



NOTES TO BOOK 7

MEDEA AND JASON (1-158)

Ovid ended Book 6 with a reference to the quest of the Golden Fleece. It is therefore not surprising that he continues the theme of the *Argonautica* into Book 7 and concentrates on the love interest that had been made so famous by Apollonius of Rhodes. For the main details of the Argonautic expedition, see Apollodorus 1.9.16-28 and Hyginus 12-23. In this section he develops the topic of Medea's hesitation and final surrender to love (9-99), the major part of his narrative being devoted to a soliloquy by the hesitant girl (11-71). As the first dramatic soliloquy in the *Metamorphoses*, Medea's speech repays study. Ovid uses this technique repeatedly in this and subsequent books as he studies the psychology of love in human beings who are victims of their own passions, not helpless targets of amor al deities. After Medea has succumbed to Jason, she helps him to accomplish the traditional trials imposed by her father (100-48), then assists him in drugging the guardian snake and stealing the Golden Fleece, so that he departs victoriously from Colchis with fleece and Medea (149-58).

- 1 *Minyae*: Jason's men. Cf. 6.720. *Pagasaea puppe*: the noun stands for the entire ship according to normal poetic synecdoche; the adjective refers to Pagasae, the Thessalian port where the Argo was constructed. *secabant*: the imperfect tense, after the perfect with which Book 6 ended, places us in the middle of the scene.
- 2-3 Phineus lived in Thrace; hence, by mentioning him Ovid announces that the Argonauts have already sailed out of the Mediterranean through the Hellespont into the Black Sea. Cf. Apollodorus 1.9.21; Hyginus 19. Phineus was blind; Ovid, relying on our familiarity with the story, plays games with us. He describes someone plunged in eternal night (blind) and dragging out a needy old age (almost starved because of the Harpies), and only then names Phineus. Reference to Phineus permits him to mention for the last time the Boreades, Calais,

and Zetes, who freed the old man of these monstrous visitors.

- 4 *fugurant*: syncopated form of *fugaverant*, which cannot fit anywhere into the hexameter. The pluperfect tense in 3–6 indicates clearly that these details serve merely as preliminaries for the main episode.
- 5 *multaque perpessi*: Ovid swiftly passes over the events which occurred while the Argonauts sailed along the coast of the Black Sea towards Colchis. Apollonius had devoted nearly an entire book to these *multa*.
- 6 *Phasidos*: the river which often serves, as here, to denote Colchis, the land through which it flows.
- 7–8 The *dum* clauses subordinate the heroic aspects of the quest (the fleece itself and the terrible trials imposed on Jason) to the passion of Medea. Ovid suppresses here, as elsewhere, the normal matter of epic in order to pursue his own amatory themes. *regem*: Aeetes, father of Medea. *Phrixia vellera*: Phrixus flew to Colchis on the ram which, when sacrificed, provided the Golden Fleece. The text of the first hemistich of 8 is troubled. The MSS have for the first word *visque* or *vosque* or *voxque*, and for the third word, the majority of the MSS have *numeris*; but Planudes' translation and several others have *Minyis*. Editors tend to emend the first word or the third word or both: e.g., *lexque datur miseris* or *visque datur munus* or *usque datur numeris*. It seems impossible at this point to recover Ovid's original text, and I dagger the entire hemistich.
- 9 *concipit*: present tense. Ovid has reached his true subject. *Aetias*: Medea, referred to by the patronymic. *ignes*: for the fire of love, cf. 6.455 ff. and *Aen.* 4.2.
- 10 *luctata*: Medea wrestles with her own erotic inclinations. To indicate the new direction the poet is taking here, it is useful to compare *pugnantemque tenet luctantiaque oscula carpit* (4.358). There Hermaphroditus vainly struggled against someone else's passionate desires and was, like so many of the people in the early books, a helpless victim. Here Medea fights a much more poignant battle against herself. She is caught in a moral dilemma and will suffer, no matter how she decides. *ratione furorem*: Ovid juxtaposes the two polar elements, the rational moral consciousness and the madness of passion.
- 11 *frustra repugnas*: one of the favorite themes of Ovid in this part of the poem: the vain resistance which mortals make against life's obstacles. But the very fact that Medea and her like do resist their inclinations makes them much more sympathetic than the lustful, uncomplicated gods, who gratify their

passions without a moment's hesitation, without the slightest moral concern. In these stories metamorphosis often comes as a compensation for the brave, but hopeless, battle.

- 12 *nescio quis deus*: Medea, experiencing her first love, is depicted as unable to recognize the god *Amor*. *obstat*: the military metaphor recurs. After *mirumque* the MSS have an absurd *quid* or *quod*, possibly the result of dittography, possibly of the word in the next line. Heinsius made the now universally accepted correction to *nisi*.
- 13 *huic*: dative with *simile*; like *hoc* in 12, prepares for the *quod* clause. *amare*: a good example of the nominative use of the infinitive. The verbal sense remains, and hence the infinitive is far more effective than a noun like *amor*.
- 14 The *nam* clause explains why she suspects herself to be in love: for otherwise she would not criticize her father's *iussa*, the trials he has ordained for Jason.
- 15 The first hemistich is a parenthesis in typical Ovidian form. Medea picks up the second hemistich of the preceding line and comments on it in inverse order, using *quoque* as in 6.194 for a connective: *nimum dura videntur, sunt dura nimis*. The change from seeming to being is enhanced by the initial position of the monosyllable. On Ovidian parentheses, see comment on 6.501. *modo denique vidi*: "I have only just now seen."
- 16 *pereat*: subjunctive with verb of fearing. Its understood subject is Jason, the antecedent of *quem* in 15. *timoris*: balances *timeo*. This question is not simply a repetition of *cur timeo*?. It focuses much more specifically on the cause of her fear and forces on us the same answer: *amor*.
- 17 *excute*: with a brusque self-command, Medea breaks the series of questions, as if interrupting a pleasant romantic dream. *conceptas flammis*: cf. *concepit ignes* 9.
- 18 *si potes*: a pathetic qualification of her resolute manner. *infelix*: regular adjective since the *Aeneid* to capture sympathy for the unhappy lover. The second hemistich, with its contrary-to-fact condition, makes clear how powerless Medea is. Cf. *vincere non poterat* 11. *sanior*: a reminder of the terms of the dilemma, *ratio* vs. *furor* (10).
- 19–20 *aliudque cupido, / mens aliud*: chiasmic arrangement of two synonyms for the dilemma. What follows is one of the most famous passages of Ovid, defining the ability of the mind to perceive (*video*) what is right, but its inability to insure action corresponding to that mental apperception. When Euripides had her say something similar in his tragedy *Medea* 1078–80,

she was about to kill her own children; the statement then epitomized her barbaric irrationality.

- 21 *hospite*: Jason. The word order designedly draws a contrast between the alien and the royal princess.
- 22 *ureris*: fire image for love. *thalamos*: metonymy for "marriage"; cf. 6.148. *alieni orbis*: "in another world," i.e., in Greece. *concupis*: "imagine."
- 23 *quod ames*: subjunctive in relative clause after indefinite antecedent. This line has five dactyls and an unorthodox run-on, all of which suggest the hurried pace of Medea's anxious and futile reasoning. *vivat*: subjunctive of indirect question, one of two alternatives, depending on *in dis est*.
- 24 *vivat*: jussive subjunctive; a prayer, as *precari* indicates. It follows spontaneously from her apparently acquiescent reference to the gods; she does not wish to leave the gods with a free choice.
- 25 *vel sine amore*: Medea implicitly admits her love. She argues that, since Jason has committed no crime, he deserves to live. It does not follow, however, that Jason deserves help in gaining the Golden Fleece; but that is the direction in which Medea's irrational feelings take her.
- 26 *tangat*: potential subjunctive. The rhetorical question with *quem non* assumes the answer: *nemo*.
- 27 *ut cetera desint*: adversative: "even though the other things are lacking."
- 28 *potest*: the indicative makes a stronger assertion. Medea is willing to disregard Jason's age, family, and manliness: his handsome face alone can conquer her. Later the mere sight of his *vultus* (86) overcomes all her good resolutions. Notice the artful division of this line at the central caesura and the balanced terms: *movere potest* and *certe movit*.
- 29 *taurorum adflabitur ore*: one of Jason's tasks (which Ovid did not list in detail at 8) was to yoke two fire-breathing bulls and plow a field with that monstrous team. The danger, of course, was that they might breathe upon him and burn him up. The older MSS agree on the reading *ore*. One reader in the late Middle Ages thought he could improve the passage with the more obvious *igne*, but there is no need to tamper with the MSS here.
- 30 Jason's second task was to sow the plowed field with dragon seed, from which armed men would spring, ready to attack him. The passage is difficult Latin, and the principal difficulty inheres in the reading *segetis* which appears in most MSS. Some

of the later MSS have eased the problem by erasing the final *-s*, thus transforming the word into a dative (in which case it would go with *concurrent* and *creatis / hostibus* would be in apposition with it). As it stands, however, the genitive must be taken as qualifying *hostibus* in 31: “he will clash with earth-created enemies belonging to his own crop.”

- 31 *fera praeda*: Jason’s final task was to snatch the Golden Fleece from the tree which was watched by a dragon. Ovid employs *fera* in a transferred sense: Jason is not “wild,” but the dragon which will eat him is. Ovid may have chosen to treat *fera* so because he already had one adjective for *draconi*, and custom forbade another; moreover, the meter could not admit *fero*.
- 32 *patiar*: future. It was standard rhetoric as early as Homer’s time to emphasize inhuman behavior by calling a person a beast or, more effectively, to assert that he was born of rocks or a wild animal. Patroclus so accuses Achilles (*Iliad* 16.33 ff.), and Dido uses similar language to attack Aeneas (*Aen.* 4.365 ff.). 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.
- 33 The Romans punned with *ferus* and *ferreus* (e.g., Cicero, *ad Quint. Fr.* 1.3.3). So here Medea, who feels passion in her heart, talks of the antithesis: iron, lack of feeling.
- 34– From the anaphora *tum . . . tum* of 32–33, Medea goes to anaphora of *cur non*; from the unlikely reference to her inhumanity, she moves now to a wildly ironic question: why doesn’t she watch him die and enthusiastically urge on his enemies? The answer is embedded in the first question. It would corrupt her eyes to see such a sight. Notice how she reviews his three contests again: (1) the bulls; (2) the men born of the dragon seed—she uses the epic compound *terrigenas*; (3) and the dragon—for which Ovid invents the fine compound epithet *insopitum*.
- 37 *di meliora velint*: obviously stronger than our “God forbid!”, for Medea prays that the gods have kinder intentions: namely, than to abandon Jason to death or to force her to watch it. No sooner has she started to pray, though, than she claims that she must act herself on Jason’s behalf.
- 38– Medea’s apparent determination to act extends to the central caesura. Immediately, though, her hesitation recurs. The gerundive is succeeded by an indecisive question, helpless now, not ironic. The dilemma, which so far has been stated in terms of *ratio* vs. *furor* or *mens* vs. *cupido*, now acquires other notes: it
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is *parens* vs. *advena*. Shall she become a traitress for Jason? That patriotic dilemma, not particularly emphasized here, is the major element of another erotic dilemma in Book 8: Scylla's choice between *pater* and *hostis amatus*. *regna*: poetic plural, presumably to avoid the metrical problem of *regnum*.

- 39 The word order is chiasmatically arranged around *servabitur*: *ope* and *nostra* frame *nescio quis* and *advena*. The overtones of this *nescio quis* differ sharply from those in 12.
- 40 The purpose clause reveals that Medea did not hesitate so much over duty to her father as over her suspicions that she would get nothing out of her action: she would merely be saving Jason for another woman in Greece! Ovid again uses word order skillfully: *sospes* is framed by *per me* and *sine me*, two phrases which succinctly express two sharply different states of Jason and hence suggest how rapidly Jason can change once saved. That, of course, was the theme of Euripides' and Ennius' *Medea*. *det lintea ventis*: literally, "give the canvas to the winds"; we say "set sail."
- 41 *alterius*: genitive of *alia*. *relinquar*: Medea refuses to think of herself objectively, and translation should emphasize that self-concern.
- 42– The conditional clauses are contradicted again by an excited
- 43 assertion: surely so handsome a man could not be such an ingrate!
- 44 Note the way Ovid introduces each member of the tricolon of 43–44: *sed non* is . . . *non ea* . . . *ea*. The progression of masculine noun, then two feminine nouns is no doubt carefully planned.
- 45 *timeam*: subjunctive of result, prepared by the demonstratives of 43–44. *meriti*: objective genitive with *oblivia*.
- 46 *ante*: adverb. The oath to which Medea refers is sworn at 94 ff.
- 47 *accingere*: passive imperative, used reflexively.
- 48 *semper debet*: Ovid expects us to sense the irony of this assertion. Euripides' *Medea* had long ago exploited the theme of Jason's ingratitude.
- 49 *face sollemni*: the torch used at the marriage rites. As she has indicated at 22, Medea wishes assurance that Jason will marry her. Here again her prediction must be felt as ironic, for the "serious" marriage proved such only for Medea. As soon as it appeared advantageous for Jason to deny his relationship with Medea and marry the royal princess of Corinth, he did so. *Pelagas*: "Greek," with *urbes* of 50.
- 50 *servatrix*: predicative, referring to Medea. *celebrabere*: future

passive. Ovid borrows an argument from Apollonius of Rhodes, who in turn was probably influenced by one of Jason's claims in Euripides: that he had brought Medea to Greece from her barbaric home, where she might appreciate true culture and be honored for her cleverness. Here the throng of mothers would honor Medea, because she had insured the safety of their sons.

