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The Metamorphic Medea

In the first half of book 7, Ovid recounts the story of Medea, the paradigm of the dangerous female in Greek myth. The poet could assume the reader's familiarity with the long literary history of this formidable female. Euripides, in particular, explored the intransigent nature of this character in his tragedy detailing Medea's horrifying deeds in Corinth. His Medea threatens the very fabric of civilized life when she kills her own children as well as her rival and the king in order to get revenge on her faithless husband by leaving him with no hope to continue his family line.

The Greek playwright reveals Medea's highly problematic status as Other. She is the foreign wife from far-off Colchis who is now dismissed by Jason for a young Greek bride. Yet she is able to exploit the appearance of total vulnerability so as to set in motion a plot by which she gains mastery over the situation. Although urged by the chorus of Corinthian women to accept what cannot be changed, Medea cunningly manipulates Creon into deferring her exile for one day by playing on his sympathies as a father and, by promising to end his childless state, obtains the guarantee from King Aegeus of Athens that once she has fled Corinth he will grant her refuge.

In her appeal to Aegeus, Euripides reminds his audience of the source of Medea's dark powers through her connection to the chthonic goddess Hecate rather than to the Olympian gods: her expertise with magic and drugs enables her to secure Aegeus's help as well as to bring about the horrifying death of the princess Glauke and her father King Creon through the stratagem of a poisoned garment.¹ Euripides symbolically characterizes his heroine with violent images pertaining to the sea, wild beasts, and inanimate nature, which suggest that she has

perversely appropriated a male heroic persona in her struggle with Jason.² By the end of the play, Medea has succeeded in rendering Jason utterly helpless but seems detached from the human realm altogether, as she appears on high, ready to flee in her magic chariot, and refuses Jason even the comfort of embracing his dead sons.

This dark figure entered into epic in a less awesome, but nonetheless complex, manifestation. In the *Argonautica*, Apollonius brings out the paradoxical nature of this barbarian princess: on the one hand, infected by Eros, she struggles over the conflict between loyalty to her family and her feelings for the hero, but on the other, once she provides the necessary help for Jason to retrieve the Golden Fleece, she has fully implicated herself in her brother Apsyrtus's murder. The Hellenistic poet, furthermore, makes Medea's connection to the dark powers of magic increasingly sinister from her first appearance in book 3 to her destruction of Talus, the last survivor of the race of bronze and the guardian of Crete, in book 4.³ Although the epic ends with an apparently bright picture of the victorious Jason returning to Greece with his new bride, the specter of Euripides' terrifying character lurks in the background.

Medea was the exemplar of the dangers of female cunning, especially when spurred by unbridled anger, for the patriarchal society of Rome as well as of Greece. Both Ennius and Accius wrote tragedies on Medea in Latin, and Vergil's Dido bears the stamp of this intractable heroine. Ovid himself was drawn to this powerful character well before the *Metamorphoses*: his *Medea*, which unfortunately did not survive antiquity, recast the events previously dramatized by Euripides in Greek and by Ennius and Accius in Latin.⁴ *Heroides* 12 envisions Medea's response to Jason when he has just deserted her for the daughter of King Creon.⁵

The episode in the *Metamorphoses* has a much broader sweep, encompassing the entire course of Medea's career from her infatuation with the handsome leader of the Argonauts and subsequent decision to aid him in his quest for the Golden Fleece to her rejuvenation of Jason's father Aeson and treacherous murder of King Pelias and finally to her failed attempt to poison King Aegeus's son Theseus and subsequent flight from Athens (1–424). In a movement from seemingly innocent to overtly threatening and dangerous, the Medea of book 7 appears to be similar to Apollonius's heroine. But Ovid plays with the reader's expectations about Medea's nature more extensively than his Greek epic predecessor. Ovid's quick shift from the inexperienced young woman struggling with her feelings of love for the handsome stranger to the accomplished witch is somewhat unsettling.⁶ Her innocent demeanor in

the first part and her sinister behavior in the final sections demand a complex characterization. The poet extends the implications of Medea's aggressiveness and cunning in particular, connecting these qualities to his larger epic project.

Ovid only briefly mentions Medea as the vengeful wife who causes the gruesome death of Jason's new bride and her father and murders her own children to punish her faithless spouse (394–97). Instead, in the first section, he reconceives the episode in Apollonius's *Argonautica* in which Medea agonizes over her love for Jason and then decides to help the hero complete the tasks imposed by Aeetes and seize the Golden Fleece. In the second section, he focuses on Medea's powers of witchcraft, especially by expanding extensively on the technical aspects of her craft and revealing the consequences of her machinations.

My discussion explores paradoxical elements of Ovid's Medea in light of the poet's own rather dissonant relationship to the epic tradition. I first examine Medea's soliloquy for its surprisingly powerful rhetoric. The poet, I believe, implies Medea's affinity with himself through an allusion to Horace that evokes his own high poetic aspirations throughout his story of this mythical heroine in book 7. Although numerous characters in the *Metamorphoses* allude to earlier works of literature in their speeches, Medea is distinctive: the poet endows her with a self-consciousness that suggests the young woman's awareness of her own literary past. Allusions to the abandoned wife of Euripides' *Medea* and *Heroides* 12 and to the young heroine of Apollonius's *Argonautica* imply that Medea only apparently reflects the vulnerability of her Hellenistic epic counterpart and that she anticipates her own future as an aggressive, masculinized character in the Greek tragedy and in Ovid's epistle. In her self-presentation, Medea both exploits previous literary versions of her character and employs considerable rhetorical skills so as to become a controlling force in the narrative. The impact of her rhetoric even extends beyond this episode, for her soliloquy serves as the archetype for the speeches of other misguided heroines later in the poem.⁷

Second, in an analysis of Medea's flight on the dragon chariot from Iolcus, I consider how Ovid extends the implications of Medea's transgressive nature. After tricking the daughters of Pelias into killing their father, Medea takes flight from her crime on a course which the poet elaborates in considerable detail. As Ovid describes this journey, he reveals how her trajectory encompasses earlier myths that are both *recherché* and morally problematic. This character, moreover, embodies the paradox that Ovid's epic both draws heavily on Hellenistic poetry

and at the same time undermines its Callimachean poetics. By adding this account of her flight from Iolcus to the traditional story of Medea's manipulation of her metamorphic skills with Pelias, the poet implies his own ability to transform his inherited material and to create a new kind of epic poem. As he charts Medea's course over the Aegean Sea, Ovid makes her flight an image of the second half of the *Metamorphoses*.

Medea's Love for Jason

The young Colchian princess certainly elicits the sympathy that critics have perceived on account of her struggle over the conflicting forces of love and duty.⁸ Medea indeed even draws the reader into her frame of mind through her charming naïveté and expressive powers. She acknowledges that Jason's fate is in the hands of the gods but immediately pleads for his safety: "vivat, an ille / occidat, in dis est; vivat tamen!" ("It is up to the gods whether he lives or dies, but nevertheless, let him live!" [23–24]). Here, she not only conveys emotional tension; she also cleverly employs an anaphora by repeating the subjunctive form *vivat* but changing its grammatical function from an indirect question to a hortatory command. In the context of her soliloquy, Medea's rhetorical skill is rather surprising, since she herself calls attention to the uncivilized nature of her homeland ("barbara tellus" [53]).

Medea's expressions of concern about Jason's response build up to a climax in which marriage becomes the reward for her help. She considers that, after being saved by her ("per me sospes" [40]), Jason will leave in order to become the husband of another ("ut per me sospes / . . . virque sit alterius" [40–41]). Yet, because his noble birth and his appearance (*vultus, gratia formae*) rule out the possibility of ingratitude on his part, she is assured of his good faith (*fidem* [46]), to which she will summon the gods as witnesses. She then reinforces the hero's indebtedness to her through a binding commitment: "tibi se semper debebit Iason, / te face sollemni iunget sibi" ("Jason will always owe himself to you; he will join you to himself with the sacred torch," [48–49]). The very structure of her language lends a concreteness to her expectations. Through the anaphora of the second-person pronoun and the asyndeton running the two clauses together, the heroine rhetorically yokes Jason's obligation to her with its fulfillment in marriage.

Medea's mention of conjugal bliss overtly seems to reinforce the impression of a naïveté, but an allusion to Horace connects her closely to

Ovid as poet. Here, imagining herself with her husband, she conveys her ecstasy in hyperbolic terms: "quo coniuge felix / et dis cara ferar et vertice sidera tangam" ("Happy with him as my husband, I will be called dear to the gods and will touch the stars with my head" [60–61]). Medea's boast echoes the end of *Odes* 1.1, where Horace claims that if his patron Maecenas places him in the ranks of the Greek lyric poets, he will "strike the stars with the top of his head" ("sublimi feriam sidera vertice" [36]).⁹ **Medea seems to appropriate this status in the poetic sphere for herself, especially as she begins to project an increasing awareness of her literary counterparts in Euripides and Apollonius.** Ovid, to be sure, makes the heroine utter his own desires: he stakes a claim to greatness not only by this dazzling poetic monologue and by his more sustained adaptation of the myth of Medea in book 7 but also by complementing this echo of *Odes* 1.1 with an echo of *Odes* 3.30 in the epilogue at the end of book 15.

