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Classical World, Volume 102, Number 3, Spring 2009, pp. 273-290 (Article)

Published by Classical Association of the Atlantic States

DOI: 10.1353/clw.0.0099



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GENDERED SPACES IN OVID'S *HEROIDES*

ABSTRACT: *The Roman woman traditionally inhabited the private space of the house. The women in the single Heroides, as letter-writers, are confined to this internal space. The few women who do manage to surmount the boundaries of the house do not find freedom and adventure, but even more extreme boundaries. Those who leave even the land behind are transformed into transgressive figures, morally and sexually. Ovid demonstrates that the physical world outside of the domus is gendered, and that this gendered space becomes a moral marker for a woman's sexual identity.*

The manipulation of the physical setting of a poem, whether internal or external, cityscape or landscape, as a method to establish atmosphere or symbolic importance, to reflect or contrast thematic aims, is intrinsic in Roman elegiac poetry, to say nothing of the genres of epic, lyric, tragedy, etc. The elegiac poets in particular have been able to build upon the scenic settings of Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman poetry as fonts of description. While forests, groves, caves, and mountains have formed the backdrop to both pastoral and elegiac poetry and have been used as indicators of, for example, sexuality, violence, and escapism, this scenic interplay between text and tale is also interwoven into the genre of the letter, especially the type of letters which Ovid has crafted with the *Heroides*. Here, some of the writers use landscape as a means to ground their complaints in a pastoral idyll which expects, but rarely receives, a faithful and eternal emotional relationship.¹ This landscape however, can also be read as evidence of gender, as just who is allowed to move within and beyond the landscape is sharply defined not only by mythological concerns, but also by moral and gender considerations.

Water (seas, oceans, rivers, pools, springs) has often formed an essential element of the pastoral and symbolic landscape. In the *Heroides*, the symbolic import of the sea figures large first in an erotic context, as the beloved (from Ulysses through Jason to Aeneas) most frequently departs and/or arrives via the sea. The passion of love is therefore linked to the physical entity of water. In mythic terms, water itself has long been associated with female sexuality and the power of creativity;² the birth of Venus from the foam of the sea is a Greco-Roman myth which speaks to this dual aspect of water and sexuality, which Dido herself points out in *Heroides* 7.59–60.³ Given that water brings men to women, however, it is linked, for both genders, to the

¹ Spentzou writes of the combination of elements of the pastoral world and the pastoral genre in the women's letters as part of the formation of what she calls "landscapes of lost innocence." E. Spentzou, *Readers and Writers in Ovid's Heroides* (Oxford 2003) 42f.

² See A. M. Keith, in this issue, who reminds us of the identification of earth as a generative female body, in addition to the connection here between water and generation.

³ I have used P. E. Knox, *Ovid Heroides Select Epistles* (Cambridge 1995) as the text for *Heroides* 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11; J. Reeson, *Ovid Heroides 11, 13, and 14. A Commentary* (Leiden 2001) for *Heroides* 11, 13, 14; and A. P. Palmer, *P. Ovidii Nasonis Heroides with the Greek Translation of Planudes* (Oxford 1898; repr. Hildesheim 1967) for all other letters.

idea of sexual experience.⁴ Yet, attitudes toward this nautical sexual experience are, not surprisingly, different for women than for men. The women of the *Heroides* make this connection very clear in their letters by using physical proximity to water as a determinant of the level of success of their sexual relationships. Water, most often in the shape of the sea, begins to replace the lover himself and so becomes a locus for the women's ever-hopeful passions. If these passions are fulfilled, the result may be a change to their present status as solitary, unwed, and celibate individuals. Since the single *Heroides* does not present the male lover's response to the querulous requests of the letter-writers, we have access only to the women's perception of the sea and their understanding of what sea travel means to them as women. In the end, sea travel for the women of the *Heroides* presents a change in sexual status, as they have the potential to move from a single to a paired state. Despite this, displacement by water presents a sea change of a different type, as most women present such travel in opprobrious terms. Indeed, just who can move onto and into the sea and what this means becomes a gender-loaded question.

Any discussion of gender and space in Ovid's *Heroides* must inevitably confront the challenge of literary history versus poetic inspiration. In terms of space, any letter intrinsically involves separation, for the receiver of the letter must be at a distance from the sender in order for a letter to be necessary at all. While theoretically this separation may be the separation of silence rather than the separation of space, for most of the women of the *Heroides*, the receiver is at some spatial remove from the woman's location; normally the beloved is across a sea or, at the very least, he is not inside the same house at the time of her writing. So the genre of the letter has already imposed the constraints of space on the writer and recipient which need not be determined by gender at all. Added to this is the fact that the spatial circumference in which Ovid's heroines move is to some extent predetermined by their literary history. For example, whether Penelope is depicted in her bedroom or in the public hall with the suitors is the poet's choice, yet Penelope must remain within the halls of the house or lose her traditional identity as a loyal wife. The option of external travel is therefore denied to her, and her environment has been demarcated by previous literary incarnations. Ovid must confront this spatial history in his fashioning of these women into epistolary figures. The epistolary genre becomes a significant player in the tension between text and narration as Ovid exploits the outward image of a stationary woman writing and the internal movement which she describes herself performing. With a few notable exceptions, most of the women of the *Heroides* are implicitly described as writing within the confines of some type of dwelling, either house, hall, or even prison. Some of the letter-writers then narrate their movement outside of the house and their ability to wander in the surrounding countryside. Like

⁴ See Keith (above, n.2) for the connection between landscapes and male heroic action, a tendency echoed in the "female" writers of the *Heroides*.

Penelope in her bedroom, this affinity for the countryside is often an internal characteristic for a letter-writer such as Oenone, who is, after all, a nymph, and thus belongs most naturally to the woods and forests around Troy. This is also plausible for Ariadne, whose mythology moves her from her native home to the deserted island of Dia, or Medea, whose story takes her from Colchis to Greece. As part of a received tradition, Ovid cannot transform their story so radically as to make them unrecognizable. Yet given all these *caveats*, what remains distinctive is Ovid's astute positioning of these women within this predetermined spatial area and his use of displacement as a threat to gender. Even when the Ovidian landscape follows closely that of a literacy antecedent, as in the details of Ariadne's island in *Heroides* 10 and Catullus 64, the physical landscape in Ovid becomes a geophysical illustration of sexual identity.⁵ It is not merely the backdrop against which the woman is placed, but rather it aids in revealing her struggle toward a specific sexual identity. As we shall see, the women are quick to interpret movement outside the home, across the landscape, up a hill, to the shores of the ocean as visible proof of sexual identity, and then to view any attempts to transgress these predetermined gender/spatial boundaries as a transformation of the sexual self. This is especially true for those women who are in any way connected to water, whether they travel across it or go down to the seashore or to the banks of a river. As Andrew Feldherr has cogently remarked in his discussion of character placement in the Underworld of *Aeneid* 6, "Where you are reveals who you are,"⁶ and when the "where" involves water, women are at risk.

