



Tragic palimpsests: The reception of Euripides in Ovid's Metamorphoses

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Tragic palimpsests: The reception of Euripides in Ovid's Metamorphoses

A dissertation presented

by

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to

The Department of the Classics

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*Tragic palimpsests: The reception of Euripides in Ovid's Metamorphoses***Abstract**

The subject of this dissertation is the reception of Euripidean tragedy in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In Chapter 1 I offer a general survey of the afterlife of Euripidean drama in the major mediating intertexts between Euripides and Ovid, namely Hellenistic poetry, Roman Republican tragedy, and Virgil's *Aeneid*, as well as a review of the pervasive presence of the Greek tragedian in the Ovidian corpus. Chapter 2 focuses on the reception of Euripides' *Bacchae* in the *Metamorphoses*. The starting point of my analysis is Ovid's epic rewriting of the Euripidean play in the Pentheus episode. Next, I argue that Ovid makes use of the allusive technique of "fragmentation", in the sense that he grafts elements of the *Bacchae* in the narratives of the *Minyads* and *Orpheus*. The final section examines Ovid's portrayal of *Procne*, *Medea*, and *Byblis* as *maenads* and their evocation of the Virgilian *Bacchants* *Dido* and *Amata*. In Chapter 3 I begin by investigating Ovid's intertextual engagement with Euripides' *Medea* in the *Medea* narrative of Book 7, which is read as an epicized "mega-tragedy" encompassing the Colchian's entire mythical career. In the second part of the chapter I discuss the Roman poet's reworking of the Euripidean tragedy in other episodes of the *Metamorphoses* and argue that *Procne*, *Althaea*, and *Deianira* constitute "refractions" of Euripides' *Medea*. Chapter 4 examines Ovid's epic refashioning of Euripides' *Hecuba*, which he merges with Virgil's alternative variant of the *Polydorus* myth in *Aeneid* 3. The Roman poet reshapes the main plot components of the Greek play, but also makes subtle allusions to the Virgilian version of the story. Chapter 5 is devoted to

the episode of Virbius in *Metamorphoses* 15. Ovid produces a novel version of the myth by melding together his Euripidean model with Virgilian and Sophoclean intertexts. The Roman poet adapts Virgil's Virbius story in *Aeneid* 7 by altering its context from a catalogue of Latin warriors into an exchange between Virbius and the nymph Egeria. Moreover, the Ovidian narrative draws on Euripides' two *Hippolytus* plays, the extant *Hippolytos Stephanephoros* and the fragmentary *Hippolytos Kalyptomenos*, as well as on Sophocles' *Phaedra*.

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Dedication

For Michael, Nikki, Vera, and Ana.

Introduction

The subject of this dissertation is the reception of the tragedies of Euripides in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The goal of the study is to explore and illuminate the various aspects of Euripidean drama appropriated by the Ovidian epic, such as themes, structural parallels, narrative technique, rhetoric, characterization, scenic allusions, and verbal echoes. Scholars have treated some of the facets of this intertextual relationship, but there has not been hitherto a full examination of the topic. The originality of this dissertation lies in a systematic, comprehensive, and in-depth investigation of the multiple ways in which the *Metamorphoses* converses intertextually with Euripidean tragedy.

There have been several studies on the reworking of individual Euripidean plays in the *Metamorphoses*. Tragedies that have been examined include *Medea*, *Bacchae*, *Hippolytus*, *Hecuba*, *Phaethon*, *Meleager*, and *Iphigenia among the Taurians*. The most comprehensive treatment of the issue to the present is Dan Curley's monograph *Tragedy in Ovid: theater, metatheater, and the transformation of a genre* based on his dissertation on the same topic.¹ The study explores Ovid's evolving intertextual engagement with the tragic genre in the course of his poetic career. The point of departure of his analysis is Ovid's lost tragedy *Medea* and its relationship with Roman Republican drama. He then investigates the appropriation of tragic elements in Ovid's elegiac epistles, the *Heroides*. The remainder of the book focuses on aspects of the epicization of tragedy in the *Metamorphoses*. In particular, he examines the epic's reshaping of tragic space and time and its reworking of dramatic soliloquys in the episodes of *Medea*, *Hercules*, and *Hecuba*. Another area of investigation is the intratextual dialogue between

¹ Curley 2013; Curley 1999.

Ovidian “tragic” heroines of the *Metamorphoses*, namely Iphigenia and Polyxena and Medea and Deianira, as well as between the epic Deianira and her elegiac counterpart in *Heroides* 9. He concludes with an overall assessment of Ovid as a tragic poet of the Augustan period and of his mediating role between Virgil and Seneca. My dissertation derives valuable insights and methodological principles from Curley’s work, but I make a more comprehensive and methodical analysis of Ovid’s reception of Euripides in particular in the *Metamorphoses* by investigating his appropriation of major plays, both extant (*Bacchae*, *Medea*, *Hecuba*, *Hippolytus*, *Alceste*) and fragmentary (*Peliades*, *Aegeus*, *Meleager*, *Hippolytos Kalyptomenos*).

Another seminal study focusing on this topic is David Larmour’s article “Tragic contaminatio in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*”.² Larmour employs the term “contaminatio” to describe Ovid’s intertextual method of transposing elements from a mythical story and incorporating them into a different episode of the *Metamorphoses*. He analyzes this allusive technique by examining three case studies: Procne, Philomela (Book 6), and Scylla (Book 8). He argues that Procne’s murder of her son Itys recalls Medea’s infanticide, Philomela’s rape and mutilation by Tereus is reminiscent of Iphigenia’s sacrifice, and Scylla’s forbidden passion for Minos evokes Phaedra’s illicit love for Hippolytus. In my own methodological approach I replace the negatively charged term “contaminatio” with the neutral term “fragmentation”, which I will explain below. Finally, it is worth noting the significant article by Ingo Gildenhard and Andrew Zissos entitled “‘Somatic economies’: tragic bodies and poetic design in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*”, which explores the merging of tragic elements with Ovidian style, the epic genre, and Roman culture in the *Metamorphoses*.³

² Larmour 1990.

³ Gildenhard/Zissos 1999.

The first step of my analysis is to detect and distinguish Euripidean from non-Euripidean sources appropriated by Ovid in the episode under examination. Next, I investigate the various allusive techniques employed by the Roman poet in his engagement with his tragic predecessor. The first type is intertextual conflation, namely the organic blending of Ovid's models, which can be divided into two subcategories. The first subdivision is the mingling of Euripidean material with a pre-Euripidean source. For example, Ovid embeds the myth of Dionysus and the Tyrrhenian pirates drawn from the Homeric Hymn to Dionysus in the story of Pentheus modeled on Euripides' *Bacchae*. The second subgroup is the fusion of a Euripidean intertext with one or more intermediate sources, such as Hellenistic poetry, Roman Republican tragedy, or Virgil's *Aeneid*. A special type of this intertextual method is the so-called "double" or "window allusion", whereby Ovid alludes simultaneously to the Euripidean model and the mediating intertext which in turn echoes the Greek original. A representative example of this type of intertextual conflation is Ovid's young Medea in Colchis in *Metamorphoses* 7, who evokes at the same time the protagonist of Euripides' *Medea* and the Colchian maiden of *Argonautica* 3, who in turn recalls her tragic predecessor.

Ovid has a penchant for melding Euripidean tragedy with Virgilian intertexts. The story of Hippolytus-Virbius in *Metamorphoses* 15 is an amalgamation of the messenger speech of Euripides' *Hippolytus* relating Hippolytus' fatal chariot ride and Virgil's narrative recounting Hippolytus' resurrection and deification as Virbius in *Aeneid* 7. Furthermore, the miniature tragedy of *Hecuba* in Book 13 constitutes a rewriting of Euripides' *Hecuba* and at the same time evokes Virgil's story of Polydorus in *Aeneid* 3. Another author whom Ovid frequently fuses with Euripidean material is Sophocles. The episode of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela in Book 6 is modeled on Sophocles' *Tereus* of which only fragments survive, but also engages intertextually

with Euripides' Medea, in that Ovid's depiction of Procne as infanticide is reminiscent of the character portrayal of the Euripidean protagonist. In an analogous fashion the Hercules and Deianira episode in *Metamorphoses* 9 draws on Sophocles' *Women of Trachis* as its primary model, but at the same time Deianira's contemplation of vengeance against her erotic adversary, which has no precedent in the Sophoclean play, recalls the revenge plot of Euripides' Medea against the Corinthian princess. In some cases, however, the fragmentary condition of the source material renders *Quellenforschung* particularly problematic. For instance, whereas it is possible to investigate the dialogue between the narrative of Hippolytus-Virbius and its Euripidean and Virgilian intertexts, the examination of the Ovidian episode's intertextual engagement with Sophocles' *Phaedra* is hindered by the survival of scant fragments of the play.

The second type of allusive method is intratextual conflation, which can be defined as the transposition of motifs, themes, characters, etc. from one Ovidian story to another. Ovid often transfers elements from one mythical episode and weaves them into another, thus creating multi-layered narratives. We can distinguish two subgroups of intratextual conflation. The first consists in the blending of a story recounted in another Ovidian work with a *Metamorphoses* narrative. This kind of intratextual relationship is most often found between the *Heroides* and the *Metamorphoses*. For example, *Heroides* 12, Medea's letter to Jason, which draws on both the Euripidean and Apollonian versions of Medea, functions as an intratext of the Medea narrative in *Metamorphoses* 7.⁴ The second subcategory of intratextual conflation is the transferal of elements from one episode of the *Metamorphoses* to another. An illustrative case is the account of Hippolytus' death and deification in Book 15, which echoes concurrently Pentheus' dismemberment in Book 3 and Hercules' demise and apotheosis in Book 9.

⁴ The authorship of *Heroides* 12 is a controversial issue with exponents both in favor (Hinds 1993) and against (Knox 1986) its authenticity.

The third type of allusive technique utilized by Ovid is “fragmentation”, a term which refers to the dismantling of a Euripidean play down to its constituent elements (e.g. episodes, characters, speeches, themes, etc.), which are then refashioned and incorporated into different stories in the *Metamorphoses*. For instance, it will be argued that Ovid reworks the *Bacchae* primarily in the story of Pentheus in Book 3 and at the same time transplants certain aspects of the Euripidean tragedy into the episodes of the *Minyads* in Book 4 and the death of Orpheus in Book 10. A special kind of “fragmentation” on the level of characterization is the so-called “refraction”, namely the portrayal of an Ovidian figure not as mere double of a Euripidean character, but as his/her distorted reflection. For example, I will contend that the Ovidian heroines Procne, Althaea, and Deianira are depicted not as mirror images of Euripides’ *Medea*, but as her graded variants.

The outline of my dissertation can be summarized as follows. In Chapter 1 I offer a general survey of the afterlife of Euripidean drama in the major mediating intertexts between Euripides and Ovid, namely Hellenistic poetry, Roman Republican tragedy, and Virgil’s *Aeneid*, as well as a review of the pervasive presence of the Greek tragedian in the Ovidian corpus. Chapter 2 focuses on the reception of Euripides’ *Bacchae* in the *Metamorphoses*. The starting point of my analysis is Ovid’s epic rewriting of the Euripidean play in the Pentheus episode which he conflated with the Homeric Hymn to Dionysus and Theocritus’ *Idyll 26*. Next, I argue that Ovid makes use of the allusive technique of “fragmentation”, in the sense that he grafts elements of the *Bacchae* in the narratives of the *Minyads* and Orpheus. For instance, the description of Orpheus’ *sparagmos* recalls the dismemberment of the Euripidean Pentheus. The final section examines Ovid’s portrayal of Procne, *Medea*, and *Byblis* as maenads and their evocation of the Virgilian Bacchants *Dido* and *Amata*.

In Chapter 3 I begin by investigating Ovid's intertextual engagement with Euripides' Medea in the Medea narrative of Book 7, which is read as an epicized "mega-tragedy" encompassing the Colchian's entire mythical career and fusing together material drawn from Euripides (Medea, Peliades, Aegaeus), Apollonius (Argonautica 3), and Virgil (Aeneid). I contend that the appropriation of the Greek play consists in amplifying its marginal elements (e.g. the murder of Pelias) into full-blown narratives and conversely compressing radically the central story of the drama, namely the events at Corinth, thereby rendering it a peripheral narrative. In the second part of the chapter I discuss the Roman poet's reworking of the Euripidean tragedy in other episodes of the Metamorphoses and argue that Procne, Althaea, and Deianira constitute "refractions" of Euripides' Medea.

Chapter 4 examines Ovid's epic refashioning of Euripides' Hecuba, which he merges with Virgil's alternative variant of the Polydorus myth in Aeneid 3. The Roman poet reshapes the main plot components of the Greek play, namely the murder of Polydorus, the epiphany of Achilles' ghost, the sacrifice of Polyxena, Hecuba's vengeance on Polymestor, and the Trojan queen's canine metamorphosis, but at the same time he makes subtle allusions to the Virgilian version of the story. Chapter 5 is devoted to the episode of Hippolytus-Virbius in Metamorphoses 15, which relates Hippolytus' death followed by his restoration to life by Aesculapius and his transportation to Italy by Diana, who transforms him into the god Virbius. It will be argued that Ovid produces a novel version of the myth by melding together his Euripidean model with Virgilian and Sophoclean intertexts. To begin with, the Roman poet adapts Virgil's Virbius story in Aeneid 7 by altering its context from a catalogue of Latin warriors into an exchange between Virbius and the nymph Egeria. Moreover, the Ovidian narrative draws on Euripides' two Hippolytus plays, the extant Hippolytos Stephanephoros

(HippS) and the fragmentary Hippolytos Kalyptomenos (HippK). The messenger speech of HippS relating Hippolytus' chariot disaster is converted into Virbius' posthumous account of his own violent death. Moreover, I will contend that the prologue and epilogue of Virbius' speech constitute a creative rewriting of Artemis' epilogue speech as *dea ex machina* in HippS.

Chapter 1

The shadow of Euripides

1.1 The Euripidean afterlife in Hellenistic poetry and Roman Republican tragedy

The first section of this chapter consists in a synoptic overview of the afterlife of Euripides in Hellenistic poetry, Roman Republican tragedy, and Virgil's *Aeneid*, which constitute the most important intermediate texts between Euripides and Ovid. The significance of this survey lies in the fact that Ovid often blends his sources by alluding not only to Euripides but also to a mediating author, who is in turn echoing the Greek tragedian. He thereby creates a complex nexus of intertextual relationships, which offer rich material for analysis and interpretation.

Euripides' successful *Nachleben* in the Hellenistic period can be illustrated by many types of evidence.⁵ He was unarguably the most popular of the three great Attic tragedians in the post-classical era, since his plays were most often revived in dramatic re-performances of the 4th and 3rd centuries BC. Euripides' favorable reception among theatre audiences is attributed to various aspects of his dramaturgy, such as the choice of subject-matter, formal innovations (speeches filled with aphorisms, dialectical arguments, rhetorical digressions) and dramatic technique (pathetic events, elaborate and suspenseful plots, use of theatrical devices).⁶ Euripidean dramas were also the most preferred subject-matter in south Italian vase-paintings greatly surpassing those of other tragedians. Papyri containing text of his plays, which were discovered in Greco-Roman Egypt, are far greater in number than those of any other dramatist

⁵ Bing 2011, 201.

⁶ Tedeschi 2002, 97-98.

demonstrating that he was the most widely read Greek poet in Hellenistic times, outdone only by Homer. Another indicator of Euripides' popularity are the numerous narrative hypotheses of his plays, which outnumber the synopses of other tragedians. Finally, Euripides is along with Homer the two authors, whose works were most frequently used in the ancient school texts of Hellenistic Egypt, eclipsing by far Aeschylus and Sophocles.⁷

Euripides' appeal to theater audiences, vase-painters, readers, and school masters is matched by his significant influence on Hellenistic poetry ranging from heroic epic and tragedy to comedy and epyllion. Several features of his dramaturgy, such as aetiology, rhetoric, preoccupation with domestic detail and humble characters, incisive psychological portraits through dramatic monologues, and mixture of tragic and comic elements,⁸ were appropriated by Hellenistic poets. Although there are several studies on Euripides' reception in individual poetic texts, there is to the present no comprehensive study of Hellenistic poetry's debt to the Greek tragedian.

First and foremost, the Euripidean heritage is conspicuous in drama, namely Hellenistic tragedy and New Comedy. The textual evidence for Hellenistic tragedy is unfortunately very scarce, consisting mainly of fragments quoted by later authors, brief scenes preserved on papyrus, some interpolated scenes of Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* and the pseudo-Euripidean *Rhesus*. One significant feature of Hellenistic tragedy is the promotion of a single scene over the entire play attested by various tendencies, such as anthologizing, namely copying and/or performing small parts of plays (e.g. messenger speeches), the performance of famous dramatic

⁷ Wissmann 2010, 63.

⁸ Hunter/Fantuzzi 2004, 426: "It may be argued that in the later stages of his career, Euripides consciously sought to break down the barriers between comedy and tragedy (cf. *Ion*, *Helen*, *IT*)".

monologues by virtuoso actors, and the declining significance of the role of the chorus.⁹ These trends can also be found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where there is a predilection for incorporating individual dramatic scenes in the epic narrative, primarily tragic soliloquies and messenger speeches.

The most famous Hellenistic tragic text is Lycophron's *Alexandra*. It consists of a single speech, where a slave reports to Priam the obscure prophecies pronounced by Cassandra, when Paris departed on his inauspicious voyage to Sparta. It is essentially a messenger-speech extended to the length of an entire tragedy (1474 lines). *Alexandra* is not a tragedy in the "classical" sense of the word, since it does not adhere to tragedy's formal criteria, such as dialogue, choral odes, etc. and does not represent characters in action, which contradicts Aristotle's definition of tragedy.¹⁰ It contains, however, tragic elements at the levels of theme, meter, structure, and diction.¹¹ The main tragic sources of Lycophron's poem are Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and Euripides' *Trojan Women*,¹² both of which feature an ecstatic Cassandra delivering riddling predictions, such as Agamemnon's murder at the hands of Clytemnestra.¹³

An intriguing Hellenistic quasi-dramatic text of unknown authorship is *Megara*, a conversation between Heracles' wife Megara and his mother Alcmene located temporally after Heracles has murdered his sons and is away performing the twelve labors in atonement for his crime. *Megara* displays a mixture of dramatic and epic elements, since it has the form of a tragic dialogue, but it is written in hexameters and the two speeches are separated by a brief comment

⁹ Hunter/Fantuzzi 2004, 436.

¹⁰ Cusset 2002-2003, 140.

¹¹ For tragic elements in *Alexandra* see Cusset 2002-2003.

¹² Cusset 2002-2003, 141-142.

¹³ For echoes of Euripides' *Helen* in *Alexandra* see Gigante/Lanzara 2010.

by a third person epic narrator. Other tragic features include the extended dirge of the two women recalling a tragic threnos and Alcmene's prophetic dream foreshadowing the death of Heracles, which is reminiscent of Hecuba's dream in Euripides' homonymous play anticipating the death of Polydorus.¹⁴ The main source of Megara is Euripides' Heracles, which dramatizes the maddened Heracles' killing of his wife and children after the completion of his labors. Moreover, the dialogue between another wife of Heracles, Iole, and his mother, Alcmena, in Book 9 of the Metamorphoses bears reminiscences of Megara. Both Alexandra and Megara can be characterized as epic-tragic hybrids, since the former is a dramatic form (iambic trimeter, messenger speech) on an epic scale (1474 lines) and treating epic subject-matter, while the latter is an epic form (hexameter, epic narrator) consisting of a dramatic dialogue and reduced to the size of a scene of tragedy (ca. 200 lines).¹⁵ This Hellenistic experimentation with the boundaries between epic and tragedy may have been one of the precursors for Ovid's innovative epic-tragic genre-crossing in the Metamorphoses.

The best-preserved specimen of Hellenistic drama is Ezekiel's Exagoge written perhaps by a Hellenized Jew in Alexandria in the 2nd century B.C. It is a dramatization of the flight of the Jews from Egypt under the guidance of Moses and is modeled on the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures. Though the subject-matter of Exagoge is non-Greek it derives from Attic tragedy and especially from Euripides many formal and linguistic elements. Its meter is an attempted revival of the Euripidean metrical form,¹⁶ it contains an explanatory prologue in the style of Euripides as well as messenger speeches recounting off-stage events,

¹⁴ Ambühl 2010, 164.

¹⁵ Hunter/Fantuzzi 2004, 440.

¹⁶ Hunter/Fantuzzi 2004, 436.

while the love triangle between Moses, Sepphorah, and Chum is reminiscent of late Euripidean dramas, such as *Helen*.¹⁷

Euripides' plays, especially the late ones, exert a pervasive influence on New Comedy, whose principal representative is Menander. The Euripidean inheritance can be detected in all aspects of Menander's comedies including plot, structure, characterization, and narrative devices and motifs, such as the expository prologue, the recognition scene, the messenger speech, the refuge at altars and the use of the *ekykklema*.¹⁸ Another aspect of Euripidean reception is Menander's appropriation of tragic language and style.¹⁹ The playwright often has his characters employ tragic diction and even make quotations from tragedy in utterly comic situations resulting in a ludicrous incongruity, which parodies both the high tragic genre and the affectations of the comic characters.²⁰ Many of these Euripidean features are indirectly inherited by the Roman comedy of Plautus and Terence through Menander, who functions as an intermediate model between the Greek tragedian and the Roman comic playwrights.²¹

Callimachus displays familiarity with Euripidean tragedy. The great Alexandrian scholar and poet was the first to produce a work consisting entirely of *aetia*, namely stories explaining the origin of a place-name, cult practice, local custom, etc. thus creating with his *Aetia* a new poetic genre. Euripides is the most significant forerunner of Callimachus and of Hellenistic poetry in general in the cultivation of aetiology. Out of the three Attic tragedians he is the one to

¹⁷ Gutzwiller 2007, 123.

¹⁸ Hunter/Fantuzzi 2004, 426-430.

¹⁹ See Katsouris 1975.

²⁰ Hunter/Fantuzzi 2004, 427.

²¹ Rosato 2005, 9.

have incorporated aetia in his dramas most consistently, since he frequently ends his tragedies with an aetion linking the mythical heroic past with the Athenian historical present.²²

Euripidean dramatic technique may have been one of the formative influences for the development of Callimachean poetics. In the prologue of his *Aetia*, where the poet responds to the literary polemic of the Telchines against his poetry, he presents Apollo as instructing him to make his sacrificial victim “full of fat”, but keep his Muse λεπταλέα, an adjective designating a poetry that is slender, well-wrought and refined. This figurative imagery recalls the agon between Aeschylus and Euripides in Aristophanes’ *Frogs*, where the two playwrights debate about the nature of tragic diction. Euripides charges his predecessor with imbuing his dramas with garrulous grandiloquence, which he was compelled to eliminate by putting tragedy on a thinning diet (*Frogs* 939–44).²³ Moreover, whereas in Aristophanes Aeschylus’ “heavy” topics outweigh Euripides’ “light” ones, in Callimachus the situation is inverted, since the shorter and thus lighter poem outweighs the longer, heavier one.²⁴ Therefore, the artistic contest between Euripides as the representative of a new and refined poetry and Aeschylus as the exponent of an older, bombastic one is transformed in the beginning of the *Aetia* into the clash between Callimachus’ short and polished poems and the long, verbose poems extolled by his critics.

The Aristophanian criticism of Euripides in the *Frogs* indicates some further areas in which the tragedian was a precursor of Hellenistic poetic traits.²⁵ The playwright is censured for his representation of heroic figures and specifically for depicting heroes in unheroic

²² For a history of aetiology in ancient Greek literature see Harder 2012, 24-26.

²³ Hunter/Fantuzzi 2004, 70.

²⁴ See Acosta-Hughes (2010, 87) for further echoes of the artistic duel between Aeschylus and Euripides in the opening of Callimachus’ *Aetia*.

²⁵ Acosta-Hughes 2010, 88-89.

circumstances (e.g. Menelaus in *Helen* and Telephus in the homonymous play as exiles in rags) and for portraying heroines as overwhelmed by illicit passions (e.g. Phaedra and Stheneboea). This innovative Euripidean characterization anticipates similar Hellenistic tendencies: in Callimachus' *Hecale* Theseus is offered hospitality by the old woman Hecale in his way to subdue the bull of Marathon, in Theocritus *Idyll 24* Heracles is presented as a baby in his cradle, while in Apollonius' *Argonautica* Medea is overcome by her erotic desire for Jason. Another charge leveled against Euripides concerns his engagement with the domestic world and humble characters. Euripides gives a speaking role to various anonymous slaves (e.g. in *Helen*) and confers a significant part in the plot on figures of low social status, such as the farmer in *Electra* and Phaedra's nurse in *Hippolytus*. An attention to domestic detail is a trademark feature of Hellenistic poetry (e.g. Apollonius' similes with homely subject-matter) and characters, such as Callimachus' *Hecale* and Molorchus and Theocritus' *Simathea* are somewhat reminiscent of their Euripidean antecedents.

Although the fragmentary state of *Hecale* does not permit us to construct a full picture of Callimachus' sources, we can nevertheless detect in it some Euripidean echoes. The opening of *Hecale*, which recounts Theseus' initial arrival in Athens and Medea's unsuccessful attempt to poison him, draws on Euripides' *Aegeus*. More specifically, the fragments of *Hecale* point to a suspenseful recognition scene, where Aegeus saves his son's life in the nick of time by recognizing his true identity by means of tokens. This episode had undoubtedly been dramatized in *Aegeus*. Ovid also recounts this scene in *Metamorphoses* 7 (404-424) and he may make a double allusion to the Euripidean original and the Hellenistic intermediate model. Moreover, the tragedy may have reported Theseus' fight with the bull of Marathon in a messenger speech.²⁶

²⁶ Hutchinson 1988, 61.

Callimachus may be alluding to such a tragic messenger report by having Theseus send a messenger to announce to his father his subjugation of the bull.

Another Euripidean drama evoked in *Hecale* is *Hecuba*. The fall of *Hecale* from prosperity to poverty and the loss of her husband and sons are reminiscent of the fate of the epic and tragic queen *Hecuba*, who passed from sovereignty and opulence to wretched servitude and was bereaved of Priam and her many sons.²⁷ Furthermore, *Hecale*'s wish that she could plunge thorns into the eyes of her son's murderer, *Cercyon*, while he was alive, and eat them raw recalls not only the epic *Hecuba*, who wished that she could eat the liver of *Achilles*, the slayer of her son *Hector* (*Hom. Il.* 24.212f.), but also the tragic queen who had pins thrust in the eyes of *Polymestor*, the killer of her son *Polydorus* (*Eur. Hec.* 1169f.).²⁸

Apollonius' epicization of tragedy in the *Argonautica* constitutes a seminal model for the appropriation of tragic material in the epics of both *Virgil* and *Ovid*.²⁹ Tragic monodies and long monologues, which are a signal feature of Euripidean dramaturgy and whose main function is to provide detailed psychological characterization, prefigure the soliloquies of later elegiac and hexameter poetry, such as those of *Acontius* in *Callimachus' Aetia* and *Simaetha* in *Theocritus' Idyll 2*.³⁰ The most telling Hellenistic example of character adumbration by means of a monologue is Apollonius' psychological portrait of *Medea* in the *Argonautica*, which draws on the characterization of Euripidean heroines. In particular, *Medea*'s agonized soliloquy at *Argonautica* 3.771-801 over whether or not to provide aid to *Jason* echoes the Euripidean *Medea*'s tormented monologue (1021-1055), where she contemplates whether to murder her

²⁷ Hutchinson 1988, 58-59.

²⁸ Hunter/Fantuzzi 2004, 199.

²⁹ Hardie 1997, 323.

³⁰ Acosta-Hughes 2010, 89.

children vacillating between her desire for vengeance against Jason and her maternal love for her sons.³¹ It has been suggested that both Euripides and Apollonius employ the innovative technique of “interior monologue” in order to portray Medea in a favorable and sympathetic light by providing access to the inner workings of her psyche and the heart-wrenching dilemma that tortures her.³²

The Apollonian Medea’s dilemma, however, though equally painful is of a different nature, since she is alternating between her passion for Jason and her sense of shame inextricably linked with her piety towards her father and her country. It thus recalls the inner struggle of another Euripidean heroine, Phaedra, who experiences the conflict between her desire (ἔρωσ) for her stepson Hippolytus and her shame (αἰδῶσ) for betraying her husband and children.³³ Medea faces another quandary, namely whether to kill herself, so as to avoid emotional pain and disgrace, or stay alive and resist her passion, which is also reminiscent of the Euripidean Phaedra’s consideration of suicide as a means of escape from dishonor. The distinguishing difference between the two heroines is that Medea, unlike Phaedra, does not fulfill her suicidal plan.³⁴

Apollonius portrays Medea as a dual personality: she is partly a naïve “helper-maiden” infatuated with a handsome stranger and thus strongly reminiscent of the Homeric Nausicaa and partly a potent witch capable of betraying her father and country.³⁵ The dark side of her personality functions as a “prequel” of the Euripidean Medea, since it serves to explain her later

³¹ Barkhuizen 1979, 47; Gutzwiller 2007, 80-81.

³² See Papadopoulou 1997.

³³ Hunter 1989, vv. 766-769; Clauss 1997, 161.

³⁴ Hunter 1989, vv. 811-816; Clauss 1997, 164.

³⁵ Gutzwiller 2007, 79.

actions. In particular, when Jason is considering surrendering her to the Colchians in exchange for keeping the Golden Fleece she bitterly rebukes him with a scathing speech. This scene prefigures Medea's animosity and verbal assault against Jason in the Euripidean drama for deserting her in order to marry the Corinthian princess.³⁶ Furthermore, the murder of Apsyrtus prefigures the killing of Medea's children in Euripides' play and the cunning lies with which she brings about her brother's demise anticipate her guileful plotting of the deaths of Creon and his daughter in *Medea*.³⁷ More specifically, Medea's allurement of Apsyrtus to an ambush by offering him various gifts, among which is a cloak given by Hypsipyle to Jason, looks disturbingly ahead to the Euripidean Medea's dispatch of a poisoned robe and crown as wedding gifts to the Corinthian princess.³⁸ The fatal wedding presents that Medea will give to Creon's daughter are also foreshadowed by the simile at 4.167-170, where Jason carrying the Golden Fleece is compared to a prospective young bride holding her wedding dress, as well as by the marriage gifts Medea and Jason receive at their own wedding from the Phaeacian women (4.1189-1191).³⁹ Other character traits that Apollonius' Medea shares with her Euripidean counterpart are the powerful instinct of self-preservation and her rhetorical skill. The former is illustrated in the *Argonautica* by her decision to follow the Argonauts in flight, and in *Medea* by her securing of a refuge in Athens, while the latter is manifest in her entreaty of Circe and Arete in the epic and her supplication of Creon in the tragedy.⁴⁰

³⁶ Dyck 1989, 459; Köhnken 2010, 143.

³⁷ Hunter 1987, 130-131.

³⁸ Dyck 1989, 460.

³⁹ See Knight 1991.

⁴⁰ Dyck 1989, 456-457.

One of Apollonius' major divergences from Euripides in terms of the representation of Medea, however, is the emphasis on her magical powers, an aspect of her character, which is largely suppressed in the Euripidean play.⁴¹ Whereas in Euripides Medea's magic skills are demonstrated only by the poisoned crown and robe that she sends to the Corinthian princess, in the *Argonautica* she performs multiple feats of sorcery, such as the dark magic ritual in honor of Hecate, the provision of magic drugs to Jason to protect him from the bulls of Ares, the lulling to sleep of the serpent guarding the Fleece, and the destruction of Talos, the bronze giant of Crete. In conclusion, the two works shed light on each other: the *Argonautica* presents the first seeds of the tragic action in Medea, while the Euripidean play looks back to the events of the epic and invests them with anticipatory dramatic irony.⁴² As we will see in chapter 3, Ovid's Medea is a conflation of her Euripidean and Apollonian antecedents, since she is portrayed successively as a young maiden in love, a powerful sorceress, a crafty manipulator of others, and an infanticide.

Theocritus' Idyll 26, subtitled *Λῆναι ἢ Βάκχαι*, can be generically defined as an epyllion with a hymnic ending. The poem is an illustrative example of Hellenistic reworking of a classical tragedy, namely Euripides' *Bacchae*.⁴³ It is essentially a rewriting of the play's second messenger speech, which recounts the dismemberment of king Pentheus by the Theban maenads on Mt. Cithaeron.⁴⁴ The epyllion contains many reminiscences of as well as departures from the Euripidean tragedy, the latter of which point to Theocritus' allusive technique of *oppositio* in

⁴¹ Hunter 1987, 130.

⁴² Hunter 1989, 18-19.

⁴³ For the intertextual relationship between the *Bacchae* and Idyll 26 see Cairns 1992 and Cusset, 1997, 2001.

⁴⁴ Cusset (1997, 457) notes that Theocritus blends in his narrative elements from the first and second messenger speech of Euripides' play, both of which describe scenes of bacchic frenzy.

imitando or “correction”.⁴⁵ Theocritus relates the same sequence of events as Euripides, namely Pentheus’ spying of the secret rites of the Bacchantes followed by his discovery and sparagmos. His narrative, however, is substantially more condensed than the Euripidean messenger report, being one third in length.

The epyllion evokes the language and imagery of the *Bacchae*, but at the same time diverges from the play in many ways. First of all, Theocritus alters the setting of the scene. Whereas in the *Bacchae* the maenads conduct their rites in a mountain glen encircled by fir trees, in *Idyll 26* they are found in a clear meadow in the mountains and while the Euripidean Pentheus mounts a fir tree in order to spy on the Bacchantes, his Theocritean counterpart beholds the Dionysiac rites from a steep rock concealing himself behind a mastic bush.⁴⁶ The Alexandrian poet also adds to his description ritual elements, which are absent in the tragedy, namely the foundation of altars by the maenads in honor of Dionysus and Semele and the dedication of sacred objects. An important divergence from the *Bacchae* concerns the role of Dionysus. Whereas in Euripides Dionysus plays an active part in the events leading to Pentheus’ death, in Theocritus the god’s intervention is indirect and is left to the reader to infer it. More specifically, whereas Pentheus in the *Bacchae* is lured by Dionysus into a death trap, the Theocritean Pentheus goes to face the Bacchantes alone and the god does not participate directly in the events. The only implicit display of his power is the madness, which he inspires in the maenads causing them to dismember Pentheus.

Theocritus elevates in his account the role played by Autonoe. Whereas in the *Bacchae* she is grouped with the other Bacchantes and none of her words or actions receives special

⁴⁵ Cairns (1992, 5, 7-9) attributes many of the Euripidean echoes not to Theocritus’ deliberate reworking of the *Bacchae*, but to a common Dionysiac ritual source.

⁴⁶ Cusset 1997, 463-464.

mention, in Theocritus Autonoe is the one who catches sight of Pentheus, she rallies her sisters with her shouts, and she is the first to be filled with Bacchic frenzy.⁴⁷ Moreover, unlike the Theocritean Pentheus who addresses his mother Agave in supplication, the Theocritean hero engages in a brief dialogue with his aunt Autonoe. Theocritus introduces further innovations in the description of Pentheus' discovery by the maenads. Pentheus flees in fear from the maenads, whereas in the *Bacchae* there is no pursuit, since the Theban king is trapped upon the fir tree and cannot escape. Moreover, while the Euripidean Pentheus is perceived by the maddened Bacchantes as a wild animal, in Theocritus he is recognized as human, evidenced by the fact that he engages in dialogue with Autonoe.⁴⁸ The Hellenistic poet also diverges from his tragic model in various details of the description of Pentheus' dismemberment. For example, whereas in the *Bacchae* Agave tears off the arm and shoulder of Pentheus, in *Idyll 26* she decapitates him and the tearing off of the shoulder is attributed to Ino instead.⁴⁹

Finally, Theocritus' most remarkable novelty is the substitution of a hymnic ending for the gnomic conclusion of the Euripidean messenger speech. The messenger closed his report with the apothegm that moderation and reverence to the gods are the supreme human virtues. The implicit moral of his statement is that mortals should respect the gods otherwise they will suffer the fate of Pentheus. The narrator of *Idyll 26* addresses an envoi to Dionysus, Semele, and her sisters and offers a much more direct moral claiming that impious mortals are punished by the gods, while the reverent ones are rewarded. What is particularly striking in the poem's conclusion is the total absence of tragic pathos and empathy. The hymnic voice expresses utter

⁴⁷ Cusset 1997, 465.

⁴⁸ Cusset 1997, 466.

⁴⁹ Cusset 1997, 467.

indifference to the Theban king's suffering and eulogizes Dionysus and the daughters of Cadmus for exacting a just penalty from Pentheus. These sentiments contrast sharply with the exodos of the *Bacchae*, where Agave laments the death of her son and Cadmus exerts criticism on Dionysus for the severity of the punishment inflicted on his grandson. As we shall see in Chapter 3, Ovid in his own reworking of Pentheus' dismemberment blends the Euripidean and Theocritean versions of the scene by means of intertextual conflation and at certain points, where he diverges from Euripides, he follows Theocritus instead.

Roman Republican tragedy constitutes a fusion of elements derived from classical Greek tragedy, Hellenistic tragedy, and Italic performance traditions,⁵⁰ made compatible with Roman social and political ideology.⁵¹ Republican tragedians were inclined to appropriate the mythological subject-matter, plots, and structure of 5th-century tragedy, but in terms of performance practices and dramatic devices aiming at astonishment, such as melodramatic plots, special effects, and the depiction of protagonists as everyday individuals, they followed the trends found in late Euripides and Hellenistic tragedy.⁵² Moreover, the Roman tragic playwrights assimilated features from New Comedy, which had in turn drawn them from the late Euripidean dramas. Such features include recognition scenes, plots with spectacular reversals and happy endings, characters of low social rank, the resolution of crises on the human level, and the accentuation of the role of Tyche in mortal affairs over divine intervention.⁵³ Despite the extremely fragmentary state of Republican tragedy, the exploration of its surviving remains can

⁵⁰ Manuwald 2011, 139.

⁵¹ For an analysis of the reception of Greek tragedy in the Roman Republican theater at the levels of social and political ideology see Gildenhard 2010.

⁵² Manuwald 2011, 140.

⁵³ Manuwald 2011, 317, 347.

shed light on the intertextual dialogue between Euripides and Ovid. The tragedians who will be discussed in this study are Ennius, Pacuvius, and Accius, since they are not only profoundly indebted to the Greek dramatist,⁵⁴ but are also important sources for the *Metamorphoses* and thus constitute intermediate models between the two authors.⁵⁵ The titles and fragments of the three tragedians attest to their penchant for basing many of their plays on Euripides.⁵⁶

Given that these playwrights succeeded each other chronologically, by examining the fragments of their dramas we can gain an understanding of the evolution of the handling of Greek tragic material in the course of the Republican period. More specifically, later Roman playwrights generally tend to write more independently from their Greek models. This development can be illustrated by the treatment of the Medea myth in a number of Republican tragedies.⁵⁷ Ennius modeled his *Medea Exul* closely on Euripides, sometimes translating fairly exactly, but often adapting freely.⁵⁸ He preserved the structure of the Greek drama, while making alterations in order to modify the play for a Roman audience.⁵⁹ Pacuvius composed the sequel tragedy *Medus*, which was either his own innovation based on some mythological source or a Roman version of a lost Hellenistic play. Finally, Accius in his play *Medea sive Argonautae* did not draw on a dramatic source, but an epic one, namely Apollonius' *Argonautica* 4. Ovid in the

⁵⁴ For the Euripidean influence on Ennius' *Medea* and Accius' *Bacchae* see Rosato 2005.

⁵⁵ For the reception of Roman Republican drama in Ovid see D'Anna 1959, Currie 1981.

⁵⁶ Ennius: *Alexander*, *Andromacha*, *Aechmalotis*, *Athamas*, *Andromeda*, *Hecuba*, *Iphigenia*, *Medea Exul*.

Pacuvius: *Antiopa*, *Iliona*, *Medus*, *Pentheus*, *Periboea*, *Protesilaus*.

Accius: *Andromeda*, *Bacchae*, *Meleager*, *Philoctetes*, *Medea sive Argonautae*, *Phoenician Women*, *Telephus*.

⁵⁷ Manuwald 2011, 289.

⁵⁸ Ennius also likely wrote another *Medea* dramatizing the events in Athens after her flight from Corinth and probably based on Euripides' *Aegeus*.

⁵⁹ Currie 1981, 2708.

Metamorphoses masterfully combines all these techniques in narrating the various tales of the Medea myth: he draws on Euripidean material (Medea, Peliades, Aegeus), epic sources (Apollonius Argonautica 3) as well as Hellenistic models (Callimachus Hecale). Therefore a gradual progression towards an increasing creative freedom can be detected in Roman Republican tragedy. From Ennius, who employs Euripides as his tragic source par excellence and adheres closely to the Euripidean originals,⁶⁰ we pass to Pacuvius, who composes sequels to (Medeus) or variants on (Iliona) Euripidean tragedies, which are markedly independent from them,⁶¹ and finally to Accius, who creatively conflates his tragic predecessors (Philoctetes) or produces innovative dramatizations of mythical subject-matter drawn from Homer and non-dramatic sources, which have no dramatic antecedents (Persis, Agamemnondae, Astyanax).⁶²

1.2 Virgil's Euripides

The scholarship on the reception of Greek tragedy in the Aeneid has a long tradition. There are several studies on the Virgilian epic's appropriation of the tragic genre in general and of Euripidean drama in particular.⁶³ The tragic voice of the Aeneid has been often viewed as challenging and clashing with the poem's epic voice. This opposition can be concretized as an antagonism between the female and male gender and ultimately as "a conflict between the Aeneid's function as a public panegyric of Roman history and the valuation to be given to the

⁶⁰ Rosato 2005, 8.

⁶¹ Boyle 2006, 88.

⁶² Boyle 2006, 112.

⁶³ Some representative studies are: Fenik 1960, Zarker 1969, König 1970, Pöschl 1978, Lyne 1987, Hardie 1991, 1997, Hughes 1995, Swanepoel 1995, Panoussi 1998.

private experience of loss and grief”.⁶⁴ The “tragic” in the Aeneid focuses on the psychological state and moral impasses of the characters while constantly questioning and problematizing Aeneas’ epic mission. Virgil is a particularly significant link between Euripides and Ovid for two main reasons. First, the Aeneid constitutes an immediate Roman paradigm for Ovid’s epicization of tragic subject matter and second, many Virgilian episodes appropriating Euripidean material, such as those of Hippolytus and Polydorus, are echoed in the *Metamorphoses* and expanded into longer narratives.

The most renowned tragic episode of the Aeneid is the story of Dido, which has been labelled as a “tragic epyllion”, whose protagonist experiences a sudden *peripeteia* (“reversal”) from utter happiness to extreme emotional suffering ultimately resulting in suicide.⁶⁵ A Euripidean heroine that functions as a significant model for the characterization of Dido is Medea. The Carthaginian queen contemplating vengeance on Aeneas in Aeneid 4 by murdering his son Ascanius after her abandonment by the Trojan hero echoes Medea, who commits infanticide in order to avenge herself on Jason for deserting her for another woman.⁶⁶ It has also been suggested that Dido in Aeneid 1 reflects the Corinthian princess in Euripides’ *Medea*.⁶⁷ Venus sends to Dido her son Cupid disguised as Ascanius and bearing various gifts, including a robe and a crown. This scene recalls Medea’s dispatch of her two sons to the Corinthian princess carrying poisoned gifts, namely a robe and a crown. Medea’s envenomed presents cause the Corinthian princess to burn to death, while Cupid’s fiery embrace causes Dido to figuratively

⁶⁴ Hardie 1997, 312.

⁶⁵ Heinze 1993, 251-8, 370-3. For the “tragedy” of Dido see also Quinn 1963, Wlosok 1976, Harrison 1989, Fernandelli 2002, and Schiesaro 2008.

⁶⁶ Collard 1975.

⁶⁷ Baraz 2009.

burn with love for Aeneas, a passion which will eventually lead to her suicide. As we will see in chapter 3, Ovid follows the precedent of the Virgilian Dido in the use of this allusive technique by attributing to many of his female characters features of the Euripidean Medea. Procne and Althaea, who commit infanticide for the sake of vengeance and experience inner conflict expressed through a dramatic soliloquy echo the words and deeds of Euripides' heroine. Moreover, Deianira's desire for revenge against her erotic rival, Iole, recalls Medea's vengeful rage against the Corinthian princess.

The *Bacchae* constitutes a significant Euripidean intertext for the *Aeneid*. Many instances of Bacchic frenzy can be found in the Virgilian epic, ranging from ritual enactment to metaphorical imagery.⁶⁸ More specifically, Amata, Dido, the Sibyl, and Helen are all depicted as figurative Bacchantes or pseudo-maenads. Upon hearing the news of Aeneas' departure Dido is likened to a bacchant, a comparison which metaphorically demonstrates her frenzied state of mind: unable to fulfill her erotic passion, Dido feels an uncontrollable wrath, which is expressed as maenadic violence and is turned against her lover, since she contemplates dismembering Aeneas. Moreover, Dido in her dreams views herself as Pentheus persecuted by the Furies, a simile which alludes explicitly to the *Bacchae*. Byblis' portrayal as a figurative Bacchant in *Metamorphoses* 9 after her rejection by Caunus recalls the characterization of Dido as a maenad. The shade of Deiphobus in *Aeneid* 6 recounts to Aeneas that Helen orchestrated a fake Bacchic ritual in order to help the Greeks sack Troy and in the same book the Sibyl's prophetic ecstasy and divine possession by Apollo is portrayed as maenadic frenzy. Finally, the frenzied Amata in *Aeneid* 7, in order to obstruct her daughter's marriage to Aeneas, hides Lavinia in the woods proclaiming her a maenad and conducts a counterfeit Bacchic revel. As we will see in chapter 2,

⁶⁸ Krummen 2004, Panoussi 2009, 115-144.

Procne's disguise as a maenad and participation in a pseudo-Bacchic ritual in order to rescue her sister Philomela in Book 6 of the *Metamorphoses* alludes to the forged Bacchic rites of Amata in the *Aeneid*.

The scene of Amata's madness also evokes another Euripidean tragedy, *Heracles*.⁶⁹ Juno sends the Fury Allecto to inspire Amata with infernal madness veiled as Bacchic frenzy, so as to instigate the war between the Latins and Trojans, a scene which recalls the Euripidean drama, where Hera dispatches Iris and the chthonic deity Lyssa to fill Heracles with infernal fury resembling Bacchic madness, in order to murder his wife and children. Another allusion to Heracles can be found in *Aeneid* 5, where Juno sends Iris to madden the Trojan women so that they burn Aeneas' fleet. The Ovidian episode in *Metamorphoses* 4, where Juno dispatches the Fury Tisiphone to madden Athamas and Ino so that they murder their sons, echoes by means of double allusion the Euripidean tragedy and the Allecto-Amata scene in *Aeneid* 7.

Euripides' *Hippolytus* is a drama extensively reworked in the *Aeneid*. Virgil alludes explicitly to Euripides in the catalogue of Italian warriors *Aeneid* 7, where he presents Virbius the son of the deified Hippolytus and briefly outlines the tragic fate of the Euripidean hero. Servius notes that Virgil derived from Callimachus' *Aetia* (fr. 190) this aetiological story of Hippolytus' transferal to Italy and his identification with the Italian deity Virbius intended to explain a local taboo on horses.⁷⁰ As we will see in chapter 5, in *Metamorphoses* 15 Hippolytus transformed into the god Virbius recounts the story of his fatal chariot ride to the mourning nymph Egeria, a scene which blends by means of intertextual conflation the messenger speech of the Euripidean drama with the Virgilian vignette on Virbius. Moreover, it has been argued that

⁶⁹ Reckford 1961, Zarker 1969, Burzacchini 2002.

⁷⁰ Horsfall 2000, 494-495.

the meeting of Aeneas and Venus in Aeneid 1 reenacts the prologue of the drama.⁷¹ The goddess appears to her son disguised as a virgin huntress and Aeneas actually mistakes her for one of Diana's nymphs or for the goddess herself. The scene has a metatheatrical dimension, since Venus wears tragic buskins (*cothurni*) and recounts to Aeneas Dido's background story, a narrative which has the same structural function as Aphrodite's prologue in the *Hippolytus*, where she relates to the audience the events preceding the play. Moreover, it has been suggested that the disguise of Venus as Diana may function as a conflation of the appearance of Aphrodite in the Euripidean prologue and the epiphany of Artemis as *dea ex machina* in the *exodos*.⁷² Furthermore, Venus diverges from her Euripidean counterpart in her attitude towards honor. Aphrodite claims in the play's opening that she rejoices in being honored by mortals and thus she will punish Hippolytus, because he spurns her worship by not participating in sex and marriage. In marked contrast to Aphrodite's views, when Aeneas promises to offer sacrifices to the disguised Venus' altar if she assists him, she replies that she hardly deems herself worthy of such honors. Finally, a significant affinity between Hippolytus and Aeneas is their similar conception of god-mortal relationship. When Aeneas recognizes Venus, he reproaches her for deceiving him and complains that he cannot clasp her hand and engage in an honest discussion with her, namely he cannot have a more intimate relationship with her. This criticism leveled against Venus evokes Hippolytus' protests in the play's prologue about not being able to have a closer relationship with his patroness goddess Artemis, since he can hear her voice, but she remains invisible to him. Similarly Aeneas can hear Venus talking to him, but cannot see her in her true form, because she has assumed the guise of a virgin huntress.

⁷¹ Harrison 1972-1973, Reckford 1995-1996.

⁷² Hardie 1997, 322.

The Virgilian Dido possesses traits of both Hippolytus, in that she has taken an oath of eternal chastity after Sychaeus' death, and of Phaedra, in that she experiences an internal struggle between her desire for Aeneas and her loyalty to her dead husband. Dido yields to her desire for Aeneas when she goes out in the wild thus fulfilling Phaedra's fantasy of hunting in the mountains.⁷³ The Aeneid's evocation of Hippolytus takes the form of a ring composition, since just as the encounter of Venus and her son in Book 1 recalls the opening of the play, the episode of Camilla's death in Book 11 is a reworking of the play's exodos. Diana's narrative about the childhood of Camilla has the same function as Venus' retrospective account about Dido's past and is thus reminiscent of the prologue speech in Hippolytus. Moreover, Diana's portrayal of Camilla reveals the many common features that the Volscian princess shares with Hippolytus. They are both virgin hunters exclusively devoted to Artemis/Diana and both have affinities with Amazons, since Camilla recalls Amazon warriors, such as Penthesilea, and Hippolytus' mother was an Amazon. Hippolytus expresses his ardent devoutness to Artemis by dedicating a garland as a votive offering to her in the prologue of the Euripidean drama, while in Diana's story Camilla's father Metabus dedicated his daughter and a spear as votive offerings to Diana in order to save her life. As a result Hippolytus and Camilla are the most beloved human devotees of the goddess of hunting.⁷⁴ Despite the goddess' great fondness of them, however, she is unable to prevent their death. Diana declares that she will send her attendant nymph Opis to destroy whoever dares to kill her protégé in order to avenge her death. These words explicitly allude to the threat uttered by Artemis at the end of Euripides' tragedy, where she states that she will kill

⁷³ Hardie 1997, 322.

⁷⁴ La Penna 1988, 233.

Aphrodite's favorite (probably Adonis) as revenge for the death of Hippolytus.⁷⁵ Furthermore, both the Euripidean Artemis and Opis describe the vengeance exacted for Hippolytus' and Camilla's death respectively as an honor to them and in both texts the goddess of hunting bestows posthumous honors on her beloved mortal: Artemis will establish a premarital ritual in Troezen in honor of Hippolytus, while Diana will offer herself burial to Camilla in her country. Finally, Camilla's last words to her fellow warrior Acca, whom she treats as her sister, echo the final utterances of the dying Hippolytus to his father Theseus. The Hippolytean characteristics of Camilla (chastity, hunting, devotion to Diana, etc.) are also shared by many Ovidian characters, such as Daphne, Callisto, and Pomona.

The Virgilian epic also draws extensively on Euripides' Trojan plays. The prologue of the Trojan Women, where Athena asks Poseidon to wreck the Greek ships on their voyage home in order to take vengeance on them for Ajax' rape of Cassandra, is evoked in the opening of the Aeneid, where Juno remembers that Minerva had sated her thirst for revenge by sinking the Greek fleet and thus following her example she induces Aeolus to unleash a storm against the Trojan ships sailing to Italy in retribution for the Judgment of Paris and so that Rome, the rival of Carthage, may not be founded.⁷⁶ The Euripidean prologue is again echoed and inverted in Aeneid 5, where Venus assuming the role of the Euripidean Athena persuades Poseidon not to destroy, but protect the Trojan fleet.⁷⁷ As we will see in chapter 2, Ovid evokes by means of double allusion both the Euripidean and Virgilian intertexts by having Juno in Metamorphoses 4 mentally rehearse Bacchus' vengeance on Pentheus, a recollection which spurs her to pursue her

⁷⁵ La Penna 1988, 242ff.

⁷⁶ Fernandelli 1997; Hughes 2003, 75.

⁷⁷ Hughes 2003, 81.

own vengeance against Ino and Athamas by sending the Fury Tisiphone to inspire them with frenzy, so that they kill their offspring.

The scene in Aeneid 5 where Juno sends Iris, disguised as a Trojan woman, Beroe, to incite the women to furor, so that they burn the Trojan ships, has been shown to reflect the Trojan Women at the levels of thought, diction, and imagery. Virgil's Trojan women, who are represented mourning in a desolate beach next to a fleet resemble Euripides' captive Trojan women, who are depicted in the same situation and this affinity is strengthened by their common hatred for the ships and the sea.⁷⁸ Moreover, Iris/Beroe claims that she saw in her dream Cassandra giving her a torch and asking her to burn the Trojan ships, an image which recalls the Euripidean Cassandra's emergence from the women's tents brandishing a torch towards the Greek ships and singing an ill-omened wedding song for her forthcoming "marriage" with Agamemnon.⁷⁹ Finally, after the Trojan women have set fire to the ships the messenger Eumelus goes to report to the Trojan men what has happened. This scene may allude to the episode in the Euripidean play, where the messenger Talthybius sees smoke coming from the Trojan tents and suspects that the Trojan women have set fire on their own quarters.

Euripides' Hecuba is reworked at the opening of Aeneid 3, where Aeneas hears the voice of the ghost of Polydorus, the son of Priam, who was treacherously murdered by the Thracian king Polymestor.⁸⁰ The shade asks Aeneas for a proper burial and the Trojans perform his funeral rites. Furthermore, Virgil employs the technique of "fragmentation" in that he transposes elements from the Polydorus episode to the story of Sychaeus in Aeneid 1. Polymestor and

⁷⁸ Hughes 2003, 74-75.

⁷⁹ Hughes 2003, 76-77.

⁸⁰ Fernandelli 1996.

Pygmalion murder Polydorus and Sychaeus respectively out of their greed for gold and both attempt to conceal their crime from the victim's relatives, namely Hecuba and Dido. Just as the ghost of Polydorus appears in Hecuba's sleep so as to warn her of Polymestor's treachery, the shade of Sychaeus appears in Dido's dream in order to reveal to her Pygmalion's abominable deed. Finally, the ghost of Sychaeus urges Dido to sail to Libya in order to protect her from Pygmalion and discloses to her the location of a hidden treasure in order to aid her in her voyage. This scene fuses and transforms two different Euripidean episodes: Priam's dispatch of Polydorus to Thrace with treasure in order to save him from the Greeks and Hecuba's false revelation to Polymestor of the site of a concealed treasure trove so as to lure him into a death trap. As we will see in chapter 5, Ovid's version of the story of Hecuba, Polyxena, and Polydorus in *Metamorphoses* 13 blends by means of intertextual conflation Euripides' Hecuba with Virgil's Polydorus episode.

Aeneas' meeting with Andromache in Buthrotum in *Aeneid* 3 bears clear reminiscences of Euripides' *Andromache*.⁸¹ Andromache recounts to Aeneas the ambush and murder of Pyrrhus by Orestes, which is dramatized in the second half of the Euripidean play. Furthermore, the Virgilian description of Pyrrhus' invasion into Priam's palace and his butchering of the Trojan king in *Aeneid* 2 alludes to and "corrects" the Euripidean messenger speech recounting the ambush and slaughter of Neoptolemus by Orestes and the Delphians. Euripides portrays Neoptolemus in very positive terms. He lets his grandfather Peleus rule Thessaly instead of usurping the throne for himself and he goes to Delphi to ask pardon from Apollo for his previous insult to the god, when he asked from him satisfaction for the killing of his father Achilles. Although he visits Apollo's temple as a repenting worshipper, he is treacherously ambushed and

⁸¹ Grimm 1967, Gibson 1999.

killed by the Delphians, who have been deceived by Orestes' false accusations against Neoptolemus. The Virgilian Pyrrhus, on the other hand, is depicted as wicked and sacrilegious, since he impiously slaughters Priam on the altar of Zeus Herkeios, where he has found refuge as a suppliant.

Virgil's Sinon episode is particularly rich in Euripidean intertexts. Sinon's arrival to Troy as captive of a group of herdsmen, who bring him bound to Priam, echoes by means of double allusion Euripides' *Alexander* and its Latin adaptation by Ennius, where herdsmen similarly bring Alexander/Paris in fetters to the Trojan king.⁸² Both heroes come before Priam under a false identity: Paris is thought by everyone (including himself) to be a slave, but is really the son of the Trojan king, while Sinon assumes the guise of an exile, but in reality is a Greek spy intending to deceive the Trojans. Moreover, both Paris and Sinon are ominous figures, since they are instrumental in Troy's destruction. Paris persuades Priam to allow him to participate in the athletic games, which leads to the revelation of his true identity and the reunion with his family. This development will have disastrous consequences for Troy, since he is going to cause the Trojan war and ultimately the downfall of his city by abducting Helen. Sinon deceives Priam and the Trojans into bringing the Wooden Horse into the city, a decision which will result in Troy's fall.

Sinon's tale about Palamedes by means of which he induces the Trojans to spare his life and accept him as one of their own is modeled on Euripides' *Philoctetes*. The Virgilian Sinon functions as the alter ego of the Euripidean Odysseus. Both have a mission, which if successful, will eventually lead to Troy's destruction. More specifically, Odysseus sails to Lemnos in order to retrieve the bow of Heracles from Philoctetes, since according to a prophecy Troy would not

⁸² Albis 1993.

fall without it. Sinon's objective is to persuade the Trojans to bring the Wooden Horse into the city, which leads to the fall of the city. Moreover, both employ cunning and treachery in order to achieve their goal. Just as Odysseus has his appearance transformed by Athena and pretends to be an outcast from the Greeks, Sinon assumes the false identity of a Greek exile. The disguised Odysseus recounts to Philoctetes the counterfeit story that "Odysseus" plotted the death of Palamedes and afterwards attempted to destroy the disguised Odysseus, who he provoked his enmity by protesting about Palamedes' death, but he managed to escape. Virgil reworks this false tale and puts it into the mouth of Sinon, who asserts that, after Ulysses contrived the killing of Palamedes, he also devised the sacrifice of Sinon, because he threatened to take revenge on him, but he miraculously escaped.⁸³ Both Sinon and Odysseus ultimately succeed in gaining their victims' sympathy and confidence by professing to have suffered the hatred and abuse of "Odysseus".⁸⁴

Sinon's account concerning Palamedes may also contain some allusions to Euripides' Palamedes. Sinon pretends to be a relative of Palamedes, namely his cousin, a role that corresponds to that of Oeax in the Euripidean play, who is Palamedes' brother. Oeax informs Palamedes' father Nauplius about his son's death and at the end of the play he comes to the Greek camp and threatens to take revenge on the Greeks. This scene may be echoed in the Virgilian text, where Sinon claims that he threatened to take vengeance on Ulysses for the death of Palamedes. Furthermore, just as Odysseus attempts to kill Oeax, but he manages to escape and possibly transforms into a sea deity, similarly his Virgilian counterpart plots the sacrifice of Sinon, who also succeeds in escaping death. Therefore, the Virgil's Sinon may be combining the

⁸³ Ganiban 2008, 65-67.

⁸⁴ Smith 1999, 509.

roles of Euripides' *Oeax* and *Nauplius*. It has also been observed that Sinon's cunning is reminiscent of Odysseus' trickery against Palamedes, since just as Odysseus presents a forged letter as evidence for Palamedes' guilt and accompanies it with a false accusation of treason, which brings about his death, Sinon "produces" the Wooden Horse and attaches to it a deceptive tale, which leads to the fall of Troy.⁸⁵

Sinon's story about his alleged sacrifice is reminiscent of Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*. Sinon falsely alleges that Ulysses plotted his "sacrifice", so that the adverse winds, which averted the return of the Greek fleet to their homeland, would become favorable. He managed, however, to miraculously escape from the Greeks in the nick of time. This tale echoes the Euripidean tragedy, where Iphigenia is about to be sacrificed by Ulysses' ruse, so that the opposing winds in Aulis would abate and Greek fleet would sail to Troy, but she is saved at the last moment by the divine intervention of Artemis, who replaces her with a deer. Thus Sinon usurps the role of Iphigenia as a sacrificial victim, which narrowly escapes death. Furthermore, the Virgilian Calchas, who is instrumental in the scheme to kill Sinon, is compelled by Ulysses to reveal to the Greek assembly the forged prophecy dictating the sacrifice of Sinon, something that seals his fate. This scene may allude to the first episode of *IA*, where Agamemnon says that he is forced to sacrifice Iphigenia, because he is afraid that either Calchas or Odysseus, who are privy to the secret prophecy about Iphigenia's sacrifice, are going to reveal it to the Greek army, who will demand the sacrifice and turn to violence against Agamemnon and Menelaus if they try to prevent it.

Finally, what has not been observed by scholars is that Sinon's narrative concerning the theft of the Palladium and the Wooden Horse evokes Euripides' *Iphigenia among the Taurians*.

⁸⁵ Ganiban 2008, 67.

Iphigenia and Sinon use deception to achieve their goal: Iphigenia tricks king Thoas, in order to escape with her brother Orestes, while Sinon dupes the Trojans, so as to bring the Wooden Horse into Troy. The connective link between the two scenes is that both Iphigenia and Sinon recount a false story concerning the polluted statue of a goddess. More specifically, Iphigenia asserts that the statue of Artemis has been defiled by Orestes and Pylades, because they have committed matricide, and that she must bring it to the shore in order to purify it. Sinon alleges that the Wooden Horse is a votive offering to Minerva, in order to appease her wrath, since Odysseus and Diomedes stole the Palladium from her temple and polluted it with their defiling hands. He then urges the Trojans to bring the Horse into Troy falsely claiming that, if they admit it into their city, it will render them invincible and they will invade and conquer Greece. Furthermore, Iphigenia describes the supernatural effects of the statue's aversion to the polluted strangers: the statue moves from its place and closes its eyes. Similarly Sinon claims that Minerva's anger was manifested by uncanny signs, namely the sweating of the Palladium, earthquake, flashing light, and appearance of the goddess herself. Finally, both Iphigenia and Sinon try to win the trust of their victims, Thoas and the Trojans respectively, by professing loathing for their enemies: Iphigenia pretends that she hates all Greeks because they sacrificed her and similarly Sinon feigns enmity for the Greeks because of their attempt to "sacrifice" him. Therefore, just as Iphigenia manages to escape from Thoas by persuading him to let her take the "polluted" statue of Artemis to the beach for cleansing, Sinon tricks the Trojans into bringing the Wooden Horse inside the city by presenting it as a votive offering in atonement for the "polluted" statue of Minerva. The Judgment of Arms, which opens Book 13 of the *Metamorphoses*, contains allusions to Virgil's Sinon episode and through the filter of the Virgilian intertext it echoes

multiple Euripidean tragedies, such as *Palamedes*, *Philoctetes*, *Scyrians*, *Telephus*, and *Iphigenia in Aulis*.

Last but not least, the encounter between Aeneas and Helen in *Aeneid* 2 is highly evocative of Euripides' *Orestes*.⁸⁶ After witnessing the slaughter of Priam by Pyrrhus, Aeneas catches sight of Helen and feels a burning desire to kill her, so as to take vengeance on her for causing the downfall of Troy. This scene recalls Pylades' plan in the Euripidean tragedy that he and Orestes murder Helen in order to avenge themselves on Menelaus for not supporting them in the Argive assembly, which decreed Orestes and Electra's death sentence. Moreover, just as the Euripidean Helen is hiding inside Agamemnon's place in order to avoid the public outcry against her for being the cause of the Trojan war, her Virgilian counterpart conceals herself in Vesta's shrine inside the palace of Priam fearing the retribution of both Greeks and Trojans. Finally, Venus' intervention, which prevents Aeneas from murdering Helen echoes Apollo's epiphany in *Orestes*, who snatches Helen away from her killers and proclaims her deification.

1.3 Euripidean tragedy and the Ovidian corpus

The final section comprises a brief survey of the appropriation of Euripidean drama by Ovid throughout his poetic career. The *Metamorphoses* is the Ovidian work which engages in the most complex and rich intertextual dialogue with Euripidean tragedy, but the numerous allusions to Euripides in Ovid's other works reflect his life-long preoccupation with the Greek tragedian. In the *Amores* the most explicit instances of the Ovid's engagement with tragedy are found in the first and last elegy of Book 3. In the metapoetic *Amores* 3.1 the personified Tragedy and Elegy

⁸⁶ Reckford 1981; Egan 1996. The authenticity of the "Helen episode" has long been the subject of scholarly controversy. For a recent discussion of this issue see Horsfall 2008, 553-567.

appear in Ovid's dream and vie with one another each claiming him as her own poet. Ovid decides to remain an elegiac poet, but only for a little while. In elegy 3.15 he finally bids farewell to elegy and embraces tragedy, claiming that Bacchus has inspired him by hitting him on the head with a thyrsus. This poem foreshadows Ovid's composition of his only tragedy *Medea*, which was modeled on Euripides' homonymous drama and of which only two lines survive.⁸⁷ Furthermore, in *Amores* 2.14 (29-34) Ovid cites *Medea* and *Procne* as mythological paradigms of infanticide and he will later treat these two tragic mothers in detail in Books 6 and 7 of the *Metamorphoses*.

The *Heroides* are a collection of love letters and thus the genres to which it mainly belongs are love elegy and epistolography. It also draws, however, on epic and tragedy as sources of mythological subject-matter and is particularly indebted to the tragic mode of dramatic monologue. The collection contains a number of epistles that rework Euripidean intertexts, namely *Phaedra's* letter to *Hippolytus* (*Heroides* 4),⁸⁸ *Hypsipyle's* letter to *Jason* (*Heroides* 6), *Canace's* letter to *Macareus* (*Heroides* 11),⁸⁹ *Medea's* letter to *Jason* (*Heroides* 12),⁹⁰ and *Laodamia's* letter to *Protesilaus* (*Heroides* 13), whose models are *Hippolytus*, *Medea*, *Aeolus*, *Medea*, and *Protesilaus* respectively. These epistles constitute very significant mediating intratexts for the *Metamorphoses* in its intertextual dialogue with Euripides and will be discussed in detail in the relevant chapters. More specifically, the letters of *Medea* and *Hypsipyle* to *Jason* with their conflation of the Euripidean and Apollonian *Medea* will be analyzed in relation to the representation of *Medea* in *Metamorphoses* 7. *Byblis's* incestuous love

⁸⁷ For some thoughts on Ovid's lost *Medea* see Nikolaidis 1985.

⁸⁸ Davis 1995.

⁸⁹ Williams 1992, Casali 1995, 1998, Philippides 1996.

⁹⁰ Knox 1986, Schmitzer 2003.

for her brother alludes to both Euripides' *Aeolus* and the Ovidian epistle of Canace to Macareus. Finally, Ovid's portrayal of the illicit passions of Scylla, Byblis, and Myrrha blends elements from Euripides' *Hippolytus* and the letter of Phaedra to Hippolytus.

In the *Ars Amatoria* and the *Remedia Amoris* Euripidean echoes can be detected in poetic catalogues in accordance with the didactic nature of the works. In *Ars* 1.283-342 a list of women with violent and unnatural passions comprises the characters of Medea, Pasiphae, Aerope, and Phaedra, all well-known heroines of the Euripidean dramas *Medea*, *Cretans*, *Cretan Women*, and *Hippolytus* respectively. Conversely, in *Ars* 3.7-28 a catalogue of women loyal to their husbands includes Laodameia, Alcestis, and Evadne, who are central female characters in Euripides' *Protesilaus*, *Alcestis*, and *Suppliant Women*. Finally, in *Remedia* 55-68 a list of women, whose fatal erotic passions could have been healed by the poet, contains again Medea, Pasiphae, and Phaedra.

In the *Fasti* there are few but interesting traces of Euripides. The history of animal sacrifice in *Fasti* 1.349-456 includes the story of the substitution of a deer for Iphigenia as a sacrificial victim, a story dramatized in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*. In *Fasti* 2.35-46 Ovid treats the subject of purification from the pollution of murder and cites as examples Peleus, Medea, and Alcmaeon's murder of their kin and their later purification, stories which are dramatized in the homonymous Euripidean plays. In *Fasti* 5.303-311, a series of mythological exempla illustrating mortal negligence of the gods and subsequent divine punishment, comprises the hybris of Oeneus and Agamemnon towards Artemis and Hippolytus' outrage towards Venus, stories which were recounted in Euripides' *Meleager*, *Iphigenia in Aulis* and *Hippolytus* respectively. Ovid narrates the story of Athamas and Ino's madness in *Fasti* 6.483-528, probably drawing on Euripides' *Ino* as one of his sources. Finally, in *Fasti* 6.733-768 we find

accounts of Hippolytus' death and resurrection by Aesculapius and of Glaucus' revival by Polyidus, which was dramatized in Euripides' lost Polyidus.

The most conspicuous case of Euripidean reception in Ovid's exile works is found in *Epistula Ex Ponto* 3.2, where the poet compares his loyal friendship with Cotta to that of Orestes and Pylades and then proceeds to recount a highly condensed elegiac version of Euripides' *Iphigenia among the Taurians*.⁹¹ Furthermore, Ovid briefly returns to the figure of Medea in *Tristia* 3.9, where he recounts Medea's gruesome dismemberment of Apsyrtus as an aetion explaining the name of his place of exile, Tomi (from Greek τέμνω 'to cut'). Ovid significantly follows the tragic version of the story alluded to in Euripides' *Medea* and according to which Medea kills her brother and not the Apollonian version in *Argonautica* 4, where Jason is the murderer of Apsyrtus. These associations of Ovid's site of relegation with Euripidean intertexts convert it into a truly 'tragic' landscape and thus render his exile poetry more genuinely tragic than Euripides' work itself.⁹²

Finally, it will be useful to identify and categorize the tragic elements appropriated by Ovid in the *Metamorphoses*. Curley divides the "tragic code", namely the coherent system of rules that define the tragic genre, in three sub-codes: the formal, narrative, and functional code.⁹³ Following in part Curley's classification I distinguish four categories of tragic elements in the Ovidian epic. The first category comprises narrative elements, namely mythical subject-matter and tragic plot patterns. The second group encompasses dramatic devices and concepts, such as pathos, dramatic irony, Aristotelian notions (anagnorisis, peripeteia, hamartia, aporia) and

⁹¹ Ingleheart 2010.

⁹² Casali 2009, 37.

⁹³ Curley 1999, 11-12.

rhetorical elements (apostrophe, paradox, a fortiori examples, and arguments from probability). The third category contains metatheatrical elements, that is self-referential markers which signal the performative and theatrical aspects of Ovid's narrative. One such metatheatrical pointer is the simile in Book 3 comparing the sown men emerging from the earth to the figures depicted on the stage curtain, which rise from the ground, when the curtain is raised (111-14).⁹⁴

Finally, the fourth group consists of formal elements, namely dramatic setting and conventional components of a tragedy, such as prologue speech, *deus ex machina*, dramatic soliloquy, messenger report, choral lyric, and agon. The tragic messenger speech with its third person narrative and use of epic diction and imagery is the dramatic component that bears the closest affinity to epic and thus it is very frequently incorporated in the *Metamorphoses*. In some cases a messenger speech is reconfigured as epic narrative. The accounts of Pentheus' dismemberment, Polyxena's sacrifice, and Polymestor's blinding are indicative examples of Ovid's epic rewriting of the tragic messenger's report. Often, however, an epic narrative is explicitly signaled as a messenger speech, as in the cases of Acoetes' story to Pentheus in Book 3, Onetus' report to Peleus in Book 11, and Hippolytus' narrative to Egeria in Book 15, which bear clear reminiscences of Euripidean messenger speeches.⁹⁵ Another dramatic element, which is appropriated and transformed by the Ovidian epic, is choral lyric. The story of Cadmus in *Metamorphoses* 3.1-137 echoes the second stasimon of the *Phoenician Women* (638-675), which recounts Cadmus' founding of Thebes, the killing of Ares' serpent, and the sowing of the serpent's teeth.⁹⁶ Moreover, the choral song in *IT* about Alcyone's lament for Ceyx (1089-95) is

⁹⁴ Hardie 1990, 226 n. 14.

⁹⁵ For an analysis of the reworking of the first messenger speech of *IT* in Onetus' report to Peleus see Coe 2010.

⁹⁶ Keith 2002a, 263.

expanded by Ovid into a long narrative on Ceyx and Alcyone that takes up the second half of Book 11 (410-748).⁹⁷ The impact of the Euripidean monologue is manifest in many dramatic soliloquies of the *Metamorphoses*, such as those of Medea, Scylla, Althaea, Byblis, and Myrrha. An example of a *deus ex machina* can be found in *Metamorphoses* 3, where Cadmus having slain Ares' serpent hears the voice of Minerva foretelling his future transformation into a serpent (97-98), a prediction which evokes Dionysus' prophesy to Cadmus as *deus ex machina* at the end of Euripides' *Bacchae* (1330).⁹⁸ Finally, a characteristically Euripidean dramatic component is the rhetorical agon. In the *Metamorphoses* such an agon is found in Book 13, namely the Judgment for Achilles' arms. Agonistic features can also be found in the artistic contests of the Pierids with the Muses in Book 5 and of Minerva with Arachne in Book 6.

⁹⁷ Coo 2010, 101-103.

⁹⁸ Keith 2002a, 263.

Chapter 2

Liber adest: Dionysiac epiphany and maenadic frenzy

The central focus of this chapter is the reception of the *Bacchae* in the *Metamorphoses*. The Euripidean tragedy's pervasive presence throughout Ovid's "Thebaid" (3.1-4.603), which traces the rise and fall of the house of Cadmus, is evidenced not only by its extensive reworking in the Pentheus episode (3.511-733), but also by the fact that many marginal stories of the drama are developed in the Ovidian epic into full-fledged narratives. Cadmus' foundation of Thebes and his creation of the *spartoi* opening the third book (3.1-137) are mentioned by the Euripidean Tiresias (170-172) and the play's chorus (264, 538-544) respectively.⁹⁹ After killing Ares' serpent Cadmus hears the disembodied voice of Minerva predicting his future transformation into a snake (3.97-98), a divination which recalls Dionysus' prophesy to Cadmus as *deus ex machina* in the *exodos* of the *Bacchae* (1330-1332).¹⁰⁰ Ovid in fact brings his Theban cycle to its conclusion with a detailed account of the metamorphosis of Cadmus and Harmonia into serpents (4.563-603).

Another story, which is only alluded to in the Euripidean play, but becomes an autonomous narrative in the *Metamorphoses*, is that of Actaeon (3.138-252). In the first episode Cadmus reminds Pentheus of the tragic fate of his cousin as a cautionary exemplum, so that he may cease his *hybris* towards Dionysus: Actaeon boasted that he was superior to Artemis in hunting and thus he was punished by the goddess by being devoured by his own hounds (337-

⁹⁹ Keith has observed (2002a, 263) that the Ovidian account of Cadmus' founding of Thebes, his slaying of Ares' serpent, and the sowing of its teeth evokes the second stasimon of Euripides' *Phoenician Women* (638-675).

¹⁰⁰ Keith 2002a, 263.

341).¹⁰¹ Ovid, on the other hand, drawing on Athena's prophecy of Actaeon's doom in Callimachus' *Bath of Pallas* (107-118) as his primary source alters the type of Actaeon's offense, since Diana punishes the young hunter for accidentally stumbling on her while bathing by transforming him into a stag and he is soon afterwards torn to pieces by his dogs. Moreover, as we shall see in the next section, Ovid following his Euripidean and Callimachean models weaves together the story of Actaeon with that of Pentheus, another Theban youth who suffers dismemberment for his outrage towards a divinity. Finally, the story of Semele recounted by Ovid immediately after that of Actaeon (3.253-325) is often cited in the drama. For example, Dionysus in the prologue recalls at the sight of his mother's tomb the incineration of Semele by Zeus' thunder brought about by the plot of Hera (1-9).

The appropriation of the *Bacchae* will be examined in three episodes of the Ovidian epic: Pentheus (3.511-733), the daughters of Minyas (4.1-415), and Orpheus (11.1-84). The story of the Theban king's impious resistance to Bacchus leading to his dismemberment by the maenads draws on Euripides' play as its main source in terms of structure, themes, scenic evocations, and verbal reminiscences. At the same time Ovid fuses his Euripidean model with other texts through intertextual conflation: the embedded narrative of the Tyrrhenian sailors is modeled on the Homeric Hymn to Dionysus; the description of Pentheus' dismemberment assimilates elements from Theocritus' *Idyll* 26; finally, many scenes of the narrative echo episodes of the *Aeneid* to the effect that Ovid's characters are reminiscent of multiple Virgilian figures.

Ovid also makes use of the allusive technique of "fragmentation", namely the dismantling of a Euripidean play down to its basic elements and their transposition to various episodes in the *Metamorphoses*. In particular, he transplants aspects of the *Bacchae* into the tales

¹⁰¹ A further reference to Actaeon is found at the end of the drama, where Cadmus informs Agave that she and her fellow maenads dismembered Pentheus at the same place, where his cousin was rent by his dogs (1291).

of the Minyads and Orpheus, which like the Pentheus story involve a human hybris towards Bacchus incurring divine retribution: the daughters of Minyas spurn the god by refusing to take part in his festival and are consequently metamorphosed into bats, while the Thracian maenads are transformed into oak trees for impiously murdering Orpheus, who is Bacchus' priest. The Roman poet grafts into the Minyads story features of the *Bacchae* that he did not previously incorporate in the Pentheus episode. As we shall see, Euripidean echoes can be detected in the description of the Minyads' hybris, in the Bacchic hymn sung by the Theban female worshippers, as well as in the god's epiphany to the impious sisters. Moreover, there is indirect reception of Euripides through intratextual conflation, in that Ovid transfers many elements from his own Pentheus narrative into the tale of the Minyads.

The primary intertext for the narrative of Orpheus' death (11.1-84) is Virgil's *Georgics* (4.453-527). Ovid, however, often deviates from his Roman predecessor evoking Euripides instead. I will attempt to demonstrate that the description of Orpheus' sparagmos blends by means of intertextual conflation the Virgilian account of the bard's demise with Euripides' *Bacchae*, which relates the dismemberment of another victim of maenadic furor. More specifically, Ovid appropriates elements from the play's second stasimon and its two messenger speeches through "fragmentation" and at the same time inserts into the Orpheus episode aspects from his own Pentheus narrative by means of intratextual conflation. The final section of the chapter explores Ovid's depiction of Procne, Medea, and Byblis as "maenads" echoing the Virgilian portrayal of Dido and Amata as "Bacchants".

2.1 Pentheus

The Pentheus narrative, which concludes the third book of the *Metamorphoses* (511-733), engages with a great variety of intertexts.¹⁰² Ovid's primary source is Euripides' *Bacchae*, which dramatizes the conflict between Dionysus and the king of Thebes. The Roman poet signals his dialogue with the Greek tragedian through thematic affinities, structural parallels, scenic allusions, and verbal echoes. Euripides' own model was Aeschylus' *Pentheus*, of which survives only a single line, so that it is impossible to know whether Ovid himself appropriated any elements from it.¹⁰³ The epic poet blends the Euripidean play with other literary antecedents by means of intertextual conflation and at the same time introduces his own innovations, thus creating a highly original and multifaceted narrative. The other main Greek intertexts of the Ovidian episode are the Homeric Hymn to Dionysus, upon which is patterned Acoetes' story about Bacchus and the Tyrrhenian sailors, and Theocritus' Idyll 26 entitled *Λῆναι ἢ Βάκχαι*, an epyllion with hymnic conclusion, which is evoked in the scene of Pentheus' dismemberment.

The question of Ovid's sources in the Pentheus story is further complicated if we take into account that apart from the aforementioned Greek predecessors he may also have derived material from two Roman Republican tragedies, namely Pacuvius' *Pentheus* (or *Bacchae*) and Accius' *Bacchae*, which in turn drew on Euripides' drama. The scant remains of these dramas, however, do not permit us to draw any safe inferences about the extent of Ovid's debt to them. Nineteen fragments survive from Accius' play, while the only attestations to the existence of the Pacuvian drama, from which not a single fragment is extant, are offered by Servius and Servius

¹⁰² Recent treatments of the episode include James 1991-1993, Feldherr 1997, Keith 2002a, Janan 2004, 2009, and McNamara 2010.

¹⁰³ Radt 1985, 298-299.

auctus, both of whom mention that in Pacuvius' tragedy Pentheus was seized with madness (ad Aen. 4.469). Servius auctus offers a summary of the Pentheus myth, in which it is not Bacchus himself, but his attendant Acoetes, who is imprisoned by the Theban king. It has been suggested that this synopsis reflects the plot of Pacuvius' Pentheus and that Ovid assumed the character of Acoetes from the Republican play. Other scholars have noted, however, that Servius auctus' abridgement does not include the motif of Pentheus' frenzy attributed to the Pacuvian drama and that it evokes closely the language and content of the Metamorphoses narrative thus arguing that it is in fact based on the Ovidian treatment of myth.¹⁰⁴

Last but not least, another significant Roman intertext is Virgil's Aeneid, a work with which the Metamorphoses engages in a complex and ceaseless intertextual dialogue. The frequent verbal reminiscences, thematic echoes, and scenic evocations of the Aeneid reveal the constant lurking presence of a Virgilian subtext in Ovid's Pentheus episode. In particular, the opening scene between Pentheus and Tiresias evokes Pyrrhus' encounter with Priam and Turnus' confrontation with Allecto; Pentheus' harangue to the Thebans recalls Laocoon's speech to the Trojans and Turnus' patriotic exhortations to the Rutulians; Acoetes' cunning deception of the Theban king echoes Sinon's trickery of the Trojans; the Theban king's impiety towards the gods and penchant for torture make him resemble Mezentius; Pentheus' portrayal as a fierce war horse is reminiscent of Turnus' march to battle and Dido's depiction as a frenzied Bacchant; finally, Agave's slaughter of Pentheus reenacts Pyrrhus' murder of king Priam.

Therefore, Ovid employs both types of intertextual conflation, in that he merges Euripides' Bacchae with pre-Euripidean material (Homeric Hymn to Dionysus) as well as with Hellenistic and Roman intermediate models (Theocritus, Pacuvius, Accius, and Virgil). The

¹⁰⁴ For a discussion of this question see Schierl 2006, 419-420.

second type involves the use of the so-called “double allusion”, whereby Ovid evokes the Euripidean drama both directly and indirectly through the Hellenistic and Roman intertexts, which may in turn echo the Greek original. The Ovidian narrative thus emerges as an intricate palimpsest of intertexts bearing the poet’s own seal. The Pentheus story falls into four scenes, each of which corresponds to an episode or combination of episodes of Euripides’ *Bacchae*. In the opening scene (3.511-527) the seer Tiresias is mocked by Pentheus and predicts the Theban king’s deadly fate. This encounter fuses elements from Dionysus’ prologue (1-63) and the first episode (170-369) of the Euripidean drama, where Pentheus and the prophet engage in an agon-like debate on the worship of Dionysus. Furthermore, as we shall see, the confrontation between Tiresias and the Theban king reenacts the clash between Oedipus and the seer in Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus* (300-462), while Tiresias’ prophecy to Pentheus about his coming doom is highly reminiscent of Athena’s prediction concerning Actaeon’s fate in Callimachus’ *Bath of Pallas* (107-120). The second scene (3.528-571) consists of Pentheus’ harangue to the Theban people, whereby he vainly attempts to persuade them to reject the Bacchic cult and take up arms against the god. This speech blends features from the Theban king’s diatribe against Dionysus in the first episode of Euripides’ play (215-247) and his mustering of the Theban troops for an expedition against the Bacchantes in the fourth episode (778-786). In the third scene (3.572-700) Acoetes, an attendant of the god, is brought in fetters before Pentheus and recounts the story of Bacchus and the Tyrrhenian sailors. This scene constitutes a conflation of the second episode of the *Bacchae* (434-518), where Pentheus questions and imprisons the captured Lydian stranger, and the first messenger speech, in which a herdsman relates to Pentheus how he and his fellow shepherds tried unsuccessfully to capture Agave (677-774). Ovid has ingeniously replaced this report with the inserted narrative of the Tyrrhenian sailors based on the Homeric hymn to the

effect that Acoetes plays simultaneously the roles of the Homeric helmsman, the Lydian stranger, and the Euripidean herdsman. Finally, the fourth scene (3.701-733), in which the epic narrator recounts the dismemberment of Pentheus by the Bacchants, is modeled on the play's second messenger speech (1024-1152) and at the same time incorporates elements from Theocritus' Idyll 26.

2.1.1 An unheeded prophecy

The Pentheus episode opens with the confrontation between the prophet Tiresias and the Theban king. Although the seer is esteemed by everyone, Pentheus alone spurns his prophetic powers and cruelly taunts him about his blindness. Tiresias replies by pronouncing a dire prophecy of Pentheus' imminent death at the hands of the Bacchants.

Pentheus is depicted in a negative light from the very outset, echoing his Euripidean counterpart. He is characterized as "scoffer of the gods" (3.514 *contemptor superum*), a designation which corresponds to that of the Euripidean Pentheus as θεομάχος ("god fighter") (45 ὄς θεομαχεῖ τὰ κατ' ἐμέ).¹⁰⁵ It has also been observed that this description of Pentheus makes him resemble Mezentius, who is branded in the *Aeneid* as a "scorner of the gods" (7.648 *contemptor divum*, 8.7 *contemptor deum*).¹⁰⁶ This implicit comparison to the Virgilian tyrant serves to portray the Theban king as an oppressive and godless autocrat. Ovid's depiction of Pentheus as an aggressive, militarist, masculine, and patriotic despot until his very downfall constitutes a significant deviation from Euripides, where the Theban king undergoes a

¹⁰⁵ Bömer 1969, v. 3.513; Barchiesi 2007, v. 3.514.

¹⁰⁶ Bömer 1969, v. 3.513; Anderson 1997, v. 3.514; Barchiesi 2007, v. 3.514.

transformation from tyrannical sovereign to disguised maenad completely under Dionysus' control.¹⁰⁷

Ovid's portrayal of Tiresias is much more traditional than that of Euripides.¹⁰⁸ The Greek tragedian diverges from the customary depiction of the seer by downplaying his standard prophetic role and transposing the knowledge of the future from the diviner to Dionysus himself in the prologue. Ovid, on the other hand, conforms to the typical presentation of Tiresias in other tragedies as the seer par excellence. Pentheus' mockery of Tiresias' prophetic utterings may indirectly recall the Euripidean hero's insolent derision towards his grandfather Cadmus when he sees him dressed in Bacchic apparel.¹⁰⁹ But neither Pentheus' polemic against Tiresias' prophetic abilities nor his taunting of the seer's blindness (3.515-516), which both belong to the tragic topos of the conflict between tyrant and prophet, have any precedent in Euripides. Ovid's immediate model both for Pentheus' taunts and for Tiresias' prophetic response is Sophocles' Oedipus Tyrannus (370-376, 413, 447-462), where another Theban king, who disputes Tiresias' power of divination and mocks his blindness, is eventually punished with blindness himself not only mental, like Pentheus, but also physical.¹¹⁰

Tiresias responds to Pentheus' insults by uttering an ominous prophecy: Bacchus will soon arrive in Thebes, but the Theban king will not honor him and thus will be dismembered by his female kin (3.517-528). The seer replies sarcastically to the king's taunts about his blindness by opening his prediction with the comment that Pentheus would be blessed if he also was

¹⁰⁷ Barchiesi 2007, 208.

¹⁰⁸ Barchiesi 2007, vv. 3.511-512.

¹⁰⁹ Met. 3.513-514 praesagaque *ridet* verba senis; Ba. 249-251 ὀρῶ πατέρα τε μητρὸς τῆς ἐμῆς, πολλὸν γέλωσιν, νάρθηκι βακχεύοντ', 322-323 ἐγὼ (i.e. Tiresias) μὲν οὖν καὶ Κάδμος, ὃν σὺ διαγελάεις, κισσῶι τ' ἐρεψόμεσθα καὶ χορεύσομεν.

¹¹⁰ Barchiesi 2007, vv. 3.515-525.

deprived of his sight, so that he would not behold the Bacchic rites and closing it with the ironic remark that Pentheus will lament the fact that Tiresias despite his blindness has “seen” too well what will happen to him. This prophecy not only sketches with precision the sequence of events leading to Pentheus’ death, namely his rejection of Bacchus, beholding of the forbidden Bacchic rites, and dismemberment by his female relatives, but also introduces the theme of sight and viewing which is integral to Euripides’ *Bacchae* and to the third book of the *Metamorphoses* as a whole. Tiresias is physically blind but possesses keen mental vision, whereas Pentheus can physically see but is mentally and morally blind. This contrast between physical and mental blindness is appropriated from the conflict between Oedipus and Tiresias in Sophocles’ *OT* (370-376, 413, 454).

The prophetic nature of Tiresias’ words is stressed by specific markers (3.519 *auguror*, 524 *eveniet*), by the repeated use of the future tense (3.522 *spargere*, 523 *foedabis*, 524 *dignabere*, 525 *quereris*) and even more significantly by the omniscient narrator’s confirmation that the oracle will be fulfilled (3.527). By putting this fatal prophecy into the mouth of Tiresias, Ovid once again follows Sophocles and diverges from the Euripidean model. Whereas in the *OT* Tiresias utters a riddling, yet accurate prophecy of Oedipus’ fate (447-462), in the *Bacchae* the seer pronounces a markedly un-prophetic warning to Cadmus to beware lest Pentheus bring woe to his royal house, a warning deriving not from his prophetic skills but simply from his observation of the facts.¹¹¹ The Euripidean Tiresias’ admonition to Cadmus is thus transformed by Ovid under the influence of Sophocles into a prediction addressed to Pentheus himself. It has been argued that in this way the Ovidian Pentheus is depicted as even more rash and blind than

¹¹¹ Βα. 367-369 Πενθεύς δ’ ὅπως μὴ πένθος εἰσοίσει δόμοις / τοῖς σοῖσι, Κάδμε· μαντικῆι μὲν οὐ λέγω, / τοῖς πράγμασιν δέ· μῶρα γὰρ μῶρος λέγει.

his Euripidean predecessor, since he disregards a sinister prediction of a seer whose prophetic abilities have recently been confirmed by the fate of Narcissus.¹¹²

What has not been observed, however, is that the Ovidian Tiresias' prophecy may also implicitly reflect the words of Dionysus himself in the prologue of the *Bacchae*. The god says that Pentheus disputes his divine status and proclaims that he will demonstrate his divinity to the entire city of Thebes (45-48). This statement can be viewed as a cryptic foretelling that Dionysus is going to punish the Theban king for disrespecting him. Furthermore, the god announces that if the Thebans attempt to capture his maenads by force, he will lead an army of Bacchantes against them (50-52), a threat that is never realized in the drama.¹¹³ The speech of the Ovidian Tiresias, on the other hand, unlike the riddling and misleading predictions of Dionysus, explicitly prophesies that Pentheus will outrage Bacchus and will consequently be torn limb from limb by the maenads (3.521-523). Pentheus reacts instantly and vehemently to Tiresias' divination by pushing him out of the way in the middle of his speech (3.526). This violent response obliquely evokes the attitude of the Euripidean Pentheus, who in order to take vengeance on Tiresias for teaching Cadmus the Bacchic rites orders his men to pry up his seat of prophecy with crowbars and overturn it (345-351).¹¹⁴ The Ovidian Pentheus, who physically abuses the seer, is thus portrayed as even more savage than his Euripidean predecessor, who wants to punish Tiresias by destroying his oracle.

Another significant intertext for the Tiresias-Pentheus scene is Callimachus' *Bath of Pallas*. The tales of Pentheus and his cousin Actaeon are closely interwoven by Ovid in

¹¹² Barchiesi 2007, vv. 3.511-512.

¹¹³ Seaford (2001, 153-154) argues that these lines may reflect the traditional story of Pentheus, according to which the Theban army engaged in an armed conflict with the maenads and was defeated, so that the astonishment of the audience will be greater when Euripides deviates from it.

¹¹⁴ Barchiesi 2007, v. 3.526.

adherence to Euripides' *Bacchae* and the various interconnections between them will be examined in detail later in this section. Their most significant affinity is that both stories deal with the theme of a mortal beholding a taboo sight and subsequently suffering punishment in the form of dismemberment. Just as Actaeon views Artemis bathing naked and is punished by the goddess by being metamorphosed into a stag and consumed by his own hunting dogs, similarly Pentheus' viewing of the forbidden Bacchic rites leads to his sparagmos by the maenads. Ovid treats the story of Actaeon early in *Metamorphoses* 3 (138-252) drawing on the Callimachean hymn as his primary model. Below I will argue, however, that the Roman poet engages with his Hellenistic source in a more complex manner by utilizing the allusive technique of "fragmentation", which, as we have seen, he also frequently uses in his appropriation of Euripides. Exploiting the many parallels between the two narratives Ovid transfers elements from one story to the other. In particular, Athena's prophecy to her attendant Chariclo concerning Actaeon's impending doom is not included by the poet in own version of the myth, but is instead transposed to the Pentheus episode and transformed into Tiresias' prediction to the Theban king describing his imminent tragic fate.

Ovid calls attention to his allusion of the Callimachean intertext by means of overt verbal reminiscences. After Tiresias is blinded by Athena for accidentally seeing her bathing, the goddess reveals to his lamenting mother Chariclo that Actaeon's parents, Aristaeus and Autonoe, will one day pray that their son might also be inflicted with blindness by Artemis for witnessing her bath instead of being devoured by his hounds (107-115). The goddess stresses the mildness of Tiresias' punishment in comparison to that of Actaeon through rhetorical hyperbole, claiming that Autonoe will call Chariclo the most blessed of women for retrieving her son merely blind,

whereas she will have to collect her own son's remains from the wilderness.¹¹⁵ Ovid explicitly evokes his Hellenistic antecedent by having his Tiresias assert that Pentheus would be fortunate if he were also blind like him, so that he would not behold the prohibited Bacchic rites, which would result in his being torn to pieces by the maenads.¹¹⁶ Hence, just as in Callimachus Tiresias' loss of vision is presented by Athena as a much more blissful state than Actaeon's future sparagmos, likewise in Ovid Tiresias deems his own blindness as preferable to Pentheus' eyesight, which will ultimately bring about the Theban king's dismemberment. It as if the Ovidian Tiresias has heard the Callimachean Athena's prophecy about Actaeon and now delivers an analogous prediction to Pentheus (!). What is more, both texts offer a similar description of the Theban youths' transgression and punishment. Athena foretells that Actaeon will become the feast of his own dogs after inadvertently beholding Artemis' bath and Autonoe will afterwards perform the sad duty of assembling her son's scattered bones from the mountain thickets.¹¹⁷ In analogous manner Tiresias prophesies that Pentheus' viewing of the secret Bacchic rites and refusal to afford honor to Dionysus will lead to his gruesome fate: he will be dismembered by the maenads, his limbs will be scattered everywhere, and his mother and aunts as well as the whole forest will be smeared with his blood.¹¹⁸

The essential difference between the two scenes concerns the function of the prophecy in its respective context. Athena employs the mythological exemplum of Actaeon, in order to offer consolation to Chariclo, who is lamenting for the blindness that has been visited on her son.

¹¹⁵ H. 5.117-118 ὀλβίσταν δ' ἔρει σε καὶ εὐαίωνα γενέσθαι / ἐξ ὀρέων ἀλαὸν παῖδ' ὑποδεξαμένα.

¹¹⁶ Met. 3.517-525 'quam felix esses, si tu quoque luminis huius / orbis' ait 'fieres, ne Bacchica sacra uideres.

¹¹⁷ H. 5.113-116 ὀπτόταν οὐκ ἐθέλων περ ἴδη χαρίεντα λοετρά / δαίμονος· ἀλλ' αὐταὶ τὸν πρὶν ἄνακτα κύνες / τουτάκι δειπνησεῦντι· τὰ δ' υἱέος ὄστέα μάτηρ / λεξεῖται δρυμῶς πάντας ἐπερχομένα.

¹¹⁸ Met. 3.518 Bacchica sacra uideres, 523-524 mille lacer spargere locis et sanguine siluas / foedabis matremque tuam matrisque sorores.

More specifically, the goddess aims to comfort her favorite attendant for Tiresias' punishment by rhetorically juxtaposing it with the much more severe penalty that will be suffered by Actaeon in the near future. On the contrary, Tiresias' prediction to Pentheus has a mocking character in response to the Theban king's insolent derision towards the seer's blindness and prophetic utterings. The prophet sarcastically comments that Pentheus would be lucky if he shared his blindness, so as to avoid seeing the secret Bacchic rites. The contrasting tone of the two speeches is particularly manifest in their denouement. Athena concludes her prophecy by asking her attendant not to "whimper", because as a favor to her she will confer on Tiresias many honorary gifts, such as the power of prophecy, longevity, and immortal fame, in order to compensate for the deprivation of his sight.¹¹⁹ Tiresias, on the other hand, ends his pronouncement by sardonically predicting that Pentheus will soon lament the fact that the seer has "seen" too well his future despite his blindness.¹²⁰

The encounter of the Theban king and the prophet apart from conversing with tragic and Hellenistic intertexts is also evocative of the confrontation between Turnus and Allecto in the Virgilian epic (7.406-474). The Fury, who is bent on kindling war between the Trojans and the Italians, takes on the guise of Calybe, Juno's aged priestess, and visits the Rutulian prince in his sleep exhorting him to take up arms against Latinus for bestowing the throne and his promised bride, Lavinia, to the foreign intruder, Aeneas. Turnus, however, derides the old seer and haughtily rejects her counsel causing the enraged Allecto to assume her true form and inspire him with infernal frenzy, so that he may violate the peace and wage war against the Trojans. To begin with, just as the diviner Tiresias warns Pentheus to show piety towards Bacchus, likewise

¹¹⁹ H. 5.119 ὦ ἐτάρα, τῷ μὴ τι μινύρεο· τῷδε γὰρ ἄλλα / τεῦ χάριν ἐξ ἐμέθεν πολλὰ μενεῦντι γέρα.

¹²⁰ Met. 3.524-525 eueniet; neque enim dignabere numen honore, / meque sub his tenebris nimium uidisse quereris.

the seer Calybe urges Turnus to take military action against the Trojans. In both cases the prophet's old age is indicated by their hoary hair.¹²¹ Furthermore, the two young heroes display an analogous scornful attitude towards the seers: Pentheus taunts Tiresias for his blindness and mocks his powers of divination echoing the arrogant derision of Turnus towards Calybe's senility and prophetic utterings.¹²²

Finally, Ovid transforms Allecto's furious reaction to Turnus' contemptuous dismissal of her advice into Pentheus' violent response towards the sarcastic prediction of Tiresias. The wrathful Fury reveals her fiendish shape and while the faltering Turnus is trying to address her, she pushes him back.¹²³ In an analogous manner the infuriated Pentheus thrusts Tiresias aside, whilst the prophet is still speaking.¹²⁴ The affinity between Allecto and Pentheus is also illustrated by their serpentine associations: the Fury's hair is entwined with hissing snakes, while the Theban king traces his ancestry from the spartoi ("sown men"), who sprang from the teeth of Mars' serpent sown by Cadmus (3.531 *anguigenae*), and more specifically he is the son of Echion (3.513 *Echionides*, 526 *Echione natus*), whose name literally means "viper-man".¹²⁵

The Pentheus-Tiresias scene is also reminiscent of another Virgilian episode: the confrontation between Pyrrhus and Priam in Aeneid 2. First of all, both heroes bear an affinity with serpents, which reflects their savage, impious, and bestial nature: the Greek warrior is

¹²¹ Met. 3.516 ille movens albentia tempora canis; Aen. 7.417-418 induit albos / cum uitta crinis.

¹²² Met. 3.513-516 spernit... /... Pentheus praesagaque ridet / verba senis tenebrasque et cladem lucis ademptae / obicit; Aen. 7.435-436 Hic iuuenis uatem inridens sic orsa uicissim / ore refert, 440-442 sed te uicta situ uerique effeta senectus, / o mater, curis nequiquam exercet, et arma / regum inter falsa uatem formidine ludit.

¹²³ Aen. 7.448-450 tantaque se facies aperit; tum flammea torquens / lumina cunctantem et quaerentem dicere plura / reppulit.

¹²⁴ Met. 3.526 talia dicentem proturbat.

¹²⁵ Aen. 7.447 tot Erinys sibilat hydris, 450 geminos erexit crinibus anguis.

compared to a snake, which having just risen from hibernation and sloughed off its skin is gleaming in the sun (2.471-475), and, as we saw earlier, the Theban king owes his serpentine origins to the Sown men in general and to his father Echion in particular. What is more, the epic simile in which the angry Pentheus is compared to a torrent, which becomes violent when it meets with impediments, evokes both the monstrous serpent of Mars described as a swollen river and the raging Pyrrhus likened to an overflowing river overcoming all obstacles in its path.¹²⁶ Barchiesi remarks that the personal note (*sic ego*) of the Ovidian simile is unusual not only for epic poetry in general, but even for the subjective and unconventional style of Ovid himself. He also notes that the formula *vidi ipse*, which is used by Ovid to introduce the simile, is appropriated from the internal narrator Aeneas, who employs it, however, in order to signal the resumption of the main action.¹²⁷ Thus the furious Pentheus recalls Pyrrhus, while the Ovidian epic voice is reminiscent of the eye-witness narrator Aeneas.

The exchange between Pentheus and Tiresias alludes to the dialogue of Priam and Pyrrhus. The connective link between the two scenes is the theme of blood pollution. The old Trojan king prays that the gods may punish Pyrrhus for killing his son Polites before his eyes and thus “polluting” with murder his paternal sight.¹²⁸ In addition, Pyrrhus later drags Priam through his son’s blood thereby literally polluting him.¹²⁹ Priam’s curse will eventually be fulfilled, since Pyrrhus will suffer a punishment fitting to his crime: he will be butchered by Orestes on

¹²⁶ Met. 3.568-571 *sic ego torrentem...vidi; / at quacumque trabes obstructaque saxa tenebant, / spumeus et fervens et ab obice saevior ibat; Met. 3.79-80 impete nunc vasto ceu concitus imbribus amnis / fertur et obstantis proturbat pectore silvas* (see Hardie 1990, 225); Aen. 2.496-499 non sic, *aggeribus ruptis cum spumeus amnis / exit oppositasque euicit gurgite moles, / fertur in arua furens cumulo camposque per omnis / cum stabulis armenta trahit* (See Barchiesi 2007, vv. 3.568-571).

¹²⁷ Aen. 2.499-500 *vidi ipse furentem / caede Neoptolemum [...]* (See Barchiesi 2007, vv. 3.568-571).

¹²⁸ Aen. 2.538-539 *qui nati coram me cernere letum / fecisti et patrios foedasti funere uultus.*

¹²⁹ Aen. 2.551 *trahit et in multo lapsantem sanguine nati.*

Achilles' tomb thus defiling his own father with his blood.¹³⁰ In Ovid Tiresias prophesies that Pentheus is going to be punished by Bacchus for outraging him: he will be dismembered by the Bacchantes and pollute with his blood his female relatives.¹³¹ Thus, Pentheus, who defiles with his gore his mother's hands, echoes both Polites, whose bloody murder taints his father Priam, and Pyrrhus, who sullies his father's tomb by being slaughtered on it. Furthermore, Tiresias' prophecy of Pentheus' dire fate is reminiscent of Priam's prayer for Pyrrhus' punishment. Finally, the impetuosity of Pentheus and Pyrrhus is reflected in the way that they both interrupt speech with sudden and violent action. Pyrrhus ends his speech by ordering Priam to die and while still saying this he drags him to the altar and slaughters him.¹³² Likewise Pentheus interrupts Tiresias in mid-speech and pushes him out of the way.¹³³ The Theban king's violent action also recalls the ferocity of Mars' serpent at the beginning of Book 3, which levels the trees that are in its way.¹³⁴ This implicit comparison of Pentheus with Pyrrhus and Mars' serpent serves to portray him as a wrathful, hybristic, and savage character.

To recapitulate, the opening encounter between the Theban king and the seer appropriates and reworks elements from various other tragic, hymnic, and epic confrontations: Euripides' Pentheus and Tiresias, Sophocles' Oedipus and Tiresias, Callimachus' Athena and Chariclo, and finally Virgil's Turnus-Allecto and Pyrrhus-Priam scenes.

¹³⁰ Aen. 3.332 excipit incautum patriasque obruncat ad aras.

¹³¹ Met. 3.522-523 mille lacer spargere locis et sanguine silvas / foedabis matremque tuam matrisque sorores.

¹³² Aen. 2.550-551 "nunc morere". hoc dicens altaria ad ipsa trementem / traxit.

¹³³ Met. 3.526 talia dicentem proturbat Echione natus.

¹³⁴ Met. 3.80 obstantis proturbat pectore silvas (See James 1991-1993, 87).

2.1.2 An unsuccessful harangue

The second scene (3.527-571) begins with the advent of Bacchus in Thebes (3.528 *Liber adest*), which introduces the theme of epiphany and recalls the god's proclamation of his own arrival in the prologue of the *Bacchae* (1-2 ἤκω ... / Διόνυσος, 5 πάρεμι).¹³⁵ Pentheus delivers a harangue to the entire population of Thebes, in which he reviles Bacchus and his eastern followers as effeminate and morally depraved and attempts to rouse the men of Thebes to arms against the foreign intruder. His speech meets, however, with utter failure and he furiously orders his servants to capture the leader of the Bacchants, who poses as a divinity.

In the *Metamorphoses* the entire population of the city, men and women, young and old, common folk and nobles, rush to participate in the new rites (3.528-530), a picture which diverges from the situation in the *Bacchae*. In the Euripidean play the female population of Thebes have been maddened by the god and forced to participate in his worship (26-40), while the only Theban men who are willing to take part in the Bacchic rites are the aged Tiresias and Cadmus (195-196).¹³⁶ Thus, whereas in Euripides it is almost exclusively Theban women who worship the god and they do this under the sway of divinely inspired frenzy, in Ovid the Theban worshippers of Bacchus belong to both sexes, all age groups, and every social class and they join the rites of their own accord. This voluntary and collective acceptance of Bacchus is an Ovidian departure from his Greek model and its function is to sharpen the focus on Pentheus' hybris, since he is presented as the only individual in Thebes who opposes the god. This isolation of the

¹³⁵ Keith 2002a, 264. See also Barchiesi 2007, v. 3.528. Bömer (1969, v. 3.528) fails to make the connection between *Met.* 3.528 and *Ba.* 1.

¹³⁶ Both the Euripidean and the Ovidian Dionysus are accompanied by a group of Bacchants, who are his loyal attendants and worshippers, but these are of eastern origin and clearly distinguished from the Theban maenads.

impious Pentheus from his reverent subjects has been emphasized from the very opening of the narrative, where he is the only one who mocks Tiresias' prophecies and scorns the gods (3.313 *ex omnibus unus*). Furthermore, in the *Bacchae* it is not only Pentheus who resists Dionysus, but also the sisters of Semele, namely Agave, Autonoe, and Ino, who impiously dispute his divinity and thus the god punishes them by maddening them and compelling them to join his worship (26-34).¹³⁷ Ovid, on the other hand, entirely suppresses the irreverence of Cadmus' daughters and makes Pentheus the sole θεομάχος, thereby amplifying his outrage.¹³⁸

Pentheus reacts instantly and violently to this civic acceptance of Bacchus by delivering a speech to the Theban populace. This speech is an Ovidian innovation, since in Euripides the Theban king never publicly addresses his subjects. Barchiesi has acutely observed that Eteocles' harangue to the Thebans in Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes* (10-20) constitutes a likely model for Pentheus' speech in terms of the patriotic exhortation to fight for one's homeland, the reference to a siege, and the distinction between the different age groups of Theban men.¹³⁹ I will argue, however, that a more immediate source for the Theban king's harangue may be found in the fourth episode of the *Bacchae*. Pentheus has just been informed by the herdsman that the maenads have assaulted some nearby villages and utterly defeated the country folk in armed conflict (748-764). He immediately gives orders that the Theban troops be marshaled so that he might lead them in a campaign against the Bacchants (778-786). This brief declaration of war is reworked and developed by Ovid into a full-blown patriotic martial speech (3.531-563). His Pentheus compares the arrival of the Bacchic cult in Thebes to a military invasion and spurs the

¹³⁷ Barchiesi 2007, vv. 3.701-733.

¹³⁸ As we shall see in the next section, Ovid transposes instead the motif of a trio of sisters, who reject the divine status of Bacchus, to the story of the Minyads (4.1-415), which follows directly after that of Pentheus (see Keith 2010, 195).

¹³⁹ Barchiesi 2007, vv. 3.540-541.

Theban men to repel Bacchus and his followers and defend their homeland.¹⁴⁰ Both the Euripidean and the Ovidian Pentheus stress the utter disgrace that the Theban warriors will suffer if they are defeated by women.¹⁴¹ Moreover, in both cases Pentheus' plan to undertake military action against the Bacchantes proves to be futile. In Euripides the Theban king is thwarted by Dionysus, who disguised as the Lydian stranger convinces him instead of attacking the maenads to camouflage himself as a Bacchant and spy on them (809-842). In Ovid, on the other hand, it is the Theban people who oppose Pentheus' desire to wage war against Bacchus. This is first implied in a parenthesis in his speech, in which he asks them to move out of his way, so that he can expose the forged nature of Bacchic worship (3.557 (*modo vos absistite*)). The Theban resistance is made explicit, when members of the royal family rebuke Pentheus and attempt to curb his enmity towards the god (3.564-565).

In his attempt to exhort the Thebans to demonstrate their military prowess, Pentheus invokes their descent from the teeth of Mars' serpent sown by Cadmus.¹⁴² Micaela Janan argues that Pentheus rhetorically distorts reality by rehabilitating the monstrous serpent of Mars, which killed many of Cadmus' companions and almost prevented the foundation of Thebes, as a hyper-masculine and nationalistic symbol of Thebanness.¹⁴³ What is more, this laudatory and proud reference to the Thebans' lineage from Mars' serpent echoes and reverses the chorus' words in

¹⁴⁰ Met. 3.539-540 *Tyron [...] nunc sinitis sine Marte capi, 553 Thebae capientur, 546-548 [...] pro fama vincite vestra! / [...] pellite molles / et patrium retinete decus!*.

¹⁴¹ Ba. 778-779 ἤδη τόδ' ἐγγὺς ὅστε πῦρ ὑφάπτεται / ὑβρισμα βακχῶν, ψόγος ἐς Ἑλληνας μέγας, 785-786 οὐ γὰρ ἀλλ' ὑπερβάλλει τάδε, / εἰ πρὸς γυναικῶν πεισόμεσθ' ἃ πάσχομεν; Met. 3.534-537 *quos non bellicus ensis, / non tuba terruerit, non strictis agmina telis, / femineae voces ... vincant?*.

¹⁴² Met. 3.531 *anguigenae, proles Mavortia, 543-545 este, precor, memores, qua sitis stirpe creati, illiusque animos...sumite serpentis!*. For the significance of Pentheus' descent from Agenor, Cadmus, and Mars' serpent see James 1991-1993 and Janan 2004, 2009.

¹⁴³ Janan 2009, 194-197.

the second stasimon of the *Bacchae* (519-575).¹⁴⁴ The Asian Bacchants claim that Pentheus has revealed his chthonic origin through his father Echion (“viper-man”) and his descent from the serpent of Mars by imprisoning the Lydian stranger and intending to put the Bacchants into chains.¹⁴⁵ They characterize him a “savage-looking monster” (541 ἀγριωπὸν τέρας) and compare him to the giants who rebelled against the gods and were also earthborn like the Thebans.¹⁴⁶ Finally, the chorus summon Dionysus to descend from Olympus and put an end to Pentheus’ hybris (553-555). Thus the chorus’ polemical reference to Pentheus’ serpentine origin, illustrative of his impious and bestial nature, is rhetorically transformed by the Ovidian Pentheus into an exultant commemoration of the Thebans’ descent from Mars’ serpent, which is raised to the level of a patriotic emblem bearing connotations of autochthony and military prowess.

Pentheus’ speech in the *Metamorphoses* also contains multiple allusions to the debate of Pentheus with Tiresias and Cadmus in the first episode of *Bacchae* (170-369). Just as the Theban king in Euripides attempts to persuade his grandfather and the seer not to accept the cult of Dionysus, the Ovidian Pentheus’ speech is designed to induce the Thebans to reject Bacchic worship. Tiresias calls Pentheus mad for opposing Dionysus, a reproach which is evoked and inverted by Ovid, since his Pentheus opens his speech by wondering what frenzy has possessed the Thebans to make them welcome Bacchus.¹⁴⁷ In addition, both the Euripidean and the Ovidian Pentheus revile the Bacchants in analogous terms. The maenads are accused of participating in

¹⁴⁴ Barchiesi 2007, vv. 3.543-545: “può sembrare bizzarra l’insistenza patriottica sulla discendenza dai denti del drago e dalla terra, ma in tragedia greca non mancano tentativi di valorizzare in questo senso l’eredità degli Spartoi, in termini di autoctonia e marziale orgoglio, anche se rimane sempre possibile l’implicazione alternativa, brutalità e istinto fraticida (cfr. Euripide *Bacch.* 537-44).”

¹⁴⁵ Ba. 537-538 ἀναφαίνει χθόνιον / γένος ἐκφύς γε δράκοντός.

¹⁴⁶ Ba. 542 φόνιον δ’ ὥστε γίγαντ’ ἀντίπαλον θεοῖς.

¹⁴⁷ Ba. 326-327 μαίνῃ γὰρ ὡς ἄλγιστα, κοῦτε φαρμάκοις / ἄκη λάβοις ἂν οὔτ’ ἄνευ τούτων νόσου, 359 μέμνησας ἤδη, καὶ πρὶν ἐξεστὼς φρενῶν; Met. 3.531-532 ‘quis furor [...] vestras / attonuit mentes?’.

fake religious rites,¹⁴⁸ indulging in excessive wine drinking¹⁴⁹ and engaging in sexual wantonness.¹⁵⁰

Pentheus' tirade against Bacchus also echoes the Euripidean hero's invective against the Lydian stranger, who is in fact Dionysus in disguise (215-247). In both cases the god is charged with introducing an effeminate, counterfeit, and morally depraved cult. The Lydian stranger is characterized as a wizard and sorcerer, while the Ovidian Pentheus claims that the Bacchic rites are nothing but magic deceptions.¹⁵¹ The stranger is portrayed as having fragrant locks, while in the *Metamorphoses* the Theban king refers to Bacchus' hair as soaked in myrrh.¹⁵² In both cases the scented hair is mocked as a sign of eastern luxury and effeminacy.¹⁵³ Finally, just as the Euripidean Pentheus declares that he will put an end to the Bacchic rites promoted by the Lydian stranger and to his false assertions that Dionysus is a god and a son of Zeus (240-243), likewise his Ovidian counterpart claims that he will compel Bacchus to confess his counterfeit paternity and the forged nature of his worship (3.557-558).¹⁵⁴ Finally, Tiresias in Euripides in his attempt to convince Pentheus of Dionysus' divinity cites a list of his special powers, one of which is his ability to madden and panic troops before battle (302-305). This statement may be echoed and

¹⁴⁸ Ba. 217-218 γυναῖκας ἡμῖν δῶματ' ἐκλελοιπένας / πλασταῖσι βακχεῖαισιν, 224 πρόφασιν μὲν ὡς δὴ μαινάδας θουοσκόους; Met. 3.534 fraudes (See Bömer 1969, v. 3.534; Barchiesi 2007, v. 3.534).

¹⁴⁹ Ba. 221-222 πλήρεις δὲ θιάσοις ἐν μέσοισιν ἰστάναι / κρατῆρας; Met. 3.536 mota insania vino.

¹⁵⁰ Ba. 222-223 ἄλλην δ' ἄλλοσ' εἰς ἐρημίαν / πτώσσουσιν εὐναῖς ἀρσένων ὑπηρετεῖν; Met. 3.537 obscenique greges (See Bömer 1969, v. 3.537).

¹⁵¹ Ba. 234 γόης ἐπωιδός; Met. 3.534 magicae fraudes (See Bömer 1969, v. 3.534; Barchiesi 2007, v. 3.534).

¹⁵² Ba. 235 ξανθοῖσι βοστρύχοισιν εὖοσμος κόμηγ; Met. 3.555 madidus murra crinis.

¹⁵³ Barchiesi 2007, vv. 3.555-556.

