

## SIMILE AND IMAGERY IN OVID HEROIDES 4 AND 5\*

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Since the publication in 1883 of the thesis by Joannes Washietl, *De Similitudinibus Imaginibusque Ovidianis*, scholars have taken various approaches to Ovid's use of formal imagery in the *Heroides*. Washietl attempted to gauge the indebtedness of Ovid to his predecessors, particularly Homer, Lucretius, Vergil and Propertius, in his selection of imagery.<sup>1)</sup> In the 1930's S.G. Owen<sup>2)</sup> sought to distinguish progressive stages of development in the construction of similes; and a topical outline of Ovidian similes by E.G. Wilkins<sup>3)</sup> provided a useful compilation for a more comprehensive study. Finally in 1964, Emilio Merone assessed the artistic validity of the similes in the *Heroides* through a study of their individual components to determine whether the figures are a simple statement of comparative terms or whether these terms have been fused so as to create a completely new image.<sup>4)</sup>

Of these scholars, only Merone concerned himself exclusively with the *Heroides*. Most discussions of Ovidian imagery

\* I should like to thank my colleagues, A.J. Christopherson and B.C. Fenik, for their encouragement and helpful criticism of earlier drafts of this paper.

1) Washietl's thesis was weakened by the mistaken assertion that Ovid drew few images from the Greek tragic poets (pp. 56-8) and by his failure to indicate Ovid's originality in adapting a borrowed image to his own poetic context.

2) S.G. Owen, "Ovid's Use of the Simile," *CR* 45 (1931) 97-106.

3) E.G. Wilkins, "A Classification of the Similes of Ovid," *CW* 25 (1932) 73-8, 81-6.

4) E. Merone, *Studi sulle Eroidi di Ovidio* (Naples 1964) 108.

either deal solely with the *Metamorphoses* or treat the Ovidian corpus as a whole, thus devoting little if any attention to the epistles of the heroines.<sup>5)</sup> The analysis of Ovid's use of the simile within the poetic context of individual epistles has been largely neglected. Even H. Jacobson's recent study of the *Heroides*, while noting the significance of some images, directs its primary focus elsewhere.<sup>6)</sup>

Many scholars who discussed the use of the simile in the *Metamorphoses* have not differed from Alfred Rohde's judgment that Ovid was rhetorical and "superficial",<sup>7)</sup> the two terms becoming almost synonymous. Owen criticized Ovid's similes as illogical, redundant and the product of nothing more than "riotous fancy".<sup>8)</sup> Even the perceptive study by J. Richardson, the first to demonstrate that Ovid's imagery in the *Metamorphoses* is not purely decorative, concludes that with a single exception, the Ceyx and Alcyone episode, similes have no thematic or symbolic force within the narrative.<sup>9)</sup>

Given the increased attention to and appreciation of Ovid's accomplishment in the *Heroides* in recent years,<sup>10)</sup>

5) See, for example, Alfred Rohde, *De Ovidi Arte Epica Capita Duo* (Berlin 1929) 52-4; J. Richardson, "The Function of Formal Imagery in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*," *CJ* 59 (1964) 161-69; T.F. Brunner, *Ovid's Use of the Simile in the Metamorphoses* (unpublished Ph.D. diss., Stanford 1965); T.F. Brunner, "The Function of the Simile in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*," *CJ* 61 (1966) 354-63; T.F. Brunner, "Δεινὸν vs. ἐλλεινόν: Heinze Revisited," *AJP* 92 (1971) 275-84, a comparison of the similes of the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti*.

6) H. Jacobson, *Ovid's Heroides* (Princeton 1974) *passim*.

7) Rohde, 21, 52-3. Cf. Brunner, *Ovid's Use of the Simile*, 130. A.G. Lee, "Tenerorum Lusor Amorum," in *Critical Essays on Roman Literature: Elegy and Lyric*, J.P. Sullivan, ed. (Cambridge, Mass. 1962) 155, characterizes as "decorative" and "intentionally misleading" the mythological similes with which *Amores* 1.10 begins. But see L.C. Curran, "Ovid *Amores* 1.10," *Phoenix* 18 (1964) 314-19.

8) Owen, 102-106.

9) Richardson, 164, 169. For an analysis of the "simile-metaphor" of the Ceyx and Alcyone episode see B. Otis, *Ovid as an Epic Poet*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge 1970) 238-46.

10) See especially, Jacobson, *op. cit.* and "Ovid's Briseis. A study of *Heroides* III," *Phoenix* 25 (1971) 331-56; W.S. Anderson, "The *Heroides*," in *Ovid*, J.W. Binns, ed. (London and Boston 1973) 49-83; E.J. Kenney, "Love and Legalism: Ovid, *Heroides* 20 and 21," *Arion* 9 (1970) 388-414; H. Dörrie, "Die dichterische Absicht Ovids in den *Epistulae*

his use of formal imagery there and its integration within the total context of each heroine's dramatic monologue ought to be reexamined. This study will treat the interplay of simile and theme in two epistles: the letters of Phaedra and Oenone.

HEROIDES 4: PHAEDRA TO HYPOLYTUS

In her epistle to Hippolytus (*Heroides* 4), Phaedra compares the burden of love upon her heart to the first yokes placed upon tender young bulls or to reins which the newly broken horse can scarce endure (21-4):<sup>11)</sup>

Scilicet ut teneros laedunt iuga prima iuencos,  
frenaque vix patitur de grege captus equus,  
sic male vixque subit primos rude pectus amores  
sarcinaque haec animo non sedet apta meo.

