

Exploring Gendered Violence from Tragic Episodes in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

By

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Abstract

This thesis discusses how Ovid integrates scenes and characters from tragedy into his *Metamorphoses*. I examine how Ovid repurposes violence from tragedy, a form of violence that is typically gendered female and occurs in the domestic sphere, into the larger space of epic. Ovid's generic blending is first discussed in his Pentheus and Caenis episodes, where perception of gender leads to violence committed against ambiguously gendered characters. Next, I propose that Ovid confronts his readers with the violence from the tragic origins of Philomela's character in order to underscore the inherent similarity between epic and tragic violence. Finally, I examine how Ovid manipulates the violent expectations for Medea's tragic character within epic's ability to encompass many times and places.

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Introduction

Ovid opens his *Metamorphoses* by claiming that his poem will display forms changed into new bodies (*formas mutatas in nova corpora*, 1.1-2). This thesis will investigate how Ovid performs similar transformations to literary *corpora*—genre and characterization—as well as physical *corpora*. Ovid takes characters with long histories in tragedy and redeploys them in a new context. In doing this he reframes the context of the violence that the characters perform.

Stephen Hinds, a pioneering force in interpreting Ovid's generic play, demonstrated in *The Metamorphosis of Persephone* that Ovid employed elegiac and epic themes in his version of the rape of Persephone, drawing upon precedents from both Greek literature and his own corpus.¹ Philip Hardie's *Ovid's Poetics of Illusion* investigated the development of Ovid's program of imagery and verbal conjuring throughout his career as well as the relationship between Ovid and other authors, from Lucretius to Petrarch to Shakespeare.² Alison Keith also discusses Ovid's blending of genre in her chapter "Sources and Genres in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*", showing how Ovid acknowledges his experience in elegy and tragedy and incorporates his generic expertise into the genre of epic.³

Using this well-established foundation of Ovid's generic play, I will discuss Ovid's engagement with tragedy within the *Metamorphoses*. A great influence on my thinking is Dan Curley's *Tragedy in Ovid* (2013), in which Curley explores how Ovid integrates tragic modes and figures throughout the poet's entire corpus. Especially important are two ideas developed by Curley: a character's "code" and the concept of "there-and-then" versus "here-and-now". A character's code is the whole literary background of the character. Curley argues that a

¹ Hinds 1987.

² Hardie, 2002.

³ Keith 2002.

character's code is invoked anytime a character appears in a work; a reader recognizes a character and remembers the other appearances of the character elsewhere in literature.⁴ In epic, the concept of "there-and-then" is important in contrast to tragedy. The genre of epic allows for more times and places than tragedy and is able to extend both before and beyond the single episode that most tragedies show.⁵ For example, Euripides is only concerned with Medea at Corinth (the here-and-now), but Ovid examines her character at many different locations (Colchis, Iolcus, Corinth, Athens). Building on Curley's work as a foundation, I aim to study Ovid's manipulation of tragedy solely through the lens of gender and violence in the *Metamorphoses*. Gender and violence are significant themes in both tragedy and epic. I suggest that Ovid uses the *Metamorphoses* to integrate conventions from both genres into one space. In doing that, Ovid exposes something that is fundamentally similar between the two types of violence that are often viewed as different.

While tragedy and epic both deal with gender and violence, they differ dramatically in how these issues are depicted and presented to the viewer/reader. In tragedy, women are often portrayed as perpetrators or victims of violence in the domestic sphere. Here canonical examples include Medea, Hecuba, Clytemnestra, and Phaedra. In contrast, epic focuses on the martial violence of the male sphere of the battlefield, with a few notable exceptions, predominantly Vergil's Camilla and the Amazon Penthesilea. I submit that in the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid incorporates the violence typically found in tragedy—domestic violence performed by women—alongside the traditionally martial concerns of epic, portraying women as violent actors in a genre that usually excludes them.

⁴ See Curley's discussion at Curley 2003, pp. 165-176.

⁵ For discussion on this concept see Curley 2013, pp. 95-101.

The expanse of Ovid's epic allows him to interweave the gendered modes of violence from tragedy and epic. Curley argues that Ovid is able to take advantage of the ability of epic to encompass many times and places, developing the idea of "there-and-thens": "The genre's [epic's] access to other places and times minimizes distinctions between 'offstage' and 'onstage', even in narratives with tragic models".⁶ Whereas tragedy is greatly concerned with the here-and-now and rarely diverts its scenes from a united time and space, epic allows the author to explore a greater range of times and places within the same episode.

This thesis explores three case studies in which the intersection of violence and gender is central. Chapter One will discuss the Pentheus episode in Book 3 and the Caeneus episode in Book 12 to show how Ovid portrays the overlap of cross-dressing and gender perception in the *Metamorphoses*. I begin with these episodes because Ovid allows his readers to witness violence that is typically offstage in tragedy in order to conflate epic (martial) and tragic (domestic) violence. By conflating the two forms of violence, Ovid forces his reader to confront the fact that both forms are similar in fundamental ways. Chapter Two will discuss the Philomela and Procne episode from Book 6 and how Ovid recasts the violence from its original tragic context. I use this episode because it provides clear markers of how Ovid manipulates time and space in this episode in order to portray violence in a way that tragedy (and the tragic stage) cannot. Chapter Three discusses the Medea narrative in Book 7, spanning from her epic beginnings in Colchis to Athens. I show that Ovid subverts the violent expectations associated with the tragic iteration of her character since he has already dispersed many aspects of her character into other episodes throughout the poem.

⁶ Curley 2013, p. 96.

Chapter 1: Perception of Gender as a Prelude to Violence

Genre and Perception of Gender in the Pentheus Episode

The focus of this chapter will be upon the interactions between gender, violence, and genre in the Pentheus episode in Book 3 and the Caeneus episode in Book 12 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In particular, this chapter investigates how Ovid exploits the common gendering of tragic violence as feminine within epic and explores how Ovid presents victims of violence who are ambiguously gendered. I investigate how Ovid incorporates the tragic story of Pentheus within the epic and how he uses the Maenads' perception of Pentheus' gender as a means to inflict violence upon him. In the Caeneus episode I discuss how Ovid examines the issue of perceived gender as a prompt to violence in a more traditionally epic setting. Both Pentheus and Caeneus must face a group whose gendered sphere they cross (Pentheus vs. the Maenads in a women's religious festival and Caeneus vs. the Centaurs on the male-centric battlefield); consequently, they become targets of violence because they are perceived as belonging to a different gender and therefore a different sphere.

In Book 3 of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid incorporates the events of Euripides' *Bacchae* into epic. Pentheus' story appears in the Theban section following the story of Narcissus. Pentheus attempts to remove the worship of Bacchus from Thebes and in the course of his crusade he captures a worshipper of Bacchus named Acoetes. After Acoetes relates the story of how he came to worship Bacchus, Pentheus attempts to spy on a group of Maenads performing Bacchic rituals before he is then torn apart by the women. The Pentheus episode appeared most famously in Euripides' *Bacchae* (405 BCE), but was also treated on the Roman stage in Pacuvius' fragmentary *Pentheus*. Ovid does not replicate Euripides' play scene by scene but

draws also from the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus* in the story of Acoetes (3.579-700). It is important to note that Ovid elides the cross-dressing scene from Euripides' *Bacchae* in the *Metamorphoses*, but, as Curley argues, the mere presence of Pentheus invokes the "master code", evoking his entire character history for readers.⁷ Therefore, while the scene of Bacchus convincing Pentheus to cross-dress has been omitted, Ovid's inclusion of Pentheus alone recalls his gender ambiguity in the minds of the readers during the *sparagmos*.

The presence of Bacchus within the Pentheus episode is not explicit in the scene where the Bacchantes tear Pentheus apart, but rather is alluded to by Ovid through the appearance of Acoetes, who is likely Bacchus in disguise.⁸ In the Acoetes portion of the Pentheus narrative, Ovid recalls the cross-dressing scene from Euripides' *Bacchae* by including the association of Dionysus with deception and disguise. The Acoetes/Dionysus tale then simultaneously looks forward to Pentheus' punishment at the hands of the god and the importance of seeing through disguise. If the sailors in Acoetes' story had been able to perceive Dionysus under the guise of a young man, they would have acted differently.⁹ Acoetes also stresses the importance of perception, on whether a disguise is real or not, particularly noting that Dionysus appeared surrounded by *inania simulacra*, images that the narrator perceives as fake. Ovid retains the focus on character's perception when he arrives at the *sparagmos* scene later in the narrative. Bacchus disguised as Acoetes brings the importance of a character's perception into the narrative, showing that what a character perceives (or in Pentheus' case, does not perceive) determines their ultimate fate in the narrative. Thus, the importance of disguise is present within the narrative even if the cross-dressing scene is omitted.¹⁰

⁷ Curley 2003, pp. 168-170.

⁸ Bömer, 1969, p. 588.

⁹ Feldherr 1997, pp. 33-36.

¹⁰ Feldherr 1997, p. 34.

Although the violence present in the Pentheus episode (a mother's murder of her son) is not typical of epic, Ovid engages with the tragic material in order to question the relationship between violence and gender that he addresses elsewhere in the epic. Ovid uses the vehicle of epic in order to allow the reader to witness the act of tragic violence that would not have appeared on the stage.¹¹ By doing this, he conflates the violence from the two genres in a way that accentuates the similarities between them.

Ovid also is able to situate a more "appropriate" death for Pentheus within the context of epic. Ovid maintains the original cause of Pentheus' death, yet by placing this episode within an epic, and using specifically military language, Ovid is able to provide Pentheus with a death akin to one on a battlefield. Of particular importance is Agave's exclamation of victory over Pentheus: *io comites, opus hoc victoria nostra est* (Behold comrades, this deed is our victory! *Met.*3.728). Agave's language here characterizes Pentheus as an opponent conquered on a battlefield, to whom she will deal a death much more appropriate for a man than the dismemberment he receives at her hands in Euripides' tragedy. Even though Pentheus is given a "manly" death, Pentheus' character code makes the reader question whether Pentheus was disguised at the time. Pentheus seems to perceive himself as a hero, especially in his exhortative speech where he condemns the Maenads and vows to track them down with weapons (3.530-60). In the tragic tradition, however, Pentheus is not known for his heroics but for his death, in particular his disguise as a Maenad at the time of his death. The association of Pentheus' death with a womanly disguise adds irony to Pentheus's own self-perception as a great general. In the end, the Maenads are the ones who conquer him in battle, not the other way around.

¹¹ Sommerstein 2010, p. 30.

The language that Agave uses to describe her “defeat” of Pentheus is reminiscent again of Euripides’ *Bacchae*. The messenger in the *Bacchae* describes Agave’s exultation in her *sparagmos* and focuses especially on the language she uses to praise Bacchus. In her praise, Agave calls Bacchus *τόν καλλίνικον*, “glorious victor” (1147). In the *Bacchae* Agave attributes the destruction of Pentheus to Bacchus, making the god the “victor” in the tragic context. In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid elides Bacchus’ direct role in the death of Pentheus and instead foregrounds the violence of the female Bacchantes as opposed to the violence of the god. Particularly important is how the Maenads realize that Pentheus is watching them. In the *Bacchae*, Dionysus is the one who calls the Maenads’ attention to the fact that Pentheus is spying on them (1079-81). In the *Metamorphoses*, Agave notices Pentheus without the help of the god: *hic oculis illum cernentem sacra profanis/ prima videt, prima est insano concita cursu/, prima suum misso violavit Penthea thyso/mater* (here his mother herself first sees Pentheus looking with profane eyes, she first is incited upon a mad course, she first beats her own Pentheus with a thrown thyrsus, 3.710-13). Agave’s use of the thyrsus in the same manner as a spear denotes the merging of the Maenads with the role of male warriors. The conflation of Maenad with warrior is not unique to Ovid,¹² but this association has stronger connotations within in the epic framework. Though not in the private space of the house, the Maenads are performing rituals that are exclusively for women. The private sphere, which in tragedy is heavily associated with violent acts, then becomes public because Ovid provides firsthand description. By allowing the reader to view this violence, and by describing the Maenads as warriors, Ovid portrays typically domestic violence as violence that is acted on the battlefield.¹³

¹² Seaford, 1996, pp.762-4.

¹³ He inverts this when he describes Tereus’ rape of Philomela, which will be discussed in chapter 2.

Ovid heightens the conflation of Maenad and warrior by transferring Euripides' epithet of *καλλίνικον* (here, *victoria nostra*) from Bacchus to the women and emphasizes the violence committed by the women. Agave removes Bacchus from the action by making the Bacchantes the sole perpetrators of the *sparagmos* of Pentheus. Ovid also shifts the impetus of the violence to the women by eliding Bacchus' direct orders to murder Pentheus from the play.¹⁴ Agave does not praise Bacchus as she does in the tragedy, but rather praises herself and her comrades. The self-driven violence of the Maenads is also evident in Agave's use of the words *comites* and *nostra*. By declaring the Bacchantes her *comites*, Agave aligns herself with the others as the murderers of Pentheus. The use of *nostra* again reinforces the actions of the Bacchantes as driven by their own will instead of the will of Bacchus. The Maenads are also *comites* in the sense that they are fellow worshippers of Bacchus, but this does not mean that Bacchus is the active force in killing Pentheus. Instead, while Bacchus is the reason that the Maenads are worshipping together Ovid continually minimizes his role in the actual killing of Pentheus.

The absence of Bacchus from the final scene of the Theban narrative in Book 3 of the *Metamorphoses* underscores Ovid's notable use of women as perpetrators of violence throughout the entirety of the poem (Maenads, Philomela/Procne, Salmacis, Hecuba, e.g.). Like the Maenads, many of these characters have a tragic history. Though Bacchus is possibly recalled by the character Acoetes, he is notably absent from the scene actually depicting the death of Pentheus as discussed above. By both omitting the *numen* of a god as the perpetrator of violence and depicting the female violence that is often found in tragedy, Ovid uses the space of epic in order to explore the problems regarding violence inflicted by female characters. By conflating the Maenads with male warriors, Ovid embeds women acting violently within a female sphere

¹⁴ Eur.*Bacc.*1079-82.

into the confines of epic. Thus, in their own female sphere, the women are alike to men on a battlefield. Ovid takes what was usually private (the Bacchic rites of the Maenads) and places it before the public viewing of his audience, thus making the female sphere a public one and exposing the participation of women in violent acts. Ovid opens the private and domestic sphere of the women to epic's more public, martial sphere, conflating generically tragic violence with that of epic.

