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THE FIGURE OF MEDEA IN MEDIEVAL LITERATURE: A THEMATIC
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City University of New York

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THE FIGURE OF MEDEA IN MEDIEVAL LITERATURE:

A THEMATIC METAMORPHOSIS

by

JOEL N. FEIMER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty
in Comparative Literature in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1983



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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

THE FIGURE OF MEDEA IN MEDIEVAL LITERATURE:

A THEMATIC METAMORPHOSIS

by

Joel N. Feimer

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The figure of Medea has undergone many thematic transformations since its first appearance in the epic poems and dramas of ancient Greece. In Hesiod, Medea is a type of fairytale princess. In Euripides, she is a vengeful woman whose wrath inspires the greatest of enormities, the slaughter of her own children. Apollonius portrays a young Medea struggling valiantly, but fruitlessly against a divinely inspired passion. The Latin poets and philosophers depict Medea as titanic, frightening, often a criminal. In Ovid's Metamorphoses, Medea degenerates into a blind destructive force. In the twelfth century Roman de Troie, Medea undergoes a remarkable transformation when she is placed in the context of fin' amor. Here she is a positive, life-sustaining figure motivated to perform helpful deeds by her noble passion. In medieval literature, the fortunes of the figure of Medea follow the writers' attitude toward secular love. When the medieval poet approves of fin' amor, Medea is portrayed positively. However, when secular passion is denigrated in favor of divine love, Medea is characterized as a type of wilfull, destructive woman, at the mercy of her unrestrained lust. In the French prose versions of the Roman de Troie, Guido delle Colonne's Historia Destructionis

Troiae, and Boccaccio's De Mulieribus Claris, such a negative Medea may be found. However, in Chaucer's Legend of Good Women and Gower's Confessio Amantis, Medea is portrayed as a saint of secular love for her unstinting fidelity to Jason. At the hands of Chaucer and Gower, Medea receives her most radical transformation, sanctification in the context of fin' amor.

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Introduction

One of the most puzzling and fascinating transformations of a heroine from classical legend into medieval literature occurred to the barbarian witch, Medea. Medea's story begins at the obscure origins of mythology and was already ancient and familiar enough by Homer's time so that he could allude to it expecting casual recognition from his audience.¹ Indeed, the many references to and retellings of Medea's tale of power, passion, betrayal and revenge earn her a place among the most significant and enduring figures to emerge from the literature of classical antiquity.

Medea's original function as a mythological figure was probably connected with healing, which was always associated with religion in ancient culture.² Her very name in Greek means counseling woman.³ Her audience, however, knows her best as Medea, the witch, or sorceress, a profession of ambiguous merit even in Graeco-Roman times.⁴ For the Greek and Latin writers of classical antiquity, Medea was at best a problematic figure who provoked a response in which equal portions of sympathy and horror were mixed; at her worst, she was a criminal of heroic proportions. By assuming the roles of lover, wife and mother as well as that of sorceress, Medea becomes the archetypal woman. As such she is feared yet coveted for her power, wooed and won for her exotic beauty and then betrayed and abandoned by her fickle seducer after fulfilling his every need, including that for progeny.

A brief catalogue of Medea's enormities is enough to demonstrate the dangerousness and fearsomeness of the woman which characterize

her in classical literature: the betrayal of her father and homeland, the murder and dismemberment of her brother, the murder of Pelias (Jason's uncle and rival) using his own daughters to accomplish the deed, the employment of her own two sons in her plot of vengeance against her Corinthian supplanter and her father, the King of Corinth, the subsequent slaughter of her beloved children as a punishment for a philandering husband, and last, though far from least, her attempted murder of the Athenian hero, Theseus.⁵

It is in the vehemence and method of her revenge upon Jason that Medea really stands out, executing not only her enemies, but her dearest possessions, her children, as well. She accomplishes the deaths of her two sons in order to leave her straying husband forlorn and childless as he faces a barren old age.⁶ Medea's only defense when she is brought to task for these crimes is one for which classical poets and philosophers held suspicion and contempt: she claimed that she had committed all of the above misdeeds while bound by her love for Jason and that she was powerless to kick against the goad of passion.⁷ From the moral perspective adopted by the writers of ancient Greece and Rome, the fires of desire might explain what it was that motivated Medea to commit her enormities, and they might even be used to evoke pity for her misfortunes from her audience, but an appeal to the emotions in the cause of love could never mitigate the poets' censure of the criminal.⁸ Classical writers portrayed her as a frightening figure, a powerful woman driven to desperate and horrible deeds. If they pitied her at all, it was as a tragic victim of her own titanic passions and demonic powers.⁹

Hesiod, Euripides, Pindar, Apollonius of Rhodes, Seneca, Ovid,

and Valerius Flaccus are among the poets and dramatists of Greece and Rome in whose extant works may be found versions of Medea's tale. Although the following discussion of the figure of Medea will examine the contributions of all of the above mentioned writers, the most important for the study of the various portraits of Medea among medieval poets is Ovid, in whose works she is practically ubiquitous. Besides a fairly complete account of her history in Metamorphoses, VII, Medea also appears in Heroides, VI and XII, and in the Ars Amatoria. Medea's portrait in Metamorphoses is one of the few in which an almost complete account of her dark career is presented. It begins with a sympathetic description of a young girl struggling to master an invincible passion which she fears, and concludes with that of a woman whose deranged mind and criminal habits have created horrors. The course of Medea's life as it is traced here is a cautionary tale which concerns the dangers of an over-mastering desire to both the individual and society. Ovid's portrait of Medea is a tragic paeon to the ineluctable power of Eros. Specifically, in Metamorphoses, Medea is a young and beautiful, but powerful sorceress driven out of her mind by her desire for Jason. No crime is too great to commit on behalf of her beloved. Conversely, she cannot restrain herself from criminal activity when her love has turned to hatred, but the hapless Jason remains the object of her passion.

Medea's reputation as a lover is also treated by Ovid in Heroides. In Letter VI, Medea is given some harsh abuse by her rival for Jason's affections, the Lemnian Queen Hypsipyle, but in her own letter (XII), some of the sympathy one might feel for Medea as a wronged

woman is established by Ovid. Heroides XII and Metamorphoses VII become the basis for the medieval portraits and allusions to Medea's story.

It has been documented that Ovid's works, especially the Heroides and Metamorphoses, were among the most consistently popular classical readings for medieval audiences.¹⁰ The fact that Ovid was so widely read during the Middle Ages may have something to do with the popularity of one of his more controversial heroines with medieval writers, both as a perfect model of the craft of sorcery and a positive example of fidelity in love. It is interesting to note that in the Middle Ages, Medea becomes a standard of excellence in matters of witchcraft against which other magicians and witches are measured.¹¹ This is not surprising given the forceful accounts of her magic powers which appear in Ovid's versions of the tale.

Far more significant than her portrayal as a paragon of witchcraft is what happens to Medea's reputation as a lover in medieval literature. Her character in the hands of such writers as Benoît de Sainte-Maure, and others who concern themselves with the genre of romance and the mores of fin' amor, undergoes some interesting transformations. From the Twelfth to the Fourteenth Centuries, whenever Medea appears in works like Benoît's Roman de Troie, the moral tone of which is defined and circumscribed by the code of fin' amor, Medea is portrayed as a positive, life-sustaining figure, whose powers are motivated by her love for Jason. On the other hand, in allegorical works and "histories" which address themselves to the questions of the nature and value of secular love in the context of a Christian world

view, Medea and her love for Jason are judged harshly.¹² For example the Thirteenth Century prose versions of Benoît's poem, Guido delle Colonne's Historia Destructionis Troiae and Jean de Meun's portion of the Roman de la Rose all portray Medea in a negative manner, either straightforwardly or ironically. The controversy surrounding the existence of the code of amour courtois and the validity of applying the system of values inherent in it, either positively or negatively, to any discussion of medieval literature are implicit in any study of the medieval Medea. Therefore, the examination of Medea's various portraits from the pens of the medieval masters will include a consideration of these issues.

The effects of the medieval code - perhaps perspective would be a better term - of fin' amor are most obvious in works such as Chaucer's Legend of Good Women and Gower's Confessio Amantis, which present Medea's story with a number of interesting revisions, whether in plot, characterization, or theme. For the romancers, Medea's fidelity in love was of paramount importance, even though it may have occasioned acts of horrifying ferocity. In such a system of values as that which inheres in the concept of fin' amor, Medea's profession and even her criminal actions could be defended, excused, and at times, even justified; in one instance, Medea is admitted into heaven.¹³ It is Jason who must bear the burden of reprobation as a faithless lover and lecherous seducer of women, while Medea becomes a saint by virtue of her adherence to Love's precepts.¹⁴ In short, the poets of the Middle Ages recast the figure of Medea in order to illustrate and examine the questions which concern them most; paramount among these are the issues that surround the problem of

the place of secular love in an age in which perfection is determined by divine standards.¹⁵ Thus, from the viewpoint of the poets of medieval romance and their audience, the perspective from which Jason and Medea are viewed and their passion is judged has been inverted so that the emotion which classical authors found highly suspect becomes the summum bonum.¹⁶

Portraits of and references to Medea may also be found in the allegorized mythological compendia and the apocalyptic literature written in Latin by poets and scholars of the later Middle Ages, such as Giovanni Boccaccio's De Mulieribus Claris, his De Casibus Illustrium Virorum, and John Gower's Vox Clamantis.¹⁷ The quasi-homiletic or exemplary nature of these works reinstates the Christian order of things which subordinates secular love to love for the divine. In addition, the efforts of men such as Petrarch and Boccaccio to reevaluate and reclaim the true legacy of the classical world led to the reemergence of the Greek and Latin authors' ambivalence towards Medea. As a result, she was again cast as a tragic, but culpable figure.¹⁸ An interesting exception to the above evaluation of Medea may be found in Gower's apocalyptic Vox Clamantis. In this work, Gower, in the anti-feminist tradition of the patristic writings and Christian philosophers condemns women as mors anime (the death of the soul), and yet he praises Medea as a figure of perfect fidelity.¹⁹ This is an indication that her reputation as a faithful lover as established by the medieval writers of romance was widespread enough that she could be alluded to as a type.

Taken as a whole, the medieval portraits of Medea from the

Twelfth to the Fourteenth Centuries are fascinating illustrations of how the meaning and value attributed to a literary figure may evolve when that figure is considered in the light of new cultural perspectives. It will be the purpose of this study to examine the many portrayals of Medea which appear in Greek, Latin, French, Italian, and Middle English in order to determine the metamorphoses which the figure of Medea undergoes when it is adapted from classical literature by medieval poets.

Introduction: Notes

¹There are several references to the story of the Argonauts in The Odyssey, though none of them mentions Medea. In Book VII. 234-260, there is a reference to Lemnos and the laughter of the gods which sets the stage for Jason's conquest of Hysipyle; Book X. 99-103, tells the reader that Circe is the daughter of Helios and the sister of Aeetes, which makes her Medea's aunt; Book XI. 30 is a reference to Jason's family tree; finally, Book XII. 69-72 recalls Argo's passage through the Clashing Rocks. For a more or less complete listing of the various works in which the voyage of the Argo is mentioned or considered at length, see Nathan Francis Rosebery Harter, "A Literary History of the Legend of the Argonautic Expedition Through the Middle Ages," Diss. Univ. of Pittsburgh, 1954.

²Walter Addison Jayne, The Healing Gods of Ancient Civilizations (1925; rpt. New York: University Books, 1962), pp. 364-365. The connection between religion, witchcraft, and medicine is also made by Justine Glass, Witchcraft: The Sixth Sense (1965; rpt. Hollywood: Wilshire Books, 1970), pp. 70-71. See also Pennethorne Hughes, Witchcraft (1952; rpt. Baltimore: Penguin, 1965), pp. 31, 60, 78, 145-160. John Middleton, ed., Magic, Witchcraft, and Curing (Garden City: The Natural History Press, 1967), in which there are a number of pertinent studies of the function of magic and witchcraft as ways of healing among primitive peoples.

³Dan S. Norton and Peters Rushton, Classical Myths in English Literature (New York: Holt Rinehart, 1952), p. 63.

⁴Hughes, pp. 33-38. C. Grant Loomis, White Magic: An Introduction to the Folklore of Christian Legend (Cambridge: The Medieval Academy of America, 1948), pp. 4-5. Jean Pepin, Mythe et allegorie: les origines grecques et les contestations judeo-chrétiennes (Paris: Mouton, 1958). Hugh Rahner, Greek Myths and Christian Mystery, trans. Brian Battershaw (1963; rpt. New York: Biblo and Tannen, 1971).

⁵This list of enormities is derived from Ovid, The Metamorphoses, Vol. I, with an English trans. by Frank Justus Miller, the Loeb Classical Library (1916-1921; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1966-1968), VII. 1-431. This is the most complete of the extant classical literary versions of the story of Medea.

⁶For discussions of Medea's revenge in the historical context of classical antiquity see Sarah B. Pomeroy, Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity (New York: Schocken, (1975), p. 109. Philip Slater, The Glory of Hera: Greek Mythology and the Greek Family (Boston: Beacon, 1968), p. 164. For an insightful consideration of misogyny among the Greeks see Froma I Zeitlin, "The Dynamics of Misogyny: Myth and Mythmaking in The Oresteia,"

Arethusa, 11 (Spring and Fall, 1978), 149-184. The above references provide a background against which the story of Medea and its meaning for its classical audience may be examined.

⁷ Anyone familiar with the works of Plato and Aristotle will be aware of the suspect nature of love and passion among the Greeks' ethical attitudes. For specific references see Plato, The Symposium, trans. Michael Joyce, pp. 534-539, and The Republic, trans. Paul Shorey, pp. 799-800, in The Collected Dialogues, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, Bollingen Series 71 (New York: Pantheon, 1961). Aristotle, The Ethics of Aristotle, trans. J. A. K. Thompson (1953; rpt. Baltimore: Penguin, 1955), p. 65. For a commentary on the cultural contexts of the Greek concepts of virtue see Werner Jaeger, Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture, 3 vols., 4th ed., trans. Gilbert Highet (Oxford: Blackwell, 1954), I, 34, II, 180, 346. Philosophers of the succeeding eras of the classical age, following Plato and Aristotle, made a long standing tradition of eschewing passion and excess in favor of reason and moderation; the former were considered the sources of sin, while the latter were the cornerstones of virtue. See Frederick Copleston, S. J., Greece and Rome, Vol. I of A History of Philosophy, 2nd ed. (1950; rpt. Westminster: The Newman Press, 1960), pp. 390-400, 410, 499-506.

⁸ The single exception to this might be the portrait created by Euripides, Medea, in Euripides' Dramas, Vol. IV, with an English trans. by Arthurs S. Way, The Loeb Classical Library (1912; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1958), pp. 284-397. The significance of Euripides' portrait has been hotly debated; see Pomeroy, pp. 107-109, for some indication of the nature and scope of the controversy.

⁹ Jaeger, Vol. I, pp. 345-352. Aristotle, The Poetics, in Vol. XXIII of Aristotle, with an English trans. by W. Hamilton Fyfe, The Loeb Classical Library (1927; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1973), xiv. 26-30. C. B. Bowra, Ancient Greek Literature (1933; rpt. New York: Oxford, 1956), pp. 111-112, 221. Gilbert Murray, The Literature of Ancient Greece, 3rd ed. rev. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1956), pp. 262-263. Harry Slochower, Mythopoesis: Mythic Patterns in the Literary Classics (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 94-96.

¹⁰ Michael Grant, Roman Literature (1954; rpt. rev. Baltimore: Penguin, 1958), pp. 209-216. Dorothy M. Robathan, "Ovid in the Middle Ages," in Ovid, ed. J. W. Binns (Boston: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1973), pp. 161-205. Philippe Wolff, The Cultural Awakening, trans. Anne Carter (New York: Random House, 1968), pp. 94-96.

¹¹ Giovanni Boccaccio, Filocolo, a cura di Enzo Quaglio, nella Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio, Vol. I, a cura di Vittore Branca (Milano: Mondadori, 1967), IV. 31. 23-37. Here can be found

a description of the skills, powers and significant events in the life of a magician named Tehano, who is engaged by a knight to accomplish the seemingly impossible task of making a garden bloom in mid-Winter. His life story and his powers bear a remarkable resemblance to those of Medea as portrayed by Ovid in Metamorphoses VII (see Boccaccio, Filocolo, IV. 31, note 28, p. 860). See also Chrétien de Troyes, Cligès, Les romans de Chrétien de Troyes, Vol. II, ed. Alexandre Micha (Paris: Champion, 1970), p. 91, 2983-2993. Here the witch, Thessala brags that her skills surpass those of Medea. See also Foster Edwin Guyer, Chrétien de Troyes: Inventor of the Modern Novel (New York: Bookman, 1957), pp. 49, 67-77. In this same critical work, Guyer compares Iseult to Medea in respect to their knowledge of herbs and their ability to cure illness, p. 59.

¹²The debate over the issue of courtly love, or fin' amor is one of the liveliest among modern scholars who concern themselves with the literature of the Middle Ages. Just a few of the perspectives on the provocative question may be found in the following: E. Talbot Donaldson, "The Myth of Courtly Love," Ventures, 5 (Fall, 1965), pp. 16-23. Joan M. Ferrante and George D. Economou, eds., In Pursuit of Perfection: Courtly Love in Medieval Literature (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1975), pp. 4-5. Joan M. Ferrante, The Conflict of Love and Honor: The Medieval Tristan Legend in France, Germany, and Italy (The Hague: Mouton, 1973), pp. 13-15. Joan M. Ferrante, Woman as Image in Medieval Literature: From the Twelfth Century to Dante (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 1-15. Frederick Goldin, The Mirror of Narcissus in the Courtly Love Lyric (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 2-15, 36-45. C.S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition (1936; rpt. New York: Oxford-Galaxy, 1958), pp. 1-43. D. W. Robertson, Jr. "The Concept of Courtly Love as an Impediment to the Understanding of Medieval Texts," in The Meaning of Courtly Love, ed. F. X. Newman (Albany: SUNY Press, 1968), pp. 1-18. This slim volume may be viewed as an epitome of the various stances assumed by critics over the issue of fin' amor. James J. Wilhelm, Seven Troubadours: The Creators of Modern Verse (University Park: Penn. State Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 71-75.

¹³For an account of Medea in Heaven, see John Gower, Confessio Amantis, in The Complete Works of John Gower, Vol. III, ed. G. C. Macaulay (1901; rpt. Grosse Pointe: Scholarly Press, 1968), V. 4218-4222.

¹⁴Dante Alighieri, Inferno, XVIII. 96. Curiously, Dante makes Jason a type of lust, but nowhere does he mention the presence of Medea in Hell. Geoffrey Chaucer, The House of Fame, in The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 2nd ed., ed. F. N. Robinson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), I. 400-401. Here Jason is placed among a number of false lovers, including Paris. Chaucer, The Legend of Good Women, in Works, 1368-1380, 1662-1669. Jason is described here as a dragon of lust. Gower, Confessio Amantis, V. 3483, 4174-4178, 4189-4198.

Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, Le Roman de la Rose, 3 vols., ed Felix Lecoy (Paris: Champion, 1974), II. 13199-13232, 14374-14378.

¹⁵ Giovanni Boccaccio, De Mulieribus Claris, a cura di Vittorio Zaccaria, nella Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio Vol. X, pp. 18-22, 84-89. Andreas Capellanus, The Art of Courtly Love, ed. John J. Parry (1941; rpt. New York: Norton, 1969), pp. 187-212. In this, the third section of his treatise concerning earthly love, Andreas demonstrates the dangers and futility of loving another human being to his audience, while showing how much more secure in love is someone who directs his heart toward the divine lover. George D. Economou, "The Two Venuses and Courtly Love," in In Pursuit of Perfection, pp. 17-47. Ferrante, Woman as Image, pp. 17-35. Ferrante, The Conflict of Love and Honor, pp. 119-120. Lewis, pp. 44-111. John Livingston Lowes, Geoffrey Chaucer (1934; rpt. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1958), pp. 82-126. Francesco Petrarca, Trionfi, nella Rime, Trionfi, e Poesie Latine, a cura di F. Neri, et. al. Milano: Ricciardi, 1951), 554-559. F. J. E. Raby, "Amor and Amicitia: A Medieval Poem," Speculum, 40 (Oct., 1965), 599-610. R.W. Southern, Medieval Humanism (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), pp. 42-43, 86-104.

¹⁶ Ferrante, Woman as Image, pp. 65-67. Ferrante, Conflict of Love and Honor, pp. 13-20. Goldin, pp. 75-78. Lewis, p. 4.

¹⁷ Boccaccio, De Mulieribus Claris, xvii. Giovanni Boccaccio, De Casibus Illustrium Virorum, ed. Louis Brewer Hall (Gainesville: Scholars' Facsimiles, 1962), iv. xii. John Gower, Vox Clamantis, in Complete Works, Vol. IV. xxi. 1324-1328.

¹⁸ Boccaccio, De Mulieribus Claris, xvii. 25. Boccaccio, De Casibus Illustrium Virorum, iv. xii. Petrarca, Trionfe d'Amore, 128.

¹⁹ Gower, Vox Clamantis, IV, xi. 463, xxi. 1327.

Chapter I: The Greek Medea

The inception of Medea's tale is forever lost to us. It lies buried with the first bard or singer of stories who found the exploits of Jason and his consort important enough to shape into song. Thus it would be inappropriate and fruitless to conjecture concerning the nature and provenance of the tale among the earliest bards. While Medea's name and occupation¹ as well as her tempestuous relationships with all who came in contact with her may tempt one to speculate, one must remember the scanty evidence and return to the meager sources which remain.

As a matter of fact, the earliest extant references to Medea's saga do not even mention her name. These appear scattered through both The Iliad² and The Odyssey³. All of the references in the former are to Jason's son by Hypsipyle who was among the heroes of the Greek contingent at Troy. In The Odyssey, Homer alludes to the family trees of both Medea and her spouse, informs his audience of the presence of Aeson in the underworld and, most important, refers to the far flung fame of Argo and her passage through the drifting rocks (XII. 69-70). The significance of these allusions lies in the fact that they refer to a variety of episodes from Medea's saga and that they seem to be casually tossed into the text. Both of these points

indicate that a fairly complete version of the tale existed upon which Homer could draw to enrich his epics which was well known to the poet's audience.⁴ However, since Homer does not present an actual portrait of Medea, his value to this study is limited to that of a signpost and the reader must turn elsewhere for the first substantial presentation of the theme of Medea.⁵

This can be found in Hesiod's Theogony where the story of Jason and Medea is told as part of the cosmic panorama of creation. Medea appears twice in Hesiod's poem; the first time is the mention of her birth where she is described as neat-ankled, which is an epithet connoting beauty,⁶ and the second is among the company of goddesses whose union with mortal men produced a generation of heroes (992-1002). When one considers these two references together, one is struck by several significant aspects of Hesiod's account. The first and most important is its brevity. Even though Homer gives his audience only glimpses of the tale of Jason and Medea, a discerning reader may observe reasonable grounds to expect that the story was far more elaborate than the version found in The Theogony. Hesiod reduces the saga to the level of a folk tale, the common motif of the hero who accomplishes impossible tasks imposed by a cruel step-father figure (often a king), wins a kingdom and a princess and lives in harmony and order ever after. Of Medea's passion, power, or destructive rage, and of Jason's betrayal of and subsequent torment at the will of his former helpmate nothing is said. Jason is a good king (1000) and Medea is subject to him as a good wife should be in the proper order of things. Hesiod's parting comment is that the story's happy ending fulfilled the will of the great god (Zeus) (1002).

Medea, who is not mentioned by her proper name in the second reference, is subject first to her father, then to her husband in the normal sequence of family connections for a marriageable girl.⁷ There is nothing remarkable about her. Even the epithets which describe her beauty are shared with many another of Hesiod's heroines.

If we hope to find anything negative to say about Medea in Hesiod's account we must find it through guilt by association. The fact that Medea is a member of the feminine gender is enough to make her suspect in Hesiod's view and to necessitate the statement of the fact that she was subject to Jason in their happy home life. Hesiod claims that women were given to mankind by Zeus as a curse to accompany the blessing of fire stolen for men from the gods by the rebel, Prometheus (600 ff.). According to Hesiod, women are experts at deceit and lovers of luxury. They are good for nothing except bringing sorrow. Medea, by virtue of her sex, participates in this curse, of which beauty is also an important element.⁸

Thus in the context of The Theogony, Medea is a beautiful but passive addition to Jason's household, a prize of quest so to speak. She does nothing and no mention is made of her formidable powers. Her roles are limited to those of princess, bride, wife and mother and her story is part of Zeus' divine plan for mortals. Pindar, on the other hand, presents us with an account of the Argo's voyage which, though brief, gives his version of Medea a bit more room and freedom to operate.

Pindar's version of the Argonautic expedition in "Pythian IV," is the most complete extant narration prior to those of Euripides

and Apollonius Rhodius and yet it is highly allusive.⁹ Pindar's poem, as Homer's Odyssey does also, assumes that the audience knows more of the story than is being told and that the poet can tell what he must of the tale leaving memory to fill in the blanks. Pindar's account of the Argo and her cargo of human destiny does not include the return to Iolchos, the restoration of Aeson, the murder of Pelias, or the exile and tragedy at Corinth. Pindar's portrait of Medea presents an interesting contrast both to that of Hesiod and to those of Euripides and Apollonius because it presents our heroine as powerful, but not violent or destructive.

The occasion for the composition of "Pythian IV" was the winning of the chariot race at the Pythian Games by Arcesilas of Cyrene (c. 462 B.C.) and the context of the story is the prediction Medea makes concerning the founding of that glorious city by a descendant of the Argonauts.¹⁰ Around this topical event, Pindar weaves his version of the story of Jason and Medea. He starts with the oracle concerning the man with the single sandle and goes on to an abbreviated account of the return voyage, which includes a visit to the Lemnian women (placed elsewhere in the accounts of Apollonius, et. al., for reasons that will be obvious to those familiar with the story). It is from the dalliance of the heroes of the Argo with the spouseless women of Lemnos that the Cyrenians eventually issued.

Within the boundaries of the above context, the figure of Medea is given much greater scope for action than it had in Hesiod's poem. She is neither Jason's superior nor his thrall, but rather his partner and advisor to whose words not only Jason but all of the Argo's heroes attend (100-103). She is immortal and mighty (15-20), Pindar employ-

ing the term *ΣΑΜΕΥΨ* (16) to help describe the awe in which she is held.¹¹ The seduction of Medea is described as taking place through the devices of the Cyprian Goddess and includes a longing for *Εἰς* as well as the masculine charms of the hero. According to Pindar's version, Medea's lore aids Jason in every task but the slaying of the dragon which he overcomes by the use of his own cunning. However, Medea is portrayed as instrumental in her own abduction, and as the instrument of Pelias' death (248-250). The foreign woman skilled in the use of all charms and drugs (233) is then left by the poet while he pursues his tale of the founding of Cyrene in celebration of its king whose victory in the chariot races is the occasion of the poem. There is no history of tragedy in this account, no inference of Medea's powers turned in vengeance against those whom she loves most. Medea's skills are only employed in aiding Jason to weather the tempest of adversity set against him by the malicious wiles of Pelias and Aeetes. Indeed, Pindar seems to indicate that in her choice of husband and adoptive homeland Medea has made the proper decisions (391-395). In all, she is a helpful force whose presence has insured the success of the hero of Hellas in the winning of his quest. The validity of this observation is borne out by a casual allusion to the story which may found in "Olympian XIII." Here Medea is mentioned as one of the heroic figures of Corinth by virtue of whose exploits the fame of that city may be justly extolled (53-54). Her deeds in this reference are reduced to the salvation of Argo and her crew.¹²

Hesiod's faineant fairytale princess and Pindar's majestic but benevolent goddess, the only extant and accessible pre-Euripidean versions of Medea, do not prepare the reader in any way for the

tempestuous cosmic force portrayed by the man whom Aristotle termed "the most tragic of Poets."¹³

What transpired in the generation or so between Pindar's and Euripides' careers to the story of Medea and the portrayal of her character has been the cause of some speculation.¹⁴ The divergence in the nature of the outcome of the story from success and accord of hero and heroine to betrayal and mutual tragedy indeed cries out for such response. However, since the fragments upon which any speculative considerations would be based are completely eclipsed by the titanic proportions of Euripides' portrait as far as succeeding generations of readers have been concerned, the attention of the present discussion must be turned in its direction.

The hallmarks of Euripides' Medea are her impressive powers, her jealous fury, her more than human capacity for both suffering and revenge, and her identification by the chorus and other characters in the play with the seemingly helpless plight of women in a world where men's arrogance is only exceeded by their insensitivity. The meaning of Euripides' Medea has been defined in a number of different ways.¹⁵ For the purpose of this paper it would be best to acknowledge the existence of these diverse definitions and proceed to the actual portrayal of the Medea theme in the context of Euripides' play.

There are a number of startling observations which can be made at the outset of this discussion. For one, Medea throughout most of the play has the unequivocal sympathy of several significant characters: the Nurse, the Tutor, and the Chorus who provide the audience with various attitudes appropriate to the common people, and even

more significantly Aegeus, King of Athens, who goes so far as to offer Medea sanctuary in his queenly city. She is censured by the Chorus, which is comprised of Corinthian women, only when it seems that she goes too far in effecting her vengeance.¹⁶ Another important fact is that Medea is able in the course of Euripides' play not only to effect the schemes she has laid, but escape unharmed aided by her grandfather, the sun god Helios.¹⁷ It is most noteworthy that Medea is promised acceptance within the walls of Athens, the city in Greek (Athenian) drama which signified a haven of righteousness and order for a number of hard pressed legendary figures. Athens, remember, heard the case and acquitted Orestes of his blood guilt, establishing the rule of law courts and becoming the dwelling place of the Eumenides in the process. It was also Athens which received the bones of that arch-sufferer, Oedipus, to guard for all time. Euripides wanted Aegeus' offer of refuge to have a special meaning for his audience as will be discussed later.

Thus both gods and mortal men and women feel sympathy for Euripides' Medea. Abandoned by her husband and protector and compelled to fall back upon her own resources, she becomes an object of pity. Yet her resources are far from meager and she is a victim who possesses the power to accomplish some vengeance.

In her rage and capabilities, Medea becomes majestic and demonic, out of man's control, but never out of her own. She manipulates the events in the play and draws her enemies to within easy striking distance. She can act the helpless female with Creon (271-356) and later with Jason (866-975) to get what she wants, employing the

tactics of flattery and seeming submission. But the Chorus and the audience are always aware that Medea is merely playing a part in order to lull the suspicions of her persecutors (364-409).

There are a number of terms which Euripides uses to identify Medea's special powers; the most obvious is "wisdom (*σοφία*)," a word which Creon and Medea both use to describe her capacities (285, 292-305). Creon, however, is aware of the fact that Medea's wisdom is capable of effecting many evils "(*κακῶν ποικίλων* , 285)." Medea later provides the audience with a more specific term for her knowledge, "*ῥαψαρκίς* (385)." This term is striking by reason of its ambiguity, for it can signify both medicine and poisons, hence both health and death, success and disaster. That Medea's skills are indeed double edged, and may be employed for positive or negative results, is brought home to the audience in her interview with Aegeus. When he enters the play, the forelorn king is returning from Delphi, whence he had gone to learn whether there was any cure for his childlessness, for him and for all Greek heroes a tragic state (671).¹⁸ Medea promises Aegeus that, in exchange for a safe refuge once she has fled Corinth, she will put an end to his predicament by means of her "*ῥαψαρκά* (718)." The meaning of this term is clear and reinforces what the audience already knows. Medea's powers, given the appropriate motivation, can be used to work good or evil.

Euripides goes even further. He establishes an identification between who Medea is and what she knows. Euripides' Medea represents both the plight of woman and the double edged power to alleviate that plight. The playwright implies this significance in the description of Medea's

predicament with which the Nurse opens the play (1-48). Medea was once Jason's loving wife, directing all her skills and efforts toward her husband's welfare. Now she is abandoned by traitorous Jason without cause. The betrayal transforms her from submissive helpmate to a dangerous and unreasoning natural force. The Nurse compares Medea to a rock or a wave of the sea (28), one immovable, the other irresistible. Taken together these images of elemental nature coalesce into a paradox which signifies danger and is pregnant with foreboding. The Nurse ends her lament over her mistress' misfortunes with words that imply that a battle has been joined and Medea, though staggering from the initial unexpected blow, may yet gain the victory (44-45). Foreshadowing their part in their mother's vengeance, Medea's sons enter as the Nurse concludes her tale.

The Guardian or Tutor who accompanies the children has news of fresh misfortune; Creon has decided to banish Medea, her sons and her household from Corinth. Upon hearing this tale of added injury, the Nurse passes judgment on Jason's actions and accuses him of baseness (*Kakos*, 82-84). The Tutor extends the accusation to cover the entire male sex which he describes as being greedy for gain and steeped in self interest (85-88). This is a telling point, all men condemned from the mouth of one of their number, one who, it may be inferred from his occupation, knows something about how men act and ought to act.

When the Chorus of Corinthian women enters some forty lines later, it is with the express purpose of trying to comfort their friend, a woman like them, in her seemingly helpless situation (131-138). Their hope is to quell the rising flood tide of Medea's

passion and turn her thoughts aside from revenge (173-186). The direction of their sympathies becomes obvious shortly thereafter when they condemn Jason as a traitor to his marriage bed (206). They listen to and are moved by Medea's tale of woe, which is expanded in her speech to encompass the plight of all women who are unhappy enough to be rejected by the men to whom they have been entrusted. Moreover, when Medea asks them not to interfere with any plan for vengeance she might devise, the Chorus agrees saying that it is just that Medea make Jason pay for his crime (267-268).¹⁹ From that point on in the play, the Chorus is privy to all Medea's schemes, a silent partner observing with approbation as she weaves her net to catch her enemies. The songs the Chorus sings expand upon the Nurse's theme of Medea's suffering by commenting on how all men have turned the world upside down with their treachery toward women (410-445). The Chorus even goes as far as to condemn Jason's actions to his face (576-578).

In contrast to its condemnation of men in general and Jason in particular, the Chorus praises Aegeus' high minded generosity (763) for sympathizing with Medea and offering her Athens as a place of refuge. The Chorus' approbation of Aegeus' actions toward Medea reinforces the audience's awareness of its feelings of friendship and sympathy with Medea by showing that it reserves its approval for those who are willing to risk censure by extending her a helping hand.

The Chorus remains a moral barometer during the course of the play, setting standards and limits which the audience can follow and respect. They are loyal to Medea up to the point when the tempest of her passion drives her to commit deeds which are beyond the capacity of mortal sensibilities to fathom and mortal consciences to condone.

The Chorus is not able to approve of all of Medea's plans because its members represent life lived within the boundaries of ordinary human activity. Medea, on the other hand, is a representation of the heroic, if not godlike, potential of human action, which manifests itself most when a specific hero or heroine is placed in impossible situations which mandate more than mortal responses.²⁰ When Medea reveals that her plans for revenge include slaying her own sons, the Chorus feels obliged to censure her (811-813) and marvel at the deed provoked by the boundless anger which Jason's betrayal has aroused (856-865). However, even at this point the Chorus does not condemn Medea, but reserves its disapprobation for Jason, whose ambition is cited as the cause of all the suffering (990-995). For Medea there is only an expression of grief over the course which she has been forced to take by virtue of her situation (996-1000). When the Messenger enters to narrate the deaths of Creon and his daughter, the Chorus reiterates its attitude toward Jason, reaffirming that he is the cause of these misfortunes, and stating that his punishment was justly visited upon him (1231-1232).

Even upon completion of her enormities the Chorus does not condemn Medea but focuses on what it considers to be the true cause, the woman's marriage bed, full of pain and suffering and the wellspring of many evils (1290-1291). The Chorus' analysis of these events indicates that the system itself, which subjects women to many torments and renders them the abject chattel of men, is to be considered the true source of the calamities just witnessed by the audience. Jason's high handed self interest and the society which applauds it at the expense of Medea and all women are both made to bear the burden of responsi-

bility for the fearsome marvels which Medea has wrought. What Euripides implies is that the society which continuously abuses its women and takes advantage of them fails to acknowledge the needs and powers of women at its own risk.²¹ Apart from the immorality of such actions, Euripides shows such actions on the part of society are not only foolish, but dangerous as well.

The point at which Euripides' attitude towards society's exploitation of women begins to become obvious is the scene between Aegeus and Medea which occupies the exact center of the play (663-758). This scene is crucial in several respects and is the fulcrum upon which the play is balanced. It shows the audience what kind of response it may expect from Medea (and perhaps by extension from all women) if she is treated with respect and her powers are not callously abused, if she is neither taken for granted nor feared. Also, Aegeus' expression of sympathy and his offer of sanctuary, while they must be offset by the audience's awareness of Medea's eventual attempt on Theseus' life, still show how the barbarian queen ought to be treated by Creon, Jason, and the society which they represent.

Aegeus' admiration for Medea's wisdom is demonstrated when he tells her of his mission to Apollo and states that a mind such as hers is what is needed to interpret the oracle's words (677). In addition, when she asks him to swear an oath by which both he and she will be protected in his granting her asylum in Athens, he tells her that her words show a great deal of foresight (i.e., wisdom,

προμηθείαν, 741) and concurs in her opinion (743-745).

Aegeus' faith in Medea's powers is partly responsible for his

offer of haven to the abandoned woman faced with the pitiable prospect of wandering exile. She promises him children through her knowledge of drugs and so strong is his desire for offspring to carry on his name (722), he accepts her offer in exchange for refuge. Furthermore, Euripides has Aegeus' concern over his childlessness suggest to Medea how her revenge upon Jason can be made complete without her slaying him. After conversing with Aegeus, Medea realizes that an old age without sons, or the prospect of begetting them, will be a living death for Jason (1310).

The last point to be discussed in connection with Aegeus is most important and is tied in with the traditional function of Athens in Greek drama. All three of the tragic playwrights of Athens employed their city as a standard for just behavior and a place where heroes and heroines bereft of resources could be sure of finding an impartial if not sympathetic hearing for their cases. Witness Aeschylus' use of the city in The Eumenides, for example, of Sophocles' employment of its suburb in Oedipus at Colonnus. In this context, the acceptance of Medea at Athens by Aegeus has monumental implications. Euripides could not have portrayed Aegeus as accepting a complete scoundrel. On the contrary, by presenting Aegeus as sympathetic to Medea's cause, Euripides is lending a great deal of weight to the justness of her case. Euripides, through his characterization of Aegeus, is also portraying a standard of behavior toward women which he seems to suggest is wiser than the exploitation of Jason or the fearful cruelty of Creon.²² The Chorus' approbation of Aegeus' generosity, which has already been cited, reinforces this view.

Relevant to the above analysis is the startling fact that as

the play ends Medea is in the process of escaping from the clutches of her tormentor, Jason, in a chariot sent to her for this purpose by her grandfather, Helios. Not only does Medea find sympathy among her fellow women and men, but it seems as if even the gods are on her side. The completion of Medea's revenge and her divinely assisted escape are remarkable achievements, the significance of which may be more fully understood if the fate of Medea is compared to that of Clytemnestra, another remarkably adept woman who was not allowed to enjoy her triumph over her husband unscathed. In Clytemnestra's case, gods, men and even her fellow women conspired to work her downfall. Escape and the means of escaping become another barometer in determining the moral rectitude of a hero's cause. A generalization which holds true for all extant tragedies of ancient Athens is that only these characters of whom the gods approve are allowed to survive. Medea would never have been allowed to quit the scene of suffering which she had created, let alone have been aided and abetted by the gods, had she been meant by Euripides to represent a criminal. Thus one may conclude that Euripides was sympathetic to Medea's cause, although he presents her as terrifying in her wrath, as unyielding in her purpose, and as possessing powers and allies which render her invincible.

Euripides' Medea is everywoman, a natural force to be tampered with and abused at one's own risk. She represents power and passion which are beyond the capabilities of man to confine. She gives life to those who befriend her and are loyal, but to those who betray her trust, she brings agony and annihilation. She is foreign, exotic, beautiful, desirable and dangerous. She embodies all of the typology

which seems to have been given to women by men since their earliest literary portraits.²³ Euripides implies that if treated fairly with respect and trust, woman has the power to grant men the greatest boon. However, he also shows that woman, in the person of Medea, has the ability to maintain her integrity against the greatest odds, and that she must not be taken for granted. Further, Medea as a figure of everywoman cannot be constrained to do anything against her will, as her oath-breaking husband learns to his eternal regret.

The last substantial portrait of Medea to be found among the Greek poets is that of Apollonius of Rhodes,²⁴ who presents a detailed account of Jason's voyage which includes not only those elements narrated by Hesiod and Pindar, but many significant incidents of the story which are not told by any of the other extant sources. The first glimpses of each other by the hero and heroine, the exchange of oaths, the details of the escape, the account of the pursuit, cleansing of the blood guilt, marriage ceremony, the slaying of Talos, and the eventual return are all described by Apollonius. In addition, the poet gives his audience finely wrought accounts of the torments which beset a young woman in the grips of passion.²⁵ Apollonius' Medea is described as a golden maiden (iii. 828, ff, vi. 727-729) whose luminous beauty and radiance are only fitting in a granddaughter of the Sun. Epithets such as *νεκτάρειον* (sweet as nectar, iii.1009) and *οὐρανόπλοον* (iii. 1064) are continuously associated with her physical attributes as well as her movements. Jason, handsome as he is, needs the assistance of the three most powerful goddesses of the Greek pantheon to secure Medea's affections (iii. 1-166). On the other hand, Medea's beauty, her obvious confusion and her

maidenly tears, without any divine assistance, enable Love the Destructive ($\sigma\tilde{\upsilon}\lambda\omicron\varsigma'\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$, iii.297) to overcome Jason. Thus Apollonius portrays Medea as a desirable love object. In addition, Medea's passion for Jason is demonstrated to be fated as well as fatal, while Jason's attraction to Medea springs from more human causes. Medea's beauty and obvious infatuation for Jason are enough to win his love. No divine intervention is needed. Therefore, the passion which binds Medea to Jason is unbreakable, while his desire for her is subject only to his senses, his ego and his will. Apollonius deliberately sets up this disparity in order to suggest one of the causes for subsequent tragedy in accordance with Euripides' tragedy.

Connected to the above point is the guiding hand of Hera, of whose presence the audience is continually made aware (iii. 113-1136, iv. 11-25, 241-245, 509-510, 1199-1200). It becomes obvious in Apollonius' narration that Medea is compelled by divine agencies to pursue her tragic course for the benefit of all Hellas. Among the most startling revelations which Apollonius makes in this context is Hera's prediction to Thetis in Book IV that Medea will be wed to Achilles in the Elysian Fields (811-816).²⁶ Apollonius wants to assure his audience that Medea's ultimate fate will be appropriately happy and associated with that of the greatest hero of legendary Hellas.

Lastly, it is Apollonius who provides a detailed narration of Jason's first encounter with dangerous women, the Lemnians and their queen, Hypsipyle. This episode is used both to illustrate the pitfalls into which passion tends to lead men and women and Jason's peculiar talents as an inspiration to female ardor (i. 609-909).

The centrality of Medea's aid to the fulfillment of Jason's task is firmly established by Apollonius' version of the story. Even before Medea first appears, Phineus, who frightens the Argonauts with his description of the terrors which lie in wait for them (ii. 316-410) predicts that the fortunate issue of their labors depends on the assistance of Aphrodite (ii. 420-424). In the opening lines of Book III, the narrator establishes Medea's love as the means by which Jason will win the fleece (1-3) and Hera proclaims to Athena (27-29) and to Aphrodite (87-89) that Medea, who is literally made up of wiles (*δοξόεσσα τετυκταί*, 89) is essential to Jason's successful completion of his fearsome task. The audience is then shown how Medea helps Jason withstand the trials set for him by her cruel and arrogant father. Her aid to Jason includes both unguents and advice (iii. 1191-1407).

In Book IV, Medea continues to be effective as she warns the Argonauts of Aeetes' treachery (83-86), and succeeds in enchanting the sleep-defying serpent allowing Jason to snatch the fleece (123-182). Later, when the Argo and her crew are trapped by Aeetes' forces under the command of Medea's half brother, Apsyrtus, Medea betrays him into Jason's hands to be butchered (450 ff.).

One of the most effective and frightening demonstrations of Medea's powers as a sorceress is provided by Apollonius in his account of the bewitching of the bronze giant, Talos. In the process of casting her spell over this enemy, Medea calls for assistance to the spirits of death. When they respond to her summons, she wills them to confound the sight of the bronze colossus. Talos, befuddled by Medea's sorcery, wounds himself in his only vulnerable spot, his

ankle, and bleeds to death. Thus Medea exhibits a third form of destruction apart from disease or wounds, murder from a distance by means of the sorcerer's art (iv. 1659-1693).²⁷

Medea, *Προβλεψαμένη* : (iii. 27), knowing many charms, is thus shown by Apollonius to be instrumental in completing the quest upon which the greatest heroes of pre-Trojan War Greece were embarked. She is exhibited as responsible not only for the successful capture of the fleece, but for the future welfare of Hellas itself and its subsequent generation of heroes. That Medea's assistance is motivated by Eros seems to be the only tragic element in her story, but it is a crucial one since erotic passion is the source of all mankind's woes. This is a theme which Apollonius constantly brings to his reader's attention. For example, just before Medea delivers her brother to Jason to be killed, the narrator berates Eros, the bane and tormentor of mankind, the parent of strife, the fountain of tears, and source of a thousand ills (iv. 445-447), as the cause of Medea's treachery. In this Apollonius bears a strong resemblance to Euripides, whose comments on the matter were discussed earlier.

Euripides' Medea presented its audience with the fullblown effects of passion which had turned from love to hatred and destroyed all who were implicated in its intricate snares. Apollonius, on the other hand, describes the onset of erotic passion, reinforced in its power and ineluctability through the participation of divine agents. The complicity of Hera, Athena and Aphrodite in losing the capricious and indifferent child-god, Eros, on the hapless Medea demonstrates that erotic love can sometimes derive its origins from divine sources,

a fact which gives it the force of fate in human affairs. That Medea's fatal passion is eventually destructive to almost all other human beings at whom it is directed, as well as herself, is a given of the tradition which Apollonius weaves into the fabric of his poem. However, Apollonius goes further and examines the conflicts and torments that arise in the consciousness of a young girl with the entrance into her heart of Eros' wounding dart. It is important to observe at this point that Jason never becomes emotionally involved with his women to the extent that they are enamored of him.

Apollonius' focus is on the torment aroused by the conflict between passion and self-control (iii. 288-298, 615 ff.). Love the Destroyer takes immediate and complete possession of Medea in the presence of her love object, Jason (iii. 275 ff.). Jason's interview with Aeetes causes Medea alarm. She fears for his life in the tasks set by Aeetes, wonders why she is so concerned with Jason's well-being, and hopes that before Jason's death he will at least become aware that she takes no pleasure in his fall (iii. 459-470).

Most significantly, later in the story Medea dreams that Jason has come to undertake the contests, not to win the fleece; she envisions herself as the prize which he has come so far and braved so many dangers to gain. As the dream continues, Medea sees herself accept Aeetes' challenge, eschewing the welfare of her homeland and defying the wishes of her parents on behalf of Jason. She wakes from her dream trembling in fear as the cries of outrage voiced by parents ring in her ears (iii. 616-635). Her dream proves to be prophetic because Jason cannot win the fleece without accepting the love and aid of Medea. Indeed, Hera intends Medea to be useful to

Jason beyond the exigencies of the immediate quest (iii. 1134-1136, iv. 241-245). The identification of the golden fleece with golden Medea is intensified as the magic sheepskin becomes the bridal robe beneath which the marriage of Jason and Medea is consummated (iv. 1140-1143). Eros makes Medea perceive herself as the object of desire which motivated the heroes to undertake their quest. Furthermore, the machinations of Hera on Jason's behalf and the impossibility of winning the fleece without Medea's aid both lend weight to the impression that Medea, as well as the skin of the golden ram, is the prize for which Jason and his companions have endured so much and toiled so hard to gain.

Upon waking from her dream, Medea trembles, fearing the evil which it portends. She attempts to belie the dream by exhorting Jason in absentia to woo a girl of his own race while Medea opts for maidenhood and a parental haven for herself. This attempt at self-denial will become a commonplace, part of the matrix of anxieties with which future poets following Apollonius will afflict their heroines who, like Medea, will be forced to choose between filial piety and unlawful love. Medea would choose virginity rather than forbidden love, but passion proves stronger than her resolve (as it will for future love-tormented women). Medea soon devises a stratagem by which she may offer assistance to Jason without suffering any pangs of conscience. Medea's nephews, who are the sons of Phrixus, who brought the golden ram from Greece to Colchis, and Medea's sister Chalciope, had allied themselves with Jason. Medea expects Chalciope to ask her to help Jason for the sake of her sons. If Chalciope does request her aid, then Medea can hardly be blamed for helping her own

nephews and responding to the urgent entreaties of her own sister (iii. 636-644). Thus Apollonius demonstrates that lovers are extremely adept at finding reasons for assisting the object of their affection, no matter what the circumstances. That love can always seduce reason and bend it to his own purposes seems to be Apollonius' message here.

The passage which follows (645 ff.) documents Medea's torments further; her vacillations, her tears, and the conflict in her soul between shame and desire. Subsequently, a handmaid brings news of Medea's strange action to Chalciope and Medea is given the opportunity for which she has hoped. Even though her pact with Chalciope should give Medea some cause to ease her conscience, her agonies continue (iii. 751, ff.). Love for Jason contends with her sense of honor as Medea cannot decide whether to aid the Greeks with her skills or not. Her anguish drives Medea to the brink of despair and disaster as she resolves to kill herself. Medea proceeds as far as opening her casket of medicines in order to end her torments with one of her own poisons (iii. 802-809). Hera forestalls Medea's desperate plan with visions of the torments of Hades and of the contrasting joys which life has to offer (iii. 809-824). Divine intervention does nothing to lessen Medea's torments, however. She continues to be plagued by anxiety over Jason's welfare which contends with her concern for honor and her loyalty to parents and homeland. Later, fear for her own safety will be added to her trials. Future poets will take their cue from Apollonius and make a detailed account of Medea's love torments an integral part of her story. Furthermore, Apollonius' portrait of Medea will become a model for subsequent portraits of lovers, both men and women, who are reduced to thralls by the power

of Eros' arrows.²⁸

References to Medea's beauty have already been cited. Apollonius wants to represent Medea as desirable. Therefore, he adds a youthful and submissive demeanor and occult powers to Medea's impressive physical attributes. It should be noted that it is specifically her submission to Jason's will and needs which enhance Medea's value. Medea's capabilities, beauty and submissiveness render her worthy of Jason's promise of eventual marriage if she should ever happen to come to Iolcus (iii. 1128-1130) where she would be worshipped as a goddess for devising counsels whereby the heroes of Hellas were saved from calamity. Apollonius presents graphically the terms of Medea's relationship to Jason which were stated by the Nurse in the prologue to Euripides' play; Medea in all things served Jason's interests and was all obedient to her husband's wishes (Medea 12-15).

Apollonius is concerned with effectively portraying Medea's powers, which are at the same time terrifying to behold and essential to the fulfillment of Jason's tasks. One need only recall Apollonius' detailed description of the charm which Medea gives to Jason to comprehend this fact. It is an unguent concocted from a flower which grows from the ichor Prometheus sheds as the eagle devours his vital organs. The very act of plucking the hero causes the fettered titan to cry out in renewed agony (iii. 846-866). Apollonius' description of Medea's occupation and the skills which she exhibits are calculated by the poet to arouse awe and fear in his audience. On the other hand, what makes Medea less threatening to the auditors of the poem is the fact that she and her remarkable powers are freely placed by the machinations of the gods at the disposal of

the Greek hero. From the moment Eros looses his arrow, Medea's activities are directed toward insuring the well-being of the Argonauts, and Apollonius is careful to assure his audience of Medea's continued utility to Jason once he returns home. Through the pronouncements of Hera, the poet also reminds the reader of Medea's ultimate destiny as the bride of Achilles in the underworld. Medea's powers are thus given proper direction and limitation. Whatever crimes she may perpetrate are to a great extent ameliorated by the purpose for her actions.

Medea's beauty, desirability, and submission, and the role of the gods in her activities on behalf of Jason and his crew serve to render the Colchian princess an acceptable, if not completely sympathetic character. In this context, it must be remembered that her kinswoman, Circe, cleanses Medea of her blood guilt, even though the Lady of Aegea cannot allow her to remain on the island or approve of the maiden's actions (iv. 739-748). Furthermore, that legendary paragon of womanly virtue, Arete, Queen of the Phaeacians, is moved by Medea's plight to scheme against the Colchians and devises a way for Medea to escape Aeetes' wrath (iv. 1077-1095, 1114-1120). Thus Medea for all her terrifying skills and reprehensible deeds is demonstrated to be a pitiable figure who is capable of evoking sympathy in others for her peculiar and difficult distress. Apollonius is trying to evoke in his audience a response similar to that of the Chorus of Corinthian women to Medea in Euripides' play.

Among the previously unrecorded elements of the story in the extant accounts discussed so far is the tale of Jason's brief sojourn on the island of Lemnos, which Apollonius fleshes out in some detail

in The Argonautica. The episode is important because it prefigures a number of aspects of Jason's encounter with Medea. The Argonauts arrive at a potentially hostile port of call, encounter a group of foreign women who, although guilty of murdering their husbands have repented their crimes. They accept the Greek heroes as lovers causing them to tarry in their amorous embraces. Finally, the women reluctantly speed the heroes on their way (i. 609-909). The Queen of the Lemnian women may be seen as a foil to Medea in a few significant ways. Hypsipyle possesses power as the ruler of the island, although her power is not as great as Medea's. The potential threat which she poses to Jason is vitiated by the fact that she is smitten by that hero's charms. These are enchained by a cloak which was a gift of Athena, though Eros is not summoned to intervene directly in this situation. Furthermore, Hypsipyle is singled out from among her people for her loyalty to her father (i. 620-626), because she spared him while all other male inhabitants of the island were massacred by the frenzied and treacherous women (i. 609-619). This last mentioned fact must be contrasted to Medea's treatment of her closest male relatives. Finally, when Heracles determines that the stay at Lemnos has become counter productive in terms of the heroes' avowed quest, Hypsipyle releases Jason without rancor, asking what should be done if she should bear his child (i. 906-908). Apollonius' portrait of Hypsipyle has a number of points in common with that of Ovid's (Heroides VI), as will be seen from the discussion of the Latin poet's references to the tale of Jason and Medea in the following chapter.²⁹

As the story makes clear, Hypsipyle is not the woman who is essential to Jason's acquisition of the golden fleece and the eventual

chastisement of his enemy, Pelias. Therefore her usefulness is limited and she must be left behind. No oaths are exchanged and Jason is not bound to Hypsipyle by any lasting tie. However, one may see here a projection of Jason's future treatment of Medea and the question then arises concerning the fate of Medea once she is no longer useful to Jason. Thus Apollonius establishes a precedent for Jason's treacherous behavior although the actual abandonment of Medea takes place well beyond the scope of The Argonautica.

Indeed this interpretation receives reinforcement from an account of the spear which Jason carries to his initial interview with the Lemnian Queen. It was a gift of the warrior maiden, Atalanta, who presented it to Jason with the hope that she would be allowed to participate in the heroes' quest for the fleece. Jason frustrates her desire because he fears that her love ($\phi\lambda\omicron\tau\eta\tau\omicron\varsigma$) would cause strife among the heroes (i. 769-773). Both Atalanta and the women of Lemnos are left in the Argo's wake. The heroes have hardly begun their quest and yet troublesome passions have been avoided. It is ironic in the context of these two incidents that Aphrodite and Eros will become so important to winning the fleece. The Argonauts, especially the critical Heracles (i. 865-874), are aware of the dangers which women and the passions they inspire bring to men.³⁰ Yet they will owe the success of their mission not to strength of arms, cunning or reasoned discourse, but to the goddess-inspired passions which their leader will ignite in the bosom of a foreign woman.

Aphrodite herself appears several times in the Lemnian episode; when she is mentioned as the cause of the massacre (i. 614-615), as

one of the figures depicted on the cloak which Athena gave to Jason (i. 741-746), and as the force behind the dalliance of the heroes among the Lemnian women (i. 850-852, 857-862). Her presence on Athena's gift cloak is perhaps most noteworthy. Here Aphrodite is depicted with loosened garment, and her hair flowing about her. She is carrying the shield of Ares on her left arm. The polished surface of the bronze shield reflects the image of her naked breast exposed by her state of coy deshabille. In this singular portrait, Apollonius has prefigured an essential element of Jason's encounter with Medea. The provocative figure of the goddess of desire reflected in the war-god's shield can be seen as an emblem of the merging of the themes of love and war. The interdependence of the quests of love and war is predicted by the prophet Phineus (ii. 423-424) and is presented in the weaving of the story of Apollonius' Argonautica. The quest for the fleece, ostensibly a warlike venture, cannot be accomplished without the direct intervention of Aphrodite and Eros and the unguents and strategems of the love-smitten Medea. This interpretation is supported by the identification of Medea with the fleece in the poem as developed above. Love and war, desire and conquest, Aphrodite and Ares, Medea and Jason, are bound by the same tether. Their significances are reciprocal and mutually reinforcing. They supply each other with motivation and intensify each other's meaning. It is interesting to note that what Apollonius makes explicit through plot and symbol may be seen as enlarging upon the clues to the meaning of the tale as presented by Euripides. With the background information supplied by Apollonius, the tragic tale of the treachery which provokes Medea's all-consuming wrath as told by Euripides can be seen

not only as Jason's portrayal of Medea but as his betrayal of himself as well. It may be that Apollonius saw these possibilities in Euripides' Medea and constructed his poem accordingly. One must not venture beyond analysis and be seduced by speculation. All that may be said for certain is that the significances suggested by the symbolic reflection of Ares-Aphrodite, Jason-Medea are absent from Hesiod's version of the tale and only hinted at in Pindar's account. However, these significances are central to the portraits of Jason and Medea presented by Euripides and Apollonius of Rhodes.

Of the four extant versions of the Medea myth in Greek literature the most influential were those of Euripides and Apollonius.³¹ Hesiod's account is much too sketchy and Pindar's too obscurely allusive to be of much value as transmitters. They both presuppose earlier, more complete versions of the story. Euripides and Apollonius, on the other hand, present between them a fairly complete accounting of the entire myth with developed characterizations and analysis of motivations. It is upon their portraits of the main characters and constructions of the plot that later poets will base their versions of the tale. Through Euripides and Apollonius one receives the material necessary for an integrated representation of Medea; beautiful child of the sun, gifted or cursed with enormous power, herself subject to the ineluctable forces of Aphrodite and Eros, faithful in every way to her beloved's desires and needs to the exclusion of every other consideration, confused and angered by Jason's gratuitous betrayal and finally driven to terror-inspiring deeds of vengeance by means of which she exacts justice for her cause. These are the essential elements of her thème de héros which have fascinated poets and audi-

ences since before the time of Homer and Hesiod.³³ The best of the Greek poets had found in Medea's story and character something of universal value and appeal which they could use to depict an essential aspect of human experience.

Medea's tale presents the tragic possibilities of the relationship between men and women as that relationship was perceived by Greek culture. As has been shown, the story and its heroine underwent a number of transformations in the context of the cultural matrix from which it was spawned until they were given what might be called an "authentic" version in works of Euripides and Apollonius Rhodius. This version was given new possibilities for change and expression among the Latin poets who were the cultural and poetic heirs of the Greeks. It is to their works which the next two chapters will proceed to document Medea's continued progress as a thematic figure.

Chapter I: Notes

¹Walter Addison, Jayne, M.D. The Healing Gods of Ancient Civilizations (1925; rpt. New York: University Books, 1962), pp. 364-365.

²Homer, The Iliad, I and II, with an English trans. by A.T. Murray, The Loeb Classical Library (1919; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967), VII. 460-470, XXI. 41-44, XXIII. 745-747.

³Homer, The Odyssey, I and II, with an English trans. by A.T. Murray, The Loeb Classical Library (1919; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1975), VII 282-284, X. 133-139, XI. 253-259; it is interesting to note in passing that Homer gives Helen, herself a daughter of the gods and divinely beautiful, skill in the use of magic potions, two primary components of the theme of Medea, IV. 219-234.

⁴Charles Rown Beye, Ancient Greek Literature and Society (Garden City: Doubleday-Anchor, 1975), pp. 96, 148-149, 177, 314. Hugh G. Evelyn-White, Introd., The Homeric Hymns and Homerica, by Hesiod, with an English trans. by Hugh G. Evelyn-White, The Loeb Classical Library (1914; rpt. rev. 1920; rev. 1936; rpt. Cambridge, Harvard Univ. Press, 1959), p. xxiii.

⁵For an account of the fragments in which Medea appears see Denys L. Page, Introd., Medea, by Euripides (1938; rpt. rev. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), pp. x-xxxvi. For the fragments themselves see J.M. Edmonds, ed. Lyra Graeca, 3 vols., with English translations by the editor (1922-1927; rpt. rev. 1928; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1958-1959), I, 104-105, II. 104-105, 274-277. Among these fragments are those of Ibycus and Simonides both of whom refer to the marriage of Medea to Achilles in the Elysian Fields. Simonides also relates that Medea restored Jason to youth by boiling him. There are many references to the death of Medea's children in poetry and art in W.R. Paton, ed., The Greek Anthology, 5 vols., with an English translation by the ed. (1917; rpt. rev. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1958), II, 190-191, III, 186-187, 330-331, V, 238-247.