Medea's thoughts of leaving Colchis with Jason as her husband give rise to heightened poetic powers.¹⁰ As she imagines herself with the hero on the dangerous sea voyage back to Greece, Medea creates a romantically enticing picture of herself safe in the arms of her husband:

nempe tenens, quod amo, gremioque in Iasonis haerens
per freta longa ferar: nihil illum amplexa verebor,
aut, siquid metuam, metuam de coniuge solo. (66–68)

[Indeed, holding the one I love, clinging to Jason's chest, I will be borne over the vast seas: embracing him, I will be afraid of nothing, or if I fear anything, I will fear for my husband alone.]

Here, three participles denoting strong physical contact (*tenens*, *haerens*, *amplexa*) produce a compelling picture of the young woman in the embrace of the hero. Ovid has Medea subtly lure the reader into adopting her point of view. A male would find it flattering to identify with the protective hero who holds the young princess in his arms and who is the object of her adoration, while a female might relate to her intrepid, yet caring, frame of mind.

By appearing to know her literary past and to articulate her own future, Medea further embodies poetic powers that align her with Ovid himself. In a discussion of Medea in both *Heroides* 12 and *Metamorphoses* 7, Stephen Hinds has pointed out the epic character's "correction" of a geographical error concerning the Symplegades when she recounts her travels with Jason in the epistolary poem.¹¹ A similar kind of literary self-awareness by Ovid's heroine, I believe, pervades her monologue.

However engaging she may be, Medea alludes to elements of her story in the Greek tragic and epic versions that are at odds with the merely naive aspects of her self-presentation.

Scholars have long recognized the debt to Euripides' Medea in the young woman's acknowledgment of the difficulty of ending her passion for the stranger. As she faces her dilemma, she feels pulled in opposite directions: "sed trahit invitam nova vis, aliudque cupido, / mens aliud suadet" ("But a strange force carries me away against my will, and desire urges one thing, reason another" [19–20]). She then sums up her predicament: "video meliora proboque, / deteriora sequor!" ("I see and approve of the better course, but I pursue the worse!" [20–21]). **With this moral insight, Medea echoes her Euripidean counterpart, who asserts that although she understands the evil course on which she embarks, her rage is stronger than her reason (1078–79).**¹² Carole Newlands observes that in the analogous passage in Euripides' play Medea decides to go through with the murder of her own children; she concludes, however, that the words spoken by Ovid's love-struck young woman have a very different effect from the model in Euripides.¹³

This echo of the vengeful wife, however, is reinforced as Medea continues to evoke Euripides' dark heroine through her language. Medea follows this allusion to the tragic character's determination to proceed on her hideous course with a suggestive collocation of words: "quid in hospite, regia virgo, / ureris?" ("Why will you burn for a stranger, royal maiden?" [21–22]). The juxtaposition of *hospite* ("guest" as well as "stranger") and "regia virgo" suggests the relation of Jason to Glauke, the daughter of King Creon of Corinth, in Euripides' play. The verb *ureris* here, of course, has the figurative meaning of erotic passion. But it also evokes the horrific condition of literal conflagration that the Corinthian princess experiences after putting on the crown and the robe that Medea's children have offered as gifts.¹⁴ Just after the tragic heroine gives voice to her moral dilemma, a messenger from the palace describes in considerable detail the fire shooting from the young woman's head and then engulfing her entire body (1186–1201). Medea's words here ironically prefigure her later act of causing another royal maiden literally to burn over her love for the handsome guest.

In her soliloquy, Medea employs poetic figures that recall her unspeakable act of infanticide as dramatized in Euripides' play. As the Colchian princess ponders what will happen if she does not help Jason, she imagines him combating the fire-breathing bulls, the militant crop of earthborn men, and the deadly serpent guarding the fleece (29–31).

Her reaction is then to castigate herself for cruelty in allowing such a fate: "tum me de tigride natam, / tum ferrum et scopulos gestare in corde fatebor" ("Then I will acknowledge that I was born from a tigress, then that I bear iron and rock in my heart" [32–33]). William Anderson notes that the image of a heart of iron or stone goes as far back as the *Iliad*, where Patroclus reproaches Achilles for refusing to re-enter battle after Machaon is wounded (16.33–34).¹⁵

The source of the comparison here, however, would seem to be Euripides, who applied it specifically to Medea. The chorus thus addresses the revenge-driven wife:

τάλαινα, ὥς ἄρ' ἦσθα πέτρος ἢ σίδα-
ρος, ἅτις τέκνων
ὄν ἔτεκες ἄροτον αὐτόχειρι μοίρα κτενεῖς. (1279–81)

[Oh, wretched one, how indeed you were rock or iron, you who will kill the crop of children that you bore with a death inflicted by your own hand.]

The context in the tragedy is especially pointed: the chorus makes the remark as it hears Medea's children scream in pain and ask each other how they can escape their mother's onslaught (1270–74). By alluding to Euripides, Ovid has Medea predict how she will be perceived at a later stage in her career. Moreover, by using the strong verb *fateor* ("to acknowledge") here, Medea makes her statement seem to be almost a retort to Euripides, a rejection of the criticism against her in the tragedy.

Medea's insistence that, if she fails to assist Jason, she was born of a tigress has a complex background vis-à-vis the tragic heroine. Euripides' Medea is castigated as a savage beast for her heartless actions against her children. Jason calls her a lioness with the wild nature of the monster Scylla when he sees her about to escape from Corinth in the chariot of the Sun with the bodies of their slain children (1342–43). In response, Medea with bitter sarcasm encourages the helpless hero to call her a lioness or Scylla, since she has achieved her revenge (1358–60). After she refuses to let him kiss or touch his children's bodies, Jason invokes Zeus to witness his injury from this fierce lioness (1405–11).

As scholars frequently observe, Vergil drew on Euripides' tragedy for his characterization of Dido in *Aeneid* 4.¹⁶ The Augustan poet has the angry Dido employ a comparable image of a wild animal when Aeneas reveals his intention to seek a new kingdom in Italy. Using the image of a tigress rather than a lioness, Vergil has the Carthaginian queen direct the analogy against the hero as she reproaches him for his callousness in abruptly deciding to leave her. Her response is to lash out and deny

Aeneas's divine parentage by claiming that the Caucasus begot him on its rocks and that Hyrcanian tigresses nursed him (365–67). Like the tragic Medea, Dido is enraged that the hero has spurned her love after she saved him and his men from death and provided him a share in her kingdom (373–75). Unable to prevent his departure, Dido similarly wants revenge; she hopes that a painful fate will cause him to lament his cruelty and even predicts that she will continue to torment the hero after her death (382–86). In Medea's soliloquy in the *Metamorphoses*, the tigress analogy, along with the image of rocks, evokes Vergil's dark heroine, an earlier literary descendant of Euripides' Medea. Although Dido uses the tigress image in reference to Aeneas, Medea here appropriates it for herself. By reversing Dido's criticism of Aeneas for his lack of gratitude for her assistance, she affirms the necessity of her aid to Jason.

Medea's ingenuous expectations about her life after accompanying Jason back to Greece with the Golden Fleece are ironic against the background of their source in Euripides' play. As she contemplates the positive results of helping Jason recover the fleece, Medea envisions a *titulus* (56), presumably a public monument engraved with her praises as savior of the Argonauts. Such an emblem of heroic stature would normally be awarded to a male rather than to a female. More realistically, she expresses her expectation that she will benefit from experiencing a superior country and cities with a longstanding tradition of art and culture, whose fame has reached even Colchis (57–58).

Although Medea's enthusiasm here could elicit sympathy for its naïveté, her references to the advantages of Greece recall Jason's reproaches to her in Euripides' tragedy. There, the hero criticizes her for being angry that he has taken a new wife. He emphasizes all the benefits that she has received from her association with him: a home in Greece instead of a barbarian land, the rule of law and justice, and fame among the Greeks for her services (536–41). Here, Medea evokes the bitter clash between the hero and the foreign wife whom he has rejected, in which the tragic heroine responds with total scorn to Jason's enumeration of the benefits of Greek civilization. By pre-empting Jason's chauvinistic attitude toward Greek culture in Euripides' play, Medea implicitly reflects Ovid's tendency to undermine the traditional hero's stance of superiority.

Through allusions to the *Argonautica* in Medea's soliloquy and in her meeting with Jason, Ovid exploits the epic background of this myth so as to reinforce the heroine's transgressive nature. The echoes of Apollonius's story of Medea's love for Jason imply a more aggressive character

than the Greek poet's naive heroine, one who is by no means simply manipulated by the hero.¹⁷ Somewhat surprisingly, Medea openly expresses her desire to be celebrated (*celebrabere* [50]) as the savior of the Greek youth, in particular by a crowd of mothers ("matrum turba"). The source for this detail, as Anderson notes, is Jason's speech to Medea in book 3 of the *Argonautica*.¹⁸ In that passage, the hero, sensing the young woman's agitation, reassures her by stating that he and his companions will spread her fame back in Greece and that their wives and mothers will do the same (990-94).

Ovid's reader familiar with Apollonius's epic, however, would perceive the irony of this allusion. There, Jason's persuasion of the glib Medea includes a somber myth foreshadowing the hero's desertion and the heroine's desire for revenge. For Jason encourages Medea by mentioning the case of Ariadne, who helped Theseus and was later rewarded with the distinction of an honorific constellation in the heavens called Ariadne's Crown (997-1006). But he conceals the fact that the celestial honor was a favor bestowed by Dionysus out of love, not a reward for Ariadne's services to Theseus and the band of Greek heroes on Crete. By the echo of Apollonius here, Medea not only appropriates Jason's words but also points forward to the analogous scene later in book 7, in which Jason does not manipulate Medea but instead does her bidding.

