

The Characterization of Medea, Dido, Ariadne and Deianira  
in Ovid's Heroides and Metamorphoses

carissimis parentibus

THE CHARACTERIZATION OF  
MEDEA, DIDO, ARIADNE AND DEIANIRA  
IN  
OVID'S HEROIDES AND METAMORPHOSES

by

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## Abstract

Ovid's characterization of women has long been recognized as revealing an understanding of the female psyche. This is shown not only in his love poetry, but also in his depiction of women in the Heroides and Metamorphoses. The Heroides in particular offered considerable scope for the portrayal of women in a state of crisis and for an exploration of their anxieties and conflicts. The verse letters reveal Ovid's interest in portraying women at an early point in his literary career, an interest which he continued throughout his writing career and which again finds expression in the Metarmorphoses.

While Howard Jacobson's study (Princeton, 1974) treats all the single letters, Florence Verducci (Princeton, 1985) has restricted her work to five of the fifteen single letters. Little attempt has been made to trace Ovid's depiction of women from the Heroides into his later works. This work investigates the characterization of Medea, Dido, Ariadne and Deianira as they are initially portrayed in the Heroides and as they are later depicted in the Metamorphoses.

Each chapter details early accounts of the heroines,

followed by an exploration of the characterization in the Heroides and Metamorphoses. It is shown that, while Ovid's knowledge and use of his predecessors is apparent, his ability to adapt the mythological details concerning his heroines creates an entirely new depiction; his portrayal varies from the Heroides to the Metamorphoses due to the demands of the respective genres and to the emphasis which he wishes to place. Despite the familiarity of his figures, Ovid has created divergent, yet coherent, interpretations of psychological and emotional crises.

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## Preface

Ovid's interest in the psychology of women is revealed not only in his love poems, but also in his depiction of women in the Heroides and in the numerous character sketches of the Metamorphoses. His ability to adapt myth to its fullest extent is clearly seen in the contrasting or parallel depictions of the figures treated in this work: Medea, Dido, Ariadne and Deianira. By means of these and other figures, Ovid has explored the possibilities of different characterizations, often extending in his depictions the formal genre of the poem or transforming a character for a particular purpose within a larger framework.

Although past scholarship on the Heroides has primarily been concerned with identifying their genre--whether they be suasoriae, ethopoeiae, prosopopoeiae, dramatic monologues or letters, to name but a few -- this study accepts the general premise that Ovid's rhetorical training is reflected, to some extent, in his work but that this also does not deny elegiac, epic, or tragic influences.

Peter Steinmetz has most recently assembled the various discussions concerning the literary form of the

Heroides and concludes by identifying them as independent, free-standing "monodramas", which present heroines at a particular crisis-point of their lives.<sup>1</sup> He terms them monodramas as they can be read, recited or staged.<sup>2</sup> This interpretation does not deny Ovid's own identification of the Heroides as letters (A.A. III.345, Am. II.18.27), but takes into account the external explanations found in the letters: who is writing, to whom she is writing, the circumstances of the writer, the addresses to family members, to the writer herself and the purpose of the letter as a whole.<sup>3</sup> For the purpose of this work, the Heroides will be regarded as embodying the general framework of the letter genre, but allowing for extensions of this form and even for a partial destruction of the illusion of a true letter.

Similarly, the genre of the Metamorphoses has been identified by Ovid himself as a carmen perpetuum (Met. I.4) -- a continuous, interconnected poem -- and is accepted as such for this study. The stories of Medea, Dido, Ariadne

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Steinmetz, "Die literarische Form der Epistulae Heroidum Ovids," Gymnasium 94 (1987): 140.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the staging of the Heroides see M.P. Cunningham, "The Novelty of Ovid's Heroides," CP (1949): 100-106.

<sup>3</sup> For discussions of the letter form, see E. Opper, "Ovids Heroides: Studien zur inneren Form und zur Motivation," (Ph.D. diss., Erlangen-Nürnberg University, 1968); Heinrich Dörrie, Der heroische Brief (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1968); Helmut Rahn, "Ovids elegische Epistel," A&A 7 (1959): 105-120.

and Deianira will be examined on their own merits but also with regard to their function within their respective books, as well as their relationship (parallel or contrasting) with the Heroides.

The letters of Medea, Dido, Ariadne and Deianira will be discussed in this order and as separate entities. Traits which are common to these letters will be also be highlighted; additional references to the Heroides will concentrate mainly on the single letters and will exclude the double letters. Attempts to find a coherent ordering among the letters will also be omitted.<sup>4</sup> Further, although the pictorial influence seems strong in Ovid, particularly in the depiction of Ariadne,<sup>5</sup> discussion here has been limited to purely literary evidence.

The figure of Medea demonstrates most clearly Ovid's skill at interpretation of character in both the Heroides and Metamorphoses and thus has been chosen as embodying significant elements which are echoed or adapted in succeeding letters. Ovid details the transformation of

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<sup>4</sup> For a discussion on the ordering of the individual letters of the Heroides see Martin Pulbrook, "The original published form of Ovid's Heroides," Hermathena 122 (1977): 29-45; Heinrich Dörrie, "Die dichterische Absicht Ovids in den Epistulae Heroidum," A&A 13 (1967): 41-55; Howard Jacobson, "Appendix: The Order of the Heroides," in Ovid's Heroides (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 407-409.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, the discussion of Sheila McNally, "Ariadne and Others: Images of sleep in Greek and Early Roman Art," Classical Antiquity 4 (1985): 152-92.

Medea from a young lover (Heroides XII) into a sorceress (Metamorphoses VII) and thereby the different effect eros had in each depiction. Ovid adapts the basic details of the story of Medea in order to create a sympathetic depiction of her anxiety and distress in the Heroides. Medea's re-examination of her early life and Jason's role in it brings her to a new understanding of her own actions and their ultimate effect on her present abandoned state. She begins to accept her responsibility in the death of her brother and the betrayal of her father, although she does not yet come to the point of admitting her guilt. Ovid ends the letter before Medea actually kills her children and therefore only ambiguously identifies her as a murderess. This ambiguity is eliminated in the Metamorphoses, where Medea gradually loses all of her sympathetic, human traits and becomes a sorceress with little or no concern for human suffering. Instead, she takes delight in the use of her magical powers. The death of her children occurs after this transformation is complete and is to be construed as merely a further indication of Medea's metamorphosis rather than as the act of an unpitying mother. In the Heroides, the effect of eros led her to review the past; in the Metamorphoses it leads her to magic.

The effect of eros is continued in the letter of Dido (Heroides VII). Working against the background of

Vergil's depiction of Dido in Aeneid IV, Ovid creates in Heroides VII a new Dido by avoiding the Vergilian concept of pietas and, indeed, by avoiding the whole theme of the divinely ordained founding of Rome. In the Metamorphoses, the character of Dido is only briefly sketched; Ovid concentrates particularly on her role as the widow of Sychaeus. Her relationship with Aeneas is ambiguous and Dido becomes merely an incident in Aeneas' travels. The Dido of Metamorphoses XIV is a refinement of her character in the Heroides, rather than a transformation from one character-type to another.

In the story of Ariadne, Ovid is again working against a well-known depiction, that of Catullus 64. Despite certain similarities, Ovid avoids repetition by expanding Ariadne's lament in Catullus 64 into a lament more expressive of her youth and inexperience. As well, he eliminates certain Catullan details, such as the arrival of Dionysus, and emphasizes other elements, such as Ariadne's sense of isolation. As in the case of Dido in the Metamorphoses, the depiction of Ariadne in Metamorphoses VIII is brief and allusive. She serves more as a bridge connecting two stories about Daedalus rather than as an important incident in Theseus' life.

By way of contrast, Ovid presents in detail the story of Deianira in both Heroides IX and Metamorphoses IX. Her letter expresses her distress particularly at Hercules'

role as maidservant to Omphale and her acute pain at the realization of Iole's potential position in her own household. Ovid details the thought-process which led to Deianira's decision to use Nessus' potion and her anxiety over its outcome. This letter is unusual in that it accepts external information in the course of the letter: Deianira receives a message concerning the effects of the poisoned cloak, Hercules' suffering and his impending death. The Deianira of the Metamorphoses concentrates on her rage at Iole's presence and the threat which she poses to Deianira's position as Hercules' wife. However, once Deianira has sent off the poisoned cloak, she disappears, and the figure of Hercules takes center stage. Thus in the Metamorphoses, Deianira is used as a tool to initiate an account of Hercules' suffering and apotheosis, rather than solely because of her own mental suffering.

The most recent works on the Heroides are those of Howard Jacobson, Ovid's Heroides (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974) and Florence Verducci's Ovid's Toyshop of the Heart: Epistulae Heroidum (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985). The first presents a more general study and lacks a detailed examination of the letters. The second work treats five of the single letters, organized along the lines of specific themes. Both works deal with the Heroides in isolation and although they discuss Ovid's probable sources, do not attempt to

connect the depiction of women in the Heroides to that in the Metamorphoses. In the following pages, I will attempt to relate the depiction of the four women in both works, using as a starting point and main focus Ovid's Heroides.

Finally, this work is divided into four chapters, each chapter concentrating on one figure. The characterization of each figure before Ovid's treatment will be generally discussed in a brief introduction, followed by an analysis of the relevant letter of the Heroides by means of coherent sections. The nature of the figure in the Heroides will be summarized before moving to a similar investigation of characterization in the Metamorphoses. Certain relevant additional depictions in Ovid's other works (Fasti, Ars Amatoria) will also be included before a concluding section on the nature of the figure in question in the Metamorphoses.

The text used for the Heroides has been A. Palmer's P. Ovidi Nasonis "Heroides" with the Greek Translation of Planudes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898; reprint, Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967). For the Metamorphoses the text used was W.S. Anderson's P. Ovidii Nasonis "Metamorphoses" (Leipzig: BSB B.G. Teubner Verlagsgesellschaft, 1982).

## CHAPTER ONE: MEDEA

### Heroides XII: Section I: Introduction

The story of Medea must have held a certain fascination for Ovid, since he returned to it several times during his literary career. Besides devoting a complete tragedy (now lost) to her plight, Ovid also chose Medea as a figure for his Heroides XII and for a substantial passage in his Metamorphoses VII.7-424. This interest parallels that of earlier writers, both Latin and Greek, who chose to illustrate the story of Medea in part or in its entirety. References to Medea are found in the fragments of Eumelos of Corinth, where her relationship to Hera is emphasized. In Hesiod's Theogony, she is conventionally described as εὐσφύρον (961), and as the typical sympathetic daughter of a stern king (Theogony 992-1002), along the lines of a Nausikaa. Pindar's Pythian IV presents Medea as the prophetess who proclaims the prophecy concerning Euphamos (Pythian IV.21-100). Pindar characterizes her by the adjective ζαμενής (Pythian IV.10) which points to a more forceful nature than is associated with the Medea of Hesiod. In Pindar, Aphrodite gives Jason a love charm to influence Medea in his favour (Pythian IV.203-219), a

detail which is merely suggested in Ovid's version in Heroides XII. Pindar also suggests that a desire to go to Greece was a motivating factor in Medea's final decision to help Jason. This desire is also implied in Jason's recital of the benefits of Greek civilization in Euripides' tragedy Medea (536-541). Pindar's Medea does display her magical skill with regard to killing the dragon who guarded the Golden Fleece, but this quality is regarded as secondary to her skill at prophecy. Similarly, Pherekydes of Athens presents Medea as the agent of Hera, who is bent on getting her revenge for a slight from Pelias (FGrHIST 3F105). According to the scholia on Apollonius Rhodius, Pherekydes is said to report that Jason killed the dragon guarding the Golden Fleece of his own accord -- Medea's magical skills were not required (Schol. A.R. IV.156).

Later Greek accounts of the Medea story include Euripides' tragedy of the same name, and Apollonius Rhodius' Books III-IV of the Argonautica. Euripides chooses to present Medea as the injured wife who decides to exact vengeance from the husband who wronged her. From her first words (Medea 96-98), heard off stage, Medea is depicted by Euripides as a woman of violent emotions. Within the first 410 lines, Medea decides to destroy her husband, his new wife (Creusa) and his father-in-law (Creon) (Medea 371-375) and only hesitates over the means to be used (Medea 376-409). Her words characterize her as

a woman of devious cunning with little evidence of the kind-hearted royal daughter. By the middle of the play, Medea has decided to kill her sons to punish Jason (Medea 792-793) and although she wavers in her decision (Medea 901-903;925;1021-1080;1240-1250), she ultimately carries out her resolution. Although Medea's nature is revealed by her decision to commit murder, her determination to sacrifice her own children does not come as a natural sequence, but as an unexpected shock. Similarly, her nature is characterized by frequent references to her magical skills (Medea 419-420;717-718;1893), although Medea does not say explicitly that she used these skills to slay the dragon or to compel the daughters of Pelias to kill their father (Medea 475-487) and thus she does not figure prominently as a witch. It is, therefore, her role as the injured and enraged wife which is given more emphasis throughout the tragedy. This characterization reaches its climax with the killing of the two children. Here Medea becomes a woman enraged almost to the point of insanity. Apart from sending the poisoned gifts to Creusa (Medea 789;1167) and availing herself of her grandfather's (<sup>ἑλλος</sup>) chariot to escape, Euripides does not include a significant amount of supernatural allusions. His Medea remains a murderous, rather than supernatural, woman.

Apollonius Rhodius, on the other hand, chooses to reverse Euripides' technique in his portrayal of Medea.

Like Hesiod, Apollonius' early characterization of Medea is as the innocent royal maiden (III.281-284;460-471). However, as the tale unfolds, Medea's position as sorceress gradually becomes clearer. Apollonius' description of Medea putting to sleep the dragon guarding the Golden Fleece highlights Medea as the possessor of spells (IV.146 ff.). Likewise, Medea's magical powers save the ship Argo from the bronze giant Talos (IV.1656f.). Since Apollonius Rhodius' account ends as Jason and Medea reach Pagasae, the depiction of Medea as the revengeful wife is not provided.

Ovid's Heroides XII begins in time after the Golden Fleece has been successfully acquired and the heroes have returned home. In Euripides' tragedy, the Nurse's prologue introduces the audience to the details of Jason and Medea's past history and the details of Jason's new marriage (1-45). In Ovid's Heroides, one learns the details of Medea's position at different intervals throughout the letter - the facts of Jason's marriage are not revealed until 137-158. Thus, without an anticipatory prologue, as in Euripides, the reader is thrust immediately into the midst of an argument between husband and wife.

Her. XII: Section II: Lines 1-2: Preamble<sup>1</sup>

The introductory at implies an earlier correspondence between Medea and Jason, or more probably, an earlier argument. The letter begins in the manner of a spoken encounter rather than one carried on through the medium of pen and paper.<sup>2</sup> Despite the dramatic beginning,

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<sup>1</sup> The divisions for the letters follow those of Eberhard Oppel "Ovids Heroiden Studien zu inneren Form und zur Motivation" (Ph.D. diss., Erlangen - Nürnberg University, 1968).

<sup>2</sup> Neither H. Vahlen, W. Schmitz-Cronenbroeck nor E.-A. Kirfel accept the introductory lines (1-2) of Heroides XII. All posit some kind of introductory distich, while expressing strong doubts about the authenticity of this postulated distich, found in editions  $\epsilon$ ,  $\zeta$  and Sar<sup>2</sup>:

Exul inops contempta novo Medea marito  
dicit, an a regnis tempora nulla vacant

W. Schmitz-Cronenbroeck cites the hard break of thought in the pentameter line as a dubious stylistic element, and maintains that the rest of the line is merely a stop-gap. The vacant of (2) followed by the vacavi of (3) also seems to present a difficulty, since it implies a needlessly repeated word in too close proximity. Although H. Vahlen posits the possibility of an opening distich, without it Heroides XII does, as Kirfel suggests, bring out the emotional excitement of the speaker. As such it is an effective introduction to the letter, as the reader is launched in medias res. Thus, as A. Palmer describes, a scene is presented in which Medea imagines Jason "tossing her letter aside with the words 'non vacat'" and Medea, in return, replies indignantly with at. The first two lines thus present a Medea who is insulted by her husband's lack of civility. She knows Jason well enough to anticipate his disregard of her letter. See H. Vahlen, Über die Anfänge der Heroiden des Ovid (Berlin: Abhdlg. d. Ber. Akad., 1881), 9-12; W. Schmitz-Cronenbroeck, "Die Anfänge der Heroides des Ovids" (Ph.D. diss., University of Cologne, 1937), 9-10; E.-A. Kirfel, Untersuchungen zur Briefform der Heroides Ovids, Noctes Romanae, vol. 11 (Bern: Verlag Paul

one of the main focuses of the letter is introduced with the verb memini (Her. XII.1). It is an immediate call to the past, and indeed, the first 135 lines of the poem look back to the past and to the events which occurred then. Past events play an important role for Medea in her interpretation of the present. The central positioning of memini reinforces its prominence in the line as well as in the letter as a whole. This theme of the past is continued in the noun regina (Her. XII.1) -- Medea, a princess no longer, still sees herself as the embodiment of royal authority and stature. This recollection tends to focus the reader's attention on Medea's present status, especially in light of Jason's new marriage. A sharp contrast is thus established between what Medea is and what she was and thus between her debasement in her own eyes and in the eyes of the world. The reader is able to take the contrast to a third remove, by realizing what Medea will be in the future -- the murderess of her own children.

The Colchorum ... regina also identifies the writer of the letter as Medea, since Ovid does not seem to have followed consistently the standard introduction to letters by announcing writer and/or addressee.<sup>3</sup> The ars of the

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Haupt, 1969), 74-77; A. Palmer, ed. P. Ovidi Nasonis Heroides with the Greek Translation of Planudes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898; reprint, Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967), 387.

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of Ovid's use of introductory and concluding distichs in letters see Kirfel, 6-53.

second line may recall Medea's characterization in Apollonius Rhodius as a woman distinguished by supernatural powers, but at present it only reveals an innocuous appearance.

The first two lines, then, serve to identify Medea, her royal status and her past service. They usher in Medea's expression of displeasure at Jason's attitude towards her and her past help.

Her. XII: Section III: Line 3-20: Medea's Complaint

Medea begins her complaint with the poetic topos of the fates unrolling the threads of life. This emphasis on the beginning of life and fate is made clear by the temporal adverb tunc (Her. XII.3) and is balanced and furthered by the tum (Her. XII.5). It is the past which is all-important to Medea and upon which she dwells. Only then could she, Medea, a princess and sorceress, have died with honour -- it is as if the past contained the climax of Medea's life, and all else is but degradation and disillusionment:

Tum potui Medea mori bene: quidquid ab illo  
Produxi vitae tempore, poena fuit.

(Her. XII.5-6)

The time before Jason's liaison with Creusa has already acquired a golden aura for Medea. Life since then has been more of a punishment (poena [Her. XII.6]) than a blessing.

Although A. Palmer suggests that poena denotes misery rather than punishment,<sup>4</sup> Howard Jacobson seems to have interpreted the word with greater precision, since he argues that the motif of punishment is of much more importance to the poem as a whole, as well as setting up the antithesis between honour and shame, crime and punishment:

When Medea describes that period of her life as one of punishment, she means precisely what she says. For the crimes she has perpetrated she recognizes the misery she has experienced as deserved recompense.<sup>5</sup>

Apollonius Rhodius' Medea fears punishment even before she has decided to help Jason:

τοὺς μὲν θεὸς ἢ τις Ἑρινύς  
ἄμμι πολυκλαύτους δεῦρ' ἤγαγε κεῖθεν ἀνίας.

(A.R., Arg. III.776-8)

In the Heroides, Medea remains focused on the past as she recounts the journey of those searching for the Golden Fleece (Her. XII.7-8), the arrival of the Greeks at Colchis (Her. XII.9-10) and Jason's inordinate attractions (Her. XX.11-12). In tone and content these lines are highly reminiscent of the Nurse's speech at the beginning of Euripides' Medea (Her. XII.1-48). Both express a despairing questioning, a hopeless desire to answer the

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<sup>4</sup> Palmer, 388.

<sup>5</sup> Howard Jacobson, Ovid's Heroides (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 112.

unfathomable. The complexities of fate extend as well to the more immediate past as Medea, allowing that Jason had to come to Colchis, wonders why he could not have been killed by the fire-breathing ox or the dragon's teeth.<sup>6</sup> Lines 11-12 introduce the motif of divinely inspired love as Medea seeks to explain Jason's attraction. These lines accord well with Apollonius Rhodius' account:

προπρὸ δ' ἄρ' ὀφθαλμῶν ἔτι οἱ ἰνδάλλετο πάντα,  
 αὐτός θ' οἷος ἔην οἷοισί τε φάρεσιν εἶτο  
 οἷά τ' ἔειφ' ὡς θ' ἔζετ' ἐπὶ θρόνου ὡς τε θύραζε  
 ἦιεν· οὐδέ τι ν' ἄλλον ὄλυσσάτο πορφύρουσα  
 ἔμμεναι ἀνέρα τοῖον· ἐν οὔασι δ' αἰὲν ὀρώρει  
 αὐδὴ τε μῦθός τε μελίσφρονες οὖς ἀγόρευσεν.

(A.R., Arg., III.453-458)

The most immediate difference is, of course, the change from μελίσφρονες (A.R., III.458) to the more derogatory ficta. Because of the derogatory aspect of the ficta, one is thus more inclined to view the plus aequo along the same lines. It may, then, indicate the divine element of the love between Jason and Medea, that is, that fate imposed love upon Medea, rather than that Medea herself initiated the love affair. This is perhaps why Jason attracted Medea more than she thought was fair or just. Both plus aequo

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<sup>6</sup> These lines also seem to be a standard part of the letter of complaint, although Medea expresses her wishes in the form of a question rather than the more regular utinam ne construction. This construction parallels the Greek εἴθ' ὤφελα construction. For further details of this construction see Helmut Hross, "Die Klagen der verlassenen Heroïden in der lateinischen Dichtung" (Ph.D. diss., Ludwigs-Maximilian University, 1958). See also Her. X.171; Vergil, Aeneid IV.658; Euripides, Medea. 1-6.

and ficta are, however, moral judgments of the past made on the basis of the present. It is only after Medea has suffered from her love affair with Jason that she wonders why she was excessively attracted to him and realizes that his words can not be trusted. Medea thus continues to view the past in terms of the present.<sup>7</sup> In the retelling of the first of Jason's trials, that of yoking the fire-breathing bull, Medea uses the term praemedicatus with respect to Jason's state of being (Her. XII.15). A. Palmer identifies the compound as occurring only in this passage,<sup>8</sup> a factor which tends to emphasize all the more strongly that part of the tale which recounts Medea's gift to Jason of a potion to protect himself against the bull. This new coinage emphasizes Medea's extraordinary powers and the role she played in Jason's trials. Ovid also reveals here his knowledge of Apollonius Rhodius:

ἡ δὲ τέως γλαφυρῆς ἐξεύλετο φωριαμοῦτο  
 φάρμακον ὄρρα τέ φασι Προμήθειον καλέεσθαι.  
 τῷ εἶ κεν, νυχίοισιν ἀρεσσάμενος θυέεσσιν  
 Δαῖτραν μουνογένειαν, ἐὸν δέμας ἰκαίνουτο,  
 ἢ τ' ἂν ὄγ' οὔτε ῥηκτὸς ἔοι χαλκοῦτο τυπῆσιν  
 οὔτε κεν αἰθομένῳ πυρὶ εἰκάθοι, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀλκῆ  
 λωύτερος κεῖν' ἦμαρ ὁμῶς κάρτει τε πέλοιτο.

(A.R., Arg. III.844-850)

This is only the second reference to Medea's magical powers, and although both references are minor ones, they are sufficient to remind the reader of Medea's special

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<sup>7</sup> Compare Apollonius Rhodius' account, Arg. III.785ff.

<sup>8</sup> Palmer, 389.

nature. Although it would be difficult to ignore Medea's magical proficiency, given her well-known characterization, Ovid does not emphasize this aspect of her character at this point and therefore uses only allusive and minor references.

This passage also contains the letter's first direct reference to Jason, in the rather derogatory adjective immemor (Her. XII.16). A. Palmer suggests "thoughtless" for immemor,<sup>9</sup> which, as with poena, seems to trivialize the role Jason played in Medea's life. As F. Verducci has pointed out, Medea recreates the young hero Jason on the model of the present Jason, the Jason who has proven himself to be treacherous and unfaithful.<sup>10</sup> So the immemor can only be "thoughtless" in the sense that Jason has apportioned very few thoughts, if any at all, to his former wife.

Like Ariadne before her (Catullus 64.123;248), Medea interprets this lack of thought on Jason's part as a crime, so that immemor becomes a term of abuse rather than merely a descriptive adjective.<sup>11</sup> This tone is enhanced by

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 389.

<sup>10</sup> Florence Verducci, Ovid's Toyshop of the Heart: Epistulae Heroidum (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 72.

<sup>11</sup> Apollonius Rhodius' Jason uses the story of Ariadne's service to Theseus as encouragement for Medea to follow Ariadne's example (A.R., Arg. III.997-1007). Naturally, he skips Ariadne's abandonment by Theseus and concentrates instead on Ariadne's divine spouse and the

the pejorative scelerate (Her. XII.19), which recalls the κάκιστος of the Euripidean model (Medea 452;465;488). Both contain the idea of extreme depravity. For Medea, the strong emotion of scelerate expresses itself more clearly in her unique desire for Jason's death and the double repetition of the idea that many evils would also have died with Jason:

Semina sevisset, totidem quot semina et hostes,  
 Ut caderet cultu cultor ab ipse suo.  
 Quantum perfidiae tecum, scelerate, perisset,  
 Dempta forent capiti quam mala multa meo!

(Her. XII.17-20)

As H. Jacobson points out: "Nowhere else in the Heroides does a heroine phrase such a wish in these terms, i.e., that the hero had died."<sup>12</sup> Euripides' Medea, in the early lines of the play, cries out to the chorus that she herself wishes to die ("οὔχομαι δὲ καὶ βίου / χάριν μεθεῖσα κατανεῖν χρήζω, φύλακ' [Medea 226-227]), but she prefers to seek revenge, not death, for Jason. With scelerate Ovid's poem moves towards open condemnation of Jason and his actions.

Her. XII: Section IV: Lines 21-158: Narratio

The first two lines (Her. XII.21-22) of this section continue in the rather ugly vein of the preceding  
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 stellification of her crown.

<sup>12</sup> Jacobson, 114.

passage, although the emphasis shifts from Jason to Medea herself. She now delights in reviling Jason, especially as it is the only joy now left open to her.<sup>13</sup> Although Medea's exact status, whereabouts and general condition are not identified in the letter, this remark seems to indicate that she has lost the status she once had, if not more material things as well. This is certainly the impression which she wishes Jason to receive. It would not do to let Jason think that her situation had improved or even remained the same -- this would scarcely elicit sympathy! The ingratitude with which Medea charges Jason (ingrato [Her. XII.21]) is only the beginning of the accusations she piles up against him in the course of the poem. At this point, the sola (Her. XII.22) seems to indicate that Medea is satisfied with only verbally avenging herself on Jason.<sup>14</sup> Ovid's Medea does not reveal at an early point in her letter her desire to harm Jason physically, as she does in Euripides' tragedy.

The regna beata (Her. XII.24) adds an interesting note to Medea's concept of the past. Although A. Palmer states that beata refers only to the economic prosperity of Colchis,<sup>15</sup> given Medea's manner of looking at the past,

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<sup>13</sup> This seems a common reaction for abandoned women. Compare Catullus 64.198-201;244-247, Vergil, Aeneid IV.380-387, Euripides, Medea 473, Ovid, Tristia IV.3.37.

<sup>14</sup> Verducci, 121.

<sup>15</sup> Palmer, 389.

Colchis might be considered happy in her eyes, as she herself had not met nor suffered from Jason's treacheries. Disaster had still to strike. The Colchians had not lost their Golden Fleece, Medea and prince Absyrtos.

In the lines which follow a correspondence is established between Medea then and Creusa, the new bride, now. Medea is very much aware of the similarities between herself and Creusa -- both are royal daughters, married to Jason, both have fathers rich in wealth and land. Medea uses the mention of her own name to underline her social position and authority (Her. XII.25). For Medea, her name is a quintessential statement of power -- it identifies who she was, who her father was and therefore what her status was.

Ovid maintains this tendency to contrast by juxtaposing Aeeta and Pelasgos (Her. XII.29) and the Greek bodies surrounded by the embroidered beds (Her. XII.30).<sup>16</sup> This series of contrasts initiates a feeling of tension expressive of Medea's inner turmoil. She herself was pulled between her native land and that of Greece, between loyalty to her father and king and loyalty to Jason. Therefore Ovid positions his words to illustrate this tension, but at the same time he evokes reminiscences of

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<sup>16</sup> Compare Vergil, Aeneid I.708

the traditional lavish hospitality.<sup>17</sup> Ovid contracts the account into two brief lines, obviously assuming that the reader can fill in the details for himself. The hospitium (Her. XII.29) of this passage is ironic, however, because of the trials which the host imposes upon his guest, but also because it is Medea herself who transgresses her father's "hospitality" by helping Jason to defeat him.<sup>18</sup>

With the repeated tunc (Her. XII.31), Medea imposes present knowledge on past actions, as she anticipates the effect Jason will have on her life. She could not possibly have known the destruction Jason would bring. Instead, she pinpoints her ruin from hindsight. It is also noteworthy that Medea describes this first meeting with Jason as the ruin of her mind (mentis [Her. XII.32]), of her reasoning. Euripides' Medea, even at the point of killing her children, presents a rational, if somewhat distraught, chain of reasoning. She is always fully aware of what she is doing and the consequences of her actions.<sup>19</sup> Apollonius' account does not continue beyond the return of Jason and the Argonauts to Aegina. We learn nothing about the later life of Jason and Medea. None of the other

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<sup>17</sup> Compare Apollonius Rhodius III.300f.; Vergil, Aeneid I.695-727.

<sup>18</sup> The same irony is latent in Dido's reference to hospitium, as Aeneas also transgresses the bounds of hospitality. See Aeneid IV.51.

<sup>19</sup> See for example, Euripides, Medea 791-794; 1049-1055; 1056-1080; 1237-1250.

sources nor the scholiasts report any tale that Medea killed her children in a state of madness.<sup>20</sup> Taking into consideration the following two lines (Her. XII.33-34) with their elegiac tone and vocabulary (perii, ignibus, arsi, [Her. XII.33]; ardet [Her. XII.34]), it is possible that in speaking of the ruin of her mind, Medea is only referring to the traditional psychological effects of a love-affair. Indeed, A. Palmer suggests that ruina might well be interpreted as "breakdown",<sup>21</sup> and when combined with mentis, might entail a mental breakdown, so strong is the effect of Jason's presence on the young, impressionable Medea. It is significant that Medea suspects some other force at work in her relationship with Jason in lines 11-12. Here she seems to feel that Jason's appearance was the initial impetus for her feelings of love, although her fate directed the result.

The description of the fires and torches accent the elegiac tone of the passage.<sup>22</sup> The pineae taeda (Her. XII.34) recall the torches carried by revellers on their way home from banquets, or to their mistress' house, but the fact that these particular torches have been offered to

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<sup>20</sup> See the discussion of sources in Euripides Medea, ed. with intro. and comm. Denys L. Page (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978) xxi-xxx.

<sup>21</sup> Palmer, 390.

<sup>22</sup> See the description in Apollonius Rhodius III.280-299. Both poets emphasize the notion of love as a fire of some type, i.e., a torch or a flame.

the gods (ad magnos ... deos [Her. XII.34]) seems to suggest primarily the idea of a sacrifice. Thus Medea sees herself as a victim of love, dedicated for the enjoyment of the god. She becomes a pawn for Jason and she emphasizes her lack of independence by describing herself as being drawn along by her fate (Her. XII.35). Thus although Medea might believe that she had initially fallen in love with Jason of her own accord, she definitely feels that she has lost control of her life from this point onwards. She herself has no part in the action. The impression that Medea is explaining her reaction in the light of succeeding events remains.

The notion that events are occurring beyond her control is intensified by Medea's inability to hide her feelings (Her. XII.37-38). Jason achieves superiority over Medea because of her love and Medea obviously resents this. Thus line 37 begins with the second direct curse which Medea levels at Jason. Perfidia is the main charge against him.<sup>23</sup> Faithlessness, hand in hand with thoughtlessness, caused Medea's plight. Medea rates faithfulness very highly (at least when it is a matter of infidelity towards herself) and she expects Jason to take the same view, especially after he had been saved by Medea's help. A lack

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<sup>23</sup> Ariadne, in Catullus 64.133;174 and Dido in Her. VII.79;118 and in Vergil, Aeneid IV.305;421 also call Theseus and Aeneas respectively perfide.

of faithfulness is a very serious charge in Medea's eyes. The word prodita (Her. XII.38) takes on added piquancy in view of Medea's actions towards her father and her views on faithfulness. Betrayal plays such a large part in Medea's life, that it would be unusual if most of her thoughts were not coloured by it in some fashion.

Lines 39-56 detail the labours which Aeetes had decreed for Jason and the subsequent reaction of the Greeks and Medea. This is the second description of the labours following upon that of Her. XII.12-20. The fire-breathing bulls with their bronze feet,<sup>24</sup> the seeds sprouting humans carrying swords and shields are much as has been reported in both Euripides and Apollonius. There are, however, a few alterations in Ovid's account which seem to be intended to underscore the trials. Jacobson<sup>25</sup> points to the insolito (Her. XII.40) as one of the first indications of differences between the Apollonian and Ovidian versions. In Apollonius, the trial is presented as one which Aeetes

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<sup>24</sup> Palmer merely states that the bronze-footed bulls were the work of Hephaestus (A.R. III.228) [Palmer, 390]. In this case, it seems reasonable to assume that it is a literary topos. As part of his Labours, Hercules killed a bronze-footed stag (Vergil, Aeneid VI.802), Homer uses bronze-footed horses to indicate the strength of their feet (Iliad, VIII.41). Pherekydes has bronze-footed bulls (frg. 112J.) as does Pindar (Pythian IV.226). Thus the bronzing can denote strength (horses, bulls) or swiftness (stags). Ovid has Medea describe the bulls thus in order to emphasize the difficulty of the contest and therefore Jason's dependence on her help and magic.

<sup>25</sup> Jacobson, 115.

accomplishes at fairly frequent intervals, not as something which has never before been attempted (A.R. III.407-408). In the Ovidian version, because the yoking of the bulls was novel, it therefore necessitated extraordinary measures--hence Medea's participation. Secondly, both Palmer and Jacobson remark that putting the serpent to sleep (Her. XII.49-50) was not one of the tests which Aetes set out for Jason.<sup>26</sup> Palmer suggests that Ovid had included it here to compress the Apollonian version.<sup>27</sup> However, the addition of another fierce beast for Jason to tame reinforces the impossibility of the tests without Medea's intervention.<sup>28</sup> The aliqua ... arte of line fifty supports this theory, especially given the previous connotation of

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 115; Palmer, 390.

<sup>27</sup> Palmer, 390.

<sup>28</sup> Palmer gives devota (Her. XII.45) as "doomed", which seems a non sequitur (Palmer, 390). Henri Bornecque suggests "docile" or "désignée à cet effet par la divinité" (Henri Bornecque, ed. Ovide Héroïdes trans. Marcel Prévost, Association Guillaume Budé, Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1964: 72). However, the TLL suggests execrabilis, detestandus, maledictus and gives Her. VI.164; IX.153, and Met. X.464 in support. Given that Medea is writing her letter after she has been cast off by Jason and given her tendency towards imbuing the past with the moral overtones of the present, it is reasonable that Medea should curse the hands which are to sow the life-generating teeth. Ovid's Medea does not decisively decide to harm either Jason, Creusa or Creon until verses 180-182 and even then her words are only an allusion to what might occur. Thus to interpret devota as doomed imputes too much significance too soon. Rather, Medea curses Jason's hands because it was these hands which were shaken in pledge (Her. XII.90) and which later betrayed their promises and abandoned Medea.

ars in line 2 and Medea's connection with it.

The passage concludes appropriately with a description of the end of the banquet. It is a scene of desolation, of abandoned couches (Her. XII.51-52) and despondent guests (Her. XII.51). Medea attempts to emphasize the importance of her help by pointing out the contrast between Jason's present position and his position at this banquet. She achieves this by remarking how far away Creusa was, both literally and figuratively:

Quam tibi tunc longe regnum dotale Creusae  
Et socer et magni nata Creontis erat?

(Her. XII.53-4)<sup>29</sup>

Medea's closing words present a romantic view of Jason's departure, highly indicative of her own feelings:

Tristis abis; oculis abeuntem prosequor udis,  
Et dixit tenui murmure lingua 'vale!'

(Her. XII.55-56)<sup>30</sup>

He is again the mysterious stranger with whom Medea had fallen in love, not the forgetful, criminal Jason of the present.

The next passage (Her. XII.57-66) is an abbreviated version of Apollonius Rhodius III.451-470;616-824.<sup>31</sup> Medea

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<sup>29</sup> Palmer's "How useless then" (Palmer, 391), although conveying the general sense of the line, does not take into account the two levels of thought of quam ... longe (Her. XII.53) i.e., literal and figurative distance.

<sup>30</sup> This scene parallels that of Apollonius Rhodius III.440-448.

<sup>31</sup> See also Vergil, Aeneid, IV.1-5.

passes the night per lacrimas, indicative of her anxiety and inner turmoil. Ovid uses only one line to suggest that Medea is torn between two emotions:

Hinc amor, hinc timor est; ipsum timor auget amorem.

(Her. XII.61)

Medea is surprisingly not torn between love and duty, but between love and fear, and both emotions are directed towards Jason. Indeed, as she concludes, her fear only serves to increase her love - thus one emotion encourages the other, rather than proving to be opposite and conflicting forces. It is remarkable that Medea does not mention any struggle she might have had between her love for her father and her love for Jason. This is in sharp contrast to the Apollonian and Euripidean models (A.R. III.616-644; Euripides, Medea 475-495). The swiftness with which Medea makes her decision demonstrates just how much control Jason has over her emotions. The guilt she feels for her decision to betray her father is therefore greater precisely because she did not hesitate. Although Medea may try to make Jason responsible, she is equally, if not more, culpable however much she may refuse to acknowledge or accept her responsibility.

As in Apollonius' account (III.674-743), it is Medea's sister Chalciope who instigates Medea's final decision by providing her with a plausible excuse for helping Jason. Euripides' Medea has her nurse to whom she

may confide her problems. Vergil's Dido has her sister Anna (Aeneid IV.6ff.). In the case of both Dido and Medea, the sister confirms the heroine in her original inclination and, indeed, provides the heroine with further justification. Ovid characteristically condenses the whole scene between the sisters into five lines (Her. XII.62-66). This brevity emphasizes that Medea's decision caused no surprise either at the time of the decision nor at the time of writing the letter. There is no hint of the despair of Apollonius' Medea, who, although she swears to help her sister and her sister's sons (III.711-717;727-739), nevertheless passes a sleepless night struggling to decide whether or not to kill herself instead of betraying her father (III.797-819). Again, Medea seems to have made her decisions fairly easily.

From the scene in Medea's bedroom, the scene shifts immediately to the shrine of Diana (Her. XII.67-92). Ovid has again compressed the tale of Apollonius, as we hear nothing of Medea's or Jason's manner of arrival, nor whether or not they have come accompanied.<sup>32</sup> The description of the grove, where the sunlight scarcely enters (Her. XII.66-67) is quite different from Apollonius' version, in which Medea and her maids sing and dance while they wait for Jason to arrive (III.949-950). Instead, there is an appropriately gloomy and sinister grove,

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<sup>32</sup> Contrast Apollonius Rhodius III.829-843;869-911.

foreshadowing the disasters which are to result from this encounter. It is also a suitable scene for Medea to practise her magical skills. It is here that Jason performs his type of magic on Medea and by means of promises and prayers entreats her help. The whole passage is fraught with irony, for the very promises which Jason makes to Medea are the causes of her present complaint. Whereas Jason in Apollonius speaks fawningly (ὑποσαύων III.396), in Heroides XII, he speaks infido ... ore (Her. XII.72).<sup>33</sup> The difference is due to the viewpoint from which each version is recounted. Medea obviously interprets Jason's actions by their effect on her at the time at which she is writing the letter. Thus, Jason's faithlessness now has made him faithless then as well. Similarly, the references to oaths taken (Her. XII.79-80), entreaties (Her. XII.81-4), promises of marriage (Her. XII.85-6), hands given in pledge (Her. XII.90) and even tears (lacrimas [Her. XII.91]) become indications of Jason's perjury rather than of his loyalty.<sup>34</sup> Jason does not bother to tell Medea that his companions will sing her

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<sup>33</sup> For other uses of falsus see Her. VII.67; Her. II.32; Her. VI.63.

<sup>34</sup> The reference to Diana (Her. XII.69) is repeated in line 79 and therefore emphasizes Medea's magical qualities. These references are slight, but nevertheless serve as reminders of Medea's dual nature. She is not the priestess of Hecate as in Apollonius, nor is she the priestess of prophecy as in Pindar's Pythian IV. However, Ovid's Medea shows characteristics which add another level to her personality.

praises if she saves him, nor that the wives and mothers of his companions will thank her.<sup>35</sup> He merely says that he himself, if saved, will be a greater glory to Medea, as if his existence alone embodies some special grace! He swears by some of the same divinities found in Apollonius -- by the gods of Medea's ancestors and by Diana. It is to be remembered that Medea's grandfather was Sol and most importantly, her aunt is Circe. Circe's role as a sorceress is of importance here.<sup>36</sup> Ovid is again hinting at Medea's magical background, but in an oblique manner. It may be assumed that Jason chose these particular divinities to swear by because he sought the help not only of Medea herself, but also of her magical abilities.<sup>37</sup>

An interesting point in this passage is the manner in which Medea describes herself and her reaction to Jason's words. She describes how her mind, the mind of a puella simplex (Her. XII.89-90), was moved by Jason's words. As she looks back on their encounter, she describes herself as a victim, a person caught (capta) by Jason's wiles. She seems to castigate herself for her credulity

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<sup>35</sup> Compare Apollonius Rhodius III.989-1007; Euripides, Medea 536-544.

<sup>36</sup> See the depiction of Circe in Homer's Odyssey, Book X. Triple Diana (triplicis ...Dianae) signifies Phoebe in the sky, Diana on the earth and Hecate in Hades. The number three is popular in magic, as are, of course, references to Hecate.

<sup>37</sup> Apollonius Rhodius presents Medea as a sorceress much more clearly. Compare III.737;802-803;843ff.

and for the swiftness with which she succumbed (Her. XII.91-92). According to H. Jacobson, Medea is the only heroine who refers to herself as simplex.<sup>38</sup> She obviously interprets herself as she was before her meeting with Jason, before she had committed the crimes which made her infamous. Although she may always be aware of her crimes, as H. Jacobson suggests,<sup>39</sup> it is her manner of interpreting the past that distinguishes her as simplex. Medea's habit of imbuing the past with overtones of the present has already been demonstrated. She does the same thing here, which is one of the reasons that the grove of Diana appears dark and gloomy. She sees Jason as the guilty party in the past (Her. XII.91) because he is guilty now. She stops short, however, of imposing her own present faults on her past self, for she continues to view herself as the innocent girl (puella) she once was. She has established a double standard when looking to the past -- one for herself and a completely different, more culpable one, for Jason.

From the sacred grove, the scene jumps once more to the trials which Jason underwent (Her. XII.93-102). At this third repetition, the contest is being described as it takes place, and Medea positions herself as one of the spectators (Her. XII.97f.). It seems a trifle odd that Medea, the powerful priestess of Hecate, should be watching

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<sup>38</sup> Jacobson, 118.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

Jason, pale with apprehension for him, even though she had already given him the magic potion to protect him. That she seems to doubt her own power is perhaps more an indication of the terrible aspect of the terrigenae ... fratres (Her. XII.99) and the lover's natural anxiety, than anxiety about the efficacy of her drugs. Ovid again seems to downplay this element of Medea's nature, for he makes no mention of the φάρμακον nor of the preliminary sacrifice which plays such a large role in Apollonius' version (III.844-868;1013-1014;1026-1062). Although she says that she herself gave the magic potion to Jason ("Ipsa ego, quae dederam medicamina, pallida sedi" [Her. XII.97]), she seems to ignore her role as a sorceress and concentrates on her role as the young woman concerned for her beloved's welfare.

In lines 103-116, Medea abruptly shatters the tender picture of herself fearing for Jason's safety when she taunts him for his decision to marry Creusa. Past and present collide as Medea describes herself as others see her -- as a barbarian virago, one who put the serpent to sleep herself and did not trust the task to Jason. In Jason's eyes, she is no longer a simplex puella, but a nocens barbara. Everything else -- money, position, innocence -- has been stripped from her (Her. XII.105-6).

The triple repetition of nunc (Her. XII.105;106) emphasizes Medea's struggle to correlate the past and the

present, especially when the present confers such hard realities. It is only when Medea has worked through in her mind the events leading up to the actual acquisition of the fleece, that she can deal with her transformation in Jason's eyes. It is at this point that anger seems to take over and she moves towards her final disillusionment regarding Jason. She numbers the sacrifices she made on Jason's behalf:

Proditus est genitor, regnum patriamque reliqui:  
Munus, in exilio quod licet esse, tuli.

(Her. XII.109-110)

The first on her list (and in actual chronology) is the betrayal of her father. The positioning of proditus at the beginning of the line is significant, as it recalls not only that Aetes was betrayed, but that Medea herself was also betrayed, both in connection with Jason. Medea makes no mention of the opportunities which would be available to her in the Greek world and which Jason might have offered her as a bribe for her help. In Apollonius, Jason had offered honour, reverence and treatment as a goddess (III.1122-1127). In Euripides' Medea, Jason tried to convince Medea that she had received more benefits than she had given (Medea 534-541;593-597). Jason's arguments fail to convince Medea either in Euripides or (by omission) in Ovid's Heroides. In Medea's view, what she had given up far outweighed any benefit she might have received in her new country. She scathingly calls Jason and his companions

foreign robbers. She sees herself merely as the booty or spoils of war: "Virginitas facta est peregrini praeda latronis" (Her. XII.111). She is still a victim, but anger is the predominant emotion, not powerlessness or shame.

Mention of a dear mother and sister left behind leads naturally to Medea's ill-fated brother (Her. XII.113). His death was one of the deeds which condemned Medea in the eyes of many. The tradition of the tale varies somewhat. In Apollonius' account, although Medea masterminds Apsyrtus' death (IV.411-420), it is Jason who actually does the killing (IV.451-481). Pherekydes (FGrHist 3F32a) gives Medea an even smaller part, as she is merely told by Jason to bring Apsyrtus from his bed - the Argonauts then kill him. Hyginus (Fab. 23) makes Jason the murderer, while in Euripides, Medea boldly admits her responsibility in the death of Apsyrtus even before she appears on stage (Medea 166-167). In Heroides XII, however, Medea does not show such candour (Her. XII.113-16). Her reluctance to speak about the death of her brother indicates that she does not feel justified in her actions. It is indicative of Medea's view of herself that she would say that she should have been torn apart along with her brother (Her. XII.116). It is precisely because she feels guilty that she (or more precisely her hand) does not dare to put down the truth in writing.

In the next passage (Her. XII.117-132), Medea's

recognition of her guilt continues as she voices surprise at her own confidence in going to sea (Her. XII.117-118). Her words suggests that as a woman (femina [Her. XII.118]), she should have had some fear of the sea, or even fear of divine retribution while at sea. However, her crimes have made her impervious to any further danger. For this reason, she can actually question the existence of the gods (Her. XII.119) for she had not then been punished as she deserved. Medea does not refute the supposition that she deserves punishment, but rather questions that she has not been punished earlier. The past has finally caught up with Medea and she is unable to see herself as a simplex puella.

Jacobson reports scathingly on lines 119-120:

It is the very triviality of the remark following hard upon her admission of fratricide that makes the juxtaposition so horrifying. To be concerned with her own image, her pride, her power, when she recognizes herself as a fratricide brands her character and her values in the most sinister and blackest tones.<sup>40</sup>

This interpretation pertains most closely to the moral judgment of the reader and is, in this respect, valuable. It is obvious that Ovid's Medea does not view her words in this fashion. Medea is not saying that she deserves punishment merely for her credulity, but rather that her credulity led her to murder her brother and betray her father and country. Because she was credulous, she trusted Jason and therefore killed her brother for his sake. If

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 113.

she had not believed in Jason, all the other disasters would not have occurred. Thus her credulitas becomes the catalyst for her other crimes and the first reason for her punishment.

The following six lines (Her. XII.121-126) demonstrate another aspect of Medea's character. It is not so much the past she fears, as the present. She would rather that she and Jason had perished among all the famous terrors of the world, which would have been more suitable punishment, than that they face the open treachery of the future. Medea can more easily survive deceiving her father and the death of her brother than she can Jason abandoning her. His desertion would make a mockery of all she had done for him and would leave her absolutely no excuse, however weak, for her actions. Thus, it is of crucial importance to Medea that Jason praise her:

Ut culpent alii, tibi me laudare necesse est,  
Pro quo sum totiens esse coacta nocens.