⁶Evelyn-White, p. xxi. Hesiod, Theogony, in Homeric Hymns, pp. 150-151, II. 961-962. One of many references to neat ankles is applied to the lovely Alcmena, pp. 148-149, I. 950. Further references to Theogony are from this edition and appear as line numbers in parentheses in the text.

⁷Sarah B. Pomeroy, Goddesses, Wives, Whores, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), pp. 79-92. Katherine M. Rogers, The Troublesome Helpmate: A History of Misogyny in Literature (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1966), pp. 23-37.

Philip E. Slater, The Glory of Hera: Greek Mythology and the Greek Family (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1968), pp. 161-192. Froma I. Zeittin, "The Dynamics of Misogyny: Myth and Mythmaking in the Orestteia," Arethusa, 11 (Spring and Fall, 1978), 1949-184. Paul Zweig, The Adventurer: The Fate of Adventure in the Western World (New York: Basic Books, 1974), pp. 61-80. The above cited studies are helpful in establishing the cultural context from which the theme of Mea emerged.

⁸ Hesiod's preoccupation with this theme surfaces in two of his major works, The Theogony, pp. 120-123, ll. 570-612, and The Work and Days, pp. 6-9, ll. 69ff. In each account there is emphasis on woman as the καλὸν κακόν ; beautiful evil.

⁹ Arthur Heiserman, The Novel Before the Novel: Essays and Discussions about the beginnings of Prose Fiction in the West (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 14. The text of the poem is taken from Pindar, The Odes of Pindar: Including the Principal Fragments, with an introduction and English translation by Sir John Sandys, The Loeb Classical Library (1915; rev. 1924, 1937; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1961), pp. 196-231. All references to this text will appear as line numbers in parentheses in the body of the paper.

¹⁰ Beye, pp. 128-137. For another brief account of how Pindar works his themes see C.B. Bowra, Ancient Greek Literature (1933; rpt. New York: Galaxy/Oxford, 1960), pp. 68-75. See also Heiserman, p.14, and Sir John Sandys, General Introduction and Introduction to Pythian IV in The Odes of Pindar, by Pindar, p. xiv.

¹¹ This term may be translated as very strong, mighty or raging, all of which give some indication of the scope of Medea's power. For some reason, Sandys chooses the laudatory but milder adjective 'brave' for his translation, p. 199.

¹² There is one other mention of Medea in Pindar's works. In one of the extant fragments she is mentioned as consorting with Peleus, the father of Achilles, Pindar, pp. 606-607.

¹³ Page, pp. xxi-xxxvi. For catalogues of the pre and post Euripidean poems and fragments see both Robert Graves, The Greek Myths (1955; rpt. New York: George Braziller, 1957), II, pp. 215-259; and Mark P.O. Morford and Robert Lenardson, Classical Mythology (New York: David McKay, 1971), pp. 337-349, 379. For Aristotle's assessment see Poetics, xiii, 10, pp. 48-49.

¹⁴ Page, pp. xxxi-xli.

¹⁵ Beye, pp. 158, 171-173, H.D.F. Kitto, "The Medea of Euripides,"

in Medea: Myth and Dramatic Form, ed. James L. Sandersen and Everett Zimmerman (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1967), pp. 286-295. Pomeroy, pp. 103-112. Jaeger, pp. 344-357.

¹⁶ Euripides, Medea, in Euripides Vol. IV, with an English translation by Arthurs S. Way, The Loeb Classical Library (1912; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1958), pp. 381-383, ll. 1265-1279 ff. All references to the text are from this edition and appear as line numbers in parentheses in the body of the paper.

¹⁷ One need only at this point reflect upon the fate of Medea's fellow woman, Clytemnestra, whose fate was sealed by three of the most powerful gods of the Greek pantheon and whose son was acquitted of exacting vengeance on her with divine aid to realize just how remarkable is the intervention of Helios on Medea's behalf. It is almost tantamount to divine approval. Aeschylus, Aeschylus II: Agamemnon, Libation Bearers, Eumenides, Fragments, with an English trans. by Herbert Weir Smyth, ed. Hugh Lloyd-Jones, The Loeb Classical Library (1926; rpt. rev. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1963). See especially Eumenides, 657-753.

¹⁸ For corroboration see Jason's lament for his sons, 1310, 1347-1350.

¹⁹ The Chorus uses the term ἐνδίκως which comes from δίκη, meaning justice.

²⁰ B.M.W. Knox, "The Medea of Euripides," Yale Classical Studies 25 (1977), 193-226.

²¹ Beyé, pp. 314-316. Werner Jaeger, Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture 4th ed. trans. Gilbert Highet (Oxford: Blackwell, 1954), Vol. I, pp. 134-135, 344-346. Vol. II, pp. 242-246. Vol. III, pp. 175-177. Slater, pp. 161-166.

²² Beyé, p. 315. Jaeger, pp. 352-357. Knox, pp. 202, 206. Kate Hamburger, From Sophocles to Sartre: Figures from Greek Tragedy, Classical and Modern, trans. by Helen Sebba (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1969), p. 126.

²³ Recall Hesiod's myth of Pandora cited above and the Old Testament portrait of Eve as found in Genesis iii. 1-12.

²⁴ Apollonius Rhodius, The Argonautica, with an English trans. by R.C. Seaton, The Loeb Classical Library (1912; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1961). All references to the text will be to this edition and will appear as line numbers in parentheses in the

body of the paper.

25

There became models which later poets copied as did Virgil and Ovid. Michael Grant, Roman Literature (1954; rpt. rev. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1958), p. 179. Moses Hadas, Ancilla to Classical Reading (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1954), pp. 291-293, and The Living Tradition, Vol. VII of Perspectives in Humanism: The Future of Tradition, ed. Ruth Nanda Anshen (New York: New American Library, 1967), pp. 79-80, 85 ff. Heiserman, p. 20.

26

For sources of this tradition see Graves, p. 257. It is found among the fragments of both Ibycus and Simonides which have been cited above.

27

It is interesting to note in passing the studies which cultural anthropologists have made of this phenomenon. See the classic work, Sir James George Frazer, The Magic Art, Vol. I The Golden Bough, Part I, 3rd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1935), pp. 119-120. See also Claude Levi-Strauss, "The Sorcerer and His Magic," in Magic Witchcraft and Curing, ed. John Middleton (Garden City, N.Y.: The Natural History Press, 1967), pp. 23-41.

28

Bowra, pp. 220-222, Grant, pp. 179, 209, 216. Hadas, The Living Tradition, pp. 80, 81-93. For a discussion of a medieval example of these conflicts see Joan M. Ferrante, The Conflict of Love and Honor: The Medieval Tristan Legend in France, Germany, and Italy (Paris: Mouton, 1973), pp. 11-24.

29

Chapter II, pp. 43-77.

30

One critic has identified this as "the flight from women," Zweig, pp. 61-80.

31

There are several other accounts of Medea's story which may be found in Greek, but they are records of the tale by mythographers and historians which are not part of the mainstream of the tradition of Jason and Medea. They have had little or no direct influence on the evolution of the theme of Medea and are of interest for the curiosities and minor variations which would otherwise have been lost. Two of these, the works of Apollondorus and Diodorus Siculus date from the mid-First Century B.C., while that of Pausanias is remarkable of these versions is that of Diodorus, whose portrait of Medea is unstintingly positive. See Apollondorus, The Library, 2 Vols., with an English trans. by Sir James George Frazer, The Loeb Classical Library (1921; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1961), Vol. I, I. ix. 15-28. Diordorus Siculus, Diodorus of Sicily, 12 Vols., with an English trans. by C.H. Oldfather, The Loeb Classical Library (1935; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1961), Vol. II,

Iv. 40-56. Pausanias, Description of Greece, 4 Vols., with an English trans. by W.H.S. Jones, The Loeb Classical Library (1918; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1959), Vol. I, II, iii. 5-8, Vol. III, VIII. xi. 1-5.

³² Bowra, pp. 222. Grant, p. 179.

³³ For a definition of the term, thème de héros and its application to the figure of Medea, see Raymond Trousson, Un problème de littérature comparée: les études de thèmes: essai de méthodologie, Lettres modernes, Situation 7 (Paris: M.J. Minard, 1965), pp. 7-10, 13, 17, 61-71, 92. See also Hamburger, pp. 123-126; Jaeger, Vol. 1, 344-345; and Beye, pp. 156-158, 171-172, 314-315.

Chapter II: The Latin Medea: Ennius to Ovid

The record of the earliest presence of Medea in Latin thought and language has, unfortunately, survived only fragments.¹ However, the fragmentary state of the survival of her story need not preclude completely an accounting of its early provenance among Latin writers since this may be deduced from extra-literary references, poetic allusions, and learned commentaries.² Medea, like so many other figures of Greek literature, was borrowed by the Romans in their quest to make the Latin language capable of expressing lofty thoughts and eternal themes in an elegant and elevated style.³ Indeed, it has become a commonplace of literary criticism from the writings of Horace at the very heart of the Augustan age⁴ that Latin literature as we know it would have been impossible without the impetus and direction supplied by Greek models.⁵ However, although this observation has been made by critics and historians from Horace's time to the present, it has always been accompanied by the subsequent statement that Latin authors transformed the metres, themes and genres which they acquired from the Greeks into fitting vehicles for the expression of their own concerns and aspirations.⁶

Latin writers, poets and philosophers focused primarily on the

accounts of Euripides and Apollonius Rhodius for their portraits of Medea.⁷ This is not surprising since, as has already been noted, the Medea and Argonautica are both provocative and problematical renderings of Medea's tale. However, this is territory which has already been charted and it is not the object of this chapter to discuss influence or provenance.⁸ The purpose of the following analysis is to set the Roman portraits of Medea beside those of the Greeks in order to see what has happened to her theme; what has remained essentially the same, what has been cast out and what has been transformed. The issue which will be considered in this and the subsequent chapter is how the Roman poets made Medea their own.

It would be fruitless to enumerate the number of portrayals of Medea of which literary history is aware, but which have not survived.⁹ One poet who did leave a few tantalizing remnants for us to ponder was Ennius, who has been called "the father of Roman epic and Roman poetry."¹⁰ He was the first poet who saw the possibilities in Greek works of literature as models for poets whose native tongue was Latin to follow and adapted both epic and tragic metres to his purpose. Ennius' version of Medea's story was entitled Medea Exul and was probably an adaptation of Euripides' works, Medea, which was discussed in Chapter I, and Medea and Aegeus, which is no longer extant.¹¹ The fragments which remain of the play are meager and give comparatively little by which an accurate assessment of Ennius' portrait may be established. However, there is a substantial fragment of the Nurse's speech which has survived.¹²

In this surviving portion of the Nurse's speech, Ennius, like Euripides (Medea, 1-8), has the speaker place the origin of Medea's misfortunes on the inaugural voyage of the Argo. However, there are

two small but significant additions which Ennius contributes to the coloring of the story. He asserts that the Argonauts had indeed come to win the Golden Fleece by trickery or fraud (per dolum, 259) which places them immediately in a suspect light. Second, he elaborates on the description of Medea by claiming that she was misled (errans, 260)¹³ by the Argo's tricky crew:

Utinam ne in nemore Pelio securibus
 caesae accidissent abiegnae ad terram trabes,
 neve inde navis inchoandi exordium
 coepisset quae nunc nominatur nomine
 Argo, quia Argivi in ea delecti viri
 vecti petebant pellem inauratam arietis
 Colchis imperio regis Peliae per dolum;
 nam numquam ere errans mea domo efferret pedem
 Medea animo aegro amore saevo saucia. (253-261)

Would that the fir wood timbers had not falled
 to earth hewn by axes in a Pelian grove; and that
 thereupon no prelude had been made to begin the
 ship which is now known by the name of Argo, for
 that chosen Argive heroes were carried in it when
 they were seeking the golden fleece of the ram from
 the Colchians, by trickery, at the behest of
 King Pelias. For thus never would my misled
 mistress Medea, sick at heart, smitten by a
 savage love, have set foot outside her home.
 (p. 313)

These additions lend a certain amount of definition to the story. The onus for Medea's trials is placed squarely upon the shoulders of the Greek heroes who it seems willfully deceive Medea in enlisting her aid to accomplish their piratical goal. Since this is a drama, one must be careful how one interprets an individual speech without the context of the entire play for a control. Because of the mangled state of Medea Exul, the tentative quality of this interpretation must be acknowledged.

Of the remaining bits of Medea Exul there are one or two quotable aphorisms such as, "Qui ipse si sapiens prodesse non quit, nequiquam sapit (271)," (He who, though wise himself, cannot help himself, is

wise in vain. p. 317), which is reminiscent of Medea's self-deprecation of her learning to Creon in Euripides' (Medea, 292-305). There is also a remarkable sequence rescued from oblivion by Cicero¹⁴ in which the audience is given a maddeningly brief glimpse of Medea plotting her enemies' downfall. These few lines (274-280) present Medea exposing her plot to her audience, while at the same time revealing her incredible capacity to endure suffering in the pursuit of her vengeance.

The aphoristic quality of these lines is notable and bear quoting:

Qui vult esse quod vult, ita dat se res ut operam
dabit. (276)

Whoever has a wish that whatever he wishes shall
come about, according to the trouble he will take,
so turns out the event. (p. 319)

and:

Ille traversa mente mi hodie tradidit repagula
quibus ego iram omnem recludam atque illi perniciem
dabo,
mihi maerores illi luctum, exitium illi exilium mihi.
(277-280)

Yonder wretch crooked in soul has this day given
me charge of bolts and bars whereby I shall let open
all my wrath and make ruin for him, yes, sorrows for
me, grief for him, for me a banishment, for him a
bane. (p.319)

There is not much that is new in content in this fragment. Euripides had provided his audience with a similar series of revelations (Medea, 364-409, 764-810). It is significant because it shows how close Ennius' Medea may have been to Euripides'. Jason is still held culpable (ille traversa mente) by Medea and her vengeance is still double-edged. The aphoristic quality of the above citations will be echoed by later writers such as Cicero in prose and Ovid in poetry as shall be shown later.

The remaining fragments are diverse enough to give a rough idea

of the extent of Ennius' play. In one, Medea enumerates her services to Jason (282-283). Another exhibits Medea's sense of alienation (284-285). In a third, Medea voices her love for her children "salvete optima copora (289)" (goodbye you dearest little things, p. 323). All of the above can find antecedents in Euripides' play.¹⁵ In one significant speech, the Chorus petitions Jupiter or the Sun to intervene and prevent Medea's crime "prohibessis scelus (291-293)," (an echo of Euripides' Medea, 1251-1270). The last remaining lines of the play (294-295) indicates that Ennius' plot extended beyond that of Euripides' extant play to include at least a glimpse of Athens.

From these bits and pieces very little may be deduced with certainty. The most significant deduction which can be made is that the characters of Medea and Jason remain constant in their translation from Euripides' Greek to Ennius' Latin version. However, the existing remnants do not reveal enough about Ennius' presentation to indicate how the respective antagonists were supposed to be judged by the audience, or what the play was expected to teach its viewers.¹⁶

In order to derive some notion of what Ennius' Medea may have been intended to instruct, the scholar must have recourse to extra literary sources. One of these which uses Medea Exul for didactic purposes is Cicero's De Natura Deorum.¹⁷ Indeed, Cicero is responsible for preserving some of the more significant of the fragments of Ennius' play which were discussed above. Cicero quotes Ennius in order that his own character, Gaius Cotta, the Academician and pontifex maximum, who is given the role of arbiter and final spokesman in Cicero's philosophical dialogue, might dispute with Balbus the Stoic the veracity of the assertion that human reason is an unmixed blessing given to mankind by

a completely benevolent deity (ii, 133 ff). Cotta claims that reason is a neutral gift at best and that men and women render it either a blessing or a curse according to how they may choose to employ it (iii, 69-72). In order to illustrate his point, Cotta quotes Medea's speeches of self-revelation and determination referred to above and comments that Medea exhibits herself to be both rational and self-destructive (iii, 66). He then presents a passage which may have come from a lost Medea by Accius. The lines quoted by Cotta concern the slaying of Apsyrtus and the Academician comments upon Medea's accomplishment of the deed, "Huic ut scelus sic ne ratio quidem defuit (iii, 68)." (Could any deed have been more rational. p. 350).

Two deductions may be made from the above material. First, that Medea commands respect for her ability to plot and scheme and, second, and more importantly, that she has become an example of the criminal mentality. Cotta's judgment of her character is clear; Medea is presented as a deliberate perpetrator of evil deeds without any consideration of ameliorating circumstances, such as Jason's betrayal of her trust, of Creon's cruel edict of banishment.¹⁸ It is impossible to determine whether Cicero is quoting out of context, but it seems certain that he is using Medea as a type of the criminal mind.

One more reference to Cicero's work, his Tusculan Disputations this time, reinforces the above interpretation.¹⁹ Cicero is still quoting Ennius, a speech of Jason's from Medea Exul, "Tu me amoris magis quam honoris servasisti gratia (286)," (You saved me more for love's sake than for honor's. p. 323), and proceeds to declaim, "Quid ergo, hic amor Medae quanta miseriarum excitavit incendia," (Well then, what a blaze of woes did this love of Medea stir up. p. 323).

In Euripides' play, Jason's egotistic assertion that Medea acted in his behalf under compulsion from Eros (530 ff), brings recriminations from the Chorus (576-578) and rebuke from his wife (579-588). Jason is shown in the Greek tragedy to be both casuistic and self-serving, an opportunist to his toes. In Cicero, on the other hand, the weight of culpability rests squarely on Medea's incendiary passion.

In these few references to Medea's story, Cicero identifies our heroine with an overwhelming and destructive passion on the one hand, and a calculatingly shrewd cunning on the other. One provides her with energy and motivation for destruction, while the other allows her to focus and channel that energy upon any object she chooses, even herself. There are no mitigating circumstances or divine machinations as with Euripides or Apollonius. Cicero's Medea is a paradoxical example of the destructive force of desire directed toward criminal acts. While it is Gaius Cotta who presents this portrait in an academic criticism of Stoic attitudes toward reason, his position is anticipated by Balbus the Stoic in Book II. After speaking of the deification of abstractions such as Wealth, Freedom, Concord, and others, Balbus turns his attention to those conceptualizations which he considers less than edifying:

Quo ex genere Cupidinis et Volupatatis et
Lubentinae Veneris vocabula consecrata sunt,
vitiosarum rerum neque naturalium (quamquam
Velleius aliter existimat), sed tamen ea ipsa
vitia natura vehementius saepe pulsan. (II,61)

In the same class the names of Desire, Pleasure,
and Venus Lubentina have been deified - things
vicious and unnatural (although Velleius thinks
otherwise), yet the urge of these vices often
overpowers natural instinct. (p. 183)

The fact that Medea was driven by erotic desire to commit her nefarious deeds renders her even more criminal and unnatural in this context as

is evident in this rhetorical question posed by Gaius Cotta, "Quae enim libido quae avaritia quod facinus aut suscipitur nisi consilio capto aut sine animi motu et cogitatione, id est ratione, perficitur (III,71)."

(Is there a single act of lust, of avarice or of crime, which is not entered on deliberately or which is not carried out with active exercise of thought, that is, by aid of the reason. p. 355). Both lawless lust and mental acuity are essential for the performance of criminal activity, and Medea possesses an abundance of each.

In Cicero's writings, there is no compassion for Medea, no attempt to see Jason as the ultimate cause of her plight and the general havoc that Medea wreaks on both those who have wounded her and herself. It is important to note here that Cicero's attitude toward sexual passion is not an isolated case, but a fairly general consensus among Roman poets, historians and philosophers.

In the work of Ovid's contemporary, Livy, for example, the evil characters such as Tarquin and Appius are motivated by Lust, while their victims, Lucretia and Verginia are presented as positive exemplars of Chastity.²⁰ Tarquin and Appius are treated by Livy as types of evils which are dangerous not only to individuals but which threaten to disrupt the order of the res publica itself.²¹

In Livy's history of Rome, Lucretia, Verginia and a host of other good women typify the female character of strength, courage, chastity, sobriety and self-control which gave the image of the Roman woman heroic proportions that rendered her a fitting companion for the heroes of Rome's legendary and historical past.²² The women of Roman legend and history are given greater scope for positive heroic action and must live up to higher expectations in regard to their moral character and intel-

lectual capabilities. This is markedly different from Athenian women from whom very little was expected and whose scope of activity was severely circumscribed.²³

Philosophical works such as Cicero's De Natura Deorum and histories such as Livy's give the reader a milieu in which the portrait of Medea created by the Latin poets may be placed.²⁴

For example, there is one passing reference to Medea in Horace's Ars Poetica.²⁵ Among the guidelines set for neophyte poets, Horace discusses the traditional characterizations of legendary heroes and heroines from which the discerning poet should not deviate. Included in the catalogue of traditional types, Medea is described as "ferox invictaque" (123); both words may be translated in manifold ways, each giving a different nuance to the meaning of Medea. Ferox may imply either fiercely gallant and brave, or fiercely savage and cruel; invicta may be translated indomitable, or inexorable. It seems likely that Horace chose his terms deliberately for these enriching ambiguities, thus granting the necessary latitude for originality to future generations of poets. Even more important is the fact that in the Ars Poetica, this characterization is treated as a topos, a literary commonplace of which every poet worth his salt should be aware.²⁶

A poet who got a great deal of mileage out of this topos, exploring many of the avenues of ambiguity implicit in the figure of Medea was Ovid. Ovid presents a variety of allusions to the story of Jason and Medea, including two which will become definitive for both later Latin writers such as Seneca and the poets of the Middle Ages. The remaining portion of the current chapter will deal with the portraits of Medea drawn by Ovid. They appear scattered throughout his works

with the most complete realizations presented in the Heroides and the Metamorphoses. In addition to the more fully realized presentations of Medea, Ovid has a substantial amount of casual references to her which may provide some interesting sidelights. Such casual references are important because they imply a consensus of meaning for any given theme to which a poet may allude when attempting to make a point. This is a sort of poetic shorthand which the poet may employ to construct his poem forcefully and economically, confident that his audience will get his message.

Once of the first references to the character of Medea in Ovid's corpus may be found in his Amores,²⁷ an early work with which Ovid established his reputation as a poet and which underwent at least one revision, by the poet's own admission.²⁸ In Book II of the revised version, Ovid has a poem (XIV) which castigates its addressee, Corinna, for attempting to abort a foetus, almost killing herself in the process. Ovid begins his poem by asking the rhetorical question why women who are capable of such cruelty to themselves and their unborn children should be held exempt from military service where such ferocity might be put to some good use (1-4). He further asks what would have happened to civilization if the mothers of the legendary heroes had aborted them, i.e. who would have conquered Troy, or been the subsequent founder of Rome and antecedent of great Caesar had Thetis Venus aborted Achilles and Aeneas (13ff)? Ovid pleads with Corinna to allow the fruit conceived in her womb to ripen:

sponte fluant matura sua. sine crescere nata.
est pretium parvae non leve vita morae. (25-26)

What is ripe will fall of its self - let grow what
has once become quick; a life is no slight reward
for a short delay. (p.425)

In the context of this eloquent plea, Ovid introduces the stories of Medea and Procne as examples of women who cruelly slew their offspring, but not without great provocation:

Colchida respersam puerorum sanguine culpant
 aque sua caesum matre queruntur Ityn.
 utraque saeva parens, sed tristibus utraque causis
 iactura socii sanguinis ultra virum.
 dicite quis Tereus, quis vos inritet Iason
 figere sollicita corpora vestra manu? (29-33)

The maid of Colchis stained with the blood of her children, we condemn, and lament the murder of Itys by the mother who brought him forth; but each was a cruel parent, each had tragic reasons for avenging herself on the husband by shedding blood that she shared with him. Tell me, what Tereus provokes on, what Jason, to pierce your bodies with aggrieved hands? (p. 425)

The meaning is clear. If Medea is guilty in the eyes of the poet of a horrible crime, how much more is a would-be-mother to be held accountable for attempting to terminate life without cause. Medea and Procne are women driven to tragic and criminal actions by the abuses of their respective husbands. While the poet may understand their motives, he cannot accept or approve of their deeds. They are each "saeve parens" no matter how compelling was the provocation of their cruelty. No animal is as ferocious as those women who could commit such crimes against nature (35-36). On the other hand, it must be noted that neither Jason nor Tereus escapes blame for the part he plays in his particular tragedy. Husbands and wives share equally the guilt of these unnatural acts. It is important to note here that Medea's story will follow immediately upon Procne's wild and tragic tale in the Metamorphoses, linked by the similarities of their vengeful responses to their husbands' betrayals.²⁹

In Amores II, XVIII, Ovid refers to his successful tragedy, the lost Medea, to his elegiac verse on the arts of love, and to his Heroides.

One of the recipients of a letter from a heroine singled out for mention by Ovid in this reference to his work is "male gratus Iason (23)," (ungrateful Jason), a description which fixes his character topologically and reinforces the negative portrait of him sketched in the passage quoted above. If Medea is culpable in the eyes of Ovid, Jason is held accountable for several reasons as the discussion of the Heroides will show.

However, before turning to the letters from the heroines, there are some important allusions to her tale in the Ars Amatoria and Remedia Amoris which should be considered. Although this disrupts the order of composition of Ovid's works, it will be more beneficial to discuss the portraits of Medea in the Heroides and Metamorphoses together. Furthermore, in the Ars Amatoria and the Remedia Amoris, Ovid, the praeceptor amoris³⁰ or professor of love treats his subject from what might be termed a philosophical point of view, laying down first principles for lovers to follow, precepts which the poet claims may be substantiated by human experience.³¹ Therefore, Ovid's precepts and advice provide a relevant background against which the portraits of Medea in the Heroides and the Metamorphoses may be examined.

The Ars Amatoria and Remedia Amoris are often described as playful or even frivolous poems and Ovid is often taken to task for the rhetorical or artificial style in which he composed them.³² All the same, after acknowledging the expert rhetoric and chuckling over the intentional frivolities, one is struck by the effective aphoristic style in which Ovid couches his observations upon lovers and their beloveds. These aphoristic observations capture the reader's attention from the start and continue to do so throughout the Ars Amatoria and the Remedia

Amoris. For example, Ovid offers this advice to would-be lovers:

Prima tuae menti veniat fiducia, cunctas
Posse capi; capies, tu modo tende plagas. (I, 269-270)

First let assurance come to your minds that
all women can be caught; spread but your nets
and you will catch them. (p. 31)

A little further on, Ovid states:

Utque viro furtiva venus, sic grata puellae:
Vir male dissimulat: tectius illa cupid. (I, 275-276)

And as stolen love is pleasant to a man, so
it is also to a woman; the man dissembles
badly: she conceals desire better. (p. 33)

The force and effectiveness of these statements cannot be lost to the reader. They may be cynical, but they are difficult to refute, especially since Ovid will substantiate them with references to natural and mythological history. The evidence is at hand to support the claim:

Parcior in nobis nec tam furiosa libido:
Legitimum finem flamma virilis habet. (I, 281-282)

In us desire is weaker and not so frantic;
the manly flame knows a lawful bound. (p. 33)

There follows in support of this axiom a veritable who's who among feminine criminals, with Pasiphae as the center piece (I, 295 ff). Included in this catalogue of the nefarious deeds of libidinous ladies is a reference to two of Medea's crimes:

Cui non defleta est Ephyraeae flamma Creusae,
Et nece natorum sanguinolenta parens? (I, 335-336)

Who has not bewailed the flames of Creusa of
Ephyre, and the mother stained with her children's
blood? (p. 37)

The two crimes selected for mention are appropriate for Ovid's theme. The first focuses on the new object of Jason's affections, Medea's rival in passion, the second on the fruits of her passion for Jason. Medea's

slaughter of her children seems to have captured the imagination of ancient authors. It became an archetype of the most horrible of crimes and an example of extreme human savagery.³³ Ovid will use it twice more in the Ars Amatoria and the Remedia Amoris.³⁴

All of these references to crimes of passion committed by women are used to establish the veracity of the following statement:

Omnia feminea sunt ista libidine mota;
Acrior est nostra, plusque furoris habet. (I 341-342)

All those crimes were prompted by women's lust;
keener it is than ours, and has more of madness. (p.37)

This tendency in women to be carried away more violently than men on the flood tide of their erotic desires is cited to assure the novice lover that he need not fear failure (I, 344 ff). Thus Ovid builds his case to prove the validity of his observations concerning women and establish his credentials as a true preceptor in the arts of loving.

There are a number of other direct references to Medea and Jason in these works. For example, when teaching apprentice lovers how to retain the affections of their mistresses once they have been won, Ovid advises against using magic charms, herbs, philtres, or other necromantic concoctions, citing the failure of Medea to hold Jason's love by magical means as one of his proofs (Ars Amatoria, II, 99-104). Ovid will employ this example again in Remedia Amoris when he will demonstrate the futility of attempting to rekindle the waning passion of an errant beloved, or to alleviate the agonies of the abandoned lover (294 ff). Here Ovid the preceptor exhibits a holy disapprobation of what he calls "Haemoniae mala pabula terrae (24)," (the baneful herbs of Haemonia, p. 195).

These evil herbs spring from the soil of Medea's homeland and may even be considered as part of her character, yet here Ovid says in effect

that they are without power to alter the natural course of events, including the waning of desire (253-260). In our discussion of the Medea of the Heroides and the Metamorphoses, we will show Ovid presenting a different portrait of those magic arts. Here, however, the theme is constant. Magic has no potency where love is concerned, neither to stave off the onset of desire, nor to win or retain the affections of the beloved. Witchcraft cannot even help the lovelorn to abate his or her own passion.

The references to Jason in the Ars Amatoria and the Remedia Amoris underscore his reputation as a faithless breaker of oaths, which in the context of these poems is not exactly a detraction. In Ars Amatoria, Book I, Ovid exhorts all apprentice lovers to:

Fallite fallentes: ex magna parte profanum
Sunt genus: in laqueos quos posuere, cadant. (645-646)

Deceive the deceivers; they are mostly an
unrighteous sort; let them fall into the
snare which they have laid. (p. 57)

Since all women are false and deceptive by nature, it is only just that they should be deceived by men (I, 655-658). Jason is not castigated for being a deceiver of women here. Rather he is held up to view as an example of what may happen to a lover caught in deception, and the slaughter of his children by his jealous wife is cited as the result of his ineptitude (II, 381-382). Jason's specific deed is described as "Coniugis admissum violatque iura marita (381)," (the crime of her (Medea's) spouse and wedlocks broken law, (p. 93), but since Ovid defines love as "Militae species (I, 233)," (a species of warfare), Jason cannot be held accountable for his faithless act, only that he performed it badly.³⁵

Lest anyone accuse Ovid of being unfair to women, he decides to arm them as well so that the warfare of love may be a more equal contest (Ars Amatoria, III, 1 ff). If Ovid has damned all women as deceivers in Book I, he is hardly more charitable to men in the third section of his poem. Elaborating on the metaphor which identifies love with warfare, Ovid condemns all men as cheats who have and use the advance of skill and experience in the arts of deception against women:

Saepe viri fallunt: tenerae non saepe puellae,
 Paucaque, si quaeras, crimina fraudis habent.
 (III, 31-32)

Often do men deceive, tender maids not often;
 should you inquire, they are rarely charged
 with deceit. (p. 121)

Foremost in the ranks of examples of men who have perpetrated such crimes against women is Jason whose exploits are described thus:

Phasida iam matrem fallax dimisit Iaso:
 Venit in Aesonios altera nupta sinus.
 (III, 33-34)

Perfidious Jason sent away the Phasian,
 already a mother; another bride came to the
 bosom of Aeson's son. (p. 121)

Ovid's style effectively illustrates the nature of Jason's betrayal, separating him from Medea, "iam matrem," by the fallax of line thirty-three and having him encircle his new bride in the chiasmus of the second line. No cultured Roman reader could fail to feel the full impact of the identification of Medea with motherhood. In setting aside the matron Medea, Jason disrupts the relationship which the Romans saw as the bond of their social order.³⁶

Neither Jason nor Medea comes off very well in the Ars Amatoria and the Remedia Amoris. In these poems, Ovid consistently defines the love relationship as a form of warfare (Ars Amatoria, III, 45-46).³⁷

Both men and women are capable of inflicting grievous wounds in the bitter fighting. Medea and Jason offer archetypes to the poet who would describe love in such terms. They are among the first ranks of those men and women who were at one and the same time lovers and deadly enemies. It must be noted in passing that one of the crucial issues raised by critics in their evaluation of these poems has been their rhetorical nature, which has been discussed extensively and even denigrated.³⁸ That the Ars Amatoria and the Remedia Amoris owe so much of their technical brilliance to rhetoric is indubitable. However, once this fact is acknowledged it must not be allowed to deflect the reader from realizing that Ovid has many profound and valid observations to make concerning the complex, and often painful nature of human relationship. Viewed properly, Ovid's skillful handling of rhetorical techniques should not detract from, but rather enhance the meaning of his poem.

There are significant traces of Ovid's definition of the love relationship as violent and destructive in both the Heroides and the Metamorphoses. The Heroides antedates the Ars Amatoria as a direct reference to the letters of the lovelorn heroines in the didactic poems demonstrates (Ars Amatoria, III, 345). Indeed, the subject matter of some of the letters may have helped Ovid develop the theme of love/warfare as expressed in the Ars Amatoria. In fact there seems to be a poetically logical progression in the development of the love theme in Ovid's early work from the Amores to the Remedia Amoris.³⁹ The fruits of that development ripen in a number of the tales in the Metamorphoses, such as that of Procne, Scylla and especially Medea's story as will be seen.

The archetypal conflict in which men and women are engaged is viewed in the Heroides primarily through the eyes of the Heroines, even though three of the letters are by men (Heroides, XVI, Paris, XVIII, Leander, XX, Acontius). Most of the subjects of the Heroides suffer the same torment, separation, for one reason or another from their lovers. That each of the women in this collection was given the opportunity to express in her own voice the agonies she endured and her reproaches for her absent lord was something new in ancient literature.⁴⁰ Ovid endows the speeches of his lovelorn women with forceful language and cleverly reasoned arguments. Ovid gives them a tragic dimension which is enhanced by the reader's awareness that for all their eloquence the missives will change nothing.⁴¹

In the course of this remarkable work, Medea appears twice, once as the cause and once as the object of abandonment.⁴² In her first appearance in Heroides VI, Medea is the "barbara venefica" (19), (barbarian poisoner) who has stolen Jason's affections from the loyal Hypsiphe. As may be expected, Medea does not receive a flattering description from the mouth of the woman she has supplanted. Medea is a "barbara paelex" (81), (barbarian whore) who has seduced Jason by means of her magic arts:

nec facie meritisque placet, sed carmina novit
diraque cantata pabula falce metit. (83-84)

It is neither by her beauty nor her merits
that she wins you, but by the incantations
she knows and the baneful herbs she cuts
with the enchanted knife. (p.75)

There follows a catalogue of Medea's powers, the enumeration of which would make any sane man think twice before embracing her:

illa reluctantem cursu deducere lunam
nititur et tenebris abdere solis equos;
illa refrenat aquas obliquaque flumina sistit;
illa loco silvas vivaque saxa movet.

per tumultos errat passis discinta capillis
 certaue de tepidis colligit ossa rogis.
 devovet absentis simulacraque cerea figit,
 et miserum tenuis in iecur urget acus-
 et quae nescierim melius. male quaeritur herbis
 moribus et forma conciliandus amor. (85-94)

She is one to strive to draw down from its
 course the unwilling moon, and to hide in
 darkness the horses of the sun; she curbs the
 waters and stays the down winding streams;
 she moves from their places the woods and
 the living rocks. Among sepulchres she
 stalks ungirded, with hair flowing loose,
 and gathers from the yet warm funereal pyre
 the appointed bones. She vows to their doom
 the absent, fashions the waxen image, and
 into its wretched heart drives the slender
 needle - and other deeds 'twere better not
 to know. Ill sought by herbs is love that
 should be won by virtue and by beauty.
 (pp. 76-77)

The last two lines foreshadow one of the basic axioms of love taught by Ovid in the Ars Amatoria, "ut ameris, amabilis esto (II, 107)," (that you may be loved, be lovable). The qualities that render one "amabilis" are beauty of form and, more importantly, cultivation of the gifts of soul and intellect (II, 108 ff). Magic arts and incantations were deprecated by the praeceptor amoris as useless and profane, as we have seen. Hypsipyle's recitation of Medea's abilities as a witch is intended to render her as a terrifying bed partner (95-96) and to incite jealousy for his reputation in Jason. Medea's awesome powers, says Hypsipyle, and not Jason's prowess as a warrior were instrumental in winning the fleece according to the report of rumor (97-100). Ovid has cleverly worked this portion of the legend into a psychologically appropriate jibe of a jilted woman against her wandering lover. Hypsipyle tries to turn Medea's own powers against her by making Jason ashamed of having used them in accomplishing his quest. It is interesting to note parenthetically that, in his Amores, Ovid had attributed similar magical

properties to the power of song (II, I, 23-28).

Hypsipyle then turns her attention toward her absent lover:

Mobilis Aesonide vernaque incertior aura,
cur tua polliciti pondere verba carent?
(109-110)

O changeable son of Aeson, more uncertain
than the breezes of springtime, why lack
your words the weight a promise claims?
(p. 77)

In this apostrophe to her errant lord, Hypsipyle seems to recognize the awful truth that Jason needed no magic herbs to draw him to Medea. His fickle nature and her proximity were sufficient.

Hypsipyle goes on trying, however, enumerating her services to Jason and alluding to Medea's criminal nature in order to render herself lovable and her rival repellant. At this point, Hypsipyle mentions the twin boys she has borne Jason. Of course they resemble their father, except in their youthful ignorance of deceit (123-124). These twin treasures Hypsipyle has almost sent to Jason: only her fear of the welcome Medea would give the boys restrained her:

Medeam timui: plus est Medea noverca;
Medaea faciunt ad scelus omne manus.
(127-128)

'Twas Medea I feared. Medea is more than a
stepdame; the hands of Medea are fitted for
any crime. (p. 79)

Medea continues to be reviled from Hypsipyle, who at one point compared herself to the Phasian in relation to their respective fathers and homelands:

proditi illa patrem; rapui de clade Thoanta.
deseruit Colchos; me mea Lemnos habet. (135-136)

She betrayed her sire; I rescued from death
my father Thoas. She deserted the Colchians;
my Lemnos has me still. (p. 79)

Ovid, the master of irony, has chosen two marvelous points of comparison upon which to focus the reader's attention. First, in referring to her own virtuous conduct toward her father, Hypsipyle also alludes to the massacre of the Lemnian men in which she was implicated. She catches herself in this blunder and tries to extricate herself (139 ff). Second, she retains possession of her homeland by virtue of the fact that there was no one left to avenge the slaughter of their men by the ladies of Lemnos. In addition, Medea's very crimes were committed, as she is so fond of reminding him, on behalf of Jason. Thus Hypsipyle's arguments only serve to embarrass herself and confirm Jason in his estrangement from her.

As Hypsipyle brings her letter to a close, she reveals a violent streak in her own nature, which is brought to the surface by the tumultuousness of her grief over losing Jason. "Medeae Medea forem (151," (I would have been Medea to Medea) she claims. The Lemnian queen implies that she would bespatter herself and Jason with the blood of her rival if she could. Hypsipyle finishes her letter with a curse:

quodsi quid ab alto
iustus adest votis Iuppiter ipse meis,
quod gemit Hypsipyle, lecti quoque subnuba nostri
maereat et leges sentiat ipsa suas;
utque ego destituor coniunx materque duorum,
a totidem natis orba sit illa viro!
nec male parta diu teneat peiusque relinquat -
exulet et toto quaerat in orbe fugam!
quam fratri germana fuit miseroque parenti
filia, tam natis, tam sit acerba viro!
cum mare, cum terras consumpserit, aera temptet;
erret inops, exspes, caede cruenta sua! (151-162)

But if in any way just Jupiter himself from on high attends to my prayers, may the woman who intrudes upon my marriage-bed suffer the woes in which Hypsipyle groans, and feel the lot she herself now brings on me; and as I am now left alone, wife and mother of two babes, so

may she one day be reft of as many babes
 and of her husband! Nor may she long keep
 her illgotten gains, but leave them in
 worse hap -let her be an exile and seek
 her refuge through the entire world! A
 bitter sister to her brother, a bitter
 daughter to her wretched sire, may she
 be as bitter to her children, and as bitter
 to her husband! When she shall have no hope
 more of refuge by the sea or by the land,
 let her make trial of the air; let her
 wander destitute, bereft of hope, stained
 red with the blood of her murders! (pp. 81-83)

These lines are, of course, an ironic foreshadowing of the fate that will actually overtake both Jason and Medea. Hypsipyle recognizes that her rival and her estranged consort have become inseparable for good or ill, and her parting words are a cry of rage at the impotency of her love. Her malediction, however, will indeed have the power to take its toll of both its objects.

The portrait of Medea painted by Hypsipyle is understandably negative. As Ovid himself states in the Ars Amatoria (II, 373 ff), women are willing to go to any lengths to avenge themselves in matters of love. Thus Medea's terrifying capabilities and the criminal nature which directs them are emphasized by Hypsipyle who wonders how Jason can sleep soundly in the bosom of such a woman.

In the twelfth letter of the Heroides, Medea is given a chance to speak in her own voice. Her missive is composed at the tragic moment after being driven out with her children by Jason, when she hears the hymns of his wedding procession and realizes the reason for her banishment from her marriage bed (151-153). The opening lines of Heroides XII seem to begin in mid-thought, as if mirroring the distraction caused by Medea's mental anguish, or continuing an argument with Jason which was begun long ago (1-6). Predictably, Medea's reproaches revolve

around her claims of having saved Jason and his heroic companions from insurmountable dangers and having delivered them safe to their homeland with the object of their quest. Pelion's tree and the ship constructed from it are again deemed the instigators of Medea's plight after the manner of Euripides and Ennius (7-10). Medea sees herself as a fool for doting on Jason's beauty and saving his life by giving him her aid.

She comments:

quantum perfidiae tecum, scelerate, perisset,
 dempta forent capiti quam mala multa meo!
 (19-20)

How much perfidy, vile wretch, would have
 perished with you, and how many woes been
 averted from my head! (p. 143)

The erudite audience realizes that she includes her own crimes against others as well as Jason's against herself in this cry of torment.

Medea proceeds to recount for Jason her heritage, as royal and rich as that of Creusa (25-28) and tell the tale of her first glimpse of the Pelasgian hero and the incendiary passion which immediately took hold of her entire being:

tunc ego te vidi, tunc coepi scire, quis esses;
 illa fuit mentis prima ruina meae.
 et vidi et perii; nec notis ignibus arsi,
 ardet ut ad magnos pinea taeda deos.
 et formosus eras, et me mea fata trahebant;
 abstulerant oculi lumina nostra tui.
 perfide, sensisti - quis enim bene celat amorem?
 eminet indicio prodita flamma suo. (31-38)

Then 'tas that I saw you, then began to know you;
 that was the first impulse to the downfall of my
 soul. I saw you, and I was undone; nor did I kindle
 with ordinary fires, but like the pine torch kindled
 before the mighty gods. Not only were you noble to
 look upon, but my fates were dragging me to doom;
 your eyes had robbed mine of their power to see.
 Traitor, you saw it - for who can well hide love?
 Its flame shines forth its own betrayer. (p.145)

The encircling chiasmus of line thirty-four establishes how completely

Medea is caught and consumed by her passion for Jason. The commonplace of love at first sight emphasizes how quickly her soul caught fire. She burns with the rapidity and intensity of heat of a pine torch kindled before the great gods, an allusion to the presence of divine intervention in other versions of her story. It is important to note that Ovid does not provide his heroine with the excuse of a fated desire administered by a group of meddling deities for the purpose of effecting their own designs. The simile "ad magnos pinea taeda deos" gives Medea's passion the stature of a divinely inspired flame while keeping it within the boundaries of human experience and dimensions.

There follows a brief account of Medea's torments on the night between her fatal initial glimpse of Jason and the coming of her sister to plead for Medea's help for the Greeks which Apollonius had effectively described in such great detail in Book III of his Argonautica.⁴³ Here Ovid gives the reader a preview of his own more complete treatment of this anguished moment in the Metamorphoses, which will be discussed below. Medea's description is brief, but effective and to the point:

ut positum tetigi thalamo male saucia lectum,
 acta est per lacrimas nox mihi, quanta fuit;
 ante oculos taurique meos segetesque nefande,
 ante meos oculos pervigil anguis erat.
 hinc amor, hinc timor est; ipsum timor auget
 amorem. (57-61)

Laying myself upon the ordered couch within
 my chamber, grievously wounded, in tears I
 passed the whole night long; before my eyes
 appeared the bulls and the dreadful harvest,
 before my eyes the unsleeping serpent. On
 the one hand was love, on the other fear;
 and fear increased my very love. (p.147)

Missing from this passage is the conflict between amor and pudor which was essential to the Apollonian account and which will be re-

inserted by Ovid in Metamorphoses, VII. The distress here is caused not by honor, but rather Medea's fear for the life and well-being of the man with whom she has so recently fallen in love.

Medea then described her interview with Jason at Diana's shrine in the sacred grove during which Jason is quick to beg her pity in return for each oaths of fidelity (81-88).⁴⁴ Ironically, he pronounces his own doom in committing his perjury:

spiritus ante meus tenues vanescat in auras
quam thalamo nisi tu nupta sit ulla meo!
(85-86)

may my spirit vanish away into thin air
before another than thou shall come a
bride to my chamber.

Medea reminds Jason of these words at the very moment he is marching to claim another bride.

In recounting the exploits which follow this perjury, Medea leaves Jason nothing. She performs all the deeds, heroic or criminal, either through her drugs or in person. Jason does very little except plunder the benefits of Medea's talents (94 ff). Medea breaks down in her narration at the point where she should describe her slaughter of her brother. She cannot bring herself to pen the words that will tell of her worst offense to date (115-118).

The clever paraleipsis by which Medea refers to the slaying of Pelias is important because it solidifies an impression which the reader has had all along and establishes the main point toward which Medea was driving in narrating the iniquities which she committed for Jason's benefit:

Quid referam Peliae natas pietate nocentes
caesaque virginea membra paterna manu?
ut culpent alii, tibi me laudare necesse est,
pro quo sum totiens esse coacta nocens.(129-132)

Why rehearse the tale of Pelias' daughters,
by devotion led to evil deeds - of how their
maiden hands laid knife to the members of
their sire? I may be blamed by others, but
you perforce must praise me - you, for whom
so many times I have been driven to crime.

(p. 153)

Thus the underlying irony of Hypsipyle's denigration of Medea for her criminal activities, which was discussed above, is made explicit by Medea in the course of her condemnation of Jason. All of her nefarious acts had only one motivation, Jason's well being. This, it will be remembered, was also the argument of Medea's tirade against her faithless husband at their first encounter in Euripides' tragedy (465 ff). It remains part of the mythic content of Medea's theme, implied or explicit among the Ovidian portraits.

Medea now bewails her fate resulting from the heartless whim of Jason (135 ff). Forced to quit her household with her small children in train, abandoned without friends, relations, or parents among a strange people with no hope of refuge in sight, Medea laments the impotency of her magic to retain Jason's love, or alleviate her torments:

serpentis igitur potui taurosque furentes;
unum non potui perdomuisse virum,
quaeque feros pepuli doctis medicatibus ignes,
non valeo flammam effugere ipsa meas.
ipsi me cantus herbaeque artesque relinquunt;
nil dea, nil Hecates sacra potentis agunt.
non mihi grata dies; noctes vigilantur amarae,
et tener a misero pectore somnus abit.
quae me non possum, potui sopire draconem;
utilior cuivis quam mihi cura mea est.

(163-172)

Dragons and maddened bulls, it seems, I
could subdue; a man along I could not; I,
who could beat back the fierce fire with
wise drugs, have not the power to escape
the flames of my own passion. My very
incantations, herbs and arts abandon me;
naught does my goddess aid me, naught the

sacrifice I make to potent Hecate. I take
no pleasure in the day; my nights are
watches of bitterness, and gentle sleep is
far departed from my wretched soul. I, who
could charm the dragon to sleep, can bring
none to myself; my effort brings more good
to anyone else soever than to me. (p. 155)

These very points Ovid will, as we have seen, make an integral part
of his course of instruction in the Ars Amatoria and the Remedia Amoris.

Like Hypsipyle before her, Medea becomes abusive. Creusa, Jason's
new love object, is a "paelex (173)" (whore) and a "stultia marita
(175)" (stupid mate). However, Medea can do much more than heap abuse
upon her unfortunate rival. She still has at her command the powers
and knowledge which had been so helpful to Jason and she possesses the
strength of will to use them:

rideat et Tyrio iaceat sublimis in ostro-
flebit et ardores vincet adjusta meos!
dum ferrum flammaeque aderunt sucusque veneni,
hostis Medeae nullus inultus erit! (179-182)

Let her make merry and lie aloft on the Tyrian
purple - she shall weep, and the flames that
consume her will surpass my own! While sword
and fire are at my hand, and the juice of
poison, no foe of Medea shall go unpunished.
(p. 155)

This of course is another echo of Euripides' Medea (800-810) and re-
mains part of the stuff of many subsequent portraits of our heroine.⁴⁵
Unlike her fellow sufferers in the Heroides, Medea is capable of much
more than lamentation and recrimination. She may be powerless to stem
the tide of passion, but she can destroy her rival and her husband
who would escape her upon it.

Amazingly enough, tragedy could be averted if Jason would relent
and take Medea back. Medea begs him to return to her. She, again
like Hypsipyle, appeals to his pride of paternity asking that he

consider the welfare of his sons, who so resemble their sire, before abandoning them to a "dira noverca (187)" (dread stepmother). Medea implores Jason to restore her to her marriage bed, claiming that such a deed would not be so harrowing as facing a pair of fire-breathing bulls, nor a dragon and therefore it would not be beyond his heroic capacities:

non ego te inploro contra taurosque virosque,
utque tua serpens victa quiescat ope;
te peto, quem merui, quem nobis ipse dedisti,
cum quo sum pariter facta parents parens.
(195-198)

I do not implore you to go forth against bulls
and men, nor ask your aid to quiet and over-
come a dragon; it is you I ask for, - you whom
I have earned, whom you yourself gave to me, by
whom I became a mother, as you by me a father.
(p. 157)

One cannot help but smile at the audacity of and implied insult in such a statement. Medea's petition may be interpreted a number of ways. First that Medea, realizing the futility of her situation merely wishes to wound Jason in his most vulnerable spot, his heroic pride. On the other hand, if taken completely seriously the above statements sound like those of a loyal woman who has no illusions about the character of her spouse, yet seeks to retain his affections no matter what his faults. One might even suspect that there is a bit of truth in both interpretations.

That Medea has no illusions about Jason is borne out by the following statement:

Dos ubi sit, quaeris? campo numeravimus illo,
qui titi laturo vellus arandus erat. (199-200)

Where is my dower, you ask? On the field I
counted it out - that field which you had to
plow before you could bear away the fleece.
(p.157)

Medea is aware of Jason's mercenary heart in which affection for money holds the most prominent place. She suggests, however, that his life and the lives of his comrades, the future heroes of Greece, ought to be enough of a dowery for him. From that ironically bitter note, Medea turns to finish her letter with a foreshadowing of the doom which her disappointment, anger and frustrated desire will effect through the medium of the power which she possesses:

quos equidem actutum - sed quid praedicere poenam
attinet? ingentis parturit ira minas.
quo feret ira sequar! facti fortasse pigebit -
et piget infide consuluisse viro.
viderit ista deus, qui nunc mea pectora versat!
nescio quid certe mens mea mai us agit!
(207-212)

Whom, hark you, I will straight - but what boots
it to foretell your penalty? My ire is in travail
with might threats. Whither my ire leads, will I
follow. Mayhap I shall repent me of what I do -
but I repent me too, of regard for a faithless
husband's good. Be that the concern of the god
who now embroils my heart! Something portentous,
surely, is working in my soul! (pp. 157-159)

Medea thus ends her missive on a wildly ominous note. Pride and passion are part of her self-revelation, as well as unswerving loyalty to her undeserving spouse. These she possesses in common with her foil and co-sufferer, Hypsipyle. Both of these heroines are also women whose past has been tainted with crime. The two women diverge, however, in their respective wills and capacities to do something about their predicaments. Hypsipyle suffers and must rely on the power of a curse to effect her vengeance. Ironically, her rival, Medea is herself the agent who realizes the doom which Hypsipyle pronounces. On the other hand, Medea has much more than words at her disposal in her arsenal of revenge. Her magic powers and incantations may have no effect on the waxing and waning of affection, nor may they be able to heal the wounds

in hearts torn by faithless lovers, but they may certainly be used to obliterate the happy-ever-after plans of fatuous Jason and his infatuated bride. Thus, the conclusion of Heroides XII alludes to the burning of Creusa and Creon and Medea's stabbing of her children, which are the deeds that will be born of her wrath.

There is a sense in Heroides XII of volcanic violence about to erupt from the smoldering depths of Medea's soul. Her portrait in Metamorphoses, Book VII⁴⁶ will not exploit the effects of that volcanic passion, as did Euripides and as will Seneca. Instead, in its bulk, it will focus on the elemental powers and capacities of Medea, which, when coupled with her passion for Jason, will elevate her to the stature of a cosmic force with terrifying propensities for evil and, remarkably enough, for good as well. Also, it is in the narrative account of Medea in Metamorphoses VII that Ovid gives the most completely realized incarnation of the mutual destruction of lovers implicit in his definition of the love-warfare relationship presented in Ars Amatoria and Remedia Amoris. The seriousness with which Ovid treats this theme⁴⁷ will become apparent as the examination of Medea's story in the Metamorphoses proceeds.

Medea is one of the few characters in the Metamorphoses who does not undergo a physical transformation herself. Instead she becomes an agent for a different kind of change, not of form, but of reversal in time, the significance of which will be explored below. One may wonder what Ovid has in mind in including this famous heroine and the saga of her tragic passion in his "carmen perpetuum"⁴⁸ (eternal song) and one may also wonder why he places it so closely to the center of his poem.⁴⁹ It will be seen that a metamorphosis does take place in

Medea, but it has a larger significance than a change in form or shape could have. Medea's transformation is a moral one which occurs in her soul and is meant as a warning to those who, like Jason, do not take passion seriously.

In Ovid's epic account, Jason receives very little space; he leads the Minyans to Colchis, swears an oath of fidelity to Medea in exchange for the wherewithal to accomplish his quest, follows Medea's directions and, lastly, petitions Medea to restore Aeson to youth. These activities occupy only about one-sixth of the space allotted to Medea's tale in the Metamorphoses. The sizable remainder is taken up by Medea, her battle with and submission to love, the activities prompted by her passion for Jason, and beyond these, acts which seem to be directed from within by the nature of her psychological transformation. These last provide the core of what Ovid is attempting to say in retelling Medea's tragedy in the Metamorphoses.

Ovid condenses the voyage of the Argonauts to Colchis into a mere six lines (1-6). The initial confrontation with Aeetes is likewise foreshortened to a few lines, the purpose of which is merely to give Medea the opportunity to see her Pelasgian hero for the first time and promptly conceive an ineluctable lust for him:

concipit interea validos Aeetias ignes
et luctata diu, postquam ratione furorem
vincere non poterat, "frustra, Medea repugnas;
nescio quis deus obstat," ait, "mirumque, nisi hoc est,
aut aliquid certe simile huic, quod amare vocatur.
nam cur iussa patris nimium mihi dura videntur?
sunt quoque dura nimis! cur, quem modo denique vidi,
ne pereat, timeo? quae tanti causa timoris? (9-16)

meanwhile the daughter of King Aeetes conceived an overwhelming passion. Long she fought against it, and when by reason she could not rid her of her madness she cried: In vain, Medea, do you fight. Some god or other is opposing you; I wonder if this is not what is called love, or

at least something like this. For why do the mandates of my father seem too harsh? They certainly are too harsh. Why do I fear lest he perish whom I have but now seen for the first time? What is the cause of all this fear? (p. 343)

The desire which afflicts Medea is sudden and unavoidable as it was in Apollonius' account in Book III of the Argonautica. Significantly, however, the mechanisms of divine intervention in the affair, the three goddesses and the maliciously playful archer god, Eros, are reduced to "nescio quis deus obstat." Medea's passion is as powerful as if it had been divinely inspired, but Ovid deliberately obscures any divine participation in its inception. It is not that he is opposed to employing a deus ex machina, as the stories of Apollo and Daphner (Met. I, 450 ff) and Pygmalion (Met. X, 255 ff) illustrate. Rather, as he did in the Heroides, Ovid wishes to obscure the divine elements of the story as elaborated by Apollonius so that the human predicament of Medea may receive the audience's undivided attention. Ovid seems to be saying that erotic passion is as powerful a force as fate in directing human lives, even when its divine origin is not made manifest. On the other hand, Ovid's Medea seems to be less of a victim of the whims of divinities than was Apollonius' heroine. The Medea of the Argonautica could always claim coercion on the part of the gods. Ovid's Medea has only her own eyes to blame. This element of her characterization is consistent with Ovid's earlier portrait in Heroides XII (31). Another aspect of Medea's portrayal in Heroides XII (61) which is retained by Ovid in the Metamorphoses is her fear for Jason's welfare which is prompted by her nascent desire.

Medea struggles against the flames of the lust which threaten to

consume her. The conflict between passion and filial piety which torments Medea is expressed as follows:

sed trahit invitam nova vis, aliudque cupido,
mens aliud suadet: video meliora proboque,
deteriora sequor. (19-21)

But some strange power draws me on against
my will. Desire persuades me one way, reason
another. I see the better and approve it,
but I follow the worse. (p. 343)

With these words, Medea anticipates by at least a generation the observation of St. Paul:

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh)
dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present
with me; but how to perform that which is good
I find not. For the good that I would I do not:
but the evil that I would not, that I do. Now
if I do that I would not, it is no more I that
do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

(Romans vii. 18-20)

Both Paul and Ovid recognize that correct or moral action is not a matter of knowledge of what is right, or even willingness to act morally. The evildoings that men and women perform are often done contrary to knowledge or will by compulsion or obsession.⁵⁰ In making her observation, Medea contradicts an important axiom of ancient ethics which had been asserted by philosophers from at least the time of Socrates to that of Marcus Aurelius.⁵¹ It was a widely held doctrine that awareness of the difference between right and wrong was sufficient for morally correct action and, correlatively, that evil deeds had their inception in ignorance of the good.⁵² Medea's profound insight into human motivation indicates that many philosophers are woefully naive in their analyses of the conditions necessary for ethical behavior.

The debate which presently takes place in Medea's soul weighs the pros and cons of helping Jason in standard rhetorical style.⁵³ Among

the reasons for granting her assistance is Jason's beauty, which Medea deems even more important than his youth, nobility of birth, or virility, "quem non, ut cetera desint, ore movere potest? certe mea pectora movit (27-28)" (Who, though the rest were lacking, would not be touched by his beauty? Certainly he has touched my heart.) Furthermore, Medea sees herself as Jason's only hope for survival against the perils proposed by Aeetes as conditions for winning the golden fleece (29-31). She concludes with an ironic self-accusation of what she would become if she did not succor the handsome Greek hero in his hour of trial:

hoc ego si patiar, tum me de tigride natam,
tum ferrum et scopulos gestare in corde fatebor!
(32.-33)

If I permit this, then shall I confess that I
am the child of a tigress and that I have iron
and stone in my heart. (p. 345)

These lines are pregnant with meaning for the audience which is aware of the whole story. With these lines Ovid skillfully makes the inception of Medea's desire resonate with the inhuman deeds of its denouement, the slaying of Pelias, the fire and the sword which dispatch Creusa and Medea's children, the attempt to poison Theseus and the escape in the whirlwind, which are presented in the Metamorphoses as acts of gratuitous and freely flowing maliciousness.

Next are marshalled the negative arguments, which of course include an awareness of the betrayal of homeland, family and filial piety implicit in aiding the Greeks (38), and more important, a healthy fear of Jason's probable ingratitude once he has what he wants, his sailing off to become another's husband while foolish Medea is left to her punishment (39-40). This last thought is the most dangerous to Jason because it almost causes Medea to abandon him to his fate (41). However, Medea's

very infatuation with him saves him for her wrath at his imagined betrayal. His grace of form and nobility of soul, along with the solemn vows which she will demand of him before granting her aid will be Medea's security. She conceives a happy ending for herself:

tibi se semper debebit Iason,
te face sollemni iunget sibi perque Pelasgas
servatrix urbes matrum celebrabere turba.
(48-50)

Jason shall always owe himself to you, he
shall join you to himself in solemn wedlock.
Then you shall be hailed as his deliverer
through the cities of Greece by throngs
of women. (pp. 345-347)

The pattern repeats itself for the remainder of her speech (51-71), which is in the form of an interior monologue. The claims of family, homeland and native gods are put forth to be obliterated by the power of Eros, by the high culture of the Greek cities and, above all, by Jason himself, who is worth the whole world (59-60). To the dangers of a long voyage over uncharted seas, Medea opposes the security she will feel in Jason's arms (66-68). Up to this point things seem to be going badly for the causes of filial piety and loyalty to homeland, but, surprisingly enough, virtue and not Eros has the last word:

coniugiumne putas speciosaque nomina culpae
inponis, Medeae, tuae? - quin adspice, quantum
adgrediare nefas, et, dum licet, effuge crimen!
(69-71)

But do you deem it marriage, Medea, and do you
give fair-seeming names to your fault? Nay,
rather, look ahead and see how great a wickedness
you are approaching and flee it while you may.
(p. 347)

Her resolve seems strong enough, but we know the whole story. Diverging from Apollonius, Ovid has Medea win the first round against her lawless lust and stride with confidence towards the second. Medea proceeds on

her way to the altar of her patroness, Hecate, with the first of passion all but completely extinguished when she chances upon the Greek hero (in Apollonius the interview was prearranged after Medea had given up her futile struggle with Eros). Just one glimpse and morality's hard-won victory is suddenly overturned, "cum videt Aesoniden extinctaque flamma reluxit (77)," (when she saw the son of Aeson and the dying flame was rekindled). Sight is the faculty through which Jason's beauty gains the victory over Medea:

spectat et in vultu veluti tum denique viso
lumina fixa tenet nec se mortalia demens
ora videre putat nec se declinat ab illo
(86-88)

She gazed upon him and held her eyes fixed
on his face as if she had never seen him
before; and in her infatuation she thought
the face she gazed on more than mortal, nor
could she turn herself away from him.
(p. 349)

Jason promises marriage in return for aid (91) and at that point Medea surrenders her conscience to her heart and abandons all resistance with complete awareness of what she is doing:

'quid faciam, video: nec me ignorantia veri
decipiet, sed amor, servabere munere nostro,
servatus promissa dato.' (92-94)

'I see what I am about to do, nor shall
ignorance of the truth be my undoing, but
love itself. You shall be preserved by my
assistance; but when preserved, fulfill
your promise.' (p. 349)

Medea makes her choice with complete understanding of the implications and significance of the assistance she is about to render Jason. She also knows that any positive value which may be imparted to her decision depends entirely upon Jason's fidelity to her.