Naturally, not all women in the *Heroides* experience displacement. Those who do not, establish for the reader the "preferred" female role, at least in traditional (male) terms. The most familiar model for this role is the figure of Penelope, who appears programmatically at the beginning of the collection of the single letters. In *Heroides* 1, Penelope does not move outside of her house; indeed, her first spatial identification of herself is alone in her deserted bed: *non ego deserto iacuissem frigida lecto* (I would not have lain, cold, in my deserted bed, 1.7), which places her in the precise physical center of her identity as faithful wife of Ulysses. While the idea of the deserted bed and the *frigida*⁷ recall the oft-repeated complaints of the male elegiac-lover, transformed into the female voice, they remain indicators of Penelope's faithfulness in emotional and spatial terms. Penelope does not leave her house; rather, she receives visitors *into* her house (traveling sailors who may have news of Odysseus, the suitors), or she sends others *out* of her house (Telemachus to search

⁵ See Keith (above, n.2), who discusses Perseus' tale in light of the women he meets and their associated landscapes: control of landscape=control of the female.

⁶ A. Feldherr, "Putting Dido on the Map: Genre and Geography in Vergil's Underworld," *Arethusa* 32 (1999) 85.

⁷ *Frigidus* is often used by the elegiac poets to denote the absence of the beloved or of passion. R. Pichon, *Index verborum amatoriorum* (Paris 1902) 156. All translations are my own, unless stated otherwise.

for news of his father, messengers to Pylos and Sparta). Even her father, Icarius, tries to persuade Penelope to leave her widowed bed, *me pater Icarius viduo discedere lecto/cogit* (My father Icarius compels me to depart from my widowed bed, 81–82), but she refuses to be displaced from her spatial center. Once again, the elegiac vocabulary of *viduo* . . . *lecto*⁸ reminds us of the erotic focus of Penelope's letter, to say nothing of the "testing" of the reader's awareness of Penelope's relationship with Odysseus in Homer's *Odyssey*.⁹ For Penelope, her physical environment is an indication of her sexual identity as wife of Odysseus.¹⁰ Remove Penelope from her space and she, in her view, will no longer be his wife. Penelope-in-her-bed is who Penelope is.

This immobility and its revelation of sexual identity is echoed by characters such as Briseis, Hermione, and Canace, although they do not articulate their decision to remain at home. Briseis, though she expresses her willingness to follow Achilles anywhere (3.67–70), pictures herself as a slave in his bedchamber, that is, firmly positioned within an interior space (3.75–76). As a *captiva*, she has, of course, been displaced from her home, Lyrnesus, to the Greek camp, and then moved from Achilles' tent to Agamemnon's, but since then, she fears to leave his camp (3.17–18). The displacement she has experienced, or even contemplates in the future, is dependent upon the free mobility of a male figure and has as its ultimate goal interior space—Achilles' bedchamber. She does not willingly seek to travel beyond this known and familiar space. Her literary predecessor, Homer's Briseis, does not use such spatial vocabulary when she briefly describes her life history in her lament for the dead Patroclus in Book 19. Although she traces her displacement from home to enemy camp, she does not articulate her relationship to Achilles in such terms; this is left for her Ovidian descendent. In the *Heroides*, stripped of any identity, Briseis seeks to reestablish at least her sexual identity by close physical proximity to Achilles, regardless of what status this proximity might entail.

Likewise, Hermione also locates herself, and therefore her sexual identity, in an interior space.¹¹ She reports that people leave *her* (her mother Helen, Orestes), she does not leave *them*. Hermione wonders wretchedly whether there is some fate among the women in her family which leads to rape (8.65–66), but her stories of Leda (8.67–68), Hippodamia (8.69–70), and then Helen¹² (8.73–74) remind us of women's

⁸ For elegiac parallels, see Propertius 2.9.16: a very telling comparison, as the phrase refers to Deidamia's bed, the widowed mistress of Achilles. Ovid's allusion points to Penelope's understanding of her position as one similar to that of the women in Troy. Oenone will use a similar phrase (*in viduo . . . toro*) in her letter to Paris to describe Menelaus' identity without Helen at *Her.* 5.106.

⁹ Knox (above, n.3) 87.

¹⁰ See Keith, in this issue, who confirms de Lauretis' view of active masculine mobility contrasted with the passive landscape of the female. This view also holds true for specific immobile women of the *Heroides*, although certain women try to dissolve this passivity.

¹¹ See Keith, in this issue, who discusses the walled space of Pomona's closed garden as feminized space, echoed here in the feminization of interior space.

¹² Hermione names her mother Helen here only as *Taenaris rapta* (the stolen Spartan woman, 8.73) in an emotionally loaded description of her childhood remem-

proximity to water. Water and sex are then inextricably linked, and this certainly does not bode well for a successful encounter in her eyes (8.65–74). This antipathy towards water, when placed in a sexual context, is an uncomplicated presentation of an attitude which will be more strongly articulated by writers such as Hypsipyle and Oenone. For Hermione, water brings violent, unsought sexual experience. Her refusal to do anything but retreat to her bedchamber and weep the night away beside Neoptolemus (and then to write to Orestes about it) may be the result of her understanding of the sexual history of her female relatives. She, at least, has remained inside a house; her problem is that it is the wrong house. Her description of her nights with Neoptolemus, where she shrinks from contact with him (8.110), and the fact that she often calls out Orestes' name (8.115) are also a revelation of her physical and emotional faithfulness to him. Her bedroom, despite being also the bedroom of the enemy, is the proof of her sexual identity with Orestes in the Penelopean model.

This view continues with the character of Canace who, recently having given birth, writes her letter to Macareus moments before she commits suicide at the order of her father, Aeolus. The letter and the writer are thus firmly entrenched within the house and bedchamber; Canace does not depart from these confines. Unlike Briseis, Canace sees no further than the very immediate future and so awaits only Macareus' return. She cannot and does not envision the nature of her life thereafter. Katherina Philippides has suggested that Canace does not interpret her relationship with her brother as in any way abnormal or immoral,¹³ and the interior setting of her letter confirms the validity of Canace's interpretation. Like Penelope and Hermione before her, Canace's position within the bedchamber reveals her sexual relationship with her brother and her loyalty towards him. Her inability to envision a life outside characterizes her sexually as the chaste lover.