(Her. XII.131-132)

With lines 133-136 of this section (Her. XII.133-158), we reach an event that has occurred in the near past, rather than the remote past. Here is the cause of Medea's complaint: Jason has told her to leave. The initial ausus es - o! (Her. XII.133) demonstrates the surprise Medea must have felt when Jason first revealed his intentions. Medea could not conceive of the idea that Jason would even think of leaving her after all she had done for him. The

repetition of the same two words in an identical position in the second line emphasizes Medea's surprise and, in her view, Jason's temerity. The same feeling, steeped in anger, is expressed in Euripides' Medea, when Medea first confronts Jason after she has learned of her banishment:

αὐτὴ δὲ πατέρα καὶ δόμους προδοῦσ' ἑμοῦς  
 τὴν Πηλιῶτιν εἰς Ἴωλκὸν ἰκόμην  
 σὺν σοῦ, πρόθυμος μᾶλλον ἢ σοφωτέρα.  
 Περίαν τ' ἀπέκτειν', ὥσπερ ἄλγιστον θανεῖν,  
 παύδων ὑπ' αὐτοῦ, πάντα τ' ἐξεῖλον δόμον.  
 καὶ ταῦθ' ὑφ' ἡμῶν, ὧ κάκιστ' ἀνδρῶν, παθῶν  
 προὔδωκας γεγῶτων· εἰ γὰρ ἦσθ' ἄπαις ἔτι,  
 συγγνώστ' ἂν ἦν σοι τοῦδ' ἐρασθῆναι λέχους.

(Eur. Medea, 483-491)

Euripides' version provides more details - Medea is banished from the country, not merely the house. Also, it is Creon who gives the order to depart. As such it is an order of exile rather than a dissolution of marriage.<sup>41</sup> It therefore becomes a personal matter between husband and wife in Ovid, rather than a civic conflict.

Medea leaves behind her anger and once again becomes the injured wife, who is hurt and chagrined by her husband's cruelty. Having been ordered to withdraw (Iussa [Her. XII.135]), Medea tamely and submissively leaves her home, accompanied by her ever-present shadow -- her love

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<sup>41</sup> Palmer, 396.

for Jason:<sup>42</sup>

Ausus es 'Aesonia' dicere 'cede domo!'  
Iussa domo cessi natis comitata duobus  
Et, qui me sequitur semper, amore tui.

(Her. XII.134-136)

The position of amore, emphasized by the relative clause which immediately precedes it, illustrates its precedence over the natis ... duobus (Her. XII.135). The amore seems almost to take on a personality of its own, as it follows Medea from the house. Its presence seems almost tangible, to Medea at least. Ovid makes no reference to the threats which Medea makes in Euripides (Medea 623-626). This may partly be due to the condensation of the story, but more particularly to Medea's desire to depict herself in a positive manner. In the passage which follows, Medea attempts to solicit pity from Jason as she describes her encounter with his wedding procession and her shocked discovery of Jason's identity as the groom. As well, Ovid does not make clear whether or not Medea knew about Jason's plans to remarry before she left the house. That she knew he was going to marry has been understood by earlier comments (Her. XII.25-26;53-54;104-3). However, when Medea actually acquired this knowledge is unclear. This lack of clarity suggests that Medea was caught totally unaware and acted as one of the witnesses watching the wedding almost

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<sup>42</sup> For a contrasting picture, see Euripides Medea 364-375;591-626.

by chance. Medea remarks that she had felt uneasy, even before she had any cause to feel so (Her. XII.141-142). The singing of Hymen (Her. XII.137) and the flickering torches (Her. XII.138) might indeed belong to Jason's wedding procession, but they could just as easily belong to someone else as well. There is no specific reason for making a connection between Jason and a wedding procession at this moment. That Medea's mind was sad (Her. XII.148) seems a reasonable enough state, given the circumstances. Her emotions have been affected by the use of the tibia (Her. XII.143) in the wedding procession. Medea may very well be again imposing present knowledge on past events and be hinting at the outcome of Jason's marriage to Creusa. As well, the tibia sounds sadder than the funerea ... tuba (Her. XII.140), which hardly befits a normal wedding procession.<sup>43</sup> The servants may have been weeping merely because of Medea's departure -- there is no particular reason for Medea to connect their tears with Jason's wedding (Her. XII.145).<sup>44</sup> The climax of the scene occurs when one of Medea's sons, not being able to see above the crowd, stands up on the threshold of a door and excitedly describes what he sees:

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<sup>43</sup> For a similar use of the tibia at a wedding see Propertius II.7.11-12.

<sup>44</sup> Palmer suggests that this scene occurs while Medea is wandering through the streets, having just been forced out of her house. This seems to be carrying coincidence a bit too far (Palmer, 397).

Me quoque, quidquid erat, potius nescire iuvabat,  
 Sed tamquam scirem, mens mea tristis erat,  
 Cum minor e pueris lassus studioque videndi  
 Constitit ad geminae limina prima foris:  
 'Hinc' mihi 'mater, abi! pompam pater' inquit 'Jason  
 Ducit et adiunctos aureus urguet equos.'

(Her. XII.147-152)

Euripides provides no such scene. Euripides' Medea did not see Jason's wedding, and the relationship between Jason and his new wife was only revealed indirectly by second-hand sources. The idea of the smallest child unwittingly destroying his mother's peace of mind seems calculated to evoke pathos. It must be the youngest and smallest of the children, as this tends to call forth the most pity and sympathy.<sup>45</sup> Verducci describes this scene as "a masterpiece of dramatic and pictorial detail."<sup>46</sup> The details of Jason's dress suggest the resplendent apparel of a victor in a triumphal procession, as do the adiunctos ... equos (Her. XII.152). The procession may be a triumphal one for Jason, but for Medea and her marriage, it is a funereal one.<sup>47</sup>

Medea's action of beating her breast and tearing her clothes and face are symbols of extreme grief and mourning and suggest again the funereal element of the

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<sup>45</sup> See for example, the description of Niobe pleading for her youngest daughter in Ovid's Metamorphoses VI.295-301.

<sup>46</sup> Verducci, 78.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 79.

passage (Her. XII.153-154). Although Medea seems to be mourning the demise of her marriage, she maintains her prior claim to Jason and demonstrates that despite his cruel treatment of her, she still feels bound to him (Her. XII.155-158). Indeed, both her present and past positions are based on her relationship to Jason, to say nothing of her criminal actions. Without him she has neither justification or status. Small wonder, then, that she wishes to maintain her hold on Jason.

Her. XII: Section V: Lines 159-174: Querelae

Medea turns yet again to addressing her father, Colchis, and her brother, i.e. those whom she has betrayed. They can now rejoice in her discomfiture - she is suffering now just as they have suffered at her hands (Her. XII.159-160). It is noteworthy that Medea couches her words in such a way that it is almost forgotten that it was she who wounded her father, left Colchis and killed her brother. As ever, Medea keeps a careful watch on the manner in which she describes her crimes. She may have admitted her guilt to herself, but she is far from confessing it openly.

She emphasizes once more the efforts she had made on Jason's behalf and stresses Jason as "qui nobis omnia solus erat" (Her. XII.162) much in the same vein as she had declared "Pro quo sum totiens esse coacta nocens" (Her.

XII.132). Whenever Medea speaks of Jason's trials, she always does it with a view to reminding him of the sacrifices she has made on his behalf. This case is no exception. It differs from previous accounts firstly because Medea declares that Jason was everything to her, and secondly by her admission that although her magical powers can help others, they are ineffectual when applied to herself. The idea that the love-interest is everything to the lover (Her. XII.162) is elegiac in nature, and is a familiar complaint once the affair is over.<sup>48</sup> Unlike Euripides' Medea, Ovid's Medea apparently does not call upon her divine ancestors to come to her aid. Hecates' teachings have come to nought:

Quaeque feros pepuli doctis medicatibus ignes,  
 Non valeo flammam effugere ipsa meas.  
 Ipsi me cantus herbaeque artesque relinunt:  
 Nil dea, nil Hecates sacra potentis agunt.

(Her. XII.165-168)

Here Ovid chooses to depict Medea as the sorceress quite openly, although he denies the efficacy of her powers to solve her own problems. The reference to bitter nights (Her. XII.169) is also a familiar elegiac topos.<sup>49</sup> Love is depicted as the most all-consuming and all-powerful source, surpassing the forces of magic which Medea had once thought

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<sup>48</sup> Medea says the same thing in Euripides Medea 228-229. See also Cat. 72.1-2; 82; 92; 104.

<sup>49</sup> Compare Amores I.2; Heroides XIII.103-4; Propertius I.1.33; II.19.6; III.9.3; IV.7.5; IV.14.2; V.3.29; Tibullus I.2.76.

capable of destroying even the most fierce beast. The bitterness remains, however, for after all:

Quos ego servavi, paelex amplectitur artus  
Et nostri fructus illa laboris habet.

(Her. XII.173-174)

Her. XII: Section VI: Lines 175-182: Revenge

The mention of paelex (Her. XII.173) reminds Medea of the "other woman" (Her. XII.175) in Jason's life and she envisages, to her bitter shame, their laughter concerning her fate. Thus the stultae ... maritae sets the tone for the next ten lines, in which Medea excites her anger and jealousy to fever pitch. She imagines Jason attacking those characteristics which once attracted him (Her. XII.177). Again, Medea imagines that Jason does not think that she has done enough for him. He must invent other reproaches to tell his new wife (nova crimina [Her. XII.177]). However, it is not so much the fabricated tales which bother Medea as the idea that Jason and Creusa will laugh at her (Her. XII.178-179). She expresses similar sentiments in Euripides (Medea 797;1049-1051), where they are used specifically as an inducement to kill her children. However, in Heroides XII, Ovid deliberately leaves the issue vague and concentrates instead on Medea's feelings towards the relationship between Jason and Creusa. The emphatic position of rideat in line 178 and its

immediate repetition in the same position in the following line emphasize the impact of their laughter on Medea.<sup>50</sup>

The last three lines of this passage look forward to the tradition of Creusa's death in Euripides, in which her death from the magic crown and cloak is vividly described (Euripides, Medea 1136-1230). Thus Ovid needs only these few lines to evoke Euripides' tradition, and he is able to drench his words with ironic significance:

Flebit et ardores vincet adusta meos!  
Dum ferrum flammaeque aderunt sucusque veneni,  
Hostis Medeae nullus inultus erit.

(Her. XII.180-182)

The references to ferrum, flammae and sucusque veneni (Her. XII.181) hint at the punishment which Medea has in store for her children, Creusa and Creon. The venom of the passage does not require further elaboration of the details of Creusa's death. Certainly Ovid is depending heavily on his audience's previous knowledge of the story. The avenging Medea of Euripides (Medea 259-263;271-375;767) is also revealed here. Anger has taken over and although Medea does not affirm that she would willingly die in her attempt to exact revenge (Eur., Medea 389-394), the same intent is there. She is now the Medea who has the powers of a sword, fire and poison at her command.

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<sup>50</sup> Medea in Apollonius also fears to be mocked at, even in death, by other women for choosing to help Jason, a stranger, over her own father (A.R. III.791-801).

Her. XII: Section VII: Lines 183-206: Cohortatio

Medea has apparently realized that she will never convince Jason to return to her if she keeps on throwing insults and threats at him. She therefore controls herself and presents herself as a supplex (Her. XII.185) who seeks pity and protection from her saviour (Her. XII.186) just as he had sought help from her (Her. XII.73-88). The very traits which made the sight of her children agony to Medea in Euripides (Medea 36;89-95), the Medea of Ovid now recalls in order to solicit Jason's pity:

Et nimium similes tibi sunt, et imagine tangor,  
Et quotiens video, lumina nostra madent.

(Her. XII.189-190)

Like Jason, Medea pleads in the name of the gods of her ancestors and in the name of what has been done (Her. XII.190-192) and adds their two children as pledges, in the hope that this will sway Jason against his decision to leave her. For the fifth and final time she refers to the trials which she helped Jason to overcome. The emphasis is again on setting the balance correctly, for in answering Jason's question of where her dowry is (Her. XII.199), Medea responds by listing the labours Jason accomplished with her help. Medea should be granted just as many favours as she had given to Jason. The listing of Jason's trials are therefore Jason's "bill", which he must repay by returning to Medea. The quadruple repetition of dos (Her.

XII.199;202;203) and the use of numeravimus continues the theme of what is rightfully due or owed. Medea's dowry consists in her having saved Jason and his companions and in enabling them to capture the Golden Fleece. Medea implies that Jason has denied this, a view which Euripides also expressed (Medea 526-532). As Medea considers what her dowry entails, her anger begins to rise again, until she once more curses Jason as improbe (Her. XII.204) and ingratus (Her. XII.206). The suppliant pose has fallen away. The reference to Sisyphus (Sisyphias opes [Her. XII.204]) is instructive, although A. Palmer dismisses it as merely synonymous for "Corinthian".<sup>51</sup> The wealth which Jason will take away is actually Creusa's dowry, but Medea means much more than merely that her dowry is large. The reference to Sisyphus seems to hint that Jason may one day be destined to suffer just as much as Sisyphus did in Hades, despite his riches. It is a veiled warning to Jason of the possible consequences of accepting Creusa as his bride, as well as an expression of Medea's anger.

Her. XII: Section VIII: Lines 207-212: Warning

The Medea who concludes the last six lines of her letter is angry enough to make dire threats to Jason, vague and ominous in this context, but clear to those cognizant

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<sup>51</sup> Palmer, 399.

of Medea's future. At the beginning of the letter, Medea remarked that she was suffering punishment for her actions (Her. XII.5-6). It is this punishment which she now intends to inflict on Jason (Her. XII.207-208). Anger which has driven Medea to reveal herself so frequently throughout the body of her letter, continues to urge her on to more terrible deeds. Medea is not so much concerned with the evil nature of what might be done, as with the fact that she was betrayed:

facti fortasse pigebit:  
Et piget infido consuluisse viro.

(Her. XII.209-210)

The use of pigebit and piget in two successive lines emphasizes Medea's displeasure in Jason's actions. The force of the verb piget is reflected in the following line as Medea warns that the god who torments (versat [Her. XII.211]) her will also see that she has repented of caring for a faithless man (infido ... viro [Her. XII.210]). The warning, with its emphasis on infido, is scarcely designed to appeal to Jason's humanity or sympathy, especially considering what Medea finally decides to do. Medea has completely forgotten about the purpose of the letter, that is, to bring Jason back to her. She is easily diverted by her sense of injury and loss of pride.

Her. XII: Section IX: Conclusions about  
the Nature of Medea

Howard Jacobson has categorized Ovid's Medea thus:

... Ovid advances a Medea who makes a futile attempt at "apologia," a whitewash which does not prevent us from seeing that the naive but virtuous Medea never existed; she appears as such only in Medea's distorted self-image.<sup>52</sup>

If Medea appears virtuous to herself, there is no need for her to make an "apologia". Medea never admits openly that she is directly responsible for any crime. As Florence Verducci points out:

... a crime committed in the name of love is, within the terms of their exclusive society of two, no crime at all.<sup>53</sup>

Jason, with his marriage to Creusa, has left this "exclusive society" and it is precisely this fact which threatens Medea and her understanding of what she has done. She is aware that she has committed a crime (Her. XII.114). She is also aware of the enormity of her actions concerning her father and her homeland. However, in Medea's mind, these actions are justified by the suffering and sacrifices she made for Jason's sake. Ovid has created a Medea who thought that her justification for committing a crime would exonerate her. Once that justification is removed (i.e., Jason himself), the keystone to her argument is destroyed.

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<sup>52</sup> Jacobson, 119.

<sup>53</sup> Verducci, 76.

It is at this point that her certainty of innocence begins to waver and she begins to admit her guilt. However, Medea never completely abandons either her faith in Jason or her belief in her own innocence. She attempts to present herself as naive but virtuous in her refusal to consider the real significance of her actions. This is her defense mechanism against looking at herself as others see her. Thus Ovid's Medea in the Heroides is painted from the inside out. He depicts Medea as a woman trying to reclaim her husband who is overcome in the process by anger at what she sees as his betrayal and a lack of recognition of her sacrifices. Her unwillingness to deal seriously with her actions forces her to try to reshape her past and to present herself always as the injured party. Ovid's Medea has already made the major decision of her life and is just now beginning to doubt its wisdom. For her own sanity, she is holding on to the illusion that she was totally blameless in the whole affair. However, the brief remarks she makes about her brother and father and the extreme anger she feels at Jason's betrayal indicate that she is slowly approaching a time of reassessment. For the time being, however, she represents herself to Jason as the innocent and injured party.

Met. VII: Section I: Introduction

The treatment of Medea in Ovid's Metamorphoses VII.1-424 differs substantially from that in the Heroides. Firstly, the Medea of the Metamorphoses always looks forward, she is not allowed to reconsider the past. Thus the laments which form such a great part of the Heroides are absent from the Metamorphoses. Secondly, the Medea of the Heroides was a more consistent figure, inasmuch as different facets of her character were revealed at one point or another in a subtle development. She moved back and forth between personalities, now simplex, now nocens, then simplex once more. In the Metamorphoses, Medea is dramatically transformed from a mere mortal woman into a powerful sorceress. This gradual transformation is signalled by Medea's increasing interest in and the pursuit of magic and evil<sup>54</sup> and concomitantly, by her decreasing interest in pudor and pietas.<sup>55</sup> Edgar M. Glenn describes the story as "the tragic deterioration of a woman's character,"<sup>56</sup> and indeed, a much more inhuman Medea results.

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<sup>54</sup> J. A. Rosner-Siegel, "Amor, Metamorphosis and Magic: Ovid's Medea (Met. 7.1-424)," CJ 77 (1981): 243. For examples, see Met. VII.138;192-219;239-293;305-349.

<sup>55</sup> For examples, see Met. VII.144-149;171-178;297-308.

<sup>56</sup> Edgar M. Glenn, The 'Metamorphoses': Ovid's Roman Games (Lanham: University Press of America, 1986), 84.

Met. VII: Section II: Lines 1-38: Medea's Passion

The first thirty-eight lines of book seven introduce the tale of Medea by a brief reference (Met. VII.1-8) to the voyage of the Argonauts and the purpose of their trip to Colchis. As in the Heroides, this element of the whole tale is incidental and serves only as a bridge to the real concentration of the tale, Medea.

It is significant that the first term associated with Medea is that of concipit (Met. VII.9) and refers to the passion she conceived for Jason. It is this passion which is to shape and transform her life in a much more drastic manner than in the Heroides. The image of fire (ignes [Met. VII.9]; conceptas flammis [Met. VII.17]) which will be repeated throughout the tale is introduced here. This parallels a similar emphasis on fire in Heroides XII.33;34;37-8. Apart from references to the fire-breathing bulls, the references to fire are used to illustrate Medea's growing passion for Jason.<sup>57</sup> The opposing forces of ratio and furor (Met. VII.10) also begin to appear at this point. Medea's struggles to overcome her love for Jason and the knowledge that by loving him she

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<sup>57</sup> Fire as an emblem of love is an elegiac topos. See Tib. II.1.82;II.4.5-6;III.11.6-7, Prop. I.6.7;I.9.17-18;III.6.39;III.17.9, Vergil Aen. IV.2;IV.23;IV.68. Dido, however, burns in anger not in love in Heroides VII.23. See also Ovid, A.A. I.573;III.567;III.597, R.A. 267, Amores III.9.56.

betrays her father are elements of her personality that are explored early in this version of the story. In the Heroides, Medea was disturbed at the thought that Jason might be harmed, not that she was betraying her father. In the Metamorphoses, her conflict between duty and love is clearly presented.

Medea's acknowledgment that the god of love and indeed love itself are unknown to her (Met. VII.12-13) makes it clear that this is a first love affair. She also reveals that she is fully aware of what she should do and of her social position:

excute virgineo conceptas pectore flammis,  
 si potes, infelix. si possem, sanior essem;  
 sed trahit invitam nova vis, aliudque cupido,  
 mens aliud suadet: video meliora proboque,  
 deteriora sequor! quid in hospite, regia virgo,  
 ureris et thalamos alieni concipis orbis?

(Met. VII.17-22)

The term sanior is a reminder of the terms of Medea's dilemma of line 10, the conflict between ratio and furor.<sup>58</sup> Ultimately, she will be overcome by this furor and will leave all elements of ratio behind.

As in the Heroides, it is Jason's physical appearance, birth and bravery which attract Medea and impel her to offer her help:

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<sup>58</sup> William S. Anderson, ed. with intro. and comm. Ovid's 'Metamorphoses' Books 6-10 (Oklahoma: American Philological Association, 1972), 245. Seneca's Medea is much more one-sided, as she lets herself be driven along mainly by the power of furor: 382-292;401-407;849ff.;926-944.

quem nisi crudelem non tangat Iasonis aetas  
 et genus et virtus? quem non, ut cetera desint,  
 ore movere potest? certe mea pectora movit.

(Met. VII.26-28)

As Edgar Glenn remarks, Medea is praying for Jason because he is young, noble, manly and beautiful: "in this area of experience, Medea is responsive to sensation, not to prudence, principle or reason."<sup>59</sup> She styles herself as a beast and as having iron and stone in her heart if she lets Jason undergo his trials without her help:

hoc ego si patiar, tum me de tigride natam,  
 tum ferrum et scopulos gestare in corde fatebor.

(Met. VII.32-33)

These are the same terms of abuse Jason hurled at Medea in Euripides' tragedy, when he discovered that she had murdered their sons (Eur., Medea 1340;1358-1360). Anderson affirms that these terms are part of standard rhetoric used to emphasize inhuman behavior.<sup>60</sup> He concludes:

Medea is so sure of her warm humanity that her reference to animal birth asserts all the more strongly her intention to help Jason. Her love proves her humanity.<sup>61</sup>

Medea's application of these terms to herself are ironic, as they eventually become reality, a transformation which has no place in the Heroides.

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<sup>59</sup> Glenn, 85.

<sup>60</sup> For parallels, see also Cat. 60.1ff., 64.154ff; Tibullus I.1.63f., Horace, Odes I.223.9, Vergil, Aen. IV.365-367, Heroides VII.37-40; X.131.

<sup>61</sup> Anderson, 246.

She concludes by deciding that the whole affair is in the lap of the gods. She must simply stop praying and instead take decisive action (Her. XII.37-38).

Met. VII: Section III: Lines 38-73: Medea's Hesitation

The second section of the poem continues Medea's argument with her conscience, even though she seemed to have come to a decision already. It is at this point that the idea of betrayal enters the picture ("prodamne ego regna parentis" [Met. VII.38]) but it is interesting that jealousy enters immediately afterwards as well. Medea cannot bear the idea that Jason, saved by her efforts, would thus be free for some other wife and she would be left behind. Medea would then be the only one at hand for immediate punishment (poena [Met. VII.41]) and she anticipates her future by calling Jason ingratus (Met. VII.43).<sup>62</sup> In contrast, in Heroides XII, Medea was not so much jealous of Jason taking a new wife, as she was angry that he had cast her off and totally ignored all her past favours for him (Her. XII.19-28;51-56;103-118).<sup>63</sup> Again,

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<sup>62</sup> Compare Seneca, Medea 465. The occasions of Medea cursing Jason and vice versa are fewer in number and generally weaker in feeling in Seneca than they are in either Euripides or Ovid. Seneca's Medea seems to lack the vitality of her predecessors.

<sup>63</sup> Seneca's Medea is also angry at being cast off in favour of another woman: 1-18;52-53;119-120;143-146;398-399;415-419;465-489.

it is his appearance which finally sways Medea, much as it did in the Heroides:

sed non is vultus in illo,  
non ea nobilitas animo est, ea gratia formae,  
ut timeam fraudem meritique oblivia nostri.<sup>64</sup>

(Met. VII.43-45)

The Medea of the Metamorphoses is already more wily than that of the Heroides, for she decides that Jason must be bound to her by agreement and with the gods as witnesses: "et dabit ante fidem cogamque in foedera testes / esse deos" (Her. VII.46-47). Ratio has not yet abandoned Medea completely. She is prudent enough to try to protect herself against possible injury and humiliation. To this end, she decides that Jason will owe an eternal debt to her, as well as becoming her husband (Met. VII.48-49). She does not wait for him to propose marriage or even suggest that she will become famous among the Greeks (as in the Heroides), but rather plans the whole affair herself. Once embarked upon the dream of her future recognition, Medea lists for herself the benefits which will come to her by leaving Colchis and the few ties she has keeping her behind (Met. VII.51-61). The parallels with Euripides (Medea 536-544) and Apollonius Rhodius (III.990ff.) are obvious. The difference here is that Medea reviews the issue personally, there is no need for Jason or his promptings. As in the Heroides, Medea concentrates on herself and the benefits

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<sup>64</sup> Compare Seneca, Medea 82-89.

which will accrue to her. Her fatherland and family receive only a brief mention before she decides that they do not provide a sufficient reason to remain:

nempe pater saevus, nempe est mea barbara tellus,  
frater adhuc infans.

(Met. VII.53-54)

Only her sister deserves any consideration and that only because her sister supports Medea's love for Jason (Met. VII.54), much as in the Heroides and Apollonius Rhodius. As in Euripides, the story surrounding Medea's brother Apsyrtus is vague. In this case, he is still a young boy (infans), so Medea has not yet forged any strong or lasting ties with him. (Her attachment is with her sister, who is on her side in this affair.) There is, as yet, no mention that Medea had even thought of killing her brother. Nor is it suggested that the young Apsyrtus might be kidnapped by Jason and Medea and then used to delay pursuit by Aeetes. Inclusion of this episode at this point would make Medea seem less innocent and more evil than the progression of the transformation which Ovid has set up would require. Thus, Medea maintains her image of a woman swayed by the power of love into helping her father's enemy, but no more. Murder remains a part of her later personality. For the present she dwells upon the benefits of civilization and curiously echoes Heroides XII.17-18 when she says:

nempe tenens, quod amo, gremioque in Iasonis haerens  
per freta longa ferar: nihil illum amplexa verebor,

aut, siquid metuam, metuam de coniuge solo.

(Met. VII.66-68)

In Seneca, the murder of Absyrtus figures in the list of favours which Medea presents to Jason as proof of her sacrifices. Seneca emphasizes the brutality of the murder by the use of artus (Medea 487) and its repetition (Medea 911-915;963-4;967-971). From Medea's introductory prologue in Seneca to her final words she is depicted as the quintessentially cruel woman with the skills of a sorceress. Because Seneca avails himself of every opportunity so to characterize her, the death of Apsyrtus is an opportunity not to be missed. Ovid, on the other hand, carefully ignores the ramifications of Absyrtus' death at this point.

Only the specter of a rival can disturb Medea; the terrors of the deep have no power over her. Here it is the power of love which protects her, not the fact that she has committed such terrible crimes that she could never experience anything worse (Her. XII.117-118).

That Medea still retains elements of modesty and piety are demonstrated at the end of this section by her swift return to reason and her clear distinction between reality and fantasy (Met. VII.69-73). She chastizes herself for putting euphemistic names on her fault and crime and warns herself, through intuition, of evil to come. She becomes embroiled again in the conflict between

pietas, pudor and amor, but, by means of a military metaphor, Ovid demonstrates that pudor and pietas triumph for the moment:

- quin adspice, quantum  
adgrediare nefas, et, dum licet, effuge crimen.'  
dixit, et ante oculos rectum pietasque pudorque  
constiterant, et victa dabat iam terga Cupido.

(Met. VII.70-73)

The key word is, however, the iam (now) -- Cupid may have held ascendancy in Medea's mind until she regarded the array of morals drawn up before her eyes. Only at this point does Cupid begin to turn away in defeat. Therefore, if Medea were to forget or overlook these morals, Cupid would have an easy victory.

Met. VII: Section IV: Lines 74-99: The Grove of Hecate

The fourth section of the tale takes place at the altar of Hecate. The whole scene is introduced without preamble by ibat (Met. VII.74). Ovid does not explain how Jason and Medea both happen to be in the same place at the same time, but as in the Heroides, these details are deemed unnecessary. In the Metamorphoses, Ovid had more scope for details and description than he had in the Heroides. He need not have restricted himself nor have depended on the reader's assumed knowledge of the other traditions. Nevertheless, Ovid is selective with regard to what he chooses to elaborate and what he does not. As will become

clear, in the Metamorphoses Ovid chooses to elaborate the elements of witchcraft and magic in the Medea story. The important factor is that Jason and Medea are at the altar of Hecate. A practical description of how they arrived there would tend to anchor the scene in reality (as in Apollonius Rhodius' account) instead of in the realm of the mysterious unknown.

This portion of the tale picks up the theme of fire and love as a burning flame, an image well-known from epic and elegiac poets. Significantly, Medea and Jason meet by an altar, itself the location of fire and sacrifice. For Medea, the mere sight of Jason is enough to rekindle the flame she had thought well extinguished:

Ibat ad antiquas Hecates Perseidos aras,  
 quas nemus umbrosum secretaque silva tegebat,  
 et iam fortis erat, pulsusque resederat ardor,  
 cum videt Aesoniden, extinctaque flamma reluxit.

(Met. VII.74-77)

The effect of Jason's appearance on Medea is furthered by its comparison to a spark of fire (Met. VII.79-82), until Jason becomes like a god to Medea with extraordinary beauty.<sup>65</sup> It is a topos of poetry that the lover attributes divine characteristics to the beloved, and Medea is no exception. Medea becomes demens (Met. VII.87) and

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<sup>65</sup> Franz Bömer, comm., P. Ovidius Naso, Metamorphosen Vol. III, Buch VI-VII (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1976), 224. It is a topos of poetry that the lover appears like a divinity or to have divine traits. See for example, Sappho, frag. 31, Prop. II.15.40.

cannot help but promise Jason her help. As in the account in Apollonius Rhodius (III.1127-1130;IV.95-98;IV.194-195), Jason freely offers marriage (Met. VII.90-91). The effect this has on Medea (she bursts into tears [Met. VII.91]) seems to indicate a release of tension and a measure of relief; her answer to Jason shows that she does indeed realize the enormity of what she is promising to do:<sup>66</sup>

'quid faciam, video, nec me ignorantia veri  
decipiet, sed amor. servabere munere nostro:  
servatus promissa dato!'

(Met. VII.92-94)

If Medea recognizes what she is doing, she also makes sure that Jason is aware of his part of the bargain as well. Although she has just entered onto the path of crime, Medea is not inclined to accept anything on the basis of trust. On the other hand Jason's offer of marriage seems to be little more than the price he was willing to pay for Medea's help. Whatever the relationship means to Medea, to Jason it seems to be merely a convenience.<sup>67</sup>

The interval between the scene at the altar of Hecate and the description of Jason's trials is filled with a brief mention of Medea handing over to Jason the magic herbs (Met. VII.98-99). Thus the element of magic, although it has been illustrated, has not yet taken over either Medea or the larger tale. There is, as yet, no

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<sup>66</sup> Glenn, 88.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 88.

mention of where or how Medea got the herbs, a situation which is destined to change radically in the next hundred lines.<sup>68</sup>

Met. VII: Section V: Lines 100-143: The Trials

The following portion describes Jason's meeting with the bull (Met. VII.104-119), the sowing of the vipers' teeth (Met. VII.121-124), the fighting of the terrigenae and the congratulations of the Greeks (Met. VII.125-142). Ovid takes pains to describe the sights and sounds of the contest with the bull and the terrigenae in detail.<sup>69</sup> The description of Jason's bravery in taming the fire-breathing bull is broken in half by a reminder that he is protected by Medea's charmed herbs (Met. VII.116). This has the effect of decreasing Jason's stature, particularly since the spectators are amazed at Jason's fortitude (Met. VII.115;120-121). Jason becomes a hypocrite, basking in the pleasure and recognition of his fictitious daring.<sup>70</sup>

As in Heroides XII.97-100, Medea grows pale at the

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<sup>68</sup> For contrast, see Apollonius Rhodius, III.817-890; 1026-1062;1191-1224.

<sup>69</sup> Seneca does not go into the details, but merely has Medea list the trials. See for example 465-476.

<sup>70</sup> Valerie Wise suggests the Jason shows an unwarranted element of bravura in stroking the bulls. "Ovid's Medea and the Magic of Language," Ramus 11 (1981): 19.

sight of the enemy arisen from the ground and has no confidence in the power of her herbs.<sup>71</sup> In this case, however, she takes immediate action and chants a spell to protect Jason even further:

ipsa quoque extimuit, quae tutum fecerat illum,  
utque peti vidit iuvenem tot ab hostibus unum,  
palluit et subito sine sanguine frigida sedit;  
neve parum valeant a se data gramina, carmen  
auxiliare canit secretasque advocat artes.

(Met. XII.134-138)

As in the Heroides, Medea's concern is directed towards Jason's safety, and this impels her to give him extra protection. Ovid does not say that she doubted her skill, but rather that she doubted whether her herbs were strong enough (neve parum valeant [Met. VII.137]).

Met. VII: Section VI: Lines 144-148: Transition

The transition between the killing of the terrigenae and the putting to sleep of the snake is covered by an unusual five lines which seem to balance the earlier transitional passage of 94-97. In both cases, Ovid seems to shy away from forceful statements. Instead, he hints at certain elements and then abandons them until a further time. In Met. VII.94-99, it was the whole question of Medea's magical powers and whence they came. In this passage (Met. VII.144-148), Ovid makes rather sly allusions

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<sup>71</sup> This parallels pallida, Her. XII.97.

to Medea's feelings for Jason and the depth of her emotion. That he calls her barbara (Met. VII.144) recalls rather abruptly one of the fundamental differences between Jason and Medea.<sup>72</sup> That Medea is prevented from embracing Jason because of fama (Met. VII.145) and  pudor (Met. VII.146) reminds the reader of Medea's initial struggle between  pudor,  pietas and  amor.<sup>73</sup> The struggle had been forgotten until now, when Ovid calls Medea back to reality and emphasizes the significance of her actions. At this point, Medea has progressed from an open, faithful daughter to one who has recourse to  secretas ...  artes (Met. VII.138) and who gives thanks to the gods with secrets chants:

quod licet, adfectu tacito laetaris agisque  
carminibus grates et dis auctoribus horum.

(Met. VII.147-148)

Met. VII: Section VII: Lines 149-158: The  draco

The description of Medea hypnotizing the snake is briefly dealt with. There is, however, a slight increase in the emphasis on magic. Not only does Medea sprinkle the snake  Lethaei  gramine  suci (Met. VII.152), this time she must also use an incantation which she repeats three times in true magical fashion (Met. VII.153). These  verba,

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<sup>72</sup> Medea slightlyingly calls herself  barbara in Her. XII.105.

<sup>73</sup> This recalls Apollonius Rhodius III.451-470;616-664.

besides putting snakes to sleep, also have the power to soothe violent oceans and disturbed streams. They remind the reader of how little Jason does on his own and how much he is dependent on Medea for her help. Despite this Medea seems to Jason merely spolia altera (Met. VII.157), a complaint which she levelled at him in Heroides XII.111-112. The inference that Medea is on a par with Jason's other spoils is emphasized by an earlier mention of spolio in the immediately preceding line (Met. VII.156). Medea is given the privilege of being singled out from the rest of the spoils, but she receives little further recognition, save for coniunge at the end of line 158.

Met. VII: Section VIII: Lines 159-178: Jason's Request

The reception of the mothers and fathers of Haemonia (Met. VII.159-162) does not seem to have been organized to give honour to Medea as she herself had hoped (Met. VII.56-58), but rather to give thanks because the men have returned home safely. These thanks are enhanced by the formal and sonorous use of pro gnatis<sup>74</sup>. Medea's extraordinary powers are lost among the thank offerings given to the gods in general. As Anderson suggests,<sup>75</sup> the

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<sup>74</sup> Franz Bömer defines this as an old form, used instead of the oblique filius and by Vergil in places of great pathos (Bömer, 242).

<sup>75</sup> Anderson, 262.

gathering has the nature of an impromptu meeting at the harbour as Jason arrives home. It serves, more importantly, as a means for introducing the story of Aeson's rejuvenation, for he alone is absent from the celebration:

sed abest gratantibus Aeson  
iam propior leto fessusque senilibus annis ...

(Met. VII.162-163)

Medea proves to be useful to Jason again, as he asks her to use her abilities to subtract some years from his life and add them to Aeson's life (Met. VII.167-168). Jason is greedy. After he admits that he owes his salvation and indeed all he has to Medea, he asks for a further favour. Medea is moved to act by Jason's expression of filial piety towards his father (Met. VII.169). Unfortunately, this has the effect of recalling Medea's impiety towards her own father. Although she carefully conceals her guilt (nec tamen adfectus tales confessa [Met. VII.171]), Medea's progress towards becoming an evil witch in thought and deed accelerates and is highlighted by her pride in her skill. She declares proudly: "quod petis, experiar maius dare munus, Iason" (Met. VII.175). The reference to diva triformis (Met. VII.177) and the ease with which Medea mentions her, suggests fairly frequent encounters between Medea and Hecate, enough that Medea calls upon Hecate quite naturally. Medea now emerges as a witch -- the love-stricken girl of the earlier lines (and of the Heroides and

Apollonius Rhodius) has largely disappeared. However she retains enough of her innocence to be shocked, at first, by Jason's request (Met. VII.171-172). She has not yet begun to perform her magic simply for enjoyment.

Met. VII: Section IX: Lines 179-237: Medea, venefica

Medea's preparations leading up to the rejuvenation of Aeson demonstrate this increasingly magical aspect of her character (Met. VII.179-237;238-284). She waits appropriately for the full moon (Met. VII.179-180) and then goes out to collect her herbs in the standard garb of a witch: loose clothing (vestes ... recinctas [Met. VII.182]), bare feet (nuda pedem [Met. VII.183]), unbound hair (nudos umeris infusa capillos [Met. VII.183]).<sup>76</sup> The countryside is dark and silent (Met. VII.184-187). After lifting her hands in a ritualistic gesture, she performs her magic rites the prerequisite three times (Met. VII.188-191). References to triceps Hecate (Met. VII.194), magos (Met. VII.195;196) and the abilities of witches (Met. VII.107-206) complete the scene.<sup>77</sup> The triple reference to the chariot of the sun (Met. VII.208;220) recalls not only Medea's parentage, but also the Euripidean tradition in

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<sup>76</sup> Compare Seneca, Medea 752ff., where Medea is similarly attired: solvens comam (752);nudo ... pede (753).

<sup>77</sup> Compare Horace's Canidia, Epode V.

which the chariot becomes Medea's means of escape after the death of her children (Eur. Medea 1317-1321).<sup>78</sup> The midnight journey to collect the herbs entails far-away and unusual place names, covering great distances of land. The distances were so vast that the journey took nine days and nights -- nine being also a magical number (Met. VII.234-235). Thus, this travelogue allows Ovid to display his artistic talent to its fullest extent and serves as well to remove Medea from the realm of the familiar to the realm of the unfamiliar. The depiction of Medea reaches its climax here, as she achieves full stature as a witch. She loses most of her human qualities and becomes an unreal figure, one who has some precedent in the Medea of Apollonius Rhodius but is a more fully developed figure than is found at the end of Euripides' tragedy. She is thus echoed in the figure of Seneca's Medea, although his Medea does not develop into a sorceress but rather maintains this character throughout the play.

Met. VII: Section X: Lines 238-284:

Preparation of the Potion

The preparation of the potion continues to exercise Ovid's descriptive powers. Further indications of Medea's transformation into a witch are supplied: she does not

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<sup>78</sup> Seneca will use in same technique in Medea 1025.

enter the house, but remains outside (citra limenque foresque [Met. VII.238]), she avoids her husband (refugitque viriles / contactus [Met. VII.239-240]), performs a sacrifice to Hecate and Youth (Met. VII.240-250) and warns the spectators to stay away (Met. VII.255-256). She is further typified by her actions around the altars (bacchantum ritu [Met. VII.258]).<sup>79</sup> Anderson suggests that by using this term, Ovid sought to emphasize the non-Roman aspects of the ritual as well as the traditional wildness and madness of the Bacchantes.<sup>80</sup> The non-Roman aspect is repeated towards the end of this passage when Ovid refers to Medea as the barbara (Met. VII.276). The repetition is intended to emphasize Medea's foreignness and to distance her from the Roman world.<sup>81</sup> The final effect is to deprive Medea of many of her human characteristics and to emphasize instead the supernatural and foreign aspects of her nature. This Medea shows little resemblance at all to the Medea of the Heroides, or even of Euripides and Apollonius Rhodius. In Euripides, her struggle over killing her children revealed some humanity in her character, regardless of one's judgment of her actions. In Seneca, Medea is

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<sup>79</sup> In Seneca, Medea cuts her own arms in sacrifice (797-811), an act which denotes strangeness and wildness much more graphically than Ovid's euphemistic and trite bacchantum ritu.

<sup>80</sup> Anderson, 272.

<sup>81</sup> Compare Euripides, Medea 536;1330; Her. XII.105.

thoroughly a witch and indeed, one who is almost maddened by her desire for revenge. Thus her mortal characteristics are not strongly emphasized. Even at this point in the Metamorphoses, Medea's transformation into a witch is not truly complete, for although she does not demonstrate human emotions, concerns or limitations, neither does she reveal a complete descent into evil. She still does not act wickedly or independently<sup>82</sup> but only upon request and for a relatively worthwhile reason. However it is also worth noting that Jason disappears completely after his request and reappears only in one more isolated reference (Met. VII.397). Rosner-Siegel interprets Medea's symbolical rejection of Jason (Met. VII.240-241) as the beginning of her abandonment of Jason and the end of her love for him.<sup>83</sup> However, Ovid does not suggest that Medea stops loving Jason, but rather that Medea follows the traditions of magic and religion in refraining from contact with males. Her action may also highlight her withdrawal from human emotion and concerns which seems to characterize Medea in her role as a witch. She gradually becomes immune to the ramifications of human relationships.<sup>84</sup>

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82 Rosner-Siegel, 238.

83 Ibid., 240.

84 Bömer remarks that no other author uses the word incomitata (185) as often as Ovid. Other magicians are allowed helpers. See Vergil, Eclogues VIII.101: Horace, Ode V.25, Sat. I.8.25 (Bömer, 248).

Met. VII: Section XI: Lines 285-293:

Rejuvenation of Aeson

The actual rejuvenation of Aeson occurs very briefly. The scene itself seems to be provided merely as a future point of comparison with the death of Pelias. The importance lies in the events leading up to the rejuvenation and not the rejuvenation itself.

Met. VII: Section XII: Lines 294-296: Transition

The rejuvenation scene is followed by another unusual transition passage, which introduces the figure of Liber. The introduction seems intrusive and with only minor connection to the story as a whole. Glenn suggests that Bacchus was impressed by the efficacy of Medea's potion. His request for some of the potion for his nurses Glenn interprets as "an Olympian compliment paid to a divinely descended personage of lesser stature."<sup>85</sup> He interprets this scene as an indication of Medea's superiority over a divinity and therefore a forewarning of Medea's destruction because of hubris. However, the passage reads more clearly as a statement of fact and conspicuously lacks moral overtones. Thus, it is an example of variatio in a metamorphosis and is one which is

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<sup>85</sup> Glenn, 90.

considerably abridged. It is much more reasonable to agree with Anderson that the story is not particularly important here and is used mainly as a means of separating two rejuvenation stories.<sup>86</sup>

Met. VII: Section XIII: Lines 297-349:

Daughters of Pelias

The second rejuvenation tale is that of Pelias. Medea convinces the daughters of Pelias that it would be an act of piety on their part to attempt to rejuvenate their father. She thus deceives the young women into killing their own father. The cause for Medea's action is explained simply as "Neve doli cessent" (Met. VII.297)- apparently Medea's "evil" instincts are to be given free rein. Thus Medea's ultimate transformation is revealed, as she connives at and eventually ensures the death of Aeson's brother Pelias evidently by pure impulse. She is no longer motivated by special requests or pure motives, but by a desire to continue using her own power. Her relationship with the daughters of Pelias is one of deception right from the time of their first meeting:

Neve doli cessent, odium cum coniuge falsum  
Phasias adsimulat Peliaequae ad limina supplex  
confugit, atque illam, quoniam gravis ipse senecta est,

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<sup>86</sup> Anderson, 281.

excipiunt natae;

(Met. VII.297-300)

Further references to Medea (Met. VII.301;307;308;331;348) allude either to her deceitful nature or, by allusion to Colchis, recall her role as a witch. Her deceitfulness is regularly contrasted with the piety of the daughters of Pelias. This is especially marked in the description of the murder of Pelias by the repetition and contrast of pietas and impia:

si pietas ulla est nec spes agitatis inanes,  
 officium praestate patri telisque senectam  
 exigite et saniem coniecto emittite ferro!  
 his, ut quaeque pia est, hortatibus impia prima est  
 et, ne sit scelerata, facit scelus;

(Met. VII.336-340)

The whole passage serves as a strong indication that Medea's complete metamorphosis into a witch has occurred. The innocence of the Medea of Apollonius Rhodius, and the confusion and unwillingness to face the truth of the Medea of the Heroides, are completely absent. Ovid's Medea is not the Medea of Euripides, who at the very least acts from a desire for revenge. This Medea acts from the enjoyment of evil and is therefore close to the Medea of Seneca. The piety towards her father, which once caused her much concern, is no longer an issue. She is not moved by the piety of the daughters of Pelias as she once was by Jason's (Met. VII.169). Instead, Medea uses their piety for her own destructive purposes. In addition, because Ovid does

not present a reason for Medea's actions, she gives the impression of using her magical abilities out of curiosity, to see what might happen. Medea has now entered fully into the realm of the supernatural and delights in the amoral use and effect of her powers.

Met. VII: Section XIV: Lines 350-403: Medea's Escape I

As in the story of the rejuvenation of Aeson, the false rejuvenation of Pelias is also connected to a travelogue of distant places. After Pelias' murder, Medea escapes by extraordinary means (Met. VII.350-351). Her flight is a tour of the Aegean landscape and as Anderson remarks, Medea "merely serves as a vehicle for the amusing display of Ovid's erudition."<sup>87</sup> The interesting part of the travelogue comes towards the end (Met. VII.394-397), when the story of the death of Medea's children is reported. This event, which in other sources was the main accusation levelled against Medea, now becomes trivialized and almost unnoticeable in the face of the more detailed account of Pelias' murder.<sup>88</sup> It may be a shortened version

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 281.

<sup>88</sup> Contrast Seneca's version of the killing of Medea's children, where the story is told at length (Medea 926-944;967-977;1005-1019). Although Seneca's version is much longer than Ovid's, the end result is similar. His love of the grotesque anesthetizes his readers, so that by the time Medea kills her children, she is merely continuing a pre-established savage character.

of the story because, as Rosner-Siegel suggests,

her destruction of her own human family is a logical and expected outcome of her previous brutal savagery.<sup>89</sup>

To that end, any further criminal action on Medea's part should not be a surprise. Indeed, this is supported by the story which closely follows upon the death of Medea's children -- her attempted killing of Aegeus' son Theseus. As in Euripides, once Medea had killed her children, she escaped into the protection of Aegeus (Met. VII.398-403). In this version, not only does Aegeus offer hospitality, he even offers Medea marriage: "nec satis hospitium est: thalami quoque foedere iungit" (Met. VII.403).

The incidental, almost cursory, role which Jason plays in the telling of the murder of his children is another indication that Medea has completely withdrawn from human relationships and emotions. Her relationship with Aegeus seems to stem more from his efforts than from hers. He offered at least temporary refuge and Medea accepted.

Met. VII: Section XV: Lines 404-424: Medea's Escape II

Once again, Medea's reasons for masterminding

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<sup>89</sup> Rosner-Siegel, 241. Indication of Medea's motivation is given in a brief half line: "ultaque se male ..." (Met. VII.397). This is a sharp abbreviation of both Euripides' (Medea 796-802) and Seneca's version (Medea 549-550) and reduces the revenge motif to a subsidiary factor.

Theseus' death are not mentioned. Jealousy of Theseus, a desire to protect her own power and position with Aegeus or a desire to practise her art may have prompted Medea to act. It is, however, the lack of any hesitation on her part, both in this story and in the tale of Pelias, that sharply defines Medea's character. Medea's attempt to deceive Aegeus, just as she deceived the daughters of Pelias, is thwarted only because of Aegeus' perspicacity (Met. VII.419-424). Aegeus is not as simple or trusting as Pelias' daughters were.

Whether victorious or defeated, Medea's reactions seem to be the same. Her one thought is flight. The last sight and mention of her in the Metamorphoses is as she magically disappears in the clouds:

effugit illa necem nebulis per carmina motis.

(Met. VII.424)

This final departure symbolically describes Medea's departure from the human race. With her metamorphosis into a sorceress, Medea had withdrawn from human society. With her disappearance by means of the nebulas she withdraws from all human contact and emphasizes her supernatural qualities. Not being human any longer, she is therefore able to escape from mortal punishment and revenge.

Met. VII: Section XVI: Conclusions about  
the Nature of Medea

Ovid has used the character of Medea to experiment with the complete transformation of a particular character, beginning in the Heroides and concluding in the Metamorphoses. Thus Medea evolves from the innocent young girl in the throes of her first love affair into a scheming, amoral sorceress. Ovid has also revealed that it is possible to present two distinctly opposite views of Medea -- one fairly positive (Heroides) and the other negative (Metamorphoses) -- yet still to illustrate more or less the same elements.