Ominously, Ovid is rather offhand about Jason's oath, describing

it in perfunctory terms instead of allowing him to speak it. The impression of Jason's trustworthiness left upon the audience by this rapid description allows little hope that Medea's faith in her hero will be justified (94-97). However, she has already chosen to believe in his beauty and his easy words and tenders him the preserving ointments.

The next sixty lines depict the trials themselves in which Jason brings off his victory before a mixed audience of Colchians and Minyans. Jason performs all of the tasks, as Medea watches from the sidelines. At the point where the dragons' teeth are sown and Jason must face the combined might of an earth-born host, Medea has doubts about the effectiveness of her unguents and begins working some magic from her vantage point:

neve parum valeant a se data gramina, carmen
auxiliare canit secretasque advocat artes.
(137-138)

And lest the charmed herbs which she had
given him should not be strong enough, she
chanted a spell to help them and called
in her secret arts. (p. 353)

Jason, however, avoids combat by using the who-hit-me trick to confuse his enemies. He hurls a stone into their midst causing them to suspect each other of foul play. Consequently their wrath is bent towards self-destruction. In Ovid the device originates with Jason. In Apollonius it was part of Medea's instructions on how to proceed with the tasks (Argonautica III. 1344-1381).

The account of the dragon's lullaby as presented in the Metamorphoses differs slightly from that of the Argonautica and Heroides. In the Apollonian version, a fearful Jason looks on while Medea confronts the formidable adversary (IV. 120-165), and in Heroides XII, Medea claims to have performed the task herself (105 ff). In the Metamorphoses,

Jason uses Medea's drugs, but faces the sleep-defying serpent himself (149). Although Jason is still relying on Medea's advice and magical concoctions, Ovid seems to give him a more active part to perform at this point in the story. It seems as if Ovid wants to demonstrate that Jason is worthy of his double prize, the fleece and Medea, by having him confront the danger on his own. In this way, Jason's dependence on Medea is reduced slightly and the irony of the following lines is muted:

et auro
 heros Aesonius potitur spolioque superbus
 muneris auctorem secum, spolia altera, portans
 victor Iolciacos tetigit cum coniuge portus.
 (155-158)

Proud of this spoil and bearing with him the
 giver of his prize, another spoil, the victor
 and his wife in due time reached the harbor
 of Iolchos. (p. 353)

At this point the reader looks up from the page to ponder just who was the prize of whom. The identification of Medea with the fleece as the object of victory which was implied by Pindar and Apollonius is made explicit by Ovid. She is both the "muneris auctorem" and the "spolia altera." The purpose for which Ovid establishes this identification is not clear. Perhaps it is meant to prepare the audience for the feat of Aeson's rejuvenation which follows. This assumption is supported by the fact that the golden fleece was reputed to have healing powers⁵⁴ and the restoration of youth to Aeson is an account of Medea's remarkable healing skills.

The subsequent section (169-390) may be treated as a diptych, or, more appropriately, as a set of mirror images in which the positive has its immediate antithetical reflection in the negative. This part takes up the bulk of Ovid's retelling of Medea's story and is crucial

to its meaning. It is important to note at this point that the positive half of this set of images is the only fully realized, extant account of Medea's rejuvenation of Aeson. There is only a maddeningly brief reference to this episode in the fragments of The Epic Cycle which survive.⁵⁵ On the other hand, Medea's involvement in the slaughter of Pelias has many allusions in the extant literature prior to the Metamorphoses and is considered one of the staples of her story.⁵⁶

Ovid's inclusion of the Aeson episode gives Medea's character a clarity of definition and a broadness of range that was lacking in the other accounts. It gives Ovid an opportunity to depict graphically the dual potential of Medea in a way that no other poet had by juxtaposing it such enormities as the slaughter of Pelias. The end result is that Ovid's becomes the definitive portrait which later poets will utilize when compiling their own. Most of the other extant versions of the story have Aeson either murdered or forced to commit suicide by Pelias,⁵⁷ and thus he provides Jason and Medea with an immediate motivation for revenge on the tyrant. Ovid puts Aeson to better use.

In Ovid's narrative, Aeson is prevented from attending the homecoming celebration for the Argonauts because he is near death from old age. Jason petitions his skillful wife to transfer some of his own life's span to his father so that Aeson might be spared a while longer. Her husband's proposal is unacceptable to Medea, but she is moved by her appreciation of the filial piety which promoted it and grants Jason an even greater boon, the complete rejuvenation of his father. Ovid's presentation of Medea's motives for performing this miracle is masterful. Medea is moved by both guilt at her abandonment of Aeetes and admiration of Jason's devotion to Aeson, which is significant because

it prefigures the paradox of the twin episodes which follow:

nec tenuit lacrimas: mota est pietate rogantis,
dissimilemque animum subiit Aeeta relictus.
(169-170)

And he (Jason) could not restrain his tears.
Medea was moved by the petitioner's filial
love, and the thought of Aeetes deserted came
into her mind, how different from Jason's!

Medea recognizes and responds to the virtue exhibited in Jason's request, although she was incapable of such virtuous action with respect to her own father. In that case, she knew the good, but performed the evil. She will now turn her talents to the performance of a deed which is the antithesis of both what went before and that which is to follow.

Ovid chooses to depict Medea's preparations for Aeson's restoration to youth in great detail. He presents the witch in action; purifying herself, invoking the aid of her patron deities, gathering her ingredients, preparing her potion and, finally, working her cure. Apollonius' description of Medea's preparation of unguents and charms for Jason's use is pale by comparison.⁵⁸ Medea prays to Nox (Night), Hecate triceps (tri-formed Hecate), and Tellus (Earth), as well as a number of lesser gods to assist her in the task she has undertaken (192-198). There follows an account of the capabilities of her magic arts:

quorum ope, cum volui, ripis mirantibus amnes
in fontes rediere suos, concussaue sisto,
stantia concutio cantu freta, nubila pello
nubilaue induco, ventos abigoque vocoque,
vipereas rumpo verbis et carmine fauces,
vivaque saxa sua convulsaue robora terra
et silvas moveo iubeoque tremescere montis
et mugire solum manesque exire sepulcris!
te quoque, Luna, traho, quamvis Temesaea labores
aera tuos minuant; currus quoque carmine nostro
pallet avi, pallet nostris Aurora venesis!
(199-209)

With your help when I have willed it, the
streams have run back to their fountain-

heads while the banks wondered; I lay the swollen, and stir up the calm seas by my spell; I drive the clouds and bring on the clouds; the winds I dispell and summon; I break the jaws of serpents with my incantations; living rocks and oaks I root up from their own soil; I move the forests, I bid the mountains shake, the earth to rumble and the ghosts to come forth from their tombs. Thee also, Luna, do I draw from the sky, though the clanging bronze of Temesa strive to aid thy throes; even the chariot of the Sun, my grandsire, pales at my song; Aurora pales at my points. (p.357)

These powers which Medea will demonstrate are formidable to say the least. They extend over all of nature, and are capable of inducing and controlling both natural and unnatural events. It is appropriate to note here that Ovid attributes many of these same powers to the art of poetry (Amores II, 1, 23 ff) and that both the poet's song and the witch's incantation share the same term in Latin, carmen. An awareness of the connection between magic and poetry is passed on to later generations of poets with Ovid's help. For example, Chaucer, following Ovid, will make a similar association between magic and poetry in the House of Fame (III. 1195-1293). The implications of this association are rooted in the belief of ancient peoples of the power of words to create and fashion reality.⁵⁹

Medea turns her carmina (208) to the task of reshaping Aeson's reality, reversing the flow of time for Jason's father until it returns to the fountain of his youth:

nunc opus est sucis, per quos renovata
senectus in florem redeat primosque
recolligat annos. (215-216)

Now I have need of juices by whose aid
old age may be renewed and may turn back
to the bloom of youth and regain its
early years. (p. 357)

In her confidence, Medea adds, "et dabitis." (217) She knows that what she has promised, her skill will be able to perform with the help of her gods. She then summons her dragon-drawn chariot to aid her in completing her feat. This remarkable conveyance, the significance of whose presence in Euripides' Medea has already been discussed, is at Medea's beck and call throughout the remainder of her tale. What in Euripides had been a token of divine aid, if not approbation, in Ovid becomes just another of the tools of Medea's trade. In addition, the dragons' proximity to Medea throughout Ovid's version of the story lends her some of the terror which such beasts inspire.

In her dragon-car, Medea wanders about the world gathering the essentials for the brew which will effect her miracle. In happy prefiguration of the outcome, Medea's dragons shed their skins after merely having been touched by the odor of the gathered grasses (236-237). This is a clever echo of an ancient etiology which established serpents as images of healing and rejuvenation, while at the same time it portrayed them as inimical to mankind.⁶⁰ Medea's association with these beasts transfers some of their duality to her and reinforces Ovid's characterization of her as a dualistic force of nature.

Now Medea sets to work preparing altars for the participating divinities, readying Aeson for his ordeal, and setting her cauldron on the boil:

Interea validum posito medicamen aeno
 fervet et exsultat spumisque tumentibus albet.
 illic Haemonia radices valle resectas
 seminaque floresque et sucos incoquit atros;
 adicit extremo lapides Oriente petitos
 et quas Oceani refluxum mare lavit harenas;
 addit et exceptas luna pernocte pruinas
 et strigis infamis ipsis cum carnibus alas
 inque virum soliti vultus mutare ferinos
 ambigui prosecta lupi;...(262-271)

Meanwhile the strong potion in the bronze pot is boiling, leaping and frothing white with the swelling foam. In this pot she boils roots cut in a Thessalian vale, together with seeds, flowers, and black juices. She adds to these ingredients pebbles sought for in the farthest Orient and sands which the ebbing tide of Ocean laves. She adds hoar frost gathered under the full moon, the wings of the uncanny screech-owl with the flesh as well, and the entrails of a werewolf which has the power of changing its wild-beast features into a man's. (p. 261)

In this passage, which proceeds for a few more lines, Ovid provides the quintessential description of the witch at work. For example, Seneca will use this passage to create his portrait of Medea. In addition, one cannot help but recall, among the manifold echoes of Ovid's scene, the bubbling cauldron tended so carefully by the witches who inform Macbeth of what Fate has in store for him.⁶¹

Medea's cauldron has an ancient and widespread heritage as an image of rebirth and fertility.⁶² The brew that she concocts within it is so powerful that a withered olive branch used by Medea as a ladle grows green and bears fruit; the drops which splash from the pot in the process of cooking and stirring cause the earth upon which they fall to flourish (277-284). With these two signs informing Medea that her "propositum mortali maius" (276) (more than mortal plan), is ready, she works her miracle on Aeson. With the accomplishment of this task by Medea, Ovid graphically extends the range of her powers beyond anything heretofore attempted by any poet whose works are extant. Euripides has Medea promise to help Aegeus become a father and Apollonius has her preserve Jason's life, but Ovid has her perform a feat greater in scope and implication than either of these predecessors. By virtue of Medea's charms and skill with magic plants and potions, the Phasian princess

actually reverses the process of time and delivers Aeson from death for a while.

Ovid goes one step further to insure that his audience will comprehend his message. He has Liber (Bacchus) recognize Medea's impressive talents and ask her to restore their youth to his aged nurses (294-296). In having the god petition and Medea comply with his request, Ovid demonstrates that his awe-inspiring heroine's skills make her more powerful than even the god of wine. Bacchus' appeal to Medea gives the audience a standard by which the range of her powers may be assessed. Medea's control over nature exceeds even that of the gods.

The audience has been made aware of the positive or beneficent potential in Medea, but this is not the complete portrait. Ovid abruptly turns the coin. With only the words "Neve doli cessent"(297) (and lest the artifices will yield), to hint at the possible motivation, Ovid commences to present the negative image. Her reputation established, Medea approaches the daughters of Pelias after faking a quarrel with Jason. Ovid shows that Medea's plot to destroy Pelias is completely gratuitous and self-directed. The will of Hera which was projected by the earlier accounts as the motivating force in the performance of Pelias' execution is completely obscured by Ovid. Ovid presents Medea as in complete control of the situation, as she was in the Aeson episode. She is "callida Colchis"(300-301) (the crafty Colchian), who needs the aid of neither divine or human inspiration to conceive of or execute her deeds.

Medea wins the confidence of Pelias' unsuspecting daughters with her protestations of friendship, and, like an experienced trickster, proves her skill yet one more time by a genuine demonstration of her

restorative powers. She takes the oldest ram in Pelias' flock and plunges it into her cauldron which is simmering with a potent brew. Out jumps a frisking lamb and the daughters are convinced (210-321). It must be emphasized that Medea's ability to perform this kind of miracle is completely genuine. It is Medea herself who is false, "fallax Aeetias"(326) (false daughter of Aeetes).

As she prepares the pot for her husband's ancient nemesis, she placed "sine viribus herbas"(327) (herbs without power), on the boil. Next she places Pelias and his bodyguard under a sleeping spell by virtue of the same incantations which brought slumber to the eyes of the ever vigilant dragon (330). Medea exhorts Pelias' daughters to cut up their father for the cauldron, appealing to their sense of filial piety (336). Ovid's sense of irony and paradox in this section of his narration are magnificent and Medea's portrait at this point becomes almost satanic. Medea's ability to manipulate her victims in this section of the story stems from her capacity to appreciate the virtue of filial piety. In this context her own betrayal of Aeetes and Jason's devotion to Aeson are appropriate foils to the present deed and enhance its ironic significance. The narrator comments on Pelias' daughters:

his, ut quaeque pia est, hortatibus in pia
prima est et, ne sit scelerata, facit
scelus (339-340)

Spurred on by these (Medea's) words, as each was filial she became first in the unfilial act, and that she might not be wicked did the wicked deed. (p. 367)

The daughters avert their eyes while plunging their weapons into their helpless father. Pelias awakens as the blows fall upon him. He cries out to his daughters who stop the slaughter, but Medea, not to be

foiled, delivers the coup de grâçe herself and plunges the old man into the boiling caldron (344-350). Thus Medea not only plans the death of Pelias, but is his ultimate executioner as well. There is no Jason here to share her culpability, just as there was no one to share the glory of her triumph over old age.

In his narrative comment which commences the next section of the story, Ovid states:

Quod nisi pennatis serpentibus isset in auras,
non exempta foret poenae.... (350-351)

But had she not gone away through the air drawn
by her winged dragons, she would not have
escaped punishment. (p. 367)

The dragons do not merely serve Medea in the performance of her good deeds; they are there to obey her malice as well. Just like Medea's powers, the serpents' potency is double-edged and depends upon the malevolence or beneficence of the will directing it to determine its outcome. One is reminded of the portrait of Medea in Cicero's De Natura Deorum which was discussed above. It will be remembered that Cotta the Academician had used Medea to demonstrate that man's reason, like every other faculty, was neither a blessing nor an evil in itself, but depended upon the human will directing it for the benevolence or maliciousness of its effects. Medea was cited as an example of rationality used by someone with criminal intent (III, xxvi-xxvii). Cotta goes as far as to say that evil would be impossible without the god-given human faculty of reason (III, xxviii, 71). Ovid, it seems, is following this line of thought which places a great deal of responsibility on the individual for the outcome of his or her deeds.

Medea embarks on the second of her dragon-powered journeys at this point. This time she soars above the sites of suitably unhappy

transformations. For example, a reference to a refugee from Deucalion's flood takes the reader back to that cosmic disaster (353-354). Medea then flies over the places made famous by Cycnus, Combe, Menephron and others whose metamorphoses are connected with tragedy. Combe is especially significant because a transformation saved her from death at the hands of her sons (382-383). The culmination of these inauspicious travels is Corinth, which Medea reaches just in time to frustrate Jason's hopes for future happiness. This section of the story is foreshortened to eliminate most of the symbolic content of the Euripidean account, or that of Ovid's own Heroides. One critic has suggested that Ovid did this because he may have already treated this episode in great detail in his lost Medea.⁶³ There is, however, an even more important and relevant reason for the condensation of the story at this point which is consistent with the significance of the character of Medea that Ovid is drawing in Metamorphoses. Ovid's Medea in this poem is not the faithful wife who, after years at her husband's side enduring hardship and privation together with Jason in exile, is now cast out by her insensitive, opportunistic spouse. In Euripides' tragedy, this characterization brings a great deal of sympathy to the figure of Medea. Ovid wants none of that for his heroine. In Metamorphoses, Medea's separation from Jason is self-inflicted, a fact which shifts the sympathy of the audience from Medea to her husband. Ovid has Medea abandon Jason and turn up in Corinth after a prolonged absence necessitated by her crimes, bringing malice and destruction with her. Notice the brevity of Ovid's condensation:

sed postquam Colchis arsit nova nupta venesis
 flagrantemque domum regis mare vidit utrumque,
 sanguine natorum perfunditur inpius ensis,
 ultaque se male mater Iasonis effugit arma.
 (394-397)

But after the new wife had been burnt by
the Colchian witchcraft, and the two seas
had seen the king's palace aflame, she
stained her impious sword in the blood of
her sons; and then, after this horrid
vengeance, the mother fled Jason's
sword. (p. 371)

Four lines are devoted to what many poets, and Ovid himself in other works had considered her most significant and problematic actions. Medea is saved from punishment a second time by her dragons who whisk her to Athens where her reception by Aegeus is deplored by the narrator:

excipit hanc Aegeus facto demmandus in uno,
nec satis hospitium est, thalami quoque
foedere iungit. (402-402)

Aegeus received her, that one deed enough
to doom him: but he was not content with
hospitality: he made her his wife as well
(p. 371)

This censure can be seen in direct contradiction to the praise bestowed upon Aegeus by the Chorus of Corinthian women in Euripides' play, the significance of which was discussed in Chapter One. Aegeus, it will be remembered, promised refuge to Medea in exchange for her aid in curing his childlessness. In vivid contrast, as Ovid tells the tale, Aegeus' foolish act almost costs him the life of his only son and heir, the hero, Theseus, whose promising career as saviour and benefactor of humankind was just commencing (404-405). Through her threat to Theseus, Medea's inimical nature develops in stature. She has grown in malice during the course of her story into an enemy of all mankind. Ovid takes the time at this point in his narration to give the pedigree of the poison which Medea had intended for Theseus (408-419). This is not an inept digression on Ovid's part. The poison is prepared from herbs which were spawned by the flecks of foam which dropped from the mouth of the hell-hound, Cerebus, as Hercules dragged him from his lair. The fabulous

origin of this particular poison enhances the presentation of Medea's character which Ovid has been developing. Medea becomes less and less human and more and more preternaturally evil during the course of Ovid's narrative.

As with the destruction of Pelias, Medea has persuaded someone else to be her minister of destruction. This time, however, tragedy is averted when Aegeus recognizes the "signa sui generis"(423) (the tokens of his own family) on the hilt of Theseus' sword and dashes the fateful cup from his son's lips in the nick of time. Medea disappears from the scene and escapes destruction in a highly significant way. Her faithful dragons are not summoned and "effugit illa necem nebulis per carmina motis"(424) (she escaped death in a dark whirlwind summoned through her spells). Medea no longer needs her serpent-drawn chariot for transportation; she has become a whirlwind of destruction set loose upon humanity, completely self-propelled.

Thus Medea has attained the dimensions of a force of nature as powerful and wantonly destructive as a tornado.⁶⁴ There is nothing and no one with sufficient force to contain her as she escapes the scene of her latest and most diabolical crime.

Medea's story is deliberately left open-ended by Ovid in the Metamorphoses, perhaps the only story in this work upon which Ovid does not put closure. The effect of such open-endedness is astounding and the story is one of the most memorable in Ovid's work. Through this vivid portrait, Ovid demonstrates the potential for human evil when passion is connected to power and directed by intelligence and a forceful will. As we have seen, in her struggle against her incipient passion for Jason, Medea is aware of and makes the audience realize the

potential for evil outcome that lies in making the wrong moral choice. Once her decision is made to follow the path marked out for her by a less than lawful love, there is no turning back. A lust for evil takes hold of Medea. She may direct her malice toward any target she wishes and the potency of her magic renders her indomitable. She attains the stature of a force of nature, if not of a goddess which in a moral sense is less than human. The tragedy of her tale as Ovid presents it here, lies in the fact that whatever potential she may have had for performing benevolent, life-sustaining deeds has been corrupted by the moral choices she has made. Ovid makes sure that his audience understands that it is Medea's damaged moral nature, and not Jason's broken vows, which creates so much havoc in her world.⁶⁵

With her gratuitously malicious plot to murder Pelias, Medea embarks on a rampage of destructive acts for which Ovid sees no end. There is no justification for Medea in Ovid's Metamorphoses, no attempt to mitigate the judgment of his audience by exhibiting her deeds as prompted by the betrayal of a distraught wife and mother as there was in the Heroides. In the Metamorphoses, Ovid has created a terrifying portrait in which his Medea exemplifies the limitless possibilities for evil inherent in the human soul. More importantly, as a true moralist, Ovid has Medea bear all the onus for the crimes she commits against her fellow human beings; crimes which through her attempt on the life of Theseus threaten the future of all humanity.⁶⁶

There remain in Ovid's works only a few minor references to Medea which do little to alter the significance of the portrait just analyzed. In the Fasti,⁶⁷ Aegeus is taken to task again for welcoming Medea to his bosom (II. 41-42), and Medea is represented as a type of those impious

criminals who should be forbidden to participate in the celebration of the feast of kinship (II. 624-630). In the Tristia,⁶⁸ we find a passing reference to the employment of Medea's slaughter of her children as a subject for their work by painters (II. 526) and a retelling of Medea's treachery towards Apsyrtus as an etiology of the origin of Tomis (III, ix), which Ovid presents to give those in Rome some idea of the rigors of his place of exile.

So far, as we have seen, the Latin portraits of Medea have been highly judgmental. Unlike Euripides, who raises questions concerning the evaluation of Medea's character, or Apollonius, who presents Medea as a young girl constrained by the designs of divinity to follow her fateful path, the Latin authors portray a Medea who is intellectually capable of making and acting upon moral choices and they judge her accordingly. There are a number of causes to which we may attribute this characterization of Medea. First, as was cited earlier, women had more freedom under Roman law than under Athenian and with the right of self determination comes the related responsibility for morally acceptable actions.⁶⁹ For instance, in his mythic history of Rome, which Augustus used as propaganda in his striving to effect moral reform in the early Empire,⁷⁰ Livy presented heroic examples of women capable of ethical deliberation and moral action for the women of Imperial Rome to emulate.⁷¹ More importantly, the majority of philosophies which were popular during the late republic and early imperial epochs preached a code of ethical behavior in which moderation was a crucial virtue.⁷² The educated Roman, whether he or she adhered to Stoic, Epicurean, Academic, or Peripatetic philosophical theories believed that the excesses of passion were the roots of evil deeds and not only should be, but could be con-

trolled by the exercise of the regulating faculty of reason. The workings of Fate were beyond human control, but it was up to the individual man or woman to choose how to deal with largess or frugality of destiny. Abandonment to joy or to excessive grief were equally to be avoided.

One would expect someone like Cicero to exhibit such an attitude toward human behavior, as indeed he does in De Natura Deorum. Cicero uses Medea as a negative example, one in which the proper roles are reversed and reason is used to serve the ends of passion and evil purpose. Surprisingly, however, Ovid, the praeceptor amoris, also applies such ethical attitudes to his treatment of passion. Although his Ars Amatoria and Remedia Amoris play upon the ironies of using moderatio in connection with the processes of falling in and out of love, that ethical concept is at the very center of those two works. In the Metamorphoses, moreover, the virtue of moderation is the central theme of a number of episodes, particularly those of Phaethon (II. 1 ff) and Icarus (VIII. 185 ff). In the course of his narrative, it becomes obvious that Ovid assumes that his audience will be able to place the moral choices which Medea makes within the ethical contexts of moderation, rational restraint and self-control. Therefore, for Ovid as well as Cicero, Medea is a negative example of moral action.

Up to this point the Latin sources seem to be in agreement in their presentation and evaluation of Medea. She is not a victim of masculine insensibility, divinely inspired love, or fate as she was in the various Greek sources, but rather Medea is an arch criminal whose powers of reason and deliberation, skill in magic, and commitment to making the wrong moral choice make her a threat to human welfare. Even the more sympathetic portrait of Medea in the Heroides cannot escape completely

from the ethical context inherent in the other Latin sources and the judgment it implies for Medea.

Chapter II: Notes

¹E. H. Warmington, Introd., Ennius and Caecilius, Vol. I of Remains of Old Latin, with an English translation by the editor, Loeb Classical Library (1935; rpt. rev. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1956), pp.viii-xvii. All references to the works of Ennius will be taken from this edition and will appear as lines with numbers in parentheses after each citation. In addition, all translations of Ennius' text will be taken from this edition with references appearing as page numbers in parentheses after each citation.

²For an example of such extra-literary allusions see Cicero, De Natura Deorum, in De Natura Deorum and Academica, with an English translation by H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library (1933; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1951), II. 35, III. 26. All subsequent references to this work of Cicero's will be taken from this edition and will appear as book and section numbers in parentheses after each citation. See also Ovid, Amores, in Heroides and Amores, with an English translation by Grant Showerman, Loeb Classical Library (1921; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1947), I, xv. 21-22. This is a reference to Varro's Argonautica. For a description of references to Medea among historians and literary critics see Michael Grant, Roman Literature (1954; rpt. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1958), p. 220. Harold Mattingly, Roman Imperial Civilization (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor, 1959), p. 316. Edward Kennard Rand, Ovid and His Influence (New York: Cooper Square Pub., 1963), pp. 17-18. L.P.Wilkinson, Ovid Recalled (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1955), pp. 115-116, 149. All translations of citations from Cicero and Ovid will be taken from the above editions.

³Grant, pp. 9-10; on Cicero in this context, 54-55; 64, 137-145. J. M. Ross, Introd. The Nature of the Gods, by Cicero, translated by Horace C. O. McGregor (New York: Penguin Books, 1972), informs us that Cicero was reading Euripides' Medea when apprehended by his assassins, p. 15; on Cicero's use of Greek models, p. 23. See also Cicero, De Natura Deorum I, iv. 8.

⁴Horace, Ars Poetica in Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica, with an English translation by H. Rushton Fairclough, Loeb Classical Library (1926; rev. rpt. 1929; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1947), 11. 52-53, 268-269, 309-311. In same volume see Epistle II, i. 156-157. Grant, pp. 10-13. All translations of Horace's Ars Poetica will be taken from this edition.

⁵Moses Hadas, The Living Tradition, Vol. VII of Perspectives in Humanism: The Future of Tradition, ed. Ruth Nanda Anshen (New York: New American Library, 1967), pp. 116-120. Mattingly, pp. 244, 291. Sarah B. Pomeroy, Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity (New York: Schocken Books: 1975), p. 117. Brooks Otis, Ovid as an Epic Poet (Cambridge: The Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 4-44. Rand, p. 72. Wilkinson, pp. 4, 14-15, 47-48, 68, 144-147, 152-155, 269.

⁶ Grant, pp. 13, 47, 55, 137-138. Horace, Ars Poetica, 285-288. Hadas, pp. 121-127, Otis, pp. 4-44, 306. 345. Wilkinson, pp. 86, 270 ff.

⁷ Grant, pp. 137, 179. Otis, pp. 6, 172, 200, 218. Wilkinson, pp. 22, 160, 206, 348.

⁸ For an idea of how well this ground has been covered see Otis, pp. 346-394.

⁹ The list of poets in the Latin language whose treatments of the Medea theme have been lost or survived only in fragmented form includes Accius, Ennius, Pacuvius, Ovid and Varro. See Warmington, p. viii.

¹⁰ Grant, pp. 180-181. Warmington, pp. xvii-xxvi.

¹¹ Ennius, p. 311 n.

¹² Ennius, p. 311 n.

¹³ Errans has a double meaning. Warmington uses a passive rendering "misled," p. 313, but the word could also be translated as wandering (i.e. at will). The moral implications of the word change with the choice of translation.

¹⁴ De Natura Deorum, III, xxv. 65.

¹⁵ See Chapter I, pp. 10-19.

¹⁶ Horace, Ars Poetica, 333-346, states that literature was indeed expected to instruct as well as entertain its audience.

¹⁷ Cicero, De Natura Deorum, III. 65-68. References to Accius' Medea in same work, II. 89, III. 67. The latter is a description of the slaying of Apsyrtus. All further references to this work will appear as Book and section numbers in parentheses after each citation.

¹⁸ This refusal to grant Medea excuses for her actions is related to the high regard and great expectations which Roman society had for its women. See Pomeroy, pp. 159, 230. In education women were expected to study philosophy and deemed capable of virtuous thought and action, Pomeroy, p. 171.

¹⁹ Cicero, Tusculan Disputations, with an English translation by J. E. King, Loeb Classical Library (1927; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1960), IV, 32, 69.

²⁰ Livy, Livy I and II, with an English translation by B. O. Foster, Loeb Classical Library (1919, 1922; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1960), I, lvii. 6-lix.3, III xlii. 1, xlix. 8.

²¹ The downfall of Tarquin heralds the establishment of republican Rome, Ibid. Grant, pp. 98-102. Mattingly, on stoicism, p. 280.

²² A number of examples may be cited from Livy; Lavinia acting as regent after the death of Aeneas, I, iii. 1-2, the quick thinking and resourcefulness of the Sabine brides averts a destructive confrontation between Roman husbands and Sabine in-laws, I, xiii. 1-8, courageous Cloelia, II, xii. 1-11, Veturia and Volumnia, the mother and wife of the renegade, Coriolanus, II, xl. 1-12, the women of Rome who had enough wealth and sense of social responsibility to ransom the city from the Gauls, V, 1.7-8. Livy as a moralist, Grant, p. 99.

²³ Pomeroy addresses herself to the question of the comparative positions of Athenian and Roman women in their respective societies in great detail, pp. 149-226. For a discussion of the question from a literary point of view see George Luck, "The Woman's Role in Latin Love Poetry," in Perspectives of Roman Poetry: A Classics Symposium, edited G. Karl Galinsky (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1974), pp. 15-31.

²⁴ Pomeroy, p. 149.

²⁵ Ars Poetica, 119 ff.

²⁶ Ars Poetica, 185. The word Horace uses to present Medea's act is trucidet, cut into pieces, butcher, which is quite graphic.

²⁷ Among these early references to Medea are Ovid, Amores, op. cit., II, xi. 1-6, which may be compared to the Nurse's speech from Ennius' Medea Exul and Amores, II, xviii. 13 ff, which contains references to Ovid's lost play, Medea and his extant Heroides.

²⁸ I. M. Le M. Du Quesnay, "The Amores," in Ovid, edited by J. W. Binns (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), pp. 3-4. See also Rand, pp. 9-16 and Wilkinson, pp. 44-82.

²⁹ Ovid, Metamorphoses, with an English translation by Frank Justus Miller, Loeb Classical Library (1916; rpt. rev. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1977), Books VI and VII. All future references to the Metamorphoses will be taken from this edition and will appear as Book and/or line numbers in parentheses after each citation. All translations of the text of Metamorphoses will be taken from this edition.

³⁰ Grant, p. 210. A. S. Hollis, "The Ars Amatoria and Remedia Amoris, in Binns, pp. 84-115. Rand, p. 33. Wilkinson, pp. 118-143.

³¹ Ovid, Artis Amatoriae, in The Art of Love and Other Poems, edited with an English translation by J. H. Mozley, Loeb Classical Library (1929; rpt. rev. 1939; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1969), I. 29-30. All future references to the Ars Amatoria and Remedia Amoris will be cited from this edition and will appear as Book and/or line numbers in parentheses directly after each quotation. See also Hollis, pp. 88-89. Although Ovid was probably not completely serious in his intention to teach willing neophyte about love and its remedies, subsequent ages, which lacked his sense of humor, took him seriously. The Remedia Amoris, especially, became a staple of physicians treating love's lunacy during the Middle Ages. Rand, pp. 137-138. Wilkinson, pp. 382-384.

³² Wilkinson, pp. 120-123, 143 seems to pronounce a negative judgment upon Ovid's artificiality as does Rand, p. 47. On the other hand Hollis, p. 88, raises the question of whether one must evaluate artifice negatively, or apply different criteria to these poems. For a more objective analysis of the Ars Amatoria and Remedia Amoris, see Hermann Frankel, Ovid: A Poet Between Two Worlds (Berkeley: Univ. of Cal. Press, 1969), pp. 53-72.

³³ Horace, Ars Poetica, 123. One of the few references to Medea in the poetry of Vergil establishes the cruelty of Love by comparing him to Medea, Eclogues, in Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid I-VI, edited with an English translation by H. Rushton Fairclough, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1940), VIII. 47-50.

³⁴ Ars Amatoria, II. 381-382. Remedia Amoris, 59-60.

³⁵ Agamemnon suffers from the same censure and Clytemnestra's revenge is defended on the same grounds, that the son of Atreus should have been more adept at secrecy, Ars Amatoria, II. 399-408. For a discussion of the connection between Clytemnestra in Greek Literature see Chapter I, pp. 11-12 n. Also Pomeroy, p. 110, and Philip E. Slater, The Glory of Hera: Greek Mythology and the Greek Family (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), p. 164.

³⁶ The stories of the Sabine Women and Veturia and Volumnia previously cited in Livy are evidence of this. See also Pomeroy, pp. 149-189. Luck, p. 27. One also calls to mind Ovid's disclaimer that his didactic love poems are not intended for maidens or matrons Ars Amatoria, I. 31-32, in this connection.

³⁷ There are a number of critics who claim that Ovid describes love playfully, as a game, Hollis, p. 88, Otis, p. 18, Rand, p. 47, Wilkinson, p. 120. However, the metaphors which dominate the poems

are taken from warfare, hunting and board games similar to chess, all of which may be seen as variations of the same activity. For example, see Ars Amatoria, III. 353 ff.

³⁸ Otis, pp. 43-44. Rand, pp. 45-47, Wilkinson, pp. 127, 133, 143. Hollis, pp. 89 ff, on the other hand, does not assume that rhetoric precludes depth of meaning or seriousness of intention on the part of Ovid.

³⁹ Hollis, pp. 94-97. Rand, pp. 54-55. Wilkinson, pp. 144-145.

⁴⁰ W. S. Anderson, "The Heroides," in Binns, pp. 65-68. Anderson cites Propertius' Elegy, IV.3 as the probable prototype of Ovid's letters.

⁴¹ Anderson, pp. 66-67.

⁴² Ovid, Heroides, in Showerman, VI and XII. There is another brief reference to Jason and Medea in Heroides, XVII. 225-236, in which Helen, who is considering flight with Paris wonders whether the amorous Trojan will prove as false to her as Jason did to Medea.

⁴³ See Chapter I, p. 23 ff.

⁴⁴ Ovid significantly employs Hecate's title as virgin goddess of the moon, Diana. For an account of the various forms and epithets under which Hecate/Diana was known in ancient times see Robert Graves, The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth (1948; amended and enlarged New York: Farrar, Staus and Giroux, 1966), pp. 24, 61-73.

⁴⁵ This is especially true of the drama from the Medea of Seneca to the Medée of Jean Anouilh. See Kate Hamburger, From Sophocles to Sartre: Figures from Greek Tragedy, Classical and Modern, translated by Helen Sebba (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1969), pp. 123-134. The revenge motif will present some potent problems and elicit ingenious solutions in the works of the poets of the Middle Ages as we shall see later.

⁴⁶ See Otis, p. 62, Rand, pp. 17-18 and Wilkinson, p. 116 for speculation concerning the reason for this. They suggest that Medea's vengeance is not a significant part of narrative in Metamorphoses because Ovid had treated it in detail in his lost tragedy. However, those who know Ovid's work will realize that this is not an adequate explanation.

⁴⁷ Irving Singer, "Love in Ovid and Lucretius," The Hudson Review (Winter, 1965-1966), 537-559. This piece was eventually incorporated

into Singer's longer work The Nature of Love: Plato to Luther (New York: Random House, 1966). Rand, pp. 62-63. Anderson, p. 64. On the mutual destructiveness of Ovid's depiction of the love relationship see Katherine M. Rogers, The Troublesome Helpmate: A History of Misogyny in Literature (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1966), pp.50-51.

⁴⁸E. J. Kenney, "The Style of the Metamorphoses," in Binns, p.117. Otis, pp. 59-61, 89.

⁴⁹Otis, p. 172.

⁵⁰There is a striking example of this compulsion to evil-doing to be found in St. Augustine, Confessions, 2 vols. with an English translation by William Watts, Loeb Classical Library (1912; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1950), II, 2-4.

⁵¹Frederick Copleston, S. J. Greece and Rome, Vol. I of A History of Philosophy 2nd ed. (1950; rpt. Westminster: The Newman Press, 1960), pp. 108-109, 334, 421, 428-429, 435-437. Marcus Aurelius, To Himself (better known as Meditations), in Essential Works of Stoicism, edited with an introduction by Moses Hadas (New York: Bantam, 1961), p. 154.

⁵²Ibid. See also Cicero's summary of stoic beliefs concerning this issue, De Natura Deorum, II. 144 ff.

⁵³Otis, pp. 172-173.

⁵⁴Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces (1949; rpt. New York: Meridian Books, 1969), pp. 52-53, 193. Robert Graves, The Greek Myths, Vol. II (1955; rpt. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1957), p. 222.

⁵⁵Apollodorus, The Library, Vol. I, with an English translation by Sir James George Frazer, Loeb Classical Library (1921; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1961), pp. 121-122 n. Graves, The Greek Myths, Vol. II, pp. 252-253. For the surviving passage see Hesiod, The Returns, in The Homeric Hymns and Homerica, edited with an English translation by Hugh G. Evelyn-White, Loeb Classical Library (1914; rpt. rev. 1920; rpt. rev. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press (1959), p.526.

⁵⁶Euripides, is the earliest extant reference, but his allusion presupposes antecedents, Medea, 486-487. Appolonius of Rhodes and Appollodorus state that the chastisement of Pelias through the agency of Medea was a primary cause for Hera's patronage of the Argonauts, Argonautica, III. 1134-1136, IV. 241-245; The Library, I, ix. 16.

⁵⁷Graves, The Greek Myths, p. 252. Apollodorus, I, ix. 27.

- 58 Apollonius, III. 845 ff.
- 59 Graves, The White Goddess, pp. 17-26, Sir James George Frazer, Balder the Beautiful, Vol. I, The Golden Bough 3rd. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1935), pp. 104-105; Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild, Vol. I, The Golden Bough, pp. 104-108.
- 60 N. K. Sandars, trans., The Epic of Gilgamesh (1960; rpt. rev. New York: Penguin Books, 1974), pp. 116-117. Joseph Campbell, The Masks of God, Vol. III: Occidental Mythology (1964; rpt. New York: Viking Compass, 1970), pp. 9-17.
- 61 Macbeth, IV, i. 1-38. For an account of Shakespeare's indebtedness to Ovid see Wilkinson, pp. 406 ff.
- 62 Sir James George Frazer, Adonis, Attis, Osiris Vol. I, The Golden Bough, pp. 180-181, and Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild, Vol. II, The Golden Bough pp. 142-143. See also Joseph Campbell, The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology (1964; rpt. New York: The Viking Press, 1971), pp. 308-309. Graves, The White Goddess, pp. 88, 132. Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones, trans., "Branwen Daughter of Llŷr," in The Mabinogion (1949; rpt. New York: Dutton, 1975, pp. 36-37. Charles Squire, Celtic Myth and Legend, Poetry and Romance, first published 1905 under title The Mythology of the British Islands (rpt. New York: Bell Publishing Co., 1979), pp. 54, 71, 176, 273, 290, 366.
- 63 Wilkinson, p. 116.
- 64 One need only recall Yahweh's response to Job from his manifestation as a whirlwind to realize the significance of such an exit, Job xxxviii. 1-2.
- 65 As Otis points out, passion is not only a destructive motivating force for Ovid. When it is mutual and lawful, love can be life sustaining and beneficent, pp. 306-345.
- 66 This evaluation of Ovid as a moral poet is based only on his retelling of Medea and as a result of its narrow base must be considered tenuous. However, although it runs counter to the opinion held by many critics and historians as the subsequent citations will demonstrate, the consideration of Ovid as a moral writer is worth a second and deeper look; Grant, pp. 206-216, Mattingly, pp. 291, 313-316. Otis, p. 205. Wilkinson, pp. 297-299. Frankel, pp. 72-111.
- 67 Ovid, Ovid's Fasti, with an English translation by Sir James George Frazer, Loeb Classical Library (1931; rpt. Cambridge; Harvard Univ. Press, 1951).

⁶⁸ Ovid, Tristia: Ex Ponto, with an English translation by Arthur Leslie Wheeler, Loeb Classical Library (1924, rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1975).

⁶⁹ Pomeroy, p. 171.

⁷⁰ Grant, pp. 10-101, 171-174, 184-187. Mattingly, p. 295.

⁷¹ See notes 20-23 above.

⁷² Copleston, pp. 428-437. Mattingly, pp. 280-283. Ross, pp. 34-52.

Chapter III: The Last of the Roman Portraits

There are three portraits of Medea by Roman Latin writers which remain to be considered; that of the dramatist, Seneca, that of the epic poet Valerius Flaccus, and finally, that of the mythographer, Hyginus. Her appearance in the works of these writers attests to the continued interest in Medea's story among the poets of the Latin Silver Age and beyond and each is distinctive in its handling of the material. Seneca, following many cues left by Ovid¹ provides the audience with a titanic creature whose greater than human capacities for both suffering and revenge are even more astonishing than those presented by Euripides. Valerius Flaccus hearkens back to Apollonius' version of the tale, especially in his use of divine intervention in the lives of Jason and his fated consort. Finally, Hyginus' brief sketch provides justifications for the heroine as well as reconciliations with members of her wronged family which ameliorate her culpability. Of these portrayals, that of Valerius Flaccus presents the most interesting points of comparison with the medieval portraits and indeed with the entire genre of Romance. These will be examined in due time, but the portrait in Seneca's Medea demands immediate attention.

Seneca's Medea is of uncertain date, as are all of his dramas,² and there are varying opinions concerning its literary value.³ Its

importance to this study, however, is paramount. It is especially significant because Seneca, through his philosophical works, if not his dramas, was among the pagan authors most admired by the intellectuals of the Middle Ages.⁴ Furthermore, one critic tells us that his dramas were not unknown to medieval writers⁵ and another declares that one of the purposes of Seneca's tragedies was to promulgate his Stoic philosophy.⁶ This last point raises some interesting questions in relation to a reading of Seneca's Medea which will be considered later. The most interesting of these queries would have to be who, if anyone, is Seneca's spokesman in the play.

There has been some speculation that the lost Medea of Ovid may have been the model for Seneca's play to the extent that one critic has suggested that the reader may discover the shape of the former in the actuality of the latter.⁷ That is a tempting but utterly futile line of enquiry. On the other hand, a close reading of the opening of Seneca's Medea and a comparison with those of the plays of Euripides and Ennius suggest some more substantial conclusions. Except for the brief reference to Tiphys,⁸ Seneca does not mention the voyage of Argo which Euripides and Ennius had cited as the ultimate cause of Medea's troubles. One must look elsewhere for Seneca's inspiration for the setting of the inception of his tragedy. There is no need for long and difficult search. The dramatic moment at which Seneca chooses to begin is the celebration of the wedding of Jason and Creusa, which becomes the subject of the Chorus' first utterance cast in the form of an epithalamion. It will be remembered that the twelfth letter of Ovid's Heroides presents the reader with a depiction the same awful moment of Medea's recognition of Jason's betrayal.⁹ Seneca takes the hint which Ovid

offered, building his tragedy around the incipient grief and righteous indignation of the abandoned wife. Seneca also has Medea exhibit confidence in the capacity of her powers to effect a vengeance that will dwarf her past deeds by comparison, spelling out Medea's warning with which Ovid closes her letter to Jason, "nescio quid certe mens mea maius agit!" (Heroides. xii.212) (Something portentous, surely, is working in my soul.) Medea, speaking her own prologue states:¹⁰

quodcumque vidit Pontus aut Phasis nefas,
videbit Isthmos. effera ignota horrida,
tremenda caelo pariter ac terris mala
mens intus agitat - vulnera et caedem et vagum
fonus per artus. levia memoravi nimis;
haec virgo feci. gravior exurgat dolor;
maiora iam me scelera post partus decent.
accingere ira teque in exitius para
furore toto. paria narrentur tua
repudia thalamis. quo virum linques modo?
hoc quo secuta es. rumpe iam segnes moras;
quae scelere parta est, scelere linquenda
est domus. (44-45)

Whatever horror Pontus has beheld, or Phasis, Isthmus shall behold. Wild deeds, unheard of, horrible, calamities at which heaven and earth alike shall tremble, my heart deep within its planning - wounds, slaughter, death, creeping from limb to limb. Ah, too trivial the deeds I have rehearsed: these things I did in girlhood. Let my grief rise to more deadly strength; greater crimes become me now that I am mother. Gird thyself with wrath, and prepare thee for deadly deeds with the full force of madness. Let the story of thy rejection match the story of thy marriage. How wilt thou leave thy husband? Even as thou didst follow him. Break off now dull delay; the home which by crime was gained, by crime must be abandoned. (pp. 231-233)

Seneca's portrayal of Medea as a woman whose maturity, which is established by the fact that she has borne children, demands enormities worthy of her was perhaps suggested by Ovid. It will be remembered that Ovid censures Jason for abandoning Medea "iam matrem" (Ars Amatoria.

iii. 34-4). What in Ovid was a reference to the crimes perpetrated on women by men, in Seneca becomes the leitmotif which binds the events of his play into a cohesive whole. Medea prepares the audience for what is to follow by describing the emotions which will motivate her actions, wrath and madness. It is important to note at this point that Seneca believes wrath to be a form of madness and that anyone in its grip is turned into a hideous monster.¹¹ The crimes which Medea promises to perform as an apt ending to her liaison with Jason are indeed portrayed more vividly in their violence than in any previous narration of the story. Even the version presented in Ovid's Metamorphoses (VII. 1-424) is no match for Seneca's presentation in this respect. This is because in Seneca's play, Medea is given the opportunity to match her wits and will against the combined forces of all her enemies.

Medea, abandoned by Jason, a friendless stranger in a hostile land whose very life is threatened by an edict from the highest authority, is left with no resources but herself. The anger and madness which she takes upon herself at the inception of the play sustain and energize her and render her in Horace's phrase, truly "ferox invictaque," (fierce and indomitable). Seneca's Medea is a more compelling agent of vengeance than even Euripides' heroine, who had at least one circum-spect ally in Aegeus. In Seneca's tragedy Medea is granted no assistance or moral support, but finds within herself resources enough to effect her triumph over her enemies.

It will be remembered that in Euripides' play, in addition to Aegeus, Medea was granted the sympathy of the Nurse, the Tutor of her children and, throughout most of the play, the Chorus of Corinthian women. These sources of support for Medea are all missing in Seneca.

The Nurse is present only as a foil to Medea.¹² Seneca's Nutrix is the voice of pragmatic reason who bids Medea to calm herself and become resigned to her adverse fortune. The Nurse's advice is not prompted by the noble (i.e. Stoic) virtue of self-control, but rather by a practical desire to keep a low profile from which to strike out in ambush at her mistress' enemies:

Sile, obsecro, questusque secreto abditos
 manda dolori. gravia quisquis vulnera
 patiente et aequo mutus animo pertulit,
 referre potuit; ira quae tegitur nocet;
 professa perdunt odia vindictae locum.
 (150-154)

Be silent, I pray thee, and confide to
 secret griefs thy hidden complaints. Whoe'er
 has dumbly borne hard blows with patient
 and calm soul, has been able to repay
 them; it is hidden wrath that harms;
 hatred proclaimed loses its chance for
 vengeance. (p. 329)

Medea scorns this craven attitude and sets the tone of her actions with a series of what can only be described as Heroic aphorisms such as, "Fortuna fortes metuit, ignavos premit," (159) (Fortune fears the brave, the cowardly overwhelms), "Numquam potest non esse virtuti locus," (161) (It can never be that for courage there is no place), "Qui nil potest sperare, desperet nihil," (163)¹³ (Whoso has naught to hope, let him despair naught). One would expect to encounter such speeches from the mouth of a warrior, and indeed there are examples too numerous to cite in the heroic literatures of the past,¹⁴ but on the lips of a woman they are positively astounding.

This scene raises some of the interesting questions which were mentioned earlier. The first is how is the audience to interpret the Nurse's advice and Medea's refusal? The Nurse surely does not represent the Stoic resolution and fortitude which Seneca propounds in such

treatises as "De Tranquillitate Animi:"

Nec ego negaverim aliquando cedendum, sed
sensim relato gradu et salvis signis, salva
militare dignitate; sanctiores tutioresque
sunt hostibus suis qui in fidem cum armis
veniunt. Hoc puto virtuti faciendum
studiosque virtutis.¹⁵ (IV. 1)

I myself would not deny that sometimes one
must retire, but it should be a gradual re-
treat without surrendering the standards,
without surrendering the honor of a soldier;
those are more respected by their enemies and
safer who come to terms with
their arms in their hands. (p. 227)

There are elements of courage and a fighting spirit in the above passage which are conspicuously lacking in the Nurse or in anyone else in the play, but which are indubitably a part of Medea's character. The following citation from Seneca's "De Brevitate Vitae," "Quid enim supra eum potest esse, qui supra fortunam est?" (v.3) (For what can possibly be above him who is above Fortune? p.301) sounds very much as if Medea could have spoken it. Finally in Seneca's "De Providentia," we find "ita adversarum impetus rerum viris fortis non vertit animum. Manet in statu et quicquid evenit in suum colorem trahit; est enim omnibus externis potentior," (ll. 1-2) (so the assaults of adversity do not weaken the spirit of a brave man. It always maintains its poise, and it gives its own colour to everything that happens; for it is mightier than all external things. pp. 7-9), and "Avida est periculi virtus et quo tendat, non quid passura sit cogitat, quoniam etiam quod passura est gloriae pars est." (iv. 4) (True worth is eager for danger and thinks rather of its goal than of what it may have to suffer, since even what it will have to suffer is a part of its glory. p. 27) Seneca's theme is constant in all of the above quotations. The adversities of fortune present the truly virtuous man or woman with ample opportunity to dis-

play his or her valorous nature. Evil fortune must be confronted as if it were a foe which one encountered on a battlefield from whom one must win the trophy of life, or die trying.

Only Medea, as has been shown, expresses such sentiments in Seneca's tragedy. As will be demonstrated, she maintains this warrior's stance to the conclusion of the play. When observed in this light the other characters, especially Creon and Jason, fare badly when compared to Medea.

The disturbing note in Seneca's Medea is his heroine's destructive rage, a madness which will ultimately consume all in its onslaught. This vengeful anger must be placed in the context of the play's dramatic situation. It is not an example of Medea run amuck or exhibiting the random violence of a tornado as she is portrayed in Ovid's Metamorphoses. In this regard, Seneca is careful to show that Jason is the ultimate cause of Medea's whirlwind of righteous indignation with his unprovoked betrayal of his wife in the interest of his own welfare.

From the time of Euripides at least, Jason's character has been plagued with the stigmas of oath-breaking and opportunism. Seneca's characterization continues that tradition. In Medea's prologue to the play which has already been cited, the heroine asks whether her divine progenitor, the Sun, may witness Jason's perfidiousness and continue his normal course through the sky undeterred:

spectat hoc nostri sator
Sol generis, et spectatur, et curru insidens
per solita puri spatia decurrit noli?
non redit in ortus et remetitur diem? (28-31)

Does he behold this, the Sun, father of my race, and do men still behold him as, sitting in his chariot, he courses over bright heaven's accustomed spaces? Why does he not return to his rising and measure back the day. (p. 231)

Medea wonders that the scope of Jason's enormity does not deter the normal course of natural events. On the other hand, in Seneca's philosophical treatises the reader will find the conviction that the cycles of nature, which often bring evil fortune may not be diverted.¹⁶

Furthermore, even a god may not alter what has been decreed since "scio omnia certa et in aeternam dicta lege decurrere. Fata nos ducunt et quantum cuique temporis restat prima nascentium hora disposuit." (De Providentia, v. 7) (I know that everything proceeds according to law that is fixed and enacted for all time. Fate guides us, and it was settled at the first hour of birth what length of time remains for each. p. 37). This statement has some interesting implications for both Jason and Medea, because each seems to be the agent of Fate with respect to the other. Jason provides Medea with the motivation to accomplish her most astounding exploits and Medea is shown to be cast in the role of Jason's nemesis by divine administrators of vengeance seeking retribution for the audacity of Argo's voyage. Thus in order to pass judgment upon the actions of either Jason or Medea, the audience must set them up as foils to each other in order to decide with whom its sympathy should be placed.¹⁷ There will be more about this point later.

Still in the prologue, Medea asks her divine forbear for his assistance in dealing with her predicament:

da, da per auras curribus patriis vehi,
committe habenas, genitor, et flagrantibus
ignifera lcris tribue moderari iuga;
gemino Corinthos litore opponens moras
cremata flammis maria committat duo.

(32-36)

Grant, oh grant that I ride through the
air in my father's car; give me the reins,
O sire, give me the right to guide thy
fire bearing steeds with the flaming

reins; then let Corinth, with her twin shores
of delay to ships, be consumed by the flames
and bring the two seas together. (p. 231)

Medea's prayer for divine aid in accomplishing her revenge is the only request for alliance which Seneca allows his heroine, and it is granted. Medea escapes from Corinth and from Jason's pursuit in the dragon-drawn chariot which was employed by Euripides and ubiquitous in the Metamorphoses. Seneca's use of the dragon-car is closer to Euripides' than to Ovid's. Seneca provides Medea with a god-sent method of escape which, as in Euripides, legitimates Medea's claim to be an agent of divine justice. This in turn renders Jason's final words ironic. As Medea is being borne aloft, Jason cries:

Per alta vade spatia sublimi aethere;
testare nullos esse, qua veheris, deos.
(1026-1027)

Go on through the lofty spaces of high
heaven and bear witness, where thou
ridest, that there are no gods. (p.315)

Jason's outrage to the contrary notwithstanding, in the light of Medea's prologue, the ending of the play, and indeed all its events, must be seen as a manifestation of the presence of divine concern in human affairs.¹⁸

An answer to the question of the audience's sympathy must be sought in the scene in which Jason and Medea appear together, each presenting his case. Unlike Euripides, who provides first a confrontation scene and then a seduction scene separated by the interview between Medea and Aegeus, there is only one meeting between Jason and his abandoned wife in Seneca's tragedy. Medea and Jason are given the opportunity to state their respective positions and level charges at each other. The exchange reveals how differently each one views and reacts to the

goads of necessity and the audience is given a chance to evaluate their opposed stances.

Just before Jason's entrance, Medea gives the audience some idea of how he will be received. Whatever passion was expended in loving Jason, an equal measure will now be energetically spent in hating him, "Si quaeris odio, misera, quen statuas modum, imitare amorem." (397-398) (If thou seekest, poor soul, what limit thou shouldst set to thy hate, copy thy love. p. 264) The power of the destruction thus loosed upon the world will have apocalyptic proportions:

quae ferarum immanitas,
quae Scylla, que Charybdis Ausonium mare
Siculumque sorbens quaeve anhelantem premens
Titana tantis Aetna fervebit minis?
non rapidus amnis, non procellosum mare
Pontusve Coro saevus aut vis ignium
adiuta flatu possit imitare impetum
ira nostras; sternam et evertam omnia.
(407-414)

What ferocity of beasts, what Scylla, what Charybdis, sucking up the Ausonian and Sicilian waters, or what Aetna, resting heavily on panting Titan, shall burn with such threats as I? No whirling river, no storm-tossed sea, no Pontus, raging beneath the north-west wind, no violence of fire, fanned by the gale, could imitate the on-rush of my wrath. I shall lay prostrate and destroy all things. (p. 263)

The ferocity of Medea's passion is matched by her ability to effect all that she threatens. The audience can rest assured that this terrible boast is not idle.

Next Medea turns her attention to explaining the deep cause of her hurt:

Timuit Creontem ac bella Thessalici ducis?
amor timere neminem verus potest.
sed cesserit coactus et dederit manus;
adire certe et coniugem extremo alloqui
sermone potuit. hoc quoque extimuit ferox.(415-419)

Did he fear Creon and the threats of Thessaly's
kind? True love can fear no man. But grant
that under compulsion he yielded and made
surrender; he could at least have come to me,
could have spoken some last words to his wife.
This also, though bold of heart, he feared
to do. (p. 263)

Medea is hurt by Jason's lack of love which she sees as manifested by his lack of fortitude. Had Jason truly loved her, he would have possessed courage enough to withstand any enemy. One must observe at this point that Medea is judging her husband by her own standards. Added to this awareness of the source of Jason's lack of resolve is the fact that he cloaked his actions from her. The revelation of the absence of candor, courage and loving commitment in Jason is what wounds Medea so deeply, a woman who had exhibited more than her share of the latter two qualities and who never broke faith with her husband.

Medea ends her speech with a terrifying resolution:

faciet hic faciet dies
quod nullus umquam taceat. invadam deos
et cuncta quatiā. (423-425)

This day shall do, shall do what whereof
no day shall e'er be done. I will storm
the gods, and shake the universe. (p. 263)

The stature that Medea attains with statements such as these is titanic. It is the true measure of Seneca's Medea that she accomplishes all that she promises. This is an aspect of Seneca's heroine which no other character in the play understands. She has the capacity to overcome all evils and all the enemies arrayed against her with the forces at her command.

The Nurse warns Medea, "nemo potentes aggredi tutus potest," (430" (No one may safely assail the strong. p. 265), just as Jason enters ironically bewailing his hardships and the constraints of fortune as

if he accedes to the Nurse's advice. His first words are, "O dura fata semper et sortem asperam, / cum saevit et cum parcit ex aequo malam!"

(431-432) (O fate ever hard, and fortune, cruel - when she rages and when she spares, equally malign! p. 265) The tone is unmistakable and the contrast in characterization is startling. Jason sees himself on the horns of a dilemma, a choice between two evils:

si vellem fidem
praestare meritis coniugis, leto fuit
caput offerendum; si mori nollen, fide
misero carendum, non timor vicit fidem,
sed trepida pietas; quippe sequeretur necem
proles parentum. (435-439)

Should I resolve to be faithful to my wife
according to her deserts, my life would be
forfeited to death; should I refuse to die,
alas! I must be faithless. It is not fear,
but fearful father-love that has conquered
faith; surely my children would share their
parents' death. (p. 265)

Beset by powerful adversaries, of whom his cousin Acastus is the nearest and most dangerous, Jason seeks security in alliance with the house of Corinth, which he hopes will provide a haven for himself and his sons. As Jason sees it, his moral choice is between fidelity to his progeny or to his wife. In weighing his decision, he sees his sons as the future and Medea as expendable to their needs. One may choose to see here the constraints of necessity binding Jason to his choice, as he does. However, the question then arises, where does that leave Medea?! Jason has Creon for his political ally and Creusa to provide sexual solace in his hour of need. He has provided a secure foster home for his sons (the question of the stepmother raised by Ovid in Heroides VI and XII must exist in the minds of the members of Seneca's audience as well, if not in Jason's). The only person whose safety and future is left out of Jason's consideration is Medea. Jason and Creon see her as non-essential excess

baggage. She is to be exiled, as Creon had informed her (262-271), left to the tender mercies of either Acastus or the Colchians, whoever has the good fortune to apprehend her first. It is difficult to imagine that Medea, or any woman for that matter, would see the wisdom of Jason's plan as he naively expects (441-444).

When viewed in this light, it is impossible to see Jason as "ingenuous and appealing," or as exhibiting "genuine kindness," as does Moses Hadas.¹⁹ What Hadas labels Medea's shockingly "unrelieved ruthlessness," when observed in the context of Jason's actions as they affect her personal safety, becomes rather the full force of righteous indignation. What kindness or ingenuousness is there in a man who uses a woman's passion for him to enlist her talents in his behalf, becomes the occasion for her committing a number of the most reprehensible crimes, fathers two children on her and then seeks to cut her loose in a hostile world at a moment when she would face the gravest perils? Medea will remind Jason of all of the above as she states her case in the scene under discussion (447-489).

