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A Contest for the Control of Ideological Space in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* XI 146–94: Apollo/Augustus, Pan, and an Allegory of the Romanization of Hellenistic Lydia

Introduction

It is now common,[1] but still meaningful, to note that for all mythologies space is a non-neutral cultural construct; space and items in it have a multiplicity of meanings that are created and negotiated in many ways.[2] A landscape is a social construct[3] that "overlaps, connects, puts in relation and contextualizes [. . .] in a human dimension, through its connection with territorial appropriations, the political assets [. . .], the construction of ideologies, the elaboration of divine pantheons or of folkloric narrative".[4] Of course, elements in a landscape often have, in myths, the added potential of becoming actual actors in narrative constructions – they become more than their objective reality, allegorically and metonymically embodying larger social ideas.

In this paper, I shall analyze some constituent features of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* XI, 146–194: the musical contest of Pan and Apollo in Lydia, at the presence of the mountain Tmolus, personified, and King Midas. In this tale natural features play a fundamental role in the development and resolution of the events; it is natural to wonder at the socio-cultural implications of these elements, especially if we consider that Ovid's poetry, always allusive, invites the reading of its "hyperanthropomorphic divinities as embodying contemporary concerns – political [. . .] psychological and social".[5] It has been long recognized that the *Metamorphoses* conceal allusions to the political reality of Augustan Rome, the Palatine and Augustus

1 Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the 2019 Annual CLARE Graduate Student Symposium (April 16th, 2019) and at a graduate seminar at the Dpt. of Classics & Religion, University of Calgary, that I co-led with dr. Matthew Loar (Washington and Lee University) on October 25th, 2019. I wish to thank the participants to both those events, as well as the co-panelists, moderators and public of the *Naming and Mapping the Gods* Conference (2020/2021) for their comments and suggestions. The usual disclaimers apply.

2 Cf. Gilhuly/Worman 2014, 1–2.

3 *Ibid.*, 4.

4 Cardete del Olmo 2016, 33; the translation of the original Spanish is my own.

5 Miller 2009, 349.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110798432-034

himself as associated with Apollo and Jupiter, and that such political readings are triggered by "imperial symbols" and allusions.[6] Why should we not then consider also geographical settings and natural features as being loaded with, and exploited in a multi-layered network of coexisting cultural symbolic values?

Here, I explore the implications of the contest episode as a multi-level literary and historical allegory, involving the relationship between Apollo and Augustus; I will suggest an innovative reading of the invention and structuring of the contest episode as an allegory of the history of the Romanization of Asia Minor.

The argumentation of this contribution is organized into 7 sections, followed by a general conclusion. In the first section, I will briefly outline some relevant traditional symbolic traits that the main characters appearing in this context possess – specifically, the gods Pan and Apollo, and mountains in general. This is to showcase the repertoire of motifs Ovid could exploit. As the analysis progresses, we shall see how the traditionally established features of the characters are enriched by additional features taken, I argue, from allusions to the historical and political contexts that Ovid conceals in the narrative, thereby lending a new significance to the mythical episode. Thus, in Section 2 we shall consider some implications of the well-known association between the god Apollo and the *de facto* emperor Augustus, that was also promoted and exploited by the *princeps* himself. We shall then turn, in Section 2.1, to a structural analysis of the contest episode in *Met*. XI 146–194, teasing out characters, motifs, plot lines, and possible poetic inspirations and models for Ovid's narrative. An analysis of previous scholarship's allegorical interpretations of this episode follows in Section 2.2.

Section 2.3 brings together, into a new allegorical interpretation of the structure and meaning of this episode, both previous scholarship and my own novel interpretations of a) the Ovidian episode, with reference to his own (tendentially subversive) poetics; b) the re-semantization of mythological traits of Apollo in the Augustan age; c) the consideration of the historical context in relation to the place where the episode is set (Asia Minor) as a key to unlocking the trans-temporal allegorical power of the mythical narrative as a mock-history of Roman and Augustan control of the Province of Asia Minor and the territory of Lydia in particular. Section 2.4 summarizes this new approach to the episode into the consideration of just how Ovid could have crafted the structure of the episode. A shorter following section, 2.5, attempts to relate the implications of the mythological and textual interpretations to a facet of material evidence from Lydia – coins bearing the image of Apollo and other gods, as well as those of Augustus and other emperors. The aim of the section is to ascertain whether and to what degree my novel interpretation of Ovid's construction of the episode, as a somewhat satirical allegory of the history of the region, matches the association between gods and rulers and their perception in the region itself – rather than relying

6 *Ibid*., 350.

solely on the point of view of the poet from Sulmona. A final section offers some concluding remarks as it summarizes the main findings of this contribution.

What I hope to show is a confirmation of the complexity and endless flexibility of mythical discourse as a medium to convey social and (geo)political reflections. Agreeing with Lincoln that myths cannot be considered as simply replicating the established structures of society,[7] and also agreeing with Winkler that myths can also be used and/or appropriated by certain sectors of society to subtly criticize and make fun of ideological structures,[8] we shall see that in Ovid's case the potentials of mythical discourse with the contest episode are directed, as in many other instances in his poetry, at "pricking the bubble of authority".[9]

1 Essences, Symbols, Actors: a Survey of Gods and Natural Features

The contest between Pan and Apollo, set in Lydia (an important detail, as stated below), is an episode in which an actual mountain in the region, Tmolus (modern-day Bozdag) is animated. It is possibly split into two selves, taking a humanoid form and sitting as judge (upon itself!) between the two gods, with the famous legendary King Midas as audience. The episode can be construed as a power play between two gods, Pan and Apollo,[10] and then between the human supporter of Pan and the winning god, in defiance of the pronouncement of another quasi-divine being as a judge and Pan's formal acceptance of defeat.

Let us consider the natural features appearing in the episode in terms of cultural configurations[11] shared by ancient Greeks and Romans. Mountains had in ancient Greek and Roman cultures an attribute of perceived wildness: they were at the fringes of the human world, places where encounters with the unrestrained divine could occur, or regressions to a pre-civilized state. Mountains were also powerful symbols for autochthony, regional identity and external identification. In their non-urban, uncivilized condition, or in their use as a pasture they were usually perceived as the domain of one god: Pan, the embodied idea of the perception of wilderness and primitiveness.[12] His primary activities were hunting, singing, and shepherding. Mountains associated with him were perceived as uncultured places where shepherds and

7 Lincoln 2014, 5.

8 Winkler 1990.

9 Barchiesi 1997, 238.

10 I have published the initial outcomes of my research on the relationships not only between these two gods, but between them and Hermes too in Roccella 2019.