The two basic tales of Apollonius Rhodius and Euripides follow one upon the other. Euripides' story can be seen as a continuation of Apollonius', although this inverts the time periods of the writers, and the differences in Medea's character might be attributed to the depiction of Medea in different eras. Ovid's Medeas, on the other hand, overlap at certain points (for example, Medea's inner conflict, Jason's trials, the departure from Colchis, the death of Pelias) and therefore present a complete picture when they are viewed side by side. The catalyst for this transformation seems to have been the force and power of eros, which is centred in the figure of Jason. Medea's first sight of Jason and simultaneously her

first pangs of love initiate her descent into inhumanity. Thus Ovid is able to reconcile the two Medeas (innocent girl and child-killing sorceress) by depicting the second Medea as a degeneration of the first. He indicates this degeneration particularly in the Metamorphoses by Medea's frequent recourse to her magical abilities. These abilities are emphasized to such an extent and assume such importance that when Medea finally does murder her children it is almost an anticlimax and certainly suggests nothing out of character. The Medea of the Heroides is certainly a much more human and emotive personality. Her most negative qualities, such as the murder of her brother and the potential deaths of her sons, are only lightly indicated in the Heroides. Here Ovid is not concerned so much with right or wrong as with Medea's struggle with her own conscience and her reaction to the present catastrophe in her life. She is unable to face the truth about herself and her actions, as she might indeed find that she is guilty and that Jason was not worth all her sacrifices. Thus she does not actually kill her children, but merely hints at the possibility. The Medea of the Metamorphoses always remains something of a literary figure. She does not demonstrate the introspection of her counterpart Medea of Ovid's Heroides. Thus, as a purely literary figure is much more easily metamorphosed into a witch. Since the murder of the children occurs after Medea's transformation

into a witch, the incident is merely indicative of Medea's state. Ovid concentrates here more heavily on the theme of deceit -- particularly Medea's deception of the daughters of Pelias -- and its connection with magic. He is much more interested in Medea as a witch in the Metamorphoses than as a woman in distress, as in the Heroides. Thus he solves the problem of a mother killing her two children by denying the human nature of the mother in one and sidestepping the issue in the other.

One Medea looks to the future (Metamorphoses), the other to the past (Heroides). Elements which are merely suggested in the Heroides, such as Medea's magic powers, are developed and expanded in the Metamorphoses. Similarly, Ovid's focus and his interests change. The Medea of the Heroides, despite her criminal actions, is still very much a human being, a person in conflict who expresses her natural anxiety, anger and jealousy. The Medea of the Metamorphoses, however, gradually loses her human characteristics and becomes a vehicle for Ovid to exhibit his artistic skill.

The challenge for Ovid lies in combining the two Medeas in a coherent unity. The elements are tripartite: Medea the young girl, Medea the witch and Medea the child-killer. Apollonius avoids the most difficult figure, Medea the child-killer, by ending his story just as Medea and Jason return to Greece. Euripides' Medea is a woman

consumed by revenge. Her magical qualities are not emphasized. An extreme desire for revenge drives Medea in all her actions and ultimately drives her to murder her children, despite her initial hesitancy. Similarly, Seneca concentrates on Medea's desire for revenge and emphasizes the most recent events. Past events are used only as support for present positions. His Medea is a woman of emotion, who wastes little time on rational thought, but lets her desire for revenge sweep her along. Although both of Ovid's Medeas are strongly affected by their emotions, it is the first experience of love which ignites their actions. All further actions derive from this love and contribute to the deaths of Apsyrtus, Aeson and the two boys. The Medea of the Heroides is forced by Jason's rejection to attempt to come to terms with her actions and begins, in the end, to doubt the justice of her decision. The Medea of the Metamorphoses never comes to this point. Instead, she succumbs to the addictive power of her magic and degenerates into an amoral, curious sorceress. Thus the death of her children is scarcely remarkable. By presenting such diverse versions of the Medea story, Ovid explores the ramifications of Medea's decision to help Jason and its ultimate effect.

## CHAPTER TWO: DIDO

### Heroides VII: Section I: Introduction

It is impossible to read Heroides VII without recalling and comparing it with Vergil's Aeneid IV. Vergil's forceful description of Dido's plight must surely have left its mark on Ovid as he began his own work. Vergil's treatment of the story of Dido and Aeneas has necessarily placed upon Ovid's Heroides VII a heavy burden of comparison. As Siegmar Döpp suggests, Ovid was certainly following Vergil very closely, although he must also have sought to free himself as much as possible from his model.<sup>1</sup> Towards this end, evidence of borrowings from Catullus (especially 64), Propertius and Tibullus as well as Ovid's own earlier works are visible.

It is crucial for an understanding of Heroides VII as an endeavour independent from Vergil to pay careful attention to the causes which prompted each author to write. Vergil's Aeneid should and must be seen as a national epic, regardless of whether it was intended to laud the emperor Augustus or not. For this reason, the

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<sup>1</sup> Siegmar Döpp, Virgilischer Einfluss im Werk Ovids (Munich: Verlag UNI-Druck, 1968), 17.

call to duty of Aeneas assumes overwhelming importance throughout the whole poem and is indeed its guiding force. Pius Aeneas must remain pius so that the empire of Rome may be founded in all its glory. If Vergil's Dido cannot understand this, this is part of her tragedy. The Dido whom Vergil depicts is driven by her love for Aeneas to give up the demands of pudor and her concern for fama. Her loss of pudor, which Helmut Hross defines as a betrayal of chastity, respectability and self-control,<sup>2</sup> creates in Dido a sense of desperation. More than any other heroine, Dido has directed her life according to pudor -- a pudor which she owed to her husband, her gods and her people. The first encounter with Dido as queen (Aen. I.495-509) and the subsequent deterioration of her in this role is a key one in the depiction of her character. It is when she steps out of her role as queen and focuses on her love for Aeneas that Dido loses her quality of pudor. The effect of this loss is portrayed by the unsettled and extravagant nature of her emotions. She changes from a calm and modest sovereign (vultum demissa [Aen. I.561]) to a woman stricken (saucia [Aen. IV.1]) by love, who is terrified by her dreams (Aen. IV.9). Thereafter, she is described by images of fire (uritur [Aen. IV.67]), as a doe struck by an arrow (Aen. IV.69ff.) -- and once she hears of Aeneas' decision

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<sup>2</sup> Helmut Hross, "Die Klagen der verlassenen Heroïden in der lateinischen Dichtung" (Ph.D. diss., Ludwig-Maximilian University, 1958), 200.

to leave -- as an enraged Bacchante (Aen. IV.300-302). Her desperation leads Dido to consider death (Aen. IV.450-51;474-76) and finally to curse Aeneas (Aen. IV.607-629) and commit suicide (Aen. IV.663-665). Vergil depicts the disintegration of her character by imagery which becomes increasingly violent and desperate.<sup>3</sup> It depicts Dido's state of mind as she progresses from calmness to hopelessness. It is only in the face of Aeneas' refusal to remain that Dido realizes the enormity of her actions. With her suicide, she attempts to reverse her decision and to regain the pudor she had given up for love. The impossibility of this attempt is revealed throughout Book IV by the fatalistic mood which permeates Dido's story. The nymphs howl (ulularunt [Aen. IV.268]), rather than rejoice, at her "wedding": Dido herself recognizes that this wedding was false (Aen. IV.171-172). Her emotions are so strained that she envisages horrible transformations during her sacrifices at the altars:

quo magis inceptum peragat lucemque relinquat,  
uidit, turicremis cum dona imponeret aris  
(horrendum dictu), latices nigrescere sacros  
fusaque in obscenum se uertere uina cruorem.

(Aen. IV.452-455)

With such an atmosphere, there is little chance of interpreting Dido's love affair as a joyous one or even to

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<sup>3</sup> See Aen. IV.68-73; IV.300-304; IV.469-473. For a comprehensive view of Dido's tragedy see E.L. Harrison, "The tragedy of Dido," EMC 33 (1989): 1-22.

anticipate that its outcome would be positive.

The situation is completely different for Ovid. He is, first and foremost, a love poet, with little, if any, interest in political or national affairs. When he does attempt a martial epic, he laughingly blames Cupid for his inability to restrict himself to his serious topic:

Arma gravi numero violentaque bella parabam  
edere, materia conveniente modis.  
par erat inferior versus; risisse Cupido  
dicitur atque unum surripuisse pedem.

(Amores I.1-4)

It is necessary, therefore, while acknowledging Ovid's debt to Vergil, to read Heroides VII with a mind attuned to this essential difference between the two writers. One is and must always be aware of the Vergilian model. Indeed, as it will be seen, Ovid himself often recalls Vergil's Dido either by direct reference, or by echo, or by adaptation. However, Ovid's female characters, particularly in the Heroides, are painted with only a few references to their heroic milieu -- this is especially true of Ovid's Dido. She is first of all a young woman in love and only secondly the queen of Carthage. The depiction of emotion in Ovid's Dido is therefore not a progression from a royal queen to a woman desperately in love, but rather a static depiction of a woman struggling to persuade her lover to remain with her in the face of hopeless odds. The depiction is, of course, also dependent upon the letter form itself, which can isolate and "freeze" a particular point in a character's

development. Nevertheless, Ovid's Dido is not transformed by her love; at the beginning of the letter she has already fallen in love with Aeneas and she remains in love throughout her letter despite occasionally expressing anger towards Aeneas. She also lacks the stark despair of her Vergilian counterpart. The Ovidian Dido has not based her life on the possession of pudor -- it is merely a contributing factor, not an overriding one. Thus the Ovidian Dido expresses an intense desire for Aeneas' presence not in order to save her reputation, but merely because of her love for him. Although Ovid uses similar terminology (uror [Her. VII.25;Aen. IV.67], laese pudor [Her. VII.97], exstinctus pudor [Aen. IV.322]), it will be seen that Ovid gives them a much different tone, just as fatalistic, but hardly so despondent. Unlike Vergil's Dido, Ovid's Dido does not lose control. Admittedly, she too threatens suicide, but the threat is present in a more melodramatic and therefore perhaps less earnest manner. The Ovidian Dido does not seem desperate enough to succumb to suicide in order to regain her lost status. Rather, the Ovidian Dido concentrates on trying to persuade Aeneas to remain and uses whatever ploy is available to her, including the threat of suicide and possible pregnancy, in her attempt. The Ovidian Dido is presented throughout Heroides VII as a more restrained character, one who seems to be more in control of her emotions and even of her own

destiny.

Similarly, one must sense a comparable distinction between the Aeneas of Vergil and the Aeneas of Ovid. In the latter, he is a man with a cause rather than a cause attached to a man. For this reason, the whole concept of pietas is altered and reduced in scope and importance. This change inevitably reflects on Aeneas' arguments for leaving Dido and her understanding of his motivation. The grand scale of Vergil's epic is removed and replaced with the struggles of a woman to keep her lover by her side while he, driven by some, to her, inexplicable force, seeks to escape.

Brooks Otis terms Vergil's Dido as an alter Aeneas, since both have a mission to found a city overseas, both have a special pietas towards the dead and both are lonely and vulnerable.<sup>4</sup> This analogy is much less distinct in Heroides VII. Ovid does not emphasize Dido's role as a queen, Aeneas' solitary situation, or the concept of pietas as a whole. Thus the differences between the characters are more clearly delineated and this, in turn, connects them more closely to the intent of the letter (an attempt to persuade Aeneas to return) rather than to some grand, epic theme.

This difference in motivation goes hand in hand

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<sup>4</sup> Brooks Otis, Virgil A Study in Civilized Poetry (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 265.

with a difference in literary format. Vergil was at liberty to employ monologues and addresses, to show internal conflicts and thought processes, to depict character by description and to provide editorial comment. The epic genre also allows the poet to demonstrate the passage of time, flashbacks and contemporaneous events. In comparison, Ovid is severely limited by the epistolary genre. It must, by its nature, be mainly one-sided, be limited to one time period and largely isolated from outside events.<sup>5</sup> Thus what Vergil wrote in 705 lines (Book IV) is more or less found in Ovid's 196 lines, and apart from references to past deeds and favours, occurs mainly in present time. The details of Ovid's story correspond more or less to those of Vergil's except for Ovid's habit of carrying well-known scenes one step further in action or result. For example, Vergil's Dido wishes that she had had a "little Aeneas" to remind her of the father (Aen. IV.328). Ovid's Dido hints more pointedly at her possible pregnancy at Her. VII.132. Similarly, the Vergilian Dido addresses Aeneas' sword as she lays it on the funeral pyre (Aen. IV.648-662). The Ovidian Dido takes the sword and lays it on her lap as she pens her final words (Her. VII.85-6). Thus Ovid tends to adopt Vergil's details but enlarges them or suggests new focuses or emphases. The

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<sup>5</sup> The only exception to this format is Heroides IX, in which Deianira receives and responds to the news of her husband's death.

result is a Dido quite unlike Vergil's although still retaining certain recognizable characteristics.

Her. VII: Section II: Lines 1-6: The Dying Swan

An introductory mood of despondency and an aura of death are established with the allusion to the dying song of the swan:<sup>6</sup>

Sic ubi fata vocant, udis abiectus in herbis

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<sup>6</sup> The following introductory distich is found in several manuscripts:

Accipe, Dardanide, moriturae carmen Elissae;  
quae legis a nobis ultima verba legi

Although this distich is not found in the chief MS P, it is found in the second oldest surviving MS E as well as in the readings of an inferior group called  $\varsigma$ . Vahlen suggests that the beginning of verse 3 (Sic ubi) posits a previous line(s) and demonstrates several instances in Ovid's poetry where the use of sic is connected to a previous description (Met. I.199-205; III.106-114; VIII.189-92; XV.852-860; Fasti I.215-22). Kirfel agrees with Vahlen, stating that no other poem or letter in Latin poetry begins with sic. However the sic may merely indicate an introductory "thus" or "as follows." Reynolds describes this and other distichs as interpolations designed to identify the sender and recipient of the letter, although this is not a technique which Ovid follows consistently. Although the carmen of verse 1, pace Schmitz-Cronenbroeck, accords well with the idea of the final song of the swan, the repeated legis ... legi causes serious problems of clarity and interpretation. Thus although introductory line(s) seems to have been lost, the possibilities that this distich is authentic are not great. See the discussion of H. Vahlen, Über die Anfänge der Heroiden des Ovids, (Berlin: Abhdlg. d. Ber. Akad., 1881), 5-6; E.-A. Kirfel, Untersuchungen zur Briefform der Heroides Ovids, Noctes Romanae, vol. 11 (Bern: Verlag Paul Haupt), 61-64; W. Schmitz-Cronenbroeck, "Die Anfänge der Heroides des Ovids" (Ph.D. diss., University of Cologne, 1937), 6; L. D. Reynolds, Texts and Transmissions (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938): 271.

Ad vada Maeandri concinit albus olor.

(Her. VII.1-2)

J. Adamietz contrasts this passage with Vergil's Aen. IV.300-3, in which Dido is compared to a raging maenad when she hears of Aeneas' preparations for departure.<sup>7</sup> However, clearer parallels are found in Ovid's Fasti and Metamorphoses where Ovid refers to the mournful song of the swan as it dies:

flebilibus numeris veluti canentia dura  
traiectus penna tempora cantat olor.

(Fasti II.109-110)

illic cum lacrimis ipso modulata dolore  
verba sono tenui maerens fundebat, ut olim  
carmina iam moriens canit exequialia cygnus.

(Met. XIV.428-30)

In the Heroides, Ovid hints at the mournful nature of Dido's last letter, mournful both because of her impending death and because of Aeneas' departure.

The words fata vocant, normally employed to depict the near approach of death,<sup>8</sup> emphasize this solemn beginning. Unlike Vergil's Dido, Ovid's Dido has signalled her approaching death early. This idea will run as a continuous underlying leitmotif through much of the poem

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<sup>7</sup> J. Adamietz, "Zu Ovids Dido - Brief," WJA 10 (1984): 123.

<sup>8</sup> A. Palmer, ed. P. Ovidi Nasonis Heroides with the Greek Translation of Planudes (Oxford: Clarendon press, 1898; reprint, Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967), 339.

and establishes the impression of a more deliberate Dido than Vergil's. The Ovidian Dido makes her decision to commit suicide after cool consideration and rational forethought. Her decision is not depicted as the sudden outcome of desperation and grief.

Dido's acknowledgment that she does not expect success for her request (Her. VII.3-4) reveals her grasp on reality. She is not blinded by her love for Aeneas, although she might feel driven to fight to retain it.

This combination of realistic appraisal and perseverance is clearly outlined in Dido's reason for writing:

Sed merita et famam corpusque animumque pudicum  
Cum male perdidderim, perdere verba leve est.

(Her. VII.5-6)<sup>9</sup>

The loss of pudor and its resultant fama forces Vergil's Dido to accost Aeneas, desperately reminding him of the favours (merita) she had granted on his account:

si bene quid de te merui, fuit aut tibi quicquam  
dulce meum, miserere domus labentis et istam,  
oro, si quis adhuc precibus locus, exue mentem.  
te propter Libycae gentes Nomadumque tyranni  
odere, infensi Tyrii; te propter eundem  
extinctus pudor et, qua sola sidera adibam,  
fama prior.

(Aen. IV.317-323)

Ovid's Dido, although she has similar losses, seems to view the waste of her animum pudicum and the disintegration of

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<sup>9</sup> Compare the importance of fama in Aen. IV.173ff.; IV.322.

her fama with more resignation than Vergil's Dido. Since the Ovidian Dido speaks of  pudor  and fama in the same breath, she lends them equal weight and importance. This establishes a contrast with the Vergilian interpretation of fama as a motivating factor in Dido's life (Aen. IV.173-195). However, as with the concept of  pudor  in Ovid, the concept of fama in Ovid is similarly reduced in scope and becomes a contributing rather than a controlling factor.

Dido's anger and feelings of betrayal seem to have burned themselves out, so that she is able to say quite calmly, "I have painfully lost everything that is important to me. To throw away a few words is nothing."<sup>10</sup> The Ovidian Dido has a firm grasp of the relative merits of her personal attributes. The loss of her good name meant a great deal to her since she seems to be suggesting that she had nothing left to lose but words. She is aware of the possible futility of her attempt (Her. VII.5-6), but is nevertheless willing to try.

Thus the first section of Heroides VII illustrates one of the main differences between the two Didos. Vergil's Dido struggles against her fate passionately and desperately, unwilling to concede that she cannot influence Aeneas' decision to depart. Ovid's Dido seems to have already endured this time of passionate railing against

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<sup>10</sup> Palmer suggests that male (Her. VII.6) may mean to sell cheaply, as it does in the expression male vendere (Palmer, 339).

fate and has now gained a calmer frame of mind. This does not mean that Ovid's Dido cannot still be roused to anger. She is aware that her initial approach has been unsuccessful, but is determined to seek a second encounter, despite a strong feeling of pessimism.

Her. VII: Section III: Lines 7-18: Dido's Disbelief

In the second section of Heroides VII, Dido continues to address Aeneas directly with a series of statements indicating her disbelief of his intentions. Although she might logically accept his departure, part of Dido still cannot believe that anyone would be willing to leave the comfort and power of Carthage. In a series of statements reminiscent of Kalypso's questions to Odysseus (Odyssey V.203-210), Dido seeks to recall to Aeneas' mind exactly what it is he is leaving behind and what uncertainties await him:

Certus es ire tamen miseramque relinquere Didon,  
 Atque idem venti vela fidemque ferent?  
 Certus es, Aenea, cum foedere solvere naves,  
 Quaeque ubi sint nescis, Itala regna sequi?

(Her. VII.7-10)

The repetition of certus es emphasizes Dido's incredulity at Aeneas' resolve.<sup>11</sup> The miseram has little of the weight

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<sup>11</sup> For the emphasis on certus ire compare Aen. IV.554; V.1-2.

of the Vergilian parallel of infelix.<sup>12</sup> A.S. Pease suggests that Vergil used infelix as a characterizing epithet similar to pius Aeneas. He also points to the more literal meaning of infelix, that is unfruitful or sterile.<sup>13</sup> This might account for Ovid's omission of the adjective, as his Dido later suggests quite definitely that she is pregnant (Her. VII.135ff.). A.S. Pease also points to the use of misera by lovers, indicating the disturbed state of their minds or alternatively the misery caused by the cruelty of one of the lovers.<sup>14</sup> In Heroides VII, the Ovidian Dido emphasizes that she will be in a wretched condition after Aeneas' departure.<sup>15</sup> She makes this statement in an early attempt to solicit pity and to emphasize that her well-being is dependent upon Aeneas' presence. This seems to indicate that Aeneas is still present in Carthage as Dido writes her letter.

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<sup>12</sup> Compare infelix Dido: Aen. I.749; IV.68; IV.450; IV.596; VI.456. miserrima Dido: Aen. IV.117. Infelix in Vergil has the additional connotation of ill-fated and unfortunate as well as the wretched and pitiable force of miser.

<sup>13</sup> A.S. Pease, Publi Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Quartus (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967), 145.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 145. Compare also Aen. I.344, 719; IV.315, 420, 429, 697; Cat. 35.14, 45.21; Horace, Odes I.5.12, I.27.18, III.12.1.

<sup>15</sup> A close parallel is found in Heroides X.61 in which Ariadne laments the terrible position Theseus left her in on the island, i.e. that she is to be a source of prey to monsters and beasts.

Catullus' Ariadne (64) laments that the wind has carried away her lover and his promises,<sup>16</sup> and Dido has the same complaint here (Her. VII.6). In both cases, the promises of marriage have come to nothing and the women are abandoned by their men with scarcely a backward glance. For Dido, this breaking of promises is symbolized by the casting off of the ships, which cast off cum foedere (Her. VII.9).

Ovid uses the term foedus in only two other letters in Her. I-XV. Two instances are found in the letter of Phaedra to Hippolytus (Her. IV). The first occurrence (Her. IV.17) refers to Phaedra's marriage to Theseus and her intention to break this alliance. The second (Her. IV.147) is an appeal to Hippolytus to join together with her in a properataque foedera. The third instance is found in the letter of Oenone to Paris in which she warns Paris that his new wife (Helen) will no more be faithful to him than she was to her first husband, Menelaus (Her. V.101). Thus Her. IV.17 and V.101 anticipate the destruction of a marriage, while Her. IV.147 refers to the formation of a new marriage and one carried out in haste (properataque) which may hint at the illicit nature of the union. Ovid therefore uses the term foedus to refer to the dissolution of marriage or the formation of an illicit marriage. In Heroides VII.9, Ovid may be indicating the dissolution of

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<sup>16</sup> Compare Catullus 64.591, 142.

Dido's "marriage" to Aeneas by means of the term foedus and its connection to Aeneas's ships and therefore his departure.

The use of foedus recalls the concept of fides and the main problem in the relationship of Dido and Aeneas—each one's differing concept of fides as it refers to their relationship. Vergil's Dido speaks of hands given in pledge (Aen. IV.314-15) and therefore views Aeneas' behaviour as a violation of fides. Richard C. Monti identifies dexteram (Aen. IV.314) as a symbol of fides in a personal political relationship and suggests that while Aeneas views his relationship to Dido within these bounds, Dido adds a further overriding emotional element.<sup>17</sup> The Ovidian Dido does not make such a clear distinction. Although fides is repeated several times in the letter, Ovid does not emphasize the political aspect of their relationship but rather the personal one. Therefore fides lacks the connotation it may have in Vergil's Aeneid. In Her. VII, it seems to refer specifically to the promises or pledges Aeneas made to Dido. When the Ovidian Dido speaks of fides, she usually makes clear reference to herself, not to her kingdom or her people (See Didon ... fidemque [Her. VII.7-8]; Dido ... fides [Her. VII.17-18]; also periuria ... Dido [Her. VII.110]). The exception is fidem [Her. VII.110] where Dido does not refer to herself by name but

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<sup>17</sup> Richard C. Monti, The Dido Episode and the Aeneid. Roman Social and Political Values in the Epic (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981), 41. Compare also Euripides, Medea 496.

clearly implies Aeneas' fidelity towards her. Similarly, Ovid emphasizes the idea of broken promises by the repetition of the noun fides and by the general theme of deception.<sup>18</sup> The destruction of promises is all the more difficult for the Ovidian Dido to understand, because, unlike Theseus and Ariadne, Dido has much to offer Aeneas (Her. VII.11-12). For this reason, Aeneas' determination to hunt for a land whose whereabouts are unknown to him, appears as so much folly to Dido (Her. VII.10).<sup>19</sup>

By means of a considered argument, Dido attempts to make Aeneas realize his folly (Her. VII.13-18). The repetition of words, especially altera, "underscores the iterative and ceaseless nature of Aeneas' quest."<sup>20</sup> The iterative nature of the lines themselves suggests Dido's frustration with Aeneas' constant journeying. In essence, Dido seems to be saying that Aeneas makes life a pursuit (Her. VII.13).<sup>21</sup> This pursuit involves a continual desire for new possessions (habendam [Her. VII.15], tenenda [Her.

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<sup>18</sup> See for example fidem: Her. VII.10, 57, 112; fides: VII.20. For the theme of deception see fallor: Her. VII.35; fallere: VII.81; falsae periuria linguae: VII.67; fraude: VII.68. For parallel uses of fides see Her. II.26; X.78; Am. II.8.18; III.3.1; Prop. I.18.18. For similar uses of foedus see A.A. II.579; III.593; Cat. 64.373.

<sup>19</sup> Compare Dido's opinion in Aen. IV.361.

<sup>20</sup> N.P. Gross, "Rhetorical wit and amatory persuasion in Ovid," CJ 74 (1979): 312. For the repetition of words see altera: Her. VII.14 (2X), 17 (2X), 18; also facta ... facienda: VII.13; quaerenda ... quaesita: VII.13-14.

<sup>21</sup> Palmer, 340.

VII.16], habendus [Her. VII.17]), as well as a continual breaking of faith, which Dido connects exclusively to women (Her. VII.17-18).<sup>22</sup> It is this "treaty" which carries the most weight with her, not a treaty between allied states or peoples. (This preliminary view of Aeneas' treatment of women will be echoed and expanded later on in the poem, when Dido refers to Aeneas' relationship with his first wife Creusa.) Although Dido seems to stress the difference between having an empire in one's grasp (sceptro tradita summa tuo [Her. VII.12]) and having to seek for a new one ("Ut terram invenias, quis eam tibi tradet habendam?" [Her. VII.15<sup>23</sup>]), it is the two final lines of this section which seem to express her real feelings:

Alter habendus amor tibi restat et altera Dido:  
Quamque iterum fallas, altera danda fides.

(Her. VII.17-18)

Here, Ovid is obviously working within the framework of Vergil's Aeneid. Although Dido may correctly have interpreted that conquering a new land usually also requires forging marital and territorial ties, to the reader this line hints at the existence of Lavinia in Vergil's Aeneid VI.764. For Dido, it is this 'treaty' based on love which most concerns her.

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<sup>22</sup> Gross comments that to Dido, "Aeneas' quest and his inextricably connected treatment of women are ever the same and ever repeated" (Gross, 313).

<sup>23</sup> According to Palmer, "traduta was a formal method of transferring dominium" (Palmer, 140).

This passage illustrates and emphasizes Dido's bitterness at Aeneas' lack of appreciation of the gift of her kingdom. She does not display the anger or desperation Vergil's Dido does when she realizes that her sacrifices have also been in vain:

nusquam tuta fides. eiectum litore, egentem  
 excepi et regni demens in parte locaui.  
 amissam classem, socios a morte reduxi  
 (heu furiis incensa feror!):

(Aen. IV.373-376)

Ovid's Dido is not in a rage, she is not driven about in a frenzy. She is however angry and scathing towards Aeneas' resolve to seek Italy, which Ovid demonstrates by the swift flow of questions. Nevertheless, Ovid's Dido knows exactly what she is saying and is in full control of her emotions.

Her. VII: Section IV: Lines 19-168

Part A: Lines 19-74

First Attempts to Influence Aeneas

The importance to Dido of her 'marriage' to Aeneas is further stressed in the first lines of this section of the letter, in which the theme of Dido's love for Aeneas is continued. For Dido, the acquisition of a new kingdom and a new people seems a far easier task than finding another wife like herself:

Quando erit, ut condas instar Carthaginis urbem,  
 Et videas populos altus ab arce tuos?  
 Omnia ut eveniant, nec di tua vota morentur,

Unde tibi, quae te sic amet, uxor erit?

(Her. VII.19-22)

The successful acquisition of a land and people seems doubtful in Dido's view, especially given the fickleness of the gods (nec di tua vota morentur [Her. VII.21]). The acquisition of a wife appears even more doubtful to her. Unlike Vergil's Dido, who cannot see beyond her own grief and the desperation of her situation, Ovid's Dido can look calmly, if sceptically, at Aeneas' future.

Another contrast between the Vergilian and Ovidian Didos is that the Ovidian Dido openly confesses her love for Aeneas at quite an early point in her letter:

Uror, ut inducto ceratae sulphure taedae:  
Aenean animo noxque diesque refert.

(Her. VII.23-24)

In this respect, Dido has common ground with Medea, who also described the fiery effect Jason's presence had on her:

Et vidi et perii! nec notis ignibus arsi,  
Ardet ut ad magnos pinea taeda deos.

(Her. XII.33-34)

Ariadne suffers similar emotions in Catullus:

non prius ex illo flagrantia declinavit  
lumina, quam cuncto concepit corpore flammam  
funditus atque imis exarsit tota medullis.

(64.91-93)

The reference to torches and fires in both the letters of Medea and Dido follows the traditional poetic description

of the effects of love.<sup>24</sup> Although Vergil's Dido may suffer from the same pangs as Ovid's Dido and Medea, she does not confess her love in such a fashion to Aeneas. It is revealed through the poet's voice and only later by Dido's own voice.<sup>25</sup> However, Ovid's use of this imagery of love does not have the dramatic weight of Vergil's. In the Aeneid, Dido's emotions are echoed by her physical actions, as in Aen. IV.66-68, where she wanders through the city like a stricken doe. The confusion in her mind is paralleled by the confusion in her movements and is therefore all the more striking. This factor is also emphasized by the length and detail of Vergil's simile. In contrast, Ovid's depiction of Dido burning from the fires of love is concise and evocative and presents her emotional state in a clear sudden impression. Ovid uses this same technique in Her. VII.23-24 and Her. XII.37-38: a brief statement of fact (uror; Et vidi et perii!) followed by a comparison ("... ut inducto ceratae sulphure taedea"; "Ardet ut ad magnos pinea taeda deos"). Dido's love for Aeneas burns as a strong, long-lasting flame whose steadiness is paralleled by her day and night concentration on her lover.

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<sup>24</sup> For similar meanings of uro see Aen. IV.67; Prop. IV.7.34; II.24.8; Tib. II.4.5; II.4.6; III.11.5; III.12.17; III.19.19; Ovid Am. I.1.26; II.4.12; II.19.3; III.1.20; A.A. II.353; III.573; Her. XV.9-10; Cat. 72.5; 83.6

<sup>25</sup> Compare Aen. IV.1; IV.66-68; IV.83. Dido does not speak of love until Aeneas is on the brink of departure: Aen. IV.307; IV.370; IV.429; IV.470.

Unlike Vergil's Dido, Ovid's Dido is not driven to mindless movement by her love. Rather, it tends to concentrate her energies on one single focus -- Aeneas. Thus Dido's movements in Her. VII do not echo her emotional thoughts but rather enhance them.

As with many of the heroines of the Heroides, Dido has also to complain of Aeneas' forgetfulness and his disregard of the sacrifices she made on his account (Her. VII.27-28).<sup>26</sup> She realizes her foolishness (si non sim stulta [Her. VII.28]) in caring for such a man but reveals how deeply Aeneas has affected her by her confession that she is unable to hate him:<sup>27</sup>

Non tamen Aenean, quamvis male cogitat, odi,  
Sed queror infidum questaque peius amo.

(Her. VII.29-30)

As Döpp declares:

Die Unfähigkeit zu hassen über die Dido volle Klarheit hat, trennt sie von der catullischen und virgilischen Heroine gleichermassen.<sup>28</sup>

This separation clearly characterizes the Ovidian Dido as a

<sup>26</sup> See for example, Her. XII.21; XII.129; XII.199ff.; Her. IX.33ff.

<sup>27</sup> Although the meaning is different, this couplet contains an echo of Catullus 85. The positioning of odi and amo at the end of each line strengthens this impression as well as emphasizing Dido's benevolence. She should hate him after all he has done, but her love is so great as to overcome any other emotion. For similar echoes of love compare militet: Her. VII.32; Amores I.9.1; II.9.2ff.; also Horace, Odes IV.1; Tibullus I.1.75; II.65 and Propertius IV.1.137.

<sup>28</sup> Döpp, 23.

woman for whom love is a controlling force in life. Despite Aeneas' behaviour, she continues to assert and reveal her feelings to him. However, her confession of enduring love echoes the pessimism of the opening lines of the letter. Dido is aware of the hopelessness of her affair with Aeneas as well as the general impossibility of her letter achieving its goal. However, Dido feels she has nothing to lose in openly confessing her continuing love for Aeneas and stubbornly hopes that this confession might even affect him. The Ovidian Dido wants Aeneas to return to her. She does not feel that her loss of pudor and tarnished fama would preclude accepting Aeneas if he chose to stay. The situation is not so clear for Vergil's Dido or even that of Ovid's Medea and Catullus' Ariadne. These women, by means of threats, curses and expressions of anger, deny their love for their lovers.<sup>29</sup> Although they may initially appeal for their lover's return, by the end of their respective letters or poems these women appear disenchanted with their lovers. It is also in accord with Ovid's depiction of Dido as a whole that she remain constant in her love for Aeneas. The Ovidian Dido does not have the volatile and changeable nature of her Vergilian counterpart. Thus Ovid's Dido becomes remarkable for her constancy rather than for the anger and concern for pudor

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<sup>29</sup> See for example, Dido's curse: Aen. IV.615-629; Ariadne's curse: Cat. 64.192-201; Medea's threat: Her. XII.207-212.

of Vergil's Dido.

Several commentators have remarked upon the fact that when Dido begins to speak of her love for Aeneas she no longer addresses him directly, but employs the third person (Aeneas [Her. VII.26; VII.29], ille [Her. VII.27; VII.34]). She also speaks of Aeneas as offering materiam (Her. VII.34) for her love. Gross describes their relationship as "one between a lover [Dido] and an external object [Aeneas] not between two involved lovers."<sup>30</sup> Döpp, on the other hand, describes the situation thus:

Aeneas wird bei Ovid lange Zeit hindurch nicht angesprochen, von ihm ist nur in der dritten Person die Rede. Didos Worte gewinnen so an Intimität, weil es den Anschein hat, als spräche sie zu sich selbst.<sup>31</sup>

Both commentators emphasize the fact that Dido is the dominant figure in the relationship. Whether the Ovidian Dido speaks to herself or to Aeneas as an object, in both cases Aeneas' importance is secondary. Even in Vergil's account, it is Dido who first reveals her obsession with Aeneas (Aen. IV.1ff.) and lies about the nature of their meeting in the cave (Aen. IV.170-172). Although Aeneas is obviously content with the situation (Aen. IV.259-264), the impression remains that Dido's love was the main component in the affair. So too in the Heroides. Dido prays to Venus for Aeneas to fall in love with her, or at least that

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<sup>30</sup> Gross, 310.

<sup>31</sup> Döpp, 28.

Aeneas might remain as an object for her to love (Her. VII.31-34). His physical presence is not necessary to stir her heart. As she herself says, "Aenean animo noxque diesque refert" (Her. VII.26).

Just at the point when Dido's prayers to Venus have induced in her a peaceful frame of mind, reality breaks through her illusion and brings her sharply back to earth:

Fallor, et ista mihi falso iactatur imago:  
Matris ab ingenio dissidet ille suae.

(Her. VII.35-36)

What follows (Her. VII.37-34) is a mixture of insult, recrimination and concern. Dido, remembering at last Aeneas' cruelty, angrily claims that he is quite unlike his mother Venus (Her. VII.35-36) and therefore must have been born from rocks, wild animals or the sea, as his character is so unnatural. She follows a long line of predecessors who have similarly castigated friends, spouses and lovers.<sup>32</sup> The idea of the sea as a parent is particularly attractive to Dido because of Aeneas' firm resolve to set sail despite inclement weather (Her. VII.39-42). Thus the nature of the weather and the sea become connected to Aeneas' nature, although Dido comments scornfully, "Iustior est animo ventus et unda tuo" (Her. VII.44). Adamietz

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<sup>32</sup> See Homer, Iliad XVI.33; Odyssey XIX.163; Euripides, Bacchae 988, Medea 1342; Vergil, Eclogue VII.44-45; Aen. IV.365-367; Cat. 60; 64.154-157; Ovid, Her. X.131-2, Met. VII.32-33; VIII.120ff.; IX.613-615; Tristia III.11.3;

suggests that this emphasis on inclement weather creates an antithesis between Dido's love and Aeneas' hardheartedness. He also suggests that Dido's reason for warning Aeneas about the winter weather is tied to thoughts of hope that he might have to remain and to thanking the storm and the sea for giving a time for a continuation of love.<sup>33</sup>

In verse 41, the Ovidian Dido picks up a remark made by the Vergilian Dido (Mene fugis [Aen. IV.314])<sup>34</sup> but instead of moving immediately to her last request, Ovid's Dido dwells on this question and turns to herself for the reason for Aeneas' departure:

Non ego sum tanti - quid no censeris inique? -  
 Ut pereas, dum me per freta longa fugis.  
 Exerces pretiosa odia et constantia magno,  
 Si, dum me careas, est tibi vile mori.

(Her. VII.45-38)

Ovid's Dido is given a much more important role in Aeneas' decision to leave than is the Dido of Vergil Dido. She sees herself as motivating Aeneas' decisions, much as he motivates hers. The non ego sum tanti (Her. VII.45) seems to suggest that Dido believes that Aeneas' main reason for leaving was herself and not any divinely imposed duty to found a new empire. Although the Vergilian Dido asks the same initial question mene fugis? (Aen. IV.314), her thoughts lead her on to consider Aeneas' promises and

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<sup>33</sup> Adamietz, 125.

<sup>34</sup> Compare also quem fugis (Aen. IV.466); quo fugis (Ariadne) (Her. X.35).

pledges and the dangers which threaten her after his departure. She does not stop to consider why he really chose to leave (Aen. IV.314-324). Both Didos deny Aeneas' divine mission, but it is Ovid's Dido who makes a concerted effort to find an alternative explanation for his departure. Although Ovid's Dido is quick to place a price on herself (censeris [Her. VII.45],<sup>35</sup> constantia magno [Her. VII.47]), she maintains that she does so out of concern for Aeneas' safety, not out of fear of abandonment. However, Ovid has given his Dido an ability to present in a forceful manner those arguments which would most convince Aeneas to stay. She does not appeal, at this point, to emotion as Vergil's Dido does (Aen. IV.320-326), but seeks to show Aeneas as clearly and rationally as possible, the error of his decision. She is wise enough to keep her argument on practical grounds first and to seek to change Aeneas' mind through reason, rather than to emphasize her desire for his presence.

Dido continues her comparison between Aeneas and the sea by wishing that he too were as changeable as the sea (Her. VII.49-52). Would that Aeneas would be as calm as the sea! The emotion which the Ovidian Dido strives to keep out of her argument surfaces briefly despite herself:

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<sup>35</sup> For a discussion of the value imagery and the disputed readings of censeris see Gianpiero Rosati, "Enea e Didone a confronto (Ovidio, Her. 7,45)," SFIC 7 (1989): 105-107.

Te quoque cum ventis utinam mutabilis esses!  
Et, nisi duritia robora vincis, eris.

(Her. VII.51-52)<sup>36</sup>

Unfortunately for Dido, Aeneas does prove to be harder than oak, since he does not change his decision to set sail. Although he had presumably voyaged much and had experienced many maritime storms, Aeneas, in Dido's eyes, ignores the dangers of the sea (Her. VII.53-56). This is an especially dangerous frame of mind for Aeneas, primarily because of the tradition that the sea exacts revenge on perjurers.<sup>37</sup> However, Aeneas is doubly at risk as Ovid's Dido makes a connection between the goddess of love, Venus, and the sea:

Praecipue cum laesus amor, quia mater Amorum  
Nuda Cytheriacis edita fertur aquis.

(Her. VII.59-60)

Venus demands punishment because she was born in Cytherean waters and therefore possesses the sea's role as punisher. As the mother of love she would also demand punishment because love itself has been wounded, i.e. Aeneas' departure breaks the promises of love between himself and Dido and he is therefore culpable (in Dido's mind at least). Although other authors refer to Cytherea as a

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<sup>36</sup> For a similar comparison of men and trees, see Aen. IV.441-49; II.626-31; Iliad XIII.389-91; A.R. IV.1682-86; Cat. 64.105-109.

<sup>37</sup> For a parallel idea see Horace, Odes III.2.26-29.

goddess of love,<sup>38</sup> Ovid uses the adjective Cytheriacis to emphasize Venus' connection with the sea, thus lending support to Dido's contention that the sea is dangerous for Aeneas at this time. Aeneas would have to face not only the winter weather, but also the hostility to the sea itself and of the mater amorum. Howard Jacobson maintains that this passage

appears ludicrous in the light of the kinship mentioned at 31-32 and 35-38 (the latter passage, by the way, vitiating the point of the former). The mater amorum is mater Aeneae as well. Is she to punish her own son? (Consider the role of Venus in the Aeneid).<sup>39</sup>

Despite the role of Venus in the Aeneid, one should not assume that she plays the same role in the Heroides. Truly, the gods play so little part in this version of Dido's story that they hold little of the prominence and weight they have in the Aeneid. Jacobson attempts to make too close a comparison between Vergil and Ovid in this respect. As well, Ovid's Dido is nothing if not clever at arguing. Jacobson himself admits that Aeneas' divine parentage "fluctuates according to rhetorical needs."<sup>40</sup> The rhetorical nature of Dido's argument is not disputed. The series of rhetorical questions (Her. VII.40-41;VII.53-54)

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<sup>38</sup> See Aen. I.675; IV.128; Prop. II.14.25; Tib. III.13.15.

<sup>39</sup> Howard Jacobson, Ovid's Heroides (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 81.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 82.

and the circular order of her thoughts (winds [Her. VII.42]; Aeneas' character [Her. VII.44]; her own worth [Her. VII.45-8]; back to the winds [Her. VII.49-50]; Aeneas' character [Her. VII.51-52]) demonstrates Dido's powers of persuasion. She is not the emotionally distraught figure in Vergil's Aeneid -- she does not rush, enraged, like a Bacchante through the city (Aen. IV.300-301), nor does she portray the maddened qualities of a Pentheus or an Orestes (Aen. IV.469-473). Her manner of speech reflects this and distinguishes the Ovidian Dido from the Vergilian model. It also allows Dido to use turns of phrase and analogies as they occur to her, unfortunately with little attention to what she has said previously. When an analogy seems fitting and appropriate, Ovid's Dido uses it regardless of contradictions. Her desperate attempts to convince Aeneas to stay causes her to either ignore or be unaware of the contradictions in her speech.

Unlike the Vergilian Dido, who desires and prays for Aeneas' destruction at sea (Aen. VI.381-384), the Ovidian Dido fears lest she may inadvertently cause Aeneas' death:

Perdita ne perdam, timeo, noceamve nocenti,  
 Neu bibat aequoreas naufragus hostis aquas.  
 Vive precor: sic te melius quam funere perdam:  
 Tu potius leti causa ferere mei.

(Her. VII.61-64)

Döpp suggests,

Aeneas' Tod möchte Dido nicht verschulden (63),

vielmehr solle es Aeneas bedrücken weiterzuleben, während sie, durch seine Schuld, den Tod gefunden habe.<sup>41</sup>

This interpretation reinforces Dido's threat to die which was initially suggested by the dying swan motif at the beginning of the letter. Although verse 64 obviously is meant to recall Aeneas' words to Dido in the Underworld (Aen. VI.458), when they are spoken by Ovid's Dido before her death, they become a sort of moral blackmail of Aeneas. This becomes particularly clear when one considers the antithesis between vive and perdam of the previous line (Her. VII.63).<sup>42</sup> While Dido prays for Aeneas' life, she does so in order that she may morally destroy him. Ovid emphasizes this by pacing vive at the beginning of the line and perdam at the end. The contrast between Aeneas' happy life and his fate to found Rome and Dido's early mournful death would definitely place a considerable burden on Aeneas' conscience. Thus, if Aeneas does not want his reputation destroyed, he must remain with Dido.

Dido, once she has implanted in Aeneas' mind an initial feeling of guilt, seeks to strengthen the impression by imagining that she has come back from the dead to appear before him: "Tristis et effusis sanguinolenta comis." (Her. VII.70). If, as Jacobson suggests, this scene is meant to recall the appearance to

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<sup>41</sup> Döpp, 33.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 33.

Aeneas in Troy of Creusa (as depicted in Aen. II.772-773) and identifies Dido in the role of Creusa,<sup>43</sup> then Dido is indeed trying to make Aeneas feel guilty. If Aeneas feels sufficiently guilty, he may grant her request:

Da breve saevitiae spatium pelagique tuaeque:  
Grande morae pretium tuta futura via est.

(Her. VII.73-74)

Dido works upon the assumption that Aeneas must feel some measure of responsibility for Creusa's loss. It is significant that the Ovidian Dido refers to herself as decepta (Her. VII.69). In the Aeneid, Aeneas is told by a tearful Creusa that Cybele does not allow her to accompany Aeneas and that he would eventually find another wife (Aen. II.776-789). Creusa thus absolves Aeneas of all responsibility on her behalf. Ovid presents a different interpretation. The decepta suggests that Aeneas was after all responsible for deceiving Dido about the promises he made to her. Furthermore, Ovid's depiction of Dido appearing to Aeneas with her hair unbound (effusis comis [Her. VII.70]) suggests mourning and death -- both ideas intended to increase Aeneas' feelings of guilt. Therefore, by identifying herself with Creusa, Dido "borrows" some of Aeneas' guilt for his wife, as the Ovidian Dido also calls herself Aeneas' wife (coniugis [Her. VII.69]). The Ovidian Dido may even be hoping that she and Creusa would mesh in

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<sup>43</sup> Jacobson, 86.

Aeneas' mind almost as one person, so that by staying with Dido, Aeneas might feel he was fulfilling some of his old obligations to Creusa.

Dido has so ordered her argument that she appeals to Aeneas first by her confession of love, secondly by her attempt to show that his decision to sail in winter is sheer folly, and thirdly by trying to make him feel guilty about his dealings with her and his lost wife Creusa. She cleverly delays her actual request to Aeneas until the last, when she has "softened up" Aeneas by increasingly emotional claims. Although Ovid's Dido does not have the fire and passion of Vergil's Dido in her complaints, it is this very reasonableness which she hopes will appeal to Aeneas. Reason appears as a stronger force than emotion against the demands of fate.

Part B: Lines 75-138: Attacks against pietas

Dido does not allow Aeneas any breathing space. Immediately after her request that he delay his departure, she returns to the assault on Aeneas' sensibilities by referring to Iulus (Her. VII.75) and the Penates, while emphasizing the inevitability of her own death (Her. VII.76). In a subtle twisting of the whole basis of Vergil's Aeneid, at this point Ovid has Dido deny Aeneas' pietas by declaring that the whole tale he told was a lie:

Omnia mentiris, neque enim tua fallere lingua  
Incipit a nobis, primaque plector ego.

(Her. VII.81-82)

The theme of falsehood is the guiding force behind this whole section. Dido moves from accusing Aeneas of abandoning Creusa (Her. VII.83-84), to forcing her to betray her vows to Sychaeus (Her. VII.97-104) and finally, in anger, she asks why Aeneas simply does not complete what he has begun and hand her over to Gaetulian Iarbas (Her. VII.125).<sup>44</sup>

Dido blames herself for having been moved by Aeneas' tale of his journeys (Her. VII.85-88). What is a cause of wonder to Vergil's Dido (Aen. I.752-756), is proof of guilt to Ovid's Dido: "Nec mihi mens dubia est, quin te tua numina damnent" (Her. VII.87). Aeneas' supposed lack of piety is then contrasted with Dido's generosity, as she had received Aeneas from his shipwreck and even gave him her kingdom (Her. 89-90).<sup>45</sup> As Adamietz comments,

so wie Aeneas sie jetzt verlassen will,  
muss er einst auch Creusa bedenkenlos dem  
Tod uberantwortet haben, und von daher  
erscheinen seine gesamt die pietas  
dokumentierenden Erzählungen in einem

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<sup>44</sup> Ovid presupposes that the reader is familiar with Dido's story, for he makes no attempt to fill in the complete details of Dido's struggles with her brother and Iarbas.

<sup>45</sup> Not only Vergil's Dido makes a similar claim (Aen. IV.373-375), but also Euripides' Medea (Medea 476) and Catullus' Ariadne (64.149-152) have done the same.

anderen Licht.<sup>46</sup>

Ovid's Dido boldly calls her affair with Aeneas a concubitus (Her. VII.92), in stark contrast to Dido's insistence in Vergil that it was a marriage (Aen. IV.173). Vergil does not use the term concubitus at all in the Aeneid. Instead, the Vergilian Dido uses coniugium, which seems to imply that Aeneas did not [call it coniugium], but either recognized no relation at all or else that of a mere liaison (amores);<sup>47</sup>

Anna speaks to Dido of a coniugium, a marriage, with Aeneas (Aen. IV.48), as does Dido herself (Aen. IV.324; IV.431). However, the Ovidian Dido uses the term coniunx (Her. VII.69) when she wants to present a pitiable picture of herself to Aeneas and therefore blackmail him into staying with her. Otherwise, she does not prevaricate but flatly calls the affair a concupitus. The Ovidian Dido sees no need to mask her culpa and does not seem to regard a formal marriage to Aeneas as an absolute necessity, but rather something which can be negotiated. Indeed at verses 167-68, Dido suggests that she would be amenable to any relationship with Aeneas, as long as she might be called his:

Si pudet uxoris, non nupta, sed hospita dicar:  
Dum tua sit Dido, quidlibet esse feret.

