

**THE STORY OF PYRAMUS AND THISBE:
EARLY FRENCH AND CASTILIAN TREATMENTS**

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of two early vernacular treatments of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, a story which is first found in Book IV of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The introduction and conclusion frame two extended chapters, each dedicated to the analysis of a single text: the twelfth-century French poem *Piramus et Tisbé* and a thirteenth-century Castilian prose version of the story from the *General estoria* of Alfonso X, 'el Sabio'. The aim of the study is to investigate the changes which are found as the material is transferred from the Latin to the vernacular, and to consider what these changes may reveal of medieval attitudes, towards the works of Classical antiquity in general, to those of Ovid in particular, and to the love which is so central to this specific story. The analysis of two vernacular texts, from literary and cultural contexts that show both similarity and difference, widens the scope of the investigation, allowing a comparison of the two treatments.

The introductory chapter considers the potential offered by the many manifestations of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, and explores possible approaches. Topics important to an understanding of the medieval treatments are discussed: the ambiguity of the account in Book IV of the *Metamorphoses*, the diversity of the Pyramus and Thisbe tradition, and the techniques and modes by which a medieval text may develop existing material. The use of comparison, as a means of revealing the essential characteristics of an individual text, is considered. The body of the thesis presents a study of each vernacular treatment in turn, focusing on the comparison with the Latin. Each chapter is divided into five sections, allowing an introduction to the specific context for each text, a detailed study of the treatment, in the three parts dictated by the original, and conclusions on the nature of the new text. The conclusion to the thesis compares and contrasts the two vernacular treatments. Both develop the potential of the Latin, presenting the lovers as exemplary characters. The analysis of *Piramus et Tisbé* adds to existing knowledge of the passages of direct speech, and shows that the interplay of elements drawn from several traditions allows the presentation of both positive and negative aspects of love. The study of the Castilian version reveals that the *General estoria* gives an account of Ovid's text, clarifying ambiguities and defining the harmful nature of love through the story of the lovers. Finally, the conclusion ends with a consideration of possible future directions for research.

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INTRODUCTION

A notable characteristic of medieval European texts is the frequent repetition of material: themes, motifs, conventions, characters and stories recur, unconfined by limits of text, form, genre, language or period. The attempt to isolate and study a particular element, such as the manifestations of a single story, can prove intriguing. Similarities and differences between texts can be used to establish a *stemma* or 'family tree', perhaps clarifying a manuscript tradition or resolving questions of chronology. The relationship between texts may, however, be more intricate than such a diagram can display. Rather than a passive reproduction of earlier material, the individual text may represent a unique association of elements, which exists in a possibly dynamic relationship with a range of texts, ideas and influences. While common features can suggest the existence of a tradition, each version of a story may manifest differences which create a changed perspective.

Material related to the story of Pyramus and Thisbe provides an example which illustrates both the potential offered by the study of such a corpus and the difficulties of deciding upon an approach. The first extant written version of the story appears in Book IV of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where lines 55 to 166 tell of Pyramus and Thisbe, of the love between them and its consequences, a narrative whose immediate context is provided by lines 1 to 54 and lines 167 to 170.¹ Numerous manifestations of this material suggest its enduring appeal and demonstrate the freedom with which it appears to cross boundaries, to be found in texts in many

¹ *Ovid: Metamorphoses*, trans. by Frank Justus Miller, 3rd edn, rev. by G.P. Goold, Loeb Classical Library, 2 vols (London: Heinemann, 1977), I, 178-91. References to the *Metamorphoses*, given as book and line number in parentheses following the quotation, will be to this edition. Unless otherwise stated, the English translation, given in square brackets, will be that found on the facing page, of which the number will be given in parentheses. The names of the lovers will be given as 'Pyramus' and 'Thisbe'.

forms and contexts, in various European languages, including Latin, French, the Hispanic languages, Italian and English, from the medieval period, the Renaissance and beyond. While these can be seen as belonging to a Pyramus and Thisbe ‘tradition’, each also constitutes a discrete text which, in the treatment given, may reflect the preoccupations, literary or other, of the period and context of its composition.

While the attempt to delineate an overall European tradition and the study of the individual treatments of the story each offer interest, the widespread distribution of the material relating to Pyramus and Thisbe, and the complex network of connections both internal and external which it displays, make it difficult to carry out a full investigation at both levels. This study, following an introduction to the nature of the material and the implications of this, will focus on two early treatments, one French, the other Castilian. The first extant versions in these languages are the twelfth-century French poem *Piramus et Tisbé*,² and a section of the thirteenth-century Castilian prose *General estoria*, which tells *de Piramo e de Thisbe de orient, los dos entendedores*.³ Study of each in turn, including a detailed comparison with the version from Book IV of the *Metamorphoses*, will be followed by an analysis of the similarities and differences between the two vernacular versions. Such an investigation is particularly valuable because the relative neglect of the Castilian text means that proper consideration of its contribution has been absent from any

² *Piramus et Tisbé*, ed. and trans. by Penny Eley, Liverpool Online Series, Critical Editions of French Texts, 5 (Liverpool: Department of French, University of Liverpool; <http://www.liv.ac.uk/sml/LOS/>, 2001). References to this text will be to the critical edition found on pages 34 to 71 of the volume, and will be given as line numbers, in parentheses following quotations. The names of the lovers will be given as ‘Piramus’ and ‘Tisbé’, save in quotations, which will retain the spelling from the text.

³ Alfonso el Sabio, *General estoria: segunda parte*, ed. by Antonio G. Solalinde, Lloyd A. Kasten and Victor R.B. Oelschläger, 2 vols (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas; Instituto Miguel de Cervantes, 1957-61), I, 194-201. References to this text will be to this edition, and will be given as page number, column and line number, in parentheses following quotations. The names of

assessment of the body of material treating the story of Pyramus and Thisbe. Study of these first treatments in French and Castilian can result in a better understanding of the early part of the Pyramus and Thisbe tradition, providing a useful tool for the examination of its later developments.

PYRAMUS AND THISBE IN THE *METAMORPHOSES*

It is essential to begin with a discussion of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe as it is narrated in the *Metamorphoses*. In this work of fifteen books, Ovid (Publius Ovidius Naso, 43 BC-AD 17) leads us from the primeval chaos to his own time. Transformation provides a common element for stories drawn from a variety of sources, Greek, Latin and Eastern.⁴ E.J. Kenney notes also the importance of the exploration of human psychology in the work, and comments that:

Ovid depicts a universe in which human beings, and more often the gods who are supposed to be in charge, are at the mercy of blind or arbitrary or cruel, and always irresistible, forces.⁵

Perhaps most importantly, in the *Metamorphoses* we see Ovid as 'a prince of storytellers' (Innes, p. 9). Skillful manipulation of language leads to a work which elicits the judgement that:

The *Metamorphoses* is without doubt the most witty and ingenious book that has come down to us from the ancient world. (Kenney, p. xiv)

The influence of the *Metamorphoses* is seen in many later works (Innes, pp. 18-24). Indeed, it is often Ovid's version of a story which is best known. This is certainly

the lovers will be given as 'Piramo' and 'Thisbe', save in quotations, which will retain the spelling and accentuation of the text.

⁴ Ovid: *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Mary M. Innes (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1955), p. 9. On the theme of metamorphosis in the text, see G. Karl Galinsky, *Ovid's Metamorphoses: An Introduction to the Basic Aspects* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975), pp. 42-69, and Joseph B. Solodow, *The World of Ovid's Metamorphoses* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), pp. 157-207. Full details of authors and works will be given in the bibliography, and in a footnote when first mentioned; thereafter a shortened form will be employed.

⁵ E.J. Kenney, *Ovid: Metamorphoses*, trans. by A.D. Melville, intr. and notes by E.J. Kenney, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. xviii.

true of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, for the possible sources indicated⁶ possess only tenuous links with the material found early in Book IV of the *Metamorphoses*, which remains the first known written version.

As we turn to the *Metamorphoses* to delineate the principal elements of a story which was to become so widely diffused, we find a text which raises questions and presents ambiguities. A first difficulty is to decide what should be considered as the main subject. Lines 55 to 166 of Book IV follow the fortunes of Pyramus and Thisbe, which can cause the material to be seen as ‘the story of Pyramus and Thisbe’. The context within which these lines are presented, however, can offer a different perspective. The opening lines of the *Metamorphoses* suggest that the work will be concerned with changes of form: ‘In nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas / corpora’ (I. 1-2), [‘My mind is bent to tell of bodies changed into new forms’] (p. 3). Within Book IV, the story of Pyramus and Thisbe is presented as the first of a series of stories told by the Minyides as, refusing to acknowledge Bacchus, they continue their work of spinning and weaving, maintaining their allegiance to Pallas. As the first to speak is shown deciding which story to tell, she appears to conceive of her material as telling ‘quae poma alba ferebat / ut nunc nigra ferat contactu sanguinis arbor’ (IV. 51-52), [‘how the mulberry-tree, which once had borne white fruit, now has fruit dark red, from the bloody stain’] (p. 183). Both the overall context of the *Metamorphoses* and the immediate context provided by the opening lines of Book IV give priority to the concept of change.

Expectations of a simple myth are tempered by the shifting attitudes offered towards story-telling. The opening lines of the *Metamorphoses* speak not only of changes of form, but also of the song which will tell of them:

⁶*Pyramus et Tisbé*, ed. by F. Branciforti, Biblioteca dell’Archivum Romanicum’, serie 1, Storie-

di, coeptis (nam vos mutastis et illas)
 adspirate meis primaque ab origine mundi
 ad mea perpetuum deducite tempora carmen! (I. 2-4)

[Ye gods, for you yourselves have wrought the changes, breathe on these my undertakings, and bring down my song in unbroken strains from the world's very beginning even unto the present time.] (p. 3)

The gods are related to both changes and song: as the agents who caused the changes their inspiration might be expected to bring truth to the song. Indeed, Solodow draws a parallel between metamorphosis and art (World, pp. 203-07). As Ovid begins, there is concern for the nature of the song itself, the song which provides a contrast to the state of perpetual change, beginning with 'chaos' (I. 7), of which it tells. In Book IV, an interesting perspective is seen, as one of the Minyides proposes the session of story-telling:

'dum cessant aliae commentaque sacra frequentant,
 non quoque, quas Pallas, melior dea, detinet' inquit
 'utile opus manuum vario sermone levemus
 perque vices aliquid, quod tempora longa videri
 non sinat, in medium vacuas referamus ad aures!' (IV. 37-41)

['While other women are deserting their tasks and thronging this so-called festival, let us also, who keep to Pallas, a truer goddess, lighten with various talk the serviceable work of our hands, and to beguile the tedious hours, let us take turns in telling stories, while all the others listen.'](p. 181)

Story-telling is related to enjoyment, allowing time spent working to pass more pleasantly. For the Minyides, the work has a significance beyond simple utility, for it marks their refusal to turn from Pallas to Bacchus. By enabling the women to continue their work, the stories gain an association with this deeper significance, and with a course of behaviour which could be viewed as the dangerous slighting of a god, or as the courageous maintenance of an existing loyalty. We see also hints of a concern with how stories are told, as we note the need for both speaker and listeners. As the first story-teller takes time to choose her material, knowledge and discrimination are shown: 'illa, quid e multis referat (nam plurima norat), / cogitat'

(IV. 43-44), ['She mused awhile which she should tell of many tales, for very many she knew'] (p. 181). Line 53, which marks the choice of story, 'hoc placet; hanc, quoniam vulgaris fabula non est' (IV. 53), ['the last seems best, this tale, not commonly known as yet'] (p. 181), could be associated with either of two narrators: the woman who is about to speak, or the narrator of the *Metamorphoses* who tells of this. A story which is little known can demonstrate the erudition of the speaker and provide interest for the audience. While the speaker may appear to consider her story to be that of how the fruit of the mulberry is changed from white to dark, the first words she speaks are 'Pyramus et Thisbe' (IV. 55). The presence of an audience for the story has been indicated. The reaction of that audience, a reaction which might be anticipated by the story-teller, could be to identify with the human lovers and become involved with what happens to them. The 'story of Pyramus and Thisbe' appears to displace the account of the change in the mulberry.

The narrative dealing with the lovers is brief, taking only 112 hexameters, and, perhaps due to this brevity, it is tightly constructed and often epigrammatic. The attitude to adopt towards Pyramus and Thisbe is difficult to establish. As the couple are introduced, only slight details are provided. Four lines set their story in the east, refer to their youth and superlative good looks and tell of their adjoining homes:

Pyramus et Thisbe, iuvenum pulcherrimus alter,
altera, quas Oriens habuit, praelata puellis,
contiguas tenuere domos, ubi dicitur altam
coctilibus muris cinxisse Semiramis urbem. (IV. 55-58)

[Pyramus and Thisbe – he, the most beautiful youth, and she, loveliest maid of all the East – dwelt in houses side by side, in the city which Semiramis is said to have surrounded with walls of brick.] (p. 183)

From closeness comes knowledge and love, which is followed by separation imposed by their parents:

notitiam primosque gradus vicinia fecit,
tempore crevit amor; taedae quoque iure coissent,
sed vetuere patres. (IV. 59-61)

[Their nearness made the first steps of their acquaintance. In time love grew, and they would have been joined in marriage, too, but their parents forbade.] (p. 183)

Motives and reactions are not elaborated. No reason is given for the parents' veto. Little access is given to the inner experience of the couple faced with this obstacle to their love. Something of the nature of the experience may be inferred from the description of its effect upon the lovers:

quod non potuere vetare,
ex aequo captis ardebant mentibus ambo.
consciis omnis abest; nutu signisque loquuntur,
quoque magis tegitur, tectus magis aestuat ignis. (IV.61-64)

[Still, what no parents could forbid, sore smitten in heart they burned with mutual love. They had no go-between, but communicated by nods and signs; and the more they covered up the fire, the more it burned.] (p. 183)

The fire metaphor shows a powerful love, which causes pain, and is only increased by secrecy.

As the love between Pyramus and Thisbe persists and increases, it leads them through a succession of scenes which present ambiguities. The role played by the wall between their homes is particularly intriguing, as it emphasizes both their union and the obstacles to its achievement. As their story begins, the wall, not specifically mentioned, could be considered present in the statement that they live in adjacent houses, and is therefore associated with the union which grows from this closeness. With the parental veto, the wall becomes a factor of separation. It also allows a demonstration of the power of the love between Pyramus and Thisbe, for it is they who find the chink which has gone unnoticed by those who had less need, for 'quid non sentit amor?' (IV. 68), 'what does love not see?' (p. 183). The wall separates, but through the chink, also allows communication. A part of this communication between Pyramus and Thisbe is presented as direct speech but, rather than showing the reality of their love through dialogue, they offer joint words of reproach to the wall:

'invide' dicebant 'paries, quid amantibus obstas?
 quantum erat, ut sineres toto nos corpore iungi
 aut, hoc si nimium est, vel ad oscula danda pateres?
 nec sumus ingrati: tibi nos debere fatemur,
 quod datus est verbis ad amicas transitus auris.' (IV. 73-77)

['O envious wall,' they would say, 'why do you stand between lovers? How small a thing 'twould be for you to permit us to embrace each other, or, if this be too much, to open for our kisses! But we are not ungrateful. We owe it to you, we admit, that a passage is allowed by which our words may go through to loving ears.'](pp. 183, 185)

These words can function at several levels, acting as a formulation of the paradox inherent in the nature of the wall which both joins and separates, and as an expression of the frustration which thus results for Pyramus and Thisbe, while the choice of the wall, rather than a potent god, as the recipient of their apostrophe, can create a humorous perspective on their situation. Further conversations at the wall, reported indirectly in lines 83 to 89, introduce a more serious element. It is through the wall that Pyramus and Thisbe plan to leave the city, and in this plan we can see a refusal to accept restriction, a determination and aspiration which reduce the comic potential.

A meeting place is arranged outside the city, at the tomb of Ninus. The setting has three parts: the tomb, the tree and the spring:

convenient ad busta Nini lateantque sub umbra
 arboris: arbor ibi niveis uberrima pomis,
 ardua morus, erat, gelido contermina fonti. (IV. 88-90)

[They were to meet at Ninus' tomb and hide in the shade of a tree. Now there was a tree there hanging full of snow-white berries, a tall mulberry, and not far away was a cool spring.] (p. 185)

Such a setting has powerful resonance, suggestions of mystery. A tomb may commemorate the life of the one entombed, but the primary association is with death. The water of the spring is a powerful symbol of life. Life also is seen in the tree. Elements in contradiction, or in balance? This is the meeting place chosen by the lovers to restore their lost union, to overcome the obstacles to their love, love which at a primary level is associated with fertility and therefore with life. By their choice

the symbols are reversed: the spring draws the lioness and death ensues; the fruits of the mulberry are changed in colour, reflecting blood and death. The tomb of Ninus can be seen as foretelling fate. The juxtaposition of life and death, tears and blood, light and dark, creates the impression of essential myth, whose full significance is beyond the understanding of the lovers. Perhaps paradoxically, the lack of comment on the significance of elements in the text can increase the sense of a deeper meaning. Little detail is given of Thisbe's journey alone from the city, and the tightness of the narrative has an important effect. Thisbe sets off 'per tenebras' (IV. 93), ['through the darkness'] (p. 185), and it seems that almost immediately she is at the tomb, seeing the lioness 'ad lunae radios' (IV. 99), ['under the rays of the moon'] (p. 185), which causes the moon to appear in an unexplained manner. The duo of lioness and moon, evoking thoughts of Diana the huntress, linked to the moon and concepts of chastity, reinforces the sense that the lovers are inadvertently engaging with elemental forces beyond their strength.

Human fallibility can be seen at certain points in the text. The plan to leave the city can be seen as misguided, a wilful circumvention of the norms of society which exposes the couple to the dangers outside the city. Indeed, Charles Segal sees:

a story of lovers who are impatient with the obstacles to their desires and leave the safe limits [of] the city for the risks of the nocturnal meeting in an unfamiliar place outside the walls of the town.⁷

Thisbe's journey alone through the night can seem folly, explained only by love: 'audacem faciebat amor' (IV. 96), ['love made her bold'] (p. 185). Fear intervenes, as the sight of the lioness causes Thisbe to flee, dropping the garment described as a 'velamina' (IV. 101). Miller translates this as 'cloak' (p. 185), Innes gives 'veil'

⁷ Charles Segal, 'Pyramus and Thisbe: Liebestod, Monument, and Metamorphosis in Ovid, Beroul, Shakespeare and Some Others', in *Hommage à Jean Granarolo: philologie, littératures et histoire anciennes*, ed. by René Braun, *Annales de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de Nice*, 50 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1985), pp. 387-99 (p. 387).

(p. 96), while Melville has 'shawl', later nuanced as 'delicate wrap' (p. 77). The choices made by the three translators are interesting. The term *cloak* suggests a substantial garment, which gives shelter and anonymity to a wearer who may be male or female. The word *veil* and the implied delicacy of Melville's *shawl* bring thoughts of a Thisbe hidden from the sight of those in the city who might prevent her from leaving, but also vulnerable to the dangers of the wild. Moreover, the *veil* and the delicate *shawl* have specific female associations, the *veil* in particular suggesting the woman's protected chastity. Segal suggests that outside the city 'tokens of recognition, tree and veil, take on meanings opposite to those initially intended', and adds 'these tokens are also sexual symbols (the change of white to red, the torn and bloodied female fabric)'. As Thisbe and Pyramus leave the city we see the end of 'the more innocent stage of their love' (Segal, 'Pyramus and Thisbe', p. 392).

Thisbe's lack of thought, Pyramus's arrival after her, his misunderstanding of the significance of the lion trace, the blood-stained garment and the absence of Thisbe, lead to death. Lack of guidance from the narrator makes it difficult to determine a perspective. The struggle against overwhelming difficulties, condemned to failure by a combination of human weakness and fate, gives Pyramus and Thisbe tragic potential. Aspects of the text would seem to undercut this. Why does Thisbe leave first? Why does Pyramus arrive late, then so swiftly assume Thisbe's death and follow this assumption with his own suicide rather than a verification of the facts? The absence of explanation can lead behaviour to appear unreasonable, causing human weakness to seem foolishness, condemning the characters to a comic role.

The presentation of the words of the protagonists as direct speech can serve to reveal and establish character. We have noted the potential ambiguity of the joint apostrophe to the wall found in lines 73 to 77. Two further examples of direct speech

are found: lines 108 to 115, with an additional line at 118, spoken by Pyramus; and lines 142 to 144, and 147 to 161, spoken by Thisbe. These speeches, where each in turn laments the death of the other and affirms their own intention to die, can, by their formal qualities, elevated register, and that very willingness to seek death for love, confer an elevated status on the speaker. Nevertheless, a different reading is possible. There is an ironic contrast between style and situation as Pyramus laments and dies for a Thisbe who is not yet dead. The extravagance of his call to the lions ‘nostrum divellite corpus / et scelerata fero consumite viscera morsu’ (IV. 112-13), [‘come, rend my body and devour my guilty flesh with your fierce fangs’] (p. 187), accentuates the absurdity latent in his reaction. Motives other than characterization may influence the words of Thisbe. Intellectual pleasure at epigram may be the cause of, for example, ‘tua te manus [...] amorque / perdidit, infelix!’ (IV. 148-49), [‘twas your own hand and your love, poor boy, that took your life’] (p. 189). Within the fiction, Thisbe’s words are also a call for results. First, she calls upon both sets of parents to permit that she and Pyramus should be placed in a single tomb, justifying her plea: ‘quos certus amor, quos hora novissima iunxit’ (IV. 156), [‘whom faithful love, whom the hour of death has joined’] (p. 189). Secondly, she addresses the mulberry, asking that the change of colour resulting from the death blood of Pyramus should become permanent, ‘gemini monimenta cruoris’ (IV. 161), [‘as a memorial of our double death’] (p. 189).

Thisbe’s pleas are granted:

*vota tamen tetigere deos, tetigere parentes;
nam color in pomo est, ubi permaturuit, ater,
quodque rogis superest, una requiescit in urna.* (IV. 164-66)

[Her prayers touched the gods and touched the parents; for the colour of the mulberry fruit is dark red when it is ripe, and all that remained from both funeral pyres rests in a common urn.] (p. 191)

We see that the story-teller was justified in viewing her material as telling of the change in the mulberry: she has indeed told ‘quae poma alba ferebat, / ut nunc nigra ferat contactu sanguinis arbor’ (IV. 51-52), [‘how the mulberry-tree, which once had borne white fruit, now has fruit dark red, from the bloody stain’] (p. 183). It is the story of the love and death of Pyramus and Thisbe which results in the changed colour of the fruit of the mulberry. An intricate relationship develops between the two elements, as the change in the mulberry becomes the culmination of the story of the lovers. The blood of Pyramus brings a change which could be seen as partial and provisional, affecting one tree for a season. The permanent change of state, presented as the consequence of the words spoken by Thisbe, assumes a significance which is difficult to establish. Thisbe sees the dark berries as ‘luctibus aptos’ (IV. 160), [‘meet for mourning’] (p. 189), giving negative connotations to the death of the lovers, but she also suggests a positive aspect, death as reunion, by the phrase ‘gemini monumenta cruoris’ (IV. 161), [‘as a memorial of our double death’] (p. 189). The reading of the sign determines the attitude towards the love between Pyramus and Thisbe; the ambiguity of the sign leaves the text open-ended.

THE PYRAMUS AND THISBE ‘TRADITION’

The number, distribution and varied nature of the manifestations of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe mean that, while it can be convenient to speak of a ‘tradition’, the coherence of this may prove hard to establish. A survey of a sample from the material, in Latin, French and Castilian, will serve to demonstrate the variety of context and form which it displays. As we have seen, the story of Pyramus and Thisbe is first found in Book IV of the *Metamorphoses*. This means that, before considering other contexts, we must first note that, as the text of the *Metamorphoses* is transmitted, the story of Pyramus and Thisbe will be included. The transmission of

the *Metamorphoses* is not always easy to trace. The earliest complete text is found in eleventh-century manuscripts.⁸ The text transmitted may include marginal or interlineal commentary, clarifying points of mythology or grammar (Coulson, p. 4). Explanation may become moral and allegorical interpretation, as in the work of Arnulf of Orleans⁹ and John of Garland¹⁰ in the thirteenth-century, and Pierre Bersuire¹¹ in the fourteenth. Although an integral part of the *Metamorphoses*, the story of Pyramus and Thisbe is also found detached from this original context. It is as the story appears to gain an independent existence that we see the greatest diversity. The story of Pyramus and Thisbe may be told separately, or may form part of a larger work. The length may vary, from extensive amplification of the material from the *Metamorphoses*, to a brief reference or allusion. Verse and prose, narrative, lyric, drama, all are found. The combination of these aspects may vary from text to text, making watertight categories hard to define.

Let us consider some examples. In Latin we find several poems from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Edmond Faral notes three examples: first, *Consulte teneros non claudit tutor amantes* (186 lines);¹² then two further poems: *[C]armina fingo, licet jam nullus carmina curet* and *Querat nemo decus ibi qui vult pingere*

⁸ The 'Vulgate' Commentary on Ovid's *Metamorphoses: The Creation Myth and the Story of Orpheus*, ed. by Frank F. Coulson, Toronto Medieval Latin Texts, 20 (Toronto: The Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies for the Centre for Medieval Studies, 1991), p. 3.

⁹ Fausto Ghisalberti, 'Arnolfo d'Orléans: un cultore di Ovidio nel secolo XII', *Memorie del Reale Istituto Lombardo di scienze e lettere*, 24, 3rd series, 15, fascicolo 4, pp. 157-234.

¹⁰ John of Garland, *Integumenta Ovidii: poemetto inedito del secolo XIII*, ed. by Fausto Ghisalberti, *Testi e Documenti Inediti o Rari*, 2 (Messina-Milan: Guiseppe Principato, 1933).

¹¹ See Pierre Bersuire, *Ovidius moralizatus: Reductorium morale, liber XV*, ed. by Joseph Engels, 2 vols, *Werkmateriaal*, 1, 2 (Utrecht: Rijksuniversiteit te Utrecht, Instituut voor Laet Latijn, 1960-62), for the first recension, A, from Paris: 1509, and *Ovidius moralizatus: Reductorium morale, liber XV*, ed. by Joseph Engels, *Werkmateriaal*, 3 (Utrecht: Rijksuniversiteit te Utrecht, Instituut voor Laet Latijn, 1966) for the first chapter of the second recension, P.

¹² Edmond Faral, *Les Arts poétiques du XII^e et du XIII^e siècle: recherches et documents sur la technique littéraire du moyen âge* (Paris: Champion, 1924), pp. 331-35. [Arts]

cecus (294 and 191 lines respectively).¹³ Robert Glendinning adds three further works: *Est amor amoris species et causa cruoris* (175 lines), *A cunis mens una duos, amor unus utrumque* (70 lines), and *Ocia si veniunt, iam mens torpescit ab intus* (449 lines), and considers the six poems as instances of schoolroom practice in rhetorical techniques.¹⁴

The twelfth-century French poem *Piramus et Tisbé*, which we will analyse in detail in the body of this thesis, illustrates some of the difficulties presented by the material dealing with Pyramus and Thisbe. First, the story is separated from the body of the *Metamorphoses*, and we see a change of language, from Latin to French. The poem is then found in the fourteenth-century verse *Ovide moralisé*, reintegrated with other material from the *Metamorphoses*;¹⁵ the change of language is maintained.

The *Ovide moralisé* then develops a complex pattern of transmission and influence. Because the fourteenth-century *Ovide moralisé* in verse uses the twelfth-century poem, many elements of this version of the story are preserved and, as Van Emden notes, retained in the prose *Ovide moralisé*, in the editions of Colard Mansion (Bruges, 1488) and of Anthoine Verard (Paris, 1493), and thus influence later versions.¹⁶ The *Ovide moralisé* (verse) also influenced the second recension, of Paris 1342, of Pierre Bersuire's Latin work the *Ovidius moralizatus*, fifteenth book of the *Reductorium morale* (Van Emden, 'Prose', 1973, pp. 31-32). The *Ovidius*

¹³ Edmond Faral, *Recherches sur les sources latines des contes et romans courtois du moyen âge* (Paris: Champion, 1913; repr. 1967, 1983), pp. 37-56. [*Recherches*]

¹⁴ Robert Glendinning, 'Pyramus and Thisbe in the Medieval Classroom', *Speculum* 61 (1986), 51-78.

¹⁵ *Ovide moralisé, poème du commencement du quatorzième siècle*, ed. by C. de Boer, 5 vols, *Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam, Afdeling Letterkunde*, n.s., 15, 21, 30/3, 37, 43 (Amsterdam: Müller; Nord-hollandische uitgeverijmaatschappij, 1915-38), II, 18-36.

¹⁶ W.G. Van Emden, 'L'Histoire de *Pyrame et Thisbé* dans la mise en prose de l'*Ovide moralisé*: texte du manuscrit Paris, B.N.F.fr. 137, avec variantes et commentaires', *Romania*, 94 (1973), 27-56 (29-33) ['Prose'], and 'Sources de l'histoire de "Pyrame et Thisbé" chez Balf et Théophile de Viau', *Mélanges de langue et de littérature médiévales offerts à Pierre le Gentil par ses collègues, ses élèves et ses amis*, 2 vols (Paris: SEDES, 1973), pp. 869-79 ['Sources'].

moralizatus, separated from the *Reductorium*, circulated independently, often attributed to Thomas Walleys, as in the Paris edition of 1509.¹⁷ Bersuire's allegorical interpretations were added, in French translation, to material from the prose version of the *Ovide moralisé* (Van Emden, 'Prose', 1973, pp. 33, 46-47). We also find the *Ovidius moralizatus* in a fifteenth-century Castilian version, the *Morales de Ovidio*.¹⁸

As the story of Pyramus and Thisbe shifts between languages, leaves the material from the *Metamorphoses* and then rejoins it, moves from verse to prose, it becomes difficult to decide upon criteria to classify texts and define the relationships between them. This difficulty is increased as further occurrences are included. Possible influence from the Latin must always be considered. We see this as Van Emden analyses another early example, which survives only as a fragment, and concludes:

It seems likely that our version represents an attempt to repeat the success of the earlier *P. et T.* by the composition of a new vernacular version, which shows signs of a return to the Latin source as well as a willingness to borrow selectively from its French precursor.¹⁹

Thus it is already apparent early in the development of the 'tradition' that each new version of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe may exploit elements from more than one of its predecessors.

¹⁷ *Metamorphosis ovidiana moraliter... explanata: Paris 1509, Pierre Bersuire, Libellus: Basel 1543 'Albricus'*, introductory notes by Stephen Orgel, *The Philosophy of Images*, 1 (New York: Garland, 1979), no page numbers, a facsimile edition of Paris, 1509 and Basle, 1543; for a facsimile edition of Lyon: Hugueton, 1518, see Ovid, *Metamorphoseos*, *The Renaissance and the Gods*, 3 (New York: Garland, 1976).

¹⁸ *Text and Concordances of 'Morales de Ovidio': A Fifteenth-Century Castilian Translation of the 'Ovidius moralizatus' (Pierre Berçuire): Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional MS 10144*, ed. by Derek Carr, *Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, Spanish Text Series*, 76 (Madison: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1992). 13 pp. + microfiche

¹⁹ Van Emden, W.G., 'A Fragment of an Old French Poem on the Subject of Pyramus and Thisbe', in *Medieval French Textual Studies in Memory of T.B.W. Reid*, ed. by Ian Short, *Anglo-Norman Text Society Occasional Publications Series*, 1 (London: Anglo Norman Text Society, 1984), pp. 239-53 (249-50). Van Emden dates the poem represented by the fragment after *Piramus et Tisbé* but before the *Ovide moralisé* in verse (p. 245).

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the story is presented as drama. In French we find, for example, the *Moralité nouvelle de Pyramus et Tisbée*,²⁰ and Théophile de Viau's *Les Amours tragiques de Pyrame et Thisbé*.²¹ In Castilian there is the *Comedia famosa de Piramo y Tisbe* of Pedro Rosete Niño.²² We might also stray briefly from the Romance languages to English, to note the comic perspective offered in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.²³ In Castilian the *romance*, or ballad, of octosyllabic lines with alternate assonance, is used. Here also there is variety: examples include the anonymous *Tisbe y Piramo que fueron*, from the sixteenth-century *Cancionero llamado flor de enamorados*,²⁴ *En la grande Babilonia* by Lorenzo de Sepúlveda, also sixteenth-century,²⁵ and Góngora's *La ciudad de Babilonia*, from the seventeenth century.²⁶ In Castilian also, there is Jorge de Montemayor's *Historia de los muy constantes y infelices amores de Piramo y Tisbe*.²⁷

Additional contexts are found as we turn to works, other than the *Metamorphoses*, which include versions of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe or allude

²⁰ *Moralité nouvelle de Pyramus et Tisbée*, ed. by Émile Picot, extrait du *Bulletin du Bibliophile*, (1901), 1-35. See also Jean-Claude Aubailly, 'Pyrame et Tisbé au théâtre: légende et idéologie', *Fifteenth-Century Studies*, 18 (1991), 1-15.

²¹ Théophile de Viau, *Les Amours tragiques de Pyrame et Thisbé: tragédie*, ed. by Jean Marie Villégier, Théâtre National de Strasbourg, Collection du Répertoire, 5 (Paris: Cicero, 1992).

²² Pedro Rosete Niño, *Comedia famosa de Piramo y Tisbé*, ed. by Pedro Correa Rodríguez (Pamplona: University of Navarra, 1977).

²³ William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. by Stanley Wells, New Penguin Shakespeare, 2 (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967).

²⁴ *Cancionero llamado flor de enamorados (Barcelona 1562) reimpresso por vez primero del ejemplar único*, intr. by Antonio Rodríguez-Monino and Daniel Devoto, Floresta Joyas Poéticas Españolas, 2 (Oxford: Dolphin, 1954), no page numbers, a facsimile edition of Barcelona, 1562.

²⁵ Lorenzo de Sepúlveda, *Romances nuevamente sacadas de historias antiguas de la cronica de España compuestas por Lorenzo de Sepulveda*, ([n.p]: Hispanic Society of America; De Vinne Press, 1903), a facsimile of Antwerp, 1551, pp. 194-98. Page numbers refer to recto and verso.

²⁶ Luis de Góngora, *Fábula de Piramo y Tisbe*, ed. by David Garrison, Clásicos El Árbol, 9 (Madrid: José Esteban, 1985).

²⁷ *Dos versiones de Piramo y Tisbe: Jorge de Montemayor y Pedro Sánchez de Viana (fuentes para el estudio del romance 'La ciudad de Babilonia' de Góngora)*, ed. by B.W. Ife (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1974).

to the material. Giraut de Cabreira, upbraiding his *juglar* Cabra, includes a reference to the story among those of which Cabra cannot sing:

Ni sabs [...]

De Piramús

Qui for los murs

Sofrí per Tibes possion.²⁸

In *Le Chevalier de la charrete*, by Chrétien de Troyes, an allusion suggests the extent of Lancelot's love, 'qui plus ama que Piramus'.²⁹ In French, the story also forms part of Tibaut's *Roman de la Poire*,³⁰ and Jehan de Malkaraume's *Bible*,³¹ both from the thirteenth century. Catalan prose tells of 'Piramus' and 'Tisbe', in the *Lamentacions* of Joan Roís de Corella.³² We have noted the presence of a Castilian version of the story in the *General estoria*. This treatment, the second of the examples which we will study more closely, expands the material from the *Metamorphoses*. A contrast might be provided by a brief allusion found in the 'primer auto' of Fernando de Rojas' *La Celestina*, where Calisto remarks:

!Oh piedad de *Celeuco*, inspira en el Plebérico corazón por que sin esperanza de salud no envíe el espíritu perdido con el desastrado Piramo y de la desdichada Tisbe!³³

²⁸ Manuel Mila y Fontanals, *De los trovadores en España*, ed. by C Martínez and F.R. Manrique, Obras de Manuel Mila y Fontanals, 2 (Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas; Patronato Menéndez Pelayo; Instituto Miguel de Cervantes, 1966), pp. 249-50. Mila y Fontanals suggests a date of 1170 for the poem (p. 242, n. 3).

²⁹ Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Chevalier de la charrete*, ed. by Mario Roques, Les Romans de Chrétien de Troyes, 3, Classiques Français du Moyen Age, 86 (Paris: Champion, 1958), line 3803.

³⁰ Tibaut, *Le Roman de la Poire*, ed. by Christiane Marchello-Nizia (Paris: Société des Anciens Textes Français, 1984).

³¹ 'Une Traduction de Pyrame et Tisbé en vers français du XIII^e siècle', ed. by Jean Bonnard, extrait du *Recueil inaugural de l'Université de Lausanne* (Lausanne: Viret-Giron, 1892).

³² *Les proses mitològiques de Joan Roís de Corella: edició crítica*, ed. by Josep Lluís Martos, prologue by Rafael Alemany Ferrer, Biblioteca Sanchis Guarner, 55 (Alicante; Barcelona: Institut Interuniversitari de Filologia Valenciana, Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 2001), pp. 191-98. Thanks are due to Dr Martos for generously giving copies of both this critical edition and his study *Fonts i seqüència cronològica de les proses mitològiques de Joan Roís de Corella*, Biblioteca de Filologia Catalana, 10 (Alicante: Universitat d'Alacant, Departament de Filologia Catalana, 2001).

³³ Fernando de Rojas, *La Celestina: tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*, ed. by Dorothy S. Severin, intr. by Stephen Gilman, El Libro de Bolsillo, Literatura, 200 (Madrid: Alianza, 1969), p. 47.

The individual versions of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe contribute to a pluralistic rather than a monolithic tradition. It is perhaps no surprise that Debra Lynn Bell, in a study of the story in medieval French, should conclude that:

These different uses of the same story demonstrate the adaptability and the flexibility of Ovid's story, and they also encompass the changes that took place in medieval French literature as a whole from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries.³⁴

The apparent popularity of the story, and the diversity of forms it manifests, may be the result of a combination of influences, as the basic material is subjected to changes which assure its continued relevance.

READING OVID, (RE)WRITING, AND THE RHETORIC OF LOVE?

The story of Pyramus and Thisbe begins with the *Metamorphoses*. This work, in classical Latin hexameters, is dated to before AD 7 (Miller, *Metamorphoses*, I, p. xi). Time and a changed literary culture would seem to separate Ovid's enigmatic account of the lovers and the mulberry from the first treatments in French and Castilian. Despite the interval, however, there are hints that the vernacular composers perceived a relationship between their work and the *Metamorphoses*. The twelfth-century French poem *Piramus et Tisbé* acknowledges both author and source: 'qu'Ovides en son livre nome' (10). In the thirteenth-century Castilian prose *General estoria* there is also a reference to author and source: material from Book IV of the *Metamorphoses*, which leads to the account *de Piramo e de Thisbe*, is introduced with the comment 'cuenta Ouidio en el quarto libro del so Libro Mayor' (195. b. 27-28). Although no title is given, the mention of Ovid in association with the story of Pyramus and Thisbe would suggest that *son livre / so Libro Mayor*, 'his book', is

³⁴ Debra Lynn Bell, 'Just Another Crack in the Wall?: The Tale of Pyramus and Thisbe in Medieval French Literature' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Georgia, 2000; abstract in *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 61 (2000-01), 3554-A), abstract. Dr Bell was kind enough to offer me a copy of her thesis on CD-Rom.

intended to indicate the *Metamorphoses*. The choice of *livre / libro* is of additional interest. It is true that for the medieval period terms denoting the nature of literary works are difficult to define.³⁵ Despite such problems of definition, the use of *livre / libro* allows, at least as a working hypothesis, the supposition that the composers of these early vernacular versions had themselves read, or heard read, some or all of Ovid's *Book*, the *Metamorphoses*, rather than simply knowing of such a book.

The assumption of a relationship between the story of Pyramus and Thisbe as it appears in the *Metamorphoses* and the first French and Castilian treatments has important implications for the study of the latter. Firstly, a written source is implied, both for the French *Piramus et Tisbé* and the Castilian *De Piramo e de Thisbe*. Unlike other examples, the source text is not lost, but may be found in any edition of the *Metamorphoses*. With due caution, for the text of Ovid's *Book* available to the writers of the vernacular texts may already have begun to accumulate commentary lacking from more modern editions, comparison can show where and how the model offered by the *Metamorphoses* is accepted, or changed, by *Piramus et Tisbé* and the *General estoria*. Faral comments that any study of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe must move beyond simple listing of versions. One line of development would be to establish the relationships between the different versions. A different approach is to focus on the qualities of the individual treatments:

Une étude qui marquerait le caractère propre de chaque oeuvre, ce qu'elle apporte de nouveau et d'original dans l'interprétation du thème traditionnel, bref les formes particulières de goût et d'intelligence qu'elle révèle. (*Recherches*, pp. 60-61)

We see that, rather than marking a clear opposition between 'nouveau [...] original' and 'traditionnel', each work is perceived as offering a new perspective on existing

³⁵ See, for example, Ian Michael, 'Epic to Romance to Novel: Problems of Genre Identification', The Ramsden / Gybbon-Money Penny Commemorative Lecture 1986 (Manchester: The John Rylands

material. This new contribution to 'l'interprétation du thème traditionnel', which gives the work its specific character, reveals something of the intellectual context which produced it. Conversely, we might suggest that knowledge of the context can illuminate the treatment. Faral continues:

De ce point de vue, et ainsi comprises, les monographies relatives à l'histoire des thèmes sont infiniment précieuses: plus nettement, plus précisément que n'importe quelle recherche, elles sont propres à faire saisir dans les traits les plus caractéristiques la culture, non seulement des auteurs, mais aussi des époques. Des deux offices essentiels de l'histoire littéraire elles remplissent l'un et l'autre: elles marquent la continuité de la transmission des thèmes, et, en chacune des oeuvres où ceux-ci sont traités, elles permettent de sentir, par opposition et contraste, les points essentiels de leur originalité. (*Recherches*, p. 61)

Again we see the implication of a relationship between the text and the circumstances of its composition. Once more we note, not an opposition 'continuité' / 'originalité', but rather 'continuité' *and* 'originalité'.

In *Piramus et Tisbé* and the *General estoria*, a possible relationship with the *Metamorphoses*, resulting from material in common, is reinforced by the references to Ovid's *Book*. In addition to such continuity, we might also expect change, from the Classical Latin of the *Metamorphoses* to the French and Castilian of the later texts. The process of translation is an intriguing one, concerning as it does the understanding, and expression in a changed form, of meaning. As Susan Bassnett notes:

Beyond the notion stressed by the narrowly linguistic approach, that translation involves the transfer of 'meaning' contained in one set of language signs into another set of language signs through competent use of the dictionary and grammar, the process involves a whole set of extra-linguistic criteria also.³⁶

The distinction between translation and new version becomes a subtle one. Even in a literal translation, the choice of word for a particular concept shifts the text to a new

University Library of Manchester, 1986) (first publ. in *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library*, 66 (1986), 498-527).

³⁶ Susan Bassnett-McGuire, *Translation Studies*, 2nd edn, New Accents (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 13.

context, for which it is thus interpreted.³⁷ The transformation can be more extreme and seem more deliberate: the new version may add material, may suppress or subvert aspects of the original. Texts, writer and posited audience become interlinked in a complex relationship. The move from Latin to the vernacular as a medium for writing raises a number of questions, related both to *Piramus et Tisbé* and the *General estoria*, which result from periods when the use of the vernacular was of increasing importance in their relative national cultures, and to medieval vernacular narrative as a whole. How did the vernacular function and develop as a written means of expression? Why was material written down in the vernacular? What factors governed the choice of material? What process is at work when a text is translated? Is 'translation' the appropriate term to describe the re-use of material so common to the medieval period? What was the attitude to the works of classical antiquity? What changes may be made due to a changed cultural context, by a new writer, for a new public?

Mention of Ovid, of Ovid's *Book*, implies that the writers of *Piramus et Tisbé* and the *General estoria* had some knowledge of Classical Latin. E.R. Curtius notes that the periodization of literary history can disguise an element of continuity, from the Roman period to the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and beyond. Despite the fragmentation of the Roman Empire, its constituent countries – those of Romania - retain a certain unity, from their common heritage of Latin culture. As the power of empire passes from Greeks to Romans to the nations of the west, particularly France, so also knowledge and learning are transferred, concepts expressed by the phrase *translatio imperii et studii*.³⁸ The Christian Church assumes an important role in the

³⁷ On the question of 'equivalence', see Susan Bassnet-McGuire, *Translation Studies*, pp. 23-29.

³⁸ Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (New York: Pantheon, 1953) pp. 17-29.

preservation and transmission of learning. We must first note the importance of the writings of the Fathers of the Church, such as St Augustine, in the early centuries of the Christian era. The pursuit of knowledge, an important aspect of monastic life, was continued in the Church schools. Étienne Gilson notes a period of expansion in the eighth century, as Charlemagne called on teachers such as Alcuin of York, seen as introducing the *trivium* and *quadrivium* into schools.³⁹ Further developments may be seen in the twelfth century. Faral indicates the existence of five major centres of learning by the end of that century: Orléans, Paris, Bologna, Salerno and Toledo (*Arts*, p. 101, n. 1).

Work in the schools centred on the authority of the written text, which became the subject of reading, commentary and imitation. Faral quotes a passage from John of Salisbury's *Metalogicus* I. 24, which describes the teaching methods of Bernard of Chartres:

In auctorum lectione quid simplex esset et ad imaginem regulae positum ostendebat; figuras grammaticae, colores rhetoricos, cavillationes sophismatum, et qua parte suae propositae lectionis articulus respiciebat ad alias disciplinas proponebat in medio: ita tamen, ut non in singulis universa docerat [...] Et quia splendor orationis aut a proprietate est, id est cum adjectivum aut verbum substantivo elegantur adiungitur, aut a translatione, id est ubi sermo ex causa probabili ad alienum tradicitur significationem, haec, sumpta occasione, inculcabat mentibus auditorum. Et quoniam memoria exercitio firmatur ingeniumque acuitur, ad imitandum ea quae audiebant, alios admonitionibus, alios flagellis et poenis urgebant. (*Arts*, p. 99)

Faral translates:

Dans la lecture [...] que Bernard faisait des auteurs, il indiquait ce qui était simple et conforme à la règle; il faisait ressortir les figures de grammaire, les couleurs de rhétorique, les finesses de raisonnement et les points par où son texte intéressait les disciplines voisines, sans toutefois dire tout à propos de tout [...] Comme le mérite de l'élocution tient soit à la pureté du style (c'est-à-dire l'ajustement de l'adjectif ou du verbe au substantif), soit à l'emploi de l'image (c'est-à-dire le passage d'un sens à un autre sens en vertu d'affinités acceptables), il profitait des occasions qui se présentaient de l'inculquer à ses auditeurs. Et comme l'exercice donne de la force à la mémoire et de la vivacité à l'esprit, il forçait à

³⁹ Étienne Gilson, *La Philosophie au moyen âge: de Scott Erigène à G. Occam* (Paris: Payot, 1933), p. 8.

reproduire ce qu'on avait entendu, en employant pour les uns le conseil, pour les autres le fouet et les punitions. (*Arts*, pp. 99-100)

The passage creates a relationship between reading and writing, which is significant in several regards.

Faral gives priority to reading the text as a means of assimilating the techniques it demonstrates. This theoretical knowledge is reinforced by imitation, and an influence is seen on medieval writing:

La base de l'enseignement était la lecture des auteurs. Cette lecture était faite par le maître, qui fournissait les explications utiles. Le commentaire, dépassant les besoins du sens, s'étendait aussi à la technique de l'oeuvre, aux principes de composition et de style dont elle fournissait des exemples [...] Les auteurs n'étaient pas expliqués seulement pour l'intérêt qu'en offrait la lecture: ils l'étaient aussi en vue des profits qu'en pouvaient tirer des imitateurs. Cette imitation a joué un grand rôle dans la formation des écrivains du moyen âge. (*Arts*, p. 101)

The emphasis is on the rhetorical arts. Techniques developed for and through the study of Latin texts are seen as influencing composition in the vernacular.

Amplificatio assumes a particular importance. Lines from the *Prologue* to the *Lais* of Marie de France seem pertinent: 'gloser la lettre / e de lur sen le surplus mettre'.⁴⁰ The diverse interpretations of Marie's *Prologue* by modern scholars suggest that, with the addition of material, change of varying degrees may be anticipated.⁴¹ We may just see a brief explanation of a detail no longer comprehensible with the passing of time and shifts of language; the marginal commentary, or 'gloss', is drawn into the main body of the text. Writing may seem to

⁴⁰ *Marie de France: Lais*, ed. by Alfred Ewert (Oxford: Blackwell, 1944); repr. with intr., notes and bibliography by Glyn S. Burgess, French Texts Series (London: Bristol Classical Texts, 1995), pp. 1-2, lines 15-16.

⁴¹ For a range of views on Marie's *Prologue* see Leo Spitzer 'The Prologue to the *Lais* of Marie de France and Medieval Poetics', *Modern Philology*, 41 (1943), 96-102; Mortimer J. Donovan, 'Priscian and the Obscurity of the Ancients', *Speculum*, 36 (1961), 75-80; Emanuel J. Mickel Jr., 'The Unity and Significance of Marie's Prologue', *Romania*, 96 (1975), 83-91; Alfred Foulet and Karl D. Uitti, 'The Prologue to the *Lais* of Marie de France: A Reconsideration', *Romance Philology*, 31 (1981-82), 242-49; Mary Louise Zanon, "'Ceo testimoine Preciens": Priscian and the Prologue to the *Lais* of Marie de France', *Traditio*, 36 (1980), 407-15.

become rewriting, as material only latent in the original text is drawn into prominence. Douglas Kelly discusses medieval concepts of invention:

Topical invention identifies and elucidates mysteries and obscurities in the *matière* by exemplifying certain places in it so as to make persons, words and actions fit a proposed context (*san*).⁴²

Rhetorical techniques may facilitate the expression of such additional material, but other influences may result in the need. We move from understanding of technique to understanding of content.

The association of reading and writing with work in the Church schools can allow us to see the Church as assuring continuity from Classical Latin culture to the medieval period. We might also see the Church as mediator between past and present, determining both what shall be written and the means of expression. Amongst texts studied in the schools were not only rhetorical treatises, but also the works of such writers as Virgil, Ovid and Juvenal (Faral, *Arts*, p. 102). Such texts may serve to illustrate questions of style, but also pose difficulties in terms of their subject matter. What changes may result from the attempt to assimilate these works of pagan antiquity to a Christian context? The reception and transmission of Ovid in the Middle Ages appears particularly intriguing. On the one hand, the perception of a significant influence leads to the use of the term *aetas Ovidiana* to describe the medieval period.⁴³ On the other hand, as we have noted, it was felt necessary, or appropriate, to explain and allegorise the original texts.

The change from Latin to the vernacular may have an additional effect. Composition in the vernacular may have been simply an intellectual exercise, an

⁴² Douglas Kelly, 'Chrétien de Troyes: The Narrator and His Art', in *The Romances of Chrétien de Troyes: A Symposium*, ed. by Douglas Kelly, The Edward Armstrong Monographs on Medieval Literature, 3 (Lexington: French Forum, 1985), pp. 13-47 (p. 30).

⁴³ Ludwig Traube's phrase has become common currency: see, for example, Richard A. Dwyer, 'Ovid in the Middle Ages', in *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. by Joseph R. Strayer and others, 12 vols (New York: Scribner, 1982-89), IX, 312-14 (313).

extension of the schoolroom training. The implication, however, is that such texts were composed for those for whom access to the Latin was difficult. Thus the move from Latin to the vernacular also draws in the secular world, which might also be expected to influence the text. Content might focus on religious thought, theology, philosophy or science, but might also cover concerns of the feudal world, of courtly society. Forms, models and techniques may come from a variety of written and oral sources. Composition becomes a synthesis of influences, the text a complexity of links with literary tradition and the wider cultural context. This synthesis, the interplay, harmony or conflict of elements within the text gives form to, and expresses, the underlying thought.

Returning to the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, to the *Metamorphoses* and the first treatments in French and Castilian, the references to Ovid's *Book* in *Piramus et Tisbé* and in the passages *De Piramo e de Thisbe* from the *General estoria* can create a sense of continuity between the Latin text and the vernacular versions. Differences might also be expected, from the passing of time, from changes of religion, language and social customs, from changing attitudes towards the pagan authors. The association of technical competence in composition with the reading and imitation of classical texts creates a relationship between reading and subsequent writing. In the new text we might see not only imitation but also signs of engagement with the underlying concepts of the original text.

The writers of *Piramus et Thisbé*, and of the passages from the *General estoria* which tell the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, present themselves as readers of Ovid's text. Indeed, both vernacular versions include the main elements from the *Metamorphoses*, both as to characters and to events. We see the couple and their love, which continues despite separation. The lovers meet at the wall between their

homes and make the pact which leads to the setting of the tomb, tree and spring. In both versions, Thisbe leaves first, encounters the lioness – a lion in the French – and flees, letting fall her garment, which is found and misinterpreted by Pyramus. The deaths and the changed colour of the mulberry ensue. Both versions retain the use of direct speech at the wall and at the death, real or perceived, of the other.

While following the text of the *Metamorphoses*, both *Piramus et Tisbé* and the *General estoria* amplify considerably. As we have noted, the reader of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe in the *Metamorphoses* is faced with questions and ambiguities. The focus shifts between the change in the mulberry and the story of Pyramus and Thisbe. As their story is developed, the text permits a range of attitudes: to the protagonists themselves, to their relationship, to their deaths. Finally, as death links the lovers and the mulberry, the changed colour of its fruits assumes an ambiguous significance. It may be that the writers of the vernacular texts feel prompted to answer questions and resolve ambiguities found in their reading of the Latin. We began with the story of Pyramus and Thisbe in the *Metamorphoses* and, as we study the first treatments in French and Castilian, we must return to it. At each stage of the story, their answers and clarifications can be revealing. Generous quotation from the Latin might impede a rapid discussion of the vernacular texts, but will allow us to establish where they follow and where they deviate from, or add to, the model from the *Metamorphoses*. As the story develops through its related stages, a particular focus might result, a wider interpretation of the whole text.

Central to the story of Pyramus and Thisbe in the *Metamorphoses* is the concept of *amor*. Study of the vernacular versions can reveal their understanding of its significance: What is the nature of *amor*? How is it to be expressed in writing? How does *amor* function in the written text? The treatments of the story found in

Piramus et Tisbé and *De Piramo e de Thisbe* will provide some of the possible answers to these questions. Thus far we have emphasized the characteristics which the two vernacular versions have in common: a shared basis in the *Metamorphoses*, the move from Latin to the vernacular, possible influences from schoolroom methods. The two texts do manifest differences: *Piramus et Tisbé* is from the twelfth century, is written in French, is composed in verse and presents the material as an independent story; the *General estoria* is from the thirteenth century, uses Castilian prose and includes the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, with other material from the *Metamorphoses*, within a combination of Biblical and secular history. Such differences of century, language, form and culture might result in interesting variations in the response to the *Metamorphoses*.

Amor might serve as the pretext for a carefully constructed rhetorical development, such as we see in the Latin poems from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. As Glendinning notes:

The exposure of boys in early adolescence to this morally ambiguous theme, precisely in connection with the use of rhetoric, with its many antithetical devices for exploring irony and paradox, is a subject of considerable interest in itself. (p. 71)

The emphasis here lies less with the physical aspects of *amor* than with the relationship between the emotion and the linguistic conventions which are used to express and explore it. A different response might be to turn from an exploration of the rhetoric of *amor* to a consideration of the allegorical potential of the material. *Amor* might be linked to language, might be expressed by allegory: What does the experience of Pyramus and Thisbe suggest of the nature of the emotion? *Amor* might be seen as ennobling, for it leads the lovers to be faithful even to death; *amor* could also be seen as dangerous, for it leads to death. The writing might emphasize positive

or negative qualities. Salvatore Battaglia notes a discussion on Pyramus and Thisbe in the *De ordine*.⁴⁴ St Augustine advises his student Licentius:

Ubi se, inquam, Pyramus et illa ejus supra seminecem, ut cantaturus es, interemerint, in dolore ipso, quo tuum carmen vehementius inflammari decet, habes commodissimam opportunitatem. Arripe illius foedæ libidinis et incendiorum venenatorum execrationem, quibus miseranda illa contingunt: deinde totus attollere in laudem puri et sinceri amoris, quo animæ dotatae disciplinis et virtute formosæ copulantur intellectui per philosophiam, et non solum mortem fugiunt, verum etiam vita beatissima perfruuntur.⁴⁵

[At that point where Pyramus destroyed himself [...] and she slew herself over his half-dead body – as you were about to relate – there, in that very anguish where it is proper that your poem should reach its highest flight, you have a golden opportunity: satirize the curse of that unclean lust and those burning passions by which those deplorable things come to pass. Then soar aloft with all your power in praise of pure and genuine love – love wherein souls endowed with knowledge and adorned with virtue are, through philosophy, united to understanding, and whereby they not only escape death, but moreover enjoy a life most happy.]⁴⁶

Lost, or never completed, no poem on Pyramus and Thisbe by Licentius is now known. Were we able to read the text, we might discern echoes of St Augustine's understanding of the quality of the emotion shared by Pyramus and Thisbe as 'illius foedæ libidinis et incendiorum venenatorum execrationem' (Migne, 32, 1877, col. 989). We might see writing employed with didactic intent, to satirise what is to be avoided, and praise what is to be sought in its place: 'puri et sinceri amoris' (Migne, 32, 1877, col. 989). It might be that such didactic intent would be subsumed by other forces, by love, or by the writing – the *carmen* - itself.

⁴⁴ Salvatore Battaglia, 'Piramo e Tisbe in una pagina di Sant'Agostino', *Filologia e letteratura*, 9 (1963), 113-22.

⁴⁵ St Augustine, *De ordine*, in J.P. Migne, *Patrologiæ latinæ cursus completus*, 32 (1877), cols. 977-1020 (col. 989).

⁴⁶ St Augustine, *De ordine*, trans. by Robert P. Russell as *Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil*, in *Writings of Saint Augustine: Volume I, The Fathers of the Church, A New Translation*, 5 (New York: Cima, 1948), pp. 229-332 (p. 262).

CHAPTER ONE

PIRAMUS ET TISBÉ: 'PAR(O)LER DE LOR AMOURS'

1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 THE DATE OF THE POEM, MANUSCRIPTS AND EDITIONS

Some of the most difficult problems posed by the study of medieval literary material are related to the difference between the posited date of composition of a work and that of the earliest manuscripts in which it is preserved. We are faced with decisions about the most appropriate text to use as a basis for further analysis. Moreover, the work no longer belongs solely to its original context, for as it is copied it may be reinterpreted. *Piramus et Tisbé* provides a particularly striking example of the difficulties posed by the study of a medieval work of which the original manuscript is no longer extant.

While it is not possible to give a precise date for the composition of *Piramus et Tisbé*, it is generally considered that the poem was composed in the twelfth century. Cornelis de Boer studies linguistic and literary details and concludes that the work dates from the third quarter of the twelfth century.⁴⁷ Faral places the poem before the *Eneas*, possibly even before the *Thebes*.⁴⁸ Madeleine Tyssens also sees

⁴⁷ *Pyrame et Tisbé: texte normand du XII^e siècle*, ed. by C. de Boer (Amsterdam: Müller, 1911), pp. 7-25 (25). [1911]

⁴⁸ Edmond Faral, 'Le Poème de *Piramus et Tisbé* et quelques contes ou romans français du XII^e siècle', *Romania*, 41 (1912), 32-57 (39-46) (repr. in *Recherches*, pp. 5-33, with additions, pp. 35-61) ['Poème'].

this early position in the chronology as plausible.⁴⁹ The earliest manuscripts which preserve *Piramus et Tisbé*, however, date from the thirteenth century. Three manuscripts belong to this period:

A: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, fr. 837 (formerly 7218).

B: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, fr. 19152 (formerly 183).

C: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Hamilton 257.

In these three manuscript collections the story of Pyramus and Thisbe is presented as a separate work, detached from its original setting in the *Metamorphoses*.

In addition to the three early manuscripts, nineteen further manuscripts contain the poem. These are the manuscripts of the early fourteenth-century *Ovide moralisé*, which not only reintegrates the story of Pyramus and Thisbe with the other material from the *Metamorphoses*, but also does so using the pre-existing poem *Piramus et Tisbé* (de Boer, 1911, pp. 30-31). This means that the twelfth-century work is placed in a new context, for the *Ovide moralisé* subjects the stories from the *Metamorphoses* to an allegorical interpretation, which suggests that a different attitude was taken towards the material, an attitude which may result in a change of perspective.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that it is the manuscripts of the *Ovide moralisé* that have, in the main, served as the base for modern editions. Barbazon and Méon used only manuscripts A and B.⁵⁰ Knowledge of the presence of *Piramus et Tisbé* in the *Ovide moralisé*, and the judgement that certain of the

⁴⁹ Madeleine Tyssens, 'Les Sources du Piramus', in *Et c'est la fin pour quoy sommes ensemble: hommage à Jean Dufournet professeur à la Sorbonne Nouvelle: littérature, histoire et langue du Moyen Age*, ed. by J.-C. Aubailly and others, Nouvelle Bibliothèque du Moyen Age, 25, 3 vols (Paris: Champion, 1993), III, pp. 1411-19 (1411).

⁵⁰ *Fabliaux et contes des poètes français des XI, XII, XIII, XIV et XV siècles*, ed. by Étienne Barbazon, rev. by M. Méon, 4 vols (Paris: Warée; Crapelet, 1808; repr. Geneva: Slatkine, 1975), I, pp. 326-54.

manuscripts of the latter provide a more reliable witness than the three early manuscripts, influenced De Boer's editions of both 1911 and 1921. However, rather than using a single manuscript of the *Ovide moralisé*, De Boer attempted to reconstitute the version of *Piramus et Tisbé* known by the composer of the later work. The resultant text, designated 'O', serves for the establishment of an edition further elaborated by the inclusion of variants from A, B and C, with other more modern scribal emendations, when felt appropriate.⁵¹ Francesco Branciforti's 1959 edition and translation into Italian rely principally on a single manuscript: Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale 1044 (R). Intervention is reduced, but still present. Branciforti's edition forms the basis of that of Raymond Cormier, which is accompanied by an English translation.⁵² Two more recent editions also use R, but considerably reduce intervention: Emmanuèle Baumgartner's edition with a French translation (2000)⁵³ and Penny Eley's edition with an English translation (2001).

As we trace the various editions of *Piramus et Tisbé*, we see the abandonment of the attempt to reconstitute the 'original' for the adoption of other critical criteria, leading to editions which represent a truthful account of a single version of the poem. Nevertheless, the use of a manuscript of the *Ovide moralisé* means that we are still faced with editions that are based on a fourteenth-century version of a work that belonged first to the twelfth-century. Despite this problem, we will consider *Piramus et Tisbé* primarily within the twelfth century context. Diplomatic transcriptions of the four manuscripts A, B, C and R are provided in Eley's edition (pp. 85-164). We are

⁵¹ De Boer (1911) and *Piramus et Tisbé: poème normand du XII^e siècle*, ed. by C. de Boer, *Classiques Français du Moyen Age*, 26 (Paris: Champion, 1921).

⁵² *Three Ovidian Tales of Love: Piramus et Tisbé, Narcisus et Dané, and Philomena et Procné*, ed. and trans. by Raymond Cormier, *Garland Library of Medieval Literature, Series A*, 26 (New York; London: Garland, 1986).

⁵³ *Pyrame et Thisbé, Narcisse, Philomena: trois contes du XII^e siècle imités d'Ovide*, ed. and trans. by Emmanuèle Baumgartner, *Folio classique* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000).

thus furnished with knowledge of the three early manuscripts, which ‘provide valuable evidence of changing conditions of reception’ (p. 32). These transcriptions will be used when a variant from the three early manuscripts appears particularly significant or illuminating, without, however, any attempt to effect an overall comparison of the four versions.

1.1.2 ‘UNE ÉCOLE D’IMITATION D’OEUVRES CLASSIQUES’?

Attempts to determine the genre of *Piramus et Tisbé* have aligned the poem with a range of other works. Several scholars associate *Piramus et Tisbé* with other twelfth-century French works that draw on Classical material. Gaston Paris considers the poem under the heading ‘imitation de l’antiquité’.⁵⁴ De Boer also notes the importance of the Latin texts, remarking: ‘au troisième quart du XIIe siècle il y a eu en “Anglo-Normandie” toute une école d’imitation d’œuvres classiques’ (1911, p. 25). Was there indeed such a school? If so, should the resultant texts be viewed as the ‘imitation d’œuvres classiques’? Several vernacular works from the period do indeed display a relationship with those of Classical Antiquity. Among the longer texts, we find the *Roman de Thebes*,⁵⁵ the *Roman d’Eneas*⁵⁶ and the *Roman de Troie*,⁵⁷ in addition to the Alexander material. Three shorter texts are also extant: *Piramus et Tisbé* itself, *Narcisus et Dané*,⁵⁸ and *Philomena et Procné*.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Gaston Paris, *La Littérature française au moyen âge: XI-XIV^e siècle*, 7th edn (1st edn, Paris: 1888; Paris: Hachette, [n.d]), pp. 77-85 (77).

⁵⁵ *Le roman de Thebes*, ed. by Guy Raynaud de Lage, 2 vols, *Classiques Français du Moyen Age* (Paris: Champion, 1966-68).

⁵⁶ *Eneas: roman du XIIIe siècle*, ed. by J.-J. Salverda de Grave, 2 vols, *Classiques Français du Moyen Age*, 44 and 62 (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Édouard Champion; Librairie de la Société des Anciens Textes Français, 1925-29).

⁵⁷ Benoît de Sainte-Maure, *Le roman de Troie*, ed. by L. Constans, 6 vols, *Société des Anciens Textes Français* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1904-12).

⁵⁸ In addition to Cormier (1986) and Baumgartner (2000), see *Narcisus et Dané*, ed. and trans. by Penny Eley, *Liverpool Online Series, Critical Editions of French Texts*, 6 (Liverpool: The University of Liverpool, Department of French; <http://www.liv.ac.uk/www/sml/LOS/>, 2002).

⁵⁹ In addition to Cormier (1986) and Baumgartner (2000), see *Philomena: conte raconté d’après Ovide*, ed. by C. de Boer (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1909).

It can be seen that material from the Classical Latin texts retains importance in a period when the written vernacular plays an increasing role. The encounter between two possibly different traditions raises interesting issues: What attitude was taken to the Latin texts by the vernacular composers? Were changes made to the material? Literary histories generally place the romances of antiquity between the vernacular epic and the later romances such as the works of Chrétien de Troyes. Paris, for example, begins with 'l'épopée nationale', follows this with the chapter 'imitation de l'antiquité', then considers the 'romans grecs et byzantins', the 'romans bretons' and the 'romans d'aventure' (pp. 35-117). While such an order can be explained as the result of simple adherence to temporal chronology, we also see the romances of antiquity presented as an intermediate stage between epic and fully developed romance. Changes in formal characteristics can be noted. Perhaps more significantly, the exploration of emotional issues assumes increasing importance. We might sense a changing sensitivity, associated with the growing sophistication of court life.⁶⁰

Why were the Latin texts made accessible to the vernacular world? Paris comments:

Les oeuvres de la littérature latine antique n'avaient jamais cessé d'être lues et étudiées dans les écoles; on n'en comprenait pas, il est vrai, la beauté artistique, mais on croyait y trouver et une incontestable vérité historique et un profond enseignement moral (les récits empruntés à l'antiquité, dit Jean Bodel, sont sérieux et apprennent la sagesse). Quand elles se trouvent contenir des aventures non moins surprenantes que celles que chantaient les jongleurs, elles semblaient aux lettrés supérieures et, à partir du XIIe siècle, ils s'efforcèrent de faire passer en français celles qui leur paraissaient pouvoir plaire davantage aux seigneurs et aux dames qui ignoraient la langue latine. (pp. 77-78)

⁶⁰ Glyn Sheridan Burgess, *Contribution à l'étude du vocabulaire pré-courtois*, Publications Romanes et Françaises, 110 (Geneva: Droz, 1970).

The Classical works contain truth and can offer a moral lesson; they are also able to entertain. The vernacular composers assume the position of intermediary. Accustomed to the material from their training in Church schools, they make it available to those for whom it would otherwise have been difficult to understand. The tension between Church and Court, between the didactic and the entertainment potential of the material, must be resolved. Decisions must be taken: where is the truth of the text? what is the meaning of the text? how is it significant within the new culture? A range of responses to such questions may be discerned as Latin texts are translated, reformulated, or adapted in the vernacular. As Édouard Jauneau shows, the concept of being as dwarves on the shoulders of giants can encapsulate a variety of attitudes towards the 'giants', such as reliance on a strong authority or the intention to surpass.⁶¹ As Rita Copeland suggests, translation may be not only 'continuity', but also 'rupture'.⁶² The vernacular writers' attitude to the earlier texts may be stated directly, in prologues or by narratorial intervention. This stated approach may be confirmed or called into question by the treatment given, perhaps suggesting a political or cultural imperative.⁶³ We might see less an imitation of the works of antiquity than an interpretation of their content, as the material is transferred from one cultural context to another.

⁶¹ Édouard Jauneau, 'Nains et Géants', in *Entretiens sur la Renaissance du 12e siècle*, ed. by Maurice de Gandillac and Édouard Jauneau, *Decades du Centre Culturel International de Cerisy-La-Salle*, n.s. 9 (Paris: Mouton, 1968), pp. 21-52.

⁶² Rita Copeland, 'The Fortunes of 'Non verbum pro verbo': Or, Why Jerome is not a Ciceronian', in *The Medieval Translator: The Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages: Papers Read at a Conference held 20-23 August 1987 at the University of Wales Conference Centre Gregynog Hall*, ed. by Roger Ellis (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1989), pp. 15-35 (15).

⁶³ See, for example, André Lefevre, 'Translation: Its Geneology in the West', in *Translation, History and Culture*, ed. by Susan Bassnett and André Lefevre (London: Pinter, 1990), pp. 14-28.

1.1.3 FROM THE METAMORPHOSES TO *PIRAMUS ET TISBÉ*

Piramus et Tisbé follows the outline of the story of the lovers as this is established in Book IV of the *Metamorphoses*. Piramus and Tisbé are introduced and the closeness of their union is emphasized; separation intervenes, but does not end their love. Meetings at the wall between their homes allow speech and result in the pact to leave the city. Tisbé leaves before Piramus, and her garment, dropped as she flees the lion, is found and misinterpreted; the death of the lovers and the changed colour of the mulberry ensue. *Piramus et Tisbé*, however, is markedly longer than the version of the story in the *Metamorphoses*. We see the expansion of third-person narrative, the inclusion of narratorial intervention and an increase in direct speech. Each of these changes has the potential to effect an altered perspective. Branciforti considers that the rhetorical techniques of *amplificatio* play a significant role in the greater length of the French poem (pp. 13-65). Rhetorical technique may not be the sole influence. It is important to analyse what fills the space thus created: do we see simply a demonstration of technique or technique employed with deliberate function, part of the new treatment?