- 51 Now Medea questions the thought of leaving her home. *germanam*: Apollonius calls her Chalciope; in his epic she actually abets Medea's plans. *fratrem*: Apsyrtos; in the usual story Medea does not leave him behind, but takes him with her; then to escape pursuit, she kills him and scatters the pieces of his corpse about the sea. Ovid passes over this detail in his abbreviated account of the return to Greece (155-58), preferring to concentrate on a few themes and leave the rest to our familiarity with Apollonius (and the Romans' acquaintance with Latin translations of the *Argonautica*).
- 53 The seemingly anguished question she asks of her conscience turns out to be a rhetorical one, for she answers it immediately item by item. The anaphora of *nempe* and the asyndeton combine to give her reply to herself a brusqueness which is dramatically apt, for she is rejecting all the normal connotations of home and replacing them with others that can justify her "treason." Thus her father is no ordinary father, being vicious (as already implied in 14-15); her native land is barbaric, not congenial to her sensitive nature.
- 55 By *maximus deus*, of course, Medea does not mean *Iuppiter optimus maximus* and *omnipotens*, but that same *Amor* which she uncertainly referred to as *nescio quis deus* in 12. She now knows him only too well. Accordingly, she can disregard all five items she worried about leaving in 51-52: it is not that she is leaving great things; she is pursuing them.
- 56- The *magna* which surpass what she is leaving are listed and, as
- 58 might be expected, outnumber as well as outweigh the five items of 51-52. First, harking back to her prediction of 50, Medea cites the honor of being known as *servatrix*: the glory "for having saved the Greek youth." *servatae pubis*: same construction as in *ab urbe condita*, with emphasis on the act as completed. Furthermore, since *titulus* regularly refers to an inscription, Ovid may have meant us to imagine the wording of an honorary dedication to Medea; it would have been *pube Achiva servata*. Cf. the much-repeated Augustan *titulus: signis receptis*, to commemorate the recovery of Roman standards from the

Parthians. Second, in place of her barbaric homeland, she will get acquaintance with a better place, i.e., Greece. (*loci* 57: objective genitive.) Third, there are famous Greek cities to be seen. (The relative pronoun ending 57 seems a casual choice; Vergilian epic places such pronouns earlier in the line.) Fourth and fifth come the civilization and the cultured practices of Greece, far more desirable than the savagery of Colchis.

- 59- The chief prize achieved by leaving her home is Jason himself;
 61 and Medea spends three lyrical lines describing that pleasure as a climax to her list. The antecedent of *quem*, in accordance with common Latin practice, is buried in the relative clause; it is *Aesoniden*, Jason. To say "exchange something for another," Ovid could use, as here, *mutare*, direct object (*quem*), *cum* plus ablative (*rebus*); or, as elsewhere, *mutare*, direct object, simple ablative: cf. 8.448. *mutasse* 60: syncopated form of *mutavisse* which alone can fit the meter. Ovid chose this rather than the easy and metrical *mutare* in order to stress the completion of the "exchange." He is, of course, exploiting the common erotic argument of "all for love." Medea makes a choice which represents the exact opposite of Aeneas' choice in leaving Dido. *velim* 60: potential subjunctive. *quo coniuge felix*: "and with him as my husband, in utter felicity"; ablative of specification. Elegiac heroes and heroines are always seeking felicity in these simplified erotic terms, and Medea hardly differs from a lover in elegy. Cf. *infelix* 18. *dis cara ferar* 61: "I shall be accounted dear to the gods." To be successful in love for Medea, is to be like a god. Ovid is apparently using several Horatian phrases in this line, twisting what Horace applied to his special position as a poet to refer to the lover's "bliss." Cf. *C. 1.31.13: dis carus ipsi*. As for *vertice sidera tangam*, cf. *C. 1.1.36: feriam sidera vertice*.

- 62- *quid quod*: "what about the fact that." *nescio qui*: Medea does
 65 not know the name; she refers to the Symplegades, rocks which periodically smash together and crush whatever lies between them. Vague fear makes her oscillate momentarily back towards *pudor*. The usual MSS disagree on the reading of the verb, offering *occurrere*, *incurrere*, and *concurrere*. The last, both because it occurs in the more recent MSS and because it is the easiest reading, is probably a medieval change. It has the desired meaning of "run together," but it cannot account for the other readings. Either *incurrere* or *occurrere* might have been "improved" to make *concurrere*, but not vice versa. To choose between the first two is more difficult: *incurrere*, offered by MN,

means "rush on or against," whereas *occurrere*, preserved by *Ampl. EPU* and probably Planudes' translation, means "encounter or run to meet." Again, by the principle of *lectio difficilior*, it would seem that we should reject *incurrere* as an attempt at emendation; the original reading, then, well attested by good MSS, would be *occurrere*. The next sea dangers, Scylla and Charybdis, were located in the Straits of Messina between Italy and Sicily, so far away from the Black Sea that it is probable that Medea uses them to stand for any peril of the type. Charybdis is described as alternately sucking in and spewing forth the sea, much as Vergil pictured it in *Aen.* 3.420ff. Scylla, girdled by savage dogs, is treated in greater detail in Books 13 and 14; Ovid narrates her metamorphosis at 14.59ff., concentrating on the dogs which swarm about her waist.

- 66- As in 53, Medea rejects the hesitation implied in her question
 68 with a brusque *nempe*, then proceeds to treat her very fears, seen in a new light, as advantages. The four successive dactyls of 66 and the three straight dactyls beginning 67 enhance the almost lyrical passion of the girl. *ferar* 67: jussive subjunctive. Love will transform her fears so that she will entirely forget herself and, if she must worry, worry about Jason. Ovid uses a similar motif most effectively in telling the story of Ceyx and Alcyone: she is distraught because Ceyx will not take her on his voyage to share the dangers.
- 69- For the last time Medea veers away from her passion. She has
 71 already reached the point of imagining Jason her husband (68; also 60) when the enormity of her desire horrifies her. *speciosa nomina culpa inponis tuae* 69-70: "are you giving fine-sounding names to your guilty deeds?" In the moral dilemmas which Ovid explores here and in later stories, one of the themes is that of naming the fault or escaping responsibility by giving it a false name. By calling Jason *coniunx*, Medea has been ignoring the fact that he is really *hospes*, hence probably *hostis*. *quin adspice* 70: this time, instead of dismissing the objection with *nempe*, Medea proceeds to act upon it. She orders herself to recognize her evil design and abandon it.
- 72- The "good" is epitomized by *rectum*, a frequent Ciceronian
 73 term for ethical behavior, then defined more precisely by *pietas* and *pudor*. By *pietas* Ovid probably means only the family relations mentioned by Medea in 51, but he might also include religious propriety (which she had cited in 51 too). In *pudor*, of course, he refers to the chaste innocence which here conquers *amor*. How sympathetic Ovid is to Medea's dilemma, for all his

blithe speed, may be inferred by comparing the ignoble way Jupiter solves his dilemma between the same two values *amor* and *pudor* (1.617ff.). *victa dabat terga* 73: Ovid returns to the military metaphor with which he introduced the dilemma in 10ff. Most editors capitalize *cupido*, apparently on the assumption that Cupid the god is routed, the unknown god who opposed Medea in 12, the *maximus deus* of 55 who had apparently taken possession of her. But Ovid seems more concerned here to state the dilemma as a tension between two abstract values: *ratio* vs. *furor*; *mens* vs. *cupido* (19); and now, similar positive qualities vs. *cupido*. The "defeat" and "flight" of *cupido* can easily take place symbolically within the human soul.

- 74- Ovid concludes the episode of the soliloquy with the imperfect
 77 *dabat*, deliberately avoiding the equally metrical *dedit*. That implies the tentative aspect of passion's "rout." Immediately then, with no transition, he places us in a new scene, an indefinite number of hours or days later, and portrays the defeat of Medea's resolution. In Apollonius the soliloquy occurs at night, the surrender of the girl some time later. Here Ovid continues with the imperfect tense and a pluperfect until he is ready to focus on the key moment with the present *videt* and perfect *reluxit*. *Hecates Perseidos*: both forms of the Greek genitive. Hecate was daughter of Perse. Why Medea was going to Hecate's altar, Ovid does not say. Apollonius, who told the story slightly otherwise, first had the girl talk to her sister Chalciope, who urged her to yield to her love, then arrange a meeting with Jason in the grove of Hecate. Ovid uses Hecate as the deity to preside over Jason's vows of fidelity (with patent irony, since Jason will not remain faithful) at 94ff., and later, when Medea involves herself in witchery, Hecate is the first god to whom she prays (194). The altar lies in woods which are shaded and isolated; *nemus* and *silva* are practically synonymous. *fortis* 76: Ovid uses this adjective with reference to the "battle" which Medea has been waging. It is only natural for him then to introduce in the second hemistich the second thematic metaphor of the scene: *ardor*. *resederat*: it had died down, but it was not necessarily dead. Thus, as soon as she saw Jason, the apparently dead flame flickered up again (*reluxit* 77).
 78 Note how both of the verbs fit the preceding fire metaphors and so serve as a transition to the fire simile of 79ff. *recanduit*: this verb, which is Ovid's invention, appears four times in the *Metamorphoses* only. It can mean "turn white" or, by extension, refer to the glowing heat of fire. Since Ovid does not seem to

picture Medea here as alternately blushing and paling, but rather blushing and glowing, the two verbs cumulatively suggest the “fire” inside her.

- 79– The simile embellishes the metaphor of 76–77. Its subject is
 83 *scintilla*, included in the relative clause of 80. (Note how Ovid begins the clause in the last foot of 79 with the casual *quaeque*.) Ovid’s sense of the spark is purely pictorial here, not in the least ominous or condemnatory; Vergil regularly uses the “fire” of love or passion with destructive overtones. Thus the four dactyls beginning 81 suggest the speed of the blaze but do not imply any danger from the fire, which merely revives on the hearth. *iam quem* 82: Ovid, intent on emphasizing the repeated *iam*, not in any way forced by the meter, moves it outside the relative clause away from its verb. *putares*: the poet draws the audience into the situation. *ut vidit iuvenem* 83: echoes the first hemistich of 77; now, however, Ovid uses the perfect tense. *specie*: “appearance”; instrumental ablative. *inarsit*: a poetic word coined in the Augustan period and used by both Vergil and Horace. It provides almost a frame for this large metaphorical complex, by harking back to *ardor* in 76.
- 84– *solito*: ablative of comparison with *formosior*, “more handsome
 85 than usual.” *Aesonis natus*: another “epic” way of referring to Jason, parallel to the patronymic *Aesonides* of 77. On Ovid’s thematic use of *formosus*, see comment on 6.167. Here Jason’s *forma* is transforming Medea’s once firm resolution. *luce* 85: synonymous with *die*, which would not fit the meter here.
- 86– *tum denique*: *denique* here, as in 15, intensifies the adverb as-
 88 sociated with it. The mere sight of Jason, no matter when, drastically affects Medea. *demens* 87: her *mens* has lost the fight, and *cupido* controls her. *mortalia ora* 87–88: the power of his face (*ore* 28) to stir a girl has already been mentioned. Now he seems godlike to her.
- 89– Ovid leaves the present tense, which helped him to emphasize
 91 the poignant position of Medea, and changes to the perfect. *prehendit*: archaic, unsyncopated form of familiar Classical *prendit*, used mainly for metrical reasons. *hospes* 90: delayed subject. By her earlier resolution, she had chosen to regard Jason as stranger; now, however, he will quickly become *amatus*. *promisit torum* 91: “promised marriage”; *torus*, which means “a swelling or protuberance,” came to be applied to a cushion, then to the bed or couch on which the cushion was placed, and finally, as here, to the marriage bed in particular. This is poetic metonymy like that of *thalamos* in 22.

- 92- *faciam*: subjunctive in indirect question. Medea admits that
 94 she grasps the significance of her actions (cf. 20). The elision
 of *me* is not unorthodox; Roman epic poets avoided eliding
 most monosyllables except where personal pronouns in the
 accusative were involved. *decipiet* 93: future. Strictly speaking,
 this verb must be assigned to *amor* as well as to *ignorantia veri*.
 But a logical problem now arises: how can Medea admit that
 love "will deceive" her? If she recognizes the deception in ad-
 vance, then she is not deceived. From the outside we in the
 audience may well condemn her and, with Socrates, claim that
 she could not knowingly do the wrong she intends to do. When,
 however, she chooses to pursue *amor* rather than *ratio*, she
 herself must believe that *amor* is right. Ovid is portraying a
 young girl about to succumb to passion, unable to resist the
 attraction of what she has been taught is wrong. As she yields,
 she still piously utters the protests that should come from a
 "good girl," but her heart is not with those words. However,
 the long struggle with her conscience does establish Medea as
 a moral creature by contrast with the amorous gods. *servabere*
 93: for all we know, this is the first time that Medea has ever
 spoken to Jason. Ovid ignores all the realities of lovers' conver-
 sation and plunges straight towards the key term. By saving
 Jason, Medea defines herself before her father as a traitor; but
 by doing so, she guarantees herself marriage. Hence, once she
 makes her promise, she wishes to extract a promise from Jason.
servatus 94: nicely chosen to balance *servabere*; from the im-
 perative *dato*, it acquires a future sense. *promissa dato*: "see to
 it that you fulfill your promises." The phrase *promissa dare*,
 which can mean "to make promises," is employed by Ovid here
 and at 2.51-52 to mean "carry out what has been promised."
 94- Jason now repeats the promise of 91, calling to witness every
 99 deity that might be concerned with the scene and people.
triformis deae 94-95: Hecate, who was thought of as also em-
 bracing the role of Diana and the moon. In the second clause of
 95 Ovid has dealt freely with word order; in prose, it might
 have run: *et (-que) per numen quod foret in illo luco*, "and by
 the divine power residing in that grove." *foret* 95: subjunctive
 in implied indirect discourse. *patrem soceri* 96: Aeetes' father
 was the Sun, the all-seeing one. To swear by the Sun is to risk
 the greatest danger if he should not make Medea his bride.
 Apollonius staged the marriage of Medea and Jason long after
 the two had left Colchis with the Golden Fleece. In 97 Jason
 swears by his successes and his perils; that is, by the success he

expects in triumphing over the perils. Ovid cuts short this potentially romantic tryst with a perfunctory pair of lines, 98–99. *creditus* 98: “having been believed.” Apart from poetry, *credere* cannot be used in the passive voice personally to mean “believe,” for the passive of *ei credidit*, “she believed him,” would be *ei ab illa creditum est*, “he was believed by her.” *cantatas protinus herbas*: “herbs which had instantly been charmed.” Medea picked some special herbs, sang incantations over them, and then gave them to Jason. Ovid compresses this action. *tecta* 99: we know nothing about where Jason was staying. In other versions, though, he was with his men on the shore by the ships. We may then take *tecta* loosely as “tents.” The perfect tense of the last two lines once again moves the scene away from us as preparation for a new episode.