¹⁵⁴ Bömer 1969, v. 3.558.

inverted by the Ovidian Pentheus who calls Bacchus an “unwarlike boy” (3.553) and refuses to be terrified by him.¹⁵⁵

Pentheus’ speech also evokes and reworks various scenes from the Aeneid. To begin with, the Theban king’s nationalistic harangue to the Thebans urging them to fight against Bacchus and his followers recalls Turnus’ patriotic exhortation to the Rutulians to march to war against the Trojans and the Latins reported by the epic narrator in free indirect speech (7.467-474). The Rutulian prince orders the choicest young warriors to take up arms and defend their homeland by repelling the enemy from their borders.¹⁵⁶ In an analogous manner Pentheus rebukes the young Thebans for replacing their arms with Bacchic paraphernalia and spurs them to drive away the foreign intruders and thus preserve their fatherland’s glory.¹⁵⁷ There also, however, essential differences between the two scenes. Whereas the devout Turnus invokes the gods to bear witness to his martial vows, the impious Pentheus scorns the gods collectively.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, the two speeches meet with a diametrically opposite reception. The Rutulian warriors inspired by their leader’s fiery speech eagerly goad each other to prepare for battle.¹⁵⁹ The Theban royal family, on the contrary, reprimand Pentheus for his harangue and attempt to restrain his belligerence against Bacchus.¹⁶⁰ The allusion to the Virgilian model is signaled by means of an overt intertextual pointer. Virgil enumerates the different reasons why the Rutulian

¹⁵⁵ Met. 3.561 *Pentheia terrebit cum totis advena Thebis?* (See Bömer 1969, v. 3.553)

¹⁵⁶ Aen. 7.467-469 *ergo iter ad regem polluta pace Latinum / indicit primis iuuenum et iubet arma parari, / tutari Italiam, detrudere finibus hostem.*

¹⁵⁷ Met. 3.540-542 *vosne, acrior aetas / o iuuenes, propiorque meae, quos arma tenere, / non thyrsos, galeaque tegi, non fronde decebat?, 547-548 uos pellite molles / et patrium retinete decus.*

¹⁵⁸ Aen. 7.471 *diuosque in uota uocauit*; Met. 3.514 *contemptor superum*.

¹⁵⁹ Aen. 7.472 *certatim sese Rutuli exhortantur in arma*.

¹⁶⁰ Met. 3.565 *corripiunt dictis frustra que inhibere laborant*.

soldiers were stirred by their commander's speech (i.e. his preeminent youth and beauty, his royal ancestry, and his military exploits) by employing the deictic pronoun *hunc* in triple anaphora.¹⁶¹ Ovid appropriates the triple *hunc*, but ironically imparts on it the exactly reverse function: it now serves to emphasize the censure of Pentheus' speech by his relatives (!).¹⁶²

The harangue of the Theban king to his people may also allude to another Virgilian episode: Laocoon's speech to the Trojans (Aen. 2.40-56). The two scenes have an analogous setting: Laocoon delivers an ardent speech to the Trojans attempting to persuade them to distrust the Greeks and not bring the Wooden Horse into the city, while Pentheus fervently addresses the Theban people aiming to induce them to reject the Bacchic cult and wage war against Bacchus and his retinue. The two speakers stress that the city is in danger of falling at the hands of a foreign invader if the citizens do not heed their advice. Both Laocoon and Pentheus fail, however, to convince their audience and are ultimately punished for their outrage towards a divinity. Laocoon is slain by the twin serpents for his sacrilegious wounding of the Wooden Horse, which is a votive offering to Minerva, while Pentheus is dismembered by the Bacchantes due to his impious resistance to Bacchus.

The thematic affinities between the two scenes are underscored by verbal echoes of the Virgilian epic. The festive celebration of the Bacchic rites in Thebes upon the advent of the god, may recall the jubilant worship of the gods by the ignorant Trojans during the last day of their city.¹⁶³ Both Laocoon and Pentheus address a throng of people (Aen. 2.39, Met. 3.530 *vulgus*) and open their speeches with a series of four rhetorical questions both wondering what madness

¹⁶¹ Aen. 7.473-474 *hunc* decus egregium formae mouet atque iuuentae, / *hunc* atque reges, *hunc* claris dextera factis.

¹⁶² Met. 3.564-565 *hunc* auus, *hunc* Athamas, *hunc* cetera turba suorum / corripuit dictis.

¹⁶³ Met. 3.528-530 [...] *festisque* fremunt ululatibus agri / [...] ad sacra feruntur; Aen. 2.248-249 nos delubra deum miseri, quibus ultimus esset / ille dies, *festam* uelamus *fronde* per urbem.

has caused the citizens to be blind to the peril that they are facing.¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, just as the Trojan priest warns his fellow citizens about the notorious cunning treachery of the Greeks, similarly the Theban king brands the Bacchic rites as nothing more than magic trickery.¹⁶⁵ Pentheus' preference that Thebes be conquered by armed men and military engines rather than be shamefully sacked by the unwarlike Bacchus may evoke Laocoon' fear that either Greek warriors are hiding inside the Horse, or that it is a siege engine.¹⁶⁶ In other words, Pentheus' predilection for an imaginary military invasion of Thebes is reminiscent of Laocoon's suspicions of an imminent Greek capture of Troy, which are soon to be fulfilled. Moreover, Pentheus' proud assertion that the Thebans have always been fearless before an army in battle array may echo the description of the Greeks' invasion of Troy, where the soldiers block the narrow streets of the city with their swords ready for slaughter.¹⁶⁷ Finally, Pentheus' reference to the role of fate in the future survival of Thebes may allude to Aeneas' lament that if fate had not been unfavorable, Troy would not have fallen.¹⁶⁸

All these Ovidian allusions to the Virgilian intertext are on another level deeply ironic because of the implicit divergences between the two scenes. Whereas the jovial celebrations of the Trojans are quickly followed by the sack of their city, the revels of the Thebans do not

¹⁶⁴ Aen. 2.42 quae tanta insania?; Met. 3.531-532 quis furor...vestras attonuit mentes?. Mcnamara (2010, 178) also remarks that the opening of Pentheus' speech is reminiscent of Laocoon's.

¹⁶⁵ Aen. 2.43-44 aut ulla putatis / dona carere dolis Danaum; Met. 3.534 magicae frauds.

¹⁶⁶ Met. 3.549-550 utinam tormenta virique / moenia diruerent, ferrumque ignisque sonarent!; Aen. 2.45 aut hoc inclusi ligno occultantur Achiui, / aut haec in nostros fabricata est machina muros. Barchiesi (2007, vv. 3.548-550) points out the tragic irony of Pentheus' wish that Thebes would be conquered by an army, given that the city is proverbial in myth for being besieged and destroyed in tragedies about the Seven or the Epigoni (Aesch. Seven against Thebes, Eur. Phoenician Women, Suppliant Women).

¹⁶⁷ Met. 3.535 non tuba terruerit, non strictis agmina telis; Aen. 2.333-334 stat ferri acies mucrone corusco / stricta, parata neci.

¹⁶⁸ Met. 3.348-349 si fata vetabant / stare diu Thebas; Aen. 2.54 si fata deum, si mens non laeua fuisset, 56 Troiaque nunc staret.

foreshadow their own destruction, but that of Pentheus. What is more, the identity and characterization of the two speakers is diametrically different: Laocoon is a devout priest of Poseidon, while Pentheus is a godless despot, who opposes Bacchus' worship. Laocoon's warning to the Trojans about the real danger of a military assault by the Greeks contrasts sharply with Pentheus' admonition to the Thebans about the imagined threat of a religious "invasion" by Bacchus. Consequently the Trojan's disbelief towards Laocoon's speech leads to the downfall of their city, whereas the Theban's opposition to Pentheus' harangue saves them from Bacchus' retribution. Moreover, unlike the impious Pentheus, who is justly punished by Bacchus for his hybris, Laocoon is the innocent victim of Minerva's cruel and unfair vengeance, since what he "wounded" with his spear was not in fact a votive offering to the goddess, but a contraption of the Greeks to bring about the fall of Troy. A final difference between the two heroes, which may not be coincidental, is that while Laocoon is killed by the twin serpents, Pentheus is repeatedly connected with Mars' serpent through his descent from the Sown men as well as through the comparison of his uncontrollable rage to that of the beast. In terms of Virgilian characters one could argue that Pentheus in this scene is a "Mezentius" or a "Pyrrhus" in the guise of a "Laocoon".

The oblique connection of the Thebans with the Trojans as the recipients of the speeches of Pentheus and Laocoon respectively is reinforced by means of verbal reminiscences of the Aeneid. Pentheus reminds the elders of Thebes of their voyage from Tyre to Greece, which reflects that of the Trojans from their fallen city to Italy.¹⁶⁹ Furthermore, the Theban king refers to their foundation of a "new Tyre", namely Thebes, which becomes the new seat for their exiled household gods echoing the Trojans' foundation of a "new Troy", that is Rome, where they place

¹⁶⁹ Met. 3.538 *longa per aequora vecti*; Aen. 1.376 *diuersa per aequora uectos* (See Anderson 1997, vv. 3.538-540; Barchiesi 2007, v. 3.358).

their own banished Penates.¹⁷⁰ Ovid's Thebans recall not only Virgil's Trojans, who are the proto-Romans, but also Romans themselves.¹⁷¹ Pentheus characterizes the Thebans as "offspring of Mars", because they sprang from the teeth of Mars' serpent sown by Cadmus (3.531 proles Mavortia). The Romans are also Mars' descendants, since the founder of Rome, Romulus, was the progeny of Mars and Ilia.¹⁷² In fact the epithet Mavortius invariably refers to Rome and Ovid is the only Latin poet to describe another city with it.¹⁷³

Further affinities between the Thebans and the Trojans can be found in Pentheus' diatribe against Bacchus. The Theban king rhetorically depicts the Theban opposition to the Bacchic cult as a clash between masculine bellicosity and unwarlike effeminacy. This polemic against the eastern Bacchus and his followers by the autochthonous Pentheus (3.351 *anguigenae*) echoes the invective leveled against the orientalism of Aeneas and his Trojans by their indigenous enemies in the Virgilian epic.¹⁷⁴ In particular, Pentheus' mocking enumeration of the musical accompaniments of the Bacchic thiasus (cymbals, flutes, tambourines, female singing) is highly reminiscent of the tirade launched by a native Italian warrior, Numanus Remulus, against the Trojans in the *Aeneid*, who derisively accuses them of eastern emasculation, sloth, and luxury and lists the musical accoutrements of the effeminate worship of Cybele (pipe, tambourines, and boxwood flute) in which he claims that the Trojans participate.¹⁷⁵ In addition, the Theban king's

¹⁷⁰ Met. 3.549 *hac Tyron, hac profugos posuistis sede penates*; Aen. 1.2 *Italiam fato profugus ...uenit*, 1.68 *Ilium in Italiam portans uictosque penatis* (See Anderson 1997, v. 3.539; Barchiesi 2007, v. 3.538).

¹⁷¹ For the implicit association of Thebes with Rome pervading Book 3 of the *Metamorphoses*, see Hardie 1990 (esp. p. 225).

¹⁷² Aen. 1.276-277 *Romulus [...] Mauortia condet / moenia*.

¹⁷³ Barchiesi 2007, v. 3.531; see also Anderson 1997, vv. 3.351-352.

¹⁷⁴ Barchiesi 2007, v. 3.555-556.

¹⁷⁵ Met. 3.532-537 *aerane tantum/ aere repulsa valent et adunco tibia cornu / [...] femineae voces / [...] inania tympana vincant?*; Aen. 9.617-620 *o uere Phrygiae, neque enim Phryges, ite per alta / Dindyma, ubi adsuetis*

scornful reference to Bacchus' luxurious purple garments embroidered with gold evokes Numanus' description of the Trojans' clothes embroidered with saffron and shining with purple.¹⁷⁶ Finally, Pentheus' taunt about Bacchus' hair soaked in myrrh recalls both Iarbas' disdainful portrayal of Aeneas as a new "Paris", whose hair is dripping with perfume and Turnus' sneering description of Aeneas' hair as drenched in myrrh.¹⁷⁷

The Theban king's monologue ends with a command to his slaves to capture the leader of the maenads, who poses as the god Bacchus (3.362-363). These words recall the Euripidean Pentheus' orders to his servants to track down and apprehend the Lydian stranger (352-357).¹⁷⁸ Ovid highlights the allusion to the *Bacchae* by means of striking verbal reminiscences.¹⁷⁹ The Theban king's speech to his people is entirely unsuccessful and he is reproached for his irreverence by Cadmus, Athamas and the other members of the court, who strive in vain to check

biforem dat tibia cantum. / tympana uos buxusque uocat Berecynthia Matris / Idaeae (See Barchiesi (2007, vv. 3.532-533), who remarks that the cults of Bacchus and Cybele were already merged in Attic tragedy through religious syncretism (see particularly Eur. Ba. 58-9, 78-82, 123-4)).

¹⁷⁶ Met. 3.556 *purpuraque et pictis intextum vestibibus aurum*; Aen. 9.614 *uobis picta croco et fulgenti murice uestis*. Pentheus' reproachful portrayal of Bacchus as "unwarlike boy", who prefers a luxurious and effeminate lifestyle to warlike activities (3.553-556 *at nunc a puero Thebae capientur inermi, / quem neque bella iuuant nec tela nec usus equorum, / sed madidus murra crinis mollesque corona / purpuraque et pictis intextum uestibus aurum*) is also analogous to the censure exerted against the god in Horace's hymn to Bacchus, where he is considered by his critics as more suited for peaceful pastimes, such as dancing and games, than for the field of battle (C. 2.19.25-27 *quamquam choreis aptior et iocis / ludoque dictus non sat idoneus / pugnae ferebari*).

¹⁷⁷ Met. 355 *madidus murra crinis*; Aen. 4.215-217 *et nunc ille Paris cum semiuiro comitatu, / Maeonia mentum mitra crinemque madentem /subnexus*; Aen. 12.99-100 *semiuiri Phrygis [...] crinis / [...] murraque madentis* (See Anderson 1997, vv. 3.553-556). See also Barchiesi (2007, vv. 3.555-556), who notes that Pentheus follows here the anti-oriental ideology, which pervades Roman culture and literature, but is overcome in the *Aeneid* through the merging of the Trojans with the native Italians into the Romans, which reflects the unification of East and West.

¹⁷⁸ Bömer 1969, v. 3.562.

¹⁷⁹ *ite...ite~ στείχοντες, advena~ξένον, attrahite huc uinctum~δέσμιον πορεύσατε δεῦρο*. Barchiesi (2007, v. 3.562) notes the subtle irony of the repeated command *ite...ite* in that it picks up the ritual formula of the chorus in the parodos of the *Bacchae* (83 *ἴτε βάκχαι, ἴτε βάκχαι*), but is put into the mouth of Bacchus' mortal adversary, who wishes to quell the god's cult.

his fury (3.565-566).¹⁸⁰ This negative reception of Pentheus' harangue reflects the opposition of Tiresias and Cadmus to the king's tirade against Dionysus by means of arguments and admonitions in the first episode of the *Bacchae* (170-369).

In conclusion, Pentheus' address to the Thebans is an Ovidian invention, which reworks various scenes from the *Bacchae*, namely the debate of the Theban king with Tiresias and Cadmus on the Bacchic cult in the first episode, the chorus' denunciation of Pentheus' serpentine descent in the second stasimon, and the Theban king's call to arms in the fourth episode. Ovid, moreover, blends by means of intertextual conflation the Euripidean material with multiple Virgilian intertexts: Turnus' martial exhortations to the Rutulians, Laocoon's speech to the Trojans, and the invectives of Iarbas, Numanus Remulus, and Turnus against the orientalism of Aeneas and his men.

2.1.3 A premeditated digression

Ovid's source for the story of the Tyrrhenian sailors, who abduct Bacchus and are punished by the god by being transformed into dolphins, is not Euripides' *Bacchae*, but the Homeric Hymn to Dionysus.¹⁸¹ The Roman poet inserts the tale in the main narrative by ingeniously putting it into the mouth of the ship's helmsman, who is anonymous in the hymn, but in the *Metamorphoses* is called Acoetes.¹⁸² The narrative frame of the story, however, namely Acoetes' capture,

¹⁸⁰ Tarrant (1995, 64) has acutely noted the overwhelming tendency of the speeches in the *Metamorphoses* to fail. He argues that Ovid presents the 'procedures of formal argument' not to represent their use and effect within the poetry, but to place rhetorical argument at an ironic distance from the emotions expressed by the speaker.

¹⁸¹ Euripides was also familiar with the myth of the Tyrrhenian pirates, since he mentions it in the prologue of his *Cyclops* (11-12 ἐπεὶ γὰρ Ἦρα σοι γένος Τυρσηρικὸν / ληιστῶν ἐπῶρσεν, ὡς ὀδηθείης μακρὰν).

¹⁸² For a comparative analysis of the myth of Dionysus and the Tyrrhenian sailors in the Homeric hymn, Ovid, Nonnus, and other sources see James 1975.

interrogation, and escape, is based on the Euripidean play, where Dionysus disguised as the Lydian stranger is likewise captured and questioned by Pentheus, but manages to escape from incarceration.¹⁸³ Furthermore, Ovid opens the next book of the *Metamorphoses* with his own hymn to Bacchus (4.11-31), which, as we shall see in the next section, has many affinities with the Pentheus narrative. Most importantly, the poet also interweaves in the hymn the stories of Pentheus and the Tyrrhenian sailors.¹⁸⁴

The question of Acoetes' identity, namely whether or not he can be identified with Bacchus, has been the subject of considerable critical debate and remains controversial. Franz Bömer is in favor of the identification of the helmsman with the god, arguing that just as Dionysus disguises himself as the Lydian stranger in the *Bacchae*, similarly Bacchus appears in the guise of his pious attendant Acoetes. Moreover, he considers the parallel between Dionysus' escape from Pentheus' prison and Acoetes' miraculous release from captivity as a clear indication that Bacchus and Acoetes are one and the same person. On the other hand, he acknowledges as an argument for the opposite view the fact that none of Acoetes' words and actions suggest that he is or could be Bacchus and concludes that there is no definite proof for either interpretation.¹⁸⁵ William Anderson, on the contrary, maintains that Acoetes is merely the god's devotee and spokesman and that Bacchus plays no active role in the story. He cites as evidence that fact that Acoetes recounts a cautionary tale to the Theban king, which if heeded, could save him, whereas the Lydian stranger in Euripides deceives Pentheus and lures him to his

¹⁸³ Barchiesi 2007, vv. 3.572-700.

¹⁸⁴ Met. 4.22-24 *Pentheia tu, venerande, bipenniferumque Lycurgum / sacrilegos mactas, Tyrrhenaque mittis in aequor / corpora. Ovid combines the myths of Pentheus and the Tyrrhenian pirates in the context of another hymn to Bacchus in Fasti 3.721-724 (tu quoque Thebaeae mala praeda tacebere matris, / inque tuum furiis acte Lycurge genus. / ecce libet subitos pisces Tyrrhenaque monstra dicere).*

¹⁸⁵ Bömer 1969, vv. 3.577-700.

demise.¹⁸⁶ Finally, according to Alessandro Barchiesi, modern criticism has justifiably assumed that Acoetes is in reality Bacchus. He suggests two solutions to the conundrum: while Ovid does not explicitly identify Acoetes with Bacchus, he surely relies on his readers to make this identification themselves, or he leaves the issue open, so as to draw attention to the strong unity between the god and his followers as well as to his capacity to create illusions that mortals cannot perceive.¹⁸⁷ Below I will argue that, although Ovid makes no direct identification of Acoetes with Bacchus, there are compelling clues in the text that Acoetes is actually the god in disguise. Furthermore, I will attempt to demonstrate that Acoetes plays simultaneously the roles of the Lydian stranger and the Euripidean herdsman, who delivers to Pentheus the first messenger speech (677-774).

A strong hint corroborating the identification of Acoetes with the god can be found in Acoetes' oath about the truth of his report of the god's miracles. He swears by Bacchus himself because, as he claims, no other god is more present among mortals.¹⁸⁸ This assertion echoes the words of the Lydian stranger, who maintains that Dionysus being close at hand is witnessing his priest's sufferings.¹⁸⁹ The Euripidean Pentheus asks where Dionysus is, because he cannot see him and the Lydian stranger replies that the god is with him, but he is not visible to the king due to his impiety.¹⁹⁰ Similarly in Ovid Pentheus asks his servants where Bacchus is, but they

¹⁸⁶ Anderson 1997, 389, vv. 3.574-576.

¹⁸⁷ Barchiesi 2007, vv. 3.572-700.

¹⁸⁸ Met. 3.658-660 per tibi nunc ipsum (nec enim praesentior illo / est deus) adiuro, tam me tibi vera referre / quam veri maiora fide.

¹⁸⁹ Ba. 500 καὶ γῦν ἃ πάσχω πλησίον παρῶν ὄρῳι (See Barchiesi 2007, vv. 3.658-660). Herter (1980, 119) also notes the verbal echo, but asserts that Acoetes is merely an attendant of Bacchus and not the god in disguise.

¹⁹⁰ Ba. 501-502 Πε. καὶ ποῦ 'στιν; οὐ γὰρ φανερός ὄμμασίῃ γ' ἔμοις. / Δι. παρ' ἐμοί· σὺ δ' ἀσεβῆς αὐτὸς ὢν οὐκ εἰσορᾷς.

respond that they did not see him.¹⁹¹ Hence, in both texts there is dramatic irony in that although Pentheus has before him Bacchus in disguise (Acoetes, Lydian Stranger) he is too “blind” and irreverent to perceive his divinity.

The Acoetes episode begins with the return of Pentheus’ servants leading the captured Acoetes (574-576), a scene which mirrors the stage entrance of the servants in Euripides, who bring the bound Lydian stranger (434-440). Both Acoetes and the Lydian stranger have their hands tied and in both scenes the disguised Bacchus is fearless and absolutely calm, a sign of his divine nature. The servant reports that the Lydian stranger neither attempted to run away nor did he turn pale in fear, but asked them smiling to lead him in fetters to Pentheus (436-440) and likewise Acoetes replies fearlessly to Pentheus’ threatening questions (582). An explicit intertextual marker indicating the affinity between the two characters is found in Pentheus’ harangue to the Thebans, where he characterizes the leader of the Bacchantes (i.e. Acoetes) as a “foreigner” thus echoing the Euripidean Pentheus’ description of the Lydian stranger.¹⁹²

Commentators have observed that the arrival of Acoetes also evokes the advent of the captured Sinon in Aeneid 2.¹⁹³ Both characters are brought before a sovereign by humble figures (herdsmen and servants respectively) with their hands tied behind their back. Barchiesi remarks that the story of Sinon is a characteristic example of how a defenseless prisoner can bring about by means of the persuasive force of his speech the downfall of an entire city.¹⁹⁴ Below I will argue that Acoetes’ resemblance to Sinon is not superficial, but has deeper connotations. First,

¹⁹¹ Met. 3.572-573 Bacchus ubi esset, / quaerenti domino Bacchum vidisse negarunt.

¹⁹² Met. 3.561 Penthea terrebit cum totis aduena Thebis?; Ba. 233-234 λέγουσι δ' ὡς τις εἰσελήλυθε ξένος, / [...] Λυδίας ἀπὸ χθονός (See Bömer 1969, v. 3.562).

¹⁹³ Met. 3.572 ecce cruentati redeunt [...], 575 et tradunt manibus post terga ligatis; Aen. 2.57 ecce, manus iuuenem interea post terga reuinctum (See Bömer 1969, v. 3.575; Anderson 1997, v. 3.575; Barchiesi 2007, v. 3.575).

¹⁹⁴ Barchiesi 2007, v. 3.575.

both heroes have assumed a false identity: Sinon is pretending to be a cousin of Palamedes, who has deserted the Greeks, while Acoetes is actually Bacchus, who has taken on a mortal camouflage. They both deliberately let themselves be captured by their enemies, so that their deception will be more convincing.¹⁹⁵ Moreover, each of them recounts a cunning tale, which has disastrous repercussions for their audience. Sinon persuades the Trojans by means of his counterfeit story to bring the Wooden Horse into their city, an action which will directly lead to the fall of Troy. Acoetes' story fails in its ostensible purpose, namely to induce Pentheus to cease his hybris against the god and embrace Bacchic worship. As we shall see, however, his loquacious and digressive narrative is actually designed to bring about the opposite effect, namely Pentheus' ruin, by heightening the king's impatience and wrath, so that he may march against the Bacchantes.

Another piece of evidence corroborating the resemblance between Sinon and Acoetes can be found in Pentheus' harangue, in which he sarcastically asks the Theban men, who have in the past been fearless in battle, whether they are now to be defeated by the magic trickery of Bacchus.¹⁹⁶ This rhetorical question evokes Aeneas' sorrowful remark that the Trojans, who proved impregnable to the formidable Greek military forces, were eventually captured by Sinon's cunning treachery.¹⁹⁷ Indeed Bacchus will appear in the next scene in the human guise of Acoetes and destroy Pentheus by means of his crafty tale, just as Sinon brought about the sack of Troy through his lies.

¹⁹⁵ Aen. 2.59-61 qui se ignotum uenientibus ultro, / hoc ipsum ut strueret Troiamque aperiret Achiuis, / obtulerat.

¹⁹⁶ Met. 3.532-537 '[...] tantum / [...]ualent / [...]magicae fraudes, ut quos non bellicus ensis, / non tuba terruerit, non strictis agmina telis, / femineae uoces et mota insania uino obscenique greges et inania tympana uincant?.'

¹⁹⁷ Aen. 2.195-198 talibus insidiis periurique arte Sinonis / credita res, captique dolis lacrimisque coactis / quos neque Tydides neque Larisaeus Achilles / non anni domuere decem, non mille carinae. McNamara (2010, 179, n. 26) notes the correspondence between the rhetorical constructions of Pentheus and Aeneas, but does not draw any connections between Acoetes/Bacchus and Sinon.

A closer examination of the two heroes' portrayal reveals further affinities between them. Sinon may initially seem to differ from Acoetes in that he looks at the Trojans in agitation and recounts his tale trembling in fear, while his Ovidian counterpart responds intrepidly to Pentheus' death threats.¹⁹⁸ Sinon's dread, however, is a mere pretense, since he is actually confident in his valor and ready to die if his stratagem fails.¹⁹⁹ What is more, just as Sinon invokes the stars to bear witness that he will truthfully reveal to the Trojans the plans of the Greeks, in an analogous manner Acoetes swears by Bacchus himself that his account of the god's epiphany is genuine.²⁰⁰ Both oaths are fraudulent, although in a different way: Sinon conceals his deceitful story by means of a false pledge of honesty, while Acoetes relates a true tale taking, however, a disingenuous vow, in that being the god in disguise he swears in his own name.

It has been noted that both Acoetes and Sinon offer autobiographical information about their humble origins with special reference to their father's poverty, probably with the intention of winning the sympathy of their audience.²⁰¹ What has not been observed, however, is that Acoetes' wondrous escape from Pentheus' prison mirrors the "escape" of Sinon from sacrifice at the hands of the Greeks. While the implements for Sinon's sacrifice (salted meal and fillets) are being prepared, he miraculously bursts his bonds and runs away.²⁰² Similarly while the instruments of Acoetes' torment (iron tools and fire) are being made ready, his chains slip from

¹⁹⁸ Aen. 2.67-28 *turbatus... / ...oculis Phrygia agmina circumspexit, 108 prosequitur pavitans; Met. 3.582 metu vacuus.*

¹⁹⁹ Aen. 2.108 *ficto pectore fatur, 61-62 fidens animi atque in utrumque paratus, / seu uersare dolos seu certae occumbere morti.*

²⁰⁰ Aen. 2.154-155 *uos, aeterni ignes, et non uiolabile uestrum / testor numen; Met. 3.658-660 per tibi nunc ipsum [...] adiuro, tam me tibi vera referre [...].*

²⁰¹ Met. 3.586 *pauper* et ipse fuit [...]; Aen. 2.87 *pauper* in arma pater primis huc misit ab annis (See Hardie 1990, 231).

²⁰² (2.132-234 mihi *sacra parari* / et salsae fruges et circum tempora uittae. eripui, fateor, leto me et *uincula rupi*.)

his hands of their own accord and he escapes.²⁰³ The distinguishing difference of the two scenes is that whereas Acoetes' release from torture is a genuine manifestation of Bacchus' divine power, Sinon's liberation from death is a fiction concocted by himself in order to stir the pity of the Trojans.

Philip Hardie has posed the question whether the Lydian stranger could be one of the models for Virgil's Sinon.²⁰⁴ I believe that there are reasonable grounds for arguing that the crafty Sinon has strong affinities with Euripides' character. Many of the correspondences noted above between Acoetes and the Lydian stranger can also be detected between Sinon and the Euripidean figure. First of all, both have assumed a counterfeit identity and intentionally let themselves be arrested and led with their hands bound to Pentheus and Priam respectively. What is more, just as the Lydian stranger deceives Pentheus and leads him to his destruction at the hands of the Bacchantes, likewise Sinon causes the fall of Troy by means of his forged story. Finally, the Lydian stranger and the Bacchantes' supernatural escape from Pentheus' prison is evoked by Sinon's miraculous "liberation" from sacrifice (2.132-134).

An important piece of evidence in support of the connection between the two characters is afforded by an extant fragment from Accius' *Bacchae*, which describes the Lydian stranger's capture by Pentheus' servants.²⁰⁵ On the one hand, Accius' description evokes the parallel scene of the Euripidean play (436-440): in both situations the Lydian stranger deliberately stays ready at hand for the servants to arrest him smiling with confidence.²⁰⁶ On the other hand, the Accian

²⁰³ Met. 3.697-700 [...] dum crudelia iussae / instrumenta necis ferrumque ignesque parantur, / [...] lapsasque lacertis/ sponte sua fama est nullo solvente catenas.

²⁰⁴ Hardie 1990, 231.

²⁰⁵ Dangel 1995, fr. 8.

²⁰⁶ Ba. 436-437 ὁ θῆρ δ' ὄδ' ἡμῖν πρῶτος οὐδ' ὑπέσπασεν / φυγῆι πόδ', ἀλλ' ἔδωκεν οὐκ ἄκων χέρα, 439-440 γελῶν δὲ καὶ δεῖν κάπαγειν ἐφίετο / ἔμμένε τε, τοῦμόν εὐτρεπές ποιούμενος; Dangel, fr. 8 praesens praesto irridens leniter.

fragment is directly echoed by Virgil's picture of the apprehension of Sinon by the Trojan shepherds: in either case the hero offers himself to be captured of his own accord.²⁰⁷ If Virgil has indeed fashioned the figure of Sinon by assimilating elements from the Lydian stranger, it follows that Ovid evokes the *Bacchae* by means of double allusion, that is both directly and indirectly through the intermediate model of the *Aeneid*, which in turn alludes to the Greek play.

The affinity between Acoetes and Sinon is also corroborated by the fact that in the preceding scene Pentheus was reminiscent of Laocoon. The conflict between Laocoon and Sinon, the former trying to warn his people against Greek treachery and avert the fall of his city, the latter attempting to dupe the Trojans into dragging the fatal Wooden Horse into Troy is reenacted in the confrontation between Pentheus, who aims to induce the Thebans to reject the Bacchic cult, and Acoetes, whose objective is to bring about the destruction of the Theban king. The implication of Acoetes' association with Sinon, both of whom employ trickery to achieve their goal, is that it presents Acoetes as a cunning character and thus functions as another argument in favor of the thesis that he is actually a mortal guise for Bacchus.

The clash between Laocoon and Sinon is reworked by Ovid not only in the macro-narrative of Pentheus, but also in the micro-narrative of Acoetes' story. In a reversal of roles, Acoetes, who advises the Tyrrhenian sailors against abducting the disguised Bacchus and bringing him on board the ship, plays now the role of Laocoon, who attempts to dissuade the Trojans from conveying the Horse into their city. In either case the audience proves heedless of the warning and suffers the consequences: the Tyrrhenian sailors are punished by the god for their impiety by being transformed into dolphins, while the Trojans see their city razed to the ground. The link between Acoetes and Laocoon is confirmed by verbal reminiscences of the

²⁰⁷ Dangel, fr. 8 nobis stupefactis sese ultro ostentum obtulit; Aen. 2.59-61 qui se ignotum uenientibus ultro, / hoc ipsum ut strueret Troiamque aperiret Achiuis, obtulerat.

Virgilian text. Laocoon is uncertain what kind of trickery lies behind the Horse, but he is sure that it is some sort of Greek stratagem.²⁰⁸ Likewise Acoetes is doubtful which divinity hides inside the boy, but he is convinced that a god is indeed concealed in it.²⁰⁹ Bacchus, who camouflages himself as an effeminate boy, thus recalls the Wooden Horse, which bears inside it the Greek warriors, in that they are both a deceptive medium of destruction for the Tyrrhenian sailors and the Trojans respectively. The disguised god is also reminiscent of the crafty Sinon, since each of them takes on a counterfeit identity (exiled Greek, defenseless boy) and destroys his enemies by means of cunning trickery. Bacchus sheds feigned tears in order to evoke the sympathy of the sailors, echoing Sinon's crocodile tears similarly aimed to make the Trojans take pity on him.²¹⁰

The Tyrrhenian sailors may ultimately suffer a grim fate like the Trojans, but they are initially reminiscent of the Greeks of Aeneid 2. To begin with, both the Greeks and the sailors are fraudulent: the former surreptitiously invade Troy by concealing themselves inside the Horse, while the latter try to trick the disguised god by falsely promising that they will convey him to Naxos, whereas their secret plan is to kidnap him. Ovid indicates the Tyrrhenian sailors' resemblance to the Greeks through verbal echoes. In particular, the catalogue of the Greek warriors hiding inside the Wooden Horse is evoked by the catalogue of the Tyrrhenian sailors. The Greeks are said to glide down the Horse by means of a lowered rope and likewise the Ovidian Dictys is characterized as being the swiftest in sliding down a rope.²¹¹ Furthermore, the

²⁰⁸ Aen. 2.248-249 *aut aliquis latet error; equo ne credite, Teucri. / quidquid id est [...].*

²⁰⁹ Met. 3.611-613 [...] *quod numen in isto / corpore sit, dubito; sed corpore numen in isto est! / quisquis es [...].*

²¹⁰ Met. 3.652 flenti similis, 656-657 lacrimas manus impia nostras / ridet; Aen. 2.145 His lacrimis uitam damus, 196 lacrimis...coactis.

²¹¹ Aen. 2.262 demissum lapsi per funem; Met. 3.616 preussoque rudente relabi.

last of the Greek catalogue is Epeus and similarly Ovid makes Epopeus the last of his list of sailors, whose name sonically recalls that of Epeus. Both characters have a leading role in their groups, in that Epeus is the inventor of the Horse, while Epopeus maintains the rowing rhythm of the oarsmen and uplifts their spirits.²¹² Finally, just as the Greeks exit the Horse and stealthily attack Troy, which is said to be “buried in sleep and wine”, in an analogous fashion the Tyrrhenian sailors abduct the disguised Bacchus, who pretends to be “heavy with wine and sleep”.²¹³ To sum up, although the perfidious Tyrrhenian sailors at first resemble Virgil’s Greeks and their “victim”, the disguised Bacchus, assumes the part of the Trojans, this situation is later ironically inverted. The sailors recall the ruined Trojans, since they are outwitted and punished by the guileful god, who plays simultaneously the roles of the Wooden Horse and Sinon.

Pentheus’ interrogation of Acoetes is a reworking of the Theban king’s questioning of the Lydian stranger in the *Bacchae*. In both scenes the prisoner is asked about his country of origin and he replies that his homeland is Lydia.²¹⁴ Furthermore, just as Pentheus asks the Lydian stranger how he became initiated in the Dionysiac mysteries, likewise his Ovidian counterpart inquires why Acoetes participates in the rites of Bacchus.²¹⁵ Finally, Acoetes’ miraculous escape from Pentheus’ prison evokes the Lydian stranger’s release from captivity (591-637) and even more closely the supernatural liberation of the Euripidean Bacchantes (443-450).²¹⁶ The multiple verbal echoes of the *Bacchae* demonstrate that Ovid fashioned this scene having Euripides’ play

²¹² Aen. 2.264 *doli fabricator* Epeos; Met. 3.619 *animorum hortator* Epopeus.

²¹³ Aen. 2.265 *inuadunt urbem somno uinoque sepultam*; Met. 3.608 *mero somnoque gravis* [...] videtur.

²¹⁴ Ba. 460 *πρῶτον μὲν οὖν μοι λέξον ὅστις εἶ γένος*; Met. 3.579 *ede* [...] *patriam*; Ba. 464 *Λυδία δέ μοι πατρίς*; Met. 3.583 *patria Maeonia est* (See Barchiesi 2007, v. 3.580).

²¹⁵ Ba. 465-466 *Πε. πόθεν δὲ τελετὰς τάσδ' ἄγεις ἐς Ἑλλάδα*; / *Δι. Διόνυσος αὐτός μ' εἰσέβησ'*, ὁ τοῦ Διός; Met. 3.580-581 *ede* [...] *morisque novi cur sacra frequentes*.

²¹⁶ Barchiesi 2007, vv. 3.699-700.

in mind. Both the Bacchantes and Acoetes are snatched away and confined in the palace prison.²¹⁷ In either case, however, the bonds are miraculously removed from their limbs of their own accord and the prison gates open with nobody unlocking them.²¹⁸ Ovid highlights his dialogue with Euripides by means of a clear intertextual marker. The epic narrator states that Acoetes' supernatural escape is conveyed to Pentheus through rumor or report (3.700 fama est), an expression which generally functions as an "Alexandrian footnote" drawing the reader's attention to Ovid's allusion to Euripides and in particular echoes the scene in the Bacchae, where a servant reports to the Theban king the Bacchantes' liberation from bondage (443-450).

Acoetes' tale has been inserted by Ovid as an embedded story in the main narrative of Pentheus and serves several functions within its narrative frame. One obvious reason why Ovid chose to incorporate this myth pertains to the essential nature of the Metamorphoses: it is a poem recounting stories of transformation. The Bacchae did not offer Ovid many instances of physical metamorphosis, since the only transformations in the play are Dionysus' assumption of a human form and Pentheus' dismemberment, which constitutes a perverted kind of metamorphosis. Thus the Roman poet decided to embed the story of Bacchus and the Tyrrhenian pirates in the Pentheus episode, since it relates the physical transformation of the sailors into dolphins and also because, like the Euripidean play, it constitutes a resistance myth, where mortal outrage against a divinity is duly punished.

The story of the impious sailors' punishment by Bacchus may on one level be interpreted as a cautionary mythological exemplum intended to persuade Pentheus not to commit outrage

²¹⁷ Ba. 443-444 ἄς δ' αὖ σὺν βάκχασι εἶρξας, ἄς συνήρπασας/ κάδησας ἐν δεσμοῖσι πανδήμου στέγης; Met. 3.696-697 protinus abstractus solidis Tyrrhenus Acoetes/ clauditur in tectis.

²¹⁸ Ba. 444 ἀντόματα δ' ἀνταῖς δεσμὰ διελύθη ποδῶν; Met. 3.699-700 sponte sua [...] lapsasque lacertis [...] catenas; Ba. 448 κληιδές τ' ἀνῆκα θύρετρ' ἄνευ θνητῆς χερρός; Met. 3.699-700 patuisse fores [...] nullo solvente) (See Bömer 1969, v. 3.699).

against the god, lest he also suffer divine retribution. Acoetes' admonitory tale, however, is entirely unsuccessful, since Pentheus storms off to Mt. Cithaeron in order to confront the Bacchants. In fact, the Theban king sentences Acoetes to death intending to make an example out of him for the Thebans, so that they may not embrace the Bacchic worship.²¹⁹ Ironically, however, Pentheus' own doom at the hands of the maenads serves as an example for the Theban women, who warned by his fate celebrate piously the new cult of Bacchus.²²⁰ Similarly Acoetes became a devout participant in the Bacchic rites after bearing witness to the exemplary punishment inflicted on the Tyrrhenian sailors by the god.²²¹ The only exemplum that Pentheus admires and wishes to follow is that of Acrisius, the king of Argos, who also opposed the introduction of the Bacchic cult into his city (3.550-560). Pentheus' emulation of a wrong role model is illustrated by the fact that they are both punished by Bacchus and just as Acrisius is said in Book 4 to have repented his outrage against the god, similarly Pentheus regrets his *hybris*.²²²

On another level, however, Acoetes, that is Bacchus in disguise, may aim to produce the opposite effect with his narrative. Below I will argue that Acoetes' speech has the covert purpose of enraging Pentheus to such an extent that he may go alone to challenge the maenads, a course of action, which will ultimately lead to his demise. In the *Bacchae* the Lydian stranger exploits Pentheus' voyeuristic curiosity to witness the Bacchic rites, in order to lure him to his downfall. He persuades him to dress up as a maenad and go secretly to spy on the Bacchants on Mt. Cithaeron, where he becomes the victim of a gruesome dismemberment (810-861). Ovid,

²¹⁹ Met. 3.579-580 o periture tuaque aliis documenta dature / morte.

²²⁰ Met. 3.732-733 talibus exemplis monitae nova sacra frequentant (See Anderson 1997, vv. 3.732-733).

²²¹ Met. 3.691 accessi sacris Baccheaque sacra frequent.

²²² Met. 3.718 iam se damnantem, iam se peccasse fatentem; Met. 4.613-614 tam violasse deum [...] paenitet; (See Mcnamara 2010, 189).

however, has omitted from his version of the myth Pentheus' desire to behold the maenads conducting their mystic rites as well as his effeminate disguise as a Bacchant. The Roman poet has instead portrayed the Theban king as a hyper-masculine and belligerent character, whose chief trait is uncontrollable wrath, a trademark feature of the heroes of martial epic.²²³ Thus, as I will attempt to show, Acoetes/Bacchus capitalizes on Pentheus' irascible character by recounting a story specially designed to infuriate him, so that he may make the mistake of confronting the Bacchants.

Pentheus' hot-tempered personality is manifest throughout the narrative. His rashness is already shown in the opening encounter with Tiresias, where he violently pushes the seer aside, while the latter is still speaking.²²⁴ His impatience is also reflected by his command to his servants to capture the leader of the Bacchants without the slightest delay.²²⁵ The Theban king's impetuosity and irritability evokes not only that of his Euripidean predecessor, but also of the proverbially reckless and wrathful Turnus.²²⁶ Ovid's detailed description of Pentheus' rage reveals further affinities with the Virgilian Turnus. After Pentheus' harangue the epic narrator describes the endeavors of Cadmus, Athamas, and other members of the royal family to check the king's hostility towards Bacchus. They bring about the opposite result, however, since Pentheus' rage is exacerbated by their warnings and reproaches.²²⁷ This description may recall

²²³ Barchiesi (2007, vv. 3.706-707) notes that the theme of Pentheus' anger is significant in the central part of the *Bacchae*, namely the conflict between the Theban king and the Lydian stranger (647, 670-671, 794-795), but disappears in the final segment of the play, where Pentheus is inspired by the god with madness and falls entirely under his spell.

²²⁴ Met. 3.526 *taliam dicentem proturbat Echione natus.*

²²⁵ Met. 3.562-563 'ite citi ... ite ducemque / attrahite huc uinctum! iussis mora segnis abesto'.

²²⁶ Ba. 670-671 Αγ. τὸ γὰρ τάχος σου τῶν φρενῶν δέδοικ', ἄναξ, / καὶ τοῦ ξύθυμον καὶ τὸ βασιλικὸν λίαν, 789 Πε. οὐκ ὀκνεῖν δεῖ; Aen. 10.380 nec Turnum segnis retinet mora (See Barchiesi 2007, v. 3.563).

²²⁷ Met. 3.565-567 *corripiunt dictis frustra que inhibere laborant. / acrior admonitu est inritaturque retenta / et crescit rabies remoraminaque ipsa nocebant.*

the Virgilian scene, where Turnus' wrath is intensified by Latinus' attempts to prevent him from fighting Aeneas.²²⁸ Moreover, the narrator throws the Theban king's fury into relief by means of an epic simile, where he compares him with a torrent, which upon meeting any obstacles seethes and courses violently.²²⁹ We saw earlier how Pentheus evokes through this simile the Virgilian Pyrrhus and Mars' serpent at the beginning of *Metamorphoses* 3. He is also reminiscent, however, of Turnus who, after Allecto has visited him in his dream and inspired him with rage and war frenzy, is likened to bubbling water in a boiling cauldron.²³⁰

This portrayal of Pentheus alerts the reader to the fact that even the slightest delay and hindrance is fuel for the king's fiery temper. Thus when the captured Acoetes is brought before him Pentheus fixes a wrathful and terrible gaze on him and addresses him in only three lines instantly condemning him to death and scarcely able to postpone his execution (3.577-581). Acoetes, however, goes on to explain why he participates in the Bacchic rites by recounting a long and rambling story full of irrelevant digressions, the kind of story calculated to incense the hasty and irascible king, so that he falls into the deadly trap of challenging the maenads. Joanne McNamara has argued that Acoetes' long-winding and digressive narrative may on the surface seem to frustrate the narrative momentum of the story, but in fact it ironically propels the action by heightening the impatience and wrath of Pentheus, so that he rushes to confront the Bacchants. She does not, however, attribute to Acoetes a deliberate intention to cause Pentheus' frustration, which will ultimately lead to his demise.²³¹

²²⁸ Aen. 12.45-46 [...] *haudquaquam dictis violentia Turni / flectitur; exsuperat magis aegrescitque medendo.*

²²⁹ Met. 3.567-571 *crescit rabies, [...] / (sic ego torrentem, [...] / [...] decurrere uidi; / at quacumque trabes obstructaque saxa tenebant / spumeus et feruens et ab obice saeuior ibat).*

²³⁰ Aen. 7.461-462 *saeuit amor ferri et scelerata insania belli, / ira super, 464-465 exsultantque aestu latices, furit intus aquai / fumidus atque alte spumis exuberat amnis.*

²³¹ McNamara 2010, 291.

Acoetes begins his narrative with an entirely extraneous section of twelve lines, where he gives autobiographical information about his birth and upbringing (584-596). He then recounts in minute detail his ship's voyage to Delos (597-604), during which his shipmates stumble upon and kidnap the disguised Bacchus presumably aiming either to get ransom or sell him into slavery (605-607). Ovid's description of Bacchus' physical appearance diverges from the Homeric Hymn to Dionysus, since he portrays the god as a young boy with feminine characteristics and heavy with sleep and wine, whereas in the hymn Dionysus resembles a youth at the threshold of manhood.²³² Acoetes thus presents to Pentheus the picture of a defenseless, effeminate, and hedonistic Bacchus, which corresponds to the king's own scornful preconception of the god as an unwarlike boy with scented hair, decked with garlands, and dressed in luxurious clothes (3.553-556), which in turn echoes the Euripidean Pentheus' description of the Lydian Stranger as emasculated and sybaritic (235-236). I believe that Acoetes has deliberately depicted Bacchus as an unthreatening and feeble figure, so that Pentheus would not be terrified by the god, but would feel the same derision for him that he expressed earlier in his speech to the Thebans.

Acoetes introduces Bacchus' epiphany with an oath that he will relate events which are genuine despite sounding incredible (658-660). This very statement, however, ironically draws Pentheus' attention to the implausible nature of the following account and disposes him towards disbelieving it. Bacchus' epiphany consists entirely of miraculous and bizarre elements: immobilization of the ship in mid-water, ivy and grape clusters entwining the oars and sails, and phantoms of tigers, lynxes, and panthers (660-671). While Ovid follows the Homeric hymn in the description of the floral miracles, he pointedly diverges from his model in the depiction of

²³² Met. 3.607-608 virginea puerum [...] forma. / ille mero somnoque gravis; H. Dion. 3-4 νεηνίη ἀνδρὶ ἐουκῶς / πρωθήβη.

the animal apparitions. In the hymn Dionysus himself transforms into a real lion, which roars and gazes threateningly at the pirates (44-45, 47-48). The god also creates a bear, which rises menacingly against the pirates and there is no indication in the text that it is a phantom (46-47). Then Dionysus in his lion shape leaps upon the captain and kills him (50-51), while the rest of the crew dive into the sea to save themselves (50-52). In Ovid, on the contrary, Bacchus remains in human form and takes no aggressive action against the sailors, while the exotic animals that appear around him are explicitly said to be insubstantial phantasms (668 simulacra [...] inania), which lie passively posing no threat to the sailors (669 iacent). Finally, whereas in the hymn the pirates desert the ship in terror (50 ἐκπληγέντες), in Ovid there is uncertainty whether they leap into the sea out of fear or madness.²³³ Therefore, while in the Homeric hymn Dionysus' epiphany is terrifying and deadly, in Ovid the god's appearance is depicted as unthreatening and non-violent. The description is tailored to the objective of Acoetes' narrative, that is to relate a story that will not frighten and warn Pentheus, but exasperate him.

The final portion of Acoetes' story consists of the transformation of the sailors by Bacchus into dolphins. In antithesis to the Homeric hymn, where the metamorphosis of the pirates is described in just half a line (53 δελφῖνες δ' ἐγένοντο), Ovid devotes to it sixteen lines (671-686). The form of punishment inflicted on the impious sailors is not at all frightening and the tone of the narration is lighthearted with many touches of humor. Acoetes first focuses on four individual cases of metamorphosis. When Medon begins to transform, his shipmate Lycabas mocks him, but while speaking he himself starts to turn into a dolphin (671-675). Libys tries in vain to ply the oars, but he sees his own hands shrinking into fins, while an anonymous sailor comically attempts to take hold of the ropes, but finds that he has no hands anymore (676-680).

²³³ Met. 3.670-671 exsiluere viri, sive hoc insania fecit / sive timor.

Acoetes concludes his description with the playful picture of the group of dolphins frolicking in the water and blowing spray from their nostrils (683-686). Hence, the humorous penalty that the sailors suffer and the amusing way it is described do not aim to caution and inspire fear in Pentheus, but to irritate and infuriate him.

Pentheus' response to Acoetes' speech reveals that the disguised god has accomplished his goal of enraging the Theban king. The exasperated Pentheus exclaims that Acoetes has subjected him to his long-winded and digressive speech, so as to diminish the intensity of his wrath by means of delay, which is a highly ironic statement given that the aim of Acoetes' story is exactly the opposite.²³⁴ The Theban king immediately sentences Acoetes to death by torture and the language of his command indicates haste and impatience.²³⁵ The Ovidian Pentheus' condemnation of Acoetes to torment and execution serves to portray him as more cruel and sadistic than his Euripidean counterpart, who only imprisons the Lydian stranger. In fact, the Theban king is reminiscent here of another savage and ruthless sovereign, namely Mezentius. Just as the Virgilian tyrant inflicts abominable torments and executions on his own people, similarly the ferocious Pentheus orders that Acoetes be tortured and killed.²³⁶ What is more, a striking similarity between the two situations is that Mezentius commits these monstrous crimes against his Tuscan subjects, who have a Lydian descent and likewise the Tyrrhenian Acoetes is

²³⁴ Met. 3.692-693 'Praebuimus longis' Pentheus 'ambagibus aures,' / inquit 'ut ira mora vires absumere posset'. Professor Richard Tarrant has pointed out to me that if we accept the alternative reading *assumere* (instead of *absumere*), which is preserved in many manuscripts, then we can make an entirely different interpretation of the scene: Pentheus deliberately subjects himself to Acoetes' verbose story, so as to increase his anger by means of the postponement.

²³⁵ Met. 3.694 *praecipitem, famuli, rapite hunc* [...].

²³⁶ Aen. 8.485-488 *mortua quin etiam iungebat corpora uiuis / componens manibusque manus atque oribus ora, / tormenti genus, et sanie taboque fluentis / complexu in misero longa sic morte necabat*; Met. 3.694-695 *cruciatuque diris / corpora tormentis Stygiae demittite nocti!*.

of Lydian nationality.²³⁷ Acoetes' miraculous escape (3.697-700) is the last straw for Pentheus' patience, who goes alone to Mt. Cithaeron to confront the Bacchants and the songs of the maenads heard from afar serve to incense the king's fury even further. His emotional turmoil is reflected by an epic simile, where he is compared to a war horse which becomes eager for battle when it hears the signal of the trumpeter (3.702-707). Thus, every event in the narrative is designed to trigger Pentheus' anger: the Thebans' opposition to their king, Acoetes' garrulous story and his supernatural escape, even the Bacchants' ritual cries.

Acoetes' narrative also functions as a tragic messenger's report and actually plays the same structural role as the first messenger speech in the *Bacchae* (677-774). A herdsman reports to Pentheus the failed attempt of the shepherds to kidnap Agave, which causes the maenads to retaliate by routing the shepherds, dismembering their cattle, and attacking the nearby villages. The enraged country folk engage in battle with the Bacchants, but are utterly defeated by them. In either case the Theban king hears a humble character (a shepherd and a helmsman respectively) relating a story where an outrage towards Bacchus or his followers is duly punished. The nature of the *hybris* is the same in both stories, since in Euripides it consists in an abortive attempt to capture Agave, one of the leaders of the Bacchants, while in Ovid it is an unsuccessful effort to abduct the disguised Bacchus himself. Furthermore, just as the shepherd describes in detail the wondrous deeds performed by the Bacchants (breast feeding of wild animals, creation of springs of water, milk, wine, and honey, etc.), similarly Acoetes gives a full account of the god's miracles during his epiphany to the Tyrrhenian sailors (floral miracles, phantoms of wild animals, etc.) and both of these descriptions serve to illustrate the divine power of Bacchus. Finally, the depiction of the servants who bring the arrested Acoetes to Pentheus as

²³⁷ Aen. 8.479-480 *urbis Agyllinae sedes, ubi Lydia quondam / gens, bello praeclara, iugis insedit Etruscis*; Met. 3.583 *patria Maeonia est, 696 Tyrrhenus Acoetes*.

bloodied implying that they engaged in fighting with the Bacchants, may echo the shepherd's messenger speech, where the rustics who confront the maenads in battle are wounded and routed by them.²³⁸

Both speeches fail to caution Pentheus and induce him to show piety to the god. The essential difference, however, between them is that whereas the Euripidean shepherd aims to persuade the Theban king to cease his opposition to Dionysus, Acoetes' purpose is precisely to be ineffectual in convincing Pentheus to embrace the Bacchic cult. In particular, the herdsman relates that whereas the weapons of the peasants were unable to harm the Bacchants, who were supernaturally protected by Dionysus, the maenads injured them with their thyrsi and turned them to flight. This account clearly reveals to Pentheus the superhuman strength and invincibility of the Bacchants and consequently the certainty of failure of a military campaign against them. Thus it constitutes a very effective warning to the Theban king, who is planning to launch an assault against the maenads. Acoetes' speech, on the other hand, with its narration of Bacchus' floral miracles, simulacra of animals, and transformation of men into dolphins is entirely unsuitable for demonstrating to Pentheus the terrifying power of Bacchus, so that he might show reverence towards his godhead.

The shepherd's speech also contains explicit admonitions and promptings to the Theban king not to fight against Dionysus. After he describes the wondrous deeds performed by the Bacchants, he comments that if Pentheus had been present and witnessed these miracles, he would have recognized Dionysus' divinity and prayed to him (712-713). Moreover, after his report of the maenads' victory over the rustics, he concludes his speech by urging Pentheus to welcome Dionysus into the city (769-774). Acoetes, on the contrary, addresses no warnings or

²³⁸ Met. 3.572 ecce cruentati redeunt; Ba. 763-764 κείναι δὲ θύρσους ἐξανιεῖσαι χερῶν / ἐτραυμάτιζον κάπενώτιζον φυγῆι.

exhortations to the Theban king to show respect to Bacchus and closes his narrative by simply stating that after the god's punishment of the Tyrrhenian sailors he joined his worship (3.691). This marked divergence from the Euripidean model is another indication that Acoetes' speech is not intended to persuade Pentheus to acknowledge Bacchus' divine status and participate in his cult, but enrage him so that he might confront the Bacchants and meet his death at their hands.

The embedded story of Acoetes serves an additional function: it mirrors in multiple ways the main narrative of Pentheus. First of all, the devout Acoetes' resistance to the Tyrrhenian sailors echoes the opposition of the pious Thebans (e.g. Tiresias, Cadmus, Athamas) to Pentheus. The Thebans' censure of Pentheus' impiety towards Bacchus only aggravates his wrath (3.564-567) and in analogous manner when Acoetes, who is both the captain and helmsman of the ship, tries to prevent his crew from kidnapping Bacchus, the infuriated Lycabas attempts to hurl him into the sea (3.621-629). In the Hymn to Dionysus, on the other hand, the captain simply rebukes the devout helmsman, when he asks his shipmates to release the god (25-27). Thus Ovid diverges from the Homeric hymn so that Acoetes' embedded tale may reflect the frame narrative. Moreover, Opheltes accuses Acoetes of frenzy, when the latter follows Bacchus' request to bring him to Naxos, thus evoking Pentheus' characterization of the Thebans as mad due to their wish to worship Bacchus.²³⁹

One important link between the inserted story of Acoetes and its narrative frame is Bacchus' use of deception. Just as the god appears to Pentheus disguised as the powerless Acoetes and lets himself be bound in fetters by his servants, likewise the god presents himself to the sailors in the guise of a defenseless boy and allows them to capture him. The camouflaged god's divine nature is perceived by none of the sailors apart from Acoetes (3.609-614) and

²³⁹ Met. 3.641-642 "quid facis, o demens? quis te furor," inquit Opheltes/ "persequitur?"; Met. 3.531-532 'quis furor, anguigenae, proles Mavortia, vestras attonuit mentes?' (See McNamara 2010, 178).

likewise Pentheus does not realize that Acoetes is actually the god in human form. Ovid lays particular emphasis on Bacchus' cunning in Acoetes' tale. His trickery is evident from his first appearance in the story: having assumed the shape of an effeminate boy, he is led along by Opheltes acting as if awakened from a drunken slumber and pretending to be reeling and hardly able to follow the sailor.²⁴⁰ The feigning of drunkenness is particularly fitting for the god of intoxication and he actually simulates the behavior of one of his typical companions, old Silenus, who appears in the hymn to Bacchus opening Book 4 as inebriated and supporting his tottering limbs with a staff.²⁴¹ When the crew loudly applauds Lycabas' attempt to throw Acoetes overboard for opposing their plans, the god pretends to shake off his drunken torpor due to the clamor and, affecting ignorance, asks them how he ended up on their ship and where they are planning to take him.²⁴² What is more, after the sailors steer the ship towards a different destination than the one they promised to take him, namely Naxos, Bacchus mockingly pretends that he has belatedly realized their scheme and, faking tears, he complains of their "cruel deception".²⁴³

This portrayal of Bacchus as fraudulent and crafty is modeled on Euripides' *Bacchae*, where Dionysus disguised as the Lydian stranger lets himself be captured by Pentheus' men and cunningly entices the Theban king into spying the maenads, so as to destroy him. The Dionysus of the Homeric hymn, on the other hand, is not represented as treacherous. From the very start he provides the pirates with a clear sign of his divinity by miraculously removing the fetters from

²⁴⁰ Met. 3.607-609 *virginea puerum ducit per litora forma. / ille mero somnoque gravis titubare videtur / vixque sequi.*

²⁴¹ Met. 4.26-27 *quique senex ferula titubantis ebrius artus / sustinet.*

²⁴² Met. 3.630-631 *veluti clamore solutus/ sit sopor atque mero redeant in pectora sensus.*

²⁴³ Met. 3.650-655 *tum deus inludens, tamquam modo denique fraudem / senserit, e puppi pontum prospectat adunca / et flenti similis [...].*

his limbs (13-14) and unlike the Ovidian Bacchus, who creates illusory phantoms of wild animals, the Homeric Dionysus engenders a real bear and transforms himself into a living and breathing lion. In conclusion, the wily trickery employed by the disguised Bacchus against the Tyrrhenian sailors in the micro-narrative alerts the reader to the fact that in the macro-narrative the god is deceiving Pentheus as well in the guise of Acoetes.

Another correspondence between Acoetes' story and the narrative frame is that the Tyrrhenian sailors are portrayed being as hybristic and obstinate as Pentheus. The sailors are repeatedly characterized as an impious lot and they laugh at the tears of Acoetes and Bacchus.²⁴⁴ Similarly the Theban king scorns the gods and ridicules Tiresias' prophecies.²⁴⁵ The alter ego of Pentheus among the Tyrrhenian sailors is Lycabas, since the chief trait of both heroes is frenzied anger and they both attempt unsuccessfully to dispatch Acoetes, who opposes their plans: Pentheus sentences him to death by torture, while Lycabas tries to hurl him off the ship.²⁴⁶ Ovid underscores the affinity of the two scenes by making the figurative language of Pentheus' orders recall Lycabas' actions. The Theban king commands his servants to snatch Acoetes and cast him headlong to the underworld river Styx, echoing Lycabas, who grabs Acoetes by the throat and tries to throw him into the sea.²⁴⁷ Another shared characteristic of Pentheus and Lycabas is their impiety, which is illustrated by the fact that they both reflect the Virgilian Mezentius. We saw earlier how the characterization of the Theban king as *contemptor superum* (3.514) is reminiscent of Virgil's despot. Lycabas is said to have been banished from an Etruscan city as

²⁴⁴ Met. 3.629 *impia turba* 656 *lacrimas manus impia nostras/ridet*.

²⁴⁵ Met. 3.514 *contemptor superum* Pentheus *praesagaque ridet*.

²⁴⁶ Met. 3.623 (Lycabas) *furit audacissimus*, 567 (Pentheus) *crescit rabies*, 577-570 *adspicit ...oculis, quos ira tremendos fecerat* 707 *recanduit ira*.

²⁴⁷ Met. 3. 694-695 *praecipitem, famuli, rapite hunc cruciataque diris / corpora tormentis Stygiae demittite nocti!*, 626-627 *iuvenali guttura pugno / rupit et excussum misisset in aequora*.

punishment for murder recalling the oppressive Mezentius, who is exiled by the Etruscan people because of his atrocious crimes against them.²⁴⁸

Pentheus and the sailors also display the same degree of stubbornness in their outrage towards Bacchus. The god initiates his epiphany by supernaturally immobilizing the Tyrrhenian ship. The sailors, however, do not cease their rowing, but even unfurl the sails and ply their oars with increased effort.²⁴⁹ In an analogous fashion Pentheus, despite the opposition of the Thebans and the miraculous escape of Acoetes attesting Bacchus' great power, persists in his struggle against the god and marches to Mt. Cithaeron to confront the Bacchants.²⁵⁰ The obstinate reaction of the Ovidian sailors towards Bacchus' epiphany contrasts sharply with the response of the sailors to the miracles performed by Dionysus in the Homeric Hymn, who ask the helmsman to bring the ship to shore, so as to release the god.²⁵¹ Therefore, Ovid deviates from the hymn in order to parallel Pentheus' obdurate irreverence to Bacchus with that of the sailors. Another manifestation of the sailors' stubbornness is found in the scene of metamorphosis. While Libys is trying to ply the oars that resist him, his arms transform into fins.²⁵² Likewise Pentheus, who becomes more enraged by the admonitions of the Thebans, is likened to a torrent, which becomes more violent when it meets with obstacles.²⁵³ The figurative image of the river made more savage by the barriers in its path is thus transformed into the literal picture of the sailors rowing their ship with redoubled struggle when it is immobilized by Bacchus. Hence, both

²⁴⁸ Met. 3.624-625 *Tusca pulsus ab urbe / exilium dira poenam pro caede luebat* (See Barchiesi 2007, vv. 3.623-625).

²⁴⁹ Met. 3.662-663 *illi admirantes remorum in verbere perstant/ velaque deducunt geminaque ope currere temptant*.

²⁵⁰ Met. 3.701-702 *perstat Echionides, nec iam iubet ire, sed ipse vadit, ubi electus facienda ad sacra Cithaeron*.

²⁵¹ H. Dion. 42-44 [...] οἱ δὲ ἰδόντες/ νῆ' ἥδη τότ' ἔπειτα κυβερνήτην ἐκέλευον γῆ πελάαν' [...].

²⁵² Met. 3.676-677 at Libys *obstantis dum vult obvertere remos, / in spatium resilire manus breve vidit*.

²⁵³ Met. 3.568-571 *sic ego torrentem, qua nil obstabat eunti, / lenius et modico strepitu decurrere vidi; / at quacumque trabes obstructaque saxa tenebant, / spumeus et fervens et ab obice saevior ibat*.

Pentheus and the sailors' obstinate impiety towards Bacchus is intensified when it meets with opposition and they are equally punished for their outrage.

Finally, the penalty that the Tyrrhenian sailors suffer for their *hybris* towards Bacchus, namely their transformation into dolphins, is recounted in a lighthearted and humorous manner, but it also has sinister overtones in that it implicitly foreshadows the punishment inflicted on Pentheus for his outrage against the god, that is his dismemberment by the Bacchantes. When Bacchus pretends to discover the sailors' malicious plan to abduct him, he complains that the deception of a defenseless boy by a group of men is an inglorious act.²⁵⁴ This scene is echoed and reversed in the description of Pentheus' death. The band of Bacchantes rush against the helpless Pentheus seeing him as a wild boar and after they dismember him the frenzied Agave exclaims that his slaughter is a triumph for them.²⁵⁵ In both scenes there is pointed dramatic irony, since in Acoetes' story the apparent victim (Bacchus in disguise) will prove to be the avenging punisher, while in the main narrative the intruding wild beast (Pentheus) is actually a powerless prey.

Another ominous anticipation of Pentheus' death is found in the scene of the sailors' metamorphosis. An anonymous sailor attempts to grasp a rope, but he suddenly realizes that he has no arms anymore and that his body has become limbless.²⁵⁶ This comic description of the sailor's transformation into a dolphin is evoked in a perverse manner in the scene of Pentheus' *sparagmos*. Pentheus tries to raise his arms in supplication to his mother, but he discovers that

²⁵⁴ Met. 3.654-655 "quo merui poenam facto? quae gloria vestra est, / si puerum iuvenes, si multi fallitis unum?".

²⁵⁵ Met. 3.715-716 ruit omnis in unum / turba furens, 728 clamat: 'io comites, opus hoc victoria nostra est!'

²⁵⁶ Met. 3.679-681 alter ad intortos cupiens dare bracchia funes / bracchia non habuit truncoque repandus in undas corpore desiluit.

they have been torn off and that his body is mutilated.²⁵⁷ The humorous transformation of the sailor, who loses his arms, because they have turned into fins, thus prefigures the grotesque “metamorphosis” of Pentheus, who is deprived of his arms by the frenzied Bacchantes.²⁵⁸ The striking verbal parallels between the two scenes illustrate that Ovid fashioned the amusing scene of the sailor’s transformation in such a way as to portend the tragic description of Pentheus’ death.²⁵⁹

To recapitulate, Ovid composes the Acoetes episode by mingling by means of intertextual conflation the Homeric Hymn to Dionysus, which is the source for the embedded narrative of the Tyrrhenian sailors, with the *Bacchae*, on which is modeled the narrative frame, namely Acoetes’ capture and escape. I have argued that Acoetes is actually Bacchus in disguise and plays the role of the Lydian stranger, in that they both lure Pentheus to his destruction by the Bacchantes, the former by exploiting his irascible and impatient character and the latter by capitalizing on his voyeuristic curiosity. Furthermore, both Acoetes in the external narrative and the disguised Bacchus in the internal story resemble in many ways the Virgilian Sinon, who echoes in turn the Euripidean Lydian stranger.

The micro-narrative of Acoetes serves multiple functions within the macro-narrative of Pentheus. First of all, it affords Ovid a straightforward physical metamorphosis, which the *Bacchae* does not provide, as well as a resistance myth parallel to that of Pentheus. On one level it is an admonitory mythological exemplum directed to Pentheus and intended to persuade him not to disrespect Bacchus, but on a deeper level it is designed to be unconvincing and infuriate

²⁵⁷ Met. 3.723-725 non habet infelix quae matri bracchia tendat, / trunca sed ostendens dereptis vulnera membris/ 'adspice, mater!' ait.

²⁵⁸ Anderson 1997, vv. 3.723-725.

²⁵⁹ bracchia non habuit ~ non habet [...] bracchia, ad intortos cupiens dare [...] funes ~ quae matri [...] tendat, trunco [...] corpore ~ trunca [...] vulnera.

the impetuous Theban king, so that he might storm off to Mt. Cithaeron and thus be destroyed by the Bacchantes. Acoetes' story also functions as a tragic messenger's report and he assumes the part of the Euripidean herdsman, who delivers the first messenger speech to Pentheus. Finally, the story of Acoetes has multiple correspondences to the main narrative. Acoetes' resistance to the Tyrrhenian sailors parallels the opposition of the Thebans to Pentheus. Furthermore, in both the internal and the external narrative Bacchus assumes a disguise (Acoetes, effeminate boy) and employs cunning deception against the Tyrrhenian sailors and Pentheus, both of whom are portrayed as impious towards the god and persistent in their outrage. Finally, the comical penalty suffered by the sailors obliquely portends the gruesome punishment inflicted on Pentheus by the god.

2.1.4 The sparagmos of Pentheus

In the final scene of Pentheus' story, in which the Theban king confronts the Bacchantes and is brutally dismembered by them, Ovid draws on the second messenger speech of the Bacchae (1024-1152) as his primary source. He also introduces in his narrative by means of intertextual conflation many elements from Theocritus' Idyll 26, which in turn echoes Euripides' play and thus functions as an intermediate model between the Greek tragedy and the Roman epic.²⁶⁰ The most significant Theocritean features in the Ovidian episode concern the setting of the scene, the role of Dionysus, the description of the dismemberment, and the elevated part of Autonoe. The concluding part of Ovid's story also contains scenic allusions and verbal reminiscences of the Aeneid, which can be found in the epic similes of the war horse (3.704-707) and the falling

²⁶⁰ For the reception of the Bacchae in Idyll 26 see Cairns 1992, and Cusset 1997, 2001.

leaves (3.729-731) as well as in Agave's slaying of Pentheus (3.725-727). The Ovidian narrative assimilates features from its Euripidean, Theocritean and Virgilian intertexts, but at the same time offers a highly original and innovative account of Pentheus' sparagmos.

Ovid's major divergence from the *Bacchae* pertains to the role of Dionysus in the Theban king's death. Whereas in Euripides the god plays a decisive part in the events leading to Pentheus' demise, in Ovid his intervention is implicit and is left to the reader to infer. The Roman poet follows in this respect the Theocritean version of the story, in which Dionysus is also divested of any direct role in the events.²⁶¹ In the *Bacchae* the disguised god maddens Pentheus and persuades him to dress up as a maenad by promising to show him the secret Bacchic rites (810-861). He then guides him to the Bacchants' place of assembly on Mt. Cithaeron (1041-1047) and places him on a fir tree thereby trapping him and making him visible to the maenads (1063-1075). At that moment he vanishes from sight and his incorporeal voice is heard exhorting the Bacchants to punish Pentheus (1077-1081). The god also provides clear signs of his epiphany, namely a brilliant fiery light and uncanny silence (1084-1085). Finally, Dionysus maddens the maenads (1094), so that they may view Pentheus as a wild beast and kill him (1107-1108). In Ovid and Theocritus, on the contrary, the Theban king goes to confront the Bacchants of his own accord and Bacchus does not openly participate in the events. The only oblique manifestation of his power is the frenzy which he inspires in the maenads and which causes them to tear Pentheus to pieces.²⁶²

One aspect in which the Ovidian Pentheus diverges from both his Euripidean and Theocritean antecedents is that he does not engage in stealth and spying. In the *Metamorphoses*

²⁶¹ Bömer 1969, vv. 701-733.

²⁶² Ba. 15 μαίνετο μὲν τ' αὐτὰ, μαίνοντο δ' ἄρ' εὐθὺ καὶ ἄλλαι; Met. 3.716 turba furens.

the enraged Theban king marches straight to the maenads' gathering place to challenge them and is immediately spotted by them. In the *Bacchae*, on the other hand, Pentheus spies on the maenads disguised as a Bacchant and mounted on a fir tree, while in *Idyll 26* he furtively watches their secret rites from a steep rock, having concealed himself behind a mastic bush (10-11). Thus Ovid deviates from Euripides, who portrays Pentheus as an effeminate, divinely maddened, and voyeuristic hero as well as from Theocritus, who depicts him as a cowardly spy of the Bacchic rites, and represents him instead as a valiant epic hero, who rushes furiously to face the maenads. This characterization has been anticipated by Pentheus' harangue to the Thebans, where he contrasted the warlike and masculine Thebans with the effeminate and wanton Bacchus and his followers (3.531-556).

The characterization of Pentheus as a brave hero is best illustrated by an epic simile, where the wrathful king is likened to a fierce war horse (3.701-707). This type of simile is usually employed in epic and tragic poetry to portray a warrior who is entering the fray (*Il.*15.263-268 (Hector), *Aes. Sept.* 392-394 (Tydeus), *Ap. Rhod. Arg.* 3.1259-1262 (Jason), *Ennius Ann.* 535-539 Skutch, *Virg. Aen.* 11.492-497 (Turnus)). Barchiesi suggests that Ovid, by depicting a war horse fervent for the fight, departs from Homer, Virgil, and Ennius, whose horse is a proud animal that exults in galloping free, grazing, bathing, and mating. He argues that the Ovidian simile, in which the horse becomes eager for battle upon hearing the trumpeter's blast alludes rather to Apollonius, where Jason preparing for his *aristeia* is likened to a neighing martial horse that longs for battle, and even more to Aeschylus, where Tydeus is compared to a horse craving for war and rushing into the fray when it hears the trumpet's signal.²⁶³

²⁶³ *Met.* 3.704-705 *ut fremit acer equus, cum bellicus aere canoro / signa dedit tubicen, pugnaeque adsumit amorem*; *Arg.* 3.1259-1260 *ἀρήιος ἵππος, ἐελδόμενος πολέμοιο / σκαρθμῶ ἐπιχρεμέθων κρούει πέδον*; *Sept.* 392-394 *βοᾶ παρ' ὄχθαις ποταμίαις, μάχης ἐρῶν, / ἵππος χαλινῶν ὡς κατασθμαίνων μένει, / ὅστις βοῆν σάλπιγγος ὀρμαίνει κλύων* (See Barchiesi 2007, vv. 3.704-705).

Below I will argue that apart from the Apollonian and Aeschylean models the Virgilian comparison of Turnus to a horse (11.492-497) is also an important source for Ovid's simile. Pentheus is repeatedly reminiscent of Turnus earlier in the narrative: his confrontation with Tiresias evokes Turnus' encounter with Allecto, his harangue to Thebans recalls the Rutulian prince's speech to his men, they both have an irascible and impatient character, and finally they employ an analogous anti-oriental rhetoric against their enemies. Hence, it comes as no surprise that Pentheus echoes Turnus at the climactic scene of his portrayal as an epic hero. In particular, the "vehicle" of Ovid's simile, that is the image of the war horse, conflates the "vehicle" of the Virgilian simile, namely a horse escaping confinement and careering free in the fields, with its "tenor": Turnus' arming for battle. In other words, the Ovidian war horse is an amalgam of the belligerent Turnus and the galloping horse of the simile. This interpretation is confirmed by verbal parallels between the two similes. Both heroes are compared to horses that snort fiercely.²⁶⁴ In addition, the Ovidian horse which conceives a desire for battle at the sound of the trumpeter's blast recalls Turnus, who after hearing the trumpet's signal for war, exults in his courage and is eager to fight the enemy.²⁶⁵ This association of Pentheus with Turnus is not merely ornamental, but has a more profound significance. In both cases the horse simile is ominous, since it portends the hero's demise: Pentheus will soon meet his death at the hands of the Bacchantes and Turnus will likewise be slain by Aeneas. The comparison of the Theban king with the Rutulian warrior is at the same time deeply ironic, since Turnus is a real epic hero, who valiantly faces Aeneas in the battlefield, whereas, as we shall see, Pentheus is a pseudo-epic hero, who displays his fear and cowardice as soon as he encounters the maenads.

²⁶⁴ Aen. 11.492-496 equus [...] fremit; Met. 3.704 fremit acer equus.

²⁶⁵ Met. 3.704-705 cum bellicus aere canoro / signa dedit tubicen pugnaeque adsumit amorem; Aen. 11.474-475 bello dat signum rauca cruentum / bucina, 491 exultatque animis et spe iam praecipit hostem.

Pentheus is also reminiscent in this simile of another Virgilian character, namely queen Dido who upon hearing the news that Aeneas is preparing to sail from Carthage is filled with mad rage and is likened to a frenzied Bacchant (4.300-304). Ovid has transferred elements from the “vehicle” of the Virgilian simile (the Bacchant) to the “tenor” of his own simile (Pentheus). In particular, just as Dido is compared to a maenad, who is stirred to blazing madness at the sound of the Bacchic cries coming from Cithaeron, likewise Pentheus’ anger is rekindled (3.707 *recanduit ira*) when he perceives the songs and shouts of the maenads originating from the mountain.²⁶⁶ This implicit connection of Pentheus with Dido is highly ironic, in that Theban king who is a sworn enemy of the Bacchants is portrayed in terms evocative of the Virgilian “maenad”. It is not coincidental that Virgil himself associated Dido with the Euripidean Pentheus. The Carthaginian queen, who dreams that she is being pursued by Aeneas (4.465-466), is likened to the maddened Pentheus on stage seeing before him the Furies.²⁶⁷ Therefore, Ovid may be making here a “double allusion”, in that his Pentheus echoes the Virgilian Dido, who in turn evokes the Euripidean Pentheus. The affinity of Pentheus with Dido by means of the horse simile may have sinister overtones, like the association with Turnus, since both the Carthaginian queen and the Theban king will soon meet their end.

The Ovidian simile, apart from drawing on epic sources, is also evocative of the Bacchae. The comparison of Pentheus to a war horse may reflect the implicit and figurative portrayal of the Theban king in Euripides as a horseman. When Pentheus realizes that he cannot behold the rites of the Bacchants from where he is, he suggest that he climb on a fir tree to have a better

²⁶⁶ Aen. 3.300-303 *saeuit inops animi totamque incensa per urbem / bacchatur, qualis commotis excita sacris / Thyias ubi audito stimulant trieterica Baccho / orgia nocturnusque uocat clamore Cithaeron; Met. 3.702-703 Cithaeron / cantibus et clara bacchantum voce sonabat, 706-707 *Pentheia sic ictus longis ululatibus aether / movit, et audito clamore*.*

²⁶⁷ Aen. 4.469-470 *Eumenidum ueluti demens uidet agmina Pentheus / et solem geminum et duplices se ostendere Thebas*.

view.²⁶⁸ He characterizes the tree as ὑψαύχην, which metaphorically means “towering”, but its literal significance is “tall-necked” and is used to refer to horses.²⁶⁹ Dionysus gently places Pentheus on the tree so as not to unseat him and the verb used to describe this action is ἀναχαιτίζω (“to eject”), which Euripides previously employed to describe the bull’s overthrowing of Hippolytus from his chariot.²⁷⁰ Finally, the Theban king is later said to be mounted on the back of the fir tree, as if it were a horse.²⁷¹ Therefore, whereas the Ovidian Pentheus is likened to a fierce war horse, Euripides’ king is portrayed as an effeminate “horseman”, who dressed up as a maenad tries to spy on the Bacchants. Moreover, the Ovidian simile may evoke and invert the simile utilized by the Euripidean messenger, in which the Bacchants singing to each other are compared to joyous fillies, who have escaped from their yokes (1056-1057). The peaceful image of the fillies prancing and enjoying their freedom is thus transformed by Ovid into the picture of a war horse eager for the fray.²⁷²

This initial characterization of Pentheus as a warlike epic hero is soon ironically deflated. As soon as the Theban king is detected by the Bacchants, they attack him and he flees in panic to save his life (3.718-719). This metamorphosis of the valiant Pentheus into a cowardly and frightened prey of the maenads is highlighted by means of verbal echoes of the beginning of the scene. Whereas in the opening the Theban king was represented as a fierce horse neighing furiously and fervent for battle, he now runs away from the frenzied throng of the roaring

²⁶⁸ Ba. 1061 ὄχθων δ' ἔπ' ἀμβάς ἐς ἐλάτην ὑψαύχενα.

²⁶⁹ Pl. Phaedr. 253d5.

²⁷⁰ Ba 1070-1072 Πενθέα δ' ἰδρύσας ἐλατίνων ὄζων ἔπι / ὀρθὸν μεθίει διὰ χερῶν βλάστημ' ἄνω / ἀτρέμα, φυλάσσω μὴ ἀναχαιτίσειέ νιν; Hip. 1232 ἐς τοῦθ' ἕως ἔσφηλε κἀνεχαιτίσειν.

²⁷¹ Ba. 1074 ἔχουσα νότοις δεσπότην ἐφήμενον.

²⁷² Barchiesi (2007, vv. 3.704-705) also notes the ironic contrast between the Ovidian Pentheus likened to a war horse and the Bacchants compared to frolicking fillies in the parodos of the Bacchae (165-167).

Bacchants.²⁷³ What is more, while earlier Pentheus recalled Turnus through the war horse simile, the situation is ironically reversed, since Agave is the one who now resembles the Virgilian warrior. Ovid transposes features from the “vehicle” of the Virgilian simile (the horse) to Pentheus’ mother. Turnus is likened to a galloping horse, which raises its neck high and its mane flows over its neck and shoulders.²⁷⁴ Similarly at the moment when Agave is about to tear off Pentheus’ head she tosses back her neck and shakes her hair through the air.²⁷⁵ In addition, Agave’s exultation in the Bacchants’ “triumph” over the intruding “boar” (3.728) is reminiscent of the horse’s joyful frolicking (11.497 *luxurians*). Hence, unlike the Euripidean Pentheus, who first humiliates himself by donning the effeminate disguise of a maenad before being physically destroyed by the Bacchants, the Ovidian Pentheus rushes to Cithaeron as a great epic hero, but then transforms into the terrified quarry of the maenads. Thus, the *peripeteia* of Pentheus’ fortunes is even more abrupt in Ovid and the triumph of the Bacchants over him even more startling.²⁷⁶

After Pentheus’ arrival at the Bacchants’ place of assembly Ovid offers a brief description of the locale: the maenads are gathered in an open mountain field (3.709 *purus ab arboribus [...] campus*), which is surrounded by trees (3.708 *cingentibus ultima silvis*). This scenery combines elements from the Euripidean and Theocritean settings. In *Idyll 26* the Bacchants conduct their rites in a clear meadow (5 ἐν καθαρῷ λειμῶνι),²⁷⁷ while in the *Bacchae*

²⁷³ Met. 3.704 ut *fremit acer equus*, 716 *turba furens [...] fremituque sequuntur*.

²⁷⁴ Aen. 7.496 *arrectisque fremit ceruicibus alte*, 497 *luduntque iubae per colla*, per *amos*.

²⁷⁵ Met. 3.726 *collaque iactavit movitque per aera crinem*.

²⁷⁶ Barchiesi 2007, vv. 3.704-705.

²⁷⁷ Gow 1952, v. 26.5: “*purus ab arboribus* may be an interpretation of *καθαρός*.” The adjective *καθαρός* in Theocritus also bears connotations of ritual purity.

they are in a mountain glen (1051 ἄγκος) encircled by fir trees (1052 πεύκαισι συσκιάζον). The novel element introduced by Ovid is that the site is visible from all sides (3.709 spectabilis undique) and thus it is figuratively depicted as a “theater”, where Pentheus will transform from spectator into the object of the Bacchant’s gaze and from intruder into victim,²⁷⁸ or even as an “amphitheater”, where the bloody hunt of a “boar” (Pentheus) will take place.²⁷⁹

All three authors represent the uninitiated Pentheus’ viewing of the secret Bacchic rites as an act of sacrilege.²⁸⁰ Ovid confers the central role on the king’s mother Agave, since she is the first to spot him and rally her sisters.²⁸¹ The Roman poet echoes Euripides, where the chorus envisions that Agave will first catch sight of her son, and later she initiates the “corrupted” sacrifice of Pentheus in the role of a priestess.²⁸² Moreover, Ovid puts further emphasis on Agave’s part by attributing to her actions performed by the entire group of the maenads in the Bacchae. The Bacchant’s detect Pentheus, rush quickly towards him inspired with divine frenzy, and hurl thyrsi against him.²⁸³ In analogous manner the Ovidian Agave spots her son, darts madly against him and is the first to wound him with her thyrsus.²⁸⁴ Theocritus, on the other

²⁷⁸ Met. 3.710 hic oculis illum cernentem sacra profanis / prima videt (See Keith 2002a, 266-267).

²⁷⁹ Barchiesi 2007, vv. 3.708-709.

²⁸⁰ Ba. 1108-1109 μηδ' ἀπαγγείληι θεοῦ χοροῦς κρυφαίους; Id. 26.13-14 ὄργια Βάκχω [...] τὰ τ' οὐχ ὀρέοντι βέβαλοι; Met. 3.710 hic oculis illum cernentem sacra profanis.

²⁸¹ Met. 3.711-713 prima videt...mater et ‘o geminae’ clamavit ‘adeste sorores!’.

²⁸² Ba. 982-984 μάτηρ πρώτῃ νιν λευρᾶς ἀπὸ πέτρας / εὐσκοπος ὄνεται / δοκεύοντα, 1114 πρώτη δὲ μήτηρ ἤρξεν ἱερέα φόνου.

²⁸³ Ba.1095 ὡς δ' εἶδον ἐλάτηι δεσπότην ἐφήμενον, 1090 ἤϊξαν πελείας ὠκύτητ' οὐχ ἦσσονες, 1094 ἐπήδων θεοῦ πνοαῖσιν ἐμμανεῖς, 1109 ἄλλαι δὲ θύρσους ἴεσαν δι' αἰθέρος.

²⁸⁴ Met. 3.711-712 prima videt, prima est insano concita cursu, / prima suum misso uiolauit Penthea thyrsu.

hand, gives the initiative to Autonoe, who is the first to catch sight of Pentheus, cry aloud, and be filled with frenzy.²⁸⁵

Both the Euripidean and the Ovidian Agave exhort their fellow Bacchantes to launch an assault against Pentheus, who is seen as a beast. In the *Bacchae* the frenzied Agave views her son as a wild animal and urges the other maenads to throw him down from the fir tree (1106-1109) and later she believes in her madness that Pentheus' head, which she has fixed on her thyrsus, is a lion's head (1140-1142). Likewise in the fourth stasimon the chorus imagined that Agave would alert the other Bacchantes to the spying Pentheus and call him a lioness' or Gorgon's offspring (984-991). The Ovidian text alludes to the Euripidean passages, since the maddened Agave cries to her sisters that a boar has trespassed in their domain and that she must slay it (3.713-715). In Theocritus, on the other hand, Pentheus is recognized as a human by the maenads, something that is indicated by his brief dialogue with Autonoe (18-19).

The frenzied Bacchantes assemble at the bidding of Agave and rush against Pentheus, who flees for his life in terror.²⁸⁶ Ovid follows here Theocritus, where the Theban king also runs away in fear from the maenads.²⁸⁷ In Euripides, however, there is no pursuit, since he is hopelessly trapped on the tree with no means of escape (1101-1102). The terrified Pentheus acknowledges and repents his hybris, cursing his folly.²⁸⁸ His psychological transformation evokes that of his Euripidean predecessor, who also confesses his guilt and entreats his mother not to kill him because of his sins.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁵ Id. 26.12 Ἀυτονόα πράτα νιν ἀνέκραγε δεινὸν ἰδοῖσα, 15 μαίνεται μὲν τ' αὐτά, μαίνοντο δ' ἄρ' εὐθὺ καὶ ἄλλαι.

²⁸⁶ Met. 3.716-717 cunctae coeunt fremituque sequuntur./ iam trepidum.

²⁸⁷ Id. 26.16 Πενθεὺς μὲν φεῦγεν πεφοβημένος, αἱ δ' ἐδίωκον (See Bömer 1969, v. 3.716).

²⁸⁸ Met. 3.718 iam se damnantem, iam se peccasse fatentem.

²⁸⁹ Ba. 1120-1121 οἴκτιρε δ' ὦ μήτηρ με μηδὲ ταῖς ἐμαῖς ἁμαρτίαισι παῖδα σὸν κατακάνης.

Ovid has elevated the role of Autonoe in his narrative, adhering to Theocritus and deviating from Euripides, where she plays an inconsequential part in the action. The wounded Pentheus turns first to his aunt Autonoe and implores her to aid him. He attempts to stir her pity by reminding her of the fate of her son Actaeon, who had been torn apart by his own hounds (3.719-720). Ovid reworks here the scene in Idyll 26 in which the Theban king asks Autonoe what is the Bacchants' purpose and she replies sarcastically that he will soon find out, implying that they wish to kill him (18-19). Ovid thus transforms the ironic Theocritean exchange between Pentheus and Autonoe into a nephew's desperate and tragic plea for help to his aunt evoking the grim destiny of his cousin. Furthermore, the Ovidian Pentheus' entreaty to Autonoe alludes to the Euripidean king's supplication to Agave. Just as in the *Bacchae* Pentheus beseeches Agave to pity him and spare his life, because he is her son (1120-1121), similarly in the *Metamorphoses* he attempts to move Autonoe by reminding her of her own son's death. In both scenes the Theban king's entreaty is unsuccessful, since the frenzied women cannot recognize him or understand what he is saying.²⁹⁰

Pentheus' reference to the fate of Actaeon highlights the close affinity between the two heroes. Ovid narrates the story of Actaeon immediately after the foundation of Thebes by Cadmus (3.138-252) and closes the book with the tale of his cousin Pentheus thus creating a ring composition, which adds unity and coherence to his *Thebaid*.²⁹¹ Both youths commit hybris by beholding a taboo sight (Diana's bath, Bacchic rites) and as a result suffer a severe divine punishment in the form of dismemberment, the former being torn apart by his hounds and the

²⁹⁰ Ba. 1123-1124 οὐ φρονοῦσ' ἄ γρη φρονεῖν / ἐκ Βακχίου κατείχεται, οὐδ' ἔπειθέ νιν; Met. 3.721 illa, quis Actaeon, nescit. Barchiesi (2007, vv. 3.719-722) points out the subtle irony arising from the discrepancy between the meaning of Autonoe's name ("she who knows herself") and the present situation, where she does not know, who her son is.

²⁹¹ Hardie 1990, 231.

latter being rent by the maenads. In addition, just as Actaeon vainly attempts to entreat his dogs and his fellow hunters to spare him, but he is not recognized by them, because he is trapped in the body of the stag, in an analogous manner the Bacchantes cannot recognize the beseeching Pentheus, since they perceive him in their frenzy as a wild boar. The essential disparity between the two heroes is that whereas the innocent Actaeon accidentally stumbles upon Diana, the insolent Pentheus goes deliberately to challenge Bacchus and view his female worshippers' rites.

We have already seen how Ovid establishes a link between the two heroes at the very outset of the Pentheus episode by avoiding to incorporate Athena's prophecy concerning Actaeon's dire fate contained in Callimachus' Bath of Pallas into his own account of the Actaeon myth and transplanting it instead in the story of the Theban king, where it takes the form of Tiresias' prediction to Pentheus about his imminent destruction. The Roman poet associates the two stories under the influence not only of Callimachus but also of Euripides, who likewise draws connections between them in the *Bacchae*. In the first episode Cadmus attempts to induce Pentheus to cease his impiety towards Dionysus by reminding him of Actaeon's wretched death as a penalty for his outrageous boasting that he was a superior hunter than Artemis herself.²⁹² What is more, a ring composition pattern is created by the concluding recognition scene of the drama, where in response to Agave's enquiry about Pentheus' place of demise Cadmus says that he died at the same place where Actaeon was torn to pieces by his hounds (1290-1291). Cadmus' admonition to the Theban king is converted into the Ovidian Pentheus' appeal to Autonoe to show him mercy by evoking in her mind Actaeon's fate.²⁹³ Ovid may have altered the nature of Actaeon's offence in adherence to Callimachus, but follows Euripides in making Actaeon's tale

²⁹² Ba. 337-341 ὄρᾳς τὸν Ἀκταίωνος ἄθλιον μόρον, / ὃν ὁμόσιτοι σκύλακες ἄς ἐθρέψατο / διεσπᾶσαντο, κρείσσον' ἐν κυναγίαις / Ἀρτέμιδος εἶναι κομπᾶσαντ' ἐν ὀργάσιν.

²⁹³ Met. 3.720 'Autonoes moveant animos Actaeonis umbrae'.

serve as a cautionary exemplum, albeit an unavailing one: just as Cadmus is unsuccessful in convincing his grandson to respect Dionysus, similarly Pentheus fails to stir the pity of his aunt.

Ovid's gruesome description of Pentheus' dismemberment constitutes a conflation of the Euripidean and Theocritean scenes, but at the same time contains novel elements. In the *Bacchae* it is Agave who initiates the killing by tearing off Pentheus' left arm (1125-1127), followed by Ino who deprives him of his right arm (1129-1130). The horrid deed is completed by Autonoe and the other maenads, who tear apart the rest of his body. Agave ends up taking Pentheus' head and fixing it on her thyrsus (1139-1141). In *Idyll 26* Agave first tears off Pentheus' head (20), Ino rends one of his arms (22) and Autonoe the other (23), while the rest of the maenads distribute among them the remains of his body (24). Ovid describes the same actions as Theocritus, that is the rending of Pentheus' arms by his aunts and his head by his mother, but in reverse sequence: Autonoe begins the dismemberment by tearing off his right arm, followed by Ino, who removes his left (3.721-722). Agave then rends his head with her bare hands (3.727), while the other Bacchantes pull apart the remainder of Pentheus' body (3.731). Finally, all three authors converge in presenting Agave as the recipient of Pentheus' head.

Ovid has introduced many innovations in his account of Pentheus' sparagmos. First, he confers on Autonoe a much more central role than the one she plays in Euripides. Not only is she the first Bacchant to whom Pentheus speaks, but also the one who initiates his dismemberment, whereas in the *Bacchae* he does not address her whatsoever and her attack is mentioned along with that of the rest of the maenads. The most likely reason for this focus on Autonoe is that she is Actaeon's mother and, as I argued above, Ovid wishes to create a close affinity between the fates of Pentheus and his cousin. The Roman poet also deviates from Theocritus in that he

inverts the order of events by placing Agave's deeds last and thereby bestows on her the same key part that she holds in Euripides while also creating a climactic sequence of violence.

The most important departure of Ovid from his models is, however, the sheer grotesqueness of his narrative. In the *Bacchae* when Agave is about to attack Pentheus he removes his Bacchic headband, so that she might recognize him, and touches her cheek in a gesture of supplication (1114 *παρήιδος ψαύων*) beseeching her to show mercy to her son (1115-1121). The gruesomeness of the Ovidian description lies in the fact that Pentheus' vain entreaty to his mother is placed after the mutilation of his arms, which renders him unable to stretch them out in supplication to her.²⁹⁴ The only thing that the Ovidian Pentheus can do is ask Agave to look at his maimed body, so that he can rouse pity in her.²⁹⁵ The sight of her disfigured son induces, however, the opposite effect in Agave making her even more frenzied than before: she howls, tosses back her neck, and shakes her hair (3.725-726) thus echoing her Euripidean counterpart whose eyes roll in madness and her mouth is filled with foam (1122-1123). Pentheus' futile supplication due to the lack of arms recalls not only the comic picture of the Tyrrhenian sailor earlier in the narrative, who loses his arms by turning into a dolphin, but also the tragic plight of his cousin, Actaeon, who having been transformed into a stag does not possess any arms to extend in entreaty to his fellow hunters and thus he bends his knees in the posture of a suppliant and vainly turns around his face as if it were his arms.²⁹⁶ Both Actaeon and Pentheus are therefore unable to make a proper supplication due to the absence of arms and thus they devise an alternative but hopeless means of making their entreaty.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁴ Met. 3.723 non habet infelix quae matri bracchia tendat.

²⁹⁵ Met. 3.724-725 trunca sed ostendens dereptis vulnera membris / 'adspice, mater!' ait.

²⁹⁶ (3.240-241 et genibus pronis supplex similisque roganti / circumfert tacitos tamquam sua bracchia vultus.

²⁹⁷ James 1991-1993, 88.

We saw in the first scene how the confrontation between Pentheus and Tiresias evokes that of Pyrrhus and Priam in Aeneid 2. Now the situation is ironically inverted, since Agave's slaughter of Pentheus reenacts Pyrrhus' murder of the Trojan king. Just as Pyrrhus twists Priam's hair in his hand and then stabs him on his side, likewise Agave entwines her fingers in Pentheus' hair before slaying him.²⁹⁸ Moreover, Agave's decapitation of Pentheus recalls the beheading of king Priam²⁹⁹ and Pentheus' mutilated body is reminiscent of Priam's headless corpse.³⁰⁰ Ovid thus depicts the tragic reversal of Pentheus' destiny by means of allusive gestures to the Aeneid, which form a ring composition: Pentheus begins as the impious and savage Pyrrhus, but ends up as the helpless king Priam.

After Agave tears off Pentheus' head and takes it in her hands, she cheerfully declares to her hunting companions that they are triumphant, since she is still believing in her frenzy that they have slain a boar.³⁰¹ Agave's "triumph" is steeped in tragic irony and echoes the Bacchae, where the messenger reports that Agave has fixed Pentheus' head on her thyrsus thinking it to be a lion's head and is returning to Thebes exulting in her "trophy" and invoking Dionysus as her fellow hunter, who has bestowed a "victory" on her.³⁰² The messenger adds, however, in bitter irony, that thanks to the god Agave has won tears as her victorious prize (1147 ὅτι δάκρυα

²⁹⁸ Aen. 2.552 implicuitque comam laeua; Met. 3.727 caput digitis complexa cruentis.

²⁹⁹ Met. 3.727 avulsumque caput; Aen. 2.558 auulsumque umeris caput (See Barchiesi 2007, vv. 3.726-727).

³⁰⁰ Met. 3.724 trunca sed ostendens dereptis vulnera membris; Aen. 2.558 iacet ingens litore truncus.

³⁰¹ Met. 3.728 clamat: 'io comites, opus hoc victoria nostra est!'. Barchiesi (2007, v. 3.728) notes that Agave's exclamation recalls the address of Amata to the Latin mothers, while she is simulating Bacchic fury (7.400 clamat: "io matres, audite, ubi quaeque, Latinae").

³⁰² Ba. 1144-1147 χωρεῖ δὲ θήραι δυσπότμοι γαυρουμένη / τειχέων ἔσω τῶνδ', ἀνακαλοῦσα Βάκχιον / τὸν ξυγκύναγον, τὸν ξυνεργάτην ἄγρας, / τὸν καλλίνικον. Barchiesi (2007, v. 3.728) observes that Agave's extended scene of "victory" in the exodos of the Bacchae (1168 ff.) has been condensed by Ovid into a single line. He argues, however, that whereas in Euripides the dominant theme is that of a "victorious hunt" and a "trophy", in Ovid the central idea is that of a "military triumph" and the "exhibition of the spoils of war".

νικηφορεῖ). Thus Ovid implicitly evokes the dramatic irony of the Euripidean play, where Agave's hunting "victory" will soon turn into lamentation after the recognition of her horrible deed.

Ovid closes the description of Pentheus' dismemberment by means of a peaceful yet disturbing simile. The rapid tearing apart of Pentheus' limbs by the Bacchantes is compared to the swiftness with which the leaves of a tree are snatched away by the autumn wind (3.729-731). The effect of this simile is disconcerting, since the extreme and abnormal brutality of the maenads is likened to the serene and natural image of leaves falling from a tree. The leaves are said to be clinging weakly on the branches so they are easily blown away by the wind and similarly Pentheus' frail limbs are without difficulty wrenched apart by the furious Bacchantes.³⁰³

The Ovidian simile draws on a variety of epic sources. In Homer the generations of men who perish and are followed by new ones are compared to the leaves which are blown away by the wind and replaced by new ones (Il. 6.146-149, cf. also Il. 21.464-469). In Virgil the multitude of shades in the Underworld are likened to the innumerable leaves that fall from the trees during autumn (Aen. 6.309-310). Barchiesi notes that Ovid unconventionally compares the leaves not with the members of the human race, but with the limbs of Pentheus' body. He argues that Ovid blends elements from both the Homeric simile (the wind blowing the leaves from the tree) as well as from the Virgilian adaptation (the reference only to the falling of the leaves and not to the sprouting of new ones).³⁰⁴ The Ovidian simile also owes its overtones of death to the Virgilian one, which is set in an afterlife context. The leaves touched by the autumn cold (3.729 *autumni frigore tactas*) symbolize Pentheus' limbs "touched" by the "coldness" of death and the

³⁰³ Met. 3.730 *iamque male haerentes alta rapit arbore ventus*.

³⁰⁴ Barchiesi 2007, v. 3.729-731.

image evokes Virgil, where the souls of the dead are likened to leaves falling at the advent of the first autumn cold (autumni frigore primo).³⁰⁵

What has not been observed, however, is that apart from alluding to epic models the Ovidian simile also contains multiple Euripidean echoes and encapsulates masterfully three different passages of the *Bacchae*. First of all, the simile reflects in a certain way Euripides' grisly description of the maenads tearing Pentheus limb from limb and hurling his body parts to each other like a ball.³⁰⁶ Seaford argues that this scene may perversely evoke the Odyssean episode in which Nausikaa and her young female companions are playing ball by the river.³⁰⁷ Both Euripides and Ovid therefore produce a grotesque effect by comparing a ghastly deed (Pentheus' dismemberment) to a beautiful, everyday image (leaves blown by the wind, women playing with a ball).

The image of leaves being shed from a tree may also be ingeniously intended to recall the Euripidean Pentheus' fall from the fir tree uprooted by the Bacchantes.³⁰⁸ An intertextual marker signaling this allusion may be the fact that the tree from which Pentheus plummets is of towering height (1111 ὑψοῦ [...] ὑψόθεν) and likewise the tree of the Ovidian simile is characterized as lofty (3.730 *alta* [...] *arbore*). Ovid thus transforms the Theban king's literal tree fall in the *Bacchae* into the figurative picture of leaves dropping from a tree, which stand for Pentheus' limbs being torn off by the maenads. Finally, another function of the simile is to illustrate the

³⁰⁵ Barchiesi (2007, vv. 3.729-731) observes that the Ovidian phrase is in the same metrical position as the Virgilian one.

³⁰⁶ Ba. 1134-1136 ἔφερε δ' ἡ μὲν ὠλένην, / ἡ δ' ἴχνος αὐταῖς ἀρβύλαις, γυμνοῦντο δὲ / πλευραὶ σπαραγμοῖς, πᾶσα δ' ἡματομένη / χεῖρας διεσφαίριζε σάρκα Πενθέως.

³⁰⁷ Od. 6.100-101 σφαίρη τὰ δ' ἄρ' ἔπαιζον, ἀπὸ κρήδεμνα βαλοῦσαι, / τῆσι δὲ Ναυσικάα λευκώλενος ἤρχετο μολπῆς (See Seaford 2001, 239).

³⁰⁸ Ba. 1111-1112 ὑψοῦ δὲ θάσσω ὑψόθεν χαμαιριφῆς / πίπτει πρὸς οὐδας μυρίοις οἰμώγασιν.

supernatural strength of the Bacchantes, since they are able to dismember Pentheus just as swiftly as the wind snatches away the leaves from a tree.³⁰⁹ This comparison evokes by means of explicit verbal echoes the words of the first messenger in the *Bacchae*, who reports to Pentheus that the maenads skinned a bull more quickly than he could blink his eyes.³¹⁰ Hence, in both descriptions the uncanny speed with which the Bacchantes tear apart their victims is rhetorically amplified by means of a hyperbolic comparison: the blinking of the eyes and the blowing away of leaves by the wind.

Tiresias' sinister prophecy that Pentheus' limbs would be scattered everywhere and that he would pollute the woods with his blood, is thus ultimately fulfilled.³¹¹ The prediction reflects the account of the Euripidean messenger, who reports that some of Pentheus' body parts lie under rocks and others in the foliage of the woods.³¹² In the *exodos* of the *Bacchae* Agave returns to Thebes alone, experiences a gradual *anagnorisis* of her inhuman deed and laments for her son's death (1165-1329), while in *Idyll 26* the recognition scene is implied by the narrator, who remarks that the Bacchantes went back to the city bringing with them not Pentheus (Πενθήα) but a cause for dirge (πένθημα) instead (25-26). Ovid, on the contrary, halts his narration abruptly and refrains from recounting the return of Agave to Thebes and the concomitant realization of her crime, thus avoiding to portray the tragic pathos of the downfall of Cadmus' house.

³⁰⁹ Met. 3.729-731 non citius fronds [...] / [...] alta rapit arbore ventus, / quam sunt membra viri manibus direpta nefandis.

³¹⁰ Ba. 746-747 θᾶσσον δὲ διεφοροῦντο σαρκὸς ἐνδύτᾳ / ἢ σὲ ξυνάψαι βλέφαρα βασιλείοις κόραις.

³¹¹ Met. 3.522-523 mille lacer spargere locis et sanguine silvas / foedabis matremque tuam matrisque sorores.

³¹² Ba. 1137-1138 κεῖται δὲ χωρὶς σῶμα, τὸ μὲν ὑπὸ στύφλοις / πέτραις, τὸ δ' ἄλλης ἐν βαθυξύλοι φόβῃ.

The messenger in the *Bacchae* concludes his report in a typical manner by offering a gnome: moderation and reverence to the gods are the finest human virtues (1150-1152). Ovid ends his story with the brief comment that the Theban women warned by the example of Pentheus' punishment participated in the organized, public worship of Bacchus (3.732-733). Thus both Euripidean messenger and the Ovidian narrator offer a straightforward moral: mortals should respect the gods, otherwise they will suffer a severe penalty. This is also the moral lesson provided by the hymnic ending of Theocritus' poem, where the narrator claims that impious mortals are justly punished by the gods, while the pious ones are rewarded (27-32). Nevertheless, the epic narrator of the *Metamorphoses* exerts oblique criticism to the maenads and by implication to Bacchus himself by relating that they dismembered Pentheus with "impious hands" (3.731 *manibus nefandis*). This phrasing suggests that the narrative voice considers the slaying of the Theban king an abominable deed despite his outrage to the god. This insinuated reproach of Bacchus in Ovid may recall Cadmus' criticism to Dionysus in the exodos of the *Bacchae*, where he acknowledges that the god rightly punished Pentheus for his *hybris* against him, but at the same time censures him for the extreme severity of the penalty, asserting that the gods should not be as hot-tempered as mortals (1344-1348). The hymnic narrator in *Idyll 26*, on the other hand, is entirely indifferent to the Theban king's fate (27-28) and eulogizes Dionysus for justly punishing the insolent Pentheus (37-38).

To recapitulate, Ovid's account of Pentheus' *sparagmos* engages in a complex intertextual dialogue with its Euripidean and Theocritean models sometimes blending them together, other times following the one instead of other, and in some cases diverging from both and inserting completely novel elements in his narrative. At the same time the Ovidian episode evokes various scenes from the *Aeneid*: Pentheus marching against the Bacchantes echoes through

the war horse simile Turnus going to battle and Dido raving madly at Aeneas' departure, while Agave's murder of her son recalls Pyrrhus' butchery of king Priam. Moreover, the Theban king's destiny is presented as reenacting in many ways the tragic fate of his cousin Actaeon in adherence to the Euripidean drama, where the fortunes of the two youths are inextricably connected. The Roman poet fashions his Pentheus episode by fusing together elements from various texts of different periods and genres ranging from archaic hymn, classical Greek tragedy, and Hellenistic poetry, to Roman Republican drama and Augustan epic. The originality and artistic value of Ovid's version of the myth lies not only in the many innovations that he introduces in it, but also in the creative reworking of his sources.

2.2 The daughters of Minyas

The episode of the daughters of Minyas opening Book 4 of the *Metamorphoses* (1-415) is a tale of mortal outrage towards Bacchus punished, just like the stories of Pentheus and the Tyrrhenian sailors immediately preceding it. Ovid does not explicitly state the location of the narrative, but suggests that it takes place in Thebes by means of indirect references.³¹³ The three sisters scorn Bacchus by refusing to participate in his rites with the other Theban women and choosing instead to remain indoors and engage in weaving in homage to their favored divinity, Minerva (1-54). In order to make the long hours of wool-working pass more pleasantly, they narrate to each other a

³¹³ Met. 3.73-4.1 *turaque dant sanctasque colunt Ismenides aras / at non Alcithoe Minyeias*, 4.31-32 *Ismenides [...] / iussaque sacra colunt; solae Minyeides intus*, 416-417 *tum uero totis Bacchi memorabile Thebis / nomen erat*. Both Anderson (1997, 410-411) and Rosati (2007, 243, v. 4.31-32) contend that the Minyads story unfolds in nearby Orchomenus in Boeotia presumably on the grounds that their father Minyas was the mythical founder of the city. Bömer (1976, 11), however, argues that the legend of Minyas is completely irrelevant for the appreciation of the Ovidian episode, so that the poet shifts without hesitation the action to Thebes. Moreover, Thebes and in particular the house of Cadmus is the focal point of Ovid's *Thebaid* spanning books 3 and 4 (3.1-4.603) and thus it would make little sense for the poet to transfer the narrative to a different location.

series of amatory tales set in the East: Pyramus and Thisbe (55-166), the love affairs of the Sun (167-273), and Salmacis and Hermaphroditus (274-388). Since the Minyads do not take part in Bacchus' festival, the god brings his rites into their own house in a miraculous epiphany and punishes them for their impiety by transforming them into bats (389-415).

The intertexts of this Ovidian episode are particularly problematic.³¹⁴ One source is perhaps Aeschylus' lost tragedy *Xantriai* ("Wool-carders"), whose title may refer to the Minyads' devotion to wool-working, but Ovid's debt to this work remains mere speculation.³¹⁵ A more probable model can be found in Nicander's *Heteroioumena* ("Transformations"), which does not survive, but many of its stories (including that of the Minyads) have reached us through the prose summaries of Antoninus Liberalis, a mythographer of the imperial age.³¹⁶ According to the version recounted by Antoninus (*Metamorphoseon Synagoge* 10) the daughters of Minyas were exceptionally committed to wool-working and reviled the other women of Orchomenus for going off to the mountains to participate in the rites of Dionysus. The god appeared to the sisters in the form of a young maiden exhorting them to embrace the Bacchic cult. When they refused, he grew angry and transformed successively into a bull, a lion, and a leopard inspiring the Minyads with panic, while their looms began to drip with milk and *νέκταρ*. In their terror the sisters drew lots to offer a sacrifice to the god and the lot falling to Leucippe they dismembered her son Hippasus and then stormed off to join the maenads in the mountains. There Hermes finally transformed them into nocturnal creatures (a bat, an owl, and an eagle-owl).

³¹⁴ Rosati 2007, 243-244; Keith 2010, 195-196.

³¹⁵ Radt 1985, 280-287.

³¹⁶ Papathomopoulos 1968.

Another version of the myth is recorded by Aelian (*Varia Historia* 3.42), who relates that the Minyads rejected the worship of Dionysus not out of their devotion to weaving, but due to their love for their husbands.³¹⁷ As a result the god became wrathful and made his divine power manifest to them through miracles: ivy and vine entwined their looms, serpents slipped into their baskets, and milk and wine dripped from the ceiling. When the sisters persisted in repulsing his cult, Dionysus filled them with furor causing them to tear to pieces Leucippe's son. They then run off to join the Bacchantes, but were chased away by them due their blood pollution and they ultimately transformed into a crow, a bat, and an owl. The last source for the story is Plutarch (*Quaestiones Graecae* 299e-f), who merely reports that the sisters became frenzied and conceived a desire for human flesh, whereupon they drew lots to choose which of their children to consume. When the lot fell to Leucippe, she offered her son Hippasus to be torn apart.³¹⁸

Ovid's treatment of the Minyads myth diverges considerably from the other surviving accounts. The only common feature between Aelian's version and the Ovidian narrative is the picture of ivy and vine wrapping around the Minyads' looms during Bacchus' epiphany, while there is no point of contact whatsoever with the account of Plutarch. Nicander's story, as transmitted by Antoninus, is the one closest to the Ovidian tale, but even in this case the differences far outnumber the similarities. Ovid largely follows the plot-pattern of the Nicandrian narrative: the Minyads' excessive dedication to wool-working leads to their refusal to take part in the Bacchic rites, which in turn triggers the god's vengeance ultimately resulting in their transformation into nocturnal creatures.

³¹⁷ Wilson 1997.

³¹⁸ Nachstädt, Sieveking, Titchener, 1935.

Nevertheless, the Ovidian story departs at many points from its Hellenistic predecessor. Nicander's *Minyads* rebuke the women of Orchomenus for celebrating Dionysus' festival, whereas their Ovidian counterparts merely confine themselves in their household and have no contact with the Theban women participating in the god's rites. Furthermore, in the Hellenistic text Dionysus confronts the daughters of Minyas appearing first as a young girl in an attempt to persuade them to cease their impiety and afterwards morphing into wild beasts so as to inspire fear in them. The Ovidian Bacchus, on the other hand, has no direct encounter with the *Minyads* either in his divine form or in disguise and his epiphany consists only of acoustic, olfactory, and visual illusions. The most important divergence from the Hellenistic account is the omission of the scene of the dismemberment of Leucippe's son and the sisters' subsequent departure for the mountains as frenzied maenads, since the Ovidian *Minyads* perform no *sparagmos* and remain within the confines of their home.³¹⁹ Ovid distances himself from Nicander even in the scene of metamorphosis: in the *Heteroioumena* the *Minyads* are transformed by Hermes into different kinds of nocturnal animals, while in the *Metamorphoses* all three sisters are metamorphosed by Bacchus into bats. Finally, the Roman poet introduces his own significant innovations into the story, namely the hymn sung by the Theban women in honor of Bacchus and the amatory tales the *Minyads* narrate to each other during their weaving.

These deviations of the Ovidian narrative from that of Nicander can be explained in terms of the *Minyads* episode's relationship with the story of Pentheus that comes immediately before it. Ovid in his customary pursuit of *variatio* may have wished to avoid repeating in the tale of the daughters of Minyas plot elements previously included in the Pentheus narrative. First of all, the fact that Pentheus has already launched a tirade against Bacchus and chastised his people for

³¹⁹ Keith 2010, 197.

embracing the god's rites, may explain why Ovid, unlike Nicander, does not portray the Minyads directly criticizing the Theban women for participating in the Bacchic festival. In the Pentheus episode Bacchus confronts the Theban king in the mortal guise of Acoetes, who recounts an embedded narrative, in which the god appears to the Tyrrhenian sailors both in disguise and in his divine form. Thus, contrary to Nicander's Dionysus, who reveals himself to the Minyads in human and animal form, the Ovidian Bacchus does not engage with the sisters in either mortal or divine form, but makes himself manifest only through his miraculous illusions. Moreover, given that Ovid has concluded Book 3 with a detailed description of the Theban king's sparagmos he does not incorporate an analogous dismemberment scene in his Minyads story.³²⁰ Finally, since the Theban maenads have already been shown in action on Mt. Cithaeron, Ovid diverges from Nicander in not representing the Minyads as frenzied Bacchantes.

Although Euripides does not dramatize or allude to the myth of the daughters of Minyas in any of his plays, Ovid incorporates in the Minyads episode various aspects from Euripides' *Bacchae* by means of "fragmentation". In particular, he appropriates from the tragedy features which he did not integrate earlier in the Pentheus narrative and weaves them instead into the story of the Minyads: the outrage of the Minyads consisting in their rejection of Bacchus' divinity is reminiscent of the questioning of the god's divine paternity by the daughters of Cadmus; the Theban women's hymn to Bacchus evokes the tragic chorus' hymnic invocation of the god in the play's *parodos*; finally, Bacchus' epiphany to the sisters recalls the god's wondrous appearance to the Asian Bacchantes. Ovid alludes to Euripides not only directly, but also indirectly by means of intratextual conflation. More specifically, he establishes a close affinity between the Minyads episode and his own version of the Pentheus myth, which both

³²⁰ Rosati 2007, 144.

recount a mortal outrage against Bacchus, which is duly punished by the god. The Minyads may be viewed as a “refraction” of Pentheus, in the sense that in both cases the impiety towards Bacchus consists in the scorning of his rites, but the Minyads’ hybris is much less aggressive than that of Pentheus. Whereas the Theban king attempts to persuade his people to reject the Bacchic cult and even urges them to take up arms against the god and his followers, the Minyads simply refuse to participate in the Bacchic festival by remaining in the confines of their home. Furthermore, as we shall see, the structure of the Minyads’ story is based on that of Pentheus. Finally, Ovid blends in the Minyads episode elements from both the frame narrative of Pentheus and the embedded tale of Acoetes. The form of retribution inflicted on the Minyads (metamorphosis into bats) does not correspond to Pentheus’ punishment (dismemberment) but to that of the Tyrrhenian sailors (transformation into dolphins), while the epiphany of Bacchus to the daughters of Minyas is highly reminiscent of the god’s appearance to the Tyrrhenian sailors.

2.2.1 The blasphemy of the Minyads

Ovid creates a seamless narrative continuity by concluding the third book with the devout Theban women celebrating the new cult of Bacchus (3.732-733) and opening the fourth with the impious daughters of Minyas, who refuse to participate in the god’s rites (4.1-4).³²¹ Ovid signals the close intratextual affinity of the two episodes by modeling the structure of the Minyads narrative on that of Pentheus. The opening scene, where the Minyads disobey the injunction of the priest of Bacchus to participate in the god’s rites, is evocative of the encounter between Pentheus and the seer Tiresias. The contrast between the Minyads, who reject the Bacchic cult,

³²¹ Anderson 1997, v. 4.1.

and the female population of Thebes, who take part in the god's festival, evokes the opposition between hybristic Pentheus and the pious Theban people as well as that between devout Acoetes and the irreverent Tyrrhenian sailors. Furthermore, many elements of the invective of Pentheus against Bacchus are reworked in the hymn addressed to the god by the Theban women and the epic narrator in the *Minyads* episode. The Pentheus episode contains the embedded narrative of Acoetes, which holds the central place and exceeds in length the frame narrative (123 vs. 99 lines). Similarly the *Minyads*' internal stories are framed by the external narrative and are substantially longer than it (335 vs. 80 lines). Just as the micro-narrative of Acoetes has many correspondences with the macro-narrative of Pentheus (e.g. both recount a hybris against Bacchus punished by the god), in an analogous manner the embedded tales narrated by the *Minyads* contain Bacchic elements, which implicitly link them with the external narrative. Finally, both stories conclude with the punishment of Pentheus and the *Minyads* respectively.

