

PYGMALION

Metamorphoses X.238–97

From the beginning of time it would seem, at least from the male perspective, man has quested for, and even sought to create, the perfect woman. Robotics produced *The Stepford Wives*, Frankenstein stitched together a bride for his monster, and Professor Henry Higgins fashioned his “fair lady” from the raggedy flower girl, Liza Doolittle, in Lerner and Loewe’s delightful musical, an adaptation from George Bernard Shaw’s *Pygmalion*. But Ovid, Shaw’s own ultimate inspiration and our principal ancient literary source for the tale, has provided us with a far more miraculous transformation. Offended by the profligacy of the daughters of Propoetus (who, for their impiety, were transformed by Venus into prostitutes and then hardened into stone), the Cypriote sculptor Pygmalion withdrew from all contact with women, living the life of a celibate and dedicating himself wholly to his art. Eventually he sculpted an ivory statue of a maiden more beautiful than any ever born, and then promptly fell in love with his own creation. The central panel of Ovid’s narrative focuses in detail on the artist’s elegiac (and to some extent ritualistic) courtship of his ivory maiden and then, when the festival of Venus had arrived, on his prayer to the goddess that his own wife might be, if not the statue itself, then at least a woman in her likeness. In return for his piety, Venus grants Pygmalion’s wish, reversing both the process by which she had transformed the impious Propoetides and the usual (human to sub-human) direction of metamorphosis in Ovid’s poem: as the sculptor kisses his “Sleeping Beauty,” her skin grows warm and soft, her veins begin to pulse, a blush comes to her face (unlike the bloodless, shameless Propoetides), and she raises up her eyes to glimpse at once the light of heaven and her lover’s gaze. Despite the unnatural inception of their affair, and under the benign guidance of Venus, the two are wed and soon have a daughter, Paphos, who (in an etiological aspect of the myth) gave her name to a city of Cyprus famous for its cult of the goddess.

It is little wonder that a story with these fairy-tale qualities, so sensuous and sentimental, and so focused on artistic creation, should have inspired, not only the talents of George Bernard Shaw, and Lerner and Loewe, but such artists (among many, many others) as Falconet, Rodin, and Gerome, whose own creations are pictured in the pages that follow. “Fellow-artists,” one ought to say—for it was very much Ovid’s point that we should see Pygmalion, not merely as a man, but as a creative genius. In this role, Pygmalion shares certain qualities with Orpheus, which the reader is invited to explore, even as his ivory maiden has much in common with Ovid’s Eurydice. To note only an obvious point or two, both men attempt to use their artistic talents to control their

women: the one fails, despite the magical charm of his music, to restore his spouse to life; the other succeeds, through piety and the power of art, in bringing his ideal woman to life. The wives themselves are one-dimensional, manipulated: Eurydice's role is but to die, and die again, uttering only an uncomplaining "farewell"; the ivory maiden, who speaks not even a single word and has no name (though in postclassical adaptations she is called Galatea), is shaped, and handled, and, when brought to life, gazes heavenward at her creator as at a god.

With these points in mind, along with the condemning attitudes about the virtue and beauty of "real" women that are expressed early in the narrative, some readers view Pygmalion in a negative light, as an eccentric misogynist and a manipulator. But the story's misogyny is perhaps better attributed to the persona of its narrator, Orpheus himself, who in mourning the death of Eurydice has gone on to reject all other women and is here singing (hence the quotation marks enclosing the text below) one of a series of ballads protesting their vile and illicit loves. Pygmalion's religious devotion to Venus is remarkable, as can be seen from her extraordinary intervention on his behalf, and, in the intensity of his reverence for his beloved, he is certainly nearer to Pyramus than to Ovid's Apollo or even to Orpheus: in the end, it may be that the poet expects us to fault Pygmalion for nothing more than the extremity of his idealism.