11 Pisano 2011, 87.

12 Cf. Borgeaud 1988, 3–6.

woodcutters would go; hunters too, and this is a shared feature with another deity sometimes associated with mountains: Apollo. His ties to mountaintops and sacred groves clearly signify the fact that "Apollo's power is recognized at the point where order is not fully established",[13] and that he was perceived to be most effective "in a boundary zone where the process of incorporation into a state of order took place".[14] In short, Apollo represents an ordering and civilizing principle. These associations were surely present to Ovid. Table 1 illustrates a series of traits that the two gods may share or not and with a few differences.[15]

Tab. 1: Mythological motifemes of Pan and Apollo on Nature/Civilization spectrum ("+" = "present", "-" = "absent"; based on Borgeaud 1988, Buxton 1992, Birge 1994, West 2003, Graf 2009, Cardete del Olmo 2016).

Motifemes	Pan	Apollo	Sphere
mountains	+	+ (Civilizing factor)	Nature
shepherding	+	+	Nature
sensuality/sexuality	+	+/- (A. has histories of unfulfilled or violent love experiences – see below – but lacks Pan's explicit sexualization)	Nature
reeds	+ (Syrinx)	–	Nature
oak (& acorns)	+ (nymph Dryope; Arcadians as *balanophagoi*, acorn-eaters)	–	Nature
pine	+	–	Nature
laurel	–	+ (Daphne)	Nature
theriomorphism	+	–	Nature
hunting/warfare	+ (primitive)	+ (sophisticated)	Nature/Civilization
sacred groves	+	+	Nature/Civilization

13 Birge 1994, 14.

14 *Ibid.*, 18.

15 Some of these traits are not exclusively associated with either Apollo or Pan. A full prospectus of the divine associations of the 'oak' or the 'mountain' motifemes for example, which are also associated with Zeus and Dionysus, would require a much broader and more extensive research. As a starting point for the study of the anthropology of mountains in Ancient Greece, see Buxton 1992. On the "Dionysization" of Pan, see Porres Caballero 2012.

Tab. 1 (continued)

Motifemes	Pan	Apollo	Sphere
music	+ (panpipe/syrinx)	+ (lyre)	Nature/Civilization
unhappy love	+ (Echo, Syrinx)	+ (Daphne)	Nature/Civilization
possession/ prophecy	+	+	Nature/Civilization
hunting/warfare	+ (primitive)	+ (sophisticated)	Nature/Civilization
healing/disease	–	+	Civilization
being cultured (clothing, ornaments, hairstyle/hair control)	–	+	Civilization

Mountains are represented in the table as a shared domain presenting an opposition between uncultured and cultured, as we can see in the hunting/warfare aspect and that of music, with the distinction between panpipes and lyre also representing an opposition of genres. The syrinx embodied the bucolic/pastoral genre[16] while Apollo's lyre had long since become a symbol for elevated poetry such as hymns and, most importantly, lyric and epic poetry. Another important symbol that distinguishes them and that will effectively become an actor in the Ovidian narrative is the reed: a panic symbol, because the syrinx is made from reeds. Oaks and acorns are also panic symbols,[17] whereas laurel is, famously, Apollo's.[18] We shall explore in the following sections how the features and associations of these gods and natural elements are employed and even assigned new meanings (much beyond their neutral appearance as natural features) in the context of the contest, with a special attention to the use of the figure of Apollo and its propagandistic use in the Augustan period.

16 This metonymical association became an unavoidable identification in literature since at least the times of Theocritus' *Idylls* (cf. Fantuzzi/Papanghelis 2006 *passim*), but it had naturally been a 'folkloric' reality since long before: see Lelli 2017, 9–41.

17 For details on the not-too-well-known association between Pan and oaks and acorns, see Borgeaud 1988, 7–8, 15, 23–24 *et passim*, and Bader 1989, 34–38.

18 Sauron 2000, in ch. VIII and IX, explores the formation of an Apollinean aesthetic based on vegetation and plant symbolism in the age of Augustus, integrating the literary perspective (Virgil and Ovid respectively in each chapter), the historical perspective (Augustus *vs*. Marc Antony), and iconography. Acanthus and laurel appear to be emblems of the Apollinenan/Augustan order, and though it is the ivy and the vine that are most explicitly Dionysiac (and thus point to Antony), also the notion of "dissymétrie" (185) and wildness appears to be anti-Augustan/Apollinean.

2 Apollo and Augustus: Public Image, Ideology, and Poetry

This second section is concerned with outlining, in very broad strokes, some features of the deep relationship between the *princeps* Augustus and the god Apollo – a relationship that can be seen as one of the many focal points in Roman history in which, for a full comprehension of the stakes, it becomes "unrealistic to try to separate out religious, political, and military elements"[19] as though they were operating in isolation from one another. Thus, we must acknowledge that in Augustan times there was an association, evident in literature and the figurative arts as well as in the political discourse, between Apollo and Augustus.[20] Augustus is known to have promoted and indeed very personally endorsed the expansion of the cult of Apollo. Suetonius tells us about Augustus tying the god to his own fortunes by erecting a temple after the victory of Actium,[21] and that among other public works he had a temple to Apollo built after a thunderstrike on his own property on the Palatine, an event interpreted by the *haruspices* as an omen (*Aug.* 29: *templum Apollinis in ea parte Palatinae domus excitauit, quam fulmine ictam desiderari a deo haruspices pronuntiarant*).[22]

I am not going to expand on this relationship as there is ample literature on the relationships between Apollo and Augustus.[23] Instead, it is useful to remember that the identification of Augustus and Apollo also had uncomfortable sides.

Of course, the identification between a ruler and a god was nothing new in the ancient Mediterranean by the end of the first millennium BCE, but it was not at all customary in Rome, where in the I century BCE it could have been seen as an act of impiety[24] and it certainly would have encountered disapproval – even by Nero's time it was still perceived as "outrageous".[25] However, the association between Augustus and Apollo was pushed to the point of impersonation by the *princeps* himself, as witnessed by the statue of Octavian with the dress and features of Apollo in the library complex next to the Palatine temple[26] (as reported by the scholiast to Hor. *Epist.* 1.3.17 and Servius on Virg. *Ecl.* 4.10).[27] Additionally, there were rumors about Augustus' infamous

19 Wiseman 1995, 13.

20 There is abundant bibliography on the ideological relationships between Augustus and Apollo; as essential references, see Gagé 1955; Zanker 1988; Sauron 1992 (513, *passim*); Barchiesi 1997; Miller 2004–2005 and 2009.

21 Suet. *Aug.* 28.

22 Text from Ihm 1908.

23 See note 20 above.

24 Champeaux 2002, 129.

25 Graf 2009, 127.

26 See also Sauron 1992, 75–76 n. 256.

27 See Bowditch 2009, 410–412.

cena [. . .] *δωδεκάθεος* ("dinner [. . .] of the 12 gods"),[28] where he reportedly impersonated Apollo in a lush feast while the city was experiencing food shortages – an Apollo *Tortor* in the eyes of the opposers.