As Jacobson observes, this imagery should not be dismissed as "traditional" in view of Hippolytus' love for nature and the meaning of his own name as "horse-breaker".<sup>12)</sup> It is no accident that Phaedra combines in her simile the two animals which have strong ties to the myths surrounding the families of Theseus and Minos. As Phaedra herself will point out later in her epistle (56-60), the animal bound inextricably to the origin and the fateful passions of her family is the bull. By this combination of images which associates Phaedra and Hippolytus on a metaphorical level in her mind, the simile early in the poem provides a key to the understanding of Phaedra's psychological condition. It reveals her manipulation of reality, that peculiar conflation and ambivalence which is characteristic of her rhetoric and which results in irony and self-delusion.

The immediate points of comparison of her simile are the ideas of inexperience and its resultant difficulties, both

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*Heroidum*," A & A 13 (1967) 41-55; A.R. Baca, "The Themes of *querela* and *lacrimae* in Ovid's *Heroides*," *Emerita* 39 (1971) 195-201.

11) Unless otherwise stated, textual citations are from the edition of H. Dörrie, *P. Ovidii Nasonis Epistulae Heroidum* (Berlin and New York 1971).

12) *Ovid's Heroides*, 152-3.

for animals and for woman. The images suggest Phaedra's spirited struggle in the grip of strong emotion.<sup>13)</sup> The mute beasts of her comparison are apposite to her presentation of herself as an unwilling and helpless victim of passion who must simply obey what she is bidden. The concept is a variant of a familiar erotic-elegiac motif: the *dominatio Amoris*.

Only Jacobson<sup>14)</sup> seems to have observed the incongruity of this frankly virginal<sup>15)</sup> imagery for Phaedra and her interweaving of motifs which are "incompatible". Phaedra's simile and its immediate context serve as a pointed reminder that she is no longer a virgin. When only five lines later (29-30) she invites Hippolytus in a single couplet "to pluck fruit from full branches and to gather the first rose,"

Est aliquid plenis pomaria carpere ramis  
et tenui primam deligere ungue rosam

she is attempting to reap the advantages both of her actual maturity and of her metaphorical presentation of herself as a *puella*. Again her imagery is ill-chosen. The flower gathered with tender nail is a reminiscence, with strong verbal echoes, of the elaborate metaphor for youthful virginity in Catullus 62.39-47. There the young chanters point out, however, that the flower, once plucked, is no longer desirable

13) Jacobson observes "the absence of any real internal conflict" in Phaedra (*Ovid's Heroides* 157). Ovid implies, particularly through the similes of the poem, that a conflict exists--or has existed, but chooses not to explore the moral complexities involved in her situation. Thus the emphasis in her dilemma and that of Euripides' Phaedra is quite different: hers is simply the struggle to resist being swept away by love. The reasons for her struggle do not enter the picture; therefore her conflict is not internalized. The *pudor* which initially prevents her from speaking (7-14), as Paratore has observed, "Sulla 'Phaedra' di Seneca," *Dioniso* 15 (1952) 224, is purely a device to justify her use of a letter. Thus her conflict may seem trivialized, nevertheless it is suggested.

14) *Ovid's Heroides*, 148. Merone, 120-21, points out that the imagery is that of a virgin, "...di una *puella* che fa le prime esperienze d'amore..."; but he overlooks the fact that this comparison is not suitable for Phaedra.

15) Is it possible that the newly broken horse itself may recall Horace's *equa trima* which is ignorant of marriage and afraid to be touched (*Odes* 3.11.9-12)?

(and for this reason the young women reject the institution of marriage). This Catullan echo from Phaedra's pen is an ironic reminder of her status as a married woman.

This effect is intensified by the image of the yoked bullock. It recalls the metaphor applied to Lalage's youthful disinterest in love at Horace *Odes* 2.5.1-4:

Nondum subacta ferre iugum valet  
cervice, nondum munia comparis  
aequare nec tauri ruentis  
in venerem tolerare pondus.

In due time, however, Horace reassures her lover, Lalage herself will seek a mate *proterva fronte* (15-16). Ovid also uses the image as a metaphor for marriage.<sup>16)</sup> In *Heroides* 9, Deianeira compares her unhappy marriage to Hercules to the yoking of unmatched bullocks at the plow (29-30):

Quam male inaequales veniunt ad aratra iuveni,  
tam premitur magno coniuge nupta minor.

Phaedra's imagery, related primarily to the topos of *servitium amoris*, suggests secondary connotations of marriage which are reinforced subtly by her echo of Catullus 62. Thus the simile and its context juxtapose circumstances Phaedra imagines or hopes for and allusions to her real situation. The result is a simile which is invalid and betrays Phaedra's self-deception.