(Her. VII.167-8)

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<sup>46</sup> Adamietz, 126.

<sup>47</sup> Pease, 33.

The difference between the two Didos is remarkable. The Vergilian Dido is driven to commit suicide because of the failure of her relationship with Aeneas. The Ovidian Dido has realized the true nature of her relationship with Aeneas but strives nevertheless to maintain some sort of tie with him. She may wish, at times, that the encounter had not happened (utinam [Her. VII.91]), but she does not disguise its nature.<sup>48</sup> The unlawful nature of their marriage is supported by Ovid's use of ululasse -- it is more frequently found in a negative sense -- of dogs howling, of women wailing in mourning, as a sound to frighten the enemy.<sup>49</sup> Therefore the howling of the nymphs at the 'wedding' is not an indication of positive hopes. This negative aspect is also supported by the very presence of the Eumenides (Her. VII.96). In Vergil, primeval earth, pronuba Juno, fire and air are present at Aeneas and Dido's union (Her. IV.95-96). In Ovid, the presence of the Eumenides at the 'marriage' casts gloom on the occasion. Their role as avengers recalls Dido's call for vengeance in the Aeneid (IV.607ff.), and her threats to Aeneas when he

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<sup>48</sup> Catullus' Ariadne similarly wishes that Theseus had never come (64.171ff.); Ovid's Medea also wishes that she could have died before Jason had come (Her. XII.3-4).

<sup>49</sup> See for example (dogs) Aen. VI.257; VII.18; (women) Aen. II.487-88; (mourning) Ovid, Met. XIII.151; Fasti IV.453; Livy V.39; (war) Livy XXI.281; Caesar, B.G. V.37.3; VII.80.4. For a full discussion see Pease, 208.

first mentioned his decision to leave (Aen. IV.384-386).<sup>50</sup> That the Eumenides give signs to the Ovidian Dido of her fate continues the negative aspect of the passage and depicts how she now views the night of her "marriage".

Like Vergil's Dido (Aen. IV.460-65), Ovid's Dido also hears her dead husband Sychaeus calling to her (Her. VII.101-102), although where Vergil's Dido only seemed (visa [Aen. IV.461]) to hear, Ovid's Dido perceives (sensi [Her. VII.101]) herself called four times and Sychaeus himself speaks to her (Ipse ... dixit [Her. VII.102]). Vergil's formless and misty description of Sychaeus' presence is given shape and substance in Ovid's account. The formal tone of citari<sup>51</sup> combined with the seemingly formal naming of Dido as Elissa (Her. VII.103) adds to Sychaeus' stature and his importance in Dido's life. It is significant that Ovid has Sychaeus address Dido as Elissa, for this recalls most particularly her role as the widow of Sychaeus, and therefore her position as a queen.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, although both the Ovidian and the Vergilian Didos have memorials to Sychaeus (Her. VII.99-100; Aen.

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<sup>50</sup> The threatening Furies ultimately recall Orestes' torment in Aeschylus' Eumenides.

<sup>51</sup> Palmer defines citare as more formal than vocare. It was employed to summon senators, tribesmen, jurymen, etc. (Palmer, 344).

<sup>52</sup> Hermann Ruprecht, "Dido oder Elissa," Gymnasium 66 (1959): 249. This also parallels Vergil's use of the name Elissa. For further discussion, see also W.C. McDermott, "Elissa," TAPhA 74 (1943): 205-215.

IV.457-8), the Vergilian Dido only hears voices which sound like her husband's:

hinc exaudiri uoces et uerba uocantis  
uisa uiri, ...

(Aen. IV.460-461)

The audible nature of her experience is emphasized by the alliteration of u's. The Ovidian Dido is certain that her husband is speaking to her, as the force of the ipse suggests:

Hinc ego me sensi noto quater ore citari;  
Ipse sono tenui dixit 'Elissa, veni!'

(Her. VII.101-102)

Dido's immediate response (Nulla mora est, venio [Her. VII.103]) and her use of debita (Her. VII.103)<sup>53</sup> indicate the continuing claims of her husband. However, she excuses her behaviour by placing the real guilt of her betrayal on Aeneas, the idoneus auctor (Her. VII.105). She protects her innocence by claiming that Aeneas' divine parentage lulled her into a feeling of false security (Her. VII.107-108). Unlike Vergil's Dido, who feels herself totally betrayed and betraying, Ovid's Dido sees her loyalty to Sychaeus as dependent on Aeneas' loyalty to her: "Adde fidem, nulla parte pigendus erit" (Her. VII.110). Thus Ovid's Dido proves herself to be much more adept at

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<sup>53</sup> Palmer describes debita as an expression of a betrothed or lawful wife as well as an expression used of offerings due to the dead or the gods (Palmer, 346). See also Horace, Odes I.36.2; II.6.23.

twisting the facts to suit herself. To call an affair a marriage is a small thing indeed, compared to making Aeneas mainly responsible for breaking her vows to Sychaeus. This is one of the few instances where the Ovidian Dido deliberately hides from reality, which may in itself be an indication of the guilt she feels.

After this relatively subdued passage, Dido adds fuel to her anger by describing the trials and sacrifices she has suffered in her life (Her. VII.111-125). In the parallel passages of the Aeneid (IV.350ff.; IV.651-663), the motivating forces are those of shame for a good name lost and of revenge for injuries inflicted. Nevertheless, the Vergilian Dido is proud of her accomplishments—building a city, avenging her husband, punishing her brother and her enemy. Although Ovid's Dido concentrates on her pride in her city (Her. VII.119-120), instead of consoling her, it seems to enrage her all the more. Thus her anger increases continually until it reaches its peak in her frustrated cry:

Quid dubitas vinctam Gaetulo tradere Iarbae?  
 Praebuerim sceleri bracchia nostra tuo.  
 Est etiam frater, cuius manus impia possit  
 Respergi nostro, sparsa cruore viri.

(Her. VII.125-128)

She does not, as Vergil's Dido does, merely suggest that her country may be defeated and overrun by hostile forces (Aen. IV.325-26), but carries the idea one step further. Her disbelief in Aeneas' pietas is revealed when she casts

him in the role of her betrayer to Iarbas or her brother Pygmalion. In her view, he has already cruelly betrayed Creusa, lied about his journey and is on the verge of abandoning Dido herself. Thus she finds it easy to believe that Aeneas would be her betrayer in a more physical sense as well. For this reason she commands him to set down the gods which he profanes by his touch (Her. VII.129). These gods would scarcely like to be saved from the fire only to fall into such hands as Aeneas':

Pone deos et quae tangendo sacra profanas:  
 Non bene caelestis impia dextra colit.  
 Si tu cultor eras elapsis igne futurus,  
 Paenitet elapsos ignibus esse deos.

(Her. VII.129-132)

Such an attack nullifies Aeneas' main reason for leaving Dido. The Ovidian Dido, hurt at Aeneas' betrayal, seeks to wound him in return. She therefore touches upon Aeneas' real sense of duty towards his gods. Ovid's description of Dido's anger makes it difficult for the reader to ascertain whether she sincerely believes her remarks or whether she was merely expressing her frustration. Certainly, Aeneas as a profaner of the gods rather than a protector presents an opposing view to that of Vergil's Aeneas. That Ovid would choose such a depiction is consistent with his manner of describing his characters, particularly in the Heroides. He shies away from the epic or magnificently tragic figure, preferring more homely and familiar figures. As Dido becomes less of a queen and more of a woman, so too does

Aeneas become less the model of pious heroism and more the picture of a normal, imperfect being. It is also characteristic of Ovid to carry his depiction of a figure one step further in development than the original model. Thus where Vergil's Dido merely expresses her doubts about Aeneas' mission (Aen. IV.376), Ovid's Dido roundly denies its authenticity.

Dido's insults towards Aeneas reach their peak only in the last six lines of this subsection (Her. VII.133-138). Ovid develops a desire expressed by Vergil's Dido (Aen. IV.327-330) into near reality, as he posits Dido's pregnancy:

Forsitan et gravidam Didon, scelerate, relinquas,  
Parsque tui lateat corpore clausa meo.

(Her. VII.133-134)

Vergil's Dido, in Gross' words, "speaks with a poignant and genuine hope for a child."<sup>54</sup> Without a doubt, Ovid's Dido lacks this poignancy and wistfulness. The crudeness in her final four lines on the subject reveals her intention of using the unborn child as a lever against Aeneas, rather than a comfort after his departure:

Accedet fati matris miserabilis infans,  
Et nondum nati funeris auctor eris,  
Cumque parente sua frater morietur Iuli,  
Poenaque conexos auferet una duos.

(Her. VII.135-138)

Gross calls Dido's suggestion of pregnancy "amusing and

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<sup>54</sup> Gross, 311.

exaggerated" and her efforts to persuade Aeneas as "overbearing and misguided,"<sup>55</sup> but a more appropriate interpretation comes from H.A. Khan, who suggests:

Ovid was running the risk of attributing to Dido, intent as she was on killing herself, something of the vindictiveness of a Medea who would slay her children simply to inflict grief on the faithless man who had fathered them.<sup>56</sup>

In this respect, Dido is a self-centered woman, absorbed by her problems, much as Medea was in Heroides XII. She also reveals herself as being much more determined than Vergil's Dido. She is willing to go to any lengths in her attempt to keep Aeneas with her, even to the extent of threatening to kill her own child as well as herself. However, the main difference between Medea and Dido is that Dido does not want to inflict grief on her husband, as H.A. Khan suggests, but rather guilt and fear. She is trying to escape from the necessity of killing herself and has already declared that she has no wish to harm her Aeneas, because she loves him too much. She simply wants to make him feel guilty enough to stay with her and uses the weapon of fear -- of her death and of their child's -- for this purpose. The reference to Iulus (Her. VII.139) recalls Aeneas' love and concern for his son, especially his claim in the Aeneid that he must not deprive Iulus of his

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 310-311.

<sup>56</sup> H.A. Khan, "Dido and the sword of Aeneas," CPh 63 (1986): 284.

heritage (Aen. IV.354-55). Thus the threat that he may destroy Iulus' brother and therefore the brother's heritage as well seems calculated to evoke Aeneas' feelings of responsibility. This subsection ends on a dramatic note, and is probably the most emotional section of the whole letter. The look at the past, highlights of Creusa, the fateful concubitus all present devices with which Dido attempts to bind Aeneas to herself. The recent past reveals a mystical encounter with Sychaeus and a quickly submerged feeling of guilt concerning violated vows. The future holds even more terrors, as it offers captivity under Iarbas or Pygmalion or alternatively, the death of an unborn child and of Dido herself.

Part C: Lines 139-156: Advantages of Carthage

The mood of the preceding passage is abruptly broken by the initial words of the next subsection: 'sed iubet ire deus' (Her. VII.139). In contrast to the Aeneid, this is one of the few occasions in which Aeneas' argument for his departure is presented. Its placement immediately after Dido's threat to kill herself and her child makes Aeneas' argument seem banal and weak. Ovid's Dido, even more than Vergil's Dido, gives little credence to Aeneas' protestations of divine commands. Although she remarks that she wishes that this god had forbidden Aeneas to come

in the first place (Her. VII.139-140), she considers it incredible that Aeneas would obey the commands of a god who allowed him to suffer so long (Her. VII.141-142). Dido moves instead to more rational arguments against Aeneas' departure. There is a return, in effect, to the mood and tone of lines 19-74, as Dido details the problems which are sure to face Aeneas as he searches for Italy:

Non patrium Simoenta petis, sed Thybridis undas.  
Nempe ut pervenias, quo cupis, hospes eris.  
Utque latet vitatque tuas abstrusa carinas,  
Vix tibi continget terra petita seni.

(Her. VII.145-148)

The alternative to this is, of course, all that Carthage and Dido offer: a people (populos [Her. VII.150]), wealth (advectas Pygmalionis opes [Her. VII.150]), a city (urbem [Her. VII.151]), power ("Resque loco regis sceptraque sacra tene." [Her. VII.152]) and the possibilities of glory in war for both Aeneas and Iulus (Her. VII.153-155).<sup>57</sup> As Jacobson comments, this argument from Iulus' welfare seems to be an Ovidian innovation and contrasts sharply with Dido's exclamation that she wished she had served Ascanius' flesh to Aeneas for dinner (Aen. IV.601-602).<sup>58</sup> Ovid's Dido, although she may threaten her unborn child, does not make the same Thyestean exclamation. In this respect, Ovid's Dido has yet to show the violent strain which marks

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<sup>57</sup> For Dido's words in Vergil, compare Aen. IV.374-75.

<sup>58</sup> Jacobson, 88.

the character of Vergil's Dido.

Ovid cleverly manages to insert a reference to Rome's mission (Aen. VI.851-853) in Dido's words: "Hic pacis leges, hic locus arma capit" (Her. VII.156). She, of course, is referring to what might be found at Carthage, not at Rome. Thus this passage is framed by two direct references to the Aeneid: the god's command to Aeneas to depart (Her. VII.139) and the reference to Rome's mission in the world (Her. VII.156). However, within this framework, Ovid shows very little of the spirit of the Aeneid, largely because his Dido discounts the authority of the god by rational argument. Jacobson is quite correct when he remarks:

The notion of a divine mission that must override personal considerations, the ability to perceive and appreciate the strange ways in which the supernatural hand operates - all this is beyond Ovid's Dido.<sup>59</sup>

However, this is surely true of Vergil's Dido as well, for not only by her words (Aen. IV.365-387), but by her actions as well (Aen. VI.450-476), she shows that she holds Aeneas, not a god, responsible for his actions and her death. Part of the tragedy of Vergil's Dido is that she cannot understand or accept Aeneas' mission. Ovid merely enlarges the theme, so that his Dido is contemptuous of the whole notion of a divine mission and does not even try to understand. This may deprive the Heroides of the high

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 90.

tragedy of the Aeneid, but on the other hand tends to add to its everyday realism. Ovid's Dido, like his own contemporaries, has turned away from blind faith in the gods, merely because they are gods. She demands more substantial proof.

Part D: Lines 157-168: Dido's Spirit of Sacrifice

Dido calls upon Aeneas' mother, his arms, and the gods which Aeneas brought with him into exile to stand witness to the end of his journeying (Her. VII.157-160).<sup>60</sup> Her entreaty for Aeneas' safety includes mention of his son Ascanius and his father Anchises (Her. VII.161-62).<sup>61</sup> These prayers lead into Dido's own prayer that she be spared, especially as her only crime had been to love Aeneas (Her. VII.163-166). Vergil's Dido uses roughly the same pleas (Aen. IV.318), although in her case she uses them in anger and as an indication of the sacrifices she has made for Aeneas. High on her list of sacrifices is the loss of her pudor and qua sola sidera adibam, / fama prior (Aen. IV.322-23). Ovid's Dido uses her words without

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<sup>60</sup> The reference to fraterna tela (Her. VII.157) recalls Dido's earlier reference to Cupid's arms at Her. VII.31-32.

<sup>61</sup> For other similar prayers for an easy rest for one's bones see Tristia III.3.73-76; Amores III.9.67; Vergil, Eclogue X.33; Tibullus I.4.49; II.6.29; Prop. I.17; Euripides, Alcestis 463.

anger, rather in a pleading prayer. Instead of upholding her claim to pudor she willingly offers to cast it aside:

Si pudet uxoris, non nupta, sed hospita dicar:  
Dum tua sit Dido quidlibet esse feret.

(Her. VII.167-168)

Obviously, Ovid's Dido is not as concerned about her reputation as Vergil's Dido is, essentially because she does not consider herself as queen of Carthage first and then as a woman in love as Vergil's Dido does. Ovid's Dido sees no purpose in stressing to Aeneas that her pudor has already been destroyed (Her. VII.5-6). For her, even more than Vergil's Dido, personal considerations are of overwhelming importance. They are so important that Dido does not much care whether she is called a nupta or an hospita, as long as she may remain by Aeneas' side. The political ramifications of the terms hospes or hospita in the Aeneid are completely lost here. Ovid is much closer to Catullus who goes even further as he has his Ariadne say that she would even be willing to be a slave for Theseus:

attamen in uestras potuisti ducere sedes,  
quae tibi iucundo famularer serua labore,  
candida permulcens liquidis uestigia lymphis,  
purpureae tuum consternens ueste cubile.

(64.160-163)

Ovid's Briseis expresses a similar willingness:

Victorem captiva sequar, non nupta maritum:  
Est mihi, quae lanas molliat, apta manus.

. . . . .

Nos humiles famulaeque tuae data pensa trahemus,

Et minuent plenos stamina nostra colos.

(Her. III.69-76)

Ovid's Dido is spiritually much closer to Ariadne and Briseis than she is to Vergil's Dido, even though she does not express any willingness to become a slave. A Dido who says "Dum tua sit Dido quidlibet esse feret" (Her. VII.168) has progressed significantly from the proud, royal Dido of Vergil's Aeneid.

Her. VII: Section V: Lines 169-180:

Further Arguments Against Leaving

In this section of her letter, Dido continues to pile up reasonable arguments against Aeneas' departure. Once again, the sea and weather are called to act as her allies (Her. VII.169-172). Instead of desperate pleas to Aeneas to at least delay his departure (Aen. IV.430-36), here Dido calmly reinforces her arguments then promises to let Aeneas go when the weather is favourable:

Tempus ut observem, manda mihi: serius ibis,  
Nec te, si cupies, ipsa manere sinam.

(Her. VII.173-174)

In Vergil, it is Dido's sister Anna who is to carry this request to Aeneas; in Ovid, Dido makes it herself.<sup>62</sup> In Vergil, Aeneas' men work against Dido's request as they are

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<sup>62</sup> Compare Aen. IV.431-34.

eager to leave and their boats are ready (Aen. IV.397-400). In the Heroides, the Ovidian Dido claims the additional support of Aeneas' men, for she suggests that they too are unwilling to depart:<sup>63</sup>

Et socii requiem poscunt, laniataque classis  
Postulat exiguas semirefecta moras.

(Her. VII.175-176)

This makes Aeneas seem very stubborn, as though he were insisting on departure in spite of all arguments against it. He is not even assured of the support of his men. Thus his reason for leaving appears even flimsier and as if it truly stemmed from a desire to escape from Dido's presence.

In her continuing argument, Dido presents some of the same ideas which her Vergilian counterpart does in the Aeneid (IV.433-36). Both women ask for a breathing space:

tempus inane peto, requiem spatiumque furori,

(Aen. IV.433)

Pro meritis et si qua tibi debebimus ultra,  
Pro spe coniugii tempora parva peto,

(Her. VII.177-178)

Both women speak of learning through suffering:

dum mea me victam doceat fortuna dolere.

(Aen. IV.434)

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<sup>63</sup> Phyllis also complains to Demophoon that by repairing his ships, she had given him the means to desert her (Her. II.45-48).

Fortiter edisco tristia posse pati.

(Her. VII.180)

However, although the words might be similar, the tone and emphasis are not:

Pro meritis et siqua tibi debebimus ultra,  
 Pro spe coniugii tempora parva peto,  
 Dum freta mitescunt et amor, dum tempore et usu  
 Fortiter edisco tristia posse pati.

(Her. VII.177-180)

Döpp classifies these lines as the high-point of Dido's speech, although he curiously comments that "Hier lasst Dido ab, unmittelbar auf Aeneas einzuwirken."<sup>64</sup> At the high-point of her speech, Dido would more naturally make use of the most forceful of her arguments -- her merita, her hope of marriage (pro spe coniugii [Her. VII.178]) and her love (Her. VII.179). Unlike Vergil's Dido, Ovid's Dido does not seek a respite in order to learn how to endure being defeated (Aen. IV.434), but rather how she may endure sadness (Her. VII.180). The calm tone with which Dido makes this final request suggests that she has already started the learning process. Vergil's Dido speaks with exhausted finality -- she has pleaded with Aeneas unceasingly, but to little avail. She cannot understand why he wishes to leave her (Aen. IV.425-29). Ovid's Dido does not display this same exhaustion or failing hopes. She firmly believes that her profession of love, combined

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<sup>64</sup> Döpp, 22.

with the strong argument about the bad weather and rough seas, will convince Aeneas at least to delay his departure a little. To the end of this passage, she maintains her calmness and composure.

Her. VII: Section VI: Lines 181-196: Dido's Last Words

The rational tone of the preceding lines is abruptly broken by Dido's repeated assertion that she intends to die, if Aeneas does not plan to stay (Her. VII.181-82). The contrast is all the greater because of the rationality of the previous passage. What Khan calls the "pathetic self-description" of a woman about to separate herself from her coniunx<sup>65</sup> is notably found here. Dido has turned from rational arguments to emotional ones. She boldly states her intention to commit suicide (Her. VII.181-82). There is no prevarication, no hesitation and certainly no doubt. Although Dido states that Aeneas' cruelty will not be able to affect her (Her. VII.182) for very much longer, she also tries to affect this hard core of Aeneas' by sketching a particularly emotional picture of herself as she writes:

Aspicias utinam, quae sit scribentis imago:  
Scribimus, et gremio Troicus ensis adest,  
Perque genas lacrimae strictum labuntur in ensem,

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<sup>65</sup> Khan, 284. He provides the parallels of Aen. IV.650f., Euripides, Alcestis, 175f. and Sophocles, Trachiniae, 920f.

Qui iam pro lacrimis sanguine tinctus erit.

(Her. VII.183-186)

This rather fanciful portrayal suggests none of the desperation and tension of Vergil's Dido (Aen. IV.641-62). Indeed, it tends to give the impression that Ovid's Dido is more concerned with the picture she is presenting, than with actually committing suicide. Jacobson feels that Ovid "belabors" the drama of the situation and thus, with line 190, wrote "one of the most bathetic lines in all his work."<sup>66</sup> Khan, on the other hand, writes that Ovid's treatment of the sword theme is "a compliment both to Virgil's craftsmanship and to the poetic possibilities of this sword motif."<sup>67</sup> Vergil's Dido seems to use the sword which Aeneas left behind (Aen. IV.646-47) to kill herself, perhaps even the very sword which she herself had given him. However, Ovid's Dido seems to say that Aeneas himself had given her the sword (tua munera [Her. VII.187]) and therefore Aeneas may literally have provided her with the means of death. Certainly, this is the impression which the Ovidian Dido wishes to present, as it provides her with further material for her emotional blackmail. The whole scene is far removed, both in spirit and in fact, from the Aeneid. It is the most obviously emotional appeal Ovid's Dido has made in her whole letter. It reinforces the idea

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<sup>66</sup> Jacobson, 82.

<sup>67</sup> Khan, 283.

that she sees herself as Aeneas' victim, although without the desperation of the Vergilian Dido. Instead, an image of Dido "toying" with the sword on her lap as though she were daring herself to commit suicide and flirting with death is presented. This image seems to have been depicted as much for Aeneas as for Dido herself. The reference to the vulnus amoris carries the echo of Ovid's elegiac verse and rather than being out of place, it is in agreement with the frequent elegiac references found throughout the poem. It also reminds Aeneas that Dido is suffering because of his departure and that he is the one responsible for her pain.

The address to her sister Anna (Her. VII.191-192) recalls the Vergilian Dido's request to her sister to help build her funeral pyre (Aen. IV.494-503). However, it does not provide the same suspense, for here Dido is revealing her coming death, not covering it up under the guise of purification.

She forbids the inscription of Elissa Sychaei (Her. VII.193), not only because of her feelings of guilt, but primarily because she wants Aeneas to feel guilty. This is, after all, a letter written to try to persuade him to remain. Dido has already shown herself to be a master at working on Aeneas' feelings of guilt and shame. In declaring him the potential cause and means (Her. VII.195-196) of her death on her tombstone, she is again trying to

make Aeneas feel so guilty and so responsible that he will not want to depart. He is faced with the dilemma that if he does leave, he will be so branded by Dido's tombstone; if he does not leave, he will face the wrath of the gods, at least according to Vergil's version of the story. Since Ovid's version of the founding of Rome has none of the fulfilment of destiny of Vergil's, Aeneas' decision to leave appears merely as his own desire, concealed under the words sed iubet ire deus (Her. VII.139). This certainly is the interpretation which Dido holds, especially given her preoccupation with her love for Aeneas. Since even the thought of Aeneas increases her own love, Dido feels that a mournful picture of herself can only do likewise for Aeneas.

Her. VII: Section VII: Conclusions about the Nature of Dido

The letter format of the depiction naturally does not allow for its continuation after the death of the writer. Indeed, even by the end of the letter, Ovid does not allow Dido to do anything more than threaten death. He has depicted Dido as a fairly rational woman, with only flickers of the fires of madness of Vergil's Dido. However, as in Heroides XII, Ovid has deliberately left the final issue unresolved. In this case, this lack of resolution may be due to the letter form, as it presents

the idea that Dido may be awaiting an answer to her letter before she takes any decisive action.

It is clear that Heroides VII, due to the restrictions of the letter form, lacks the balance of the Vergilian depiction, which can present Aeneas' arguments as well as Dido's.<sup>68</sup> It is also clear that the Ovidian Dido is not at all the passionate Vergilian Dido. The elegiac allusions, i.e. cursing the lover's ancestry (Her. VII.35ff.) and the plea to Venus and Amor (Her. VII.31-32), in addition to such elegiac vocabulary such as castris militet ille tuis (Her. VII.32), uror (Her. VII.25), odi and amo (Her. VII.29-30), reflect Ovid's elegiac background. It is an elegy modified and restrained by practicality, but it is nonetheless elegy. It is this distinction which allows Heroides VII to succeed. Ovid's Dido is not an heroic Dido from an epic model. Despite obvious and numerous similarities,<sup>69</sup> they are not the same woman. Their viewpoints and natures do not derive from the same background, although these "backgrounds" are literary. Ovid has indeed transposed his Dido out of the epic past into the elegiac present. But she does not view the world or Aeneas' role in it at all like the Vergilian Dido. They

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<sup>68</sup> Jacobson, 91.

<sup>69</sup> J.N. Anderson has compiled the frequent verbal echoes between the Heroidean and Vergilian Didos which demonstrate Ovid's clear knowledge of the Aeneid. See J.N. Anderson, "On the Sources of Ovid's Heroides" (Ph.D. diss., John Hopkins University, 1896), 50-75.

seem more like ancestress and descendant, the latter preserving many of the general characteristics and features, but revealing at the same time a development of perspective and outlook. Dido's letter is adapted to Ovid's Dido and would be as unsuitable in a Vergilian context as a Vergilian Dido would be here. Where Vergil's Dido seeks through passionate pleas and insults to move Aeneas, Ovid's Dido seeks through carefully considered arguments, through an accumulation of sensible reasons, to influence Aeneas' departure, and only occasionally reveals the anger lurking beneath the surface. Although just as bereft of friends as Vergil's Dido, Ovid's Dido yet appears more self-sufficient, more independent. For this reason she does not appear as tragic as Vergil's Dido, or indeed, as tragic as the other heroines of the Heroides. Despite her repeated threats of suicide, one feels that Ovid's Dido might be able to overcome and survive Aeneas' departure, whereas Vergil's Dido might not (and did not). Therefore, although acknowledging and paying tribute to the Vergilian model, one must allow the Ovidian Dido her own existence separate from Vergil.

Met. XIV.75-84: Section I: Introduction

It would not be surprising after Heroides VII if Ovid were to give up the struggle to create a new Dido in

his Metamorphoses XIV. Here he describes Aeneas arrival in Carthage, Dido's encounter with Aeneas, their love affair and her death in a total of seven lines (Met. XIV.75-81). Such a condensation from Vergil's account is an amazing feat in itself, although Ovid's tendency towards abbreviation in the Metamorphoses has been noted with reference to Medea (and Deianira -- Chap.IV). However none of these women suffer from such drastic curtailment of their stories as Dido. The possible reasons for such an abridgement are many. For Ovid, the primary purpose of the Aeneas saga is to bridge the gap between myth and history and thereby continue his carmen perpetuum into recent history and on into the present. Thus many of the incidents in Aeneas' travels are merely occurrences to be listed on Ovid's itinerary. This is especially true of the Dido/Aeneas interlude and agrees with Ovid's general premise with respect to Dido and Aeneas in the Heroides. Ovid was writing an epic for the glorification of the Roman race in neither the Heroides or the Metamorphoses. Thus he does not concentrate on the pietas theme or the related themes of pudor and fama. In the Metamorphoses, Dido becomes just one more hindrance in Aeneas' long journey towards Rome and not a pivotal encounter.

J. Ellsworth sees a remarkable similarity between

the Dido episode and the Scylla/Glaucus/Circe episode.<sup>70</sup> In both stories, a) strangers come by sea asking the ruler (a woman) for help (Glaucus, Aeneas); b) the stranger is offered the woman's (Circe, Dido) love; c) he rejects the woman and leaves because of his dedication to another purpose (Glaucus for Scylla, Aeneas for Rome); d) the woman turns her hostility on herself (Dido) or another woman because she is unable to revenge herself on the man who deserted her (Circe revenges herself on Scylla).<sup>71</sup> Further, both Circe and Dido claim to be unable to seek revenge from their lovers because of their own continuing love for them (Her. VII.61-64; Met. XIV.40-41).. Thus Ovid sought to avoid repetition and tedium by not placing two rather lengthy stories with such close similarity back to back. One of Ovid's techniques in the Metamorphoses is to treat only one of two similar tales in detail, the second being referred to merely by allusion or in brief.<sup>72</sup> Such is

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<sup>70</sup> J. Ellsworth, "Ovid's 'Aeneid' Reconsidered (Met. 13.623-14.608)," Vergilius 32 (1968): 30.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>72</sup> For example, Ovid gives great detail to Apollo's pursuit of Daphne (Met. I.451-524), but Jupiter's similar pursuit of Io is only briefly recounted (Met. I.588-600). Similarly, in the story of Jason and Medea, Ovid concentrates on the terrible aspect of the bull and the terrigenae (Met. VII.100-142). However, when Ovid describes Jason's encounter with the snake which guarded the golden tree, his description is brief and to the point (Met. VII.149-158). Likewise, the daughters of Minyas tell many stories in brief, before they finally settle on which stories to recount in detail -- all stories, however, deal with some type of transformation (Met. IV.43ff.).

the case in the Dido/Aeneas story. Contrary to expectations (based on the reader's knowledge of Vergil's Aeneid), Ovid elaborates the Scylla/Glaucus/Circe story rather than the love story of Dido and Aeneas. The massive amount of material which Ovid handles in the Metamorphoses may be partially responsible for the curtailment of Dido's story, particularly after his assertion of the popularity of the Dido story (Tristia II.535-6). He may have felt that the Dido story had been treated often enough. Alternatively, an unwillingness to compete yet again with Vergil's depiction may have led Ovid to avoid the issue almost entirely. (The Fasti passage presents Anna's experiences with Aeneas in which Dido reappears as a ghost to warn Anna of Aeneas' lack of responsibility. This goes far beyond the portrayal of Dido in Vergil's Aeneid.)

Met. XIV: Section II: Lines 75-84: Discussion

Commentators such as von Albrecht and Franz Bömer reasonably cite Vergil as the probable source for this passage, and indeed the parallels are fairly obvious.<sup>73</sup> What is more significant, however, and what most commentators seem to have missed, is what Ovid does not say about the Dido-Aeneas story. He seems to reduce those

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<sup>73</sup> Compare Met. XIV.77 and Aen. I.158; Met. XIV.78 and Aen. IV.373; Met. XIV.79 and Aen. IV.130; Met. XIV.81 and Aen. IV.650,676; Meta. XIV.82 and Aen. IV. 257f., 565.

elements which Vergil emphasized and enlarge those elements which Vergil merely touched upon. Thus, the burning of the ships (Aen. IX.69-123), the loss of Aeneas' pilot (Aen. V.833-871), the descent into the Underworld and Aeneas' confrontation with the future (Aen. VI), the war with Turnus (Aen. VII-XII) are treated by Ovid in abbreviated form. When one adds the curtailment of Dido's story to this list, it becomes apparent that many of the details of Vergil's Aeneid have been omitted in Ovid's version. This is most apparent in Aeneas' descent into the Underworld and in his dealings with Dido.

In Vergil's Aeneid, Dido served as a means of further illustrating Aeneas' humanity and his struggles to comprehend and obey the commands of fate. The image of Dido as a queen first proud and then despairing of her actions and Aeneas' stubborn refusal to yield to her pleas demonstrated also the cruelty and inexorability of fate itself. It also, however, evoked a considerable discussion regarding Aeneas' loyalty or disloyalty, pietas or impietas. In any event, Aeneas' leaving of Dido might be interpreted as a rite of passage in his journey towards the fulfillment of his fate, albeit only a minor one in view of the effect of his descent into the Underworld. Nevertheless, the story was a crucial one for Aeneas' development and the development of contemporaneous historical links between Rome and Carthage. Seen in this

light Ovid's omissions must surely mean more than a basic desire to curtail the traditional Vergilian account. It is not enough to say, as most commentators do, that Ovid was presupposing his readers' knowledge of Vergil's Aeneid and his reliance on their memories to fill in the gaps. Nor can it be said that Ovid was tired of the figure of Dido, for he returns to her story in Fasti III. Assuredly, Ovid was attempting to create a new Aeneid, relying on Vergil's story as a model, but necessarily adapting the story to his own interpretation. One of the adaptations involves the removal by Ovid of the theme of pietas especially in relation to Aeneas. This may account for the short shrift which Dido receives in Ovid's account. Indeed, Dido is treated so lightly that she does not even appear under her own name. She is merely Sidonis (Met. XIV.80), a name given to her because she had fled from Tyrian Sidon to Libya.<sup>74</sup> Her royal status is ignored by Ovid, as animoque domoque (Met. XIV.78) need not necessarily refer to a kingdom, but merely a home such as any woman might possess. The catastrophe of Aeneas' departure is hinted at in "non bene discidium Phrygii latura mariti" (Meta. XIV.79), but Ovid again keeps on the side of restraint in his allusion. Bömer suggests that Ovid used the term maritus "in einer

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<sup>74</sup> M. Haupt, O. Korn, R. Ehwald, M. von Albrecht, P. Ovidius Naso, Metamorphosen, Vol. II, Buch VIII-IX, 5th ed., (Zurich: Weidmann, 1966), 360.

hintergrundig malitiosen Bemerkung"<sup>75</sup>, although he also suggests that it has no negative implications. Certainly it appears as a statement of fact and overrides the discussion of whether or not Dido was truly married to Aeneas. The emphasis on their relationship in the Aeneid, fraught as it was with celestial machinations, is nowhere to be found in Ovid.

The reference to Dido's death, her funeral pyre and sword carries none of the double-edged allusions of Vergil's account -- there is no mention of Dido laying a likeness of Aeneas on the pyre, of strewing it with the accoutrements of their bedchamber nor the fact that she used a sword given to her by Aeneas to kill herself (Aen. IV.641-650). The only comment Ovid makes about Dido's agony over Aeneas' departure is in the deceptaque decipit omnes (Met. XIV.82), which clouds the issue much more than illuminates it. Thus Dido becomes merely an incident in Aeneas' journey and does not rate further development or interest.

In contradiction to Vergil's Aeneid, Aeneas does not meet Dido again in the Underworld. This omission has the effect of placing Aeneas' journey firmly within the bounds of rationality and common occurrence and away from the majesty and supernatural nature of Vergil's work.

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<sup>75</sup> Franz Bömer, comm., P. Ovidius Naso Metamorphosen Vol. VI, Buch XIV-XV (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1986), 32.

Dido's relationship with her husband Sychaeus is neither mentioned here nor before her death and therefore her betrayal of Sychaeus can only be inferred from the mariti of verse 79. Except for one small point, her suicide seems to be viewed as the action of a woman made overly distraught by the departure of her lover. This small point is the deceptaque decipit word-play of the penultimate line of this passage. This recalls the mood, if not the exact words of Heroides VII, in which Dido writes to Aeneas:

Omnia mentiris, neque enim tua fallere lingua  
Incipit a nobis, primaque plector ego.

(Her. VII.81-82)

The Dido of the Heroides makes it clear that Aeneas deceived her with regard to his parentage, his heroic deeds and his promises. The Dido of the Metamorphoses does not speak at all, although logically her deception is connected to Aeneas' departure. The word-play is enough, however, to interrupt the flow of the lines and to place a clear break between Dido's own story and the story of Aeneas and his men. Attention is focused once again on Aeneas. Although Aeneas is said to flee (fugiens XIV.82) from the shores of Carthage, much as he does in Vergil's Aeneid,<sup>76</sup> the idea sounds discordant here. There is no obvious connection between Dido's death and Aeneas' flight, unless of course,

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<sup>76</sup> Compare Aeneid IV.565; 571-584.

he had somehow been involved in her death. Although no god has appeared to Aeneas to recall him to his duty,<sup>77</sup> the collocation of Dido's death and Aeneas' swift departure inevitably links the two events together. Aeneas' part in Dido's death therefore seems much greater, although the whole matter is vague and allusive. This vagueness reflects badly on Aeneas, for whereas in the Aeneid, one knew exactly where Aeneas stood with regard to Dido, in Ovid, the reader is left floundering. Nevertheless, one cannot totally absolve Aeneas of responsibility in regard to Dido's suicide because no reason is given for his departure and the divine motive is not admitted. Furthermore, Ovid does say that Dido was deceived (Met. XIV.81).

Although Vergil's Aeneid is necessarily in the background of this account, the adaptations which Ovid has brought to the story demand a re-evaluation of Vergilian attitudes. The reasons and motives cannot be removed bodily from the Aeneid and placed in the Metamorphoses merely because the two contain the same general account. One cannot and should not impute to Ovid's Aeneas motives which belong to Vergil's Aeneas. Dido's relationship with Aeneas in the Metamorphoses is left open to interpretation because of a lack of details. All that is available are hints and innuendoes which carry more weight than they

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<sup>77</sup> Compare Aeneid IV.554-570.

perhaps should because of Ovid's determination to avoid the idea of pietas. This avoidance forces Ovid to curtail those portions of Aeneas' journey which are centered upon the issue of pietas, i.e., Dido and the descent into the Underworld. In Vergil the concept of pietas is connected with the founding of Rome and its historical and national importance and Aeneas' actions must be driven towards this end. Thus Vergil gives particular care to his description of Aeneas' meeting with his father Anchises in the Underworld. For Ovid, the historical and national importance of the epic is not a consideration. Unlike Vergil, Ovid's Aeneid was not written to glorify Rome and its past. His Aeneid is part of his expressed wish to write of transformations primumque ab origine mundi / ad mea ... tempora (Met. I.3-4). The story of Aeneas serves as a bridge from the mythological to the "historical" world and thus to Caesar, Augustus and Ovid's own time. Aeneas' role is thus one of continuance and this also affects his relationship with Dido. He is not required to be the embodiment of pietas and the great founder of Rome, but merely to mark off a certain period of time and to act as a springboard for Ovid to describe certain, to him, more interesting transformations. Thus a prolonged account of Dido's story is not relevant for Ovid, especially as it does not contain a metamorphosis. Dido becomes merely the means of getting Aeneas away from Carthage and on to Rome.

As Edgar Glenn comments, this "brevity of treatment may imply that in matters of great moment, love and women are negligible."<sup>78</sup> On the other hand, he also points out that Ovid is annalistic in his approach to Aeneas' career, which not only undercuts his achievements,<sup>79</sup> but also effectively reduces the need and importance of such figures as Dido. Thus on a literary level, Ovid has displayed the relative unimportance of Dido's character both to Aeneas and to his account of the foundation of Rome.

Otto S. Due suggests that the absence of moralizing in the Metamorphoses was a relief and was a result of the changes in the political and social society which had occurred between the time of Vergil's Aeneid and Ovid's Metamorphoses.<sup>80</sup> He affirms that "the Metamorphoses questions all those values in which the former generation had so ardently believed or wanted to believe."<sup>81</sup> This might easily be applied to Vergil's use of pietas; however, in regard to Dido, Ovid does not so much appear to question its pietas as to ignore it entirely. Thus, Ovid may also be signalling on a purely social level the redundancy of a

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<sup>78</sup> Edgar M. Glenn, 'The Metamorphoses': Ovid's Roman Games (Lanham: University Press of America, 1986), 184.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>80</sup> Otto S. Due, "Changing Forms Studies in the Metamorphoses of Ovid," Classica et Mediaevalia 10 (1974): 160-162.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

character such as Dido who calls forth anachronistic values.

The whole depiction of Dido stems, therefore, from Ovid's overt and covert aims in writing the Aeneas story. His determination to avoid the weight, gravity and importance of pietas in Vergil's account, his own literary purpose in the Metamorphoses as a whole, and his personal style yielded a Dido who has only a superficial resemblance to her Vergilian model. She appears neither as a queen with a growing country who becomes the pawn of the gods and in the end destroys herself (Aeneid IV), nor as a passionate woman deceived by her lover (Heroides VII). Rather, she is one of the many encounters, tragic but inescapable, which occur in the personal history of such men as Aeneas. She is, in Ovid's Metamorphoses, merely a woman caught by circumstance in a relationship which she allows to destroy her. From Vergil's proud and courageous queen, Dido has become in Ovid's Metamorphoses a normal human being with attendant frailties and weaknesses.

## CHAPTER THREE: ARIADNE

### Heroides X: Section I: Introduction

The problem of Ovid's primary sources is an ongoing one, although with regard to Heroides X, most commentators detect the undeniable influence of Catullus 64. A particular problem lies in the difficulty of defining possible Hellenistic models from the scanty extant remains. A. Palmer is one of the few commentators who unequivocally states that,

The sixty-fourth poem of Catullus is the source of this epistle, and probably Ovid had recourse to no other.<sup>1</sup>

Other commentators, such as Howard Jacobson<sup>2</sup> and J. Ferguson,<sup>3</sup> are less positive and allow for the possibility that Ovid might have used other sources for his depiction of Ariadne. However, Heroides X does suggest a thorough familiarity with Catullus 64, as will be shown through the course of this chapter, both in language and depiction.

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<sup>1</sup> A. Palmer, ed., P. Ovidi Nasonis Heroides with the Greek Translation of Planudes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898; reprint, Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967), 373.

<sup>2</sup> Howard Jacobson, Ovid's Heroides (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 213.

<sup>3</sup> J. Ferguson, "Catullus and Ovid," AJPh 81 (1960): 338.

Apart from Catullus 64, one finds mention of Ariadne in Homer, Iliad XVIII.592 and Odyssey XI.321ff.-- however the former passage merely states that Ariadne had beautiful tresses and the latter that she was beautiful, the daughter of Minos, and that she was carried off by Theseus. Apollonius Rhodius' Argonautica gives the story in somewhat greater detail in two passages: III.997-1007 and IV.432-434. In the first, Jason uses the story of Ariadne's help to Theseus and her subsequent reward of a crown of stars as an example of helpfulness for Medea to follow. Ariadne's abandonment by Theseus is left out of this account. Medea would hardly agree to help Jason if she thought there was the possibility that she herself would be abandoned once her usefulness was over. The passage in Book IV refers to the tradition in which Dionysus became enamoured of Ariadne, after she had been abandoned by Theseus on Dia.<sup>4</sup> Both the Corpus Tibullianum/Lygdamus and Propertius refer to Ariadne, but only in passing references. Propertius mentions Ariadne as leader of a maenad chorus (euhanter ... choros) in II.3.18, and as a witness among the stars to Bacchus' love in III.17.8. In I.3.1-2, she is the Gnosian woman who threw herself on the deserted shore at Theseus' departure. The Corpus Tibullianum briefly recounts Ariadne's abandonment by

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<sup>4</sup> There are also minor references in Hesiod, Theog. 947; Diodorus Siculus 4.61.5. For further details see Palmer, 373f.

Theseus and refers to Catullus' own poem:

sic cecinit pro te doctus, Minoi, Catullus  
ingrati referens impia facta viri.

(Tib. III.6.41-42)

By the time of Hyginus, Ariadne's betrayal of her brother and father was emphasized as well as her aid to Theseus (Hyginus Fab. 42). Hyginus, like Catullus, mentions Theseus' intention to marry Ariadne and in Fab. 43 gives a reason for Theseus' abandonment of her: he thought it would be a matter of reproach for him to bring Ariadne to Athens. Dionysus appears as the saviour in this version of the story, for he marries Ariadne. She is revenged for her desertion when Theseus forgets to change his sails to a lighter colour as his father had charged him, and his father, believing that the dark sails meant Theseus' death, commits suicide.

When we turn to Catullus 64, certain details of the myth can be regarded as firmly established: Ariadne, the beautiful daughter of Minos, falls in love with Theseus, betrays her brother and her father for his sake and flees with him from Crete. She is later abandoned by Theseus on Dia and rescued by Dionysus who makes her his wife. Because of either Dionysus' love or the love of the immortal gods, Ariadne is given a crown of stars in the sky.<sup>5</sup> Catullus 64

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<sup>5</sup> For alternative version of the story of the crown of stars, see Hyginus, Poetica Astronomica II.5, and also Mary Grant's comments in The Myths of Hyginus (Kansas: Kansas University Press, 1960), 189.

puts flesh and blood on the bare bones of this story. It is introduced by means of the story of the wedding of Peleus and Thetis. The coverlet of their marriage bed is embroidered with the depiction of Ariadne, abandoned by Theseus on the shores of Dia. Catullus is the first poet to connect Ariadne's curse of Theseus with the death of Theseus' father, Aegeus.<sup>6</sup> By doing so he gives character to Ariadne so that she becomes distinct from the tradition of the type of woman who merely loves, only to be betrayed in turn by her lover. By inserting the Ariadne/Theseus tale within the framework of the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, Catullus has established a link between the two tales. Thus the Ariadne story cannot be viewed independently, but must be a positive or negative reflection of the Thetis story, although opinions about the nature of the reflection vary greatly.<sup>7</sup>

Catullus 64 presents Ariadne's story in full, from her betrayal of her father and brother to the arrival of Dionysus and his troop (with chronological distortion). At the centre of the Ariadne / Theseus section of 64, the Catullan Ariadne is given a voice to express her anxiety

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<sup>6</sup> Michael J. Putnam, "The Art of Catullus 64," HSCP 65 (1961): 179. See also, P.Y. Forsyth, "Catullus: the Mythic Persona," Latomus 35 (1976): 560.

<sup>7</sup> See the on-going discussion between T.P. Wiseman, "Catullus' Iacchus and Ariadne," LCM 2 (1977): 177-189 and G. Giangrande, "Catullus 64," LCM 2 (1977): 229-231, T.P. Wiseman, "Catullus 64 again," LCM 3 (1978): 21-22.

and despair at Theseus' departure (64.132-163), her helplessness (64.164-191) and her final demands for vengeance (64.192-250). However, the story of the annual sacrifice of Athenian youths to the Minotaur, Theseus' determination to end it, his arrival in Crete, Ariadne's love and help, Theseus' conquering of the Minotaur and their resulting escape are all described by the voice of the poet (64.76-131). Even Ariadne's discovery that Theseus has left her is recounted by the poet (64.52-75). It is not until Ariadne utters her last laments (extremis ... querellis [64.130]) that we actually hear her own words:

'sicine me patriis auectam, perfide, ab aris,  
 perfide, deserto liquisti in litore, Theseu?  
 sicine discedens neglecto numine diuum  
 immemor a! deuota domum peiuria portas?  
 nullane res potuit crudelis flectere mentis  
 consilium? tibi nulla fuit clementia praesto,  
 immite ut nostri uellet miserescere pectus?

(64.132-138)

In the first two verses of her speech, Catullus' Ariadne has twice referred to Theseus as perfidus (64.131,132), a term which she does not use at all in Heroides X.<sup>8</sup> She reveals that Theseus had promised her conubia laeta (64.141) and optatos hymenaeos (64.141), and attributes Theseus' salvation to her own efforts (64.149-151). The

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<sup>8</sup> This differs strongly from characters such as Medea, who calls Jason scelerate (Her. XII.19), perfide (Her. XII.37), infido (Her. XII.72) and improbe (Her. XII.204) and Dido, who calls Aeneas perfide (Her. VII.79; 118) and scelerate (Her. VII.133).

recollection of Theseus' salvation turns Ariadne's thoughts to her own salvation, and she ponders the fate awaiting her on deserted Dia:

pro quo dilaceranda feris dabor alitibusque  
praeda, neque iniacta tumulabor mortua terra.

(64.152-153)

Catullus' Ariadne fears such a savage death and counts it as an unwonted reward for all the sacrifices she has made. She expresses her anger by comparing Theseus' nature to those very wild animals which she fears. She scathingly suggests that Theseus was born to a lioness under a desert rock or to the waves of the sea (64.154-157) since, like them, he is so cruel and unyielding. She cries that even if it shamed him to bring her home as a bride, she would willingly have served as a slave in his household:

si tibi no cordi fuerant conubia nostra,  
saeua quod horrebas prisca praecepta parentis,  
attamen in vestras potuisti ducere sedes,  
quae tibi iucundo famularer serua labore,  
candida permulcens liquidis uestigia lymphis,  
purpureaue tuum consternens ueste cubile.

(64.158-163)

Catullus' Ariadne has little pride with respect to her relationship with Theseus. She is willing to accept any position, any situation, as long as it ensures proximity to Theseus. The duties of a female slave in a household were often euphemistically described as caring for the master's bedchamber. A more intimate relationship is usually

understood<sup>9</sup> and it seems to be this relationship which Catullus' Ariadne is willing to accept, indeed, to accept wholeheartedly. This emphasizes all the more Ariadne's devotion and submission to Theseus.<sup>10</sup>

Catullus' Ariadne sees the very winds as opposed to her cause (Cat. 64.64-66). She wishes that Theseus had never come to Crete (Cat. 64.171-176), and despairs that she has no one to turn to for help and nowhere to go, for she cannot possibly return after having betrayed father and country. (Cat. 64.187-188). Catullus' Ariadne finds herself at a point of no return, both literally and figuratively. Like Dido in Vergil's Aeneid (IV.607-629), Ariadne demands vengeance from the gods for what she has suffered:

quae quoniam uerae nascuntur pectore ab imo,  
uos nolite pati nostrum uanescere luctum,  
sed quali solam Theseus me mente reliquit,  
tali mente, deae, funestet seque suosque.

