

**GAZE, MOVEMENT AND GENDER IN  
OVID'S STORY OF ATALANTA AND  
HIPPOMENES (*MET.* 10.560-707)**

**Artemis Archontogeorgi**

Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH)  
(aarchon@helit.duth.gr)

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## GAZE, MOVEMENT AND GENDER IN OVID'S STORY OF ATALANTA AND HIPPOMENES (*MET.* 10.560-707)

*ABSTRACT:* In his *Metamorphoses*, Ovid created a world of alternating images that reflect both the significance of visual communication and the importance of movement. In these stories, vision and movement are closely related to the characters' genders, the plot, and the final transformations. The relationship between Ovid's literary text and a movie as a narrative, wherein the medium of storytelling differs, allows for the application of feminist film theory, especially that of Laura Mulvey. This approach can be applied to the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid's piece of art that combines both text and image in an exemplary manner. Atalanta's story, which will be discussed, is chosen precisely because it highlights the multi-dimensional function of vision and movement, combined with the gender of the observer and the object of the gaze, as well as the transformation process.

*Keywords:* Ovid; *Metamorphoses*; gaze; movement; gender.

## GAZE, MOVEMENT AND GENDER IN OVID'S STORY OF ATALANTA AND HIPPOMENES (*MET.* 10.560-707)<sup>1</sup>

In her article “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, published in 1975, Laura Mulvey suggests that a movie is influenced by the obsessions of the society that produces it. She proposes the existence of a male bearer of the gaze and a female object of the gaze, present for the erotic pleasure of both internal and external spectators (Mulvey 1975, 11-13). Such pleasure is aroused when a female character is projected on the screen as an object of desire, and the external spectator, unable to take an active part in the plot, is placed in the role of a scopophilic voyeur (Mulvey 1975, 8-10).

Mulvey's views were based on the psychoanalytic theories of Freud and Lacan. The former (Freud 1986, 112-135) argued that the spectator, positioned as the active subject, begins with narcissistic self-love and subsequently displaces his erotic desire onto a passive object of sight, from which he derives pleasure through the act of looking (scopophilia). Simultaneously, the object of sight enjoys being under an investigative gaze. In scopophilia, which necessitates the operation of the erotic instinct, pleasure arises from the transformation of an “Other” into an erotic object, a fetish, through sight (fetishistic scopophilia). Lacan (1998, 67 ff.) extended Freud's ideas by emphasizing the human form. He contended that for the active subject, an image emerging from the realm of imagination leads to self-awareness through identification with

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the idealized image. Erotic pleasure, therefore, according to Lacan, emerges from the formation of subjectivity through reflection (narcissism).

Laura Mulvey (1975, 13-17) articulated the opinion that both these tendencies operate in cinema. On one hand, the image of the erotic object, projected within the darkened theater, and the simultaneous inability to return the gaze activate the viewer's scopophilic instinct, transforming cinema into a conduit for the illicit act of voyeurism.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the viewer's identification with the spectacle or the recognition of fragmented aspects of the "self" in the projected image is a crucial element of narcissistic looking. The woman, as the visual object offered for the pleasure of the man, becomes part of male fantasy and gradually "learns" to develop characteristics capable of arousing erotic stimulation.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the woman acquires what Mulvey terms "to be looked-at-ness" and learns to self-define as an object of male desire.<sup>4</sup>

According to Mulvey, the male gaze is active and exerts control over the female object-spectacle, while men, as bearers of the gaze, control the space they inhabit and impel the narrative forward. On the other hand, women are associated with the setting or the content of the narrative, slowing down or freezing the narrative as the camera wanders over their bodies and zooms in on certain body parts, enhancing the spectator's aesthetic pleasure (Mulvey 1975, 11-13). As the female object becomes a static image offered for the visual pleasure of the spectator, she loses her humanity and substance.

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2 Metz 1985, 799-801. Mary Devereaux (1990, 343) cites Alfred Hitchcock's film *Rear Window* (1954) as an example.

3 Luce Irigaray (1977, 364) notes that the woman, as an erotic object, moves between the pornographic display of physical beauty and the shy reaction of a virgin in order to achieve the viewer's sexual arousal.

4 Mulvey 1975, 442. Mary Devereaux (1990, 340) argues that women find their identity in the position of men (father, husband, lover), upon whom their existence depends. Roland Barthes (1981, 11) observes that as the object of the photographic lens, one metaphorically derives existence from the photographer.

In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the theme of transformation itself is available for visualization, inviting – as well as provoking – readers to examine comparatively the representative abilities of both text and gaze. Hinds (2010, 197) suggests two aspects of the Ovidian gaze: the different themes of vision (such as the “forbidden gaze”) and the use of certain motifs drawn from works of visual art and architecture contemporary to the writer, a tendency which primarily affects the representation of stylized landscapes. In other words, Ovid allows his characters to be visualized through his descriptions as if they were statues, and his landscapes to be presented like realistic paintings.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, each image in Ovid's masterpiece seems to possess two qualities: that of movement and of stasis closely associated with the process of transformation (Feldherr 2010, 243-244). Static images that freeze the narrative, and dynamic elements that push forward the narrative, alternate in the text, allowing the reader to witness the swift transformation occurring before their eyes, as well as viewing the static and irreversible effect of the transformation. As Feldherr (2010, 244) points out, Ovid demands from the reader to be stimulated to “see” the events and to believe in the reality of what they “see” in a text where virtual illusion and verbal fiction coexist.<sup>6</sup>

In the following discussion, I will attempt to demonstrate that in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, gaze and movement are clearly related to the gender of each character and play an important role in the development of the stories. Atalanta's story, which will be discussed, is chosen precisely because it highlights the multi-dimensional function of gaze and movement combined with the gender of the

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5 In his *Metamorphoses*, Ovid transforms images into poetry using techniques borrowed from epic poetry, primarily *ekphrases* (*descriptio*), which involve describing visual art in poetic form, as well as similes. For more details, see Laird 1996, 76-77.

6 As Laird (1996, 85) suggests reality can be disguised as image, just as image can be disguised as reality.

bearer and the object of the gaze, as well as the transformation process.

In the 10th book of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid assigns the role of narrator to Orpheus, who recounts a series of illicit or unbecoming love stories, clearly distinguished between those of young boys beloved by gods (such as Ganymede, Hyacinthus, and Adonis) and those of girls whose forbidden passions deserve just punishment (the Propoetides, Myrrha, and Atalanta).<sup>7</sup> Orpheus' aversion to the female gender (10.79-80 *omnemque refugerat Orpheus / femineam Venerem*, "[Orpheus] had abstained from the love of women") sets the tone for the misogynistic perspective through which women are portrayed in his narration. The erotic stories of the aforementioned young women are directly associated with their gender and their active expression of desire.

