

### **Flesh and Stone: Touch and Skin in Ovid's Pygmalion**

Despite the many extant studies on the episode of Pygmalion in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, little has been said on the relevance of touch and its sense organ in the passage from a medical and biological perspective; and yet, not only is the sensual experience of Pygmalion predominantly centred on the haptic sense: even the female characters in the episode, the ivory maiden on the one hand, and the shameless Propoetides on the other, are also prominently characterised by references to their skin (e.g. 241-2; 254-5; 283-6; 289).

In this paper, I want to show how Ovid utilises his knowledge of technology and ancient theories of the body to establish the juxtaposition between these two opposite paradigms of female sexuality. In the first part, I will focus on the characterization of the Propoetides with the aim to track down what medical theories might have informed Ovid's description of the physiological alteration of their skin. In the second part, I will switch to the ivory maiden to show how references to the senses, and more specifically touch, in the narrative of her body's transformation from stone into flesh can tell us more about the nature of the artifact on the one hand, and the gendered and eroticised use of the sensory element in Ovid's poetry on the other.

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