(64.198-201)

At this point in Catullus' poem, Ariadne's story is interrupted by that of Theseus. The final meeting of father and son is described, in which Theseus' father urged him to change the colour of his sails if he returned successful to Athens. Theseus forgot his father's charges and thus unwittingly caused his father's death. He

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<sup>9</sup> Justin Glenn, "Ariadne's Daydream (Cat. 64.158-63)," CJ 75 (1980-1981): 111.

<sup>10</sup> Putnam, 178.

returned to his home mourning his father's death, and experiencing the same grief which he had caused Ariadne (64.246-248). The scene then shifts back to the island of Dia where Dionysus approaches Ariadne, inflamed with love for her (Cat. 64.251-253). However, instead of continuing to highlight the meeting between Dionysus and Ariadne, Catullus returns to the story of the marriage of Peleus and Thetis with which the whole poem began.

Apart from more detailed points of comparison which will be discussed later, a main point of difference between the two stories of Ariadne rests in the aims of the respective poets. Where Catullus strives to present his interpretation of two marriages in his poem, Ovid aims at an examination of Ariadne's mental turmoil after Theseus' abandonment and her attempts to convince Theseus to return for her. Wiseman maintains that there are striking cross-references in poem 64 to some of Catullus' personal poems, as well as parallels between 64 and 63 (Attis).<sup>11</sup> He sees 64 as a generally unhappy poem reflecting Catullus' own unhappiness, especially in his relationship to Lesbia.<sup>12</sup> Forsyth expresses a similar view regarding Catullus' affair

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<sup>11</sup> T. P. Wiseman, "Catullus' Iacchus and Ariadne," *LCM* 2 (1977): 177. Wiseman compares 64.59-69, 132-8 and poem 30; 64.157 and poem 60; 64.139-142 and poem 70; 64.190f. and poem 76. Comparisons between 64 and 63 include 64.179 and 63.16; 64.251 and 63.25; 64.127-30 and 63.47.9.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

with Lesbia.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, Giangrande asserts that Catullus celebrates the martial age through the figure of Achilles, that the story of Peleus and Thetis has a typical "happy ending", and that the coverlet depicting the story of Ariadne and Theseus is "unclouded by disaster."<sup>14</sup> Jacobson takes a simpler stand and concludes that

Catullus is concerned with the myth as a paradigm of lover's betrayal: he is concerned with the central fact of Ariadne's abandonment by Theseus, not with the peripheral adjuncts to this fact. She is betrayed and everything about her reflects this betrayal.<sup>15</sup>

In this respect, Ariadne becomes merely a stock character, distinguished from others by the detail of Catullus' depiction, but expressing little personal characterization. Ariadne is important for the effects Catullus can create with her, for the manner in which he can portray her as the abandoned woman, and for the possibilities of contrast which he can create between the stories of Peleus and Thetis and Theseus and Ariadne. This is, perhaps, why so little of the story is heard from Ariadne's own lips. When she laments, she utters the expected and traditional words of anger and despair and her desire for vengeance is quickly granted. The overall emphasis is on the sad vignette which Ariadne creates, alternately climbing the

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<sup>13</sup> Forsyth, 561-562.

<sup>14</sup> G. Giangrande, "Catullus 64," LCM 2 (1977): 229-230.

<sup>15</sup> Jacobson, 221.

rugged mountains and gazing out to sea (Cat. 64.126-7) or running to meet the waves of the sea (Cat. 64.128). Although Catullus gives definite clues to Ariadne's emotional state (64.52-57;250), it is mainly by means of her soliloquy (64.132-201) that she expresses her thoughts. Ariadne's story as a whole is frequently interrupted by flashbacks (64.76-115;212-237), projections (64.207-211; 238-248;249-264) and the poet's own comments (64.58-75; 116-131). Thus Catullus presents a series of vignettes not necessarily in chronological order, although they are all interconnected. The Ariadne-Theseus story is intended as a foil to the Peleus-Thetis story and not as an independent, isolated whole.

In contrast to Catullus 64, Ovid's Heroides X stands as an independent work and therefore claims its interpretation from what occurs in the letter itself. It is not contrasted, paralleled or inserted into another tale, as in Catullus 64, and therefore it ultimately projects a coherent unity. Thus the question of the optimism or pessimism of the Ariadne episode within the framework of the story of Peleus and Thetis is absent. Ovid's Ariadne (or her situation) can only be interpreted as optimistic or pessimistic depending upon her relationship to Theseus and to her environment. The manner in which each poet chose to present the Ariadne story therefore differs greatly.

This, in turn, brings to light another fundamental difference between the two poets. As with Heroides VII and XII, the primary intent of the writer is to influence her beloved to return. Catullus' Ariadne does not ask Theseus to come back to her. She merely curses him for his forgetfulness of her past merits (64.134-157) and rhetorically asks where she should go now (64.177-183). Ovid's Ariadne wants Theseus to return to her and she emphasizes this by the number of times she makes her request, both to Theseus himself and to her bed (revertere [Her. X.35]; flecte ratem [Her. X.36,105]; redde duos [Her. X.56]; relabere [Her. X.49]). Thus although there are significant parallels in the two depictions of Ariadne, the fundamental differences of intent of each poem must also colour their respective interpretations.

Heroides X: Section II: Lines 1-6:

Ariadne's Reason for Writing

In the opening lines of Heroides X,<sup>16</sup> Ariadne

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<sup>16</sup> Heinrich Dörrie's edition (1971) adds these two initial verses:

Illa relicta feris etiam nunc, improbe Theseu  
vivit. Et haec aequa mente tulisse velis?

However, most commentators hold that this distich is interpolated in place of an original which has since been lost. Although Her. X is found in the oldest surviving MS, (Paris lat. 8242), this distich is found only in early printed editions. W. Schmitz-Cronenbroeck holds that the

introduces two ideas, or rather two fears, which run like threads through her letter. The first is found in her statement that she has found wild beasts more gentle than Theseus:

Mitius inveni quam te genus omne ferarum:

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original introduction are lines 3-4, since they contain the usual identification of addressor and addressee. The above distich he considers an interpolation, and terms the pentameter "krass". He suggests that Her. IV.116 provided the model for the first two lines of Her. X (Schmitz-Cronenbroeck, 8-9). H. Vahlen posits the loss of an introductory distich and terms the present interpolated distich "schwächlich and wenig geschickt." He also argues against the transition in the cod. Guelferbytanus of 1-2 to a position after 5-6 as this disturbs the continuity and no real reason is given for the transition (Vahlen, 25-26). Kirfel also suggests Her. IV.116 as a model for the interpolation and rejects the above interpolation as unclear. He finds the use of mens in the pentameter line difficult to understand and reports parallel usages in two other interpolated distichs (Her. VI and Her. IX). This suggests to Kirfel that all three distichs stem from one single interpolator (Kirfel, 69-70). As well, Kirfel prefers lines 3-4 as an introductory distich, citing Ovid's customary style and the weak connection between 1-2 and 2-3 (E.-A. Kirfel, 70). However, Kirfel seems to ignore Ovid's delight in beginning his letters sharply and with a distich designed to attract immediate attention, as in Her. XII. Kirfel sees a lack of clarity in the absence of a dependent genitive noun in non ulli. I do not find this a problem and agree with A. Palmer in his interpretation of non ulli ferae (Palmer, 374). Given Ariadne's later emphasis on Theseus' hardness (Her. X.107-110;132), this distich introduces one of Ariadne's repeated complaints and sets the stage for the further development of this theme. For further discussion see W. Schmitz-Cronenbroeck, "Die Anfänge der Heroiden des Ovids" (Ph.D. diss., University of Cologne, 1937), 8-9; H. Vahlen, Über die Anfänge der Heroiden des Ovid (Berlin: Abhdlg. d. Berl. Akad., 1881), 25-6; E.-A. Kirfel, Untersuchungen zur Briefform der Heroides Ovids Noctes Romanae, vol. 11 (Bern: Verlag Paul Haupt, 1969), 69-71; A. Palmer, ed., P. Ovidi Nasonis Heroides with the Greek Translation of Planudes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898; reprint, Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967), 374.

Credita non ulli quam tibi peius eram.

(Her. X.1-2)

While bluntly telling Theseus exactly what she thinks of him, by the end of the letter these lines will have an ironic tinge because the animals which Ariadne terms gentler than Theseus are the same ones she fears will cause her death! Ariadne demonstrates a strong fear of wild beasts at several instances in her letter. That she now terms them gentler than Theseus indicates just how cruelly she feels Theseus has treated her. However, it is her great fear of the ferae which will contribute to her irrationality and will be expressed in her exaggeration of her situation and the dangers which may face her. Although she might write that she could not have suffered worse than to have entrusted herself to Theseus rather than to the animals, these are only bold words. Emotions and reality are at variance with each other.

The second fear which is repeated in the letter is connected with sleep:

In quo me somnusque meus male prodidit et tu  
Per facinus somnis insidiate meis.

(Her. X.5-6)<sup>17</sup>

The repetition of somnus in connection with prodidit and

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<sup>17</sup> J.N. Anderson suggests a comparison between Her. X.5 and Catullus 64.56 in his "On the Sources of Ovid's Heroides" (Ph.D. diss., John Hopkins University, 1896), 78. However, Catullus does not suggest the idea of betrayal which Ovid pinpoints with the use of prodidit and which emphasizes the personification of somnus.

insidiate signifies not only the destructive power sleep had for Ariadne. It is her sleep (somnusque meus) which betrayed her and this makes the betrayal all the more hurtful and cruel. Although the et tu at the end of line 5 sharply denotes Theseus' involvement, Ariadne considers her own sleep to be a major culprit. The abrupt et tu prevents Theseus from slipping away from his involvement in the affair. His guilt Ariadne impresses upon him in the last line of this section: "Per facinus somnis insidiate meis." (Her. X.6). Ariadne is not slow to accuse Theseus, but here the accusation is restricted to the charge of plotting against her (insidiate [Her. X.6]) -- there is no further accusation at this point. As an initial attempt to appeal to Theseus to come back, this emphasizes his guilt rather than an obligation to return. To mention Theseus' plotting would hardly melt Theseus' hardheartedness or appeal to his sense of honour. It is more likely to have initiated thoughts of guilt and shame. Ovid's Ariadne, as Catullus', is not slow to blame Theseus for her present predicament. Indeed, Ovid's description of Ariadne's predicament in the next lines continues her description of Theseus as a betrayer and increases Theseus' shame by emphasizing Ariadne's terror upon awakening and her desperate attempts to find him. At this point in her letter, Ariadne's intention seems merely to inflict shame.

Heroides X: Section III: Lines 7-58: Narratio

Part III is indeed a narratio for it recounts the events prior to the beginning of Ariadne's letter, specifically her discovery of Theseus' departure. The passage begins with the epic form of Tempus erat (Her. X.7)<sup>18</sup> and abruptly introduces a change in the mood and tenor of the letter. The scene becomes the still quietness of very early morning, and as Howard Jacobson comments,

the ambience is tuned to the events taking place: the quiet is sharpened by its being broken only by the plaint of birds; the coldness is crisp and emblematic, and the still-life is broken by the agitation of spargitur.<sup>19</sup>

Overt mention of Ariadne's anger at Theseus' betrayal and the deception of her sleep has disappeared. Ariadne has returned to the world of her memories, as if amazed that everything could be so quiet and calm in the face of the catastrophe which was overtaking to her. The birds, complaining in the branches, suggest the still quiet of early morning.<sup>20</sup> Ariadne's first attempts to reach Theseus are the casual efforts of one still warm and comfortable from a deep sleep and what Florence Verducci terms "the

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<sup>18</sup> Compare Ovid, Met. II.680;VI.587;X.448;XV.336.

<sup>19</sup> Jacobson, 219.

<sup>20</sup> Compare the same effect of birds in Horace, Epodes II.26, Ovid, Amores III.1.4.

pleasures of the night."<sup>21</sup> Jacobson interprets the lines clearly:

her (Ariadne's) ineffectual grasping for Theseus is vividly presented in a long frustrated sentence in which Thesea appears early, but manus is delayed to the end, leaving us, like Ariadne, waiting and waiting for the outcome.<sup>22</sup>

The outcome is a rather surprised and incredulous Nullus erat (Her. X.11), which stylistically echoes the Tempus erat at the beginning of this passage (Her. X.7). It also marks another change of tempo, as Ariadne becomes more desperate and more unbelieving in her attempts to find Theseus. The tempo becomes more abrupt until Ariadne discouragingly reaffirms her initial discovery: nullus erat (Her. X.12). Verducci terms Ariadne's actions, "a frantic sleepy groping," and "a travesty of the pathetic gesture,"<sup>23</sup> depicted by Catullus' Ariadne (64.127-9), which seems to ignore the incredulity inherent in the scene. If, as Verducci herself states, "Ariadne's hands reach for Theseus with a sleepy familiarity too domestic for

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<sup>21</sup> Florence Verducci, Ovid's Toyshop of the Heart: Epistulae Heroidum (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 250. Tib. I.9.56 offers a similar, although more forceful, use of languida. In the context of Her. X, this use of languida becomes a matter of reproach to Theseus—after a night spent with Ariadne, he nevertheless leaves her without a thought.

<sup>22</sup> Jacobson, 219.

<sup>23</sup> Verducci, 257.

romance,"<sup>24</sup> then this familiarity makes Theseus' absence more startling and unexpected. Ariadne is at this point still half-asleep and cannot and does not want to believe the message which her hands are giving her -- thus the repeated attempts, each time extending her reach. After the third attempt, fear brings her fully awake (Excussere metus somnum [Her. X.13]) and she realizes that Theseus is not beside her. She expresses her grief in a traditional fashion, by beating her breasts and tearing her hair (Her. X.15-16). Verducci comments that in elegy, the depiction of dishevelled women was often used to show that even in grief some women were still, sometimes even more, beautiful.<sup>25</sup> However, she sees in this action of Ariadne's an element of excess and Ariadne's reference to her hair (Her. X.16) reveals to Verducci "the self-concern of a posturing prima donna."<sup>26</sup> However, within twelve lines (5-16), Ariadne has mentioned somnus five times -- her description of her full awakening begins and ends with a reference to sleep. Thus it would seem that Ovid was attempting to emphasize Ariadne's rude awakening rather than her concern about her dress. The description of Ariadne's hair as turbida reflects her abrupt awakening, as

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 256.

<sup>25</sup> See for example, Amores I.7.11-18; Amores I.14.19-22.

<sup>26</sup> Verducci, 250.

well as her state of mind. As such, Ariadne's dishevelled hair is a mark of grief, much as is the beating of her breasts (Her. X.15), and suggests her vulnerability and defencelessness. The pathos of her situation is emphasized by her action of tearing at her hair and making it even more disheveled (rapta [Her. X.16]).

The account continues with another brief descriptive detail: Luna fuit (Her. X.17). Ariadne remembers small details only gradually and only as they reflect upon some further event. She remembers that there was a moon because it allowed her to make out her surroundings and therefore forced her to realize that she was alone:

Luna fuit; specto, siquid nisi litora cernam;  
Quod videant, oculi nil nisi litus habent.

(Her. X.17-18)<sup>27</sup>

The echo of nisi litora, nisi litus, is irrevocably final. Nevertheless, despite the barrenness of the shore, Ariadne continues her search for Theseus until the very rocks echo her calling (Her. X.19-24). Jacobson has pinpointed the sense of distance between her body and herself in Ariadne's account of her actions.<sup>28</sup> Each stage of her behaviour is expressed by various parts of her body acting as agents for her intellect: first her hands and arms (Her. X.11-

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<sup>27</sup> For the emphasis on Ariadne's solitary position see also Her. X.18 and Cat. 64.57; Tristia III.471; III.479.

<sup>28</sup> Jacobson, 223.

12), then her legs (Her. X.13-14), her chest, hands, and hair (Her. X.15-16), her eyes (Her. X.17-18) and lastly her feet (Her. X.19-20). These "agents" of Ariadne's have understood Theseus' departure long before her own mind has accepted it. This is perhaps why she calls her feet puellares (Her. X.20), which Verducci finds mannered, foolish and affected.<sup>29</sup> Ariadne sees her feet almost as if they belong to someone else. She obviously feels little connection to them, only that they look like a young girl's feet when she notices that they are slowed down by the sand. It would indeed be mannered to describe one's own feet as puellares, as Verducci suggests, but Ariadne scarcely recognizes them as belonging to her at all. As well, the term puellares is indicative of Ariadne's character. Because she is a young girl, an ingenue, she is totally unprepared for the situation in which she finds herself. The term puellares emphasizes her youth and inexperience and is designed to remind Theseus of this fact and therefore of her dependence on him. Thus it is in no way remarkable or out of character that she identifies her feet for what they are. Furthermore, her running hither and thither on the beach (Her. X.19) demonstrates that she is on the border of despair and is reacting to half-formed impulses. As she writes her letter, she remembers that she

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<sup>29</sup> Verducci, 259. On the other hand, Howard Jacobson sees puellares as pleading and pathetic (Jacobson, 220).

could so barely control her rational thought and now interprets the echoing of her voice as the attempt by nature to help her in her search:

Interea toto clamanti litore 'Theseu':  
 Reddebant nomen concava saxa tuum,  
 Et quotiens ego te, totiens locus ipse vocabat:  
 Ipse locus miserae ferre volebat opem.

(Her. X.21-24)

If even nature helps Ariadne to call Theseus, this is surely a further reproach to him. As with the repetition of nisi litora, nisi litus in lines 17-18, the repetition of locus ipse, Ipse locus (Her. X.23-24) emphasizes Ariadne's surroundings and thus her separation from Theseus. With this comes a sense of desolation which will work upon Ariadne's consciousness and eventually cause her to exaggerate her terrors.

As with the time and the moon, another phenomenon intrudes upon Ariadne's consciousness: Mons fuit (Her. X.25). In her desperate search to see Theseus, it appears as another indication of nature's attempt to help. From its summit, she may at last catch a glimpse of her beloved (Her. X.25-28).<sup>30</sup> Each phrase, Tempus erat (Her. X.7), Nullus erat (Her. X.11), Luna fuit, (Her. X.17) and Mons fuit (Her. X.25) indicates a separate stage in Ariadne's

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<sup>30</sup> Ovid's description of the mountain is more descriptive than Catullus' (64.126). J.N. Anderson also suggests Her. II.121;V.61-2, which also emphasize Ovid's talent for painting in the details of his scenes (Anderson, 80).

awareness of her surroundings. As each element intrudes upon her consciousness, she discovers an additional factor of her abandonment. First (line 7ff.), the desire to find Theseus, then (11ff.) the realization that he is not present, next (line 17ff.) the discovery that he is nowhere nearby, and finally (line 25ff.), the shattering certainty that Theseus has actually left her behind. It is at this point that Ariadne's interpretation of her surroundings and the forces of nature begins to change.

The sequence of realization serves to highlight the passage of time, as Ariadne's perceptions of her surroundings grow clearer. First, she sees nothing, but only hears the birds (7ff.). Next, as her eyes adjust to the light, she is able to discern the shore (17ff.), then she sees a hill with bushes (25ff.). Finally, she catches sight of the sails of Theseus' ship (30ff.). By now it is probably early morning, the sun having just risen.

Ariadne changes from viewing nature as an aid in her distress, to seeing it as the opposition. She pictures herself used by the winds and then suddenly finds herself a part of this very cruel nature:<sup>31</sup>

Inde ego, man ventis quoque sum crudelibus usa,  
Vidi praecipiti carbasa tenta noto:  
Aut vidi aut tamquam quae me vidisse putarem -

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<sup>31</sup> Compare Ovid's description of Theseus' departure (Her. X.30) and Cat. 64.53; Ariadne's feeling of disbelief (Her. X.31) and Cat. 64.55.

Frigidior glacie semianimisque fui.

(Her. X.29-32)

While Schmidt suggests that Ariadne's ill-usage by the winds arouses pity,<sup>32</sup> Jacobson sees it as an explicit, even too obvious, technique.<sup>33</sup> The transition on the part of nature from friend to enemy in Ariadne's eyes is indeed swift, and is an indication of her continuing mental turmoil. She reacts to circumstances as they occur and as the wind is filling Theseus' sails and bearing him away from her, she views it as an enemy at that particular moment. If the wind were driving Theseus towards her, she would then probably regard it as an ally. Thus Ovid borrows the elegiac topos that the winds carry away a lover's words, but gives it more material substance by indicating that the winds may carry away the lover himself.<sup>34</sup>

The sudden realization of Theseus' departure sends a cold chill through Ariadne and immediately deprives her of all power of speech -- she is momentarily struck dumb (Her. X.32-3), caught between life and death. However, her unwillingness to accept that Theseus has actually abandoned her gives her the strength to find her voice again (just as

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<sup>32</sup> E.A. Schmidt, "Ariadne bei Catull und Ovid," Gymnasium 74 (1967): 496.

<sup>33</sup> Jacobson, 220.

<sup>34</sup> Compare Ovid, Am. I.4.11f., A.A. I.388; Cat. 30.10; 64.59, 142; 65.17.

it gave her strength to climb the mountain [Her. X.27]):

Nec languere diu patitur dolor; excitor illo,  
Excitor et summa Thesea voce voco.

(Her. X.33-34)

Instead of discouraging her, Ariadne's grief enjoins her to call for Theseus at the top of her voice (summa voce), as if he could still hear her and be affected by her words. Ariadne is still under the illusion that Theseus would come back to her, if only she could attract his attention and make him aware of his mistake.

As Ariadne relates her words to Theseus (Her. X.35-36), Jacobson sees a significant amount of role - playing, that is, Ariadne tends to present herself as the "deserted woman," rather than actually being a deserted woman:

We sense Ariadne watching, indeed, directing herself, as if she becomes the epic poet, standing beyond, yet intensely interested in, and, after all, controlling the mythical character.<sup>35</sup>

Jacobson's sense of role-playing overlooks the passage of time between the events which Ariadne describes and the actual writing of the letter. This time-lapse, however slight, creates a certain distance between Ariadne's shock at Theseus' departure and her emotions as she writes her letter. The sense that she is playing a role is emphasized particularly since Ovid chose to have Ariadne repeat her exact words, instead of merely offering a paraphrase. This

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<sup>35</sup> Jacobson, 224.

is true of several of the heroines in the Heroides, who report portions of their speeches directly: Dido reports Sychaeus' words (Her. VII.102) and Medea retells the words of Jason's promises to her (Her. XII.72-88). However, this role-playing need not affect the sincerity of Ariadne's emotions, nor is it anything new or unusual for Ovid's characters. Her actions appear as if they belong to the theater merely because they do not seem the actions of everyday life. Obviously, Ariadne's situation is far from ordinary and therefore lends itself to these larger than life attitudes.

Because Verducci also finds fault with this scene, regarding Ariadne's words as a challenge to the romantic mood, she interprets Ariadne's diction as inappropriate and comic. She concludes:

No amount of editorial hedging mitigates the fact that after cursing Theseus like a proper Plautine shrew, Ariadne says, "Turn your ship! She is missing her full crew".<sup>36</sup>

However, the point seems to be that Ariadne has not yet properly cursed Theseus. The scelerate (Her. X.35) is the first term of abuse which she directs towards Theseus. As well, Ovid's Ariadne at this point has accused Theseus of nothing else except plotting against her. Thus her scelerate is only mildly perjorative. It is an expression

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<sup>36</sup> Verducci, 260.

of anger and frustration rather than vilification.<sup>37</sup> This abuse is repeated only in one other instance, when she calls Theseus improbe (Her. X.77). Plautine shrews do not usually curtail their vocabulary or their curses so drastically. As well, Ariadne has not yet realized that Theseus has no intention of coming back for her. It is not until line 43 that Ariadne finally weeps in complete despair (tum denique fleui) and begins to understand that Theseus is truly not returning. When Ariadne curses Theseus in line 35, it is because he has suddenly left her (perhaps to return), not because he has abandoned her completely. Total desertion would surely require more intense and repeated maledictions. Her subsequent resort to beating her breasts serves as a further indication of her increasing grief, as well as adding volume (replebam) to the sound of her voice.<sup>38</sup>

Unlike her Catullan counterpart, the Ovidian Ariadne at least shows some initiative. Once it occurs to her that Theseus is too far away to hear her she attempts to attract his attention by signalling:

Si non audires, ut saltem cernere posses,  
Iactatae late signa dedere manus:  
Candidaque inposui longae velamina virgae,

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<sup>37</sup> Compare Medea's use of scelerate (Her. XII.19) towards Jason, Dido's towards Aeneas (Her. VII.133).

<sup>38</sup> For the custom of beating one's breasts in grief see Cat. 64.273; Ovid, Met. IV.554;VI.532;XI.709; for the custome of crying/howling and beating one's breasts as a sign of grief see Vergil, Aen. II.487-8;XII.607.

Scilicet oblitos admonitura mei.

(Her. X.39-42)

Ariadne's whole purpose is to draw Theseus' notice back to herself and her desolate position. She still believes that Theseus will return, if only she can make him aware of the fact that she has been left behind. All her actions, particularly that of signalling, suggest that the Ovidian Ariadne is nothing if not resourceful. Her actions may prove to be useless, but they are at least real attempts to extricate herself from her present calamity. Ovid's Ariadne has none of the helplessness of Catullus' Ariadne. She does not succumb quickly to complete hopelessness. Although fearful and anxious about Theseus' departure, she is able to maintain some vestige of self-control and to devise means of helping herself. At the same time, she is giving Theseus a ready excuse for his desertion of her, i.e., that he was unaware that he had left her. The excuse is an implausible one, to be sure, but it demonstrates that Ariadne is anxious for Theseus' return, even after she has sensed his departure. The letter is, after all, written to plead with him to come back. She has cursed Theseus for leaving without her, but the only complaint (as opposed to the expression of anger, scelerate [Her. X.35]) Ariadne has at this moment concerns Theseus' forgetfulness (oblitos

Her. X.42).<sup>39</sup>

When even signalling produces no result, Ariadne finally succumbs to tears (Her. X.43-46). The disappearance of Theseus' sails removes the only other sign of a human presence within Ariadne's sight. Complete isolation and loneliness engulfs her and she becomes truly sola. She is now left alone on an island lacking any sign of human habitation and has just lost sight of the last speck of Theseus' sail (Her. X.43). The physical loneliness is now joined to her mental loneliness -- she is far from the spiritual comfort of her father and brother because of her own act of betrayal. Unlike Catullus' Ariadne (64.132ff.), Ovid's Ariadne, overwhelmed by her total isolation, cannot immediately turn to words for solace. Rather, she can only wander about aimlessly:

Aut ego diffusis erravi sola capillis,  
 Qualis ab Ogygio concita Baccha deo;  
 Aut mare prospiciens in saxo frigida sedi,  
 Quamque lapis sedes, tam lapis ipsa fui.

(Her. X.47-50)

Howard Jacobson suggests that Ariadne undergoes a complete transformation and becomes a piece of the physical landscape - the human and non-human merge (tam lapis ipsa

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<sup>39</sup> Catullus uses the term immemor (64.58, 123) and his Ariadne calls Theseus perfide (64.154, 133), a term of strong reproach.

fui [Her. X.50]).<sup>40</sup> However, this transformation occurs in two parts which reflect Ariadne's state of mind. Firstly, she is either frantic and distracted, which causes her to run about like a Bacchante (Her. X.47-48), or she reverts to the hopelessness she felt after Theseus' failure to notice her signalling and can only sit numbly on a rock (Her. X.49-50). These comparisons have little in common with Catullus' (64.61-62). Catullus' Bacchante is a more composed, static statue, while Ovid's experiences the traditional initial Bacchic frenzy before the traditional mental and physical exhaustion takes its place.<sup>41</sup> The repetition of lapis (Her. X.50) illustrates how senseless Ariadne had become and how utterly hopeless.<sup>42</sup> Eventually, Ariadne seems to gather up enough strength to return to the bed<sup>43</sup> in which she and Theseus had spent the night:

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<sup>40</sup> Jacobson, 223. J.N. Anderson and James Hutton agree that Ovid intentionally corrected Catullus by dividing his comparison of 64.60-2 into two distinct ones. Hutton suggests that Ovid was perhaps motivated because 1) Catullus' Bacchic expression was too Catullan for Ovid and 2) while the figure might possibly be acceptable to a narrative, it was unsuitable for self-description as in Heroides X. (Anderson, 81. James Hutton, "Catullus and Ovid," CW 36 (1943): 245.)

<sup>41</sup> Compare the account of the actions of the women in Euripides' Bacchae (683f.) who, after being driven in a frenzy through the mountains, sink to the ground in exhaustion.

<sup>42</sup> Anderson, 82, offers Aen. VI.469, Met. XIII.539; Medea 28; Amores I.7.51; Met. III.419 for the adoption of the inanimate nature of a rock by a human being.

<sup>43</sup> Verducci argues that Ariadne's appeal to her bed reduces the convention to foolish absurdity (Verducci, 263). She suggests that Ariadne's direct rather than

Saepe torum repeto, qui nos acceperat ambos,  
 Sed non acceptos exhibiturus erat,  
 Et tua, quae possum, pro te vestigia tango,  
 Strataque, quae membris intepuere tuis.

(Her. X.51-54)

Her repeated return to this bed suggests that Ariadne is still very much in a daze and has not fully grasped the reality of Theseus' departure. She may even half-expect to find Theseus in the bed again, as if the recent events had only been a bad dream. Her "bed" is the only visible evidence of her affair with Theseus which remains. Unfortunately for Ariadne, as Schmidt comments,

Ebenso ist das leere Lager die immer neue Bestätigung der Verlassenheit (v.51-58). Es ist das Sinnbild der zerstörten Gemeinsamkeit, wie es bei Catull das gebrochene Eheversprechen war.<sup>44</sup>

The realization of abandonment causes Ariadne to curse the bed itself and to vent her anger on its immovable existence:

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indirect speech (Her. X.56ff.) strains our tolerance for the convention because of the prosaic nature of Ariadne's language. This seems to ignore the mental turmoil which Ovid's Ariadne expresses at this point. She can hardly be expected to discourse in perfect, dramatic prose as Verducci seems to expect. Unlike her counterparts from tragedy (Aeschylus, Agamemnon 410-11; Euripides, Alcestis, 175-188; Sophocles, Trachiniae 912-930), the Ariadne of Heroides X is a simple girl who is thrust into a situation beyond her experience and uses ordinary, everyday language to try to explain or lament it. She returns to her "bed"-which probably merely indicates the place where she and Theseus spent the night -- in disbelief, as if to make sure that she had actually spent the night with Theseus on the island and that she had not imagined the whole affair.

<sup>44</sup> Schmidt, 496.

Incumbo lacrimisque toro manante profusis  
 'Pressimus' exclamo 'te duo: redde duos!  
 Venimus huc ambo: cur non discedimus ambo?  
 Perfide, pars nostri, lectule, maior ubi est?'

(Her. X.55-58)

It is perhaps significant that Ariadne curses the bed and calls it perfidus, not Theseus. Up to this point, Ariadne has not mentioned the promises which Theseus may or may not have spoken to her. She is completely silent about whether he promised marriage. Catullus' Ariadne, after cursing Theseus for his faithlessness, complains that the winds have carried away all of Theseus' promises (Cat.64.139-142). Not so Ovid's Ariadne. Theseus remains almost completely blameless, it is the bed which suffers the full brunt of Ariadne's accusations -- Theseus has so far only been charged with forgetfulness.

Heroides X: Section IV: Lines 59-78: Ariadne's Distress

Once Ariadne has realized that she is indeed alone, her thoughts turn naturally to the difficulties of her position. Like Medea, Ariadne has no one to turn to and nowhere to go: returning to her home is impossible due to her betrayal of her father. Indeed, her position is even worse than Medea's because she can find no sign of human habitation on her island:

Quid faciam? quo sola ferar? vacat insula cultu:  
 Non hominum video, non ego facta boum.  
 Omne latus terrae cingit mare; navita nusquam,

Nulla per ambiguas puppis itura vias.  
 Finge dari comitesque mihi ventosque ratemque:  
 Quid sequar? accessus terra paterna negat.

(Her. X.59-64)<sup>45</sup>

Jacobson points to the succession of negatives in this passage (non ... non ... nusquam ... nulla) as an indication of "the desolation of the all-embracing sea ... echoed in the hollow reverberation of the string of negatives."<sup>46</sup> Ariadne is completely and totally sola and as Schmidt suggests,

Die ausweglose Härte der Lage wird  
 seelisch erfahren einerseits im sorgenden  
 Vorgriff auf die Zukunft und andererseits  
 im deutenden Rückgriff auf die Vergangenheit.<sup>47</sup>

Like Medea and Catullus' Ariadne, even if Ovid's Ariadne had the leave to depart her island (Her. X.63), she would still have nowhere to go (Her. X.64). Like Medea, Ariadne must face a life of exile (Her. X.65-66).<sup>48</sup> As she considers her future existence, Ariadne remembers her past life and the joy in her father and homeland which is now lost to her. Her betrayal of them strongly recalls that of

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<sup>45</sup> J.N. Anderson offers comparison between Her. X.60 and Cat. 64.168,184; Homer Od. 10.98. The connections with Georgics I.118 and Ap. Rh. IV.1282 seem however very slim (Anderson, 83).

<sup>46</sup> Jacobson, 219.

<sup>47</sup> Schmidt, 497.

<sup>48</sup> Compare Euripides Medea 255ff.

Medea, as they speak in similar terms of their deeds:<sup>49</sup>

At pater et tellus iusto regnata parenti  
 Proditae sunt factae, nomina cara, meo,  
 Cum tibi, ne victor tecto morerere recurvo,  
 Quae regerent passus, pro duce fila dedi,

(Her. X.69-72)

However it is not until about half-way through her letter that Ariadne begins to blame Theseus for her present position. She recognizes her own part in betraying her father (Her. X. 70), but attributes its initial cause to Theseus' promise:

'per ego ipsa pericula iuro,  
 Te fore, dum nostrum vivet uterque, meam.'

(Her. X.73-74)

Catullus centers his Ariadne's complaint on Theseus' faithlessness and the breaking of his promise of marriage:

at non haec quondam blanda promissa dedisti  
 uoce mihi, non haec miserae sperare iubebas,  
 sed conubia laeta, sed optatos hymenaeos,  
 quae cuncta aërii discerpunt irrita uenti.

(Cat. 64.139-142)

Ovid's Ariadne could depend on no such firm promise. Ovid's Theseus only promised ambiguously that Ariadne would be "his" ("Te fore, dum nostrum vivet uterque, meam." [Her. X.74]). Ariadne seems to be under the impression that she and Theseus have struck a bargain -- she gave him the thread (cum ... dedi [Her. X.71]) as he was promising (cum mihi dicebas [Her.X.73]) that they would belong to each

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<sup>49</sup> Compare Euripides' Medea 31;483;502;798;1032; also Her. XII.67-68;109-112, Met. VIII.113, Cat. 64.113-16.

other. She considers that she has fulfilled her part of the bargain, while he, in her view, has reneged on his. Despite the fact that their agreement was not a formal one, as were the agreements of Catullus' Ariadne or Ovid's Medea's with their respective men, the Ovidian Ariadne obviously considers it just as binding, in the same way that Dido felt her relationship to Aeneas was binding. Therefore, the fact that Ariadne and Theseus are not together Ariadne views as treason and she responds, admittedly with some exaggeration:

Vivimus, et non sum, Theseu, tua, si modo vivit  
Femina periuri fraude sepulta viri.

(Her. X.75-76)

Jacobson suggests that the vividness of Ariadne's description places her in a tomb;<sup>50</sup> however it might be more accurate to say that the vividness of Ariadne's imagination places her there. Ariadne looks upon her island as her tomb, as it means her death and allows no egress. She does not seem to feel very much guilt about her betrayal of her father and brother except that her betrayal has no significance without Theseus' presence. Thus she calls Theseus improbe (Her. X.77) because he did not keep up his part of their agreement. As Schmidt points out, Ariadne's death-wish (Her. X.77-78) concerns the time

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<sup>50</sup> Jacobson, 223.

after she had given her help to Theseus.<sup>51</sup> Thus she does not regret what she herself has done, but only its indirect result -- Theseus' faithlessness. If she had died along with her brother, Theseus' promise that they would be together while they were both alive would have been annulled and her death would have removed the necessity for Theseus to be faithful: "Esset, quam dederas, morte soluta fides" (Her. X.78).

Heroides X: Section V: Lines 79-110: Ariadne's Fears

As Ariadne herself says, she is concerned not only that there are still things to be endured (quae sum passura [Her. X.79]) but what these particular things may be (Her. X.79-80). She is not afraid of death as much as of the anxiety and tension of waiting for death to come. That this type of fear has already touched her is demonstrated by the list of potential dangers which begins this passage. She allows herself to imagine that the island is inhabited by every manner of wild beast and scares herself in the process:

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<sup>51</sup> Schmidt, 499, also demonstrates that in other letters, such as Her. II.59f. (Phyllis) and Her. XII.3-6 (Medea), the death-wish occurs before the first act which marks the beginning of ill-fortune. Both women wish that this first act and the subsequent ones had not occurred. Ariadne allows her initial aid to Theseus. She merely does not want to see his faithlessness made manifest. Compare also Her. X.77 and Cat.64.150;181 (Anderson, 86).

Iam iam venturos aut hac aut suspicor illac,  
 Qui lanient avido viscera dente, lupos;  
 Forsitan et fulvos tellus alat ista leones;  
 Quis scit, an et saevam tigrida Dia ferat?  
 Et freta dicuntur magnas expellere phocas:  
 Quis vetat et gladios per latus ire meum?

(Her. X.83-88)

The delaying of lupos until the end of the verse (Her. X.84) increase Ariadne's tension, almost as if she were deliberately trying to terrify herself by dwelling on the savageness of wolves. This technique is repeated in the following three lines, as the Ovidian Ariadne lists the dangers to be feared: leones (Her. X.85), tigrida (Her. X.86)<sup>52</sup> and phocas (Her. X.87). Each animal, except for leones, is described by a suitably horrific adjective or phrase (avido dente [Her. X.84], saevam [Her. X.86], magnas [Her. X.87]). Jacobson sees this as obvious rhetoric and gross exaggeration and says:

We would take refuge in the extremity of Ariadne's situation, but that is probably to avoid rather than to meet the difficulty.<sup>53</sup>

The difficulty may not be with Ariadne's situation, but

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<sup>52</sup> Line 86 presents certain textual problems, Alternatives have been presented by scholars for 1) tigrida: tigride or tigridas; 2) Dia: silva, illa, Naxus, intus, insula; 3) ferat: vacet, habet, alat, habent. See Palmer, apparatus criticus, for the relevant MSS. However, the point seems to be that Ariadne dreams up all the terrifying animals she knows, regardless of whether they exist on the island of Dia or not. Tigers follow naturally after wolves and lions. The mention of seals (Her. X.86) brings Ariadne back to her own situation, that is, that she is surrounded by the sea.

<sup>53</sup> Jacobson, 216.

rather with Ariadne's mind. There is no better way to scare oneself than to dwell upon the ramifications and possibilities of a situation, especially when that situation appears to be as hopeless as being abandoned on a seemingly deserted island. Ariadne's words here are rhetorical and exaggerated, calculated to penetrate Theseus' heart which she will later describe as silices and adamanta (Her. X.109-110). Her words are also the product of an anxious mind, largely the result of her own vivid imagination. She is alone and has no one to protect her either from man or beast (Her. X.88).

On the other hand, Ariadne realizes that she has not only to fear non-human threats, but human ones as well:

Quis vetat et gladios per latus ire meum?  
Tantum ne religer dura captiva catena,  
Neve traham serva grandia pensa manu,  
Cui pater est Minos, cui mater filia Phoebi,  
Quodque magis memini, quae tibi pacta fui.

(Her. X.88-92)

Unlike Catullus' Ariadne (64.158-163), Ovid's Ariadne rejects completely the idea of slavery, indeed it is one of her fears. Jacobson terms Ariadne's fear of pirates on her deserted island (Her. X.89-92) "irrational" and maintains that

even granting possibility of such an arrival, to complain about it when her major problem is the lack of any human being (as she herself says) is little short of ludicrous.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Jacobson, 217.

However, Ariadne is frightened. She cannot control her fear or her thoughts and this causes her mind to jump to extravagant fears. In her extremity, she sees the possibility of the appearance of savage beasts just as easily as that of threatening strangers. Thus although her fears may appear "irrational" to a calm mind, Ariadne is far from being calm -- her irrationality appears to her as completely rational. The choice of slavery over certain death seems little choice to Ariadne in her present frame of mind. She is proud of her lineage, as Jacobson scathingly points out,<sup>55</sup> but it is also part of her inheritance. To lose it would be to lose part of herself, besides the fact that she would be cast into chains as a slave which would be unbearable punishment for one brought up to be a princess. Ariadne would probably prefer death, as she writes that she fears not death but the delay of death (Her. X.82). Slavery would be equivalent for her to

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 217. Jacobson believes that Ovid's Ariadne puts too much emphasis on her lineage, considering her present circumstances. However, she is obviously impressed by her position in society, regardless of whether any society exists on Dia or not. She has not yet realized that she is no longer a part of society and that her position is therefore of little use to her. Her position in society also recalls that she considers herself betrothed to Theseus (pacta [Her. X.92]) and emphasizes the contrast between her present and past positions. This, in turn, may remind Theseus that he is responsible for the change and should therefore come back to rescue Ariadne.

slow death.<sup>56</sup> She had spent her life among preeminent people -- her father a king, her mother partly divine-- and had been "betrothed" (pacta Her. X.92)<sup>57</sup> to Theseus, himself the son of a king. She is not prepared to suffer the lowly status of a slave. Her status is one of the few bargaining tools that the Ovidian Ariadne feels she has at her disposal -- perhaps it might make Theseus pause if he were to realize that he was abandoning the daughter of a king and not just a commoner. Thus despite the irrationality of being afraid of becoming a slave instead of being afraid of dying while marooned on a desert island, it is still a real fear for Ariadne.

Ariadne has now so thoroughly frightened herself that she combines all her fears into one final group:

Si mare, si terras porrectaque litora vidi,  
 Multa mihi terrae, multa minantur aquae.  
 Caelum restabat: timeo simulacra deorum:  
 Destituor rapidis praeda cibusque feris.  
 Sive colunt habitantque viri, diffidimus illis:  
 Externos didici laesa timere viros.

(Her. X.93-98)

In essence, Ariadne expects threats from everyone and everything around her. Both the sea (mare) and the earth

<sup>56</sup> For an indication of the attitude of captured women towards slavery, see Euripides' tragedy The Trojan Women, 165-167; 170-175; 187-190; 190-197; 235-251; 278-291; 302-3; 346-7; 484-497; 657-664; 673-683.

<sup>57</sup> This contradicts lines 73-74, where the relationship between Ariadne and Theseus is described in more tenuous terms. The pacta is perhaps an addition on Ariadne's part -- it is how she understands their relationship rather than what was understood by Theseus.

(terras) have proven hostile to her, now only the sky remains to show its animosity towards her as well.

There has been considerable discussion among scholars concerning the meaning of timeo simulacra deorum (Her. X.95). None of the commentators have elucidated the question of what the simulacra actually are, but instead, have concentrated on the interpretation of the complete line. Stégen, Marg and Verducci seem to ignore the issue. Jacobson merely states: "...I readily admit that I do not understand the verse."<sup>58</sup> Palmer concludes that they are "probably phantoms, supposed divine, seen by Ariadne hovering in the air."<sup>59</sup> However, Ovid's Ariadne does not specifically say that she sees any phantoms hovering in the air -- Palmer's interpretation appears too definite -- but merely that she fears the simulacra deorum. Help may come from Lucretius, who describes simulacra as

quae, quasi membranae summo de corpore rerum  
dereptae, uolitant ultroque citroque per auras,  
atque eadem nobis vigilantibus obuia mentes  
terrificant atque in somnis, cum saepe figuras  
contuimur miras simulacraque luce carentum,

(DRN IV.31-35)

If there is a connection between Lucretius and Ovid's simulacra, it would suggest that Ariadne is afraid of the images or "films" -- to use Lucretian terminology-- (membranae [DNR IV.31]) which can be torn from the gods.

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<sup>58</sup> Jacobson, 227.

<sup>59</sup> Palmer, 378.

It is these simulacra which frighten Ariadne awake as well as asleep, as they fly ultroque citroque per auras (DNR IV.32). Vergil also describes the ability of simulacra to fly, as he adapts Lucretius DNR IV.1.123:

huc dona sacerdos  
cum tulit et caesarum ovium sub nocte silenti  
pellibus incubuit stratis somnosque petivit,  
multa modis simulacra videt volitantia miris  
et varias audit voces fruiturque deorum  
conloquio atque imis Acheronta adfatur Avernis.

(Aen. VII.86-91)

Although Vergil places his description of simulacra at night (sub nocte silenti [Aen. VII.90]), whereas Ovid's Ariadne fears her simulacra at daybreak, both establish a connection between simulacra and gods. The simulacra of the gods, because they are of a more insubstantial nature than other beings, are according to Lucretius,<sup>60</sup> only perceived in the mind. It is these simulacra which Ariadne fears. She has imagined the existence of wild beasts and in the same manner, imagines the intangible existence of the gods. In essence, the Ovidian Ariadne is saying that she is afraid of everything, from all areas of her present world -- land, sea and sky.

Stégen suggests that Ariadne, in her position, would normally have turned to the gods for help. However, since she abandoned her father to follow Theseus and killed her own brother, she fears the anger of the gods and

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<sup>60</sup> See Lucretius DNR V.146-149.

therefore says timeo simulacra deorum.<sup>61</sup> Marg has the same opinion, although he adds an element of irony to line 95, but also posits a lacuna between 95 and 96 to account for the abrupt transition of ideas between the two.<sup>62</sup> Verducci also supports this irony, for she maintains that Ariadne will be saved by these simulacra deorum which frighten her. She also maintains that,

Ovid, unlike Catullus, makes it patently clear that his Ariadne will find in Bacchus neither justification nor transcendental reward but, quite simply, a one-way ticket off scary Dia.<sup>63</sup>

However, there is no textual justification for citing Bacchus as one of the simulacra deorum apart from the traditions of the tale. There is also no reason to believe that Ovid will follow this tradition. Neither is it "patently clear" that Ariadne will find in Bacchus a means off the island of Dia. Rather, one might posit the opposite contention, as Bacchus himself does not figure in the whole of the letter. Even if this phrase pointed to the future arrival of Dionysus, the timeo would bode little good fortune for Dionysus. Ariadne would fear Dionysus just as much, if not more, than she fears the wild beasts.

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<sup>61</sup> G. Stégen, "Notes de Lecture 85. Ovide, Her., X, 94-95," Latomus 19 (1960): 360.

<sup>62</sup> W. Marg, "Ovid, Heroides 1, 95/96," Hermes 88 (1960): 505-506. Marg, like Verducci, posits Ariadne's eventual rescue by Bacchus.

<sup>63</sup> Verducci, 275.

Ariadne does not expect any salvation at all. Jacobson seems to come much closer to the point when he suggests that Ovid deliberately omitted even allusion to Bacchus because of his interest in keeping the frame of his poem narrow:

The sense of barrenness, the seemingly inevitable doom, the extremity of the situation and the hopelessness are the dynamic factors, the heart of the poem. Any sense of the arrival of Dionysus with concomitant wedding festivities (as in Catullus) would break the desired mood.<sup>64</sup>

Jacobson's interpretation supports Ariadne's despondent statement that she will become prey for wild animals.<sup>65</sup>

This despondency continues in the next two lines (Her. X.97-98) as Ariadne reveals her disenchantment with and distrust of men (externos ... viros [Her. X.98]). This is what Theseus has done to her. After his sudden and total betrayal, she now refuses to trust any other foreigner, even though her salvation might lie with them.

In the last twelve lines of this passage, Ariadne presents a very human wish that the events which led to her own personal catastrophe had not happened (Her. X.99-110).<sup>66</sup> For Ariadne, her catastrophe began with the death

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<sup>64</sup> Jacobson, 227.

<sup>65</sup> Catullus' Ariadne has the same fear: 64.152 (J.N. Anderson, 86).

<sup>66</sup> Compare Medea's wish, Her. XII.120f., Dido's Her. VII.91-92, Cat.64.171-176. The Nurse's opening speech in Euripides' Medea is also a good example.

of her brother Androgeos (Her. X.99) and was followed each year by the death of the youths from Athens (Her. X.99-100) and finally by the death of Ariadne's half-brother, the Minotaur (Her. X.101-102). Ariadne naturally regrets her part in Theseus' success (Her. X.103-104) and she bitterly comments that she is not surprised that Theseus was able to kill the Minotaur (Her. X.105-6), since his heart could not even be transfixed by ferrea cornu (Her. X.107). She accuses Theseus of having a heart so hard that it could have protected him against even the Minotaur (Her. X.107-110). Her thoughts are on her participation in the contest and Theseus' actions. Interestingly enough, she does not mention their love affair. Nor does she continue to list the sacrifices she has made on Theseus' behalf, as do heroines such as Medea and Dido.<sup>67</sup> All in all, the insult which Ariadne directs at Theseus seems rather light and hardly appropriate to the injury which he has made her suffer.