100 *postera aurora*: the reference to dawn here provides perhaps the only indication of the previous episode's occasion. That was probably at night. *depulerat*: pluperfect tense in order to set the background, as in 3 ff.

101 *Mavortis arvum*: archaic poetic synonym for *campus Martius*; cf. 119. Heavy accentuation of the first syllable of *Mavors* eventually caused syncopation and the Classical form, *Mars*. The field of Mars is not here an anachronism, for Apollonius places Jason's trials in a spot of the same name.

102 *iugis*: “on the heights.” Apparently the plain was located in a hollow and enclosed by hills, on the ridges of which the spectators could sit in safety while Jason faced his perils. In Rome the Circus Maximus exhibits a similar natural conformation. After describing the general populace's position, Ovid then focuses on the king, centered *medio* (in) *agmine* 102–103 as the chief figure presiding over the contests. Medea is ignored until the second trial (134 ff.), when we learn, as we had every reason to expect, that she, too, sits among the spectators.

103 *purpureus*: “robed in purple”; this is an extended poetic treatment of the adjective, which normally describes the color intrinsically belonging to a thing.

104–*ecce*: Ovid dramatically shifts from motionless spectators to
106 violent bulls and the first trial. *adamanteis*: unique occurrence in Ovid's poetry of an adjective which is also met in Manilius. Behind the word stands the noun *adamas*, a Latin transliteration of Greek; it meant a material, usually metal, which was unbreakable, undestroyable. Since normal animals would have been badly burned when breathing fire out of their noses, Ovid equips these bulls with asbestos nostrils. *Vulcanum*: poetic

metonymy, using the god of fire to stand for fire. *aeripedes* 105: poetic compound apparently invented by Vergil in *Aen.* 6.802. The bronze hooves make the bulls noisier and more dangerous; Apollonius uses the equivalent Greek compound for them in 3.496. It is evident that Ovid has chosen to imitate the usual epic style here as appropriate to the traditional "epic" scene. *ardent* 106: initial spondee and full stop.

106— Ovid uses a pair of similes to embellish the fearsome noise and
 10 fire produced by the bulls. On double similes in Ovid, cf. comment on 6.527. The humble occupations from which these comparisons are drawn raise questions about the poet's tone here: is he being slyly irreverent toward the myth, or is he attempting to be vivid? One suspects the former. In the first simile he refers to the roaring furnace of the blacksmith; in the second to the lime kiln of a builder, who would melt limestone down in order to secure lime for cement and mortar. The lime kiln is definitely a Roman allusion, anachronistic, datable to the first century B.C. and Ovid's day, when the use of cement became common. Ovid's precision about the treatment of lime argues personal observation. In 108 he says that, when sprinkled with water, it ignites. A chemical reaction takes place when calcium oxide and H₂O are combined: the water boils off and leaves a powdery residue, calcium hydroxide. The word order of 107 involves some ellipsis. Expanded, the simile would read: *aut ut resonant silices ubi . . .* The roaring furnaces help to illustrate the thunderous sound (*sonant* 110) emitted by the lungs and throats of the beasts as they pour out their flames. *usta* 110: a vivid note. The throats are scorched but not consumed, much as a metal pan would be when held over a flame (with no liquid to absorb the heat).

110— *illis*: dative with *obvius*. *vertere* 111: Ovid shifts suddenly from
 14 present to perfect tense, which he will maintain until he returns to Jason in 115. *truces*: nominative with the understood subject, *tauri*. *venientis*: balances *it*. *pulvereum* 113: poetic adjective used before Ovid by Vergil in *Aen.* 8.593. Ovid employs it here (also 6.705) for its "epic" tone and its contribution to the alliteration. *pede bisulco*: the typical "cloven hoof" of cattle. The epithet is confined to poetry in this period; the entire passage goes back to Lucretius 2.356. *fumificis* 114: another "poetic" word. Varro *De Ling. Lat.* 7.38 cites it in a mock-heroic fragment of Plautus. It is a little difficult to take seriously Ovid's "smoking bellows"; his flamboyant use of "epic" vocabulary gives the whole scene a melodramatic quality. And the

final spondaic quadrisyllable, *impleverunt* (cf. 6.69), adds to the melodrama as it emphatically closes the description.

- 115 The straight series of dactyls belies the fright of the Greeks and the “heroic” advance of Jason. *subit*: present tense, continuing from *obvius* it in 111.

- 115– Keeping us in suspense, Ovid interrupts the action with a self-conscious parenthesis. Just in case we are wondering why Jason was not stopped by the flames, the poet returns to the perfect tense momentarily to tell us that Jason did not feel the fire. Then, in asyndeton, he comments on the fact with a typical epiphonema involving *tantum* and carefully planned to fill the hemistich; cf. 6.18n. We now hear something more precise about the enchanted herbs mentioned earlier in 98. In the expanded account of Apollonius, Jason anointed his body with a magic lotion that rendered him impervious to the heat. The text of these two lines is difficult. In 115 *subit* is not found in the usual MSS, which indeed have for the second hemistich: *subito Minyae ille nec illos* (or *ullos*). They then continue into the first hemistich of 116 with *sensit anhelatus* PSU³M *anhelatos* N *anhelantes* Ampl. U. The awkwardness of the elision at the bucolic diaeresis, with the long syllable *-ae* yielding to the short *i* of *ille*, makes this text suspect. Moreover, although the correlation between *nec* of 115 and *-que* of 117 is permissible in poetry (the parenthesis would have to shrink to the second hemistich of 116), it is by no means likely that Ovid would have mixed the perfect *sensit* with the present *mulcet* in correlative clauses. Thus the reading which occurs in *Fragm. Voss.* and was reported by Naugerius for several “old” MSS: *Minyae; subit ille* seems infinitely preferable. The problem of the first part of the parenthesis remains. The authority for *ignes* is extremely slight. Although it is an elegant suggestion, we can make do with *illos anhelatus* or *anhelantes*. I personally prefer *anhelantes*. To summarize, I would accept the authority of *Fragm. Voss.* against the awkward reading of most older MSS for the first four feet of 115: *deriguere metu Minyae; subit ille*. Then I would return to the prevailing text of the MSS: *nec illos / sensit anhelantes* (the last word derived from Ampl.).

- 117 Note the somewhat playful alliteration, *pendula palearia*. By boldly stroking the bulls’ dewlaps, Jason gradually tamed and yoked them.
- 119 *ferro*: to be taken in common with both *insuetum* and *proscindere*. The former mildly personifies *campum*; the latter is a poetic verb.

- 120 Ovid focuses on the marvelous throughout this scene, setting it off sharply from the pathos of Medea's tortured passion. For Ovid's use of "marvel" as a theme, see comment on 6.82. Note the chiasmic arrangement of verbs and subjects.
- 121 *galea aena*: ablative of source without a preposition.
- 122 *vipereos dentes*: dragon's teeth to be used as seed. Hence, *semina* in 123.
- 123 *praetincta veneno*: the teeth came from a poisonous dragon and remained infected by the venom.
- 124 A metamorphosis takes place as the teeth change into bodies. For *novus* as a formulaic term in the description of metamorphosis, see comment on 6.381.
- 125–29 Delaying the subject *infans* until the last word of 126, Ovid embarks on a simile, in which he exploits the familiar idea of "Mother Earth." He employs a number of metaphorical terms (*visceribus, gravae, feto*) to establish the parallel, and synonyms increase the resemblance: thus, the words for assuming form, *speciem sumit* 125 and *imago / effecta est* 128–29. However, Ovid makes no more extensive use of the simile, as Vergil might have, for example, to suggest the *difference* between the helpless infant and the fearsome warrior.
- 130 *quodque magis mirum est*: Ovid attaches the note of marvel here, as often, to the scene of metamorphosis, defining the audience's reactions. He uses the same hemistich in 15.317. *simul edita*: there is a genuine ambiguity here concerning the syntax of *edita*. It might be nominative feminine with *imago* 128 or it might be accusative plural with *arma*. The word order does not help to decide the issue, for the hexameter permits no other arrangement of these words. Of the two possible translations—"as soon as it was brought forth, it clashed its weapons" and "it clashed the weapons which were brought forth at the same time"—the second seems preferable. The marvel inheres not in the instantaneous clashing of the weapons, but in the fact that the weapons sprouted up with the man's form.
- 131–33 *quos*: Ovid now refers to the whole crop of soldiers. *praeacutae*: read as three long syllables. Because of its short *a* between long syllables, this word was excluded from the hexameter unless the poetic license of synizesis blended the *a* with the preceding *ae*. Apparently this is the only instance where the word appears in Latin poetry, let alone the hexameter. *torquere* 132: standard verb to describe the throwing motion of the spear, which, as with the javelin in athletic contests today, involved a snap or partial rotation of the arm. *Haemonii iuvenis*: poetic circum-

locution for Jason, the Thessalian youth. *metu* 133: ablative of manner. *vultumque animumque*: for the double *-que* (here, perhaps, also used for metrical reasons), see 6.179n. The use of two objects or subjects of different connotations with the same verb, a favorite practice of Ovid, has the rhetorical name of “zeugma.” In a poet like Vergil this device enhances economy and contributes to the density and power of the narrative. Ovid uses zeugma, on the other hand, to create an illogical picture for the amusement of his sophisticated audience. In Latin one can say *demittere vultum* or *oculos*, “lower the eyes,” and one can say *demittere animos*, “let one’s spirits sink,” but no serious speaker would ever link the two phrases in zeugma, for the physical process of the first interferes with the psychological process of the second and causes an anticlimax, whichever way you put it. That is what Ovid apparently seeks here: to make the consternation of the Greeks improbable and so keep his audience amused and free from the slightest trace of involvement with the incredible story. With a similar zeugma he records the distress of Phoebus over Coronis’ faithlessness: *pariter vultusque deo plectrumque colorque / excidit* (2.601–602). The three items, all linked by *-que* and stressed by *pariter*, interfere with a sympathetic treatment of one another. *Pelasgi* 133: cf. 7.49.

- 134— *extimuit*: Ovid uses this verb four times in the *Metamorphoses*,
 36 always in this form, almost as if he regarded it as an intensified form of *timuit*. Cf. 8.605. The reference in *ipsa* is clarified by the relative clause. In returning briefly to Medea, Ovid does not name her. *tot ab hostibus unum* 135: to emphasize the contrast between one and many Ovid interrupts the phrase *iuvenem* . . . *unum* with the prepositional phrase.
- 137— *neve*: i.e., *et ne*, which was not metrically apt here. The normal
 38 use of *neve* or *neu* is to introduce a co-ordinate negative phrase or clause. However, it was extended in order to link a negative clause with a preceding affirmative one, provided that both were in parallel subjunctive constructions. Cf. *Aen.* 7.265 or Horace *C.* 1.2.50. *data gramina*: cf. 98, *accepit herbas*. The noun, like other words of its type, provides an ideal fifth-foot dactyl. *carmen / auxiliare* 137–38: the run-on is unorthodox, for it starts in the sixth foot. Possibly Ovid intended to emphasize the adjective by the unusually abrupt enjambement. *auxiliare* has military, prosaic associations; it belongs in the vocabulary of historians narrating battles. Cf. 6.424. Here, however, the phrase *carmen auxiliare* is a novelty. As Jason

prepares to face the crop of soldiers, Medea gets him "military assistance" by a chanted spell!

- 139- Ovid radically abbreviates the usual story, relying on his
 40 audience's familiarity with the details. Without telling us that Medea had so instructed Jason, he merely records that Jason threw the stone among the enemy; without telling us why, he reports that the danger was thus averted from Jason. The five dactyls of 139 make the throwing of the "heavy" stone an easy task; the four successive spondee of 140 mark the contrast, the weary struggle for the soldiers.

- 7- 141- *terrigenae*: cf. 36. *civili acie* 142: it was a topos of Augustan
 42 poetry that the civil wars of the first century B.C. had pitted brother against brother. Therefore, as soon as Ovid mentions the fratricide of these men, he thinks of civil war. Earlier, when he described Cadmus' battle with the Dragonseed warriors, Ovid also exploited the allusion to civil strife: cf. 3.117. Note the alliteration of c.

- 142- *Achivi*: Jason's men. *avidis amplexibus haerent* 143: "cling to
 43 him with eager embraces."

- 144 *conplecti*: stronger than *amplecti* (which would not have fitted without causing elision), appropriate to the fiercer passions which animate Medea. *barbara*: the poet apostrophizes Medea and labels her ambiguously. Probably, though, he calls her "barbarian" only to mark the contrast between the natural loyalty of Jason's men and the guilty, even treacherous passion linking this woman and the Greek. *velles*: potential subjunctive; contrary to fact.

