Magnanimus Phaethon

The Sublime in Ovid's Metamorphoses

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Introduction

The sublime is, though one of the most evocative concepts of ancient literary criticism, also one of the most slippery ones to define. Most of our knowledge on the subject in ancient times comes from Longinus's *Peri Hypsous*, a treatise in which he aims to teach contemporary authors how to achieve sublimity themselves, based mainly on examples of the Greek masters, notably Homer and Demosthenes. For Longinus, the sublime manifests itself in the highest form of art, it is a certain excellence that fills the spectator with a sense of awe, and that is capable of lifting up the spirit of its audience to a higher level. In the treatise, Longinus attempts to teach what the sublime is, and how it can be achieved by splitting it up into five sources: majesty of thought (τὸ περὶ τὰς νοήσεις ἀδρεπηβολον), strong emotion (τὸ σφοδρὸν καὶ ἐνθουσιαστικὸν πάθος), a certain use of figures (ποιὰ τῶν σχημάτων πλάσις), noble diction (ἡ γενναία φράσις) and the correct arrangement of a text (ἡ ἐν ἀξιώματι καὶ διάρσει σύνθεσις).

Any study dealing with Longinus and the *Peri Hypsous* must necessarily the problem of its authorship. Up to the 19th century it was widely held that the treatise was written by the 3rd century A.D. scholar Cassio Longinus at the court of Zenobia at Palmyra. This is based on the 10th century Parisinus 2036 manuscript, which shows Διονυσίου ἢ Λογγίνου in a table of contents, a conjecture of a Byzantine scholar that points clearly at Dionysius of Halicarnassus or Cassio Longinus.[1] There are still those, such as Heath, who prefer to see Longinus as Cassio Longinus of the 3rd century A.D., proceeding from the view that it is more economical to ascribe the treaty to an already well-known scholar than to create a new unknown one, where there is no particularly strong reason to do so.[2] Those who identify the sublime in Latin literature, however, have a clear preference for the views of Mazzucchi and Russell, who separately build the case for an unknown Dionysius Longinus in the 1st century AD. Although this dating is still too late to allow Ovid to have any knowledge of the treaty itself, it is close enough to suggest that the concept of the sublime must have already been known in

[1] Russell (1964) xxii. Mazzucchi (2010) xxx. agrees and points out a similar conjecture in Par.Gr.1741 in the emendation of Μενάνδρου ῥήτορος γενεθλίων διαίρεσις τῶν ἐπιδεικτικῶν to Μενάνδρου ῥήτορος ἢ Γενεθλίου...
[2] Heath (1999) 26.

Rome before the appearance of the *Peri Hypsous*. Indeed, Longinus's assertion that the treatise is a response to one written on the same topic by Caecilius of Caleacte, a Greek rhetorician and critic of the Augustan age, suggests that the sublime was already a topic of discussion in Roman literary theory before the *Peri Hypsous*.

Interest in Longinus's theory of the sublime has been revived over the last10 years and has led, quite naturally, to studies on how the sublime manifested itself in practice, most notably in Latin poetry, mostly from the 1st century B.C. to the 1st century A.D., approximately the time Longinus is assumed to have lived. Studies have been performed on the sublime in, amongst others, Lucretius, Vergil, Ovid, Lucan and Statius.[3]

Discussion of the sublime in Ovid has focused exclusively on the Phaethon episode in the second book of the *Metamorphoses.* Spanning the end of the first, and the first 300 lines of the second book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, this long episode tells the myth of Phaethon and the chariot of the Sun. In the final throws of book I, we find Phaethon, the son of Clymene and the Sun, getting into an argument with Epaphus, who challenges Phaethon's unproved assertion that is father his divine. Hurt, Phaethon returns to his mother, who gives him good news: the palace of the Sun is close by, he can easily go there! The second book opens with an ecphrasis on the beautiful palace of the Sun, before Phaethon finally meets his father, who grants him a single wish as proof of their relationship. Phaethon makes up his mind quickly, he wants to ride the solar chariot for a day, and though the Sun tries to dissuade him from this dangerous idea in two long speeches, the young boy will not be swayed. Quickly after the chariot departs Phaethon loses control and realises his lofty ambition was, in fact, a rather bad idea, but unfortunately this has come too late. The Sun's horses run rampant and set fire to the earth, burning up the earth's mountains, rivers and cities. A complete destruction of earth, or ekpyrosis, threatens to occur, before Jupiter steps in and surgically removes Phaethon from his chariot, saving the world in the process. The young boy dashes to the ground like a falling star and lands in the river Eridanus.

[3] Lucretius: Conte (1994), Porter (2007), Hardie (2009); Vergil: Conte (2006); Ovid: Barchiesi (2009), Schiesaro (2014); Lucan: Day (2013); Statius: Leigh (2006).

Barchiesi (2006, 2009) and Schiesaro (2014) identify the prominent themes of height and Phaethon's superhuman ambition in his desire to ride the solar chariot, but are mostly concerned with the further implications of the sublime for the Phaethon episode. The political and meta-poetic consequences of Ovid's potential self-representation as a sublime hero could, admittedly, lead to fascinating insights into Ovid's own poetic identity and his posturing against the great political and poetic authorities of the day. Unfortunately, however, these studies seem pleased to identify the sublime in the episode exclusively through the Lucretian echo in '*magnanimus Phaethon*' and Phaethon's lofty ambition, disregarding much of Longinus's treatise in the process. This thesis will aim to harmonise more of the Phaethon episode with Longinus's writings, in order to provide a more solid foundation for any further study of the implications of Ovid's use of the sublime. Furthermore, it will also ask whether the typical assessment of Phaethon's journey through the sky as a failed attempt at sublimity is justified. In the first chapter I will attempt to lay out the various aspects of Longinus's sublime, as well as discussing the manner in which previous studies have read the sublime into Latin poetry. The second chapter and third chapter will then establish that a number of key aesthetics of the Sublime are important themes in the Phaethon episode, with the first focusing on Ovid's imagery, notably height and light, and the second on his poetic style. In the fourth chapter I will aim to show that, beyond the aesthetics of the sublime, Phaethon himself seems to embody the sublime through his great spirit his lofty ambition. The final chapter will then consider Ovid's sublime in the context of Lucretius's scientific and philosophic sublime.

1. What is the Sublime?

1. Introduction

As the sublime has become an increasingly well-known concept in art criticism, it has become more difficult to fit it with a clear definition, and one could even argue that various distinct types of the sublime now exist, which share little but their name. There is already considerable difficulty in considering some of Longinus's examples as belonging to the same label of sublimity (what does Sappho's erotic frenzy have in common with Homer's depiction of an Eris figure as tall as heaven?), without also having compare these with Auschwitz, Hiroshima and September 11, which have been adduced by Gene Ray as examples of the 20th century sublime.[4] Helpfully, discussions of the sublime in different contexts and different authors typically admit this difficulty, so that the sublime in Lucretius is usually tagged as 'the Lucretian sublime', and Edmund Burke's focus on the importance of fear for the sublime survives as 'Burke's sublime'. In the light of the plethora of theoretical approaches one can take to finding the sublime in a work of art, it seems wise to restrict ourselves, as much as possible, to a single approach. Although recent studies into the sublime in Latin poetry (Porter (2010); Day (2013)) have also considered later definitions of the sublime, as proposed by Kant and Burke, for example, this study will be restricted to the sublime as described in Longinus's *Peri Hypsous*, on top of a foray into the Lucretian sublime in chapter 5. Although, as has been pointed out above, we must not seek to draw a direct line between Ovid and Longinus, using an approach to the sublime that is broadly contemporary to Ovid increases the likelihood that the examples of sublimity found in the text, as well as the effect they have, would also have been considered sublime by the author himself.

[4] Ray (2005) 97.

2. The Sources of the Sublime

Longinus divided his treatise into sections broadly corresponding to the five sources (πηγαὶ) from which the sublime springs: majesty of thought (τὸ περὶ τὰς νοήσεις ἀδρεπηβολον), strong emotion (τὸ σφοδρὸν καὶ ἐνθουσιαστικὸν πάθος), a certain use of figures (ποιὰ τῶν σχημάτων πλάσις), noble diction (ἡ γενναία φράσις) and the correct arrangement of a text (ἡ ἐν ἀξιώματι καὶ διάρσει σύνθεσις). Longinus himself makes the distinction that the first of these two are more innate than the latter three, which are closer to the technical manuals of rhetoric. The most central of these is also the very first, majesty of thought. Accordingly, its influence can also be felt in the other five sources, as diction must be noble (γενναία) and arrangement must be worthy and elevated (ἐν ἀξιώματι καὶ διάρσει).

For Longinus, majesty of thought is a mind-set that relies heavily on the psychology of the Homeric heroes, and as such he derives many examples from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. An important part of majesty of thought is psychological, or the depiction of great thoughts. Indeed, it is impossible for those who think base thoughts to produce anything sublime (*Subl.* 9.3). Ajax is a fundamental character for Longinus in the description of heroic majesty of thought, and two scenes involving this hero are introduced to explain the concept. The first of these deals with Ajax's reaction to the dark mist spread by Zeus over the battlefield, requesting that the darkness is lifted so that he can fight once more. (*Il.*17.645*).* Longinus praises this mind set, because it shows his bravery (ἀνδρεία) and quest for noble deeds (γενναῖα).[5]

Apart from his approval of Ajax's actions and feelings, Longinus also praises Homer for his judgement as he remarks that "these are truly the feelings of an Ajax" (ἔστιν ὡς ἀληθῶς τὸ πάθος Αἴαντος, *Subl.* 9.10). This passage, then, shows majesty of heart not only through Ajax's thoughts and actions, but also through the majesty of thought required of the poet in order to properly understand his character. This connection between the poet and his creation is a vital component of the Longinian

[5] In the Iliad, Ajax is also frequently described as (one of the) largest of the Homeric heroes, (ἔξοχος Ἀργείων κεφαλήν τε καὶ εὐρεας ὤμους, *Il.* 3.227). Although Longinus does not make this connection, Ajax is both psychologically and physically ὕψος, through his heroic mind and large stature.

sublime, though it is not considered a source by itself, and will be considered further down. The second of Longinus's Ajax-examples is taken from the 11th book of the Odyssey, in which Ajax refuses to speak to Odysseus because of his bitter hatred of the man (*Od*. 5.563). For Longinus, his silence is grander than anything he could have said, and it is here that we find the full force of the sublime. Although it has been cast, so far, as a result of lofty and excellent language (ἀκρότης καὶ ἐξοχή τις λόγων, *Subl*. 3.3), it appears that the sublime can also appear in the explicit absence of language. Majesty of thought, then, or the sublime in general, is not only the product of words, but it can also be a feature of that which is described.

The importance of majesty of thought for the Longinian sublime derives from the single most important concept underlying the sublime: height. Longinus does not devote a separate section to highlighting the importance of height in his treatise, nor is it named as one of the sources of the Sublime. Nevertheless, language and imagery of height and size are as pervasive through the text as the name of the treatise suggests they will be (ὕψος translates to 'high'). The description of Eris in the fourth book of the Iliad, though adduced as an example of greatness of spirit, is not psychologically sublime or majestic. Rather, she is sublime for her huge stature; for she is shown as a figure of immense size, having her head fixed in the heavens and her feet on earth (*Il*. 4.440). Further images that ask the audience to imagine impossibly great heights and distances follow, as Longinus discusses Homer's description of the steeds of Hera (*Subl*. 9.5 = *Il*. 5.770), which can jump so far that there would not be enough space on earth for them to leap twice. Even more powerfully, Longinus also asks his reader to consider Homer's description of the battle of the gods, in which the earth is rent open, producing a vista from the lowest point of the underworld to the highest point in heaven (*Subl*. 9.6 = *Il*. 20.60; 21.19). The aesthetic sublimity of size and height is never clearer than in chapter 35, where Longinus presents the sublime flight of the human mind, which allows one to imagine things that go beyond the borders of reality and look down on earth.

Beyond featuring height frequently in his examples of sublimity, it can be seen that the very language Longinus uses to describe the effect of sublime passages or the images they present is also full of allusions to height. As we have already seen, the main source of sublimity is named either "elevation of thought" τὸ περὶ τὰς νοήσεις ἀδρεπήβολον, making use of the image of tall unharvested

corn (ἄδρεπτος) or magnanimity (μεγαλαφροσύνη). Furthermore, the sublime is achieved through the highest peak of linguistic genius (ἀκρότης καὶ ἐξοχή τις λόγων), in which height again symbolises the excellence of the sublime.

The second source of sublimity is Pathos, defined as the use of strong and vehement emotion, but it is not discussed directly in our extant version of the Περὶ ὕψους. It is possible that the lacuna after *Subl.* 9.4 would have contained an, admittedly, short discussion on this topic, but Longinus's promise to write a separate treatise on this source at *Subl.* 3.5 and 44.12 might well indicate that, as Russell holds, "emotion is best treated in the course of the discussion of τὸ περὶ τὰς νοήσεις ἀδρεπήβολον". [6] As such, a good understanding of Longinus's view on the importance of emotion might be obtained from examining the text as a whole. There is, however, also a short passage of text that deals directly with emotions:

> ἀλλ᾽ εἰ μὲν ὡς ἕν τι ταῦτ᾽ ἄμφω, τό τε ὕψος καὶ τὸ παθητικόν, καὶ ἔδοξεν αὐτῷ πάντη συνυπάρχειν τε ἀλλήλοις καὶ συμπεφυκέναι, διαμαρτάνει: καὶ γὰρ πάθη τινὰ διεστῶτα ὕψους καὶ ταπεινὰ εὑρίσκεται, καθάπερ οἶκτοι λῦπαι φόβοι, καὶ ἔμπαλιν πολλὰ ὕψη δίχα πάθους
>
> *"Now if he made this omission from a belief that the Sublime and the Pathetic are one and the same thing, holding them to be always coexistent and interdependent, he is in error. Some passions are found which, so far from being lofty, are actually low, such as pity, grief, fear; and conversely, sublimity is often not in the least affecting"* (*Subl.* 7.2)

Although emotions are one of the best ways to elicit the sublime, this does not mean that the pathetic and sublime effects are the same. In fact, many emotions bring about the exact opposite of the sublime, because they are not lofty. At the same time, a passage need not necessarily be emotional in order to be sublime, as can also be seen from the Eris passage quoted above. It is difficult to give an exact list of sublime emotions, but we can, at the very least, apply to emotions the same standards as to the other elements of the sublime.

[6] Russell (1964) xiii.

In order to help us find these standards, we might look at what seems a consistent undercurrent of imagery running through Longinus's description of both the innate and the technical sources of the sublime. It has been argued by Innes that this imagery, along with Longinus's style, is what makes "Longinus his own best example". [7] She identifies four main strands of imagery: victory and competition (*Subl.*1.3; 44.2; 13.4;34.1;34.4), the forces of nature, such as thunderbolts and large rivers (*Subl.*33-6; 32.1;12.4), freedom and incarceration (*Subl.*15.10;16.2;22;44), and vast distances (*Subl.*8.2;9.4;9.6;9.9;15.4). Beyond these particularly sublime images, however, it is also noticed that Longinus 'practices what he preaches', as he mirrors sublime figures of speech in his own language (*Subl.*18.1, for example). Innes shows that this observation is also valid on a larger scale: just as Sappho is praised (*Subl.*10.1) for presenting only the τὰ καιριώτατα and combining them into a single body, so has Longinus done the same with his treatise, taking the five sources of the sublime and moulding them into a single work. From the whole of the work, and from its persistent images, we can at least establish that sublime emotions must be lofty, the product of elevated, free minds, as well as being strong – corresponding to the sudden violence of a thunderbolt.

Before examining the more technical portion of the *Peri Hypsous*, the important concept of Φαντασία must be addressed. Φαντασία is an important because it is supposed to be most effective way to add elevation and action to a text (μεγαληγορίας καὶ ἀγῶνος ἐπι τούτοις, καὶ αἱ φαντασίαι παρασκευαστικώταται, *Subl.* 15.1). It operates by making listeners into spectators *through enthusiasm and passion* (ὑπ' ἐνθουσιασμοῦ καὶ πάθους, 15.1). Longinus is not the only one to recognise the close link between emotion and φαντασία, as Quintilian also points out that the poet who is best at producing φαντασίαι or *visions*, will most affect his audience's emotions (*has (viz.visiones) quisquis bene ceperit, is erit in adfectibus potentissimus, Inst*. 6.2.29). The implications of effective φαντασία are significant for the experience of the sublime, because it provides a solution to the question *who* actually experiences the sublime. In his examples on φαντασία, Longinus uses visualisation as a link between the poet, his character and the audience. Of Orestes's delusional sighting of the Erinyes he says, for instance:

[7] Innes (2006) 311.

> "ἐνθαῦθ' ὁ ποιητὴς αὐτος εἰδεν Ἐρινύας, ὅ δ' ἐφαντάσθη, μικροῦ δεῖν θεάσασθαι καὶ τοὺς ἀκούοντας ἠνάγκασεν."
>
> "Here the poet saw the Erinyes himself. He visualised them, and almost forced his listeners to see them as well." (Subl. 15.2)

Φαντασία bridges the gap between the emotions of the poet, the emotions of his characters and the emotions of the external audience, transferring whatever is experienced by one to the others. When effective, then, the sublime description of a force of nature or a particularly amazing palace (a description that produces a sublime sensation in its direct, internal spectator), is not confined merely to the poem itself, but is transferred to the poet and the audience as well.

The function of φαντασία is especially apt for poetic description of visual objects, but a version of it can also be found in Longinus's account of the effect of figures of speech, which will be of great use in ch. 3 on Ovid's style). Just as φαντασία bridges a gap between the internal and external worlds of the poem, so do figures of speech add forcefulness and passion to poetic style by mimicking the effects of real, non-poetic speech (see, e.g. Longinus's discussions of hyperbaton, questions and asyndeton, which constantly link the figures to the emotional states they represent). Effectively employed figures of speech transfer the experiences of characters to the audience, who mirror the character's experience by reacting to the sound of the words it is described with.

3. The Technical Sources

The final three sources of the sublime are clearly more technical than the first two. Nevertheless, the presence of majesty of thought and passionate emotion is clearly felt in their discussion, as they remain the guiding principles for the choice of certain figures of style. For Longinus, figures of speech are, for example, at their most effective only when they are allied with a sublime effect, because the grandeur and beauty of sublimity will disguise their artificiality (περιλαμφθεῖσα ἡ τοῦ πανουργεῖν τέχνη τοῖς κάλλεσι καὶ μεγέθεσι, *Subl.* 17.2-18). Moreover, the merits of individual figures of speech are also discussed in terms of qualities that stand close to majesty of thought and passionate emotion. Questioning and replying to oneself, for example, produces a response that

imitates the height of passion (μιμεῖται τοῦ πάθους τὸ ἐπίκαιρον), and sudden questions tend to force irritated, vehement responses (παροξυνθέις, ἐναγωνίως, *Subl*. 18.2; 20). Again, the transition between third and first person in a narrative has a similar effect of to an outburst of passion (ἐκβολή τις πάθους, *Subl.* 27.3). These qualities of figures of speech all correspond to Longinus's picture of the first two sublime sources: they are rapid, vigorous, lofty and passionate.