Ovid transposes many elements of the Pentheus story into the episode of the *Minyads* by means of intratextual conflation. First of all, the sisters' disdain towards Bacchus' divinity (4.390 *spernitque deum*) recalls the scorn of Pentheus towards the gods in general (3.514 *contemptor superum*) and Bacchus in particular.³²² More specifically, both the Theban king and the *Minyads* dispute Bacchus' parentage, namely that he is the offspring of Jupiter.³²³ The *Minyads*' hybris also evokes that of the daughters of Cadmus (Agave, Ino, and Autonoe) in Euripides' *Bacchae*,

³²² Anderson (1997, vv. 3.389-390) wrongly notes that the verb *spernit* at 3.513 describes Pentheus' contempt for Bacchus, whereas it actually refers to his derision towards Tiresias. Bömer (1976, v. 4.4), on the other hand, correctly links *spernit deum* (i.e. the *Minyads*) with *contemptor superum* (i.e. Pentheus).

³²³ *Met.* 3.557-558 *cogar / adsumptumque patrem...fateri*, 4.2-4 *Bacchum / progeniem negat esse Iovis sociasque sorores / impietatis habet* (See Bömer 1976, v. 4.3).

who likewise doubt Dionysus' descent from Zeus.³²⁴ Ovid omits the irreverence of Cadmus' daughters in his version of the Pentheus story and transfers it by means of "fragmentation" to the Minyads, another trio of impious sisters.³²⁵ The outrage of the Theban king and the Minyads towards the god consists in their resistance to the establishment of organized Bacchic worship: the Theban king refuses to erect temples in honor of Bacchus (3.521), while the Minyads oppose the adoption of his cult (4.1-2). Moreover, both the sisters and Pentheus allege that the Bacchic rites are counterfeit (3.558, 4.37 *commentaque sacra*)³²⁶ echoing the Euripidean Pentheus' characterization of the Dionysiac cult as fictitious (218 *πλασταῖσι βακχεΐαισιν*).

Finally, in both stories the blasphemy towards Bacchus is accompanied by an adherence to another divinity.³²⁷ The Minyads' refusal to venerate Bacchus is explained by their worship of Minerva, whom they consider a superior deity (4.38). Their attitude is reminiscent of Pentheus' mentality, who scorns Bacchus and extols instead Ares' serpent, the monstrous ancestor of the Thebans, raising it to the level of a patriotic symbol of military valor (3.544-548). What is more, in both narratives the mortals' religious beliefs mirror their character. Pentheus' admiration for Ares' serpent is reflected in his savage, warlike, and violent personality, while the Minyads' dedication to Minerva is expressed through their excessive devotion to wool-working. Steven Hinds maintains that two divine festivals are in implicit rivalry here, arguing that if we interpret the metonymy *intempestiva Minerva* (4.33) not only as "untimely weaving", but also as

³²⁴ Ba. 26-27 *ἐπεὶ μὲν ἀδελφαὶ μητρόσ, ὅς ἤκιστ' ἐχρῆν, / Διόνυσον οὐκ ἔφασκον ἐκφῶναι Διός*. Ovid indicates the allusion to Euripides through clear verbal echoes (*sorores~ἀδελφαί, negat~ οὐκ ἔφασκον, Bacchum~Διόνυσον, progeniem esse~ ἐκφῶναι, Iovis~Διός*).

³²⁵ Keith 2010, 195.

³²⁶ Anderson 1997, vv. 4.36-39.

³²⁷ The motif of a mortal committing outrage towards a divinity by worshipping another god is characteristic of tragedy (cf. Hippolytus' *hybris* towards Aphrodite due to his exclusive devotion to Artemis in Euripides' Hippolytus).

“untimely festival of Minerva” and employ the calendrical system of the *Fasti*, according to which the goddess’ festival (March 19th) takes place almost immediately after the festival of *Liberalia* in honor of Bacchus (March 17th), it follows that the Minyads’ worship of the goddess is indeed “untimely” by two days.³²⁸ In other words, the Minyads reject the festival of Bacchus in order to celebrate that of Minerva.

The obstinate irreverence of the Minyads towards Bacchus is also reminiscent of the stubborn outrage of the Tyrrhenian sailors against the god. To begin with, both the sisters and the seamen are characterized by the narrator as impious bands.³²⁹ Despite the tearful pleading of Acoetes and the disguised Bacchus the sailors persist in their chosen course (3.656-657) and even when the god immobilizes their ship in mid-sea they unfurl the sails and ply their oars with redoubled effort (3.662-663). Similarly the Minyads are the only women who adhere to their weaving during the holiday in honor of Bacchus, thus profaning his festival (4.34-36, 389-390). Ovid hints to the analogous attitude of the Tyrrhenian sailors and the daughters of Minyas by means of a subtle verbal echo: the Minyads’ spinning of the thread (4.36 *deducens* filum) may recall the sailors’ unfurling of the sails (3.663 *velaque deducunt*).

The Minyads’ disobedience towards the priest of Bacchus at the beginning of their story evokes the opening confrontation between Pentheus and Tiresias. The Theban king’s mockery of Tiresias’ prophetic abilities and the taunting of his blindness (3.513-516) triggers the seer’s dire prophecy, according to which the Pentheus’ failure to honor Bacchus will bring about the god’s retribution in the form of dismemberment by his female kin (3.519-525). In the Minyads narrative the priest of Bacchus orders the Theban female population to abandon their daily

³²⁸ Hinds 2005 (209-210) characterizes this interplay as “a cross-cultural and cross-calendrical ‘pun’ between the time-systems of the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti*”.

³²⁹ Met. 3.629 *impia* turba, 3.656 manus *impia*, 4.3-4 *sociasque sorores / impietatis* habet.

activities and celebrate the god's festival predicting that if Bacchus' godhead is outraged his wrath will be fierce (4.4-9).³³⁰ Thus both Tiresias and the Bacchic priest foretell the god's imminent punishment of mortal impiety, but whereas the former pronounces a precise prophecy specifically directed towards Pentheus, the latter's prediction is vague and has no particular addressee.³³¹ The Theban king is heedless of Tiresias' divination pushing him violently aside while the seer is still speaking (3.526). Likewise the Minyads entirely disregard the priest's prophetic warning and the epic narrator lays emphasis on their excessive recklessness (4.2 *adhuc temeraria*). Therefore, both episodes open with a scene typical of the "resistance myth", namely an encounter between an impious mortal (or group of mortals) and a priest, who predicts the god's impending vengeance against the non-believers.³³² This correspondence serves to alert the reader to the fact that Pentheus' terrible fate awaits the irreverent Minyads as well.

The juxtaposition of the Theban women's devout participation in the festival of Bacchus with the Minyads' rejection of his worship echoes the contrast between Pentheus' opposition to Bacchus and the Theban people's joyful espousal of the god's rites. In both stories the entire

³³⁰ Rosati (2007, v. 4.7-8) has observed that the language employed by Ovid to describe Bacchus' genuine celebration in Thebes is highly reminiscent of the diction with which Amata's pseudo-bacchic rites are being depicted in the Aeneid. In particular, both the Bacchic priest and the Latin queen exhort a group of women to remove their fillets from their hair and participate in the god's festival (4.4-8 *festum celebrare sacerdos ... crinales soluere uittas... iusserat*, 7.403 *solvite crinalis vittas, capite orgia mecum*). Moreover, the priest's injunction to the Theban female population to put on fawn-skins and wield thyrsi (4.5-7 *pectora pelle tegi ... manibus frondentes sumere thyrsos... iusserat*) evokes the Latin women's dressing up as maenads (7.390 *vociferans etenim mollis tibi sumere thyrsos*, 396 *pampineasque gerunt incinctae pelibus hastas*).

³³¹ The affinity between the two scenes is emphasized by the use of verbs of divination: *auguror* (3.519), *vaticinatus erat* (4.9).

³³² Another interesting affinity between the two scenes is that the countless cult titles of Bacchus among the Greek nations (4.16-17 *et quae praeterea per Graias plurima gentes / nomina, Liber, habes*) recall Tiresias' immense fame throughout the Greek cities (3.511-512: *cognita res meritam vati per Achaidas urbes / attulerat famam, nomenque erat auguris ingens*). Ovid stresses the link by clear verbal reminiscences: *plurima nomina~ingens nomen, per Graias gentes~per Achaidas urbes*.

community takes part in the Bacchic festivities regardless of age or social status,³³³ but there is one essential difference: whereas in the Pentheus episode the worshipers belong to both sexes (3.529 *mixtaeque viris*), in the Minyads narrative we witness an exclusively female festival. This contrast can be explained in terms of the poet's narrative focus. Since in the former story the main character is Pentheus, Ovid includes the Theban men among the worshippers, so that the Theban king can appeal to their martial valor and dissuade them from adopting the effeminate Bacchic rites. In the latter story, however, the daughters of Minyas hold the central role and thus the poet structures the narrative as a conflict between the pious Theban women and the irreverent sisters excluding all male participants. Furthermore, the epic narrator introduces the protagonist(s) in both stories by distinguishing him/them from the general mass: Pentheus is the only Theban who spurns Tiresias and opposes Bacchus, while the Minyads are the only women who remain within their household, while the rest of the female population are outdoors worshipping the god.³³⁴

The contrast between the Minyads' outrage towards Bacchus and the Theban women's celebration of the god also evokes the clash between the reverent Acoetes and the impious Tyrrhenian sailors. When Acoetes realizes that the boy abducted by the sailors is actually a god in disguise, he prays that he bestow his favor and assistance on their voyage and grant pardon to his shipmates for their *hybris*.³³⁵ Similarly the Theban women pray to the god that he confer on them his divine aid and have a gentle disposition towards them.³³⁶ The response to Acoetes'

³³³ Met. 3.529-530 *matresque nurusque / vulgusque proceresque ignota ad sacra feruntur*, 4.5 *famulas dominasque suorum*, 4.9 parent *matresque nurusque*.

³³⁴ Met. 3.513 *spernit Echionides tamen hunc ex omnibus unus*, 4.32 *solae Minyeides intus* (See Rosati 2007, v. 4.1).

³³⁵ Met. 3.613-614 *quisquis es, o faveas nostrisque laboribus adsis; / his quoque des veniam!*.

³³⁶ Met. 4.30 *'placatus mitisque'* rogant Ismenides *'adsis'*.

prayer comes from his fellow sailor Dictys, who sarcastically asks him not to pray for their sake meeting with the approval of the rest of the crew.³³⁷ The prayer of the Theban women is likewise flouted by one of the daughters of Minyas, who contrasts the other women's participation in the false rites of Bacchus with their own adherence to the superior divinity Minerva and suggests that they complement their weaving with the narration of tales, obtaining the endorsement of her sisters.³³⁸

In conclusion, the blasphemous Minyads assimilate features from the hybridic daughters of Cadmus of Euripides' *Bacchae* as well as from impious Pentheus and the irreverent Tyrrhenian sailors of the preceding narrative. On the other hand, the devout Theban women constitute a conflation of the pious Theban people and Acoetes, while the priest of Bacchus is reminiscent of the prophet Tiresias.

2.2.2 The Bacchic hymn

In the context of the festival in honor of Bacchus the Theban women address a hymn to the god (4.11-32), which engages in dialogue with various intertexts, namely the parodos of Euripides' *Bacchae* and certain fragments of Roman Republican tragedy.³³⁹ The description of Bacchus' punishment of Pentheus and the Tyrrhenian sailors in the preceding narrative is followed by a hymn to the god in the *Minyads* episode, where the Theban women and the epic narrator commemorate among other exploits Bacchus' triumph over the Theban king and seamen. Ovid

³³⁷ Met. 3.614-620 "pro nobis mitte precari!" / Dictys ait [...] hoc Libys, hoc [...] Melanthus, / hoc probat Alcimedon et [...] Epopeus, / hoc omnes alii.

³³⁸ Met. 4.37-42 "dum cessant aliae commentaque sacra frequentant, / nos quoque, quas Pallas, melior dea, detinet" inquit, / [...] / dicta probant primamque iubent narrare sorores.

³³⁹ For an analysis of Ovid's hymn to Bacchus see Danielewicz 1990.

may have appropriated this narrative pattern, where the feats of a character are followed by a hymn in his honor, from authors such as Callimachus and Virgil. In the *Hecale* after Theseus subdues the bull of Marathon, the Athenians sing a hymn in his honor celebrating his heroic deed,³⁴⁰ while in *Aeneid* 8 Evander's story of Hercules' slaying of Cacus is followed by the Arcadians' hymn to Hercules, who sing his victory over the monster. A closer thematic model for this narrative pattern, however, can be found in Euripides' *Bacchae*, where after the description of Pentheus' dismemberment in the second messenger speech comes the fifth stasimon (1153-1164), in which the chorus celebrate the downfall of the Theban king and the triumph of Dionysus.

The Ovidian hymn to Bacchus also contains many allusions to the *parodos* of the *Bacchae*. It has been observed that the Theban women worshipping Bacchus resemble the chorus of the Euripidean play, in that they employ the hymnic style and ritual diction of tragedy.³⁴¹ Both the Asian Bacchantes of Euripides and the Ovidian Theban women open their invocation to the god with the cult titles "Bacchus" and "Bromius".³⁴² What is more, both hymns celebrate Dionysus' double birth from Semele and Zeus³⁴³ and make reference to the god's bull form.³⁴⁴ The Euripidean maenads sing that the Theban female population has run off to Mt. Cithaeron to worship Dionysus deserting their looms and shuttles.³⁴⁵ In an analogous manner the Theban

³⁴⁰ Ovid fashions a similar hymn to Theseus sung by the Athenians in *Metamorphoses* 7.486-503.

³⁴¹ Keith 2010, 196.

³⁴² Ba. 65-67 θοάζω / Βρομίωι πόνον ἠδὸν / κάματόν τ' εὐκάματον, Βάκχιον εὐαζομένα; Met. 4.11 Bacchumque vocant Bromiumque.

³⁴³ Ba. 88-100 [...] Διὸς βροντᾶς νηδύος ἔκβολον μάτηρ ἔτεκεν, λιποῦσ' αἰῶνα κεραυνίωι πλαγᾶι: λοχίαις δ' αὐτίκα νιν δέξατο θαλάμαις Κρονίδας Ζεύς, [...] ἔτεκεν δ', ἀνίκα Μοῖραι τέλεσαν; Met. 4.12 ignigenamque satumque iterum solumque bimatrem.

³⁴⁴ Ba. 100 ταυρόκερων θεὸν; Met. 4.19 cum sine cornibus adstas.

³⁴⁵ Ba. 116-118 εἰς ὄρος εἰς ὄρος, ἔνθα μένει / θηλυγενῆς ὄχλος / ἀφ' ἰστῶν παρὰ κερκίδων τ'.

women in Ovid lay aside their weaving implements and participate in the Bacchic festival.³⁴⁶ Thus in both situations the women abandon their weaving in order to engage in Bacchic cult, but the distinguishing difference is that whereas the Euripidean Theban women become Bacchantes, because they have been maddened by Dionysus (119 οἰστρηθεῖς Διονύσῳ), their Ovidian counterparts take part in the god's rites in obedience to the instructions of the Bacchic priest (4.9 parent, 4.32 iussaque sacra colunt). Just as in the Pentheus episode Bacchus receded in the background and the lens focused on the human characters, similarly in the Minyads story it is the mortals who are in the limelight, while the god remains inconspicuous. Finally, the Euripidean Bacchantes celebrate the god to the sound of drums, shouts, and flutes and likewise Bacchic worship in the Ovidian hymn is accompanied by female singing, drums, and pipes.³⁴⁷

Alison Keith argues that Ovid's hymn to Bacchus may also draw on Roman Republican tragedy.³⁴⁸ In particular, she has detected in Ovid's diction verbal reminiscences from a fragment of Ennius' *Athamas*.³⁴⁹ Both poets represent worshippers invoking the god with the cult titles "Bacchus", "Bromius", and "Lyaeus".³⁵⁰ Ovid may also be alluding to an extant line from Accius' *Bacchae* for which there is no parallel in the Euripidean original.³⁵¹ The Ovidian and Accian invocations to the god share in common the reference to Bacchus' birth from Semele (fr. 5 *Semela genitus*, *Met.* 4.12 *bimatrem*). Finally, all three hymns address Bacchus as "father",

³⁴⁶ *Met.* 4.9-10 *matresque nurusque / telasque calathosque infectaque pensa reponunt*.

³⁴⁷ *Ba.* 154-163 μέλλετε τὸν Διόνυσον βαρυβρόμων ὑπὸ τυμπάνων, [...] ἐν Φρυγίαισι βοαῖς ἐνοπαῖσί τε, λωτὸς ὅταν εὐκέλαδος ἱερὸς ἱερὰ παίγματα βρέμηι; *Met.* 4.29-30 *femineae voces* impulsaque *tympana* palmis / concavaque aera sonant longoque foramine *buxus*.

³⁴⁸ Keith 2010, 197.

³⁴⁹ Jocelyn 1967.

³⁵⁰ fr. 52, 120-121 *his erat in ore Bromius his Bacchus pater, / illis Lyaeus*; *Met.* 4.11 *Bacchumque vocant Bromiumque Lyaeumque*.

³⁵¹ fr. 5 *O Dionyse, pater optime vitisator Semela genitus, Euhie!*.

refer to the god's invention of wine³⁵² and end with a cult-title stemming from the ritual cry "euhoe".³⁵³

What is more, the description of the Bacchic festival in *Metamorphoses* 4 echoes and inverts Pentheus' tirade against Bacchus in the preceding book. To begin with, Pentheus' exhortation to the Theban youths to reject the Bacchic rites is evoked by the Bacchic priest's instructions to the Theban female population to participate in the god's festival. The Theban king claims that it is more fitting for the young men to wield weapons instead of thyrsi and wear helmets instead of garlands.³⁵⁴ The priest of Bacchus, on the other hand, orders the Theban women to crown their heads with festive wreathes and brandish thyrsi.³⁵⁵ Moreover, Pentheus' appeal to the youths to assume the valor and fighting spirit of Ares' serpent, in order to repel Bacchus' religious "invasion" of Thebes may be ironically recalled by the priest's injunction to the women to take up thyrsi so as to honor the god.³⁵⁶

The Theban king's invective against the god is also evoked and reversed by the hymn to Bacchus. In particular, the epic narrator in Book 4, whose poetic voice merges with that of the Theban women invoking the god, reworks various elements from Pentheus' harangue to the Thebans. The Theban king mockingly characterizes Bacchus an "unarmed boy", whereas the narrator glorifies the god by calling him a boy of eternal youth.³⁵⁷ Pentheus describes derisively

³⁵² fr. 52, 121 *uitis inventor sacrae*; fr. 5 *vitisator*; Met. 4.14 *genialis consitor uvae*.

³⁵³ fr. 52, 122 *euhan euhium*; fr. 5 *Euhie*; Met. 4.15 *Euhan*.

³⁵⁴ Met. 3.541-542: *o iuvenes, propiorque meae, quos arma tenere, / non thyrsos, galeaque tegi, non / fronde decebat?*.

³⁵⁵ Met. 4.7-8 *serta coma, manibus frondentis sumere thyrsos / iusserat*.

³⁵⁶ Met. 3.555 *animos [...] sumite serpentis!*, 4.7-8 *sumere thyrsos / iusserat*.

³⁵⁷ Met. 3.533 *puero [...] inermi*, 4.17-18 *tibi enim inconsumpta iuventa est, tu puer aeternus*. Another response to Pentheus' taunt can be found in the Fasti-hymn to Bacchus, where the elegiac hymnist claims that the god was born

the god's effeminate and luxurious appearance consisting of perfumed hair, garlands, and purple attire embroidered with gold (3.354-356). The epic voice, on the contrary, lauds Bacchus' superlative feminine beauty (4.518 *formosissimus*, 3.520 *virgineum caput est*). One of the exploits of Bacchus extolled in the hymn is the conquest of the East.³⁵⁸ This praise echoes Pentheus' complaint that Thebes have been "captured" by the new god.³⁵⁹ Furthermore, the Theban king reviles the counterfeit frenzy of the maenads induced not by the god's inspiration, but by intoxication (3.536 *mota insania vino*). The epic hymnist, on the other hand, draws a comical sketch of the drunken Silenus supporting his tottering limbs with a walking stick.³⁶⁰

Finally, upon the arrival of Bacchus (3.528 *Liber adest*) Pentheus initiates his diatribe against the god with a scornful catalogue of Bacchic musical accompaniments consisting of drums, flutes, cymbals, and female singing.³⁶¹ The narrator, on the other hand, claims that whichever place the god visits (4.28 *quacumque ingrederis*) he is welcomed by the same assortment of Bacchic sounds.³⁶² The epic voice also makes subtle modifications to Pentheus' list in order to suggest the shift from polemic to eulogy. The Theban king disparagingly characterizes the drums as "empty, powerless" (3.537 *inania tympana*), while the hymnist simply says that they are struck by the worshippers' hands (4.29 *impulsaque tympana palmis*). What is more, whereas the Pentheus mentions only women as the god's worshippers in order to stress the

"armed", because his birth came about, when Jupiter appeared before Semele bearing his thunderbolt (Fast. 3.715-716 *Semelen, ad quam nisi fulmina secum / Iuppiter adferret, partus inermis eras*).

³⁵⁸ Met. 4.20-21 *Oriens tibi victus, adusque / decolor extremo qua tinguitur India Gange*.

³⁵⁹ Met. 3.533 *at nunc a puero Thebae capientur inermi*.

³⁶⁰ Met. 4.26-27 *quique senex ferula titubantis ebrius artus / sustinet*.

³⁶¹ Met. 3.532-533 *aerane ... / aere repulsa ... adunco tibia cornu, 536-37: femineae voces ... inania tympana*.

³⁶² Met. 4.28-30 *femineae voces impulsaque tympana palmis / concavaque aera sonant longoque foramine buxus* (See Bömer 1976, v. 4.28; Anderson 1997, vv. 4.28-30).

effeminate nature of his cult (3.536 *feminae voces*), the narrator adds in the catalogue the shouts of young men (4.28 *clamor iuvenalis*), so as to indicate the universal welcome afforded to the god.

To recapitulate, Ovid's hymn to Bacchus in the *Minyads* episode appropriates elements of tragic diction and hymnic style from the *parodos* of Euripides' *Bacchae* as well as from choral odes of Roman Republican tragedies, such as Accius' *Bacchae* and Ennius' *Athamas* and at the same time it transforms Pentheus' tirade against Bacchus into a hymnic encomium of the god.

2.2.3 "Weaving" tales

Just as the *Pentheus* story contains the embedded story of Acoetes about Bacchus and the *Tyrrhenian* sailors, similarly the *Minyads* episode includes three inserted narratives recounted by the sisters to each other: *Pyramus and Thisbe* (4.55-166), the loves of the Sun (4.169-270), and *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* (4.285-388). The narrative function of the internal stories in the two episodes is entirely different. Acoetes' longwinded story is designed to trigger the wrath of the impatient Pentheus, so that he may go alone to Mt. Cithaeron to confront the maenads and thus meet his death at their hands. The *Minyads'* stories, on the other hand, are an act of defiant *hybris* towards Bacchus, since instead of participating in his festival like the *Theban* women, they prefer to stay indoors and engage in weaving and the narration of tales thus causing the god's wrath, who punishes them by transforming them into bats.³⁶³ Ovid signals the different function of Acoetes' narrative from that of the *Minyads'* tales in terms of the perception of the

³⁶³ Note the prophecy of the priest of Bacchus, who warns that the wrath of the offended deity would be fierce (4.8-9 *saevam laesi fore numinis iram / vaticinatus erat*).

passage of time. Pentheus accuses Acoetes that he subjected him to a rambling and digressive story, so that he could weaken his anger by means of the delay. In other words, Acoetes' tale makes the exasperated Pentheus feel that time passes more slowly.³⁶⁴ The first of the Minyads, on the contrary, suggests that they recount stories to one another in order to lighten their toil of weaving by making time seem to pass more quickly.³⁶⁵ Therefore, the story of Acoetes, who is actually Bacchus in disguise, causes the anger of Pentheus, because he finds it protracted and garrulous, while the Minyads' long narratives are entertaining for themselves, but bring about the wrath of Bacchus.

In the previous section we saw how Acoetes' micro-narrative has many correspondences with the macro-narrative of Pentheus.³⁶⁶ The embedded stories of the Minyads, on the other hand, do not have explicit connections with the framing narrative of Bacchus' festival and the punishment of the three sisters. Alison Keith has argued, however, that Dionysiac themes and imagery pervade the Minyads' amatory tales suggesting that the god has infiltrated the sisters' minds and narrative imagination prior to his epiphany in the episode's denouement.³⁶⁷ To begin with, the locale of the Minyads' stories is the East: Babylon (Pyramus and Thisbe), Persia (the Sun, Clytie, and Leucothoe), and Caria (Salmacis and Hermaphroditus). The Eastern setting of

³⁶⁴ Met. 3.691-692 *praeuimus longis*' Pentheus '*ambagibus aures*,' / inquit 'ut ira *mora* vires absumere posset.

³⁶⁵ Met. 4.40-41 *perque vices aliquid, quod tempora longa* videri / non sinat, in medium vacuas referamus ad *ures*!.

³⁶⁶ a) The pious Acoetes' resistance to the Tyrrhenian sailors parallels the opposition of the devout Thebans to Pentheus; b) both the sailors and the Theban king are portrayed as impious towards Bacchus and persistent in their outrage; c) in both the internal and the external narrative Bacchus assumes a disguise (Acoetes, boy) and employs cunning deception against the Tyrrhenian sailors and Pentheus respectively; d) the comical penalty suffered by the sailors implicitly foreshadows the gruesome punishment inflicted on Pentheus by the god.

³⁶⁷ Keith 2010, 204.

the Minyads' tales is ironic given the eulogy of Bacchus' Eastern conquests in the hymn to the god opening the book (4.20-21).³⁶⁸

Keith detects in the Pyramus and Thisbe story verbal evocations of Bacchic rites and themes.³⁶⁹ Thisbe's torn and bloodied cloak (4.103-4, 107-8) and Pyramus' desperate appeal to the lions to tear apart and devour his body (4.112-14) bear connotations of dismemberment (*σπαραγμός*) and the consumption of raw flesh (*ὠμοφαγία*), both of which are typical elements of Bacchic ritual. Moreover, when Thisbe catches sight of the dying Pyramus she is described as becoming "paler than boxwood" (4.133-5 *buxo pallidiora*), a simile which recalls the boxwood flute, one of the Bacchic musical instruments cited earlier in the hymn to Bacchus (4.30 *longoque foramine buxus*). To the aforementioned Dionysiac features we can add a further one: the first Minyad introduces the story of Pyramus and Thisbe as an aetion explaining the red color of the fruit of the mulberry tree saying that they obtained this color from the blood of the two lovers that was sprinkled on them.³⁷⁰ This bloody image may be intended to evoke the gory prophecy of Tiresias in the Pentheus episode, who predicts that the Theban king will pollute with his blood the trees of Mt. Cithaeron (3.522-523 *sanguine silvas / foedabis*).

Keith notes that Leuconoe's tale about the love affairs of the Sun functions as an aetion for the origin of frankincense, since the Sun-god transforms his dead beloved into the frankincense shrub (4.249-55).³⁷¹ She remarks that the poet stresses the utilization of frankincense in the rites of Bacchus both in the conclusion of the Pentheus episode (3.733) and in the Bacchic festival at the outset of the Minyads story (4.11) and cites the connection of

³⁶⁸ Keith 2010, 200.

³⁶⁹ Keith 2010, 201-204.

³⁷⁰ Met. 4.51-52: *an, quae poma alba ferebat / ut nunc nigra ferat contactu sanguinis arbor*.

³⁷¹ Keith 2010, 207.

Syrian frankincense with Dionysiac worship in Euripides' *Bacchae* (144-5) concluding that the story of Leuconoe explains the provenance of an element of Bacchic cult, the offering of frankincense to the god. The *Metamorphoses*-action about frankincense corresponds to the *Fasti*-action in the elegiac hymn to Bacchus, where the poet recounts that the god first established the dedication of frankincense and other libations to the gods (3.727-732).

Before reaching the main story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, the third Minyad Alcithoe rejects a series of other narratives with Dionysiac associations.³⁷² She mentions in passing the Curetes, who protected the infant Jupiter from discovery by Saturn by drowning his crying with dancing and drum playing. This myth is associated with the invention of Dionysus' cult object, the drum (τύμπανον), in the parodos of Euripides' *Bacchae* (120-34). The Minyad also discards the myth of Crocus and Smilax, who were transformed into saffron and bryony, two plants closely connected with Bacchic ritual. The aroma of saffron is part of Bacchus' epiphany to the Minyads (4.393) and bryony is mentioned twice in the *Bacchae* in association with Dionysiac worship (108, 703). Finally, Keith has found implicit Dionysiac elements in the concluding tale of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus.³⁷³ The likening of the blushing Hermaphroditus with the moon tinged with crimson, at the time when bronze cymbals clash (4.329-33), brings to mind the nocturnal rites of Bacchus, where the cymbals were widely used (cf. *Met.* 3.532-3, 4.30, 4.393). Furthermore, Salmacis tightly embracing Hermaphroditus is compared among other things to ivy clinging to a tree (4.361-7). Ivy is a trademark of Bacchus: in the Pentheus episode the god appears to the Tyrrhenian sailors wreathed in ivy and causes ivy

³⁷² Keith 2010, 209-211.

³⁷³ Keith 2010, 211-214.

to entwine their oars and sails (3.663-7), while in his epiphany to the Minyads the tapestries turn into ivy (4.395).

2.2.4 The retribution of Bacchus

The Minyads episode ends with Bacchus' appearance to the impious sisters and their transformation into bats. Below I will argue that the epiphany scene assimilates elements from Euripides' *Bacchae* by means of "fragmentation" as well as from the Pentheus episode through intratextual conflation.

After the Euripidean Pentheus has captured the Lydian stranger and led him to the palace's prison, the disguised god escapes from his fetters and appears to the chorus of Asian Bacchants in an epiphany, which consists of his disembodied voice, an earthquake, and a blazing thunderbolt (575-603). All these elements are masterfully reworked by Ovid in Bacchus' epiphany to the Minyads. The illusory earthquake which seems to shake the sisters' house evokes the real earthquake which razes to the ground Pentheus' palace.³⁷⁴ What is more, Dionysus' roaring cry is transformed in the Ovidian narrative into the howling of incorporeal beasts.³⁷⁵ Finally, the flaming thunder, which blazes around Semele's tomb and threatens to burn the Theban king's palace is converted into deceptive fire and smoke, which fill the Minyads' home.³⁷⁶ Ovid is playfully rewriting here the *Bacchae* scene, since Euripides' blazing thunder is

³⁷⁴ Met. 4.402 *tecta* repente *quati* ... *videntur*; Ba. 586-587 *τάχα τὰ Πενθέως μέλαθρα διατινάξεται πεσήμασιν*. For the destruction of Pentheus' palace by Bacchus' earthquake compare Horace C.2.19.14-15: *tectaue Penthei / disiecta non leni ruina*.

³⁷⁵ Ba. 592-593 Βρόμιος ὄδ' *ἀλαλάζεται* στέγας ἔσω; Met. 4.404 *falsaque saevarum simulacra ululare ferarum*.

³⁷⁶ Ba. 594-599 Δι. ἄπτε κεραύνιον αἴθοπα λαμπάδα, / σύμφλεγε σύμφλεγε δώματα Πενθέος. / Χο. ἤ ἤ, πῦρ οὐ λεύσσεις, οὐδ' ἀνγάζη / τόνδε Σεμέλας ἱερὸν ἀμφὶ τάφον / ἄν ποτε κεραυνοβόλος ἔλιπε φλόγα / Δῖος βροντά; Met. 4.402-403 *pinguesque ardere videntur / lampades et rutilis conlucere ignibus aedes, 405 fumida [...] per tecta*.

reduced to glowing oil lamps (!).³⁷⁷ Hence, Ovid transforms the real divine phenomena of the Euripidean epiphany (earthquake, thunder, Dionysus' voice) into illusory miracles (false tremor, burning oil lamps, simulacra of howling beasts) thereby undercutting the grandeur of his tragic model. Nevertheless, in both scenes the mortals respond with terror to the god's epiphany. The Euripidean Bacchants fall trembling to the ground, while the fearful Minyads try to find refuge from the fire and the gleaming lights in dark hiding-places.³⁷⁸

Bacchus' epiphany to the daughters of Minyas is also highly evocative of the god's appearance to the Tyrrhenian sailors in the Pentheus episode.³⁷⁹ The epic narrator introduces the god's miraculous self-revelation by claiming that the event is beyond belief (4.394 resque fide maior).³⁸⁰ These words echo Acoetes' oath preceding the account of Bacchus' epiphany that he is going to recount genuine incidents despite their incredibility.³⁸¹ Bacchus' appearance to the Minyads consists of visual, acoustic, and olfactory illusions. The epiphany begins with the sudden sound of invisible drums, pipes, and cymbals (4.391-393) recalling not only Pentheus' scornful catalogue of Bacchic paraphernalia (3.532-533, 537), but also the list of Dionysiac musical instruments in the hymn to Bacchus (4.29-4.30).³⁸² The house is then filled with the fragrance of myrrh and saffron (4.393 redolent murraeque crocique), a miracle which evokes at the same time Pentheus' depiction of Bacchus having his hair scented with myrrh (3.555

³⁷⁷ Ba. 594 κεράνιον αἶθοπα λαμπάδα; Met. 4.402-403 pinguesque ardere videntur / lampades.

³⁷⁸ Ba. 600-601 δίκητε πεδόσε δίκητε τρομερὰ / σώματα, μαινάδες; Met. 4.405-407 fumida iam dudum latitant per tecta sorores / diversaeque locis ignes ac lumina vitant, / dumque petunt tenebras.

³⁷⁹ Keith 2010, 198.

³⁸⁰ For the "credibility" motif as a topos associated with divine aretalogy see Henrichs 1978, 210-211.

³⁸¹ Met. 3.659-660 tam me tibi vera referre / quam veri maiora fide (See Anderson 1997, vv. 4.394-395; Rosati 2007, vv. 4.394-398).

³⁸² Anderson 1997, vv. 4.391-393; Rosati 2007, 4.391-393; Keith 2010, 197.

madidus murra crinis) as well as the action of the origin of saffron in Alcithoe's story.³⁸³ The next wondrous phenomenon is the gradual transformation of the Minyads' looms and tapestries into ivy, vine-leaves, and grape clusters (4.395-398), which is reminiscent of Bacchus' entwining of the ship of the Tyrrhenian sailors with the same plants (3.664-665).³⁸⁴ Furthermore, the metamorphosis of the purple tapestry into grapes of the same color recalls the luxurious purple cloak of Bacchus described derisively by Pentheus.³⁸⁵ Finally, the phantoms of howling beasts echo the simulacra of tigers, panthers, and lynxes, which lie around Bacchus during his epiphany to the sailors.³⁸⁶

In the description of the Minyads' metamorphosis into bats we can detect a subtle allusion to the prophecy of Tiresias in the Pentheus episode in terms of the themes of "darkness" and "vision". Tiresias foretells that Pentheus will lament that the seer has "seen" too well (i.e. the future) despite being in "darkness" (i.e. blindness).³⁸⁷ The epic narrator claims that the darkness does not allow him to see in what way the Minyads transformed into bats.³⁸⁸ Thus the literal darkness leading to the narrator's actual lack of sight recalls Tiresias' figurative darkness, his blindness, which results, however, to mental vision, namely his prophetic power. Moreover, Pentheus' prophesied lament (3.525 *quereris*) corresponds to the shrill wailing of the Minyads transformed into bats (4.413 *peraguntque levi stridore querellas*).

³⁸³ Rosati 2007, v. 4.393; Keith 2010, 210.

³⁸⁴ Rosati 2007, vv. 4.394-398.

³⁸⁵ Met. 4.398 *purpura fulgorem pictis accommodat uvis*, 3.556 *purpuraque et pictis intextum vestibus aurum* (See Rosati 2007, vv. 4.394-398).

³⁸⁶ Met. 4.404 *falsaque saevarum simulacra ululare ferarum*, 3.668-669 *quem circa tigres simulacraque inania lyncum / pictarumque iacent fera corpora pantherarum* (See Anderson 1997, vv. 4.402-404; Rosati 2007, v. 4.402).

³⁸⁷ Met. 3.525 *meque sub his tenebris nimium vidisse quereris*.

³⁸⁸ Met. 4.409-410 *nec qua perdidierint veterem ratione figuram, / scire sinunt tenebrae*.

2.3 The death of Orpheus

Ovid's main intertext for the story of Orpheus' gruesome death at the hands of the Thracian maenads (Met. 11.1-84) is Virgil's *Georgics* (4.453-527). In this section I will attempt to show that the episode of Orpheus' death constitutes a conflation of Virgil's epyllion and Euripides' *Bacchae*, which dramatizes the mythical events leading to Pentheus' demise. Ovid's appropriation of the *Bacchae* in the Orpheus story has been almost completely disregarded by critics.³⁸⁹ Below I will contend that the Ovidian narrative assimilates elements from the second stasimon and the two messenger speeches of the *Bacchae* by means of "fragmentation". At the same time Ovid transposes many features from his own account of Pentheus' sparagmos in Book 3 of the *Metamorphoses* into the description of Orpheus' dismemberment through intratextual conflation.

The earliest known account of Orpheus' dismemberment by the Thracian women is found in Aeschylus' tragedy *Bassarai* of which survive only scant fragments and a prose plot summary contained in Eratosthenes' *Catasterismoi* 24.³⁹⁰ According to Aeschylus, after his descent to Hades Orpheus shifted his faith from Dionysus to Apollo, the Sun God, and thus the offended Bacchus launched against the bard his female followers, the *Bassarai*, who tore him in pieces. The next reference to the myth belongs to Plato's *Symposium*, where Phaedrus claims that Orpheus' death at the hands of women was divinely sent punishment for his cowardice, in that he contrived to descend to Hades alive to retrieve his wife instead of bravely committing suicide for

³⁸⁹ Segal (1989, 91) has made the sole reference to Ovid's evocation of the *Bacchae* in his Orpheus story without, however, any further elaboration: "Ovid reminds us of his skill in both dispersing and fusing different parts of the mythical tradition. In this case he combines Orpheus' end with Pentheus' death at the hands of the maenads in Euripides' *Bacchae*, a myth to which Virgil had already alluded, albeit less directly ('the rites of nocturnal Bacchus' G.4.521)."

³⁹⁰ Radt 1985, 138-140.

the sake of love (179b). In the Hellenistic period Phanocles in his *Erotes* recounts that the women of Thrace slew Orpheus, because he introduced homosexual love to the Thracian men and refused to praise heterosexual passion (1.7-10). In the Augustan era Conon (FGrH, 26 F1 XLV) records an otherwise unattested variant of the myth according to which the Macedonian and Thracian women tore Orpheus to pieces primarily because he excluded them from participation in his sacred mysteries, although he also allows for other incentives, such as the bard's enmity for the female race after the loss of his wife. Finally, Virgil describes briefly in the *Georgics* Orpheus' sparagmos by the Thracian Bacchantes, because they felt scorned by his shunning of love and marriage and his absolute devotion to the memory of his dead wife.³⁹¹

Hence, the pre-Ovidian tradition offers a variety of explanations for Orpheus' death ranging from outrage to a divinity and faintheartedness to gender conflict, banning from religious rites, and spousal loyalty. Ovid, however, provides a combination of motivations for the maenads' murderous hatred towards Orpheus by blending the Phanoclean and Virgilian versions: the bard on the one hand spurns the passion of women and on the other hand institutes pederasty among the Thracians (10.83-85) and sings homosexual and misogynistic songs (10.152-154).³⁹² Furthermore, while there is general consensus as to the Thracian origin of Orpheus' female killers (with the exception of Plato, who does not mention their nationality), there are two distinct literary traditions with regard to their precise identity: Aeschylus, Virgil, and Ovid

³⁹¹ G. 4.516, nulla Venus, non ulli animus flexere hymenaei, 520-522 [...] spretae Ciconum quo munere matres / inter sacra deum nocturnique orgia Bacchi / discerptum latos iuvenem sparsere per agros.

³⁹² Met. 10.79-82 [...] omnemque refugerat Orpheus / femineam Venerem [...] / [...] multas tamen ardor habebat / iungere se uati; multae doluere repulsae, 11.7 'en' ait, 'en, hic est nostri contemptor!'

ascribe to them the role of maenads, whereas in Plato, Phanocles, and Conon they are portrayed as ordinary women.³⁹³

Although Ovid's immediate source for the episode of Orpheus' death is Virgil, he develops his predecessor's four-line description (4.520-523) into a full-blown narrative of about fifty lines (11.1-51) by drawing on the one hand on Euripides' *Bacchae* and on the other hand on his own version of the Pentheus myth in the *Metamorphoses*. Ovid's appropriation of the *Bacchae* takes the form of "fragmentation" whereby he assimilates elements from the play's second stasimon and its two messenger speeches and fuses them organically together in a novel synthesis. At the same time he incorporates in his description many aspects from his own Pentheus narrative in Book 3 by means of intratextual conflation. The myths of Orpheus and

³⁹³ Egan (2001, 61-65) contends that Virgil is instead following the version of the Orpheus myth reflected by Conon, according to which the bard was dismembered by Thracian non-maenad women, because he denied them participation in the Bacchic orgies, of which he was the presiding priest. To support this interpretation he proceeds to rearrange the line-order of the Virgilian text by moving verse 521 (*inter sacra deum nocturnique orgia Bacchi*) before 519, so that it becomes the antecedent of line 520 (*spretae Ciconum quo munere matres*), and thus produces a new translation (4.517-522): "In between his holy services to the gods and the nocturnal orgia of Bacchus he ranged alone... complaining of the stolen Eurydice and the worthless gifts of Pluto. The matrons of the Cicones shunned from this ritual (*italics mine*) tore the young man apart and scattered him widely over the fields." Although Egan's hypothesis is appealing, there are, nevertheless, several pieces of textual evidence which contradict it. (a) Whereas Virgil labels the rites as "Bacchic", Conon's text epitomized by Photios does not explicitly characterize the orgies as "Dionysiac". Moreover, the term *δργια* does not exclusively refer to the rites of Dionysus, but can also designate the Orphic mysteries (Hdt. 2.81.5) and in fact the account of the rites offered by Conon is not in the least reminiscent of a Bacchic celebration. The mysteries are said to be conducted exclusively by male initiates and to take place in the interior of a house. This description contrasts with the traditional mythic presentation of Dionysiac rites, according to which they are performed primarily by women and their typical setting is the wilderness (see Eur. *Bac.* 677-774). All these clues lead to the conclusion that Conon is actually referring to Orphic mysteries (a view also shared by Brown (2002, 306): "Konon is the sole authority for the banning of women from Orphic rites") and thus cannot function as a source for Virgil's Bacchic rites. (b) The collocation of the nocturnal Bacchic orgies with the bard's *sparagmos* in the transmitted Virgilian text (4.521-522) serves as a clear indication that it is in fact the Thracian women who are celebrating the rites of Dionysus in the course of which they tear apart Orpheus, a scene which recalls the parallel myth of Pentheus, who is dismembered by the Theban maenads in the midst of the god's orgies (Eur. *Bac.* 1024-1152). (c) Orpheus is represented in the lines immediately preceding his death as lamenting inconsolably the loss of his wife and wandering in the desolate Thracian wilderness in utter isolation from humans and in the company of only beasts and trees (4.507-520). This pathetic portrayal of the bard, which is further emphasized by his comparison to a lonely nightingale grieving for the loss of its young (4.511-515), can hardly be harmonized with Egan's conception of him as "alternating between his solitary (*solus*) wanderings over the Thracian countryside and his various religious activities (*sacra deum*), which include his mystagogic role in the cult of Dionysus". What is more, Virgil has already offered an explicit explanation for Orpheus' *munus* ("tribute") to his dead wife, which triggers the feeling of slight in the Thracian women and which is no other than his abstention from love and marriage (4.516).

Pentheus are intrinsically linked, since both heroes share the same tragic fate: they are torn to pieces by a group of frenzied Bacchants. Ovid, however, also highlights the essential divergences between the two mythical characters. Pentheus is the archenemy of Dionysus and opposes the establishment of his cult in Thebes. Orpheus, on the contrary, constitutes an “anti-Pentheus”, in that he is the god’s priest (11.68 *sacrorum vate suorum*),³⁹⁴ who has introduced his rites in Phrygia and Athens,³⁹⁵ in contrast with the Aeschylean tradition, where the bard incurs Dionysus’ wrath for worshipping exclusively the Sun god. Moreover, while the Theban king’s *hybris* and cause of his demise is his scorn towards Bacchus (3.514 *contemptor superum*), the Thracian bard’s death is occasioned by his derision towards the maenads’ passion for him (11.7 *nostrum contemptor!*). Hence, whereas in the Pentheus episode it is the impious Theban king who suffers the god’s retribution through his agents, the Bacchants, in the Orpheus narrative the god punishes the sacrilegious maenads for killing his priest by transforming them into oak trees (11.67-84).

In the second stasimon of the *Bacchae* (519-575) the chorus make a covert association between Pentheus and Orpheus in terms of their conflict with Dionysus. The Bacchants invoke Dionysus to descend from Mt. Olympus so as to check Pentheus’ *hybris* and then wonder if the god leads his bands of maenads on Olympus, where once Orpheus assembled the trees and wild

³⁹⁴ The term *vates* originally meant “prophet, seer”, but in Augustan poetry it acquired the additional sense “poet”. In line 11.68 I am translating *vates* as “priest”, since Orpheus is explicitly associated with the promulgation of Bacchic rites as well as because it better explains the depiction of his murder as sacrilege and the god’s grief for his death (11.67-70 *Non impune tamen scelus hoc sinit esse Lyaeus / amissoque dolens sacrorum vate suorum / protinus in siluis matres Edonidas omnes, / quae uidere nefas, torta radice ligauit*). In other passages of the *Metamorphoses*, however, the rendering “bard” is more appropriate (e.g. 11.1-2 *Carmine dum tali siluas animosque ferarum / Threicius uates et saxa sequentia ducit*).

³⁹⁵ *Met.* 11.92-93 *Midan, cui Thracius Orpheus orgia tradiderat cum Cecropio Eumolpo.*

animals with his enchanting music.³⁹⁶ By juxtaposing Pentheus' outrage to Dionysus with Orpheus' mesmerizing song Euripides may cryptically allude to the bard's clash with the god and his subsequent dismemberment by the Bacchantes,³⁹⁷ thereby implicitly foreshadowing Pentheus' own impending sparagmos.³⁹⁸ The Ovidian narrative of Orpheus' death opens with the bard sitting on a shaded hill in the Thracian mountains and attracting trees, beasts, and stones through his spellbinding music, a scene which recalls both the aforementioned Euripidean description of Orpheus and the Virgilian account, where the bard laments by the river Strymon charming tigers and attracting oaks with his song.³⁹⁹ Below I will argue that just as Euripides inserts in his Pentheus drama a hint to Orpheus' dismemberment, Ovid conversely introduces in his Orpheus narrative multiple allusions to Pentheus' sparagmos.

While the Ovidian bard is hypnotizing nature with his song, the Thracian Bacchantes make a dramatic entrance (11.3 *ecce*) and spot him from a hill-top. The women are dressed in animal

³⁹⁶ Ba. 553-555 μόλε, χρυσῶπα τινάσσων, / ἄνα, θύρσον κατ' Ὀλύμπου, / φονίου δ' ἀνδρὸς ὕβριν κατάσχες, 561-564 τάχα δ' ἐν ταῖς πολυδένδροισιν Ὀλύμπου / θαλάμαις, ἔνθα ποτ' Ὀρφεὺς κιθαρίζων / σύναγεν δένδρεα μουσαίς, / σύναγεν θήρας ἀγρώστας.

³⁹⁷ The chorus in fact do not clarify the nature of the relationship between Orpheus and Dionysus and thus the kletic hymn to the god (556-564) can be read in two different, but not mutually exclusive, ways. At one level, the Asian Bacchantes list the mountains Nysa, Parnassus, and Olympus as the favorite haunts of the god, where he might be found leading his band of maenads, and which are envisioned as the sites of Dionysus' future worship (Seaford 2001, vv. 556-575). According to this interpretation Orpheus may be viewed as a friend (or even priest) of Dionysus (Dodds 1960, vv. 560-564). At another level, however, all the aforementioned locales bear associations with mortal enemies of the god: in the Iliad (6.130-140) the Thracian king Lycurgus pursued Dionysus' nurses on Mt. Nyssa and was punished with blindness by Zeus; in Aeschylus' Eumenides (22-26) the Corycian cave on Parnassus is mentioned in connection with Dionysus' expedition against Pentheus at the head of the Bacchantes and the god's contrivance of the Theban king's death; finally, Olympus may be imagined as the site of Orpheus' sparagmos by the maenads, a myth previously dramatized in Aeschylus' Bassarai. On the basis of this reading the chorus cite a catalogue of locations, where a conflict between Dionysus and his human θεομάχοι (Lycurgus, Pentheus, Orpheus) took place, in anticipation of the god's deadly confrontation with the Theban king on Mt. Cithaeron.

³⁹⁸ Euripides employs in the Hippolytus the same technique of a subtle allusion to a parallel myth, which anticipates the ensuing events in the play. In the second stasimon the chorus wish that they could transform into birds and fly above the waters of Eridanus, where the Heliades lament their brother Phaethon (732-741). This scene alludes to the death of the Phaethon, while driving Helios' chariot, which portends the imminent fatal chariot ride of Hippolytus.

³⁹⁹ Met. 11.1-2 carmine dum tali silvas animosque ferarum / Threicius vates et saxa sequentia ducit; G. 4.510 mulcentem tigris et agentem carmine quercus.

skins and have their hair loosened upon their shoulders echoing the appearance of the Theban maenads in the first messenger speech of the Euripidean play.⁴⁰⁰ One of the maenads points at Orpheus as the one who scorns them and hurls her thyrsus against him (11.7 'en,' ait 'en, hic est nostrī contemptor!). This exclamation may evoke the disembodied voice of Dionysus in the second messenger speech of the Bacchae, who claims that Pentheus is mocking his godhead, his rites, and the Bacchantes themselves and exhorts them to punish him.⁴⁰¹ The distinguishing difference between the two scenes is the identity of the person urging the maenads to violence: Dionysus in Euripides and a maenad in Ovid. This divergence can be explained in terms of the different role of Dionysus in the two stories. Whereas in the Greek play the assault of the maenads against Pentheus is part of the god's plan to exact vengeance from the Theban king for opposing his cult, in the Metamorphoses the Bacchantes' murder of Orpheus is an act of impiety in the eyes of Bacchus, for which he duly punishes them (11.67-84).

The first assault of the Bacchantes against Orpheus meets with failure. The women hurl thyrsi and stones against the bard, but are unable to wound him, because his song stops their missiles in mid-air.⁴⁰² This initial unsuccessful attack on the bard may recall the abortive assault of the Bacchantes against Pentheus in the second messenger speech of Euripides' play. The maenads fling thyrsi, branches, and stones against the Theban king, but cannot injure him, since

⁴⁰⁰ Met. 11.3-4 tectae lymphata ferinis / pectora velleribus, 11.6 leves iactato crine per auras; Ba. 695-697 καὶ πρῶτα μὲν καθεΐσαν εἰς ὄμους κόμας / νεβρίδας τ' ἀνεστεΐλανθ' ὄσαισιν ἀμμάτων / σύνδεσμι' ἐλέλυτο, καὶ καταστίκτους δοράς. The Ovidian description of the maenads' streaming hair also evokes the depiction of the leader of the Bacchantes in the parodos of the Bacchae (150 τρυφερόν <τε> πλόκαμον εἰς αἰθέρα ρίπτων).

⁴⁰¹ Ba. 1078-1081 ἐκ δ' αἰθέρος φωνή τις, ὡς μὲν εἰκάσαι / Διόνυσος, ἀνεβόησεν· ὃ νεάνιδες, / ἄγω τὸν ὑμᾶς κάμει τὰμά τ' ὄργια / γέλων τιθέμενον· ἀλλὰ τιμωρεῖσθέ νιν.

⁴⁰² Met. 11.7-13 [...] et hastam / vatis Apollinei vocalia misit in ora, / quae foliis praesuta notam sine vulnere fecit; / alterius telum lapis est, qui missus in ipso / aere concentu victus vocisque lyraeque est / ac veluti supplex pro tam furialibus ausis / ante pedes iacuit.

he is sitting high on a fir tree beyond the range of their missiles.⁴⁰³ Thus in both scenes the preliminary attack of the Bacchantes is repelled: in the case of Orpheus due to a counteracting magical song and in the case of Pentheus owing to the remoteness of the target. Furthermore, Orpheus' immunity to the Bacchantes' projectiles echoes and reverses the scene in the first messenger speech of the Bacchae, where it is the maenads who are impervious to the weapons of the villagers due to the supernatural protection of Dionysus.⁴⁰⁴

The Thracian maenads instead of being disheartened by their failure grow uncontrollably violent and frenzied (11.13-14). They make a second attempt on Orpheus, this time accompanying their assault with a dissonant Bacchic "symphony" of uproar, pipes, drums, breast-beating, and howling, which ultimately drowns the sound of Orpheus' lyre and voice.⁴⁰⁵ This scene is rich in allusions to multiple intertexts ranging from Euripides' Bacchae and Apollonius' Argonautica to Ovid's own Pentheus story. To begin with, the belligerent music of the maenads directed against Orpheus recalls and contrasts sharply with the festive song of the Theban Bacchantes in the second messenger speech of the Bacchae, who sing antiphonically and are compared to joyful fillies.⁴⁰⁶ The Thracian women's renewed assault is crowned with success, since the bard's song is overwhelmed by their discordant music and thus cannot fend off

⁴⁰³ Ba. 1096-1102 πρῶτον μὲν αὐτοῦ χερμάδας κραταιβόλους / ἔρριπτον, ἀντίπυργον ἐπιβᾶσαι πέτραν, / ὄζοισί τ' ἐλατίνοισιν ἠκοντίζετο, / ἄλλαι δὲ θύρσους ἴεσαν δι' αἰθέρος / Πενθέως, στόχον δύστηνον, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἦνυτον. / κρεῖσσον γὰρ ὕψος τῆς προθυμίας ἔχων / καθῆσθ' ὁ τλήμων.

⁴⁰⁴ Ba. 760-764 τοῖς μὲν γὰρ οὐχ ἦμασσε λογχωτὸν βέλος, / οὐ χαλκός, οὐ σίδηρος <ἐνθεον χροᾶ> / κεῖναι δὲ θύρσους ἐξανιέϊσαι χερῶν / ἐτραυμάτιζον κάπενώτιζον φυγῆι / γυναῖκες ἄνδρας οὐκ ἄνευ θεῶν τινας. Ovid also alludes to the Euripidean intertext by another subtle inversion: the stones which are later dyed red with Orpheus' blood (11.18-19 tum denique saxa / non exauditi rubuerunt sanguine vatis) are reminiscent of the villagers' weapons, which cannot bloody the Bacchantes' flesh (οὐχ ἦμασσε λογχωτὸν βέλος, / οὐ χαλκός, οὐ σίδηρος <ἐνθεον χροᾶ>).

⁴⁰⁵ Met. 11.15-18 cunctaque tela forent cantu mollita, sed ingens / clamor et infracto Berecynthia tibia cornu / tympanaque et plausus et Bacchei ululatus / obstrepere sono citharae.

⁴⁰⁶ Ba. 1056-1057 αἰ δ' ἐκλιποῦσαι ποικίλ' ὡς πῶλοι ζυγὰ / βακχεῖον ἀντέκλαζον ἀλλήλαις μέλος.

their missiles any longer.⁴⁰⁷ This outcome evokes the successful secondary attack of the maenads against Pentheus, who uproot the fir tree with their bare hands and hurl him to the ground (1103-1113). Hence, just as the Euripidean Bacchantes overcome the obstacle of the tree by means of their supernatural strength, in an analogous fashion their Ovidian counterparts neutralize the magical protection of Orpheus' song through their cacophony.

The clash between Orpheus' harmonious song and the Bacchantes' roaring music can also be read as an artistic contest and in this respect the scene is highly reminiscent of the musical clash between Orpheus and the Sirens in Apollonius' *Argonautica*. While the Argonauts are sailing past the island of Anthemoessa, the Sirens unleash against them their enchanting song, which has the power to enthrall the listener, so that he wastes away through languor (4.891-894, 900-904). Orpheus, however, counteracts their spellbinding song with his overwhelming lyre playing and thus the ship is borne to safety away from the treacherous island (4.905-911). First of all, the Sirens bear some interesting affinities with the Thracian maenads. The mythical singers are part maidens and part birds, while the Bacchantes who gather round Orpheus before attacking him are likened to a flock of birds hostilely encircling an owl.⁴⁰⁸ In addition, the Sirens are always on the lookout for approaching sailors from a vantage point on their island and similarly the maenads catch sight of Orpheus from the summit of a nearby hill.⁴⁰⁹

What is even more striking is that Ovid has fashioned this scene as a direct inversion of the Apollonian episode. In the *Argonautica* the Sirens' mesmerizing song directed against the Argonauts almost constrains them to moor on their island, but is eventually neutralized by the

⁴⁰⁷ Met. 11.18-19 *tum denique saxa / non exauditi rubuerunt sanguine vatis.*

⁴⁰⁸ Arg. 4.898-899 *τότε δ' ἄλλο μὲν οἰωνοῖσιν / ἄλλο δὲ παρθενικῆς ἐναλίγκται ἔσκειν ἰδέσθαι*; Met. 11.24-25 *et coeunt ut aves, si quando luce vagantem / noctis avem cernunt.*

⁴⁰⁹ Arg. 4.900 *αἰεὶ δ' εὐόρμου δεδοκημένα ἐκ περιωπῆς*; Met. 11.4 *tumuli de vertice cernunt.*

deafening lyre playing of Orpheus.⁴¹⁰ In the *Metamorphoses*, on the contrary, the bard's bewitching melody, which captivates nature (birds, beasts, trees, and stones), initially succeeds in repelling the Bacchants' projectiles, but is ultimately drowned by their roaring music.⁴¹¹ Moreover, the Apollonian Orpheus causes the Argonauts' ears to ring with the sound of his lyre and throws the Sirens' song into confusion rendering it an indistinguishable tune for his companions, so that the *Argo* sails safely away from the treacherous island.⁴¹² The Ovidian Orpheus, on the other hand, fails to make the stones tossed against him "hear" his song, which is overwhelmed by the Bacchic music, and hence cannot protect himself from them.⁴¹³ Hence, while Orpheus in the *Argonautica* triumphs over the Sirens by overpowering their song with his lyre and captivating his fellow Argonauts, his Ovidian analogue is defeated by the Bacchants, since his song is neutralized by their music and thus he is no longer able to enchant his inanimate audience (the stones).

The conflict between Orphic song and Dionysiac uproar is also evocative of Pentheus' confrontation with Bacchic music in *Metamorphoses* 3. The Theban king asks sarcastically the Theban men whether Bacchus and his followers are so powerful that they can defeat them, although they have previously been fearless in battle, contrasting the war trumpet with the Bacchic musical instruments and the song of the maenads (3.352-357). Furthermore, while

⁴¹⁰ Arg. 4.892-894 *λίγειαί / Σειρήνες σίνοντ' Ἀγελωίδες ἠδείησι / θέλγουσαι μολπήσιν*, 903 *ἴεσαν ἐκ στομάτων ὄπα λείριον*, 903-904 *οἱ δ' ἀπὸ νηός / ἤδη πείσματ' ἔμελλον ἐπ' ἠιόνεσσι βαλέσθαι*, 905 *εἰ μὴ* [...] Ὀρφεύς, 907 *κραιπνὸν εὐτροχάλοιο μέλος κανάγησεν ἀοιδῆς*, 909 *παρθενίην δ' ἐνοπήν ἐβήσατο φόρμυξ*.

⁴¹¹ Met. 11.1-2 *carmine dum tali silvas animosque ferarum / Threicius vates et saxa sequentia ducit*, 20-21 *attonitas etiamnum voce canentis / innumeras volucres*, 15-18 *cunctaque tela forent cantu mollita, sed ingens / clamor et infracto Berecynthia tibia cornu / tympanaque et plausus et Bacchei ululatus / obstrepere sono citharae*. Romeo (2012, 30, n. 40) also notes that the drowning of Orpheus' song by the music of the Bacchants constitutes a reversal of the *Argonautica* scene, where the bard's lyre overwhelms the treacherous song of the Sirens.

⁴¹² Arg. 4.908-909 *ὄφρ' ἄμυδις κλονέοντος ἐπιβρομέονται ἀκουαί / κρεγμῶ*, 911 *ταὶ δ' ἄκριτον ἴεσαν αὐδήν*.

⁴¹³ Met. 11.21-22 *tum denique saxa / non exauditi rubuerunt sanguine vatis*.

Pentheus is later marching to Mt. Cithaeron, he becomes incensed with rage upon hearing the songs and howling of the Bacchants, and is likened to a war horse which conceives an eagerness for battle, when it perceives the signal of the trumpeter (3.702-707). Thus, the Pentheus narrative presents a clash between martial and Bacchic music, which corresponds to the opposition between Orphic and Dionysiac song in the Orpheus story. What is more, in both episodes Bacchic music plays an instrumental role in the hero's death. The singing and howling of the Theban maenads rekindle Pentheus' wrath thereby luring him to Cithaeron, where he will meet his end (3.702-707), while the music and shrieking of the Thracian Bacchants drowns Orpheus' song thus rendering him vulnerable to their deadly missiles (11.15-19). Ovid underlines the affinity between the two scenes by incorporating in the description of Dionysiac music in the Orpheus narrative all the elements from the two aforementioned Pentheus passages.⁴¹⁴

One would expect that once the Bacchants have succeeded in negating the protection afforded to Orpheus by his song, they would immediately proceed to slay him. It thus comes as a surprise to the reader that they first direct their murderous violence against the bard's audience, namely the numerous birds, serpents, and wild animals that are listening mesmerized to his musical performance.⁴¹⁵ This savage attack of the Thracian maenads against wild nature stands in contrast with the behavior of the Theban Bacchants in the first messenger speech of the Bacchae, where they are portrayed being in perfect harmony with it: they girdle themselves with serpents, which lick their cheeks, breast feed baby gazelles and wolf cubs, and the entire Mt.

⁴¹⁴ Met. 11.15-17 *ingens / clamor et infracto Berecynthia tibia cornu / tympanaque et plausus et Bacchei ululatus*, 3.353 *adunco tibia cornu*, 537 *inania tympana*, 706 *longis ululatibus*, 707 *audito clamore*.

⁴¹⁵ Met. 11.20-22 *ac primum attonitas etiamnum voce canentis / innumeras volucres anguesque agmenque ferarum / Maenades Orphei titulum rapuere theatric*.

Cithaeron with its beasts participates in their Bacchic revels.⁴¹⁶ Therefore, the Theban maenads' loving and nurturing attitude towards wild nature is converted into the Thracian Bacchants' deadly ferocity against the untamed natural world. Nevertheless, this divergence between the Euripidean and the Ovidian Bacchants proves to be momentary, since, as we shall see below, shortly afterwards they both turn against a herd of cattle, which they brutally tear apart.

After the Thracian women dispatch Orpheus' animal audience, they turn with blood-stained hands against the "star" of the performance himself (11.23). Their inimical encircling of the bard is described by means of two similes of different provenance: a bird simile originating from the world of nature and an amphitheater simile belonging to Roman contemporary life (11.24-27). These comparisons are highly allusive in nature drawing on the Euripidean and Virgilian intertexts as well as other Ovidian intratexts. The maenads gathering around Orpheus in order to attack him are first compared to birds surrounding an owl with hostile intentions.⁴¹⁷ To begin with, the Ovidian simile echoes the portrayal of the Bacchants in Euripides' drama. In the first messenger speech the Theban maenads, who are rushing to pillage the nearby villages in retaliation for the ambush of the shepherds, are likened to a flock of birds.⁴¹⁸ In the second messenger speech the daughters of Cadmus darting to slaughter Pentheus are likewise compared to swift doves.⁴¹⁹ Moreover, it has been observed that the assembly of the Thracian maenads prior to their assault on Orpheus recalls earlier closely connected episodes of the

⁴¹⁶ Ba. 697-702 [...] καταστίκτους δοράς / ὄφρασι κατεζώσαντο λιχμῶσιν γένυν. / αἱ δ' ἀγκάλαισι δορκάδ' ἢ σκύμνους λύκων / ἀγρίους ἔχουσαι λευκὸν ἐδίδοσαν γάλα, / ὅσαις νεοτόκοις μαστὸς ἦν σπαργῶν ἔτι / βρέφη λιπούσαις [...], 726-727 [...] πᾶν δὲ συνεβάκχεν' ὄρος / καὶ θῆρες, οὐδὲν δ' ἦν ἀκίνητον δρόμωι.

⁴¹⁷ Met. 11.24-15 et coeunt ut aves, si quando luce vagantem / noctis avem cernunt [...]. Miller (1990, 144) notes that the initial amicable circle of birds and other animals around the bard (11.1-2) is now ironically replaced by the Bacchants' hostile encompassing of Orpheus described as a flock of birds attacking an owl.

⁴¹⁸ Ba. 748 χωροῦσι δ' ὥστ' ὄρνιθες ἀρθεῖσαι δρόμωι.

⁴¹⁹ Ba. 1089-1090 Κάδμου κόραι / ἤϊξαν πελείας ὠκύτητ' οὐχ ἥσσονες.

Metamorphoses: the gathering together of the Theban Bacchants before killing Pentheus as well as the rally of Actaeon's hounds preceding the devouring of their master.⁴²⁰

Apart from evoking the Euripidean play Ovid also reworks extensively the Virgilian bird simile in the Orpheus story. After the second death of his wife Orpheus mourns inconsolably for his loss and is likened to a nightingale lamenting perpetually for its fledglings snatched away from their nest by a pitiless farmer.⁴²¹ The bereaved bard plays the role of the grieving nightingale, the abducted fledglings stand for Eurydice, while the *durus arator* is either Aristaeus, who caused the first death of Eurydice, or Dis who called her back to the underworld, after Orpheus broke their pact by gazing back at her. Ovid alludes to the Georgics simile, but transforms completely its tone and content. In particular, the Virgilian image of elegiac dirge is reshaped into a scene of savage violence: the nocturnal nightingale (4.511 *philomela*, 514 *flet noctem*) is replaced by the owl, another bird of the night (11.25 *noctis avem*), while the defenseless fledglings (4.512-513 *fetus [...] / [...] implumis*) are converted into attacking birds (11.24 *aves*).

The simile is also evoked later in the Ovidian episode, in which the Bacchants turn to flight some farmers, who happen to be plowing nearby, and proceed to dismember their oxen (11.31-38). The situation of the Virgilian simile is ironically reversed, in that the cruel ploughman (4.512 *durus arator*) plucking the unfledged birds from their nest is replaced by helpless farmers (11.33 *lacertosi coloni*) terrified by the maenads' onslaught and leaving behind

⁴²⁰ Met. 3.715-716 *ruit omnis in unum / turba furens; cunctae coeunt trepidumque sequuntur*, 236 *cetera turba coit confertque in corpore dentes* (See Miller 1990, 141).

⁴²¹ G. 4.511-515 *qualis populea maerens philomela sub umbra / amissos queritur fetus, quos durus arator / obseruans nido implumis detraxit; at illa / flet noctem, ramoque sedens miserabile carmen / integrat, et maestis late loca questibus implet*.

their cattle to be slaughtered.⁴²² Ovid echoes the simile a final time in the aftermath of Orpheus' death, when Bacchus grieving the loss of his priest punishes the impious maenads by transforming them into oak trees. The frightened women, who suddenly see their feet being immobilized and fixed into the ground, are likened to birds vainly attempting to escape from a snare set by a fowler.⁴²³ The cunning fowler (*callidus auceps*) resembles the cruel farmer of the *Georgics* (*durus arator*), while the trapped birds are reminiscent of the captured nestlings. Hence, Ovid has the Virgilian simile constantly in mind and rewrites it at all the major points of his narrative: the maenads' assault against the bard, the routing of the farmers, and the women's punishment by Bacchus.

The second simile which depicts the Bacchant's enclosing of the bard prior to their attack is that of a stag hunted by dogs in the morning spectacle of the Roman amphitheater.⁴²⁴ This simile has also rich associations with the *Bacchae* and the earlier Ovidian episodes of Pentheus and Actaeon. The comparison of the Bacchant's with hounds is reminiscent of the scene in the first messenger speech of the Euripidean drama, where after the shepherds' abortive attempt to ambush and capture Agave she likens the maenads with dogs being hunted by the men and exhorts them to retaliate.⁴²⁵ Therefore, Ovid has inverted the situation of the Euripidean intertext by transforming the Bacchant's from hunted dogs to hounds in pursuit of their terrified prey.⁴²⁶

⁴²² Ovid cleverly indicates the inversion by transferring the epithet *durus* from the Virgilian farmer to the fields, which the Ovidian ploughmen are tilling (11.33 *dura...fodiebant arva*).

⁴²³ *Met.* 11.73-75 *utque suum laqueis, quos callidus abdidit auceps, / crus ubi commisit volucris sensitque teneri, / plangitur ac trepidans adstringit vincula motu.*

⁴²⁴ *Met.* 11.25-27 *structoque utrimque teatro / ceu matutina cervus periturus harena / praeda canum est, vatemque petunt.*

⁴²⁵ *Ba.* 731-733 ἡ δ' ἀνεβόησεν· ὧ δρομάδες ἐμαὶ κύνες, / θηρώμεθ' ἀνδρῶν τῶνδ' ὕπ'· ἀλλ' ἔπεσθέ μοι, / ἔπεσθε θύρσοις διὰ χερῶν ὀπλισμένοι.

⁴²⁶ Note also that in both scenes the Bacchant's immediately after their comparison with dogs attack their enemy with thyrsi (733 ἔπεσθε θύρσοις διὰ χερῶν ὀπλισμένοι 11.27-28 *fronde virentes / coniciunt thyrsos*).

What is more, the portrayal of the bard as a stag about to be torn apart by dogs recalls Actaeon, who was transformed into a real stag and devoured by his own hounds earlier in the *Metamorphoses* (3.138-252).⁴²⁷ Orpheus thus follows the precedent of the Euripidean and the Ovidian Pentheus, both of whom, as we have seen, evoke Actaeon's demise: the former by being warned by Cadmus to avoid the fate of his cousin (Ba. 337-341) and by being dismembered at the same place as Actaeon (Ba. 1290-1291) and the latter by reminding Autonoe of her son's death (Met. 3.719-721) and by performing an armless supplication like his cousin (Met. 3.723-725). Finally, Miller has remarked that a shift can be detected from the world of theater to the realm of amphitheater, in that Orpheus initially performs his music before the enchanted trees, beasts, and birds, which are compared to a theatrical audience (11.20-22), but is afterwards depicted as a stag hunted by dogs in the amphitheater (11.25-27).⁴²⁸ This metatheatrical imagery echoes the progression in the Pentheus narrative, where the Theban king at first gazes at the secret Bacchic rites as a spectator in a theatrical performance (3.709-710), but is then pursued by the maenads resembling a boar in the amphitheater (3.714-715).

After the Bacchantes have surrounded Orpheus, they launch their third attack showering him with whatever is on their disposal: thyrsi, stones, tree branches, and clods of earth.⁴²⁹ This description recalls the first unsuccessful assault of the Theban maenads against Pentheus seated on the fir tree, against whom they hurl stones, fir branches, and thyrsi.⁴³⁰ These improvised

⁴²⁷ Miller 1990, 145.

⁴²⁸ Miller 1990, 146-147: "The superstar of the 'theater' has been ironically metamorphosed into a victim in the amphitheater."

⁴²⁹ Met. 11.27-30 *vatemque petunt et fronde virentes / coniciunt thyrsos non haec in munera factos. / hae glaebas, illae direptos arbore ramos, / pars torquent silices.*

⁴³⁰ Ba. 1096-1099 *πρῶτον μὲν αὐτοῦ χειμάδας κραταιβόλους / ἔρριπτον, ἀντίπυργον ἐπιβᾶσαι πέτραν, / ὄζοισί τ' ἐλατίνοισιν ἠκοντίζετο, / ἄλλαι δὲ θύρσους ἴεσαν δι' αἰθέρος.*

weapons are not, however, enough for the maenads in their frenzy and thus they interrupt their attack once more, in order to search for additional arms (11.30 *neu desint tela furori*). Some farmers happen to be plowing a field nearby and upon spotting the “horde” of Bacchants advancing against them they flee in terror abandoning their farming implements, which the savage women then use to tear their oxen to pieces (11.31-38). This scene is highly evocative of the episode in the first messenger speech of the *Bacchae*, where after the herdsmen’s failed attempt to abduct Agave the Theban maenads turn them to flight and dismember their cattle (734-747).⁴³¹ Ovid signals the allusion to the Euripidean intertext by means of explicit verbal echoes.⁴³² Moreover, just as the rending of the cattle by the Theban Bacchants functions as a prelude for their invasion in the nearby villages of Hysiae and Erythrae and foreshadows Pentheus’ *sparagmos* in the second messenger speech, in an analogous manner the Thracian maenads’ tearing apart of the oxen prefigures their imminent dismemberment of Orpheus.⁴³³

An essential difference between the two scenes, however, is that whereas the Euripidean maenads pull the cattle limb from limb with their bare hands (736 *χειρὸς ἀσιδήρου μέτα*), the Ovidian Bacchants seize the farmers’ tools, namely hoes, rakes, and mattocks (11.36 *sarculaeque rastrique graves longique ligones*), and employ them as weapons to dismember first the oxen and then Orpheus himself (11.37-38). This unorthodox use of implements is somewhat reminiscent of the Theban women’s utilization of tree branches as crowbars to uproot the tree on

⁴³¹ Romeo (2012, 32-33) also observes that Ovid has appropriated from Euripides the motif of the rustics’ flight followed by the dismemberment of their cattle by the maenads.

⁴³² 734 *φεύγοντες* ~ 11.35 *fugiunt*, 743 *ταῦροι ... κὰς κέρασ θυμούμενοι*, 11.37-38 *cornuque minaces / ... boves*, 739 *διεφόρουσ παράγμασιν* ~ 11.38 *divulsere*.

⁴³³ Ba. 751-754 *Ἵσιὰς τ' Ἐρυθράς θ'*, [...] / [...] *ὥστε πολέμοιοι / ἐπεσπεσοῦσαι πάντ' ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω / διέφερον*; Met. 11.38 *divulsere boves, ad vatis fata recurrunt*.

which Pentheus is sitting.⁴³⁴ Ovid, however, is more likely drawing on an alternative source both for the motif of the conversion of agricultural tools into weapons as well as for the transformation of the Euripidean herdsmen into farmers, namely the Georgics. Neumeister claims that Ovid's designation of the ploughmen's implements as "weapons" constitutes an allusion to the Virgilian didactic poem.⁴³⁵ He notes that in the Georgics the farmers' tools are often described as *arma*,⁴³⁶ arguing that this figurative diction reflects a central theme of the first two books, namely the contrast between farmer and soldier. Both are representatives of the Iron Age, but while the former fights a noble "war" to tame unruly nature, the latter engages in a base struggle against his fellow humans. Neumeister concludes that within this ideological context the iron tools of the farmer are the equivalent of the soldier's weapons.

What has not been observed, however, is that Ovid is reworking in this scene a specific passage of the Georgics, namely the conclusion of the first book on the Roman civil wars (1.505-514). The poet laments that during this dark period violence and crime have overwhelmed the whole world and there is no longer any regard for agriculture (1.506-507 *non ullus aratro / dignus honos*). The visible symptoms of this decay of farming is that the fields lay waste robbed of their farmers (1.507 *squalent abductis arua colonis*), who have presumably been recruited as soldiers, and the pruning hooks have been forged into swords (1.508 *et curuae rigidum falces conflantur in ensem*), that is the agricultural tools have been refashioned as weapons. The Ovidian narrative evokes, but at the same time radically alters its Virgilian intertext. In the *Metamorphoses* the farmers flee in terror to escape the violence of the Thracian maenads and

⁴³⁴ Ba. 1103-1104 τέλος δὲ δρυῖνοις συντριαινοῦσαι κλάδοις / ρίζας ἀνεσπάρασσον ἀσιδήροις μοχλοῖς.

⁴³⁵ Met. 11.34-35 *operisque relinquunt / arma sui*) (See Neumeister 1986, 179-180, Romeo 2012, 33).

⁴³⁶ G. 1.160 *dicendum et quae sint duris agrestibus arma*. Thomas (1988, vv. 1.160-175) remarks that the catalogue of farming implements in G. 1.160-175 constitutes "the equivalent of the Homeric 'arming scene'".

thus their fields are left empty and desolate.⁴³⁷ Furthermore, the peasants abandon in their haste their agricultural implements, which are converted by the women into deadly weapons with which they tear apart their cattle.⁴³⁸ Ovid has thus transformed the Virgilian invasion of civil war in the serene world of agriculture into the incursion of the Bacchantes in the peaceful domain of the farmers. Moreover, if this scene is read from a metapoetic viewpoint, then one might argue that the maenads' raid against the ploughmen symbolizes the intrusion of Euripides' *Bacchae* into Virgil's *Georgics* within the framework of the *Metamorphoses*. In other words, we are spectators of a generic interplay between tragedy and didactic poetry depicted on an epic canvas.

Ovid sets the conversion of the farming tools into weapons within a broader transition from agricultural to war imagery. The picture of oxen plowing the land beneath the yoke and of brawny husbandmen digging the hard soil with their farming tools and sweating to produce their harvest is reminiscent of the farmer's labor during the Iron age in the *Georgics* and in fact conflates multiple Virgilian passages.⁴³⁹ The sudden attack of the Bacchantes against the farmers, however, occasions a shift towards martial diction. The advancing band of maenads is characterized as *agmen*, a term which typically designates an army on the march (11.34 agmine qui viso fugiunt) and they transform the farmers' tools into real weapons (11.34-35 operis [...] arma sui, 30 neu desint tela furori). What is more, the Bacchantes' earlier assault against Orpheus

⁴³⁷ Met. 11.32-33 dura lacertosi fodiebant arva coloni, / agmine qui viso fugiunt, 35 vacuos...per agros,

⁴³⁸ Met. 11.34-38 operisque relinquunt arma / sui, [...] iacent dispersa [...] / sarculaque rastrique graves longique ligones / quae postquam rapere ferae cornuque minaces / divulsero boves. Neumeister (1986, 180) notes that the image of the farmers' tools scattered in the fields (11.35 arma [...] vacuosque iacent dispersa per agros) adapts the picture in the Virgilian Orpheus story, where it is the bard's limbs which are dispersed on the ground (4.522 discerptum latos iuuenem sparsere per agros).

⁴³⁹ Met. 11.31-33 forte boves presso subigebant vomere terram, / nec procul hinc multo fructum sudore parantes / dura lacertosi fodiebant arva coloni, 36 sarculaque rastrique graves longique ligones; G. 1.125 ante Iouem nulli subigebant arua coloni, 2.356-357 aut presso exercere solum sub uomere et ipsa / flectere luctantis inter uineta iuuenos, 1.164 tribulaque traheaque et iniquo pondere rastris (See Neumeister 1986, 179-180; Romeo 2012, 33).

was described as a rash and unbridled battle, where infernal madness reigned supreme.⁴⁴⁰ This language echoes the imagery of the aforementioned Georgics civil war passage, in which the impious god of war rages in a Roman world plagued with foreign wars and internal strife.⁴⁴¹ Finally, the Ovidian war imagery is also reminiscent of the diction in the first messenger speech of the Bacchae, where the Theban maenads, who plunder the villages of Hysiae and Erythrae are compared to invading enemy troops and the enraged peasants take up arms against them.⁴⁴²

Ovid may also have in mind in this scene another Virgilian episode, namely the outbreak of the war between the Latins and the Trojans in Aeneid 7. Just as the peaceful pastoral world of the Virgilian rustic folk is violently disrupted by war and infernal fury, in an analogous manner the tranquil agricultural world of the Ovidian farmers is invaded by Bacchic frenzy.⁴⁴³ In Virgil the cause igniting the war between Trojans and Latins is the wounding of Silvia's pet stag by Ascanius brought about by Allecto's intervention.⁴⁴⁴ The Fury first inspires Ascanius' hounds with madness and provides them with the scent of the stag, so that they track it down and hunt it and then guides Iulus' faltering hand, so that his arrow strikes its prey (7.479-499). Ovid rewrites the Aeneid scene in figurative terms: the Bacchants encircling Orpheus are likened to dogs

⁴⁴⁰ Met. 11.13-14 sed enim temeraria crescunt / bella modusque abiit insanaque regnat Erinys.

⁴⁴¹ G. 1.505 tot bella per orbem, 509-511 hinc mouet Euphrates, illinc Germania bellum; / uicinae ruptis inter se legibus urbes / arma ferunt; saeuit toto Mars impius orbe. Compare also the diction in the Virgilian scene, in which Aeneas rushes into battle against the Greeks (Aen. 2.337-338): in flammis et in arma feror, quo tristis Erinys, / quo fremitus uocat et sublatus ad aethera clamor.

⁴⁴² Ba. 752-754 [...] ὄστε πολέμιοι / ἐπεσπεσοῦσαι πάντ' ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω / διέφερον·, 758-759 [...] οἱ δ' ὀργῆς ὑπο / ἐς ὄπλ' ἐχώρουν φερόμενοι βακχῶν ὕπο.

⁴⁴³ Romeo (2012, 30-31) argues that the bacchic madness of the Thracian maenads (11.3-4 ecce nurus Ciconum tectae lymphata ferinis / pectora uelleribus, 30 neu desint tela furori) described as infernal furor may also evoke the infernal fury inspired into Amata by Allecto in Aeneid 7 (377 immensam sine more furit lymphata per urbem), which is camouflaged as maenadic frenzy (7.385 simulato numine Bacchi, 405 reginam Allecto stimulis agit undique Bacchi).

⁴⁴⁴ Aen. 7.481-482 prima laborum / causa fuit belloque animos accendit agrestis.

hunting a stag thus recalling Ascanius' hounds pursuing Silvia's stag.⁴⁴⁵ Furthermore, Ovid has replaced Allecto, who fills the dogs with madness, with the abstract notion of mad Fury, which overwhelms the maenads with frenzy.⁴⁴⁶

At this point, however, the affinities between the two scenes end and the divergences begin. The Latin peasants, enraged by the stag's injury, rally to fight against the Trojans initially turning their rustic tools (brands, sticks, etc.) into weapons and later substituting real arms for them.⁴⁴⁷ Ovid essentially "corrects" here his Virgilian model: whereas in the Aeneid it is the wrathful countrymen who convert their rustic implements into arms and dart furiously to battle, in the Metamorphoses the frightened farmers take to flight at the sight of the Bacchants abandoning their farming tools, which are used by the women as weapons.⁴⁴⁸ The inversion of Virgil's episode is underscored by further verbal reminiscences. The Ovidian husbandmen, who happen to be plowing nearby, flee when they perceive the "army" of Bacchants approaching them and abandon their implements.⁴⁴⁹ This description reverses the Virgilian narrative, where the royal herdsman Tyrrhus, who happens to be hewing an oak tree in the vicinity, upon hearing Silvia's call for aid (7.503-504) snatches up his axe raging for the fray and summons his rustic

⁴⁴⁵Met. 11.25-27 *structoque utrimque theatro / ceu matutina cervus periturus harena / praeda canum est*; Aen. 7.481 *ut ceruum ardentem agerent*, 493-494 *hunc procul errantem [...] / commouere canes*. Romeo (2012, 32) suspects that the motif of the dogs may function as a connective link between the two scenes, but does not elaborate on the issue.

⁴⁴⁶ Aen. 7.479-480 *hic subitam canibus rabiem Cocytia uirgo / obicit*, 493-494 *rabidae uenantis Iuli / [...] canes*; Met. 11.14 *insanaque regnat Erinys*, 3-4 *lymphata [...] / [...] pectora*, 11.30 *furori*.

⁴⁴⁷ (7.506-508 *improuisi adsunt, hic torre armatus obusto, / stipitis hic grauidi nodis; quod cuique repertum / rimanti telum ira facit*, (7.523-525 *non iam certamine agrestic / stipitibus duris agitur sudibus praeustis, / sed ferro ancipiti decernunt*

⁴⁴⁸ Romeo (2012, 32) also notes the contrast between the terrified farmers of Ovid and the belligerent Virgilian rustics and contends (2012, 34) that the Ovidian picture of the farmers' tools dispersed in the fields (11.35 *arma ... vacuosque iacent dispersa per agros*) may echo Allecto's boast to Juno that she will scatter weapons all over Italy (Aen. 7.551 *spargam arma per agros*).

⁴⁴⁹ Met. 11.31 *forte*, 33 *dura [...] fodiebant arva*, 34 *agmine qui viso fugiunt operisque relinquunt / arma sui*.

troops to battle.⁴⁵⁰ Therefore, Ovid has transformed the battle-thirsty countrymen of Virgil who engage in conflict with the Trojans into timorous farmers routed by the Thracian maenads.

After chasing away the farmers and dismembering their cattle the Bacchants proceed to their fourth and fatal attack against Orpheus. As I will argue below, Ovid transposes in the final part of the Orpheus narrative many elements from his earlier Pentheus episode through intratextual conflation. The bard stretches out his hands in supplication (11.39 tendentemque manus) and vainly attempts to stir their pity with his words (11.40 nec quicquam voce moventem).⁴⁵¹ Orpheus' portrayal evokes the characterization of the Ovidian Pentheus shortly before his death, when he makes a futile supplication to his mother even though his arms have been torn off and tries to appeal to his aunt's mercy by reminding her of her own son's death.⁴⁵² In addition, the narrator emphasizes in both scenes the contrast between the hero's past identity and his present plight. The Theban king is in his final moments transformed from an enraged, belligerent, and inexorable enemy of Bacchus to a frightened victim of the maenads, who speaks mildly, acknowledges his guilt, and condemns himself.⁴⁵³ The Thracian bard, on the other hand,

⁴⁵⁰ Aen. 7.509-510 quercum cuneis ut forte coactis / scindebat, 508 uocat agmina Tyrrhus, 510 rapta spirans immane secure.

⁴⁵¹ Miller (1990, 146) observes that Orpheus' supplication to the maenads reverses the earlier "supplication" of the stones towards him, which fall before his feet enchanted by his music (11.12 ac veluti supplex pro tam furialibus ausis), and argues that this narrative development is reflected in the sequence of images within the bird and stag similes. The bard is initially compared to an owl, namely a nocturnal predator, but immediately afterwards to a stag, the iconic animal of fear and timidity.

⁴⁵² Met. 3.723-724 non habet infelix quae matri bracchia tendat, / trunca sed ostendens dereptis vulnera membris, 720 'Autonoes moveant animos Actaeonis umbrae!',

⁴⁵³ Met. 3.717-718 iam trepidum, iam verba minus violenta loquentem, / iam se damnantem, iam se peccasse fatentem.

who could formerly mesmerize the entire world of nature with his song, is now for the first time unable to move his “audience” (i.e. the Bacchantes) with his words.⁴⁵⁴

Ovid limits the description of Orpheus’ sparagmos to a single verb (11.41 *perimunt*) bearing no associations of dismemberment. This is an even shorter account than that of the Virgilian version, where three verbal forms denoting dismemberment are employed.⁴⁵⁵ The reason behind this minimalist description may be the fact that Ovid has already offered a detailed and gruesome narration of Pentheus’ sparagmos earlier in the *Metamorphoses* (3.721-731) and thus refrains now from reiterating such a scene in the interest of *variatio*. Nevertheless, the end result in both stories is the same: the hero’s limbs lay scattered everywhere.⁴⁵⁶ Another affinity between the two scenes is the condemning tone of the narrator towards the women’s deed. The hands of the Theban maenads, which tear Pentheus’ body to pieces, are characterized as “impious” (3.371 *membra viri manibus direpta nefandis*), while the Thracian Bacchantes are branded as “sacrilegious” at the moment of killing Orpheus (11.41 *sacrilegae perimunt*).

The bard’s death is lamented by the natural world in its entirety (trees, rivers, stones, birds, beasts) as well as by the sylvan and water nymphs (11.41-49). This universal dirge for Orpheus stands in stark contrast with the total absence of mourning for the demise of the Ovidian Pentheus.⁴⁵⁷ The different response to each hero’s death may pertain to their relationship with Bacchus: the Theban king is the impious archenemy of Bacchus destroyed in accordance with his plans, whereas the bard is the god’s cherished priest killed contrary to his wishes. As we saw

⁴⁵⁴ Met. 11.41-43 *perque os [...] / auditum saxis intellectumque ferarum / sensibus, 39-40 et in illo tempore primum / irrita dicentem nec quicquam voce moventem.*

⁴⁵⁵ G. 4.522-523 *discerptum* latos iuuenem *sparsere* per agros. / tum quoque marmorea caput a ceruice *reuulsum*.

⁴⁵⁶ Met. 3.522 *mille* lacer spargere *locis*, 11.50-51 *membra iacent diversa locis*.

⁴⁵⁷ Contrast the laments of Cadmus and Agave for the Theban king in the exodos of the *Bacchae* (1165-1392).

earlier in this chapter, the dismemberment of Pentheus is described by means of a gruesome simile, where the speed in which the Bacchantes rent the hero's limbs is compared to the swiftness with which the autumn leaves are snatched away from a tree by the wind.⁴⁵⁸ This disturbing image is masterfully reworked in the scene of Orpheus' demise, in which the bard's soul flies through his melodious mouth into the wind and the trees' lament for him is expressed in terms of pathetic fallacy: they shed their leaves as if cutting their hair in mourning.⁴⁵⁹ Thus, the grotesque simile of Pentheus' sparagmos is transformed into the pathetic image of Orpheus' expiration followed by nature's dirge for his demise.

Bacchus' reaction to Orpheus' death is immediate: grieving for the loss of his priest he punishes the Thracian women for their impious crime by metamorphosing them into oak trees (11.67-84). His sorrow, however, remains inconsolable and thus he departs from Thrace and returns to his native Phrygia (11.85-87). The god's attitude here contrasts sharply with the aftermath of the Pentheus story, where not only the maenads suffer no penalty for slaying the Theban king, but also his death serves as a warning for the women of Thebes causing them to worship Bacchus (3.732-733). Hence, whereas Pentheus' demise leads to the establishment of Bacchic rites in Thebes, Orpheus' death drives the god away from Thrace.

The Ovidian scene of Bacchus' vengeance on the maenads is a reworking of the Phanoctean episode, where the Thracian women suffer retribution at the hands of their husbands. The Thracians feel terrible grief upon learning about Orpheus' demise and thus they punish their

⁴⁵⁸ Met. 3.729-731 non citius frondes autumnni frigore tactas / iamque male haerentes alta rapit arbore ventus, / quam sunt membra viri manibus direpta nefandis.

⁴⁵⁹ Met. 11.43 in ventos anima exhalata recessit, 45-47 te carmina saepe secutae / fleverunt silvae, positis te frondibus arbor / tonsa comas luxit [...].

wives by branding them with tattoos, so that they never forget their crime.⁴⁶⁰ Similarly Bacchus experiences sorrow for the death of his priest and punitively transforms the Thracian matrons into oaks.⁴⁶¹ Both Phanocles and Ovid lay emphasis on the impious and savage nature of the women's deed.⁴⁶² Moreover, the penalty inflicted on them is in both cases perpetual: the women of Thrace continue to be ritually tattooed in atonement for Orpheus' murder down to Phanocles' times, while the Ovidian Bacchantes become oak trees for eternity.⁴⁶³

The punishment inflicted on the maenads by Bacchus is also reminiscent of the god's revenge on Pentheus and the Tyrrhenian sailors earlier in the *Metamorphoses*. The Theban king suffers Bacchus' retribution for his blasphemous opposition to his cult as well as for the incarceration and attempted execution of Acoetes, the god's attendant (who is actually Bacchus in disguise).⁴⁶⁴ Likewise the maenads experience the god's vengeance for their sacrilegious slaughter of Orpheus, the god's priest (11.41 *sacrilegae* perimunt). Furthermore, the form of punishment inflicted upon the Bacchantes recalls the fate of the impious Tyrrhenian sailors. Just as the transformation of the sailors into dolphins is preceded by the immobilization of their ship, similarly the Bacchantes' metamorphosis into oak trees follows after the entrapment of their feet. In particular, although the ship is supernaturally frozen in mid-sea and the oars are entwined with ivy, the Tyrrhenian sailors persist in rowing with redoubled effort and unfurl their sails in a futile

⁴⁶⁰ Er. 1.23-25 Θρηῆκες δ' ὡς ἐδάησαν ἀρήϊοι ἔργα / γυναικῶν ἄγρια, καὶ πάντα δεινὸν ἐσηῆθεν ἄχος, / ἄς ἄλόγους ἔστιζον.

⁴⁶¹ Met. 11.67-70 Lyaeus / amissoque dolens sacrorum vate suorum / protinus in silvis matres Edonidas omnes, / ...torta radice ligavit.

⁴⁶² Er. 1.7 κακομήχανοι, 23 ἔργα [...] ἄγρια, 26 στρυγεροῦ... φόνου; Met. 11.41 *sacrilegae*, 67 *scelus*, 70 *nefas*) (See Bömer 1980, v. 11.3).

⁴⁶³ Er. 1.27-28 ποινὰς δ' Ὀρφεῖ κταμένῳ πίνουσι γυναῖκες / εἰσέτι νῦν κείνης εἶνεκεν ἀμπλακίης; Met. 11.67 non impune tamen scelus hoc sinit esse Lyaeus.

⁴⁶⁴ Met. 4.22-23 Penthea tu, venerande, bipenniferumque Lycurgum / sacrilegos mactas.

attempt to escape the god's revenge.⁴⁶⁵ In an analogous manner the Thracian women's feet become fixed into the ground and entangled with roots, while they vainly try to flee Bacchus' wrath.⁴⁶⁶

Finally, the Bacchants' entrapment may also evoke and invert the miracle scene in the first messenger speech of the *Bacchae*. The Euripidean maenads magically produce streams of milk by digging up the soil with their fingertips.⁴⁶⁷ In the Ovidian episode, on the other hand, Bacchus thrusts the maenads' toes into the ground thereby ensnaring them before he changing them into oaks.⁴⁶⁸ Thus Ovid ingeniously transforms the Euripidean picture of the Theban Bacchants performing miracles with the divine aid of Dionysus into a scene, in which the Thracian maenads suffer the god's punishment.

2.4 Ovidian Bacchants: Byblis, Procne, and Medea

Apart from the distinctly Euripidean Dionysiac themes the *Metamorphoses* also contains Bacchic imagery of another provenance, which can be defined as Virgilian "maenadism" and which itself converses intertextually with the *Bacchae*.⁴⁶⁹ Ovid's engagement with Virgil's peculiar brand of Bacchism is manifest in the episodes of Byblis (9.454-665) and Procne (6.412-674). Byblis'

⁴⁶⁵ Met. 3.660-664 ...stetit aequare puppis / haud aliter, quam si siccam navale teneret. / illi admirantes remorum in verbere perstant / velaque deducunt geminaque ope currere temptant; / impediunt hederæ remos.

⁴⁶⁶ Met. 11.76-78 sic, ut quæque solo defixa cohaeserat harum, / exsternata fugam frustra temptabat, at illam / lenta tenet radix exsultantemque coercet.

⁴⁶⁷ Ba. 708-710 ὄσαις δὲ λευκοῦ πάματος πόθος παρήν, / ἄκροισι δακτύλοισι διαμῶσαι χθόνα / γάλακτος ἔσμοῦς εἶχον.

⁴⁶⁸ Met. 11.71-72 quippe pedum digitos, in quantum est quæque secuta, / traxit et in solidam detrusit acumina terram.

⁴⁶⁹ Recent studies on the Virgilian "Bacchants" (Dido, Amata, Helen, and the Sibyl) include Krummen 2004 and Panoussi 2009, 115-138.

comparison to a maddened Bacchant, while she vainly searches for her brother Caunus with whom she has fallen desperately in love (9.635-644), echoes the portrayal of Dido as a frenzied maenad in the Aeneid (4.300-303) upon hearing the rumors that her beloved Aeneas is planning to sail away from Carthage.⁴⁷⁰ In both cases the overwhelming erotic madness of the heroine is thus described in terms of Dionysiac furor. The affinity between the two stories is underscored by the fact that Caunus' actions in response to Byblis' passion are reminiscent of Aeneas' divinely ordained mission: just as the Trojan chieftain departs from Carthage in order to found a new city in a foreign land, namely Lavinium, likewise after Caunus is forced to flee from Miletus owing to his sister's indefatigable wooing he travels to another region and lays the foundations of a city named after himself (9.633-635). Therefore Ovid follows his epic predecessor in presenting a tragic love story as the origin of a ktisis narrative.

The question of Ovid's sources is considerably more complicated in the case of Procne's metamorphosis into a "Bacchant". After reading Philomela's tapestry informing her about Tereus' crimes the Athenian princess dons the attire of a maenad and pretends to participate in the Thracian biennial rites of Bacchus in order to conceal her true aim, which is to rescue her sister from incarceration (6.587-600). The origin of the Bacchic celebration and Procne's maenadic disguise is a highly controversial issue among critics.⁴⁷¹ The prevalent view is that despite the absence of proof in the fragments and testimonia of Sophocles' Tereus, which constitutes Ovid's primary model in this episode, the Roman poet probably derived the motif of the Dionysiac festival from the Sophoclean drama. The evidence adduced in favor of this hypothesis is that Accius' Tereus, which functions as a mediating intertext between Sophocles

⁴⁷⁰ Kenney 2011, vv. 9.641-644.

⁴⁷¹ For an outline of the scholarly debate on this question see Ciappi 1998, 434-438.

and Ovid, contains a Dionysiac component (fr. 647 W) likely drawn from the Sophoclean original.⁴⁷²

The intertext, however, which is explicitly evoked by the Ovidian narrative, is the pseudo-bacchic festival of Amata in the Aeneid (7.385-405). The Latin queen feigns maenadic frenzy and hides her daughter Lavinia in the woods proclaiming her a Bacchant, so as to thwart her imminent marriage with Aeneas.⁴⁷³ In an analogous manner the Athenian princess pretends to be possessed by Bacchic madness aiming to save her sister from imprisonment and conceal her in the palace by dressing her up as a maenad.⁴⁷⁴ Both Amata and Procne thus mask their true purpose of rescuing a close family member by simulating Dionysiac fury.⁴⁷⁵ A distinguishing difference, however, between the two scenes is that whereas the Latin queen contrives a false Bacchic ὀρειβασία (7.389-403), the Athenian princess exploits the genuine biennial rites of Dionysus in Thrace (6.587-588).⁴⁷⁶ Moreover, in either scene the maenadic frenzy is merely a façade for another kind of furor originating from the nether world. It is the Fury Allecto who maddens Amata and goads her to organize the pseudo-bacchic rites, while Procne's simulated Bacchic fury conceals her infernal wrath and together with Philomela they figuratively play the role of the Furies:⁴⁷⁷ they take revenge on Tereus for a family-related crime, which is a

⁴⁷² Ciappi 1998, 439; Gildenhard/Zissos 2007, 15, n. 26.

⁴⁷³ Aen. 7.385 simulato numine Bacchi, 387 natam frondosis montibus abdit.

⁴⁷⁴ Met. 6.596 Bacche, tuas simulat (i.e. furias), 598-560 raptaeque insignia Bacchi / induit et uultus hederarum frondibus abdit / [...] intra sua moenia ducit (See Ciappi 1998, 440-441; Rosati 2009, vv. 6.587-600).

⁴⁷⁵ Procne may also recall the Virgilian Helen, who engages in pseudo-maenadism by conducting a counterfeit celebration of Bacchus, in order to send to the Greek fleet the signal to invade Troy (Aen. 6.517-519).

⁴⁷⁶ Horsfall 2000, vv. 7.373-405.

⁴⁷⁷ Aen. 7.405 reginam Allecto stimulis agit undique Bacchi; Met. 6.595 terribilis Procne furiisque agitata doloris.

characteristic prerogative of the underworld sisters and they are portrayed throughout the narrative in terms evocative of the chthonic goddesses.⁴⁷⁸

A more complex theory is expounded by Dan Curley, who contends that Ovid has appropriated the Thracian celebration of Bacchus from Sophocles' tragedy, where it functions as the ritual background for the play's brutal violence, but he suggests an alternative source for Procne's Bacchic disguise, namely Euripides' *Bacchae*. He notes that the Ovidian Pentheus unlike his Euripidean counterpart does not assume the guise of a maenad and argues that the Roman poet has instead transferred to Procne the role of the pseudo-Bacchant, an allusive technique which has been defined in this study as "fragmentation".⁴⁷⁹ In fact Curley's hypothesis can be further elaborated, if Procne is viewed as also assuming the part played by Dionysus in the Euripidean play. The Athenian princess having herself disguised as a Bacchant camouflages Philomela as a maenad, so that she can be led secretly into the palace and escape the notice of Tereus.⁴⁸⁰ This scene may be intended to recall Euripides' drama, in which Dionysus in the human guise of the Lydian stranger dresses up Pentheus as a Bacchant under the false pretext that it will allow him to remain undetected by the Theban maenads (822-833) and leads him to Mt. Cithaeron. Hence, Ovid seems to echo and invert his tragic model by essentially altering the function of the maenadic disguise: unlike the effeminate Bacchic apparel of Pentheus, which ostensibly aims to conceal him from the Bacchants, but in reality serves the purpose of humiliating him in the eyes of his citizens (854-855) before he is killed by the maenads,

⁴⁷⁸ Met. 6.590 furialiaque accipit arma, 657-658 sicut erat sparsis furiali caede capillis, / prosiluit (See Goldenhard/Zissos 2007, 5-6).

⁴⁷⁹ Curley 2003, 187-188.

⁴⁸⁰ The way that Procne disguises Philomela, namely by covering her face with ivy-leaves (6.599 uultus hederarum frondibus abdit), is reminiscent of how the Nysian nymphs concealed the cradle of Bacchus from his stepmother Juno by camouflaging it with ivy (Fasti 3.767-770 hedera est gratissima Baccho; / hoc quoque cur ita sit, discere nulla mora est. / Nysiadas nymphas puerum quaerente noverca / hanc frondem cunis opposuisse ferunt).

Philomela's Bacchic camouflage is the first step of the plot of exacting vengeance from Tereus, since it enables the two sisters to reunite and stealthily enter the palace.

The violent climax of Ovid's Tereus episode also contains some intriguing allusions to the Bacchae. To begin with, the dismemberment of Itys by his mother and aunt evokes Pentheus' sparagmos by Agave and her sisters.⁴⁸¹ Both the Theban king and the boy realize that their end is imminent⁴⁸² and vainly entreat their mother for mercy by means of a double invocation of her maternal identity.⁴⁸³ Itys may also echo the Ovidian Pentheus, who having been deprived of his arms by his aunts is reduced to childlike helplessness and can only pronounce two words, beseeching his mother to look at his mutilated body.⁴⁸⁴ In addition, in all three scenes it is the mother who initiates the attack.⁴⁸⁵

The Ovidian episode's recognition scene, in which Tereus discovers that he has consumed his own son is highly reminiscent of Agave's anagnorisis in the Euripidean drama, when she realizes that she has slain Pentheus. After the Thracian king has finished his gruesome feast, he orders that Itys be summoned to his presence and when Procne sardonically replies that his son is inside him the bewildered Tereus repeatedly inquires where he is.⁴⁸⁶ This description steeped in tragic irony reworks the Euripidean exodos, where the frenzied Agave, who has

⁴⁸¹ Goldenhard/Zissos 2007, 5.

⁴⁸² Ba.1113 κακοῦ γὰρ ἐγγυῶς ὦν ἐμάνθανεν; Met. 6.639 iam sua fata videntem.

⁴⁸³ Ba. 1118-21 ἐγὼ τοι, μητέρα, εἰμί, παῖς σέθεν / Πενθεύς, ὃν ἔτεκες ἐν δόμοις Ἐχίονος; / οἴκτιρε δ' ὃ μητέρα με μηδὲ ταῖς ἐμαῖς / ἁμαρτίαισι παῖδα σὸν κατακτάνης; Met. 6.640 et "mater! mater!" clamantem et colla petentem (See Curley 1997, 320; Ciappi 1998, 461).

⁴⁸⁴ Met. 3.724-725 trunca sed ostendens dcreptis uulnera membris / 'aspice, mater!' ait.

⁴⁸⁵ Ba. 1114 πρώτη δὲ μήτηρ ἤρξεν ἱερέα φόνου; Met. 3.712-713 prima suum misso uiolauit Penthea thyrso / mater, 6.641 ense ferit Procne, lateri qua pectus adhaeret (See Ciappi 1998, 461-462).

⁴⁸⁶ Met. 6.652 tantaque nox animi est, 'Ityn huc accersite!' dixit, 655-656 circumspicit ille / atque ubi sit quaerit; quaerenti iterumque uocanti.

returned bearing Pentheus' head, asks where her son is and later commands that Pentheus be sent for to marvel at her hunting exploit.⁴⁸⁷ What is more, in both scenes the son's head functions as a trophy⁴⁸⁸ and plays an instrumental role in the tragic anagnorisis. The maddened Agave fixes Pentheus' head on her thyrsus thinking it to be a lion's head and later it is precisely by gazing at her son's head that she becomes conscious of her atrocious deed (1280-1289).⁴⁸⁹ Similarly Tereus realizes that he has devoured his son's flesh, when Philomela bursts triumphantly into the room and hurls Itys' head against him.⁴⁹⁰ Finally, both Agave and Tereus respond to the horrible revelation by bitterly lamenting for the crime they have unwittingly committed.⁴⁹¹

Finally, Medea is also portrayed by Ovid as a figurative Bacchant. While performing a magic ritual by means of which she aims to rejuvenate Aeson, the Colchian sorceress displays typical maenadic features: she utters ritual cries and lets her streaming hair upon her shoulders after the fashion of a Bacchant.⁴⁹² Medea's representation as a maenad has no precedent in the extant literary tradition and is very likely an Ovidian invention. This characterization of Medea in fact echoes the depiction of the frenzied Agave earlier in the *Metamorphoses*, who tosses back

⁴⁸⁷ Ba. 1212 Πενθεύς τ' ἐμὸς παῖς ποῦ ἔστιν, 1257-1258 τίς αὐτὸν δεῦρ' ἂν ὄψιν εἰς ἐμὴν / καλέσειεν, ὡς ἴδι με τὴν εὐδαίμονα (See Ciappi 1998, 462).

⁴⁸⁸ Ciappi 1998, 462.

⁴⁸⁹ Ba. 1139-42 κρᾶτα δ' ἄθλιον, / ὄπερ λαβοῦσα τυγχάνει μήτηρ χεροῖν, / πήξασ' ἐπ' ἄκρον θύρσον ὡς ὀρεστέρου / φέρει λέοντος διὰ Κιθαιρώνοσ μῆσου.

⁴⁹⁰ Met. 6.658-9 prosiluit Ityosque caput Philomela cruentum / misit in ora patris.

⁴⁹¹ Ba. 1282 Ἀγ. ὀρῶ μέγιστον ἄλγος ἢ τάλαιν' ἐγώ; Met. 6.665 flet modo seque uocat bustum miserabile nati.

⁴⁹² Met. 7.190-191 ternisque ululatus ora / soluit, 257-258 passis Medea capillis / bacchantum ritu flagrantem circuit aras). Kenney (2011, vv. 7.190) remarks that the motif of Medea uttering ritual shouts is found in Sophocles' *Rhizotomoi* (Radt fr. 534 βοῶσ' ἀλαλαζομένη), whose theme is the murder of Pelias, and argues that Ovid may have transferred it to the story of Aeson.

her hair and howls before tearing off Pentheus' head.⁴⁹³ What is more, Medea's command to Jason and her servants to retire, so as not to defile with their presence her secret incantations recalls Pentheus' blasphemous viewing of the forbidden Bacchic rites.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹³ Met. 3.725-726 [...] uisis ululauit Agaue / collaque iactauit mouitque per aera crinem (See Kenney 2011, v. 7.258).

⁴⁹⁴ Met. 7.255-257 hinc procul Aesoniden, procul hinc iubet ire / ministros et monet arcanis oculis remouere profanos. / diffugiunt iussi, 3.710 hic oculis illum cernentem sacra profanis (See Bömer 1976, v. 7.256).

Chapter 3

Medea through the kaleidoscope: Reflections and refractions of a tragic heroine

The third chapter focuses on the intricate and multi-faceted reception of Euripides' Medea in the Ovidian epic.⁴⁹⁵ As we saw in chapter 1, Ovid converses intertextually with the Euripidean play throughout his poetic career.⁴⁹⁶ The Roman poet's most significant treatments of the Medea myth prior to the *Metamorphoses* are his lost tragedy *Medea* and *Heroides* 12, Medea's letter to Jason. The Ovidian play, of which sadly only two fragments survive, dramatized the events unfolding in Corinth and was probably modeled closely on Euripides' drama.⁴⁹⁷ The twelfth elegiac epistle can be chronologically placed after the marriage of Jason and the Corinthian princess and before the announcement of Creon's decree for Medea's exile.⁴⁹⁸ The first part of the letter, which draws on Apollonius' *Argonautica* 3, is essentially a flashback to the events in Colchis, namely Jason's securing of Medea's magical aid, his completion of the tasks set by Aeetes, and the theft of the Golden Fleece. The second part evokes perhaps Euripides' *Medea* as well as Ovid's own tragedy and constitutes an ominous and ironic prefiguring of the action about to take place in Corinth: the murder of the Corinthian princess by means of the poisoned robe and Medea's filicide. *Heroides* 12 will be included in this chapter's discussion, inasmuch as it functions as a

⁴⁹⁵ On the reception of Euripides' *Medea* in the *Metamorphoses* see Binroth-Bank 1994, Newlands 1997, Curley 1999, 8-51, and Curley 2013, 121-133, 141-152.

⁴⁹⁶ For an examination of the treatment of Medea in the Ovidian corpus see Nikolaidis 1984 and Schutzer 2003.

⁴⁹⁷ On Ovid's *Medea* see Nikolaidis 1985 and Curley 2013, 19-58.

⁴⁹⁸ The question of the Ovidian authorship of *Heroides* 12 is a hotly debated issue and there are arguments both in favor and against its authenticity. Tarrant (1981, 152 n. 39) argues that *Her.* 12 is a conflation of two Ovidian treatments of Medea, *Metamorphoses* 7 (1-13) and the lost tragedy *Medea*. Knox (1986) contends that the poem is inauthentic on the grounds that it does not conform to Ovidian style and diction and that it is drawing on the Medea narrative in *Metamorphoses* 7. He suggests that the author is an imitator of Ovid and dates the poem to the period immediately after Ovid's death. Hinds (1993), on the other hand, is less interested in the authenticity issue and argues that the *Medea* of *Her.* 12 as an amalgam of fragments of other Medeas is mainly an issue of intertextuality.

possible mediating intratext between Ovid's *Medea* and the *Metamorphoses*. In particular, Federica Bessone has plausibly argued that various elements, which are found in the epistle and have no precedent in either Apollonius or Euripides, are likely to have been appropriated from the Ovidian play.⁴⁹⁹ As we shall see, these motifs are later incorporated by Ovid into the stories of Procne and Althaea in the *Metamorphoses*.

In the first part of the chapter I will investigate Ovid's intertextual dialogue with Euripides' *Medea* in *Metamorphoses* 7. Having already treated the Corinthian episode in a tragedy and an elegiac epistle Ovid chose not to repeat himself by telling the same story in full length in the *Metamorphoses*, but to abridge it in a miniature summary of a few lines (7.494-497).⁵⁰⁰ The first half of the seventh book (7.1-424) recounts instead in detail all the other major events of Medea's life in a linear narrative. The opening scene relating young Medea's love for Jason in Colchis (7.1-158) draws on Apollonius' *Argonautica* 3 as its primary model, but at the same time contains subtle allusions to Euripides' *Medea* in the form of ironic foreshadowing.⁵⁰¹ In particular, as we shall see, the Ovidian Medea is a paradoxical conflation of the mature Euripidean Medea, the ruthless child-murderess, and Apollonius' heroine, the enamored, credulous maiden. At the same time she evokes Virgil's Dido and Euripides' Phaedra in terms of her inner struggle between passion and modesty/reason, thus constituting a multi-layered character, which poses a challenge to the interpreter.

The next episode, which takes place after the return of the married couple to Iolcus, is the rejuvenation of aged Aeson by Medea (7.159-293). Unfortunately Ovid's source for this

⁴⁹⁹ Bessone 1997, vv. 12.133-158 (the wedding of Jason and the Corinthian princess), 146 (Medea's son as nuntius of Jason's marriage), 189-190 (the resemblance of Jason's sons to their father), 212 (Medea's contemplation of an indeterminate terrible deed).

⁵⁰⁰ Larmour 1990, 132.

⁵⁰¹ On the reception of Apollonius' *Argonautica* in the *Metamorphoses* see Reggi 1995 and Kenney 2008.

narrative is unknown to us, but according to the argument of Euripides' *Medea* the poet of the epic *Nostoi* ("Returns") had treated this event.⁵⁰² The Aeson story, whose primary focus is on Medea's magic skills, will not be examined in the present study, on the grounds that Euripides drastically suppresses Medea's role as a sorceress and consequently there are very faint traces of his tragedy in the Ovidian narrative.⁵⁰³ The episode's main models are the descriptions of the Colchian's incantations in *Argonautica* 3 (528-533, 860-866) and Dido's pseudo-magic rites in *Aeneid* 4 (474-532).⁵⁰⁴

What follows next is the account of the murder of Pelias (7.297-349), whose main intertext is Euripides' *Peliades*. Due to the extremely fragmentary state of the play, however, the discussion of its relationship with the Ovidian narrative will be restricted to structural and plot issues. Moreover, apart from reworking the *Peliades* the Roman poet makes multiple allusions to Euripides' *Medea*. Medea's trickery of the *Peliades* echoes her deception of Creon and Aegeus, while the ram's rejuvenation and the murder of Pelias obliquely recall the demise of the Corinthian princess and Creon respectively through the technique of "fragmentation". Finally, the Euripidean intertexts are merged in the Pelias story with Virgil's *Aeneid* and Apollonius' *Argonautica*. Medea's deceptive skills are reminiscent of those of Sinon in *Aeneid* 2 (57-194), while her murderous nocturnal invasion into Pelias' chamber echoes that of Helen, Menelaus, and Ulysses in Deiphobus' bedroom in Book 6 (477-534). In addition, the *Peliades*, who avert

⁵⁰² West 2003, 158-159.

⁵⁰³ Mastronarde 2002, 24-25.

⁵⁰⁴ Ovid subtly evokes his Hellenistic predecessor also by means of "fragmentation." In particular, he omits the description of the Apollonian Jason's sacrifice to Hecate prior to anointing his body with the promethean drug (3.1193-1223) in his own Colchian episode and transposes instead many of its elements (the nocturnal setting, the ram sacrifice, the blood pits, the invocation of Hecate, the libations, etc.) to the scene of Medea's sacrifice to Hecate and *Iuventas* in preparation for the rejuvenation of Aeson (7.182-185, 189-190, 7.238-256) (see Segal 2002, 14).

their gaze before killing their father, are evocative of the Apollonian Medea turning away her eyes, while Jason is butchering her brother Apsyrtus (4.464-481).

After Medea's aerial escape from Iolcus there follows a lengthy description of her flight upon her serpent-drawn chariot over various Greek locales (7.350-390). We then find her first in Corinth (7.391-397), the setting of Euripides' *Medea*. I will argue that the narrator's brief sketch of the Corinthian episode may indirectly echo Medea's own summary of her vengeance plot in the Euripidean play (772-810). After another escape on her flying chariot Medea lands in Athens (7.398-424), where she unsuccessfully attempts to poison Theseus and escapes punishment by vanishing into thin air. In this concluding story the Roman poet has blended elements from various fragmentary works, namely Euripides' *Aegeus*, Callimachus' *Hecale*, and Ennius' *Medea*, all of which treat the encounter between Theseus and Medea. Moreover, the Ovidian narrative contains a few implicit allusions to the meeting between Aegeus and the Colchian in Euripides' *Medea*.

Ovid wishes to provide his reader with a comprehensive portrait of Medea and thus each narrative is a reflection of a different aspect of the heroine's personality. At the same time the Roman poet traces the heroine's steady moral decline: in the Colchis episode she is presented as a young gullible maiden helplessly in love who benevolently aids her beloved; in the Aeson narrative she is a powerful witch capable of harnessing the forces of nature and employs her powers benignly by rejuvenating Jason's aged father; in the Pelias story we witness the darker side of her personality, since she is portrayed as a cunning manipulator, who wreaks havoc upon her enemies; her moral degeneracy reaches its apex in the Corinthian and Athenian episodes in which she assumes the role of the treacherous and murderous mother and stepmother respectively, while her flight from Iolcus and Corinth on her serpent-drawn chariot and her

miraculous escape from Athens reveal her as a semi-divine being with a supernatural ability to evade punishment.