- 9
 10 145- There is serious corruption in these two lines. Although a few
 46 MSS read them in this order, the majority reverse the two. In either case, it is plain that the corruption goes back before all extant MSS, for it is necessary to posit a lacuna after 146: Ovid has embarked upon a past contrary-to-fact condition and omitted the crucial protasis. Since the first four feet of 146 parallel the thought of 145, it is customary to regard the two lines as a doublet, either Ovid's or some interpolator's, and to choose one or the other as the correct line intended by Ovid for his final version. If we do that, too, then 146 seems an obvious candidate for rejection. *ne faceres* 145: subjunctive after verb of restraint, *tenuit* serving for the more common *retinuit*. *reverentia famae* is synonymous with *pudor* 146.

- 11 149- *pervigilem*: poetic compound, possibly invented by Ovid as
 51 *insopitum* in 36 was. *herbis*: the enchanted plants given to Jason in 98 have many uses. Cf. 116 and 137. *praesignis* 150:

probably another invention of Ovid; used here with three nouns, all ablatives of specification. Ovid makes sure that the dragon seems properly *horrendus* by assigning it three tongues and hooked fangs. *aureae* 151: scanned as two long syllables. The tree is called “golden,” of course, because it bears the Golden Fleece.

- 152 Note the four successive spondees, a solemn beginning to the long sentence. *Lethaei gramine suci*: where we should say “the Lethaeian juice of the herbs,” Ovid places his emphasis on the herbs (*gramine*), which he then defines as “of Lethaeian juice.” Most of the MSS have corrupted *gramine* to *carmine*. The adjective refers to the soporiferous properties of the river Lethe.
- 153– Medea used spells as well as herbs. *ter*: magic number. The
54 accompanying relative clause indicates the marvelous powers of these spells. If they can stop the violence of stormy seas and raging fires, surely they can lull a mere dragon to sleep.
- 155 *somnus in ignotos oculos ubi venit*: this is the overwhelmingly agreed upon reading of the MSS. If accepted, it creates another subordinate clause in an awkward way that does not seem appropriate to Ovid; and the two clauses with *postquam* are placed in asyndeton with this. Furthermore, the use of *et . . . -que* to link the co-ordinate clauses that follow leaves something to be desired. Although, despite these objections, editors usually do not emend, Merkel proposed an elegant change: *ubi tibi*. This would eliminate the new subordinate clause and at the same time alter the *et* to a simple connective, the conclusion now consisting of three members. The eyes are called “unknown,” because the dragon has been immune to sleep up to now.
- 155– *auro*: ablative with *potitur*. *heros Aesonius* 156: another epic
58 periphrasis for Jason, heroic son of Aeson. Ovid uses an initial spondaic word here, contrary to regular Augustan practice. *spolio superbus*: the alliteration is probably playful, especially as Ovid then proceeds to make a word play with *spolia altera* in 157. Pride in heroic exploit is standard behavior in epic. However, here, inasmuch as Jason himself has accomplished so little, the adjective *superbus* causes smiles. *auctorem* 157: i.e., Medea. *Iolcias tetigit portus* 158: the adjective, which first appears in corrupted form in Propertius 2.1.54, was the cause of much confusion in Ovid's MSS also. Those who recognized the allusion to the Thessalian port Iolcus glossed the word with *Haemonios* or *Thessalicos*, and some scribes copied the gloss instead of the rightful text. The use of the perfect *tetigit* after

the present *potitur* is not strange. Ovid marks a huge leap between the two clauses, skipping over the wanderings of Jason (to which Apollonius devoted a quarter of his poem), in order to come to a sharp stop with the arrival in Thessaly. For the perfect tense at the end of a scene, cf. 98–99. *cum coniuge*: Medea has gained her wish; she is now Jason's wife, as he promised in 91.

MEDEA AND AESON (159–293)

Apollonius devoted his final book to the long wanderings of Jason and Medea before their ultimate return to Iolcus. However, what happened in Thessaly after their arrival had long been of interest to the makers of myth and to the Greek dramatists. Pelias, Jason's uncle, did not welcome Jason back, because he had sent him off in the first place to get rid of him. In the version that both Apollodorus 1.9.27 and Hyginus 24 record, Jason himself decided to kill Pelias. Apollodorus motivates Jason's decision by saying that Pelias had forced Jason's father Aeson to commit suicide and then wiped out the rest of the family; so Jason determined on vengeance as well as self-protection. Hyginus says that Jason cherished the thought of vengeance for all the dangers he had encountered on the expedition. Both accounts then agree that Medea was the instrument of his designs. Euripides uses much the same story in *Medea* 484ff. The story of Aeson's rejuvenation is Greek and belongs to the epic tradition. Whether it was ever so artfully employed as here, is not known. Ovid uses it in a tale of black magic and marvel as a foil to the murder of Pelias (297–349). The Medea we see here has very little to do with the love-torn girl we have watched earlier. Now she is an accomplished witch, delighting in her powers and rather amusing us by her skill. Except for a momentary conversation between Jason and Medea, we hear nothing of the passionate love which is the theme of 7.9–99, of Apollonius 3 and Euripides' tragedy; here we remain in the make-believe world of marvel created in 7.100ff.

- 159– *Haemoniae*: Thessalian; cf. 132. Just as Medea had predicted
62 in 49–50, the *matres* assemble to do her honor for saving their
sons. *pro gnatis receptis*: this sounds like the official *titulus* to
which Medea alluded in 56. The archaic form *gnatis* helps to
suggest a public decree or inscription. This whole scene is in-
vented by Ovid to effect the transition to Aeson through one of

his favorite narrative topoi: all gather but the person on whom he intends to concentrate, Aeson. *grandaevi patres* 160: aged fathers will remind us of Jason's father. The adjective is epic, used several times by Vergil (e.g., *Aen.* 1.121). *congesta*: with *tura*. The lavishly heaped up incense is burned. *liquefaciunt* 161: as the incense burns, it seems to melt. Ovid lengthens the *e* so that the word will fit the meter: cf. 9.175. *inductaque cornibus aurum*: "and its horns gilded with gold." The verb *inducere* can be used in the passive as though it were equivalent to the Greek middle voice, at least by a poet interested in expanding Latin syntax with Greek techniques. So Ovid here uses with it the so-called Greek accusative and the normal dative. Vergil uses similar syntax with *induo*: *galeam clipeique insigne decorum / induitur* (*Aen.* 2.392–93). Cf. 182 below. Cf. also *perque pedes traiectus lora tumentis* (*Aen.* 2.273). *victima vota facit* 162: the victim, a bull, fulfills a promised offering for the safe return of the Argonauts. The alliteration and swift dactylic rhythm do not encourage us to linger over this scene.

- 162– *sed abest*: Ovid first used this preambulatory device to introduce the story of Io. When all the other rivers gathered to congratulate Daphne's father on her metamorphosis, *Inachus unus abest* 1.583; Io's father was lamenting her disappearance. Cf. comment on 6.421. The line devoted to describing Aeson prepares for Jason's request.
- 164 *Aesonides*: the patronymic is appropriate here, for Jason speaks with special awareness of his father. *debere salutem*: echoes the theme of Medea's speech in 50 and 93–94. Ovid omits the subject of the infinitive.
- 167 *quid enim non carmina possunt*: the parenthesis, like others of Ovid, repeats the key word *possunt*, asking a rhetorical question introduced by *quid enim*. It thus removes most of the hesitation from the conditional sentence.
- 168 *deme meis annis*: supply as object *aliquos annos*, which is implied by *demptos*.
- 169 Ovid adds a stage direction, that Jason could not refrain from tears. *pietate*: Jason's dutiful sacrifice for his father.
- 170 *dissimilem animum*: of Medea, who had defined herself as *impia* by betraying her father Aeetes. *Aeeta*: alternative form of the nominative, useful in meter.
- 171 *adfectus tales*: her warm memories of her father. The abrupt beginning of the speech in the fifth foot and the immediate interruption suggest the sharpness of Medea's objection.

- 172 *coniunx*: each addresses the other by this appropriate title; cf. 165. *scelus*: Medea is so deeply in love with Jason that she regards as a "sin" the very suggestion that he diminish his lifespan.
- 173 *posse*: picks up Jason's remarks in 167. Though no doubt skillful enough to be able to accomplish the miracle, Medea objects: "Do I seem (to you) capable of transferring to someone else the span of your life?"
- 174 *sinat*: potential subjunctive, unreal condition. *isto*: supply *munere* from next line; ablative of comparison with *maius*. The demonstrative conveys the forceful tone with which Medea rejects Jason's request.
- 176–177 Ovid has placed *renovare*, which goes with both ablatives (*arte* and *annis*), in the second phrase, whereas its object *aevum* appears in the first phrase. The statement, when rightly read, contrasts *arte mea* with *annis tuis*.
- 177–178 *diva triiformis*: Hecate; cf. 94n. *praesens* 178: prayers often ask for the advent of the deity (*adsis, advenias*), for the presence can mean considerable assistance. *adnuat*: "nod assent"; subjunctive in a proviso clause after *modo*. Note that Medea does not explain what her *maius munus* will be, for Ovid does not wish to spoil the moment when he describes the miracle. The audience knew the story anyway.
- 179 *tres noctes*: combinations of three occur frequently in Medea's magic ritual. Cf. 189, 235 (3 times 3), 324. Night serves as the necessary time for preparation. *cornua*: of the moon, referred to later at 181. The new moon, with what we consider a crescent shape, looked to the poets like the arc of horns. They then said that the horns were filled out into a circle to make the full moon. Thus in 530–31: *iunctis explevit cornibus orbem / luna*. The subjunctives here are in purpose clauses, but we would translate: "There were still three nights *before* the horns would come together and form a circle."
- 181 *solida imagine*: with its complete shape. A full moon is congenial for witchery.
- 182 *egreditur*: present tense for vividness; Medea's actions receive the focus. *vestes induta*: same "Greek" construction as above: *inducta aurum* 161. *recinctas*: "loosened," as Roman ritual required for religious ceremonies. Cf. 1.382 and 398; also the familiar scene of Dido's ominous nocturnal rites *in veste recincta* (*Aen.* 4.518).
- 183 *nuda pedem*: "barefoot"; again, Greek accusative. The bindings of the feet were also loosened according to ritual require-

ments. Hence, Dido has one foot bare. *nudos capillos*: the hair is “bare” of ornaments or restraint, another element of ritual. Greek accusative with past participle again, as in 182.

- 184– Note the chiasmic patterning of adjectives and nouns, this time in
 85 a triple series limited by *vagos . . . gradus*. The adjectives establish a mood; then the nouns specify its application.
- 185– Ovid now employs the familiar narrative formula that often
 88 begins: *nox erat*. Cf. note on 6.489. All the world is quiet and asleep: we then expect an adversative clause, introduced by *at* or *sola*, to focus on the wild activity of Medea. Ovid, however, toys with our expectations. Instead of moving from the world of nature to Medea, he reports a sole exception in nature: the stars glitter, and Medea then proceeds to pray to them. Ovid will use the same formula and the same introductory verb *solverat* in 10.368–69 to concentrate on Myrrha’s passion. We might assume that Ovid, having in 185 covered humans, birds, and animals, would then turn to representative things that grow or move, such as water, trees, and bushes. So Vergil does in *Aen.* 4.522 ff. Ovid, however, playfully desiring to be complete, decides to introduce snakes. That at least is one interpretation of this troubled text in 186 and 186^a. Although 186^a is attested by the good older MSS, Heinsius eliminated it from his text; hence the numbering traditionally used since then. The problem is the difficult one of “doublets” in Ovid: are they his original intention, his later revision, or the result of some scribe’s interpolation? We noted one in 145–46; another will appear in 246–47. Here the problem is exacerbated by our uncertainty as to the correct reading of the final words in 186 and 186^a. Good MSS record *serpens* and singular or plural forms of the verb *serpo*; other good MSS report *sepes* or its apparent equivalent *saepes*. Ovid might have used *serpens* in one line, *saepes* in the next; he might have used *serpens* or *saepes* in both. Both words are common, both frequently employed by Ovid, though *serpens* obviously has more poetic adaptability. Either word might have been corrupted into the other; but it seems more likely that *sepes* or *saepes* might have been read into *serpēs*. When Heinsius rejected 186^a, he used *saepes* in the text of 186. When the line is dropped, the noun of 186 will then be governed by the verb *silent* of 187 and affected by its second subject *frondes*. Snake and leaves hardly belong together; hedge(s) and leaves are congenial. The same reasoning, it seems to me, can be used even more strongly when 186^a is included. Now the phrase *sopitae similis* (in some MSS changed to the plural: *sopitis*

similes) makes it most illogical to accept *serpens*. You might say a snake was seemingly asleep only if he were *not*; but that is precisely what Ovid does not wish to say here. Everything is "asleep" and quiet except the stars (and Medea). Ovid could say that the hedgerows were seemingly asleep (in a metaphorical sense) and mean that they *were* "asleep"; that is the sense which this passage demands. Hedges do not sleep; their quietness can be likened to sleep. In short, it seems right to accept both lines as Ovidian and to read, as the final word in both, *saepes*.

- 188— *bracchia tendens*: gesture of prayer; cf. 6.262 and 359. Medea's
91 ritual acts are performed in threes, and Ovid uses *ter* and
3 *ternis* in anaphora. *flumine* 189: ablative of source. Pouring
water over the head would be a purificatory rite. *ululatus* 190:
Medea gave three shrieks to attract attention from the gods.
Vergil cited a ritual shriek at the "marriage" of Dido (*Aen.*
4.168).