The first half of this chapter has sought to examine the sources of the sublime as presented by Longinus and has, not without reason, focused primarily on the rhetorical aspects of the treatise, i.e. the extent to which it describes a literary effect that is the hallmark of 'good writing'. At the same time, it has focused mostly on interpreting Longinus himself. What follows is a discussion of Longinus's treatise understood in the context of other, Latin texts, and shows more philosophical reading of the text that has proven fashionable in modern scholarship.

4. Finding the sublime in Latin literature

A fundamental aspect of modern approaches to Longinus's sublime is the tendency to see his treaty as more than merely rhetorical. Lacoue-Labarthe states that it is "illegible without the presupposition of a precise philosophical intent beneath each of its fundamental statements", and more recently Doran has claimed that a "technical-stylistic conception of *hypsos* is myopic and misleading."[8] Recently, a number of studies have sought to identify traces of the sublime in practice, looking at Latin literature, all making use of a rather philosophical reading of the sublime. [9] Although these studies share the fundamental objective of cementing the sublime as a current literary concept between the first centuries B.C. and A.D., their approaches to the sublime also highlight how widely it can be understood. This chapter will consider a number of characteristics of the sublime on the basis of these studies and seek, if at all possible, to establish a working definition of the sublime to apply to Ovid.

[8] Lacoue-Labarthe (1993) 86. He is followed explicitly by Day (2013) 36. Doran (2015) 56.
[9] On the sublime in general, Innes (2006) ; On sublimity within specific works, Conte (2005), Porter (2007), Day (2013), but also Schiesaro (2003) and Leigh (2006) on particular characters.

The philosophical sublime

In his analysis of the sublime in Lucretius, Porter is firstly concerned with showing how atomism in particular is wont to produce "feelings of sublimity, of fear and awe, (again) with the aim of realigning in a radical way one's view of oneself and the world, well beyond the mere replacement of mythological and theological awe with secular or scientific awe."[10] This type of realignment, the realisation of one's place in the universe, is also found in a key passage towards the end of the Περὶ ὕψους, where Longinus remarks that mankind has been put on earth to be as it were spectators and fierce rivals of nature and all her works (θεατάς τινας τῶν ὅλων αὐτῆς ἐσομένους καὶ φιλοτιμοτάτους ἀγωνιστάς, *Subl*. 35.2).[11] Longinus opens up inroads to understanding this, when he says that the human mind has the capacity of seeing beyond the boundaries of the universe.

> διόπερ τῇ θεωρίᾳ καὶ διανοίᾳ τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης ἐπιβολῆς οὐδ' ὁ σύμπας κόσμος ἀρκεῖ, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς τοῦ περιέχοντος πολλάκις ὅρους ἐκβαίνουσιν αἱ ἐπίνοιαι, καὶ εἴ τις περιβλέψαιτο ἐν κύκλῳ τὸν βίον, ὅσῳ πλέον ἔχει τὸ περιττὸν ἐν πᾶσι καὶ μέγα καὶ καλόν, ταχέως εἴσεται, πρὸς ἃ γεγόναμεν.
>
> "Therefore even the whole universe is not wide enough for the soaring range of human thought, but man's mind often overleaps the very bounds of space. When we survey the whole circle of life, and see it abounding everywhere in what is elegant, grand, and beautiful, we learn at once what is the true end of man's being." (*Subl*.35.3*)*

The focus, again, is on the visual and, closely connected, mental capabilities of man (θεωρίᾳ, περιβλέψαιτο), which allow him to discover the purpose of existence (πρὸς ἃ γεγόναμεν). Longinus, here, says two things about the sublime: first of all, it is *because of* (διόπερ) our desire for what is more divine than man (δαιμονιωτέρου) that we are capable of looking beyond reality and secondly, this allows us a glimpse into a higher truth. It is here that we can draw the link between sublimity and

[10] Porter (2010) 168
[11] The strong visual components of the sublime have been noted, among others, by Day (2013) 34; Porter (2010) 170; and Leigh (2006) 231.

defamiliarisation, as the mind visualises a lexical image that is not, by virtue of it also being a mental image, bound by observable reality. Longinus highlights this quality of literature by comparing it to sculpture, responding to the criticism that it is better to be lifelike than to be grand:

> κἀπὶ μὲν ἀνδριάντων ζητεῖται τὸ ὅμοιον ἀνθρώπῳ, ἐπὶ δὲ τοῦ λόγου τὸ ὑπεραῖρον, ὡς ἔφην, τὰ ἀνθρώπινα.
>
> *"In sculpture, we look for that which resembles man, but in literature we seek, as I said, that which transcends humankind."* (*Subl*. 36.3)

Of course, this is accompanied by highly impressive visual effects, and the language employed by Longinus reinforces the importance of the visual aspect of a sublime experience. Many examples used by the author, especially those in the sections dealing with imagery, are picked out specifically because of their startling visual effect. The sublime, however, is not merely an aesthetic exercise, designed simply to present the reader with imposing views to gawk at. For Porter, and Longinus, it has the rather more philosophical goal of leading to a heightened understanding of the nature of man and "the realignment of one's view of oneself and the world".[12]

The linguistic Sublime

We have previously seen how the transcendental nature of the sublime can be viewed from a philosophical angle, in which it deepens our understanding of reality. Conte develops the idea of the the sublime by looking at the highly defamiliarising language used by Vergil. Conte characterises Vergil's technique as providing a bridge between thinking and feeling: "what is capable of being thought almost manages to become capable of being felt, taking on a body and shape."[13] This occurs through 'stops' in the natural flow of the poetry, which usually take the shape of highly irregular usage of ordinary language. Vergil forces his reader to reinterpret familiar words in a new way, which requires an active imagination to make sense of new constructions and, as such allows the poet to

[12] Porter (2010)168.
[13] Conte (2005) 59.

create an 'alternative reality', in which signifiers do longer correspond to their usual signified realities. Vergil's main tools for the transformation of regular language are the literary figures of enallage and hypallage, in which conventional grammatical agreement is turned on its head. This allows Vergil to create two texts that run through each other, as it were. On the one hand, the more usual meaning of a line can always be salvaged: all the words are there, we must only rewrite them in the 'appropriate' case. Simultaneously, a line can be read literally, which forces the reader to set aside his usual interpretation in order to accommodate the new reality created by the unusual combination.

Vergil's sublime language is not all-pervading and constant, but "shows various peaks of intensity".[14] If the sublime is, in fact, a 'special effect' rather than a style, this must also mean that the distribution of sublime scenes over a text must be carefully regulated in order to keep the balance. Longinus hints at something similar in his distinction between general rhetorical skilfulness and the sublime:

> καὶ τὴν μὲν ἐμπειρίαν τῆς εὑρέσεως καὶ τὴν τῶν πραγμάτων τάξιν καὶ οἰκονομίαν οὐκ ἐξ ἑνὸς οὐδ' ἐκ δυεῖν, ἐκ δὲ τοῦ ὅλου τῶν λόγων ὕφους μόλις ἐκφαινομένην ὁρῶμεν, ὕψος δέ που καιρίως ἐξενεχθὲν τά τε πράγματα δίκην σκηπτοῦ πάντα διεφόρησεν καὶ τὴν τοῦ ῥήτορος εὐθὺς ἀθρόαν ἐνεδείξατο δύναμιν.
>
> *"Skill in invention, lucid arrangement and disposition of facts, are appreciated not by one passage, or by two, but gradually manifest themselves in the general structure of a work; but a sublime thought, if happily timed, illumines an entire subject with the vividness of a lightning-flash, and exhibits the whole power of the orator in a moment of time.*" (*Subl.* 1.4)[15]

A sublime experience does not require careful build-up and does not need to be repeated; it must only be deployed at the right time (καιρίως) in order to make a direct impact (εὐθὺς) on the reader. The principle fits well with Longinus's general idea that men admire most what is uncommon (παράδοξος), and when repeated too often, even the sublime can become familiar.

[14] Conte (2005) 121 Conte's comparison of Vergil's sublime language to the tremors of an earthquake and their varying intensity seems, again, derived from the historical prominence of earthquakes in the study of the sublime.
[15] For a similar idea cf. 3, on bombast (τὸ οἰδεῖν).

Sublime language use, much like the sublime visual images discussed above, presents readers with a landscape that is markedly different from what are used to. For Conte the two are intimately connected, in that the sublimity of visuals relies entirely on the sublimity of language, or the Longinian *megalegoria*.[16] This, I believe, is too restrictive of any inherent sublimity in certain objects, ideas and images. The Περὶ ὕψους is a rhetorical treatise, so it is not too surprising that the author should focus his attention on linguistic ways to achieve or assist a sublime effect. As Innes and Mazzucchi[17] have pointed out, however, many sections, such as *Subl.* 10-13.5, do no not describe sources of sublimity, but rather methods to evoke a sublime effect. This is a helpful distinction for much of the text, but it is one that Conte, as he identifies both method and source in language, does not make. Sections 34-5 especially make a strong case for inherent sublimity, that is to say sublimity that does not depend on *how* something is described, but on *what* is described, where Longinus highlights how we are naturally drawn to large rivers, volcanoes and the stars.

Sublime characters

We have previously considered the sublime in the context of an effect, and on how sublime elements in description or narration can provide a space for philosophical and political considerations in the context of an 'alternative reality'. Leigh and Schiesaro both approach the sublime in a different way, in their attempts to show that certain characters are particularly sublime.[18] The sublime only makes up a small part of Schiesaro's larger analysis on Atreus in Seneca's Thyestes, yet it is a fundamental aspect of this multifaceted character. In the play, Atreus "blurs the boundaries between gods and men"[19] and "tramples the boundaries between different realms in his polymorphous manifestations"[20], all the while expressing himself in language that is notably sublime. Schiesaro does not have to look for long before finding a paradigmatic practical example of the sublime in Atreus's first monologue.[21] At Sen.*Thy.*176-80, Atreus uses two figures of speech highlighted by Longinus for their sublimity, namely asyndeton and repeated internal questions, and while he himself is enraged (*iratus Atreus*), he

[16] Conte (2005) 96.
[17] Innes (2006) 302; Mazzucchi (1990).
[18] Leigh (2006); Schiesaro (2003).
[19] Schiesaro (2003) 127.
[20] Schiesaro (2003) 133.
[21] Schiesaro (2003) 131.

reproaches another for being the opposite of the sublime: undaring, slow, and nerveless (*ignave,iners, enervis*). Not only are Atreus's ideals sublime, so is his language. Seneca's portrayal of Atreus is a highly instructive example of what the sublime can look like when put into practice. We need not necessarily expect any direct echoes or parallels between Longinus's theory and a practical example, but we can still clearly identify the sublime behaviour and language as put forward in the treatise. Most interestingly, in Seneca's Atreus there is even the sense that the philosophical, transitional sublime was present in the mind of an author of the first century A.D.

5. Conclusion

This opening chapter has sought to highlight the central features of the Sublime effect in theory and practice. All the above can combined to form quite a terrifying mass of interpretations of the sublime, and it remains our task to formulate briefly a more workable idea. This chapter has sought to approach the topic from two sides: to interpret Longinus from within his own work and examples on the one hand, and to take from modern scholarship on the other hand. This has culminated, also, in two broad approaches to the sublime. Based on Longinus's examples and his explanation we can see the sublime as a special effect that is characterised by vehemence and a certain loftiness. It does not pervade through a work, but rather flashes up like a thunderbolt, an effect that can be created through a variety of techniques. A major characteristic of these techniques is that they create a sense of urgency by, for example, shifting perspective or speeding up the narrative and accordingly allow the reader to experience the events of the narrative himself. Beyond these figures, Longinus offers up a number of favourite images and themes of the sublime throughout the text, which include movement upwards and downwards, examples taken from forceful natural events, freedom, light, and immense size.
The approaches of modern scholars have sought to combine the rhetorical sublime with the sublime of later western philosophy, to create a sublime that has a transformative effect on the text. The philosophical sublime lies in that which cannot be represented, an insight that lies beyond the boundaries of the physical world.

2. Aesthetics of the Sublime

One of the most used approaches to identifying the sublime within poetry has been to look for imagery that corresponds with that used by Longinus in the examples, or indeed in the language of the *Peri Hypsous*. In the first chapter we have looked at the importance of sight for the sublime, as well as the basic associations of the sublime with great heights, distances and sizes, and the amazement these are wont to produce. This chapter will aim to show that these aesthetics also enjoy a prominent place in Ovid's narration of Phaethon's ride through the sky on the solar chariot. The discussion will begin with the solar palace, the first, programmatic visual display offered by Ovid to set the tone of the episode, before moving on to show the continued prominence of height and vast distances in the rest of the episode and suggesting a double interpretation of what the reaction to these sublime aesthetics might be.

1. The Palace of the Sun

Ovid's description of the palace of the Sun occupies a prominent position at the start of the second book of the *Metamorphoses*, signalling the completion of the journey Phaethon set out on at the end of book 1 (*patriosque adit ortus*, *Met*. 1.779). The opening passage of the book is an ecphrasis of the palace (*Met*. 2.1-30), clearly introduced with the typical formula for starting an epic ecphrasis (*regia est*, *Met*. 2.1),[22] as Ovid shows us the beautiful house of the Sun and its enormous doors.

Let us begin, however, with a quick reminder of what ecphrasis is and what it does. Nowadays, the term is typically used to denote a scene describing a plastic work of art, such as Homer's shield of Achilles, Vergil's shield of Aeneas or the description of the coverlet on Thetis's wedding couch in Catullus 64. As Webb points out, however, this is a modern, narrower definition of ecphrasis. According to a more ancient definition of the term, an ecphrasis is any passage of text that manages to bring its contents before the eyes of its audience and "makes listeners into spectators."[23]

[22] Bömer (1969) 235, Anderson (1997) 229.
[23] Webb (2009) 8.

This quality is also known as φαντασία, and it is a central part of a successful ecphrasis. [24] We have discussed φαντασία in the previous chapter, and have pointed out its importance as a link between the experiences of the characters within a poem and the audience outside it. The ecphrasis, split up in a description of facade of the palace, its doors and its interior, is a striking way to start a new chapter in a story, suggesting that it might have a wider function within the rest of the book. Miller points out that a highly descriptive opening to stories – setting the scene – is a typical characteristic of Ovid, noting that these opening scenes frequently address themes that will remain important for the rest of the story.[25] The detailed and focused character of ecphrasis, and its close connection to φαντασία make it an excellent way to construe a background against we can see the rest of the myth develop, but it also, crucially, serves to draw us closer to Phaethon. The description of the palace is partitioned according to the natural sequence in which Phaethon visits it, thus we see the façade of the palace at the exact time Phaethon reaches it (quo *simul*, *Met.* 2.19), and we see the inside only after Phaethon enters it (*intravit dubitati tecta parentis*, *Met.* 2.20). How much more effective is, in this light, Ovid's conclusion to the ecphrasis through Phaethon's reaction to all he sees?

> *Inde loco medius rerum novitate paventem*
> *Sol oculis iuvenem quibus aspicit omnia vidit*
>
> The boy, shaking from the sight of the strange things,
> is seen in the middle by the Sun's all seeing eyes. (*Met*. 2.30-1)

We have only read (or heard) everything that Phaethon has actually seen, but through the strongly visual nature of the ecphrasis, we are invited by Ovid to almost see them ourselves. Phaethon's reaction, then, is introduced as an example of a reaction the audience should also mirror. In the following sections we will look at the palace of the Sun with more detail, and suggest that Phaethon's reaction is, in fact, a sublime one.

[24] Goldhill (2007), Webb (2009).
[25] Miller (1920) 420 remarks how Ovid frequently begins new stories with *scene-setting* descriptions of a new location. He notes especially the description of Tempe prefacing the story of Io (Met.1.568ff.), and the description of the Grotto of Gargaphie before the myth of Actaeon (Met.3.155ff.), but is aware that "instances might be multiplied in illustration of this point."

2. The Palace of the Sun and the Aesthetics of the Sublime

"*Regia Solis erat sublimibus alta columnis*
clara micante auro flammasque imitante pyropo,
Cuius ebur nitidum fastigia summa tegebat,
Argenti bifores radiabant lumine valvae.
materiam superabat opus;"

"The palace of the sun was built up high on its huge columns,
shining with shimmering gold and flaming firestone,
Its gleaming ivory covered the top of the pediment
and the twin doors shone with silvery light.
The workmanship outclassed the material. (*Met*.2.1-5)"

Our first impression is one of great size and height, with the first line emphasising this twice through *sublimibus* and *alta*. Looking further, our eyes are automatically drawn upwards to the top of the pediment (*fastigia summa*). The second striking feature of this palace is the luxury of its building materials, which are just as impressive as its height: the palace is made of gold (*auro*), *pyropum* (a goldish bronze),[26] ivory (*ebur)* and silver (*argenti),* and it has beautiful doors made by the divine craftsmanship of Vulcanus (*Mulciber*, 2.5).

In ascribing these features to the lofty palace of the Sun, Ovid is sticking to well-established poetic territory. Height is typical for the literary depiction of temples and palaces going back to Greek epic, with ὑψερεφής (high-roofed) or simply μέγα, standard Homeric epithet for palaces.[27] Palaces of such extraordinary luxury were by no means uncommon in high literature, and two particularly close parallels can already be found in Homer. When Telemachus and Peisistratos enter the palace of Menelaos at Odyssey 4.15-90, Homer repeatedly stresses the height of the palace, as well as its

[26] The word is not common in Latin poetry, but when it is used it is always in connection to its shimmering character. Lucretius uses the word to describe the colour of a dove's plumage lighting up in direct sunlight (DRN 2. 803); Propertius uses it of reflective shields (4. 10.21).
[27] *Od*. 4.15, 46, 757; 7. 85, 225; 10.111; 13. 5; 15. 241, 424, 432; 19. 526. *Il*. 5. 213; 9.582; 19. 333.

lustre.[28] The palace is so impressive, that Telemachus cannot resist comparing the palace to the abode of Zeus himself, as he marvels at the bronze, electrum, silver and ivory that bedeck the palace (χαλκοῦ τε στεροπὴν κὰδε δώματα ἠχήεντα// χρυσοῦ τ' ἠλέκτρου τε καὶ ἀργύρου ἠδ' ἐλέφαντος.//Ζηνός που τοιήδε γ' Ὀλυμπίου ἔνδοθεν αὐλή// ὅσσα τάδ' ἄσπετα πολλά. Σέβας μ' ἔχει εἰσορόωντα. Od. 4.72-5). In book 7 of the Odyssey, Odysseus also finds himself in a wonderful palace, now that of Alkinous, king of the Phaeacians. This building has bronze walls (χάλκεοι τοῖχοι, Od. 7.88ff.), golden doors (χρύσειαι θύραι), silver pillars (ἀργύρεοι σταθμοὶ) and golden watchdogs, made by Hephaistos himself (χρύσειοι καὶ ἀργύρεοι κύνες, οὕς Ἥφαιστος τεῦξεν). Odysseus's reaction to the beauty around him is the same as that of Telemachus: he stands still and admires the wonderful palace (ἔνθα στὰς θηεῖτο πολύτλας δῖος Ὀδυσσευς// αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ πάντα ἐῶι θηήσατο θυμῶι). Ovid does not stray far from Homeric examples, then, and the palace remains, spectacular though it is, deeply rooted in the epic tradition of the description of royal palaces.