Jason's only response to Medea's speech is that he was able to prevail upon Creon to reduce her sentence from death to banishment (491-492). He then advises her to take full advantage of the situation and flee while she can because "gavis ira regum est semper." (494) (Grievous ever is the wrath of kings. p. 269) This statement is the leitmotif of his motivation. He cannot bear the thought of so much royal power arraigned against him and he succumbs to his cowardice in the face of what he deems ineluctable bad fortune:

Cedo defessus malis.
et ipsa casus saepe iam expertos time.
(518-519)

I yield, worn with trouble. And do thou
thyself beware lest thou tempt fate too
often. (p. 275)

Medea's response to this advice is, "Fortuna semper omnis infra me
stetit." (520) (Always has every fortune stood beneath my feet. p.275)

The attitude presented here is echoed in Seneca's De Providentia:
"contemptum periculorum adsiduitas periclitandi dabit." (iv.13) (Familiarity with exposure to danger will give contempt for danger. p.31)

Medea is willing to engage all their foes, Acastus, Creon:

His adice Colchos, adice et Aeeten ducem,
Scythas Pelasgis iunge; demersos dabo. (527-518)

Add the Colchians to these, add Aeetes, too, to
lead them, join Scythians with Pelasgians; to
destruction I will give them all. (p.275)

If only Jason will remain faithful. His only answer to her remarkable love and courage is his heartfelt cowardliness, "Alta extimesco sceptrum" (529) (I tremble at lofty scepters, p. 275), to which Medea adds "Ne cupias vide." (529) (See that thou lust not after them. p.277) As was true of Euripides' heroine and Ovid's Heroidean portrait, Seneca's Medea knows her husband well. She intimates that greed, as well as cowardice, is among the adamant constraints which bind Jason to his decision to leave her.

The conclusion of the interview provides an important deviation from Euripides. In the Greek playwright's version, Medea's boys were exiled with their mother and her decision to use them as agents of her revenge occasions a second meeting with Jason to ask that they be allowed to petition their future stepmother in person not to share their mother's exile. Seneca has Jason planning all along to retain custody of his sons and has Medea ask Jason to surrender her their offspring to comfort her in exile (540-543). Jason's answer to his wife's request is:

haec causa vitae est, hoc perusti pectoris
 curis levamen. spiritu citius queam
 carere, membris, luce. (547-549)

This is my reason for living, this, my
 heart's comfort, consumed as it is with
 cares. Sooner could I part with breath,
 with limbs, with light. (p.277)

This is significant for two reasons. First it demonstrates Jason's complete selfishness and second it suggests to Medea the most effective means of avenging her betrayal. Both of these things Euripides had accomplished through his presentation of Medea's conversation with the kind-hearted Aegeus. As Seneca's Medea comments in an aside, "Sic natos amat?/bene est, tenetur, vulneri patuit locus." (549-550) (Thus does he love his sons? 'Tis well! I have him! The place to wound him is laid bare. p.279) In the speech which follows, Medea closes the confrontation by asking Jason to send their sons to her for a final maternal embrace and begging him to overlook her recent excesses of passion and remember only her better self (551-557). That Jason accepts this sudden reversal of attitude on Medea's part does not speak well for his intelligence or his ability to judge character.

Medea now begins to set her plans in motion with the observation, "fructus est scelerus tibi/nullum scelus putare." (563-564) (The fruit of thy crimes is to count nothing crime. P.299) and an awareness that the utmost speed is crucial to her success. This statement thematically links the middle of the play with the beginning and the end. The line is meant to evoke in the memory of the audience Medea's history to establish her preparedness to accomplish the task at hand.

A large portion of the remainder of the play is occupied with a narration, first by the Nurse (670 ff), and then by Medea (740 ff) of the elaborate preparations of the poisons with which Medea will annoint

the fatal peace offerings to her rival. What in Euripides' Medea is mentioned casually as a given of the plot (789), in Seneca becomes a crucial portion of the action to which the Roman playwright devotes almost two hundred lines, or roughly one-fifth of his play. This lengthy description of the preparation of the poisoned unguents with which Medea will anoint the robe, necklace and crown which are to be sent to Creusa is provided by Seneca in order to give his audience a fully realized account of Medea's skills and powers. This is done to establish the magnitude of Medea's stature. It will be remembered that Ovid presents such a detailed description of Medea's arts in his narration of the preparations for Aeson's restoration of youth (Metamorphoses. VII.179 ff.). In Ovid, the Aeson episode is contrasted with the tragic acts of destruction which follows. Seneca's depiction, on the other hand, is set in the context of Medea's revenge and is used to enlarge Medea's character to titanic proportions. It is significant to note that in order to achieve this effect the playwright includes two references to Prometheus in this section of the play, one by the Nurse (709), and one by Medea herself (820-824). In a passage which is reminiscent of Apollonius' Argonautica (III. 845 ff.), the Nurse enumerates a catalogue of Medea's store of potions and herbs, one of which is "sparsus cruore Promethei" (spattered with Prometheus' blood). If this were the only reference to the hero-god it might be dismissed as simply a display of allusive erudition. However, Medea will bring up Prometheus again in the process of anointing the marriage gifts:

ignis fulvo clusus in auro
latet obscurus, quem mihi caeli
qui furta luit viscere feto
dedit et docuit condere vires
arte, Prometheus. (820-824)

Within this tawny gold lurks fire, darkly
 hid; Prometheus gave it me, even he who
 expiates with ever-growing liver his theft
 from heaven, and taught me by his art how
 to store up its powers. (p. 297)

This passage is very important to interpreting Medea's significance, especially the "dedit et docuit." Prometheus the Titan hero-rebel who interposed his compassion and cunning between insignificant mankind and divine ill-will is presented as an ally and teacher of Medea's. By making her the Titan's protégée Seneca enhances Medea's stature. In addition Prometheus' wisdom, suffering and obstinate integrity become foils to Medea's. Her agonies, anger and isolation borrow significance from those of her titanic instructor. Like her mentor, Medea is alone and profoundly majestic in both her predicament and her response to it. Seneca's heroine is in one respect more fortunate than Prometheus, who could do nothing but suffer as he waited for Hercules to deliver him from his fetters. Medea, on the other hand, is an active participant in her own deliverance. There is also an ironic dimension to the comparison of Prometheus and Medea which emerges when one considers that the tragic titan's sufferings are the result of his benevolent actions toward mankind, while Medea's acts are enormities which are motivated by hatred and revenge.

There remains one more observation to be made about this play which concerns Seneca's portrayal of Jason. At the conclusion of the confrontation between husband and wife discussed earlier, the Chorus sings the second of its odes which deals with the ill effects of Argo's audacious voyage.²⁰ It begins by describing the ferocity of the passions of a scorned wife comparing it to a mighty river in spring flood and commenting:

caecus est ignis simulatus ira
 nec regi curat patiturve frenos
 aut timet mortem; cupit ire in ipsos
 obuius enses. (591-594)

Blind is the fire of love when fanned by
 rage, cares not to be controlled, brooks
 no restraint, has no fear of death; 'tis
 eager to advance even against the sword.
 (p. 281)

The Chorus proceeds to petition divine protection for the husband
 against the onslaught of such a deluge of violence. However, it is
 aware that this may not be granted since Neptune will oppose it, "sed
furit vinci dominus profundum/regna secunda." (597-598 (But the lord of
 the deep is enraged that the second realm is conquered. p. 281).
 Neptune is determined to exact vengeance for the transgressions of the
 Argonauts, who had violated his medium and made it subject to the
 commerce of men.

The Chorus now takes time to present the story of Phaethon as an
 example of what happens to those who attempt too much and to comment:

constit nulli via nota magno;
 vade qua tutum populo priori,
 rumpe nec sacro, violente, sancta
 foedera mundi. (603-606)

The familiar path has cost no mortal
 dear; walk thou where 'twas safe for
 folk aforesaid, nor break, rash man, the
 inviolable covenants of the universe.
 (pp. 281-283)

Such comments are typical of Choruses and rarely apply to the central
 figure of a play except to point out the discrepancy between the virtue
 of the via media and the actions of the hero or heroine under discussion.
 The Chorus then catalogues the Argonauts who came to a bad end during
 or after the voyage. Tiphys, Orpheus, Hercules, Hylas, Meleager, Idmon,
 Mopsus, Peleus, Palamedes and ultimately Pelias (who ordered the quest)

are among those who fell under the curse caused by the Argo's wake. The expedition is viewed here as a kind of primal sin which demands expiation from all who were involved:

Quisquis audacis tetigit carinae
nobiles remos nemorisque sacri
Pelion densa spoliavit umbra,
quisquis intravit scopulos vagantes
et tot emensus pelagi labores
barbara funem religavit ora
raptor externi rediturus auri,
exitu diro temperata ponti
iura piavit. (607-616)

Whoever handled that daring ship's famous oars and despoiled Pelion of his sacred grove's thick shade, whoever entered between the roaming rocks and, having passed the perils of the deep, moored his vessel on a savage shore, to return captor of foreign gold - all by a dreadful end atoned for the sea's outraged laws. (p. 283)

As narrated by the Chorus, Pelias' demise is particularly ironic and fitting since he who caused the vastness of the deep to be violated finds his ending in the narrow seething sea of Medea's boiling cauldron:

ipse qui preadam spoliūque iussit
aureum prima revehi carina,
ustus accenso Pelias aeno
arsit angustas vagus inter undas.
(664-669)

Pelias himself, who bade the prize of the golden spoil be brought away in the first ship, seething in a boiling pot, wandering amidst waters close confined, perished by fire. (p. 287)

Seneca's presentation of the deed renders Medea as an agent of divine justice. For the first time Pelias' bizarre demise is not told as simply another of Medea's long list of crimes. This fact becomes more significant in the last two lines of the choric ode which petition that Jason be spared the fate of his comrades, "iam satis, divi, mare vindi-

castis;/parcite iusso." (668-669) (Enough now, ye gods, have ye avenged the sea; spare him who was ordered to the task. p. 283) The prayer is of course ironic, but more important, before the audience hears the Nurse's trepidacious speech describing Medea at work or witnesses Medea herself preparing the wedding gifts, the Chorus presents the events to follow as a form of divine judgment upon Jason's audacity and Medea as the agent of Neptune. Thus the Chorus, though anything but sympathetic to Medea's plight, recognizes and informs the audience that the sufferings which Jason is about to endure are the result of his own actions which violated the boundaries of propriety imposed on men by gods.

This is a crucial observation because it shows that Jason is capable of going too far, of transgressing eternal laws. This would seem to be inconsistent with the portrait of the Jason who, seeking a safe refuge from his enemies, abandons his wife to her fate. However, it must be remembered that in so doing Jason is violating other laws and transgressing other boundaries. Medea has informed the audience in her prologue (1 ff.) of Jason's transgressions and will again bring them to mind as she prepares to slaughter her sons (924-925) and slays her second son before Jason's horrified eyes:

Hac qua recusas, qua doles, ferrum exigam.
i nunc, superbe, virginum thalamos pete,
relinque matres. (1006-1008)

Here where thou dost forbid it, where it will
grieve thee, will I plunge the sword. Go now
haughty man, take thee maids for wives, abandon
mothers. (p. 311)

In the context of the Chorus' two odes on the overreaching of the Argonauts, and Medea's repeated charges against him, Jason cannot be viewed as an innocent victim. The tragedy forces its audience to

acknowledge that Jason has performed exploits which have disrupted the natural order of things and broken laws which gods and men hold sacred. These violations demand retribution of which Medea is the agent. Jason has gone too far more than once and is to be held accountable for the disruption and discord which his actions have wrought. This accountability for human action is a commonplace of Stoic doctrine which Seneca has woven deeply into his play.²¹ While it does not allow the audience to extend sympathy to Medea, it provides a function for her actions which goes beyond personal vengeance and involves Jason in responsibility for the tragedy in which all are ruined.

Seneca's Medea is titanic, alienated, yet beyond the effects of fortune, a woman whose powers and purposefulness are awesome and terrifying. Seneca dehumanizes her portrait, rendering her an irresistible force which sweeps all obstacles from her path. The playwright enhances his heroine by his allusions to Prometheus and to the anger of Neptune, as well as by the common device of listing her specific powers (752-770), which include halting the sun in mid-career (768, see 28-31). In the light of all of this Jason's closing abuse of Medea is completely ironic. Where Seneca's Medea rides, she bears witness to an abiding interest of the gods in the affairs of men and to divine intervention for the purpose of chastizing human transgressors. In this Seneca departs from the earlier Roman portraits such as Ovid's and Cicero's in which Medea is presented as unrestrained evil incarnate. Seneca is closer to Euripides' rendering in making Medea an agent of god-directed punishment, though he differs from the Greek poet in depth of characterization and tone.²² Euripides, it will be remembered, cast Medea in the role of avenger of all womankind for the repressions of a

masculine-dominated culture. Seneca's Medea is fighting a purely personal battle against a husband whose unmitigated self-interest has cast her to their common enemies while securing a comfortable haven for himself and his sons.

If Seneca's Medea is more than human, a frenzied matron of titanic proportions who possesses maturity of power and purpose (910), Valerius Flaccus gives back to his portrait a number of the qualities of vulnerability, humanity, and appealing, youthful femininity infused into the characterization of Medea by Apollonius Rhodius. Medea is again the demure virgin selected by the gods to serve their own interests. The major problem confronting any analysis of Flaccus' poem is that the critic is forced to deal with a fragment.²³ The poem breaks off at the point where Jason and his crew are cornered by Apsyrtus and the Colchian fleet. Thus, the audience does not have a complete document from which to assess the significance shaped for Medea by Valerius Flaccus. However, the extant portion of the narrative is substantial and Flaccus provides enough information for a tentative interpretation.

There are a number of aspects of the poem which permit a reflection upon the theme of Medea as projected in Flaccus' Argonautica. First, Flaccus employs many devices of foreshadowing, including pronouncements by prophets, gods and material projected in sculpted scenes. By means of such devices Valerius Flaccus gives the most elaborate account of Medea's story to date.²⁴ Second, as mentioned earlier, Flaccus' Argonautica is characterized by a high visibility of gods and goddesses who shape and direct the movement of the story, the actions of the hero and heroine, and from whom many of the prophecies concerning the principal characters come. Third, Flaccus provides the audience with

an expanded version of the process by which Medea falls in love with and commits herself to Jason giving ample opportunity for the depiction of divine intervention as well as an exhibition of Medea's self-reflection. In this respect, Flaccus' account is far more elaborate than that of Apollonius Rhodius. In addition, Flaccus' narrative presents Medea and the audience with a chance to view Jason in the act of performing heroic exploits that magnify his worth and lovability. The scene in which this occurs, which occupies a good deal of Book VI (575-760), has a number of important analogues in medieval literature and will be examined later in greater detail. However, it takes several encounters between Jason and Medea before she will allow herself to give in to her passion; the initial meeting, the viewing from the wall, the second interview with Aeetes (Medea was not present at the first), and the final meeting with Jason for which Medea is prepared by Venus in the form of Circe and during which Medea resorts to magic to bind Jason's affections.

All of the above give ample evidence for an interpretation of Flaccus' portrait of Medea. Before passing to a discussion of their implications, it should be added that Flaccus presents an image of Medea that is twofold; Medea the virginal tool of the gods and Medea the witch. While the poet builds sympathy for the former in ways which shall be examined below, he presents the latter as a member of a terrifying profession which he views with loathing and horror. The presence of these two Medeas is unreconciled in the extant text and presents problems of inconsistency to the would-be interpreter. For example, a major question which arises is which Medea was to predominate as the

poem drew to its close. Indeed, as the poem breaks off in Book VIII, Medea, in terror lest Jason betray her to her brother's arms at the insistence of the Argonauts begins to demonstrate the violence of which she is capable after reminding Jason of what her magic powers have accomplished for him:

sic fata parantem
reddere dicta virum furiata mente refugit
vociferans. qualem Ogygias cum tollit in arces
Baccus et Aoniis inlidit Thyada truncis,
talis erat talemque iugis se virgo ferebat
cuncta pavens: fugit infestos vibrantibus hastis
terrigenas, fugit arduentes exterrita tauros.
(444-450)

So spoke she, and while the hero strove to answer she fled away like a mad fury, crying aloud upon him. Like a Thyiad when Bacchic frenzy drives her to the Ogygian hills and dashes her against Aonian trees, so was she then, so madly raged the maiden upon the thwarts, in fear of all that might befall: she flees the brandished spears of threatening giants, in terror she flees from firey bulls. (pp. 445-447)

The fragmentary condition of the ending makes definitive responses to this passage difficult. What does clearly emerge, however, is the rising tide of wrath and passion augmented by fear and indignation which characterizes Medea's reaction to the Argonauts' treacherous and craven desire to turn her over to her brother in order to avoid battle.

One is tempted to speculate further that in a completed version of the poem Medea would have been given more opportunities by her Greek companions to exhibit violent emotions. In any case, Flaccus would have had to provide some motivation in order that Medea's character could be rendered appropriate for the ending of her marriage to Jason which the poem foretells three times; Mopsus' vision (I.223-226), among the subjects depicted in the decorative sculpture on the entrance

to the Temple of the Sun (V. 433 ff.), and Hecate's lament over the loss of Medea as priestess in her temple (VI. 337-338). It is important to notice that this display of emotion is accompanied by references to Medea's accomplishments to date:

credidit arduos quis te tunc innigere tauros
posse? quis ad saevi venturum templa draconis?
o utinam ergo meus pro te non omnia posset
atque aliquid dubitare amor! quin nunc quoque
quaero
quid iubeas. (437-441)

Who believed then that thou couldst yoke the
fiery bulls, or couldst venture into the
precinct of the fierce serpent? Would then
that my love were not able to do all things
for thy sake, but doubted even a little!
Nay, now too I ask what thou commandest.
(p. 445)

One implication which can be drawn here is that if Medea has been invincible to date, there is no reason for Jason or his companions to suppose that she will now be overcome. Moreover, what she has done so far has been motivated by love; what might happen to Jason's fortunes should anger become her directing principle?

At this point it is appropriate to turn to the discussion of Flaccus' characterization of Medea through the use of foreshadowing devices. Valerius Flaccus provides too many of these to discuss the contributions of them all, but the citation of a few examples will suffice. They begin early in Book I when the narrator of the poem mentions among the horrors untold by Pelias in conferring the quest upon Jason:

cautes Scythico concurre ponto
Cyaneas tantoque silet possessa dracone
vellera, multifidas regis quem filia linguas
vibrantem ex adytis cantu dapibusque vocabat
et dabat externo liventia mella veneno.
(59-63)

No word spake he of the Cyanean crags that
 clash upon the Scythian main, no word of
 the fleece held by the monstrous dragon
 with the flickering forked tongues, whom
 the princess called forth from the inmost
 chambers by charms and by good, to give
 him honey-cakes dark with the venom of
 strange hands. (p. 7)

In this passage the image projected is that of Medea the witch, powerful enough to tame the fearsome dragon who guards the coveted fleece. Notice in lines 61 and 62 the "quem" which refers to the "dracone" securely bound by the "regis filia" who is enveloped in turn by the "multifidas linguas" which are described by the eerie term "vibrantem." The impact of the structure of the image is strange and terrifying and one shudders at the inextricable association of princess and dragon. They are almost one. The elements of this scene are completed and augmented by the horrifyingly poignant depiction of Medea embracing the slumbering serpent and lamenting her betrayal of her pet as Jason ponders stealing the fleece (VIII. 92-104). This tender familiarity of the Colchian princess and her pet dragon renders Medea a source of both amazement and terror.

A second category of the device of foreshadowing may be found in Book I. This appears among the prophecies revealed by the frenzied Mopsus as the Argonauts are preparing to depart on their quest (211-226). The theme of Mopsus' revelations concerns the trials that the heroes will soon face; the enmity of Neptune, the rape of Hylas, the battle of Pollux and Amycus, the firebreathing bulls and dragon-seed warriors. All of these are of course appropriate to the acquisition of the fleece. However, Mopsus does not cease his tale of woes there. He goes on to add:

quem circum vellera Martem
 aspicio? quaenam aligeris secat anguibus auras

caede madens? quos ense ferit? miser eripe
 parvos
 Aesonide. cerno en thalamos ardere iugales.
 (223-226)

What strife is this I see around the fleece?
 What woman is this, drenched with slaughter,
 that cleaves the air upon winged serpents?
 Whom does she strike at with the sword?
 Unhappy Jason, snatch the little ones away!
 Yonder I discern the bridal chambers all
 ablaze. (p.21)

Here again Medea is associated with dragons, much to the same effect that Ovid produces in Metamorphoses VII. Now she is "caede madens," in full fury destroying her sons with the sword and setting fire to Jason's prospects for a secure future without her. Thus Valerius Flaccus continues to portray a Medea who inspires awe and terror. In the process he follows Seneca's lead in depicting the carnage as suffering meted out to Jason because of his involvement with an expedition the daring of which has aroused the ire and enmity of Neptune as well as her own revenge (211-214).

Before the reader leaves Book I behind, there are two more foreshadowings of Medea to encounter. The first, modeled perhaps on Anchises' speech to Aeneas in the underworld (Aeneid VI.756 ff.), reveals that Medea's tragedy is only a part of the general movement of dominion from one nation to the next as each succeeds the other through the agency of Bellona (I. 545 ff.). Though this does not add anything specific to Medea's character, it nevertheless places ultimate responsibility for her deeds with Father Jupiter (I. 558-560).²⁵ The force of Fate thus imparted to Medea's actions does not excuse them in a classical ethical context, but it does reinforce the irony inherent in her attempts to make other choices than those prescribed by the story.

The second foreshadowing has to do with a presentation of the practice of witchcraft in which Medea does not herself appear. In order to reassure himself concerning his son's future, Aeson enlists the services of an aged "Thessalis" (I.737) (witch), who uses the customs of her evil race (779-780) to obtain certain knowledge of the outcome of Jason's quest. The tone of the entire passage (I. 730-818) is one of unrestrained horror at dabbling in mysteries that had better remain hidden. Ghosts, Furies and drinking blood hot from the veins of a sacrificial victim, as well as the extreme age of the officiating witch serve to render both herself and her profession as objects of fear and loathing. This ancient "Thessalis" provides a foil to the virginal Medea and shows the reader that, in part at least, Medea's fearsomeness is due to her association with witchcraft. The audience is also being set up to be astounded by the contrast. The horrifying practices of magic seem appropriate to a withered crone; performed by a desirable young woman they take on an added dimension of loathing.

Perhaps the most remarkable device for foreshadowing occurs in Book V (433-454) in which Mulciber is said to have adorned the temple of the Sun with the story of the rape of Medea,²⁶ the theft of the fleece and subsequent events up to and including the carnage at Corinth and the dragon-car escape. The abandonment and revenge of Medea are described thus:

ille priorem
deserit; ultrices spectant a culmine Dirae.
deficit in thalamis turbataque paelice coniunx
pallam et gemniferae donum exitiale coronae
apparat ante omnes secum dequesta labores.
(444-448)

his former spouse he abandons; avenging
Furies watch from the palace roof. His

wife, sore distressed in her chamber and
 moved to anger by her rival, prepares a
 robe and the deadly gift of a jeweled
 crown, first bewailing her sufferings.

(p. 277)

The passage goes on to describe the effects of the poisoned gifts and the puzzlement of the Colchians at what the "ignipotens" (firegod) might have had in mind in creating all this, concluding, "ille quis labor, aligeris aut quae secet anguibus auras/caede madens; odere tamen visusque reflectunt." (453-454) (what enterprize was that, or who is it with winged serpents cleaves the air, dripping with murder; they hate them nevertheless, and turn away their gaze. p.279). Several things about the citation are striking. First the way it sets up the desertion of Medea and motivates her acts of madness. The force of the "deserit" and the presence of the "ultrices Dirae" place the responsibility squarely upon Jason. In addition, Medea's rival is called "paelex," a term with pejorative connotations. It will be remembered that Medea was called "barbara paelex" in Ovid's Heroides (vi. 81), by Hypsipyle, the woman whom she supplanted in Jason's affections. Jason's provocation of Medea is great and evokes an equivalent response. Most important, these words emanate from the narrator who is presenting an "objective" account in describing the doors for the reader. Lastly, the verbal echo from the first book of the poem is startling, specifically the "aligeris aut secet anguibus auras/caede madens." This line binds what might be called the middle of the poem with the beginning giving consistency to Flaccus' portrait of Medea as well as shaping interpretation with the aid of narrative objectivity.

Before leaving this discussion, one last device of foreshadowing must be mentioned because with it Valerius Flaccus alludes to the

ending of the story of Medea, which affects the significance of her portrayal. In the process of castigating his wife and daughter for becoming involved in the affairs of men, Jupiter, as is proper, has the final word:

mox ubi Thessalicis referent hos flamina terris,
tunc aderit victorque domos et sceptrum tenebit,
donec et Aeetes inopis post longa senectae
exilia (heu magnis quantum luet impia fatis)
nata iuvet Graiusque nepos in regna reponat.
(V. 683-687)

Soon when the breezes waft these heroes back to Thessalian lands, he (Perses) will return and in triumph hold the sceptre and the kingdom, until his (Aeetes) daughter (ah, what atonement will she pay to the mighty fates for her impiety!) bring Aeetes aid, when in long exile he hath spent a helpless old age, and a Grecian grandson place him on his throne once more. (p. 295)

Flaccus is the first of the extant literary portraits to include this information.²⁷ It adds two important aspects. The first is that Medea's sorrows may be taken as calamities suffered in reparation for her impiety in helping Jason and betraying father and homeland. In itself this is nothing new or remarkable. However, the second component is new; the reconciliation with her wronged father with the help of her half-Greek son, the scion of Aegeus. The implication is that Medea, after a stormy existence, finally reaches a safe harbor, returns to her homeland and with the aid of Medus, who is not named, restores Aeetes to his throne and successfully ends the long years of suffering endured by father and daughter because of the advent of the Greek adventurers. Nowhere is it mentioned that Jason was awarded a similar fate. Accordingly, one may conclude that the sympathy of the presiding deities was with the long suffering Medea.

When one considers the Flaccus' depiction of the seduction of Medea by the gods in light of the above discussion, it must be noted that Juno and Venus have a more difficult time subduing Medea in Flaccus' poem than do Hera and Aphrodite in the narrative presented in Apollonius' Argonautica. In Apollonius' account, once Eros lodges his arrow in Medea's breast, her doom is sealed and the rest is rhetoric (III.282-284). Flaccus' heroine is wounded by no such dart upon seeing Jason for the first time (V. 350 ff.). The only mention of divine intervention here is Juno's, who is concerned that the care and toil of the long voyage to Colchis may have diminished Jason's beauty. The Queen of the Gods makes her hero shine forth in godlike splendor as he approaches the fateful first encounter (V. 366 ff.). Medea is suitably impressed ("attonita," V. 373) and Jason is in turn entranced by the Colchian princess:

nec minus inter
ille tot ignoti socias gregis haeret in una
defixus sentique ducem dominamque catervae.
(V. 375-377)

He likewise is entranced by her alone of all
the unknown company of maidens, conscious of
her as queen and mistress of the land.
(p. 273)

Jason addresses her as a goddess, asks for directions to the palace which Medea gives him and the interview is over. Significantly, the only aid which Jason receives here is from his patroness, and Medea is not yet conquered. On the other hand, her native beauty is enough to impress him.

Medea is not present at the first encounter between Greek Hero and barbarian king (V. 455 ff.) at which it is agreed that Jason will help Aeetes in his war against Perses in return for the fleece (V.534-

546). It is only after the battle between the forces of Aeetes and those of his brother Perses has been joined that Juno, thinking ahead to Aeetes' future treachery, considers Medea with her powers of witchcraft as a useful ally for her favorite:

haec etenim Minyas ne iungere Marte peracto
monstra satis iubeat Cadmei dentibus hydri,
ante diem timet et varias circumspicit artes.
sola animo Medea subit, mens omnis in una
virgine nocturnis qua nulla potentior aris.
(VI. 436-440)

For she fears beforehand lest when the warfare be over he bid the Minyae sow the Cadmean dragon's teeth and yoke these monsters (the fire-breathing bulls), and casts about for divers ruses. Medea alone comes to her mind, all her thoughts are centered on the maiden only, than whom none is more potent at the nightly altars. (p. 333)

There follows a list of Medea's qualifications and accomplishments (441-445) and the relation of the fact that both Circe and Phrixus marvelled at her powers (445-448). It is at this time that Juno, seeking to recruit Medea in Jason's cause, enlists the aid of Venus, thinking "quid si caecus amor saevusque accesserit ignis?" (454) (What if blind passion add thereto its merciless flame? p.335) What is remarkable here is that this ploy seems to come to Juno as an afterthought, while in Apollonius' Argonautica Hera's strategy is effected in preparation for the first meeting of hero and heroine (III. 1 ff.). Instead of employing the capricious Cupid (Eros) as an agent, Juno asks Venus to lend her the sacred girdle.²⁸ The Goddess of Love has her own reasons for complying with Juno's petition (VI. 467-469) and:

nec passa precari
ulterius dedit acre decus fecundaque monstris
cingula, non pietas quibus aut custodia famae,
non pud, at contra levis et festina cupido

adfatusque mali dulcisque labantibus error
et metus et demens alieni cura pericli.
(VI. 469-474)

Suffering no further prayer she gives her
the dangerous ornament, the girdle fruitful
in dire issues, that knows not piety nor
care of good reputation nor honor, but rather
fickleness and hot desire, and inducement
to ill and sin that allures the wavering,
the fear and the distracting terror of
another's peril. (pp. 335-337)

Thus armed with Venus' blessing, Juno proceeds to Medea's chamber changing her form into that of Chalciope, Medea's sister. Taking Medea by the hand (488), Juno leads her to the battlements of the city from whence to view the heroic exploits of the Minyans who are fighting for Aeetes.

At that moment Hecate observes Juno's treachery and vows:

non iniussa tamen; neque te, mea cura,
relinquam.
magna fugae monumenta dabis, spernere
nec usquam
mendaci captiva viro, meque ille magistrum
sentiet et raptu famulae doluisse pudendo.
(VI. 499-502)

Yet not unbidden goest thou, nor, my dear
one, will I forsake thee. A signal record
of thy flight shalt thou leave behind, nor
though a captive shalt thou ever be despised
by thy false lord, nay, he shall know me for
thy teacher, and that I grieved with shame
that he robbed me of my handmaid.
(pp. 337-339)

This prophecy of future ills leaves little doubt concerning Hecate's assessment of Jason. It also demonstrates the precarious nature of human existence under the tutelage of the Graeco-Roman gods. The patronage of one deity is no guarantee of prosperity since it may transgress the sacred prerogatives of another. Juno enlists Medea to aid Jason, to the eventual harm of her favorite. The irony here is a profound one. Of course, there is the added dimension that Hecate assumes

that Jason will ultimately betray Medea, providing an apt moment for revenge.

At this point the story returns to deeds of battle in which the forces of Aeetes, Jason included, are being particularly valiant. With Juno's help (VI. 578) Medea sees Jason wherever she looks and asks the fateful question:

quis, precor, hic, toto iam dudum fervere campo
quem tueor quemque ipsa vides? nam te quoque tali
attonitam virtute reor. (VI. 588-590)

Who, pray, is he whom I have long been watching
rage furiously over all the plain and whom thou
thyself dost see? for I ween that thou too art
amazed at valour so great. (p. 345)

Seizing her opportunity, Juno extols Jason's prowess and leaving nothing to chance, magnifies Jason's valor (VI. 602 ff.). It is at this moment, after viewing Jason in action, that Medea begins to feel the agonies of incipient passion (VI. 657-680). In this passage, Flaccus begins to present his version of the conflict between amor and pudor.

Book VI ends with the battle breaking off in darkness and the momentarily victorious Minyans and Colchians returning to town. The reader is left with the reactions of an exhausted Medea to the events of the day:

ut fera Nyctelii paulum per sacra resistunt,
mox rapuere deum iam iam in quodcumque paratae
Thyiades, haut alio remeant Medea tumultu,
atque inter Graiumque acies patriasque phalangas
semper inexpletis adgnoscat Iasona curis
armaque quique cava superest de casside vultus.
(VI. 755-760)

As the Nyctelli in their wild revels awhile
resist the god, but soon have the Thyiads
drunk the frenzy, ready now for any deed,
even in such tumult does Medea return, and
ever amid the Grecian host and the troops
of her own land doth she, with passion

still unsated, recognize Jason and his armour
and his face that strains forward from the
hollow helm. (p. 357)

This scene presents a number of significant variations to the story. The first is that this is Medea's second viewing of Jason and she is only beginning to struggle with the pangs of love. Second, although the involvement of Medea on Jason's behalf is frequently foretold, Flaccus gives the moment of fulfillment of the prophecy a kind of verisimilitude by having Juno seem to think of enlisting Medea's aid in a situation which arises from Jason's immediate and future perils, the battle and the tasks. Thus Flaccus adds a sense of spontaneity to Juno's actions which is lacking elsewhere and at the same time reinforces the reader's awareness of Aeetes' treacherous nature. This latter serves to make the barbarian king an object of the audience's righteous indignation. Finally and most significant, for the first time in the extant narrations of the story the audience observes Jason performing heroic feats which are worthy of Medea's admiration if not her love, and Jason is given the opportunity by Flaccus to earn Medea's passion as well as Aeetes' gratitude.²⁹ The fact that Aeetes reneges on his bargain with Jason makes it easier for the audience to accept the proffering of Medea's love and enables the reader to perceive the justice of the gods' intervention on Jason's behalf, because he is dealing with such a treacherous adversary.

The arousing of the lady's passion through feats of valor will become a literary commonplace among the medieval writers of romances. It is curious to note how many of the components of this scene - the raging battle, the hero enhanced, the lady observer on a high vantage

point, and the presence of a go-between - can be found in the medieval analogues. There is perhaps a common antecedent to the classical and medieval analogues in Ovid's story of Minos and Scylla.³⁰ However, Flaccus' Argonautica was not unknown to medieval audiences and may have provided suggestions on its own.³¹

Book VII opens with a depiction of the agonies of Medea's tortured soul (1-25) and her struggles against the bonds of passion are described throughout the book (103-152). Her torments reach such proportions that at one point she is compared by the narrator to the Fury-driven Orestes (148). Medea wavers in her passion and weighs commitment to father and familial hearth against her love for Jason. When Juno observes this vacillation, she proceeds to enlist the direct intervention of Venus (VII. 153-170). Venus takes up the challenge, disdaining even the formidable enmity of Hecate as she asserts:

haut satis est, sed me ipsa opus, et cunctantia
poscunt
pectora me dubiusque pudor: iam foedera faxo
Raemonii petat ipsa viri metuatque morari....
nec tunc Hecates subeat metus, aut mea forte
impediat ne coepta time. quin audeat opto:
continuo transibit amor, cantuque trilingui
ipsam flammiferos cogam compescere tauros,
amplexumque pati. (VII. 176-186)

But this suffices not: I myself am needed,
it is I whom her wavering heart and stead-
fast doubt demand; soon will I make her
herself seek union with the Haemonian chief
and tremble at delay. See thou (Juno) that
he go apace to the shrine of light-bringing
Diana (Hecate). where the Colchian is wont
to shed the light of sacred torches and
with her company of maidens dance around
its queen. Nor let dread of Hecate now
come over thee; fear not lest she hinder
my efforts. Nay, let her even venture:
straightway will the passion pass to her,
and I will compel her herself to subdue

with triple chant the fire-breathing bulls
and to suffer embraces. (p. 375)

Venus is manifestly self-confident. Her powers are irresistible and even Hecate can be bent to her designs. What chance does Medea have against such a formidable goddess?

The Colchian princess now agonizes over the imminent demise of her beloved, vowing to find some means of providing a fitting burial for his heroically charred bones and keeping vigil over his tomb (VII. 201-209). At this propitious moment Venus appears in the form of Circe and Medea's doom is sealed. In a passage resonant with echoes of Apollonius and Ovid,³² Venus works on Medea's soul, plying the hapless girl with persuasive arguments and inflammatory kisses (VII. 254-256, 284-289). Finally Medea is vanquished and it is doubtful that anyone would blame her when her defection was engineered by such a potent seducer. As the narrator presents it:

Ergo ubi nescio quo penitus se numine vinci
sentit et abscisum quidquid pudor ante monebat,
tum thalami penetrare petit, quae maxima norat
auxilia Haemoniae quaerens pro rege carinae.
(VII. 323-326)

When therefore she felt that she was being
utterly vanquished by some strange power,
and that all shame's former promptings were
torn away, then sought she her secret bower
to find the mightiest aid she knew for the
captain of the Haemonian ship. (p. 385)

Then Medea arms herself with poisons which, as in many earlier versions, are sprung from the blood of tortured Prometheus (VII. 355-362), and led by Venus (373-374) proceeds to the fatal rendezvous with Jason.

The elaborations on the hints of Apollonius and Ovid concerning the conflict of love and modesty in Medea's heart which Flaccus weaves into his narrative serve to augment the stature of Medea. They magnify

her sense of piety which necessitates the direct active intervention of the Queen of Heaven and the irresistible Cytherean whose power neither gods nor men may escape. The remarkable thing becomes not that Medea betrays her parents and homeland, but that she was able to hold out for so long against the combined forces of the divine representatives of destiny and passion. It is also significant that Flaccus gives Medea specific personalities against whom she must contend when in Apollonius and Ovid the conflict is completely internal.³³

Taken as a whole Valerius Flaccus' portrait of Medea is a complex one in which, though Medea's status as a witch renders her potentially terrifying and dangerous, her desirability as a beautiful young woman earns her three suitors besides Jason.³⁴ The many divine prophecies and personalities which conspire to involve her in the quest on Jason's behalf cause her to be seen as a victim of the flow of destiny and the workings of divine will. Thus Flaccus' portrayal of Medea as it stands is ambiguous, evoking sympathy on the one hand and caution, if not terror on the other.³⁵ One may only speculate as to whether or how Valerius Flaccus would have resolved this ambiguous characterization had he finished his poem. As it is, Flaccus' Argonautica can be seen as an embodiment of the dilemmas which arise from the facts of the story of Medea and Jason.

Evaluation of Medea's character is a little less ambiguous in the account found in the work of Hyginus the mythographer.³⁶ Hyginus' date is uncertain, but more recent consensus places him somewhere in the second century, A.D.³⁷ However, what is important here is that the work called the Fabulae which is attributed to someone named Hyginus presents a shorthand account of her story in which Medea's portrait is

less complex. It is significant to note that in Hyginus' version Juno and Venus are still highly visible. There is for example:

tunc Chalcipoe de Medea indicat, perducitque
eam cum filiis suis ad Iasonem. quae cum eum
uidisset, agnouit quem in somniis adamauerat
Iunonis impulsu, omniaque ei pollicetur, et
perducunt eum ad templum. (xxi. 3-4)

Then Calciope revealed all to Medea, and
conducted her with her own sons to Jason.
Who (Medea) when she saw him recognised he
whom she loved in a dream sent by Juno, and
all was promised to him, and they led him
to the temple.

and "Iason a Medea Veneris impulsu amatus est." (xxii. 15) (Jason was loved by Medea through the instigation of Venus.)

In addition Hyginus, whose account of the story takes the reader beyond the point at which the Argonautica of Flaccus breaks off, mentions the complicity of Arete and Alcinous in the marriage of Jason and Medea, describing the event thus, "Medea mulier est inuenta, coniugi est tradita." (xxiii.3) The use of the term "tradita" in this context has a number of interesting connotations; delivered up, surrendered, as well as given in marriage, entrusted and confided. On the one hand the term hints at betrayal, on the other of complete possession by Jason. In either case Medea is caught. Another incident narrated by Hyginus not included in Flaccus' version is the slaying of Absyrtus. Hyginus presents a significantly different retelling than most of the other sources. Here Jason slays Absyrtus on his own and Medea gives her brother burial (xxiii. 4). This act of familial piety on Medea's part is narrated nowhere else.

Most important to this study is the language used by Hyginus to describe the events at Corinth which are told in section XXV:

Aeetae Medea et Idyiae filia cum ex Iasone iam filios Mermerum et Pheretem procreasset summaque concordia uiuerunt, obiciebatur ei hominem tam fortem ac formosum ac nobilem uxorem aduenam atque uenificam habere. huic Creon Menoeci filius rex Corinthius filiam suam minorem Glaucen dedit uxorem. Medea cum uidit se erga Iasonem bene merentem tanta contumelia esse affectam, coronam ex uenenis fecit auream eamque muneri filios suos iussit nouercae dare. Creusa munere accepto cum Iasone et Creonte confraglavit. Medea ubi regiam ardere uidit, natos suos ex Iasone Mermerum et Pheretem interfecit et profugit a Corintho.

Medea, the daughter of Aeetes and Idyia, now produced with Jason her sons Mermerus and Pheres and they lived in the greatest harmony, until it was cast up to him (Jason) that a man so strong, handsome and noble should have a foreign sorceress as a wife. To him (Jason) Creon, the son of Menoeceus, King of Corinth, gave his young daughter Glaucen to wife. Therefore, when Medea saw that she was scorned by Jason, from whom she merited so much good, she made a golden crown from poisons and she sent her sons to give the gift to their stepmother. When Creusa accepted the gift, she was consumed by fire along with Jason and Creon. When Medea saw the palace burning, she slew Pheres and Mermerus, her sons by Jason, and fled from Corinth.

From this passage it is obvious where Hyginus' sympathies lie; Jason and Medea live in "summa concordia," she having borne him two children, until it is objected to by some unknown party that someone so strong, beautiful and noble should have a foreign sorceress for a wife. Thus the disruption of Medea's marriage to Jason is presented as completely arbitrary and aided by Jason's egotism. The fact that Medea and Jason lived in the greatest harmony up to that point underscores the injustice done to

Medea, whom Jason scornfully sets aside after all she had done for him. This is the strongest pro-Medea statement of any author to date and would have appealed to a medieval audience.³⁸ Hyginus also has Jason consumed in the common conflagration of Medea's revenge, something that is found in no other source.

Medea's troubles continue during her sojourn at Athens (xxvi). After bearing Aegeus a son, Medus, Medea was driven from her refuge by the "sacerdos Dianae" (priest of Diana) for being a "mulier venefica et scelerata" (xxii.2) (sorcerous and wicked woman). No mention is made here of Theseus or Medea's attempt on his life which is so significant in Ovid. From Athens she proceeds to Absyrtus' place of burial where she makes amends to her brother's memory. Finally, with the help of Medus, Medea overcomes the treacherous Perses and restores an abject Aeetes to his throne, which Medus will inherit (xxvii). The ending of the story as projected here is characterized by reconciliation between Medea and her sire as it was in Flaccus' Argonautica.³⁹ The emphasis here is on Medea's gestures of familial devotion and her concern with undoing the harm done to Aeetes because of her disruptive liaison with the faithless Jason.

Although brief, Hyginus' is the most sympathetic of all Medea's portraits. His blatant disapproval of Jason's betrayal of Medea, to whom so much was owed, and his presentation of Medea's homeward journey of restoration and reconciliation both serve to give a more positive cast to the significance of the theme of Medea. With the Fabulae's account the reader has come a long way from the judgmental portraits such as Cicero's and Ovid's.

These last three narrations of Medea's story all add something

unique to the transformation of the meaning of the theme of Medea. All seem to have difficulty in judging Medea negatively. Seneca enlarges Medea's dimensions and renders her more solitary, unyielding and ferociously heroic. Valerius Flaccus protracts her struggles against impossible odds magnifying her commitment to virtue and her strength of character. He also finds it hard to decide which Medea he wants to emphasize, the terrifying witch, privy to repulsive practices, or the adorable maiden whose desirability commands no less than four suitors. The result of this indecision is that Flaccus' Argonautica underscores the fact that Medea can be both. Finally, Hyginus has no difficulty placing both his admiration and sympathy squarely with Medea. One thing is clear, the perjorative judgment of Medea's actions and character which infused the portraits of the late Republic and early Empire is missing.

From here this study moves into the Middle Ages, whose poets were aware of many of the works discussed in Chapters Two and Three.⁴⁰ However the story was transmitted from a classical to a medieval cultural context, it was given new meanings by the atmosphere of the Middle Ages. This was a climate that had taken definite shape by the Twelfth Century when the story of Medea reappears, and was a cultural milieu composed of several coexistent, sometimes contradictory, elements. Among these were Christianity, Feudalism/Chivalry, and the controversial Fin Amor, sometimes called Courtly Love. What transformations occur to the Medea theme at the hands of poets formed by the ethical systems and cultural values inherent in the component elements of the medieval world view will occupy the remainder of this study.

Chapter III: Notes

¹ Michael Grant, Roman Literature (1954; rpt. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1958), pp. 220-221. Nathan Francis Rosebery Harter, "A Literary History of the Legend of the Argonautic Expedition Through the Middle Ages," Diss. Univ. of Pittsburg 1954, p. 62. Frank Justus Miller, Introd., Seneca's Tragedies, Vol. I, by Seneca with an English trans. by Frank Justus Miller, Loeb Classical Library (1917; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1960), p. xii. All references to the text of Seneca's Medea will be taken from this edition and will appear as line numbers in parentheses after each citation. All translations of Seneca's Medea will be from this edition. Edward Kennard Rand, Ovid and His Influence (1925; rpt. New York: Cooper Square Pub., 1963), pp. 17-18.

² Richard M. Grummere, Seneca the Philosopher and His Modern Message (New York: Cooper Square Pub. 1963). This study claims that Seneca wrote his tragedies during his exile on Corsica. Moses Hadas, A History of Latin Literature (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1952), p. 246. Hadas asserts that the dates of composition are unknown.

³ John Wight Duff, The Literary History of Rome, 3rd ed. (1909; rpt. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1953), pp. 84, 170. Duff judges Seneca's tragedies poor in comparison to his Greek models. Thomas Stearns Eliot, "Seneca in Elizabethan Translation," in Essays on Elizabethan Drama (1932; rpt. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1956), p. 3-55. Eliot defends Seneca's style as appropriate to its purpose and shows how it inspired some of the loftiest poetry of Elizabethan Drama. In the same vein see Moses Hadas, "The Roman Stamp of Seneca's Tragedies," in Medea: Myth and Dramatic Form, James L. Sanderson and Everett Zimmerman, eds. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1967), pp. 298-308. Reprinted from American Journal of Philology, LX (1939), 220-231. Grant, pp. 221-222, speaks of Seneca's bombastic style. Clarence W. Mendell, Our Seneca (1941; rpt. New York: Archon Books, 1968), pp. 3-21, while making a plea for tolerance of Seneca's style compares him to Sophocles and the Roman suffers in comparison. Mendell also feels that Seneca could not have written his plays to be performed. While he agrees with Mendell about Seneca's writing plays to be recited only, Miller, p. x, is less reserved about his approval of their literary merit.

⁴ John W. Basore, Introd. Seneca: Moral Essays, 3 Vols. by Seneca, with an English trans. by John W. Basore, Loeb Classical Library (1928; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1963), Vol. I, pp. x-xi, xiv, Vol. II, pp. x-xi. All references to the texts of Seneca's philosophical works will be taken from this edition and will appear in parentheses after each citation. Moses Hadas, Ancilla to Classical Reading (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1954), p. 352. Hadas, History of Latin Literature, p. 252. Grummere, pp. 66-68, 84-86. Ernst Robert Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, trans. by Willard Trask (1953; rpt. New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 50. Edward Kennard Rand, The Founders of the Middle Ages (Cambridge, 1928; rpt. New York:

Dover Publications, 1957), pp. 30-35, 162. Robert M. Wenley, Stoicism and its Influence (New York: Cooper Square, 1963), pp. 114, 134, 153.

⁵ Grummere, p. 86.

⁶ Hadas, History of Latin Literature, pp. 247-249. Mendell, pp. 152-168, seems to demur in this, but in reality is in substantial agreement.

⁷ Rand, Ovid and His Influence, pp. 17-18. The subject of the relationship of Ovid's Medea (lost) to Seneca's is also touched on by L. Patrick Wilkinson, Ovid Recalled (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1955) p.116.

⁸ Seneca, Medea, 3.

⁹ See Chapter II, pp. 52 ff.

¹⁰ For a discussion of Seneca's use of the prologue see Mendell, pp. 64-81.

¹¹ Seneca, De Irae I. i. 3-5.

¹² For a discussion of the Nurse as foil see, Hadas, History of Latin Literature, p. 248. Also Mendell, p. 182.

¹³ Hadas, History of Latin Literature, p. 248 declares that Seneca's is an "heroic Medea, virile and active in her hate."

¹⁴ Georges Dumézil, The Destiny of the Warrior, trans. by Alf Hiltebeitel (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 106-107.

¹⁵ See also Seneca, De Tranquillitate Animi, iv. 1-2, v. 4.

¹⁶ See especially Seneca, De Providentia, iii. 1, 4, iv. 12, vi. 4-7.

¹⁷ In connection with this issue, Grummere, pp. 72-75 asserts that Seneca was something of a feminist. On the other hand, a general condemnation of the Stoic's attitude toward women may be found in Sarah B. Pomeroy, Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), pp. 171, 230.

¹⁸ This divine concern over the conduct of human affairs is a

constant theme in Seneca's philosophical writings. Witness De Tranquillitate Animi, xvi. 3, and more importantly the entire De Providentia.

¹⁹Hadas, History of Latin Literature, p. 250, and "Roman Stamp," p. 300. In this context, although not as clearly pro Jason, Mendell, pp. 181-184, number Medea among Seneca's female villains.

²⁰The first occurs just after Creon's exit, Medea, 301 ff. See Mendell, pp. 153, 156, 163-166 for a discussion of the stoic qualities of the values presented here.

²¹Wenley, pp. 96-97. See also Grummere, p. 57. See in Seneca, De Tranquillitate Animi, ii. 7, iii. 7, and De Irae, II. xii. I, xiii.3.

²²See Mendell, pp. 64-93 for a discussion of tone in Seneca. Also pertinent are Hadas, "Roman Stamp," and Eliot, "Seneca in Elizabethan Translation," pp. 4-14.

²³Ronald Syme, "The Argonautica of Valerius Flaccus," The Classical Quarterly (July-October, 1929), 129-137. J. H. Mozley, Introductio Valerius Flaccus' Argonautica, by Valerius Flaccus, with an English trans. by J. H. Mozley, Loeb Classical Library (1934; rpt. rev. 1936; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1958), pp. vii-viii. All references to the text of the Argonautica will be taken from this edition and will appear as book and line numbers in parentheses after each citation. All translations of Flaccus' poem will be taken from this edition. See also W. C. Summers, A Study of the Argonautica of Valerius Flaccus (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1894), pp. 15-39.

²⁴An earlier account which rivals Flaccus' for completeness may be found in Apollodorus, The Library, with an English trans. by Sir James George Frazer, Loeb Classical Library (1921; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1961), I. ix. 16-28. This version is not literary and it does not refer at all to the Trojan material.

²⁵The significance of the connection of the Argo's voyage with the story of Troy for the Middle Ages is discussed by Harter, pp. 70-73. Curiously this study does not mention Flaccus' inclusion of the Trojan material, pp. 64-65. This is especially disconcerting when one considers the importance which the connection of the Voyage of the Argo with the Trojan War has for medieval writers and that Flaccus seems to be the first to make it.

²⁶This is perhaps another Virgilian echo modeled on the arms made for Aeneas by Mulciber. Virgil, Virgil, Vol. II, Aeneid VII-XII and The Minor Poems, with an English trans. by H. Rushton Fairclough, Loeb

Classical Library (1910; rpt. rev. 1934; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1950), VIII. 626-673. The tradition of the decorated artifact can be traced back as far as Homer, The Iliad, Vol. II, with an English trans. by A. T. Murray, Loeb Classical Library (1924; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967), XVIII. 478-608. However, the idea of the decoration as a projection of divinely ordained history seems to be a Roman innovation. Homer does not use his description of the Shield of Achilles in this way, nor does Apollonius present his version of the scene under discussion, Argonautica III. 210-240, in this manner.

²⁷ An earlier Greek, non-literary source does exist for this information, Apollodorus, The Library, I. ix. 28.

²⁸ Flaccus may have gotten the idea for this from Homer, The Iliad, XIV. 153-233, in which Hera begs the girdle to befuddle the wits of Zeus in the interest of the Trojan cause.

²⁹ Harter, p. 65.

³⁰ Ovid provides an early analogue to this battlement scene in the Metamorphoses, VIII. 1 ff. which relates the story of Minos and Scylla, but Scylla needs no goddess bearing a sacred love-inspiring girdle to point Minos out to her. In addition, Minos is at war with Scylla's father, Nisus, while Jason is fighting in Aeetes' cause.

³¹ One of the earliest manuscripts containing Flaccus' poem dates from the Ninth Century, Mozley, p. xviii. See also Curtius, p. 51. Charles Homer Haskins, The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century (1927; rpt. New York: New American Library, 1976), p. 113. Jean Seznec, The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and Its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art, trans. Barbara F. Sessions, Bollingen Series XXXVIII (1953; rpt. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1972), p. 32.

³² For example, Apollonius, Argonautica, III. 309-313 has Aeetes refer briefly to Circe's defection to the West upon which Valerius Flaccus, Argonautica, VII. 217-222 elaborates. Ovid, Metamorphoses, VII. 56-61 has Medea mention the pros of abandoning Colchis for the advantages of Greece, which Flaccus gives to Circe/Venus in her attempt to sway Medea to Jason's cause, Argonautica, VII. 223-236.

³³ See Apollonius, Argonautica, III. 616-645, Medea's dream, and IV. 817-821, in which Hera is mentioned as directing Medea's thoughts, but is not actually present. Also Ovid, Metamorphoses, VII. 11-73 in which Cupid appears only as an afterthought. For a discussion of Flaccus' handling of this kind of scene compared to Apollonius and Virgil, see Hadas, History of Latin Literature, p. 266.

³⁴ Styrys (Argonautica, V. 258), Anaosis (VI. 43), and Coastes

(VI. 155) are Medea's other suitors. The last is "maximus hos inter Stygia artes."

³⁵ See Valerius Flaccus, Argonautica, VI. 45-46. Concerning Anausis the narrator comments, "nescius heu, quanti thalamos ascendere monstri/arserit atque urbes maneat qui terror Achaeas." (Alas, he knew not how dire a monster was she for whose marriage couch he yearned, nor what terror was in store for the Achaeans cities. p. 303).

³⁶ Hyginus, Fabulae, ed. H. J. Rose (Leyden, Netherlands: A. W. Swerthoff, 1933), pp. 24-30, 148. All references to this work will be taken from this edition and will appear as section and line numbers in parentheses after each citation. The translations of citations from Hyginus are my own.

³⁷ Duff, P. 458. Harter, p. 67. Brooks Otis, Ovid as an Epic Poet (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 139, 180, 189.

³⁸ Loyalty was a primary virtue in both feudal/chivalric and courtly ethical systems. Meg Bogin, The Women Troubadours: An Introduction to the Women Poets of Twelfth Century Provence and a Collection of their Poems (New York: W.W. Norton, 1980), pp. 8-19. Carolly Erickson, The Medieval Vision: Essays in History and Perception (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 115-134. Joan H. Ferrante, Woman as Image in Medieval Literature (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 74-75. Frederick Goldin, The Mirror of Narcissus in the Courtly Love Lyric (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 74-75, 78, 184-186, 237-248. W. T. H. Jackson, "Faith Unfaithful: The German Reaction to Courtly Love," in The Meaning of Courtly Love, ed. F. X. Newman, Papers of the First Annual Conference of the Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, SUNY Binghamton, March 17-18, 1967 (Albany: SUNY Press, 1968), pp. 55-76. C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition (1936; rpt. New York: Oxford/Galaxy, 1958), pp. 18-43. Sidney Painter, French Chivalry: Chivalric Ideas and Practices in Medieval France (1940; rpt. Ithaca: Cornell/Great Seal, 1961), pp. 28-64, 95-148.

³⁹ And also Apollodorus, The Library, I. ix. 28.

⁴⁰ The works of Ovid are ubiquitous in the Middle Ages, but the presence of Seneca, Valerius Flaccus, Cicero, and Hyginus has been noted by scholars among medieval collections of classical authors and may have contributed something to the transmission of our story. See Curtius, pp. 36-62; Grummere, pp. 86-87; Haskins, pp. 70-126; Rand, Founders of the Middle Ages, pp. 3-68; Rand, Ovid and His Influence, pp. 111-149; Seznek, pp. 38, 51, 85, 115, 221. See also Gilbert Highet, The Classical Tradition: Greek and Roman Influences on Western Literature (New York: Oxford, 1949), pp. 48-69.

Chapter IV: Medea in the Twelfth Century

After the last of the Roman portraits which appeared during the first and second centuries A.D., there seem to be no significant variations on the theme of Medea until the advent of the High Middle Ages.¹ The time span between these eras is not totally devoid of mention of her name, which occurs in brief references in handbooks of classical pagan mythology produced by mythographers, rather than fully developed renarrations of her tale.² As a matter of fact, Dares the Phrygian, whose sixth century account of Jason's exploits was a sourcebook for medieval writers, makes no mention of Medea.³ For this remarkable situation, no explanations have been forthcoming from scholars and speculation upon its causes are beyond the scope of this study, which addresses itself to the extant literature. Suffice it to say in passing that the lack of intermediate portraits makes the transmission of the theme of Medea from classical antiquity to the Middle Ages somewhat of a mystery which remains to be solved.⁴

When the Medea theme resurfaces in the Middle Ages, it enters an age of heightened literary activity from 1100 A.D. on, which included the production of both scholarly works in Latin and original imaginative works in the vernacular.⁵ Thus the Twelfth Century has come to be identified as one of those eras in history since the dissolution of

the Roman Empire which could be termed a renaissance; a period in which quality of scholarship and the production of imaginative vernacular literature rose coextensively.⁶ It was a time of renewed interest in and redefinition of the place of humankind in the universal divine plan.⁷ In the context of this intellectual and literary activity some important and controversial elements were added to the ideal concept of woman.⁸

Perhaps the most significant of the redefinitions of the image of woman to appear in the Twelfth Century is the role ascribed to the lady in the complex relationship described by the medieval poets as fin'amor⁹ and labeled "courtly love" by modern critics.¹⁰ The controversy among scholars over the definition of these terms and their applicability to medieval works of literature has been waging since the late Nineteenth Century.¹¹ It is not the purpose of this chapter to summarize the struggle or to identify the main threads of dispute. Rather it is intended that a careful comparison of some of the classical portraits of Medea with that of Benoît de Sainte-Maure in his monumental Roman de Troie and the use of the Medea theme by Chrétien de Troyes in his Cligès will demonstrate a qualitative difference in the medieval conceptualization of Medea and valuation of the passion by which she was driven.¹²

This study does not mean to imply that there was universal agreement among medieval writers concerning the nature and uses of human passion. Indeed there was probably greater reason for medieval man with his Christian contemptus mundi to mistrust physical passion for another human being than there was for classical man who did not have to face an eternity of terrifying consequences for making the wrong choices and commitments. One may identify in the Christian attitude towards women

a blatantly antifeminist tradition which is found in clerical writings in which both the presence and absence of Medea are significant. It is extraordinary, for example, that Dares' Sixth Century De Excidio Troiae Historia, an acknowledged source for Benoît's great work, neglects to mention Medea at all.

In De Excidio, Dares reduces the entire episode of Jason at Colchis to a few phrases, "Colchos profecti sunt, pellem abstulerunt, domum reversi sunt."¹³ (They came to Colchis, they bore away the fleece, they returned home.) It seems that for Dares, the most important aspect of the Argonautica was its function as a prelude to the first destruction of Troy by Hercules.¹⁴ The Phrygian demonstrates no interest whatsoever in Medea.

Similarly, Joseph of Exeter, whose De Bello Trojano (c.1184) is of a somewhat later date than Benoît's Roman de Troie makes no mention of the Colchian maid.¹⁵ It is interesting to note that Joseph follows Dares' plot as does Benoît but is only a bit more prolix than Dares on the matter of the Golden Fleece. Joseph presents its capture by Jason thus:

Quid memorem Aesonidae duras incumbens leges
Aeetae imperio? quid semina jacta? quid hostes
Terringenas, Martisque boves, saevique Draconis
Excubias? ignis virtuti cedit et ensis,
Eripiturque emtum summo discrimine vellus.¹⁶

Why should I recount the story of Jason burdened by the harsh laws of Aeetes' command? The cast (sown) seeds? The earthborn foes, the oxen of Mars, and the ever watchful savage dragon? Fire and sword yield to manly courage and the fleece is snatched away in the greatest danger.

It is clear from this passage that in Joseph of Exeter's estimation, Jason's manly fortitude subdues the myriad dangers which surround the

fleece. Medea, her magic lore, Jason's tutelary goddesses and the violent and tragic passion which places Medea at Jason's disposal are not mentioned at all.

While it is dangerous to base generalizations on such scanty testimony, one suspects that there may be a sort of double vision concerning Medea in medieval literature. Specifically, works in the vernacular tend to acknowledge her loyalty to Jason and his debts to her, while productions in Latin either ignore her completely, as do Dares and Joseph, or present her in a negative light. An example of a pejorative portrait can be found in the Mythologies (2.7) of Fulgentius, who was roughly contemporaneous with Dares.¹⁷ Fulgentius includes Medea among the five "daughters" of the Sun whom Venus inflamed with lust in vengeance for the Sun's exposing her adultery with Mars to Vulcan. In this work, Medea is presented as a type of "valor corrupted by lust," representing one of the five human senses, hearing, which should be devoted to light and truth, but is rendered dark and impotent because of Venus' curse. There are some notable exceptions to negative portraits of Medea in medieval Latin works. These will be noted as the significance of the Medea theme in medieval literature is established by the representative portraits of Medea contained in the works presented for analysis, both Latin and vernacular.