In his role as artist in fact, and in particular as an artist of the erotic, Pygmalion has much in common with Ovid himself. Both the poet and Pygmalion (who is at once a creator and the poet's own creation) revere love, and beauty, and the illusion of reality. It has been observed that Ovid's comment on the realism of Pygmalion's statue—*ars adeo latet arte sua* ("so utterly was his artifice concealed by his art")—might well serve as a prime tenet of the poet's own philosophy of art.



"Pygmalion and Galatea"
Auguste Rodin, 1889
Metropolitan Museum of Art
New York

- 238 **Sunt . . . ausae:** the opening line is neatly symmetrical, with **Venerem** at the axis, surrounded by **obscēnae . . . Prōpoetides**, and verbals framing the whole; the sentence's prose order would be **Tamen Prōpoetides obscēnae ausae sunt negāre Venerem esse deam**.
- tamen:** i.e., ignoring the fate of their compatriots, the Cerastae, whom Venus had transformed into bulls for butchering their guests—a story told by Ovid in the preceding passage.
- obscēnus, -a, -um, ill-omened; filthy, loathsome; lewd.**
- obscēnae . . . ausae:** Ovid likes to arrange pairs of end-rhyming and grammatically connected words such as these two by setting one at the caesura, with the last syllable under the ictus, and the other at line's end; the effect is to accentuate both the connection and the assonance (cf. I.460 above).
- Prōpoetides, Prōpoetidum, f. pl., the Propoetides** (daughters of Propoetus of Cyprus, who were, according to this legend, the first prostitutes).
- 239 **prō quō:** i.e., *for this offense*.
- sua . . . / corpora cum fōrmā** (240): a kind of hendiadys; we would say simply *their beautiful bodies*.
- īrā:** abl. of cause.
- 240 **prīmae . . . feruntur:** sc. *esse, they are said to be the first*.
- vulgō, -āre, -āvī, -ātus, to make available to the masses; to prostitute** (**vulgāsse = vulgāvisse**).
- 241 ***pudor, pudōris, m., sense of shame; decency, chastity.**
- sanquisque indūruit ōris:** Ovid imaginatively blends the physiological with the psychological—when we are ashamed, blood rushes to our faces and we blush, but when we cease to feel shame and to blush, it is because the blood has hardened in our veins.
- indūrēscō, indūrēscere, indūruī, to grow hard, harden, set.**
- 242 **rigidus, -a, -um, rigid, stiff; unyielding.**
- parvō . . . discrīmine:** *with little noticeable change*, i.e., from their former nature as “hardened” prostitutes; abl. of attendant circumstance.
- ***silex, silicis, m., hard stone, flint** (often used of the absence of emotions, or “hard-heartedness,” in persons—cf. *Am.* I.11.9 below).
- versae:** sc. **sunt**.
- 243 **Quās = Eās** (with **agentīs**).
- quīa, conj., since, because.**
- ***Pygmalīōn, Pygmalīōnis, m., Pygmalion** (legendary king of Cyprus, though here seen only as a sculptor).
- aevum, -ī, n., time, age; aevum agere, idiom, to spend one's life, live.**
- per crīmen:** here, *in wickedness, viciously*.
- 244 **offēnsus, -a, -um, offended, shocked.**
- vitīs, quae plūrima:** English would take the adjective with the noun rather than the pron., *the countless vices which . . .*
- 245 **sine coniuge caelebs / vīvēbat . . . cōnsorte carēbat** (246): the second clause intensifies the first; note the harsh c alliteration at the end of both

“Sunt tamen obscēnae Venerem Prōpoetides ausae
esse negāre deam; prō quō sua, nūminis irā,
240 corpora cum fōrmā p̄rimae vulgāsse feruntur,
utque pudor cessit sanguisque indūruit ōris,
in rigidum parvō silicem discrīmine versae.