Medea's insistence on receiving an oath before aiding the hero implies that she resists the model of the Colchian princess in the *Argonautica*. In her soliloquy, Medea asserts that Jason will swear an oath to her and that she will compel the gods to be witnesses as a guarantee of his good faith (46-47). In doing so, she recalls the oath that Apollonius's heroine asks of Jason as she takes the drastic step of fleeing from Aeetes' palace before she drugs the serpent guarding the Golden Fleece. There, the frightened young woman reacts to her desperate plight, after she has defied her father by giving Jason the magic potion to conquer the bulls and to encounter the earth-born men. First, Medea pleads with the Argonauts to rescue her: "rusasthe dusammoron" ("Save ill-fated me" [4.83]). Then, she addresses Jason individually and promises to subdue the serpent and obtain the fleece for him. When she asks the hero to honor his promises to her so that she may not become a source of reproach for lack of kin (90-91), Apollonius emphasizes the anguish of the young woman, describing her as "*akêchemenê*" ("grieving" [92]).

Ovid's Medea elicits an oath from Jason much earlier than Apollonius's heroine, before providing any help. In her encounter with Jason in the grove of Hecate, she thus states her demands without diffidence:

quid faciam, video, nec me ignorantia veri
decipiet, sed amor! Servabere munere nostro!
servatus promissa dato! (92-94)

[I see what I am doing, and not ignorance of the truth but love will deceive me!
You will be saved by my service; saved, make your vow!]

The poet then indicates that the hero made a pledge to guarantee his success in overcoming the dangers by invoking three deities: Hecate, the indigenous divinity of the grove, and Medea's grandfather Helios (94-97). By stating the hero's oath in indirect discourse, the poet allows Jason no personal voice and reduces the immediacy of his presence. Whereas Jason in the *Argonautica* is in complete control of his initial meeting with Medea and shows his ability to manipulate the Colchian princess through his clever speech, here Medea dominates.

Ovid reinforces the power of his heroine by a subtle use of imagery in this scene. Whereas Apollonius emphasizes the intervention of Eros after Hera and Athena request the aid of Aphrodite on behalf of Jason (3.6-166), Ovid subtly shifts the focus to Medea herself by eliminating divine agency. Through a simile, however, he alludes to Eros's wounding of Medea in the *Argonautica*. Here, he describes the hero's effect on the young woman when she first sees him in the grove of Hecate:

utque solet ventis alimenta adsumere, quaeque
parva sub inducta latuit scintilla favilla,
crescere et in veteres agitata resurgere vires
sic iam lenis amor, iam quem languere putares,
ut vidit iuvenem, specie praesentis inarsit. (79-83)

[And just as a small spark which was hidden in ashes is accustomed to feed on the breezes and to increase and to take on its former strength when fanned, so now as she saw the youth, the mild love, which you would have thought was already flagging, burst into flame at the appearance of the man in person.]

Ovid once again cleverly adapts the traditional image of fire for sexual passion. His simile recalls Apollonius's description of Medea after she first sees Jason.¹⁹ The Greek poet here describes the young woman's emotions:

And as a poor woman whose job is to spin wool piles up twigs around a blazing brand so that she may kindle a fire at night beneath her roof, when she has woken up very early, and the flame greatly increasing from the little log consumes all the twigs together, so in secret baneful Love, coiling around her heart, blazed. (3.291-97)

Like Apollonius, Ovid contrasts the small size of the ember with the powerful flame erupting from it. But he diminishes the pathos of his predecessor's simile by eliminating its backdrop of a laboring woman who must rise at a very early hour and start a fire in order to perform the work by which she ekes out a living. Ovid does not supply a context within his simile but instead focuses entirely on the fire generated. He thus makes his Medea less human and more like a force of nature than her counterpart in the *Argonautica*. Furthermore, "oulos erôs" ("baneful love") can signify either the psychological force or the god Eros, who has just shot Medea with his bow, and this ambiguity adds to the pathos of Medea's plight. But the dynamic of the plot involves divine manipulation: intent on promoting the hero's cause, Hera and Athena prevail upon Aphrodite to make Medea fall in love with Jason. On the narrative level, then, the Colchian princess is the victim of higher powers working to achieve their own interests. In the *Metamorphoses*, struck by the hero's appearance, Medea finds Jason's face divine ("nec . . . mortalia ora" [87–88]). By alluding to, but at the same time rejecting, divine causality, Ovid further internalizes Medea's passion and suggests her powers to bring about the desired consequences, however dreadful, on her own terms.²⁰

Ovid insinuates a reversal of masculine and feminine roles in Medea's meeting with Jason, in sharp contrast to the analogous scene in the *Argonautica*.²¹ Whereas Jason in the Greek epic dominates the meeting and adroitly manipulates Medea in the grove of Hecate, here he is passive. There, he speaks to the heroine at great length, reassuring her of his sincerity and flattering her (3.975–1007); she, on the other hand, is able to respond only with difficulty after a considerable amount of time has passed (1025). Here, Jason utters no direct speech at all.²² Ovid merely summarizes the hero's request in the briefest terms: "et auxilium submissa voce rogavit / promisitque torum" ("He both asked for help with a hushed voice and promised her marriage" [90–91]). Although grammatically modifying *voce*, the word *submissa* ("hushed," "lowered") adds to the characterization of Jason in Ovid's episode: it reinforces his subordination to Medea and his feminized nature in contrast to a subtly masculinized Medea.

Although Medea in *Metamorphoses* 7 is a late descendant of the heroines of Euripides' *Medea*, Apollonius's *Argonautica*, and even *Heroides* 12, she creates the impression that she is a controlling voice in the manner of the narrator. Medea's echo of *Odes* 1.1, in which Horace expresses a desire for high status in lyric, aligns her with Ovid as poet. Ovid,

of course, makes allusions to other literary texts, but Medea's self-assertive manner suggests her own awareness of her background in literary myth. Even as she elicits sympathy for her plight, the heroine evokes critical moments in the tragic and epic versions of her story. Ovid thus enables Medea to appear simultaneously an innocent ingenue and a powerful, dominating woman. He thereby hints at Medea's usurpation of the powers traditionally reserved for the heroic male. The clever Medea figuratively transforms herself more fully as her story unfolds. She thus comes to symbolize the multiple forms by which metamorphosis may be envisioned in Ovid's poem.

The Flight of Medea the Witch

After Medea applies her skill with drugs to restore Aeson to youth, she then engages in a more sinister use of magic by deceiving the daughters of Pelias with her deliberately ineffective concoction and then murdering the king. Ovid prefaces this section of Medea's story by explaining her motivation: "neve doli cessent" ("so that plots may not cease" [297]). Her concern is thus to sustain her need for trickery rather than to further Jason's dynastic ambitions. Ovid would doubtless have perceived Apollonius's gloss on the name of Medea in the phrase "mêdea kourês" ("the plots of the young woman" [3.826]).²³ He thus suggests the very essence of Medea by pointing to this etymology of her name in Greek, for *dolus* ("trickery") is the Latin equivalent of *mêdos* (plural, *mêdea*).

Medea at this point illustrates the meaning of her name implied in Ovid's etymological pun, for she proceeds to deceive the Peliades, convincing them that her witchcraft will rejuvenate their father by draining the blood of an old sheep and transforming it into a lamb. By pretending to use the same effective magic potion and ritual on Pelias, she gets the women to stab the old king. After she herself completes the murder, Medea flies swiftly from the scene by air. The poet asserts that without her magic dragons ("pennatis serpentibus" [350]), Medea would not have escaped punishment for this hideous crime.

Medea's very means of escape endows this morally flawed character with a special status.²⁴ Aerial flight in the *Metamorphoses*, whether by Phaethon in the chariot of Sol in book 2 or by Daedalus on wings of his own devising in book 8, is a form of liberation from normal human constraints that implies common ground with the creative experience of the poet himself.²⁵ As we will see in chapter 3, Ovid renders Daedalus's

creation of wings highly problematic by connecting his flight in the narrative with the fate of his unfortunate nephew Perdix. Medea's journey from Iolcus to Corinth appears to have had no precedent in prior versions of the myth. The poet's own invention, it is a virtuoso display of geographical and mythical lore that scholars have felt serves little real purpose.²⁶ A close examination of this passage, however, shows that Ovid connects many of the myths mentioned in Medea's flight to thematic concerns and to the unique nature of his epic, especially as it unfolds in the second half.

First of all, the content of several of the myths in this travelogue concerns the loss of children and the response of a parent or, in one case, a grandparent to that loss. Most of these myths are now obscure, but they seem to have had Hellenistic sources. Antoninus Liberalis attributes to Hyginus Alcidas's loss of Ctesylla (368–70) and Hyrie's of Cynus (371–81), and to Boius Eumelus's rash act of killing his son Botres for violating sacrificial procedure that leads to the man's despair (390). The story of the river god Cephissus's lament for his grandson who was transformed into a seal (388–89) is otherwise unattested. In two of these myths, the parent bears either a direct or an indirect responsibility for the death of the child. The reference to Alcidas merits particular consideration. As Medea passes over Carthaea, Ovid refers to *pater* Alcidas about to marvel at the metamorphosis of his daughter into a dove (369). According to Antoninus Liberalis 1, an Athenian named Hermochares tricked a certain Ctesylla into reading aloud an inscription on an apple to the effect that she promised to marry him. Although agreeing to give Hermochares his daughter in marriage, Alcidas violated his oath to the man, who called upon the gods for revenge. As a result, they brought about the young woman's death in childbirth but then transformed her into a dove and called for rites to be instituted in her honor.