At the same time, the *vox populi* also told a story of Apollo being Augustus' father,[29] possibly encouraged as well by the fact that Augustus' hair was *subflavum*:[30] direct divine descent is clearly a Hellenistic trope, which might not have been looked well upon by Romans. In the contest episode, *flavum* is also used by Ovid for Apollo's hair (165) and one must not forget that in the ancient world an identity of color elicits the recognition of an identity of substance, since colors in their materiality channel "fonctions sociales, et [. . .] un imaginaire affectif et collectif"[31] – some would see it not as an idle detail but as a meaningful *signum*.

Nevertheless, important values that appeared to be symbolized by Apollo in Augustan and Ovid's poetry, values very dear to Augustan propaganda, were an idea of the restraint and control over displayed wealth, an ethos of *labor*.[32] Wealth, in Augustan discourse,[33] was not to be flaunted: there had to be a degree of control and that is what opposed Rome to a perception of Hellenistic kingdoms. In fact, interpreters of the appearance of Apollo at the contest note that the appearance of the god is indeed rich as befits a deity (*Met*. XI, 165–169):

> *ille caput flavum lauro Parnaside vinctus*
> *verrit humum Tyrio saturata murice palla*
> *distinctamque fidem gemmis et dentibus Indis*
> *sustinet a laeva, tenuit manus altera plectrum;*
> *artificis status ipse fuit. [. . .]*[34]

28 Suet. *Aug*. 70: *Cena quoque eius secretior in fabulis fuit, quae uulgo δωδεκάθεος uocabatur; in qua deorum dearumque habitu discubuisse conuiuas et ipsum [scil. Augustus] pro Apolline ornatum [. . .] adclamatumque est postridie: omne frumentum deos comedisse et Caesarem esse plane Apollinem, sed Tortorem, quo cognomine is deus quadam in parte urbis colebatur*. ("There was besides a private dinner of his, commonly called that of the "twelve gods," which was the subject of gossip. At this the guests appeared in the guise of gods and goddesses, while he himself was made up to represent Apollo [. . .] and on the following day there was an outcry that the gods had eaten all the grain and that Caesar was in truth Apollo, but Apollo the Tormentor, a surname under which the god was worshipped in one part of the city". Text from Ihm 1908, transl. by Rolfe 1914).

29 Suet. *Aug*, 94.

30 Suet. *Aug*, 79.

31 Grand-Clément 2021, 296.

32 Hadjittofi 2018, 289.

33 I adopt this fortunate expression from Barchiesi 1997.

34 "He [Apollo], the blond head encircled with laurel of Parnassus, swept the ground with the mantle, dipped to the full in Tyrian purple, and holds high with the left hand the lyre, filled with gems and Indian ivory, the other hand held the plectrum. His very pose was that of an artist / he himself was the ideal condition of the artist". Text from Tarrant 2004; the translation is my own – the two options at the end of the passage show an (intentional?) ambiguity of the text, discussed below.

Each attribute, with its provenance signalled by adjectives (*Parnaside, Tyrio, Indis*) aptly summarizes the breadth of Augustus' power.[35] The detail of the golden hair of the god tied, *vinctus*, by laurel has been however recognized by previous scholarship as symbolizing a restraint and control over appearances. This attitude of restraint has been likened to Augustus' own averting the downfalls of declaring a Golden Age, because "the gold in the Golden Age was not literal, as a foolish Midas (or Hellenistic king) would have it, but a metaphor for ongoing physical and moral effort".[36] Apollo is a god who "knows how to keep the dangers of his goldenness under control",[37] unlike the famous King Midas of the Golden touch, who appears in the episode of the contest and is indeed a symbol for some tropes of Hellenistic kingship.

But a darker parallel emerges: "most of Apollo's markers of imperial authority are, at the same time, symbols of Oriental luxury and decadence".[38] The refinement in garment and clothing was also meant to contrast Pan's rusticity and savageness, but it may have also reminded of the outfit of a rich Hellenistic king. This depiction of the tropes and risks of a certain type of regal aesthetics does not only involve Apollo's attire, but it applies first and foremost to the human world in the figure of the ridiculed King Midas, the embodiment of "failed Hellenistic kingship".[39] As Hadjittofi writes: "if Ovid's myth of Midas is constructed as a joke, it is a very political joke: one that also stands as a warning against Rome's adoption of the cultural tropes and narratives of Hellenistic imperial ideology".[40]

We can imagine how this ambiguity in the significance of Apollo's dress in Ovid might have been received by Augustus while the *princeps*' own use of the iconography of Apollo on the Palatine was much more controlled, authoritarian.[41] Indeed the appearance of Apollo as he arrives at the contest has long been compared and even equated by scholars[42] to the statuary type of the *Apollo Citharoedus*, of which the now-lost possibly Skopadic cult statue that was in the temple of Apollo *Palatinus* was an example. This type is best represented by the sculpture of the *Apollo Citharoedus/Musagetes* from the II century CE (Fig. 1) that was found among the ruins of Longinus' villa near Tivoli.

Commentators recognized a play on the ambiguity of the expression *artificis status*, with an oscillation between the objective and the subjective value of the gen-

35 Miller 2009, 350.
36 Hadjittofi 2018, 289.
37 *Ibid.*, 302.
38 *Ibid.*, 301.
39 Hadjittofi 2018, 278.
40 Hadjittofi 2018, 279.
41 See Bowditch 2009, 410–428 especially.
42 Barchiesi 1997, Miller 2009, Hadjittofi 2018.

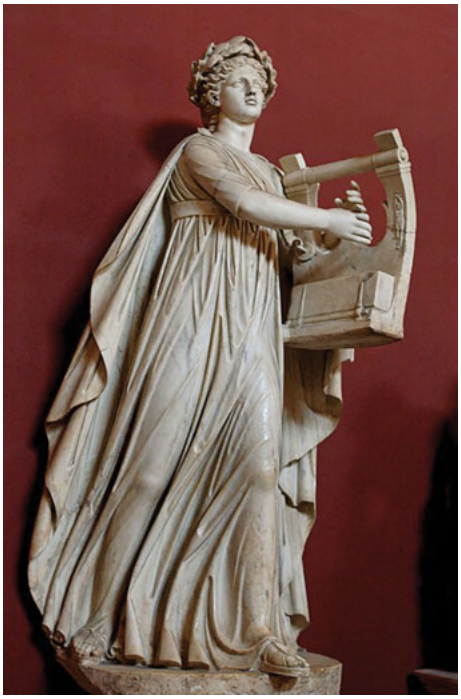

Fig. 1: Statue of *Apollo Citharoedus/Musagetes*. Museo Pio-Clementino; Hall of the Muses, Inv. 310. Photo: Public domain.

itive.[43] This ambiguity, whereby Apollo being described as an artist and at the same time possibly as a work of an artist, compels listeners and readers to think about actual works of art. Indeed, there are some similarities with the description: the hair (*caput . . . lauro . . . vinctus*); the tunic (*verrit humum . . . palla*); the playing of the lyre. However, the first element of the hair is such a topical element in the iconography of Apollo that it is scarcely an argument for the consideration of Ovid's description as an *ekphrasis* of this statuary model; the third one is decidedly different: the lyre is held by a strap in the statue and the left hand as well as the right one appears to be plucking the strings (and there is no plectrum, as opposed to the text's description). The second element, that of the vest, is actually the only point of identity, with a brief but suggestive literary *comparandum* to the realism in the rendition of the effect of wind and motion on clothing, characteristic of Skopas' style.