Ovid also engages with the Roman tradition of describing big, impressive buildings, looking primarily at Propertius's description of the temple of Apollo (*Carm*. 2.31) and Vergil's metaphorical temple of Augustus (*Georg*. 3.1-30), which are also conspicuous for their height and their luxurious components.[29] Propertius's description of the temple of Apollo highlights the material richness of the temple: it is made of gold (*aurea porticus, Carm*. 2.31.1), it sports columns of yellow Punic marble (*Poenis columnis*, 3), it contains elements of bright marble (*claro marmore*, 9) and has doors made of Libyan ivory (*Libyci nobile dentis opus*, 11).[30] Though less in less explicit terms than in Homer, Propertius also hints at the astonishing effect of the edifice, referring to it as a 'great sight' (t*antam speciem*), captivating him to the point of making him late *(veniam tardior).*

Vergil's temple in the proem of *Georgics* 3 is no less of a spectacle, with its doors of gold and solid ivory, explicitly linked to the defeat of the Indians, (*auro solidoque elephanto,* Verg. *Geor*.3.26), columns of bronze taken from ships (*navali surgentis aere columnas*, 29) and Parian marble from Greece (*Parii lapides*, 33). Again, there is a strong focus on the exotic provenance of the materials,

[28] The palace is called a ὑψερεφὲς μέγα δῶμα (4.15), a θεῖον δόμον (4.43) and has shimmering walls ἐνώπια παμφανόωντα (4.42) which causes the two boys to wonder (θαύμαζον, 4.44) at its beauty.
[29] Both Propertius's and Vergil's temples have strong meta-poetic significance.
[30] Fedeli (2005) 876 notes that Punic marble was usually yellow. For Propertius the emphasis is on its provenance, not its looks.

which suggests, on the one hand, their luxury, but must, on the other hand, also remind one of Rome's global supremacy that allowed these materials to be acquired.[31] Ovid's description of the palace the Sun, though it shares the same imagery, looks at the precious metals from a different angle, giving the passage a different character than the palaces of Vergil or Propertius.[32]

Of course, the luxury aspect of the materials that make up Ovid's palace could not and must not be forgotten – it is part and parcel of a divine palace that it be luxurious, but it should also be noted that Ovid is interested in more than the exotic nature of the material. Rather, he pays much more attention to the visual effect produced by the metals shining in the sunlight, as we come across a sequence of luminous words: *clara, micante, flammas imitante pyropo, nitidum, lumine* and *radiabant (Met.* 2. 1-5*)*. This cluster of words paints a dazzling picture with an almost blinding effect, the first in a sequence of three found throughout the Phaethon passage.[33]

So far, we have identified three elements that occur in traditional models for beautiful palaces and have been amplified in Ovid's description of the palace of the Sun: height, light, and amazement.[34] As we have seen in the previous chapter, all three of these are closely related to the aesthetics of the Sublime, as presented in Longinus's *Peri Hypsous.*

Height, as is evident from the very term ὑψος, is the focal point for the aesthetics of the sublime, it is Longinus's favourite descriptor by far for anything that leads to the sublime. A more detailed account of the pervasiveness of height throughout the treatise has already been given in the previous chapter, but a few examples will aid comparison to Ovid's palace of the Sun. Longinus's examples of physical heights, as opposed to the metaphorical 'elevation' of speech, often contain a reference to heaven as a token of a truly unimaginable height. For instance, Longinus's preferred example of a passionless sublimity is Homer's description of Otus's and Ephialtes's assault on heaven by piling Ossa on Olympus *(Od.* 11.305*)*, evoking the improbably impressive height of two mountains

[31] For the political implications of these two depictions of the temple of Apollo, see Dufallo(2013), esp. ch.5, Describing the Divine.
[32] Barchiesi (2009) 175 does identify a clearly orientalising tendency in the extravagant depiction of the palace, based on the similarity of Ovid's scene to that of Propertius.
[33] Phaethon cannot bear the light of the Sun (*propiora ferebat//lumina*, Met.2.22-3) and is ultimately blinded by the light of the chariot, just before he crashes (*suntque oculis tenebrae per tantum lumen obortae,* 181).
[34] In a particularly apt example for our current purpose, Lucian, writing in the 2nd century A.D., explores the effect of a particularly luxurious house on its viewers in the *de Domo*. He characterises the effect in terms strikingly similar to those used by Longinus, claiming that the mind of the viewer is exalted by looking at the palace (γοῦν δοκεῖ καὶ συνεξαίρεσθαι οἴκου πολυτελείᾳ ἡ τοῦ λέγοντος γνώμη, *De Domo 3*).

placed on top of each other (*Subl*. 8.2). In a similar vein, Homer's description of Eris (*Il.* 4.440) is also praised for the way she is presented as being as tall as the distance between heaven and earth (*Subl*. 9.4). When Longinus digresses from poetry to discuss what can be considered sublime in real human experience, he characterises this through examples of conspicuous height, yet again. Big things and great distances, he argues, are more likely to incite wonder than small things: we prefer the vastness of the Nile or the Ocean over a small, pure stream (οὐ τὰ μικρὰ ῥεῖθρα θαυμάζομεν … ἀλλὰ τὸν Νεῖλον καὶ Ἴστρον ἢ ‘Ρῆνον, πολὺ δ’ ἔτι μᾶλλον τὸν Ὠκεανον, *Subl*. 35.4).

Bright lights are also common in Longinus, with the sun in particular frequently used to describe both the natural sublime and poetic genius, which go hand in hand for him. [35] The *Iliad*, and Homer's corresponding poetic skill, are described as the sun at its brightest (*Subl*. 9.13), while the *Odyssey* is cast as the setting sun – no less important and impressive, but less vivid and intense. Imagery of the sun and of other bright lights is also prominent in Longinus's discussion of the power of sublime figures to disguise themselves through their own excellence. The artificiality of the figures is hidden when shaded by the light of their beauty and greatness (παραληφθεῖσα ἡ τοῦ πανουργεῖν τέχνη τοῖς κάλλεσι καὶ μεγέθεσι τὸ λοιπὸν δέδυκεν καὶ πᾶσαν ὑποψίαν ἐκπέφευγεν), just as lesser lights are outshone by the sun and disappear in its light (καὶ τἀμυδρὰ φέγγη ἐναφανίζεται τῶι ἡλίῶι περιαυγούμενα, 17.2). This is the great power of the technical sublime: it is able to hide its artificial nature by the sheen of its sublimity (διὰ λαμπρότητα, 17.3). In all the examples above, sublime light draws attention to itself and away from others; its supremacy over all that is not sublime is so great that it cannot be ignored.

In the same section we saw Longinus describing the human sublime experience through large rivers; we can also find one example that unifies light and height in a single sublime object.

> "οὐδέ γε τὸ ὑφ'ἡμῶν τουτὶ φλογίον ἀνακαιόμενον, ἐπεὶ καθαρὸν σώιζει τὸ φέγγος, ἐκπληττόμεθα τῶν οὐρανίων μᾶλλον"

[35] Innes (2006) 305.

> "nor are we so much amazed at this little flame that we kindle ourselves, because it keeps its light clear, as at the stars in heaven"[36] (*Subl*. 35.4)

The stars are much more out of reach, and much greater than a little fire kindled here on earth, provoking a reaction of sheer amazement (ἔκπληξις). This, Longinus argues, is typical of humankind: we marvel more at that which is great, and we are more amazed by the uncommon than what we already know (θαυμαστὸν δ'ὅμως ἀεί τὸ παράδοξον, *Subl*. 35.5). Is this not exactly the effect the palace of the Sun has on Phaethon? The young boy has just made the journey to the skies and, as such, finds himself in a completely unknown, elevated environment. This is typified by the palace, which does not only extend even further up into the sky, but also shines out powerfully, the product of divine craftsmanship. Admittedly, Ovid reserves Phaethon's reaction to his new surroundings until after he has gone inside, but what he encounters there is no less bright. His father, the personification of the sun, is sitting on an equally luminous throne, (*purpurea velatus veste sedebat // in solio Phoebus claris lucente smaragdis*, 23-4), and his crown is so bright that Phaethon struggles to approach (*neque enim propiora ferebat // lumina*, 22-3*).* Finally, we have Phaethon's response to his elevated, shiny surroundings: he shudders in wonder at the novelty of it all (*novitate paventem*, 31). Read alongside the *Peri Hypsous*, this reaction becomes a sublime experience: the astonished response to an object of unparalleled loftiness and blinding brightness. Beyond Phaethon, Ovid has also tried to show the palace to the audience by strongly visualising the palace in an ecphrasis, who are in turn supposed to mirror Phaethon's sublime amazement.

The unapologetic focus on the luxurious and luminous qualities of the palace, though traditional elements, does not only set Ovid's palace of the Sun apart from palaces of earlier literature in terms of what it depicts, but also in *how* it depicts it.[37] Whereas Homer's Menelaos still has to play down how beautiful his palace is because it cannot compare to the palaces of the gods, Ovid has gone a step beyond, because he need exhibit no such restraint in this description. The result is a palace that engages with traditional models, but greatly outshines them at the same time. This adds to the sublime impressiveness of the palace of the sun in two ways: it is not only a superhuman palace *within* the

[36] Translation by Russell (1964) 167.
[37] Bernsdorff (2000) 23.

poem, prompting a stunned reaction from Phaethon because he has never seen anything quite like it, it is also special *outside* the poem, because it engages with, and surpasses other examples of palaces in classical literature. Here we can see Longinus's account of poetic mimesis in action (Subl.13.2): Ovid's imitation of his poetic forebears has not only elevated the literary passage, but also helped the poet himself surpass his rivals.

The roots of Ovid's palace of the sun, then, belong clearly to the epic tradition of describing palaces such as this, but the final result is one that far surpasses the palaces of his literary forebears. The loftiness of the palace, and the way it engenders a sense of wonder in those who look at it correspond closely to Longinus's predilection for objects of great size, and to the amazed reaction they are supposed to engender in their beholders. By reading the description of the palace alongside Longinus's *Peri Hypsous*, the correspondences between the aesthetics of the sublime and those of the palace have become clear, and form a springboard from where we can investigate whether and how these aesthetics pervade throughout the Phaethon episode.

3. Height and Flight

Before we continue to the rest of the episode, however, we must first look briefly at a part of the ecphrasis that did not come to attention in the previous section: the beautifully worked palace doors and the macrocosm of the earth they portray. It is noted by Brown, following Bartholomé,[38] that many of the elements of Mulciber's art on the palace doors are directly relevant to the Sun: the palace as a whole is appropriately radiant for the sun, and the cosmic view of earth is one the Sun sees every day, for he can see everything ((*oculis) quibus aspicit omnia*, Met.2.32). More interestingly, Mulciber's art is related directly to Phaethon's experience driving the chariot, later on in the poem, because he will also see all the earth has to offer when he looks down from the chariot (*despexit ab aethere terras*, 178). Both father and son are able to inspect the entire earth as they fly through the sky, which literally elevates them miles above anyone and anything else. The concept of flight is a natural fit to the sublime, as it ticks the boxes of a number of Longinus's favourite themes. Primarily, it is the physical realisation of Longinus's upwards motion of the mind, which is one of the main

[38] Bartholomé (1935) 19, Brown (1987) 213.

characteristics of the sublime.[39] Closely allied to this, flight has natural connotations of freedom, because it allows one to escape the constraints of earth. In the case of Daedalus and Icarus, a myth with close similarities to that of Phaethon, flight is explicitly an escape from incarceration, and for Phaethon himself, his flight in the solar chariot is a way to express that he is, indeed, bold and free (*ille ego liber, ille ferox, Met.1.* 756-7). Longinus also contrasts the elevation of the sublime with servitude and lowly thoughts (μικρὰ καὶ δουλοπρεπῆ φρονοῦντας),[40] but his most emphatic comparison of the sublime with flight and an escape from boundaries comes at *Subl*. 35:

> Διόπερ τῆι θεωρίαι καὶ διανοίαι τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης ἐπιβολῆς οὐδ'ὁ σύμπας κόσμος ἀρκεῖ, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς τοῦ περιέχοντος πολλάκις ὅρους ἐκβαίνουσιν αἱ ἐπίνοιαι, καὶ εἴ τις περιβλέψαιτο ἐν κύκλωι τὸν βίον ὅσωι πλέον ἔχει τὸ περριτὸν ἐν πᾶσι καὶ καλόν, ταχέως εἴσεται πρὸς ἃ γεγόναμεν.
>
> "Therefore the whole universe is not enough for the flight of human sight and mind, and often our thoughts break through the boundaries of what is around us. And if we should look at life around and see all that is elevated and beautiful, we will soon know what we were born for."

This is the ultimate elevation, surpassing even the constraints of the universe, allowing one to look around freely at all the world holds from a different perspective. Ovid's Phaethon episode shows us two examples of this *flight of the mind*, translated into a physical flight, through the eyes of the Sun and Phaethon. There is, however, a fundamental difference in the way the Sun looks down on earth, as represented by the ecphrasis on the palace doors, and the way Phaethon will look down on earth, which is at that point on the verge of destruction. The following section will detail the stark difference between the gazes of the Sun and Phaethon, showing the two distinct types of sublimity that their experiences show.

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[39] So at Subl. 7.2. Longinus states that our souls are naturally lifted up by the sublime (ψυχή ὑπο τἀληθοῦς ὕψους ἐπαίρεται), and at *Subl.* 9.1, he claims it is the task of the poet to lift up his soul to the heights as much as possible (τὰς ψυχὰς ἀνατρέφειν πρὸς τὰ μεγέθη). There are many more examples, such as at *Subl*.13.2; 35.2; 36. 1,4.

[40] The sublime passage of Plato cited at Subl.13 makes much the same point again. "They, therefore, who have no knowledge of wisdom and virtue, whose lives are passed in feasting and similar joys, are borne downwards, as is but natural, and in this region they wander all their lives; but they never lifted up their eyes nor were borne upwards to the true world above." Translation by Havell (1890).

4. The Solar Gaze: Order

Whereas Phaethon's flight and vision are richly detailed from *Met.* 2.176-332, we are not given an explicit account of the Sun's experience of his daily journey. As we noted at the start of this section, however, the ecphrasis of the palace doors describes quite well the sights that the Sun sees from his chariot. Looking at the doors of the palace, Brown has remarked that the scenes on these doors, as well as the description of the Sun's court are characterised by a strong emphasis on order.[41] The artwork neatly divides all the rings of the cosmos, from air to earth to water and zooms in, again highlighting the four elements that make up all of creation. The sovereign image of heaven, itself symbolic of order through reference to the thunderbolt (*caeli fulgentis, Met*. 2.17), stands above, symmetrically flanked by the twelve signs of the zodiac. The focus on order continues inside the palace, where personified Day, Month, Year and Century stand in pairs to the sides of the Sun, accompanied by the Hours, whose regular intervals are made explicit (*Dies et Mensis et Annus// Saeculaque et positae spatiis aequalibus Horae, Met.* 2.25-6). Following these markers of time, we are introduced to the seasons, who present themselves in order (Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter) along with their usual attributes.

Many have read the cosmic scenes on the doors of the palace as an analogue to the creation myth of the first book,[42] in which the earth is formed from the chaos of unmixed elements and Zeus establishes his rule over the universe. Whereas we are given a taste of a world before Zeus has established order in the first book, the ecphrastic introduction to the second book only presents the tranquil world that is already carefully moderated by Zeus (*super haec imposita est caeli fulgentis imago, Met*. 2.17*).* This is the world that the Sun sees with his sovereign gaze, his assured power over time and the seasons already emphasised by his royal attributes: a throne, a crown and a purple cloak (*Met.* 2. 23-4; 40-1*).* When the Sun remarks at lines 64-6 that looking down on the entire earth from the highest point of his journey even strikes fear into his heart (*medio est altissima caelo//unde mare et terras ipsi mihi saepe videre// fit timor, Met.* 2.64-66*)*, this must still be understood in the context that no one can even reach this point in the chariot, apart from himself (*non tamen ignifero quisquam*

[41] Brown (1987) 214.
[42]Barchiesi (2005) 235, Anderson (1996) 230, Brown (1987) 215, Albrecht (1968) 443.

consistere in axe// me valet excepto, Met. 2.60-1*).* Add to this that even in his fear, the Sun is not overcome by the terrifying height and speed of the chariot (*nec me, qui cetera, vincit impetus, Met.* 2. 72-3*).* The Sun finishes his warning speech and points out his power once more, when he asks Phaethon to look down on earth and pick anything he wants instead of the chariot, implying his lordship over all he sees below (*denique quidquid habet dives circumspice mundus, Met.* 2.95). These three examples are all indicative of how the sun surveys all around him from a privileged position of height, from where he realises that he is in control over all that he sees.

We might characterise the Sun's mighty gaze down as a sublime experience through comparison to Longinus's *flight of the mind* (*Subl*. 35, quoted above), as the Sun has literally risen above what is mortal and can look around freely. This side of the sublime is based on a sense of supremacy, where elevation naturally implies primacy over those who are not as elevated, as is echoed best in Longinus's praise of Demosthenes. This poet has distinguished himself from all others not because he is blameless, as indeed the Sun is also not beyond fright, but because of his complete control over the most elevated and divine attributes. (ἐπειδὴ ταῦτα, φημί, ὡς θεόπεμπτα δεινὰ δωρήματα (οὐ γὰρ εἰπεῖν θεμιτὸν ἀνθρώπινα) ἀθρόα ἐς ἑαυτὸν ἔσπασεν, δια τοῦτο ὁις ἔχει καλοῖςἅπαντας ἀει νικᾶι, *Subl.* 34.4).[43]

5. Phaethon's Gaze: Disorder and the Destruction of the World

Phaethon's experience of driving the chariot is fundamentally different from that of his father, as is his view of the earth from above. Whereas the flight of the sun, as suggested on the palace doors, moves over a world operating in perfect order, the exact opposite can be said of Phaethon's flight, as disorder reigns supreme. Accordingly, Phaethon's experience of the height and speed of the chariot, as well as of the universe below him, is radically different from that of the Sun.

With the inexperienced mortal at the reigns, rather than the mighty Sun, the orderly track of the Sun's horses is the first to give way (*nec quo prius ordine currunt, Met.* 2.168), the catalyst for the many the lapses from order that are to come. The signs of the Zodiac, which are still symmetrical and

[43] This aspect of sublimity corresponds to what Porter characterises as the Lucretian sublime, as seen in Ch.1, where the Epicurean elevation of the mind through the understanding of atomism brings the observer in control of everything he sees. This type of the sublime will return in the final chapter of this thesis.

immovable on the palace doors, now try to move out of the way of the flaming chariot. The Triones, usually cold, have now grown hot and attempt to douse themselves in the sea, explicitly running counter to what is "allowed" (*radiis gelidi caluere Triones// et* ***vetito*** *frustra temptarunt aeqore tingi Met.* 2.171-2). As the horses rampage on in disorder (*nullo inhibente,* 202*; sine lege ruunt,* 204) they encounter places they have never been before (*per auras ignotae regionis eunt,* 203), continuing not only the theme of disorder, but also challenging the idea that the ecphrasis had shown us a full picture of the universe.