What kind of text is *Piramus et Tisbé*? The relationship with the romances of antiquity is indeed important. *Piramus et Tisbé* shares with them the reliance on classical models, the importance given to love and the search for a means of expression which will permit the exploration of this theme. It is the development of this means of expression on which Faral focuses in his discussion of the relationship between *Piramus et Tisbé*, the *Thèbes* and the *Eneas*. Comparison leads to the conclusion that *Piramus et Tisbé* should be placed after the *Thèbes* and before the *Eneas*, which shows its influence. This influence is also noted in the works of Chrétien de Troyes ('Poème', pp. 39-57).

A.M. Cadot sees the move, in *Piramus et Tisbé*, from myth to *roman*. The French text shows greater complexity of setting, of the extension of the narrative through time and of characterization than is found in the Latin:

C'est la convergence de ces trois facteurs, espace, temps, personnages, infiniment plus complexes que chez Ovide, qui nous amène à parler du roman.⁶⁴

How far the *Metamorphoses* can be regarded as true myth, how far *Piramus et Tisbé* may be viewed as a *roman*, depends upon definitions. While in the *Metamorphoses* the couple move alone through a landscape possessed of a resonance and an ambiguous significance, detail added in the French poem fixes Piramus and Tisbé more firmly in a specifically concrete and medieval setting. For William Kibler, greater detail contributes significantly to depth of characterization.⁶⁵

1.1.4 FIRST-PERSON DIRECT SPEECH IN *PIRAMUS ET TISBÉ*

Perhaps the most notable characteristic of *Piramus et Tisbé* is its use of first-person direct speech. In Table 1 we see that a comparison with the *Metamorphoses* reveals changes of extent and distribution of direct speech in the French text.

⁶⁴ A.M. Cadot, 'Du Récit mythique au roman: étude sur *Piramus et Tisbé*', *Romania*, 97 (1976), 433-61 (p. 456).

⁶⁵ William W. Kibler, '*Piramus et Tisbé*: A Medieval Adapter at Work', *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, 91 (1975), 273-91 (p. 291).

Table 1: First-person Direct Speech in the *Metamorphoses* and *Piramus et Tisbé*

	Metamorphoses: Book IV			Piramus et Tisbé		
	Speaker	First Line	Lines	Speaker	First Line	Lines
Separation				Piramus	'Hé, las! fet il, 'chetif dolent'	(143-95)
				Tisbé	'Lasse', fet elle, 'Com male ore'	(212-97)
At the Wall	Pyramus & Thisbe	'invide' dicebant 'paries, quid amantibus obetas?'	(73-77)	Piramus	'Tysbé', dist il, 'bele faiture'	(332-48)
				Tisbé	'Amis, ensi vos os nomer'	(369-91)
				Piramus	'Amie, moult sui angoissous'	(398-489)
				Tisbé	'Amie, trop vous desconfortez'	(494-583)
Death	Pyramus	'una duos' inquit 'nox perdet amantes'	(108-15)	Piramus	'Nuis de douleur, nuis de torment'	(702-63)
	Pyramus	'accipe nunc' inquit 'nostri sanguinis haustus!'	(118)	Tisbé	'Espee dont je suis saisie'	(816-76)
	Thisbe	'Pyrame,' clamavit, 'quis te mihi casus admetit?'	(142-44)	Tisbé	'Pyramus, ves ci vostre amie'	(879-80)
	Thisbe	'Tua te manus' inquit 'amorque'	(148-61)	Piramus	'Tysbé, amie'	(887-88)

More detailed study shows that differences of content are also found. Consideration of changes of extent, distribution and content raises questions related to their significance, both intra- and extra-textual.

Piramus et Tisbé makes greater use of direct speech than the *Metamorphoses*.

This change may simply reflect the general tendency of the French text to amplify the Latin. Nevertheless, we must ask whether rhetorical technique was the only influential factor. In *Piramus et Tisbé* a greater proportion of the text is carried through the words of Piramus and Tisbé themselves, which raises questions related to the nature of the first-person 'voice', in general and in this text. Is there a need for access to the characters' inner experience expressed through their own words? Does the first person offer a different perspective? Is this perspective important in the overall dynamic of the poem?

The existence of a different perspective may be supported by the formal, metrical, difference between the words of Piramus and Tisbé and the rest of the text. Their words, apart from two short rhyming *laissez* (332-48, 369-91), are composed of a series of song-like lyric stanzas consisting of a bisyllable followed by between two and five octosyllables in rhyme with it. De Boer describes the latter as 'les parties strophiques' (1911, p. 15). Faral speaks of 'diverses combinaisons métriques

de caractère lyrique' ('Poème', p. 53). The remainder of the poem is in octosyllabic rhyming couplets. The words spoken by the couple seem marked out as being of a different quality.

The relationship between the first person and the third person in *Piramus et Tisbé* needs further consideration. The poem alternates between the two, as Table 2 shows.

Table 2: The Distribution of First Person and Third Person in *Piramus et Tisbé*

First Line	Lines	Person
En Babilone la cité	(1-22)	Third Person
Hay, Amours, devant tes iex	(23-40)	Apostrophe to Amours
De tel saiete et de tel lance	(41-74)	Third Person
Li douz regars, li simples sens	(75-102)	Third/ First Person
Li dui enfant sont en destroit	(103-42)	Third Person
'Hé, las!' fet il, 'chetif dolent'	(143-95)	First Person: Piramus
Ains qu'il peust son duel finir	(196-211)	Third Person
'Lasse', fet elle, Com male ore'	(212-97)	First Person: Tisbé
La pucele est trois fois pasmee	(298-331)	Third Person
'Tysbé', dist il, 'bele faiture'	(332-48)	First Person: Piramus
La pucele de l'autre part	(349-68)	Third Person
'Amis, ensi vous os nomer'	(369-91)	First Person: Tisbé
Ne plus lors parler a lui	(392-97)	Third Person
'Amie, moult sui angoissous'	(398-489)	First Person: Piramus
Li jovenciaux plaint et souspire	(490-93)	Third Person
'Amis, trop vous desconfortez'	(494-583)	First Person: Tisbé
Ensi ferment lor covenant	(584-701)	Third Person
'Nuis de dolour, nuis de torment'	(702-63)	First Person: Piramus
Tel duel et tel priere faite	(764-815)	Third Person
'Espee dont je suis saisie'	(816-76)	First Person: Tisbé
Adont s'incline la pucele	(877-78)	Third Person
'Pyramus, ves ci vostre amie'	(879-80)	First Person: Tisbé
Li jovenciaux, la ou moroit	(881-87)	Third Person
'Tysbé, amie'	(887-88)	First Person: Piramus
Atant se taist, ne puet plus dire	(889-912)	Third Person

The alternation between first person and third person can be viewed in several ways. De Boer sees a parallel with the posited form of the Breton *lais*, believed to be composed of both spoken and sung passages: *Piramus et Tisbé* also has 'le récit' and 'les parties lyriques' (1911, pp. 14-25). Faral notes a similarity between the varying metre of *Piramus et Tisbé* and the alternate prose and verse of *Aucassin et Nicolette*:

Il reste entre les deux poèmes une ressemblance considérable, qui consiste dans la distribution de l'oeuvre en parties narratives et parties lyriques et l'usage, très rare ailleurs, de la laisse assonancée ou rimée de sept ou huit syllabes. ('Poème', pp. 53-54)

For Jean-Claude Aubailly, the extended use of the first person contributes to the dramatic quality seen in the poem, particularly when compared with Malkaraume's *Bible*.⁶⁶ Models proposed for so-called 'lyric insertion' may also have relevance to *Piramus et Tisbé*.⁶⁷ Conversely, that text may illuminate discussion of the relationship between lyric and narrative.⁶⁸

First-person direct speech not only forms a greater proportion of the whole text, but it is also found at additional points in *Piramus et Tisbé*. As Piramus and

⁶⁶ Jean-Claude Aubailly, 'Aux Sources du théâtre: le 'poème' de *Piramus et Tisbé* (vers 1170)', *Revue des Langues Romanes*, 95 (1991), 15-30.

⁶⁷ See A.R.T Butterfield, 'Interpolated Lyric in Medieval Narrative Poetry', (unpublished doctoral thesis, Cambridge University, 1988; abstract in *Aslib Index To Theses*, 38, 1 (1988), A8a 38-0124; Jane H.M. Taylor, 'The Lyric Insertion: Towards a Functional Model', in *Courtly Literature: Culture and Context*, ed. by Keith Busby and Eric Cooper (Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1990), pp. 539-48; Sylvia Huot, *From Song to Book: The Poetics of Writing in Old French Lyric and Lyrical Narrative Poetry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

⁶⁸ For a discussion of some of the varied ways of viewing the relationship between lyric and narrative see Louise Margaret Haywood, 'A Comparative Study of the Function of Lyrics in Romances and Sentimental Romances in Medieval Spanish and Middle English, c. 1300-1500' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London, November 1994; abstract in *Aslib Index to Theses*, 45 (1995), A8a 45-12130), pp. 1-23. Dr Haywood kindly lent me a copy of her thesis. For the findings of the Haywood thesis see: 'Lyrics and Other Verse Insertions in Sentimental Romances', in *Studies on the Spanish Sentimental Romance (1440-1550): Redefining a Genre*, ed. by Joseph J. Gwara and E. Michael Gerli (London: Thamesis, 1997), pp. 191-206; 'El "mal pecado" de los troyanos: Lírica y modos narrativos en la *Historia troyana polimétrica*', in *Actas del XII Congreso de la AIH, Birmingham 1995: I, Medieval y Lingüística*, ed. by Aengus M. Ward (Birmingham: Department of Hispanic Studies, University of Birmingham, 1998), pp. 216-21; and, 'Lyric in Medieval Secular Narrative', in *Proceedings of the Eighth Colloquium*, ed. by Andrew M. Beresford and Alan Deyermond, *Papers of the Medieval Hispanic Research Seminar*, 5 (London: Department of Hispanic Studies, Queen Mary & Westfield College, 1997), pp. 61-73.

Tisbé suffer separation, their words are reported directly, whereas Ovid keeps them silent. At the wall between their two houses, each speaks in turn, rather than addressing the wall jointly, as in the *Metamorphoses*. The laments spoken as each believes the other to be dead are maintained, with some change of detail. These changes bring a change of focus. Three points in the story of the couple are brought into prominence: their separation, their meetings at the wall, their deaths. Why these three? Three moments of high emotional charge, present in the *Metamorphoses*, are developed in *Piramus et Tisbé*. How are they treated?

First-person direct speech implies the spoken word. The words of Piramus and Tisbé form a pattern of paired speeches, which consist of long, uninterrupted sections of monologue. The use of paired speeches can be seen as a reflection of their situation: two people who are in love, who are divided and who seek to restore their lost union. Further analysis is needed to see whether the text itself permits or prevents the restoration of the union between Piramus and Tisbé. Are they divided by the blocks of text, locked into monologue, or do they achieve dialogue? Is there communication between the characters or from the text outwards? Do these patterns of communication harmonize with other elements of the poem?

We will consider the passages of direct speech within the overall development of the text, as this establishes both the wider context for the discourse and the specific circumstances in which it is shown as being spoken. Haywood notes that formulae, and framing or transitional clauses, can help in the understanding of the function of lyric in medieval Spanish and English romance (1994, pp. 2-3). The means by which *Piramus et Tisbé* achieves the immediate transition from third to first person might be equally revealing. It may be important to note whether the speaker is said to be alone or to be addressing someone else. Particular terms may be

used which indicate what manner of discourse is concerned. Modern scholars have used a range of terms when speaking of the passages of first-person direct speech in *Piramus et Tisbé*: De Boer speaks of ‘des monologues ou complaintes’ (1911, p. 14); Kibler describes the speeches of the lovers as ‘lyric monologues’ and ‘laments’ (pp. 275, 280).

The form and content of the individual speeches needs close study. The thought expressed may be motivated by the circumstances of delivery, or may be more abstract. We may see the use of pre-existing models, or the development of new means of expression, which draw on a range of resources. Is there conflict or harmony between the different elements? How do the first-person voice, the formal structures and the content function together? How do the passages of direct speech function within the text as a whole? Detailed analysis can help to answer some of these questions and establish a proper framework for the understanding of this aspect of *Piramus et Tisbé*.

1.2 THE OPENING OF *PIRAMUS ET TISBÉ*

Much of the additional material in *Piramus et Tisbé* is related to the early stages of the story: the introduction of the couple, their separation and its effects. The importance of the *exordium*, or entry into the material, in teaching on rhetoric, has been considered as influential (Kibler, p.276). It should be noted that in any narrative, regardless of the use of formal rhetorical techniques, the opening plays a crucial role, orientating the reader within the text and delineating characters, setting and situation. Formal technique can make an important contribution, firstly by bringing an increased ability to manipulate language, which can facilitate the expression of thought, and secondly by acting as a signal that the text is operating at

a particular level of formality. The opening of *Piramus et Tisbé* is important because it may reveal something of what kind of text is to be expected.

In the *Metamorphoses*, as one of the series of stories told by the Minyeides, the story of Pyramus and Thisbe is placed within a specific context. Firstly, we must note that the presentation of a story within a story makes story-telling itself a part of the subject matter of the text. Secondly, we recall how the presence of the frame story allows a dual focus. The material is thought of as telling: ‘quae poma alba ferebat / ut nunc nigra ferat contactu sanguinis arbor’ (IV. 51-52), [‘how the mulberry-tree, which once had borne white fruit, now has fruit dark red, from the bloody stain’] (p.183). The changed colour of the fruit of the mulberry is mentioned first, but appears to lose importance as the first words spoken concentrate on the lovers: ‘Pyramus et Thisbe’ (IV. 55). As we turn to *Piramus et Tisbé*, we find that, in the three early manuscripts, the wider frame provided by the *Metamorphoses* is absent, and with it the frame story of the Minyeides. The story of Pyramus and Thisbe is isolated from the setting within which its significance was first understood.

As a text begins, the reader may be guided by direct comment from the narrator. *Piramus et Tisbé* refers briefly to author and source (‘qu’Ovides en son livre nome’, 10), but makes no direct statement of the attitude towards the material, nor of any principles of composition which this text might elaborate or uphold. Comparison with the *Metamorphoses* will help draw out the essential character of the treatment found in the French poem. Indeed, as we begin, a rare example of an abbreviation of the Latin, the very lack in *Piramus et Tisbé* of any account of the story-telling of the Minyeides, can be seen as a statement of what is perceived to be of greatest significance in the original. In the French text the subject is more clearly the story of Pyramus and Tisbé. The presentation of the couple and their relationship

in the opening passages of the poem might indicate how their story has been understood, and how it is seen as relevant to the new setting.

1.2.1 THE INTRODUCTION OF THE COUPLE

In the *Metamorphoses*, the story of Pyramus and Thisbe begins at line 54 of Book IV. We have seen the brevity with which lines 54 to 61 introduce the couple:

Pyramus et Thisbe, iuvenum pulcherrimus alter,
altera, quas Oriens habuit, praelata puellis,
contiguas tenuere domos, ubi dicitur altam
coctilibus muris cinxisse Semiramis urbem.
notitiam primosque gradus vicinia fecit,
tempore crevit amor, taedae quoque iure coissent,
sed vetuere patres. (IV. 55-61)

[Pyramus and Thisbe – he, the most beautiful youth, and she, loveliest maid of all the east – dwelt in houses side by side, in the city which Semiramis is said to have surrounded with walls of brick. Their nearness made the first steps of their acquaintance. In time love grew, and they would have been joined in marriage, too, but their parents forbade.]
(p. 183)

Pyramus and Thisbe are named, and two qualities are associated with them: youth and beauty. The setting for their story is the east; the reference to Semiramis suggests the city of Babylon. A time in the distant past is implied, a time when Babylon still stood, already the past as the Minyeides tell their stories. Pyramus and Thisbe, however, are less fixed in time and place than centred on each other. They are linked by the balanced ‘alter / altera’ (IV. 55-56) and by their shared attributes. They inhabit the same city, in adjoining houses. We see affinity, closeness, followed by knowledge and love; the movement towards complete union is then disrupted by the veto of the parents.

In *Piramus et Tisbé*, lines 1 to 102 cover these first stages in the story. In terms of content, aspects of the Latin are retained and developed in the French. We see the youth and beauty of Piramus and Tisbé, and the love between them, which techniques of *amplificatio*, such as *repetitio*, underline and nuance, amplifying the text’s own amplifications. In addition, *Piramus et Tisbé* adds detail which, perhaps

considered necessary to clarify for the medieval context what might be tenuous in the Latin, fixes the text more firmly within that medieval setting. The passage can be divided into three sections, using their first line for convenience:

‘En Babilone la cité’	(1-22)
‘Haÿ, Amours, devant tes iex’	(23-44)
‘Encor ne sevent riens d’Amours’	(45-102)

As we study each of the three sections more closely, we will see that the text introduces concepts which will be significant throughout, interweaving elements from a range of discourses and fields of experience.

‘En Babilone la cité’ (1-22)

Let us consider the opening lines of *Piramus et Tisbé*:

En Babilone la cité
 Furent dui home renomé,
 De grant valour, de grant hautesce,
 De parenté et de richesce.
 Li riche home orent deus enfans
 D’une biauté et d’uns samblans;
 L’uns fu vallés, l’autre meschine;
 Tant biaux n’orent rois ne roÿne.
 Deus enfans orent li riche home,
 Qu’Ovides en son livre nome
 Et dist qu’il furent apelé
 L’un Piramus, l’autre Tysbé. (1-12)

It appears that, as in the *Metamorphoses*, Piramus and Thisbe are linked by their presentation in parallel terms. Their youth is evoked, and emphasized, by ‘enfans’ (5, 9) and ‘vallés [...] meschine’ (7). There is the movement from two families, two individuals, to union: they are ‘deus enfans / d’une biauté et d’uns samblans’ (5-6). There is the balance of ‘l’uns [...] l’autre’ (7), repeated at line 12 ‘l’un [...] l’autre’. We see Piramus and Tisbé, united by the youth and beauty associated with them both. The emphasis on the quality of youth is extremely interesting. Considered as a general quality, youth could have associations with spring, with life, with love. In many medieval texts, youth, together with beauty, forms part of the conventional

presentation of the ideal protagonist, of the ideal lover: the lyric texts of the troubadours prize *jovenes*; the heroes of romance are generally young. *Piramus et Tisbé*, by accentuating the youth and beauty of its protagonists, could appear to align them with such idealized figures, leading to the expectation that Piramus and Tisbé will share a relationship of elevated quality, free from mundane constraint.

Youth, however, is shown in greater complexity, not only as an ideal state, but also as part of the circumstances of the lives of Piramus and Tisbé. Their youth is first seen in relation to their parents: they are introduced as the children of men of substance: ‘Li rich home orent deus enfans’ (5). Indeed, their fathers are mentioned in the text before Piramus and Tisbé themselves, and their status is emphasized:

Dui home renomé,
De grant valour, de grant hautesce,
De parenté et de richesce.
[...] riche home. (2-5)

We can see the assumption that high status is appropriate, part of that set of qualities which characterizes the idealized love: youth, beauty, nobility. The elements which constitute status are themselves significant. Ovid presents city-dwellers; *Piramus et Tisbé* develops the implications of living in society: to be ‘renomé’ (2) depends on what others think. Lineage and wealth – visible signs of status – must be preserved by careful marriage. Interwoven references to their fathers continually nuance the qualities of the young couple. Hyperbole presents their beauty as unsurpassed even by the children of the persons of highest rank in society: ‘tant biaux n’orent rois ne roïne’ (8). We might see Piramus and Tisbé sharing royal status by association; we might also note that beautiful children can be viewed as increasing the worth of their parents. ‘Dui home’ (2) and the repeated ‘deus enfans’ (5, 9) link Piramus and Tisbé by the parallel created, but also emphasize their subordinate status as children; the repetition of ‘li riche home’ (5, 9) consolidates the power of the parents who will

separate them. Piramus and Tisbé are placed within a society, subject to the dictates of its hierarchies, which for them, most immediately, means subject to their parents. Youth is subject to age.

A new force enters the text, as the youth of Piramus and Tisbé is connected to *Amours*. While in the *Metamorphoses* we read simply 'tempore crevit amor' (IV. 60), *Piramus et Tisbé* specifically places the origins of the relationship between the couple in early youth:

Ancois qu'il eüssent set ans
Toucha Amours les deus enfans. (13-14)

As in *Aucassin et Nicolette*, *Floire et Blanchefleur* and the *Lai de l'Espine*, the relationship between Piramus and Tisbé begins in childhood.⁶⁹ Youth is taken to the extreme, which could be seen as the expression of the view that, if youth is a positive quality, more is better. Perhaps more importantly, *Piramus et Tisbé* allows a glimpse of the reality of the union between Piramus and Tisbé. The repetition of the plural article in lines 17 to 21 may have a decorative function. It also serves to increase the density of the enumeration of the many factors of their common childhood which draw them together:

Li pers aëz, l'igaulz corages,
Lor grans biautez, lor grans parages,
Les paroles, li ris, li jeu
Et li aaisement del leu
Et li entreveoir souvent
Lor donnerent espirement. (17-22)

We see an idyllic relationship, where similarity brings a union which is reinforced by shared activities. Elements in the passage, however, bring conflict, which threatens

⁶⁹ *Aucassin et Nicolette: chantefable du XIIIe siècle*, ed. by Mario Roques, 2nd edn, *Classiques Français du Moyen Age*, 41 (Paris: Champion, 1936); *Floire et Blancheflor: édition du ms. 1447 du fonds français*, ed. by Margaret M. Pelan, 2nd edn, *Publications de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Strasbourg, Textes d'Étude*, 7 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1956); *Floire et Blancheflor: seconde version: édition du ms. 19152 du fonds français*, ed. by Margaret M. Pelan, *Association des Publications Près les Universités de Strasbourg* (Paris: Ophrys, [n.d]); for the *Lai de l'Espine*, see *Les*

the evocation of the idyll. *Espirement* (22), ‘hope’, a concept drawn from lyric poetry, in general brings implications of the hope of response, of reciprocity, of fulfilment. Piramus and Tisbé already share a close union, already acknowledge this bond. Perhaps their hope is of progression from their childhood relationship, of more than ‘les paroles, li ris, li jeu’ (19), but such a progression may expose their relationship to the intrusions of the adult world. Moreover, a temporal incongruity sets the very youth in which they are united in contradiction to love:

Toucha Amours les deus enfans,
Et navra plus en lor endroit
Que lor aëz ne requeroit. (14-16)

How should this be understood? As we cannot consider love *per se* as inappropriate for childhood, we must anticipate the development of a particular conception of love. Already, in these lines, we see *Amours* as an active force, with the associations of pain suggested by the verb *navrer*, ‘wound’, in line 15.

‘Haÿ, Amours, devant tes iex’ (23-44)

Modern editors of *Piramus et Tisbé*, by the use of the capital, suggest *Amours* to be an agent acting upon the lovers, distinguished thus from *amours* the emotion experienced. This editorial decision is given some validity by a shift at line 23, as the third-person narrative voice addresses ‘Amours’ directly: ‘Haÿ, Amours’ (23). Faral includes apostrophe among figures used for amplification. A distinction is made between the *apostropha* of the ancients – a turning from the judge to address an opponent – and that which medieval scholars understood by apostrophe, which falls under the heading of *exclamatio*, the address to any person or object. Faral, discussing the work of Cornificius, draws out two qualities of *exclamatio*:

L'exclamation sert à renforcer l'expression de la douleur ou de l'indignation en interpellant un homme, une ville, un lieu, un objet quelconque [...] quand la grandeur du sujet l'exige. (*Arts*, p. 71)

A possible misunderstanding of the *rei magnitudo* of Cornificius as 'ampleur de développement' may be responsible for the inclusion of apostrophe among the figures of amplification (*Arts*, pp. 70-75).

The apostrophe to 'Amours' which begins at line 23 of *Piramus et Tisbé* functions with dramatic effect. The scene evoked is the feudal court, a concept which has a dual significance at this point. The feudal lord, centre of the court, functions as law-giver, giving in exchange the means of survival. As the security of law becomes more firmly established, the community of the court, seeking more than safety, shelter and food, may turn to other aspects of human existence such as music, poetry, entertainment. This latter aspect of court life can be seen as the shift to apostrophe, suggesting a narrator who turns to 'Amours', recreates an oral delivery or a performance. The role of the court as a centre for law is also important, for the tone, stating the nature of 'Amours' as an unbeatable force, is accusing:

Haÿ, Amours, devant tes iex
Ne puet durer joenes ne viex. (23-24)

It is as though attention is drawn to a presence hitherto unnoticed in court, as a priest warns of a Satan ever-watchful to take advantage of human infirmity, and, although Piramus and Tisbé are associated with youth, the apostrophe implies that what is said will be pertinent to all ages, 'joenes' and 'viex' (24).

Apostrophe, as a rhetorical device, rarely produces a reply, and 'Amours', even faced with an accusation, remains silent. This allows the apostrophe to be extended, formulated as a structured discourse which articulates the accusation by means of a series of linked metaphors. We begin with the concept that love acts through the eyes:

Haÿ, Amours, devant tes iex

Ne puet durer joenes ne viex. (23-24)

The impossibility of withstanding introduces metaphors which draw on the vocabulary of battle. We see the unfailing arrow against which no armour is proof:

Il n'est jouvente ni aëz
 Qui de ton dart ne soit navrez.
 Contre ton dart n'a nulle essoigne
 Double haubers ne double broigne.
 Ta saiete ne set faillir. (25-29)

The particular terms used for armour help to situate the metaphor in a medieval context. We see also the term *garir*, which would be used of the protection owed by a feudal lord to his men, a protection which, it is implied, would be ineffectual against 'Amours', for:

Vers lui ne puet nulz homs garir. (30)

'Amours' cannot be contained by the normal means which society employs for the imposition of order.

The metaphor of the arrow is explored in some depth, and from several perspectives. Curiously, while it seems that the arrow causes no physical wound, draws no blood, there is an effect:

Sans douleur fait traire souspir,
 Sans sanc espandre fait palir. (31-32)

At one level, the verbs *souspir* and *palir* indicate the concept of love as sickness. The absence of a physical wound also serves to emphasize that the discourse is operating at a metaphorical level. A further development is seen with the use of allegory. Love's arrow of tradition is subjected to medieval expression through equivalence, as the parts of the arrow are used to represent the process and effects of being touched by love:

Li fers de ton dart porte feu,
 Souspirs la fleche dou mileu,
 Li penon engiens et priere,
 Douce amors la coche d'arriere.
 Li fers navre dou regarder
 Et la fleche coule el penser,
 Li penon font les apareulz,

La coiche ajouste les conseulz. (33-40)

Negative aspects of the experience are reinforced: by the use of *feu*, love as fire, uncontrollable and all-consuming; by the repetition of *souspir*; by the insistence on the association between love and a lethal weapon, which results from the detail of the exploration. Some ideas introduced fit with difficulty into this portrayal. The reference to 'engiens et priere' (35) might suggest the lovers using all possible means to achieve their goal. 'Douce amours' (36) evokes a more positive side to love, the paradox of the experience which is both pleasure and pain.

The apostrophe to 'Amours' functions on several levels. The opening passages of *Piramus et Tisbé*, beginning from the brief details found in the *Metamorphoses*, present a series of amplifications on the subject of the love between Piramus and Tisbé. The apostrophe to 'Amours' expands on and explains an earlier statement 'toucha Amours [...] navra' (14-15). Thus we can see apostrophe as a device to amplify and widen the scope of a topic. The written text gives the impression of being a record or recreation of an oral discourse. The implied setting for delivery is the medieval court, which unites the legal context appropriate to the original understanding of *apostropha* with a forum where performance and entertainment are important. The implied speaker is the cleric, faced with potentially conflicting demands from court and Church. The writer or composer of the text, the reader of Ovid's *Book*, resolves possible discord through the formal structure of the set piece apostrophe. Both within the fiction and outside the text we see an implied audience, perhaps living in a court society whose reality might be bounded more by physical discomfort and the exigencies of the feudal hierarchy, appreciating the intricate intellectual exploration through metaphor and carefully structured discourse. The audience are also involved in the subject under discussion: in the apostrophe we see an exploration of the universal, through a metaphorical development which

expresses the painful experience of all those subject to the power of 'Amours'; the overtones of a sermon only emphasize the implicit warning against 'Amours', both subject and addressee, *rei magnitudo*.

The apostrophe ends with the return to the third person at line 41, but the metaphor of the arrow maintains continuity of thought. The shift is from the second-person 'ton dart [...] ta saiete' (26-29) to the third-person 'de tel saiete' (41), from the general exploration of the nature of 'Amours' in the apostrophe to a particular case. In a further reflection of the structure used in a sermon,⁷⁰ the experience of Piramus and Tisbé is presented as an illustration of the truth of what has been said:

De tel saiete et de tel lance
Navra Amours en lor enfance
Le jovencel et la meschine,
Tresque la mort lor fu voisine. (41-44)

All the essential elements of the story of Piramus and Tisbé are present: their youth, their love, their death. Line 44 could suggest that love will be with them even to death, thus they may be seen as faithful; it could also be that 'Amours' is implicated in that death.

'Encor ne sevent riens d'Amours' (45-102)

Rather than answering questions about the events that lead to death, line 45 seems to begin a reiteration of material covered in the first 22 lines. We see again the relationship of Piramus and Tisbé in childhood (45-60). There is further emphasis on their superlative, and equal, beauty (61-68). Line 69 returns once more to their childhood. Several effects of techniques of *amplificatio* are at work. The essence of amplification is to continue to talk about the same subject, but in different ways, drawing on and drawing in many areas of human experience, to illuminate the central

theme. The amplification may seem to exist simply for the pleasure of the formal means used, the pleasure of playing with language. We might thus classify the hyperbole and the personification of nature which express the beauty of Piramus and Tisbé:

Tant com jaspes sormonte voirre,
 Et or argent, et primevoire
 A la marouste sormonté,
 Tant sormontoient de bonté
 Et de valour et de biauté
 Cil dui tous ceulz de la cité.
 Par grant conseil et par grant cure
 Et par grant sens les fist Nature. (61-68)

These elements, however, are not devoid of function. They signal a text where the particular way language is used will be important. They also re-emphasize qualities of the protagonists which link them and set them above others. The claim for the personal involvement of Nature in their affairs raises them in some measure to the level of the gods. This passage, though, is enclosed within sections of text which narrate their lives as human children, which limit their potential for transcendence.

The relationship between Piramus and Tisbé gains depth, compared with both the depiction in the *Metamorphoses* and that found earlier in *Piramus et Tisbé*. Details are glimpsed of childhood encounters, a whole life is implied, idyllic:

Par matinet chascun s'en emble,
 Si vont le jour jouer ensamble,
 Deduient soi o les enfans
 De lor aëz et de lor tans. (51-54)

Even so, there are hints of potential conflict, which are gradually explained. With 'Amours', a disturbing element enters the portrayal of innocent childhood encounters:

Encor ne sevent riens d' Amours,
 Si les a mis en grans freours.
 Ja lor plaist par matin lever

⁷⁰ On the *Artes Praedicandi*, and the use of *exempla* in medieval sermons, see Charles Smyth, *The Art of Preaching: A Practical Survey of Preaching in the Church of England, 747-1939* (London: S.P.C.K., 1953), pp. 19-98.

Et l'un de l'autre porpenser,
 Et jeüment plus que lor droit
 Et lor aëz ne requeroit.
 [...]
 Le jour pensent d'eulz esgarder,
 Qu'il ne s'en pueent saoler;
 Tart revienent a lor ostaulz
 Quar li departirs lor est mauz.
 Plaist lor a faire mainte chose
 Dont l'en moult les manace et chose. (45-60)

Their emotion is inappropriate for their age, it leads them to focus each exclusively on the other. They return home late, which suggests a neglect of other bonds in society.

In the relationship between Piramus and Tisbé, age becomes of crucial importance, and their situation alters with the passing of time. While still very young they enjoy freedom to meet and speak:

Tant com [...]
 Il furent dedans dis ans,
 Fu assez lor licence grans
 D'aler ensamble et de parler,
 D'esbanoier et de joer. (69-74)

They reveal their feelings, but this alone does not cause their parting, which is presented as the result of a combination of factors:

Li douz regars, li simples sens
 Et li non convenables temps,
 Et que nulz biens n'est sans envie
 Et nes uns sers sans felonie
 Les fist departir et garder,
 Qu'il ne porent ensamble aler. (75-80)

The significant element of the three is time, which leads to a change of attitude towards their intimacy. Time is bringing them to sexual maturity, and may involve physical desire in their relationship.

The brief summary of the separation of Piramus and Tisbé in lines 75 to 80 is amplified in the passages which follow. First, in lines 81 to 94, we see a dramatic presentation of the episode. As a servant warns Tisbé's mother, who instructs a chambermaid to ensure that Tisbé does not see Piramus, the rapid changes of

character, and the brief phrases of direct speech, recreate the sense of alarm felt at the sudden realization of a situation of potential danger. An answer given to the question raised by the *Metamorphoses* – why were the couple parted? – reinforces the importance of the social context. Action from the wider world breaks into the idyll enjoyed by Piramus and Tisbé. Significantly, it is the woman who is seen as needing strong control, which must be imposed from outside. There is also an echo of a feudal society which guards women of high status, to preserve virginity, in order that the parentage of offspring may be known with certainty to assure the preservation of lineage.

Further details are given concerning the reasons for separation in lines 95 to 102, which suggest that it will be final. A marriage is not possible because of a quarrel which arises between the two families. This explanation, with its suggestion of warring dynasties, also evokes medieval society. The information is puzzling in one way, however, for Tisbé is already separated from Piramus, forbidden to see him. Leena Löfstedt, in an article on the *Lai de l'Espine*, another medieval text which has as subject a love relationship with its origins in childhood, cites remarks by Gratian which shed light on medieval attitudes to this question. Seven years is seen as marking the end of early childhood; after this, the child can agree to a marriage. With sexual maturity there is the risk of a physical relationship preempting the marriage ceremony. Thus, the Church counsels the separation of cousins when a marriage is to take place, to avoid problems from the juxtaposition of sexual life and day-to-day living.⁷¹ Parallels can be seen in *Piramus et Tisbé*. We are told that before they are seven, Piramus and Tisbé experience love. No physical relationship is overtly attributed to them at this stage, but the implied conflict between their age and

'Amours' could suggest the potential. As they grow, this potential becomes evident to others, and they are parted. At this stage in the action, a marriage is not precluded, indeed the parting could be seen as evidence that a marriage is to take place. With the quarrel between the families, alliances change, and the marriage is no longer seen as a positive move. The parting seems definitive.

The treatment of the beginning of the story

Before considering how *Piramus et Tisbé* presents the experience of separation, let us summarize what we have learnt from the study of the opening passages of *Piramus et Tisbé*. The essential elements of the opening of *Piramus et Tisbé* can be traced to the *Metamorphoses*. Both texts present a couple, equal in youth and beauty, who from living near each other develop a bond which grows into love. *Piramus et Tisbé* amplifies the brief details found in the *Metamorphoses*, suggesting a different focus. The procedure in operation is interesting, as the amplifications of the Latin found in the French text are themselves developed, adding more information, with in some ways an effect parallel to that achieved by the multiple views on an event or idea offered by the *laisses similaires* of the *chansons de geste*. In *Piramus et Tisbé*, and other medieval texts, the original amplification then stands as a brief summary, which may seem obscure until clarified by later passages of the text, several of which might contribute to the eventual understanding of the reader or audience.

Concepts can be seen from several traditions. The emphasis on the youth and beauty of Piramus and Tisbé could be a reflection of the celebration of youth in lyric poetry, itself perhaps an extension of the association between spring, youth and love. In addition, the possession of superlative qualities allows the protagonists the

⁷¹ Leena Löfstedt, 'Une Nouvelle Lecture du *Lai de l'Espine*', *Neophilologische Mitteilungen*, 2 (2000), 253-59 (253-54).

possibility for transcendence. Lyric poetry presents a relationship largely free from constraints other than those imposed by the one loved. In *Piramus et Tisbé* the ideal is suggested, but the youth of the protagonists is also linked to the reality of their lives, social and physical in combination. We see the introduction of specific narrative circumstances within which the convention takes place, and within which it may be explored. Piramus and Tisbé are first presented almost as two halves of one whole. As they grow older, this potential for perfect union is disrupted by forces outside their control. The possibility for physical passion comes into conflict with what society demands of them, resulting in separation.

1.2.2 THE EXPERIENCE OF SEPARATION

The way that the experience of separation from the beloved is expressed is significantly different in *Piramus et Tisbé* from the brief lines which intervene between the parental veto and the introduction of the wall in the *Metamorphoses*.

Here we find:

quod non potuere vetare,
ex aequo captis ardebant mentibus ambo.
consciis omnis abest; nutu signisque loquuntur,
quoque magis tegitur, tectus magis aestuat ignis. (IV. 61-64)

[Still, what no parents could forbid, sore smitten in heart they burned with mutual love. They had no go-between, but communicated by nods and signs; and the more they covered up the fire, the more it burned.] (p. 183)

The fire metaphor expresses two aspects of the experience of Pyramus and Thisbe: the pain that they feel, and the fact that forbidding meetings does not end love, indeed, causes it to increase. Attempts to communicate continue. *Piramus et Tisbé* begins to consider the wall at line 304, suggesting that again there is an expansion of the Latin. Perhaps the most notable difference is in the use of person. First, immediately following the account of the quarrel between the families of Piramus and Tisbé, a passage of third-person narrative presents the effects of the separation.

There is then a change, with the direct reporting of the words of Piramus and Tisbé.

We can identify the following sections:

‘Li dui enfant sont en destroit’	(103-42)	[Third Person]
‘Hé, las!’ fet il, ‘chetif dolent’	(143-95)	[Piramus]
‘Ains qu’il peüst son duel fenir’	(196-211)	[Third Person]
‘Lasse’, fet elle, ‘Com male ore’	(212-97)	[Tisbé]
‘La pucele est trois fois pasmee’	(298-303)	[Third Person]

Close analysis will demonstrate how each treats the material from the *Metamorphoses*.

‘Li dui enfant sont en destroit’ (102-42)

As in the *Metamorphoses*, separation brings unhappiness for the couple, and also causes their love to grow:

Li dui enfant sont en destroit;
 Li uns n’ot l’autre ne ne voit:
 Moult lor samble griez la devise
 Que lor parens ont entr’aulz mise.
 Mes ce que l’en les garde plus –
 Tysbé n’ose issir fors de l’us
 Ne Piramus vers lui garder –
 Fet plus lor amour aviver. (103-10)

In *Piramus et Tisbé*, time contributes to an increase in both pain and love. As Piramus and Tisbé approach maturity, an appropriate age for a physical love which they are prevented from satisfying, we see a density of rhetorical figures, particularly *repetitio*, which evokes the intensification of the suffering experienced:

Andui croissent selonc lor tens:
 Croist lor aëz et croist lor sens,
 Croist lor ardours et croist lor plaie,
 Et croist li feus que riens n’apaie,
 Croist lor amours et lor aëz,
 Et ja orent quinze ans passez.
 Et puis qu’il vindrent en jouvent
 Et il choisirent escient
 Et lor aëz s’ahert au cours
 Ou nature choisist amours,
 Adont nes lessent plus guerir
 Li lonc penser, li grief souspir,

Les grans dolours, li fort complaint;
Li durs tormens au cuer lor maint. (110-24)

The experience is expressed in the same terms as were used in the apostrophe to 'Amours' earlier in the poem: love is torment, wound or sickness, fire. We see that Piramus and Tisbé do indeed demonstrate the truth of the accusations, accusations that anticipate, that become prophetic. The metaphors are developed and connected, emphasizing the physical effects. There is no relief:

Dementent soi et nuit et jour;
Toute lor vie est en dolour;
Plorent, plaignent chascuns par soi,
Ne sevent d'eulz prendre conroi. (125-28)

We see the *topos* of the remedy which cannot be found:

Ne ne pueent trouver remire
Ne par mecine ne par mire. (129-30)

Fire burns within them; the metaphor expresses both the internal and the physical:

Li feux lor siet dedens les os,
Qui ne lor lesse avoir repos,
Ains les travaille jor et nuit
Et de mortel ardor les cuit.
Cil feux et cele flame seule
Retrait les ners et art la meule,
Tault la vertu, change biauté,
Et chace tout alegiereté. (131-38)

Line 137, 'tault la vertu, change biauté', used of love as fire, could also be an extension of the battle metaphor, or of the concept of love as sickness. It also evokes the contrast between 'then' and 'now', which Margaret Alexiou notes as a feature of Greek ritual laments for the dead.⁷² The power of 'Amours', foretold when the text still presented the idyll, has wrought this change in Piramus and Tisbé.

Piramus et Tisbé expands the fire metaphor from the *Metamorphoses*, reinforcing the equation that separation from the beloved equals suffering. We see a further development, for interwoven with the metaphorical exploration of the effects

⁷² Margaret Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974), pp. 165-71.

of separation are references to the use of sound to express suffering: ‘li grief souspir’ (122), ‘li fort complaint’ (123), ‘dementent soi’ (125), ‘plorent, plaignent’ (127), ‘demente soi’ (142). At this point in the story, where the *Metamorphoses* is silent, *Piramus et Tisbé* presents the words of Piramus and Tisbé in the form of two long sections of first-person discourse. Each speaks in turn: first we hear Piramus, in the passage which begins ‘Hé, las!’ fet il, ‘chetif dolent’ (143-95), then Tisbé speaks, ‘Lasse’, fet elle, ‘Com male ore’ (212-97). This difference between the two texts makes study of these passages particularly helpful in drawing out some of the features of the first-person voice in the French text.

References to the speech of Piramus and Tisbé are interwoven through the opening passages of *Piramus et Tisbé*. It is interesting that, despite its physical potential, their relationship is expressed through the concept of speech. Among the activities which contribute to their idyllic childhood we find the ‘paroles’ (19) they speak together. Until they are ten years old they have freedom ‘d’aler ensamble et de parler’ (73). Their separation means that ‘il ne porent ensamble aler’ (80); by implication, speech together is also prevented; indeed, at this point, manuscript A has an interesting variant: ‘ne porent ainz plus parler’ (Eley, p. 148, line 92). The quarrel between the families not only precludes a marriage between Piramus and Tisbé, but even makes it impossible ‘d’envoier entr’eulz message’ (102). They cannot communicate even by means of an intermediary. As we have noted, when the lovers are separated, sound and speech are still important. It is fascinating that the text does not give access to the words spoken by Piramus and Tisbé in the idyllic stage of their relationship, only to those spoken when they are separated.

The transition to the words of Piramus is achieved gradually in the sequence of passages which precede them. Third-person narration, with the brief sequence of

direct speech from the servant and Tisbé's mother, recounts the circumstances which lead to separation: first, the closeness of Piramus and Tisbé is noticed and measures are taken to part them (75-94), then the quarrel between their two families sets the separation firmly in place (95-102). The third person continues, but there is a change of perspective, as it concentrates less on events and more on the result for Piramus and Tisbé. As the text effects this change of focus from external action to the experience of the individual, there is the use of vocabulary and motifs which might be associated with lyric poetry. The presentation of their experience amplifies the brief treatment given by the *Metamorphoses*:

ex aequo captis ardebant mentibus ambo [...]

quoque magis tegitur, tectus magis aestuat ignis (IV. 62-64)

[sore smitten in heart they burned with mutual love [...] the more they

covered up the fire, the more it burned] (p. 183)

Links are also created with the opening passages of the text, through the parallels with the apostrophe to 'Amours'. There is then a shift from the third person plural to the third person singular:

Piramus est plains de tristour,
 Plains de souspir et plains de plour,
 Plains de penser et plains de cure.
 Demente soi en tel mesure. (139-42)

The opening of *Piramus et Tisbé* forms a gradual, carefully motivated, transition to the words of Piramus and Tisbé. The nature of the love between Piramus and Tisbé is such that separation equals suffering, which finds its outlet in words. As the poem moves from the third person account of the anguish experienced by the lovers to the first-person presentation of the words with which they express their pain, the extent and complexity of their discourse suggests that the formulation of their experience in language becomes the impetus for the text.

‘Hé, las!’ fet il, ‘chetif dolent’ (143-95)

The mode of expression as Piramus speaks needs some study. In the lines which provide the immediate transition to his words we have seen the progression which associates them with his suffering:

Piramus est plains de tristour,
Plains de souspir et plains de plour,
Plains de penser et plains de cure.
Demente soi en tel mesure. (139-42)

There is a change of term, from *parler*, used earlier in the poem, to *se dementer* (142). The repetition of ‘plains de’ in the preceding lines evokes an excess of pain forcing its way into words. As Piramus ceases speaking, we find the term ‘son duel’ (196), used in such a way as to make *duel* analogous with his discourse.

As has been mentioned, the extended passages of direct speech in *Piramus et Tisbé* display a different metre to the octosyllabic rhyming couplets used in the rest of the poem. The passage which begins ‘Hé, las!’ fet il, ‘chetif dolent’ (143-95) is composed in the metre characteristic of the majority of the direct speech: a pattern which follows a bisyllable with a short group of octosyllables in rhyme with it, giving a lyric or musical quality. Here, thirteen sections are found, with between two and four octosyllables following each bisyllable; no bisyllable is found in the first section. The rhyme shows great variety, a clear display of technical skill: -ent (143-46), -our (147-51), -as (152-55), -oi (156-59), -ai (160-64), -ort (165-68), -ais (169-72), -ier (173-76), -ault (177-80), -eu (181-83), -ie (184-87), -ours (188-91), -er (192-95). The rhyme sounds remain soft, giving a plaintive effect to the first-person voice. We can see a potential tension, for the characteristics of form suggest a song, a crafted piece of text, but the passage purports to be the words of Piramus, spoken from great pain. It might be that ‘Hé, las!’ fet il, ‘chetif dolent’ represents one thing to the writer of *Piramus et Tisbé*, and something else to Piramus himself.

At first impression, Piramus's words might seem an unstructured outpouring of anguish, stringing together conventions used to express the effect of unfulfilled love: love as pain, love as fire, love which if not fulfilled will lead to death. The presence of the bisyllabic lines divides the text into 'stanzas', which might allow a structured lyric, following the pattern of the *chansons*. In *Piramus et Tisbé* the sense is not confined to these 'stanzas', which do not end with a *reprise*. We see Piramus turn to a series of addressees. Indeed, it is interesting that, although the first instinct is to consider the passage as an example of first-person direct speech, while the words of Piramus are given directly, the focus moves between first and second person. A range of forms of second person address, from diverse fields, are of potential relevance to discussion of the way emotions are presented in Piramus's words. Biblical models for the expression of suffering could be seen in the Psalms, or in prayer in general. Techniques of apostrophe also offer a means for the articulation of pain. That the suffering experienced by Piramus results from his separation from Tisbé also draws in the field of love poetry. It is perhaps significant that in all these models, in a literary context, there is communication of emotion from the speaker, but rarely a response from the one addressed.

Piramus begins in the first person, the focus on self:

'Hé, las!' fet il, 'chetif dolent,
Soufferrai longues cest torment?
Tous tens ai duel, joie noient,
Et com plus me duel, plus m'esprent
Amour.' (143-47)

The density of vocabulary related to suffering suggests an experience so intense that Piramus, in his analysis of his emotional situation, can see no alternative. 'Hé, las! [...] chetif dolent' (143), begins Piramus. In line 145 'duel' opposes and overpowers 'joie'. The rhyme in the first four lines emphasizes that Piramus sees his suffering as all pervasive: 'dolent [...] torment [...] joie noient' (143-45). The question in line

144 evokes the words of biblical characters afflicted or tested by God: Job crying out for an explanation, or the Psalmist, or Christ upon the cross. ‘Soufferrai longues cest torment?’; the effect is of pain so strong that it forces itself from the speaker. A biblical text might include the implied response from a God who hears all. Pirus voices an apostrophe to an entity who is not named. The parallel evokes the persona of ‘Amours’, the god of love.

Pirus begins with a statement, with internal focus, of a state of suffering in which he is passive. With the verbal ‘duel’ and the rhyme word ‘esprent’ of line 146 there is the move to the idea that this state of suffering is due to an external agent, ‘Amour’ (147), which first gains emphasis from standing alone as a bisyllable, then acts as a point of articulation between the first four lines and the next group of octosyllables:

‘Amour.
Je mens, certes, ains est ardur
Qui ensi vient de jour en jour,
Si taint ma face et ma coulour,
Com fait la fueille la froidour.’ (147-51)

As Pirus contradicts himself ‘je mens’ (148), we see the development of his thought. We see a questioning of the very nature of ‘Amour’, as previous conceptions are undermined by the effects experienced. The comparison of those effects to those of frost on a leaf suggests the fragility of Pirus pitted against such a foe. We also hear an echo of the hyperbole which, earlier in the poem, describes the lovers:

Tant com jaspes sormonte voirre,
Et or argent, et primevoire
A la marouste sormonté,
Tant sormontoient de bonté
Et de valour et de biauté
Cil dui tous ceulz de la cité. (61-66)

Against ‘Amour’, even those of possessed of such superlative qualities are unable to withstand.

Suffering forces expression in words, but Piramus receives no response. As he continues, rapid shifts suggest desperation:

‘Hé las!
 Hé, Piramus, quel la feras?
 En quel guise te contendras?
 Hay, pere qui m’engendras,
 Pourquoi
 N’as tu ore pitié de moi?
 Se tu ne prens autre conroi,
 Ou par enging ou par desroi
 Feraï,
 Tysbé, bele, que te verrai,
 Ou se ce non pour toi morrai.
 Saches, se par amours ne t’ai,
 Que par force te ravirai.’ (152-64)

Second person pronouns are used, but the person addressed may not always be the same. As the bisyllable ‘hé las!’ (152) echoes his first sounds, the sigh of the lover, Piramus turns briefly to himself, but uses the second person. His self-questioning brings no answers; lacking resources, he must seek outside himself. As Piramus addresses a succession of potential sources of help, it is not always clear to whom he speaks. With ‘hay, pere qui m’engendras’ (155), Piramus could be addressing his own father or God. The sense continues through the bisyllable to complete a question which could be addressed to either. The question itself reinforces the impression that Piramus looks to others for solutions: ‘pourquoi / n’as tu ore pitié de moi?’ (156-57). Lines 158 to 160 also present words whose intended recipient is not at once clear. Piramus slips from the address to ‘pere’ to apostrophe to Tysbé, but the use of the second person pronoun ‘tu’, common to both, masks the shift, which only becomes evident with the name ‘Tysbé’ of line 161:

‘Se tu ne prens autre conroi,
 Ou par enging ou par desroi
 Feraï,
 Tysbé, bele, que te verrai,
 Ou se ce non pour toi morrai.
 Saches, se par amours ne t’ai,
 Que par force te ravirai.’ (158-64)

Here we see the possibility that, if others cannot help, Piramus himself will act. The first-person future verbs imply a definite intent of future action, while the gradation ‘par enging [...] par desroi [...] par force’ (159-64) suggest an increasing willingness to employ any means, even violence, to resolve the situation.

The thoughts expressed in Piramus’s words are more complex than at first they appear. Piramus will act only if others do not, if Tisbé does not respond: we see the opposition ‘par amours ne t’ai’ (163) / ‘par force’ (164). The weakened potential for sustained action is further undercut by ‘se ce non pour toi morrai’ (162). We see the *topos* which presents unfulfilled love as leading to death. Furthermore, we can see an allusion to the convention which relates lack of fulfilment to the absence of a response from the woman loved, who thus becomes implicitly to blame for the death of the lover. The story of Pyramus and Thisbe provides a context where this *topos* appears at first curiously inappropriate: the love between Piramus and Tisbé is reciprocal and acknowledged, therefore Piramus cannot justly lay blame on Tisbé for a lack of response which carries within it the potential for his death. Nevertheless, Piramus will die because of Tisbé, and to an extent because of her actions. We see a manipulation of the *topos*, which could lead to appreciation of the irony which makes the new context appropriate.

The link between love and death is developed, with the idea that, if love cannot be fulfilled, death is not only inevitable, but is also an escape from continued suffering:

‘La mort
Iert mon refuge et mon confort,
S’aulques me tient cis malz si forz
Ou se longues m’est fais cis torz.’ (165-68)

The phrase used by Piramus of death, ‘mon refuge et mon confort’ (166), could be a return to the imagery presenting the experience of love as an assault by an unbeatable

foe. The phrase also has a biblical resonance, intriguing in the context of the death which is sought. It is also significant that, while death, at least in a wordly, physical relationship, would seem the last step, an end to the struggle, the final closure, these lines are not the close of Piramus's words, but lie at approximately the mid point of his discourse. It is as though, at least for now, Piramus turns from this potential surcease. Nevertheless, although the rhyme words lead us in succession from 'confort' (166) to 'maus si fort' (167) and then to 'torz' (168), with its implications of a wrongness, the thing that should not be, it is not suicide that Piramus rejects as inherently wrong, but the situation which separates him from Tisbé.

We see Piramus move from a brief consideration of the quietude offered by death to an attempt to refuse, in words at least, the circumstances which cause his suffering:

'Torz fais?
 Hé, dieux, pourquoi n'est fais cis plais
 Que nos parens fussent em pais?
 N'etissons mie tant d'agais.
 Gaitier?
 Ne je ne puis tant exploitier
 Que je trouvasse messagier
 Que je li peüsse envoyer.' (169-76)

'Hé, dieux' (170) seems almost accusing when followed by the reference to lack of peace between the two families. All is related to the love relationship: the many sentries who might be expected in a time of conflict are given importance because they prevent Piramus from reaching Tisbé even by messenger. The theme of communication resurfaces.

The gods have not intervened to impose peace between the families, Piramus can do nothing, except call for an end to his pain:

'Cui chault?
 Ne monte riens, se dieux me sault.
 Haÿ, peres qui mains en hault,
 Estain le feu qui si m'assault,
 Le feu
 Qui m'a tolu et ris et jeu.

Ne puis guerir en nesun leu.' (177-83)

Curiously, it seems that the Christian God implied by 'peres qui mains en hault' (179) is asked to act against 'le feu' (180) which is perhaps more the province of a pagan god of love. The repetition of 'le feu' (181) first accentuates its effects on Piramus, then leads to a brief reflection which reminds us of the lost 'ris et jeu' (182), the lost idyll of the childhood relationship with Tisbé.

Piramus seeks an end to his pain: Does he wish to stop loving Tisbé? As Piramus continues, a further apostrophe to Tisbé can suggest that she is the cause of his misery:

'Amie,
Pour vous est ma coulour perie,
Mon cors navré, ma chars percie.
Bele, pour vous despens ma vie
En plours.' (184-88)

Despite the change to the use of the second person plural 'vous', which seems hard to explain, there are parallels with Piramus's earlier statement 'pour toi morrai' (162). Here we see a number of physical effects which, as the result of battle wounds or the symptoms of an illness, continue metaphors used earlier to express the experience of love. There are also parallels with the formulation of the effects of death of a lament; Piramus laments his own altered state. It would seem reasonable for him to want love to end, if this would end his suffering. His attitude might be clarified by further consideration of lines 185 to 186, whose biblical echo can otherwise be puzzling. Piramus states 'pour vous est [...] mon cors navré, ma chars percie' (185-86), evoking the wounds suffered by Christ on the cross, and creating a parallel which seems inappropriate. Nevertheless, there is a similarity, if we view both Christ and Piramus as willingly suffering pain for love.

Piramus seeks a return to a state before suffering, seeks the restoration of the lost union with Tisbé:

'Consente moi li dieux d'amours
 Qu'encor la tiengne nuit ou jours,
 Ou a leesce ou a dolours!' (189-91)

The brief prayer prompts the thought 'be careful what you ask of the gods'. The ironic difference between the desires of Piramus and the way his request will be fulfilled recalls the human misunderstandings of the oracle at Delphi and evokes the Classical view of humankind as the playthings of the gods.

As material from the *Metamorphoses* is developed in *Piramus et Tisbé*, the role assigned to the gods proves intriguing. While in the *Metamorphoses* as a whole we do see humans subject to the whims of the gods, in the passages which tell the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, those gods seem largely absent. No mention is made of Jupiter or of Juno, and events seem less the result of supernatural intervention and more the consequences of human actions. When the gods are mentioned, it is as an anonymous presence, as narratorial comment confirms the effect of Thisbe's final pleas:

vota tamen tetigere deos, tetigere parentes;
 nam color in pomo est, ubi permaturuit, ater,
 quodque rogis superest, una requiescit in urna. (IV. 164-66)

[Her prayers touched the gods and touched the parents; for the colour of the mulberry fruit is dark red when it is ripe, and all that remained from both funeral pyres rests in a common urn.] (p. 191)

In *Piramus et Tisbé*, absence becomes a profusion of presences. Cadot notes that the French text greatly increases references to pagan deities and religious practices. Some are considered to represent automatic usage. Others, such as the use of 'Amours' to designate an outside agent, the references to Venus, the term *temple*, create a text which seems more strongly pagan (pp. 439-44).

This intensification of pagan religious elements in *Piramus et Tisbé* proves interesting when compared with the portrayal of classical deities in other medieval texts. As Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski notes, classical mythology was transmitted to

the medieval period in several ways, allowing differing perspectives on the gods, who could become untrustworthy, dangerous demonic forces or the means for the exploration of aesthetic or philosophical concepts.⁷³ Jean Seznec indicates four traditions which assured the survival of the pagan gods: the historical, the physical, the moral and the encyclopedic.⁷⁴ The historical, or euhemeristic, with its portrayal of the pagan gods and goddesses as historical, human figures, might seem the most appropriate for the medieval Christian context. A different response to mythology is found in the medieval Latin commentaries on classical texts. Macrobius, in the *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, distinguishes fable from the more significant *narratio fabulosa*, a distinction which allows the belief that poetry can contain truth beneath the surface, or *integumentum*, of the text.⁷⁵ For the scholars this led to intricate interpretations, described variously by more recent scholars as allegory or moralization. As Logié remarks:

Il s'agit de la tradition morale, fondée sur le mode allégorique: le mythe ne dit pas ce qu'il dit; il faut l'interpréter pour en saisir le sens véritable.
(p. 233)

Such a tradition, already found in the *Mitologiae* of Fulgentius (Logié, p. 234), becomes particularly significant in the writings of the scholars at Chartres in the twelfth century, most notably in the commentary on the *Aeneid* attributed to Bernardus Silvestris.⁷⁶

Common to the varied responses to classical mythology is the presentation of the pagan gods as dispossessed of their nature as truly divine beings. This diminished

⁷³ Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, 'The Gods as Metaphor in the *Roman de Thèbes*', *Modern Philology*, 83 (1985), 1-11 (p. 1). See also Philippe Logié, *L'Énéas: une traduction au risque de l'invention*, Nouvelle Bibliothèque du Moyen Âge, 48 (Paris: Champion, 1999), pp. 221-35.

⁷⁴ Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition in Renaissance Humanism and Art*, trans. by Barbara F. Sessions, Bollingen Series, 38 (New York: Pantheon, 1953), pp. 11-147.

⁷⁵ Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, 'The Gods as Metaphor', pp. 1-2.

status, and its consequent loss of power to effect change in the affairs of humankind, appears evident as we turn from Latin to the vernacular, to the *romans antiques*.⁷⁷

Moreover, pagan religious practices, with seeming anachronism, are presented in terms appropriate to the twelfth-century context; as Daniel Poirion notes of the *Enéas*:

Il'y a là une tentative pour comprendre la religion antique à partir de l'expérience religieuse médiévale.⁷⁸

It would seem that *Piramus et Tisbé* provides a contrast, increasing the slight role of the pagan gods found in the Latin, rather than diminishing a powerful presence. Nevertheless, in all the texts, the gods do retain a role, and may have a function in the text which is not always at once apparent. Poirion suggests that in the *Enéas*:

Le panthéon mythologique n'est [...] pas réduit à une sorte d'évhémérisme ni à une figuration christologique. Il est recentré. [...] Le mythologie ainsi réduite renforce le mythe du héros fondateur d'une cité. (p. 215)

We can see a text in part political, lending support to the Norman settlement in England (p. 216), in part moral, revealing 'l'idéal du prince' (pp. 216-18). Significantly, such didactic purpose is fulfilled through the 'transposition poétique de la mythologie' (p. 219). Blumenfeld-Kosinski argues that in the *Roman de Thebes* also the role of the gods is not eliminated, but adapted, to permit a critique of war and emphasis on the value of learning (pp. 5-11).

The gods thus gain a new function in the *romans antiques*, allowing the exploration of 'didactic and moral preoccupations' (Blumenfeld-Kosinski, p. 5). We must consider the significance of their portrayal in *Piramus et Tisbé*. Cadot suggests that the increased paganisation of the French text, compared with the Latin, should

⁷⁶ Francine Mora-Lebrun, *L'Enéide médiévale et la naissance du roman*, Perspectives Littéraires (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994), pp. 87-145.

⁷⁷ See, on the *Enéas* for example, Logié, pp.177-85.

be seen as a device to place at a certain distance a love which is of overwhelming power and leads to death, a concept which might seem in contradiction to Christian belief (pp 445-47). Close analysis shows that in *Piramus et Tisbé* the gods assume a complex role, functioning often at a micro-textual level, most notably in the passages of direct speech. Indeed, Eley comments that:

one curious effect of our poet's preoccupation with the emotional analysis of his protagonists is that it leads him to enhance the role of the pagan gods, rather than to attenuate it like the authors of the *romans antiques*' (p. 24).

It is not always easy to differentiate instances which might represent the reproduction of habitual recourse to the name of God from examples which constitute deliberate indication of a pagan context, and the blurring can have an interesting effect.

In 'Hé, las!' fet il, 'chetif dolent' (143-95) Piramus makes continued appeals to deities, who are not always clearly defined. As he draws to a close, the phrase 'li dieux d'amours' (189) could be read in two ways. The term *Amours*, the violence associated with the effects of this entity, the mention of the 'temple Veneris' (202) in the lines of third person narrative which follow his words, might predispose us to see the indication of a pagan god of passionate love. The Christian God also, we might note, can be named as a God of Love. Interwoven with words which invoke the power of a deity to resolve the situation which causes him to suffer, Piramus also speaks words to Tisbé. This, particularly with the sometimes indeterminate second person pronouns, can have the effect of causing Piramus to appear to set Tisbé as equal to God. We can see also a warning. Piramus expresses his suffering in structures which have parallels in the words of biblical characters, particularly those

⁷⁸ Daniel Poirion, 'De l'*Enéide* à l'*Eneas*: mythologie et moralisation', *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, 19 (1976), 213-29 (p. 223).

of the Old Testament, tested by God. The God of the New Testament is a God of Love, the God of the Old Testament is not mocked.

The words of Píramus, ‘Hé, las!’ fet il, ‘chétif dolent’ (143-95), can function on several levels. The directly reported speech of the protagonist can add to characterization, offering a Píramus who is passive, expressing his pain and calling on outside forces for help. The passage can make a more subtle contribution to our response to *Píramus et Tisbé*. Píramus speaks aloud, but this might be a device to render the silent internal discourse which would otherwise be inaccessible. The content and form of the discourse are significant, drawing on several traditions. We see an illustration of the effects of love as they are explored in the apostrophe to ‘Amours’, reinforcing the conception of love as suffering. It is only when there is separation from the beloved that love brings suffering. The tension between love and separation provides the impulse for much lyric poetry. Love is associated with pain and death but also with the language which expresses the experience. In *Píramus et Tisbé* we are provided with narrative circumstances which cause the separation of the lovers. Píramus reacts appropriately, with words, using terms which align him with those who employ such concepts: love as pain, wound, fire, leading to death.

As Píramus speaks, apostrophe is the means by which he is shown as structuring his thoughts. The use of the second person facilitates the blending of structures and concepts from love poetry, from biblical and liturgical texts, and from the formal study of rhetoric. The shifting focus of his words can suggest the confusion of unspoken thought. Formal rhetorical structures, however, imply the attempt to formulate thought clearly, in a discourse intended to be heard by others. The appeals of Píramus, his refusal to accept, seem without effect. The universe does

not change, at the centre of the speech death remains, and he himself falls silent, overwhelmed by the physical symptoms which fill the text:

'Pasmere
M'estuet errant; ne puis parler.
Or sui hetiez, or vueil plorer,
Ore ai grant chault, or vueil trambler.' (192-95)

Piramus speaks alone and receives no response, save from the audience of the text.

The response he seeks is from Tisbé.

'Ains qu'il peüst son duel fenir' (196-211)

A brief passage of sixteen lines of third-person narrative intervenes between the words of Piramus, 'Hé, las!' fet il, 'chetif dolent' (143-95), and those of Tisbé, 'Lasse', fet elle, 'Com male ore' (212-97). In the first eleven lines the focus remains with Piramus:

Ains qu'il peüst son duel fenir
Li prist la face a empalir;
En lermes et en plorement
Chey pasmez ou pavement.
Empres grant piece est relevez,
Tous tristes, tous descolorez,
Vait s'ent au temple Veneris,
Couche soi sus le marbre bis,
Une priere a commencie
Qu'ele li doinst avoir baillie
De parler a Tysbé s'amie. (196-206)

The effect of the physical symptoms experienced by Piramus is confirmed. He is unable to finish his words; when he speaks again it is in the temple of Venus, as again he pleads with an outside force for help. Here the text reports only the sense of what Piramus says, not his exact words. Significantly, his prayer is to 'parler a Tysbé s'amie' (206).

The final lines of this passage shift the focus to Tisbé herself:

Tysbé rest la dedens enclose:
Fors dou palais issir nen ose. (207-08)

There is the potential for a different perspective on the woman than that presented in the words of the male lover. It may seem that this potential will be ignored; so abrupt

is the shift from Tisbé as object to Tisbé as subject that line 207 creates, for a brief instant, the impression that, like a sacred virgin in the very temple where Piramus speaks, she hears his words. This would make any actions and words of hers a response to his. However, although Tisbé may be seen as having an allegiance to Venus, the walls that enclose her are the physical walls of her home. Thus there is no direct response to Piramus. Tisbé's physical and emotional state is summarized in lines 209 to 211:

Souvent remembre ses amours,
Souvent mue le jour colours,
Souvent se plaint et sovent plore. (209-11)

These lines recall the lines which introduced the words of Piramus:

Piramus est plains de tristour,
Plains de souspir et plains de plour,
Plains de penser et plains de cure.
Demente soi en tel mesure. (139-42)

In both cases we see the use of *repetitio*: the 'plains de' (139-41) which emphasizes the extent of Piramus's unhappiness is matched by the 'souvent' (209-11) used of Tisbé. The similar structure is reinforced by the elements which constitute Tisbé's unhappy state: the idea that Piramus is 'plains de penser' (141) is matched by the expression 'remembre ses amours' (209); like Piramus, Tisbé weeps and expresses her emotions aloud: 'se plaint et [...] plore' (211). Although Tisbé is not responding to the words spoken by Piramus, a link is established. The transition to Tisbé's speech 'Lasse', fet elle, 'com male ore' (212-97), as with that to Piramus's 'Hé, las!' fet il, 'chetif dolent' (143-195), can be traced throughout the earlier part of the text. The nature of love is formulated in universal terms in the apostrophe to 'Amours' (23-40), then illustrated by the story of Piramus and Tisbé. Third-person narration tells of the events which lead them to be separated, then of how they experience this separation. The physical and mental effects produced in them are described in joint terms, then there is a focus on each in turn, followed in each case by direct reporting

of their words, first Piramus and now Tisbé. Thus we can see that there is a coherent thread, from the opening passages of the poem, to the mind of Tisbé, and finally to the words she speaks. We see paired speeches, but Tisbé is not responding directly to the words spoken by Piramus: both respond, in parallel, to the effects of 'Amours'.

'Lasse', fet elle, 'Com male ore' (212-97)

As Tisbé speaks, the first person is marked by a change of metre, from octosyllabic rhyming couplets to the same form used for the words of Piramus: a bisyllable sets the rhyme for a group of octosyllables. The first line spoken by Tisbé, however, completes a rhyming couplet which forms part of the preceding third-person narrative, linking her words to the circumstances in which they are spoken. As in 'Hé, las!' fet il, 'chetif dolent' (143-95) the sense is not confined by the divisions marked by the bisyllables. These function in two main ways, either continuing an idea, perhaps with subtle developments, or marking a sharp shift of thought.

Lines 212 to 223 demonstrate the first pattern, as Tisbé begins to express her emotional situation in words:

'Lasse', fet elle, 'Com male ore
 Fui nee!
 Hé, diex, com male destinee,
 Com dure vie m'est donee!
 Ains mes ne fu nulle esgardee
 En vie,
 Qui par savoir ou par voidie
 Ne setist engigner boisdie,
 Fors moi.
 Mes quant je plus pens et mains voi,
 En quel guise prendrai conroi,
 Amis douz, de parler a toi?'

Tisbé first two lines introduce the concept of ill fortune, *male ore* (212), and by associating this with her birth create the impression that she sees her whole life as marked by the suffering she now experiences. In the two lines that follow, Tisbé confirms that this is her reading of the situation: by 'male destinee' (214), which reinforces the sense of 'male ore' (212), and by 'dure vie' (215). We see the

character creating her own narrative, presenting her situation as extreme and thus placing herself above others who have suffered. These others are introduced in line 216, not by name, but by the feminine adjective ‘esgardee’ (216). Tisbé may be speaking hypothetically, or may be associating herself with historical or fictional characters; ‘ains mes’ (216) shows that she sees her situation as infinitely more difficult, thus of greater significance, than theirs.

Interesting terms describe how others have found a way past the obstacles which impeded them, while Tisbé can see no way to do the same. *Savoir* (218) implies knowledge, intelligence, wisdom, the faculty of reason. *Engigner* (219), particularly in combination with *voisdie / boisdie* (218 / 219), has connotations of cunning and manipulation, frequently associated with women. The placing of ‘fors moi’ (220) in isolation in a bisyllabic line emphasizes the contrast Tisbé sees between herself and others who have been in a similar situation. Nevertheless, she seems less to distance herself from the methods employed by them, than to consider that, for her, all strategies will be insufficient.