I think that instead a better match to Ovid's description of Apollo's arrival, when it comes to ornaments and details, is quite possibly the painted plaster of the *Apollo Citharoedus* that was found near the *Scalae Caci* on the western side of the

43 Miller 2009, 236 n. 108 and Hadjittofi 2018, 301.

Palatine Hill (Fig. 2) – stairs that were leading from the *Forum Boarium* to the House of Augustus and to the temple of Apollo.[44]

Fig. 2: Painted Plaster of *Apollo Citharoedus*, Antiquarium del Palatino, Inv. 379982. Photo: Eye Ubiquitous / Alamy Stock Photo.

Whereas the previous statue was not holding the lyre with the left hand, Apollo does that in this painting. The instrument is also adorned with gems and possibly an inlaid ivory piece. Notice the Tyrian purple dye of the mantle. *Artifex* does not exclusively mean 'sculptor': it refers to anyone who is exercising any *ars*, a technique, in general;[45] why not 'painter', too?

I do not wish to discount statuary as possible *focus* of recognition by the audience: the lost Skopadic statue of the *Apollo Citharoedus* in the Palatine temple could have been a closer match than the Tivoli one[46] – at least another model the audience could have easily recognized. However, I believe the pictorial parallel would be a better fit if we are to compare the details of it and of Ovid's text – moreover, that artwork was just as accessible to the public as the cult statue in the temple.

Thus, the text's description would have had at least two different artistic referents in the reality of the Palatine alone: one hypothetical, through the use of an example of the same sculptural type; the other from an actual artwork from the Palatine. We are not considering the countless other representations of Apollo that

44 Miller 2009, 2 presents the painting as being in the House of Augustus itself and does not make a comparison to the text discussed here.

45 *TLL*, sub voce.

46 Barchiesi 2006, 415 seems to push for the Tivoli statue.

anyone living in Rome could see in their daily life, but simply focusing on the Palatine as the *fulcrum* of the ideological appropriation of the cult of Apollo on the part of Augustus.[47]

Teasing out the most significant aspects investigated in this section, we could state that the close association (to the point of filiation or even partial identification) between Apollo and Augustus, was very much an ideological reality and a tool of the Augustan regime. This association presented advantages, but it also came with darker sides. Just as Augustus himself was aware of it and actively exploited its potential, so Ovid too would have been, like most educated Romans of his time, very much conscious of it. We have also seen that the poet did not shy away from drawing inspiration from, or in any case very likely alluding to, real-world elements like sculptures or paintings in his verbal description of a highly politicized god like Apollo in the contest episode – and as he was possibly hinting at those real-world items, he certainly knew where they were located: Augustus' grounds.

2.1 The Contest: Events, Structure, Motifs and Models

Let us now move to the events of the contest. An outline of the contest episode, with line numbers, events and motifs that appear is shown in Tab. 2:

Tab. 2: Events and motifs in the Contest episode (*Met.* XI, 146–194).

Events (*Met.* XI, 146–194)	**Motifs**
146–9: Midas flees wealth and goes to the mountains, worshipping Pan.	Midas flees to the mountains after the Golden Touch story (*Met.* XI, 85–145) is resolved; mountains as Pan's domain; Midas is still foolish. (*silvas et rura colebat / Panaque montanis habitantem semper in antris, / pingue sed ingenium mansit*).
150–2: Description of the setting – Mt. Tmolus; mention of Sardis and Hypaepa.	
153–6: Descr. of Pan's panpipe songs to nymphs, playing there (*ibi* – near Hypaepa, at the feet of Tmolus). He spurns *(contemnere)* Apollo's music, and the contest is set; Tmolus is called to be the judge.	The instrument is referred with the *pars pro toto* mention of the *harundo*, the reed. The contest is defined *inpar* (uneven) by the poet even before it begins.
157–161: Tmolus is animated. He sits and takes the pose of the judge.	Imposing height of Tmolus. Oaks and acorns surround ears and head (the mt. is inherently panic).

47 See Kellum 1985.

Tab. 2 (continued)

Events (*Met.* XI, 146–194)	Motifs
161–3: Pan plays *barbarico . . . carmine* and is pleasing to Midas, who happened to be close by when the contest takes place.	Barchiesi (2006, 416) notes that Pan would play in the Phrygian mode.
163–9: Description of the arrival of Apollo.	Apollo's attire, richly died, the refined and recherché 'international' ornaments of the instrument, his restrained and beautiful pose mark him as in another class altogether and already the winner.
169–170: Apollo starts playing a chord.	Apollo does not even play a full song/hymn.
170–1: Tmolus declares Ap. The winner and orders *(iubet)* Pan to submit his reeds *(cannas)* to the lyre.	Tmolus, inherently 'panic', instantly recognizes Apollo's superiority and bids Pan to concede. Allegorical interpretation #1: hierarchy of literary genres.
172–4: All agree with the judgement except Midas.	Because of his foolishness, Midas does not recognize Apollo's superiority. Midas' "ill-advised decision to declare a judgment in the competition between Pan and Apollo, is unattested before this poem" (Hadjittofi 2018, 297).
174–9: Transformation of Midas' ears into those of an ass.	A probably innovative aetiology for the feature of Midas' ass ears, already current in Greece by the V cent. BCE (Aristoph. *Plut.* 287).
180–2: Midas hides his shame under a purple turban.	Purple is an Apollinean color (the god's own mantle was dipped in Tyrian purple). Does it represent an only superficial adhesion to Apollo's values as he hides the shameful punishment?
183–9: Midas' servant/barber knows of the king's secret; digs a hole and tells it to the ground.	Midas does not have full local support.
190–194: Reeds grow in that spot and tell of Midas' shame. Apollo is avenged *(ultus)*.	Apollo's victory is considered complete with the public humiliation of the dissenter, for which the help of the former opponent Pan in his distinctive symbol, the reeds, was instrumental.

King Midas flees from his Kingdom of Phrygia to the neighboring region of Lydia and roams the mountains around Mount Tmolus, where he worships Pan, as is appropriate. Tmolus is flanked by the cities of Sardis to the North and the small town of Hypaepa to the South. It is right there or close by (*ibi* in line 153) that the contest takes place. Pan's music is so beautiful that Pan himself boasts about the superiority of his music over Apollo's, initiating the contest. Tmolus is called to be

the judge, and the mountain god – this most basic symbol of authority – is animated and anthropomorphised. Pan plays his song and Midas likes it, then it is Apollo's turn.

