Orpheus slumps over his lyre, his left hand clasping the instrument's upper curve. The lyre seems to be used to anchor the body that sprawls across his lap, its limbs falling limply to either side. The specifics of how many bodies are being shown and to whom they belong are not immediately evident here, for Pablo Picasso's lines do not allow us to parse the figure(s) easily. This drawing, executed on September 1, 1930, is known as The Death of Orpheus. The study was Picasso's initial experimentation with imagery for Albert Skira's 1931 French translation of Ovid's Metamorphoses, to which the artist contributed fifteen full-page etchings and fifteen half-plates to use as frontispieces for each of the books of Ovid's epic.

The Roman poet Ovid published the Metamorphoses in Latin in 8 CE; his text, which escapes traditional genre designations, retold more than two hundred and fifty Greco-Roman myths, stretching from the creation of the world through the deification of Julius Caesar in 42 BCE, a year after Ovid's birth. Through his focus on changing forms and bodies, on the process of becoming (often through violent means), Ovid thematizes the very acts of rewriting and reworking. Surely Ovid's authorial control and revision of a vast array of familiar Greco-Roman stories appealed to Picasso, who practiced a similar selective canonical absorption and modification in his own work. Just as Ovid's text influenced and inspired later writers such as Dante Alighieri, William Shakespeare, Geoffrey Chaucer, and Giovanni Boccaccio, so too did many visual artists, including Sandro Botticelli, Nicolas Poussin, Peter Paul Rubens, and Odilon Redon, take up specific Ovidian tales in painting, sculpture, and graphic work. Picasso's choice of Ovid's text for his venture with Skira thus participates in a long-standing literary and visual tradition. For both Ovid and Picasso the appeal of tradition lay in remaking it.

With the exception of an unpublished illustration of Actaeon becoming a boar, Picasso avoided depicting an actual metamorphosis. Instead, he used linear style to show bodily interaction and exchange, the movements of bodies into one another. Many of Picasso's preliminary drawings for the Metamorphoses work through ideas that had long engaged him in his academic training, in his attention to the inherent fragmentation of the body through Cubism, and in the pressure he places on what a classical body can be in large paintings from the early 1920s. During this time, Picasso's large-scale work engaged directly with classicism, while in the later part of the decade his large-scale painting did not quote classical art explicitly. If
sculpted integrity. Just as Picasso’s women evoke ancient Greek korai, so do these young men recall ancient Greek kouroi (youths), archaic Greek dedications that play between individuation and type. Both Three Women at the Spring and The Pipes of Pan present the illusion of individual bodily integrity, of presence in a world con-structed with and in relation to other bodies.

Not only did Picasso edit his own preliminary sketches for Metamorphoses to settle on a very clear, curvilinear style that pins all thirty drawings, but he also carefully selected which Ovidian tales to illustrate, reworking the style in which he responded to them. His selection is as important for which stories he leaves out (such as Proteus, Pygmalion, Narcissus, and the Minotaur) but which, I would argue, he picks up in other contexts. Some of what Picasso excluded from his tightly edited 1931 edition of Ovid’s Metamorphoses finds expression in both the Vollard Suite and Guernica.

In earlier editions of the Metamorphoses, artists matched sequential, didactic illustrations to Ovid’s narrative, which often includes several connected myths in each book. Picasso, in contrast, presents a synchonic image of an event from a single myth per book. The collected images still present a continuous narrative, but Picasso’s tight edit- ing gives his selection much more visual power. In the only instance of repetition within the series, he devotes two of his fifteen full plates to different components of the story of Orpheus and Eurydice (Eurydice Bitten by a Serpent and Death of Orpheus). He also includes half-sized, non-narrar-ive frontispiece images of faces and fragments of bodies; he executes these in the same clean lines as the larger illustrations, unifying his style across all thirty final images. These half-plates of faces and fragments of bodies offer up witnesses to Ovid’s account within each book. Picasso depicts both selected moments in the narrative, and fragments of an audience. In this way, Picasso departs from the didacticism of his predecessors in favor of direct-ing a collective theatricality.