Ovid alludes to the second messenger speech of the *Bacchae* (1043-1152) within the direct speech of the *sparagmos* scene. In the messenger's speech, the messenger (one of Pentheus' servants) quotes both Agave and Pentheus in his extended report. Because of tragedy's aversion to showing violence on stage this type of quotation is made necessary. Messenger speeches are a necessary tragic device both for reporting the violence that occurs offstage and for moving the plot of the tragedy forward.¹⁵ Because the messengers are reporting offstage events and are not aided by the mimesis of a typical tragic scene, they must resort to using a greater amount of detail in their report in order to convey the offstage actions as accurately and vividly as possible. As Poe notes, "While a messenger's narrative method may, to a greater or lesser degree, detract from a scene's effectiveness as an enactment of a dramatic situation, it may, at the same time, endow his description of events with great vividness and clarity".¹⁶ Because messenger speeches by nature use language to create a visual narrative, they provide a paradigm for Ovid's approach to using (written) language to enhance visual experience. Epic allows the reader to witness the offstage events of tragedy firsthand. The messenger is not present in Ovid's narrative, thus leaving room for the reader to be the witness for the death of Pentheus in lieu of the messenger from the *Bacchae*.

¹⁵ Poe 2009, pp. 358-362.

¹⁶ Poe 2009, p. 362.

Ovid's language recalls the messenger speech from Euripides' play but, because there is no messenger, it provides a more direct link between the audience and the scene. Unlike the messenger quoting Agave and Pentheus in the tragedy, Agave and Pentheus have direct speech here, thus performing in the exact way that a messenger speech cannot. Ovid is able to use the direct speech to take the vividness of the episode a step further than the messenger, simultaneously recalling the original Euripidean passage while also heightening the visual engagement of the reader.¹⁷

Another important aspect of Ovid's adaptation of the Pentheus episode to epic is his use of simile. The use of a simile serves two purposes: to ground the scene in epic, where simile is a tool frequently used by poets, and to heighten the visual engagement of his readers by providing a second layer of experience within the narrative. Just as Agave's exhortation of *io comites* invites an epic reading of Pentheus' death, so too does the inclusion of a simile in the description of the death invoke the tropes of epic poetry. Prior to his description of Pentheus' death, Ovid provides a simile that is fitting for the epic context and perhaps foreshadows the "martial" death to come:

*ut fremit acer equus, cum bellicus aere canoro
signa dedit tubicen, pugnaeque adsumit amorem,
Pentheia sic ictus longis ululatibus aether
movit et audito clamore recanduit ira (3.704-707).*

Just as a fierce horse snorts when the military trumpeter

¹⁷ Goldenhard and Zissos 1999, p. 171.

gives the signals with his brazen song, and he takes up desire of battle.

Thus did the air, beaten by the long wails, move Pentheus

and his anger burned with the clamor heard.

This comparison of a hero to a war horse ready for battle has particular echoes of Homer's description of Paris and Apollonius' of Jason in his *Argonautica*.¹⁸ Feldherr discusses Pentheus' attempts within the *Metamorphoses* to align himself with a Roman general or emperor by using rhetoric and imperial ideology.¹⁹ Feldherr argues that despite Pentheus' self-alignment with a powerful general, he ultimately falls to the thing he despises, the *magicae fraudae* of Bacchus. McNamara too notes how Pentheus aspires to the epic precedent of the *Aeneid* through his rhetoric and admonition of the events that are happening in Thebes.²⁰ McNamara argues that the combination of the war horse simile and the earlier military rhetoric spoken by Pentheus serve to distance Pentheus from the cross-dressing undertones of the episode. However, Pentheus is ultimately thwarted in his attempt to become an Aeneas-like figure as Ovid undermines Pentheus' self-identification by aligning the king with effeminate rather than hyper-masculine heroes of the literary past. While Pentheus is not a Greek hero in the traditional sense, the character attempts to portray himself as such. Through this simile, however martial it may seem, Ovid actually recalls the gender-bending of Euripides' Pentheus rather than portraying him as a traditional, masculine warrior. Pentheus then, despite his best efforts, is aligned through the simile with the effeminate lover-heroes of Greek epic, such as Paris and Jason, rather than the powerful military one that he attempts to portray himself as. Ovid's use of simile, therefore, both

¹⁸ Bömer 1969, 622.

¹⁹ Feldherr 2010, pp.214-17 and 224-226 respectively.

²⁰ McNamara 2010, pp.179-186.

pays homage to its epic predecessors and reminds the audience that Pentheus is not one of the great heroes of Homeric epic.

Von Glinski too notes that Ovid subverts Pentheus' self-disillusionment through this simile both by implying that Bacchus is the one in control (riding the horse that is Pentheus) and by mimicking "Pentheus' own distorted sense of self, on the one hand replicating his martial fantasy and on the other hand subjugating it under Bacchic power".²¹ Just as in Euripides' *Bacchae*, Pentheus rushes to spy on the Bacchantes under the influence of Bacchic power instead of through a rational means all his own. The war horse simile that Ovid uses when describing Pentheus then provides a false positive. Pentheus is not in fact the militaristic hero he would like to imagine himself as but is the pawn of the god. Ovid's implication that Pentheus is not as self-controlled as the character believes again recalls Euripides' tragedy where Pentheus is duped into spying on the Maenads dressed as a Maenad himself.

Ovid continues his generic play with another simile, this time describing Pentheus' gruesome death:

*non citius frondes autumn frigore tactas
iamque male haerentes alta rapit arbore ventus
quam sunt membra viri manibus derepta nefandis (3.729-31).*

Not more quickly does a wind snatch leaves from a high tree, touched by an autumn frost, to which they barely were clinging than the limbs of the man were torn off by unholy hands.

²¹ Von Glinski 2012, p. 20.

This simile too recalls the imagery from epic.²² The messenger speech in Euripides' *Bacchae*, when describing the *sparagmos* of Pentheus, is not lacking in visual engagement (as discussed above). In fact, the messenger even uses a simile in his description of how Bacchus places Pentheus on the fir tree to better spy on the Maenads (1060-67). However, the messenger of Euripides' play does not go to the same lengths as Ovid to increase the visual engagement regarding the actual death of Pentheus. This could be due to the messenger's own personal feelings in relating his master's death.²³ The messenger's use of first person words, such as *ὁρῶ*, perhaps points to a limited objectivity of the description because of the close personal ties of the messenger. The messenger speech comes from another's point of view and thus is colored by the messenger's perception of the death he has witnessed rather than the audience's own immediate reaction. Ovid as omniscient narrator is able to circumvent the perspective of the messenger and provides the reader of the epic with a vision as the spectator of this tragic scene.²⁴

Because epic is saturated with extended similes, Ovid's frequent use of simile in this traditionally tragic episode showcases his blending of genres. Ovid's engagement with tragedy around the framework of simile, however, is not an effort by the poet to entirely immerse the tragic episode within the epic context. Ovid's use of epic simile also emphasizes the divergence between the epic and tragic genres, and rather than trying to completely harmonize the two, he draws attention to the generic tension. This generic tension "plays its own constitutive part in marking and playing with the conventions of both epic and tragedy, retaining the distinct flavors of each".²⁵ Ovid does not incorporate a tragic episode into epic through simile in order to excise

²² *Il.*21.646-6.

²³ De Jong 1991, Appendix A and Poe 2009, p. 360.

²⁴ Von Glinski 2012, p. 21, Feldherr 1997, p. 32.

²⁵ Von Glinski 2012, p. 96.

the tragic context of the episode, but rather he attempts to create space for the interaction of a tragic episode with epic while retaining traces of its literary past.

Ovid blurs the lines between what is epic and what is tragic, taking advantage of the focus on spectacle in his epic in order to expose what was previously offstage in tragedy. Ovid also recalls a tragic framework within his epic through the visuality and metatheatricality of the scene.²⁶ Ovid provides the theatrical setting for Pentheus's death while still adapting the manner of his death to the epic format. The gendered aspect of the violence in this episode is at odds with the violence that is typically seen in epic. The aggressive act of violence performed by women is at home on (or off of) the tragic stage, as seen with characters such as Medea, Clytemnestra, and the very Bacchae from this episode, as opposed to the mostly martial, male driven violence associated with epic. Although there are exceptions (Penthesilea, Camilla), they are unique and still participate in martial violence in a masculine space. The violence in this scene in the *Metamorphoses* is characterized both by the feminine space (a Bacchic ritual) and the female performers of the violence. Therefore, this violence is quite antithetical to violence typically found on an epic battlefield.

Caeneus: The Ambiguous Hero

The death of Pentheus is unquestionably a scene appropriated from tragedy and Ovid makes sure to include the remnants of its tragic foundations within the context of his epic. This crossing over of violence familiar from tragedy into the epic genre is just one instance of Ovid presenting gender perception as a gateway to violence. In Book 12, Ovid writes about a character

²⁶ Keith 2002, p. 266; Curley 2013, p. 99.

more naturally at home in epic, Caeneus.²⁷ The Caenis/Caeneus episode in the *Metamorphoses* comes within the context of Ovid's own little *Iliad*, after Achilles has defeated the impenetrable Cycnus in battle. Cycnus' death reminds Nestor of the old Lapith hero Caeneus and the Centauromachy between the Lapiths and the Centaurs. Nestor narrates that Caenis is a woman who is raped by Neptune then granted a wish by the god. Caenis wishes to be made so that she can never be raped again, and Neptune transforms the woman into a Greek male hero, named Caeneus. Later, at the Battle of the Lapiths and Centaurs, Caeneus, fighting as the preeminent hero among the Greeks, is specifically attacked by the Centaurs because of his gender history. Caeneus is killed after wounding many of the Centaurs.

In Ovid's epic, as in the *Iliad*, Nestor is the one to talk about Caeneus and his transformation from woman (Caenis) to man (Caeneus), although there is no mention of the circumstances for the metamorphosis in the *Iliad*. However, Caeneus is still described in epic-heroic terms within the Homeric epic, placed alongside an *ehoiē* of men in Book 2.²⁸ The fullest description of Caenis' transformation comes from Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women* (fr. 87), while Vergil describes Caeneus as having been changed back into a woman in the Underworld (Verg. *Aen.* 6.448-9).

As Nestor narrates the battle, the relationship between Caeneus' inverted gender and the violence of the Centaurs becomes evident. Similar to Pentheus, Caeneus has crossed into a realm deemed inappropriate for his sex and is killed as a result. Although Caeneus is certainly a man in the eyes of Nestor at the time of the battle, it is the Centaurs who continue to gender Caeneus as female and are therefore enraged that a "woman" has caused such damage to their ranks:

²⁷ See Ziogas 2013, pp. 184-92. Caenis/Caeneus has brief appearances in the *Iliad*, *Argonautica*, *Shield*, and *Aeneid*, as well as the *Catalogue of Women*.

²⁸ Ziogas 2013, p 202.

*et te, Caeni, feram? nam tu mihi femina semper,
tu mihi Caenis eris. nec te natalis origo
commonuit, mentemque subit, quo praemia facto
quaque viri falsam speciem mercede pararis?
quid sis nata vide, vel quid sis passa, columque,
i, cape cum calathis et stamina pollice torque;
bella relinque viris! (Met.12.470-6).*

And shall I suffer you, Caenis? For you will always be a woman to me, you will always be Caenis to me. Has your birth origin not reminded you, does it not enter your mind, by what deed you got the prize and by what price you got the false appearance of a man? Look at how you were born, or what you have suffered, and go, take up the distaff with the baskets and turn the threads with your thumb; leave wars to men!

The language of these insults, spoken by the centaur Latreus, has a particular history in epic, especially in his admonition to leave war to men.²⁹ This language participates in the epic trope of demeaning an enemy by calling him a woman.³⁰ Yet, despite Latreus' insults, it is Caeneus who emerges triumphant in the battle between the two. It is clear in the centaur's perception that Caeneus does not belong on the battlefield, that "she" is crossing into a realm that is almost exclusively reserved for men. Even though there is a precedent of women participating on the epic battlefield (Camilla, Penthesilea, e.g.), these cases are still exceedingly rare and notably

²⁹ Bömer 1982, p. 157.

³⁰ Keith 2000, pp. 19-21.

exceptional. Latreus is attempting to categorize Caeneus not as one of these rare exceptions, but as an imposter. Ovid is unwilling to fit Caeneus into any neat categorization. Mopsus, after Caeneus' death, declares that Caeneus was the greatest of men (12.531). Mopsus therefore accepts Caeneus' presence on the battlefield, ultimately accepting his categorization as a man.³¹ However, even if the Greeks are willing to memorialize Caeneus as a man, the gendering of Caeneus as female by the Centaurs shows that they believe that Caeneus has crossed into a sphere—the battlefield—that is not suitable for his gender. As with Pentheus, Caeneus suffers the consequences of not performing, and thus deviating from, expected gender roles and participating in an action that is not fit for his perceived gender.