“Quās quia Pygmalion aevum per crīmen agentīs
vīderat, offēnsus vitūis, quae plūrima mentī
245 fēmineae nātūra dedit, sine coniuge caelebs
vīvēbat thalamīque diū cōnsorte carēbat.
Intereā niveum mīrā fēliciter arte
sculpsit ebur fōrmaque dedit, quā fēmina nāscī

Discussion Questions

1. In 241–42 Ovid wants his readers to visualize the actual metamorphosis of the Propoetides, but how might the incident and the transformation also be viewed metaphorically?
 2. Comment on the word order, and its effect, in 242.
 3. What is your response to Pygmalion’s actions, and his motivations, in 243–46? Is the characterization of woman’s nature (244–45) Pygmalion’s, the narrator’s (i.e., Orpheus’), or Ovid’s?
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caelebs, caelibis, unmarried, celibate.

246 **thalamus, -ī, m., inner chamber; bedroom.**

cōsors, cōnsortis, m./f., one who shares with another; a partner, consort, companion.

careō, carēre, caruī, caritūrus + abl., to lack, be without.

247 **niveum mīrā fēliciter arte / . . . ebur (248): the ABCBA**

arrangement—with the epithets first, and the nouns suspensefully delayed—is as “felicitously artful” as the sculpture Ovid describes. The full significance of **mīrā** becomes apparent as the tale unfolds (cf. **mīrātur** 252).

248 **sculpō, sculpere, sculpsī, sculptus, to carve, sculpt.**

sculpsit ebur, fōrmaque dedit: another chiasmus.

quā: (*beauty*) with which, abl. of description.

quā fēmina nāscī / nūlla (249): the alliteration and assonance add a delicate sound effect.

- 249 **operis . . . suī**: objective gen. with **amōrem** (cf. **simulātī corporis ignēs** 253).
 ***concipiō, concipere, concēpī, conceptus**, *to receive; to conceive, develop; to express or compose* (in words).
- 250 **quam**: subject of both **vīvere** and **velle** in the indirect statement after **crēdās**, *which you would think was alive and wanted to move*; the 2nd-pers. verb serves to involve the audience.
- 251 **reverentia, -ae, f.**, *reverence; modesty, shyness* (the statue's imagined modesty is quite appropriate, since she is, of course, still nude—see 263).
movērī: the passive, while essentially equivalent to the English intransitive *to move*, is especially suited to the description of a statue which has the will, but not the power, *to move itself*.
- 252 **ars . . . suā**: a brilliant, oxymoronic **sententia**, and certainly a prime tenet in Ovid's own philosophy of art.
haurit / . . . ignēs (253): **ignēs** is used here, as often, of the fires of love, with **simulātī corporis**, objective gen.—*he draws into his heart a fiery passion for this body he had created*.
- 253 **simulātī**: a deliberate contrast with **vērae** (250).
- 254 **operī**: dat. with the compound **admovet**.
temptantēs: the participle modifies **manūs** but introduces the indirect question **an . . . ebur** (255), and so should be translated at the end of the main clause, *testing (to see) whether it is flesh or ivory*. The halting monosyllables at line's end suspensefully anticipate the question.
- 255 **corpus . . . fatētur**: the anaphora and the breathless series of dactyls and one- and two-syllable words are perhaps meant to suggest Pygmalion's excitement as his hands move over the statue's body, an effect continued in the alliteration and polysyndeton of the next verse.
- 256 **dat . . . putat**: Ovid accentuates the internal rhyme by carefully setting the rhyming syllables under the ictus.
- 257 **tāctīs . . . membrīs**: dat. with the compound **īnsīdere**; the separation of participle from noun, and in fact the entire structure of the line, is precisely paralleled in the next verse.
īnsīdō, īnsīdere, īnsēdī, īnsessus, *to settle upon; to sink into*.
- 258 **et . . . artūs**: the prose arrangement would be **et metuit nē livor in artūs pressōs veniat**, and again (as with **tāctīs** 257) English would use a relative clause rather than a participle—*and he fears that a bruise may appear on the limbs he has pressed*.
livor, livōris, m., *a bluish discoloration, a bruise*.
- 259 **adhibeō, adhibēre, adhibuī, adhibitus**, *to hold out; to make use of, employ; to offer*.
puellīs: dat. with **grāta**.
- 260 **mūnera**: like the elegiac lover, Pygmalion showers his beloved with gifts.
 ***concha, -ae, f.**, *shellfish* (especially the murex, the ancients' principal source for purple dye—see on 267 below); *shell, pearl*.