These images of a disturbed universe are by no means less sublime than the ordered universe experienced by the Sun. The disordered sublime approaches Burke's sublime, which locates the power of the sublime in its threat to 'mutilate and dissolve' the human image. The automatic response is one of terror, caused by the sudden threat of disorder. [44] Although Longinus does not explicitly connect fear and disorder, or fear and violence, these links become apparent throughout treatise. He does espouse disorder as a source of the sublime, both in terms of images and language, claiming of figures of speech, for instance, that there is peace in order, and passion in disorder (ἐν στάσει γὰρ τὸ ἠρεμοῦν, ἐν ἀταξίᾳ δὲ τὸ πάθος, *Subl.* 20,2).[45] Retaining the same contrast between restful peace and passionate disorder, we can move to Longinus's assessment of Hyperides, who, though technically the better orator, is still inferior to Demosthenes because he does not strike terror in the hearts of his audience, and lets them remain calm, because no-one is afraid of him (καρδίῃ νήφοντος **ἀργα** καὶ τὸν ἀκροατὴν ἠρεμεῖν ἐῶντα οὐδεὶς γοῦν Ὑπερείδην ἀναγινώσκων φοβεῖται, Subl. 35.). Demosthenes's effect on his audience is the opposite, and is often described in terms of violence. In *Subl.* 12.4, for example, he is compared to a lightning bolt, terrible and vigorous, burning everything in his sight (ἔτι δὲ τάχους ῥώμης δεινότητος, οἱον καίειν, *Subl*. 12.4). Demosthenes's violent effect on his audience leads to a frightened reaction, and produces in them the sublime sensation of astonishment (ἐκπλῆχαι, *Subl.* 12.5).

[44] Pres (1983) 138.
[45] Disorder is also an important point in Longinus's defence of the mistakes made by sublime authors. They are the supposed products of the "disorder that is natural to genius" (*Subl.* 34.4). Archilochus is also to preferred over Eratosthenes for his "passionate disorder"(*Subl. 34*.5)

Moving back to Ovid, we see the themes of fear and destruction return prominently in the description of the unchecked chariot, as the disorderly motions of the chariot and the world around it inspire a sense of fear in Phaethon while it all but manages to destroy the earth. When the onrushing chariot reaches the earth, it sets fire to everything nearby, making the fields grow white (*pabula canescunt*, *Met.* 2.212). It is usual for the fields to grow white with their crops, as is the case in the eternal spring of the golden age (*ager gravidis canebat aristis*, *Met.* 1.110),[46] but the following line helps us understand what is actually happening to the fields: the dried plants are curiously fuel their own destruction (*suo praebet seges arida damno*, *Met.* 2. 213).[47] In this case the white colour is of ash, rather than of ripe wheat, signifying that even the normal passing of time, which would usually see the crops gradually ripen, is disrupted, as the plants mature and burn up in an instant. We move on to the fate of the cities of men on earth, which are instantly turned to dust, before Ovid shifts his attention to the widespread geological consequences of the heat coming from the chariot. A catalogue of mountains from all over the Mediterranean is set on fire, emphatically shedding their previously cold or watery characteristics (*Oete… tum sicca, prius creberrima fontibus*, *Met*. 2.217-8; *nivibus Rhodope caritura*, 222). A second catalogue follows, this time of the rivers, which dry up and disappear, allowing the sunlight to penetrate into the underworld, terrifying Hades. (*Dissilit omne solum, penetratque in Tartara rimis// lumen et infernum terret cum coniuge regem*, *Met.* 2.260-1*).*[48] This image echoes *Il. 20.61*, where Hades fears Poseidon's violence in the battle of the gods will cleave the earth and open Hades to the light. Interestingly, it is also adduced by Longinus as an example of the sublime, though he claims that a non-allegorical reading of the passage would be impious, because the gods should never be able to see Hades (*Subl*. 9.6). Ovid's image is a toned down version of the Homeric original, in which the earth is still rent open by an action of great force, but the gods are not explicitly said to see Hades, thus saving it from charges of impiety. So what was sublime about this problematic image?

[46] Barchiesi (2005) 253.
[47] Paradoxical effects such as this are a favourite of Ovid's. Some examples include the river Inachus adding to his own water through weeping (Met.1.584), the reduplication of Etna's fires caused by Phaethon's fall (2.220), and Jupiter's apparent ability to quench fire with fire (2.440).

> ἐπιπλέβεις, ἑταῖρε, ὡς ἀναρρηγνυμένης μὲν ἐκ βάθρων γῆς, αὐτοῦ δὲ γυμνουμένου Ταρτάρου, ἀνατροπὴν δὲ ὅλου καὶ διάστασιν τοὺ κόσμου λαμβάνοντος.
>
> Do you see, my friend, how the whole world is torn open from the fundaments of earth, and Tartarus itself is laid bare, and how the whole universe is in ruin and disorder? (*Subl*. 9.6)

The complete and violent upheaval of earth is disorder taken to the extremes, and its result is that everything in the universe, mortal and immortal, is now doing battle and facing danger together (ἅμα τῆι τότε συμπολεμεῖ καὶ συγκινδυνεύει μάχηι, *Subl. 9.6)*. The cosmic danger that threatens to wipe out the entire universe is not only designed to strike simple fear into Phaethon, but also into the audience.[49] Although one part of the sublime is made up by the sight of all that is beautiful and calm in the universe, which is what the Sun sees, another, distinct part consists of passionate disorder, which overwhelms and greatly frightens the spectator, Phaethon, and through him the external audience, in much the same way as listeners are overcome by the lightning bolt language of Demosthenes. Throughout the description of the conflagration of the earth, Ovid systematically undoes all the scenes represented on the palace doors. The ordered reality, which the Sun could look down on from above in sublime assurance of his position within it, has been turned on its head.

6. Conclusion

The universe of Ovid's Phaethon episode lives and breathes with a sublime aesthetic, characterised by wondrous heights, elevated flights and the chaotic dangers of a world on the verge of destruction. These magnificent visuals have a powerful astonishing effect on Phaethon that resembles the reaction of ἔκπληξις to a sublime view, as he marvels at the massive palace, and shakes in vertiginous terror as he looks down on a burning world. The strongly visual style of the episode, full of vivid description, is not meant to solely affect Phaethon, however, as Ovid draws in the audience and invites them to imagine the same surroundings for themselves, turning listeners and readers into spectators. This is a key contributor to a sublime effect, as it creates a more vivid picture that allows the audience to share in the emotional responses of Phaethon.

[49] Jope (1989) 17 notes how Lucretius blows up natural disasters to a cosmic scope in the *DRN* in order to inspire fear by suggesting there is a 'collective danger to mankind'.

3. Ovid's Sublime Style

1. Introduction

Whereas the themes of flight, heights and grandeur of the Phaethon episode have already been cursorily identified as potential markers of the sublime by some commentators, there have been no attempts to discover how the episode relates to the more technical aspects of the sublime. Of course, the same caveat applies to this undertaking as in the previous chapter, where it was shown that typical themes of Longinus's sublime, such as the contrast between high and low and an emphasis on fire and light, recur throughout the Phaethon passage. These elements do not necessarily only point at the sublime, but the confluence of so many themes related to the sublime make it more probable that Ovid was aiming at a specific effect. The same can be said especially of an analysis of style, because the figures mentioned by Longinus are by no means uncommon in Latin poetry, and do not have to be the product of Ovid's sublime inclination. Furthermore, we must keep in mind that certain stylistic figures, in particular hyperbaton, were significantly more common in Latin poetry than they were in Greek, so that it is unlikely that they produced an identical response in the reader. This requires that we approach Ovid's style by looking primarily at what effects it has, and comparing this to *how* Longinus's technical elements lead to sublimity, rather than simply identifying what they are. Again, it is through the combination of a sublime theme, a sublime style and a sublime character that we can safely assume that the reoccurrence of this effect is not due simply to chance.

Of the technical portion of the *Peri Hypsous*, the discussion of stylistic figures (ποιὰ τῶν σχημάτων πλάσις) takes up most of the space, treating a number of well-known stylistic elements, such as rhetorical questions (18), asyndeton (20), hyperbaton (22), the more general polyptoton (23) and metaphor (28-32,37). Whereas many manuals on rhetorical technique of the age upheld a distinction between a more plain and concise Attic style and the elaborate and ornate Asianist style, or the three χαρακτῆρες of Greek textual criticism,[50] no such division is made by Longinus. Our author's stance on the matter is perhaps best summarised by Russell, who holds that Longinus's sublime does

[50] For an overview of the characters of various styles see Kennedy (1989) 192-8 and Kirchner (2007) 192-3.

not belong exclusively to one style or another. As a special effect, rather than a special style, it approves of each style as long as it is appropriate to the text, and requires that it portray vividness, passion and urgency, though in a certain moderation.[51] Accordingly, we find these effects highlighted in most of Longinus's discussions on sublime technique. Questions and asyndeta, for example, make the narrative more vivid and active, by pretending to represent informal speech (*Subl.* 17; 19.2), and at *Subl.* 20 Longinus remarks that the combination of various figures can produce a sense of disorder, which aids the depiction of passion (ἐν ἀταξίᾳ δὲ τὸ πάθος, *Subl.* 20.2), and adds vigour to the whole (ἐρανίζῃ τὴν ἰσχυν, *Subl.* 20.1). The quality that underlies most of these figures of speech is that they are somehow reminiscent of real-world language use, as Longinus frequently refers to their effect by giving an example taken from human interaction. The implication is that when an audience identifies such a figure of speech in a literary text, this will evoke the same emotional response it would in normal human interaction. This use of language has a similar effect to successful φαντασία, which we considered in the previous chapter, in that it invites the audience to participate in the text and to experience, through reading or listening, a similar sensation to that which the characters within the text are experiencing.

2. Phaethon terrified (Met. 178-92)

Our first inclination, then, is to look for a sublime effect in passages that depict strong emotion, or urgent action. It is clear that this is not the case of the entirety of the Phaethon episode, but since it is an effect that we are looking for, we can initially confine analysis to a single selected passage. There is perhaps no passage better suited to this purpose than the moment that Phaethon has just entered the solar chariot, as Longinus even includes Euripides's version of this scene in his examples of the sublimity of φαντασία (*Subl.* 15). In Ovid's version, 28 lines after the chariot first takes off, we are first given an idea of Phaethon's reaction to the bumpy ride, showing us, unsurprisingly, his complete terror:

[51] Russell (1964) xlii.

Ut vero summo despexit ab aethere terras
infelix Phaethon penitus penitusque iacentes,
palluit et subito genua intremuere timore,
suntque oculis tenebrae per tantum lumen obortae.

"Looking down on the earth from highest heaven,
unhappy Phaethon saw it receding further and further.
He grew pale and his knees started shaking,
and shadows of the great light covered his eyes."

(*Met. 2. 178-82*)

In these lines, which start off a longer passage filled with inverted expectations, Ovid begins Phaethon's close-up with the double contrast that lies behind *despexit ab aethere*. We see, first of all, the juxtaposition of high (*summo aethere*) and low (*despexit terras penitus penitus iacentes*) that produces a similar sense of distance and height as Homer's description of Eris at *Il. 4.442*, which Longinus praises for its depiction of the distance between heaven and earth (τὸ ἐπ' οὐρανὸν ἀπὸ γῆς διάστημα, *Subl.* 9.4). It is not simply the height of the chariot itself that scares Phaethon, but rather the vertigo-inducing distance between heaven and earth, the contrast between two extremes. The polarity of heaven and earth is reinforced through the opposition between *summo* and *penitus penitus,* with the distance emphasised through rhetorical doubling of *penitus*.[52]

The second contrast comes to light when we consider the echo of Vergil's verses "*Iuppiter aethere summo// despiciens mare velivolum terrasque iacentis*" (*Aen*. 1.223-4), where the king of the gods looks down mightily at everything he rules. Ovid's delaying of the subject *Phaethon* enhances the effect of this contrast, as it is only then that we realise it is not the controlling Jupiter doing the surveying, but rather a fearful, mortal boy. Again, the contrast is one between high and low, great and small: the divine might of Jupiter is contrasted with the mortal helplessness (*infelix*) of Phaethon.

[52] Anderson (1996) 249.

Ovid's inversion of Vergil has also been read as the poet's meta-poetic comparison of himself, a terrified youngster, to the almighty master of Roman literature, Vergil.[53] The recasting of a line from the Aeneid shows clearly Ovid's engagement with his literary forebears, and is taken to imply his failure to live up to Vergil's greatness. In this sense, the contrast Ovid evokes through *despexit ab aethere,* fits closely to Longinus's understanding of (poetic) μίμησις. The process of poetic imitation is, at least initially, compared to a battle between an established veteran and his fresh-faced challenger (*Subl.* 13), and Ovid's allusion to Vergil exemplifies this aspect of imitation both in terms of the Phaethon-Jupiter opposition and in the Ovid-Vergil opposition: a young man's inability to emulate the greats. Crucially, however, this is not complete failure, as contest with one's betters is already admirable per se, even if it results in failure (καὶ τὸ ἡττᾶσθαι τῶν προγενεστέρων οὐκ ἄδοξον, *Subl.* 13.5). This essential aspect of the Phaethon episode will receive more attention in Chapter 4, but for now it will suffice to note that Ovid's ability alone to work an allusion to Vergil into his text elevates his product through association with the great Aeneid, even if it comes out worse.[54] Although we might question whether μίμησις can be counted as a technical, stylistic aspect of the sublime in all cases, this case of precise repetition, the most direct form of μίμησις, imparts to Ovid's text the epic elevation as it did in Vergil's Aeneid. The analysis of lines 178-9 shows how Ovid reinforces the visual contrast between high and low, a key dynamic of the sublime, by means of stylistic elements and the transformation of a paradigm of elevation to one of inferiority.

Let us return to Ovid's text: having shown the audience an external view of the chariot in the sky, Ovid continues the shift of perspective towards Phaethon (*palluit-obortae)* by moving even closer, entering the mind of the boy. His unhappiness with the situation, indicated but not detailed by *infelix*, now becomes evident, as we see how terror is physically affecting Phaethon, who grows pale and is blinded by the light of the solar chariot. Where *despexit terras* was a relatively direct reference, it is tempting to see a more indirect influence here, by way of imitation Sappho fr. 31. To speak of allusion would perhaps be going too far, but there is a clear similarity in Ovid's sketch of Phaethon's

[53] Schiesaro (2014) 96-101. Morgan (2003) 76-77.
[54] Similarly, Ovid's reworking of the line reflects favourably on his skill as a poet, and Phaethon's sheer ability to stand in the same place as Jupiter, watching the earth from above, reflects well on his character, even if both fail by comparison to their examples.

reaction by dissecting him into his various body parts. Lines 180-2 see his skin, knees and eyesight fail him, three symptoms that also occur in Sappho (pallor: χλωροτέρα δὲ ποίας// ἔμμι; trembling: τρόμος δὲ // παῖσαν ἄγρει; eyesight: ὀππάτεσσι δ'οὐδὲν ὄρημμ'). Interestingly, Longinus admired this poem greatly, quoting it in its entirety in the *Peri Hypsous* and subjecting to a brief stylistic analysis. Sappho's main virtue is her success in choosing her subject material: picking out the most important elements and binding them together (ὅτι τὰ ἄκρα αὐτῶν καὶ ὑπερτεταμένα δεινὴ καὶ ἐκλέξαι καὶ εἰς ἄλληλα συνδῆσαι, *Subl.* 10. 1). [55] Moreover, Longinus admires the poem for the way it depicts Sappho's state not as one single emotion, but as a combination of competing and contradictory effects.[56] Crucially, this does not make her feelings less intelligible for the reader, as they have, Longinus stresses, been taken from the actual symptoms of love. Rather, Sappho's poem works, and works so well, precisely because she has managed to accurately and poignantly separate the conflicting sensations of love. In his depiction of Phaethon's emotional state, Ovid seems to have taken a similar route, as he manages to convey a complete picture of the charioteer's reaction by picking through separate physical responses in 2. 180-2, before zooming in further to portray the whirlwind of thoughts going through his mind at lines 183-187.[57]

Of the physical effects of the chariot ride on Phaethon, his blindness most deserves further comment. Whereas the first two symptoms are fairly straightforward, Phaethon's blindness is represented, in a seemingly paradoxical way, as the result of excess light. Of course, this not the first time that the boy has been dazzled by light to the point of blindness, which was also the case when he first came eye to eye with his father at 2. 22-23, but Ovid's suggestion that shadows appear before Phaethon's eyes because of the light relies more heavily on the paradoxical opposition between light and dark. The sensation Ovid aims at is not at all unfamiliar, as it has been experienced by anyone who has looked directly into the sun and has had to squint, but the antithetical formulation of bright

[55] Mazzucchi (2010) 190 also considers Sappho's love-interest sublime – one so beautiful that he can almost be considered divine (ἴσος θέοισιν); a beauty met by complete marvel. Longinus does not make this point explicitly, however.

[56] Sappho burns and freezes, thinks rationally and raves at the same time (καὶ καθ' ὑπεναντιώσεις ἅμα ψύχεται καίεται, ἀλογιστεῖ φρονεῖ); the result is not *one* emotion, but a confluence of different emotions (μὴ ἕν τι περὶ αὐτὴν πάθος φαίνηται, παθῶν δὲ σύνοδος, *Subl.* 10.3).

[57] Ovid's segmented approach to Phaethon's fear and the physical effects it has on him is also remniscent of Lucretius's account of fear and the human body at DRN. 3. 182.

light and the blinding shadows it produces, is initially confusing. Ovid's structuring of the line contributes to its confusing nature, particularly through the use of hyperbaton. Though common in Latin poetry, the hyperbaton of *sunt obortae* is extreme here, especially due to the postposition of the participle, which contains the operative part of the sentence.[58]

Longinus favours the use hyperbaton as a way to confer a state of mental agitation, mirrored in the corruption of order in the sentence (*Subl*. 22) Phaethon's blindness, the final and most dramatic of his first three physical symptoms, is also the first that challenges his sensory perception of the world around him. This verse, challenging both in terms of form and content, mirrors the confusion felt by Phaethon, and helps provoke in the external audience similar disorientation, as they come to grips with the meaning of the verse.