Heroides X: Section VI: Lines 111-128

Ariadne's Complaints against Nature

Instead of enlarging upon Theseus' perfidy, Ariadne prefers to challenge again the forces of sleep and the

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<sup>67</sup> See Medea, Her. XII.105f., 129f., 163-4, 199ff; Dido, Her. VII. 19-20, 68, 89-90, 149-150, 152.

winds for their role in her abandonment:

Crudeles somni, quid me tenuistis inertem?  
 Aut semel aeterna nocte premenda fui.  
 Vos quoque crudeles, venti, nimiumque parati,  
 Flaminaque in lacrimas officosa meas;

(Her. X.111-114)<sup>68</sup>

Ariadne has no qualms about complaining of sleep or the winds, for, as Jacobson comments,

The personification of the inanimate becomes virtually the acknowledgement of their reality and personal existence, such that Ariadne can readily address them.<sup>69</sup>

Despite the fact that Ariadne does accuse Theseus of his involvement in her misfortune (Her. X.5;35;76;115), she gives equal weight to her accusations against the forces of nature. Sleep still holds the first place among those charged. So too are the winds charged, who carried off Theseus' ships. Ariadne seems to use them to accustom herself to blaming Theseus. Each time she comes one step closer to openly and bitterly blaming him. At the beginning of her letter, the winds and sleep were to blame, Theseus' part was only briefly mentioned (Her. X.5-6; 29-30). Now, Ariadne is able to express her opinion more openly. Not only does she charge sleep and the winds, but also Theseus' pledge to her:

Dextera crudelis, quae me fratremque necavit,  
 Et data poscenti, nomen inane, fides.

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<sup>68</sup> Catullus 5.5-6 presents a similar idea of one long night for lovers.

<sup>69</sup> Jacobson, 221.

In me iurarunt somnus ventusque fidesque:  
 Proditum sum causis una puella tribus.

(Her. X.115-118)

Ariadne holds Theseus responsible not only for her brother's death, but also her own, presumably either her forthcoming physical death on the island or her spiritual death regarding her home and family. His right hand (dextera [Her. X.115]), the symbol of trust and commitment, becomes the symbol of Theseus' treachery. She recognizes that Theseus' promise (Her. X.73-74) was also an empty one (nomen inane [Her. X.116]). The repetition of fides (Her. X.116;117) and its final position in both lines demonstrate Ariadne's disenchantment with Theseus. She had given him her trust and he had abused it. In a rather fanciful picture, Ariadne sees herself as one poor little girl fighting hopelessly against three giants: somnus, ventus, and fides perfidia.

From here Ariadne jumps back to her death and the all-important rituals of burial which she will lack (Her. X.119-124). She assumes that her death is unavoidable (moritura [Her. X.119]), and concentrates instead on the disadvantages to dying in a foreign land, far from home and family (Her. X.119-122). (This supports the view that Dionysus has no real place in Ariadne's letter, as he would destroy the complete hopelessness of her situation.) However, Ovid's Ariadne never reaches the heights of passion of a Medea or a Dido or even the despair of a

Deianira. This is particularly evident in the last four lines of this passage (Her. X.125-128), as Ariadne pictures Theseus' triumphant return to Athens. At this point, one might expect Ariadne to rain down accusations and curses upon Theseus' head. Ovid's Ariadne shows herself to be very different from Catullus' Ariadne, as she does not demand vengeance for herself and punishment for Theseus (64.192-201). The whole passage is instead marked by a morbid interest on Ariadne's part in imagining what her fate might be. She allows her imagination free rein not only as she describes her own death without due rituals (Her. X.119-125), but also Theseus' triumphal return to Athens (Her. X.125-128). In contrast to Catullus, Ovid does not use Theseus' return as impetus for Ariadne's curse. Instead, Theseus' return and exploits become a tale of adventure, in which Ariadne herself figures as one of the foreign wonders. This is a reason for bitterness on Ariadne's part, but it does not lead her to curse Theseus.

Heroides X: Section VII: Lines 129-132

Castigation of Theseus

One of the few indications which Ariadne gives Theseus to tell him that he has injured her is found in this penultimate section. It begins with a rather bitter warning from Ariadne that Theseus should not forget to

include her in the list of his victories:

Me quoque narrato sola tellure relictam:  
Non ego sum titulis subripienda tuis.

(Her. X.129-130)

Throughout the listing of his adventures, Ariadne's anger has begun a slow crescendo. The conspicuous placing of me at the beginning of the first verse (Her. X.129) is balanced by the relictam at the end of the verse and emphasizes Ariadne's anger at her abandonment. The Ovidian Ariadne is particularly perturbed by the fact that she was abandoned on a deserted island (sola [Her. X.129]). She certainly feels her position is bad enough to warrant an outburst of anger:

Nec pater est Aegeus, nec tu Pittheidos Aethrae  
Filius: auctores saxa fretumque tui!

(Her. X.131-132)

This tradition of casting aspersions upon an ex-lover's birth seems overdue for Ariadne. She has previously chastized Theseus for having a heart of stone (Her. X.109-110), but it is when she contemplates Theseus' return to his family (Her. X.125) that she begins to deny his parentage. This is a particularly strong denigration, given Ariadne's view on her own parentage (Her. X.91). Once she envisages herself as one of Theseus' spoils, as incidental to the adventure, she begins to take real offence. The Ovidian Ariadne uses very little detail or imagination in her defamation, especially when compared

with Dido (Her. VII.37-40/Aeneid IV.365-7), or Catullus' Ariadne (64.154-157).<sup>70</sup> In this respect, Ovid's Ariadne lacks the fire and passion of her predecessors. She is angry, but not upset enough to free herself from all restraint and curse Theseus thoroughly. Although she has already accused Theseus of hardheartedness (Her. X.109-110), this second charge adds little more weight. The reason for her half-hearted efforts become clear in the last section of her letter.

Heroides X: Section VIII: Lines: 133-150: Cohortatio

After re-accusing Theseus of hardness, one half expects Ariadne to conclude with some destructive curse. Instead, she begins with a plea to the gods to enable Theseus to see her in his mind as she stands unmoving upon her wave-lashed rock:

Di facerent, ut me summa de puppe videres!  
 Movisset vultus maesta figura tuos.  
 Nunc quoque non oculis, sed, qua potes, aspice mente,  
 Haerentem scopulo, quem vaga pulsat aqua;  
 Aspice demissos lugentis more capillos,  
 Et tunicas lacrimis sicut ab imbre gravis.

(Her. X.133-138)

Ariadne feels that her only means of influencing Theseus to come back to her is to appeal to his pity.<sup>71</sup> Her only

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<sup>70</sup> See also Catullus 60 for a typical example.

<sup>71</sup> Schmidt, 498.

accusation was hardly strong enough to upset Theseus seriously and had been expressed in rather mild terms. Hence also the pathetic, exaggerated picture she presents of herself, immobile on a rock lashed with waves, her hair streaming down her back and her clothes drenched with spray.<sup>72</sup> Verducci faults this scene and claims,

The fiction of the epistolary form is nowhere else in Ovid's Heroides so transparently absurd as in this letter, and Ovid's picture of Ariadne's mode of composition is a mercilessly comic attack upon generic proprieties, including those of his own genus ignotum.<sup>73</sup>

The fiction of the epistolary form may indeed be more obvious in Ariadne's letter but this is not necessarily a corollary to a comic attack upon generic proprieties. It betrays rather Ovid's lack of concern about certain details of his craft. The letters of Dido, Medea and Deianira demonstrate that Ovid often wrote for dramatic effect (for instance, Dido writing to Aeneas with his sword on her lap, Her. VII.183-6), often to the detriment of plausibility. Also the drama of the letters is directed at the addressee, in an effort to make him change his mind and return to his beloved. The rhetoric, as here, may be exaggerated, but

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<sup>72</sup> J.N. Anderson, 88, suggests for comparison with Her. X.137, Cat. 64.63; Amores III.9.51; A.A. I.530; Tib. I.3.8. All these references purport to be true signs of grief and despair at the death of a loved one. However, Ariadne might be said to be grieving at the death of her love affair with Theseus.

<sup>73</sup> Verducci, 253.

this points to the desperation and hopelessness of the sender. One should therefore not be surprised if all the details are not quite correct.

Ovid expands the image of Ariadne's predicament in the following two verses:

Corpus, ut impulsae segetes aquilonibus, horret,  
Litteraque articulo pressa tremente labat.

(Her. X.139-140)

Jacobson points out that the combination of water (imbre) and wind (aquilonibus) "reflect (Ariadne's) major enemies, the sea which isolates and endangers her, the winds which carry her only hope away."<sup>74</sup> Ovid, through Ariadne, presents the pathetic picture of a dishevelled and soaking girl on a wave-lashed rock who gazes hopelessly at the point where her lover disappeared. This may be melodramatic and romantic, but it is also Ovidian and indicative of the personality of Ovid's young Ariadne. Throughout her letter she has shown a marked interest in her possible fate, almost to the exclusion of Theseus himself. Her attempts to catch sight of him fill the early lines of the letter. However, it is the animals and dangers which might threaten her in the future, not her more immediate difficulties, which hold her attention. Her death, not Theseus or his father's, is the subject of her imaginings. So too with the depiction of herself on the

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<sup>74</sup> Jacobson, 221.

rock. Not only does this serve to frighten Ariadne herself, but it is also designed to make Theseus realize the fate to which he has left her. This appeal to pity continues with the addition of an appeal to sympathy:

Non te per meritum, quoniam male cessit, adoro:  
 Debita sit facto gratia nulla meo,  
 Sed nec poena quidem: si non ego causa salutis,  
 Non tamen est, cur sis tu mihi causa necis.

(Her. X.141-144)

Unlike other heroines (Dido, Medea), Ariadne does not use her past deeds as a means to compel her lover to return.<sup>75</sup> Interestingly and pathetically enough, she admits quite without rancour that her help turned out badly (quoniam male cessit [Her. X.141]) and even more surprisingly, asks for no thanks for her efforts (Her. X.142). Nor does she appeal to their past love; she seems to base her reasoning that Theseus should come back and save her on the argument that even if she had not helped him that was no reason for him to kill her. Instead of exploiting her help, as Catullus' Ariadne does (64.157f.), Ovid's Ariadne seems to do the opposite, and thus barely mentions her services at all. When she does mention them, it is disparagingly, almost reassuring Theseus that he is as great a hero as he is assumed to be. She maintains her pathetic pose right up to the end of her letter, as she depicts herself

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<sup>75</sup> Ariadne has previously mentioned her past deeds as deserving of a reward only once and then only briefly (Her. X.124).

dramatically stretching out her arms to Theseus:

Has tibi plangendo lugubria pectora lassas,  
 Infelix tendo trans freta longa manus:  
 Hos tibi, qui superant, ostendo maesta capillos:  
 Per lacrimas oro, quas tua facta movent:  
 Flecte ratem, Theseu, versoque relabere velo!  
 Si prius occidero, tu tamen ossa feres.

(Her. X.145-150)

As Jacobson remarks, Ariadne's efforts to stretch her hands over the sea, demonstrate the futility of her endeavor.<sup>76</sup> Ovid is again aiming at effect, at emotion, at an appeal to pity. Thus Ariadne brings to Theseus' attention her hands, her breasts, her torn hair and her tears as overt and increasingly pathetic symbols of her grief and despair (Her. X.145-148). With these, Ariadne seeks to try to move Theseus to return to her. Unlike Ovid's Medea and Dido, Ovid's Ariadne does not seem to want her lover to return to her for the sake of what she has given up and suffered on his account, but because of pity at her sorrowful situation. She suppresses to a great extent her blame of Theseus for having abandoned her. Admittedly, she does express her anger (Her. X. 1-2;35-36;77-78;107-110;132), but her rage is not sustained. Her one and only concern is Theseus' return and thus she directs the whole of the letter to this purpose. Unlike Dido and Medea, Ariadne's isolation makes the return of her lover even more imperative. She has neither magical skills nor the support

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<sup>76</sup> Jacobson, 219.

of a sister to whom she may appeal. Her only means of salvation is an appeal to Theseus himself. If this should fail, she has no further recourse. Her only consolation then seems to be that if she has died before Theseus reaches her, he will at least have her bones (Her. X.150). Ariadne never gives up the hope that Theseus will return, perhaps not for some time given her statement about her bones, but nevertheless eventually. This is perhaps the reason for her lack of overt anger and gentle treatment of Theseus' betrayal. She may not have wanted to place their reunion in jeopardy. Instead, she assures both herself and Theseus of his eventual return, and consoles them both with the melancholy thought that her bones will be waiting for him, even if she herself is gone. Of all the heroines of the Heroides, Ariadne has the most to gain in persuading her lover to return to her. Although she has betrayed her father and aided in the murdering of her brother, she has not herself committed murder (like Medea), she has not actively harmed her lover (like Deianira), nor has she fatally cursed him (like Dido). Unlike the other heroines, she appears as the truly innocent girl who is tricked by her lover into betraying her family. There is no suggestion of guile in Ariadne's words -- exaggeration and "dramatics" are certainly present and are additional indications of her youth and inexperience.

Heroides X: Section IX: Conclusion

The Nature of Ariadne's Character

What becomes clear from the outset is that Ovid's Ariadne has very little to do with Catullus' Ariadne. She appears rather as a woman who is more prey to her imagination, whether it results in self-induced fear, self-pity or dramatic melancholy. She never uses her love for Theseus as an argument for his return. She only remarks that she had been swayed by his promise to give the aid he sought (Her. X.72-74). Her statement that Theseus was her better part (Her. X.58), although superficially addressed to the bed, only lightly reminds Theseus of her attachment.

Ariadne struggles to understand Theseus' desertion. She begins with a dramatic account of her discovery of his departure in which her feelings of disbelief are made clear. She appears to find it difficult to connect the peacefulness of her surroundings (Her. X.6-17) with the personal disaster which Theseus' departure causes. Her first attempts to discover the reasons for this departure are actuated by the belief that Theseus left her behind mistakenly. Thus her attempts to attract his attention by cries and signalling (Her. X.35-42). When this fails, Ariadne finally allows herself to weep (Her. X.43-44), perhaps in frustration at her ineffectual attempts, perhaps with the beginnings of suspicion concerning Theseus'

abandonment. The repeated visits to her bed to find Theseus illustrate her wavering hope of his return and her bewilderment. This aimlessness is connected to her inability to understand how such a thing could happen to her, the daughter of a king, especially after Theseus' promises (Her. X.65-76).

The realization that she is truly alone on an island is accompanied by fear and wild imaginings of her death (Her. X.79f.). One part of her mind refuses to give up the thought that her parentage and nobility will protect her from any outrage, while the other half confronts her with Theseus' treachery (Her. X.91f.). Her naive trust and pride in her nobility reveals not only her youthful mind, but also the closed society in which she must have grown up. Part of Ariadne's struggle is therefore to reconcile her former life on Crete with the reality of the world in which her lover abandons her and leaves her on a deserted island.

Throughout, the letter is dominated by the inescapable fact of Ariadne's solitude and the total lack of resources. Unlike Medea, Deianira or Dido, who although they all felt themselves isolated from others, were still indisputably within a community, Ariadne must face the rigours of complete separation from humanity. Even the forces of nature withdraw themselves from her and become her enemies. She must move in a world where the forces of

nature conspire to hinder her. She sees them as tangible forces, usually negative ones, against which she must struggle to reach Theseus. Even her anger towards sleep adds to its personification as a subtle force.

Ariadne also seems to experience a separation from herself, as she views the operation of her limbs as agents for her intellect (Her. X.11-20). From anger at her bed, to anger at Theseus for his false promise, to her fear of wild animals and strangers, Ariadne lapses into dull acceptance of Theseus' cruelty (Her. X.100f.) and gloomy despair at her betrayal by sleep (Her. X.111f.). This in turn fades into self-pity, particularly when she dwells upon her death (Her. X.119f.). The only thing her mind can think of doing is to make herself seem sufficiently pitiable to move Theseus to return to her (Her. X.133f.). She is not a woman of strength or determination. Her decision to betray her father and brother seems to have consumed all the self-confidence and determination she possessed, as she now allows her wild imaginings to prey upon her mind.

It is difficult to determine whether Ariadne truly desires Theseus himself to return, or whether she simply wants to be rescued. Her early frantic actions seem the result of panic at being abandoned on a deserted island rather than the loss of Theseus himself. Her return to her bed, although a tangible sign of their love, seems to

emphasize the reality of Ariadne's abandonment much more than it reflects her enduring love for Theseus. Ariadne's repeated insistence that the bed should return two people, since two people had slept there (Her. X.56-57), emphasizes her abandonment. Theseus may be the greater part (Her. X.58), but this may merely indicate his dominant role in their relationship. Although she refers to her love for Theseus (Her. X.9f., 51ff., 73ff.), Ovid's Ariadne is much more concerned about herself and her own immediate calamity. She relates that she had given Theseus the thread to lead him out of the labyrinth (Her. X.72), but the reference is only in passing. It is quickly followed by mention of Theseus' promise that he and Ariadne would be together as long as they were alive (Her. X.73-4), but Ariadne then passes immediately to her fear of wild animals (Her. X.79ff.). Her fears soon take precedence over thoughts of Theseus.

The Ovidian Ariadne makes no demands of Theseus on the basis of her past help, indeed, she specifically states that Theseus owes her nothing for her help since it turned out badly (Her. X.141-142). She seems overwhelmed with her solitary state, and lacks inner resources to cope with her situation. She needs Theseus because he represents her only foreseeable means of departure from the island. She cannot afford the risk of provoking him and so prefers to curse sleep, winds, bed and water rather than the real

cause of her predicament. There is still an emotional attachment but her present predicament seems to have overwhelmed her feelings for Theseus. Ariadne does not show the passionate intensity of a Medea, a Deianira or a Dido.

As Ovid is preeminently interested in achieving a particular effect in his depiction of Ariadne, he omits certain traditional elements. The most obvious omission is that of the figure of Dionysus. Ovid's Ariadne is a woman who is convinced that there is no escape for her from the island of Dia. Her letter to Theseus is written on this premise and her reactions are the result of this belief. Although she might pray to the gods for rescue, there is no reason for her to appeal to Dionysus in particular. The presence of Dionysus would destroy the closed world in which Ariadne moves. Although her imagination might extend to envisioning innumerable wild beasts or sailors or even her own body after her death, it does not seem to extend to the world of the divinities. Her reference to the gods (Her. X.95) proves only the extent of her fears. If Dionysus were to appear, he would in all probability only be seen by Ariadne as another threat, as Schmidt has suggested.<sup>77</sup> The joyful excitement of Dionysus' followers would obviously be entirely out of place after Ariadne's gloomy conclusion to her letter.

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<sup>77</sup> Schmidt, 494.

Ovid also avoids to a great extent Ariadne's involvement in Theseus' exploits. He does mention her help, but they are only casual references and provide none of the illustration of Catullus. Nor are Theseus' deeds retold in any great detail, but again in only two brief accounts (Her. X.77-78; 100-106). Thus Ariadne's world remains for the most part centered on the island. She does not belong to a greater world as both Ariadne and Theseus do in Catullus. There the story extends beyond Ariadne, both before and after her own role. Ovid's Ariadne, on the other hand, exists almost in a vacuum, for although she refers to her parents, her family, past and probable future events, her association with the outside world is cut off, both literally and figuratively. She thus becomes the epitome of sola, a woman who is forced to rely purely on her own resources. Ariadne must rely on her wits to save herself -- unfortunately her wits do not always seem equal to the task. Her mind is prey to many fears, not the least of which is death. In a sense, Ariadne tends to become associated more with the natural world of her island than with the human world outside it. Although she fears them, the wild beasts and forces of nature seem more real to her than the fact of Theseus' departure. Thus she is able quite easily to personify sleep and to see the winds and waters as forces which deliberately work against her.

Ovid has created an Ariadne who is young in mind

and experience. She is not a brave and resourceful heroine nor is she an angry and vengeful one. Ovid's Ariadne is a woman with a tendency towards exaggeration, particularly when she talks about what frightens her, but also when she seeks to explain why certain events have occurred to her. She can be melodramatic, pitiable or melancholy, as the situation demands. She is not so much a woman of passion as a woman of warmth. This may, perhaps, make her less memorable (in comparison with the striking figure of Catullus' Ariadne), but it may also make her more human. She is a woman who has discovered that her first trust in a stranger has been misplaced and her former life has not equipped her to deal with this tragedy. This results in a sense of fantasy, and a preoccupation with the dangers which may or may not face her on her island. Ovid's Ariadne lives in a closed world, restricted to the island of Dia. Even when she is faced with the possibility of her death, she cannot seem to enter the real world, but retreats even further into her world of illusion and melodrama.

Met. VIII.159-182: Section I: Introduction

The story of Ariadne and Theseus follows upon that of Scylla and Minos (Met. VIII.1-151) and falls within the larger frame of the tale of Daedalus (Met. VIII.152-168;

183-262). Thus it occupies only a minor role in this tale and in Book VIII as a whole. Like Ovid's treatment of the Dido - Aeneas saga, with Ariadne, Ovid omits more details of her story than he includes.

The detailed reporting of Scylla's attempted love affair with Minos and her subsequent transformation into the Ciris occurs before the Ariadne story. The parallels between Scylla's and Ariadne's stories are remarkable and striking. Both women fall in love with their father's enemy -- Scylla with Minos (Met. VIII.44-45), Ariadne with Theseus (Met. VIII.171). A link is also established between the two stories through the person of Minos, the love-interest of one girl and the father of the other. The connection is strengthened since both women betray their fathers and their countries for the sake of their lovers. Scylla cuts off her father's purple lock of hair (Met. VIII.83-89) which had ensured the safety of his kingdom (Met. VIII.8-10). Ariadne gives Theseus the thread (Met. VIII.173) which allowed Theseus to leave the labyrinth once he had defeated the Minotaur and thus brought to an end the tribute paid to Minos for the death of his son. Although Ariadne's action does not provoke the downfall of her father's realm as Scylla's had done, the intent to betray her father is the same for both women. It is interesting that both stories focus on the need for a talisman (purple lock of hair, thread) and that this talisman is offered as

a gift to the lover, signifying the giving of the women themselves. It is also intended to secure the love of the hero and to ensure that the lovers remain together. In both cases, the talisman fails to produce the desired effect, for both women are summarily abandoned.<sup>78</sup>

The close and various parallels between the two suggests that the linking was deliberate on Ovid's part and therefore that more may be inferred from Scylla's story than is outwardly suggested.<sup>79</sup> The words which Scylla expresses when she learns of Minos' departure (Met. VIII.113-118) are much like those of Ariadne at Her. X.57-74. Scylla, like Ariadne, is a woman who is deserta et multa querens, although she has no Liber to save her. Certainly Medea and Dido both in the Heroides and the

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<sup>78</sup> It is perhaps noteworthy that all the women discussed here, with the exception of Dido, have some sort of talisman with which they tried to help or to hold on to their lovers. Medea uses her extraordinary powers to help Jason in his trials, Deianira sends the poisoned cloak to Hercules to regain his love, and Ariadne gives Theseus the thread to help him out of the labyrinth. In the Heroides X, Dido has only the possibility of her pregnancy to delay Aeneas, although this idea is not found in the Metamorphoses.

<sup>79</sup> For instance, Minos is appalled by Scylla's treachery and although he accepts her gift, he wants to have little to do with Scylla herself (Met. VIII.95-100). In Ariadne's tale, Theseus, of course, is not recorded as having expressed himself in the same manner. However, the fact that Theseus accepted Ariadne's help without demurral and then cruelly (crudelis) abandoned her is more to his discredit. In this case, Minos is depicted as a more "virtuous" character, as he is outraged at Scylla's betrayal of her father. Theseus accepts Ariadne's betrayal of both her father and her half-brother as nothing untoward.

Metamorphoses expressed similar concerns. Deianira's special position required different sentiments. Ariadne's position, more similar to that of Medea and Dido, would therefore presuppose similar sentiments.

Thus by the time one reaches the Ariadne story, the story's actual framework has already been supplied by the preceding tale of Scylla. The Ariadne saga, short as it is, serves to recall that of Scylla and vice versa, and does indeed make a full account of Ariadne's tale repetitious and superfluous.

As most commentators suggest<sup>80</sup>, the Ariadne story provides a smooth transition from the story of Minos and Scylla to that of Daedalus. When Minos comes back to Crete he coerces Daedalus into building the labyrinth and thus the story of Ariadne is introduced (Met. VIII.152-168). At the conclusion of her tale, Ovid turns back to Daedalus. While Ariadne was suffering from Theseus' desertion (desertae et multa querenti [Met. VIII.176]), Daedalus was suffering from exile on Crete (perosus / exilium [Met. VIII.183-4]). The interea provides the temporal connection between the two stories and allows Ovid to continue his story of Daedalus and his escape from Crete.

Theseus' encounter with Ariadne does not seem to

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<sup>80</sup> See A.S. Hollis Ovid Metamorphoses Book VIII, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 53.

Franz Bömer, P. Ovidius Naso Metamorphosen, Vol. IV, Buch VIII-IX, (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1977), 57.

have affected him in any great measure - she is merely an isolated incident in his life. This, in turn, deprives the character of Ariadne from any lasting influence either on Theseus or to the book as a whole. She becomes merely a tool of Ovid's craft and is used primarily as a bridge to further tales of Daedalus' exploits and as an initial introduction to the figure of Theseus.

Met. VIII: Section II: Lines 159-179: Discussion

The beginnings of Daedalus' experiences provide a smooth transition to Ariadne's. The emphasis on Daedalus' skill (ingenio fabrae celeberrimus artis [Met. VIII.159]) and the detailed description of the labyrinth (Met. VIII.159-168) set the scene for a heroic labour on the part of Theseus, much in the style of Jason's labours and in a minor scale, those of Hercules.<sup>81</sup> However, the heroic effect is diminished by the brevity with which the tale is told, as well as by the open reference to Ariadne's help:

quo postquam geminam tauri iuvenisque figuram  
 clausit et Actaeo bis pastum sanguine monstrum  
 tertia sors annis domuit repetita novenis,  
 utque ope virginea nullis iterata priorum  
 ianua difficilis filo est inventa relecto, ...

(Met. VIII.169-173)

As Bömer comments, the whole story of the tribute of

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<sup>81</sup> Compare Met. VII.100-158; Her. XII.93-100; Met. IX.1-272; Her. IX.84-100.

Athenian youths is encapsulated within the conjunctions postquam ... ut.<sup>82</sup> Theseus is not permitted a dramatic build-up for his brave deed, but instead gets a short introduction and then the revelation that he achieved his success ope virginea (Met. VIII.172). Like Jason, Theseus owes his success to his beloved, but unlike Jason, Theseus' own efforts are not detailed. A similar technique is used in the Scylla and Minos story, for Minos' defeat of Nisus is merely detailed by a past clause (Met. VIII.101-102). On the other hand, Jason and Minos are both given opportunities to speak which are denied to Theseus.

As in Ovid's treatment of Dido, Ariadne is not addressed or referred to by her own name.<sup>83</sup> She is merely the source of ope virginea (Met. VIII.172) and the rapta Minoide (Met. VIII.174). The patronymic does emphasize Ariadne's relationship to Minos and therefore her connection to the Scylla story, but does little to increase her prestige beyond her legitimate role as the daughter of

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<sup>82</sup> Bömer, Buch VIII-IX, 62.

<sup>83</sup> There may be a connection in Ovid between the dominant female figures and the use of their names. For instance, Medea is addressed by name six times in a combination of self-address (Met. VI.11,41,70) and by the narrator (Met. VI.257,285,406). Deianira is addressed twice, both times by the narrator and both times using the same structure (Met. IX.910, 135-138). Neither Dido nor Ariadne's names are used. Within the Metamorphoses, Medea and Deianira make a determined effort to retain their lovers, while Dido's efforts are less efforts than threats, and Ariadne is merely a passive endurer of fate. This passivity is reflected in the lack of personification and the omission of proper names.

a king. Bömer comments on Ovid's use of rapere, and suggests that it be understood as "nicht 'rauben', sondern etwa 'entführen' d.h. mit ihrem Willen" and presents the rape of Helen as a comparison.<sup>84</sup> He concludes:

So jedenfalls die communis opinio, und es besteht kein Anlass zu der Annahme, Ovid habe hier davon abgehen wollen.<sup>85</sup>

Thus the first reference to the affair between Ariadne and Theseus depends upon the ope virginea whose import is enlarged by the rapta. Given Ariadne's position as daughter of the king, when she helped Theseus she automatically betrayed her father and country. This action presupposes either Ariadne's great love for Theseus or a great desire to put an end to the sacrifice of the Athenian youths.<sup>86</sup> The second reference is again a vague allusion to their relationship: comitemque suam (Met. VIII.175). It depends on the interpretation of comes in a non-platonic sense, for which Bömer cites relevant parallels.<sup>87</sup> This interpretation is supported by crudelis, which seems to be

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<sup>84</sup> Bömer, Buch VIII-IX, 63. Bömer also compares Catullus 64.116f., Propertius II.24.43, Diodorus IV.61.4, Plutarch Theseus 19.1

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>86</sup> Naturally, previous knowledge of at least Her. X and Catullus 64 would help to flesh out Ariadne's story. Hyginus mentions that Ariadne loved Theseus (Fab. CCLXX,3), although he does not mention any desire on her part to stop the yearly Athenian tribute.

<sup>87</sup> See Amores I.4.15, Amores II.16.43, Her. XII.161, A.A. III.636.

a faint echo of the insults which the women of the Heroides hurled at their spouses.<sup>88</sup> The women of the Metamorphoses are much more restrained in their emotions. None of the four chosen women curse their husbands or lovers in the Metamorphoses. Medea calls Jason ingratus (Met. VII.43), but this occurs when she is trying to decide whether or not she should help him and she quickly denies that he has any ingratitude in him at all:

sed non is vultus in illo,  
non ea nobilitas animo est, ea gratia formae,  
ut timeam fraudem meritique obliviam nostri.

(Met. VII.43-45)

Dido and Ariadne are not given the opportunity to express themselves. Deianira, when she speaks, comments on her own wretched position (Met. IX.141-151) and does not speak of Hercules directly. Nevertheless Ovid does not use his role as narrator openly to cast aspersions, however slight, on any of the male figures with the exception of Theseus.

Although Ovid gives no specific reason for Theseus' desertion of Ariadne (Catullus describes Theseus as immemor [64.58]), the inclusion of a descriptive adjective (crudelis) serves not only to highlight the character of Theseus, but also to bring Ariadne's plight and Ovid's

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<sup>88</sup> Compare Dido, perfide, (Her. VII.79,118), scelerate (Her. VIII.133), Medea, perfide (Her. XII.37), scelerate (Her. XII.19), infido (Her. XII.72), Ariadne, scelerate (Her. X.35), improbe (Her. X.77). Ariadne, however, calls sleep, the winds and Jason's right hand crudelis (Her. X.111,113,115).

sympathies into focus. Ovid characterizes Theseus more directly in comparison to Catullus. Catullus calls Theseus immemor several times (64.58,123,1135,248); he also labels Theseus as ferox (64.73,247), an epithet which Quinn suggests "implies insensitivity or callousness, as much as courage."<sup>89</sup> Bömer maintains that crudelis is "ebenfalls ἐρῶτικως",<sup>90</sup> which contributes further slim proof of the affair between Ariadne and Theseus. The destituit (Met. VIII.176) (which Bömer also characterizes as "gelegentlich ἐρῶτικως"<sup>91</sup>) identifies Theseus as the guilty party and alternatively, Ariadne as the victim. Bömer cites as parallel usages Amores III.5.42 and III.7.14, which vividly call to mind the Ariadne of Heroides X and her desperate feelings of abandonment and desolation.

Ovid's reference to Ariadne as desertae et multa querenti (Met. VIII.176) does not add much to his characterization of her. Instead, it breaks the connection between Theseus and Ariadne and turns the story towards Liber. The phrase provides a short synopsis of what could have been the essence of Ariadne's story. This brevity effectively reduces Ariadne's importance to that of a standardized representation. Like Catullus (64.249-264),

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<sup>89</sup> Kenneth Quinn, ed, with comm., Catullus The Poems (London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd., 1970), 314.

<sup>90</sup> Bömer, Buch VIII-IX, 64.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 64.

Ovid is silent about Ariadne's response to Liber's approach. The word order of lines 176-177 suggests that although Ariadne remains at the center of the story, she is a passive recipient of Liber's favours. Ovid does not give her the opportunity of reacting to Liber's amplexus et opem (Met. VIII.177); her lamentations emphasize only her involvement with Theseus. The stellification of Ariadne's crown is recounted by the narrator - Ariadne's thoughts on this subject are not recorded:

utque perenni  
sidere clara foret, sumptam de fronte coronam  
inmisit caelo.

(Met. VIII.177-179)

Ariadne exists after Theseus' departure only long enough to complain of his treatment of her. She is not permitted to curse him nor to clearly elucidate her feelings. She thus remains a mute, elusive figure who seems, on the surface, to bear little connection to the Ariadne of Catullus or of Ovid's Heroides X. The characterization of Ariadne is achieved by allusions and echoes of other depictions and of other figures such as Scylla.

### Section III: Other Versions of the Ariadne Story

a) Fasti III.459-516

Ovid returns to the story of Ariadne in Fasti

III.459-516. He takes up the story after Theseus' departure, when Ariadne has already met and married Bacchus. Although Theseus is held to be at fault for his treatment of Ariadne, he is also said to be responsible for her deification (Theseo crimine facta dea est [Fasti III.460]) which seems to mitigate his error. He is labelled by Ovid as periuro (Fasti III.461) and ingrato (Fasti III.462), but in contrast to her relationship with Theseus, Ariadne is characterized as happy in her marriage to Bacchus:

iam bene periuro mutarat coniuge Bacchum,  
 quae dedit ingrato fila legenda viro.  
 sorte tori gaudens 'quid flebam, rustica?' dixit,  
 'utiliter nobis perfidus ille fuit.'

(Fasti III.461-464)

This is certainly a change from the Ariadne in Catullus and Ovid who is deserta et multa querens! Theseus is left behind for the advantages of life with a god. Although this account continues with the story of Bacchus' and Theseus' actions (Fasti III.471-478) and Ariadne laments her fate once again (Fasti III.479-507), the conclusion of the tale differs drastically. Bacchus overhears his wife's words (Fasti III.507-508), calms her and shows his love by her deification and the stellification of her crown:

et 'pariter caeli summa petamus!' ait,  
 'tu mihi iuncta toro mihi iuncta vocabula sumes,  
 nam tibi mutatae Libera nomen erit,  
 sintque tuae tecum faciam monimenta coronae,  
 Vulcanus Veneri quam dedit, illa tibi.'

(Fasti III.510-514)

Thus the story focuses on Ariadne's rewards and her relationship with Bacchus. Ariadne still has not found a man who is faithful to her,<sup>92</sup> but Bacchus' unfaithfulness is considered of slight importance, considering his divine status and his ability to grant divinity to others.

Although Ovid provides an interesting interpretation of the events which occurred after Theseus' departure and before Ariadne's deification, it does not agree with earlier representations of Ariadne. His account on the whole is lighthearted, both in tone and words.<sup>93</sup> Although Ariadne's lament builds in intensity, its effectiveness is destroyed by the picture of Bacchus following Ariadne and eavesdropping on her words.<sup>94</sup> It

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<sup>92</sup> Ariadne refers twice to Bacchus' new love interest as a paelex (Fasti III.483, 493) and once to her embraces (amplexus [Fasti III.496]), which suggests that she saw this new woman as a real rival to her position as Bacchus' wife. Although she adjures Bacchus to remain faithful and not to prefer any woman's love to hers (Fasti III.497-98), the implication seems to be that Bacchus has already been unfaithful to her.

<sup>93</sup> Béla Németh, "Ariadne - Dido - Ariadne. Interpretationsgedanken Über ein dramatisches Triptychon," ACD XVII-XVIII (1981-1982): 159. A good discussion of the presentation of Fasti III by Ovid using the eyes of a sceptic.

<sup>94</sup> Eleanor S. Rutledge, "Fasti 3.459-516: Ariadne Revisited," Maia 28 (1976): 125-126, suggests that Ariadne's monologue is not really a lament, but "a rehearsal of sentiments calculated to bring a straying husband back home." (126). She also suggests that here Ariadne is a mature, married woman who realizes that she has the ability to recapture her husband's interest-unlike Ariadne of the Metamorphoses, who is totally helpless (125).

provides for the "happy ending" motif which does indeed make Ariadne's complaints seem empty. In the Metamorphoses, Ariadne's relationship to Bacchus is unclear and uncertain. The Metamorphoses tends to reflect Ariadne's fear and apprehension, which is not the case in the Fasti. Her anxieties are made light of and swept away by Bacchus' presence and his promise of stellification is used as evidence of his love. As well, the story of Ariadne's change of status and name (she becomes Libera) provides an aetiological reason for the existence of the goddess Libera. Although the stellification carries the same significance in the Metamorphoses, Ariadne's reaction is much less certain. Her reaction, or rather lack of reaction, to Bacchus' gift gives the impression that the stellification has very little to do with Ariadne herself and is a result of Ovid's desire to include a metamorphosis in his story.

In the Fasti, Ovid merely takes advantage of his characterization of Ariadne as deserta et multa querens to develop her story on these same lines but with a twist for the ending. In a sense, the Metamorphoses and Fasti accounts show Ovid experimenting with the figure of Ariadne, trying out alternative endings. The similarities between the stories are superficial and restricted to common characters and a basic theme. The depiction of these characters and the development of the theme do not

run on parallel lines.

b) Ars Amatoria I.525-568

After a discussion of personal grooming, Ovid turns to the story of Bacchus and Ariadne as proof that the god looks favourably upon lovers. Here he uses some of the same images from the Heroides, but transforms the tone to one of lightness and frivolity. Ariadne, wandering on the shore after Theseus' departure, is termed amens, perhaps a recollection of her state of mind in Her X.19. As in Catullus 64.63-67, Ovid emphasizes Ariadne's lack of concern about her clothing as an indication of her disturbed state of mind:

utque erat e somno, tunica uelata recincta,  
nuda pedem, croceas inrelicata comas,  
Thesea crudelem surdas clamabat ad undas,  
indigno teneras imbre rigante genas.

(A.A. I.529-532)

In Heroides X.111-2 the forces of nature are depicted as hostile to Ariadne and her plight. In A.A. I.531 this hostility has been changed to a more neutral expression of indifference (surdus). Furthermore, Ovid enlarges upon his brief reference to Ariadne's hair in the Heroides (X.16) in order to present a picture of Ariadne in distress, yet still beautiful (A.A. I.533-4). Her heartfelt cries ("'perfidus ille abiit: quid mihi fiet?' ait; / 'quid mihi fiet?' ait" [A.A. I.536-7]) are suddenly interrupted by the

clash of cymbals (sonuerunt cymbala [A.A. I.537]) and tympana (adtonita tympana pulsa manu. [A.A. I.538]). With this interruption, the picture of the desolate Ariadne fades and a riotous description of Bacchus and his followers ensues. The solemn tones of the first lines of this passage also evaporate, to be replaced by the lively, excited voices of the Satyrs: 'surge age, surge, pater' (A.A. I.548). As well the description of drunken, old Silenus riding in on an ass and then promptly falling off ("in caput aurito cecidit delapsus asello;" [A.A. I.547]) robs the passage of any remaining seriousness.

The arrival of Bacchus, surrounded by his retinue, does little to reassure Ariadne:

iam deus in curru, quem summum texerat uuis,  
 tigribus adiunctis aurea lora dabat;  
 et color et Theseus et uox abiire puellae,  
 terque fugam petiit terque retenta metu est.

(A.A. I.549-552)

As in Heroides X.86, in the Ars Ariadne has also tigers to fear, this time in reality, as opposed to imagined terrors. As well, the placement of Theseus between Ariadne's lost colour and voice debases him to a mere physical sense, rather than an independent being. Her triple attempt to flee, combined with her comparison to a field of grain (A.A. I.553-4),<sup>95</sup> present an exaggerated description of a woman paralysed with fear.

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<sup>95</sup> Compare a similar metaphor in Her. X.139.

Bacchus makes a pointed reference to Theseus' unfaithfulness (A.A. I.555) in an attempt to calm Ariadne and quickly offers her the prize of becoming his wife and her deification as a constellation:

'pone metum, Bacchi Cnosias uxor eris.  
munus habe caelum: caelo spectabere sidus;  
saepe reges dubiam Cressa Corona ratem.'

(A.A. I.556-558)

In order to reassure Ariadne even further, Bacchus leaps down from his chariot -- so that she need not approach the tigers -- takes her in his arms, and carries her off to eternal happiness (A.A. I.559-562). Ovid's reference to the imprint of Bacchus' foot in the sand seems to be a sly hint at Ariadne's own difficulties in the sand in Her. X.20. However the overall emphasis is not on Ariadne's plight, but on Bacchus' ready speech and swift action. Although Ariadne is once again in the position of not being given an opportunity to express her thoughts (as in Met. VIII.176), Ovid here seems to suggest that she is completely overwhelmed by events, and has not yet had time to catch her breath and think of a suitable rejoinder. There is very little of the pathetic Ariadne of Catullus 64 or of Heroides X or Metamorphoses VIII in this depiction. Rather, the figure of Ariadne is used to depict Bacchus' success at love and therefore his undoubted support of hopeful lovers. Ariadne is relevant only because she was one of Bacchus' more successful exploits, not because she

is Ariadne, daughter of Minos, abandoned by Theseus on the island of Dia.

#### Section IV: Conclusions about the Nature of Ariadne

In the Heroides, the lover sometimes gives his promise to the woman concerned in order to ensure her cooperation. Medea was promised marriage, Dido assumed that her relationship was marriage, Deianira depended on Hercules to maintain his reputation as a hero, and Ariadne thought Theseus would always be with her. In the Metamorphoses, promises and assumptions are more vague. Medea is the only character who openly mentions Jason's promise of marriage (Met. VII.91-93). After Book VII and Medea, the pledges become increasingly more vague. Ariadne's position is suggested only by means of the interpretation of comitemque suam (Met. VIII.176). Deianira is apparently confused by rumours of her husband's activities (Met. IX.138ff.), despite the stated proclivity of rumour for falsehood. Dido was apparently deceived (Met. XIV.81) but by whom or in what way is not detailed. Thus Ovid depends heavily on the readers' previous knowledge of the stories in question and he merely circumvents the controversial issues. Although he characterizes Theseus specifically as crudelis, he avoids the whole subject of why Theseus actually did abandon

Ariadne. He contents himself with the fact of her desertion. Similarly, he does not delve into the complexities of Ariadne's betrayal of her father and country, but rather presents the betrayal as fact and side-steps the issue by remarking upon Daedalus' skill (Met. VIII.172-3). Ovid seems to prefer to present his views by hints and allusions, particularly his unexpected reference to Minos in Minoide (Met. VIII.174) and the swift passage from one betrayal to another: Ariadne betrays her father; Theseus betrays Ariadne.

Ariadne's story is unusual because she is the only woman of the four for whom salvation, in the figure of Liber, appears. From being the incarnation of solitude and abandonment in Heroides X, she becomes in Metamorphoses VIII an almost meaningless figure. Her salvation by Liber places her, to some extent, in a class with Medea whose own extraordinary powers ensured her escape. The conclusion of Ariadne's tale suggests a typical "happy ending", especially as the story ends with the stellification of Ariadne's crown.

It is difficult to determine the nature of Ariadne's character in the Metamorphoses because of the small role which she plays. Although Ariadne's passage is longer than Dido's (fourteen lines to seven), Dido is revealed as a more complex character. This is partly due to the very complexity of her story, but also of course to

the manner in which she is presented. Her reaction to Aeneas' departure is suggested before it actually occurs (Met. VIII.79), her death reveals her as both deceiving and deceived (Met. VIII.81), Aeneas is described as fleeing, not merely sailing from her lands (Met. VIII.82). These details enliven an otherwise standard account of the Carthaginian episode of Aeneas' career and certainly add colour to Dido's depiction. Ariadne's character is less well defined. Ovid chooses not to comment on her reactions or emotions. The information which he provides about Ariadne is impersonal -- she was the source of the "female aid", Theseus' "own companion", her crown was made a constellation. The reference to Ariadne's emotions at Theseus' departure (Met. VIII.176) is a brief statement of behaviour and does not substantially differentiate Ariadne from any of the women. One would expect Ariadne to lament Theseus' departure, so that when she does, she is merely complying with standard behaviour. She is not allowed to speak, therefore the opportunity to distinguish herself is lost. It is only when one compares Ariadne to Scylla, that Ariadne's nature begins to become clear. The two women experience similar situations and thus perhaps similar thoughts, particularly when they present talismen to their lovers. However, such comparisons are never pointedly expressed by Ovid, so that they can only serve as guidelines and cannot be interpreted as mirror images.

In the Fasti and the Ars Amatoria, Ovid exaggerates Ariadne's reactions and her situation for comic effect. In contrast to two rather serious depictions of Ariadne in the Heroides and Metamorphoses, Ovid concentrates on the other side of the story in the Fasti and Ars Amatoria. Thus we find Ariadne confronted once again by a husband's unfaithfulness (Fasti III) as if she were destined always to be unlucky in love. Bacchus also arrives to carry out the traditional "happy ending" (Ars Amatoria I), but does so in a farcical "grand seigneur" manner. In these passages, the figure of Ariadne is important because of the well-known details of her story. Ovid depends heavily upon his reader's knowledge of the myth of Ariadne, Theseus and Bacchus in order to present a cleverly twisted version of the tale. Ariadne emerges as a malleable figure for caricature rather than a subject for the exploration of human emotion. As a caricature, Ovid's Ariadne cannot present any startling new personality traits, as these would neither be recognized, nor appreciated. All elements must derive from accepted models.

The Metamorphoses, the Fasti and the Ars Amatoria, add little to the characterization of Ariadne. Instead, Ovid reduces Ariadne's traits to the lowest common denominator possible and works with these to achieve the effect he desires, whether it be a sharply reduced account to serve as a bridge for a succeeding story (Metamorphoses

VIII), an attempt to show how easily Ariadne's story may be turned to comedy (Ars Amatoria I), or an account which goes beyond the accepted details of a myth (for example, that Ariadne had to face a further rival for Liber's love [Fasti III]). It is a mark of Ovid's talent that he can successfully present such diverse accounts of the same figure.

## CHAPTER FOUR: DEIANIRA

### Heroides IX: Section I: Introduction

The fullest accounts of the story of Deianira and Hercules are those found in Apollodorus (Bibl. I.8; II.7.5ff.), Hyginus' Fabulae (31,33-36) and Sophocles' Trachiniae. Apollodorus' account provides little information in the way of character study although he does report that Deianira drove a chariot and practised the art of war: "αὕτη δ' ἠνολόκει καὶ τὰ κατὰ πόλεμον ἤσκει, ... " (Ap. Bibl. I.8.1). This may perhaps reflect the interpretation of Deianira's name as hominum destructicem<sup>1</sup>. The name seems to point to some earlier myth which may have recounted Deianira's prowess in war and underlies Apollodorus' comment on Deianira's martial skills. Certainly, in Apollodorus, Deianira is depicted more as a woman fearful of losing her husband's love than as a "misandrist". He recounts briefly the story of the contest between Hercules and Achelous for Deianira's hand (II.7.6), Nessus' attempted rape of Deianira (II.7.6) and Hercules' death by means of the poisoned cloak (II.7.7). Apollodorus

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<sup>1</sup> I. Errandonea, "Deianira Vere ΔΗΙ-ΑΝΕΙΡΑ," Mnemosyne 55 (1977): 147.

suggests that Deianira was prompted to act because she feared that Hercules loved Iole more than herself. It is from Lichas, Hercules' herald, that Deianira first learns of the existence of Iole:

παρὰ δὲ τούτου τὰ περὶ τὴν  
 Ἰόλην Δηϊάνειρα πυθομένη, καὶ δείσασα μὴ  
 ἐκείνην μᾶλλον ἀγαπήσῃ, νομίσασα ταῦς  
 ἀληθείαις φίλτρον εἶναι τὸ ῥυέν αἶμα Νέσσου,  
 τούτῳ τὸν χιτῶνα ἔχρισεν.

(Ap. Bibl. II.7.7)

It is the existence of Iole which begins the fatal chain of events, although Apollodorus concentrates on Deianira's personal relationship with Hercules. When Deianira learns of Hercules' death she hangs herself (II.7.7). We hear very little about Deianira's turmoil which results from the physical presence of Hercules' mistress Iole, her thoughts leading up to her decision to use Nessus' potion, or about her feelings when she learns that she has caused Hercules' death. One can, of course, surmise what her feelings were from the fact that she killed herself, but Apollodorus does not as a rule indulge in psychological studies.

Similarly, Hyginus' accounts are mainly factual. Deianira's parentage, the contest for her hand, her marriage to Hercules, Nessus' attempted rape and Deianira's poisoning of the robe and Hercules' subsequent death are all briefly described. The only hint of characterization

is implied in the statement that it was Iole's beauty that caused Deianira to react:

Deianira Oenei filia Herculis uxor cum vidit  
Iolen virginem captivam eximiae formae esse  
adductam verita est ne se coniugio privaret.