Ovid's appropriation of Euripides' *Medea* in *Metamorphoses* 7 consists in amplifying marginal elements of the play into full-blown episodes and conversely compressing radically the central story of the drama, namely the events in Corinth, thereby rendering it a peripheral narrative.⁵⁰⁵ More specifically, the Colchis episode and the murder of Pelias, which are cited in passing in the Euripidean play in the form of flashbacks, become each the subject of an autonomous story in Ovid. Medea's flight on Helios' chariot, which constitutes the denouement of Euripides' drama, is described by Ovid not once but three times, namely in Medea's journey over Thessaly to gather herbs for Aeson's rejuvenation potion (7.220-233), in her tour over various locales in Greece after her escape from Iolcus (7.350-390), and finally in her trip from Corinth to Athens (7.398-399). Finally, Medea's refuge in Athens, which in Euripides is an event projected into the future, is converted by Ovid into the concluding scene of his narrative.

Moreover, the Ovidian narrative can be read as an epicized "mega-tragedy" encompassing Medea's entire mythical career, in terms of both subject matter and structure. With the sole exception of Aeson's rejuvenation every individual episode is an epic reworking of earlier dramatic works (Euripides' *Medea*, *Aegeus*, and *Peliades*, Ennius' *Medea* and *Medea Exul*, and Ovid's own *Medea*). Moreover, each of its narratives may be viewed as the equivalent of a part of a tragedy. In particular, the Colchis episode, which contains an extended soliloquy delivered by Medea, fulfills the two principal functions of the expository prologue of a tragedy: it provides the reader with essential background information and foreshadows later events in the story. The narratives of Aeson and Pelias serve as dramatic episodes, while the descriptions of the old ram's rejuvenation and Pelias' murder probably constitute epic rewritings of messenger

⁵⁰⁵ Newlands 1997, 178.

speech scenes in Euripides' *Peliades*. Furthermore, I will attempt to show that the account of Medea's flight over Greece is evocative of the anticipatory function of a tragic stasimon and more specifically of an "escape ode", in which the chorus wish that they may travel to distant locales. Both the chorus' imaginary journey and Medea's real trip allude to other mythical tales, which obliquely foreshadow forthcoming events in the main story, in the former case the play's looming disaster and in the latter Medea's filicide in Corinth. The last minute recognition of Theseus by his father Aegeus, which thwarts Medea's poisoning attempt, constitutes a parallel to the climactic scene of anagnorisis in Euripides' *Aegeus*. Finally, the escape of Medea from Athens in a magical mist corresponds to the exodos of Euripides' *Medea*, where she flies away from Corinth on Helios' chariot.

In the second part of the chapter I will explore Ovid's intertextual engagement with Euripides' *Medea* in the remainder of the *Metamorphoses*, which takes the form of "fragmentation". As we noted above, Ovid abbreviates the Corinthian episode in a radical manner with the effect that the Euripidean play's two central events, namely the murder of the Corinthian princess and the infanticide, are reduced to a mere four lines (7.394-397). The Roman poet then transfers these essential elements of the drama and weaves them into other mythical narratives, affording them a more elaborate treatment. In particular, he reworks the theme of vengeance attained through filicide in the stories of Procne and Althaea, since the former kills her son Itys in order to punish her husband for raping and mutilating her sister and the latter murders her son Meleager in retribution for his slaying of her brothers. Finally, in the Deianira episode Ovid expands upon the motif of jealous revenge against an erotic rival, in that the heroine considers eliminating her husband's mistress.

The prevalent view of criticism has hitherto been that Procne, Althaea, and Deianira simply recall traits of Medea and thus they are perceived as “doubles” of the Euripidean heroine.⁵⁰⁶ The Roman poet’s intertextual dialogue with his predecessor, however, seems to be much more complex and nuanced than this. Below I will contend that the Ovidian heroines are not just mirror images of Euripides’ Medea, but constitute her “refractions” in a two-fold sense. First, in the typical sense that they are characters other than Medea who assimilate features of the tragic heroine and secondly, in the specific sense that they are graded variants of Medea. In particular, as we shall see, Procne is an amplified version of the Euripidean protagonist surpassing her in cruelty, ruthlessness, and bloodthirstiness. Althaea, on the other hand, constitutes a more humanized variant of Medea, in terms of the profound contrition she experiences for the murder of her son, which ultimately drives her to suicide. Finally, Deianira is merely an “aspiring Medea”, since she briefly entertains a scheme of dispatching her rival, but soon dismisses it. Thus, a structural pattern of diminishing intensity seems to emerge: after the “overblown Medea” that is Procne in Book 6, the reader encounters the Medeas of Apollonius and Euripides in Book 7, followed by a more “fragile Medea”, namely Althaea, in Book 8, and the sequence concludes with Deianira, a “would-be Medea”. The ultimate goal of this chapter is to probe and try to decipher Ovid’s kaleidoscopic portrayal of Medea, namely her various reflections (enamored girl, omnipotent sorceress, devious schemer, deadly (step)mother, and creature with quasi-divine qualities) and how these evoke her tragic precursor, as well as the refracted images of Euripides’ heroine, Procne, Althaea, and Deianira.

⁵⁰⁶ Larmour 1990, Newlands 1997, Ciappi 1998, Gildenhard/Zissos 2007, Curley 2013.

Reflections of Medea

3.1 Medea in Colchis

The main intertext for the episode of Medea in Colchis in *Metamorphoses* 7 (1-159) is Apollonius' *Argonautica*. Ovid, however, blends his Hellenistic model with Euripides' *Medea* and Virgil's *Aeneid* by means of intertextual conflation. The Roman poet's treatment of the Colchis narrative contains several divergences from his Alexandrian predecessor. First of all, Ovid compresses and simplifies the account of the *Argonautica* through a technique, which has been termed as "fast-forwarding".⁵⁰⁷ The voyage of the Argonauts from Iolcus to Colchis, which takes up the first two books of the Hellenistic epic, is drastically condensed into a single introductory sentence (7.1-6),⁵⁰⁸ while the recovery of the Golden Fleece and the return journey, which are the subject of *Argonautica* 4, are similarly abridged into a few lines (7.149-158).⁵⁰⁹ The events of Book 3 of the *Argonautica*, namely the embassy to Aetes, Medea's falling in love with Jason, and the hero's accomplishment of the trials set by the king for the retrieval of the Fleece, are reduced from around 1400 to 140 lines (7.7-148). Finally, the Apollonian Medea's three distinct monologues are merged into one long soliloquy delivered by her Ovidian counterpart.⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁷ Kenney 2008, 364, n.9: "...a recurrent feature of the *Metamorphoses*, the "fast-forwarding" technique [is] employed by Ovid to carry the reader quickly and effortlessly over structurally necessary but thematically unimportant links in the narrative chain."

⁵⁰⁸ Kenney 2008, 364.

⁵⁰⁹ Kenney 2008, 368.

⁵¹⁰ Kenney 2008, 371.

Another significant deviation from the Hellenistic antecedent pertains to the role of the gods in the Ovidian story. Whereas in Apollonius Aphrodite at the behest of Hera and Athena bribes her son, Eros, to compel Medea to fall in love with the Greek hero by shooting her with his arrow, the Roman poet removes the gods almost entirely from the action and thereby presents Medea's love for Jason as deriving from within herself.⁵¹¹ In fact, as we shall see, the divine causation is internalized, in that Medea thinks that a god has instilled passion into her (7.11-12). Cupid does make a brief appearance after the end of Medea's monologue, but is depicted as fleeing in defeat before the personified abstract ideas of modesty, piety, and righteousness (7.72-73) and thus contrasts sharply with the omnipotent Apollonian Eros, who effortlessly makes Medea succumb to passion. The Ovidian narrative thus focuses more sharply on Medea's emotional fluctuations and portrays her as fully responsible for her actions, since her motivation stems not from an exterior force, but from her inner self.

The Roman poet also distances himself from his Alexandrian source in terms of his characterization of Medea. In the *Argonautica* Medea undergoes a gradual process of transformation from an innocent maiden infatuated with a handsome stranger in Book 3 into a ruthless witch capable of impious murder in Book 4. The turning point is the scene in which the heroine lures her brother Apsyrtus into an ambush, where he is pitilessly slaughtered by Jason (4.391-481). The Colchian girl thus loses her innocence forever and becomes polluted by kindred blood. Ovid, on the other hand, skillfully circumvents the problem of reconciling the two Medeas of the literary tradition by transplanting character traits from the mature Medea of Euripides into the innocent maiden of Apollonius. Moreover, Ovid incorporates in his Medea features of Virgil's queen Dido thus creating a highly intertextual character, who constitutes an amalgam of various heroines. Finally, Ovid departs from Apollonius by further undermining Jason's heroic

⁵¹¹ Newlands 1997, 184-185.

status.⁵¹² In the Hellenistic epic Jason's heroism has already been compromised by the pivotal role played by Medea, since it is effectively through her magic aid that he successfully performs his trials. The Greek hero retains, however, part of his heroic identity through the display of valor and martial prowess in his encounter with the fire-breathing bulls and the Sown-men. In the *Metamorphoses*, on the other hand, Jason is reduced to a mere "puppet" under Medea's control, since apart from being entirely dependent on her magic to perform the tests he also does not engage in a direct confrontation either with the bulls or with the Sown men.

Ovid's appropriation of Euripides' *Medea* in the Colchis narrative is complex and difficult to detect and interpret, partly because the Euripidean model is inextricably interwoven with the Apollonian and Virgilian intertexts and partly on account of the elusive and intricate nature of the Ovidian allusions. The Roman poet follows the paradigm of Apollonius in his intertextual engagement with the Greek tragedian in that he concurrently echoes and anticipates the events of the Euripidean play.⁵¹³ This intriguing combination of recalling and foreshadowing is made possible by the fact that on the one hand Euripides' work precedes that of Ovid, but on the other hand the mythical events dramatized in the *Medea* succeed those of the Colchis narrative in the *Metamorphoses*. In other words, the Ovidian *Medea* both evokes her dramatic counterpart and prefigures her future Euripidean self. More specifically, the Roman poet grafts many attributes of Euripides' *Medea*, the manipulative and merciless infanticide, into the Apollonian *Medea* of *Argonautica* 3, the young and gullible princess hopelessly in love, thereby fashioning a paradoxical and multifaceted figure. These elements include the Euripidean *Medea*'s acute self-awareness of the moral implications of her actions, her peculiar relationship with the gods, sexual jealousy, murderous vengefulness, and aspirations to heroic glory.

⁵¹² Kenney 2008, 365.

⁵¹³ Hinds 1993, 17.

Furthermore, Ovid's heroine is reminiscent of another famous Euripidean female protagonist, Phaedra from the *Hippolytus*, in terms of her self-conscious internal struggle between passion and reason.

Finally, the Ovidian Medea evokes Virgil's Dido, in that both heroines experience an inner conflict between amor and pudor. At the same time, however, Ovid's character "corrects" her Virgilian model. Thus, for example, Dido's rhetorical accusations against Aeneas are transformed into Medea's self-reproach, her fearful premonition of Aeneas' betrayal turns into the Colchian princess' false sense of safety, and her self-delusional view of her affair with Aeneas as marriage is echoed and reversed by Medea's realization of the illicit nature of her contemplated liaison with Jason.

3.1.1 Medea's monologue

The main focus of this section is Medea's soliloquy, since it is this part of the episode which contains the highest concentration of allusions to Euripides. The Colchian princess debates with herself the tormenting moral dilemma she is facing, namely either yield to love and bestow her help on Jason thereby betraying her father and country, or refrain from succoring the Greek hero by adhering to her sense of reason, modesty, and filial piety. Her speech is essentially a rhetorical self-suasoria, whereby she attempts to convince herself to give in to her passion, and thus it consists of a series of objections to lending her aid to the Greek hero followed by their direct refutation.⁵¹⁴ In this context the Ovidian heroine's speech constitutes an intertextual palimpsest, which echoes not only the words of the Euripidean and Apollonian Medeas, but also the arguments of Jason in his tragic and epic incarnations and even the sentiments of the chorus

⁵¹⁴ Cecchin 1997, 83.

of Corinthian women in Euripides' play. What is more, Medea's soliloquy holds particular significance for the overall structure of the *Metamorphoses* because of its programmatic nature. It is the first purely dramatic monologue in the work and introduces many themes, such as the amor-pudor conflict, which are further elaborated in later solo speeches, such as those of Scylla, Byblis, and Myrrha.⁵¹⁵

After an introductory couplet, which sets the scene by describing the embassy of the Argonauts to Aetes to request the Golden Fleece and the king's pronouncement of the trials to be accomplished by Jason (7.7-8), the lens focuses immediately on Medea and her emotional response to the advent of Jason. The Colchian princess experiences love at first sight, which recalls the reaction of the Apollonian Medea to Jason's arrival and in both cases the feeling of passion is expressed through fire imagery.⁵¹⁶ The distinguishing difference of the two scenes is that whereas in the *Argonautica* Medea falls in love after being smitten by Eros' arrow, in the *Metamorphoses* she develops these feelings entirely of her own accord. Hence, Ovid excludes the world of the gods from his narrative, thereby laying emphasis on the human level of action.

The manner, however, in which the Ovidian Medea confronts her passion, is not reminiscent of her Apollonian counterpart, but rather of Euripides' *Phaedra*. Medea's soliloquy is occasioned by an inner struggle between love and reason, which has no equivalent in Apollonius, but rather evokes the plight of the female protagonist of the *Hippolytus*. When the Ovidian heroine perceives the first pangs of love, she fights for a long time against her passion, described as madness, by employing her sense of reason, but she ultimately fails to overcome her desire for

⁵¹⁵ Curley 2013, 141, 146.

⁵¹⁶ Met. 7.9 *concipit* interea *ualidos* Aetias *ignes*; Arg. 3.284-287 ἦκ' ἐπὶ Μηδείῃ. τὴν δ' ἀμφασίη λάβε θυμόν· / αὐτὸς δ' ὕπορόφοιο παλιμπετὲς ἐκ μεγάροιο / καγχαλόων ἦξε, βέλος δ' ἐνεδαίετο κούρη / νέρθεν ὑπὸ κραδίη φλογὶ εἴκελον.

Jason and admits defeat.⁵¹⁷ In her monologue she reiterates the experience of this conflict by claiming that love urges her one way and her mind another.⁵¹⁸ This description echoes the words of Phaedra to the chorus of Troezenian women after the revelation of her illicit passion for Hippolytus. The Euripidean heroine confesses that after she was struck with love for her stepson she deliberated on the ways in which she could best endure her passion. She initially attempted to conceal her malady in silence and when that failed she unsuccessfully tried to vanquish her folly by means of self-control, finally deciding upon suicide as the optimal rational plan.⁵¹⁹ Thus, just as Phaedra faces an internal conflict between love and reason, which takes the form of folly/illness versus moderation, similarly Medea is tormented by the clash between erotic frenzy and rational thought and both are unsuccessful in subduing their passion. The Euripidean Medea is likewise torn apart by a dilemma between reason and emotion, where the latter prevails, but in this case it is her wrath against Jason prompting her to murder their children in order to take revenge on him, which clashes with the rational plan of sparing her sons and taking them with her.⁵²⁰

At the end of her monologue Ovid's Medea experiences another kind of inner conflict, which is expressed as an external struggle between Cupid and the personified abstract concepts of righteousness, filial piety, and modesty.⁵²¹ This time passion is defeated by the opposing

⁵¹⁷ Met. 7.9-11 concipit interea ualidos Aetias ignes / et luctata diu, postquam ratione furorem / uincere non poterat, 'frustra, Medea, repugnans;'.

⁵¹⁸ Met. 7.19-20 aliudque cupido, / mens aliud suadet.

⁵¹⁹ Hipp. 391-394 λέξω δὲ καὶ σοι τῆς ἐμῆς γνώμης ὁδόν. / ἐπεὶ μ' ἔρωσ ἔτρωσεν, ἐσκόπουν ὅπως / κάλλιστ' ἐνέγκαμ' αὐτόν. ἠρξάμην μὲν οὖν / ἐκ τοῦδε, σιγᾶν τήνδε καὶ κρύπτειν νόσον·, 398-402 τὸ δεύτερον δὲ τὴν ἄνοιαν εὖ φέρειν / τῷ σωφρονεῖν νικῶσα προυνοησάμην. / τρίτον δ', ἐπειδὴ τοισίδ' οὐκ ἐξήνυτον / Κύπριν κρατῆσαι, κατθανεῖν ἔδοξέ μοι, / κράτιστον (οὐδεὶς ἀντερεῖ) βουλευμάτων.

⁵²⁰ Med. 1079-1080 θυμὸς δὲ κρείσσω τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων, / ὅσπερ μεγίστων αἴτιος κακῶν βροτοῖς. For the various interpretations of lines 1078-1080 sees Mastronarde 2002, 393-397.

⁵²¹ Met. 7.72-73 dixit, et ante oculos Rectum Pietasque Pudorque / constiterant et uicta dabat iam terga Cupido.

feelings of pudor and pietas, but it is only a momentary victory, since as soon as Medea sees Jason again, her love, which seems to have abated, is rekindled (7.76-83). Ovid draws for this clash between love and modesty on Apollonius and Virgil.⁵²² The Apollonian Medea vacillates whether or not to go to her sister Chalciope, in order to manipulate her into asking her to give her aid to Jason for the sake of her sons. The reason is that on the one hand she is restrained by her sense of shame, but on the other hand she is goaded by her desire for Jason.⁵²³ Her impasse is resolved by a handmaiden, who sees her in torment and summons Chalciope. During her dialogue with her sister she wavers once more whether or not to agree to grant her help to Jason in accordance with Chalciope's request, but at this point love finally overpowers her virginal modesty.⁵²⁴ In an analogous manner Dido faces an inner conflict between pudor, namely her respect for the memory of her dead husband Sychaeus and for her reputation as queen of Carthage, and amor, that is her desire of Aeneas.⁵²⁵

The opening of Medea's monologue might echo and reverse the final words of her Euripidean model. The Ovidian heroine addresses herself, claiming that she fights in vain against her passion.⁵²⁶ Euripides' Medea on the other hand ends her bitter exchange with Jason by refusing to return to him the corpses of his sons for burial and asserting that his entreaty is futile.⁵²⁷ The context of the two situations is completely different: whereas in Euripides Medea is in a state of absolute power having avenged herself on her enemies (Jason, Creon, and the

⁵²² Bömer 1976, vv. 7.10-13; Cecchin 1997, 83; Curley 2013, 146.

⁵²³ Arg. 3.652-653 ἦτοι ὄτ' ἰθύσειεν, ἔρυκέ μιν ἔνδοθεν αἰδώς / αἰδοῖ δ' ἐργομένην θρασὺς ἵμερος ὀτρύνεσκεν.

⁵²⁴ Arg. 3.681-682, ὧς φάτο· τῆς δ' ἐρύθηνε παρήια, δὴν δέ μιν αἰδώς παρθενίη κατέρυκεν, ἀμείψασθαι μεμαῦϊαν', 686-687 ... ὄψε δ' ἔειπεν / τοῖα δόλω, θρασέες γὰρ ἐπικλονέεσκον ἔρωτες.

⁵²⁵ Aen. 4.54-55 his dictis impenso animum flammavit amore, / spemque dedit dubiae menti, solvitque pudorem.

⁵²⁶ Met. 7.11 frustra, Medea, repugnas.

⁵²⁷ Med. 1402-1404 Ια. [...] δός μοι πρὸς θεῶν / μαλακοῦ χρωτὸς ψαῦσαι τέκνων. / Μη. οὐκ ἔστι μάτην ἔπος ἔρριπται.

Corinthian princess) and about to depart triumphantly from Corinth on Helios' flying chariot, in Ovid she is a helpless victim of the overwhelming force of love. Therefore, by having his Medea evoke her Euripidean counterpart the Roman poet stresses the contrast between the young maiden desperately in love with Jason and the omnipotent murderess, who has utterly vanquished her unfaithful husband by depriving him of his offspring.

The heroine's relationship with the gods can be construed in light of the speech's rhetorical purpose, which, as has been noted above, is to induce herself to grant her magical aid to Jason in his trials. In this context the reason that Medea adduces for her powerlessness to resist her passion for the Greek hero is the compelling force of an unspecified divinity.⁵²⁸ The god is of course no other than Cupid and Ovid makes here a playful allusion to the *Argonautica*, where Eros makes Medea fall in love by shooting her with his arrow. The Roman poet, however, almost completely displaces the god of love from his narrative and presents Medea's feelings as originating from within her.⁵²⁹ Thus the Ovidian Medea is portrayed as fully culpable for her decision to betray her father and country by aiding the Greek hero and in this respect she resembles her Euripidean counterpart, whose revenge plan against Jason is not dictated by a god, but is the product of her own plotting. In contrast to most other Euripidean plays Medea does not feature divine characters participating in the dramatic action, but the interference of the gods in the events is left to be conjectured by the audience.⁵³⁰ The deeds of all the characters in the play can thus be interpreted as the result of their own free will. The only direct divine intervention comes at the end of the play when Helios provides his flying chariot to his granddaughter Medea in order to enable her to escape to Athens. In fact it is Medea herself who assumes the status of a

⁵²⁸ Met. 7.12 *nescioquis deus* obstat.

⁵²⁹ Kenney 2011, v. 7.12.

⁵³⁰ For the role of the gods in Euripides' *Medea* see Mastronarde 2002, 32-34 and 2010, 153-206.

semi-divine being by means of her position on the crane and by fulfilling some typical functions of a *dea ex machina*, such as the pronouncement of prophecies concerning the fate of human characters and the future establishment of a ritual.

A few lines below Ovid's heroine exhorts herself to banish the flames of passion from her heart, but once again professes her inability to do so due to the effect of a strange power, namely the power of love, which drags her along against her will.⁵³¹ Furthermore, in refutation of her compunction to abandon her country's divinities, in order to follow Jason to Greece, she maintains that the greatest god of all (i.e. Cupid) has taken possession of her.⁵³² This rhetorical self-representation of Medea as a helpless victim of Cupid, so as to convince herself to help Jason, evokes Medea's portrayal of herself in Euripides' play. The Euripidean protagonist claims that she and the gods have contrived together the plan of murdering the children, in order to steel herself for her revenge as well as share with the gods the responsibility of her impending horrible deed.⁵³³ Therefore, just as the Euripidean Medea's citation of the complicity of the gods can be read as a rhetorical device by which she aims to persuade herself to commit infanticide,⁵³⁴ likewise her Ovidian counterpart masks her own passion for Jason as a feeling forcibly instilled in her by Cupid, whom she portrays as an abstract divine force. What is more, the Ovidian heroine's assertion that she is compelled by Cupid to give in to her passion, may appropriate and repurpose the Euripidean Jason's argument that he owes little gratitude to Medea, since it was

⁵³¹ Met. 7.17-20 *excute uirgineo conceptas pectore flammas, / si potes, infelix. si possem, sanior essem. / sed trahit inuitam noua uis, aliudque cupido, / mens aliud suadet.*

⁵³² Met. 7.51-52 *deosque / et natale solum uentis ablata relinquam?*, 55 *maximus* intra me *deus* est). Kenney (2011, v. 7.55) remarks that this notion of divine possession can also be found in Ovid's previous treatments of Medea, namely in *Heroides* 12 (211-212 *uiderit ista deus, qui nunc mea pectora uersat! / nescioquid certe mens mea maius agit*) and in his lost tragedy (fr. 2 *feror huc illuc uae plena deo*).

⁵³³ Med. 1013-1014... ταῦτα γὰρ θεοὶ / κἀγὼ κακῶς φρονοῦσ' ἐμηχανησάμην.

⁵³⁴ Mastronarde 2002, 33.

not of her own accord that she offered her aid to him, but it was Eros who forced her to save him.⁵³⁵

The first question which Medea addresses to herself is one of ostensible naivety: she wonders whether what she feels is love.⁵³⁶ The Ovidian heroine recalls here Phaedra's question to her Nurse in Euripides' *Hippolytus*, who asks what is meant when they say people are in love.⁵³⁷ In both cases the question is in fact rhetorical. Phaedra is fully conscious of what erotic passion is, since she has been tormented by it from the beginning of the play and her inquiry merely reflects her reluctance to reveal her illicit love for her stepson, which she does divulge a few moments later.⁵³⁸ Likewise Medea knows perfectly well that she is desperately in love with Jason, as is evidenced by her self-exhortation a few lines below to expel passion from her heart (7.17). Hence, both heroines display an apparent ignorance and inexperience regarding the matters of love, which is however only a façade concealing their actual awareness of their passion.⁵³⁹ This characterization of the Ovidian Medea as mindful of her love at the very beginning of her soliloquy contrasts sharply with the portrayal of her Apollonian counterpart, who goes through a slow and gradual realization of her passion for Jason, progressing from incomprehension of her emotional state (3.464-470) to recognition of her feelings for the Greek

⁵³⁵ Met. 7.12 nescioquis deus obstat, 19 sed trahit inuitam noua uis; Med. 529-531 [...] ἀλλ' ἐπίφθονος / λόγος διελθεῖν ὡς Ἔρωσ σ' ἠνάγκασεν / τόξοις ἀφύκτοις τοῦμὸν ἐκσῶσαι δέμας.

⁵³⁶ Met. 7.12-13 [...] mirumque nisi hoc est, / aut aliquid certe simile huic, quod amare uocatur.

⁵³⁷ Hipp. 347-348 Φα. τί τοῦθ' ὃ δὴ λέγουσιν ἀνθρώπους ἐρᾶν; / Τρ. ἥδιστον, ὃ παῖ, ταῦτόν ἀλγεινόν θ' ἄμα (See Bömer 1976, v. 7.13; Kenney 2008, 373).

⁵³⁸ Barrett 1964, v. 347; Halleran 1995, v. 347.

⁵³⁹ Kenney (2011, vv. 7.13-14) remarks that Medea's pseudo-innocence (7.12-14 mirumque nisi hoc est, / aut aliquid certe simile huic, quod amare uocatur, / nam cur iussa patris nimium mihi dura uidentur?) also echoes the elegiac lover-poet of *Amores* 1.2, who feigns ignorance regarding his feelings (1-2 esse quid hoc dicam, quod tam mihi dura uidentur / strata...?).

hero (636-644) and finally to painful indecision whether or not to give him the magic drugs (3.771-801).⁵⁴⁰

Medea is not only conscious of her passion for Jason, but she is also fully cognizant of the moral culpability of the action she is about to undertake. This ethical self-awareness is crystallized in the famous Ovidian sententia: uideo meliora proboque, / deteriora sequor (7.20-21). The Colchian maiden recognizes what is the right thing to do, namely remain loyal to her father and homeland, and even approves of it, but despite this realization she makes the wrong choice by offering her assistance to Jason. The first course of action is dictated by her sense of reason and the latter by her erotic passion, which as we have seen above are driving her to opposite directions (7.19-20). Medea displays the same self-awareness in her meeting with Jason just before she commits the transgression of giving him the magic drugs. She claims that she is not deceived by her ignorance of the truth, but by her love, namely she deliberately does what she perceives is wrong by succumbing to her passion.⁵⁴¹ This portrayal of Medea differentiates her from her Apollonian counterpart, who, as soon as she takes the decision to help Jason, does not waver from her plan, nor does she demonstrate cognizance of the moral reprehensibility of her actions.⁵⁴²

The Ovidian heroine's heightened sense of moral self-consciousness is instead evocative of the Medea of Euripides.⁵⁴³ The Euripidean protagonist concludes her final monologue before the murder of her children with the assertion that she is aware of the harmful deed she is about to

⁵⁴⁰ Cecchin 1997, 82-83.

⁵⁴¹ Met. 7.92-93 quid faciam uideo, nec me ignorantia ueri / decipiet, sed amor.

⁵⁴² Binroth-Bank 1994, 71-72.

⁵⁴³ Anderson 1972, vv. 7.19-20; Binroth-Bank 1994, 40-41; Newlands 1997, 182-183.

perform, but also realizes that her anger overpowers her rational plan of sparing her sons.⁵⁴⁴ Both heroines experience an emotional condition reminiscent of the Aristotelian state of *akrasia*, which has been defined as a “paralysis of the will, in which a moral agent correctly perceives the ‘better’ course but fails to act on it”.⁵⁴⁵ Thus, in the context of the pattern of “recalling and foreshadowing” that we noted above, the young Medea’s decision to follow the erroneous course of action in spite of her awareness of the righteous one evokes her Euripidean counterpart, but at the same time it anticipates and explains the origin of the mature Medea’s choices.⁵⁴⁶ The Ovidian Medea also echoes the moral self-awareness of Euripides’ Phaedra, who undergoes an analogous struggle between reason and passion.⁵⁴⁷ The Euripidean heroine maintains that people perceive the righteous course of action, but fail to follow it either out of slothfulness or because they give precedence to a pleasing activity.⁵⁴⁸

A compelling reason cited by Medea in order to persuade herself to grant her magical aid to Jason consists in imagining what terrible lot awaits the Greek hero in the event that she does not help him. The Colchian princess foresees that without her succor Jason will be incinerated by the fire-breathing bulls, engage in fatal combat with the earth-born warriors, or be sacrificed as a defenseless prey to the monstrous serpent.⁵⁴⁹ Ovid appropriates and transforms here the topos of the lover’s ingratitude, according to which the abandoned heroine upbraids her ungrateful

⁵⁴⁴ Med. 1078-1080 καὶ μανθάνω μὲν οἷα δρῶν μέλλω κακά, / θυμὸς δὲ κρείσσων τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων, / ὅσπερ μεγίστων αἴτιος κακῶν βροτοῖς.

⁵⁴⁵ Nugent 2008, 155-159.

⁵⁴⁶ Schmitzer 2003, 33-34; Curley 2013, 144.

⁵⁴⁷ Bömer 1976, v. 7.21; Kenney 2011, vv. 7.20-21.

⁵⁴⁸ Hipp. 380-383 τὰ χρήστ' ἐπιστάμεσθα καὶ γινώσκομεν, / οὐκ ἐκπονοῦμεν δ', οἱ μὲν ἀργίας ὕπο, / οἱ δ' ἠδονὴν προθέντες ἀντὶ τοῦ καλοῦ / ἄλλην τιν' [...].

⁵⁴⁹ Met. 7.29-31 at nisi opem tulerō, taurorum adflabitur ore / concurrentque suae segeti, tellure creatis / hostibus, aut auido dabitur fera praeda draconi.

beloved by reminding him of the services she has rendered him. In particular, the Ovidian Medea echoes and inverts both her Euripidean and Apollonian models, both of whom recount to Jason the assistance they offered him in his trials, so as to rebuke him for his forgetfulness and lack of reciprocity.⁵⁵⁰ Hence, the enumeration of past services by the Medeas of Euripides and Apollonius, which functions as ammunition for reproaching Jason for his ingratitude, is converted by the Ovidian Medea into an argument aimed at convincing herself to offer her assistance to the Greek hero.⁵⁵¹

Another rhetorical technique by which Medea attempts to persuade herself to help Jason is self-reproach. She claims that if she lets the Greek hero perish while performing the trials, she will be prove to be as savage as a tigress' progeny and as pitiless as if her heart was made out of iron and stone.⁵⁵² Ovid is playfully alluding here to the rhetorical topos in which an unfaithful lover or friend is branded as a monster or the offspring of a wild animal.⁵⁵³ The commonplace has a long tradition, tracing back its origins to Patroclus' rebuke of Achilles in the Iliad (16.33-35).⁵⁵⁴ The immediate model of the Metamorphoses passage is Dido's reprimand of Aeneas,

⁵⁵⁰ Med. 476-482 ἔσωσά σ', ὡς ἴσασιν Ἑλλήνων ὅσοι / ταῦτόν συνεισέβησαν Ἀργῶιον σκάφος, / πεμφθέντα ταύρων πυρπνόων ἐπιστάτην / ζεύγλαισι καὶ σπεροῦντα θανάσιμον γύην· / δράκοντά θ', ὃς πάγχρυσον ἀμπέχων δέρος / σπείραις ἔσωιζε πολυπλόκοις ἄυπνος ὄν, / κτείνας' ἀνέσχον σοι φάος σωτήριον, Arg. 4.362-367...τηλόθι δ' οἴη / λυγρῆσιν κατὰ πόντον ἄμ' ἀλκυόνεσσι φορεῦμαι, / σῶν ἔνεκεν καμάτων, ἵνα μοι σόος ἀμφί τε βουσίην / ἀμφί τε γηγενέεσσιν ἀναπλήσειας ἀέθλους· / ὕστατον αὖ καὶ κῶας, ἐπεὶ τ' ἐπίστων ἐτύχθη, / εἶλες ἐμῆ ματίη (See Binroth-Bank 1994, 54).

⁵⁵¹ The Medea of the Metamorphoses also evokes and reverses her elegiac antecedent in Heroides 12, who reminds Jason that without her help he would have perished in the tests (15-18 *isset anhelatos non praemedicatus in ignes / immemor Aesonides oraque adusta boum; / semina iecisset totidem sevisset et hostes, / ut caderet cultu cultor ab ipse suo!*) and derives pleasure from reprimanding her ungrateful lover (21-22 *est aliqua ingrato meritum exprobrare voluptas. / hac fruar; haec de te gaudia sola feram*, Med. 473-474 ἐγὼ τε γὰρ λέξασα κουφισθήσομαι / ψυχὴν κακῶς σέ καὶ σὺ λυπήσῃ κλύων).

⁵⁵² Met. 7.32-33 hoc ego si patiar, tum me de tigride natam, / tum ferrum et scopulos gestare in corde fatebor.

⁵⁵³ Curley 2013, 151.

⁵⁵⁴ Another well-known example is Ariadne's censure of Theseus in Catullus 64 (154-156 *quaenam te genuit sola sub rupe leaena, / quod mare conceptum spumantibus expuit undis, / quae Syrtis, quae Scylla rapax, quae vasta Charybdis*).

when she discovers his plan to sail away and abandon her.⁵⁵⁵ The Carthaginian queen rejects the Trojan hero's descent from Venus and Anchises and tauntingly suggests that he is the offspring of Mt. Caucasus and was nurtured by fierce tigers.⁵⁵⁶ Therefore, the Roman poet "corrects" the Virgilian intertext by having his Medea launch the accusation of inhuman cruelty not to her lover, but to herself, in order to goad herself to succor Jason.⁵⁵⁷

Apart from the Aeneid, however, Ovid also evokes Euripides' drama, where Medea's ferocity and ruthlessness is conveyed by an analogous imagery throughout the play. In the prologue the Nurse compares the lamenting heroine's unresponsiveness to her friends' advice to the "deafness" of a rock or a sea wave and reports that Medea gazes at the servants, who try to speak to her, with the glance of a bull or lioness.⁵⁵⁸ After Medea's infanticide the chorus exclaim that she is made out of stone or iron to have been able to commit such a cruel deed.⁵⁵⁹ Finally, in the exodos Jason reviles Medea for the murder of their children by likening her to a lioness and the monster Scylla.⁵⁶⁰ What is surprising, however, is that Medea sarcastically accepts her husband's vituperation, since she has achieved her goal of taking revenge on him.⁵⁶¹ Thus, the young Medea of the Metamorphoses, who is willing to brand herself as a savage beast for not

⁵⁵⁵ Bömer 1976, vv. 7.32-33; Kenney 2008, 374; Kenney 2011, vv. 7.32-33.

⁵⁵⁶ Aen. 4.365-367 nec tibi diua parens generis nec Dardanus auctor, / perfide, sed duris genuit te cautibus horrens / Caucasus Hyrcanaeque admorunt ubera tigres.

⁵⁵⁷ Binroth Bank 1994, 53, n. 133. Ovid's epic Medea also echoes and inverts her earlier elegiac predecessor, who accuses Jason of having a heart made of iron (Her. 12.183-184 quodsi forte preces praecordia ferrea tangunt, / nunc animis audi verba minora meis).

⁵⁵⁸ Med. 28-29 ... ὡς δὲ πέτρος ἢ θαλάσσιος / κλύδων ἀκούει νοουθετουμένη φίλων, 187-189 καίτοι τοκάδος δέργμα λεαίνης / ἀποταυροῦται δμωσίν, ὅταν τις / μῦθον προφέρων πέλας ὀρηθῆι.

⁵⁵⁹ Med. 1279-1281 τάλαινα, ὡς ἄρ' ἦσθα πέτρος ἢ σίδαρος / ἄτις τέκνων / ὄν ἔτεκες ἄροτον αὐτόχειρι / μοίραι κτενεῖς.

⁵⁶⁰ Med. 1342-1343 λέαιναν, οὐ γυναῖκα, τῆς Τυρσηνίδος / Σκύλλης ἔχουσαν ἀγριωτέραν φύσιν.

⁵⁶¹ Med. 1358-1360 πρὸς ταῦτα καὶ λέαιναν, εἰ βούληι, κάλει / [καὶ Σκύλλαν ἢ Τυρσηνὸν ὄικησεν πέδον] / τῆς σῆς γὰρ ὡς χρῆν καρδίας ἀνθηψάμην.

aiding Jason, echoes and inverts her mature Euripidean counterpart, who after having perpetrated the ghastly act of infanticide readily adopts the label of a merciless wild animal.⁵⁶²

When Medea seems to have resolved on helping Jason in his trials (7.37-38), she is suddenly seized by fearful anxiety. She is afraid that despite saving the Greek hero from death he is going to sail to Greece without her and marry another woman, while she remains in Colchis and suffers a dire punishment for betraying her father. The maiden's bleak vision of the future elicits her passionate outburst and she wishes for Jason's death as penalty for his ingratitude.⁵⁶³ The *Metamorphoses* passage engages in a complex allusive dialogue with its Euripidean and Apollonian intertexts. First of all, Medea's dread that Jason may leave her behind to undergo retribution at the hands of king Aetes recalls the terror of her Apollonian predecessor in *Argonautica* 4 at the thought of being surrendered by the Argonauts to the pursuing Colchians and returning to her homeland to suffer her father's punishment.⁵⁶⁴ On the other hand, the Ovidian heroine's fear of being deserted by Jason for another woman "corrects" the attitude of Medea in Book 3 of the *Argonautica*, who wishes that the Greek hero may become another woman's husband in his own country, while she adheres to her virginity and remains in her homeland.⁵⁶⁵ Moreover, in contrast to the Apollonian Medea, who hopes that Jason may depart for Greece without her and she herself commit suicide in order to avoid disgrace before the eyes

⁵⁶² Curley 2013, 152.

⁵⁶³ Met. 7.38-43 prodamne ego regna parentis / atque ope nescioquis seruabitur aduena nostra / ut per me sospes sine me det lintea uentis / uirque sit alterius, poenae Medea relinquitur? / si facere hoc aliamue potest praeponere nobis, / occidat ingratus!

⁵⁶⁴ Arg. 4.379-381 πῶς ἴξομαι ὄμματα πατρός; / ἢ μάλ' ἐνκλειῆς. τίνα δ' οὐ τίσιν ἠὲ βαρεῖαν / ἄτην οὐ συμυγεῖως δεινῶν ὕπερ οἷα ἔοργα / ὀτλήσω, σὺ δέ κεν θυμηδέα νόστον ἔλοιο;

⁵⁶⁵ Arg. 3.639-640 μνάσθω ἐὼν κατὰ δῆμον Ἀγαιίδα τηλόθι κούρην, / ἄμμι δὲ παρθενίη τε μέλοι καὶ δῶμα τοκήων (See Bömer 1976, v. 7.41; Kenney 2011, v. 7.40-43).

of her people, the prospect of Jason abandoning her in Colchis triggers in Ovid's heroine a desire for the hero's own death.⁵⁶⁶

Apart from evoking her Hellenistic counterpart, however, Ovid's Medea also echoes her Euripidean model. To begin with, the Ovidian heroine's suspicion that Jason may forsake her for another woman foreshadows the situation in the Euripidean play, where the Greek hero does in fact abandon Medea in order to marry the Corinthian princess.⁵⁶⁷ The Colchian maiden's reluctance to commit treason against her father lest she is left behind by Jason and punished for her treachery anticipates the tragic state of aporia in which the Euripidean Medea finds herself: she is fully aware that she cannot return to her father's kingdom, which she betrayed for Jason's sake.⁵⁶⁸ Furthermore, her wish for Jason's death as a retribution for his ingratitude and infidelity may allude to the Euripidean Medea's initial revenge plot of murdering the Greek hero along with Creon and his daughter as well as perhaps to her prediction of Jason's death in the play's exodos by being struck on the head by a remnant of the Argo.⁵⁶⁹ The Ovidian Medea's fantasy also echoes very closely the Euripidean chorus' prayer for Jason's death as punishment for dishonoring his loved ones, namely his wife and his children.⁵⁷⁰ The evocation of the chorus' words by Ovid's heroine can be explained by the fact that the Corinthian women frequently assume the viewpoint of Medea in the play, expressing ideas and sentiments corresponding to

⁵⁶⁶ Arg. 3.786-789 [...] ὁ δ' ἐμῆ ἰότητι σαωθεῖς / ἀσκηθῆς, ἵνα οἱ θυμῷ φίλον, ἔνθα νέοιτο· / αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν αὐτῆμαρ, ὄτ' ἐξανύσειεν ἄεθλον, / τεθναίην [...].

⁵⁶⁷ Anderson 1972, v. 7.40; Kenney 2008, 37; Binroth-Bank 1994, 52.

⁵⁶⁸ Med. 502-503 νῦν ποῖ τράπωμαι; πότερα πρὸς πατρὸς δόμους, / οὓς σοὶ προδοῦσα καὶ πάτραν ἀφικόμην; (See Curley 2013, 148).

⁵⁶⁹ Med. 376-378 [...] τήνδ' ἐφῆκεν ἡμέραν / μεῖναι μ', ἐν ἧι τρεῖς τῶν ἐμῶν ἐχθρῶν νεκροῦς / θήσω, πατέρα τε καὶ κόρην πόσιν τ' ἐμόν, 1386-1388 σὺ δ', ὥσπερ εἰκός, κατθανῆι κακῶς κακῶς, / Ἄργους κάρησιν λειψάνωι πεπληγμένος, / πικρὰς τελευτὰς τῶν ἐμῶν γάμων ἰδόν.

⁵⁷⁰ Med. 659-662 ἀχάριστος ὄλοιθ' ὅτῳ πάρεστιν / μὴ φίλους τιμᾶν καθαρᾶν / ἀνοίξαντα κλῆϊδα φρενῶν· / ἐμοὶ μὲν φίλος οὐποτ' ἔσται.

those of the protagonist. Finally, the young Medea's indignation at the thought that Jason could prefer another woman to her ironically echoes and inverts the Euripidean Jason's bitter regret after being informed of Medea's infanticide that he foolishly preferred to marry her than a Greek woman.⁵⁷¹

Ovid's lovesick heroine immediately dispels, however, her fears of Jason's betrayal by means of self-deception. She deludes herself that Jason's beautiful physical appearance mirrors his noble character and thus she need not be afraid of treachery or ingratitude on his part.⁵⁷² The Ovidian Medea's naïve perspective is in fact a reworking and repurposing of the Apollonian Jason's flattery to the Colchian maiden that her lovely physique reflects the gentle kindness of her heart, in order to seduce her and thereby secure her magical aid.⁵⁷³ Thus, what in Apollonius is a fawning praise employed by Jason to persuade Medea to succor him in his trials is transformed by Ovid into a self-beguiling argument by means of which the Colchian maiden attempts to induce herself to offer her aid to the Greek hero.⁵⁷⁴ Moreover, it has been suggested that Medea's gullible words in the *Metamorphoses* allude to and contrast with her Euripidean counterpart's complaint pertaining to Jason's betrayal, that there is not a token on the human

⁵⁷¹ Med. 1339-1341 οὐκ ἔστιν ἥτις τοῦτ' ἂν Ἑλληνίς γυνή / ἔτλη ποθ', ὧν γε πρόσθεν ἠξίουν ἐγὼ / γῆμαι σέ, κῆδος ἐχθρὸν ὀλέθριόν τ' ἐμοί. Medea's feeling of outrage at being rejected by Jason for another woman is also reminiscent of the Ovidian Hypsipyle's complaint at the news that Jason preferred to share Medea's bed than her own (Her. 6.131-132 hanc tamen, o demens Colchisque ablate uenenis, / diceris Hypsipyles praeposuisse toro).

⁵⁷² Met. 7.43-45 [...] sed non is uultus in illo, / non ea nobilitas animo est, ea gratia formae, / ut timeam fraudem meritique obliuia nostri.

⁵⁷³ Arg. 3.1006-1009 [...] ἦ γὰρ ἔοικας / ἐκ μορφῆς ἀγανῆσιν ἐπιτείησι κεκάσθαι. / ὧς φάτο, κυδαίνων· ἦ δ' ἐγκλιδὸν ὄσσε βαλοῦσα / νεκτάρειον μείδησε, χύθη δέ οἱ ἔνδοθι θυμός.

⁵⁷⁴ Binroth-Bank (1994, 53 n. 131) and Curley (2013, 150-51) remark that the Medea of the *Metamorphoses* echoes and at the same time ironically anticipates her elegiac counterpart in the *Heroides*, who rebukes herself for being captivated by Jason's looks and consequently becoming blinded to his duplicity and ingratitude (Her. 12.11-12 *cur mihi plus aequo flavi placuere capilli / et decor et linguae gratia ficta tuae?*, 16 *immemor Aesonides, 35-36 et formosus eras, et me mea fata trahebant; / abstulerant oculi lumina nostra tui*).

body by which one can discern wicked people, namely that it is not possible to infer one's character from their external appearance.⁵⁷⁵

Another argument utilized by Medea to allay her fears of Jason's perfidy is that she will ask him to take a solemn oath of fidelity before the gods.⁵⁷⁶ Ovid expects the reader to discern the irony of Medea's confidence that Jason will keep his pledge to her by recalling the Euripidean and Apollonian intertexts.⁵⁷⁷ In the *Argonautica*, when Medea discovers that the Argonauts are planning to abandon her in order to escape the pursuing Colchians, she protests that Jason has forgotten about the oath he took in the name of Zeus.⁵⁷⁸ Likewise in Euripides Medea laments in the prologue that Jason by deserting her for the Corinthian princess has violated the pledge he made to her and invokes the gods to witness the Greek hero's ingratitude.⁵⁷⁹ Moreover, later in the play during the *agon* with Jason she will accuse him directly of transgressing his oath to her and of scorning the gods who witnessed it.⁵⁸⁰

Medea concludes the rejection of her fears about Jason's unfaithfulness by rhetorically asking herself what she is afraid of, given that the situation is absolutely safe and by exhorting herself to proceed to action without delay.⁵⁸¹ The Ovidian heroine's sense of security is of course

⁵⁷⁵ Med. 518-519 ἀνδρῶν δ' ὅτῳ χρῆ τὸν κακὸν διειδένα / οὐδεὶς χαρακτήρ ἐμπέφυκε σῶματι; (See Binroth-Bank 1994, 52-53).

⁵⁷⁶ Met. 7.46-47 et dabit ante fidem cogamque in foedera testes / esse deos.

⁵⁷⁷ Binroth-Bank 1994, 54.

⁵⁷⁸ Arg. 4.358-359[...] ποῦ τοι Διὸς Ἰκεσίῳ / ὄρκια, ποῦ δὲ μελιχραὶ ὑποσχεσίαι βεβάασιν;, 388 μάλα γὰρ μέγαν ἦλιτες ὄρκον.

⁵⁷⁹ Med. 20-23 Μήδεια δ' ἡ δύστηνος ἠτιμασμένη / βοῶν μὲν ὄρκους, ἀνακαλεῖ δὲ δεξιᾶς / πίστιν μεγίστην, καὶ θεοὺς μαρτύρεται / οἴας ἀμοιβῆς ἐξ Ἰάσονος κυρεῖ, 160-163 ὦ μεγάλα Θέμι καὶ πότνι Ἄρτεμι, / λεύσσεθ' ἅ πάσχω, μεγάλοις ὄρκους / ἐνδησαμένα τὸν κατάρατον / πόσιν;

⁵⁸⁰ Med. 491-495 ὄρκων δὲ φρουδῆ πίστις, οὐδ' ἔχω μαθεῖν / εἰ θεοὺς νομίζεις τοὺς τότε οὐκ ἄρχειν ἔτι / ἢ καινὰ κεῖσθαι θέσμι' ἀνθρώποις τὰ νῦν, / ἐπεὶ σύννοισθ' ἄ γ' εἰς ἔμ' οὐκ εὐορκος ὦν.

⁵⁸¹ Met. 7.47-48 quid tuta times? accingere et omnem / pelle moram!

illusory and ironically “corrects” the fearful premonitions of Dido.⁵⁸² The omniscient narrator of the *Aeneid* claims that the Carthaginian queen has correctly perceived beforehand Aeneas’ impending treachery, namely his departure for Italy, despite the seeming absence of danger and views this foreboding as a reflection of a lover’s imperviousness to trickery.⁵⁸³ Ovid’s *Medea*, on the contrary, deceives herself with a specious feeling of safety, since the reader knows perfectly well that she is going to be betrayed by Jason in Corinth.⁵⁸⁴

The next section of *Medea*’s soliloquy consists of a climactic series of fantasies concerning her life with Jason in Greece, which function as yet another rhetorical argument by which she aims to convince herself to aid the hero. The young heroine’s dreams about the future allude to the forthcoming events in the saga recounted in the Euripidean and Apollonian intertexts and are fraught with dramatic irony, since familiarity with Ovid’s Greek models alerts the reader to the fact that they all constitute delusions, which will be tragically frustrated. *Medea*’s first reverie is that Jason will feel eternally indebted to her for rescuing him and that he will repay her by means of a solemn marriage.⁵⁸⁵ Another reward she expects to receive is to be celebrated by throngs of women throughout Greece as a divine savior of the Argonauts.⁵⁸⁶ Both fantasies are highly ironical, since they will not be fulfilled. In lieu of the ceremonious wedding the Ovidian heroine hopes for, a hasty and informal marriage will take place on the island of the Phaeacians in *Argonautica* 4.1128-1227, so that *Medea* may avoid capture by the Colchians.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸² Kenney 2011 v. 7.41.

⁵⁸³ *Aen.* 4.296-298 *At regina dolos (quis fallere possit amantem?) / praesensit, motusque excepit prima futuros / omnia tuta timens.*

⁵⁸⁴ Binroth-Bank 1994, 55.

⁵⁸⁵ *Met.* 7.48-49 *tibi se semper debebit Iason, / te face sollemni iunget sibi.*

⁵⁸⁶ *Met.* 7.49-50 *perque Pelasgas / seruatrix urbes matrum celebrabere turba.*

This marriage is also fated to have a catastrophic conclusion, given that Jason will abandon Medea for the Corinthian princess in Euripides' play.⁵⁸⁸ What is more, Medea's aspirations to glory are thwarted later in the Ovidian narrative, since after the Argonauts' return to Greece the Thessalians hold festivities and make sacrificial offerings not in honor of Medea, but of the gods (7.159-162).⁵⁸⁹

Scholars have remarked that the Ovidian heroine's fantasies echo the Apollonian Jason's promises to Medea, in order to secure her aid. The Greek hero vows that he is going to repay her for her succor by making her his lawfully wedded wife.⁵⁹⁰ Furthermore, the hero assures her that she is going to become famous throughout Greece by the praise of the Argonauts and their female relatives and will be even honored as a goddess for saving the Argonautic expedition.⁵⁹¹

What has not been observed, however, is that the Ovidian heroine's wishful thinking evokes and reverses the Euripidean Jason's argument by which he attempts to refute Medea's claim that he owes gratitude to her. The hero maintains that she exaggerates the aid she offered him in his trials and deems Aphrodite the only savior of the Argonautic expedition, on the grounds that Medea rescued him under the compulsion of Eros' arrows.⁵⁹² In addition, the

⁵⁸⁷ Binroth-Bank 1994, 50-51.

⁵⁸⁸ Anderson 1972, v. 7.49.

⁵⁸⁹ Binroth-Bank 1994, 49 n. 111.

⁵⁹⁰ Arg. 3.990 σοι δ' ἂν ἐγὼ τείσαιμι χάριν μετόπισθεν ἀρωγῆς, 1128-1129 ἡμέτερον δὲ λέχος θαλάμοις ἔνι κουριδίοισιν / πορσανέεις [...] (See Bömer 1976, v. 7.49).

⁵⁹¹ Arg. 3.992-994 [...] ὧς δὲ καὶ ἄλλοι / ἥρωες κλήσουσιν ἐς Ἑλλάδα νοστήσαντες, / ἠρώων τ' ἄλοχοι καὶ μητέρες, 1122-1127 εἰ δέ κεν ἦθεα κείνα καὶ Ἑλλάδα γαῖαν ἴκηαι, / τιμήσσω γυναιξὶ καὶ ἀνδράσιν αἰδοίη τε / ἔσσειαι, οἱ δέ σε πάγχυ θεὸν ὧς πορσανέουσιν, / οὐνεκα τῶν μὲν παῖδες ὑπότροποι οἴκαδ' ἴκοντο / σῆ βουλή, τῶν δ' αὐτε κασίγητοί τε ἔται τε / καὶ θαλεροὶ κακότητος ἄδην ἐσάωθεν ἀκοίται· (See Anderson 1972, v. 7.50; Binroth-Bank 1994, 50-51; Kenney 2011, vv. 7.49-50).

⁵⁹² Med. 526-531 ἐγὼ δ', ἐπειδὴ καὶ λίαν πυργοῖς χάριν, / Κύπριν νομίζω τῆς ἐμῆς ναυκληρίας / σώτειραν εἶναι θεῶν τε κἀνθρώπων μόνην. / σοι δ' ἔστι μὲν νοῦς λεπτός· ἄλλ' ἐπίφθονος / λόγος διελεῖν ὧς Ἔρωσ σ' ἠνάγκασεν. / τόξοις ἀφύκτοις τοῦ μὸν ἐκσῶσαι δέμας.

Ovidian Medea's ambition for heroic fame diverges from the portrayal of her Apollonian counterpart, who never expresses such aspirations, and is instead reminiscent of her Euripidean predecessor, who is eager to attain glory by means of her revenge on Jason.⁵⁹³

Despite the enticing fantasies of a marriage with Jason and acquisition of renown in Greece, Medea seems momentarily to have compunctions about abandoning her family, ancestral gods, and homeland.⁵⁹⁴ She immediately, however, discards her misgivings by means of rhetorical arguments: she brands her father as savage, disdains her country as barbarous, considers her brother no obstacle to her departure due to his young age,⁵⁹⁵ has the support of her sister, and is possessed by the mightiest of all gods, Cupid.⁵⁹⁶ This contemptuous and dismissive attitude of the Ovidian heroine towards her relatives and fatherland deviates from the subsequent perspective of her Apollonian and Euripidean counterparts. When Medea finds out in the *Argonautica* that the Argonauts are pondering whether to surrender her to the Colchians, she bitterly regrets having deserted her country and parents, which were the most cherished things to

⁵⁹³ Med. 807-810 μηδεῖς με φαύλην κάσθενῆ νομιζέτω / μηδ' ἠσυχαιάν ἀλλὰ θατέρου τρόπου, / βαρεῖαν ἐχθροῖς καὶ φίλοισιν εὐμενῆ / τῶν γὰρ τοιοῦτων εὐκλεέστατος βίος. Ovid also depicts Medea as ambitious for heroic glory in *Heroides* 6, where Hypsipyle accuses her of attempting to overshadow Jason and take credit for his exploits (99-100 *adde quod ascribi factis procerumque tuisque / se iubet et titulo coniugis uxor obest*).

⁵⁹⁴ Met. 7.51-52 *ergo ego germanam fratremque patremque deosque / et natale solum uentis ablata relinquam?*

⁵⁹⁵ In a marked departure from his Greek sources, Ovid suppresses in the *Metamorphoses* Medea's murder of her brother Apsyrtus, since he makes no allusive foreshadowing of the deed in his heroine's monologue and omits entirely the episode in his abridged narrative of the Argonauts' return to Greece (7.155-158). In the *Argonautica* Apsyrtus is a grown man pursuing the Argonauts at the head of the Colchian fleet, but is lured by Medea into an ambush and slaughtered by Jason (4.305-348). In Euripides' play, on the other hand, Medea's murder of her brother, who is still a boy, at the palace's hearth is recounted as a flashback either by the rueful Medea (166-167) or by Jason, who employs it as rhetorical invective against her (1333-1335). The Roman poet, on the contrary, offers in other works of his an alternative version of the myth, in which Apsyrtus is a child taken hostage by Medea, who dismembers him and scatters his limbs, in order to delay Aetes' pursuit of the Argonauts. In *Heroides* 12 Medea repents killing her brother and wishes that she could share his fate (113-116), while in *Heroides* 6 Hypsipyle vituperates Medea for dismembering her brother and fears the same doom for her children if they fall at the Colchian's hands (129-130 *spargere quae fratris potuit lacerata per agros / corpora, pignoribus parceret illa meis?*). Finally, Ovid offers a full account of Apsyrtus' *sparagmos* by Medea in *Tristia* 3.9.

⁵⁹⁶ Met. 7.53-55 *nempe pater saeuus, nempe est mea barbara tellus, / frater adhuc infans; stant mecum uota sororis, / maximus intra me deus est.*

her, on account of her shameful desire for Jason.⁵⁹⁷ In an analogous fashion the Euripidean protagonist feels remorse for forsaking her homeland and family, seduced by the persuasive power of Jason, only to be abandoned by him in Greece for another woman.⁵⁹⁸

Medea solidifies her decision to leave her homeland behind by asserting that the benefits she is going to enjoy by accompanying Jason in Greece surpass her present life in Colchis. These privileges include the heroic fame of having rescued the Argonauts, the contact with a glorious and superior civilization, and an intensive “training course” in Greek culture and art.⁵⁹⁹ The Ovidian heroine appropriates here the argument employed by Euripides’ Jason to rebut Medea’s charge of ingratitude, namely that he repaid her for saving his life by repudiating her for the Corinthian princess.⁶⁰⁰ In particular, the Euripidean hero asserts that the remuneration she has received exceeds by far the favors she bestowed upon him. He then proceeds to offer a catalogue of these benefits, which comprise residence in civilized Greece instead of barbarian Colchis, familiarity with justice, use of laws in place of violence, and attainment of renown throughout Greece for her magical skills.⁶⁰¹ In addition, it is noteworthy that the Ovidian Medea’s scornful characterization of her homeland as “barbarous” and thus inferior to Greece, in order to induce

⁵⁹⁷ Arg. 4.360-363 ἦς ἐγὼ οὐ κατὰ κόσμον ἀναιδήτω ἰότητι / πάτρην τε κλέα τε μεγάρων αὐτοῦς τε τοκῆας / νοσφισάμην, τά μοι ἦεν ὑπέρτατα [...].

⁵⁹⁸ Med. 800-802 ἡμάρτανον τόθ' ἠνίκ' ἐξελίμπανον / δόμους πατρώϊους, ἀνδρὸς Ἑλληνος λόγοις / πεισθεῖς, ὅς ἡμῖν σὺν θεῶι τεῖσει δίκην (See Binroth-Bank 1994, 50).

⁵⁹⁹ Met. 7.55-58 non magna relinquam, / magna sequar: titulum servatae pubis Achiuae / notitiamque loci melioris et oppida quorum / hic quoque fama uiget cultusque artesque uirorum. Anderson (1976, vv. 7.56-58) and Kenney (2011, v. 7.56) note that titulus apart from its figurative sense “glory” may refer here to a public inscription in honor of Medea in the form of pube Achiva servata or ob pubem Achivam servatam after the model of ob pubem servatam inscribed in Augustus corona civica.

⁶⁰⁰ Reggi 1995, 123-124; Cecchin 1994, 84; Kenney 2011, vv. 7.55-56

⁶⁰¹ Med. 534-541 μείζω γε μέντοι τῆς ἐμῆς σωτηρίας / εἴληφας ἢ δέδωκας, ὡς ἐγὼ φράσω. / πρῶτον μὲν Ἑλλάδι ἀντι βαρβάρου χθονὸς / γαῖαν κατοικεῖς καὶ δίκην ἐπίστασαι / νόμοις τε χρῆσθαι μὴ πρὸς ἰσχύος χάριν / πάντες δέ σ' ἵεσθοντ' οὕσαν Ἑλληνες σοφῆν / καὶ δόξαν ἔσχεες· εἰ δὲ γῆς ἐπ' ἐσχάτοις / ὄροισιν ὤικεις, οὐκ ἂν ἦν λόγος σέθεν.

herself to abandon it, evokes the perspective of the Greek hero in Euripides, who often uses the label “barbarian” as rhetorical invective against Medea (536, 1330).⁶⁰² Finally, Medea’s shift of viewpoint towards the end of her speech is reflected by her claim that she is going to seek “greater things” by sailing to Greece with Jason (7.55-56), which inverts her initial statement that she is going to follow the “worse path” despite her awareness and approbation of the better one (7.20-21).⁶⁰³ In other words, the young heroine’s cold-blooded calculation of the advantages to be gained by moving to Greece overcomes her earlier moral scruples to betray her family and homeland.

The climax of Medea’s dreams about the future is her ecstatic vision that with Jason as her husband she will be hailed as blessed and beloved of the gods and will eventually reach the stars.⁶⁰⁴ The Ovidian protagonist’s self-addressed *makarismos* and apotheosis fantasy engage in a complex dialogue with its Euripidean, Apollonian, and Virgilian intertexts. To begin with, Kenney has remarked that Ovid’s Medea echoes Jason’s enticing words in the *Argonautica*, who adduces the mythological exemplum of Theseus and Ariadne in order to persuade the Colchian maiden to grant him her magical aid.⁶⁰⁵ The Greek hero recounts that after the Cretan princess helped Theseus, she sailed away with him and became dear to the gods, who rewarded her by transforming her into a constellation.⁶⁰⁶ He then goes on to promise Medea that she will receive

⁶⁰² Binroth-Bank 1994, 50; Kenney 2011, v. 7.53. Cf. *Heroides* 12, where Medea accuses Jason of viewing her derisively as a “barbarian” (105 *illa ego, quae tibi sum nunc denique barbara facta*).

⁶⁰³ Binroth-Bank 1994, 56.

⁶⁰⁴ *Met.* 7.60-61 *quo coniuge felix / et dis cara ferar et uertice sidera tangam*.

⁶⁰⁵ Kenney 2008, 378-379; Kenney 2011 v. 7.61.

⁶⁰⁶ *Arg.* 3.1001-1004 *τὴν δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ / ἄθανατοι φίλαντο, μέσῳ δὲ οἱ αἰθέρι τέκμωρ / ἄστερόεις στέφανος, τὸν τε κλείουσ' Ἀριάδνης, / πάννυχος οὐρανίοις ἐνελίσσειται εἰδῶλοισιν*.

the same remuneration from the gods, if she rescues the Argonautic expedition.⁶⁰⁷ Jason's narrative is, however, deceptive, since he conveniently fails to mention that Ariadne was deserted by Theseus on Naxos and afterwards rescued by Dionysus, who made her his wife and deified her. Moreover, the story of Ariadne's abandonment by Theseus implicitly foreshadows Medea's own betrayal by Jason in Corinth. The evocation of the Apollonian model thus serves to suggest that the Ovidian Medea's dream of apotheosis is self-delusive, since she is destined to be deserted by the Greek hero and become an infamous infanticide.

The Roman poet apart from reworking here his Hellenistic predecessor also alludes to Euripides' play. More specifically, Medea's optimistic hope that thanks to her marriage with the Greek hero she will be deemed fortunate may echo the Euripidean heroine's sardonic eulogy of Jason as an admirable and faithful husband, who has made her seem blessed in the eyes of Greek women.⁶⁰⁸ Furthermore, her misguided confidence that she will be praised as dear to the gods may evoke and reverse the Euripidean Jason's revilement of Medea as a creature hateful to gods and humans alike on account of the impious murder of her children.⁶⁰⁹ Finally, the Ovidian heroine's dream of attaining heaven will be ironically realized in the Euripidean play (as well as in the ensuing narrative of the *Metamorphoses*), in which Medea will fly away from Corinth on a winged chariot bestowed upon her as a divine favor by Helios.⁶¹⁰ Hence, Ovid's intertextual engagement with Euripides hints that Medea's fantasies of a blissful marriage and deification will be tragically thwarted.

⁶⁰⁷ Arg. 3.1005-1006 ὧς καὶ σοὶ θεόθεν χάρις ἔσσειται, εἴ κε σαώσεις / τόσσον ἀριστήων ἀνδρῶν στόλον.

⁶⁰⁸ Med. 509-511 τοιγάρ με πολλαῖς μακαρίαν Ἑλληνίδων / ἔθηκας ἀντὶ τῶνδε· θαυμαστὸν δέ σε / ἔχω πόσιν καὶ πιστὸν ἢ τάλαιν' ἐγώ.

⁶⁰⁹ Met. 1323-1324 ὃ μῖσος, ὃ μέγιστον ἐχθίστη γύνοι / θεοῖς τε κάμοι παντὶ τ' ἀνθρώπων γένει.

⁶¹⁰ Kenney 2008, 379.

Last but not least, Medea's dream of achieving deification "corrects" Dido's reproach to Aeneas that because of him she lost her modesty and earlier repute, which was her only path to posthumous apotheosis.⁶¹¹ Unlike the Virgilian heroine, for whom the relationship with Aeneas constitutes a source of defamation and disgrace, Ovid's Medea deems her future marriage with Jason as a blessing, which will confer upon her happiness, renown, and divine status.⁶¹² The allusion to the Virgilian intertext, however, alerts the reader to the fact that Medea, like Dido, is not going to fulfill her longing to reach the stars.

Medea's reverie of a blissful future with Jason is suddenly interrupted by her fear of the dangers lurking in the return voyage to Iolcus, namely Scylla, Charybdis, and the Clashing Rocks (7.62-65). She immediately dismisses these anxieties by imagining herself held safely in the arms of her husband (7.68-70). The characterization of Jason as her spouse triggers yet another unexpected change of viewpoint, since Medea becomes aware that all this time she has been under the spell of a self-delusion: she has labeled her imagined illicit relationship with Jason, which constitutes a betrayal of her father and homeland, as a lawful wedding, in order to conceal her transgression from herself.⁶¹³ Scholars have observed that the Ovidian heroine's realization constitutes an ironic evocation of the epic narrator's comment in the Aeneid that Dido calls her relationship with Aeneas a marriage, thereby masking her offense with a specious name.⁶¹⁴ There are, however, significant differences between the two passages, which derive from the fact that Ovid has substituted Medea's subjective perspective for the Virgilian

⁶¹¹ Aen. 4.321-323 [...] te propter eundem / exstinctus pudor et, qua sola sidera adibam, / fama prior [...] (See Kenney 2011 v. 7.61).

⁶¹² Binroth-Bank 1994, 55.

⁶¹³ Met. 7.69-70 coniugiumne putas speciosaque nomina culpae / imponis, Medea, tuae?.

⁶¹⁴ Aen. 4.171-172 nec iam furtium Dido meditatur amorem: / coniugium uocat, hoc praetexit nomine culpam) (See Cecchin 1997, 85; Kenney 2008, 379; Kenney 2011, vv. 7.69-70).

narrator's viewpoint. First of all, whereas Medea's words reflect a clear cognizance of her fault and a victory of reason over her furor, the narrator's remark in Virgil indicates Dido's self-deception and blindness due to her passion for Aeneas.⁶¹⁵ Moreover, the epic narrator's objective moral criticism of Dido is replaced by Medea's self-condemnation.⁶¹⁶ Finally, the Ovidian heroine's words contain humorous irony, because unlike her Virgilian model, who views her sexual encounter with Aeneas in the cave as a lawful wedding, Medea imagines being married to Jason before even having met him for the first time.

Medea's realization of her self-delusion leads to a final appeal addressed to herself to contemplate, while there is still time, the immensity of the crime she is about to commit, namely aid Jason in his tasks thereby betraying her country and family, and refrain from perpetrating it.⁶¹⁷ The Ovidian heroine's self-exhortation recalls the prayer of the chorus to the gods in Euripides' play, which takes place immediately before Medea's infanticide. The Corinthian women invoke the Earth and Helios to turn their gaze towards Medea, before she murders her children, and entreat the Sun god to prevent her from committing the impious deed.⁶¹⁸ The intertextual dialogue with the Euripidean tragedy is corroborated by a surviving fragment of Ennius' Medea, in which the chorus prays to Jupiter and the Sun to behold Medea's infanticide before it takes place, and forbid her to perpetrate it.⁶¹⁹ Thus, Ovid evokes Euripides by means of double allusion, that is both directly and indirectly through the mediating intertext of Ennius'

⁶¹⁵ Schmitzer 2003, 35.

⁶¹⁶ Binroth-Bank 1994, 56-57.

⁶¹⁷ Met. 7.70-71 ...quin aspice quantum / adgrediare nefas et, dum licet, effuge crimen!.

⁶¹⁸ Med. 1251-1254 ἰὼ Γᾶ τε καὶ παμφαῆς / ἄκτις Ἰλίου, κατίδεται ἴδετε τὴν / ὀλομένην γυναῖκα, πρὶν φοινίαν / τέκνοις προσβαλεῖν χεῖρ' αὐτοκτόνον, 1258-1260 ἀλλά νιν, ὃ φάος διογενές, κάτειργε / κατάπαυσσον ἔξελ' οἴκων τάλαιναν / φοινίαν τ' Ἐρινὺν ἦπ' ἀλαστόρων.

⁶¹⁹ Med. fr. 110 Iuppiter tuque adeo summe Sol qui res omnis inspicias / quique tuo lumine mare terram caelum contines / inspice hoc facinus prius quam fit. prohibebis scelus.

play, which in turn echoes the Greek tragedy. The Roman poet ingeniously transforms the Euripidean and Ennian chorus' prayer to the gods to thwart Medea's impending murder of her sons into a self-invocation of the Colchian Medea to avoid committing treason against her homeland. Furthermore, just as the Corinthian women's beseeching of the gods proves futile, since they do not intervene to prevent Medea's crime, likewise the Ovidian heroine's self-entreaty is made in vain. Although it initially seems that Medea's sense of modesty, piety, and righteousness have vanquished her irrational passion for Jason (7.72-73), as soon as the maiden lays eyes on the Greek hero she once again falls madly in love with him and decides to aid him contrary to her father's wishes (7.76-83).

3.1.2 Further Euripidean allusions in the Colchis narrative

In the remainder of the Colchis episode, namely Medea's meeting with Jason at Hecate's grove, the Greek hero's completion of the tasks set by Aeetes, and the acquisition of the Golden Fleece, Ovid draws on Apollonius' *Argonautica* as his main model. Nevertheless, there are some intriguing allusions to Euripides' *Medea*, which are worthy of analysis. To begin with, after Jason supplicates Medea to offer him her magical aid promising to make her his wife in return (7.89-91), she asks him for a pledge of fidelity (7.92-94) and the hero takes an oath in the name of Hecate and the Sun god.⁶²⁰ Ovid deviates here from the *Argonautica*, in which Jason swears by Zeus and Hera that he will marry Medea, as soon as they return to Greece.⁶²¹

⁶²⁰ Met. 7.94-97 ...per sacra triformis / ille deae lucoque foret quod numen in illo / perque patrem soceri cernentem cuncta futuri / euentusque suos et tanta pericula iurat. Cf. *Heroides* 12, where Jason makes a similar pledge to Medea in the name of Helios and Hecate (77-80 per mala nostra precor, quorum potes esse levamen, / per genus, et numen cuncta videntis avi, / per triplicis vultus arcanaque sacra Dianae, / et si forte alios gens habet ista deos).

The Roman poet echoes instead Euripides' play, where Medea vows in the name of Hecate to take vengeance on Jason for abandoning her in order to marry the Corinthian princess and on Creon for sentencing her to exile.⁶²² Moreover, the Euripidean heroine requires Aegeus to take an oath by Helios that he will provide her with refuge in Athens.⁶²³ Jason's oath by Hecate and Helios bears sinister connotations, since both divinities are closely associated with Medea and play an instrumental role in Jason's punishment in the Greek play. Medea is Hecate's priestess, since she is the divine patroness of magic arts, and the goddess must thus be imagined as assisting Medea in her revenge plot against her enemies. Helios is Medea's grandfather and not only gives Medea the golden crown with which she murders the Corinthian princess, but also facilitates her escape from Corinth after her vengeance is complete by granting her his flying chariot.⁶²⁴ Hence, the Ovidian hero's pledge, unlike that of his Apollonian predecessor, is teeming with irony, since the gods in whose name he unwittingly swears will collaborate with Medea to bring about his destruction.⁶²⁵

Another interesting, albeit covert, allusion to Euripides' drama can be found in the account of Jason's second task, his confrontation with the earthborn men. The warriors, who spring from the ground after the Greek hero sows the teeth of Mars' serpent, are likened to fetuses assuming human shape inside their mothers' womb and coming out to the light when

⁶²¹ Arg. 4.95-97 δαίμονη, Ζεὺς αὐτὸς Ὀλύμπιος ὄρκιος ἔστω / Ἥρη τε Ζυγίη, Διὸς εὐνέτις, ἧ μὲν ἐμοῖσιν / κουριδίην σε δόμοισιν ἐνιστήσεσθαι ἄκοιτιν, / εὐτ' ἂν ἐς Ἑλλάδα γαῖαν ἰκώμεθα νοστήσαντες (See Binroth-Bank 1994, 73).

⁶²² Med. 395-400 οὐ γὰρ μὰ τὴν δέσποιναν ἦν ἐγὼ σέβω / μάλιστα πάντων καὶ ξυνεργὸν εἰλόμην, / Ἐκάτην, μυχοῖς ναίουσαν ἐστίας ἐμῆς, / χαίρων τις αὐτῶν τοῦμὸν ἀλγυνεῖ κέαρ. / πικροὺς δ' ἐγὼ σφιν καὶ λυγροὺς θήσω γάμους, / πικρὸν δὲ κῆδος καὶ φυγὰς ἐμὰς χθονός (See Binroth-Bank 1994, 73).

⁶²³ Med. 746-747 ὄμνυ πέδον Γῆς πατέρα θ' Ἥλιον πατρός / τοῦμοῦ θεῶν τε συντιθεὶς ἅπαν γένος.

⁶²⁴ Kenney 2011, v. 7.96.

⁶²⁵ Binroth-Bank 1994, 73.

they are fully formed.⁶²⁶ The Ovidian simile diverges from that employed by Apollonius in the *Argonautica* to describe the creation of the earthborn men. The Hellenistic poet compares the soldiers rising from Ares' field and wielding shining arms to stars gleaming in the night sky after a winter storm.⁶²⁷ In both texts, however, Jason defeats the earthborn by hurling a great stone into their midst, thus causing them to turn against each other. Ovid's simile may evoke the Euripidean play in an oblique manner.⁶²⁸ In particular, the comparison of the earthborn warriors to newborn babies allows their destruction by Jason to be figuratively read as an infanticide, thereby prefiguring Medea's murder of her sons in the Greek play. This interpretation is substantiated by an echo of the Euripidean drama found in Medea's soliloquy. The Colchian maiden imagines in fear that, unless she helps Jason, he is going to fatally clash with his "crop", namely the earthborn men.⁶²⁹ Her words recall the chorus' condemnation of Medea for killing the children she herself gave birth to characterizing them as her own "crop".⁶³⁰

The highly condensed description of Jason's obtainment of the Golden Fleece and the return voyage to Iolcus also anticipates in an implicit way the events in Euripides' play. Jason's arrogance as he triumphantly departs with his spoils for Greece prefigures the portrayal of the hero in the Greek drama, where he is depicted as haughty and ungrateful towards Medea.⁶³¹

⁶²⁶ Met. 7.125-129 utque hominis speciem materna sumit in aluo / perque suos intus numeros componitur infans / nec nisi matus exit in auras, / sic ubi uisceribus grauidae telluris imago / effecta est hominis, feto consurgit in aruo.

⁶²⁷ Arg. 1359-1363 ὡς δ' ὀπότη', ἐς γαῖαν πολέος νιφετοῖο πεσόντος, / ἄν ἀπὸ χειμερίας νεφέλας ἐκέδασαν ἄελλαι / λυγαίη ὑπὸ νυκτί, τὰ δ' ἄθρόα πάντα φαάνθη / τείρεα λαμπετόωντα διὰ κνέφας – ὡς ἄρα τοίγε / λάμπον ἀναλδήσκοντες ὑπὲρ χθονός.

⁶²⁸ Kenney (vv. 7.125-130) maintains, on the contrary, that the Ovidian simile, which depicts the Earth as a mother figure, has a Lucretian provenance (R.N. 2.998; 5.795-7, 821-825).

⁶²⁹ Met. 7.29-30 concurrentque suae segeti, tellure creatis hostibus.

⁶³⁰ Med. 1279-1281 τάλαιν', ὡς ἄρ' ἦσθα πέτρος ἢ σίδαρος / ἅτις τέκνων ὄν ἔτεκες ἄροτον αὐτόχειρι / μοίραι κτενεῖς.

Furthermore, the Ovidian Jason's viewing of Medea as merely another part of the plunder, although it was thanks to her that he won the Golden Fleece, evokes the Euripidean heroine's complaint to the chorus that she was carried off as booty by the Greek hero.⁶³² Finally, the characterization of Medea as "gift-giver" (7.157) ominously foreshadows the fatal gifts she will offer the Corinthian princess.⁶³³

3.2 Medea in Iolcus

The question of Ovid's sources in the Pelias episode (7.297-349) is particularly complex and challenging to answer, because his main model, Euripides' Peliades, survives in extremely fragmentary condition. According to the ancient Life of Euripides the play belonged to the tragedian's first production at the City Dionysia in 455 B.C. Out of the sixteen extant fragments the majority have gnomic content and thus do not provide us with any useful insights into the playwright's treatment of the story. The highly fragmentary hypothesis of the play is likewise of little help, since the sole piece of information it offers is that the tragedy included the rejuvenation of a ram. Finally, the rhetorical summary (Progymnasmata 3.4) by the Armenian historian Moses of Chorene (5th cent. AD) constitutes merely a brief outline of the plot with very few details as to the particular manner in which Euripides dramatized the myth.

A tentative reconstruction of the Euripidean play is only made possible by examining and juxtaposing later mythographical sources (Hyginus 24, Pausanias 8.11.2-3, Nicolaus of

⁶³¹ Met. 7.155-156 [...] et auro / heros Aesonius potitur spolioque superbus.

⁶³² Met. 7.157 secum, spolia altera, portans; Med. 255-256 ἐγὼ δ' ἔρημος ἄπολις οὔσ' ὑβρίζομαι / πρὸς ἀνδρός, ἐκ γῆς βαρβάρου λελητισμένη (See Kenney 2011, v. 7.157; Binroth-Bank 1994, 99).

⁶³³ Kenney 2008, 368-369.

Damascus FGrHist90 F 54, Diodorus Siculus 4.50-53, and Apollodorus 1.9.27), which contain a number of plot elements that have been ascribed to the tragedy.⁶³⁴ These features include the setting of the action at Pelias' palace, the concealment of the Argonauts' return, Medea's disguise as a priestess of Artemis, the opposition of Alcestis, one of the daughters of Pelias, to the Colchian's plot, and finally the fire signal sent by Medea from the rooftop to summon Jason.⁶³⁵ Given the absence of substantial textual evidence for the Peliades, my comparative analysis of the Ovidian narrative and its Euripidean intertext will consequently focus on aspects of structure and plot development and will be predicated on a hypothetical reconstruction of the Greek play. It has been suggested that Sophocles' *Rhizotomoi* ("Root-Cutters") may also have treated the same mythical episode on the basis of a single fragment featuring Medea gathering magic herbs (F 354), but this hypothesis remains inconclusive on account of the scant evidence.⁶³⁶

Euripides' *Medea*, produced twenty-four years after the *Peliades* in 431 BC, incorporates the myth of Pelias as integral background to its plot by means of brief allusions to the earlier play.⁶³⁷ *Medea's* treacherous murder of Pelias not only explains her and Jason's flight to Corinth, but also foreshadows her cunning revenge plot against Creon, the Corinthian princess, and her

⁶³⁴ Kannicht (2004, 609) contends that Diodorus' account, while based on the Euripidean play, has been augmented and adorned with details derived from other sources.

⁶³⁵ Collard/Cropp 2008, 61 (Vol. II).

⁶³⁶ Radt 1985, 410-411; Collard/Cropp 2008, 63 (Vol. II).

⁶³⁷ In the prologue the Nurse presents Medea's and Jason's dwelling in Corinth as a result of the Colchian's persuasion of the Peliades to murder their father (9-10). During the agon with Jason Medea reminds him how she killed Pelias as a favor to him (486-487), in order to reproach him for his ingratitude and perfidy. A few lines below in a state of tragic aporia the heroine expresses her despair over her impending exile by claiming that she cannot return either to Colchis on account of betraying her father, nor to Iolcus, because she contrived Pelias' death (504-505). Finally, she asserts that the royal houses of Pelias and Creon are hostile to her (734-735) and may thus come to Athens to demand her surrender, so as to convince Aegeus to take a solemn oath by the gods that he will offer her secure refuge in his city.

husband. In what follows I will argue that Ovid, being aware of the close affinities between the two tragedies, not only draws on the Peliades in his narrative, but also repeatedly alludes to the Medea. First of all, Medea's crafty deception of the Peliades recalls her manipulation of Creon and Aegeus in the Euripidean play. Moreover, the Colchian's exploitation of the gullible daughters of Pelias as instruments to murder their father echoes her employment of her own innocent sons as a vehicle to avenge herself on her husband and the royal house of Corinth. Furthermore, the rejuvenation of the ram and the murder of Pelias implicitly evoke the death scenes of the Corinthian princess and Creon respectively by means of "fragmentation". In particular, the Roman poet mentions only in passing the demise of the Corinthian king and his daughter in his abridged summary of the events in Corinth (7.394-397) and instead transposes elements of the Euripidean scenes to the Pelias episode. Finally, Medea's aerial escape from Iolcus is both reminiscent of and anticipates her flight from Corinth on Helios' chariot.

In the Pelias narrative Ovid conflates the Euripidean model with the Virgilian and Apollonian intertexts, just as he did earlier in the Colchis episode. As we shall see below, Medea's trickery of the daughters of Pelias is evocative of Sinon's deception of the Trojans in Aeneid 2 (57-194), while the stealthy infiltration of Medea and the Peliades into the king's chamber in order to murder him reworks the treacherous invasion of Helen, Menelaus, and Ulysses in Deiphobus' quarters in Book 6 (477-534). What is more, the depiction of the Peliades as averting their eyes while slaying their father recalls the depiction of the Apollonian Medea, who turns away from her brother Apsyrtus' slaughter by Jason, so as to avoid the pollution of kindred blood (4.464-481).

Finally, the Pelias story converses intratextually with the immediately preceding narrative of Aeson and essentially constitutes its "inverted doublet" (7.159-296). More specifically,

Medea's rejuvenation of Jason's father prompts Bacchus to ask her to restore his old nurses to their former youth (7.294-296). The rejuvenation of the aged ram by the Colchian sorceress is, on the other hand, part of her plot to dupe the Peliades into believing that she will make their father young again, if they dismember him and boil his limbs. Thus, Medea contrives the murder of Pelias by camouflaging it as a pseudo-rejuvenation ritual.

3.2.1 Divergences from Euripides' Peliades

Ovid's Pelias narrative deviates significantly from its Euripidean model in terms of plot and structure. To begin with, the Greek play must have referred to an explicit motivation for the murder of Pelias, which can be conjectured from the mythographical and literary sources offering various reasons for Jason's desire to take vengeance on his uncle. One incentive could have been the dethronement of Aeson by his brother and Pelias' dispatch of Jason to Colchis to recover the Golden Fleece, so that he would meet his death during the perilous voyage (Hyginus 24.1, Apoll. Arg. 1.5-17, Pind. Pyth. 4.71-78). An alternative motive may have been Pelias' murder of Jason's relatives (his father, mother, and younger brother) due to his belief that the Argonauts had perished in their expedition (Apollod. 1.9.27, Diod. 4.50.1.1-3.16). The common element of the two versions is that Medea plays an instrumental role in Jason's revenge, since she undertakes to devise and execute the murder scheme.

Ovid, on the other hand, does not cite any overt motive for the slaying of Pelias other than Medea's wish to perpetuate her treacherous ways.⁶³⁸ Through this pointed departure from the previous tradition the Roman poet on the one hand focuses exclusively on Medea, since he excludes Jason entirely from the action rendering him merely a silent accomplice, and on the

⁶³⁸ Met. 7.297 *neve doli cessent*.

other hand he paints a highly negative portrait of the Colchian, in that she acts purely out of a desire for deception and wickedness.⁶³⁹ Ovid's treatment in the *Metamorphoses* also contrasts with his earlier elegiac version of the events in *Heroides* 12, where Medea claims that it was for Jason's sake that she orchestrated Pelias' murder by his daughters.⁶⁴⁰

Ovid follows Euripides in placing the action at Pelias' palace, but he diverges from his tragic antecedent with regard to the specifics of the setting. In particular, on the basis of the mythological sources (Hyg. 24.2, Diod. 4.50.3.16-19) it has been suggested that in the Peliades the return of the Argonauts to Iolcus is kept secret and the *Argo* is hidden in a nearby anchorage. In the *Metamorphoses*, however, the heroes come back openly to the city, since the preceding episode of Aeson's rejuvenation begins with the Thessalian people's public celebration in honor of their *nostos* (7.159-162). Moreover, the Roman poet deviates from his predecessor in terms of the stratagem employed by Medea to deceive the Peliades and win their trust. In the Euripidean play the Colchian probably disguised herself as a priestess of Artemis, a false identity which conferred religious authority on her and thus enabled her to trick the daughters of Pelias into believing that she would rejuvenate their father. This premise is predicated on the one hand on the mythographical evidence (Hyg. 24.2, Diod. 4.51.1) and on the other hand on the fact that in Pacuvius' tragedy *Medus Medea* assumes an analogous disguise as priestess of Diana and deceives king Perses by promising to free Colchis from famine (fr. 174-176, Hyg. 27), a plot element which the Roman tragedian most likely derived from Euripides' drama. On the contrary, in Ovid's narrative Medea does not adopt a counterfeit identity, but pretends instead to have engaged in a dispute with Jason and flees to the Peliades as a suppliant in order to gain their

⁶³⁹ Bömer 1976, vv. 7.297-349; Kenney 2011, v. 7.297-349.

⁶⁴⁰ Her. 12.129-132 *quid referam Peliae natas pietate nocentes / caesaque virginea membra paterna manu? / ut culpent alii, tibi me laudare necesse est, / pro quo sum totiens esse coacta nocens* (See Newlands 1997, 188).

sympathy and thereby manipulate them more easily (7.297-299). Pausanias also relates that Medea feigned hatred for Jason, whereas in reality she was conspiring with him against Pelias (8.11.2.1-3). Thus it may be postulated that Ovid and Pausanias are both drawing on a later Hellenistic source, unknown to us, which depicted the Colchian pretending to be at odds with her husband as part of her ruse to trick the Peliades. Alternatively the two authors may be deriving this feature from Euripides, but, as has been argued above, it is more likely that in the Greek play Medea employed instead the subterfuge of disguising herself as a priestess of Artemis. As we shall see below, the Ovidian heroine is also reminiscent of the Virgilian Sinon, who feigns enmity for Ulysses, so as to win the pity and friendship of the Trojans.

Another important Ovidian deviation from the Euripidean tragedy concerns the characterization of the Peliades. Drawing once again on the mythographical texts, we can assume that the Greek play depicted Alcestis as the only daughter of Pelias who opposed Medea's plot.⁶⁴¹ In Hyginus (24.2) she is said to initially reject the sorceress' claim that she could rejuvenate their father, while in Diodorus (4.52.2.8-3.10) she abstains entirely from the act of Pelias' murder on account of her filial piety. In the *Metamorphoses*, on the other hand, none of the Peliades holds a distinct role in the story and they are easily manipulated by the Colchian into killing their father. In this way Ovid lays more emphasis on Medea's deceptive skills and portrays the daughters of Pelias as one-dimensional characters without any individual features. Pelias himself must have played a central part in the Euripidean play as is evidenced by the testimony of Diodorus, where the king engages in dialogue with Medea asking her to prove her ability to rejuvenate him and later orders his daughters to perform any deed that the Colchian asks them (4.51.5.17-7.2). In the Ovidian narrative, however, Pelias recedes into the background

⁶⁴¹ Collard/Cropp (2008, 61 (Voll II)) ascribe F 603, where a father admonishes his daughter, to a dialogue between Pelias and Alcestis.

and does not participate in the action on account of being weighed down by old age; the only exception is the final scene, where the dying king makes a pathetic appeal to his daughters (7.343-347).⁶⁴²

The manner in which the Roman poet deals with the rejuvenation of the ram is illustrative of his poetic program in the *Metamorphoses*. The old ram's transformation into a lamb in the Peliades was in all probability an illusion conjured by Medea in order to deceive the Peliades into believing that she would restore their father to his youth. This hypothesis is corroborated both by Moses' summary of the play, who recounts that, while the boiling water shook the cauldron, the girls were tricked by Medea into thinking that the ram had been rejuvenated (3.4.3-4), and by mythographical sources, which recount that the lamb was a phantasm fashioned by Medea by means of her magic drugs (Hyg. 24.3, Diod. 4.52.2.2-2.5).⁶⁴³ Ovid, however, departs from his tragic model by representing the Colchian as carrying out a genuine transformation of the ram into a lamb (7.314-321). The Roman poet's treatment is in accord with the essence of his work, since it provides him with an explicit instance of physical metamorphosis. What is more, Medea's magical rejuvenation of the ram is in keeping with the consistent emphasis Ovid lays on the Colchian's sorcery skills in Book 7. In the opening story she affords Jason the magic drugs, which protect him from the fire-breathing bulls, in the Aeson episode she performs an elaborate magic ritual in order to rejuvenate the hero's father, in Corinth she employs her poisonous drugs to destroy Creon and his daughter, and finally in Athens she vanishes from sight in a magical cloud.

⁶⁴² Met. 7.299-300 *atque illam, quoniam grauis ipse senecta est, / excipiunt natae.*

⁶⁴³ Apollodorus (1.9.27) and Pausanias (8.11.2.6-3.1), on the other hand, relate that Medea performed an actual rejuvenation of the ram, while according to Nicolaus of Damascus (F 54) she rejuvenated instead some sheep.

Towards the end of the Euripidean play, after Medea has contrived the murder of Pelias, she probably sends a fire signal from the palace's rooftop, so as to summon Jason and the other Argonauts to enter the city, something that is attested by the mythographical evidence (Hyg. 24.5, 4.52.3.12-4.19). In the *Metamorphoses*, on the other hand, Medea sends no signal to the Greek hero, a divergence which reflects once again Ovid's focus on Medea and his exclusion of Jason from the action. Moreover, the Greek tragedy must have surely included a recognition scene, in which the Peliades painfully realize that they have been deceived by Medea into impiously murdering their father. The mythographical texts report two different reactions on the part of the daughters of Pelias. They either flee into exile in order to avoid reproach for their crime (Hyg. 24.4, Paus. 8.11.1.9-10, 3.4-5) or they attempt to commit suicide, but are prevented by Jason, who takes pity on their suffering (Diod. 4.52.4-5). The Ovidian narrative, on the contrary, does not feature an *anagnorisis*, but focuses exclusively on Medea's escape.⁶⁴⁴ The Roman poet thus avoids depicting the reversal of the Peliades' fortune and the tragic pathos they experience,⁶⁴⁵ just as he previously did in the Pentheus story, where he refrained from reporting Agave's return to Thebes, her realization of her son's murder, and the *peripeteia* of her fate.

Finally, Ovid departs from the Euripidean model with regard to the aftermath of Pelias' murder. According to one tradition Jason departed with Medea for Corinth, after he bestowed the kingship on Pelias' son, Acastus, and arranged the marriages of the Peliades (Hyg. 24.5, Diod. 4.53.1.12-3.27). In other words, the couple left from Iolcus on friendly terms with the Thessalians. It is more plausible, however, that the Greek play offered another variant, according to which Jason and Medea were punished with banishment from Iolcus by Acastus and the Thessalian people and subsequently found refuge in Corinth (Apollod. 1.9.27, Nicol. Damasc. F

⁶⁴⁴ Kenney 2011, vv. 7.348-349.

⁶⁴⁵ Anderson 1972, v. 7.349.

54). The fact that this version was dramatized in Euripides' *Peliades* is suggested by the allusions the tragedian makes to the earlier play in his *Medea*, where the Colchian asserts that the house of Pelias is inimical to her (504-505) and dreads the kind of reception the daughters of Pelias will offer her if she ever returns to Iolcus (734-735). Ovid, on the other hand, focuses entirely on Medea's evasion of punishment by escaping on her serpent-drawn chariot, making no reference whatsoever to Jason's departure or to the reaction of the Thessalians (7.350-351). Furthermore, Medea's use of her flying chariot did not in all probability feature in the *Peliades*, since it is not attested by any of the mythographical sources nor by the summary of Moses. As I will attempt to show below, it is probably an element transplanted by Ovid into his narrative from the exodos of Euripides' *Medea*.

3.2.2. The deception of the Peliades

The analysis of the intertextual relationship between the *Peliades* and the Ovidian narrative was limited to aspects of plot and structure due to the dearth of textual evidence for the Greek play. I will examine the Roman poet's engagement with Euripides' extant *Medea* in terms of thematic affinities, scenic evocations, and verbal allusions as well as with the Virgilian and Apollonian intertexts. The Pelias episode opens with Medea's advent as a suppliant at the court of the king, where she is offered hospitality by the Peliades, since their father is weighed down by old age.⁶⁴⁶ The scene echoes and inverts the words of Euripides' heroine, who in a state of tragic aporia bewails the fact that she cannot find refuge at the abode of the daughters of Pelias, because she

⁶⁴⁶ Met. 7.298-300 [...] *Peliaeque ad limina supplex / confugit; atque illam, quoniam grauis ipse senecta est, / excipiunt natae.*

devised their father's death.⁶⁴⁷ Thus, the Ovidian Medea's exploitation of the Peliades' hospitality in order to bring about their father's demise foreshadows and explains the inability of her Euripidean counterpart to return to Iolcus as a suppliant.

On a thematic level Medea's utilization of the unwitting Peliades as instruments to destroy their father is reminiscent of the Euripidean heroine's employment of her own innocent sons as a vehicle to wreak vengeance on her husband and the royal family of Corinth. In particular, the Ovidian protagonist, taking advantage of the girls' devotion and love for their father, tricks them into killing him by falsely promising that she would subsequently rejuvenate him. In the Greek play Medea first dispatches her children with poisoned gifts to the Corinthian princess thereby causing her death as well as that of her father and afterwards murders her sons, so as to complete her revenge on Jason by depriving him both of his current and future offspring.

The cunning deception of the daughters of Pelias by the Colchian sorceress is also a close reworking of Medea's manipulation of Aegeus in Euripides' play. First of all, the Ovidian heroine's feigned quarrel with Jason, which constitutes a ruse to win the friendship of the Peliades, evokes the Euripidean protagonist's genuine discord with her husband, which she similarly employs to gain Aegeus' sympathy.⁶⁴⁸ What is more, Medea's beseeching of the Peliades to provide her with refuge recalls the Colchian's supplication of Aegeus to offer her shelter in Athens.⁶⁴⁹ In both texts Medea's supplication is integral to her revenge plot, since in

⁶⁴⁷ Med. 502-505 νῦν ποῖ τράπωμαι; πότερα πρὸς πατρός δόμους, / οὓς σοὶ προδοῦσα καὶ πάτραν ἀφικόμην; / ἢ πρὸς ταλαίνας Πελιάδας; καλῶς γ' ἂν οὖν / δέξαιντό μ' οἴκοις ὧν πατέρα κατέκτανον. Cf. also Ennius Medea Exul, fr. 104, Joc., quo nunc me uortam? quod iter incipiam ingredi? / domum paternamne? anne ad Peliae filias?

⁶⁴⁸ Met. 7.297-298 neue doli cessent, odium cum coniuge falsum / Phasias adsimulat; Med. 690-692 Μη. Αἰγεῦ, κάκιστός ἐστί μοι πάντων πόσις. / Αἰ. τί φήεις; σαφῶς μοι σὰς φράσον δυσθυμίας. / Μη. ἀδικεῖ μ' Ἰάσων οὐδὲν ἐξ ἐμοῦ παθῶν.

⁶⁴⁹ Met. 7.298-300 Peliaeque ad limina supplex / confugit; atque illam ... / excipiunt natae; Med. 709-713 ἀλλ' ἄντομαί σε τῆσδε πρὸς γενειάδος / γονάτων τε τῶν σῶν ἰκεσία τε γίνομαι, / οἴκτιρον οἴκτιρόν με τὴν δυσδαίμονα / καὶ μή μ' ἔρημον ἐκπεσοῦσαν εἰσίδης, / δέξαι δὲ χώραι καὶ δόμοις ἐφέστιον.

the *Metamorphoses* it helps her obtain the trust of the daughters of Pelias, while in Euripides' tragedy it affords her a safe haven in Athens, where she can flee for protection after murdering the Corinthian sovereigns and her children. The intertextual dialogue between the two scenes is confirmed by Ovid's own account of the subsequent events in the *Metamorphoses*, according to which Aegeus welcomes Medea in Athens and affords her hospitality.⁶⁵⁰

Finally, the Ovidian heroine's promise to magically rejuvenate the girls' father echoes and anticipates her Euripidean predecessor's pledge to Aegeus that she will grant him offspring by means of her drugs.⁶⁵¹ In either case, however, the promise of magical aid is in fact deceptive: Medea's pseudo-rejuvenation ritual is merely a stratagem for murdering Pelias, while Euripides must have expected the members of the audience who were familiar with his Aegeus treating the later events in Athens to be aware that his protagonist plans to provide children to the Athenian king not through her sorcery, but by marrying him and bearing him progeny herself. Once again the later Ovidian narrative, in which Medea becomes Aegeus' wife in Athens, corroborates the affinity between the two texts.⁶⁵²

Medea's rejuvenation of the old ram is an essential component of her deception of the Peliades, since it solidifies the girls' trust in her powers as well as in her alleged intention to restore their father to his youth.⁶⁵³ Ovid fashions this scene by drawing on the account of the Corinthian princess' death in the Euripidean messenger speech (1181-1202) through the

⁶⁵⁰ Met. 7.402-403 excipit hanc Aegeus, facto damnandus in uno; / nec satis hospitium est.

⁶⁵¹ Met. 7.304-305 spes est uirginibus Pelia subiecta creatis / arte suum parili reuiescere posse parentem, 309 mox ubi pollicita est; Med. 716-718 εὐρημα δ' οὐκ οἶσθ' οἶον ἠϋρηκας τόδε: / παύσω γέ σ' ὄντ' ἄπαιδα καὶ παίδων γονὰς / σπεῖραί σε θήσω· τοιάδ' οἶδα φάρμακα.

⁶⁵² Met. 7.403 thalami quoque foedere iungit.

⁶⁵³ Met. 7.309-311 'quo sit fiducia maior / muneris huius' ait, 'qui uestri maximus aeuo est / dux gregis inter oues, agnus medicamine fiet'.

intertextual technique of “fragmentation”. In particular, the Roman poet drastically abbreviates into a single line the scene of the princess’ demise in his own subsequent narrative (7.394) and transfers instead many elements from the Euripidean scene to his description of the ram’s rejuvenation after submitting them to radical transformation. In this way Medea’s metamorphosis of the ram both alludes to the Greek play and anticipates the scene of the princess’ fiery death later in the *Metamorphoses*.

After Medea kills and dismembers the ram, she throws its limbs along with potent potions into a boiling cauldron.⁶⁵⁴ What follows is an account of the aged ram’s transformation by the magic drugs: the animal’s body shrinks and its horns are burnt away as it gradually turns into a lamb.⁶⁵⁵ This description evokes the deadly effects of the poisoned gifts sent by the Euripidean heroine to the Corinthian princess: the golden crown emits magic flames and causes the young woman’s hair to burst into fire, while the envenomed robe slowly devours her flesh and makes it melt away from her bones.⁶⁵⁶ In a sense the Corinthian princess also undergoes a gruesome kind of metamorphosis, since her face and eyes become disfigured to the effect that she becomes unrecognizable to everyone but her father.⁶⁵⁷

Ovid signals his dialogue with the Greek tragedian by means of an implicit intertextual marker: he characterizes Medea as *venefica* (7.316), an adjective which apart from meaning “sorceress” bears the literal sense “poisoner”. The Roman poet thereby alludes to the Euripidean

⁶⁵⁴ Met. 7.314-316 *fodit et exiguo maculavit sanguine ferrum, / membra simul pecudis ualidosque uenefica sucos / mergit in aere cauo.*

⁶⁵⁵ Met. 7.316-317 *minuunt medicamina corpus / cornuaque exurunt nec non cum cornibus annos.*

⁶⁵⁶ Med. 1186-1187 *χρυσὸς μὲν ἀμφὶ κρατὶ κείμενος πλόκος / θαυμαστὸν ἔει νᾶμα παμφάγου πυρός, 1190 πυρουμένῃ, 1193-1194 σύνδεσμα χρυσὸς εἶχε, πῦρ δ', ἐπεὶ κόμην / ἔσεισε, μᾶλλον δις τόσῳ ἐλάμπετο, 1188-1189 πέπλοι δὲ λεπτοί, σῶν τέκνων δωρήματα, / λευκὴν ἔδαπτον σάρκα τῆς δυσδαίμονος, 1199-1200 σάρκες δ' ἀπ' ὀστέων ὥστε πεύκινον δάκρυ γνάθοις ἀδήλοισ φαρμάκων ἀπέρρεον)*

⁶⁵⁷ Med. 1196-1198 *πλὴν τῷ τεκόντι κάρτα δυσμαθῆς ἰδεῖν / οὐτ' ὀμμάτων γὰρ δῆλος ἦν κατάστασις / οὐτ' εὐφυῆς πρόσωπον.*

Medea's use of the poisoned gifts to murder the Corinthian princess and at the same time prefigures his own account of the young woman's death through the Colchian's venomous drugs.⁶⁵⁸ Moreover, the humorous description of the baby lamb echoes and inverts the tragic depiction of the dying Corinthian princess. The young animal bleats softly and springs out of the cauldron fleeing in a frolicsome manner and seeking a sheep's udders to suckle on.⁶⁵⁹ The young maiden, on the other hand, groans terribly due to the excruciating pain and rising from her seat turns to flight while attempting to throw the crown from her burning hair by shaking her head.⁶⁶⁰ Finally, the dread of the servants witnessing the ghastly spectacle of the Corinthian princess' demise, is converted into the astonishment of the Peliades at the ram's miraculous rejuvenation.⁶⁶¹ Thus, Ovid masterfully transforms the grisly scene of the princess' death into the comical and lighthearted account of the ram's metamorphosis.

Medea's trickery of the Peliades, apart from evoking the Euripidean heroine's manipulation of Aegeus, is also reminiscent of the Virgilian Sinon's deception of the Trojans in Aeneid 2. The Ovidian heroine's scheme essentially consists in concealing her treacherous plan of murdering of Pelias under the veneer of a "gift" she offers to the Peliades, namely her promise of rejuvenating their father.⁶⁶² This combination of deceit and gift-giving is emblematic of Medea in both her Euripidean and Apollonian incarnations: in the Greek play she contrives the death of the Corinthian princess and Creon by sending the new bride poisoned presents, while in

⁶⁵⁸ Met. 7.394 sed postquam Colchis arsit noua nupta uenenis.

⁶⁵⁹ Met. 7.319-321 et tener auditur medio balatus aeno; / nec mora, balatum mirantibus exsilit agnus / lasciuitque fuga lactentiaque ubera quaerit.

⁶⁶⁰ Met. 1184 δεινὸν στενάζασ' ἢ τάλαιν' ἠγείρετο, 1190-1192 φεύγει δ' ἀναστᾶσ' ἐκ θρόνων πυρουμένη, / σειούσα χαιτήν κρᾶτά τ' ἄλλοτ' ἄλλοσε, / ῥῖναι θέλουσα στέφανον.

⁶⁶¹ Met. 1201-1202 δεινὸν θέαμα. πᾶσι δ' ἦν φόβος θιγεῖν / νεκροῦ· τύχην γὰρ εἶχομεν διδάσκαλον; Met. 7.320 balatum mirantibus, 322 obstipuere satae Pelia.

⁶⁶² Met. 7.297 neve doli cessent, 309-310 quo sit fiducia maior / muneris huius.

the Hellenistic epic she lures her brother Apsyrtus into a deadly ambush by enticing him with gifts. The same thematic pattern of *donum* and *dolus* is found, however, in Book 2 of the *Aeneid*, where the Greeks send the Wooden Horse to the Trojans ostensibly as a votive offering to Minerva, but in reality it constitutes a stratagem aimed to bring about the fall of their city.

Ovid's allusive dialogue with the Virgilian intertext is indicated by the close affinities between Medea and Sinon. To begin with, both characters bring destruction to their enemies by means of deception: the Greek hero persuades the Trojans to bring the Horse into their city through the deceitful assertion that it will grant them protection and even enable them to conquer Greece, while the Colchian convinces the Peliades to murder their own father by falsely promising that she will afterwards magically rejuvenate his dismembered body. Indeed Medea's cunning trickery strongly recalls Sinon's crafty fraudulence.⁶⁶³ Medea's and Sinon's deceitfulness manifests itself in various ways. I argued above that in Euripides' *Peliades* Medea most likely deceived the daughters of Pelias by disguising herself as a priestess of Artemis. The Ovidian protagonist, however, arrives at the court of Pelias in the guise of a fugitive suppliant pretending to have engaged in a dispute with Jason and feigning enmity for her husband.⁶⁶⁴ The Roman poet thereby diverges from the Euripidean model and follows instead the *Aeneid*, where Sinon allows himself to be captured by the Trojans and pretends to be an exile harboring hatred for Ulysses, because the Ithacan devised the death of his cousin Palamedes and bearing a grudge against the Greeks in general for letting him be unjustly condemned to sacrifice.⁶⁶⁵ What is more,

⁶⁶³ Met. (3.297 *Neue doli cessent*, 300-301 ...*quas tempore callida paruo / Colchis amicitiae mendacis imagine cepit*, 308 *ficta grauitate*; Aen. 2.152 *dixerat. ille dolis instructus et arte Pelasga*, 195-196 *talibus insidiis periurique arte Sinonis / credita res, captique dolis lacrimisque coactis*, 79-80 *nec, si miserum Fortuna Sinonem / finxit, unum etiam mendacemque improba finget*, 107 *ficto pectore fatur*.

⁶⁶⁴ Met. 7.297-298 *odium cum coniuge falsum / Phasias adsimulat*.

both Sinon and Medea mingle truth with lies, so as to deceive their victims. The Colchian recounts to the Peliades her genuine rejuvenation of Aeson (7.302-303) before falsely promising to restore their father to his youth (7.309-310). The Greek hero likewise blends the true story of Ulysses' intrigue against Palamedes with the fabricated narrative of the Ithacan's plot to have Sinon sacrificed and he fuses the real episode of the Palladium's theft by Ulysses and Diomedes with the fictitious tale of the construction of the Wooden Horse as a votive offering to appease the goddess.

Another shared trait of the two characters is the rhetorical skill by means of which they trick their audience. Medea relates to the maidens a catalogue of her magical exploits, but lays particular emphasis on her rejuvenation of Aeson by dwelling on that specific feat.⁶⁶⁶ She thereby plants the seed in the Peliades' mind that their father can also be restored to youth by her sorcery and thus they themselves seek her aid and even offer her a generous reward (7.304-306). In an analogous fashion Sinon abruptly interrupts the narrative of Ulysses' cunning scheme against him in order to fuel the Trojans' suspense to hear the rest of his story (2.105-106).⁶⁶⁷ Finally, in both narratives a supernatural event reinforces Medea and Sinon's deceptive speech. In the Aeneid Laocoon attempts to persuade the Trojans that the Wooden Horse is a Greek stratagem and hurls his spear against it. Thus, when the twin serpents sent by Minerva slay the priest and his children, the Trojans terrified by the omen claim that Laocoon was justly punished for his sacrilegious wounding of the goddess' votive offering and admit the Horse into the city

⁶⁶⁵ Aen. 2.94-96 nec tacui demens et me, fors si qua tulisset, / si patrios umquam remeassem uictor ad Argos, / promisi ultorem et uerbis odia aspera moui, 158-159 fas odisse uiros atque omnia ferre sub auras, / si qua tegunt, teneor patriae nec legibus ullis.

⁶⁶⁶ Met. 7.302-303 dumque refert inter meritorum maxima demptos / Aesonis esse situs atque hac in parte moratur.

⁶⁶⁷ Aen. 2.100-102 nec requieuit enim, donec Calchante ministro-- / sed quid ego haec autem nequiquam ingrata reuoluo, / quidue moror?

thus sealing their doom.⁶⁶⁸ Similarly after Medea fulfills her promised miraculous rejuvenation of the ram the dumbfounded Peliades lay aside any hesitation they may still have and urge her even more persistently to make their father young again, thereby setting in motion the final part of the Colchian's plot, namely the murder of the king.⁶⁶⁹

Ovid's intertextual engagement with Virgil is further complicated by the fact that not only the Ovidian Medea may echo Sinon, but also the Virgilian hero may in turn be reminiscent of Euripides' Medea. First of all, both characters destroy their enemies by means of cunning persuasion. Just as the Euripidean protagonist convinces king Creon to reprieve her exile from Corinth for a day, so that she may accomplish her revenge plot against Jason and the royal family, similarly the "banished" Sinon induces king Priam to let him stay in Troy and bring the Wooden Horse into the city, which leads to the Trojans' downfall. Sinon wins the sympathy of the Trojans by employing the tragic topos of *aporia*. He falsely laments that he is an exile, who has no place among the Greeks and the Trojans want to punish him with death.⁶⁷⁰ The Greek hero's words recall that of Medea in the Euripidean play, who in order to reproach Jason for the desperate situation he has brought her in bewails that now that she will be banished from Corinth she can turn neither to Colchis, because she betrayed her father, nor to Iolcus, since she contrived Pelias' murder.⁶⁷¹ Finally, both Medea and Sinon display fearless resolution in their plans. The Greek hero is confident in his valor and is prepared either to bring his scheme into completion or

⁶⁶⁸ Aen. 2.228-233 tum uero tremefacta nouus per pectora cunctis / insinuat pauor, et scelus expendisse merentem / Laocoonta ferunt, sacrum qui cuspide robur / laeserit et tergo sceleratam intors'erit hastam. / ducendum ad sedes simulacrum orandaque diuae / numina conclamant.

⁶⁶⁹ Met. 7.322-323 obstipuer'e satae Pelia, promissaque postquam / exhibuere fidem, tum uero impensius instant.

⁶⁷⁰ Aen. 2.69-72 'heu, quae nunc tellus,' inquit, 'quae me aequora possunt / accipere?' aut quid iam misero mihi denique restat, / cui neque apud Danaos usquam locus, et super ipsi / Dardanidae infensi poenas cum sanguine poscunt?'

⁶⁷¹ Med. 502-508 νῦν ποῖ τράπωμαι; πότερα πρὸς πατρὸς δόμους, / οὓς σοὶ προδοῦσα καὶ πάτραν ἀφικόμην; / ἢ πρὸς ταλαίνας Πελοπιδᾶς; καλῶς γ' ἂν οὖν / δέξαιντό μ' οἴκοις ὧν πατέρα κατέκτανον. / ἔχει γὰρ οὕτω τοῖς μὲν οἴκοθεν φίλοις / ἐχθρὰ καθέστηχ', οὓς δέ μ' οὐκ ἐχρῆν κακῶς / δρᾶν, σοὶ χάριν φέρουσα πολεμίους ἔχω.

to perish at the Trojans' hands.⁶⁷² Likewise the Euripidean heroine is ready either to cunningly plot the murder of her enemies in a stealthy fashion, provided that she finds a safe refuge to resort to after the deed, or to openly slay them, even if it means her own demise.⁶⁷³ Hence, Ovid evokes Euripides by means of double allusion, in that his Medea may recall her tragic predecessor both directly and obliquely through the intermediate model of Sinon.

3.2.3 The murder of Pelias

The climactic scene of the episode, namely Pelias' murder and dismemberment, contains many intriguing allusions to Euripides' Medea. To begin with, after the Colchian has lulled Pelias and his guards to sleep by means of her magic incantations, she and the Peliades enter the king's chamber, in order to stab him to death.⁶⁷⁴ This scene may echo the words of the Euripidean heroine contemplating the various ways in which she can avenge herself on her enemies. Medea briefly considers entering stealthily in Jason and the Corinthian princess' bridal chamber and slaying them with her sword, but rejects this plan out of fear of being apprehended in the act and resolves instead upon employing her magic drugs.⁶⁷⁵ Thus, whereas in Euripides' play the scheme of a clandestine infiltration and murder is merely entertained by Medea, in the Metamorphoses the Colchian puts the plan into action.

⁶⁷² Aen. 2.61-62 [...] fidens animi atque in utrumque paratus, / seu uersare dolos seu certae occumbere morti.

⁶⁷³ Med. 389-394 οὐκ ἔστι. μείνας' οὖν ἔτι σμικρὸν χρόνον, / ἦν μὲν τις ἡμῖν πύργος ἀσφαλῆς φανῆι, / δόλοι μ᾽ εἴμι τόνδε καὶ σιγῆι φόνον· / ἢ δ' ἔξελαύνηι ξυμφορὰ μ' ἀμήχανος, / αὐτῆ ξίφος λαβοῦσα, κεῖ μέλλω θανεῖν, / κτενῶ σφε, τόλμης δ' εἴμι πρὸς τὸ καρτερόν.

⁶⁷⁴ Met. 7.331-332 intrarant iussae cum Colchide limina natae / ambierantque torum.

⁶⁷⁵ Med. 376-380 πολλὰς δ' ἔχουσα θανασίμους αὐτοῖς ὁδοῦς, / οὐκ οἶδ' ὅποιαι πρῶτον ἐγχειρῶ, φίλαι· / πότερον ὑφάσω δῶμα νυμφικὸν πυρί, / ἢ θηκτὸν ὥσω φάσανον δι' ἥπατος, / σιγῆι δόμους ἐσβᾶσ' ἴν' ἔστρωται λέγος.

When the women have encircled Pelias' bed, Medea realizes that the maidens have compunctions to proceed to action and thus she delivers a short speech exhorting them to kill their father and falsely claiming that she will afterwards rejuvenate him (7.332-340). The Ovidian heroine's harangue evokes various passages of the Euripidean play. The Colchian opens her speech by reproaching the Peliades for their reluctance and passivity and spurring them to unsheathe their swords and stab their father, so that the old putrid gore may flow away and she can magically refill his body with fresh blood.⁶⁷⁶ Medea's appeal to the maidens may echo her Euripidean predecessor's "military" self-exhortation prior to the murder of her children. Medea rebukes herself for hesitating to perform the impious deed and urges first her heart to steel itself and then her hand to show no cowardice, but draw the sword and kill her sons.⁶⁷⁷ Therefore, Ovid transforms the Euripidean protagonist's agonizing self-goading to commit infanticide into Medea's ruthless and deceptive exhortation to the ignorant Peliades to murder their father.

The main rhetorical argument employed by Medea to manipulate the Peliades into committing patricide is that of pietas. She paradoxically argues that the maidens' murder of their father constitutes an act of love and devotion and a filial duty they have to perform, since his death will allegedly result in resurrection and rejuvenation.⁶⁷⁸ Thus in a scene teeming with dramatic irony the innocent girls slay their father, so as to avoid being impious to him.⁶⁷⁹ The

⁶⁷⁶ Met. 7.332-334 'quid nunc dubitatis inertes? / stringite' ait 'gladios ueteremque haurite cruorem, / ut repleam uacuas iuuenali sanguine uenas'.

⁶⁷⁷ Med. 1242-1246 ἀλλ' εἴ' ὀπλίζου, καρδία· τί μέλλομεν / τὰ δεινὰ κάναγκαῖα μὴ πράσσειν κακά; / ἄγ', ὧ τάλαινα χεῖρ ἐμή, λαβὲ ξίφος, / λάβ', ἔρπε πρὸς βαλβίδα λυπηρὰν βίου, / καὶ μὴ κακισθῆς [...].

⁶⁷⁸ Met. 7.336-338 si pietas ulla est nec spes agitatis inanes, / officium praestate patri telisque senectam / exigit. According to Anderson (1972, v. 7.336) Medea's warped notion of filial love recalls Procne's analogous paradoxical perversion of piety, who claims that devotion to her husband Tereus is a crime (6.635 scelus est pietas in coniuge Terei).

⁶⁷⁹ Met. 7.339-340 his ut quaeque pia est hortatibus impia prima est / et, ne sit scelerata, facit scelus. Kenney (2011, vv. 7.332-338) notes that Ovid elaborates here on the paradoxical theme of the Peliades' murder of their father out

Ovidian heroine's exploitation of the Peliades' pietas may be evocative of Medea's capitalization on Creon's paternal love in the Greek play, in order to attain her vengeance against Jason and the royal family. The Euripidean protagonist craftily convinces the Corinthian king to suspend her exile from the city for one day, falsely claiming that she needs to find a safe haven for her children, whereas in reality she needs the additional time to set in motion her scheme (340-343). The Colchian succeeds in overcoming the king's resolution by entreating him to pity her sons and appealing to his role as father and his affection for his own children.⁶⁸⁰ Hence, just as the Euripidean Medea manages to prolong her stay in Corinth, so as to execute her plot of revenge, by taking advantage of Creon's fatherly piety, likewise her Ovidian counterpart dupes the Peliades into killing their father by invoking their filial love.

The gruesome scene of Pelias' death may evoke the account of Creon's demise in the messenger speech of Euripides' Medea by means of "fragmentation". More specifically, Ovid only alludes to Creon's end in his epigrammatic version of the events at Corinth by referring to the conflagration of the king's palace by the Colchian's drugs and grafts instead elements of the Euripidean scene into the episode of Pelias' murder.⁶⁸¹ After the Thessalian king has received multiple wounds from his daughters' swords he suddenly awakens from his magically induced sleep drenched in blood and half-mangled and attempts to rise from his bed, supporting himself on his elbow.⁶⁸² This description may echo the scene of the Greek play, in which Creon after having embraced and lamented his dead daughter tries to raise himself to his feet, but clings fast

of piety, which he had earlier introduced in a pithy form in Heroides 12.129-130: quid referam Peliae natas pietate nocentes / caesaque uirginea membra paterna manu?.