Sound also makes an important contribution to the effect of these lines.[59] We have seen that the repetition of '*penitus penitusque*' serves first of all to stress the distance between Phaethon and the safety of solid ground, as well as of the speed at which the chariot is ascending. The alliteration of "*Phaethon penitus penitusque*",[60] however, also produces an audible effect similar to that of scared stammering. *Iacentes* breaks off the effect, before *palluit* briefly reintroduces it and starts off yet another sequence of t-sounds in *subito genua intremuere timore,* evoking a similarly frantic effect. Through their position in a passage describing Phaethon's startled reaction to the flight, these repeated sounds do precisely this, enhancing the terror felt by the boy by mimicking sounds associated with his emotional state. Longinus does not directly address the effect of the *repetition of sounds,* as chapters 39-43 deal mainly with metrical and rhythmical aspects of sound. [61] When he does address harmony and sound, however, we might find in his choice of the alliterative Euripidean line γέμω κακῶν δὴ κοὐκέτ' ἔσθ' ὅποι τεθῇ ("I am full of sorrow, there is no space for more", *Subl.40 = Eur.Herc.1245),*

[58] Anderson (2005) 249.
[59] Claassen (2008) 98-110 pays special attention to Ovid and the use of sound effects. There is much danger in attributing fixed effects to the combination and repetition of sounds, or even in identifying such repetition in the first place. Nevertheless, she concludes that Ovid's use of sound effects is typically not the product of chance, admitting that 'context is all' (101), in the interpretation of these effects.
[60] The aspirate *ph* in ***Ph****aethon*, though a Greek word, would not have been pronounced as a fricative. There would have been a distinction between the aspirated *ph* unaspirated *p,* but it would most likely still have contributed to the triple alliteration of *'p'* sounds. See Sidney Allen (1978) 27.
[61] *Subl.* 39-43 does deal with topics such as sound and harmony, but here Longinus focuses mainly on metrical and rhythmical aspects of sound.

the suggestion that alliteration did contribute to the harmony that Longinus finds conducive to the sublime.

Having gone through Phaethon's physical reaction to the speeding chariot, Ovid then moves into the mind of the charioteer, to show his internal panic. In five verses we see Phaethon wish he had never embarked on this soon-to-be-fatal journey:

Et iam mallet equos numquam tetigisse paternos,
iam cognosse genus piget et valuisse rogando,
iam Meropis dici cupiens ita fertur, ut acta
praecipiti pinus borea, cui victa remisit
frena suus rector, quam dis votisque reliquit.

"Now he wishes he had never touched his father's steeds,
now he regrets having known his parentage, and even to have dared to ask,
now he desires to be called Merops's son, as he is borne away
like a ship buffeted and conquered by the on-setting North wind,
that the captain has let go and entrusted to the gods."

(Met.2. 182-6*)*

This passage can be split up into two parts, with the first three verses detailing Phaethon's thoughts, before launching into a two-verse simile comparing the boy to a storm-tossed mariner.[62] The first group continues the theme of Phaethon's panic both in form and content: within three lines he discards all his reasons for having gone on this quest in the first place. Ovid's style reinforces Phaethon's internal struggle, as his thoughts are framed by the anaphoric repetition of *iam*, emphasising the speed at which these thoughts race through Phaethon's head. His regrets take the shape of a *hysteron proteron*, beginning with his most recent misstep (driving the horses) and ending with the rejection of his mortal father, the inverted order being a marker of his confused mind. The

[62] For the suitability of the 'captain'-theme to the political aspect of the Phaethon episode, see Barchiesi (2005) 254. We might also think of Longinus's praise of Homer's shipwreck scenes (*Subl.*15), an important passage that links fear to sublime experiences.

rush and disorder of Phaethon's thoughts is emphasised by the confused and inconsistent use of verbs in these verses. The sequence starts off simply with the present subjunctive *mallet tetigisse*, identified by Bömer as the unusual reconfiguration of the typical wish formula *mallem + infinitive* to the third person.[63] *Piget* keeps Phaethon as the implied subject, but is typically used impersonally, and is the centre of the zeugma of *cognosse piget et valuisse*, to which yet another verb form is added through the gerund *rogando.* Phaethon's thoughts continue in the subordinate clause *meropis dici cupiens*, as Ovid chooses for yet another way to express the most important information, now through a participle and passive infinitive construction.[64] The shift from Phaethon's internal thoughts to the external description implied by *fertur* is abrupt, and before we can readjust, Ovid has launched into a simile. Certainly, there is nothing incomprehensible about these verses, but the alternation and complexity of Ovid's phrasing does impart a hasty energy to the whole, mirroring Phaethon's feverish thoughts.

Lines 187-92 show the final consequences of Phaethon's terror: he is both mentally and physically incapable of holding on to the reins and controlling the chariot:

Quid faciat? multum caeli post terga relictum,
ante oculos plus est! animo metitur utrumque,
et modo quos illi fatum contingere non est,
prospicit occasus, interdum respicit ortus:
quidque agat ignarus stupet et nec frena remittit
nec retinere valet nec nomina novit equorum.[65]

What should he do? Much of heaven is behind him,
but more is ahead! In his mind he measures both,
and now he looks at his destination, then at his departure,
neither of which fate will allow him to reach.

[63] Bömer (1969) 288.
[64] It is not unusual to denote fatherhood through the possessive genitive, but this is by no means the easiest Latin. See Bömer (1969) 289.
[65] Zwierlein (1999) 255 believes lines 191-2 are interpolations based on their (almost) repetition of information that has already been given. So *quidque agat* (193) points too closely to *quid faciat?(187)* , and *nec frena remittit* (191)to *nec flectat habenas* (169). However, it is not unlikely that Phaethon was constantly repeating the same thoughts in this situation: he is too paralysed to do anything and cannot break through this loop of fear.

Knowing not what to do he stands paralysed,

he cannot hold tight or let loose the rains, and the horses he cannot call.

(*Met.* 2. 187-92)

Ovid reopens the main narrative after simile with a direct question "*quid faciat?*', which for Longinus is a sure fire way to invest a text with a sense of urgency (*Subl*. 18). Occurring just after a simile, the short question restarts the main narrative with a jolt, also showing the doubt in Phaethon's mind, both through form and content. The following lines lean heavily on repeated contrasts, which give the narrative a dynamic, twisting and turning effect. First we see Phaethon positioned in the middle of the sky, as he looks over his shoulder to find as much behind him (*post terga)* as there is before him *(ante oculos).* The same is repeated, more or less, in the following line, though now through the double contrast of *prospicit –respicit* and *occasus – ortus.*[66] In the final lines of this passage, Phaethon's complete paralysis finally has a disastrous result: he can neither rein in the horses (*retinere valet*), nor let the reins go (*nec frena remittit*[67]), in yet another contrast that sees Phaethon hopelessly stuck in the middle.

In the style of Sappho, Ovid has represented Phaethon's emotional state by selecting a number of his physical and mental reactions to the world around him, a group of reactions, filled with contrast, that attack him almost simultaneously and leave him paralysed through sheer fright. Ovid's deft selection is coupled with heavy use of stylistic figures, contrast, repetition and sound effects to add vividness, confusion and speed to his description of Phaethon's frenzied mind. As was the case in Sappho's ode, Ovid's psychological picture of Phaethon is effective because it is relatable.

Taken together, the various effects produce a passage that manages to bring the audience close to experiencing the flight of chariot itself by subjecting them to an audible or legible analogue of Phaethon's experience, and draws them along, yielding a sublime sensation of pathos, terror and confusion. Interestingly, this is precisely what Longinus praises in Euripides's description of Phaethon's flight through the sky: the creation of an image that is so lifelike that we would almost

[66] The juxtaposition of *occasus* and *ortus* showcases the pair's double meaning, referring both to Phaethon's actual departure and destination, as to his birth (*ortus*) and death (*occasus*).
[67] Words built around a 're'-prefix recur throughout 185-92: *remisit, (rector), reliquit, relictum, respicit, remittit, retinere*. This is another interesting example of variation that, as it is based on continuity, speeds up the narrative.

believe that the poet was present at the events he describes and his corresponding ability to transfer this experience to the audience (*Subl*. 15.4).

3. Shifts in narrative intensity

The passage discussed above is inherently suited to conveying a sublime effect because of the part of the story it describes: it is the first time we can gage Phaethon's reaction to the fulfilment of his greatest wish, as he hurtles through the sky at breakneck pace. The moment is an important one in the story, as it begins the reversal of Phaethon's fortune and starts off the disastrous sequence of events that are to unfold in the second part of the story. Of course, the story cannot consist solely of moments like these, and there are times at which Ovid must put his foot on the brakes, before he can build up the narrative tension once more. Shifts in narrative tempo and focus are, of course, somewhat of a speciality of Ovid, whose practice of embedding smaller myths within larger ones, sometimes to the point of utter confusion, is one of the defining features of the style of the *Metamorphoses*.[68] With the narration of Phaethon's flight through the sky, however, the poet is faced by a unique challenge, as he must check his description of a situation beyond all control: a speeding chariot that can, explicitly, not be reined in.

In the very first description of the effect of sublimity, Longinus suggests that, unlike in other styles, the power of the sublime can manifest itself within a single moment, like the flash of a lightning bolt (*Subl*. 1.4). The same metaphor is used in Longinus's comparison of the styles of Demosthenes and Cicero, the former characterised by his quick, violent style, and the latter by his more effusive use of language (*Subl*. 12.4). For our critic, Demosthenes clearly comes out on top in terms of sublimity, because the abrupt and violent effect of his language is more likely to produce the complete astonishment (τὸ σύνολον ἐκπλῆξαι) that is so central to the effect of the sublime.

There must, however, be a method to the madness. Though a sublime effect is produced by astonishing the audience, Longinus also warns that this effect must be carefully moderated, lest it slip

[68] Ovid's narrative technique has been subject to much research, notably Rosati (2002); Wheeler (2000).

out of control (*Subl*. 2.2).[69] This moderation is performed through the knowledge and application of proper technique: passionate torrents of language are not necessarily sublime by themselves, but they must sometimes be curbed through the careful selection and combination of material, words and figures.[70] Even though sublimity has a natural affinity with the great and the overwhelming, Longinus is careful to set it wholly apart from excess. Throughout the treatise, authors are warned that the very same methods that can evoke the sublime, can also be its downfall, if they are not used sparingly (*Subl*. 3; 4; 29; 38). Finding the sublime is a balancing act, of sorts, that requires approaching the extremes of passion and ornament, but that must never overstep it. Ovid's segmentation of Phaethon's ride through the sky is an excellent example of how the careful intervention of a poet can keep a passage filled with strong emotion and quick action from becoming too overwhelming, and can even make it more effective through deft variation of narrative intensity.[71]

Ovid's narrative adventurousness is not as explicit in the Phaethon episode as it elsewhere,[72] as he never leaves Phaethon's world to tell a completely different story. What we do see, however, is Ovid's frequent departure from his main focus, Phaethon in the chariot, to spend time detailing what is happening around him. This approach to the narrative has a disjunctive effect, which has been criticised by Anderson as greatly diminishing the creation of pathos for Phaethon's misfortunes.[73] It is, of course, true that creating distance between the audience and Phaethon by changing focus slows down the narrative somewhat and lessens the sense of urgency.

We might best understand Anderson's objection to Ovid's style in the Phaethon episode when the poet again suddenly departs from his hero in order to devote seven lines to the reactions of the stars to the turbulence around them (*Met*. 2.171-77). In the ten lines that precede this passage, Ovid

[69] Ovid and Longinus use the same metaphors of losing control. Phaethon's chariot is also compared to a ship without ballast (*Met*. 2.163-4; 185-6), and Longinus uses language related to horse-racing to describe the effect technique can have on the sublime: δεῖ γὰρ αὐτοις ὡς κέντρου πολλάκις οὕτω δὲ καὶ χαλινοῦ (*Subl.* 2)
[70] Throughout the discussions of technical sources of the sublime, Longinus repeatedly stresses the need for and effectivity of variation in style. Cf. *Subl.* 20 for the variation of stylistic figures. *Subl.* 22. For the energy produced by varied language use. *Subl.* 23 for the variety induced by the juxtaposition of various cases, times, persons, etc.
[71] Conte (2005) 121, describing Vergil's sublime style, also emphasises that it is characterised by shifts in intensity.
[72] In book 5, for example, Minerva's journey to Helicon (5. 250-678) opens up the narration of a song contest between the muses, which again contains Arethusa's account of her own transformation, as told by Callisto. See Rosati (2002) 272 for a detailed analysis of this narrative structure.
[73] Anderson (1997) 248 ad Met.2.176-7; 250 ad Met.2.195-7; 262 ad Met.2.311-13; 263 ad Met.2.319-22.

had filled his writing with a sense of speed and disorder, culminating in two lines commenting on Phaethon's reaction to it all (*ipse pavet nec qua commissas flectat habenas// nec scit qua sit iter nec, si sciat, imperet illas, Met.* 2.169-70). [74] There is no explicit indication that *ipse* refers to Phaethon, and we might reasonably expect these lines to be the introduction to a further exploration of the young boy's thoughts. Ovid, however, has other plans, and sets his sight on the world around the chariot. Lines 171-7 describe the reactions of various stars to the disruption of the regular order and the chariot's intrusion into their domains, taking the time to address them and detail their characteristics. Anderson's criticism of *memorant* (*Met.* 2.176) is especially valid, with its reference to an oral tradition removing the narrator, and his audience, from the events he is describing. Its occurrence within an apostrophe (*te quoque, Met.* 2.176), only increases the distance Ovid is now creating between Phaethon and the audience. The objection that this distance results in a loss of pathos for Phaethon, however, misses the point of Ovid's shifts of perspective. Rather than implying that we shouldn't care for Phaethon, Ovid's attention for the things that are happening around the chariot, which means that he must shift his focus from Phaethon, only strengthens our pathos for Phaethon. First of all, the passionate passages that do revolve around Phaethon and show in detail his panicked response gain in strength by comparison to the more relaxed, detached passages that describe the consequences of his fateful ride, as the audience is left to wonder what is going on with Phaethon every time Ovid breaks off the narrative. Secondly, Ovid's focus on the world around the chariot allows him to paint a vivid picture of the terrible scenes that are unfolding around the boy, making his reaction all the more relatable.

To illustrate, this pattern of building and relaxing tension is also found later on in the episode: a return to the volatile motions of the chariot (*Met.* 2.201-209), for example, is followed by a long catalogue of mountains (*Met.*2. 210-225).[75] After the catalogue, we turn to the boy again, as he sees the frightening sight of a burning world and struggles to bear the heat of the speeding chariot. (*Met.*2. 227-234). This passage, zoomed in on Phaethon, manages again to rouse pity for him, now blinded by

[74] "He shivers and does not know where to steer the reins he has been entrusted, nor does he recognise the road nor could he, if he had, drive the horses."

[75]Though this passage does interrupt the narrative tension, Ovid's catalogue is all but orderly. Barchiesi (2005) 253-4 points out that, though the disorder of the mountains is typical of epic catalogues, Ovid manages to take this effect to the extreme, in order to mirror the confusion and speed of the chariot.

a thick cloud of smoke, and paints a dazzling picture of the heat of the chariot through an accumulation of heat-related words (*aestus, ferventes, fornace, candescere, cineres, favillam, calido fumo*). Before we can get all too familiar with Phaethon, however, another catalogue, this time on rivers, slows down the narrative. The focus turns away from Phaethon and the chariot between lines 235-304, as Tellus finds Jupiter and complains about her undeserved fate. The monologue is long and it takes the earth a considerable amount of time to come to the point: the universe as we know it is on the verge of destruction. (*si freta, si terrae pereunt, si regia caeli// in Chaos antiquum confundimur*, *Met.*2. 298-9). This dramatic statement reintroduces to the narrative the urgency that was lost by Tellus's lengthy speech, and Jupiter's response immediately moves on the narrative. In the final climax, the king of the gods climbs to the highest point of the universe and strikes down Phaethon, who falls from his chariot as a shooting star.

The constant shift of perspective, towards and away from Phaethon, results in a striking change of narrative intensity.[76] Although commentators such as Anderson have found it distracting, and read it as Ovid's denial to create pathos for a hubristic Phaethon, Ovid's narrative shifting only serves to emphasise the passages that give a better look at Phaethon's feelings. Moreover, through the constant jumping from one scene to another, Ovid does not only create suspense by splitting up Phaethon's experience of the ride up into different passages, but also manages to convey, through his structuring of the episode, the earthly disorder that Phaethon has caused. Through the ordering of his material, as well as the flourishes of his stylistic figures, Ovid creates a text that produces a sublime experience in the reader because it forms a textual analogue to Phaethon's experience, marked by the vertiginous contrast between high and low, and the suggestion of a world in which so much is happening at once that it becomes impossible not to jump from topic to topic. These technical aspects of literature combine with Ovid's selection of themes and visuals to form a whole that instils in the audience a sublime wonder and terror equal to that felt by Phaethon in the chariot.

[76] Ovid is more than aware of the effect he is creating. When he breaks off the narrative at 2. 195 through the excursory formula "*est locus*" he tricks his audience into thinking he will embark on an ecphrasis. This is no place he is describing, however, but rather Scorpio, whose terrifying appearance has an immediate effect on Phaethon. The unexpected resumption of the main narrative so soon after a signalled break must have kept audiences on the edge of their seats.

Had Ovid collated all the scenes that describe the violent motions of the chariot and Phaethon's emotional response to create a single scene of sustained chaos, it would, in all probability, have been too much to bear. Rather, then, Ovid has split up Phaethon's flight, making each glance back to Phaethon more exciting due to the sudden shift of perspective and quickened narrative speed. Returning to Longinus's comparison between Demosthenes and Cicero; Ovid's treatment of flight is clearly more similar to Demosthenes's abrupt style: by cutting the flight into chunks, he enhances their relative urgency and speed. At each shift back to Phaethon, the audience is caught by surprise by the sudden change, and is born alongside Phaethon through tumultuous passages. Like lightning, Ovid shocks us each time he returns to Phaethon, before relaxing the tension and waiting for the next thunderbolt to strike.

4. Conclusion

Ovid's sublime style aims at a similar effect to that of the sublime aesthetics of the episode, as we saw in the previous chapter. Ovid's language when describing Phaethon's terrified reaction to what is happening to him mimics the boy's reactions in an attempt to subject the audience to an audible or legible analogue of flying on the chariot themselves. Accordingly, the sublime sensations and sublime vistas experienced by Phaethon intratextually are given an extratextual dimension as well, as the audience, though not actually present at the events being described, feel a similar astonishment to Phaethon because of the effective vividness of Ovid's language.

4. Phaethon as a sublime character

1. Introduction

Over the previous four chapters we have seen how the sublime can be found in the imagery and style of Ovid's Phaethon episode, but Phaethon himself has not come up quite as much. It was established in the initial overview of the ways in which the sublime can manifest itself that even people or characters can be considered to exhibit sublime characteristics. Longinus does not spend much time discussing characters in his treatise, focusing rather on what is said than on what this implies for the person who has said it. It is almost surprising that Longinus has as little attention for the personal aspect of the sublime, considering the strong association of ὑψος with character in Homer, before it came to be used as a term of literary criticism.[77]

This is in part due to the fact that Longinus is required by the form of the treatise, and indeed by his opening argument that sublimity *can* be taught (Subl. 1.1-2; 2.1-2), to spend a significant portion of the text discussing the technical, teachable elements of the sublime. Sublime characters and people are not technical, but are rather founded on the first two of Longinus's five sources of sublimity: great-heartedness and passion (καὶ εἰ δωρητὸν τὸ πρᾶγμα μᾶλλον ἢ κτητόν, *Subl*. 9.1), and it is the mark of a great author that he can raise up the souls of his characters to the heights (τὰς ψυχὰς ἀνατρέφειν πρὸς τὰ μεγέθη, *Subl.* 9.1).[78] The first of these is considered the most important of all (τὴν κρατίστην μοῖραν ἐπέχει τῶν ἄλλων τὸ πρῶτον, *Subl*. 9.1) and consists of an "echo of a great soul" (ὕψος μεγαλοφροσύνης ἀπήχημα, *Subl.* 9.2). He has used this phrase before, and evidently expects Terentianus to be familiar with it[79], which means that he, unfortunately, does away with a more thorough explanation. From the examples that follow, however, we can form a good idea of what entails such a great soul.