From Fulgentius, Dares and Joseph of Exeter, it is appropriate to proceed to Benoît de Sainte-Maure's account of the Argo's voyage of which the final three-fifths is dominated by the presence of Medea. Although a great deal of speculation has been devoted to the possible sources for Benoît's version of the story, the question remains an open one.¹⁸ Benoît himself mentions Dares, from whose work he derived the

general plot of most of his Roman de Troie. However, as has been seen, Dares' version is completely silent in regard to Medea and delivers no more than a thumbnail sketch of the events at Colchis. A prime candidate as a source for Benoît's knowledge of Medea is Ovid, for both his accounts of Medea's story in Heroides XII and Metamorphoses VII were known to the writers in the Middle Ages.¹⁹ However Ovid's versions do not account for the way in which Benoît presents certain elements of his narration; for example the ordering of Jason's tasks and the specific aids with which Medea provides Jason in order to accomplish them.²⁰ Of the other narrations of Medea's theme which have survived from the classical era, it is extremely doubtful that Benoît would have known the works of Euripides or Apollonius Rhodius.²¹ On the other hand, Hyginus' version, of which Benoît may have been aware, is far too sparse to account for any of the specific elements of the tale as developed in the Roman de Troie.²² While Valerius Flaccus' Argonautica had some currency during the Middle Ages, it is not certain that Benoît could have known his work directly.²³ Thus the question of the classical sources for Benoît's poem remains an open one. It must also be noted in passing at this point that the problem of the medieval sources for Benoît's Medea is far from settled; however, a convincing argument has been made for the use of the book of the first Vatican Mythographer by Benoît.²⁴

While the specific sources for Benoît's retelling of Medea's story, classical or otherwise, may never be fully discovered, other tasks, perhaps more important than that of accurately establishing literary antecedents, remain to be accomplished. One of these is to study the extant versions of Medea's tale comparatively as analogues in order to

determine what redefinitions, if any, Benoît as a medieval poet casts in his account. Furthermore, it remains to be discovered what new meanings the Twelfth Century poet may have incorporated in his portrait of Medea. Indeed some tentative beginnings have been made in discovering the medievalness of Benoît's Medea,²⁵ but they lead to obvious conclusions (i.e. that Benoît's Medea is truly medieval)²⁶ and do not explore deeply enough the significance of Benoît de Sainte-Maure's variations of the theme of Medea.

The following analysis of Benoît's Medea will concentrate on three elements of the narrative which Benoît's version has in common with three previously discussed classical works: Apollonius' Argonautica, Ovid's Metamorphoses, and Valerius Flaccus' Argonautica. The narrative components which will be examined are the inception of passion, the conduct of the affair, and the involvement of Medea in the accomplishment of the tasks imposed on Jason in acquiring the fleece. How Medea is presented in each of these aspects of the story is essential to determining the significance of her portrayals by each of the above-mentioned poets. As will be seen, Benoît's version differs from the classical antecedents in a number of important ways as he recasts Medea in a medieval mold.

The first narrative element to be discussed is how the several poets handle the origin of Medea's passion for Jason. In the poems of Apollonius and Valerius there is elaborate preparation for an orchestration of the event by Jason's tutelary deities, among whom are Hera-Juno and Aphrodite-Venus. Ovid, on the other hand, is less insistent on the involvement of distinct divine personalities, suggesting that passion itself has the force of divinity, if not fate. The above observations

have been discussed in detail in previous chapters²⁷ and need not be represented here in great length. In contrast to Apollonius Rhodius and Valerius Flaccus, Benoît, who is closer in tone on this point to Ovid, presents the arousal of Medea's passion for Jason thus.

Quant ele certainement sot
 Que c'ert Jason, mout par li plot:
 Mout en aveit oi parler
 E mout l'aveit oi loer.
 Mout l'aama enz en son cuer:
 Ne poeit pas a nesum fuer
 Tenir ses ieuz se a lui non;
 Mout li ert de gente facon. 28

When she knew for certain that this was Jason, she was greatly pleased! She had heard many speak of him and had heard him praised highly. Love for him soon took possession of her heart. She couldn't take her eyes from him for any price; so noble was he to behold.

After a brief description of ten lines which present Jason's beauty, Benoît continues:

Mout i a Medea ses ieuz
 Douz, frans e simples, senz orguieuz;
 Mout le remire doucement:
 Sis cuers de fine amor esprent:
 Mout par li plaist, mout li agree.
 Tost li avreit s'amor donee,
 S'il fust en lieu qu'il li queist:
 Ne cuit ja l'en escondeist. (1263-1270)

In Medea's eyes he is sweet, frank and open, without pride. She regarded him very sweetly. Her heart is captured by fin'amor. He is very pleasing and agreeable to her. If he were in a place where he could have returned it, she would soon have given him her love; she could never hide the burning (passion) for him.

Benoît's narrator makes a significant observation at this point, "mout le desire a mariage," (1278) and then completes his presentation of

Medea's incipient passion for Jason:

Ensi sofri a mout grant peine
 Toz le uit jorz de la semaine;
 N'ot bien ne repos ne solaz;
 Des or la tient bien en ses laz
 Amors, vers cui rien n'a defense.
 (1279-1283)

So she suffered very great pain
 for an entire week; she had neither
 repose nor solace: henceforth Love
 has her completely in his bonds
 against whom there is no defense.

The above lines have been quoted at some length in order to provide the reader with a sense of how different they are in tone and atmosphere from any of the classical versions. First one must notice that in accord with certain themes found elsewhere in medieval narrative and lyric poetry, Medea has heard of Jason's beauty and prowess before their first encounter. She has thus been prepared by his reputation to fall in love with him. The most famous examples of preparation for, or falling in love through the reputation of the beloved appear in "Quan lo rius de la fontana," and "Lanquan li jorn son lonc en may," by Jaufré Rudel. In addition, this device plays a role in the stories of Tristan and Isolde and Siegfried and Kriemhild.²⁹ Second the elaborate descriptions of Medea's psychological tortures as she wavers between her nascent passion and the moral claims of filial duty which may be found in Ovid, Apollonius and Valerius Flaccus are completely missing in Benoît. The only torment that Medea suffers from the clutches of Amor is the "mout en dote le comencier," (1287) Her perplexity arises from the fact that she is unsure how to initiate the affair. The dilemma of amor-pudor upon which so much depends in the classical versions, especially in Ovid and Valerius, never even arises. The phrase applied to

Amors, the medieval god of Lovers, "vers cui rien n'a defense," is sufficient for Benoît. The Medea of the Roman de Troie does not agonize over the moral choice between passion and modesty which had been a crucial component of the theme in classical literature.³⁰ Third, Benoît makes it explicit that what Medea feels for Jason is proper love or refined love (fin' amor, 1266) and that her ultimate objective is marriage. It is important to note at this time that of the four major love affairs which Benoît weaves into the fabric of the Roman de Troie, Medea's has the best claim to legitimacy,³¹ especially when it is compared to the liaison of Paris and Helen which is the immediate cause of the Trojan War. Jason and Oëtes are not at war and neither Jason nor Medea are married.

The above mentioned facts would have been extremely significant to a medieval audience. The phrase "fin' amor" in a medieval context implies that Medea's love for Jason is not base or degrading, but is an emotion which ennobles and enhances the quality of life for both participants and which demands unquestioning loyalty on the part of lover and beloved in order to be considered valid. The label "fin' amor" and the distinctions implied by it are specifically medieval and are not to be found among the previously discussed classical portraits of Medea.³² The fact that Benoît declares that Medea's object is matrimony is important because it shows not only that she has quickly resigned herself to her fate, but also that she chooses a course of action to which, at the very least, the clerics in the audience could offer no objection. Marriage is not an afterthought or something viewed with trepidation by Benoît's Medea as with the heroines of the three classical poets. Rather it is the logical and expected result of Medea's love for Jason, and Benoît

is quick to underscore that point.

Before proceeding to the next narrative element, one must notice two more aspects of the origins of love between Jason and Medea in the Roman de Troie. First the narrator is careful to place the incident in time. As Jason and his ever present companion Hercules enter Oëtes' city, Jaconites, "Beaus fu li tens a cler le jor,/Come el termine de pascor." (1153-1154) (The season was beautiful and the day was bright, as if it were Easter.) The reader will recognize here a reference to the standard topos of the Spring opening which has many uses and appearances in medieval literature. Benoît himself had employed it some two hundred lines earlier as the temporal setting in which Jason and his crew embarked on their voyage. (939-947) It may be called the topos of hopeful expectations, the most famous of which appears in the opening lines of the "General Prologue" to The Canterbury Tales (1-18). While this stylized beginning and its inverse are almost ubiquitous in medieval poetry,³³ it is significant to note that none of the three classical poets who are being employed for purposes of comparison uses it either to commence Jason's voyage or his love affair with Medea. It has been observed that the purpose of the Spring topos, in medieval lyric at least, was to establish the fact that the lovers "were part of the harmony of nature in spring and fulfilled the purpose of Nature in the universe."³⁴ However, one must notice that Benoît's story of Medea is situated in a context of betrayal and destruction. Jason will eventually abandon Medea and the gods will exact a harsh vengeance for the crime (2014-2026).³⁵ In the light of this fact it may be observed that Benoît de Sainte-Maure has added a dimension of irony to his employment of the motifs connected with the Spring topos.

In addition to the Spring topic, Benoît provides his narrative with the most elaborate descriptions of the hero and heroine to date.³⁶ The concern with the physical appearance and the moral qualities of characters who inhabit a work of literature is not to be found among our classical authors who present only the sketchiest detail of physical attributes and who declare moral qualities of character through epithets or deeds.³⁷ A number of commentators on the Roman de Troie have noted this attention to detail of portraiture in establishing the medievalness of Benoît's treatment of the tale of Troy, but they fail to present an adequate discussion of how this medieval poet uses the portrait to establish the significance of his characters. Instead the critics assume a sort of rote conventionality to medieval portraiture.³⁸ A notable exception to the above is the careful study of portrait technique in medieval French romances of the Twelfth Century in which Alice Colby demonstrates the folly and dangers of such a naive approach.³⁹ The results of Colby's work show that the critic who presumes that all medieval portraits are merely formulaic will miss the significance of the information presented in both content and organization of detail. With Miss Colby's excellent example for a guide, it is time to discuss Benoît's portrayals of Jason and Medea.

Jason's portrait, which is separated into two parts, establishes him a knight of great beauty, worth, sense, strength and virtue (716-720). Further, he is courteous, gentle, brave, beloved by all and possesses great nobility of character, love of glory and generosity (721-724). The content of Jason's catalogue of virtues is not unique, nor is the result of all its formidable qualities:

Trop ert de lui grant reparlance,
E tant aveit fait dès enfance

Que mout ert coneüz sis nons
 Par terres e par regions. (725-728)

There was concerning him a great deal
 of conversation, and there had been
 so much since his childhood, that his
 name was very well known far and wide.

Jason's renown and the qualities of character which sustain it serve a number of purposes. Primarily they inspire the enmity of Peleus, as Benoît[^] calls Jason's uncle, who suggests that Jason undertake the voyage to Colchis in the hope that he will never return (729 ff.). Second, his fame precedes Jason to Jaconites, Benoît's[^] name for Medea's city, where they prepare Medea to fall in love with him (1247-1248). The completion of Jason's description is given by Benoît[^] when Medea first sees the hero (1250-1263). The narrator comments at this point that the immediately smitten Medea cannot take her eyes off Jason. This is followed by the assertion that the bond of fin' amor has been established between them as has been previously discussed. The visual effect of Jason's beauty on Medea is not new to the tale. It is an important part of the narration in all three classical poets. Apollonius and Valerius Flaccus prepare Medea for it with elaborate accounts of divine intervention which mitigate Medea's culpability for the events which follow. Ovid and Benoît[^] all but eliminate the apparatus of meddling divinities. In Ovid Medea is faced with the full force of her moral dilemma, the choice between love for Jason and loyalty to her father. As will be seen, Benoît[^] eliminates the dilemma by altering the traditional characterization of Medea's father and the circumstances under which Medea offers her assistance to Jason. The narrative element of the visual impact of Jason on Medea and the question of her culpability will undergo some interesting and important variations as the theme is followed

into the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

The seduction of Medea which Apollonius and Valerius portray as the result of prophecies, oracles, and divine intervention, Benoît depicts as the effect of Jason's virtues and reputation on Medea. Jason's personal attributes, both physical and moral, win Medea's heart, enhancing the stature of the hero and making the situation more conventionally human.

Finally, although Jason's virtues and fame assure him a place in Medea's affections, they are ultimately and ironically belied by the outcome of the tale as foreshadowed by Benoît. Benoît's narrator foretells Jason's betrayal and abandonment of Medea and the bitter revenge which she enacts as a result (2022-2025). While the medieval French poet chooses not to relate this part of the tale, moving on to the story of Troy's first destruction, he does employ the traditional tragic ending as a prelude to the unfortunate outcomes of the love stories which follow and the ultimate disaster of Troy.⁴⁰

Benoît's description of Medea (1201-1244) includes a great deal of significant information. Medea's beauty is established at once (1202), as well as the fact that she is an only child (1203), an important narrative divergence from the classical sources because it eliminates one of Medea's most heinous crimes. Then there follows a catalogue of her powers and talents:

Trop ert cele de grant saveir:
Mout sot d'engin e de maistrise,
De conjure e de sorcerie;
Es arz ot tant s'entente mise
Que trop par ert sage e aprise;
Astonomie e nigromance
Sot tote par cuer des enfance;
D'arz saveit tant e de conjure,
De cler jor feist mui oscure;

S'ele vousist, co fust viaire
 Que volisseiz par mi cel aire;
 Les eves faiseit corre ariere:
 Scientose ert de grant maniere.
 (1204-1216)

She (Medea) possessed a great deal of knowledge: she knew about cunning and power, conjuring and sorcery; she had so focused her mind on these arts that she was very wise and learned in them; astronomy and necromancy she had completely by heart since childhood; she knew so much about magic and enchantments, she could turn bright day into dark night; if she desired, she could travel by flight through the airy heavens; she made streams flow backwards: she was skillfull to the greatest degree.

The above description of Medea is remarkable for several reasons. First, although something similar appears in each of the classical works chosen for comparison,⁴¹ it is not to be found in Benoît's avowed authorities, Dares and Dictys. The most likely source for the catalogue would seem to be Ovid (Met. VII. 208-209, or Her. VI. 80-94), in whose work both the Sun's chariot and Aurora are described as paling at the potency of Medea's poisons.⁴² Second, this description of her powers seems to be unique to Medea among the portraits of ladies in Twelfth Century romances.⁴³ It is a crucial element of the theme of Medea retained by Benoît either directly from classical versions or from an undiscovered intermediary early medieval work. Significantly it makes Benoît's Medea a much more actively powerful heroine than most of her literary contemporaries.⁴⁴

The above statement bears a bit of elaboration. Most heroines of medieval romances are given little to do on their own. Rather they inspire, either by their presence or the predicaments in which they find

themselves, their lovers to perform noble and heroic deeds.⁴⁵ Medea is one remarkable exception because she is moved to accomplish the first of her noteworthy deeds by Jason's predicament, a complete inversion of the usual course of events. In his description of her, therefore, Benoît provides his audience with information concerning her qualifications which will assure his listeners that Medea is equal to the task of rescuing Jason. Finally, and in this Benoît again diverges from the classical accounts, the medieval poet uses this description to prepare his audience for the active role which Medea will play in conducting her affair with the Greek hero.

In his narration of Medea's pursuit of Jason, Benoît differs greatly from the classical analogues in which Medea is presented as a helpless victim of divinities or divinely inspired passions which direct the course of her action at every turn. Benoît, on the contrary, portrays a Medea who is in total control, self-motivated, and conscious of all she does once her passion for Jason is acknowledged. Most of the classical poets who deal with the inception of Medea's affair with Jason rely on divine and/or human agents to win Aeetes' daughter to the Greek Hera's cause. A good example of this is Apollonius Rhodius who employs both Eros and Chalciope to perform this function. The one exception is Ovid, who in the Metamorphoses relies on the divine force of human passion and circumstance to bring his hero and heroine together. In none of these earlier works does Medea play an active role in setting up the encounters with Jason, or providing him with access to her person. In contrast, this is exactly what Benoît's Medea does. After Amors, "vers cui rien n'a defense," (1293) has done his part, it is Medea who "Mout en dote le comencier." (1287) As Benoît develops the situation, one day

after dinner Medea is provided with the opportunity she seeks when she encounters Jason and Hercules:

E cele, que d'amor esprent,
S'en vient a eus mout vergondose,
De parler sage e sciëntoses.
(1296-1299)

And she, who is captured by love
approaches them modestly in order
to speak wisely and learnedly.

Benoît's combination of humble demeanor and wise and learned speech cannot fail to win the audience's sympathy and Jason's heart.

At this point it is Medea who speaks first and tells Jason that he has need of her "leial conseil." (1308) (good advice) Then in a rather lengthy passage, she explains the dangers:

Li deu i ont lor garde mise
Par tel maniere e par tel guise
Com te dirai, quar bien t'est ues.
(1336-1339)

The gods have set their guard (over
the ram) in such a manner and in such
a way, as I will tell you, because it
will be very useful to you.

Medea informs Jason of the fire breathing oxen (1341 ff.) and the "serpenz qui toz jorz veille," (1357 ff.) (the sleepless serpent): "Par art e par conjureison/Ont cil en garde le mouton," (1348-1349) (by magic and enchantment they (the gods) protect the ram) Thus Medea's method of revealing the dangers he must face to Jason contains the very clever strategy of suggesting the remedy along with stating the evil. If the guardians of the fleece operate by means of sorcery, who would know how to deal with them better than a sorceress? Medea concludes her good advice with the following:

Que t'en ferie lonc sermon?
Saches ja n'avras la Toison

Por rien que seit, nel cuider mie:
 Guar come as empris grant folie!
 Ainz te di bien, se tu i vas,
 Que ja mais n'en retourneras.
 (1369-1374)

Why should I make a long sermon of
 it to you? Know that you will never
 have the Fleece no matter what you
 may do or plan: For what a great
 folly you have undertaken! So I
 tell you truly, if you go there,
 that you will never return.

The above observation is Jason's first information concerning the difficulties which face him. Significantly it comes from the very person who has the power to help him. Medea is making herself and her services indispensable to Jason. In the works of Apollonius and Valerius Flaccus, Jason's need of Medea's assistance had been established through the devices of prophecy, foreshadowing, omniscient narration, and Aeetes' cruel edicts. What Benoît has done by shifting the source of the information concerning the impossible tasks to Medea is provide his audience with the portrait of a woman who knows her worth and is not above a bit of self-advertisement in order to inform her beloved of her potential usefulness to him. One must marvel at Medea's boldness and directness, which are soon enhanced by Benoît in the subsequent dialogue.

Upon receiving the information, Jason makes an appropriately brave speech concerning his honor and the duty of a brave man to confront the most difficult tasks (1375-1387). In response Medea offers her services to Jason on the condition that he marry her and take her back with him to his native land:

Dueus et pitiez me prent de tei:
 La en iras, co sai e vei;
 Mais se de co seüre fusse
 Que jo t'amor avêir pûisse,

Qu'a femme espose me preisses,
 Si que ja mais ne me guerpisses,
 Quant en ta terre retornasses,
 Qu'en cest país ne me laissasses,
 E me portasses leial fei,
 Engin prendreie e bon conrei
 Com ceste chose parfereies,
 Que mort ne mahaing n'i prendreies.
 (1393-1404)

I feel concern and pity for you:
 You will go there, this I know
 and see; But if I were certain
 that I could have your love, that
 you would marry me, and that you
 would never abandon me when you
 returned to your own land, that
 you would not leave me in this
 country, and would keep good
 faith with me, I would take good
 plan and precaution for the task
 you face, so that you would take
 neither death nor wound there.

She promises that her help will keep Jason from all harm in the trials to come if he will be loyal to her. This contingency is common to the classical analogues and, as in them, it is ironic in the light of the ultimate ending of the story. However, because of the changes which Benoît has made in the narrative, such as Medea's being an only child, and the context of fin' amor in which the medieval poet has set his tale, Jason is made more culpable than in the classical versions, if that is possible.

In anticipation of Jason's doubts concerning the efficacy of her aid and her ability to perform what she has promised, Medea elaborates:

Mais jo sai tant de nigromance,
 Que j'ai aprise dès m'enfance,
 Que, quant que jo vueil, tot puis faire:
 Ja ne m'iert peine ne contraire.
 Quant que est grief, tot m'est legier:
 Ja n'i troverai encombrier. (1407-1412)

But I know so much about necromancy,
 which I have studied from my youth,

that, whenever I wish, I can do anything; never does either pain or difficulty overwhelm me. Whenever there is hardship, all is easy for me; never will I find any difficulty (i.e. anything too difficult).

Medea's self-confidence is awe inspiring. As a matter of fact, her assertion that whenever she wishes she is able to do anything makes her godlike. The statement that in her will and power are coextensive is an attribute which the Middle Ages recognized in God. For example, Walter of Châtillon once stated concerning divine wisdom, "potest omnia que posse voluit," (St. Omer 7. st. 1)⁴⁶ (can do all things that it wishes to do). About a century and a half later, Dante would make this observation a lietmotif of his Commedia, as for instance when Virgil addresses Charon, one of the many demonic obstacles to the pilgrims' way in Hell:

E il duca a lui: "Caron, non ti
crucciare:
vuolsi così cola, dove si puote
ciò che si vuole; e più non demandare.
(III. 94-96)

And the leader (Vergil) to him: Charon,
don't torture yourself; thus it is
willed above, where that which is
willed is accomplished; and ask no
more.

In the light of the above, Medea's boast is truly remarkable. It is important to hear Medea out to the end of her speech:

Or esguarde que tun feras,
Saveir se tu (1) m'otreieras:
Ton cuer m'en di senz deceveir,
Tot ton corage en vueil saveir.
(1413-1416)

Now take care what you will do,
be certain if you will give it
(your oath) to me: Speak your
heart to me without deception,

you will realize your heart's
desire.

She thus sets up the terms of her contract. In return for Jason's salvation, Medea wants all his loyalty, will and love. Such a bargain was common between the heroes and heroines of medieval romances, but few had such pragmatic benefits for the hero.

In the spirit of opportunism, which his earlier incarnations exhibited, Jason immediately accepts Medea's offer and swears by all the gods that he will love and keep faith with her (1418-1420). He then continues:

Ma dame seriez e m'amie,
De mei avreiz la seignorie:
Tant entendrai a vos servir
Que tot ferai vostre plaisir.
(1423-1426)

You will be my lady and my love,
you will have lordship over me;
so much will I study to serve you
that I will do all your pleasure.

Once this oath is given, the love agreement is completed. Medea proceeds then to direct the next phase of the relationship, the tryst in the curtained chamber.

Consistent with Benoît's portrait of her so far, Medea sets the scene and then sends one of her maids to fetch Jason (1474 ff.). In the process of instructing her servant about how to accomplish her task, Medea takes the time to reflect that if she doesn't summon Jason as soon as she had promised, she will have broken faith with him (1486-1494). The waiting-woman dispatched on her mistress' errand, Medea retires to a sumptuous bed to await Jason's arrival. The bed of course is an essential piece of lover's equipment in both lyric and romance⁴⁷ and Benoît takes the time to describe it in detail for his audience

(1537-1554). Benoît concludes the description with the comment:

El lit se coucha la pucele,
Que mout fu sage e gente e bele;
Bien esteit digne d'itel lit.
(1555-1557)

The maiden, who was very wise,
noble and beautiful, lay down
in the bed: she was very worthy
of that same bed.

The bed of gold, silver and precious stones is an appropriate setting for the treasure it contains. Jason is an extraordinarily fortunate hero.

At this point Medea reveals that she is not above a bit of subterfuge. She feigns sleep upon Jason's approach and then surprise as she inquires how he was able to come to her bed. Medea remains in total control of the situation throughout the scene, exacting further oaths and sureties from Jason before bestowing her body or her lore. At this point the narrator tells his audience that Jason has perjured himself:

Jason ensi li otreia,
Mais envers li s'en parjura;
Covenant ne lei ne li tint:
Por co, espeir, l'en mesavint.
Mais jo n'ai or de co que faire,
Del reconter ne del retraire:
Assez i a d'el a traitier,
Ne le vos quier plus porloignier.
(1621-1628)

Thus Jason gave his consent to her,
but he perjured himself toward her.
He kept his word neither to her nor
with her: for which perhaps misfortune
came to him later on. But I don't
have time to speak of that, neither
to recount it nor recit it: enough
has been said about it, nor do I
seek to prolong the story further
for you.

The above passage bears the weight of the tragic future which Benoît

does not choose to recount. Jason's perjury is cited as the cause of all the evil which the poet and, as indicated in the citation, his audience know will befall the couple. Thus at the very moment when their relationship begins, Jason sows the seeds of mutual destruction through his projected disloyalty and oath breaking.

The narrator then describes the consummation of the love relationship:

Tote la nuit se jurent puis,
Ensi com jo el Livre truis,
Tot nu a nu e braz a braz.
Autre celee ne vos faz:
Se il en Jason ne pecha,
Cele nuit la despucela;
Quar, s'il le voust, ele autretant.
(1629-1635)

Then all night long they lay together,
just as I found in the book, naked
body to naked body and arm in arm.
Other secrets I do not tell you: if
nothing was lacking in Jason, that
night he deflowered her; because,
she wanted it as much as he.

The above passage has no analogue in the classical sources, in none of which Jason and Medea consummate their relationship at such an early stage of the story. In Apollonius' poem (IV. 111-1169), their wedding takes place on Scheria, the island of Alcinous, at the bidding of Queen Arete in order to prevent Medea being returned to her father. Ovid never describes the wedding night of Jason and Medea in either Heroides or Metamorphoses. The Argonautica of Valerius Flaccus breaks off before the couple has a chance to consummate the marriage. Indeed, Jason and Medea are interrupted in mid-ceremony by the untimely appearance of her brother's pursuing fleet (VIII. 217-284). However, Benoît's depiction of the chamber scene and of the deflowering of Medea will become essen-

tial elements of the medieval versions of the story.

Furthermore, the choice of the verb form "jurent" to describe the sexual act is interesting. The third person plural perfect of the verb, ("gesir" (to lay) looks remarkably like the third person plural indicative of "jurer" (to swear an oath to one's lord, or to be betrothed). It seems as if Benoît wishes to suggest an identification of the deflowering of Medea by Jason with the oaths of loyalty which it rewards. Thus both Jason's pledge and the sexual act bind him to Medea, to whom he now owes his love and fidelity. Jason's debt is augmented by the aid which Medea proffers in the form of advice, ointments, and magic paraphernalia in order that Jason will be able to accomplish the impossible tasks ahead.

As has been noted, one remarkable aspect of the encounter between Jason and Medea is that Benoît is the first of the poets discussed to have it take place in Medea's bed chamber, devoting such attention to detail in the description narrative of the bed. After Benoît the bed chamber and its bed will become traditional elements in the medieval versions of the theme of Medea. Another feature of Benoît's narrative is Medea's control of the situation, summoning Jason when she is prepared to receive him, boldly stating her conditions for granting her love and assistance, and finally consummating the agreement. Neither Apollonius Rhodius, Ovid, nor Valerius Flaccus portray a Medea who participates so actively and without inner turmoil in effecting her own destiny. Medea's self-control and self-directed activity seem to be what make her medieval, what set her medieval incarnation apart from previous portraits, both Greek and Roman, in which she is more of a victim, or a human pawn in a complex game of divine vengeance.⁴⁸ What

distinguishes Benoît's portrayal of Medea from those of other medieval heroines is the lack of anxiety which she feels upon falling in love with Jason. Her only anxious moments are caused by her uncertainty concerning how to commence the affair and by her fear that she may disappoint her lover by seeming too sluggish in summoning him to her bed. She soon overcomes both obstacles.

Benoît also placed a medieval stamp on the specific gifts which Medea tenders Jason for the completion of his endeavors. The classical poets who narrate Medea's aid to Jason are content to have her provide him with ointments and advice. Apollonius Rhodius, for example, is satisfied to have Medea give her hero unguents, which confer courage, confidence and invulnerability, detailed instructions for their application, and advice on how to proceed during the contest (Argonautica III. 1026-1062). Jason is then left to carry out Medea's instructions on his own. Ovid condenses his account of Medea's gifts to Jason into a mere two lines (Metamorphoses VII. 98-99). Valerius Flaccus in his Argonautica (VII.461-538) adds nothing to the catalogue of Medea's helpful donations, but he revises and expands the narrative somewhat by having Medea anoint Jason and his armor herself while instructing him how to deal with the tasks ahead. In contrast, Benoît, employing the popular medieval stylistic device of amplification, increases the number of the gifts from two to five.

Both the number and nature of the gifts would have been fraught with meaning for a medieval audience. The first is a talisman, "une figure/Faite par art e par conjure," (1651-1652) (a figure made by magic and spells), which will protect Jason against fear, the second an ointment against fire like those tendered by the classical Medeas.

The third gift is a magic ring:

Si ne verras ja mais plus bel;
 E si saches bien que la pierre
 Ne puet estre en nul sen plus chiere.
 (1664-16666)

Than which you will never see a more
 beautiful: and whose stone, note well,
 couldn't be in any sense more valuable.

The properties of this extraordinary anel are its power against enchantments, fire, weapons, poisons and serpents, and its ability to render the bearer invisible should he desire to be so. The ring bearer may accomplish this feat by turning the stone outward on his finger. In order to render himself visible again, the stone is simply repositioned inward (1675-1683). Faral has traced the origin of the magic ring to the classical accounts of the ring of Gyges, the Lydian,⁵⁰ but rings of invisibility were popular among Benoît's contemporaries as well.⁵¹ The ring, as Medea tells Jason, is her most treasured possession and she advises him to guard it well (1687-1688). Jason is then given a parchment upon which is written a spell which he must repeat three times while facing east. This is done in order to propitiate the god of war when Jason sacrifices the sacred sheep to obtain the fleece (another divergence from the classical sources in which the ram of Phrixus has already been slain and skinned long before Jason arrives in Colchis) (1691-1701). Lastly, the hero is given a gluz (1702), a compound with which to plug up the nostrils of the fire snorting oxen. Although each of the gifts is worthy of closer study, this would take up too much time. For the present one must be satisfied with a close examination of one of the magic aids, the ring, and the consideration of the fact that there are five gifts all together.

If, as Faral claims, the ring which Medea gives to Jason is derived from the legends of the famous ring of Gyges, then it has a jaded if not criminal past. The legendary Gyges, mentioned by Plato as the ancestor of the famous seventh king of the Lydians who appears in Herodotus (Histories, I. 8-12), finds the ring in an ancient underground grave (underworld motif), discovers its properties by accident, and proceeds to use them for evil purposes; these are the seduction of his queen, assassination of his king, and ascent to the throne. Plato projects Gyges as the type of man who uses extraordinary powers of concealment for evil purposes, one who performs criminal actions precisely because he is assured that they will be undetected (Republic, II. 359-360). The tale may have entered the Middle Ages with the help of Cicero (De Officiis, III. 38), and Faral cites a medieval reference contemporary with the Roman de Troie.⁵² If Faral's exegesis is correct, then the magic ring has criminal connotations with which Benoît's audience would have been familiar through the De Officiis of Cicero and which could possibly attach themselves to its keeper and its user. Therefore, Benoît may have attempted to disassociate Medea's ring from the moral implications of the tale of Gyges by having it operate opposite to the workings of its nefarious ancestor.⁵³ Benoît de Sainte-Maure must have been aware of the predilection of his audience for the bizarre and the marvelous⁵⁴ and a magic ring with ancestral connections was just the ticket. On the other hand, he would not have wanted his Medea to bear any burden of guilt by association. In Benoît, Jason is the perjurer who accepts the gifts and then betrays the giver.⁵⁵

The number of the gifts may also be significant. Five is the number of the pentacle, which has a long history in the mystical and

allegorical literature of the near east and west.⁵⁶ The pentacle has been interpreted as a life symbol employed by the ancients in various forms as a magical device to insure fertility and the preservation of life, both individual and collective.⁵⁷ The Middle Ages traced the origin of the pentacle to Solomon,⁵⁸ whom Benoît mentions (1804) in connection with Jason's armor. One of the integrated groups of five represented by the endless knot of the pentacle is that of the five human wits, or five senses. If one considers the specific gifts proffered by Medea to Jason, they may be seen as connected to one or more of the five senses; the ring with sight, the ointment with taste, the compound (gluz) with smell since it is used to stop up the nostrils of the bulls, hearing with the spell which Jason must pronounce, and lastly touch with the amulet which Jason must bear upon his body. If this is a bit far fetched, it will be remembered that as early as the Sixth Century Medea had been identified as one of the five children of the sun who represented the five senses (Fulgentius, Mythologies, II. vii. 22). In Fulgentius' work, as had been noted, Medea represents the sense of hearing. Importantly, Fulgentius' mythography was a source for the late Twelfth or early Thirteenth Century Liber Ymaginum Deorum, attributed to Albrius (which may have been a pseudonym for Alexander Neckham.⁵⁹ Thus the connection between Medea and the five senses was maintained from the time of Fulgentius to the high Middle Ages and would have been available to Benoît's audience.

In a larger context, one may see the number five as a life sustaining symbol which is connected with the Christian concept of salvation. For example, Man's redemption was secured by Jesus Christ who sustained five physical wounds in the process; in the Latin ritual of the Mass it

takes five words to effect the miracle of transubstantiation. Lastly, the pentacle, the five pointed star, was identified in medieval lore with the "endless knot," a symbol of human perfection and the triumph of life over death from pagan antiquity which had been appropriated by Christian writers to represent salvation.⁶⁰

Benoît could count on his audience recognizing the number five as possessing life sustaining meanings which would enhance the significance of his Medea. Thus the purpose of the medieval poet's amplification becomes clear. Following accepted and established rules of medieval prosody, Benoît marshalls a host of information, which to a modern audience might seem esoteric, in order to establish Medea as Jason's undisputed savior in a typically medieval fashion. This provides the story with an appropriate moral lesson which Benoît delivers before returning Jason to his homeland and moving on to the tale of Troy's first destruction.

After the tasks have been successfully completed, Jason and Medea are in no hurry to depart (2008 ff.). Oëtes, it seems is not the tyrannical scoundrel of the classical sources. There is no desperate escape and no mad pursuit. Here Benoît takes the time to comment:

Grant folie fist Medea:
 Trop ot le vassal aame
 Por lui laissa son parente,
 Son pere e sa mere a sa gent.
 Assez l'en prist puis malement;
 Quar, si com li Autors recontre,
 Puis la laissa, si fist grant honte.
 (2014-2020)

Medea committed great folly: She
 loved the vassal so much that she
 abandoned her family for him, her
 father, her mother, and her people.
 Then he treated her very badly,
 because, as the authors tell, he

he then abandoned her, in which
he committed a great crime.

Thus Medea's greatest crime was folly. She loved Jason too well and gave up too much for his sake. However, Benoît's judgment, founded upon the evidence of li Autors, which must not be disputed, is against the shameful act of abandonment by the criminal Jason. This is a crime for which the gods will effect a bitter vengeance:

Trestuit li deu s'en corrocierent,
Qui mout asprement l'en vengierent.
(2025-2026)

For all these things the gods will
be so enraged, that they will avenge
her (Medea) quite cruelly.

The character of Jason will bear the stigma of these crimes against Medea and their punishment throughout the Middle Ages. More importantly, Benoît is extremely careful to remove the onus of any future tragic events from Medea by stating that they will represent divine retribution occasioned by Jason's perfidy.

Benoît then portrays a Medea who is very active and direct, a teacher and guide. Also, the decision to love Jason causes Medea little torment. Medea does indeed feel some doubts concerning her decision to love Jason as she watches him perform the required tasks from a tower. Medea muses:

Jason, sire, beaus amis genz,
Mout sui por vos en grant error,
Quar jo vos aim de grant amor.
En grant dotance m'avez mise:
Ne puet mais estre en nule guise
Que jo m'en puisse aseürer,
Tant que vos veie retorner.
Grant paor ai e grant dotance
Que de co n'aiez remembrance
Que vos ai dit e enseignié:
Jammais nen avrai mon cuer lié
Desci que vos tienge en mes braz.

A toz les deus oreison faz
 Qu'il ne seiant vers vos irie.
 (1847-1861)

Jason, my lord, beautiful, noble friend,
 I have made a big mistake for your sake,
 because I love you with a great love.
 You have put me in great fear: I cannot
 be relieved of it until I see you return
 (to me). I have great fear and great
 suspicion that you don't remember what
 I gave you and taught you: never will
 my heart be joyful until I hold you
 in my arms. I pray to all the gods
 that they will not be angry with you.

Medea's torment in this passage arises from her fear for Jason's safety. It has nothing in common with the soul-rending anxieties which were part of her characterizations in the classical versions of the tale. Medea's interior monologue was probably suggested to Benoît by Ovid's description of Medea's fright at Jason's peril in Metamorphoses (VII. 134-138), but by this point in Ovid's version Cupid is the undisputed victor of Medea's psychomachia. In addition, Benoît sets a moral seal upon Medea's story based on the ethos of fin' amor. The essential virtue of the relationship of refined or noble love is the loyalty of the lovers to each other, which has ethical counterparts in the contemporaneous code of Chivalry.⁶¹ Finally, in the context of fin' amor, the medieval poet holds Jason responsible for the tragic conclusion of the tale of which Benoît is aware through his authorities, but which the exigencies of narrating the tragedy of Troy will not permit him to relate.

Benoît de Sainte-Maure's account of the inception of Jason and Medea's love is not the only use of the theme of Medea in the Twelfth Century. There is a casual reference to Medea's prowess as a sorceress in Chrétien de Troyes' Cligès which is later than the Roman de Troie.⁶² One of the ancillary characters in Cligès is Thessala, whose very name

is found in classical works as the generic term for witches.⁶³ The word in Latin means Thessalian woman and among classical poets Thessaly was renowned for the practice of witchcraft.⁶⁴ Thessala is the nurse of Fenice, Cligès' beloved, and true to her name, is a woman expert in the ways of the wicca. She boasts of her expertise:

Ja sai bien garir d'itropique,
De quinancie et de cuerpous;
Si sai garir de l'arcetique,
De quinancie et de cuerpous;
Tant sai d'orines et de pous
Que ja mar avroiz autre mire;
Et sai, se je l'osoie dire,
D'anchantemanz et de charaies
Bien esprovees et veraies
Plus c'onques Medea n'an sot,
N'onques mes n'an vos dire mot,
Si vos ai jusque ci norrie.
(2983-2993)

I know well how to heal dropsy,
and I can cure gout, quinsy and
asthma: I know so much about
urine and the pulse that you
would never need any other physi-
cian: and I know, if I dare say
it, more about well proven and
true charms than Medea ever knew
about them, I haven't ever said
a word about this to you, even
though I have nursed you (cared
for you) until now.

Thessala places her arts at the disposal of her mistress who is distraught over the fact that, as Iseult before her, she is to be married to the uncle of the man she loves. Fenice finds her position untenable and Iseult's solution morally unacceptable. It is at this point that Thessala offers her formidable services. The story proceeds with magic and enchantment serving the needs of the lovers, a situation which has analogues in some of the most popular medieval narratives.⁶⁵ The above passage is significant for this study because it demonstrates that

Medea's reputation as a sorceress was sufficiently well established by Chrétien's time to render a casual allusion effective.

The basis for such a reputation poses an interesting question. A preliminary review of the Latin and vernacular lyric has turned up no references to Medea or her story to date. It has been seen that the Latin narratives of Dares and Joseph of Exeter ignore Medea's role in the winning of the fleece. This leaves only two possible sources for Medea's reputation in the Twelfth Century upon which Chrétien de Troyes could have drawn; the works of Ovid which Chrétien knew well⁶⁶ and Benoît's Roman de Troie.⁶⁷ However, the problem becomes even more puzzling when one considers that in order for an allusion to be meaningful, an audience must be able to identify and respond to it. Unless one can assume that all of Chrétien's listeners knew Ovid's work in Latin as well as he, which seems unlikely, the reference in Cliges to Medea as the standard for witches may indicate an enormous and immediate popularity for Benoît's Roman de Troie.⁶⁸ There is more conclusive evidence to support this point which will be discussed in the next chapter.

There is one more reference to Medea in the Twelfth Century which deserves mention. This is a curious presentation found in Hue de Rotelande's Protheselaus.⁶⁹ The noteworthy fact concerning Hue's narrative is that it borrows the names of characters from classical legends while inventing completely novel stories in which to set them. Hue's Medea owes nothing to her classical counterparts, or to Benoît's medieval incarnation, even though it has been established that he knew the latter.⁷⁰ An examination of Hue's portrait of Medea (2934-2979) reveals none of the traditional elements of the theme of Medea. There is no mention of her knowledge of sorcery, her resultant powers, her part in

Jason's quest, her betrayal of her family, the murders of her brother and Pelias, the rejuvenation of Aeson, or Jason's infidelity and the subsequent tragedy. In Hue de Rotelande's poem, Medea is a widowed queen of Crete who ultimately marries the titular hero, Protheselaus. Hue's work is cited here only in order to indicate how popular literary taste in Twelfth Century France had taken to classical matter. When the old stories gleaned from the matter of Rome had been retold, the market created by them (or to which their narrators had responded, perhaps) demanded more tales with ancient classical settings. This provided authors with the opportunity to invent new stories decked out in the trappings of classical antiquity as it was understood in the Middle Ages.⁷¹ Another example of this was Chrétien's Cligès.

Medea's reputation in the Twelfth Century then relies upon the vernacular Roman de Troie and the Latin works of Ovid. For the purpose of this study, it is Benoît de Sainte-Maure's portrait which is crucial. The variations upon the theme of Medea which he wrought: the context of fin' amor, the active, life sustaining Medea, and the villainous perjury of Jason were widely disseminated. Evidence of the echoes and reactions which they inspired may be discovered two centuries away in the works of Boccaccio, Gower and Chaucer. The works of these writers in both the vernacular and Latin provide interesting contrasts in the significance of the figure of Medea, as will be seen at the appropriate time. Now attention must be turned to the Thirteenth Century incarnations of Medea, some of which are revaluations of Benoît's portrait.

Chapter IV: Notes

¹ Nathan Francis Rosebery Harter, "A Literary History of the Legend of the Argonautic Expedition Through the Middle Ages," Diss. Univ. of Pittsburgh 1954, pp. 70-73.

² Harter, p. 72. Frank A. Dominguez, The Medieval Argonautica, Potomac, Md.: Studia Humnitatis (1979), pp. 10-18. Fabius Planciadis Fulgentius, Mitologiarum, in Opera, ed. Rudolf Helm (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1898), II. vii. 22. For a convenient translation of this work, see Fulgentius, Fulgentius the Mythographer, trans. with intro. Leslie Whitbread (Athens: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1971), pp. 20-23, 72-73. St. Augustine, Confessions, III. 7. Georg Henrich Bode, ed., Scriptores Rerum Mythicarum Latini Tres (Cellis: Schulze, 1834) Mythographer I, 25.

³ Dictys Cretensis et Dares Phrygius, De Bello Trojano with Joseph of Exeter, De Bello Trojano (London: A. J. Valpy, 1825), pp. 295-298. The citations of Dares' prose De Excidio Trojae Historia and Joseph of Exeter's hexameter De Bello Trojano will be taken from this edition and appear as page or line numbers in parentheses after each quotation. All translations of passages cited from these works will be my own.

⁴ Among the studies which have attempted to shed some light on Medea's journey from antiquity to the Middle Ages are Dominguez, pp. 8-26. Harter, pp. 67-73. Douglas Bush, Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry (1932: rpt. rev. New York: Norton, 1963), pp. 3-22. Edmond Faral, Recherches sur les sources latines des contes et romans courtois du moyen age (Paris: Champion, 1967), pp. 307-383. Jean Frappier, "Remarques sur la peinture de la vie et des héros antiques dans la littérature française du xii et du xiii siècle," ed. Armand Fourrier (Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1964), pp. 13-51. Gilbert Highet, The Classical Tradition: Greek and Roman Influences on Western Literature (New York: Oxford, 1949), pp. 48-57. Jean Seznec, The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art, trans. Barbara F. Sessions, Bollingen Series XXXVIII (1953; rpt. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 20, 51, 90-104, 188, 212-220. Henry Osborn Taylor, The Classical Heritage of the Middle Ages, 4th ed. (New York: Ungar, 1957), pp. 40-51. See also Gustave Cohen, Chrétien de Troyes et son oeuvre (Paris: Boivin, 1931), pp. 30-74.

⁵ H. J. Chaytor, From Script to Print: An Introduction to Medieval Vernacular Literature (Cambridge, 1945; rpt. New York: October House, pp. 48-70. Cohen, pp. 7-29. Charles Homer Haskins, The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century (Cambridge, 1927; rpt. New York: NAL Meridian, 1967), pp. 32-126. Joan M. Ferrante, Woman as Image in Medieval Literature (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 1-15. Friedrich Heer, The Medieval World: Europe, 1100-1350, trans. Janet Sondheimer (New York: NAL Mentor, 1961), pp. 101-125. W. T. H. Jackson, The Literature of

The Middle Ages (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1960), pp. 1-79. Seznec, pp. 90-94. R. W. Southern, Medieval Humanism and Other Studies (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), pp. 42-43; the volume is a collection of reprints of essays produced between 1930 and 1962. The enthusiasm of the above historians and critics for the Twelfth Century must be tempered by an awareness of the literary activity in preceding centuries. The following studies are helpful for this purpose: Phillippe Wolff, The Cultural Awakening, trans. Anne Carter (New York: Pantheon-Random House, 1968), on the Carolingian period; Eleanor Duckett, Death and Life in the Tenth Century (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1968); Stanley B. Greenfield, A. Critical History of Old English Literature (New York: N.Y.U. Press, 1965), on the Ninth and Tenth Centuries in England.

⁶ Chaytor, pp. 23-47. Heer, pp. 101-114. Frappier, pp. 17-19. Jackson, pp. 33-59. Hight, 11-14.

⁷ Haskins, pp. 3-31. Heer, pp. 113-125. Southern, pp. 29-60.

⁸ Ferrante, pp. 37-64. Eileen Power, Medieval Women, ed. M.M. Postan (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 9-34. Jackson, pp. 94-101.

⁹ The term fin' amor used to describe the proper love relationship between a noble man and lady was coined by Twelfth Century poets of lyric and romance. Examples of how the label was employed by both troubadours and trobairitz may be found among the following: Marcabrun, "Ges l'estornels non s'oblida," 46, "Per savi l tenc ses doptanssa," 13-18; Bernart de Ventadorn, "Non es meravelha s'eu chan," 33-36; Giraut de Bornelh, "Can lo glatz e l frechs e la neus," 61-65, in Lyrics of the Troubadours and Trouveres, ed. with trans. and intro. Frederick Goldin (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1973). Tibors, "Bels dous amics, ben vos posc en ver dir," Countess of Dia, "A chantar m'er de so qu'ieu non volria," 22-28; Castelloza, "Mout avetz faich long estatge," 11-12; Domna H., "Rosin, digatz m'ades de cors," 68-70, in The Women Troubadours, ed. with trans. and intro. Meg Bogin (1976; rpt. New York: Norton, 1980), see also Bogin, Intro., pp. 37-62.

¹⁰ The controversy over the propriety of using the term "courtly love" in the discussion of medieval poems has been raging since Gaston Paris first employed it as a critical concept. One of the most controversial works of criticism to attempt to define it is C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (1936; rpt. New York Galaxy-Oxford, 1958), pp. 1-43. The classic attempt to distinguish between the two labels is Moshe Lazar, Amour courtois et "fin' amors" dans la litterature du XII siecle (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1964). Strong objections to applying "courtly love" in the analysis of a medieval poem are raised by E. Talbot Donaldson, "The Myth of Courtly Love," Ventures, 5 (1965), 16-23. A more recent discussion of the controversy which includes a comprehensive bibliography is F. X. Newman, ed., The Meaning of Courtly Love (Albany: S.U.N.Y. Press, 1973). Perhaps the most helpful approaches to the problem may be found

among the following; W.T.H. Jackson, "The De amore of Andreas Capellanus and the Practice of Love at Court," Romanic Review 49 (1958), 243-251; Joan M. Terrante, "The Conflict of Lyric Conventions and Romance Form," in In Pursuit of Perfection, eds. George D. Economou and Joan M. Ferrante (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat, 1975), pp. 135-178. See also Jackson, The Literature of the M.A., pp. 70, 150-154, 240-263.

11

The full range of the controversy involved in the attempt to determine the applicability of the term "courtly love" to the study of medieval texts can be observed in Newman's book. See especially D.W. Robertson, Jr. "The Concept of Courtly Love as an Impediment to the Understanding of Medieval Texts," pp. 1-18, and Charles S. Singleton, "Dante: Within Courtly Love and Beyond," pp. 43-54, for discussions at opposite poles of the spectrum. Newman's bibliography, though not exhaustive, provides a representative sampling of the various perspectives involved, pp. 97-102. Critics who have examined the role of love or amor in the Roman de Troie, the pivotal work to be examined in the present chapter are Alfred Adler, "Militia et Amor in the Roman de Troie," Romanische Forschungen 72 (1960), 14-29; R.M. Lumiansky, "Structural Unity in Benoit's Roman de Troie," Romania 79 (1958), 410-424; Maurice Wilmette, "Observations sur le Roman de Troie," Le Moyen Age 27 (1914), pp. 93-119.

12

Ferrante, Woman as Image, pp. 65-76. Lewis pp. 4-5. Jackson, Literature of the M.A., pp. 37-38, 93-100, 146-147, 156-157. Taylor, pp. 4-7. Ferrante, "Lyric Conventions and Romance Form," pp. 135-144, shows how in some romances, especially those narrating classical themes, something similar to a classical condemnation of love may be found.

13

Dares, p. 298.

14

The place of the Argonautic expedition in the History of the Trojan-Greek conflict had, it will be remembered, a classical antecedent in Valerius Flaccus, Argonautica, I. 529-573. See also Herodotus, The Histories, I. 1-4. Diordorus Siculus, The Library of History, IV.42. 1-7.

15

The approximate dates for the poems are established respectively by Albert C. Baugh, "The Middle English Period: 1100-1500," in A Literary History of England, ed. Albert C. Baugh (New York: Appleton, Century, Crofts, 1948), p. 149; and Colby, p. 183.

16

Joseph of Exeter, De Bello Trojano, I. 174-178.

17

Whitbread, "General Introduction" to Fulgentius the Mythographer, pp. 3-5.

- ¹⁸ Cohen, pp. 63-67. Dominguez, 8-17. Faral, pp. 169-187, 313-320. Frappier, pp. 16-20, 38-42. Harter, p. 73.
- ¹⁹ Bush, pp. 9-11. Haskins, pp. 107-109. Highet, pp. 62, 79, 98-99. Seznec, pp. 91-94. See also Edward Kennard Rand, Ovid and His Influence (Cambridge, 1925; rpt. New York: Cooper Square, 1963), pp. 112-149. L.P. Wilkinson, Ovid Recalled (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1955), pp. 369-398.
- ²⁰ Dominguez, p. 21.
- ²¹ It is a commonplace of literary history of the Middle Ages that the Greek language was virtually unknown in the West. See Haskins, p. 280. Highet, p. 6. Taylor, p. 44. However, the common view is challenged by E. R. Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, trans. Willard R. Trask, Bollingen 36 (1953; rpt. New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 389 n.
- ²² Hyginus, Fabulae, ed. H. I. Rose (Leyden: A. W. Sythoff, 1933), XXII-XXVII.
- ²³ Curtius, pp. 51, 147, 263, 454. Highet, p. 101. Haskins, p. 113.
- ²⁴ Dominguez, pp. 17-23. Cohen, pp. 34-36. An interesting, but not well documented theory that Chrétien de Troyes may have influenced Benoit's poem is proposed by Foster Erwin Guyer, Chrétien de Troyes: Inventor of the Modern Novel (New York: Bookman Associates, 1957), p. 45-49.
- ²⁵ Dominguez, pp. 20-26. Wilmotte, p. 105. Frappier, pp. 39-42.
- ²⁶ Cohen, pp. 65-66. Adler, pp. 23-24, compares Medea in Benoît to the ladies of the chansons de gestes. Lumiansky, pp. 411-414.
- ²⁷ On Apollonius' Argonautica, see Chapter I, pp. 19-31. On Ovid's Metamorphoses VII, see Chapter II, pp. 59-79. On Valerius Flaccus' Argonautica, see Chapter III, pp. 106-120.
- ²⁸ Benoît de Sainte-Maure, Le Roman De Troie I, ed. Léopold Constans (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1904), 1245-1252. All references to Benoît's text will be taken from this edition and will appear as line numbers in parentheses after each citation and paraphrase. All translations of passages cited from this work are my own.

²⁹ Jaufre Rudel, "Quan lo rius de la fontana," and "Lanquan li jorn son loc en may," in Goldin, pp. 102-107.

³⁰ One of the manuscripts of the poem edited by Constans, G., does include the amor-pudor monologue from Ovid, but Constans believes it to be a later interpolation. Benoît de Sainte Maure, Le Roman de Troie V, p. 329. In his introduction to the poem in Tome VI of his edition Constans provides one of the most complete discussions of its possible sources, pp. 235-260.

³¹ Lumiansky, pp. 411-413. Adler, pp. 23-24. For a less sympathetic analysis of Medea's passion for Jason in the Roman de Troie, see Ferrante, "Conflict of Lyric Conventions and Romance Form," pp. 140-141. The fact remains that Jason and Oëtes are not enemies, there are no crimes which accompany Medea's aid to Jason, nor do the pair have to flee an outraged parent once the fleece has been won.

³² Classical poets and philosophers, for the most part did not believe that love between man and woman could be ennobling. Witness the speech of Pausanias in Plato's Symposium, one of the first examples of the distinction between base and ennobling love on record, 180, c, 185, c. Pausanias, who uses the terms earthly and heavenly Aphrodite to distinguish between the two kinds of eros, implies that the higher type of the two is homoerotic. Pausanias' distinction may be the origin of the theme of the two Venus' in medieval literature although the dialogue which contains it was probably unknown in the Twelfth Century, Haskins, pp. 299. See also Adler, p. 20. Cohen, pp. 33-37. Ferrante, Woman as Image, pp. 66-68. Lewis, pp. 5-9, 88. Denis de Rougemont, Love in the Western World, rev. and aug. ed., trans. Montgomery Belgion (1940; rpt. New York: Fawcett, 1969), pp. 61-85. Irving Singer "Love in Ovid and Lucretius," The Hudson Review (Winter 65-66), 537-599. Taylor, p. 5. Jackson, "The De Amore of Andreas Capellanus," pp. 244-245. Frederick Goldin, "The Array of Perspectives in the Early Courtly Love Lyric," in Economou and Ferrante, pp. 51-100. On the two Venus' of the Middle Ages see, George D. Economou, "The Two Venuses and Courtly Love," in Economou and Ferrante, pp. 17-50, and Robert Hollander, Boccaccio's Two Venuses (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1977). Curtius, pp. 122-127.

³³ Curtius, pp. 183-202, traces its development from Classical antiquity to the Middle Ages. Peter Dronke, Medieval Latin and the Rise of European Love Lyric, Vol. I, 2nd ed. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1968), pp. 247-250. Peter Dronke, The Medieval Lyric (1968; rpt. Harper-Perennial Library, 1969), pp. 114-124. Jackson, Literature of the M.A., pp. 224-226.

³⁴ Jackson, Literature of the M.A., p. 226.

³⁵ Adler, 14-29. Ferrante, "Conflict of Lyric Conventions and

Romance Form," pp. 140-142. Lumiansky, pp. 410-424. J. L. Levenson "The Narrative Format of Benoît's Roman de Troie." Romania 100 (1979), 54-70. See also Frappier, pp. 39-42.

³⁶ Colby, pp. 99-103. Wilmotte, pp. 104-106. Jackson, Literature of the M.A., pp. 88-97. Adler, pp. 17-18. Benoît on Jason, 715-728, and on Medea, 1200-1240.

³⁷ Ovid for example never tells his audience how Jason and Medea look in his Metamorphoses and Apollonius is content to describe Medea in the most general terms, Argonautica III. 828, 1009, 1064, IV. 721-729.

³⁸ Dominguez, pp. 24-26. Harter, p. 73. Frappier, p. 39. Wilmotte, pp. 105-108. Colby, pp. 3-13.

³⁹ Colby, pp. 23-72, 88-103.

⁴⁰ Adler, pp. 15-20. Ferrante, "Conflict of Lyric Conventions and Romance Form," p. 141. Levenson, pp. 65-67. Lumiansky, p. 411.

⁴¹ Apollonius, Argonautica III. 528-533. Ovid, Metamorphoses VII. 179-293. Valerius Flaccus, Argonautica VI. 440-448. See also Seneca, Medea, 752-770. On Seneca's presence in the Middle Ages see Haskins, pp. 37, 102, 110, 112-116.

⁴² The other sources in contrast to Ovid emphasize Medea's stopping the sun in order to lengthen the day. The presence of this catalogue of Medea's talents and studies in Benoît when it does not appear in his avowed sources would seem to contradict Hight's assertion that Benoît had little classical education, p. 53.

⁴³ Colby, pp. 17-20.

⁴⁴ Two notable exceptions are Iseult and Morgan Le Fay, both of whom are connected with the art of healing. Ferrante, Woman as Image, pp. 81-97, expands this list pointing out that the heroines of Twelfth Century French Romances are potent and active figures, but none of her examples is as completely self reliant as Benoît's Medea.

⁴⁵ Goldin, pp. 53-55, 71. Heer, 164-196. Jackson, Literature of the M.A., pp. 94-100.

⁴⁶ Quoted in Dronke, Medieval Latin and the Rise of the European Love Lyric, Vol. I, p. 296.

⁴⁷ For examples of the curtained bed or bed chamber as the focus of amatory activity see Cercamon, "Ab lo temps qu fai refreschar," 49; Jaufre Rudel, "Quan lo ruis de la fontana," 13; The anonymous Goliard, "Iam, dulcis amica, venito," 1-8; Froissart, "Dit de la Fontaine Amoureuse," 807-810, "Paradys d'Amours," 15-18; Chaucer, "The Book of the Duchess," 250-264; Troilus and Criseyde, III. 946 ff.

⁴⁸ Ferrante, Woman as Image, pp. 74-88.

⁴⁹ Durtius, pp. 490-495.

⁵⁰ Faral, pp. 339-341. Plato, Republic II. 359 d- 360 a; Cicero, De Officiis III. 38.

⁵¹ For example the ring which Lunete gives to Yvain to secrete him from her mistress, Chretien de Troyes, Le Chevalier au Lion, 1024-1035.

⁵² Faral, p. 340, cites Gervase of Tilbury, Otia Imperiale. III.45.

⁵³ In the accounts of Plato and Cicero the ring makes the bearer invisible when the stone is concealed by the palm of the hand. For evidence that the Twelfth Century audience of Benoît would have been aware of Cicero's De Officiis, see Haskins, pp. 110-114.

⁵⁴ Faral, pp. 307-383. See also Douglas Kelly, "Matière and genera dicendi in Medieval Romance," Yale French Studies 51 (1975), 147-159.

⁵⁵ Dominguez, 26.

⁵⁶ James George Frazer, Taboo and the Perils of the Soul, Vol. III of The Golden Bough (1911; rpt. New York: Macmillan, 1935), p. 306. Jesse L. Weston, From Ritual to Romance (1920; rpt. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday-Anchor, 1957), pp. 77-78, 94-98.

⁵⁷ Weston, pp. 77-79, 93-95. Frazer, pp. 298-307.

⁵⁸ Brian Stone, "The Pentangle and its Significance," in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, 2nd ed., trans. Brian Stone (New York: Penguin Books, 1974), pp. 147-149.

⁵⁹ Seznec, pp. 170-172.

⁶⁰ One of the most complete illustrations of the use of the number five as a symbol of salvation and virtue may be found in the Fourteenth

Century English romance, Gawain and the Green Knight, eds. J. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon, 2nd ed. rev. Norman Davis (1925; rpt. rev. Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), 619-669. See Notes, pp. 92-96. For illuminating discussions of the use of the number five in Gawain and the Green Knight see Larry D. Benson, Art and Tradition in Gawain and the Green Knight (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 36-91-108, 228. M. Mills, "Christian Significance and Romance Tradition in Gawain and the Green Knight", in Critical Studies of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, eds. Donald R. Howard and Christian Zacher (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1968), pp. 85-105. Donald R. Howard "Structure and Symmetry in Sir Gawain," in Howard and Zacher, pp. 159-173.

⁶¹ Cohen, 24-26. Sidney Painter, French Chivalry: Chivalric Ideas and Practices in Medieval France (1940; rpt. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell-Great Seal, 1957), pp. 95-148. Power, pp. 20-28.

⁶² Chrétien de Troyes, Cligès, ed. Alexander Micha (Paris: Champion, 1970), p. viii. All references to Cligès will be taken from this edition and will appear as line numbers in parentheses after each citation. Cohen, p. 66. Colby, pp. 182-183. Faral, pp. 169-187. For a dissenting opinion on which is the earlier work see Guyer, pp. 45-51.

⁶³ One example of an ancient author who uses "thessalis" as synonymous with "witch" is Valerius Flaccus, Argonautica I. 737.

⁶⁴ Chapter III. p. 111.

⁶⁵ One may consider at this point the misdirected potion which entangled the ill-fated Tristan and Iseult in a web of passion and intrigue, or the cloak of invisibility which Sigfried used to subdue the formidable Brunhild to Gunter's embraces. Upon reflection, it must be noted that while magic may have helped to unite lovers in these stories, the tales themselves have tragic denouements.

⁶⁶ D. W. Robertson, Jr. "Chrétien's Cligès and the Ovidian Spirit," Comparative Literature 7 (1955), 35-42. Guyer, pp. v-viii, 2-4, 41-54. Cohen, pp. 28-29. Rand, pp. 124-126.