nūlla potest, operisque suī concēpit amōrem.
 250 Virginis est vērae faciēs, quam vīvere crēdās
 et, sī nōn obstat reverentia, velle movērī—
 ars adeō latet arte suā. Mīrātur et haurit
 pectore Pygmaliōn simulātī corporis ignēs.

“Saepe manūs operī temptantēs admovet an sit
 255 corpus an illud ebur, nec adhūc ebur esse fatētur.
 Ōscula dat reddīque putat, loquiturque tenetque,
 et crēdit tāctīs digitōs īnsīdere membrīs,
 et metuit pressōs veniat nē līvor in artūs.
 Et modo blanditiās adhibet, modo grāta puellīs
 260 mūnera fert illī: conchās teretēsque lapillōs
 et parvās volucrēs et flōrēs mīlle colōrum
 līliaquē pictāsque pilās et ab arbore lāpsās

Discussion Questions

1. Comment on the very striking sound effects in 250–51. How are the halting monosyllables in 251 appropriate to the context?
 2. Several elements in the narrative at 247–53 purposely recall the opening tale of the Propoetides (cf., for example, **fōrmam** 248 and **fōrma** 240; **reverentia** 251 and **pudor** 241; **simulātī corporis** 253 and **corpora** 240). Explore the several connections between the description of Pygmalion’s statue and the character and transformation of the Propoetides. Why does Ovid link the two stories as he does? How is Pygmalion’s reaction to the statue in 252–53 ironic in view of his earlier response to the Propoetides?
 3. What do the verbs **putat**, **crēdit**, and **metuit** (256–58) tell us about Pygmalion’s emotional state?
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261 **mīlle colōrum**: gen. of description; and note the assonance with **flōrēs**.

262 **līlium**, -ī, n., *lily*.

līliaquē: lengthening of a short vowel (diastole) is not uncommon in poetry, especially (as here with **-quē**) when the syllable is under the ictus and precedes a caesura.

pictus, -a, -um, *painted, colored*.