ORPHEUS

Picasso began his experiments with Ovid and Orpheus with the study from September 1, 1930, and in the following three weeks he went on to produce at least two other studies, specifically of the Death of Orpheus, among his many preliminary drawings for the full series. Depictions of the myth of Orpheus appear as early

To NORN BODIES FOR PLEASURE

The classical tradition up to this time had emphasized wholeness, even as fragments, Picasso played with this ideal of wholeness in paint, often flattening or compressing parts of even his most sculptural bodies. However, he remained engaged throughout the 1920s with inquiries toward which he directed the classical in the period of 1922-23. What he moved away from over the decade and returned to again at its close is the deployment of imagery that bears a formal relationship to a classical poetics of the body. Of the many interwar paintings executed in this large, lumbering sculptural style, I present two as typical: Three Women at the Spring and The Pipes of Pan.

Picasso executed at least twenty full studies for Three Women at the Spring, not counting the many related draw-ings and paintings preceding it and studies of individual body parts, in particular of hands. The women’s loosely modeled masses define the space taken up by their bodies. The rocks and the small water jug place these women in an undefined, somewhat pastoral setting. Each woman is an iteration of her companions in the manner of ancient Greek korai, or maidens. The thick, vertical drapery of their garments evokes the solid fluting of Doric columns as well as the folds of the ancient Greek peplos (outer garment). These women are not the sensuous female Aphrodites, the smooth bathing nudes that populate paint-ings by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, nor are they like the three nymphs traced out by delicate lines as shown, for example, in Picasso’s Sculp tor with a Sculpted Group (Homage to Carpeaux) (1934) from the Vollard Suite (1930–33). The women at the fountain are decidedly not graces. Picasso depicts the restrained chignons of the figures in Three Women at the Spring as though they are carved, Dark, almost vacant eyes look out from sculptural faces, recalling Picasso’s 1916 por-trait of Gertrude Stein, as well as the empty gazes of innumerable Greco-Roman sculptures. Picasso depicts the semblance of sculpture, of the completed presence of the figure in the round that characterizes the plastic body, yet in certain passages he collapses the three-dimensionality of his figures. In the lower right-hand corner, for example, he dips paint from the woman’s feet, flaunting the medium from which she emerged. Shading at the women’s necks suggests Picasso’s choice, in the later 1920s, to sever bust or face from body, both the cleaving and its reconstitution. Their bodies, however, remain solidly bounded.

In The Pipes of Pan (p. 116), Picasso’s youths have the same angular faces as his maidens. They share their heavy-footed weight, but Picasso flattens the youths’ plastic presence. The passage of dripping paint at the foot of Three Woman that marked their medium becomes the flattened volumes of the pipes, parts of the figures’ chests, and the relationship of their legs to architecture. The painted body begins to lose its


5. Although brows and bone structure types, individuation was a significant aspect of their value. As the representative of the dedicator, the young sculptor was not far removed from the god. Thus the image of the kinsman in fragments of the statue was more acceptable to the cult father. See Renée Freytag, Die Ereignisse von Eutresis und die Statue des Hermes (Zürich: Verlag der Eidgenössischen Schatzkasse, 1988).

6. Michelangelo, David (first plate). September 1, 1930, and in the following three weeks he went on to produce at least two other studies, specifically of the Death of Orpheus, among his many preliminary drawings for the full series. Depictions of the myth of Orpheus appear as early
as the fifth century BCE, such as on an ancient Attic red-figure calyx krater now in the collection of the Getty Villa: the painter has depicted a scene of maenads attacking Orpheus on one side (p. 201), while the other side shows a more generalized Dionysiac scene. Orpheus, whose story is recounted in Books 10 and 11 of the Metamorphoses, was the child of Apollo and Calliope, the Greek muse of epic poetry. Ovid falls in love with Eurydice, who is bitten by a serpent on their wedding day and killed. Orpheus follows Eurydice into the underworld to negotiate with Hades, who, swayed by Orpheus’s musical lament, agrees to return Eurydice to the living world, on the condition that Orpheus not look back at Eurydice as she follows him out of the underworld. Of course, just before they would have emerged, Orpheus indeed looks back, and Eurydice is lost to the underworld forever. Orpheus mourns Eurydice and his music arrests the natural world surrounding him until a group of Thracian maenads in a Bacchic frenzy slaughter him with staves, branches, thorns (Dionysian staffs), and their bare hands. Orpheus’s lyre and severed head float down the river Hebrus: “the plaintive lyre makes some kind of moan, the lifeless tongue moans along with it, the moaning riverbanks respond in turn.”