⁶⁷ That Benoît's Medea may indeed have been a source for Chrétien's Thessala is suggested by Cohen, pp. 62, 212, and Faral, p. 315.

⁶⁸ Chaytor, pp. 86-87, 90-101. Dominguez, pp. 27-47. Jackson, Literature of the M.A., pp. 156-157.

⁶⁹ Hue de Rotelande, Protheselaud, ed. Franz Kluckow, Gesellschaft für romanische Literatur, 45 (Göttingen: Niemeyer, 1924).

⁷⁰ Kluckow, Introduction to Protheselaus, pp. 29-30.

⁷¹ Faral, pp. 415-419. Frappier, pp. 50-51.

Chapter V: Medea in the Thirteenth Century

While the characterization of Medea in the Twelfth Century is dominated by the portrait presented in Benoît de Sainte-Maure's Roman de Troie, there are several substantial presentations of the Medea theme in the Thirteenth. Two of these, the versions of Medea's story in the group of works included under the title Roman de Troie en Prose¹ and the Latin prose Historia Destructionis Troiae² of Guido delle Colonne are known to owe their existence, if not their characterizations of Medea, to Benoît's poem. There is, however, a third portrait of Medea which critics have claimed was derived directly from Ovidian sources. It is based upon the reference to Medea which may be found in Jean de Meun's continuation of the Roman de la Rose.³ Although direct indebtedness of Jean to Ovid's works is glaringly evident, it is also demonstrably true that Jean knew at least one of the narrations based on Benoît's Roman de Troie, if not the original. Before proceeding to a discussion of the specific works in which Medea appears, it may be beneficial to consider the context in which they are set.

Generally speaking, in the literature of the Thirteenth Century, noble women and the passion which they inspired were not regarded as favorably as they had been in those works which bore witness to the flourishing of "courtly" literature and the conventions of fin' amor

in the Twelfth Century.⁴ The descriptions of passion and its feminine inspiration remain the same. The mechanisms by which men and women come to love each other are still sudden, ineluctable and overwhelming. The eyes continue to be the proverbial portals of sexual passion, but they no longer open the way to ennobling inspiration as they did in the works of the previous century. Love of physical beauty becomes folly akin to idolatry⁵ and, as will be shown in the discussions which follow, its effects are usually tragic. In such context as this, Medea comes off badly. For example, in one of the prose versions of the Roman de Troie, Medea is transformed by her foolish love for Jason into an unnatural monster. In Guido delle Colonne's Latin history she becomes a paradigm of feminine evil who rivals the biblical Eve. In Jean de Meun's portion of the Roman de la Rose, the setting for the reference to Medea is the allegorical seduction of the Rose, an endeavor from which Reason is completely excluded. Indeed, the storming of the maiden's fortress is accomplished only with the help of some of the least savory characters in medieval literature and is portrayed as an end in itself.⁶

There are several versions of the prose Roman de Troie which have survived the centuries since the Middle Ages.⁷ The oldest of these redactions of Benoît's monumental poem dates from about the middle of the Thirteenth Century.⁸ According to one critic the prosification of the Roman de Troie was an attempt to turn romance into history and fantasy into acceptable narrative for a more sober, better educated and sceptical audience.⁹ One of the existing prose romances was interwoven with the Matter of Britain of the prose Arthurian cycle and had to be disentangled in order to be reconstructed into a coherent whole.¹⁰ In this version, which was discovered in the Codex Bodmer 147, little or

nothing is done to redefine Medea's character, as a comparison of one or two scenes corresponding to incidents in Benoît's poem will demonstrate. However, in what may be the oldest of the prose redactions,¹¹ the author has given the story a markedly different ending which significantly alters the meaning of Medea.

In the prose Roman which was found in the Codex Bodmer 147 may be discovered a much flatter narrative than in Benoît de Sainte-Maure's poem. Much of the richness of detail which made the Roman de Troie into a brightly colored tapestry has been eliminated in favor of a more rapid pace. Detail and dialogue are sacrificed to the exigencies of plot and moral message.¹² The first point at which one notices these differences is in the prologue. Benoît's lengthy foreshadowing of the plot of his poem and acknowledgement of his sources, which include a statement of purpose for writing the poem, are missing (1-730). The prose Roman de Troie of Bodmer 147 commences with the story of Jason and Pelleus without any preamble of plot, sources, or theme. The first encounter between Jason and Medea, which Benoît embroidered with rich detail, is briefly narrated and the prose redactor's description of Medea pales beside that provided by Benoît (1201-1242). In the prose Troie, forty-one lines are reduced to four:

Puis (Oestés) envia querre Medea sa
fille, qui estoit l'une des plus beles
puceles et des plus sages qui feust en
nule terre, et qui plus savoit de l'art
de nigromance. Et cele vint au mandement
son pere, vestue et appareille des plus
biaux aornemenz qu'ele eust. (p.30).

Then (Oestés) sent for his daughter,
Medea, who was one of the most beautiful
and wisest maidens of any land, and most
learned in the art of necromancy. And

she came at her father's bidding, dressed
and appareled in the most beautiful adorn-
ment she had.

Gone are the catalogue of Medea's powers and the detailed description of
her gown and jewels which Benoît completes with a standard medieval
comparison:

Par mi la sale vint le pas;
La chiere tint augues en bas,
Plus fine a fresche e coloree
Que la rose quant ele est nee:
Mout fu corteise e bien aprise.
(1237-1241)

She stepped into the hall, her
visage bowed, more refined, and
fresh and brightly hued than the
rose when it is born: she was most
courteous and very learned.

The rose simile and all it signifies and all of the elaborate visual
detail with which Benoît evoked such a vivid portrait of Medea are reduced
to a few clichéd adjectives which develop the meaning of her charac-
terization in shorthand. One can only marvel at the literary taste and
technique which tolerated, if not mandated the elimination of so many
meaningful details. However, it is important to note here that this
foreshortened presentation does not alter the content of the theme of
Medea as found in Benoît.

The thirty-six lines of the Roman de Troie (1242-1278) which des-
cribe Medea's first sight of Jason and the impact of his reputation and
appearance on her are diminished in Codex Bodmer 147 to a scant six
lines of prose:

Quant Medea entra ou palais et ele vit
Jason, „de cui ele avoit par maintes foiz
tant oy parler, et ele sot d'ou il venoit
et qu'il queroit, maintenant li entra ou
cuer, et merveillosement de grant amor
l'ama; et que plus le regardoit et plus

li abelissoit; si pensa et dist en
 son cuer que poi se priserait et
 ameroit se ele ne fesoit tant qu'ele
 eust tout son voloir de lui par
 mariage. (p. 31)

When Medea entered the palace and she
 saw Jason, of whom she heard so many
 speak so many times, and she knew from
 where he came and what he was seeking,
 immediately he entered her heart and
 marvelously she loved him with great
 passion; and the more she beheld him
 the more pleasing he became; she
 thought to herself and said in her
 heart that she would have little care
 or love for herself if she did not
 arrange it so that she had all her
 will with him through marriage.

While the onset of Medea's passion for Jason is as sudden and complete in the prose redactor's version as it is in the poem, Benoît's term for it "fine amor (1266,)" is replaced by "grant amor." Therefore all of the connotations which refined love would have had for the Twelfth Century love poet and his audience, especially nobility of soul and fidelity in love, are missing from the prose version. Even though "grant amor" elicits a sense of the impact of Jason on Medea, the refining quality of the love indicated by Benoît's terminology is excised. In addition, the prose narrator's Medea seeks to have power over Jason, which was also true of Benoît's heroine (1275). This is a consistent element of the medieval portraits of Medea which distinguishes them from those of the classical writers whose Medeas were struggling against the compulsion of their own divinely inspired passion. Significantly, so far in the medieval characterizations, Medea is more comfortable with her love for Jason. Her main concern is not how to reconcile the conflicting demands of love and filial piety, but rather how to begin to win Jason's heart. Finally, although the significant

connotations of Benoît's "fine amor" are lacking, Medea's object in pursuing Jason is still matrimony. However, because the context of refined love is not established, Medea's desire for power over her intended husband is inappropriate, disruptive and sinful.¹³

The pattern of the story in the prose Roman de Troie which was extracted from Codex Bodmer 147 is essentially the same as that found in Benoît's poem. All of the specific elements of the narrative are present, but all of the elaborate detail has been excised. The initial love tryst is still arranged by Medea and still takes place in Medea's bedchamber. However, Benoît's description of Medea's richly bejeweled bed, which serves to provide an appropriate setting for her beauty and royal station (1537-1554), is drastically reduced in the prose version to "son lit qui molt richement estoit parez" (p. 32) (her bed which was richly appointed). However, although Benoît's lavish and elaborate settings are eliminated by the prose redactor, significantly the two accounts agree on the fact that Jason perjures himself when he swears his oath of loyalty and fidelity to Medea on an image of Jupiter as a prerequisite to Medea granting her aid (pp. 32-33). Here the narrator of the prose roman comments, "Ilec menti Jason et se parjura, dont il li mesavint espoir puis." (p. 33) (Here Jason lied and perjured himself, because of which perhaps misfortune came to him later on.) Again, as in Benoît's narrative (1264), the future tragedies are the result of Jason's false swearing of faithful service to the woman who is about to save his life and secure the successful completion of his quest. At this point it is important to note that there is no statement of the impropriety of the hero's success depending on a woman's aid, as may be discovered in some of the classical versions (Apollonius, Argonautica III.

470-576 and Valerius Flaccus, Argonautica V. 324-400).

The useful magic gifts which Medea proffers to Jason in fidelity to her part of their lovers' bargain remain the same, including the remarkable ring which works in reverse of other rings of invisibility (Medea's gift has the added virtue of protection of the bearer against evil enchantments and venoms). However, at this point the prose redactor enlarges upon the significance of the ring by using it ironically to comment on Jason's character. Medea cautions Jason as she presents him with her gift, "Icestui anel me gardes bien, car il ne puet estre prisiez de bonté ne de valor, ne il n'est nus, se il l'vaoit sor lui, qui de nul mal se deust douter." (p.33) (Guard this ring well for me, because it may not be prized for goodness or valor, nor is it, if he who possesses it is suspect of any evil). Thus the prose writer of the Bodmer Troie demonstrates that he is capable of some crushing irony, although such moments are rare in his version of the tale. In the act of passing Jason the ring, which is at the same time one of Medea's most powerful gifts and a symbol of the love bond, Medea, who uses a pronoun which may refer to either the gift or the recipient, ironically pronounces the true nature of the object of her largess. Thus the prose redactor of the Bodmer version of the tale uses the ring to underscore the meanness of Jason's character and the culpability of his actions. It is important to note that even though the characterization of Medea in this prose retelling of the Roman de Troie is less positive than in Benoît's portrait, there is no corresponding rehabilitation of Jason.

The story of Jason and Medea as found in Codex Bodmer 147 breaks off at the same point as in Benoît's Roman de Troie. Jason conquers the various adversaries which guard the fleece on a small island (this is

one of the few medieval narrations in which an anxious Medea does not observe her beloved's exploits from a high tower in her city) and returns victorious to his waiting comrades and secret bride. Again, as in Benoît's poem, there is no rush to escape the wrath of Oestés, a common element in the classical sources of the tale. Jason and Medea sojourn "toute la quinzaine, et molt orent li dui amant bon loisir de faire lor volenté." (p. 36) (the whole fortnight, and the two lovers had a good deal of leisure to do their will) (See also Benoît, Roman de Troie, 2008-2013.) At this point the prose redactor of the Bodmer Troie takes the time to predict an unhappy future for Jason and Medea before he leaves their tale to narrate the first destruction of Troy:

Tant ama Medea Jason que ce fu merveilles,
et bien i parut que quant il s'en ala, ele
lessa por lui son pere et sa terre et tot
son parenté et s'en ala avecques lui, dont
ele fist molt grant folie. Car il li menti
sa foi ne li tinst pas verité de ce que il
li ot en convent, ainz la lessa et fist puis
grant honte, ce que il ne li deust mie por
riens avoir fet, selonc la cortoisie et la
bonté que ele li voit fet; dontli dieu se
corrocerent puis a lui et s'en vengierent
molt asprement, si comme nos entendons.
(p. 26)

Medea loved Jason so much that it was a marvel, and it was obvious because when he left, she abandoned for him her father, her homeland and all her family and went with him herself, in which she did a very foolish thing. Because he foreswore his oath to her, nor kept faith with her concerning what he promised her, rather he abandoned her thus committing great shame, which he should not have done it to his beloved for any thing, considering the courtesy and kindness she had done for him; for which the gods then became wrathful toward him and avenged themselves on him very bitterly, as we hear.

Jason is guilty of a shameful deed by returning evil to Medea in payment

for the goodness and courtesy she had shown him. The gods themselves will exact a bitter revenge for his misdeed. It is clear that the conventional values operating in this passage concur with those found in Benoît's conclusion (2014-2028). Before leaving Jaconité, the lovers obtain permission to depart from the generous Oestés who provides a royal sendoff. This detail, which is not found in Benoît's Roman reinforces the culpability of Jason, who repaid such consistent courtesy and good will from Oestés and Medea with his future betrayal.

There is another prose version of the Roman de Troie which is of interest to this investigation. It is the work which appeared under the title Le Roman de Troie en prose edited by Constans and Faral and is probably the oldest of the prose redactions of Benoît's poem. Its beginning is not as abrupt as that of the Bodmer text. The prose romance edited by Constans and Faral provides a foreshortened prologue which includes an outline of the work, an exhortation to engage in meaningful activities, and a plea to avoid idleness which engenders vice. Among the fruitful and edifying pursuits listed is the study of history through the works of ancient authors:

Car par le choses passées puet l'on
mout jugier de celes qui sunt a avenir,
et se puet mout aidier en restorer la
defaute que Aristotes dit que est es
geunes homes, la ou it dit que jeunes
honz ne puet estre sages. (pp. 1-2)

Because by things past one may better
judge concerning those of the future,
and can help much to correct the defect
that Aristotle said is in young men,
when he said that young men can not
be wise.

Thus the prologue of the prose redaction takes upon itself a consciously didactic tone which is consistent with Benoît's opening and his stated

purpose (1-44). There is a small difference in the two prologues which might be significant. The authority whom Benoît cites as his model of wisdom is Salemon (1), while the prose redactor refers to Aristotle. Literary critics and intellectual historians have noted that Aristotle was one of the thinkers who set the tone of the Thirteenth Century, and this fact may be reflected in the prose redactor's choice of sources.¹⁴ A close comparison of the two openings will reveal a number of other divergences. Benoît recounts the genesis of the story of Troy from Homer through Dares, avowing that his purpose is to render its meaningful contents into romance (as much a linguistic term here as it is a type of narrative) for the edification of his audience which could not read Latin (33-44). The prose redactor continues his opening with sketches of the geographies and histories of Greece and Troy respectively (pp. 3-5). From this point on the prose redaction follows the plot of Benoît's poem fairly closely, although it attempts to tighten up Benoît's seemingly rambling presentation. For example, the prose version conflates the two passages in which Benoît presents the confusion of Jason's uncle Pelias with the hero Peleus, husband of the sea nymph Thetis and father of Achilles (145-150, 703-715) into six lines of bare prose (p. 5).

As in the version of the Troy story which was extracted from the Codex Bodmer 147, although the general outline of the plot follows that of Benoît's Roman de Troie, if the reader examines the details of the Roman de Troie en prose edited by Constans and Faral he will discover a number of significant variations in the presentation of her character which modify the meaning of the Medea theme. The first example of the prose writer's revisions occur when Medea is first introduced to the reader at the moment she is summoned by her father to greet his visitor;

the narrator comments:

le rei envoya querre sa fille, qui
Medea estoit apelee, et il n'avoit
plus hoir. Et elle estoit de merveill-
ouse biauté, mais aveuc tout ce si
estoit ele tres sage durement en l'art
de nigromance, comme cele qui tout son
tens i avoit mis, Que vos dirons de ces
merveilles? Assés vos seroient merveill-
ouses a entendre et a moi grevouses de
raconter, a ce que assés avons a dire
encore autre chose. (pp. 9-10)

the king sent for his daughter, who was
called Medea, and he had no other heir.
And she was of marvellous beauty, but
with all that she was so very heavily
learned in the art of necromancy, as
one who had spent all her time at it.
What shall we say to you concerning
these marvels? They would be as wonder-
ful (i.e. strange) for you to hear as
they would be grievous (difficult) for
me to recount, because we still have
many other things to tell.

The prose writer wants his readers to be aware of the significance of Medea's skills. After stating how hard Medea has worked to become an expert in the black arts, the redactor says that it would be better not to provide more information concerning Medea's skills because his audience might find the details too marvelous to be credible and he would find them too painful to narrate. This editorializing is an important change from the more reportorial style of Benoît, whose description was more complete, or of Bodmer 147. For the first time in the medieval portraits there is a hint of disapprobation of Medea's talents, which modifies her significance. As will be remembered, Benoît went into great detail in his elaborate presentation of Medea's involvement in magic and its resultant skills. He emphasized the power of Medea to affect the courses of natural phenomena and her capacity to sustain

Jason's life while he successfully completed his quest. The text of Bodmer 147 does not alter this characterization of Medea. However, the prose redactor of the version edited by Constans and Faral is skeptical of the efficacy of Medea's magic and does not suggest that anything positive could be derived from its application. This disapproval of Medea will become more fully realized at the completion of the episode of the Golden Fleece as the following analysis will demonstrate.

It is important to note at this point that Jason is still portrayed as a perjurer who falsely swears fidelity to Medea on the image of Jupiter, "Tout ensi li jura Jason, ja soit chose que il s'en esparjura après villeinement." (p.14) (Just so Jason swore to her through which he villainously perjured himself afterward.) It is also noteworthy that Medea's gifts, including her best beloved ring, and the trysting place, Medea's bedchamber, remain unchanged in this account. Thus the events of the story remain faithful in kind and sequence to their presentation in Benoît's poem up until the unhurried departure of the lovers for Jason's homeland. At this point, as he is about to conclude the story, the prose writer inserts a variant ending which provides a startling and violent chain of events:

Et en la parfin l'en mena Jason aveuc
 lui en son país, dont elle fist grant
 follie, et mout s'en repentí après,
 si comme li auctor dit, quar celi lassa
 sur une ille de mer, et si estoit grosse
 de dous enfans. Et puis fist elle tant
 que elle se parti de l'isle et se delivra
 des enfans, et tant quist Jason qu'ele le
 trova, et lors tua ses deus enfans, si en
 prist les cuers se les entrailles et les
 dona a mangier a Jason qui engendrés, les
 avoit de sa char, et puis après geta
 devant lui les piés et les mains des
 enfans et li dist que ce estoient les
 membres de ses filz que il avoit engendrés,

dont il avoit les entrailles mangiees,
 et qu'ele avoit cen fait en yengeance
 de ce qu'ele l'avoit delivré de mort et
 il l'en avoit rendu aspre gueredon comme
 d'elle laissier en une ille sauvage. Por
 quoi les sages jugent que ceste fu la
 plus crûel mere qui onques fuste. (p.18)

And in the end Jason led her with him to his country, for which she committed great folly and greatly repented it afterward, as the author says, because she was abandoned on an island in the sea while pregnant with two children. And then she managed an escape from the island and delivered the children, and sought Jason until she found him, and then killed her two children, took from them the hearts and the entrails and gave them to Jason to eat, who had engendered them of his flesh, and then after threw before him the children's feet and hands and told him that these were the limbs of the sons that he had begotten, whose entrails he had eaten, and that she had done this in vengeance because she had delivered him from death and he had rendered her bitter guerdon by abandoning her on a desert island. For which the sages judge that this was the cruelest mother who ever was.

This passage has been quoted at length because the remarkable and horrifying ending added by the prose redactor completely reverses the significance which the story of these tragic lovers had in Benoît's poem. In the Twelfth Century Roman de Troie, it will be remembered, Medea's greatest crime was the folly of loving the false and unworthy Jason whose perjury will be bitterly avenged by the gods (2014-2028). The text of Bodmer 147 concurs in Benoît's prophecy and his evaluation of Jason (p.36). Responsibility for the vaguely implied tragic events of the future is attributed to Jason's forswearing his sacred oath of fidelity to Medea.

In the prose version of the Troy story which was edited by Constans and Faral, Jason is not absolved from his guilt, but it is Medea's

ferocity in avenging herself which becomes the focus of attention. This is remarkably similar to the advice of Horace concerning the appropriate characterization of Medea, and to the actual portraits of Ovid and Seneca, as well as to the Medea who seems to emerge from the fragmented Argonautica of Valerius Flaccus.¹⁵ Indeed, this is the first time that Medea is accused of going further than murdering her children and actually serving them to Jason in a sacriligious feast in either the classical or medieval accounts.¹⁶ In order to ensure that the significance of Medea's acts is not lost to his readers, the prose redactor's comments highlight Medea's unnatural cruelty rather than Jason's ingratitude and betrayal. Thus he makes explicit the suggestion of the effects of Medea's immersion in the study of the black arts on her character which was noted earlier. This prose version of the Roman de Troie is thus closer in tone and presentation to Ovid's portrait of Medea in the Metamorphoses, which ends with the heroine transformed into an uncontrollable destructive force.¹⁷ The Medea portrayed by the Constans and Faral Roman de Troie en prose is anything but sympathetic. There is no acknowledgement here of fin' amor, and its mitigating effects. Medea's fidelity to Jason is a minor issue. Instead, the prose writer supplies an ending to his story which presents a Medea whose savagery is legendary and surpasses that of her least sympathetic classical incarnations.

The negative portrait of Medea developed by the Roman de Troie en prose edited by Constans and Faral is not unique among the Thirteenth Century retellings of her tale. That which was presented by Guido delle Colonne surpasses it in the completeness of its disapprobation. Guido's characterization of Medea makes her a paradigm of feminine

instability, lust, wrong-headedness and evil. What Guido does is take Benoît's poem, strip it of all romance conventions, and with the help of the prose vernacular versions, composes an authoritative history in Latin prose which was considered authentic by writers of future generations.¹⁸ With the reintroduction of the tale into the Latin tongue, the full force of the clerical tradition of anti-feminism is brought to bear on the theme of Medea. The plot is essentially that of Benoît's poem and the vernacular prose versions derived from it, although Guido never acknowledges them as his sources.¹⁹ In fact, even though it is obvious from a close scrutiny of the texts concerned that Guido was indeed following closely several vernacular French versions of the Trojan saga, he claims to have been collating the works of Dares the Phrygian and Dictys of Crete, both of whom the writers of the Middle Ages believed to be eyewitnesses to the destruction of Troy, into a single, unified history (Prologue, 35-50). Guido further asserts that he has been aided in his task by an earlier Latin collation, which he attributes to a nephew of Sallust's named Cornelius (Prologue, 50), but which was more probably a version of the Twelfth Century De Bello Troiano of Joseph of Exeter.²⁰ To the information which he gleaned from Benoît's poem, the prose redactions of the Roman de Troie, and Joseph of Exeter's Latin poem, Guido delle Colonne adds certain details which indicate that he was also aware of Ovid's portraits, especially the Metamorphoses.

Whatever Guido's sources, his account is remarkable for the use it makes of Medea. While she is not as savage in Guido's Historia as she was in Constans and Faral's edition of the Roman de Troie en prose, the Sicilian judge makes her a type of feminine folly and concupiscence. Medea's lust for Jason, which moves her to commit the gravest follies,

is presented as the overriding motivation to which all women, no matter how noble or learned, are subject by their very nature.

The first mention of Medea in Guido's history occurs at the reintroduction of the Ovidian claim that Medea restored the aged Aeson to youth through the use of her magic powers (I, 35-40). While Guido does not make much of Medea's achievement at this point, he is obviously preparing his audience for a more complete account of her accomplishments which he will present later on. The narration of Medea's miracle long before she is encountered by Jason establishes her as a woman of great learning and wonder-working capacities. Interestingly, Guido has Medea's reputation precede her appearance in his work, a reversal of the troubadour convention which was employed by Benoît and the prose redactors that Medea had been prepared to fall in love with Jason because of the fame which had preceded him to Colchis. What Guido seems to be doing here is establishing Medea's credibility as a powerful wonder-worker in order to make her enslavement to passion all the more remarkable and typical. Ironically, Guido inserts the incident of Aeson's rejuvenation even though he will later go to great lengths to demonstrate his skepticism concerning the value and efficacy of magic in general and specifically Medea's reputed skills (II, 200 ff.).

The structure of Guido's history remains essentially the same as that established by Benoît and followed with minor if significant variations by the vernacular prose redactors. For example, Guido continues to confuse Pelias with Peleus which makes Jason the cousin of Achilles, a mistake which has been found in both Benoît's poem and the Roman de Troie en prose edited by Constans and Faral. Furthermore there is some evidence to indicate that Guido may also have had access to a version

of the prose roman similar to that contained in Codex Bodmer 147.²¹ This can be demonstrated by a comparison of the several treatments of Jason's arrival in Medea's homeland. In Benoît's Roman de Troie and the prose redaction edited by Constans and Faral it is set in a temporal Spring topos (Benoît, 1153-1154; Constans, p. 9). Guido follows instead the direction of the prose writer of Codex Bodmer 147 (p. 30) who fixes Jason's arrival at Colchis in the spatial topos of the locus amoenus which focuses attention on the timeless harmony of such a place.²² The locus amoenus in the prose vernacular of Bodmer 147 is only sketched thus:

Et tant ont nagie et siglé que il sont
arrivé en une isle molt planteurose de
toz biens, prés d'une cité qui a non
Jaconité, fort et bele et bien fermee
et abitant de molt de bones genz.

And so much did they navigate and sail
that they arrived at an island abundant
with all good things, near a city that
was called Jaconite strong, beautiful
and well fortified and inhabited by many
good people.

Typical of Guido's version in his much more elaborate presentation:

Et sulcantes maria, uentis affantibus
prosperis, non post multos dies in Colcos
insulam salui perueniunt et desideratum
feliciter portum intrant.

In insula igitur Colcos erat tunc temporis
quedam ciuitas, Iaconites nomine, caput regni
pro sua magnitudine constituta, vrbs ualde
pulcra, muris et turribus circumdata, fabri-
catis multis insignita palatiis, plena populo
copioso, et insignis multorum nobilium incolatu.
In hac igitur vrbe degebat regaliter rex Oetes
in multorum comitiua suorum, cum non longe
ciuitate ipsa nemora multa virescerent apta
quidem uenationibus ob multarum ferarum
copiam iugis uescentium nemorosis. In cuius
urbis ambitu longa patebat distensa planities
frigidariis et uiridariis illustrata, dum
aquarum fontes in ea innumerabiles scaturirent
et quam plures fluuii continuis fluctibus
prolabentes riuulis eandem planitiem irrigarent.

Quare multarum uenatricium avium copia
 uigebat in illa, multarum uolucrum
 cantilene incessanter ibidem dulci
 modulamine personabant. (II. 124-143).

Then plowing through the sea, blown
 upon by favorable winds, they arrived
 safely at the island of Colchis before
 too many days had passed, and joyfully
 entered the port they had longed for.

There was at that time on the island
 of Colchis a certain city named Jaconites,
 which had been established as the capital
 of the kingdom on account of its great
 size, an extremely beautiful city, sur-
 rounded by walls and towers, embellished
 with many skillfully constructed palaces,
 filled with a large populace, and dis-
 tinguished by being the home of many fine
 noblemen. In this city, King Aeetes lived
 regally with a large retinue, since not far
 from the city were many green groves suit-
 able for hunting because there was a large
 supply of wild game grazing on the wooded
 hills. Around this city extended a broad
 plain, adorned with ponds and groves, while
 innumerable springs bubbled forth on it and
 many rivers, gliding along in continuous
 streams, watered this plain with little
 brooks. For this reason, the supply of birds
 for hunting was abundant in it, and the
 chirping of many birds sounded incessantly
 throughout the place with sweet melody.²³

The Sicilian judge emphasizes the prosperity and man-made beauty of the
 city set concordantly in the natural harmony and bounty of the surround-
 ing landscape. The cosmic harmoniousness of the island of Colchis serves
 two purposes. It manifests the just rule of Aeetes without which such a
 pleasance could not be established or maintained, and it also highlights
 the folly and culpability of Medea who would leave such a place which
 was her inheritance in such a way as to disrupt its harmonious integrity.

Soon after this description of her homeland, the audience is intro-
 duced to Medea, who is of marriageable age and the sole heir to the king-
 dom. At this point Guido, as does Benoît, provides a fairly complete

account of Medea's education and powers (II. 175-189). Unlike Benoît, however, Guido raises some objections to the legendary assertions of Medea's capabilities. The Christian historian castigates Ovid, whom he cites as his source, for disseminating information about Medea which is contrary to the natural order of things as established by God. As a good Christian, Guido assures his readers that only God, who created it, has the power to alter the workings of the system of Nature, as He did in the case of the extraordinary eclipse of the sun which accompanied the death of Christ (II. 190-229). Guido concludes that the claims of the ancient writers concerning the scope and magnitude of Medea's legendary powers must be accepted only as emphatic attempts to magnify her character by exaggerating her skill in magic (II. 230-234). Here Guido is following the long-hallowed practice among Christian writers of separating the fruit from the chaff, the nugget of truth from the trappings of fable. This practice had a long history of application to Christian reading of pagan Latin literature, traceable at least to St. Augustine.²⁴ Thus while Guido considers the details to be farfetched and unacceptable, the face of the matter for him was that Medea was a powerful sorceress, a member of a profession of which he as a Christian must disapprove.²⁵

As if this were not bad enough, Medea was also a woman. For Guido delle Colonne that was a deadly combination as he demonstrates in the following comment:

Numquid est sapientis se credere constancie puellari aut sexui mulierbi, qui nullis annorum circulis nouit captare constantiam? Cuius animus semper consistit in motu et precipue inter pubescentes uacillationes antequam mulier viro facta uiripotens misceatur. Scimus enim mulieris animum semper virum appetere, sicut appetit materia semper

formam. O utinam materia transiens
 semel in formam posset dici suo contenta
 formato! Set sicut de forma ad formam
 procedere materie notum est, sic mulieris
 Concupiscentia dissoluta procedere de viro
 ad virum, uti esse creditur sine fine, cum
 sit quedam profunditas sine fundo, nisi
 forte pudoris labes aliqua abstinencia
 laudanda concluserit sub terminis honestatis.

(II. 243-255)

Is it wise to trust to feminine constancy
 or the female sex, which has never been
 able, through all the ages, to remain con-
 stant? Her mind always remains in motion
 and is especially changeable in girlhood,
 before the woman, being of marriageable
 age, is joined to her husband. For we know
 the heart of woman always seeks a husband,
 just as matter always seeks form. Oh, would
 that matter, passing once into form, could be
 said to be content with the form it has re-
 ceived. But just as it is known that matter
 proceeds from form to form, so the dissolute
 desire of woman proceeds from man to man, so
 that it may be believed without limit, since
 it is of an unfathomable depth, unless by
 chance of the taint of shame by a praiseworthy
 abstinence should restrict it within the limits
 of modesty. (pp. 15-16)

Guido continues his tirade from which he attempts to draw the moral lesson
 that no woman is to be trusted because there is no safeguard against her
 strategems. As Guido apostrophizes to Aeetes, "Quid tibi profuit Martis
custodia aduersus fraudes mulieris et dolor?" (II. 263) (What did the
 protection of Mars avail you against the tricks and snares of a woman?
 p. 16) Guido castigates Aeetes for foolishly providing the opportunity
 for social intercourse between Jason and Medea and thus participating in
 his own downfall. Aeetes' primary fault is that he ought to have known
 better than to place his trust in his daughter. The results of his rash
 act are that he loses his daughter and an untold amount of his vast
 treasure, not specifically the Golden Fleece, but its representative

value as an image of fabulous wealth (I. 85-97). As Guido sees it, the very nature of woman is to be inconstant, drawn by the uncontrollable urges of her libido to ceaselessly change one love object for another. Furthermore, Medea is a type of the feminine sex. For Aeetes to expect loyalty and trustworthiness from his daughter in the presence of Jason is like expecting the sun to travel from west to east. In his characterization of Medea, Guido delle Colonne is not out of step with his contemporaries as the subsequent analysis of her portrait in the Roman de la Rose will show.²⁶

In Guido's narrative, as is usual in love poetry, Medea's passion enters her soul through the double passage of the eyes, a fact which at least one future mythographer will incorporate into the theme of Medea as part of what she signifies.²⁷ Guido adds that Medea, contemplating Jason's beauty of physical form "quod repente in concupiscentia eius exarsit et feruentis amoris in animo cecum concepit ardorem." (II.275-276) (She suddenly burned with desire for him, and conceived in her heart a blind passion for him. p. 16) By using the word "concupiscentia" to denote the nature of Medea's attraction to Jason, Guido indicates the sinful, as well as criminal, quality of the object of Medea's passion and the emotion he inspires. Medea's love for the fleshly Jason can only be valued one way. Guido reinforces this negative valuation by observing that Medea:

ergo tanti feruoris exasperata cupidine
conceptum crimen satis conatur ebtgere
ut non solum ab hiis a quibus inspicitur
percipi forte posset, sed etiam a seipsa
probabilis excusationis argumenta producit
quibus illud quod esse posset nefas in
virgine excusabile conuertat in fas.

(II. 283-289)

(Medea) however, stirred by a desire of great fervor, tried to conceal the sin which she was thinking of, so that not only would it not be observed by those to whom it perhaps might be perceived, but also so that she might produce in her own mind arguments for plausible excuses by which she might be able to turn by excuses what might possibly be wrong in a young girl into right action. (p. 16)

As in the prose vernacular accounts, there is no mention of the ennobling passion of fin' amor, but Guido goes a step further by stating the criminal nature of Medea's attraction to Jason. He also asserts that her wish to marry him is only a feeble attempt to legalize her lust (II. 290-297).²⁸ Thus Guido indicates that Medea's love for Jason is sinful and implies that nothing good can come from it for either of them. The curious thing is that after categorically stating the inconstancy and lustfulness of the female sex, Guido is left with the facts of the story, specifically that Jason abandoned Medea to take another lover, not the other way round. Guido, however, does not seem at all concerned that the evidence he presents does not substantiate his analysis.

The judge from Messina continues to scrutinize Medea's activities and motives. In the process he reintroduces the old Ovidian conflict between amor and pudor, presenting it in a way that eliminates any tension which might result from the uncertainty of the outcome (II. 300-309). Amor has its way with Medea and Fortune soon provides her with an opportunity to render herself essential to Jason by virtue of her magic so that her desire for him may be satisfied (II. 310-315). Thus in Guido's retelling of the tale, the ennobling label of fin' amor and the legitimating motivation of marriage which Benoît projects in

his portrait of Medea, become sordid concupiscence and legalized lust. Medea's generosity to Jason is portrayed as a sham which masks Medea's libidinous urges and her life-sustaining powers are prostituted to the pursuit of passion.

As in the vernacular accounts, the bargain between Jason and Medea is sealed and ratified in the familiar medieval trysting place, the lady's bed chamber (III. 1-190). Guido's version of the scene is faithful to the sequence set up by Benoît and the prose redactors; a golden image of Jupiter is produced upon which Jason perjures himself. At this point Guido delle Colonne provides a substantial castigation of both Jason and Medea.

Jason is condemned for accepting Medea and her indispensable aid, taking advantage of her generosity, causing her to abandon the refuge of her parents and homeland, and then betraying her. Guido comments:

Quo ergo pudore depulso iuramenti tui
 fedus eludere presumpsisti vt ingrati-
 tudinis labe pollutus credentem deceperis
 uirginem? Ea laribus paternis abstracta
 et deorum timore postposito, quos elegisti
 periurando contempnere, ei fidem fallere
 ueritus non fuisti a qua tanti boni magnalia
 te certum est suscepisse. Sane te inuerecundum
 demum decepissem Medeam narrat ystoria. Sed hoc
 processit ex tua deceptione flagitium, ut
 eiusdem ystorie series non obmittit, quod in
 tui penam periurii et in odium fidei rupte
 tue, diis uigentibus, uitam tuam turpi casu
 diceris finiuisse. (III. 82-94)

What lack of shame made you dare to mock
 the bond of your oath so that you, defiled
 by the disgrace of ingratitude, might deceive
 a credulous young girl? When you had taken
 her away from her ancestral hearth and had
 put aside fear of the gods, whom you chose
 to scorn by foreswearing, you were not afraid
 to betray the confidence of the woman from
 whom it is certain you received such great
 benefits. The story says, nevertheless,

that at the last you shamelessly
deceived Medea. But your deception,
as the course of this same story does
not omit, produced this shame, namely,
that in the punishment of your perjury
and in aversion for your broken faith,
since the gods were powerful, you are
said to have finished your life in the
misfortune of disgrace. (p. 23)

This passage is one of the most complete condemnations of Jason to be found in any of the classical or medieval analogues. Its significance is clear. The blame for Jason's future misfortunes and ignominious end is placed squarely upon his own perjury. In this Guido is in accord with Benoît and the prose redactors. Fidelity to one's oath is still a primary virtue. However, as shall be seen, Guido does not permit Medea's fidelity to Jason to mitigate her culpability. Indeed it is cited as one of the sources of her guilt.

Guido's censuring of Medea is based upon two errors: her trust in Jason and her confidence in the uncertain knowledge and power of her arts, specifically astronomy (Guido's term). Guido inquires ironically, if not rhetorically, why, if Medea could predict the future, she provided herself with such a tragic ending by giving herself to the false Jason (III. 95-103). Thus Medea becomes an example to those foolish enough to give any credence to the prognostications of the stars as Guido concludes:

Sed certum est astronomie iudicia super
incerto firmata, de quo manifestum ex-
emplum potenter et patenter in te
elicitur, que tibi prouidere per ea
nullatenus potuisti. Hic enim sunt illa
incerta que faciles adcredendum pro certo
decipiunt et aperto conuoluunt falsitatis
errore. In quibus nullus deprehenditur
futurorum effectus, nisi a casu forte-
contingat, cum solius Dei sit, in cuius
manu sunt posita scire tempora temporum
et momenta. (III. 103-111)

It is certain that the judgments of astronomy are based upon uncertainty, of which the manifest example is most powerfully and plainly seen in you, who were in no way able to see into the future through astronomy. For these are those uncertain things which, being easy to believe, certainly deceive and confuse by means of evident error and falsity. In these things no effect of the future is to be discovered, unless perhaps it is touched upon by chance, since it is of God alone, in whose hand is the knowledge of times and the moments of times. (pp. 23-24)

The message is quite clear. Medea's tragic fate is the result of her twofold sin. First her idolatrous lust causes her to place her trust in a perjurer, an opportunist who shamelessly uses her body and her talents for his own advantage and then abandons her. The second root of Medea's misfortunes is bound up with the effort she expended in acquiring her expertise in such nefarious arts as "astronomy." Instead of misplacing her love and trust in a faithless mortal and her confidence in her necromantic skills, she should have given her heart and consciousness to God and had faith only in Him. In this way Medea, as any good Christian, would have avoided folly, shame, and tragedy. The tone of Guido's elaborate condemnation is in close accord with the moral teachings of the Gospels. In the passage cited above, for example, Guido seems to shape his Medea in order to illustrate the following passage from Matthew:

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where rust and moth consume and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither rust nor moth consumes, nor thieves break in and steal. For where thy treasure is, there also will thy heart be. (6: 19-21)

Guido's Medea exemplifies one who puts her faith in the riches of the world which every medieval Christian had been taught were patently false and deceptive.²⁹ Because Medea foolishly places her faith in the things of this world, represented by Jason and her own powers of divination, she participates in her own betrayal and is as responsible for it as Jason is.

Indeed after the above sermon, Guido describes how Jason and Medea spent the night in each other's arms. Medea's lust, instead of being sated, feeds upon the very act and her passion grows more intense with practice (III. 119-121). Again Guido cannot resist providing a moral comment:

Hic est ille gustus tanta seducens
amenitate miseros amatores, qui cum
ab eis plus recepitur magis appetitur,
quem odire non potest stomachus saturatus,
cum cordis audivitas et cupiditas uoluptatis
continuum in eo, dum eius feruet dulcis
anxietas, nutriat appetitum. (III.122-126)

This is that sensation, seducing miserable
lovers by such great enjoyment, which the
more it is received by them, the more it
is desired, and which the sated appetite
is not able to hate, since the desires
of the heart and greed for pleasure
nurture continually a desire for it, while
its sweet longing rages. (p. 24)

Thus there is nothing redemptive in Medea's giving in to her passion. This is not the ennobling fin' amor which Benoît had attributed to his Medea. Nor is the last of Guido's Medea the great folly of the Medeas of the prose vernacular redactions of the Roman de Troie, although folly is closer to what Guido has in mind. In Guido delle Colonne's Historia, Medea's attraction to Jason is presented rather as the sin of lust, which

is described in terms analogous to those which may be discovered in St. Augustine's Confessions, where sexual passion is condemned not only as foolish, but wrong headed and destructive as well.³⁰

The gifts Medea tenders to Jason to aid him in his trials remain the same as in the vernacular French versions. However, Guido's description of the operative powers of Medea's fabulous magic ring (III. 157-170) agrees with that of the Roman de Troie en prose edited by Constans and Faral rather than with Benoît. While speculation on such a minor point of narration is risky, it may be that the anonymous prose redactor and the Sicilian moralist were less chary about having the magic properties of Medea's prize possession identified with those of the ring employed by Cicero's criminal shepherd, Gyges, in his rise to power. Certainly the tone and thrust of both versions support such an idea. Guido, however, does not single out the ring as Medea's most valued gift, as do all the variations of the Roman de Troie.

The rest of the story proceeds predictably. Jason undergoes the trials of the Golden Fleece following Medea's instructions to the letter while she watches anxiously from a tower in the city. As in all of the medieval narratives discussed so far, the tasks are encountered on a small island separated from the mainland by a narrow strait. Jason accomplishes his quest, returns victorious and is received with great joy by everyone but Aeetes who greets him "fictitia iocunditate" (III. 352) (with feigned please p. 30) which is a variation of Guido's. Guido's Aeetes is grief stricken over the loss of such a treasure (III. 351-353). Jason and Medea resume their trysts in secret and remain for one month in Colchis at Medea's persuasion, until the opportunity is seized to steal away secretly (III. 373-375). Aeetes' grief, Medea's

penchant for dalliance, and the secret flight from Colchis are all Guido's additions to the tale. They reinforce the sense of furtiveness and sinfulness with which Guido's account is interwoven. Guido completes his version not by adding any new elements to the tale, but, as Benoît does, by pointing up a moral lesson (III. 376-393). Medea's motivation for running off with Jason is that she wishes to flee parental control. Her price for such rash behavior is an obscure death in misery after many detestable adventures, none of which Guido specifies. Jason dies after great suffering, damned by the gods for his perjury. However, it is to Medea that Guido addresses his parting remarks:

dic, tibi quid profuit Iasonem enormia
 incurisse dispendia, dic, tibi quid
 profuit in Iasonem grauis ultio et
 uindicta deorum postea subsequuta?
 Sane uulgariter dici solet, animali
 mortuo inutiliter proficit medicinalium
 herbarum naribus adhibere medelas. Nisi
 forte diis placeat non imperasse recomp-
 ensationem iniurie sed ut a mortalibus
 cognoscatur deos nolle graues culpas
 etiam in facie uiuentium absque pene
 talione transire. (III. 385-393)

Say what did it profit you that Jason incurred such monstrous losses; say what did it profit you that the harsh revenge and reprisal of the gods afterward pursued him? Indeed it is commonly said that it is useless to apply the remedies of medicinal herbs to the nostrils of a dead animal. Unless perchance it pleases the gods not to demand satisfaction for an offense except so that mortals may realize that the gods do not wish serious faults to pass by in the sight of living men without retribution and punishment. (p. 31)

The biblical echo and its purport are unmistakable. "Say what does it profit a man to gain the entire world and lose his immortal soul," asks Christ rhetorically of His disciples (Matt. 16: 25-26).³¹ Medea in

Guido's apostrophe is asked a similar question and the answer in both cases is the same. It profits Medea nothing that Jason suffers the gods' retribution; it profits a mortal nothing to gain the world at the expense of his soul. Medea, like those who choose to follow the desires of the world, chooses wrongfully. The end results are suffering, destruction and condemnation. Most significantly, in Guido's Historia, the onus of blame is placed squarely on Medea.

Thus the Historia Destructionis Troiae presents the most negative portrait of Medea to date among medieval writers. She becomes an example of culpable feminine moral behavior, the epitome of female beauty, lust, and wrong-headedness which bring her and all who are involved with her to ruin. Significantly, her downfall is aided and abetted by her fabled learning and magical powers, an indication that intellectual capabilities are powerless against passion and that an intelligent woman is a threat to herself and those around her. Medea is so destructive because she does not acknowledge the proper authority: parent, husband, or divinity. She is in control, and the results are disastrous, two facts which connect her in Christian typology to the primal woman, Eve, through whose usurpation of authority and independent action sin and death entered the world.

While the appearance of Medea in Guido's Historia is relentlessly pejorative, her portrait in Jean de Meun's section of the Roman de la Rose is much more complex and tinged with true irony. Jean provides two references to Medea (13199-13234 and 14374-14378), both of which have been traced to Ovidian prototypes,³² but, as will soon be demonstrated, the more substantial passage has medieval antecedents. In addition,

both allusions to Medea are included among the arguments with which La Vielle attempts to persuade Bel Acueil to espouse her pragmatic theory of love. Briefly stated La Vielle exhibits an attitude toward the love relationship which assumes that all men are lecherous, fickle, cruel, opportunistic, and stupid. They desire only one thing from a woman, and, if she is wise, she will sell it to them dearly so that she will have something of value to comfort her in her old age when she is no longer attractive to men (12732-15573). In order to gain credence for her assertions, La Vielle first establishes her credentials by claiming that her expertise in the art of loving has been gained during a long life devoted to perfecting her craft:

Bele iere, et jenne et nice et fole,
 n'onc ne fui d'Amors a escole
 ou l'en leust la theorique,
 mes je sai tout par la pratique.
 Experimenz m'en ont fet sage,
 que j'ai hantez tout mon aage;
 or en sai jusqu' a la bataille,
 si n'est pas droiz que je vos faille
 des biens aprendre que je sai,
 puis que tant esprovez les ai.
 Bien fet que jennes genz conseille.
 Sanz faille, ce n'est pas merveille
 s'ous n'en savez quartier ne aune,
 car vos avez trop le bec jaune.
 (12771-12784)

Beautiful was I, and young and ill
 and foolish,
 I had not been in Love's school
 where one read the theory,
 but I knew all from practice.
 Experiments had made me wise in it,
 which I have dwelled on all my life;
 Now I know about it, up to the battle,
 so it would not be right if I should fail
 to teach you about the good things that I know
 Since I have proved them so often.
 He does well who counsels young people.
 Without fail, it's no wonder
 if you know nothing about it
 because you have such a yellow beak
 (you are so young).

La Vielle's description of her experience in love is strongly reminiscent of Ovid's, "Militiae species amor est." (Ars Amatoria II. 233) (Love is a kind of warfare.) In the light of such a definition, La Vielle's generous offer to teach the unfledged Bel Acueil all she has learned from her ceaseless experimentation in the amatory arts may be suspected of having an ulterior motive. The juxtaposition of the wise and generous adage, "Bien fet qui jennes genz conseille," and the nature of the subject matter contained in La Vielle's curriculum sets up one of the ironies in which Jean de Meun places his references to Medea.

In spite of her claims to the contrary, La Vielle seems to have been badly scarred in her repeated combats in the lists of Love. This is evidenced by the fact that her avowed purpose in instructing the neophyte Bel Acueil is to convert him into an instrument of revenge for wounds received in the bitter guerrilla warfare of passion:

Por ce, biaux filz, vos endoctrine
 que, quant endoctrinez seroiz,
 des ribaudiaus me vanheroiz;
 car, se Dex plest, quant la vendra,
 de cest sarmon vos souvendra.
 (12850-12854)

For this (reason), beautiful son, I
 indoctrinate you so that, when you
 will be indoctrinated, you will avenge
 me on the ribalds; Because, if God may
 please, when He will come, He will
 remind you of this sermon.

In the context of the entire Roman de la Rose, it does not bode well for Amant, the narrator-hero, if La Vielle's attempt to indoctrinate Bel Acueil is successful, because he represents the receptivity of the Rose to Amant's suit. However, Amant is quick to allay the reader's fear that such an indoctrination might have taken place by asserting:

mes por riens nule qu'el deist
 tel traison ne me feist:
 ce me fiancoit et juroit,
 autrement ne m'aseuroit.
 (12967-12970)

but not for anything she said
 Did he such treachery to me as he
 pledged and swore to me and assured me
 in no other manner.

The irony of the above assertion is obvious. If Bel Acueil had been won over by La Vielle's instructions, false oaths and assurances would be among the armory of deceptive devices with which any well equipped lover would wage love. Furthermore, if La Vielle's description of love is accurate, nothing is certain and Amant is a fool to place any faith in pledges and vows. From this perspective, Jean de Meun seems very close in attitude to Guido delle Colonne, but unlike Guido Jean never gives his audience the benefit of third-person omniscient moral statement. Every line of the poem, including Guillaume de Lorris' beginning is spoken by a participant in the action and perspectives vary.³³ However, the insecurity and incertitude nurtured by the absence of an objective narrator in the Roman de la Rose only serve to reinforce a sense of identity in the moral stances of the French poet and the Sicilian historian. Thus Guido delle Colonne and Jean de Meun achieve a similar effect through different techniques. Both historian and poet demonstrate that love and lovers are fickle and deceptive.

La Vielle continues her instruction to Bel Acueil by advising:

Biau filz, qui veust joir d'amer,
 des douz maus qui tant sunt amer,
 les commandemenz d'Amors sache,
 mes gart qu'Amors a soi nou sache.
 (12981-12984)

Beautiful son, he who wishes to enjoy love
 and the sweet evils (pains) which are so

bitter,
 must know the commandments of Love,
 but take care that he does not know
 Love itself.

While the above is sound Ovidian advice, it has had dire consequences in the story of Medea and Jason as developed in the medieval works discussed so far because it has been the underlying principle of Jason's behavior to Medea. As has been observed, even Guido does not excuse Jason from blame for his cold-hearted perjury to Medea. Jason's exploitation of Medea, which is in accord with La Vielle's base advice, has consistently been cited as a primary cause of tragedy in the medieval narrations of Medea's story.

Before proceeding to La Vielle's specific references to Medea, it is necessary to cite one more of her axioms of love:

Biau filz, ja larges ne saiez;
 en pluseurs leus le queur aiez,
 en un seul leu ja nou metez
 ne nou donez ne ne pretez,
 mes vendez le bien chierement
 et torjorz par enchierement;
 et gardez que nus qui l'achat
 n'i puisse fere bon achat;
 por riens qu'il dont ja point n'en ait,
 mieuz s'arde, ou se pende, ou se nait.
 (13006-13016)

Beautiful son, never be generous (in love);
 Have your heart in several places,
 Never put it in a single place
 Nor give it nor lend it,
 But sell it very dearly
 And always for a higher price;
 And take care that no one who buys it
 is able to make a good deal;
 for no matter how much he gives,
 let him have nothing for it
 better he should burn, or hang,
 or drown.

La Vielle's counsel in the above passage is startling. She advises both infidelity and calculation as matters of policy on love. Rather than

fin' amor, which is supposed to refine the characters of those who practice it, the love defined by La Vielle is nothing more than a commodity. She advises using passion to exploit prospective lovers. La Vielle is thus an antitype of refined love, who represents a negative ideal of sexual passion. Not only does she advocate self-prostitution as a way of capitalizing on desire, but she also encourages perjury in lovers by citing the gods themselves as examples of such behavior:

Jupiter et li dieu riaient
quant li amant se parjuraient,
et maintes foiz se parjurerent
li dieu qui par amours amerent.
(13097-13100)

Jupiter and the gods laughed
When lovers perjured themselves
And many times the gods perjured
themselves who loved passionately.

Like a number of others, this passage is modeled on Ovid's advice to would-be lovers (Ars Amatoria I. 631-636). Jean de Meun uses it to continue to establish his portrait of La Vielle as a type of love, one of the many permutations of the theme open to the medieval practitioner. Yet it is difficult to establish La Vielle's purpose in the poem beyond that of realizing a negative figure of love.³⁴ The irony of having such a character as one of the guardians of the chastity of the Rose is masterful. The credentials of such a warden are manifestly suspect and one assumes that her only appropriate qualification for the job is age.

This then is the character who twice refers to Medea during her lengthy discourse on the theory and practice of love. The context created by La Vielle for retelling the story of Jason and Medea is conditioned by her philosophy of love and is complex, if not problematical. Medea is one of four classical heroines used by La Vielle to illustrate

her point that all men are foreswearers in love, therefore should be deceived themselves. Dido, with whom Aeneas dallied as long as she was useful to him and then abandoned; Phyllis, who hanged herself in grief for Demophon's breach of faith; and Oenone, who was promptly replaced in Paris' affections by Helen are Medea's companions in woe. Significantly, Medea is the last of La Vielle's illustrative examples and is portrayed as a victim abandoned by Jason who goes mad and strangles her children. La Vielle's presentation of the tale is clearly shaped by its setting. She asks at the outset:

Que refist Jason de Medee,
 qui si vilmant refu boulee
 que li faus sa foi li manti
 puis qu'el l'ot de mort garanti,
 quant des toreaus qui feu gitoient
 par leur gueules et qui venoient
 Jason ardoir ou depecier,
 sanz feu santir et sanz blecier
 par ses charmes le delivra,
 et le serpent li enivra
 si qu'onc ne se pot esveillier,
 tant le fist formant someillier?
 Des chevaliers de terre nez,
 bataillereus et forsenez,
 qui Jason voloient occierre
 quant il entr'eus gita la pierre,
 fist ele tant qu'il entrepristrent
 et qu'il meismes s'entrocistrent,
 et li fist avoir la toison
 par son art et par son poison.
 (13199-13218)

What did Jason do with Medea,
 Who was so vilely deceived
 When he gave his oath to her
 After she were to save him from death,
 From the bulls who spit fire
 From their gullets and who came
 to burn or tear Jason apart,
 She delivered him through her charms,
 Without feeling fire and without
 being wounded,
 And she drugged the serpent for him
 So that it could not waken
 so deeply did she make it sleep.

Of the earth-born knights
 belligerent and enraged
 who wanted to kill Jason -
 when he threw the stone among them,
 She caused them to seize upon themselves
 so that they killed each other,
 and she helped him obtain the fleece
 through her magic and through her potion.

One notices something quite remarkable here. Although it is certain that Jean de Meun knew the works of Ovid intimately,³⁵ he chose to enumerate the tasks which Jason performed through Medea's aid and intervention in the order in which they are found in the medieval sources rather than the Ovidian. Benoît, the French vernacular prose redactors, and Guido all recount the events of Jason's combat as the taming and yoking of the bulls, the slaying of the serpent, and the self-slaughter of the foemen born from the slain serpent's teeth. In Ovid's Metamorphoses (VII. 121-142), the dragon's teeth from which the earthborn men evolve are from a previously slain serpent, presumably that which Cadmus slew when he founded Thebes.³⁶ In Ovid, Jason slays the living dragon who guards the Golden Fleece as his final test (Metamorphoses VII.149-158). There is indeed an Ovidian element in La Vielle's narration. It is Jason's strategy of tossing a huge stone into the midst of the earth-born soldiers (Metamorphoses VII. 139-142). In the Metamorphoses, Jason's trick causes the spawn of the dragon's teeth to turn on and slay each other, but in La Vielle's account Medea causes the self-slaughter of the earth-born men by means of her magic skills after Jason hurls the stone, which only serves to make the dragon-knights angry at Jason and resolve to kill him. Jason's strategem of hurling the stone in order to cause his foes to fight among themselves appears in none of the other medieval versions studied so far, but was a common element in

the narratives of the classical writers.

La Vielle includes one final service of Medea to Jason which raises some interesting questions and problems. She continues:

Puis fist Eson rejoyvenir
 por mieuz Jason a soi tenir,
 ne riens de lui plus ne voloit
 fors qu'il l'amast con il soloit
 et ses merites regardast
 por ce que mieuz sa foi gardast.
 (13219-13224)

Then she made Aeson young again
 in order to better hold Jason to herself,
 she wanted nothing more from him
 except that he love her as he used to do
 and be aware of her merits
 in order that he better keep his faith.

Although the rejuvenation of Aeson was an essential part of Ovid's narrative (Metamorphoses VII. 159 ff.) which the classical Latin poet used as an opportunity to fully present Medea's powers as a sorceress, the only medieval version examined so far which mentions the incident is Guido delle Colonne's Historia. This raises the tantalizing question of whether it was Guido's work which gave Jean de Meun the shape of his Medea's story. The respective dates of the two works lend support to the theory. While the Historia was not finished until 1287, ten years after the date at which Jean completed his continuation of the Roman de la Rose, Guido had written Book I of his history, in which the rejuvenation of Aeson is mentioned, in 1270. Furthermore, it is known that Guido spent some of the decade of 1270-1279 sojourning in England and France.³⁷ However, a major problem arises when one recalls that the bulk of Medea's story in the Historia Destructionis Troiae is told in Books Two and Three which were not composed until 1287.

What may be concluded with certainty from the above evidence is

that La Vielle's slanted account of Jason's treachery to Medea was composed from a combination of medieval and classical sources, and significantly, that it includes exactly the episode that Guido delle Colonne added to his portrait of the classical heroine. The two medieval writers found the rejuvenation of Jason's father to be an essential element for their respective versions. In addition, Jean de Meun and Guido delle Colonne must have had access to comparable sources, both the works of Ovid and some form of the Roman de Troie. To suggest any more concrete or definite connections between the French scholar-poet and the Sicilian judge-historian at this time would be fruitless speculation.

La Vielle completes her brief narration of Medea's tragic tale by showing that all of the heroine's efforts to bind Jason to herself were to no avail and that Jason's betrayal was the cause of bitter sorrow:

Puis la lessa, li maus trichierres,
 lis faus, li desloiaus, lierres;
 don ses enfanz, quant el le sot,
 por ce que de Jason les ot,
 estrangla de deul et de rage,
 don el ne refist pas que sage
 quant el lessa pitie de mere
 et fist pis que marrastre amere.
 (13225-13232)

Then he abandoned her, the evil
 trickster, the false, the disloyal
 thief, for, when she knew it, she
 strangled her children in grief
 and rage because she bore them by
 Jason in which she did not act
 wisely when she abandoned a mother's
 pity and acted worse than a bitter
 stepmother.

The fault here is clearly Jason's; for love of him she bore her children and because of his treachery she slew them. Thus Medea acted in a way which was contrary to her reputation for learning and her nature by committing the desperate deed. The ending is reminiscent of that of

the Roman de Troie en Prose edited by Constans and Faral in which Medea slays her twin sons and feeds them to Jason. In that version Medea becomes the cruelest mother who ever lived and here she is worse than a cruel stepmother. Both accounts provide unique ways of dispatching the children. However, while the prose writer focuses on the ferocity of Medea's revenge, La Vielle, in accord with her theme makes Jason, whose treachery drives Medea to commit a mad and desperate act, the villain of the piece.

La Vielle claims to be able to recite a thousand such stories of faithless men and the suffering women who love them (13233). The fact that Medea is only one of a thousand abused women provides her with a setting which is similar to the one she had in Ovid's Heroides in which her letter was the twelfth addressed to a feckless or faithless lover and the second one of that collection sent to Jason. Even though La Vielle portrays a Medea who has suffered at the hands of an opportunistic lover, however, one cannot assert that La Vielle's narrative exhibits the conventional ethic of fin' amor by which to judge Jason. Rather, the old crone's view of love is much closer to that of Ovid's Ars Amatoria as has been observed. For La Vielle, love is not ennobling, but a combat in which the ethic of survival is the only viable one:

Briefment tuit les bolent et trichent,
tuit sunt ribaut, par tout se fichent,
si les doit l'en ausinc trichier,
non pas son quer an un fichier. (13235-13238)

Briefly all deceive and trick them (women)
All are ribalds (lechers), they establish them-
selves everywhere so one must trick them (men)
in the same way, not fix one's heart on one man.

Similar sentiments and phrasing begin the third book of Ovid's Ars Amatoria, "Saepe viri fallunt: tenerae non saepe puellae,/Paucaque, si

quaeras, crimina fraudis habent." (31-32) (Often do men deceive: tender maids not often,/And, should you ask little do they possess of the crime of deceit.) Significantly, Jason is one of the illustrative examples of this dictum.

It is from the second book of the Ars Amatoria that La Vielle selects her remaining reference to Medea. Following Ovid, who, as has been seen, denies that magic and sorcery have the power to direct the course of love,³⁸ La Vielle counsels against faith in the black arts either to charm a man into love, or cause him to dislike a rival (14365-14373). As evidence to support the contention that skill in magic is powerless in matters of love, La Vielle cites the experiences of Medea and Circe:

Onques ne pot tenir Medee
Jason por nul anchantement,
n'ong Cyrce ne tint ansement
Ulixes qu'il ne s'en foist
por nul sort que fere en poist.
(14374-14738)

Nor ever could Medea hold
Jason with any enchantment,
Nor did Circe ever hold similarly
Ulysses so that he did not escape from her
for no power that magic gave to her.