- 263 **Hēliades, Hēliadum**, f. pl., *the Heliades* (daughters of the sun god Helios, who, as they lamented the death of their brother Phaethon, were transformed into poplar trees that “wept” tears of amber—Ovid tells the story in *Met.* II).
lacrimās: here, *amber beads*.
- 264 ***gemma**, -ae, f., *jewel, gem*.
monile, monilis, n., *necklace, ornamental collar; jewelry*.
- 265 **aure . . . pectore**: prose would include the prepositions **dē** and **in**, respectively.
bacca, -ae, f., *berry, nut; pearl, bead*.
redimīculum, -ī, n., *a decorative band, garland*.
- 266 **Nec . . . vidētur**: litotes; Pygmalion not only dressed his statue, it seems, but also undressed her—for bed!
***fōrmōsus, -a, -um**, *beautiful, lovely* (a common epithet in elegy).
- 267 **collocō, -āre, -āvī, -ātus**, *to set up, arrange*.
hanc: sc. *statuam*.
***strātum, -ī**, n., *bedding, coverlet*; (often in pl.) *bed*.
Sīdōnis, Sīdōnidis, *of Sidon, Sidonian* (the town of Sidon, on the coast of Phoenicia, was famous for its production and export of purple dye from the murex—see on *concha* 260).
- 268 **appellō, -āre, -āvī, -ātus**, *to speak to; to call* (someone) *by a particular name*.
appellatque . . . sociam: sc. **hanc** (from 267)—*and he calls her* (or it!) *the companion of his bed* (cf. **thalamī . . . cōnsorte** 246). The alliteration of l/l in this passage adds an elegant sound effect to the scene’s close (note especially the soundplay in **collō/collocat/colla** 264–68, and cf. 280 and 285).
socia, -ae, f., *a female associate, partner*.
acclīnō, -āre, -āvī, -ātus, *to lay down, rest (on)*.
acclīnāta colla / . . . repōnit (269): *he lays its head to rest*.
- 269 **plūma, -ae, f.**, *feather; feather cushion, pillow*.
***tamquam**, conj., *just as, as if, as though*.
tamquam sēnsūra: *just as though it could feel them*.
repōnō, repōnere, reposuī, repositus, *to put back; to put down, lay down* (in a position of rest).
- 270 ***festus, -a, -um**, *festive*; with **diēs** (and often pl.), *a holiday, festival*. The festival of Venus, goddess of sensual love, aptly, and suspensefully, interrupts the bedroom scene of 266–69.
diēs: often f., as here, when reference is to a specific day.
tōtā . . . Cyprō: sc. **in**, *the most celebrated in all of Cyprus*.
Cyprus, -ī, f., *the island of Cyprus*.
- 271 **pandus, -a, -um**, *curving, bowed*.
inductae: here, with **aurum** as object and **pandīs . . . cornibus** (dat. with compounds), the participle has a reflexive or middle force, lit. *having applied gold to their arching horns*, but more freely, *with their arching*

Hēliadum lacrimās. Ōrnat quoque vestibus artūs,
 dat digitīs gemmās, dat longa monīlia collō;
 265 aure levēs bācae, redimīcula pectore pendent—
 cūncta decent. Nec nūda minus fōrmōsa vidētur:
 collocat hanc strātīs conchā Sīdōnide tīnctīs,
 appellatque torī sociam, acclīnātaque colla
 mollibus in plūmīs tamquam sēnsūra repōnit.
 270 “Festa diēs Veneris tōtā celeberrima Cyprō
 vēnerat, et pandīs inductae cornibus aurum
 conciderant ictae niveā cervīce iuvencae,
 tūraque fūmābant, cum mūnere fūnctus ad ārās
 cōnstitit et timidē ‘Sī, dī, dare cūncta potestis,

Discussion Questions

1. What is the intended effect of the polysyndeton in 260–63?
 2. Comment on the word order, and its effect, in 264–65.
 3. How is the progression of Pygmalion’s actions in 254–69 like a courtship? How is it different?
 4. Comment on the alliteration in 272. Is the effect onomatopoeic? How do the sound effects of 273 differ?
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272 *īciō, īcere, īcī, ictus, *to strike* (with a weapon—here a sacrificial knife or ax).

niveā cervīce: abl. of respect with ictae.

iuvenca, -ae, f., *a young cow, heifer* (appropriately, a female animal is sacrificed to the female deity).

273 tūs, tūris, n., *frankincense* (often pl. for the incense used in religious rites).

fūmō, -āre, -āvī, -ātus, *to fume, (emit) smoke*.

274 timidē: with dīxit (276); Pygmalion addresses the goddess with all due reverence.