- 192— In her prayer, which Ovid has invented for this dramatic occa-
98 sion, Medea invokes a variety of deities: (1) Night, who most
faithfully guards secrets. (2) The stars. *quaeque* 192: looks
forward to *astra* in 193. *diurnis . . . ignibus*: the sun. (3) Hecate,
here called *triceps* instead of *triformis* (cf. 177). *coeptis*
conscia 194: "aware of my undertakings"; *conscia* with dative.
cantusque artisque 195: double *-que* both epic and metrically
useful; each noun an objective genitive. *magorum*: Persian men
of magic who, like Medea, would be under the protection of
9 Hecate: (4) Earth, which provides the magic plants needed by
Medea. (5) The invocation ends with a general appeal to all the
0 elements of the landscape and all the gods who might dwell
therein.

- 199— After the invocation Medea follows the customary pattern of
206 prayer; in a long set of relative clauses, she records how these
deities have helped her. *ripis mirantibus*: Ovid personifies the
river banks in order to interject playfully his characteristic note
of the marvelous. *in fontes rediere suos* 200: it is contrary to
nature for rivers to flow back to their sources. Therefore, such a
phenomenon is either an impossibility (an adynaton used in
oath) or a supernaturally inspired miracle. Next, in a neatly
chiastic pair of clauses, she tells of the gods' help in calming or
11 stirring the ocean (200–201), then controlling clouds or winds
(201–202), destroying vipers (203), and creating earthquakes
(204–206). For the notion of "bursting" snakes, cf. Vergil *Ecl.*
8.71. *viva saxa* 204: rock in its natural situation, seemingly

growing in the earth. *sua*: ablative with *terra*. *robora*: mighty oaks which would be violently uprooted, *convulsa*, in an earthquake. *mugire solum* 206: the rumbling sound of an earthquake, familiar to any Italian who had been near Naples or in eastern Sicily. *manes exire sepulchris*: remarkably like the marvel which Matthew 27:51-52 reports after the Crucifixion: "And the earth shook, and the rocks were split; the tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised."

- 207- Luna, *traho*: magic was supposed to be able to draw the moon
 208 down from the sky to help. Cf. Vergil *Ecl.* 8.69: *deducere lunam*. Since Luna is an aspect of three-formed Hecate, whom Medea has already invoked in 194, Ovid seems inconsistent here. *Temesaea aera* 207-208: Temesa was a source of copper / bronze, in some location not definitely known any more in Ovid's time, but referred to in *Odyssey* 1.184. The bronze, made here into cymbals, was used ritually at times of eclipses (when the moon supposedly experienced *labores*) to counteract the mysterious force that was attempting to take away the moon. *minuant* 208: *quamvis* with the subjunctive (contrast 6.490) implies that the action, not yet come to pass, is in the realm of uncertainty. No matter how the cymbals *may* sound to counteract the eclipse, Medea has undeniable power to bring the moon down.
- 208- *currus avi*: the chariot of the Sun, father of Aeetes, grandfather
 209 of Medea. *avi* is a brilliant emendation of Heinsius for the *aut*, *at*, *et* of the MSS.
- 210- Already in the relative clause (*quorum ope* . . . 199 ff.) Medea
 14 had reminded the gods of their general assistance to her. Now she recalls their help on particular occasions: namely, when she saved Jason from his trials at Colchis. This "reminder" is often ritually handled with anaphora that repeats the pronoun addressed to the deity, here *vos* 210 and 212. *hebetastis* 210: syncopated form of perfect, with *-vi-* dropped. The notion of "blunting" the flames is justified by the feeling that fire has something "sharp" about it. Cf. 13.802: *acrior igni*, referring to Galatea. *pressistis aratro* 211: the bulls in fact took the yoke (cf. 118) upon their necks, but the plow was hitched to the yoke. In 212 translate: "you caused the snake-born warriors to fight beastly war against each other." *serpentina*: a flamboyant poetic compound invented for this passage and unique in Latin. *custodemque rudem somno sopistis* 213: accepting this text, we appear to have a playful version of the "heroic" episode

of 149 ff., as is appropriate to Ovid's purpose here: "The rough custodian you stilled with sleep." The partial personification of *custodem*, the potential contempt in *rudem*, and the alliteration of *s* all work together here. *vindice decepto* 214: also referring to the guardian dragon.

215 *renovata*: cf. 177.

216 *in florem redeat*: subjunctive in relative purpose clause. The metaphor is horticultural, of course, derived from a plant or tree which out of season blooms again. Note the triple use of compounds with *re-* in 215–16.

217 *dabitis*: Medea is continuing to address the gods to whom she gave the pronoun *vos*. The future indicative states a fact about which the subjunctives of 216 raised some doubts. The reason for Medea's confidence becomes clear in the *enim* clause. She interprets the flashing of the stars (an echo from the beginning of her prayer in 188) and, even more securely, the presence of the miraculous dragon-drawn chariot as divine approval of her request. Note the chiasitic arrangement of the two clauses in 217–19.

219 *aderat currus*: in a typical stage direction, chiasitically disposed, Ovid documents Medea's statement. The asyndeton is deliberate.

220– Ovid reports Medea's first actions, background to the next scene in which she flies over the various parts of the Aegean, in the perfect. Notice how she strokes and drives the dragons as if they were ordinary horses. *simul*: used for the prose *simul ac*.

222– Once in the air, *sublimis*, Medea looks down upon Thessaly, then steers her dragons to various places where she can find the desired magic herbs: first to the mountains that ring Thessaly (224–27), then to the rivers flowing from them to the sea (228–31), also to a Thessalian marsh; and finally as far south as the coast of Boeotia opposite Euboea (232–33). *Tempe*: neuter accusative plural; a famous valley, regarded by Greek writers as the epitome of loveliness. It lies between Olympus and Ossa in northern Thessaly, and through it flows the Peneus River.

223 *certis regionibus*: areas where Medea definitely expects to find herbs. But the text is disputed, and behind *certis* may lie an unfamiliar place name.

224 *quas*: its "antecedent" *herbas* is embedded in the next clause. *tulit*: to be understood in each clause of 224–25. *Ossa*: just south of the Peneus River on the northeast coast of Thessaly.

Pelion: another tall mountain, south along the coastal chain, near Pagasae and Lake Boebeis. Ovid is proceeding clockwise with the main heights that enclose the Thessalian Plain.

- 225 *Othrys*: a chain of mountains running more or less east-west along the southern part of Thessaly. *Pindus*: another chain marking the western limit of this region. *Olympus*, the tallest mountain of Greece, almost 10,000 feet high, on the northern bank of the Peneus, closes the circle.
- 226–*placitas*: “since they pleased her.” Note the alliteration of this
 27 line, with *p* and *r*. Medea plucked some of the herbs up by the roots (since the roots possessed magic); others she merely cut low on the stalk with a bronze sickle.
- 228– Not content with listing the major mountains of Thessaly as
 31 sources for Medea’s magic brew, Ovid now continues with the major rivers. *gramina*: one of Ovid’s synonyms for *herbae*; cf. 137 and 152. *placuerunt*: picks up *placitas* of 226. Here Ovid shifts to the perfect tense until 239. *Apidani*: the MSS agree that the river’s name is *Eridani*. But the Eridanus is a poetic name for the Po (*Padus* in prose and literal descriptions); it does not belong in a group of Thessalian rivers. The Apidanus, far less familiar to the scribes who made the change, is even today an identifiable river, which flows north from the Othrys chain through the plain until it joins with the Enipeus. *Amphrysi* 229: also flows from the Othrys, but starting from a point to the east of the Apidanus and taking a course northeast into the Pagasaeon Gulf. *Enipeu*: flows north through the plain, combining with the Apidanus, into the Peneus. Ovid apostrophizes the river, partly to vary his pattern, partly to facilitate his meter. Using *inmunis*, he could not produce a long syllable with the ending of *erat*; *eras* does have a long *a*. *Peneus* 230: flows in an easterly direction from the foothills of the Pindus chain through the northern part of the Thessalian Plain and out into the Thermaic Gulf between Olympus and Ossa. *Spercheides*: adjectival form of Spercheus River, which flows from a spur of the Pindus eastward along the southern boundary of Thessaly and out into the Malian Gulf near Thermopylae. All five of these rivers are named by Ovid in 1.569–80. *nec non*: a solemn connective employed in epic lists, where the double negative adds a touch of importance to the items so introduced. Here an added effect is the procession of spondees. *litora Boebes* 231: Boebe is a Thessalian village (of which this is the Greek genitive form) lying on a shallow (hence “rush-grown” along its shores) lake appropriately named Boebeis.

- 232– *Anthedone*: ablative of source. Anthedon, on the east coast of
 33 Boeotia, earns the adjective *Euboica* because it faces the island of Euboea. *vivax*: appropriate not only to Medea's purposes of rejuvenation, but also to the story of Glaucus briefly mentioned in 233. Glaucus explains his metamorphosis in 13.917 ff. When the fish which he had caught touched the grass of Anthedon (*gramine contacto* 13.936), they immediately became lively again and escaped back into the sea. He, in turn, testing the grass, was changed into a sea creature. With a flourish of learning Ovid anticipates himself and tells us that the grass had not yet acquired its reputation from the transformation of Glaucus.
- 234– The whole sentence through *redit* is an excellent illustration of
 36 the *cum inversum* structure. Her return, being the main thought of the passage, goes into the indicative. In the two lines of background which precede, the word order is free; *lustrantem* is object of *viderat* and in turn has its own object *agros*.
- 236– “The dragons were touched but by the scent”—of all the herbs.
 37 Ovid ends the trip of Medea by testifying to the potency of her materials. The mere scent of them, wafted through the air, made the dragons go through the skin shedding usually experienced by ordinary snakes. Their renewal anticipates the rejuvenation of Aeson. Needless to say, this long witch's flight and the final *coup de théâtre* are not in the sources; they are Ovid's invention. *annosae* 237: a word much favored by Augustan poets. Ovid uses it five times in the *Metamorphoses*, this being the first.
- 238 *citra limenque foresque*: since the narrative pictures her approaching the palace, “on this side of the threshold” means outside. To keep herself ritually pure, Medea avoids all “pollution.”
- 240– *aras e caespite*: temporary turf altars appear frequently in Latin
 41 literature. For the solemnities of the truce between Aeneas and Latinus, men are sent out into the plain to prepare *aras gramineas* (*Aen.* 12.118–19); for the hardly solemn prayer which lovesick Horace wishes to make to Venus, he bids his slaves bring him the makings of an altar: *vivum caespitem* (*C.* 1.19.13). *dexteriore* 241: used only when two items are involved. Supply *parte*. *Hecates*: Greek genitive (cf. 231n.) with *aras*.
- 242 Boughs and foliage were often used as here to adorn altars or to deck the heads of priests or to be borne in solemn procession.
- 243 *egesta tellure*: ablative absolute. *scrobibus*: ablative of source.

A hole was dug near each altar to receive the offerings. These *scrobes* are called *fossas* in 245.

- 244– *velleris atri*: Ovid permits himself a daring metonymy for
 45 *ovis*. A black sheep is the proper victim for a subterranean deity. Cf. the victims sacrificed by Aeneas before plunging into the Underworld (*Aen.* 6.243 ff.). One of them is *atri velleris agnam* 249. Aeneas' ritual is far more complicated. Ovid, hurrying, rapidly records the fact that Medea plunged her knife into the throat of the victim then poured the blood into the sacred holes.
- 246– Having used *perfundit*, Ovid now employs a poetic synonym
 47 *invergens*, possibly another echo of *Aen.* 6.244. The problems of these two lines lie in the second hemistichs, for the MSS make it difficult to be sure what Medea poured next. Most of the MSS report *mellis*, "honey," for the last word of 246; *vini* appears in a few; *Bacchi* and even *lactis* can be found. We do know of a ritual liquid of honey and milk—it is mentioned on the occasion of similar rites in *Odyssey* 11.27—but, whatever its Latin name, it does not appear to have been simply *mel*. And it is quite inconceivable that Medea would have tried to pour unmixed honey, because it would not pour. Therefore, although there is no way of explaining how *mellis* crept into the MSS, it seems best to accept *vini* in 246, *lactis* in 247, and assume that Medea poured wine and plain milk.
- 248 *fudit*: Ovid puns, using for speech a verb synonymous with the verbs of pouring. *terrena numina*: not gods of earth, i.e., idols, but gods of the earth, i.e., Underworld.
- 249 *rapta cum coniuge regem*: Pluto and Proserpina, whom he ravished from earth.
- 251 *precibusque*: the otiose *-que* is added to make a long syllable.
- 252 *ad auras*: Aeson has presumably been bedridden inside the palace. Now he is carried outside into the open air. Several MSS have changed *auras* to *aras*.
- 253 *resolutum carmine*: i.e., *Aesonem*. Medea charms him into deep sleep; cf. *solverat* 186.
- 254 *exanimi similem*: it is a "deathlike" sleep. Once asleep, he is stretched out on the magic herbs. If he were placed on ordinary grass, there would be no need for *stratis*.
- 255– *procul ire . . . oculos remove profanos*: ritual language of the
 56 priest to the uninitiate. Horace begins his Roman Odes assuming the role of priest before a vulgar throng: *odi profanum vulgus et arceo* (C. 3.1.1).
- 257 *passis capillis*: hair loosened for the rite; cf. 183.