The simile would be entirely appropriate to Hippolytus if he were to experience love; Phaedra's choice of imagery

16) The association between *iugum* and marriage in the elegists seems to be peculiarly Ovidian. S. Lilja, "The Roman Elegists' Attitude to Women," *Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae* B 135, 1 (1965) 85, cites Propertius 3.25.8: *tu bene conveniens non sinis ire iugum* as an example of the metaphorical use of the yoke to denote marriage. But Pichon, *De Sermone Amatorio apud Latinos Elegiarum Scriptores* (Paris 1902) 177, is correct that the metaphor there is related to the *concordia amantium*. See L. Richardson, Jr., ed., *Propertius Elegies I-IV* (Oklahoma 1977) 412 *ad loc.* and W.A. Camps, ed., *Propertius Elegies Book III* (Cambridge 1966) 170 *ad loc.* Both editors interpret the metaphor as similar to Prop. 1.5.2: *et sine nos cursu quo sumus ire pares*. A. La Penna, "Note sul linguaggio erotico dell'elegia latina," *Maia* 4 (1951) 206, cites the use of the verb ζεύγνυμι by the Greek tragic poets and the Alexandrians as a metaphor for marriage: Sophocles *O.T.* 826, *Trach.* 536; Euripides *Alc.* 994, *Electra* 99. Ovid may have borrowed this metaphor from Greek literature.

is intended to obscure the real disparity between them and place the two on the same emotional level.<sup>17)</sup> In the pastoral images which follow it (29-30) we have noted a metaphor for youthful virginity. Yet these in turn appear in a context of guilt and wrongdoing: *crimen* (25), *nocens* (28), *crimine* (31), *adulterio...adulter* (34).<sup>18)</sup> When Phaedra, in this same context, speaks of her former integrity which must be marked now by an unaccustomed stain (31-2):

Si tamen ille prior, quo me sine crimine gessi,  
candor ab insolita labe notandus erat,

her remark is a telling contrast to her description of Hippolytus later. Here are true *candor*, symbolized by his garment, and the flowers of virginity; modesty produces the blush which is his only stain (71-2):

Candida vestis erat, praecincti flore capilli,  
flava verecundus tinxerat ora rubor.

By its language and context, the first simile reveals Phaedra's vain attempt to become another Hippolytus. By equating her with bullocks and a horse it is also the first prefiguration of her role in his ultimate fate.<sup>19)</sup> Both animals recur prominently and prophetically in the narrative which follows. When Phaedra attributes her adulterous love for Hippolytus to the fate of her family, the common element in the passage, from the disguise assumed by Jupiter (*tauro*

17) Jacobson, *Ovid's Heroides*, 147, points out that *Amazonio Cressa* and *puella viro* are an attempt to conceal their kinship so that "...the two, stepmother and stepson, stand together on one level, potential erotic-elegiac lovers."

18) Armando Salvatore, "Motivi Poetici nelle Heroides di Ovidio," *Atti del Conv. intern. Ovidiano* II, 240-41, observes the fine juxtaposition of contrasts throughout this letter. Other critics are less appreciative of Phaedra's rhetoric. F. Arnaldi, "Il Mondo Poetico di Ovidio," *Studi Ovidiani*, 17, characterizes it as "dialettica perversa, ma troppo sofisticata". I cannot agree with Jacobson, 157, who calls it the "rhetoric of a middle-aged woman" and summarizes the epistle as "a joke with Phaedra as the butt."

19) Ovid often suggests the outcome of events beyond the scope of the actual writing of the epistle. A further example is the anachronistic appearance of Patroclus in the epistle of Briseis, cited by Jacobson, *Ovid's Heroides*, 41, n. 61 (= "Ovid's Briseis," *Phoenix* 25 [1971] 355, n. 63).

*dissimulante deum*, 56) to the Minotaur conceived in the unnatural union of Pasiphae (*decepto subdita tauro*, 57) and killed by Theseus, is the bull--the animal to be invoked by Theseus in his curse against his son.

The horse reappears in two passages, both repeating the idea of struggle, first suggested by the newly broken horse in Phaedra's initial simile (22). Phaedra suddenly yearns to hunt wild animals on forested ridges, to race a light chariot drawn by a swift steed (37-46):

Iam quoque--vix credes--ignotas mutor in artes;  
est mihi per saevas impetus ire ferar.

Iam mihi prima dea est arcu praesignis adunco  
40 Delia; iudicium subsequor ipsa tuum;  
in nemus ire libet pressisque in retia cervis  
hortari celeres per iuga summa canes  
aut tremulum excusso iaculum vibrare lacerto  
aut in graminea ponere corpus humo.

45 Saepe iuvat versare leves in pulvere currus  
torquentem frenis ora fugacis equi.

The language of the passage is revealing. The spondaic *torquentem frenis* (46) conveys the powerful straining of the horse at his reins before he gallops away in the swift dactyls of the final half of the pentameter ...*ora fugacis equi*. There is the implication that Phaedra has lost control, that she is now being carried away by some external force. Note the number of passive or impersonal verbs with which she describes her desires: *mutor* (37), *libet* (41), *iuvat* (45), the explicit *est mihi...impetus* (38), and her admission that her own judgment no longer suffices...*iudicium subsequor ipsa tuum* (40). This utter lack of control is made explicit by the second simile of the poem, and her confession (51-2) that others report her actions when her *furor* is spent (47-50):

Nunc feror, ut Bacchi furiis Eleleides<sup>20)</sup> actae  
quaeque sub Idaeo tympana colle movent  
aut quas semideae Dryades Fauniquae bicornes  
numine contactas attonuere suo.