As the narrative progresses, Orpheus relinquishes his role as narrator to Venus, who recounts to Adonis the story of Atalanta and Hippomenes, a tale culminating in the desecration of Cybele's temple and the transformation of the two lovers into lions.<sup>8</sup> The story begins with an oracle predicting that if Atalanta marries, she will lose herself, sealing the young girl's fate (10.565-566 *nil opus est, Atalanta, tibi fuge coniugis usum. / nec tamen effugies teque ipsa viva carebis*, "you don't need a husband, Atalanta: run from the necessity for a husband. Nevertheless, you will not escape, and, still living, you will not be yourself"). Seeking to avoid her fate, Atalanta decides to remain single, wandering the shady forests as a huntress (10.567-568 *per opacas innuba silvas / vivit*, "she lived in

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7 Cf. Ov. *Met.* 10.152-154 *puerosque canamus / dilectos superis inconcessisque puellas / ignibus attonitas meruisse libidine poenam*, "I sing of boys loved by the gods, and girls stricken with forbidden fires, deserving punishment for their lust". Regarding the narrative techniques of the 10th book, see e.g. Rosati 2002, 271-304. The Latin text follows the edition by R. J. Tarrant 2004. All translations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are from Kline 2004.

8 For the tradition of the myth and visual representations, see Knox 1990; Scanlon 2002, 176-185; Fratantuono 2014, 204-205. For a concise overview of feminist film theory and criticism, see Mulvey 1975; Kaplan 1983; Devereaux 1990; Doane 1991; Rabinowitz & Richlin 1993, 102-107.

the dark forests”), unless one of her numerous suitors defeats her in a race. The price for defeated suitors is death.

At the beginning of her narrative, Venus refers to the two qualities that make Atalanta irresistible to men: her swiftness and her beauty (10.562-563 *nec dicere posses, / laude pedum formaene bono praestantior esset*, “nor could you say whether her speed or her beauty was more deserving of high praise”). She returns to the latter (10.573 *tanta potentia formae est*, “such was the power of her beauty”) to justify the suitors’ participation in the race despite the obvious danger to their lives. As Ciabaton (2020, 189) comments, Venus’ remarks about Atalanta’s beauty underscore its influence on the male soul while also emphasizing that beauty is part of the wooing process, as “the girl must always be beautiful”. As Atalanta runs, the beauty and femininity of her nude body are likened to Venus’ body (10.578-579 *posito corpus velamine vidit, / quale meum*, “he saw her unclothed body, one like mine”), making her irresistible. Simultaneously, the phrase “*posito velamine*” connects Atalanta’s image with Diana (Ov. *Met.* 3.192 *meposito visam velamine*, “seen there, while she herself was naked”), evoking her devotion to celibacy, virginity, and hunting. Though not a nymph herself, Atalanta follows the lifestyle of a forest nymph and seems to possess the undesired beauty of nymphs, attracting the male gaze and desire. Thus, Atalanta exhibits what Mulvey (1975, 11) refers to as “to be looked-at-ness”, wherein a woman, as she becomes part of the male fantasy, is gradually “trained” to develop characteristics that may elicit sexual arousal, thereby identifying herself as an object of male desire.<sup>9</sup> When Hippomenes enters the scene under the guidance of Venus, Atalanta, devoted to Diana, becomes the subject of contention. Thus, Atalanta is positioned on the verge between two opposite realms, those of Venus and Diana, since the

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9 In the *Metamorphoses* Daphne (*Met.* 1.475-480), Callisto (*Met.* 2.411-416), Syrinx (*Met.* 1.691-698), Arethoussa (*Met.* 5.577-584) and many more possess the same characteristics as Atalanta. For the portrait of a nymph see Curran 1978; Davis 1983, 43-44; Hinds 2010, 188-196.

narrative seems to unfold as a contest between the two goddesses, testing their powers.

At the same time, Atalanta is attributed with masculinity: she is highly athletic, dispatching anyone inferior to her, demonstrating power and supremacy, and displaying a virility often confirmed by her stout and sometimes armed appearance in visual art representations (Reeder 1995, 29-30; Barringer 1996, 73).<sup>10</sup> Her winged feet (10.591 *ablata talaria*) associate her with the restless male characters of Perseus and Mercury, who journey throughout the world of the *Metamorphoses*.<sup>11</sup> Perseus' encounter with the petrified Andromeda (Ov. *Met.* 4.672-677) emphasize the contrast between active male figures and passive female figures, contributing to the broader themes of agency and power dynamics in the narrative.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, Atalanta, when naked, could rival the beauty of Adonis if he were a woman (10.578-579 *posito corpus velamine... / quale tuum, si femina fias*, "her unclothed body, Adonis, like yours

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10 For example, we can observe a manly appearance of Atalanta on a red-figure kylix of 450-430 BC assigned to the Aberdeen painter, today at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (no. 03.820). On the contrary, Atalanta is depicted as a seductive figure on a red figure krater of the same period assigned to the painter of Dinos, today in the Museo Civico Archeologico of Bologna (no. D11-12 266).

11 I prefer here to follow Anderson's (1966) interpretation of "talaria" as a noun meaning "winged ankles" rather than "a long garment reaching down to the ankles" which is the interpretation suggested by most dictionaries (e.g. *OLD* s.v. *talaris* 1, where the Ovidian passage is cited). After all, Ovid specifically stresses that Atalanta is running naked (10.578 *posito ... velamine*). Furthermore, Anderson's interpretation connects Atalanta with the winged figures of Mercury and Perseus, reinforcing the masculine qualities of the heroine. See also Verg. *Aen.* 4.239-241; Prop. 2.30.5-6; Ov. *Met.* 2.736, 4.665-667, 4.729-731.

12 See also Ziogas 2013, 164-169 on Atalanta's association with Achilles in Homer and Vergil. Atalanta's similarity to Achilles is also established in Vergil through the use of the epithet "*inmitis*". Cf. Verg. *Aen.* 1.30, 3.87. The contradiction between the epithets *inmitis* (Ov. *Met.* 10.573) and *molis* (Ov. *Met.* 10.609), both attributed to Atalanta, furthermore highlights her ambiguous nature, with reference to motifs of Roman erotic elegy. See Ciabaton 2020.



if you were a woman”) (Anderson 1966; Salzman-Mitchell 2005, 85). The androgynous nature of Atalanta contrasts with Adonis’ effeminate figure, introducing the reversal of gender roles in this story.