- 258 *Bacchantum ritu*: although so far Medea has been likened to a priest, Ovid wishes us to sense fully the extraordinary, un-Roman aspects of this ritual. Hence, he compares her to Bacchantes, women who epitomize wildness, not only by their loosened locks (cf. 3.726 and 4.6), but also by their swift and passionate movements. *flagrantes aras*: the altars have been "burning," presumably to burn up the entrails of the sacrificial lamb (cf. *Aen.* 6.253).
- 259 *multifidas faces*: firebrands or torches were made either by taking the branch of some resinous tree or by splitting, as here, a log of such wood. The latter, of course, would be likely to burn longer and steadier. Ovid invented the adjective for this alliterative line; then he used the same hemistich in 8.644. Other writers of the first century borrowed his invention, to make it a regular part of the Latin vocabulary. *fossa sanguinis atra*: "trench black with blood"; cf. 245. Ovid normally uses the ablative form of *sanguis* in the fifth foot because he seeks the short ending. The ablative of specification is what we should have expected here. However, needing a consonant to prevent elision with *atra*, he blithely switched his syntax to the genitive, presumably on the analogy of the genitive with adjectives.
- 260 *infectas*: "once they were dipped." Since Ovid quite often resorts to cognates of the main verb in such contexts, some scribe conjectured *intinctas* here, and Heinsius, always sensitive to Ovid's style even when MS evidence counts against him, adopted the reading. From his edition, then, *intinctas* has crept wrongly into our Lewis and Short dictionary. *accendit*: not that the blood made the torches especially inflammable; but Medea needed the blood for the ritual, so dipped the torches before lighting them.
- 261 For the magical properties of threes in ritual, cf. 189–90. *lustrat*: a ritual verb which has come into English in that sense. After the slaughter of the suitors, at the end of *Odyssey* 22, Odysseus also uses burning sulphur to purify his palace from the pollution of blood.
- 262 *posito aeno*: Ovid jumps again in his narrative. He has told us nothing about the preparation of this *medicamen*, and he has only incidentally slipped in a reference to *herbae* above at 254. Now we learn that Medea has used some of the herbs to concoct a magic brew and has set it steaming and bubbling somewhere on the scene in a bronze cauldron. *medicamen* existed along with *medicamentum* in Classical Latin, but the former proved

more popular with the poets because of its dactylic possibilities. Ovid uses it twenty times.

- 263 Ovid uses conventional language for a boiling pot. Cf. *Aen.* 7.462ff., where Vergil takes the ordinary picture as the basis of a vivid simile for Turnus' emotions.
- 264 The ingredients of the witch's brew are now elaborately listed for eleven lines, until Ovid grows tired and summarizes the remaining elements (275). *radices*: cf. 226. The Thessalian valley is unspecified; it could have been near any of the mountains listed in 224ff.
- 265 *seminaque floresque*: normally, Ovid does not lengthen a short syllable before *flores*; in fact, he regularly uses this word in the sixth foot of the hexameter to insure the shortness of a preceding vowel. Cf. 9.380. Here, though, he is playfully exploiting a Homeric practice, the lengthening of the enclitic *-τε* in precisely such lists as this. Vergil did it before Ovid; cf. *Aen.* 12.363. *sucos atros*: black for "atmosphere."
- 266 What kind of stones these are, Ovid does not say. The point is that they have an exotic origin, as do the sands of 267.
- 268 *luna pernocte*: ablative of source. It was believed that frost actually came from the moon, dropping down on the earth. On a clear moonlit night of fall or winter, the frost is often heavy. *luna pernox* is a common Augustan phrase, more imaginative than scientific.
- 269 *strigis infames alas*: the screech owl forms a standard element of bad omens at night. Ovid has transferred the epithet from the bird to its wings. The *Dira* sent by Jupiter transformed itself into a *strix* and flew at Turnus *sonans alis*, to paralyze his strength in the final duel with Aeneas (*Aen.* 12.862ff.).
- 270–*soliti*: genitive with *lupi*. The werewolf customarily changes its
71 bestial appearance into that of a man. *ambigui* 271: its form varies—now animal, now human.
- 272 *Cinyphii chelydri*: a dangerous water snake of Libya. Medea has somehow procured its castoff skin.
- 273 *vivacis cervi*: again the adjective is doubly apt, as in 232; stags supposedly outlive men by many years. Ovid uses the same phrase in 3.194.
- 274 *novem cornicis saecula passae*: "a crow that survived nine generations of men."
- 275–Into the weird concoction Ovid now dumps a thousand other
76 nameless ingredients to render it truly incredible, more melodramatic than affective. *propositum mortali maius* 276: "a

purpose more than mortal," i.e., a supernatural purpose, for she is defying death itself.

- 277- Take *iampridem* with *arenti*: it has for a long time now been
 78 drying up; this makes the condition of the branch closely analogous to that of Aeson. Thus what happens to it signifies what can happen to him. Ovid uses the perfect in these four lines (275-78), to establish background for the dramatic event of the present.
- 280 *fit viridis*: the dramatic metamorphosis is enhanced by the alliteration from *vetus* to *viridis*. *primo*: with the first clause. Ovid is describing the rejuvenation of the branch in three stages: it grows green; it sprouts leaves; then suddenly it is loaded with olives. As noted at 6.81, olive trees require many years before producing fruit.
- 282- The miracle of the branch receives confirmation, for even the
 84 spray from the bubbling cauldron causes the ground to put forth flowers. *aenis*: ablative of place from which. Note alliteration at the end of 283. *vernati* 284: cf. *fit viridis* 280.
- 285- Like a cook who has tested her icing, Medea judges the brew
 87 ready as a result of these metamorphoses and immediately operates upon Aeson. Although the action potentially could horrify an audience, Ovid sweeps through the description in a few rapid lines. Medea cuts Aeson's throat and drains out all his blood; then somehow she replaces it with her magic potion. To ladle the brew into the gaping throat, as we are apparently to imagine Medea doing, would take hours. Ovid feels indifferent to exactitude here, for he offers us two choices in 288.
- 287- *quos*: i.e., *sucos*. *conbibit*: although the subject of the verb,
 88 Aeson cannot be said to be actively engaged in "drinking the juices down," for Medea has temporarily killed him. However, Ovid wishes us to focus on him from the beginning, for the subsequent miracle affects Aeson alone. *aut ore aut vulnere* 288: drinking normally involves the mouth, so Ovid offers us that picture, but he also permits us to imagine the far more grotesque scene of Aeson drinking through his slit throat.
- 288- Now a standard metamorphosis is developed. The beard, once
 92 white, becomes black. *posita* 289: this verb often functions to define the abandoned condition; cf. 237. *rapuere*: the verb emphasizes the speedy change. *pulsa fugit* 290: Ovid brings out the violence of the magic by military metaphors. *abeunt*: continues the sense of *fugit*. This verb appears often in scenes of metamorphosis with the preposition *in* plus accusative, synonymous with *mutare in*. Cf. 8.254-55. *adiecto corpore* 291: when

Aeson puts on flesh. *luxuriant* 292: Ovid uses the verb once more in the *Metamorphoses* at 9.267 to describe a similar situation, the vitality exhibited by a snake after it sheds old age and skin (*posita cum pelle senecta*).

- 292–*Aeson miratur*: marvel regularly greets metamorphosis, and
93 marvel is often the main effect sought by Ovid. Here, instead of pointing to the spectators' amazement, Ovid concentrates cleverly on Aeson, now very much alive. *hunc se reminiscitur* 293: he remembers himself being this person forty years ago. *hunc* is predicative. It was corrupted in almost all the MSS into *nunc*.

BACCHUS AND HIS NURSES (294–96)

Very briefly, Ovid punctuates this rejuvenation of Jason's father and separates it from the contrasting tale which will follow, the pseudo rejuvenation of Jason's uncle (which results in murder), by inserting a mere allusion to Bacchus' decision to reward his nurses by making them young again. We do not know exactly what nurses Ovid refers to, but the story is clearly not terribly important here. For a similar intrusion of an unimportant metamorphosis designed to articulate the two portions of a long drama, see below the tale of the Teumessian fox at 759 ff.

- 294 *ex alto*: "from the heavens." *miracula monstri*: either one of these words would have been sufficient, and Ovid deliberately overstates the "miracle" and alliterates as well.
295 *iuvēnes annos*: "years of youth."
296 *capit hoc munus*: how Bacchus got the elixir as a gift and how he used it on the nurses is left to our imagination.

MEDEA AND PELIAS (297–349)

The portrait of Medea the benevolent witch now changes to Medea the malevolent one. She who brought Aeson back to youth now deliberately causes the death of Aeson's brother Pelias. Ovid does not even motivate the story, merely saying that Medea acted so as to maintain trickery. Since she and Jason are naturally suspect to Pelias' family, Medea pretends to have fallen out with Jason and offers to gratify Pelias as a way of getting back at Jason. To lend credence to her promises she rejuvenates an aged ram. Then freeing herself from the taint of murder, she persuades the daughters of Pelias to butcher their father by cutting his throat, on the pretext that she will do for him what she did for the ram (and for Aeson before

that). Ovid increases the dramatic irony by repeatedly echoing the language of Aeson's miracle. Instead of using the magic potion on the dead Pelias, she merely plunges him in hot water, which of course has no effect. For this, she and Jason are hounded out of Thessaly as murderers and flee to Corinth. Both Sophocles and Euripides dramatized this lurid story in now lost tragedies. Summaries of the events can be found in Apollodorus 1.9.27 and Hyginus 24. As noted above (cf. introduction to 159 ff.), Apollodorus and Hyginus both say that Jason plotted the murder of Pelias and used Medea as his willing instrument. Both also vary from Ovid on the way Medea approached the daughters of Pelias. After that, though, the accounts agree with the more elaborate melodrama of Ovid.

- 297 *neve*: for this word as an initial conjunction, see 137n.
 298 *Phasias*: Medea, from the River Phasis in Colchis. Ovid seems to have invented this word as adjective in his earlier poetry, then used it as substantive here only.
 299 *gravis ipse senecta*: Pelias is slowed down by old age like Aeson; cf. 162–63.
 300 *natae*: Hyginus lists five of them, including Alcestis, the loyal and self-sacrificing wife of Admetus (later). *callida*: the note of deception announced in *doli* 297 dominates these opening lines. Ovid constantly alters the impression of Medea from *infelix* 18 until he arrives at this.
 301 *amicitiae mendacis imagine*: we might translate: “with a false show of friendship”; but Ovid is using his language properly. As we saw in 6.103 and 110, *imago* occurs in scenes where gods assume a false or deceptive guise. Ovid, however, correctly says that the *imago* is real, but the friendship false.
 302 *demptos*: Medea describes her service in language that reverses what Jason requested of her in 168.
 303 *situs*: an example of the poetic plural used to avoid elision of *situm. hac in parte*: i.e., “on this subject.”
 304 *virginibus Pelia creatis*: i.e., *Peliae filibus*. Unfortunately, it is virtually impossible in Latin hexameter to use the ordinary word *filia* in the plural (*filiae*, if elided before a short vowel, an unorthodox practice, alone will fit); and the same holds true for *filius*. Accordingly, Ovid must resort to some circumlocution every time he mentions “Pelias’ daughters.” He has used the poetic synonym *natae* in 300. Here he uses the past participle of *creare* with an ablative; cf. 3. He will use a similar construction, *satae Pelia*, in 322.

- 305 Note the position of *suum*, moved up to the front to emphasize the daughters' special hope. *revirescere*: the metaphor of "growing green" has been well prepared by the description in 280 and 284.
- 306 *pretiumque iubent sine fine pacisci*: they ask her to set her own price. "Money is no obstacle," as we say.
- 307 This is the third successive line in which Ovid has used five dactyls. *dubitare videtur*: Medea is a consummate actress here; this mendacity agrees with the way Euripides presented her.
- 308 *animos rogantes*: their pleading eagerness. Some MSS read *rogantum*, which certainly facilitates the translation ("the eagerness of the pleading girls"), but is suspect for precisely that reason. *ficta gravitate*: Medea continues to exploit her "disguise." She is violating important Roman values: *amicitia* and *gravitas*.
- 309 *quo sit fiducia maior*: relative purpose clause.
- 310- *qui*: the antecedent *dux* is embedded in the relative clause.
- 11 *maximus aevo*: oldest. This is the easiest way for the hexameter poet to form a superlative of "old." *dux gregis* 311: Ovid apparently wanted a dactyl here, and *aries* will not fit since its first two syllables are short. *agnus fiet*: the ancient ram will become a baby lamb. Both Apollodorus and Hyginus report that Medea won the girls over by this same device.
- 312 *innumeris*: poetic word probably invented by Lucretius. Ovid uses it twelve times in the *Metamorphoses*. *effetus*: cf. 252. *laniger*: cf. 6.395n. Ovid has deliberately made his vocabulary "epic" to start this scene of miracle.
- 313 *cava tempora*: the standard epithet for temples is *cava*. Cf. 2.625, 10.116, 11.159, and 12.133.
- 314 *marcentia guttura*: the throat is withered from age. Medea cuts the ram's throat just as she had cut Aeson's and intends to have Pelias' cut.
- 315 *exiguo sanguine*: another sign of old age, "thin blood."
- 316- Here Medea varies her pattern. When she had slit Aeson's throat and drained his blood, she poured her potion into him.
- 17 Now she plunges corpse and brew together into a cauldron. She will do the same with Pelias' corpse in 349. Both lines have five dactyls, as Ovid sweeps us through this adventure. Even though he applies to Medea the noun *venefica*, he avoids aligning his mood with the potentially grim associations of poisoning. *pecudis*: another metrically convenient synonym for *aries*. *aere cavo* 317: Ovid uses "bronze" to stand for a number of items characteristically made of bronze: cauldrons, helmets,

trumpets, cymbals (cf. 208). He employed this same phrase earlier in 4.505.