20) The onomatopoeic patronymic *Eleleides*, meaning literally 'the

Merone observes that the three similes "...descrivono le condizioni spirituali, il travaglio dell'anima de Fedra..." and he continues, "...si sarebbe desiderata una sola similitudine, la quale, con la sua carica espressiva e con la sua intensità, avrebbe giovato certamente all'arte di Ovidio. Tre similitudini, senza apprezzabili e sensibili variazioni...sembrano troppe, stemperano un po' l'immagine di Fedra follemente innamorata."<sup>21)</sup> Rather, the image seems to suggest not that Phaedra suffers internal torment, but that she has given up her initial struggle altogether: she is driven now by violent passion, stunned so that she is not even conscious of her actions. In the words of Jacobson (p. 149), "This is now her character."

The movement of the similes is from possession by divine power--Bacchus, Cybele--to possession by creatures not quite human, not quite divine; from the harsher manifestations of divinity, to the wilder, more violent manifestations of semi-divine creatures of nature. By making Phaedra evoke such a progression of comparisons here, Ovid has juxtaposed to her yearnings for the pastoral allurements of nature the dangerous violence of the wilderness.<sup>22)</sup>

Phaedra's desire to become a devotee of the Delian goddess, to hunt on forested ridges is, on one level, a desire

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daughters of Bacchus', appears only here in Latin literature. See A. Palmer, ed., *P. Ovidi Nasonis Heroides* (Oxford 1898) 308. It is symptomatic of another motif prominent throughout the epistle: the idea of family relationships. Phaedra is so obsessed with ties of family that she seems to think of everyone in terms of family relationship. Theseus is *Aegides* (59) and *Neptunius heros* (109); she even calls Hippolytus *Thesides* (65). As already indicated, she views her love for Hippolytus as a debt owed the fate of her family (53ff.); her recital of the "crimes" of Theseus shows them to be crimes against family (109-24). Finally, in the impassioned plea with which her epistle ends Phaedra, who is trying to convince Hippolytus to violate ties of family, appeals to him on the basis of family relationships: *genitor* (157), *proavi* (158), *avus* (159), *miserere priorum* (161), *parce meis* (162), *mater* (166). In an epistle of 176 lines, there are forty-one nouns or adjectives denoting family relationships, including four patronymics. See Jacobson, *Ovid's Heroides*, 156, for the constant presence of deceit which characterizes Phaedra's view of her ancestors.

21) Merone, 116-17.

22) The motifs are Euripidean; cf. *Hippolytus* 176-242.

to accompany Hippolytus in the pursuits which he enjoys.<sup>23)</sup> Her portrayal of his characteristic *studia* (79-84) is almost a doublet of this earlier wish:

Sive ferocis equi luctantia colla recurvas,  
 80           exiguo flexos miror in orbe pedes;  
           seu lentum valido torques hastile lacerto,  
           ora ferox in se versa lacertus habet;  
           sive tenes lato venabula cornea ferro--  
           denique nostra iuvat lumina quidquid agis.

Again the idea of struggle (*luctantia colla*, 79) accompanies the picture of the horse. But while the horse of Phaedra's first simile struggled to shake free of its new reins and later similes conveyed Phaedra's increasing helplessness, Hippolytus at this point exhibits complete mastery and skillful control as he guides his steed through an equestrian figure. The use of the same adjective (*ferocis*, 79...*ferox*, 82) to describe the horse and the arm of Hippolytus seems to suggest that man and beast are here equally matched, a picture which takes on irony for the reader, who knows the fate of Hippolytus to die in the tangled reins of his

23) On a deeper level, it is a manifestation of her conflict. Diana, goddess of the hunt dear to Hippolytus, is likewise the virgin goddess. Throughout the epistle hunting plays a dual role, with erotic as well as virginal connotations: *figat*, 16; *caecum...vulnus*, 20; the repeated idea of capture which figures in the first simile of the poem, *victas*, 14; *victa*, 153; *captus*, 22; *capit capta*, 64; the analogy of the bow, a very erotic play on the word *mollis*, 91-2. Phaedra's wish becomes the expression of a sexual impulse thwarted by Hippolytus' devotion to virginity. Later she will reject Diana in favor of Venus (87-8). When she repeats her desire to accompany Hippolytus into the forest (101-4), it is so that Venus may be served. She has attempted to allay his doubts by three *exempla* involving hunter-lovers: Cephalus and Aurora (93-6), Venus and Adonis (97-8), Meleager and Atalanta (99-100). Presumably, the first is intended to depict the younger lover who submits to the advances of an older woman; the second, to identify the forest as the scene of erotic union; and the third, to portray lovers as companions in the hunt. The *exempla*, however, bear sinister import--as examples of (1) adultery; (2) incest--*Cinyraque creatum* is contrived to emphasize the manner of Adonis' conception; (3) death--note the telling reference to Meleager by his patronymic. He will meet death at the hands of his own mother after he has murdered his uncles. See Jacobson's observations (*Ovid's Heroides*, 153-4) on the self-defeating nature of Phaedra's rhetoric.

frightened and fleeing steeds.<sup>24)</sup>

The two motifs of horse and bull coalesce prophetically again at the end of Phaedra's epistle (165-6):

Flecte, ferox, animos! Potuit corrumpere taurum  
mater, eris tauro saevior ipse truci?