As Tisbé claims the use of both wisdom and wit for women, we can see either a contradiction of the view which holds women unable to reason, or a statement of the belief that women, influenced by physical passion, will employ any means to achieve their desires. Words spoken earlier by Piramus provide both a parallel and an interesting contrast:

‘Ou par enging ou par desroi
 Ferai
 Tysbé, bele, que te verrai,
 Ou si ce non pour toi morrai.
 Saches, se par amours ne t’ai,
 Que par force te ravirai.’ (159-64)

As Piramus considers how to achieve his purpose, the structures ‘par [...] ou par’ (159) and ‘se par [...] ne / que par’ (163-64) show a willingness to use additional

tactics. Where Tisbé, however, begins with ‘par savoir’ (218), then adds ‘ou par voisdie’ (218), then ‘engigner boisdie’ (219), Piramus, ignoring *savoir*, begins with ‘par enging’ (159), then contemplates alternatives which are increasingly distanced from reason: either ‘par engin’ (159) or ‘par desroi’ (159); if not ‘par amours’ (163), then ‘par force’ (164). Piramus is able to conceive of embracing methods more extreme and violent than those suggested by Tisbé. For both, the obstacles seem insurmountable.

Even as Tisbé clarifies what she wants, the difficulty of achieving success has already been suggested:

‘Mes quant je plus pens et mains voi,
En quel guise prendrai conroi,
Amis douz, de parler a toi?’ (221-23)

We can see a change of focus from the start of Tisbé’s words. Her first two lines could be viewed as an exclamation with no specific addressee. ‘Hé, diex’ (214) might represent linguistic habit or, in association with the concept of ‘destinee’ (214), mark the start of an apostrophe to a deity. In line 223 it becomes evident that, in lines 221 to 223 at least, Tisbé addresses Piramus: ‘amis douz’ (223). We see an interesting revelation of Tisbé’s thoughts: firstly it becomes clear that, throughout, those thoughts are centred on Piramus and, secondly, the term *amis* (223) indicates her attitude towards him.

The verb *parler* (223) is particularly significant, and capable of more than one interpretation. We have seen that the relationship between Piramus and Tisbé is presented in terms of communication through language. When they are separated, their desire for reunion is formulated in the same way. We are told that Piramus prays that Venus will allow him to ‘parler a Tysbé s’amie’ (206). Tisbé addresses words to Piramus which speak of the difficulty, despite the use of her mental faculties implied by the verb *penser* in line 221, of finding a way to speak to him;

parler is what Tisbé seeks also. The reality of the separation between them is underlined by the fact that Tisbé addresses words to Piramus which he does not hear.

Parler is then repeated as a separate bisyllabic line, which introduces Tisbé's next thoughts:

'Parler?
Tysbé, fole, veulz tu desver
Et ta chastee violer
Et ton lignage vergonder?
Non faire!
Garde Raison, qui t'est contraire.
Ne te chaille entour toi atraire
Corage
Par quoi tu faces itel rage.
Onques feme de ton lignage
Ne fu reprise de putage.
Reprise?
Non serai je, par nulle guise.
Miex vueil estre cent fois ocise.' (224-37)

The way the repetition of 'parler' functions in Tisbé's discourse is a good example of a technique used not only in *Piramus et Tisbé*, where the presence of the bisyllabic lines makes it more noticeable, but also, as Faral notes, in other texts, such as the works of Chrétien de Troyes ('Poème', pp. 47-49). A word is repeated, often as a question, leading to a different perspective on the meaning of the term, and to the development of the thought in a different direction. The effect can be dramatic, signalling the sudden realization by a character of the wider implications of a situation. Tisbé has seen only her separation from Piramus and her need to speak to him again. With the reiteration of 'parler' (224), this time as a question, we see a shift in her thoughts, as she considers the consequences of persisting. Eley considers that by *parler* Tisbé means 'sexual converse' as well as 'conversation' (p. 27). As Tisbé questions herself, using the second person, 'Tysbé, fole, veulz tu desver / et ta chastee violer' (225-26), we may see the realization that conversation may not be enough, or a moment of clarity which lays bare previous self-deception. Other terms, such as 'lignage vergonder' (227), and 'putage' (234), emphasize the shameful

nature of the behaviour contemplated. A space is claimed for the voice of Reason, 'qui t'est contraire' (229). Nevertheless, the repetition of both 'lignage' (227, 233) and 'reprise' (234, 235) suggests that Tisbé is given pause less by the nature of what she intends than by what others may say of her and her lineage as a result.

The bisyllabic question 'parler?' (224) is followed by a series of questions and imperatives, as Tisbé uses the second person, not to an outside force but to herself. With the second bisyllabic question 'reprise?' (235) we see a shift to the first person:

'Reprise?
Non serai je, par nulle guise.
Miex vueil estre cent fois ocise.' (235-37)

A further shift is seen in line 238, with a return to the second person and a different perspective:

'Tysbé,
Ou as tu pris icest pensé?
Tost as Pyramus oublié!' (238-40)

Faral notes that, both in *Piramus et Tisbé* and in the speech of Lavinia in the *Eneas*, the internal is represented as a fictitious dialogue ('Poème, pp. 44-45). Sarah Kay, discussing allegory in troubadour lyric poetry indicates the use of:

rhetorical techniques whose function appears to be to describe or extend the subject as a psychological entity or 'self': the use of personified abstractions (Amors, Jovens, Merce etc.), the narrativization of faculties (heart, will, desire, etc.), and the use of inner dialogue.⁷⁹

Of these techniques, the two latter can be seen as Tisbé speaks. It is as if there are three speakers. A first voice begins, using the first person: 'lasse [...] com male ore / fui nee' (212-13). This voice also employs the second person, but in the form of apostrophe to Piramus. Two further voices break in, addressing Tisbé herself in the second person. One speaks against the pursuit of the relationship with Piramus:

⁷⁹ Sarah Kay, *Subjectivity in Troubadour Poetry*, Cambridge Studies in French (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 50-83 (50).

'Tisbé, fole' (225), the other speaks in favour of it: 'Tysbé [...] tost as Pirus oublé' (238-40). The debate within Tisbé herself, as she attempts to resolve opposing demands, is presented dramatically: one character is offered conflicting counsel by two others. The first-person voice responds, as if hearing and reacting to each side in turn, first disclaiming any intention to join with Pirus: 'reprise? / non serai je' (235-36), then repudiating her words: 'amis, / onques a certes ne le dis' (241-42). As the first-person voice once more addresses an apostrophe to Pirus, a fourth character is added. When Tisbé speaks of Pirus as 'amis douz' (223) it is as if he were so; to have considered abandoning him is as if she had done so. The naming of Pirus conjures him before Tisbé as if he were physically present, having heard both her acknowledgment of love and its denial. Thus it is that again she retracts her words, aware that she could appear unfaithful:

'Amis,
Onques a certes ne le dis.
Or poez dire, ce m'est vis,
A droit
Qu'en amours de feme n'a foit.' (241-45)

The phrase 'amours de feme' (245) implies that women were generally seen to lack constancy in love. Tisbé expresses the conflict which could face a woman as the result of a love relationship. On one side is society, lineage, her father; on the other is her lover, Pirus. As Tisbé formally states the transfer of her allegiance, the concepts operate on both a literal and a figurative level:

'Biaux douz amis, prenez a droit
Le gage:
Tenez, sire, pour cest outrage
Vous otroi ci mon pucelage.' (246-49)

Tisbé humbles herself, introducing questions of rank and relative worth:

'Trop iere ore de fier corage.
De fier?
Vers vous doi ge bien suploier.
Moult avroie le blasme chier
Se m'en ooie reprochier.
Contraire,

Si com me samble, a mon viaire,
 Nulz hom ne m'en devroit retraire,
 Ne reprendre de cest afaire.' (250-58)

Tisbé's earlier concerns could be excessive pride in an exceptional lineage. There is also the echo of the troubadour convention whereby the male elevates the woman, placing her in the position of feudal lord. Tisbé refuses the superior position 'vers vous doi ge bien supploier' (252), giving Piramus an implicit worth which should undercut criticism from others.

The argument is not completely won, however, for the speaker for the prosecution cuts in once more, with accusations of insanity and excessive, ungoverned behaviour:

'Desvee!
 Tes toi, fole desmesuree!
 Quel corage vous a muee?
 Moult estes ore forsenee.' (259-62)

The first-person voice appears to recognize the warning, implicit in the serious implications of the terms used, and to change position once more, accepting the idea of her father's authority:

'Lerai
 Tout cest pensé que je ore ai;
 Par le conseil mon pere avrai
 Autresi gent ami, bien sai.' (263-66)

The change is only brief, as 'autresi gent ami' (266) is questioned, 'si gent?' (267), and her thoughts turn once more to Piramus:

'Si gent?
 Merveil se Piramus m'entent.
 Oïl, je tramble, bien le sent.
 Si mar le dis, or m'en repent.' (267-70)

Here, no intervention from a second person prompts the return to Piramus, the first-person voice continues, as though moving towards more certainty, after rapid changes. Indeed, Tisbé is troubled by the thought that Piramus may have heard her consider accepting another lover. We see a further demonstration of the power of

language when the mind is involved: 'si mar le dis' (270), Tisbé attempts to avert misfortune, as though saying something gives it reality.

The choice of position is confirmed: no second person voice is needed to speak in favour of Piramus, the second person who speaks against also falls silent.

Tisbé addresses her words to Piramus:

'Hé, biaux!
Rose tendre et lis nouveiaus,
Flors de tous autres damoisiaus,
Merci!
N'aies cure de quanque di;
De paour ai le cuer marri.
Jamais n'avrai nul autre ami
Que vous.' (271-78)

We see an interesting combination. These lines could be viewed as apostrophe, as they give expression to emotion in words addressed to an entity outside the speaker. They could also be seen as love poetry, as they are addressed to the object of the speaker's love. They can be read as lyric verse, isolated from specific references. They can also be seen as closely linked to the characters and events of *Piramus et Tisbé*. We can see how the text develops the use of imagery related to plants. Tisbé says to Piramus:

'Rose tendre et lis nouveiaus,
Flors de tous autres damoisiaus.' (272-73)

We recall that flower imagery contributed to the hyperbole used of both Piramus and Tisbé in lines in the third person:

Tant com jaspes sormonte voirre,
Or argent, et primevoire
A la marouste sormonté,
Tant sormontoient de bonté
Et de valour et de biauté
Cil dui tous ceulz de la cité. (61-66)

We remember also, however, Piramus's description of the effects of love on him:

'Si taint ma face et ma coulour,
Com fait la fueille la froidour.' (150-51)

As Tisé continues, she refers to specific words she has spoken, pleading ‘n’aies cure de quanque di’ (275). Relating her words to the circumstances which produced them, she attributes her reaction to ‘paour’ (276), foretelling another moment when fear, of the lion, will turn her from the path which leads to union with Piramus. Here, she reaffirms her loyalty: ‘jamais n’avrai nul autre ami / que vous’ (277-78). We recall the words of the Commandment: ‘Thou shalt have no other gods before me’.⁸⁰ Emotions inspired by love are vanquishing the arguments of reason. The biblical echo emphasizes the strength of the new allegiance, but also suggests that it is unwise.

Further space is given to the negative implications of the relationship by the intervention of *mes* (279), ‘but’. The focus, however, is less on the folly or otherwise of persisting, and more on the difficulty:

‘Mes vos parens sont envious
Et li mien sont de moi jalous.’ (279-80)

There are rapid changes of attitude. Difficulty is first shrugged off:

‘Cui chault?
Ne monte riens, se diex me sault.
Or sens mon cuer, ore ai trop chault,
A poi ferai pour vous un sault.’ (281-84)

Then the situation seems overwhelming:

‘Hé, lasse!
Que ai je dit? Riens ne me passe
Li mauz qui si souvent me lasse.
Dolente!’ (285-88)

‘Lasse’ (285) reiterates the first word spoken by Tisé and ‘dolente’ (288) repeats the ‘dolent’ (143) of Piramus’s first words, returning her to the state of suffering they share.

As Tisé draws to a close, we see a marked similarity to the end of Piramus’s first speech. Like Piramus, Tisé appeals to ‘li diex d’amours’ (289):

⁸⁰ Genesis 20. 3. References to the Bible are to the text of the King James Version (1611).

'Li diex d'amours le me consente,
Ou bon me soit, ou m'en repente,
Qu'entre mes bras encor le sente
Par termes.' (289-92)

Indeed, her words match closely those of Piramus:

'Consente moi li dieux d'amours
Qu'encor la tiengne nuit ou jours,
Ou a leesce ou a dolours!' (189-91)

Tisbé, also overcome by tears and fainting, evokes a bleak and desolate life to come:

'Ci fenirai ma plainte en lermes.
Pasmier m'estuet, ore est li termes.
Ensi
M'estuet faire par chascun di:
Tel fief tieng je de mon ami.' (293-97)

Her bitter final comment 'tel fief tieng je de mon ami' (297) evokes the realization of the true implications of an allegiance which, once given, must be upheld.

'La pucele est trois fois pasmee' (298-303)

The text returns to third-person narrative but, as when Piramus ceases speaking, the focus remains briefly with the speaker who has fallen silent:

La pucele est trois fois pasmee,
Et quant elle s'est relevee
Anseus ses mains vers le ciel tent:
Aus diex prie moult humblement
Qu'il li doignent conseil trouver
Qu'a son ami puisse parler. (298-303)

Tisbé's behaviour mirrors that of Piramus. His claim 'ne puis parler' (193) is confirmed by the third-person statement that he is overcome by tears and fainting 'ains qu'il peüst son duel fenir' (196). Tisbé also suggests that tears will oust words: 'ci fenirai ma plainte en lermes' (293); she also faints (298). Both Piramus and Tisbé express their suffering in words, which then appear to reinforce it, impeding further speech. As with Piramus, when next Tisbé speaks, only the sense of her prayer to the gods is given, as she prays for a way to speak to her lover. There is a reminder that Piramus and Tisbé are affected by the same emotion and the same situation. There are differences: Piramus asks that the goddess 'li doinst avoir baillie / de parler a

Tysbé s'amie' (205-06), whereas Tisbé asks for 'conseil trouver / qu'a son ami puisse parler' (302-03), implying that she will then take action. Both employ the verb *parler*.

Separation and Speech

In the *Metamorphoses*, when the lovers are separated, their experience is presented in the third person:

quod non potuere vetare,
ex aequo captis ardebant mentibus ambo.
consciis omnis abest; nutu signisque loquuntur,
quoque magis tegitur, tectus magis aestuat ignis. (IV. 61-64)

[Still, what no parents could forbid, sore smitten in heart they burned with mutual love. They had no go-between, but communicated by nods and signs; and the more they covered up the fire, the more it burned.] (p. 183)

In *Piramus et Tisbé* the reactions of the couple are explored more fully, both through the third person and through the first. We see a departure from the Latin, as the French version includes speeches from both Piramus and Tisbé:

Piramus: 'Hé, las!' fet il, 'chetif dolent' (143-95)

Tisbé: 'Lasse', fet elle, 'Com male ore' (212-97)

Analysis of these first extended passages of direct speech in *Piramus et Tisbé* allows some preliminary conclusions to be drawn which may be helpful in establishing the function and significance of direct speech within the poem.

The change of form from the octosyllabic rhyming couplets used for the third person might lead us to view the first-person passages as 'lyric insertions' placed within a framing narrative. Topics and motifs associated with lyric poetry are present: love is disrupted by separation, which is experienced as anguish and possible death; love itself becomes fire, wound, sickness, the paradox of the pain which is not refused. Our analysis has shown that the transition to direct speech is gradual and

that lyric motifs are motivated by the narrative circumstances. First and third person are integrated.

Direct speech can contribute to characterization, by revealing emotions and the way that characters respond to and conceptualize events. As we first hear Piramus and Tisbé, their words can operate in this way, if only to a degree. Piramus appears passive. He begins with a focus on his suffering, continues with a series of apostrophes which emphasize his pain and appeal for outside help, then ends with a return to his suffering. Tisbé appears a great deal more active, in large part due to the internal debate in which she engages. John Secor indicates the importance of the concept of *porpenser* in *Piramus et Tisbé* and *Aucassin et Nicolette*. *Porpenser*, related to *penser*, can be used of the suffering lover's unproductive thinking, typical of Piramus, but also found in Tisbé. In addition, the term has associations with planning and forethought, which are the domain of Tisbé, for 'the woman's role in these stories is first of all to think and to plan carefully, and only then to speak and act'.⁸¹ We must ask, however, whether Tisbé's speech and actions are wise, or misguided.

Despite the differences between Piramus and Tisbé which their words make apparent, the extent of their characterization remains limited. Their speech manifests a difference of response which suggests less two individuals and more a difference between male and female. This difference could be a reflection of twelfth-century attitudes to gender roles. More specifically, the literary models used become important. The attitude of Piramus reflects the posture of the male lyric poets, where love is related to suffering, to be relieved, or prolonged, by the woman, whose voice is not heard. In *Piramus et Tisbé* the voice of the woman is heard, but Tisbé does not

seem free to choose according to her own desires, but is shown as divided between two conflicting allegiances: to her father and to her lover.

Faral suggests a model for the Tisbé's internal debate in that of Medea, in the *Metamorphoses* ('Poème', p. 46). Other women in the *Metamorphoses*, for example Biblis in Book IX, are also shown as exploring a dilemma in this way. The course of action needed to realise love in these cases – treachery or incest – is more clearly open to criticism. The choice of this model to represent Tisbé's internal argument suggests that her choice of love should also be seen as worthy of criticism, and adds weight to the factors opposing love; the refusal to accept parental authority and the damage to the reputation of Tisbé and her family. This shows the difficult position of a woman faced in reality with the conventions used in lyric poetry: 'damned if she does, damned if she doesn't'.

Tisbé's need for such a debate shows that the two sides of the argument both have importance for her; moreover, her dilemma is not easily resolved. The representation of what might be an abstract argument as the painful experience of one woman diminishes the distance between abstract and experience for the reader. There could be intellectual appreciation, or a didactic effect by means of a demonstration, which is made more effective through occurring within the imagination. The quality of performance, strongly present in *Piramus et Tisbé*, would enhance both results.

More distinctive than any differences between Piramus and Tisbé suggested by their first speeches are the similarities. We must note that their words result from their common experience: shared characteristics of youth, beauty and rank result in love; separation brings suffering, which both Piramus and Tisbé express through

⁸¹ John R. Secor, 'Le porpenser: Forethought Before Speech or Action in Tisbé and Nicolette',

words. Although Tisbé's internal debate gives her a more active character, both she and Piramus begin and end with the focus on their pain.

Speaking and not speaking become significant themes in the text. When Piramus and Tisbé are able to be together, they are free to speak, but their words are kept silent by the text. When they are separated, each reacts in the same way, elaborating their thoughts in extended discourse, which is available to the audience or reader. We thus associate suffering with the speech which expresses it, and appreciate the craft which makes narrative circumstances and discourse mutually appropriate. Piramus and Tisbé, however, do not seek to entertain an audience but to communicate, each with the other. Because their relationship is presented in terms of speaking, the pattern of their communication becomes intriguingly ironic. Despite the bond of shared conversation, they appear to say more when apart than when united. They experience the same situation and both have recourse to words to express the need to restore communication, but because they react in parallel rather than together, each addresses the other, but is not heard.

In *Piramus et Tisbé* the presentation of the initial experience of separation integrates the first person and the third, combining the didactic and the recreational. At one level, Piramus and Tisbé are presented as *exempla*: illustrations of the dangers of love, they demonstrate its effects. We also see a possibly playful manipulation of language and literary convention, as *Piramus et Tisbé* exploits the potential offered by the story of Pyramus and Thisbe in the *Metamorphoses*.

1.3 CONVERSATIONS THROUGH A WALL?

While the *Metamorphoses* provides the essential elements of the scenes at the wall, a different emphasis results from the way that they are developed in *Piramus et Tisbé*. In the *Metamorphoses*, lines 65 to 92 can be seen as centred on the wall between the homes of Pyramus and Thisbe. Three subdivisions can be seen within this passage. Lines 65 to 70 narrate how the chink in the wall, which had existed for a long time, is found by the lovers, and used for speech between them. Lines 71 to 77 give access to words spoken, jointly, by the lovers. Lines 81 to 91 focus on the plan to leave the city, but report only the content of what is said. In the second half of line 91 and in line 92 we see the lovers wait for night, when the plan is to be carried out. The account of Thisbe's departure begins at line 93.

In *Piramus et Tisbé* the scenes concerned with the wall occupy from line 304 to line 589. Subdivisions which are somewhat different from those of the account in the *Metamorphoses* are found. Lines 304 to 331 tell of the wall and the discovery of the chink. Lines 332 to 393 give access to the first words spoken through the wall by the lovers, with narrative links. Lines 397 to 589 provide extended access to the words of Piramus and Tisbé the next day, ending with the introduction of the plan to leave, again with brief narrative links. Lines 590 to 617 treat the change from day to night and the wait for the moment of departure. Line 617 begins the account of Tisbé's journey. Even this general outline indicates that differences are to be found in the French poem, which displays greater length and an increased use of first-person direct speech, while showing only two meetings at the wall. A more detailed analysis of each of these two episodes will demonstrate the full extent of the changes made by *Piramus et Tisbé*.

1.3.1 THE DISCOVERY OF THE CHINK AND THE FIRST WORDS

Several passages are concerned with the introduction of the wall between the homes of Piramus and Tisbé, their discovery of the chink and their first use of it for speech:

‘Prochain furent li dui palais’	(304-31)	[Third Person]
‘Tysbé’, dist il, ‘bele faiture’	(332-48)	[Piramus]
‘La pucele de l’autre part’	(349-68)	[Third Person]
‘Amis, ensi vous os nomer’	(369-91)	[Tisbé]
‘Ne pot lors plus parler a lui’	(392-97)	[Third Person]

‘Prochain furent li dui palais’ (304-331) [Third Person]

The six lines which follow Tisbé’s first monologue – lines 298 to 303 – are linked to it by the way they maintain the focus on Tisbé. A performance could be imagined: ‘Tisbé’ falls silent, and mimes her supplication to the gods, which is drawn to the attention of the audience by a narrator, whose words thus combine storytelling and voiced stage direction. As the third-person narration continues with the words ‘prochain furent li dui palais’ (304), it seems that there is an abrupt change of subject. However, the following lines of narrative (304-31) introduce the wall between the homes of Piramus and Tisbé. This wall divides the lovers, but also, by means of the hole which they discover in it, provides a means for them to communicate. There is thus continuity from Tisbé’s prayer to be able to speak to her beloved, ‘qu’a son ami puisse parler’ (303).

In *Piramus et Tisbé* the passage of third-person narrative which begins the sequence at the wall creates a changed context, in particular for the words of the lovers, compared with the *Metamorphoses*. In the *Metamorphoses* the account of the discovery of the chink is brief:

fissus erat tenui rima, quam duxerat olim,
cum fieret, paries domui communis utriue.

id vitium nulli per saecula longa notatum –
 quid non sentit amor? – primi vidistes amantes
 et vocis fecistes iter, tutaque per illud
 murmure blanditiae minimo transire solebant. (IV. 65-70)

[There was a slender chink in the party-wall of the two houses, which it had at some former time received when it was building. This chink, which no one had ever discovered through all these years – but what does love not see? – you lovers first discovered and made it the channel of speech. Safe through this your loving words used to pass in tiny whispers.]
 (p. 183)

At first, with the mention of the wall between the two houses, it seems that the French text will follow the Latin closely:

Prochain furent li dui palais
 Et par tele maniere fais
 C'une parois et uns murs seulz
 Estoit devise d'ambedeus. (304-07)

Subtle changes are to be found. The French text emphasizes the divisions effected by the physical buildings: there are 'dui palais' (304), the wall divides them. In addition, the text shows the lovers within this setting: the chink is situated in the room where Tisbé is confined:

Endroit la chambre la dedens
 Ou mains conversoient de gens,
 Ou la pucele iert enfermee,
 Fu la parois un peu crevee. (308-11)

Piramus et Tisbé begins to set the scene for the finding of the chink. Line 309 ('ou mains conversoient de gens') can be seen as an explanation of the failure of the two households to notice Piramus and Tisbé speaking through the wall. The lack of visitors to the room also acts as a partial explanation for the chink having lain hidden for many years. The small size of the gap, mentioned immediately before this, also suggests cause and effect:

La crevace n'ert gaires grans,
 Si fu celee par mains ans. (312-13)

Perhaps more importantly, with the depiction of the very room where Tisbé is held there is also a reminder that she is kept away from Piramus physically, thus

motivating the amplification which attributes the responsibility for the finding of the crevice to 'Amours':

Desi qu'Amours la fist trouver,
Vers cui riens ne se puet celer. (314-15)

'Quel chose est ce qu'amours ne sent?' (316), which parallels the Latin 'quid non sentit amor?' (IV. 68), can be seen as reinforcing this presentation of the power of love. Penny Eley's choice of the lower case 'a' for this second use of 'amours' in this passage reminds us of the dual function of the word in *Piramus et Tisbé*: 'Amours', the outside force which acts upon the lovers, and 'amours', the emotions and impulses they experience. The account in the *Metamorphoses* makes this shift from love to lovers by means of an apostrophe:

primi vidistes amantes
et vocis fecistes iter, tutaeque per illud
murmure blanditiae minimo transire solebant. (IV. 68-70)

In *Piramus et Tisbé* the lovers, through Tisbé, are already more clearly present, and this presence becomes stronger:

Li dui amant premierement
Aperçurent celui pertus:
Primes Tysbé, puis Piramus. (317-19)

Rather than simply the undefined 'amantes', the names of the lovers are reiterated in the French text. This can be seen as accentuating their individuality; Tisbé is the first to find the chink, which reinforces her role as the more active of the two. Not only does Tisbé discover the chink first, she acts on her discovery, so that Piramus may also be aware of it:

Tysbé trouva la crevetüre,
Prist le pendant de sa cainture,
S'en fist outre le fer paroir,
Que ses amis le pot veoir. (320-23)

This creates an intriguing situation, where Tisbé is confined within a small area but remains active in the pursuit of love, whereas Piramus, free to move in society, maintains his attitude of suffering.

The narrative continues, moving from a room at one side of the wall to one at the other:

Piramus vint de deporter
 Pour ses dolours reconforter.
 Entre en la chambre, cele soi,
 Torne ses iex vers la paroi,
 Garde, si aperçoit l'enseigne
 Qui la crevace li enseigne.
 Cele part vait, prent le pendant,
 Voit le pertuis aparissant. (324-31)

In lines 324 to 325 there is the attempt to shake off the melancholy state. This can be seen as a faint echo of the demands of society, and even of chivalry, which are found much more clearly in other texts, such as *Erec et Enide* of Chrétien de Troyes, which show the protagonist reconciling private desires and public duties.⁸² In *Piramus et Tisbé* the male protagonist is not given a role in the public world. Piramus retreats from society by choice, embracing melancholy in solitude. Tisbé's action intrudes into that solitude, as the device of her belt is seen by Piramus. A chain of events can be seen: 'Amours' acts upon Tisbé, the emotion within her needs an outlet, found in the chink, and in the impulse which leads her to feed her belt into the gap, a physical gesture which interrupts the stasis of Piramus. In the *Metamorphoses* the discovery of the chink, attributed to the lovers jointly, occurs on some non-specific occasion. *Piramus et Tisbé* develops the role of the lovers, showing each in turn, and as a result gives an account which deals with the specific circumstances of the discovery. These circumstances give an immediacy, which, in an oral delivery of the text, could have been developed by mime by characters taking the roles of Piramus and Tisbé.

⁸² Chrétien de Troyes, *Erec et Enide*, ed. by Mario Roques, *Les Romans de Chrétien de Troyes*, 1, *Classiques Français du Moyen Age*, 80 (Paris: Champion, 1955).

Direct Speech

Before moving to close study of the words spoken through the wall by Piramus and Tisbé, we should consider briefly how the French text differs in general from the Latin in the use of person in these scenes. The *Metamorphoses* makes use of direct speech, but does not show it as occurring on a single occasion, and attributes it to the lovers jointly:

saepe, ubi constiterant hinc Thisbe, Pyramus illinc,
 inque vices fuerat captatus anhelitus oris,
 'invide' dicebant 'paries, quid amantibus obstas?
 quantum erat, ut sineres toto nos corpore iungi
 aut, hoc si nimium est, vel ad oscula danda pateres?
 nec sumus ingrati: tibi nos debere fatemur,
 quod datus est verbis ad amicas transitus auris.'
 talia diversa nequiquam sede locuti
 sub noctem dixere 'vale' partique dedere
 oscula quisque suae non pervenientia contra. (IV. 71-80)

[‘O envious wall,’ they would say, why do you stand between lovers? How small a thing ‘twould be for you to permit us to embrace each other, or, if this be too much, to open for our kisses! But we are not ungrateful. We owe it to you, we admit, that a passage is allowed by which our words may go through to loving ears.’ So, separated all to no purpose, they would talk, and as night came on they said good-bye and printed, each on his own side of the wall, kisses that did not go through] (pp. 183, 185)

In *Piramus et Tisbé* the first passages of direct speech are shown as occurring on a single occasion, that of the discovery of the chink. As Tisbé acts, Piramus responds with words which the text reports directly. In turn, the words of Tisbé are also given, maintaining the pattern of paired speeches already noted earlier in the text. A further passage of direct speech from each then follows, again fixed to a particular moment: the following day. The apostrophe to the wall is reserved for this latter occasion, and spoken by Piramus alone.

The first passages of direct speech at the wall – that spoken by Piramus: ‘Tysbé’, dist il, ‘bele faiture’ (332-48) and Tysbé’s ‘Amis, ainsi vos os nomer’ (369-91) – have features in common which create a contrast with their first passages of direct speech. They differ formally from the third-person narrative, but, unlike the

earlier passages of direct speech from the lovers, there are no bisyllabic lines. The pattern is one of octosyllabic lines which all have the same rhyme: 'ure' in the passage from Piramus, and 'er' in that from Tisbé. This might suggest that a certain cohesion is to be expected in terms of content, a possibility reinforced by the relative shortness of these passages compared with the earlier two. The first words spoken by Piramus and Tisbé in the poem are not fixed to a specific occasion and can be seen as the essence of their suffering, expressed as direct speech, as if spoken on one occasion. Each speaks in turn, expresses longing to speak with the other, but they remain isolated. The first passages of direct speech at the wall are fixed to a specific occasion which is made the more definite by the recounting of the way the chink in the wall is discovered. This discovery means that the possibility of direct communication now exists, with potential consequences for the words spoken.

'Tysbé', dist il, 'bele faiture' (332-48) [Piramus]

The words of Piramus are spoken as he sees the chink, revealed by the end of Tisbé's belt:

'Tysbé', dist il, 'bele faiture,
 Flours de toute autre creature,
 Par l'enseigne de la chainture
 Sui je venus offrir droiture
 Que ne trouvai la crevetüre;
 Vostre en est bele l'aventure
 D'apercevoir tel trouestre.
 Se vous avez de moi tel cure
 Ne vous tendra la fermeüre
 Que ne veigniez ici segure:
 Sans message, sans couverture,
 A basse vois et a murmure
 Porrons parler de nostre injure;
 Emprez savrois en quel arduure
 M'a mis Amours sans forfaiture.
 Hé, diex, comme est sa vie dure,
 Qui longuement teulz mauz endure!' (332-48)

Despite the existence of the chink, it is not clear whether Piramus is addressing Tisbé in her own person, or merely expressing his thoughts by means of apostrophe. His approach is not immediately practical: he does not ascertain whether Tisbé is at the

other side of the wall. His first two lines suggest he remains within the confines of the lyric discourse, where a response is not expected from the lady. Lines 334 to 338 can be related to a chivalric context; a lesser knight acknowledges that the greater has the mastery. This could be an extension of the lyric convention which presents the lady as feudal lord, or could imply the possibility of comradeship resulting from shared aims and values. Lines 339 to 344 develop the potential inherent in the chink, presenting as direct speech what in the *Metamorphoses* is given as third-person narrative. In lines 339 to 341 Piramus relates Tisbé's ability to reach him to the extent of her love for him; this implies that, if she does not come, her love is weak, an attitude which reveals certain contradictions in Piramus's approach: he praises Tisbé's discovery, emphasizing his own failure, but does not draw from this failure any inference that his own love is weak. There is a parallel with the contradictory convention which elevates the woman as lady, creating distance, but which blames her as cruel for not reducing that distance by responding.

Lines 342 to 344 are of particular significance when considered in the light of the process of change from the *Metamorphoses* to *Piramus et Tisbé*. Firstly, there is the comment 'sans message, sans couverture' in line 342. In the *Metamorphoses*, when the lovers are separated, we are told 'conscius omnis abest; nutu signisque loquuntur' (IV. 63). Miller translates: 'they had no go-between, but communicated by nods and signs' (p. 183). Melville also includes the idea of the go-between: 'they spoke by signs; they had no go-between'.⁸³ The role of the go-between becomes highly charged in many texts which deal with the story of lovers who are separated. The go-between becomes essential for communication but entails the risk that a love which should remain hidden will be revealed. In the story of Pyramus and Thisbe in

the *Metamorphoses* there is the statement that no intermediary is used. However, first signs, then the chink in the wall, fulfill the need for communication between the lovers, which is thus brought to prominence as a theme. It may be this that is responsible for the importance of the theme of communication through speech in *Piramus et Tisbé*; the idea is suggested by the account in the *Metamorphoses* and then combined with the lyric concept which relates the suffering caused by impeded love to the expression of that suffering in words which become an end in themselves.

The story of Pyramus and Thisbe offers a further link between separation and language, in a parallel with drama. As medieval drama developed from the Church liturgy, increasingly elaborate scenery became common. Many separate scenes would be present at once, in separate 'mansiones' or 'loci', the action moving from one to the next. The words and actions of the actors within these would inform the audience of what that character was experiencing.⁸⁴ Characters in other scenes, to maintain the fiction, must remain unaware of developments, until touched by them or told of them. The influence of the drama, and by implication of the Church, might be reflected in the way, in a range of medieval narrative texts, many characters repeat, to other characters, what a reader, or audience for an oral presentation, would already know. The Pyramus and Thisbe story already contains within it the concept of the separate houses. The French text *Piramus et Tisbé* creates in words the 'mansiones' of the drama, with the insistence upon the two rooms found in the third-person narrative which describes the wall and the chink in it. Again there is the sense of a narrative which includes the functions of stage direction. A comparison with other medieval drama, for example *Le Jeu d'Adam*, shows that the stage directions found

⁸³ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans by A.D. Melville, intr. by E.J. Kenney, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 76.

within these can be at times both long, and detailed, and when read can function as a narrative. Third-person narrative and first-person direct speech alternate in *Piramus et Tisbé* as stage direction and the words of the characters alternate in drama.

Unlike the drama, in the *Piramus and Thisbe* story there is no go-between, nor any need for one, because of the existence of the chink in the wall. In *Piramus et Tisbé* the remark of *Piramus* 'sans message' (342) could be seen as a passing reference to the idea of the role of the go-between in the furtherance of a love relationship. Its true importance, however, is revealed with recognition of its dual function; there is an allusion related to form, with the link to dramatic presentation, either actual or suggested; there is also an allusion related to theme, with the potential for direct verbal communication which the chink affords. The words of *Piramus*, to this point in the passage, could be apostrophe framing the internal, and are addressed ostensibly to *Tisbé*; they would also serve to inform a reader or watching audience of the use which is proposed for the chink.

As the passage ends, the use of the future ('porrons parler', 344) marks a shift, as *Piramus* turns from the present communication, practical and informative, to the proposed content of future communications. At first there is the suggestion of shared communication, of dialogue, with the use of the first-person plural verb and the possessive 'nostre' (344), which relates to the 'injure' which is common to both *Piramus* and *Tisbé*. Lines 345 to 348, however, make it evident that *Piramus* remains focused on his own emotional state. The second person singular 'savrois' (345) implies that his intention is that he will speak and *Tisbé* will listen. Lines 345 to 348 can be read in relation to the narrative circumstances of the relationship between *Piramus* and *Tisbé*; nevertheless they contain no explicit references to events, but

⁸⁴ See *Le Mystère d'Adam: An Anglo-Norman Drama of the Twelfth Century*, ed. by Paul Studer

express meaning through conventions – the suggestion of a legal, feudal affront committed by ‘Amours’, the undefined suffering – which have more general application. There is a shift from the context of the drama, where words are related to specific circumstances, to the lyric convention, which detaches suffering from that specific cause and relates it to the language which expresses it. The discovery of the chink by Piramus provides a thread of cohesion to his words; the relationship he perceives between suffering and language returns him to passivity.

‘La pucele de l’autre part’ (349-68) [Third Person]

In contrast with that of Piramus, the attitude of Tisbé, alert on the other side of the wall shows her as actively engaged:

La pucele de l’autre part
Est en escout et en esgart. (349-50)

The passage of third-person narrative which intervenes in the text between the words of Piramus and those of Tisbé shows that the emotions related to love can create contradictions. Tisbé has expressed her desire to speak with Piramus but, when she sees him, the physical effect of her emotion prevents her, at first, from speaking:

De la parole entent l’esfroi,
Trait soi plus pres de la paroi,
Met son oeil endroit la crevace,
De son ami connut la face.
Parler cuide, mes el ne puet
Pour l’amour qui si la commuet.
Ou premerain esgardement
Fremist, souspire et si esprent,
Tressault, tramble et si tressue,
Taint sa color et si li mue.
Porpense soi qu’ele li die,
En soi meïsmes s’entroblië:
En tantes guises la destraint
Amours, qui toutes choses vaint.
A la parfin s’est pourpensee,
Si s’est un poi assefëree;
Met la bouche endroit la fendure,
Emprez parole en tel mesure. (351-68)

‘Amis, ensi vous os nomer’ (369-91) [Tisbé]

When Tisbé does speak, her first word, ‘amis’ (369), echoes the final ‘ami’ (297) of her first speech, reaffirming the choice made. Strength of character could explain the way that, in line 370, she asserts her right to maintain the relationship, if only through language. Line 371 adds the power of the emotion which draws her to Piramus:

‘Amis, ensi vous os nomer –
Ce ne me puet on pas veer –
Ne me puis pas vers vous celer.’ (369-71)

Although Tisbé is drawn to Piramus by powerful emotions, she does not accept his attitude uncritically. A contrast is seen: Piramus praises her, with ‘bele faiture’ (332), she upbraids him:

‘Vostre proesce vueil gaber:
Premiere soi conseil trouver
Com peüssons ci assambler,
Quar qui plus aime plus voit cler.’ (372-75)

The use of ‘proesce’ may seem a little perplexing, for this quality seems lacking in Piramus; it may be this lack that Tisbé mocks. While manuscript B matches manuscript R, giving ‘proece’, manuscript A gives ‘perece’, which thus shows Tisbé mocking inaction. Manuscript C gives ‘mes ie uos ueil .i. poi gaber’.⁸⁵ This means that Tisbé’s words here can then be seen in relation to those which follow, where she responds to what Piramus has said and, by the way she frames her response, questions his assumptions. Lines 373 to 375, for example, can be seen as a direct response to lines 339 to 341, spoken by Piramus.

Tisbé then moves to consideration of whose love is the greater:

‘Griement vous oi desconforter,
Mes poi savez que est amer:
Encor vous en poez joer,

⁸⁵ The transcriptions given by Eley are as follows:

MS R: ‘Uostre proesce uueil gaber’ (362); MS B: ‘Uostre proece uueil gaber’ (335);
MS C: ‘Mes ie uos ueil .i. poi gaber’ (277); MS A: ‘Uostre perece uueil gaber’ (361).

A moi lessiez le duel user,
 Cui riens ne puet confort doner.
 Joie ai changiee por plorer,
 Pour dolereus complains jeter,
 Et leesce pour gementer,
 Soëf dormir por grief penser,
 Jeu et delit pour souspirer.' (376-85)

She does this by exploiting links, between love, suffering and the language used to express suffering, which Piramus has already established, and, by the contrast between the 'vous' of lines 376 to 378 and the 'moi' of 379, claims the language of suffering for her own. The series of contrasts in lines 381 to 385 demonstrates the changed state which Tisbé perceives in herself, the change from then to now, found in the lament. The positive state of the past is swept away by the painful negative experience of the present, which follows it in the text. The physical effects of emotion once again overwhelm Tisbé:

'Amis, ne puis or plus ester:
 Lermes m'aonbrent l'esgarder,
 Soudairs me tolent le parler.' (386-88)

The fact that these physical symptoms are found both as Tisbé begins to speak and as she ends, adds to what she says the manner in which it is delivered; she is not enjoying an artistic game with language but is expressing genuine emotion.

Emotion could be seen in Piramus, as he ends his first speech in the text:

'Paser
 M'estuet errant; ne puis parler.
 Or sui hetiez, or vueil plorer,
 Ore ai grant chault, or vueil trambler.' (192-95)

Tisbé, however, shows the extent of her love by proposing a solution to the separation which causes them to suffer. She returns to the potential offered by the chink in the wall:

'Pensez demain dou retourner,
 Plus a loisir porrons parler
 Et li uns l'autre conforter.' (389-91)

Tisbé is more specific than Piramus, suggesting that they meet 'demain' (389). By this contrast between her behaviour and that of Piramus, Tisbé gives the answer to

the question of whose love is the greater, building her arguments on what Piramus himself has said and done. She also shows that she is not willing to remain trapped within the unilateral discourse of suffering love. Her proposals for the future imply a dialogue, by the use of the first-person plural 'porrons' (390). She also implies equality, by the use of 'conforter' (391), which is usually demanded of women, but here is to be mutual.

Piramus et Tisbé begins to develop the potential of the chink in the wall, a potential which is only suggested by the account found in the *Metamorphoses*. As regards form and narrative technique, *Piramus et Tisbé* amplifies the sparse detail of the non-specific third-person narrative of the Latin text, fixing events more closely to time, place, and character. The result is a text which could be a performance in written form, or a text which functions in part by the appeals made to the parallels between the form of the drama and the content of the material. The spoken word assumes a significant role, both in the drama, and at the wall between the lovers, and *Piramus et Tisbé* exploits the potential this offers. The first passages of direct speech at the wall are part of the scene which shows the discovery of the chink and the use of it for speech between Piramus and Tisbé. As such they assume a dramatic function, informing the audience. Differences between Piramus and Tisbé emerge in the words they are given. These can be seen as part of the differentiation which makes Tisbé the more active, the more eager, participant. More importantly, discussion of the extent to which the paired speeches can be seen as constituting the basis of a dialogue reveals a subtle critique of the discourse of love. The chink in the wall affords the opportunity for speech between separated lovers; by exploiting this *Piramus et Tisbé* raises questions about the relationship between love and language.

‘Ne pot lors plus parler a lui’ (392-97) [Third Person]

Two further passages of direct speech at the wall are reported by *Piramus et Tisbé*: Piramus: ‘Amie, mout sui angoissous’ (398-489), and Tisbé: ‘Amis, trop vous desconfortez’ (494-583). Between these and the previous passages spoken at the wall six lines of third-person narrative are found:

Ne pot lors plus parler a lui,
Ensi departent ambedui.
Li jours s’en vait, la nuis prist fin.
Ansi repairent au matin
Et revienent a lor pertus.
Primes parole Piramus. (392-97)

These lines function as a link between passages of direct speech, by maintaining the focus on speaking. Piramus and Tisbé have each spoken, the third-person narrative passes to the silence of Tisbé, who is unable to speak further (392). There is silence and parting (393), then meeting and speech (395-97), with the night intervening (394).

1.3.2 THE SECOND DAY

The references to the times of the meetings are significant in several respects. A difference of time scale becomes evident, compared with the *Metamorphoses*, where specific time references are not found, but a greater length of time is implied:

primi vidistes amantes
et vocis fecistes iter, tutaeque per illud
murmure blanditiae minimo transire solebant. (IV. 68-70)

[You lovers first discovered and made it the channel of your speech. Safe through this your loving words used to pass in tiny whispers.] (p. 183)

The chink is found, it is used and that use becomes habitual, as ‘solebant’ (IV. 70) suggests. The material covering the apostrophe to the wall follows in lines 71 to 80, but, although one speech is given in the text, the use of ‘saepe’ (IV. 71) implies repeated meetings. It is only with the final meeting at the wall, in lines 81 to 92, when the plan to leave is formulated, that a specific occasion is described, framed at

one end by the change from night to day, and at the other by the change from day to night. Even here ‘solitum [...] locum’ (IV. 83) reinforces the fact that the meetings have an extension over time and that they have become part of the life of Pyramus and Thisbe.

Line 394 of *Piramus et Tisbé* (‘li jours s’en vait, la nuit prist fin’) can be seen as translating the sense of the two lines which, in the *Metamorphoses*, lead into this final meeting:

postera nocturnos Aurora removerat ignes,
solque pruinosas radiis siccaerat herbas. (IV. 81-2)

[The next morning had put out the starry beacons of the night, and the sun’s rays had dried the frosty grass.] (p. 185)

The several meetings of the *Metamorphoses* become two only in *Piramus et Tisbé*, and these two meetings take place within a brief, defined, period. Eley sees the change in the time scale as highlighting the urgent nature of young love, which takes no time for thought (p. 16). Piramus and Tisbé do demonstrate qualities associated with youth; however, the rapid succession of events can take on a more general significance, for we have already noted, in the apostrophe to ‘Amours’ (23-40), that young and old are equally vulnerable to the power of love. The change of time scale in *Piramus et Tisbé* creates immediacy, and in addition maintains the dramatic quality of the text; in a performance it would be more practical, and more effective, to replace an indeterminate series of meetings with two specific ones.

A further change from the *Metamorphoses* is seen in the fact that in *Piramus et Tisbé* at each of the two meetings the words of Piramus and Tisbé are reported as direct speech. The following passages are concerned with the second meeting:

‘Amie, moult sui angoissous’ (398-489) [Piramus]

‘Li jovenciaux plaint et souspire’ (490-93) [Third Person]

‘Amis, trop vous desconfortez’ (494-583) [Tisbé]

‘Ensi ferment lor covenant’ (584-89) [Third Person]

This use of direct speech can be seen as a corollary of the suggestion of performance. There is a continuation of the pattern where the third-person narrative of the *Metamorphoses*, which recounts events, is replaced by direct speech, which demonstrates them. The second passages of direct speech at the wall, in one sense, are a continuation of the scene of discovery and show speech through the chink in the wall.

In comparison with the *Metamorphoses*, *Piramus et Tisbé* not only increases the extent of direct speech at the wall; there is the further change from the plural to the singular, and the presentation of paired speeches. Time references again become important. Meetings were suggested, Tisbé proposed a specific day ‘demain’ (389), the two do indeed return ‘au matin’ (395). This means that, in contrast with earlier pairs, the second pair of speeches at the wall presupposes a known listener: Piramus and Tisbé have proposed the meeting, and are supposed to be speaking to each other; it is interesting to discover how far this potential for dialogue will be exploited. The return to the song-like stanzas seen at separation might suggest a move from a dramatic to a lyric mode.

The scenes at the wall differ from the earlier use of direct speech in *Piramus et Tisbé* in that for the latter there was no model, either for form or for content, whereas at the wall the *Metamorphoses* offers, not only the use of direct speech, but also several topics which are thus available to *Piramus et Tisbé*. Three subjects are covered by the *Metamorphoses*. Firstly, there is the apostrophe to the wall, which could be read as humorous or as a presentation of the paradox of the lovers’ situation. The account of the final meeting introduces two further topics. At line 84

we read 'multa prius questi statuunt'. Miller translates this as 'then first in low whispers they lamented bitterly' (p. 185), while Melville has 'then whispering low / their sorry troubles' (p. 89). The couple speak of their suffering. Finally, there is the plan to leave the city and meet at the tomb of Ninus; the evasion of the veto which causes their suffering.

'Amie, moult sui angoissous' (398-489) [Piramus]

Piramus begins by addressing Tisbé:

'Amie, moult sui angoissous,
 Quar a mort sui navrez pour vous
*Que j'ain.*⁸⁶
 Des or vieng je bien a reclain,
Com li ostors quant il a fain;
 Plus sui pris que poissons a l'ain.
 Sorpris
 Sui je pour vous, ce m'est avis:
 Ne sai que soit joie ne ris;
 S'auques me tient, n'en irai vis.
 Muir moi!
 Li diex d'amours ne garde foi,
 Quar sormontez nous a sa loi:
 Lacié somes en une roi
 Andui.' (398-412)

Here we find the oblique references of the code of the courtly poem; the lovers can interpret detail which might pose dangers if known by the wider society. Piramus has returned in response to Tisbé's proposal. The simile used to express this is drawn from falconry, the hawk returning to feed hunger (402). John Cummins notes that 'literary comparison of the medieval knightly hero to a bird of prey is commonplace'. Not only are hawk and hound almost extensions of the knight, the hawk, swift and unerring, becomes an appropriate metaphor for the triumphant hunter, warrior, or lover.⁸⁷ Piramus, however, expressing not triumph but subjugation, draws on another aspect of falconry. The hawk, essentially free, is

⁸⁶ The italics in quotations from *Piramus et Tisbé* are those of the editor, and indicate a reading from manuscripts C or A, 'where both R and B are deficient' (Eley, p.10).

mastered by the falconer, who assumes the dominant role through the control of sleep and food. Intriguingly, in the context of conventions related to love, the hawk in the mews is subject to many ailments, which must be alleviated by medicines provided by the falconer.⁸⁸ Pirus feels that his will is dominated by that of Tisbé. From falconry, Pirus turns to further imagery related to hunting, the metaphor of a fish on a line (403), with its suggestions of the deceptive bait, as 'sui pris' of line 403 shifts to the 'sorpris' of line 404. Mastered, taken unawares, Pirus senses lost joy and potential death. The rhyme 'oi', which begins with the bisyllable 'muir moi' (408), links this state of the suffering lover to consideration of the 'diex d'amours' (409). As with the references to Tisbé, the imagery relates to domination of will. The accusation 'ne garde foi' (409), in conjunction with 'loi' (410), suggests the lord who breaks faith. The *roi* (411), 'net', returns us to hunting imagery, and, although Pirus sees Tisbé and himself as sharing captivity, the parallels associate Tisbé with the god of love.

Pirus displays awareness of this association when he says that he does not know with whom to plead:

'Ne sai cui prier, vous ou lui.
 Bele, a vous fais je mon refui.
 Se por vous muir, tant mar i fui!
 Amie,
 Moult feriez grant felonie
 Se pour vous perdoie la vie,
 Quant par vous puis avoir aye.' (413-419)

In line 414 we see the choice of Tisbé. This introduces a statement of the convention where the blame for suffering is laid on the woman who withholds the *aye* (419), 'aid', which could alleviate it. When considering the use of these conventions from

⁸⁷ John Cummins, *The Hound and the Hawk: The Art of Medieval Hunting* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988), pp. 223-29.

⁸⁸ On the manning of hawks, and the provision of food, and remedies for their illnesses, see John Cummins, *The Hound and the Hawk*, pp. 200-09.

lyric poetry it is important to take into account the posited circumstances where they are spoken. The text has created a situation in which Piramus might be expecting that Tisbé will be listening to his words; thus these should be considered as a discourse addressed from one person to another. Within this context, Piramus implies a specific intention ('prier', 413) and organizes his material to this end; the use of rhetoric to persuade. He presents Tisbé as dominating him, associates her with an unjust god of love, adds the extremely negative connotations of 'felonie' (417). His argument becomes clear: if Tisbé does not wish to be viewed in this way, she has only to grant him what he wishes. Piramus then continues with a long elaboration of his suffering:

'Dolent!
 Moult puis avoir duel et torment,
 Qui tant ai amé longuement
 Et ne puis faire mon talent.
 Chetis!
 Hé, bele, com sui entrepris,
 Com sui pour vostre amour conquis!
 Dolour
 Ne me default ne nuit ne jour:
 Or pens, souspir et emprez plour,
 Toute ai perdue la coulour,
 Dormir,
 Boivre et mengier m'estuet gerpir,
 Ne puis parler que ne souspir.
 Bien ai apris mal a souffrir.
 Dedit
 Et quanque je desir me fuit.' (420-36)

This can be seen as reinforcing the argument, by exciting pity in Tisbé, and Piramus maintains the immediacy of the appeal by interweaving direct address to Tisbé, 'hé bele [...] vostre amour', in lines 425 to 426.

Piramus then shifts to apostrophe:

'Hé, diex, a cui complaing je luit,
 Ja ne garrai se ne m'en fui.
 Foir?
 Amours ne me veult pas gerpir:
 Pour amours m'estovra morir.' (437-41)

The shift is not abrupt, for these lines contain references to those addressed to Tisbé. The physical symptoms of line 427 to 433 are summarized by 'complaing' (437);

love becomes a sickness, the 'diex' addressed would, it seems, be the god of love. The concept of flight provides a further link. In lines 435 to 436 sorrow is expressed in terms of the impossibility of grasping joy, which flees. In line 438 Piramus states that he cannot be healed from the 'complaing', the sickness, of line 437. This creates the image of a community where sickness has struck, and those not ill flee contagion. Piramus, however, is already infected, thus the metaphor of flight once again represents an impossibility. Emphasis of this impossibility comes with its realization by Piramus, expressed by the repetition of 'foir' as a separate bisyllable at line 439. 'Foir' is set in opposition to the two lines which follow; this means that line 440 ('Amours ne me veult pas gerpir') gains the sense that 'Amours' will not allow him to go free; sickness cannot be outrun, but there is also the reminder that Piramus feels himself to be in the power of a harsh lord from whom he cannot escape. The images create a sense of disharmony and disintegration: joy is personified, and flees from Piramus; his flight, from sickness, from lord, from love itself, will fail. The metaphors are sustained; both sickness and the justice of the lord can result in the death foretold in line 441, death which returns us to lines 416 to 419:

'Amie,
Moult feriez grant felonie
Se pour vous perdoie la vie,
Quant par vous puis avoir aÿe.' (416-19)

These parallels between the words addressed to Tisbé and those ostensibly addressed to the god accentuate the association between the two which Piramus is voicing.

Indeed, it becomes difficult to be certain at first who is addressed, as a further shift occurs:

'Morrai?
Se dieu plaist et vous, non ferai,
Ançois vous en soupploierai:
Ja tant, ce cuit, n'en prierai
En vain,
Ains tendrai tant droite ma main
Que de cest mal me ferois sain

Et de vostre amitié certain.' (442-49)

Potential, future, death is presented as the bisyllabic rhetorical question 'morrai?' (442). The answer given in the following line shows that this death can be avoided, but relates this to the will of both 'dieu' and 'vous'. 'Se dieu plaist' can be seen as an automatic linguistic habit, a reference by a Christian medieval speaker to the Christian God, which others might express in other terms; as other gods, as fate, as the power of the universe. The particular context means that we might consider that Piramus is speaking of the god of love, which means that 'vous' must apply here to Tisbé; Piramus links the two, and makes his avoidance of death dependent on both. The verbs used, *soupploier* (444) and *prier* (445), would be appropriate to a religious context, to the feudal, legal, context and to the pleading addressed to a lover.

We see the development in Piramus's argument. Firstly, there are negative qualities, to be associated with the one addressed if they are not persuaded to accept the speaker's point of view. Secondly, there is the appeal to pity. Thirdly, in lines 442 to 449, comes the affirmation, using the future tense, that persuasion will not be in vain; an affirmation that is, in itself, a further tool of persuasion. The future state of happiness is depicted in lines 447 to 449, in extremely interesting terms. The idea of reaching out and being cured of sickness forms part of the presentation of love as a sickness which will only be cured by a response from the lady. This presentation operates not only at a metaphorical level, but also literally, for the lover is shown as suffering actual physical symptoms, which are also healed. A biblical echo can be seen, of the leper who calls upon Christ for healing [Matthew 8.2-4]. This deepens the potential significance of line 449, where Piramus states his assurance that he will be made 'de vostre amitié certain'. There can be implications of the certainty of God's love, once appeal is made. The use of feudal imagery to present the relationship with God for medieval society draws in the relationship between lord

and vassal, itself used as a metaphor for the relationship between the lover and his lady. Piramus posits a future state in which he is certain of a harmonious relationship. By implication, at the time of speaking, he lacks certainty. An explanation might be seen for the need to persuade Tisbé, who supposedly already returns his love.

The affirmation of certainty is reinforced by the rhyme ‘-ain’. This rhyme sound links the pleading which will not be ‘en vain’ (446), the outstretched ‘main’ (447), the healing, or sanity, of ‘sain’ (448), and ‘certain’ (449). Each clause fits a single line, rhythm is reinforced by rhyme to give solidity to what is said, as each step builds on the preceding one without disruption, to the final ‘de vostre amour certain’ (449), which might be expected to stand as a closure to what Piramus says. Certainty is not the final word of this speech, however, for Piramus continues, with an apostrophe to the wall.

There is a model for this apostrophe in the *Metamorphoses*:

‘invide’ dicebant ‘paries, quid amantibus obstas?
quantum erat, ut sineres toto nos corpore iungi
aut, hoc si nimium est, vel ad oscula danda pateres?
nec sumus ingrati: tibi nos debere fatemur,
quod datus est verbis ad amicas transitus auris.’ (IV. 73-77)

[‘O envious wall,’ they would say, ‘why do you stand between lovers? How small a thing ‘twould be for you to permit us to embrace each other, or, if this be too much, to open for our kisses! But we are not ungrateful. We owe it to you, we admit, that a passage is allowed by which our words may go through to loving ears.’] (pp. 183, 185)

These words are spoken by Pyramus and Thisbe together, and associated with their habitual use of the chink for communication. The use of apostrophe in this context seems curious; rather than gaining insight into the nature of the relationship between Pyramus and Thisbe through the way they address each other, the reader is faced with joint words, which have almost the quality of a chorus, addressed to the wall. There is no grandeur in an apostrophe addressed, not to the gods, or the universe;

there seems humour in the words ‘invide [...] paries’ (IV. 73), which can cause the lovers to appear foolish. Their words could be intended to represent playfulness between them, or an intellectual game between writer and reader: the lovers complain that the wall separates them, but also acknowledge that it allows their words to pass; the paradox of the wall which both separates and joins.

In *Piramus et Tisbé* the apostrophe to the wall is given to Piramus alone; if foolishness is to be seen, it will be associated with him only. His use of the apostrophe is extended: compared with the five lines of the Latin, forty lines of the French (450-89) can be seen as concerned with it. In *Piramus et Tisbé*, however, the recipient of the apostrophe is less easily defined than in the *Metamorphoses*. This is seen in the first section of the apostrophe, where Piramus addresses first the wall, then Tisbé:

‘Hé, murs!
Tant par estes aspres et durs,
Mes se je fuisse auques seürs,
La frete
Fust a mes mains si ample fete
Que sans veüe de la guete
Vous en eüsse parmi trete.’ (450-56).

‘Hé murs’ (450) is clearly directly addressed to the wall, the harshness of which is emphasized in the following line, with ‘tant par’, ‘aspres’ and ‘dur’. Eley translates line 452 (‘mes se je fuisse auques seürs’) as ‘but if I felt a little safer here’ (p. 53), an allusion to the illicit nature of the communication between Piramus and Tisbé. There could be an echo of the ‘certain’ of line 449, a reminder that Piramus is seeking certainty. Piramus’s idea of widening the crevice – not found in the *Metamorphoses* – means that the ‘vous’ of line 456 must be addressed to Tisbé, who can then be brought through to him.

As Piramus continues, he addresses the wall directly once more:

‘Parois,
Aiez merci de ces destroys!

Pertuis, tant par estes estrois!
 Chaillous, se vous aouvressoies
 Seul tant
 Qu'ensamble fussiens en parlant,
 Et alissons entrebesant!' (457-63)

A linguistic game seems to be in progress, a game which continues through the apostrophe, as Piramus employs a range of words which have the sense of wall or chink. This device means a range of rhyme sounds become available. It also means that Piramus can extend the apostrophe, and alternate between address to the wall, to the chink, and to Tisbé, without undue repetition. Having earlier alluded to the harsh nature of the wall, here a difference from the *Metamorphoses* is seen, as the tone becomes pleading; first to the wall 'aiez merci' (458), then to the chink 'se vous aouvressoies' (460). The first-person plural verbs introduced by 'ensamble' (462) might seem an echo of the joint words of the *Metamorphoses*, but it is evident that Piramus will not be content with speech alone; he wants the physical presence of Tisbé when they speak, he also envisages kisses. In the first section of the apostrophe to the wall Piramus contemplates violent action against the wall to achieve his desire, in the second he uses verbal persuasion. One model can be seen in the *Metamorphoses*; the presence of the wall, the plea to allow at least kisses to pass.

In *Piramus et Tisbé* the organization is altered. Tisbé is addressed again, in lines which reiterate that the end of suffering will come from her presence:

'Amie,
 Se fusse en vostre compaignie,
 De grant doleur fusse garie,
 Mais tote chose nos envie.' (464-67)

The alternating pattern of address continues, as Piramus directs the apostrophe once more to the wall:

'Hoster,
 Pour tant te devons nous amer,
 Qui parmi toi nous lais parler.
 Crevace
 Cele toi bien que ne te sace
 Nes uns de ceulz qui nous manace.

*A demi oeil esgart la face
 Par toi
 De cele qui le cuer de moi
 Et le corage a trait o soi.
 Mesiere,
 Tant par estes cruel et fiere,
 Qui n'aouvez par ma proiere
 Tant que besier puisse la chiere,
 La bouche,
 La cui douceurs au cuer me touche.'* (468-83)

Lines 468 to 470 can be seen as touching on lines 76 to 77 of the *Metamorphoses*:

*'nec sumus ingrati: tibi nos debere fatemur,
 quod datus est verbis ad amicas transitus auris.'* (IV. 76-77)

['We owe it to you, we admit, that a passage is allowed by which our words may go through to loving ears.'] (p. 185)

Rather than acknowledgement of gratitude, in *Piramus et Tisbé* there is only acknowledgement of the fact that they should not hate the wall. Lines 471 to 473, a plea to the chink to remain hidden, remind us that its use would be prevented by others. As earlier, it is the physical which preoccupies Piramus here; lines 474 to 477 imply that he can just glimpse Tisbé, and develop this fact, which is part of their situation, into the *topos* where love enters the heart via the eyes. The use of the *topos* recalls that Piramus's emotions are involved, it also acts as a reminder of the physical presence of Tisbé. We thus see that the interweaving of Tisbé into the apostrophe to the wall is more complex than at first appears: Piramus addresses her directly, and in addition, refers to her.

The references to Tisbé are focused on Piramus's desire for physical union. When he speaks again to the wall, at line 478, there is an accusation of cruelty because the wall will not open and allow him to kiss Tisbé. The lovers in the *Metamorphoses* do raise the possibility of the wall opening further:

*'quantum erat, ut sineres toto nos corpore iungi
 aut, hoc si nimium est, vel ad oscula danda pateres?'* (IV. 74-75)

['How small a thing 'twould be for you to permit us to embrace each other, or, if this be too much, to open for our kisses!'] (p. 183)

However, there is more a tone of gentle reproach than an accusation of cruelty. There is a further difference between the account in the *Metamorphoses* and that found in *Piramus et Tisbé*, which stems from the fact that in the former both lovers speak, whereas in the latter it is Piramus alone. As a result, the emphasis is changed; two addressees are available to Piramus: the wall and Tisbé herself. In an apostrophe ostensibly destined to the wall Piramus interweaves both direct address to Tisbé and, more subtly, references to the kisses he desires from her. The emphasis on the wall as an obstacle, which alone seems to divide the lovers, reinforces the fact that Tisbé is at the other side. Thus she hears, not only words directly addressed to her, but all that Piramus says. He restates his love for her, and indirectly pleads for more than words in return. The linking of Tisbé with the wall can be seen as part of this persuasion; the shifting focus of Piramus's words means that at other points in the apostrophe, where it is less evident that Tisbé may be intended, it will nevertheless be valid to perceive a reference to her. Piramus implies that she is like the wall to him, in that she could allow physical union, but will permit only words. As a result, accusations of harshness and cruelty, pleading for kindness, are destined for Tisbé. The final lines could be addressed to either:

‘Hé, gente,
Itant me fetes sans atente,
Ne plus.
Prions orendroit de ça jus
Que nous aït dame Venus
Que nulz ne truisse cest pertus.’ (484-89)

Eley translates ‘hé gente’ (484) as ‘ah, fair wall’; the line could equally apply to Tisbé.

A number of elements from the wall scenes in the *Metamorphoses* can be seen in ‘Amie, moult sui angoissous’ (398-489), the second passage of direct speech which *Piramus et Tisbé* attributes to Piramus at the wall. There is first the general

statement in the *Metamorphoses* that the chink in the wall was used by the lovers for speech:

et vocis fecistes iter, tutaeque per illud
murmure blanditiae minimo transire solebant. (IV. 69-70)

[You [...] made it the channel of speech. Safe through this your loving words used to pass in tiny whispers.] (p. 183)

In *Piramus et Tisbé* this is shown occurring, on specific occasions, through the use of direct speech. ‘Amie, moult sui angoissous’ (397-489) forms part of a series of four passages of direct speech, found on two occasions, as paired speeches spoken by Piramus and Tisbé in turn. As for the content of the words spoken by the lovers, Piramus uses material from two of three potential areas suggested by the *Metamorphoses*: the idea of expressing suffering encapsulated in ‘multa prius questi statuunt’ (IV. 84) and the apostrophe to the wall. The plan to leave the city is not proposed by Piramus.

The use of first-person direct speech becomes significant in the way the material used functions within Piramus’s speech. In the *Metamorphoses* the expression of suffering is indirectly reported, shared, and may include mutual comfort. In *Piramus et Tisbé* the single male voice frames the expression of suffering in terms which recall the voice of the lyric poem. This itself seeks to persuade the lady to accede to the demands of the male. The organization of these conventions found in Piramus’s speech reinforces this aspect of persuasion. In the *Metamorphoses* plural direct speech means that the apostrophe to the wall can be seen as a plea for change made by both lovers to forces outside themselves. The choice of the wall recalls the circumstances, and, by focusing on an apparently mundane object, adds a comic element. In *Piramus et Tisbé* the apostrophe to the wall sees the continuation of the single male voice. This means that Tisbé becomes the recipient of the words of Piramus, who interweaves continued address to her with

words addressed to the wall, words which see parallels established between the wall and the lady of lyric convention. The apostrophe to the wall becomes part of the longer speech, in which Piramus organizes the linguistic resources at his disposal, with the intention of persuading Tisbé.

‘Li jovenciaux plaint et souspire’ (490-93) [Third Person]

Four lines of third-person narrative intervene between the words of Piramus, ‘Amie, moult sui angoissous’ (398-489) and those of Tisbé, ‘Amis, trop vous desconfortez’ (494-583):

Li jovenciaux plaint et souspire,
Lores fremist, ne pot mot dire,
Et quant li siens contes remaint,
Tysbé commence son complaint. (490-93)

There is the transition from the words of one speaker to the words of the other. Piramus is said to fall silent because he cannot speak further, which raises the question of what he would have added had he been able to continue. Tisbé begins to speak only when Piramus has finished, rather than interrupting him with answers; the representation of formal oratory, rather than of a vigorous dialogue where the words of one speaker are taken up, as immediate cues, by a second who is anxious to verbalize their thoughts.

The choice of formal speeches cannot be simply the result of a lack of other models, for we have already noted the sequence of brief phrases used in the scene where a servant, noticing the import of the relationship between Piramus and Tisbé, informs Tisbé’s mother, who then charges a chambermaid with ensuring that Tisbé does not see Piramus (81-94). These brief lines of direct speech have a largely narrative function, whereas additional functions are becoming apparent in the passages of direct speech attributed to Piramus and Tisbé.

The first speeches of the lovers are described in a variety of ways. The third-person narrative tells us that Piramus 'demente soi' (142), that Tisbé 'se plaint' (211), and speaks of Piramus's 'duel' (196), while Tisbé herself speaks of her 'plainte' (293). It is not easy to be certain of what would have been understood by these terms. Further terms are added as the couple speak at the wall: 'Amie, moult sui angoissous' (398-489), spoken by Piramus, is described as 'li siens contes' (492); the words of Tisbé, 'Amis, trop vous desconfortez' (494-583), which will follow, are spoken of as a 'complaint' (493).

Amis, trop vous desconfortez (494-583) [Tisbé]

First line to first line, it seems, comes Tisbé's response to Piramus:

'Amis, trop vous desconfortez;
 Merveilles n'est, que trop m'amez:
 Bien sai qu'a mort estes navrez
 Pour moi,
 Et je por vous, en moie foi.
 De ma vie ne sai conroi,
 Ne sui mie en menor esfroi
 Que vous.
 Moult estes tristes et plorous,
 Et mes cuers est moult angoissous.
 Griement
 Vous complaigniez de cest torment,
 Mes je, espoir, plus durement.
 Amis,
 Qui si dites qu'estes conquis,
 Li miens cuers est d'amors surpris
 Sans faille;
 Plus est espris que feus em paille.
 Amors m'ocist et me travaille.' (494-512)

The repeated use of 'trop', in lines 494 and 495, associates the extravagant expression of emotion by Piramus with a lack of *mesure*, the quality of equilibrium so important to medieval thought. With the loss of *mesure* comes disharmony for the individual and for society. The impression of a response by Tisbé to the words of Piramus continues, as Tisbé, in a series of parallel clauses, enumerates the elements of the suffering claimed by Piramus, and equals, or exceeds them, with her own experience. There is a hint of impatience in the 'bien sai' (496) which leads into

consideration of the first element; a suggestion that Tisbé has heard too many words from Piramus associating his love for her with a wound which will lead to death. This sense of impatience is maintained by the emphatic effect of the single syllable words 'et je por vous' (498), as Tisbé claims that she matches him. Piramus's experience, in the second person, is equalled by Tisbé's, in the first person. For her also, love is a death wound, life is suffering, lamenting; she also conceptualizes falling in love as an attack made upon her.

Tisbé's claim that she matches Piramus in suffering finds an echo in lines 833 to 836, spoken when she believes that Piramus is dead:

'Com foible amour, com povre foi
Avroie,
Amis, se je ne vous sivoie,
S'a court termes ne m'ocioie.' (833-36)

These lines from Tisbé's lament can be seen as reflecting from lines from the *Metamorphoses*:

'est et mihi fortis in unum
hoc manus, est et amor: dabit hic in vulnera vires.
persequar extinctum.' (IV. 149-51)

['I, too, have a brave hand for this one deed; I, too, have love. This shall give me strength for the fatal blow. I will follow you in death.'] (p. 189)

Here Thisbe asserts that she will do no less than Piramus, equalling him in love, and in ability to kill herself, an assertion which is followed up with action. Use is made of the *topoi* associating love with death. In general, a first stage is the equating of the pain resulting from frustrated love with that of a death wound. Sophistry twists the equation; the fatal nature of the wound will be negated if the frustration is removed; if frustration remains, death will be accepted, or even sought, as relief from suffering. Claims of willingness to die for the other become a measure of the extent of love. In *Piramus et Tisbé* exploration of the *topoi* begins at the level of metaphor; the element of persuasion inherent in the words of a male poet is undercut by Tisbé, in lines that

foretell the shift from the metaphorical level to the literal, where death occurs for both.