Equally ambiguous is Hippomenes’ figure. He claims to lack no bravery (10.607 *nec virtus citra genus est*, “my courage is no less than my birth”), a claim evidenced by his decision to race Atalanta despite the obvious danger to his life (10.616 *quod inest virtus et mens interrita leti*, “what if he does have courage, and a spirit unafraid of dying”). Nevertheless, Hippomenes prevails over Atalanta not due to his virility, but because he cheats, displaying a cunning reminiscent of a womanly trait (Reeder 1995, 29-30). Venus’ intervention as Hippomenes’ aid underscores that Atalanta is competing with the goddess, not her would-be fiancé, relegating Hippomenes to an inferior role, subordinate to both the goddess and Atalanta. Furthermore, Hippomenes’ beauty is likened to that of a virgin’s face (10.631 *quam virgineus puerile vultus in ore est*, “how the virginal expression of a boy clings to his face!”)<sup>13</sup> Thus, if Atalanta is identified with Adonis, Hippomenes assumes the role of Venus, and vice versa, in a narrative where the images of male and female are applied interchangeably to both couples (Atalanta – Hippomenes / Venus – Adonis).

This gender confusion is also evident in the exchange of gazes between the two main characters as they both become objects of the gaze. When Hippomenes first sees Atalanta running, his motionless figure (10.575 *sederat Hippomenes*, “Hippomenes had taken his seat”) emphasizes his problematic image, portraying him as a distant observer who questions the necessity of the race (10.576 *petitur cuiquam per tanta pericula coniunx?*, “who would try for a wife at such a risk?”), yet simultaneously seeking scopophilic pleasure

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13 Reed (2013, 285-286) discusses the inherent narcissistic traits exhibited by the girl as she admires the attractive appearance of the young suitor; in essence, Atalanta sees a reflection of herself in him.

by watching the contest (Salzman-Mitchell 2005, 85).<sup>14</sup> Though initially skeptical and deeming participation in such a dangerous race foolish, Hippomenes immediately changes his mind upon seeing Atalanta's face and naked body (10.578 *ut faciem et posito corpus velamine vidit*, "but when he saw her face and her unclothed body"). The action is triggered by the male gaze, which functions as the beginning of desire. Ovid focuses on Hippomenes' sight and rewards him as the dominant bearer of the gaze, while simultaneously prompting the external spectator to "see" through the eyes of the hero.<sup>15</sup>

Hippomenes' reaction to this erotic sight resembles that of an elegiac lover: he is consumed by desire (10.582 *concipit ignes*, "he falls in love with her"), while the resemblance between Atalanta and Diana places Hippomenes in Actaeon's position, unintentionally becoming a voyeur.<sup>16</sup> The spectacle of Atalanta in motion immobilizes Hippomenes (10.580 *obstipuit*, "he was stunned") as he admires her beauty. His immobility could be seen as a sign of fem-

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14 Hippomenes' behavior corresponds to that of a Roman spectator who watches the races at the Hippodrome and comments on the show! For the scopophilic pleasure of the spectator see Mulvey 1975, 8-10 & 13-14.

15 Regarding the gaze as the beginning of love in elegiac poetry, cf. Prop. 1.1.1 *Cynthia prima suis miserum me cepit oculis*, "Cynthia was the first, to my cost, to trap me with her eyes", 2.15.11-12 *non iuvat in caeco Venerem corrumpere motu / si nescis, oculi sunt in amores duces*, "no joy in corrupting Venus to a blind motion: know, if you do not, the eyes are the guides of Love". The nymphs in the *Metamorphoses* are often the object of lustful male gaze: Io – Jupiter: 1.588 *viderat*; Pan – Syrinx: 1.699 *videt*; Callisto – Jupiter: 2.422 *Jupiter ut vidit*; Arethousa – Alpheus: 5.603 *quia nuda fui, sum visa paratior illi*.

16 For the burning desire of the elegiac lover cf. e.g. Prop. 1.6.7, 3.22.31; Ov. *Rem.* 229; Ov. *Am.* 1.4.26, 2.4.12; Tib. 2.4.6, 3.11.5. Notice the change in Apollo's behavior as soon as he sees Daphne: Ov. *Met.* 1.490-496. On the parallelism with Actaeon cf. Ov. *Met.* 3.185 *visae sine veste Dianae*, where Actaeon sees Diana naked as she bathes and he pays for his voyeurism with his life. The participle "visae" assigns Diana the passive role of a spectacle subjected to the active and, in this case, violating male gaze.

ininity were it not counterbalanced by his energetic ability to gaze upon her, implied by the active form of the verb “video” (10.578) (Sharrock 2010, 137-147).<sup>17</sup> Hippomenes’ speechless stupefaction and his motionless first appearance in the story render him a static image, endowing Atalanta with the power of Medusa, while he is reminiscent of Perseus, who loses control over his flight upon seeing Andromeda’s still body.<sup>18</sup> Yet, contrary to Andromeda, Atalanta is in motion.

The sight of Atalanta as she runs corresponds to a stereotyped image of a virgin fleeing from her suitor.<sup>19</sup> The repeated use of the verb “fugere” (10.565-566 *fuge / nec effugies*, “run ... you will not escape”) in the prophecy concerning Atalanta’s future prescribes her compulsory movement (10.568-569 *instantem turbam / fugat*, “fled from the crowd of insistent suitors”). For Atalanta, there is only one way to avoid an undesirable marriage, and that is to run. Her renowned speed (10.563 *laude pedum*, “her speed”) aids her efforts, but her beauty, as well-known as her velocity (10.563 *for-*

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17 Hippomenes’ ability to speak and his active gaze deter his conversion into a static image. For the active male gaze see Mulvey 1975, 12-13.

18 On Medusa cf. Ov. *Met.* 4.781-782 *vidisse hominum simulacra ferarumque in silicem ex ipsis visa conversa Medusa*, “he saw the shapes of men and animals changed from their natures to hard stone by Medusa’s gaze”. On Perseus cf. Ov. *Met.* 4.676-677 *et stupet et visae correptus imagine formae / penae suas quater est oblitus in aere pennus*, “[he] was stunned, and seized by the vision of the form he saw, he almost forgot to flicker his wings in the air”.