⁶⁸⁰ Med. 344-345 οἰκτιρε δ' αὐτούς· καὶ σὺ τοὶ παιδῶν πατὴρ πέφυκας· εἰκὸς δὲ σφιν εὐνοϊάν σ' ἔχειν.

⁶⁸¹ Met. 7.395 flagrantemque domum regis mare uidit utrumque.

⁶⁸² Met. 7.343-344 ille cruore fluens cubito tamen adleuat artus / semilacerque toro temptat consurgere.

to her poisoned robe and whenever he uses force to get up his flesh is torn from his bones.⁶⁸³

Hence, in both texts Medea employs the offspring as instruments to murder their father: the dead princess inadvertently causes her father's death by entangling him in a death grip triggered by the Colchian's lethal drugs and similarly the Peliades unknowingly bring about their father's doom thinking that they will rejuvenate him.

Moreover, the dying Pelias, who stretches his arms in supplication to his daughters inquiring who is the instigator of the attack against him, may recall the weeping Corinthian king, who throws his arms around his dead child and asks her, which divinity has destroyed her.⁶⁸⁴ The words of both characters are filled with dramatic irony, in that Creon does not suspect that Medea is behind the murder of his daughter, thinking instead that her death was caused by a god, and Pelias unwittingly wonders, who has devised his assassination, although Medea is present at the scene. The Thessalian king's entreaty halts his daughters' assault and threatens to ruin Medea's plan, but the cunning sorceress prevents him from saying anything else by swiftly cutting his throat.⁶⁸⁵ The epic narrator's comment regarding Pelias' wish to speak further might

⁶⁸³ Med. 1211-1217 ἐπεὶ δὲ θρήνων καὶ γόων ἐπαύσατο, / χρήζων γεραῖον ἐξαναστήσαι δέμας / προσείχθ' ὥστε κισσοῦς ἔρνεσιν δάφνης / λεπτοῖσι πέπλοις, δεινὰ δ' ἦν παλαίσματα. / ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἦθελ' ἐξαναστήσαι γόνυ, / ἢ δ' ἀντελάζυτ'· εἰ δὲ πρὸς βίαν ἄγοι, / σάρκας ἐσπάρασσ' ἀπ' ὀστέων. The description of Pelias' murder is also reminiscent of other scenes from the *Metamorphoses* through intratextual conflation. In particular, the king's half-mangled supplication to his daughters (7.344-345 *semilacerque toro temptat consurgere et inter/ tot medius gladios pallentia bracchia tendens*) recalls that of Pentheus to his mother (3.723-724 *non habet infelix quae matri bracchia tendat, / trunca sed ostendens direptis uulnera membris*). In addition, Pelias' dismemberment by Medea (7.348-349 *plura locuturo cum uerbis guttura Colchis / abstulit et calidis laniatum mersit in undis*) echoes both the Theban king's sparagmos by his female relatives (3.721-722 *illa quis Actaeon nescit dextramque precantis / abstulit*; Ino *lacerata est* altera raptu) and Itys' laceration by Procne and Philomela (7.644-645 *uiuaque adhuc animaeque aliquid retinentia membra / dilaniant, pars inde cauis exsultat aenis*). The evocation of Ovidian intratexts, which recount the murder of sons by their mothers, in the scene of Pelias' assassination by Medea may be intended to serve as a covert foreshadowing of the Colchian's own impending infanticide in the *Metamorphoses* (7.396 *sanguine natorum perfunditur impius ensis*).

⁶⁸⁴ Met. 7.343-347 *inter / tot medius gladios pallentia bracchia tendens / 'quid facitis, natae? quis uos in fata parentis / armat?' ait*; Med. 1206-1208 ὤμωξε δ' εὐθύς καὶ περιπτύξας χέρας / κυνεῖ προσαυδῶν τοιάδ'. Ἔ δύστηνε παῖ, / τίς σ' ὄδ' ἀτίμως δαιμόνων ἀπόλεσεν;

⁶⁸⁵ Met. 3.347-349 *cecidere illis animique manusque; / plura locuturo cum uerbis guttura Colchis / abstulit*.

constitute an implicit intertextual marker playfully hinting at the Euripidean intertext, in which Creon in fact delivers two additional lines of speech before he dies wondering again, who has bereft him from his child, and desiring to perish with her, a wish tinged with dark irony, since it will be immediately fulfilled.⁶⁸⁶

Finally, after Medea has executed her plot of murdering Pelias, she flies away from Iolcus on her serpent-drawn chariot. I have argued above that based on the extant evidence Euripides' Peliades most likely did not include an aerial escape of Medea, but that she and Jason departed together from the city either of their own accord or banished by Acastus. Ovid probably appropriated this scene from the exodos of the Medea and incorporated it into the Pelias narrative. In fact the epic narrator's comment that unless the Colchian had risen in the air on her winged chariot, she would not have escaped punishment may verbally echo the Euripidean Jason's words, who being ignorant of the fact that Medea has already obtained the flying chariot from Helios, ironically asserts that the only way for Medea to depart from Corinth with impunity for murdering the royal family is to hide under the earth or to rise on wings in the sky.⁶⁸⁷ Medea's flight from Iolcus not only evokes the Euripidean model, but also foreshadows the Colchian's subsequent aerial escape from Corinth in the Ovidian narrative by means of which she evades Jason's retribution.⁶⁸⁸

Apart from alluding to Euripides' play Medea's assassination of Pelias constitutes an innovative reworking of Helen's orchestration of Deiphobus' murder during the fall of Troy in Aeneid 6 (477-534). To begin with, the Colchian's pseudo-rejuvenation ritual echoes

⁶⁸⁶ Med. 1209-1210 τίς τὸν γέροντα τύμβον ὀρφανὸν σέθεν / τίθησιν; οἴμοι, συνθάνομί σοι, τέκνον.

⁶⁸⁷ Met. 7.350-351 quod nisi pennatis serpentibus isset in auras, / non exempta foret poenae. fugit alta [...]; Med. 1296-1300 δεῖ γάρ νιν ἦτοι γῆς γε κρυφθῆναι κάτω / ἢ πτηνὸν ἄραι σῶμ' ἐς αἰθέρος βάθος, / εἰ μὴ τυράννων δώμασιν δώσει δίκην. / πέποιθ' ἀποκτείνασα κοιράνους χθονὸς / ἄθῳος αὐτὴ τῶνδε φεύξεσθαι δόμων;

⁶⁸⁸ Met. 7.397-398 ultaque se male mater Iasonis effugit arma. / hinc Titaniacis ablata draconibus [...].

thematically Helen's pseudo-Bacchic ritual, which she employs as a façade for summoning the Greeks to invade Troy.⁶⁸⁹ Furthermore, the nocturnal infiltration of Medea and the Peliades into Pelias' royal chamber echoes the nighttime invasion of Helen, Menelaus, and Ulysses into Deiphobus' quarters. Just as Deiphobus is deeply asleep in his bedchamber, Pelias has been magically lulled to sleep by Medea and in both cases the heavy slumber, which the characters are experiencing, is compared to the tranquility of death.⁶⁹⁰ Moreover, Deiphobus is rendered defenseless by his wife, who removes all the weapons from his chamber (6.523-524) and likewise Medea deprives the king of protection by putting his guards to sleep (7.329-330). Next, Helen opens the gates of the house and summons Menelaus and Ulysses inside.⁶⁹¹ In an analogous manner Medea and the Peliades surreptitiously enter Pelias' quarters.⁶⁹²

What is more, just as Ulysses is the one, who exhorts Menelaus to slay Deiphobus, similarly the Colchian urges the maidens to commit the sacrilegious murder of their father.⁶⁹³ The Peliades' hope that the killing of their father will be a "gift" to him, since it will be followed by his rejuvenation, may recall Helen's expectation that her deadly betrayal of Deiphobus will be

⁶⁸⁹ Met. 7.326-327 [...] cum rapido fallax Aetias igni / imponit purum laticem et sine uiribus herbas; Aen. 6.517-519 illa chorum simulans euhantis orgia circum / ducebat Phrygias; flammam media ipsa tenebat / ingentem et summa Danaos ex arce uocabat. Anderson (1972, v. 7.327) remarks that the description of the fake potion echoes and inverts the long catalogue of ingredients for the genuine ritual of Aeson's rejuvenation (7.264ff.).

⁶⁹⁰ Aen. 6.520-522 tum me confectum curis somnoque grauatum / infelix habuit thalamus, pressitque iacentem / dulcis et alta quies placidaeque simillima morti; Met. 7.328-330 iamque neci similis resoluto corpore regem / et cum rege suo custodes somnus habebat, / quem dederant cantus magicaeque potentia linguae. Anderson (1972 v. 7.328) observes that Pelias' magical lulling to sleep by Medea recalls the Colchian's sedation of Aeson (7.252-255), but whereas the ritual killing of the sleeping Aeson is followed by his rejuvenation the king will be truly murdered.

⁶⁹¹ Aen. 6.525 intra tecta uocat Menelaum et limina pandit, 528-529...inrumpunt thalamo, comes additus una / ... Aeolides.

⁶⁹² Met. intranant iussae cum Colchide limina natae / ambierantque torum.

⁶⁹³ Aen. 7.529 hortator scelerum Aeolides; Met. 7.331-332 his ut quaeque pia est hortatibus impia prima est / et, ne sit scelerata, facit scelus.

considered a “gift” by Menelaus and thus he will forgive her for her past infidelities.⁶⁹⁴ Another striking affinity between the two scenes is that just as Pelias is mangled by his daughters’ swords and afterwards dismembered by Medea, likewise Deiphobus is lacerated by the Greeks, who cut off his ears, nose, and arms.⁶⁹⁵ In addition, the dying Pelias’ question to his daughters asking them who has goaded them to slay him may echo the surprised Aeneas’ inquiry to Deiphobus regarding the identity of his murderer.⁶⁹⁶ The doom of Pelias at the hands of Medea, who plunges his dismembered body in the boiling cauldron, may in fact evoke the deadly fate of Deiphobus contrived by his wife, who “plunged” him into misfortune.⁶⁹⁷ Finally, just as Deiphobus’ prayer for Helen’s punishment on account of her treachery proves futile, likewise Medea escapes from Iolcus with impunity for her crime.⁶⁹⁸

Last but not least, the scene of Pelias’ assassination may evoke by means of “fragmentation” the account of Apsyrtus’ murder in *Argonautica* 4.452-481. More specifically, Ovid omits in his drastically condensed narrative of the Argonauts’ return voyage the episode of Apsyrtus’ deadly ambush by Medea and Jason (7.155-158) and transfers instead some of its features to the death scene of the king of Iolcus. When the Peliades after much hesitation ultimately decide to murder their father they are unable to behold their horrible crime and thus

⁶⁹⁴ Met. 7.309-310[...] quo sit fiducia maior / muneris huius, 336-338 si pietas ulla est nec spes agitat inanes, / officium praestate patri telisque senectam / exigite; Aen. 6.526-527 scilicet id magnum sperans fore munus amanti, / et famam extinguere ueterum sic posse malorum.

⁶⁹⁵ Met. 7.344 semilacer, 348-349 cum uerbis guttura Colchis / abstulit et calidis laniatum mersit in undis; Aen. 6.494-497 Atque hic Priamiden laniatum corpore toto / Deiphobum uidet et lacerum crudeliter ora, / ora manusque ambas, populataque tempora raptis / auribus et truncas inhoneste uulnere naris.

⁶⁹⁶ Met. 7.346-347 quis uos in fata parentis/ armat?; Aen. 6.500-501 Deiphobe armipotens, genus alto a sanguine Teucris, / quis tam crudelis optauit sumere poenas?

⁶⁹⁷ Met. 7.346-347 ‘quid facitis, natae? quis uos in fata parentis/ armat?’, 348-349 plura locuturo cum uerbis guttura Colchis / abstulit et calidis laniatum mersit in undis; Aen. 6.511-512 sed me fata mea et scelus exitiale Lacaenae / his mersere malis; illa haec monumenta reliquit.

⁶⁹⁸ Aen. 6.529-530 di, talia Graias / instaurate, pio si poenas ore reposco; Met. 7.350-351 quod nisi pennatis serpentibus isset in auras, / non exempta foret poenae.

they avert their eyes and strike blindly at him.⁶⁹⁹ The maidens' behavior may echo that of the Apollonian Medea, who while Jason is slaughtering Apsyrtus turns away her eyes and covers them with her veil.⁷⁰⁰ Her motivation for doing this, however, is not the fact that she is appalled by the atrocious deed like the Peliades, but her attempt to avoid being polluted by the sight of her brother's blood.⁷⁰¹ Moreover, the dying Pelias' reaction, who covered in blood stretches forth his arms to his daughters in a gesture of supplication, is perhaps reminiscent of Apsyrtus' final act before he perishes: the young man gathers the blood flowing from his wound in his hands and stains red his sister's veil and robe, thus polluting her with blood guilt.⁷⁰² Finally, Medea's dismemberment of the king followed by the plunging of his limbs in the cauldron may recall the sparagmos of Apsyrtus by Jason, who cuts off his extremities before burying him.⁷⁰³ Therefore, in contrast to the Apollonian Medea, who does not actively participate in her brother's murder and averts her eyes from it, her Ovidian counterpart ruthlessly kills Pelias and tears him to pieces.

⁶⁹⁹ Met. 7.340-342 *haud tamen ictus / ulla suos spectare potest, oculosque reflectunt / caecaque dant saeuis auersae uulnera dextris*. Kenney (2011, 7.339-342) argues that the characterization of the Peliades' attack as "blind" (7.342 *caeca [...] vulnera*) not only refers to their literal lack of vision, since they have turned away their eyes, but also implies their mental "blindness", in that they are under the spell of Medea's deception.

⁷⁰⁰ Arg. 4.465-466 *αἴψα δὲ κούρη / ἔμπαλιν ὄμματ' ἔνεικε*, καλυψαμένη ὀθόνησιν, 474 *ἀλευομένης*.

⁷⁰¹ Arg. 4.467 *μὴ φόνον ἀθρήσειε κασιγνήτοιο τυπέντος*.

⁷⁰² Met. 7.343 *ille cruore fluens*, 345 *pallentia bracchia tendens*; Arg. 4.471-474 *λοιίσθια δ' ἥρωσ / θυμὸν ἀναπνείων, χερσὶν μέλαν ἀμφοτέρησιν / αἶμα κατ' ὠτειλὴν ὑπόσχετο*, τῆς δὲ *καλύπτρην / ἀργυφῆν καὶ πέπλον ἀλευομένης ἐρύθηεν*.

⁷⁰³ Met. 7.349 *calidis laniatum mersit in undis*; Arg. 4.477 *ἥρωσ δ' Αἰσονίδης ἐξάρματα τάμνε* θανάοντος, 480 *ὕγρον δ' ἐν γαίῃ κρύψεν νέκυν*.

3.3. Medea's flight over Greece

After her escape from Iolcus Medea sets forth on a long flight over various Greek locales before ultimately reaching Corinth (7.350-390). This trip is preceded by the Colchian's ride in her serpent-drawn chariot over Thessaly, in order to gather magic herbs for Aeson's rejuvenation (7.220-233) and will be followed by her flying travel from Corinth to Athens (7.398-399). The lengthy account of her aerial journey serves on one level as a narrative device to introduce no less than fifteen obscure metamorphoses connected with the places cited by means of allusions.⁷⁰⁴ On a deeper level, however, the description of Medea's flight contains metamorphic tales, which implicitly foreshadow by similarity or contrast the impending events at Corinth. In this respect it has an analogous function to that of a tragic stasimon and in particular an "escape ode", in which the chorus express the wish that they could fly to other places in a hopeless attempt to escape from the terrible situation they are witnessing. In this context they refer to other mythical stories, which often prefigure the imminent catastrophe in the play.⁷⁰⁵ Therefore, the tragic chorus' escape fantasy is realized in Ovid's epic narrative by Medea's literal aerial escape and the two journeys share an anticipatory function.

The stories recounted during Medea's journey herald the events in Corinth by means of shared themes, such as airborne escape, evasion of punishment, infanticide, and parental lament. To begin with, the first tale related by the epic narrator is that of Cerambus' escape from the

⁷⁰⁴ Anderson 1972, vv. 7.350-403; Newlands 1997, 190.

⁷⁰⁵ A characteristic example is the "escape ode" of Euripides' *Hippolytus*, where the women of Troezen pray that they could turn into birds and fly towards the West over the river Eridanus, where the sisters of Phaethon, transformed into poplars, still mourn their brother's demise (732-741). Phaethon's deadly journey on Helios' flying chariot is introduced here, in order to prefigure Hippolytus' own imminent fatal chariot ride.

Great Flood by turning into a bird with the aid of the nymphs.⁷⁰⁶ The language employed to describe his salvation anticipates the account of the Colchian's escape from Corinth after the murder of her children thanks to the flying chariot granted to her by the Sun god.⁷⁰⁷ Another stop on Medea's trip is Rhodes, an island closely linked to the Sun god, her grandfather, where Jupiter punished the Telchines for their malevolent magic by drowning them in the sea.⁷⁰⁸ This story contrasts with Medea's avoidance of punishment for her own evil sorcery both in Iolcus and in Corinth (7.350-351, 397-398).

The myth of Hyrie's lament for the supposed death of her son Cycnus (he was actually turned into a swan), on account of which she was transformed into a lake, is in sharp contrast with Medea's ruthless murder of her sons in Corinth.⁷⁰⁹ This is followed by the story of another mother, Combe, who escapes from the murderous assault of her sons by turning into a bird and may thereby prefigure by means of inversion Medea's evasion of punishment in Jason's hands after the filicide by flying away on her chariot.⁷¹⁰ Finally, the concluding tale of Eumelus portends the events in Corinth in two ways (7.390). According to Antoninus Liberalis 18, which summarizes Boios' Ornithogonia 2, Eumelus killed his son Botres in wrath, because he did not treat a sacrificial lamb with religious piety, but after he repented of his crime Apollo felt pity for

⁷⁰⁶ Met. 7.354-356 hic ope nympharum sublatus in aera pennis, / cum grauis infuso tellus foret obruta ponto, / Deucalioneas effugit inobrutus undas.

⁷⁰⁷ Met. 7.397-399 ultaque se male mater Iasonis effugit, / hinc Titaniacis ablata draconibus intrat / Palladias arces.

⁷⁰⁸ Met. 7.365-367 Phoebeamque Rhodon et Ialysios Telchinas, / quorum oculos ipso uitiantes omnia uisu / Iuppiter exosus fraternis subdidit undis.

⁷⁰⁹ Met. 7.380-381 at genetrix Hyrie, seruari nescia, flendo / delicit stagnumque suo de nomine fecit, 396-397 sanguine natorum perfunditur impius ensis / ultaque se male mater Iasonis effugit arma.

⁷¹⁰ Met. 7.382-383 adiacet his Pleuron, in qua trepidantibus alis / Ophias effugit natorum uulnera Combe, 396-399 sanguine natorum perfunditur impius ensis / ultaque se male mater Iasonis effugit arma. / hinc Titaniacis ablata draconibus intrat / Palladias arces.

him and transformed the boy into a bird.⁷¹¹ Thus, on the one hand, Eumelus' infanticide may portend the Colchian's own murder of her sons. On the other hand, however, the image of Eumelus mourning his son in the shape of a flying bird may cryptically allude to the state of Jason in the exodos of the Euripidean play, who laments his dead sons about to be carried away in the sky on Medea's flying chariot.⁷¹²

3.4 Medea in Corinth

As we noted earlier, Ovid radically abridges the events at Corinth, which are the subject of Euripides' *Medea*, into four lines (7.394-397), since he had already treated the story in his own *Medea* as well as in *Heroides* 12 (if the epistle is actually Ovidian). In this laconic summary the Roman poet refers only to the Corinthian princess' fiery death, the burning of Creon's palace, Medea's infanticide, and her escape from Jason's vengeance. In other words, he outlines the actions of the Euripidean play, but omits all the dialogue and monologue scenes, which can be explained by the fact that he transferred many elements of these scenes to the preceding *Medea* narratives in the epic. We have seen, for instance, how Medea's soliloquy in Colchis reworks rhetorical arguments utilized by Medea and Jason in the dramatic agon as well as parts of the Euripidean heroine's monologue speeches or how the Colchian's manipulation of the Peliades is evocative of her deception of Creon and Aegeus in the Greek play.

The epic narrator's summary of the events in Corinth may in fact implicitly allude to Medea's own outline of her revenge scheme in the Euripidean play (772-810). The demise of the Corinthian princess may recall the Colchian's revelation to the chorus that she plans to murder

⁷¹¹ Anderson 1972, 285.

⁷¹² Met. 7.390 *Eumelique domum lugentis in aere natum.*

the new bride by means of her poisoned gifts.⁷¹³ The destruction of Creon's palace is partly reminiscent of the Euripidean heroine's claim that she is going to utterly confound Jason's household.⁷¹⁴ The particular detail of the conflagration of Creon's palace, however, is not found in Euripides' play and thus it has been hypothesized that it may derive from the Roman poet's own tragedy.⁷¹⁵ Moreover, the narrator's censure of Medea's filicide as impious may evoke the Euripidean protagonist's self-condemnation for the impending sacrilegious murder of her sons.⁷¹⁶ Finally, the Colchian's flight from Corinth following her vengeance on Jason may echo the prediction of Euripides' Medea that she will find refuge in Athens after exacting revenge from her husband.⁷¹⁷

Furthermore, all the events contained in the Ovidian synopsis have been obliquely anticipated by the preceding narratives revolving around Medea. I have already argued that the ram's rejuvenation by Medea (7.316-321) is a rewriting of the death scene of the Corinthian princess in the Euripidean play and thus foreshadows the same scene in the *Metamorphoses* (7.394). Similarly I have shown how the account of Pelias' death (7.343-349) evokes Creon's demise in the Greek tragedy and thereby prefigures the Corinthian king's doom implied by the destruction of his palace in the Ovidian narrative (4.395). In addition, Medea's murder of her sons is ominously portended by her sacrifice of a sheep as a ritual offering to Hecate and

⁷¹³ Met. 7.394 sed postquam Colchis arsit noua nupta uenenis; Med. 804-806 οὔτε τῆς νεοζύγου / νύμφης τεκνώσει παῖδ', ἐπεὶ κακὴν κακῶς / θανεῖν σφ' ἀνάγκη τοῖς ἑμοῖσι φαρμάκοις.

⁷¹⁴ Met. 7.395 flagrantemque domum regis mare uidit utrumque; Med. 794 δόμον τε πάντα συγγέασ' Ἰάσονος.

⁷¹⁵ Bömer 1976, v. 7.395.

⁷¹⁶ Met. 3.796 sanguine natorum perfunditur impius ensis; Med. 792-793 τέκνα γὰρ κατακτενῶ / τᾶμ', 796 τλᾶσ' ἔργον ἀνοσιώτατον.

⁷¹⁷ Met. 7.397-399 ultraque se male mater Iasonis effugit arma. / hinc Titaniacis ablata draconibus intrat / Palladias arces; Med. 771 μολόντες ἄστῃ καὶ πόλισμα Παλλάδος, 795-796 ἔξειμι γαίας, φιλτάτων παίδων φόνον / φεύγουσα, 802 ὃς ἡμῖν σὺν θεῷ τείσει δίκην.

Iuventas, so as to aid her rejuvenate Aeson.⁷¹⁸ Finally, I have contended that the Colchian's aerial escape from Corinth (7.397-398) is anticipated by her previous flight from Iolcus on her serpent-drawn chariot (7.350-351).

3.5 Medea in Athens

In the final episode of Medea's adventures in the *Metamorphoses* we find her in Athens, where she is received as a guest by Aegeus after her escape from Corinth and becomes his lawfully wedded wife. Upon Theseus' arrival in the city the Colchian tries to murder him by persuading the Athenian king, who is ignorant of his son's identity, to offer him a poisoned drink. Aegeus recognizes him, however, in the nick of time by the engravings on his sword and Medea evades punishment by vanishing in a magic cloud (7.398-424). The primary intertext of the Ovidian narrative was most likely Euripides' *Aegeus*, which was produced in the 430s and probably antedated his *Medea*.⁷¹⁹ The surviving fragments suggest that Medea played a central role in the play (fr. 1-13 Kannicht). The Roman poet also alludes to Euripides' *Medea*, which contains a meeting between Aegeus and the Colchian, in which she cunningly elicits from him an oath to offer her refuge in his city in exchange for granting him offspring through her magic drugs, a scene which ironically prefigures her later deception of the Athenian king (663-758). The tragedian thus projects Medea's stay in Athens and her assassination plot against Theseus as a future event and at the same time alludes to his earlier play. Sophocles wrote an *Aegeus* as well (fr. 19-25 Radt), but the play's meager fragments provide no evidence that it featured Medea as

⁷¹⁸ Met. 7.396 sanguine natorum perfunditur impius ensis; 244-245 sacra facit cultosque in guttura uelleris atri / conicit et patulas perfundit sanguine fossas.

⁷¹⁹ Collard/Cropp, 2008, 5.

a character and it therefore constitutes an unlikely model for the *Metamorphoses* story.⁷²⁰ Another source on which Ovid probably drew is Callimachus' *Hecale*, which opens with Medea's failed scheme to poison her stepson (fr. 3-11 Hollis). Finally, the Roman poet may have engaged intertextually with Ennius' *Medea*, which also treats the events in Athens, but of which only a single fragment is extant (fr. 112 Jocelyn).

There are two mythical traditions regarding the sequence of events in the Aegeus story. According to the standard version attested by Callimachus' *Hecale* and Plutarch's *Theseus* 12 and 14, Theseus undertakes on his own initiative to subjugate the bull of Marathon after Medea's failed plot to murder him and the reunion with his father. There was also, however, a variant version found in Apollodorus *Epit.* 1.5-6 and the Vatican mythographer 1.48, in which Medea first convinced Aegeus to send Theseus against the bull in the hope that it would kill him and only attempted the poisoning after he had subdued it. It has been suggested that the Euripidean play followed the variant version, on the grounds that placing the recognition scene after the Marathonian triumph and thus rendering it the climax of the story would be the most suitable structure for a tragic plot,⁷²¹ as well on the basis of iconographical evidence.⁷²² Sophie Mills has argued, on the other hand, that Sophocles' tragedy did not include Medea as a character and its plot comprised instead the subjugation of the bull, the recognition of Theseus, and the conflict with the Pallantids, Theseus' cousins.⁷²³ Finally, Adrian Hollis contends that Ovid also adhered

⁷²⁰ Mills 1997, 238.

⁷²¹ Hollis 2009, fr. 3-7.

⁷²² Collard/Cropp (2008, 4-5) note that vase paintings between 460 and 430 depict Theseus with the subdued bull meeting with Aegeus and a distressed woman carrying a jug and a libation dish, who has been identified as Medea. From 430s onwards the female figure is portrayed with oriental attire under the influence of Euripides' *Aegeus* or *Medea*, which presented Medea in an orientaling manner.

⁷²³ Mills 1997, 238. For a different view see Hahnemann (1999 & 2003), who attributes the standard version to Euripides and the variant version to Sophocles.

to the variant version, namely that he presented the recognition as following the Marathonian triumph, since the subjugation of the bull is implied in the reference to Theseus' exploits before reaching Athens and is commemorated by the Athenians in their hymn to the hero immediately after the reunion of father and son.⁷²⁴ My hypothesis is, however, that the Roman poet has ingeniously conflated the Euripidean and Callimachean intertexts, that is the variant and the standard versions. In particular, Theseus' subdoing of the bull precedes Medea's assassination attempt in the chronological succession of events, but it follows the recognition scene in terms of narrative sequence, in that it is celebrated in the Athenian hymn after the anagnorisis.

The Ovidian Aegeus' offer of hospitality to Medea may allude to the scene of Euripides' *Medea* in which the Colchian beseeches the Athenian king to receive her as a guest in his city.⁷²⁵ At the same time the scene evokes preceding episodes of the *Metamorphoses*: Aegeus' welcome of Medea recalls the Peliades' hospitality to the supplicating Colchian, while her marriage with the king is reminiscent of her earlier wedding to Jason.⁷²⁶ Thus, Aegeus combines in his dealings with Medea the tragic mistakes of the previous characters. What is more, the epic narrator's explicit condemnation of the Athenian king for his gullibility in welcoming Medea into his home may echo the Euripidean chorus' oblique criticism of Aegeus in the event that he receives the impious infanticide in his holy city.⁷²⁷

⁷²⁴ Met. 7.405 qui uirtute sua bimarem pacauerat Isthmon, 433-434 te, maxime Theseu, / mirata est Marathon Cretaei sanguine tauri) (See Hollis 2009, fr. 3-7).

⁷²⁵ Met. 7.402-403 excipit hanc Aegeus [...] / nec satis hospitium est; Med. 713 δέξαι δὲ χώραι καὶ δόμοις ἐφέστιον.

⁷²⁶ Met. 7.298-300 Peliaequae ad limina supplex / confugit; atque illam [...] / excipiunt natae), 403 thalami quoque foedere iungit, 22 thalamos alieni concipis orbis?, 49 te face sollempni iunget sibi.

⁷²⁷ Met. 7.402 excipit hanc Aegeus, facto damnandus in uno; Med. 846-850 πῶς οὖν ἱερῶν ποταμῶν / ἢ πόλις ἢ φίλων / πόμπιμός σε χώρα / τὰ παιδολέτειραν ἔξει, / τὰν οὐχ ὀσίαν μέταυλον;

Theseus arrives at the court of Aegeus, but his father is oblivious to his true identity.⁷²⁸ The king's ignorance must have been an essential element of Euripides' *Aegeus*, as is suggested by fragments in which the young hero is asked about his name, country, and parentage and most likely assumes a false identity.⁷²⁹ Likewise Callimachus must have included the motif of Theseus' incognito advent.⁷³⁰ Unlike Aegeus, Medea becomes aware of Theseus' identity and immediately concocts her scheme to poison him with aconite.⁷³¹ As in the case of Pelias' murder, no motive is offered for the Colchian's malevolence against the hero and the epic narrator focuses instead on giving a long aetiological explanation for the provenance of the aconite from Cerberus' foam-flecked jaws (7.408-419).⁷³² A glimpse of the source of Medea's enmity against Theseus is provided, however, by one of the fragments of Euripides' *Aegeus*, which contains the gnomic statement that a stepmother is inherently hostile towards the children from her husband's previous marriage.⁷³³ Similarly in Callimachus Medea is the only one cognizant of Theseus' identity and employs aconite in order to poison the hero.⁷³⁴ The narrator of the *Metamorphoses* recounts how Medea cunningly manipulated Aegeus into offering Theseus the poisoned cup by convincing him that the hero was his enemy, but does not elaborate on the particulars of her plan.⁷³⁵ Once again a fragment of the Euripidean play sheds some light on the Colchian's

⁷²⁸ Met. 7.404 iamque aderat Theseus, proles ignara parenti.

⁷²⁹ Aeg. fr. 1 ποίαν σε φῶμεν γαῖαν ἐκλελοιπότα / πόλει ξενουῖσθαι τῆδε; τίς πάτρας ὄρος; / τίς ἔσθ' ὁ φύσας; τοῦ κεκήρυξαι πατρός;, fr. 2 τί σε μάτηρ ἐν δεκάτῃ τόκου ὠνόμαζεν;

⁷³⁰ Hecal. fr. 8 παρὲκ νόον εἰλήλουθας (See Kenney 2011, v. 7.404).

⁷³¹ Met. 7.406-407 huius in exitium misce Medea quod olim / attulerat secum Scythicis aconiton ab oris.

⁷³² Newlands 1997, 190-191.

⁷³³ Aeg. fr. 4 πέφυκε γάρ πως παισὶ πολέμιον γυνή / τοῖς πρόσθεν ἢ ζυγεῖσα †δευτέρῳ πατρί†.

⁷³⁴ Hecal. fr. 4 ἢ δ' ἐκόησεν, τοῦνεκεν Αἰγέος ἔσκεν, fr. 5-6, v. 7 παρδαλιαγχές (=leopard's bane, i.e. aconite) (See Hollis 2009, fr. 5-6, v. 7).

stratagem: the speaker claims that a poor, but powerful man is accustomed to snatch away the possessions of wealthy people.⁷³⁶ These words are most likely uttered by Medea and addressed at Aegeus in an effort to persuade the king that Theseus is a rival aiming to usurp his throne.

Ovid lays particular emphasis on the dramatic suspense and irony of the anagnorisis, which is predicated on the ignorance of both father and son: Theseus unwittingly takes the cup in his hands and is on the verge of drinking it, when Aegeus recognizes at the very last moment his family's tokens on the hilt of his son's sword and prevents him from consuming Medea's poison.⁷³⁷ This scene must surely have been the climax of the Euripidean tragedy, but unfortunately there are no fragments surviving from it. The closest extant parallel can be found in Callimachus' epyllion, which contains references to the sword and sandals left by the Athenian king in Troezen to serve as the γνωρίσματα ("tokens of recognition") of his son (fr. 9-11) as well as Aegeus' dramatic exhortation to Theseus to refrain from imbibing the poisoned drink.⁷³⁸ The Roman poet also stresses the mixed emotional response of Aegeus to the anagnorisis: the king is both joyful at reuniting with his son and horror-struck that he came so close at perpetrating filicide.⁷³⁹ Although there are no extant fragments from the aftermath of the recognition scene in the Euripidean play, one can conjecture that the tragedian would also have underscored the intense reaction of Aegeus at the discovery of his son's identity. The Ovidian narrative closes with Medea's sudden escape from punishment by enveloping herself in a mist

⁷³⁵ Met. 7.419-420 *agrestes aconita uocant. ea coniugis astu / ipse parens Aegeus nato porrexit ut hosti.*

⁷³⁶ Aeg. fr. 7a *ἀνὴρ γὰρ ὅστις χρημάτων μὲν ἐνδεής, / δρᾶσαι δὲ χειρὶ δυνατός, οὐκ ἀνέξεται· / τὰ τῶν δ' ἐχόντων / χρήμαθ' ἀρπάζειν φιλεῖ.*

⁷³⁷ Met. 7.421-423 *sumpserat ignara Theseus data pocula dextra, / cum pater in capulo gladii cognouit eburno / signa sui generis facinusque excussit ab ore.*

⁷³⁸ Hecal. fr. 7 *ἴσχε τέκος, μὴ πῖθι* (See Kenney 2011, vv. 7.421-423).

⁷³⁹ Met. 7.425-427 *at genitor, quamquam laetatur sospite nato, / attonitus tamen est ingens discrimine paruo / committi potuisse nefas.*

conjured by her incantations.⁷⁴⁰ This scene corresponds to the exodos of the Euripidean play, but once again there is no available textual evidence as to how the playwright fashioned the ending of his drama.

Refractions of Medea

3.6 Procne: Surpassing Medea

Ovid's primary source for the Procne narrative (6.424-674) is Sophocles' *Tereus* (written before 414 BC), which established the canonical version of the myth.⁷⁴¹ Sixteen fragments in all (fr. 581-595, Radt) survive from the play along with a fragmentary hypothesis (POxy 3013, ed. Parsons 1974). The Roman poet seems for the most part to follow the plot of the Greek play, yet he diverges from his predecessor in some significant ways.⁷⁴² First, while in Sophocles' *Tereus* becomes enamored of Philomela and rapes her on board his ship during the return voyage to Thrace,⁷⁴³ in Ovid the Thracian king falls in love at first sight with the girl in Athens (6.455-460) and the rape takes place instead in a secluded hut in the woods after they reach Thrace (6.519-525).⁷⁴⁴ Secondly, the majority of scholars are in agreement that in contrast to the *Metamorphoses*, where Tereus incarcerates Philomela in the forest hut and lies to Procne that her sister has died (6.563-575), the Greek tragedy did not feature Philomela's imprisonment in the

⁷⁴⁰ Met. 7.424 *effugit illa necem nebulis per carmina motis*.

⁷⁴¹ On the date of Sophocles' play see Sommerstein/Fitzpatrick 2006, 157-159.

⁷⁴² For a recent reconstruction of *Tereus* see Sommerstein/Fitzpatrick 2006, 151-153.

⁷⁴³ POxy 3013 μεσοπορήσας [ήράσθ]η τῆς παιδός· ὁ δὲ τὰ πῖσ[τὰ οὐ φ]υλάξας διεπαρθένευ[σεν]

⁷⁴⁴ Rosati 2009, vv. 6.424-674.

woods.⁷⁴⁵ An appealing hypothesis is that the Thracian king conveys the girl secretly into the palace camouflaged as a servant and tells her sister that she has perished.⁷⁴⁶

Thirdly, whereas in Ovid's narrative Procne disguises herself as a maenad in order to rescue her sister from her internment in the woods (6.587-560), it has been suggested that in the Sophoclean play the recognition scene between the two sisters unfolded on stage for greater dramatic effect and therefore there was no need for Procne to assume the role of a pseudo-Bacchant.⁷⁴⁷ Finally, Sophocles' Tereus concluded in all likelihood with a scene in which a *deus ex machina* (perhaps Apollo) describes the protagonists' transformation into birds brought about by another divinity (possibly Zeus) (fr. 581) and casts reproach on them for their misdeeds (fr. 589).⁷⁴⁸ In the Ovidian story's denouement, on the other hand, there is virtual absence of the gods, since the bird metamorphoses are not ascribed to any divine intervention, but are left mysteriously unmotivated (6.667-674).

The discussion of the Sophoclean play in the present study will be very limited, on the grounds that neither the extant fragments nor the hypothesis shed light on how the tragedian dramatized the aspects of the myth that will be examined here, namely Procne's contemplation of the revenge plot, her moral dilemma, the infanticide, and Tereus' anagnorisis. Another model on which Ovid has drawn is Accius' Tereus (fr. 1-9, Dangel), which echoes in turn Sophocles' tragedy, thus functioning as an intermediate intertext between the two works. Unfortunately the scanty fragments of the play do not allow a reconstruction of its plot and thus little can be

⁷⁴⁵ Sommerstein/Fitzpatrick 2006, 151.

⁷⁴⁶ March 2000, 135-136 n. 44.

⁷⁴⁷ Sommerstein/Fitzpatrick 2006, 152.

⁷⁴⁸ Sommerstein/Fitzpatrick 2006, 153.

ascertained about its relationship with the Sophoclean and Ovidian works.⁷⁴⁹ Nevertheless, despite the scarce textual evidence it has been convincingly argued that Ovid was acquainted and conversed intertextually with the Accian play.⁷⁵⁰

This section will focus on Ovid's engagement with Euripides' *Medea* in the Procne narrative. In particular, the Sophoclean and Accian intertexts have been conflated with the Euripidean play by means of "fragmentation". As we have noted earlier, the Roman poet condenses the infanticide theme in the *Medea* narrative of Book 7 (394-397) and treats it instead in detail in the Procne story, incorporating and reworking in it many elements appropriated from Euripides' tragedy. Below I will argue that Ovid's Procne does not directly reflect the Euripidean *Medea*, but constitutes a "refraction" of the tragic heroine, in the sense that she surpasses her in terms of ferocity, mercilessness, and rejection of maternal instincts. Procne is thus portrayed as an "overblown *Medea*" and has an important structural function, in that she anticipates the other graded variants of Euripides' heroine in the *Metamorphoses*: *Medea* herself in Book 7, the "humanized *Medea*" *Althaea* in Book 8, and the "aspiring *Medea*" *Deianira* in Book 9.

Finally, the Procne narrative engages in intratextual dialogue with *Heroides* 12, *Medea's* letter to Jason, since a number of the epistle's thematic motifs (e.g. Jason's wedding with the Corinthian princess, *Medea's* son as nuntius of Jason's marriage, the resemblance of Jason's sons to their father, *Medea's* contemplation of an indeterminate great deed) are reworked in the *Metamorphoses* story. What is more, since these motifs have no parallel in either Euripides or

⁷⁴⁹ Livius Andronicus also wrote a *Tereus* (fr. 24-29, Spaltenstein), but similarly the tragedy's meager extant fragments make it impossible to reconstruct its plot and establish its relation with the rest of the literary tradition.

⁷⁵⁰ Curley (2003, 180) (following Currie 1981, 2725) remarks that the Ovid's description of Tereus seized by unbridled mad desire upon beholding Philomela (6.451-460) is clearly evocative of Accius' fr. 1 in terms of both diction and imagery. In addition, Curley (2003, 180-181) on the basis of another Accian fragment (fr. 3), which attests to the presence of a Dionysiac component in the play, conjectures that the motif of the Ovidian Procne's pseudo-maenadism may have been derived from the Republican tragedy.

Apollonius, it has been postulated that they originate from the poet's own Medea.⁷⁵¹ Thus, the elegiac work may constitute a mediating intratext between Ovid's tragedy and his epic.

Ovid's choice to closely connect Procne and Medea is anything but arbitrary. Scholars have long noted the multiple thematic affinities between the two mythical heroines.⁷⁵² Both women are married to foreigners and take revenge on their unfaithful spouses by committing filicide. In either case the husband's transgression involves the violation of conjugal pietas: Jason abandons Medea in order to marry the Corinthian princess, while Tereus rapes and mutilates Procne's sister. Both Medea and Procne experience an agonizing internal conflict between maternal pietas and desire for vengeance, which is externalized through a highly emotional soliloquy and leads to their radical psychological metamorphosis from nurturing mothers and loyal wives to ruthless infanticides. Nonetheless, there are also some noteworthy distinguishing differences between the two heroines. Whereas Medea has traveled from her barbarian homeland Colchis to civilized Greece (Corinth), Procne is a Greek woman who has made a journey from Athens to a barbarian land (Thrace). Moreover, in contrast to Medea who has betrayed and deserted her father in order to marry Jason and murdered her own brother so as to facilitate her escape, Procne is a dutiful daughter, who has wedded Tereus in adherence to her father's wishes, as well as a loving sister, whose longing to see Philomela sets in motion the tragic course of events. Finally, Procne's moral dilemma is more complex than that of Medea, in that her love for her son clashes not only with her passion for revenge, but also with her pietas towards her sister, who has been brutally violated by Tereus.

⁷⁵¹ Bessone 1997, vv. 12.133-158, 146, 189-190, 212.

⁷⁵² Larmour 1992, 132; Newlands 1997, 192-195; Ciappi 1998, 445-446; Rosati 2009, vv. 6.424-674.

Ovid's association of the two myths in fact develops a tendency originating in the earlier literary tradition, which can be best exemplified by the relationship between Sophocles' *Tereus* and Euripides' *Medea*.⁷⁵³ The many shared motifs between the two plays, such as the wedding between a Greek and a barbarian, the deliberate infanticide committed by a mother in order to avenge herself on her husband, and a rhetorical speech of the female protagonist, in which she protests against the inferior status of women within the patriarchal institution of marriage (*Med.* 214-266, fr. 583), attest to the fact that one of the two tragedians was familiar with other's work and deliberately evoked him.⁷⁵⁴ The question, however, which tragedy predates the other is still controversial and there are arguments on both sides of the debate.⁷⁵⁵ An argument put forward in favor of the priority of Sophocles' play is that the filicide was an integral component of the Procne myth, whereas the introduction of the infanticide in the *Medea* story seems to be Euripides' innovation, possibly under Sophoclean influence.⁷⁵⁶

3.6.1 Procne and Medea in Ovid's amatory works

Ovid signals the affinity between the two narratives by almost directly juxtaposing them in the poem, since they are only separated by the brief story of Boreas and Orithyia (6.675-721). In fact, the Roman poet's penchant for linking these two heroines as rhetorical paradigms of infanticidal mothers is palpable throughout his career from his early elegiac compositions to the exile works (*Am.* 2.14.29-34; *Ars.* 2.381-384; *Rem.* 59-62; *Fast.* 2.627-629; *Trist.* 2.387-390;

⁷⁵³ Ciappi 1998, 446-447.

⁷⁵⁴ Sommerstein/Fitzpatrick 2006, 158 n. 9.

⁷⁵⁵ Ciappi (1998, 447 n. 41) offers a comprehensive survey of the scholarship on the question of priority

⁷⁵⁶ Sommerstein/Fitzpatrick 2006, 158. For the opposite view, namely that the filicide was not part of the Procne myth prior to Sophocles and that he incorporated it in his drama inspired by Euripides, see March 2003, 141-154.

Pont. 3.1.119-120).⁷⁵⁷ In the context of the present discussion it is worthwhile to examine the Amores and Ars Amatoria passages, on the grounds that they evoke Euripides' Medea and at the same time they prefigure the poet's treatment of Medea's "refractions" in the Metamorphoses, thus functioning as important intermediate intratexts between the two works.

Amores 2.14 is addressed to Corinna, who is facing mortal danger after an abortion. The elegiac poet, fearful for his ailing beloved's life, delivers a highly rhetorical suasoria, which takes the form of a general diatribe against abortion and by which he aims to persuade her not to repeat the "crime". The poem forms a diptych with the preceding elegy (2.13), in which the anxious lover makes a prayer to the goddesses Isis and Ilithyia to save Corinna's life. Ovid opens his speech by wondering what profit is there for women to abstain from war by being exempted from military service, if they deal wounds against their own bodies by having abortion.⁷⁵⁸ The rhetorical question conveys the poet's criticism towards Roman women, because although they are safe from the mortal perils of battle, they nonetheless foolishly expose themselves to an even higher death risk by having abortion. The Ovidian reproach against the female gender echoes and inverts the Euripidean Medea's refutation of the misogynistic view that men risk their life in war, while women remain at the safety of their home.⁷⁵⁹ The tragic heroine bases her rebuttal on the assertion that she would much prefer to engage in fighting than toil in labor, thereby implying that childbirth has a higher mortality risk than warfare.⁷⁶⁰ Hence, the elegiac poet substitutes the

⁷⁵⁷ Rosati 2009, vv. 6.621.

⁷⁵⁸ Am. 2.14.1-4 quid iuvat immunes belli cessare puellas, / nec fera peltatas agmina velle sequi, / si sine Marte suis patiuntur vulnera telis, / et caecas armant in sua fata manus?

⁷⁵⁹ Med. 248-251 λέγουσι δ' ἡμᾶς ὡς ἀκίνδυνον βίον / ζῶμεν κατ' οἴκους, οἱ δὲ μάρνανται δορί, / κακῶς φρονοῦντες· ὡς τρις ἂν παρ' ἀσπίδα / στῆναι θέλομ' ἂν μᾶλλον ἢ τεκεῖν ἄπαξ.

⁷⁶⁰ Mastronarde (2002, vv. 248-251) notes that Medea's argument is skillfully founded on Athenian ideology, according to which the public duty of a man was military service while that of a woman procreation and thus death in childbirth was equally laudable as death in battle.

contrast between war and abortion for Medea's juxtaposition of combat and labor and converts her argument that women lead a more dangerous life giving birth than men fighting into a censure of women, who avoid the hazards of war, yet subject themselves to the self-destructive experience of abortion.

In the concluding part of the elegy the poet launches an invective against Roman women for having abortion, comparing them to the mythical exempla of the notorious infanticides Procne and Medea (2.14.27-38). Ovid's rhetorical aim is to show that the Roman women's "crime" far surpasses in savagery, ruthlessness, and lack of maternal instinct the abominable deed of the tragic heroines. He begins by vehemently protesting against his contemporary women's practice of employing metal instruments and drugs for inducing abortion, which parallels Procne and Medea's use of a sword to murder their offspring as well as the Colchian's destruction of the Corinthian princess by means of envenomed gifts.⁷⁶¹ The Roman women outdo, however, their mythical counterparts in cruelty, in that they kill their children before they are even born. Moreover, the *puellae* outstrip Procne and Medea in terms of ferocity and bloodthirstiness on account of the frivolous incentive of their deed. The mythical heroines are characterized as savage mothers guilty of a bloody deed, but their infanticide is at least motivated by the desire for revenge against a treacherous husband.⁷⁶² The Roman women, on the other hand, are not goaded by the betrayal of a spouse, but have abortion purely for aesthetic reasons, namely so as to avoid getting wrinkles on their body.⁷⁶³

⁷⁶¹ Am. 1.24.27-28 *vestra quid effoditis subiectis viscera telis, / et nondum natis dira venena datis?*

⁷⁶² Am. 1.24.29-32 *Colchida respersam puerorum sanguine culpant / aque sua caesum matre queruntur Ityn; / utraque saeva parens, sed tristibus utraque causis / iactura socii sanguinis ultra virum. / dicite, quis Tereus, quis vos irritet Iason?*

⁷⁶³ Am. 1.24.7-8 *scilicet, ut careat rugarum crimine venter, / sternetur pugnae tristis harena tuae?*

The next argument of the elegiac poet's denunciation of Roman women is a masterful reworking of the Euripidean Jason's tirade against Medea in the exodos of the Greek play. After the Greek hero has learned of Medea's filicide, he bitterly brands her as an "infanticidal lioness", a reprimand which carries the implication that a lioness was able to kill her own young.⁷⁶⁴ The elegiac poet surpasses the rhetorical force of his tragic predecessor's vituperation by claiming, on the contrary, that the "tender" puellae outdo in ferocity and lack of maternal feelings the lionesses and Armenian tigers, since even wild animals cannot murder their progeny.⁷⁶⁵ Furthermore, Ovid replaces Jason's contrast between the barbarous Medea and the civilized Greek women, who would never have the heart to commit infanticide, with a juxtaposition between the merciless Roman women and the beasts, which do not possess the audacity to kill their offspring.⁷⁶⁶ The final and most compelling argument of Ovid's admonitory speech to Corinna concerns the retribution suffered by the Roman women, which exceeds that of the tragic protagonists. Procne and Medea will always be reviled by posterity for their filicide (29 culprit), but at least they were immune from an immediate penalty, since the former was transformed into a swallow and the latter escaped on her flying chariot. The Roman women, on the other hand, are often punished for having abortion by dying themselves and they are even rebuked in their funeral by the assembled crowd.⁷⁶⁷

⁷⁶⁴ Med. 1339-1343 οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ τις τοῦτ' ἂν Ἑλληνίς γυνή / ἔτλη ποθ', ὧν γε πρόσθεν ἠξίου ἐγὼ / γῆμαι σέ, κῆδος ἐχθρὸν ὀλέθριόν τ' ἐμοί, / λέαιναν, οὐ γυναικα, τῆς Τυρσηνίδος / Σκύλλης ἔχουσαν ἀγριωτέραν φύσιν. 1405-1407: Ζεῦ, τάδ' ἀκούεις ὡς ἀπελαυνόμεθ' / οἶά τε πάσχομεν ἐκ τῆς μυσαρᾶς / καὶ παιδοφόνου τῆσδε λεαίνης;

⁷⁶⁵ Am. 1.24.35-37 hoc neque in Armeniis tigres fecere latebris, / perdere nec fetus ausa leaena suos. / at tenerae faciunt, sed non inpune, puellae. Mckeown (1998, vv. 2.14.35-36) observing the Ovidian allusion to the Euripidean play reads the elegiac poet's assertion as a refutation of Jason's words, whereas in reality it is a rhetorical amplification of the Greek hero's rebuke.

⁷⁶⁶ Mckeown (1998, vv. 2.14.35-36) remarks that Medea's audacia is a recurrent theme in Euripides' tragedy.

⁷⁶⁷ Am. 1.24.37-40 at tenerae faciunt, sed non inpune, puellae; / saepe, suos utero quae necat, ipsa perit. / ipsa perit, ferturque rogo resoluta capillos, / et clamant 'merito!' qui modo cumque vident.

The apparent solemnity of Ovid's harangue against abortion is surreptitiously undercut, however, by the humorous irony resulting from his implicit comparison with Euripides' Jason. More specifically, in contrast to the Greek hero's condemnation of Medea for murdering his sons, the elegiac poet reproaches Corinna for having abortion, without being certain, however, whether it is his own child she has killed.⁷⁶⁸ What is more, Jason mournfully concludes his invective against Medea by invoking the gods to bear witness to her monstrous deed and her cruel denial to allow him to bury his sons (1405-1414). The Ovidian diatribe, on the other hand, culminates with a comic deflation, since the poet dismisses his earlier reproach against Corinna and fearing for her life prays to the gods to forgive her this once for her transgression, but at the same time warns her not to repeat it under threat of a future punishment.⁷⁶⁹ The particular significance of Amores 2.14 for this study lies in the fact that it anticipates Ovid's poetic technique of *emulatio* in the portrayal of Procne in the *Metamorphoses*. Just as the elegiac Roman *puellae* surpass in ferocity and mercilessness the mythical paradigms of Procne and Medea, similarly, as we shall see, the epic Procne outdoes her Euripidean model in savagery and ruthlessness.

The pairing of Medea and Procne in the *Ars Amatoria* (2.373-389) also constitutes an essential precedent for Ovid's poetic program in the *Metamorphoses*, in that it foreshadows his depiction of the Euripidean Medea's "refractions" in the epic. In this passage the *praeceptor amoris* instructs the male lover to take care that his illicit affairs be conducted in a furtive manner and kept secret from his beloved, warning him that if a woman becomes aware of an erotic rival she is filled with fierce sexual jealousy, which will have disastrous repercussions for

⁷⁶⁸ Am. 2.13.5-6 sed tamen aut ex me conceperat – aut ego credo; / est mihi pro facto saepe, quod esse potest.

⁷⁶⁹ Am. 2.14.41-44 ista sed aetherias vanescant dicta per auras, / et sint omnibus pondera nulla meis! / di faciles, peccasse semel concedite tuto, / et satis est; poenam culpa secunda ferat!

him. In order to reinforce the persuasive force of his precept he cites the mythical exempla of Medea and Procne, who driven by envy exacted a terrible vengeance from their adulterous husbands by committing filicide.⁷⁷⁰ Moreover, the didactic poet also presents a catalogue of a woman's reactions when seized by jealousy, which comprise animalistic rage, fiery desire for revenge, and figurative Bacchic frenzy (2.373-380). More specifically, the jealous woman's savage wrath is compared to that of a wild boar, a lioness, and a viper.⁷⁷¹ Marion Steudel argues that Ovid's description is a parody of a passage in Virgil's *Georgics*,⁷⁷² in which the didactic poet proclaims the absolute power of amorous passion over all living species and cites examples of animals overcome by erotic madness, two of which, the lioness and boar, are shared by the Ovidian list.⁷⁷³ She notes that Ovid humorously transforms the Virgilian instances of beasts in erotic furor into animal similes illustrating a woman's envy.

Apart from conversing with the Virgilian intertext, however, the *Ars Amatoria* passage evokes Euripides' *Medea* and contains in seminal form a typology of the various manifestations of female jealousy that will be later fully developed in the *Metamorphoses* in the portrayal of the graded variants of the Euripidean heroine (*Procne*, *Althaea*, and *Deianira*). To begin with, the comparison of a woman in a fit of angry jealousy to a lioness suckling her cubs diverges from the Virgilian model, in which the lioness overwhelmed with erotic lust is said to abandon her young, and recalls instead the Euripidean *Medea* experiencing raging envy, who is likened to a lioness

⁷⁷⁰ Ars. 2.381-384 coniugis admissum violataque iura marita est / barbara per natos Phasias ulta suos. / altera dira parens haec est, quam cernis, hirundo; / aspice, signatum sanguine pectus habet.

⁷⁷¹ Ars. 2.373-377 sed neque fulvus aper media tam saevus in ira est, / fulmineo rabidos cum rotat ore canes, / nec lea, cum catulis lactentibus ubera praebet, / nec brevis ignaro vipera laesa pede, / femina quam socii deprensa paelice lecti.

⁷⁷² Steudel 1992, 91f.

⁷⁷³ G. 3.245-248 tempore non alio catulorum oblita leaena / saeuior errauit campis, nec funera uulgo / tam multa informes ursi stragemque dedere / per siluas; tum saeuus aper, tum pessima tigris.

aggressively protective of her offspring.⁷⁷⁴ We notice again Ovid's technique of *emulatio*, since the cheated woman's wrath is even more savage than that of a lioness and thus she outdoes her Euripidean counterpart, whose anger is equated with that of the wild animal. At the same time the Ovidian simile prefigures the comparison of Procne about to murder Itys to a tigress dragging away a suckling fawn, which, as we will see, also emulates the representation of Euripides' heroine.⁷⁷⁵

Moreover, the description of the woman's discovery of an erotic antagonist prefigures the scene in the *Metamorphoses*, where Deianira is informed by rumor that Hercules has been enamored of Iole.⁷⁷⁶ The betrayed beloved is consumed with fiery rage and her distraught inner state is reflected by her facial expressions.⁷⁷⁷ This generic depiction on the one hand recalls the portrayal of the Euripidean Medea casting a fierce glance on her children, which betrays her thoughts of infanticide as retribution against Jason.⁷⁷⁸ On the other hand, however, it is echoed and expanded in the representation of the epic Procne and Althaea teeming with vengeful wrath. Procne meditating vengeance upon Tereus cannot contain her blazing anger, while Althaea's angry contemplation of revenge on Meleager is mirrored in the contortions of her face.⁷⁷⁹ The

⁷⁷⁴ Janka 1997 vv. 2.375-376: Ars 2.375 nec lea, cum catulis lactentibus ubera praebet, G. 2.245-246 tempore non alio catulorum oblita leaena / saeuior errauit campis, Med. 187-189 καίτοι τοκάδος δέργμα λεαίνης / ἀποταυροῦται δμωσίν, ὅταν τις / μῦθον προφέρων πέλας ὀρμηθῆι.

⁷⁷⁵ Galasso 2000, vv. 6.636-646: Met. 6.636-637 Nec mora, traxit Ityn, ueluti Gangetica ceruae / lactentem fetum per siluas tigris opaca.

⁷⁷⁶ Ars 2.377 femina quam socii deprensa paelice lecti, Met. 9.137-140...cum Fama loquax praecessit ad aures, / Deianira, tuas, quae ueris addere falsa / gaudet et e minimo sua per mendacia crescit, / Amphitryoniaden Ioles ardore teneri, 144-146 paalex lacrimis laetabitur istis. / quae quoniam adueniet, properandum aliquidque nouandum est, / dum licet et nondum thalamos tenet altera nostros.

⁷⁷⁷ Ars 2.373, media ... in ira, 378 ardet et in vultu pignora mentis habet.

⁷⁷⁸ Med. 92-93 ἦδη γὰρ εἶδον ὄμμα νιν ταυρουμένην / τοῖσδ', ὥς τι δρασείουσαν.

⁷⁷⁹ Met. 6.609 ...ardet et iram / non capit ipsa suam Procne (Janka 1997 vv. 2.378), Met. 8.467-468 et modo nescioquid similis crudele minanti / uultus erat.

jealous woman rushes to put into action her revenge plot, which consists in the use of sword and fire.⁷⁸⁰ Ovid once again “corrects” the Virgilian intertext, where the animals rush into the figurative flames of erotic madness, not the literal flames of vengeance.⁷⁸¹ The didactic poet alludes instead to Euripides’ play, in which Medea contemplates various vengeance schemes against Jason, which include burning the newlyweds alive and stabbing them to death.⁷⁸² At the same time the Ovidian passage looks forward to Procne’s headlong rush to impious crime and her consideration of means of retaliation against Tereus, which comprise setting the palace on fire and hurling him into the flames or cutting off his tongue, eyes, and genitals with a blade.⁷⁸³ Finally, female envy takes the form of figurative maenadic frenzy, which anticipates the portrayal of Byblis as a maddened Bacchant in the *Metamorphoses*, after her incestuous passion has been repeatedly rejected by her brother.⁷⁸⁴

3.6.2 Procne as “overblown Medea”

Ovid’s portrayal of Procne as an amplified version of Euripides’ Medea is reflected both in the nature of her revenge on Tereus and in the manner she executes it. It has been argued that Procne’s reprisal is a combination of symmetrical vengeance and escalating retribution, in the sense that she inflicts on him a perversely fitting punishment and at the same time her retaliation

⁷⁸⁰ Ars 2.379 *in ferrum flammisque ruit*.

⁷⁸¹ G. 3.244 *in furias ignemque runt*; amor omnibus idem.

⁷⁸² Med. 378-379 *πότερον ὑφάψω δῶμα νυμφικὸν πυρί, / ἢ θηκτὸν ὄσω φάσγανον δι’ ἥπατος*.

⁷⁸³ Met. 6.585-586: *sed fasque nefasque / confusura ruit*, 614-617 *aut ego, cum facibus regalia tecta cremabo, / artificem mediis immittam Terea flammis, / aut linguam atque oculos et quae tibi membra pudorem / abstulerunt ferro rapiam [...]*.

⁷⁸⁴ Ars 2.380 *fertur, ut Aonii cornibus icta dei*, Met. 9.641-644 *utque tuo motae, proles Semeleia, thyrso / Ismariae celebrant repetita triennia Bacchae, / Byblida non aliter latos ululasse per agros / Bubsides uidere nurus*.

is a “double payback”, which goes beyond the standard type of revenge, the *ius talionis* (“an eye for an eye”), and is characterized by a much higher degree of violence.⁷⁸⁵ In particular, each of Tereus’ crimes is matched by an apt and more brutal requital by Procne. Thus the Thracian king’s rape and mutilation of his sister-in-law and is repaid in double by his wife through the murder and dismemberment of their son, whom she then serves as a meal to the unwitting father. Goldenhard and Zissos have read Tereus’ cannibalistic feast as a figurative rape, in the sense that Procne “penetrates” her husband with his own son, thus suitably avenging the rape of her sister.

The two scholars also note that Procne’s desire to surpass her husband’s transgression by means of a more horrific vengeance is demonstrated by her initial deliberations, in which she momentarily considers resorting to a type of vengeance conforming to the *lex talionis*, such as glossectomy, blinding, and castration (6.616-617), but immediately dismisses these options in favor of a grander and more sadistic punishment, namely infanticide and annihilation of lineage through cannibalism. There is, however, another way in which Procne’s retribution outdoes her spouse’s crime, which thus far has not received attention. Tereus’ mendacious story about Philomela’s death, which causes her to mourn her sister for a whole year (6.565-571), is avenged by Procne by the actual murder of their son. Her revenge is once again perversely symmetrical. Tereus deceives his wife by the false tale of Philomela’s demise and similarly Procne tricks her husband by inviting him to a counterfeit sacred feast, which is merely a camouflage for the cannibalistic banquet.⁷⁸⁶ What is more, Procne’s inquiry about the whereabouts of her sister is answered by Tereus’ forged narrative and in an analogous fashion when the Thracian king asks where his son is, his wife replies cryptically that he is “inside him”.⁷⁸⁷ Tereus’ feigned groans

⁷⁸⁵ Goldenhard/Zissos 2007, 9-10.

⁷⁸⁶ Met. 6.565 commentaque funera narrat, 648 patrii moris sacrum mentita.

and tears for Philomela's supposed death are converted into his genuine cries and weeping for his son's real demise.⁷⁸⁸ Finally, the cenotaph erected by Procne in honor of her "deceased" sister finds its grotesque equivalent in the "living tomb" of Itys, namely his father's belly.⁷⁸⁹

Medea's vengeance in Euripides' play is characterized by an analogous blend of symmetry and escalating violence.⁷⁹⁰ The Greek hero's desertion of Medea and his sons is punished by the Colchian by the obliteration of his progeny achieved through filicide and by her own departure from Corinth. Furthermore, Medea avenges herself on Jason for his marriage with the Corinthian princess, in order to produce new descendants and thus solidify his social status in the city, through the murder of Creon's daughter, which consequently destroys the Greek hero's plan of creating a royal lineage. Finally, the Corinthian king's banishment of the Colchian and Jason's failure to revoke the royal decree of exile is requited by the heroine, who kills Creon and predicts Jason's lonely and unheroic death.

Despite the fact that the two heroines follow the same pattern of symmetrical and escalating retribution, as we will see below, Procne outshines Medea in terms of ferocity, ruthlessness, and dismissal of her maternal role at every stage of her vengeance, from the formation of the revenge plot and her moral dilemma, to the filicide, and the revelation of her horrible deed to the ignorant Tereus. The Ovidian heroine's emulation of her Euripidean predecessor is thrown in sharp relief if one considers the sheer savagery of her infanticide and

⁷⁸⁷ Met. 6.564 *coniuge quae uiso germanam quaerit*, 652 *'Ityn huc accersite' dixit*, 656 *ubi sit quaerit*.

⁷⁸⁸ Met. 6.565 *dat gemitus fictos*, 566 *et lacrimae fecere fidem*, 661 *Thracius ingenti mensas clamore repellit*, 665 *flet modo*.

⁷⁸⁹ Met. 6.568-569 *inane sepulcrum / constituit*, 665 *seque uocat bustum miserabile nati*.

⁷⁹⁰ Of course this theme of escalating revenge could also have been Sophoclean, but it is not attested by the surviving fragments.

the subsequent sacrilegious treatment of her son's body. Medea kills her children, but at the same time takes care to bury them in the sacred precinct of Hera Akraia's temple, so that the Corinthians may not open up their tomb and outrage their bodies in revenge for her murder of the royal family (1378-1381). Procne, on the other hand, not only murders Itys, but she and her sister also defile his body by tearing it apart, cooking it, and serving it to her husband in a gruesome banquet.

Gildenhard and Zissos have contended that there is a deeper metapoetic level in the Ovidian narrative.⁷⁹¹ By reading her sister's message woven on the tapestry, which recounts Tereus' terrible crime (6.582 *carmen miserabile*), Procne assumes the role of lector and she then attempts as auctor to imitate and outdo this "text" by committing an even more horrendous deed. The two critics characterize this motif as Procne's "aesthetics of revenge" and observe that later authors from Seneca to Shakespeare and beyond follow the Ovidian heroine's intratextual paradigm of emulation on an intertextual level. Each author attempts to surpass his predecessor through the portrayal of characters who outshine the Athenian sisters in the savagery and goriness of their vengeance. I believe that a metapoetic dimension of this kind can also be detected in Ovid's appropriation of Euripides, in the sense that behind Procne's emulation of Medea in terms of her revenge scheme and its implementation one can perceive the Roman poet's own endeavor to exceed his tragic antecedent.

3.6.3 The "marriage" of Tereus and Philomela

The reworking of the Euripidean intertext takes place primarily in the second part of the Ovidian narrative, which comprises Procne's discovery of Tereus' crime, her plot of revenge and internal

⁷⁹¹ Gildenhard/Zissos 2007, 10-11.

conflict, the infanticide, Tereus' anagnorisis, and the sisters' aerial escape. It is worth examining briefly, however, the first section of the story, which recounts Tereus' voyage to Athens and the rape of Philomela, on the grounds that the Roman poet depicts in it the relationship of the Thracian king with the Athenian sisters as an erotic triangle, which parallels that of Jason, Medea, and the Corinthian princess in the Greek play. To begin with, the language used to describe Pandion's entrusting of his daughter to Tereus, in order to convey her to her sister, contains elements implicitly suggestive of a wedding ceremony and thus foreshadows with dark irony their "perverted marriage", namely Tereus' rape of Philomela. The characterization of the Athenian and Thracian kings as "father-" and "son-in-law" (6.447 *soceri*, 496 *gener*) refers on one level to Tereus' marriage to Procne, but on another it insinuates his imminent bloody "nuptials" with Philomela.⁷⁹² What is more, Tereus' pledge to return Philomela promptly to her father is ironically described with the verb *spondeo* (6.450), which bears the secondary sense "betroth". In the farewell scene Pandion joins the right hands of Tereus and Philomela, a symbolic gesture which alludes to the matrimonial custom of *iunctio dextrarum*, which sanctioned the union of the married couple.⁷⁹³

The reading of this scene as a pseudo-wedding is further corroborated by the fact that Pandion's pact with Tereus is reminiscent of the marriage contract between Medea and Jason in *Heroides* 12. After the Greek hero's promise to wed the Colchian maiden, in order to secure her magical aid, they join right hands as a token of this arrangement. In an analogous manner the Thracian king seals his agreement with his father-in-law to take Philomela to her sister by the

⁷⁹² Anderson 1972, vv. 6.496-499.

⁷⁹³ *Met.* 6.506-507 *utque fide pignus dextras utriusque poposcit / inter seque datas iunxit...* (see Anderson 1972, v. 6.507).

shaking of right hands.⁷⁹⁴ Moreover, Tereus' trickery of Pandion and Philomela by means of crocodile tears and an eloquent speech, in which he veils his own illicit passion for Philomela with Procne's pious desire to see her sister, echoes Jason's deception of Medea by a combination of alluring words and feigned weeping.⁷⁹⁵ Finally, the epic narrator's parenthetical comment concerning the gullibility of the Athenian king and his daughter recalls Medea's retrospective comment about her own naïve credulity.⁷⁹⁶ The commentators are in agreement that Ovid incorporates matrimonial features into this scene in order to allude to a different version of the myth attested by Apollodorus (2.14.8) and Hyginus (Fab. 45.1), according to which Tereus pretended that Procne had perished and thus asked Pandion for Philomela's hand in marriage to replace her.⁷⁹⁷ An alternative, yet not mutually exclusive, interpretation is that the Roman poet's aim by representing Pandion's commending of Philomela to Tereus as a figurative wedding is to evoke Creon's marrying of his daughter to Jason and thus portray an erotic triangle corresponding to that of the Greek tragedy.

A final piece of textual evidence in support of this theory is Philomela's labeling of herself as Procne's paelex after her rape by the Thracian king and of Tereus as a "husband" to both women, a statement which encapsulates the confusion of family relations brought about by Tereus' crime.⁷⁹⁸ Philomela's self-conception as her sister's rival mistress may recall Medea's

⁷⁹⁴ Met. 6.447-448 dextera dextrae / iungitur, 495-496...generi dextram complexus euntis / Pandion comitem lacrimis commendat abortis, Her. 12.90 dextrae dextera iuncta meae.

⁷⁹⁵ Met. 6.467-471 ...cupidoque reuertitur ore/ ad mandata Procnes et agit sua uota sub illa. / facundum faciebat amor, quotiensque rogabat / ulterius iusto, Procnen ita uelle ferebat; / addidit et lacrimas, tamquam mandasset et illas, 473-474 ipso sceleris molimine Tereus / creditur esse pius laudemque a crimine sumit, Her. 12.91-92 vidi etiam lacrimas – sua pars et fraudis in illis. / sic cito sum verbis capta puella tuis.

⁷⁹⁶ Met. 6.472-473 pro superi, quantum mortalia pectora caecae noctis habent!, Her. 12.89-90 haec animum – et quota pars haec sunt! – movere puellae / simplicis.

⁷⁹⁷ Anderson 1972, v. 6.507; Galasso 2000, vv. 6.494-510; Rosati 2009, vv. 6.506-507.

⁷⁹⁸ Met. 6.537-538[omnia turbasti; paelex ego facta sororis, / tu geminus coniunx, hostis mihi debita poena].

jealous branding of Jason's new bride as a *paelex* in *Heroides* 12.⁷⁹⁹ Moreover, given that the protagonist of the Euripidean play never refers to the Corinthian princess as her husband's concubine (Gr. *παλλακίς*), it may be hypothesized that this element originates in Ovid's own lost *Medea*. Later in the narrative, after Procne rescues her sister and brings her secretly into the palace, she attempts to embrace her, but the mute Philomela keeps her eyes fixed on the ground and desperately attempts to swear to her sister by means of gesticulations that this disgrace was forcibly inflicted on her by Tereus.⁸⁰⁰ Philomela's attitude reveals her utter shame, which stems from her lingering view of herself as her sister's *paelex*.⁸⁰¹

Another feeling, however, which may be motivating Philomela's behavior, is dread of her sister's wrathful jealousy, which is implied by her shuddering fear and pallor when she enters the palace.⁸⁰² Philomela's alarm, however, proves unfounded, since Procne's sole concern is to avenge herself on Tereus for his crimes and she harbors no jealousy or inimical feelings towards her sister (6.609-619). This portrayal of Philomela may obliquely allude to Sophocles' *Tereus*, which according to the hypothesis featured Procne being stung to madness with envy for her husband's infidelity,⁸⁰³ although it cannot be established whether her jealousy entailed any enmity towards Philomela.⁸⁰⁴ At the same time, however, the Roman poet may be evoking the Euripidean *Medea*'s sexual jealousy towards the Corinthian princess, which goads her to take revenge on her adversary. Therefore, it can be argued that Ovid suppresses the theme of Procne's

⁷⁹⁹ Her. 12.173-174 quos ego servavi, *paelex* amplectitur artus, / et nostri fructus illa laboris habet.

⁸⁰⁰ Met. 6.605-609 ...sed non attollere contra / sustinet haec oculos, *paelex* sibi uisa sororis, / deiectoque in humum uultu iurare uolenti / testarique deos per uim sibi dedecus illud / inlatum, pro uoce manus fuit.

⁸⁰¹ Met. 6.605 oraque deuelat miserae *pudibunda* sororis, 606 *paelex* sibi uisa sororis.

⁸⁰² Met. 6.601-602 ut sensit tetigisse domum Philomela nefandam, / *horruit* infelix totoque *expalluit* ore.

⁸⁰³ POxy 3013 ἐπιγνοῦσα δὲ ἡ Πρ[όκνη τὴν ἀλή]θειαν ζηλοτυπ[ίᾳ] οἰστρηθεῖσα.

⁸⁰⁴ Sommerstein/Fitzpatrick 2006, 174-175.

envy in his version of the story, but also alludes to it covertly by having Philomela fearfully view her sister as Sophocles' Procne or Euripides' Medea.

3.6.4 The revenge plot

I will begin my main analysis of the intertextual dialogue between the Ovidian narrative and its Euripidean model from the pivotal moment when Procne reads the tapestry and discovers the truth about Tereus' crimes, namely the rape and mutilation of Philomela and his deceptive story that she has perished (6.581-582). In this anagnorisis scene Ovid's heroine undergoes a conversion from a lamenting sister into a wife bent on vengeance, which evokes and at the same time diverges from the psychological metamorphosis of her Euripidean predecessor. First of all, the two women differ in terms of the speed of their transformation. In the prologue of the Greek play the Nurse reports Medea's ceaseless lament on account of Jason's betrayal of her and her children by the marriage to the Corinthian princess (24-33). Gradually, however, her sorrow is mingled with a wrathful passion for revenge, since the protagonist's own lyrical exclamations alternate between her wish to commit suicide and her desire to witness the destruction of her children, her husband, and the Corinthian princess (96-97, 111-114, 144-147, 160-167). Finally, by the time of her initial exchange with the chorus she has dismissed her earlier mournful attitude and composedly reveals to them her intention to avenge herself on her husband (259-263). In contrast to her Euripidean counterpart's slow progression from inconsolable grief to vengeful anger, Procne upon reading her sister's message experiences a sudden and radical change from sorrow to a raging longing for retribution, which produces a scene of heightened pathos and dramatic tension.

Another distinguishing difference between the two figures pertains to the reason motivating their lamentation and the manner in which they react to their spouses' perfidy. Medea's dirge is triggered by Jason's infidelity and is accompanied by languishing, fasting, and profuse weeping.⁸⁰⁵ Procne's portrayal contrasts sharply with that of Euripides' protagonist, in that she initially laments her sister's supposed death (6.566-570), but when she finds out her husband's treacherous deeds, she immediately refuses to indulge in tearful mourning and is instead entirely absorbed in the thought of retribution.⁸⁰⁶ What is more, after the reunion with Philomela she chides her sister for crying and, unable to control her own blazing anger, chooses the path of revenge over that of grief.⁸⁰⁷ Procne thus surpasses her Euripidean antecedent in terms of her rejection of passive lament for her husband's transgressions and her ruthless determination to exact vengeance. Moreover, as we noted above, the Roman poet does not attribute to his protagonist the sentiment of sexual jealousy, which characterizes both Sophocles' Procne and Euripides' Medea. Hence, the only motivating forces generating the actions of his heroine are fiery rage and desire for vengeance.

In addition, both heroines go through a similar transition from mourning to silence. When Procne reads her sister's tapestry, she falls into a mute-like silence recalling her sister's literal dumbness, which is caused by her overwhelming indignation and whose extraordinariness is emphasized by the parenthetical comment of the narrator, who wonders at her capacity to do so.⁸⁰⁸ Later in the story, after she has reached the decision to murder her son, she is also said to

⁸⁰⁵ Med. 24-26 κείται δ' ἄσιτος, σῶμ' ὑφεῖσ' ἀλγηδόσιν, / τὸν πάντα συντήκουσα δακρύοις χρόνον / ἐπεὶ πρὸς ἀνδρὸς ἦισθετ' ἠδικημένη.

⁸⁰⁶ Met. 6.584-585 nec flere uacat, sed fasque nefasque/ confusura ruit poenaeque in imagine tota est.

⁸⁰⁷ Met. 6.609-612 ...ardet et iram / non capit ipsa suam Procne fletumque sororis / corripiens 'non est lacrimis hoc' inquit 'agendum, / sed ferro...'

boil up with tacit ire.⁸⁰⁹ Medea on the other hand attempts to dissuade Creon from banishing her from Corinth and claims that she will keep a deferential silence acknowledging the superior power of the royal family. The Corinthian king, however, expresses his disbelief towards her obsequious words and silent shrewdness, fearing that she is secretly hatching a treacherous plot against him.⁸¹⁰ Therefore, unlike the Euripidean heroine whose silence is a cunning ploy designed to promote her revenge scheme, Procne's silence is the result of genuine and ineffable wrath. Furthermore, the Ovidian heroine's attitude echoes Medea's parenthetical claim in *Heroides* 12 that she cannot find the proper words to express her justified anger for Jason's betrayal.⁸¹¹ Whereas the elegiac Medea's assertion is merely rhetorical, however, since she goes on venting her wrath against the Greek hero, the epic Procne's rage is truly so consuming that she cannot verbally articulate it.⁸¹²

After the rescue of Philomela from her place of interment and the reunion of the two sisters, Procne immediately begins planning her vengeance. Scholars have remarked that the Ovidian heroine's contemplation of various revenge plots against Tereus (6.611-619) is highly reminiscent of Medea's *aporia* in the Greek play, in which she reflects upon different ways to

⁸⁰⁸ Met.6.582-585 *germanaeque suae carmen miserabile legit / et (mirum potuisse) silet. dolor ora repressit. / uerbaque quaerenti satis indignantia linguae / defuerunt;*

⁸⁰⁹ Met. 6.623 *triste parat facinus tacitaque exaestuat ira.*

⁸¹⁰ Med. 313-320 Μη. νυμφεύετ', εἴ πράσσοιτε· τήνδε δὲ χθόνα / ἔατέ μ' οἰκεῖν. καὶ γὰρ ἠδικημένοι / σιγησόμεσθα, κρεισσόνων νικώμενοι. / Κρ. λέγεις ἀκοῦσαι μαλθάκ', ἀλλ' ἔσω φρενῶν / ὄρρωδία μοι μὴ τι βουλευήης κακόν. / τασῶϊδε δ' ἦσον ἢ πάρος πέποιθά σοι / γυνή γὰρ ὀξύθυμος, ὡς δ' αὐτῶς ἀνὴρ, / ράϊων φυλάσσειν ἢ σιωπηλὸς σοφή.

⁸¹¹ Her. 12.133-134 *ausus es – o, iusto desunt sua verba dolori! – / ausus es 'Aesonia,' dicere, 'cede domo!'*

⁸¹² Bessone (1997, v. 12.133) suggests a metapoetic reading of the *Heroides* passage, according to which Medea's words reflect elegy's incapacity to express tragic dolor, and argues that the phrase *desunt sua verba* may allude to Medea's suitable articulation of her anger in Ovid's own lost tragedy.

avenge herself on Jason, Creon, and his daughter (374-385).⁸¹³ The two soliloquys have some conspicuous affinities. Both heroines declare that they possess many means to harm their enemies and waver about which to choose (Met. 6.613, 618-619, Med. 376-377). Moreover, two of the options they consider for exacting their revenge are the use of fire and steel (Met. 6.614-617, Med. 378-379). What has not been observed, however, is that there is a fundamental difference between the two monologues, which opens up a novel way to analyze their intertextual relationship. Whereas Medea's *aporia* involves finding the most efficient and safest tactic to take vengeance on her foes, the Ovidian heroine vacillates as to how she will inflict the most terrible punishment on her husband. Consequently the Euripidean heroine's alternative ways of retribution are characterized by the same degree of violence, while Procne's options escalate in ferocity and bloodthirstiness.

This interpretation can be substantiated by a comparative scrutiny of the two passages. Even before listing her catalogue of reprisal choices Ovid's protagonist announces her intention to come up with the most horrible imaginable penalty for Tereus. She instructs her sister that the course of action they must follow is not that of lament for their plight, but of fierce revenge symbolized by the use of steel and asks her whether she knows any other means that can surpass steel in violence, asserting that she is ready for any kind of impious action.⁸¹⁴ The Ovidian heroine's programmatic desire to discover the most cruel method of revenge contrasts with Medea's introductory declaration that she knows many deadly ways to destroy her enemies, but is not sure which to choose (i.e. in terms of efficacy).⁸¹⁵

⁸¹³ Anderson 1972, v. 6.614-615; Ciappi 1998, 449; Galasso 2000, vv. 6.601-635; Rosati 2009, vv. 6.609-619.

⁸¹⁴ Met. 6.611-613 'non est lacrimis hoc' inquit 'agendum, / sed ferro, sed si quid habes, quod uincere ferrum / possit. in omne nefas ego me, germana, paraui.

⁸¹⁵ Med. 376-377 πολλὰς δ' ἔχουσα θανασίμους αὐτοῖς ὁδοῦς, / οὐκ οἶδ' ὅποια πρῶτον ἐγχειρῶ, φίλαι.

Not only are Procne's retribution options characterized by ascending violence, but also each of her alternatives outdoes in savagery the corresponding one in the Euripidean heroine's list. The first choice entertained by Procne, which consists in burning the whole palace and casting Tereus himself in the flames as though possessing superhuman strength, exceeds in destructiveness and ferocity Medea's plan of setting on fire Jason's bridal chamber.⁸¹⁶ The Ovidian heroine next considers avenging herself on her husband by means of simultaneous glossectomy, blinding, and castration, which constitutes a symmetrical vengeance for his crimes.⁸¹⁷ The cutting off of his tongue not only matches what he did to her sister, but is also a fitting penalty for his cunning lies to Pandion and Procne. The removal of his eyes destroys the very root of his transgressions, since it was upon seeing Philomela that he conceived his perverse passion. Finally, the amputation of his genitals constitutes a suitable punishment for his shameful violation of her sister. Procne's gruesome contemplated revenge far outstrips in brutality her Euripidean counterpart's parallel scheme, according to which she will stealthily infiltrate the newly-weds' chamber and stab them to death.⁸¹⁸ It is also noteworthy that whereas the calculating Medea expresses a concern for clandestine action, Procne consumed with rage thinks only of undertaking violent deeds out in the open.

The Ovidian heroine's bloodthirstiness is still not sated by these retaliation plans and therefore she indulges in rhetorical hyperbole envisioning herself slaying Tereus by inflicting on him a thousand wounds.⁸¹⁹ Medea on the other hand rejects her initial revenge options, because they entail a risk of her being apprehended in the act and put to death thus incurring her enemies'

⁸¹⁶ Met. 6.614-615 aut ego, cum facibus regalia tecta cremabo, / artificem mediis immittam Terea flammis, Med. 378 πότερον ὑφάψω δῶμα νυμφικὸν πυρί.

⁸¹⁷ Met. 6.616-617 aut linguam atque oculos et quae tibi membra pudorem/ abstulerunt ferro rapiam.

⁸¹⁸ Med. 379-380 ἢ θηκτὸν ὄσω φάσγανον δι' ἥπατος, / σιγῆι δόμους ἐσβᾶσ' ἴν' ἔστρωται λέχος

⁸¹⁹ Met. 6.617-618 aut per uulnera mille / sontem animam expellam.

mockery. She thus resolves her vacillation by deciding to murder her foes by means of poison, which is both the safest alternative and the thing she is inherently skilled at.⁸²⁰ Ovid also echoes the Euripidean protagonist's contemplation of various revenge options in *Heroides* 12, where he follows the Greek play more closely by having his Medea consider steel, fire, and poison as possible means to punish her enemies.⁸²¹

Procne remains, however, unsatisfied with all the vengeance plots she has devised and ends her speech by proclaiming that she is concocting in her mind a great deed, though she still wavers as to what it will be.⁸²² The conclusion of her soliloquy, just like its introduction, evokes the opening of Medea's *aporia*, where she vacillates which path of revenge to follow (376-377), but once again the epic heroine's focus is on exacting the most awful vengeance, whereas her tragic counterpart's interest lies in finding the most effective retribution. Critics have noted that apart from reworking the Euripidean model, the Roman poet also alludes here to his own twelfth elegiac epistle, in which Medea closes her speech in a sinister tone by claiming that she is contriving in her mind some great plan.⁸²³ It has also been remarked, however, that this motif originates in the Euripidean play, where the Nurse fears that Medea is pondering a grand, indeterminate deed.⁸²⁴ The Ovidian innovation lies in the fact that these ominous words are put into the mouth of the elegiac Medea herself (and later in that of Procne, her "refraction" in the *Metamorphoses*), which produces a higher dramatic effect. It has in fact been postulated that the

⁸²⁰ Med. 381-385 ἀλλ' ἔν τί μοι πρόσαντες· εἰ ληφθήσομαι / δόμους ὑπερβαίνουσα καὶ τεχνωμένη, / θανοῦσα θήσω τοῖς ἔμοῖς ἐχθροῖς γέλων. / κράτιστα τὴν εὐθεΐαν, ἣι πεφύκαμεν / σοφοὶ μάλιστα, φαρμάκοις αὐτοὺς ἐλεῖν.

⁸²¹ Her. 12.181-182 dum ferrum flammaeque aderunt sucusque veneni, / hostis Medae nullus inultus erit!

⁸²² Met. 6.618-619 magnum quodcumque paravi; / quid sit, adhuc dubito.

⁸²³ Bömer 1976 v. 6.618; Ciappi 1998, 449; Galasso 2000, vv. 6.601-635; Rosati 2009, vv. 6.618-619: Her. 12.212 nescioquid certe mens mea maius agit!

⁸²⁴ Bessone 1997, v. 12.212: Med. 37 δέδοικα δ' αὐτὴν μὴ τι βουλευέσῃ νέον, 43 κᾶπειτα μείζω συμφορὰν λάβῃ τινά.

simultaneous occurrence of this motif in *Heroides* 12, the Procne narrative, and Seneca's *Medea*⁸²⁵ points to the fact that it derives from Ovid's lost tragedy.⁸²⁶

While Procne is vacillating in this manner, Itys suddenly makes a fortuitous dramatic appearance, which straightaway suggests to his mother what will this great punishment against Tereus be: the murder of her son and the serving of his flesh to his unsuspecting father in a grotesque banquet.⁸²⁷ Below I will contend that this tragically timely arrival of Itys holds the same structural function as Aegeus' opportune advent in Euripides' *Medea*, in that they both trigger the protagonists' vengeance scheme. After the Euripidean heroine has solved her first conundrum concerning the most efficient revenge stratagem by deciding on the use of poison, she immediately faces a second aporia. She realizes that no city or individual will provide her with refuge after avenging herself on the royal family and thus she will have no hope of escaping punishment at the hands of the Corinthians (386-388). She thus resolves upon waiting for a short time and then choosing between two alternative courses of action: if a safe haven reveals itself, she will execute her plot of retribution in a covert and crafty manner, but if she is left with no sanctuary to resort to, she will then valiantly slay her enemies out in the open and perish herself in the act.⁸²⁸ Aegeus' unexpected and chance stage entrance in the third episode resolves *Medea's* quandary, since he furnishes her asylum in Athens and therefore impunity for her

⁸²⁵ *Med.* 917-919 nescioquid ferox / decreuit animus intus et nondum sibi / audet fateri.

⁸²⁶ Bessone 1997, v. 12.212.

⁸²⁷ *Met.* 6.619-621 [...] peragit dum talia Procne, / ad matrem ueniebat Itys; quid possit, ab illo / admonita est...

⁸²⁸ *Med.* 389-394 [...] μείνας' οὖν ἔτι μικρὸν χρόνον, / ἦν μὲν τις ἡμῶν πύργος ἀσφαλῆς φανῆι, / δόλοι μῆτιμι τόνδε καὶ σιγῆι ῥόνον· / ἢ δ' ἐξελαύνη ξυφορὰ μ' ἀμήχανος, / αὐτὴ ξίφος λαβοῦσα, κεί μέλλω θανεῖν, / κτενῶ σφε, τόλμης δ' εἶμι πρὸς τὸ καρτερόν.

contemplated retaliation.⁸²⁹ Hence, the coincidental appearance of Itys and Aegeus sets in motion the revenge plot of each heroine.

There is, however, a significant distinguishing difference between the two scenes. Whereas her son's arrival immediately plants in Procne's mind the seed of filicide, the advent of the Athenian king enables Medea to disclose to the chorus in detail her design to murder the Corinthian princess and her father by means of the poisoned gifts (780-789), which she announced already in the first episode. The Euripidean heroine then reveals her decision to kill her children completely unexpectedly, thereby taking the audience by surprise (791-793), since she never expresses such an intention earlier in the play.⁸³⁰ Therefore, in contrast to the Euripidean play, in which the coming of Aegeus allows Medea to proceed to the destruction of the royal family, in the *Metamorphoses* the entrance of Itys directly inspires Procne to commit infanticide.

3.6.5 A mother's dilemma

Having conceived the plan of filicide the Ovidian heroine experiences an internal conflict, which evokes that of her Euripidean predecessor, but also surpasses it in complexity. In particular, Medea's desire for vengeance against Jason clashes with her love for her children. In the case of Procne, however, it is not only her yearning for revenge against her husband that fights against her motherly pietas, but also her affection for Philomela, which goads her to punish Tereus for

⁸²⁹ Med. 765-771 νῦν καλλίνικοι τῶν ἐμῶν ἐχθρῶν, φίλοι, / γενησόμεσθα κὰς ὁδὸν βεβήκαμεν, / νῦν ἐλπίς ἐχθροῦς τοῦς ἐμοῦς τείσειν δίκην. / οὗτος γὰρ ἀνήρ ἦι μάλιστ' ἐκάμνομεν / λίμην πέφανται τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων / ἐκ τοῦδ' ἀναγόμεσθα πρυμνήτην κάλων, / μολόντες ἄστῳ καὶ πόλισμα Παλλάδος.

⁸³⁰ Anderson 1972, vv. 6.620-622.

the crimes he committed against her sister. Furthermore, her inner struggle between the roles of mother and sister anticipates that of Althaea in Book 8, who is likewise torn between her maternal feelings for her son and her pietas towards her brothers, namely her duty to avenge them by murdering Meleager.⁸³¹

Procne's murderous plot is immediately reflected in her pitiless and wrathful gaze towards Itys, which recalls Medea's look of hateful rage towards her sons in the prologue of the Greek play interpreted by the Nurse as an ominous sign that she plans to do them harm.⁸³² The primary incentive driving Ovid's protagonist to commit infanticide is Itys' extraordinary resemblance to his father.⁸³³ In her distorted perspective by murdering her son she is simultaneous killing Tereus. By attributing such a motive to Procne Ovid deviates markedly from the Greek play, in which Medea never views her sons as surrogates for their father. To be sure, the Euripidean heroine also associates the infanticide directly with Jason, albeit in a different way: she claims that she will slay her sons in order to cause agony to her husband⁸³⁴ and later accuses him that it was his hybris towards her, namely his betrayal and new marriage, which ultimately caused the children's demise.⁸³⁵

Many critics have observed that Procne's words here explicitly allude to Heroides 12, where Medea similarly points out that her sons are the spitting image of Jason.⁸³⁶ Nevertheless,

⁸³¹ Anderson 1972, v. 6.629; Rosati 2009, vv. 6.619-635.

⁸³² Bömer 1976, v. 6.621; Ciappi 1998, 449; Rosati 2009 v. 6.621: Met. 6.621 oculisque tuens immitibus, 623 triste parat facinus tacitaque exaestuat ira, Med. 94 ἤδη γὰρ εἶδον ὄμμα νιν ταυρουμένην / τοῖσδ', ὡς τι δρασείουσαν· οὐδὲ παύσεται / χόλου, σάφ' οἶδα, πρὶν κατασκῆψαί τι.

⁸³³ Met. 6.621-622 'a! quam / es similis patri' dixit.

⁸³⁴ Med. 1046-1047 τί δεῖ με πατέρα τῶνδε τοῖς τούτων κακοῖς / λυποῦσαν αὐτήν δις τόσα κτᾶσθαι κακά;

⁸³⁵ Med. 1072-1073 Μη. εὐδαιμονοῖτον, ἀλλ' ἐκεῖ· τὰ δ' ἐνθάδε / πατῆρ ἀφείλετ', 1363-1366 Ια. ὃ τέκνα, μητρὸς ὡς κακῆς ἐκύρσατε. / Μη. ὃ παῖδες, ὡς ἄλεσθε πατρώϊαι νόσοι. / Ια. οὗτοι νιν ἡμῆ δεξιά γ' ἀπώλεσεν. / Μη. ἀλλ' ὑβρις οἱ τε σοὶ νεοδηῆτες γάμοι.

the usual interpretation propounded is that the children's likeness to their father spurs Medea, like Procne, to contemplate filicide.⁸³⁷ The situation is, however, diametrically opposite: the sons' resemblance to Jason is a source of erotic longing for the elegiac heroine and thus of profound grief, since she has been abandoned by the Greek hero.⁸³⁸ Hence, the epic Procne, whose desire for revenge is stirred by the viewing of her son as a mirror image of his father, evokes and reverses her elegiac counterpart. Moreover, it has been postulated that the motif of the sons' likeness to their father as a stimulus for filicide may be one more element stemming from Ovid's lost Medea and finding its way through his twelfth elegiac epistle into the Procne narrative.⁸³⁹

When Procne seems to have resolved firmly on perpetrating the abominable deed, Itys extends a heart-melting greeting to his mother, which has an instant effect on her stirring her maternal pietas and at the same time diminishing her vengeful wrath.⁸⁴⁰ Scholars have remarked that the encounter between Procne and her son echoes the parallel scene in the Euripidean play, in which Medea's prior determination to proceed to the infanticide is dissolved at the disarming sight of her children.⁸⁴¹ What has not been observed, however, is that in the Ovidian narrative

⁸³⁶ Anderson 1972, vv. 6.621-622; Bömer 1976, vv. 6.621-622; Ciappi 1998, 449; Rosati 2009, v. 6.622: Her. 12.189-190: et nimum similes tibi sunt, et imagine tangor, / et quotiens video, lumina nostra madent.

⁸³⁷ The only exception is Bessone (1997, vv. 12.189-190), who notes that Medea's words express amorous feelings.

⁸³⁸ The elegiac heroine may be "correcting" here Virgil's Dido, who wishes that Aeneas before deserting her had at least given her a son, a little Aeneas, whose resemblance to his father would remind her of the Trojan hero and thus would not be a cause of anguish, but a consolation to her in her sorrowful state: Aen. 4.327-330 saltem si qua mihi de te suscepta fuisset / ante fugam suboles, si quis mihi paruulus aula / luderet Aeneas, qui te tamen ore referret, / non equidem omnino capta ac deserta uiderer.

⁸³⁹ Bessone 1997, vv. 12.189-190.

⁸⁴⁰ Met. 6.627 mota quidem est genetrix infractaque constitit ira.

⁸⁴¹ Anderson 1972, v. 6.625; Ciappi 1998, 449; Galasso vv. 6.601-635: Med. 1042-1048 αἰαῖ· τί δράσω; καρδία γὰρ οἴχεται, / γυναῖκες, ὄμμα φαιδρὸν ὡς εἶδον τέκνων. / οὐκ ἂν δυναίμην· χαιρέτω βουλευματα / τὰ πρόσθεν· ἄζω παῖδας ἐκ γαίας ἐμούς. / τί δεῖ με πατέρα τῶνδε τοῖς τούτων κακοῖς / λυποῦσαν αὐτὴν δις τόσα κτᾶσθαι κακά; / οὐ δῆτ' ἔγωγε· χαιρέτω βουλευματα.

the characters' roles are reversed. Whereas in Euripides Medea holds the active part, the Roman poet gives Itys the initiative thereby enhancing the tragic pathos of the scene. More specifically, the Euripidean heroine addresses her children with affectionate words, kisses their hands, and begs them not to smile beguilingly and look at her with their innocent eyes.⁸⁴² In the *Metamorphoses*, on the other hand, Itys is the one who approaches and greets his mother showering her with embraces, kisses, and blandishing words.⁸⁴³ Moreover, Procne outdoes Medea in terms of her tenacious resistance to her maternal instincts. In contrast to the Euripidean protagonist who weeps willingly and profusely at the thought of the impending filicide, her Ovidian counterpart's tears are forced and involuntary.⁸⁴⁴ Finally, Procne "corrects" the Medea of *Heroides* 12 whose eyes are filled with tears of erotic passion and sorrow on account of the likeness of her sons to their father.⁸⁴⁵

Procne suddenly becomes aware that she is wavering about her decision to commit infanticide due to her maternal pietas and recalling the suffering of Philomela she debates with herself whether the mother or the sister in her should prevail (6.629-633). Her inner struggle is manifested both visually by means of her alternate gaze towards her sister and son and verbally through the juxtaposition of Itys' alluring speech and her sister's muteness inflicted on her by Tereus' mutilation of her tongue (6.630-633). The Ovidian protagonist's sudden change of heart is evocative of her Euripidean predecessor's analogous realization that she has allowed her

⁸⁴² Med. 1068-1069 παῖδας προσειπεῖν βούλομαι· δότ', ὧ τέκνα, / δότ' ἀσπάσασθαι μητρὶ δεξιὰν χέρα, 1040-1041 φεῦ φεῦ· τί προσδέρκεσθέ μ' ὄμμασιν, τέκνα; / τί προσγελάτε τὸν πανύστατον γέλω;

⁸⁴³ Met. 6.624-626 ut tamen accessit natus matrique salutem/ attulit et paruis adduxit colla lacertis / mixtaque blanditiis puerilibus oscula iunxit.

⁸⁴⁴ Med. 922-925 Ια. αὐτῆ, τί γλωροῖς δακρῦοις τέγγεις κόρα, / στρέψασα λευκὴν ἔμπαλιν παρηίδα, / κοῦκ ἀσμένῃ τόνδ' ἐξ ἐμοῦ δέχῃ λόγον; / Μη. οὐδέν· τέκνων τῶνδ' ἐννοουμένη πέρι, Met. 6.628 inuitique oculi lacrimis maduere coactis.

⁸⁴⁵ Her. 12.189-190 et nimium similes tibi sunt, et imagine tangor, / et quotiens video, lumina nostra madent.

resolve to perpetrate infanticide to weaken owing to her motherly sentiments (1049-1055). What is noteworthy is that both heroines employ rhetorical self-delusion in order to induce themselves to proceed to the horrible deed. Procne's perverse point of view is reflected in her conception of her sense of piety towards her son as "excessive",⁸⁴⁶ whereas pietas, like virtus, has an absolute value.⁸⁴⁷ Medea on the other hand claims that if she does not kill her children, she will incur the mockery of Jason, since she considers the infanticide his punishment. What is more, she claims that even considering "soft" arguments stemming from her maternal love (e.g. that her agony for the children's death will be double than that of Jason) is a sign of cowardice.⁸⁴⁸

Procne concludes her internal debate by returning full circle to the initial impetus pushing her to commit filicide, namely Itys' resemblance to his father. The Ovidian heroine exhorts herself to look at the vile husband she is married to, a statement which implies that in her warped perspective her son has transformed into Tereus himself.⁸⁴⁹ The final rhetorical argument in favor of murdering Itys utilized by Procne is the sober acknowledgement of her degeneration with respect to her noble family, which she imputes to a moral "contamination" contracted from being married to a depraved husband and which is prepared by her self-characterization in the preceding line as "Pandion's daughter". Her ethical degeneration is crystallized in a paradoxical and morally perverted sententia: every act of piety towards Tereus is a "crime" and thus conversely a transgression against her husband, in this case the infanticide, constitutes a "pious" deed.⁸⁵⁰

⁸⁴⁶ Met. 6.629-630 sed simul ex nimia mentem pietate labare / sensit.

⁸⁴⁷ Anderson 1972, v. 6.629.

⁸⁴⁸ Med. 1049-1052 καίτοι τί πάσχω; βούλομαι γέλωτ' ὀφλεῖν / ἔχθρους μεθεῖσα τοὺς ἐμοὺς ἀζημίους; / τολμητέον τάδ'· ἀλλὰ τῆς ἐμῆς κάκης, / τὸ καὶ προσέσθαι μαλθακοὺς λόγους φρενί.

⁸⁴⁹ Met. 6.634 cui sis nupta uide, Pandione nata, marito.

Procne's acute self-consciousness of the wicked nature of the act she plans to commit recalls her Euripidean antecedent's similar self-awareness regarding the depravity of the impending filicide.⁸⁵¹ Furthermore, both heroines rhetorically ascribe their deed to a force ostensibly beyond their control: Medea asserts that her wrath overcomes her rational plan of sparing her children, while her Ovidian counterpart claims that it is her moral degeneration which drives her to murder her son. On the other hand, Procne's conception of herself as the degenerate offspring of her noble father Pandion departs pointedly from Medea's self-image as a worthy descendant of her illustrious ancestors Aetes and Helios.⁸⁵² Nevertheless, in either case the heroine's perception of herself has an auto-paraenetic function: the Ovidian heroine's cognizance of her degeneration incites her towards infanticide, while her Euripidean counterpart's pride in her descent is a stimulus to exact vengeance from Jason and the Corinthian princess.

By recognizing her degenerate state Procne thus diverges from Medea and, as I will argue below, evokes instead the Virgilian Pyrrhus. After witnessing the death of his son Polites before his very eyes at the hands of Pyrrhus, the wrathful Priam explicitly doubts that he is the son of Achilles, since the Greek hero respected the Trojan king's supplication by returning Hector's body for burial (2.531-543). Pyrrhus sarcastically accepts Priam's insult, characterizing himself as "degenerate" in relation to his father, to whom he refers in the previous line, as well as his grandfather Peleus, who is implicitly mentioned through Achilles' patronymic Pelidae.⁸⁵³ The

⁸⁵⁰ Met. 6.635 degeneras; scelus est pietas in coniuge Terei.

⁸⁵¹ Med. 1078-1080 και μανθάνω μὲν οἷα δρᾶν μέλλω κακά, / θυμὸς δὲ κρείσσων τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων, / ὅσπερ μεγίστων αἴτιος κακῶν βροτοῖς.

⁸⁵² Med. 404-406 ὀρᾶς ἃ πάσχεις; οὐ γέλωτα δεῖ σ' ὀφλεῖν / τοῖς Σισυφείοις τοῖσδ' Ἰάσονος γάμοις, / γεγῶσαν ἐσθλοῦ πατρὸς Ἥλιου τ' ἄπο.

Greek warrior demonstrates at once his depravity by sacrilegiously butchering Priam at Jupiter's altar (2.550-553). Hence, both Procne and Pyrrhus display a cold-blooded mindfulness of their moral degeneration, which emphasizes the savagery of their deeds.

3.6.6 Infanticide, anagnorisis, and exodos

Having decided to carry out the atrocious deed Procne immediately drags Itys away to a remote part of the palace. The ferocity of her action is stressed by a simile comparing her to a tigress carrying off a suckling fawn into the woods in order to devour it.⁸⁵⁴ The portrayal of the Ovidian heroine as a wild animal echoes that of her Euripidean predecessor, who is frequently likened to a lioness in the Greek play.⁸⁵⁵ In the prologue the Nurse remarks that Medea casts the savage glance of a lioness with cubs to any servant that dares to address her.⁸⁵⁶ This characterization recurs in the exodos, where Jason vituperates Medea by repeatedly branding her as an infanticidal lioness.⁸⁵⁷ Thus the Euripidean heroine's radical psychological metamorphosis from an affectionate mother into a ruthless infanticide is reflected on the level of imagery in her transformation from a lioness aggressively protective of her young into the paradoxical figure of a lioness that murder its own offspring.⁸⁵⁸ In an analogous manner the comparison of Procne

⁸⁵³ Aen. 2.547-549 cui Pyrrhus: 'referes ergo haec et nuntius ibis / Pelidae genitori. illi mea tristia facta / degeneremque Neoptoleumum narrare memento.

⁸⁵⁴ Met. 6.636-637 nec mora, traxit Ityn, ueluti Gangetica ceruae / lactentem fetum per siluas tigris opacas;

⁸⁵⁵ Bessone 1998, 192-193; Galasso 2000, vv. 6.636-646.

⁸⁵⁶ Med. 187-189 καίτοι τοκάδος δέργμα λεαίνης / ἀποταυροῦται δμωσίν, ὅταν τις / μῦθον προφέρων πέλας ὀρμηθῆι.

⁸⁵⁷ Med. 1342-1343 λέαιναν, οὐ γυναῖκα, τῆς Τυρσηνίδος / Σκύλλης ἔχουσαν ἀγριωτέραν φύσιν, 1405-1407: Ζεῦ, τάδ' ἀκούεις ὡς ἀπελαυνόμεθ' / οἷά τε πάσχομεν ἐκ τῆς μυσαρᾶς / καὶ παιδοφόνον τῆσδε λεαίνης;

⁸⁵⁸ Galasso 2000, vv. 6.636-646.

intending to murder her own son to a tigress about to kill the progeny of another species also constitutes a paradox, which symbolizes her complete alienation from her son and the concomitant rejection of her maternal role, since she views Itys solely as a replica of Tereus and thus has no compunction to use him as an instrument of vengeance against her husband.⁸⁵⁹ What has not received attention, however, is the fact that Ovid by depicting Procne's attitude towards her son as that of a predator against its prey deviates from Euripides' representation of Medea as a wild animal that turns violent against its own young to the effect that the epic heroine outstrips her tragic model in terms of estrangement from her offspring and dismissal of her motherly instincts.

The Roman poet paints a highly pathetic scene of Itys' death at the hands of his mother, which constitutes a reversal of the preceding scene, in which the boy's blandishments stirred Procne's maternal feelings (6.624-628).⁸⁶⁰ The boy's prior innocence gives its place to a realization of his impending doom. Whereas he previously drew down to himself his mother's neck in order to kiss her, now he stretches forth his arms and vainly attempts to grasp her neck. Moreover, his earlier salutation and endearing words to his mother are substituted by his double pathetic cry "mother". Finally, while the Ovidian heroine was momentarily moved in the previous scene by her son's winning behavior, she now pitilessly murders him without even turning away her gaze.

In contrast to the epic poet who offers the reader a full picture of the infanticide, the same scene is represented in an oblique manner in the Greek play, since the audience only hear the children's cries from inside the palace moments before they are murdered by their mother (1271-

⁸⁵⁹ Bessone 1998, 193.

⁸⁶⁰ Met. 6.639-642 *tendentemque manus et iam sua fata uidentem* / et 'mater, mater' clamantem et colla petentem / ense ferit Procne, lateri qua pectus adhaeret, / nec uultum uertit.

1279). This is partly due to the standard convention of 5th century Athenian theater, which did not allow scenes of violence to be enacted on stage, and partly due to the playwright's own choice, since he does not recount the filicide by means of a subsequent messenger speech. Despite the allusive nature of the Euripidean scene there is a noteworthy echo in the Ovidian narrative. In particular, Itys' awareness of his imminent demise evokes the children's analogous realization of their coming end.⁸⁶¹ Furthermore, Ovid amplifies the tragic pathos of the scene by having Itys implore Procne directly to show him mercy, whereas in the Greek play the children entreat futilely the chorus to save them from death at their mother's hands.⁸⁶²

Procne's evocation of Virgil's Pyrrhus at the conclusion of her soliloquy continues in the scene of the infanticide, since the description of Itys' murder echoes the slaughter of Priam by the Greek hero. Each author lays particular emphasis on the sacrilege of the murder. Both scenes take place in the penetralia, that is the innermost and most sacred part of the house (Met. 6.646, Aen. 2.484). Moreover, upon finishing his speech Neoptolemus pollutes Priam by dragging him through his son Polites' blood and then butchers him at Jupiter's altar. Likewise Procne immediately after her monologue carries off the helpless boy to a remote part of the palace and defiles the penetralia with her son's putrid gore.⁸⁶³ The Greek warrior then seizes Priam by the hair and buries his sword deep into his side and in an analogous manner Procne plunges her blade into her son's side.⁸⁶⁴ The two scenes end in a gruesome climax: the Trojan king is

⁸⁶¹ 1274-1275 Πα.^α οἴμοι, τί δράσω; ποῖ φύγω μητρὸς χέρας; / Πα.^β οὐκ οἶδ', ἀδελφὲ φίλτατ'· ὀλλύμεσθα γάρ, 1279 Πα.^β ὡς ἐγγυὸς ἦδη γ' ἔσμεν ἀρκύων ζίφους.

⁸⁶² Galasso 2000, vv. 6.636-646:1276-1278 Χο. παρέλθω δόμους ἀρῆξαι φόνον / δοκεῖ μοι τέκνοις. / Πα.^α ναί, πρὸς θεῶν, ἀρήξαιτ'· ἐν δέοντι γάρ.

⁸⁶³ Met. 6.636 nec mora, traxit Ityn, 638 utque domus altae partem tenuere remotam, 646 ...manant penetralia tabo, Aen. 2.550-551 nunc morere.' hoc dicens altaria ad ipsa trementem / traxit et in multo lapsantem sanguine nati.

⁸⁶⁴ Met. 6.641 ense ferit Procne, lateri qua pectus adhaeret, Aen. 2.552-553 implicuitque comam laeua, dextraque coruscum / extulit ac lateri capulo tenus abdidit ensem.

decapitated and ends up lying on a shore as a headless corpse, while Itys is dismembered and his flesh is offered as a feast to his unsuspecting father (Met. 6.643-647, Aen. 2.557-558). Finally, the impiety of the two scenes is accentuated by the shared motif of the pollution of a father's eyes through the witnessing of his son's death. Just as Philomela hurls Itys' bloody head against the face of his shocked father, similarly Polites is slain by Pyrrhus before his parents and Priam curses the Greek hero for befouling his sight with the murder of his own son.⁸⁶⁵ Therefore, Procne exceeds even Virgil's Pyrrhus in blasphemous ferocity, since in contrast to the Greek hero she does not slay and defile her sworn enemy, but her own progeny.

After the sisters have dismembered and cooked Itys' body Procne invites her husband to the cannibalistic feast veiling it as an ancestral Athenian custom, in which only the husband may partake.⁸⁶⁶ The Ovidian heroine's contrived rites echo and invert the genuine rites, which Medea institutes in Corinth in atonement for her murder of her children.⁸⁶⁷ Procne surpasses her tragic predecessor in sacrilege, since the Euripidean protagonist after the impious filicide honors the memory of her sons by establishing a solemn festival for them, whereas she not only kills her son, but also serves his flesh in a gruesome banquet under the veneer of a sacred rite. The unwitting Tereus sits high on his ancestral throne and devours his son's flesh.⁸⁶⁸ This ironic picture of the Thracian king before the reversal of his fortune bears sinister connotations, in that it recalls Medea's prophetic vision in Heroides 12, who imagines the ignorant and haughty

⁸⁶⁵ Met. 6.658-59 *prosiluit Ityosque caput Philomela cruentum / misit in ora patris*, Aen. 2.531-532 *ante oculos evasit et ora parentum*, / *concidit*, 538-39... *patrios foedasti funere vultus*.

⁸⁶⁶ Met. 6.647-649 *his adhibet coniunx ignarum Terea mensis / et patrii moris sacrum mentita*, *quod uni / fas sit adire uiro, comites famulosque remouit*.

⁸⁶⁷ Med. 1381-1383... *γῆι δὲ τῆιδε Σισύφου / σεμνήν ἑορτήν καὶ τέλη προσάγομεν / τὸ λοιπὸν ἀντὶ τοῦδε δυσσεβοῦς φόνου*

⁸⁶⁸ Met. 6.650-651 *ipse sedens solio Tereus sublimis auito / uescitur inque suam sua uiscera congerit aluum*;

Corinthian princess mocking her while lying on her luxurious bed and cryptically predicts the girl's impending fiery death by means of her magic drugs.⁸⁶⁹

Tereus' tragic recognition that he has consumed his own son is a reworking of the anagnorisis scene in the Euripidean play, in which Jason learns of his children's death at the hands of their mother. Both fathers' ignorance of the truth is steeped in dramatic irony. Jason's claim that he has come to save his sons fearing that Creon's relatives may harm them as retribution for Medea's murder of the royal family elicits the chorus' pitiful comment on the hero's obliviousness to his misfortune.⁸⁷⁰ The Thracian king's unawareness on the other hand manifests itself in his command that his son be summoned after he has glutted himself on his flesh, which in this case prompts the epic narrator's remark on his ignorance.⁸⁷¹ The chorus' enigmatic reply that if Jason knew the truth he would not have thought that his children were in danger of being killed by Creon's relatives triggers the hero's ironic question whether Medea wishes to murder him as well.⁸⁷² In an analogous manner Procne plays the role of a cryptic messenger by responding to Tereus' request for his son with the ambiguous retort that "the one he seeks is inside him" and Ovid heightens the suspense and tragic irony by having the Thracian king look around him and repeatedly ask where his son is.⁸⁷³

⁸⁶⁹ Bessone 1997, v. 12.179: Her. 12.179-180 rideat et Tyrio iaceat sublimis in ostro –/ flebit et ardores vincet adusta meos!

⁸⁷⁰ Med. 1303-1307 Ια. ἐμῶν δὲ παίδων ἦλθον ἐκσώσων βίον, / μή μοί τι δράσωσ' οἱ προσήκοντες γένει, / μητρῶιον ἐκπράσσοντες ἀνόσιον φόνον. / Χο. ὦ τλήμιον, οὐκ οἶσθ' οἱ κακῶν ἐλήλυθας, / Ἴᾶσον·

⁸⁷¹ Met. 6.647 ignarum Terea , 652 tantaque nox animi est, 'Ityn huc accersite' dixit.

⁸⁷² Med. 1307-1308 Χο. οὐ γὰρ τοῦσδ' ἄν ἐφθέγξω λόγους. / Ια. τί δ' ἔστιν; ἦ που κάμ' ἀποκτεῖναι θέλει;

⁸⁷³ Met. 6.654-656 iamque suae cupiens exsistere nuntia cladis / 'intus habes quem poscis' ait. circumspicit ille / atque ubi sit quaerit; quaerenti iterumque uocanti.

The anagnorisis in the Euripidean play is achieved by the chorus' direct revelation to Jason that his sons have perished by their mother's hand.⁸⁷⁴ The Ovidian narrative's recognition scene, on the contrary, is characterized by gruesome horror: the disheveled and blood-soaked Philomela assuming the part of a mute messenger suddenly leaps forward from hiding and tosses Itys' head to his shocked father's face.⁸⁷⁵ Tereus thus realizes the horrible truth by deciphering the meaning of his wife's obscure words through his sister-in-law's grisly display. Finally, Tereus surpasses Jason in the violence of his response to the disclosure of his son's death. The Greek hero's reaction is a combination of lament for the loss of his children and his new bride (1347-1350) and vehement invective against Medea for her atrocious deed (1323-1346). The Thracian king, on the other hand, utters a terrible cry as he overturns the table, on which the ghastly banquet took place, mourns bitterly for Itys' demise, and pursues the Athenian sisters with unsheathed sword in order exact revenge from them (6.661-666).

Procne's state of mind during the recognition scene contrasts sharply with that of her husband. The Ovidian heroine neither laments the death of Itys nor expresses any remorse for her bloody deed. Moreover, there is no indication that she will grieve for him after her metamorphosis into a swallow, a portrayal which diverges from the earlier mythical tradition according to which Procne transformed into a nightingale mourns eternally for her son.⁸⁷⁶ Medea also does not bewail her children's death at the play's denouement, but before the infanticide she claims that after that day she is going to mourn them perpetually.⁸⁷⁷ Therefore, Procne once

⁸⁷⁴ Med. 1309 παῖδες τεθνᾶσι χειρὶ μητρώϊαι σέθεν.

⁸⁷⁵ Met. 6.657-659 sicut erat sparsis furiali caede capillis, / prosiluit Ityosque caput Philomela cruentum / misit in ora patris...

⁸⁷⁶ Goldenhard/Zissos 2007, 7.

⁸⁷⁷ Med. 1247-1250 ... ἀλλὰ τήνδε γε / λαθοῦ βραχεῖαν ἡμέραν παίδων σέθεν / κάπειτα θρήνει· καὶ γὰρ εἰ κτενεῖς σφ', ὅμως / φίλοι γ' ἔφυσαν· δυστυχῆς δ' ἐγὼ γυνή.

again outdoes her Euripidean counterpart in terms of her mercilessness and her rejection of her maternal instincts.

The Ovidian protagonist's emulation of her tragic predecessor is clearly reflected in her desire to be herself the messenger of her son's death, whereas, as we saw, in the Greek play the chorus of Corinthian women reveal to Jason the horrible news. Procne's essential difference from Medea lies in the fact that she is entirely oblivious to the self-destructive nature of her revenge, since she derives perverse joy from her crime and the epic narrator is the one who characterizes Itys' demise as "her own disaster".⁸⁷⁸ Medea, on the contrary, is fully conscious that her vengeance against Jason in the form of filicide entails her own ruin and agony, but prefers to suffer herself than sustain the ridicule of her husband.⁸⁷⁹ Finally, the Euripidean heroine openly taunts her husband after he has learned of the infanticide. For instance, she responds to his tirade by ordering him to leave and bury his wife (1393-1394). Her Ovidian counterpart, on the other hand, mocks the ignorant Tereus in a veiled manner by means of her sardonic insinuation of the cannibalistic feast (6.655 *intus habes quem poscis*).