From direct address to Pirus Tisbé turns to apostrophe to a deity:

'Diex grans,
 Quel ire est ce, quel maltalans,
 Que as a moi de si lonc tans?
 Diex pere,
 Qui me fels nestre de mere,
 Voies mon duel et ma misere,
 Ma paine.' (513-19)

The significance of these lines varies with the perceived sense which Tisbé gives to the deity. Appeal may be to an unspecified deity, in the same way as to any other outside force; the apostrophe serving simply as an outlet for Tisbé's emotions. Tisbé may, however, be addressing her words to the Christian God; her suffering must be a sign of God's anger with her. A further meaning for the concept of deity can be seen in the implication that Tisbé associates 'Amors' (512) with 'Diex' which results from the juxtaposition of lines 512 and 513:

'Amors m'ocist et me travaille.
 Diex grans.' (512-13)

In the middle of a section of lines with the same rhyme Tisbé shifts again to address Pirus:

'Males herres et male estraine
 Reçui,
 Amis, quant primes te connui.' (520-22)

This thought is then amplified:

'Ains puis ne nuit ne jour ne fui
 Sans plaie.
 N'est merveille s'ele s'esmaie,
 La touse
 Qui pour vous est si angoissouse:
 Riens ne la puet faire joieuse.
 A tort
 Ai je perdu joie et deport;
 Riens ne me puet doner confort;
 Par grant angoisse atens la mort.' (523-32)

Tisbé emphasizes that the responsibility for her suffering must rest with Pirus, within the convention which attributes that for his to her. Lines 525 to 528 present an

intriguing use of the third person by Tisbé for herself. Can it be that she seeks to distance herself from her suffering, perhaps in order to understand it more clearly? The negatives which are found throughout this section, associated both with its first person and its third, show that from both perspectives Tisbé sees only pain.

The pair night and day ('ne nuit ne jour ne fui / sans plaie', 523-24) is explored further, as each is considered in turn, showing that, indeed, neither gives respite. First, and briefly, Tisbé describes her state by day:

'Le jour
Je sui en lerne et en freour
Et en angoisse et en dolour
Et en torment et en tristour.' (533-36)

The repetition of 'et en' creates a list which is non-specific, but emphatic. Secondly, at greater length, Tisbé describes her experiences at night:

'La nuit
N'ai je ne deport ne deduit.
Quant je me gis dedens mon lit,
Riens n'oi,
S'en sui en paine et en esfroi;
Si m'est avis que je vous voi,
Et ne poez parler a moi,
Dont sui pires que ne soloi.
Tressaill,
Tressu d'angoisse et de travail;
Dont tens mes mains que je vous bail,
Et quant vous doi prendre, si fail.' (537-47)

The increased detail given to Tisbé's experiences at night can be seen as an exploration of the convention which presents the suffering caused by love as intensified during the night; the lover cannot sleep, or sleeps only to be disturbed by dreams. Tisbé begins with a general statement on her lack of joy at night but, rather than of an inability to sleep, she speaks of hearing nothing ('quant je me gis dedans mon lit, / riens n'oi', 539-40). That Tisbé hears nothing could be a consequence of the fact that she is held in an inner room; an evocation of the silence of the night, when awareness of suffering becomes more vivid. Line 342 could be a development of this scene, as Tisbé imagines that she sees Piramus. Imagination leads to dream,

the dream of the lover, of lyric poetry. The lyric poet dreams that he holds the lady. On waking, separation is worse than before; the convention serves to emphasize the distance between the lover and the lady, as hope seems to be fulfilled by the embrace, only to be undercut by the lonely awakening, which shows that hope, based upon a dream, is without foundation.

In *Piramus et Tisbé* Tisbé takes the male role, itself a textual artefact, and relates it to another text, the speech which, throughout *Piramus et Tisbé*, is so important an aspect of the relationship between her and Piramus. Tisbé dreams that she sees Piramus, but hope raised by this is then shown to be false, because Piramus cannot speak to her; the fundamental aspect of their relationship is lacking in the dream manifestation. The realization of the deception of the dream makes suffering worse than before. The insubstantial nature of this dream Piramus is emphasized by the way Tisbé describes how she reaches out, but fails to reach him; there is thus no dream embrace:

‘Dont tens mes mains que je vous bail,
Et quant vous doi prendre, si fail.’ (547-48)

In these lines there is an echo of lines spoken earlier by Piramus in ‘Amie, moult sui angoissous’ (398-489). There we saw first Piramus’s impression of being distanced from Tisbé, presented in terms of joy in flight:

‘Dedit
Et quanque je desir me fuit.’ (435-36)

This was followed by the expression of hope, of healing, of certainty of love:

‘Ains tendrai tant droit ma main
Que de cest mal me ferois sain
Et de vostre amistié certain.’ (447-49)

While for Piramus present failure to grasp joy is followed in the text by claims of reaching it in the future, for Tisbé, in the dream, Piramus remains unreachable. However, it is significant that for Piramus certainty is placed in the future; the hope

will only become reality 'se dieu plaist et vous' (443). Thus shown as dependent on Tisbé, the certainty expressed by Piramus forms in truth part of his strategy of persuasion, and is therefore as insubstantial as Tisbé's dream Piramus, and this is reinforced by the way Piramus does not finish his speech on the note of certainty, but returns to the contemplation of separation, represented by the wall, itself an element in the attempt at persuasion. This attempt at persuasion shows a Piramus who seems trapped by the language he uses; persuasion will have little effect upon the wall itself, and might seem unnecessary with regard to his relationship with Tisbé, who is said to return his love.

By means of the contrast of dream with the reality of her waking state, Tisbé is shown confronted by evidence which confirms her separation from Piramus. Her words show a different approach from that of Piramus, as *Piramus et Tisbé* develops the concept of the lover's dream, drawing in elements from the account in the *Metamorphoses*. Tisbé slips again into sleep, and again she dreams:

'Amis,
 Quant me rendors, si m'est avis
 Que vous estes devant mon vis,
 Tous dehaitiez et tous pensis.
 Diex donge
 Que biens me viengne de cest songe!
 Dont mest avis que me semonge
 Sovent
 Ne sai quel vois, en complaignant,
 Qui ce me dist apertemant
 Ensi:
 'Tysbé, cognois tu ton ami?
 Esveille toi, s'alons de ci.
 Tysbé,
 Li dieu nous ont amonesté
 Que issons fors de la cité,
 Souz le morier,
 Droit a la fontaine au gravier:
 La nous porrons esbanoier.' (549-67)

Again the dream reveals the figure of Piramus, his state of melancholy is evoked in line 552. A different dynamic becomes apparent, as Tisbé reports words that she hears, words which serve to introduce the idea of the plan to leave the city and meet

at the tomb of Ninus. In the *Metamorphoses* we are told only that Pyramus and

Thisbe decide upon this idea:

multa prius questi statuunt, ut nocte silenti
fallere custodes foribusque exedere temptent,
cumque domo exierint, urbis quoque tecta relinquunt,
neve sit errandum lato spatiantibus arvo,
convenient ad busta Nini lateantque sub umbra
arboris: arbor ibi niveis uberrima pomis,
ardua morus, erat, gelido contermina fonti. (IV. 84-90)

[Then first in low whispers they lamented bitterly, then decided when all had become still that night to try to elude their guardians' watchful eyes and steal out of doors; and, when they had gotten out, they would leave the city as well; and that they might not run the risk of missing one another, as they wandered in the open country, they were to meet at Ninus' tomb and hide in the shade of a tree. Now there was a tree there hanging full of snow-white berries, a tall mulberry, and not far away was a cool spring.] (p. 185)

Third-person narrative is used to report the arrival at this decision, proposals and counter-proposals are not shown, the plan becomes a joint idea.

In *Piramus et Tisbé* third-person narrative is replaced by direct speech; this is given added complexity by the fact that the proposal to leave the city is contained in words of direct speech, spoken by a character in a dream, which Tisbé reports. One effect of the differences between the *Metamorphoses* and *Piramus et Tisbé* is to associate the plan to leave the city with Tisbé. It is here that a contrast is seen between the function of the direct discourse given to Piramus in the second speech at the wall, and that given to Tisbé. For Piramus, separation and the resultant suffering become the impulse for a discourse which is self-nourishing, which maintains the focus on separation, and which presents the wall as an obstacle. In 'Amis, trop vous desconfortez' (494-583) Tisbé moves from a first dream experience which is associated with consciousness of separation to a second which introduces action to resolve the problem; a move from the lyric to the dramatic, from fruitless language to a practical approach; if the wall cannot be breached, then it can be circumvented.

The association of the plan to leave the city with Tisbé might add to the delineation of her as more practical, more active, compared with Piramus. It might also suggest that her love is greater, as both Piramus and Tisbé have established a relationship between the extent of their love and the ability to overcome the obstacles to it: Piramus, when he comments ‘se vous avez de moi tel cure / ne vous tendra la fermeture’ (339-40), and Tisbé, when she ripostes ‘qui plus aime plus voi cler’ (375). This greater love displayed by Tisbé may be viewed as positive or negative, as faithfulness, or as over-eagerness, the latter associated with a current of opinion which viewed the sexuality of women as less controlled than men. Imputations of over-eagerness could be contradicted by the claim that the plan does not originate with Tisbé herself, but rather with a voice in her dream.

The text seems ambivalent on the nature of the dream which Tisbé reports to Piramus. A dream might be seen as a means of guidance, from a force outside the dreamer. A number of elements might lead Tisbé to expect that the guidance given by her dream would be reliable. In it she seems to see Piramus, whom she loves. The words spoken seem to be linked to him, for we find the use of the first-person plural in ‘s’alons de ci’ (561) and in ‘li dieu nous ont amonesté’ (563). It is the gods who are presented as the originators of the idea to leave the city, which implies that the plan is based on authority, and on greater knowledge than that available to humanity.

Considered more critically, aspects of her dream suggest that Tisbé should be more cautious. Indeed, some uncertainty may suggested by her comment ‘Diex donge / que biens me viegne de cest songe’ (553-54). Pagan gods may interfere in the affairs of humanity with malicious intent, and the figure of Piramus may be a simulacrum intended to deceive. Moreover, although medieval dream theory made provision for the usefulness of dreams to the dreamer, not all dreams were seen as

significant. As A.C. Spearing notes, Macrobius, in his commentary on the *Somnium Scipionis*, suggests five categories of dreams. Meaning may be found in dreams of three categories: the *somnium*, or enigmatic dream which allows of interpretation, the *visio*, or 'prophetic vision', and the *oraculum*, in which a figure of authority gives advice. Two categories are meaningless, the *insomnium* and the *visum*.⁸⁹ While it might seem that Tisbé's dream should be included amongst those seen as significant, such an inference would be contradicted by the primary characteristic of the *visum*, which 'comes upon one in the moment between wakefulness and slumber' (Spearing, p. 9), a definition which could be applied to Tisbé's restive shifts and her comment 'quant me rendors' (550), which lead into her account of her dream. Perhaps most significantly, the dream is reported to Piramus within a situation to which it contains a solution. In addition to Macrobius as a possible basis for medieval dream theory, and hence model for the dream-vision text, Bodenham suggests Aristotle, and comments:

As the mind in sleep knows only itself, at least in the context of Aristotle's *Parva Naturalia*, the events in the narrative must be the substance of the mind that dreamt them. They are the embodiment of its faculties, of its fears, desires and hopes that take place as figments of the imagination.⁹⁰

Thus might we see a manifestation of Tisbé's unconscious desires in the dream state. The ending of their separation would be satisfying to Tisbé and to Piramus, and in addition to the reader or audience who sympathize with them, and this desire for resolution of difficulties might lead to an absence of critical thought; Tisbé would

⁸⁹ A.C. Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp.8-11. See also Alison M. Peden, 'Macrobius and Medieval Dream Literature', *Medium Ævum*, 54 (1985), 59-73 (p. 60) and C.H.L. Bodenham, 'The Nature of the Dream in Late Mediaeval French Literature', *Medium Ævum*, 54 (1985), 74-86 (p. 74).

⁹⁰ C.H.L. Bodenham, 'The Nature of the Dream', p. 76. See also Louise M. Haywood, "'La escura selva': Allegory in Early Sentimental Romance", *Hispanic Review*, 68 (2000), 415-28 (p. 418-19).

trust the dream and the audience could be led to feel that she was justified in doing so.

It is significant that the speaker whose voice Tisbé hears is not clearly defined; it may seem that the dream Píramus speaks, but Tisbé states first that ‘me semonge / sovent / ne sais quel vois’ (555-57). The sense of being summoned by an unknown voice in the night evokes thoughts of Samuel in the Temple at night, called by God:

And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep; That the Lord called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. And the Lord called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again. Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord revealed unto him. And the Lord called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shall say, Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak: for thy servant heareth.⁹¹

The situation of Samuel provides a contrast with that of Tisbé, a contrast which is suggestive. Samuel does not recognize the voice of God; verse 7 shows that this is because of a limitation of knowledge: ‘Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord revealed to him’. At first Samuel acts according to this incomplete knowledge; full knowledge comes with advice from Eli, advice based on a wider perception. In *Píramus et Tisbé* Tisbé is placed in physical and mental isolation. Walls separate her from others in society who may advise her; she is given no confidante, and therefore can seek counsel only from herself or from Píramus, and such counsel may be tainted by their desire for union, and may indeed be false counsel.

⁹¹ I Samuel 3. 3-10.

Tisbé does ask Pirus for his opinion:

‘Amis,
 Dites qu’il vous en est avis.
 De m’amor vueil que soies fis
 Pour voir.
 Je m’emlerai dou premier soir,
 A mienuit irai savoir,
 La fors,
 S’i trouverai le vostre cors.
 Amis, ta vie est mes tresors;
 Gardez
 Ne soiez lenz ne demorez;
 Dou premerain some levez,
 A la fontaine me querez,
 Sous le morier enmi les prez,
 La ou Ninus fu enterrez,
 Certainement m’i troverez.’ (568-83)

The content and the organization of this final passage of Tisbé’s speech ‘Amis, trop vous desconfortez’ mean it is unlikely to draw a refusal of the plan from Pirus. The passage divides into two sections of eight lines, lines 568 to 575, and 576 to 583, each beginning with the word ‘amis’. The use of this term at the start of the first section means that, even as Tisbé ostensibly asks Pirus what he thinks (568-69), she is predisposing his answer. In lines 570 to 571 Tisbé states that she wants Pirus to be certain of her love; the organization of the material creates a link between the plan to leave the city and the assurance of Tisbé’s love, an assurance which Pirus has been seeking, and which would lead him to view the plan with favour. In lines 572 to 573, Tisbé uses the first-person future tense to say that she will go. This is significant because it shows that, despite doubts mentioned in lines 553 to 554, despite the request for advice, Tisbé has already decided upon her course of action. The placing of ‘la fors’ (574) in isolation highlights the enormity of the step she is taking; what leads her to this is the potential physical presence of Pirus. This physical presence is made more likely by the way Tisbé incorporates him into these lines, and by the fact that she tells him that she will go.

The following eight lines, lines 576 to 583, deal with another journey out of the city, that to be made by Piramus. Lines 576 to 577 again begin with the word 'amis' and are a further assurance of Tisbé's love for Piramus, which could be viewed as a *captatio benevolentiae*, which will ensure that the imperatives of lines 577 to 580 will be obeyed, moving their action to the future, and thus creating a parallel with the stages of Tisbé's departure. The verb 'trouver' is used twice in this passage of sixteen lines, in the final line of each section of eight lines, thus highlighting the pattern that is established. In the first section, Tisbé states that she will go out of the city, 'si trouverai le vostre cors' (575), to find Piramus; this means that when, in the second section, she asks him to go, she can assure him that he will find her there ('certainement m'i troverez', 583); in the text it is as if she is already there.

The final section of 'Amis, trop vous desconfortez' also gives details of the place where Piramus and Tisbé will meet. This setting is drawn from the account in the *Metamorphoses*, which tells how, so as not to miss each other, Pyramus and Thisbe plan to meet at the tomb of Ninus:

convenient ad busta Nini lateantque sub umbra
arboris: arbor ibi niveis uberrima pomis,
ardua morus, erat, gelido contermina fonti. (IV. 89-90)

[They were to meet at Ninus' tomb and hide in the shade of a tree. Now there was a tree there hanging full of snow-white berries, a tall mulberry, and not far away was a cool spring.] (p. 185)

For Pyramus and Thisbe, a practical reason lies behind the decision to set a rendezvous. For Ovid, as writer, practical reasons may also be important. There is the link between Ninus and Semiramis, who is associated with the city of Babylon in line 58 ('coctilibus muris cinxiesse Semiramis urbem'). It would thus seem reasonable that the tomb of Ninus should be found outside the city. The additional detail about the tree is necessary because it is the changed colour of its fruits which constitutes

the metamorphosis of this particular story. The presence of the spring would be necessary in a desert setting for this tree to flourish. Although practical reasons can be given, together the three elements present an intriguing combination of life and death.

In *Piramus et Tisbé* the meeting place is first mentioned by the speaker heard by Tisbé in her dream; here only two elements are present, the mulberry and the spring:

‘Souz le morier,
Droit a la fontaine au gravier.’ (565-66)

These elements bring positive connotations: the water of the spring is fundamental to life, the presence of the tree creates the garden setting which has associations with love. The speaker in the dream evokes one of the primary models for the link between love and the garden, with the words ‘Tysbé, [...] esveille toi, s’alons de ci’ (560-61); a faint echo of words from the Song of Songs:

My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; The fig tree putteth forth her green figs and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise my love, my fair one, and come away.⁹²

Water, the end of winter, love, all mean that life can flourish.

When compared with the setting created in the *Metamorphoses*, that found in *Piramus et Tisbé* is incomplete when first delineated, in the dream on which Tisbé bases her actions, as if the speaker is attempting deception by withholding information. The first reference to the tomb comes at the end of ‘Amis, trop vous desconfortez’ (494-583), when Tisbé seems already set on following the plan:

‘A la fontaine me querez,
Sous le morier enmi les prez,
La ou Ninus fu enterrez.’ (580-82)

⁹² The Song of Solomon 2. 10-13.

Here the three elements from the *Metamorphoses* are all present, but in a changed order, which places first those which suggest life, as if Tisbé refuses to acknowledge the significance of the tomb, incongruous as a meeting place for love, because of its association with death. The order proves important, for, as death intrudes upon the *locus amoenus*, changing all its aspects from life to death, so the mention of the tomb intrudes into the words of Tisbé, revealing an irony of which she is unconscious. Tisbé, by the use of the future, creates the impression of certainty:

‘A mienuit irai savoir,
La fors,
S’i trouverai le vostre cors.
Amis, ta vie est mes tresors.’ (573-76)

The impression of certainty means that for Piramus it will seem as though she will be already there. Her final line (‘certainment m’i trouverez’, 583) seems a confirmation of this; however, the harmonious progression from the evocation of the *locus amoenus* to the certainty of the meeting is physically impeded in the text by the reference to the tomb; the final two lines of Tisbé’s speech, considered together, lie in an uneasy juxtaposition, which emphasizes the incongruity of the tomb as a meeting place for lovers:

‘La ou Ninus fu enterrez,
Certainment m’i trouverez.’ (582-83)

Tisbé promises certainty, but, in truth, when Piramus arrives at the rendezvous, Tisbé will not be there. The absence of Tisbé will result in the death of Piramus; a death which gives an ironic truth to the words ‘le vostre cors’ (575). It is the living Piramus whom Tisbé prizes with the words ‘amis, ta vie est mes tresors’ (576), the living Piramus who leads her to consider a plan which is based upon a dream of dubious trustworthiness, a plan which turns her aside from the accepted norms of society. To that living Piramus Tisbé addresses words destined to bring him to agreement with the plan, to bring him to the rendezvous, and thus she brings him to his death.

In 'Amis, trop vous desconfortez' (494-583), while material from the *Metamorphoses* is used, it is adapted and developed. As noted earlier, in the *Metamorphoses* we are told of the use of the chink in the wall by the lovers, to allow speech to pass; in *Piramus et Tisbé*, the use of direct speech demonstrates this fact in action; direct speech thus assumes functions of third-person narrative. The *Metamorphoses* offers three topics: there is the apostrophe to the wall, given as direct speech, and third-person reporting of the expression of suffering, and of the formulation of the plan to leave the city. Of these topics 'Amis, trop vous desconfortez' (494-583) covers only the latter two. The *Metamorphoses* uses the third person plural, attributing speech to Pyramus and Thisbe jointly; *Piramus et Tisbé* differentiates, giving the words of each lover in turn. This means that different areas of the potential material may come to be associated with each; Pyramus rails impotently, while Tisbé plans action. The actual use of resources in *Piramus et Tisbé* presents a more complex reaction to them than this might suggest.

The *Metamorphoses* tells us that 'tum murmure parvo / multa prius questi statuunt' (IV. 83-84). We recall Miller's translation: 'then first in low whispers they lamented bitterly' (p. 185). In *Piramus et Tisbé* Tisbé's words are described as a 'complaint' (493). The *complaint* is not easy to define formally; the expectation is of an extended exploration of the experience of love, formulated according to a range of related conventions which focus upon suffering. The change from the third-person reporting of joint speech in the *Metamorphoses* to the first-person individual speeches of *Piramus et Tisbé* has a significant effect. In the words of Pyramus, 'Amie, moult sui angoissous' (398-489), the extended exploration of the *complaint*, in juxtaposition with the apostrophe to the wall, functions as a comment on characteristics of the former; persuasion from a position of inaction. 'Amis, trop vous

desconfortez' (494-583) follows almost directly, with only brief lines of third-person narrative which, rather than introducing new circumstances, link the two speeches, raising the possibility that Tisbé's words can be seen as a response to those of Piramus. By means of this response the *complaint* is subjected to a further critique. Piramus dwells much on his suffering; Tisbé claims that hers equals or exceeds it. If the expression in words is a measure of suffering, Tisbé also can use the *topoi*, they apply also to her experience.

Indeed, Tisbé's suffering fills her whole life, both night and day, and it is by the use of this pairing that, still within her *complaint*, she moves beyond the link between love and language, to the domain of action, where love can receive fulfillment. The shift is gradual, for night is at first another aspect of suffering love; the first dream underlines separation from Piramus. It is only with the second dream that potential action becomes evident. The use of Tisbé's dream as a vehicle for the suggestion of the plan, compared with the joint formulation found in the *Metamorphoses*, is important in several ways. The plan seems to originate with Tisbé; it is her dream, and she thinks it worth relating to Piramus. This causes Tisbé to seem more active than Piramus; the woman more eager than the man. The plan originates, however, not with Tisbé but with the speaker in her dream, which can seem to remove the responsibility from Tisbé. Aspects of the dream suggest that a more critical response would have been appropriate, and there is thus an indirect comment upon the nature of the emotion which makes such a response unlikely. The presentation of the setting for the rendezvous in *Piramus et Tisbé*, compared with the *Metamorphoses*, evokes the unreliable quality of life when governed by emotion which is itself unmastered. As though deceiving by omission, the dream speaker creates a setting which lacks the troubling element of the tomb. Tisbé includes this,

but places it in the final position, a possible self-deception which results in a juxtapositioning which reminds us that death is part of the story of Piramus and Tisbé. The final lines concerned with the wall, 'ensi ferment lor covenant' (584-89), will be considered in the next section, where the lovers leave the walls of Babylon, to find death beneath the mulberry.

1.4 FROM THE WALLS OF BABYLON TO DEATH

After the scenes at the wall the organization of the material in *Piramus et Tisbé* follows much more closely that of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe found in the *Metamorphoses*. In both texts third-person narrative tells of events which lead from the wall to the death of the lovers. In both texts the words spoken by each lover in the belief that the other is dead are reported directly. There is a contrast with earlier scenes in *Piramus et Tisbé*, where the use of first-person direct speech may in itself be significant, when compared with the silence at separation or the joint words at the wall found in the *Metamorphoses*. Nevertheless, although to a lesser extent than earlier in the story, additions and changes to the Latin can still be found in the French.

1.4.1 THE WAIT FOR NIGHTFALL AND THE DEPARTURE FROM BABYLON

In the *Metamorphoses*, line 90 of Book IV gives the last detail related to the making of the plan. Lines 91 to 107 relate events from this point to the discovery of Thisbe's blood-stained garment by Pyramus, which is followed by the words he speaks. In *Piramus et Tisbé*, when Piramus and Tisbé fall silent at the wall there is a much longer section of third-person narrative, from line 584 to line 701, before further direct speech is found. Episodes only touched on in the Latin are developed. One

effect is the creation of a varying dynamic, as the focus shifts from external events to how these are experienced by Piramus and Tisbé. The change of perspective may be less evident than a change from third to first person but, if to a lesser degree, it can operate with a similar effect. We can divide this section into three passages:

‘Ensi ferment lor covenant’	(584-89)	[Third Person]
‘Li dui amant sont en grant cure’	(590-617)	[Third Person]
‘Ja ert la gent toute endormie’	(618-701)	[Third Person]

Some discussion of these passages is necessary to show how each contributes to the context for the final passages of direct speech.

‘Ensi ferment lor covenant’ (584-89) [Third Person]

Six lines of third-person narrative mark the end of the scenes in *Piramus et Tisbé* which are concerned with the use of the chink in the wall for speech:

Ensi ferment lor convenant,
Puis departent li dui amant
Et saluerent le pertuis
Qu’il ne virent des or mais puis,
Mes primes baise la paroi
Chascuns au departir de soi. (584-89)

We see here the move from the first person to the third-person plural, which unites the lovers, if only through grammar, as they agree upon the plan and then part. The *Metamorphoses* does not mention this final parting at the wall; the third-person description of the tree and spring in lines 89 to 90 is followed only by the remark ‘pacta placent’ (IV. 91) [‘they liked the plan’] (p. 185). *Piramus et Tisbé* introduces the suggestion of the motif of the *alba* or dawn parting of the lovers. There are kisses, but these are insubstantial, impeded by the wall, a detail of their story which in the *Metamorphoses* is found after the joint apostrophe to the wall:

sub noctem dixere ‘vale’ partique dedere
oscula quisque suae non pervenientia contra. (IV. 79-80)

[As night came on they said good-bye and printed, each on his own side of the wall, kisses that did not go through.] (p. 185)

This slight change of organisation in *Piramus et Tisbé* accentuates the tension between joining and separation which is present at this stage of the story. The couple leave the wall, which allows only an imperfect union, in the hope that their plan will permit a more complete one. Grammar emphasizes separation, with the move to the third person singular (588-89). The potential offered by the plan may explain the absence of sorrow at this parting, the significance of which is not recognised by Piramus and Tisbé, and the finality of which lends irony to the comment, applied to the wall, 'qu'il ne virent des or mais puis' (587).

'Li dui amant sont en grant cure' (590-617) [Third Person]

Related to the motif of the parting at dawn is the longing for nightfall, and the presence of the beloved. In *Piramus et Tisbé* we see this longing developed and given a new focus, compared with the brief details given in the *Metamorphoses*, where only two lines are found between the end of the scenes at the wall and the departure of Thisbe:

pacta placent; et lux, tarde discedere visa,
praecipitatur aquis, et aquis nox exit ab isdem. (IV. 91-92)

[They liked the plan, and slow the day seemed to go. But at last the sun went plunging down beneath the waves, and from the same waves the night came up.] (p. 185)

These lines mark the close of a meeting opened by lines 81 to 82:

postera nocturnos Aurora removerat ignes,
solque pruinosas radiis siccaverat herbas. (IV. 81-82)

[The next morning had put out the starry beacons of the night, and the sun's rays had dried the frosty grass.] (p. 185)

Indeed, although the eagerness of the lovers for the arrival of night is touched upon in line 91, an important function of these lines is to fix this one meeting, which sees the making of the pact, to a specific occasion, in contrast to other meetings at the wall.

Piramus et Tisbé marks the beginning of the final meeting at the wall with a brevity – ‘li jours s’en vait, la nuit prist fin’ (394) – which parallels that found in the *Metamorphoses*. The wait for nightfall which follows that meeting is explored in greater depth. As the passage begins, we see how detail is used:

Li dui amant sont en grant cure;
 Trop lor samble que li jours dure;
 Moult se complaignent dou soleil,
 Souvent l’apelent ‘non feeil’,
 Quar trop se targe d’esconser,
 Et si fait la nuit demorer:
 Dient qu’a escient le fait
 Pour destourbanche de lor plait. (590-97)

The Latin ‘et lux, tarde discedere visa’ (IV. 91) [and slow the day seemed to go] (p.185), is first straightforwardly translated in line 591 ‘trop lor samble que li jours dure’. Lines 592 to 597 then expand upon the implied longing, which the lovers express by means of apostrophe to the sun. The third person plural verbs recall the joint apostrophe to the wall found in the *Metamorphoses*; the imperfect ‘dicebant’ (IV. 73) finds a parallel in ‘moult’ (592) and ‘souvent’ (593). Kibler (p. 285) notes the shift from the sun as ‘an aloof Classical god’ to the feudal ‘non feeil’ (593) used in *Piramus et Tisbé*. With this extra small scene *Piramus et Tisbé* maintains its greater focus upon the way the lovers experience events. We might expect extended passages of direct speech, as at earlier points in their story; but, apart from the two words ‘non feeil’ (593), this apostrophe is reported only indirectly, which means that we see youth, impatient, playful, extravagant, observed from the more objective viewpoint of the third person.

A similar development of the text of the *Metamorphoses* is seen in the way *Piramus et Tisbé* treats the coming of night:

Li jours s’en vait, la nuis repaire,
 Et li termes de lor afaire.
 Montent les guetes sor les murs;
 Cil se dorment qui sont segurs,
 Mes nulz des deus ne se repose,
 Ains est en apens d’autre chose;

Chascuns en soi meismes soigne
De bien entreprendre sa besoigne. (598-605)

Line 598 can be seen as translating the Latin. The mention of les 'guetes' (600) might seem an unimportant detail, part of the medieval setting where the sentries would naturally take their posts as night falls. However, more than mere scene setting is involved. The mention of the sentries is followed by the comment 'cil se dorment qui sont segurs' (601). The knowledge that men are on watch brings security and permits sleep; the normal routines of society continue. The following line 'mes nulz des deus ne se repose' (602), therefore sets Piramus and Tisbé apart from society. There is an amplification of line 590, 'li dui amant sont en grant cure'. This line can be understood in two ways, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive: there is the idea that the lovers long for nightfall and the opportunity to put their plan into action; there is also the suggestion that they experience uneasiness at the prospect.

The remainder of this passage explores the contradictory impulses which trouble their thoughts; we find the *topos* of the contest of love and reason, ending with the defeat of the latter:

Or sont li cuer en esperance,
Et non pourquant sont em balance
De ce s'il le facent ou non,
Mes volentez oste raison.
Delitent soi ou dous penser
De ce qu'il doivent assambler,
Et devisent en lor corages
Lor mors, lor deulz et lor damages.
Il ont andui joie et dolour,
Mes toutes ores vaint Amour;
Sens ne raison nes puet retraire
De ce qu'il ont empris a faire. (606-17)

The focus is once more upon the emotional state of Piramus and Tisbé, and passages of direct speech might be expected: when they are first separated, a third-person description of their emotional turmoil (103-38) leads into the first passages of direct speech. Here, at the moment when Piramus and Tisbé must decide upon action which

will be irrevocable, only the third person is found. Despite the suggestion of internal debate, the absence of the words in which the lovers formulate their thoughts means that these have less space in the text, giving the effect of a lack of reflection. Moreover, the existence of a true choice between two courses of conduct is presented only to be denied: the statement that Piramus and Tisbé 'sont em balance / de ce s'il le facent ou non' (607-08) is undercut by 'mes' (609); the vacillation between extremes of 'joie et dolour' (614) is interrupted, again by 'mes' (615). Decision-making powers are ousted, by *volontez* (609), 'will, desire', and by *Amour* (615). The choice is predetermined, as is the result: 'lor mors, lor deulz et lor damages' (613). Furthermore, although the text is speaking of Piramus and Tisbé, the third person permits the insertion of more general comment: 'mes volontez oste raison' (609); 'mes toutes ores vaint Amour' (615), *sententiae* which underline the universal application of the warning against the dangerous potential of love which is found in the story of the lovers.

'Ja ert la gent toute endormie' (618-701) [Third Person]

This section of third-person narrative is largely concerned with events. First there is the focus on Tisbé; her departure, journey, arrival at the rendezvous and encounter with the lion (618-74). The text then turns to the arrival of Piramus, who discovers traces of the lion, sees the bloodied garment and, seeing it, believes that Tisbé is dead (675-96). The physical stasis and contradictory emotions of lines 590 to 617 are followed not by structured passages of direct speech, but by action and the violent intrusion of the lion. This emphasizes that the opportunity for reconsideration has passed, and demonstrates the truth of lines 612 to 613 'devisent en lor corages / lor mors, lor deulz et lor damages', thus presenting the story of Piramus and Tisbé as a

warning to others who might be unaware of the dangerous nature of this love which sweeps aside reason.

The concentration upon action is also important in that chance, Tisbé's fear and Piramus's misreading of the significance of the blood-stained garment lead to a changed situation and a new context within which the final passages of direct speech must be understood. Piramus reads the signs and, not finding Tisbé, he 'cuide [...] bien qu'el soit fenie' (695); the reactions and words of Piramus, and those of Tisbé faced with the dying Piramus, will be those of bereavement. The account in the *Metamorphoses* provides the primary model; a more general understanding of the emotions experienced on bereavement, and of their formulation in the formal lament may also be illuminating.

As Velma Bourgeois Richards notes, 'a lament is simply what is said when someone is dead, or is believed to be dead'. Nevertheless, while expressing the same grief, praise for the dead, guilt and regret as are found in the immediate reaction to a death, the lament in medieval narrative presents them in a more structured form, employing rhetorical devices such as apostrophe, metaphor, parallel or balanced clauses, and repetition.⁹³ Alexiou indicates that Greek tradition provides one source of the ritual lament.⁹⁴ Faral includes the *complainte funèbre* when discussing the development of the *complainte* during the medieval period:

La complainte sous toutes ses formes, complainte funèbre, complainte sur des infortunes diverses, ruines de villes, défaites, séparations, a été abondamment cultivée, soit isolément et pour elle-même, soit dans des ouvrages où elle n'entrait que comme élément. Or, l'apostrophe y est d'un emploi courant et, à partir du XI^e siècle, en constitue une pièce de style: apostrophes aux personnes défuntées ou disparues, apostrophes à des abstractions personnifiées, la Mort, l'Amour, la Fortune, apostrophes à des objets inanimés, la terre, un pays, une ville, une chambre, une épée,

⁹³ Velma Bourgeois Richmond, *Laments for the Dead in Medieval Narrative*, Dusquesne Studies Philological Series, 8 (Pittsburgh: Dusquesne University Press, 1966, p. 29.

⁹⁴ Margaret Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

etc. C'est un fait dont les exemples se relèvent par centaines: il est intéressant d'en voir le principe formulé dans les traités d'école. (*Arts*, p. 72)

The suggestion is of the elaboration of the lament for the dead as a rhetorical set piece. Bourgeois Richmond concurs: the prevalence of the lament for the dead, the *planctus*, in medieval textual material indicates that writers were aware of the tradition and its particular conventions (pp. 17-28). In the narrative text, the lament is not found in isolation, but forms part of the whole. As Zumthor comments:

Le *planctus* de la Chanson de Geste peut être considéré comme un genre littéraire au mode d'existence très particulier: lyrique par nature, mais inexistant hors d'un récit (donc, de l'exposé discursif d'une situation qui lui confère sa fonction significative), il tient de ce récit à la fois sa substance et, pour une part, les éléments de sa forme.⁹⁵

The *planctus* in its turn may contribute to the significance of the narrative.

It is also interesting to note that Faral uses the term *complainte* for the speech resulting from separation as well as for the funeral oration. For the speaker in each case there are many common features to the two situations, resulting in similarities both of form and of content. When the separation is that experienced by divided lovers, the nature of their experience and of love may be explored by the establishment of links between love and death. In the lament for a dead lover this could result in an intriguing combination; an exploration of the nature of love or an exploration of the nature of death?

Knowledge of the emotions experienced on bereavement can help in the understanding of lines 696 to 701, which act as the immediate transition to the words of Piramus. Here we find a description of his physical reaction to the belief that Tisbé is dead, and of the way he delivers the words which express his emotions:

Plus devint vers que fueille d'ierre,
Et enredi comme une pierre;
Mue li sans, change corage,
Lores esprent d'ire et de rage,

⁹⁵ Paul Zumthor, 'Les *Planctus* épiques', *Romania*, 84 (1963), 61-69 (62).

Emprez parole itant comme ire
Et maltalens li lesse dire. (696-701)

The account in the *Metamorphoses*, with the mention of a change of colour (IV. 106), provides some basis for the physical reactions of Piramus. The French text adds details of an emotional state which suggests less grief than anger: *ire*, *rage* and *maltalens*. We might accept Eley's translation of *ire* (699, 700) as 'anguish', but this still leaves *rage* (699), rendered as 'rage', and *maltalens* (701), interpreted as 'wrath'. Modern studies of the experience of bereavement show that a range of emotions are experienced: 'shock, anger, bargaining, grief and acceptance'.⁹⁶ Shock and grief can be understood, shame and anger might seem more difficult; the effect of bereavement is more complex than might at first be expected. Magnified by the presence and fact of death, the survivor's relationship to the dead person touches on fundamental issues of how life should be conducted.

1.4.2 WORDS IN THE PRESENCE OF DEATH

As *Piramus et Tisbé* moves to the final scenes of the story, the words of Piramus and Tisbé alternate with passages of third-person narrative. We can mark the following sections; the last can be further subdivided:

'Nuis de dolour, nuis de torment'	(702-63)	[Piramus]
'Tel duel et tel priere faite'	(764-79)	[Third Person]
'Tysbé repairot a ytant'	(780-815)	[Third Person]
'Espee dont je suis saisie'	(816-76)	[Tisbé]
'Adont s'encline la pucele'	(877-908)	[Third / First]

⁹⁶ Dorothy Severin, 'From the Lamentations of Diego de San Pedro to Pleberio's Lament', in *The Age of the Catholic Monarchs, 1450-1516: Literary Studies in Memory of Keith Whinnom*, ed. by Alan Deyermond and Keith Macpherson, *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* Special Issue (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1989), pp. 178-84, (179).

‘Nuis de dolour, nuis de torment’ (702-63) [Piramus]

Piramus et Tisbé follows the third-person description of Piramus’s reaction to the belief that Tisbé is dead with direct reporting of the words he speaks, beginning at line 702: ‘Nuis de dolour, nuis de torment’. As noted, the words of Pyramus are given as first-person direct speech at this point in the *Metamorphoses* (IV. 108-18). Indeed, it may be that this, with the words of Thisbe, served in part to prompt the use of the first person to such an extent in *Piramus et Tisbé* as a whole, compared with the third-person narrative or joint words of the *Metamorphoses*. Even here, however, where the account in the *Metamorphoses* presents the words of Pyramus directly, there is a return to third-person narration in lines 115 to 117, before the final words of Pyramus in line 118, followed in lines 119 to 127 by an account of the death of Pyramus. In *Piramus et Tisbé* the words of Piramus – lines 702 to 763 – constitute a much longer passage than in the Latin, and continue without interruption from the third-person voice, which is found again at line 764; lines 764 to 779 are concerned with the death of Piramus and its effect upon the mulberry. This means that, at a moment when emotional reaction is of importance, the French text increases the amount of first-person direct speech, and diminishes the role of third-person narration. This may be because of the need for a dramatic presentation, or to allow the internal to be shown so that the public would know what a character was feeling, or be a true reflection of a French society in the twelfth century which verbalised thought to a greater extent than Latin society in the time of Ovid.

The account of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe in the *Metamorphoses* provides a model, not only for the use of first-person direct speech to express the emotions experienced at bereavement, but also for what is said. Kibler comments:

The Norman poet has taken each of the themes given him by his model, but has so amplified them that from an eight and one half line discourse he has fashioned a moving plea of sixty-eight lines. (p. 287)

Analysis of the words of Píramus in lines 702 to 763 does indeed reveal the presence of content from the Latin. More detailed study is necessary to demonstrate how this content is amplified and developed in the French. In the *Metamorphoses* Píramus begins with a statement which can be read straightforwardly, but which by its epigrammatic brevity can seem enigmatic:

‘una duos’ inquit ‘nox perdet amantes’. (IV. 108)

[‘One night shall bring two lovers to death’.] (p. 187)

In *Píramus et Tisbé* Píramus also makes reference to the night:

‘Nuis de douleur, nuis de torment,
Moriers, arbres de ploement,
Prez, qui dou sanc estes sanglent,
Fontaine,
Que ne m’avez rendue saine
Celi cui sanc gist en l’araine?’ (702-07)

The reference to the night in the Latin becomes here apostrophe; this apostrophe is then extended, to draw in the mulberry, the fields and the spring. As we have seen, the medieval rhetorical arts offer the apostrophe to the outside entity, or force of nature, as a means of expressing overwhelming emotion (Faral, *Arts*, p. 71-72). This use of the second person voice was already central in the ancient Greek ritual lament, generally spoken by women, and directed largely to the dead person. Topics would include the impossibility of expressing the emotions experienced, guilt, the contrast between ‘then’ and ‘now’ (Alexiou, pp. 161-71). Address to the dead might seem fruitless, the use of the second person a mere formal device; in truth, at a fundamental level, the rhetorical device reflects the most urgent communication need.

When Píramus first speaks, he addresses, not the Tisbé he believes dead, but forces of nature. These, however, are not random recipients of the expression of sorrow, they are the elements of the setting which was to see the lovers reunited. As

a result of the phrases associated with them by Piramus all these elements of the setting take on a new aspect; the night which was to be the occasion of joyful reunion is now 'de dolour [...] de torment' (702); the mulberry becomes an 'arbres de plorement' (703); the term 'saine' (706) evokes the life-giving potential of the spring, a potential which here, for Piramus, has failed. While there is no tomb amongst the elements addressed, there is blood on the earth, not the life-giving blood of the dying god,⁹⁷ but blood which makes of the *locus amœnus* a place of death and sorrow. The whole of this section can be seen as a question, a demonstration of *interrogatio*; Piramus addresses each element of the setting in turn, extending the change from 'then' to 'now' effected by death to the whole of nature, as he poses the question 'why?'.

The lines which follow seem not to derive from the account in the *Metamorphoses*. We might see a rhetorical development of the preceding lines; *exclamatio*, addressed to all the aspects of nature thus implicated, or to a wider force:

'Sodainement est fete vaine
M'entente,
M'esperance, m'amour, m'atente.' (708-10)

'Sodainement' (708) suggests simple shock at the sudden nature of the change in the situation. The combination of 'sodainement' with 'est fete vaine' (708) evokes the intervention of capricious gods, or of fate, in the affairs of men; upturning and undercutting plans. The term *vaine* increases the possible meanings, not only have plans 'come to nothing' (Eley, p. 63, line 708), in that they will not come to pass, there is the suggestion that they were without foundation, meaningless, perhaps 'vain' in that they were related to the worldly not the spiritual. As the passage develops, Piramus does address a deity:

⁹⁷ On Tammuz and Adonis, for example, see Jessie Laidlay Weston, *From Ritual to Romance*

'Hé, diex, quel duel me represente
Ceste guimple que voi sanglente!' (711-12)

The use of the term 'diex' (711) seems here to represent linguistic habit, rather than appeal to the divine. The focus of the lines is on the significance that the blood-stained *guimple* (712), 'wimple', has for Piramus, a significance which is based upon a misinterpretation of the sign; the irony that balances the outcome of the story between the intervention of fate and the workings of human frailty.

As though her garment evokes her presence, Piramus now addresses Tisbé:

'Amie,
Com fu la beste tant hardie
Qui vers vous fist ceste envaÿe?
Quel mal, quel duel, quel felonie
Qu'en tel maniere estes perie!' (713-17)

In the *Metamorphoses* the third-person narrative has told of the intervention of the lioness; this is not specified, at this point, by Piramus. Reference to it here in *Piramus et Tisbé* may have been felt necessary to explain the reaction of Piramus; a reminder to the audience. There is also a reinforcement of the shocking nature of events; these are presented in terms which relate it to a criminal outrage against the norms of society: 'envaÿe' (715), 'felonie' (716). Piramus laments that Tisbé should die 'en tel maniere' (717), a phrase which functions as a reference to the specific way in which he believes that she has died – eaten by lions – and as an expression of the more universal feeling, faced with death, that there is a wrongness involved.

From the amplification, the text of *Piramus et Tisbé* returns to the model offered by the *Metamorphoses*, where we find an expression of a topic common to many laments; the belief that the dead person was more worthy to live than the one who survives:

'e quibus illa fuit longa dignissima vita;
nostra nocens anima est. ego te, miseranda, peremi,

in loca plena metus qui iussi nocte venires
nec prior huc veni.' (IV. 109-12)

['But she of the two was more worthy of long life; on my head lies all the guilt. Oh, I have been the cause of your death, poor girl, in that I bade you come forth by night into this dangerous place, and did not myself come hither first.'] (p.187)

Rather than a survivor of much greater age than the deceased, or one who experiences a generalised feeling of guilt, Pyramus presents himself as the *cause* of Thisbe's death, on two counts: he told her to come, and did not come first. *Piramus et Tisbé* shows Tisbé as more active in the formulation of the plan; nevertheless, the text follows the *Metamorphoses* in having Piramus express guilt:

'Ma cure,
C'est grant damage que tant dure,
Qui ci vous fis venir segure,
Sole en tel liu par nuit obscure.
Seule!' (718-22)

In the *Metamorphoses*, the expression of guilt is followed by a call for the lions to devour Pyramus also:

'nostrum divellite corpus
et scelerata fero consumite viscera morsu,
o quicumque sub hac habitatis rupe leones!' (IV. 112-14)

['Come, rend my body and devour my guilty flesh with your fierce fangs,
O all ye lions who have your lairs beneath this cliff!'] (p.187)

In *Piramus et Tisbé* Piramus expresses guilt, then seems to digress into further exclamation and apostrophe:

'Hay, de la mauvese goule
Qui de vostre char est saoule!
Hé, las!
Ci voi dou sanc et voi des dras.
Lyon, tu qui la devoras,
Merveil se plus n'en i lessas;
Lune crueulz, qui l'esgardas,
S'a cele hore n'en obscuras.
C'est tort,
Quant ele est morte et ne sui mort:
Ne sai quel duel me soit plus fort.
La mort est mon mieudre confort.
Chetis!
Quant elle est morte et je sui vis!' (723-36)

Compared with the direct line of the Latin, in the French the words of Piramus fly in many directions, creating a greater sense of distress. Nevertheless, the underlying detail can be seen to derive from the *Metamorphoses*. First, in lines 723 to 728, the implications of the ferocity of a lion's mouth and teeth are developed. Words placed in the rhyme position play an important role: the pattern is set by 'seule' (722), which in terms of sense belongs to the previous section, with its focus on the guilt of Piramus and the implied innocence and vulnerability of Tisbé; the contrast with the vulnerability accentuates the violence and physicality of 'goule' (723) and 'saoule' (724). The association of this physicality with the lion will accentuate the dramatic potential of the text and also increase pity for both Tisbé and Piramus. The melancholy 'hé, las!' (725) reminds us of the parallel with Piramus who also desired the flesh of Tisbé; he has waited, and believes himself forestalled. Line 726 is related to this belief; and seems a mere repetition of the sense of line 712 ('ceste guimple que voi sanglente!').

The two lines addressed to the lion which follow might appear gruesome or humorous, suggesting greed, with the comment on the strangeness that more was not left:

'Lyon, tu qui la devoras,
Merveil se plus n'en i lessas.' (727-28)

Underlying these lines is serious comment on what is to be taken as the basis for knowledge and belief. This episode of the story causes Piramus to appear foolish: he arrives late and jumps to conclusions; audience or reader, with greater knowledge would consider that he should have made sure of his facts before reacting. However, Piramus is shown presenting his evidence: a physical object, which should imply certainty. He cannot produce the dead body of Tisbé, to reinforce his belief, because he believes it to have been eaten. At one level, belief is acceptable, for while Thomas

was able to confirm belief in the physical domain, others believed through faith alone. For the Christian, faith in the resurrection is founded in truth, based in knowledge; for Piramus, knowledge is incomplete. Eley translates ‘merveil se plus n’en i lessas’ (728) as ‘I marvel that you did not leave more of her’ (p. 65, 728). We see Piramus expressing incomprehension. The term *merveil* might suggest a link with the magical, because of the related *merveilleux*, used of the enchanted world which often intrudes on that of humans in Arthurian romance. The sense suggests more the indication of that which is not understood. An example is found in *Yvain*, by Chrétien de Troyes. A lady and two of her maidens, finding the naked Yvain asleep in the wild, are moved by pity for his suffering; one of the maidens returns, leaving clothes on the ground by Yvain, who, on waking, ‘si se mervoille a desmesure’.⁹⁸

Piramus et Tisbé, by additional detail, presents Piramus as not completely foolish, for there is some evidence on which to base the conclusions he draws; nevertheless, there is also the suggestion of missing evidence, implied by the fact that he cannot fully understand. His incomprehension is given a wider focus by his words to the moon in lines 729 to 730; the ‘crueulz’ (729), applied to a moon which did not turn from seeing, leads to the thought that what was seen should not have happened:

‘C’est tort,
Quant ele est morte et ne sui mort:
Ne sai quel duel me soit plus fort.
La mort est mon mieudre confort.
Chetis!
Quant elle est morte et je sui vis!’ (731-36)

For Piramus, two aspects are important: ‘c’est tort / quant ele est mort et ne sui mort’ (731-32); Tisbé is dead and he is not. The implications of this are developed by balanced clauses, repeated with slight changes. The term *tort* (731), as the earlier

⁹⁸ Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Chevalier au Lion (Yvain)*, ed. by Mario Roques, *Les Romans de Chrétien de Troyes*, 4, *Classiques Français du Moyen Age*, 89 (Paris: Champion, 1964), lines 2884-3021 (3021).

felonie (716), is drawn from the feudal, legal, sphere; there is the opposition *tort* / *dreit*, ‘offense’ / ‘law’, but also ‘twisted’ / ‘straight’, ‘wrong’ / ‘right’. Underlying all reactions to bereavement is the fundamental feeling that death is outrageous. The response to a particular bereavement sharpens the focus, expressing the incomprehensible nature of death by relating it to a specific set of circumstances which make it inappropriate, such as youth dead before age, the innocent dead before the guilty. The use of *tort* (731) can be seen as an accusation against death; it also reiterates Piramus’s perception of his guilt in causing Tisbé’s death. We might then expect a development on the positive qualities of Tisbé herself. The eulogy to the dead, apparently neglected, might be discerned, *in absentia*, in the grief suggested as Piramus develops the implications of the fact that Tisbé is dead and he is not and, unable to decide which is the greater sorrow, refers to his own death as comfort. This, in turn, evokes the posture of the lover who states that love is so great that, if it is not returned, death will result, indeed that death will be a comfort. Implicit in such an attitude is the high quality of the person who can inspire such overwhelming love; implicit also, however, is that that value is important primarily in relation to the one who loves, the other becomes the ‘love object’. Piramus shifts his position, moving from an admission of guilt as the cause of Tisbé’s death to return to the static melancholy of the separated lover, with the use of this motif of death as ‘confort’ (734), and with the term ‘chetis’ (735).

The melancholy state thus evoked is a passive state, which can explain the way Piramus calls for death:

‘Por dieu, terre, quar m’englotis,
 Ou tu, lyons, qui l’oceÿs,
 Repaire:
 Je sui tous pres, sans nul contraire
 Ta volenté pués de moi faire.
 Revien,
 Qui devoras la douce rien;
 Son sanc betüz, or boi le mien!’ (737-44)

Piramus et Tisbé rejoins the account in the *Metamorphoses*, where as we have noted, Piramus appeals to the lions for death; however, while the outline is provided by the Latin, the French does not follow it exactly. There is first apostrophe to the very earth itself; the appeal for it to engulf Piramus expresses a desire for an end to his existence which would be marked by the upturning of the forces of nature. In the *Metamorphoses* Thisbe encounters a lioness; Pyramus addresses his appeal for death to the wider group of lions nearby. In *Piramus et Tisbé* Tisbé's encounter is with a lion, and it is to this same lion that Piramus addresses his apostrophe; a challenge to another knight, but a challenge in which submission has already been made.

In the *Metamorphoses* the call for death to be administered by an outside force is followed by the comment:

'sed timidi est optare necem.' (IV. 115)

['But 'tis a coward's part merely to pray for death.'](p.187)

This introduces the idea of the suicide; if death does not come from outside it may be sought, or be self-inflicted. In lines 115 to 117 we see Pyramus take Thisbe's cloak beneath the tree, kiss it, and weep on it, before his final remark, addressed to the garment:

'accipe nunc' inquit 'nostri quoque sanguinis haustus!' (IV. 118)

['Drink now my blood too.'](p.187)

In *Piramus et Tisbé* these words are transposed and become part of the apostrophe to the lion. The extended use of apostrophe continues; once more the French text emphasizes words rather than deeds; unlike his Latin counterpart, Piramus seems caught up by his misery and his oratory, unable to act. There is an irony in the words he addresses to Tisbé:

'Dolens!
Ma douce amie, trop sui lens
Qu'a vostre mort ne fui presens.' (745-47)

Piramus regrets his tardiness, and by so doing once more postpones action, proving the truth of his words 'trop sui lens' (746). The mention of the particular death of Tisbé leads to his apostrophe to Death, personified by the direct address:

'Mors, quar repaire, si me prens!
Hé, mors,
Pourquoi demores?' (748-50)

Accusations of cruelty, of hostility towards mankind, of unreason, might be expected. Piramus appeals to Death, appeals for death, and accusation seems absent. Nevertheless, the accusation is present, contained within the question 'pourquoi demores?' (750). Death delays, as Piramus delayed his arrival at the rendezvous, as he delays now. Accusing himself, he accuses Death. Death came for Tisbé, when not desired, but does not come now, when desired, thus showing unreasonable behaviour.

Piramus et Tisbé presents Piramus seeking death. The extension of the appeal for death to a series of sources can be seen as emphasizing the failure of Piramus to act. He becomes an example of the lover who states a desire for death when love becomes impossible; the desire itself becomes locked into language and does not move into the domain of action. This failure to realise death means that moral questions related to suicide are not of paramount importance in most examples of the *topos*. In the story of Pyramus and Thisbe love and separation are followed by the self-inflicted death of the lovers. This raises the question of suicide, and of how it is presented in *Piramus et Tisbé*. We might expect a tension between the motif of the love which will go even unto death, and Christian teaching on suicide as a mortal sin. A failure of faith, suicide, as self-murder, also usurps the prerogative of God to

determine when life shall end.⁹⁹ Following the deaths of Piramus and Tisbé, the *Ovide moralisé* touches on the separation from God which results from suicide:

Quar li uns deulz ne uaudroit estre
Ou paradis au roi celestre
Et li autres ne fust ici.¹⁰⁰

As Paul Binski notes, this exclusion was marked by medieval society:

Nor could [churchyards] witness the burial of the spiritually and socially marginalized: the unbaptized, heretics, lepers, Jews and suicides, were all proscribed.¹⁰¹

Nevertheless, an honourable motive could make suicide less unacceptable; context might prove important (Guiance, pp. 367-79).

Elements of Piramus's speech combine to diminish the fact of his death as suicide. The extended series of apostrophe calling for death found in *Piramus et Tisbé* becomes more than a failure to act. It shows Piramus seeking death from outside himself; by implication, such a death would render suicide unnecessary. Moreover, while some phrases evoke the motif of the lover who desires death, Piramus repeatedly dwells upon his guilt, interweaving references to death in such a way as to suggest that it should be seen as an appropriate punishment:

'C'est grans tors
Que je ne sui orendroit mors.
Suer chiere,
Je vous ai morte qui derriere
Ving a mon terme, et vous premiere.' (750-54)

Finally, when the lack of action from outside forces turns Piramus to his own resources, he uses words with which a knight might spur himself to battle against a foe:

'Or pri ma destre que bien fiere:
Vengerai vos en tel maniere.
Vengier?' (755-57)

⁹⁹ Ariel Guiance, *Los discursos sobre la muerte en la Castilla medieval (siglos VII-XV)*, Estudios de Historia ([Madrid]: Junta de Castilla y Leon Consejería de Educación y Cultura, 1998), p. 359.

¹⁰⁰ Eley, p. 107, MS R, lines 889-891.

¹⁰¹ Paul Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 56.

The verb *vengier* creates a particular context for the use of arms. The term implies the taking of action against one who has committed an offence. The action taken restores balance to a relationship disrupted by the offence. Piramus, who will undo the offence against Tisbé, is also the implied offender. The reference to his right arm in isolation emphasizes that he will strike in the one capacity and die in the other. His action becomes less a self-killing and more the administration of justice.

Piramus still has more to say:

‘Mes primes vueil aus diex proier
 Qu’il demoustrant en cest morier
 Signe de mort, de destorbier,
De plour:
 Facent le fruit de tel coulour
 Comme il a fiert a la douleur.’ (758-63)

These lines do have a basis in the text of the *Metamorphoses*, where we read:

‘at tu quae ramis arbor miserabile corpus
 nunc tegis unius, mox est tectura duorum,
 signa tene caedis pullosque et luctibus aptos
 semper habe fetus, gemina monimenta cruoris.’ (IV. 158-61)

[‘And do you, O tree, who now shade with your branches the poor body of one, and soon will shade two, keep the marks of our death and always bear your fruit of a dark colour, meet for mourning, as a memorial of our double death.’] (p. 189)

In the Latin text, however, these words are not spoken by Piramus, but by Thisbe, over the dying Piramus. Kibler considers that:

The shifting of this crucial speech from Tisbé to Piramus is a further example of the Old French poet’s tendency to rationalization and explanation. (p. 288)

In the *Metamorphoses* the speech follows the moment when the mulberry is changed in colour by the blood of Piramus; the words are a ‘consecration of the metamorphosis’, in keeping with Ovid’s purpose. In *Piramus et Tisbé* the speech is spoken just before the shedding of the blood and the consequent change; the effect is to cause the metamorphosis to appear as the result of the words of the lovers, rather than as ‘divine whim’ or the physical fact of the blood (Kibler, pp. 287-88). Cadot

also sees significance in the change of order. The account in the *Metamorphoses* lays a foundation of science to explain the metamorphosis, which becomes the result of a natural phenomenon; the blood soaks the roots of the tree, and thus causes the permanent nature of the change. *Piramus et Tisbé* describes the blood falling on the tree in less detail; the placing of the prayer to the gods in the mouth of Piramus, before blood is shed, makes the change in the mulberry appear as the miraculous result of his words (Cadot, pp. 435-36).

In the *Metamorphoses* the words of Pyramus express his reaction briefly. His first line is in truth a summary of what he will say; 'una duos' inquit 'nox perdet amantes' (IV. 108); his belief that Thisbe is dead means that his own death is already foretold. The remainder of his speech sets out the logical steps that explain his statement and lead to its fulfilment: eulogy of the dead person; his guilt; appeal to the lions for death; recognition that he must achieve his own death. In *Piramus et Tisbé* each of these elements is present. Amplification creates a more complex relationship between them, which expresses in greater detail the complex reaction on bereavement; a more intimate, and perhaps less heroic, exploration than in the Latin. Death dominates the speech; the death of Tisbé, the death of nature, the death of Piramus. This death could be seen as an example of the unfulfilled love leading to death; the lyric motif explored within the narrative circumstances which cause it. This would lead to a tension between sympathy for the character and uneasiness at the mortal sin of suicide. However, a more complex interplay between the beloved, death, love, guilt, and the lover is created in the words of Piramus; loss and grief make death appealing; guilt means death is the fitting punishment. 'Mes primes' (758) might suggest a return to Piramus's former delay and vacillation, the phrase also implies that death will follow. As we have seen, the prayer to the gods can be

seen as the cause of the change in the mulberry (Kibler, pp. 287-88; Cadot, pp. 436-36). It also returns us to the opening words of this speech: nature is perceived in changed aspect because of grief. There is thus a reminder that Piramus is expressing the emotions of bereavement; these are reinforced by the knowledge that he too will die. The natural consequence is the desire that some sign should be seen in nature.

‘Tel duel et tel priere faite’ (764-79) [Third Person]

The alternation of direct speech and third-person narrative in *Piramus et Tisbé* is maintained, as the third person resumes at line 764 and continues until line 815. This passage of third-person speech, which intervenes between the words of Piramus and those of Tisbé, falls into two sections: lines 764 to 769 remain with Piramus; in lines 770 to 815 the focus is on Tisbé. A third-person comment signals the end of the passage of direct speech:

Tel duel et tel priere faite. (764)

While the terms used might be expected to help in understanding the discourse, by providing a formal and thematic context, the possible applications of *duel* and *priere* derived from their use in *Piramus et Tisbé* alone means that they raise more questions than they answer. *Duel* has been used, as if as a generic term, of Piramus’s first passage of direct speech (143-95), described as ‘son duel’ (196). In both *duel* and *complainte* we see the rhetorically structured use of apostrophe to express sorrow; perhaps the form of the lament on bereavement serves as a model for the lover’s ‘plaint’. *Priere* can express the address to a deity; it can also be used more generally for an appeal. We find the two senses combined at line 413, when Piramus remarks ‘ne sai cui prier, vous ou lui’, blending beloved and divinity. The presence of the two terms in line 764 is important because of the way they are balanced by the repetition of ‘tel’; the sense of a completed discourse is reinforced by the past

participle 'faite' and by the lack of any indication that Piramus ceases speaking because he is unable to continue.

The movement of the text is from speech to action, as Piramus deals the fatal blow:

Puis emprez a s'espee traite,
 Si a la guimple sus levee
 En son la more de l'espee.
 Bese la guimple aveuc le sanc,
 Tresperce soi parmi le flanc,
 Tresque de l'autre part dou cors
 Fet aparoir l'espee fors.
 La ou il muert baise la guimple. (765-72)

Finally, Piramus acts. The term *espee* is used three times (765, 767, 771); the emphasis on the sword acts as a reinforcement of the heroic potential suggested by 'or pri ma destre que bien fiere' (755). Heroic stature becomes less evident as a result of a further element, the *guimple*, which is also mentioned three times (766, 768, 772), gaining a new emphasis when compared with the single 'velamina' (IV.115) of the *Metamorphoses*. In direct speech Piramus has given his interpretation of the significance of the *guimple*; for him it represents 'duel' (711), is proof of Tisbé's death (726), and is all that remains to him of her (728). In the third-person narrative sword and garment are interwoven, as Piramus physically places them together. The significance of the *guimple* for him at the moment of his death blow is difficult to determine; as proof of Tisbé's death it could stand as evidence of his guilt and explanation of a judicial killing; the parallel with the favour given by a lady to a knight in a tournament would draw in concepts of love inspiring noble deeds. The kisses given to the *guimple* could be a consequence of such an attitude; however, this 'favour' is more than a simple love gift, it represents not only Tisbé, but Tisbé dead, which means that the kisses gain in significance also, becoming both the epitome of sorrow at loss and the final physical embrace. A number of attitudes towards Piramus become possible. He can be seen as a Christ figure, dying for the restoration of

harmony, pierced in the ‘flanc’ (769). He becomes the tragic hero, as his aspiration is followed by the moment of perception which reveals that his own fatal flaw has led to disaster. He is an heroic knight, the lyric lover, a man lamenting an elusive physical fulfilment. An audience would identify with him, and pity him. This potential reaction is assumed and then manipulated by the placing and organisation of the single line which follows the account of the death blow:

Si fete amour a mort le simple! (773)

This line is the second part of a rhyming couplet:

La ou il muert baise la guimple.
Si fete amour a mort le simple! (772-73)

In the first line of the couplet the *guimple* retains the meanings it has for the dying Piramus. In the second line of the couplet ‘si fete’ (773) draws together all these potential significances and designates them as an ‘amour’ (773) which is linked by sound with ‘a mort’ (773), establishing the link between cause and effect. The rhyme ‘guimple’ / ‘simple’ (772, 773) shocks, and alters perceptions, reminding us that Piramus has misconstrued the meaning of the blood-stained garment; all his reactions to it thus become those of the comic fool; the example to be avoided.

Piramus et Tisbé, omitting the simile found in the *Metamorphoses*, then deals briefly with the effect of the blood on the fruits of the mulberry:

Sor les branches raie li sans,
Nercist li fruis qui estoit blans:
Tous temps avoit esté la more
Blanche jusques a icele hore;
Adont si ot noire coulour
En tesmoignage de dolour. (774-79)

It is here that we find comment on the previous whiteness of these fruits, now changed to black. Following so soon after the judgement of Piramus’s reaction as ‘simple’ (773), the ‘dolour’, signified by the dark colour, might stand as a warning.

'Tysbé repairoit a ytant' (780-815) [Third Person]

After the change in colour of the mulberry, *Piramus et Tisbé* follows the account in the *Metamorphoses*, returning to Tisbé, first in third-person narration, then first. The passage of third-person narration which precedes the words of Tisbé over the dying Piramus, while following the broad lines set by the *Metamorphoses*, contains some significant amplifications. The *Metamorphoses* signals the return to Thisbe with the word 'ecce' (IV. 128); fear of the lioness led her to hide; she is drawn from hiding by her bond with Pyramus. Reciprocity is implied in the motives given to Thisbe: she does not want Pyramus to miss her; she longs to tell him of what has happened. The strength of the impulse is shown by the fact that Thisbe seeks with both eyes and soul:

ecce metu nondum posito, ne fallat amantem,
illa redit iuvenemque oculis animoque requirit,
quantaque vitarit narrare pericula gestit. (IV. 128-30)

[And now comes Thisbe from her hiding-place, still trembling, but fearful also that her lover will miss her; she seeks for him both with eyes and soul, eager to tell how great perils she has escaped.] (p.187)

As Tisbé returns, *Piramus et Tisbé* attributes to her the same two motives as her Latin counterpart:

Tysbé repairoit a ytant,
Qu'el ne deceüst son amant;
Moult couvoite qu'ele li die
De quel peril elle est garie. (780-83)

The quality of the bond which draws Tisbé might be inferred; *deceüst* (781) has a wide field of reference; from the simple 'disappoint' to the significance of 'fail', 'break faith'. Overwhelming longing to speak with Piramus is suggested by 'couvoite', reinforced by the superlative 'moult' (782). The French text then adds additional material on Tisbé's thoughts:

Cuide acomplir sa volenté
De ce qu'ele ot tant desirré. (784-85)

We can see a continuation of the lines which precede; 'cuide acomplir' (785) continues the exploration of Tisbé's state of mind as she returns to where she expects to find Piramus. The term *volonté* (784) introduces the concept of that towards which the will is turned; in the context of the love relationship the meaning can be linked to union with the beloved. There is thus the sense of an expected culmination, which is found in the lines which follow:

Mes ore aproce terme brief
Que lor amours vendront a chief. (786-87)

There is an ambiguity in this reference to time. We could see a use of the brevity *topos*; the audience's longing for the satisfactory ending, matching Tisbé's, makes further amplification on her state of mind superfluous. The word 'mes' (786), however, functions in combination with 'cuide acomplir' (784), and gives it two perspectives; for Tisbé the prime term is *acomplir*, whereas for the narrator it is the *cuide*, which in combination with *mes*, undercuts that expectation; the narrator knows the end of the story, while Tisbé does not. This balancing of expectation with critical comment founded in more complete knowledge continues. Tisbé anticipates union, both physical and through speech:

Ja li est vis qu'el soit o lui,
Et s'entrebracent ambedui
Et parolent de lor amours. (788-90)

This is followed by the remark:

Mes orendroit avra dolours. (791)

'Ja li est vis' (788) can be read two ways. For Tisbé the effect of anticipation is so powerful that it is as though she were already with Piramus; we remember, however, Tisbé's use of a similar phrase throughout her account of her dreams, where we find 'si m'est avis que je vous voi' (542), 'si m'est avis / que vous estes devant mon vis' (550-51) and 'dont mest avis que me semonge' (555); the parallel thus created is illuminating. The disparity between perception and reality is exploited; the words

used to describe Tisbé's expectations are not, in themselves, contradicted by the end of her story, for as 'lor amours vendront a chief' (787) she and Piramus will embrace and speak of their love; the contradiction is between the sense that the words are felt to have for Tisbé and the way they will be proved true in the text. Amplification in *Piramus et Tisbé* not only underlines the discrepancy between expectation and realization, it also emphasizes Tisbé's lack of awareness of that discrepancy, a state of mind encapsulated in line 792 ('tout belement s'en vait arrier'). The audience relate to her on two levels; there is sympathy for her state of innocent anticipation; there is also the knowledge that this anticipation is ill-founded, even foolish. Drawn in by sympathy, the audience shares with her the shock as events fail to match expectation.

The first signs that the situation will differ from expectation are found on the return to the mulberry. In the *Metamorphoses* Thisbe recognises the place and the shape of the tree, but the colour of the fruit puzzles her:

utque locum et visa cognoscit in arbore formam,
sic facit incertam pomi color: haeret, an haec sit. (IV. 131-32)

[And while she recognises the place and the shape of the well-known tree,
still the colour of its fruit mystifies her. She doubts if it be this.]
(pp. 187, 189)

This disorientation is also found in *Piramus et Tisbé*:

Et quant elle aproce au morier
Donques se tint pour esgaree,
Pour la coulour qu'el vit muee. (793-95)

The term *esgaree* (794) expresses Tisbé's literal belief that, outside the known city, she has lost her way. We have seen how, for Segal, the crossing of boundaries is an important element in the early part of Book IV of the *Metamorphoses*, where 'both the enframing narrative and the first tale depend on a tension between a safe interior space and a threatening or unknown outside world' ('Pyramus and Thisbe', pp. 388-89). Within a Christian context, we might also see the metaphorical sense of straying

from the paths of truth. For Tisbé, the feeling of being astray results from the changed colour of the fruits of the mulberry. The lines which follow reiterate that these were white, but now are stained with blood:

Quar primes avoit veü blanc
Le fruit, qui ore est taint de sanc. (796-97)

The balance with lines 793 to 795 is completed by a return to Tisbé's belief that she is lost:

Endementres que elle doute
Si a tenue droite route. (798-99)

Here we find that belief expressed negatively; this introduces into the text the phrase 'elle doute' (798), and removes from the text the concept of the 'droite route' (799), the 'right way', or the 'path of righteousness'.