The elision of the Pentheus cross-dressing scene does not eliminate Pentheus' gender confusion in that episode but may in fact strengthen the readers' memory of the scene by its very omission. Caeneus, however, is certainly not cross-dressing but has been transformed from one sex to the other. Despite his disguise as a woman amongst the Bacchants, Pentheus is perceived as a man by his enemies and is killed for it. The same happens to Caeneus. Even though Caeneus is physically not female at the time of the battle between the Lapiths and the Centaurs, Caeneus is perceived and identified as a non-male by his enemies and is singled out to be destroyed. Of particular importance to Caeneus' gendering by his enemies is Latreus' use of the term *falsam speciem*. Though this does not recall specific language from the Pentheus episode, Caeneus is alike to Pentheus in that they both assumed different forms in order to infiltrate a sphere that was previously unavailable to them. Latreus' taunts signal Caeneus as an intruder on the battlefield. Latreus, along with the other Centaurs, genders Caeneus as female, instead choosing to perceive the hyper-masculine Caeneus as the woman Caenis. The phrase *falsam speciem* works in

³¹ Freas 2018, p. 78.

conjunction with Latreus's continued use of the name "Caenis" in order to show that the Centaurs believe that they are seeing through Caenis' disguise. Because Caeneus is actually Caenis in the minds of the Centaurs, they do their best to remove the intruder from the traditionally masculine sphere of warfare, paying special attention to killing Caeneus among all of the Greeks present. Caeneus is singled out as an intruder similar to how the Bacchantes discover and rush upon Pentheus, who is unveiled out from under his own *falsam speciem*.

The response of both the Bacchantes and the Centaurs to a perceived intruder in their midst is strikingly similar. At the sight of Pentheus, whom the Bacchantes see as a wild boar, the women rush at the intruder, many against one: *mater et "o geminae" clamavit "adeste sorores!/ille aper, in nostris errat qui maximus agris, /ille mihi feriendus aper."* *ruit omnis in unum/turba furens; cunctae coeunt fremituque sequuntur iam trepidum* (and his mother shouted "oh sisters, come! That boar, the massive one who wanders around our fields. That boar must be torn apart by me." All rushed against one, a raving crowd; they all group together and chase him, fearful, with an uproar, *Met.*3.715-16). Ovid uses language that highlights the group versus the intruder. The repeated use of group words such as *omnis*, *turba*, *cunctae*, and *coeunt* create a stark contrast between the unity of the group of Bacchantes and the solitude of the intruder Pentheus. When Agave incites the other Bacchantes to action, she is sure to create an "us vs. them" mentality with repetition of the contrasting *mihi* and *ille*. The outrage of the Bacchantes is driven by the discovery of an outsider in their midst. They distrust Pentheus' disguise, and though they mistake him for a boar instead of a man, the Bacchantes respond with unanimous fury in their pursuit and ultimate destruction of the intruder. Even though the Bacchantes perceive Pentheus as a boar, they gender him as male (*ille*), alluding to the intrusion of a male into the sphere of the female. This adds to the outrage of the Bacchantes and causes their pack mentality to

take full effect. They are sure to root out the one who does not belong precisely because he does not belong. Thus, the Bacchants see right through the *falsam speciem* of Pentheus and take action to remove the intruder from their midst.

The Centaurs in their episode in Book 12 maintain a similar pack mentality in their attack on Caeneus:

*‘Ecce runt vasto rapidi clamore bimembres
telaque in hunc omnes unum mittuntque feruntque
tela retusa cadunt, manet imperfossus ab omni
inque cruentatus Caeneus Elateius ictu.
fecerat attonitos nova res. “heu dedecus ingens!”
Monychus exclamat “populus superamur ab uno
vixque viro; quamquam ille vir est, nos segnibus actis
quod fuit ille, sumus. quid membra immania prosunt,
quid geminae vires et quod fortissima rerum
in nobis duplex natura animalia iunxit?” (Met. 12.494-502).*

Behold! The swift man-beasts rushed forward with a huge uproar and they all throw and bear spears at this single man and the spears fall blunted, and Caeneus, son of Elatus, remains unharmed and unbloodied by every blow.

The new thing made them astonished .“Alas, a massive shame!”

Monychus cried. “We as a people are overcome by one

who is scarcely a man; although that one is a man, we, with our weak attacks,
are what that one was. What use are huge members,
what use our twin strengths and that our double nature
joined into us the strongest animals of all?"

Again, Ovid draws attention to a crowd gathered together and attacking a singular figure. Here Ovid emphasizes Caeneus' isolation by having *omnes* separate the agreeing words *hunc* and *unum*. Ovid also shows how the Centaurs drew their focus towards Caeneus, isolating their aggression towards Caeneus despite the myriad of Greeks around with whom they could concern themselves. The Centaurs' concern with defeating Caeneus stems not only from Caeneus' prowess in battle but also from the fact that they perceive Caeneus as a woman who has crossed gender norms to intrude upon the male sphere of the battlefield. The Centaur Monychus particularly struggles to comprehend the might of Caeneus when the Centaurs charge the hero *en masse*. Caeneus' strength in battle bewilders the Centaurs. Monychus is astonished that one who is *vix viro* is able to overcome the race that supposedly has the strength of both man and beast. Though Monychus calls Caeneus *ille* and *vir*, he draws attention again to the figure of Caenis, stating that the Centaurs have been reverted to what Caeneus was when he was still Caenis (499-500). The one whom the Centaurs see as a woman is overpowering the superhuman strength of the Centaurs,³² providing more anger at the intrusion of a "female" figure onto the battlefield, especially one who has proven to be more masculine than the Centaurs. Caeneus' breach of gender boundaries causes the hero to be singled out and ganged up on much in the same way as Pentheus was in Book 3 (although Caeneus originally fares better than Pentheus). Monychus

³² Keith 1999, p. 207.

then goes on to question the use of the Centaurs' *immania membra* if they are not able to penetrate Caeneus, showing their continued concern with overcoming a foe that they perceive as a woman.³³ The superiority of one who was a woman, whom the Centaurs certainly perceive as a woman, along with their inability to assert dominance in their own masculine sphere, enrages the Centaurs even more and they increase their efforts to kill Caeneus, eventually burying the hero under a forest of trees.

The manner of Caeneus' death should be contrasted with that of Pentheus. While there is much debate as to which gender Caeneus' death befits,³⁴ I believe that his death was more appropriate for that of a woman than a man. Pentheus' death is refigured by Ovid in order to provide a more martial, more male appropriate death to the character despite the fact that he was dressed as a woman and killed by a woman. Thus, a man gets a man's death, even if the circumstances were not ideal. Ovid does the opposite with Caeneus. Caeneus, despite being a man in appearance and action, is given a death through suffocation, one which is more appropriate to a woman.³⁵ This, along with the phallic imagery of a forest of trees being piled upon Caeneus, reverts Caeneus back to the form of a female, at least in the eyes of the Centaurs. The enemies of Caeneus drive this reversion through their gendering of the character as non-male and thus unsuited for a man's death on the battlefield.

Within the Pentheus and Caeneus episodes of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid employs the importance of a character's perception of gender and how that precedes acts of violence committed by and upon female characters. Ovid is careful, however, not to blend the reader's perception with the perception of the violent actors. Ovid divides the perception of the reader

³³ Freas 2018, p. 16.

³⁴ Freas 2018, pp. 77-79.

³⁵ Keith 2000, p. 83.

from that of the actors, as is the case with the Maenads in the Pentheus episode. What the Maenads see and what the reader sees are different, especially because Ovid's inclusion of Pentheus evokes the tragic history (and therefore gender-bending) of the character. Within the Pentheus episode, Ovid's Maenads attack Pentheus, under the impression that he is a boar, without the impetus of Bacchus. Because of this, Ovid shifts the agency of the Maenads' violence to the Maenads themselves rather than Bacchus. Pentheus is then punished for transgressing gender boundaries by encroaching on the Bacchic rites of the Maenads. The Maenads continue to perceive Pentheus as a boar and continuously gender him as male in their perception, recalling traces of the cross-dressing scene famous from Euripides' play. Ovid, of course, adapts the violence of the Maenads from tragedy, and in doing so creates a visually engaging episode of violence that is more at home on the battlefield (in this case a *campus*) in the genre of epic. The conflation of the Maenads with warriors especially serves to heighten the shift from the private sphere of tragedy to the public one of epic. Because Pentheus attempted to cross gender boundaries, and in his attempt assume the guise of another gender, the Maenads excised the intruder from their midst. Their perception of Pentheus as an outsider, particularly as a male outsider intruding upon a female sphere, led to the Maenads' violence against Pentheus.

As with Pentheus, Caeneus become the target of the Centaurs' violence in the episode in Book 12. Though Caeneus is not disguised, but rather has changed genders, the Centaurs, remembering Caeneus' former female form, perceive Caeneus as an intruder upon the male-centric battlefield and therefore attack one they perceive as participating in the wrong gendered sphere. Caeneus' ultimate demise may be more appropriate for the death of a woman, but Ovid continues to conflate different forms of violence in the Centauromachy episode because of the Centaurs' interpretation of Caeneus as an intruder into that sphere.

Ovid takes full advantage of epic's space for multiple there-and-thens in order to fit the stereotypical violence of both tragedy and epic into the same work. Ovid depicts both tragic and more traditionally epic characters as victims of violence because of gender transgressions. The similarity in how Ovid depicts both epic and tragic violence raise questions about whether one mode of violence is worthy or praise over the other or if violence should be praised in any way whatsoever.

Chapter 2: Violence in Plain View: Tereus, Philomela, and Procne

Tragic Space and Time in Epic

In this chapter, I wish to explore further how Ovid transports the domestic setting typical of tragedy into the world of his epic poem, thereby allowing his readers a broader perspective on this narrow space. As Curley argues, tragedy is concerned with events that occur within in one small period of time (generally less than a day) and events on stage are constrained to few spaces. For example, the entire action of Euripides' *Medea* occurs outside the front of Jason and Medea's home.³⁶ Epic poetry, however, by its nature requires different times and spaces.³⁷ While the characters of tragedy may make reference to multiple locations, many times a secondary location is mentioned only through a messenger speech and not witnessed on stage. Ovid narrates firsthand the scenes in tragedy that do not appear on stage, exposing the entirety of the action of a play, most importantly the violent apex. Where tragedy avoids direct confrontation with, or at least display of, violence, Ovid confronts the violence head on.

Aristotle claims that both epic and tragedy have *eusynoptic* plots,³⁸ or plots that can easily be taken in and understood at a glance. Alex Purves argues that the "success of both epic and tragedy depends on plots that are—like well-defended cities or encampments—easily viewable as a whole, and the model that is most appropriate for trying to gain a sense of what it means to take in a literary work in one view is the theater, which arranges all of its seats in such a way that each spectator is given a clear view of the plot".³⁹ Therefore Ovid's challenge in the

³⁶ Curley, 2013, pp.95-6.

³⁷ Starting with Homer's invocation to the Muses in the *Iliad*, Purves, 2010, p.6. See also Ovid's invocation at the beginning of the *Met*.

³⁸ *Poet.* 23.1459a30-4.

³⁹ Purves, 2010, p.28.

Metamorphoses in not to shift the plot of a tragedy to epic, which is no challenge at all,⁴⁰ but rather to reconfigure the confined space of tragedy to conform to the much broader space of epic. The Greek stage is also *eusynoptic*, like the plots of the plays which take place on it, easily taken in at a glance. The setting of epic is not taken in quite as easily, especially because epic will encompass many different settings and times. I will explore how Ovid takes the static stage of tragedy and molds it to the more dynamic settings of epic by using different times and places.⁴¹

The *eusynoptic* plot, however, does not readily apply to Ovid's unconventional epic. The myriad of stories and episodes that Ovid covers far outdistances those of Homer or Vergil.⁴² There is little of the *Metamorphoses* that can be taken in at a glance, even if Ovid's *in nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas corpora* is believed to be the sole purpose of this poem. Although the entire epic cannot be deemed *eusynoptic*, each episode individually is recognized and understood quickly despite the expansiveness of the epic as a whole. The story of Tereus and Philomela from Book 6, which is the focus of this chapter, fits within the *eusynoptic* description.

Another challenge facing Ovid was one that faced Homer as well: how can Ovid turn his listeners, or readers, into spectators?⁴³ In other words, how can Ovid create something visual in a medium that does not include actors, backdrops, and stages?⁴⁴ The answer lies most obviously in Ovid's skill as a poet, but the same answer that applied to Homer applies to Ovid. Just as Homer did, Ovid takes the position of an omniscient narrator, not omniscient because he has witnessed

⁴⁰ Purves points to Aristarchus' observation that the Greek ships on Troy's shores are very much like a theater, p.28. Even Aeschylus testifies that tragedy is crumbs from Homer's table, TrGF 3. T112a-b.

⁴¹ The so-called "dramatic time". Taplin, 1977, p. 291.

⁴² As Curley puts it: "a boundless subject for a boundless genre", 2013, p. 97.

⁴³ See Strauss Clay, 2011, p.14.

⁴⁴ Ovid perhaps had practice through his *Medea*, which some have argued was recited rather than performed. For discussion, cf. Wheeler, 1999, p. 35, Tarrant, 1978, pp. 260-1, and Fantham, 1982, p. 7.

every event in the poem, but because he is inspired by the gods. In this way, the poet is able to bring events from the distant past to the perception of his audience.⁴⁵

Another important function of exhibiting the behind-the-scenes aspect of tragedy in epic is Ovid's frequent inclusion of the typical domestic setting from tragedy. Epic does not totally exclude domestic or private settings, such as Penelope's bedroom in the *Odyssey*, but it does not dwell in the domestic sphere to the same extent that tragedy does. Much of the action in tragedy happens within the private lives of the royal family or within their home, where women play major roles and many times become violent actors. Because the violence that does happen inside the home (Jocasta's suicide, Medea's murder of her children) occurs offstage, Ovid exploits epic's flexibility to portray violence perpetrated by female characters directly to his audience. While the genre of epic is not incompatible with the domestic setting, Ovid still makes an unusual pairing between epic and violence in this setting, especially violence both against women (Tereus against Philomela) and by them (Philomela and Procne against Itys) in the domestic sphere.

