "snowy Etna, nurse of dazzling snow all the year" (νιφόεσσ' Αἴτνα, πάνετες χιόνος ὀξείας τιθήνα, *Pyth*. 1, 20) before describing the fires that issue from it (lines 21–26).[33] The contrast reflects the material reality of a mountain often still covered with

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28 As argued by Sala in an unpublished paper. On Ovid's wider engagement with Grattius' *Cynegtica* in the *Ars Amatoria* see Tsaknaki 2018.

29 Diana's cult site near Aricia was on the shore of the *Speculum Dianae* ('Mirror of Diana'), a volcanic lake, but it is not clear that Grattius or Ovid were aware of this. For the site's activity, which resulted in spillovers of the lake during Roman history, see De Benedetti et al. 2008.

30 In comparison, Aelian does not pick out any features with the potential to cause fear when he describes Etna's temple of Hephaestus (*NA* 11, 3).

31 For the presence of these substances at Etna, see *Aetna* 390–95 and Ov. *met*. 15, 350–51.

32 See, e.g., Pl. *resp*. 588c–591c; Arist. *En* 1118a16–25.

33 cf. Theoc. *id*. 11, 47–48.

snow. With a subtle nod to Etna's mythological monster and knowledge of its real landscape, Ovid provides philosophically informed advice for the lover desperate to set aside his love.

A final passage wields the *horridus* qualities of the volcanic environment to greater effect than others in this section. In *Heroides* 15, Sappho addresses her male lover Phaon, who has rejected her and moved to Sicily. Much like the story of Polyphemus and his volcanic emotions, the poem depicts a natural environment in sympathy with the protagonist. For example, Sappho recalls going to a grove where she and Phaon used to meet and searching for some reminder of their happiness, but the disenchanted *nemus* only reflects her stark grief back at her: branches have laid aside their foliage and the birds are all silent except for the nightingale, the Daulian bird who weeps for her son Itys (150–56).[34] A similar affinity is apparent when Sappho proclaims the intensity of her desire:[35]

> *uror ut, indomitis ignem exercentibus Euris,*
> *fertilis accensis messibus ardet ager.*
> *arva, Phaon, celebras diversa Typhoidos Aetnae;*
> *me calor Aetnaeo non minor igne tenet*. (Ov. *epist.* 15, 9–12)
>
> "I burn, as the fertile field blazes when its crops are set alight and untamed southeast winds drive the fire. You frequent the far-off fields of Typhon's Etna, Phaon: heat holds me, one no less than Etna's fire."

Sappho first compares the heat of her desire to a part of nature that is coded as feminine in the literary tradition, a fertile field. That Phaon 'frequents' the fields surrounding Etna is an acknowledgement that her lover has moved on to greener pastures (cf. ll. 51–55), but, given the propensity of Etna to destroy fields (Lucr. 6, 642, Verg. *georg*. 1, 471–73, and Ov. *met*. 13, 865), it is possible to construe this line as a threat.

Sappho, therefore, takes on the kind of monstrous qualities associated with Typhon and Polyphemus. Like the Cyclops, she burns with a desire that is alloyed with a blazing jealous anger. Her volcanic emotion is unusual in terms of gender – in the other examples examined it has been a male who burns with volcanic fire or controls its dangerous force.[36] The Sappho of *Heroides* 15 has been seen as 'mannish', and her association with volcanic fire may support her characterisation as a transgressor of gender and sexual boundaries.[37] However, the spark of jealous anger is well in keeping with the potential violence that always seems to accompany the metaphor of the volcanic fires of desire. Its violence may affect Phaon, but the poem suggests that it is more likely to rebound upon Sappho. Ovid constructs a Sappho who has been maddened by the experience of rejection, and, following Menander's *Leukadia* (F 258 Koerte), he implies that her destructive desire will lead her to kill herself by taking the nymph's advice to throw herself from the Leucadian cliffs (*epist*. 15, 163–80).

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34 Comparing the silence but for the halcyon's song at Ov. *epist*. 18, 79–82, Rosati 1996, 213 comments "Nature shows its sympathies with Sappho's sufferings…. The absence of the song of birds is one example of nature's Mitempfindung with the protagonist's fate."

35 The poem's authorship has been doubted, most influentially by Tarrant 1981. For an overview of the question (from the perspective of Ovidian authorship), see Thorsen 2014, 96–122, as well as Rosati 1996 and Hallet 2005.

36 It is, after all, a male (*perfidus ille*) who has possession of the writing tablets at *ars* 3, 489–90.

37 E.g., Gordon 1997, 275 comments: "Ovid's treatment of Sappho fits a pattern that emerges when we view the treatment of female homoeroticism in Roman literature in general. Almost all tribades (women who desire other women) who appear in ancient Latin texts are explicitly masculinized, sometimes so radically that their very bodies become male." See too Hallet 2005.

Conclusion

This chapter has tried to demonstrate that Ovid employs the unusual metaphor of the volcanic fires of love in contexts where there is some danger – to sexual modesty or reputation, to mental health, or even to life itself. Mount Etna and other sites of volcanic activity had a variety of mythological associations, but Ovid tends to draw upon their connection with Typhoeus most often, creating a sense of latent violence, and if he does invoke the Cyclopes, it is not in their guise as a positive creative force but as the creators of Jupiter's punishing thunderbolt. Whether his tone is more light-hearted, as in the *Ars Amatoria* and *Remedia Amoris*, or more sombre as in the *Heroides*, the image of the volcano allows Ovid to paint erotic desire as a powerful natural force that can have devastating effect. Ovid's depiction of the volcanic environment is most detailed in the *Metamorphoses*, the latest of the works under investigation. Whether as the portentous setting for Proserpina's rape or as a metaphor for the desire and jealous anger boiling in Polyphemus, the volcanic environment and its wild forces suit the poem's constant refrain that desire always has the potential to tip into violence. Volcanic environments allow Ovid to explore Roman anxieties about the forces of nature and the forces of desire within – Etna and desire both cause tremors.

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