In the *Metamorphoses* the moment of uncertainty is followed by the sight of writhing limbs; the simile of wind on the sea expresses Thisbe's reaction of shock:

dum dubitat, tremebunda videt pulsare cruentum
membra solum, retroque pedem tulit, oraque buxo
pallidiora gerens exhorruit aequoris instar,
quod tremat, exigua cum summum stringitur aura. (IV. 133-36)

[While she hesitates, she sees somebody's limbs writhing on the bloody ground, and starts back, paler than boxwood, and shivering like the sea when a slight breeze ruffles its surface.] (p.189)

There is then recognition of her lover, which results in a physical demonstration of grief, followed by an embrace:

sed postquam remorata suos cognovit amores,
percutit indignos claro plangore lacertos
et laniata comas amplexaque corpus amatum
vulnere supplevit lacrimis fletumque cruori
miscuit et gelidis in vultibus oscula figens. (IV. 137-41)

[But when after a little while she recognises her lover, she smites her innocent arms with loud blows of grief, and tears her hair; and embracing the well-beloved form, she fills his wounds with tears, mingling these with his blood. And as she kissed his lips, now cold in death, she wailed.] (p.189)

In *Piramus et Tisbé* the account of the recognition of the lover balances detail from the Latin with changes which draw the scene into the context created by the French.

Significantly, the first sense involved is that of hearing; Tisbé hears sounds made by Piramus:

Le jovenciel oit senglotir,
Plaindre, gesmir, trere souspir. (800-01)

The importance of speech in the relationship between Piramus and Tisbé is a primary motif throughout the text; although the sounds made here by Piramus are his death agonies, the terms used apply equally to the sounds called forth by separation from Tisbé: 'plaindre' (801) suggests the discourse of suffering love – 'li fort complaint' (123) – interrupted by sobs, groans, and sighs. After hearing comes sight:

Vit la guimpe comme il la touche
D'ores en autres a sa bouche. (802-03)

In the *Metamorphoses* Thisbe's sight of her garment is linked to the empty scabbard; the combination of the two elements signals her full realization of the significance of what she sees, a realization confirmed by the exclamation with which she resumes speech: 'tua te manus' inquit 'amorque / perdidit, infelix!' (IV. 148-49). In *Piramus et Tisbé* Tisbé has not yet spoken, and the 'guimpe' (802) is seen first in the context of Piramus's reaction to it; significantly, rhyme emphasizes 'touche' / 'bouche' (802, 803). Tisbé sees her lover embrace her garment, then she sees his wound:

Et quant elle aperçoit la plaie
N'est merveille s'elle s'esmaie.
Quant voit parmi le cors l'espee,
Fuit li li sans, si s'est pasmee. (804-07)

We see the stages of her reaction. First there is fainting, not found in the *Metamorphoses*, but a common reaction to powerful emotion throughout *Piramus et Tisbé*. Secondly, we see the physical expressions of grief – tearing of hair, beating of self – which are found in the *Metamorphoses*:

Relieve soi, dolante et mate,
Trait ses cheveux, si se degrate,
Derront sa char, si plore et crie. (808-10)

Comment follows on her state of mind; desire for death:

Plus aime mort que ne fet vie. (811)

We see the dramatic shift achieved by the passage of third-person narration. Tisbé anticipates embraces and the fulfilment of her love, but finds only the dying Piramus and a sword; this means that her words also will differ from expectation:

Lores s'encline sor le cors,
Si a traite l'espee fors,
Encontremont l'en a drecie,
Puis parole com feme irie. (812-15)

'Espee dont je sui saisie' (816-76) [Tisbé]

In the *Metamorphoses* Thisbe moves from shock to speech and her words are reported directly. First, shocked and emotional, repeating his name, she calls upon Piramus to answer her (IV. 142-44). A brief return to the third person interrupts; Piramus can only look upon her. Thisbe sees her cloak and the empty scabbard and her understanding of the significance of the two in combination effects a shift in the dynamic of her discourse, which is no longer governed by undirected emotion but by purpose. She declares her ability to match Piramus in death, and follows this with apostrophe, first to their parents, for a single tomb, then to the mulberry, for the change of colour to become permanent (IV. 148-61). Content and rhetorical figures combine to create a formal discourse, appropriate for Thisbe's final moments. In *Piramus et Tisbé*, while the passage of third-person narrative presents Tisbé's reaction of shock, the drawing of the sword from Piramus's body, and the comment that she speaks 'com feme irie' (815) show her moving towards action. The heroic stance seems predominant and this sense of purpose informs the first words she speaks, apostrophe to the sword:

'Espee dont je sui saisie,
Qui ma joie as a deul fenie,
Or esproeuve com es hardie.
Espee,
Qui nostre amour as terminee,
En mon pis soies reschaufee,
De nos deus sans ensanglente.' (816-22)

The sword assumes an intriguing role. In one aspect it is an agent for change, from good to bad, turning 'joie' to 'duel' (817). Conversely, it could seem an agent for good, joining Piramus and Tisbé, in the physicality of lines 821 to 822, which move from Tisbé's breast to the sword thus marked with the blood of both lovers. Tisbé assumes the male role: by drawing and raising the sword; by the intent to use it with violent purpose; by the use of the term *saisie* (816), which has the sense 'possessed', but which also has connotations of feudal status through the possession of a fief. Even the use of apostrophe to the sword could be seen as part of this role; the words addressed by a knight to bid the sword strike well. However, there is then a separation of sword and Tisbé; she begins with 'espee' (816), but continues with 'en mis pis' (821). We can see a parallel with the situation of Piramus, when he declaims 'or pri ma destre que bien fiere' (755), separating the agent from the object of the action, with the result that his action becomes less clearly suicide. However, while this can be true of Tisbé's situation, the parallel is not exact. Piramus is agent because it is his right arm which is to strike, then object 'tresperce soi parmi le flanc' (769). For Tisbé, the sword will act, while she is present only as the one struck, which not only diminishes her responsibility for her death, but also transfers the active, male, characteristics from Tisbé to the sword.

As Tisbé envisages her own and Piramus's blood mingled on the sword, a change of mood becomes evident; the verbal adjective 'ensanglantee' (822) is followed by the bisyllabic 'sanglente!' (823), whose long second syllable suggests a sigh of sorrow. In the change of mood, articulated round the bisyllable, Tisbé turns to a more sorrowful apostrophe, expressed to God, or gods, lamenting the end of their youth:

'Hé, diex, quel fin et quele atente,
Com tost perist nostre jouvente!' (824-25)

There is regret for an end which is so different from expectation. The immediate connection is with the expectation raised by the plan to leave the city, a plan which can be seen as springing from the impatience of youth, increased by passion rather than governed by reason; Tisbé's words thus act as a warning to be wary of the emotion which can wreak such havoc. There is also a more profound sense of regret. The emphasis upon their youth in the opening passages of the text gives the bond between Piramus and Tisbé more substance than simply that of passion; able to reach fruition unimpeded, it could have been a positive force. Society, passion, the lion and fate intervene; human desire is thwarted, youth, and life, become death.

Tisbé turns to the specific death which concerns her:

'Biau sire,
Petit vous puet espargnier ire
Quant vostre main vous vault ocire.' (826-28)

With 'biau sire' (826), she addresses Piramus, her allegiance now clearly with him. In the reference to 'vostre main' (828) we see the first element of the phrase spoken by Thisbe in the *Metamorphoses*, where she says 'tua te manus [...] amorque / perdidit, infelix!' (IV. 148-49). Tisbé does not immediately speak of the second element, the love which shares responsibility. Indeed, she shifts from the second person to the first, with the effect of an aside from the formal level of discourse so far articulated by her use of apostrophe:

'Lasse, com puis parole dire,
La ou je voi que il souspire?' (829-30)

One effect of these lines is the practical one of informing the public of the fact that Piramus is not dead. This could be an example of the moment when the rumour of a death is revealed to be misfounded. Several texts make use of the motif of the false

death. In *Cliges*, for example, after taking the potion, Fénice appears to be dead.¹⁰² The belief in a death permits the exploration of the emotions of bereavement, and allows space for the discourse which expresses them: in *Cligès*, the people lament (5719-37), so does Cligès (6154-81). The reversal of circumstances means that these emotions, and that discourse, are not the final word; there is first *duel*, but then *joie*. For Tisbé, there is no *joie*, as her next words make clear:

‘Jou voi
Que il travaille a mort por moi.’ (831-32)

The repetition ‘je voi [...] jou voi’ (830-31) evokes the way a truth is confirmed by the fact that it is seen by all present in court. The truth thus affirmed by Tisbé is that Piramus still lives, but is dying; ‘por moi’ (832) can have the sense ‘for me’, or ‘because of me’. Tisbé’s words also assume the function of a comment on her previous discourse, formal rhetoric which becomes inappropriate to the situation. When Tisbé does return to apostrophe to Piramus, the rhyme in *-oie* provides a close link to the previous lines rhyming in *-oi*:

‘Com foible amour, com povre foi
Avroie,
Amis, se je ne vous sivoie,
S’a court terme ne m’ocioie.’ (833-36)

Tisbé’s words express, not disconnected emotional outbursts, but a logical progression in her thought, as she considers the implications of the situation; she must follow Piramus in death, matching him, not in courage, but in love. The essence is drawn from the *Metamorphoses*, as Thisbe declares that she will match Pyramus:

‘est et mihi fortis in unum
hoc manus, est et amor: dabit hic in vulnera vires.
persequare extinctum letique miserrima dicar
causa comesque tui: quique a me morte revelli
heu sola poteris, poteris nec morte revelli.’ (IV. 149-53)

¹⁰² Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligès*, ed. by Alexandre Micha, *Les Romans de Chrétien de Troyes*, 2, *Classiques Français du Moyen Age*, 84 (Paris: Champion, 1957), lines 5707-18.

['I, too, have a hand brave for this one deed; I, too, have love. This shall give me strength for the fatal blow. I will follow you in death, and men shall say that I was the most wretched cause and comrade of your fate. Whom death alone had power to part from me, not even death shall have power to part from me.'] (p.189)

Rather than the customary amplification, *Piramus et Tisbé* seems to abbreviate the Latin, speaking only of love and of following Piramus. This may be because of the difficulty of translating lines 152 to 153, or perhaps because of a need to move to the essential, the death of Tisbé. The brevity *topos* may be indicated, but then set aside; while Tisbé speaks of the need to curtail speech 'com puis parole dire' (829), and of the need for immediate action 's'a court terme ne m'ocioie' (836), she continues to speak. First there is a prolongation of the apostrophe to Piramus:

'Biaux chiers,
Com grant dolours, quelz destorbiers!
Trop fu vostre corages fiers!' (837-39)

These lines can be seen as a development of the eulogy of Piramus inherent in Tisbé's willingness to die with him, for this is based on the strength of her love, which implies a value in Piramus himself.

Tisbé shifts her focus to nature. The *Metamorphoses* presents the apostrophe, or prayer, spoken by Thisbe to the mulberry tree:

'at tu quae ramis arbor miserabile corpus
nunc tegis unius, mox est tectura duorum,
signa tene caedis pullosque et luctibus aptos
semper habe fetus, gemini monumenta cruoris.' (IV. 158-61)

['And do you, O tree, who now shade with your branches the poor body of one, and soon will shade two, keep the marks of our death and always bear your fruit of a dark colour, meet for mourning, as a memorial of our double death.'] (p.189)

Here we can see words which confirm the permanence of the change in the mulberry (Kibler, pp. 287-88). This view places the significance more firmly with the metamorphosis than with the story of Pyramus and Thisbe. It should be noted, however, that the metamorphosis is closely related to that story: their love, and death, lead to the metamorphosis, which will stand as a memorial to it, if Thisbe's words

'gemina monimenta cruoris' (IV. 161) are fulfilled. As noted, *Piramus et Tisbé* shows Piramus addressing the appeal to the mulberry, before his death; cause and effect, prayer and miracle? Are Tisbé's words thus rendered superfluous? She speaks, not simply to the mulberry, but to several aspects of nature:

'Lune, fontaine, prez, moriers,
Nuit pale,
Qui enseigne me feïs male
Quant fui issuë de la sale,
Oiez!
Pri vous que ma mort tesmoigniez.' (840-45)

The Latin offers potential, with Thisbe's apostrophe to tree and parents. There is the rhetorical potential of the apostrophe and also the intriguing circularity of the relationship love / death and metamorphosis. The French text exploits this opportunity. The expansion to the wider range of elements of nature creates a parallel with the words spoken by Piramus, when he believes Tisbé to be dead:

'Nuis de dolour, nuis de torment,
Moriers, arbres de plorement,
Prez, qui dou sanc estes sanglent,
Fontaine,
Que ne m'avez rendue saine
Celi cui sanc gist en l'araine?' (702-07)

We see the same elements addressed by both lovers, who are thus linked by their discourse. The words of Piramus express his perception of a change of aspect in the setting, which appeared to offer love, but brought only death. The words of Tisbé also emphasize the contrast between her earlier perceptions, and her present experience, as the reference to her departure from the city reiterates the contrast between what she expected then, and what she finds now. Unlike the address to a single entity, an appeal with undertones of an ordination of a pre-existing situation, the French Tisbé's apostrophe to a wider nature acts as an expression of her emotions of perplexity. Her plea 'pri vous que ma mort tesmoigniez' (845) evokes the desperate wish that some sign should remain as a witness to her death, brought about

by circumstances which she cannot understand, circumstances which seem beyond her control, circumstances which move her beyond control:

‘Diex, de mon cuer, comme est iriez!’ (846)

A move from apostrophe to nature to the use of the second person to address herself creates the impression of an attempt to reassert control over herself, to return to her purpose of death:

‘Tysbé, mauvese, que targiez?
Mauvese,
Tant solement morir vous plese,
Qu’or ne vous fault ne point ne ese.’ (847-50)

A bisyllable follows, repeating the word ‘morir’, in interrogative mode, effecting the shift to the first person response, which confirms that her desire is only for death:

‘Morir?
Nulle chose tant ne desir
Com mes douleurs a defenir.
A tort me targe dou ferir.’ (851-54)

Still she does not act, accusing herself of ‘tort’ (854) for the delay, repeating the term in the following bisyllable, which introduces an apostrophe to ‘Amours’:

‘A tort!
Amours, fetes mon poing si fort
Qu’a un seul cop reçoive mort,
S’en avra s’ame grant confort:
Andui morromes d’une mort.’ (855-59)

There is a return to the Latin, to the words of Thisbe, ‘hoc manus, est et amor’ (IV. 150), the linked hand and love, which it seemed that *Piramus et Tisbé* would neglect, but which have merely been postponed, by additional detail in the French which develops the emotional state of Tisbé, showing the enormity of the action envisaged when she speaks of following Piramus in death; she must persuade herself, must call upon ‘Amours’ (856), as an outside force, to strengthen her hand. Lines 858 and 859 present the future, when the action is accomplished. The phrase ‘grant confort’ (858) encapsulates the opposite of Tisbé’s extreme tension, and contrasts with Piramus’s suffering, when Tisbé commented ‘travaille a mort’ (832). *Confort* suggests physical

healing, spiritual healing, and the balm of the response from the beloved so desired by the lover in lyric poetry. All this will be achieved by Tisbé's death, which will reunite the lovers. Three elements in line 859 emphasize this union: the word 'andui'; the first-person plural verb 'morrômes'; the conception of the two deaths as 'une mort', which rhymes with 'confort' (858).

Tisbé then addresses Piramus:

'Amis,
 Bien sai qu'amours vous ont ocis.
 Quant assambler ne poons vis,
 Mors nous joindra, ce m'est avis.' (860-63)

There is continuity from Tisbé's thoughts on love and death. Phrases from the *Metamorphoses* which had not been developed earlier are now drawn in. There is the statement by Thisbe 'tua te manus [...] amorque / perdidit, infelix!' (IV. 148-49); the role of love is now referred to. Echoes of the difficult 'quique a me morte revelli / heu sola poteris, poteris nec morte revelli' (IV. 152-53) might be heard in lines 862 to 863, emphasizing death as the restoration of union.

This conception of death leads into words spoken to the two sets of parents.

In the *Metamorphoses* Thisbe appeals:

'hoc tamen amorum verbis estote rogati,
 o multum miseri meus illiusque parentes,
 ut, quos certus amor, quos hora novissima iunxit,
 conponi tumulo non invidetis eodem.' (IV. 154-57)

['O wretched parents, mine and his, be ye entreated of this by the prayers of us both, that you begrudge us not that we, whom faithful love, whom the hour of death has joined, should be laid together in the same tomb.'](p.189)

Tisbé also address the parents, in words which at first have an ironic edge, for it is not only she and Piramus who have seen plans lead to an unexpected outcome:

'Parens,
 Qui nous cuidiez garder leens,
 A court terme serois dolens.
 Com dolereuz encombrement
 Verrois,
 Quant ambedeus nous trouverois
 Ensemble, mors et acolez!' (864-70)

There is then the appeal that she and Piramus be buried together:

‘Pri vous que cest don me donez:
 Quant en joie fumes sevez,
 Et a mort somes dessamblez,
Seviaus
 Que nous contiengne uns seulz tombiaux;
 Andeus nous reçoive uns vesseaux.’ (871-76)

Sorrow and joy, separation and union, are intricately balanced. Tisbé lays responsibility with the parents, but pleads for the single tomb with the formal ‘pri vous que cest don me donez’ (871), appropriate when asking a boon of an overlord. Plans to keep them apart have led to death, but death which joins, for they are ‘ambedeus [...] / ensamble, mors et acolez’ (869-70). Those responsible for the destruction of *joie* (872), ‘essential joy and harmony’, must restore it, by confirming the reunion found in death. In the *Metamorphoses* the plea to the parents is followed by that to the mulberry. In *Piramus et Tisbé* this material is covered earlier, allowing a logical development through Tisbé’s speech, with an increasing emphasis on death as the state which will permit union.

‘Adont s’encline la pucele’ (877-908) [Third Person / First Person]

Despite the hope of union it offers, the presentation of death in the final lines of *Piramus et Tisbé* is not unreservedly positive. There is rapid alternation between third-person narrative and brief phrases of first-person direct speech:

‘Adont s’encline la pucele’	(877-78)	[Third Person]
‘Pyramus, ves ci vostre amie’	(879-80)	[Tisbé]
‘Li jovenciaux, la ou moroit’	(881-87)	[Third Person]
‘[...] Tysbé, amie’	(887-88)	[Piramus]
‘Atant se taist, ne puet plus dire’	(889-908)	[Third Person]

We can see a reflection of the pattern seen in the scenes between the servant, Tisbé’s mother and the chambermaid (81-94), which lead to the initial separation of Piramus

and Tisbé. In these final lines of the poem, physical union is regained and the verbal communication sought with such urgency is restored. Nevertheless, imminent death means that success in the quest is ephemeral. As the dying Tisbé embraces the body of Piramus, we read:

Le cors acole et si l'embrace,
 Les iex li baise et bouche et face;
 Baise la bouche par grant cure:
 Tant com sans et vie li dure,
 Se demoustre veraie amie.
 Cil est fenis, cele est fenie.
 Iluec morust; en tel senblant
 S'assanblerent li dui amant. (901-08)

Tisbé proves herself 'veraie amie' (905). Significantly, however, the implied endorsement of her behaviour is limited: 'tant com sans et vie li dure' (904). The rhyme 'amie' / 'fenie' (905, 906) both underlines that love has brought Tisbé to death and suggests that death marks the end of wordly life. Depending on the criteria applied, Tisbé's actions, and by implication those of Piramus, can be praised as those of the perfect lovers or condemned as sin:

Dites amen, chascun par non,
 Que dieus lor face voir pardon,
 Et nos face redemption
 Et nos otroit beneficon. (909-12)

The closing lines of the poem lead us from death, which silences Piramus and Tisbé, to life, to 'redemption' (911), which will be made possible by the application of the moral and spiritual lesson exemplified by their story.

1.5 *PIRAMUS ET TISBÉ*: CONCLUSION

What conclusions may be drawn about *Piramus et Tisbé*? A first response to this question must be to note that it proves difficult to offer a simple definition of a text which displays such a wide range of characteristics, and shares elements with so many other works. Close study shows that the material from the *Metamorphoses*

plays an essential role, providing not only the story told by *Piramus et Tisbé*, but also the foundation for many of its amplifications. As the Classical Latin text is developed by the French it is drawn from one context to another, the original material viewed from a medieval perspective. A variety of influences can be discerned in the new text: the rhetorical arts, oral performance, lyric poetry, concepts related to the feudal world, the apparent preoccupation of court society with an intricate exploration of the nature of love, echoes from the Bible and Church teaching. How are such influences, with their potential contradictions, reconciled in *Piramus et Tisbé*? Tensions created by the possible opposition or reconciliation of its elements, amongst them the use of the third or first-person voice, prove central in the poem.

The attempt to determine the major subdivisions and overall structure of *Piramus et Tisbé* can prove interesting. Aubailly sees three ‘actes’, preceded by a ‘Prologue’:

Acte I: 1er jour: Douleur de la séparation; découverte de la fissure.
 Acte II: Le lendemain: Amour juré et décision de fuir.
 Acte III: La nuit tragique: Réunion dans la mort. (‘Au sources’, 1991)

These divisions do not correspond exactly to the movement of the poem. Rather, first there is brief union followed by separation; the focus then moves to the wall between the two homes, finally there is the move from Babylon to death beneath the mulberry. For Marie-Noëlle Lefay-Toury, the death of the lovers is central to both Latin and French versions of the story. Death is predetermined by the *Metamorphoses*:

C’est une intrigue tout à fait simple, un cheminement continu de l’amour à la mort, opéré par deux personnages, alternativement destinataire et destinataire, tour à tour ou ensemble sujets, à la recherche d’un objet qui

est d'abord l'amour, et auquel, par suite d'une méprise, essentiellement un fait d'intrigue, se substituera la mort.¹⁰³

In *Piramus et Tisbé*, the death of Piramus and Tisbé is foretold early. Lefay-Toury (pp. 14-27) studies the structure of the poem and, noting the strong presence of death and suffering, particularly in the passages of first-person direct speech, provisionally concludes:

Tous les éléments de la structure de *Piramus*, considérés isolément, semblent donc nous indiquer que la mort des amants est bien la seule fin vers laquelle tend le récit et sa seule raison d'être. (p. 27)

For Lefay-Toury the comparison with the *Metamorphoses* confirms the greater importance given to death in *Piramus et Tisbé* and reveals that love also gains in power in the French text (pp. 28-34).

There is, however, a subtle complexity resulting from the interplay of many elements in *Piramus et Tisbé*, which may pass unperceived and unappreciated in any study of overall structure. In the opening of *Piramus et Tisbé* we see the introduction of a number of concepts which will be significant in the poem. The interweaving, which results from the amplification of the first twenty-two lines in the passages which follow, allows the presentation of potentially contradictory views. Piramus and Tisbé can seem both superior and all too human. The presentation of love also suggests a duality, less a statement of extreme polarity than an exploitation of both negative and positive charges associated with the concept.

The apostrophe to 'Amours' of lines 23 to 40, while suggesting an idealised portrayal of love as a result of the detailed development of the metaphor of love's arrow, also introduces the painful results of the experience for those involved. In the four lines which follow the apostrophe, what has been revealed is applied to Piramus and Tisbé:

¹⁰³ Marie-Noëlle Lefay-Toury, *La Tentation du suicide dans le roman français du XII^e siècle*,

De tel saiete et de tel lance
 Navra Amours en lor enfance
 Le jovencel et la meschine,
 Tresque la mort lor fu voisine. (41-44)

The lines are significant in what they reveal of the remainder of *Piramus et Tisbé*. 'De tel saiete' (41) implies that the story of Piramus and Tisbé will illustrate the painful effects of love and also that it will take place within the conventions which have just been employed. Christopher Lucken notes that, while the arrow is initially 'sans sanc' (32), maturity brings more complete knowledge of love, which does result in the shedding of blood. Youth, blood, and the metamorphosis of the mulberry are associated with the young scholars who learnt their craft through imitation of Ovid's story of Pyramus and Thisbe.¹⁰⁴

As *Piramus et Tisbé* develops the story of the lovers, first-person direct speech assumes an important role. These passages prove intriguing because they can function in several ways, often simultaneously. As the words of the protagonists they reveal reactions and emotions. As long uninterrupted passages of speech they permit the development of arguments, ideas and ultimately of the text itself. While passages of first-person direct speech can be studied in isolation, their full significance comes when they are considered as part of the whole poem. The relationship between first and third person parallels that of verse and prose in the *prosimetrum*.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, as Table 3 shows, *Piramus et Tisbé* displays a more complex pattern of subdivisions than the simple alternation of first person with third.

Collection Essais sur le Moyen Age (Paris: Champion, 1979), p. 15.

¹⁰⁴ Christopher Lucken, 'Le Suicide des amants et l'enseignement des lettres: Piramus et Tisbé ou les métamorphoses de l'amour', *Romania*, 117 (1999), 363-95.

¹⁰⁵ Peter Dronke, *Verse with Prose from Petronius to Dante: The Art and Scope of the Mixed Form* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1994).

Table 3: *Piramus et Tisbé*: Subdivisions

	First Line	Lines	Person	Content, Function	
Open ing	En Babilone la cité	(1-22)	Third Person	Opening passage	
	Hay, Amours, devant tes iex	(23-40)	Apostrophe to Amours	The nature of love	
	De tel saiete et de tel lance	(41-44)	Third Person	Love and Piramus and Tisbé	
	Encor ne sevent riens d'Amours	(45-74)	Third Person	Piramus and Tisbé together	
	Li douz regars, li simples sens	(75-94)	Third/ First Person	The separation of Piramus and Tisbé	
	Adont leva uns maltalent	(95-102)	Third Person	Separation confirmed	
	Li dui enfant sont en destroit	(103-42)	Third Person	The experience of separation	
	'Hé, las!' fet il, 'chetif dolent'	(143-95)	First Person: Piramus	Words of Piramus on separation	
	Ains qu'il peust son duel finir	(196-211)	Third Person	Transition: speaker to speaker	
	'Lasse', fet elle, 'Com male ore'	(212-97)	First Person: Tisbé	Words of Tisbé on separation	
	La pucele est trois fois pasmee	(298-303)	Third Person	Transition: speaker to silence	
The Wall	Prochain furent li dui palais	(304-31)	Third Person	Events: the wall, discovery of the chink	
	'Tysbé', dist il, 'bele faiture'	(332-48)	First Person: Piramus	Words of Piramus at the wall, 1	
	La pucele de l'autre part	(349-68)	Third Person	Transition: speaker to speaker	
	'Amis, ensi vous os nomer'	(369-91)	First Person: Tisbé	Words of Tisbé at the wall, 1	
	Ne plus lors parler a lui	(392-97)	Third Person	Transition: day to day, speaker to speaker	
	'Amie, moult sui angoissous'	(398-489)	First Person: Piramus	Words of Piramus at the wall, 2	
	Li jovenciaux plaint et souspire	(490-93)	Third Person	Transition: speaker to speaker	
	'Amis, trop vous desoonfortez'	(494-583)	First Person: Tisbé	Words of Tisbé at the wall, 2	
	Ensi ferment lor covenant	(584-89)	Third Person	Transition: speech to thought	
From the Walls of Babylon To Death Beneath the Mulberry	Li dui amant sont en grant cure	(590-617)	Third Person	Transition: thought to action	
	Ja ert la gent toute endormie	(618-74)	Third Person	Events: Tisbé's journey, the lion	
	Et Pyramus y est venus	(675-701)	Third Person	Events to words: Piramus's arrival	
	'Nuis de dolour, nuis de torment'	(702-63)	First Person: Piramus	The words of Piramus before death	
	Tel duel et tel priere faite	(764-79)	Third Person	Words to action: Piramus's death blow	
	Tysbé reparroit a ytant	(780-815)	Third Person	Events: the return of Tisbé	
	'Espee dont je suis saisie'	(816-76)	First Person: Tisbé	The words of Tisbé before death	
	Adont s'encline la pucele	(877-78)	Third Person	Transition: pause in words of speaker	
	'Pyramus, ves ci vostre amie'	(879-80)	First Person: Tisbé	The words of Tisbé before death continue	
	Li jovenciaux, la ou moroit	(881-87)	Third Person	Transition: from silence to speech	
	'Tysbé, amie'	(887-88)	First Person: Piramus	The words of Piramus before death resume	
	Atant se taist, ne puet plus dire	(889-908)	Third Person	Transitions: speech to silence, life to death	
	Closing	Dites amen, chascun par non	(909-912)	Third Person	Closing Phrases: from the story to life

With 46.5 percent of the text in the third person, to 53.5 percent in the first, the balance between the two seems almost equal. Although first and third person do alternate, at each stage, smaller divisions can be seen. The passages of transition become extremely interesting. As the third person is used to describe the actions of Piramus and Tisbé, spoken stage direction might join with direct speech to suggest performance, echoes might be heard of the imagined spoken and sung sections of the Breton *lais*. Repeated references to speaking, found of necessity in passages which mark the change from one speaker to another or from direct speech to events, bring

additional significance, reinforcing the role of speaking in the relationship between Piramus and Tisbé. Speaking, inability to speak, the desire for speech, reflect the pressures experienced by the couple. Their love generates discourse whose very extent in *Piramus et Tisbé* suggests the urgency of their need. The movement of the poem, aided by the passages of transition, is always forward.

It is following the separation of the couple that we find the first passages giving their words as direct speech. Piramus speaks first ('Hé, las!' fet il, 'chetif dolent', 143-95), then Tisbé ('Lasse', fet elle, 'Com male ore', 212-97). Rather than brief decorative insertions, we see extended discourse, which is motivated both by the immediate circumstances of delivery and by the gradual stages by which the text presents the hypothesis that love and separation result in suffering which is expressed in words. The story from the *Metamorphoses* provides the circumstances and *Piramus et Tisbé* develops what is left unsaid in the Latin; the words which result make several contributions to our understanding of the French text. The very exploitation of the potential offered by the *Metamorphoses* suggests that enjoyment of such wit might be anticipated from the audience. Indeed, Tony Hunt comments of twelfth-century French romance:

A multifocal presentation, exploiting irony, impersonation and a whole range of literary effects in constantly changing performances [...] literature as *lusus*.¹⁰⁶

The words spoken on separation develop the shifting presentation of the protagonists, who can appear at one moment superior to others and at the next all too human. Piramus and Tisbé react appropriately, presenting their emotions in elevated terms, thus reinforcing qualities which suggest the ideal lovers. Nevertheless, their words must also be seen as the result of powerlessness, as their parents enforce

separation but love demands union. Moreover, as Piramus appears to relish his role as melancholy lover, an inability to change the situation is emphasized. While Tisbé's internal debate leads her to appear more active, it also introduces references to the outside world which threatens their relationship, and thus we see her actions as constrained.

Deeds seems impossible, only words remain. Thus words, the appropriate reaction to the suffering caused by separation from the beloved, become also a substitute for action. The substitution can seem a retreat to a world of linguistic manipulation, untroubled by the actual obstacles to love. However, the passages of first-person direct speech are not isolated from those in the third person. The manipulation of language occurs within the context provided by the narrative circumstances, and results in an exploration not only of the experience of Piramus and Tisbé but also of the conventions used to express this.

The first speeches of Piramus and Tisbé also contribute to the portrayal of their relationship in terms of speaking together. Before separation, speech is one of the activities which unites them: 'les paroles [...] lor donnerent espirement' (19-22); 'fu assez lor licence grans / d'aler ensamble et de parler' (72-73). It is not until they are parted, however, that their words are given in the text. One effect of this is the creation of the association we have seen between the suffering caused by love and the text which results. A further effect results from the importance given to speech as a component of their union. The words of Piramus and Tisbé become a form of action, a continuance of their relationship, a refusal to accept the word of their parents. The extravagance of their speech suggests the violence of the emotion which

¹⁰⁶ Tony Hunt, *Chrétien de Troyes: Yvain (Le chevalier au lion)*, Grant & Cutler Critical Guides to French Texts, 55 (London: Grant & Cutler, 1986), p. 14.

motivates them, a violence which is increased by the vulnerability to love associated with youth.

When Piramus and Tisbé are separated, action appears impossible, allowing words to gain importance as a force in the text. This importance is reinforced by the discovery of the chink in the wall, and its use for speech. The first passages of direct speech at the wall ('Tysbé', *dist il, 'bele failure'*, 332-48, spoken by Piramus; 'Amis, *ensi vos os nomer'*, 369-91, spoken by Tisbé) increase the dramatic quality of the poem and further the action. Reference made by the couple to unhappiness underlines the need for an end to separation, a need which will be answered in part by the chink. From the *Metamorphoses* comes the means of communication of such inherent absurdity. Because *Piramus et Tisbé* articulates the relationship between the lovers, and their attempts to restore union, at least in part in terms of verbal communication, we see the urgency of love leading to foolish behaviour.

With the second passages of first-person direct speech at the wall ('Amie, *moult sui angoissous'*, 398-489, spoken by Piramus; 'Amis, *trop vous desconfortez'*, 494-583, spoken by Tisbé) we see a return to the pattern established by the words spoken on initial separation: extended discourse, composed in octosyllables and bisyllables, expresses the experience of Piramus and Tisbé in terms of conventions which gain a particular pertinence from the circumstances which prompt their use. The universal or non-specific convention is thus subjected to a critique: Piramus, emphasising suffering and frustration, attempts persuasion; Tisbé shows her own pain to be equal to his and proposes a solution.

Doubts as to the wisdom of the planned course, already suggested by the words of Tisbé, prove less powerful than the need for union. Two brief sequences of lines bring the transition, first from words to the possibility of reflection ('ensi

ferment lor covenant, 584-89), then from thought to a determination to continue with action ('li dui amant sont en grant cure', 590-617). As we see Tisbé, untroubled by fear, leave the city on the journey which will end with the death of both lovers, we can view her actions in two ways. One view is to see love leading to persistence in unreasonable behaviour. A different aspect is suggested by the term 'covenant' in line 584, which suggests that she, and later Piramus, are bound by loyalty. Their love and their words lead them to behaviour which can appear both foolish and faithful, negative and positive.

Piramus, finding Tisbé's bloodstained garment, believes her to be dead. As he laments ('Nuis de dolour, nuis de torment', 702-63), a number of elements combine, with interesting effect. The account in the *Metamorphoses* provides a model for the use of direct speech at this point. Emotion seems more intense in *Piramus et Tisbé*: the formal structures of the ritual lament for the dead allow the expression of grief, guilt, rage, perplexity. The arrival of Piramus after Tisbé, determined by the *Metamorphoses*, gives a specific basis for the sense of guilt and unworthiness often found in the words of the survivor. 'C'est tort / quant elle est mort et ne sui mort' (731-32) Piramus declares. Death becomes comfort, restored union, justice heroically administered. The darkening of the fruit of the mulberry follows the words of Piramus, giving them a certain power.

The implied superiority of Piramus is undercut by other elements in the text. The use of reason may lead to Piramus's understanding that the presence of the blood-stained garment and the absence of Tisbé signify death eaten by a lion. However, the very rapidity with which this conclusion is reached suggests powers of reasoning affected by emotion. Piramus, godlike, appears able to bring change to the universe, but the changed colour of the mulberry is still 'signe de mort' (760).

‘Tresperce soi parmi le flanc’ (769), we are told of Piramus; the Christlike aspect is contradicted only four lines later by the extremely significant remark ‘si fete amour a mort le simple!’ (773). Eley translates ‘such is the love which caused this hapless youth’s death!’ (p. 67); Baumgartner suggests ‘de quel amour il meurt victime!’ (p. 71). What is the specific nature of this love? The words of the protagonists, reinforcing the third-person passages of the opening, present love as all-consuming and, once impeded by separation, associated with suffering and death. The artifice of the text underlines this: ‘amour a mort’ (773). The logical conclusion of a love relationship explored in such terms is death. As Piramus dies, we might see the heroic culmination of his role as ideal lover. The brief addition ‘le simple’ (773), reserved to the end of the line, contradicts this heroic quality and acts as a warning: love thus conceived subjugates reason, diminishes freedom of action and leads to foolish behaviour.

A certain ambivalence to death, and thus to love, persists. In the words spoken as she finds Piramus dying (‘Espee dont je suis saisie’, 816-76) Tisbé calls for a single tomb, implying that death unites the lovers, a fact which can mitigate the harmful effects of love. Death retains negative associations, through the dark fruit; the rhyme underlines: ‘tel coulour / comme il a fiert a la douleur’ (762-63). Death can seem the ultimate loyalty, but brings silence to a relationship presented in terms of the desire to speak together.

The genre of *Piramus et Tisbé* is not easy to determine, due to the many characteristics shared with a range of other texts of its period. It might be that the poem can be understood best when considered as part of the development of romance in the twelfth century. The term *romance* can itself have a wide application, making definitions difficult. A primary aspect, giving rise to the term, is the use of the

vernacular, the Old French *romanz*, as opposed to Latin, or indeed any other language not understood.¹⁰⁷ With the group of Old French texts known as the *romans antiques*, which English might denote as the ‘romances of antiquity’, *roman / romance* can become more specific. Rather than texts which are simply ‘not Latin’, we can see material which was originally in Latin presented in the vernacular. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, discussing the *romans antiques*, emphasizes their ‘bookishness’. With the treatment of book-based antique subject matter, the *roman antique* participates in the *translatio studii*. Explicitly in prologues or implicitly in the texts, we see the clerics claim their place in the tradition of those who, possessed of knowledge, shared it and thus assured its continuance. In their turn, the clerics employ their abilities to pass the material, with the benefits it offers, to those of their own time, in terms which the latter are able to understand; the use of the vernacular draws in a further aspect of the *translatio* topos. Transfer may not always be straightforward, and it is as they accept, reject or turn to new uses the words of the ancient ‘auctores’ that we see the vernacular poets claim the freedom to impose their own vision of the significance of these earlier texts upon the material, revealing, for example, its ‘politico-historical relevance’. Thus we see the exploitation of three aspects of the *translatio* topos: the *translatio studii*, the change from one language to another, and the *translatio imperii*. For Blumenfeld-Kosinski, ‘this threefold exemplification of the *translatio* topos constitutes the basis for recognizing and analyzing a *roman antique*’.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Robert Marichal, ‘Naissance du roman’, in *Entretiens sur la Renaissance du 12^e siècle*, ed. by Maurice de Gandillac and Édouard Jeuneau, *Décades du Centre Culturel International de Cerisy-La-Salle*, n.s., 9 (Paris: Mouton, 1968), pp. 449-92 (pp. 450-51).

¹⁰⁸ Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, ‘Old French Narrative Genres: Towards the Definition of the *Roman antique*’, *Romance Philology*, 34 (1980), 143-59 (159). See also Robert Marichal, ‘Naissance du roman’, pp. 462-64.

Piramus et Tisbé meets two of these requirements, as a vernacular text which, while not explicitly stressing the exploitation of the *translatio studii* topos, establishes, with the comment 'qu'Ovides en son livre nome' (10), a relationship with an earlier Latin version of the material it treats. History, politics and the *translatio imperii* topos, however, seem absent from the poem. In *Piramus et Tisbé* we find, not only a shorter length than that typical of the *roman antique*, but also a narrower focus, as we learn, not of the fate of princes and nations, but of that of two individuals, two lovers, qualities which might suggest that the poem should be considered as a *lai*.¹⁰⁹ However, while the imperatives of power may influence the process of translation, other aspects of the *roman antique* may provide evidence to support the view that political concerns were not the sole criteria.

Audience expectation may affect literary production in several ways. Jean Charles Payen comments:

Le public du roman médiéval attend de l'œuvre non seulement une évocation, mais aussi l'élaboration, puis la confirmation, d'une morale chevaleresque où la *fin'amors* ait sa place.¹¹⁰

The exploration of important themes is not the only element which might link audience and text. Robert Marichal suggests a change from the *chanson de geste*, recited to large numbers of people, to the *roman*, a text read aloud in a more intimate setting. Changed circumstances of composition and of delivery, and an increasingly sophisticated public, permit greater linguistic complexity ('Naissance du roman', pp. 455-61). The importance of the rhetorical arts for medieval vernacular narrative has already been noted. Alexandre Aimé Petit suggests that the repetition and contrast of

¹⁰⁹ On the *lai* see Jean-Charles Payen, 'Le Lai narratif', in *Le Fabliau et le lai narratif*, Typologie des Sources du Moyen Age Occidental, fasc. 13 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975), pp. 31-63.

¹¹⁰ Jean-Charles Payen, F.N.M. Diekstra and others, *Le Roman*, Typologie des Sources du Moyen Age Occidental, fasc. 12 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975), p. 26.

textual elements becomes a primary characteristic of 'une écriture romanesque'.¹¹¹ The intricate texture which results can function at several levels. The decorative surface of the text may itself appeal. The use of highly-patterned language, at the service of argument and persuasion, can be seen as contributing to the important role assumed by monologue and dialogue in the *roman antique* and, as a consequence, must be seen as playing a significant part in the 'naissance du roman'.¹¹²

Although watertight definitions for 'romance' may prove elusive, many scholars identify an idealistic quality.¹¹³ The presentation of the protagonists can play a significant role in such idealism. Northrop Frye, classifying fictional modes by the 'hero's power of action', comments:

1. If superior in *kind* both to other men and to the environment of other men, the hero is a divine being, and the story about him a *myth* in the common sense of a story about a god. [...]
2. If superior in *degree* to other men and his environment, the hero is the typical hero of *romance*, whose actions are marvellous but who is himself identified as a human being. [...]
3. If superior in degree to other men but not to his natural environment, the hero is a leader. He has authority, passions, and powers of expression far greater than ours, but what he does is subject to social criticism and to the order of nature. This is the hero of the *high mimetic* mode, of most epic and tragedy, and is primarily the kind of hero that Aristotle had in mind. [...]
4. If superior neither to other men nor to his environment, the hero is one of us. [...] This gives us the hero of the *low mimetic* mode, of most comedy and realistic fiction. [...]
5. If inferior in power or intelligence to ourselves, so that we have the sense of looking down on a sense of bondage, frustration or absurdity, the hero belongs to the *ironic* mode.¹¹⁴

An attempt to decide on the mode of *Piramus et Tisbé* according to this classification faces evident difficulties, since several categories can apply to the joint heroes of the poem. In the *Metamorphoses*, the story of Pyramus and Thisbe is notable for the

¹¹¹ Alexandre Aimé Petit, *Naissances du roman: les techniques littéraires dans les romans antiques du XII^e siècle*, 2 vols (Lille: Atelier National Reproduction des Thèses, Université Lille III; Geneva: Slatkine, 1985), I, pp. 675-749.

¹¹² See, for example, Daniel Poirion, 'De l'*Énéide* à l'*Eneas*', pp. 219-20, and Alexandre Aimé Petit, *Naissances du roman*, I, pp. 553-673.

¹¹³ See, for example, Gillian Beer, *The Romance, The Critical Idiom* (London: Methuen, 1970), p. 5, and John E. Stevens, *Medieval Romance: Themes and Approaches* (London: Hutchinson, 1973).

absence of a clearly determined attitude towards the protagonists, who can appear comic, heroic, tragic. The treatment in *Piramus et Tisbé* appears to preserve something of this ambivalence. In the introduction of the couple, the French text, developing details from the Latin, shows Piramus and Tisbé sharing youth, beauty and high rank. Their close union can contribute to the sense of a positive characterization. The ideal evoked by the initial portrayal of Piramus and Tisbé is reinforced by the use of rhetorically patterned language and complex metaphor.

Once suggested, the ideal is called into question, threatened by the outside world. The story in the *Metamorphoses* provides an appropriate context for the exploration of the result when conventions must be played out within narrative circumstances. Developments in the French text further emphasize the inherent tension between the ideal and 'reality' as represented by those narrative circumstances. As Tisbé's mother, forewarned by the servant, intervenes to pre-empt any physical relationship by keeping Tisbé apart from Piramus, we see that the very qualities which can constitute the ideal contribute to the difficulty of maintaining it: youth is subordinate to age; rank brings obligations to lineage; the innocent union has the potential for physical passion and the introduction of a disruptive force into human affairs. As in other romances, such as those of Chrétien de Troyes, the private emotional world is not free from the demands of public duty. Indeed, definitions must be nuanced for, rather than being consistently 'superior in degree', the various episodes of a story can allow the romance hero's power of action to extend from the godlike to the comic: Yvain, for example, triumphs in battle, but also cowers in bed, hidden from those who seek him by a magic ring (*Yvain*, 1026-202). Hunt comments:

¹¹⁴ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*, 2nd edn (London: Penguin Books, 1990), pp. 33-34.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the romances is the tension created by the coexistence of an idealistic and a critical spirit, the latter frequently undercutting the former, the exact balance of the two varying from work to work. (1986, p. 21)

Perhaps we might see in romance the validation of the ideal as a potential goal. The shifting characteristics of the romance protagonist move gradually closer to the realization of the ideal state, as concepts are opposed then reconciled. For Kelly, the combination of varied elements is central to the romance text: 'the happy balance of potentially conflicting elements – a *concors discordia* – is a *bele conjointure*' (1985, p. 36). A later study concludes with the suggestion that in romance we see a quest: 'the fundamental search for meaning in diversity'.¹¹⁵

In *Piramus et Tisbé* the protagonists demonstrate the effects of a particular kind of love. First-person direct speech plays an important role: expressing emotion, formulating the conception of love which operates, representing that love within the text. Both love and discourse display a range of qualities. Love can elevate or humble, can bring joy or suffering, and it is perhaps only in the emphasis on the power of love that we can see *Piramus et Tisbé* as 'l'exaltation de l'amour passion' (Cadot, p. 438). The discourse which expresses love is elevated but flawed. In *Piramus et Tisbé* we see myth, tragedy, comedy, irony. The shifting characteristics of the two human protagonists, Piramus and Tisbé, and of two non-human protagonists, love and discourse, move inexorably and with some violence to an understanding of the nature of the ideal, and to the revelation that 'si fete amour' (773) results in an intricate, beautiful text and a close union, but a painful life and an untimely death.

¹¹⁵ Douglas Kelly, *The Art of Medieval French Romance* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), p. 320.

CHAPTER TWO

THE *GENERAL ESTORIA*: 'DE PIRAMO E DE THISBE':

'EL AMOR DE LOS ENTENDEDORES'

2.1 INTRODUCTION

2.1.1 THE *GENERAL ESTORIA*

A thirteenth-century Castilian version of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe is found in the intriguing context of the *General estoria* of Alfonso X, 'el Sabio'. The *General estoria* was conceived as a history of the world from its beginnings to the time of Alfonso. The project did not reach completion: the six parts in existence reach only to the time of the Romans, drawing material from a range of sources, biblical and secular.¹¹⁶ Solalinde suggests dates of composition between 1272 and 1284 for the *General estoria* as a whole, the first three parts being completed by 1280 (*GeI*, pp. xii-xiii). A range of influences are seen. The use of Castilian can be related to a desire to mark its growing prestige as a national language.¹¹⁷ The organization of the material reflects the view of history as a series of cycles, the rise and fall of empires:

¹¹⁶ Alfonso el Sabio, *General estoria: primera parte*, ed. by Antonio G. Solalinde (Madrid: Junta Para Ampliación de Estudios e Investigaciones Científicas; Centro de Estudios Históricos, 1930), pp. xii-xvi. References to the text of the first part of the *General estoria* will be to this edition, indicating for clarity *GeI*, and giving page number, column and line numbers in parentheses after the quotation. See also María Rosa Lida de Malkiel, 'La *General estoria*: notas literarias y filológicas 1', *Romance Philology*, 12 (1958-59), 112-42.

¹¹⁷ Roger Wright, *El Tratado de Cabreros (1206): estudio sociofilológico de una reforma ortográfica*, Papers of the Medieval Hispanic Research Seminar, 19 (London: Department of Hispanic Studies, Queen Mary and Westfield College, 2000), pp. 116-22.

Thebes, Troy, Rome, Castile; the past validates the present.¹¹⁸ The inclusive nature of the *General estoria* is one of its most fascinating characteristics. The validity of the Bible as a source of history for a Christian society may be understood; the use of pagan authors, of pagan fictions, seems more perplexing, but is explained by the belief in the hidden truth, to be illuminated by later, Christian, scholars. The scholastic influence can be seen as an explanation for the tendency to explanation, clarification and rationalization of the source texts referred to in the *General estoria*; we see 'texto y glosa' (Rico, pp. 167-88). These general characteristics of the *General estoria* might lead us to expect a scholarly rendition of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe within its pages. Olga Tudorică Impey suggests that in the Alphonsine prose we should also see a concern for style, and the development of a literary language.¹¹⁹ Greater subjectivity might result where use is made of the letters from Ovid's *Heroides*;¹²⁰ no such letter, however, is attributed to Thisbe.

2.1.2 FROM THE *METAMORPHOSES* TO THE *GENERAL ESTORIA*

Little detailed study exists of the *General estoria*'s treatment of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe. London and Leslie, in a 1955 article, published the transcription of the text, prepared in the Seminary of Medieval Spanish Studies at the University of Wisconsin, which would later form part of the 1957 edition of volume 1 of part 2 of the *General estoria*. The manuscript used is K: Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid, ms.

¹¹⁸ Francisco Rico, *Alfonso el Sabio y la General estoria: Tres lecciones*, 2nd edn, Letras e Ideas (Barcelona: Ariel, 1984), pp. 65-120.

¹¹⁹ Olga Impey, 'En el crisol de la prosa literaria de Alfonso X: unas huellas de preocupación estilística en las versiones del retrato de Dido', *Bulletin Hispanique*, 84 (1982), 7-23.

¹²⁰ Olga Tudorică Impey, 'Ovid, Alfonso X, and Juan Rodríguez del Padrón: Two Castilian Translations of the *Heroides* and the Beginnings of Spanish Sentimental Prose', *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 57 (1980), 283-97. For the *Heroides* see Ovid, *Heroides and Amores*, trans. by Grant Showerman, 2nd edn, rev. by G. P. Goold, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: Heinemann, 1977).

10327 (olim I. i. 79). London and Leslie indicate the presence of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe in the second part of the *General estoria*, and comment that:

Its interest, apart from the additional note it offers to the bibliography of Ovidian influence in the Middle Ages, lies in two areas: the kind of translation given it by the scholars in the court of Alfonso, and the particular use made of the story within the *General estoria*.

The study considers how closely the Castilian translates the Latin. Analysis is largely by means of footnotes which indicate some areas of difference and suggest potential sources or parallels. In addition to these footnotes, there is a brief commentary, of three and a half pages, which sees in the text an accurate translation of the Latin, with few omissions. Additions, which account for the greater length of the Castilian, are divided into two categories:

Explanations to clarify the story or the motivation of the characters, and information added in encyclopedic fashion whenever the course of the tale offered a convenient place for it.¹²¹

Further analysis is required to demonstrate the significance, and effect, of changes and additions. Moreover, it is important to consider the text, not simply as a translation of a Latin document, but as a retelling of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe: the specific subject matter may prove crucial.

The *General estoria*, while following the story of Pyramus and Thisbe as it is found in the *Metamorphoses*, amplifies many details. Relatively little material is added to the opening: from the introduction of the couple to the first mention of the wall, which takes ten lines in the Latin, fills just over one column in the Castilian. Much greater amplification is found of the material which concerns the wall, the setting of the tomb, spring and tree, the departure of Thisbe, and the discovery of her

¹²¹ Gardiner H. London and Robert J. Leslie, 'A Thirteenth-Century Spanish Version of Ovid's "Pyramus and Thisbe"', *Modern Language Review*, 50 (1955), 147-155 (147, 149). The Seminary is now the Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies. For details of MS K see *General estoria: segunda parte*, I, xii-xv.

garment by Píramo. The distribution of direct speech matches that found in the *Metamorphoses*.

The text of the *General estoria* is divided by rubrics, which head sections which resemble short chapters, although no chapter numbers are given in the manuscript. A number of sections are concerned with material related to the mulberry, Píramo and Thisbe. Table 4 shows the relevant rubrics and the events covered by the section they head.

Table 4: Rubrics related to the story of Píramo, Thisbe and the Mulberry

(General estoria: II)

Rubric	Events
'De las razones de las fijas de Mineo en sos laoures contra Baco.' (194. b. 25-26)	The Minyeides' decision to tell stories and the choice of material for the first story.
'De Piramo e de Thisbe de orient, los dos entendedores, de como se fablaron e la postura que fizieron en so amor.' (195. b. 13-16)	The setting, the introduction of Píramo and Thisbe, their separation. The use of the wall for speech and the making of the plan to leave the city. Thisbe's departure, journey and arrival at the tomb of Ninus.
'De lo que contescio a Tisbe e desi a Piramo so aquel moral.' (197. a. 35-36)	Thisbe's encounter with the lioness and her subsequent flight. The discovery by Píramo of Thisbe's torn, blood-stained cloak; the misunderstanding which leads to his death.
'De como fizo Tisbe pues que fuxo ante la leona.' (199. a. 2-3)	Thisbe's return to the rendezvous and her discovery of the dying Píramo.
'De la oracion que Thisbe fizo en su muert.' (200. a. 20-21)	Thisbe's pleas to their parents and to the mulberry.
'De lo que quiere mostrar el mudamiento de las moras blancas en negras.' (201. a. 4-6)	Commentary on the meaning of the change in the mulberry.
'De como touieron por buena esta razon las fijas de Mineo et sus mugieres, e rogaran a Leucothoe que dixiese ella la su uez.' (201. b. 2-5)	The reactions of the audience to the story.

A detailed comparison of the Castilian with the Latin will reveal the specific nature of the amplification. It may be that it will be found that added details serve to clarify obscure aspects of the source text; the account in the *General estoria* becomes a scholarly commentary, presenting the *gloss* within the text. Amplification may effect a more fundamental change of emphasis, revealing a particular attitude towards Píramo and Thisbe, the love between them and its results: death and the metamorphosis of the mulberry.

2.1.3 REASONS FOR STORY-TELLING

While only a small part of the *General estoria* is dedicated to Píramo and Thisbe, other passages of more general comment also prove pertinent, providing a context for their story. The *Prologue* which begins the *General estoria* discusses the relationship between events, their formulation in a text, and the later use of that text (*GeI*, p.3). An important factor is knowledge itself; the present and the future cannot be fully understood, only of the past is knowledge complete:

Mas del tiempo passado, por que saben los comienços e los acabamientos delos fechos que y se fizieron, dezimos que alcanzan los omnes por este tiempo cierta mientre el saber delas cosas que fueron. (*GeI*, 3. a. 23-27)

It is because of this full knowledge that events from the past, rather than other periods, were written down:

Onde por que el saber del tiempo que fue es cierto e non delos otros dos tiempos, assi como diximos, trabaiaron se los sabios omnes de meter en escripto los fechos que son passados. (*GeI*, 3. a. 28-32)

There is the implication that knowledge of past events was seen as worthy of preservation for future generations:

Pora auer remembrança dellos, como si estonçes fuessen e que lo sopiessen los que auien de uenir assi como ellos. (*GeI*, 3. a. 32-b5)

The chain which begins with events and those who wrote of them is extended, as writings are made into books. The subject matter is used for a particular purpose:

Et esto fizieron, por que delos fechos delos buenos tomassen los omnes exemplo pora fazer bien, et delos fechos delos malos que reçibiessen castigo por se saber guardar delo non fazer. (*GeI*, 3. b. 14-19)

The prologue introduces a first person, 'yo don Alfonsso' (*GeI*, 3. b. 20-21), who thus presents himself as part of the story of how texts are used; the extensive official style suggests that imperial ambition, as well as didactic desires, may have an important influence. Alfonso speaks of the process of collection and selection:

Despues que oue fecho ayuntar muchos escriptos e muchos estorias delos fechos antiguos, escogi dellos los mas uerdaderos e los meiores que y sope. (*GeI*, 3. b. 26-30)

A further step is involved, the significant phrase is 'fiz ende fazer este libro' (*GeI*, 3. b. 30). This is followed by 'e mande y poner todos los fechos sennalados' (*GeI*, 3. b. 30-31); Alfonso might establish criteria, but such an ambitious project required the collaboration of other writers, who would have their own effect on the material.

Parallels can be seen with the opening of the *Metamorphoses*. As the work begins, Ovid claims a specific purpose, saying 'In nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas corpora' (I. 1-2), ['My mind is bent to tell of bodies changed into new forms'] (p. 3). This stated purpose concerns the subject of the text which is to follow; Ovid draws together material from many sources, emphasizing the aspect of metamorphosis. This could be because the subject matter of the source texts is thus perceived, or because these offer the opportunity for the development of this aspect. As Ovid continues, it becomes evident that metamorphosis is not the sole theme:

di, coeptis (nam vos mutastis et illas)
adspirate meis primaque ab origine mundi
ad mea perpetuum deducite tempora carmen! (I. 2-4)

[Ye gods, for you yourselves have wrought the changes, breathe on these my undertakings, and bring down my song in unbroken strains from the world's very beginning even unto the present time.] (p. 3.)

The gods are seen first in relation to the metamorphoses which they have caused, but then as a source of inspiration for Ovid; the concern is with the writing, with the song. There is the ambitious plan: there is also the implication that the work, divinely

inspired, shall be truth. There is the same pattern that we see presented in the *Prologue* to the *General estoria*: first there are the events in the past, the metamorphoses; the gods, unlike Ovid, present and responsible, can bring the truth of these matters; this can be seen as confirming his sources, which are not mentioned here. Ovid's *carmen*, the *Metamorphoses*, is then seen from the perspective of a different time, a different present, as it is included in the *General estoria*, by an Alfonso who comments:

Fiz ende fazer este libro, e mande y poner todos los fechos sennalados tan bien delas estorias dela Biblia, como delas otras grandes cosas que acahesçieron por el mundo, desde que fue començado fastal nuestro tiempo. (*GeI*, 3 .b. 30-35)

Ovid and Alfonso conceive their work in similar terms: it is to cover events from the world's beginning to their own time. Ovid presents a specific focus, metamorphosis, while that of Alfonso is wider, limited only to 'los fechos sennalados' (*GeI*, 3. b. 31), both biblical and secular. The intention to include both explains the use of material from the *Metamorphoses*; the juxtaposition of the two might be expected to create contradictions between Christian and pagan viewpoint, contradictions only to be resolved by an interpretation of the latter which presents the perceived subject matter as other than pagan, an interpretation which syncretises it with the Christian.

The motives of the story-teller, and the perceived subject matter of their story, become particularly fascinating when we consider material relating to Pyramus and Thisbe. In the *Metamorphoses* the Minyeides decide to tell stories to lighten the labour of spinning and weaving; story-telling becomes entertainment, but is also linked to their allegiance to Pallas, and their refusal to acknowledge Bacchus. As she who proposed the activity prepares to tell the first story she is shown considering the choice of material (IV. 44-53). She may seem free to choose any one of several potential stories, fulfilling her artistic integrity as story-teller, but it is significant that

all the stories considered involve a metamorphosis, and therefore fulfil also Ovid's stated purpose; when she chooses, the reason given, 'hanc quoniam vulgaris fabula non est' (IV. 53), ['this tale, not commonly known as yet'] (p. 183), could reflect her artistic preoccupations, those of Ovid, or both. The subject of the story to be told is summarised as:

quae poma alba ferebat
ut nunc nigra ferat contactu sanguinis arbor. (IV. 51-52)

[How the mulberry-tree, which once had borne white fruit, now has fruit dark red, from the bloody stain.] (p. 183)

When the story begins, however, the first words are 'Pyramus et Thisbe' (IV. 55); the story of the lovers, the explanation of the metamorphosis of the mulberry, appears to displace it in the text.

The *General estoria* sets the story of Pyramus and Thisbe within the context of material drawn from the fourth book of the *Metamorphoses*, acknowledging this source 'cuenta Ouidio en el quarto libro del so Libro Mayor' (195. b. 27-28). The immediate context is provided by a passage with the rubric 'De las razones de las fijas de Mineo en sos lauores contra Baco' (194. b. 25-26). The *General estoria* includes the frame-story of the Minyeides, perhaps simply because it is present in the source, and thus includes the significant aspects of that context. Story-telling becomes part of the subject matter of the text. Between the reader and the material dealing with the lovers a chain of voices intervene: the writer of this section of the *General estoria* tells of the text of Ovid, which tells of the Minyeides and the tales they tell. Different motivations inform the story-telling of each, affecting the choice of material and the use made of it.

In the *General estoria*, the presentation of the Minyeides is similar to that found in the *Metamorphoses*. Here too their activity of story-telling is to make work less onerous; one of the sisters proposes it 'por que ayamos mas ligero de fazer algun

buen lauor de nuestras manos' (195. a. 16-17). Here too, a relationship is established between the story-telling and the allegiance to Pallas. The relationship is reinforced by the fact that the *General estoria*, amongst the attributes which give rise to that allegiance, includes an elevated level of 'los saberes liberales' (194. b. 36-37); an example of the way the *General estoria* presents the pagan gods as supremely skilled humans, rather than as divine, which implies that this particular field of knowledge is particularly valuable. This can then be related to the way knowledge is emphasized as potential subject matter is assessed, 'començo a pensar de muchas cosas qual dizrie, ca muchas sabie' (195. a. 23-25), a phrase drawn from the *Metamorphoses*. A detail in the *General estoria* draws into greater prominence the role of the audience, not only as part of the motivation for the story, but also in the choice of material, which is decided upon not, as in the Latin, by the speaker, named here as Alcithoe, but because:

Plogo a las otras hermanas e a su conpanna, ca esta razon dixieron que non era aun publiuada nin la sabien aun el pueblo. (195. b. 3-6)

The *General estoria* precedes the list of the stories available with the comment 'assi como cuenta Ouidio' (195. a. 25-26); this can be seen as scholarly referencing, as the indication of the authority which supports what will be said, or as that for facts which may then be disputed. This means that when we read that the story-teller considers 'si dirie de cuemo el aruol que leuara la fructa blanca, por que la leuo negra despues, e vinol esto por contannimiento de sangre' (195. a. 37-b. 1), this summary may not necessarily represent the true, or only, significance of the material for the *General estoria*.

2.2 THE BEGINNING OF THE STORY

As the story begins, the *General estoria* follows the pattern set by the *Metamorphoses*, turning from the mulberry to the lovers. Píramo and Thisbe are

introduced, and their closeness is followed by separation. The opening passages are headed by a rubric, which presents concepts which will prove significant.

2.2.1 THE RUBRIC 'DE PIRAMO E DE THISBE'

In the indirect reporting of Alcithoe's thoughts, the story she will tell is that of how the fruit of the mulberry were changed in colour. As she begins to speak, the text of the *General estoria* includes a rubric, which does not mention the mulberry:

De Piramo e de Thisbe de orient, los dos entendedores, de como se fablaron e la postura que fizieron en so amor. (195. b. 13-16)

The rubric could be contemporaneous with the original text of the *General estoria*, or be from a later hand; guidance, or comment. The implication is that the story will be about Piramo and Thisbe; the paired names suggest a link between the two. Details nuance and qualify. The setting is suggested by the phrase 'de orient' (195. b. 14). For a Castilian audience this means that events are distanced not only in time – from the past of the Minyeides – but also distanced in space.

The phrase 'los dos entendedores' (195. b. 14) has the opposite effect, drawing the material into the context of thirteenth-century Castile by the vocabulary used. The sense of the term *entendedor* needs some clarification. Cobarrubias, considering it within the entry for the verb *entender*, notes the derivation from the Latin *intelligare* and definitions reflect the link with understanding.¹²² Martín Alonso considers *entendedor* to be an adjective, dates its use to the eleventh to fifteenth centuries, and gives as a primary definition: 'que entiende, perito, entendido, sabidor'. More specific definitions are drawn from textual references. Potential meanings from the thirteenth century are: 'sabio, inteligente, devoto' in the *Loores* of Berceo, and, significantly, 'amante', first in the *Poema de Fernán González*,

¹²² Sebastián de Cobarruvias Orozco (Madrid, 1611; repr. Madrid: Turner, [n.d.]), p. 523.

'olvidan los parientes por el *entendedor*' [629c], then, in the *General estoria*, but from a reference from later in the story of Píramo and Thisbe 'por que non fuesse enartado el su *entendedor*' [199. a. 9-10]. The fourteenth century offers 'alcahuete', in the *Libro de buen amor* of Juan Ruiz 'tomó un *entendedor*' [v14, 478]. There is also a reference to the *Celestina* [1499, VIII, 106] 'A buen *entendedor*, en la bragueta cabrá'.¹²³

The definitions given by Alonso imply an evolution, or development, of the term, from the wide definition of a person who understands, or comprehends, to the specific one of the *amante*, 'the lover'; a person in a relationship which makes that understanding reciprocal.¹²⁴ The use of *entendedor* in the *General estoria* would appear to provide evidence of the existence of a Castilian vocabulary dealing with love, an existence obscured by the use of Galician for love poetry in the time of Alfonso X. The term *entendedor* can be associated with lyric: Frédéric Mistral suggests a troubadour origin.¹²⁵ H.R. Lang discusses the possible effect on court poetry of visits by Provençal poets to the Spanish peninsula and, to a lesser degree, by Spanish poets to Provence and France. Among the poems analysed is a *pastourelle* by Pedramigo de Sevilha, which makes use of the term *entendedor* in the context of the love relationship.¹²⁶ In the *General estoria* we find the same word in Castilian prose. Impey suggests that:

al incluir en la *General estoria* de Alfonso X las obras de Ovidio, los traductores tenían recurso a la lírica trovadoresca para mediar la distancia

¹²³ Martin Alonso, *Diccionario medieval español: desde las glosas emilianenses (s. X) hasta el siglo XV*, 2 vols (Salamanca: Universidad Pontificia, 1986), II, 1040-41.

¹²⁴ For the definition of *entendedor* as 'amante', see also Lloyd A. Kasten and John J. Nitti, eds, *Diccionario de la prosa castellana del rey Alfonso X*, Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, Spanish Series, 126, 3 vols (New York: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 2002), II, p. 779.

¹²⁵ Frédéric Mistral, *Dictionnaire provençal-français embrassant les divers dialectes de la langue d'oc moderne*, 2 vols (Aix: Veuve Remondet-Aubin, [n.d.]), I, p. 942.

¹²⁶ H.R. Lang, 'The Relations of the Earliest Portuguese Lyric School with the Troubadours and the Trouvères', *Modern Language Notes*, 10/4 (1895), 104-16 (222-23).

ética y sentimental que separaba el mundo erótico ovidiano del castellano del siglo XIII, y para amplificar el texto con descripciones poéticas.

Entendedor represents 'el tercer grado de la *fin'amor* [...] que en la lírica provenzal designa al amante aceptado por la dama'.¹²⁷ The *General estoria* uses the term of both Píramo and Thisbe. Each of the several examples needs consideration as it occurs, in order to establish its meaning and significance more securely.

Setting and characters introduced, the rubric continues with a summary of what might be considered the events to be related: 'como se fablaron e la postura que fizieron en so amor' (195. b. 14-16) The first of these, 'como se fablaron' (195. b. 14-15), could be read as an allusion to the fact that Píramo and Thisbe, separated, are able to communicate through the wall between their homes; the sense would be 'how they were able to speak to each other'. However, the phrase could be seen as completed by the final words of the rubric, 'como se fablaron [...] en so amor'; *amor*, 'love', becomes the pivotal element which governs both speech and 'postura'. *Postura* might be understood as 'stance', 'attitude'. The term can also mean 'pact, treaty', bringing the sense of a legal agreement, as for example in the thirteenth-century *Posturas* of the 'Cortes de Toledo'.¹²⁸ In the *Metamorphoses* the story-teller thinks of her material as dealing with the metamorphosis of the mulberry, but when the story is told, the metamorphosis is only one element, the result of the love between Pyramus and Thisbe. In the *General estoria*, before the story is told, both metamorphosis and love have been introduced. This suggests that the love between Píramo and Thisbe, and the way it leads them to speak and act, are seen as crucial.

¹²⁷ Olga Tudorică Impey, 'La *fin'amors* y sus términos en la prosa histórica de Alfonso X: un caso de reflexión y refracción', *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*, 9 (1984-85), 369-84 (369, 374).

¹²⁸ On the language of the *Posturas* see Wright, *El Tratado de Cabreros* (2000), pp. 90-94.

2.2.2 THE INTRODUCTION OF THE LOVERS

While the *General estoria*, in the opening passages of *De Piramo e de Thisbe*, can be seen to follow lines 55 to 64 of the *Metamorphoses*, Book IV, a comparison of the two texts reveals slight but potentially significant differences. One change is in the opening words. In the *Metamorphoses* one of the Minyeides – the text says only ‘e quibus una’ (IV. 36), [‘then one of them’] (p. 181) – having chosen her story, begins to speak with the words ‘Pyramus et Thisbe’ (IV. 55). The *General estoria* also tells of the choice of story and that the story-teller, Alcithoe, speaks, but then adds first the rubric and then the comment ‘cuenta la Estoria que’ (195. b. 18), a phrase usually used by the *General estoria* to refer to its source text. As Alcithoe is supposedly speaking, the words could be seen as a reference by her to her source. However, they could be seen as an intervention by the *General estoria*, setting aside the fictional framework of the Minyeides, perhaps because of the perception that the story of Piramo and Thisbe constitutes a separate subject.

The introduction of the lovers also varies slightly from Latin to Castilian. The *Metamorphoses* gives the names of the lovers, tells of their youth and superlative beauty, and adds that they lived in adjoining houses; the setting is the east, in the city walled by Semiramis, assumed to be Babylon:

Pyramus et Thisbe, iuvenum pulcherrimus alter,
altera, quas Oriens habuit, praelata puellis,
contiguas tenuere domos, ubi dicitur altam
coctilibus muris cinxisse Semiramis urbem. (IV. 55-58)

[Pyramus and Thisbe – he, the most beautiful youth, and she, loveliest maid of all the east – dwelt in houses side by side, in the city which Semiramis is said to have surrounded with walls of brick.] (p. 183)

Similar details of character and setting are found in the *General estoria*:

Auie en este tienpo en orient un mancebiello, e dizien le Piramo, e una mancebiella, e llamauan la Thisbe, e Piramo aquel de quien esto es dicho cuenta otrossi que fue uno de los mas fremosos mancebos de toda orient, et Thisbe otrossi la mas fermosa doncella de todas quantas donzellas auie en aquella partida del mundo, et que estos dos mancebiellos seyendo

tales, que ouieron las casas uezinos pared a paret; e fue esto en la cibdat de Babilonna, la que la reyna Semiramis cerco de muros. (195. b. 18-30)

One change that can be seen is the way that the events to be related are placed at a distance, first by the addition of a reference to time, 'en este tienpo' (195. b. 18-19), then, perhaps as a result of syntax, by the repetition of references to place, 'en orient' (195. b. 19), 'de toda orient' (195. b. 23), 'en aquella partida del mundo' (195. b. 25-26). A further additional reference to place is found in the naming of the city associated with Semiramis as Babylon. The history of Semiramis is related in the first part of the *General estoria*, where the account of the walling of Babylon ('aquella cibdad de Babilonna', *GeI*, 104. a. 43) includes a cross-reference to Píramo and Thisbe. The passage is interesting, for it includes a quotation of four lines from the Latin of Ovid's 'Libro mayor', the *Metamorphoses*, followed by an explanation in Castilian:

Cerco destos la reyna la ciudad; onde dize assi Ouidio enel quarto libro del su Libro mayor en estos uiosos de latin:

Piramus et Tisbe, juuenum pulcherrimus alter,
Altera, quas oriens habuit, prelata puellis,
Contiguad habuere domos, ubi dicitur altam
Cotilibus muris cinxisse Semiramis vrbem.