19 Atalanta’s flee brings to mind the runaway of Daphne: Ov. *Met.* 1.474 *fugit altera nomen amantis*, “the other fled from love’s name”, 1.502 *fugit ocior aura*, “she flees swifter than the lightest breath of air”, 1.503 *neque resistit*, “and resists”, 1.511 *curre fugam inhibe*, “check your flight”, 1.515 *quem fugias; ideoque fugis*, “who you run from, and so you run”, 1.525-526 *timido Peneia cursu / fugit*, “timid Peneis ran”. Of Io: Ov. *Met.* 1.597 *fugiebat*, “she was already in flight”. Of Syrinx: Ov. *Met.* 1.701 *fugisse per aviam nympham*, “and how the nymph ran through the wilds”. Of Arethusa: Ov. *Met.* 5.601 *fugio sine vestibus*, “I fled, without my clothes”. Of Callisto: Ov. *Met.* 2.443 *clamata refugit*, “at the shout she runs”, as they all run to get away from their suitors.

*maene bono praestantior esset*, “or her beauty was more deserving of high praise”) and omnipotence over her suitors (10.573 *tanta potentia formae est*, “such was the power of her beauty”), who crowd to claim her as their bride – and prize – disregarding the harsh rules of the contest, stands against her.<sup>20</sup> Ovid employs familiar motifs: the opposing wind carries away the wings on her ankles (10.591 *aura refert ablata citis talaria plantis*, “the breeze blew the streaming feathers on her speeding ankles behind her”); her flowing hair waves freely on her ivory back (10.592 *tergaque iactantur crines per eburnean*, “her hair was thrown back from her ivory shoulders”); stripes hang from her knees (10.593 *poplitibus suberant picto genualia limbo*, “ribbons with embroidered edges fluttered at her knees”); her naked body reddens with exertion (10.594 *inque puellarum corpus candore ruborem*, “a blush spread over the girlish whiteness of her body”).<sup>21</sup> Like Daphne before her (Ov. *Met.* 1.530 *auctaque forma fuga est*, “her beauty enhanced by flight”), Atalanta’s beauty is not diminished but rather accentuated by her flight under the male gaze (10.590 *cursus facit ille decorum*, “her beauty enhanced by flight”), in an elegiac literary environment where beauty and desire are reinforced by the disarray of clothes and hair, by dissatisfaction, degradation, or fear.<sup>22</sup> Atalanta gradually transforms into an admirable image, emphasized by the passive verb “visa est” (10.589), becoming an object of desire under the male gaze,

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20 Cf. Ov. *Met.* 1.488-489 *sed te decor iste, quod optas, / esse vetat, votoque tuo tua forma repugnant*, “but your beauty itself, Daphne, prevents your wish, and your loveliness opposes your prayer”, where Daphne’s beauty contradicts her desire to remain unmarried and a virgin, shaping the tension between “seeming” and “being”.

21 Blushing is part of a girl’s beauty and symbolizes her undeniable purity. Cf. Cat. 61.79 ff., 62.21; Verg. *Aen.* 12.4-9.

22 Ovidian characters whose beauty is enhanced by their fear: Leucothoe: Ov. *Met.* 4.230 *ipse timor decuit*, “her fear enhances her”; Hermaphroditus: Ov. *Met.* 4.330 *sed et erubisse decebat*, “though the blush was very becoming”; Europa: Ov. *Fasti* 5.608 *et timor ipse novi causa decoris erat*, “while fear itself lent her fresh grace”; Sabine women: Ov. *Ars* 1.126 *et potuit multas ipse decere timor*, “and many made even fear itself look fitting”.

freezing the action. Hippomenes' gaze fixates on specific parts of Atalanta's body, which is no longer a whole entity but rather dissected into pieces (ankles, hair, back, knees) for Hippomenes' fetishistic consumption.

A similar description is encountered in the case of Daphne (Ov. *Met.* 1.497-503), as Apollo gazes upon the nymph for the first time. Daphne's female body is broken up into fleshly snapshots, which are admired in fragments and aim at the erotic pleasure and sexual arousal of the viewer, both internal and external. Thus, Daphne's loose hair (1.497 *spectat inornatos collo pendere capillos*, "he sees her disordered hair hanging about her neck"), her eyes (1.499 *micantes oculos*, "her eyes sparkling"), her mouth (1.499 *oscula*, "her lips"), her hands and fingers (1.500 *digitosque manus*, "hands and fingers"), her arms (1.501 *bracchiaque nudos lacertos*, "her arms bare to the shoulder") magnetize Apollo's gaze and ignite his love for the nymph.<sup>23</sup> The emphasis on the narrator's gaze highlights how Daphne is transformed into a spectacle "to be looked-at", into the captivated object of the scrutinizing male gaze, as her body is turned into a fetish through poetic narration via a process that insists on the obsessive dissection and fragmentary description of the female body.

We can also identify similarities in the first appearance of Corinna, standing before the poet *posito velamine* (Ov. *Am.* 1.5.17-22):

*ut stetit ante oculos posito velamine nostros,  
in toto nusquam corpore menda fuit.  
quos umeros, quales vidi tetigique lacertos!  
forma papillarum quam fuit apta premi!  
quam castigato planus sub pectore venter!  
quantum et quale latus! quam iuvenale femur!*

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23 The eroticized connotation attributed to the mouth through the metonymic reference of "*oscula*" (= kisses) is noteworthy. Cf. Prop. 2.15.10 *oscula sunt labris nostra morata tuis!*, "how long my kisses lingered on your lips!"; 2.15.50 *omnia si dederis oscula, pauca dabis*, "though you give all your kisses, they'll prove all too few"; Tib. 1.1.62 *tristibus et lacrimis oscula mixta dabis*, "and grant me kisses mixed with your sad tears".

“When she stood before my eyes, the clothing set aside, /  
 there was never a flaw in all her body. / What shoulders,  
 what arms, I saw and touched! / Breasts formed as if they  
 were made for pressing! / How flat the belly beneath the  
 slender waist! / What flanks, what form! What young  
 thighs!” (Transl. Kline 2001)

The phrase “*ante oculos nostros*” at the beginning of the description subjugates the female body to a curious and controlling gaze aimed at sexual arousal. Nude Corinna (1.5.17 *posito velamine*), like Daphne and Atalanta, is transformed into an image, passive and inert, while the viewer is presented as the bearer of gaze and power, free to create both the image and the narrative. Thus, we hear the voice (or perhaps the thoughts) of the narrator, simultaneously as the woman transforms into a fetish, an object with a perfection found only in works of art, in sculptures, or in poetry. Corinna is displayed motionless and silent (1.5.17 *ut stetit*), a collection of fetishistic objects (shoulders, arms, breasts, abdomen, chest, flank, thigh) devoid of subjectivity, the image of a mindless body that justifies and perpetuates a patriarchal ideology of subjugation.<sup>24</sup> Her body, organized and symmetrical, contrasts with her fragmented idol, as she is not depicted as a whole but fragmentarily under the control of her lover’s gaze. This artificial presentation is more a projection of erotic desire and fantasies of the viewer and visualizes a sexuality less connected with pleasure and more with dominance over the woman, who is nothing more than a body.