*Flecte, ferox* echo the description of the horse and Hippolytus' equestrian skill in the passage discussed above (*ferocis*, 79; *flexos...pedes*, 80; *ferox*, 82). Moreover, the alliterative adjective *trux* used to describe the bull subtly reinforces the comparison Phaedra is drawing between the animal and Hippolytus. Earlier in her letter, when Phaedra described the reactions of other women to Hippolytus, she applied the same adjective to him (73-4):

quemque vocant aliae vultum rigidumque trucemque,  
pro rigido Phaedra iudice fortis erat.

This comparison, with its interweaving of verbal echoes, draws Hippolytus inexorably into the fate of Phaedra's family and suggests that he is in a perverse way the logical object of her passion. Through her preference for this man-bull Phaedra becomes in the truest sense her mother's daughter, her brother's sister. And the identification of Hippolytus with the bull suggests that his ultimate destruction will be due to his own nature.

Thus the images introduced in the first simile are related not only to the myth of Hippolytus, but also to themes developed in the course of Phaedra's monologue. The horse is used as a latent foreshadowing of death and a symbol that acquires emotional force--as a sign of Phaedra's struggle against her passion and of Hippolytus' control over his emotions, a control which would result in his steadfast rejec-

24) A form of the same verb, *luctor*, appears at *Metamorphoses* 15.519, when Ovid narrates the death of Hippolytus. There, however, it is used by Hippolytus to describe his own doomed struggle to control his horses. Cf. *Ars Amatoria* 1.338; *Fasti* 3.265-6, 5.309-10, 6.737-45. When Ovid makes Phaedra find the dirt on Hippolytus' face handsome (*Heroides* 4.78), the statement takes on ironic overtones and perhaps a latent allusion to her vengeful joy in his death. See Jacobson, *Ovid's Heroides*, 155, esp. n. 31, for a similar play on the use of water at the end of the poem.

tion of her advances and his loss of physical mastery at the fateful moment. The bull links the fate of the pair with an ominous pattern unfolding throughout their personal history. As the second simile signifies Phaedra's surrender to more powerful forces and links them to violence in the wilderness,<sup>25)</sup> the pastoral haunts of Hippolytus--and their virginal connotations--become at once his refuge and his undoing.

#### HEROIDES 5: OENONE TO PARIS

The two similes of *Heroides* 5, the letter of Oenone to Paris, are related to the bucolic landscape which provides both the setting and a dominant theme for the poem.<sup>26)</sup> To the nymph Oenone the woodlands are not only the milieu which she knows and understands best, but a part of her pedigree, the guarantee of her importance. She identifies herself as ...*Pegasis Oenone, Phrygiis celeberrima silvis* (3). As her epistle continues, Oenone's perception of her woodlands gradually reveals her character and creates an antithesis between the old and new loves of Paris,<sup>27)</sup> between the simple life and the luxury of Priam's court.

Haughtily Oenone reminds Paris that *she* is a nymph, daughter of a great river, yet she did not disdain to be his bride when he was a mere slave (9-12). Sound patterns reinforce the tone of bitter, wounded hauteur. The repetitive "t" in lines 9 and 10 makes her seem to spit out her words

25) For Ovid's later use of this motif and its antecedents in tragedy, the pastoral genre and primitive mythology, see Hugh Parry, "Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: Violence in a Pastoral Landscape," *TAPA* 95 (1964) 268-82. Also C.P. Segal, *Landscape in Ovid's Metamorphoses. A Study in the Transformations of a Literary Symbol* (Wiesbaden 1969).

26) L. Haley, "The Feminine Complex in the *Heroides*," *CJ* 20 (1924-25) 17, notes the "wild charm of sea and mountain" which creates a romantic atmosphere in this epistle.

27) The rivalry between the two mistresses which plays a major role in the second part of the monologue is foreshadowed by the sarcastic reference to a *nova coniunx* in the introductory lines. See Jacobson, *Ovid's Heroides*, 179-80, for a discussion of the economy of the opening distich, and F.H. Grantz, *Studien zur Darstellungskunst Ovids in den Heroides* (diss. Kiel 1955) 6, 40-2, for a discussion of the way in which the introduction determines the structure of the poem.

scornfully, while the "f" and "ph" sounds in the final half of the pentameter make her claim to semi-divinity proudly emphatic.<sup>28)</sup>

Imagery drawn from nature accompanies the chronological narrative of Oenone's affair with Paris.<sup>29)</sup> She first portrays her love for Paris within the woodland setting (13-16):

Saepe greges inter requievimus arbore tecti  
 mixtaque cum foliis praebuit herba torum.  
 Saepe super stramen faenoque iacentibus alto  
 defensa est humili cana pruina casa.

The scene is reminiscent of a Tibullan reverie in which lover and *puella* drowse, warm and dry as the rain patters overhead (Tibullus 1.1.45-8). But again the setting is intended to magnify the importance of Oenone vis-à-vis Paris. As the yet undiscovered son of Priam, the old Paris had been both literally and figuratively a slave, tending his flocks on Mount Ida and participating in the *servitium amoris* with Oenone as his *domina*.<sup>30)</sup>

Oenone reminds Paris that she had been his instructress in the art of hunting (17-20):

Quis tibi monstrabat saltus venatibus aptos  
 et tegetet catulos qua fera rupe suos?  
 Retia saepe comes maculis distincta tetendi,  
 saepe citos egi per iuga longa canes.