E quiere esto dezir assi enel nuestro language: Piramo e Tisbe, el uno delos mas fermosos mancebos que seer podrien et Tisbe, adelantada delas doncellas de orient, fascas mas fermosura que todas ellas, ouieron las casas de cerca ell una del otra alli o es dicho quela reyna Semiramis cerco la alta cibdad conlos muros cochos. (*GeI*, 104. b. 6-24)

The naming of the city within the full account of the story of the lovers is an example of the way that facts which can be established from other sources are drawn into the text of the *General estoria*. There is of course a significance in the establishment of the setting as this particular city, Babylon, because of biblical accounts of the lascivious behaviour of its inhabitants. The condemnation of such behaviour inherent in the biblical presentation of the destruction of the city may suggest that the insistence on distance of time and place be seen, not as an offer to the audience of a

potential freedom from the mores of thirteenth-century Castile, but rather as a warning and a distancing of the writer from the material.

Slight changes between the *Metamorphoses* and the *General estoria* are also found in the initial presentation of the lovers. In the *General estoria*, names are not the first detail given, rather, there is mention of youth: ‘un mancebiello’ (195. b. 19), ‘una mancebiella’ (195. b. 20). The use of the diminutives may imply a tradition associating extreme youth with the lovers; the same characteristic is found in the Old French poem *Piramus et Tisbé*. However, rather than direct influence, the similarity may be the result of reference to parallel commentaries on the *Metamorphoses*. A further effect of the prior mention of youth is that, for an instant, the lovers are not Píramo and Thisbe, but nameless, universal. Youth can evoke a state of freedom from restraint linked to innocent love, or can be seen as a subordinate status. Limitation of personal autonomy is suggested by a change in the way the names of the couple are given: in the Latin, naming is straightforward, ‘Pyramus et Thisbe’ (IV. 55), whereas in the Castilian, name, and thus identity, is presented as the result of the words of others: ‘dizien le Piramo [...] llamauan la Thisbe’ (195. b. 19-21); the third person plural is used, not the reflexive self-naming.

Verbs of saying are also important in the presentation of the good looks of Píramo. First there is ‘et Piramo aquel de quien esto es dicho’ (195. b. 21-22), which would seem to mean ‘and Piramus, of whom this is said’; the following clause could present a difficulty, for we find ‘cuenta otrossi que fue uno de los mas fremosos mancebos de toda orient,’ (195. b. 22-23), which might suggest we should understand ‘and Piramus, of whom this is said, recounts also that he was one of the most beautiful youths in all the east’, causing Píramo to praise his own looks. A more reasonable translation would result if ‘aquel de quien esto es dicho’ (195. b. 21-22) is

seen as meaning ‘the author from whom this material – the story of Pyramus and Thisbe – is taken’ or ‘he whose saying, or story, this is’, or ‘he who said this’. The verb ‘cuenta’ then follows naturally, the same person relating all; that Píramo was young, and also very beautiful. The speaker, or author, indicated is not Alcithoe, but Ovid, because we read not *aquella* but *aquel*. A further way to resolve the apparent difficulty is to see continuity of subject from the start of the passage: ‘cuenta la Estoria que [...] cuenta otrossi’ (195. b. 18-22). The *General estoria* is not giving a literal translation of the passage from the *Metamorphoses*, but an account of it: ‘Ovid says’.

Interpretation of the significance of details in the *Metamorphoses* becomes part of the text of the *General estoria*. The Latin joins the lovers, by name ‘Pyramus and Thisbe’ (IV. 55), and by the parallel structures such as ‘alter [...] altera’ (IV. 55-56) used to indicate their youth and beauty. In the Castilian there are also parallel clauses, maintaining the emphasis on the possession of shared qualities and on the initial union such similarity suggests. The text continues ‘et que estos dos mancebiellos seyendo tales’ (195. b. 26-27), a phrase which can stand as a summary of what has been said of Píramo and Thisbe, before proceeding to the next detail, the fact that they live in adjoining houses. Nevertheless, it is interesting that the syntax of the Castilian establishes a relationship between the characteristics of Píramo and Thisbe and the fact that their houses are in close proximity: ‘et que estos dos mancebos seyendo tales, que ouieron las casas uezinos pared a paret’. *Tales* could, of course, mean simply that the particular *mancebos* are Píramo and Thisbe; the neighbouring houses, and the intervening wall, follow from the fact that the text tells their story. A different reading would be to see in *tales* a reference to the qualities of the lovers, implying perhaps that the physical proximity of their homes is linked to

the similarity of the lovers, an additional factor that unites them, or simply a reflection of the fact that those of similar status often inhabit the same neighbourhood. The emphasis on the similarity of Píramo and Thisbe is perhaps significant in the context of the belief that inequality was an obstacle to a satisfactory love relationship.

2.2.3 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PÍRAMO AND THISBE

The *Metamorphoses* follows the introduction of Pyramus and Thisbe by lines which recount in greater detail the relationship between them:

notitiam primosque gradus vicinia fecit,
tempore crevit amor, taedae quoque iure coissent,
sed vetuere patres: quod non potuere vetare,
ex aequo captis ardebant mentibus ambo.
conscius omnis abest; nutu signisque loquuntur,
quoque magis tegitur, tectus magis aestuat ignis. (IV. 59-64)

[Their nearness made the first steps of their acquaintance. In time love grew, and they would have been joined in marriage, too, but their parents forbade. Still, what no parents could forbid, sore smitten in heart they burned with mutual love. They had no go-between, but communicated by nods and signs; and the more they covered up the fire, the more it burned.] (p. 183)

The growth of love is shown as a process of development: from proximity comes knowledge and the first steps in the relationship, then love, and then desire for complete union. The sentence continues, but the lines of development so far established are interrupted by their parents: 'sed vetuere patres' (IV. 61). Love, not subject to parental veto, remains, presented now as pain and fire; communication becomes difficult.

These essential elements of the story from the *Metamorphoses* are present in the treatment given by the *General estoria*:

Et aduxo entrellos la connosciencia e las primeras entradas dell amor la uezindat que auien muy de cerca, et crescio ell amor entrellos a tiempo, e casaran se en uno, si non que gelo uedauan los padres, lo que les non pudieron uedar en el cabo; et amauan se egual mientre ell uno all otro, et quando ninguno non les ueye, fablauan se por gestos e por sennales, et quanto mas andaua ell amor encubierto entrellos, tanto mas se encendie, e se auiuaua e ardie. (195. b. 30-196 .a. 1)

Small changes are seen, and while it may be that these are due to the difficulty of arriving at an exact translation of the Latin, the result is a series of additions which offer a slightly different presentation of the relationship between Píramo and Thisbe. Their proximity is emphasized by the phrase ‘que auien muy de cerca’ (195. b. 32-33). Perhaps more specific than the Latin ‘notitiam primosque gradus’ (IV. 59), the Castilian ‘la connoscencia e las primeras entradas dell amor’ (195. b. 31-32) shows that love is important even in the early stages of the relationship.¹²⁹ As this love grows, it is described as ‘ell amor entrellos’ (195. b. 33), creating a sense of reciprocity, which is accentuated by the reflexive pronouns of the Castilian: ‘casaran se’ (195. b. 34), ‘amauan se’ (195. b. 36), ‘fablauan se’ (195. b. 38-39). Píramo and Thisbe share a love which has the potential to lead to full union: ‘casaran se en uno’ (195. b. 34).

Complete union is impeded by the parents of the couple: ‘casaran se en uno, si non que gelo uedauan los padres’ (195. b. 34-35). The pronoun *ge* would seem to be the indirect object pronoun of *uedar* and thus refers to Píramo and Thisbe, although it might indicate the parents. The direct object pronoun *lo* thus refers to that which is forbidden, the possible marriage of the previous clause. In the clause which follows it becomes more difficult to determine what is indicated by the direct object pronoun. We read ‘lo que les non pudieron uedar en el cabo’ (195. b. 35-36). Here *lo* could denote love, for we are told that love continues. It could be, however, that *lo* refers to marriage, for the syntax links the clauses, and a parallel could be seen for the union of marriage in the death which joins Píramo and Thisbe ‘en el cabo’ (195. b. 36).

¹²⁹ On this presentation as an example of the first stage of a relationship of *fin’amors*, see Olga Tudorică Impey, ‘La *fin’amors*’, p. 375.

In the Latin, fire metaphors are important in the representation of the nature of the love between Pyramus and Thisbe. Fire is associated first with the forbidden marriage, through the 'taedae', 'torches' (IV. 60), a concept which is retained in Melville's translation: 'wedding torches would have flamed' (p. 76). Marriage may be prevented but love continues, depicted as fire, now internal: 'ardebant mentibus ambo' (IV. 62). Forbidden and secret, love grows 'quoque magis tegitur, tectus magis aestuat ignis' (IV. 64), a contradiction of science which suggests love is more powerful even than fire. In the Castilian the fire metaphor is reduced: no wedding torches are mentioned and as love continues we are told at first simply 'et amauan se egual mientre mucho ell uno all otro' (185. b. 36-37). While the reciprocal 'amauan se', reinforced by 'egual mientre' and 'ell uno all otro', suggests the strength of the bond between Píramo and Thisbe, the absence of the fire metaphor makes the potential for passion less evident, which might lend support to the view that Castilian texts minimize the physical aspects of a love relationship. Such support would then be weakened as the *General estoria* continues: 'et quanto mas andaua ell amor encubierto entrellos, tanto mas se encendie, e se auiauua e ardie' (195. b. 39-196. a. 1). The *General estoria* does frequently employ paired synonyms, as though to render a Latin term with the utmost clarity. Nevertheless, the use at this point of three terms only accentuates the increasing power of the flames and of the love which these represent.

Love increases with separation. The *General estoria* does not offer a detailed exploration of how the separation and the increasing love are experienced by Píramo and Thisbe. As in the *Metamorphoses*, attempts at communication continue. There is no reference to the lack of an intermediary, but an increased sense of the need for secrecy: 'et quando ninguno non los ueye, fablauan se por gestos e por sennales'

(195. b. 37-39). It may be that Piramo and Thisbe suffer from their separation; it may also be that the very necessity of concealing the relationship acts to strengthen it.

2.3 WORDS AT THE WALL

The wall which stands between the lovers is one of the most intriguing elements in their story, the epitome of the tension between union and separation which is a fundamental aspect of their story. In the *Metamorphoses*, the introductory passage of that story shows that it is because their homes adjoin that they enter upon the first steps of their relationship. When that relationship is impeded by the interdiction of their parents, the wall takes on a dual role, both joining and separating. The two aspects are linked: the chink in the fabric of the wall permits verbal communication, which attracts the lovers to it, but this only emphasizes that they are, each on their own side, separated by it; verbal communication is all that is possible. The *Metamorphoses* dedicates lines 65 to 92 of Book IV to the scenes at the wall. These lines can be divided into three sections. Firstly, third-person narration tells of the existence of the chink and its discovery and use by Pyramus and Thisbe. Secondly, one example of the words spoken is given in the form of direct speech, the apostrophe to the wall. Thirdly, expressions of suffering, and the making of the plan are reported.

The account of the scenes at the wall in the *General estoria* also falls into the same three divisions, but is of greater length. The amplifications fall into several categories. There are those noted in the opening passages of *De Piramo e de Thisbe*, such as the interjection of a reference to the source, or the shift in sense which can be related to the influence of the Castilian language itself on the attempt to transfer meaning from one language to another, or the shift which reflects the fact that

meaning is being transferred from one cultural context to another. In addition, there is an increase in detail which can be related to the need to explain and clarify.

2.3.1 THE WALL: FIRST MEETING(S)

The Castilian text begins its account of the scenes at the wall with a reference to the source of the material 'sobresto, assi como cuenta ell autor' (196. a. 1-2). This reference reminds us that there is an authority for what is related, but also serves a more important function in indicating a division in the story, and the introduction of new information. This new information is that of the existence of a chink in the wall.

Several additions are made to the Latin, which reads:

fissus erat tenui rima, quam duxerat olim,
cum fieret, paries domui communis utrique.
id vitium nulli per saecula longa notatum –
quid non sentit amor? – primi vidistes amantes
et vocis fecistes iter, tutaeque per illud
murmure blanditiae minimo transire solebant. (IV. 65-70)

[There was a slender chink in the party-wall of the two houses, which it had at some former time received when it was building. This chink, which no one had ever discovered through all these years – but what does love not see? – you lovers first discovered and made it the channel of speech. Safe through this your loving words used to pass in tiny whispers.] (p. 183.)

In the Castilian, the chink is at first only slight, no more than 'un rescrieço' (196. a. 4), which might explain why it was not noticed by the builders; although it expands, it remains small 'una auertura non grant' (196. a. 6-7), a rationalization of the general lack of knowledge of its existence. The account then continues 'que se podrien fablar los omnes por y' (196. a. 7-8); an addition which anticipates the use which will be made of the chink by Píramo and Thisbe, but which by relating this to its smallness, reminds us also that speech is all that will be possible. A phrase follows, 'esta maldat de la paret' (196. a. 8-9), which shows that the chink in the wall can be viewed as an example of duality; for a hole in the wall might be viewed positively by the separated lovers, but negatively by those who see the role of the

wall as to shelter, defend, or divide. The latter role is inherent in the use of ‘non lo sabie ninguno de las conpannas de amas la casas’ (196. a. 9-10), used to translate the Latin ‘id vitium nulli per saecula longa notatum’ (IV. 67). The idea of the length of time during which the chink has gone unnoticed is developed into an explanation: ‘ca nunqua pararan y mientes nin les acaesciera pora que’ (196. a. 10-12); no one had thought of it, nor had need to. This both provides a link to the agency of love in the discovery and at the same time reduces its significance. Further changes add to the changed perspective. The *Metamorphoses*, with the directness of a rhetorical question, underlines the role of love in heightening perceptions ‘quid non sentit amor?’ (IV. 68), then relates this to the experience of the lovers, who see what has gone unperceived by others, and use it to further their union:

primi vidistes amantes
et vocis fecistes iter, tutaeque per illud
murmure blanditiae minimo transire solebant. (IV. 68-70)

[This chink [...] you lovers first discovered and made it the channel of speech. Safe through this your loving words used to pass in tiny whispers.] (p. 183)

The *General estoria* interjects a reference to the source, following this with a rhetorical question which refers, not to love as an abstract force, but to lovers:

Mas diz Ouidio en este logar que ¿qual es la cosa nin la sotileza que los amadores non sienten e non fallan pora lo que dessean? (196. a. 12-15)

A strange ambivalence appears: the reference to the source negates the immediacy of the rhetorical question and creates distance between the writer and the views expressed; the omission of any mention of love suggests caution and a wish to set aside the force of this emotion; the doubling of words, such as ‘la cosa nin la sotileza’ (196. a. 13), ‘non sienten e no fallan’ (196. a. 14), reinforces its potency and the association ‘los amadores [...] lo que dessean’ (196. a. 13-15).

The rhetorical question presents lovers as enjoying sharpened perceptions and an ability to overcome obstacles as a result of their need to fulfil their desires. ‘Los

amadores' (196. a. 13-14) could refer to Píramo and Thisbe, but the sentences which follow make it more likely that it indicates lovers in general. There is a change from the direct 'primi vidistes amantes' (IV. 68), to the third-person 'onde estos dos donzellas, Píramo e Thisbe' (196. a. 15-16); a change from a dramatic use of rhetorical devices in the Latin text to a more practical level of discourse in the Castilian, which presents Píramo and Thisbe as an example which demonstrates the truth of a postulated theory. Desire sharpens perceptions and this is shown [*onde*] by the fact that the lovers are the first to discover the chink:

Onde estos dos donzellas, Píramo e Thisbe, uieron primero que otre
aquella abertura de la pared. (196. a. 15-17)

The *Metamorphoses* tells of the discovery of the chink and describes its use for speech in terms – 'tutaeque per illud / murmure blanditiae minimo transire solebant' (IV. 69-70) – which imply both secrecy and intimacy, without developing the potential of the latter. By small amplifications, the *General estoria* develops an account which is both more practical, and more revealing of the experience of Píramo and Thisbe. The *Metamorphoses* follows the discovery by the use for speech; the *General estoria* shows the steps which make that use reasonable. We are told that Píramo and Thisbe realize that the chink will permit them to speak to one another: 'asmaron, tan bien ell uno cuemo ell otro, como se podrien fablar por alli assaz' (196. a. 17-19). An additional reference to the use of signals explains how they communicate their separate discoveries, so as to meet at the wall: 'e fizieron se sus sennales que uiniessen alli' (196. a. 19-20). The use of signals, rather than other means of communication, is explained by the fact that they cannot be together. Their separation is presented in terms which underline the difficulty of their experience, subject to the scrutiny of their families:

Ca por non seer apercebudos sospechados de los de sus casas non se
osauan legar uno a otro. (196. a. 20-23)

Píramo and Thisbe are linked, by phrases such as ‘ell uno como ell otro’ (196 .b. 18), by the reflexive verbs, by the fact that they share secret signs ‘sus sennales’ (196. a. 20). They are also separated by their families. The account of the use of the chink draws out this tension, for while the lovers do meet at the wall and speak, their communication is diminished by the need to avoid discovery:

Unieron alli amos e fablaron se por y, e pero muy quediello por que non sonasse nin se descubriessen ellos por y. (196. a. 23-25)

The situation of Píramo and Thisbe could create sympathy for them, or could show them as setting at nought the norms of society.

In the *Metamorphoses*, the brief description of the manner in which Pyramus and Thisbe communicate through the wall is then developed:

saepe, ubi constiterant hinc Thisbe, Pyramus illinc,
inque vices fuerat captatus anhelitus oris. (IV. 71-72)

[Often, when they had taken their positions, on this side Thisbe, and Pyramus on that, and when each in turn had listened eagerly for the other's breath.] (p. 183)

The word ‘saepe’ (IV. 71) reinforces the imperfect ‘solebant’ of the preceding line to present a developed custom. Pyramus and Thisbe, each on their own side, divided by the wall, are yet in a situation of some intimacy, evoked by the idea of listening for the breath of the other. The words they speak are reported as direct speech:

‘invide’ dicebant ‘paries, quid amantibus obstas?
quantum erat, ut sineres toto nos corpore iungi
aut, hoc si nimium est, vel ad oscula danda pateres?
nec sumus ingrati: tibi nos debere fatemur,
quod datus est verbis ad amicas transitus auris.’
talía diversa nequiquam sede locuti
sub noctem dixere ‘vale’ partique dedere
oscula quisque suae non pervenientia contra. (IV. 73-80)

[‘O envious wall,’ they would say, ‘why do you stand between lovers? How small a thing ‘twould be for you to permit us to embrace each other, or, if this be too much, to open for our kisses’! But we are not ungrateful. We owe it to you, we admit, that a passage is allowed by which our words may go through to loving ears.’ So, separated all to no purpose, they would talk, and as night came on they said good-bye and printed, each on his own side of the wall, kisses that did not go through.] (pp. 183, 185)

A curious communication is reported, not words of love between the lovers, but a joint apostrophe to the wall, which presents the additional feature of being repeated 'saepe [...] dicebant' (IV. 71-73).

The *General estoria* presents the same situation as the *Metamorphoses*, showing the lovers each on their own side of the wall:

Unien alli Piramo del un cabo e Thisbe del otro, e fablauan de muchas cosas en so amor, e hablando se, por que se alcançauan los sos respiramientos ell uno all otro, e non se podien ellos mas legar, començaron se a quexar de la paret como ninnos. (196. a. 26-32)

Additions and reorganization create an account which clarifies perplexing aspects of the Latin text. It seems unreasonable that the couple should meet repeatedly, but speak only to the wall, and the *General estoria* rectifies this apparent incongruity by stating that 'fablauan de muchas cosas en so amor' (196. a. 27-28), but tantalisingly, unlike for example the French *Piramus et Tisbé*, gives no details of the *muchas cosas*, using direct speech only for the apostrophe to the wall. The promise of the rubric that the account will cover; 'de como se fablaron en [...] en so amor' (195. b. 14-16) is fulfilled, but only in part. The presentation of this apostrophe resolves certain of the difficulties associated with it. Verb tenses play a significant role, for while the imperfects 'uinien [...] fablauan' (196. a. 26-27) create a picture of regular meetings similar to that found in the *Metamorphoses*, the present participle 'hablando se' (196. a. 28) could refer to a particular occasion, a supposition confirmed by the preterit in the phrase 'començaron se a quexar de la paret' (196. a. 30-31) which, more rationally, sees the apostrophe spoken only once, rather than repeatedly. An explanation of the apostrophe is found in the organization of the clauses which precede it:

Et hablando se, por que se alcançauan los sos respiramientos ell uno all otro, e non se podien ellos mas legar, començaron se a quexar de la paret como ninnos. (196. a. 28-32)

First there is an indication of the situation, a moment when Píramo and Thisbe are at the wall, speaking. Then 'por que' introduces the explanation for the apostrophe to the wall. Two facts are juxtaposed. The first, which has a basis in the *Metamorphoses*, is that the breath of the lovers passes through the chink; the *General estoria* uses the verb *alcançar*, 'to reach', and, by using the phrase 'ell uno all otro' (196. a. 29-30) presents the breath as a means whereby Píramo and Thisbe reach each other. An addition follows, 'e non se podien ellos mas legar' (196. a. 30), which underlines that no more than breath can go through. The imperfect tense presents a habitual situation, but at the moment when the tension inherent in that situation is perceived by Píramo and Thisbe; the combination of two facts, 'por que se alcançauan [...] e non se podien' (196. a. 28-30), that breath reaches but not more, proves the impetus for the apostrophe to the wall. The comment that they speak 'commo ninnos' (196. a. 31-32) could suggest that they are in fact only children, or could be a comment on the way they choose to formulate their frustration; such comment could be read in two ways, for the apostrophe to the wall can be seen as misdirected foolish complaint, or as playful wit.

The *General estoria* prefaces the apostrophe with a further reference to the source. There could be caution about the content, or there could be the wish to indicate an authority for the words to be reported, suggesting that an account of words that are presented as those actually spoken should be fully accurate, as that account may be used as evidence. An intriguing interweaving of speakers results:

Començaron se a quejar de la paret como ninnos, assi como cuenta
Ouidio segunt dixiemos, e dixieron contra ella. (196. a. 30-33)

The text passes from Píramo and Thisbe, to Ovid, to its own writer, then returns to the lovers, whose words are then presented:

'Paret enuidiosa ¿por que contrallas a los amadores? Et quan poco era que
te abriesses por quanto nos pudiessemos llegar, e aun si esto mucho es,

que mas non que nos pudiessemos llegar de las caras, et maguer que nos esto non fazes, en que nos faries grant gracia por esso, mucho te gradescemos por que nos dexas fablar por ti.' (196. a. 33-b .1)

The form and content of their speech follows the model from the *Metamorphoses*; an apostrophe which moves by stages from the critical epithet 'enuidiosa' (196. a. 34) to the rhetorical question which presents the wall as an obstacle, to subtle persuasion, ending with an expression of gratitude for the little that is permitted. The structures of the Castilian create a balanced, formal discourse. The smallness of the boon implied by 'quan poco era' (196. a. 35) makes more likely that that yet smaller, introduced by 'e aun si [...] que mas non' (196. b. 36-37), will be granted. The closing formalities increase the impression of a structured discourse of persuasion addressed to a superior. The Latin 'nec sumus ingrati: tibi nos debere fatemur' (IV. 76), ['but we are not ungrateful. We owe it to you, we admit' (p. 185)] becomes three clauses in the Castilian: first, an admission that an appeal has been made 'et maguer que nos esto non fazes' (196. a. 38-39); second, by the use of the phrase *grant gracia*, appropriate for use to a feudal overlord, an emphasis on the extent of the favour already shown 'en que nos faries grant gracia por esso' (196. a. 39-40); third, an expression of gratitude 'mucho te gradescemos' (196 .a. 40-b. 1). It may be that echoes are heard of words spoken in the court of Alfonso 'el Sabio', which were felt to be an appropriate model here. The context of thirteenth-century Castile may also be responsible for the change from mention of kisses to 'que nos pudiessemos llegar de las caras' (196. a. 37-38). Overall, however, we can see close adherence to the apostrophe to the wall as this is reported in the *Metamorphoses*, suggesting that it was indeed felt that an accurate account should be given of words spoken. This supposition can be tested further with regard to other examples of direct reporting of speech in this version of the Pyramus and Thisbe story.

The third-person narrative which closes this scene at the wall gives further details of the context within which Píramo and Thisbe have spoken:

Pues que estas palabras ouieron dichas en so amor, e eran de solaz e non dotro pro que les ende uniesse. (196. b. 2-4)

There is an interpretation of the Latin ‘*talia diversa nequiquam sede locuti*’ (IV. 78), which Miller translates as ‘so, separated all to no purpose, they would talk’, but which Melville translates as ‘so, on their separate sides they talked in vain’ (p. 76), placing the futility upon the speech rather than upon the separation. This latter translation is reflected in the *General estoria*; the context for the words of Píramo and Thisbe is their love, the only *pro*, ‘benefit, profit’, they gain is *solaz*, ‘relief’. The scene closes with the account of how each kisses the wall before parting. An addition in the Castilian interprets the significance of the kisses:

E besaron amos la paret cada uno de la su part cuemo se besarien ellos, si llegar se pudiessen. (196. b. 5-7)

Píramo and Thisbe have spoken, they cannot kiss, so they part ‘e espidieron se alli aquel hora e fueron se’ (196. b. 7-8).

2.3.2 ‘OTRA DIA MANNANA’

The *General estoria* follows the *Metamorphoses* in recounting a further meeting at the wall: the final meeting, which sees the formulation of the plan to leave the city. In the Latin text the meeting is introduced by a description of the transition from night to day:

postera nocturnos Aurora removerat ignes,
solque pruinosas radiis siccauerat herbas:
ad solitum coiere locum. (IV. 81-83)

Miller translates this as:

The next morning had put out the starry beacons of the night, and the sun’s rays had dried the frosty grass; they came together at the accustomed place. (p. 185)

This translation causes a difficulty in that it implies a transition from the previous meeting, while the transition is from a report which refers to an unspecified number of meetings to the account of this particular meeting, articulated by means of the transition from the night which precedes the final meeting to the day on which it takes place. The translation given by Melville resolves this difficulty by making the time reference indeterminate; the meeting which follows then gives it a context:

The rising dawn had dimmed the lamps of night,
And the sun's beams had dried the frosty grass
Back to their place they came. (p. 76)

It is interesting that both translations into Modern English omit the reference to Aurora, maybe because it was seen as merely figurative, perhaps unlikely to be understood by a modern reader, and better rendered in a more straightforward manner. The same omission is made by the *General estoria*, which gives:

Otra dia mannana, pero el sol calient ya, tornaron se amos a aquel lugar
mismo, e assi lo pusieran ante noche. (196. b. 8-10)

It may be that the reference to a pagan goddess was felt to be unnecessary, and therefore inappropriate. The time reference 'otra dia mannana, pero el sol caliente ya' (196. b. 8-9) acts as a structuring device, marking the transition from the previous meeting: 'espudieron se alli aquel ora e fueron se' (196. b. 7-8) is followed by 'otra dia mannana' (196. b. 8), creating a sequence in time, from the occasion when the apostrophe was delivered, to this final meeting. 'Otra dia mannana' (196. b. 8) could mean 'another day, in the morning', but most likely refers to 'the next morning'. The reference to the sun then makes the indication of time more precise.

Both the *Metamorphoses* and the *General estoria* concern themselves with what is said at this final meeting of the lovers at the wall, reporting this indirectly. In the *Metamorphoses* there is first the comment that 'tum murmure parvo / multa prius questi statuunt' (IV. 83-84), ['then first in low whispers they lamented bitterly']

(p.185). An account is then given of the plan to leave the city; a logical development from the frustrations associated with communication at the wall. Both elements are present in the *General estoria*:

E assi lo pusieran ante noche, e fablando se amos e diziendo se de muchas cosas por sus uozes baxas, e querellando se ell uno all otro de los apremiamientos de sus padres e sus madres, pusieron que pues que uenies la noche e fues toda la yent aquedada, que enartassen ellos a los porteros de sus casas, e saliessen amos solos, e fuessen cada uno por si fuera de la cibdat; et por que non errassen del logar o se ayuntarien, pusieron e firmaron entre si que se ayuntassen all alcoba e al luziello del rey Nino, e que se ascondiessen so la sombra dun arbol que estaua y. Aqui fabla la Estoria dell assentamiento daquel logar del luziello del rey Nino, e diz que nascie y una fuent muy grant e muy fria quanto era mester, e que tal logar uuscaron los sos pora tan alto e tan noble rey como fue aquel rey Nino; e cerca la fuent estaua un aruol muy grant e muy alto, e cargado de fructo blanco. (196. b. 10-32)

We see that the *General estoria* offers a longer account than that in the *Metamorphoses*. The phrase ‘assi lo pusieran ante noche’ (196. b. 10) can seem perplexing, as it seems at first to belong with the phrases which render lines 81 to 83 of the *Metamorphoses* Book IV. Could it derive from the Latin ‘postera nocturnos’ (IV. 81)? Could it mean that Píramo and Thisbe went to the wall before night? It seems more reasonable to see a link with ‘pusieron que’ (196. b. 14-15), which introduces the plan. We could see a writer beginning on the topic of the plan, realizing that a portion of the Latin had been skipped, inserting the Castilian equivalent, then returning to the plan. Alternatively, there could be the intention to combine the complaint and the plan more tightly than in the Latin, or this could be the effect of the writer’s attempt to include the missing material. The two uses of *poner* which here can be taken as meaning ‘agree’, ‘pusieran ante noche’ (196. b. 10) and ‘pusieron que pues que uenies la noche’ (196. b. 14-15), frame a number of clauses in which the past participles of verbs of speaking are used, preceded by *e* ‘and’, ‘e fablando se [...] e diziendo se de [...] e querellando se’ (196. b. 11-13). There is one communication between Píramo and Thisbe, in which the making of the plan is interwoven with the emotional interjections which evolve it. Both participate,

either in dialogue, or in counterpoint, for we read not simply ‘fablando [...] diciendo [...] querellando’, but ‘fablando *se amos* [...] diciendo *se* [...] querellando *se ell uno all otro*’ (196. b. 11-13). We see an account of the speech between Píramo and Thisbe which is more revealing than that found in the *Metamorphoses*; again there is at least a partial fulfilment of the promise to tell ‘como se fablaron [...] en so amor’ (195. b. 14-16). The means by which they speak has been explained, something of the quality and mode of their communication is suggested, the topics which they discuss are also developed: again the couple speak *de muchas cosas* (196. b. 11-12); their grievance is specifically related to ‘los apremamientos de sus padres e sus madres’ (196. b. 13-14). The structures used to describe it present the communication between Píramo and Thisbe as an affirmation of their union, but this specific indication of content recalls the particular circumstances in which that communication takes place: they are separated by the wall, separated by the veto of their parents.

The prohibition stems from the couple’s parents, but will be upheld by others. This is inherent in the *Metamorphoses*, where the lovers plan ‘ut nocte silenti / fallere custodes’ (IV. 84-85), [‘when all had become still that night to try to elude their guardians’ watchful eyes’] (p. 185). In the *General estoria* Píramo and Thisbe plan ‘pues que uenies la noche e fues toda la yent aquedada, que enartassen ellos a los porteros de sus casas’ (196. b. 15-17), which suggests that they must avoid not only those charged with overseeing them, but *la yent*, ‘everyone’.

The plan conceived by the lovers entails more than the slight subversion of authority implied by the avoidance of those who watch them. The *Metamorphoses* reports that Pyramus and Thisbe decide:

fallere custodes foribusque excedere temptent,
cumque domo exierint, urbis quoque tecta relinquunt. (IV. 85-86)

[to try to elude their guardians' watchful eyes and steal out of doors; and when they had gotten out, they would leave the city as well.] (p. 185)

Their intention is to slip by the watchers in order to leave, not only their houses, but the city itself, thus separating themselves from the society and authority of which it is a symbol. The *General estoria* includes the plan to leave the city, reporting that Píramo and Thisbe agree that 'saliessen amos solos, e fuessen cada uno por si fuera de la cibdat' (196. b. 17-19). Joint action is implied by the third-person plural verbs, however *amos* and *cada uno*, which have heretofore also emphasized the union between Píramo and Thisbe, are here qualified. 'Saliessen amos *solos*' (196. b. 17) might be read in conjunction with the avoidance of the *porteros* of their houses, and thus would represent the solitude of the first steps of their separation from society. The phrase *amos solos*, with its juxtaposition of apparent opposites, is highly significant, for it both unites and separates; Píramo and Thisbe will share a situation, that of being alone. They will leave the city, not together but in parallel: 'cada uno *por si*' (196. b. 18-19).

The *General estoria* draws into prominence the separation from society and the voluntary separation of the lovers which would result from their project. The situation is potentially disturbing, leaving Píramo and Thisbe as solitary individuals, free from demands, but bereft of support. A slight change of perspective is also seen in the account of the arrangement of the rendezvous which is to assure a successful reunion. In the *Metamorphoses* a practical tone predominates: for Pyramus and Thisbe there is the need to indicate a meeting place once the fixed confines of the city have been abandoned; for Ovid there is the need to introduce the setting of the tomb, with its nearby tree, central to the account of the metamorphosis:

neve sit errandum lato spatiantibus arvo,
convenient ad busta Nini lateantque sub umbra
arboris. (IV. 87-89)

[and that they might not run the risk of missing one another, as they wandered in the open country, they were to meet at Ninus' tomb and hide in the shade of a tree.] (p. 185)

The *General estoria* also shows a logical progression:

E fuessen cada uno por si fuera de la cibdat; et por que non errassen del logar o se ayuntarien, pusieron e firmaron entre si que se ayuntassen all alcoba e al luziello del rey Nino, e que se se ascondiessen so la sombra dun arbol que estaua y. (196. b. 18-24)

The focus is on the bond between Piramo and Thisbe, who will be separated *cada uno por si*, and who fear missing the place where they are to be joined 'el logar o se ayuntarien' (196. b. 20), a phrase which could indicate the place for their reunion, or a place where their existing union will be developed further. The bond which unites the lovers is emphasized by the presentation of the process of agreeing the rendezvous. Perhaps to clarify the Latin 'convenient' (IV. 88) two verbs are used 'pusieron e firmaron' (196. b. 20-21) which can be seen as increasing the agreement between Piramo and Thisbe, which is then further reinforced by the addition 'entre si' (196. b. 21). It is important to note also that the account of the final meeting at the wall is structured round verbs which can denote agreement. We note here the third use of *poner* in the passage, as the details of the plan are evolved and agreed upon by the lovers. The verb *firmary* can be related to the legal sphere, the signing of a legal document, the written agreement to abide by details previously considered verbally.

The setting of the tomb, tree, and spring

The plan made by the lovers introduces into the text the setting of the tomb, tree and spring. In the *Metamorphoses* the three elements are introduced in stages. First the report of the formulation of the plan by Pyramus and Thisbe tells of the choice of the tomb of Ninus as the necessary meeting place and of the arrangement to hide beneath a tree:

neve sit errandum lato spatiantibus arvo,
convenient ad busta Nini lateantque sub umbra

arboris. (IV. 87-89)

[and that they might not run the risk of missing one another, as they wandered in the open country, they were to meet at Ninus' tomb and hide in the shade of a tree.] (p. 185)

Information is then added which may not have been spoken of, or even known by, the couple, with the mention of the mulberry and its white fruit and the indication of the nearby spring.

arbor ibi niveis uberrima pomis,
ardua morus, erat, gelido contermina fonti.(IV. 89-90)

Now there was a tree there hanging full of snow-white berries, a tall mulberry, and not far away was a cool spring.] (p. 185)

These details are significant to the story-teller, who has planned to tell the story of the metamorphosis of the mulberry, and who is setting up her material to include the elements which bring this about. The result is the tripartite setting of the tomb, tree and spring; life and death in juxtaposition.

The *General estoria* includes full details of this setting in the report of the final scene at the wall. First there is the plan to meet at the tomb of Ninus and hide beneath a tree:

Por que non errassen del logar o se ayuntarien, pusieron e firmaron entre si que se ayuntassen all alcoba e al luziello del rey Nino, e que se se escondiessen so la sonbra dun arbol que estaua y. (196. b. 19-24)

The qualification of 'un arbol' by the phrase 'que estaua y' suggests that Píramo and Thisbe may already have a particular tree in mind for their meeting. Further information on the setting is reserved for later sentences. The division established by the *Metamorphoses* is maintained and the end of the topics covered by the lovers is further marked by a reference to the source for the details which follow:

Aqui fabla la Estoria dell asentamiento daquel logar del luziello del rey Nino, e diz que nascie y una fuent muy grant e muy fria quanto era mester, e que tal logar uuscaron los sos pora tan alto e tan noble rey como fue aquel rey Nino; et cerca la fuent estaua un aruol muy grant e muy alto, e cargado de fructo blanco. (196. b. 24-32)

Reorganization and amplification of the material change the perspective on the spring. It is described before the tree, and like the tree, becomes 'muy grant' (196. b. 27). To the 'muy fria' (196. b. 27) which accords with the 'gelido' (IV. 90) of the Latin is added the phrase 'quanto era mester' (196. b. 27), which draws out the crucial need for cool water in a hot climate. The change of order gives precedence to the spring and the position of the tree is given in relation to it, 'cerca el fuent' (196. b. 30), suggesting that the water of the spring permits the existence of the tree. The *General estoria* presents a logical order, but also diminishes somewhat the role of the tree; it evidently flourishes, for it is 'muy grant y muy alto' (196. b. 31) and not only has white fruit but is 'cargado de fructo blanco' (196. b. 31-32), but it is placed in second place to the spring and because it is not named as the mulberry its significance is understated.

The perspective on the tomb of Ninus is also different. The *Metamorphoses* places it first, then adds information about the tree and the spring. The *General estoria* also mentions the tomb before either tree or spring, first as the plan is formulated and then to signal the description of the setting in greater detail. This description reverses the order found in the Latin, placing the spring first. An additional reference to the tomb then follows, an expansion which London and Leslie suggest may have been drawn from either a gloss on Ovid or a work of ancient history (p. 151). The amplification is short, 'tal logar uuscaron los sos pora tan alto e tan noble rey como fue aquel rey Nino' (196. b. 28-30), but has a significant effect. One result is that the order of the elements is changed. In the full description of the setting the text offers the order spring, tomb, tree; in temporal chronology the spring precedes the tomb, influencing the choice of its site; the spring has the potential to bring life, seen in the vigour of the mulberry, but also draws death; the death which

results from the appeal of the spring to the lioness is prefigured by the presence of the tomb.

The amplification also reveals important characteristics of the occupant of the tomb. The repetition of *rey* reinforces the status of Ninus as king, a status which the *Metamorphoses* leaves unstated. The quality of the king, ‘tan alto e tan noble rey’ (196. b. 28-29) creates a parallel with the superlative used of the spring and tree. There is also a parallel with Alfonso ‘el Sabio’, originator of the *General estoria*, described in its first rubric as ‘el muy noble rey don Alfon’ (*GeI*, I. 3. rubric) and in its prologue as ‘fijo del muy noble rey don Fernando e dela muy noble reyna donna Beatriz’ (*GeI*, b. 24-26). The use of the designation *muy noble* for Alfonso’s parents reinforces his own status, but also suggests a relationship between nobility and kingship. Nobility could result from kingship, or could be an essential characteristic which gives validity to the position of the king as one who is above all other people in a society. Lida de Malkiel notes the influence of Alfonso’s belief in hierarchy in the *General estoria* (‘Notas I’, 1958-59, pp. 127-28, p. 140, n. 32). As we return to the tomb of Ninus, we see a simple hierarchy which divides the people, *los sos*, from the king and which shows the relationship between them. As the people seek a superlative setting for the tomb of their king, the effort they expend reveals their perception of the high quality of the king who calls it forth; the tomb is set within the context of the community which honours its king. As Píramo and Thisbe make their pact, the setting of the tomb, tree and spring is designated as their rendezvous. The amplifications in the *General estoria* assume significance as we move into the final stages of the story, from the walls of Babylon to death beneath the mulberry.

2.4 FROM THE WALLS OF BABYLON TO DEATH

As the lovers wait for nightfall, anticipation predominates, leaving no room for sorrow at parting, or fear that expectation may not be fulfilled. As night comes the lovers take the crucial steps, each leaving alone for the meeting place. This separation is a fundamental element of their story in the *Metamorphoses*, which shows each in turn faced with the upturning of their plans: Thisbe expects Pyramus, but encounters the lioness; Pyramus expects Thisbe, and finds only her torn and blood-stained garment.

2.4.1 THE WAIT FOR NIGHTFALL

The *General estoria* hints at the process whereby Píramo and Thisbe debate the stages of their plan, but reports only the plan in its final state, as it is agreed upon by the couple. In the first stages, events match the hypothetical design, as the lovers part and wait for night:

Et plogo mucho a amos deste paramiento, e desque se partieron dalli, esperando el tienpo que pusieran, tanto non auien feuzo de ueer el ora que pusieran en que saliessen que se les fazie el dia muy luengo, e que se ponie el sol muy tarde en las aguas de occident, o se el pone sienpre, e que salie otrossi muy tarde dessoas mismas aguas la noche, ca assi cuenta Ouidio que en las aguas se acaba el dia e de las aguas se leuanta la noche. (196. b. 32-197. a. 4)

The passage corresponds to lines 91 to 92 of the *Metamorphoses* Book IV:

pacta placent; et lux tarde discedere visa,
praecipitatur aquis, et aquis nox exit ab isdem. (IV. 92-92)

[They liked the plan, and slow the day seemed to go. But at last the sun went plunging down beneath the waves, and from the same waves the night came up.] (p. 185)

The *General estoria*, unlike the Latin, states that the lovers part, but shows them focused, not on their parting, but on their plan. The Latin *pacta* is rendered as ‘paramiento’ (196. b. 33) in the Castilian. *Poner* continues to play an important role, making explicit that it is anticipation of the arrival of the time which they have designated which causes time itself to seem slow to pass:

Esperando el tiempo que pusieran, tanto non auien feuza de ueer el ora que pusieran en que saliessen que se les fazie el dia muy luengo. (196. b. 34-37)

Anticipation is underscored also by the repetition of 'muy tarde' (196. b. 37-38, 197. a. 1), applied to both the sun setting in the waves and the moon rising from them. The interpolated 'ca assi cuenta Ouidio que' (197. a. 2-3) might be seen as an explanation for the inclusion of a fact not supported by science. There is then the return to the story and the indication of the coming of night 'et pues que llego ya' (197. a. 5).

2.4.2 THISBE'S DEPARTURE AND JOURNEY

While, in the final stages of the story, the *General estoria* follows the essential framework of the account in the *Metamorphoses*, considerable expansion is seen, most notably of the material relating to Thisbe. The journey from home to the meeting place is dealt with briefly in the *Metamorphoses*:

Callida per tenebras versato cardine Thisbe
egreditur fallitque suos adoptertaque vultum
peruenit ad tumulum dictaque sub arbore sedit.
audacem faciebat amor. (IV. 93-96)

[Now Thisbe, carefully opening the door, steals out through the darkness, seen of none, and arrives duly at the tomb with her face well veiled and sits down under the trysting tree. Love made her bold.] (p. 185)

In the *General estoria* we are drawn more closely into the experience of Thisbe. When compared with the Latin changes may be slight, as in the account of how, as night comes at last, Thisbe goes out alone:

Et pues que llego ya, e fazie grant tiniebra, ca salie la luna tarde, abrio con grant arteria Thisbe las puertas de los palacios de so padre, de guisa que non sonassen, e enarto muy bien sus guardas, e salio cubierta dun manto uerano la cabeçça e la cara. (197. a. 5-11)

As has been noted, the transfer of material from one language to another entails the search for appropriate terms and syntax. Decisions must be made, first on the meaning of perhaps quite small units of the original text, then on the equivalent in the target language. If we see language as a social phenomenon, the material will be

shifted to a new social context. Thisbe leaves her home secretly by night, for a rendezvous with her lover. How is this presented? In the Latin we read ‘callida per tenebras versato cardine Thisbe’ (IV. 93), [‘now Thisbe, carefully opening the door, steals out through the darkness’] (p. 185). In the Castilian there is first a phrase which acts as a culmination of the passage which depicted the impatient wait for night, ‘et pues que llego ya’ (197. a. 5). Then there is the resolution of the potential contradiction in the Latin, which speaks here of darkness, but later of the moon: the Castilian points out pragmatically that there was darkness because the moon rose late ‘ca salie la luna tarde’ (197. a. 6); reason, not passion, relates to the darkness. As Thisbe opens the door, she does so ‘con grant arteria’ (197. a. 6-7). This phrase often denotes the use of mental agility, or cunning, to outwit an apparently stronger opponent, and as such acts to undermine power relationships. The Castilian text underlines the subversion of the power relationship between Thisbe and her father by specifying that she employs *grant arteria* against ‘las puertas de los palacios de so padre’ (197. a. 7-8); she outwits authority, ‘enarto muy bien sus guardas’ (197. a. 9). *Arteria* also has a narrative function, enabling the action to progress beyond an obstacle which impedes it; Thisbe moves beyond the restrictions and into the rest of her story. Finally, we note that *arteria*, particularly in the Spanish Ballads, is associated with women, and while it may enable the escape from danger, more often it is related to physical desire. Men can use intellectual ability in the service of reason, while women are driven by thought which serves the physical. Thisbe leaves her father’s house by night to meet her lover at Ninus’s tomb.

In the *Metamorphoses* three lines see Thisbe leave the city and arrive at the tomb. A rare narratorial comment follows ‘audacem faciebat amor’ (IV. 96). The

General estoria has more to say before reaching this point. First there is an explanation of how Thisbe knows the way to the tomb of Ninus:

E por que el alcoba e el luziello del rey Nino eran muy noble cosa, e fecha muy noble mentre e assentado en muy a abte logar, e yuan muchas uezes en el anno los omnes onrrados de la cibdat de Babilonna, e otrossi las muy nobles duennas, e auien en costunbre las madres e las otras parientes de leuar alla sus fijas donzellas, e sus sobrinas e criadas que tienien guardadas, et Thisbe auie ydo alla con su madre muchas uezes, sabie muy bien la carrera e el logar. (197. a. 11-22)

The stages of the explanation resemble a twisting path which reveals brief glimpses of the tomb, the attitude of the people of the city towards it, and the organization of the society of that city. The tomb and its crafting are both described as *muy noble* ‘muy noble cosa e fecha muy noble mentre’ (197. a. 12-13), which provides a link with king Ninus, the ‘tan noble rey’ (196. b. 29), showing that his people were not content merely with a pleasant site, now described as a ‘muy a abte logar’ (197. a. 14), but continued their efforts, giving their best workmanship to create a tomb of high quality, appropriate to honour their king.

The text provides a history of the tomb, and then continues this history into the present of Píramo and Thisbe, by presenting the tomb and its setting as attracting the people of Babylon. Although it is not clear whether the people go to honour the dead king, or simply to enjoy the beauty of the tomb and its setting, there is a development of the original presentation of the tomb as existing within the context of a society: created to honour a king, it becomes a location which is important to the city. Details later in the text reinforce this importance; the cave where Thisbe hides from the lioness is known to her from many visits with her friends; the dust and sand in which Píramo sees the tracks of the lioness result from the many people who go to that place.

The text does not speak of all the people of the city, mentioning only ‘los omnes onrrados’ (197. a. 15) and ‘las muy nobles duennas’ (197. a. 16-17). This

could be an indication of a division of society which implies separate activities; the common people may have no time to visit the tomb, while those of noble rank have leisure and an appreciation of the beauty and artistic qualities of the setting, if not an awareness of its more profound significance. It may be that all ranks in society visit the tomb, and the mention of the nobles is a signal that the excursion is a suitable one for nobility. Such a signal may also lie behind the separation of men and women, 'los omnes onrrados [...] otrossi las muy nobles duennas' (197. a. 15-17), which, by emphasizing that women also go, could imply that some journeys are not made by women. It is because Thisbe has accompanied her mother many times that she knows the direction to take. The need for an explanation implies that the writer of the text was anticipating that Thisbe's knowledge would otherwise puzzle readers. This in turn suggests a society where noble women do not go out alone, but only in a group, under supervision.

The writer may have based this expansion about the tomb of Ninus and the visits made to it upon some reference to the customs of high ranking citizens of ancient Babylon; it reveals perhaps more about the nobility of thirteenth-century Castile, and gives a particular perspective on Thisbe's actions, from which her state of mind might be inferred. Thisbe is presented as of high rank, participating in activities appropriate to her rank, part of the community of her peers, in the company of the separate company of women within that community. This is Thisbe's habitual behaviour, described at the moment when she is making the journey made so many times before, but in an altered fashion, not in a group by day, but alone and by night; she subverts the very activity which is so important to her community, to leave the city, to step outside society and outside her normal parameters.

The explanation of how Thisbe knows the route to the tomb is followed by a brief account of her journey:

Salio ella de casa ante que Piramo, e fuesse quanto mas pudo, catando se toda uia aderedor si uerie uenir a Piramo; et assi como llego al luziello, assentosse so aquel aruol, cuemo auie puesto con Piramo, so entendedor. (197. a. 22-28)

In the *Metamorphoses*, while the prior departure of Thisbe is an important part of the story, the reasons are not explored in depth; physical desire may be responsible; chance also may play a part. The *General estoria* states clearly that Thisbe leaves before Píramo. This may be due to desire; we can see the urgency of passion in the clause ‘e fuesse quanto mas pudo’ (197. a. 23-24) and Thisbe’s preoccupation with her lover in the repetition of his name three times in this short passage. It is also true that for Thisbe this must be a testing journey, particularly in contrast with other times that she has followed this route, and there is the creation of sympathy for her as she looks around in the night to see if Píramo is coming. The preoccupation revealed by the repetition of Píramo’s name may be more complex than simple physical desire. There is a reminder of why Thisbe is making the journey as she arrives at the tomb and sits beneath the tree ‘cuemo auie puesto con Piramo, so entendedor’ (197. a. 27-28). Again there is the effect of a report of Thisbe’s thought; her actions have been determined by her agreement with Píramo. *Entendedor* may carry a range of potential significances related to the union between Thisbe and Píramo: their original close union is impeded by other people, they seek to restore it by means of their plan, which, by separating them from society, increases the exclusive nature of their relationship. *Entendedor* thus suggests a love relationship which involves complicity between the lovers and an exclusion of others. For Thisbe, Píramo is ‘so entendedor’ (197. a. 27-28); she is now bound uniquely to him, the one with whom, and for whom, she has cut herself off from all other support. Thus it is that she looks for him

on the journey which ends with her sitting beneath the tree by the tomb, alone in the night.

The passage dedicated to Thisbe's solitary departure closes with narratorial comment from two sources. The writer of this section of the *General estoria* first notes the enormity of the step taken by Thisbe 'et era este grant cometimiento pora donzella' (197. a. 28-29), then refers to the explanation given by *ell autor*; we see the words of Ovid 'audacem faciebat amor' (IV. 96), ['love made her bold'] (p. 185), set apart from the rest of the passage by the attribution: 'mas dize aqui ell autor que la fuerça dell amor la fazie atreuuda e osada' (197. a. 29-31). This could be a qualification of an explanation which appears to validate the behaviour of Thisbe. A different view is to see the use of an authority which substantiates a claim which acts as a warning; love makes Thisbe daring, and leads her into error.

2.4.3 'DE LO QUE CONTESCIO [...] SO AQUEL MORAL'

The moment when Thisbe sits alone beneath the mulberry is important in the structure of the story, and this is marked in the text. First the narrator remarks 'agora dezir uos emos de como les contescio alli a amos' (197. a. 32-33), a structuring device which could be an indication of an oral delivery, or of the persistence of stylistic features deriving from such a delivery, where it is necessary to guide the listening public by signalling the start of a new section. This orientation is then reiterated in the rubric which heads the new section 'de lo que contescio a Tisbe e desi a Piramo so aquel moral' (197. a. 35-36). These interventions raise the expectation that what follows will be an account of the adventures which befall first Thisbe and then Píramo, but it seems that this expectation will not be fulfilled, as the text enlarges on the information about the surroundings of the tomb:

Cerca aquella alcoba e el luziello del rey Nino, o nascie aquella fuent e estaua aquel moral grant, e alto, e muy bien fecho, e cargado estonces de

sos frutos blancos, auie una grant selua otrossi muy noble e llena de caça,
 e de todos uenados e de bestias saluages, et andaua y muchos ganados.
 (197. a. 38-b. 5)

The passage is not found in the *Metamorphoses*, where the line which begins with the comment on Thisbe's boldness, 'audacem faciebat amor' (IV. 96), ends with the arrival of the lioness. The result in the *General estoria* is a different, and perhaps more developed, transition to the events which follow. The reiteration of the three elements of the central setting is a further technique from the oral delivery, which reinforces significant details by repetition, often shifting the portrayal subtly by slight changes or additions. Tomb, spring and tree are presented once more as the new section begins, with the addition that the tree is 'aque'l moral' (197. a. 40), the tree whose metamorphosis is so closely linked to the events which befall Thisbe and Píramo. Indeed, although Thisbe is not mentioned, this further delineation of the setting acts as a reminder of her, for it is here that she sits. Around her is the countryside, with its predators and prey, an amplification which provides a logical explanation for the arrival of the lioness:

Et aquella noche de Píramo e de Tisbe saliera una leona en aquella selua a
 unas uacas que andauan alli, e mato dellas e comio quanto pudo; e lo uno
 por la contienda que las uacas le dieran quando las ella querie matar, lo al
 por que auie comido much, tomol grant sed, e sabie ella aquella fuente del
 alcoba del rey Nino, e uenie a beuer en ella, e muchas otras uezes ueniera
 ya y dantes. (197. b. 5-15)

The account of this arrival is itself amplified in the *General estoria*. The physical nature of the lioness is emphasized by the description of her thirst as 'grant sed' (197. b. 12), and by the explanation of that thirst as due to the fight for food and the large amount eaten. We see a parallel between the lioness and Thisbe, for both are strongly drawn to the same setting, which is thus seen from their two perspectives, and the lioness, like Thisbe, knows of it and has been many times before.

There is a parallel between Thisbe and the lioness, but each remains unaware of the other. The text treats each in turn, bringing Thisbe to the tree before turning to

the lioness. While the text speaks of the lioness, Thisbe is left sitting, preoccupied with thoughts of Piramo, and knowing nothing of the concerns of the lioness, who knows nothing of her. The approach of the lioness is then interrupted by the insertion of information about the drinking habits of animals:

Et esto assi conteçe que los uenados, e las bestias e las otras animalias saluaies que aprenden las fuentes que a en las montannas o ellas usan de andar, e quando menester lo an, uienen alli a beuer. (197. b. 15-19)

There is an explanation of the frequent visits of the lioness, who is following the habits of animals to return to sources of water of which they have learnt. While there is an attribution to a source ‘e esto assi conteçe’ (197. b. 15), a medieval bestiary seems more likely than Ovid, indeed London and Leslie indicate the addition as an example of ‘insertions of encyclopedic nature [...] offering bits of information not found in the Latin’ (p. 149). While the information may seem an interruption to the story, it serves to postpone the moment when Thisbe becomes aware of the lioness, accentuating the sense of separate worlds, the human world of Thisbe, the city and love, and the mysterious world of the lioness in the night. The reader, or audience, knows of both worlds, and sees the two lives begin to converge, for this night is described as ‘aquella noche de Piramo e de Tisbe’ (197. b. 5-6), and Thisbe, by her own choice, has placed herself outside her normal safe context.

The text returns to Thisbe, still waiting for Píramo:

E tanto tardaua Piramo e non uiniera aun que era salida la luna, e yua clara, e estaua escampado ell aer e fazie lumbre. (197. b. 20-22)

The lines function at several levels. Facts are given which allow for a logical narrative; Píramo has delayed so long that the moon has risen, which will allow Thisbe to see the lioness. We also see that, while the audience might experience suspense at the approach of the lioness towards the unsuspecting Thisbe, her tension would result from the wait for Píramo. In the description of the light we can see a

writer caught by the possibilities offered by an imaginative recreation of her experience, as she waits in the dark, then in the strangeness of the moonlight. We also see an example of darkness illuminated by light, leading to the perception of truth.

The description of the light of the moon leads into the arrival of the lioness and the flight of Thisbe:

Et la leona uenie ensaneldando fiera mentre e faziendo grant estruendo, et Thisbe oyo el roydo, e cato contra ella et uiola a los rayos de la luna, e entendio como era bestia braua; et auie y de cerca una cueua e sabia la Tisbe, ca fuera y con otras donzellas quando uenien alli en romeria a treueiar y, e leuantos e fuxo pora esconder se en ella; et con el grant pauor que ouo de la leona cayosel de las espaldas el manto y luego dont se leuanto, que sola mentre non ouo acuerdo de tomar le. (197. b. 23-34)

Sound and fury, the lioness erupts upon the scene with greater violence than in the *Metamorphoses*, which states:

quam procul ad lunae radios Babylonia Thisbe
vidit et obscurum timido pede fugit in antrum,
dumque fugit, tergo velamina lapsa reliquit. (IV. 99-101)

[Far off under the rays of the moon Babylonian Thisbe sees her, and flees with trembling feet into the deep cavern, and as she flees she leaves her cloak on the ground behind her.] (p. 185)

Additions made by the *General estoria* contribute to the logical development of the narrative. The sounds made by the lioness explain why Thisbe becomes aware of her; the ferocity, ‘ensaneldando fiera mentre e faziendo grant estruendo’ (197. b. 23-24), leads to Thisbe’s understanding that the approach is that of a wild beast; the cave is known from visits with friends; fear causes her cloak to slip from her shoulders, she then simply forgets to take it up. The additions also draw us into Thisbe’s experience: her sudden shock at the furious arrival, the contrast between the rush to the cave for sanctuary and the gentle excursions made before with her friends, her fear.

The lioness bursts into Thisbe’s consciousness and, in a reversal of the biblical saying that perfect love casts out fear, the love and the pact which have so far

underlain all her actions are displaced by a fear which prevents all coherent thought, a lapse which will have serious consequences. The lioness, in contrast, remains unaware of Thisbe. In the *Metamorphoses* the discovery of the dropped garment seems purely fortuitous, the attack upon it gratuitous:

ut lea saeva sitim multa conpescuit unda,
dum redit in silvas, inventos forte sine ipsa
ore cruentato tenues laniavit amictus. (IV. 102-04)

[When the savage lioness has quenched her thirst by copious draughts of water, returning to the woods she comes by chance upon the light garment (but without the girl herself!) and tears it with bloody jaws.] (p. 185, p. 187)

In the *General estoria* the role played by chance is reduced; it is reasonable that the lioness should see the garment as she turns, and her destruction of it is presented as a consequence of her rage with her prey:

La leona, pues que ouo beuido quanto quiso, tornauas por la selua, e en tornando se uio el manto yazer y cerca, et como uenie sannuda del fecho de las uacas, echo las manos e la boca en el, e desmelenol e fizol todo pieças, e en rompiendol ensangrentol con la sangre de las uacas en que se untara, e traye el rostro sangriento, e unto el manto e desi tornos a su montanna. (197. b. 35-198. a. 6)

Although the element of chance is minimised, the lioness remains detached from the world of humans: after her destruction and bloodying of the garment she disappears from the text with the phrase ‘tornos a su montanna’ (198. a. 5-6). This means that in both Latin and Castilian texts the lioness can be seen as the agent of fate, intervening in the affairs of humankind, unmoved by the consequences.

‘Pyramo cuemo salio mas tarde desto’

Events are determined. The account in the *Metamorphoses* has fixed the later departure of Pyramus, and his misreading of the signs on arrival:

serius egressus vestigia vidit in alto
pulvere certa ferae totoque expalluit ore
Pyramus; ut vero vestum quoque sanguine tinctam
repperit. (IV. 105-08)

[Pyramus, coming out a little later, sees the tracks of the beast plain in the deep dust and grows deadly pale at the sight. But when he saw the cloak too, smeared with blood, he cried.] (p.187)

The words and actions which follow give outward form to his misperceptions. The small insertions so typical of the version in the *General estoria* treat Píramo's discovery in more depth. First we read that:

Piramo cuemo salio mas tarde desto, quando llego a aquel logar del luziello de Nino, e daquela fuente e del aruol, e non uio a Thisbe, cato por alli a derredor si la uerie. (198. a. 7-11)

Píramo leaves, not simply after Thisbe, but 'mas tarde desto' (198. a. 7), after the events just recounted. The recapitulation of the elements of the setting helps draw out the change since the previous mention: after the violence of the lioness and of Thisbe's fear, their departure leaves silence and an empty scene, which awaits the arrival of Píramo. His first perception is of the absence of Thisbe. We see the parallel between the separated lovers, for as Thisbe looked around in the night for Píramo, 'catando se toda uia aderredor si uerie uenir a Piramo' (197. a. 24-25), he looks now for her 'cato por alli a derredor si la uerie' (198. a. 10-11).

Before telling of what Píramo sees, the text gives an explanation for the presence of thick dust, which results from the many visitors to the location:

Et auie en el logar arena e polbo que se fazie y del grant huso de los omnes que uenien y muchos sienpre. (198. a. 11-13)

The evocation of the crowds usual to the area points the contrast with this moment as Píramo sees the tracks of the lioness, then finds Thisbe's cloak:

Et quando cato el por alli en ell poluo, uio las pisadas de la leona, et andando por alli fallo el manto. (198. a. 14-16)

He knows it to be Thisbe's because he looks at it by moonlight:

Et catol a la luna, e entendio que era el de Thisbe. (198. a. 16-17)

The lack of Thisbe, the tracks of the lioness, the abandoned cloak, lead Píramo to his misapprehension, which is then reported:

Et quandol uio roto yl sintio ensangrentado, touo que Thisbe era ya alli uenida primero que el, e que salieran algunos leones daquela montanna, e que unieran a aquel logar como pusieran amos, e que la fallaran, e que la comieran, a dexaran alli el manto parado tal e daquela guisa roto e

ensangrentado de la sangre della, e començos a matar todo.
(198. a. 17-26)

Píramo, like Thisbe, sees the plan go awry. We see this encapsulated in the report of his thought that the lions came as they themselves had planned: ‘a aquel lugar como pusieran amos’ (198. a. 21-22). The ruin of all his hope is then reinforced by two brief phrases: ‘e que la fallaran, e que la comieran (198. a. 22-23). Píramo reacts to the shock. First there is a physical reaction ‘començos a matar todo’ (198. a. 25-26). London and Leslie note here the use of *matar(se)* with the meaning ‘to grow pale’, rather than ‘to kill’ (p. 152). Loss of colour is typical of shock, and in addition is a characteristic often associated with the suffering lover.

‘El duelo que Píramo fizo alli por Thisbe’

Píramo then expresses his shock and pain in words, which are reported by the text in the first person. Several models, or precedents, may be significant: the account in the *Metamorphoses* itself gives the words of Pyramus directly; the lament and the lyric poem also express suffering and separation from the perspective of the first person voice. In the *General estoria*, before the direct report of the words of Píramo, there is an intervention which indicates a source and gives a third-person report of their content:

Et cuenta aqui la Estoria el duelo que Píramo fizo alli por Thisbe, como querellando se de la su tardança del, e su culpa e su desauentura en que era caydo. (198. a. 26-30)

We see that the *General estoria* gives an account of *la Estoria*, which tells of the words spoken by Píramo, which are thus filtered through the perspective of two intervening texts. The third-person summary in the *General estoria* acts as preliminary guidance and interpretation of form and content. The term *el duelo* is pertinent to both the formal structure of the funeral oration and the sorrow thus articulated. *Querellarse* adds a sense of less controlled expression, perhaps due to the

complexity of Piramo's emotions, in which sorrow is blended with awareness of tardiness and guilt, but also of misfortune, in which we can see a glancing allusion to the fortuitous changes wrought by the turns of fortune's wheel.

The summary suggests that the text of the *Metamorphoses* serves as the primary model, for there we find sorrow, loss, and guilt expressed; a detailed comparison will show whether the *General estoria* supplements this source. In the *Metamorphoses*, the epigrammatic opening words spoken by Pyramus are followed by lines which express his sense of Thisbe's greater worth and his guilt for her death:

'una duos' inquit 'nox perdet amantes,
e quibus illa fuit longa dignissima vita;
nostra nocens anima est. ego te, miseranda, peremi,
in loca plena metus qui iussi nocte venires
nec prior huc veni.' (IV. 108-12)

['One night shall bring two lovers to death. But she of the two was more worthy of long life; on my head lies all the guilt. Oh, I have been the cause of your death, poor girl, in that I bade you come forth by night into this dangerous place, and did not myself come hither first.'] (p.187)

We see close adherence to the Latin as the Castilian *duelo* begins:

Dixo assi: 'Como una noche matara a dos amadores, de quien la entendedor fuera muy derecha de ueuir luenga uida, la nuestra alma es culpada e nuzient aqui. Duenna de quien tod omne se deurie doler e auer merçet, yo te mate, que te mande uenir de noche estos logares lenos de miedo, e non uin yo primero.' (198. a. 30-38)

Certain renderings are revealing of Piramo's attitude towards Thisbe. First, 'e quibus illa' (IV. 109) becomes 'de quien la entendedor' (198. a. 31-32). *Entendedor* was used earlier of Thisbe's thought of 'Piramo, so entendedor' (197. a. 27-28), now Piramo uses it of Thisbe, suggesting that the term *entendedor* does indeed imply a mutual relationship. For Piramo, implicit in the phrase 'dos amadores' (198. a. 31) are two *entendedores*, now associated with death. Second, 'miseranda' (IV. 110) is given as 'duenna de tod omne se deurie doler e auer merçet' (198. a. 34-35). The use of *duenna* could be a term of respect for rank, or an echo of the convention where the lover elevates the beloved as 'lady'. Piramo reveres Thisbe, and presents her not

simply as ill-fortuned, but worthy of pity from all; an ironic contrast with their desire to flee society. As in the Latin, Thisbe's worth is contrasted with Píramo's guilt.

In the *Metamorphoses* admission of guilt is followed mid-line by the apostrophe to the lions:

'nostrum divellite corpus
et scelerata fero consumite viscera morsu,
o quicumque sub hac habitatis rupe leones!
sed timide est optare necem.' (IV. 112-15)

['Come, rend my body and devour my guilty flesh with your fierce fangs,
O all ye lions who have your lairs beneath this cliff! But 'tis a coward's
part merely to pray for death.'] (p.187)

The *General estoria* adds a brief explanatory comment:

Desi dixo assi por las pestilencias que tenie quel deuien a el uenir por tal fecho. (198. a. 38-b. 2)

The apostrophe to the lions is then given:

'¡O leones, quales quier que en estas montannas e so estas pennas morades, salit et uenit agora, e echat las bocas en mi, e despeçat me las entrannas cruelmientre, e desmelenat me tod el cuerpo que non finque en mi pieça con pieça!' (198. b. 2-8)

Similar terms were used for the attack upon Thisbe's cloak by the lioness, who 'echo las manos e la boca en el, e desmelenol e fizol todo pieças' (198. a. 1-2); Píramo, bound to Thisbe by love, separated by guilt, must suffer as he believes she did. A further comment interrupts the words of Píramo, explaining the reference to cowardice which follows:

Desi, tantol aquexo ell amor de Thisbe que se razono contra si mismo, como culpado de couardia, e dixo assi: '¿Mas por que esto yo en esto? Del medroso es e al medroso pertenesce dessear muert.' (198. b. 8-13)

Each stage of the lament is subject to comment, which is set apart from the words spoken, which thus are presented as if with fidelity as found in the source.

The *General estoria* matches the *Metamorphoses* in shifting between first person and third person. The *Metamorphoses* tells how Pyramus takes Thisbe's cloak beneath the mulberry, then returns to the first person for what are to be his final words:

velamina Thisbes
 tollit et ad pactae secum fert arboris umbram,
 utque dedit notae lacrimas, dedit oscula vesti,
 'accipe nunc' inquit 'nostri quoque sanguinis haustus!' (IV. 115-18)

[He picks up Thisbe's cloak and carries it to the trysting tree. And while he kisses the familiar garment and bedews it with his tears he cries: 'Drink now my blood too.'] (p.187)

The General estoria gives:

Dichas estas palauras, tomo el manto de Thisbe en so braço e troxol apretado a los pechos e al coraçon, e vino al moral pora o fizieran su postura el e ella; et pues que se assento so la sombra del aruol, començo a besar esse manto de Thisbe e lorar sobrel; desi dixo assi: 'Manto, tu tienes la sangre de mi sennora Thisbe, e agora recib la mia.' (198. b. 13-21)

Here, Píramo takes up Thisbe's cloak, then holds it close against his breast and heart, 'apretado a los pechos e al coraçon' (198. b. 15), a significant gesture for this token which is all that remains to him of Thisbe. Píramo carries the cloak 'al moral pora o fizieran su postura el e ella' (198. b. 16-17). *Postura* would seem to be a term for pact: not only does he take the cloak into the shade of the tree, we are told that 'se assento so la sombra del aruol' (198. b. 17-18), he sits, as Thisbe sat, emphasising that this is the closest that he can come to keeping the pact. In a reversal of the order found in the Latin ('lacrimas [...] oscula', IV. 117), Píramo first kisses the cloak, then weeps upon it. The suggestion is of a scene where he bears the cloak against his heart, kisses it, then awareness of loss leads to tears and the apostrophe to the cloak. This apostrophe is slightly expanded, creating two balanced clauses. The first of these, 'manto, tu tienes la sangre de mi sennora Thisbe' (198. b. 20-21), is an important addition, firstly because Píramo claims Thisbe as his *sennora*, and secondly because he states clearly that the cloak is marked with her blood. It is the combination of the two facts which leads inexorably to the second clause 'agora recib la mia' (198. b. 21); believing Thisbe dead, Píramo also must die. The love-token held to the heart, the symbolic keeping of the covenant, the naming of Thisbe

as *mi sennora*: conventional actions and words, these additions nevertheless draw out the emotional significance of the moment for Piramo.