Atalanta’s transformation into a piece of art, presented for voyeuristic pleasure to both internal and external spectators, is primarily highlighted when her naked form could rival the beauty of Venus and Adonis, if he were a woman (10.578-579 *posito corpus velamine vidit / quale meum, vel quale*

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24 Gubar 1987, 722; Greene 1998, 77 & 81. The description of Corinna, as it revolves around her genitalia, which are not mentioned, corresponds to Irigaray’s observation (1977, 363-365) that the female gender is represented as a hole/vacuum on a symbolic level, a remark that also applies to Daphne. See also Miller 2001, 134-135.

*tuum, si femina fias*, “but when he saw her face and her unclothed body, one like mine, Adonis, or like yours if you were a woman”). Nude Atalanta resembles Venus in her nudity, reminiscent of the numerous statues of Venus with which the Roman spectators were familiar, presenting a female image as a means to satisfy male aesthetic pleasure. On the other hand, the beauty of the newborn Adonis is likened to the naked bodies of Cupids portrayed in paintings (10.515-517 *qualia namque / corpora nudorum tabula pignuntur Amorum / talis erat*, “being so like one of the torsos of naked Amor painted on boards”), a similarity that ascribes to both Adonis, and synecdochically to Atalanta, the role of characters depicted within a work of art. The artistic objectification of Atalanta is enhanced by the mention of her ivory back (10.592 *terga eburnea*, “ivory shoulders”), echoing the description of Pygmalion’s statue, a motionless erotic object created by its own lover, made of the same material.<sup>25</sup> The assembly of the statue corresponds to the fragmented description of the female body, as we saw in the case of Atalanta. Hippomenes – and through him Ovid – focuses on specific parts of Atalanta’s body and describes them with carefully chosen and erotically charged words, just as Pygmalion, the sculptor, selects the piece of ivory from which he will create the parts of the ideal woman’s body. In the process of creation, the hero/poet and the Pygmalion/sculptor first deconstruct the erotic object mentally and then reconstruct the female form as a fetish for their own sexual pleasure. Pygmalion serves the male

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25 Cf. Ov. *Met.* 10.246 *sculpsit ebur formamque dedi*, “he carved a figure, brilliantly, out of snow-white ivory”, 10.275-276 *eburnea virgo ... / similis mea ... eburnae*, “the girl of ivory, he said, one like my ivory girl”. See Salzmann-Mitchell 2008, 308. In the *Metamorphoses*, ivory is used to describe fragmentary parts of the human body, often with erotic content. Cf. Narcissus: 3.422 *eburnea colla*, “ivory neck”; Hermaphroditus: 4.332 *ebori tincto*, “ivory painted”, 4.335 *eburnea colla*, “ivory-white neck”, 4.355 *eburnea signa*, “ivory statue”; Pelops: 6.405 *ebur ostendisse sinistro*, “the ivory, of his left shoulder”, 6.410-411 *inpositum est non comparentis in usum / partibus ebur*, “ivory was used in place of the missing part”.

ideology through his art for a passive mate, who needs neither voice nor identity but only virginity and who submits to male control. Based on Mulvey's discussion (1975, 13-14) on the anxiety of castration, the male reaction is either to save, devalue or punish the woman, as in the case of the Propoetides, or to turn her into a fetish object, as in the case of Pygmalion. The story of Pygmalion reveals the predetermined fate of the female body as an erotic object and at the same time the fate of the male artist struggling to control and perfect an unstable and intangible work of art (Salzmann-Mitchell 2008, 308-310). However, unlike Pygmalion's statue, Atalanta is still in motion.

Atalanta's naked body, as she assumes the paradoxical role of a moving statue, demonstrates her power and sovereignty but also her vulnerable position, as she is exposed to Hippomenes' gaze, which is far from innocent.<sup>26</sup> The correlation between Atalanta and Andromeda, awaiting rescue by the flying Perseus, as well as the comparison to Pygmalion's statue, a motionless fetish object at the mercy of its creator's sexual desire, indicates Atalanta's new position, already formed in Hippomenes' imagination: Atalanta must be stopped so that Hippomenes can marry her and enjoy her love. Hippomenes' intent to immobilize Atalanta is expressed in the way he looks at her. Along with the external viewer, who identifies with him, Hippomenes "fixes" Atalanta with his gaze (10.601 *vultuque in virgine fixo*, "fixing his gaze on the girl"), aiming to transform her animated figure into a static image and herself

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26 Other female characters appearing naked in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are: Diana: *Ov. Met.* 3.192. Callisto: *Ov. Met.* 2.460. Arethusa: *Ov. Met.* 5.594-595. On Greek vases and Etruscan mirrors of the 6<sup>th</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> century BC Atalanta is depicted naked wearing a girdle and standing next to Peleus just before the beginning of the honorific games for Pelias. Propertius 3.14.1-4 admires the naked girls who fight with young men, perhaps an allusion to Atalanta herself.



into a suitable erotic object (Salzman-Mitchell 2005, 86-87; Sharrock 2010, 137-147).<sup>27</sup>

The case of Atalanta is perhaps the only instance in the *Metamorphoses* where the young woman looks back at her aspiring lover and even gazes directly at him (10.609-610 *talia dicentem molli Schoeneia vultu / aspicit et dubitat*, “as he spoke Schoeneus’s daughter looked at him with a softening expression, uncertain”).<sup>28</sup> Love at first sight applies to Atalanta, who is drawn to Hippomenes’ beauty and youth. Due to Hippomenes’ handsome appearance (10.611 *hunc formosis*, “handsome youths”), Atalanta experiences emotional wavering (10.614 *nec forma tangor [poteram tamen hac quoque tangi]*, “nor is it his beauty that moves me [yet I could be touched by that too]”), reconsidering her attitude towards marriage (10.635 *unus eras, cum quo sociare cubilla vellem*, “you would be the one I would want to share my bed with”). Her doubt expresses both the reluctance of a young girl to leave her family home and her freedom, as well as the overpowering appeal of the opposite sex and maternity (Reeder 1995, 29-30). The image of the young man affects Atalanta, whose gaze becomes tender (10.609 *molli vultu*, “a softening expression”), contradicting the harshness of her nature (10.573 *illa quidem inmitis*, “truly she was pitiless”), and this is what slows her down during the race (10.661-662 *o quotiens, cum iam posset transpire, morata est / spectatosque diu vultus invita reliquit*, “o how often, when she could have overtaken him, she lingered, and watching his face for a while, left him behind against her

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27 Cf. Verg. *Aen.* 12.70 *figitque in virgine vultus*, “he fixed his gaze on the girl”, when Tyrnos faces Lavinia. The verb *figere* is used for Hyperion’s son, whose glorious eye is “fixed” on Leucothea: Ov. *Met.* 4.196 *Leucothoen spectas et virgine figis in una*, “your eyes, that ought to be fixed on the whole earth, are fixed on one virgin girl”, as well as for the spear, which penetrates Cyparissus’ beloved deer: Ov. *Met.* 10.130-131 *iaculo Cyparissus acuto / fixit*, “the boy transfixed it with his sharp spear”.