We have already discussed the lines (165–9) describing his attire. The refined ornaments and his restrained pose mark him as the winner: the match is qualified proleptically by the poet as uneven (*inpar*, 156) before it even starts. Tmolus, an inherently *panic* place, has no choice but to instantly recognize Apollo's superiority and he orders Pan to submit his reeds (*submittere cannas*, 171),[48] a metonymy for the panpipe. Because of his foolishness, Midas does not recognize Apollo's superiority and here is when the transformation takes place: his ears become those of a donkey – a possibly new aetiology for a feature that was linked to Midas and already very popular in Greece in the V century BCE, as two lines (286–287) from Aristophanes' *Plutus* show: ὄντως γὰρ ἔστι πλουσίοις ἡμῖν ἅπασιν εἶναι; / ΚΑΡΙΩΝ: νὴ τοὺς θεούς, Μίδαις μὲν οὖν, ἢν ὦ̃τ᾽ ὄνου λάβητε ("*Chorus leader:* You mean it's really possible for us to be wealthy? *Cario*: So help me god, you'll be Midases if you can find a pair of ass's ears!").[49]

When Pan is introduced in lines 146–9, the term *harundo*, "reed" first appears in the contest episode as a metonymy for his instrument.[50] The term occurs again at the end: as the wind blows, the reeds tell the secret, delegitimizing the king and avenging Apollo.

Jacqueline Fabre-Serris acutely observed that the development of the Ovidian 'cycle of Midas' as a whole, with the inclusion of the episode of the capture of Silenus and the golden touch before and leading up to the contest, shows both an important structural opposition between *cultus/ars* and *rusticitas*,[51] and an inversion of motifs: Midas starts as the refined Hellenistic king living in luxury, and is later shown living as an uncultured simpleton in the wilderness.[52]

The idea itself of this contest between the two gods, however, and the addition of the involvement of Midas both appear to be Ovid's invention, not without inspiration from previous models as it seems:[53] Barchiesi recognized a precedent for the idea of a contest of gods in Callimachus *Ia.* 4, with its contest between the laurel and the olive tree (naturally symbolizing Apollo and Minerva) that is also set on Tmolus.[54] The idea of superiority of lyric poetry over bucolic poetry being represented in the actions

48 *Canna*, *harundo*, and *calamus* are all interchangeable terms for the plant and the musical instrument in the *Met*., often appearing close to one another in context (book I, 705–712, here, and in book XIII, 890–894).

49 Text and transl. Henderson 2002.

50 But not for the first time in the *Met*.: see note 49.

51 1995, 358: "la *rusticitas* est vaincue par l'*ars*, étroitement associé, dans la description du dieu [*scil*. Apollo], aux raffinements précieux du *cultus*: le laurier, la pourpre, l'ivoire et les pierreries".

52 1995, 358–359.

53 Cf. Hadjittofi 2018, 277.

54 2006, 408 n. 11.

of gods can be seen when Pan putting down ("forgetting") his pipe after singing one of Pindar's (lyric) hymns had appeared in an epigram attributed to Antipater (*AP* XVI.305).[55] Barchiesi also noted the incongruence of having a musical contest between different categories of instruments, resolving it in his analysis of the passage as an allegory of the hierarchy of genres.[56]

To further explain the reason for this "mixed category" contest (another meaning for the qualification of the *certamen* as *inpar*) I suggest looking at another significant precedent: Verg. *Ecl.* IV, 55–59. I argue this is a fundamental model for Ovid's construction of the contest episode, but I have not seen it detected or discussed in relation to *Met.* XI by other commentators:[57]

> *Non me carminibus vincet nec Thracius Orpheus*
> *Nec Linus, huic mater quamvis atque huic pater adsit,*
> *Orphei Calliopea, Lino formosus Apollo.*
> *Pan etiam, Arcadia mecum si iudice certet,*
> *Pan etiam Arcadia dicat se iudice victum.*[58]

The debts of Ovid to Virgil go beyond genre and metre to involve the sphere of poetic fantasy and matter as well. At this point in the *Eclogues*, we have a recognition of the necessity for a higher style to praise a consular offspring,[59] and in this higher version of the bucolic not even Orpheus and Linus, mythical (semi-)human fathers of lyric poetry, could defeat Virgil's pipe. Here we have a hypothetical contest between lyres and pipes, and a direct precedent for Ovid. Furthermore, even Pan would concede in a contest, as he does is Ovid's contest episode. Virgil's contest is judged by a personified land, Arcadia, that is a famously mountainous region and the home of Pan – like Mt. Tmolus where, according to Ovid, Pan always has his home (*Met.* XI, 147: *Panaque montanis habitantem semper in antris*). In both Virgil and Ovid, Pan is defeated in his own home. In Virgil, Pan is defeated even in bucolic poetry itself since Virgil's is a higher style, a bucolic that transcends itself to become politically engaged. In Ovid, Pan is defeated by a lyric style that is higher by default, but the whole question of genres is recast and complicated into multiple levels: Ovid's epic poem (lvl. 1) assumes pastoral tones in the contest (lvl. 2), wherein the lyric/epic genre is declared winner (lvl. 3), but the verdict is questioned and needs the material help of the *harundo*, metonymy for the bucolic (lvl. 4) to

55 See Barchiesi 2006, 415 for a brief discussion, text and translation of this epigram.

56 Barchiesi 2006, 413–415. See also Section 2.2 below.

57 Huxley 1996, 86–87 does refer to lines 58–59 as an inspiration for Ovid, but for a different excerpt of the *Met.* and only in terms of metre (IX, 488–489).

58 "Then shall neither Thracian Orpheus nor Linus vanquish me in song, though mother give aid to the one and father to the other, Calliope to Orpheus, to Linus fair Apollo. Even were Pan to compete with me and Arcadia be judge, then even Pan, with Arcadia for judge, would own himself defeated"; text and translation adapted from Fairclough 1916.

59 *Sylvae sint consule dignae*, l. 3.

really be implemented – it is the *harundo* that, in the contest, whispers the secret shame of Midas' ears and deprives the king of the last shreds of his credibility. Virgil's bucolic poetry wins over 'normal' bucolic poetry because it elevates itself through the choice of a special subject matter. Ovid's bucolic formally loses to lyric/epic, but lyric/epic are really kept in place by the subservient help of bucolic in the metonymy of the reeds. It is a highly subversive message; before we explore it more in depth, let us also note that, before mentioning a Pan who professes himself defeated in contest by the judgement of a personified place, Virgil mentions Orpheus – and it hardly seems a coincidence that Ovid decided to open book XI with the description of Orpheus' death (followed by the description of the transformation of the Bacchants into trees, meta-poetically signaling the shift from a tragedy-like *sparagmos* to more bucolic-like *silvae*) and the beginning of the section on Midas, initiated to the orphic mysteries by the legendary poet himself (*cui Thracius Orpheus* / *orgia tradiderat*; *Met.* XI, 92–93).