- 317–*minuunt ea*: the magical mixture “reduces” the large ram into a
 18 tiny lamb. Ovid is rather facile with his pronoun *ea*, for there seems no special reason for using the neuter. Neither the kettle nor the *membra* has anything to do with causing the reduction; therefore, we should have expected *ei* in reference to *sucos*. In order to get short syllables, it seems, Ovid has permitted himself freedom. In one of the MSS a scribe felt compelled to gloss *ea* with *medicamina* (cf. 311), and that word subsequently replaced *minuunt ea*. *exurunt* 318: the chemical heat of the herbs burns off the horns and the years too!
- 319 *tener balatus*: Ovid cleverly implies the success of the change before actually stating it. Since “bleating” can apply to sheep in general, the adjective clarifies the potential ambiguity.
- 320 *nec mora*: for this initial dactylic unit, cf. 6.53 and 636. *mirantibus*: the standard note attached to metamorphosis; cf. 292n. and 294. *agnus*: the word carefully placed at the end of the line for emphasis; cf. 311.
- 321 *lascivit*: “frisk about,” a regular verb for young animals. *fuga*: “flight” used in an extended sense for fast movement. The lamb is so young that it looks for its mother’s milk; again the action speaks more strongly of the metamorphosis than a simple statement.
- 322 *obstipueret*: another dramatic direction frequently employed with metamorphosis. Here, practically synonymous with *mirantur* or *miratae sunt*.
- 323 *fidem*: cf. *fiducia* 309.
- 324 *ter*: the magic number again. *iuga dēmpserat* 324–25: the Sun drives a chariot and, when he unyokes his horses, that signifies he has run his course or set. *Hibero flumine*: the Ebro River, located in Spain, signifies the west, where the Sun disappears.
- 325 *micabant / sidera* 325–26: cf. 188 for similar setting.
- 326 *rapido igni*: the etymology based on the verb *rapio* accounts for this use of the adjective, “consuming.” *fallax*: the theme of deception continues; cf. *falsum* 297. For the patronymic *Aeetias*, cf. 9n.
- 327 *purum laticem*: plain water. *sine viribus herbas*: impotent herbs. We are meant to contrast this brief description of the useless potion with the elaborate list of ingredients for Aeson’s rejuvenation, 264 ff.
- 328 *neci similis*: modifies *somnus* of 329. The phrase, though

parallel to that describing Aeson in 254, has a more violent connotation appropriate to the actual murder that will now take place. *resoluto corpore*: also parallel to 252-53.

- 331 *limina*: Pelias' bedroom. Ovid slows down this line with three initial spondees, to produce the fitting mood. The verbs go into the pluperfect, because the actions form part of the background for the main scene.
- 332 Note how abruptly, dramatically rather than according to epic conventions, Ovid starts this speech, leaping over any poignant description of hesitation, not even telling us who is speaking. *inertes*: since they are doing nothing when action is required, Medea means to call them "cowards."
- 333 *stringite gladios*: parallel to 285-86, with an important difference that Ovid has deliberately withheld from us. It is the daughters, not Medea, who will cut the old man's throat. *veterem cruorem*: echoes 286.
- 334 *repleam*: echoes 287.
- 335 There is grim irony in what Medea says, as Ovid intended. They think that they can extend, whereas they are actually going to end, Pelias' life.
- 336 *si pietas ulla est*: Medea viciously perverts the noble emotion of filial love. This abuse of *pietas*, as we noted in the case of Procne (cf. 6.503 for this same phrase used similarly), Ovid exploits as a favorite theme. *spes inanes*: another bit of irony.
- 337 *officium*: moral duty, here hideously perverted. *telis*: Medea changes the pattern of earlier episodes significantly. To empty Aeson or the ram of blood she merely cut their throats. Here she gets all the daughters to participate in the murder by using weapons defined only in 345. Ovid makes this no clearer in *coniecto ferro* 338. He might well mean "by throwing a spear"; he actually means: "by plunging the swordpoint in." Cf. 245.
- 339-40 Succumbing to Medea's vile argument, the girls act paradoxically. Ovid comments twice. First in 339 he says: "According as each is *pia*, she is the first to be *impia*"; that fitly deals with the theme of *pietas*. Then he adds: "to avoid *scelus*, she commits *scelus*." The same paradox occurs later in 8.477 and 9.408.
- 343 *ille*: up to this strategic moment, Ovid has kept Pelias a nonentity. He has not even attempted to describe his hostility to Jason. Now he probably invents this little vignette, when Pelias starts up from his enchanted sleep to cry out pathetically to his grief-stricken daughters.
- 344 *semilacer*: unique in this line. Since it helps to create a dactylic

hemistich, it is likely that Ovid intended it to be taken lightly. *et inter*: an unorthodox way of handling enjambement in epic; probably enhances the sense of speed here.

- 345 *gladios*: Ovid at last uses the proper word for the weapon; cf. *telis* 337n. *ferro* 338. *bracchia tendens*: standard dramatic gesture of appeal or prayer.
- 346 *gnatae*: this reading, presented by good MSS, is archaic, hence can be used to imply the solemn bond that should exist between father and daughters. *quis*: this is the reading of the MSS and lays the emphasis on Medea (even though, in realistic terms, Pelias would not know that anyone had provoked his daughters to the crime). Heinsius, more interested in dramatic accuracy than trust in the MSS, adopted *quid*.
- 347 *animique manusque*: the use of zeugma at this potentially tragic moment again shows us how we are to take the scene. For playful zeugma, cf. comment on 133.
- 348 *cum verbis guttura / abstulit* 348–49: essentially Ovid has created another playful zeugma here, for the ablative of accompaniment provides an alternative for the coordinate *et verba* or *verba et* or the double *-que* construction of 347. Cf. 6.272n. When she snatches away words and throat, Medea hardly seems serious.
- 349 *laniatum*: Medea tore or cut the corpse into pieces; or the daughters' swords had already shredded Pelias. *mersit*: parallel to the ambiguous description of the ram's rejuvenation (*membra mergit* 316–17). *undis*: we are to remember, of course, that mere water is boiling, as Ovid warned us in 327. Without sketching the subsequent scenes when the girls discovered the cruel deception—precisely the scenes which would have served as high points of “tragic realization” in Sophocles' and Euripides' plays—Ovid quickly moves away and so prevents us from becoming emotionally engaged.

MEDEA'S FLIGHT (350–403)

Having committed her crime for Jason, Medea aroused the horror of Thessaly, and she and Jason were driven from the land. In the usual accounts she and Jason went together to Corinth, where the next episode of their married life, the subject of Euripides' superb tragedy, took place. Since Ovid has no intention of vying with Euripides, he decides to separate the flight of husband and wife and exploit a situation which may have been suggested to him by his playful reference to Anthe-don earlier in 232, during Medea's previous air journey. He

therefore describes Medea again soaring through the air on a tour of the Aegean landscape, and he names fifteen places which can be ingeniously linked with metamorphoses by brief allusions. In this section we are not interested in Medea as a dramatic character at all. She merely serves as a vehicle for the amusing display of Ovid's erudition. Needless to say, then, this is entirely Ovid's invention.

- 350 *quodnisi*: the conjunction *quod si*, used to conclude an argument, is familiar in prose and colloquial poetry. Horace uses it in his *Sermones* and even in *C.* 1.1.35 to introduce the final couplet. Ovid exhibits it six times in the *Metamorphoses*. (e.g., 7.712). The negative form of this conjunction is less common. This is the sole example in the *Metamorphoses*. *pennatis*: poetic word. Medea is flying off in her regular serpent-drawn chariot, as in 218 ff.
- 351 *exempta foret*: pluperfect subjunctive, *foret* providing a metrically convenient substitute for *esset*. *poenae*: dative of separation.
- 352 Medea flies over southern Thessaly first (352–56), passing over shaded Mt. Pelion (for location, cf. 224n.) southward to the Othrys chain. *Philyreia*: Pelion is associated with the Centaur, Chiron, hence with his mother Philyra; cf. 2.676.
- 353 For location of Othrys, cf. 225n. *loca nota*: these places are the pastures of the Othrys uplands.
- 354–56 Ovid sketches the outlines of a plot: Cerambus, friend of the nymphs, was changed into a winged creature, presumably a bird, and so escaped death in the Great Flood. This story is unique here. A different tale about Cerambus is preserved in Antoninus Liberalis 22, who derived it from Nicander's *Changed Ones* (a prototype of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*), Book 1. Cerambus, at first a friend of the nymphs and Pan, childishly scorned them when they tried to warn him of a coming disaster to his flocks. Therefore he was punished: he had his flocks killed by a wintry storm (not the Flood), and he himself was transformed into a wood beetle. *sublatus pennis* 354: refers to flight, then secondarily to bird-metamorphosis. The description of the flood in 355 follows the usual pattern. Ovid divides his adjectives from his nouns. *foret obruta* 355: pluperfect subjunctive; cf. 351n. Ovid has chosen this verb in order to make his pun with *inobrutus* in 356, a word which is his unique invention for this passage. *Deucalioneas* 356: another word invented for this passage; but other poets borrowed it later.

Notice how it occupies an entire hemistich. Ovid told the story of Deucalion at 1.313–415.

- 357 Medea now proceeds to fly out over the Aegean, for no very good reason except to permit Ovid to introduce allusions to six metamorphoses involving Asia Minor and the islands of the Aegean. We should have expected such a purposeful female to be less of a tourist and to have headed directly for her destination, Corinth. *Aeoliam Pitane*: Pitane was a port city in Aeolis of Asia Minor. Leaving it on her left signifies that Medea heads south along the coast. *relinquit*: main verb through 367.
- 358 *simulacra draconis*: since Lesbos lies opposite Pitane and served as the locale for the petrification of a snake (recounted by Ovid in 11.55–60), it is customary to identify the two incidents of 7.358 and 11.55 as one and the same.
- 359–*Idaeum nemus*: Mount Ida rises in the southern part of the
60 Troad opposite the northern tip of Lesbos. This place is then somewhat to the north of Pitane, but it is not necessary to assume that Medea swerved up there before heading down to Cos and Rhodes. Ovid merely wishes to attach three rare metamorphoses. In the first, he sketches an otherwise unknown story for us: how Liber's son stole a calf and Liber, to protect the boy from punishment, changed it into a stag.
- 361 *pater Corythi*: Paris. Ovid probably refers to the humiliating end of the prince of Troy, who, instead of receiving royal burial in a magnificent tomb, was covered, like an unknown, with a little sand. For a similar paradox about burial, see the beginning of Horace *C.* 1.28.
- 362 *novo latratu*: for the use of *novus* to allude to metamorphosis, cf. 6.381n. Who this Maera was who was changed into a dog, is unknown. Ovid describes the change of Hecuba into a dog at 13.567ff., but that occurs in Thrace.
- 363–*cornua matres* / *gesserunt*: again we know from Ovid alone
64 this story of the Coan women who were changed into cows. It is, however, linked in time to a well-known event, Hercules' expedition against Troy (cf. Ovid's reference in 11.212ff.) and to his return to Greece by way of Cos (cf. Apollodorus 2.7.1). Cos is an island off the coast of Caria near Halicarnassus, a hundred miles south of Lesbos.
- 365–*Phoebeam Rhodon*: Rhodes was the island of Helios, the Sun.
67 At one of its main cities, Ialysos, the Telchines lived and by their formidable magic so frightened people that Jupiter plunged them forever under the sea. This story may also come

from Nicander (cf. 354n.). Note the spondaic fifth foot with a Greek name in 365. *fraternis undis* 367: i.e., of Neptune.

- 368–*Cartheia moenia Cae*: Ovid refers to the city of Carthaia on
 70 the island of Cea or Ceos. (The feminine form produced the modern name Kea.) Since Cea is one of the westernmost of the Cyclades, mentioning it helps to bring Medea back to mainland Greece. Ovid's allusion to the surprising transformation of Alcidas' daughter into a dove can be expanded from Antoninus Liberalis 1, a story assigned to Nicander III. Ctesylla, daughter of Alcidas, was promised under oath to an Athenian Hermochares. When the father went back on his oath, Hermochares complained to the gods, who helped him seduce Ctesylla, caused her death in childbirth as punishment to the father, then finally changed her into a dove and instituted rites in her honor. *miraturus nasci potuisse* 370: a clever way of referring to the metamorphosis, with the usual element of marvel.
- 371 *lacus Hyries*: Ovid does not bother to locate this lake for us until the vague statement of 382, that Pleuron lies nearby. The lake is between Calydon and Pleuron in western Aetolia. Medea's dragons have once again got out of hand and swept her far beyond her destination in a new direction, along the Corinthian Gulf. *Cycneia tempe*: Ovid uses the noun to describe any pretty valley. The adjective alone serves to identify the main character of the story, the spoiled *puer* Cynus. This is the second of three stories that Ovid recounts about a Cynus, matched with other localities, who turned into a swan. See 2.367ff. and 12.122ff.
- 372 *subitus olor*: *subitus* provides an even more dramatic adjective than *novus* (cf. 362) for briefly defining a metamorphosis. Ovid has used it earlier in 1.315 and 2.349. *Phylus*: since his story can be controlled by the account in Antoninus Liberalis 12, taken again from Nicander III, the difficulty with names in the MSS is easily corrected.
- 373–*imperio pueri*: Cynus was a handsome *puer*, vainly loved by
 76 Phylus. He imposed on his lover a series of seemingly impossible tasks: (1) to kill a lion without a sword; (2) to capture alive some man-eating vultures; (3) to lead a wild bull from its herd by hand. Ovid has reversed the order of the first two tasks, probably for metrical convenience. They have little importance except as leading to the climactic third. *domitos* 374: covers both the killing of the lion and capture of the vultures. *vincere* / *vic erat* 374–75: unless Ovid follows a different version, where Phylus might have had to battle the bull, he is being

rather casual with details; for Phylus "conquered" his bull by finding it helplessly locked by the horns with another. Ovid would have been truer to Nicander with *ducere* / *duxerat*. *iratus* 375: the last task was too much for Phylus. He rejected Cynus and refused to hand over to him the bull. (In Nicander he was to bring the bull to the altar of Zeus, not apparently to Cynus; thus it seems likely that Ovid does *not* use Nicander as a source here.) *stricto totiens amore*: this is the reading of the usual MSS. Because it involves an unusual handling of *stricto* (regularly found in Ovid with a weapon, e.g., in 285 and 333), Heinsius and later editors have adopted from more recent MSS *spreto*. That is so obviously the easier reading that it should be judged a scribal attempt to "correct" the original; hence, we should do our best to make sense of *stricto*. From the meaning "touch" can be derived "injure by touching." So Ovid describes a snakebite with this verb (*dente pedem strinxit* 11.776). Here, then, Phylus is angry that his love has so often been wounded or abused.