The myth of Alcidas has important thematic links with Medea's own actions in Corinth. With his reference to this story about the loss of a child, Ovid does not inform the reader of Alcidas's pain or sense of responsibility for his daughter's death. Instead, he refers to the man's astonishment at her metamorphosis ("miraturus erat" [370]). The poet similarly does not mention Medea's feelings about killing her children and reports the deed obliquely: "sanguine natorum perfunditur impius ensis" ("The impious sword was drenched with the blood of her children" [396]). He only tersely conveys his distance from Medea's dreadful act in a brief statement: "ultraque se male mater Iasonis effugit arma"

("The mother, having badly avenged herself, fled the arms of Jason" [397]).²⁷

The poet, furthermore, ignores an element in literary versions of the two myths with socio-religious implications. In the myth of Alcidas, the institution of a ritual to commemorate the unfortunate young woman who paid the price for her father's violation of an oath also suggests the eventual outcome of Medea's crime: at the end of Euripides' tragedy, the heroine herself tells Jason that she will establish annual rites to atone for the blood guilt (1381–83). In his brief reference to this myth, Ovid keeps the human and moral issues under the surface, though his contemporary reader would presumably have been aware of the details in Nicander's account.

The flight narrative hints at the morally problematic nature of Medea's witchcraft. Here, Ovid describes Medea's passage over Rhodes:

Phoebeamque Rhodon et Ialysios Telchinas
quorum oculos ipso vitiantes omnia visu
Iuppiter exosus fraternis subdidit undis. (365–67)

[Rhodes belonging to Phoebus, and the Telchines, dwellers in Ialysus. Hating the eyes of those men who spoiled all things with their very gaze, Jupiter hid them under his brother's waves.]

By the epithet *Phoebeam*, the poet calls attention to the patronage of Rhodes by the sun god Helios. That divinity is the grandfather of Medea, a fact which Apollonius emphasizes when the heroine seeks refuge with her aunt Circe after murdering her brother Apsyrtus, for the sorceress recognizes the young woman by her flashing eyes, a characteristic of the race of Helios (4.725–29). Like the Telchines, Medea is capable of bewitching with her brilliant eyes those whom she loathes.²⁸

Ovid's reference to witchcraft connects both the Telchines and Medea to a debate about poetics. In his preface to the *Aetia*, Callimachus singles out the Telchines as his literary enemies, hostile critics who carp at him for not producing long works.²⁹ Responding with disdain for these opinionated backbiters, the Greek poet defends his relatively short poems by reference to their quality: they are all the "sweeter" for being carefully constructed, in contrast to the unpolished work of continuous narrative espoused by the Telchines (frag. 1.1–20).

The Medea section is by far the longest continuous narrative on a single character in the *Metamorphoses*. Does Ovid paradoxically imply that it threatens to expand into a virtual epic by itself? The narrative recounting Medea's magic with Aeson is unusually lengthy (179–293),

filled with details about the setting, Medea's invocation of the gods associated with magic, the arcane herbs sought for the potion, and the procedure of rejuvenation itself. Medea's deception of Pelias's daughters then mirrors the previous narrative in the details of her magic, though in a more abbreviated form (300–356). **The poet does not stop Medea's story until the moment that her cunning use of magic fails. At that point, he dismisses her with only a single line: "effugit illa necem nebulis per carmina motis"** ("She escaped death in a cloud created by her incantation" [424]). Fleeing unceremoniously from Athens into an undefined exile, she disappears from the poem for good. Much like the Telchines in Callimachus's *Aetia*, Medea thus symbolizes a narrative, motivated by an obsession with cunning and the arcane, that threatens to proliferate indefinitely.

Immediately after his reference to the Telchines, however, Ovid suggests his affiliation with Callimachus and Hellenistic poetics in his reference to the next two myths. The story of Alcidamas, recounted by Nicander, incorporates the motif of an apple inscribed with a message binding the reader of it to an amorous relationship with its author. Like Ovid in *Heroides* 20 and 21, Nicander presumably imitated Callimachus's story of Acontius and Cydippe in the *Aetia* involving the motif of a similarly inscribed apple, which causes a young woman unwittingly to commit herself to the author of the words.³⁰ The poet then mentions the story of Cynus and Hyrie, a quintessentially Hellenistic tale elaborated in some detail rather than summarized in a very sketchy form.

Ovid's account of the myth of Cynus and his mother is in fact eleven lines (371–81), more than three times the length of each of the other sixteen myths mentioned in this travelogue. It involves a handsome youth who orders a suitor named Phylus to perform the extraordinarily difficult tasks of subduing wild creatures, such as vultures, a lion, and a bull; when Phylus in disgust at Cynus's coldness refuses to hand over the bull, the youth jumps off a cliff and, as he falls, is metamorphosed into a swan. His mother Hyrie is so filled with grief that, as she weeps, she dissolves into a lake, which then takes its name from her.

Ovid's version differs from Nicander's as reported by Antoninus Liberalis principally in the name of Cynus's mother and in her metamorphosis. In Antoninus Liberalis 12, the woman is called Thyrie and is transformed into a bird rather than a lake.³¹ Although it is possible that Ovid found his variant on the name in some other source, there is no evidence that he did not make the change himself. The difference in

the initial letter ("h" as opposed to "th") correlates with the change in the metamorphosis in Ovid's text.

The poet here seems to suggest a connection between the name Hyrie and water. The Greek verb *oureo*, "to make water," which lacks the initial aspirate, is similar.³² Another name for this lake in antiquity was Hydra, which is also connected linguistically with water (from *hudo*) and might have provided the poet an incentive for changing Thyrie to Hyrie.³³ Furthermore, the Latin verb *urinor* (or *urino*) may have suggested to Ovid a clever double play: since it means "to plunge into water," a proper name related to this verb would not only conjure up an association with water but would also recall the woman's act of jumping into the lake in Nicander, which then brought about her transformation into a swan. Ovid in a typically Hellenistic manner shows how a minute change in orthography can effect a linguistic metamorphosis that substantively alters the meaning of the text.

Ovid's use of the myth of Cynus here draws attention to the poetics of the *Metamorphoses*. The youth's metamorphosis into a swan is itself suggestive of Callimachean poetics.³⁴ This story not only involves the transformation of the youth and his mother, but also suggests the instability of a name itself as the marker of a unique and meaningful identity. As the second of three myths relating the transformation of a Cynus into a swan, this one combines the predominant elements of the other two: the erotic in Cynus's relationship with Phaethon (2.364–80) and the heroic in Cynus's encounter with Achilles (12.73–147). The story of Cynus and Phylus is an odd integration of the two motifs, serving as a parody in miniature of the theme of heroic labor motivated by love. It foreshadows Ovid's humorous treatment of numerous tales interweaving the heroic and the erotic in the last half of the poem, including the Calydonian hunt that centers on Meleager's passion for Atalanta in book 8 and Achelous's contest with Hercules for Deianira in book 9, which will be discussed in chapter 3.

Ovid's summary amusingly deflates underlying epic pretensions. The myths of Hercules' labors provide an ironic model, for Cynus plays the role of Eurystheus vis-à-vis Hercules as he imposes on Phylus the task of bringing back vultures, a lion, and a bull (373–74). In Antoninus Liberalis's summary, Hercules even provides help to Phylus in subduing the bull.³⁵ But the larger issues of divine hostility and political power inherent in the Hercules myth are lacking in this personal love story. Furthermore, the language of high emotions here evokes humor rather than empathy. Phylus becomes angry (*iratus* [375]), refusing to persist

in his efforts when the return of his love is too meager (*stricto* meaning "pulled in," "tight" [375]); Cynus, in turn, is outraged (*indignatus* [377]). The poet reduces the behavior of the arrogant lover to mere petulance, for Cynus cries out bluntly, "cupies dare" ("You will wish to give it" [377]). One might have expected a degree of eloquence in the last words spoken by the son of Apollo as well as of Hyrie, especially since this offspring of the god of poetry in his metamorphosed state produced the soulful swan song. Cynus's final act seems too abrupt and inadequately motivated to elicit pity. With no further verbal response on his part, this haughty youth simply throws himself off a cliff.