28 The nymphs in the *Metamorphoses* do not look back at their suitors, with the exception of Arethusa, who sees the shadow of Alpheus. Cf. Ov. *Met.* 5.614-615 *vidi praecedere longam / ante pedes umbram*, “I saw a long shadow stretching out before my feet”.

will!"). Though it is now Hippomenes' turn to become a spectacle, there is no equivalent description of Hippomenes' body as is the case with Atalanta's body. This difference indicates that although Atalanta can stare at Hippomenes, her gaze is not active and, thus, does not affect the young man, who cannot be turned into an erotic object by her. In contrast, Atalanta herself, as she begins to depend on Hippomenes' presence for her identity, seems to accept her visualization, as she refers to herself using a passive voice verbal form (10.632 *visa*) and acknowledges her "to be looked-at-ness" (Salzman-Mitchell 2005, 87).

It would be interesting to juxtapose to the aforementioned scene of Atalanta two other scenes from the Ovidian *Metamorphoses* which enhance the cinematic interpretation of the story of Atalanta in relation to gaze and gender. The first instance unfolds in the story of Echo and Narcissus.<sup>29</sup> Echo sees Narcissus (Ov. *Met.* 3.356 *adspicit hunc*, 3.370-371 *Narcissum ... vidit*), follows him closely (Ov. *Met.* 3.371-372 *sequitur vestigia furtim, quoque magis sequitur*, "following him secretly, and the more she followed") and even ventures to approach him (Ov. *Met.* 3.388-389 *egressaque silva / ibat, ut iniceret sperato brachia collo*, "comes out of the woods to put her arms around his neck, in longing"). As previously observed, the gaze serves as the beginning of love, placing the nymph in the role of the elegiac lover. Thus, Echo assumes the role of the male, ultimately pursuing Narcissus, who flees from her, reacting exactly as nymphs do to their suitors. Despite this gender inversion, Echo's gaze remains feminine/passive, lacking the power to control the object of her desire, which is neither described in detail nor objectified. Conversely, when later Narcissus sees his reflection in the water and falls in love with it, his masculine gaze exerts influence over his reflection. Narcissus, stupefied and immobile, fixates on this other body in the water which transforms into a work of art, into a statue of Parian marble (Ov. *Met.* 3.418-419 *adstupet ipse sibi vultuque inmotus eodem / haeret, ut e Pario formatum marmore sig-*

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29 Regarding the gaze in the myth of Narcissus see e.g. Rosati 1983; Salzman Mitchell 2005.

*num*, “he is astonished by himself, and hangs there motionless, with a fixed expression, like a statue carved from Parian marble”). Subsequently, the reflection’s “face” is delineated into fragments, dissected into eyes, hair, neck, cheeks, mouth, as the lover’s gaze traverses it (Ov. *Met.* 3.420-424), confirming the active power of the male gaze.

The second case is that of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus.<sup>30</sup> Here, too, the nymph assumes the role of the male, who sees and desires to possess Hermaphroditus (Ov. *Met.* 4.316 *cum puerum vidit visumque optavit habere*, “when she saw the boy, and what she saw she longed to have”). The passive form “visum” and the choice of the verb “opto” emphasize the role that sight plays in the conquest of the desired object. However, Salmacis also retains her feminine identity, as she seeks to acquire Mulvey’s “to be looked-at-ness” and willingly transforms herself into a spectacle under the male gaze (Ov. *Met.* 4.317-319, the use of the passive form “videri” implies this notion). On the other hand, Hermaphroditus displays elements of femininity, such as the blush with which he responds to Salmacis’ love confession (Ov. *Met.* 4.330 *sed et erubuisse decebat*, “though the blush was very becoming”), likened to ripe apples or tinted ivory (Ov. *Met.* 4.331-332 *hic color aprica pendentibus arbore pomis / aut ebori tincto*, “apples are tinged with this colour, hanging in a sunlit tree, or ivory painted with red”); his ivory neck (Ov. *Met.* 4.335 *eburnea colla*, “his ivory-white neck”), illustrating the use of ivory to depict fragmented parts of the human body, often with erotic content; his manner of avoiding Salmacis’ erotic assault (Ov. *Met.* 4.336 *desinis, an fugio tecumque” ait “ista relinquo?”*, “stop this, or shall I go, and leave this place, and you?”). After rejecting her advances, the nymph withdraws and secretly watches Hermaphroditus (Ov. *Met.* 4.339 *tum quoque respiciens*, “she still looked back”). Believing himself unseen (Ov. *Met.* 4.341 *inobservatus*), Hermaphroditus removes his clothes (Ov. *Met.* 4.345 *mollium de tenero velamina corpore poni*, “he stripped the soft clothes from

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30 Regarding the gaze in the myth of Hermaphroditus see e.g. Salzman Mitchell 2005; Pietropaolo 2011; Groves 2016;

his slender body”) and plunges into the water. As Groves (2016, 353-354) points out at the precise moment when Hermaphroditus unveils himself, the narrator deliberately withholds any specifics regarding Hermaphroditus’ physical attributes. The excited erotic reaction of Salmacis provides the sole glimpse into Hermaphroditus’ actual physical appearance available to the reader. Shortly afterwards, he is transformed into an ivory statue (Ov. *Met.* 4.354-355 *ut eburnea / signa*, “an ivory statue”), as the narration unfolds from Salmacis’ perspective. While the focus invites us to follow Salmacis’ gaze, however, the absence of an active verb in relation to the gaze as well as the lack of detailed description of the male body implies that the nymph’s gaze is not active and has no power over Hermaphroditus. The narratives of Echo and Salmacis complement and illuminate the reading of the story of Atalanta regarding the relationship between gaze and gender. They demonstrate that, despite the desire of the female bearers of the gaze to control the object of their desire through sight, they fail due to their gender. They also underscore that Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* can be read more broadly through the lens of Mulvey’s cinematic theory.