Dido, although a woman who has suffered displacement in the past when she escaped from her brother Pygmalion over the sea (7.117), does not move beyond her own territorial boundaries in her letter. She does move outside her house with Aeneas, but only to hunt and then take shelter from the storm in a cave (7.93–94). Even this small displacement destroys Dido's happiness, as even she is quick to recognize. She does not follow Aeneas down to the shore as he leaves, however; she does not seek to join him in his travels; and she does not pursue him across the sea. In these respects, Ovid follows the Vergilian tradition regarding movement, geographical space, and identity. This is also one area however, where he distinguishes his work from his predecessors. The Ovidian Dido does not limit her recriminations to the person of Aeneas, but uses the natural world around her as proof of his lack of sexual *fides*. Leaving her land, crossing the sea, and finding another land is interpreted not as a search for a kingdom but as a betrayal of

branches of Helen's departure. Clearly, she holds Helen responsible for her actions and her abandonment of her child, and so responsible for her fateful affair with Paris.

¹³ K. Philippides, "Canace Misunderstood: Ovid's *Heroides* XI," *Mnemosyne* 49 (1996) 427.

love (7.17), and this language of erotic betrayal permeates the letter. This betrayal is also presented in geophysical terms, as Dido assigns consciousness to the earth itself. She says that the Italian land will hide itself from Aeneas (7.147–148), as though the land were sentient and able to respond to Aeneas' infidelity.¹⁴ This statement is placed within the context of Dido's open disparagement of Aeneas' divine mission and her suggestions for a substitute empire (7.139–180). What is important to remember is that the land is interpreted as reacting unfavorably to Aeneas' behavior toward Dido. The earth not only withdraws, but even hides (*latet*) itself from Aeneas' ships, presenting the idea of deliberate separation between land and sea, between the sexuality linked to women (land) and that linked to men (sea). The ships bring Aeneas (and his betrayal of Dido) to Latium, and so the Italian earth is unwilling to receive him. The land is imagined as giving a moral and physical response to Aeneas' erotic betrayal. This sentience of the earth, introduced as a moral statement on sexual behavior, becomes a recurring leitmotif in the letters.

There are a number of women in the *Heroides* who do cross over the threshold of the house and move in the wider world of the surrounding countryside in a more accentuated manner than their literary models. Unlike our first group of women, who located their sexual identity firmly within the house, if not within the bridal bedchamber, this group of women attempts to establish their sexual identities beyond these first limits. Here we find Phaedra, who sees the countryside as a place to hunt and thus a location in which she can get close to her stepson Hippolytus¹⁵ by mimicking his actions. Unlike her literary ancestress in Euripides' *Hippolytus*, this Phaedra does not remain indoors and immobile. Where Euripides' Phaedra only wishes that she might go hunting (Eur. *Hipp.* 215–222) and soothe herself with fresh-flowing water under the trees (*Hipp.* 208–212), Ovid's Phaedra actually goes outside of her house and hunts:

In nemus ire libet, pressisque in retia cervis
hortari celeris per iuga summa canes,
aut tremulum excusso iaculum vibrare lacerto
aut in graminea ponere corpus humo.
(*Her.* 4.41–44)

It pleases me to go into groves and, driving
stags into nets, to urge on swift hounds along the
mountain ridges, or to hurl the quivering javelin
from my vigorous arm or lay my body on the
grassy turf.

¹⁴ Although Vergil presented the image of Italy retreating from Aeneas (Knox [above, n.3] 226); *Aen.* 3.496–497; 5.629; 6.61), it is as an eagerly sought-after goal which is elusive and distant, rather than Ovid's image of an entity capable of a physical reaction to the presence of another.

¹⁵ Sappho, too, finds the groves and forests (*Ep. Sapph.* 15.135–156) as places in which to rediscover her lost Phaon, but here as well the pastoral world is barren, with only the imprint of Phaon's presence (*Ep. Sapph.* 15.147–148). Knox identifies the motif as "common in Hellenistic and Roman love poetry" (Knox [above, n.3] 302).

She sees the groves and forests as an escape to a pastoral world of idyllic love,¹⁶ which the reader knows, and Phaedra fears, is not fated to be successful. Her movement from house to countryside was initiated by her passion for Hippolytus and is an attempt to establish a link with him through similar experiences. Phaedra seems to think that by moving into Hippolytus' space and performing the same pursuits as he does will enable her to become part of his world and therefore part of himself. This search for a connection to Hippolytus even compels her to try her hand at chariot racing (4.45–46), in her "vain attempt to become another Hippolytus."¹⁷ Phaedra's doubts about the success of her relationship with Hippolytus lead her almost immediately to retrace the love affairs of the women of her family. There is no overt mention of water in her stories (although it is a predominant feature of the tales of Europa and Ariadne), yet the underlying import of movement outside of house and country cannot be ignored: Europa abducted and brought over the seas to Crete, Pasiphae moving from marital house to labyrinth, Ariadne moving from house to island (4.55–60). The contrast between the successful pastoral love-affairs Phaedra presents (Cephalus and Aurora, Venus and Adonis, Atalanta and Oeneus), in which the characters inhabit the pastoral world by custom and convention, and the uncertain destinies of her own female forebears, presents Phaedra's conflicted attitude toward the pastoral world. While she seeks to see it as a *locus amoenus* of sexual fulfillment, the history of her own female ancestors troubles her. Movement outside the house had not brought sexual happiness to the women in her past, so why should Phaedra not suffer similarly? Indeed, it is significant that when Phaedra chooses a location for a dwelling for herself and Hippolytus, she describes the isthmus and city thus:

Aequora bina suis obpugnant fluctibus Isthmon,
Et tenuis tellus audit utrumque mare.
Hic tecum Troezena colam, Pittheia regna.
(4.105–108)¹⁸

Two seas assail the isthmus with their waves,
and the slender land hears the sea on each side.
Here, with you, shall I dwell in the Troezen land,
the kingdom of Pittheus.

¹⁶ Spentzou (above, n.1) 73. Spentzou defines Phaedra's woods as essentially erotic, especially given Phaedra's long list of successful pastoral loves (4.93–100).