(Hyg., Fab. 36)

There is no further discussion of her doubts, fears or hesitation. In Hyginus, as in Apollodorus, when Deianira learns that her poisoned cloak caused Hercules' death, she immediately kills herself, although we are not told by what means (Hyg., Fab. 36). Both Apollodorus and Hyginus are concerned with the recital of events, not with their interpretation.

A more complete depiction of Deianira's character is provided in Sophocles' account. The opening lines of the Trachiniae present Deianira as she discourses on the anxieties and slights which she has had to suffer because of her marriage to Hercules:

λέχος γὰρ Ἡρακλεῦ κριτὸν  
ξυστᾶσ' ἀεὶ τιν' ἐκ φόβου φόβον τρέφω,  
κείνου προκηραίνουσα. νύξ γὰρ εἰσάγει  
καὶ νύξ ἀπωθεῖ διαδεδεγμένη πόνον.  
κάψυσαμεν δὴ παῖδας, οὓς κείνός ποτε,  
γῆτης ὅπως ἄρουραν ἔκτοπον λαβῶν,  
σπεύρων μόνον προσεῖδε κάξαμῶν ἅπαξ.

(Soph., Trach. 27-33)

Already marriage to a hero is shown to involve more misery than happiness. Easterling suggests that Sophocles was

concerned with depicting the relationship between Deianira and Hercules,

from the start of their marriage so we can judge what happens in the play not just as the outcome of a particular deed done recently by Hercules, but of what he has always been like.<sup>2</sup>

Thus Deianira offers herself as an object of sympathy and commiseration, although her fears are nonetheless sincere and heartfelt. She appeals to her Nurse and to the women of Trachis for comfort, support and advice.<sup>3</sup> She is not alone in her plight -- she has her son Hyllus to help her and an audience for her woes. This is one crucial difference between the Sophoclean and Ovidian Deianiras. In the Heroides, Deianira is alone and this circumstance shapes her relationship to Hercules and the reasons for her actions.

As well, the Sophoclean Deianira is troubled by the oracles concerning Hercules and his fate. Hercules' fate is particularly important to Deianira, as she herself says (Trach. 83-85), because she and her son die or live according to whether Hercules also dies or lives. This oracle and the will left by Hercules before he set off on his journeys (Trach. 160-177) heighten Deianira's feelings of foreboding for the future and darken the general

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<sup>2</sup> P.E. Easterling, "Sophocles, Trachiniae," BICS 15 (1968): 60.

<sup>3</sup> See for example, Soph., Trachiniae 49-57; 141-179; 205-224; 531ff.

atmosphere of the play itself.

When the messenger Lichas arrives (Trach. 229ff.), Deianira is eager to learn of Hercules' well-being and location. She is quick to sympathize with the women captured from Oechalia, once her own fears have been assuaged:

Δη. αὐται δέ, πρὸς θεῶν, τοῦ ποτ' εἰσὶ καὶ τύνες;  
οἴκτραί γάρ, εἰ μὴ ξυμποραὶ κλέπτουσί με.  
Λι. ταύτας ἐκεῖνος Εὐρύτου πέρσας πόλιν  
ἐξεύλεθ' αὐτῷ κτήμα καὶ θεοῦς κριτόν.

(Soph., Trach. 242-245)

As Lichas explains Hercules' exploits, he describes Hercules' year of servitude to Omphale as having been ordained by Zeus (Trach. 251) and refers to the shame involved in the servitude as the cause for the sacking of Oechalia:

κεῖνος δὲ πραθεὶς Ὀμφάλῃ τῇ βαρβάρῳ  
ἐναιαυτὸν ἐξέπλησεν, ὡς αὐτὸς λέγει,  
χοῦτως ἐδήχθη τοῦτο τοῦνειδος λαβὼν  
ὡσθ' ὄρκον αὐτῷ προσβαλὼν διώμοσεν,  
ἧ μὴν τὸν ἀγχιστήρα τοῦδε τοῦ πάθους  
ξὺν παιδὶ καὶ γυναικὶ δουλώσειν ἔτι.

(Soph., Trach. 252-257)

Lichas presents Hercules' shame as being due to the mere fact of slavery and then to being bound to a woman, and a foreign one at that. (Ovid's Heroides IX will provide a completely different interpretation.) However, it must be recognized that at this point Lichas is concealing the true reasons for Hercules' sack of Oechalia for fear of

offending Deianira. Nevertheless, as Easterling suggests, "Perhaps the real point of all this stress on slavery is to make us begin to wonder if Heracles the enslaver was not after all a slave himself."<sup>4</sup>

Despite her joy, Deianira is very much aware of the vicissitudes of fate and thus she feels much pity for the captive women (Trach. 293-306). She is aware that she too may one day be in the same position. Unaware of Iole's future role in her household, Deianira addresses her sympathetically:

ὦ δυστάλαινα, τίς ποτ' εἶ νεανίδων;  
 ἄνανδρος, ἢ τεκνοῦσσα; πρὸς μὲν γὰρ φύσιν  
 πάντων ἄπειρος τῶνδε, γενναία δέ τις.

(Soph., Trach. 307-309)

Secure in her role as spouse of Hercules, Deianira can afford to be warm-hearted. The deportment of Iole is also significant, for in Sophocles she acts as one would expect a slave to act, that is, fully conscious of her change of status and of her plight. She is, as Sophocles has depicted her, an innocent young girl, a victim caught up by external circumstances (a depiction that is transformed by Ovid in the Heroides). It is easy for Deianira to feel pity for her and her plight.

Lichas' timorous evasions of Deianira's questions

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<sup>4</sup> Easterling, 61.

suggest some dreadful mystery, but Deianira is too overjoyed at Hercules' well-being and imminent return to pay much attention. The sudden, unheralded speech of the messenger (Trach. 335ff.) destroys Deianira's serenity and her joy in Hercules' expected return. Now, Hercules' love for Iole threatens Deianira, her position as Hercules' wife and her marriage (Trach. 351-358). She persuades Lichas that no harm will come either to him or to Iole if he tells the truth about her identity (Trach. 457-468). She can still afford to pity Iole and be generous with her sympathy. Once she hears the truth from Lichas, Deianira seems to accept the news quite calmly (Trach. 490-496). She does promise Lichas a gift for Hercules ( δῶρον [Trach. 494]), but at this point the gift seems entirely harmless to Deianira, Lichas and the chorus, although it may have a completely different interpretation for the audience.

Once Deianira realizes that Iole threatens her position (Trach. 536-542), her peace of mind is destroyed. Despite the anxieties inherent in her position of wife of Hercules, Deianira was at least certain that this role was secure. Iole's arrival deprives Deianira of this reassurance. She is especially fearful of losing Hercules' love because she is no longer as young and pretty as she once was, especially when compared to Iole (Trach. 547-551). Her plan, therefore, is to try to ensure that Hercules will remain in love with her and not with Iole.

To accomplish this, she intends to use the potion given to her by Nessus. Regardless of the fact that Sophocles' Deianira strains the audience's credulity by her belief that Hercules' enemy would ever want to help her, Deianira firmly accepts that Nessus' potion is indeed a love potion.<sup>5</sup> Deianira's intent is not to kill Hercules, but to make sure that he remains in love with her. Thus despite her shame at having to use a love potion to retain her husband's interest in her,<sup>6</sup> Deianira decides to go through with her plan -- if the chorus members agrees (Trach. 87ff.). The instructions which she gives to Lichas regarding the robe (Trach. 600-619) are probably no more than those she had received from Nessus. Indeed, she herself reveals this to the chorus once she discovers what has happened to the piece of wool she had used to smear the cloak (Trach. 680-4).<sup>7</sup>

The realization that she may have caused Hercules' death (Trach. 712-713) prompts Deianira to plan her own death (Trach. 719-720). The chorus attempt to convince Deianira of her innocence (Trach. 727-728), but Deianira

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<sup>5</sup> In Hyginus' account, Nessus tells Deianira that it will ensure Hercules' faithfulness and Deianira accepts it, credens (Hyg., Fab. 36). Similarly, in Apollodorus, Deianira thought (νομισασα [Ap. Bibl. II.7.7]) that it was a love-philtre.

<sup>6</sup> D.A. Hester, "Deianira's 'Deception Speech,'" Antichthon 14 (1980): 7.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 7.

accepts full responsibility for the deed and for the fact that she recognized too late the true nature of Nessus' potion. In the face of her son Hyllus' loathing, Deianira is at first hesitant to accept the reality of Hercules' suffering (Trach 738ff.), but once Hyllus has related the whole tale (Trach. 749ff.), Deianira says not a word, but leaves silently. After a brief interval, the nurse announces her suicide. Hyllus, although he has just cursed his mother and wished for her death (Trach. 734-737), is overcome with grief when he discovers Deianira's suicide. It is only with his mother's death that he accepts her innocence in Hercules' death (Trach. 932-946).

Sophocles' Deianira has been characterized throughout as a woman whose love for her husband prompted her to take what proved to be fatal measures to keep her husband's interest. The presence of Iole in her house was the incentive for her actions. Iole's presence emphasized Deianira's age and fading beauty as well as the lack of influence she exerted over Hercules' emotions. The Sophoclean Deianira agrees with her depiction in the accounts of both Apollodorus and Hyginus with respect to her gullibility in accepting Nessus' potion. This factor requires a suspension of disbelief by the audience -- it is simply a given of the myth. Similarly, Deianira's references to the potion as a love philtre and to the anointing of the cloak provide examples of dramatic irony

for the audience; the characters themselves must remain ignorant of the true nature of the potion in order to achieve a significant anagnorisis not only for Deianira, but for Hyllus and Hercules as well.<sup>8</sup>

Heroides IX: Section II: Deianira's Letter

Unlike the other heroines of the Heroides, Deianira is the only wife or lover who physically harms her beloved, although she causes this destruction unwittingly. Thus Deianira must hold a special place in the body of the Heroides, following perhaps such figures as Medea (Heroides XII) and Phaedra (Heroides IV). Both these women differ from Deianira in that they move with a full understanding of their actions.

Deianira does not seek revenge from her husband, as Medea does (Her. XII), or a delay of departure as Dido

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<sup>8</sup> Errandonea suggests that Deianira intentionally deceived Lichas and the chorus about the nature of Nessus' philtre (Errandonea, 152). Deianira does tell the chorus what she is going to do, but her actions are directed towards getting Hercules' love back, not towards his murder or indeed, with the thought of vengeance at all (Trach. 582-587). Errandonea's argument concerning Deianira's guilt demands that a great deal be read into Deianira's straightforward statements. This ignores the whole concept of anagnorisis for a character as well as the use of dramatic irony. Similar doubts can be raised in Sophocles' Oedipus Rex. There, one is amazed at Oedipus' lack of awareness concerning the meeting at the crossroads, even when Jocasta herself has realized its implications (Soph., Oedipus Rex. 1954-1072). Thus Deianira's actions and words are consistent as a prelude to an anagnorisis of her own deeds.

does (Her. VII), nor does she even ask her husband to return to her (Ariadne, Her. X). Her purpose in writing Hercules a letter is first of all to shame Hercules into realizing the degradation of his status as a slave, first with his servitude to Omphale, then with his love for Iole. Secondly, Deianira wants to try to maintain Hercules' interest in her, when faced with a younger rival (Iole). Like Medea, Deianira has to come to terms with a rival for her husband's love. Although Medea is actually cast off by Jason, while Deianira is not, Deianira must face her husband's mistress daily in her own house. It is how Deianira deals with this situation which distinguishes her letter from that of Medea. The fact that Deianira actively decides to win back her husband brings her to the forefront of the other women of the Heroides. In this sense, she is comparable to Ovid's Ariadne (Her. X) who uses every means at her disposal to attract Theseus' attention.

This letter is also distinguished by its unusual external form. It is the only letter of the Heroides which accepts a reality external to the reality of the letter itself. That is, Deianira accepts the news of the death of her husband Hercules and incorporates her response to it in her letter. D.W.T.C. Vessey<sup>9</sup> points to this factor as an example of the poet's "bungling" and therefore the

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<sup>9</sup> D.W.T.C. Vessey, "Notes on Ovid, Heroides 9," CQ 19 (1969): 352.

possibility of its non-Ovidian authenticity. However, Vessey overlooks the emotional state of a woman like Deianira with a husband such as Hercules. It is difficult for Deianira to comprehend how a hero who had overcome so many terrible monsters and who appeared to be virtually invincible for so many years, could possibly succumb at this point in time. Thus she writes to Hercules not only to try to understand and clarify her own thoughts, but to bring Hercules to a realization as well. While she is writing, the news of Hercules' imminent death arrives. Her letter then becomes an outlet for her grief and a medium for the expression of her own guilt and shame. Viewed in this manner, the anomaly of writing to a husband who is dying becomes the attempt of a desolate wife to come to terms with the impending death of her husband and the destruction of the meaning of her life.

Heroides IX: Section III: Lines 1-2: Hercules' Victory

The initial gratulor of Heroides IX suggests Deianira's pride in her husband's achievement.<sup>10</sup> The

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<sup>10</sup> H. Vahlen feels that the following interpolated distich may indeed stem from Ovid, despite its abruptness:

Mittor ad Alciden a coniuge conscia mentis  
Littera, si coniunx Deianira tua ist.

He suggests a parallel for littera in Trist. V.4 and for littera conscia mentis in Her. XVII.265. The si coniunx Deianira has models in Her. V.4; Trist. V.13.2; Ex Ponto

mention of Oechalia (a city which Hercules has recently captured, killing its king and capturing his daughter) identifies the basic time reference of the letter and the event which has prompted Deianira to write. However, it is nostris in the final position of the line which, when connected with titulis, sheds light on Deianira's conception of her own status with regard to Hercules and

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I.3; I.10. However this merely suggests the interpolator's familiarity with Ovid. This distich is found only in MS P, the codex Regius and a fifteenth century edition, yet Vahlen still accepts its authenticity (Vahlen, 28). Alternatively, W. Schmitz-Cronenbroeck terms the change from the letter speaking in the first person to the voice of Deianira (mittor, gratulor) confused and unbearable and "genügt an sich schon, jenes Distichon als unechten Zusatz zu erweisen" (Schmitz-Cronenbroeck, 8). He takes exception to verse 2 of the interpolated distich, considering it inconceivable that Deianira would not depict herself as anything other than Hercules' spouse. He also feels that conscia mentis is false as Deianira only realizes the significance of Nessus' poison towards the end of the letter. Schmitz-Cronenbroeck does not consider the idea that conscia mentis may merely refer to Deianira's thoughts. E.-A. Kirfel cites the same problem between mittor and gratulor (Kirfel, 67). He cites another interpolated use of the word mentis (Her. VI. interpolated distich) and concludes, "Die inneren Anstöße und die grosse Anlichkeit mit dem interpolierten Eingagn zu Brief VI verbieten es, dem Brief IX vorangesetzten Distichon einen Werts zuzumessen." (Kirfel, 68). He does not see a problem with the introductory verses as they stand now. Rather, they begin with what is psychologically most important for Hercules. The mention of the capture of Oechalia in verse 2 suggests the reason for Deianira's complaint and is introduced by queror, which is antithetic to gratulor (Kirfel, 68). On these grounds the interpolated distich has been excluded from this discussion. For further discussion see H. Vahlen, Über die Anfänge der Heroiden des Ovid (Berlin: Abhdlg. d. Berl. Akad., 1881), 27-30; W. Schmitz-Cronenbroeck, "Die Anfänge der Heroiden des Ovids," (Ph.D. diss., University of Cologne, 1937), 8; E.-A. Kirfel, Untersuchungen zur Briefform der Heroides Ovids, Noctes Romanae vol. 11 (Bern: Paul Haupt, 1969), 67-68.

his triumphs. As Palmer suggests, Deianira sees herself as the legitimate partner of Hercules' glories,<sup>11</sup> thus his victories are hers as well. The whole concept of status is one which Deianira takes very much to heart and this is emphasized by its early inclusion in her letter.

A major theme is introduced in the second verse: the relationship between the conqueror and the conquered, expressed by the play on words of victorem victae. A major part (Her. IX.53-118) of Deianira's letter to Hercules deals with this theme of conqueror and conquered, especially in terms of role reversal. Hercules, the great hero, has not only been conquered, but has been conquered by a woman (victae). This detail lends acidity to the queror at the end of this verse. It balances the initial gratulor and therefore adds a touch of irony to Deianira's congratulations. Thus Deianira's introductory address to Hercules carries an underlying tone of irony and bitterness.

Heroides IX: Section IV: Lines 3-26: Narratio

This section of Heroides IX introduces the fama of Hercules after his victory at Oechalia. It comes as no

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<sup>11</sup> A. Palmer, P. Ovidius Nasonis, Heroides and the Greek Translation of Planudes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898; reprint, Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967), 359.

surprise, after the bitterness of the first two verses, that fama is modified by the adjective decolor (Her. IX.4). Jacobson points to the almost moralizing tone of these words,<sup>12</sup> which indeed seems suggested by the preceding queror (Her. IX.2) and the succeeding infitianda (Her. IX.4). That Hercules' fama must be disowned obviously indicates that, in Deianira's eyes at least, it is something unworthy and undesired. As this passage continues, it is gradually revealed that it is Hercules' giving up of his masculine characteristics of strength and prowess which has here occasioned his disgrace. He has given up his reputation for courage not to some great divinity or hero, but rather to the smaller, fickle forces of Venus (Her. IX.11-12) and Amor (Her. IX.26). As Deianira recounts Hercules' past achievements (Her. IX.21-26), she does so, as Jacobson suggests, with both pride and disappointment -- pride for what Hercules has achieved and disappointment for the present result.<sup>13</sup> There is almost an element of disbelief in Deianira's words as she tries to find the seeds of Hercules' present weakness in his early years:

Tene ferunt geminos pressisse tenaciter angues,  
 Cum tener in cunis iam Iove dignus eras?  
 Coepisti melius, quam desinis; ultima primis

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<sup>12</sup> Howard Jacobson, Ovid's Heroides (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 239.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

Cedunt: dissimiles hic vir et ille puer.

(Her. IX.21-24)

In the end, she can but assert that Hercules has become a different person. She cannot reconcile the past with the present. In a sense, then, her letter becomes an attempt to understand the present Hercules against the background of his past deeds. Her difficulty is compounded by the knowledge that Hercules has been defeated by apparently weaker figures, Omphale and Amor.<sup>14</sup> That Deianira is amazed by these events is suggested by her references to Hercules' miraculous labours, in this case, supporting the earth for Atlas (Her. IX.17-18), throttling snakes while still in his cradle (Her. IX.21-22) and the defeat of wild beasts and the Stheneleian foe (Her. I.25). As Jacobson comments, Deianira is totally absorbed in (and also by) Hercules' past, "replete with feelings of awe and admiration."<sup>15</sup> However, Deianira's list of Hercules' exploits also reminds Hercules of his successes. The contrast established between his past role as conqueror and present role as handmaid is calculated to shame Hercules and to persuade him to end his servitude to Omphale. (Deianira is forced to return again to the insoluble problem of the difference between Hercules then and now at

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<sup>14</sup> Sophocles' Deianira makes the same comment (Trach. 488-489).

<sup>15</sup> Jacobson, 240.

a later date in the poem.)

Heroides IX: Section V: Lines 27-118: Complaints

Deianira now identifies herself as Herculis uxor (Her. IX.27). This phrase repeats the idea inherent in the titulis nostris of the first line of the letter. This epithet illustrates the most important factor of life for Deianira. It solidifies the feeling in the first two sections of the letter that Deianira sees her existence only in terms of her position as Hercules' wife. Jacobson comments that Deianira's life gains significance only in this role<sup>16</sup> and its repetition further on in the letter, both in words and meaning,<sup>17</sup> supports this view. The first six lines of this section (Her. IX.27-32) are also heavy with references to marriage, spouses, in-laws, and images related to the state of marriage.<sup>18</sup> Given Deianira's preoccupation with her husband and her married state, these references are totally in character. The comparison of marriage to the yoking of animals (Her. IX.29-30) prepares

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>17</sup> See Herculis uxor (Her. IX.149); advena paelex (Her. IX.121). Jacobson, 131-132.

<sup>18</sup> See nupta (Her. IX.27); socer (Her. IX.28); magno coniuge nupta (Her. IX.30); nubere, nube (Her. IX.32). Ovid also offers a vivid parallel to the difficulty of being married to someone of dissimilar status: inaequales veniunt ad aratra iuveni (Her. IX.29).

for the transition of thought to Hercules as the great subduer (Her. IX.33-34). Deianira's complete identification with Hercules is further revealed as she mentally shares in the dangers which he faces (Her. IX.35-38).<sup>19</sup> These dangers are almost physically present for Deianira (iactor), even though she herself is domo vidua votis operata pudicis (Her. IX. 35). The combination of torqueor and iactor (Her. IX.35;37) denotes Deianira's restlessness of mind, a restlessness perhaps due partly to the fact that she does not share in all of Hercules' labours and therefore does not know what is actually happening to Hercules at any given time, and to the natural anxiety of a wife for an absent husband. She is limited in her actions to what a good wife can do to protect her husband -- pray for him votis operata pudicis (Her. IX.35) and seek to anticipate what is in store for him (Her. IX.39-40). In this respect, fama rears its ugly head again (Her. IX.41-42) and causes Deianira much torment.

As with most of the women of the Heroides, Deianira is described as alone, bereft of family (Her. IX.43-44). This contrasts with the depiction of Deianira in Sophocles, where she is able to appeal to her Nurse, the Chorus and

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<sup>19</sup> Phaedra enters into Hippolytus' love of hunting in the same way as Deianira does, except that Phaedra uses it as a sign of love, not anxiety (Her. IV.37-44; Eur., Hippolytus 215-221). Both women seem to feel that by participating in their husband's/lover's pursuits, they will become closer to him.

her son Hyllus (Soph., Trach. 49-60; 61-93; 584-587). In Her. IX, even Hyllus himself is absent (Her. IX.44). For Medea and Ariadne, the absence of family members seems to denote the sacrifices they have made on behalf of their husbands -- they have willingly left their homeland to follow them to a land which is new and strange. It also suggests the complete dependence of the wife on her husband/lover, since he is the only person to whom she has any recourse in times of trouble. Even Dido regards herself as cut off from all familial ties despite the close and willing proximity of her sister Anna. In Ovid, as in Vergil, the only real help Anna is allowed to give her sister is to take care of her ashes after her death (Her. VII.191-192; Aen. IV.675-685). However, in Deianira's case, she is not bereft of her family because of something she herself has done. She has not betrayed her father and country (Medea, Ariadne), nor has she fled to protect her husband's people and wealth (Dido). Deianira's hand had been won by Hercules in a battle against the river god Achelous (Her. IX.138-140). Thus she rightfully belongs to Hercules and is separated not only from her own family but even from Hercules' (Her. IX.43-44) principally because of where Hercules chose to settle her. Unlike Medea, Dido and Ariadne, Deianira's only sacrifice for Hercules has been this separation from family. She cannot appeal to her past services. All of Hercules' exploits were achieved by

Hercules' own efforts, Deianira has no part in them. She has, up to this point, endured Hercules' philanderings (Her. IX.49-52), but she does nothing more than recall, albeit bitterly, these derelictions to Hercules' attention. Therefore, Deianira can only appeal to Hercules through her marriage and her own reputation. Unlike Medea, Dido and Ariadne, Deianira has no guilt in her past.

The absence of family members recalls the agents of Deianira's separation: Eurystheus and the persistent anger of Juno (Her. IX.45-46). However this is not Deianira's main charge against Hercules. He threatens her position as Herculis uxor by beginning peregrinos amores (Her. IX.47). She scornfully remarks that any woman who wants can become a mother by Hercules (Her. IX.48). However, Deianira must surely have become accustomed to Hercules' philandering by this time. Thus, Deianira is disturbed not merely by a foreign love, but by the type of service Hercules is required to fulfil (the conqueror is turned handmaid) and to whom he owes this duty (a woman). This is connected to the initial complaint in the second verse of the letter: the conqueror had become the conquered. Despite his long list of past successes, Hercules himself had been conquered. This overmastering has an immediate effect on Deianira, which is why she calls herself Omphale's noverca (Lydo ... Lamo [Her. IX.54]). Deianira feels the sting of shame as much as, if not more than

Hercules, and so judges the seriousness of his actions by how severely they have affected her personally. The love affairs with Auge, Astydamia (the nymph of Ormenus), and the fifty daughters of Thespius seem not to have seriously disturbed Deianira either socially or emotionally. With Omphale however, Hercules is no longer in control -- it is Omphale who directs their relationship and it seems to be this factor which seriously disturbs and shames Ovid's Deianira. The wife of the great Hercules has a husband who is under the thumb of a foreign queen. Therefore Deianira can rightfully say that she too ("Sentitur nobis iraque longa deae." [Her. IX.46]) suffers from the judgments of Eurystheus and the wrath of Juno.

As Deianira lists Hercules' duties while in servitude to Omphale (Her. IX.53-118), her letter begins to take on the shape of a biography of Hercules' life. This digression compares a "before" and "after" Hercules in the sense that his strength and courage in facing innumerable wild beasts (Her. IX.85-118) are contrasted with his role-reversal as handmaid of Omphale (Her. IX.53-84). This experience of Hercules', which Deianira styles as a recens crimen (Her. IX.53), threatens Deianira on two counts. Firstly, she is disturbed because the river Meander has seen Hercules bejewelled like a woman (Her. IX.55-58). The positioning of both Meandros (Her. IX.55) and vidit (Her. IX.57) is significant particularly because it contains the

emphasis on hearsay and reputation which were discussed earlier. Ovid seems to suggest that because Hercules' heroic reputation has been tarnished by these actions, Deianira herself, as the wife of Hercules, may also have suffered. Not only does she suffer from the inequality of their social positions (Her. IX.31-32), but she can derive no benefit from a husband who assumes feminine garb and does a woman's work. Ovid's Deianira sees Hercules' loss of stature as a reflection on her own reputation. She points to his tarnished social standing (and therefore her own) by the frequent use of verbs denoting shame or disbelief and of adjectives contrasting Hercules' strong and weak characteristics.<sup>20</sup> The listing of his various conquests (Nemean lion [Her. IX.61], Diomedes [Her. IX.67], Busiris [Her. IX.69], Antaeus [Her. IX.71]) sharpens the contrast between Deianira's Hercules and Omphale's Hercules. Omphale's Hercules has all the standard female accoutrements: monilia (Her. IX.57), zona (Her. IX.66), calathum (Her. IX.73;76), fila (Her. IX.77), pensa (Her. IX.78), stamina (Her. IX.79), fusos (Her. IX.80).<sup>21</sup> These

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<sup>20</sup> See puduit (Her. IX.59); ausus es (Her. IX.63); dedecuisse (Her. IX.66); puendus (Her. IX.70); pigeat (Her. IX.72); dissimulanda (Her. IX.84); molli ... viro (Her. IX.79); robusto ... pollice (Her. IX.77); digitis ... duris (Her. IX.79); praevalidae ... manus (Her. IX.80).

<sup>21</sup> Palmer points to the populus alba (Her. IX.64) as the emblem of the "manly athlete" (Palmer, 365). This would therefore intensify the contrast between Hercules the athlete and Hercules the man wearing a mitra, the headwear of women and "effeminate persons." (Palmer, 565).

descriptive nouns tend to emphasize the ridiculousness of the scene which Deianira describes and it is this very ridiculousness which shames Deianira. Although it may be difficult to envisage without laughter a brawny Hercules disguised as a woman, to Deianira at least, it is a picture of serious and grave import.<sup>22</sup> Hercules' ridiculousness reflects on Deianira.<sup>23</sup> It is she, not Hercules, who seems to have taken her public role very seriously. Thus she lists his past victories and his shameful behaviour starkly, in an attempt to shock Hercules back into an awareness of his social duty.

Unlike many other heroines of the Heroides (e.g. Medea, Ariadne and Dido) Deianira does not focus or emphasize the crimes or sacrifices she has made for Hercules. Indeed in this section of the letter (Her. IX. 27-118), in which the description of Hercules as a handmaid (Her. IX.53-118) comprises more than two-thirds, there is

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<sup>22</sup> Comparison might be made with the opening scene of Euripides' Bacchae, in which the two old men, Cadmus and Teiresias, appear dressed in the garb of the Bacchantes (Eur., Bacchae 177ff.). There has been much discussion over the seriousness or lack of seriousness of this scene on the grounds of ridiculousness (see the commentary of Euripides' Bacchae by E.R. Dodds, second ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 89-91). A similar situation is present here, where the picture of Hercules dressed up as a woman has inherent comic qualities. Deianira, however, regards the scene most seriously, just as Cadmus and Teiresias were serious about the costume and manner of devotees of Bacchus.

<sup>23</sup> Ovid paints an even more ludicrous picture of Heracles dressed up in Omphale's clothes in Fasti II.305-326.

very little mention of Deianira herself. Once Deianira begins her description of the female Hercules, her own identity seems to disappear almost completely, except for the censorious tone of the passage as a whole. The laments which one would expect to form the main body of Deianira's letter are missing. They occur mainly at Her. IX.119-142 and Her. IX.143-164 but even within these verses they have none of the force of the complaints one finds with a Medea or an Ariadne. Instead Deianira becomes absorbed in exploiting the opportunity of shaming Hercules by referring to his disreputable behaviour. Instead of cursing Hercules, she retreats even further into his past, as she recounts, one after another, Hercules' heroic exploits (Her. IX.85-104), concluding with a caustic command: "I nunc, tolle animos et fortia gesta recense (Her. IX.105). Obviously, there is no need for Deianira to recount to Hercules his own exploits. Ovid uses the recollections of his heroines as a means of filling in the background details of myths, all the while maintaining the fragile illusion of the letter form. For example, in Heroides XII, Medea recapitulates her first meeting with Jason and his completion of the trials set before him (Her. XII.29038; 39-52). Similarly, Dido recounts her reception of Aeneas onto her shores, their love affair (Her. VII.89-96), the story of her husband's death and her own escape (Her. VII.111-132). Ariadne as well makes brief references to

her past life and her meeting with Theseus (Her. X.71-74; 99-104). This technique permits Ovid to eliminate the need for an intruding commentator (as in his Byblis letter in Met. IX.523-573) and yet present a clear picture of Hercules the valiant hero. As the Ovidian Deianira describes the shame of Hercules' opponents, she ruthlessly destroys Hercules' heroic stature, paving the way for his own defeat and degradation until he himself has been mastered (Her. IX.108). Ovid's Deianira even seeks to make the shame of the scene even stronger by imagining that Hercules himself was reporting his exploits to Omphale (Her. IX.84).

All four women studied here saw the past as a happier time, although they were mainly unaware of this fact. Deianira is the exception to the three other women because although she too sees the past as a happy, her happiness did not depend completely upon the presence of her husband. She does not ask Hercules to return to her and restricts her complaint about his absence to two lines (Her. IX.33, 35).<sup>24</sup> She is concerned because she does not know what is happening to Hercules as well as because he is not by her side. True to her nature, when Hercules is at his most powerful and productive, Deianira feels that she

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<sup>24</sup> Contrast Sophocles' Deianira, who complains of Hercules' absence in the first lines of the play (Trach. 31-48). The Nurse also supports Deianira in her complaints and suggests practical measures (Trach. 49-60).

is also.

At the end of this long historical reminiscence, Deianira can no more understand Hercules' actions than she could at the beginning of her letter. She is forced to conclude with a simple statement which expresses a statement of fact, rather than an explanation:

Quo tu non esses iure, vir illa fuit,  
Qua tanto minor es, quanto te, maxime rerum,  
Quam quos vicisti, vincere maius erat.

(Her. IX.106-108)

It is almost as though Deianira has given up and allowed Omphale supremacy over Hercules. The next two lines contain an element of finality, of hopelessness:

Illi procedit rerum mensura tuarum:  
Cede bonis: here laudis amica tuae.

(Her. IX.109-110)

Deianira has ceased her struggle to reconcile the two different Hercules and is bitter about the degradation of Hercules' heroic stature.

The final eight lines of this section (Her. IX.111-118) continue the idea of finality. Deianira attempts to make Hercules understand how he has unknowingly (nescis [Her. IX.113]) been overcome by Omphale. Deianira, presented with the alleged facts, even though she knows that they are carried by fama, is forced to admit their reality. In her world, hearsay about Hercules, regardless of whether it is true or not, affects her. Even if the stories about Hercules' time with Omphale should prove to

be false, for Deianira, the damage has already been done. The Ovidian Deianira must therefore deal with the rumours about Hercules as if they were facts and she suffers accordingly. In this respect, Deianira is very much like Aeschylus' Clytemnestra, who also suffers from manifold rumours about Agamemnon (Aesch., Agamemnon 846-870).

Since Hercules has obviously yielded to Omphale, Deianira, as part of Hercules, is forced to yield also. Thus with only a single "O pudor!" (Her. IX.111), Deianira is able to envisage Omphale dressed up in Hercules' arms without too much difficulty. This passage, in which a woman takes on the accoutrements of a man, thus forms a balance for the description of Hercules in female garb (Her. IX.55-64):

Femina tela tulit Lernaeis atra venenis  
Ferre gravem lana vix satis apta colum,  
Instruxitque manum clava domitricae ferarum  
Vidit et in speculo coniugis arma sui.

(Her. IX.115-118)

That a woman is able to wear Hercules' traditional garb diminishes the credibility of his exploits and of his physical prowess. Hercules' club becomes a symbol of his strength and for a woman to use it suggests that Hercules is not as strong as his reputation maintained. It also reduces Hercules to the level of a lover besotted with his mistress, whom he allows to dress up in his "uniform". The remark that Omphale sees herself in the mirror in Hercules' weapons (Her. IX.118) suggests that she postures before the

mirror to see how well Hercules' lion-skin suits her -- she is interested in the "look", not in Hercules' ability or strength. Thus Hercules' arms are reduced to the guise of fashionable apparel.

Heroides IX: Section VI: Lines 119-142: Comparatio

Deianira may have come to terms with the existence of Omphale, but she has yet to do so with the threatening figure of Iole. The Ovidian Deianira begins on a qualifying note: she is willing to accept Omphale's presence, but only because knowledge of Omphale comes through rumour alone:

Haec tamen audieram; licuit non credere fama,  
Et venit ad sensus mollis ab aure dolor.

(Her. IX.119-120)

It is another situation entirely when Deianira is forced to confront Iole face to face.<sup>25</sup> That Iole is a peregrinus amor is important, given the prominent positioning of advena paelex (Her. IX.121). More important is the way in which Iole presents herself as she is led to Hercules' house:

Nec venit incultis captarum more capillis,  
Fortunam vultu fassa decente suam;

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<sup>25</sup> Clytemnestra faces a similar situation with the arrival of Cassandra in Aeschylus' Agamemnon (1019-1030), although she had made up her mind to kill Agamemnon even before he arrived home with Cassandra. The Deianira of the Heroides never even considers this option.

Ingreditur late lato spectabilis auro,  
 Qualiter in Phrygia tu quoque cultus eras;  
 Dat vultum populo sublimis ut Hercule victo:

(Her. IX.125-129)

Deianira could accept the reality of Omphale because the information came through fama (Her. IX.120). She cannot accept the reality of Iole firstly because this foreign woman is paraded before her eyes ("Ante meos oculos adducitur advena paelex, / Nec mihi, quae patior, dissimulare licet." [Her. IX.121-122]) and secondly and most importantly, Iole does not act as a captive should.<sup>26</sup> She is fully aware of the benefits and possibilities of her position and does not appear in any way downcast (Her. IX.125-129). In Omphale's case, Deianira can pretend that the whole situation does not even exist ("licuit non credere famae" [Her. IX.119]); with Iole, Deianira is not even permitted this luxury ('Nec mihi, ... dissimulare licet." [Her. IX.122]).

This passage is heavy with references to sight and appearance and, as Simone Viarre maintains, a dramatic

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<sup>26</sup> In Sophocles' Trachiniae, the messenger says that Hercules had sent Iole " οὐδ' ὥστε δούλην " (Trach. 367). Also, Sophocles' Iole arrives with a properly submissive demeanor and thus receives sympathy and pity from Deianira (Trach. 309-310). However the lack of any such indication in the Heroides may suggest Iole's own confidence in her position which would in turn disturb Deianira all the more. Hercules may well have sent Iole late lato spectabilis auro (Her. IX.27) but it is very likely that Iole herself decided to advance without vultu ... decente (Her. IX.126).

insistence on clothing, jewels and attitudes.<sup>27</sup> In her attitude and manner of dress, Iole seems to be telling Deianira that her role as Herculis uxor is now over and that she has usurped Deianira's place. Both Iole and Deianira are aware of the significance of dressing for one's position. Regardless of whether or not Iole has truly taken over Deianira's role, this is exactly what Deianira herself believes to be a possibility:

Forsitan et pulsa Aetolide Deianira  
 Nomine deposito paelicis uxor erit,  
 Eurytidosque Ioles et insanii Alcidae  
 Turpia famosus corpora iunget Hymen.

(Her. IX.131-134)<sup>28</sup>

From these words, it is obvious that Deianira now does not feel herself to be very secure in her role as Herculis uxor. She is completely undone by this blatant acceptance of another mistress and is immediately convinced that Hercules has put her aside. This affair is not like the previous ones because in this case Hercules has brought his mistress home; it is now impossible for Deianira to ignore this woman's existence. The words she uses to describe her

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<sup>27</sup> Simone Viarre, "La rhétorique et l'imagination dans la IXe Héroïde (Déjanire à Hercule)," Helmantica XXVIII (1967): 556. For the references to sight and appearance see oculos (Her. IX.121); non sinis averti (Her. IX.123); oculis (Her. IX.124); aspicienda (Her. IX.124); vultu (Her. IX.126); incultis ... capillis (Her. IX.125); captarum more (Her. IX.125); spectabilis (Her. IX.127); sublimis (Her. IX.129).

<sup>28</sup> Sophocles' Deianira thinks the same thing (Trach. 530-551).

state of mind are those of someone describing stark terror:

Mens fugit admonitu, frigusque perambulat artus,  
Et iacet in gremio languida facta manus.

(Her. IX.135-136)

The next six lines briefly recount Hercules' battles with the river god Achelous and with the centaur Nessus (Her. IX.137-142). By declaring that she had not been a source of regret for Hercules, Deianira seems to imply that Hercules was a reason for regret on her part. However, Hercules, having won Deianira, was legitimately able to marry her:

Me quoque cum multis, sed me sine crimine amasti;  
Ne pigeat, pugnae bis tibi causa fui.

(Her. IX.137-138)

By analogy, it is obviously a source of shame for Hercules to have loved Iole. The accusatory tone of these and the following lines, as Deianira recounts her early years with Hercules, describe her feelings of betrayal. The contrast between the honour she brought to Hercules and the shame that she feels he brought to her is strongly implied. The last four lines of this section (Her. IX.139-142) recall to the reader Deianira's history and her share in her husband's death. Although one is always aware of Deianira's story, the details tend to fade into the background in the face of Deianira's consuming interest in Hercules' career. These four lines remind the reader of the essential reason for sympathizing with Deianira. The

recapitulation of the Achelous and Nessus stories emphasizes Deianira's innocence in the affair and her ignorance of the actual power of the sanguis equinus. On a more significant level, a retelling of the Nessus story has jolted Deianira's memory. She remembers the promise of the centaur, that his potion would ensure her lover's faithfulness. She has at her hands a weapon against Iole and the means to recapture her position of Herculis uxor and the meaning of her life.<sup>29</sup>

Heroides IX: Section VII: Lines 143-164: Accusatio

It is not until this point in the letter that the reader appreciates that Deianira has already sent the poisoned cloak to Hercules. She seems to have resorted to the use of magic before she resorted to pen and paper. The story of Medea and Jason contains a similar idea, as Medea also sent a poisoned cloak (and crown) to Jason's new wife, but with an intent to cause injury, not with a desire to encourage or regain love (Eur., Medea 1167-1221). Although

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<sup>29</sup> We are not allowed to consider why Deianira would believe that a potion given to her by a victim of Hercules would work in and not against her favour. Perhaps she thought that the centaur's gift was a last token of appreciation from an ardent admirer! The whole scene does imply that Deianira has a rather simplistic and innocent mind. It is however, this innocence of Deianira's that causes her a great deal of trouble. She is by no means a clever or conniving woman and in this respect is much like Ovid's Ariadne in the Heroides.

the effect of Medea's and Deianira's gifts are the same, their reasons for sending them are polar opposites.

The letter has also been written in anticipation of what might happen. Deianira obviously did not trust the efficacy of the centaur's magic. She was not completely convinced that Hercules would return to her. The letter now reads as Deianira's attempt to comfort herself, to reassure herself that she had, after all, taken the correct measures.<sup>30</sup> In the interval between sending the cloak and receiving the news of Hercules' impending death, Deianira has had time to speculate on the efficacy of the potion. Perhaps the delay has served to convince her that it was ineffectual and so she resorts to writing this letter.

As Deianira writes her letter, she seems to be trying to understand both the past and present Hercules. She has some suspicion that she is not without fault in her decision to use the centaur's potion.<sup>31</sup> This is not to say that she was aware at all of the possible negative results of Nessus' potion. Rather, she realizes that it was her cloak which has harmed Hercules, and she cannot yet accept the horror of what she has unwittingly done.

For a woman so concerned with fama, it is perhaps

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<sup>30</sup> Sophocles' Deianira was also uncertain about the validity of her actions (Trach. 582-593).

<sup>31</sup> Sophocles' Deianira assumes complete responsibility, despite the efforts of the chorus to convince Deianira of her innocence (Trach. 722-730).

fitting that the news of her husband's imminent death should also come as a rumour:

Sed quid ego haec refere? scribenti nuntia venit  
Fama, virum tunicae tabe perire meae.

(Her. IX.143-144)

An event which Deianira could never have envisaged has occurred which throws her whole world into complete chaos. It is not surprising that the news of her husband's death brings forth her cry from her heart:

Ei mihi! quid feci! quo me furor egit amantem?  
Impia quid dubitas Deianira mori?

(Her. IX.145-146)

Vessey is critical of the refrain (Her. IX.146, 152, 159, 164):

This refrain certainly adds nothing to the effect but merely serves as a make-shift to avoid the necessity of adequately describing the grief of Deianira.<sup>32</sup>

It would appear that Vessey has overlooked a crucial aspect of Deianira's character. Her status as Herculis uxor will be nullified by the death of her husband (Her. IX.149-150). This perception becomes even more acute when Deianira feels that she is responsible for Hercules' death. Her hesitation over suicide now appears despicable as her feelings of guilt increase. Her repeated return to this self-recrimination demonstrates the chaotic nature of her thoughts. She is barely capable of rational reasoning.

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<sup>32</sup> Vessey, 354.

Her ideas go round in circles, always returning to the same point, the only fixed thought of which she is capable. The position of impia as the first word of each refrain emphasizes Deianira's obsession with her guilt. The use of a refrain may be uncommon in Ovid,<sup>33</sup> but it clearly describes Deianira's continuous, repetitive, train of thought. It denotes a symptom of anxiety and desperation from which Deianira certainly suffers, as well as feelings of guilt and self-recrimination.

Deianira also seems to view herself as one part in a chain of destruction. She looks back to the fate of her brother Meleager at the hands of his mother (Her. IX.151-154). She seems to equate her mother's act with her own, even though the extenuating circumstances were quite different.<sup>34</sup> Although her reasoning is false, Deianira's desperation is also due to the fact that she sees herself as a member of a family fated to cause the death of another

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<sup>33</sup> There are parallel uses of a refrain in Cat. 61.4-5ff., 62.5f.; Vergil, Eclogues VIII.21ff; Ovid, Am. I.6.24ff. Jacobson terms the refrain in Heroides IX a controlling device which "evokes the inevitability of doom. It is the bell's tolling, unfeeling, relentless, inexorable." (Jacobson, 229.)

<sup>34</sup> Firstly Meleager's mother Althaea had to choose between avenging the death of her brothers with the death of her son or protecting her son at the expense of the moral obligations she owed to her brothers. Thus the moral grounds on which Deianira and her mother based their decisions were quite different. Secondly, Althaea knew and had known for quite some time that if she burnt Meleager's life-log, she would also kill her son. Deianira had no notion of the true nature of Nessus' cloak.

close family member. Deianira feels that this gives her all the more reason to break the chain by her own death.<sup>35</sup>

Deianira's prayer, sworn on the laws of her marriage bed, recalls the Sophoclean Deianira's farewell to her marriage bed (Soph., Trach. 920-926).<sup>36</sup> It is by this most sacred oath that she maintains her innocence in Hercules' death:

Deprecor hoc unum per iura sacerrima lecti,  
Ne videar fatis insidiata tuis.

(Her. IX.159-160)

Despite her own guilt, Deianira does acknowledge Nessus' part in Hercules' death:

Nessus, ut est avidum persussus arundine pectus,  
'Hic' dixit 'vires sanguis amoris habet.'  
Inlita Nesseo misi tibi texta veneno.

(Her. IX.161-163)

The Ovidian Deianira uses Nessus' own words in an attempt to explain how she came not only to accept the poison, but even to use it. Although Deianira identifies Nessus as the

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<sup>35</sup> Phaedra expresses a similar feeling of being part of a chain of consequences, although in her case, she uses it to justify her love for Hippolytus (Her. IV.53-66). She is attempting to continue the chain for her own desires, rather than trying to break the chain and end disaster for all, as Deianira is attempting.

<sup>36</sup> Vergil's Dido also returns to her bed and Aeneas' before she commits suicide (Aen. IV.648-660); so does Alcestis (Eur., Alcestis 175-188). The bed becomes a symbol of marriage and of the promises connected with marriage. For a discussion of the bed as a metaphor for marriage see Helmut Hross, "Die Klagen der verlassenen Heroiden in der lateinischen Dichtung," (Ph.D. diss., Ludwigs-Maximilian University, 1958), 128ff.

primary cause of Hercules' imminent death, she does not deny her own responsibility. The final refrain in verse 164 suggests Deianira's continuing and weighty guilt.

Heroides IX: Section VIII: Lines 165-168: Farewell

The final section of the letter lists those nearest and dearest to Deianira's heart. Like Dido, Deianira has her sister Gorge to remember (Her. IX.165) and her brother Tydeus as well (Her. IX.166). The farewell to lux (Her. IX.167), reminiscent of Greek tragedy,<sup>37</sup> determines the course of Deianira's thoughts and her final resolution. Deianira leaves to the end her farewells to those whom she considers most important, her husband and her son (Her. IX.168). The positioning of vir and Hylle emphasizes their significance to Deianira, one as the reason for life and the other as the proof of this life. Hyllus is the only remaining proof of Deianira's marriage to Hercules and of her identification with Hercules' career.

In Ovid's Heroides, the manner of Deianira's suicide is left entirely to the imagination as only Deianira's last words are reported (Her. IX.165-168).

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<sup>37</sup> See Euripides, Alcestis 282-284; Sophocles' Antigone 876-882.

Although women often committed suicide with a sword,<sup>38</sup> Ovid deliberately makes no such mention. Unlike the Dido of the Heroides, Deianira is not seeking to present a melodramatic picture of herself. It is not important how Deianira kills herself, merely that she is determined and prepared to do so.

Her. IX: Section IX: Conclusions about the  
Nature of Deianira

It is possible to see, then, what Ovid might have been reading or have already read, during the composition of Heroides IX. There is a close, basic resemblance between the Sophoclean and Heroidean Deianiras. However, as is usual with Ovid, he chooses only those elements of the stories which he himself is interested in pursuing. The major difference between the Sophoclean and Heroidean versions of the Deianira story is that Ovid concentrates on Deianira exclusively. The story is told from her eyes and from her viewpoint, a method which is specifically determined by the letter form. As well, Ovid changes the main emphasis from Iole to Omphale. Although Iole is the actual catalyst for the letter, Deianira has been shamed

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<sup>38</sup> Dido used a sword in both Vergil (Aen. IV.663-665) and Ovid (Heroides VII.184). In Sophocles, Deianira also uses a sword (Trach. 929-930), although in Apollodorus she hangs herself (Ap. Bib. II.7.7).

more seriously and for a longer period of time because of Hercules' relationship with Omphale. Iole puts the finishing touches to Deianira's humiliation. As well, although the Ovidian Deianira mentions twice that this service to Omphale was imposed upon Hercules (Her. IX.7;45), the significant references to Venus and Love suggests that she holds Hercules and his passions equally responsible for the relationship (Her. IX.11;26;134). The Sophoclean version of the Deianira story presents a more unified depiction. Hercules fell in love with Iole and sacked Oechalia in order to possess her. Thus the Sophoclean Deianira seems concerned mainly with her relationship to Hercules and not with her own reputation. It is Ovid who brings Deianira's position in Hercules' household and Deianira's feelings about her position in society into clear focus.

The theme of fama is inevitably tied to the concept of one's standing in society. This theme comprises three significant sections of Heroides IX: 3-26, 119-142 and 146-164. In each of these sections fama is closely tied to the sister theme of reputation and since Deianira connects her reputation to Hercules', she suffers from his disgraces. The connection between fama and one's reputation has its parallel in Vergil's Dido (Aen. IV). Dido's death also seems due, in part, to her loss of reputation and the subsequent deterioration of her standing in the eyes of her

people. Although motivated by different causes, both women succumb to suicide. Even Hercules' whereabouts seems to be derived from fama and rumor (Her. IX.2, 21, 41, 53, 119, 143-4). It would seem that Hercules is scarcely ever able to present news of his exploits himself. The struggle between rumour and fact is one with which most of the women of the Heroides must contend, especially as most are related in some way to well-known figures such as Hercules, Jason, Aeneas or Theseus. The reputation, real or fictitious, of men such as these is in part responsible for the torments which their women suffer.