Ovid's summary of the Cynus myth here is a distillation of his narrative technique in recounting the story of Meleager and Atalanta and the Calydonian boar hunt in book 8, the myth of Hercules and Achelous in book 9, and the Trojan War in books 12 and 13. Heroic activity in those narratives is similarly deflated as it is interwoven incongruously with erotic elements.³⁶ Parody or caricature is the predominant mode. In the Calydonian hunt, for instance, Theseus dissuades his companion Pirithous from attempting to shoot at the boar by using language of love: "cui 'procul' Aegides 'o me mihi carior' inquit / 'pars animae consistere meae!'" ("To him the son of Aegeus said, 'Stand far away, oh dearer to me than myself, part of my very soul!'" [8.405-6]).³⁷

Even without an intrusion of the erotic, heroic endeavor elicits humor more than awe. Achilles' fight with the warrior Cynus, a son of Neptune, is rather an endurance test. With considerable impatience, the Greek hero is forced to undergo a variety of postures and gyrations before finding a means of snuffing out his enemy's life.³⁸ Frustrated that four spear shots fail to penetrate Cynus's chest, Achilles jumps from his chariot and pummels the man's head. Then, after Cynus trips over a rock, he swings him around and thrusts him to the ground; with knees on his chest, he strangles the man with his helmet straps (12.96-144). The metamorphosis of Cynus into a swan then serves an unexpected purpose. As he is about to strip the dead warrior, Achilles finds the armor empty (145-47): with no body as a war prize, the great Greek hero is deprived of concrete proof of his valor and a source of material gain from any ransom for the body.³⁹

Ovid hints at a defining characteristic of his poem, the element of chance, immediately following the myth of Cynus and Hyrie. The poet specifies that the next place Medea passes over is in close proximity to Lake Hyrie and the valley of Cynus: "adiacet his Pleuron, in qua trepidantibus alis / Ophias effugit natorum vulnera Combe" ("Near them

lies Pleuron, in which Combe, the daughter of Ophius, escaped wounds from her sons on quivering wings" [382-83]). Since nothing is known of the myth of Combe beyond what Ovid says here, it is difficult to assess its significance in the context.

The site is perhaps mentioned principally because the name itself reinforces the fact of its proximity to Lake Hyrie. The word *pleuron* in Greek in fact means "ribs" or "side." The name, functioning grammatically as the subject, is then explained by its verb *adiacet* ("lies beside"). This place happens to be near a more significant one for the poet. Ovid's play with the meaning of the name here points to the element of chance as a governing principle in this epic. Indeed, many events recounted in the *Metamorphoses*, as the poet observes at various points, occur fortuitously at the same time or in succession.⁴⁰ Eschewing any significance of a providential nature in such collocations, Ovid exploits the literary potential of chance occurrences as a means of moving his narrative forward.

Elsewhere in the travelogue of Medea's flight from Iolcus, Ovid alludes specifically to his own narrative of the Trojan War as a subject bereft of heroic meaning. Here, as the witch passes over the Troad, he singles out a grave: "quaque pater Corythi parva tumulatus harena est" ("and where the father of Corythus was buried with a small amount of sand" [361]). As Anderson notes, this line refers to Paris and his degrading burial, totally lacking the magnificence that a hero of royal stock would expect.⁴¹ Ovid in his narrative of the Trojan War in books 12 and 13 dismisses Paris as a warrior but mentions him three times in a cynical manner. At the beginning of book 12, in referring to the honor of a cenotaph for Priam's son Aesacus, he records the absence of Paris, "who afterward brought a long war to his homeland along with the wife he had stolen [*raptā*]" (5). In the contest over the arms of Achilles in book 13, Ulysses also disparages the man when he recalls going to Troy as an ambassador to retrieve Helen: "Paris, his brothers, and his comrades in theft [*qui rapuere sub illo*] hardly kept their wicked hands away" (202-3). Finally, when Neptune can no longer bear the destruction of Troy and sends Apollo to take on Achilles, the god discovers Paris in the midst of carnage shooting arrows here and there at a few insignificant Greeks ("rara per ignotos spargentem cernit Achivos / tela Parim" [600-601]).⁴²

The poet here does not even name Paris but instead refers to him obliquely in a way that draws attention to the Trojan's shame. For this son of Priam was exposed at birth lest he fulfill a dreadful prophecy

that he would be a source of destruction to Troy but survived by chance; raised as a shepherd, he later wed the nymph Oenone and had a child by her named Corythus.⁴³ This Corythus goes unmentioned in the surviving accounts of the Trojan War, though his reputed death at the hands of his own father reinforces the propriety of Ovid's allusion to Paris's unheroic burial here.⁴⁴ When he later describes the fate of Achilles' body, Ovid implicitly recalls Paris. The "parva urna" (614) that contains Achilles' ashes is analogous to the "parva harena" covering Paris's remains.

The implied comparison between Paris and Achilles is revealing. The poet pays lip service at least to Achilles' reputation as the greatest of all heroes. He contrasts the disparity between the hero's physical remains and his fame: although his ashes hardly fill a small urn, Achilles survives through his glory, which fills the world (615–17). Yet by immediately asserting that Achilles' very shield served to incite strife (*bella* [621]), Ovid connects that hero inherently to violence. In the contest over his arms, as we will see in detail in chapter 5, Ajax and Ulysses both stake a claim to having had the closer relation to the great hero in their individual efforts to win. Although the true successor to his cousin on the basis of martial skills, Ajax cannot win a war of wits against Ulysses and takes his own life. Even as a ghost, Achilles perpetuates bloodshed by demanding the sacrifice of Polyxena to satisfy his need for honor (13.441–48). If his skepticism about heroism undercuts Achilles' glory, the poet does not deny that hero's power. By contrast, Paris's total lack of merit as a warrior wins him only silence or open disdain in Ovid's text.

Immediately after this reference to Paris, Medea proceeds on her journey in the vicinity (the poet does not name another geographical area but instead refers only obliquely to a metamorphosis). Here, the place itself responded to an animal transformation: "et quos Maera novo latratu terruit agros" ("and the fields which Maera frightened with her strange barking" [362]). Commentators note that this Maera is otherwise unknown but point to an analogue in Ovid's account of Hecuba's metamorphosis into a dog: after the body of her beloved son Polydorus washes up on the shore, Hecuba in her inconsolable grief seeks revenge on the treacherous Thracian king Polymestor by gouging the man's eyes out; when the king's followers try to subdue her, she is transformed into a dog (13.537–78). Rather than just offering a brief parallel to a more elaborate myth, the reference to Maera specifically makes an allusion to Hecuba's metamorphosis, by which Ovid continues to anticipate obliquely his Trojan War narrative.

The key, I believe, lies in an etymological play on the name Maera. The only other mythological character known as Maera is the dog that revealed to Erigone the location of the corpse of her father Icarus, murdered by drunken shepherds to whom he had given the gift of wine. After the young woman commits suicide by hanging herself from a tree over her father's body, the protagonists in the myth are honored by being metamorphosed into stars, with Maera becoming Sirius.⁴⁵ Appropriate to its association with the Dog Star, the name Maera (or Maira) is related to the Greek verb *marmairô*, "to sparkle."⁴⁶ In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid creates his own etymology for Hecuba after she is transformed into a dog. Here, he recounts the fate of Hecuba in her new form: "vetrumque diu memor illa malorum / tum quoque Sithonios ululavit maesta per agros" ("And then, too, for a long time, mindful of her old evils, she howled sadly over the Sithonian fields" [13.570–71]).⁴⁷ Hecuba is the Maera who evokes terror in those who hear her strange barking, for her sorrow drives her to howl through the landscape. She has become in essence *maesta*: the adjective, related to the verb *maereo*, "to grieve," explains the name Maera, suggesting the overwhelming grief that she expresses in her new physical form through howling (*ululavit*).

In addition to supplying his version of the Trojan War, Ovid in Hellenistic fashion also alludes to another major section of the second half of the *Metamorphoses*, the narrative of Orpheus in book 10. The poet in fact recalls the death of his great singer near the very beginning of this passage when he mentions Medea's flight over the Aegean along the coast of Asia Minor. After stating that the heroine passed over Pitane, he refers more allusively to the next site: "factaque de saxo longi simulacra draconis" ("and the image of the long serpent made from rock" [358]). As Anderson notes, Ovid here refers to the island of Lesbos, which is situated opposite Pitane and was the scene of the petrification later described in book 11.⁴⁸

This transformation involves the great bard Orpheus. After the Thracian women have mutilated the body of the singer whom they despised for scorning them, Orpheus's severed head, still retaining the power of song, washes up on the shore of Lesbos; it would then have been the prey of a snake if Apollo had not turned the creature to stone (50–60). There, Ovid suggests the frightening aspect of this hideous creature even when rendered harmless, for the snake became stone just as it was preparing to devour Orpheus's head: "in lapidem rictus serpentis apertus / congelat et patulos, ut erant, indurat hiatus" ("And he froze the serpent's open mouth into stone and hardened the gaping jaws just as

they were" [59–60]). Here, the description of the snake is more abbreviated. But the poet creates a coiling effect in his description of the calicified snake by structuring the verse with a synchysis, in which the two sets of adjectives and nouns are in interlocking order.

The immediate context provides no indication of the poet's reason for alluding to Orpheus's fate. The travelogue, however, contains at least one myth that points to the content of the narrative devoted to Orpheus's songs in book 10. The poet thus refers to Medea's passage over Cyllene: "in qua cum matre Menephron / concubiturus erat saevarum more ferarum" ("on which Menephron was about to lie with his mother in the manner of savage beasts" [386–87]). The theme of incest in fact looms large in Orpheus's songs: the tale of Myrrha's love for her father Cinyras (300–502) is by far the longest in that sequence.⁴⁹

Because of the scandalous nature of the subject matter, Orpheus prefaces his account with an apologetic address to his audience: he urges fathers and daughters to stay away or to disbelieve or to be assured that the crime was punished (300–303). Orpheus thus appears to justify this story through the moral tone of his narration, by focusing on the young woman and underplaying the self-interest of the father.⁵⁰ Myrrha pays the penalty by suffering banishment and then metamorphosis just as she is in labor with her child. Cinyras plays the role of a morally outraged victim as he draws his sword and drives his daughter out of the kingdom. But this character is problematic, if not technically culpable: while his wife participates in a fertility ritual to Ceres in which she is prohibited from sexual activity, he seeks sexual pleasure with a young girl who, he is told, is the same age as his own daughter (431–41). Ovid's reference here to Menephron's incestuous relations as *saevarum more ferarum* would seem to point to Myrrha, who in Orpheus's narrative tries to justify her desire for her father by analogy with the sexual habits of cows, horses, goats, and birds (324–29).⁵¹ The speciousness of her argument, however, does not register with the crazed mind that Orpheus depicts, and Myrrha proceeds on her perverted course.