In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid likely drew his treatment of the story of Philomela, Procne, and Tereus from the now very fragmentary *Tereus* of Sophocles for the source material of his telling of the tragedy, along with the versions by Livius Andronicus and Accius (both fragmentary).⁴⁶ A damaged hypothesis of Sophocles' *Tereus* written around the 2nd or 3rd century BCE also exists. Due to the fragmentary nature of the other extant sources on Philomela and Procne, it is difficult to discern which portions of Ovid's telling he drew from them and which ones he invented himself, however the "internment" of Philomela, when Tereus imprisons

⁴⁵ Strauss Clay, pp. 17-18. See also, Feldherr, 2010, p. 22 on how emotion closes the distance.

⁴⁶ Fitzpatrick, 2001, p. 92.

Philomela in the woods, appears to be an Ovidian innovation.⁴⁷ The timeline within Sophocles' *Tereus* itself is also in doubt, but it does appear that the play begins right when Tereus returns to his palace from Athens or just after (meaning that Philomela has already been raped and hidden away). The rest of the play then seems to take place in the Thracian palace, but this of course is not completely confirmed.

The expanse of time encompassed in Ovid's episode departs greatly from the tragic source material. Right from the beginning of his telling, Ovid employs epic's expanse to extend the parameters of the tragedy. The start of Ovid's telling begins long before the events of the tragedy, as he tells of an unnamed Athenian war that kept Athens from Pelops' funeral (*solae cessastis Athenae/obstitit officio bellum*, 6.421-22). Tereus then arrives as an ally to the Athenians in order to help them defeat the barbarian army (*Threicius Tereus haec auxiliaribus armis/fuderat et clarum vincendo nomen habebat*, 6.424-25). Then comes the marriage between Tereus and Procne (*quem sibi Pandion opibusque virisque potentem/et genus a magno ducentem forte Gradivo/conubio Procnes iunxi*, 6.426-28) and Itys' birth (6.433-34). Within roughly twelve lines, Ovid visits four different time periods in the same narrative, a distinct departure from the typical one day length of a tragedy. Ovid's placement of this episode within epic allows him to surpass the walls of tragedy and portray events outside of tragedy's more singular focus. As Curley notes, "Ovid incorporates events that in the *Tereus* happened offstage, such as the murder of Itys and the ensuing feast, or that happened beyond the dramatic time-frame, such as the voyage of Tereus and the violation of Philomela".⁴⁸ The nature of epic provides for a more inclusive telling of Philomela and Tereus, allowing Ovid to incorporate the events from beginning to end, instead of starting *in medias res*. The expanded chronology both increases

⁴⁷ Fitzpatrick, 2001, p. 91.

⁴⁸ Curley, 2003, p. 176.

Ovid's *ethos* as well as helps to define the relationships between the characters more concretely, thus adding *pathos* to the coming violence.⁴⁹ The timeframe of Ovid's narrative already is far greater than that of Sophocles' *Tereus* before he even enters into the events of the play.

In his swift telling of the events preceding Tereus' rape of Philomela, Ovid actually skips over the "epic" part of this tale. The martial heroics of Tereus are summarized quite succinctly. Ovid merely informs the reader that there was a war and that Tereus fought well: *clarum vincendo nomen habebat*. Ovid makes it clear that he is not interested in exploring the martial aspects of the story, even if he may have been well within his scope to do so. The introduction of Tereus comes with little preamble and his name comes several lines before any mention of Pandion, Philomela, Procne, or any other character connected to the events of the tragedy. The arrival of Tereus, and subsequent setting of Thrace, is made even more surprising by the lack of connection between Thrace and the previous episode (a brief mention of Pelops mourning his sister, Niobe).

The wide-ranging nature of epic also allows for Ovid's innovation of Philomela's internment at the hands of Tereus. From the start of this episode, Ovid shows that he is willing to include large spaces of time in his narrative, even if the time that passes is laid out in a single line. A prime example of Ovid's willingness to expand and contract time in this episode is the prelude to Procne's request to Tereus for him to return to Athens and bring back her sister to Thrace for a visit: *Iam tempora Titan/quinque per autumnos repetiti duxerat anni* (and now the Titan had led out the lengths of the changing year through five autumns, 6.438-39). By condensing such a length of time into one sentence, Ovid takes full advantage of epic's capacity to cover long passages of time, regardless of whether the passage is marked by a full treatment or

⁴⁹ The omniscient narrator/memory are important here. Bakker, 2005, discusses this in relation to Homer, yet it applies well to Ovid.

a short one such as this. The compression of time in such a way is also apparent later in this episode when Ovid tells of the passage of Philomela's imprisonment in the woods, describing the passing of a year in a way similar to the Homeric formula for marking the passage of time: *signa deus bis sex acto lustraverat anno* (the sun god has passed through twelve months with a year completed, 6.571).⁵⁰ Ovid summarizes five years and one year in an identical way, while also giving the same amount of attention to a much shorter timeframe from the end of Athens' war to the marriage of Tereus and Procne. This also creates a contrast between the genres of epic and tragedy. In tragedy, Procne and Philomela would be given the opportunity to voice their pleasure or displeasure at leaving home, but in his epic, Ovid glosses over the sisters' feelings in his role as narrator. He chooses who gets to speak when and provides a notable absence of the women's opinions in an episode where the ability to speak is so important.

Ovid is able to expand and condense definite passages of time, unlike tragedy.⁵¹ He does so in order to tell a complete narrative from beginning to end (Tereus' arrival in Athens to the transformed sisters flying off) where tragedy depicts a less extensive timeline. By beginning with Tereus aiding the Athenians in war, Ovid provides the background to the tragic center of his narrative that would have been known to his audience but removed from the tragedy itself. Ovid does not depict Tereus as wicked right from the start, as in Sophocles' tragedy, but instead provides a character arc for the Thracian king.

Tereus' arc begins with the king as an ally to the Athenians (*Threicius Tereus haec auxiliaribus armis fuderat*) and a man of noble stock (*quem sibi Pandion opibusque virisque potentem/et genus a magno ducentem forte Gradivo*). This is hardly the Tereus that the audience would expect from his tragic history. This incongruity can be explained by the "code" that

⁵⁰ Curley, 2003, p. 176.

⁵¹ See Taplin, 1977, p. 293.

Curley argues is invoked any time a particular character is introduced. In Tereus' case, his code would evoke his rape and mutilation of Philomela, not his military exploits. Ovid, however, is not constrained to the timeframe of the tragic plot and can establish the character of Tereus in a more favorable light before his inevitable shift to wickedness. Though the reader of the *Metamorphoses* would know that the rape of Philomela would be forthcoming, the heroic nature of Tereus' introduction in the poem creates a greater impact when the character eventually does transform into the Tereus known from tragedy. Tereus is not a one-dimensional villain in Ovid's telling of the tragedy, but a man who undergoes major transformation to his character prior to the metamorphosis that will occur at the end of the narrative. Because there is a greater expanse of time for his use, Ovid is able to play up the drama of the episode through the early avoidance of reference to Tereus as a rapist.

Ovid does not keep Tereus' tragic credentials in doubt for very long, however, as he quickly foreshadows the disaster that is to come because of the marriage between Procne and Tereus. Ovid describes the sinister omens that preside over their marriage, creating a nexus point between Tereus the hero and Tereus the rapist.

*Non pronuba Iuno,
non Hymenaeus adest, non illi Gratia lecto.
Eumenides tenuere faces de funere raptas,
Eumenides stravere torum, tectoque profanus
incubuit bubo thalamique in culmine sedit.
Hac ave coniuncti Procne Tereusque*
6.428-33.

But Juno, the one who presides over marriage, was not present,
Nor Hymenaeus, nor were the Graces by that marriage bed.
The Furies held torches snatched away from a funeral
The Furies prepared the bed, and a foreboding owl
Kept watch from the rooftop and sat on the peak of the marriage chamber.
Under this omen Procne and Tereus were married.

Here is Ovid's first sign posting that the disaster associated with Tereus will come to pass. Ovid draws attention to the domestic setting in this premonition. The focus on the marriage bed (*lecto, torum*) and chamber (*thalami*) serves to foreshadow the corruption of the marriage that Tereus will later perform. The ill-fated marriage depicted here by Ovid carries connotations for Tereus' character in the domestic sphere. The association of the marriage with the domestic sphere does not only show Tereus' wicked character in relation to marriage, but to the domestic sphere as a whole.

Ovid uses the omens during the marriage to create a divide between Tereus' behavior in the public sphere of battle and the private sphere of the household. The contrast between Tereus' actions in these two spheres is extreme and pointed. Ovid takes great care to set up Tereus' heroic nature at the beginning of the narrative before swiftly pivoting to a damning characterization of his nature as base and barbaric. When Tereus first arrives in the narrative, Ovid describes Tereus as winning glory in battle (*clarum vincendo nomen habebat*), being of noble stock (*genus a magno ducentem forte Gradivo*), and powerful in both wealth and men (*opibusque virisque potentem*). All of these positive attributes will be quickly cancelled out when

Tereus is depicted within in the domestic setting. After his ominous wedding with Procne, Tereus returns to Athens in order to bring Philomela back to Thrace. When Philomela walks into the room where her father and Tereus are conversing, Tereus is immediately inflamed with lust for her and his earlier association with a great race is dispelled.

*Digna quidem facies: sed et hunc innata libido
exstimulat, pronumque genus regionibus illis
in venerem est: flagrat vitio gentisque suoque (6.458-60).*

Her beauty was fit (for his desire): but the natural sexual desire
Stimulated him, his race prone to sexual desire in those regions.
He burned with his own vice and that of his race.

Ovid's second description of Tereus' nature completely neutralizes the earlier one. With the presence of the omens at Tereus' wedding, Ovid foreshadows the stark shift from heroic warrior to wicked Thracian (Ovid is perhaps playing with the necessary violence inherent in the *genus Gradivi* that leads to Tereus' marital heroism, but also gives way to his sexual violence). By showing the ill-fated marriage with emphasis on the domestic setting, Ovid sets up the quick departure from the first description of Tereus. The shift occurs immediately when Tereus appears in the domestic sphere. Inside Pandion's home, Tereus is no longer recognized through the *clarum nomen* that he earned in battle but the *innata libido* that comes from the barbaric Thracian race. The *innata libido* will be the ultimate impetus behind the rape of Philomela and Tereus' wickedness for the rest of the episode.

The remainder of the episode takes place in the domestic setting, focused on two primary locations: the hut in the woods where Tereus imprisons Philomela and the private home of Tereus. Ovid has already utilized epic's inclusivity as it relates to the timeframe of a narrative, and as the narrative progresses, Ovid begins to take greater advantage of the spatial breadth of epic. Within the first 150 lines, the narrative visits multiple places with little detail given. At first, the narrative is in Athens, where Tereus aids the Athenians in war (412-428). Then the narrative moves to Thrace, presumably where Procne and Tereus marry and their son Itys is born (429-447). In each location, no real detail is given to the setting of the events that are taking place. After Tereus leaves Thrace and arrives in Athens for a second time, Ovid continues to omit details of the setting of the conversation between Pandion and Tereus, describing only the action (*Ut primum soceri data copia, dextera dextrae/iungitur, et fausto committitur omine sermo*, 6.447-8). Tereus' stay in Athens takes up a substantial portion of the narrative, but the exact location of the events in the episode can only be inferred. The conversation with Pandion is perhaps taking place in a private chamber, where Philomela is able to come in unannounced (*ecce venit magno dives Philomela paratu*). The next location is a banquet hall where Pandion entertains Tereus, though again Ovid describes only the action and not the location (*regales epulae mensis et Bacchus in auro/ponitur; hinc placido dantur sua corpora somno*). Finally, Tereus is transported to his guest room in Athens, where he is unable to sleep (*cura removente soporem*).

The lack of focus on the various locations within this segment of the narrative shows Ovid's manipulation of space within the narrative.⁵² Because epic allows for so many different locations to be visited by its characters, there is no need for Ovid to put particular focus on minor

⁵² Ovid takes us on a "hodological" journey through the space of the episode. The audience is able to visualize exactly where each character is. See Strauss Clay pp.97-99, drawing from Lewin, 1934.

shifts in location. In this case, the shifting locations serve to emphasize the agonizing emotion that Tereus feels after his glimpse of Philomela. Tereus is first talking with Pandion, then at dinner, then sleepless in his bedroom. Each new location is also a marked passage of time, combining the two in a way that tragedy is unable to. As readers, we are only told that Tereus arrives at Athens: *iubet ille carinas/in freta deduci veloque et remige portus/Cecropios intrat Piraeaque litora tangit* (He ordered the ships to be led into the sea and with sail and oar he landed at the Cecropian harbor and the Piraean shores, 6.444-6). Ovid does not even detail Tereus' arrival at the palace of Pandion. Ovid's lack of attention to spatial detail contrasts sharply with the later description that Ovid provides in the episode.

Once Tereus returns to Thrace with Philomela, this changes. The locations of the action no longer need to be inferred. Ovid provides each location with specific detail so that the readers know where every character is at all times. Ovid's specificity of location begins on the journey from Athens back to Thrace. Whereas on the journey to Athens Tereus launched his ships and arrived in Athens in the same sentence (6.444-6), on the way back to Athens Ovid provides a more detailed description of the journey: *Ut semel inposita est pictae Philomela carinae/admotumque fretum remis tellusque repulsa est* (As soon as Philomela was placed on the painted ship and the sea was stirred by the oars and the land was left behind...6.511-12). Although the distinct description of the sea journey could be ascribed merely to *variatio*, Ovid is more likely providing a nexus point in the narrative, both geographically (Philomela being moved from Athens to Thrace), but also in terms of space. The first half of the narrative serves as background for the latter half and Ovid does not burden himself with every detail but as the narrative shifts, Ovid begins to provide more detail as the setting takes on more importance. Philomela's journey on the ship requires more detail because at this crucial moment in the

narrative the location of the ship represents the horror that is to come. By providing only a little more detail about the ship (*pictae carinae*) and its relative location to the shore of Athens (*fretum remis tellusque repulse est*), Ovid draws the reader's attention to the detail and therefore importance of the ship. This is the location where the narrative changes and will shift to the events known from tragedy. Starting with the ship, Ovid begins to provide more detail about locations as their importance in relation to the plot increases.