¹⁷ C. S. Pearson, "Simile and Imagery in Ovid *Heroides* 4 and 5," *ICS* 5 (1980) 115.

¹⁸ The interpretation of these lines varies, as scholars try to determine whether Phaedra locates herself in Athens or the Troezen. Eggerding pointed to Ovid's lack of geographical knowledge, while Palmer suggested otherwise (F. Eggerding, *De Heroidum Ovidianum Epistulis quae vocantur commentationes*, DPhH 18 (1911) 210; and Palmer, ed., *P. Ovidii Nasonis Heroides, Heroides with the Greek Translation of Planudes*, (Oxford 1898; Hildesheim [reprint 1967]) 311. H. Jacobson, *Ovid's Heroides* (Princeton 1974) 144 summarizes the theories and decides on Athens as the locale in accordance with the first *Hippolytus*.

Her description scarcely suggests a land of peace, for the seas fight (*obpugnant*) the isthmus, and the land appears slender and fragile (*tenuis*) in the maelstrom of the waters. Land and sea, natural opposites, fight with each other for supremacy. It is perhaps significant that Phaedra does not choose a pastoral setting for their future home, but rather one which hints at combative opposites and the contradictory nature of their possible relationship (stepmother/wife; stepson/husband), a relationship inherently offering violence to family ties. Her ineffective attempts throughout the letter to convince herself that Hippolytus will return her love are an indication of the futility of these wider personal boundaries. Movement from inside the house to the external pastoral world (where her lover resided) has not provided the sexual autonomy that Phaedra desired. And it cannot eliminate her sexual identity, which locates her firmly within the house as the wife of Theseus and the mother of his children. This transgression of boundaries threatens Phaedra's sanity (4.47–50) and, in the end, her life.

Hypsipyle manipulates her spatial limits with the same futile results. She can move outside her home, and indeed, the women of Lemnos must do so in order to fulfill the roles of the men who are no longer present. Like Dido, as the female ruler of her land, she has a wide geographical territory over which she can traverse. She does not try to use this spatial freedom to her advantage however. Unlike Dido and Phaedra, she does not go hunting with Jason and she does not create a pastoral idyll for their union. Apollonius' Hypsipyle says goodbye to Jason inside her palace; he then strides down to the harbor and is the first to board his ship (Ap.Rhod. 1.910–911). Hypsipyle disappears from the account at this point. Ovid's Hypsipyle takes a much more active role, as she must have followed Jason down to the seashore to watch his departure, as she says, *nobis aspiciuntur aquae* ("the waters are viewed by me," 6.68), and her description concentrates upon wind and waters carrying the ship away (6.65–67). She then climbs a tower which she describes as *in latus omne patens turris circumspicit undas* ("on every side the open tower scans the waters," 6.69) to watch her beloved sail away as long as she can.¹⁹ The sea thus both brings and takes love, as is common for many of these women. While Jason's arrival has given Hypsipyle love and children, his departure signals the end of this relationship and brings to a halt Hypsipyle's sexual relationship. Jason is the male who sails freely over the unrestricted sexuality of water, a state which is denied to Hypsipyle herself. She cannot seek closeness to Jason through the medium of the water or the waves and she cannot imitate his unrestricted sexuality. Her attempt to continue her sexual relationship with Jason compels her to climb her tower—but this only marks her as someone set apart. The search for a high vantage point from which to see the

¹⁹ See Keith's remarks in this issue concerning Perseus' propensity for commanding "from a high place" in order to attain visual mastery. Could these women also be mimicking this attempt to control from a high place, if not sight of the lover, then the departing lover himself? This would suggest that the search for physical height is consistent with a desire to manipulate the beloved.

beloved depart is not unique to Hypsipyle, as Ariadne, Laodamia, and Oenone will all do the same thing. But while the other heroines all seek landmasses as vantage points, Hypsipyle seeks a (hu)man-made object. We are not told who constructed the tower (the Lemnian husbands who were all killed? the women who were left?), but this constructed edifice identifies Hypsipyle as a human figure imposed on a natural landscape. The very openness of the tower (*patens*) reveals Hypsipyle as a solitary, unpaired figure, of limited mobility even in the landscape over which she rules. Having adopted the authority and work of the men whom she helped to kill, she cannot adopt the same sexual freedom that comes with complete separation from land. Hypsipyle's tower ties her to her landscape and becomes part of her as it takes on the human ability to survey (*circumspicit*) the horizon. As part of a constructed landscape, she is restricted to a truly immovable position to await Jason's return. This immovability will later affect her reaction to Jason's relationship with Medea.

Hypsipyle's letter is set at the time when Jason has already returned to Greece with Medea. The vocabulary she uses to refer to Medea is indicative of the moral connection between journeying on the sea and women, nautical mobility versus land-based immobility. Medea is called a *barbara venefica* (foreign sorceress, 19) and a *barbara paelex* (foreign mistress, 81, 149), a dual emphasis on her barbarity and her usurpation of Hypsipyle's role with Jason.²⁰ Her curse on Medea, that she might suffer exile (6.158–159), stresses the negative import of dislocation from home and country. Exile compels an individual to become rootless, not bound to one's own geographical space, a wanderer instead of grounded at home. Indeed, displacement through sea, land, and air (6.161) is interpreted by Hypsipyle as punishment for Medea, this mobility being the antithesis of a stable home, hearth, and husband. In the end, jealous of Medea's sexual attractiveness and ability to move geographically, Hypsipyle finds that her capacity to move into the wider physical landscape once inhabited by the males of her society has not granted her complete sexual autonomy. Isolated in her tower, she is determined to regard this male ability to remove to a space disconnected from land as deleterious for a woman, and uses Medea as a prime example of this. Medea is thus morally condemned for her ability to transgress boundaries.

The letter of Oenone to Paris clarifies this moral condemnation. Like Phaedra, Oenone creates a pastoral world in which she and Paris hunted and loved before he set off to collect Helen as his prize. Oenone describes the woods, forests, and mountains in which she and Paris sported and solidifies this link between the pastoral and the erotic with the trope of Paris carving their names on a tree trunk (5.21–30).²¹ It is ironic that Paris cuts down this pastoral landscape

²⁰ While this attitude is reflective of a woman who has been supplanted by another, Medea's foreignness strikes a particular chord with Hypsipyle as she, too, is foreign with respect to Jason.