- 377- Furious, Cynus says two words and leaps from a high rock
79 (into the lake, according to Nicander and probably implied by 371). Ovid then introduces spectators (*cuncti* 378) to raise our expectations falsely. *pendebat pennis* 379: an announcement of the bird-metamorphosis as in 6.668.

- 380- Ovid adds a metamorphosis of Hyrie, Cynus' mother, which is
81 absent from Nicander. It is a standard change from a grieving female into a spring or pool. cf. Cyane 5.425ff. and Byblis 9.655ff. *servati nescia*: this is a reading found and adopted by Heinsius. Two good MSS, M and P, appear to have corrupted this into the infinitive *servari*; most of the MSS exhibit *servatum*, which is supposed to be a wildly abbreviated form of *eum servatum esse*. *nescius* can be used (and Ovid so uses it) with an objective genitive, a complementary infinitive, with an infinitive in indirect discourse, and with a subordinate clause in indirect question. *servari nescia* could only be understood as the complementary usage, and as such is meaningless here. That leaves *servati* as an objective genitive. Because Ovid otherwise does not use a past participle in this construction, it generated the alterations that our MSS now exhibit. Perhaps Ovid created the phrase on the analogy of *nescius voti* (the latter a common substantive formed from the past participle), which he uses in 10.481 and twice in earlier poems. Translate: "ignorant of his safety."

- 382- Near-by Pleuron offers another bird-metamorphosis, preserved

- 83 for us by this passage alone: Combe was changed into a bird and so apparently escaped the murderous attack of her children. *his*: i.e., *locis* or *regionibus*. *Ophias* 383: daughter of Ophius.
- 384- *Calaureae*: an island off the Argolid. It had once been under
85 the protection of Leto. Medea seems now to be flying back more or less in the correct direction towards Corinth (introduced with an apt *tandem* in 391). *conscia* 385: i.e., *arva*. Ovid likes to personify nature this way; cf. 6.547. Upon this adjective depends *regis* and the rest of the line. The myth of the royal pair is otherwise unknown.
- 386- As Medea flies eastward, Mt. Cyllene in Arcadia stands at her
87 right. *concupiturus erat* 387: Ovid seems to wish to make the act of incest approximately contemporary with Medea's passage. Hyginus, who also refers (253) to this tale, says that Menephron did commit incest with his mother Bias and daughter Cyllene; but he may have misunderstood Ovid. *more ferarum*: incest is an animal, not a human, practice, as Myrrha points out in 10.324ff.
- 388- *Cephison*: Greek accusative of Cephisos, the god of the river
89 flowing between northern Boeotia and Locris. Who his grandson was and why he was changed by Apollo into a seal, is unknown. *procul*: it is almost impossible that Medea could have seen the Cephisos on the far side of Mt. Parnassus.
- 390 Antoninus Liberalis 18, summarizing Boios' *Origin of Birds* II, gives us fuller and perhaps different details about this story. Eumelus, a devout worshiper of Apollo, struck his son Botres in anger and killed him because he failed to treat with due piety a sacrificial lamb. When he obviously regretted such a fit of fury, Apollo took pity on Eumelus and changed the boy into a bird. *in aere natum*: "the son in the air," i.e., as a bird.
- 391- Medea arrives in Corinth. *vipereis*: a poetic adjective particularly favored by Vergil and Ovid. For Ovid's purpose, dragons, serpents, and vipers are all the same thing: they pulled Medea's chariot. *Ephyren Pirenida*: Ephyre (the archaic name of Corinth) with its spring Peirene. To this site Ovid attaches a strange tale, unique here: that in the beginning of the world, men were produced from rain-stimulated mushrooms! *edita* 393: supply *esse*, indirect discourse after *vulgarunt*.
- 394- Ovid summarizes the well-known details of Medea's tragic suffering and vengeance, the subject of Euripides' play. *Colchis*:
97 adjective agreeing with *venenis*. *nova nupta*: Glaucé or Creusa, daughter of the Corinthian king Creon. Medea lured her into putting on a poisoned robe, which killed her and Creon when

he tried to help her. *flagrantem domum regis* 395: in this melodramatic detail, Ovid goes beyond Euripides. *mare utrumque*: since Corinth rises close to an isthmus, there is sea on either side to witness its misfortunes. *impius ensis* 396: after avenging herself on her rival, Medea then went on to destroy Jason by killing the two sons which she had borne for him. The violation of *pietas*, which closely resembled the *impietas* of Procne, did not need elaboration. At the end of Euripides' tragedy, Medea faces Jason, taunts him, scorns his sudden paternal feelings, and then escapes his anger by means of the chariot of the Sun. Ovid has compressed all this into 397.

398 *Titaniacis draconibus*: the dragons which belonged to the Titan Phoebus or the Sun.

399– *Palladias arces*: Athens. Ovid completes his account of Medea's
400 long tour of Greece with three final short metamorphoses. The first two belong together; Antoninus Liberalis 6 tells the story in detail, without stating its source. Periphas was a righteous king in old Attica, so just that men assigned to him honors that belonged to Zeus. In anger Zeus determined to destroy him and his family with a thunderbolt, until Apollo interceded. Then Zeus contented himself with changing the king into an eagle, king of birds; his wife into a vulture (her name Phene is the Greek word for the bird). The unfamiliar name Phene caused the scribes of the MSS great trouble, and they guessed that it might be masculine, so changed the feminine *iustissima* to the masculine vocative *iustissime*. Some editors object to the epithet for the wife which by rights belongs to Periphas. But there seems no reason to make a change; she shared his noble qualities, Ovid implies.

401 *neptem Polypemonis*: Alcyone, daughter of Sciron, granddaughter of Polypemon, was thrown from a cliff by her father because of unchastity. However, instead of being killed, she was somehow changed into the seabird halcyon. Little is known of this myth; and Ovid, who had a much grander tale of a different Alcyone to tell in Book 11, chose not to elaborate here. *innixam alis*: leaning on her wings, i.e., flying. Note how many synonyms Ovid has developed to represent briefly a bird-metamorphosis.

402 *facto damnandus in uno*: to be condemned for a single action, namely, that he received Medea. As Euripides tells the story, Medea extracted a promise of hospitality from him while he was passing through Corinth and before she had committed her crimes there.

- 403 *thalami foedere*: Aegeus married her. They had a son Medus, who would become the ancestor of the Medes. Cf. Apollodorus 1.9.28.4 and Hyginus 26.

MEDEA AND THESEUS (404–424)

Medea trapped Aegeus into marrying her, because she knew he was eager to have a son succeed him. However, Aegeus had had a son long ago, though not in the regular way of marriage, and that son—Theseus—eventually came to Athens to present himself to his father. Medea recognized him first and tried to kill him in order to protect her power. As she had used the daughters of Pelias to commit her crime, so she persuaded Aegeus to hand Theseus the poisoned cup on the pretext that the young man was plotting against his throne. At the last moment, though, Aegeus recognized Theseus' sword, identified his son, and Medea disappeared forever from Greece and Ovid's poem.

- 404 *iamque aderat*: Ovid moves swiftly to his next scene in the life of Medea, passing over intervening episodes with a simple *iam*. *ignara*: used in a passive sense here; it is active in 421.
- 405 *et pacaverat*: pluperfect to establish background. Theseus had faced a series of monsters and criminals along the narrow road from Corinth to Athens and destroyed them. In the hymn sung to praise him at 433 ff., some of these exploits are listed. MSS disagree on whether *et* or *qui* should be used here. It seems more likely that *et* would be changed to the obvious *qui* than otherwise. *bimarem*: cf. 395n.
- 406–407 *in exitium*: to produce his death. *miscet*: present tense, to establish the main action. However, Ovid then sketches further background and contents himself with the perfect after his digression (420 ff.). Object of *miscet* is *aconiton* 407, which Ovid has placed in its own relative clause as he often does. *Scythicis oris* 407: properly to be used only of the area now occupied by Bulgaria and Rumania and bordering Russia, but poets could extend Scythia to include the southern coast of the Black Sea where Medea had been born. Aconite is a poisonous plant with bright flowers, often called by the dramatic names monkshood or wolfsbane.
- 408–409 *Echidneae / canis*: Cerberus, monstrous birth of the monstrous Echidna, half woman, half snake. *memorant*: Ovid distances himself from this story by attributing it to others. Cf. 6.714.
- 409– *specus est . . . est via*: Ovid abruptly goes into an "epic" descrip-

- 13 tion, to give some background and hold us in suspense. The path by which Hercules emerged from Hades with Cerberus was variously located, and one candidate for the spot was in the neighborhood of Heraclea on the Pontus or Black Sea, supposedly founded by Hercules himself. *Tirynthius heros* 410: Ovid has alluded to Hercules' birth at Tiryns in 6.112. Note how he devotes 411 and 412 to accumulating details about Cerberus before finally naming him in 413. *obliquantem oculos* 412: the intimate detail of the subterranean beast which blinks when exposed to the piercing light of the sun appeals to the amused concern for realism of a Greco-Roman audience. *nexis adamante catenis*: chains of adamantine links. *abstraxit* 413: this reading is found in E and seems warranted by Planudes' translation, so Heinsius adopted it. Most of the MSS have the compound *ad-* or *at-**traxit*, which seems to emphasize the wrong direction in the dragging process.
- 413–*pariter ternis latratibus* 414: these triple barks emerge simul-
15 taneously, of course, from the three heads of the monster. Again Ovid's realism has a humorous quality which effectively distances us from the tale. Note the use of contrasting colors in 415, green setting off the white of the foam. Ovid frequently uses red and white in this way.
- 416–*has*: i.e., *spumas. concesse*: syncopated form. *putant*: con-
17 tinues the note of *memorant* 408. *nactasque*: the *-que* links the two perfect infinitives. Being deponent *nactas* has its own object in a clause that continues through *solī*.
- 418–*quae*: i.e., *vires. agrestes aconita vocant* 419: at the end of a
19 metamorphosis, Ovid, as often, accounts for the name. Here he was obliged to rely on his audience's mastery of Greek. The Greek word *aconiton* was derived from *acone* (whetstone); that has its equivalent in Latin in *cos*, which in turn is related to *cautes* (cliff), the word Ovid uses in 418. Since, however, he seems to express his skepticism about the whole tale, he here also implies his doubts in the etymology: only rustics would be that simple-minded!
- 419–*ea*: i.e., *aconita*, plural now as compared with 407 where the
20 parenthetical description started. *coniugis*: Medea. *ipse parens* 420: dramatic emphasis on another near case of *impietas* devised by Medea. *ut hosti*: Medea had deceived Aegeus into believing his unrecognized son to be an enemy.
- 421 *sumpserat*: pluperfect for background. Ovid will use *cum-inversum* according to his regular narrative technique. *ignara dextra*: ablative of source; from Aegeus' hand.

- 422– *in capulo gladii*: when Aegeus left Aethra, who would bear him
 23 Theseus, he placed under a stone a sword which his son, if such
 was born, should claim when he was old enough to roll away
 the stone. Cf. Apollodorus 3.15.7.2 and Hyginus 37. This sword
 Theseus was wearing as he was about to drink the poison. On its
 ivory hilt it apparently bore a family crest, *signa sui generis*.
facinus excussit 423: Ovid uses effective metonymy where we
 are obliged to translate “he dashed the criminal cup from his
 lips.” For *facinus* used in metonymy again, cf. 10.198.

THESEUS (425–52)

Theseus does not himself play an important part in the *Metamorphoses*, possibly because his exploits were too well known to excite Ovid’s interest, possibly because he was too heroic for Ovid’s tastes. However, he uses Theseus through this book and the next until finally abandoning him at 9.96 to start several sequences that stimulate his artistry. As soon as one thinks of Theseus, one thinks of Minos, Crete, and the Minotaur; Ovid therefore first developed a narrative about Minos and his naval conquests of the Aegean up to the point where Theseus, arriving in Crete as a hostage, slew the Minotaur and escaped with Ariadne (7.453–8.182). Then, after digressing to tell of Daedalus (8.183–259), he goes on with events that can be attached to Theseus after his triumphant return from Crete: the Calydonian Hunt and a set of stories exchanged among some of the heroes on their way home (8.260–9.97). In this passage of Book 7, which acts as a bridge to the Minos sequence, Ovid reviews the happy celebrations in Athens on the occasion of Aegeus’ discovery of his son, with special emphasis on the hymn sung about Theseus’ exploits before reaching Athens. In freeing the coast of monsters, from Epidauros to Athens, Theseus rivaled the Labors of Hercules. Hyginus 38 provides a somewhat defective list of Theseus’ foes; Plutarch, in his life of Theseus, goes into ample detail.

- 426 *adtonitus*: a favorite dramatic touch in the *Metamorphoses*; cf. 6.600. *discrimine parvo*: “by a small margin.” If it is called ablative of specification, the terminology helps to emphasize Ovid’s verbal play with *ingens* and *parvo*.
 427 *fovet*: the asyndeton leaves out a connective such as *igitur*. In gratitude to the gods for their miraculous preservation of Theseus, Aegeus institutes a thanksgiving.



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