Tragic Violence Seen in Epic

The next location, and perhaps most significant in this episode, is the *stabula* in which Tereus imprisoned Philomela. Correspondingly, Ovid goes into great detail about the location and state of the hut at two different points in the episode. First, Ovid provides a (relatively) lengthy description of the hut's location in the woods: *cum rex Pandione natam in stabula alta trahit, silvis obscura vetustis* (When the king dragged Pandion's daughter to the remote hut, hidden in the ancient woods, 6.521-22). Similar to Ovid's description of Tereus' ship, the poet provides more description of the *stabula* to emphasize its importance. The hut comes into clearer picture later in the narrative: *fugam custodia claudit/structa rigent solido stabulorum moenia saxo* (a guard prevents her flight, the walls of the hut, built from solid stone, stand strong, 6.572-3). Taken all together, Ovid's descriptions of the *stabula* almost represent the set of the stage. This contrasts greatly with the absolute lack of description regarding Pandion's palace in the earlier part of the narrative. As the narrative continues to transition to the tragic elements, the details about the setting take on an increased importance.

The setting of the hut in the woods is likely the most important in the episode and introduces the key element of entire narrative: violence performed against women. The violent

rape and dismemberment that Tereus performs on Philomela sets up the remainder of the episode, including the violent murder of Itys. The rape of Philomela corresponds to the tragic story but is described by Ovid in a way that is more fitting for the lines of epic. This is how Ovid redeploys the modes of tragedy for epic. He takes what occurs off stage and brings it to the center of his narrative, drawing attention to what he is doing by describing the location of the rape.⁵³ If reconstruction of previous tragic material is correct, it is likely that the rape of Philomela even took place before the events of the play. Violence within the domestic sphere has few depictions in epic (Dido's suicide and Aeneas' description of Priam's death are perhaps the best examples), but violence committed against or by women in the domestic sphere is common in tragedy, with examples such as Antigone and Jocasta's suicides or Medea's murder of her two children and Agamemnon's death at the hands of Clytemnestra. Because violence in tragedy is sequestered offstage, Ovid takes advantage of the unique times and spaces of epic in order to more fully expose the violence of tragedy.

Ovid's inclusion of violence more suitable for tragedy is then validated through his description of the actual violence. The generic tension that Ovid employed at the introduction of Tereus into the narrative returns after Tereus has successfully imprisoned Philomela in Thrace. Ovid describes Tereus' capture and rape of Philomela in terms of an epic military struggle, despite the tragic implications of the episode. As Gildenhard and Zissos note, the similes of the hare and eagle (*non aliter quam cum pedibus praedator obuncis/deposuit nido leporem Iovis ales in alto/nulla fuga est capto, spectat sua praemia raptor*, 6.516-18) and the lamb/dove and wolf (*illa tremit velut agna pavens, quae saucia cani/ore excussa lupi nondum sibi tuta videtur/utque columba suo madefactis sanguine plumis/horret adhuc avidosque timet, quibus haeserat, unguis*,

⁵³ This is typical of Ovid. See Curley, 2013, pp.95-99 and Barchiesi, 2005.

6.527-30) have origins in the epic, and bloody, battlefield of the *Iliad*.⁵⁴ Pavlock too indicates that Tereus treats Philomela as an enemy that must be defeated in battle.⁵⁵ When Tereus conquers Philomela (*vicimus!*), it reinforces the epic-warrior nature of Tereus' character.⁵⁶ Tereus' attempts to return to the context of the epic battlefield recall his intervention at the beginning of the narrative in order to win the Athenians' war. Ovid shows that the epic world of the battlefield is where Tereus thrives. Tereus' prowess in epic-military pursuits attempts to drag the non-epic episode back to the context of battle and war. In his mutilation of Philomela by cutting out her tongue, Tereus performs an action much more at home on the battlefield.⁵⁷ The accompanying simile also emphasizes the epic tenor of the violence that Tereus is committing:

ille indignantem et nomen patris usque vocantem
luctantemque loqui comprehensam forcipe linguam
abstulit ense fero. radix micat ultima linguae,
ipsa iacet terraeque tremens inmurmurat atrae,
utque salire solet mutilatae cauda colubrae,
palpitat et moriens dominae vestigia quaerit. (6.555-60)

Tereus grabbed her dissenting tongue always calling the name of her father
and struggling to speak, pressed by pincers, and he cut off her tongue. The root of the
tongue, itself trembling lies muttering on the dark earth
just as the tail of a mutilated snake is accustomed to writhe about, it throbs

⁵⁴ Gildenhard and Zissos, 2007, p. 9, 20.

⁵⁵ Pavlock, 1991, p. 36.

⁵⁶ Gildenhard and Zissos also note the elegiac connotations of this term, p. 8.

⁵⁷ Gildenhard and Zissos, p. 20.

and dying seeks the feet of its mistress.

This graphic simile acts much in the same way as the other similes in this episode. Ovid takes a particularly epicizing poetic device in order to repackage and deliver the violence from tragedy into its new mode. The mix between violence from epic (through Ovid's use of simile, the similarity to the *Iliad*) and violence more appropriate to tragedy (occurring in the domestic sphere, committed against a woman) embodies Ovid's purpose in this episode. He takes violence that happens in tragedy, violence that would not appear on the tragic stage, and situates it in the context of epic. By using elements from both genres, Ovid is able to show violence in epic, a genre where violence is rampant, while retaining some of the tragic properties of the violence. Thus, the two forms of violence are conflated, showing how they are fundamentally similar.

Simile is seen through a myriad of criteria to be epic. Brunner attempted to define the epic characterization of simile as something that makes the unepic into something epic,⁵⁸ which Hinds later countered.⁵⁹ In Ovid's case, he clearly uses the simile to integrate tragic material into the epic context, though he appears to be doing so with an element of self-awareness. The *Metamorphoses* challenges generic norms and problematizes genre. As Marie von Glinski argues, Ovid uses the simile as a form of "challenging the norms of the genre and defining poetics in the face of tradition".⁶⁰ By making one genre inseparable from another, Ovid situates Philomela into a genre that was not hers originally, thus blurring the lines between what is right for epic and what is right for tragedy.

⁵⁸ Brunner, 1971, p. 363. The definition is slightly more complex but remains very restrictive.

⁵⁹ Hinds, 1987, pp. 115-34.

⁶⁰ Von Glinski, p. 86.

The violence that is later performed by Philomela and Procne, the murder of Itys, takes place once again in the private sphere of the household. In accordance with the importance of that location in the overall arc of the narrative, Ovid takes care to provide detailed description of the place of Itys' murder, the most remote location in the household: *utque domus altae partem tenere remotam* (6.638). Procne does to Itys what Tereus did to Philomela: she drags her victim to a secluded (*alta*) area in order to perform horrific acts of violence against him. The death of Itys takes place away from the eyes of any possible onlookers (*altae, remotam*) just as Tereus raped and mutilated Philomela in the secluded hut. Similar to his description of the violence inflicted by Tereus, Ovid again uses a simile charged with epic connotations to describe Procne's slaying of her son: *nec mora, traxit Ityn, veluti Gangetica cervae/lactentem fetum per silvas tigris opacas* (with no delay, Procne dragged Itys, just as a Gangean tigress drags the suckling fawn of a deer through the shadowy woods, 6.636-7). The domestic sphere of tragedy is again turned into the public and bloody epic battlefield. Ovid understands the obstructed nature of tragic violence and depicts all violence within this episode far from watchful eyes. At the same time, however, Ovid allows for the violence to be seen by external viewers instead of internal, inverting how violence from tragedy is typically witnessed. The *stabula* is *obscura* in the woods, just as the *opacas silvas* obscure a tigress' slaughter of a fawn. So too, Procne drags Itys away to the *remotam* part of the house in order to commit her crime.

Ovid's use of simile in his descriptions of graphic violence is notable in itself. Though simile is not a poetic device that is totally absent from tragedy⁶¹ its long history in epic ensures that the usage of simile is forever linked with the genre. The use of simile in the two instances discussed above coincides with the two most violent events of the Philomela and Procne

⁶¹ See Euripides' *Bacchae* lines 1066-67.

narrative: Philomela's rape and Itys' murder. Both forms of violence would not have been depicted on the tragic stage, rather they would have been reported by a messenger. Though messenger speeches were able to vividly convey events that happened off stage, they represented an alternate portrayal of the violence.⁶² As Perry argues, by not depicting the violence on the stage and filtering it through a witness rather than actual action on stage, the shock of the violence is mitigated. In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid takes care to avoid this. Ovid's use of simile serves to heighten the visual engagement of the reader by providing more detail for the reader to recreate in their mind's eye.⁶³ It could be argued that the violence is filtered through the simile, but Ovid does not shy away from depicting violence without simile:

colla petentem
ense ferit Procne, lateri qua pectus adhaeret,
nec vultum vertit. satis illi ad fata vel unum
vulnus erat: iugulum ferro Philomela resolvit,
vivaque adhuc animaeque aliquid retinentia membra
dilaniant. pars inde cavis exsultat aenis,
pars veribus stridunt; manant penetralia tabo (6.640-46).

Procne struck Itys, who was seeking her neck,

Where the heart clings to his side

And she did not change her face, and one wound was enough for that one to die:

⁶² See Perris, 2011.

⁶³ In his commentary Anderson too agrees that Ovid does not shy away from violence but reaches a level of spectacle that is almost unbelievable, p. 224, cf. 557-60.

Philomela opened his throat with a sword,

And then they sliced up his limbs, still living and retaining some aspect of life. One part

Then boils in the hollow cauldron, another crackles on spits; the inner rooms drip with
gore.

Ovid does not hide this graphic horror off stage, rather he plunges his reader headfirst into the crime committed by the two women. Simile, here, is perhaps unnecessary due to the vividness of language that Ovid employs. When Ovid uses similes in this narrative, he does not use it to forego the violence that comes with them. Instead, the simile is a prelude to even more violence. Unlike the tragic stage, Ovid has no qualms in showing his reader the violence that is often the focal point of a tragic story. Because of the heavily epic background of simile, the poetic device is a powerful way for Ovid to incorporate the violence in this episode into the foreground and entangle his readers into greater visual engagement with images that are ghastly to imagine.

In this way, Ovid creates tension between violence that is and isn't seen, violence that is and is not *supposed* to be seen. As a warrior, Tereus performs appropriate violence and earns fame for it (recall *habebat clarum nomen*), but the violence that Tereus commits in this narrative will not win him any *kleos*. He performs violence similar to that on the battlefield in the domestic sphere, violence that is usually hidden in the home or not depicted onstage, but in Ovid's poem the two kinds of violence are juxtaposed to show that they are fundamentally the same. Ovid does not attempt to glamorize the rape of Philomela and the murder of Itys but to draw a sharp contrast between how the violence is performed and how it should be perceived.

Tereus' consumption of Itys provides an excellent contrast between the early locations of this episode and the later ones. After Tereus has begged for Pandion's permission to bring

Philomela back to Thrace, Pandion throws a banquet (presumably) in honor of his son-in-law's visit. Though it can be easily assumed that the banquet happens in some kind of dining hall, Ovid provides little to no information about the feast or the area where the feast occurs: *regales epulae mensis et Bacchus in auro/ponitur; hinc placido dant turgida corpora somno* (a royal feast was placed on the tables and Bacchus was put into gold cups; then tired bodies gave way to peaceful sleep, 6.488-89). Ovid provides no real description of the feast or its location, a choice that heightens the importance of the later, gruesome feast. Ovid first provides a grisly description of the food that will be provided for Tereus—the remains of his son Itys—in contrast to the generic description of *regales epulae* (6.644-46). Though this feast is quite obviously more important to the episode than the feast in Athens, Ovid strengthens the importance by beginning with a vivid description of Procne preparing her son.

Ovid goes on to set the scene more thoroughly and bring into even stronger contrast the brief feast from earlier. Where the feast begins in Athens with no prelude, Ovid describes how Procne invites her husband to the meal: *his adhibet coniunx ignarum Terea mensis* (the wife invites unknowing Tereus to this meal, 6.647). Previously, Tereus' invitation to dine with Pandion was omitted, but in this instance, Procne's invitation of her husband helps to prepare the final vile act of the narrative. Ovid too takes time to set out Procne's pretext for Tereus dining alone, her way of removing the slaves from the dining hall without suspicion: *et patrii moris sacrum mentita, quod uni/fas sit adire viro, comites famulosque removit*, (She pretended that it was a sacred feast in the custom of her ancestors, at which it is proper for the husband alone to come, and she removed his companions and servants, 6.648-9). By describing Procne's process in leading Tereus into the trap that she has laid, Ovid greatly contrasts the feast earlier in the episode. Readers likely know exactly what is coming, but Ovid shows the whole process leading

up to the inevitable result. Ovid thus sets up the *anagnorisis* so common in tragedy. The reader is taken along for the ride, finding out everything before Tereus does. The reader can only read on in horror as Tereus consumes his son before his realization, heightening the mostly undeserved pity that Tereus receives as well as the reader's disgust at the whole outcome.

By removing the servants from the dining hall, Procne attempts to occlude her murder of Itys and subsequent process of feeding his body to Tereus. Though Procne attempts to remove internal viewers of the violence from the equation, the reader still remains as an external witness to her violence. After all, the reader has already witnessed the murder even though Procne attempted to take Itys to the *remotam partem domus*. The reader as the witness of violence in this episode is distinct from the tragic messenger, who usually is a bystander of violence before reporting it to the other characters and audience alike. In the case of the *Metamorphoses*, the witnessing of violence is ubiquitous. The reader is not taken by surprise when Itys is fed to Tereus because the reader was a witness to the previous scene of Itys' murder. Instead, Ovid increases the reader's engagement with violence, giving them the full scope of the violence that tragedy does not provide. Procne is able to remove her servants (and any potential tragic messengers) from the hall, but not the reader. The reader sees everything.