Longinus shows how the powerful the effect of the sublime soul is through the example of Ajax's silence when confronted by Odysseus in the *Nekyia* in *Il.* 11 (*Subl.* 9). The passage itself is not cited – a rare occurrence in Longinus - but this only reinforces his subsequent argument that, on some

[77] Russell (1964) xxx.
[78] "Even if it is innate rather than teachable."
[79] Subl. 9.2 γέγραφά που καὶ ἐτέρωθι τὸ τοιοῦτο ("*As I wrote before somewhere else"*).

occasions, words are not necessary to produce a sublime effect, and that a simple thought alone can be sublime (φωνῆς διχα θαυμάζεταί ποτε ψιλὴ καθ' ἑαυτην ἡ ἔννοια δι' αὐτο τὸ μεγαλόφρον, *Subl.* 9.2).[80] Ajax's silence is sublime because it shows his character, unmasked by speech, and shows it to be free of wretched and ignoble thoughts (μὴ ταπεινὸν φρόνημα καὶ ἀγεννές). The passage is another treasure trove of Longinus's favoured opposition between the high and the low, the wonderful and the base.[81] The next example is cut short by a lacuna, but must refer to Alexander's famous retort to Parmenios that he too would accept Darius's peace offers, if he were Parmenios.[82] Though Longinus's reasons for including this passage are missing, this passage clearly deals with the refusal to yield – even when this might seem the most prudent course of action – and an ambition for greater things. This theme of bravery and ambition in the face of danger returns strongly in Longinus's second Ajax example, in which the hero begs Zeus to restore the light, even if that would cause his death. (*Subl.*9.10). It is specifically this aspect of great-heartedness and the sublime that will come to the fore in our analysis of Phaethon's character in the *Metamorphoses*.

2. A Sublime Phaethon

We first meet Phaethon when he is compared his peer Epaphus, the son of Io and Jupiter.[83] The two boys are equal in age, and also in spirit (*animis aequalis et annis*, *Met.*1.750). Our first impression of Phaethon, then, who has no proof of his own divine parentage, is that he is just as high-spirited as a boy who is openly held to be divine and is even worshipped in temples (*perque urbes iuncta parenti// templa tenet, Met.*1.749-50). It is Epaphus who sets up the main conflict of the story when he challenges Phaethon's boast:

[80] This runs counter to Longinus's earlier suggestion that the sublime is "a certain excellence in words" (ἀκρότης καὶ ἐξοχή τις λόγων, *Subl*. 1.3).
[81] Favoured characteristics are: wonderful (θαυμαστὸν), weighty (ἐμβρίθης), high-spirited (φρονηματίης), set against the much worse: wretched (ταπεινὸν), ignoble (ἀγεννές), small (μικρον) and "fit for a slave" (δουλοπρεπής).
[82] *Subl*. 9.4, Cf. Plut.*Alex*. 29. The implications of Alexander's willingness to march on , namely his conquering of more land, also makes this an example of the sublimity of vast distances and far horizons.
[83] Barchiesi (2005) 229 and Bömer (1969) 224 note that the language used to present Epaphus's divinity carries the strong suggestion that this was also once met with doubt and scepticism (tandem, creditur).Rather than implying that Epaphus is not actually the son of Jupiter, however, this rather sets up the important theme of unproven parentage. Anderson (2006) 222 argues that Epaphus's divine birth is doubted, and not that of Phaethon.

Sole satus Phaethon, quem quondam magna loquentem
nec sibi cedentem Phoeboque parente superbum
non tulit Inachides "matri"que ait "omnia demens
credis et es tumidus genitoris imagine falsi"

When Phaethon, the son of the Sun, was once boasting,
and out of pride for his father refused to yield to Epaphus,
the son of Io said: "You foolishly believe everything your mother says,
and you swell with pride from the false notion of who your father is. (Ovid. *Met.*2.751-4)

These lines abound with words that can be associated with the sublime. *Magniloquentia*, picked up by "*magna loquentem"*, was used as a technical term in literary criticism for Homer's lofty style.[84] It also resembles the later characterisation of Phaethon as *Magnanimus* (*Met.* 2.110), the strongest echo of Longinus's μεγαλόφρων.[85] *Superbus* has the same connotations of loftiness and is close to Longinus's favoured μεγαλοφροσύνη and φρονηματίης (*Subl.* 9. 2, 4).[86] Its negative counterpart *tumidus*, swollen, also occurs in Longinus as ὀγκος, where it is usually more positive, and has a meaning that is very close to ὕψος itself. [87] Following Epaphus's jibe, Phaethon looks for his mother and, safe in her arms, gives his own account of what has just happened.

"quo" que "magis doleas genetrix," ait "ille ego liber,
ille ferox tacui. Pudet haec opprobria nobis
et dici potuisse et non potuisse refelli.

[84] Cic. *Or.* 191 & *Fam.*13.15.2.
[85] This is also a clear allusion to Lucretius's *magnanimus Phaethon* at (*DRN* 5.397).
[86] Like μεγαλοφροσύνη and φρονηματίης, *suberbus* can refer to both a positive and negative quality, ranging from pride to arrogance and haughtiness. Quintillian also sees a link between *superbus* and the sublime: when speaking of the need to select a gentle, inoffensive style of speech, he characterises the opposite of this style as not at all vehement (*superbum*), lofty (*elatum*) or sublime. (*Quare ipsum etiam dicendi genus in hoc placidum debet esse ac mite; nihil superbum, nihil elatum saltem ac sublime desiderat*, Quint. *Inst.Or.*6.2.19).
[87] *Subl.* 8.3; 12.3; 39.3; 40.2.

At tu, si modo sum caelesti stirpe creatus,

ede notam tanti generis meque adsere caelo."

"To your greater dismay, mother" he said, "I, so
bold and free, was silent. I am ashamed that this
could be said of me, and that I could not refute it.
If I am divine offspring, tell me, and give me a place in heaven."

(Met. 1.756-60*)*

Phaethon rephrases Epaphus's criticism by claiming that he is not being arrogant and haughty, but simply bold (*ferox)* and free (*liber)*. [88] These two characteristics, again, harmonise well with the sublime, and especially with the character Longinus attributes to the ideal orator. Freedom[89], both for Longinus and Phaethon, revolves in part around the self-confidence that allows one to aim for great things. Longinus asserts that it is impossible for the orator who thinks slave-worthy thoughts to ever produce the sublime (οὐδε οἱόν τε μικρὰ καὶ δουλοπρεπῆ φρονοῦντας θαυμαστόν τι ... ἐξενεγκεῖν, *Subl.* 9.3). Phaethon's ambition is by no means base or restricted.[90] When his mother suggests that he is free to seek out proof, if that is what he wants (*si modo fert animus*), the young boy immediately sets his sights for heaven (*concipit aethera mente*) and starts off, unfazed (*impiger*), on a journey for this proof (*Met.* 1.776-9).

As to Phaethon's boldness, the impetuosity and violence signified by *ferox* recur frequently in On the Sublime as attributes granted to the most successful sublime authors. Demosthenes, in particular, is characterised through his forcefulness, speed and violence (τὸ μετὰ βίας ἕκαστα ἔτι δὲ τάχους, ῥύμης, δεινότητος, *Subl.* 12. 2), replete with strong passions (σφοδροῖς πάθεσι). Phaethon certainly shows his urgency and strong passion throughout the myth. After Epaphus's insult he is

[88] *Adsere caelo* (1. 760) is formed off the back of *adserere libertati*, a phrase used of giving freedom to slaves, thus providing another link to the theme of freedom. Flight and freedom are, of course, also of central importance in Ovid's treatment of the very similar myth of Daedalus and Icarus.
[89] For a fuller discussion of the importance of the theme of freedom in Longinus, see Innes (2006) 108.
[90] Ovid's choice to have Phaethon word his divine aspirations through such an epic term as "*caelesti stirpe creatus*" (Barchiesi (2005) 232) shows not only Ovid's epic ambition, but also Phaethon's elevated mind.

taken over by embarrassed anger (*erubuit Phaethon, iramque pudore repressit, Met.*1. 755), worded in terms (*convicia*, *Met.* 1. 756; *opprobria*, 758) that are certainly a bit strong for an argument between two boys. Once his mother tells him he can seek proof himself, however, his reaction is one of immediate and great happiness (*emicat extemplo laetus, Met.* 1.776).[91] He is equally impetuous in his conversations with the Sun, hardly allowing him to finish speaking before answering (*vix bene desierat*, *Met.* 2 47) and fiercely combating his father's warnings in his burning desire to ride the chariot (*dictis tamen ille repugnat// propositumque premit flagratque cupidine currus, Met.* 2.103-4*).*

The abundance of fire-related vocabulary connected to Phaethon has been discussed often[92], most notably regarding his name (φαεθων, originally an epithet of the sun, translates to 'blazing'[93]), his fiery temperament (as shown above) and his appearance (*At Phaethon rutilos flamma populante capillos*, *Met.*2. 319). Of course, Phaethon's association with fire and flame connects him to his father, and could be said to foreshadow the conflagration he brings to the earth, but, beyond this, the importance of fire to the Longinian sublime also merits consideration. As we have shown in chapter 1, fire imagery is pervasive in Longinus's treatise, and it is typically used as a way to visualise the effect of the sublime. For example, Demosthenes's fiery language (οἷον καίειν, *Subl.* 12.4), which almost burns up all before him, makes him the prime example of a sublime orator, and the object of our wonder is usually not a small flame, but rather the burning stars and the Etna, belching out streams of fire (*Subl.* 35.4). Phaethon and his burning passion highlight the same vehement and violent qualities of fire as those that come to fore in Longinus. Of course, the association of strong emotion and flame is not one particular to the sublime, but they are but one aspect of Phaethon's character that allows us to associate him with the sublime.

Phaethon's most sublime side, however, has yet been left without mention. Although we have briefly mentioned 'elevated' mind in the initial impression we are given at the end of *Metamorphoses* 1, the sublime implications of Phaethon's decision to act on this spirit and to literally climb the heights of heaven to drive the chariot have not been discussed. Height, in all ways and manners, is

[91] At Verg. *Aen*. 6.5-6, Aeneas's young companions burst out in joy when they finally see the mainland (*Iuvenum manus emicat ardens// litus in Hespirium*). *Micare* has connotations of urgency and force, and might be used especially of young people.
[92] Bass (1977) 403; Van der Sluijs (2006) 71; Diggle (1970) 4.
[93] Hom. *Il*.11. 735; *Od*.5 479.

perhaps the central aspect of Longinus's sublime, and, as we have seen in chapter 2, the effect of the sublime is often worded in terms of being 'lifted up' or elevated. (*Subl.* 7.2; 13.1; 14.1; 36.1). Phaethon's journey up to the palace of the Sun and his wild ride through the sky are not only the markers of lofty ambition, but transport him, physically, to heavenly spheres. The palace of the Sun, huge itself, (*regia … alta, Met.* 2.1*)* is placed on a steep slope (*acclivi limite, Met.* 2. 19); both the Sun's description of his journey through the sky, as well as Phaethon's fateful ride are shot through with vocabulary of height (*medio est altissima caelo, Met.* 2.64*; sidera alta*, 71; *alto sub aethere,* 205; *modo summa petunt*, 206-7), and even the chariot itself is high (*altos … currus*, 105-6). Along with Phaethon's physical movement through the heights of heaven, however, comes the loftiness of Phaethon's ambition, which is foreshadowed in the boy's wish for a place in heaven (*adsere caelo, Met.*1. 761) and made explicit when Phaethon's desires to reach the heights both mentally and physically are intertwined as he sets the skies in his mind (*concipit aethera mente, Met.*1. 777).[94] At this point, these *aethera* are nothing more than the realm of the sun, but Phaethon's ambitions lie even higher, as becomes clear when he requests to drive the solar chariot. The extent of this ambition is clearly put into words by his father's response:

> *Magna petis, Phaethon, et quae nec viribus istis*
> *munera convenient nec tam puerilibus annis.*
> *sors tua mortalis; non est mortale quod optas.*
> *plus etiam quam quod superis contingere fas sit*
> *nescius adfectas.*
>
> You seek great things, Phaethon,
> and gifts that are not suited to your skills or age.
> Your fate is mortal, but what you ask for is not.

[94] Cf. *Subl.* 9.1. An almost literal example of how a soul is lifted up to the heights (τὰς ψυχὰς ἀνατρέφειν πρὸς τὰ μεγέθη)

> Unwittingly do you aim for things that go beyond
> even the gods. (*Met.* 2. 54-8)

Phaethon's request is for great things (*magna)*, not only because they are a significant responsibility, but also because of their sheer difficulty. Again, then, we can point out that this is precisely the realm in which we can find the sublime: great things that surpass the normal and everyday. (*Subl.* 35. 3) The task, however, is not simply great; it goes beyond what mortals can do, leading to an interesting comparison with one of Longinus's characterisations of the sublime. Immediately before the section that locates sublimity in things huge and impressive, the mental process associated with the sublime is portrayed as a love of things that are greater and more divine than we ourselves are. (εὐθὺς ἄμαχον ἔρωτα ἐνέφυσεν ἡμῶν ταῖς ψυχαῖς παντὸς ἀεὶ τοῦ μεγάλου καὶ ὡς πρὸς ἡμᾶς δαιμονιωτέρου. *Subl.* 35. 2).[95] Phaethon's wish for the chariot and accordingly for proof of his divinity through the accomplishment of a dangerous divine task is much the same, surpassing that which is mortal and striving for the divine. Furthermore, Phaethon's desire for the chariot is expressed in the same terms of a helpless desire (ἄμαχον ἔρωτα). Phaethon vehemently refuses to yield to his father's words (*dictis tamen ille repugnat, Met.* 2. 103) and burns with desire for the chariot (*flagratque cupidine currus,* 104), but Ovid never has Phaethon put into words *why* it is precisely the chariot he so desire. Surely, there are less dangerous tokens of proof that the Sun is his father (as the sun points out at 102), but Phaethon will not have any of it: he is drawn to the chariot like a moth to a flame, with a desire that surpasses the rational.

Although Ovid does not elaborate on the contents of Phaethon's retort to his father, or his reasons for choosing the chariot[96], Seneca the Younger, directly quoting Ovid,[97] does make a suggestion as to what the young man would have said to his father's warnings:

[95] In the next section, the production of sublime text itself is conceived as a way of "approaching the divine" (τὸ δ' ὕψος ἐγγὺς ἅιρει μεγαλοφροσύνης θεοῦ, *Subl.* 36. 1).
[96] Phaethon is notably silent throughout most of the myth, only addressing Clymene at 1. 756-60 and speaks to the Sun at *Met.* 2. 35-9. Speech could have saved Phaethon's life at (), but again he remains silent, forgetful of the horses' names. The ability to speak (in public) was, of course, an important marker of maturity in Rome and Greece, and Phaethon's inability highlights his youthfulness and helplessness.
[97] Ovid's Phaethon is well known by Seneca and is quoted directly at *Prov*. 5.9-11; *VB* 20.5; *Ep. 115. 12-13.*

“Haec cum audisset ille generosus adulescens, 'placet' inquit 'uia, escendo; est tanti per ista ire casuro.' Non desinit acrem animum metu territare:

utque uiam teneas nulloque errore traharis,
per tamen aduersi gradieris cornua tauri
Haemoniosque arcus uiolentique ora leonis.

Post haec ait: 'iunge datos currus: his quibus deterreri me putas incitor; libet illic stare ubi ipse Sol trepidat.' Humilis et inertis est tuta sectari: per alta uirtus it.”

“When he had heard these things, the brave young man said: ‘I want to climb that road; it is worth that much to me, even if I should fall.’ But his father did not stop terrifying his high spirit with fear:

“As you stick to the road and drive on without fault,
you will go across the horns of Taurus,
the Haemonian Sagittarius and the jaws of violent Leo.”
Then he says: ‘yoke the chariot you have given to me: I thrive on those things with which you think you can deter me. I want to stand there where the Sun himself is afraid.’ Let the humble and timid man cross safe paths, virtue goes through the heights.” (Sen. *Prov*. 5.11)

Seneca casts Phaethon as an exemplum of the stoic *vir bonus*,[98] who (sublimely) avoids the easy route and tends to the heavens instead. Phaethon, of his course, is destined to fail in this mighty pursuit, but Seneca is not praising his ability to actually complete a noble task. Rather, he is pointing at Phaethon’s moral success in his determination to challenge his own boundaries and attempt the divine, rather than the commonplace.

[98] Lanzarone (2008) 371; Ker (2009) 123.

3. Is Phaethon bad?

We tried to pin down the character of Ovid's Phaethon in the previous section, and established that it had a sizeable overlap with aspects of the sublime. A significant issue in naming Phaethon a sublime character, however, is that Phaethon does not seem to come off that well in the myth. With the notable exception of Seneca, commentators usually consider Phaethon a petulant child, an antihero who is painted in all but a favourable light by Ovid. [99] This evaluation of Phaethon is usually based strongly on the catastrophic results of his attempt: [100] failure and consequently his death – the punishment (*non honor est: poenam, Phaethon, pro munere poscis Met.* 2. 99) for his hubristic assumption that can equal his father's deeds. [101] With an eye only on the final result, Phaethon's ambition to reach the skies can indeed easily be turned into hubris, the fatal failure to recognise that he is more mortal than immortal, and as such he becomes a warning against overly ambitious behaviour.

Moreover, it cannot be denied that Ovid's Phaethon is a far cry from an epic hero. Whereas he is a young man about to get married in Euripides's play[102], he is but a young boy in Ovid. Phaethon's insecurity, the reason he sets out to find his father, requires that he is younger in Ovid, but beyond being necessary for the plot, his youth has further implications for his character. At various points in the myth in the *Metamorphoses*, Phaethon shows his youthfulness, for instance through his emotional reaction to Epaphus's taunts (*Met.* 1.754), his immediate return to his mother to be held in her arms (761), and his attempt to persuade his father by cuddling up to him (*Met.* 2.99-100). The boy's fear at seeing the Sun and his fiery crown must remind the reader strongly of the baby Astyanax at the sight of Hector (*Met.* 2. 40-43 & *Il*. 6.466-75)[103], and the image of a pale-faced Phaethon trembling helplessly on the solar chariot is hardly heroic (*Met.* 2.179-81). Not only does Ovid strongly emphasise Phaethon's youth, but his moral character is also presented in dubious light when we first

[99] E.g. Nagy (1973) 155; Galinsky (1975) 48-50; Bass (1977) 403; Anderson (1997)227-8; Morgan (2003) 75.
[100] In the light of his failure, Schiesaro (2014) can only call it an "attempt at sublimity".
[101] *"It is no honour, Phaethon, you are asking punishment as a gift."*
[102] Ciappi (2000) 133.
[103] Weiden Boyd (2012) 113-4.

meet him. *Magniloquentia* specifically, occurring on three other occasions in the *Metamorphoses*, never works out well for the person doing the boasting and has strong negative connotations.[104]

This negative depiction of Phaethon is, however, intertwined with a more positive assessment of his character. The negative sequence of *magna loquentem, tumidum, superbum*, for example, is balanced out when Phaethon returns to his mother and gives his own account of what happened. Whereas in Ovid's (or Epaphus's) words he was boasting *(magna loquentem)* earlier, he now responds to Epaphus's taunt with silence (*tacui)*, and instead of being puffed up (*tumidus*), he is now the more positive bold (*ferox)* and free (*liber)*.