We have considered the plot structure and very likely poetic inspirations or models for this Ovidian episode, teasing out motifs and situating the places in which the contest takes place: Asia Minor. We shall now turn to discuss the ways in which previous scholarship has found relevant layers of meaning to this story, with a special focus on allegorical interpretations of both a metaliterary and a historical nature.

2.2 Allegorical Readings

An obvious allegorical interpretation that has been amply explored reads the episode as symbolizing the inferior character, in the hierarchy of literary genres, of bucolic poetry to lyric and epic – an interpretation thoroughly explored in its significance by Barchiesi (2006) and already discussed by Fabre-Serris (1995), as we have seen. In addition, we noted that the final moments of the episode show a degree of playful subversion of the established and expected outcome of a contest between genres even as it appears, on the surface, to be confirmed.

The subversion is evident when Apollo's dignified music still needs the recognition and the help of the defeated *harundo* to clear the victory. It is not really a *revenge* of bucolic poetry – in fact, it is Apollo who gets avenged, *ultus*. Rather, Ovid appears to indicate that bucolic poetry, rightly inferior, will have to acknowledge its subservience and use to Augustan and Apollinean discourse, in order to continue existing legitimately. The crucial intervention of the *harundo* at the end of the episode, however, subtly reinstates its importance and effectively downgrades Apollo's own victory, undermining the recognition of his self-sufficiency for peaceful domination.

Aside from a *Kreuzung der Gattungen* with which scholars of Ovid are familiar, that involves mixing conventions of different genres within one work, one may say that there is an ideological *Kreuzung der Gattungen* under the sign of Apollo's dominion:

the recognition of the superiority of Apollo's lyric/epic has to be, on some level, always present and shown in all other genres. Ironically, the lyric/epic supremacy cannot be fully established without the acquiescence, and ultimately the disguised help, of bucolic poetry. Ovid himself, in his epic/didascalic *Metamorphoses*, subsumes and plays with the conventions of other genres within the poem itself, bucolic included.[60] It appears that Ovid's underlying meta-poetic message is that poetic genres can no longer be clearly and wholly independent if Apollo must be recognized as victor by all; they are inferior when juxtaposed to the nobility and "natural" superiority of lyric/epic. But Ovid is also subtly letting us know that the change brought by Apollo is not fully effectual – there is some (human) resistance to be countered; nor is it fully self-sufficient. Ultimately, it is just a display of power on Apollo's part, who simply has to appear and pluck a chord – and a display of subordination on the part of the now-subservient genre of bucolic, which is actually doing the "dirty work" of avenging Apollo and consolidating his authority. A message with clear political tones.

These implications of the contest episode bring us to the consideration of political allegories underlying the myth. Indeed, it is easy to read the episode as a structural allegory symbolizing a clash of ideals between cultured and uncultured, from the Roman perspective mediating between the notion of a previously barbaric/Hellenistic and now Romanized Lydia, Phrygia and Asia Minor. The study of this allegorical level of the contest episode has been recently opened with the study of the depiction of King Midas in the *Metamorphoses* as an embodiment of the tropes of Hellenistic kingship.[61]

I argue, however, that the political and ideological implications, and indeed perhaps the foundations themselves for the construction of the contest episode, are deeper – in the implications of the Apollo/Augustus identification discussed above, and in the consideration of the political history of the province of Asia Minor and Hypaepa themselves, especially when considered with Augustus' strategies in the reorganization of the provinces. It has been remembered how Apollo's attire in the episode may be taken to summarize the span of Augustus' rule: Hadjittofi notes that it is appropriate for such an "imperial" Apollo to defeat Pan and his barbarian follower Midas, stating that "it is also historically accurate: Rome did, after all, vanquish the Hellenistic kingdoms".[62]

It is necessary to acknowledge, however, that the opposition between Apollo and Pan, *cultus/ars* and *rusticitas*, however stark it may appear in this episode, is in the reality of the Augustan ideological program more nuanced and softer: Pan is an Arcadian and the images of peace, serenity and prosperity in simplicity that are

60 See Barchiesi 2006 on the play between bucolic and epic in Ovid's *Met*. On the intertextual play between Ovid, Theocritus and the bucolic Virgil of the *Eclogues* in particular, and the way Ovid's epic in the *Met*. subsumes the genre, in relation to Pan specifically (though the contest episode is not discussed), see Landolfi 2020.

61 Hadjittofi 2018.

62 2018, 301.

associated within the Latin bucolic genre itself[63] with the trope of a Golden Age (very much a part of the Augustan *principatus*' ideological *milieu*, though never declared), as well as the astrological form of Pan as Capricorn as the chosen zodiac birth-sign of Augustus,[64] appearing also in the iconography of the *princeps*[65] – all these elements point toward the desire to integrate 'panic' elements into the 'apollinean' Augustan ideals of the *pax Romana*.[66]

Let us then explore, in the next two sections (2.3 and 2.4), the possibility of a broader allegory underlying the contest episode and take a closer look, in most general lines, at the history of the province of Asia Minor, and Hypaepa. This history will include the discussion of relevant events that took place under Augustus, and it will hopefully provide a clear link between what came before, in Sections 2, 2.1 and the current section, and the way in which Ovid, I argue, has reused the topical traits discussed in Section 1, combining them with the Augustan re-functionalization of the figure of Apollo and with what he might have conceived of the local political history and religious traditions of the region of Asia Minor.

2.3 The Contest as a Historical Allegory: a Sketch of the History of Asia Minor

As is known, the last king of Pergamon Attalus III bequeathed the Kingdom to Rome in his testament in 133 BCE. However, Aristonicus-Eumenes III fought the donation and started a revolt that had some support in the region. A feeling of unrest in the new republican province continues throughout the history of the Republic long after it is pacified by the consul Marcus Perperna in 129 BCE. The province had always had the misfortune to pick the losing side in the wars between Mithridates and Rome, Pompey and Caesar, the Caesaricides and Antony, Antony and Octavian.[67] It was a province that never quite caught the spirit of what was happening. The claim that the province was a strong supporter of Rome is frail – it is evident in the event of Tiberius having to choose where the temple for his cult in Asia would have been located. In Tacitus' *Annales* IV, 55 the historian tells of eleven cities that had sent deputations to plead their case; a common argument for those hearings was the claim of their support of the Romans in wars like again like that against

63 See Simon 2015.

64 See Sauron 1992, 513 n. 133 and Barton 1995, 34ff.

65 As in the *Gemma Augustea*, where the Capricorn appears over Augustus' head about to be crowned with a wreath of laurel; see Zanker 1988, 230ff.

66 As we shall see, this perspective fits very well with my allegorical interpretation of the ending of the contest (*harundo* and Cicero Minor; see below).

67 *ODCW*, s.v. "Asia, Roman Province".