²¹ Knox (above, n.3) 145–46 identifies the pastoral and elegiac overtones in this description as well as the motifs of hunting and inscriptions on trees.

in order to build his ships for Greece (5.41–42), perhaps a subtle warning of his destruction of their love affair which Oenone does not seem to perceive. She appears at his side in the harbor as he leaves, although she dwells more on Paris' tears and his unwillingness to depart than her own position. She has moved through the pastoral landscape however, to its boundary on the seashore. Knox points to the use of *prosequor* ("I attend," 5.55) as appropriate for "escorting someone on a journey, with *oculis* forming a pathetic image. . . ."²²

The verb serves to indicate Oenone's desire to depart from her landscape and to enter onto a new one. The impossibility of doing so is confirmed by *oculis*. Then Oenone climbs a mountaintop to watch for Paris' return. This mountain, a *moles*, is tellingly described as one which *resistit* the waves (5.61–62), as if the land itself offers determined and sentient resistance to the sea and all it stands for: travel, adventure, and unrestricted sex. The land seems to forbid the mixing of the two realms and even the transgression of this female beyond the immovability of the land, shorthand, perhaps, that Oenone's sexuality is restricted. Since this mountain is the only place from which Oenone can see Paris, it is her attempt to approach as closely as possible to the world which Paris inhabits and from which she is banned. Unlike Hypsipyle's tower, which reminds us of the presence of man(kind) in the natural landscape, Oenone's hill is a part of this landscape, much as is Oenone herself. Even so, her hilltop cuts her off from her familiar pastoral realm just as Hypsipyle's tower does, and she cannot seek unification with her lover through the medium of land or water. She cannot not take advantage of the sexual escape which water offers, but rather is constrained to a very visible part of the motionless land. Paris, through the medium of the sea, comes and goes at will, Oenone does not.

From her mountaintop, Oenone watches the arrival of Helen, whom she describes as a shameful girlfriend who clings to [Paris'] breast, *haerebat gremio turpis amica tuo* (5.70).²³ *Haereo* recalls the vocabulary of Latin elegy where it refers to the physical proximity of the lover and the outward physical reaction of love and passion.²⁴ Here, *haerebat* presents Helen as a sexual entity almost indivisible from Paris, and could also be considered as a picture of the triumphant female. Helen, according to Oenone, is a woman who sails across the ocean only because of and with a man and thus is presented as an unrestricted sexual individual. Certainly, Oenone sees Helen thus, as it is the impetus for her frantic response (she beats her breast, tears her cheeks, and makes Ida resound with her crying: 5.71–74). When she says that Helen followed Paris *per aperta . . . aequora* (5.77–78), her vocabulary emphasizes both transgression

²² Knox (above, n.3) 153.

²³ Knox (above, n.3) 155 rightly points to the tone of reprobation in *turpis amica*.

²⁴ *Gremium* is also the vocabulary of the elegists, referring both to males and females, although references to female laps or bosoms are far more frequent. See Pichon (above, n.7) 162. Knox (above, n.3) 155 suggests that "their [Paris and Helen's] intimacy gives the game away."

and public display. Women (*quae*) who follow men across the sea also abandon their husbands (*legitimos viros*, lawful husbands), says Oenone, making an explicit connection between adultery and the sea, as if the first inevitably precedes the other—with Helen as a proof of this assumption.²⁵ Spatial displacement has now clearly been equated with illegitimate sexual experience. Oenone does not suggest that a woman could follow her husband across the sea. Instead her use of *sequantur* (follow) is clarified by the *destituant* (abandon) in the following pentameter while the proximity of *aequora* (seas) and *legitimos* (lawful) emphasizes their inherent opposition. According to Oenone, good wives stay at home and do not travel on the sea.

In support of her precedence over Helen, Oenone reminds Paris that, as a nymph, she was at home in the forests and woods of Ida and once was hunted by the satyrs and by Faunus himself (5.135–138). She uses this as a way of convincing Paris of her sexual desirability, especially since she maintains that even Apollo, the builder of Troy, loved her (5.139–140). The story of her rape by Apollo appears oddly here as a proof of sexual desirability, but it does reveal that Oenone is sexually firmly entrenched on the land, as much as Helen's sexuality was associated with the sea. And even her ability to move about in the countryside does not, in the end, give her much sexual freedom. Even when she reminds Paris of her active hunting abilities (5.17–20), she describes the times when they are hunting *together*, not when she is by herself. She may indeed be showing him the best places to hunt and how to use the net, but she is only doing this to please and bewitch Paris. As a woodland nymph, Oenone can more easily transgress the male/female boundaries of the inside versus the outside world than the average woman. Yet this male hunting activity, involving spatial displacement, is presented here solely as something which can benefit the male beloved. One might then say that this nymph is presented as a naturally transgressive character, who blends both female and male elements in her. That Oenone can hunt as well as a man does not help her keep Paris' love or his promises of marriage. Her ability to move outside the house did result in her being gifted with Apollo's healing arts in recompense for the rape (5.145–146), but little else, as she is unable to heal herself of her passion for Paris.²⁶ Instead, hunting in the forests brings not any long-lasting sexual success, but rather a cessation of it. Oenone's ranging across the countryside has done little but to finally immobilize her on a mountaintop: this mobility does not guarantee sexual success. Further, her inability to meet Paris at the shore, as she did at his first arrival, or on the water, confirms her gendered space; she is limited to the earth and indeed sees the ocean as adulterous and so literally out of bounds. Helen, whom one might assume could be seen as a

²⁵ Hypsipyle uses the same technique of blame for Medea, as in Ovid's version of the tale Hypsipyle and Jason are married (*Her.* 6.41–46), unlike in Apollonius, where the couple remains unwed.

²⁶ Knox (above, n.3) 166 suggests that Ovid may have been the originator of this version of the source of Oenone's ability to heal Paris.

successful female sailor, is once again presented as an illustration of adultery and shameful behavior.