Overall, a more balanced assessment of Phaethon's character is a more fruitful way to approach Ovid's representation of the young man striving for the heavens. Although he is by no means perfect, Phaethon is also given a number of positive attributes, the clearest of which is his magnanimity (*magnanimus Phaethon, Met.* 2.210*).* Perhaps motivated by the overall negativity of Phaethon's image, this epithet is often read sarcastically,[105] a cynical nod to Lucretius's more valorous Phaethon[106], but it is by no means necessary to see Phaethon as little more than an overambitious failure. Despite his fatal lack of skill, there is something admirable in Phaethon, preserved in Ovid's balanced characterisation of the young man, and strongly underscored in Seneca's interpretation. It is perhaps brought forward best in the epigrammatic epitaph Phaethon is given after his fall into the Eridanus:

[104] Met. 8.396: Ancaeus boasts he is better than Atalanta and is killed by the Calydonian bull. For the implications of the vilification of the "Arcadian überhero Ancaeus" see Morgan (2003) 67 & Keith (1999) 227-8.
Met.9.31: Achelous challenges Hercules for the hand of Deianira and loses in battle. Met.13.222: Ajax boasts he can fight, but leaves along with the rest of the Greeks after Agamemnon gives up the battle at Troy because of his dream. (These are the words of Odysseus in his speech for the weapons of Achilles and should, accordingly, be taken with a pinch of salt.) Especially the final example shows the need to consider matters of focalisation when it comes to the negative assessment of *magniloquentia.* Odysseus is obviously trying to place Ajax in a negative light: the evaluation of his actions after Agamemnon's order is clearly that of Odysseus. In the case of Phaethon the negative connotations of *magna loquentem* and *superbum* might well be due to focalisation through Epaphus. Although these words are not a part of Epaphus's direct speech in the following line, their proximity suggests that they might well be taken as projections of Epaphus's thoughts. Even considering the negative connotations of *magniloquentia* and *tumidus*, this negative picture of Phaethon need not define him for the rest of myth.
[105] Anderson (2005) ad loc.
[106] *DRN.* 5.397.

"HIC SITUS EST PHAETHON, CURRUS AURIGA PATERNI,

QUEM SI NON TENUIT, MAGNIS TAMEN EXCIDIT AUSIS."

"Phaethon is buried here, the driver of his father's chariot.

Even if he did not control it, he died from great daring."

(*Met.* 2. 328-9)

The epitaph puts the focus onto Phaethon's character rather than his deeds, downplaying the nigh destruction of earth through with a vague "*si non tenuit*", and emphasising rather the greatness and boldness of his deeds. One might ask whether Phaethon's exploits should be considered a failure at all, seeing as his epitaph does not only bear tribute to proud Phaethon's achievement, but also fulfils his main wish: the epitaph is concrete, everlasting 'proof' that he was the child of the Sun (*currus auriga paterni*). Even his second wish, to be granted a place in heaven (*adsere caelo*), is answered, if we read in '*auriga*' a reference to Phaethon's catasterism as to the eponymous star sign, which is preserved in Euripides's *Phaethon*[107], though not explicitly mentioned in Ovid's account.[108] Even if we do not grant that Phaethon has been successful in obtaining what he set out for, the final message relayed by the epitaph is that he deserves praise for the audacity of his deeds, if not for flawless execution.[109] On the whole, this approach resembles closely Longinus's own answer to the question whether it is better to be flawless in mediocrity or less than in the sublime (*Subl.* 33-36). He concludes that perfection is required of art, and much less so of the sublime, which demands not perfection but greatness of spirit (τὸ μὲν ἀδιάπτωτον ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ τέχνης ἐστὶ κατόρθωμα, τὸ δ' ἐν ὑπεροχῆι, πλὴν οὐχ ὁμότονον, μεγαλοφυΐας, *Subl.* 36-4). Throughout the myth, Phaethon is constantly shown to lack the requisite skill to drive the chariot, and it is this that causes his death and the near ekpyrosis of earth, and yet his valorous spirit is often underscored. Consequently, his achievement is not his ability to equal the gods in skill or power, which is, as the Sun points out, impossible for mankind. Rather,

[107] Van der Sluijs (2008) 245, Diggle (1970) 194f..
[108] Nonnos explicitly refers to the catasterism of Phaethon into Auriga or Ἡνιοχος.
[109] A similar approach to failure is also taken in the cases of Achelous and Ancaeus. Ancaeus is gored by the Calydonian boar despite his daring (*audens*, Met. 8.396), and Achelous claims his shame at losing a fistfight to Hercules is lessened by his pride at the enormity of the task (Met. 9.31).

Phaethon's sublimity is the product of his daring character, his magnanimity, which tempts him to take to the skies, even if he knows the dangers, as have been pointed out in full by the Sun.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, we will venture a brief explanation for the two sides of Phaethon identified above, suggesting that they might not be mutually exclusive. The myth of Phaethon has been fertile grounds for finding meta-poetic or political statements related to the dangers of overstepping one's boundaries and flying too high, with one approach taking the myth as Ovid's commentary on his own poetic career. This is particularly interesting, because an author's identification with one of his characters makes up a part of Longinus's account of the sublime. The connection between the Phaethon figure and Ovid was first suggested by Holzberg[110], seeing the similarity between Ovid's *fert animus* in the opening line of the *Metamorphoses* (*Met.* 1.1) and Clymene's suggestion that Phaethon climb heaven (*si modo fert animus, gradere et scitabere ab ipso, Met.* 2. 775). The political and meta-poetic implications of the association between Ovid and the ambitious Phaethon have also been pointed out by Weiden-Boyd (2012), Schiesaro (2014), Barchiesi (2005). There is not enough space to fully consider Ovid's (self)-association with the high-minded Phaethon as a sublime figure, but Morgan's unique approach to Ovidian self-fashioning deserves a mention as a possible solution for the difficulty in reconciling the boyish failure and the sublime hero within Phaethon. Morgan suggests that the dominant line of Ovidian criticism that focuses on his puerility and lack of epic seriousness was anticipated by the poet himself, as he purposefully populates his 'epic' with whimpering boys, rather than masculine heroes.[111] This tendency, an attempt to rebel against the typical masculine order and authority of epic, occurs frequently as 'the failure of young boys to emulate their fathers.'[112] Phaethon's portrayal as an irresponsible boy is one instance of Ovid's inversion of epic's heroic masculinity, but Phaethon's sublime characteristics make this episode more than just a frivolous attempt at undermining the traditional order of things. The praise for Phaethon's

[110] Holzberg (1997) 90-1.
[111] Morgan (2003) 77. Phaethon is the main example of a boy attempting a task he is wholly unsuited for. Ancaeus and Actaeon are also suggested as examples of the "anti-heroic values" of the poem (p.67-8).
[112] Morgan (2003) 78.

boldness in his endeavour, explicitly bound with Ovid's own literary rivalry against the unsurmountable Aeneid, suggests that this episode contains not only a playful rejection of the epic norm, but even praise for those who undermine it.

5. The Ovidian Sublime and Remythologisation

1. Introduction

In the previous chapters we have examined various aspects of the sublime in Ovid's Phaethon episode, starting with the sublime aesthetics of the palace of the Sun and the horrifying views of an earth on the verge of destruction from above. We have also examined Ovid's sublime style, which draws the audience closer to Phaethon and creates a textual analogue to the young man's experience, and have concluded with the sublimity of Phaethon's audacious character and his wish to drive his father's chariot. In the opening chapter it was suggested that one of the difficulties involved in studying the sublime was its distinct character in different authors, and from these three aspects of the sublime a general idea of Ovid's approach to the concept can be pieced together. All three aspects have focused mainly on Ovid alone, but it has been seen that an important part of the sublime is made up by a poet's reaction to or emulation of (μίμησις) the sublimity of poetic predecessors and rivals (*Subl.* 14). A connection between Ovid's Phaethon episode and Lucretian (sublime) philosophy has already been made between Barchiesi (2009) and Schiesaro (2014), who both argue that Ovid's account of the Phaethon myth is one that deliberately subverts Lucretius's use of the myth at *DRN.* 5. 400-410, as well as questioning the success of the didactic project.[113] Within this comparison of Lucretius's natural philosophy to the world presented by Ovid in the Phaethon episode, there is a special place for the sublime, or, more specifically, Ovid's answer to what has become known as "the Lucretian sublime".

2. The Lucretian Sublime

The identification of the sublime in Lucretius has been of fundamental importance in charting the evolution of the sublime, and it has become an important anchor for the increasingly popular view that the sublime becomes an important concept in post-Vergilian Latin literature.[114] A brief outline of the Lucretian sublime has already been given in chapter 1, but we might quickly recap a number of the

[113] Schiesaro (2014) 74.
[114] Hardie (2013) 125-6.

main points. One of the defining goals of Lucretius poetry is the propagation of a philosophically detached view of the world, exemplified by Epicurus's crossing of the flaming walls of the world (*extra // processit longe flammantia moenia mundi, DRN. 1.73*) to come an understanding of nature free from superstition (*religio).*[115] In this sense, this flight of mind corresponds closely to Longinus's discussion of mankind's sublime ability to lift themselves up with their mind, and cross the boundaries of the universe in order to come to greater knowledge (*Subl*. 35.3-4). This is the aspect of the sublime we have also seen in Ovid's depiction of the Sun's flight, allowing him to observe the world laid bare beneath him (Chapter 2.5). Lucretius also shares Longinus's appreciation for the magnificence of natural phenomena and the wonder they can produce, but on this point we also find a fundamental discrepancy between these two forms of the sublime.

Throughout the *De Rerum Natura*, Lucretius repeatedly states that it is his goal to remove the terror produced by the sight of awe-inspiring (natural) phenomena that leads us to imagine involved gods.[116] What is marvellous at first sight quickly ceases to be so extraordinary when it is observed repeatedly, with a good helping of reason:

Hisce tibi in rebus late est alteque videndum
et longe cunctas in partis dispiciendum
ut reminiscaris summam rerum esse profundam
et videas caelum summai totius unum
quam sit parvula pars et quam multesima constet
nec tota pars, homo terrai quota totius unus.
quod bene propositum si plane contueare
ac videas plane, mirari multa relinquas.

You must look far and wide in these matters,
and you must look all around from afar

[115] This similarity has been widely noticed by Porter (2010) 174; Day (2013) 44; Schiesaro (2014) 75. On Lucretius's goal of philosophical detachment, see Jope (1989) 18ff.
[116] Notably at *DRN*. 1.146-150 and its repetitions at 2. 59-61; 3. 91-3, 6 39-41.

> so that you might remember how profound the sum of things is
> and that you might see how triflingly tiny a part of everything
> this one heaven is. Not so great a part as one man is of the earth.
> If you look at this point clearly, when well established,
> you will stop wondering at many things.
>
> (Lucretius, *DRN.* 6.653-4)

Porter is right to note that Lucretius does not want us to stop wondering at everything altogether, for there are still many things that cause wonder in nature. What has changed, however, is the nature of that wonder and, accordingly, the way this wonder can be considered sublime. Having deconstructed the wonder caused by extreme height and size, as well as the fear and misunderstanding they produce, sublime experiences must now stem from the realisation that nature can sometimes seem to disobey atomistic truths, but that the learned observer knows that this is mere show.[117] Nevertheless, this passage is still an injunction on the fascination and terror caused by irrationality or ignorance, and as such it removes the terrifying aspect of the sublime, confining sublime sensations to those produced by philosophic detachment and understanding. Furthermore, the passage as a whole, even if we keep in mind Porter's attempt to rescue it, stands in stark contrast to a key passage of Longinus:

> ὡς εὐπόριστον μὲν ἀνθρώποις τὸ χρειῶδες ἢ καὶ ἀναγκαῖον
> θαυμαστὸν δ' ὅμως ἀεὶ τὸ παράδοξον.
>
> "the useful and necessary are easily available to man, but the unusual incites marvel"
>
> (*Subl.* 35.5)

Whereas Lucretius wants the spectator to reduce the object of his vision and revel in its miniature size when compared to the entire universe, Longinus's sublimity is typically reserved for things grand and impressive. One could add that Lucretius's insistence on the removal of wonder through repeated observation, as implied in the passage above, and stated directly in *DRN.* 2.1025, also runs directly counter to this idea. Longinus finds the sublime in the παράδοξον, the rare and incredible, rather than

[117] Porter (2010) 172-173.

in that which is well-known through repetition. Furthermore, it is a key feature of the sublime that it never weakens in power, even after repeated perusal (*Subl*. 7.3). In this sense, Lucretian sublimity exists in a different configuration than Longinus's sublime, by and large removing terror and violence from the equation. Although the sublime in Lucretius is still anchored in the observance of the natural world and its wonders, it has detached contemplation of these phenomena at its heart. Although there is also a place for the sublime flight of the mind and the corresponding deepening of understanding of the universe in the *Peri Hypsous* (*Subl.* 33-5), this only one aspect of the Longinian sublime. In the Phaethon episode of *Metamorphoses* 2, it is precisely Lucretius's detached, demythologised sublimity that Ovid seems to take issue with and, accordingly, inverts emphatically.

3. Lucretius in Ovid's Phaethon Episode

Before it can be argued how Ovid diverges from Lucretian philosophy and, by extension, from the Lucretian sublime, a few touching points between Ovid's Phaethon episode and the *DRN* must be highlighted. The ecphrastic palace that opens *Metamorphoses 2*, imagined as a place where the aesthetic sublimity of high columns, shining light and cosmic vistas are unified with a divine understanding of the orderly world as a whole (as suggested by the palace doors), is shown to be a rather unfaithful depiction of reality, when Phaethon's fateful crash threatens to destroy that world. The luminescence and impressiveness of the palace are part of what make Phaethon tremble in marvel (*rerum novitate paventem, Met.* 2.31; cf. 2.110), but they also produce in him an incorrect assumption of what the heavens look like (*Met.* 76-8). The palace of the Sun is Phaethon's first experience of this elevated realm, and its extravagant architecture and peaceful order suggest to Phaethon that this must be what the heavens are. Once Phaethon declares his desire to ride the solar chariot, however, the Sun warns him that he does not know what he is getting himself into:

> "*Forsitan et lucos illic urbesque deorum*
> *concipias animo delubraque ditia donis*
> *esse? per insidias iter est formasque ferarum"*

> Perhaps you imagine in your mind that heaven is full of the parks,
> and the cities of the gods, and temples rich in gifts?
> It is not: the path stretches past dangers and the bodies of fierce creatures. (*Met*. 2.75-78)

Phaethon essentially makes the same mistake as Telemachus does in the Odyssey, when, awestruck by the lavish palace of Menelaos, he compares the beauty of that palace to those of the gods,[118] but we might look at the *DRN* to find an even closer parallel to the mistake of Ovid's Phaethon. At the end of the second book, Lucretius "prepares the reader for the shocking novelty of the proposition that there is an infinite number of worlds",[119] by reminding his student that one should be wary of the draw of the marvellous and the new. For those who have never gazed into the heavens, he argues, it must be the most wonderful sight to see the moon and stars in all their splendour. This, however, can quickly lead to wrong assumptions about what they are and where they came from. The danger is that the student, in his state of awe, might do away with true reason (*expuere ex animo rationem, DRN.* 2. 1023), and take instead the same dangerous path that saw people come up with gods in the first place: the lethal combination of awe and ignorance.[120] The startled student might actually consider the quarters of the sky (*lucida templa*, *DRN.* 2. 1038) to be the real temples of the gods![121] To avoid this, Lucretius teaches that observers of wonderful things should rather temper their sense of wonder with reason and judgement (*sed magis acri iudicio perpende*, 1042), which allows them to carefully weigh their theories and come up with a satisfactory (rational) conclusion. Man's wonder (and terror) at looking up at the sky is brought up again in *DRN.* 5, as Lucretius seeks to explain the reasons that *religio* came to flourish. Just like the kneejerk reaction from ignorance that placed the gods in the sky, mankind extended a divine explanation to other events that ushered us into a horrified amazement

[118] Lucian also identifies Telemachus's astounded reaction to the palace of Menelaus as the result of its novelty, regarding it unsurprising that the young boy should consider the palace divine, *because he had never seen anything like it* (ἅτε μηδὲν ἐν γῇ καλόν τι ἄλλο ἑωρακότι, *De Domo 3*).
[119] Hardie (2014) 156.
[120] Cf. DRN. 5.1183-1192. Nec poterant quibus id fieret cognoscere causis// ergo perfugium sibi habebant omnia divis// tradere et illorum nutu facere omnia flecti. They could not discern what caused this to happen, so they took refuge in ascribing everything to the gods, thinking that everything happened at their nod.
[121] Bailey (1947) 620. Lucretius usually uses the phrase *templa caeli* to refer to the "quarters" of heaven, but in this context he might be setting up a pun of sorts, in which *templa* is restored to its more usual sense.

through sheer magnitude, beauty or violence. Lightning strikes, earthquakes and fierce winds all have a similar effect: they make us tremble in fear (*cui non animus formidine divum// contrahitur, cui non correpunt membra pavore?, DRN.* 5.1218-19) and accordingly we seek to explain them, irrationally, through the gods (*potestates magnas mirasque relinquunt// in rebus viris divum, DRN.* 5. 1239-40).

There are clear similarities between Phaethon and Lucretius's awestruck spectator: the student marvels at the skies because he is shaken by their novelty (*novitate exterritus, DRN.* 2. 1040), and Phaethon is similarly affected by the palace (*rerum novitate paventem*, *Met*. 2.31). Moreover, the student and Phaethon both mistakenly see the stars as the peaceful abodes of the gods, rather than what they truly are. Furthermore, the objects of marvel are both conspicuous for their height –the heavenly bodies in Lucretius and a heavenly, towering palace in Ovid –, as well as for their remarkable shine – Lucretius's heaven has a clear, pure colour (*caeli clarum purumque colorem, DRN.* 2.1030)) and is lit up by the sun (*solis praeclara luce nitorem,* 1032). We have already established that the attributes of the solar palace, viz. primarily its height and its sheen, and the reaction these attributes evoke, are reminiscent of the aesthetics of the Longinian sublime, and we might say the same about Lucretius's description of the wonder produced by starry nights, as well as including the more fearful effects of volcanoes, tempests and earthquakes. Yet whereas it is Lucretius's objective to diminish his students' fear and wonder when they see these phenomena by shifting from a mythological explanation to a scientific or philosophic perspective, Ovid's portrayal of the heavens and the world around us is one where myth reigns supreme and sparks the deepest of fears.