Heroides IX demonstrates the inner turmoil of the mind of a woman who has twice lost her husband to another and is attempting to recapture his attention. Unlike Medea, Deianira's past behaviour has been exemplary. However, she experiences feelings of guilt over her responsibility (however unwitting) for his death. She was prompted to this act because of the importance her social standing (Herculis uxor) had for her. This position was threatened by Hercules' actions (in his transvestite role) and by his new mistress (Iole). Thus Deianira, seeking to improve the situation, actually destroys her world by causing Hercules' death. Deianira seeks suicide as a fitting punishment for what she has done. Although innocently embroiled in the battle between Hercules and Nessus, Deianira is the pawn for the beginning and end of

their rivalry. Heroides IX discusses the helplessness of women who are caught in a complex and only half-understood crisis.

Met. IX.1-272: Section I: Introduction

The focus of the Deianira story in Ovid's Metamorphoses is entirely different. In this case, Deianira herself becomes part of the background and the figure of Hercules steps into the foreground of the story. She is used as a means to introduce metamorphoses. She is the indirect cause of Achelous' metamorphosis into a snake and a bull (Met. IX.62-63; 80-81) and the direct cause of Hercules' apotheosis (Met. IX.262-265). Deianira's calamity is briefly, but evocatively, described. There is no mention of her ultimate fate, although it can reasonably be assumed, from the popularity of the Hercules saga as a whole, that Ovid's readers were aware of it. This passage does not emphasize internal conflicts of a psychological nature as do Heroides IX and Sophocles' Trachiniae. It is more narrative in nature, beginning with the description of the battle between Hercules and Achelous (Met. IX.1-97), followed by that between Hercules and Nessus (Met. IX.98-133) and ending with Hercules' death and apotheosis (Met. IX.159-272). The concentration on Hercules is broken by only two passages: that concerning Deianira (Met. IX.134-

138) and that concerning Lichas (Met. IX.211-225). Of the two, only the Deianira passage moves completely away from the narrative format. In contrast with the other characters of the story, only Deianira expresses any uncertainty about her actions. Hercules does not experience anything like the inner turmoil of Deianira. His cries (Met. IX.174-204) are more in the nature of recriminations and accusations and show none of the conflict to which Deianira's words point (Met. IX.147-151).

Book IX as a whole continues the narrative theme of Book VIII, which concludes with the story-telling of Achelous to Theseus and his companions, whom he had invited to his cave to wait for the river to subside. He proceeds to tell them the stories of Philemon and Baucis (Met. VIII.616-724) and Erysichthon (Met. VIII.738-878) and introduces the story of the loss of his horn at the very end of this book (Met. VIII.879-884). Thus this story begins Book IX and is the introduction to the story of Hercules, his conquests, his death and apotheosis. Deianira, as the instigator of his death, plays a minor role in the sequence of these events.

Met. VIII: Section II: Lines 1-88: Achelous

The first section of Book IX introduces the two characters who had concluded Book VIII. The speaker,

Theseus, is presented as Neptunius heros (Met. IX.1) and the river-god Achelous as Calydonius amnis (Met. IX.2). Theseus' question about Achelous' missing horn continues the story-telling setting of Book VIII. The struggle between Hercules and Achelous is related by Achelous.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, perhaps not surprisingly, Hercules is presented as one more powerful in brawn than in brain. For example, when Achelous suggests that Hercules' parentage is rather uncertain, he describes Hercules' reaction as follows:

Talia dicentem iamdudum lumine torvo  
spectat et accensae non fortiter imperat irae  
verbaque tot reddit: 'melior mihi dextera lingua!  
dummodo pugnando superem, tu vince loquendo,'  
concrediturque ferox.

(Met. IX.27-31)

From the beginning of the Hercules saga, Hercules' strength and prowess are emphasized and prove to be the basic elements of his character. However, Anderson rightly defines Hercules' bravery as specious heroism, which deprives the passage of any enduring solemnity. This is to be a dominant characteristic of the entire story.

As Achelous begins his tale, he promises to tell the story in its entirety (Met. IX.4-7) which in turn leads

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<sup>39</sup> Franz Stoessl remarks that Ovid has altered the order of the battle scenes of Achelous and Nessus against Hercules in the Metamorphoses in comparison with the order in Sophocles' Trachiniae. Presumably, this was to facilitate the cross-over from Book VIII to IX and to provide a link (Deianira) between the two tales. Franz Stoessl, Der Tod des Herakles (Zurich: Rhein-Verlag, 1945), 78.

to the first mention of Deianira (Met. IX.9). Her fame is suggested by the manner in which Achelous begins his story:

nomine siqua suo tandem pervenit ad aures  
Deianira tuas, quondam pulcherrima virgo  
multorumque fuit spes invidiosa procorum;

(Met. IX.8-10)

At this point, Deianira's fame, her nomen, is not specifically identified. It may have been based on her beauty and her eligibility for marriage or her role in Hercules' death. It is also natural for Achelous to assume that Theseus has heard of Deianira, since he has just come from Calydon and the Boar Hunt (Met. VIII.260ff.).<sup>40</sup> Deianira's reputation is of great importance and of great extent, as in Heroides IX, but of a different type.<sup>41</sup> It centers on the strategically placed nomine and pulcherrima virgo,<sup>42</sup> which recalls the first sight Aeneas' men had of Queen Dido in Carthage:

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<sup>40</sup> Franz Bömer, comm., P. Ovidius Naso Metamorphosen Vol. IV, Buch VIII-IX (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1977), 280.

<sup>41</sup> Compare Vergil, Aeneid II.81-83; I.375ff.; Met. IX.137-8.

<sup>42</sup> According to Franz Bömer, this verse ending, although obvious, is without parallel in classical poetry. (Bömer, 280.) Galinsky interprets Ovid's reference to Deianira as pulcherrima virgo as a parallel to Vergil's description of Lavinia (Aen. VIII.72; XI.479f.; XII.64-70, 605ff; G. Karl Galinsky, "Hercules Ovidianus," WSt 6 (1972):99). Certainly, Deianira, like Lavinia, was the causa mali tanti (Aen. XI.480) and she seems to play a role similar to Lavinia's in the Aeneid. Both women are depicted as beautiful, the prizes of battles and the reason for those very battles. They have little personal importance beyond their respective roles of causing Hercules' death and continuing the Trojan line.

Haec dum Dardanio Aeneae miranda videntur,  
 dum stupet obtutuque haeret defixus in uno,  
 regina ad templum, forma pulcherrima Dido,  
 incessit magna iuvenum stipante caterva.

(Aen. I.494-497)

Both women, renowned for their beauty, were ultimately destroyed by the men they loved. Common elements between Dido and Deianira are more clearly evident in the Metamorphoses than in the Heroides, perhaps because Deianira appears in the former very much as a victim, with little control over her destiny. As with Dido's relationship with Aeneas, Deianira's relationship with Hercules is guided by outside forces, in this case the centaur Nessus.

Deianira is the logical starting point for Achelous' story because she was multorumque ... spes invidiosa procorum (Met. IX.10)<sup>43</sup> and this initiated the confrontation between Hercules and Achelous. The reference to quondam (Met. IX.9) emphasizes the fairy-tale nature of Deianira's story, lending it a "once upon a time" flavour.<sup>44</sup> Throughout the whole battle scene (Met. IX.31-88), there is no mention of Deianira, whether she is present at the contest, whether she has even seen the

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<sup>43</sup> Compare Her. IX.136. The competition between suitors for the daughter of a king is a familiar scene from myth. See for example the stories of Atalanta (Hyg., Fab. 187), Alcestis (Hyg., Fab. 51) and Andromeda (Hyg., Fab. 64).

<sup>44</sup> For similar uses of quondam see Aen. XI.74, Georgics III.478; Lucretius III.1029; Ovid, Am. I.14.33.

contestants or even whether she has any part in the selection of her husband. Likewise in Heroides IX, although Deianira mentions the contest (Her. IX.138-139), this information may have been acquired after the event and not necessarily during it. In the Sophoclean version, Deianira's presence is clearly indicated:

ἀ δ' εὐώπιδος ἀβρὰ  
 τηλαυγεῖ παρ' ὄχθῳ  
 ἦστο, τὸν ὄν προσμένουσ' ἀκούσαν.

(Trach. 523-525)

Thus in contrast to the Trachiniae, Deianira herself appears much less important, indeed rather secondary to the marriage as a whole. The brief reference to Deianira's beauty, followed by the reference to suitors, suggests a competition for the daughter of a king, a daughter who is eligible by reason of her status as well as her beauty.<sup>45</sup> This element of competition is reinforced by verses 46-48, where Deianira is also represented as a prize. She is hardly distinguishable from any other heroine whose hand in marriage was won through battle.

The description of the actual battle scene in the Metamorphoses reveals echoes of Homer, Sophocles and

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<sup>45</sup> Atalanta's suitors had to compete in a footrace (Hyginus, Fab. 185), Perseus had to kill a sea-monster in order to marry Andromeda (Hyginus, Poet. Astr. II.9.12), and Pelops won Hippodamia in a chariot contest (Ap. Epitome II.3-7; Hyginus, Fab. 84).

Vergil.<sup>46</sup> Achelous, in his telling, glosses over his defeat and more importantly, Deianira's marriage to Hercules. The marriage is also not specifically mentioned in Heroides IX, although Deianira consistently emphasizes the theme of marriage and the importance of marriage.<sup>47</sup> In Metamorphoses IX, Deianira is the prize of the contest and once the prize is lost, Achelous prefers not to dwell on his defeat or on his loss. Instead, Ovid cleverly directs attention to the breaking off of Achelous' horn (and its transformation into the Cornucopia) which was the initial impetus for the telling of the story (Met. IX.85-88). Although Achelous' powers of self-transformation have brought him neither honour nor success, he does seem to regard the transformation of his horn into the Cornucopia with some pride.<sup>48</sup>

Met. IX: Section III: Lines 89-97: Interlude

The Cornucopia introduces the next section of

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<sup>46</sup> Compare Met. IX.40 with Iliad XV.618ff., Verg. Aen. X.693ff. Compare Met. IX.61 with Iliad XI.749; XIX.61; XIV.738; Verg., Aen. XI.418.

<sup>47</sup> See Her. IX.27-32;132-134;149.

<sup>48</sup> M. Haupt, O. Korn, R. Ehwald and M. von Albrecht remark that Ovid was the first to explain that the horn of Achelous became the horn of plenty (M. Haupt, O. Korn, R. Ehwald and M. von Albrecht, P. Ovidius Naso. Metamorphosen Vol. II. Buch VIII-XV. 5th ed., (Dublin: Weidmann, 1966), 73.). Ovid thus concentrates more on this metamorphosis than on the figure of Deianira.

Metamorphoses IX. At Achelous' words, a nymph appears with the horn filled with fruit as the second course of the meal. This short interval breaks the rhythm of Achelous' story-telling and calls the audience back to the reality of Achelous: guests and feast. It provides a suitable ending for both story and feast, as Achelous' guests are now no longer restrained by the flooding waters (Met. IX.92-93).

Met. IX: Section IV: Lines 98-133: Nessus

The theme of Achelous' broken horn provides the tenuous link to the next division of the poem, in which the poet takes over Achelous' role as narrator. Here, as Anderson suggests, "Ovid announces that he intends to contrast the consolable fate of Achelous with the death of Nessus, all for love of Deianira."<sup>49</sup>

The story resumes after the marriage of Hercules and Deianira has occurred and as they are on their way from Calydon to Thebes (patrios muros [Met. IX.103]). In contrast to Achelous, Nessus is to find that contact with Deianira is deadly:

at te, Nesse ferox, eiusdem virginis ardor  
perdiderat volucris traiecitum terga sagitta.

(Met. IX.101-102)

The description of Nessus as ferox (101) anticipates the

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<sup>49</sup> W.S. Anderson, ed., Ovid's Metamorphoses Books 6-10 (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 424.

story and thus paves the way for some catastrophe. The scene changes suddenly at 103 with a description of the river in full spate, which establishes the explanation for Nessus' offer to carry Deianira across the stream.<sup>50</sup> Ovid also provides fresh insight into Hercules' character, which he does not seem to have borrowed from other sources and which he uses as the ostensible reason for letting Nessus carry Deianira: Hercules is described as being "intrepidum pro se, curam de coniuge agentem" (Met. IX.107).<sup>51</sup> The chiasitic arrangement of intrepidum and agentem suggests Hercules' uncertain mind and a duality of character. In contrast to the violent Hercules of the Hercules and Achelous scene, here Ovid seems to present a Hercules with at least a hint of husbandly concern for the safety and well-being of his new wife.<sup>52</sup> Deianira herself remains

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<sup>50</sup> The idea of the swollen stream also provides a further link between section three (97-133) and section one (1-87), as Theseus and his friends were also prevented from continuing their journey because of torrential waters. Both heroes (Hercules and Theseus) are also returning from Calydon after contests, one against a boar (Theseus), the other against a river god (Hercules).

<sup>51</sup> Bömer points to the unusual adjective intrepidum, which is unknown before Ovid and may have been invented by him. (Bömer, 305.)

<sup>52</sup> Apollodorus provides one reason:

αὐτὸς μὲν οὖν Ἡρακλῆς τὸν ποταμὸν διέβη, Δηϊάνειραν δὲ μισθὸν αἰτηθεὶς ἐπέτρεψε Νέσσω διακομίζειν.

Bib. II.7.6

Hyginus gives another:

Nessus Ixionis et Nubis filius,

mute and invisible throughout most of this scene.

Nessus, who apparently is also aware of Deianira's attractions, cleverly flatters Hercules and thus persuades him to entrust Deianira to him:

Nessus adit membrisque valens scituque vadorum,  
'officio' que 'meo ripa sistetur in illa  
haec,' ait, 'Alcide tu viribus utere nando.'

(Met. IX.108-110)

Hercules, true to his earlier characterization (in the contest between Hercules and Achelous) cannot resist this veiled suggestion to show off his strength. As Galinsky suggests, Hercules is so concerned with proving his bravery that he is totally insensitive to Deianira's fear.<sup>53</sup> The next two lines present an Ovidian scene in which the emotions of a particular character are delicately suggested, in this case Deianira's:

pallentemque metu fluviumque ipsumque timentem  
tradidit Aonius pavidam Chalidonida Nesso.

(Met. IX.111-112)

Neither Apollodorus, Sophocles or Hyginus report anything

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centaurus, rogatus ab Deianira  
ut se flumen Euhenum transferret.

Fab. 34

Sophocles has Deianira describe the scene:

ὄς κάμει, τὸν πατρῶον ἠνίκα στόλον  
ξὺν Ἡρακλεῦ τὸ πρῶτον εὔνης ἐσπόμεν,  
φέρων ἐπ' ὤμοις, ἠνίκα ἢ 'ν μέσῳ πόρῳ,  
φαύει ματαίαις χερσίν.

Trach. 562-565

<sup>53</sup> Galinsky, 99.

about Deianira as she is being entrusted to Nessus. According to Ovid, her fears of the stream and of Nessus appear equal, but she cannot or at least does not make any verbal objection. The triple repetition of fear (metu, timentem 111; pavidam 112) lends a great deal of pathos to the scene, much more so than the accumulation of proper names as Bömer suggests.<sup>54</sup>

Hercules, in his by now typical headstrong and rash fashion, rushes into the stream, having first thrown his bow, arrows and club onto the opposite bank (Met. IX.116-117). It is as he reaches the opposite bank and is picking up his weapons that Hercules hears the cries of his wife (coniugis agnovit vocem 119).<sup>55</sup> It is now abundantly clear that Nessus had contrived to distance Hercules from Deianira in order to indulge his own desires. Hercules' boastful words (115) and his actions depict him once again not as a hero, but "wie der klassische Tolpatsch, der weniger im Kopf und mehr im Biceps hat."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Bömer, 306.

<sup>55</sup> Compare Soph., Trach. 565f.: Apoll. Bib. II.7.6. In contrast to the Ovidian description of the attempted rape, in Seneca it is Nessus and Deianira who reach the opposite bank first and Hercules who is caught in mid-stream (Sen., Her. Oet. 507-513). This account lends no more stature to Hercules' actions than Ovid's, but rather increases Nessus' prominence in the story. Likewise, Seneca's description of Nessus as he catches his poisoned blood in his hand and pours it into his hoof (520f.) lends a gruesome and yet comic aspect to the story. Deianira's fear and the seriousness of her plight are quite lost.

<sup>56</sup> Bömer, 303.

The conception of Deianira as a prize and therefore merely a tangible possession is emphasized by her relative speechlessness. Apart from coniugis vocem (119), Deianira does not speak a word, which effectively restricts any detailed characterization. That Deianira is a chattel is also stressed by the vocabulary Hercules uses when he talks of his wife. As Nessus attempts to rape Deianira, Ovid employs the legal/commercial expression fallere depositum to describe Nessus' actions. Anderson suggests "appropriating a trust"<sup>57</sup> which clearly points to Ovid's fondness for legalistic expressions.<sup>58</sup> This expression, as well as the following "nec res intercipe nostras" (122) do distinguish Deianira as a possession, rather than as a person. Hercules' lack of awareness concerning Deianira's fear of both the river and of Nessus once again characterizes Hercules as a man with more brawn than brain.<sup>59</sup>

One of the common features between Sophocles and Ovid is that both interpret the centaur's blood to be poisoned because Hercules had shot him with an arrow dipped in the poison of the Lernean Hydra.<sup>60</sup> Sophocles gives a

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<sup>57</sup> Anderson, 425.

<sup>58</sup> Compare similar commercial expressions in Her. X.109-110, Her. V.480.

<sup>59</sup> Otto S. Due, Changing Forms, Studies in the Metamorphoses of Ovid Classica et Mediaevalia 10 (1974): 81.

<sup>60</sup> Soph., Trach. 572-577.

clear explanation of Nessus' words to Deianira, in which he enjoins her to gather up some of his blood and to keep it as a love potion (Soph., Trach. 572ff.). It is only later that Deianira smears this blood on Hercules' cloak. On the other hand, Heroides IX seems to exhibit some confusion between the poison and the cloak. Nessus tells Deianira that his sanguis has the power of love (Her. IX.162). She apparently smears this on the cloak which she then sends to Hercules (Her. IX.163).<sup>61</sup> In the Metamorphoses, it is Nessus who smears the cloak for Deianira and it is this cloak that she carefully keeps (Met. IX.132-133). Thus once again in the Metamorphoses Deianira is deprived of a decisive role. It is Nessus who performs the important task of smearing the cloak. It is on him that the reader focuses and not on Deianira.

In contrast to the Sophoclean version, neither of Ovid's accounts contain the omen of disaster which Deianira receives in the Trachiniae when she discovers what has happened to the tuft of wool she used to anoint Hercules'

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<sup>61</sup> The emphasis on magic and its power is pronounced in Seneca's Hercules Oetaeus. Deianira's Nurse mentions the existence of magical charms (452-462) and Deianira's description of what happens to the tuft of wool with which she smeared Hercules' cloak also hints at the supernatural (719-738). This passage has certain parallels with Sophocles' version (Trach. 688-704), particularly in the effects of sun and heat on the tuft of wool and its effects on the ground itself. However, Seneca takes the description dramatically one step further, as instead of crumbling away to powder (Soph., Trach. 697-700), Seneca's tuft of wool bursts into flames (Sen., Her. Oet. 725-728).

cloak:

τὸ γὰρ κάταγμα τυγχάνω ῥύψασά πως  
 [τῆς οἴδος, ᾧ προύχριον, ἐς μέσσην φλόγα,<sup>3</sup>]  
 ἀκτῖν' ἐς ἠλιῶτιν' ὡς δ' ἐθάλπετο,  
 ῥεῦ πᾶν ἄδηλον καὶ κατέφηκται χθονί,  
 μορφῇ μάλιστα εἰκαστὸν ὥστε πύονος  
 ἐκβρώματ' ἂν βλέφειας ἐν τομῇ ξύλου.  
 τοιόνδε κεῖται προπετές. ἐκ δὲ γῆς, ὅθεν  
 προύκειτ', ἀναζέουσι θρομβώδεις ἀφροῦ,  
 γλαυκῆς ὀπίρας ὥστε πύονος ποτοῦ  
 κυθέντος ἐς γῆν Βακχίας ἀπ' ἀμπέλου.

(Soph., Trach. 695-704)

The only suspicion of a threat occurs in the Metamorphoses at 131, where Nessus' words "neque enim moriemur inulti" suggests that all will not proceed simply. W.S. Anderson points out that such words normally preface some desperate act or prediction of ultimate vengeance.<sup>62</sup> Ovid here clearly prepares the way for the future destruction, a foreshadowing which is lacking in Heroides IX.<sup>63</sup> Instead, Ovid inserts Deianira's frantic lament as she learns of Hercules' death (Her. IX.145-160) and the refrain of the lament (Her. IX.146ff.) creates the feeling of tension which would otherwise be missing. Met. IX. features little of this tension.

In the final two lines of this passage (Met. IX.132-133), Nessus gives Deianira the poison. The scene

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<sup>62</sup> See for example Vergil, Aen. II.670; Aen. IV.659.

<sup>63</sup> In Seneca's Hercules Oetaeus, Deianira foresees the probability of her own death, but will be content as long as she manoeuvres the death of Iole as well (Sen., Her. Oet. 333-336).

is extremely brief and gives remarkably few details. For instance, questions concerning the ownership of the velamina, who smeared it with blood, or why Deianira would accept such a gift, are not even raised, just as they are ignored in the Heroides and Sophocles.<sup>64</sup> Deianira's credulity in accepting Nessus' promise of an inritamen amoris is an accepted fact in all accounts of the story. It is a premise accepted by Deianira as well as by later authors that "anything touched by the hot blood of Nessus must be efficacious in awakening passions."<sup>65</sup>

Met. IX: Section V: Lines 134-272: Deianira

This last and longest passage of the Deianira saga focuses finally on Deianira in the first subsection of this passage (Met. IX.134-158). Although the complete text of Heroides IX is condensed and modified into twenty-five lines, Ovid succeeds in capturing the essence of Deianira's character and her conflict.

The passage of time between the meeting with Nessus and Deianira's use of the inritamen amoris is broadly indicated by the first lines:

Longa fuit medii mora temporis, actaque magni

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<sup>64</sup> Compare Hyginus' account, Fab. 34; Apollodorus, Bib. II.7.6; Sophocles, Trach. 568-577.

<sup>65</sup> Anderson, 426.

Herculis inplerant terras odiumque novercae.

(Met. IX.134-5)

Ovid is obviously not interested in detailing Hercules' labours at this point. He merely indicates the passage of time, and plunges immediately into the occasion at which Heroides IX begins: Hercules has successfully returned from Oechalia and is beginning his sacrifices to Jove (Met. IX.136-137; see also Her. IX.1-2). As in the Heroides (IX.3), fama plays an early and important role in the lives of Deianira and Hercules. In both sources, fama brings the news of the existence of Iole to Deianira. In Metamorphoses IX, fama is characterized as loquax, a characteristic which is implied, if not mentioned in Heroides IX.<sup>66</sup> However, Ovid introduces a new element in the Metamorphoses version of the story by means of his further elaboration on the nature of fama:

cum fama loquax praecessit ad aures,  
Deianira, tuas, quae veris addere falsa  
gaudet et e minimo sua per mendacia crescit,  
Amphitryoniaden Ioles ardore teneri.

(Met. IX.137-140)<sup>67</sup>

This description of fama, that it rejoices in adding falsity to truth, since it is placed so close to the information about Iole, suggests that the affair between Hercules and Iole might indeed be merely rumour and have no

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<sup>66</sup> Compare the description of fama in Her. IX.3,143-4.

<sup>67</sup> Compare Aen. IV.173-197.

basis in truth at all. Thus Deianira's actions might have no basis except for her own fear and anxiety. She becomes more clearly a victim of her own gullibility. She first believed that Nessus' blood would act as an inritamen amoris and then that the rumours about Hercules and Iole were true. Similarly, Deianira in the Heroides believes that she has been supplanted by Iole as Hercules' wife, without actually knowing Hercules' intentions (Her. IX.131-134).

W.S. Anderson suggests that Ovid, by apostrophizing Deianira and then inserting a long description of fama, has encouraged sympathy for Deianira and increased the tension on her account.<sup>68</sup> Deianira's gullibility is further reinforced by the subsequent credit at the beginning of 141. The collocation of amans and Venerisque novae (i.e. Iole) personifies Deianira as a woman in love, a characteristic which is by and large absent from Heroides IX.<sup>69</sup> Deianira's fear (perterrita [Her. IX.141]) is the emotion which seems to compel her to take some action to secure her position. Miseranda (Her. IX.143) and tearful (lacrimis [Her. IX.142]), she soon controls herself and is able to think about firmer action:

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<sup>68</sup> W.S. Anderson, 427.

<sup>69</sup> In the Heroides, Deianira identifies herself closely with Hercules and his trials (Her. IX.133ff.), and expresses her wifely anxiety for Hercules while he is absent. Nevertheless, she seems much more preoccupied with her own status than with her love for Hercules.

mox deinde 'quid autem  
flemus?' ait 'paelex lacrimis laetabitur istis.  
quae quoniam adveniet, properandum aliquidque novandum est,  
dum licet et nondum thalamos tenet altera nostros.

(Met. IX.143-147)

Unlike her counterparts in the Heroides and the Trachiniae, Deianira has not seen her rival (nondum [147]) and will never see her rival in this version of the story.<sup>70</sup> This fact is a reminder that Deianira is working totally on the basis of rumour, that she has no tangible proof at all.

Into a mere five lines (147-151), Ovid has managed to compress all of Deianira's doubts and hesitations. The hesitation over her decision is a brief version of the more usual extended expressions of anxiety.<sup>71</sup> Although these lines do not contain the force of the Heroidean or Sophoclean versions, they do convey Deianira's confused and uncertain mind.<sup>72</sup> As in Heroides IX.151, the mention of her brother Meleager is connected in Deianira's mind with the idea of violence. In Heroides IX, the violence was

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<sup>70</sup> Deianira's reaction to Iole's presence in Seneca's Hercules Oetaeus (she runs in a rage throughout the house with flushed face [246-255]) is hardly comparable to Deianira's restrained accusations in Heroides IX or to the brief, heartfelt cries in Metamorphoses IX (although this may be mainly the result of Seneca's Stoic influence). Only in Seneca's version of the Deianira/Hercules saga does Deianira admit, before taking any direct action, that she is going to commit a fearful crime (Sen., Her. Oet. 330-331).

<sup>71</sup> See Her. X.59-64; Eur., Medea 499-510.

<sup>72</sup> Compare Her. IX.42-43, 146-148; Sophocles, Trach. 233ff., 375-8, 530ff.

directed towards Hercules; in Metamorphoses IX, it is the new mistress Iole who is to suffer the attack:<sup>73</sup>

quid, si me, Meleagre, tuam memor esse sororem  
forte paro facinus, quantumque iniuria possit  
femineusque dolor, iugulata paelice testor?

(Met. IX.149-151)

In this case, the reference to Meleager and violence comes before any action has occurred, rather than as a recollection after action (Her. IX.151). Deianira thus assumes the quality of a Medea, one who is determined to exact vengeance from her husband's new wife.<sup>74</sup> Deianira does not go so far as to plan to harm her husband, but her intentions towards her rival are malign. Anderson suggests that facinus (Met. IX.150) usually denotes a bad crime, which in this case, is supported by the violence of iugulata (Met. IX.151).<sup>75</sup>

In the last few lines of this subsection (Met. IX.152-158), the herald Lichas suddenly appears for no apparent reason beyond the fact that he must act as messenger for Deianira. (His presence does provide Ovid

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<sup>73</sup> Her expressions of violence towards Iole (345-350) are unmatched in Heroides IX. In Seneca, Deianira is much more concerned with her fading beauty and her declining ability to attract Hercules (380f.) than she is in Ovid. Her anger at Iole's usurpation of her role seems based on jealousy for her beauty and youth rather than on marital or political reasons. Here Deianira even threatens to kill Hercules (436-444), a threat which was completely absent from the minds of both Deianiras in Ovid.

<sup>74</sup> Compare Eur., Medea 784-789; Her. XII.175-182.

<sup>75</sup> Anderson, 427.

with a metamorphosis later on in the story [Met. IX.211-229]). Deianira seems to hand over the tainted cloak to Lichas automatically; the lack of a personal pronoun or reference until the ipsa (Met. IX.156) tends to distance Deianira from the scene. The presence of the narrator is obvious, which also tends to add to the effect of distance. The feeling of impending doom is enforced by the repetition of adjectives signifying ignorance (ignaroque, nescia, [155]; inscius [157]) and by the meaningful luctus at the end of line 155. Deianira appears last in this tale when she hands over the cloak to Lichas:

ignaroque Lichae, quid tradat, nescia luctus  
ipsa suos tradit blandisque miserrima verbis,  
dona det illa viro, mandat.

(Met. IX.155-157)

She is finally characterized as miserrima (156) before she disappears completely from the scene.<sup>76</sup> This subsection

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<sup>76</sup> Seneca does provide Deianira with a death scene, although one quite unlike either Heroides IX or the Sophoclean version. The Senecan Deianira takes the time to discuss by what method and by whose hand it would be best for her to die (855ff.). She even has an argument with her son Hyllus about whether or not she should commit suicide (900f.). Deianira compares herself to other women who have committed great crimes (Medea [950], Procne [953], Althaea [954]), but in doing so makes little use of what should be her main defence, her innocence with regard to the effect of Nessus' potion. Although her arguments about faithful wives being willing to go before their husbands in death has vague echoes of Euripides' Alcestis, she displays none of the dignified, resolute character of an Euripidean heroine. One possible reason for this is the lack of inner conflict or doubt portrayed by the Senecan Deianira. Ovid's heroines, as Sophocles', were women concerned about the moral and personal ramifications of their own and their husband's acts. They express hesitation, anxiety and

ends dramatically, as the inscius heros Hercules puts on the fatal cloak. The drama continues in the depiction of Hercules' death, for instead of describing his death through the medium of a messenger (as in Heroides IX and Sophocles' Trachiniae), Ovid tells the story directly, and so lends a certain force and immediacy to his account.

The last 113 lines (159-272) describe Hercules' torment, his destruction of Lichas as the cause of his suffering, a brief council of the gods, and Hercules' final death and apotheosis. Deianira has disappeared completely. Hercules does not learn, as he does in Sophocles' Trachiniae, of Deianira's blameless hand in his death (Soph., Trach. 1137-1145). Nor is Deianira granted any long death scene in the Metamorphoses as she is in Sophocles (Trach. 870-946). If it were not for such accounts as those of Apollodorus (Bib. II.7.7) and Hyginus (Fab. 36), among others, Deianira's fate would not have been known from the account in the Metamorphoses. This factor recalls the depersonalization of Deianira suggested at the beginning of this account. In the Metamorphoses,

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uncertainty before they finally decide upon a course of action. Seneca's Deianira had made her decision before she spoke and reveals very little of the inner turmoil she may have felt.

Her death carries little weight in the play for despite Hyllus' detailed account (Her. Oet. 1456-58; 1463-1471), Hercules makes no comment whatsoever about Deianira's manner of death, or about her possible guilt or innocence. As in Metamorphoses IX, Deianira disappears quite suddenly from the scene. Attention is focused on Hercules' agony, death and subsequent apotheosis.

Deianira is useful as a bridge between stories (Achelous and Hercules, Hercules and Nessus) and as a motivational force for the action within a story (cause of Hercules' death). She is mainly a useful literary figure, although Ovid cannot resist adding a few details to her character.<sup>77</sup>

#### Section VII: Conclusions about the Nature of Deianira

The nature of the two Ovidian versions of Deianira is determined by literary genre, focus and concentration. In the Metamorphoses, the concentration is obviously not on Deianira (as in Heroides IX) but on Hercules, his battles and his death. (The fullest treatment of Hercules' apotheosis appears in Seneca's Hercules Oetaeus.) The framework of Achelous' story-telling carries over into the Hercules/Deianira story, despite the change of narrator. Thus reality remains at a farther remove than for example in Heroides IX or Sophocles' Trachiniae.

Ovid cannot resist the psychological ramifications of a personal crisis. He allows his imagination free reign in Heroides IX, but his choice of focus in Metamorphoses IX

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<sup>77</sup> The Senecan impression of Deianira is of a woman consumed by jealousy. This jealousy drives her to long for the horrible death not only of her rival, but of her husband as well. In this respect, Seneca's Deianira has significantly departed from both Ovid and Sophocles. She is much more a woman of passion than a woman driven to extremes by circumstances beyond her control.

forces him to curtail his description. Deianira is portrayed merely in outline form, with only general characteristics. Nevertheless, Ovid does supply details (e.g., fear of Nessus and the river) which tend to give more substance to Deianira's personality. There is a conflict between Ovid's decision to concentrate on the Hercules figure and his interest in Deianira's plight. This interest is perhaps all the stronger for his earlier attempt at exploring Deianira's case (Heroides IX).

Deianira is and must be represented as a victim, which is perhaps why the Senecan Deianira, in comparison with other depictions, strikes the reader so oddly and seems overdrawn. However, although she still emerges as a pawn in Metamorphoses IX, her futile efforts do not strike the reader as forcefully as in Heroides IX, perhaps because of her relative speechlessness.

The contrast established between the Medeas of Heroides XII and Metamorphoses VII can also be traced in the Deianiras of Heroides IX and Metamorphoses IX. Deianira of Heroides IX is very much a "real" person, a woman concerned with and troubled about her husband's actions, their results and her own personal place in society. She has character, strength and perseverance. In contrast, the Deianira of the Metamorphoses is a less definite character, with only touches of personality. She is the poet's tool used to initiate other transformations,

rather than herself being the subject of an exploration. Proof of this is the fact that Deianira vanishes from the tale once she has played her role of handing over to Lichas the poisoned cloak.

The changes between the two Deianiras are not as startling as between the two Medeas, perhaps because the essential nature of Deianira remains the same. She is always the wife abandoned for a younger mistress, but in the Heroides she is an abandoned wife with her own personal and distinct crisis. In the Metamorphoses, the essential Deianira is visible only in a few lines. It is not until Seneca that the transformation of Deianira from an innocent victim to a willing and eager participant in crime is complete.

## Conclusion

Ovid chose to interpret the characters of these four women at different periods in his literary career: towards the beginning (Heroides) and towards the end (Metamorphoses). A notable feature of these two works is the dexterity with which Ovid manipulates the traditional elements of the mythological tales connected with each woman. Not only do details concerning the character of each woman vary from the myth itself (for example, anger or lack thereof towards her spouse, reasons for committing a crime, reactions to betrayal and abandonment), but they vary from one of Ovid's poems to the other. The variety is dependent, in part, on the genre in which Ovid was writing -- the Heroides lends itself very well to first person emotional expression, while the genre of the Metamorphoses often prompted Ovid to restrict a tale either because he had recently treated a similar theme or in the interests of brevity.

The figure of Medea demonstrates most clearly Ovid's virtuosity in character interpretation, for he takes great pains to explore her character both in Heroides XII and in Metamorphoses VII. Unlike figures such as Dido or Ariadne, treated very briefly in the Metamorphoses, the two

representations of Medea are equally lengthy and detailed. Ovid seems to have recognized the contradictions in Medea's story: the impassioned young lover and the cool and calculating witch are both essential aspects of Medea's personality. Ovid chose to explore the emotional aspect of Medea's character in the Heroides. Thus we find a sympathetic depiction of Medea as a woman who, cast off by her husband, looks back at her past life and deeds and begins to question her choices. Her decision to help Jason against her father is revealed to her as the most crucial decision in her life and the ultimate cause of her present plight. Jason's act of betrayal reminds Medea of her own act of betrayal towards her father and of the killing of her brother in a bid to escape. The realization of Jason's unfaithfulness and his lack of regard for all that she has done and given up for him forces Medea to take new stock of Jason and, indeed, of herself. Ovid portrays this assessment of Medea's character by allowing her to begin to question the justice of her early actions and by hinting at her consternation when she starts to realize that she may not have made the right choice after all, and that Jason is not worthy of the sacrifices she has made on his behalf. Jason is revealed as the center of Medea's life and the justification for her actions. Her abandonment by Jason destroys her faith in him and in herself. Thereafter she struggles to underscore her innocent role in her father's

betrayal and the death of her brother and, at the same time, she is afraid to admit her guilt since this would make a mockery of all she had done for Jason. She attempts to maintain her mask of innocence to the end of her letter; only occasionally does it slip, despite her efforts, and reveal the doubt and fear underneath.

Ovid ends Medea's letter before she actually kills her children, and in fact he leaves unresolved the whole question of whether she will actually kill them or not. This supports Ovid's interpretation of Medea as a sympathetic figure, one who has been misled in her choices but has not yet acted out of pitiless revenge. Her anger towards Jason is clearly evident, but it has not yet compelled her to a final act of punishment.

The references to Medea's magical abilities are relatively subdued in the Heroides. Her gift to Jason of a magic potion against the terrigenae is chronicled and there is a veiled allusion to her deception of the daughters of Pelias, but Medea the witch remains very much in the background. It is her former love for Jason and her present disillusionment and anger at her betrayal that are at the forefront of her letter.

This emphasis contrasts strongly with Medea's depiction in Metamorphoses VII. Here, Medea becomes transformed from the innocent lover into the supernatural sorceress and, in the process, forfeits the sympathetic

traits with which her character is imbued in the Heroides. Ovid does not represent Medea in the Metamorphoses as hesitant or doubting, but rather as one who has yielded to the temptations of power and evil offered to her by her magical abilities. This is not to say that her magical background is denied in the Heroides, it merely becomes secondary to her more human nature. In the Metamorphoses, Ovid depicts the ascendancy of magic in Medea's personality by devoting increasing attention to the gift of the potion to help Jason against the terrigenae, to Medea's putting the dragon to sleep with the Lethaei gramine suci and particularly to her midnight journey to collect and concoct a potion of herbs necessary to rejuvenate Jason's father Aeson. The murder of Pelias by his unwitting daughters (at Medea's instigation) reveals Medea's transformation into a witch and the disappearance of her human, emotional qualities. Her supernatural flight among the clouds accents her present character as a figure beyond the human sphere and unconcerned with questions of justification and morality.

Although both depictions of Medea have in common her love for Jason, the effect of this love determines each character. In the Heroides, the effects of eros eventually force Medea to take stock of her past deeds and cause her to come to a realization of the enormity and significance of her betrayal of father and country. In the

Metamorphoses, eros leads Medea in the opposite direction, as she rejects the moral ramifications of her betrayal and in fact rejoices in her deceitful nature.

The guiding force of eros is again revealed in the figure of Dido in Heroides VII, and by implication in Metamorphoses XIV. Like Medea in the Heroides, the Dido of the Heroides is caught in a conflict of responsibilities, in her case, between her love for Aeneas and her deep-seated feeling of obligation towards her deceased husband Sychaeus. The poet's awareness of the Vergilian model is reflected in his avoidance of the theme of pietas and in the Ovidian Dido's rejection of Aeneas' divinely ordained mission. Ovid's Dido does not stop to reconsider the past as Medea of the Heroides does, but rather concentrates on present and very immediate dangers for Aeneas in her attempt to persuade him to remain with her. Her letter is marked by a careful deliberation and lacks the fire and passion which marks Vergil's Dido.

Ovid's Dido does not deceive herself regarding her relationship with Aeneas; eros, instead of clouding her vision, allows her to see clearly that her relationship with Aeneas is merely a concupitus. However, Dido insists upon Aeneas' recognition of her services, especially after she hears her deceased husband calling to her, thereby reinforcing his prior claim to her affection.

Aeneas' impending departure does cause Dido to look

back on their time together and to remark upon her inability to stop loving the man she hates. These opposing emotions prevent her from cursing Aeneas and his descendants, as Dido does in the Aeneid, although her sense of injury leads her to revile Aeneas for his cruelty and hardheartedness.

Unlike the Vergilian depiction of Dido, the Ovidian version does not concentrate on Dido's outraged sense of pudor. Rather, Ovid's Dido is quite willing to give up her position and status and become merely a servant, if this will guarantee her proximity to the man she loves. She will attempt any subterfuge to force him to remain by her side and therefore threatens the life of her unborn child as well as her own. Ovid depicts Dido as writing with Aeneas' sword in her lap, only moments away from committing suicide.

Ovid reveals Dido's powers of persuasion by allowing her to suggest that Aeneas should feel guilt and remorse for his decision to resume his search for a new land. She introduces Aeneas' wife Creusa, lost in the flight from Troy, as evidence of Aeneas' faithlessness and adds repeated assertions that he will break his pledge, his fides to her, by leaving. She continues to apply this pressure right up to the end of her letter, as she suggests that the inscription of his name on her tombstone will forever identify his responsibility in her death. Her

refusal to use the name Elissa, which identifies her as the wife of Sychaeus, is yet another attempt to increase Aeneas' feelings of remorse.

Metamorphoses XIV stands in stark contrast to Heroides VII. In the Metamorphoses, Ovid avoids the very mention of Dido's name, but instead identifies her as coming from Sidonian Tyre which emphasizes her role as the widow of Sychaeus. Ovid's depiction of Dido in the Metamorphoses is by allusion and adumbration. The relationship between Dido and Aeneas is characterized only by Dido's welcoming of Aeneas into her heart and home and by the foreshadowing that she will not easily brook the departure of her maritus. However, even this modest profile suggests Ovid's sympathy for the figure of Dido, particularly since the whole Aeneas saga, instead of promoting the Vergilian glory of Rome, is reduced to a neutral listing of events.

Eros instigates and promotes Dido's plight. Ovid chooses to explore its effect on her in the Heroides in a direct, probably intentional, contrast to Vergil. This contrast is explicitly revealed in Ovid's depiction of Dido in the Heroides, but becomes refined and more opaque in his recounting of the Aeneas saga in the Metamorphoses.

A similar opacity is in evidence in Ovid's depiction of the figure of Ariadne. In Heroides X, Ovid is again working against a well-known predecessor, this time

Catullus' depiction of Ariadne in 64. As with the Ovidian Dido, the Ovidian Ariadne has superficial similarities with her Catullan model. Both are abandoned on desert islands, both lament Theseus' departure, both attempt to catch a last glimpse of the sails of his ship by climbing a nearby outcrop. Ovid continues Catullus' depiction of Ariadne in the sense that he augments Ariadne's lament in Catullus 64 into a full depiction of her character. Ovid's Ariadne loses the majestic dignity of Catullus and becomes instead a frightened young girl, whose world has been twice disrupted: once, joyfully, with her help to and departure with Theseus and a second time, disastrously, as she wakes to discover Theseus' departure. Her youth is reflected in her imagination which creates terrors in every realm (land, sea and sky) and which sees even the winds and her own sleep as negative, opposing forces. The rigidity of Catullus' Ariadne as she stares seaward at Theseus' departing ship is transformed in Ovid's Ariadne into a helter-skelter run up and down the deserted beach and a frantic attempt to attract Theseus' attention by vigorous signalling.

The realization of loneliness causes Ariadne to return to the bed in which she and Theseus spent the night. Once again, as in the stories of Medea and Dido, the power of eros is the moving force behind Ariadne's misfortune. Like them, Ariadne had sacrificed much for her lover, but

unlike Medea and Dido, Ariadne never really stops to reconsider her actions. She remains forever in love with Theseus, and despite all indications to the contrary, holds on to her hope that he will one day return for her.

The isolation which the women of the Heroides all feel is heightened in Ovid's depiction of Ariadne. Her sense of solitude is denoted not only by the geographical remoteness of the island, but also by Ariadne's own feeling of dislocation from human society. It is through the character of Ariadne that Ovid is able to explore the psychological ramifications of complete solitude.

As in his depiction of Dido in the Metamorphoses, so Ovid's depiction of Ariadne in Metamorphoses VIII is brief and allusive. Again, Ariadne is not mentioned by name, but merely as rapta Minoide, which identifies her exalted parentage much more than it does her own person. She is described as being Theseus' comes, and her desertion by him and rescue by Dionysus is quickly related. Her role in Theseus' life and indeed in the book as a whole is incidental; she serves primarily as a bridge between stories of Daedalus and his adventures. Ariadne does not speak in the Metamorphoses and so Ovid does not allow her the opportunity to distinguish herself.

Ovid returns to the figure of Ariadne in both Fasti III and Ars Amatoria I. In the Fasti, Ovid resumes the story of Ariadne after her rescue by Dionysus and

characterizes her as a happy wife, despite a certain amount of straying on Dionysus' part. Ovid seems to have rejected completely the serious nature of Ariadne's plight in order to concentrate on a more frivolous aspect of her experiences.

A similar flippant depiction of Ariadne is found in the Ars Amatoria. Despite Theseus' recent abandonment of her, Ariadne is only briefly characterized as amens, before the arrival of Dionysus and his train disrupts the pensive mood. Ovid again chooses to ignore Ariadne's plight in favour of a more light-hearted illustration of Dionysus as the great lover.

The theme of the great lover is found in another respect in the story of Deianira in Heroides IX and Metamorphoses IX. In both of the Ovidian works, Deianira finds herself the victim of two love affairs. In the Heroides, it is Hercules' relationships with Omphale and Iole which ultimately cause Deianira to resort to the use of the centaur's poison. Eros has once again surfaced to affect the life of an otherwise blameless woman.

Like Vergil's Dido, Ovid's Deianira is immensely concerned with her status and reputation in society. For this reason, she is shamed when rumours of Hercules' servitude to Omphale become known, and Hercules debases himself (in Deianira's eyes) by assuming the dress and duties of a maidservant. However, this is at least

bearable, for Hercules' actions occur at a distance-- Deianira is spared the sight of Omphale in Hercules' garb and of Hercules in Omphale's garb. However, the arrival of Iole places a wholly different light on Hercules' love affairs, for now Deianira must deal with the visible presence of a rival, a rival who is to share her own home. Ovid's Deianira sees Iole as a rival from the moment of her appearance, unlike Sophocles' depiction of Deianira who at first assumes that Iole is merely a captive slave taken as part of the conquest of Oechalia. The Sophoclean Iole is silent and weeping; the Ovidian Iole enters Deianira's house proudly and dressed in gold. Ovid eliminates much of the Sophoclean theme of the vicissitudes of war by not depicting Iole in a distressed state. He concentrates instead on the wife's emotions as she sees her husband's interest in her waning. From fear that she has lost not only her position as wife of Hercules, but Hercules' love as well, the Ovidian Deianira decides to take the desperate measure of using the potion which the centaur Nessus had given her at his death.

Throughout her letter, Deianira attempts to make Hercules realize the broader significance of his actions both towards herself and society at large. Although she suggests the difficulties of being married to a more noble spouse, Ovid's Deianira is quick to reduce her musings to her own situation. She does not, as the Sophoclean

Deianira does, discourse at length on the trials of a woman married to such a man as Hercules, who is away more than he is at home. Instead, Ovid's Deianira seeks to understand Hercules' actions by recalling his past achievements and contrasting them with his present duties as handmaid. She suggests the shame of Hercules' opponents at being defeated by someone who has now surrendered his masculinity and strength and, finally, can only reiterate her bewilderment and despair at Hercules' actions.

Deianira's desperation at the news of Hercules' impending death reveals her dependence on Hercules and his importance to her life. Thus Ovid characterizes her as a woman who acted innocently, but fatally, in her attempt to recapture her husband's love.

Ovid continues this exploration of a woman driven to desperate measures to retain her husband's love in his depiction of Deianira in the Metamorphoses. Here, he places Deianira's story in a wider context, for he begins it as she is about to cross the swollen stream in the arms of the lustful centaur. Deianira is, for a great part of her story, mute, but Ovid's depiction of her defencelessness characterizes her as a victim of passion--firstly of Nessus' and then of her own.

However, Hercules' sufferings and death take precedence over Deianira's suicide, as the figure of Deianira disappears in the Metamorphoses once she has

handed the poisoned cloak to her servant Lichas to give to Hercules. Although Ovid has briefly recounted her struggle over the use of the poison, Deianira's words are quickly forgotten in the face of Hercules' painful eloquence.

In his exploration of these characters, Ovid has adopted the most recognizable elements of each myth, but has adapted and transformed the lesser details. This is particularly evident in his depiction of the essential character of each figure, for in this respect, the figure may possess little resemblance to the traditional or most famous versions. Dido has little of the majestic queen in the Heroides; Deianira does not discourse on the disadvantages of royal marriages in the Metamorphoses; Ariadne is flawed by her youth and inexperience in the Heroides.

As a general rule, the depiction of these women in the Heroides reveals their human nature, their faults, weaknesses and fears. Their problems do not encompass great catastrophes, but more immediate, personal crises. Medea is concerned mainly with the state of her relationship with Jason; Dido only mentions her kingdom briefly; Ariadne wants to know what will happen to her in the immediate future; and Deianira merely wants her husband to return to her.

In the Metamorphoses, on the other hand, the personal nature of the depictions of the Heroides has

disappeared and the representations of these women become the instruments for a particular effect or metamorphosis. Medea's transformation into a witch provides great scope for Ovid's descriptive powers and for the illustration of a series of metamorphoses, but Dido and Ariadne both serve principally as links in larger stories and it is the omission, rather than inclusion, of their tales which causes the greatest impact for the reader. Deianira provides the motive for Ovid's description of Hercules' suffering and ultimate transformation. Thus these women become purely devices -- Ovid makes no effort to create the illusion of reality, as he does in the Heroides. The emphasis in these two Ovidian works moves away from the precise emotional study of a particular character towards a more one-dimensional, descriptive depiction.

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