A clear example of this moral transgression is given by Ariadne in *Heroides* 10. Ariadne presents us with the model of a woman who has left the confines of her paternal house and has successfully (at least up to the time just prior to her writing) traveled across water. Yet Ariadne sails on the sea solely because of and with a man; this is not a solitary journey, but one prompted by a desire for proximity with the beloved. Successful sailing adventures have so far been associated with the male, as he is the one who has the freedom and ability to go beyond his homeland and engage in sexual relationships without immediate consequences. We have only to think of the epic voyages of the men of the *Heroides* to realize the connection between naval and sexual adventures. Such an analogy does not hold true from the vantage point of the women of the *Heroides*, where seaborne sexual adventures inevitably come to grief. Such is the case with Ariadne; Theseus is a stranger who literally sails into and out of her life, both physically and sexually. To Ariadne, it seems completely natural to sail off with her lover, to imitate his journey on sea and in bed. Yet her brief journey ends in disaster, because instead of sailing to Greece with Theseus, she wakes up to find him absent from her bed and catches only a last glimpse of his sails as he disappears off the horizon.²⁷ This imitation of male sexual activity has succeeded neither in similar spatial nor emotional terms. Instead of allowing Ariadne the freedom of the seas, her sea journey has ironically placed her in a more sexually-limited space. The island transmutes into a physical prison for Ariadne, as she, landlocked, runs back and forth along the seashore in a vain attempt to attract Theseus' attention (10.19–20). The sea literally locks her into a distinct spatial environment more circumscribed than her Cretan homeland. Here she is as much sexually confined as Hypsipyle is in her tower or Oenone on her hilltop. Visually and geographically distanced from her native landscape, Ariadne becomes a reminder that women cannot set sail/have sexual adventures like men. For all three women, the sea only provides a last tantalizing glimpse of her lover. Instead of promoting Ariadne's sexual relationship, it now denies it.

The only thing that Ariadne can do to further her physical relationship with Theseus is, like Oenone, to climb a mountaintop for a better view (10.25–28). Thus, spatial unification with the lover is attempted through the phallic imagery of the mountaintop upon which Ariadne sits (10.25–28). The sexuality of this image is complicated by the fact that the cliff has been undercut (*adesus*) by the water,²⁸ as if Ariadne's sexual relationship is being eaten away; that this disintegration is violent is suggested by *raucis* ("raucous, harsh sounding"). Water is presented as a destructive force, both by carrying Theseus (=sex) away, and by destroying the landmass Ariadne was hoping

²⁷ *Her.* 10.9–12, 29–30, 43.

²⁸ *Her.* 10.26: *scopulus raucis pendet adesus aquis* ("the seaciff hangs down, eaten away by the harsh-sounding waters. . .").

to use to attain unification with her lover. Disappointed, she roams the empty seashore or perches on a rock, neither space indicative of fertility, but rather barren in all senses of the word. Indeed, Ariadne describes herself as *frigida* (10.49)²⁹ as she sits and looks out at the sea—an adjective expressive of her mental and sexual state. Notice that she does not run *into* the sea in her efforts to bridge the distance between herself and her lover, even in her extreme panic.³⁰ Nor does she try to immerse herself in the ocean, thereby at least joining her lover in the physical environment over which he moves. The sea, which around her native island of Crete was used as a vehicle of escape, now becomes a barrier to escape (10.61–62). It has played a powerful role in Ariadne's transformation from virgin maiden to sexually active woman. Yet, despite Ariadne's apparent freedom in the choice of her lover, it is, in the end, the sea and the man who define her sexual identity. Ariadne's sexual experience begins and ends only when Theseus determines that it should and results in the sterility of her mountaintop seat. When he ends their joint adventure, whether intentionally or not, Ariadne's sexuality is cut short.³¹ Her first "voyage" ends in abandonment and sterility. Her attempt to "act like a male" with regards to sex and sailing has provided only a misleading illusion of success and adventure.

Medea is another figure who attempts to become transgressive and indeed, because of her abilities as a witch, can reasonably be expected to move beyond physical gender boundaries. Yet she too finds that this transgression is ultimately unsuccessful and leads to self-destruction. As a parallel to Ariadne, Medea chose to betray her father and her country and to set off on a journey to Greece with and because of a man, in this case, Jason. Unlike Ariadne, Medea's sexual journey takes a bit longer to fall apart, since she does manage to travel to Greece and bear two children to Jason before personal chaos ensues. The sexual significance of the sea is made apparent when Medea complains that her virginity was made a plunder for foreign robbers (12.111), and when she claims that she felt no fear in entrusting herself to the sea, although she was *femina, iamque nocens* ("female and now harmful," 12.118). The audacity of this statement lies partly in the fact that Medea has just described the death and dismemberment of her brother at her own hands. Medea reminds us, however, that the sea is a dangerous place for

²⁹ Ovid's Ariadne uses *frigida* twice, here at 49 and also to describe her state as she saw Theseus' sails depart (10.32). It is a familiar topos in Ovid's amatory poetry: *Am.* 2.1.5, 2.7.9, 3.5.42; *Rem. am.* 492; *Her.* 1.7, 19.69.

³⁰ This action distinguishes Ovid's Ariadne from Catullus', who *does* run straight into the ocean waves in her desperate attempt to join Theseus: 64.128–129.

³¹ Although Ovid seems to insinuate the arrival of Dionysus, Ariadne is herself not aware of this circumstance, and so the focus of her letter is only on present and recent events. Later, Ariadne says, *timeo simulacra deorum* ("I fear the images of the gods," 10.95), which may be Ovid's way of alluding to the imminent arrival of Dionysus. He also describes Ariadne as roaming around with her hair unbound, *qualis ab Ogygio concita Baccha deo* ("just as a Bacchante aroused by the Ogygian god," 10.48), which also directs the attention of the reader to the subsequent events in Ariadne's life, yet she remains unaware of this.

lovers (12.111–120),³² and the phraseology *femina, iamque nocens* (12.118) suggests first the incongruity of the female moving onto the watery landscape, and then the depravity of Medea's actions. Mythology and Euripides' *Medea* tell us that, as Medea traveled further away from her home, the more extreme her depravity became, until it culminated in the death of her two children, hinted at in the *Heroides* only by evocative references to her children.³³ Yet Medea writes her letter within the confines of her present home; only her youngest child is said to move towards the world outside, and he only advances as far as the doorstep.³⁴ Medea refuses to watch Jason's wedding procession as it passes her door, remaining inside her house as a sign of her claim of marital and sexual fidelity. She has re-entered the traditional physical boundaries of the female, and indeed, in the recent past, these boundaries have proven fertile and successful for her. Yet appearances can be deceiving, for Medea's new spatial limitations have also been contrived and manipulated by a male: Jason has set her apart in order to marry the king's daughter (*Her.* 12.133–136). Medea's seclusion within her house does not preserve her sexual life, nor does it bring balance to her existence; rather, the opposite occurs, and like Ariadne, she finds sterility, not sexuality.³⁵ It would seem that once a female has transgressed her spatial boundaries, she cannot return to her former state. Medea's foray into the external world and her journey across water has brought danger and destruction, and an ultimate destruction of her identity as wife of Jason and, some would say, of her identity as mother.