If these two renowned sorceresses were unable to hold their respective love objects through magic, then enchantments are surely useless in waging love and any woman who places her faith in them is a fool. Ovid makes this same point twice in his didactic discourses on the art of loving using the same examples, Medea and Circe, each time (Ars Amatoria II. 99-104; Remedia Amoris 261-268). Thus La Vielle borrows consistently from a very respectable authority on the arts and sciences of love.³⁹ This is appropriate to the nature, tone and plot of much of the Roman de la Rose.⁴⁰ Once Jalousie constructs the castle in which Bel Accueil

and the Rose are to be immured from Amant (3779 ff.), there is every expectation that the fortress of enforced chastity will be stormed eventually. Even Guillaume de Lorris recognizes that the outcome of combat in love chez Ovide must be unconditional surrender.⁴¹ As has been noted, there is a marvelous irony at work in that the very person who is assigned to defend the chastity of the Rose is by her own confession most unchaste (12984-12918). Needless to say, the choice does not bode well for chastity, as the outcome of the poem demonstrates.

Significantly, it is this very irony which tints, if not taints, La Vielle's portrait of Medea. It becomes difficult to regard Medea sympathetically when her story is being employed to bolster an argument which advocates deceit, self-love, and the marketing of love as a commodity. This point becomes even more meaningful when one recalls that Jean de Meun chose one of the medieval narratives of Medea's story for his source, even though he was demonstrably well aware of the Ovidian versions. Jean's choice indicates a clear attempt to revalue the meaning of the tale in accord with most of the other Thirteenth Century accounts. The Twelfth Century poem by Benoît de Sainte-Maure had cited the operation of fin' amor on the emotions of Medea, which provided her love for Jason with an ennobling, if not virtuous cast. Refined love becomes folly in the vernacular prose redactions of Benoît's poem and it is a phrase which seems to have no meaning for Guido delle Colonne's version of the story.

In the Roman de la Rose Medea is presented as a victim in the age-old conflict in which all lovers engage. There is nothing ennobling about her passion or her fate. In La Vielle's narrative, Medea is one of those foolish women who gave everything to her man in good faith.

However, in spite of the services Medea rendered and powers she possessed, she was used, deceived, and ultimately betrayed and abandoned by the enemy who won her heart.

All of the Thirteenth Century versions of Medea's tale which have been discussed in this chapter provide similar portraits. In these medieval analogues, Medea's fidelity to Jason is not a virtue, but an instrument of her self-destructive folly. Her faith is given to the wrong object. Neither her magic arts, nor Jason's oaths ultimately have any value. Because they are both of this world, they are not only suspect but patently false. In the Roman de la Rose the duplicity of earthly love and Medea's magic arts are provided with an added dimension of irony by the context of La Vielle's speeches.

A number of points must be noted before leaving this discussion of the Thirteenth Century Medeas. First, while the vernacular writers were not flattering, the most negative portrait was that of Guido's Historia Destructionis Troiae. Guido's disapproval of Medea and all of her sex is complete and vehemently argued at length. This fact illustrates a continuation of the clerical, anti-feminist attitude toward Medea noticed in the Twelfth Century Latin sources in which Medea's participation in Jason's adventures is completely ignored. The writers of the Fourteenth Century will continue to present their most censorious characterizations of Medea in Latin, with one notable exception. Second, the influence of Benoît's Roman de Troie on subsequent versions must be acknowledged, especially in terms of plot, setting, the nature of Medea's gifts to Jason and their significance. Even with Ovid's works as tempting alternative sources, the writers of the Thirteenth Century, whether in the vernacular or Latin rely heavily on Benoît, while using Ovid whenever

they felt it was necessary to fill in the gaps. This will also be the case with a number of the Fourteenth Century versions. Finally, the reader must notice what is missing from the Thirteenth Century narratives of Medea, again under the influence of Benoît. Specifically the absent elements include some of Medea's most gruesome enormities; the slaying and dismemberment of Apsyrtus, her brother, the dismemberment and boiling of Pelias effected with the duped assistance of his own daughters, and the burning of Creusa and Creon. Where the violent deeds are reintroduced, they are limited to the activities which promote the mutual anguish of Medea and her faithless husband, to wit the slaughter of their children. In addition, two of the most negative retellings add the rejuvenation of Aeson to the list of Medea's services to Jason. This generous demonstration of her powers serves to underscore Medea's foolishness and Jason's treacherous opportunism.

It seems that even when the medieval writers wish to exhibit disapprobation of Medea, they ignore some of the most violent and horrifying of her deeds. It is enough for them to keep the tragedy focused on the principals. All the medieval analogues discussed so far stress the unworthiness of Jason, and by extension any mortal man, as an appropriate object of trust and love for a woman. On the other hand, Medea is portrayed as at best a foolish, at worst a lecherous, female, whose uncontrollable passion causes her to make disastrous choices. In works such as Guido's Historia, she is held morally accountable for her choice. On the other hand, the "sympathetic" portrait of Medea in the Roman de la Rose is patently ironic. It will be interesting to see how the writers of the Fourteenth Century handle the medieval legacy of the Medea theme.

Chapter V: Notes

¹ Léopold Constans et Edmond Faral, eds. Le Roman de Troie en Prose, I, (Paris: Champion, 1922). Volume II which was supposed to have contained commentary and notes was never published. All references to this version of the Roman de Troie en prose will be from this edition and will appear as page numbers in parentheses following each citation. Francoise Vielliard, ed. Le Roman de Troie en prose (Version du Codex Bodmer 147) (Geneve: Fondation Martin Bodmer, 1979). All references to this version of the Roman de Troie en prose will be taken from this edition and will appear as page numbers in parentheses after each citation. All translations of passages from both works will be my own. There are other versions of the Roman de Troie en prose which appeared during the Thirteenth Century, one as far from France as the Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem. However, these versions were either not available for the current study, or were too close in content to the presented versions to merit independent discussion. See Kathleen Chesney, "A Neglected Prose Version of the Roman de Troie," Medium Aevum, 11 (1942), 46-67; Hugo Buchthal, Miniature Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957), pp. 68-69.

² Guido de Columnis, Historia Destructionis Troiae, ed. Nathaniel Edward Griffin (Cambridge, Mass.: The Medieval Academy of America, 1936). All references to Guido's text will be from this edition and will appear as book and line numbers in parentheses after each citation. A helpful translation, introduction and notes to the Historia may be found in Guido delle Colonne, Historia Destructionis Troiae, Mary Elizabeth Meek, trans., ed. (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1974).

³ Guillaume de Lorris et Jean de Meun, Le Roman de la Rose, I and II, Félix Lecoy, ed. Les Classiques Français du Moyen Age, 92, 95 (Paris: Champion, 1970, 1974). All references to the Old French text will be from this edition and will appear as line numbers in parentheses following each citation. All translations from the Old French will be my own.

⁴ Joan M. Ferrante, Woman as Image in Medieval Literature (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 99 ff. George D. Economou, "The Two Venuses and Courtly Love," in In Pursuit of Perfection: Courtly Love in Medieval Literature, George D. Economou and Joan M. Ferrante, eds. (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1975), pp. 25-32. Economou actually traces the mistrust of passion and the women who inspire it to roots in the mid-Twelfth Century. Alan M.F. Gunn, The Mirror of Love: A Reinterpretation of the Romance of the Rose (Lubbock: Texas Tech Press, 1952), pp. 36-45, 350-386. Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition: A Study in Style and Meaning (1957; rpt. Berkley: Univ. of California Press, 1964), pp. 71-82. Both Economou and Muscatine describe the Roman de la Rose as an "anti-courtly" work. Carrolly Erickson, The Medieval Vision: Essays in History and Perception (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 181-212. C.S. Lewis, The

Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition (1938; rpt. New York: Oxford-Galaxy, 1958), pp. 144-145. John F. Benton, "Clio and Venus: An Historical View of Medieval Love," in The Meaning of Courtly Love, F.X. Newman, ed. (Albany: S.U.N.Y. Press, 1973), pp. 19-42. Benton challenges the view that, historically speaking, the Twelfth Century was any more pro-feminist or less anti-feminist than the centuries which preceded or followed it. W.T.H. Jackson, "Faith Unfaithful: The German Reaction to Courtly Love," in Newman, pp. 55-76. Jackson analyzes the Thirteenth Century German reaction to the Twelfth Century idealization of noble women and the passion they inspire as one of skeptical criticism, if not rejection. Katharine M. Rogers, The Troublesome Helpmate: A History of Misogyny in Literature (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1966), pp. 58-98. Eileen Power, Medieval Women, M.M. Postan, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 26-31. This book is a collection of Ms. Power's essays on the topic of women in the Middle Ages, the earliest of which appeared in 1926. Power's work is especially useful for its enlightenment of the place and function of women other than the noble lady, and in its reconstruction of the quotidian life of the noblewoman. Joan Evans, Life in Medieval France, 3rd ed. (New York: Phaidon, 1969), pp. 28-29. The first edition of this work appeared in 1925, a second revised edition in 1957. Evans also provides a noteworthy use of the phrase fin' amor which is found in the Thirteenth Century Image du Monde (1247), "Philosophie est connoissance/Et fine amour de sapience; Philosophy is knowledge/And refined love of wisdom," p. 112. It is interesting that the term fin' amor which originally denoted the refined passion of one human being for another, by the Thirteenth Century was current enough to be applied to a denotation of human passion for wisdom. Thus the term could be rehabilitated even if the original emotion had become suspect.

⁵Ferrante, Woman as Image, pp. 21-22, 101-103. John V. Fleming, The Roman de la Rose: A Study in Allegory and Iconography (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969), p. 97. Rosemond Tuve, Allegorical Imagery: Some Medieval Books and Their Posterity (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 19, 40-41, 243. Etienne Gilson, The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy, The Gifford Lectures, 1931-1932, A.H.C. Downes, trans. (1936; rpt. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), p. 287. Rogers, pp. 65-66. See also St. Augustine, City of God, XIV.2-5. St. Paul, Colossians 3:5, Romans 8:5-8.

⁶Fleming, pp. 106-107. Tuve, pp. 234-235. Chauncey Wood, "La Vielle, Free Love and Boethius in the Roman de la Rose," Revue de literature comparee, 51, 336-342. For a slightly more positive assessment of the character of La Vielle see Gunn, pp. 374-395.

⁷Frank A. Dominguez, The Medieval Argonautica (Potomac, Md.: Jose Porrua Turanzas, 1979), pp. 31-40. Chesney, pp. 46-60.

⁸H.J. Chaytor, From Script to Print: An Introduction to Medieval Vernacular Literature (1945; rpt. New York: October House, 1967), p.86.

Meek, p. xiv. Vielliard, p. 8. Chaytor indicates that the prosification of the Roman de Troie in other vernaculars was widespread in Thirteenth Century Europe, pp. 97-99.

⁹Chaytor, pp. 83-85.

¹⁰Vielliard, p. 7. Vielliard also surmises, pp. 8-9, that the version of the Troy story contained in Bodmer 147 has many resemblances to Guido's Historia and the version meridionale cited by Chesney, although parts of it must have been taken directly from Benoît's poem.

¹¹Dominguez, p. 32 n. 14.

¹²Vielliard, pp. 12-15.

¹³One need only be reminded here of the biblical example of Eve and the advice of St. Paul on marriage, Ephesians 5:21-24. The need for women to be under the guidance of men and not vice-versa was heartily affirmed by medieval philosophers and theologians, Ferrante, Woman as Image, pp. 1-3, 18-21. Erickson, pp. 185-190. Rogers, pp. 70-77.

¹⁴Dominguez, pp. 40-41. Gilson pp. 241-247, 269. Henry Osborn Taylor, The Medieval Mind: A History of the Development of Thought and Emotion in the Middle Ages, I and II 4th ed. (1925; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1962), I, pp. 17-18, 37-38, II, pp. 421-434, 451-456, 572. Ferrante, Woman as Image, pp. 101-105. Rogers, p. 66. Erickson, pp. 105-107, 204, 261. Evans, pp. 107-109.

¹⁵Chapter II, pp. 41-80. Chapter III, pp. 89-123.

¹⁶Dominguez, pp. 44-45, suggests the stories of Ariadne, Hypsipyle, and Atreus as the models for the savage conclusion. However, the Ovidian account of Philomela, Procne and Tereus in Metamorphoses VI. 401-674, is closer in content to the events contained in Constans' and Faral's prose redaction's ending of Medea's story than the Thyestes tragedy, and is separated from Ovid's account of Medea in Metamorphoses by a scant forty-six lines.

¹⁷Chapter III, pp. 75-77.

¹⁸Dominguez, pp. 45-46. Meek, pp. xi-xii. On the vigor and authority of Latin as a literary and scholarly language in the Thirteenth Century see Ernst Robert Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, Willard Trask, trans., Bollingen 36 (1953; rpt. New York: Harper and Row, 1963), pp. 24-30. Helene Nolthenius, Duecento: The Late Middle Ages in Italy, Darton Longman and Todd, trans. (New York: McGraw-

Hill, 1968), pp. 135-155. Charles Homer Haskins, "Latin Literature under Frederick II," in Studies in Medieval Culture (1929; rpt. New York: Ungar, 1958), pp. 124-147.

¹⁹ Dominguez, pp. 27-35. Meed, pp. xii-xviii. Chesney, pp. 49-57.

²⁰ Meek, pp. xix-xx. To be fair, one should compare Guido's Prologue to that of Benoît de Sainte-Maure, Roman de Troie, 71-124, in which the French poet makes the same claim. Furthermore, neither prose French redaction of Benoît's poem under discussion makes a similar assertion of sources.

²¹ Chesney, pp. 52-53. Vielliard, pp. 8-9.

²² Curtius, pp. 195-200. Similar uses of the pleasant place topos are ubiquitous in medieval literature, both vernacular and Latin. However, for purposes of comparison see Dante Alighieri, Divina Commedia, Inferno, IV. 106-120; Purgatorio, XXVII-XXXIII.

²³ The translations of Guido's Latin are taken from Meek. Hereafter all references to this translation will appear as page numbers in parentheses after each citation.

²⁴ St. Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, II, xl. 60, III, xii. 18. See also Edward Kennard Rand, Founders of the Middle Ages (1928; rpt. New York: Dover, 1957), pp. 34-68.

²⁵ For biblical authority concerning the disapproval of witches see Exodus 22:18, "Thou shalt not suffer a sorceress to live." Acts 8:9-24, which presents the story of Simon Magus. See also St. Augustine, Confessions, IV, ii.

²⁶ Tuve, pp. 3-55. Ferrante Woman as Image, pp. 99-125. Economou, pp. 29-31.

²⁷ Giovanni Boccaccio, De Mulieribus Claris, XVI.

²⁸ One must be reminded here of one of Chaucer's most foolish characters, January, who exhibits a similar desire with ribald rather than tragic results. Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Merchant's Tale," in The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 2nd ed., F.N. Robinson, ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), 1263-1468. See also Rogers, pp. 64-67. St. Augustine, Confessions, IV, xii.

²⁹ Curtius, pp. 122-124. Gilson, pp. 108-127. Luke 12:33-34. Colossians 3:1-4. St. Augustine, Confessions, IV, x-xi.

30

St. Augustine, Confessions, II, i; III, i; IV, ii, x-xiii.

31

See also Luke 17:33. John 12:35.

32

Lecoy, Notes to Le Roman de la Rose, II, p. 291. Fleming, pp. 90-91. Muscatine, p. 83. Ernest Langois, Origines et sources du Roman de la Rose (Paris: Ernest Thorin, 1890), pp. 119-127. See also Gilbert Highet, The Classical Tradition: Greek and Roman Influences on Western Literature (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1949), pp. 62-69. Douglas Bush, Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry, New rev. ed. (1932; rpt. New York: Norton, 1963), pp. 9-10.

33

Charles Dahlberg, "First Person and Personification in the Roman de la Rose," Medievalia 3 (1977), 37-58.

34

Fleming, pp. 171-184. Wood, pp. 338-340.

35

Langois, pp. 120-121, mentions only Ovid's Metamorphoses as the source. No other critic examined to date has suggested that Jean may have used a version of the Roman de Troie. See for example Fleming, pp. 1-84, or Muscatine, pp. 71-97.

36

Dominguez, p. 22.

37

Meek, p. xxviii.

38

Chapter II, pp. 45-46.

39

Edward Kennard Rand, Ovid and His Influence (1924; rpt. New York: Cooper Square, 1963), pp. 137-144. L.P. Wilkinson, Ovid Recalled (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1955), pp. 366-397. Dorothy Robatham, "Ovid in the Middle Ages," in Ovid, J.W. Binns, ed. (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), pp. 191-209.

40

Gunn, pp. 3-60. Fleming, 104-115.

41

Edward Kennard Rand, "The Metamorphosis of Ovid in Le Roman de la Rose," in Studies in the History of Culture: The Disciplines of the Humanities (Menasha, Wis.: Banta, 1942), pp. 103-121.

Chapter VI: The Medeas of the Fourteenth Century

In the Fourteenth Century, the variations on the theme of Medea run the gamut from disapprobation to sanctification. As may be expected, the differences in meaning of the specific figures of Medea usually, but not always, depend upon the context in which those figures are set. In general, when Medea appears in vernacular works of which fin' amor is the subject, she is treated positively, as for example in Chaucer's Legend of Good Women and Gower's Confessio Amantis. On the other hand, when the language is Latin, or the didactic and moralistic aim of the writer is to demonstrate the inconstancy and worthlessness of earthly love, Medea is employed as a negative example of femininity as in Boccaccio's De Mulieribus Claris and De Casibus Illustrium Virorum. Exceptions to these observations will be found in other works by Boccaccio, Chaucer, and Gower and will be discussed at the proper time.

The Fourteenth Century also saw the most completely realized portrait of Medea to appear in the medieval narrations of her story. It is found in the Ovide Moralisé, which traces the tale from Jason's acceptance of the quest to obtain the fleece to Medea's attempt to poison Theseus and her subsequent escape. The writer of the Ovide Moralisé was not content merely to allegorize Ovid's accounts of Medea in Heroides VI and XII and Metamorphoses VII. As will be seen, he

incorporated a number of elements from other sources, both classical and medieval, to flesh out the story to his satisfaction. In addition, the allegories which he discovers in the tale will provide a fascinating glimpse into the way the medieval mind could reconcile pagan stories to Christian theology.

The portrait of Medea which is found in the Ovide Moralisé will be given a more complete analysis shortly. At present one must note in passing the existence of a mid-Fourteenth Century translation of Guido delle Colonne's Historia Destructionis Troiae into Middle English alliterative verse, called the "Geste Historiale" of the Destruction of Troy by its editors.¹ As it does not alter the significance of Guido's portrait of Medea in any way, it will not be discussed here. It is mentioned only to document the continuation of the medieval narrative of Medea's story which may be traced through Guido's prose Latin work and French vernacular prose versions to its origins in the Twelfth Century Roman de Troie by Benoît de Sainte-Maure. To be sure the legacies of Benoît's and Guido's narrations of Medea's tale will be discovered in the works which will receive more thorough examinations in this chapter, but it is interesting to observe that a relatively unaltered translation of Guido's portrait of Medea was available in Middle English.²

Before returning to a more complete consideration of Medea as she is portrayed in the Ovide Moralisé, one must pause to reflect upon one of the earliest references to the barbarian princess in Fourteenth Century literature. It is found in Dante Alighieri's Divina Commedia, Inferno (XVIII. 82-99).³ Here among the panderers and seducers of the Eighth Circle's first pit, Jason is presented by Dante as the representative of the type of man who deceives women for his own gain and then abandons

them. The portrait of Jason is short and focuses mainly upon that hero's betrayal of the Lemnian Queen, Hypsipyle. After a brief account of Jason's sojourn in Lemnos, Virgil, the pilgrim, Dante's guide through Inferno and most of Purgatorio, continues:

Lasciolla quivi gradiva e soletta:
tal colpa a tal martiro lui condanna;
anche di Medea si far vendetta.

Con lui sen va chi da tal parte inganna;
e questo basti della prima valle
sapere, e di color che in sè assanna.
(94-99)

He left her there pregnant and forlorn: such
guilt condemns him to such torment; and
also for Medea vengeance is taken.

With him go all who practice the like deceit;
and let this suffice to know respecting the first
valley, and those whom it devours. (p. 197)

The attention of this passage is primarily upon the iniquities of Jason, especially his deception of Hypsipyle. The abandonment of Medea is only added as an afterthought and nothing specific is told about her character or her plight. Even so, there are a number of remarkable things to be observed here. First is that Jason's punishment is the logical outcome of almost one hundred and fifty years of negative judgment. In Dante's Inferno, there is no doubt concerning who is at fault, which is a debatable issue in many classical sources. As has been seen in the medieval works examined so far, while the evaluation of Medea fluctuates with the context, the overwhelming majority of the portraits of Jason condemn his perjury and infidelity. Second, Medea's story was known well enough to be reduced to a mere mention of her name. The proliferation of versions of the Roman de Troie in both vernacular and Latin literature must have been responsible for that. Most important, however, is the

fact that Dante, while he makes Jason the archetypal seducer, never mentions Medea's fate. There are several places in Inferno which Dante might have found appropriate for Medea's troubled shade: among the wrathful of Circle V (Cantos VII and VIII); or the violent against neighbors in Circle VII for her destruction of Creusa and Creon (Canto XII); or the traitors to kin and country for her treatment of Aeetes, Absyrtus and her own children (Circle IX, Cantos XXXII-XXXIII). No matter where she is sought, Medea is not to be found among the damned in Dante's poem.

When one considers that Dante's journey through Inferno chronicles in part his personal salvation through the refined love that exists between himself and Beatrice,⁴ Medea's absence is significant. However, although Medea is not condemned to eternal torment for any of the enormities she committed in Jason's behalf, or in revenge for his infidelity as she will be in Boccaccio's works, Chaucer's Book of the Duchess and a brief allusion in Gower's Confessio Amantis, III, neither is she among those souls who are being purified, nor among the blessed in Heaven. The sanctification of Medea does indeed occur in Chaucer's Legend of Good Women and Gower's Confessio Amantis, V, but Dante does not take his Medea that far for the simple reason that, as a pagan, Medea could find no admittance among the saved in Dante's poem.

In contrast to Dante's Commedia with its single allusion to Medea, there is the fairly complete narration of the tragic story of the Greek hero and his barbarian sorceress which is found in the Ovide Moralisé.⁵ To be sure, there are a number of works in vernacular languages and Latin to which this title has been ascribed.⁶ However, the most significant representative of the moralized Ovids for the purpose of this study is the early Fourteenth Century French poem edited by Cornelis de

Boer. The influence of this vast work has been disputed,⁷ but scholars have found traces of it in the works of Guillaume de Machaut⁸ and Geoffrey Chaucer⁹ and there is evidence that Gower used it in composing his narrative of Medea. Whatever its influences may have been, its existence is remarkable.¹⁰ The monumental Ovide Moralisé is a perfect example of the medieval mode of allegory which enabled the scholar or poet of the Middle Ages to reconcile by analogy two such disparate contexts as pagan narrative and Christian theology without any qualm of intellect or conscience.¹¹ Before citing examples of the Ovide Moralisé's allegorization of the story of Jason and Medea, it is appropriate to describe the narrative itself and provide some idea of the scope of its sources.

The medieval French poet of the Ovide Moralisé does not merely translate the contents of Ovid's Metamorphoses VII for his version of the story. He adds information which he gathers from the Heroides VI and XII, the letters of Hypsipyle and Medea to the fickle Jason as well. However, these do not exhaust the list of works which contributed to the narrative as de Boer would lead the reader to expect.¹² A close reading of the text of the Ovide Moralisé in the light of the analyses of works considered previously in this study will reveal a diversity of sources, both classical and medieval, which attests to the French poet's erudition and concern for continuity and completeness of the tale of Jason and Medea.

Ovid begins Metamorphoses VII with a brief allusion to the rescue of the seer Phineus from the Harpies by the Argonauts and a description of the landing at Colchis which plunges Medea into an immediate and all-consuming passion for Jason that becomes the focal point for Ovid's

development of Medea's character. The medieval poet, on the other hand, follows the pattern of the narrative established by Benoît de Sainte-Maure in the Twelfth Century and continued by the prose vernacular romances of Troy and Guido's Latin prose history in the Thirteenth Century. The account of Jason and Medea in the Ovide Moralisé begins with the inauguration of the quest for the Golden Fleece. Yet even to the work of such august precursors the poet of the Ovide Moralisé found it necessary to add significant details in the interest of completeness. For example, he opens Book VII (1-7) with a brief account of Phrixus and Helle in order to begin his version at the commencement of the tale. Ovid only gives Phrixus a single allusive line (VII. 6), but the medieval poet had available to him two more fully realized presentations of Phrixus' story in Hyginus' Fabulae (XXI)¹² and Vatican Mythographer I (23). While it is not certain what the actual source of the story of Phrixus was, it is known that the work of Hyginus and the first Vatican Mythographer were current throughout the Middle Ages.¹³ The Ovide Moralisé then proceeds to narrate the enmity of Pelias for Jason (VII. 12-188) relying heavily on Benoît's Roman de Troie (703-878), or one of the versions which it spawned.

At this point the Ovide Moralisé comments on the character of Jason:

En sor que tout si le forma
De bones teches et de mours,
Que, s'il fust loiaus vers amours,
En tout le monde n'eust té,

Mes moult petite leauté,
Ot vers amours en son aage,
Si l'en avint deulz et damage,
Si com porrez ou conte oir. (VII.29-35)

Above all she (Nature), found him
Of every good quality and manner,
So that, if he were loyal towards love,

Everyone would have spoken of it,
 But he had such little loyalty
 In his life for his love,
 That it caused him sorrow and shame,
 As you will be able to hear in this story.

The above judgment of Jason's character and actions is almost ubiquitous among the medieval sources. It is usually found in those works which derive from Benoît's poem, including Guido delle Colonne's Historia Destructionis Troiae, at the point in the story where Jason swears fidelity to Medea upon the image of Jupiter before entering Medea's bed.¹⁴ In Jean de Meun's continuation of the Roman de la Rose, the condemnation of Jason as "li maus trichierres,/li faus, li desloiaus, li lierres," (13225-13226), follows his abandonment of Medea after she had accomplished all for him. Finally, it has just been noted that Dante used Jason as the type of the seducer in Inferno. In order to drive home the point that such a clear condemnation of Jason is medieval in tone and origin, it must be observed that Ovid makes no such evaluation in Metamorphoses VII when Jason swears his oath of fidelity to Medea (94-99). Ovid places censure of Jason for his disloyalty only in the mouths of the women who he betrays, Hypsipyle and Medea (Heroides VI, XII), whereas the Ovide Moralisé describes the essential flaw in Jason's character before he has a chance to be false to anyone. It is a judgment in the form of foreshadowing. While there is a classical analogue in the Argonautica of Valerius Flaccus which accused Jason of perjury at the moment when he tenders his oath of fidelity to Medea in return for the aid she proffers (VII. 509-510), the traditional evaluation of the medieval writers concerning Jason is more proximate and available to the poet of the Ovide Moralisé.

The Ovide Moralisé mentions among the reasons for Pelias' hatred

for Jason the prophecy of the man with the single sandal who would eventually supplant Pelias (VII. 47-55). This motif is not to be found either in Ovid's Metamorphoses, or any of the medieval versions of the story discussed so far. It is another bit of information which the poet of the moralised Ovid obtained from Hyginus (Fabulae 18).

From Benoît (751-768) and Guido (I. 62-95), the Ovide Moralisé borrows the device of the rumor of the Golden Fleece and the impossible tasks which guard it, which suggest to Pelias how to eliminate the troublesome Jason (92-130). Also included as in the medieval narratives (Benoît, 965-1112; Guido, II. 1-125), is an account of the Argonauts' landing at Troy where they receive discourteous treatment at the hands of Laomedon (VII. 195-242). In the Ovide Moralisé the episode is embellished with an account of Hercules' first destruction of Troy and the ravishing of Hesione, who is given as a spoil of war to Telamon. The rape of Hesione is cited as the direct cause of Paris' abduction of Helen and the ultimate annihilation of Troy (VII. 222-237). This addition is interpolated from the medieval versions of the story which deal with the first war of the Greeks with the Trojans which takes place after Jason's safe return to Greece with the Golden Fleece and Medea (see for example Guido's Historia IV. 343-360).¹⁵ The Ovide Moralisé uses this episode as foreshadowing and places it out of the sequence established by earlier medieval narratives because the Fourteenth Century poet's purpose is to follow the plan of Ovid's Metamorphoses of which the story of Troy is only a part.

A significant addition to the medieval versions, as well as to Ovid's, is the Ovide Moralisé's account of Jason's sojourn on Lemnos (VII. 251-272). This brief section of the narrative may be seen as a

condensation of Heroides VI (see also Hyginus Fabulae 15). However, the narrator of the Ovide Moralisé cannot resist making the following comment which again is in accord with Jason's medieval characterizations:

Il li plevi qu'il la prendroit
 A feme, quant il revendroit,
 Et l'emmenroit en Grece o li,
 Mes moult tost l'ot mise en oubli,
 Puis qu'il li ot le dos torné.
 (VII. 263-267)

He swore to her that he would marry
 Her, when he should return
 And he would take her to Greece with him,
 But he quickly forgot all about her
 As soon as he had turned his back on her.

The tone of this passage has much in common with that of Dante's brief description of Jason among the seducers. Both Dante and the Ovide Moralisé early in the Fourteenth Century reintroduce the story of Hypsipyle to increase Jason's portion of shame. They thus establish a precedent for presenting Medea together with her predecessor in Jason's affection which will be followed by many writers later in the century. The negative portrait of Jason created through the association of the figures of Hypsipyle and Medea will remain constant in the works of Boccaccio, who does not treat Medea kindly, and in the works of Chaucer, who sanctifies Medea. Whether or not Medea is portrayed in a sympathetic manner, Jason is almost universally condemned.

From the point at which Jason and the Argonauts arrive at Colchis, the text of the Ovide Moralisé follows Metamorphoses VII fairly closely. The medieval poet reintroduces the classical sequence of the trials which Jason must endure to win the Golden Fleece as in Metamorphoses VII (29-31, 100-158) mentioning the tasks several times in the course of his narrative (VII. 104-123, 380-386, 582-641). With the aid of Ovid's

Tristia (III. ix. 19-32), the murder and dismemberment of Absyrtus, which is not in the Metamorphoses, is reinserted into the list of Medea's enormities (VII. 655-678). A number of significant elements from the medieval tradition of the narrative are missing. These include the love tryst of Jason and Medea in her chamber, the five gifts, among which was the fabulous ring of protection and invisibility, the island of Colchis on which the trials take place, and the tower from which Medea observes her beloved in action. In turn the Ovide Moralise' makes a number of meaningful restorations of motifs which were essential to the classical versions of the story, but were ignored by medieval writers. Among these are the murder of Pelias with the unwitting help of his daughters, the burning of Creusa (but not Creon), the slaughter of the children, and the episode of Aegeus and Theseus. These will be discussed below.

However, at this point the narrator pauses to present a resume of the preceding events up to the safe return of Jason and Medea to Greece. The Ovide Moralise' specifically mentions Athens as the first Greek city that the Argonauts enter (VII. 682), which is not in any of the classical accounts. The resume itself is strongly reminiscent of the moralizing passages of which Guido delle Colonne was so fond (Historia II. 241-269). It includes the following comment:

Medee iert la toison doree,
 Qui tant fu close et enserree,
 Que nulz hom ne pooit chevir
 De lui soustraire ne ravir
 Sans son conseil et sans s'aye,
 Dont maint en perdirent la vie
 Qui la vaudrent sans son otroi
 Fortraire à son pere le roi.
 Jason ama, quant el le vit,
 Qui par son conseil la ravit
 A son pere et a son lignage,
 Si emporta par mer à nage,

Et pour eschaper a son pere
 Desmembra Medea son frere.
 Pour ce furent de mort retrait,
 Si gom la fable le retrait.
 (693-708)

The gilded fleece was in Medea's control,
 Which was so closely guarded
 That no man could accomplish
 stealing or ravishing it from her,
 Without her advice or aid,
 For which many lost their lives
 Who wanted to steal it from her father,
 the king, Without her consent.
 She loved Jason as soon as she saw him
 Who by her counsel abducted her from her
 Father and her lineage, Then he
 carried her on a voyage over the sea
 And in order to escape her father
 Medea dismembered her brother.
 Because of this they were saved from death,
 As the fable tells. (pp. 117-118)

The idea of Medea participating in the theft of the fleece is an essential element of the Medea theme in both classical and medieval versions. It is one of the acts upon which moral judgments of Medea are based. For example, Benoît's Roman de Troie and its prose derivatives accuse Medea of folly for helping Jason to the fleece and leaving her family for him. Ovid's Metamorphoses goes a step further in identifying Medea as the "spoilia altera" (VII. 155-158) (the other spoil), with which Jason returns to his homeland. It will be remembered that Guido (Historia II. 255-260) also examines the moral implications of Medea's identification with the fleece. Following Ovid, the Ovide Moralise suggests the concept of the double spoil as well, "La toison emporte et al bele/Jason." (VII. 645-646) (Jason carried off the fleece and the beauty.) Therefore the moral disapprobation implied in the above passage derives from Medea's deliverance of the fleece and her person into Jason's hands. However, the disapproval of Medea's actions is most explicit in Guido

delle Colonne's unsympathetic portrait.¹⁶

There are a number of significant restorations to the story as presented in the Ovide Moralisé which remain to be noted. For at least two, the murder of Pelias (VII. 1247-1360), and the episode of Medea in Athens (VII. 1673-1680, 2069-2114), there are clear Ovidian sources (Metamorphoses VII. 297-349, 398-424). However, for the story of Jason's betrayal of Medea, his marriage to Creusa, and Medea's subsequent revenge which encompasses her rival and her two sons by Jason no adequate Ovidian original exists. Although there are allusions to the burning of Creusa by Medea and the slaughter of the children scattered throughout Ovid's works,¹⁷ none of these provides the completeness of detail narrated by the Ovide Moralisé from which only the inclusion of Creon in Medea's revenge is omitted (1361-1506). The section in question begins when, after slaying Pelias with the help of his daughters, Medea flees in fear of their wrath. The narrator continues:

Endementres se maria
Jason, et Medee oubliä.
Moult fist que folz,
Moult i mesprist,
Quent la lessa et autre prist.
(VII. 1365-1368)

Meanwhile Jason remarried
And forgot Medea
He acted like a great fool,
Greatly he deceived himself
When he abandoned her and took another.

As he did with Hypsipyle, so does Jason with Medea. Out of sight is out of mind where Jason's women are concerned. Here, however, Jason's infidelity is exhibited as folly and self-deception, as the narrator asserts, foreshadowing the tragic events to come. Unlike most of the previous medieval narratives, which only alluded to the future tragedies

of Jason and Medea, or the version of the Roman de Troie en prose edited by Constans and Faral which provided a cannibalistic ending inspired by Procne's revenge on Tereus, or the Roman de la Rose, which ignores Creusa's fate and has Medea strangle her children, the Ovide Moralise' reconstructs the burning of Creusa and the stabbing of the children with great attention to detail.

At line 1381, the Ovide Moralise' begins an interpolation which is modeled fairly closely on Heroides XII. Then swiftly, in thirty-six lines (1469-1498), Medea's vengeance is described commencing thus:

Atant envoie a la meschine,
 Cele qui fortrait li avoit
 Jason, qui siens estre devoit,
 Une chemise trop deugiee
 Et plus blanche que noif negiee.
 (VII. 1470-1474)

Then she (Medea) sent to the young
 woman (Creusa),
 Who had stolen Jason from her,
 Who ought to have been hers (Medea's)
 A very fine dress newly
 Whiter than the newly fallen snow.

The above passage clearly indicates Creusa's culpability in having stolen Jason from Medea, an idea which none of the classical sources develops. In works such as Euripides' Medea and Seneca's play of the same title, for example, Creon arranges the marriage between his ill-fated daughter and Jason. Creusa, who is called Glauce by Euripides, seems to be more of a victim of Creon's bad judgment, Jason's lust and opportunism, and Medea's wrath, than of her own sinful actions. The fact that Creusa is not portrayed as an innocent pawn, but as a young woman who is held accountable for her actions mitigates any blame which Medea incurs for her destruction.

The dress which is the agent of Creusa's demise is described as

more beautiful than the work of Pallas or Arachne (VII. 1476-1478). Although the comparison is original with the poet of the Ovide Moralise, the inspiration for it was probably derived from the contest between Minerva and Arachne as found in Ovid's Metamorphoses (VI. 1-145). The Ovide Moralise continues, "Bele iert, mes dessous la biauté/Tapissoit grant disloiauté." (1479-1480) (It was beautiful, but beneath the beauty, great disloyalty was hidden.) If one recalls the original description of Jason and the comment by the poet cited above, a comparison between two treacherous agents, Jason and Medea's chemise is suggested. In both cases treachery is masked by a beautiful exterior. Thus responsibility for the tragedy is shifted to Jason. When Creusa dons the dress she is completely incinerated by the power of its magic (VII. 1481-1483). The narrator continues:

Ore est double la haine
 Que Jason avoit vers Medea.
 A lui ne pot estre acordee,
 Et quant Medea sot de voir
 Qu'el ne porroit sa pais avoir,
 D'ire et de rage forsena.
 Sa rage tant la demena,
 Que deus enfans, qui sien estoient,
 Pour ce que lor pere sambloient
 Ocist en depit de Jason,
 Puis mist en flambe sa meson,
 Si s'enfui par l'air volant.
 (VII. 1484-1495)

Now the hate which Jason had
 Towards Medea was doubled.
 She could not be reconciled to him.
 And when she knew that she
 Would not be able to have her peace,
 (i.e. what she wanted)
 She went out of her mind with anger and rage.
 Her rage so demented her
 That two children, which were hers,
 Because they resembled their father,
 She killed to spite Jason.
 And then she set fire to her house,
 And fled flying through the air.

A number of amazing elements emerge here. First that Jason's hatred is doubled by Medea's murder of his bride. The implication is that he first manifested his hatred for Medea by abandoning her. This is the strongest statement of Jason's motivation in betraying Medea to date. Second is that Medea actually expected to be reconciled to her wandering husband once her rival had been eliminated. Third, in consequence, the murder of the children and the burning of the house are depicted as Medea's reaction to finally realizing that Jason's love is lost to her forever. This remarkable sequence exists nowhere in the classical sources. It is suggested by a number of hints in Heroides XII (173-190, 207-212) in which upon hearing Jason's wedding procession pass by her house, Medea calls Creusa a whore (paelllex), weeps over the likeness of her sons to their father and threatens that her anger will effectively direct the weapons at her disposal, sword, flame, and poisons, toward the hearts of her enemies. While she does this, she also pleads with Jason to return to her. However, Heroides XII does not mention the poisoned dress, or the actual slaughter of the children. In only one extant classical source which would have been available to the medieval poet are both of these elements to be found.¹⁸ Only Seneca's Medea has both the poisoned robe (568-588, 817-832), and the slaying of the children (916-1027), both of whom are killed on stage and one of whom is slain before Jason's horror filled eyes.

Thus the story of Jason and Medea as told in the Ovide Moralise' includes elements which are derived from both classical and medieval sources. The medieval structure of the story which is found in Benoît de Sainte-Maure's Roman de Troie and Guido delle Colonne's Historia Destructionis Troiae is adapted by the poet of the Ovide Moralise' to

organize the material from other works which he used to flesh out the pieces of the tale he found in Ovid's Heroides and Metamorphoses. Ovid's Tristia, either Hyginus' Fabulae, or the work of the First Vatican Mythographer, and perhaps Seneca's Medea can be identified as contributors to the Ovide Moralise's version of the tale.

The effects of such erudition and concern for detail are manifold. For example, the important addition of Hypsipyle to the narrative reinforces the medieval condemnation of Jason's actions and character, an element which the Ovide Moralise shares with Dante's Inferno. In addition, all of Medea's crimes are reintroduced; the murder of Absyrtus, the slaughter of Pelias, the poisoned incendiary robe which dispatches Creusa, the slaying of her children, and the attempted poisoning of Theseus. All except for the Theseus episode demonstrate the depth of Medea's commitment to Jason, as she reminds him (VII. 1464-1469) in her lengthy appeal to him which is derived from Heroides XII. Thus the narration of Medea's enormities serves to underscore Jason's guilt in the matter and his disloyalty in betraying one who had loved him so completely.

The final episode, in which Medea attempts to poison Theseus, follows a protracted account of his exploits on behalf of mankind, his sojourn in the underworld with Pirithoos, and their rescue by Hercules (VII. 1681-1952). As in Ovid's original Metamorphoses (VII.404-424), the purpose of the incident seems to be to indicate how far Medea has progressed in evil practices. However, the medieval poet underscores, as Ovid does not in Metamorphoses, the fact that Medea's criminal career began and flourished for Jason's benefit. Taken as a whole, the tale of Jason and Medea as found in the Ovide Moralise is sympathetic to the

heroine whose great gifts were exploited by a lover who knew no loyalty. This evaluation of Jason would certainly have no meaning apart from the medieval context of fin' amor in which loyalty is a primary virtue.

Before leaving the Ovide Moralisé some account must be taken of the allegories with which the story of Jason and Medea is interwoven. On the surface they have little or nothing to do with deriving any moral from the events of the classical tale, as for instance Guido delle Colonne was so fond of doing. Instead the poet of the Ovide Moralisé constructs his allegory purely by analogy, linking Christian dogma to pagan motifs on the basis of figural likeness. This was a common practice among Christian writers from the era of the early fathers through the wanning medieval world.¹⁹ One or two examples from the many interspersed throughout the narrative should suffice as illustration.

First the Golden Fleece itself:

C'est la sainte virginité
De la mere, ou la deité
Se vault joindre par mariage
Charnement al umain lignage,
Si donal'erbe et la racine
De la salvable medecine.
(743-748)

It is the holy virginity
Of the mother, where the deity
Desired to join himself in
Fleshly marriage to human lineage.
Thus is given the leaf and root
Of salvific medicine.

This is a rather striking identification, especially since, as has been noted Medea was also represented by the Golden Fleece. Thus both the pagan heroine and the Christian queen of heaven are signified by the same symbol. It seems that the medieval mind could hold two disparate significances side by side without strain or confusion.

In the same vein, the taking of the fleece by Jason is likened to Christ's assumption of fleshly human existence from which the salvation of mankind is derived (799-820). The cauldron and the potion by means of which Aeson is rejuvenated become images of the sacrament of Baptism and the power of God's grace through which mankind is saved by the agency of Christ, who suffered martyrdom resembling Aeson's dismemberment and was reborn through his divine potency (1087-1246). Medea severing Pelias' head and thrusting his body into the cauldron (1355-1360) figures God severing the devil's head, thus effectively countering the evil fiend's ancient enmity towards man with God's never ceasing super-abundant love (1580-1642). Creusa represents the fraud perpetrated upon men and women by the false beauties of the material world and the human form for which God takes most bitter vengeance by burning the deceivers in the eternal fires of judgment at the end of the world (1644-1672). Finally, the cup of poison which Medea offers to Theseus figures the cup of bitter suffering which is the medicine that God in His eternal wisdom, love and mercy administers to men for the health of their immortal souls (2115-2168).

It is important to note that none of these allegories presents Jason or Medea in an unfavorable light. However, Pelias' daughters and Creusa represent the diabolical dangers which mortal Christian man faces every day of his sojourn on earth and from which he is able to escape only through the aid of divine intervention. The interesting thing here is that both the hero and heroine have positive significances in the allegories, in which they represent some salvific activity of God the Father or Christ. While it is difficult to say what the effects of the allegories are on the characterizations of Jason and Medea, it is hard

to imagine that the consistently positive analogies would have no redemptive influence on significance of their respective portraits. In fact, the rehabilitative results of the allegories on Medea's character will be observed in the version of the story which appears in John Gower's Confessio Amantis which will be discussed later.

From the Medea of the Ovide Moralise the discussion now turns toward the portraits of the barbarian sorceress which are found in the works of the Italian writer-scholar Giovanni Boccaccio. Medea appears in several of Boccaccio's writings both in Italian and in Latin. The most fully realized characterizations may be found in the Amorosa Visione, the Genealogia Deorum Gentilium and De Mulieribus Claris, while brief allusions to her story have been found in Il Filocolo and De Casibus Illustrium Virorum. The discussion of Boccaccio's portrayals of Medea presents an interesting challenge because of the critical controversy which has been evoked by his works. An earlier generation of Boccaccio's critics divided his writings into a youthful period during which he supposedly abandoned himself to the causes of Love and Woman and a later term which commences after a spiritual conversion had sobered the libertine writer and caused him to turn his talents to classical studies and moral themes.²⁰ The problem with this theory was that it was based upon "autobiographical" gleanings from the contexts of Boccaccio's works. The critics who espoused it never considered that the Giovanni of the poems and stories was a character who owed his existence to the imagination of Giovanni the writer.²¹

Since then a group of critics more interested in the text than in the life of the author has turned its efforts to analyzing Boccaccio's life's work, which activity has raised a number of significant theories

about individual works, but has provided no consensus concerning the import of Boccaccio's work as a whole.²² The present study follows the example of Hollander, who systematically traces the medieval theme of the two Venuses through Boccaccio's vernacular writings through a close and careful reading of the texts.²³ However, the following discussion will examine Boccaccio's portraits of Medea in both of the languages in which he was fluent.

The early Il Filocolo²⁴ contains many brief references to the story of Medea, as well as one lengthy adaptation of Ovid's account of her powers, which appear in Books III and IV, the latter containing the section known as the questioni d'amore. The earliest reference to Medea in Filocolo III is astounding for its revaluation of Jason's abandonment of Medea:

La misera Isifile fu da Giansone abbandonata per giovane non meno bella e gentile di lei, e per la salute propria della sua vita, la quale senza Medea avere non potea. Medea poi per la sua crudeltà fu giustamente da lui lasciata, trovando egli Creusa più pietosa di lei.
(III.18.22-23)

The unfortunate Hypsipyle was abandoned by Jason for a young woman not less beautiful and noble than she, in order to preserve his life, which he could not have done without Medea. Then Medea, because of her cruelty, was justly abandoned by him, he finding Creusa more virtuous than Medea.

In the above passage, Jason is justified both for abandoning Hypsipyle and betraying Medea. He betrays Hypsipyle in order to save his life, a motive which a pragmatist might find acceptable, but certainly not an adherent of fin' amor. In the second instance, Medea's cruelty justifies Jason's infidelity in favor of the more pious Creusa. The above state-

ment sets the tone for most of the following allusions to Medea's story by Boccaccio's narrators. Their disapproval of Medea runs all through Boccaccio's works, but will be most evident and significant in De Mulieribus Claris.

Of the remaining references to Medea in Book III of Il Filocolo two (35. 7; 65. 3-4) connect her with the unnatural cruelty of Procne, because both women slew their children to spite their husbands. The first passage reads thus:

Quanta acerbità e quanta ira si puote
ancora discernere essere stata in
Progne, ucciditrice del proprio figliuolo
per far dispetto al marito! E Medea
simigliantemente!

How much bitterness and how much wrath
could be discerned to exist in Procne,
murderess of her little son in order to
spite her husband! And similarly Medea!

Boccaccio had several sources from which to choose the above identification. It is scattered throughout the works of Ovid (Amores II, xiv.39-40; Ars Amatoria II.381-386; Remediis Amoris 59-62). Furthermore, the entire story of Tereus' rape of Philomela and Procne's savage revenge appears in Metamorphoses VI (401-674), separated from the story of Medea by a mere forty-six lines. Medea and Procne are also associated by Hyginus (Fabulae 239) among the examples of mothers who murdered their children. This crime of infanticide is the occasion of the only negative references to Medea in the works of Chaucer and Gower. In Boccaccio's writings it is only one of the many reasons for which she is condemned. Finally, there is also a reference in Book III to the powerlessness of magic spells and potions to influence the course of love (39. 7) in which Medea is mentioned as one who learned this lesson only too well. The

primary classical source of this allusion is again Ovid (Ars Amatoria II. 99-104); Remediis Amoris (249-288). However, another medieval reference to this theme may be found in Jean de Meun's continuation of the Roman de la Rose (14374-14378). In Boccaccio's Latin works, Medea's practice of witchcraft will be an essential cause of the author's condemnation of his subject.

The first allusion to Medea in Book IV of Il Filocolo is incorporated into the second question of love (IV. 23-26) which debates the issue of who suffers most, one who has gained his love and lost it, or someone who has never attained the object of his desire. Medea is cited by Fiammetta, who has been chosen the queen and arbiter of the debates, as evidence that one who has experienced prosperity in love and then has lost it bears the greater burden of grief:

Medea non seppe mai, secondo il suo
dire, che prosperita si fosse mentre
essa amo, ma, abandonata da Giansone,
si dolfe della avversita. (24. 3)

Medea never knew, according to her
own words, what prosperity was while
she was in love, but abandoned by
Jason, she complained of adversity.
(1-20, 159-174)

Boccaccio probably has Heroides XII in mind here. The reference itself adds little to the significance of the figure of Medea. However, the context in which it is being used seems to be a sympathetic one which connects her with those who have suffered most grievously for love. It is also important to recall that the allusion is being employed by Queen Fiammetta. Her authority seems to lend weight to the propriety of feeling sympathy for Medea. However, as will be seen shortly, the Queen will have a much harsher judgment to pronounce on Medea. Fiammetta's less

sympathetic evaluation of Medea occurs in the course of the seventh question of love (IV. 43-46) which considers whether love is good or evil. Caleon, one of the young men engaged in the debates, whose obvious infatuation with Fiammetta has caused him to compose a ballad upon the emotion which she inspires (IV. 43. 10-13), proceeds to state the question thus, "Graziosa reina, io disidero di sapere se a ciascuno uomo, a bene essere di se medesimo, si dee innamorare o no." (IV. 43. 16) (Gracious queen, I would like to know whether each man should for his own delight, be enamored or not.) The question raises an essential issue about love; whether it is appropriate or good for a man to love selfishly. Fiammetta addresses the question by distinguishing among the kinds of love which human beings may experience (IV. 44. 3-9). These are amore onesto, honest love which is good upright and loyal; amore per diletto, love for delight, which is the kind of love indicated by Caleon and is under the auspices of a lesser god who directs the adoration, hopes, and prayers of carnal lovers; and, finally, amore per utilità, love for utility, a kind of opportunism which is subject to the whims of fortune and is more hatred than love. La Vielle of Jean de Meun's portion of the Roman de la Rose provides an excellent example of this last category.

The first kind of love, amore onesto emanates from God and leads the lover to the eternal possession of the eternal kingdom. It is the source of all order and happiness on earth.²⁵ The last, amore per utilità leads the way to eternal perdition. However, even though the second kind of love, amore per diletto, is not as opportunistic as love for the sake of utility, it is not treated kindly at all by Fiammetta. She claims that amore per diletto deprives the lover of honor and freedom, leads him into trouble, awakens vices in him, and causes him to be

concerned about hopeless cares.

Caleon attempts to counter the Queen's doctrines concerning amore per diletto by describing all those who were made virtuous by it. Among those who were ennobled by love for delight, Caleon mentions Medea, "carissima guardatrice delle sue arti, poi che le costui fiamme sentì, liberamente sé e'l suo onore e le sue arti concedette a Giansone." (IV. 45. 4) (Most dear guardian of her arts, when she felt his (Cupid's) flames, freely conceded herself, her honor and her arts to Jason.) Obviously Caleon is asserting the ennobling effects of earthly love of man and woman which effect had been one of the primary tenets of fin' amor, a concept which Benoît de Sainte-Maure had employed in the creation of his portrait of Medea.²⁶

Unfortunately for Caleon, Fiammetta has already undercut his argument with her three categories of love. Furthermore, she proceeds to refute each of his illustrative examples of those whose characters had been improved by the effects of amore per diletto. In accord with her refutation, Fiammetta's own estimation of Medea is far less flattering than Caleon's:

Ne' fa questo amore i cupidi liberali,
ma quando in tanta copia, quanta poni
che in Medea fu, abonda ne' cuori,
quelli delle mentale vedere priva,
et delle cose, per adietro debita-
mente avute care, stoltamente diventa
prodigo, non quelle con misura donando,
ma disutilmente gittando: crede piacere,
e dispiace a' savi. Medea, non savia,
della sua prodigalità assai in breve
tempo senza suo utile si penté, e
connobbe che se moderata mente i suoi
cari doni avesse usati non saria a
sì vile fine venuta. (46. 5-6)

Nor does this love make the covetous
liberal, rather Medea was so burdened

by the abundance of love in her heart,
 that it seemed to deprive her of reason,
 and concerning the things which right-
 fully should have been held dear, she
 foolishly became prodigal, not giving
 them in measure, but uselessly casting
 them away: she sought to please, and
 she displeased the wise. Unwise Medea
 soon repented of her prodigality, with-
 out benefit to herself, and realized
 that had she used her valuable gifts
 moderately, she would not have come to
 so vile an end.

Thus Fiammetta shifts the perspective from which Medea's actions are viewed. From this new vantage point, Medea's generosity is transformed into wasteful prodigality which leads to her tragic end. In the light of this evaluation Medea's enormities are stripped of any justification and Jason is released from any responsibility for them. If it is foolish and not virtuous actions which amore per diletto inspires then Medea has no one to blame but herself for her misfortunes. Fiammetta's judgment of Medea is strongly reminiscent of that found in Guido delle Colonne's Historia Destructionis Troiae (III. 376-382). That Medea's passion for Jason is blameworthy rather than deserving of praise fits in with some of the more recent interpretations of Il Filocolo as a treatise against the abuses of amore per diletto, which, on the basis of Caleon's description can be seen as Boccaccio's version of fin' amor.²⁷ Both Medea and the passion which she experiences are held up to harsh criticism in Il Filocolo. The negative evaluation of Medea which is established in this early work predominates throughout Boccaccio's writings.

Before dismissing Il Filocolo, brief mention must be made of a noteworthy use of Ovid's portrait of Medea in the fourth question of love. This involves Boccaccio's description of the magician Tebano, who is engaged by a young man named Tarolfo to fabricate through magic a

complete, blossoming, fruitful locus amoenus in the middle of a winter landscape. Tarolfo has been promised that if he can accomplish this impossible task, he will win the love of a virtuous, beautiful married woman (IV. 31-34).²⁸ Boccaccio's narrative of the old magician's fulfillment of the deed (IV. 31. 23-37), including his prayers to Hecate, his dragon-drawn chariot, his cauldron, and the withered olive branch which grows green and bears fruit from stirring the potion, are exact translations of Ovid's description of Medea's preparations for the rejuvenation of Aeson (Metamorphoses VII. 179-283). In addition, the specific task to which Tebano is set is noteworthy for the possibilities it raises concerning the provenance of the theme of Medea in the Middle Ages. The power to make a winter landscape bloom as if it were summer is attributed to Medea by Seneca (Medea 759-762) and Guido delle Colonne (Historia Destructionis Troiae II. 187-189). It does not appear in Ovid or the description of her powers in Benoît (Roman de Troie 1211-1216). Therefore, Boccaccio had to have obtained the idea for Tebano's task from either Seneca's or Guido's portrait of Medea, if not both.²⁹ Unfortunately, Medea is not mentioned by name in this passage and so the story of Tebano's generosity does not modify her significance in Boccaccio's writings in any way. What is remarkable on the other hand is how Boccaccio created his portrait of the quintessential magician from a variety of presentations of the theme of Medea.

Medea next appears in the Amorosa Visione.³⁰ She first is mentioned briefly, along with Hypsipyle, among the heroines depicted on the wall devoted to earthly glory (Cantos 6-11). Here Medea is described both as tormented and "crudele e dispietata" (IX. 26) (cruel and pitiless). Her agony seems to be offset by the cruelty of the acts which

it motivated. Medea laments her fate:

se io più savia alquanto fossi stata
né sì avessi tosto preso amore,
forse ancor non sarei suta ingannata
(IX. 28-30)

If I had been a good deal wiser
nor so quickly fallen in love,
perhaps I would not have been so
betrayed.

Medea blames herself and her reckless abandon to her passion for Jason as the causes of her misfortune. This is consistent with Fiammetta's interpretation of her fate which was cited above. Now the dimension of self-condemnation has been added by Boccaccio.

In Canto XXI of the Amorosa Visione a more detailed portrait of the sufferings of Hypsipyle and Medea is provided on the panel devoted to the workings of Love in the world (Cantos 14-29). The narrative begins with Jason who is situated among the three women whom he desired: Hypsipyle, Medea and Creusa (XXI. 14-18), two of whom he had already possessed. Hypsipyle is the first to speak and calls Jason "sanza fede alcuna" (19) (completely faithless), "dispietato" (20) (pitiless), and "crudelo" (21) (cruel). She upbraids Jason for being as faithless as the wind (30) because he abandoned her, leaving her pregnant with twin sons, for Medea (31-51). The echoes from Ovid (Heroides VI) are striking. The tone is plaintive and appealing, with Hypsipyle finally begging Jason not to abandon her, but return and dispense all her sorrows (51-52).

Medea's turn is next and her appeal is based, as it was in Ovid's Heroides XII, on all of the services she had performed for Jason. The bulls, the dragon, the winning of the fleece, the dismemberment of Absyrtus, the rejuvenation of Aeson, and the murder of Pelias in order to make Jason king were all done "per piacerti" (77) (in order to please

you) says Medea. Her last mentioned service is noteworthy because it indicates that Boccaccio had access to the tradition of the Ovide Moralise, which is the only source studied so far that clearly states that Jason became king after Pelias' death (VII. 1362-1363). Medea ends her address to Jason with a threat and a plea:

che s'io non fossi stata all tua vita,
ne' lei ne' me avevi, ne' altra alcuna.
Adunque a me, per Dio, ti rimarita.
(86-89)

that if I had not been in your life,
you would not have either she, nor me,
nor any other.
Therefore, for God's sake, you must
remarry me.

Medea warns Jason of her revenge and begs for his return as she does in the closing lines of Heroides XII. Canto XXI ends at this point. It is not until the opening verses of the following canto that Jason's response to Hypsipyle and Medea is given. He simply turns away from both of them, saying nothing and embracing his new love, Creusa (XXII. 1-3). His gesture is eloquent in its disdain for both of his former loves.

While both Hypsipyle and Medea are given expanded speeches, they are only the preparation for Jason's cold-hearted reaction to the anguish they express. The characterization of Jason in the Amorosa Visione seems to represent more Fiammetta's definition of amore per utilità in Il Filocolo, than amore per diletto. The effect of the narrative is really to condemn Jason for his cruel, self-centered pursuit of pleasure, though it does nothing to rehabilitate Medea's character. In this passage, Boccaccio comes close to Guido delle Colonne's disapproval of both Jason and Medea.

It is significant to note that Boccaccio twice in the Amorosa Visione couples Medea and Hypsipyle in their suffering, as does Dante in Inferno XVIII³¹ and as in the Ovide Moralise'. As this study has shown the coupling of Hypsipyle and Medea in woe is a common practice in the Fourteenth Century. As will be seen, Chaucer again sets the portraits of Hypsipyle and Medea together in the Legend of Good Women. Whenever the two heroines are coupled in their misery, whether or not the works in which they appear are sympathetic to the concept of fin' amor, the culpability of Jason is emphasized.³²

Medea also appears several times in the Latin works of Boccaccio. The first of these to mention her is the Genealogia Deorum Gentilium (IV. xi-xiii),³³ which gathers information concerning her from a variety of classical sources. These include: Homer's Odyssey, Cicero's De Natura Deorum, Ovid's Heroides, Metamorphoses, and Tristia and Hyginus' Fabulae. The story as it appears in the Genealogia is completely, though briefly, stated, and it includes all of the information contained in the Ovide Moralise', which was examined above. Boccaccio comments that the story of Medea which was gathered from his numerous sources, is a mixture of history and fable (IV. xii. 25). The story of Medea in the Genealogia begins with the escape of Phrixus to Colchis with the Golden Ram (IV. xi. 4-19), briefly sketches the inception of the quest, the participation of Venus in procuring Medea's aid for Jason, the trials (for which no specific information is given), the conquest of the fleece and the flight from Colchis (IV. xii. 19-30). It is interesting to note that Boccaccio cites Apollonius' Argonautica as his source for this part of the story (IV. xii. 26). Then follows an inordinately long account of Medea's crimes, which begins with a

complete narration of the slaughter and dismemberment of Absyrtus which is taken from Ovid's Tristia (III. ix) and ends with Medea's attempt to poison Theseus (IV. xii. 1-30).

In the Genealogia, Boccaccio portrays Jason's abandonment of Medea as purely arbitrary, as do all of the medieval versions, "Tandem quacunq[ue] ex causa factum sit a Jasone abdicata est, et Creusa Creontis regis Corinthiorum filia desponsata." (IV. xii. 17) (Finally, whatever the cause may have been, she was disavowed by Jason, and Creusa, the daughter of Creon, King of the Corinthians, was betrothed.) Interestingly, Boccaccio is the first of the medieval writers to mention that Creon was consumed with his daughter in the fire of Medea's wrath (IV. xii. 20-21). In addition, probably at the suggestion of Seneca's Medea (1000-1028), Boccaccio has Medea slay her children while Jason looks on "eo vidente trux femina filios trucidavit innocuos et maleficiis suis sublata Athenas abiit." (IV. xii. 24-25) (While he watched, the savage woman butchered the innocent sons and fled exultant to Athens by means of her witchcraft.) In Seneca's play, Medea slays one of her sons before Jason arrives on the scene to avenge the deaths of Creusa and Creon; the second is killed while the father pleads for his life. However, after all that happened between them, Boccaccio has Medea reconciled to Jason, and with his aid, she restores her father Aeetes to his throne (IV. xii. 31-36). This element of the tale is probably based on Hyginus' Fabulae (XXVI-XXVII), who does not mention Jason at this point in the tale, but claims that Medea helped Aeetes regain the throne with the aid of her son by Aegeus, Medus.