Ovid constructs the erotic chase in the story of Atalanta and Hippomenes as a genuine game with rules predetermined by Atalanta, who declares that she will not be conquered unless beaten in a race (10.569-570 *nec sum potienda, nisi / victa prius cursu*, “I will not be won, till I am beaten in running”).<sup>31</sup> The originality of this contest lies in the fact that Atalanta sets herself as the prize, leaving it to the participants to judge whether the prize of the race is unequal in relation to the punishment, though it appears that

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31 A contest for the hand of a virgin is commonplace in Greek myths, such as in the story of Pelops and Hippodamia. See Grimal 1990, 336. Also, refer to Rimell 2006, 119-122, who draws comparisons between the eroticized athleticism displayed in the game between Apollo and Hyacinthus (Ov. *Met.* 176 ff.) and the race between Atalanta and Hippomenes. Furthermore, cf. Ov. *Ars* 2.725-728, where the race is used as a metaphor for the sexual act, with an emphasis on the erotic satisfaction of both lovers.

Hippomenes was primarily fascinated by Atalanta's wildness. He knows, however, that neither flattery nor charm is sufficient to overcome her reluctance; she must be defeated in a race and subdued.<sup>32</sup>

Recognizing both the risk to his life and his inability to win Atalanta in a fair competition, Hippomenes invokes Venus and employs the trick with the apples. Atalanta is delayed by admiring the beauty of the apples that Hippomenes throws in her path, allowing him to overtake her twice and ultimately win. At a critical moment just before the end of the race, Atalanta is captivated by the beauty of the apple (10.666-667 *obstipuit virgo nitidique cupidine pomi / declinat cursus*, "the girl was astonished, and, eager for the shining apple, she ran off the course") and chooses to pick it up (10.667 *aurumque volubile tollit*, "picked up the spinning gold"). Apples, symbolizing abundance and fertility, are often linked with wedding ceremonies. In many myths, virgins who yield to marriage are presented with an apple, akin to Cydippe, or a pomegranate, like Persephone.<sup>33</sup> These fruits, traditionally associated with arousing female sexuality and desire, take on a different significance in Atalanta's narrative. Instead of Hippomenes himself, these fruits serve as a means for him to repeatedly impede the swift Atalanta, ultimately symbolizing her acceptance of the idea of marriage and sexual intimacy (Barringer 1996, 74).

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32 Reeder 1995, 30; Barringer 1996, 73. Cf. Prop. 1.1.9-15 *Milanion .. / saevitiam durae contudit lasidos ... / Ergo velocem potuit domuisse puellam*, "Milanion, did not shirk hard labour, ... in crushing fierce Atalanta, Iasus' daughter ... So he was able to overcome the swift-footed girl", where Melanion wins the reluctant Atalanta. The verbs *contundo* and *domo* indicate that the prospective lover needs to tame his beloved one. See also Grimal 1990, 334 for the brutal transformations of Thetis in the arms of Peleus, which allude to the wild nature of an unmarried girl harnessed through love and marriage.

33 For the myth of Persephone see Grimal 1990, 341-342. For the story of Cydippe and Acontius see Ov. *Her.* 20-21. The comparison of the apple with love is discussed in Littlewood 1968; Segal 1969; Faraone 1990; Gentilcore 1995; Méndez 2020. In Latin literature the apple and the pomegranate are rendered with the same word, *pomum*.

Hippomenes' effort to delay Atalanta and ultimately immobilize her is reflected in the frequent use of the word "mora".<sup>34</sup> Initially, Venus notes that there is not enough time to aid Hippomenes (10.643 *nec opis mora longa dabatur*, "though there was scant time to give him my help"). Shortly thereafter, the audience urges Hippomenes not to delay, as he is on the brink of victory (10.659 *pelle moram: vinctes!*, "don't wait: you'll win!"). During the race, Atalanta herself intentionally delays (10.661 *o quotiens ... morata est*, "o how often ... she lingered") and reluctantly leaves Hippomenes' beloved figure behind. The use of the passive form "morata est" implies the existence of an agent, in this case, the image of Hippomenes, which Atalanta is unwilling to lose sight of, thus causing her delay (Salzman-Mitchell 2005, 88). She accelerates to catch up and diminish the distance created by her pause at the first apple (10.669-670 *illa moram celeri cessataque tempora cursu / corrigit*, "she made up for the delay and the lost time by a burst of speed"), leaving Hippomenes behind. The same scenario repeats after the second apple (10.671-672 *et rursus pomi iactu remorata secundi / consequitur transitque virum*, "again she delayed when a second apple was thrown, followed, and passed the man"). Atalanta's course oscillates between rapid motion and stoppage until her final immobility, due to the increased weight of the third apple and Atalanta's delay (10.678 *gravitate moraque*, "the heaviness of the burden and the delay").<sup>35</sup> The result is Hippomenes' victory, as he claims his valuable prize (10.680 *duxit sua praemia victor*, "the winner led

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34 For the pun between the words *mora* and *amor* and their erotic connotations especially in Roman elegy see Pucci 1978, 52-54, fn. 1 & 3.

35 For the association between the words *gravitas* / *gravis* / *gravo* and pregnancy cf. Ov. *Met.* 9.287 *tendebat gravitas uterum mihi*, "the weight of the child stretched my womb", 10.495 *iamque gravem crescens uterum perstrinxerat arbor*, "now she could scarcely bear the weight of her womb"; Ov. *Her.* 6.61 *quod tamen e nobis gravida celatur in alvo*, "but that of mine that's hidden in your pregnant womb", 7.133 *gravidam Dido*, "pregnant Dido", 11.38 *aegraque furtivum membra gravabat onus*, "and the secret load weighed on my weak limbs", 16.44 *iam gravidus iusto pondere venter erat*, "by now her belly was swollen with my full weight". See also OLD s.v. *gravis* 2b.

away his prize"). Atalanta's objectification is complete; due to her continuous stops, she loses the race and is transformed into a prize, while the use of the verb "duxit", echoing the phrase used for a wedding ceremony ("uxorem ducere"), suggests that the girl is now prepared to be led into conjugal life (Salzman-Mitchell 2005, 88).<sup>36</sup>

Thus, the race is a blend of erotic pursuit and sport, wherein Atalanta and Hippomenes alternatively assume the roles of hunter and prey, reflecting the gender confusion previously mentioned. When Atalanta leads, she is portrayed as prey, and the race, an aspect of the erotic pursuit, symbolizes the transition of an unmarried girl into adulthood and mature sexuality. Conversely, when Atalanta falls behind, she appears as a hunter tracking Hippomenes' trail, placing her in the position of a boy undergoing a rite of passage, in this case, a hunt.<sup>37</sup>

Atalanta's speed and the vigor of the two competitors are underscored by respective similes. Ovid describes Atalanta and Hippomenes as flying over the sea or through wheat fields as they race (10.654-655 *posse putes illos sicco freta radere passu / et segetis canae stantes percurrere aristas*, "You would think them capable of running along the waves without wetting them, and passing over the ripened heads of the standing corn").<sup>38</sup> Atalanta appears to fly (10.587 *passu volat alite virgo*, "the virgin girl sped by on winged feet") and is likened to a Scythian arrow (10.588-589 *quamquam Scythica non setius ire sagitta / Aonio visa est iuveni*, "To the Aonian youth she flew like a Scythian arrow"). Scythian archers

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36 About the use of the phrase *uxorem ducere* see Hersch 2010, 141-144.