Following immediately upon her description of love within the protective serenity of the forests, these words suggest the erotic theme of hunter-lover. Menalcas and Amyntas, the lovers of *Eclogues* 3, hunt wild boar together (74-5), and Menalcas boasts that Amyntas is better known than Delia to his hunting dogs (66-7). In Tibullus 1.4.49-50, Priapus admonishes the aspirant lover to bear the nets willingly if his beloved is drawn to the hunt. Ovid adapts this metaphor to

28) See Jacobson's discussion of the ostentatiousness of these lines, *Ovid's Heroides*, 181-2.

29) C.J. Bradley, "Ovid Heroides V: Reality and Illusion," *CJ* 64 (1969) 160.

30) F.O. Copley, "*Servitium Amoris* in the Roman Elegists," *TAPA* 78 (1947) 285-300.

heterosexual love: consider Phaedra's longing to hunt with Hippolytus and the elaborate hunting metaphors of the *Ars Amatoria*, which makes love itself merely another type of sport.<sup>31)</sup>

The metaphor admits of two lines of development: the lover who follows along with the hunter-beloved (usually in the servile role of guardian of the nets) in an attempt to win his affections (Tib. 1.4.50; *Eclogues* 3.75; cf. Apollo and Hyacinthus, *Meta.* 10.171-3; Venus and Adonis, *Meta.* 10.533-9; Milanion, *Ars Amatoria* 2.188-9), and the hunter-lover who practices his art in order to ensnare the unwitting beloved and initiate (usually) her in the art of love (*Ars Amatoria* 1.89, 253, 263, 269-70; 2.2).<sup>32)</sup> Oenone's instructions to Paris combine these two aspects of the metaphor: we see her both in the servile role of *comes* stretching out the nets and as the master-hunter teaching her art. Neither is a part usually played by the female member of a love partnership;<sup>33)</sup> since the aggressive hunter-lover usually succeeds in entrapping only himself, both roles result in the position of *servus*, reserved for the male, in the *servitium amoris*. Oenone's instructions to Paris, then, juxtapose the reality of her avocation as huntress and the suggestion of elegiac metaphor in a way which hints at a double meaning and at the irony of her situation. While Oenone had taught Paris the art of hunting, she had been his instructress also in the art of love. In so doing, however, in effect she had passed from *domina* to *servus*, thereby dooming her hopes for her love affair.

The bucolic theme is maintained by Paris' carving on the

31) S. Lilja, 182, notes Ovid's preference, of all the elegists, for imagery drawn from the hunt. Cf. *Ars Amatoria* 1.263-5, 391-4, 763-6. Note also the frequent use of the verb *cipio* in book 1: 61, 83, 159, 234, 265, 270, 348, 351, 358-9, 382, 403, 458. See E.W. Leach, "Georgic Imagery in the *Ars Amatoria*," *TAPA* 95 (1964) 142-54.

32) The case of Phaedra is different. Although she desires to accompany Hippolytus on the hunt (*Heroides* 4. 39-44), she does not become guardian of the nets, but hunts with him as his equal. Thus she acquires elements of both aspects of the metaphor.

33) Sulpicia is the obvious exception (Tibullus 3.9.11-14 = 4.3.11-14); see Copley, 295.

beech trees and by his ἀδύνατον incised on the poplar--both, as Jacobson points out, unique modifications of traditional motifs.<sup>34)</sup> Oenone regards the trees bearing her name as further monuments to her renown.<sup>35)</sup> Paris reverses the usual pattern for such ἀδύνατα, so that the curse under which he has placed himself unwittingly--and the magnitude of his violation of nature--will increase with the growth of the tree. As a fountain nymph who has gained further authority in nature through Paris' blade (21-4), Oenone has the power not only to pray for the fulfillment of that curse, as she does (31-2), but also to command and herself participate in the disordering of nature. The verse carving and the prayer of Oenone reflect the turmoil within her--and consequently within all nature--at the faithlessness of Paris.

Even before the dread pronouncement of *nefas* at line 40, Ovid has depicted the judgment and departure of Paris as acts contrary to the natural order. There is a sudden metaphorical change within Oenone.<sup>36)</sup> The imagery depicting her reaction to the fateful judgment is cold and violent: a sudden terrible storm (*pessima mutati...amoris hiems*, 34), accompanied by thunder (*Attoniti*, 37) and cold (*...gelidusque cucurrit, / ...dura per ossa tremor*, 37-8). Once trees had provided and sheltered leafy couches for love; they had borne Paris' pledges of fidelity, Oenone's claims to enhanced glory. Now with a swiftness<sup>37)</sup> which conveys the ruthlessness of his deed, Paris cuts down trees to prepare his fleet.

Within this context, the first simile infuses the moment of departure with an ironic pathos.<sup>38)</sup> Oenone describes the sorrowful farewell of the lovers (46-8):

34) Ovid's *Heroides*, 182-3.

35) Bradley, 160, misses this distinction when he interprets the trees of this passage as "emblematic of the...glory of the lovers' vows". The glory involved, in Oenone's eyes, is hers alone.

36) *Ibid.*

37) The judgment and Oenone's reaction to it occupy 8 lines (33-40); the preparation and launching of the fleet, only a distich (41-2). Note Cassandra's reference to Paris' ship as *obsceam* (119).

