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Eurydice's Complaint: A fatal Catachresis in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

In this paper I will argue for a re-reading of Ovid's Orpheus and Eurydice story (*Met.*10.1-85) in the light of Orpheus' notorious catachresis confusing love with rape. Engaging in particular with the studies of Enterline (2000) and Hinds (1998) I will contend that the story of Orpheus' love for Eurydice in the *Metamorphoses* is, in effect, a rape narrative comparable to the stories of Daphne and Apollo (*Met.*1.452-567), Persephone and Pluto (*Met.*5.337-571), or Philomela and Tereus (*Met.*6.401-674). Thus, the emphasis in received readings (e.g., Anderson 1982, Mack 1995, Segal 1972) upon the intertextual influence of Vergil's *Georgics* (4.453-527) on Ovid's re-working of this story may be complemented by analysis of the intratextual influences at work in this narrative.

In his appeal to the gods of the Underworld for the return of his beloved Eurydice. (10.17-39), Orpheus seeks to achieve his aim, in part, by reminding Persephone of her rape - 'ueteris rapinae' (28) - by Pluto, and by drawing parallels between her situation and his own. Persephone too has known *amor* - albeit in the mode of rape - he argues, and should therefore be sympathetic to his plea. In Orpheus' confusion of rape with *amor* in his address to Persephone, echoes may be heard of the dissenting voices that speak against this view elsewhere in the *Metamorphoses*. We may hear the echo not only of Orpheus' mother Calliope's resisting rhetoric, but also echoes of the dissenting, resisting voices of Cyane and Arethusa, of Ceres and Persephone. And these echoes, these continuing complaints, may be heard to speak for the silent Eurydice - she who, we are told, has no complaint to make against her lover except that she was loved - 'quid enim nisi se quereretur amatam?' (10.61). Subjecting Ovid's question to further interrogation, I will ask whether Eurydice has legitimate cause to complain against Orpheus precisely *that she was loved*.

I will demonstrate that in Ovid's account of this couple's ill-fated union (and re-union) Eurydice indeed suffers because of Orpheus' 'love' for her. The union is compromised *ab initio* by Orpheus' failure to summon Hymen successfully, and the smoking marriage torch which cannot be made to burn indicates an absence of mutual 'burning' passion or erotic desire between the unhappy couple. Moreover, Eurydice is described immediately after her wedding in a context of physical and emotional disengagement from her new husband as she wanders through the grass accompanied by a group of nymphs. As Sara Mack (1995, 281) wryly observes: 'Why was the new bride wandering around with her girlfriends anyway?' I will answer that Eurydice is seeking to resist the amorous intentions of her new husband and attempting to maintain her virginal status when she is fatally bitten by the snake.