Furthermore, the anagnorisis of the Procne narrative evokes and reverses the scene in *Heroides* 12, in which Medea learns of Jason's marriage with the Corinthian princess. Whereas in the *Metamorphoses* Procne wishes to be the messenger of her own son's death, in the elegiac epistle Medea's youngest son unwittingly becomes the messenger of his mother's misfortune, namely Jason's wedding. Both scenes are fraught with tragic irony: the ignorant Tereus' summoning of his son after he has consumed his flesh echoes the innocent child's bidding to his mother to view the festive bridal parade led by his father without realizing that this disclosure

⁸⁷⁸ Met. 6.653-654 *dissimulare nequit crudelia gaudia Procne; / iamque suae cupiens exsistere nuntia cladi*

⁸⁷⁹ Med. 1361-1362 Ια. καὲν γε λυπῆι καὶ κακῶν κοινωνὸς εἶ. / Μη. σάφ' ἴσθι· λύει δ' ἄλγος, ἦν σὺ μὴ ἔγγελαῖς.

will set in motion the events resulting to his own doom.⁸⁸⁰ What is more, the elegiac work functions once again as a possible intermediate intratext between Ovid's epic and his lost tragedy. Bessone has postulated that the *Heroides* passage may allude to a scene in Ovid's *Medea*, in which the news of Jason's nuptials are delivered to Medea not by a messenger, but by her own son.⁸⁸¹ She has also formulated the hypothesis that Procne's revelation to Tereus of his son's death may recall a parallel scene in the Ovidian play, in which Medea assumes herself the role of the messenger disclosing the infanticide to Jason.

Both Procne and Medea complete their revenge on their husbands by denying them the right to bury their dead offspring. The Euripidean heroine achieves this by carrying away her children in Helios' chariot, while her Ovidian counterpart prevents Tereus from offering burial to Itys by making him his own son's "living tomb".⁸⁸² Procne outstrips, however, her tragic antecedent in terms of her sacrilegious treatment of her son's body. Medea may murder her children, but at the same time announces that she will bury them in the sacred precinct of Hera Akraia's temple.⁸⁸³ Procne and her sister, on the other hand, defile Itys' body by tearing it to pieces and serving it to the Thracian king in a gruesome feast. Moreover, Tereus' impossible wish that he could tear open his son's "tomb", namely his chest,⁸⁸⁴ and give him proper burial

⁸⁸⁰ Her. 12.145-146 *diversi flebant servi lacrimasque tegebant – / quis vellet tanti nuntius esse mali?* 149-52 *cum minor e pueris (iussus studioque videndi / constitit ad geminae limina prima foris) / huc modo, mater, adi! pompam pater,* inquit, 'Iason / ducit et adiunctos aureus urget equos!', Met. 6.652 *tantaque nox animi est, Ityn huc accersite!* dixit.

⁸⁸¹ Bessone 1997, v. 12.146.

⁸⁸² Met. 6.663-665 *et modo, si posset, reserato pectore diras / egerere inde dapes semesaque uiscera gestit, / flet modo seque uocat bustum miserabile nati*, Med. Ia. *θάψαι* νεκρούς μοι τούσδε καὶ *κλαῦσαι πάρες*. / Μη. οὐ δῆτ'. Note that the verb *egero* bears the secondary sense "carry to the grave" and thus corresponds to *θάπτω* in the Greek text.

⁸⁸³ Med. 1378-1379 ... *σφας τῆιδ' ἐγὼ θάψω χερί, / φέρουσ' ἐς ἼΗρας τέμενος Ἀκραίας θεοῦ*.

⁸⁸⁴ Rosati (2009, v. 6.665) remarks that the metaphorical description of the parent as his own offspring's "tomb" is also found in Accius' *Atreus* (TRF 226 *natis sepulchro ipse est parens*).

rites echoes and inverts the situation in the Greek play, where Medea is going to bury her children at Hera's precinct, so that the Corinthians may not tear up their grave and outrage their bodies as retribution for her murder of the royal family.⁸⁸⁵

After his bitter lament for his son Tereus pursues Procne and Philomela with murderous intent, but they evade punishment through their metamorphosis into a swallow and a nightingale respectively.⁸⁸⁶ The Athenian sisters' aerial escape recalls that of Medea, who in the play's exodos flies away on her grandfather Helios' chariot. The description of the sisters' transformation may verbally echo Jason's claim that the only way for Medea to avoid a penalty for her deeds is to sprout wings and rise aloft in the sky, which ironically foreshadows her imminent airborne departure.⁸⁸⁷ An attractive hypothesis is that the Euripidean hero's words may in fact subtly allude to the avian metamorphosis of the Athenian sisters in Sophocles' *Tereus*, in which case Ovid would be evoking both plays by means of double allusion. Furthermore, after her transformation Procne flies to the palace's rooftop (6.669) and in an analogous manner her Euripidean counterpart is last seen in the play on top of the Corinthian palace.

A significant distinguishing difference between the two scenes, however, is that whereas Tereus is consumed with desire for vengeance, which manifests itself in his chase of the Athenian sisters with a drawn sword, in the Greek play Jason does not express the wish to avenge himself on Medea, but predicts instead that she is going to suffer punishment at the hands

⁸⁸⁵ Med. 1380-1381 ὡς μή τις αὐτοὺς πολεμίων καθυβρίσῃ / τυμβοῦς ἀνασπῶν.

⁸⁸⁶ Rosati (2009, vv. 424-674) in contrast to earlier theories argues that Ovid allusively adheres to the prevalent convention in Latin literature, according to which Procne became a swallow and Philomela a nightingale (in the Greek tradition the metamorphosis is the exact opposite). He bases his argument on the birds' aetiological habitation preferences: the swallow ascends to the palace's roof, a dwelling suited to Procne, while the nightingale flies to the forest, a locale more apt for Philomela given her earlier imprisonment in the woods.

⁸⁸⁷ Met. 6.667-668 corpora Cecropidum pennis pendere putares;/ pendebant pennis, Med. 1296-1298 δεῖ γάρ νιν ἦτοι γῆς γε κρυφθῆναι κάτω / ἢ πτηγνὸν ἄραι σῶμ' ἐς αἰθέρος βάθος, / εἰ μή τυράννων δώμασιν δώσει δίκην.

of Creon's relatives.⁸⁸⁸ What is more, Ovid seems to have adapted his own version of the events at Corinth in the *Metamorphoses* in such a way as to echo the Procne myth, since in contrast to the Euripidean play *Medea* is said to escape Jason's armed pursuit (7.397 *Iasonis effugit arma*). This interpretation is corroborated by a subtle allusion to Horace's Ode 4.12, which opens with the picture of Procne transformed into a nightingale and perpetually mourning her son. In particular, Ovid's moral condemnation of Medea for her depraved revenge against Jason by means of infanticide is reminiscent of Horace's analogous criticism towards Procne.⁸⁸⁹ Finally, the denouement of the Ovidian narrative contrasts with the Euripidean *exodos* in terms of its open-endedness: whereas the Athenians sisters are trapped in a state of a perpetual pursuit by Tereus, Medea gains closure by means of her utter destruction of her enemies and her triumphant escape from Corinth.

3.6.7 The role of the Furies

Throughout the Ovidian story the Olympian gods play no role whatsoever in the action and there is also no suggestion that they preside over human affairs. The epic narrator focuses instead on the mortal characters' deeds, feelings, and interaction with each other. As we noted in the introduction, this absence of a divine mechanism is most conspicuous in the narrative's conclusion, where the avian metamorphoses are neither requested by the protagonists nor

⁸⁸⁸ Met. 6.666 *nunc sequitur nudo genitas Pandione ferro*, 671 *ille dolore suo poenaeque cupidine uelox*, Med. 1298-1303 *εἰ μὴ τυράννων δώμασιν δώσει δίκην. / πέποιθ' ἀποκτείνασα κοιράνους χθονὸς / ἀθῶιος αὐτῆ τῶνδε φεύξεσθαι δόμων; / ἀλλ' οὐ γὰρ αὐτῆς φροντίδ' ὡς τέκνων ἔχω / κείνην μὲν οὐς ἔδρασεν ἔρξουσιν κακῶς.*

⁸⁸⁹ Met. 7.397 *ultraque se male mater*, C. 4.12.5-8 *nidum ponit Ityn flebiliter gemens / infelix avis et Cecropiae domus / aeternum opprobrium, quod male barbaras / regum est ultra libidines.*

attributed to a supernatural interference, but remain mysteriously unexplained. This treatment diverges from the earlier literary tradition: in Sophocles a *deus ex machina* ascribes the transformation to another divinity, while in Apollodorus and Hyginus it is brought about by the merciful gods in response to the Athenian sisters' prayer. In Ovid, however, there is no implication that the siblings' transformation constitutes their redemption. On the contrary, the blood stains branding their plumage hint that they are condemned to bear forever the stigma of their impious crime (6.669-670).⁸⁹⁰ In the Euripidean play there is an analogous absence of the gods from the dramatic action and the lens focuses exclusively on the mortals and their complex interpersonal relationships. The only exception is an indirect divine intervention in the *exodos*, where Medea escapes in the chariot provided to her by her grandfather Helios.

It has been argued that the Olympians are replaced in the Ovidian story by the divinities of the Underworld, namely the Furies.⁸⁹¹ Unfortunately it is impossible to establish whether the Erinyes played any part in Sophocles' *Tereus* due to the inconclusiveness of the textual evidence.⁸⁹² The chthonic goddesses are programmatically introduced in the narrative in the very first scene, the marriage of Tereus and Procne. The description of the nuptials falls within the literary *topos* of the "ill-omened wedding".⁸⁹³ The ceremony is not officiated by the customary conjugal deities Juno and Hymenaeus, but by the Furies who assume the role of bridesmaids by wielding torches stolen from a funeral and preparing the wedding bed. Moreover, both the

⁸⁹⁰ Anderson 1972, v. 6.667.

⁸⁹¹ Gildenhard/Zissos 2007, 4-7.

⁸⁹² Sommerstein and Fitzpatrick (2006, 175) remark that the fragmentary hypothesis contains the *locus desperatus*]νη † υ. ερεινοισ†, which has been restored as [μεμνημένη]νη ὑπ' Ἐρινύος, "maddened by an Erinyes". They suggest that if this emendation is accepted, then it is plausible that Procne's murder of Itys in the Greek play was imputed to infernal frenzy.

⁸⁹³ Met. 6.428-434 ...*non pronuba Iuno, / non Hymenaeus adest, non illi Gratia lecto; / Eumenides tenuere faces de funere raptas, / Eumenides strauere torum, tectoque profanes / incubuit bubo thalamicque in culmine sedit. / hac aue coniuncti Procne Tereusque, parentes / hac aue sunt facti.*

wedding and the birth of Itys are accompanied by the evil portent of the screech-owl, which perches on the roof of marriage chamber. These ill omens serve to forebode that the couple's seemingly blissful union will ultimately lead to domestic tragedy: Philomela's gruesome "wedding" with Tereus (i.e. her rape and mutilation) and Itys' gory death.

The immediate source of the Ovidian passage is the description of Dido and Aeneas' perverted marriage in Aeneid 4,⁸⁹⁴ which will result in the Carthaginian queen's demise.⁸⁹⁵ The couple's union, which takes place in a cave, is presided by the primordial Earth and its sole witness is the open sky. In lieu of nuptial torches there is flashing thunder and the bridal songs are replaced by the inauspicious howling of the nymphs. Furthermore, later in the narrative the sinister screech-owl is featured as one of the portents of Dido's death.⁸⁹⁶ An essential difference between the two scenes is that whereas the Carthaginian queen deludes herself that her illicit union with Aeneas constitutes a real wedding, Tereus and Procne are joined in genuine bonds of marriage. What is more, the Ovidian nuptials surpass their model in terms of ominousness, since while in the Aeneid the ceremony is overseen by the patroness of marriage Juno, in the Metamorphoses the goddess yields her place to the baleful Furies.

Apart from reworking its Virgilian intertext Ovid's episode converses intratextually with the Heroides, where we find multiple variations on the common place of the "ill-omened wedding" (2.117-120, 6.43-46, 7.93-96, 11.101-104, 12.139ff., 14.27ff., 21.157ff.).⁸⁹⁷ In the context of the present analysis it is worth briefly examining the sixth and twelfth epistles in light

⁸⁹⁴ Aen. 4.165-172 speluncam Dido dux et Troianus eandem / deueniunt. prima et Tellus et pronuba Iuno / dant signum; fulsere ignes et conscius aether / conubiis summoque ulularunt uertice Nymphae. / ille dies primus leti primusque malorum / causa fuit; neque enim specie famaue mouetur / nec iam furtium Dido meditatur amorem: / coniugium uocat, hoc praetexit nomine culpam.

⁸⁹⁵ Galasso 2000, vv. 6.424-438.

⁸⁹⁶ Aen. 4.462-463 solaque culminibus ferali carmine bubo / saepe queri et longas in fletum ducere uoces.

⁸⁹⁷ Galasso 2000, vv. 6.424-438.

of their connection to the figure of Medea. In *Heroides* 6 Hypsipyle laments her desertion by Jason for the sake of the Colchian and accuses him of perfidious betrayal, because he violated their wedding pact.⁸⁹⁸ She claims that Juno and Hymenaeus were present at their marriage, but immediately adds that a Fury brandished the bridal torch. The sinister image of the torch-wielding Fury recurs in Procne's wedding ritual. On the other hand, whereas Procne's marriage is truly ill-boding, in that its outcome will be rape, mutilation, and murder, Hypsipyle's depiction of her union with Jason as portentous is merely rhetorical hyperbole, since it entails no dire consequences for her apart from her abandonment by the Greek hero. At the same time the elegiac heroine's self-delusive view of her liaison with Jason as a formal wedding is evocative of Dido.

In *Heroides* 12 we find another pertinent instance of the ominous wedding motif.⁸⁹⁹ Medea recalls the sorrowful moment, when in shocked disbelief she saw the wedding torches and heard the nuptial songs of Jason and the Corinthian princess' marriage.⁹⁰⁰ On one level the hymenaeus is mournful for Medea, since it signals the irrevocability of her abandonment by the Greek hero for a new wife. On another level, however, the characterization of the bridal hymn as "funereal" ironically prefigures the impending transformation of the Corinthian princess'

⁸⁹⁸ Her. 6.41-46 *heu! ubi pacta fides? ubi conubialia iura / faxque sub arsuos dignior ire rogos? / non ego sum furto tibi cognita; pronuba Iuno / adfuit et sertis tempora vincetus Hymen. / at mihi nec Iuno, nec Hymen, sed tristis Erinys / praetulit infaustas sanguinolenta faces.*

⁸⁹⁹ Her. 12.137-142 *ut subito nostras Hymen cantatus ad aures / venit, et accenso lampades igne micant, / tibiaque effundit socialia carmina vobis, / at mihi funerea flebiliora tuba, / pertimui, nec adhuc tantum scelus esse putabam; / sed tamen in toto pectore frigus erat.*

⁹⁰⁰ Bessone (1997, vv. 12.133-158) postulates that given that the description of the wedding of Jason and the Corinthian princess in *Heroides* 12 has no parallel in the Euripidean play Ovid may be evoking here his lost tragedy. She bases her hypothesis on the affinities between the epistle and Seneca's *Medea* (57-117), where the dramatic action is set on the day of Jason's wedding. Both *Heroides* 12 (137-141) and the Senecan tragedy (116-117) feature Medea hearing from afar the wedding hymn and gradually realizing Jason's betrayal. She concludes that both works may be alluding to Ovid's *Medea*.

wedding into a funeral courtesy of the Colchian's fatal gifts.⁹⁰¹ On the basis of this interpretation the wedding torches blazing with fire can be viewed as an implicit foreshadowing of the conflagration of Creon's daughter by the poisoned crown and robe. An interesting affinity between the epistle and the Procne narrative is the dramatic irony coloring the two scenes. The people of Corinth joyfully sing the hymenaeus in celebration of the princess' wedding oblivious to the fact they will soon lament her demise. In an analogous manner the Thracians congratulate Tereus and Procne on their nuptials and the royal couple proclaim the day of their wedding and of the birth of Itys as public festivals ignorant of the future dissolution of their marriage and the death of their son.⁹⁰²

The scene of Tereus and Procne's inauspicious wedding also engages in an intricate intertextual dialogue with Euripides' *Medea*. To begin with, the theme of the ill-omened wedding pervades the play, since there are many suggestions that the marriage of Jason and the Corinthian princess will result into a funeral. Having cunningly exacted from Creon a one-day reprieve of her banishment Medea reveals to the chorus her plan to render Jason's nuptials a source of bitter mourning for him.⁹⁰³ After her agon with the Greek hero the Colchian ominously prophesies behind his back that his wedding to Creon's daughter will cause him to lament.⁹⁰⁴ In the fourth episode Medea puts into action her scheme of murdering the princess by means of her deadly gifts. In order to deceive Jason to allow her to send the envenomed robe and crown to his new wife she pretends to assume the role of a νυμφεύτρια (bridesmaid) by alleging that she was

⁹⁰¹ Bessone 1997, vv. 139-140.

⁹⁰² Her. 12.143-144 turba ruunt et 'Hymen,' clamant, 'Hymenae!' frequenter – / quo propior vox haec, hoc mihi peius erat, Met. 6.434-438 gratata est scilicet illis / Thracia, disque ipsi grates egere diemque, / quaque data est claro Pandione nata tyranno / quaque erat ortus Itys, festam iussere uocari; / usque adeo latet utilitas!

⁹⁰³ Med. 399-400 πικρούς δ' ἐγώ σφιν καὶ λυγρούς θήσω γάμους, / πικρὸν δὲ κῆδος καὶ φυγὰς ἐμὰς χθονός.

⁹⁰⁴ Med. 625-266: νύμφευ' ἴσως γάρ, σὸν θεῶι δ' εἰρήσεται, / γαμεῖς τοιοῦτον ὅστε θρηνεῖσθαι γάμον.

foolish to have opposed his wedding and that she ought instead to have attended his bride in their marriage chamber.⁹⁰⁵ Medea's words are steeped in irony in light of the preceding and subsequent scenes. In particular, her claim that she should have stood beside the bridal bed and served the Corinthian princess echoes her earlier plot to stealthily infiltrate the couple's wedding chamber and stab them to death.⁹⁰⁶ Furthermore, her assertion that she should have enjoyed tending Jason's bride is likewise darkly ironic, since the verb κηδεύω ("attend, take care of") bears the additional sense "bury" and thereby anticipates the Colchian's delight in murdering the princess and ordering Jason in the exodos to inter his wife.⁹⁰⁷ Medea completes her trickery of the Greek hero by falsely taking on the part of the groom's mother: she dispatches the poisoned robe and crown to the princess veiled as wedding gifts and utters a μακαρισμός in her honor, namely a ritual pronouncement of the bride as blessed by her kin.⁹⁰⁸ Therefore, just as the marriage of Jason and Creon's daughter is transformed by Medea into the princess' funeral, similarly the outcome of Tereus and Procne's wedding is infanticide.

There is another ominous marriage in the Euripidean play, albeit an imaginary one, which turns into obsequies. At the opening of her great monologue Medea laments that she will not be able to arrange her sons' future wedding.⁹⁰⁹ The Colchian's vision is fraught with dramatic irony, since her children think that their separation from their mother will be due to her exile from

⁹⁰⁵ Med. 884-888 νῦν οὖν ἐπαινῶ σωφρονεῖν τέ μοι δοκεῖς / κῆδος τόδ' ἡμῖν προσλαβόν, ἐγὼ δ' ἄφρων, / ἦι χρῆν μετεῖναι τῶνδε τῶν βουλευμάτων / καὶ ξυμπεραίνειν καὶ παρεστάναι λέγει / νύμφην τε κηδεύουσαν ἦδεσθαι σέθεν. See Mastronarde 2002, v. 887.

⁹⁰⁶ Med. 379-380 ἦ θηκτὸν ὄσω φάσγανον δι' ἥπατος, / σιγῆι δόμους ἐσβᾶσ' ἴν' ἔστρωται λέχος.

⁹⁰⁷ Med. 1394 στεῖχε πρὸς οἴκους καὶ θάπτ' ἄλοχον.

⁹⁰⁸ Med. 952-958 εὐδαιμονήσει δ' οὐχ ἐν ἀλλὰ μυρία, / ἀνδρός τ' ἀρίστου σοῦ τυχοῦσ' ὀμευέντου / κεκτημένη τε κόσμον ὄν ποθ' Ἥλιος / πατρὸς πατήρ δίδωσιν ἐγγόνισιν οἷς, / λάζυσθε φερνάς τάσδε, παῖδες, ἐς χέρας / καὶ τῆι τυράννῳ μακαρία νύμφη δότε / φέροντες· οὗτοι δῶρα μεμπτὰ δέξεται.

⁹⁰⁹ Med. 1021-1027 ὃ τέκνα τέκνα, σφῶιν μὲν ἔστι δὴ πόλις / καὶ δῶμ', ἐν ᾧ λιπόντες ἀθλίαν ἐμὲ / οἰκήσεται αἰεὶ μητρὸς ἐστερημένοι / ἐγὼ δ' ἐς ἄλλην γαῖαν εἶμι δὴ φυγὰς, / πρὶν σφῶιν ὀνάσθαι κάπιδεῖν εὐδαίμονας, / πρὶν λουτρὰ καὶ γυναῖκα καὶ γαμηλίους / εὐνάς ἀγῆλαι λαμπάδας τ' ἀνασχεθεῖν.

Corinth, while what she insinuates is that she will send them to the Underworld. Medea's bitter regret that she will not have the enjoyment of adorning her sons' nuptial beds and hold aloft the bridal torches may be reworked in the Ovidian narrative, where the Furies prepare the couple's bed and wield the torches in their marriage.⁹¹⁰ In both cases the sinister wedding image portends the children's funeral: the Euripidean heroine will bury her sons at the precinct of Hera's temple (1378-1381) and in an analogous manner Procne will entomb Itys in his father's belly (6.663-665).

Gildenhard and Zissos have remarked that the description of the Furies' role in Tereus and Procne's marriage is evocative of the beginning of a hymn owing to its quasi-strophic structure (produced by the anaphora of Eumenides, *hac ave, and quaque*) and its closing gnomic statement.⁹¹¹ They argue that the Ovidian passage can thus be read as an epic rewriting of a hymnic invocation to the infernal goddesses. This programmatic authorial appeal to the Furies implicitly alerts the reader to the fact that the Athenian sisters function as human incarnations of the chthonic deities.⁹¹² As we saw in chapter 2, Procne assumes the role of a maenad in order to rescue her sister from captivity and her simulated Bacchic frenzy is merely a façade concealing her infernal furor (6.595-596). After they reunite their sisters resolve upon exacting vengeance from Tereus for a transgression committed against kin (i.e. the rape and mutilation of Philomela), which constitutes a distinctive prerogative of the Furies. Their metamorphosis is clearly reflected in the narrative's gruesome denouement, where the perversely ecstatic Philomela appears before Tereus with her hair drenched in gore and flings against him his son's head (6.657-658). The

⁹¹⁰ Met. 6.430-431 Eumenides tenuere faces de funere raptas, / Eumenides strauere torum.

⁹¹¹ Gildenhard/Zissos 2007, 4.

⁹¹² Gildenhard/Zissos 2007, 5-6.

portrayal of the Athenian sisters as figurative Furies may recall the depiction of Medea as a human avatar of an Erinys in the Euripidean play. In particular, the epic narrator's hymnic invocation of the Furies may echo and invert the stasimon immediately preceding the filicide, in which the chorus of Corinthian women pray to Helios to prevent the Erinys embodied by Medea from murdering the children.⁹¹³

Finally, Ovid produces a ring composition by featuring the Furies again at the episode's conclusion.⁹¹⁴ After Tereus realizes the abominable crime of his wife and sister-in-law he invokes the nether sisters to punish them.⁹¹⁵ The Thracian king's prayer alludes to Jason's analogous appeal to the Erinys to take revenge on Medea for murdering their sons at the exodos of the Greek play.⁹¹⁶ Both heroes' invocation is futile, since it remains unanswered by the gods, as well as marked by tragic irony, in the sense that Medea and the Athenian sisters themselves take on the part of human incarnations of the chthonic goddesses.

3.7 Althaea: Humanizing Medea

The earliest extant attestation of the Meleager myth is found in Homer's Iliad (9.529-605), where Phoenix cites it as a mythological exemplum in order to persuade Achilles to relinquish his wrath and return to battle. In the early classical period Bacchylides offers his own version of the myth

⁹¹³ Med. 1251-1260 *ἰὼ Γᾶ τε καὶ παμφαῆς / ἄκτις Ἀλίου, κατίδεν' ἴδετε τὰν / ὀλομένην γυναῖκα, πρὶν φοινίαν / τέκνοις προσβαλεῖν χέρ' αὐτοκτόνον· / σᾶς γὰρ χρυσέας ἀπὸ γονᾶς / ἔβλασταν, θεοῦ δ' αἷμα <χαμαί> πίτνειν / φόβος ὑπ' ἀνέρων. / ἀλλὰ νιν, ὦ φάος διογενές, κάτειρ- / γε κατάπαυσον ἔξελ' οἴκων τάλαι- / ναν φοινίαν τ' Ἐρινὸν ἱὺπ' ἄλαστόρων†.*

⁹¹⁴ Goldenhard and Zissos (2007, 6) contend that the Ovidian narrative reflects the typical structure of a hymn, which comprises an initial invocation, an aretology, and a concluding invocation, and thus it functions as a hymnic eulogy of the Furies.

⁹¹⁵ Met. 6.662 *uipereasque ciet Stygia de ualle sorores.*

⁹¹⁶ Med. 1389-1390 *ἀλλὰ σ' Ἐρινὺς ὀλέσειε τέκνων / φονία τε Δίκη.*

in his fifth epinician ode, in which the soul of the Calydonian hero recounts to Heracles, who has descended to Hades, the story of the boar hunt and of his subsequent demise. A significant contrast between the epic and lyric accounts is that whereas in Homer it is implied that Meleager's death will result from Althaea's fatal curse, in Bacchylides the mother murders her son by burning a magic log, which was inextricably bound to the hero's life force.

Ovid's narrative of the Calydonian boar hunt and Meleager's death (8.260-546) follows, however, an alternative variant of the myth either popularized or invented by Euripides in his *Meleager* (written between 418 and 404 BC), from which survive roughly twenty five fragments.⁹¹⁷ Sophocles also wrote a *Meleager*, but it was probably based on the Homeric account.⁹¹⁸ According to the Euripidean version Meleager fell in love with the Arcadian Atalanta, who was one of the participants in the hunt, and he awarded her the beast's hide and head as trophies, thus triggering a quarrel with his maternal uncles and ultimately killing them. Following the lyric version Euripides then presents Althaea's destruction of Meleager by means of the fatal brand, but unlike Bacchylides' poem, where the hero perishes at the battlefield, in the tragedy the dying Meleager might have returned on stage before expiring (fr. 535).⁹¹⁹ The Roman poet adopts and amplifies Euripides' eroticization of epic material in his description of Meleager and Atalanta's "love at first sight".⁹²⁰ Moreover, the Ovidian account of the Calydonian boar hunt and the ensuing deadly dispute between Meleager and the Thestiads probably constitutes an epic rewriting of Euripides' first messenger speech most likely delivered to Oeneus (fr. 530-531). The Roman poet, however, converts what must have been a grand

⁹¹⁷ Collard/Cropp 2008, 614 (alternative mythical version), 616-617 (date of the play) (Vol. I); fr. 515-538 Kannicht

⁹¹⁸ Collard/Cropp 2008, 617 (Vol. I).

⁹¹⁹ Collard/Cropp 2008, 615 (Vol I); Kannicht fr. 535.

⁹²⁰ Segal 1999, 302 n.4; 313 n.16.

heroic description of the hunt in the Greek play into mock-epic burlesque teeming with unheroic “feats” and comic incidents. Finally, the concluding account of Althaea’s suicide in the *Metamorphoses* may allude to the play’s second messenger speech, in which the heroine’s demise was possibly reported by her old Nurse (fr. 533).

The Euripidean play will not be included in the present discussion on the grounds that its extant fragments shed no light on those parts of the story on which I will focus my analysis.

In particular, nothing survives from either Althaea’s internal struggle between her maternal love and her desire for revenge or from Meleager’s demise (it is far from certain that fr. 535 belongs to the hero’s death scene). Another source on which Ovid must have drawn is Accius’ *Meleager* (fr. 1-16 Dangel). As in the case of Euripides’ tragedy there are only scant remains from the Republican play, but fortunately three fragments survive from Althaea’s inner debate (fr. 11-13) and one from Meleager’s demise (fr. 14), which are evoked by the Ovidian narrative and will be examined in the relevant sections. Furthermore, given that Accius’ drama was in all probability modeled on Euripides, it probably functioned as a mediating intertext between the Euripidean and Ovidian works.

In this section I will investigate the appropriation of Euripides’ *Medea* in the narrative of Meleager’s death (8.445-525). It will be argued that Althaea, like Procne in Book 6, constitutes a “refraction” of the Euripidean heroine. Whereas Procne, however, is portrayed as an “overblown *Medea*”, Althaea is a more “humanized” variant of the tragic protagonist. To begin with, both heroines commit infanticide, but their motivation differs widely. Whereas *Medea* slays her sons in order to exact vengeance on Jason for abandoning her, Althaea’s murder of Meleager is punishment for his killing of her brothers. The Ovidian heroine’s filicide has thus greater justification than her Euripidean predecessor’s, since *Medea*’s innocent sons, who suffer on

account of their mother's animosity towards their father, contrast sharply with Meleager, who is guilty of the impious shedding of kindred blood. What is more, the loving sister Althaea wishing to avenge her dead brothers is a far cry from the ruthless fratricide Medea, who murders Apsyrtus so as to facilitate her escape with Jason.

Both protagonists undergo an agonizing emotional conflict between their maternal instincts and their yearning for revenge, which is articulated in either case through an elaborate dramatic soliloquy.⁹²¹ Althaea's quandary is, however, more complex than that of her Euripidean antecedent, since she is also torn between the roles of mother and sister, and in this sense it echoes Procne's dilemma between maternal and sisterly pietas.⁹²² In addition, once Medea has reached the painful decision of killing her sons, she displays a coldblooded determination to go through with the deed. Her Ovidian counterpart, on the other hand, is highly reluctant to perform the infanticide even after having resolved upon it. As we shall, Althaea recalls in this respect the daughters of Pelias in Book 7, who have qualms about murdering their father. A further affinity between the Peliades and Althaea is the moral paradox that their deed is at the same time impious, in that they are guilty of interfamilial murder, and pious, since they consider it a duty towards their relatives: Althaea wants to take revenge on Meleager for the murder of her brothers, while the Peliades are tricked by Medea into believing that the patricide is the means for achieving their father's rejuvenation. Althaea's evocation of the Peliades serves to depict her as more pathetic and compassionate than her Euripidean model.

Finally, the two heroines contrast markedly with respect to their ultimate fate. Although Medea expresses suicidal tendencies in the prologue on account of her grief for Jason's betrayal,

⁹²¹ Ciappi 1998, 448.

⁹²² Ciappi 1998, 449-450.

in the exodos we become witnesses of her triumphant departure for Athens, since her delight in exacting retribution from her husband surpasses her painful remorse for murdering her sons. Althaea, on the contrary, expresses in her monologue the desire to follow her brothers in the underworld after the infanticide and at the denouement she fulfills her wish by stabbing herself out of profound sorrow and contrition for her crime. Hence, the Ovidian heroine is portrayed throughout the narrative as a more humane and pitiful figure than her Euripidean counterpart in terms of her incentive for the filicide, her compunction to perform it, and her overwhelming guilt which drives her to commit suicide.

3.7.1 Althaea's dilemma

The Althaea narrative opens in a dramatic manner by depicting the heroine undergoing two radical psychological transformations in short succession. While she is making gift offerings to the gods in gratitude for her son's success in the boar hunt, she catches sight of her dead brothers being carried back to the city and her joy straightaway dissolves into tears.⁹²³ When, however, the identity of the murderer becomes known, her sorrow immediately turns into a longing for vengeance against Meleager.⁹²⁴ Althaea's double anagnorisis both echoes Medea's emotional metamorphosis in the Greek play and deviates from it in respect to motivation and speed. Whereas, as we saw in the previous section, the Euripidean heroine experiences a gradual shift from grief for Jason's perfidy into an ardent desire for revenge against him, her Ovidian

⁹²³ The Ovidian Althaea may depart here from her Accian counterpart, who seems to become initially aware of her brothers' demise not by directly seeing them, but by hearing the terrible news (fr. 10 - x - x - x - x - x timida eliminor / <e> clamore, simul ac nota uox ad auris accidit).

⁹²⁴ Met. 8.445-450 dona deum templis nato uictore ferebat, / cum uidet extinctos fratres Althaea referri. / quae plangore dato maestis clamoribus urbem / implet et auratis mutauit uestibus atras; / at simul est auctor necis editus, excidit omnis / luctus et a lacrimis in poenae uersus amorem est.

counterpart's conversion from a lamenting sister into a vengeful mother is sudden and drastic. Just as Althaea, however, fills the city with her wailing, similarly the Euripidean chorus hear Medea's cries probably from inside the palace.⁹²⁵

The Ovidian protagonist evokes instead in terms of her swift inner transformation Procne, who upon reading Philomela's tapestry goes through a violent and abrupt change from anguish for her sister's supposed demise into a wrathful yearning for avenging herself on Tereus (6.581-586). Furthermore, the description of Althaea's lament and desire for revenge recalls the psychological portrait of the Athenian princess. Both heroines initially change their royal golden garments into black mourning attire, but they later reject passive mourning and become engrossed in thoughts of revenge.⁹²⁶ Finally, Althaea diverges from her Homeric counterpart, who experiences sorrow and vengeful passion simultaneously, since she prays to the gods of the underworld to destroy her son while grieving for her brothers.⁹²⁷

Consumed with a desire to punish Meleager for his impious deed Althaea orders a pyre to be prepared, where she plans to burn the brand bound by the Fates to her son's fate, in that its destruction will result in the hero's own demise (8.451-461). What follows next is a masterful

⁹²⁵ Med. 131-135 Χο. ἔκλυον φωνάν, ἔκλυον δὲ βοᾶν / τᾶς δυστάνου Κολχίδος· οὐδέπω / ἦπιος; ἀλλ', ὧ̃ γεραιά, λέξον. / ἀμφιπύλου γὰρ ἔσω μελάθρου γόνον / ἔκλυον [...]. Mastronarder (2002, vv. 135-136): "it seems best to understand that the structure is Medea's house and that ἔσω μελάθρου is thus an attributive modifier of γόνον; some interpreters instead take the phrase as adverbial with ἔκλυον, referring to the women's own houses. ἀμφίπυλος (extant only here and in the scholia on this line) is, like ἀμφίθυρος in Lysias 12.15, an adj. referring to the fact that a Greek house might have two doors, not only the main front door between the street/plaza and the internal courtyard, but also a small rear door. The point of referring to the existence of the second door is to suggest that the sound of Medea's cries reached her neighbours through the back alley and they have as a result gathered before her house to make inquiries."

⁹²⁶ Met. 6.566-570 ...uelamina Procne / deripit ex umeris auro fulgentia lato / induiturque atras uestes et inane sepulcrum / constituit falsisque piacula manibus infert / et luget non sic lugendae fata sororis; 585-586 nec flere uacat, sed fasque nefasque/ confusura ruit poenaeque in imagine tota est. Anderson (1972, v. 8.449) has also noted Althaea and Procne's analogous psychological transformation into women bent on revenge.

⁹²⁷ Π. 9.565-571 τῇ ὅ γε παρκατέλεκτο χόλον θυμαλγέα πέσσων / ἐξ ἀρέων μητρὸς κεχολωμένος, ἦ ῥα θεοῖσι / πόλλ' ἀχέουσ' ἠρᾶτο κασιγνήτιο φόνιοι, / πολλὰ δὲ καὶ γαῖαν πολυφόρβην χερσὶν ἀλοία / κικλήσκουσ' Ἀΐδην καὶ ἐπεινήν Περσεφόειαν / πρόχην καθεζομένη, δεύοντο δὲ δάκρυσι κόλποι, / παιδὶ δόμεν θάνατον [...].

account of the heroine's internal struggle between her maternal love and her sisterly duty to avenge her brothers (8.462-477), which is concurrently evocative of the dilemma experienced by Euripides' Medea, Accius' Althaea, and Ovid's own Procne. To begin with, the Ovidian heroine's inner conflict between the roles of mother and sister constitutes an elaboration of the brief description of Procne's analogous quandary.⁹²⁸ The temporary dissolution of Althaea's vengeful wrath by her motherly affection and pity is reminiscent of both Procne and Accius' heroine.⁹²⁹ Likewise her fiery rage for the death of her siblings, which causes her to be seized by a frenzied desire for revenge against her son, is reminiscent of her Accian and Ovidian counterparts.⁹³⁰ At the same time Althaea's meditation of vengeance on Meleager is reflected in the contortions of her face, an image which recalls the depiction of the Euripidean Medea casting a savage glance on her children indicative of her infanticidal thoughts.⁹³¹ Finally, the portrayal of Althaea plotting an unspecified cruel deed (8.467 *nescioquid... crudele*) can be traced back to Euripides' Medea, the elegiac Medea of Heroides 12, and Procne.⁹³²

After an agonizing internal struggle between her opposing feelings Althaea's sisterly obligation gradually starts to overcome her maternal sentiments and thus she stands before the

⁹²⁸ Met. 8.463-464 [...] pugnans materque sororque / et diuersa trahunt unum duo nomina pectus, 491 fratres ignoscite matrem, 475 incipit esse tamen melior germana parente, 6.630-633 ab hoc iterum est ad uultus uersa sororis / inque uicem spectans ambo 'cur admouet' inquit / 'alter blanditias, rapta silet altera lingua? / quam uocat hic matrem, cur non uocat illa sororem?,

⁹²⁹ Met. 8.468 modo quem misereri credere posses, 499 mens ubi materna est? ubi sunt pia iura parentum...?, 508 nunc animum pietas maternaque nomina frangunt; Met. 6.627-630 mota quidem est genetrix infractaque constitit ira / inuitique oculi lacrimis maduere coactis. sed simul ex nimia mentem pietate labare sensit...; Acc. Mel. fr. 11 . . . nunc si me matrem mansues misericordia capsit. The Ovidian allusion to Accius has been observed by both Bömer (1977, v. 8.463) and Ciappi (1990, 450 n. 49).

⁹³⁰ Met. 8.466: saepe suum feruens oculis dabat ira ruborem, 491 ei mihi, quo rapior?...; Met. 6.609-610 ardet et iram non capit ipsa suam Procne..., 623 triste parat facinus tacitaque exaestuat ira; Acc. Mel. fr. 12 Heu! cor ira feruit caecum; amentia rapior ferorque!

⁹³¹ Met. 8.467-468 et modo nescioquid similis crudele minanti / vultus erat...; Med. 92-93 Τρ. ἤδη γὰρ εἶδον ὄμμα νιν ταυρουμένην / τοῖσδ', ὥς τι δρασείουσαν.

⁹³² Med. 37 δέδοικα δ' αὐτήν μή τι βουλεύσῃ νέον; Her. 12.212 nescioquid certe mens mea maius agit!; Met. 6.618-619 magnum quodcumque paravi; / quid sit, adhuc dubito.

blazing altar holding the log in her hands and is ready to cast it into the flames (8.475-480). In this dramatic setting she bursts into a highly rhetorical and pathetic monologue, in which she vacillates between murdering her son and sparing his life (8.478-511). The Ovidian heroine opens her speech with an invocation of the Furies as goddesses of vengeance to turn their gaze towards her frenzied rites, thus asking for their divine assistance in her imminent filicide.⁹³³ Althaea's appeal to the chthonic sisters may echo and invert the Euripidean chorus' prayer to Helios to behold Medea before she commits the infanticide, so as to prevent the Erinyes embodied by her from perpetrating the impious deed.⁹³⁴ At the same time Althaea's words are reminiscent of the epic narrator's sinister description of the Furies' role as bridesmaids at Procne's wedding, which was read in the previous section as a programmatic hymnic invocation to the infernal goddesses foreshadowing the deadly outcome of the couple's union, namely the murder of Itys (6.428-434).⁹³⁵

Moreover, the Ovidian protagonist's wish that the pyre may burn her "flesh", namely her son, as she wields the fatal log before the flames may recall Canace's prayer to the Furies in Heroides 11 to kindle her funeral pyre with their infernal torches.⁹³⁶ Canace's invocation hints at her intention to commit suicide and thus the evocation of her words by Althaea may serve to suggest her own desire to kill herself after the murder of her son. This interpretation is substantiated by reading Althaea's statement literally, namely she wants the fire to burn her own

⁹³³ Met. 8.481-482 'poenarum' que 'deae triplices, furalibus' inquit, / 'Eumenides, sacris uultus aduertite uestros.

⁹³⁴ Med. 1251-1253 Χο. ἰὼ Γᾶ τε καὶ παμφαῆς / ἄκτις Ἀλίου, κατίδεν' ἴδετε τὰν / ὀλομένην γυναῖκα, πρὶν φοινίαν / τέκνοις προσβαλεῖν χέρ' αὐτοκτόνον', 1258-1260 ἀλλά νιν, ὃ φάος διογενές, κάτειργε / κατάπαυσσον ἔξελ' οἴκων τάλαιναν / φονίαν τ' Ἐρινὺν ἄλαστόρων†.

⁹³⁵ Met. 6.430-431 Eumenides tenuere faces de funere raptas, / Eumenides strauere torum.

⁹³⁶ Met. 8.478-480 ... 'rogus iste cremet mea uiscera' dixit / utque manu dira lignum fatale tenebat, / ante sepulcrales infelix adstitit aras; Her. 11.103-104 ferte faces in me quas fertis, Erinyes atrae, / et meus ex isto luceat igne rogas!

flesh as well. Her death wish is fulfilled at the end of the episode, when she stabs herself with a sword.⁹³⁷ Finally, the Ovidian heroine's appeal to the Furies may allude to the Homeric Althaea's prayer to Hades and Persephone to destroy her son, whose future fulfilment is anticipated by the fact that it is heard by an Erinys.⁹³⁸ The distinguishing difference between the two scenes is that whereas Ovid's Althaea holds the central role by murdering Meleager herself and simply asking for the succor of the Furies, her Homeric counterpart entreats the infernal gods to perform the impious deed for her.

Although Althaea is aware that by taking revenge on Meleager for her brothers' impious murder she will commit a crime herself, she nevertheless deems that death must be repaid with death according to the *lex talionis* (8.483-484). She thus curses her son to perish and wishes that Oeneus' royal house and the whole Calydonian kingdom may collapse by the accretion of deaths and mourning.⁹³⁹ The Ovidian heroine's words verbally recalls Medea's curse in the prologue of the Euripidean play, where she prays for her sons' death and the ruin of Jason's house.⁹⁴⁰ Moreover, Althaea's desire for the accumulation of deaths, namely filicide in retribution for her brothers' demise, may evoke and reverse the chorus' vain entreaty to Medea not to heap murder upon murder, that is not to commit infanticide in addition to the destruction of Creon and the Corinthian princess.⁹⁴¹

⁹³⁷ Met. 8.531-532 *nam de matre manus diri sibi conscia facti / exegit poenas acto per uiscera ferro.*

⁹³⁸ Π. 9.566-572: ... ἢ ῥα θεοῖσι πόλλ' ἀχέουσ' ἠρᾶτο κασιγνήτοιο φόνοιο, / πολλὰ δὲ καὶ γαῖαν πολυφόρβην χερσὶν ἄλοια / κυκλήσκουσ' Αἴδην καὶ ἐπαινήν Περσεφόνειαν / πρόχην καθεζομένη, δεύοντο δὲ δάκρυσι κόλποι, / παιδὶ δόμεν θάνατον· τῆς δ' ἠεροφοῖτις Ἐρινὺς / ἐκλυεν ἐξ Ἐρέβεσφιν ἀμείλιχον ἦτορ ἔχουσα.

⁹³⁹ Met. 8.497-498 ... pereat sceleratus et ille / spemque patris regnumque trahat patriaeque ruinam; 8.485 *per coaceruatos pereat domus impia luctus*

⁹⁴⁰ Med. 111-114 αἰαῖ, ἔπαθον τλάμων ἔπαθον μεγάλων / ἄξι' ὀδυρμῶν. ὦ κατάρατοι / παῖδες ὀλοισθε στυγεράς ματρὸς / σὺν πατρὶ, καὶ πᾶς δόμος ἔρροι.

⁹⁴¹ Met. 4.483-484 *mors morte pianda est, / in scelus addendum scelus est, in funera funus*; Med. 1265-1267 δειλαία, τί σοι φρενοβαρῆς / χόλος προσπίτνει καὶ ζαμενῆς <φόνου> / φόνος ἀμείβεται.

Another affinity between the two heroines is that they both contemplate the emotional suffering that the infanticide will cause to their husbands, though they differ in terms of their motivation for inducing it. In particular, Althaea weighing the rival claims of her husband and her father cannot tolerate the fact that the blissful Oeneus delights in his victorious son, while Thestius is grieving for the loss of his own offspring, and resolves that they must both mourn.⁹⁴² Medea, on the other hand, wishes to deprive Jason both of the children that he has with her and of the future progeny born from his new wife in order to punish him for outraging their marriage bed.⁹⁴³ What is more, the anguish of the two fathers is underscored by the tragic frustration of the hopes that they cherish for their sons. The Ovidian heroine wishes that Meleager's death may thwart the aspirations of Oeneus that his son will succeed him to the throne.⁹⁴⁴ In an analogous fashion Jason nurtures futile hopes that his sons will one day rule Corinth side by side with their new brothers.⁹⁴⁵ Finally, both fathers are portrayed as experiencing the agony of a childless and sorrowful old age. At the denouement of the Ovidian narrative aged Oeneus is depicted as lying prostrate on the ground, befouling his head with dirt in mourning for his son, and rebuking his long life for allowing him to behold his offspring's demise.⁹⁴⁶ Similarly Jason laments in the

⁹⁴²Met. 8.486-487 an felix Oeneus nato uictore fruetur, / Thestius orbus erit? melius lugebitis ambo.

⁹⁴³ Med. 800-805 ... ὃς ἡμῖν σὺν θεῶι τείσει δίκην / οὐτ' ἐξ ἐμοῦ γὰρ παῖδας ὄψεται ποτε / ζῶντας τὸ λοιπὸν οὔτε τῆς νεοζύγου / νύμφης τεκνώσει παῖδ'(α)[...], 1354-1355 σὺ δ' οὐκ ἐμελλες τᾶμ' ἀτιμάσας λέχη / τερπνὸν διάξειν βίοτον ἐγγελῶν ἐμοί, 1370 οἶδ' οὐκέτ' εἰσί· τοῦτο γὰρ σε δῆξεται.

⁹⁴⁴ Met. 8.495-498 ergo impune feret uiuusque et uictor et ipso / successu tumidus regnum Calydonis habebit, / uos cinis exiguus gelidaeque iacebitis umbrae? / haud equidem patiar; pereat sceleratus et ille / spemque patris / regnumque trahat patriaeque ruinam.

⁹⁴⁵ Med. 916-921 οἶμαι γὰρ ὑμᾶς τῆσδε γῆς Κορινθίας / τὰ πρῶτ' ἔσεσθαι σὺν κασιγνήτοις ἔτι. / ἀλλ' αὐξάνεσθε· τᾶλλα δ' ἐξεργάζεται / πατήρ τε καὶ θεῶν ὅστις ἐστὶν εὐμενής. / ἴδοιμι δ' ὑμᾶς εὐτραφεῖς ἥβης τέλος / μολόντας, ἐχθρῶν τῶν ἐμῶν ὑπερτέρους.

⁹⁴⁶ Met. 8.529-530 puluere canitiem genitor uultusque seniles / foedat humi fusus spatiosumque increpat aeuum.

exodos the loss of his current and future sons and Medea sadistically points out to him that his pain will only be exacerbated in old age.⁹⁴⁷

Apart from juxtaposing the situations of her father and husband Althaea also ponders the contrasting circumstances of her son and her brothers. She wonders whether Meleager will remain unpunished and rule Calydon puffed up with his triumph in the boar hunt, while the Thestiads have become a handful of ashes and unavenged souls.⁹⁴⁸ The Ovidian heroine's words may on the one hand evoke the Euripidean Medea's self-addressed rhetorical question whether she will allow herself to become a laughingstock by not inflicting punishment on her enemies.⁹⁴⁹ On the other hand she echoes the vacillation of Procne earlier in the poem, who compares the lots of her sister and her son asking herself why Itys, whom he views as her husband's reflection, is able to speak, while Philomela is mute due to the mutilation of her tongue by Tereus.⁹⁵⁰ Althaea conceives the murder of her son as a sacrificial offering by which she seeks to appease the shades of her brothers.⁹⁵¹ The motif of the infanticide as sacrifice can be traced back to Euripides' play, where Medea describes her sons as sacrificial victims.⁹⁵² At the same time the Ovidian heroine's words echo and invert the elegiac Medea's lament in Heroides 12 that her

⁹⁴⁷ Med. 1347-1350 ἐμοὶ δὲ τὸν ἐμὸν δαίμον' αἰάζειν πάρα, / ὅς οὔτε λέκτρων νεογάμων ὀνήσομαι, / οὐ παῖδας οὖς ἔφρσα κάξεθρεψάμην / ἔξω προσειπεῖν ζῶντας ἀλλ' ἀπώλεσα, 1395-1396 Ia. στείχω, δισσῶν γ' ἄμωρος τέκνων. / Μη. οὐπω θρηγεῖς· μένε καὶ γῆρας.

⁹⁴⁸ Met. 8.494-496 *ergo impune feret uiuusque et uictor et ipso / successu tumidus regnum Calydonis habebit, / uos cinis exiguus gelidaeque iacebitis umbrae?*

⁹⁴⁹ Med. 1049-1050 *καίτοι τί πάσχω; βούλομαι γέλωτ' ὀφλεῖν / ἐχθροὺς μεθεῖσα τοὺς ἐμοὺς ἄζημίους;*

⁹⁵⁰ Met. 6.630-633 *ab hoc iterum est ad uultus uersa sororis / inque uicem spectans ambo 'cur admouet' inquit / 'alter blanditias, rapta silet altera lingua? / quam uocat hic matrem, cur non uocat illa sororem?'*

⁹⁵¹ Met. 8.476 *consanguineas ut sanguine leniat umbras, 488-490 uos modo, fraterni manes animaeque recentes, / ... magnoque paratas / accipite inferias uteri mala pignora nostri.*

⁹⁵² Med. 1053-1055 *χωρεῖτε, παῖδες, ἐς δόμους. ὅτῳ δὲ μὴ / θέμις παρεῖναι τοῖς ἐμοῖσι θύμασιν, / αὐτῷι μελήσει· χεῖρα δ' οὐ διαφθερῶ (see Bessone 1997, v. 12.160).*

present misfortunes, namely the loss of her homeland and her abandonment by Jason, constitute a “sacrifice” to her dead brother Apsyrtus.⁹⁵³

The narrator comments that Althaea by murdering Meleager in order to placate her brothers’ ghosts is perpetrating a deed which is simultaneously reverent and impious.⁹⁵⁴ This moral paradox is reminiscent of the portrayal of the Peliades in Book 7, who in their pious desire to restore their father to his youth sacrilegiously slay him.⁹⁵⁵ The essential difference between the two scenes is that whereas the innocent daughters of Pelias are manipulated by Medea into believing that the dismemberment of their father is a prerequisite for his magic rejuvenation, Althaea makes an agonizing, yet conscious choice to kill her son. Moreover, just as Althaea describes her impious filicide as a pious duty to her dead brothers, likewise Medea deceives the Peliades into thinking that their parricide constitutes a loving act of devotion to their father.⁹⁵⁶ By associating Althaea with the Peliades Ovid may intend to depict her as a more sympathetic and pitiful figure than the Euripidean and Ovidian Medeas, whose infanticide is characterized as unequivocally impious.⁹⁵⁷ Althaea’s paradoxical portrayal as simultaneously *pia* and *impia* also

⁹⁵³ Her. 12.160-162 inferias umbrae fratris habete mei; / deseror amissis regno patriaue domoque / coniuge, qui nobis omnia solus erat! (see Bessone 1997, v. 12.160). Bessone also observes that Seneca appropriates the Ovidian theme by having his Medea represent the slaying of her sons as a sacrificial offering to the spirit of her brother, whom she herself previously killed for Jason’s sake (Med. 970-971 victima manes tuos / placamus ista). She thus postulates that the concept of Medea’s filicide as sacrifice to the spirit of Apsyrtus may originate in Ovid’s lost Medea.

⁹⁵⁴ Met. 8.476-477 et, consanguineas ut sanguine leniat umbras, / impietate pia est.

⁹⁵⁵ Met. 7.339-340 his ut quaeque pia est hortatibus impia prima est / et, ne sit scelerata, facit scelus.

⁹⁵⁶ Met. 8.488-490 uos modo, fraterni manes animaeque recentes, / officium sentite meum magnoque paratas / accipite inferias uteri mala pignora nostri, 7.336-338 si pietas ulla est nec spes agitatis inanes, / officium praestate patri telisque senectam / exigite et saniem coniecto emittite ferro.

⁹⁵⁷ Med. 795-796 ἔξειμι γαίας, φιλτάτων παίδων φόνον φεύγουσα καὶ τλᾶσ’ ἔργον ἀνοσιώτατον; Met. 7.396 sanguine natorum perfunditur impius ensis.

contrasts sharply with Procne's perverted conception of pietas, who considers a crime any act of reverence towards her husband.⁹⁵⁸

At the final part of her soliloquy Althaea is once again overwhelmed by her maternal instinct remembering her labors of childbirth and her affection for her son.⁹⁵⁹ The Ovidian heroine's words evoke those of her tragic predecessor, who reminisces on her travails, labor pangs, and toilsome rearing of her offspring grieving that they were all in vain.⁹⁶⁰ There is, however, a significant difference between the two speeches. Whereas Medea's remembrance of childbirth constitutes part of her lament for her sons' death, on whose murder she has already resolved, Althaea's recollection of labor functions as an emotional incentive against committing filicide. Thus, the Ovidian protagonist is once again portrayed as a more merciful and compassionate figure than her Euripidean counterpart.⁹⁶¹

Finally, both heroines attempt to justify to themselves their decision to perpetrate infanticide by adducing a rhetorical argument: the mother's prerogative to determine her progeny's life and death. In particular, Medea claims that since her sons must die, she should be the one to kill them, because she bore them.⁹⁶² Ovid elaborates on the Euripidean motif by having his Althaea rhetorically ask the absent Meleager to return to her the life twice given to

⁹⁵⁸ Met 6.635 scelus est pietas in coniuge Tereo. I disagree at this point with Anderson (1972, v. 8.477) and Ciappi (1998, 450), who deem Althaea and Procne's notions of pietas as analogous.

⁹⁵⁹ Met. 8.499-500 mens ubi materna est? ubi sunt pia iura parentum / et quos sustinui bis mensum quinque labores?

⁹⁶⁰ Med. 1029-1031 ἄλλως ἄρ' ὑμᾶς, ὧ τέκν', ἐξεθρεψάμην, / ἄλλως δ' ἐμόχθουν καὶ κατεξάνθην πόνους / στερρὰς ἐνεγκοῦσ' ἐν τόκοις ἀλγηδόνας

⁹⁶¹ Ciappi (1998, 449, n. 8) notes the affinity between the two passages, but considers them analogous arguing that in both cases the memory of labor and maternal affection has become a futile joy for the mothers.

⁹⁶² Med. 1236-1241 φίλοι, δέδοκται τοῦργον ὡς τάχιστά μοι / παῖδας κτανούση τῆσδ' ἀφορμᾶσθαι χθονός, καὶ μὴ σχολὴν ἄγουσαν ἐκδοῦναι τέκνα / ἄλληι φονεῦσαι δυσμενεστέροι χειρί. / πάντως σφ' ἀνάγκη κατθανεῖν· ἐπεὶ δὲ χρή, / ἡμεῖς κτενοῦμεν οἴπερ ἐξεφύσαμεν.

him, first by giving birth to him and then by saving the brand from the flames.⁹⁶³ Whereas, however, the more humanized Ovidian heroine offers reasonable grounds for committing filicide, namely that she is punishing Meleager for the impious murder of his uncles, her Euripidean model wishes to slay her innocent sons in order to avenge herself on Jason for his infidelity. She thus puts forward a self-delusional reason for killing them so as to convince herself to perform the deed: although she can save them by bringing them with her to Athens, she asserts that if she does not murder them quickly herself, then they will meet their death at the hands of someone more pitiless, implying the Corinthians who will seek vengeance for their king's demise.

Having reached the painful decision to destroy her son Althaea turns away and hurls the brand into the flames with trembling hand.⁹⁶⁴ The aversion of her gaze reflects her feelings of compunction and horror about committing infanticide and is reminiscent of the depiction of the Peliades, who display their qualms about perpetrating patricide by turning away their eyes while stabbing their father to death.⁹⁶⁵ The portrayal of Althaea contrasts sharply with those of Euripides' protagonist, who after having resolved to murder her sons has no scruples about performing the deed, and Ovid's earlier refraction of Medea, Procne, who ruthlessly slays Itys without turning away her face.⁹⁶⁶

⁹⁶³ Met. 8.503-505... uixisti munere nostro, / nunc merito moriere tuo. cape praemia facti / bisque datam, primum partu, mox stipite rpto / redde animam, uel me fraternis adde sepulcris.

⁹⁶⁴ Met. 8.511-512 [...] dixit dextraque auersa trementi / funereum torrem medios coniecit in ignes.

⁹⁶⁵ Anderson 1972, v. 8.511; Galasso 2000, vv. 478-514. Met. 7.340-342: [...] haud tamen ictus / ulla suos spectare potest, oculosque reflectunt / caecaque dant saeuis auersae uulnera dextris.

⁹⁶⁶ Met. 6.640-641 ense ferit Procne, lateri qua pectus adhaeret, / nec uultum uertit.

3.7.2 The deaths of Meleager and Althaea

The brief description of Meleager's demise is fashioned by Ovid in such a way as to evoke not Medea's filicide, but the account of the deaths of her other victims in the play, namely Creon and his daughter. A thematic correspondence between the two scenes is that both heroines destroy their enemies from afar: Medea sends to the Corinthian princess the poisoned crown and robe as wedding gifts, which cause the death of the young bride and her father, while Althaea brings about Meleager's destruction by burning the fatal brand, which is intrinsically connected with the hero's life force. A further affinity on the level of imagery is that both Meleager and the Corinthian princess experience a fiery death: the Greek hero feels his inwards scorching with invisible fire, while the young woman's flesh is consumed by the unseen flames of the poison.⁹⁶⁷ Moreover, there is in both scenes an interesting cause and effect relationship: the burning of the brand directly causes Meleager's destruction and likewise the conflagration of the Corinthian princess brings about her father's demise, in that he clings inextricably to her poisoned robe and perishes with her.⁹⁶⁸ Ovid might subtly allude to the Euripidean intertext by conferring to the brand quasi-anthropomorphic characteristics, since it is said to utter or seem to utter a groan as it is consumed by the flames.⁹⁶⁹ The description of the brand may echo the portrayal of the blazing Corinthian princess as giving forth a terrible shriek of pain.⁹⁷⁰ Furthermore, both the brand and the

⁹⁶⁷ Met. 8.515-517:[...] *flamma Meleagros ab illa / uritur et caecis torreri uiscera sentit / ignibus* [...]; Med.1200-1201 *σάρκες δ' ἀπ' ὀστέων ὥστε πεύκινον δάκρυ / γνάθοις ἀδήλοισ φαρμάκων ἀπέρρεον*.

⁹⁶⁸ The motif of the supernatural connection between the fatal brand and Meleager's life span is also found in Accius' play, where (probably) Althaea recalls the Fates' prophecy about Meleager's destiny being linked to the log (fr. 13, *eumpsum uitae finem ac fati internecionem fore / Meleagro, ubi torrus esset interfectus flammeus*).

⁹⁶⁹ Met. 8.513-514 *aut dedit aut uisus gemitus est ipse dedisse / stipes et inuitis correptus ab ignibus arsit*.

⁹⁷⁰ Med. 1183-1184 ἡ δ' ἐξ ἀναύδου καὶ μύσαντος ὄμματος / δεινὸν στενάξασ' ἡ τάλαιν' ἠγείρετο, 1190 φεύγει δ' ἀναστᾶσ' ἐκ θρόνων πυρρουμενή.

young woman undergo a metamorphosis, in that the brand turns into ashes (8.525), while the princess' flesh melts from her bones and her facial features become disfigured beyond recognition (1195-1202).

The portrayal of the dying Meleager is also highly reminiscent of that of Creon. Meleager is far away at the moment of the burning of the brand and unwitting of his mother's actions.⁹⁷¹ In an analogous fashion the Corinthian king is absent while his daughter perishes and thus when he enters her chamber unaware he makes the fatal mistake of embracing her.⁹⁷² The ignorance of Creon and Meleager is reflected in their words, which teem with tragic irony. The narrator suggests that the dying Meleager may have invoked his mother with his final breath, unaware that she has caused his death.⁹⁷³ Similarly the Corinthian king ignorant of Medea's machinations asks his dead daughter which divinity has destroyed her and his wish that he could die with her will ironically be fulfilled a few moments later.⁹⁷⁴ The evocation of the deaths of Creon and his daughter may serve to emphasize the unheroic nature of Meleager's demise. This reading is supported by Meleager's own lament that he is perishing in a cowardly and bloodless manner and his pronouncing of Ancaeus as blessed for dying gruesomely in the boar hunt. Although the warrior's mourning for dying ingloriously away from the battlefield is a common epic topos, Ovid's tone here is implicitly parodic, since Ancaeus' death is described earlier in the narrative as foolish and mock-heroic.⁹⁷⁵

⁹⁷¹ The dying Meleager's ignorance about the nature and provenance of the magic attack against him is also attested in Accius' Meleager (fr. 14 quae uastitudo haec aut unde inuasit mihi?).

⁹⁷² Met. 8.515-516 insciūs atque absens flamma Meleagros ab illa / uritur [...]; Med. 1204-1205 πατήρ δ' ὁ τλήμων συμφορᾶς ἀγνωσίαι / ἄφνω παρελθὼν δῶμα προσπίτνει νεκρῶι.

⁹⁷³ Met. 8.520-522 grandaeuumque patrem fratresque piasque sorores / cum gemitu sociamque tori uocat ore supremo, / forsitan et matrem.

⁹⁷⁴ Med. 1208 τίς σ' ὧδ' ἀτίμως δαιμόνων ἀπόλεσεν;, 1210 οἴμοι, συνθάνοιμί σοι, τέκνον.

Furthermore, despite their initial attempts to resist both characters ultimately perish. The Corinthian king engages in a futile wrestling match with the corpse of his daughter, but when he tries to extricate himself from her embrace, he rips his flesh from his bones and he finally gives up (1211-1217). Likewise Meleager at first overcomes with fortitude the agony of the scorching flames, but eventually yields to their overwhelming intensity (8.516-517, 522). Finally, the death of the two characters is described with analogous imagery: Creon's life is extinguished as he lets go of his soul and similarly Meleager's fiery pain is snuffed out while his spirit gradually slips away into the thin air.⁹⁷⁶

Meleager's death has a profound impact on both his family and the city of Calydon. The entire populace takes part in a public lamentation for the hero and special mention is made of his father's dirge and the excessive mourning of his sisters, who are ultimately transformed by Diana into birds (8.526-546). The most extreme reaction to his demise, however, is that of Althaea who kills herself. Euripides' Medea also displays suicidal tendencies, but her motivation is entirely different. Whereas the Ovidian heroine ends her life because she feels contrition for committing filicide, her Euripidean counterpart wishes to die out of grief for Jason's unfaithfulness and new marriage (8.531-532). Althaea's profound remorse for her deed serves to portray her as more pathetic and emotionally fragile than her tragic antecedent. To be sure, Medea also experiences anguish for slaying her children, but her desire to take revenge on her husband surpasses her own pain (1361-1362). Althaea's suicide has been foreshadowed at the conclusion of her soliloquy, where she resolves to avenge her brothers' death on the provision that she may follow them in

⁹⁷⁵ Kenney 2011, v. 8.519

⁹⁷⁶ Med. 1218-1219 χρόνοι δ' ἀπέσβη καὶ μεθῆχ' ὁ δὺςμορος / πυγῆν· κακοῦ γὰρ οὐκέτ' ἦν ὑπέρτερος; Met. 8.522-525 [...] crescunt ignisque dolorque / languescuntque iterum; simul est extinctus uterque, / inque leues abiit paulatim spiritus auras/ paulatim cana prunam uelante fauilla.

the underworld.⁹⁷⁷ The Ovidian protagonist's consistency between words and deeds is also in stark contrast to Medea's attitude in Euripides, since in spite of her will in the prologue to perish she eventually makes a triumphant escape in the exodos on Helios' chariot after she exacted vengeance from Jason and the royal family of Corinth.⁹⁷⁸

Ovid's allusion to the Euripidean intertext is signaled by subtle verbal echoes. Althaea's acute consciousness of the abominable nature of the infanticide is reminiscent of Medea's analogous self-awareness.⁹⁷⁹ The essential difference is that whereas the Ovidian heroine's cognizance of her terrible deed drives her to commit suicide, in the case of her Euripidean predecessor it neither prevents her from performing the filicide nor does it induce her to kill herself afterwards. Moreover, Ovid seems to be the only author who represents Althaea as committing suicide by stabbing herself with a sword, thus deviating from the standard version according to which the heroine hanged herself (Diodorus 4.34.7, Apollod. 1.73).⁹⁸⁰ It may thus be postulated that the Roman poet has adapted the description of Althaea's suicide in order to evoke the Euripidean play, in whose prologue the Nurse is afraid that Medea may stab herself.⁹⁸¹

⁹⁷⁷ Met. 8.509-511 *me miseram! male vincetis, sed vincite, fratres, / dummodo quae dederō uobis solacia uosque / ipsa sequar.*

⁹⁷⁸ Med. 96-97 *ιώ, δύστανος ἐγὼ μελέα τε πόνων, / ἰώ μοί μοι, πῶς ἂν ὀλοίμαν;, 144-147 αἰαῖ, διά μου κεφαλᾶς φλοῦξ οὐρανία / βαίη· τί δέ μοι ζῆν ἔτι κέρδος; / φεῦ φεῦ· θανάτῳ καταλυσαιμᾶν / βιοτᾶν στυγεράν προλιπούσα.*

⁹⁷⁹ Met. 8.531-532 *nam de matre manus diri sibi conscia facti / exegit poenas acto per uiscera ferro;*
Med. 1078-1080 *καὶ μανθάνω μὲν οἷα δρᾶν μέλλω κακά, / θυμὸς δὲ κρείσσων τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων, / ὅσπερ μεγίστων αἴτιος κακῶν βροτοῖς.*

⁹⁸⁰ Segal 1999, 238.

⁹⁸¹ Med. 39-40 [...] *ἐγῶϊδα τήνδε, δεμαίνω τέ νιν / μὴ θηκτὸν ὄσπῃ φάσγανον δι' ἥπατος.*

3.8 Deianira: An aspiring Medea

Ovid's main intertext for the Hercules and Deianira narrative (9.1-272) is Sophocles' *The Women of Trachis*. The Roman poet, however, diverges from his source in the portrayal of Deianira drawing instead on Euripides' *Medea*. In particular, Deianira functions as another refraction of the Euripidean heroine, but unlike Procne, who surpasses Medea in her savagery and ruthlessness, and Althaea, who is a more pathetic and remorseful version of Euripides' protagonist, Deianira constitutes instead an aspiring Medea. Moreover, while Procne and Althaea evoke Medea in terms of their infanticide, Deianira is reminiscent of the Euripidean protagonist on account of the fact that she is consumed with jealousy for Hercules' infidelity and reflects on exacting retribution from her erotic rival.

Dan Curley argues that the Ovidian heroine briefly contemplates assuming the role of Medea in that she considers murdering Iole, thereby recalling the Colchian who destroyed the Corinthian princess.⁹⁸² She eventually sends, however, Nessus' robe to Hercules thinking it to be an erotic charm by which she will win back his love thus conforming to her Sophoclean predecessor who harbors no enmity towards her husband's mistress and does not devise a revenge plot against her. Curley also contends that the Ovidian character who actually plays the part of Medea is the centaur Nessus, in the sense that he seeks to avenge himself on his erotic antagonist Hercules by dispatching to him his deadly robe, which is smeared with a mixture of his blood and the poison of the Lernaean Hydra.⁹⁸³ In an analogous fashion Medea exacts revenge from the Corinthian princess by sending her the envenomed robe and diadem as wedding gifts. Furthermore, just as the Euripidean heroine employs her innocent sons as bearers

⁹⁸² Curley 2013, 205-206.

⁹⁸³ Curley 2013, 201-202.

of the gifts to the young bride, likewise Deianira and Lichas function as the unwitting carriers of the centaur's robe to Hercules. Curley detects allusions to the Euripidean intertext in the description of the fatal robe, in Deianira's soliloquy, and in the account of Hercules' death.

In this section I will attempt to substantiate further Deianira's evocation of Euripides' Medea by analyzing verbal reminiscences of the Greek play in the Ovidian narrative that have not been observed thus far. At the same time I will explore how the *Metamorphoses* narrative converses intratextually with *Heroides* 9, Deianira's epistle to Hercules. Whereas in his elegiac work Ovid adheres to the Sophoclean model, in his epic version of the myth he deviates from it by blending it with Euripides' tragedy. Finally, I will examine possible models for Deianira as a would-be Medea: Hypsipyle in *Heroides* 6, who fantasizes about killing her erotic rival Medea and thus recalls the Colchian's revenge on the Corinthian princess, and the Virgilian Dido, who imagines reenacting Medea's vengeance on Jason by murdering Aeneas' son, Ascanius.

3.8.1 Deianira's quandary

I will begin my analysis from the point in the Ovidian narrative in which the dying Nessus having been shot by Hercules' arrow besmears his robe with his blood mixed with the venom of the Hydra of Lerna and bestows it as a gift on Deianira asserting that it is a love charm (9.128-133). Deianira then sends the centaur's robe to her husband as an honorary gift for his sack of Oechalia (9.153-157). The Roman poet departs here from the Sophoclean model, where Deianira collects the poisoned blood of Nessus, keeps it hidden in a cauldron, and later imbues with it a robe, which she herself has woven (555-558, 568-581).⁹⁸⁴ In *Heroides* 9, on the contrary, Ovid

⁹⁸⁴ Kenney 2011, vv. 9.132-133.

had followed the Greek play by attributing the weaving of the robe and its anointment with the centaur's blood to Deianira (159-163).

It has been suggested that the *Metamorphoses* variant of the myth is intended to evoke Euripides' tragedy, where Medea treacherously sends her erotic rival the envenomed robe and crown, on the pretext that they are bridal gifts by which she attempts to win the favor of the princess, so that she may persuade her father not to banish the Colchian's sons (780-789, 954-956).⁹⁸⁵ Thus Nessus, who takes revenge on his antagonist by means of his poisoned garment, adheres to the Medea paradigm. The centaur's evocation of the Euripidean heroine is supported by a subtle verbal echo. At the moment of his death Nessus addresses himself in a theatrical aside, claiming that he will not die unavenged, and then proceeds to offer his blood-stained robe to Deianira as an erotic charm.⁹⁸⁶ The centaur's explicit desire to exact vengeance from Hercules diverges from his Sophoclean counterpart, who addressing Deianira falsely claims that she may use his blood as an enchantment to retain Heracles' passion (569-577). The Ovidian Nessus may recall instead Euripides' Medea, who asserts in her monologue that if her revenge plot is exposed she is resolved to slay her enemies out in the open even if it will mean her own death.⁹⁸⁷ At the same time the centaur's words may echo and invert the dying Heracles' determination in Sophocles to avenge himself on his wife.⁹⁸⁸

⁹⁸⁵ Curley 2013, 201-202.

⁹⁸⁶ Met. 9.131-133 excipit hunc Nessus 'neque enim moriemur inulti' / secum ait et calido uelamina tincta cruore / dat munus raptae uelut inritamen amoris.

⁹⁸⁷ Med. 392-394 ἢ δ' ἐξελαύνηι ξυμφορά μ' ἀμήχανος, / αὐτὴ ξίφος λαβοῦσα, κεῖ μέλλω θανεῖν, / κτενῶ σφε, / τόλμη δ' εἶμι πρὸς τὸ καρτερόν. Nessus may also echo the elegiac Medea of *Heroides* 12, who threatens to avenge herself on her enemies by means of her poisonous drugs (181-182 dum ferrum flammaeque aderunt sucusque veneni, / hostis Medae nullus inultus erit!).

⁹⁸⁸ Tr. 1109-1111 [...] προσμόλοι μόνον, / ἴν' ἐκδιδαχθῆ πᾶσιν ἀγγέλλειν ὅτι / καὶ ζῶν κακοῦς γε καὶ θανῶν ἐτεισάμην.

Deianira's first reaction to the rumors that Hercules has been overcome with passion for Iole is one of profound sorrow, which manifests itself through the shedding of copious tears.⁹⁸⁹ Soon, however, she rejects this passive state of grieving and after contemplating various ways to oppose her erotic antagonist, including murdering her, she finally resolves to send the robe to Hercules, in order to regain his love. This psychological portrait of the Ovidian heroine deviates from that of her Sophoclean predecessor, who announces her plan to dispatch the robe to her husband without a prior self-debate (584-586)⁹⁹⁰ and is represented as weeping not when she learns of Hercules' adultery, but before her suicide.⁹⁹¹ Deianira echoes instead her Euripidean antecedent, who in the prologue grieves inconsolably because of Jason's unfaithfulness,⁹⁹² but from the first episode onward she begins to devise her revenge scheme against her husband and the royal family of Corinth. Finally, Deianira's dismissal of lamentation in the *Metamorphoses* in favor of drastic action "corrects" the passive attitude of her elegiac counterpart, who grieves for Hercules' infidelity (*Her.* 9.1-2, 135-136) and does not contrive any stratagems against Iole.⁹⁹³

Deianira opens her soliloquy with a passionate invective against her rival, which has no parallel in the attitude of her Sophoclean antecedent.⁹⁹⁴ In the *Women of Trachis* Deianira on the one hand considers the presence of Iole in the house as an outrage to her (536-538) and hopes to overcome her antagonist by means of the love charm (584-586), but on the other hand she

⁹⁸⁹ *Met.* 9.141-143 *credit amans Venerisque nouae perterrita fama / indulsit primo lacrimis flendoque dolorem / diffudit miseranda suum; [...]*

⁹⁹⁰ Curley 2013, 204.

⁹⁹¹ *Tr.* 919-922 καὶ δακρῶν ῥήξασα θερμὰ νάματα / ἔλεξεν· «ὦ λέχη τε καὶ νυμφεῖ' ἐμά, / τὸ λοιπὸν ἦδη χαίρεθ' ὡς ἔμ' οὔποτε / δέξεσθ' ἔτ' ἐν κοίταισι ταῖσδ' εὐνάτριαν.»

⁹⁹² *Med.* 24-26 κεῖται δ' ἄσιτος, σῶμ' ὑφεῖσ' ἀλγηδόσιν, / τὸν πάντα συντήκουσα δακρῶις χρόνον / ἐπεὶ πρὸς ἀνδρὸς ἦισθετ' ἠδικημένη.

⁹⁹³ Curley 2013, 210-212.

⁹⁹⁴ Curley 2013, 203-204.

accepts Heracles' infidelities (445-446, 459-462), she does not cast any reproach against Iole (447-448, 462-463), and even shows pity for the young woman's misfortunes (463-466). The characterization of the Ovidian heroine evokes rather Euripides' protagonist. Deianira abandons her weeping because she believes that her tears will be a source of sadistic pleasure for her haughty rival, thus echoing Medea's claim that she will not allow her enemies to enjoy causing her grief.⁹⁹⁵ On the other hand, Deianira's branding of Iole as Hercules' concubine has no Sophoclean or Euripidean precedent, but recalls instead the words of her elegiac predecessor.⁹⁹⁶

Deianira feels the urgent need to hatch a plot against Iole, because she views her imminent arrival as an invasion into her house and is afraid that her rival is going to usurp her marriage chamber.⁹⁹⁷ The Ovidian heroine's panic derives from her belief in the rumors spread by Fama, according to which Hercules is has been seized with passion for Iole (9.137-143). The narrator's comment, however, that the goddess' report consists of both truth and lies alerts the reader to the fact that Deianira's reaction may be premature and excessive, since she has not yet received sure knowledge of the facts. The situation in the Ovidian narrative contrasts sharply with that in the Women of Trachis, where Deianira has already met Iole before hearing of Heracles' adultery and learns of her husband's passion through messenger reports and direct investigation.⁹⁹⁸ The Roman poet has replaced the Sophoclean sequence of events with the figure of Fama, whom he has derived from Virgil's Aeneid, where the goddess reports to Iarbas Dido's

⁹⁹⁵ Met. 9.143-144 [...] *mox deinde 'quid autem / flemus?'* ait 'paelex lacrimis laetabitur istis'; Med. 395-398 οὐ γὰρ μὰ τὴν δέσποιναν ἦν ἐγὼ σέβω / μάλιστα πάντων καὶ ξυνεργὸν εἰλόμην, / Ἐκάτην, μυχοῖς ναίουσαν ἐστίας ἐμῆς, / χαίρων τις αὐτῶν τοῦμὸν ἀλγυνεῖ κέαρ.

⁹⁹⁶ Her. 9.121-122 *ante meos oculos adducitur advena paelex, / nec mihi, quae patior, dissimulare licet!*

⁹⁹⁷ Met. 9.145-146 *quae quoniam adueniet, properandum aliquidque nouandum est, / dum licet et nondum thalamos tenet altera nostros.*

⁹⁹⁸ Curley 2013, 204, 211.

relationship with Aeneas (4.188-197).⁹⁹⁹ What is more, unlike the Ovidian protagonist Sophocles' Deianira is not afraid that Iole is going to banish her from her marriage chamber, but that she will be forced to share the same bed with her husband's mistress.¹⁰⁰⁰

The epic Deianira's perspective is reminiscent rather of that of the Euripidean Medea, who protests that Jason has appointed the Corinthian princess as mistress in her house.¹⁰⁰¹ Moreover, the Ovidian heroine's sense of exigency for action (the plot against her rival) on the grounds of an unfounded motive (gullible belief in the rumors about her Hercules' adultery) evokes the mindset of Medea who claims that she needs to swiftly commit infanticide and then escape from Corinth, justifying her decision by means of the self-deluding argument that if she does not murder her children herself they will be slain more savagely by the Corinthians seeking revenge for their king's death.¹⁰⁰² In addition, Deianira's wish to devise a scheme for neutralizing the threat posed by her adversary recalls the Nurse's fear in the prologue of the Euripidean play that Medea may concoct a sinister plot.¹⁰⁰³ The Ovidian heroine's stratagem seems momentarily to be the murder of Iole, but she ultimately resolves to employ Nessus' robe to rekindle her husband's passion. The Euripidean protagonist's design, on the other hand, proves to be both the infanticide and the murder of Creon and his daughter. Ovid thereby raises expectations in his reader that Deianira will become a "new Medea" only to frustrate them

⁹⁹⁹ Anderson 1972 vv. 9.137-140.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Tr. 539-540 καὶ νῦν δὺ' οὔσαι μίμομεν μιᾶς ὑπὸ / χλαίνης ὑπαγκάλισμα·, 545-546 τὸ δ' αὖ ξυνοικεῖν τῆδ' ὁμοῦ
τίς ἂν γυνὴ / δύναίτο, κοινωνοῦσα τῶν αὐτῶν γάμων·, 550-551 ταῦτ' οὖν φοβοῦμαι μὴ πόσις μὲν Ἡρακλῆς / ἐμὸς
καλῆται, τῆς νεωτέρας δ' ἀνὴρ.

¹⁰⁰¹ Med. 692-694 Μη. ἀδικεῖ μ' Ἰάσων οὐδὲν ἐξ ἐμοῦ παθῶν. / Αἰ. τί χρῆμα δράσας; φράζε μοι σαφέστερον. / Μη.
γυναῖκ' ἐφ' ἡμῖν δεσπότην δόμων ἔχει.

¹⁰⁰² Med. 1236-1239 φίλαι, δέδοκται τοῦργον ὡς τάχιστα μοι / παιδας κτανούση τῆσδ' ἀφορμᾶσθαι χθονός, / καὶ μὴ
σχολῆν ἄγουσαν ἐκδοῦναι τέκνα / ἄλλῃ φονεῦσαι δυσμενεστέροι χειρί.

¹⁰⁰³ Met. 9.145 aliquidque nouandum est; Med. 36-37 στρυγεῖ δὲ παῖδας οὐδ' ὄρῳσ' εὐφραίνεται / δέδοικα δ' αὐτὴν μὴ
τι βουλευσῆι νέον.

immediately afterwards. The use of the verb “novare” to signify Deianira’s contriving of a plan may bear metapoetic connotations alluding to Ovid’s innovative treatment of the character of Deianira by conflating her Sophoclean predecessor with Euripides’ Medea. This reading is corroborated by the Roman poet’s employment of the same verb in the *Ars Amatoria* to describe his invention of the genre of erotic epistolography, i.e. the *Heroides*.¹⁰⁰⁴

Finally, the epic Deianira’s reaction to the news of Hercules’ unfaithfulness echoes and inverts the outlook of her elegiac antecedent. Whereas the *Heroides* follow the Sophoclean model in chronologically setting Deianira’s letter after Iole has already arrived in Trachis (9.121), the Ovidian heroine’s dramatic monologue in the *Metamorphoses* precedes the advent of her rival in the city (9.145-146).¹⁰⁰⁵ Moreover, Deianira in *Heroides* 9 shows initial disbelief in the reports of her husband’s infidelities, which cause her only mild grief, and she is afraid that Iole may perhaps appropriate her place as Hercules’ lawfully wedded wife only after she sees her entering the city in triumph.¹⁰⁰⁶ In stark contrast to her elegiac counterpart the epic Deianira credulously believes the rumors about her husband’s new love and weeps profusely fearing with certainty that Iole will encroach on her marriage chamber.¹⁰⁰⁷ Deianira’s terror in the *Metamorphoses* at the prospect of being displaced by her antagonist serves to explain her ensuing contemplation of a murder plot against Iole, which has no equivalent in the epistle.

¹⁰⁰⁴ *Ars* 3.345-346 vel tibi composita cantetur Epistola voce: / ignotum hoc aliis ille novavit opus.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Curley 2013, 210.

¹⁰⁰⁶ *Her.* 9.3-6 fama Pelasgiadas subito pervenit in urbes / decolor et factis infitianda tuis, / quem numquam Iuno seriesque imensa laborum / fregerit, huic Iolen imposuisse iugum., 119-122 Haec tamen audieram; licuit non credere famae. / et venit ad sensus mollis ab aure dolor — / ante meos oculos adducitur advena paelex, / nec mihi, quae patior, dissimulare licet!, 131-132 forsitan et pulsa Aetolide Deianira / nomine deposito paelicis uxor erit.

¹⁰⁰⁷ *Met.* 9.137-143 [...] cum Fama loquax praecessit ad aures, / Deianira, tuas, quae ueris addere falsa / gaudet et e minimo sua per mendacia crescit, / Amphitryoniaden Ioles ardore teneri. / credit amans Venerisque nouae perterrita fama / indulsit primo lacrimis flendoque dolorem / diffudit miseranda suum.

In such a state of anxious anticipation of her rival's advent Deianira begins to weigh her options in a series of self-addressed rhetorical questions (9.147-154). We notice a gradual escalation in her alternative courses of action as she progresses from silence, to speech, to flight, and finally to active resistance. She first considers whether she should tacitly endure her sorrow over Hercules' adultery or voice her complaints to him. Next, she wavers between returning to her homeland Calydon or awaiting Hercules' arrival in Trachis. The Ovidian heroine is in a state of tragic aporia, which has no parallel in Sophocles, but is reminiscent of that of the Euripidean Medea, who asks herself whether she should go back to her native Colchis or to Iolcus.¹⁰⁰⁸ The distinguishing difference between the situations, however, is that while Medea ponders where to find refuge after Creon has issued a decree of exile for her, the terrified Deianira considers flight, although Hercules has not banished her from their house. Ovid's protagonist then shifts from passive to active attitude by wondering whether she should leave her house or, since she has nothing left to lose, stay and oppose her adversary.

Her final deliberation is whether she should murder Iole, which is suddenly triggered by the recollection of her brother.¹⁰⁰⁹ Deianira's concluding words engage in dialogue with a variety of intertexts and Ovidian intratexts. To begin with, the heroine's desire to follow the example of Meleager in bravely committing an impious crime out of love recalls the episode in the previous book, where the wrathful hero slew his uncles in order to take vengeance on them for insulting his beloved Atalanta (8.737-444). Deianira's wish, however, is fraught with tragic irony in that she will ultimately adhere to the paradigm of her brother in a different way than she expects,

¹⁰⁰⁸ Met. 9.147-148 [*'conquerar an sileam? repetam Calydonam morerne? / excedam tectis an, si nihil amplius, obstem?'*]; Med. 502-505 *γὺν ποῖ τράπωμαι; πόττερα πρὸς πατρὸς δόμους, / οὓς σοὶ προδοῦσα καὶ πάτραν ἀφικόμεν;* / ἢ πρὸς ταλαίνας Πελοπιδάδας; καλῶς γ' ἂν οὖν / δέξαιντό μ' οἴκοις ὧν πατέρα κατέκτανον (See Curley 2013, 204-205).

¹⁰⁰⁹ Met. 9.149-151 *quid si me, Meleagre, tuam memor esse sororem / forte paro facinus, quantumque iniuria possit / femineusque dolor, iugulata paelice testor?*

namely by murdering her kin: just as he dispatched his maternal uncles, similarly she will end up unwittingly killing her husband.¹⁰¹⁰ At the same time the epic Deianira “corrects” her elegiac predecessor, who invokes Meleager not as an example of perpetrating impious murder, but as an inspiration for courageously facing death, since she intends to commit suicide in remorse for unknowingly causing the death of her husband.¹⁰¹¹

The Ovidian protagonist also diverges pointedly from her Sophoclean antecedent, who does not contemplate vengeance on Iole, but feels sympathy for the young woman’s misfortunes, since Heracles sacked her city and killed her family, because Eurytion refused to marry his daughter to him.¹⁰¹² Moreover, Deianira’s desire in the *Metamorphoses* to commit a bold and impious crime (i.e. kill her rival) contrasts sharply with her tragic model’s explicit rejection of brazen acts of wickedness and her hatred for women who perpetrate such deeds.¹⁰¹³ The Ovidian heroine’s scheme to murder her antagonist evokes instead one of the revenge plots entertained by Medea, namely to infiltrate Jason’s marriage chamber and slay the Corinthian princess with the sword.¹⁰¹⁴ In addition, Deianira’s incentives for avenging herself on her adversary are reminiscent of her Euripidean antecedent’s motivation. Both heroines are spurred by a sense of intense grief and by having suffered a grave injustice on account of their husbands’ betrayal.¹⁰¹⁵

¹⁰¹⁰ Casali 1995, v. 9.151; Galasso 2000, vv. 9.134-158.

¹⁰¹¹ Her. 9.151-152 tu quoque cognosces in me, Meleagre, sororem! / in pia quid dubitas Deianira mori? (See Kenney 2011, vv. 9.149-151).

¹⁰¹² Tr. 463-467 [...] σφ’ ἐγὼ / ὄκτιρα δὴ μάλιστα προσβλέψασ’, ὅτι / τὸ κάλλος αὐτῆς τὸν βίον διώλεσεν, / καὶ γῆν πατρώαν οὐχ ἔκοῦσα δύσμορος / ἔπερσε κάδουλωσεν.

¹⁰¹³ Tr. 582-583 κακὰς δὲ τόλμας μήτ’ ἐπισταίμην ἐγὼ / μήτ’ ἐκμάθοιμι, τὰς τε τολμώσας στυγῶ.

¹⁰¹⁴ Med. 379-380 [...] ἢ θηκτὸν ὄσω φάσγανον δι’ ἥπατος, / σιγῆι δόμους ἐσβᾶσ’ ἴν’ ἔστρωται λέχος (See Curley 2013, 205-206).

¹⁰¹⁵ Med. 160-165 ὦ μεγάλα Θέμι καὶ πότνι’ Ἄρτεμι, / λεύσσεθ’ ἅ πάσχω, μεγάλοις ὄρκοις / ἐνδησαμένα τὸν κατάρατον πόσιν; ὃν ποτ’ ἐγὼ νύμφαν τ’ ἐσίδοιμ’ / αὐτοῖς μελάθροισι διακναιομένους, / οἷ’ ἐμὲ πρόσθεν τολμῶσ’ ἄδικεῖν, 395-

Furthermore, Deianira's appeal to her heroic brother as a stimulus to valiantly murder her rival may echo Medea's invocation of her noble ancestry, namely her father Aetes and her grandfather Helios, in order to incite herself to be courageous in exacting retribution from her enemies.¹⁰¹⁶

The Roman poet's depiction of Deianira as an "aspiring Medea" may have been inspired by the portrayal of two other famous heroines, Virgil's Dido and Ovid's own Hypsipyle, in the sense that they all fantasize about playing the role of the Colchian, but eventually do not realize their desire for vengeance. Upon discovering that Aeneas secretly plans to abandon her and sail for Italy in order to found "New Troy", the Carthaginian Queen is seized with frenzied madness and contemplates avenging herself on the Trojan hero by violent acts reminiscent of those of other mythical heroines. In particular, she considers dismembering Aeneas and scattering his limbs in the sea echoing Medea's sparagmos of her brother Apsyrtus, or murdering Ascanius and serving his flesh to his father evoking Procne's cannibalistic banquet, in which she offers her son Itys as a feast to Tereus.¹⁰¹⁷ The Virgilian heroine, however, does not ultimately fulfill her revenge fantasies, but commits suicide instead.

Heroides 6, Hypsipyle's letter to Jason, constitutes an even closer model for Deianira. The elegiac heroine imagines the hypothetical scenario, in which Jason returns to Lemnos accompanied by Medea after his ship has been stranded at its shores and is thus forced to confront the deserted queen and their twin offspring (6.141-145). Although Hypsipyle condemns the crime of the Lemnian women, who murdered their adulterous spouses and their Thracian

399 οὐ γὰρ μὰ τὴν δέσποιναν ἦν ἐγὼ σέβω / μάλιστα πάντων καὶ ζυνεργὸν εἰλόμην, / Ἐκάτην, μυχοῖς ναίουσαν ἐστίας ἐμῆς, / χαίρων τις αὐτῶν τοῦμόν ἀλγυνεῖ κέαρ. / πικροὺς δ' ἐγὼ σφιν καὶ λυγροὺς θήσω γάμους.

¹⁰¹⁶ Med. 403-406 ἔρπ' ἐς τὸ δεινόν· γῦν ἀγὼν εὐψυχίας. / ὄρᾱς ἅ πάσχεις; οὐ γέλωτα δεῖ σ' ὀφλεῖν / τοῖς Σισυφείοις τοῖσδ' Ἰάσονος γάμοις, / γεγῶσαν ἐσθλοῦ πατρὸς Ἥλιου τ' ἄπο.

¹⁰¹⁷ Aen. 4.600-602 non potui abreptum divellere corpus et undis / spargere? non socios, non ipsum absumere ferro / Ascanium patriisque epulandum ponere mensis?

concubines, she nevertheless daydreams about partially following the example of her countrywomen by sparing the unfaithful Jason out of mercy, but savagely killing his mistress.¹⁰¹⁸ Her wish to become “Medea” to Medea alludes to the fact that her imagined revenge scheme against her erotic rival foreshadows the Colchian’s actual vengeance on the Corinthian princess. The Lemnian queen’s longing for retribution will be not realized, however, since Jason will never return to her island. A significant affinity between Deianira and Hypsipyle concerns the invocation of a mythological exemplum as a self-exhortation to action: just as the Lemnian queen rouses herself to bravely take revenge on her antagonist by appealing to the bloody deed of her countrywomen as an instance of grief over male infidelity stirring women to courageously take up arms, similarly the epic heroine’s recollection of her identity as Meleager’s sister incites her to yearn for valiantly exacting revenge from her adversary and thus demonstrate the destructive power of female sorrow.

After vacillating between various courses of action Deianira ultimately decides to resort to the solution of Nessus’ robe, so as to reignite Hercules’ passion.¹⁰¹⁹ Sophocles’ protagonist, on the other hand, does not engage in a self-debate on how to neutralize the threat posed by her erotic rival, but immediately announces her decision to use the centaur’s robe as a love charm to win back her husband’s affections.¹⁰²⁰ The Ovidian heroine’s *aporia* is reminiscent of the thought process of Euripides’ Medea, who after contemplating various revenge plots resolves to

¹⁰¹⁸ Her. 6.139-140 Lemniadum facinus culpo, non miror, Iason; / quamlibet ignavis iste dat arma dolor, 149-151 paelicis ipsa meos inplessem sanguine vultus, / quosque veneficiis abstulit illa suis! / Medeae Medea forem!

¹⁰¹⁹ Met. 9.152-154 in cursus animus uarios abit; omnibus illis / praetulit imbutam Nesseo sanguine uestem / mittere, quae uires defecto reddat amori.

¹⁰²⁰ Tr. 584-586 φίλτροις δ’ ἔάν πως τήνδ’ ὑπερβαλώμεθα / τὴν παῖδα καὶ θέλκτροισι τοῖς ἐφ’ Ἡρακλεῖ, / μεμηγάνηται τοῦργον.φ

employ the poisoned robe and diadem to destroy the Corinthian princess and Creon.¹⁰²¹ The distinguishing difference between the two situations is that while the Euripidean protagonist is fully aware of the deadly properties of her gifts, her Ovidian counterpart, like the Sophoclean Deianira, is ignorant of the fact that her donum is going to bring about her husband's agonizing demise.¹⁰²² Instead of reenacting Medea's vengeance on her adversary Deianira is thus manipulated by Nessus into giving his lethal robe to his own erotic antagonist, Hercules. Hence, the cunning centaur is the one who in fact plays the role of Medea, while the Ovidian heroine along with the unwitting Lichas assume the part of the Colchian's innocent children bearing the fatal gifts to her rival.

Finally, it is noteworthy that Deianira disappears from the narrative after she dispatches her deadly gift to her husband. Although her future dirge is ironically anticipated by the narrator at the moment when she hands the fatal robe to Lichas (9.155-157), Ovid omits the anagnorisis of the inadvertent murder of her husband and her resulting suicide. He thus diverges from both the Sophoclean model, where the Nurse recounts her mistress' suicide (Tr. 899-946), as well as from the elegiac version of the myth, in which the elegiac heroine mourns for her deeds and repeatedly expresses her intention to commit suicide (Her. 9.146, 152, 158, 164).¹⁰²³ One interpretation of the poet's choice to exclude Deianira's suicide in the *Metamorphoses* is that in this way the focus in the last part of the narrative shifts entirely on Hercules' death and deification. An alternative, but not mutually exclusive reading, however, is that by not

¹⁰²¹ Med. 376-377 *πολλάς δ' ἔχουσα θανασίμους αὐτοῖς ὁδοῦς, / οὐκ οἶδ' ὅποια πρῶτον ἐγχειρῶ, φίλαι, 384-385 κρᾶτιστα τὴν εὐθεΐαν, ἧ πεφύκαμεν / σοφοὶ μάλιστα, φαρμάκοις αὐτοῦς ἐλεῖν.*

¹⁰²² Met. 9.155-157 *ignaroque Lichae quid tradat nescia luctus / ipsa suos tradit blandisque miserrima uerbis / dona det illa uiro mandat.*

¹⁰²³ Curley 2013, 212.

recounting the heroine's death the Roman poet assimilates her to Medea, who escapes from Corinth unscathed after her crimes.

3.8.2 The death of Hercules

Ovid's description of Hercules' demise caused by Nessus' robe creatively reworks the Sophoclean account of the hero's end by conflating it with the death scenes of Creon and the Corinthian princess in Euripides' play. The evocation of the Euripidean model in the Ovidian narrative of the Greek hero's death serves as a further allusion to the fact that Nessus' revenge on Hercules by means of the poisoned vestis reenacts Medea's retribution against the Corinthian princess.¹⁰²⁴ To begin with, Hercules' donning of the poisoned robe recalls verbally the parallel description in the Women of Trachis as well as the Euripidean scene, in which the Corinthian princess puts on the deadly peplos.¹⁰²⁵ The emphasis on the hero's ignorance of the deadly nature of his wife's gift is reminiscent of the scene in Euripides' play, where Creon enters his daughter's chamber and being oblivious to the cause of her death makes the fatal error of embracing her corpse.¹⁰²⁶ The unawareness of Hercules and Creon is mirrored in their speech, which is tinged with tragic irony: just as the Corinthian king erroneously accuses a divinity of killing his daughter instead of the real culprit, Medea, likewise the Greek hero is mistaken to

¹⁰²⁴ Curley 2013, 202-203.

¹⁰²⁵ Met. 9.157-158 [...] capit inscius heros / induiturque umeris Lernaee uirus echidnae; Med. 1159 λαβοῦσα πέπλους ποικίλους ἠμπέσχετο; Tr. 757-759 κήρυξ ἀπ' οἴκων ἵκετ' οἰκείος Λίχας, / τὸ σὸν φέρων δῶρημα, θανάσιμον πέπλον· / ὄν κείνος ἐνδύς, ὡς σὺ προῦξεφίεσο.

¹⁰²⁶ Med. 1204-1205 πατήρ δ' ὁ τλήμων συμφορᾶς ἀγνωσία / ἄφνω παρελθὼν δῶμα προσπίτνει νεκρῶι. Hercules' death scene also echoes the depiction of Meleager's demise in the previous book in terms of the hero's unawareness and his initial valiant resistance to the pain (Met. 9.157 inscius heros, 163-165 dum potuit, solita gemitum uirtute repressit, 8.515-517 inscius atque absens flamma Meleagros ab illa / uritur et caecis torreri uiscera sentit / ignibus ac magnos superat uirtute dolores (See Galasso 2000, vv. 9.159-210).

rebuke Juno for bringing about his destruction, whereas in reality the devious Nessus is to blame for his death.¹⁰²⁷ In the *Women of Trachis*, on the contrary, Heracles initially reviles Deianira for his demise, since he learns from Lichas that the robe was dispatched as a gift from her, but is later informed by his son Hyllus that the centaur actually tricked his wife into giving him the lethal attire.¹⁰²⁸

The description of the deadly effects of the poisoned robe in the Ovidian episode also blends elements derived from the Sophoclean and Euripidean intertexts. To begin with, the depiction of the deadly garment as clinging closely to Hercules' body echoes the parallel description in Sophocles' play.¹⁰²⁹ The concomitant graphic image, however, of the hero's vain attempt to remove the robe, which causes his own flesh to be torn from his bones is drawn from the messenger speech of Euripides' play: Creon glued to his daughter's robe tears away his flesh when he tries to extricate himself from her fatal grip.¹⁰³⁰ Ovid signals his allusion to his tragic predecessor by means of an intertextual marker: the narrator's parenthetical comment on the gruesome nature of his account evokes the Euripidean messenger's analogous remark whereby he introduces his report of the poison's effects on the Corinthian princess.¹⁰³¹

¹⁰²⁷ Med. 1207-1208 ἼΩ δύστηνε παῖ, / τίς σ' ὄδ' ἀτίμως δαιμόνων ἀπόλεσεν;; Met. 9.176-178 'cladibus' exclamat, 'Saturnia, pascere nostris, / pascere et hanc pestem spectata, crudelis, ab alto / corque ferum satia.

¹⁰²⁸ Tr. 1046-1052 ὦ πολλὰ δὴ καὶ θερμά, καὶ λόγῳ κακά, / καὶ χερσὶ καὶ νότοισι μοχθήσας ἐγὼ· / κοῦπω τοιοῦτον οὔτ' ἄκοιτις ἢ Διὸς / προὔθηκεν οὐθ' ὁ στυγνὸς Εὐρυσθεὺς ἐμοὶ / οἷόν τόδ' ἢ δολῶπις Οἰνέως κόρη / καθήψεν ὤμοις τοῖς ἐμοῖς Ἐρινύων / ὑφαντὸν ἀμφίβληστρον, ᾧ διόλλυμαι, 1141-1142 Νέσσοσ πάλαι Κένταυρος ἐξέπεισέ νιν / τοιῶδε φίλτρῳ τὸν σὸν ἐκμῆναι πόθον. (See Kenney 2011, vv. 9.176-181).

¹⁰²⁹ Met. 9.166-169 nec mora, letiferam conatur scindere uestem; / qua trahitur, trahit illa cutem, foedumque relatu, / aut haeret membris frustra temptata reuelli / aut laceros artus et grandia detegit ossa; Tr. 767-771 ἰδρῶς ἀνήει χρωτὶ καὶ προσπτύσσειτο / πλευραῖσιν ἀρτίκολλος, ὥστε τέκτονος / χιτῶν, ἅπαν κατ' ἄρθρον· ἦλθε δ' ὀστέων / ὀδαγμαὸς ἀντίσπαστος· εἶτα φοίνιος / ἐχθρᾶς ἐχίδνης ἰὸς ὡς ἐδαίνυτο (Kenney 2011, v. 9.161).

¹⁰³⁰ Med. 1211-1217 ἐπεὶ δὲ θρήνων καὶ γόων ἐπαύσατο, / χριζὼν γεραίων ἐξαναστήσῃ δέμας / προσείχθ' ὥστε κισσοῦς ἔρνεσιν δάφνης / λεπτοῖσι πέπλοις, δεινὰ δ' ἦν παλαισμάτα. / ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἦθελ' ἐξαναστήσῃ γόνυ, / ἢ δ' ἀντελάζυτ'· εἰ δὲ πρὸς βίαν ἄγοι, / σάρκας γεραίας ἐσπάρασσ' ἀπ' ὀστέων (See Anderson 1972, v. 9.166).

¹⁰³¹ Met. 9.167 foedumque relatu; Med. 1167 τὸνθένδε μέντοι δεινὸν ἦν θέαμ' ἰδεῖν·

The Roman poet continues the fusion of his tragic models in the description of the destruction of Hercules' body by the envenomed robe. Thus, he appropriates purely Sophoclean elements, such as the triggering of the poison's effects by the heat of the sacrificial flames and the picture of the hero being bathed in sweat.¹⁰³² In other cases he employs features found in both plays, such as the devouring of the victim's body by the poison.¹⁰³³ Finally, he includes Euripidean motifs, such as the burning of the hero by the robe's magical flames, a theme which is drastically downplayed by Sophocles, who only makes a single reference to fire imagery.¹⁰³⁴ Last but not least, the Ovidian account of Hercules' apotheosis, which is not described in the Sophoclean play, may contain an intriguing allusion to Euripides. After the hero is totally consumed by the flames of his funeral pyre, his physical form is not recognizable any longer, since his mortal part has been destroyed and only his divine part survives, which retains the features of his father Jupiter.¹⁰³⁵ The Ovidian hero's divine metamorphosis may ironically evoke and reverse the grisly transformation of the Corinthian princess: after the young woman's burning by the magical flames of the poison, which involves the disfigurement of her facial

¹⁰³² Met. 9.161-162 *incaluit uis illa mali resolutaque flammis / Herculeos abiit late dilapsa per artus, 173 caeruleusque fluit toto de corpore sudor*; Tr. 765-767 ὅπως δὲ σεμνῶν ὀργίων ἐδαίετο / φλοῦξ αἵματηρὰ κάπῳ πιείρας δρυός, / ἰδρῶς ἀνήει χρωτὶ [...].

¹⁰³³ Met. 9.172 *sorbent auidae praecordia flammae, 201-202 [...] pulmonibus errat / ignis edax imis perque omnes pascitur artus*; Tr. 1053-1057 πλευραῖσι γὰρ προσμαχθὲν ἐκ μὲν ἐσγάτας / βέβρωκε σάρκας, πλεύμονός τ' ἀρτηρίας / ῥοφεῖ ξυνοικοῦν· ἐκ δὲ χλωρὸν αἷμά μου / πέπωκεν ἤδη, καὶ διέφθαρμαι δέμας / τὸ πᾶν ἀφράστῳ τῆδε χειρωθεὶς πέδη (see Bömer 1977, vv. 9.201-202); Med. 1187-1188 πέπλοι δὲ λεπτοί, σῶν τέκνων δωρήματα, / λευκὴν ἔδαπτον σάρκα τῆς δυσδαίμονος.

¹⁰³⁴ Met. 9.170-172 *ipse cruor, gelido ceu quondam lammina candens / tincta lacu, stridit coquiturque ardente ueneno. / nec modus est, sorbent auidae praecordia flammae, 174-175 ambustique sonant nerui, caecaque medullis / tabe liquefactis tollens ad sidera palmas, 201-202 [...] pulmonibus errat / ignis edax imis [...]*; Med. 1186-1187 χρυσοῦς μὲν ἀμφὶ κρατὶ κείμενος πλόκος / θαυμαστὸν ἴει νᾶμα παμφάγου πυρός, 1190 φεύγει δ' ἀναστᾶσ' ἐκ θρόνων πυρομένη, 1198-1201 [...] αἷμα δ' ἐξ ἄκρου / ἔσταζε κρατὸς συμπεφυρμένον πυρὶ, / σάρκες δ' ἀπ' ὀστέων ὥστε πεύκινον δάκρυ / γνάθοις ἀδήλοισι φαρμάκων ἀπέρρεον; Tr. 1081-1082 Αἰαῖ, ὦ τάλας, αἰαῖ, / ἔθαλψεν ἄτης σπασμὸς ἀρτίως ὄδ' αἶ.

¹⁰³⁵ Met. 9.262-265 *interea quodcumque fuit populabile flammae / Mulciber abstulerat, nec cognoscenda remansit / Herculis effigies, nec quidquam ab imagine ductum / matris habet, tantumque Iouis uestigia seruat*

characteristics and the melting of her flesh, she becomes unrecognizable to everyone but her father.¹⁰³⁶

Chapter 4

Hecuba: Maiden sacrifice and maternal revenge

The stories of Polydorus and Polyxena first woven together in Euripides' Hecuba (c. 424 BC) had a rich afterlife in Greek and Roman literature.¹⁰³⁷ One of the most famous adaptations of the myth is Ovid's Hecuba narrative in the Metamorphoses (13.429-575). The Roman poet draws on the Euripidean play as his primary model, but at the same time diverges in significant ways from his tragic predecessor.¹⁰³⁸ The Ovidian narrative follows closely the main plot outline of the Greek play, which comprises Polydorus' murder by Polymestor, the sacrifice of Polyxena at the behest of Achilles' ghost, Hecuba's vengeance on the Thracian king, and finally the Trojan queen's canine metamorphosis. The Euripidean material, however, is radically curtailed by the exclusion of several characters and episodes. Thus, the debate of the Achaean assembly concerning the fate of Polyxena and Hecuba's exchanges with Agamemnon, Odysseus, and Polymestor are omitted in Ovid's story. Moreover, the Metamorphoses affords its reader a direct epic presentation of scenes which are reported in Euripides ex post facto partly due to the

¹⁰³⁶ Med. 1195-1999 *πίτνει δ' ἐς οὐδας συμφορᾶν νικωμένη, / πλὴν τῶι τεκόντι κάρτα δυσμαθῆς ἰδεῖν· / οὐτ' ὀμμάτων γὰρ δῆλος ἦν κατάστασις / οὐτ' εὐφυὲς πρόσωπον, αἶμα δ' ἐξ ἄκρου / ἔσταζε κρατὸς συμπεφυρμένον πυρὶ / σάρκες δ' ἀπ' ὀστέων ὥστε πεύκινον δάκρυ / γνάθοις ἀδήλοισι φαρμάκων ἀπέρρεον.*

¹⁰³⁷ See Mossman 1995, 247-253 for a brief overview of the treatment of Polydorus and Polyxena in post-Euripidean ancient literature.

¹⁰³⁸ For the intertextual relationship between the Euripidean and Ovidian versions of the Hecuba myth see Venini 1952, Dippel 1990, Paschalis 2003, Álvarez Morán and Iglesias Montiel 2006, Papaioannou 2007, and Curley 2013.

dramatic convention of fifth century Athenian theater, which prohibited the display of violent action on stage.¹⁰³⁹ The ghost of Polydorus relates his murder by Polymestor, the appearance of Achilles' ghost is described by both the chorus and Polydorus, Polyxena's sacrifice is reported by the herald Talthybius, the discovery of Polydorus' corpse is announced by an old maidservant, and finally the blinding of Polymestor is recounted by the Thracian king himself. Hence, The omniscient narrator of the Ovidian epic appropriates the role of all the internal Euripidean narrators.

Ovid's incentive for the omission of all male characters (Agamemnon, Odysseus, Talthybius, and the ghost of Polydorus) except for those who are instrumental to the development of the plot (Achilles' ghost and Polymestor) is probably his wish to focus more closely on the psychological portraits of his female protagonists. As I will argue below, Polyxena surpasses her Greek antecedent both as a symbol of female sensuality and in terms of the appropriation of masculine features such as valor and the aspiration for heroic status, while Hecuba outdoes her tragic counterpart in terms of the excessive pathos of her lamentation for Polyxena and the ferocity of her revenge on Polymestor. Finally, the Roman poet sets the action of his narrative on the Thracian coast of Chersonese in adherence to his tragic model, but also makes substantial alterations to the Euripidean setting.¹⁰⁴⁰ In contrast to the Greek play, in which Hecuba's metamorphosis takes place during the sea voyage towards Greece, in the *Metamorphoses* she is transformed into a dog on the coast of Thrace. Furthermore, whereas in Euripides the blinding of Polymestor is set inside the tent of the captive Trojan women, the

¹⁰³⁹ Hopkins 2000, 24-25.

¹⁰⁴⁰ For Ovid's innovating reworking of the spatial and temporal aspects of the Euripidean play see Curley 2013, 101-114.

Ovidian scene unfolds in an unspecified secluded location (13.555 in *secreta*) somewhere on the coast of Thrace.

Ovid derives certain elements of his narrative from other Euripidean tragedies. The Roman poet was familiar with Euripides' *Trojan Women*, which constitutes one of his major sources for the account of the fall of Troy (Met. 13.404-428) immediately preceding the Thracian episode.¹⁰⁴¹ However, the only explicit allusion to the Greek play in the Hecuba narrative is the Trojan queen's allotment as war booty to Ulysses (Met. 13.422-425, 485-487; Tro. 277-292) in stark contrast to Euripides' *Hecuba*, where her master is said to be Agamemnon (Hec. 724-725). What is more, I will contend that Ovid is obliquely evoking Euripides' *Bacchae* in the scene of Polymestor's blinding by depicting Hecuba as a figurative maenad in terms of her superhuman strength and immunity to weapons. On the other hand, the surviving fragments of Sophocles' *Polyxena* do not suggest that Ovid is in any way indebted to the play.¹⁰⁴² Most importantly, the Sophoclean tragedy treats only the sacrifice of Polyxena making no reference to the Polydorus story. In addition, its action unfolds not in Thrace, but in the Troad. Likewise the scant extant textual evidence of Ennius' and Accius' *Hecuba* plays does not allow us to determine whether the Roman poet appropriated any features from their works, while Pacuvius' *Iliona* dramatizes an alternative variant of the Polydorus myth. The only surviving pre-Ovidian treatment of the sacrifice of Polyxena is found in Catullus' *Carmen* 64 (362-370). As I will argue below, Ovid's portrayal of Polyxena as a fearless maiden seeking heroic glory constitutes a direct reversal of the Catullan depiction of the Trojan heroine as a passive and helpless sacrificial victim.

¹⁰⁴¹ Curley 2013, 104: "Ovid recalls the *Trojan Women* in his report of the destruction, particularly the fates of Cassandra and Astyanax, and in the collective and emphatic *Troades* (421), which stamps the preceding narrative with Euripides' title. Hecabe's final act in the *Trojan Women* - her departure from Troy and from the stage - becomes her first act in the *Metamorphoses*".

¹⁰⁴² For a recent reconstruction of Sophocles' *Polyxena* see Sommerstein 2006, 51-66.

The most significant mediating intertext between Euripides and Ovid is Virgil's Polydorus narrative opening the third book of the *Aeneid* (3.13-68). Aeneas' first stop after his flight from the fallen Troy is the Thracian shore, where he founds a new city. While he is making sacrifices to the gods he pulls up some myrtle and cornel branches as decoration for his altars, but to his amazement and terror blood begins trickling from them. The Trojan hero then hears the voice of Polydorus' ghost recounting to him how the spears with which he was treacherously murdered by Polymestor had grown into shoots and exhorting him to flee from the accursed land. The Trojans decide to offer proper burial honors to the young Trojan before immediately setting sail again. Sergio Casali has convincingly argued that Ovid employs in his story a distinctive Virgilian allusive technique.¹⁰⁴³ Virgil follows (or invents) a variant of the Polydorus myth which deviates from the Euripidean version, but at the same time echoes the Greek play by means of subtle allusions. The *Metamorphoses* narrative, on the contrary, adheres to the Euripidean model while implicitly alluding to the Virgilian one.

Moreover, the Ovidian account is characterized by a substantial shift of narrative emphasis from Polydorus to Achilles and Polyxena. The epiphany of the Virgilian ghost of Polydorus is replaced by that of Achilles' ghost and the focal point of action is no longer the tomb of the young Trojan prince, but the sepulcher of the Myrmidon hero.¹⁰⁴⁴ Similarly the funeral rites for Polydorus yield their place to Polyxena's obsequies. Finally, I will contend that Ovid's reworking of the Euripidean *Hecuba* may allude to Virgil's refashioning of the

¹⁰⁴³ Casali 2007, 188.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Paschalis 2003, 154: "There is intertextual association between Ovid's Polyxena narrative and Virgil's Polydorus narrative: The landing of the Greek fleet on the coast of Thrace in *Met.* 13.439-440 becomes associated with the arrival at the same place of Aeneas and the Trojans in *Aen.* 3.13-17. The events surrounding Aeneas' sacrifice and the incident with the body of Polydorus lacking proper burial are retrospectively projected into Achilles' demand for proper burial honors also in the form of a sacrifice. Finally, it is worthy of note that the tumulus and the *arae* ("altar") in the Ovidian narrative of the sacrifice of Polyxena (452-3) are also central spatial constituents of Virgil's Polydorus narrative."

Euripidean Polydorus. In particular, the Thracian spear-attack against the Trojan queen is reminiscent of the death of the Virgilian Polydorus, while Ovid's placing of Hecuba's death on land instead of the sea seems evocative of Virgil's account of Polydorus' demise. Another Virgilian episode which Ovid's narrative engages intertextually is the account of Priam's death (Aen. 2.506-508). It will be argued that the sacrifice of intrepid Polyxena by tearful Neoptolemus evokes and reverses the slaughter of helpless Priam by ruthless Pyrrhus and that the tragic reversal of Hecuba's fortunes emulates the Trojan king's peripeteia.

Finally, the Hecuba narrative converses intratextually with other stories in the *Metamorphoses*. Dan Curley has suggested that the sacrifice of Polyxena echoes the miniature account of Iphigenia's sacrifice in the previous book of the *Metamorphoses* (12.29-34).¹⁰⁴⁵ Noting the intrinsic affinities between the two heroines, namely that they are both regal maidens sacrificed for the sake of the Greek army on account of unfavorable winds, he argues that the Polyxena narrative is fashioned in such a way as to implicitly evoke aspects of Iphigenia's experience, such as her initial unwillingness to die, her sudden realization of the sacrifice which indicates her ignorance or surprise, and the presence of an altar. Furthermore, he contends that Ovid's conflation of Polyxena and Iphigenia is reminiscent of Euripides' own fusion of the two heroines in *Iphigenia in Aulis*. The Euripidean heroine initially recalls Aeschylus' Iphigenia in that she is depicted as a helpless sacrificial victim pleading for her life. Later in the play, however, she is suddenly transformed into a fearless maiden willingly embracing death thereby echoing the tragedian's own Polyxena in *Hecuba*. Finally, as we shall see, the portrayal of Hecuba evokes and reverses by means of explicit verbal reminiscences two other maternal figures of the *Metamorphoses*, Procne and Niobe. In contrast to Procne who avenges herself on

¹⁰⁴⁵ Curley 2013, 185-200.

her husband by committing infanticide, the Trojan queen takes revenge on her son's murderer. Moreover, both Niobe and Hecuba are mourning mothers who have been bereft of their offspring, but whereas the former's childlessness is a punishment inflicted on her on account of her outrage against Latona, the latter's loss of her progeny is due to no fault of her own, but she is a tragic victim of fate.