‘Dios [...] grant golpe por medio del corazon’

In the *Metamorphoses* the account of the suicide of Pyramus deals briefly with the death blow, and is notable for the careful simile which describes how his blood spurts up, and which explains the staining of the fruit of the mulberry:

quoque erat accinctus, demisit in ilia ferrum,
nec mora, ferventi moriens e vulnere traxit.
ut iacuit resupinus humo, cruor emicat alte,
non aliter quam cum vitiato fistula plumbo
scinditur et tenui stridente foramine longas
eiaculatur aquas atque ictibus aera rumpit.
arborei fetus adspergine caedis in atram
vertentur faciem, madefactaque sanguine radix
purpureo tinguit pendentia mora colore. (IV. 119-27)

[So saying, he drew the sword which he wore girt about him, plunged the blade into his side, and straightway, with his dying effort, drew the sword from his warm wound. As he lay stretched out upon the earth the spouting blood leaped high; just as when a pipe has broken at a weak spot in the lead and through the small hissing aperture sends forth long streams of water, cleaving the air with its jets. The fruit of the tree, sprinkled with the blood, was changed to a dark red colour; and the roots, soaked with his gore, also tinged the hanging berries with the same purple hue.] (p.187)

In the *General estoria* we find first:

E diziendo esto saco el cuchiello que traye cinto, e dios con el grant colpe por medio del corazon, e pero tirol luego; e el cayo theso al pie dell aruol, la cara contra a arriba, e començo a salir la sangre alta por la llaga. (198. b. 21-27)

While the details can be seen as deriving from the Latin, they also offer a slightly different perspective. Piramo bears ‘un cuchiello’ (198. b. 22), a knife, not a sword, for he has been described as ‘un mancebiello’ (195. b. 19) and ‘[un] mancebo’ (195. b. 23), not as a knight. We see the young man strike a ‘grant colpe’ (198. b. 23), acting swiftly before courage fails, acting extravagantly in the grip of emotion. He strikes, not ‘in ilia’ (IV. 119), but ‘por medio del corazon’ (198. b. 23-24). The change could be an error, a different base text of the *Metamorphoses*, or the deliberate choice of the heart as the appropriate place for a death blow resulting from

love (London and Leslie, p. 148). The scene ends with a dramatic fall to the ground, and blood spurting high from the wound.

From emotion and drama we move to scholarly referencing and scientific explanation, as the simile of the ruptured pipe is attributed to Ovid, and botanical details are expanded:

Et da aqui Ouidio esta semeiança a quel salie la sangre, e diz que assi yua alto dell el reguero della por el aer como el agua por el forado del canno del plomo quando se ronpe en algun logar, e echa ell agua alta, e ua sonando en la salida; e cayo la sangre por el tronco del aruol, e entro por las rayzes a yuso, e tinxo las; e desi assi como cuenta ell autor, salio de la rayz el çumo que cria e mantiene las foias e los frutos en los aruoles, e tinxo el fruto daquel aruol, e tornol en negro; e las moras, que eran dantes blancas, tomaron se alli en negras. (198. b. 27-40)

Píramo is dying, and like the *Metamorphoses*, the *General estoria* presents a scientific explanation which links that death and the darkening of the fruits of the mulberry, and which marks a pause in the narrative of the affairs of the lovers. Both texts then turn to Thisbe.

‘Agora diremos de Thisbe’

In the *Metamorphoses* lines 128 to 163 show the stages which lead Thisbe from the cave, to her discovery of the dying Pyramus, to her realization of the cause, to her own death. The narrative alternates between third person and the first person, which is used for the words of Thisbe. The *General estoria* shows the same stages, but amplifies considerably; the situation of Thisbe seems to exercise a particular fascination.

The *Metamorphoses* left Thisbe hiding in the cave. The return to her story is marked with ‘ecce’ (IV.128), as she is drawn from hiding by thoughts of her lover:

ecce metu nondum posito, ne fallat amantem,
illa redit iuvenemque oculis animoque requirit,
quantaque vitarit narrare pericula gestit. (IV. 128-30)

[And now comes Thisbe from her hiding-place, still trembling, but fearful also that her lover will miss her; she seeks for him both with eyes and soul, eager to tell how great perils she has escaped.] (p.187)

The *General estoria* marks the return to Thisbe with a further example of the formulaic phrase *agora diremos*, saying ‘agora diremos de Thisbe’ (198. b. 41). The text is then further divided by a rubric: ‘de como fizo Tisbe pues que fuxo ante la leona’ (199. a. 1-2). The conflict between fear and love, which Thisbe experiences as she leaves the cave, is developed in the Castilian, which alternates references to the lioness and Píramo. Thisbe still fears the lioness, but does not want to fail Píramo:

Tisbe, pues que se temie aun mucho de caer por desauentura en las manos de la leona, por tod esso non dexo de atreuer se a uenir al logar del plazo, por que non fuesse enartado el su entendedor. (199. a. 5-10)

Thisbe seeks for Píramo, but looks out also for the lioness:

Et salio de la cueua catando de oios e de coraçon a todo part por Piramo, e guardando se toda uia si non estarie por alli por uentura la leona. (199. a. 10-13)

As nothing is to be seen, Thisbe draws near the tree, longing to find Píramo and tell him of the dangers she has escaped:

Et pues que non ueye ninguna cosa, fuesse llegando al aruol, cobdiciando fallar a Piramo e contar le el periglo de que auie escapado. (199. a. 13-17)

We note also the particular vocabulary used of the relationship with Píramo. There is a further example of the term *entendedor*, again in association with the agreement between the lovers. Thisbe seeks, not with ‘oculis animoque’ (IV. 129), not with ‘eyes and soul’ (p.187), but ‘de oios e de coraçon’ (199. a. 10-11), with eyes and *heart*; the superficial and the profound, but ruled perhaps more by emotion than reason. Complicity, emotion, bind Thisbe to Píramo; the verb *cobdiciar* shows the strength of the longing which draws her to him, the two verbs *fallar*, ‘to find’, and *contar*, ‘to tell, relate’, suggest that she longs for the presence of Píramo, if only after being so long alone, as well as for the chance to tell of her adventures.

In the *Metamorphoses*, hope proves ill-founded. The mulberry proves the first sign, bringing Thisbe from certainty to doubt:

utque locum et visa cognoscit in arbore formam,
sic facit incertam pomi color: haeret, an haec sit. (IV. 131-32)

[And while she recognizes the place and the shape of the well-known tree,
still the colour of its fruit mystifies her. She doubts if it be this.]
(pp. 187, 189)

When speaking of Thisbe's shift from certainty to doubt, the *General estoria* mentions the spring as well as the tree:

Pues que llego a la fuent e connoscio el logar, e en ell aruol la forma que
uiera dantes blanca e la ueye mudada en otra color, por las moras que eran
dantes blancas e las ueye prietas, dubdo si era aquel el logar o si non.
(199. a. 17-22)

The narrative has returned repeatedly to the setting, enumerating the three elements of spring, tomb and tree which compose it. This setting has gained a particular significance for the lovers, as the place where the pact between them will be fulfilled. When Thisbe arrives for the second time, the mention of the spring and the tree suggest a return to the familiar, recreating Thisbe's brief certainty. The effect is deceptive and short-lived, however, for the trio is incomplete, and the mulberry is disturbingly different, an unsettling effect which recreates Thisbe's doubt. The incomplete evocation of this changed setting in the Castilian text accentuates the reversal of fortune.

The unexpected continues: disorientated by the change in the mulberry, Thisbe becomes aware of movement. In the *Metamorphoses* certain aspects remain unstated; it is not immediately clear whether Thisbe has realized that she sees Pyramus, and the similes used of her reaction could imply shock or fear:

dum dubitat, tremebunda videt pulsare cruentum
membra solum, retroque pedem tulit, oraque buxo
pallidiora gerens exhorruit aequoris instar,
quod tremit, exigua cum summum stringitur aura. (IV. 133-36)

[While she hesitates, she sees somebody's limbs writhing on the bloody ground, and starts back, paler than boxwood, and shivering like the sea when a slight breeze ruffles its surface.] (p.189)

The *General estoria* clarifies:

Et mientras estaua dubdando, uio a Piramo yazer tendudo e firiendo de pies e de manos en tierra, e tirosse ella un poco atras, non sabiendo por cierto que era aquello; et tornosse con el miedo mas amariella que el açafran, e espuluzrosse toda con el pauor que ouo; et cuenta aqui la Estoria, dando su semeiança, ques paro como la mar quando raye, e se allana e le anda un poquiello de orage a de suso que la estrinne. (199. a. 22-33)

We are told that Thisbe sees Píramo, but does not know for certain what it is she sees. As the *General estoria* lays great stress upon the most complete knowledge possible, Thisbe is in an unhappy position, 'non sabiendo por cierto que era aquella' (199. a. 25-26). Her reaction of fear is clearly stated. There is a change in the simile used of her loss of colour; from 'buxo / pallidiora gerens' (IV. 134-35), ['paler than boxwood'] (p.189), to the Castilian 'tornosse con el miedo mas amariella que el açafran' (199. a. 27-28), 'she turned more yellow than saffron with fear'. The Latin uses the simile of a breeze on the sea to express Thisbe's physical reaction of shivering; the Castilian notes the presence of this simile in *la Estoria*, but precedes it with the clear statement 'espuluzrosse toda con el pauor que ouo' (199. a. 28-29). Thus, not only is Thisbe's reaction stated unambiguously, her fear is underlined by the synonyms *miedo* and *pauor* in two consecutive clauses 'tornosse con el miedo mas amariella que el açafran, e espuluzrosse toda con el pauor que ouo' (199. a. 27-29).

The *General estoria* expands still further on Thisbe's state of mind, following the emphasis on Thisbe's fear with the word *mas*, 'but', which introduces a statement which deals with the other emotions which motivate her:

Mas pero tanto era grant ell amor et la cobdicia que auie de ueer ya a Piramo que non fuxo dalli adelant, mas torno contra alla. (199. a. 33-36)

Again we see the tension between love and fear within Thisbe. We are reminded of the statement as she makes her journey alone through the night that 'la fuerça dell amor la fazie atreuuda e osada' (197. a. 30-31). In the series of situations which have tested her courage, only the encounter with the lioness has not seen courage

reinforced by love, and here love again proves stronger than fear. The doubling of 'ell amor et la cobdicia' (199. a. 33-34), suggests that love is augmented by the longing to see Píramo, which itself grows stronger as this desire seems near to fulfilment; the shock at the true situation is all the greater. Ironically, Thisbe has just seen Píramo, but without being aware that the movement she glimpses is the death agony of her lover.

'Pues que conosco los sos amores'

In the *Metamorphoses* we see the moment of recognition, and Thisbe's physical reaction to grief, important both in itself and as the transition to the words that she speaks:

sed postquam remorata suos cognovit amores,
percutit indignos claro plangore lacertos
et laniata comas amplexaque corpus amatum
vulnere supplevit lacrimis fletumque cruori
miscuit et gelidis in vultibus oscula figens. (IV. 137-41)

[But when after a little while she recognizes her lover, she smites her innocent arms with loud blows of grief, and tears her hair; and embracing the well-beloved form, she fills his wounds with tears, mingling these with his blood. And as she kissed his lips, now cold in death, she wailed.] (p.189)

There is recognition of the lover also in the *General estoria*:

Pues que conosco los sos amores en las sennales de las querellas de los gemidos que Píramo fazie, començos a ferir luego muy desmesurada mientre por los pechos e por la cara, e dar se grandes feridas, e messar se e ronper se los uestidos; et llego ya alla, que ningun miedo non gelo estoruo, uio de tod en todo que era Píramo aquel, et abraçol como a la cosa del mundo que mas amaua, et catol todo por ueer que era aquello, e fallo le la llaga e la sangre, e el so cuchiello sangriento con que se firiera e fuera de la uayna, et entendio cuemo el se firiera, cuedando que fuera della lo que el cuedara, fascas que la matara alli alguna bestia saluage, e la leuara e la comiera; e sobrel otro duelo que ella fazie, començo a rascar se toda e llorar muy fiera mient, e cayen las sus lagrimas en la sangre que salie del e en la laga, e yua todo mezclado; e esfriauasse ya a el la cara con la muert quel llegaua, ca se firiera en las uenas del coraçon, e por tod esso ella non dexaua de besar le muchos uezes. (199. a. 36-b. 22)

Seeing the passage in its entirety, we note the greater extension compared with the corresponding lines in the *Metamorphoses*. A number of changes account for the amplification. Thisbe's recognition of Píramo is achieved in stages. In a first stage,

the phrase from the Latin, 'suos cognovit amores' (IV. 137), ['she recognizes her lover'] (p. 189), is drawn into the Castilian, where recognition is associated with sound:

Pues que connochio los sos amores en las sennales de las querellas e de los gemidos que Piramo fazie. (199. a. 36-38).

Thisbe's reaction of grief is then described:

Començos e ferir muy desmesurada mientras por los pechos e por la cara, e dar se grandes feridas, e messar se e ronper se los uestidos. (199. a. 38-b.3)

Her reaction appears more extreme than in the *Metamorphoses*, both as to extent, and as to manner: she beats her face and breast, tears her hair and clothes, and the adverbial phrase 'muy desmesurada mientras' (199. a. 39-b. 1) is significant for the loss of control, the absence of *mesura*, implied, a state which is reinforced by ferocity of the 'grandes feridas' (199. b. 2) which Thisbe directs against herself.

Realization and grief match the pattern set by the *Metamorphoses*, but the *General estoria* introduces a second stage, in which the recognition of the lover resulting from hearing is confirmed by sight; an affirmation of the belief that certainty comes from what is witnessed with the eyes:

Et llego ya alla, que ningun miedo non gelo estoruo, e uio de tod en todo que era Piramo aquel. (199. b. 3.-5)

This sentence is significant also when considered within Thisbe's story. It marks the moment when Thisbe arrives at the place which has drawn her so strongly throughout her troubled journey through the night. No fear hinders her, as she reaches that for which she has longed, the absolute certainty of the presence of Píramo. Indeed, this same sentence could have served as a summary of her journey and the transition to a joyful reunion with Píramo, were it not for the intervention of the lioness. A meeting there is, and an embrace, as we saw in the *Metamorphoses*, and as we see in the *General estoria*, in a phrase to be often repeated in Castilian, 'e

abraçol como a la cosa del mundo que mas amaua' (199. b. 5-7); there is however no joy, but only grief.

Before Thisbe's tears, the *General estoria* provides a solid foundation for her grief. First, she studies Píramo in order to understand the situation, and discovers the wound, the blood and the knife:

Et catol todo por ueer que era aquello, e fallo le la llaga e la sangre, e el so cuchiello sangriento con que se firiera e fuera de la uayna. (199. b. 7-10)

Then there is a report of how she deciphers what she finds:

Et entendio cuemo el se firiera, cuedando que fuera della lo que el cuedara, fascas que la matara alli algun bestia saluage, e la leuara e la comiera. (199. b. 10-14)

The report of what Thisbe believes allows an access to her thoughts not found in the *Metamorphoses*. We glimpse something of the process by which the material world is experienced through the senses and interpreted by the mind. We see also something of the thoughts of two individuals; the lovers Píramo and Thisbe. Repetition of vocabulary creates parallels between Thisbe here and Píramo earlier, as each decodes the signs that they find. Two verbs are significant, *catar* related to the use of sight, and *entender*, relating to the use of the mind, or intellect. Píramo, finding Thisbe's cloak 'catol a la luna, e entendio que era el de Thisbe' (198. a. 16-17), Thisbe, finding Píramo, 'catol todo [...] et entendio cuemo el se firiera' (199. b. 7-11). The evidence is subjected to close scrutiny, as Píramo is aided by the light of the moon, and Thisbe looks at every detail. The resultant understanding, or belief, may be viewed as reasonable. Píramo may know the cloak to be Thisbe's, and even if he only believes it to be so, he does know she planned to be there. Thisbe finds Píramo's wound, blood, the bloody knife, and no signs of any other person, making reasonable her belief that Píramo himself is responsible.

Hard evidence also gives rise to more speculative thought in both cases. Píramo sees that the cloak is bloody and torn and this, in combination with the animal tracks and the lack of Thisbe, leads him to believe that lions came, ‘e que la fallaran, e que la comieran’ (198. a. 22-23). Significantly the verb used here of Píramo’s thought is not *entender* but *tener*; ‘touro que’ (198. a. 18). Seeing Píramo, seemingly struck down by his own hand, Thisbe speculates on the events which led him to take such a course of action. As Thisbe’s hypothesis develops, it is based on Píramo’s understanding of what happened to her; ‘que le matara alguna bestia saluage, e la leuara e la comiera.’ (199. b. 12-14). While Píramo is mistaken, the repetition emphasizes the accuracy of Thisbe’s re-creation; perhaps she is more closely attuned to Píramo than he is to her, or perhaps theory is supported by the knowledge that only her death could lead Píramo to kill himself. The responses of both Píramo and Thisbe are affected by the relationship between them. Faced with blood and signs of violence, each thinks first of the other, suggesting that they are centred on each other. Their union is strong, but is threatened both by outside forces and by their own reactions, in which reason is subverted by emotion.

Thisbe’s decoding of the signs may seem more reasonable; in the *General estoria* her grief is extended:

Et sobrel otro duelo que ella fazie, començo a rascar se toda e llorar muy fiero mient, e cayen las sus lagrimas en la sangre que salie del e en la laga, e yua todo mezclado; et esfriauasse ya a el la cara con la muert quel llegaua, ca se firiera en las uenas del coraçon, e por tod esso ella non dexaua de besar le muchas uezes. (199. b. 14-22)

The *General estoria* accentuates Thisbe’s grief by this second mention, which draws in the mixing of tears and blood found in the *Metamorphoses*. Again the Castilian shows control overwhelmed by emotion, as Thisbe weeps ‘muy fiero mient’ (199. b. 15-16), and continues kissing the dying Píramo ‘muchas uezes’ (199. b. 21-22). The intervening explanation of why Píramo grows so swiftly cold in death might seem to

detract from the emotion experienced by Thisbe, however, the substance of that explanation, ‘ca se firiera en las uenas del coraçon’ (199. b. 19-20), could give rise to both literal and figurative readings; the wound in the heart links physiology with love.

‘La manera a que ella fazie duelo’

After the physical reaction, love and grief find expression in words. In the *Metamorphoses* Thisbe calls out to Pyramus:

‘Pyrame,’ clamavit, ‘quis te mihi casus admetit?
Pyrame, responde! tua te carissima Thisbe
nominat; exaudi vultusque attolle iacentes!’ (IV. 142-44)

[‘O my Pyramus, what mischance has reft you from me? Pyramus!
Answer me. ‘Tis your dearest Thisbe calling you. Oh listen, and lift your
drooping head!’] (p.189)

The *General estoria* gives a reference for Thisbe’s words:

Agora cuenta aqui la Estoria la manera a que ella fazie duelo, e las
palabras que dizie en el, e diz assi. (199. b. 23-25)

The phrase ‘la manera a que ella fazie duelo’ (199. b. 23-24) could refer to the account in the previous paragraph of the physical manifestations of grief displayed by Thisbe, which are described as *duelo*. *Duelo* could, however, apply to the words to be spoken, suggesting that the source text, *la Estoria*, has been read as indicating not only what is said, but also the manner of delivery. As speech begins, the Latin uses ‘clamavit’ (IV. 142); in the Castilian we find ‘lamo Thisbe’ (199. b. 25), as she calls upon her lover:

Lamo Thisbe: ‘¡O Píramo! ¿Que desauentura te me tollio? Píramo,
responde me; Thisbe, la tu mucho amada, te nombra, e oylo e torna aca la
cara que tienes tornada a tierra.’ (199. b. 25-29)

Content and form follow closely those found in the *Metamorphoses*: address to the lover; allusion to misfortune couched as a rhetorical question, *interrogatio*; the demand for a response from Píramo; the reference to herself as speaker, in terms

which make the demand likely to be fulfilled – we note here the significant *la tu mucha amada* – and finally the further imperatives.

Speech gives way to silence; the reply of the lover, unable to speak, but even in death, moved by the name of Thisbe, as the *Metamorphoses* shows us:

ad nomen Thisbes oculos a morte gravatos
Pyramus erexit visaque recondit illa. (IV. 145-46)

[At the name of Thisbe, Pyramus lifted his eyes, now heavy with death, and having looked upon her face, closed them again.] (p.189)

The same response is seen in the *General estoria*:

Piramo tenie ya los oios apremudos con la muerte, et quando oyo el nonbre de Thisbe, alço los et desque la uio, baxo los luego, ca yazie ya despodorado de la uida. (199. b. 29-34)

The second mention of death could serve as further explanation for Píramo's weakness and failure to speak. As in the *Metamorphoses* it also presents Píramo's final moment as filled with the sight of Thisbe; a vision of the beloved, or the realization of a meaningless death.

Thisbe too is faced with a moment of realization. Both the *Metamorphoses* and the *General estoria* use the third person to tell how she finds her dropped garment, then return to the first person for the words of Thisbe, in an extended passage of direct speech, which covers three related topics: the death of her lover and its implications for her; apostrophe to their parents, and apostrophe to the mulberry. In the *Metamorphoses* Thisbe finds her forgotten garment and Pyramus's empty scabbard, a double discovery which proves the impetus for the words which immediately follow it, and which reveal its significance for her:

Quae postquam vestemque suam cognovit et ense
vidit ebur vacuum, 'tua te manus' inquit 'amorque
perdidit, infelix! est et mihi fortis in unum
hoc manus, est et amor: dabit hic in vulnera vires.
persequar extinctum letique miserrima dicar
causa comesque tui: quique a me morte revelli
heu sola poteris, poteris nec morte revelli.' (IV. 147-53)

[Now when she saw her own cloak and the ivory scabbard empty of the sword, she said: 'Twas your own hand and your love, poor boy, that took

your life. I too have a hand brave for this one deed; I too, have love. This shall give me strength for the fatal blow. I will follow you in death, and men shall say that I was the most wretched cause and comrade of your fate. Whom death alone had power to part from me, not even death shall have power to part from me.'] (p.189)

In the *General estoria*, Thisbe finds only her cloak:

Et ella cato aderredor de si e del, e conosco alli el so manto della que ronpiera la leona. (199. b. 34-36)

While the empty scabbard is not mentioned, Thisbe has found Píramo's bloodstained knife in her examination of the scene earlier, and the repetition of the verb *catar* shows her investigation continues, providing further evidence to add to her preliminary conclusions; a gradual process which leads to the understanding of the truth, compared with the compression found in the *Metamorphoses*.

Thisbe then expresses the implications for her of what she has discovered:

E dixo assi: '¡Ay, el mio Piramo, la mi lumbre e la mi uida! Bien entiendo que la tu mano e el mio amor te an muerto, onde tengo a ti por muy desauenturado e a mi por mas. Mas en cabo ¿por que esto yo en esto? Ca pora matar yo a mi tan fuert mano e yo como tu pora ti, e ell amor tan grant de ti commo tu de mi lo auies, et el mio coraçon e esto tan bien daran a mi fuerça pora ferir me, e llagar me, e matar me a fierro por ti, como lo dieron essas mismas cosas a ti por mi; et seguire yo muerta a ti muerto, e si mas non, pues que yo, mesquinna e muy mal auenturada fuere dicha achaque de la tu muert, sere dicha conpannera otrossi de la muert; et tu que pudieras partir de mi con la muert sola muriendo dotra guisa, non te podras agora desapegar de mi con ella.' (199. b. 36-200. a. 15)

While in both the *Metamorphoses* and the *General estoria* Thisbe expresses a clear understanding both of her own responsibility for events and of the effect upon her future actions, the Castilian text is longer. The return to direct speech is marked, not by any extended reference to a source, but merely by 'e dixo assi' (199. b. 36-37), suggesting that Thisbe's *duelo* continues unbroken, actions and words in alternation. In an addition to the Latin, Thisbe states the importance of Píramo to her: '¡Ay, el mio Piramo, la mi lumbre e la mi uida!' (199. b. 36-37). We then see a return to the *Metamorphoses*, where Thisbe says:

'tua te manus' inquit 'amorque perditit, infelix!' (IV. 148-49)

['Twas your own hand and your love, poor boy, that took your life.']
(p.189)

We see the corresponding sentence in the *General estoria*:

'Bien entiendo que la tu mano e el mio amor te an muerto, onde tengo a ti por muy desadventurado e a mi por mas.' (199. b. 38-40)

Here also Thisbe attributes responsibility for Píramo's death to his own hand and to love. Her own involvement is perhaps more clearly stated, as she blames 'el mio amor' (199. b. 38-39). We note also that, with the word *onde*, she establishes two relationships, firstly between the manner of Píramo's death and her view of him as 'desadventurado' (199. b. 40), and secondly a sequence of cause and effect between that death and her own state of misfortune, unmentioned in the *Metamorphoses* but which here exceeds that of Píramo.

The *Metamorphoses* show us Thisbe claims equal strength of hand and love, of ability to strike:

'est et mihi fortis in unum
hoc manus, est et amor: dabit hic in vulnera vires.' (IV. 149-51)

['I too have a hand brave for this one deed; I too, have love. This shall give me strength for the fatal blow.'] (p.189)

In the *General estoria*, there is first an inserted rhetorical question:

'Mas en cabo ¿por que esto yo en esto?' (199. b. 40-200. a. 1)

We note the echo of Píramo, who spoke the same words before his own suicide, saying '¿mas por que esto yo en esto?' (198. b. 11), as action was postponed by words. Perhaps here Thisbe feels that she dwells on her misfortune unduly, perhaps she hesitates before a step more final even than those taken earlier; we see her upbraid herself for inaction, '¿por que esto yo en esto?' (200. a. 1), before turning to her hand and love:

'Ca pora matar yo a mi tan fuert mano e yo como tu pora ti, e ell amor tan grant de ti commo tu de mi lo auies, et el mio coraçon e esto tan bien daran a mi fuerça pora ferir me, e llagar me, e matar me a fierro por ti, como lo dieron essas mismas cosas a ti por mi.' (200. a. 1-8)

Equal strength of hand and love, the resultant force for the final blow; the sense of the Latin is present. The differences in the Castilian may result from the attempt to translate lines of epigrammatic brevity into a language of differing syntax and textual tradition, whilst maintaining clarity. The first notable aspect of the Castilian is the plethora of pronouns, which at first reading can cause the passage to seem not clear but confusing. A translation into English might read:

‘As strong a hand have I to kill myself as had you for yourself, and love for you as strong as had you for me, and my heart and these will give me also strength to strike myself, and wound myself, and kill myself with steel, as these same things gave it to you for / because of me.’

Apparent redundancy and confusion result in revealing clarity. Thisbe alternates first person and second person. This reminds us that she addresses Piramo; she began this passage ‘¡Ay, el mio Piramo, la mi lumbre e la mi uida!’ (199. b. 36-37). Piramo is present in her discourse, and becomes a point of reference: Thisbe speaks of strength of hand for her death blow ‘tan fuert [...] como *tu pora ti*’ (200. a. 2-3); of love ‘ell amor tan grant *de ti* commo *tu de mi* lo auies’ (200. a. 3-4); emphasis is given to equality and reciprocity. To continue in this relationship to Piramo, Thisbe must take the same action as he, indeed logic would insist that recreation of circumstances will result in the reproduction of results. Her hand and love match his, and reinforced in the Castilian by her heart, will give her force to kill herself, as she says ‘como lo dieron essas mismas cosas a ti por mi’ (200. a. 7-8). We see that Thisbe continues from her earlier self reproach ‘¿por que esto yo en esto?’ (200. a. 1), reinforcing this spur to action. The emphasis on the physicality of the blow, and the repetition of *matar*, found in the phrase ‘ferir me, e llagar me e matar me a fierro’ (200. a. 6), explain the need for self-persuasion.

As Thisbe continues, the move to action seems indicated by the use of the future tense:

'Et seguire yo muerta a ti muerto, e si mas non, pues que yo, mesquinna e muy mal auenturada fuere dicha achaque de la tu muert, sere dicha conpannera otrossi de la muert; et tu que pudieras partir de mi con la muert sola muriendo dotra guisa, non te podras agora desapegar de mi con ella.' (200. a. 8-15)

We note a difference from the Latin:

'persequar extinctum letique miserrima dicar
causa comesque tui: quique a me morte revelli
heu sola poteris, poteris nec morte revelli.' (IV. 151-53)

In the Castilian 'et si mas non' (200. a. 9) suggests that a certain hesitation remains.

The deciding argument might be that only thus can death not separate her from Piramo.

'De la oracion que Thisbe fizo en su muert'

Confirmation that Thisbe has decided to kill herself is found in two apostrophes, to the parents of both lovers and to the mulberry, which are found in lines 154 to 161 of the *Metamorphoses*:

'hoc tamen amborum verbis estote rogati,
o multum miseri meus illiusque parentes,
ut, quos certus amor, quos hora novissima iunxit,
conponi tumulo non invidetis eodem;
at tu quae ramis arbor miserabile corpus
nunc tegis unius, mox est tectura duorum,
signa tene caedis pullosque et luctibus aptos
semper habe fetus, gemina monumenta cruoris.' (IV. 154-61)

['O wretched parents, mine and his, be ye entreated of this by the prayers of us both, that you begrudge us not that we, whom faithful love, whom the hour of death has joined, should be laid together in the same tomb. And do you, O tree, who now shade with your branches the poor body of one, and soon will shade two, keep the marks of our death and always bear your fruit of a dark colour, meet for mourning, as a memorial of our double death.'] (p. 189)

The *General estoria* first marks a shift by remarking, again with guidance suggestive of an oral delivery:

Et pues que esto ouo dicho, Thisbe fizo su oracion a sos dioses e a sos parientes como uos oyredes' (200. a. 16-18)

A change is anticipated, from what Thisbe has said, to a discourse denominated as an *oration a sos dioses*. The break is underlined by a rubric, which associates the new line of communication with Thisbe's death, promising to tell 'de la oracion que

Thisbe fizo en su muert' (200. a. 20-21). As the new section begins, first we find confirmation that Thisbe has decided to kill herself, then additional information on her final words:

Thisbe, pues que firmo en so coraçon de se matar por Piramo, como se mato el por ella, fizo, ante que se firiesse, su oration a sus dioses en razon de remenbrança daquel fecho, e a sos parientes en razon de so soterramiento. (200. a. 23-27)

The making of the pact between the lovers is recalled by the verb *firmar*, in the phrase 'firmo en so coraçon' (200. a. 23), the motivation for Píramo's suicide is reiterated, and paralleled by that of Thisbe, as though she continues her efforts, almost a quest against all odds, to keep to the agreement she has made. The sentence continues, as Thisbe will continue, not with words postponing death, nor with words of self-persuasion, but with a discourse delivered in the moments before a death already decided upon, and thus influenced by the fact of that death. The form of Thisbe's discourse is reiterated as *so oration*, which can be translated as 'her prayer' when addressed to *sus dioses*, 'her gods', but which might be read as 'her plea', or 'her petition', when addressed to human parents. The *razon*, 'subject', of her words is outlined: from the gods she will seek 'remenbrança daquel fecho' (200. a. 27), to the parents she will speak of her burial.

As the words of Thisbe are presented, the reference to *la Estoria* which generally precedes direct discourse is not found, perhaps due to a feeling that sufficient context has been provided; we read simply 'e dixo assi' (200. a. 28-29), as, first, she speaks to the parents:

'¡O uos, muy desauenturados parientes, padres e madres mios e deste Piramo! Como quier que nos assi muramos por tal desauentura seyendo mancebiellos e en el comienço de la mejor edat que los omnes an, et seyendo otrossi de todas partes de las mayores sangres de toda la cibdat de Babilonna, desto que uos ruego yo e uos pido por merced que seades uos rogados, que a nos amos, a quien tan certero amor e la postremera ora de la uida assi ayunto, que uos non tengades por mal de meter nos a amos, a mi e a Piramo, en un luziello.' (200. a. 29-b. 1)

We can compare this with her words in the *Metamorphoses*:

'hoc tamen amborum verbis estote rogati,
o multum miseri meus illiusque parentes,
ut, quos certus amor, quos hora novissima iunxit,
conponi tumulo non invidetis eodem.' (IV. 154-57)

['O wretched parents, mine and his, be ye entreated of this by the prayers
of us both, that you begrudge us not that we, whom faithful love, whom
the hour of death has joined, should be laid together in the same tomb.']
(p. 189)

In both Latin and Castilian, Thisbe addresses both sets of parents and asks that the lovers, joined by love and death, be buried in one tomb.

A significant addition in the *General estoria* is the allusion to the youth and nobility of Piramo and Thisbe. London and Leslie note the addition, and refer to earlier points of the text, where youth and nobility are added to the characteristics of the lovers, as in other medieval versions of the story, such as the Old French *Piramus et Tisbé*.¹³⁰ While youth and nobility might seem natural qualities of the idealized lovers, a distinctive perspective is given in Thisbe's words. A relationship can be seen between youth, presented as 'el comienzo de la mejor edad que los omnes an' (200. a. 33-34), and nobility, expressed as being 'de las mayores sangres de toda la cibdat de Babilonna' (200. a. 35-36); Piramo and Thisbe are presented as on the threshold of the prime of life, a point at which they might be expected to contribute to the extension of their high, and equal, lineage. The intervention of death further connects youth and nobility; when Thisbe states 'nos assi muramos por tal desauentura' (200. a. 31-32), *por tal desauentura* could refer to the misunderstandings which lead to death, or could refer forward, by means of the present participles 'seyendo [...] et seyendo otrosi' (200. a. 32-34) to the state of youth and nobility whose potential is cut short. There is loss for the lovers, but also

¹³⁰ London and Leslie, 'A Thirteenth-Century Spanish Version', p. 154, n. 7, with cross references to p. 151, n. 1, and p. 152, n. 1.

for their lineage; thus it is, perhaps, that Thisbe begins her apostrophe ‘O uos, muy *desaumenturados* parientes’ (200. a. 29-30).

Unlike in the *Metamorphoses*, Thisbe does not claim that Píramo joins her in her appeal; perhaps it would be contrary to Christian doctrine to have the dead speak. Her solitary plea, however, is reinforced by a range of means. The allusion to the ill fortune which has befallen all parties, by its circuitous nature, delays the approach to Thisbe’s request, with an effect of cautious respect towards those who have the authority to grant it. The reference to ‘las mayores sangres’ (200. a. 35) applies equally to the parents, from whom Píramo and Thisbe have inherited it. As Thisbe nears the crux of her argument, the repetition of *rogar* and the use of the synonym *pedir* [*por merced*] suggest intense supplication; ‘uos ruego yo e uos pido por merced que seades uos rogados’ (200. a. 37-38). As justification, or precedent, for the granting of her petition, she cites, as in the *Metamorphoses*, the fact that love and death have already united her and Píramo; in the Castilian she speaks, not simply of ‘certus amor’ (IV. 156), [‘faithful love’] (p.189), but of ‘*tan* certero amor’ (200. a. 39). Thisbe speaks alone, but Píramo is present throughout the text she delivers: she addresses not only her own parents, but also those of Píramo; she uses the first-person plural ‘nos assi muramos’ (200. a. 31-32); she states that they share youth and equal rank; her petition rests on the fact that they are joined by love and death; with repetition and the use of Píramo’s name she pleads for the union of the two in one tomb: ‘que a nos amos [...] nos a amos, a mi e a Píramo’ (200. a. 38-b.1); Píramo is present, and linked with Thisbe, subtly reinforcing her request.

The preliminary explanation spoke of Thisbe’s *oration* to gods and parents, but the *General estoria* follows the *Metamorphoses*, where her words are addressed, first to the parents, then to the mulberry itself:

'at tu quae ramis arbor miserabile corpus
nunc tegis unius, mox est tectura duorum,
signa tene caedis pullosque et luctibus aptos
semper habe fetus, gemina monumenta cruoris.' (IV. 158-61)

['And do you, O tree, who now shade with your branches the poor body of one, and soon will shade two, keep the marks of our death and always bear your fruit of a dark colour, meet for mourning, as a memorial of our double death.'](p.189)

Thisbe's words in the Castilian match closely:

Desi dixo esquantral moral: 'Et otrossi tu, aruol que crubes agora con los tos ramos el desauenturado cuerpo de Piramo solo, et crobriras agora luego los de amos, el mio e el suyo, ruego te que retengas las sennales desta muert, e lieua sienpre tu e tu generacion fruto negro, et pues que madurare, que se torne tal que conuenga a lagrimas e a duelos, e que sea sienpre en remembrancia de la sangre desta doblada muert, mia e de Piramo.' (200. b. 1-12)

In both texts Thisbe foretells the moment when a single death will become two, joined in the shelter of the branches of the tree, which is asked to retain its dark-coloured fruits as an appropriate memorial. In the *General estoria* names and possessives make it clear that Thisbe is speaking of herself and her lover and thus there is greater immediacy. Píramo is named, as we find, not 'miserabile corpus [...] unius' (IV. 158-59), but 'el desauenturado cuerpo de Piramo solo' (200. b. 4). The two bodies become 'los de amos, el mio e el suyo' (200. b. 5-6). The word *amos*, which so often unites the lovers, is linked with the clear statement that the second death will be Thisbe's own, a fact reiterated as she ends her plea.

As when pleading with their parents, Thisbe uses *rogar* and the subjunctive as she asks for the continuation of the black fruits, sign and memorial of their death. A particularly significant use is made of Thisbe's final line from the *Metamorphoses*, where she says 'semper habe fetus, gemini monumenta cruoris' (IV. 161). The Latin *semper* (IV. 161), 'always', finds its equivalent in the Castilian *sienpre*, which appears twice here. First we read 'lieua sienpre tu e tu generacion fruto negro' (200. b. 7-8), where the allusion to a lineage accentuates the extension of the present to the future which is inherent in 'always'; this mulberry may die, but there will always be

a mulberry with dark fruit. As Thisbe draws to a close she repeats *siempre*, saying 'que sea siempre en remembrance de la sangre desta doblada muert' (200. b. 10-12). The mention of blood in the Latin 'gemini monumenta cruoris' (IV. 161) is of evident influence. There is also a reminder of an earlier reference to *sangre* in the *General estoria*, when Thisbe says that she and Píramo are 'de las mayores sangres' (200. a. 35). Parallels, and contrasts, become apparent between the mulberry and the lovers. The mulberry is placed in a lineage, whose marks will be shown by the fruit *pues que madurare*, 'as it ripens'. In Píramo and Thisbe also we see lineage and the end of childhood, but their lineage is expressed in terms of *sangre*, 'blood', and as they reach maturity that blood is transformed to death, the sign of a lineage for which they will give no future generations.

The death blood of Píramo marks the mulberry, Thisbe's death is to come, and the permanence of the change in the mulberry is sought 'en remembrance' (200. b. 11) of this double death. The term *remembrance* is used twice in the context of Thisbe's final requests, first in the preliminary summary, which presents 'su oration a sus dioses en razon de *remembrance* daquel fecho' (200. a. 26-27), then by Thisbe herself. The summary can be seen as necessary guidance; we note also that the concept of *remembrance* thus frames and creates a context for what she asks. The term *remembrance* is used to render 'monimenta' (IV. 161); both terms are related to a means of ensuring that the past is not forgotten. Píramo and Thisbe will have past and present but, after Thisbe's death, of the future nothing, save what others grant them of remembrance.

Thisbe's words bring her, inexorably it seems, to the moment of her death.

We note the brevity found in the *Metamorphoses*:

dixit et aptato pectus mucrone sub imum
incubuit ferro, quod adhuc a caede tepebat. (IV. 162-63)

[She spoke, and fitting the point beneath her breast, she fell forward on the sword which was still warm with her lovers blood.] (p.191)

The *General estoria* is also concise:

Pues que Tisbe ouo fechos estos ruegos a sos dioses e a sus parientes, tomo el cuchuello de Piramo, que estaua aun tibio de la ferida dell, e paros le en derecho del costado siniestro, o tenie el coraçon, e echosse sobrel e matos. (200. b. 13-18)

The remark that Thisbe strikes in her left side 'o tenie el coraçon' (200. b. 17-18) could be a convention linked to the role of love in her death; the parallel with Píramo also reminds of the swiftness of his death, as though to underline that Thisbe is committed to following him.

The Results of Thisbe's Pleas

As Thisbe dies, the focus turns to the result of her pleas to the mulberry and the parents of the lovers. In the *Metamorphoses* we see both requests granted:

voto tamen tetigere deos, tetigere parentes;
nam color in pomo est, ubi permaturuit, ater,
quodque regis superest, una requiescit in urna. (IV. 164-66)

[Her prayers touched the gods and touched the parents; for the colour of the mulberry fruit is dark red when it is ripe, and all that remained from both funeral pyres rests in a common urn.] (p. 191)

The *General estoria* also begins by stating that Thisbe's pleas have an effect:

Pero los desseos de las sus oraciones que ella fizo mouieron a los sus dioses, et mouieron otrossi a sus parientes. (200. a. 18-21)

As in the Latin, the metamorphosis of the mulberry is covered first:

Ca aquel color que ella demando, aquel mismo finco en el fruto del moral pues que madura de seer siempre negro, que es color que da sienpre signo de mal, e esto cumplieron por ruego della los sus dioses. (200. b. 21-26)

A slightly different perspective results from additions in the Castilian. Reiteration emphasizes that the metamorphosis is asked for by Thisbe and granted by 'los sus dioses' (200. b. 26), an affirmation of the power of individual prayer which is puzzling in a text written in a Christian context of pagan gods; perhaps the possessive *sus* evokes a mutual loyalty between human and gods, which creates an

important parallel for a Christian society. The positive element, represented by the granting of prayer to an individual otherwise bereft of support, is countermanded by the nature of a response which results in the confirmation of a darkening which is due to death, a negative element which is accentuated in the Castilian by the explanation of the Latin term *ater*, 'que es color que da sienpre signo de mal' (200. b. 24-25).

Positive and negative are mingled also in the account of the burial of the lovers given by the *General estoria*:

Et otrossi fizieron del soterramiento los parientes, que luego en sus casas los non fallaron otra dia, e sopieron que fuera delos, fueron e tomaron los muy onrrada mentre con grandes llantos e grandes duelos, et cuemo era la costumbre de los nobles en aquel tiempo, quemaron los luego, et touieron los parientes de amas las partes por muy guisado que aquellos a qui assi ayuntara ell amor en cabo de su uida, que ninguno non los parties en la muert, et tomaron las cenizas damos e metieron los en un luziello fech muy apuesto e muy pintado con su estoria sobrel. Et este fuy ell amor e el acabamiento de Piramo e de Thisbe. (200. b. 26-201. a. 2)

Compared with the Latin, the Castilian gives a more complete account. A brief summary tells how the parents discover what has happened 'los non fallaron otra dia, e sopieron que fuera dellos' (200. b. 28-29). The parents, like their children, have a moment of realization. The clause *los non fallaron otra dia*, 'they did not find them the next morning', implies in truth *los uuscaron otra dia, e los non fallaron*, 'they looked for them the next morning, and did not find them'. The parents seek their children, expecting to find them, but discover only absence and death; the report of the discovery reproduces the shocking nature of the experience. The discovery leads the parents to the place where their children lie dead: 'fueron e tomaron los muy onrrada mentre con grandes llantos e grandes duelos' (200. b. 30-31). Emotion is implied, which draws the parents to their children as powerfully as love draws Piramo and Thisbe to each other. Movement in both cases is the same; from the city to the setting of the spring, the tomb of Ninus and the mulberry. The open, daytime,

communal, activity is inverted, as love leads Píramo and Thisbe to travel secretly, alone, and by night. The intrusion of death has an equally disruptive effect on everyday life; no morning meal is mentioned, abandoned it seems in the urgency of events, which transform the usually joyful excursion into an unexpected journey, which ends in ‘grandes llantos e grandes duelos’ (200. b. 31). The echo of the words of Thisbe, which saw the dark colour of the mulberry as appropriate to ‘lagrimas e duelos’ (200. b. 10), acts as a confirmation of the negative aspect of the deaths of Píramo and Thisbe, as we see the sorrow which results.

The hyperbole of ‘tomaron los *muy* onrrada mientras con *grandes* llantos e *grandes* duelos’ (200. b. 30-31) can act to accentuate the emotion experienced by the parents as individuals and show the intensity of their mourning. There is also the suggestion of a funeral procession, in which the dead are borne with honour, and mourned by many. Death disrupts, and society responds with ritual words and actions, which express the devastation experienced, but within a pre-ordained pattern which thus attempts to control it. We see this in the text. The reiteration that weeping and mourning are associated with death has itself a ritual quality. Ritual is implied in the line from the *Metamorphoses* which tells of the cremation of the lovers and the placing of their ashes in a single urn: ‘quodque rogis superest, una requiescit in urna’ (IV. 166). The *General estoria* gives additional information on cremation, and on the *luziello*, with reference both to its role as a resting place for the ashes of Píramo and Thisbe, and as an artefact. London and Leslie suggest that ‘the details of the crematory customs and the placing of the lovers’ story over their tomb are probably from other sources’ (p. 155, n. 3). Rather than being drawn from other sources, the comment in the *General estoria* ‘et cuerno era la costumbre de los nobles en aquel tiempo, quemaron los luego’ (200. b. 32-33) can be seen as an amplification of the

reference in the Latin to 'rogis' (IV. 166), preceded by an explanation which, significantly, presents the use of a *rogus*, 'funeral pile', as *la costumbre*, thus emphasizing the importance of ritual.

The expansions in the *General estoria*, by revealing more of the sorrow caused to others by the deaths of Píramo and Thisbe, can suggest that these deaths are indeed a negative element in the story of the lovers. As the account of the funeral rituals which formalize the expression of sorrow continues, the perspective becomes less clear, as death assumes a positive aspect as the agent which restores the lost union between the lovers. The Latin demonstrates the truth of the comment 'vota [...] tetigere parentes' (IV. 164), and shows Pyramus and Thisbe joined, in a single line, with the move from the plural 'rogis' (IV. 166), of the first hemistich, to the singular 'una requiescit in urna' (IV. 166), of the second.

The Castilian, after the cremation, adds a report of the decision which leads to the ashes of the lovers being interred together. This report reproduces closely the earlier pleading of Thisbe:

Que a nos amos, a quien tan certero amor e la postremera ora de la uida
assi ayunto, que uos non tengades por mal de meter nos a amos, a mi e a
Píramo, en un luziello. (200. a. 38-b. 1)

Thisbe addresses both sets of parents, presents herself and Píramo as linked by love and death, and seeks a positive attitude to her request for a joint *luziello*. It would seem unlikely that the parents would hear Thisbe's pleas, but we are told that these 'mouieron [...] a sus parientes' (200. b. 20-21), and, once aware of the deaths, the parents are shown acting and thinking as though in direct response to her words:

Touieron los parientes de amas las partes por muy guisado que aquellos a
qui assi ayuntara ell amor en cabo de su uida, que ninguno non los parties
en la muert. (200. b. 34-37)

Unity between Píramo and Thisbe seems to spread to their parents, as approval for a joint *luziello* is given by 'los parientes de amas las partes' (200. b. 34). The

influential factor in the decision is that love linked the lovers in the final moments of their lives. The *General estoria* appears to grant increasing value to this union. Repetition implies an important fact, emphasized to ensure that it will be retained in the memory. There is the suggestion of the perception of a superior, exemplary, or perhaps extreme quality in the lovers, or their love: 'aquellos a qui assi ayuntara ell amor en cabo de su uida' (200. b. 35-36); it becomes inappropriate to separate those thus joined: 'que ninguno non los parties en la muert' (200. b. 37). Echoes of the marriage service appear to reinforce the validity of the relationship between Píramo and Thisbe; intriguingly, they are joined, not by God, but by *ell amor*, and not with anticipation of a long married life, but *en cabo de su uida*. The parents confirm the provisional union with the permanence of the carefully crafted single *luziello*:

Tomaron las cenizas damos e metieron los en un luziello fecho muy
apuesto e muy pintado con su estoria sobrel. (200. b. 38-40)

The emphasis given to the bond brought by love in death can act as an affirmation that the deaths of the lovers can be viewed as a positive element in their story.

Despite the apparent blessing given by text and parents to a union achieved in death, the attitude to that death remains ambiguous. The *General estoria* gives an account of the reactions and thoughts of the parents faced with the deaths of their children. First there is shock, disruption and sorrow; raw emotion is then formulated as ritual, which seeks to impose order on chaos. In the report of the thoughts which result in the single *luziello* we can see a reproduction of the human desire to give meaning to the incomprehensible; the deaths of Píramo and Thisbe become not pointless, but ordained and sanctified by love. This perceived, or stated, meaning is given permanence in the single *luziello*; the story of the lovers painted on their tomb might confirm the interpretation given by the parents, or might contradict it.

2.5 TRUTH, MEMORY AND INTERPRETATION

As the *General estoria* ends the story of Piramo and Thisbe, it seems that their deaths might be viewed as positive or negative, thus allowing an ambivalent attitude to their love. However, guidance can be found, clarifying the significance of the material for the *General estoria*. Following further study of the way in which the text ends the story of the lovers, we will turn our attention to the concept of *membrança*, first seen in the *Prologue* (*GeI*, 3. a. 32-33). Finally, we will consider the explanatory commentary, which, in the *General estoria*, follows the story proper.

2.5.1 THE END OF THE STORY

In both the *Metamorphoses* and the *General estoria* Thisbe's pleas are granted. In the *Metamorphoses*, as we recall, this result is briefly recounted:

voto tamen tetigere deos, tetigere parentes;
nam color in pomo est, ubi permaturuit, ater,
quodque rogis superest, una requiescit in urna. (IV. 164-66)

[Her prayers touched the gods and touched the parents; for the colour of the mulberry fruit is dark red when it is ripe, and all that remained from both funeral pyres rests in a common urn.] (p. 191)

There is a startling shift. The narrative has focused upon Pyramus and Thisbe, telling of their love, their separation, their attempts at reunion, their deaths. Suddenly they seem dismissed from the text, as the result of Thisbe's lengthy pleas is given with a brevity which seems almost perfunctory. We have been told, before the appearance of Pyramus and Thisbe, that the story is conceived as that of 'quae poma alba ferebat / ut nunc nigra ferat contactu sanguinis arbor' (IV. 51-52), ['how the mulberry-tree, which once had borne white fruit, now has fruit dark red from the bloody stain'] (p.183). We have been told that the story is to be about the mulberry, but have forgotten this as we become involved in the story of Pyramus and Thisbe. The change of focus now suggests that what happens to the lovers is only important in so

far as it effects, and explains, the metamorphosis in the mulberry. The mulberry fails to dominate the material completely, however, for the results of two pleas are found. We end with the lovers united, 'una requiescit in urna' (IV. 166); asked for first by Thisbe, as though this were of greatest importance to her, and reported last in the text, which thus returns the focus to the lovers and maintains the emphasis on their desires.

In the *General estoria* both results are given, in the same order as in the *Metamorphoses*. The metamorphosis of the mulberry is shown, reminding the reader that the subject of the story was described much earlier in the text as:

Cuemo el arbol que leuara la fructa blanca, por que la leuo negra despues,
e uinol esto por contannimiento de sangre. (195. a. 37-b. 1)

The amplifications in the Castilian, however, add little on the mulberry, and by showing the effect of the deaths of Píramo and Thisbe on their families, and by expanding on the tomb, retain the focus more firmly on the material as the story of the lovers. This perspective seems confirmed by the sentence which follows the account of the placing of the ashes in the *luziello*; there is no mention of the mulberry, simply the comment 'et este fue ell amor e el acabamiento de Piramo e de Thisbe' (200. b. 40-201. a. 2).

This sentence, 'et este fue ell amor e el acabamiento de Piramo e de Thisbe' (200. b. 40-201. a. 2), is most interesting. Before moving to a detailed discussion, we might note the range of possible meanings, which the attempt at an English translation reveals:

And this was the love and death of Píramo and Thisbe.

And this was [the story] of the love and death of Píramo and Thisbe.

And this [text that you have just heard] was [the story of] the love and death of Píramo and Thisbe.

And this [text that you have just heard] was [the story of] the love, and end, of Píramo and Thisbe.

And [this text that you have just heard] was [the story of] the love of Píramo and Thisbe, and how it ended / how they ended [up dead].

We have noted how the text offers guidance to reader or audience by signalling the move from one section to another. This sentence, however, can be seen as indicating the significant aspects of the material from the point where Píramo and Thisbe are first introduced as protagonists. The rubric announces that the account will be ‘de Piramo e de Thisbe de orient, los dos entendedores, de como se fablaron e la postura que fizieron en so amor’ (195. b. 13-16). The account itself then tells of ‘un mancebiello [...] Piramo [...] una mancebiella [...] Thisbe’ (195. b. 19-21), and moves into the story of their love. Now the end is marked: ‘et este fue ell amor e el acabamiento de Piramo e de Thisbe’ (200. b. 40-201. a. 2). *Este* can refer to the text, to the story told, or to the posited events. We can see simply material well organized, according to the precept ‘say what you are going to say, say it, and say that you have said it’. When we consider the nature of what has been said, however, additional nuances become evident.

The text indicates the intention to tell of Píramo, of Thisbe, and of their love; it is this narrative which now concludes ‘et este fue ell amor e el acabamiento de Piramo e de Thisbe’ (200. b. 40-201. a. 2). While Píramo and Thisbe are in one sense presented as the protagonists, the syntax subordinates them to the main clause ‘ell amor e el acabamiento’ (201. a. 1-2). Love and death become active forces; their significance remains ambiguous. The power of the love between Píramo and Thisbe has been demonstrated by its effect upon them; it can be seen as offering the

potential both for union and for destruction, for it draws them together, but leads them to death. It is possible to view death as a positive force which achieves resolution by reuniting the lovers after separation. A different perspective becomes apparent when the clause 'ell amor e el acabamiento' is set in relation to the start of the narrative. Here, although death is present by implication in the references to the mulberry and the blood, these precede the appearance of Píramo and Thisbe, and with the introduction of the couple, death seems forgotten and love becomes central. As their story ends, however, we see that love is followed, literally, by death. The text promises to tell of Píramo, of Thisbe, and of their love, and 'et este fue ell amor e el acabamiento de Piramo e de Thisbe' (200. b. 40-201. a. 2) becomes an ironic comment on the events which constitute the story whose narration fulfils that promise.

As the *General estoria* closes its account, the additional mention of death can make more apparent the equivocal attitude possible towards a union which takes place *in urna, en un luziello*, thus reducing any beneficial role for death. The word chosen to indicate death proves intriguing for, rather than *la muert*, we find *el acabamiento*, whose associations with 'ending' can accentuate the finality of death, but whose implications of 'completion' could evoke a state of perfection, achieved in death. Completion and finality, both, are inherent in the preterit *fue*, the range of potential referents for whose subject *este* – text, story, events – reminds us that *el acabamiento* can be applied to Píramo and Thisbe, to their story, and to the text which recounts it, and here seems to bring narrative, but not interpretative, closure.

Inherent in the *Metamorphoses* is the interweaving of the two connected stories; the deaths of the lovers are present in the allusion to the metamorphosis of the mulberry, as the mulberry is present in references to those deaths; inherent too, is

the difficulty of establishing the attitude to be taken towards those deaths. These ambiguities are retained, and even developed, in the *General estoria*. Moreover, while *este fue* places Píramo, Thisbe, their love and their death in the past, the signs requested by Thisbe persist. In both the *Metamorphoses* and the *General estoria* Thisbe indicates that the past of the lovers has brought death and a provisional union, and she uses this to strengthen her pleas; the resultant signs are not easy to interpret.

In the tomb we can see death, sorrow and the lack of a future. Thisbe, however, presents death as uniting her with Píramo, and the joint tomb thus becomes a sign of that union. The *General estoria* accentuates permanence, for a tomb, as that of Ninus demonstrates, is a long-lasting artefact, which draws the memory of the dead into the future from which they are otherwise absent. On the tomb of Píramo and Thisbe, moreover, is painted their story, further preserving it. We note, however, that by declining to describe the detail of the painting, the text leaves open the interpretation of its subject which the future may determine.

The darkening of the fruit of the mulberry also has multiple and complex significance, which seems heightened by the *General estoria*. The change of colour results from the death of Píramo, and is to be maintained as appropriate to 'lagrimas e a duelos' (200. b. 10); a negative perspective on death which seems doubled by the continuing request 'e que sea sienpre en remenbrancia de la sangre desta *doblada* muert' (200. b. 11-12), and reinforced by the effect on their families of the deaths of the lovers; Thisbe reminds us, however, that this double death, 'mia e de Píramo' (200. b. 12), also unites the separated lovers. Moreover, the metamorphosis of the mulberry, sign of the death which cuts short the future of Píramo and Thisbe, serves also to carry their story into the future.

2.5.2 REMEMBRANÇA

Knowledge of the past is maintained in the future; we return to the concept suggested by *remenbrança* or *remenbrancia*. In the *Metamorphoses*, Thisbe asks for the mulberry to retain its dark colour ‘*gemini monumenta cruoris*’ (IV. 161) [‘as a memorial of our double death’] (p.189). In the *General estoria*, first we are told that Thisbe ‘fizo [...] su oration a sus dioses en razon de remenbrança daquel fecho’ (200. a. 25-27), then in her words we find ‘en remenbrancia de la sangre desta doblada muerte’ (200. b. 11-12). Both *monimenta* and *remenbrança / remenbrancia* serve to indicate that the berries of the mulberry, permanently darkened, become a means of preserving the past. The equivalence between the terms, however, is perhaps not exact. Let us consider some definitions. For the Latin [‘monimenta’] *monumentum, monimentum*, we find the definition ‘monument, memorial’.¹³¹ For the Castilian, Martín Alonso gives the variant spelling *remembranza*, defined as ‘conmemoración, recuerdo’ (*Diccionario medieval español*, II, p. 1555). Kasten and Cody, in addition to *remenbrança*, give a range of spellings: *relembança, remebraça, remebranza, remembraça, remembrancia, remembrança, remembranza, remenbraca, remenbracia, remenbrancia, remenbrança, remenbranza*. A first definition is ‘memoria, recuerdo’. Among the examples, including several from the Gospels, which follow this definition, we find the two from the *General estoria* related to Thisbe’s plea (200. a. 27, 200. b. 11). The first is not developed, the second, from the words of Thisbe herself is presented as ‘*en remembranza de, en memoria de*’.¹³²

¹³¹ *Cassell’s Latin Dictionary*, rev. by J.R.V. Marchant and Joseph F. Charles (London: Cassell, [n.d.]), p. 351.

¹³² Kasten Lloyd A. and Florian J. Cody, *Tentative Dictionary of Medieval Spanish*, 2nd edn (New York: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 2001), p. 605.

The difference between Latin and Castilian could be important. The Latin seems to lay the emphasis more upon the physical object or sign, which preserves, recalls, and represents the past. The Castilian draws in the process which occurs in the mind, where memory might be sustained, or renewed. The use of the term in relation to the life of Christ joins actions with words, in the creation of ritual. A second definition given by Kasten and Cody is ‘relación, resumen, memorandum’ (*Tentative Dictionary*, p. 605). All these latter terms refer to a spoken or written text of words which preserves information. Did Castilian have the term *monumento* at this period? Kasten and Cody offer *monimento*, with the variant *monumento*, from the Latin *monumentu*, defined as ‘sepulcro’ or ‘lápida sepulcral’ (p. 475). The use of *remenbrança* / *remenbrancia* as Thisbe calls for the changed colour of the mulberries to become permanent might therefore represent a deliberate, and significant choice, bringing the associations of mind, memory, and writing.

Back to the Prologue: Rememrança and Writing

The concept of *remenbrança* / *remenbrancia* is mentioned in connection with writing at the start of the *General estoria*, as the *Prologue* discusses the process which leads from past events to the texts which speak of them. It is worth returning to this passage, which proves pertinent in several respects to previous discussion. In contrast with the present and the future, which can be known only imperfectly, the past can be known completely:

Mas del tiempo passado, por que saben los comienços e los acabamientos delos fechos que y se fizieron, dezimos que alcançan los omnes por este tiempo cierta mientras el saber delas cosas que fueron; onde por que el saber del tiempo que fue es cierto e non delos otros dos tiempos, assi como diximos, trabaieron se los sabios omnes de meter en escripto los fechos que son passados pora auer rememrança dellos, como si estonçes fuessen e quello sopiessen los que auien de uenir assi como ellos. (*Gel*, 3. a. 23-b. 1)

Here, we see the spelling *remembrancha*, which will be used thereafter to denote the concept. The need, or desire, for *remembrancha* of the past becomes the impetus for writing. However, it is not the past *per se* that proves important. It is because knowledge of them is complete that past events are written down ‘pora auer remembrancha dellos’ (*GeI*, 3. a. 32-33). It could be that full knowledge, of ‘los comienços e los acabamientos’ (*GeI*, 3. a. 24), permits an understanding of the consequences of actions, and thus we can see a link between perceived significance, *remembrancha* and writing.

The use of *remembrancha* makes evident a revealing parallel. The perceived import of the past leads the ‘sabios omnes’ to the activity of writing ‘pora auer remembrancha’ (*GeI*, 3. a. 32-33), and this writing preserves the past for the future. The significance of the past she shares with Piramo leads Thisbe to plead for a sign ‘en remenbrancia’ (200. b. 11), the result of her pleading is the metamorphosis of the mulberry, whose dark berries also record the past for the future. The analogy between dark berries and letters written in ink, intrinsic to the material, is accentuated by the *General estoria*.

Intriguing in this context is the role of Alfonso ‘el Sabio’, stated in the first person as the *Prologue* concludes:

Onde por todas estas cosas [...]despues que oue fecho ayuntar muchos escriptos e muchos estorias delos fechos antiguos, escogi dellos los mas uerdaderos e los meiores que y sope; e fiz ende fazer este libro, e mande y poner todos los fechos sennalados. (*GeI*, b. 20-31)

We might see a parallel between Alfonso and Thisbe. Thisbe perceives significance in the past, and brings into being a record which encapsulates both past and significance and projects them into the future. Alfonso is also concerned with the past, bringing together texts which tell of ‘los fechos antiguos’ (*GeI*, 3. b. 28). The activity itself, and the scale of the enterprise implied by ‘*muchas escriptos e muchas*

estorias' (*GeI*, 3. b. 27-28), show that the past is perceived as having significance. The perception of particular significance can be seen as Alfonso speaks of choosing from the texts 'los mas uerdaderos e los meiores' (*GeI*, 3. b. 29); the use of *saber* shows the role of his intellect in the application of his criteria. We then see Alfonso's will play an active part in the formation of the new text: 'fiz ende fazer este libro, e mande y poner todos los fechos sennalados' (*GeI*, 3. b. 30-31). The realization of Alfonso's project rests in the hands of others, as the metamorphosis of the mulberry was ultimately reliant on the gods. Alfonso, however, has power, evoked by the verbs used, particularly *mandar*, and confirmed by the past tense, which refers to 'este libro', the text which we hold in our hands. We might therefore see a certain parallel with the power of the gods who brought about the realization of Thisbe's plea.

Alfonso's power enables him to bring into being *este libro*, within whose pages we find a version of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe. The brief statement 'onde por todas estas cosas' (*GeI*, 3. b. 20) shows that his motivation springs from the ideas discussed earlier in the *Prologue*. *Este libro* becomes part of the process of writing the past, undertaken first by 'los sabios omnes [...] pora auer rememrança' (*GeI*, 3. b. 30-33). As Alfonso speaks of using these earlier writings of the past in the new text, *este libro*, we glimpse a brief history of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, present in the past, in the writings of 'los sabios omnes', in Alfonso's book, *este libro*, the *General estoria*. We are reminded that their story, the past, is not only preserved by the metamorphosis of the mulberry and the shared tomb, but also in texts of words. Indeed, it is only these written texts which present the relationship between the love and death of Pyramus and Thisbe and the metamorphosis of the mulberry, which makes of the darkened berries a record of the past. The significance

of the manifestation in the physical world is revealed only in the written text, which may remain ambiguous.

Understanding the text becomes important when we consider once more the views of the *Prologue* on the aims which underlay the writing undertaken by 'los sabios omnes'. The concept of *remembrancha* links writing the past with the use made of the resultant text by the future:

Trabaiaron se los sabios omnes de meter en escripto los fechos que son passados pora auer remembrancha dellos, como si estonçes fuessen e quelo sopiessen los que auien de uenir assi como ellos. (*GeI*, 3. a. 30-b. 1)

The need for *remembrancha* of the past is seen as the impulse for writing. As we have seen, Kasten and Cody define *remembrancha* as 'memoria, recuerdo', and also as 'relación, resumen, memorandum'. However, they do not cite the use of the term in the *Prologue* of the *General estoria* as an example for either definition (*Tentative Dictionary*, p. 605). Indeed, it is not easy to separate the two senses when considering this example of the use of *remembrancha*, for the mental process and the record of words are not only both applicable, but interrelated, in the context of this passage. *Pora auer remembrancha dellos* might mean 'to have a record of them', it might also mean 'so that they would be remembered'; it is the record of words which leads to memory. We are faced with the question of what is meant by 'remembered'; we can see the application of 'remember' to facts which have been learned, or the concept of memory which preserves in the mind a past which has been experienced. The *Prologue* implies that it is in order to achieve *remembrancha* that 'los sabios omnes', wrote 'como si estonçes fuessen e quelo sopiessen los que auien de uenir assi como ellos' (*GeI*, 3. a. 33-b. 1). A translation into English of this passage might read:

Learned men worked to write down events of the past to have *remembrancha* of them, as if [so that it would be as though] those who were to come had been there [then] and known it as they did.

While it is possible that 'los sabios omnes' had experienced that of which they wrote, the same would not be true of those in the future, for whom the written text recreates the experience *como si estonçes fuessen*, 'as if they had been there'. It is this recreation of experience which results in *rememrança*. The connection made between *rememrança* and experience raises the intriguing concept of the creation of the memory of an event which has not been experienced, as though it had.

The comments in the *Prologue* could derive from an earlier treatise on writing, meaning that the views of 'los sabios omnes' are expounded in order to reveal what they themselves saw as essential to the text which will achieve *rememrança*; a comment on their intention as to the nature of the text. The thoughts in the *Prologue* could be Alfonso's own analysis, giving a slightly different perspective; no longer do we see a statement of ideas existing before the writing of the text, which might thus be influential in the formation of that text, but rather the thoughts of a future reader of the text. Important to both perspectives is the central concept of a text which not only preserves knowledge of the past but also, by recreating the experience of the past, renders it particularly accessible to the future. A simple question might trouble such philosophy: Is it possible to write for the future? Changing cultural horizons may create a discrepancy between the text of words and the mind and imagination of the reader, causing the attempted recreation of experience to become ineffective. Assumptions and resonances of the text might then need interpretation to render them comprehensible within the changed culture. While the *Prologue* of the *General estoria* presents 'los sabios omnes' as writing texts which would resonate for the future, the presentation of those texts in the body of the *General estoria* suggests that just such an interpretation has proved necessary. The treatment given to the work of one *sabio omne*, Ovid's story of Pyramus and Thisbe,

demonstrates this clearly. If it had been felt that the story as it is found in the *Metamorphoses* was able to recreate the experience, it would be present in that form in the *General estoria*. We find, however, not the epigrammatic brevity of Ovid's Latin hexameters but a text in Castilian prose, which gives an account of the text of the *Metamorphoses* in terms which render it more comprehensible to thirteenth-century Castile. We note that 'Alfonso's' own future readers may reinterpret, bringing into focus the two perspectives, that of the *General estoria*, and that of their own cultural formation.

Knowledge of the past is to be accessible to the future; we might wonder why this should be of value, why such importance is given to *membrança*. For Thisbe, the concept is related to her own story. It might simply be that she does not wish to be forgotten. It might be, however, that she feels that the events which have occurred are of such significance that they should leave a permanent sign in the world; a reflection of the way that to each individual their own story is of paramount importance. We note also that, while Thisbe formulates her story in a particular way, the ambiguity of the terms she employs only aids the tendency of the future to impose its own reading. For 'los sabios omnes' the connection with the past is less personal for, while they may have experienced some of 'los fechos que son passados' (*GeI*, 3. b. 31-32), their writing encompasses the stories of many people. A different motive would seem to underlie the need for *membrança*. 'Natural cosa es de cobdiar los omnes saber los fechos que acahescen en todos los tiempos' (*GeI*, 3. a. 7-9) the *Prologue* begins; the intrinsic value of all knowledge may explain the

willingness to undertake the effort of writing.¹³³ A more specific reason is given later:

Et esto fizieron, por que delos fechos delos buenos tomassen los omnes exemplo pora fazer bien, et delos fechos delos malos que reçibiessen castigo por se saber guardar delo non fazer. (*GeI*, 3. b. 14-18)

Rememrança is important because knowledge of the past has didactic potential. It is at this point in the discussion that Alfonso speaks of his own motivation and activity: ‘onde por todas estas cosas [...] fiz ende fazer este libro’ (*GeI*, 3. b. 20-30); Alfonso presents himself as successor to ‘los sabios omnes’, the ancients, who were led to preserve the past in writing at least in part because of the lessons which might be learned.

We might consider, however, that while the writer may frame the knowledge of the past with didactic intent, it is for their reader to interpret the lesson, and it may not always be easy to differentiate between ‘los fechos delos buenos’ and ‘los fechos delos malos’: In which group, for example, should the story of the mulberry and the lovers Pyramus and Thisbe be placed? The version of the story found in the *General estoria* presents a complex interplay of texts and traditions, explaining and interpreting the material from the *Metamorphoses*, but of necessity retaining many of its ambiguities. In deciding whether the material should be placed among ‘los fechos delos buenos’, or among ‘los fechos delos malos’, a first difficulty is to determine the *fecho*, or *fechos*, of the text, no easy task as a result of the way the story of the metamorphosis of the mulberry remains interwoven with the story of the lovers in the Castilian version as in the Latin. It is from the actions of the human lovers that a lesson might most easily be learnt, ‘exemplo pora fazer bien’ (*GeI*, 3. b. 15-16), or

¹³³ For a discussion of the themes of the importance of knowledge, and the interconnected nature of all knowledge in the *General estoria* see Rico (1984), pp. 123-41.

'castigo por se saber guardar delo non fazer' (*Gel*, 3. b. 17-18); the problem of deciding which should be found in events related to Píramo and Thisbe remains.

Certain of the amplifications of the text of the *Metamorphoses* found in the *General estoria*, particularly when considered within the context of thirteenth-century Castile, guide the reader's perspective on the actions of the lovers, allowing a lesson to be seen. An example of such guidance can be seen in the presentation of Thisbe's departure from the city, which emphasizes the gravity and danger of such a step, presenting a warning, which is reinforced as the full consequences become apparent. However, while some aspects of the treatment given by the *General estoria* to the actions of Píramo and Thisbe might suggest that such behaviour should be avoided, other elements of the Castilian text can act to increase a natural identification with protagonists who are young, beautiful, and in love.

