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Speech, Silence, and Gender in the Hermaphroditus Myth of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (4.274-388)

1. Daphne transformed: Ovid *Metamorphoses* 1.567.

adnuit utque caput uisa est agitasse cacumen.

She agreed and seemed to shake her treetop like a head.

2. Io transformed: 1.467-650.

*si modo verba sequantur;
 oret opem nomenque suum casusque loquatur;
 littera pro verbis, quam pes in pulvere duxit,
 corporis indicium mutati triste peregit.*

If only words could follow, she would pray for help and speak her own name and her misfortune; in the place of words, a letter, which her hoof drew in the dust, related the sad proof of her changed body.

3. One of the Minyides invites the sisters to tell stories as they weave: 4.36-41.

*e quibus una levi deducens pollice filum
 "dum cessant aliae commentaque sacra frequentant,
 nos quoque, quas Pallas, melior dea, detinet" inquit,
 "utile opus manuum vario sermone levemus
 perque vices aliquid, quod tempora longa videri
 non sinat, in medium vacuas referamus ad aures!"*

One of them, drawing the thread with a light thumb, said, "While the other women go and frequent these made-up rites, let us too, whom Pallas Athena, the better goddess, occupies, lighten the useful work of our hands with various talk, and in turns let us bring to idle ears, out in the open, something to make the time seem like it's not dragging."

4. Alcithoë expresses her purpose in choosing the Salmacis and H. myth: 4.284.

dulcique animos novitate tenebo.

And I will capture your attention with sweet novelty.

5. Alcithoë's ring structure of silence: 4.274, 4.389.

postquam siluere sorores..., "After the sisters fell silent..."
finis erat dictis..., "That was the end of her story..."

6. Salmacis' direct speech:

A) to proposition Hermaphroditus: 4.320-328;

*'puer o dignissime credi
esse deus, seu tu deus es, potes esse Cupido,
sive es mortalis, qui te genuere, beati,
et frater felix, et fortunata profecto,
si qua tibi soror est, et quae dedit ubera nutrix;
sed longe cunctis longeque beatior illa, (325)
si qua tibi sponsa est, si quam dignabere taeda.
haec tibi sive aliqua est, mea sit furtiva voluptas,
seu nulla est, ego sim, thalamumque ineamus eundem.'*

“You, boy, most worthy of being believed a god, if you are a god, you can be Cupid, or if you are mortal, blessed are those who gave you birth, and lucky is your brother, and fortunate indeed is any sister you might have and the nurse who gave you her breast. But far and away beyond all, more blessed is she who is your wife, if you have one, if you’ve deemed any worthy of the marriage torch. If you have any wife, let me be your secret desire, or if you don’t, let me be she, and let us enter into the same bedchamber.”

B) to feign a departure to mollify H.: 4.337-338;

*Salmacis extimuit 'loca' que 'haec tibi libera trado,
hospes. "*

Salmacis was frightened and said, “I leave these places to you free, guest.”

C) to declare victory: 4.356;

'vicimus et meus est' exclamat nais...

“We have won and he is mine,” exclaims the nymph...

D) and to taunt Hermaphroditus and to pray to the gods that they be joined: 4.370-372.

*'pugnes licet, inprobe,' dixit,
'non tamen effugies. ita, di, iubeatis, et istum
nulla dies a me nec me deducat ab isto.'*

“You can fight, wicked boy,” she said, “but you will not escape. Order it so, gods, and let no day separate him from me nor me from him.”

7. Salmacis and other aggressors in the *Met.*:

A) Jupiter addresses Io: 1.589;

*'o virgo Iove **digna** tuoque **beatum**
nescio quem factura toro...'*

“Oh, virgin worthy of Jove, and about to make someone blessed with your bed...”

B) Tereus exclaims that he has won: 6.513;

'vicimus!' exclamat, 'mecum mea vota feruntur!'

“We have won!” he exclaims, “I carry with me the object of my prayers.”

C) and Canens promises that she will get Picus someday: 14.533.

'non' ait 'effugies, vento rapiare licebit...'

“You will not escape,” she said, “though you be taken away by the wind.”

8. Hermaphroditus' direct speech:

A) to ask Salmacis to stop kissing and groping him: 4.336:

'desinis, an fugio tecumque' ait 'ista relinquo?'

“Will you stop, or will I flee and leave these places and you?”

B) to pray to his parents to enchant the pool of water: 4.382-386.

sed iam non voce virili

Hermaphroditus ait: 'nato date munera vestro,

et pater et genetrix, amborum nomen habenti:

quisquis in hos fontes vir venerit, exeat inde (385)

semivir et tactis subito mollescat in undis!'

But in a voice that was already not masculine, Hermaphroditus said, “Give to your son this gift, father and mother, your son who has both your names: any man who comes into these waters, let him leave from there a half-man and softened suddenly by the touch of the water!”

9. Salmacis' silence: 4.329.

nais ab his tacuit.

The nymph fell silent after these words.

10. Salmacis resumes her overture: 4.334-335.

poscenti nymphae sine fine sororia saltem

oscula iamque manus ad eburnea colla ferenti...

To the nymph as she **asked without end** for at least sisterly kisses and now brought her hands to his ivory neck...

11. Salmacis admires the blush on Hermaphroditus' face: 4.329-332.

pueri rubor ora notavit;

nescit, enim, quid amor; sed et erubuisse decebat:

hic color aprica pendentibus arbore pomis

aut ebori tincto est aut sub candore rubenti,

cum frustra resonant aera auxiliaria, lunae.

A blush marked the boy's face; for he didn't know what love was, but the blush still became him. This is the color of apples hanging from an airy tree, or of painted ivory or of the eclipsed moon, red under the whiteness, when bronze meant to aid resounds in vain.

12. Alcithoë engages in *praeteritio*: 4.276-284.

“vulgatos taceo” dixit “pastoris amores

Daphnidis Idaei, quem nymphe paelicis ira

*contulit in saxum: tantus dolor urit amantes;
 nec loquor, ut quondam naturae iure novato
 ambiguus fuerit modo vir, modo femina Sithon. (280)
 te quoque, nunc adamas, quondam fidissime parvo,
 Celmi, Iovi largoque satos Curetas ab imbri
 et Crocon in parvos versum cum Smilace flores
 praetereo dulcique animos novitate tenebo."*

She said, "**I am silent** about the well-known loves of the shepherd Daphnis of Ida, whom the nymph, in anger at a rival, turned into stone; so great a pain sets lovers on fire. **Nor do I speak** how at one point, with the law of nature altered, Sithon was ambiguous, at one point a man, at another a woman. You too, Celmis, now adamant, once most faithful to the young Jove, and the Curetes sown from a large rain-storm, and Crocus, turned into small flowers with Smilax, **I pass by**, and I will capture your attention with sweet novelty."

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