The narrative of Medea's flight from Iolcus contains much material that is difficult to assess, both because of Ovid's compression of these myths and because of the lack of external support for several of them. But it is clear that the poet suggests a complex vision through his evocation of the themes of loss and suffering. He alludes, for instance, to varied levels of responsibility for the death of a child and reactions to that loss by a parent. As I mentioned, Alcidas is indirectly the cause of Ctesylla's death. Eumelus himself, however, kills Botres in anger over

the boy's inappropriate consumption of a sacrificial animal, and his remorse is implied in the word *lugentis* (390). If the former myth hints at the callousness of Medea in Ovid's narrative, the latter has a parallel in the rash decision of Althaea in book 8 to end Meleager's life. There, she is enraged that her two brothers have been killed in an argument with the hero over giving the spoils of the Calydonian boar hunt to Atalanta. Although wavering over the conflicting obligations of piety, Althaea in the end chooses to privilege her brothers over her son. But, in despair, she commits suicide by the sword (531–32).

Preceding a major infusion of material derived from the heroic tradition, the imaginative travelogue that Ovid creates here through his surrogate's flight is a microcosm of his revisionist approach to epic. Ovid avoids the fate of becoming a version of the Telchines, who not only exploit magic for negative purposes but also symbolize a preference for long-winded narrative on a heroic subject. By contrast, the allusions to Hellenistic poetics in this section convey Ovid's light, witty approach to his mythical material.

Medea's flight encapsulates the poet's rejection of traditional heroism and his embrace of more unconventional themes for his own epic. Ovid thus implies the emptiness of the heroic ethic by alluding to the myths of Paris and Hecuba, which reflect problematically on the significance of burial and on the effect of war on the defeated. The narrative of books 12 and 13 develops this skeptical approach to the war and its aftermath from a variety of perspectives, through parody of traditional heroic exploits and repeated illustrations of the mechanical brutality of war.⁵²

Ovid hints at the major theme of incest through the myth of Menephron. He develops this subject in the second half of the poem not only through Orpheus's story of Myrrha's incestuous love for her father but also through his extended tale of Byblis's passion for her brother Caunus, whom she tried to seduce by resorting to the elegiac strategy of a love letter (9.450–665). Ovid also incorporates a more prominent role for the artist, whose failures he explores as fully as his talents. His allusion to Orpheus here points forward to his complex portrayal of the archetypal poet in books 10 and 11. There, Ovid fully reveals the paradox of the bard's existence: on the one hand, his sublime powers keep his audience spellbound but, on the other, the antagonism that he arouses highlights his precarious position in the world outside the narrow confines of art. As we will see in chapter 4, Orpheus's narratives reflect an insidious form of self-absorption.

Medea's flight on the magical chariot, recounted in a clever variation on the geographical excursus, thus serves as a dynamic image of the poet's own narrative in the second half of the poem. At the beginning of book 7 she seems to take control and metamorphose the earlier versions of her monumental mythical character, but in her flight from crime she further reflects the etymology of her name with its connection to cunning. The problematic heroine symbolizes Ovid's own production of clever plots that subvert traditional mores and undermine conventional notions of order on all levels.

73. Sharrock 1991, 36, noting that Narcissus is compared to a statue of Parian marble, comments on the similar symbolism of the two episodes: "ivory and marble, snowy white and red blood all feature in an opposition between purity and sex." Given her focus on "womanufacture," however, she opts not to develop the connections. Sharrock also, esp. 41–45, points to numerous elegiac elements in the Pygmalion episode, such as the comparison of the mistress to a statue, the use of blandishments, and the offer of modest gifts. Her purpose is to reveal "gendered power relations" in the ways by which both Pygmalion and the elegist are enamored with the object of art, bring inert material to life, and ultimately create the object of desire; she is, therefore, more interested in the positive rather than negative aspects of the sculptor.

74. Segal 1998, 17–18, calling attention to the role of Venus in transforming the statue into a real woman, notes that the happy ending does not resolve the ambivalence of Pygmalion's actions. As I discuss in chapter 4, Orpheus is a complex internal narrator whose views are frequently undermined by the text.

75. On Pygmalion's actions as well as their long-range consequences, see Janan 1988, 124–28.

76. See Farrell 1992, 235–68, for a discussion of this episode focusing on its generic inclusiveness, which contributes to the ludicrousness of Polyphemus's song of seduction.

77. Milowicki 1996, 155–66, also observes that Polyphemus is a parody of Narcissus but does not connect the two with Apollo's prophecy in the *Ars*. In his brief remarks on the connection between the two episodes, he notes that the shepherd has his own Tiresias in the form of Telemus (13.770–77) and comments on the echo of *noverit* with *novi* as implying "serious dementia."

78. For poetic implications of his last major inclusion of elegy in the poem, see Myers 1994a, 225–50. Myers explores the elegiac model of the story of Pomona and Vertumnus in Propertius 4.2, which was itself influenced by Callimachus: the episode points forward to the poet's aetiological emphasis in the Roman material in the last books and suggests the importance that Ovid attaches to crossing generic boundaries in the *Metamorphoses*.

Chapter 2. The Metamorphic Medea

1. See Pucci 1980, 94–96, on Medea's invocation to Hecate as her helper (*sunergos* [396]) after she reflects on killing her enemies by being clever (*sophia*), which she considers the "straight way," and using poisons (384–85). Medea's use of "straight" here is highly ambiguous since the word is normally associated with "truth, justice, and whatever is free from manipulation and trickery."

2. See Boedeker 1997, 127–48, especially on metaphors that are developed through the perspectives of various characters on Medea and that are given additional resonance through allusions to the voyage of the Argonauts.

3. For a recent discussion of the increasingly negative portrayal of Medea's connection to magic from books 3 to 4, see Clare 2002, 240–60, along with extensive bibliography. Clare reflects on the contrast developed between Orpheus and Medea. Whereas the former exerts a power to charm nature for benevolent purposes through his connection to divinities and other forces of order, the latter aggressively binds nature to her purposes, ultimately threatening the very fabric of the universe through her association with chthonic powers.

4. We have only testimonials from a few ancient authors, including Quintilian and Tacitus, that Ovid in fact wrote a *Medea*. Holzberg 2002, 34–36, pointing to the paucity of fragments of the play, believes that Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 10.1.98, does not really make a strong case for Ovidian authorship of the *Medea*: the Roman's statement that Ovid could have accomplished so much if he had only reined in his talent suggests that the tragedy is far too different from the poet's other works. One might claim, however, that Ovid was always intent on showing his versatility.

5. Although the consensus seems to be that *Heroides* 12 is genuine, not all scholars accept its authenticity. Knox 1986b, 207–23, states the case against Ovidian authorship. Although a definitive answer may not be possible, Barchiesi 1993, 343–44, points to the highly self-conscious nature of *Heroides* 12 as a literary work; he observes that the last two lines refer to divine possession (213), suggestive of the tragedy ascribed to Ovid, and to something greater (*maius* [214]), suggestive of a tragic mode.

6. Anderson 1972, 262, for instance, considers the skilled woman who rejuvenates Jason's father Aeson too remote from the young girl who speaks her anguished soliloquy and, 275, emphasizes that Medea is motivated to kill Pelias because of her desire to indulge in trickery. Rosner-Siegel, 1982, 231–43, however, finds that the Medea narrative is sustained by a "psychological metamorphosis" in which the young woman's love for Jason is short lived and her interest in magic increases, first for beneficial and then for malicious purposes. Medea's brutal murder of her own children thus appears as a natural consequence of her progressive change in character rather than strictly as a means of punishing Jason for his betrayal of her. Binroth-Bank 1997, 17–35, comments on the psychological state of the heroine, with references to Euripides' heroine. Newlands, 1997, 178–208, on the other hand, believes that Ovid juxtaposes the love-struck young girl and the experienced witch in order to expose inconsistencies in the myths of Medea: after sympathetically portraying the young woman's struggle over her passion for Jason, the poet fills the lengthy account of the witch with humorously exhaustive details of her magic rituals. She observes that Ovid in this episode underplays issues central to Euripides' *Medea* (marriage, betrayal, and the status of women) and displaces them onto other marriage tales in the central section, such as those of Procne, Philomela, and Tereus, so as to explore a female type whose passion is so intense that she violates cultural values and asserts her independence from conventional male authority.

7. In particular, that of Scylla (8.44–80), Byblis (9.474–516), and Myrrha (10.320–55).

8. See Anderson 1972, however, for ironic resonances in Medea's speech that Ovid would expect his reader to catch without much trouble. For example, on 40, Anderson notes that Medea's hesitation seems less motivated by filial piety than by self-interest, and, on 53, he observes that she has a ready answer to what appears to be a tormented question about leaving her family and country.

9. Anderson 1972, on 59–61, not only cites the echo here of *Odes* 1.1.36 but also notes that Medea's phrase "dis cara ferar" echoes *Odes* 1.31.13 ("dis carus ipsis"), where Horace ironically describes the merchant as an antitype of the poet himself. Anderson does not, however, associate Medea's words with poetic powers but instead connects them to the heroine's psychology, regarding them as fulfilling her amorous desires.