Picasso avoids depicting Ovid’s triumphant ekphrasis (vivid description) of Orpheus’s lyre and postmortem tongue continuing their love lament. In the sketch Picasso made on September 1 (p. 163), the passage at the center, identifiable only by Orpheus’s lyre, seems to show Orpheus grasping at a falling body. His lyre and head are joined in such a manner that the lyre seems to cover part of his face and mouth. The falling body in the central passage could be his own, or possibly Eurydice’s, whose fall proceeds and precipitates Orpheus’s own death in Ovid’s narrative. In the published version (p. 201), the falling body has definitely become Orpheus’s, but in the study (p. 163) Picasso appears to be exploring the relationship of one death to the other. Picasso’s rendering is ambiguous regarding the boundaries between bodies and body parts, a practice that he repeats in other drawings and etchings, as well as in other media. In the upper right corner, Picasso reprises this coterminous figure of head, lyre, and body, using less shading and even more weight to depict the falling limbs. The figures remain difficult to parse, but just below the pair, Picasso depicts again the twisting, falling body, as though describing the path of its fall. Orpheus has lost his grip. The figure’s slack arm merges with the raised arm of the personified wind blowing in from the right. Hatched shading highlights her profile and attack. Her right hand wields a raised blade, moving straight toward the central figure of Orpheus. She is at once a maddened maenad and the wind that scatters Orpheus’s limbs and carries his lyre and head, still lamenting, down the river. Limbs and torsos fill the upper left section of the study, conveying action but not its narrative particulars. One hand grips a bow that points upward. The lowing bulls, one in the lower left foreground and the other in the upper right background, set the pastoral, Orphic setting and hint at formal qualities that Picasso would later bring to Guernica.
Orpheus’s backward-arching fall. Her left leg bends at the knee and her right leg rises straight up from where her foot touches Orpheus’s bent right leg. She rises as he falls, directed by her gaze.

Eurydice’s death is similarly serene. She has fallen, and the torqued lines of her body from right leg through hips and spine suggest motion, even as she appears to rest in the arms of one of her attendants. Her garment spreads out beneath her. Three women attend her as a fourth turns away at far left. One woman gazes at Eurydice as she lifts her by her armpit, while behind her another figure moves forward, simultaneously a former iteration of the kneeling woman and a separate figure. The central woman kisses and clasps Eurydice’s right foot, where the snake bit. A fourth woman, wearing a peplos, faces away; she might be an iteration of Eurydice several moments earlier, running before the fatal snake bite. Eurydice, dead or dying, looks toward the snake on the ground. Picasso reduced the snake itself to comic proportions, a mere squiggle beneath Eurydice’s forearm and dying gaze.

Picasso maintains a light, streamlined style in depicting Eurydice’s violent death, just as he does with her lover’s. He avoids showing the actual attacks, scenes of the underworld, or Orpheus’s fatal look back. Picasso never competes with Ovid’s ekphrasis, but his dissolution of bounded, individuated bodies, to which he gestured in his paintings of the early 1920s, responds to the death and dismemberment in Ovid’s stories. In the Metamorphoses, Orpheus dies at the hands of Thracian women, Eurydice from a serpent bite, Semele from Zeus’s thunderbolt.21 Proteus changes rapidly—from lion to tree to water, and finally to flame.22 Phaeon, intoxicated by the hubris of youth, tries to command his father’s chariot, scorches the earth, and Zeus smites him dead.23 Change is violent; love is violent; history is violent; humanity is violent. Picasso depicts it all with exquisite line. This duality of formal restraint and internal violence constitutes one of Picasso’s commentaries on classicism itself. For Ovid the soul remains intact through each subsequent change in form; Picasso, in contrast, shows us the myth of a body’s solidity, of its bounded individuation.
CLASSICISM AND REVOLUTION