4. Remythologisation and the Ovidian sublime

A prime example of anti-Lucretian tendencies in Ovid is the palace of the Sun, at the opening of *Metamorphoses* 2. Leaving aside the very existence of a palace in the sky for the meantime, it is striking how easily a mortal child can scale the heights of heaven and waltz in unannounced. Indeed, even before we see the palace we are told by Clymene that it is actually rather easy to reach it (*nec longus patrios labor est tibi nosse penates, Met.*1. 772) and that the house of the sun has a close border to earth (*domus est terrae contermina nostrae, Met.* 1.773). Moreover, this is a world in which

divine beings consort freely enough with mortals to create children, contributing to the overall sense that the gods of this world are by no means the detached Epicurean/Lucretian gods, so far removed from mortal affairs. Concerning the palace itself, Schiesaro fittingly calls the spectacular edifice "a triumph of anti-Epicurianism",[122] highlighting the material riches it exhibits. Again, however, Ovid's focus on the luminous aspect of the palace must not be forgotten, for it is this aspect that turns the Sun's palace all too literally into a *lucidum templum caeli*. The palace itself, the gem-set throne Sol sits on (*solio claris lucente smaragdis*, 2. 24), the chariot driven by Phaethon (2. 106-110),[123] and even the crown of light rays (*imposuit comae radios,* 2. 124) are all physical objects that share the main property of the Sun – its ability to bring light. As such, they are all manifestations of the mythologizing tendency that gives misunderstood natural phenomena a divine cause and a physical instigator – precisely the tendency that Lucretius so seeks to avoid. In their physical form, however, these surrogates of the sun have their own claims to sublimity. The crown of rays, for example, represents a light so strong that Phaethon simply cannot approach his father until he has removed it from his head (*constititque procul: neque enim propiora ferebat// lumina*, *Met*. 2.22-3), and the image of a crown must automatically evoke associations of nobility, grandeur and elevation. Whereas Lucretius had deconstructed sublime natural phenomena that produced incorrect assumptions through their incomprehensible size and greatness, proclaiming them to be simply the workings of atomism, Ovid takes opposite direction, emphatically equating them with divine agency. As it happens, this process of remythologisation, the opposite of Lucretius's demythologization of natural phenomena,[124] is a recurring theme in Ovid's Phaethon episode.

We began our discussion of Lucretius and Ovid by highlighting a similarity between Phaethon and the awestruck student, in that they are both advised by their teachers that the conclusions they have reached on the basis of observation are incorrect. In Ovid, the Sun's Lucretian remark that Phaethon must not believe the heavens are filled with the peaceful abode of the gods at *Met*.2. 75-8 introduces his long speech that mixes an emotional request for Phaethon to reconsider his

[122] Schiesaro (2014) 77.
[123] Brown (1987) sees a clear parallel between the description of the stunning chariot and the palace, which are both richly decorated, highly luminous and very impressive.
[124] Jope (1989) 20.

wish with a lesson in astronomy, to back up his plea. The main purpose of this speech, and by extension the Sun's didactic purpose, is to stop Phaethon from embarking on his fatal journey,[125] and the Sun's preferred method of dissuasion is an appeal to fear.[126] The Sun's main vehicle for conveying this is telling Phaethon of his own experiences with driving the solar chariot, and how he himself trembles with fear at the steep climbs and high speeds (*fit timor, et pavida trepidat formidine pectus*, Met. 2.66). The Sun's didactic approach, then, is diametrically opposed to that of Lucretius, as it does not seek to allay fears, but rather attempts to instil them in Phaethon's mind. To fit this approach, the Sun also employs the opposite of Lucretius's demythologizing explanations of the universe, turning physics into myth.

The description the Sun gives of the course of the Sun at lines 63-70, for example, seems to resemble closely the astronomical theories of Cn. Pompeius Geminus's εἰσαγωγὴ εἰς τὰ Φαινόμενα, a commentary on Aratus's famous astrological treatise.[127] but the Sun has altered them slightly to give himself an active role in the motions of the skies. This results in a passage that reads as a science lesson, but one which has been partially remythologized, so that the movements of the celestial objects are described not as regular and passive natural phenomena, but rather as a dizzying roller-coaster ride to be experienced by the driver of the sun-chariot. The same process of remythologisation is found in the advice scene in which the Sun counsels his offspring on which course to take through the heavens, the part of Euripides's Phaethon that is cited by Longinus for its sublimity (*Subl.* 16). Although the Sun is mostly concerned with dissuading Phaethon from actually driving the chariot, he eventually concedes and explains which path he must take.

Nec tibi derectos placeat via quinque per arcus.
sectus in obliquum est lato curvamine limes
zonarum trium contentus fine polumque
effugit australem iunctamque aquilonibus Arcton.

[125] Schiesaro (2014) 78; Anderson (2005) 236-7; Barchiesi (2009), interestingly, characterises it as an "inverse propemptikon" 166.
[126] Schrijvers (1970) 251 argues that Lucretius purposefully confronts his readers with the fear of the violence of nature in order to promote the virtues of philosophical detachment. This approach is similar to that of the Sun, who also uses fear to achieve his goals.
[127] Loos (2008) 268. The author follows Aujac (2002, xxii-xxiv) in identifying Geminus with Cn. Pompeius Geminus .

Hac sit iter (manifesta rotae vestigia cernes)

utque ferant aequos et caelum et terram calores

nec preme nec summum molire per aethere cursum.

altius egressus caelestia tecta cremabis,

inferius terras; medio tutissimus ibis.

You must not take the road over the five circles.

The road cuts across at an oblique angle in a broad arc,

staying within the boundaries of the three imaginary circles.

It keeps away from the South Pole and the north bear with its winds.[128]

This is the road (you can see the clear tracks of the wheels).

In order that they might bring equal heat to heaven and earth

make sure you do not drop down too much or take your course through the heights.

If you go too high you will burn the roofs of heaven.

too low and you will scorch the earth. The middle course is safest. (Ovid. Met. 2. 129-37)

Ovid's description of the heavens is much more elaborate than that of Euripides, and is based, at least here, on Pompeius Geminus. [129] Lines 129-33 require specific scientific knowledge if they are to be understood, as Ovid resists simply naming the road Phaethon must avoid the Milky Way and the road he is to take the ecliptic.[130] Rather, Phaethon and the external audience are meant to tease this information out of a complicated description of their relative locations to other heavenly objects. Loos argues that Ovid's audience could be expected to have a sufficient grasp of astrology to understand this passage,[131] but the difficult material does give the passage a distinctly scientific colouring. Again the Sun remythologises the contents of the heavens, as the "road" (*hac sit iter*, Met. 2.33) he is describing might be but an imaginary one in reality, a piece of astrological theory, but here it is turned

[128] This translation is based on Loos (2008).
[129] Loos (2008) 259-61
[130] Loos (2008) 273. Ovid does explicitly refer to the Milky Way as a road at 1.168-9, where it is explicitly called a *via sublimis.*
[131] Loos (2008) 267-8.

into a physical object on which chariots can drive – you can even see the marks left behind on previous trips (*manifesta rotae vestigia cernes*, 13).

Having set out briefly the whole route, the Sun zooms into one part of the journey, revealing the most significant and most frightening portion of his lesson:

"per tamen adversi gradieris cornua tauri
Haemoniosque arcus violentique ora leonis
saevaque circuitu curvantem bracchia longo
scorpion atque aliter curvantem bracchia cancrum.
Nec tibi quadrupedes animosos ignibus illis,
quos in pectore habent, quos ore et naribus efflant,
in promptu regere est"

"You will go past the horns of rushing Taurus
the Haemonian bow of Sagittarius and the jaws of violent Leo,
Scorpio too, bending its cruel claws in a broad arc,
and Cancer, bending its claws the other way
Nor is it in your power to control those horses,
spirited with the fires they have in their breast,
and breath out through their mouths and noses." (Ovid. Met. 2. 80-6)

The Sun has introduced the signs of the zodiac not as constellations, but rather as frightening beasts (*formas ferarum*, 77). Anderson insightfully comments that he has "reversed the usual process of the human imagination" [132] by bringing to life the imagined animal-shapes we see in the skies. The remythologisation becomes complete through the way the Sun characterises these imaginary creatures, imbuing them with characteristics that imply they are an actual, physical threat to the charioteer (*adversi tauri, violenti leonis, saeva bracchia*).

At Met. 2.194, a terrified Phaethon can actually see the likenesses of the animals in the sky

[132] Anderson (2005) 238

(*Vastarum videt trepidus simulacra ferarum*), and we must note the echo of the key Lucretian phrase *simulacra*. For Lucretius, the shapes we can sometimes identify in the sky are a perfect example of the *simulacrum*,[133] a subtle 'image' that we can see, but which we must judge with our mind to be unreal.[134] This, he suggests, is the reason that we sometimes see Centaurs, Scylla or Cerberus, even though these animals never existed (*DRN.* 4.739-41).[135] For Phaethon, however, these terrifying creatures are all too real, and the very aspect of menacing Scorpio causes a paralyzing fright that sees him release the reigns of the chariot (*mentis inops gelida formidine lora remisit*, *Met.* 2.200).[136]

Porter is right when he remarks that Lucretius's reduction of the universe to the combination and recombination of atoms paradoxically enhances and decreases the sublimity of the cosmic knowledge it promises: although we might marvel at the thrill of our understanding of something so vast and violent as the universe, the realisation that it is, in fact, no more than a rather large aggregate of infinitely small particles, is also somewhat of a let-down. This can also be applied to Ovid's treatment of Phaethon: a story about a young man braving cosmic monsters on a burning chariot borne forward at hurtling pace by divine steeds, before being mercilessly shot down by the king of the gods is substantially more exciting than a – admittedly more accurate – scientific account of these events.

Ovid's description of the heavens, the motion of the sun and stars is sublime precisely because it remythologises the abstract forces that stand at the basis of these phenomena. Although understanding them in their cosmic vastness can also be considered sublime in a Lucretian sense, their representation as mythological phenomena that can and do interact directly with Phaethon means that Ovid's poetry creates a sense of extreme proximity to these irresistible forces of nature. Lucretius's demythologisation and deconstruction of natural phenomena allows one to attain a sublime philosophical detachment from the world, in which sublimity derives from a deepened understanding

[133] For Lucretius's theory of *Simulacra* and its Greek origins see Bailey (1947) 1179-81.
[134] Hardie (2006) 123-43 (esp.124-7) also finds Ovid imitating and inverting Lucretian *simulacra* in the story of Echo and Narcissus in *Metamorphoses* 3.
[135] Bailey (1947) 1269 points out that the reason *why* centaurs cannot exist is given later at *DRN* 5.878.
[136] The fact that Ovid explicitly calls Scorpio and the other star signs *simulacra* can be taken as little more than an allusion to Lucretius, but might also imply that these are just the figments of Phaethon's imagination, brought to life by the Sun's dissuasive remark that the skies are populated by terrifying beasts.

of the entirety of the universe and the philosophically transformative effect of realising one's own place within it. Ovid channels Lucretius's scientific didactic mode throughout the episode, casting Phaethon as a dumbstruck student, unaware of the true nature of the universe, who is to be taught by the teacher figure played by the Sun. His father's warnings take the shape of science lessons, but their message is decidedly anti-Lucretian, as Ovid's universe is shown to disobey the rules of atomism and embraces rather a terrifying world of myth. When set against the Lucretius, as Ovid's frequent allusions and nods of the head suggest we must, the Ovidian sublime explicitly does not consist of the heightened understanding that a flight of the mind can produce, but is rather one where frightful cosmic commotion astonishes the lookers-on with its vividness and proximity.

Conclusion

As was suggested in chapter 1, the sublime exists in various configurations for different authors, philosophers and art critics, with each taking their own approach to what a sublime experience or a sublime effect can entail, precisely. On a fundamental level, this experience or effect is one of awe and astonishment (ἔκπληξις) caused by observing or hearing something magnificent, either in its size, height, philosophical implications, violence etc. To this bare-bones framework of the sublime, which has perhaps been stripped down too far to do justice to what the sublime entails, one can add the various idiosyncrasies of the person producing sublime literature, or theorising about the philosophy of the sublime. This thesis has highlighted four aspects of the Ovidian sublime specifically in the Phaethon episode in the second book of the *Metamorphoses*: aesthetics, literary style, the sublime character of Phaethon and its relationship to the philosophical sublime of Lucretius.

Ovid's explicit attention to detail in describing the visual spectacle surrounding Phaethon at all times provides a valuable starting point, as it imbues the episode as a whole with a pervasive sublime lustre, so to speak. One central medium of sublimity is perception, whether this is through the sight of something wondrous by hearing elevated poetry or by understanding a deeper truth, and Phaethon's visual environment is rich in sublime imagery. Physical heights are an important strain of imagery throughout the history of the sublime, and they are also a recurring feature of the Phaethon episode, where their function is manifold. By far the largest part of the myth unrolls in the heights of heaven, so that the episode is literally elevated to a higher plane. From this heavenly perspective, all the distances described, as the Sun and Phaethon look down, are maximised, and it is no surprise that they cause sensations of vertigo both in the divine father and the mortal son. This reaction to extreme heights and the fantastic powers of nature is precisely the awe and astonishment that underlies the ἔκπληξις of the sublime.

Apart from great heights the episode also contains, particularly in the passage that depicts the near-end of the earth, a powerful testament to the irresistible power and magnitude of the forces of nature, another historical source of the sublime. Although the Phaethon episode betrays its connections to Lucretius's natural philosophy, its insistence on a mythological world sets it apart from

the atomist universe of the *DRN*. Not only are the main actors, Phaethon and the Sun, (semi-)divine, but the whole universe is populated by creatures of myth; the constellations are remythologised into terrifying beasts and the impersonal motion of the sun through the heavens is turned into an action sequence of a chariot hurtling along a cosmic path. Ovid's emphatically mythological universe adds to the grandeur of the scenes he is describing: the divine palace of the Sun is one of near-unimaginable height and splendour, because it is a palace of myth. Similarly, the fierce creatures populating the sky are made more fearful because they possess superhuman size and power. By turning Phaethon's exploits into a concrete journey past real, remythologised, dangers, rather than presenting them as the abstract forces of nature, Ovid also adds to the vividness of his description, an essential component of its sublimity.

The vertigo-inducing vistas from above and the terrifying images of a world under threat of the destructive power of the fire of the sun are not solely meant to strike fear and awe into Phaethon, however, they are also meant to affect the audience. Ovid's attention to visual detail also helps to create an incredibly immersive effect, drawing the audience in and inviting them to experience exactly what Phaethon is experiencing: to stand in mute wonder or frantic terror just as the young boy driving the solar chariot. Ovid's Phaethon episode is a testament to the power of φαντασία and the extent to which it can connect the audience with the characters of the text. For Longinus, φαντασία is an important part of the sublime precisely because it forms a bridge between the audience, the text and the author, who must possess such vivid imagination and skill in description as to make it seem that he was present at the scene he is narrating. If the poet can make his audience believe that the events he is narrating are unfolding before their very eyes, they too might experience the sublime sensations produced by seeing a divine palace, or hurtling along the sky as the earth below burns to ash. The vividness of the Phaethon passage is depends greatly on Ovid's focus on scenery, but the author's poetic style also creates proximity to the events of the poem. By zooming in and out from Phaethon, Ovid creates suspense, and in the passages that focus on the chariot, the emotions of the young boy are mirrored in the sounds, figures, contrasts and words that make up the lines of the work. Ovid's emotive and vivid language and style subject the audience to an audible analogue of Phaethon's experience, drawing them closer to the sublime realities of the poetic universe.

Ovid's Phaethon episode, then, joins the sublime imagery of height and violent with a vivid style in order to draw the external audience into seeing the same sights as Phaethon, and feeling the same sensations. Accordingly, Phaethon is not the only one subjected to a sublime experience, as the audience is invited to be similarly astonished and terrified by what they are reading or hearing.

Beyond the sublime aesthetics and style of the episode, we have the character of Phaethon himself, which embodies the elevation of the sublime in a different way. Phaethon is a mortal with the exceedingly lofty ambition of proving his own divine parentage by fulfilling a feat that is reserved only for the gods. In this sense, Phaethon embodies μεγαλοφροσύνη, the most important source of the sublime in Longinus, because he wishes, quite literally, to be elevated above mortals' normal station. Yet modern scholarship has largely classed Phaethon and his driving of the chariot as a failed attempt to sublimity, condemning the young boy for his gigantomachic ambitions and his failure to recognise that he is not immortal. This reaction is tempting, for Indeed Phaethon is a clear failure, if an essential component of a sublime experience stems from a sort of philosophical reassessment of oneself and one's place in the universe, obtained by looking at the earth from a great height, for example, as is the case with Lucretian sublime, and indeed many of the more philosophical interpretations of the sublime since. Ovid's final assessment of Phaethon, however, as presented in the epitaph, is overwhelmingly positive: Phaethon wanted to drive the solar chariot, and wanted concrete proof that he was the son of the Sun, and his epitaph is testament to the fulfilment of both these wishes. Besides, Longinus considers that even an attempt at sublimity can itself be called sublime. Phaethon fails the test of Lucretian sublimity, but this is no wonder, for Ovid has created a world in which philosophical detachment is simply not possible: the world of myth is too directly present and too tangible to reduce it to a world we must not fear. In the light of the terrifying world Ovid has created, and the extraordinary bravery Phaethon exhibits, until, admittedly, the solar horses run rampant, we should rather consider Seneca's judgement of the passage, praising the young man for his daring attempt to attain the superhuman. There is clear sublimity in Phaethon's ardent desire to scale the heights of heaven, to stretch the boundaries of his mortality and, even, in his terror at watching the earth go up in flames.

This having been said, it is clear that Phaethon is not without his problems, and though there is a strongly sublime feeling to his character, he is by no means as sublimely heroic as Ajax, Longinus's favourite. Even if we praise Phaethon for his daring, the fact of the matter is that he did fail, and did so spectacularly. Ovid has distorted the typical character of a sublime hero from a man, unafraid of death, determined to face a lofty challenge even in the face of danger, to a young boy, who weeps in his mother's arms at the insult Epaphus, and, most condemningly, quivers in blind fear and immediately disavows his wish to drive the chariot and prove his divine parentage as soon as things take a turn for the worse. As highlighted by Morgan, however, this type of distortion of the expected virtues of manliness, and the depiction of whimpering boys in men's roles is a standard feature of Ovid's rebellious inversion of convention. Phaethon is clearly not the sublime character of the *Peri Hypsous*, but he fits in well in Ovid's world, where young boys take up men's or even god's positions, and accordingly we might call Phaethon, flawed though he his, and his grand attempt to ride the solar chariot, though it was a failure, a hallmark not of the Longinian, but of the Ovidian sublime.

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