4.1 The murder of Polydorus

The Ovidian narrative opens with a sketch of the background of Polydorus' story (Met. 13.429-438). When Priam became fearful that Troy was in danger of falling at the hands of the Greeks, he secretly sent his youngest son Polydorus with a large sum of gold to his Thracian guest-friend, Polymestor. After the fall of the city, however, the Thracian king, spurred by his ravenous desire for wealth, murdered his Trojan protégée and threw his body into the sea. Ovid's introduction evokes the prologue of Euripides' *Hecuba* by means of double allusion, namely both directly and indirectly through Virgil's Polydorus episode (Aen. 3.13-68), which in turn echoes the Greek play. In particular, Ovid derives from his sources the basic plot elements of the episode, such the

clandestine dispatch of Polydorus to Thrace,¹⁰⁴⁶ Polymestor's greed,¹⁰⁴⁷ and the direct causal relationship between Troy's downfall and young Trojan's murder.¹⁰⁴⁸

Although the Ovidian text teems with explicit verbal reminiscences of both the Euripidean and Virgilian models, it clearly adheres to Euripides' version of the myth, according to which Polymestor murdered Polydorus and threw his body into the sea where it was later discovered by Hecuba.¹⁰⁴⁹ Virgil, on the contrary, follows or invents another mythical variant, in which the king tries to conceal his crime by burying the Trojan prince's corpse on the Thracian shore with the spears transfixing his body having turned into myrtle shoots. Casali argues that Ovid employs here the characteristic Virgilian technique of alluding to the intertext which is dismissed.¹⁰⁵⁰ He achieves this both by means of the profuse verbal echoes of the Aeneid in the prologue of the Polydorus narrative and by opening his own "Aeneid" with a passing allusion to the Virgilian version of the "bleeding bush".¹⁰⁵¹

¹⁰⁴⁶ Met. 13.430-434 Polymestoris illic / regia diues erat, cui te commisit alendum / clam, Polydore, pater Phrygiisque remouit ab armis / consilium sapiens, sceleris nisi praemia magnas adiecisset opes; Aen. 3.49-52 Aen. 3.49-57 hunc Polydorum auri quondam cum pondere magno / infelix Priamus furtim mandaratum alendum / Threicio regi, cum iam diffideret armis / Dardaniae [...]; Hec. 3-7 Πολύδωρος, [...] / Πριάμου τε πατρός, ὅς μ', ἐπεὶ Φρυγῶν πόλιν / κίνδυνος ἔσχε δορὶ πεσεῖν Ἑλληνικῶ, / δείσας ὑπεξέπεμψε Τρωικῆς χθονὸς / Πολυμήστορος πρὸς δῶμα Ὀρηκίου ξένου, 10-11 πολὺν δὲ σὺν ἔμοι γρυσοῦν ἐκπέμπει λάθρα / πατήρ [...], 19-20 καλῶς παρ' ἀνδρὶ Ὀρηκί πατρώῳ ξένῳ / τροφαῖσιν ὡς τις πτόρθος ἠὲξόμην τάλας (See Bömer 1982, vv. 13.431-432; Hopkinson 2000, v. 13.431).

¹⁰⁴⁷ Met. 13.432-433 [...] sceleris nisi praemia magnas / adiecisset opes, animi inritamen auari; Aen. 3.56-57 [...] auro / vi potitur. quid non mortalia pectora cogis, / auri sacra fames?; Hec. 25 κτείνει με χρυσοῦ τὸν ταλαίπωρον χάριν (See Álvarez Morán and Iglesias Montiel 2006, 41).

¹⁰⁴⁸ Met. 13.435-436 ut cecidit fortuna Phrygum, capit impius ensem / rex Thracum iuguloque sui demisit alumni; Aen. 3.53-55 ille, ut opes fractae Teucrum et Fortuna recessit, / res Agamemnonias victriciaque arma secutus / fas omne abrumpit; Polydorum obruncat [...]; Hec. 21-25 ἐπεὶ δὲ Τροία θ' Ἔκτορος τ' ἀπόλλυται / ψυχὴ πατρώα θ' ἔστια κατεσκάφη / αὐτὸς τε βωμῶ πρὸς θεοδμήτω πίνει / σφαγεῖς Ἀχιλλέως παιδὸς ἐκ μαιφόνου, / κτείνει με [...] (See Bömer 1982, v. 13.435; Hopkinson 2000, v. 13.435).

¹⁰⁴⁹ Met. 13.437-438 et, tamquam tolli cum corpore crimina possent / exanimem scopulo subiectas misit in undas; Hec. 25-27 κτείνει με [...] / ξένος πατρώος καὶ κτανὼν ἐς οἶδμ' ἄλος / μεθῆχ' [...].

¹⁰⁵⁰ Casali 2007, 182-184.

¹⁰⁵¹ Met. 13.628-630 scelerataque limina Thracum / et Polydoreo manantem sanguine terram / linquit; Aen. 3.27-29 nam quae prima solo ruptis radicibus arbor / vellitur, huic atro liquuntur sanguine guttae / et terram tabo maculant, 42-43 non me tibi Troia / externum tulit aut cruur hic de stipite manat.

Scholars have noted an intriguing contradiction in the Ovidian poem pertaining to the particular manner of Polydorus' murder. Whereas in the Euripidean prologue Polymestor is said to have cut Polydorus' throat with a sword, later in the narrative Hecuba discovers at the shore her son's body, which has suffered wounds made by Thracian spears.¹⁰⁵² Two different explanations have been offered to resolve this inconsistency. Bömer advocates that both *vulnera* and *telis* should be construed as poetic plurals and thus translated as "wound" and "sword" respectively.¹⁰⁵³ Casali, on the other hand, suggests that Ovid follows the Euripidean version (i.e. death by sword) and at the same time implicitly alludes to the Virgilian variant (i.e. murder by spear). He contends, however, that this discrepancy need not be corrected, but instead read as a subtle evocation of an analogous inconsistency in Virgil.¹⁰⁵⁴ The ghost of Polydorus reveals to Aeneas that his body was pierced by an "iron crop of spears", but immediately afterwards Aeneas relates that Polymestor decapitated the young Trojan, implying that he killed him with a sword.¹⁰⁵⁵ Casali concludes that Ovid by reenacting the Virgilian contradiction in his narrative engages in the reverse intertextual dialogue with Euripides than his Roman predecessor. Whereas Virgil recounts an alternative version of the myth obliquely echoing Euripides, Ovid evokes the Greek play and recalls the Aeneid indirectly. What has not been observed, however, is that the Greek dramatist himself generates ambiguity regarding Polydorus' manner of death. After the Trojan prince's corpse has been discovered and brought on stage Hecuba asks whether he was slain by a spear, yet a few lines below she laments that his body has been mangled by a

¹⁰⁵² Met. 13.435-436 *capit impius ensem / rex Thracum iuguloque sui demisit alumni*, 536-537 *aspicit eiectum Polydori in litore corpus / factaque Threiciis ingentia uulnera telis.*

¹⁰⁵³ Bömer 1982, vv. 13.536-537.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Casali 2007, 184-188.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Aen. 3.45-46 *nam Polydorus ego. hic confixum ferrea textit / telorum seges et iaculis increvit acutis*, 55 *Polydorum obtruncat.*

sword.¹⁰⁵⁶ Hence, it may be argued that both Virgil and Ovid reproduce a discrepancy already found in their Greek model.

A significant Ovidian innovation in the prologue pertains to narrative technique. In the opening of the Euripidean play the ghost of Polydorus addresses the audience reporting his tragic end and his appearance in Hecuba's dream. In the Aeneid the young Trojan's shade reveals his fate to Aeneas, who in turn narrates his story to Dido. Ovid, however, inverts the roles of narrator and addressee by having the external narrator make a pathetic apostrophe to the dead Polydorus (Met. 13.431-432) and at the same time recount the Trojan's tale to the reader.¹⁰⁵⁷ Thus, while in Hecuba Polydorus is a speaking ghost and in the Aeneid Polydorus' voice is emitted from a body pierced by spears and transformed into a bush, in the Metamorphoses he is reduced to a voiceless corpse without a soul (13.438 *exanimem*).¹⁰⁵⁸ Finally, Sophia Papaioannou has observed that Ovid lays particular emphasis on Polymestor's greed as an incentive for killing Polydorus.¹⁰⁵⁹ In particular, the Thracian king is said to have possessed riches even before the advent of the Trojan prince.¹⁰⁶⁰ Moreover, in contrast to the Aeneid, where Polymestor is motivated not only by his desire for wealth, but also by his alliance with the victorious Greeks,¹⁰⁶¹ in the Metamorphoses Polydorus' death is attributed entirely to the great treasure accompanying him to Thrace. Ovid follows in this respect his Euripidean source, in which

¹⁰⁵⁶ Hec. 699-700 ἔκβλητον ἢ πέσημα φοινίου / δὸρὸς ἐν ψαμάθῳ λευρᾷ; 718-720 ὃ κατάρπ' ἀνδρῶν, ὡς διεμοιράσω / χροῖα, σιδαρέω τεμῶν φασγάνῳ / μέλεα τοῦδε παιδὸς οὐδ' ᾤκτισας.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Álvarez Morán and Iglesias Montiel 2006, 40; Curley 2013, 106-107.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Curley 2013, 107.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Papaioannou 2007, 220.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Met. 13.430-431 Polymestoris illic / regia diues erat [...].

¹⁰⁶¹ Aen. 3.54-56 res Agamemnonias victriciaque arma secutus / fas omne abrumpit; Polydorum obruncat et auro / vi potitur.

Polymestor's allegation that he murdered Polydorus in order to promote the interests of his Greek allies (Hec. 1136-1144, 1175-1176) is dismissed by both Hecuba and Agamemnon a mere pretext masking his true motivation, namely his thirst for gold (Hec. 1197-1207, 1243-1246). The Roman poet also stresses Polymestor's avarice in his meeting with Hecuba, depicting it as an inherent vice.¹⁰⁶²

4.2 The epiphany of Achilles

After the flashback narrative explaining the circumstances of Polydorus' death the lens focuses on the Greek fleet which has been forced to anchor at the Thracian shore of Chersonese on account of adverse winds. The action is set in motion by the sudden appearance of Achilles' shade demanding the sacrifice of Polyxena as an honorary offering for his tomb (Met. 13.439-449). The Ovidian account of Achilles' speech constitutes a conflation of two Euripidean passages: Polydorus' description of the words of Achilles in the prologue and the chorus' report of the ghost's harangue in the parodos.¹⁰⁶³ At the same time, however, the Roman poet departs in multiple ways from his tragic model. An important deviation on the level of narrative technique is the inversion of the sequence of events. In Euripides the Greek fleet is halted in mid-water during its homeward voyage by the awe-inspiring epiphany of Achilles' apparition, who reproaches them for departing without making a funereal offering in his honor. As a result the Achaeans moor their ships at the

¹⁰⁶² Met. 13.554 *praedaeque †adsuetus† amore*.

¹⁰⁶³ Met. 13.455-458 'immemores' que 'mei *disceditis*' inquit, '*Achiui*, / obrutaque est mecum uirtutis gratia nostrae? / ne facite! utque *meum non sit sine honore sepulcrum*, / *placet Achilleos mactata Polyxena manes*.'; Hec. 40-41 αἰτεῖ δ' ἀδελφὴν τὴν ἐμὴν *Πολυξένην* / τύμβῳ φίλον πρόσφαγμα καὶ γέρας λαβεῖν, Hec. 113-115 ποῖ δὴ, *Ἀναοί*, / τὸν ἐμὸν τύμβον / *στέλλεσθ'* ἀγέραςτον ἀφέντες; (See Álvarez Morán and Iglesias Montiel 2006, 42-43).

Thracian shore in order to sacrifice Polyxena.¹⁰⁶⁴ In Ovid, on the other hand, the ghost of Achilles first compels the Greeks to fasten their ships at the Thracian side of the Hellespont and afterwards appears to them so as to demand the Trojan princess' sacrifice.¹⁰⁶⁵

This alteration of the narrative structure entails another divergence from the Euripidean source: whereas in *Hecuba* Achilles stops the Greek ships by his mere appearance and rebuking address, in the *Metamorphoses* the shade brings the fleet to a standstill by causing the winds to become adverse. Ovid may here be blending two distinct moments of the Euripidean play: the epiphany of Achilles at the beginning of the play and a later scene, in which Agamemnon states that the Greek fleet is prevented from sailing from Thrace because a god does not grant favorable breezes.¹⁰⁶⁶ This unidentified divine entity cannot be the ghost of Achilles, who has already been appeased by Polyxena's sacrifice and thus has no motive for causing windlessness. It has instead been suggested that the god responsible for the adverse weather conditions may be delaying the fleet from departing in order to afford Hecuba sufficient time for bringing to fulfilment her revenge scheme against Polymestor.¹⁰⁶⁷

An alternative, yet not mutually exclusive, explanation for Ovid's innovative introduction of the motif of the "unfavorable winds" in the epiphany of Achilles is that he wishes to depict the circumstances which occasion the sacrifice of Polyxena in such a fashion as to evoke the analogous

¹⁰⁶⁴ Hec. 35-39 πάντες δ' Ἀχαιοὶ ναῦς ἔχοντες ἥσυχοι / θάσσοις ἐπ' ἀκταῖς τῆσδε Θρηκίας χθονός. / ὁ Πηλέως γὰρ παῖς ὑπὲρ τύμβου φανείς / κατέσχε' Ἀχιλλεύς πᾶν στράτευμ' Ἑλληνικόν, / πρὸς οἶκον εὐθύνοντας ἐναλίαν πλάτην, 109-113 τύμβου δ' ἐπιβάς / οἶσθ' ὅτε χρυσέοις ἐφάνη σὺν ὅπλοις, / τὰς ποντοπόρους δ' ἔσχε σχεδίας / λαίφη προτόνοις ἐπερειδομένας, / τάδε θωύσσων [...].

¹⁰⁶⁵ Met. 13.439-442 *litore Threicio classem religarat* Atrides, / dum mare pacatum, dum uentus amicior esset. / hic subito, quantus cum uiueret esse solebat, / exit humo late rupta [...].

¹⁰⁶⁶ Hec. 898-901 ἔσται τάδ' οὔτω· καὶ γὰρ εἰ μὲν ἦν στρατῶ / πλοῦς, οὐκ ἂν εἶχον τήνδε σοὶ δοῦναι χάριν· / νῦν δ', οὐ γὰρ ἴησ' οὐρίους πνοὰς θεός, μένειν ἀνάγκη πλοῦν ὀρῶντας ἡσύχους.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Kovacs 1995, 481, n. 17.

setting of Iphigenia's sacrifice briefly recounted in the previous book.¹⁰⁶⁸ In particular, just as the wrathful Diana causes adverse winds which prevent the Greek fleet from sailing from Aulis against Troy and her anger can only be placated by the sacrifice of Agamemnon's daughter, likewise the infuriated Achilles precludes the Greek ships from returning home by means of unfavorable winds until they propitiate him through the sacrifice of Hecuba's daughter.¹⁰⁶⁹ Thus, in contrast to his Euripidean antecedent Ovid's Achilles holds the power to control the weather conditions, which elevates him to a quasi-divine level and renders his epiphany more wondrous and awe-inspiring.

Ovid stresses the rage of Achilles' ghost by means of an explicit Homeric allusion. The apparition is said to gaze threateningly towards the Greeks bearing the same countenance he had when he was about to attack Agamemnon.¹⁰⁷⁰ The Ovidian description echoes the conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon at the opening of the Iliad, during which the Myrmidon looks menacingly towards the Achaean commander and is prevented by the intervention of Athena from assaulting him with his sword.¹⁰⁷¹ In both situations Achilles' fury is triggered by his

¹⁰⁶⁸ Álvarez Morán and Iglesias Montiel 2006, 42-43.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Met. 12.24-29 permanet Aoniis Boreas uiolentus in undis / bellaque non transfert; et sunt qui parcere Troiae / Neptunum credant, quia moenia fecerat urbi. / at non Thestorides; nec enim nescitue tacetue / sanguine uirgineo placandam uirginis iram / esse deae, 13.439-440 litore Threicio classem religarat Atrides, / dum mare pacatum, dum uentus amicior esset, 448 placet Achilleos mactata Polyxena manes. Cf. Quintus of Smyrna, 14.216-222, where the ghost of Achilles addresses Neoptolemus as follows: ἀμφὶ δ' ἄρ' οἴδμα / κινήσω πόντοιο, βαλῶ δ' ἐπὶ χεῖματι χεῖμα, / ὄφρα καταφθινύθοντες ἀτασθαλίησιν ἐῆσι / μίμνωσ' ἐνθάδε πολλὸν ἐπὶ χρόνον, εἰσόκ' ἔμοιγε / λοιβὰς ἀμφιγέωνται ἐελδόμενοι μέγα νόστου· / αὐτὴν δ', εἴ κ' ἐθέλωσιν, ἐπὶν ἀπὸ θυμὸν ἔλονται, / κούρην ταρχύσασθαι ἀπόπροθεν οὔτι μεγαίρω". See Hopkinson 2000, v. 13.440: "There is perhaps a slight hint at the version of the story, parallel to that of the sacrifice of Iphigenia on the Greeks' outward journey (181-204n.), which had Achilles threaten to prevent the fleet from sailing unless Polyxena was killed. The Greek epic poet Quintus of Smyrna (third century AD) follows that version of events (14.216-27)."

¹⁰⁷⁰ Met. 13.442-444 [...] similisque minanti / temporis illius uultum referebat Achilles, / quo ferus iniusto petiit Agamemnona ferro.

¹⁰⁷¹ Il. 1.148 τὸν δ' ἄρ' ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν προσέφη πόδας ὠκὺς Ἀχιλλεύς, 188-192 ὡς φάτο· Πηλεΐωνι δ' ἄχος γένετ', ἐν δέ οἱ ἦτορ / στήθεσσι λασίοισι διάνδιχα μερμηρίξεν, / ἦ ὅ γε φάσανον ὄξυ ἐρυσσάμενος παρὰ μηροῦ / τοὺς μὲν ἀναστήσειεν, ὃ δ' Ἀτρεΐδην ἐναρίζοι, / ἦε γόλον παύσειεν ἐρητύσειέ τε θυμόν. / ἦος ὃ ταῦθ' ὄρμαινε κατὰ φρένα

perceived loss of honor on account of being deprived of a woman, Briseis and Polyxena respectively, whom he considers his honorary prize (γέρας). The Ovidian emphasis on Achilles' psychological state contrasts sharply with the hero's portrayal by the Euripidean chorus, who only describe his physical appearance, remarking that the ghost had donned a golden armor.¹⁰⁷² If we accept the reading iniusto [...] ferro (13.444) offered by the manuscripts then Ovid seems to completely invert the Homeric scene. In the Iliad Agamemnon is portrayed as unjust, since he deprives Achilles of his rightful γέρας, Briseis, and thus the Myrmidon's contemplated assault against Atreus' son is represented as justified revenge. In the Metamorphoses, however, the hero's attack is viewed as unjust through the lens of the ghost's current cruel and ruthless demand for the sacrifice of Polyxena.¹⁰⁷³ This reading is supported by the overall negative portrayal of Achilles by the external narrator, who characterizes him as savage and merciless (13.444 ferus, 449 immiti [...] umbrae).

Another significant Ovidian divergence from his tragic predecessor pertains to the location of Achilles' epiphany. Whereas in Euripides Achilles' shade manifests itself over his tomb (37 ὑπὲρ τύμβου φανεῖς, 93 ἦλθ' ὑπὲρ ἄκρας τύμβου κορυφᾶς, 109 τύμβου δ' ἐπιβάς) in the Metamorphoses he springs up from a wide-gaping chasm in the earth in the vicinity of his tomb (13.442 exit humo late rupta).¹⁰⁷⁴ One possible explanation of the Roman poet's innovation is

καὶ κατὰ θυμόν, / ἔλκετο δ' ἐκ κολεοῖο μέγα ξίφος, ἦλθε δ' Ἀθήνη / οὐρανόθεν· (See Bömer 1982, v. 13.444, Hopkinson 2000, vv. 13.443, and Álvarez Morán and Iglesias Montiel 2006, 43).

¹⁰⁷² Hec. 110 οἷσθ' ὅτε χρυσέοις ἐφάνη σὺν ὅπλοις.

¹⁰⁷³ If, on the other hand, we adopt Magnus' emendation iniustum [...] Agamemnona, then Ovid depicts Agamemnon as unjust in his strife with Achilles and therefore creates a sharp contrast between the justified wrath of Achilles in the Iliad and the ghost's pitiless anger, which can only be appeased by the shedding of innocent blood. This reading does not accord, however, with the negative characterization of Achilles in the Ovidian episode.

¹⁰⁷⁴ There is debate among scholars concerning the location of Achilles' tomb. Bömer (1982, vv. 13.441-443) suggests that in Hecuba the ghost of Achilles emerges from his tomb before the Greeks depart from Troy, on the grounds that according to the Homeric version the hero was buried at Sigeum on the Trojan coast (Od. 24.71ff.). He then argues that Ovid has transferred the ghost's epiphany to Thrace and since Achilles was not interred there he

that he wishes to create another affinity between Achilles and Diana, who earlier in the poem cleaves the earth in order to offer an escape route to her protégé Arethusa (transformed into a spring), so that she can elude the grasp of the lustful river Alpheus (5.639 *Delia rupit humum, caecisque ego mersa cavernis*). Thus, the hero's ghost shares with the goddess the ability not only to control the winds, but also to tear the earth asunder.

An alternate interpretation of Ovid's choice to alter the provenance of Achilles' epiphany is that he aims at obliquely evoking the rape of Proserpina in Book 5 of the *Metamorphoses*. Enraged by Cyane's attempt to obstruct his kidnapping of Proserpina Dis splits the earth open by smiting it with his scepter and drives his chariot down into Hades.¹⁰⁷⁵ Following the opposite direction the wrathful ghost of Achilles tears the earth apart and ascends into the world above in order to demand the sacrifice of Polyxena. Moreover, the ensuing scene in which the Greeks violently tear the Trojan princess from her mother's embrace may echo Proserpina's abduction by the lord of the Underworld.¹⁰⁷⁶ Finally, just as the kidnapped Proserpina becomes Dis' wife, likewise Polyxena is portrayed as "bride" of Achilles' ghost through the subtle conjugal

springs up from the earth instead of his tomb. He admits, however, that there is a conspicuous discrepancy in the Ovidian text, in that a few lines below Polyxena's sacrifice is said to take place before Achilles' tomb (*Met.* 13.449). Hopkinson (2000, v. 13.442, 452) follows Bömer's argument and attempts to resolve the spatial inconsistency by contending that the Greeks returned to the Troad in order to sacrifice Polyxena at the hero's tomb. This explanation is, however, unconvincing, since not only Ovid nowhere refers to a sea voyage back to Troy, but also such a journey would be impossible given the adverse winds caused by Achilles. Finally, Álvarez Morán and Iglesias Montiel (2006, 42-43) try to clarify the incongruity by suggesting that the ghost of Achilles crosses the Hellespont and emerges from the earth at the Thracian coast. This hypothesis, however, also fails to explain the fact that Polyxena's sacrifice unfolds at Achilles' tomb. Justina Gregory (1999, v. 37), on the other hand, convincingly claims that Euripides diverges from the Homeric tradition about Achilles' tomb since despite his vagueness regarding the exact site of the sepulcher it is essential that it should be located at the Thracian shore, where the action of the drama takes place. Thus, the most plausible conjecture is that Ovid follows the Euripidean model in placing Achilles' tomb in Thrace, but at the same time deviates from it by having the ghost arise from the ground presumably in close proximity to the burial mound.

¹⁰⁷⁵ *Met.* 5.420-424 *haud ultra tenuit Saturnius iram / terribilesque hortatus equos in gurgitis ima / contortum ualido
sceptrum regale lacerto / condidit; icta uiam tellus in Tartara fecit / et pronos currus medio cratere recepit.*

¹⁰⁷⁶ *Met.* 13.450 rapta sinu matris, 5.520-521 quod rapta, feremus, / dummodo reddat eam!, 7.249-250: *umbrarumque rogat rapta cum coniuge regem.*

connotations in the description of her sacrifice. For instance, during her lament over Polyxena's corpse Hecuba says that her tears and a handful of sand will be the only "dowry" of her daughter.¹⁰⁷⁷ Just like Achilles' association with Diana above, the implicit connection between Dis and the hero's ghost through their supernatural ability to split the earth apart serves to invest Achilles with divine-like qualities and thereby depicts his epiphany as more cosmic and terrifying than that of his Euripidean counterpart.

As we noted above Achilles' demand for the sacrifice of Polyxena as an honorary tribute to his tomb recalls the words of his tragic antecedent. On the other hand, the Ovidian hero's reprimand of the Greeks for their forgetfulness and ingratitude towards him for his valiant exploits has no precedent in the Greek play.¹⁰⁷⁸ One suggested source for Ovid's innovation is the Iliadic scene in which the ghost of Patroclus appears in Achilles' dream and after upbraiding the hero for forgetting him demands that he bury him as soon as possible, so that he may enter Hades.¹⁰⁷⁹ Apart from alluding to the Homeric intertext the Roman poet may also be reworking the elegiac topos of the abandoned heroine. In particular, Achilles' accusations against the departing Greeks are reminiscent of the querelae of Catullus' Ariadne, who censures Theseus for sailing away forgetful of his promise of fidelity and showing no gratitude to her for saving his life.¹⁰⁸⁰ The Ovidian hero's speech also recalls the complaints of another famous deserted

¹⁰⁷⁷ Met. 13.523-52 at, puto, funeribus dotabere regia uirgo, / condeturque tuum monumentis corpus auitis. / non haec est fortuna domus; tibi munera matris / contingent fletus peregrinaeque haustus harena.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Met. 13.445-446 'immemores' que 'mei disceditis' inquit, 'Achiui, / obrutaque est mecum uirtutis gratia nostrae'?

¹⁰⁷⁹ Il. 23.69-71 εὔδεις, αὐτὰρ ἐμῆιο λελασμένος ἔπλεν, / Ἀχιλλεῦ. οὐ μὲν μεν ζῶοντος ἀκήδεις, ἀλλὰ θανόντος; / θάπτε με ὅττι τάχιστα, πύλας Αἴδαο περήσω (See Papaioannou 2007, 235). Papaioannou also draws a structural parallel between the two texts, in that just as the Achilles' epiphany is followed by Polyxena's sacrifice, similarly after the appearance of Patroclus' ghost takes place his funeral during which Achilles sacrifices Trojan hostages as funeral offerings for his comrade (Il.23.62-108). She does acknowledge, however, that there is no exact correspondence, since the Homeric ghost makes no request for human sacrifice.

heroine, Virgil's Dido. While Aeneas is preparing to set sail for Italy, the Carthaginian Queen rebukes him for being unmindful of and ungrateful for the aid she has offered him.¹⁰⁸¹ It may thus be argued that the epic-tragic grandeur of Achilles is ironically undermined by means of gender reversal, in that the hero's ghost momentarily assumes the passive role of the forsaken heroine. He immediately "corrects", however, the elegiac commonplace by forbidding the Greeks to sail away (13.447 *ne facite!*) and forcing them to appease his wrath by sacrificing Polyxena at his tomb.

4.3 The sacrifice of Polyxena

In obedience to the ghost's command the Greeks immediately tear Polyxena away from her mother and lead her to Achilles' tomb for the sacrifice (Met. 13.449-452).¹⁰⁸² Ovid has radically compressed and simplified the action of the Greek play, where the Achaeans hold an assembly to debate the shade's demand and Ulysses is assigned the task of bringing Polyxena for sacrifice (Hec. 116-143). An entire episode is then devoted to an exchange between Hecuba, Odysseus, and Polyxena, in which the Trojan queen unsuccessfully attempts to supplicate the Ithacan to

¹⁰⁸⁰ C. 64.134-135 sicine *discedens* neglecto numine divum / *immemor* a, devota domum periuria portas?, 155-157 quod mare conceptum spumantibus expuit undis, / quae Syrtis, quae Scylla rapax, quae vasta Charybdis, / *talia qui reddis pro dulci praemia vita?*

¹⁰⁸¹ Aen. 4.537-539 Iliacas igitur classis atque ultima Teucrum / iussa sequar? quiane auxilio iuvat ante levatos / et bene *apud memores veteris* stat *gratia facti?* (See Bömer 1982, vv. 13.445-446).

¹⁰⁸² The external narrator's description of the snatching away of the maiden from her mother's embrace (Met. 13.450 *rapta sinu matris* quam iam prope sola fouebat) echoes the words of the Euripidean chorus, who announce to Hecuba that Odysseus is coming to drag her daughter away from her bosom (Hec. 141-143 ἤξει δ' Ὀδυσσεὺς ὅσον οὐκ ἤδη / πῶλον ἀφέλξων σὼν ἀπὸ μαστῶν / ἐκ τε γεραιᾶς χερὸς ὀρμήσων) (See Bömer 1982, 13.449-451 and Hopkinson 2000, v. 13.450). Curley (2013, 194) suggests that the Ovidian phrase *rapta sinu matris* may be read in an alternative way as indicating the resistance not of the mother, but of the daughter. He notes that such a characterization of Polyxena is not consistent with her portrayal in Euripides' play, where the heroine accepts her fate voluntarily (Hec. 342-350). He thus argues that Ovid may be alluding here to Iphigenia's mentality in Aeschylus' Agamemnon or in the first half of Euripides IA, where she expresses explicit unwillingness to die. Such a re-interpretation of the Ovidian passage is intriguing, but also highly conjectural, since it is not supported by any concrete textual evidence.

spare her daughter and Polyxena announces her decision to willingly become a sacrificial victim (Hec. 216-433). By drastically abridging the Euripidean scenes in a couple of lines the Roman poet not only lends his narrative a swift pace, but also focuses exclusively on the figure of Polyxena.¹⁰⁸³

The first glimpse of Polyxena offered by Ovid constitutes a “correction” of the Virgilian depiction of the Trojan princess.¹⁰⁸⁴ During her meeting with Aeneas at Dulichium Andromache exclaims that Polyxena was fortunate to perish at Achilles’ tomb and contrasts her sister’s blessed fate with her own miserable lot in becoming the slave wife of Pyrrhus.¹⁰⁸⁵ The external narrator of the *Metamorphoses* inverts Andromache’s words by characterizing the Trojan princess as an ill-fated sacrificial victim.¹⁰⁸⁶ At the same time two seminal features of Polyxena’s character are introduced, namely her exceptional valor and paradoxical nature as a woman with masculine spirit (Met. 13.451 *fortis [...] plus quam femina uirgo*). As we shall see below, the Ovidian heroine exceeds her Euripidean predecessor in terms of her assimilation of male traits, such as courage and the yearning for a heroic and glorious death.

Another defining characteristic of Polyxena is her self-awareness. When she is led to the tomb she does not lose her composure, but remains self-possessed and conscious of her noble lineage (Met. 13.453 *memor ipsa sui*).¹⁰⁸⁷ It has been suggested that on a metapoetic level the

¹⁰⁸³ The sharp focus on Polyxena is underlined by the use of passive verbs to describe the transportation of the maiden to Achilles’ tomb for the sacrifice (Met. 13.450 *rapta*, 452 *ducitur [...] fit hostia*, 454 *admota est*).

¹⁰⁸⁴ Hopkinson 2000, vv. 13.451-452.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Aen. 3.321-323 o felix una ante alios Priameia uirgo / hostilem ad tumulum Troiae sub moenibus altis / iussa mori!

¹⁰⁸⁶ Met. 13.451-452 *fortis et infelix et plus quam femina uirgo* / *ducitur ad tumulum* diroque fit hostia busto.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Hopkinson 2000, v. 13.453. The motif of Polyxena’s royal birth recurs in her speech, where she characterizes her blood as “noble” (Met. 13.457 ‘*utere iam dudum generoso sanguine*,’ dixit).

Ovidian heroine is also mindful of her literary past as a Euripidean protagonist of the tragic stage.¹⁰⁸⁸ This metatheatrical reading is corroborated by the Trojan princess' later self-address by means of her own name (Met. 13.460). Upon being brought to the altar Polyxena realizes that the sacrificial rites are being prepared for her, which implies her ignorance and surprise at the revelation.¹⁰⁸⁹ This psychological portrayal of the heroine constitutes a marked divergence from the Greek play, where the Trojan princess is fully aware of the impending sacrifice before she is led off stage by Odysseus (Hec. 435-437). Curley argues that Ovid may be alluding here to Iphigenia's attitude in Euripides' IA, where the innocent maiden is enticed to the Greek camp under the false promise of marriage with Achilles and is utterly shocked to find out that she will instead become a sacrificial victim for Artemis.¹⁰⁹⁰

Another Ovidian departure from his tragic model consists in the substantial curtailment of the role of Neoptolemus in Polyxena's sacrifice and the concomitant sharpening of the focus on the Trojan princess. In Euripides' play the Greek hero, who presides over the sacrificial rites, takes Polyxena by the hand and escorts her to the burial mound. He then conducts the ritual by making a libation, requesting ritual silence, and invoking his father's spirit. Finally, he unsheathes his sword and makes a signal to a group of Achaean youths to restrain the maiden, so as to prevent any escape attempt (Hec. 523-545). In the *Metamorphoses*, however, the sacrificial ritual is entirely omitted and Neoptolemus simply awaits Polyxena with drawn sword (Met.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Curley 2013, 109.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Met. 13.453-454 [...] *postquam crudelibus aris / admota est sensitque sibi fera sacra parari*. Curley (2013, 194-195) notes that the inclusion of an altar in Polyxena's sacrifice constitutes another deviation from Euripides' *Hecuba*, where the rites take place at Achilles' burial mound and there is no reference to an altar. He contends that the Roman poet evokes once again the sacrifice of Iphigenia, where the altar is a central component of the ritual in Aeschylus (Ag. ὑπερθε βωμοῦ), Euripides (IA 1555 πρὸς βωμὸν θεᾶς), and Ovid himself (Met. 12.31 ante aram stetit Iphigenia).

¹⁰⁹⁰ Curley 2013, 195.

13.455). Furthermore, Ovid's Polyxena evokes and reverses the words of the Euripidean Neoptolemus. The Greek hero summons Achilles' ghost to "drink" the maiden's pure blood honorifically addressing him as both Peleus' son and his own father.¹⁰⁹¹ The Ovidian heroine, on the contrary, claims that her free blood will indeed be a pleasing propitiatory offering, but she disdainfully feigns ignorance of the identity of the sacrifice's recipient and she instead identifies herself in a self-laudatory manner as king Priam's daughter.¹⁰⁹² Moreover, Euripides' Neoptolemus prays that Achilles be propitious to the Achaeans and grant them a safe homecoming, thus conferring on him quasi-divine status and powers.¹⁰⁹³ Polyxena, on the other hand, contemptuously asserts that the Greeks are not going to appease a deity with her sacrifice, but a mere mortal.¹⁰⁹⁴ Polyxena's statement may also be read as an implicit allusion to Iphigenia's sacrifice which was made to placate not a ghost, but the wrathful Artemis.¹⁰⁹⁵

In Euripides' play Polyxena delivers her speech before the Greek army, where she expresses her desire to die free (Hec. 546-552) and at the apex of her tragic performance she tears her robe down to her waist revealing her breasts to the assembly and offers Neoptolemus the option between striking her neck or bosom (Hec. 558-565).¹⁰⁹⁶ Euripides' description of the

¹⁰⁹¹ Hec. 534-538 ὃ δ' εἶπεν ὃ παῖ Πηλέως, πατὴρ δ' ἐμός, / δέξαι χάς μοι τάσδε κληητηρίου, / νεκρῶν ἀγωγούς· ἐλθὲ δ', ὡς πίης μέλαν / κόρης ἀκραφνὲς αἶμ' ὃ σοι δωρούμεθα / στρατός τε κάγω.

¹⁰⁹² Met. 13.467-469 *acceptior illi, / quisquis is est quem caede mea placare paratis / liber erit sanguis, 470 Priami uos filia regis / non captiva rogat.* Curley (2013, 197) suggests that Polyxena's pretended unawareness of who Achilles is evokes Iphigenia's genuine ignorance of the Greek hero's identity in IA, where she is unable to recognize the approaching Achilles, since she has never met him before in person (1338-1341).

¹⁰⁹³ Hec. 538-542 *πρευμενῆς δ' ἡμῖν γενοῦ / λῦσαί τε πρόμνας καὶ χαλινωτήρια / νεῶν δὸς ἡμῖν ἴπρευμενοῦς† τ' ἀπ' Ἰλίου / νόστου τυχόντας πάντας ἐς πάτραν μολεῖν.*

¹⁰⁹⁴ Met. 13.461 *haud per tale sacrum numen placabitis ullum, if genuine.*

¹⁰⁹⁵ Met. 12.27-29 at non Thestorides; nec enim nescitue tacetue / sanguine uirgineo placandam uirginis iram / esse deae.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Gregory (1999, vv. 560-561) summarizes the various interpretations of the symbolic meaning of the heroine's gesture of uncovering herself, which include Polyxena's establishment of herself as an object of male desire, the

nude Polyxena is characterized by erotic intensity, as is evidenced by the remarks of Talthybius, who praises the exceptional beauty of the Trojan princess' breasts and compares them to those of a statue.¹⁰⁹⁷ Yet, the tragic heroine, who is in absolute control of the exposure of her body, renders herself the object of the soldiers' erotic gaze for a very short period of time. Ovid, on the other hand, inverts the sequence of events by having his Polyxena uncover her breasts at the beginning of her soliloquy before the Greek soldiers (Met. 13.457-473). This structural reversal may on the surface seem anticlimactic, but in fact it highly eroticizes the tone of the narrative, since it essentially means that the Trojan princess has her breasts exposed for the entire duration of the scene, thereby affording gratuitous nudity to her male spectators.

The Ovidian description of the confrontation between Polyxena and Neoptolemus also surpasses its tragic model in terms of sensuality. The Greek hero in the *Metamorphoses* casts a penetrating gaze upon the Trojan princess described with the verb *figere* ('to pierce, transfix'), which has explicit erotic connotations.¹⁰⁹⁸ What is more, whereas Euripides' Polyxena simply asks Neoptolemus to strike her on her chest or neck, her Ovidian counterpart requests that the hero plunge his sword deep into her, a statement with clear sexual undertones, since *telum* is a standard euphemism for the *membrum virile*.¹⁰⁹⁹ Finally, in contrast to the tragic heroine who tears apart her robe, a dramatic gesture which prefigures the lethal violence that she is going to

declaration of her freedom through the controlled exposure of her body, and the ritual passage from a former self into a new identity by means of disrobing.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Hec. 560-561 *μαστούς τ' ἔδειξε στέρνα θ' ὡς ἀγάλματος / κάλλιστα* (See Gregory 1999, vv. 560-561).

¹⁰⁹⁸ *utque Neoptolemum stantem ferrumque tenentem / inque suo uidit figentem lumina uultu* (See Curley 2013, 197).

¹⁰⁹⁹ Met. 13.458-459 '*nulla mora est. at tu iugulo uel pectore telum / conde meo*'; Hec. 563-565 *ἰδοῦ, τόδ', εἰ μὲν στέρνον, ὃ νεανία, / παίειν προθυμῆ, παῖσον, εἰ δ' ὑπ' ἀρχένα / χρήζεις, πάρεστι λαίμωδος εὐτρεπῆς ὄδε*. For the sexual metaphor of *telum* see Adams 1982, 17, 19, 159.

suffer at the hands of Neoptolemus, Ovid's Polyxena simply reveals her breasts to the hero, like a woman to her lover.¹¹⁰⁰

Ovid's protagonist also outshines her tragic antecedent in terms of chastity thus underscoring Euripides' paradoxical portrayal of Polyxena as simultaneously chaste and highly sensual. When the Euripidean Polyxena notices Neoptolemus' signal to the Achaean youths to restrain her, so that she does not attempt to escape, she asks that nobody touch her, since she is resolved to die willingly.¹¹⁰¹ In the *Metamorphoses* there is no suggestion of an attempted immobilization of the Trojan princess, yet she forbids the Greek soldiers to touch her body out of a desire to protect her virginity from male contact.¹¹⁰² Moreover, the dying heroine's gesture of covering her private parts as she is falling down echoes the analogous behavior of her Euripidean predecessor.¹¹⁰³ Whereas, however, Talthybius simply comments that Polyxena fell in a seemly manner, the external narrator of the *Metamorphoses* praises the heroine's preservation of her honor and chaste modesty.¹¹⁰⁴

Ovid's Polyxena evokes her Euripidean model in her passionate rejection of a life of slavery¹¹⁰⁵ on account of her social status as a Trojan princess as well as in her resulting desire to

¹¹⁰⁰ Met. 13.459 (*iugulumque simul pectusque retexit*); Hec. 558-560 λαβοῦσα πέπλους ἐξ ἄκρας ἐπωμίδος / ἔρρηξε λαγόνας ἐς μέσας παρ' ὀμφαλὸν / μαστούς τ' ἔδειξε [...]

¹¹⁰¹ Hec. 553-554 ἐκοῦσα θνήσκω· μή τις ἀνηται χροῶς / τοῦμοῦ· παρέξω γὰρ δέρηγ ἐυκαρδίως.

¹¹⁰² Met. 466-467 *ite procul, si iusta peto, tactuque uiriles / uirgineo remouete manus.*

¹¹⁰³ Bömer, vv. 13.479-80.

¹¹⁰⁴ Hec. 568-570 ἡ δὲ καὶ θνήσκουσ' ὄμως / πολλὴν πρόνοιαν εἶχεν εὐσγήμων πεσεῖν, / κρύπτουσ' ἃ κρύπτειν ὄμματ' ἀρσένων χρεῶν; Met. 13.479-480 *tum quoque cura fuit partes uelare tegendas, / cum caderet, castique decus seruare pudoris.*

¹¹⁰⁵ Met. 13.460 *scilicet haud ulli seruire Polyxena ferrem*; Hec. 357-367 νῦν δ' εἰμὶ δούλη. πρῶτα μὲν με τοῦνομα / θανεῖν ἐρᾶν τίθησιν οὐκ εἰωθὸς ὄν· / ἔπειτ' ἴσως ἂν δεσποτῶν ὤμων φρένας / τύχοιμ' ἂν, ὅστις ἀργύρου μ' ὠνήσεται, / τὴν Ἑκτορός τε χιτῶν πολλῶν κάσιν, / προσθεὶς δ' ἀνάγκην σιτοποιῶν ἐν δόμοις / σάειν τε δῶμα κερκίσιν τ' ἐφρεσάται / λυπρὰν ἄγουσαν ἡμέραν μ' ἀναγκάσει· / λέχη δὲ τὰμὰ δούλος ὠνητός ποθεν / χρανεῖ, τυράννων πρόσθεν ἡζιωμένα. / οὐ δῆτ' [...]. (See Bömer 1982, vv. 13.457-459).

die as a free woman.¹¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, Polyxena's complaint in the *Metamorphoses* that her mother constitutes an obstacle to her death wish echoes her tragic counterpart's exhortation to Hecuba not to oppose her decision to perish.¹¹⁰⁷ The Ovidian heroine, however, surpasses her tragic antecedent in her eagerness for death. This is evident at the very opening of her speech, where she impatiently asks Neoptolemus to spill her blood without delay.¹¹⁰⁸ What is more, although Euripides' Polyxena longs for death, she nevertheless joins Hecuba in a lament for her impending doom.¹¹⁰⁹ Her Ovidian counterpart, on the other hand, not only paradoxically protests that her mother is diminishing her enjoyment of death, but also rhetorically claims that she ought to mourn her own life rather than her daughter's demise.¹¹¹⁰

Ovid's most striking divergence from his tragic model can be found in the denouement of Polyxena's speech. The Trojan princess recalls the ransoming of Hector's corpse and requests that her own body be returned to Hecuba without ransom (*Met.* 13.469-473).¹¹¹¹ This statement has no parallel in the Euripidean play and engages instead in dialogue with epic intertexts, both Homeric and Virgilian. First of all, the Ovidian scene constitutes an innovative reworking of the

¹¹⁰⁶ *Met.* 13.465-467 *uos modo, ne Stygios adeam non libera manes, / ite procul, si iusta peto, tactuque uiriles / uirgineo remouete manusi, 470-471 (Priami uos filia regis, / non captiua rogat); Hec.* 550-552 ἐλευθέραν δέ μ', ὡς ἐλευθέρα θάνω, / πρὸς θεῶν, μεθέντες κτείναντ'· ἐν νεκροῖσι γὰρ / δούλη κεκληῖσθαι βασιλῆος οὔσ' αἰσχύνομαι (See Bömer 1982, vv. 13.465-467; Hopkinson 2000, v. 13.465).

¹¹⁰⁷ *Met.* 13.462-463 *mors tantum uellem matrem mea fallere posset; / mater obest [...]; Hec.* 372-374 μητέρα, σὺ δ' ἡμῖν μηδὲν ἐμποδῶν γένη λέγουσα μηδὲ δρῶσα, συμβούλου δέ μοι / θανεῖν πρὶν αἰσχροῦν μὴ κατ' ἀξίαν τυχεῖν.

¹¹⁰⁸ *Met.* 13.457-458 *'utere iamdudum generoso sanguine,' dixit; / 'nulla mora est'.*

¹¹⁰⁹ *Hec.* 432-434 κόμιζ' Ὀδυσσεῦ μ' ἀμφιθεῖς κάρη πέπλους / ὡς πρὶν σφαγῆναί γ' ἐκτέτηκα καρδίαν / θρήνοισι μητρὸς τήνδε τ' ἐκτίκω γόοις.

¹¹¹⁰ *Met.* 13.462-463 *mater obest minuitque necis mihi gaudia, quamuis / non mea mors illi, uerum sua uita gemenda est.*

¹¹¹¹ *Met.* 13.469-473 *'si quos tamen ultima nostri / uerba mouent oris (Priami uos filia regis, / non captiua rogat), genetrici corpus inemptum / reddite, neue auro redimat ius triste sepulcri, / sed lacrimis; tum, cum poterat, redimebat et auro'*

ransoming of Hector in Iliad 24.¹¹¹² Both Hector and Polyxena are victims of Achilles' rage, but whereas the former is slain by the Greek hero at the field of battle, the latter is sacrificed by the Greeks on Achilles' tomb in obedience to the demand of his ghost. There is also complete gender reversal, since in the Iliad king Priam recovers from Achilles the corpse of his son, while in the *Metamorphoses* Polyxena asks for the return of her body to her mother. Another distinguishing difference between the two situations is that in contrast to the Homeric scene, where the Trojan king paid handsome ransom to Achilles consisting of gold and various gifts, the Ovidian heroine makes the pathetic request that her mother be allowed to redeem her body not with ransom, but with her own tears.

The specific wording of Polyxena's request evokes another Homeric episode, namely the dying Hector's appeal to Achilles to return his body to his parents in exchange for rich ransom.¹¹¹³ Papaioannou argues that Polyxena appropriates here the role of her heroic brother, which reflects her masculinization and is in keeping with her paradoxical portrayal throughout the episode as a virile woman (13.451 plus quam femina uirgo).¹¹¹⁴ What has not been observed, however, is that the Trojan princess actually emulates Hector and could be even said to outdo him in heroic status in many ways. To begin with, Hector initially displays cowardice in his duel with Achilles, since he turns to flight upon seeing the terrifying hero advancing against him and has to be lured to a confrontation by Athena's trickery (Il. 22.131-246). Polyxena, on the contrary, is intrepid throughout the Ovidian narrative and valiantly embraces her fate as a

¹¹¹² Papaioannou 2007, 241.

¹¹¹³ Il. 22.337-343 τὸν δ' ὀλιγοδρανέων προσέφη κορυθαίολος Ἴκτωρ· / “λίσσομ’ ὑπὲρ ψυχῆς καὶ γούνων σῶν τε τοκῆων, / μὴ με ἔα παρὰ νηυσὶ κύνας καταδάσσει Ἀχαιῶν, / ἀλλὰ σὺ μὲν χαλκὸν τε ἄλις χρυσόν τε δέδεξο, / δῶρα τά τοι δώσουσι πατὴρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ, / σῶμα δὲ οἴκαδ’ ἐμὸν δόμηναι πάντιν, ὄφρα πυρός με / Τρῶες καὶ Τρώων ἄλοχοι λελάχῳσι θανόντα.”

¹¹¹⁴ Papaioannou 2007, 241-242.

sacrificial victim. In addition, after his defeat the dying Hector makes a supplication to Achilles for the return of his body (Il. 22.337-343), but the enraged hero wishing to further avenge the death of Patroclus not only ruthlessly dismisses any offer of ransom, but also threatens that the Trojan hero will become a feast for dogs and birds instead of receiving proper burial (Il. 22.344-354) and proceeds to defile his enemy's body by dragging it behind his chariot (Il. 22.395-404). Ovid's heroine, on the other hand, makes a proud request for the return of her body to her mother, which brings tears to the Greeks and prompts them to immediately send her back to Hecuba for burial. Finally, it is only after the intervention of Zeus himself, the supplication by Priam, and the payment of abundant ransom that the Greek hero finally relents and gives back Hector's corpse for burial (Il. 24.64-590). In sharp contrast the Trojan princess secures the return of her body to Hecuba without any ransom.

Below I will contend that apart from the Homeric source the Ovidian passage also converses intertextually with Virgil's epic. In particular, Polyxena's recollection of the ransoming of Hector echoes Priam's analogous reminiscence of the retrieval of his son's corpse from Achilles in Aeneid 2.¹¹¹⁵ Given the self-reflexive connotations of memory in Latin poetry¹¹¹⁶ the Ovidian heroine's recollection can be read as a metapoetic allusion to the Aeneid passage. Therefore, Ovid seems to evoke the Iliad by means of double allusion, in that his Polyxena remembers the words of Virgil's Priam, who recalls in turn the Trojan king's encounter with Achilles in Homer. The Roman poet also signals the evocation of the Virgilian model by means of an intertextual marker: the Trojan princess assumes the part of her father by defining herself as "the daughter of king Priam" (13.470 Priami [...] filia regis). The function of

¹¹¹⁵ Aen. 2.540-543 at non ille, satum quo te mentiris, Achilles / talis in hoste fuit Priamo; sed iura fidemque / supplicis erubuit corpusque exsanguie sepulcro / reddidit Hectoreum meque in mea regna remisit.'

¹¹¹⁶ Hinds 1998, 1-5.

Polyxena's reminiscence, however, is the exact opposite of that of Virgil's Priam. The Trojan king contrasts Achilles' respectful attitude towards him as a suppliant by returning Hector's body for burial with the present impiety of his son Pyrrhus, who has murdered his son Polites before his very eyes (Aen. 2.535-539). Polyxena, on the other hand, juxtaposes Priam's recovery of Hector by means of ransom to the request for the return of her own body to her mother without ransom, which is granted by the Greeks. Hence, whereas Priam's memory aims at showing the depravity of Pyrrhus in comparison to his father, Polyxena's recollection demonstrates Neoptolemus' moral superiority to Achilles, since unlike his father he sends back the heroine's body for burial without requiring any ransom.

Polyxena's highly rhetorical speech has an immediate and powerful impact on the Greek assembly. The soldiers are stirred to pity and burst into tears, and the narrator once more accentuates the princess' valor by remarking that unlike them she restrained herself from weeping (Met. 13.474-475 *dixerat. at populus lacrimas, quas illa tenebat, / non tenet*). Ovid's description of the Greek response to the Trojan princess' words contrasts sharply with the corresponding scene in the Euripidean play, where the Achaeans voice loud approval of her speech (Hec. 553 *λαοὶ δ' ἐπερρόθησαν*). The Roman poet's goal is probably to amplify the tragic pathos of the scene by extending to the entire Greek army the reaction of the Euripidean Talthybius, who cried both during Polyxena's sacrifice and while later recounting the event to Hecuba.¹¹¹⁷ Moreover, Curley has suggested that the Ovidian departure from the tragic model constitutes yet another evocation of the sacrifice of Iphigenia in the previous book, where the

¹¹¹⁷ Hec. 13.518-520 *διπλᾶ με χρήσεις δάκρυα κερδᾶναι, γύνοι, / σῆς παιδὸς οἰκτῶ· νῦν τε γὰρ λέγων κακὰ / τέγξω τόδ' ὄμμα πρὸς τάφῳ θ' ὄτ' ὄλλυτο.*

officiants are depicted as weeping profusely (Met 12.31 flentibus ante aram stetit Iphigenia ministris).¹¹¹⁸

The concluding description of Polyxena's death engages simultaneously with Euripidean, Virgilian, and Catullan intertexts. First of all, Ovid deviates from his tragic predecessor in his portrayal of Neoptolemus. In the Euripidean play the Greek hero is ambivalent about sacrificing Polyxena, since on the one hand he is eager to appease his father's ghost, but on the other hand he is out of pity reluctant to kill her (Hec. 566 ὁ δ' οὐ θέλων τε καὶ θέλων οἴκτω κόρης). The Roman poet intensifies the pathos of the scene by depicting Neoptolemus as weeping and being entirely unwilling to slay the Trojan princess (Met. 13.475 ipse etiam flens inuitusque sacerdos).¹¹¹⁹ Furthermore, Ovid markedly departs from his Greek source in the manner of his depiction of Polyxena's death. In both situations Neoptolemus is given the option by the heroine to strike either at her neck or her breast. Euripides' hero chooses to cut Polyxena's throat and let her blood flow on Achilles' burial mound (Hec. 567-568 τέμνει σιδήρῳ πνεύματος διαρροάς / κρουνοὶ δ' ἐχώρουν). This mode of killing indicates that Polyxena dies as a sacrificial victim.

The Ovidian Neoptolemus, on the other hand, opts for plunging his sword into Polyxena's breast, a means of killing which signifies that she is slain like a male warrior in the field of battle and thus stresses her overall depiction as a masculine woman (Met. 13.476 praebita coniecto rupit praecordia ferro).¹¹²⁰ Polyxena's paradoxical death as a man in combat, even though she is a woman, is emphasized later rhetorically by Hecuba in her lament for her daughter.¹¹²¹ What is more, Ovid represents his Polyxena as surpassing her tragic counterpart in

¹¹¹⁸ Curley 2013, 198-199.

¹¹¹⁹ Hopkinson 2000, v. 13.475.

¹¹²⁰ Curley 2013, 111.

¹¹²¹ Met. 13.497-498 at te, quia femina, rebar / a ferro tutam; cecidisti et femina ferro.

valor and fearlessness by yet another subtle inversion of the sequence of actions. Whereas the Euripidean heroine kneels before Neoptolemus in readiness for his death-dealing blow, her Ovidian counterpart bends her knee only after she is smitten by the Greek hero and retains a fearless countenance to the very end.¹¹²² In addition, the Ovidian description “corrects” Catullus’ account of Polyxena’s sacrifice in Carmen 64, where she is likewise depicted as sinking to the ground with fainting knees.¹¹²³ Whereas, however, Catullus’ heroine is compared to a passive sacrificial victim, her Ovidian counterpart dies as a courageous warrior.

The scene of Polyxena’s sacrifice may also be intended to evoke and reverse the slaughter of Priam by Pyrrhus in Aeneid 2. As we saw above, the Trojan princess’ recollection of the ransoming of Hector alludes to the similar reminiscence of Priam. While Polyxena’s speech, however, has a profound emotional effect on Neoptolemus causing him to shed tears and filling him with compunctions about killing her, his Virgilian counterpart is unmoved by Priam’s reproachful words and proceeds to ruthlessly butcher him. Moreover, unlike the Ovidian Neoptolemus who slays Polyxena as a valiant soldier by driving his sword through her breast, Virgil’s Pyrrhus savagely drags Priam to Zeus’ altar, seizes him by the hair, and plunges his blade in the old man’s flank up to the hilt (Aen. 2.550-553). Another sharp contrast between the two figures concerns their motivation for the murder. Ovid’s hero piously offers Polyxena as a sacrificial victim to the ghost of Achilles in order to appease his wrath and is the officiating priest of the sacrifice (Met. 13.745 sacerdos). His Virgilian predecessor, on the other hand, slaughters Priam sacrilegiously at the altar of Zeus Herkeios and sarcastically says to the Trojan

¹¹²² Hec. 561-562 [...] καθεῖσα πρὸς γαῖαν γόνυ / ἔλεξε πάντων τλημονέστατον λόγον; Met. 13.477-478 illa super terram defecto poplite labens / pertulit intrepidus ad fata nouissima uultus.

¹¹²³ C. 64.369-370 quae, velut ancipiti succumbens victima ferro,/ proiciet truncum submitto poplite corpus. Hopkinson (2000, v. 13.477) notes the Catullan allusion, but does not analyze its meaning.

king that he will send him as a messenger to Achilles in order to report to him his son's impious deeds and moral degeneracy (Aen. 2.547-549). Finally, the two heroes markedly diverge in the treatment of their victim's body. Whereas the Ovidian Neoptolemus grants Polyxena's request and returns her corpse to the Trojan women for burial (Met. 13.481), Virgil's Pyrrhus decapitates the Trojan king and leaves his headless body unburied on the shore (Aen. 557-558). Hence, Ovid by reworking his Euripidean model, paints the picture of a more humanized and pious Neoptolemus, who contrasts starkly with the pitiless, ferocious, and sacrilegious Pyrrhus of Virgil. The affinity between the death scenes of Priam and Polyxena is also corroborated by an intratextual signpost. The epigrammatic account of the Trojan king's demise in the Ovidian narrative of the sack of Troy earlier in Book 13 is described in such a way as to evoke the princess' sacrifice. In particular, the narrator recounts that Jupiter's altar drank the scanty blood of aged Priam, an image which is reminiscent of the Euripidean Neoptolemus' invocation of his father's ghost to drink Polyxena's blood and at the same time implicitly foreshadows the Ovidian Polyxena's claim that her free blood will be pleasing to Achilles' shade.¹¹²⁴

4.4 The lament of Hecuba

After Polyxena is sacrificed her body is returned to the Trojan women for burial in adherence to her request as Ovid avails himself of the opportunity to paint a masterful portrait of Hecuba as the bereft mother par excellence. His description of the Trojan queen's dirge, however, diverges substantially from that of Euripides and he emulates his tragic predecessor by surpassing him in

¹¹²⁴ Met. 13.48-410 *Ilion ardebat, neque adhuc consederat ignis, / exiguumque senis Priami Iouis ara cruorem / conbiberat [...]; Hec. 536-538 *ἔλθε δ', ὡς πίνης μέλαν / κόρης ἀκραϊφνὲς αἷμι' ὃ σοι δωρούμε / στρατός τε κἀγώ; Met. 13.467-469 *acceptior illi, / quisquis is est quem caede mea placare paratis, / liber erit sanguis.***

terms of the pathos of his heroine. To begin with, Hecuba in the Greek play grieves for Polyxena while she is still alive engaging in a shared lament with her daughter before she is led away by Odysseus and her corpse is never brought back onstage (Hec. 415-440). The Roman poet, however, heightens Hecuba's tragic suffering through an inversion of the sequence of events, in that the Trojan queen mourns over her daughter's body after her sacrifice (Met. 13.488-532).¹¹²⁵

Moreover, upon receiving news of Polyxena's sacrifice Euripides' Hecuba claims that her daughter's noble death has diminished her grief.¹¹²⁶ In sharp contrast her Ovidian counterpart is inconsolable for her loss and proceeds to lament her daughter in an excessive and unbridled manner.¹¹²⁷ Hecuba's mourning gestures are in fact highly reminiscent of Thisbe's extreme lament upon recognizing the corpse of Pyramus earlier in the poem.¹¹²⁸ More specifically, both heroines embrace the body of their dead beloved, shed tears on their wounds, kiss them passionately, strike themselves (Hecuba her chest and Thisbe her arms), and tear out their hair.¹¹²⁹ The evocation of the heart-rending story of Pyramus and Thisbe serves to accentuate the tragic tone of Hecuba's dirge. At the same time Hecuba's dirge for Polyxena outdoes the queen's earlier lament for Hector and her other sons at Troy, where she was depicted as clinging to their

¹¹²⁵ Curley 2013, 112.

¹¹²⁶ Hec. 590-592 οὐκ ἂν δυναίμην ἐξαλείψασθαι φρενός· / τὸ δ' αὖ λίαν παρεῖλες ἀγγελθεῖσά μοι / γενναῖος.

¹¹²⁷ Curley 2013, 154-155.

¹¹²⁸ Hopkinson 2000, v. 13.490.

¹¹²⁹ Met. 13.488-493 quae corpus complexa animae tam fortis inane, / quas totiens patriae dederat natisque uiroque / huic quoque dat lacrimas; lacrimas in uulnera fundit / osculaue ore tegit consuetaque pectora plangit / canitiemque suam concreto in sanguine uerrens / plura quidem, sed et haec laniato pectore dixit, 534 albentes lacerata comas [...]; Met. 4.137-141 sed postquam remorata suos cognouit amores, / percutit indignos claro plangore lacertos / et laniata comas amplexaque corpus amatum / uulnera suppleuit lacrimis fletumque cruori / miscuit et gelidis in uultibus oscula figens.

tombs, kissing their bones, and carrying away Hector's ashes in her bosom.¹¹³⁰ Finally, the Ovidian heroine's act of sweeping with her hair the coagulated blood of her daughter may be intended to exceed in wretchedness the pitiful image of her Euripidean counterpart who lies on the ground and befouls her hair with dust.¹¹³¹

The Roman poet also outstrips in pathos his tragic model in his description of Polyxena's funeral. In the *Hecuba* the Greeks and Trojan women conduct the Trojan princess' funeral rites together. The Achaeans begin the obsequies by strewing leaves upon her body and erecting a pyre (*Hec.* 571-575) and Hecuba states that she is going to wash, dress, adorn, and lay out for burial her daughter's body (*Hec.* 609-615). Finally, Hecuba exits the stage at the end of the play, in order to cremate and inter the bodies of Polyxena and Polydorus (*Hec.* 894-897, 1287-1288). In the *Metamorphoses*, on the other hand, the Trojan women receive immediately Polyxena's body and thus it can be assumed that they will perform the funeral on their own (*Met.* 13.481-483). After her lament Hecuba goes to the beach to draw water for cleansing her daughter's body (*Met.* 13.531-535), but the discovery of Polydorus' corpse leads the narrative in a different direction, namely to the Trojan queen's revenge on Polymestor and her canine metamorphosis. Thus, she never actually buries her children herself.

Ovid's most striking departure from his Euripidean source pertains to Hecuba's funeral offerings for Polyxena. In both situations the Trojan queen grieves for the fact that being a slave she cannot provide her daughter with a funeral worthy of her noble spirit and regal status.¹¹³² The

¹¹³⁰ *Met.* 13.422-426 *ultima conscendit classem (miserabile uisu) / in mediis Hecabe natorum inuenta sepulcris; / prensantem tumulos atque ossibus oscula dantem / Dulichiae traxere manus. tamen unius hausit / inque sinu cineres secum tulit Hectoris haustos* (See Curley 2013, 155).

¹¹³¹ *Met.* 13.492 *canitiemque suam concreto in sanguine uerrens; Hec.* 495-496 *αὐτὴ δὲ δούλη γραῦς ἄπαις ἐπὶ χθονὶ / κεῖται, κόνει φύρουσα δύστηνον κάρα* (See Bömer 1982, v. 13.492-493, Hopkinson 2000, v. 13.492).

¹¹³² *Met.* 13.523-525 *at, puto, funeribus dotabere regia uirgo, / condeturque tuum monumentis corpus auitis. / non haec est fortuna domus; Hec.* 612-614 *νύμωγν τ' ἄνυμφον παρθένον τ' ἀπάρθενον, / λούσω προθῶμαί θ'—ὡς μὲν*

funeral gifts offered by the Ovidian Hecuba, however, are of substantially lesser value than those of his Euripidean predecessor. In the Greek play the Greeks afford the Trojan princess garments and ornaments as a tribute to her valor and nobility, while Hecuba asks the Trojan women to bring adornments purloined from their masters.¹¹³³ In the Ovidian narrative, on the other hand, Hecuba pathetically asserts that the only “gifts” she can give her daughter are her tears and a handful of sand from the Thracian shore.¹¹³⁴ Therefore, whereas the Euripidean Polyxena receives a modest, yet decent funeral consisting of cremation, burial of her remains, and offering of adornments, her Ovidian counterpart is afforded only symbolic burial signified by the throwing of some sand on her corpse.

The Ovidian Hecuba’s meager funeral offerings to her daughter are also reminiscent of her gifts to the dead Hector, namely tears and a lock of hair, at the aftermath of the fall of Troy earlier in the book.¹¹³⁵ Polyxena’s funeral, however, surpasses in tragic pathos that of her brother, since whereas the Trojan hero was buried in a glorious tomb next to his brothers, his sister’s fate is not to be interred in her ancestral sepulchers, but on a foreign shore.¹¹³⁶ Finally, the Ovidian heroine’s wretched funeral rites may be intended to echo and invert the Trojans’ sumptuous obsequies for Polydorus in Aeneid 3, which involve the raising of a high mound, the

ἀξία, πόθεν; / οὐκ ἄν δυνάμην· ὡς δ’ ἔχω (τί γὰρ πάθω;) (See Venini 1952, 370). Moreover, both heroines represent Polyxena as a “bride” of Hades. The Euripidean Hecuba refers to the ritual washing of her daughters’ body, which was a prominent element of both funerals and weddings (See Gregory 1999, v. 611) and characterizes Polyxena by means of an oxymoron as a “bride, who is no bride” and a “virgin, who is no virgin”. Her Ovidian counterpart also uses nuptial imagery in describing her daughter’s funeral rites as her “dowry”.

¹¹³³ Hec. 575-580 [...] ὁ δ’ οὐ φέρων / πρὸς τοῦ φέροντος τοιάδ’ ἤκουεν κακά· / ἔστηκας, ὦ κάκιστε, τῇ νεάνιδι / οὐ πέπλον οὐδὲ κόσμον ἐν χεροῖν ἔχων; / οὐκ εἶ τι δώσων τῇ περισσ’ εὐκαρδίῳ / ψυχὴν τ’ ἀρίστη; 615-618 κόσμον γ’ ἀγείρας’ αἰχμαλωτῶν πάρα, / αἶ μοι παρέδρου τῶνδ’ ἔσω σκηνομάτων / ναίουσιν, εἴ τις τοὺς νεωστὶ δεσπότης / λαθοῦσ’ ἔχει τι κλέμμα τῶν αὐτῆς δόμων.

¹¹³⁴ Met. 13.525-526 tibi munera matris / contingent fletus peregrinaeque haustus harenae.

¹¹³⁵ Met. 13.427-428 Hectoris in tumulo canum de uertice crinem, / inferias inopes, crinem lacrimasque reliquit.

¹¹³⁶ Met. 13.524-525 condeturque tuum monumentis corpus auitis. / non haec est fortuna domus.

building of an altar, the pouring of libations of milk and blood, and the second burial of the Trojan prince.¹¹³⁷ In contrast, however, to the Ovidian Hecuba's extravagant dirge consisting of passionate mourning gestures and a long soliloquy, the Virgilian funeral lacks any tragic pathos, since the only expressions of grief are the Trojan women's loosening of their hair and the bidding of a last farewell to the deceased.

The narrator introduces Hecuba's monologue (Met. 494-532) with the parenthetical comment that what he will report is merely an excerpt of her full speech.¹¹³⁸ This remark has been read as a hint of the Trojan queen's excessive lament for her daughter, in the sense that the narrator has omitted the redundant parts of her soliloquy.¹¹³⁹ An alternative, but not mutually exclusive, interpretation of the authorial note is that it constitutes a metapoetic allusion to the Euripidean Hecuba's speech upon receiving news of her daughter's sacrifice (Hec. 585-628). The narrator claims in effect that he has excluded from his version of Hecuba's dirge the words of her Euripidean counterpart. Indeed, upon a close scrutiny of the Ovidian heroine's speech we notice that it is highly original and deviates markedly from that of her tragic antecedent.¹¹⁴⁰ On the one hand, Ovid leaves out central aspects of the Euripidean Hecuba's soliloquy, such as her gnomic thoughts on the constancy of human nature (Hec. 592-602) and the ephemerality of mortal happiness (Hec. 623-628). On the other hand, he inserts novel features, such as the link between Polyxena's death and that of her brothers (Met. 13.496-500). Finally, the Euripidean elements that

¹¹³⁷ Aen. 3.62-68 ergo instauramus Polydoro funus, et ingens / aggeritur tumulo tellus; stant Manibus arae, / caeruleis maestae vittis atraque cupresso, / et circum Iliades crinem de more solutae; / inferimus tepido spumantia cymbia lacte / sanguinis et sacri pateras, animamque sepulcro / condimus et magna supremum voce ciemus.

¹¹³⁸ Met. 13.493 plura quidem, sed et haec laniato pectore dixit.

¹¹³⁹ Curley 2013, 155.

¹¹⁴⁰ Hopkinson 2000, v. 13.494.

the Roman poet does assimilate, such as Hecuba's peripeteia (Hec. 620-623, 809-811), are radically transformed and given new semantic content.

The opening of Hecuba's lament contains an explicit allusion to the speech of her tragic predecessor, in that both begin with an apostrophe to their dead daughter (Met. 13.494 *nata*; Hec. 585 ὦ θύγατερ).¹¹⁴¹ This overt echo, however, serves to draw the reader's attention to the fundamental differences between the introductory words of the two heroines. In particular, while the Euripidean Hecuba laments that she is beset by woes and observes that a new sorrow always follows closely upon the previous one, her Ovidian counterpart pathetically asserts that Polyxena's death is her final source of grief, since she does not have anything else to lose.¹¹⁴² The statement of Ovid's heroine is designed to underscore the tragic irony of her situation, since after her dirge for her daughter she will experience more agony triggered by the discovery of Polydorus' corpse (Met. 13.538).¹¹⁴³ Moreover, the tragic Hecuba's metaphorical viewing of her many miseries is converted into the Ovidian heroine's literal gaze on the wounds of her daughter's corpse.¹¹⁴⁴

The next section of Hecuba's speech, in which she depicts Polyxena as the last in a long line of dead offspring slain by Achilles (Met. 13.499-505), has no parallel in the Greek play. Whereas the Greek hero killed Hecuba's sons on the field of battle, the death of Polyxena is paradoxical in that she has been murdered by a dead Achilles. In this context the Trojan queen calls to mind Achilles' own demise claiming that after he was slain by Paris she thought that her

¹¹⁴¹ Venini 1952, 370.

¹¹⁴² Met. 13.494 *nata, tuae (quid enim superest?) dolor ultime matris*; Hec. 585-588 ὦ θύγατερ, οὐκ οἶδ' εἰς ὃ τι βλέψω κακῶν, / πολλῶν παρόντων· ἦν γὰρ ἄψωμαί τινος, / τάδ' οὐκ ἔα με, παρακαλεῖ δ' ἐκείθεν αὖ / λύπη τις ἄλλη διάδοχος κακῶν κακοῖς.

¹¹⁴³ Hopkinson 2000, v. 13.494.

¹¹⁴⁴ Met. 13.495 *nata, iaces, uideoque tuum, mea uulnera, uulnus*; Hec. 585-586 οὐκ οἶδ' εἰς ὃ τι βλέψω κακῶν, / πολλῶν παρόντων.

children were finally safe from his murderous wrath, but her hopes were bitterly frustrated, since he continued to persecute her family as a ghost by demanding her daughter's sacrifice.¹¹⁴⁵ The Ovidian heroine evokes, but at the same time re-contextualizes and repurposes the words of her tragic model, who identifies herself as the mother of Paris, the slayer of Achilles, in order to argue that she is indirectly guilty of the Greek hero's demise and thus she should be sacrificed in place of her innocent daughter.¹¹⁴⁶ Thus, unlike the Euripidean Hecuba, who refers to the death of Achilles at the hands of Paris as a self-incrimination, so as to save her daughter's life, her Ovidian counterpart mentions the same event as a rebuke against Achilles, who rages against her family even from beyond the grave.

A central theme of Hecuba's soliloquy is the tragic topos of peripeteia, namely the reversal of her fortune from prosperity to disaster. Ovid appropriates this motif from Euripides, but at the same time reworks it in an innovative manner. Upon receiving Polyxena's body the Ovidian Trojan women enumerate all the dead offspring of Priam ending with the sacrificed Trojan princess (Met. 13.481-483). They quickly shift their focus, however, on Hecuba lamenting that from royal wife and mother she became a slave (Met. 13.483-485). The Trojan queen's downfall from kingship to slavery is a recurrent concept in the Greek play mentioned by Talthybius (Hec. 488-496) and Hecuba herself (Hec. 809-811).¹¹⁴⁷ The Ovidian narrator, however, whose voice is fused with that of the chorus, gives a new twist to the theme. In particular, he apostrophizes Hecuba characterizing her as "the worst lot of the spoils", whom Ulysses would not otherwise

¹¹⁴⁵ Met 13.501-505 at postquam cecidit Paridis Phoebique sagittis, / "nunc certe" dixi "non est metuendus Achilles" / nunc quoque mi metuendus erat. cinis ipse sepulti / in genus hoc saeuit, tumulo quoque sensimus hostem. / Aeacidae fecunda fui!

¹¹⁴⁶ Hec. 383-388 εἰ δὲ δεῖ τῷ Πηλέως / χάριν γενέσθαι παιδὶ καὶ ψόγον φυγεῖν / ὑμᾶς, Ὀδυσσεῦ, τήνδε μὲν μὴ κτείνετε, / ἡμᾶς δ' ἄγοντες πρὸς πυρὰν Ἀχιλλέως / κεντεῖτε, μὴ φείδεσθ'· ἐγὼ ἔτεκον Πάριον, / ὃς παῖδα Θέτιδος ᾔλεσεν τόξοις βαλὼν.

¹¹⁴⁷ Hopkinson 2000, v. 13.483-484.

have wanted as his slave (presumably due to her old age, frailty, and unattractive physical appearance) were it not for the fact that she had given birth to Hector and ends with the bitterly ironic comment that Hector's heroic glory scarcely secured a master for his mother.¹¹⁴⁸ There is no precedent for this notion in Euripides' Hecuba, where the Trojan queen's master is not Odysseus, but Agamemnon (Hec. 724-725). I believe that Ovid actually evokes and reverses here a passage from Euripides' Trojan Women, in which Hecuba expresses anguish and revulsion at being allotted as a slave to the treacherous and unjust Odysseus.¹¹⁴⁹ Therefore, the Roman poet stresses the utter wretchedness of the Trojan queen by transforming the Euripidean heroine's loathing of having Odysseus as a master into the Ovidian Ulysses' reluctance to accept a slave of such low worth as Hecuba.

Hecuba laments her tragic downfall from being a powerful and rich queen with a big family to a destitute exile and slave of Ulysses.¹¹⁵⁰ The Ovidian heroine's self-mourning recalls the words of her tragic predecessor who contemplates her present abject state as a childless old woman deprived of her city and allotted as a slave to Agamemnon in contrast to her earlier prosperous status as a queen blessed with numerous offspring.¹¹⁵¹ The Trojan queen's bleak vision of her future life as a slave in Greece assumes a concrete form as she imagines herself being offered as a gift to Penelope, who will assign to her the menial task of weaving and display

¹¹⁴⁸ Met. 13.485-487 nunc etiam praedae mala sors, quam uictor Vlixes / esse suam nollet, nisi quod tamen Hectora partu / edideras. dominum matri uix repperit Hector.

¹¹⁴⁹ Tro. 279-292 Τα. Ἰθάκης Ὀδυσσεὺς ἔλαχ' ἀναξ δούλην σ' ἔχειν. / Εκ. ἔῃ ἄρασσε κρᾶτα κούριμον, ἔλκ' ὀνύχεςσι / δίπτυχον παρειάν. / ἰώ μοί μοι. / μυσαρῶ δολίῳ λέλογγα φωτὶ δουλεύειν, / πολεμίῳ δίκας, παρανόμῳ δάκει, / ὅς πάντα τάκειθεν ἐνθάδ' <ἀνστρέφει, / τὰ δ' > ἀντίπαλ' αὐθις ἐκείσε δίπτυχῳ γλώσσοι, / φίλα τὰ πρότερ' ἄφιλα τιθέμενος πάλιν. / <αἰαῖ,> γοᾶσθ', ὦ Τρωιάδες, με· βέβακα / δύσποτος, οἴχομαι ἅ / τάλαινα, δυστυχεστάτῳ / προσέπεσον κλήρω.

¹¹⁵⁰ Met. 13.508-513 [...] modo maxima rerum, / tot generis natisque potens nuribusque uiroque, / nunc trahor exul, inops, tumulis auulsa meorum, / Penelopes munus.

¹¹⁵¹ Hec. 809-811 τύραννος ἦ ποτ' ἀλλὰ γῆν δούλη σέθεν, / εὔπαις ποτ' οὔσα, γῆν δὲ γραῦς ἄπαις θ' ἅμα, / ἄπολις ἔρημος, ἀθλιωτάτη βροτῶν (See Bömer 1982, vv. 13.508-59, Hopkinson 2000, vv. 13.509-510).

her to the other Ithacan women scornfully remarking that she used to be the mother of illustrious Hector and the spouse of king Priam.¹¹⁵² This image belongs to a literary topos that can be traced back to Homer and involves the envisioning of a Trojan woman's future life as a Greek slave.¹¹⁵³ In particular, it has been observed that the Ovidian Hecuba's words recall the prophetic vision of Hector about Andromache in Iliad 6, according to which she is fated to become a slave forced to weave at a Greek woman's loom and will be identified by a passer-by as the former wife of heroic Hector.¹¹⁵⁴ The Homeric passage establishes the main components of the commonplace, which include the contrast between former nobility and future slavery in a foreign land, menial labor, and identification of the woman through kinship with a famous Trojan man. The Roman poet at the same time evokes various Euripidean variants on the Homeric archetype.¹¹⁵⁵ In particular, Euripides' Polyxena fears that she will be bought by a cruel master who will compel her, the sister of Hector, to perform base tasks, such as weaving, bread making, and cleaning,¹¹⁵⁶ while Hecuba in the Trojan women grieves for her imminent arrival to Greece as a slave, where she will be apportioned menial labor, such as door keeping and bread baking.¹¹⁵⁷

¹¹⁵² Met. 13.511-513 Penelopes munus, quae me data pensa trahentem / matribus ostendens Ithacis "haec Hectoris illa est / clara parens, haec est" dicet "Priameia coniunx."

¹¹⁵³ Curley 2013, 161.

¹¹⁵⁴ Il. 6.456-461 καί κεν ἐν Ἄργει ἐοῦσα πρὸς ἄλλης ἰστὸν ὑφαίνοις, / καί κεν ὕδωρ φορέοις Μεσσηΐδος ἢ Ὑπερείης / πόλλ' ἀεκαζομένη, κρατερὴ δ' ἐπικείσεται' ἀνάγκη / καί ποτέ τις εἶπησιν ἰδὼν κατὰ δάκρυ χέουσας' Ἔκτορος ἦδε γυνῆ ὃς ἀριστεύεσκε μάχεσθαι / Τρώων ἱποδάμων ὅτε Ἴλιον ἀμφεμάχοντο (See Hopkinson 2000, v. 13.512).

¹¹⁵⁵ Curley 2013, 159-161.

¹¹⁵⁶ Hec. 359-364 ἔπειτ' ἴσως ἂν δεσποτῶν ὠμῶν φρένας / τύχοιμ' ἂν, ὅστις ἀργύρου μ' ὀνήσεται, / τὴν Ἔκτορος τε χιτῶνων πολλῶν κάσιν, / προσθεὶς δ' ἀνάγκην σιτοποιὸν ἐν δόμοις / σαίρειν τε δῶμα κερκίσιν τ' ἐφεστάναι / λυπρὰν ἄγουσαν ἡμέραν μ' ἀναγκάσει.

¹¹⁵⁷ Tro. 490-494 δοῦλη γυνὴ γραῦς Ἑλλάδ' εἰσαφίζομαι. / ἃ δ' ἐστὶ γήρα τῶδ' ἀσυμφορώτατα, / τούτοις με προσθήσουσιν, ἢ θυρῶν λάτρην / κληῖδας φυλάσσειν, τὴν τεκοῦσαν Ἔκτορα, / ἢ σιτοποιεῖν [...] (See Hopkinson 2000, v. 13.511).

Throughout his narrative Ovid depicts Hecuba's peripeteia as echoing and ultimately surpassing in terms of tragic pathos that of her husband Priam in both his Euripidean and Virgilian incarnations. To begin with, the narrator's juxtaposition of Hecuba's earlier status as royal mother and spouse and the very personification of Asia's prosperity with her current fate of being the worst part of the war booty is reminiscent of the Virgilian Priam's downfall from proud ruler of the people of Asia to a headless corpse lying unburied on the Trojan shore.¹¹⁵⁸ During her lament Hecuba deems her own fate as more pitiable than that of Troy, on the grounds that her city was utterly destroyed, but at least the Trojans' woes finally came to an end, whereas she is still suffering a life of agony having been reduced from powerful queen to helpless slave and preserving Troy in her memory as still standing.¹¹⁵⁹ The Ovidian heroine's words evoke Aeneas' comment that the final outcome of Priam's fate was to die at the hands of Pyrrhus and witness Troy's fall.¹¹⁶⁰

Finally, the Trojan queen mourns that her excessively long life has caused her to view one death of a family member after the other and thus reaches the paradoxical conclusion that Priam can be considered fortunate in his death, since he was spared from bearing witness to Polyxena's demise and did not experience the misery of a life without kingship, namely slavery.¹¹⁶¹ Ovid here reworks Andromache's claim in both the Trojan Women and the Aeneid that Polyxena was fortunate to have died at Troy, because she was thus saved from the doom of a

¹¹⁵⁸Met. 13.483-485 [...] o modo regia coniunx, / regia dicta parens, Asiae florentis imago, / nunc etiam praedae mala sors, Aen. 2.556-558 tot quondam populis terrisque superbum / regnatorem Asiae. iacet ingens litore truncus, / avulsumque umeris caput et sine nomine corpus (See Papaioannou 2007, 223).

¹¹⁵⁹ Met. 13.508-511 iacet Ilium ingens, / euentuque graui finita est publica clades, / sed finita tamen; soli mihi Pergama restant, / in cursuque meus dolor est.

¹¹⁶⁰ Aen. 2.554-558 haec finis Priami fatorum; hic exitus illum / sorte tulit, Troiam incensam et prolapsa videntem / Pergama [...].

¹¹⁶¹Met. 13.519-522 [...] quis posse putaret / felicem Priamum post diruta Pergama dici? / felix morte sua est; nec te, mea nata, peremptam / aspicit et uitam pariter regnumque reliquit.

life of captivity.¹¹⁶² Hence, Hecuba judges the reversal of her fortune as more devastating than that of her husband and thereby “corrects” her Euripidean counterpart’s claim that she and Priam have both been utterly ruined by the loss of her children, namely they have experienced the same *peripeteia*.¹¹⁶³ At the same time the Ovidian heroine evokes Evander’s dirge for Pallas in the *Aeneid*, who remarks that his wife is blessed to have perished, since she was not forced to see the death of their son.¹¹⁶⁴

Hecuba’s loss of Polyxena is detrimental to her, since she considers her daughter the sole consolation for her woes.¹¹⁶⁵ Her claim is reminiscent of that of her tragic antecedent, who says that Polyxena is her only comfort, since she plays the role of city, nurse, support, and guide for her.¹¹⁶⁶ This latest blow of fate drives Hecuba to curse her excessive longevity and accuse the gods of cruelty for prolonging her life only so that she can witness new deaths, a statement fraught with tragic irony, since it implicitly foreshadows the discovery of Polydorus’ corpse a few moments later.¹¹⁶⁷ The Ovidian protagonist echoes her Euripidean predecessor’s similar complaint to Odysseus that she has lived too long and that Zeus keeps her alive, so that she may

¹¹⁶² Tro. 641-642 κείνη δ’, ὁμοίως ὥσπερ οὐκ ἰδοῦσα φῶς, / τέθνηκε κούδεν οἶδε τῶν αὐτῆς κακῶν; Aen. 3.321-323 o felix una ante alios Priameia uirgo / hostilem ad tumulum Troiae sub moenibus altis / iussa mori!

¹¹⁶³ Hec. 620-623 ὦ πλεῖστ’ ἔχων μάλιστά τ’ εὐτεκνώτατε / Πρίαμε, γεραιά θ’ ἦδ’ ἐγὼ μήτηρ τέκνων, / ὡς ἐς τὸ μηδὲν ἤκομεν, φρονήματος / τοῦ πρὶν στερέντες (See Curley 2013, 155).

¹¹⁶⁴ Aen. 11.158-161 tuque, o sanctissima coniunx, / felix morte tua neque in hunc seruata dolorem. / contra ego uiuendo uici mea fata, superstes / restarem ut genitor (See Hopkinson 2000, v. 13.521).

¹¹⁶⁵ Met. 13.514 postque tot amissos tu nunc, quae sola leuabas / maternos luctus, hostilia busta piasti.

¹¹⁶⁶ Hec. 280-281 ἦδ’ ἀντὶ πολλῶν ἐστὶ μοι παραψυχή, / πόλις, τιθήνη, βάκτρον, ἡγεμὼν ὁδοῦ (See Bömer 1982, vv. 13.514-515, Hopkinson 2000, vv. 13.514-515).

¹¹⁶⁷ Met. 13.516-519 quo ferrea resto?/ quidue moror? quo me seruas, annosa senectus?/ quo, di crudeles, nisi uti noua funera cernam, / uiuacem differtis anum? (See Hopkinson 2000, v. 13.518).

witness even worse misfortunes.¹¹⁶⁸ The Roman poet once again outdoes his source in terms of tragic pathos by altering the context and purpose of the Trojan queen's words. Whereas Hecuba's protest in the *Metamorphoses* about her long drawn out life is made after Polyxena's demise and leads to a death wish,¹¹⁶⁹ her tragic counterpart's complaint simply expresses her sorrow for her afflictions, in order to gain the pity of Odysseus and thus convince him to spare her daughter.

Although the Trojan queen opens her speech with the claim that by losing Polyxena she has lost everything, which results in her desire to commit suicide, at her soliloquy's denouement she remembers that she still has a reason to endure living a little while longer, namely Polydorus.¹¹⁷⁰ In sharp contrast to Euripides' Hecuba who having been alarmed by the visit of Polydorus' ghost in her dream (*Hec.* 68-86) is filled with terrible dread that her son is dead,¹¹⁷¹ her Ovidian counterpart is certain that Polydorus, her youngest and most beloved son, is alive, a thought that offers her false comfort. Therefore, Ovid once again echoes and inverts his tragic model aiming to heighten the tragic irony of the situation and thus create a more pathetic anagnorisis scene, namely Hecuba's discovery of Polydorus' body and a more sudden and violent peripeteia for his heroine.

¹¹⁶⁸ *Hec.* 229-233 αἰαῖ· παρέστηχ', ὡς ἔοικ', ἀγὼν μέγας, / πλήρης στεναγμῶν οὐδὲ δακρῶν κενός. / κᾶγωγ' ἄρ' οὐκ ἔθνησκον οὐ μ' ἐχρήν θανεῖν, / οὐδ' ὄλεσέν με Ζεὺς, τρέφει δ' ὅπως ὀρώ / κακῶν κάκ' ἄλλα μείζον' ἢ τάλαιν' ἐγώ.

¹¹⁶⁹ The fact that Ovid's Hecuba contemplates suicide is confirmed by her use of the expression *quid moror?* ("Why do I linger in life?", *Met.* 13.517), which recalls Dido's protest to Aeneas that his abandonment of her will result in her death (*Aen.* 4.323-325 *cui me moribundam deseris hospes / (hoc solum nomen quoniam de coniuge restat)? / quid moror?*).

¹¹⁷⁰ *Met.* 13.527-530 *omnia perdidimus; superest, cur uiuere tempus / in breue sustineam, proles gratissima matri, / nunc solus, quondam minimus de stirpe uirili, / has datus Ismario regi Polydorus in oras* (See Hopkinson, 2000, v. 13.494).

¹¹⁷¹ *Hec.* 429-430 Πο. ὅ τ' ἐν φιλίπποις Θρηξί Πολύδωρος κάσις. / Εκ. εἰ ζῆ γ' ἀπιστῶ δ': ὧδε πάντα δυστυχῶ.

4.5 Hecuba's revenge

Hecuba ends her speech by reproaching herself for delaying to wash Polyxena's corpse in preparation for her burial and goes to the shore in order to draw water.¹¹⁷² The Ovidian narrative evokes and reverses its tragic model, where the Trojan queen dispatches an old handmaid to fetch water for bathing her daughter.¹¹⁷³ The Roman poet's goal is to amplify the tragic pathos and directness of the ensuing anagnorisis scene, in which Hecuba discovers the body of Polydorus herself.¹¹⁷⁴ In the Euripidean play, on the contrary, the Trojan queen recognizes her son's corpse after it is brought from the shore to the Achaean camp.¹¹⁷⁵ One possible intratextual source of inspiration for Ovid's adaptation of the Euripidean intertext may be the recognition scene of the Ceyx and Alcyone episode, where the heroine identifies herself her husband's body floating close to the shore (Met. 11.710-728).

Hecuba's reaction to the discovery of her son's body is highly paradoxical. Whereas she earlier indulged in an excessive lament for Polyxena consisting of both ardent mourning gestures and a long soliloquy, she is now so overwhelmed with sorrow that she falls deadly silent and refrains from shedding any tears.¹¹⁷⁶ Her response contrasts sharply with that of her Euripidean

¹¹⁷² Met. 13.531-535 'quid moror interea crudelia uulnera lymphis / abluere et sparsos inimiti sanguine uultus?' / dixit et ad litus passu processit anili, / albentes lacerata comas. 'date, Troades, urnam' / dixerat infelix, liquidus hauriret ut undas.

¹¹⁷³ Hec. 609-613 σὺ δ' αὖ λαβοῦσα τεῦχος, ἀρχαία λάτρι, / βάνιασ' ἔνεγκε δεῦρο ποντίας ἄλός, / ὡς παῖδα λουτροῖς τοῖς πανυστάτοις ἐμήν, / νόμφην τ' ἄνυμφον παρθένον τ' ἀπάρθενον, / λούσω [...] (See Hopkinson 2000, vv. 13.533-535).

¹¹⁷⁴ Met. 13.536-537 aspicit eiectum Polydori in litore corpus / factaque Threiciis ingentia uulnera telis.

¹¹⁷⁵ Hec. 679-680 Θεραπ. [...] ἄθρησον σῶμα γυμνωθὲν νεκροῦ / εἶ σοι φανεῖται θαῦμα καὶ παρ' ἐλπίδας.

¹¹⁷⁶ Met. 13.538-540 Troades exclamant; obmutuit illa dolore, / et pariter uocem lacrimasque introrsus obortas / deuorat ipse dolor [...].

counterpart, who upon seeing Polydorus' corpse bursts into a sung dirge for her son.¹¹⁷⁷ Moreover, Euripides' Hecuba initially supplicates Agamemnon to punish Polymestor on her behalf (Hec. 789-792) and upon his refusal she resolves to devise a revenge plot herself and asks only for his protection from any retribution by the Greeks (Hec. 870-875). On the contrary, her Ovidian counterpart is filled with wrath and immediately decides to exact vengeance from the Thracian king on her own (Met. 13.544-546).

Hecuba's portrayal echoes instead the depiction of two other Ovidian mothers: Procne and Niobe. Both Procne and Hecuba have relatives victimized by savage Thracian kings: Philomela is raped, mutilated, and incarcerated by lustful Tereus, while Polydorus is murdered by greedy Polymestor on account of his wealth. The Trojan queen's vengeance, however, constitutes an inversion of the Athenian princess' retribution. Whereas Procne perpetrates filicide so as to punish her husband, Hecuba avenges the death of her son by blinding and slaying Polymestor. Thus, in contrast to Procne who in the previous chapter was viewed as an "overblown Medea", since her filicide surpasses that of the Euripidean heroine in ferocity and mercilessness, Hecuba may be characterized as an "anti-Medea" in that she is a loving mother who directs her vengeful rage against her son's killer. This reading is corroborated by a significant Ovidian divergence from his tragic model, namely the omission of the murder of Polymestor's sons by the Trojan women, which effectively absolves his Hecuba of the crime of infanticide.

The Roman poet signals the affinity between the two heroines by means of explicit verbal echoes throughout the last part of his narrative. To begin with, both heroines undergo a sudden

¹¹⁷⁷ Hec. 681-686 οἴμοι, βλέπω δὴ παῖδ' ἐμὸν τεθνηκότα, / Πολύδωρον, ὄν μοι Θρηξ ἔσφζ' οἴκοις ἀνήρ. / ἀπωλόμην δύστηνος, οὐκέτ' εἰμὶ δὴ. / ὦ τέκνον τέκνον, / αἰαῖ, κατάρχομαι νόμον / βακχεῖον, ἐξ ἀλάστορος ἀρτιμαθῆς κακῶν.

psychological metamorphosis from mourners to avengers.¹¹⁷⁸ Upon reading Philomela's tapestry Procne is struck by dumbfounded silence and is unable to weep due to her extreme grief for her sister's suffering. In an analogous manner when Hecuba catches sight of Polydorus' body her sorrow is so consuming that she cannot express it through either words or tears.¹¹⁷⁹ In both cases the astonishing nature of the heroine's silence is underscored by the poet: the narrator marvels at Procne's ability to remain tacit upon finding out Philomela's rape and mutilation by her husband, while Hecuba's muteness is contrasted with the Trojan women's shriek at the spectacle of dead Polydorus. In addition, the profound sorrow of the two heroines is swiftly transformed into blazing wrath and they are both completely engrossed in the idea of vengeance.¹¹⁸⁰ The essential difference between them, however, is that unlike Procne, who plans to punish Tereus' transgression by means of another crime, namely filicide, Hecuba turns her just anger against the infanticide himself.

Another central maternal figure of the *Metamorphoses* evoked by Hecuba through intratextual conflation is Niobe. An important thematic link between the two heroines is that they both experience a sudden and violent peripeteia: they are rich and powerful queens blessed with numerous children who are reduced to a state of utter wretchedness and inconsolable grief by being bereft of all their progeny. Ovid signposts the connection between the two heroines by means of multiple verbal reminiscences, which at the same time serve to accentuate the crucial

¹¹⁷⁸ Curley 2013, 182.

¹¹⁷⁹ Met. 6.581-585 *euoluit uestes saeui matrona tyrannu / germanaeque suae carmen miserabile legit / et (mirum potuisse) silet, dolor ora repressit, / uerbaque quaerenti satis indignantia linguae / defuerunt; nec flere uacat [...]* (See Rosati 2009, v. 6.583).

¹¹⁸⁰ Met. 13.544-546 [...] *seque armat et instruit ira, / qua simul exarsit, tamquam regina maneret, / ulcisci statuit poenaeque in imagine tota est*; Met. 6.581-585 [...] *sed fasque nefasque / confusura ruit poenaeque in imagine tota est, 609-610 ardet et iram / non capit ipsa suam Procne [...]* (See Bömer 1982, vv. 13.545-546, Rosati 2009, v. 6.583).

distinguishing difference between the two *matres orbae*. Whereas Niobe is a haughty and hybristic adversary of Latona, whose loss of her offspring constitutes a punishment at the hands of Apollo and Diana, Hecuba is an innocent victim of the vicissitudes of fortune, who is deprived of her children through no fault of her own.

The Trojan queen makes her first appearance in the narrative at the ruins of smoldering Troy wildly mourning her dead sons by adhering to their tombs and and kissing their bones.¹¹⁸¹ This image is highly reminiscent of the Theban queen's dirge for her sons slain by Latona's divine offspring: she falls madly upon their lifeless bodies and gives them farewell kisses.¹¹⁸² What is more, in both cases the mother's endless sorrow over her children's death contrasts with her husband's "better" fate. Hecuba pronounces Priam blessed in his death, since he thereby escaped the heart-rending spectacle of his daughter's demise, while the narrator comments that Amphion put an end to his grief for his dead sons by committing suicide.¹¹⁸³ The pinnacle of agony for the two heroines is the loss of their youngest and last surviving offspring. During her lament for Polyxena Hecuba finds solace in the thought that her youngest son, Polydorus, is still alive and this gives her strength to endure living a while longer.¹¹⁸⁴ Her hopes, however, are immediately thwarted by the discovery of his dead body. In an analogous fashion Niobe beseeches the gods to

¹¹⁸¹ Met. 13.423-325 *in mediis Hecabe natorum inuenta sepulcris; / prensantem tumulos atque ossibus oscula dantem / Dulichiae traxere manus.*

¹¹⁸² Met. 6.276-277 *corporibus gelidis incumbit et ordine nullo / oscula dispensat natos suprema per omnes.*

¹¹⁸³ Met. 13.521-522 *felix morte sua est; nec te, mea nata, peremptam / aspicit et uitam pariter regnumque reliquit;*
Met. 6.271-272 *nam pater Amphion ferro per pectus adacto / finierat moriens pariter cum luce dolorem.*

¹¹⁸⁴ Met. 13.527-530 *omnia perdidimus; superest, cur uiuere tempus / in breue sustineam, proles gratissima matri, / nunc solus, quondam minimus de stirpe uirili, / has datus Ismario regi Polydorus in oras.*

show mercy to her youngest daughter, who is her last remaining progeny, but even while making her entreaty her daughter falls dead.¹¹⁸⁵

This final blow of fate has a drastic metamorphic impact on Hecuba highly evocative of Niobe's transformation.¹¹⁸⁶ The Trojan queen is figuratively petrified by becoming completely motionless, falling silent, and fixing her eyes on the ground.¹¹⁸⁷ The Theban queen, on the other hand, undergoes a literal transformation into stone: her eyes are fixed in their sockets and her tongue becomes still thus losing the ability to speak.¹¹⁸⁸ Next, Hecuba raises a savage gaze towards the sky, which might be interpreted as a silent rebuke against the gods for allowing the death of Polydorus.¹¹⁸⁹ Her gesture is reminiscent of that of the Theban queen, who after the loss of her sons lifts her arms towards the sky openly accusing Latona of deriving sadistic pleasure from her pain and asserting that she is still a more blessed mother than the goddess, in that she has seven remaining daughters compared to the goddess' two (Met. 6.280-285).¹¹⁹⁰ Once again the verbal echo underlines the intrinsic disparity between the two figures. Whereas the Trojan

¹¹⁸⁵ Met. 6.297-300 *sexque datis leto diuersaque uulnera passis / ultima restabat; quam toto corpore mater, / tota ueste tegens 'unam minimamque relinque; / de multis minimam posco' clamauit 'et unam.' / dumque rogat, pro qua rogat occidit.*

¹¹⁸⁶ Bömer 1982, vv. 13.540-541; Hopkinson 2000, v. 13.540; Rosati 2009, v. 6.583.

¹¹⁸⁷ Met. 13.539-541 *obmutuit illa dolore, / et pariter uocem lacrimasque introrsus obortas / deuorat ipse dolor, duroque simillima saxo / torpet et aduersa figit modo lumina terra.* Commentators (Bömer 1982, vv. 13.540-541; Hopkinson 2000, vv. 13.540-542) have observed that the Ovidian heroine's momentary "petrification" is also highly reminiscent of Dido's reaction to Aeneas' attempt to appease her anger in the Underworld (Aen. 6.467-471). The Carthaginian queen, who is still filled with blazing wrath for the Trojan hero's betrayal, remains unmoved by his words and keeps her averted eyes fixed on the ground. Her implacable attitude is expressed through a simile comparing her to stone or Parian marble.

¹¹⁸⁸ Met. 6.303-309 *deriguitque malis. nullos mouet aura capillos, / in uultu color est sine sanguine, lumina maestis / stant immota genis; nihil est in imagine uiuum. / ipsa quoque interius cum duro lingua palato / congelat, et uenae desistunt posse moueri; / nec flecti ceruix nec bracchia reddere motus / nec pes ire potest; intra quoque uiscera saxum est.*

¹¹⁸⁹ Met. 13.542 *interdum toruos extollit ad aethera uultus.*

¹¹⁹⁰ Met. 6.279 *a quibus ad caelum liuentia bracchia tollens.*

queen's protest against the gods is justified, Niobe's vituperation of Latona is further manifestation of her outrage towards the goddess which inevitably leads to the total annihilation of her progeny. Finally, both heroines are immortalized by Ovid as bereaved mothers perennially mourning their offspring. Niobe's endless lament for her children even after her metamorphosis into a statue is symbolized by the tears trickling incessantly from the stone (Met. 6.310-312). Likewise after Hecuba is transformed into a dog she continues to recall her lost progeny and makes the fields of Thrace resound with her sad howling (Met. 13.570-571).

Ovid depicts Hecuba's burning wrath for the loss of Polydorus by means of an epic simile. The Trojan queen marching in anger towards Polymestor's palace is likened to a raging lioness bereft of her suckling cub who follows the footprints of the man who has stolen her whelp.¹¹⁹¹ The Ovidian picture engages in a multi-faceted dialogue with various intertexts and intratexts. To begin with, the Roman poet evokes the Homeric simile, which compares Achilles mourning the death of Patroclus to an enraged lion which roams the wilderness attempting to track down the hunter who has snatched away its cubs.¹¹⁹² An important affinity between the Trojan queen and the Greek hero is that they are both filled with an explosive fusion of anger and sorrow, which transmutes into a desire to punish the slayer of their loved ones, Polymestor and Hector respectively. Hecuba's association with Achilles through the lioness simile effectively raises her to the status of a Homeric warrior and foreshadows her brutal and gory vengeance against Polymestor.

¹¹⁹¹ Met. 13.547-548 utque furit catulo lactente orbata leaena / signaque nacta pedum sequitur quem non uidet hostem, / sic Hecabe, postquam cum luctu miscuit iram, / non oblita animorum, annorum oblita suorum, / uadit ad artificem dirae Polymestora caedis.

¹¹⁹² Iliad 18.316-323 τοῖσι δὲ Πηλεΐδης ἄδινου ἐξήρχε γόοιο / χεῖρας ἐπ' ἀνδροφόνους θέμενος στήθεσσιν ἐταίρου / πυκνὰ μάλα στενάχων ὥς τε λίς ἠϋγένειος, / ᾗ ῥά θ' ὑπὸ σκύμνους ἐλαφιβόλος ἀρπάσῃ ἀνήρ / ὕλης ἐκ πυκνῆς· ὁ δὲ τ' ἄγνυται ὕστερος ἐλθὼν, / πολλὰ δὲ τ' ἄγκε ἐπῆλθε μετ' ἀνέρος ἴγνι' ἐρευνῶν / εἶ ποθεν ἐξεύροι· μάλα γὰρ δριμύς χόλος αἰρεῖ· / ὣς ὁ βαρὺ στενάχων μεταφώνεε Μυρμιδόνεσσιν (See Bömer 1982, vv. 13.547-549, Hopkinson 2000, vv. 13.547-548).

Below I will argue that apart from the Homeric model Ovid's simile also converses intertextually with Euripides' Hecuba. The Ovidian Hecuba's comparison to a lioness deprived of her young may echo and invert the portrayal of Polymestor in the Greek play. After being blinded by the Trojan women the Thracian king exits from their tent in pursuit, groveling on all four.¹¹⁹³ He explicitly likens himself to a mountain beast on account of his movement as a quadrupedal animal as well as his desire to hunt down the women and feast on their flesh.¹¹⁹⁴ Moreover, the Ovidian heroine's loss of Polydorus recalls the Euripidean Polymestor's loss of his sons, who were snatched away and murdered by the Trojan women. Another significant affinity between the two characters is that they are both overwhelmed with boiling anger, which drives them to seek vengeance against their children's murderers.¹¹⁹⁵ In addition, Ovid's depiction of the Trojan queen as a lioness following the tracks of an enemy, whom she does not see, since he is far away, may constitute a subtle allusion and rewriting of the Euripidean passage, in which Polymestor likened to a mountain beast tries to find with his hands the footprints of Trojan women, who are not visible to him due to his blindness.

Finally, the Ovidian simile functions as a further intratextual link between Hecuba and Procne. In particular, the Trojan queen's depiction as a lioness deprived of her cub evokes and reverses the Athenian princess' comparison to a tigress dragging away a suckling fawn used to describe the way she violently drags Itys to a remote part of the palace in order to murder

¹¹⁹³ Hec. 1056-1061 Πο. ὄμοι ἐγώ, πᾶ βῶ, πᾶ στῶ, πᾶ κέλσω, / τετράποδος βάσιν θηρὸς ὀρεστέρου

τιθέμενος ἐπὶ χεῖρα κατ' ἴχνος; ποῖαν / ἢ ταύταν ἢ τάνδ' ἐξαλλάξω, τὰς / ἀνδροφόνους μάρψαι χρήζων Ἰλιάδας, / αἶ με διώλεσαν;

¹¹⁹⁴ Hec. 1070-1072 πᾶ πόδ' ἐπάξας / σαρκῶν ὀστέων τ' ἐμπλησθῶ, / θοῖναν ἀγρίων τιθέμενος θηρῶν, 1172-1173 ἐκ δὲ πηδῆσας ἐγὼ / θηρ ὧς διώκω τὰς μαιφόνους κύνας.

¹¹⁹⁵ Met. 558-559 spectat truculenta loquentem / falsaque iurantem tumidaque exaestuât ira; Hec. 1054-1055 Ἐκ. ἀλλ' ἐκποδὼν ἄπειμι κάποστήσομαι / θυμῶ ζέοντι Ὀρηκὶ δυσμαχωτάτῳ.

him.¹¹⁹⁶ The two comparisons cast in relief the fundamental difference between the two mothers. The lioness simile reflects Hecuba's affection for and protectiveness of Polydorus as well as her rage against Polymestor and her yearning for vengeance. The tigress simile, on the other hand, indicates Procne's alienation from Itys, whom he views as a mirror-image of his father, and anticipates the pitiless slaughter and dismemberment of her son.

Having resolved upon avenging herself on Polymestor Hecuba goes to his palace and seeks audience with the king (Met. 13.551-552). In the Greek play, on the other hand, the Trojan queen dispatches a handmaiden to summon Polymestor to the Achaean camp (Hec. 889-894).¹¹⁹⁷ Ovid employs the same technique of omitting the intermediary as in the scene of the discovery of Polydorus' corpse, in order to sharpen the focus on the figure of Hecuba. In both texts the Trojan queen's revenge plot capitalizes on the Thracian king's greed for wealth, since it involves leading him into a trap by the deceptive promise of hidden treasure.¹¹⁹⁸ Euripides' heroine whets the appetite of Polymestor by telling him about caves containing hidden Trojan gold, but then entices him into the Trojan women's tent, where she alleges she has concealed more treasure brought from Troy without the knowledge of the Achaeans (Hec. 1000-1116). The Roman poet, however, alters the location of the ambush by having his Hecuba lure the Thracian king to an unspecified secluded place by means of a false promise to show him a hidden hoard of gold.¹¹⁹⁹ One possible explanation for the choice of an outdoors setting is that it facilitates the subsequent

¹¹⁹⁶ Met. 6.636-637 nec mora, traxit Ityn, ueluti Gangetica ceruae / lactentem fetum per siluas tigris opacas (See Curley 2013, 183).

¹¹⁹⁷ Hopkinson 2000, v. 13.551.

¹¹⁹⁸ Hopkinson, vv. 13.552-553.

¹¹⁹⁹ Met. 13.552-555 [...] nam se monstrare relictum / uelle latens illi, quod nato redderet, aurum. / credit Odrysus praedaeque †adsuetus† amore / in secreta uenit (Hopkinson, v. 13.555).

confrontation between Hecuba and the Thracians, which would not have been possible if the scene took place inside the Greek camp.

The most significant Ovidian divergence from his tragic predecessor in the revenge scene is the exclusion of Polymestor's offspring. In the Euripidean play Hecuba invites the Thracian king along with his children and with the aid of the Trojan women blinds him and slays his two sons thereby exacting a vengeance from the king, which surpasses in ferocity his crime. In the *Metamorphoses*, on the contrary, the Trojan queen takes revenge on Polymestor alone by blinding and killing him. As noted above, one interpretation for the Ovidian departure is that it distinguishes Hecuba from the poem's infanticidal mothers, Medea, Procne, and Althaea, in the sense that she is a bereaved mother who avenges the death of her child. Ovid signals his portrayal of Hecuba as an "anti-Medea" by describing her punishment of Polymestor in a way that evokes and reverses Procne's retribution on Tereus. To begin with, the Thracian king is depicted as treacherous, a feature which he shares with his Euripidean antecedent. In the Greek play he gives false replies to Hecuba's questions about whether Polydorus is still alive and remembers her and whether the gold sent with him is kept safe (*Hec.* 986-997). Likewise in the Ovidian narrative he greedily and impatiently asks the Trojan queen to show him the gold, which he promises to give to her son and even takes a perfidious oath in the name of the gods (*Met.* 13.555-558). Moreover, the narrator brands Polymestor with the epithet *artifex* ("cunning contriver"), which was used by Procne earlier in the poem to label Tereus, another deceitful Thracian king.¹²⁰⁰ The two kings live up to their characterization by employing cunning deception to conceal their crimes. Tereus deceives Procne by the false story that her sister

¹²⁰⁰ *Met.* 13.551 *uadit ad artificem* dirae Polymestora caedis, 6.615 *artificem* mediis immittam Terea flammis. Gildendhard and Zissos (2007, 16, n. 34) note that Ovid also associates the two kings by means of the epithet *Odrysius* ("Thracian") (*Met.* 6.490, 13.554).

perished on the voyage to Thrace (Met. 6.563-570), while Polymestor attempts to trick Hecuba into believing that her son is still alive.

Furthermore, the depiction of Hecuba in the vengeance scene is highly reminiscent of that of Procne. In particular, one of the retribution schemes entertained by Procne is to remove Tereus' eyes (along with his tongue and genitals).¹²⁰¹ The Athenian princess' vengeance fantasy is realized by Hecuba, who plucks out Polymestor's eyes.¹²⁰² At the same time the Trojan queen's encounter with Polymestor echoes and inverts the meeting of Procne with Itys. Upon seeing her son the Athenian princess comes up with the plan of murdering him in order to avenge herself on her husband, her motivation being his close resemblance to his father. She thus casts on him a pitiless gaze and is said to boil with tacit wrath as she contemplates the details of her revenge plot.¹²⁰³ In an analogous fashion the Trojan queen looks savagely on Polymestor and is overwhelmed with seething rage as she hears him taking a false oath by the gods that her son is alive and well.¹²⁰⁴ In addition, the Thracian king's crafty and fawning lies recall the child's blandishing gestures towards his mother consisting of embraces, kisses, and sweet words.¹²⁰⁵ Once again, the verbal allusions are aimed to stress the fundamental difference between the two situations: whereas Procne is about to commit a heinous crime by murdering her innocent son, Hecuba is spurred by guilty Polymestor's duplicity to take just revenge on him.

¹²⁰¹ Met 6.616-618 aut linguam atque oculos et quae tibi membra pudorem / abstulerunt ferro rapiam, aut per uulnera mille / sontem animam expellam.

¹²⁰² Met. 13.561-562 expellitque genis oculos (facit ira potentem)/ immergitque manus foedataque sanguine sonti.

¹²⁰³ Met. 6.621-623 [...] oculisque tuens immitibus 'a! quam / es similis patri' dixit; nec plura locuta / triste parat facinus tacitaque exaestuauit ira.

¹²⁰⁴ Met. 13.558-559 spectat truculenta loquentem / falsaque iurantem tumidaque exaestuauit ira.

¹²⁰⁵ Met. 13.555-558 tum blando callidus ore / 'tolle moras, Hecabe' dixit, 'da munera nato. / omne fore illius, quod das, quod et ante dedisti, / per superos iuro, 6.624-627 ut tamen accessit natus matrique salutem / attulit et paruis adduxit colla lacertis / mixtaque blanditiis puerilibus oscula iunxit, mota quidem est genetrix infractaque constitit ira.

Ovid's account of Polymestor's blinding and its aftermath deviates substantially from the description of the same events in Euripides' *Hecuba*. Below I will contend that the Roman poet draws instead on another Euripidean play: the *Bacchae*. More specifically, the Ovidian *Hecuba*'s revenge on Polymestor reenacts the punishment visited on Pentheus by Dionysus and his Theban maenads. To begin with, the Trojan queen's stratagem to lure the Thracian king to a vague outdoors location by the deceptive promise of showing him a hidden treasure trove echoes Dionysus' scheme of enticing the Theban king to Mt. Cithaeron by offering to show him the secret rites of the maenads.¹²⁰⁶ Thus, just as *Hecuba* exploits Polymestor's innate greed for wealth, similarly Dionysus capitalizes on Pentheus' voyeurism and subconscious desire to witness the forbidden Bacchic rituals. Furthermore, in contrast to Euripides' *Hecuba*, where the blinding of Polymestor takes place inside the Trojan women's tent, Ovid may have been inspired to set his scene at a remote locale by the *Bacchae*, in which Dionysus leads Pentheus through deserted paths to Mt. Cithaeron.¹²⁰⁷

Ovid's version of the blinding scene departs in many ways from that of his tragic model. In Euripides' *Hecuba* Polymestor himself describes in a messenger speech how the Trojan queen and the other captive women first disarmed the Thracian king and separated him from his sons by pretending to play with them (*Hec.* 1151-1159). Then, they suddenly immobilized him, murdered his children with swords, and blinded him by piercing his eyes with brooches (*Hec.* 1160-1171). Finally, they fled from the tent escaping the clutches of the enraged king (*Hec.*

¹²⁰⁶ Met. 15.552-555 [...] nam se monstrare relictum / uelle latens illi, quod nato redderet, aurum. / credidit Odrysius praedaeque †adsuetus† amore / in secreta uenit; Ba. 810-820 Δι. ἄ. βούλη σφ' ἐν ὄρεσι συγκαθημένας ἰδεῖν; / Πε. μάλιστα, μῦριον γε δούς χρυσοῦ σταθμόν. / Δι. τί δ'; εἰς ἔρωτα τοῦδε πέπτοκας μέγαν; / Πε. λυπρῶς νιν εἰσίδοιμ' ἄν ἐξωνομένας. / Δι. ὄμως δ' ἴδοις ἄν ἠδέως ἅ σοι πικρά; / Πε. σάφ' ἴσθι, σιγῇ δ' ὑπ' ἐλάταις καθημένας. / Δι. ἀλλ' ἐξιγνεύσουσίν σε, κἄν ἔλθῃς λάθρα. / Πε. ἀλλ' ἐμφανῶς; καλῶς γὰρ ἐξεῖπας τάδε. / Δι. ἄγωμεν οὖν σε κάπιχειρήσεις ὁδοῖ; / Πε. ἄγ' ὡς τάχιστα, τοῦ χρόνου δέ σοι φθονῶ.

¹²⁰⁷ Met. 13.555 in secreta uenit; Ba. 840-841 Πε. καὶ πῶς δι' ἄστεως εἶμι Καδμείους λαθῶν; / Δι. ὁδοὺς ἐρήμους ἴμεν; ἐγὼ δ' ἠγήσομαι.

1071-1075). The *Metamorphoses*, on the other hand, offers a much more gruesome spectacle: Hecuba summons the Trojan women, but she alone seizes Polymestor and gouges out his eyes with her bare hands (Met. 13.560-564).¹²⁰⁸ I will argue that in this scene Ovid portrays Hecuba as a figurative Bacchant by creatively reworking Pentheus' sparagmos by the Theban maenads recounted in the second messenger speech of the *Bacchae*. The Roman poet may have actually derived this idea from Euripides' *Hecuba* itself, where Polymestor depicts the Trojan women as metaphorical maenads by branding them as "Bacchantes of Hades" and fearing that they will dismember his sons, scatter their limbs in the mountain, and offer their flesh as feast to dogs.¹²⁰⁹

Whereas the Trojan women in *Hecuba* overpower Polymestor by means of guile and superior numbers, the Ovidian heroine avenges herself on the Thracian king on her own through sheer strength. In particular, she seizes him violently, sinks her fingers into his eyes, plucks out his eyes, and finally plunges her arms in his head and pulls out the sockets.¹²¹⁰ This grisly description may echo verbally the scene in the *Bacchae*, where the frenzied Agave grabs Pentheus' left arm, plants her foot on his side, and tears off his shoulder.¹²¹¹ The distinguishing difference between the two situations is that while Agave's uncanny strength is bestowed on her by Dionysus, Hecuba owes her superhuman power to her rage.

¹²⁰⁸ Hopkins 2000, vv. 13.561-564.

¹²⁰⁹ Hec. 1075-1078 ποῖ πᾶ φέρομαι τέκν' ἔρημα λιπῶν / Βάκχαις Ἄϊδα διαμοιρᾶσαι / σφακτά, κυσίν τε φοινίαν δαῖτ' / ἀνήμερόν τ' ὄρειον ἐκβολάν;.

¹²¹⁰ Met. 13.560-564 atque ita correpto captiuarum agmina matrum / inuocat et digitos in perfida lumina condit / expellitque genis oculos (facit ira potentem) / immergitque manus foedataque sanguine sonti / non lumen (neque enim superest), loca luminis haurit. I opted for Heinsius' emendation *potentem* instead of the reading *nocentem* attested by the manuscripts, on the grounds that it explicitly alludes to the Euripidean intertext.

¹²¹¹ Ba. 1125-1128 λαβοῦσα δ' ὠλέναισ' ἀριστεράν χέρα, / πλευραῖσιν ἀντιβᾶσα τοῦ δυσδαίμονος / ἀπεσπάραξαν ὄμρον, οὐχ ὑπὸ σθένους / ἀλλ' ὁ θεὸς εὐμάρειαν ἐπεδίδου γεροῖν, 1135-1136 πᾶσα δ' ἡματομένη / χεῖρας διεσφαίριζε σάρκα Πενθέως.

Ovid also diverges significantly from Euripides in his description of the aftermath of Polymestor's blinding. In the *Hecuba* the blinded king rushes out of the tent on all fours like a wild animal seeking to exact vengeance from the Trojan women by devouring their flesh (*Hec.* 1056-1082). When his attempts at retribution prove futile, he calls upon the Thracians and Greeks for aid (*Hec.* 1089-1097), but only Agamemnon arrives who is secretly in league with the Trojan queen. What follows is a Euripidean agon, in which Hecuba and Polymestor plead their respective cases before Agamemnon, who plays the role of a judge and announces his verdict in favor of Hecuba (*Hec.* 1109-1251). In the *Metamorphoses*, on the other hand, Polymestor is slain by Hecuba and the Thracians enraged by their king's demise assault Hecuba by hurling stones and spears against her.¹²¹² The Ovidian scene may evoke instead the first messenger speech of the *Bacchae*, in which the countrymen infuriated by being plundered by the maenads attack them with spears.¹²¹³ In addition, just as the Bacchantes are immune to the peasants' weapons on account of Dionysus' divine protection, likewise Hecuba cannot be harmed by the Thracians' missiles due to the fact that she is transformed into a dog. Finally, the Thracian missile attack against Hecuba may constitute an implicit allusion to the Virgilian narrative of Polydorus, in which the Thracians murdered the Trojan prince by shooting spears against him.¹²¹⁴ In other words, Ovid's Thracians attempt to kill Hecuba in the way that the Virgilian Thracians slew her son.