JENNIFER STAGER

Picasso executed the series of one hundred prints known as the Vollard Suite over the decade of the 1930s, deploying a range of techniques and depicting a range of subjects (including his studio, the Minotaur, faces and modern scenes, and studio scenes), and yet a clear connection between prints continues to evade summary analysis. Ambroise Vollard, Picasso's dealer from 1901 until Vollard's death in 1939, commissioned the series in 1930. Unlike much of Picasso's graphic work of the late 1920s and early 1930s, such as his illustrations for Antiphonistes (see Chapter 4) and Ur-eine (see Chapter 6), the Vollard Suite was not structured around a specific text. While diverse in technique and subject matter, the series of images that comprise the suite share a consistent intertexture of forms and subjects from the antique past in modern contexts. Sculptor Reclining before Nude (p. 207), from the loose subset of images of studio scenes within the Vollard Suite, is paradigmatic: the scene depicts a classicizing sculpture that melts, but does not melt entirely. The Aphrodite of Knidos, especially the first female nude sculpture in ancient Greek art, as well as the slightly later culminating Aphrodite, also naked (p. 208), a base attests that the naked figure is a statue, although she is in the act of drying her right arm with a towel and her face turns towards the viewer over her right shoulder. A boarded up rear reclines naked on a bed or couch in the version of a woman whose head is visible in profile, suggesting a bed, but for her hands dangling the rear. The scenes, indeed all of the Vollard Suite, play with the Pygmalion-epos boundary between art and life. Another etching, Heads of Characters and Real Woman (fig. 1) transfers the fluidity of the boundary in the suite by situating the scene within the world of the theatre. Those naked figures approximate the sculpted body on a pedestal. Each scene has a different mood—a bearded male, a Minotaur with a crown, and a woman holding up a male nude to her face. The Dionysian world of the theater in ancient Greece was foremost a space of religious, political, and civic expression. There is a political to Picasso's classical theater here as well: a contemporary (but independent) etching offers a key.

In 1931, Picasso produced a monochrome graphic work, The Dream and Lie of Franco I (p. 206), against the fascist regime of Francisco Franco in Spain. Nine graphic novel-style panels, arranged in three rows of three, comprise each of the prints. The first print depicts Franco in a suit panel, marching through various acts of destruction while mounted on a horse. In the third scene, upper left of the plates, Franco attacks with a pickaxe a classical (or classicizing) bust that looks like one of Picasso's etchings from the Vollard Suite. Given the transnational hold of the classical Grotesque and Renaissance on the history of Western art and the association of classical statuary with a kind of conservative, elite culture in the modern West, a classical bust might seem a strange subject for a fascist to attack. Indeed, wherever in Europe, Hitler and Mussolini provide the classical bust for their own use. It is, for example, that very moment of art produced under the short-lived Athenian democracy that Leni Riefenstahl coupled for Hitler in his film Olympia (1936). In the way classical culture became a tool of conservation governments and social groups, Picasso, in contrast, sought out the multifaceted and ambiguous aspects of statuary and drew them into his own modernism. Franco's use of classical art could be taken for face value, as an iconic act of a dictator's classicalism, however, it is rarely so straightforward. Under Franco's rule a classicism itself, which Picasso is always already multifaceted and fragmented. In the Vollard Suite Picasso repeatedly departs the ideal Monument in the vein from September 16, 1934, p. 50, of the same of the ideal Monument is contiguous with another core, a variation on its July as a lesser sketch for The Death of Medea. The sketch is a chronicle of Jacques-Louis David's painting of the murdered French revolutionary. Picasso executes this image within an image as a distinctly sparse and linear style, abandoning the carving lines of his classicizing figures. Here within those repeated depictions of ancient players and forms, Picasso reimagines a modern revolution. In the way Picasso's Vollard Suite departs the potential for revolution within even the most classical of forms.