At the peak moment of tragic irony (*tantaque nox animi est, "Ityn huc accersite!" dixit, 6.652*) and Tereus' *anagnorisis*, Procne actually usurps the role of witness/messenger from tragedy. In her triumph, Ovid reveals that Procne wants to be the messenger of bad news: *dissimulare nequit crudelia gaudia Procne/iamque suae cupiens existere nuntia cladis/"intus habes, quem poscis" ait* (Procne is unable to hide her cruel joy and now desiring to be messenger of his downfall says "You have him within, the one whom you ask for", 6.653-55). Being the actor of the murder, dismemberment, and cooking of Itys, Procne appropriately serves also as the

conveyor of her son's death to Tereus. By removing all servants/witnesses from the dining hall, Procne allows herself to be the messenger of bad news, something that she does gleefully. In her own right, Philomela too wishes that she could be the messenger of her and her sister's revenge: *Ityosque caput Philomela cruentum/misit in ora patris nec tempore maluit ullo/posse loqui et meritis testavi gaudia dictis* (Philomela sends the bloody head of Itys before the face of his father and she wished to be able to speak more at no other time and to attest to her joy with fitting words, 6.658-660). Procne fulfills the role both for her own sake and Philomela's. Ovid conflates what is onstage and offstage in tragedy here, combining the two spaces into one. By removing an internal audience and the messenger, but including graphic depictions of violence, Ovid uses epic to do what tragedy cannot. Ovid simultaneously reveals the violence and the reaction of his characters to the violence, whereas in tragedy the violence must first take place out of sight before being revealed to the characters on stage.

The metamorphosis at the end of the episode provides some closure for Ovid's themes throughout. Notably, Tereus is transformed into the *epops*, a bird that is believed to be the hoopoe. Tereus' metamorphosis resolves the tension between his tragic and epic characteristics. Though Tereus has just undergone the most tragic aspect of his tale, Ovid uses the metamorphosis to show Tereus' true nature, which the king will now inhabit forever: *vertitur in volucrem, cui stant in vertice cristae/prominet inmodicum pro longa cuspidē rostrum/nomen epops volucris, facies armata videtur*, (Tereus is changed into a bird, on whose head stands plumes and instead of his long spear a rather long beak. The name of the bird is the *epops*, its appearance seems armed, 6.672-4). Ovid draws great attention to the warlike aspects of the bird, giving a finality to the generic tension within Tereus' character. In a ring composition with the opening appearance of Tereus, the Thracian king is once again a fearsome warrior and will

remain so forever. Interestingly, Ovid avoids any of the tragic (or elegiac) aspects of Tereus' character in this metamorphosis, giving the *epops* no association with rape or a murdered son.

The metamorphoses of Philomela and Procne provide an excellent illustration of von Glinski's notion that Ovid uses simile as a gateway to metamorphosis: "Simile and metamorphosis share obvious affinities in their preoccupation with manipulation of shape, either physically or mentally. In finding similarities in the disparate entities, in seeing one thing as another, both highlight the importance of surface impressions for construing identity. Metamorphosis may even be seen as carrying simile to an extreme: if one thing can look like another, what keeps it from actually being another thing altogether, or prevents it from sliding from resemblance into sameness?"⁶⁴

Ovid himself plays heavily off of this idea with the metamorphoses of Philomela and Procne, first giving a false segue into a simile (*corpora Cecropidum pennis pendere putares*, you would think that the bodies of the women from Athens hung with wings, 6.667) before correcting himself and transitioning from a simile into description of reality: *pendebant pennis* (6.668). Ovid then describes the appearance of the sister-birds: *neque adhuc de pectore caedis/excessere notae, signataque sanguine pluma est* (even now the signs of their slaughter do not fade from their breasts, and their feathers are noted by blood, 6.669-670). The sisters actually become like the dove from the simile that Ovid uses earlier to describe Philomela (629-30).⁶⁵

The transformations of the two sisters are also significant because Ovid uses their respective flight paths in the same way he has used space throughout the episode: *quarum petit altera silvas/altera tecta subit*, (one of the sisters seeks the woods, the other the roof, 6.668-9). Ovid reemphasizes the two locations of violence in the narrative: the woods, where Philomela

⁶⁴ von Glinski, 2009, pp.1-2.

⁶⁵ Anderson, p. 220, cf 527-30.

was raped and held captive, and the house of Tereus, where the sisters murdered Itys and Tereus dined on the remains of his son. Ovid keeps a continuity of space in the narrative by having the sisters fly to the scenes of violence. Unlike in tragedy where the end of the play generally occurs where it began, even if the implications of the play move beyond the focus of the stage (such as the end of the *Medea*), at the end of Ovid's tragic-epic episode, the physical space extends far beyond the borders of a stage, especially when Ovid's narrative follows the two newly transformed birds in different directions. Ovid traces the movements of the characters beyond the traditional walls of the stage. Where Medea's flight to Athens must be imagined, in the Philomela episode, Ovid shows where the characters end up after the end of the "play". The metamorphosis in this sense serves almost as an epilogue to the actions that lead up to it. The play should end with the metamorphosis, but Ovid goes beyond the end, using the scope of epic, in order to fully tell the story. Where on stage it would have been impossible to show the transformation and subsequent flight of the birds to different places, Ovid is not restrained by the physical technology available to tragedy.

This episode exemplifies how Ovid encourages a new interpretation of how violence is portrayed in epic. Ovid's generic play does more than show the ingenuity of the poet but serves to question how violence is perceived in epic. The juxtaposition of Tereus' epic and tragic characterizations strongly underscore how similar the acts of violence that he performs are at the fundamental level. Both forms of violence serve to increase Tereus' fame or infamy. His martial prowess gives him his *clarum nomen*, but it is because of his tragic violence in the domestic sphere, both his rape of Philomela and the revenge of Procne, that his name lives on. By using military language in Tereus' rape of Philomela, Ovid blurs the lines between the two typically distinct forms of violence and blends them into one condemnable spectacle.

Chapter 3: The Intergeneric Medea: How Ovid Depicts the Tragic Medea in Epic

A Tragic Medea in an Epic Setting

In this chapter I will explore how Ovid engages with the character of Medea in the *Metamorphoses*. On the heels of Book 6, where the murder of Itys, committed by Procne to punish her cruelly unfaithful husband, presages Medea's murder of her own children and the reference to the Golden Fleece at the end of the book foreshadows Ovid's treatment of the Argonautic myth (and Medea's role therein), Ovid turns to the female character perhaps most heavily associated with tragedy. Ovid's own lost *Medea* and his treatment of her in the *Heroides* create a strong association between the author and character. After recasting Medea in both elegy and tragedy, Ovid fashions an epic Medea in the *Metamorphoses*. While there are certainly echoes of Medea from the *Heroides* and other elegiac poems⁶⁶ in the *Metamorphoses*, I will be focusing on how Ovid uses the tragic and epic history of the character in Book 7 of his poem.

My main focus will be on three smaller episodes within the lengthy Argonautic/Medea section at the beginning of Book 7. I will first examine Medea's monologue at the beginning of the book, which spans from lines 11-73. I will look at how Ovid creates a tragic monologue in epic by drawing on elements from Euripides' *Medea* and merging them with Medea's indecision from Apollonius' *Argonautica*. Next I will explore how Ovid depicts Medea's violent actions from her history, namely how she tricks the daughters of Pelias into murdering their father and Ovid's curiously short depiction of the events at Corinth from Euripides' tragedy. Finally, I will discuss the end of Medea's narrative in the *Metamorphoses* and how Ovid subverts expectation

⁶⁶ Curley, 2013, p.127; Newlands, 1997, p. 189.

through tragic conventions in the brief Theseus-Medea episode before moving on from the infamous Colchian.

At the beginning of Book 7 Ovid allows only about 10 lines for the first part of the expedition of the Argonauts (which takes up about two and a half books in Apollonius' *Argonautica*) before devoting the next 60 lines to the conflict that Medea feels between her devotion to her homeland and her father and her infatuation with Jason. This contrast more than perhaps anywhere else in the *Metamorphoses* exemplifies Ovid's manipulation of time and space in his epic. Ovid greatly compresses the early stages of Jason's journey (and in all gives about 200 lines to the entirety of the Argonautic myth) yet gives a much longer amount of narrative space to a scene that takes place over a fraction of the time. Ovid juxtaposes the length of Medea's speech with the compression of Jason's journey to signpost how he is integrating a tragic format—the long monologue—into epic. The theme of the book switches quickly from the epic journey of the Argonauts to the internal struggle of Medea.

In his commentary on the *Metamorphoses*, Anderson calls Medea's monologue the "first dramatic soliloquy in the *Metamorphoses*".⁶⁷ Ovid's use of this dramatic monologue comes at an intriguing time in his narrative. Rather than save a dramatic monologue for the tragic parts of Medea's literary career (specifically at Corinth), Ovid instead inserts a tragic monologue into a scene from her epic history. Medea may be at her most tragic in the whole of Book 7 during this monologue. Both the form and content of her speech recall her epic literary history as well as her tragic one.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Anderson, 1972, p. 243.

⁶⁸ Bömer discusses how Ovid mixes the two, pp. 199-202.

Medea's internal struggle is prominent in Apollonius' *Argonautica*.⁶⁹ Apollonius too draws on Medea from Euripides' play to foreshadow her literary future in the *Argonautica*. In the *Argonautica* Medea's indecision is between Jason and her father, shown through a dream. Medea eventually goes to her sister Chalciope to discuss her difficulty, turning her personal struggle into a dialogue. In the *Metamorphoses*, however, Ovid takes the content of Medea's struggle from Apollonius, her desire to help Jason against her loyalty to her family, and delivers it in a Euripidean mode. Medea struggles with herself also in Euripides' *Medea*, but it is her decision to murder her children that gives her pause in the drama.⁷⁰ In Apollonius, Medea's difficult decision manifests itself in the form of a dream rather than a monologue. In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid merges the two methods of showing Medea's strife into one. As the *Metamorphoses* is an epic, the subject of Medea's struggle steams from her epic past where the delivery of her internal monologue comes from her depiction on the stage.

Ovid does not rely solely on form to integrate the tragic Medea into epic. Much of the content of Medea's monologue relies heavily on Medea's future as the notorious murderess from tragedy. The line *aliudque cupido/mens aliud suadet: video meliora proboque/deteriora sequor* (desire persuades me one way, reason another: I see what things are better and I approve, but I follow the worse things, 7.18-20) links the decision making of the epic Medea with the tragic one.⁷¹ In both instances Medea realizes that she is making the wrong and more difficult choice, but is determined to stick with the choice that she makes. As the reader knows, Medea's choice to help Jason will eventually have disastrous consequences. Medea herself seems to

⁶⁹ 3.433-72, wherein Medea has her dream about helping Jason and leaving behind her parents and also consults with her sister Chalciope,

⁷⁰ 1019-1080.

⁷¹ Anderson points out that Medea shows a similar sentiment when debating whether or not to kill her children, pp. 245-6.

acknowledge that helping Jason, and a possible marriage to him, may not end well: *quem, nisi crudelem, non tangat Iasonis aetas et/genus et virtus? quem non, ut cetera desint/ore moveri potest?* (whom, unless cruel, does Jason's youth and birth and manliness not touch? Whom, even if the rest is lacking, is it not permitted to be moved by his face? 7.26-28). Medea does not count Jason's virtue⁷² or fidelity among his good qualities but rather focuses on Jason's physical features. Jason's character does not sway Medea to his side, only his good looks and noble birth. Medea then concedes that even if Jason was lacking the noble birth, his good looks would be enough to persuade her to his side. Even as she realizes that Jason may be lacking in substance, Medea is still drawn to help him, which foreshadows Jason's infidelity in Corinth. Ovid foreshadows Jason's already well-known, and anticipated, betrayal of Medea as Medea appears to see something of the sort coming in the future.

The anticipation of Jason's betrayal appears again slightly later in Medea's speech: *si facere hoc aliamve potest praeponere nobis/occidat ingratus* (if he is able to do this or to prefer someone else to me, let that ungrateful man die, 42-3). Ovid again evokes Medea's future in tragedy. The anger that Medea feels at this hypothetical betrayal, which will later become reality, mirrors the anger that she feels throughout the tragedy. Medea then tries to convince herself that Jason could not possibly prefer another woman to her because he would always be in her debt: *tibi se semper debebit Iason* (Jason will always owe himself to you, 48). This line, which Anderson argues is meant to be understood as ironic,⁷³ will contrast sharply with Jason's lack of gratitude after his arrival in Corinth. It also follows *ut cetera desint* to show precisely what sort

⁷² Here I am taking *virtus* to mean manliness or valor in battle (something that could even be argued Jason is lacking). I do not believe Ovid is describing Jason as being virtuous in the sense that he is pious, faithful, etc. If this is the case, then Jason being virtuous just adds to the irony of Medea's monologue.

⁷³ Anderson, p.248.

of moral character Jason is lacking. As others have noted,⁷⁴ Jason will also argue in Euripides' *Medea* that he is not in Medea's debt at all but indebted to Aphrodite.⁷⁵

Ovid creates an immense amount of tension between Medea's epic present in the *Metamorphoses* and her tragic future in the *Medea* during her monologue. Since Ovid is just beginning the Argonautic narrative and Medea's character arc, the reader would likely expect some resolution of the tensions later in the narrative. Ovid decisively exploits these expectations when he summarizes the Corinthian episode later in the book. I will go into greater detail on Ovid's version of the events at Corinth in the *Metamorphoses*, but for now I would like to discuss Jason's role at Corinth in the poem. Surely relying on the reader's knowledge of Medea and Jason's story, Jason's marriage to the princess of Corinth is not explicitly stated in Ovid's brief epitome. Rather, Ovid describes the marriage in a compressed way, merely mentioning the princess as the *nova nupta* without going into detail about Jason's role as the husband. In the same vein, Ovid also omits the scene where Jason rationalizes his decision to marry into the Corinthian royal family to Medea. The abbreviated account of Jason's betrayal of Medea plays into Ovid's greater game of setting up the grand finale of the famous Medea at Corinth before subverting expectations and giving the Corinthian episode a parenthetical treatment. By abbreviating the scene in this way all of the foreshadowing that Ovid does in Medea's speech becomes that much more important. Although the reader almost certainly knows the full details of Euripides' *Medea* or the literary tradition behind Jason's marriage to the princess of Corinth, within the narrative of the *Metamorphoses* Ovid places the most detail about Jason potentially betraying Medea in her monologue at the beginning of the book.