37 See also Sourvinou Inwood 1987, 137; Barringer 1996, 73. Races and dances, like Arkteia during Brauronia in honor of Artemis and Heraean games to praise Hera, were part of premarital ceremonies, especially for girls, and they marked the transition of a virgin to an adult woman, a process which was completed at marriage.

38 Cf. Verg. *Aen.* 7.808-811, where Camilla's speed in battle is compared to a flight over fields and sea. For similarities between the Ovidian Atalanta and Vergil's Camilla see Ziogas 2013, 169-174.

are often cited in Roman literature as exemplars of martial virtue, supported by their wild nomadic lifestyle.<sup>39</sup> The reference to Atalanta's "Scythian" nature, similar to that of an Amazon, from the perspective of the "civilized" Aonian youth, once again evokes Atalanta's virile and rugged character. The use of the passive form "visa est" in the first simile reinforces Atalanta's presence as an image, placing not only Hippomenes but also the external reader in the role of spectator. This impression is heightened by the use of the second person (10.654 *putes*) in the second simile, where the poet encourages the external reader to follow the contest with the eyes of the internal audience and to be swept away by the collective sentiment of the competition.<sup>40</sup>

After their union and due to Hippomenes' disrespectful attitude towards Venus, the couple is punished by the goddess, who instills uncontrollable passion in Hippomenes. The desecration of Cybele's sanctuary will lead to their transformation into lions. Although there is no description of the sexual act, the impiety and the violation of the sacred space are conveyed to the reader/viewer through the eyes of the wooden statues of the gods turning away (10.696 *sacra retors'erunt oculos*, "the sacred images averted their gaze"). Immediately after, we hear Cybele's inner monologue as she decides the fate of the two lovers. The passive form "visa est" (10.699 *poena levis visa est*, "but the punishment seemed too light") submits both the goddess' thoughts on the severity of the punishment and the fact that the goddess herself, along with the external viewer, witnesses the execution of the punishment. Hippomenes'

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39 Cf. Hor. *Od.* 3.8.23-24 *iam Scythae laxo meditantur arcu / cedere campis*, "and now the Scythians, their bows unstrung, plan to give up their plains". Atalanta is an archer herself.

40 On the use of the second person see Anderson 1972; Laird 1996, 80; Feldherr 2010, 260. At the beginning of the narration (*Ov. Met.* 10.575-577), Hippomenes is one of the audience and he comments on the failure of Atalanta's suitors in relation to the value of the prize. The external spectator sometimes identifies with Hippomenes and sometimes with the internal audience. For this shifting tension between the looks see Mulvey 1975, 11-12.



sexual brutalization is the cause of their transformation, victimizing Atalanta. At the culmination of the erotic pursuit, the object of Hippomenes' desire undergoes a transformation, existing only as an illusion in the lover's imagination. Once again, the narrative "focus" moves over the bodies of both lovers as they transform into lions (10.698-704). The neck, fingers, shoulders, chest, and face are gradually isolated and acquire animalistic characteristics until the final transformation, defined by the loss of speech. Their transformation demonstrates that love, and consequently the lover's gaze, has no power outside the human sphere, as, according to Venus, neither youth nor a beautiful face moves beasts (10.547-549). The reference to the beasts' indifferent eyes (10.549 *oculosque*) deconstructs the motif of love at first sight and the subsequent domination that the lover exerts on the object of desire.

Hippomenes' endeavor to stop Atalanta's flight temporarily alters her nature, illustrating the transient power of the gaze. As the gods do not allow the lions to mate, Atalanta (and Hippomenes) is condemned to an asexual life.<sup>41</sup> As noted by Forbes Irving (1990, 75-76), Atalanta's desire to remain unmarried is overturned at the last moment, as the young maiden does not submit to the bonds of marriage but is harnessed as a lioness to Cybele's chariot. Atalanta, on the other hand, through her transformation, is freed from the romantic bond with Hippomenes and although her outward appearance changes, her transformation into a lioness allows her to return to her original androgynous nature, wild and untamed (10.573 *illa quidem inmitis*). According to Ziogas (2013, 161), Atalanta begins as a wild maiden, then becomes a domesticated spouse, and transitions from a sexually active individual to a genderless lion, echoing her original androgynous state.

In conclusion, Ovid's portrayal of Atalanta in his *Metamorphoses* highlights the interplay of gaze, movement, and gender, as theorized by Laura Mulvey. Atalanta is depicted as an ambiguous figure embodying both masculine and feminine traits, gradually

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41 For lions as sexless creatures, see Hyginus, *Fabulae* 185; *Mythographi Vaticani* 1.39; Servius *ad Aen.* 3.113. See also Forbes Irving 1990, 67.

becoming the object of the male gaze. The artificial presentation of Atalanta serves more as a projection of the viewer's erotic desires and fantasies, both internal and external, visualizing a sexuality less associated with pleasure and more with dominance over women, who are reduced to mere bodies. Through her similarity to works of art, Atalanta is transformed into an object of scopophilic description; the static portrayal of her body freezes the narrative and selectively emphasizes specific parts of her body, resembling cinematic freeze frames that arouse the erotic interest of both internal and external observers. The ongoing interaction between Atalanta's swift movement and the voyeuristic desires of her suitor underscores the power dynamics inherent in visual representation. The tale of Atalanta and Hippomenes challenges conventional gender roles prescribed by movement: the man assumes the role of the hunter and the woman that of the prey in an allegory of the erotic pursuit. Atalanta must persist in her movement to maintain her purity, while Hippomenes aims to impede her progress and ultimately render her immobile for his own use. As Atalanta confronts the pursuit of her suitors, her resistance to marriage and societal norms is continually interrogated by the male gaze, culminating in her transformation into a lioness, symbolically reclaiming her untamed nature.

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