A similar destruction of identity from spatial displacement has also been experienced in a minor fashion by Deianira in *Heroides* 9. In her case, destruction did not arrive from crossing the sea, but from crossing the river Evenus (9.141–142). This journey is also not prompted by Deianira herself, but by her husband Hercules, who actually entrusts her to the centaur Nessus to be carried across the stream, rather than carrying her himself. This presents a very evocative picture of the authority of the male over female sexuality and what happens when a woman gets involved with the wrong male. Nessus is described as dying in the waters of the Evenus,³⁶ a subtle blending of the elements of sexuality and violence, and an unnoticed warning to Deianira about male authority in her sexual life. Once again, the "voyage" is initiated and brought to a conclusion by the male. Thereafter, when Deianira tries to act like a male, that is, to take decisive action to preserve Hercules' love for her, disaster strikes in the form of the poisoned cloak. While *Heroides* 9 presents Hercules as the

³² Just as also Dido feared that Venus would exact retribution from Aeneas while he was at sea because of his betrayal of her love (*Her.* 7.55–60).

³³ 12.149–152, 187–190, 197–198, 209–212.

³⁴ *Limina*: 12.150, itself a marker of boundaries. Medea does not step beyond the *limen* of the door in her letter.

³⁵ See Keith (above, n.2), where once again, the character of Medea resists the feminized landscape.

³⁶ *Semivir occubuit in letifero Eveno* ("the half-man sank down in death-dealing Evenus," 9.141).

transgressive figure much more clearly than Deianira, her attempts to become more assertive in her relationship with Hercules reveal her inability to assume a role that is not really hers. Since Deianira connects her sense of identity to her husband's,³⁷ any feminization of his identity results in the destruction of her own. The meeting with Nessus and the journey across water sowed seeds of destruction for Deianira's relationship with Hercules and her own sexual success.

This whole concept of the danger of women transgressing their spatial and physical boundaries is amply described in Hypermeatra's retelling of the story of Io in *Heroides* 14. Hypermeatra's story is one which stays firmly within interior space and in which the female refuses to act aggressively and kill her husband, and instead makes the decision to allow her sexuality to flourish with her lawful husband, regardless of her father's injunction. Here there is no sea, no river, and no travel for Hypermeatra. Instead, she gives us an account of her feelings and actions on her wedding night and the following days (14.21ff.), all of which takes place in an internal space. The anger of her father Danaus at her refusal to kill her groom reminds Hypermeatra of Juno's anger towards Io for having captured the interest of her husband, Jupiter. As the daughter of the river god Inachus, Io establishes the connection between water, and women and sexuality. The cow Io is pictured on the banks of her father's river, aghast and terrified by what she has become (14.89–92).³⁸ Io's transformation, initiated by Juno's anger at her sexual attractiveness, does not become real for Io until she looks in the water of the river Inachus (14.93).³⁹ The water in effect mirrors the results of her sexual attraction and brings Io face to face with the reality of her rape in very physical terms. For Io, sex has brought about a complete and physical change of identity. The references to *liquidi parentis* ("watery father," 14.89) and *patriis aquis* ("in my father's waters," 14.90) confirm the relationship between father and daughter and the liquid nature of this relationship. The chiasmus of *liquidi nova vacca parentis* reinforces this connection between father and daughter, water and cow,⁴⁰ suggesting that one is dependent upon the other. Io is the only female in the *Heroides* who actually looks *into* the water, instead of what is on it. Similarly, she is the only female who accomplishes her journey entirely by herself. Although her transformation has been prompted by Jupiter's passion,⁴¹ it is Io alone who runs *per mare, per terras*

³⁷ She refers to *titulis . . . nostris* ("to our titles of honor," 9.1) when referring to Hercules' recent exploits, to her title as *Herculis uxor* ("wife of Hercules," 9.27). She expresses dismay at what Hercules is doing to his reputation and thus contemplates suicide when she realizes that she has killed him.

³⁸ J. Reeson points to *teneram* ("tender," 87) as a sign of Io's complete transformation, since *tener* can refer both to women of elegy, but also to "skittish animals." J. Reeson, *Ovid Heroides 11, 13, and 14. A Commentary* (Leiden 2001) 286.

³⁹ J. Reeson (above, n.38) 290 notes the varied terminologies for looking and water: *vidit* (90), *miraris* (93), *spectas* (97), *unda* (93), *fonte* (97).

⁴⁰ J. Reeson (above, n.38) 287.

⁴¹ In the Ovidian version of the *Heroides*, Jupiter is only incidentally referred to when Hypermeatra remarks that Io was not able to retain Jupiter's interest in her transformed state (14.88–89). Juno, not Jupiter, was the agent of transformation.

cognataque flumina ("through the ocean, through lands and known streams," 14.101), and so literally crosses *through* both male and female environments in an unceasing attempt to escape from the self that she has become. The bestiality of Io's form is emphasized first by her inability to speak, and then by the terror she feels at the animal, instead of human, sounds which she produces (14.91–92), then by a series of contrasts in which human activity is replaced by animal activity: eating branches, drinking at a spring, lying on the ground (14.95–100). But at the same time, it is this bestiality which places her in an ambiguous in-between world where she is neither wholly human nor wholly animal and neither wholly male nor wholly female. Both as a cow and as a woman, Io suffered because of her sexual identity; yet as a cow, when her sexual identity was concealed, she had the ability to move through a wider landscape and indeed, to ignore spatial boundaries. Now instead of the land shrinking back from the sea, and the sea becoming a barrier to the land, the sea, land, and rivers offer her avenues of escape (*viam*, 14.102). It is only when Io throws herself into the waters of the Nile that she regains her human shape (14.107–108), and this immersion into a geography previously denied to women uncovers her human female identity. This allows Io to come full circle from transformation to transformation, both initiated by rivers. No other woman in the *Heroides* achieves this level of contact with water.