- 275 **coniūnx**: with **mea**. The prose arrangement would be ‘**Sī, dī, cūncta dare potestis, coniūnx mea sit, optō, similis eburnae,**’ **Pygmalion timidē dicit** (**nōn ausus dīcere ‘eburnea virgō’**); in his modesty, Pymalion did not dare ask that he marry the statue itself but only some maiden with the statue’s beauty. The disjointedness of Pygmalion’s language here is perhaps meant to mirror his hesitancy in making the request.
optō: used here (as often) parenthetically.
eburneus, -a, -um, (*made of*) *ivory*.
- 276 **eburnus, -a, -um**, (*made of*) *ivory* (sc. **statuae**).
- 277 **Sēnsit**: **Venus** is subject of this verb (cf. 293) as of **aderat**.
festīs: sc. **diēbus**, dat. with the compound **aderat** (cf. 295).
- 278 **vōta . . . velint**: indirect question with **sēnsit**; in prose **quid** would introduce the clause. Despite the indirection of Pygmalion’s prayer, Venus understands what he truly wants.
amīcī . . . ōmen: the phrase (*as an omen . . .*) is in apposition with the signs described in 279.
- 279 **flamma**: i.e., from the incense burning on the altar.
ter, adv., *three times* (here, as often, a mystical number).
 ***accendō, accendere, accendī, accēnsus**, *to kindle, ignite; to make hotter, intensify*.
- apex, apicis**, m., *the top or point of something*; here, *the tip* (of a flame).
- 280 **rediit**: **ille** (Pygmalion) is subject; his return home from the festival and his rush to find the statue are described entirely in quick dactyls.
simulācra: the word, an emphatic pl., perhaps deliberately recalls **similis** (276); there Pygmalion prays for a wife *like his ivory statue*, while here his statue is *the likeness of his very own girl*. **Suae** is likewise emphatic, as is **petit**, a verb connoting intentional action; and, in anticipation of the transformation to come, Ovid describes the statue here for the first time with the noun **puella**, a word straight out of the vocabulary of Latin elegy (cf. Catullus’ frequent, and insistent, **mea puella**). The **ll** alliteration (a favorite Catullan sound effect) in **ille puellae** adds a further elegiac touch (see on 268).
- 281 **dedit ōscula**: a deliberate echo of **ōscula dat** (256—and cf. **dataque ōscula** 292), just as **Admōvet . . . manibus . . . temptat** in the next verse looks back to **manūs . . . temptantēs admōvet** (254), and **subsīdit digitīs** (284) recalls **digitōs īnsīdere** (257)—the earlier seduction resumes, but now under Venus’ inspiration.
vīsa tepēre est: sc. **statua** or **puella**; the ivory maiden grew warm with life and with passion. The preceding diaeresis and the very brevity of the clause itself (cf. **Corpus erat** 289) focus our attention on this first sign of the statue’s animation; Pygmalion here plays the handsome prince to his Sleeping Beauty, as his kiss brings her to life.
- 282 **Admōvet . . . temptat**: the seduction proceeds again from kiss to caress (cf. 256–58); chiasmus intensifies the eroticism by bringing **ōs, manibus**, and **pectora** together, with the verbs framing the scene. The root meaning of

- 275 sit coniūnx, optō' (nōn ausus 'eburnea virgō'
dīcere), Pygmaliōn 'similis mea,' dīxit, 'eburnae.'
Sēnsit, ut ipsa suīs aderat Venus aurea festīs,
vōta quid illa velint, et, amīcī nūminis ōmen,
flamma ter accēnsa est apicemque per āera dūxit.
- 280 "Ut rediit, simulācra suae petit ille puellae,
incumbēnsque torō dedit ōscula; vīsa tepēre est.
Admovet ōs iterum, manibus quoque pectora temptat;
temptātum mollēscit ebur, positōque rigōre
subsīdit digitīs cēditque, ut Hymettia sōle

Discussion Question

The references to Venus and her **nūmen** in 270–79 again recall the narrative's opening lines. In what ways do the Propoetides' treatment of Venus and her response compare with Pygmalion's attitude toward the goddess and her response to him? Consider again how the fate of the Propoetides compares with the fate of Pygmalion's statue.