A scholarly account, with continual references to the authority of the source text in Ovid's *Libro mayor*, might not seem the most appropriate vehicle for the creation of sympathy for the lovers. A different perspective becomes apparent when we consider certain key characteristics of the text which can be linked to this approach to the material, particularly the preoccupation with clarifying what may be obscure in the source. In general, we see a move from the often epigrammatic brevity of the Latin verse to a more complete account in Castilian prose. Whereas in the original, the *Metamorphoses*, we find a language and a form which function within established systems for the representation of reality, in the new text, the *General estoria*, both language and form, particularly in combination, constitute a developing means of expression, with the potential for reliance on different models and textual traditions.

The use of Castilian in the *General estoria* allows the material from the *Metamorphoses* to be understood by a public lacking in Latin. The language of the text might be close in many respects, such as vocabulary and register, to that of everyday use, with a resultant reduction of distance between public and material. The change from verse to prose is also important in this respect. The deliberate manipulation of language, a characteristic of all writing, is perhaps most evident in verse, which thus clearly manifests its nature as an artificial construct which attempts to represent reality. Prose, by contrast, appears more natural, and lacks the dislocating effect caused by the need to interpret. The reduction of awareness of the text as an intermediary allows the material to appear more immediate.

To allow the story of Pyramus, Thisbe, and the mulberry from the *Metamorphoses* to be understood within a new context, the *General estoria* makes changes of language and of form which reduce the distance between the reader and the story. The same is true of changes made to content. We have seen how the *General estoria* expands on many details from the *Metamorphoses*, explaining motives and facts which might otherwise appear incomprehensible. The terms of reference become important, for clarification, which relies on the assumptions of the society for which it is provided, draws the whole of the material into the context of the culture of that society, presenting the experience of Piramo and Thisbe in terms which would allow thirteenth-century Castilians to relate it to their own lives.

In the *General estoria* we move from the patterned structures of Latin verse to the familiar structures of Castilian prose; from epigram to the story of the lovers Piramo and Thisbe. In the presentation of their story we do not find great play on the elaborate lyric conventions, such as we have seen in the French *Piramus et Tisbé*. Instead, the text is structured around certain key words which are central to the

relationship between Píramo and Thisbe: *amor*, *entendedor* and *postura*. We have noted the possible association between the concept of *entendedor* and troubadour lyric indicated by Impey, who comments that, when using such concepts, the writers of the *General estoria* ‘las comentan con palabras de desaprobación’ (‘La *fin’amors* y sus términos’, p. 374, p.369). As we read the Castilian version of the story of Píramo and Thisbe, possible disapproval can be counteracted by other factors. We identify with the couple, joined together by love, divided by their parents. We see the making of the pact between them, the suggestion of a legal model found in its formulation reinforced as they keep their given word and undertake the dangerous quest for reunion, displaying a loyalty which increases sympathy for them. The deaths of Píramo and Thisbe assume a more positive aspect, as a demonstration of faithfulness, which reverses the separation imposed by their parents; *castigo* or *exemplo*?

The *General estoria* opens with the past. The *Prologue* discusses knowledge of the past and the preservation and transmission of that knowledge in writing, first by ‘los sabios omnes’, and then by Alfonso. As we follow these stages we learn also of the history, of the past, of the *General estoria* itself. When we move from the *Prologue* to the body of the text, we find that, in addition to knowledge of past events, the *General estoria* preserves also the process of preservation. Each layer of the text contains earlier ones: within the *General estoria* is an account of Ovid’s text, ‘el quarto libro del so Libro Mayor’ (194. b. 29); within this is the storytelling of the ‘fijas de Mineo’ (194. b. 28), which includes Alcithoe’s story of the mulberry and the lovers. Within the written texts is the past, which generates other, non written, texts: the story of Píramo and Thisbe painted on their tomb, and the metamorphosis of the mulberry. The latter is particularly intriguing, as both past event and sign which

preserves the past, which exists with reference to it. The metamorphosis of the mulberry occurs as a consequence of the actions of Píramo and Thisbe; their story includes the metamorphosis.

The story of Píramo and Thisbe is the past, preserved for the future in written texts, on their tomb, and by means of the dark berries of the mulberry. As we have seen, the *Prologue* of the *General estoria* states that ‘los sabios omnes’ committed the past to writing for *rememrança*, the text would be such that for future readers it would be ‘como si estonçes fuessen e quello sopiessen’ (*GeI*, 3. a. 33-34), from knowledge of past events could be drawn *exemplo*, or *castigo*. If, in the material relating to the mulberry and the lovers, we consider the story of Píramo and Thisbe as the most fruitful source of didactic material, we find that the potential *castigo* can be undermined by the very qualities which allow the recreation of their experience. The darkened berries of the mulberry exist in the physical world, but here they have small potential as a text related to the story of the lovers, for they do not recreate experience, and their significance is known only through the written texts which also preserve them.

2.5.3 ‘DE LO QUE QUIERE MOSTRAR EL MUDAMIENTO’

Story and metamorphosis persist, interrelated through the deaths of Píramo and Thisbe. As the *General estoria* closes its account of events with the remark ‘et este fue ell amor e el acabamiento de Piramo and Thisbe’ (200. b. 40-201. a. 2), the ambiguities related to those deaths remain, hindering understanding of the true significance of the material. The *General estoria* responds by including an explanatory commentary, with the rubric ‘de lo que quiere mostrar el mudamiento de las moras blancas en negras’ (201. a. 4-6).

A context for such commentaries is provided in the first book of the *General estoria*, following the story of Jupiter and Io, the first of Ovid's stories to be presented. The exposition begins with the work of the pagan writers:

Los auctores delos gentiles fueron muy sabios omnes e fablaron de grandes cosas, e en muchos logares en figura e en semeiança duno por al, como lo fazen oy las escripturas dela nuestra sancta Eglesia; et sobre todos los otros auctores, Ouidio en el su Libro mayor, e esto tira ala su theologia delos gentiles mas que otras razones que ellos ayan, e el Ouidio mayor non es al entrellos si non la theologia e la Biblia dello entre los gentiles. (*GeI*, 162 .b. 47-163. a. 2)

The attitude is revealing. The inherent merit and significance implied by the statement that the pagan writers discussed important matters, often in veiled terms, is increased by, but also rests upon, the parallel established between pagan and Christian writings. Indeed, the pre-eminence of Ovid amongst the pagan writers is established by the presentation of his *Libro mayor*, the *Metamorphoses*, as comparable to the Bible as a source of *theologia*, 'philosophy' or 'knowledge of the world', for pagan society. We can see the relevance of these remarks to the text of the *General estoria*. The evaluation in relation to Christian texts provides justification for the use of pagan texts by Christian writers. The reference to the expression of meaning indirectly, 'en figura e en semeiança duno por al' (*GeI*, 162. b. 49-50), indicates the need for interpretation of the text, which the provision of the Christian context suggests may be by the application of the techniques of biblical exegesis.

Pagan and Christian texts possess a latent truth, which only awaits revelation.

A recapitulation applies the proposition to the story of Jupiter and Io:

Non lo tenga ninguno por fabliella, por que es delas razones de Ouidio, ca el que las sus razones bien catare e las entendiere fallara que non ay fabliella ninguna, nin freyres predigadores e los menores que se trabaian de tornarlo en la nuestra theologia non lo farien si assi fuesse, mas todo es dicho en figura e en semeiança de al. (*GeI*, 163. a. 44-52)

The statement that the story of Jupiter and Io should not be seen as *fabliella*, 'fiction', 'falsehood', is supported by the fact of its source among the writings of

Ovid; this means that the assertion applies also to other material from the *Metamorphoses*. Assurance of the absence of falsehood in Ovid's work comes only after the text has been studied and understood: the presence of truth will become apparent to one who 'las sus razones bien catare e las entendiere' (*GeI*, 163. a. 46-47). As the argument is developed, truth and interpretation become closely related for, while interpretation of the text is necessary to reveal the truth within it, it is the assumption that truth is present which justifies the work of interpretation undertaken by the clerics.

The work of the clerics is described as 'se trabaian de tornarlo en la nuestra theologia' (*GeI*, 163. a. 49-51), which implies an interpretation within a new philosophical and religious context. This section of the *General estoria* concludes with a repetition of the statement found near its start, that 'todo es dicho en figura e en semeiança de al' (*GeI*, 163. a. 51-52). We can see a reference to meaning veiled by the use of figurative language. However, within the context of Christian interpretations of the Bible, particularly of the Old Testament, the term *figura* has additional significance, denoting a pattern, of relationships of characters and events, which is a reflection of a truth which becomes evident only later in time, in the light of further knowledge.¹³⁴ Christian clerics are in possession of knowledge which was not vouchsafed to the pagan writers; it is the application of that knowledge which is necessary for the full significance of the text to be revealed.

We see an additional stage in writing and understanding the past. This becomes evident in the next section of the *General estoria*:

Leemos en los Integumentos de los sabios que espusieron oscuros los dichos delos gentiles – e es integumento por descubrimiento, por que

¹³⁴ On *figura* see Erich Auerbach, 'Figura', trans. from the German by Ralph Mannheim, in *Scenes From the Drama of European Literature, Theory and History of Literature*, 9 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), pp. 11-76 and 229-37.

departe, e descubre e apaladina las palabras e razones sobre lo que quisieron dezir en ellos los sabios delos gentiles, en que dixieron en cubierta mientras uno por al. (*GeI*, 163. b. 5-12)

The *General estoria* refers to the 'Integumentos de los sabios' (*GeI*, 163. b. 5-6), which see obscurity in, and attempt to discern the meaning of, the writings of 'los sabios delos gentiles' (*GeI*, 163. b. 10-11). We note the parallel with the much disputed lines from the *Prologue* to the *Lais* of Marie de France:

Custume fu as ancïens,
 Ceo tes [ti] moine Precïens,
 Es livres ke jadis feseient
 Assez oscurement diseient
 Pur ceus ki a venir esteient
 Et ki aprendre les deveient,
 K'i peüssent gloser la lettre
 E de lur sen le surplus mettre. (9-16)

In the *General estoria*, two groups of 'sabios omnes', two bodies of work, are described by a third, which shows the relationship between them.

Before detailed analysis of the commentary which follows the account of events related to Píramo, Thisbe, and the mulberry, let us read it in its entirety:

Rubric: De lo que quiere mostrar el mudamiento de las moras blancas en negras
 Departe maestre Johan que por aquello que el moral cria primera mientras las moras blancas e despues, quando las trae a maduras, que se tornan prietas, que esto que aun oy lo faze aquel frutero en so fruto, mas que se entiende por y por la blancura la uida, por el color negro la muert, et por Piramo et por Tisbe la mancebia e ell amor de los entendedores; et por que los entendedores de tal amor se fallan muchas uezes mal de so entender, ca uinieron ya ende grandes males al mundo e muchos, pusieron los griegos, e Ouidio e los otros autores gentiles romanos que ouieron dellos esta razon enxiemplo deste fecho en Piramo e en Tisbe, en razon de castigo pora los otros que lo oyessen. Et por aquello que dize Ouidio que las moras primero blancas que se tornaron despues negras, departe maestre Johan ell ingles que se entiende por la blancura la mancebia e los mancebos, e aun qual quier otro de qual quier edat que sea en tal amor entiende, et que se entiende otrossi por y el sabor que dent an los entendedores; et el mal en que se ende fallan despues, que se entienda por la negrura que uiene postrimera en las moras. Aun diz maestre Johan que por las moras primero blancas e despues negras, que se entiende que muerte yaze e se asconde en el dulce amor. (201. a. 8-40)

As we have seen, the material on the mulberry and the lovers poses important difficulties in terms of defining the meaning of the text, both at the level of the events which occur, and at a more profound level. It is not easy to decide whether the story

should be seen as that of the metamorphosis of the mulberry, or that of the lovers. The metamorphosis can be seen as central, the story of the lovers as the explanation of this phenomenon. The mulberry, however, is entirely passive, while the lovers act, and react; it is their actions which lead to the metamorphosis of the mulberry, it is they, as protagonists, who attract the interest of the reader. Moreover, when Thisbe finds the mulberry darkened by the blood of her dead lover, she calls for the change to become permanent in terms which mean that, when her plea is answered, the metamorphosis becomes more than a physical phenomenon, assuming a significance which is not easy to interpret. The rubric 'de lo que quiere mostrar el mudamiento de las moras blancas en negras' (201. a. 4-6) suggests that the *General estoria* sees this element as central to the material, if only in terms of the need to provide clarification.

The explanation begins with a reference: 'departe maestre Johan' (201. a. 8). Who was 'maestre Johan'? The use of the verb *departir* returns us to the remarks on textual commentary found in the first book of the *General estoria*:

Leemos en los Integumentos de los sabios que espusieron oscuros los dichos delos gentiles – e es integumento por descubrimiento, por que departe, e descubre e apaladina las palabras e razones sobre lo que quisieron dezir en ellos los sabios delos gentiles, en que dixieron en cubierta mentre uno por al. (*GeI*, 163. b. 5-12)

We can see that 'maestre Johan', named three times (201. a. 8, 201. a. 28, 201. a. 37) as the source of the commentary on the darkening of the berries of the mulberry, is one of 'los sabios', who worked to clarify the meaning of the writings of 'los sabios delos gentiles'. The qualification 'maestre Johan ell ingles' (201. a. 28-29) would appear to fix the identity of the commentator even more firmly, indicating the scholar John of Garland. John of Garland's *Integumenta Ovidii* might be one example of the *Integumentos* referred to in Book I, or the work intended.

It has been noted that the commentary on the mulberry in the *General estoria* does not correspond to that found in the work of John of Garland. London and Leslie,

rather than the full text from the *General estoria*, give a summary of the commentary:

After the practical statement that the change of colour undergone by mulberries as they mature is a natural one which occurs even today, following 'maestre Johan ell ingles', the symbolism and moral significance of the tale are given.

Sources of the material are explored in a footnote:

The 'practical' explanation is probably from the twelfth-century Ovidian commentary of Arnaulfus Aurelianensis: 'Mora de albis in nigra nichil aliud est quam quod alba sunt nondum matura, sed nigrescunt dum maturescunt' (F. Ghisalberti, *Arnolfo d'Orléans, un cultore di Ovidio nel secolo XII*, Milan, 1932, p. 210). Most of the explanation that follows, although ascribed to 'maestre Johan ell ingles', assumed to be John of Garland (cf. Solalinde, *General estoria*, p.xiv), must, however, belong to another annotator, for only the lines ...*por las moras primero blancas*, etc., correspond to John of Garland's terse: *Alba prius morus nigredine mora colorans / Signat quod dulci mors in amore latet*' (F. Ghisalberti, *Giovanni di Garlandia: Integumenta Ovidii, poemetto inedito del secolo XIII*, Milan, 1933, p. 51).¹³⁵

The presence of material additional to that offered by John of Garland does not mean that the *General estoria* is careless or mistaken in its attribution. We might see an effect similar to that noted with respect to the material attributed to Ovid. We have seen that comparison with the cited source – Ovid's *Libro mayor*, the *Metamorphoses* – reveals amplifications in the *General estoria*. These amplifications could be due to the use of a version of the *Metamorphoses* which differs from that available to twenty-first century scholars. The difference could be as small as a single letter, or could extend to the inclusion of commentaries, prior to the *General estoria*, which have become accepted as the work of Ovid. This material is then further elaborated as the *General estoria* draws a range of sources and models, many perhaps not previously associated with the *Metamorphoses*, into a relationship which results in the revelation of the significance of the primary text, within the new context. The commentary of John of Garland, included as part of the account and

¹³⁵ London and Leslie, 'A Thirteenth-Century Spanish Version', p. 155.

explanation of the *Metamorphoses* given by the *General estoria*, is itself the subject of elaboration and clarification.

Analysis of the passage headed by the rubric ‘de lo que quiere mostrar el mudamiento de las moras blancas en negras’

Scholars such as ‘maestre Johan’ analysed earlier texts in order to discover:

Lo que quisieron dezir en ellos los sabios delos gentiles, en que dixieron en cubierta mientras uno por al. (*GeI*, 163. b. 10-12)

The *General estoria* follows its account of the interrelated stories of the lovers and the mulberry with one such commentary, raising expectations that the significance of the earlier material will be explained. The passage is to tell ‘de lo que quiere mostrar el mudamiento de las moras blancas en negras’ (201. a. 4-6). The terms used are significant. The remarks in Book I of the *General estoria* discuss the analysis of *dichos*, *palabras*, and *razones* (*GeI*, 163. b. 6-9), terms which are related to human discourse. The meaning, or significance, of that discourse is expressed by the verb combination *querer dezir*. Here, the object of study is not words but the *mudamiento*, the ‘change’, in the berries of the mulberry. One element of the material, the metamorphosis of the mulberry, the ‘text’ within the text, is isolated as the focus of analysis. Moreover, the use of the verb combination *querer mostrar* suggests a different system for the formulation of meaning: significance comes not from what is said, but from what is shown, a difference which has important implications for any interpretation.

The placing of the explanatory commentary after the account of the love and death of Píramo and Thisbe leads to the assumption that the metamorphosis will be interpreted within this context, however, as the passage begins this assumption appears ill-founded. There is no immediate mention of the lovers, and the term

mudamiento appears to refer merely to the habitual change from white to dark berries which occurs as the mulberry matures:

Departe maestre Johan que por aquello que el moral cria primera mientre las moras blancas e despues, quando las trae a maduras, que se tornan prietas, que esto que aun oy lo faze aquel frutero en so fruto.
(201. a. 8-13)

These lines, however, should not be seen as a ‘practical explanation’ (London and Leslie, p. 155, n. 4) of the metamorphosis. Before any explanation, we find a statement of what is to be explained; before the gloss, the text. The *General estoria* does not abandon the *Metamorphoses* for botany, rather we must see a reading of the former informed by the latter. In the *Metamorphoses*, the material is introduced in terms which suggest that the metamorphosis of the mulberry is a change which occurs only once: ‘quae poma alba ferebat / ut nunc nigra ferat contactu sanguinis arbor’ (IV. 51-52), [‘how the mulberry-tree, which once had borne white fruit, now has fruit dark red, from the bloody stain’] (p.183); the blood of Pyramus stains berries and roots (IV. 125-27). Thisbe pleads for the change to become permanent ‘semper’ (IV. 161), but with the result of her pleas, a more complex situation is revealed: ‘nam color in pomo est, ubi permaturuit, ater’ (IV. 165), [‘for the colour of the mulberry fruit is dark red when it is ripe’] (p.183). The connection between the ripeness of their berries and their change of colour is given greater prominence in the *General estoria*, particularly as the account unfolds. As Alcithoe considers telling the story ‘de cuemo el aruol que leuara la fructa blanco, por que la leuo negra despues, e uinol esto por contannimiento de sangre’ (195. a. 37-b. 1), the chronological relationship established by the verb tenses and *despues* could, as in the *Metamorphoses*, refer to a single change of state. As her audience approve her choice of material, ‘esta razon postrimera del aruol e del su fruto, primero blanco e despues negro’ (195. b. 1-3), it becomes possible to see a repeated change of state. The blood

from Píramo's death wound falls on the trunk and roots of the tree; the latter nourishes the fruits, which thus becomes darkened 'salio de la rayz el çumo que cria e mantiene las foias a los frutos en los aruoles, e tinxo el fruto daquel aruol' (198. b. 36-38); a single change seems indicated, but the use of the term *cria* provides a link with the natural cycle of the tree and a change as the fruit matures. Thisbe's plea to the mulberry is framed to take into account this aspect of the change of colour: 'lieua sienpre tu e tu generacion fruto negro, et pues que madurare, que se torne tal que conuenga a lagrimas e a duelos' (200. b. 7-10), and the result of her plea emphasizes it: 'aquel color que ella demando, aquel mismo finco en el fruto del moral pues que madura de seer sienpre negro' (200. b. 21-24).

The *General estoria* accentuates the complexity of the change which affects the mulberry. Rather than suffering a simple metamorphosis from white-fruited to dark-fruited tree, in each generation of the mulberry the change from white to dark is itself preserved, and seen in the ripening fruits. It is this phenomenon whose significance is explored in the commentary on the 'mudamiento de las moras blancas en negras' (201. a. 4-6). While the rubric uses the verb combination *querer mostrar*, the body of the commentary uses *entenderse*. Difficulties can result from the differing uses of *entender* found in the passage. It is possible to isolate the construction *por x se entiende y*; more subtle than simply 'x means y', the phrase has implications of revelation 'by / through / because of x, y may be understood'. We see this as, following the presentation of what is meant by the change in the mulberry, the first equivalences are given:

Mas que se entiende por y por la blancura la uida, por el color negro la muert. (201. a. 13-15)

First we see 'que se entiende por y' (201. a. 13-14), where *y* refers back to *aquello* (201. a. 8-9), used of the fact that the fruit of the mulberry turns from white to black

as it ripens. Next, we see the white equated with life, the black with death. The parallel is not arbitrary, and indeed functions with some level of complexity. White can have positive connotations, such as truth, purity and light, which can be seen as pertaining to life. Black can suggest absence of light, secrecy, sin, and sorrow, and can be associated with death. In addition, it is important to remember that white and black are not discussed in isolation, but rather in relation to each other, as elements of the change of colour undergone by the fruit of the mulberry. We should see the indication of the correspondence which exists between the life of the mulberry and the wider cycle of life and death.

The commentary then speaks of Píramo and Thisbe:

et por Píramo et por Tisbe la mancebia e ell amor de los entendedores;
(201. a. 15-17)

While it may seem that the mulberry has been abandoned for a new subject, this is not so, for white and black, Píramo and Thisbe, all depend on *que se entiende por y*, all are aspects of the change of colour of the fruit of the mulberry. While the change from white to black at ripeness reflects and reveals the wider cycle of life and death, the first change of colour has been presented as the result of the actions, the life and death, of two individuals, the lovers Píramo and Thisbe. We could read ‘se entiende por y [...] por Píramo et por Tisbe la mancebia e ell amor de los entendedores’ (201. a. 13-17) as an indication that Píramo and Thisbe are to be understood as standing for youth and *ell amor de los entendedores*. A different reading would give full weight to the central phenomenon, the changed colour of the mulberry. Through Píramo and Thisbe, as aspects of this change, youth and *ell amor de los entendedores* may be understood.

The *General estoria* establishes the link between the lovers and the metamorphosis of the mulberry. The youth of both Píramo and Thisbe has been

accentuated; they could be seen as representing youth, and through them the essential nature of youth is made more evident. Central to the material is the relationship between Píramo and Thisbe. Here, this relationship is not described simply as *amor*, but as *ell amor de los entendedores*, implying a particular kind of love and a sense for *entendedor* more specific than 'amante'. We have noted the use of the term *entendedor* five times in the text. The rubric which introduced the material on the lovers describes them as 'Piramo et Thisbe de orient, los dos entendedores' (195. b. 13-14). We next see the term used as Thisbe sits alone beneath the mulberry 'cuemo auie puesto con Piramo, so entendedor' (197. a. 27-28). Píramo speaks of Thisbe as 'la entendedor' (198. a. 31-32). *Entendedor* is again used in connection with Thisbe as, despite her fear of the lioness, she returns to the meeting place 'por que non fuesse enartado el su entendedor' (199. a. 9-10). Finally, following the death of the lovers and the change in the mulberry, we read that 'se entiende por y [...] por Piramo et por Thisbe la mancebia e ell amor de los entendedores' (201. a. 13-17). We can see the close connection between the use of the term *entendedor* and the pact which the lovers make, the *postura* which is to restore lost union. The relationship of *entendedor* can be viewed positively, as one bringing closeness and loyalty between individuals. The *General estoria*, however, has established a connection between the metamorphosis and the lovers, and it is in this context that Píramo and Thisbe allow an understanding of *ell amor de los entendedores*:

Mas que se entiende por y por la blancura la uida, por el color negro la muert, et por Piramo et por Tisbe la mancebia e ell amor de los entendedores. (201. a. 13-17)

The fruit of the mulberry changes from white to dark on ripening. Beyond a simple association of white with life and black with death, there is the correspondence between the two cycles; the fruits of the mulberry grow, ripen and move to the death of that season; life is followed by death. The first darkening, the first death, was

brought by Piramo and Thisbe. Lest the parallel with the first sin of Adam be insufficient, the *General estoria* continues, removing all doubt as to how *ell amor de los entendedores* should be viewed:

Et por que los entendedores de tal amor se fallan muchas uezes mal de so entender, ca uinieron ya ende grandes males al mundo e muchos, pusieron los griegos, e Ouidio e los otros autores gentiles romanos que ouieron dellos esta razon enxiemplo deste fecho en Piramo e en Tisbe, en razon de castigo pora los otros que lo oyessen. (201. a. 17-25)

The text is clear: the effect of *ell amor de los entendedores* is negative, for the lovers and for others. The exact sense of the lines is not always easy to determine. First the text considers *los entendedores*. We read ‘los entendedores de tal amor’ (201. a. 17-18), which would appear to translate as ‘those who love in such a way’, or ‘those who are bound together by such a love’, although the implication of a specific relationship already present in the term *entendedor* appears to render superfluous the qualifying ‘de tal amor’ (201. a. 18); we might see an addition for emphasis, or a different function for *de*, giving the sense ‘*entendedores*, from their love’. ‘Los entendedores’ (201. a. 17-18) and ‘entender’ (201. a. 19), linked etymologically and semantically, are separated in the sentence by the ‘mal’ which results; *mal* which could be read as ‘evil’, as ‘misfortune’, as ‘harm’, as ‘damage’. The scope is widened: the negative effects of *tal amor* gain potency, from the plural and from ‘grandes’ and ‘muchos’, and spread from the lovers to the world, in a clause which evokes the entry of sin into the world through the original sin of Adam and Eve: ‘uinieron ya ende grandes males al mundo e muchos’ (201. a. 19-20).

This negative perspective on *ell amor de los entendedores* is presented as the impetus, not for composition *per se*, but for the composition of texts which tell the story of Piramo and Thisbe. We are told that it is because such love is dangerous that:

Pusieron los griegos, e Ouidio e los otros autores gentiles romanos que ouieron dellos esta razon enxiemplo deste fecho en Piramo e en Tisbe, en razon de castigo pora los otros que lo oyessen. (201. a. 20-25)

We must note first the indication of a series of writers who have dealt with the material. It is intriguing that the list begins with ‘los griegos’ (201. a. 21), whose texts are not known, rather than with Ovid, who is generally cited as the primary authority. Given the tendency of the *General estoria* for inclusiveness, had a Greek version predating the *Metamorphosis* been available, we would expect a more specific account of its content. It might be that, while the text itself was lost to thirteenth-century Castile, a belief in its existence still persisted. Such a belief could be founded in truth, or be the result of an ill-founded tradition. We might see the concept of *translatio studii*, which saw knowledge pass from the Greeks to the Romans, and then to the Christian scholars of medieval Europe, by implication their intellectual successors. This is the sequence presented here, first the Greeks, then ‘Ouidio e los otros autores gentiles romanos que ouieron dellos esta razon’ (201. a. 21-23), all contained within the *General estoria*.

Several terms need clarification. The term *razon* appears to refer to the material, the ‘story’ of Pyramus and Thisbe, and of the mulberry. The particular *fecho* indicated is the fact, previously stated, that *ell amor de los entendedores* is harmful. Thus we come to the crucial concept, *poner enxiemplo en*. We have noted the comment in the *Prologue*, which sees texts composed so that:

Delos fechos delos buenos tomassen los omnes exemplo pora fazer bien,
et delos fechos delos malos que reçi biessen castigo por se saber guardar
delo non fazer. (*Gel*, 3. b. 14-18)

Here we see what might be seen as a second stage, *tomar exemplo*, the reaction of the public to an indication in the text. When we return to Piramo and Thisbe, the *General estoria* states that the Greeks, Ovid, and the tantalising ‘otros autores gentiles romanos’ (201. a. 21-22) ‘pusieron [...] enxiemplo deste fecho en Piramo e en

Thisbe' (201. a. 20-24). Píramo and Thisbe are a means to reveal the important truth, *este fecho*, the true dangerous nature of *ell amor de los entendedores*.

The *General estoria* shows the Greeks, Ovid, and those who followed, as using the story of Pyramus and Thisbe because of its didactic potential. This understanding of the attitude of earlier writers has an important influence on the Castilian text, an influence beyond the simple addition of an explanatory commentary following, but isolated from, the main narrative. The *General estoria* gives an account of Ovid's text, elaborating the original material so as to clarify the meaning perceived in it. Píramo and Thisbe are presented as *entendedores* and the most significant amplifications in terms of length function as a development of the meaning of this term. The explanatory commentary creates a new perspective, clarifying the significance of the concept within the dynamic of the whole text, by stating that *ell amor de los entendedores* will be illuminated by Píramo and Thisbe 'en razon de castigo' (201. a. 24-25). As *entendedores*, Píramo and Thisbe show loyalty, but also act in secrecy, outside the norms of society, and the powerful nature of their relationship leads them to excess, suicide, death.

Attention is drawn to duality: white and dark berries, life and death. Duality can also be seen in the quality of the relationship between Píramo and Thisbe. Their love brings the first darkness, the first death. This negative perspective is reinforced by the indication that earlier writers, including Ovid, the primary source for this Castilian account, used the story of Pyramus and Thisbe to reveal the danger of love such as that shared by the couple. Nevertheless, despite this specific statement, it appears that the *General estoria* has not completely resolved the ambiguities inherent in the material, for the lovers, and their love, retain a certain attraction. The commentary on Ovid's text, attributed to 'maestre Johan', reveals the significance

which results from the connections established between the metamorphosis of the mulberry and the love between Píramo and Thisbe. As the passage draws to a close, it becomes apparent that the potential for both negative and positive perspectives on this love is an important element in the interpretation:

Et por aquello que dize Ouidio que las moras primero blancas que se tornaron despues negras, departe maestre Johan ell ingles que se entiende por la blancura la mancebia e los mancebos, e aun qual quier otro de qual quier edat que sea en tal amor entiende, et que se entiende otrossi por y el sabor que dent an los entendedores; et el mal en que se ende fallan despues, que se entienda por la negrura que uiene postrimera en las moras. (201. a. 25-37)

From an amplification which establishes a link between *ell amor de los entendedores* and the use made of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe by a series of writers, the *General estoria* returns to the particular texts which are the focus of its attention: the words of Ovid and the commentary on these given by 'maestre Johan'. A reiteration of the central phenomenon, the metamorphosis of the mulberry, associates it specifically with Ovid: 'et por aquello que dize Ouidio que las moras blancas que se tornaron despues negras' (201. a. 25-28). Commentary from 'maestre Johan' follows, first on the white:

Que se entiende por la blancura la mancebia e los mancebos, e aun qual quier otro de qual quier edat que sea en tal amor entiende. (201. a. 29-32)

Again, we see disparate concepts brought together in a relationship which reveals significance. The whiteness is presented as a way to understand youth. Because white has earlier been associated with life, the first reaction is to see an indication of the positive qualities of youth, such as freshness, hope, the potential for continuing life, possessed, but then lost, by Píramo and Thisbe. Whiteness, however, is associated not only with youth but also with 'qual quier otro de qual quier edat que sea en tal amor entiende' (201. a. 30-32).

Youth and other ages are connected by 'tal amor' (201. a. 32), which, as we have seen, has been used to refer to *ell amor de los entendedores*. The specific

mention of youth suggests that it is presented as particularly vulnerable to the influence of such love, which thus becomes one of its essential characteristics. If we return to Píramo and Thisbe, we can see that they demonstrate this aspect of youth for, as the story which begins with emphasis on their youth develops, we see them as *entendedores*, sharing an overwhelming, exclusive love, which leads them to act without moderation. The extension of the concept of *tal amor* to include those of any age suggests a universal experience and a lesson pertinent to all. A difficulty arises from the correlation of this experience of love with the white, a correlation which appears to unsettle the patterns established earlier, contradicting the lesson on the dangerous nature of *ell amor de los entendedores* revealed through Píramo and Thisbe. The difficulty is resolved by an understanding of the perspective taken towards the metamorphosis at this point. While the emphasis has seemed to lie on the change from white to dark, here we are reminded that mulberries were 'primero blancas' (201. a. 27), a reiteration of their first state which recalls the opening lines of the commentary with its information on the natural cycle of the mulberry 'el moral cria primera mientras las moras blancas' (201. a. 9-10). There is always first the white, the positive effect of love, 'el sabor que dent an los entendedores' (201. a. 33-34); then there is the dark colour, 'el mal en que se ende fallan despues' (201. a. 34-35).

The commentary of 'maestre Johan', mediated by the *General estoria*, exploits the full potential offered by the change of colour seen in the fruit of the mulberry, a natural phenomenon which exists in a specific relationship to two human lovers, Píramo and Thisbe. We are not guided to see the metamorphosis as a symbol of a relationship consecrated by death, rather we see the correspondences: white and dark; life and death; the attraction of love and its pain. The account of their story

which precedes the commentary can create sympathy for Píramo and Thisbe. Unlike many stories from the *Metamorphoses* the protagonists are not gods, and do not themselves undergo a change of shape. Ordinary humans at one level, they are also young, beautiful, and share a close, and faithful relationship, aspects of their story which gain emphasis from the amplifications of the *General estoria*. We see also, however, the harm which results from their love, for while they do not undergo a change of shape, they suffer a change of state, from life to their death by suicide. The duality, white and then dark, ‘el sabor [...] el mal’, is a crucial aspect of the lesson, not simply because were love not attractive there would be less need to warn against it, but because the warning concerns this central aspect of the nature of *ell amor de los entendedores*. We see a love whose danger is hidden, love which is deception:

Aun diz maestre Johan que por las moras primero blancas e despues
negras, que se entiende que muerte yaze e se asconde en el dulce amor.
(201. a. 37-40)

CONCLUSION

The story of Pyramus and Thisbe, at least as it is now known, is told for the first time in Book IV of the *Metamorphoses*. Of the many manifestations of this story, two have been studied here in detail: the French poem *Piramus et Tisbé* and the Castilian prose version from the *General estoria*. The two have features in common: the first extant version in their respective language, each refers to Ovid's *Book* and, while following the story from the *Metamorphoses* both in outline and in much of the detail, each expands the material. The reference to an earlier text in combination with the amplification of its contents evokes the concept from the *Prologue* to the *Lais* of Marie de France: 'gloser la lettre / e de lur sen le surplus mettre' (15-16). The range of interpretations to which these lines have given rise allows a correspondingly wide range of expectations with regard to the nature of the new text. *Gloser la lettre* may refer to the clarification of the text at any one or more of a number of levels: the discussion of vocabulary and grammatical structures; the explanation of puzzling cultural details or of characters' motives; the exposition of myth; the illumination of the moral or spiritual significance of the material, or the revelation of its unexplored potential. The addition of *le surplus* may emphasize certain aspects, perhaps at the expense of others, resulting in a changed dynamic. The two vernacular versions, while sharing certain characteristics, differ in ways which might lead to the expectation of contrasts in the treatment given to the original material. *Piramus et Tisbé* is in French verse and is dated to the twelfth century, while the *General estoria* is in Castilian prose and is dated to the thirteenth century. To language, form and period must be added other characteristics less easy to quantify.

In *Piramus et Tisbé* the story of Pyramus and Thisbe is presented as an independent work, and lacks, moreover, any overt guidance on the attitude taken towards the writings of Ovid. Attempts to classify the French text rest on the establishment of affinities with a range of other Old French texts of the twelfth century. The use of the Classical authors is shared with the *romans d'antiquité*: the *Roman de Thèbes*, the *Roman d'Eneas* and the *Roman de Troie*. The recourse to Ovid is also found in *Narcisus et Dané* and *Philomena et Procné*. Shorter length, with perhaps a more restrained focus, results in links not only with the latter, but also with the *lais*. Existing material is adapted, particularly through an increased attention to its potential as a vehicle for the exploration of emotional issues, to the sophisticated courtly society of twelfth-century France. The lack of any direct statement in the opening lines of *Piramus et Tisbé* regarding the truth or fiction of Ovid's account, or of ways in which the material may be made pertinent to the public of the vernacular text, leaves such attitudes to be discerned from the treatment itself, thus giving particular value to the comparison with the *Metamorphoses*.

The *General estoria* may also be viewed as a 'courtly' text, since the impulse for its composition came from the mind of a king. Court life, however, may have many aspects, and differing attitudes to the material from the *Metamorphoses*, differing conceptions of its possible function within society, may result in significant differences. In the *General estoria* the story of Pyramus and Thisbe is only part of a longer work, which itself provides a series of contexts, of texts within texts, of storytellers. Concepts similar to those expressed by Marie de France in the *Prologue* to her *Lais*, which have been applied only by extension to *Piramus et Tisbé*, are found explicitly stated in the *General estoria*. In the *Prologue*, Alfonso 'el Sabio'

presents the *General estoria* as part of the process of writing the past. Past events are written down, then made into books:

Trabaiaron se los sabios omnes de meter en escrito los fechos que son passados pora auer remembrança dellos, como si estonçes fuessen e que lo sopiessen los que auien de uenir assi como ellos [...] et fizieron desto muchos libros. (*GeI*, 3. a. 30-b. 6)

Alfonso gathers much of this potential material, then chooses only certain works:

Yo don Alfonso [...] despues que ouo fecho ayuntar muchos escritos delos fechos antiguos, escogi dellos los mas uerdaderos e los meiores que y sope; e fiz ende fazer este libro, e mande y poner todos los fechos sennalados tan bien delas estorias dela Biblia, como delas otras grandes cosas que acahesçieron por el mundo, desde que fue començado fastal nuestro tiempo. (*GeI*, 3. b. 20-35)

We see a parallel with the words of Marie de France. Central to her *Prologue* is the use of existing material by later generations. As she speaks of the texts which form the basis of her own work, we see them presented as preserving knowledge of earlier events or truths:

Des lais pensai k'oi aveie;
Ne dutai pas, bien le saveie,
Ke pur remembrance les firent
Des aventures k'il ofrent
Cil ki primes les comencierent
E ki avant les enveierent. (32-37)

We see the same concept expressed in the same terms: Marie claims that the first 'lais' were composed 'pur remembrance' (34); Alfonso states that scholars wrote down what had happened in the past 'pora auer remembrança dellos' (*GeI*, 3. a. 31-32). The past is recorded and thus remembered. Both Marie and Alfonso present themselves as using the earlier material, as adapting it.

In the *General estoria* the story of the mulberry, Pyramus and Thisbe is placed within the broad time scale of all recorded history, as this is found in a range of texts. There is a claim for the truth of the stories to be found in the work: Alfonso chooses 'los mas uerdaderos' (*GeI*, 3. b. 29). The specific text concerned, Ovid's *Libro mayor*, although not biblical, is given validity as a source of truth. Indeed,

elsewhere in Book I, the *General estoria* provides guidance on the attitude taken to the pagan writers in general and Ovid in particular:

Los auctores delos gentiles fueron muy sabios omnes e fablaron de grandes cosas, e en muchos logares en figura e en semeiança duno por al, como lo fazen oy las escripturas dela nuestra sancta Egleſia; et sobre todos los otros auctores, Ouidio en el su Libro mayor, e esto tira ala su theologia delos gentiles mas que otras razones que ellos ayan, e el Ouidio mayor non es al entrellos si non la theologia e la Biblia dello entre los gentiles. (*GeI*, 162. b. 47-163. a. 2)

The *Prologue* suggests a didactic potential, with the comment on writing the past:

Esto fizieron, por que delos fechos delos buenos tomassen los omnes exemplo pora fazer bien, et delos fechos delos malos que reçibiessen castigo por se saber guardar delo non fazer. (*GeI*, 3. b. 14-18)

As the *General estoria* covers the material from Book IV of the *Metamorphoses* the treatment might be expected to illuminate its meaning and draw out the lesson to be learned.

Differences are seen in the way that the French and Castilian versions approach the opening of the story. *Piramus et Tisbé* lacks any reference to the story-telling of the Minyeides, which in the *Metamorphoses* provides the immediate context for the material relating to the mulberry, Pyramus and Thisbe. The dual focus of the Latin text is narrowed, giving greater prominence to the story of the lovers. The *General estoria* retains the frame-story of the Minyeides, and with it the dual focus, shifting from Alcithoe's conception of her material as the account of the change in the mulberry to her concentration on Píramo and Thisbe as the story begins. An additional result of the inclusion of the frame-story is the drawing into relief of the activity of story-telling itself, and the extension of the chain of intermediaries between the events told and the final public which hears of them: the *General estoria*, 'Alfonso', tells of Ovid's text, which recounts how Alcithoe tells the story of the mulberry, Píramo and Thisbe.

In the initial presentation of the lovers and their situation, the influence of the *Metamorphoses* can be seen in the vernacular versions, as they retain the essential elements of the opening of the story: the names of the protagonists, their youth and beauty, their initial union and then the imposition of separation. As each text develops this initial material, both similarities and differences are seen.

The considerable expansion of the early stages of the story in *Piramus et Tisbé* introduces concepts which will prove significant throughout the text. The accentuation of the youth and beauty of Piramus and Tisbé, reinforced by the addition of high rank, results in protagonists possessed of qualities which constitute an ideal. However, even as the potential for a perfect union is suggested, it is disrupted by the interweaving of other, more disturbing ideas. Piramus and Tisbé are subject to the narrative circumstances of their story, as these are developed by the French version. Youth is placed in relation to the demands of both society and love. Piramus and Tisbé are first shown as children, subordinate to their parents. As the possibility of the physical relationship inherent in youth becomes evident, the needs of rank and lineage impose obligations, resulting in the provisional separation, which is then made final by the quarrel between the families. Forced acquiescence to parental rule leaves the couple vulnerable to the urgency of love.

The nature of the love experienced by Piramus and Tisbé is not left undefined. We see an active, external force ('toucha Amours les deus enfans / et navra', 14-15). The apostrophe to Amours (23-40) presents the pain which results for those affected, emphasizing that few if any are immune: 'Hay, Amours, devant tes iex / ne puet durer joenes ne viex' (23-24). The story of Piramus and Tisbé substantiates the truth of the generalizations found in the accusations addressed to

‘Amours’. It becomes evident that a particular aspect of love is concerned, not simply love, but love that is frustrated and increased by separation.

While the opening of *Piramus et Tisbé* displays signs of deliberate amplification, resulting in the adaptation of the material to suggest a particular conception of love, the *General estoria* follows the Latin much more closely. Small additions are made, perhaps resulting from the process of translation. As in *Piramus et Tisbé*, the youth of the couple is exaggerated: Píramo is described as ‘un mancebiello’ (195. b. 19), Thisbe as ‘una mancebiella’ (195. b. 20). Unlike the French, however, no lyrical hyperbole accentuates their superlative beauty, nor is their rank given great emphasis in the opening lines. The closeness of the union which develops between the couple is reinforced by the structures of the Castilian, in particular the use of reciprocal pronouns and the insertion of phrases such as ‘en uno’ (195. b. 34) and ‘ell uno all otro’ (195. b. 37). When they are separated, the *General estoria* adds little to the account from the *Metamorphoses*, and indeed minimizes the fire metaphor that the Latin uses to express the nature of the emotion experienced. Nevertheless, the metaphor remains, underlined in its single use by the synonyms ‘se encendie, e se auuiua e ardie’ (195. b. 41-196. a. 1).

When the opening stages of the story in the two vernacular versions are compared, the French appears to display greater artificiality than the Castilian. *Piramus et Tisbé* uses verse and rhyme, in a rhetorically patterned text that depends heavily on metaphor and the exploitation of *topoi*. The *General estoria* uses prose and presents a much more straightforward narrative. It might seem that the Castilian, despite the scholarly reliance on the source text (‘cuenta la Estoria que’, 195. b. 18), offers a more accessible account of the experience of the lovers, in contrast to a possible distance created by the extreme artificiality of the French. Such distance

would be reduced for a public keen to enjoy the exploration of love in relation to particular conventions. Each of the two versions 'translates' the material from the *Metamorphoses* in terms appropriate for the context.

The association between love and language is more immediately evident in *Piramus et Tisbé* than in the *General estoria*, due to the increased recourse to first-person direct speech in the French text. This increase affects the nature of the text in several ways. At one level the result is a dramatic portrayal of events, as at each significant stage of their story the reactions of Piramus and Tisbé are revealed through their own words. The sense of the text as a record or recreation of a performance is increased by the passages that provide the transition from one speaker to the other or from one scene to the next. The words of the protagonists make some contribution to their characterization, differentiating an active Tisbé from the more passive Piramus, while revealing in both a impetuosity which could be the result of youth, of the effects of their emotions, or of the two in combination. Nevertheless, the characterization is not fully developed, any more by passages in the first person than by those in the third.

While direct speech in *Piramus et Tisbé* reveals only limited details of Piramus and Tisbé as individuals, the concept of speech itself proves significant in the delineation of the nature of the emotion that makes them a couple. The text articulates their relationship in terms of speaking. Among the elements that lead to their original union are 'les paroles' (19), and while this union is still unbroken they are allowed to 'aler ensamble et de parler' (73). With separation, speech together is impeded, and both Piramus and Tisbé are described as seeking to speak to the other: Piramus prays to Venus to be able to 'parler a Tysbé s'amie' (206); Tisbé asks the gods 'qu'il li doignent conseil trouver / qu'a son ami puisse parler' (302-03). This

emphasis on speech advances the plot, as their prayers are answered by means of the chink in the wall, revealed due to the urgency of their need ('quel chose est ce qu'amours ne sent', 316). The words spoken through the wall lead to the formulation of the plan to meet outside the city, the plan that results in the death of both.

In *Piramus et Tisbé* the words of the lovers do more than simply forward the movement of external events. The integration within the text of the concept of speech is more complex even than its use as a synonym for sexual activity, the desire for the forbidden conversation reflecting the urgent physical desires which impel Piramus and Tisbé from the walls of Babylon to their death beneath the mulberry. Patterns of speaking and silence become significant. While speech is associated with the state of union between Piramus and Tisbé, it is only once they are separated that their words are made accessible to the reader or audience of the text; language becomes a substitute for physical closeness.

A most significant line of development resulting from the use of the first person in *Piramus et Tisbé* occurs in relation to conventions relating to love and within the terms of the discourse used to express these. While Piramus and Tisbé differ, their initial reaction to separation is presented in parallel: continuing love leads to suffering, which is manifested most notably in extended passages of direct speech. Potential undeveloped in the *Metamorphoses* is exploited by *Piramus et Tisbé* as we see a juxtaposition of narrative circumstances and a particular discourse. The situation of separation offers the context for the discourse of suffering love, and Piramus reacts appropriately: 'Hé, las! fet il, 'chetif dolent' (143-95). Tisbé's first speech, 'Lasse', fet elle, 'Com male ore' (212-97), with its internal debate, reveals the contradictory demands facing the woman who must listen to both the discourse of the male lover and that of society.

In the *General estoria* there is neither such extensive use of direct speech, nor such widespread exploitation of the *topoi* which together are so important in the creation of an altered dynamic in *Piramus et Tisbé* compared with the *Metamorphoses*. Additions in the Castilian seem more clearly the result of the desire to clarify perplexing details in the source. Nevertheless, communication between the lovers proves as significant in the Castilian version as in the French. The *Metamorphoses* provides the crucial elements: as initial union is followed by separation, attempts to communicate continue, first by signs, then by the words spoken through the wall which result in the plan to leave the city. Communication becomes a means to continue a love that is forbidden. This aspect of the story is present, and developed, in *Piramus et Tisbé*, but is perhaps masked by the much greater amplification which turns the focus on the emotional reaction of the couple and on the way that this is explored, emphasizing the tensions facing the lovers through the interplay between their situation and the aptness of the discourse to which it gives rise.

Amplifications in the *General estoria* give a different perspective on the experience of the couple. There is an emphasis on secrecy. When Píramo and Thisbe are first separated and speak by gestures and signals, the text inserts 'quando ninguno non los ueye' (195. b. 38). When the chink in the wall is discovered, the value of such a secret means of communication is underlined 'ca por non seer apercebudos sospechados de los sus casas non se osauan legar uno a otro' (195. b. 20-23). It is clear that those around the couple will see and prevent any open meetings. The need for secrecy accentuates the forbidden nature of the love between Píramo and Thisbe and, as they persist in their relationship, sets them in opposition to the rest of society.

In the *General estoria* the discovery of the hitherto unnoticed chink in the wall sets Píramo and Thisbe apart from others but draws them together. In common with both the *Metamorphoses* and *Piramus et Tisbé*, the relationship between the couple leads to heightened perception, informed by the urgency of their need. Unlike the French, which has Tisbé make the discovery first ('primes Tysbé, puis Piramus', 319), the Castilian follows the Latin, underlining the joint attribution 'ell uno cuemo ell otro' (196. a. 18). As we read of the words spoken, unity and secrecy are intertwined:

Uinieron alli amos e fablaron se por y, e pero muy quediello por que non sonasse nin se descrubiessen ellos por y. (196. a. 23-25)

The *General estoria* also differs from *Piramus et Tisbé* in having both lovers address the apostrophe to the wall 'como cuenta Ouidio' (196. a. 32), uniting them in their expression of the paradox of the nature of their means of communication. The apostrophe, childish, or humorous, permits relief from tension:

Començaron se a quexar de la paret como ninnos [...] estas palabras ouieron dichas en so amor, e eran de solaz e non dotro pro que les ende uiniessen. (196. a. 30-b. 4)

The frustration with their situation remains, resulting in the plan to leave the city. The formulation of this plan is also presented as a joint activity, and its agreement gains an almost legal formality, suggesting a true pact: 'pusieron e firmaron entre si' (196. b. 20-21).

As the lovers decide to circumvent both the physical walls and the parental veto which separate them from each other, they determine on a course of action which demonstrates the division from the rest of society effected by their perseverance in the forbidden relationship. In the *Metamorphoses* we see the need for the darkness of night, for secrecy and the avoidance of those who watch (IV. 84-85). The move outside the city exposes the protagonists to danger; the refusal of law

involves also the refusal of protection. Indeed, as the details of the plan are established, the choice of the tomb for the rendezvous acts as a warning note. Because Thisbe leaves first, the account of her departure and journey assumes additional importance. In the *Metamorphoses*, this account is short, but includes the comment ‘audacem faciebat amor’ (IV. 96) [‘love made her bold’] (p. 185), which both emphasizes the effect of love and provides a contrast with the fear soon to be provoked by the lioness.

Piramus et Tisbé signals the risk inherent in the plan by the unsubstantiated authority of the dream voice with which it originates (‘ne sai quel vois’, 557). One result of the emphasis on their suffering found in the passages of direct speech is to suggest a couple vulnerable to their emotions, and open to any solution, however unwise. With the wait for night, we see the wakeful unease in the minds of Piramus and Tisbé, which differentiates them from the rest of society (590-617). Tisbé’s prior departure, predetermined by the *Metamorphoses*, reinforces her characterization as the more active partner, already in part established by her more active voice, her discovery of the chink and her proposal of the plan to Piramus. The solitary journey does not trouble Tisbé:

Sole par nuit et sans paour:
Tel hardement li done amour. (624-65)

Even the omens that fill the night do not lead to doubt that she will carry out what she has undertaken:

Quant ot esgardé tout entour,
Onques pointe nen ot paour
Qu’el ne parface son afaire,
A quel fin qu’ele en doie traire. (632-35)

Love brings courage. The result is a journey that can be seen as foolish or faithful.

The *General estoria* suggests the gravity of the decision to leave the city largely through a focus on Thisbe. Unlike *Piramus et Tisbé*, there is no prior

suggestion of a more active role for her. Indeed, the joint formulation of the plan in the Castilian text reinforces the portrayal of Píramo and Thisbe as a couple. This makes the more evident the separation that the plan entails, for they will leave ‘amos solos [...] cada uno por si’ (196. b. 18-19). We note the reverse *alba*, not the dread of the dawn parting, but the eager anticipation of the night, which is intended to bring union, but which will reinforce separation. As we have seen, when Thisbe leaves the city, the amplification which explains her knowledge of the route creates a contrast between the earlier outings, which take place within the framework provided by society, and her present solitary journey, which places her outside it. As the Castilian Thisbe looks around her, she seeks the presence of Píramo, a detail that accentuates her lonely state.

Crucial lines come as Thisbe sits beneath the mulberry, awaiting Píramo:

Assentosse so aquel aruol, cuemo auie puesto con Píramo, so entendedor,
et era este grant cometimiento pora donzella, mas dize aqui ell autor que
la fuerça dell amor la fazie atreuuda e osada. (197. a. 26-31)

The *General estoria* further accentuates the magnitude of the step taken by Thisbe: ‘era este grant cometimiento pora donzella’ (197. a. 28-29). As in *Piramus et Tisbé*, we see the retention of the comment from the *Metamorphoses* which attributes Thisbe’s courage to the influence of love. An addition in the Castilian proves highly significant, contributing to the definition of the nature of the emotion that leads Thisbe to act in such a way. We read ‘cuemo auie puesto con Píramo, so entendedor’ (197. a. 27-28). The use of the verb *poner* recalls its use in the account of the formulation of the plan between Píramo and Thisbe, where it contributes so greatly to the portrayal of the strength of the bond between the two. The association of the term *entendedor* with the pact adds to the definition of ‘lovers’ the further connotations of mutual understanding and agreement. The term is used later in the story, as Thisbe, although still fearful of the lioness, returns ‘por que non fuesse

enartado el su entendedor' (199. a. 9-10). We have noted the legal overtones found in the Castilian version of the scene which sees the making of the pact, and Thisbe's actions, informed by the need to keep her given word, can be seen as a demonstration of loyalty. Píramo himself is presented using the term *entendedor* of Thisbe, suggesting that both perceive the relationship in similar terms:

Como una noche matara a dos amadores, de quien la entendedor fuera
muy derecha de ueuir luenga uida'. (198. a. 30-33)

These words are spoken following the discovery of Thisbe's blood-stained cloak, and will be followed by Píramo's death, which by the future 'dos' (198. a. 31), can be seen as restoring the broken union represented by the singular of 'la entendedor' (198. a. 31-32).

The *General estoria* shows the lovers Píramo and Thisbe as faithful, bound by their relationship as *entendedores* and by the pact that results. Loyalty can be seen in *Piramus et Tisbé* also. In her first speech, 'Lasse', fet elle, 'Com male ore' (212-97), Tisbé presents herself as torn between two loyalties, as by death she proves herself 'veraie amie' (905), we see the conflict resolved in favour of the loyalty to Piramus. Indeed, a variant in Manuscript C (lines 594-95) makes loyalty specific, commenting on the death of the lovers:

Ici fenist des .ii. amanz
Com lor leal amor fu granz. (Eley, p. 143)

Thus in both *Piramus et Tisbé* and the *General estoria* love can gain positive connotations from the association with the loyalty which it inspires. The death of the lovers becomes a demonstration of the extent of their faithfulness and a mark of the union whose restoration can be achieved in no other way.

In both vernacular versions, as in the *Metamorphoses*, a positive perspective is possible on the love that joins the couple. Both texts also offer a negative perspective, and in both cases, speech between the couple plays a crucial role. In

Piramus et Tisbé, as Piramus and Tisbé resort to the highly patterned language of rhetorical devices and poetic conventions associated with the suffering caused by frustrated love, their relationship is displaced from the purely physical plane to that of the discourse itself. The nature of their love is explored through the critique of the constituent elements of the discourse, from the discourse to the discourse and at the interface between the verbal and the physical. The transitional passages not only contribute to the text as performance, they emphasize the tension between speaking and the inability to speak, between union and separation.

In the final scene of the story this tension becomes extreme. Death brings silence, which paradoxically can represent both union and separation. Tisbé beseeches ‘Piramus, ves ci vostre amie’ (879). We read first of Piramus that ‘parler i veult, mes il ne puet / quar la mort qui le tient nel let’ (885-86). Next, Christ-like, Piramus triumphs over death, but the triumph is brief, as after a few words only ‘atant se taist, ne puet plus dire’ (889). As death regains dominion and imposes silence on Piramus, Tisbé moves to her own death. Dying, she embraces and kisses the dead or dying Piramus. No words are reported, but words may have been spoken. The final scene reflects the original union of the couple: physical closeness and the possibility of communication that is not disclosed to the public. Death also means final separation. Union, sought throughout the text in terms of the restoration of speech together, becomes impossible. As the lovers are silenced in death, it becomes evident that the exploration of love through *topoi* which link love to separation, suffering and death, carried to the logical conclusion, results in a relationship untenable on the physical plane, having existence only on that of language.

The *General estoria* tells, as the rubric promises:

De Piramo e de Thisbe de orient, los dos entendedores, de como se fablaron e la postura que fizieron en so amor. (195. b. 13-16)

Words spoken by Piramo and Thisbe lead to the *postura*, the 'pact', between them, which is kept loyally, even unto death. The apparent absence of artifice in the prose, the addition of small details which clarify the experience of the lovers, the positive qualities of youth, beauty and loyalty, draw the public into the story and lend a positive aspect to the love which is central to it. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the story and the love end with the death of Piramo and Thisbe, the mourning of their families and the darkened colour of the fruit of the mulberry.

The possibility of a positive attitude to death as the restoration of union between the lovers is greatly undercut by the treatment given by the *General estoria* to the change in the mulberry. Thisbe pleads for the dark colour brought by the blood of Piramo to be maintained:

Lieua sienpre tu e tu generacion fruto negro, et pues que madurare, que se torne tal que conuenga a lagrimas e a duelos, e que sea sienpre en remenbrancia de la sangre desta doblada muert, mia e de Piramo. (200. b. 7-12)

The death is shared, but the sign that will record it and preserve memory of it for the future is presented as appropriate to 'lagrimas e [...] duelos' (200. b. 10). The third-person narrative confirms the permanence both of the change and its negative associations:

Aquel color que ella demando, aquel mismo finco en el fruto del moral pues que madura de seer siempre negro, que es color que da sienpre signo de mal. (200. b. 21-25)

Lest, however, the public, misunderstanding the meaning of the changed colour despite the comment 'es color que da sienpre signo de mal' (200. b. 24-25), should persist in a misreading of the text, the *General estoria* clarifies further by the inclusion of the passage of commentary headed by the rubric 'de lo que quiere mostrar el mudamiento de las moras blancas en negras' (200. a. 4-6).

The commentary, found neither in modern editions of the *Metamorphoses* nor *Piramus et Tisbé*, removes any doubt as to whether from the story of Piramo and

Thisbe we should draw ‘exemplo pora fazer bien’ (*Gel*, 3. b. 15-16) or ‘castigo por se saber guardar delo non fazer’ (*Gel*, 3. b. 17-18). Using perhaps an annotated manuscript of the *Metamorphoses* which includes both, the *General estoria* draws on the commentaries of Arnulf of Orléans and John of Garland, despite the attribution to the latter alone. The Castilian commentary includes the statement ‘que se entiende [...] por Piramo et por Tisbe la mancebia e ell amor de los entendedores’ (202. a. 13-17), a correspondence which reveals the organizing principle of this version of the story.

In the *Metamorphoses* the concept of *amor* is central: we are told of the union between the couple ‘tempore crevit amor’ (IV. 60) [‘in time love grew’] (p. 183); the comment ‘quid non sentit amor?’ (IV. 68) [‘what does love not see?’] (p. 183) prefaces the discovery of the chink; we read of Thisbe ‘audacem faciebat amor (IV. 95) [‘love made her bold’] (p. 185); Thisbe says of Pyramus ‘tua te manus [...] amorque / perdidit, infelix!’ (IV. 148-49) [‘twas your own hand and your love, poor boy, that took your life’] (p. 189), and adds of herself ‘est et mihi fortis in unum / hoc manus, est et amor’ (IV. 149-50) [‘I, too, have a hand brave for this one deed; I, too, have love’] (p. 189); Thisbe’s plea for the shared tomb rests on the union brought by ‘certus amor [...] hora novissima’ (IV. 156) [‘faithful love [...] the hour of death’] (p. 189).

What is the meaning of *amor*? The *General estoria* offers an explanation at several levels. At a literal level we see the definition of *amor* as ‘ell amor de los entendedores’ (201. a. 16-17). At the level of events, of the *estoria*, the nature of the emotion is revealed by the story of Piramo and Thisbe. As *entendedores*, they participate in a relationship of closeness and complicity. This relationship, which can have positive aspects, excludes other people, leading to the plan to leave the city,

which results in death for the lovers. A deeper level of significance is explored. The commentary begins, not with the lovers, but with the change in the mulberry, a physical phenomenon, a fact, for the fruits of the mulberry do indeed darken as they ripen. The earlier presentation of the changed colour as the result of the actions of Píramo and Thisbe means that the establishment of correspondences white-life and black-death creates an association between the story of the lovers and that of the Fall of mankind which first led to the introduction of death.

The commentary underlines the harmful nature of the emotion which is being explored and the wider application of the material as a lesson:

Por que los entendedores de tal amor se fallan muchas ueces mal de so entender, ca uinieron ya ende grandes males al mundo e muchos, pusieron los griegos, e Ouidio e los otros autores gentiles romanos que ouieron dellos esta razon enxiemplo deste fecho en Piramo e en Thisbe, en razon de castigo pora los otros que lo oyessen. (201. a. 17-25)

The duality white-dark, life-death is part of the lesson, representing the duality of *tal amor*, first 'sabor' (201. a. 33), then 'mal' (201. a. 34). The danger lies in the deception.

The study of *Piramus et Tisbé* and the passages from the *General estoria* which tell *De Piramo e de Thisbe* shows the central importance to them of the version of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe found in Book IV of the *Metamorphoses*. The Latin not only provides the outline of the narrative for the vernacular texts but also prompts their expansion of the original, as they reveal their perception of its meaning. In both *Piramus et Tisbé* and the *General estoria* the lovers are presented as exemplary characters. *Piramus et Tisbé* displays 'invention', the recognition of undeveloped potential in material, whose exploration is of value (Kelly, 1985, p. 30). Amplifications emphasize the youth, beauty and high rank of Piramus and Tisbé, resulting in protagonists who, while not specifically described as 'courtly', epitomize many values associated with the ideal of courtly society. Playful wit perceives and

exploits the aptness of the account in the *Metamorphoses* as a vehicle for the exploration of love in terms appropriate to such an ideal. Faced with obstacles to their union, Piramus and Tisbé respond with words and actions that suggest that a primary significance perceived in the Latin *amor* is the opportunity it offers for the generation of text. In the *General estoria*, amplifications lead to a definition of *amor* as ‘ell amor de los entendedores’ (201. a. 16-17), a concept that is defined at literal, historical and allegorical levels by the story of Píramo and Thisbe. The decorative, highly-structured text which *Piramus et Tisbé* constructs at the prompting of *amor* maintains something of the ambiguity found in the Latin: while the oppositions and combinations which compose the discourse of love reveal its flaws, they also allow the lovers to retain their idealized quality. The negative perspective on the nature of *amor* offered by the Castilian text is only confirmed as the account closes:

Aun diz maestre Johan que por las moras primero blancas e despues
negras, que se entiende que muerte yaze e se asconde en el dulce amor.
(201. a. 37-40)

The sweetness of ‘ell amor de los entendedores’ (201. a. 16-17) is revealed as part of its danger.

‘Iamque opus exegi’ (XV. 871), [‘and now my work is done’] (II. p. 427), Ovid remarks, in the final passage of the *Metamorphoses*. We cannot yet say the same, for we must first assess what has been learned. Because texts do not exist in isolation, some aspects of the work may lead away from the story of Pyramus and Thisbe into other areas. In the version of the story found in the *General estoria*, two concepts are of particular significance: *entendedor* and *rememrança*. It would be interesting to consider other uses of *entendedor*, both in the *General estoria* and in other texts, to see whether they confirm the sense understood from the reading of the story of Píramo and Thisbe. We might also ask if the concept is confined to Castilian alone, or has its parallel in other languages, as does the Castilian *rememrança* in

Old French. The central role of the single term *entendedor* in the story of Píramo and Thisbe opens a further avenue of investigation, as we seek to discover whether other stories in the *General estoria*, drawn from Ovid or elsewhere, manifest a similar principle of organisation. In passing, we might note the vast potential for further work offered by the *General estoria*, both alone and in comparison with similar histories in other languages, such as the French *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César*.¹³⁶

Piramus et Tisbé has links with a number of texts, and some of these relationships need further exploration. We see similarities between *Piramus et Tisbé* and other twelfth-century French texts. As Faral notes, the focus on emotions is shared with the *romans d'antiquité*, the reiterated question and the internal debate are seen in the works of Chrétien de Troyes, while *Aucassin et Nicolette* displays similarities both of form and content ('Poème', pp. 39-57). We have seen also how *Piramus et Tisbé* draws together elements from several traditions, and reveals meaning through the juxtaposition and opposition of concepts. It is difficult to ascertain for certain the extent to which *Piramus et Tisbé* was responsible for characteristics common to so many works. Nevertheless, while it may be excessive to attribute the whole romance tradition to this one work, the date suggested for the composition of the poem means that *Piramus et Tisbé* must be seen as an early and significant witness to the development of that tradition.

Piramus et Tisbé is not only related to works of its period of composition but also to other texts that retell the story of Pyramus and Thisbe. As we have seen, Van Emden traces the effect of the twelfth-century poem on later French texts ('Prose', pp. 29-33; 'Sources', pp. 869-79). We may use similarities between texts to trace the

¹³⁶ See Paul Meyer, 'Les Premières Compilations françaises d'histoire ancienne: I. *Les faits des Romains*, II. *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César*', *Romania*, 14 (1885), 1-81, and *Histoire ancienne*

influence of *Piramus et Tisbé*, but we must also recognize that the process of change, of adaptation of material, will continue. A study of the differences might allow us to determine how succeeding generations have interpreted, first *Piramus et Tisbé*, and then the *Ovide moralisé*. As Eley suggests, close study of the differences between the principal witnesses to *Piramus et Tisbé* might lead to a 'clearer understanding of the evolution of the poem' (p. 32). The influence of the *Ovide moralisé* itself is so extensive that its effect may be difficult to determine with certainty, particularly where a return to the story from the *Metamorphoses* may also explain a significant aspect of a particular text. A study of the different allegorical interpretations could prove fascinating.

While *Piramus et Tisbé* is preserved by the *Ovide moralisé*, direct transmission of the story of Píramo and Thisbe from the *General estoria* is less easy to determine. Comments in the *Prologue* to Lorenzo de Sepúlveda's *Romances nuevamente sacadas de historias antiguas de la cronica de España* establish links between Lorenzo's work and that of Alfonso el Sabio. The *Prologue* begins with a reference to the value of earlier writings:

Considerando quan prouechosa sea le lection delas historias antiguas, amicissimo señor, ansi para tener la como por espejo delante de los ojos, en que se vean los altos y heroycos hechos de los antepassados, para dar recreacion a nuestro entendimiento como para imitarlos en los auisos y dulces exemplos y excelentes dichos que de su lectura resultan, acorde de tomar este pequeño trabajo. (*Romances nuevamente sacadas*, p. 2^o; abbreviations in the original have been expanded.)

As Lorenzo continues, we find a direct reference to Alfonso el Sabio:

Digo en metro Castellano y en tono de Romances viejos, que es lo que agora se usa. Fueron sacados ala letra de la cronica que mando recopilar el serenissimo señor rey don Alfonso: que por sus buenas letras y reales desseos y grande erudicion en todo genero de sciencia, fue llamado el sabio. (*Romances nuevamente sacados*, p. 2^o)

These remarks show that the work of Alfonso was not completely forgotten, and suggest that both the *Prologue* and the *Romance de Pyramo y de Thisbe*, found on folios 194 verso to 198 verso of the text, would repay further study. Indeed, a study of the different treatments found in the many Castilian *romances* that tell the story of the lovers could prove an extremely interesting project.

Analysis of the two early vernacular treatments of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe has shown how *Piramus et Tisbé* and the *General estoria* amplify the material from the *Metamorphoses*, drawing out the potential latent in Ovid's account. Two perspectives remain possible: love unites the couple, who are faithful even unto death; love is also a disruptive force, which leads the lovers to act foolishly, to disregard the word of their parents, to separate themselves from society and, by their excessive, unbalanced behaviour, to place themselves in a situation of danger, in which their emotions continue to overwhelm their reason, leading to their death. The shared tomb and the changed colour of the mulberry, a lasting memorial of the bond between the couple, also emphasize the sorrow which death brings. In the early treatments, the story articulates both the closeness brought by love and its dangers. We might ask how far both perspectives are represented in later versions. At first consideration it may appear that the faithfulness of the lovers becomes their most enduring characteristic: In the *Sermón* of Diego de San Pedro, for example, we are told of 'la leal Tisbe'.¹³⁷ The anonymous Castilian ballad begins 'Tisbe y Piramo que fueron / dos leales namorados' (*Flor de enamorados*, no page numbers). However, as in the case of *Piramus et Tisbé*, warnings of the harmful nature of love, while not

¹³⁷ Diego de San Pedro, *Tractado de amores de Arnalte y Lucenda, y Sermón*, ed. by Keith Whinnom *Obras completas de Diego de San Pedro*, 1, Clásicos Cástalia, 54, (Madrid: Cástalia, 1973), pp. 172-83 (183).

immediately evident, may become apparent with close analysis, revealing a range of attitudes both to the story of Pyramus and Thisbe and to love itself.

As we end our study of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, let us turn to the concluding lines of the *Metamorphoses*:

Iamque opus exegi, quod nec Iovis ira nec ignis
 nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere vetustas.
 cum volet, illa dies, quae nil nisi corporis huius
 ius habet, incerti spatium mihi finiat aevi:
 parte tamen meliore mei super alta perennis
 astra ferar, nomenque erit indelebile nostrum,
 quaque patet domitis Romana potentia terris,
 ore legar populi, perque omnia saecula fama,
 siquid habent veri vatum praesagia, vivam. (XV. 871-79)

[And now my work is done, which neither the wrath of Jove, nor fire, nor sword, nor the gnawing tooth of time shall ever be able to undo. When it will, let that day come which has no power save over this mortal frame, and end the span of my uncertain years. Still in my better part I shall be borne immortal far beyond the lofty stars and I shall have an undying name. Wherever Rome's power extends over the conquered world, I shall have mention on men's lips, and, if the prophecies of bards have any truth, through all the ages shall I live in fame.] (II. p. 427)

The change in the mulberry is perpetual, the story of Pyramus and Thisbe persists, its enduring popularity confirming both the truth of the final five lines of the *Metamorphoses* and Ovid's self-claimed status as a bard. Lines 871 to 872, however, may not pass unchallenged, for the many shapes which the story of the lovers assumes must lead to the conclusion that, while the wrath of Jove may not undo, a later poet may transform.

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