¹²¹² *Met.* 13.565-568 clade sui Thracum gens inritata tyranni / Troada telorum lapidumque incessere iactu / coepit; at haec missum rauco cum murmure saxum / morsibus insequitur [...].

¹²¹³ *Ba.* 758-764 οἱ δ' ὀργῆς ὕπο / ἐς ὄπλ' ἐχώρου φερόμενοι βακχῶν ὕπο· / οὐπερ τὸ δεινὸν ἦν θέαμ' ἰδεῖν, ἀναξ· / τοῖς μὲν γὰρ οὐχ ἦμασσε λογχῶτόν βέλος, / οὐ χαλκός, οὐ σίδηρος, <ἐνθεον χροά>, / κείναι δὲ θύρσους ἐξανειῖσαι χερῶν / ἐτραυμάτιζον κάπενώτιζον φυγῆ / γυναῖκες ἄνδρας οὐκ ἄνευ θεῶν τινοσ.

¹²¹⁴ *Aen.* 3.45-46 nam Polydorus ego. hic confixum ferrea textit / telorum seges et iaculis increvit acutis.

The Ovidian episode concludes with the description of Hecuba's canine metamorphosis, which deviates from the Euripidean account.¹²¹⁵ In the Greek play the blind Polymestor announces a prophecy revealed to him by Dionysus, according to which Hecuba will be transformed into a dog during the voyage to Greece and drown in the sea (Hec. 1259-1267). In the *Metamorphoses*, on the contrary, the Trojan queen turns into a dog while she is being assaulted by the Thracians and subsequently wanders in the fields of Thrace (Met. 13.567-571). Ovid does preserve, however, the Euripidean action concerning Hecuba's tomb. In both texts the Trojan queen is eventually buried at a promontory on the Thracian coast, which is named Cynossema ("Dog's tomb") after her.¹²¹⁶ Ovid's transferal of the setting of Hecuba's metamorphosis and death from sea to land may have been inspired by the Virgilian rewriting of the death of Polydorus. Whereas Euripides' Polymestor throws Polydorus' body into the sea, his Virgilian counterpart buries him at the Thracian coast. In the final scene of the Ovidian narrative we witness Hecuba roaming the fields of Thrace in her canine form and howling mournfully in remembrance of her misfortunes.¹²¹⁷ This pathetic denouement echoes the Trojan queen's first appearance in the narrative lamenting her sons at the Trojan cemetery (Met. 13.423-428). Ovid's concluding portrayal of Hecuba diverges from that of Euripides, who depicts her as deriving joy from her retribution against Polymestor and being indifferent to her impending metamorphosis and death.¹²¹⁸

¹²¹⁵ Hopkins 2000, vv. 13.569-570.

¹²¹⁶ Met. 13.569-570 *locus exstat et ex re / nomen habet*; Hec. 1270-1273 Εκ. θανοῦσα δ' ἢ ζῶσ' ἐνθάδ' ἐκπλήσω ἴβιον†; / Πο. θανοῦσα· τύμβωι δ' ὄνομα σῶι κεκλήσεται ... / Εκ. μορφῆς ἐπαιδὸν μή τι τῆς ἐμῆς ἐρεῖς; / Πο. κυνὸς ταλαίνης σῆμα, ναυτίλοις τέκμαρ.

¹²¹⁷ Met. 13.570-571 *ueterumque diu memor illa malorum / tum quoque Sithonios ululauit maesta per agros.*

¹²¹⁸ Hec. 1257-1258 Πο. χαίρεις ὑβρίζουσ' εἰς ἔμ', ὃ πανοῦργε σύ. / Εκ. οὐ γάρ με χαίρειν χρῆ σε τιμωρουμένην; 1274 Εκ. οὐδὲν μέλει μοι, σοῦ γέ μοι δόντος δίκην.

Chapter 5

Hippolytus in Aricia: Romanizing Euripides

The earliest known sources for the Hippolytus myth are the tragedies of Euripides and Sophocles, all three of which treat Phaedra's fatal illicit passion for her stepson, which ultimately results in her suicide and Hippolytus' death as a result of Theseus' curse. Euripides composed two plays about the story, *Hippolytos Kalyptomenos* and *Hippolytos Stephanephoros* (hereafter referred to as HippK and HippS respectively), while Sophocles wrote a *Phaedra*. Out of the three plays only HippS is fully extant. Our knowledge of HippK is based on a fragmentary hypothesis and about twenty fragments and likewise no more than twenty fragments survive from *Phaedra*.¹²¹⁹ As regards chronology the prevalent view in scholarship is that HippK (ca. 436-433) antedates HippS (428 BC) and Sophocles' tragedy should be dated between the two Euripidean plays (ca. 435-429 BC).¹²²⁰ The attribution of an earlier date to HippK is mainly founded on the hypothesis of HippS by Aristophanes of Byzantium, who remarks that the extant play was written after HippK, because what had been "unseemly" and "reprehensible" in the earlier play was "corrected" in it.¹²²¹

Critics have suggested that this morally improper aspect of HippK pertains to Phaedra's direct confrontation of Hippolytus, which constitutes a major difference between the two plays.¹²²² Whereas in HippS the Nurse makes an approach to Hippolytus without Phaedra's

¹²¹⁹ For a detailed reconstruction of HippK and *Phaedra* see Sommerstein/Talboy 2006, 256-266 and 275-287 respectively.

¹²²⁰ On the relative chronology of the three plays see Sommerstein/Talboy 2006, 266-272 and 287-289.

¹²²¹ Halleran 1995, 25.

¹²²² Halleran 1995, 26; Collard/Cropp 2008, 467-468 (Vol. I); Sommerstein/Talboy 2006, 258.

knowledge, in an attempt to arrange an adulterous affair between them, in HippK Phaedra herself tries to seduce her stepson (fr. 430). Thus, the earlier Hippolytus most likely portrayed a wanton Phaedra bent on adultery in sharp contrast to her virtuous counterpart in HippS, where she struggles against her passion and displays a deep concern for preserving her good reputation (eukleia) by avoiding any disgraceful deed. Another significant divergence between the two tragedies relates to the time of Phaedra's death.¹²²³ In HippS she hangs herself prior to the return of Theseus and falsely accuses Hippolytus of rape by means of a suicide note. On the contrary in HippK Phaedra commits suicide after the truth has been exposed and Hippolytus has perished in the fatal chariot ride. Finally, in contrast to the HippS, where the credulous Theseus is entirely certain of the truthfulness of Phaedra's incrimination of Hippolytus, in HippK he orders an inquiry into his wife's charge, probably after condemning Hippolytus to exile but before the messenger's report of the chariot disaster.¹²²⁴ On the basis of evidence drawn from the fragmentary hypothesis it has been postulated that Theseus devises a ruse in order to test Phaedra's fidelity.¹²²⁵ He orders a slave to disguise himself as Hippolytus by putting on his clothes and covering his head in the manner of a suppliant. The false Hippolytus then elicits the truth from Phaedra in a meeting probably spied upon by Theseus from a place of concealment.

The primary divergences between Sophocles' tragedy and Euripides' Hippolytus plays can be briefly summarized as follows. To begin with, the reason for Theseus' absence differs from play to play.¹²²⁶ In HippS the Athenian king is visiting an unspecified sanctuary in order to receive an oracle, while in HippK he is in Thessaly with Peirithous. In Phaedra, on the contrary,

¹²²³ Collard/Cropp 2008, 468 (Vol. I).

¹²²⁴ Collard/Cropp 2008, 470 (Vol. I).

¹²²⁵ Sommerstein/Talboy 2006, 263-264.

¹²²⁶ Sommerstein/Talboy 2006, 275.

Theseus has descended into Hades with Peirithous in order to abduct Persephone and is presumed dead. Thus, given that the Sophoclean Phaedra considers herself a widow, her passion for Hippolytus was probably not depicted as deliberately illicit (though certainly still improper). Moreover, just as in HippS the Nurse functions as a mediator between Phaedra and Hippolytus, but the roles are reversed.¹²²⁷ In particular, whereas in Euripides' play the Nurse approaches Hippolytus without her mistress' knowledge falsely claiming that she will use a magic love philter to free her from her passion, in the Sophoclean tragedy she initially refuses to act as a go-between and only yields after Phaedra makes a counterfeit threat of suicide. Furthermore, Hippolytus' early departure in Phaedra before the return of Theseus precludes two important plot elements of the Euripidean plays, namely the confrontation (agon) between father and son as well as the need for Theseus to banish his son.¹²²⁸ Finally, an attractive hypothesis suggested by critics is that Seneca's portrayal of a repentant Phaedra confessing her love and false rape charge over the corpse of Hippolytus and offering him a lock of hair before committing suicide may have been drawn from Sophocles' play.¹²²⁹

There is also a Roman version of the Hippolytus myth attested to by Virgil (*Aen.* 7.761-782), who recounts Hippolytus' resurrection by Aesculapius and transportation to Italy by Diana, where he became identified with the minor local divinity Virbius. The fusion of the two figures served as an aetiological explanation of a religious taboo, which forbade the admission of horses in Diana's sacred grove in Aricia in light of the fact that Hippolytus was destroyed by his own

¹²²⁷ Sommerstein/Talbot 2006, 276-278.

¹²²⁸ Sommerstein/Talbot 2006, 279-280.

¹²²⁹ Sommerstein/Talbot 2006, 283-284

steeds (7.778-780).¹²³⁰ Virgil, who according to Servius (*Aen.* 7.778) derived this story from Callimachus' *Aetia* (fr. 190), introduces the myth by including in his catalogue of Italian warriors Virbius Jr., the son of Hippolytus/Virbius and Aricia, who is very likely a character invented by the poet.¹²³¹ It has been suggested that the narrator implicitly foreshadows the young Virbius' untimely death, on the grounds that he is never mentioned again in the narrative and is depicted driving his chariot to battle (7.781-782), an image which bears ominous connotations in view of the immediately preceding account of his father's fatal chariot ride (7.779-780).¹²³²

The Ovidian episode of Hippolytus-Virbius (*Met.* 15.492-546) is embedded in the narrative of Numa and Egeria (*Met.* 15.479-491, 547-553). Numa's death following a long and a peaceful reign causes public lamentation and his wife Egeria flees into the grove of Aricia, where she disrupts with her dirge the sacred rites of Diana. Her fellow nymphs offer her words of consolation and the god Virbius attempts to comfort her by recounting the story of his own death in a chariot crash and his subsequent restoration to life and apotheosis. Egeria, however, remains inconsolable for her loss and is eventually transformed by Diana into a spring. Another Ovidian treatment of the myth is found in the *Fasti* (6.733-768), where the Virbius story is inserted into the aetiological narrative of Aesculapius' death by Jupiter's thunderbolt as punishment for the revival of Hippolytus followed by his own resurrection and catasterism, namely his metamorphosis into the constellation Ophiuchus.

In this chapter I will attempt to show that Ovid conflates the Euripidean, Virgilian, and Sophoclean models, thereby fashioning an innovative narrative which constitutes a palimpsest of

¹²³⁰ Bömer 1986, vv. 15.492-546.

¹²³¹ Horsfall 2000, vv. 7.761-782.

¹²³² Horsfall 2000, vv. 7.763-764, 781.

multiple intertexts. In particular, he reworks Virgil's narrative of Hippolytus-Virbius in an entirely different context, in the sense that he converts the Virgilian account embedded in the catalogue of Latin warriors into a speech addressed by Virbius to lamenting Egeria. At the same time the Ovidian narrative appropriates elements from all three tragic treatments of the Phaedra and Hippolytus myth. To begin with, the messenger speech of HippS reporting Hippolytus' chariot catastrophe is transformed into Virbius' posthumous account of his own violent demise and the Roman poet signals the evocation of his model by means of explicit allusions. Moreover, I will contend that the prologue and epilogue of Virbius' speech constitute a novel reworking of Artemis' epilogue speech as *dea ex machina* in HippS. In particular, they are both divine characters who offer a retrospective account of the same events (i.e. Phaedra's adulterous passion and false rape allegation as well as Theseus' decree of exile and fatal curse) and at the same time recount Hippolytus' posthumous destiny (i.e. hero cult in Troezen and deification in Italy respectively). Furthermore, the two speeches have the same narrative function: just as the Euripidean Artemis tries to comfort Hippolytus for his imminent death, likewise Virbius' account of his own fate serves as a consolatory mythological exemplum by means of which he attempts to soothe Egeria's grief for her husband's demise. As we shall see, however, both speakers ironically fail to comfort their addressees because they employ ill-chosen arguments.

Ovid's intertextual dialogue with HippK can be examined only in terms of plot, since the meager fragments of the play render impossible the detection of any verbal echoes. I will argue that the Ovidian narrative diverges in significant ways from HippS and echoes HippK instead. First, Virbius describes his attempted seduction as a direct confrontation with Phaedra in accordance with HippK and contrary to HippS, where the Nurse approaches Hippolytus of her own accord. Second, whereas in HippS Aphrodite delivers the prologue speech explaining that

she has caused Phaedra to fall in love with Hippolytus as a means of punishing him for his spurning of her worship, Virbius makes no reference to a divine intervention on the part of the goddess. This could be attributed to the briefness of the account or to Virbius' reluctance to mention even the name of the goddess whom he detests. It is possible, however, that Ovid may allude to HippK, where Aphrodite probably did not participate in the dramatic action and Phaedra was depicted as entirely culpable for her passion.¹²³³ Third, the Ovidian Hippolytus perishes during the chariot ride in sharp contrast to HippS, in which he is mortally wounded, but returns on stage and is reconciled with Theseus before he dies. This version of Hippolytus' death converges with that of HippK, where it has been postulated that the messenger reports the youth's demise and his body is brought back on stage as Theseus laments the loss of his son.¹²³⁴

Ovid's intimate knowledge of HippK is attested by his earlier elegiac version of the myth in *Heroides* 4, Phaedra's letter to Hippolytus, where he makes some overt allusions to the lost play. First of all, the reason for Theseus' absence mentioned by Phaedra, namely his sojourn with Peirithous in Thessaly (*Her.* 4.109-112), is in agreement with HippK. On the other hand, in HippS the Athenian king is visiting an oracle and in Sophocles' *Phaedra* he has descended into the underworld.¹²³⁵ What is more, the Ovidian heroine's letter constitutes a direct attempt to seduce her stepson and thus corresponds to Phaedra's direct approach to Hippolytus in HippK. This interpretation is supported by an allusion to a fragment of the lost play. Ovid's Phaedra claims that Amor, who rules even over the gods themselves, has commanded her to write the

¹²³³ Halleran 1995, 38.

¹²³⁴ Halleran 1995, 27; Sommerstein/Talboy 2006, 265. Ovid may also be alluding to Sophocles' *Phaedra*, where it has been likewise hypothesized that Hippolytus dies in the chariot crash and his corpse is carried back on stage (Sommerstein/Talboy 2006, 283).

¹²³⁵ Sommerstein/Talboy 2006, 256.

love letter to Hippolytus and prays for the god's assistance in her endeavor to seduce him.¹²³⁶ In an analogous fashion her Euripidean predecessor asserts that the omnipotent Eros is her teacher of daring and audacity, a statement which foreshadows her confrontation with Hippolytus.¹²³⁷ In addition, Phaedra in the *Heroides* (4.109-128) attempts to induce Hippolytus to have an illicit affair with her, on the grounds that Theseus has wrought injury on them both, referring inter alia to his multiple infidelities. This appeal to an existing resentment towards Theseus may evoke HippK, where her tragic antecedent complains that she is neglected by her husband, apparently referring to Theseus' sexual infidelities.¹²³⁸

Finally, the Roman poet's probable intertextual engagement with Sophocles' Phaedra is attested by a single, but essential detail. His Hippolytus drives his chariot towards Troezen, which implies that he comes from Athens.¹²³⁹ This may constitute an allusion to the Sophoclean play which most likely had an Athenian setting in contrast to both HippS and HippK, where the action took place in Troezen.¹²⁴⁰

¹²³⁶ Her. 4.11-16 quidquid Amor iussit, non est contemnere tutum; / regnat et in dominos ius habet ille deos. / ille mihi primo dubitanti scribere dixit: / 'scribe! dabit victas ferreus ille manus.' / adsit et, ut nostras avido fovet igne medullas, / figat sic animos in mea vota tuos!

¹²³⁷ fr. 430 ἔχω δὲ τόλμης καὶ θράσους διδάσκαλον / ἐν τοῖς ἀμηγάνοισιν εὐπορότατον, / Ἔρωτα, πάντων δυσμαχώτατον θεόν.

¹²³⁸ Sommerstein/Talboy 2006, 256-257 and n. 21.

¹²³⁹ Met. 13.506-507 Pittheam profugo curru Troezena petebam / iamque Corinthiaci carpebam litora ponti (cf. F. 6.739 non impune pius iuvenis Troezena petebat).

¹²⁴⁰ Curley 1999, 158; Sommerstein/Talboy 2006, 275.

5.1 Virbius' speech as *consolatio* and posthumous account

As noted above, the story of Hippolytus is inserted as a mythological exemplum in the form of a consolatory speech addressed by Virbius to lamenting Egeria. A topos in consolationes was to argue that others have suffered worse calamities than the person being consoled. It is the only point made by Hippolytus to Egeria (as regards the nymphs, we do not know what their "words of consolation" consisted of), and appropriately so. I mean that this is no regular, fully developed *consolatio*, but one constructed out of the calamity that befell Hippolytus and intended to diminish Egeria's grief. In other words it is a tragic story turned into a consolation argument. There is no direct literary precedent for the consolatory function of the Hippolytus story and it is probably an Ovidian invention. The Roman poet, however, may have drawn inspiration from thematically related literary models. The archetypal consolation speech occurs in the last book of the *Iliad*, where Achilles tries to comfort Priam for the death of his son Hector and persuade him to share a meal with him by recounting the more wretched fate of Niobe (Il. 24.599-620). This mythological precedent is appropriately adduced because the situation is analogous: both Priam and Niobe lament the loss of their offspring, but eventually make a temporary pause in their mourning in order to eat before resuming their dirge. Niobe's fate sounds worse, since she lost all her twelve children, whereas many of Priam's progeny are still alive; on the other hand the magnitude of Hector's death and the repercussions of his loss were incalculable, eventually leading to the fall of Troy and death or enslavement of its citizens and most notably its noble ones.

Another precedent occurs in Callimachus, *Bath of Pallas* (Hymn 5.95-130), where Athena attempts to console Chariclo for the blinding of her son Teiresias by prophesying the more

disastrous fate of Actaeon. The two situations are again similar in that both Tiresias and Actaeon accidentally beheld virgin goddesses bathing nude (Athena and Artemis respectively) and were subsequently punished by them. The argument in Hymn 5 is that Actaeon's fate is more tragic, in the sense that Tiresias was blinded by Athena but granted the gift of prophecy in compensation (5.119-126), while Actaeon will be first transformed by Artemis into a stag and then torn apart and devoured by his own hounds (5.107-119). From a thematic viewpoint the Callimachean episode looks more attractive than the Homeric one as a precedent for the Virbius-Egeria story. Just as the death of Actaeon, which Athena adduces as a consolatory exemplum in an effort to soothe Chariclo's sorrow for her son's blinding, involves the youth's sparagmos by his own hounds, likewise Virbius' account of his demise by means of which he tries to console Egeria for her husband's passing entails, as we shall see below, a dismemberment by his own horses.

Virbius' speech to Egeria is prefaced by the deified hero's wish that his own fate did not have the ability to relieve Egeria's grief.¹²⁴¹ What he actually wishes for is that he had not suffered so terribly himself, but unfortunately he did suffer and his calamity can now offer comfort to Egeria. There is subtle irony in the fact that Virbius laments his tragic ending and at the same time appears absolutely convinced of the consolatory force of his fate, since in the end it turns out that his sufferings cannot provide any consolation to Egeria and lessen her grief.¹²⁴² The outcome that belies Virbius' conviction and expectation has to do with the fact that his fate is not analogous to Numa's, as he thinks (15.494 *similes aliorum respice casus*), and as a matter of fact his ultimate destiny is far better than the king's. Specifically, Numa enjoyed a blissful

¹²⁴¹ Met. 15.493-495 'siste modum' dixit, 'neque enim fortuna querenda / sola tua est. similes aliorum respice casus; / mitius ista ferēs. utinamque exempla dolentem / non mea te possent releuare -sed et mea possunt.'

¹²⁴² Met. 15.547-549 non tamen Egeriae luctus aliena leuare / damna ualent, montisque iacens radicibus imis liquitur in lacrimas [...].

marital life with a devoted wife who inconsolably lamented his death to the point of eternally weeping for him in the shape of a spring. By contrast Hippolytus abstained from sex and rejected marriage and became the object of an illicit passion by his step-mother that proved the source of his doom. What is more, as a ruler Numa exercised political control over the Latins,¹²⁴³ established sacred rituals, and taught a peaceful way of life to his warlike people. Hippolytus, on the other hand, did not participate in political life and devoted his life exclusively to the worship of Diana, to hunting and chariot-riding; and at the most critical moment of his life he was unable to exercise control over his horses.¹²⁴⁴ At first sight Hippolytus' fate seems more pathetic than Numa's: the Latin king died at an old age "having completed the term of kingship and his life",¹²⁴⁵ while Hippolytus experienced a violent death at the bloom of his youth on account of his father's curse and his stepmother's false rape allegation. Eventually, however, he was handed a more blessed lot than Numa, in that he was both resurrected and deified. In these terms there is further irony in the fact that Virbius feels outrage at the mere thought that Egeria may dare to compare his own much more pitiful fate to her husband's destiny and her own loss.¹²⁴⁶ As regards his motivation for offering to alleviate Egeria's grief, this looks subtly selfish and humorous: what triggers his consolatory speech is the fact that Egeria is disturbing the sacred rites of Diana with her sighs and lamentations;¹²⁴⁷ she therefore must be made to stop doing this!

¹²⁴³ Met. 15.480-481 in patriam remeasse ferunt ultroque petitum / accepisse Numam populi Latialis habenas;

¹²⁴⁴ Met. 518-520 ego ducere uana / frena manu spumis albetibus oblita luctor / et retro lentas tendo resupinus habenas.

¹²⁴⁵ Met. 15.485 qui postquam senior regnumque aevumque peregit, [...].

¹²⁴⁶ Met. 15.530-531 num potes aut audes cladi componere nostrae, nympha, tuam?

¹²⁴⁷ Met. 15.487-490 nam coniunx urbe relicta / uallis Aricinae densis latet abdita siluis / sacraque Oresteae gemitu questuque Dianae / impedit.

The origin of the consolatory function of Virbius' speech can be ultimately traced back to HippS and specifically to Artemis' epilogue speech to Hippolytus. I will contend that both Ovid's Virbius and the Euripidean Artemis make consolation speeches respectively to Egeria lamenting the death of her husband and to Hippolytus who is himself on the brink of death. Just as Egeria's grief, however, cannot be soothed by Virbius, whose situation is entirely different from Numa's, in an analogous fashion Hippolytus cannot be comforted by Artemis' arguments. In particular, her imminent revenge on Aphrodite's protégé is irrelevant to him (HippS 1416-1422), while the honors that Hippolytus is promised to receive in recompense for his tragic fate, namely the establishment of his cult worship in Troezen (1423-1430), is posthumous and does not change the fact that he is presently undergoing an agonizing and untimely death. In addition, just as Virbius shows lack of empathy towards the nymph, since his incentive for the consolation of Egeria is her disruption of Diana's sacred rites by her mourning, likewise Artemis does not display true compassion toward Hippolytus: she claims that she is prohibited by divine law to weep for a mortal and departs from the stage before Hippolytus dies to avoid defiling her sight by looking upon a corpse.¹²⁴⁸ Finally, just as Egeria continues to weep completely unmoved by Virbius' *consolatio*, similarly Hippolytus remains inconsolable after Artemis' speech and even lightly rebukes the goddess for the ease with which she abandons him in his final moments despite the fact that he is her favorite mortal.¹²⁴⁹ Hence, the Ovidian Virbius can be viewed as a mirror image of Euripides' Artemis, in the sense that they both deliver consolation speeches that utterly fail to comfort their addressees.

¹²⁴⁸ HippS. 1395-1396 *Ἰπ. ὀρᾶς με, δέσποιν', ὡς ἔχω, τὸν ἄθλιον;* / *Ἀρ. ὀρῶ· κατ' ὄσσων δ' οὐ θέμις βαλεῖν δάκρυ,* 1437-1439 *Ἀρ. καὶ χαῖρ'· ἐμοὶ γὰρ οὐ θέμις φθιτοῦς ὀρᾶν / οὐδ' ὄμμα χραίνειν θανασίμοισιν ἐκπνοαῖς;* / *ὀρῶ δέ σ' ἤδη τοῦδε πλησίον κακοῦ.*

¹²⁴⁹ HippS 1440-1441 / *Ἰπ. χαίρουσα καὶ σὺ στεῖχε, παρθέν' ὀλβία· / μακρὰν δὲ λείπεις ραιδίως ὀμιλίαν.*

Finally, Ovid undermines the pathos of Hippolytus' death by shifting the emphasis from the tragedy of Hippolytus to the tragedy of Numa. In HippS Artemis predicts that the honors that Hippolytus will receive as cult hero will include a pre-marital ritual in which unwed maidens will cut locks of their hair as funeral offerings, mourn him eternally with copious tears, and sing songs in his honor.¹²⁵⁰ Furthermore, the chorus closes the play by stating that Hippolytus' demise will bring about public lamentation in Troezen and Athens, because, as they say, "sorrowful tales concerning illustrious men have greater power to move".¹²⁵¹ In sharp contrast Virbius' account of his own demise has no emotional effect on Egeria, but it is the death of Numa which occasions the dirge of his people (15.486-487) and his wife's inconsolable grief until she is finally turned by Diana into an eternal fountain of tears (787-490, 547-551).

The environment in which Virbius' speech is placed is, however, different from that of the Euripidean tragedy. Verbal allusions and the sylvan landscape (the grove of Aricia, inhabited by wood and lake nymphs), where the encounter between Egeria and Hippolytus takes place, recall the pastoral tradition (silvae in Virgil's Eclogues is a synecdoche for the pastoral world and the pastoral song). Specifically the language used for describing the public lamentation following Numa's demise recalls the opening of the universal lament for the death of Daphnis in Virgil's fifth Eclogue (in Ovid the nymphae are mentioned immediately next).¹²⁵² This is the song of the Virgilian Mopsus (Ecl. 5.20-44) which in turn reworks the song of Thyrsis in Theocritus, Idyll 1.64-145 about the "sufferings of Daphnis". Moreover, the Theocritean-

¹²⁵⁰ HippS 1423-1429 Ἀρ. σοὶ δ', ὦ ταλαίπωρ', ἀντὶ τῶνδε τῶν κακῶν / τιμὰς μεγίστας ἐν πόλει Τροζηνίαι / δώσω· κόραι γὰρ ἄζυγες γάμων πάρος / κόμας κερδύνται σοι, δι' αἰῶνος μακροῦ / πένθη μέγιστα δακρῶν καρπουμένωι / ἀεὶ δὲ μουσοποιὸς ἐς σὲ παρθένων / ἔσται μέριμνα [...].

¹²⁵¹ HippS 1462-1466 Χο. κοινὸν τόδ' ἄχος πᾶσι πολίταις / ἦλθεν ἀέλπτως. / πολλῶν δακρῶν ἔσται πίτυλος· / τῶν γὰρ μεγάλων ἀξιοπενθεῖς / φῆμαι μᾶλλον κατέχουσιν.

¹²⁵² Met. 15.485-486 exstinctum Latiaeque nurus populusque patresque / deflere Numam; Virg. Ecl. 5.20-21 exstinctum Nymphae crudeli funere Daphnin / flebant.

Virgilian Daphnis and the Ovidian Egeria share the motif of inconsolable grief for the absence and death of a beloved companion respectively. There is also an intriguing parallel as regards the way in which the lives of Theocritus' Daphnis and Ovid's Egeria end: the former "wasted away" (1.66 ἐτάκετο) because of unsatisfied love and eventually "went to the stream" (whatever ἔβα ῥόον may mean) and "the waters closed over him" (11.140-141); the latter "melts away in tears", until Diana out of pity transforms her into a cool fountain.¹²⁵³ Fountains are key features of the pastoral landscape and Egeria's transformation makes of her an integral natural element of the grove of Aricia where she retired after the death of her husband (cf. the transformations included in Virgil, Eclogue 6). The "eternal waters" into which Diana reduced her limbs are a new manifestation of her unending tears and thus Egeria is destined to weep eternally for Numa.

As we noted above, Ovid refashions the Euripidean messenger speech recounting Hippolytus' chariot crash into Virbius' retrospective narrative of his own death. The closest antecedent for a character who gives a posthumous account of his own demise is Deiphobus in Aeneid 6 (494-534). During his descent into the Underworld Aeneas meets the ghost of his comrade-in-arms, Deiphobus, still bearing the marks of the cruel wounds inflicted upon him. In grief and remorse Aeneas asks what happened, explaining that he was not able to find Deiphobus' body for burial. Deiphobus replies that Helen, his wife, had betrayed him to the vengeance of Menelaus and Odysseus (6.520-529). Deiphobus is so brutally mutilated (his face and hands mangled, the ears ripped from his head, his nostrils cut off by an ugly wound) that Aeneas barely recognizes him.¹²⁵⁴ In other words in the hands of Menelaus Deiphobus suffered a

¹²⁵³ Met. 15.545-551 non tamen Egeriae luctus aliena leuare / damna ualent, montisque iacens radicibus imis / liquitur in lacrimas, donec pietate dolentis / mota soror Phoebi gelidum de corpore fontem / fecit et aeternas artus tenuauit in undas.

¹²⁵⁴ Aen. 6.494-499 atque hic Priamidem laniatum corpore toto / Deiphobum uidet et lacerum crudeliter ora, / ora manusque ambas, populataque tempora raptis / auribus et truncas inhoneste uulnere naris. / uix adeo agnouit pauitatem ac dira tegentem supplicia, et notis compellat uocibus ultro:

treatment so harsh that caused him to become almost unrecognizable. In an analogous fashion the Ovidian Hippolytus suffered a sparagmos when he was thrown from the chariot and his body was entangled in the reins and torn to unrecognizable pieces.¹²⁵⁵ The two heroes share one more significant affinity: in their respective account of events they both bitterly denounce a treacherous female who was the cause of their violent death, respectively Helen¹²⁵⁶ and Phaedra.¹²⁵⁷ Therefore, the closest precedent for Hippolytus' narrative of his own sparagmos (15.532 lacerum [...] corpus) is Deiphobus' posthumous account of his mutilation (6.495 lacerum crudeliter ora); both characters accuse devious women for their tragic fate.

In conclusion, Ovid's point of departure for shaping the Hippolytus story a consolatory speech was the epilogue speech of HippS addressed by Artemis to dying Hippolytus. Virbius' speech is in addition placed in a pastoral context involving inconsolable grief for the death or absence of a companion. It is furthermore thematically close to the literary precedent of Athena's consolation speech to Chariclo in Callimachus' Hymn 5. Finally, as an account in which a character posthumously recounts his own death Virbius' speech may be indebted to the Deiphobus episode in Aeneid 6.

¹²⁵⁵ Met. 15.523-532 excutior curru, lorisque tenentibus artus / uiscera uiua trahi, neruos in stipe teneri, / membra rapi partim, partim reprensa relinqui, / ossa grauem dare fracta sonum fessamque uideres / exhalari animam nullasque in corpore partes noscere quas posses, unumque erat omnia uulnus. / [...] / uidi quoque luce carentia regna / et lacerum foui Phlegethontide corpus in unda [...].

¹²⁵⁶ Aen. 6.511-512 sed me fata mea et scelus exitiale Lacaenae his mersere malis; illa haec monumenta reliquit.

¹²⁵⁷ Met. 15.497-504 fando aliquem Hippolytum uestras si contigit aures / credulitate patris, sceleratae fraude nouercae / occubuisse neci, mirabere uixque probabo, sed tamen ille ego sum. / me Pasiphaeia quondam temptatum frustra patrium temerare cubile, / quod uoluit, finxit uoluisse et crimine uerso / (indiciine metu magis offensane repulsae?) / damnauit [...].

5.2 Virbius as “messenger” and “deus ex machina”

Virbius’ speech to Egeria constitutes a conflation of two distinct scenes of HippS: the messenger report and Artemis’ speech in the exodos. Dan Curley has argued that Virbius’ prologue¹²⁵⁸ evokes the prologue of Aphrodite in HippS, in that in accordance with dramatic prologue conventions both speakers identify themselves at the very start of their speech and offer a general outline of the story.¹²⁵⁹ I contend instead, however, that upon closer scrutiny Virbius’ preface does not conform to the conventions of a prologue speech, but rather to those of an epilogue speech, for the following reasons:

(a) Whereas Aphrodite’s speech is prospective, in that she foretells what is going to take place in the play (Hippolytus’ punishment for his hybris, Phaedra’s passion, Theseus’ curse, and Hippolytus’ death) Virbius’ narrative is retrospective in nature, recapitulating what has already happened, just like Artemis’ speech in the exodos of the Euripidean play.

(b) In contrast to Aphrodite’s prologue, which anticipates the future events in a general and somewhat vague manner so that the audience may still feel suspense and be surprised by the final

¹²⁵⁸ Met. 15.497-504: *fando aliquem Hippolytum uestras si contigit aures / credulitate patris, sceleratae fraude nouercae / occubuisse neci, mirabere uixque probabo, sed tamen ille ego sum. / me Pasiphaeia quondam temptatum frustra patrium temerare cubile, / quod uoluit, finxit uoluisse et crimine uerso / (indiciine metu magis offensane repulsae?) / damnauit, [...]*

¹²⁵⁹ Curley 1999, 150-151: “The prologue function of these lines (15.497-500) should not be underestimated. First, they offer a blueprint for the ensuing narrative: Virbius’ audience can expect to hear of the intrigue with Phaedra, the curse of Theseus, and the untimely demise of Hippolytus. Moreover, the blueprint is a general one, much like in an actual tragedy, for the details of the intrigue and the curse remain to be told. Second, these lines contain the speaker’s self-identification, another crucial element of the tragic prologue. Third, and perhaps most intriguing, this prologue is delivered by a god-Virbius, *ex pagina* — as is often the case in tragedy, and is the case in the extant Hippolytus. The play opens with Aphrodite, who explains that Hippolytus has slighted her (10ff.), that she has made Phaedra love him (24ff.), and that Theseus will cause his son’s death as a result (41ff.). Her prologue, in fact, is striking in its conformity to the ideal: she identifies herself to the audience (1f.), and her outline, more important, of the drama is not so prescriptive as to remove all suspense or surprise for the audience. So Virbius’ introduction, even as it bears the trappings of epic, seems to engage the Hippolytus as a code-model, appropriating the tragic prologue-code of the genre as manifest in the play.”

outcome of events, both Virbius and Artemis include in their account specific plot details, such as Hippolytus' exile and Phaedra's false rape charge.

(c) While Aphrodite's speech ends with Hippolytus' death, the narratives of both Virbius and Artemis describe his posthumous fate, which is a standard feature of divine epilogue speeches: the goddess predicts the establishment of Hippolytus' hero cult in Troezen, while Virbius recounts his resurrection and deification.

(d) There are no verbal echoes of Aphrodite's speech in Virbius' opening lines, but, as we shall see, he makes several explicit allusions to Artemis' speech.

The prologue of Virbius' speech offers a compressed summary of the Phaedra and Hippolytus story that evokes and reverses the retrospective account of Artemis in HippS and, as I will argue, it may instead echo the plot of HippK. Both Artemis and Virbius open their speech by censuring the credulous Theseus and the deceitful Phaedra for causing Hippolytus' death.¹²⁶⁰ At this point, however, the convergences end. To begin with, Virbius condemns Phaedra unequivocally for her illicit love, but does not refer to an intervention on the part of Aphrodite.¹²⁶¹ On the contrary, the wording plainly suggests that Phaedra is entirely responsible for her adulterous passion. Furthermore, no mediation of the Nurse is mentioned and Phaedra is said to have approached Hippolytus directly in an attempt to seduce him.¹²⁶² Unless this is a question of a drastically abbreviated narrative, the aforementioned elements could possibly

¹²⁶⁰ Met. 15.497-499: *fando aliquem Hippolytum uestras si contigit aures / credulitate patris, sceleratae fraude nouercae / occubuisse neci [...]*; HippS. 1286-1289: *Θησεῦ, τί τάλας τοῖσδε συνήδη, / παῖδ' οὐχ ὀσίως σὸν ἀποκτείνας / ψευδέσι μύθοις ἀλόχου πεισθεῖς / ἀφανῆ; φανεράν δ' ἔσχεθες ἄτην.*

¹²⁶¹ Met. 15.500-501 *me Pasiphaeia quondam / temptatum frustra patrium temerare cubile.*

¹²⁶² Cf. Curley 1999, 157: *temptatum temerare* (501) while stating that Hippolytus was tempted to defile Theseus' bed, gives no indication of how he was tempted, whether by Phaedra herself, or via letter, or via some other third party. If anything, a predicative reading of *temptatum* with *damnauit* in 504--"she tempted and condemned me"--would favor the direct approach presumed in the HK. Likewise the accusation; the action is clear in *damnauit*, as well as in *crimine verso* (502), but the means is left to the reader's imagination.

constitute allusions to HippK, the main plot features of which (i.e. direct confrontation between Phaedra and Hippolytus, no role played by Aphrodite, no intercession of the Nurse) were outlined in the introduction to the present chapter. In stark contrast, the Euripidean Artemis partially exonerates Phaedra for her illicit love by adducing the extenuating factors that were omitted by Virbius, namely Aphrodite’s instigation of Phaedra’s desire, her noble struggle against her passion, and the Nurse’s deception of her mistress and revelation of her secret love to Hippolytus.¹²⁶³ Hence, Virbius “corrects” Artemis’ positive characterization of Phaedra as a virtuous woman destroyed by the machinations of Aphrodite and the wiles of her Nurse by depicting her as lustful, brazen, and fully accountable for her passion, a portrayal reminiscent of the depraved Phaedra of HippK. Virbius may allude to Phaedra’s wanton nature by referring to her as “daughter of Pasiphae” (15.500). In HippS Pasiphae’s unnatural passion for the bull is adduced by the heroine as an explanation for her unlawful desire for her step-son by means of heredity.¹²⁶⁴

Furthermore, Virbius denounces Phaedra for her false rape accusation, but expresses uncertainty about her motivation: was it the fear of exposure that drove her to incriminate him or rather her vindictive indignation at being repulsed by him?¹²⁶⁵ Curley contends that Virbius’ ambiguity about Phaedra’s incentive may allude to the fact that the heroine of HippS is motivated by both emotions, namely fear of revelation which is closely connected with her

¹²⁶³ HippS 1298-1306 *ἀλλ’ ἐς τόδ’ ἦλθον, παιδὸς ἐκδεῖξαι φρένα / τοῦ σοῦ δικαίαν, ὡς ὑπ’ εὐκλείας θάνη, / καὶ σῆς γυναικὸς οἴστρον ἢ τρόπον τινὰ / γενναιότητα· τῆς γὰρ ἐχθίστης θεῶν / ἡμῖν ὄσαισι παρθένειος ἡδονῆ / δηχθεῖσα κέντροις παιδὸς ἠράσθη σέθεν. / γνώμη δὲ νικᾶν τὴν Κύπριν περρωμένη / τροφοῦ διώλετ’ οὐχ ἐκούσα μηχαναῖς, / ἢ σῶ δι’ ὄρκων παιδὶ σημαίνει νόσον.*

¹²⁶⁴ HippS 337-343 *Φα. ὦ τλῆμον, οἶον, μητερ, ἠράσθης ἔρον. / Τρ. ὄν ἔσχε ταύρου, τέκνον; ἢ τί φῆις τόδε; / Φα. σύ τ’, ὦ τάλαιν’ ὄμαιμε, Διονύσου δάμαρ. / Τρ. τέκνον, τί πάσχεις; συγγόνους κακορροθεῖς; / Φα. τρίτη δ’ ἐγὼ δύστηνος ὡς ἀπόλλυμαι. / Τρ. ἔκ τοι πέπληγμαί· ποῖ προβήσεται λόγος; / Φα. ἐκεῖθεν ἡμεῖς, οὐ νεωστί, δυστυχεῖς.*

¹²⁶⁵ Met. 15.502-504 *quod uoluit, finxit uoluisse et crimine uerso / (indiciine metu magis offensane repulsae?) / damnauit [...].*

concern for her good reputation (HippS 685-694, 715-721) and desire for vengeance on Hippolytus for the spurning her passion.¹²⁶⁶ He does not exclude the possibility, however, that revenge may also be the motive of the other tragic Phaedras. I will argue, however, that Virbius' reconstruction of Phaedra challenges that of the Euripidean Artemis. First of all, Virbius' explanation of Phaedra's motivation contrasts sharply with the words of Artemis, who exculpates her in part for her false accusation by citing a single incentive for her actions: Phaedra was afraid of Hippolytus disclosing the truth to his father, which would lead to her disgrace and ill-repute.¹²⁶⁷ In addition, although the Phaedra of HippS does wish to punish Hippolytus, it is not for rebuffing her love as Virbius suggests, but rather because of his haughtiness, misogyny, and lack of moderation.¹²⁶⁸ It has been suggested, on the other hand, that vindictiveness due to erotic rejection may have been the motive of Phaedra's false charge in HippK.¹²⁶⁹ Therefore, Virbius undercuts Artemis' representation of Phaedra as a noble woman seeking to preserve her eukleia by also attributing to her the motivation of the vengeful Phaedra of HippK.

¹²⁶⁶ Curley 1999, 157: "The speculation regarding Phaedra's motive, *indiciine metu magis offensane repulsae* (503), is equivocal. *metu* points to the heroine's obsession with eukleia, reputation, on display throughout the HS, while *offensa* alludes to a moment of vindictiveness in that play (724ff.). Yet there is no reason to exclude the other dramas, especially when the motives are so general: if the extant Phaedra is vindictive, surely the others would be to some degree. Indeed, Virbius' seeming inability to distinguish between reputation and revenge contributes to the fragmentation of the narrative- one motive for one kind of Phaedra, another for another."

¹²⁶⁷ HippS. 1310-1312 ἢ δ' εἰς ἔλεγχον μὴ πέση φοβουμένη / ψευδεῖς γραφὰς ἔγραψε καὶ διώλεσεν / δόλοισι σὸν παῖδ', ἀλλ' ὁμῶς ἔπεισέ σε.

¹²⁶⁸ HippS 728-731 ἀτὰρ κακὸν γε χᾶτέρω γενήσομαι / θανούσ' ἴν' εἰδῆ μὴ ἔπι τοῖς ἔμοις κακοῖς / ὑψηλὸς εἶναι τῆς νόσου δὲ τῆσδέ μοι / κοινῇ μετασχὼν σωφρονεῖν μαθήσεται.

¹²⁶⁹ Cf. Sommerstein 2006, 260: "Phaedra's second failure (in HippK) will have changed her love into the vengeful hatred of 'a woman scorned'. She apparently expressed her feelings, and revealed at least something of her intentions, in the presence of the chorus, whose reaction is shown in fr. J (429), and possibly also of her Nurse; fr. P (433) may belong here, and perhaps, as suggested above, fr. F (428) too."

Virbius also utterly condemns his gullible father for exiling him and destroying him by means of Poseidon's curse.¹²⁷⁰ Artemis, on the other hand, although she reproaches Theseus for casting a curse on Hippolytus,¹²⁷¹ also partially absolves him for the rash destruction of his son due to his ignorance of the truth and because Phaedra's death rendered her accusation compelling.¹²⁷² As one would expect, Virbius exonerates himself from committing any wrong, thereby recalling his Euripidean counterpart's self-exculpation.¹²⁷³

Virbius' backward-looking description of his fatal chariot ride constitutes an epic reworking of the messenger's report in HippS. A remarkable convergence between the two accounts is the fact that both speakers elicit an emotional response from their audience, Egeria and Theseus respectively, contrary to the intended one. As noted above, Virbius appears confident that the story of his past misfortunes can and will console Egeria, but she remains inconsolable to the very end. In Euripides the gloomy messenger, one of Hippolytus' companions who brings the news of the disaster, feels and thinks in human terms and is therefore convinced that his report will bring sorrow to Hippolytus' father, to the city of Athens and the Troezenian land.¹²⁷⁴ Theseus, however, ignorant of the falsehood of Phaedra's rape allegation, initially derives pleasure from the messenger speech, since the report reveals that the curse cast against his son has been fulfilled by Poseidon (HippS 1169-1170). Eventually, however, he

¹²⁷⁰ Met. 15.498 *credulitate patris*, 1504-1505 [...] *pater eicit urbe / hostilique caput prece detestatur euntis*.

¹²⁷¹ HippS. 1315-1317 ἄρ' οἴσθα πατρός τρεῖς ἄρ᾽ ἔχων σαφεῖς; / ὧν τὴν μίαν παρεῖλες, ὃ κάκιστε σύ, / ἐς παῖδα τὸν σόν, ἐξὸν εἰς ἐχθρῶν τινα.

¹²⁷² HippS.1334-1337 [...] τὴν δὲ σὴν ἀμαρτίαν / τὸ μὴ εἰδέναι μὲν πρῶτον ἐκλύει κάκης; / ἔπειτα δ' ἡ θανοῦσ' ἀνήλωσεν γυνή / λόγων ἐλέγχους, ὥστε σὴν πεῖσαι φρένα.

¹²⁷³ Met. 15.1504 *meritumque nihil*; HippS. 1378-1383: ὃ πατρός ἐμοῦ δύστανος ἀρά; / μαιφόνον τι σύγγονον / παλαιῶν / προγεννητόρων ἐξορίζεται / κακὸν οὐδὲ μένει, / ἔμολε τ' ἐπ' ἐμέ – τί ποτε, τὸν / οὐδὲν ὄντ' ἐπαίτιον κακῶν;

¹²⁷⁴ HippS. 1157-1159 Αἴ. Θησεῦ, μερίμνης ἄξιον φέρω λόγον / σοὶ καὶ πολίταις οἷ τ' Ἀθηναίων πόλιν / ναίουσι καὶ γῆς τέρμονας Τροζηνίας.

changes his hatred for Hippolytus to indifference (i.e. he feels neither sorrow nor pleasure for his death) out of a sense of shame before the gods and because Hippolytus is his son.¹²⁷⁵

As noted in the introduction, Ovid adopts the Athenian setting of Sophocles' Phaedra by having his Hippolytus drive his chariot towards Troezen, whereas in the two Hippolytus plays by Euripides set in Troezen the youth's destination is Argos.¹²⁷⁶ In both cases, however, the location of the chariot crash is the shore of the Corinthian gulf. As regards the appearance of the bull from the sea and the reaction of people and horses at the sight of it, Ovid generally follows the account of Euripides, but at the same time deviates from his model in some significant ways. In HippS a supernatural, sky-high wave is formed and the swollen sea suddenly spews forth "a bull, a savage monster", which fills the whole land with its bellowing.¹²⁷⁷ Despite its wild and frightening appearance and the fact that it is sent by a god it remains an animal throughout, comes ashore and chases Hippolytus' horses (see further below). In the hyperbolic initial description of the same event in the Metamorphoses the sea and the bull merge: the sea rises, a huge mass of water shapes itself into a mountain and gives out bellowing sounds; next it splits at the summit and from it a horned bull emerges, referred to as "monstrum".¹²⁷⁸ Moreover, in contrast to the bull of the Euripidean messenger report, the Ovidian monster is never seen on dry land and in addition it expels quantities of seawater from its nostrils and gaping mouth like the

¹²⁷⁵ HippS. 1257-1260: Θη. μίσει μὲν ἀνδρὸς τοῦ πεπονθότος τάδε / λόγοισιν ἦσθην τοῖσδε· νῦν δ' αἰδοῦμενος / θεοῦς τ' ἐκεῖνόν θ', οὐνεκ' ἐστὶν ἐξ ἐμοῦ, / οὔθ' ἦδομαι τοῖσδ' οὔτ' ἐπάχθομαι κακοῖς.

¹²⁷⁶ Met. 13.506-507 Pittheam profugo curru Troezena petebam / iamque Corinthiaci carpebam litora ponti (cf. F. 6.739 non impune pius iuvenis Troezena petebat); HippS 1195-1200 [...] πρόσπολοι δ' ὑφ' ἄρματος / πέλας χαλινῶν εἰπόμεσθα δεσπότη / τὴν εὐθὺς Ἄργους κάπιδαυρίας ὁδόν. / ἐπεὶ δ' ἔρημον χῶρον εἰσεβάλλομεν, / ἀκτὴ τις ἔστι τοῦπέκεινα τῆσδε γῆς / πρὸς πόντον ἤδη κειμένη Σαρωνικόν.

¹²⁷⁷ Hipp. 1214-1216: κῦμ' ἐξέθηκε ταῦρον, ἄγριον τέρας· / οὗ πᾶσα μὲν χθὼν φθέγματος πληρουμένη / φρικῶδες ἀντεφθέγγετ' [...]

¹²⁷⁸ Met. 15.508-513: cum mare surrexit cumulusque immanis aquarum / in montis speciem curuari et crescere uisus / et dare mugitus summoque cacumine findi./ corniger hinc taurus raptis expellitur undis / pectoribusque tenus molles erectus in auras / naribus et patulo partem maris euomit ore, 517 quadripedes monstrique metu turbantur; cf. Aen. 7.780: et iuuenem monstris pauidi effudere marinis (cf. Bömer 1986, vv. 15.508-510).

ketos that Perseus fights in Book 4 of the *Metamorphoses*¹²⁷⁹ and the dolphins in the story of the Tyrrhenian sailors in Book 3.¹²⁸⁰ The two Ovidian parallels bring the portrayal of the bull closer to a sea-monster, which explains the fact that it never comes ashore.

The description of the bull-monster is probably intended to highlight Hippolytus' fearless reaction (he remains unperturbed at the frightening sight, his mind preoccupied with thoughts of exile)¹²⁸¹ and on the other hand to justify the fear of his companions and especially of his horses, which are so disturbed by the appearance of the monster that they drag the chariot, headlong, down the steep cliff.¹²⁸² In Euripides the appearance of the bull likewise throws the horses into panic,¹²⁸³ but no reaction is mentioned on the part of Hippolytus, unless he is included among those who at the beginning are seized with a "vehement fear" upon hearing a thunderous sound coming from an unspecified direction.¹²⁸⁴ It is actually before the appearance of the bull that the messenger describes Hippolytus' psychological state: he initially laments his exile, but then regains his composure and accepts his fate.¹²⁸⁵ In the *Metamorphoses* the Euripidean Hippolytus' tears and groans are converted into "preoccupation with exile" and condensed to half a line which occurs at the moment of the appearance of the bull. In Euripides Hippolytus vainly

¹²⁷⁹Met. 4.728-729 *belua puniceo mixtos cum sanguine fluctus / ore uomit.*

¹²⁸⁰Met. 3.683-686 *undique dant saltus multaque aspergine rorant / emerguntque iterum redeuntque sub aequora rursus inque chori ludunt speciem lasciuaque iactant / corpora et acceptum patulis mare naribus efflant.*

¹²⁸¹Met. 15.514-515 *corda paudent comitum, mihi mens interrita mansit / exiliis contenta suis [...].*

¹²⁸²Met. 15.516-518 *cum colla feroces / ad freta conuertunt arrectisque auribus horrent / quadripedes monstrique metu turbantur.*

¹²⁸³HippS 1218 *εὐθὺς δὲ πάλους δεινὸς ἐμπίπτει φόβος.*

¹²⁸⁴Hipp.1201-1205 *ἔνθεν τις ἠχὴ χθόνιος, ὡς βροντὴ Διός, / βαρὺν βρόμον μεθῆκε, φρικώδη κλυεῖν· / ὀρθὸν δὲ κρᾶτ' ἔστησαν οὐς τ' ἐς οὐρανὸν / ἵπποι, παρ' ἡμῖν δ' ἦν φόβος νεανικὸς / πόθεν ποτ' εἶη φθόγγος.*

¹²⁸⁵Hipp. 1178-1184 *ὁ δ' ἦλθε ταῦτὸν δακρύων ἔχων μέλος / ἡμῖν ἐπ' ἀκτάς, μυρία δ' ὀπισθόπους / φίλων ἄμ' ἔστειχ' ἠλίκων <θ> ὀμήγουρις. / χρόνοι δὲ δὴ ποτ' εἶπ' ἀπαλλαχθεὶς γόων· / Τί ταῦτ' ἀλύω; πειστέον πατρὸς λόγους. / ἐντύναθ' ἵππους ἄρμασι ζυγηφόρους, / δμῶες, πόλις γὰρ οὐκέτ' ἔστιν ἦδε μοι.*

attempts to control the chariot, but the horses pay no heed to him and carry him violently along against his will.¹²⁸⁶ In the *Metamorphoses*, however, Hippolytus struggles to control the chariot and he would have succeeded in checking his maddened horses, if the wheel had not struck a tree trunk.¹²⁸⁷ Hippolytus-Virbius' aim may be to present himself as a charioteer superior to his Euripidean predecessor. This raises the question of how reliable a narrator Virbius is, given that in the *Fasti* the external narrator follows the Euripidean version instead.¹²⁸⁸

Furthermore, in *HippS* the bull plays a decisive role in the chariot crash: it prevents Hippolytus from driving the chariot to flat ground by maddening the horses with fear and pushes them instead towards rocky ground. As a result the chariot is overthrown when a wheel strikes upon a rock.¹²⁸⁹ In the *Metamorphoses*, on the other hand, the monster does not actively participate in the chariot disaster apart from the fact that it initially inspires the horses with mad fear. The chariot crashes when a wheel accidentally hits upon a tree trunk.¹²⁹⁰ Because of the fall Hippolytus is gravely wounded in Euripides, but survives as long as it is needed for him to

¹²⁸⁶ Hipp. 1219-1226 καὶ δεσπότης μὲν ἱππικοῖσιν ἦθεσιν / πολὺς ξυνοικῶν ἦρπασ' ἠνίας χεροῖν, / ἔλκει δὲ κόπην ὥστε ναυβάτης ἀνήρ, / ἰμάσιν ἐς τοῦπισθεν ἀρτήσας δέμας· / αἱ δ' ἐνδακοῦσαι στόμια πυριγενῆ γνάθοις / βίαι φέρουσιν, οὔτε ναυκλήρου χερὸς / οὔθ' ἵπποδέσμων οὔτε κολλητῶν ὄχων / μεταστρέφουσαι.

¹²⁸⁷ Met. 15.517-520 [...] monstrique metu turbantur et altis / praecipitant currum scopulis. ego ducere uana / frena manu spumis albetibus oblita luctor / et retro lentas tendo resupinus habenas./ nec uires tamen has rabies superasset equorum,/ nil rota, perpetuum qua circumuertitur axem / stipitis occursu fracta ac disiecta fuisset.

¹²⁸⁸ F. 6.741-742 solliciti terrentur equi frustra retenti / per scopulos dominum duraque saxa trahunt. Cf. Segal 1984, 320: "Ovid's Hippolytus is his own messenger, as it were, we cannot discount the possibility that the poet means to us to perceive his story as slanted in his own favor (see also 15.530f.)."

¹²⁸⁹ HippS. 1226-1233 κεί μὲν ἐς τὰ μαλθακὰ / γαίας ἔχων οἶακας εὐθύνοι δρόμον, / προφαίνεται' ἐς τὸ πρόσθεν, ὥστ' ἀναστρέφειν, / ταῦρος, φόβῳι τέτρωρον ἐκμαίνων ὄχον· / εἰ δ' ἐς πέτρας φέροντο μαργῶσαι φρένας, / σιγῆι πελάζων ἄντυγι ξυνείπετο, / ἐς τοῦθ' ἕως ἔσρηλε κἀνεχαίτισεν / ἀνίδα πέτρῳι προσβαλὼν ὄχηματος.

¹²⁹⁰ Met. 15.521-523 nec uires tamen has rabies superasset equorum,/ nil rota, perpetuum qua circumuertitur axem / stipitis occursu fracta ac disiecta fuisset.

appear on stage again and be reconciled with his father before dying.¹²⁹¹ By contrast in Ovid Hippolytus perishes instantly by being impaled in a tree trunk and torn to pieces.¹²⁹²

Hippolytus prays to Artemis at the beginning of HippS that he may end his life as he began it, namely dwell in an untouched meadow and have the unique privilege of being a devotee of Artemis,¹²⁹³ but his wish is not fulfilled. The Euripidean Hippolytus' wish is realized, however, in the *Metamorphoses*:¹²⁹⁴ As the deified Virbius he resides in a sacred grove, enjoys the unique gift of resurrection, and is a divine attendant of Diana.¹²⁹⁵ Hippolytus perishes in HippS, but Artemis bestows on him posthumous honors in the form of a pre-marital ritual conducted by unmarried maidens who will forever sing of him and about Phaedra's passion for him (HippS. 1423-1430). Thus, the Euripidean Hippolytus achieves immortality through hero cult and poetry, while in the *Metamorphoses* Diana immortalizes Hippolytus by means of deification.

¹²⁹¹ HippS. 1232-1246 ἐς τοῦθ' ἕως ἔσφηλε κάνεγαίτισεν / ἀψίδα πέτραι προσβαλὼν ὀχήματος. / σύμφυρτα δ' ἦν ἅπαντα· σύριγγές τ' ἄνω / τροχῶν ἐπήδων ἀξόνων τ' ἐνήλατα, / αὐτὸς δ' ὁ τλήμων ἠνίαισιν ἐμπλακεῖς / δεσμὸν δυσεξέλικτον ἔλκεται δεθεῖς, / σποδοῦμενος μὲν πρὸς πέτραις φίλον κᾶρα / θραύων τε σάρκας, δεινὰ δ' ἐξαυδῶν κλύειν / Στήτ', ὃ φάνησαι ταῖς ἐμαῖς τεθραμμέναι, / μή μ' ἐξαλείψητ'. ὃ πατρὸς τάλαιν' ἄρα· / τίς ἄνδρ' ἄριστον βούλεται σῶσαι παρών; / πολλοὶ δὲ βουληθέντες ὑστέρωι ποδὶ / ἐλειπόμεσθα. χῶ μὲν ἐκ δεσμῶν λυθεῖς / τμητῶν ἱμάντων οὐ κάτοιδ' ὅττοι τρόποι / πίπτει, βραχὺν δὴ βίον ἐμπνέων ἔτι.

¹²⁹² Met. 15.524-529 excucior curru, lorisque tenentibus artus / uiscera uiua trahi, neruos in stipe teneri./ membra rapi partim, partim repressa relinqui./ ossa grauem dare fracta sonum fessamque uideres / exhalari animam nullasque in corpore partes / noscere quas posses, unumque erat omnia uulnus. Cf. F. 6.743-745 exciderat curru lorisque morantibus artus / Hippolytus lacro corpore raptus erat / reddideratque animam, multum indignante Diana; F. 3.265 Hippolytus loris direptus equorum (See Bömer 1986, vv. 15.524-525).

¹²⁹³ HippS 73-74, 82-87: Ἴπ. σοὶ τόνδε πλεκτὸν στέφανον ἐξ ἀκράτου / λειμῶνος, ὃ δέσποινα, κοσμήσας φέρω, / [...] ἀλλ', ὃ φίλη δέσποινα, χρυσέας κόμης / ἀνάδημα δέξαι χειρὸς εὐσεβοῦς ἄπο. / μόνοι γὰρ ἔστι τοῦτ' ἐμοὶ γέρας βροτῶν / σοὶ καὶ ζύνειμι καὶ λόγοις ἀμείβομαι, / κλύων μὲν αὐδῆς, ὄμμα δ' οὐχ ὀρών τὸ σόν. / τέλος δὲ κάμψαιμ' ὥσπερ ἠρξάμην βίου.

¹²⁹⁴ Cf. Curley 1999, 209: In his final verse Virbius remarks that he resides numine sub dominae. This is his endpoint, but also his point of departure. His prayer to Artemis in the HS has been answered: τέλος δὲ κάμψαιμ' ὥσπερ ἠρξάμην βίου. In typical Ovidian fashion he has become what he already was, and his story, for all its epic pretensions, has not come all that far from tragedy.

¹²⁹⁵ Met. 15.536-537 tum mihi, ne praesens auferem muneris huius / inuidiam, densas obiecit Cynthia nubes, 545-546 hoc nemus inde colo de disque minoribus unus / numine sub dominae lateo atque accenseor illi.

5.3 The Virgilian and Ovidian incarnations of Virbius

The opening line in Virgil's version of the Hippolytus-Virbius story marks the first difference between his version and Ovid's: after Hippolytus become Virbius he bears a son to Aricia, also named Virbius after his father (7.761-762); on the contrary, Ovid's Virbius remains chaste and a celibate follower of Diana (15.545-546). Both poets engage in a drastic compression of Euripides, but Ovid's account of the causes of his death is more detailed and involves an explicit condemnation of Theseus for his credulity and of Phaedra for her treachery.¹²⁹⁶ Ovid dwells upon Theseus' credulity also in the *Fasti*,¹²⁹⁷ while Virgil omits it. The only thing he tells regarding Theseus is that Hippolytus "paid the debt due to his father with his blood", which is a vague reference to the curse.¹²⁹⁸ Both poets adduce Phaedra's intrigue as the primary cause of Hippolytus' death, but while Virgil ascribes it to "a stepmother's cunning", Ovid uses harsher language referring to "a stepmother's accursed deceitfulness". This marked difference in tone can be explained by the identity of the narrator: in the *Aeneid* the events are recounted by the more detached epic narrator, whereas in the *Metamorphoses* Virbius himself bitterly recalls the crimes of his father and stepmother which led to his demise. Due to the terseness of the Virgilian account, which in addition was designed to accommodate both Hippolytus-Virbius and Virbius Jr., Hippolytus' dismemberment is treated in only three words (7.766 *turbatis distractus*

¹²⁹⁶ Met. 15.497-500 *fando aliquem Hippolytum uestras si contigit / aures credulitate patris, sceleratae fraude nouercae / occubuisse neci, mirabere uixque probabo, / sed tamen ille ego sum [...]*.

¹²⁹⁷ F. 6.737-738 *notus amor Phaedrae, nota est iniuria Thesei: / devovit natum credulus ille suum* (See Bömer 1986, vv. 15.797-499).

¹²⁹⁸ Aen. 7.764-765 *namque ferunt fama Hippolytum, postquam arte nouercae / occiderit patriasque expleat sanguine poenas* (See Bömer 1986, vv. 15.797-499).

equis), which evoke the name “Ἰππόλυτος” through etymological wordplay, while Ovid dedicates a description of six lines to the same event (15.524-526).¹²⁹⁹

There is in my view a specific reason as to why in the *Metamorphoses* the fatal chariot ride (15.506-529) as well as Hippolytus’ resurrection and deification (15.530-546) are treated at much greater length than the other parts of the story. The reason is that the (quasi-)sparagmos, which makes Hippolytus “unrecognizable”, constitutes a first stage of metamorphosis, to be followed by resurrection and deification involving both a change of appearance and a change of name. Virgil, on the contrary, gives his narrative a different focus. It is first worthy of note that while both poets include Hippolytus’ resurrection in their accounts, Virgil devotes more space to the punishment of Aesculapius for being the discoverer of the medicinal skills which made it possible for a mortal to rise from the dead;¹³⁰⁰ hence Jupiter became indignant and hurled Aesculapius to the depths of Tartarus. In Ovid’s account Aesculapius restores Hippolytus to life with his powerful cures “despite indignant Dis”, but no punishment is inflicted on him.¹³⁰¹ Therefore, while the Virgilian Jupiter’s indignation and punishment of Aesculapius suggests the poet’s interest in the violation of cosmic order, the focus of Ovid’s narrative is laid on Hippolytus’ resurrection and subsequent deification.

Another important divergence between the two accounts concerns Hippolytus’ apotheosis. In Virgil Diana hides him in a secret location and transports him to Italy to the grove

¹²⁹⁹ Moreover, Servius detects a Latin etymological pun by explaining Virbius as “twice a man” (quasi bis virum).

¹³⁰⁰ Aen. 7.766-773 [...] ad sidera rursus / aetheria et superas caeli uenisse sub auras./ Paeoniis reuocatum herbis et amore Dianae./ tum pater omnipotens aliquem indignatus ab umbris / mortalem infernis ad lumina surgere uitae./ ipse repertorem medicinae talis et artis / fulmine Phoebigenam Stygias detrussit ad undas .

¹³⁰¹ Met. 15.531-535: uidi quoque luce carentia regna / et lacerum foui Phlegethontide corpus in unda./ nec nisi Apollineae ualido medicamine prolis / reddita uita foret; quam postquam fortibus herbis / atque ope Paeonia Dite indignante recepi,[...] (See Bömer 1986, v. 15.535). In the *Fasti* Aesculapius’ punishment by Jupiter is mentioned, but in compensation he is catasterized by Apollo (F. 6.746-749, 753-762).

of Egeria and changes his name to Virbius. There Virbius spends a lonely and inglorious life.¹³⁰² Virbius was a minor local deity, but not much is made of Hippolytus' identification with him. Therefore, Virgil downplays Hippolytus' deification. In the *Metamorphoses* Diana conceals Hippolytus in a cloud, changes his features, and makes him look old. She then vacillates about where to convey him and after rejecting Delos and Crete she chooses Italy. The final step of his transformation is the change of his name. Ovid's Virbius openly boasts of his prerogatives: he possesses the enviable gift of a second life, he is a minor divinity, and finally he is an attendant of Diana enjoying the goddess' protection.¹³⁰³ Thus, in stark contrast to his Virgilian counterpart, the Ovidian god represents himself as lacking neither company nor glory.

Hippolytus' eventual condition is in both poets associated with aetia referring to the circumstances of his death, but they are differently motivated: in Virgil horses are not allowed in Diana's sacred grove because they tore Hippolytus apart;¹³⁰⁴ in Ovid, on the other hand, Diana changes Hippolytus' name into Virbius, so that he may not be reminded by his own name of the horses which caused his death.¹³⁰⁵ Virgil reserved for the conclusion of the story details of the circumstances of Hippolytus' death which he had earlier omitted (horses frightened by a sea-monster; location of the event). Apparently he did so in order to stress that what happened once

¹³⁰² Aen. 7.774-777 at Trivia Hippolyturn secretis alma recondite / sedibus et nymphae Egeriae nemorique relegat, / solus ubi in siluis Italis ignobilis aeuum / exigeret uersoque ubi nomine Virbius esset.

¹³⁰³ Met. 15.536-546 tum mihi, ne praesens auferem muneris huius / inuidiam, densas obiecit Cynthia nubes, / utque forem tutus possemque impune uideri, / addidit aetatem nec cognoscenda reliquit / ora mihi. Cretenque diu dubitauit habendam / traderet an Delon; Delo Creteque relictis / hic posuit nomenque simul, quod possit equorum / admonuisse, iubet deponere, "qui"que "fuisti / Hippolytus" dixit, "nunc idem Virbius esto." / hoc nemo inde colo de disque minoribus unus / numine sub dominae lateo atque accenseor illi.'

¹³⁰⁴ Aen. 7.778-780 unde etiam templo Triviae lucisque sacratis / cornipedes arcentur equi, quod litore currum / et iuuenem monstris pauidi effudere marinis.

¹³⁰⁵ Met. 15.542-544 hic posuit nomenque simul, quod possit equorum / admonuisse, iubet deponere, "qui"que "fuisti / Hippolytus" dixit, "nunc idem Virbius esto". The religious taboo action is however retained in F. 5.263-266: vallis Aricinae silva praecinctus opaca / est lacus, antiqua religione sacer. / hic latet Hippolytus loris direptus equorum, / unde nemo nullis illud aditur equis.

should never happen again in the life of Hippolytus-Virbius who, despite his resurrection, remains as vulnerable as he was in the past, unlike his deified Ovidian counterpart; though it is more likely, so the passage sinisterly suggests, that something unfortunate may befall his mirror image, Virbius Jr., now seen driving his horses to war.

Appendix

Conjugal reunions: Orpheus and Eurydice and the Alcestis

Ovid's primary source for the stories of Orpheus' retrieval and second loss of Eurydice and the bard's gruesome death at the hands of the Thracian maenads is Virgil's *Georgics*. The poet of the *Metamorphoses* engages in constant intertextual dialogue with his Roman predecessor and clearly expects his readers to have Virgil's version of the myth in mind while reading his poem. This is illustrated by the fact that he shapes his narrative in such a way as to evoke the Virgilian subtext at every step, so that a full appreciation of the Ovidian tale is impossible without recalling its literary antecedent. Several studies have been written on the intertextual relationship between the two stories and the prevalent scholarly view is that Ovid's chief purpose is to parody the Virgilian model by subverting its tragic and elegiac content through humor, irony, and bathos.¹³⁰⁶ It has also been suggested, however, that the satire of Virgil's episode does not preclude Ovid's idiosyncratic brand of sympathy, pathos, and gravitas by means of a creative reworking of the myth.¹³⁰⁷

The main thesis propounded in this paper is that, although Virgil is undoubtedly Ovid's main interlocutor, he nevertheless diverges from him at many points and seems to draw instead on an alternative source, namely Euripides' *Alcestis*. Below I will contend that the Ovidian narrative of Orpheus and Eurydice may be read as a conflation of the Virgilian account and the Greek play. The Roman poet's familiarity with Euripides' tragedy is evidenced by references he makes to it in his other works. In particular, the *Ars Amatoria* (3.17-22), the *Tristia* (5.14.37-40),

¹³⁰⁶ For a reading of Ovid's Orpheus episode as Virgilian parody, see Anderson 1982, Neumeister 1986, and Makowski 1996.

¹³⁰⁷ Segal 1989, 81.

and the *Epistulae Ex Ponto* (3.1.105-112) contain analogous catalogues consisting of Alcestis, Laodamia, and Evadne, who are the protagonists in Euripides' *Alcestis*, *Protesilaus*, and *Suppliant Women* respectively and are cited as mythological exempla of women, whose superlative devotion to their husbands drove them to perish for their sake. Despite the significant affinities between the myths of Alcestis and Eurydice the intertextual engagement of Ovid's story with the Euripidean play has been largely overlooked by criticism. The main parallel between the two stories is that both Admetus and Orpheus bring about their wives' death, the former by having Alcestis assume his place in Hades and the latter by gazing back at Eurydice before they exit the Underworld. In fact, the two mythical episodes had been previously associated in Euripides' *Alcestis* and Plato's *Symposium*. Mourning his wife's imminent death Admetus vainly wishes that he possessed Orpheus' artistic power, so that he could descend into the Underworld and restore Alcestis to life by enchanting Pluto and Persephone with his song.¹³⁰⁸ Phaedrus, on the other hand, contrasts Alcestis' valor, who sacrificed her life out of love for her husband and was rewarded by the gods with a second life, with Orpheus' cowardice, who descended to the Underworld alive to retrieve Eurydice and was thus punished by being offered a mere simulacrum of his wife and by being later slain by women (Pl. *Symp.* 179b-d). Exploiting the traditional affinities of the two myths Ovid seems to evoke many aspects of the *Alcestis*. It will be argued that Orpheus' portrayal is highly reminiscent of that of Admetus, the song that the bard performs before the gods of the Underworld appropriates rhetorical topoi of the Euripidean drama, and finally the happy conclusion of the Ovidian story recalls the blissful denouement of the Greek play.

¹³⁰⁸ Alc. 357-362 εἰ δ' Ὀρφέως μοι γλῶσσα καὶ μέλος παρῆν, / ὥστ' ἡ κόρην Διμήτρος ἢ κείνης πόσιν / ὕμνοισι κηλήσαντά σ' ἐξ Ἄιδου λαβεῖν, / κατήλθον ἄν, καί μ' οὐθ' ὁ Πλούτωνος κύων / οὐθ' οὐπι κώπη ψυχοπομπὸς ἄν Χάρων / ἔσχ' ἄν, πρὶν ἐς φῶς σὸν καταστήσαι βίον.

For the most part of the twentieth century the almost unanimous consensus of scholarship was that the prevalent pre-Virgilian version of the Orpheus myth related his ultimate success in bringing Eurydice back to the world of the living, while the tragic version involving the second death of Eurydice due to Orpheus' backward gaze attested by Virgil and Ovid was attributed to a lost Hellenistic model.¹³⁰⁹ John Heath, however, challenged this predominant theory by contending that a scrutiny of the extant sources, primarily Euripides *Alcestis*, Plato's *Symposium*, *Hermesianax*' *Leontion*, and Ps.-Moschus *Lament for Bion*, reveals that the postulated happy-ending version does not in fact exist.¹³¹⁰ He argues that according to the literary evidence Orpheus' "triumph" is limited only to the persuasion of Pluto and Persephone by means of his song to return to him his wife. None of the aforementioned texts, however, report the events following Orpheus' enchanting performance in Hades nor of course do they refer to a cheerful conclusion, in which the couple ascend from the Underworld and spend the rest of their life together. He concludes that all the pre-Virgilian accounts of Orpheus' *katabasis* actually fit better into their narrative context, if we imagine that Eurydice never returns with her husband from Hades.¹³¹¹

Virgil inserts the story of Orpheus and Eurydice as an embedded narrative in the episode of *Aristaeus* in the fourth book of the *Georgics*. In his own account of the myth in Books 10 and 11 of the *Metamorphoses* Ovid omits the framing narrative of *Aristaeus*, but relates roughly the

¹³⁰⁹ See for instance Bowra 1952, Segal 1972, 489-490, and Thomas 1988, 225.

¹³¹⁰ Heath 1994, 164-165.

¹³¹¹ In the *Alcestis* the grieving Admetus is either unaware of or more likely deliberately omits the tragic denouement of Orpheus' story, since it is ironically inappropriate in the context of a speech, in which he fantasizes about finding a way to reunite with his wife after her impending death. As regards *Hermesianax*, Heath (1994, 188-189) argues that the narrative context points clearly to an unhappy conclusion, since the *Leontion* is a collection of stories illustrating the overwhelming force and destructiveness of love and the third book in particular, in which the Orpheus fragment belongs, constitutes a catalogue of the tragic loves and ensuing torments of poets and philosophers.

same events as Virgil, namely Eurydice's sudden demise, Orpheus' catabasis and retrieval of his wife through his enthralling song, his backward gaze leading to the second loss of Eurydice, and finally his spurning of female love, which results in his dismemberment by the Thracian maenads. Despite Ovid's overall adherence to the Virgilian sequence of events scholars have long noted that his version of the story actually contains multiple departures from his predecessor.¹³¹² The most striking perhaps divergence from his antecedent concerns the episode's denouement. Whereas Virgil gives his narrative a markedly tragic ending, in that the mourning Orpheus is eternally separated from his beloved Eurydice, Ovid frustrates the reader's expectations by offering him instead a happy conclusion, where the bard is joyfully reunited with his wife in the afterlife. I will attempt to show that Ovid's depiction of a blissful post-mortem marital life for Orpheus and Eurydice is in fact drawing on the Euripidean play.

The Ovidian narrative opens with the ominous wedding of Orpheus and Eurydice, which is suddenly transformed into a funeral, when the latter is accidentally bitten by a venomous serpent (10.1-12). Ovid deviates here from Virgil who makes no reference to the couple's wedding and may be subtly echoing instead the scene in the *Alcestis*, in which the Thessalian king who has just given burial to his wife contrasts their initial festive entry into their home as a married couple with his present mournful arrival at his desolate house (912-925). In particular, the sinister presence of the god of marriage, Hymenaeus, in the Ovidian couple's wedding, which is soon to be followed by Orpheus' dirge, may evoke Admetus' bitter reminiscence of the joyful wedding hymns (*ὑμέναιοι*), which have now turned into mournful wailing.¹³¹³ Whereas,

¹³¹² Anderson 1972, 1982; Neumeister 1986; Segal 1989; Makowski 1996; Romeo 2012.

¹³¹³ Met. 10.2 *Hymenaeus*, 4-5 *adfuit ille quidem, sed nec sollemnia verba / nec laetos vultus nec felix attulit omen,* 11-12 *quam satis ad superas postquam Rhodopeius auras / deflevit vates;* Alc. 916 *σὺν θ' ὑμεναίοις ἔσταιχον ἔσω,* 922 *νῦν δ' ὑμεναίων γόος ἀντίπαλος.*

however, the newly wedded Euripidean couple is escorted by lit pine torches, the wedding torch held by Hymenaeus cannot be kindled and produces only ill-omened smoke.¹³¹⁴ Finally, Admetus recalls entering with his wife their new home attended by a group of revelers and likewise the new bride Eurydice is depicted strolling in the company of a band of Naiads before the fatal snake bite.¹³¹⁵

Ovid's characterization of Orpheus is highly evocative of that of Admetus and the Roman poet may draw on the Euripidean figure in order to "correct" the Virgilian portrayal of the Thracian bard. To begin with, the two heroes are culpable for causing their wives' death. Admetus is accused by his father Pheres of murdering Alcestis by asking her to take his place in Hades (Alc. 695-696, 730), while Orpheus causes Eurydice's second demise by looking back at her before reaching the upper world (Met. 10.55-60). Moreover, they both regret and grieve for their error: Admetus spends most of the play mourning his decision to ask for Alcestis' sacrifice, while Orpheus remains seven days without food at the banks of Styx lamenting the loss of his wife (Met. 10.73-75). What is more, unlike Virgil, who does not recount Orpheus' song in the Underworld, Ovid presents the content of the bard's musical *suasoria*, which seems to contain reminiscences of the Euripidean drama.

In his attempt to convince the lords of Hades to permit him to bring Eurydice back to life Orpheus employs rhetorical *topoi* about the inevitability of death. His argument is that since every mortal is bound to die sooner or later, Eurydice should be allowed to reach maturity before falling under the eternal sway of the reign of the Underworld (10.17-18, 32-35). In other words,

¹³¹⁴ Alc. 915 τότε μὲν πεύκαις σὺν Πηλιάσιν; Met. 10.6-7 fax quoque, quam tenuit, lacrimoso stridula fumo / usque fuit nullosque invenit motibus ignes.

¹³¹⁵ Alc. 916-918 ἔστειχον ἔσω φιλίας ἀλόγου χέρα βαστάζων, / πολυάχητος δ' εἴπετο κῶμος; Met. 10.8-10 nam nupta per herbas / dum nova naiadum turba comitata vagatur, / occidit in talum serpentis dente receptor.

he cleverly employs common places about death's inescapability so as to actually overcome death temporarily.¹³¹⁶ This may be an ironic reversal of the standard consolatory and protreptic functions of these topoi in the *Alcestis*. The chorus of Thessalian men remark that it is the common lot of all mortals to die, so as to console the mourning Admetus and help him come to terms with his wife's death (416-419). Later in the play Heracles refers to the ineluctability of death and the uncertainty of the span of one's life aiming to exhort a lamenting manservant to enjoy life to the fullest (780-802). Verbal echoes of the Euripidean play may be detected in the notions of the necessity for all mortals to die and the need to endure the loss of one's beloved.¹³¹⁷ Having set forth his rhetorical argumentation the bard successfully entreats Dis and Proserpina to postpone Eurydice's death until she completes her full allotment of years and return her to him as a kind of "loan".¹³¹⁸ Orpheus' appeal may evoke and reverse Apollo's vain endeavor in the prologue of the Euripidean play to persuade Thanatos, the god of death, to defer *Alcestis*' demise until she reaches old age.¹³¹⁹

Ovid's Orpheus is portrayed as hypocritical and cowardly departing from his Virgilian counterpart and echoing Admetus.¹³²⁰ The bard concludes his song with the bold assertion that if the divinities of the Underworld do not allow Eurydice to come back to life, he is resolved to join

¹³¹⁶ Anderson 1982, 41.

¹³¹⁷ Alc. 416-419 Ἄδμητ', ἀνάγκη τάσδε συμφορὰς φέρειν· / οὐ γάρ τι πρῶτος οὐδὲ λοίσθιος βροτῶν / γυναικὸς ἐσθλῆς ἤμπλακες· γίγνωσκε δὲ / ὡς πᾶσιν ἡμῖν κατθανεῖν ὀφείλεται, 782 βροτοῖς ἅπασιν κατθανεῖν ὀφείλεται; Met. 10.17-18 o positi sub terra numina mundi, / in quem reccidimus, quicquid mortale creamur, 26 posse pati uolui nec me temptasse negabo, 32 omnia debemur vobis.

¹³¹⁸ Met. 10.36-37 haec quoque, cum iustos matura peregerit annos, / iuris erit vestri: pro munere poscimus usum.

¹³¹⁹ Alc. 48-53 Απ. λαβὼν ἴθ'· οὐ γὰρ οἶδ' ἂν εἰ πείσαιμί σε. / Θα. κτείνειν γ' ὄν ἂν χρῆι; τοῦτο γὰρ τετάγμεθα. / Απ. οὐκ, ἀλλὰ τοῖς μέλλουσι θάνατον ἀμβραλεῖν. / Θα. ἔχω λόγον δὴ καὶ προθυμίαν σέθεν. / Απ. ἔστ' οὖν ὅπως Ἄλκηστις ἐς γῆρας μόλοι; / Θα. οὐκ ἔστι· τιμαῖς κάμῃ τέρπεσθαι δόκει.

¹³²⁰ Heath (1996, 366) argues that Ovid's insinuation of Orpheus' cowardice for not committing suicide evokes Phaedrus' explicit denouncement of the bard in Plato's *Symposium* (179b-e), who accuses him of faintheartedness for contriving to descend to Hades alive to recover his wife.

her in death.¹³²¹ After her second death, however, caused by his backward gaze he does not fulfill his promise of suicide, but instead goes on living. In an analogous fashion the Thessalian king beseeches Alcestis not to abandon him, since her death would bring about his own demise as well.¹³²² Nevertheless, his claim proves devoid of truth, since he continues living after his wife's death. Furthermore, Pheres openly accuses his son of faintheartedness for avoiding to die at his appointed time and asking his wife to perish in his place (694-702) and Admetus himself imagines that his enemies will deride him for not having the courage to face death and sacrificing Alcestis instead (954-957). Finally, during Alcestis' funeral Admetus tries to commit suicide by hurling himself on her tomb, but is restrained by the chorus (895-902). This gesture may be interpreted, however, as disingenuous, since he is undoubtedly aware that he will be prevented from his suicidal attempt by the Thessalian men. Orpheus' envisioning of the double death of himself and his wife may in fact evoke the words of his Euripidean model, who imagines entering the Underworld with Alcestis.¹³²³ Therefore, although both heroes initially claim that they will follow their wives in Hades, they do not live up to their pledge and thus turn out to be craven and insincere.

A significant affinity between Orpheus and Admetus concerns their reactions to the loss of their wives. In particular, both heroes reject love and marriage after their spouses' demise for analogous reasons. The Ovidian narrator recounts that after the second death of Eurydice Orpheus shunned all women either because he was unfortunate with them or because he gave a

¹³²¹ Met.10.38-39 quodsi fata negant veniam pro coniuge, certum est / nolle redire mihi.

¹³²² Alc. 276-277 σοῦ γὰρ φθιμένης οὐκέτ' ἂν εἶην, / ἐν σοὶ δ' ἐσμὲν καὶ ζῆν καὶ μή.

¹³²³ Met. 10.39 leto gaudete duorum; Met. 900-902 δύο δ' ἀντὶ μιᾶς Ἄιδης ψυχᾶς / τὰς πιστοτάτας σὺν ἂν ἔσχεν.

pledge to his wife.¹³²⁴ Likewise Admetus takes an oath before Alcestis never to marry another woman and after her death claims that he will flee from weddings and female gatherings, because he cannot endure the sight of women Alcestis' age.¹³²⁵ Virgil, on the other hand, makes no reference to an oath of celibacy taken by Orpheus, but simply mentions that the bard avoided love and marriage out of devotion to his dead wife.¹³²⁶ Nevertheless, neither Admetus nor Orpheus ultimately adhere to their pledge of chastity, since the former accepts the veiled woman brought to him by Hercules as a gift, who is actually Alcestis in disguise, while the latter spurns heterosexual love, but turns to pederasty instead (10.83-85). Thus Ovid's Orpheus, portrayed as unfaithful to the dead Eurydice, deviates from his Virgilian predecessor, who remains chaste and loyal to his wife, recalling the Thessalian king instead.

A means by which both Orpheus and Admetus attempt to cope with their bereavement is by constructing an erotic statue fantasy. The Euripidean hero asks that an effigy in the semblance of Alcestis be fashioned and placed on his bed, where he may lay next to it, embrace it, and address it by her name imagining that he has his wife in his arms.¹³²⁷ Similarly one of the stories sung by the Ovidian bard is that of the sculptor Pygmalion, who fashions the statue of a woman with which he falls hopelessly in love (Met. 10.243-297). Pygmalion's fantasy is highly reminiscent of that of Admetus: he kisses and embraces the statue speaking to it as if it were

¹³²⁴ Met. 10.79-81 [...] omnemque refugerat Orpheus / femineam Venerem, seu quod male cesserat illi, / sive fidem dederat [...].

¹³²⁵ Alc. 328-331 ἐπέ σ' ἐγὼ / καὶ ζῶσαν εἶχον καὶ θανοῦσ' ἐμὴ γυνὴ / μόνη κεκλήσῃ, κοῦτις ἀντὶ σοῦ ποτε / τόνδ' ἄνδρα νύμφη Θεσσαλὶς προσφθέγξεται, 950-953 [...] ἔξωθεν δέ με / γάμοι τ' ἐλῶσι Θεσσαλῶν καὶ ξύλλογοι / γυναικοπληθεῖς· οὐ γὰρ ἐξανέξομαι / λεύσσω δάμαρτος τῆς ἐμῆς ὀμήλικας.

¹³²⁶ G. 4.516 nulla Venus, non ulli animum flexere hymenaei.

¹³²⁷ Alc. 348-352 σοφῆι δὲ χειρὶ τεκτόνων δέμας τὸ σὸν / εἰκασθὲν ἐν λέκτροισιν ἐκταθήσεται, / ὧι προσπεσοῦμαι καὶ περιπτύσσων γέρας / ὄνομα καλῶν σὸν τὴν φίλην ἐν ἀγκάλαις / δόξω γυναῖκα καίπερ οὐκ ἔχων ἔχειν.

alive and even places it on his couch calling it his bride.¹³²⁸ Heath has argued that Pygmalion functions as Orpheus' alter ego, since they are both artists who spurn women and whose art enables them to animate stone and bring their beloved to life.¹³²⁹ Unlike Admetus who participates himself in his reverie, Orpheus projects it instead to his mythical surrogate. Whereas, however, the Euripidean hero is fully aware of the fictitiousness of his daydream calling it a "cold pleasure" intended to "ease the burden of his soul" (353-354), Pygmalion is deceived by his own artistry thinking that the statue is alive and returning his kisses and fearing that he might bruise it with his fingers (10.252-260). Moreover, in the bard's tale the fantasy ultimately becomes reality, in that Pygmalion's prayer to Venus to provide him with a wife resembling the statue is fulfilled by the goddess, who transforms the effigy into his bride (10.274-279). Hence, in contrast to the inconsolable Orpheus of the Georgics, for whom the lost Eurydice is irreplaceable, his Ovidian analogue, like Admetus, seeks comfort for his grief in the delusion of an inanimate substitute.

The aspect in which Ovid's Orpheus narrative and the Alcestis converge most strikingly is their conclusion. In the denouement of the Euripidean drama Heracles brings Alcestis back to Admetus after rescuing her from Thanatos. In order, however, either to test Admetus' fidelity to his wife or simply to play a joke on his host for hiding from him earlier Alcestis' death, he conceals her identity by veiling her face and asserting that he won her as a prize in an athletic contest and proceeds to offer her temporarily as a servant to the Thessalian king, until he returns from his labor in Thrace (1019-1036). Despite his initial resistance Admetus ultimately yields to Heracles' overwhelming pressure and accepts her into his home (1042-1116). The reunion of the

¹³²⁸ Met. 10.256 *oscula dat reddique putat loquiturque tenetque*, 267-268 *collocat hanc stratis concha Sidonide tinctis / adpellatque tori sociam*.

¹³²⁹ Heath 1996, 367-370.

couple is effected by the lifting of Alcestis' veil and Admetus' gaze on his wife.¹³³⁰ The climax of Ovid's story is a direct inversion of the Euripidean scene, in that Orpheus loses Eurydice when he looks at her.¹³³¹ Euripides has in effect reversed the "gaze taboo" of the Orpheus myth replacing it with a "silence taboo": Alcestis is not allowed to speak to Admetus for three days until she receives purification (1143-1146).

The effect that Orpheus' gaze on Eurydice has on him is also evocative of Admetus' reaction to the viewing of Alcestis. After witnessing the second death of his wife the bard is "stunned" (11.64) and compared by the narrator to a man who became petrified from terror after looking at Cerberus led by Heracles out of Hades.¹³³² Ovid ironically "corrects" here the previous literary tradition, according to which Orpheus either symbolically "petrifies" Cerberus with his song or is at least able to withstand the monster's gaze.¹³³³ The Ovidian description may also echo, however, the Euripidean scene, in which Admetus at the insistence of Heracles prepares to escort the veiled Alcestis into his house. The Thessalian king turns away as he reaches out behind him and grasps her hand, likening the veiled woman to Medusa and thus implicitly himself to Perseus, who in order to avoid being petrified by the Gorgon's gaze reached behind him with his sword as he cut off her head.¹³³⁴

¹³³⁰ Alc. 1121-1126 Ηρ. βλέμων πρὸς αὐτήν, εἴ τι σῆι δοκεῖ πρέπειν / γυναικί· λύπης δ' εὐτυχῶν μεθίστασο. / Ἀδ. ὦ θεοί, τί λέξω; θαῦμ' ἀνέλπιστον τόδε· / γυναῖκα λεύσσω τὴν ἐμὴν ἐτητύμως, / ἢ κέρτομός μ' ἐκ θεοῦ τις ἐκπλήσσει χαρά; / Ηρ. οὐκ ἔστιν, ἀλλὰ τήνδ' ὄρῳ δάμαρτα σὴν.

¹³³¹ Met. 10.56-57 hic, ne deficeret, metuens avidusque videndi / flexit amans oculos, et protinus illa relapsa est.

¹³³² Met. 10.65-67 quam tria qui timidus, medio portante catenas, / colla canis vidit, quem non pavor ante reliquit, / quam natura prior saxo per corpus oborto.

¹³³³ Virg. G. 4.483 tenuitque inhians tria Cerberus ora; Herm. Leontion 7.10 ἡδὲ καὶ αἰνοτάτου βλέμμ' ὑπέμεινε κυνός (See Heath 1996, 363).

¹³³⁴ Alc. 1117-1118 Ηρ. τόλμα προτεῖναι χεῖρα καὶ θιγεῖν ξένης. / Ἀδ. καὶ δὴ προτεῖνω, Γοργόν' ὡς καρατομῶν (See Parker 2007, vv. 1118-1120_).

There are many intriguing affinities between the two scenes. To begin with, unlike Orpheus, who is deprived of Eurydice due to his backward gaze on her, Admetus regains Alcestis precisely by turning back and looking at her. In either situation, however, the effect on the gazing hero is stunning amazement.¹³³⁵ Furthermore, both Alcestis and Eurydice are ironically compared to underworld creatures possessing a petrifying gaze, namely Medusa and Cerberus respectively. Ovid seems to lay emphasis on the affinity between the two comparisons by means of an implicit intertextual marker: Orpheus opens his song to the lords of Hades by claiming that he has not descended to the underworld in order to capture Cerberus, whom he describes as “Medusa’s monstrous offspring” (Met. 10.20-22).¹³³⁶ In addition, whereas Admetus’ successful reunion with his wife is described in terms of Perseus’ avoidance of the Gorgon’s petrifying gaze, Orpheus’ emotional “paralysis” at the loss of his bride is likened to a man’s petrification at the sight of Cerberus. Thus, in contrast to Admetus, who compares himself to the valiant Perseus beheading Medusa, Orpheus is depicted by the narrator as a helpless victim of Cerberus’ gaze. Finally, Heracles functions as a connective link between the two narratives: just as he leads Alcestis back to the world of the living, likewise in the Ovidian simile he drags Cerberus from Hades to the upper world.

As I will argue below, Ovid’s picture of the cheerful reunion of Orpheus and Eurydice in the underworld alludes not to a hypothesized happy ending version of the myth, but to the story of Admetus and Alcestis in the Euripidean drama. In his long farewell speech to his wife before

¹³³⁵ Met.11.64 non aliter stupuit gemina nece coniugis Orpheus; Alc. 1124-1125 γυναῖκα λεύσσω τὴν ἐμὴν ἐτητύμως, / ἢ κέρτομός μ' ἐκ θεοῦ τις ἐκπλήσσει χαρά. Admetus’ fear that he may be mockingly deluded by a god (Alc. 1124-1125) and his following question to Heracles, whether Alcestis is a phantom from the underworld (Alc. 1127 ὄρα δὲ μή τι φάσμα νεπτέρων τόδ' ἦι) may be a subtle Euripidean allusion to the version of the Orpheus myth reported by Plato according to which the gods punished the Thracian bard for his cowardice by presenting him with a simulacrum of his wife (Symp. 179d Ὀρφέα δὲ τὸν Οἰάγρου / ἀτελῆ ἀπέπεμψαν ἐξ Ἄιδου, φάσμα δεῖξαντες τῆς γυναικὸς / ἐφ' ἣν ἦκεν, αὐτὴν δὲ οὐ δόντες, ὅτι μαλθακίζεσθαι ἐδόκει).

¹³³⁶ Met. 10.20-22 non huc [...] descendi, / [...] uti villosa colubris / terna Medusaei vincirem guttura monstri.

her imminent death the Thessalian king asks her to await him in the afterlife, where they will be ultimately reunited, and to prepare their subterranean residence.¹³³⁷ Just like Admetus' earlier statue fantasy, his vision of a posthumous reunion with his wife is realized in the Ovidian narrative, where after Orpheus' death at the hands of the Thracian maenads his shade descends to Hades and is happily rejoined with his beloved wife.¹³³⁸ Furthermore, both texts underscore the inseparability of the reunited couple in the next life. Admetus commands that he be buried in the same coffin as Alcestis, so that his body may lay eternally next to hers and he may not be parted from her even in death.¹³³⁹ In an analogous manner Orpheus and Eurydice stroll with synchronized steps in the fields of the blessed.¹³⁴⁰ The essential difference between the two situations is that whereas the Euripidean couple is joyfully reunited in real life at the end of the play, the Ovidian couple finds its happy ending post mortem.

Hence, by giving his narrative a blissful denouement Ovid "corrects" the tragic ending of the *Georgics*, where it is explicitly stated that the couple will be eternally separated,¹³⁴¹ and may rather evoke the happy conclusion of the *Alcestis*. It should be noted, however, that the ending of the Euripidean play is implicitly problematic: the cheerful reunion of the couple may actually be deceptive given that the audience witness only Admetus' response and not that of Alcestis, who is temporarily unable to speak due to the "silence taboo". Thus one can only wonder what Alcestis' reaction will be to Admetus' acceptance of the veiled woman into his house on the very

¹³³⁷ Alc. 363-364 ἀλλ' οὖν ἐκεῖσε προσδόκα μ', ὅταν θάνω, / καὶ δῶμ' ἐτοίμαζ', ὡς συνοικήσουσά μοι.

¹³³⁸ Met. 11.61-63 umbra subit terras, et quae loca viderat ante, / cuncta recognoscit quaerensque per arva piorum / invenit Eurydicen cupidisque amplectitur ulnis.

¹³³⁹ Alc. 365-368 ἐν ταῖσιν αὐταῖς γάρ μ' ἐπισκήψω κέδροις / σοὶ τούσδε θεῖναι πλευρά τ' ἐκτεῖναι πέλας / πλευροῖσι τοῖς σοῖς· μηδὲ γὰρ θανῶν ποτε / σοῦ χωρὶς εἶην.

¹³⁴⁰ Met. 11.64-66 hic modo coniunctis spatiantur passibus ambo.

¹³⁴¹ G. 4.500-502 [...] neque illum / prensantem nequiquam umbras et multa uolentem / dicere praeterea uidit [...].

day of her funeral. The Roman poet stresses the reversal of the Virgilian model in the last line of his narrative by means of a humorous allusion: whereas Virgil's Orpheus lost Eurydice forever due to his frenzied backward gaze, his Ovidian counterpart can now look back on his wife without fear of ever losing her again.¹³⁴²

Finally, a ring composition pattern can be discerned in both the Euripidean play and the Ovidian narrative. Admetus' painful recollection after Alcestis' funeral of the joyful entrance into their house as a newly-wed couple (915-917) is echoed in the drama's denouement, where the Thessalian king takes the veiled Alcestis by the hand and escorts her once again inside the house, a scene which resembles a bridegroom's leading of his wife into their new home (1113-1119).¹³⁴³ Likewise the conclusion of Ovid's narrative, in which Eurydice is shown cheerfully promenading in the Elysian fields in the company of her husband (11.64-66) evokes its opening, where the happy bride was depicted strolling carefree in a meadow attended by a group of nymphs (10.8-9).

¹³⁴² G. 4.490-491 restitit, Eurydicenque suam iam luce sub ipsa / immemor heu! uictusque animi respexit; Met. 11.66 Eurydicenque suam iam tuto respicit Orpheus (See Romeo 2012, 36).

¹³⁴³ Parker 2007, vv. 1119-1120.

Conclusions

The detailed analysis of the reception of Euripidean tragedy in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* conducted in this study has yielded the following conclusions. First, I have attempted to give an answer to the pivotal research question what is distinctly Euripidean in the Ovidian epic by formulating a typology of tragic elements in the poem which have a Euripidean provenance. In particular, the Roman poet transforms into epic narrative several standard formal components of Euripidean tragedy, including messenger report, dramatic monologue, prologue speech, *deus ex machina* speech, anagnorisis scene, and choral lyric. To begin with, Ovid shows a particular predilection for the Euripidean messenger speech, given that it is the part of a tragedy which most closely approximates the epic genre in terms both of its narrative technique (third person narrator) and its epic diction and imagery (e.g. grand style, similes, *enargeia*, etc.). A messenger speech is reworked in the *Metamorphoses* in two different ways. In some instances it is converted into third person epic narrative, such as the accounts of Pentheus' dismemberment, Polyxena's sacrifice, and Polymestor's blinding. In other cases it is overtly presented as a messenger report, in the sense that it is delivered by an internal narrator to another character. Representative examples of this type are Acoetes' story of the Tyrrhenian sailors related to Pentheus and Virbius' narrative of Hippolytus' chariot disaster recounted to Egeria. An aspect of the Euripidean messenger speech which Ovid is fond of reworking and attempts to emulate is the graphic description of scenes of gruesome violence. In contrast to the Euripidean Pentheus' pathetic supplication to Agave to spare him by touching her cheek, his Ovidian counterpart attempts to entreat his mother after his arms have been torn off and thus is unable to extend them to her in supplication. Similarly Ovid's description of Polymestor's blinding surpasses in

grisliness its tragic model: whereas in Euripides the Trojan women blind Polymestor by piercing his eyes with brooches, the Ovidian Hecuba plucks out with her bare hands the Thracian king's eyeballs as well as their sockets. Finally, the Euripidean Hippolytus is gravely wounded in his fatal chariot ride, but survives long enough to return on stage, while his Ovidian counterpart is torn to pieces by his frenzied horses after he has been entangled in the reins and impaled in a tree trunk.

Another important component of Euripidean tragedy appropriated by Ovid is the dramatic soliloquy. The use of this dramatic device allows the Roman poet to fashion complex female psychological portraits, another central feature of the *Metamorphoses* shared with Euripides' dramaturgy. Many Ovidian heroines experience an agonizing moral dilemma and express their plight through a solo speech, which displays trademark features of tragic rhetoric, such as apostrophe, paradox, *aporia*, *a fortiori* examples, and arguments from probability. Medea's monologue in Book 7 has a programmatic function in the poem, in that it is the first purely dramatic soliloquy in the work and introduces themes like the *amor-pudor* conflict which are reworked in the later monologues of Scylla, Byblis, and Myrrha. The Colchian's speech is essentially a rhetorical *self-suasoria*, whereby she attempts to convince herself to give in to her passion for Jason, and thus it consists of a series of objections to lending her aid to the Greek hero followed by their direct refutation. Her monologue echoes both aspects of the Euripidean Medea, such as her acute self-awareness of the moral implications of her actions, her sexual jealousy, murderous vengefulness, and aspirations to heroic glory, as well as Phaedra's self-conscious inner struggle in *Hippolytus* between passion and reason.

Procne in Book 6 experiences an internal conflict, which evokes the Euripidean Medea's inner struggle, namely her desire for vengeance against Jason which clashes with her love for her

children, but at the same time surpasses it in complexity. In the case of Procne it is not only her yearning for revenge against her husband that fights against her motherly pietas, but also her affection for Philomela, which goads her to punish Tereus for the crimes he committed against her sister. Similarly Althaea in Book 8 faces a quandary between the roles of mother and sister, in that she is torn between her maternal feelings for her son and her pietas towards her brothers, namely her duty to avenge them by murdering Meleager. Finally, Deianira in Book 9 vacillates between various states of mind: her initial grief at the rumors of Hercules' infidelity turns into desire for vengeance against her erotic rival finally and she finally resolves to send Nessus' robe to Hercules, in order to regain his love. The Ovidian heroine echoes the Euripidean Medea, who in the prologue mourns inconsolably for Jason's unfaithfulness, but from the first episode onward begins to devise her revenge scheme against her husband and the royal family of Corinth.

Another tragic component assimilated by Ovid is the recognition scene (anagnorisis) accompanied by a sudden reversal of fortunes (peripeteia). The most memorable anagnorisis of the poem is Hecuba's discovery of Polydorus' body on the Thracian shore, where she has gone to draw water to cleanse Polyxena's corpse in preparation for her burial. The Ovidian scene surpasses in tragic pathos and immediacy the anagnorisis of its Euripidean model, in which the Trojan queen recognizes her son's corpse after it is brought from the shore to the Achaean camp. The Ovidian Hecuba's first reaction is overwhelming sorrow which renders her speechless and unable to shed any tears, but quickly her grief turns into boiling wrath and she immediately decides to exact vengeance from the Thracian king. Her response contrasts sharply with that of her Euripidean counterpart, who upon seeing Polydorus' corpse bursts into a sung dirge for her

son and only after Agamemnon's refusal to punish Polymestor on her behalf does she resolve to devise a revenge plot herself.

The Euripidean prologue is also reworked by Ovid in an epic fashion. A good example is the introduction of the Hecuba narrative which recounts the murder of Polydorus by Polymestor. The prologue of the Euripidean play in which the ghost of Polydorus recounts to the audience his tragic end is transformed into third person epic narrative. Furthermore, the Roman poet inverts the roles of narrator and addressee by having the external narrator make a pathetic apostrophe to the dead Polydorus and at the same time relate the Trojan prince's story to the reader. Thus, whereas in Hecuba Polydorus is a speaking ghost, in the *Metamorphoses* he is reduced to a voiceless corpse and his narrative role is assumed by the omniscient narrator. The Roman poet also assimilates in his epic the Euripidean epilogue speech of a *deus ex machina*. A representative instance is Virbius' speech which constitutes a creative rewriting of Artemis' epilogue speech as *deus ex machina* in *Hippolytus*. Both are divine characters who offer a retrospective account of the story of Hippolytus and Phaedra and at the same time recount Hippolytus' posthumous fate. What is more, the two speeches have the same narrative function: just as the Euripidean Artemis tries to comfort Hippolytus for his imminent death, likewise Virbius' account of his own fate serves as a consolatory mythological exemplum by means of which he attempts to soothe Egeria's grief for her husband's demise. Finally, another dramatic component, which is absorbed and reconfigured by the Ovidian epic, is choral lyric. For instance, the Theban women's hymn to Bacchus evokes the tragic chorus' hymnic invocation of the god in the play's *parodos*. The Theban women worshipping Bacchus resemble the chorus of the Euripidean play, in that they employ the hymnic style and ritual diction of tragedy.

The most comprehensive and illustrative example of Ovid's epic reworking of tragic elements is the Medea narrative in Book 7, which I construed as epicized "mega-tragedy" covering Medea's mythical *res gestae*, in the sense that each individual episode functions as the epic counterpart to a conventional part of a tragedy. Thus, Medea's monologue in the opening episode was viewed as the structural equivalent of the expository prologue of the Nurse in Euripides' *Medea*, in that it offers an outline of important background details of Medea's story and anticipates later developments in the narrative, such as Jason's betrayal and Medea's vengeance. The episodes of Aeson and Pelias function as "dramatic episodes", while the accounts of the ram's rejuvenation and Pelias' murder probably constitute epic versions of messenger speeches recounting the same events in Euripides' *Peliades*. I also argued that the description of Medea's flight over Greece is reminiscent of a choral "escape ode", in which the chorus wish that they may travel to distant locales. Just as the envisioned voyage of the chorus journey contains allusions to other myths, which anticipate the play's impending catastrophe, likewise the Colchian's real journey alludes to mythical stories, which implicitly foreshadow Medea's infanticide. What is more, Aegeus' recognition of his son Theseus in the nick of time as he is about to drink Medea's poison, corresponds to the anagnorisis scene of Euripides' *Aegeus*. Finally, Medea's escape from Athens in a conjured cloud forms the structural parallel of the *exodos* of Euripides' *Medea*, where she flies away from Corinth on Helios' chariot.

Another conclusion that can be drawn from my investigation of Ovid's appropriation of his tragic predecessor is that the Roman poet reworks each Euripidean play in a different way by employing a large variety of allusive techniques. The *Bacchae* are condensed into a 200 line epic narrative whose four scenes correspond to an episode or conflation of episodes of the Euripidean play. Thus, the opening confrontation between Pentheus and Tiresias blends elements from

Dionysus' prologue and the agon between the Theban king and the prophet in the first episode of the *Bacchae*. The second scene, namely Pentheus' harangue to the Theban people, fuses features from the Theban king's diatribe against Dionysus in the play's first episode and his rallying of the Theban army for an expedition against the Bacchantes in the fourth episode. The third scene, where the captured Acoetes, namely Bacchus in disguise, recounts the story of Dionysus and the Tyrrhenian sailors, constitutes a conflation of the second episode of the *Bacchae*, where the Theban king questions and imprisons the Lydian stranger, and the first messenger speech, in which a herdsman recounts the failed attempt to capture Agave. Ovid substitutes the embedded narrative of the Tyrrhenian sailors based on the Homeric Hymn to Dionysus for the messenger's report to the effect that Acoetes plays simultaneously the roles of the Homeric helmsman, the Lydian stranger, and the Euripidean herdsman. The final scene, which describes the dismemberment of Pentheus by the Bacchantes, draws on the play's second messenger speech and at the same time evokes Theocritus' *Idyll* 26. The most significant divergence between the Euripidean and Ovidian Pentheus pertains to genre. Whereas the tragic Pentheus is a conflicted character torn between his rational hybriatic rejection of Dionysiac worship and his subconscious desire to view the Bacchic rites, his epic counterpart is a one-dimensional character solely driven by his extreme wrath and surpassing his model in terms of irascibility, impatience, and ruthlessness by evoking Virgilian figures, such as Pyrrhus, Turnus, and Mezentius.

Moreover, the Roman poet grafts constituent elements of the *Bacchae*, which he did not incorporate in the Pentheus episode, into the narratives of the *Minyads* and *Orpheus* by means of "fragmentation". In particular, the *Minyads*' hybris consists in their rejection of Bacchus' divinity and thus recalls the questioning of the god's divine paternity by the daughters of Cadmus in the Euripidean play; the Theban women's hymn to Bacchus echoes the tragic chorus'

hymnic invocation of the god in the play's parodos; and Bacchus' miraculous appearance to the sisters evokes the god's epiphany to the Asian Bacchantes. The account of Orpheus' sparagmos alludes to the dismemberment of the Euripidean Pentheus by assimilating features from the play's second stasimon and the two messenger speeches. For example, the preliminary attack of the Thracian maenads against Orpheus, which is repelled by the bard's counteracting magical song creatively reworks the initial assault of the Bacchantes against Pentheus in the second messenger speech, which proves unsuccessful because he is sitting on the fir tree beyond the range of their missiles. Furthermore, the attack of the Thracian maenads against the farmers followed by the dismemberment of their oxen evokes by means of explicit verbal reminiscences the scene in the first messenger speech of the play, where the Bacchantes launch an assault against the herdsmen after their failed attempt to abduct Agave and proceed to tear their cattle to pieces.

Finally, both the Minyads and Orpheus may be viewed as "refractions" of the Euripidean Pentheus. The daughters of Minyas are depicted as less impious than Pentheus, in the sense that they only refuse to take part in Bacchic worship by remaining inside their home, whereas the Theban king not only doubts Dionysus' divine nature, but also attempts to obstruct the establishment of his cult in Thebes. Orpheus, on the other hand, can be characterized as an "anti-Pentheus", in that he is a priest of Bacchus torn apart by the sacrilegious Thracian maenads, who are subsequently punished by the god.

Ovid reworks Euripides' *Medea* in his *Medea* narrative in Book 7 by drastically abridging the main plot of the drama in a few lines and expanding the play's peripheral elements into full-fledged narratives. In particular, the brief retrospective allusions to the Colchis episode and the murder of Pelias are developed in the *Metamorphoses* into self-contained stories. *Medea's* flight on Helios' chariot in the play's exodos is converted into three different aerial

journeys (i.e. Medea's flight over Thessaly in search for herbs for Aeson's rejuvenation and her aerial escapes from Iolcus and Corinth). Furthermore Medea's stay in Athens, which is anticipated in the Euripidean play, becomes in Ovid the denouement of his narrative. I argued that Ovid's portrayal of Medea in Colchis constitutes a paradoxical fusion of the mature Euripidean Medea, the cunning infanticide, and Apollonius' heroine, the gullible maiden in love. The Roman poet fashions the Iolcus episode by drawing on Euripides' Peliades and at the same time alluding to Euripides' Medea. For example, Medea's trickery of the Peliades evokes her deception of Creon and Aegeus, while the ram's rejuvenation and the murder of Pelias recall through "fragmentation" the demise respectively of the Corinthian princess and Creon. The narrator's miniature outline of the Corinthian episode is reminiscent of Medea's own sketch of her revenge scheme in the Euripidean play. The concluding narrative in Athens is modeled on Euripides' Aegeus and also contains subtle allusions to the exchange between the Athenian king and the Colchian in Euripides' Medea. In addition, I contended that Procne, Althaea, and Deianira constitute "refractions" of Euripides' Medea, in the sense that they can be viewed as graded variants of the tragic heroine. Procne is an amplified version of Medea surpassing her in cruelty and ruthlessness; Althaea constitutes a more humanized variant of the Euripidean protagonist in terms of her profound contrition for her filicide; finally, Deianira is merely an "aspiring Medea", in that she entertains a plot of dispatching her erotic rival, but eventually abandons it.

The Ovidian narrative of Hecuba in Book 13 constitutes an epic rewriting of Euripides' Hecuba, in that it reconfigures the central plot elements of the Greek play, namely Polydorus' murder, the sacrifice of Polyxena, Hecuba's vengeance, and the Trojan queen's metamorphosis. The Roman poet's emulation of his tragic antecedent is reflected in the portrayal of his female

protagonists. Polyxena outdoes her Euripidean counterpart both with regard to female sensuality and the usurping of male characteristics, such as courage and ambition for heroic glory, while Hecuba surpasses her tragic model in terms of the emotional intensity of her dirge for Polyxena and the savagery of her vengeance on Polymestor.

I also attempted to show that the story of Virbius and Egeria in Book 15 appropriates elements from both the extant *Hippolytos* Stephanephoros and the fragmentary *Hippolytos* Kalypomenos. In particular, the messenger report of HippS recounting Hippolytus' fatal chariot ride is refashioned into Virbius' posthumous narrative of his own violent demise, while the prologue and epilogue of Virbius' speech evoke Artemis' epilogue speech as *dea ex machina*. In particular, they are both divinities who offer a retrospective account of the story of Phaedra and Hippolytus and at the same time relate Hippolytus' posthumous fate. Moreover, the two speeches share a consolatory purpose, in that just as Artemis attempts to comfort Hippolytus for his impending demise, similarly Virbius employs the narrative of his own death as a mythological exemplum through which he tries to alleviate Egeria's sorrow for her husband's passing. Both speakers, however, are ironically unsuccessful in lifting the spirits of their addressees owing to the fact that they utilize unsuitable arguments. Finally, the Ovidian story deviates in certain ways from HippS, namely the manner in which Phaedra's passion is revealed to Hippolytus, the role of Aphrodite, and the moment of Hippolytus' death, evoking HippK instead. Finally, it has been argued that Ovid reworks Euripides' *Alcestis* by means of "fragmentation", in the sense that he transposes elements of the Euripidean play into the narrative of Orpheus and Eurydice in Book 10. In particular, Ovid's ironical portrayal of Orpheus as cowardly, hypocritical, and unfaithful evokes the characterization of Admetus; the bard's song in Hades assimilates and repurposes the Euripidean play's rhetorical *topoi* about death's inevitability; and most significantly the happy

reunion of the Ovidian couple in the Underworld recalls the blissful denouement of the Greek play, where Admetus is reunited with Alcestis.

The final conclusion that can be derived from this study pertains to Ovid's intertextual relationship with Virgil, his most immediate Roman predecessor. In particular, the Ovidian reception of Euripidean drama emulates the Virgilian appropriation of the Greek tragedian. To begin with, as we saw in Chapter 1, Virgil incorporates in the *Aeneid* figurative incarnations of characters of the *Bacchae*. Dido in Book 4 views herself in her sleep as Pentheus pursued by the Furies and is likened to a frenzied maenad, as a means to illustrate her overwhelming wrath after her abandonment by Aeneas, and she contemplates tearing the Trojan hero to pieces. Amata in Book 7 plays the role of a pseudo-Bacchant in an attempt to thwart the marriage of Aeneas and Lavinia and organizes a fake Bacchic festival; similarly Helen assumes the part of a counterfeit maenad and arranges a counterfeit Bacchic ritual as a ploy to facilitate the Greek invasion in Troy; finally, the comparison of Sibyl to a Bacchant reflects her prophetic madness and possession by Apollo. Ovid in reworking the *Bacchae* not only recounts the story of the real Pentheus and the Theban Bacchants in Book 3, but also includes in his poem figures with Bacchic features reminiscent of their Virgilian counterparts. As I discussed in Chapter 2, Byblis' portrayal as a figurative Bacchant in Book 9, which is illustrative of her erotic frenzy after her rejection by Caunus, echoes the comparison of Dido to a maenad and Procne's disguise as a Bacchant and participation in the Thracian Bacchic rites as a stratagem to rescue Philomela alludes to the depiction of Amata as a pseudo-maenad. Moreover, Medea is compared to a Bacchant while conducting Aeson's rejuvenation ritual, in that she exhibits maenadic characteristics, such as streaming hair and ritual cries. Finally, Ovid portrays Hecuba as a

figurative Bacchant in the scene of Polymestor's blinding in terms of her superhuman strength and her immunity to the Thracian weapons.

In Chapter 1 I analyzed Dido and Venus as “refractions” of Euripides' Medea. After her desertion by Aeneas the enraged Carthaginian queen envisions exacting revenge from the Trojan hero by murdering Ascanius thereby evoking the Euripidean heroine, who commits filicide in order to avenge herself on Jason for abandoning her for the Corinthian princess. Dido, however, does not fulfill her revenge fantasy and thus can be viewed as an “aspiring” Medea. Furthermore, Venus in Book 1 is depicted as a figurative Medea, in that she dispatches to Dido her son Cupid in the guise of Ascanius bearing a robe and a crown as guest gifts, a scene which echoes the Colchian's sending of her sons to the Corinthian princess carrying a poisoned robe and a diadem as bridal presents. Medea's deadly presents bring about the Corinthian princess' fiery death, while Cupid's “blazing” embrace instills burning passion for Aeneas in Dido, which ultimately results in her suicide. In rewriting Euripides' Medea Ovid includes in his poem both the entire career of the real Medea as well as multiple “refractions” of the Euripidean protagonist, namely Procne as “overblown Medea”, Althaea as “humanized Medea”, and Deianira as “would-be Medea”.’

Virgil recounts in Aeneid 3 a short narrative about Polydorus, which alludes to Euripides' Hecuba, but constitutes an alternative mythical variant of the murder of the Trojan prince by Polymestor. Ovid vies with his epic antecedent's refashioning of the Euripidean play in two ways. First, he follows closely the mythical plot of his tragic predecessor instead of that of the Aeneid and at the same time makes subtle allusions to the discarded Virgilian version in the prologue of his narrative and in the opening of his own “Aeneid”. Second, he expands the brief Virgilian episode by incorporating in his story all the major components of the Euripidean play,

i.e. Polydorus' murder, Achilles' epiphany, Polyxena's sacrifice, and Hecuba's revenge. Finally, the Virgilian episode of Virbius in Aeneid 7 is based on Callimachus' Aetia (fr. 190), but at the same time echoes Euripides' HippS by alluding to Phaedra's passion, Theseus' deadly curse, and Hippolytus' chariot crash. Ovid's Virbius and Egeria narrative in Metamorphoses 15 concurrently adapts the miniature Virgilian variant of the myth and augments it by extensively reworking aspects of both HippS (e.g. the messenger report) and HippK (e.g. Phaedra's direct confrontation of Hippolytus).

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