- Pygmalion tests his beauty's pulse), but the word's repetition in this context (at 282, 283, 289, and cf. 254) strongly suggests its common metaphorical sense of *making a sexual advance* upon a woman.
- temptat;** / **temptātum** (283): the immediate (and alliterative) repetition underscores the rapidity of the transformation.
- 283 **mollēscō, mollēscere, to become soft or yielding** (cf. **remollēscit** 285).
positō: = **dēpositō;** use of the simple form of a verb in place of an expected compound form is common in verse.
- rigōre:** cf. the Propoetides' transformation to **rigidum . . . silicem** (242).
- 284 **subsīdō, subsīdere, subsēdī, to crouch down;** + dat., *to yield, give way to* (some outside force).
subsīdit digitīs: the sense of the verb here is clarified by the following simile; Pygmalion's fingers leave their imprint on the statue's flesh in fact, just as he had fantasized they might in 257.
- Hymettius, -a, -um, from Mt. Hymettus** (a mountain near Athens noted for its honey and so also, as here, for its beeswax).

- 285 ***cēra**, -ae, f., *beeswax, wax* (in any of its various uses, including, as here, modeling); *a writing tablet* (of the common type which was coated with wax, on which notes could be easily incised and erased).
remollēscō, remollēscere, *to become soft again* (cf. **mollēscit** 283).
remollēscit . . . **pollice**: for the alliteration see on 268.
tractō, -āre, -āvī, -ātus, *to keep pulling, dragging; to handle, rub, stroke*.
tractātaque pollice: wax used for modelling or other purposes was left in the sun and then worked with the fingers to make it softer and thus more readily shaped.
- ***pollex, pollicis**, m., *thumb*.
multās: with **faciēs** (286), here *shapes* or *forms*.
- 286 **flectitur** . . . **ūsū**: sound effects are added by the alliteration of **f** and the aptly soft assonance of **ū** at the end of the verse (where there is also some etymologizing wordplay in **ūtilis ūsū**).
fit ūtilis ūsū: the more it is used, or rather handled, the more easily worked and usable the wax becomes.
- 287 **dubiē**, adv., *hesitatingly, with hesitation*.
fallique verētur: sc. **sē**, acc. subject of the infin. in indirect statement.
- 288 **vōta**: here, not *prayers*, but *the object of his prayers*.
retractō, -āre, -āvī, -ātus, *to draw back; to handle or feel again or repeatedly* (cf. **tractāta** 285).
- 289 **Corpus erat**: the brevity of the clause and its placement at the beginning of the verse underscore Pygmalion's astonishment.
saliō, salire, saluī, saltus, *to jump, leap; to move suddenly, pulse*.
- ***vēna, -ae, f.**, *blood-vessel, vein; vein, streak* (of some stone or mineral).
- 290 **Paphius, -a, -um**, *of Paphos* (a city in southwest Cyprus).
Paphius . . . **hērōs**: cf. **Rhodopēius** . . . **hērōs**, of Orpheus (X.50); and note the interlocking word order in **Paphius** . . . / **verba** (291). The use of the epithet here anticipates the naming of the city after Pygmalion's child, referred to in 297.
plēnissima: here, *the most abundant* or *generous*.
- 291 **grātēs, grātium**, f. pl., *thanks, thanksgiving*; with **agere**, *to give thanks*.
agit: some mss. have **agat**, and editors accepting that reading view the clause as a relative clause of purpose. But, given Pygmalion's piety in 270–79, the indicative seems preferable—in gratitude he offers a prayer of thanks to the goddess at the very moment of his dream's fulfillment.
ōra . . . **falsa** (292): the use of pl. for sing. is common with **ōs**, but may be intentionally emphatic here; note too the effect of the framing order, the suspenseful delay of **nōn falsa**, the wordplay with **ōra/ōre/ōscula**, and the repeated **ō**'s in 292 that suggest the lovers' impassioned moaning.
- 293 **sēnsit**: the same verb is used of both Venus herself (277) and the lover she has brought to life for Pygmalion; both are sensitive and sensual.
ērubēscō, ērubēscere, ērubuī, *to blush with shame, feel shame*.
ērubuit: Pygmalion's creation had the sense of shame and modesty which the Propoetides lacked (cf. **pudor cessit** 241).