Perhaps this is why Phyllis in *Heroides* 2 contemplates a suicidal leap from her phallic mountain after Demophoon's departure (2.131–136). She attempts to transgress her spatial environment most frequently and deliberately of all these characters, although also ineffectually. Phyllis, like Oenone, is present at the harbor when Demophoon departs and receives his kisses and assurances of return (2.91–92). Then, as time passes and she hears no news of his return, in the pattern of Ariadne, she paces the seashore, and looks out on the waters.⁴² But, more aggressive than Ariadne, she also rushes straight into the waves when she catches sight of a sail, in *freta procuro, vix me retinentibus undis/mobile qua primas porrigit aequor aquas* ("I rush straight into the sea, scarcely did the waters restrain me/just where the changeable sea stretches out its shallow waters," 2.127–128). Her desire for emotional and physical union with Demophoon brings her to breach the barrier between land and sea. The waters, ever sentient, attempt to hold her back (*retinentibus*) and are partially successful as Phyllis advances no farther than the shallows. Her desire for total immersion in the Io model is prevented by the sea itself, perhaps because the transformation she desires is not to become completely herself, as Io wished, but rather to transform, or at least joint with, another. Tellingly, the closer the boat approaches the shore, the weaker Phyllis becomes, until she finally faints, a

⁴² *Her.* 2.121: *maesta tamen scopulos fruticosaque litora calco*. . . . ("nevertheless, sorrowful, I tread upon the rocks and bushes of the shore. . . ."). Jacobson reports an alternative version in which Phyllis is said to have gone to the seashore nine times in search of Demophoon, a detail which Ovid ignores. H. Jacobson (above, n.18) 59. The fact that she wanders the seashore at all, however, brings her to the very boundary of her gendered space.

physical acknowledgment of emotional stress.⁴³ Since unification by water has failed at ground level, Phyllis resorts to contemplating suicide by throwing herself off a nearby promontory (2.131–134).⁴⁴ Her description of the bay with its steeply rising phallic crests (132)⁴⁵ may provide Phyllis with the physical unification which she ardently desires. It too, however, as Ariadne has found, is destined to be just as infertile. On a symbolic level, this is the only way in which she can achieve union with Demophoon. She pictures her body washed out to sea and into Demophoon's sight. This presents the idea of complete immersion into the matter which carried the lover away, not just a sailing on top of it, and so is a graphic example of the use of water as a medium of unification between the male and female and thus the potential change in sexual identity in the Io model. Phyllis wants to use the sea as a vehicle even more tangibly than Demophoon did, who only sailed *on* the water. The constraints of the genre do not allow us to see Phyllis commit suicide nor her final unification with Demophoon. If the reader can posit that Phyllis is successful in her suicide attempt, then her attempt to change her sexuality has been achieved at the price of her own destruction. The breaking of her spatial gender barriers is accomplished through a violent and calamitous act; the sea prevents less destructive events. Crossing spatial gender boundaries thus threatens a radical transformation of self, indeed the possible extinction of the self. While Io was able to survive her transformation, it was an uncovering of identity rather than a substantive *change* in identity. Certainly, such a visual transformation is not anticipated by any of the women of the *Heroides*. They envisage a more sexual unification with the beloved with little further articulation about the results. Since, however, Phyllis is not able to skim over the surface of the sea as Demophoon and countless other males have done, her only other recourse is to try and jump in. For her, change of identity, with its accompanying change of sexual identity, means a loss of self. None of the other women, who had access to high vantage points and therefore could also have

⁴³ Laodamia's response to Protesilaus' departure in *Heroides* 13 is somewhat similar, but takes place at the departure scene. Like others before her, Laodamia watches her husband's ship depart and tries to keep him, his ship, and his sails in sight as long as possible (13.15–25). Unlike Ariadne and Hypsipyle, however, Laodamia does not seek a high point from which to catch a last glimpse of her husband; rather her last view of him causes her to faint, giving a reverse sequence to the Phyllis scene here. Reeson comments on the progressive nature of Laodamia's description as an indication of her emotion at the time of Protesilaus' departure (Reeson [above, n.38] 124–25). Perhaps because Laodamia creates a waxen image of her husband, she does not seek as forcefully to achieve spatial proximity to Protesilaus as other women do. Certainly, she locates herself clearly within the house with her story of Protesilaus stumbling over the threshold as he was leaving (13.85–86). So in addition to indicating Laodamia's interest in omens (Jacobson [above, n.18] 209), this scene also helps to locate her spatially within the household.

⁴⁴ Sappho contemplates a similar decision to commit suicide at *Heroides* 15.185–192, except that she hopes that her leap off the Leucadian rock will free her from her love for Phaon, rather than establish a tangible connection between them (15.165–172).

⁴⁵ The *cornua* (cliffs) are described as *praerupta* (steep) and as rising stiffly (*rigent*), which Knox (above, n.3) 137 identifies as "purely Ovidian." This would suggest that Ovid was deliberately emphasizing the erect nature of the cliffs.

posited such violent spatial transgressions, dare such a radical transformation, despite its potential for sexual success.

What is interesting is that none of these women ever do achieve unification with the male nor do they ultimately transgress their sexual space. Even though some women are able initially to move about their spatial and therefore sexual boundaries, none is entirely successful. Io, our only example of successful transgression, is not a character of the *Heroides*, but a tale told within a letter. She is not even one of the main writers who seeks unification with a specific lover, but rather an exemplum of another's anger and passion. The story of Io, however, teaches that transgressions of one's normal boundaries, whether willingly or unwillingly, lead to a radical transformation of self, even a descent into the bestial. At the same time, Io teaches that the purgation of the bestial may be achieved through total immersion in an element most frequently associated in the *Heroides* with males, water. This interpretation is one which might usefully be learned by other heroines who are so willing to cast themselves on the waters of change and who try to alter who and what they are. Unaware of the story of Io, these women attempt to move beyond their spatial boundaries, but never really move deeply enough. Their movement is limited by the land itself, which literally fixes them on *terra firma*. Some heroines, like Ariadne and Phyllis, can move right up to the very margin of the earth, to the shores of the ocean, but are prevented from going any farther. Others, like Helen, Deianira, and Medea, actually transgress their spatial and physical environment, but find no ultimate successful resolution at the end of their journey. Water, especially the sea, then becomes a sort of moral marker for women's identity, as Oenone clarifies when she suggests that good wives do not travel on the open sea. Despite a desire to become unified with their lovers and thus to change their status and identity, these women are limited to land. As they move from the restricted confines of the home to the more open space of the natural landscape, and then toward the largest expanse of the sea, they come to the subliminal realization that all of these spaces are freely traversed by men, but not by women. But for women like Hypsipyle and, by implication, Penelope, Hermione, and Canace, sexual experience beyond a limited, immobile landscape imposes a prejudicial moral evaluation on women. Water comes to mean sexuality, both male and female, during the course of these letters. Yet sexual identity and sexual practice for women is always a geographically confined experience. Restricted to a position on the margin of sexuality, the women of the *Heroides* can gaze out upon, touch, and even wish for, but cannot enjoy, the male-dominated sea.