10. Wise 1982, 16–25, also observes that the young heroine envisions a relationship with Jason based on her own fantasy, enlivening the picture of the potential dangers of a sea voyage with Jason. Wise focuses on the sections dealing with Medea's witchcraft, especially her incantations, pointing out that the more experienced witch employs not only powers of incantation but also persuasive skills with the daughters of Pelias. Noting that the poet highlights his own powers of language in his riveting description of Jason's contest with the bulls as he simultaneously exposes Medea's failure to grasp the irony of her fears since the outcome is predetermined, Wise concludes that Ovid undermines his heroine's creative powers.

11. Hinds 1993, 9–47, discusses Medea's odd mention in *Heroides* 12 of traveling past both the Symplegades and Scylla on the trip to Greece with Jason, which would not be possible from Colchis. Later, in the *Metamorphoses* passage, the poet has Medea allude to the confusion of the Symplegades with the Planctae, which Hinds notes was a common error in antiquity; through her phrase "nescioqui . . . montes" (62–63), Ovid has Medea correct the earlier passage by suggesting her fear of the Planctae rather than the Symplegades, which were already fixed permanently when Jason went through them en route to Colchis.

12. See Bömer 1977, ad loc.

13. Newlands 1997, 182–83, finding the expression here "disarming," appropriately observes that Medea's intention is to help rather than to cause harm.

14. Ovid in *Heroides* 12 clearly has Medea allude to the literal fire that will soon consume the Corinthian princess by playing on the figurative erotic meaning of the flame: "flebit et ardores vincet adusta meos!" ("She will weep, and being burned, will surpass my flames!" [180]). Ovid's reader familiar with the *Heroides* would presumably recall Medea's ominous pun there, particularly because it is followed by the manifest threat that no enemy of hers will go unpunished as long as she has a sword, fire, or poison (181–82).

15. Anderson 1972, on 32, also cites Dido's reproach to Aeneas in Vergil (4.365–66), a text that Ovid may have in the background here.

16. See Otis 1964, 72–78 and 85–90, on the influence of Apollonius's characterization of Medea on Dido, especially through epic similes and motifs of sleeplessness and in her thoughts of suicide and use of sorcery; he concludes that Vergil brings out both the emotional and the moral implications of his heroine's state of mind on her actions much more than his predecessor.

17. Apollonius's Medea, however, is not uncomplicated, even in book 3. The poet plays her against Homer's Nausikaa, for instance, through allusions to the *Odyssey*. See the commentary of Hunter 1989. On the discordant aspects of Medea in contrast to the social integration of Nausikaa, see Pavlock 1990, 51–63.

18. Anderson 1972, on 50, notes a general allusion to Apollonius here but emphasizes the source for both poets in Euripides' play; in Euripides, Jason reminds Medea that he was responsible for bringing her to Greece, where she not only experienced culture but also received honor.

19. Haupt, Ehwald, and Von Albrecht 1966, on 79–83, note that the simile refers to Apollonius 3.291–95.

20. Newlands 1997, 185, observes that the gods play no role in setting the love affair in motion and have no concern with Jason's or Medea's interests. She furthermore notes that Ovid attributes Jason's especially handsome appearance in this scene to chance, in contrast to Apollonius, who has Hera enhance Jason's looks for the meeting with Medea. In that way as well, Ovid has eliminated the divine apparatus that helps to make sense of human events.

21. Smith 1997, 99, in a discussion of shame as a moral force for Ovid's and Apollonius's heroines, notes that *aidôs* does not fail Medea in the *Argonautica* until her meeting with the hero in the grove has taken place (3.1015–21) but that *pudor* in the *Metamorphoses* has already lapsed from the beginning of the encounter. I would emphasize, however, that Apollonius's Medea undergoes a process by which the poet shows the disintegration of her *aidôs* in part through the symbolic interplay of the colors red and white. See Pavlock 1990, 56–57 and 61–62.

22. Contrast *Heroides* 12, in which Medea, reminding Jason of his promises, especially his pledge of marriage to her alone, actually quotes his words to her in the grove of Diana (73–88). She makes his flattery at that time clear: he hoped, for instance, that she would not look down on (*dedignare* [83]) a Pelasgian suitor. Medea also indicates that he in fact said much more to her than she actually records: "et quota pars haec sunt!" ("And how small a portion [of your words] are these!" [89]).

23. Hunter 1989, on 825–27, notes the etymological play and calls attention to a similar punning with the verb *mêdeto* at 3.1137, which adds a twist by making Medea the agent of Hera's designs. Hunter also observes that the punning on Medea's name goes back at least to Pindar, *Pythian* 4.27, where Medea refers to herself with the phrase "mêdesin . . . amois." The pun on Medea's name in

Pythian 4 has in fact been acknowledged for some time; Gildersleeve 1885, ad loc., observes that Medea is not averse to alluding to her own name.

24. Later, in *Tristia* 3.8, Ovid uses Medea's flight from Corinth on the dragon chariot as an image for his own release from the constraints of exile at Tomi: "nunc ego Medae vellem frenare dracones, / quos habuit fugiens arce, Corinthae, tua" ("Now I would wish to rein Medea's serpents, which she had as she fled from your citadel, Corinth" [3–4]). The poet goes on to mention Daedalus's wings as well as Medea's chariot as a way of retrieving what matters to him most: his homeland, his friends, and especially his wife (5–8).

25. Wise 1977, 44–59, considers flight as an analogue to poetry through the vision afforded by the aerial experience and through the artistic nature of the specific means of flight, in particular the chariot of the Sun or the wings of the artisan Daedalus. Wise acknowledges, however, that the agents of flight in Ovid's epic have only limited success in their vision and art, in contrast to the poet himself.

26. Wilkinson 1955, 235, simply indicates that Ovid uses this passage to imply that he "knows many more stories than he tells." Otis 1970, 173, dismisses the section on Medea's wanderings as "quite uninspired." Hill 1992a, on 350–401, states that Ovid includes Medea's journey "to insinuate a host of obscure metamorphoses."

27. The alliterative effect of the collocations of *male* and *mater* may reinforce the more overt, though brief, criticism of Medea here. Segal 1982, 241–46, discussing similar punning on Medea's name in Seneca's tragedy on this heroine's infanticide, including *monstrum* as well as *malum*, perceives a "tension between monstrosity and maternity as the central dynamic force of Medea's tragedy." Segal observes that Seneca implicitly has Medea transform herself from *mater* to *monstrum* through language so as to secure revenge on Jason and adds a visual image of her state as she is conveyed by the chariot drawn by serpent monsters at the end.

28. In *Argonautica* 4, Medea reveals the awesome powers of her eyes in destroying the giant Talus, guardian of Crete, when he tries to prevent the Argonauts from landing (1668–72).

29. Cameron 1995, 259–60, discusses Callimachus's association of the Telchines with *baskaniê* ("envy") in the prologue of the *Aetia*, where the poet refers to them as the "baneful race of envy" (17), and compares the prologue of the *Hymn to Apollo*, where *phthonos* occurs three times, referring to the envy that plagues the poet. Noting that later sources do not account for the Telchines' connection with malignancy, Cameron cites Strabo 14.2.7; there, the Telchines are said to have been bewitched by rivals who envied them for their skill as artisans.

30. Papathomopoulos 1968, 71–72, n.11, indicates the likelihood that Nicander alluded to Callimachus's "Acontius and Cydippe" because of clear evidence of the latter's influence in the *Heteroioumena*, especially with respect to aetiology, but also acknowledges the possibility that Antoninus Liberalis as a

learned grammarian may have made the association. Forbes Irving 1992 [1990], 232–33, asserts that Nicander would have known that Callimachus's Acontius story featured not only the motif of the inscribed apple but also the father's failed effort to marry the girl to another man; he also notes that Ioulis is the home of Acontius as well as Ctesylla. Observing that the motif of the apple here becomes redundant because Alcidas himself makes an oath that drives the plot of the story, Forbes Irving suggests that Nicander combined elements of Callimachus's episode with a local *aetion*.

31. Forbes Irving 1992 [1990], 257, notes that Lake Conope, where swans still gather, was called Kykneia in Antoninus Liberalis. Claiming that Ovid would not have had the knowledge to correct Nicander and was therefore presumably not responsible for the change in name of the woman (and the lake) from Thyrie to Hyrie, Forbes Irving suggests that the poet may have followed the account by Areus, cited by Antoninus as a source along with Nicander. In my opinion, however, Ovid's well demonstrated inclination for linguistic play could easily account for his making this alteration.

32. In *Fasti* 5, Ovid explains the origin of the constellation Orion through a pun on the verb *oureo*: when a poor old man named Hyrieus provided them hospitality, Jupiter, Neptune, and Mercury reciprocated by giving the childless widower an infant produced from the ground on which they had urinated. Hyrieus then called the boy Urion, later changed to Orion, from the circumstances of his birth (5.495–536). Ovid here may recall the two proper names, Urion and Hyrieus, attributing to both the connotation of water. Clearly, the etymologizing is not linguistically sound, but it does have an aurally suggestive value. Palmer 1988 [1954], 229–30, comments on the "inherently unstable" nature of the glottal aspirate in Latin; he notes that some Latin words related to Greek roots without aspiration acquired an "unetymological *h*" (e.g., Latin *haurio* and Greek *auō*).