While Ovid offers extreme details of the story's violence, like Philomela's severed tongue writhing on the ground and still struggling to call for her father, Picasso depicts in synchronic narrative the repeated rapes and the dissolution of the body that these rapes engender. In his four versions, Picasso works through the violent story to settle on a version in which the dissolution of the boundary between Philomela's and Tereus's bodies conveys its violence. In the September 18 study (p. 169), he depicts Tereus and Philomela as separate and defined bodies at rest. Only the disfiguring dagger at Tereus's hip registers any aspect of Ovid's narrative. In his three other versions, Picasso discards the direct reference of the dagger to specific tortures, focusing instead on the more generalized penetration of one body by another. Picasso's published etching (p. 200) depicts Tereus moving into a resistant Philomela, although the ambiguity or at least restraint of her resistance sets Picasso's drawing of the council woman apart from Ovid's narrative. Tereus's hands clasp and Philomela as separate and defined bodies at rest. Only the disfiguring dagger at Tereus's hip registers any aspect of Ovid's narrative. In his three other versions, Picasso discards the direct reference of the dagger to specific tortures, focusing instead on the more generalized penetration of one body by another. Picasso's published etching (p. 200) depicts Tereus moving into a resistant Philomela, although the ambiguity or at least restraint of her resistance sets Picasso's drawing of the council woman apart from Ovid's narrative. Tereus's hands clasp and Philomela as separate and defined bodies at rest. Only the disfiguring dagger at Tereus's hip registers any aspect of Ovid's narrative. In his three other versions, Picasso discards the direct reference of the dagger to specific tortures, focusing instead on the more generalized penetration of one body by another.

Philomela survives and weaves the events into a typography that she sends to her sister. In revenge, the sisters kill Tereus, Tereus and Procne's son, and serve his flesh to Tereus at a banquet. After the king has eaten his son's flesh, Philomela emerges with the head of Tereus on a platter. The acute violence of Philomela's story is nominally mitigated by her final transformation into a nightingale. It was no doubt significant for Picasso that Philomela's story emerge as something of an on- urine (or primal being) for modern poetry. The tale reappears most famously in Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus and T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land.

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Picasso’s third study most fully articulates the breadth of his engagement with Philemon’s rape. He composed the scene within a central rectangular frame but filled the border with sketches (p. 169 right).31 While the border images are themselves studies in some respects, they contribute to the image’s overall sense of repeated movement. This study also articulates a relationship between Picasso’s graphic works of 1931–32 and what he put to the test of large-scale painting in 1931–32. In the study’s central panel, Picasso depicts Tereus’s bulky frame pressing down on the resistant Philemon, who shows at her attacker with her left leg. Tereus restrains her arms, pushing her to the ground. Hash marks radiate from Tereus’s grip on Philemon’s left arm, a feature that is not retained in the other studies. The marks add a somewhat comic urgency that counters the gravity of the violation under way. Philemon’s spreading body—her navel floating to the left, Picasso’s trademark composite rear-frontal view, her impossibly rotated left leg—attests to her effortful struggle. She averts her face from both Tereus’s and the viewer’s gaze. Philemon’s turned-away face obscures the chronology of events: are we seeing the rape before or after Tereus has cut out her tongue? This chronological ambiguity registers rape’s repetition, its iterative impact.

Picasso figures the repeated rape in the multiple faces around the border. At the bottom of the frame, he displays a shaded, volumetric style that is entirely different from the linearity of the central frame and the rest of the border. A lush nude figure redines at left. She lies on her right side, right leg drawn up beneath her and head propped in her right hand. Her round breasts press forward, framed by her left arm, which drapes along the curves of her torso. Her hands and feet in the central frame are much less complete, their digits unfinished or open-ended. Above the hands, Tereus’s beard profile, with great attention paid to the lines and contours of both hands. By contrast, the hands and feet in the central frame are much less complete, their digits unfinished or open-ended. Above the hands, Tereus’s beard profile, with great attention paid to the lines and contours of both hands. In his paintings of the early 1920s, Picasso explored light subjects—bodies by the sea, boys piping, couples on the beach—with a weighted, sculptural style, and only hinted at the illusion of a body’s bounded integrity. In 1930, he brought the simplicity of line to bear on debasement. The lack of enclosure of Philemon’s body articulates an idea that is similar to the one implied by the paint dripping from the foot of the woman at the right in Three Women at the Sea: the impossibility of individuation, of a body’s bounded independence. The solid, substantial bodies of the the early 1920s reappear a decade later as the merging of modular body parts at the beach, entwined and indistinguishable, as in Figures by the Sea. The figure(s) here work their semblance of boundedness and individuation, a semblance that is only partially performed. In Figures by the Sea, as in Picasso’s Metamorphoses illustrations—especially those of Tereus and Philemon—it is impossible to isolate one body from another or to assemble the parts into a unified whole. The truth of the plastic body’s nonindividuation appears before the viewer, made (barely) tolerable by paint. Picasso has captured these forms, sculpted out of the sand on which they rest, in their full, illusory presence, but at a moment whose imminent dissolution is figured in our inability to articulate individual bodies. If Picasso’s paintings of the early 1920s hint at bodily replication, Figures by the Sea pictures that replication in terms of exchange or interchange between bodies, an interchange that occurs at the expense of individuation. Metamorphosis demands the breakdown of illusory bodily integrity.32 While this painting bears no obvious formal relationship to classical imagery, it engages the same questions of the body’s coherence and validity. From Three Women at the Spring to Figures by the Sea, Picasso’s engagement with the body and the ancient Mediterranean develops over the course of a decade.
Two images in the sleep sequence painted January 22 and 23, 1932, display the all-at-once-ness toward which Picasso had been working. On January 22, he painted Rest. But this is hardly the body at rest. We recognize the wild profile with its electric hair and its displaced carnivorous mouth between two vertical eyes, somehow replicated in a gaping scream emanating from the profile. This head meets its body seamlessly; body and face form a monstrous, unified whole.