38) Merone, 121-2, judges this "una rappresentazione di rara efficacia".

miscuimus lacrimas maestus uterque suas.  
 Non sic appositis vincitur vitibus ulmus,  
 ut tua sunt collo bracchia nexa meo.

This mingling of tears is to be the last union of mortal and water nymph. But the image is striking for other reasons as well: Oenone's simile reveals a reversal of sexual roles already hinted at by her dominant position as hunter-teacher. Paris is the vine, planted beside and clinging to Oenone, the elm. The vine, in this context, is the feminine image, as in Catullus 62.54: (*vitis*)...*ulmo coniuncta marito*, and in *Amores* 2.16.41-2, where Ovid himself is the *ulmus* and his *domina*, the *vitis*:

ulmus amat vitem, vitis non deserit ulmum:  
 separor a domina cur ego saepe mea?

Oenone's image depicts Paris as an integral, though weaker, part of nature, united with her in her own element, yet dependent on her for support. But the vine can destroy the very support from which it has received its initial nourishment. On one level, Paris is taking the first steps which will destroy his love for Oenone. On another, the felling of the trees has become a symbolic act freeing him from subservience to her. However reluctant his departure, even as he clings tearfully to Oenone, Paris has already destroyed the support for the vine.

As the simple bucolic life has become symbolic of the former union of Paris and Oenone, so now Oenone equates Paris' desire for Helen with his new-found status and luxury at Priam's court. The gleam of royal crimson from his ship affords her, as she waits impatiently on the shore, the first fearful inkling that the old Paris is gone forever (65-6):

Dum moror, in summa fulsit mihi purpura prora.  
 Pertimui: cultus non erat ille tuus.

The return reverses the major elements of the earlier scene of farewell. A gentle breeze (*Aura levis*, 53) had stirred his departing sails and decisive human action, the churning of the sea by the oars, was required to draw him from her.

A swift breeze (*cita...aura*, 67) returns the ship to land, thus ironically fulfilling Oenone's prayer to the Nereids (57). But now it is Helen who clings to Paris, a pose which recalls the simile of the vine twined upon the supporting elm. The significant difference, however, is that here Paris has assumed the dominant role once played by Oenone and nature. With his acquisition of Helen and her *cultus*, Paris has gained masculine independence. While the farewell had begun with the suggestive union of mortal and nature through tears, the scene of return closes with Oenone's solitary tears among the rocks of Ida (73-4).<sup>39)</sup>

The second simile draws both Paris and Helen within the rustic theme. Oenone's image in the first simile (47-8) was an agricultural one: the vines had been planted (*appositis*, 47) beside the tree. At Paris' departure another agricultural image depicted the action of the oars upon the sea (*eruta*, 54).<sup>40)</sup> Now Oenone describes Paris' fickleness (109-12):

Tu levior foliis, tum cum sine pondere suci  
mobilibus ventis arida facta volant.

Et minus est in te quam summa pondus arista,  
quae levis adsiduis solibus usta riget.

Her implications are unmistakable. Once she had lain in love with Paris on a bed of leaves (14; 87-8); her first simile had depicted Paris himself as a living vine. Here Paris is compared to nature which is dry, sterile; to a harvest, ruined. Taken together, the two similes have sexual overtones which reinforce those of the mingled tears and tears among the rocks in the scenes of departure and return. Oenone charges that she gave Paris his manhood--or at least taught him how to use it. But by abandoning her and using his knowledge adulterously, Paris has wasted his sexuality.<sup>41)</sup>

39) See Jacobson, *Ovid's Heroides*, 192-3, for the circular construction of this passage.

40) Cf. Palmer, 318 *ad. loc.*

41) Cf. Horace *Odes* 1.25.17-20, where the *aridae frondes* suggest the fate of Lydia, whose haughtiness in bestowing her favors to the poet induces him to depict her as still passionate, but neglected in old age. See references to the theme of withered leaves in R.G.M. Nisbet and

This meaning is intensified by Cassandra's prophecy with its agricultural imagery (115-8):

Quid facis, Oenone? Quid arenae semina mandas?

Non profecturis litora bubus aras!

Graia iuvenca venit, quae te patriamque domumque  
perdat! Io prohibe! Graia iuvenca venit!

Grantz correctly observes that line 115 is an intentional allusion to Oenone's tears upon the sand in the scene of departure (55-6) and that Cassandra's agricultural image has sexual overtones.<sup>42)</sup> His interpretation of the individual components of the image, however, is reversed because he has failed to observe that Oenone plays an essentially dominant masculine role here as within her earlier recollection of life with Paris. It is Oenone who performs the masculine task of sowing although Cassandra predicts that her harvest will fail, a prediction vindicated already for the reader by the ruined crop of the second simile of the poem. There Paris was equated with dry leaves and *arista* burned by constant sun so that harvesting would be useless and the act of sowing itself, a wasted labor.

Jacobson's discussion of line 38 is pertinent. Since *durum os* "elsewhere always refers to men", Jacobson speculates that lines 37-8 may be adapted from a lost tragedy which described Paris' reaction to the sudden apparition of three naked goddesses. The odd phrase here serves "as parody of the grand claims Oenone makes for herself by transferring to her Paris' response."<sup>43)</sup> Neither parody nor adaptation is necessary to explain the masculine phraseology. As Jacobson admits, the language of 37-8 is typically Ovidian for descriptions of fear. Moreover, certain phrases (*micuere, gelidus, cucurrit, tremor*) are particularly suited to Oenone's character as a fountain, and the masculine phrase suits her masculine role throughout much of the epistle.