Aristonicus. Delegates from Hypaepa are mentioned at the opening of the sentence among those dismissed as having too weak a case:

> *neque multum distantia inter se memorabant de vetustate generis, studio in populum Romanum per bella Persi et Aristonici aliorumque regum. Verum Hypaepeni Trallianique Laodicenis ac Magnetibus simul tramissi ut parum validi.*[68]

In the same sentence that mentions the more famous and important city of Magnesia as well, and just after Tacitus had noted the use of the argument of support to the Roman cause, I do not think that the judgement of being *parum validi* is merely a matter of city size.[69] On the contrary, it appears that the question is significantly overshadowed by politics and the consideration of the attitudes during the periods of crisis for the Roman rule in the region's history.

When Augustus finally brings an end to the Civil Wars in 31 and 30 BCE and reorganizes the State as well as the administration of its territories, he also reorganizes Asia Minor as a proconsular province. A governor that stood out in the process was Marcus Tullius Cicero Minor. His story is fascinating: he had sided with his father at Pharsalus and was afterwards pardoned by Caesar; he then sided with Brutus and Cassius, but Octavian pardoned him after the battle of Philippi. As expected, he had no sympathies for Antony, whom he works against as a faithful ally of Octavian. He was then proconsul of Asia Minor – since he was *consul suffectus* with Augustus in 30 BCE, it is entirely possible that he was there as Augustus started his reorganization, as Grant 1944 argues, before formally returning the power to the Senate in 27 BCE.[70] Marcus Tullius Cicero Minor was arguably the first proconsul of the province as it was being reorganized (29–27 BCE).

His is the perfect paradigm of a former opposer who, defeated, becomes a servant of the regime and an instrument for pacification – much like the *harundo* at the end of the contest. There, Apollo is finally qualified by the adjective *ultus*, and if we go back to the descriptive program of the reliefs on the doors of the temple on the Palatine "evoking Apollo as an avenger" – it is interesting to note that "in these and other sculptural features [. . .] scholars have seen various allegorical permutations of the civil wars and Octavian's successful vanquishing of Antony and the forces of the East".[71] Though Antony is the stark opposer, the eastern Dionysus to Augustus' Apollo, it seems appropriate for Pan – a god who, though in contrast with Apollo, still fits into the propaganda of the *Pax Augusta* – and his symbols to be an allegory for opposing forces that ultimately find their place in the new order, contributing to it, just like Cicero Minor.

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68 Text from Jackson 1937.

69 *Contra* Altınoluk 2013, 80.

70 See Atkinson 1958 for a contrasting, though not fully convincing, opinion on the dates of Cic. Minor's proconsulate.

71 Bowditch 2009, 411–2.

There is a fascinating intertwining of the themes of the provincial restructuring of Asia, the veneration of the victor of the Civil Wars, and Augustus' role in promoting specifically the cult of Apollo in that province in a paragraph from Augustus' own literary monument, the *Res Gestae* (24):

> In templís omnium civitátium pr(ovinci)ae Asiae victor ornallmenta reposui, quae spoliátim possederat. § Statuae (mea)e pedestrés et equestres et in | quadrigeis argenteae steterunt in urbe xxc circiter, quas ipse | sustuli (§) exque eá pecuniá dona aurea in áede Apol(li)nis meó nomi|ne et illórum, qui mihi statuárum honórem habuerunt, posui.[72]

We must agree that the restructuring of the province, the stabilization of governance, the promotion of the *princeps*' figure and that of the cult of Apollo are all facets of the same reality as constructed by Augustus himself.

That Asia Minor was perceived as a place with a particular abundance or fondness for trials, contests and the show of justice can be seen also in an observation of Cicero Minor's illustrious father. In a letter to Quintus, when he was *propraetor* in Asia (61–59 BCE), Cicero wrote: *ac mihi quidem videtur non sane magna varietas esse negotiorum in administranda Asia, sed ea tota iuris dictione maxime sustineri.* ("As it seems to me, the administration of Asia presents no great variety of business; it all rests in the main on the dispensation of justice"; *Ep. Ad Fam.* I. 2).[73]

Ovid himself could have noticed it in his travels; in *Tristia* I, 2, 77–78 he mentions in passing that he had visited the cities of Asia Minor: *nec peto, quas quondam petii studiosus, Athenas, / oppida non Asiae, non loca visa prius* ("nor am I on my way to Athens as once I was while a student, nor to the cities of Asia, nor the places I have seen before".)[74] As he was a student in Athens and the Eastern provinces, sitting at public trials would have no doubt been seen as a good opportunity to learn Greek and improve one's skills in the *ars loquendi*, as well as enjoy some entertainment.

The history of the Province of Asia Minor, as well as the (perceived) cultural features just discussed, lends itself quite well to suggesting stories, to a creative, poetical mind, of contested authority, unsettled rule, judiciary entertainments, and elements of the supernatural or divine, due to its exoticness and foreignness to Roman eyes. The wilderness of the locales was also highly suggestive and poignantly conducive to relevant cultural *topoi* (those on mountains and natural features discussed in Section 1), through which a mythological narrative of transformations, clashes between the civilized and uncivilized and, inevitably, clashes of cultures could easily be imagined.

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72 "After my victory I replaced in the temples in all the cities of the province of Asia the ornaments which my antagonist in the war, when he despoiled the temples, had appropriated to his private use. Silver statues of me, on foot, on horseback, and in chariots were erected in the city to the number of about eighty; these I myself removed, and from the money thus obtained I placed in the temple of Apollo golden offerings in my own name and in the name of those who had paid me the honour of a statue". Text (with diacritics and integrations) and translation from Shipley 1924.

73 Text and transl. Shackleton Bailey 2002.

74 Text and transl. Wheeler 1924.

2.4 Ovid, the Structuralist Poet?

This deeper historical allegory would see this contest as a mythicized sketch of the history of Roman sovereignty in Lydia and Pergamon, subtly recalling events closer to Ovid involving Augustus and Asia Minor. Indeed, with the donation of the Kingdom of Pergamon to Rome the principle of Rome's authority is explicitly and unequivocally attributed, but it is contested by Aristonicus, the principle of unrefined sovereignty that Midas represents. The sovereignty of the region tries to hide the shame in a purple turban (181: *purpureis* [. . .] *tiaris*), an Apollinean and very much institutionally Roman color[75] (remember the *Tyrio* [. . .] *murice* at 166); it externally accepts Roman governance, but not without incidents. Finally, a former enemy of Augustus/Apollo turned ally helps bring order to a region mythically portrayed as desiring to be ruled by Apollo's Romans (remember Tmolus' decision), with a ruling class – foolish like Midas – that was not always compliant. The mention of Hypaepa as seat of the contest could be a telling clue for this interpretation.

Then, as a "structuralist poet" of sorts, Ovid could have symbolized this history in a clash of principles symbolized in the structurally significant characters and natural features, animated or not, that he uses in the episode and which we can rightly call actors.

Tab. 3: Contest Episode: Actors and Structural Significance.