- 285 cēra remollēscit tractātaque pollice multās
flectitur in faciēs ipsōque fit ūtilis ūsū.
Dum stupet et dubiē gaudet fallīque verētur,
rūrsus amāns rūrsusque manū sua vōta retractat.
Corpus erat: saliunt temptātae pollice vēnae!
- 290 “Tum vērō Paphius plēnissima concipit hērōs
verba, quibus Venerī grātēs agit, ōraque tandem
ōre suō nōn falsa premit, dataque ōscula virgō
sēnsit et ērubuit, timidumque ad lūmina lūmen
attollēns pariter cum caelō vīdit amantem.
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Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the effectiveness and appropriateness of the simile in 284–86. Notice how the words **remollēscit tractātaque pollice** (285) are connected to identical or closely related words in the surrounding narrative; consider the imagery and the implications of these interconnections.
 2. In what respects do diction and sound effects lend intensity to the scene described in 288?
 3. How does Ovid’s manipulation of verb tenses enliven the narrative in 280–89?
 4. Comment on the sound effects in 293.
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lūmina lūmen: the juxtaposition neatly suits the action, as the statue, now alive, raises *her timid gaze up to his*, and the lovers’ eyes meet for the very first time.

294 **pariter**, adv., *together; at the same time.*

pariter . . . vīdit: *at the very same time she saw both her lover and the light of her first day.* With **cum caelō** there is a play on the double sense of **lūmen** as both *eye(s)* and *light*, and the resulting imagery is brilliant—as Pygmalion’s creation opens her eyes, she raises **them** upward like a newborn child into the light of day and then, **in the very same instant**, like a blushing maiden, she gazes into the eyes of her lover.

- 295 **coniugium**, -ī, n., *marriage* (here dat. with the compound **adest**—cf. 277).
quod fēcit: i.e., through her inspiration and her response to Pygmalion's prayer.
- coāctīs** / . . . **orbem** (296): *with the horns of the (crescent) moon brought nine times to full circle*, an epic circumlocution for the passage of nine months, the length of a pregnancy; interlocking word order and the **n/m** alliteration add to the solemn tone.
- 296 **noviēns**, adv., *nine times*.
lūnāris, -is, -e, *of the moon*.
- 297 **illa**: Pygmalion's bride, who remains nameless to the very end of the tale (though later writers call her Galatea).
Paphos, -ī, acc. **Paphon**, f. (or m., as some texts read **dē quō** for **dē quā** in this line), *Paphos* (child of Pygmalion).
gignō, **gignere**, **genuī**, **genitus**, *to create, give birth to*.
dē quā tenet īnsula nōmen: *from whom the island preserves this name*, i.e., for the city of Paphos (see on **Paphius** 290), a final etiological detail.



"Pygmalion and Galatea," Jean-Léon Gérôme, 1890

“Coniugiō, quod fēcit, adest dea, iamque coāctīs
cornibus in plēnum noviēns lūnāribus orbem
illa Paphon genuit, dē quā tenet īnsula nōmen.”

Discussion Questions

1. On the surface level of this narrative, Pygmalion may seem to be some kind of pervert with a bizarre fetish for his female statue, but in the end of course, as the statue is miraculously brought to life, we realize that we have been drawn out of the real world and into the world of magic and metamorphosis. With this in mind, how might you interpret in metaphorical terms Pygmalion's withdrawal from society and his surrender to art? Discuss the themes of art, its effects, and its relationship to reality as they are developed through the symbolism of the entire narrative.
 2. Comment on the function of the statue as a character in the story and especially on the paradox that, while central to the tale, she remains utterly passive. How are Pygmalion and Ovid alike in their relation to the character? What other correspondences do you detect between the poet and the sculptor?
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"Pygmalion and Galatea"
Étienne-Maurice Falconet, 1763
Musée des Arts Décoratifs
Paris