⁷⁴ Anderson, p.248; Bömer, 1976, p. 210; Curley, 2013, p. 122.

⁷⁵ 527-28.

The heavy foreshadowing in Medea's monologue thus becomes almost a premonition. When Medea is foreshadowing in her speech, she brings in front of her (and the reader's) eyes events that will actually come to pass. Instead of going into detail about the reality of Jason and Medea's marriage when he reaches the contents of the tragedy, Ovid instead retrojects the failure of the marriage into Medea's speech. The contents of the tragedy are contained within Medea's fears that Jason would prefer another woman to her. Thus, this Medea is a dual Medea, both epic and tragic. Ovid merges the concerns of the epic and tragic Medea into one tragically infused monologue because he will be eschewing the anticipation of the tragic Medea later in the book. As a result, Medea's monologue is a fuller treatment of the tragic events at Corinth than the actual treatment that Ovid gives later in the book.

Medea's inset tragic monologue sets the tone for the rest of the episode in which Ovid continues to create tension between the genres of epic and tragedy. After the long monologue, Ovid returns to the narrative of the Argonauts before shifting to Medea's post-Argonautic tradition. Ovid spends a good deal of space on the episode in which Medea restores Aeson to his youth and murders Pelias while pretending to do the same. This scene also marks the beginning of Ovid's exploration of the violence that surrounds Medea's character. Though she does provide the magical potions for Jason to complete his tasks assigned by Aetes, Medea does not take part in the violence of killing the Spartoi or the dragon guarding the fleece. Ovid also elides the murder of Medea's brother, Absyrtus. Instead, Jason obtains the Golden Fleece and returns to Iolcus with Medea as his wife in the space of three lines. The omission of this detail is intriguing but follows Ovid's structure in this narrative. By omitting Jason and Medea's murder of Absyrtus, Ovid foreshadows that not all of Medea's actions will receive an expansive treatment.

Medea as Violent Actor

Ovid manipulates Medea's association with violence in several ways. He elides any mention of Absyrtus and Medea's role in his death. Ovid also gives little attention to the death of Medea's children. Ovid does, however, present his readers with a detailed episode showing a violent Medea during the murder of Pelias. This is the most graphic violence that Medea commits in the entire episode. When she slits Aeson's throat (7.286), Ovid merely mentions the act and moves on. The violence is neutered even further by its context. Oddly, slitting Aeson's throat was actually beneficial to the old man. The slaughter of her children and the Corinthian royal family is summarized neatly (7.384-87) but is merely an epitome of Medea's most famous exploit. Anderson argues that Ovid's invention of Medea burning down the royal palace of Corinth (7.395), absent from Euripides' *Medea*, increases the wickedness of her crime even more.⁷⁶ Despite this bonus detail, however, Ovid refrains from providing much in the way of detail regarding Medea's crimes in Corinth.

Ovid goes into greatest detail when Medea presides over and ultimately completes the murder of Pelias. Although Medea's own final stroke is dealt with rather quickly, Ovid takes time to describe the horror of both Pelias and his daughters as the Iolcian king is murdered. Medea, though she does not physically take part in the violence until the final moments, orchestrates the whole crime, tricking the daughters of Pelias to slaughter their father while she urges them on. The violence in this episode is significant in itself, but Ovid also draws attention to the other nefarious parts of Medea's tragic character, namely her ability to lie convincingly and her use of magic.

⁷⁶ Anderson, pp. 285-6.

Euripides' Medea tells several convincing lies throughout the play. She convinces Creon to allow her one more day before departing Corinth and promises to leave with no harm coming to the royal family. Medea also lies to Jason, saying that their children and his new wife will be safe. The consequences of believing these lies were disastrous for both characters. The myth of Medea tricking Pelias' daughters into killing their father is also well known.

The slaughter of Pelias is centered around Medea's ability to use magic. First, she uses magic to cure Aeson. Upon hearing of this, the daughters of Pelias approach Medea so that she may also lessen their father's age. Medea then performs the same ritual she used on Aeson for an aged ram, turning it back into a lamb in order to show the daughters that they can trust (both magic and lying). Finally, Medea feigns using magic when preparing the potion for Pelias, but does actually use magic in order to ensure his death:

*ter iuga Phoebus equis in Hiberno flumine mersis
dempserat et quarta radiantia nocte micabant
sidera, cum rapido fallax Aetias igni
imponit purum laticem et sine viribus herbas.
iamque neci similis resoluta corpore regem
et cum rege suo custodes somnus habebat,
quem dederant cantus magicaeque potentia linguae (7.324-330).*

Three times had Phoebus removed the yokes from his horses after they were submerged
in the Ebrus and the stars were shining brightly on the fourth night,
When the deceitful daughter of Aetes placed clear water over a hot fire and herbs

Without magical properties. And now a sleep similar to death holds the king in his relaxed body and holds the guards along with their king, (sleep) which incantations and the power of magic speech gave.

Medea dissimulates a magic spell to the daughters of Pelias but actually uses one on the king and, importantly, his guards. Although the guards are mentioned but briefly, by taking care to put them to sleep as well, Medea tips her hand to the daughters, who fail to recognize the sign of danger. Medea also ensures that she is removing any witnesses to the murder, as even the daughters will avert their eyes. The only real witness seems to be the reader.

Medea's actions leading up to the death of Pelias mirror her actions before murdering Glauce/Creusa and Creon in Euripides' *Medea*. She feigns an act of reconciliation or aid (giving a gift to Jason's new wife, claiming that she will make Pelias younger) before using magic in order to kill her target. In the *Metamorphoses*, Medea does not use magic to kill Pelias, but it does provide the opportunity for her to murder the king. In this case, magic instead ensures that Medea will be able to kill Pelias even if it is not the means by which she kills him. The actual acts of violence that Medea performs, the murder of her children in the play and the murder of Pelias in the *Metamorphoses*, are very different. In Euripides' *Medea*, the slaughter of her children is heard by the audience (1270-81), but not witnessed on stage. In the *Metamorphoses*, as often, Ovid takes something that was not performed on stage and places it before the attention of his audience. Though the murder of Pelias and the murder of Medea's children are not the same event, it is Medea's violence that Ovid is putting before the eyes of his audience.

In the *Medea*, the four murders that Medea had a hand in take place outside the sight of the audience. In the case of her children, there are no witnesses, no messengers, that bear the

news to the audience, but rather the sound of the murder and then Medea's speech at the end of the play. The absence of witnesses to Medea's actions is continued by Ovid in this episode, albeit in a much different manner. At first Pelias' murder is not undertaken by Medea's hands but by the unknowing hands of Pelias' daughters. With the guards and the kings asleep, the only physical witness to the violence is Medea herself, the one who orchestrated the murder. The reader remains as a witness as well, but without the same power that Medea wields. The daughters of Pelias, the actual actors of the violence, surprisingly are not spectators of their actions. While they inadvertently murder their father, the daughters of Pelias look away from their stabbing:

*his, ut quaeque pia est, hortatibus in pia prima est
et, ne sit scelerata, facit scelus: haud tamen ictus
ulla suos spectare potest, oculosque reflectunt,
caecaque dant saevis aversae vulnera dextris (7.339-42)*

At these urgings, as each was pious, first she is impious,
And so that she might not be wicked, she commits a crime; nevertheless
None of them are able to watch their own blows, they turn away their eyes,
and having turned away they give unseen wounds with savage hands.

Ovid delights in the irony of the daughters' attempts to perform their filial duties to their father, but he also draws particular attention to their vision. Medea is not mentioned in this small passage until she cuts Pelias' throat, but she is assumedly looking on as the daughters turn away.

Ovid's focus on the eyes of the daughters draws the readers' attention more acutely to the act that they are committing. In emphasizing how and why the daughters are turning their eyes away, Ovid creates a livelier scene for his reader. The reader, with eyes fixed upon the passage, is not able to turn their eyes away but imagines the daughters turning away as they stab their father. The added detail and movement in the scene create more visual richness for the reader. The act of the daughters turning away while continuing to stab Pelias must be visualized by the reader, whereas the daughters intentionally avoid seeing the act.

Although this scene is not taken from any extant tragedy, Ovid does seem to be playing with tragic conventions, nevertheless. It is difficult to avoid any associations with tragedy when dealing with the character of Medea. The setting of Pelias' death, the private bedroom of a person of royalty, is one that often plays a role in tragedy (think Jocasta's and Phaedra's suicides). Ovid, however, brings the private household to the forefront, giving attention to a setting which is almost always offstage. Tragedy will often have a messenger (perhaps a household slave) witness the horrific act of violence that acts as the apex of many plays. Because the violence happens offstage out of the audience's sight, it is necessary for the messenger to report what has happened to the audience.

The setting of Pelias' death becomes more tragic when looking at the rejuvenation of Aeson that Medea performs earlier in the episode (251-296). Notably, when performing the rite on Aeson, Medea removes all other witnesses from the altars: *hinc procul Aesoniden, procul hinc iubet ire ministros/et monet arcanis oculos remove profanos/diffugiunt iussi* (she ordered Jason to go far from here, and her attendants too, and she warned them to avert their profane eyes from the rituals. They depart as ordered. 7.255-567). In this situation Medea is performing helpful magic at the request of Jason, but she still takes care to ensure privacy in the act. When Medea

does perform the ritual to rejuvenate Aeson, she does so on a pseudo-*paraskenium*. Curley argues that the double doors and double altars outside the home but leading into the *domus* represent a *theatron* for Medea's performance, in this case an "otherworldly" one. Curley too argues that this is Medea's "solo performance" and embodies Ovid's assimilation of tragic theatricality and amphitheatrical violence into epic.⁷⁷ This performance takes place in the front of the home on a pseudo-*theatron*, but has removed all witnesses from the occasion, making the front of the *domus* similar to the private chambers where much of tragic violence happens. Medea has already sequestered herself before slitting Aeson's throat (286). Although a healthful throat-slitting, the violence still happens outside of the vision of spectators, excepting the audience, much in the same way that Pelias' death will seem only to have the reader as the viewer of the violence. It is notable too that Bacchus himself is watching the ritual from on high: *Liber et admonitus, iuvenes nutricibus annos/posse suis reddi, capit hoc a Colchide munus* (Liber, having learned that it would also be possible for his nurses to be returned to their youthful years, took this gift from the Colchian, 7.295-6). Medea's tragic performance is witnessed by the god of tragedy himself.

In depicting Pelias' death, Ovid reverses the formula from tragedy. After Medea gives a tragic performance during the rejuvenation ritual for Aeson, Ovid appears to set up another similarly tragic scene. But here, Ovid removes any potential messenger, first through Medea's sleep potion and then through the unwillingness of Pelias' daughters to watch their violent actions. Instead, the audience is left to witness the murder, to become spectators of something that would happen offstage in tragedy. Ovid does not overtly incorporate tragedy into epic in this scene, but instead shows that he *could have* gone down a path that he has taken elsewhere in the

⁷⁷ Curley, 2013, p.126-127.

Metamorphoses. Ovid sets a scene that could feasibly happen within tragedy but takes a hard turn into the themes present in his epic. Ovid creates tension between the two genres only to avoid a confrontation between them. Unlike in the Philomela and Procne episode, Ovid avoids weaving tragedy and epic together in the scene of Pelias' murder, but only shows the potential to do so before going in another direction. Ovid uses women as violent actors here, similar to Philomela and Procne, to remind the audience exactly *why* they are shielded from seeing this violence on stage in tragedy. Ovid enhances the *pathos* of the scene at the end when Pelias wakes up from his magic-induced sleep:

*ille cruore fluens, cubito tamen adlevat artus,
semilacerque toro temptat consurgere, et inter
tot medius gladios pallentia bracchia tendens
“quid facitis, gnatae? quid vos in fata parentis
armat?” ait (7.334-47).*

Pelias, streaming with blood, nevertheless was lifting his limbs from the bed and half-mangled he tried to rise from the bed, and in the middle of so many swords, stretching out his pale arms, he spoke:

“What are you doing, daughters? What arms you to the death of your father?”

As Pelias tries to raise his now grotesque form from his death-bed, Ovid does not soften the cruelty of Medea's trick.⁷⁸ The reader witnesses the horror of Pelias waking up to his daughters

⁷⁸ Curley argues that Ovid uses spectacle in this scene to play to the amphitheatrical connotations of violence (as in the Pentheus episode in Book 3) in Ovid's time, p.128, 2013.

as murderers, themselves converted into Medeas. On the tragic stage, the audience is shielded from the horrors that Ovid shows plainly. Ovid gives no filter of the messenger, nor does he allow the death to take place out of sight. He forces the reader to witness the violence and suffer through the pain of Pelias' death in the real time of the narrative. By showing the reader a horror that they don't usually see, Ovid provides a stark reminder of tragedy's ability to shield its audience from violence as well as epic's less obstructed portrayal of violence.

Following Pelias' weak attempts to rise, Ovid abruptly cuts short the episode: *plura locuturo cum verbis guttura Colchis/abstulit et calidis laniatum mersit in undis* (the Colchian cut the throat of the one about to speak more with words and submerged the mangled one into the burning waters, 7.348-9). When Medea swiftly takes flight out of Colchis, Anderson too notes that Ovid sets up a perfect opportunity to delve into the tragic genre but avoids "precisely the scenes which would have served as high points of 'tragic realization' in Sophocles' and Euripides' plays".⁷⁹ Ovid departs from the anagnorisis because this is *not* tragedy, again creating tension between genres before diffusing them.