Actors	Structural significance
Midas	Uncultured, excessive sovereignty in Lydia and the Seleucid, then Attalid, territories in Anatolia ("failed kingship" paradigm). Opposer of Apollo = rebellious local authorities, not recognizing the victory of a new/higher authority.
Pan	Principle of projected un-culturedness of the region. First appearing as a principle of defiance to Apollo's supremacy, later he stands as the graceful loser who concedes victory and cooperates.
Reeds	Panic element and metonymy for the musical instrument. Instrumental in delegitimizing Midas and asserting Apollo's authority = a former (instrument of the) adversary, now an instrument of the new regime.
Tmolos	Principle of autochthony; basic embodiment of the notion of sovereignty and authority; hence, the *truest* authority of a region, the mountain being a metonymy for the region itself.
Apollo	Principle of order and of Roman authority (= Augustus and Augustan values).

75 Cf. discussion on colors above.

The outline of my proposed new allegorical interpretation for the episode as a whole, with a description of the function each of the relevant actors would play, is presented in Tab. 3 above. What this level of interpretation would ultimately describe though, is indeed on the one hand a political satire at the expenses of both the local ruling class of Lydia and the surrounding regions, and of Augustus; on the other hand, it would still be a limited – however rich and layered and sophisticated – and subjective perception of the political and religious[76] history of a territory that is foreign to Ovid (however long he sojourned in Asia Minor, his perspective was not that of a local). In the next section, I shall briefly attempt a survey of the numismatic evidence that may point to a greater complexity in the local envisioning of the relationships between gods and rulers in specific areas of Asia Minor.

2.5 Apollo, Augustus, and Coins from Asia Minor

In reality, the iconography of Augustus and Apollo in coins from the cities of Tmolus, Hypaepa, and Sardis in Lydia and Hierapolis in Phrygia shows a more complex side to the relationships between the locals and Augustus, and his use of the figure of Apollo. While it may have been used as a symbol for Roman propaganda and as a poetic device for conveying Augustan values, in Lydia in Augustus' times it appears that the god was not really appropriated as a symbol for Roman authority in coinage. Thanks to the raising of "trust and faith in him both in the entire Empire and Hypaipa" that Augustus was able to elicit, Hypaepa started to "mint coins in his reign and struck at least nine emissions".[77] Strikingly though, Apollo does not appear in local coins from his reign: the source of divine authority shown on the reverse lies predominantly in the Hellenistic model of the bearded Zeus. Later, Apollo appears on the reverse of coins of Nero and Commodus.[78]

As for Tmolus,[79] there are twenty coin types from Hadrian to Gordian III. Eight of these types are considered pseudo-autonomous coinages, the remaining 12 portray emperors or their wives on the obverse. On the pseudo-autonomous ones, the most represented figures are Tmolus, Silenus, Herakles, Omphale, Dionysus. There is only one dubious representation of Apollo. On imperial coinage, Apollo appears twice, on a coin type of Sabina and on one of the four types of Commodus.[80]

In Sardis, Apollo is a dominant figure in the civic coinage in the II century BCE, up to the years of Attalus III and in the civic coinage with local magistrates up to

76 Ovid indeed appears to be implying, with the episode, that the supremacy of Apollo – in other words, his cult – was all the more strengthened as an outcome of the contest.

77 Altınoluk 2013, 95.

78 Cf. *Ibid*., 87–96 and Appendixes II–III.

79 See Foss 1982 for a complete description.

80 *Ibid*.

the beginning of the Common Era. The god is not present in the extant imperial coinage, except for one type of Commodus and one of Valerian I – a sign that possibly he was too much of a symbol for the previous political regime and could not be easily appropriated by Roman authority there.

In Hierapolis in Phrygia, instead, Apollo – with his prominent cult as Apollo Lairbenos in the local temple – was successfully appropriated and used by the emperors on their coins, from Augustus to Gallienus. It is interesting that in the contest episode Midas, a Phrygian king, can oppose Apollo's supremacy while in Lydia!

Resistance to the use of Apollo in coinage from Lydia in the imperial period may well be interpreted as a sign of a partial resistance by the region to the Apollinean propaganda of the Augustan regime, in the *Res Gestae* and as filtered through a mythical lens in Ovid's poetry. More work can be done to investigate the geopolitical implications for the religious and political ideology of the *principatus* as they emerge from the use of divine iconography on coins.

Concluding Remarks

The older and wiser Octavian may not have been too happy with Ovid's use of the identification between himself and Apollo; in the first place, because it was not always a positive one and it reflected a Hellenistic trope of divine kingship, which might have been resisted by part of the Roman aristocracy. Secondly, the variety of the provenance of Apollo's ornaments in the contest of Book XI does summarize the span of Augustus' dominion but, for all the symbolism of the restraint of the golden hair, it sits uneasily with a *princeps* investing time and effort in condemning excess.

Ovid portrays Apollo as not self-sufficient for completing his victory but pacifying a territory by enlisting the cooperation of humbler gods who were formerly with the opposing side, who are defeated and who conceded victory – like Augustus and Cicero Minor. In light of the associations that were being strongly pushed even by Augustus himself between him and Apollo, is Ovid talking about Apollo or is it really Augustus?

Augustus did not like to be made the subject of poetry or literature, with the except of writings of the most serious kind: *componi tamen aliquid de se nisi et serio et a praestantissimis offendebatur* ("but he took offence at being made the subject of any composition except in serious earnest and by the most eminent writers"; Suet., *Aug.* 89).[81] Ovid was among the most eminent writers of his time – but was he regarded by most contemporaries as capable of writing "in serious earnest"? A work that could have been regarded by the *princeps*' circle as a "serious" poetical

81 Text from Ihm 1908; transl. by Rolfe 1914.

effort might have been seen in the incomplete *Fasti*, but that is a topic best left for other occasions.[82] One doubts that the circle of the *princeps* may have regarded the author of the *Ars Amatoria* and the *Remedia Amoris*, among other works, as a *serious* author.

In conclusion, I think Ovid's subversive, technicalized[83] use of myth, even in the contest episode, might have constituted one of the many little drops that filled the measure of the *princeps'* patience with the poet.

I have already mentioned how Ovid's allegorical reference might be considered a *mise en abyme* – we risk not appreciating the full significance of the mythological narrative without considering the hidden historical allegory, while the quasi-historiographical sketch emerges if considered as a narrative sequence. And yet we also must recognize that the circular relation between the two is somewhat elusive and difficult to grasp firmly, behind the scenes of a beautifully constructed story of gods, kings, and natural features high (a mountain) and low (the reeds). Yet, it is in such an enticing ineffability, in that feeling of vague familiarity and relation to history, that some most effective mythical narratives thrive and live on in a cultural tradition.

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82 For an overview of its compositional history, style, and the political and religious valences see Miller 2002 and Fantham 2002.

83 Kerényi 1993, 116.

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