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Margaret Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace: Odes Book 1* (Oxford 1970) 298-300.

42) Grantz, 49-52.

43) Jacobson, 184 and n. 22.

Thus Paris, not Oenone, is represented by the *litora* at 116 and the *saltus* at 124, images usually applied to the female in the plowing metaphor. Cassandra's image places Oenone and Helen in a similar realm, but as plowman and *iuvenca*, and points up the undesirable turn of events: the *iuvenca* has ousted the plowman and ruined his planting.

Bradley is only partially correct in his statement:

Oenone's hope for Paris' return appears sustained by a belief that his cruel desertion and new passion...are impossible, unnatural, and unreal. The letter becomes, therefore, an urgent attempt to return to reality from a hell of destructive illusions.<sup>44)</sup>

It is true that the unique narrative perspective of the *Heroides*, influenced as it is by the fusion of external 'factual' motivation and internal psychological direction, can assume a new reality independent of a purely objective context.<sup>45)</sup> Still, part of the humor of this epistle lies in the fact that Oenone does accept at least some of the realities of Paris' changed circumstances. In fact, it is consistent with Ovid's characterization of Oenone that nature's child recognizes the allurements of *cultus* and aspires to a life among the 'beautiful people' of Priam's court. Although she protests her indifference to wealth and royal palaces (81)--proper sentiments for a fountain nymph--she finally blurts out her real feelings (85-8):

Dignaque sum et cupio fieri matrona potentis;  
sunt mihi quas possint sceptrā decere manus.  
Nec me, faginea quod tecum fronde iacebam,  
despice; purpureo sum magis apta toro.

Jacobson sees this statement as an expression of Oenone's inconsistency of character.<sup>46)</sup> But is this not the real

44) Bradley, 160.

45) See Grantz, *passim*, and B. Latta, *Die Stellung der Doppelbriefe, Heroides 16-21, im Gesamtwerk Ovids* (diss. Marburg 1963) *passim*. H. Fraenkel, *Ovid: A Poet Between Two Worlds* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1945) 43, and Dörrie, *A & A 13* (1967) 46-7, also note the peculiar perspective in the *Heroides*. For a discussion of the different focus of the Oenone epistle, involving both present and past reaction to external circumstances, see Jacobson, *Ovid's Heroides*, 187-8.

46) Jacobson, *Ovid's Heroides*, 185.

point to which her whole letter has been leading: her insistence at the outset upon her proper blue-blooded pedigree (3, 10), her insecure suspicions that Paris may now be ashamed of her (44, 79-80, 83-4, 87-8), even her emphasis upon her own importance within nature (23-4) and her witty retort that she is unimpressed by the prospect of becoming one of Priam's many daughters-in-law (82)? These assertions are not, as Grantz suggests,<sup>47)</sup> an *apologia* to prove her guiltlessness in the eyes of the gods, but an attempt to establish her continuing right to be Paris' wife. Yet Oenone does not ask Paris to return with her to their earlier life in the woodlands. Rather Ovid playfully undercuts the bucolic theme to suggest that even nature, beholding the delights of man's worldly accomplishments, would turn her back on rustic glades for the joys of love.

Analysis of the epistles of Phaedra and Oenone has shown that Ovid's similes there are not merely decorative, but are well integrated within each monologue and contribute to the development of a consistent pattern of themes and imagery. The source of the imagery chosen for the similes is significant. In *Heroides* 4 (Phaedra) similes are related to the basic mythological framework within which the dramatic moment of composition is cast and serve to remind the reader of the outcome of the situation which lies outside the heroine's knowledge. The reader gains thereby a double perspective which allows him to view the myth as a whole, while witnessing the heroine's emotional and intellectual reactions at her moment of crisis.

This technique in the construction of similes is not unique to this letter in the *Heroides*. In the epistle of Medea to Jason (*Heroides* 12), for example, the fire image of the simile at 33-6 pervades the myth and her monologue from the fire-breathing bulls (17-8, 44) to the *flammea lumina* of the serpent guarding the fleece (109) and finally to her burning revenge on her rival (183) and her plea to Jason for *fides* (193). The simile equating Cydippe's colorless complex-

47) Grantz, 9-10.

ion with an apple in *Heroides* 21 (217-8) recalls the moment of her unwitting oath in the myth, but has obvious limitations as an image and does not receive the extensive development within the monologue as is the case in some other epistles.

Even in *Heroides* 5, where the bucolic setting of the myth provides the images used in the similes, the development of this imagery suggests the futility of Oenone's aspirations. The agricultural imagery brings about a reversal of roles, not only in the sexual sense as the preceding analysis has attempted to show, but also in those roles which Oenone and Paris play in the universe as a whole. Paris has become a part of the natural world, transplanted to be sure, while Oenone is the plowman who attempts by his labors to make nature more productive. The result conveys the impossibility of combining two basically incompatible worlds: Paris can be no more a part of Oenone's world than she can forsake her rightful nature to share in his. Oenone fails as plowman; Paris destroys nature in his pursuit of *cultus*.

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