33. Strabo 10.2.22 says that this lake, situated between Pleuron and the city Arsinoe, was then known as Lysimachia but used to be called Hydra.

34. On Callimachus's use of the swan as an image for his own nature as a refined poet and the assimilation of this motif into Latin poetry, see Donohue 1993, 18–29.

35. In Antoninus Liberalis 12, Phylus appeals to Hercules for help, and in response the latter causes two bulls to appear, butting and finally thrusting each other to the ground. Phylus is thereby able to grab one by the leg and to drag it away to the altar of Jupiter. Hercules himself urges the youth not to accede to any more of Cynus's commands.

36. Segal 1999, 312–18, has a useful discussion of the erotic elements intruded into the Meleager episode, including an amusing interplay between elegiac and epic language and style. Meleager's traditionally heroic uncles, for instance, employ erotic language ("captus amore" [435]) in reproaching their nephew, and Meleager himself is characterized by the erotic metaphor of

flames (325). But he then assumes a more heroic stance suggestive of Odysseus with Nausikaa by asserting the happy state of the man whom Atalanta chooses as her husband.

37. Anderson 1972, on 405–7, refers to Theseus's plea as "words of passionate friendship." Ovid is probably playing on the two traditions of heroic friendship and erotic attachments in the reference to the dear one as part of his own soul. Anderson notes as background two passages in Horace's *Odes* in which the lyric poet refers to dear ones: 1.3.8 ("animae dimidium meae"), addressed to Vergil and *Odes* 2.17.5 ("meae . . . partem animae"), addressed to Maecenas. The precise nature of Horace's relations to the great Latin epic poet and to his magnificent patron cannot be known for certain. But, as Putnam 1986, 141, observes on *Odes* 4.7, the situation of Theseus's imprisonment with his dear (*caro*) friend in the underworld, juxtaposed to the non-erotic relationship of Diana and Hippolytus (25–28), strongly suggests homoerotic love. Furthermore, Ovid presumably had Callimachus, *Epigram* 42.1, in mind, in which the Hellenistic poet uses similar language in an overtly erotic context.

38. Segal 1999, 336, commenting on the Meleager episode as an "elaborate cartoon" rather than the representation of the traditional epitome of heroic prowess, refers to Achilles' amazement at finding that there was no wound ("vulnus erat nullum" [12.127]) after he has thrust his spear at Cynus. The poet's reduction of the typical Homeric contest on the battlefield creates the effect of an innocuous pleasure derived from the violence depicted in the text.

39. Zumwalt 1977, 212–13, views Achilles' contest with Cynus as questioning traditional notions about eternal fame and about the very *virtus* by which one earns fame. Focusing on the frailty of Achilles' heroic ego as it manifests itself through the hero's boasting, amazement at the failure of his first shot, reassurance after killing Lycian Menoites, joy at wounding Cynus, and then finally unheroic means of combat, she points out that although Cynus actually escaped death through metamorphosis, Achilles is still credited with victory. O'Bryhim 1988, 49–53, observing that Achilles' contest with Cynus is the subject of conversation among the Greeks that evening, discusses the poet's devious strategy of further reducing Achilles' glory. For Nestor tells a similar story about the brutish, drunken Centaurs' battle with Caeneus: the sympathy aroused for the unfortunate Caeneus is then implicitly transferred to Cynus, and the Greeks say no more about Achilles' contest.

40. Chance is sometimes mentioned explicitly to effect a transition: in the story of Thebes in book 3, for instance, the narrative thus moves from the birth of Bacchus to the prophet Tiresias: "While these things were going on through the earth by the law of fate, and the cradle of twice-born Bacchus was safe, they say that by chance [*forte*] Jupiter, relaxed with wine, had put away his serious concerns" (316–19). More often, it is suggested obliquely: the narrator in book 15, for instance, introduces the story of the hero Cipus who refused kingship by a series of similes describing Hippolytus's response to seeing Egeria transformed

into a spring: his wonder was like the farmer's surprise at the creation of the autochthonous Tales, or Romulus's at the transformation of his spear into a tree, or Cipus's at his new horns reflected in water (552–66).

41. Anderson 1972, ad loc., also calls attention to the beginning of Horace, *Odes* 1.28. Although he does not expand on the reference, Anderson's choice of analogue is well taken, especially because Horace demeans Archytas, a philosopher and general whose grave is paltry. Like Ovid, Horace in that instance is sarcastic rather than generally philosophic about the vicissitudes of human fate. On Horace's cynicism about Archytas's fate, see Frischer 1984, 71–102.

42. Ovid does not focus on Paris as the agent of Achilles' death in the scene itself; rather, he credits Apollo with turning the bow in the right direction and guiding the weapon. In fact, he does not even mention that Paris actually shot the arrow and immediately shifts the focus to Priam's joy at Achilles' death (607–8). He then apostrophizes the dead hero with a scathingly oblique reference to the Trojan warrior: "victus es a timido Graiae raptore maritae" ("You were conquered by the timid thief of a Greek wife" [609]).

43. The story of Paris's marriage to Oenone and their child Corythus is told by Parthenius, *Erôtika pathêmata* 4 and 34, and in Conon 23; Parthenius in 34, moreover, cites verses by Nicander making Helen the mother of Corythus. Lightfoot 1999, 392–93, discussing the similarity of Parthenius's and Conon's versions, suggests a common source in Hegesianax, which Parthenius would seem to have broken up by deleting all reference to Corythus from *Erôtika pathêmata* 4, where jealousy of Helen rather than grief for her dead son induces Oenone to refuse to heal Paris's wound.

44. Lightfoot 1999, 545–46, on *Erôtika pathêmata* 34, notes that in Parthenius's version of the myth, Paris kills Corythus out of jealousy because Helen is attracted to him, although it is not clear if the Trojan was cognizant of the young man's identity. Comparing Conon's version, in which Oenone deliberately sent Corythus to cause friction between Paris and Helen, Lightfoot postulates that Parthenius chose to separate the stories of Oenone and Corythus in order to exploit the literary potential of the theme of jealousy.

45. In Hyginus, *Fabulae* 130, Icarus becomes Arcturus (a star in the constellation Boötes) and Erigone (the constellation Virgo).

46. See Liddell, Scott, Jones, s.v. *Maira*.

47. Hill 1992a, on 362, believes that the location of Hecuba's metamorphosis here in Thrace appears to rule out an identification with Maera. But Ovid would certainly have been aware of the variations on the site of the Trojan queen's transformation in the literary accounts. Forbes Irving 1992 [1990], 207–10, observes that after Euripides, later writers elaborate considerably on the myth. Nicander (frag. 62), for instance, appears to locate the incident in Troy, where the grief-stricken Hecuba is metamorphosed after jumping into the sea. After surveying the tradition on Hecuba, Forbes Irving indicates that the older version of the myth, involving a metamorphosis as the end point in a "sequence

of unbroken suffering" (not connected to the queen's revenge on Polymestor), reflected two significant aspects of her condition: her removal from human society after losing both city and family and her endurance of more than any human is able to tolerate. On the latter point, he notes that Quintus Smyrnaeus (14.282 ff.) compares Hecuba to a dog howling obsessively prior to her metamorphosis. Given the prominence of Nicander as a source for the myths in this travelogue, Ovid in line 362 might well be alluding to his version, with its Trojan setting and focus on grief rather than revenge, and be conflating it with the more traditional scene in Thrace in book 13.

48. Anderson 1972, ad loc., accepts the identification of the snake here with that in book 11 but does not discuss its import.

49. The last of Orpheus's songs, the story of Venus and Adonis, beginning at 519 and ending at 739, is only apparently longer since it is in fact interrupted by Venus's extended inset tale of Atalanta and Hippomenes (560–704), recounted as a warning to Adonis about the dangers of wild animals in the hunt.

50. Janan 1988, 126–28, shows that Orpheus even creates a linguistic counterpart to the course of Myrrha's incestuous desire and its fulfillment; in particular, the use of the possessive adjectives *meus* ("mine") and *tuus* ("yours"), which in Latin can refer to both family members and amorous objects, here erases the difference between father and lover and between daughter and mistress.

51. Hill 1992a, on 387, refers to *Metamorphoses* 10.324–29.

52. Ellsworth, 1980, 23–29, shows that while apparently ignoring the *Iliad*, Ovid cleverly makes it the organizing principle of this section by expanding on brief passages in Homer's epic, such as the battle of Lapiths and Centaurs (12.210–535), based on Nestor's mention of the exploits of an earlier generation of heroes (*Iliad* 1.260–72), and by including stories similar to those in the *Iliad*, such as Achilles' contest with Cycnus, which replaces the hero's duel with Hector in Homer. On the latter, Ellsworth observes that the death of Cycnus rather than of Hector motivates Achilles' own death, for Cycnus's father Neptune rouses Apollo, who then aids Paris against the Greek hero. He reads Ovid's version of the *Iliad* as a condemnation of war by its emphasis on the destructiveness of brute force in the war itself and in various inset tales.

Chapter 3. Daedalus and the Labyrinth of the *Metamorphoses*

1. See Williams 1964, 48–63, on aspects of the vision of the future shown to the hero in book 6, whose goal is to move the poem away from the Trojan and Homeric past and into a world reflecting the idealized values of Augustan Rome.

2. Wheeler 2000, 7–47, viewing repetition as a "generative principle" of the *Metamorphoses*, uses the creation of the world in the first part of the poem to

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