Medea in Flight and at Athens

Medea's long flight before landing in Athens has given scholars difficulty. There are several schools of thought when considering Ovid's purpose for including such a long excursus inside Medea's narrative. Some scholars argue that Ovid is showing off his geographical knowledge as author, particularly in the vein of Hellenistic literature and its tendency to provide long catalogues and etiologies.⁸⁰ Another argument is that Ovid used the wandering flight of

⁷⁹ Anderson, p. 280.

⁸⁰ Buxton, 2010; Binroth-Bank, 1994, p.139; Kenney, 2011; Anderson, pp.280-81; Newlands, p. 190.

Medea in order to squeeze more metamorphoses into his poem.⁸¹ Everywhere that Medea visits in her journey has a briefly described episode in which Ovid gives his reader more examples of a transformation.⁸² Some also indicate that there is a connection between Medea and many of the places that she visits.⁸³ These arguments are not mutually exclusive and likely provide the bulk of the explanation for Ovid's choice to include this long flight. Another possible explanation is that Ovid uses Medea's flight to further delay and minimize the Corinthian episode. By providing a lengthy delay between the Pelias episode and the Corinthian episode that would logically follow—that is if Ovid is faithful to the mythographic timeline—Ovid creates tension for the lead up to Medea's actions at Corinth before defying the expectations that he sets up.⁸⁴ The lack of crescendo in Ovid's portrayal of Medea's most famous exploits falls in line with his avoidance of fully portraying the tragic Medea.

A simple explanation for Ovid shortening Medea's actions at Corinth is that Ovid does not want to retread ground that he has already covered in his literary career. Due to Ovid's own tragedy *Medea*, he likely does not want to write again at length about the events that he has already covered. The reader can merely go to Ovid's *Medea* if they want a full treatment of the Corinthian episode. This simple explanation does not quite do justice to the complexity of the *Metamorphoses*, however. The brief overview of Medea's time at Corinth could also reflect the fact that Ovid has already dispersed the contents of the of the *Medea* elsewhere in the *Metamorphoses*. Others have noted the presence of additional Medeas in the *Metamorphoses*.⁸⁵ Especially strong is the connection between Procne and Medea. By portraying Procne's murder

⁸¹ Binroth-Bank, 140.

⁸² Combe turns into a bird at Pleuron (382-3); at Calauria, a king and queen turn into birds (384-5); Apollo turned Cephisus' grandson into a sea-calf (388-9).

⁸³ Pavlock, 2009, pp. 50-9

⁸⁴ Curley argues that the deliberate anti-climax is because Medea has already been poisoner, murderer, etc, in the narrative and does not need to be discussed again in the more famous episode, p.132.

⁸⁵ Pavlock, 1991, p. 43; Curley, 1997; Larmour, 1990; Newlands, 1997, pp. 192-195.

of Itys in a previous book, Ovid does not need to show a similar scene of infanticide in Book 7. Returning to Medea's speech at the beginning of the book, Ovid creates another tie between her and Procne: *hoc ego si patiar, tum me de tigride natam* (If I allow this, then I admit that I am born from a tigress, 7.32). If Medea suffers Jason to be destroyed, then she fears that she will be like the child of a tigress (thus a tigress herself). Later in Medea's life (but earlier in her literary career) her purpose will be to destroy Jason utterly, thus becoming the tigress that she fears to be at the beginning of Book 7. With this in mind, Ovid therefore aligns Medea with Procne further by describing both as tigresses (recall the simile comparing Procne to a tigress at lines 6.636-7).

Ovid seems to play this game with several different character types in the *Metamorphoses*. Feldherr argues that Ovid encourages the reader to search out false Maenads throughout the poem because of Pentheus' failure to dress as a Maenad and Procne's performance as a Bacchant when she rescues Philomela.⁸⁶ Ovid does the same with Medea. Much as Curley argues that Medea has already done everything she would do at Corinth in the first half of Book 7, other characters have already acted out events in place of the ones that Medea is destined to do at Corinth. Procne has already taken revenge on her husband through the murder of Itys, and Agave too has murdered her own child.

Curley believes that Ovid is asking the reader to understand Medea's metanarrative powers through her stops on the flight.⁸⁷ Curley argues that Medea imparts part of her own story onto the events that Ovid narrates at the location that she visits and therefore exerts narrative force on episodes that are not her own. Curley, however, limits his interpretation to the metanarrative powers of Medea during her flight in Book 7, but I suggest that Ovid extends her metanarrative presence to the rest of the poem. Not only does Medea impart part of her story

⁸⁶ Feldherr, 1997, pp. 54-55

⁸⁷ Curley, 2013, pp. 132-3.

onto the cities that she visits in Book 7, but also to other characters that Ovid narrates more fully in the rest of the poem, such as Procne or Scylla.

I wish now to return to a previously mentioned reason for the long flight of Medea, but to look at it through a different lens in conversation with the elision of the events at Corinth. Ovid likely included the great catalogue of other Greek cities in order to squeeze even more metamorphic episodes into his poem, as Medea visits roughly 16 sites, each with a brief tale of metamorphosis attached. Ovid's desire to showcase metamorphosis may have caused his unwillingness to go into great detail about the events of Euripides' *Medea*, for Euripides' *Medea* contains no stories of metamorphosis.⁸⁸ The *Medea* has no such tradition to draw on. The episodes of Medea's character arc in which Ovid does go into great detail, especially when Medea helps restore Aeson and does the opposite with Pelias, provide an opportunity for Ovid to have actual metamorphosis in the *Metamorphoses*.

The lack of metamorphosis related to Medea's violence at Corinth may also explain why Ovid has sprinkled so many other Medeas throughout the rest of the poem. Because of the close association between other women's violence in the poem with Medea's violence from the *Medea*, Ovid does actually incorporate the Corinthian episode, just under the guise of different characters. Ovid is then able to include elsewhere the metamorphosis that the deaths of Jason and Medea's children is sorely lacking. Therefore, there is no need to go over old ground (as previously stated) as well as no need to shoehorn a metamorphosis in. The *Medea* simply does not fit well enough into Ovid's poem.

After the shockingly brief treatment of Medea's most famous exploits, Ovid devotes one last episode to Medea in Athens. Due to the abbreviated nature of the *Medea* within the

⁸⁸ In contrast, Ovid dedicates a lengthy part of his poem to the events from the *Hecuba* because at the end Ovid can use Hecuba's transformation into a dog as part of the *Metamorphoses* (13.567-71).

Metamorphoses, the scene where Medea secures amnesty from Aegeus in the play is totally omitted from Ovid's version of the story. Therefore, within the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid is relying on the reader's knowledge of the play, which he just severely truncated, in order to justify Medea's departure from Corinth and immediate arrival in Athens. Even though Ovid cut out most of the details of the *Medea*, it is still important to the narrative to know what happened in the play.

By following Medea to Athens, Ovid is again taking advantage of the lack of boundaries in epic as opposed to tragedy and the tragic stage. At the end of the *Medea*, Medea rides off to Athens on her chariot, leaving a devastated Jason behind. In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid is not forced to stop here. He has already depicted Medea flying in her infamous chariot several times, yet this time the destination is more important than the flight itself. After depicting Medea's most famous tragic scenes, Ovid lands her in the city where tragedy was written and performed. Much like in the Philomela and Procne episode, Ovid is able to follow Medea beyond the confines of the stage and the narrative of the tragedy into the next step in her story. Unlike Philomela and Procne, Medea's story continues to a much fuller extent after the end of her tragedy.

As he does with much of the narrative, Ovid continues his practice of reaching a deliberate anticlimax within the Medea-Theseus episode. At the end of the first part of the narrative,⁸⁹ Jason and Medea leave Colchis and arrive back in Greece with little incident (7.156-8). After murdering Pelias, Ovid transitions quickly to Medea's flight, leaving out the tragic anagnorisis of his daughters (349-51). When Medea finally reaches Corinth, Ovid treats the much anticipated narrative in a very brief manner, defying the expectations that he had been setting up for much of the book (391-97). Ovid reaches an anticlimax in the Medea-Theseus

⁸⁹ Rosner-Siegel breaks up the narrative into 3 episodes: Medea and Jason, Medea and Aeson, Medea and Pelias, 1982, p.234. I believe Medea's flight and her time in Athens should be 4th and 5th episodes.

narrative by setting the scene for another devious murder by Medea only to have the day saved by Aegeus. At this point in her life, Medea has already orchestrated the murder of six people (if we count Absyrtus) and plans to add Theseus to the list. Theseus also fits the mold of many of Medea's other victims: a young offspring related to royalty. Medea mixes a cup of poison, called aconite, to kill Theseus, alike to the *venenis* in line 394 that Medea used to kill the Corinthian princess. Right as Theseus is about to drink the poison, Aegeus recognizes the sword that Theseus is wearing as a family heirloom and knocks the poison out of Theseus' hand (421-23).⁹⁰ Ovid inverts the tragic *anagnorisis* here. Instead of realizing the horror of his mistake in the aftermath (like Theseus will after Hippolytus' death), Aegeus recognizes the danger right before it happens and is able to prevent tragedy from happening. Ovid gives Aegeus an *anagnorisis* that had been denied to other characters within the narrative. Instead of a tragedy happening, the day is saved and Medea must flee.

Here too Ovid gives an anticlimax. As in her escapes from Iolcus and Corinth, Medea swiftly flees the scene and avoids any punishment: *effugit illa necem nebulis per carmina motis* (She escaped death in clouds raised by her chantings, 424). Oddly, this is the last that we see of Medea. She disappears without being subjected to her (well deserved) punishment and departs from a 400 line narrative behind with little to no fanfare. Ovid does not give Medea a dramatic exit but leaves her story behind much in the way he has completed other narratives within the first half of Book 7, without a real ending. Oddly, Medea has left behind the dragon chariot that has accompanied her through the majority of the narrative, being her primary form of transportation after she leaves Colchis. This could be a result of her reaching the end of her character arc, going from young maiden to powerful sorceress, one so powerful that she no

⁹⁰ Anderson notes that this is inverse to how Medea tricked Pelias' daughters into killing their father, p. 287.

longer needs the aid of her chariot.⁹¹ By finally removing Medea's signature mode of transportation, her chariot, Ovid disassociates Medea from Euripides' tragedy entirely. Medea's exit at the end of the play is awe-inspiring precisely because of the chariot. Earlier in the Athenian episode, Aegeus recognizes Theseus before the moment of disaster and is able to prevent a tragedy from occurring. It is fitting that Ovid also depicts Medea's final flight without the chariot. Now that she has finally been thwarted and has nowhere else to fly to, Ovid abandons Medea in a fashion that once again foils the expectations of the reader. Medea's departure from the narrative of the *Metamorphoses* lacks all the fanfare of her departure from Euripides' *Medea* and epitomizes Ovid's manipulation of expectations in the poem.

In Book 7, Ovid presents the readers with a well-known character in Medea, one that he has already examined multiple times. Because Medea's story is so well-known, Ovid takes what is expected of her typical character arc and uses this narrative to evade the expectations of the reader. Instead of building to a crescendo in Corinth, Ovid provides a tragic monologue at the beginning of the book, while Medea is still in Colchis, in order to depict Medea's anxieties from the play in a different format. It appears at first that Ovid is foreshadowing the events that are to come at Corinth, but Medea's monologue is the only place where he provides her worries over Jason's possibly infidelities and her struggle between right and wrong. As the narrative progresses, Ovid allows the reader one glimpse at Medea's violent potential in the Pelias episode. Ovid takes something tragic, the violent domestic sphere and Medea's own wicked machinations, but writes it in a non-tragic way. The private room is shown to the viewer and no messenger or *anagnorisis* is provided. After Medea's escape from Iolcus, Ovid arrives at the

⁹¹ Many argue (and I agree) that Medea's character arc in this narrative is a slope down from maiden faithful to her father to wicked sorceress almost equal to a god. Tarrant, 2005, p. 71; Newlands, pp.178-9, Rosner-Siegel, pp. 241-3.

infamous events of Euripides' play. But Ovid defies expectations by only briefly treating the episode, skimming over something that he seemed to be building to throughout the whole narrative. Even if his reasons are manifold, it is clear that Ovid had a program of thwarting expectations of the reader throughout the whole narrative

Similar to the *clarum nomen* of Tereus, Medea's infamy is assured through her violent acts. By showing the violent actions of a female character in the same poem as those actions of a male, Ovid provokes the reader into questioning whether any form of violence should be praised. Epic typically valorizes acts of violence, whereas the violence of tragedy is universally condemned. When Ovid employs violence from tragedy in epic he corrupts interpretations of epic violence as heroic and denotes that at its most basic it is the same as the condemned violence of tragedy

Conclusion

I have shown how Ovid incorporated characters and scenes from tragedy into his epic, changing the well-known stories into new forms. By doing so, Ovid refitted violent acts from the tragic stage into the expansive space of epic, marking both kinds of violence, as well as male and female actors of violence, as similar in fundamental ways. One form of violence earns praise and fame while the other is portrayed as wicked, fitting for the genre of tragedy and how the genre exposes the human capacity for violence during dire circumstances. Because Ovid does not shield his readers from the female gendered violence of tragedy, he opens the way for those violent acts to be interpreted in the same way as acts of martial violence. The tragic violence that Ovid portrays does not invite praise in the way that military violence might but instead encourages the reader to question and rethink the more positive portrayal of typically epic violence. Others have noted the relationship between the amphitheater and the spectacle of violence in the poem⁹² and it is quite possible that Ovid took offstage violence and portrayed it centrally in order to match the spectacle of the amphitheater. I would argue, however, that the *Metamorphoses*, where Ovid depicts violence of many kinds, offers a condemnation of violence of any kind. Just as Ovid converts forms into new bodies and combines different genres in a new way, his *Metamorphoses* invites a new form of interpreting the violence done to human bodies.

⁹² Such as Feldherr, 1997, 43; 2010, 172-98; and Hardie, 2002, 40.

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