Vivid color—bright reds, yellows, greens, and blues—advertises the figure’s madness, juxtaposed against jaunty parlor wallpaper. Here is the creature that stoned Orpheus. The next day, with Sleep, Picasso returns to the comfort of apparent legibility: clear lines, soft color, a calm moon-face, rounded breasts and belly, the closed hairless lips of prepubescent genitals. We can almost hear a light snore. In his selections for the Metamorphoses, Picasso deliberately depicted the most shattering of narratives with exquisite line. By the same token, Picasso painted Sleep one day after Rest not to sublimate the terrible with the beautiful but to declare the two as one, existing in a state of unending and simultaneous metamorphosis in which beauty and monstrosity inhabit the same form.

Many thanks to Diana Magaloni and Michael Govan for inviting me to participate in this exhibition in such good company, to the indefatigable Lilly Casillas for her incredible research skills, to Sara Cody for her deft editing, to Camille Mathieu for sharing her knowledge of early archaeology, art history, and modernism so generously, and to Jeremy Melius, Shahrzade Ehya, and Tim Clark for the opportunity to begin thinking through Picasso and Ovid in their company early in my time at Berkeley. All errors remain my own.


The border of Picasso’s third study for the Rape of Philomela allows us to understand the sleepers who make up the majority of his large-scale paintings between 1931 and 1932 within the context of his particular engagement with Ovid. The series of sleeping women makes this connection to his Ovidian figures rather obviously by depicting a sleeping body that seems to be both human and composed of ripe fruit. With this sleep sequence, Picasso approaches the process of bodily change that he distinctly avoided in his illustrations of the Metamorphoses, precisely because his version of metamorphosis differs from Ovid’s. In an Ovidian version of the scene, the woman would become a cornucopia with womanly desires, her soul intact within her transformed body; in Picasso’s depiction, she is both woman and fruit. In his Girl with Guitar (January 10, 1932) the paneling of the Figure sequence from the late 1920s is recognizable. The paneling gives way to the back of her chair, disjointed by the head in profile. The familiar white shape highlights the girl’s head and its separation from her body. Picasso takes pains to suture this head to its body, to depict the imperfect process of melding a face and figure. He has smoothed the face’s electric strands of hair and given it the elegant lines of his illustrations for Ovid. Her breast is both apple and fern, her belly the guitar that in an earlier incarnation stands in some relation to the face (compare with the September study for The Death of Orpheus). Her limbs merge with the chair in which she sleeps.

In Reading, painted the previous day (January 9, 1932), Picasso grafts the figure’s head more securely to her body, its sutures smoothed. If the Ovidian prints concerned themselves with the interpenetration of multiple bodies, or with the openness of one body to another as the sign of its fiction, the sleep sequence, which Picasso worked out in the context of illustrating Ovid, explores the reconstitution of face and body from constituent organic parts, and the penetration of a body by its own constituent parts. Guitar, fern, and face create a woman.