Perhaps the most significant element of Boccaccio's description of Medea in the Genealogia is his use of the term maleficium to label

Medea's craft. By the Thirteenth Century maleficium, which literally means evil doing, came to mean specifically the actions of witches, or the practice of witchcraft. It is a term with important legal and theological ramifications which carried the full weight of censure and condemnation by both church and state.³⁴ The word maleficium connects Medea with evil and heresy and makes her subject to the most horrifying forms of retribution. Most important, Boccaccio is the first medieval writer to apply this term to Medea's arts. It is definitely pejorative and manifests the full extent of Boccaccio's disapprobation of Medea. Lastly, it should be noted in passing that Medea's companion in sorrow, Hypsipyle, is not included in this section of the Genealogia, although Boccaccio does tell her story at a later time (V. xxviii-xix).

Boccaccio's negative evaluation of Medea, which in the Genealogia was implied in his arrangement of the narrative and by his use of the label maleficium to describe her powers, is explicitly vehement in De Mulieribus Claris³⁵ in which the chapter concerning Medea (XVII) follows that in which Hypsipyle appears. The tone of Medea's section of De Mulieribus Claris is unmistakably set by the opening phrase "sevissimum veteris perfidie documentum," (1) (the cruelest example of ancient perfidiousness). This is reminiscent of Cicero's description of Medea in De Natura Deorum, which casts Medea as an example of the most evil and dangerous kind of criminal.³⁶ In De Mulieribus Claris, Medea is both "formosa satis et malefitorum longe doctissima" (2) (very beautiful and most long learned in witchcraft), a formidable combination. Boccaccio often expounds upon the dangers of feminine beauty and makes them a recurrent theme in De Mulieribus Claris, a motif he establishes in the initial chapter in which the misdeeds of

the first woman, Eve, are narrated (I. 3-4). Medea's beauty, combined with her learned training in the evil arts of witchcraft, earn her Boccaccio's unstinting condemnation in this work. As the author comments after he has described her powers, "Nec illi - quod longe peius - ab artibus fuit dissonus animus; nam, deficientibus eis, ferro uti arbitrabatur levissimum" (3) (Nor, by far the worse, was the soul of that woman discordant with her arts; for those being deficient, it was considered most easy to use the sword.) This is not the blushing but competent maiden of Benoît's Roman de Troie, nor the lascivious participant in her own downfall found in Guido's Historia Destructionis Troiae. Boccaccio's Medea in De Mulieribus Claris is bred and educated expressly to perform evil deeds, which breeding and education was in accord with the criminal nature of her soul. While the judgmental tone of this passage is similar to that found in Guido's work, even the Sicilian moralist never went this far.³⁷

Nor is simply condemning Medea enough for Boccaccio. In Chapter VII of De Mulieribus Claris one may also see a rehabilitation of the figure of Jason. Boccaccio seems to follow Benoît's initial characterization of Jason as so handsome, virtuous and beloved by the Thessalian people, that his uncle Peleus, in fear and jealousy, plots his demise through the stratagem of the impossible task (Roman de Troie 716-790; De Mulieribus Claris XVII. 4). This positive appraisal of Jason is never countered by a charge of perjury or disloyalty, as it is in so many of the other medieval versions of the story, including Boccaccio's own Il Filocolo and Amorosa Visione. In De Mulieribus Claris all of the blame for the violent deeds and tragic events is Medea's. Boccaccio even asserts that Medea caused a civil war in her country in order to

have the leisure for Jason to take her to bed (XVII. 4-5). This completely new addition to the charges against Medea has two possible sources. The first is the Argonautica of Valerius Flaccus in which civil war did indeed break out between Aeetes and his brother over the issue of the return of the fleece to the Greeks. It was instigated by Jason's tutelary deities Juno and Venus in order to provide him with an opportunity to display his prowess in battle to the smitten but resistant Medea (VI. 572-620). The second source is the medieval tradition initiated by Benoît which affirmed that Medea had accepted Jason into her bed before the contest of the fleece. The classical source delays the defloration of Medea by Jason until sometime after they escape from Colchis with their prize. On the other hand, Boccaccio makes Medea's incontinence a motivation for her inciting civil discord. The Medea of De Mulieribus Claris is the most criminal so far.

The tests which Jason must perform in order to win the Golden Fleece, in either a classical or medieval version, are missing. There are no bulls which breathe fire, no dragons, no earthborn foes for Jason to combat; nor are there unguents, spells, or magic rings to help the hero face his adversaries while the anxious Medea observes him. Boccaccio wants nothing which may be construed positively to be included in this portrait of Medea. Following Guido (Historia Destructionis Troiae II. 242-269), Boccaccio focuses on the downfall of Aeetes through the disloyalty and concupiscence of his daughter (XVII. 5-6). Boccaccio even deprives Medea of her most positive act, the restoration of youth to Aeson. While in the Genealogia (IV. xii. 13-14), the incident is narrated traditionally, in De Mulieribus Claris the author asserts that at the safe return of Jason with his wife and spoils,

Aeson seemed to grow young again (XVII. 8). Boccaccio thus effectively removes another important narrative element which demonstrated that Medea was capable of life-sustaining activity through her magic.

Medea, as in the Genealogia, slays her children in spite over Jason's marriage to the Corinthian princess while he looks on. Here, the princess is called Glauce, which is the name given to her by Seneca (Medea, 494-495).³⁸ Boccaccio completes his tale of Medea's enormities again as in the Genealogia with the reconciliation of the criminal to her husband and her father (XVII. 9-10). However, the fact that they are reconciled does nothing to rehabilitate her character.

The remainder of Chapter XVII is devoted to expressing the moral which may be derived from the tale of Medea's tragic criminal career for the instruction of the audience.³⁹ Medea is an example of one who sins because she gives too much freedom to her eyes, which are the gates of the soul. Had Medea not allowed herself to be captivated by Jason's seductive mortal beauty, her father's power would have been preserved longer, and her brother's life and her own virginity would have been spared (XVII. 11-14). There are many sources which could have inspired such a moral; St. Matthew's Gospel, for example:

The lamp of the body is the eye. If the
eye be sound, thy whole body will be full
of light. But if thy eye be evil, thy
whole body will be full of darkness.
Therefore if the light that is in thee
is darkness, how great is the darkness
itself! (6. 22-23)⁴⁰

There is also emphasis placed on the effect of Jason's beauty upon Medea's soul through the medium of her eyes in Ovid's Heroides VI (11-12, 31-38), and Metamorphoses VII (27-28, 77-88). Thus both sacred Scripture and pagan story support Boccaccio's moral.

What is most noteworthy is the relentless disapprobation of Medea in De Mulieribus Claris. In contrast, one of the portrayals of Medea in Il Filocolo had been as an unfortunate fool -- not exactly flattering, but it offset the references to her cruelty. In Amorosa Visione, whatever negative things were said about Medea were mitigated by the portrayal of Jason's cruelty and infidelity. The Latin works of Boccaccio thus depict a Medea who is more a maddened criminal than a faithful victim of her husband's lust and opportunism. This point is further illustrated by the two brief references to Medea in De Casibus Illustrium Virorum.

De Casibus mentions Medea's father, Aeetes, among the shades of unfortunate kings who have gathered to have their stories told by Boccaccio for the edification of his audience. Aeetes blames Jason for his woes, among which is the insane lust inspired by the Greek hero in Medea (Fol. iv). The second reference (Fol. xii) numbers Medea among the examples of sinful women. She is specifically burdened with plundering her father, dismembering her brother, and slaying her own children. Her companion in crime is again Procne.⁴²

Thus from his earliest writings in the vernacular to his more scholarly Latin productions, Boccaccio proves himself to be no friend to Medea. He emphasizes her cruelty and her criminal nature which he finds aptly manifested in her chosen profession. He is as censorious of Medea as was Guido delle Colonne, if not more so. He even suggests that Jason was justified in leaving Medea because of her savage nature. No other author has ever gone that far in his disapproval. Furthermore, there is no rehabilitation of Medea because of her love for Jason, and, especially in the Latin writings, Jason is never accused of perjury or infidelity to Medea.

The influence of Boccaccio's works, particularly those in Latin, on the incipient European Renaissance was profound.⁴³ Its presence will be noted in the discussions of the portraits of Medea which are to be found among the writings of Chaucer and Gower. With this point in mind, it is amazing to discover that Chaucer and Gower portrayed Medea as a saint and martyr in the service of the god of Love.

There are a number of references to Medea scattered throughout Chaucer's works.⁴⁴ As shall be seen, not all of them are flattering. However, the most detailed portrait of Medea to be found in Chaucer's writings occurs in the Legend of Good Women, which may be described as a martyrology of those faithful to the rule of the God of Love.⁴⁵ There are many interesting observations to be made concerning Chaucer's placement of Medea among the exemplary ladies who reside in the heaven of fin' amor over which Amor and his queen, Alcestis, preside. The sources from which Chaucer drew material for his characterization of Medea in the Legend of Good Women will be discussed later. First the allusions to the story of Jason and Medea which may be discovered in some of Chaucer's other works must be considered.

Medea appears twice in the Book of the Duchess. The dreamer includes her among the figures depicted in the storied glass windows of his dream study (330) which include a number of characters who participate in the Story of Troy, and the "text and glose" (333) of the Roman de la Rose. Thus Chaucer places Medea in a catalogue of the most popular subjects of medieval literature, which anyone who aspires to writing poetry would have to know.⁴⁶ The aptness of Chaucer's inclusion of Medea in the list of standard topics of medieval literature is attested to by the current study.

The second reference to Medea is more startling. It occurs at the point in the story when the dreamer is exhorting the Man in Black not to commit the sin of suicide in grief over the loss of his beloved, because:

Ye sholde be dampned in this cas
By as good ryght as Medea was,
That slough her children for Jasoun.
(725-727)

This statement is remarkably similar in tone to some of the characterizations of Medea which were discovered in Boccaccio's works. However, Chaucer goes farther than Boccaccio did, even in De Mulieribus Claris. He specifically states that Medea was damned for her desperate crime. It is important to note that this is one of only two brief negative judgments of Medea which may be found in Chaucer's works.⁴⁷ Furthermore, it appears in a work that has raised many questions for critics concerning Chaucer's portrayal of the value and significance of refined earthly love.⁴⁸ The dreamer's blatant lack of understanding of the Man in Black's predicament makes his negative reference to Medea an appropriate one. The dreamer does not seem to comprehend or approve the motivation of love which drives the Man in Black to desperation as it did Medea. Therefore he must disapprove of one and condemn the other.

Medea is referred to twice in the House of Fame, also. In Book I, which is a retelling of the story of Aeneas with profound emphasis on the Dido episode, Medea is mentioned in a list of ladies who were betrayed by "fals and recchless" (397) lovers as was Dido by Aeneas. As in Dante, the Ovide Moralise, and Boccaccio, Medea's companion in anguish is Hypsipyle, and Jason is cited twice for infidelity (400-401). In this passage Jason bears the total burden of blame since no other aspect of the story is mentioned. In Book III, Medea appears in a

catalogue of magicians, witches, sorcerers, pythonesses, etc. who inhabit Fame's castle (1260-1263). With the aid of their magic arts, these powerful personages know how to "make a man ben hool or syk." (1270) Among the sorceresses mentioned are Medea, Circe and Calypso (1271-1272). The grouping is suggestive of Ovid who twice connected Medea and Circe (Ars Amatoria II. 99-104; Remediis Amoris 261-264) and the Roman de la Rose (14374-14378) which follows Ovid's example. The position of the catalogue in Book III is noteworthy since Chaucer devotes this section of the House of Fame to the "art poetical." (1095) In this context, the magicians are listed immediately after the musicians who are led by Orpheus (1201-1258). The association of the musicians, magicians and poets in the House of Fame is an interesting one which may have suggested to Chaucer by the fact that in Latin the same word is used to denote a poet's song and an enchantress' spell, carmen.⁴⁹ In the House of Fame, Chaucer exhibits none of the opprobrium of Boccaccio against maleficium. This is because in the context of the House of Fame magicians have a legitimate function, which is to make men famous through their art (III. 1275-1276).

There is one more brief reference to Medea which must be considered before proceeding to a discussion of the Legend of Good Women. This allusion occurs in Part III of "The Knight's Tale." On the walls of Venus' Temple to which Palamon takes his suit to defeat Arcite and win Emelye for his own, are depicted those who have been subject to Venus' laws. The significance of the passage is that no worldly power is greater than Love's:

Thus may be seen that wysdom ne richesse,
 Beautee ne sleighte, strengthe ne hardynesse,
 Ne may with Venus holde champartie,
 For as hir list the world than may she gye.
 (1947-1949)

Among those whose powers have been subjugated by Venus are Medea and Circe (1944). Again, the coupling of the classical enchantresses could have been suggested to Chaucer, as in the House of Fame, by Ovid or Jean de Meun. The powerlessness of enchantments to overthrow the rule of Love is a positive omen for Palamon, who does eventually win his Emelye.

Chaucer's portrait of Medea in the Legend of Good Women is based primarily on the medieval versions of the story, principally those of Benoît and Guido, whom Chaucer acknowledges, and the Ovide Moralisé, about which Chaucer is silent.⁵⁰ In addition, contributions are made to Chaucer's good Medea by Ovid and Valerius Flaccus. Chaucer's narrative is not as elaborate as those of his sources. He omits a good deal of significant detail since the focus of his tale is on how to demonstrate the goodness of Medea and the corresponding falseness of Jason.⁵¹ The effects of his omissions will be discussed later.

The context of Chaucer's variation on the theme of Medea in the Legend is an elaborate literary joke which forms a connecting thread throughout Chaucer's work. The poet Chaucer created a persona for himself as the student and chronicler of Love's workings in the world, but also as an inept versifier and lover.⁵² As explained in the Prologues to the poem, Chaucer's persona has incurred the wrath of the God of Love and the ladies of his court by telling of the infamous infidelity of Criseyde (F 332-334; G 265-266). Alceste, the Queen of Love's heaven and the paragon of womanly virtue among his followers intercedes for Chaucer and wins for him forgiveness and an appropriate penance (F 475-494; G 468-485). For his transgression, Chaucer is sentenced to compose a hagiography of women who were faithful to their errant lovers,

even though they suffered greatly for it. The crown of martyrdom is awarded to these ladies because they were virtuous in the "craft of fyn loving," (F 544; G 534) of which Alcestis is the chief example. Fidelity in love is sufficient to win paradise. As Love informs Chaucer, "Ne shal no trewe lover come in helle." (F 553)

In the moral milieu set up by the Prologues to the Legend of Good Women, judgment becomes a simple matter. Men who betray the women who love them are lecherous beasts (F 486-499; G 475-479) for whom loving is only a game. The women who suffer the depredations of these seducers are considered saints, "goode women alle,/And trewe of love, for oght that may byfalle." (F 560-561) The good women dwell with the God of Love in Paradise. Among these martyrs of Cupid, whose ranks include Cleopatra, Dido, and Ariadne, are Hypsipyle and Medea, who have earned their places in Amor's Heaven through the sufferings they endured because of the lechery of that epitome of false lovers, Jason:

Thow rote of false lovers, Duc Jasoun,
Thow sly devourere and confusioun
Of gentil wemen, tendre creatures,
Thow madest thy recleymyng and thy lures
To ladyes of thy statly aparaunce,
And of thy wordes, farced with plesaunce,
And of thy feyned trouthe and thy manere,
With thyn obeysaunce and humble cheere,
And with thy contrefeted peyne and wo.
There othere falsen oon, thow falsest two!
(1368-1378)

The above evaluation of Jason is strongly reminiscent of his portraits in Dante's Inferno, the Ovide Moralise', and Boccaccio's Amorosa Visione. It is the logical outcome of placing the facts of the tale of Jason and Medea in the context of the conventions of fin' amor.

Chaucer mentions two main sources for his version of the stories of Hypsipyle and Medea, Guido delle Colonne's Historia Destructionis Troiae

and Ovid's Heroides (Legend 1464-1465).⁵³ While Guido's work was in fact a primary source of the story of Jason and Medea for the Middle Ages, its antifeminism and the fact that it doesn't even mention Medea's companion in suffering, Hypsipyle, make Chaucer's citation of Guido as his principal authority for these tales suspect. As will be recalled, Guido condemns Medea throughout his narrative for giving in to her passion for Jason because of the lamentable, but universal, weakness of her sex (II. 235-279; III. 114-126). Chaucer's use of Ovid as one of his sources is no less astounding in the light of the Latin poet's characterization of Medea which was discussed in Chapter II.⁵⁴ To accuse Chaucer of misunderstanding his avowed authorities would be both fruitless and ridiculous in the light of his constant scholarly and literary activities.⁵⁵ One can only conclude that Chaucer revised the material he received from his sources to conform to another set of expectations and conventions, specifically, those of fin' amor, which were unknown to Ovid and unacceptable to Guido.

In the Legend of Good Women, Chaucer pares his narrative of Medea's tale to the bare bones of the story, especially in comparison to the versions of Ovid, Guido, and the Ovide Moralisé. From the beginning, Chaucer emphasizes Jason's treacherous nature:

To Colcos comen is this duc Jasoun,
That is of love devourer and dragoun.
As mater appetiteth forme alwey,
And from forme into forme it passen may,
Or as a welle that were botomles,
Ryght so can false Jason have no pes.
For, to desyren, thourgh his appetit,
To don with gentil women his delyt,
This is his lust and his felicite.
(1580-1588)

Thus Chaucer's Jason is a bottomless pit of lustful appetite who is

compelled by his lechery to work his will on gentle ladies. This evaluation has two noteworthy antecedents. The first is Guido's Historia (II. 117-127) in which Medea is accused of precisely the same flaw, unquenchable libido. The second is Boccaccio's Amorosa Visione (XXI. 14-17) in which Jason is portrayed as possessing this fault.

Chaucer further describes Jason as handsome, regal in bearing, well spoken, friendly, "And coude of love al the art and craft pleyner/Withoute bok, with everych observaunce," (1607-1607) For Jason, love is an art which he has refined through long practice, and Medea has the misfortune to fall in love with him.⁵⁶ The allusion to Ovid's infamous, but influential, Ars Amatoria is unmistakable here as Chaucer observes that its teachings would have been superfluous for Jason.

On the other hand, Chaucer reduces the description of Medea's powers as a sorceress to a single line (1650), eliminating all of the material from which Ovid, Seneca, Benoît de Sainte-Maure, Guido delle Colonne, and the Ovide Moralisé derived such sensational effects. Following Benoît and Guido, Chaucer makes Medea an only child, which effectively eliminates one of her more horrifying enormities. Chaucer concentrates on the interviews and love trysts between Medea and Jason at which the oaths of fidelity are exchanged and Jason commits his perjury. Again Benoît is the source. All of the magic paraphernalia -- magic scrolls rings of invisibility, etc. -- are jettisoned as unimportant for Chaucer's purpose in the Legend. The moral asides with which Guido punctuates his narrative are eliminated because they would be inappropriate in the legenda the subject of which is the suffering of women who were faithful to their earthly lovers. Chaucer never mentions Aeson or Pelias. Consequently the audience never gets to observe Medea at work

for good or ill. Thus Chaucer renders his character considerably less formidable, or frightening, and he emphasizes her condition as a victim of Jason's lust. However, in doing so, he excises all of the elements which made her an object of fascination for both the antique and medieval worlds. Chaucer's portrait of Medea is flat and lacking in fiery spirit or determination. An alternative interpretation is that, since Chaucer, as is demonstrated by the catalogue of his sources, chooses not to mention episodes and details which were well known, he is being ironic in his treatment of Medea. Chaucer may indeed have expected his audience to fill in the gaps in his narrative, thereby severely undermining his avowed portrayal of Medea as a good woman.

Chaucer does mention Jason's betrayal of Medea and her sons (1656-1661), as he establishes the perfidious nature of Jason, "That, in his dayes, nas ther non yfounde/So fals a love-re goinge on the ground." (1668-1669) Chaucer concludes his narrative with Medea lamenting her seduction:

'O, haddest thou in thy conquest ded ybe,
 Ful mikel untrouthe had ther deyed with the!
 Wel can Ovyde hire letter in vers endyte,
 Which were as now to long for me to wryte.
 (1676-1679)

Here Chaucer tells his audience precisely what he has done. He ends his version of the story at the point where Ovid begins one of his (Heroides XII. 19-20). Most important, Chaucer does not narrate the quadruple murders with which Medea afflicts Jason in revenge for his treachery. Chaucer completely eliminates the violence, rage, and criminal activities which accompany Medea's passion for Jason in other versions of the tale. He stresses Medea's services and fidelity to Jason, as well as that hero's false and lecherous nature, thus effectively

shaping his narrative to the specifications of a martyrology of faithful women. The result is a saintly but flat portrait of Medea, which is perhaps ironic, but from which all of the intriguing and horrifying complexities have been removed.

On the whole, Chaucer's use of the theme of Medea casts the heroine in a positive light. One important fact which emerges here is that the significance of Medea, which is shaped by the exigencies of each specific work, varies with the attitude that the poet-narrator exhibits toward the idea of fin' amor. For example, in the Book of the Duchess, love is depicted as a debilitating sickness which is dangerous to the life of the soul as well as the health of the body of the Man in Black. Correspondingly, Medea is condemned for slaying her children. In Book I of the House of Fame in which the infidelity of men rather than love itself is the subject of disapproval, Medea is portrayed as a victim. In "The Knight's Tale," which exhibits the power of Love and Venus in the temporal world, Medea is depicted as one who is subject to love in spite of her powers of sorcery. The rule of Amor and Venus is painful, but ineluctable in "The Knight's Tale," as the fate of its heroine Emelye demonstrates. The Legend of Good Women was written as a martyrology in praise of faithful women who adhered to the specific virtues of earthly lovers: obedience to the God of Love and fidelity to one's beloved. Thus these saints of Love merited an eternal reward in a Paradise which was designed for them. Medea wins an undisputed place among Love's martyrs for her unstinting loyalty to Jason.⁵⁷ In turn, Jason is condemned for being a professional lover and seducer as he was by Dante.

Similarly, in the works of John Gower,⁵⁸ even though, as in Chaucer,

a negative reference to Medea may be found, the character of Medea is presented in a more consistently sympathetic way than in the work of any other author, classical or medieval. Again, as in Chaucer, there are several brief allusions to the figure of Medea which are illuminating. These occur in the Mirour de l'Omme, Cinkante Balades, Vox Clamantis, and Confessio Amantis. In addition, a foreshortened version of the tale of Jason and Medea may be found in Traité pour Essampler les Amantz Marietz, a thought-provoking title. Finally, there is the fully realized account of the story which is found in Book V of the Confessio Amantis. Derived from a wide variety of classical and medieval sources, which will be indicated at the appropriate time, it is the most positive of the portraits of Medea which have been discussed to date. Almost all of Medea's activities are described here, both life-sustaining and criminal; only the dismemberment of Absyrtus and the murder of Pelias are missing. However, the betrayal of her father, the burning of Creusa, and the slaughter of her children are retained along with the winning of the fleece and the rejuvenation of Aeson. In contrast, it will be remembered that Guido delle Colonne's condemnation of Medea was based on far fewer negative elements. In spite of her violent deeds, and because of her passionate attachment to Jason, both of which earned Medea Boccaccio's enthusiastic disapprobation, Gower has his Medea finish her story in heaven, after being rescued from Jason's wrath by the goddess Pallas. It is also significant to note that Gower is the first author to write about Medea in three languages.

In the Mirour de l'Omme (3724-3730), the sleepless serpent which guarded the Golden Fleece and which Jason defeated by means of a secret agreement (*par covine*, 3726) he made with Medea, is used by Gower as a

figure of the sin of envy. In this reference, both Jason and Medea come off well. They exhibit how envy may be defeated by cooperation and mutual regard. Gower's use of the story here is similar to that in the allegories of the Ovide Moralise'. Its significance is developed by means of analogy rather than from any moral inherent in the facts of the tale.

In the Cinkante Balades (XLIII. i. 1), Jason is mentioned among the paradigms of treacherous lovers along with Hercules, Aeneas and Theseus. This popular use of the Greek hero, Jason, in medieval literature has often been noted in this study. It is a commonplace evaluation which derives from the meeting of classical stories and the concept of fin' amor.

A more noteworthy reference to the story of Jason and Medea appears in the Vox Clamantis, a work in which women in general fare badly (IV. xii. 490; xiii. 1-594). In Book VI of this work Gower makes the following startling comparison:

Mortuus est Troilus constanter amore fidelis,
Iamque Iasonis amor nescit habere fidem:
Solo contenta moritur nunc fida Medea,
Fictaque Crisaida gaudet amare duos.
(xxi. 1325-1328)

Dead is Troilus steadfastly faithful in love,
And now Jason's love knows not how to keep faith:
Content with the earth now the faithful Medea dies,
And false Cressida rejoices to love two men.

The linking of Troilus to Medea as examples of fidelity in love and Jason to Cressida as opposing examples of falsehood had been implied since the mid-Twelfth Century when Benoît had incorporated the story of Jason and Medea and the history of the Fall of Troy into a single work in which love and war had complementary roles to play. In Vox Clamantis, which Gower was composing at about the same time as Chaucer was working on

Troilus and Criseyde,⁵⁹ the implied connection is finally made explicit. Most important, the specific approval of Medea is set against a background of mistrust and condemnation for the rest of her sex, whose lecherous antics Gower cites as one of the principal causes for the chaos of his times. As far as the Vox Clamantis is concerned, there seem to have always been more Cressidas than Medeas. This is quite a contrast to the portrayals of Medea by Guido delle Colonne and Giovanni Boccaccio. It establishes Medea as a woman who is honest in love as she will later be portrayed by Gower as an example of honest love.⁶⁰

In the Traité pour Essampler les Amantz Marietz VIII, Jason and Medea are given an entire poem, three stanzas of seven lines each, to express what Gower considers to be the essence of their story. In the first stanza, Medea helps Jason to win the fleece, an achievement for which he receives great renown (VIII. l. 3-4). He leads her to his home in Greece and marries her there (notice the sequence of events follows the classical sequence of Metamorphoses VII and Ovide Moralisé VII). The second stanza describes how Medea, content in her belief in her husband's love (VIII. ii. 1-3) bears him two children, and then is unexpectedly abandoned by Jason in favor of Creusa (VIII. ii. 3-6). The third stanza depicts Medea's grief and wrath and the pitiable act to which they drive her:

Ses joefnes fils, quex ot jadis enclos
 Deinz ses costées, ensi come forseneé
 Devant les oels Jason ele ad tueé.
 (VIII. iii. 3-5)

Her young sons, whom once she bore
 In her womb, thus as one deranged
 She killed before Jason's eyes.

It will be remembered that the slaughter of the children was performed

before Jason's eyes in Boccaccio's Genealogia and De Mulieribus Claris.⁶¹ Gower will have Medea slay her children in the same way in Confessio Amantis V. Significantly, the refrain of Balade VIII is "Freinte espousaille dieus le vengera" (God will avenge the broken marriage).⁶² Thus Medea is given the role of divine avenger, which she had claimed for herself in Seneca's play (Medea 1-55, 740-842). Before leaving this poem, it must be noted in passing that both Benoît (2025-2026) and Guido (III. 382-385) claim that the gods will avenge Jason's perjury to Medea and that both are more proximate sources for this theme in Gower's Traité. Also, the Ovide Moralisé employs the term "forsena" (VII. 1489) (enraged, deranged) to denote Medea's psychological reaction to Jason's rejection.

The Confessio Amantis contains two brief allusions to Medea in addition to the extended narrative of her story in Book V. The first reference appears in Book III (2559-2562), in which Medea is listed among those who are condemned for homicide because she slew her children and attempted to poison Theseus. This is the only negative mention of Medea in all of Gower's works. Interestingly it refers to the same deed for which Chaucer, the dreamer-narrator of the Book of the Duchess believed Medea to be damned. Infanticide seems to be Medea's worst enormity in the opinion of both Chaucer and Gower. In the light of this fact, the ending which Gower gives to Medea's tragic tale in Confessio Amantis V is truly startling, as will soon be seen. The second brief allusion to Medea in the Confessio may be found in Book VIII and is reminiscent of Medea's appearance in the Cinkante Balades. Again the forlorn Colchian Princess and her Greek seducer appear in a catalogue of lovers who have run afoul of each other. The context here (VIII. 2560-2570) is one

which demonstrates the uncertain, short-lived benefits of love,⁶³ and is strongly reminiscent of Boccaccio's Amorosa Visione (VIII-IX) and similar catalogues of lovers, unfortunate or otherwise, which abound in medieval literature.

One of the more complete medieval versions of the story of Jason and Medea is found in Gower's Confessio Amantis V. The sources for Gower's adaptation of the story are manifold. They include works by both classical and medieval authors. Ovid's Metamorphoses VII and Heroides XII are of course the parent sources. However, the majority contributors is medieval, primarily Benoît de Sainte-Maure and Guido delle Colonne from whom Gower derives his plot and a number of specific elements.⁶⁴ The material Gower gleaned from Benoît and Guido he augmented with information from the Ovide Moralisé, Boccaccio's Genealogia Deorum Gentilium and De Mulieribus Claris, and perhaps even Chaucer's Troilus.⁶⁵ When one recalls that the portrayals of Medea in a number of these works present a negative appraisal of her character, the outcome of Gower's version of the tale in Confessio Amantis V is remarkable. The first part of Gower's narrative follows Benoît and Guido fairly closely, including the mistaken identity of Peleus for Pelias. Significantly, the seduction of Hypsipyle by Jason is not included by Gower who wants his audience's sympathies only for Medea. Because the plot of the story presented by Benoît breaks off after the departure of Jason and Medea from Colchis, Gower uses Ovid, the Ovide Moralisé, and Boccaccio to complete his tragic tale. With their assistance, Gower presents a fairly complete account of the rejuvenation of Aeson, as well as the device of the golden robe steeped in poison with which Medea slays her rival. Gower also includes Medea's vengeful slaughter of her two sons, but the ending he gives the tale is his own, the

sanctification of Medea for her fidelity to Jason.

The story of Jason and Medea in Book V of the Confessio Amantis is used by Gower as an exemplum of the effects of the sin of perjury in love by which false lovers deceive the tender hearts of women (3232-3240).⁶⁶ At the beginning of his narrative, Gower deviates from Benoît and Guido by making Peleus childless (3250-3254). Thus he effectively eliminates the embarrassing assertion of kinship between Jason and Achilles which Benoît and Guido had made, and he also removes the occasion for one of Medea's enormities, the tricking of Pelias' daughters into slaying their own father. Thus, like other medieval writers who have told the tale of Jason and Medea, Gower is not merely a translator, but he is rather a recreator as certain condensations and additions demonstrate.⁶⁷

Another example of Gower's revisions is that he has Oëtes first warn Jason of the difficulty of winning the fleece (3343-3347); in Benoît's Roman de Troie (1335-1369) and in Guido's Historia (II. 359-374) this function is performed by Medea. The effect of this change is to render Oëtes more courteous and Medea's betrayal of him more gratuitous. Furthermore, Gower is the first writer to have Medea and Jason fall in love at the same moment (3375-3392), which represents a mutuality in the inception of their passion which is not in any of the other accounts classical or medieval.⁶⁸ This sense of the mutuality of their love is reinforced by the invention of Gower that after their first meeting, Jason is as anxious to encounter Medea again as she is him:

Al was Medea that he thoughte,
So that in many a wise he soghte
His witt wakende er it was day,
Som time yee, som time nay,
Som time thus, som time so,

As he was stered to and fro
 Of love, and ek of his conqueste
 As he was holde of his beheste.
 (3407-3414)

Although it takes the unstable Jason a while to make up his mind about which he desires more, he finally plans to win Medea's love before tackling the task of winning the fleece (3415-3420). Most important is the fact that Jason's intention to capture Medea's heart is resolved before he learns of the value of her aid.

That Medea is Jason's primary objective and the winning of the fleece secondary is appropriate to the context of fin' amor. By having Jason fall in love with Medea first, Gower also eliminates the unfortunate impression that Medea was selling herself to Jason by offering to help him at the same time she declared her love for him. However, Gower does follow Benoît's Roman de Troie (1410-1416) and Guido's Historia (II. 388-405) when he has Medea reveal her love to Jason while promising to aid him in obtaining the fleece. At this point she openly states that her assistance is contingent upon his oath to her of fidelity in love (3449-3452). His acceptance of her conditions, the lovers' covenant (3453-3456), and his later making a vow to the same effect on an image of Jupiter (3483-3492), before taking Medea's virginity, are the oaths which Jason foreswears when he abandons Medea for Creusa (4190-4198).

Gower proceeds to describe the nature of Medea's aid to Jason in preserving his life and winning the Golden Fleece, following Benoît and Guido up to the point where the deed is accomplished and is celebrated by a banquet which Oëtes gives in Jason's honor (3852). Medea's five magic gifts, including the potent ring of invisibility, the medieval

order of the tasks, the island on which they are accomplished, and the tower from which Medea observes the scene are all to be found in Confessio Amantis V. At this point in the story, Gower describes the escape of Jason with his double prize from Colchis, during which Medea contrives to steal Oëtes ancestral treasure (3895-3903), as she does in Guido (III. 73-75) and Boccaccio's De Mulieribus Claris (XVII. 5). Gower omits the murder and dismemberment of Absyrtus and simply has Oëtes' fleet give up the pursuit because of Jason's long head start and turn back for Colchis (3920-3926).

From this point in Gower's narrative, the author begins to rely upon Ovid, the Ovide Moralise, and Boccaccio in order to complete his tale. After arriving in Greece, Medea bears Jason two sons (3938) and then agrees to rejuvenate the aged Eson (3942-3952). This allows Gower to provide a vivid portrait of the sorceress at work with the assistance of Ovid's Metamorphoses VII (195-275) and the Ovide Moralise (892-1080). To the elements which he borrows from the classical and medieval poems Gower adds some minor variations. For example, in the Confessio Amantis V, Medea becomes invisible in order to work her magic on Eson (4026-4030). When the rejuvenation of Eson is accomplished (4170-4174), Genius, the narrator-confessor reminds his audience, Amans the lover-penitent, of Medea's generosity to Jason: specifically her assistance in obtaining the Golden Fleece, her dowry of her father's treasure, and the restoration of Eson's youthfulness. Interestingly, the sons that Medea bore to Jason are not included in her list of services to him. Perhaps this is because, as his wife, the bearing of Jason's children was considered part of Medea's duties. The recapitulation of Medea's gifts to Jason at this point in the story follows the pattern found in the Ovide Moralise (VII.

1381-1469) which inserts a translation of Heroides XII, providing Medea with an opportunity to upbraid her husband for deserting her in order to marry Creusa.

Modifying the order of the narrative in the Ovide Moralisé, Genius states that Peleus is dead and Jason has succeeded to the throne after he reminds Amans of Jason's indebtedness to Medea. The assumption is that Jason's inimical uncle died from natural causes. Medea does not murder Peleus with the unwitting aid of his daughters as she does in Ovid's Metamorphoses (VII. 297-349), the Ovide Moralisé (VII. 1265-1360), and Boccaccio's Genealogia (IV. xii. 15-16) and De Mulieribus Claris (XVII. 8-9). Thus there is no need for Medea to be exiled from Jason, and he is shorn of one of his primary excuses for betraying his wife. Jason's treachery is rendered completely gratuitous by Gower's change of plot. The narrator comments at this point on Jason's behavior:

Medea hath fulfild his wille:
But whanne he scholde of riht fulfille
The trouthe, which to hire afore
He hadde in thyle of Colchos swore,
Tho was Medea most deceived.
(4189-4193)

Jason breaks his troth and abandons Medea for a new love (4194-4198). He thus commits the sin of perjury, the sin for which the tale is the exemplum. Gower does not flinch at narrating the tragic and violent deeds which result. The narrator draws upon the Ovide Moralisé (VII. 1470-1500) for details. As in the French poem, Creon is not mentioned, and Creusa is burned to death by means of a golden mantel which is steeped in Medea's poisons (4200-4209); then, as in Boccaccio, she slays both her sons before Jason's horrified eyes (4210-4216). As she does so, Medea informs Jason that his perjury has been the cause of these tragic events.

There is a strong resemblance between Gower's narrative and the conclusion of Seneca's tragedy in this scene (Medea, 978-1027).

Before the astonished Jason can exact vengeance on Medea with his sword, she is rescued in a most significant manner:

Bot farewel, sche was ago
Unto Pallas the Court above,
Wher as sche pleigneth upon love,
As sche that was with that goddesse,
And he was left in gret distresse.
(4218-4222)

Gower's ending is unambiguous. Medea is gone up into that part of Heaven presided over by the goddess of wisdom, which is an appropriate choice of patrons for one who is so steeped in knowledge.⁶⁹ From her heavenly vantage point, Medea complains of the sufferings which love entails. However, the culprit is not passion, but the foresworn Jason who made a travesty of love with his perjury. Medea's flight from Theseus' revenge in a magically summoned whirlwind which ends the versions of the tale found in Ovid's Metamorphoses (VII. 424) and the Ovide Moralise' (VII. 2112-2114) becomes sanctification in Gower's account. Medea is in Paradise in the company of the goddess of wisdom, while Jason is left to suffer the effects of his falsehood. Gower's ending bears a marked resemblance to that of Chaucer's tale of the double sorrow of Troilus (Troilus and Criseyde V. 1806-1834), which appeared before Gower composed the Confessio Amantis.⁷⁰ However, in Chaucer's work, Troilus condemns earthly love as subject to the whims of Fortune. In the Confessio Amantis' version of the story of Jason and Medea, the lesson conveyed to Amans, and by extension to the audience, is that foreswearing an oath in love is a sin which occasions great tragedy (4223-4229). Jason is provided with none of Cressida's excuses, i.e. the constraints of parent

and destiny. The violent deeds to which Medea is driven are occasioned by his wilful infidelity. Jason's opportunistic faithlessness was a theme which Gower received from the writings of Benoît de Sainte-Maure, Guido delle Colonne, and the Ovide Moralisé.

Thus the Fourteenth Century provides a number of diverse portrayals of the theme of Medea. The Ovide Moralisé presents a characterization which, though fully realized, is problematical. It is a narrative whose fabric is woven of many sources and ornamented with its allegories. Although it details most of Medea's crimes, it gives her ample motivation for them because of Jason's calculating infidelity. On the whole its evidence seems to render a positive significance for Medea; however, its presentation of the murders of Absyrtus and Pelias and its arrangement of the Theseus episode are decidedly damaging to Medea's reputation. Perhaps it would be most accurate to say that, as far as the story is concerned, the Ovide Moralisé is both inclusive and objective. In contrast, Boccaccio's allusions to the tale of Jason and Medea and his portraits in the Genealogia Deorum Gentilium and De Mulieribus Claris are anything but flattering to Jason's barbarian princess. The consistent vehemence of Boccaccio's antipathy to Medea is puzzling. It might be explained via Hollander's thesis that Boccaccio distinguished between two Venuses: a heavenly Venus who was God's vicar on earth, and an earthly Venus who was subject to the whims of Fortune and was corruption itself. The nature of Medea's portraits in Boccaccio's works indicate that he identifies her with the latter goddess, perhaps at the suggestion of Guido delle Colonne's Historia Destructionis Troiae. While Hollander's thesis raises almost as many questions as it answers when it is applied to the vernacular works of Boccaccio in general, it may be the best approach to an interpretation

of Boccaccio's Medea, especially given the judgment of her pronounced by Fiammetta in the seventh question of love of Il Filocolo.⁷¹

In juxtaposition to the noncommittal Ovide Moralise' and the condemnatory works of Boccaccio, Medea receives her most positive realizations in the literature of the Fourteenth Century. They are found in Chaucer's Legend of Good Women and Gower's Confessio Amantis. Chaucer and Gower are both well aware of the varied characterizations of Medea which preceded theirs, as the impressive list of their respective sources demonstrates. Yet in their major portraits the figure of Medea is set in a context which confers upon her the accolade of saint and martyr in the worship of the God of Love. It cannot be denied that the milieu of fin' amor in which Medea is placed in the Legend of Good Women and the Confessio Amantis is loaded with ironies and literary jokes,⁷² but the fact remains that Medea possesses in abundance the primary virtue of refined, ennobling human love. Medea's fidelity to Jason is an essential and consistent element of the theme of Medea in every work in which she has appeared since the Fifth Century B.C. It is ferocious, enthusiastic and boundless. It is because of Medea's loyalty to Jason that Chaucer elevates her to the ranks of Love's saints and martyrs which are presided over by the classical paragon of feminine virtue, Alcestis.

As has been noted, the lack of specific detail in Chaucer's presentation of Medea is ambiguous and provocative. On the surface, Chaucer's portrait of Medea in the Legend of Good Women is rather flat, displaying none of the qualities which have made her character so fascinating to audiences down through the ages. There is no passion, no power, no violence in Chaucer's portrait of Medea. However, the fact that Chaucer divests his Medea of so much meaningful detail may indicate his reliance

on his audience's ability to create an ironic portrayal of Medea from the missing elements.

Gower goes even further than Chaucer. His reward for Medea is the heaven of Pallas, the goddess of wisdom, and actual sanctification. Medea's portrait in Confessio Amantis V is the logical outcome of her association in medieval literature with the concept of fin' amor. Under the aegis of refined love, Gower provides his narrative with an inversion which may be construed as a miracle of Love. In this context all of the crimes which Medea commits for love of and in fidelity to Jason, especially the murder of her rival and the slaughter of her sons, when balanced in the scales of Love's justice, serve not to condemn but to exalt her. To be sure, in the culminating irony of Gower's Confessio, another inversion takes place. Medea in the heaven of wisdom complains about love and what she suffered while subject to Jason, much like the dreamer Amans-Gower when he awakens from his vision at the end of the Confessio (VIII. 2858-2970). However, no matter what opinion of love is being presented in the Confessio Amantis, the fact remains that Medea has been sanctified for having suffered its purgatory and for having remained steadfast in its virtues. Indeed, Gower's use of the figure of Medea as a paradigm for fidelity in the Vox Clamantis reinforces the positive portrait of Medea in the Confessio Amantis. In both works Medea is portrayed as and praised for being true in her affections.

It is amazing to consider that in the Fourteenth Century, Medea's story inspired such a variety of portrayals. From Boccaccio's archetype of evil-doing to Gower's saint, Medea is transformed by the valuation placed upon her passion for Jason in each individual work. Thus the fortunes of the figure of Medea among the writers of the Fourteenth

Century chronicle their attitudes towards the all-consuming passion of earthly love to which Medea was so committed in respect to Jason. What is even more astounding is that the attitude toward fin' amor was not rigidly consistent, but was altered to conform to the exigencies of specific works, or sections of works. Thus Chaucer could condemn Medea for slaying her children in the Book of the Duchess on the one hand, and elevate her to the company of Love's saints on the other. In Gower the transformation takes place between Book III of the Confessio Amantis and Book V. These sudden transformations demonstrate that the significance of a theme may be altered in a number of ways to suit an ethical milieu, even if that milieu exists only in literary conventions. Correspondingly, the Medeas of the Fourteenth Century, especially those of Chaucer and Gower, are evidence of a qualitative revaluation of the themes of woman and passion among medieval writers which can be traced to beginnings in the Twelfth Century.

Chapter VI: Notes

¹ G.A. Panton and D. Donaldson, eds., The 'Gest Hystoriale' of the Destruction of Troy, EETS 39,56 (1869; rpt. New York: Oxford, 1968), pp. 1-34.

² One of the few things changed by the Middle English translator was that he chose to leave out a good deal of the negative moralizing, which Guido has attached to Medea's character. Compare for example Historia Destructionis Troiae III. 376-383 with Gest Hystoriale III. 980-994.

³ Dante Alighieri, Inferno, Divina Commedia, ed. with trans. H. Oelsner (1900; rpt. London: Dent, 1962). All references to Dante's poem will be to this edition and will appear as canto and line numbers in parentheses following each citation. All translations of Dante's poem will be from this edition.

⁴ Charles Singleton, "Dante: Within Courtly Love and Beyond," in The Meaning of Courtly Love, ed. F.X. Newman (Albany: S.U.N.Y. Press, 1973), pp. 43-54. Joan M. Ferrante, Woman as Image in Medieval Literature: From the Twelfth Century to Dante (New York: Columbia, 1975), pp. 129-152. Edward Kennard Rand, Founders of the Middle Ages (1928; rpt. New York: Dover, 1957), pp. 251-284.

⁵ Rosemond Tuve, Allegorical Imagery: Some Medieval Books and Their Posterity (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 232-233.

⁶ Cornelius de Boer, ed. 'Ovide Moralisé': Poème du commencement du quatorzième siècle, Tome I (Amsterdam: Johannes Muller, 1915). This first volume contains an introduction to the poem and the first three books. Volume III, which contains Books VII-IX, including the narrative of Jason and Medea, did not appear until 1931, and was edited by de Boer, Martina de Boer, and Jeannette Th. M. van's Sant. All references to the poem will be taken from the above volumes and will appear as book and line numbers in parentheses following each citation. All translations of passages from this work are my own.

⁷ Tuve, p. 232.

⁸ de Boer, Introduction to the Ovide Moralisé, tme. I, pp. 29-43. de Boer traces Machaut's narrative of the story of Jason and Medea in the Judgment du Roi de Navarre to the Ovide Moralisé, while mistakenly listing the original sources of the tale as only Metamorphoses VII and Heroides VI and XII, p. 34.

⁹ John Livingston Lowes, "Chaucer and the Ovide Moralisé," PMLA, 33 (1918), 302-325. Lowes concerns himself with the story of Philomela as

composed by Chaucer from several sources, among them the Ovide Moralisé. Significantly the work of Chaucer's for which he made use of the Ovide Moralisé is the same in which his most complete account of Medea appears in the Legend of Good Women. Lowes also demonstrates a possible sequence of influence from the Ovide Moralisé, through the works of Machaut, to Chaucer.

¹⁰Tuve, pp. 25-55, 219-229.

¹¹de Boer, Introduction, p. 24; tme. III. pp. 11-12. de Boer will even bend the facts to fit inexplicable additions to the story. For example, in the Ovide Moralisé, the return of Jason and Medea to Greece has them land first at Athens (VII. 683-689). This fact is not narrated by Ovid who simply has them return to Iolcos (Metamorphoses, VII. 159-172), but de Boer cites Ovid as its source. III. p. 11.

¹²Hyginus, Fabulae, ed. H.F. Rose (Leyden: A.W. Sythoff, 1933). All references to this work will be taken from this edition and will appear as chapter numbers in parentheses following each citation.

¹³George Henry Bode, ed. Scriptores Rerum Mythicarum Latini Tres (Cellis: E.H.C. Schulze, 1834). All references to this work will be taken from this edition and will appear as chapter numbers in parentheses following each citation.

¹⁴See Benoît de Sainte-Maure, Roman de Troie, 1621-1629; Roman de Troie en Prose, Codex Bodmer 143, p. 33; Roman de Troie en Prose, ed. Constans and Faral, p. 14.

¹⁵Ovid includes an account of the first destruction of Troy in Metamorphoses XI. 200-220, but it is not connected with the saga of the Argo, nor is it clearly stated that Hesione's rape is the cause of Helen's. There does exist a classical tradition (Herodotus, The Histories I.2-3; Valerius Flaccus, The Argonautica I. 531-573), which mentions the abduction of Medea by Jason as the direct cause of Paris' rape of Helen. See also Chapt. III, pp. 110-111.

¹⁶Chapt. V, pp. 177-189.

¹⁷See for example Metamorphoses VII. 394-397. Amores II. xiv.29-33 in which Medea and Procne are compared. Ars Amatoria I. 335-336, Fasti II. 624, Heroides XII. 175-182, Tristia II. 526. All of the above references are to allusions from a fragment of a line to eight lines long which contain none of the explicit detail found in the Ovide Moralisé.

¹⁸Hyginus, Fabulae, XXV mentions only the poisoned crown and states that Creusa, Creon and Jason were consumed in its fires before Medea kills the children. Vatican Mythographer I. 25 mentions the tunic, but

not the children.

¹⁹ Ferrante, pp. 37-64. Rand, pp. 1-40. Tuve, pp. 1-55. Henry Osborn Taylor, The Medieval Mind, 4th ed. (1925; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1962), II. 248-259. Jean Seznec, The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art, trans. Barbara F. Sessions, Bollingen Series 38 (1953; rpt. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 92-94.

²⁰ See for example Thomas Caldecott Chubb, The Life of Giovanni Boccaccio (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1930).

²¹ Thomas G. Bergin, Boccaccio (New York: Viking, 1981), pp. 29-65. Robert Hollander, Boccaccio's Two Venuses (New York: Columbia, 1977), pp. 1-12.

²² For two comprehensive surveys of Boccaccio criticism to date see Vittore Branca, Boccaccio: The Man and His Works, trans. Richard Monges, co. trans. and ed. Dennis J. McAuliffe, forward Robert C. Clements (New York: N.Y.U. Press, 1976); and Bergin pp. 365-379.

²³ Hollander, pp. 11-30. For a history of the emergence of the theme of the two Venuses in medieval literature see George D. Economou, "The Two Venuses and Courtly Love," in In Pursuit of Perfection: Courtly Love in Medieval Literature, eds. Joan M. Ferrante and George D. Economou (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1975), pp. 17-50.

²⁴ Giovanni Boccaccio, Il Filocolo, ed. Antonio Enzo Quaglio, Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio, Vol. I, ed. Vittore Branca (Milano: Mondadori, 1967). All references to this work will be from this edition and will appear as book, chapter and line numbers in parentheses after each citation. All translations of passages from this work are my own.

²⁵ Fiammetta's description of onesto amore makes it an operating principle of the Great Chain of Being. Arthur O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being: A Study in the History of an Idea (1936; rpt. New York: Harper, 1960), pp. 24-98. Francis Cornford, Introduction to Plato's Timaeus, Plato, trans., with a running commentary by Francis Cornford (New York: Bobbs Merrill, 1959), pp. xxiii-xxvi. See Plato, The Timaeus, 27c-40c for the Platonic concept of the Great Chain of Being. For a discussion of the influence of the Timaeus on medieval thought see Charles Homer Haskins, The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century (1927; rpt. New York: Meridian Books, 1976), pp. 343-346. Etienne Gilson, The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy, trans. A.H.C. Downes (1936; rpt. New York: Scribner's, 1940), pp. 69-84. R.W. Soothorn, "Humanism and the School of Chartres," in Medieval Humanism and Other Studies (New York: Harper, 1970), pp. 61-85. Rand, pp. 251-284. The inspiration for Fiammetta's description is probably Dante's portrayal of his love for Beatrice in the Divina Commedia which leads the poet-pilgrim Dante to salvation, Inferno II.

43-126. Bergin, pp. 78-80, 86. Branca, p. 47. Hollander, pp. 34-36, connects Fiammetta's onesto amore with St. Paul's idea of charity.

²⁶ Chapt. IV. pp. 135-137.

²⁷ Hollander, pp. 34-37. Bergin, p. 91.

²⁸ If the story sounds familiar, that is because it is used again by Boccaccio in his Decamerone X. v. and it is also an analogue to Chaucer's "Franklin's Tale," both of which ask the same question proposed in Il Filocolo, which of the principals proved most noble; the husband, the lover, or the magician (the wife is not considered). However, neither the version of the tale in the Decamerone, nor that in The Canterbury Tales includes the elaborate description of the magician's craft modeled on Ovid's Medea which formed the core of fourth question of love.

²⁹ Giovanni Boccaccio, Genealogia Deorum Gentilium Libri, I ed. Vincenzo Romano (Bari: Laterza, 1951), IV. xi. 11, mentions Seneca's Medea as one of its sources. Hollander, pp. 42-43, 83, demonstrates that Boccaccio knew Seneca's Phaedra and his philosophical works. Branca, pp. 36, 64-68, 92-94, 129. Bergin, p. 177. Boccaccio's awareness of Guido delle Colonne's work is suggested by Branca, p. 43. Bergin, pp. 106-107, cites only Benoît's Roman de Troie as a source for the Filostrato leaving the question of Boccaccio's knowledge of Guido an open one.

³⁰ Giovanni Boccaccio, Amorosa Visione, in Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio, Vol. V, ed. Branca. All references to this work will be from this edition and will appear as canto and line numbers in parentheses following each citation. There is a variant to the poem, text B, included in this volume which does not alter in any way the presentation of Medea. All translations of passages from this work are my own.

³¹ For a discussion of the influence of Dante's works on the Amorosa Visione see Bergin, pp. 150-151; Branca, p. 47; Hollander, p. 85.

³² For corroboration on this point see Francesco Petrarca, Trionfi, ed. Ferdinando Neri, in Rime, Trionfi, e Poesie Latini, ed. Ferdinando Neri, et. al. (Milano: Ricciardi, 1951), 128-134. In Petrarca's Trionfi, the triumph of Love is superseded by the triumph of Death, which in its turn succumbs to the victory of Eternity. In such a context the power and value of earthly love is greatly diminished. Petrarca's Trionfi was directly influenced by Boccaccio's Amorosa Visione. Hollander, pp. 87, 207-208; Bergin, p. 153.

³³ Giovanni Boccaccio, Genealogia Deorum Gentilium Libri, op. cit. All references to this work will be taken from this edition and will appear as book, chapter and line numbers in parentheses following each

citation. All translations of passages from this work are my own.

³⁴ Edward Peters, The Magician, the Witch, and the Law (Philadelphia: Univ. Penn. Press, 1978), pp. 1-20, 85-109. For a handy compendium of medieval documents dealing with witches and their position under church and civil law see Alan C. Kors and Edward Peters, Witchcraft in Europe: 1100-1700: A Documentary History (Philadelphia: Univ. of Penn. Press, 1972), pp. 25-97. See also Pennethorne Hughes, Witchcraft (1952; rpt. Baltimore: Penguin, 1965), pp. 56-70, 163-195.

³⁵ Interestingly, even though Medea is castigated for her wickedness by Boccaccio in De Mulieribus Claris, the author retains the reconciliation of Medea, Jason and Aeetes with which he concluded his narrative in the Genealogia. Giovanni Boccaccio, De Mulieribus Claris, ed. Vittorio Zaccaria, Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio, Vol. X, ed. Branca. All references to this work will be from this edition and will appear as chapter and line numbers in parentheses following each citation. All translations of passages from this work will be my own.

³⁶ Chapt. II, pp. 37-38.

³⁷ Chapt. V, pp. 180-189.

³⁸ The name Glauce for Creon's daughter also appears in Ovid, Heroides XII. 53 and Hyginus, Fabulae XXV.

³⁹ Although Zaccaria denies any moral purpose for Boccaccio's De Mulieribus Claris, Introduction to De Mulieribus Claris, pp. 6-13, Boccaccio takes great care to draw one from Medea's story. Both Branca, pp. 110-112, and Bergin, pp. 246-254, claim a moral didacticism for the work. See also Guido A. Guarino, Introduction to Concerning Famous Women, by Giovanni Boccaccio, trans. Guido A. Guarino (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1963), pp. ix-xxxi.

⁴⁰ See also Luke xi. 34-36.

⁴¹ Giovanni Boccaccio, De Casibus Illustrium Virorum, A facsimile reproduction of the Paris edition of 1520, ed. Louis Brewer Hall (Gainesville, Fla.: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1962). All references to this work will be to this edition and will appear as folio numbers in parentheses following each citation. All translations of passages from this work are my own.

⁴² Here Medea is coupled with Procne who slew her son, cooked and fed him to his father. They are both examples of parental cruelty which Boccaccio used together in Il Filocolo III. 35.7, 65.3.

43

Seznec, pp. 220-238. Bergin, pp. 270-272.

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Concerning the connection in Chaucer's mind between reading and writing, see John Livingston Lowes, Geoffrey Chaucer (1934; rpt. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1958), pp. 56-91. Wolfgang H. Clemen, Chaucer's Early Poetry, trans. C.A.M. Sym (1963; rpt. London: Methuen, 1968), pp. 2-22. Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition: A Study in Style and Meaning (1957; rpt. Berkeley: Univ. of Cal. Press, 1964).

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"Man of Law's Prologue," 70-73, in The Canterbury Tales, provides the second reference to Medea's murder of her children. This negative allusion was borrowed by Chaucer from Jean de Meun, Roman de la Rose 13228-13229. George Lyman Kittredge, "Chaucer's Medea and the Date of the Legend of Good Women," *PMLA*, 24 (1909), 343-363.

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Clemen, pp. 37-66. Lowes, pp. 100-102. Muscatine, pp. 101-107. Bernard F. Huppe and D.W. Robertson, Jr., Fruyt and Chaf: Studies in Chaucer's Allegories (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1963). For a discussion which synthesizes the relationship between Chaucer's scholarship, his ars poetica, and his theories of love see Robert O. Payne, The Key of Remembrance: A Study of Chaucer's Poetics (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1963).

49

See for example Ovid, Metamorphoses I. 4, and VII. 424, in which Ovid refers to his own poem as a perpetual song (perpetuum carmen) and Medea's carmina (spells) through which she escapes from Theseus' wrath, and Lowes, pp. 83-86, for more of Chaucer's sources which make the connection between magic and poetry.

50

Interestingly, Kittredge, pp. 357-363, does not cite the Ovide Moralisé one of Chaucer's sources, perhaps because his essay appeared prior to the date of de Boer's third volume which contains the story of Jason and Medea.

51

Lumiansky, p. 561.

52

Clemen, pp. 28-29, 39-44, 59-64. Lowes, Geoffrey Chaucer, pp. 92-132. Payne, pp. 128, 223-231.

53

Chaucer "Legend of Hypsipyle and Medea," 1456-1458, cites Valerius Flaccus, Argonautica I. 100-175, the catalogue of heroes as one of his sources. Kittredge, pp. 563- , asserts that Chaucer used Benoît, Ovid's Metamorphoses and Gower's Confessio Amantis.

54

Chapt. II. pp. 41-78.

55

Payne, pp. 61-90. Lowes, Geoffrey Chaucer, pp. 56-91.

56

Lumiansky, pp. 561-562.

57

Concerning the purpose of the Legend of Good Women see Lowes, Geoffrey Chaucer, pp. 126-132, 158. R.T. Lenaghan, "The Clerk of Venus: Chaucer and Medieval Romance," in The Learned and the Lewed: Studies in Chaucer and Medieval Literature, ed. Larry D. Benson (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1974), pp. 31-44. Edmund Reiss, "Chaucer's Courtly Love," in Benson, pp. 95-112.

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John H. Fisher, John Gower: Moral Philosopher and Friend of Chaucer, (New York: N.Y.U. Press, 1964), pp. x, 221-335.

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For discussions of Gower's concept of honest love see Michael D. Cherniss, "The Allegorical Figures in John Gower's Confessio Amantis," Res Publicam Literarum, 1 (1978), 7-20. Linda Barney Burke, "Women in John Gower's Confessio Amantis," Mediaevalia, 3 (1977), 239-259. Kurt O. Olsson, "Rhetoric, John Gower, and the Late Medieval Exemplum," Mediaevalia et Humanistica n.s., 8 (1977), 185-200. Paul Strohm, "Form and Social Statement in Confessio Amantis and The Canterbury Tales," Studies in the Age of Chaucer, 1 (1979), 17-40.

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It has been surmised that Gower knew Boccaccio's Genealogia Deorum Gentilium; Russell A. Peck, Kingship and Common Profit in Gower's Confessio Amantis (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Ill. Univ. Press, 1978), p. 194, n. 11. The references to the manner in which Medea slays her children in Balade VIII reinforce this connection.

62

Fisher, pp. 83-85.

63

Peck, pp. 178-179.

⁶⁴ Burke, pp. 240-245. Burke discounts Gower's possible use of the Ovide Moralise for his portrait of Medea, p. 258 n. 30, but the evidence seems to support the idea that he did. See Conrad Mainzer, "Gower's use of the 'Medieval Ovid' in the Confessio Amantis," Medium Aevum, 41 (1972), 215-229.

⁶⁵ Fisher, pp. 234-235, indicates that the Confessio was begun after the Troilus had been completed by Chaucer.

⁶⁶ Burke, pp. 243-247. Peck 108-109.

⁶⁷ Peck, pp. 109-115.

⁶⁸ Burke, p. 247. Strohm, pp. 28-30 discusses the political and cosmic necessity for mutuality in love for Gower.

⁶⁹ Ferrante, Woman as Image, pp. 155-156.

⁷⁰ For a discussion of the thematic connections between Troilus and Criseyde and Gower's works in general see Fisher, 221-251, 293-295.

⁷¹ Hollander, pp. 31-40, 83-84. Bergin, pp. 91, 189.

⁷² Peck, pp. 114-115, 161-184. For a general discussion of the ironic position of earthly love in a medieval context see F.J.E. Raby, "Amor and Amicitia: A Medieval Poem" Speculum, 40 (Oct., 1965), 599-610. Reiss, pp. 107-111. Anthony E. Farnham, "The High Prosaic Seriousness: John Gower as Didactic Raconteur," in Benson, pp. 161-174.

Conclusion

The theme of Medea has fascinated audiences from the time of Homer to the present day. However, it received its most profound revaluation in the poems, allegories, and learned mythographies of the Middle Ages. The classical era produced a wide range of Medeas from Hesiod's fairy-tale princess to the enraged criminal of Ovid. It is interesting that among the classical poets, those who chose to tell the story of the quest for the Golden Fleece and the inception of Medea's love for Jason fashioned their tales in the narrative genres of ode and epic. Examples of these are Hesiod, Pindar, and Apollonius among the Greeks, and Valerius Flaccus among the Romans. On the other hand, the poets who focused on the violent ending of Medea's passion for Jason composed dramas. These dramatic versions include plays by Euripides, Ennius, and Seneca. The single exception is Ovid who tells the whole tale in narrative genres, a verse epistle and a modified epic.

In the Middle Ages, all of Medea's more fully realized portraits are narratives. There are no dramas which deal with the Medea theme, perhaps because the medieval drama found topics from sacred Scripture, saints' lives and fabliaux more suitable than stories from classical poets. Another reason for the exclusively narrative presentations of the story of Jason and Medea in the Middle Ages may lie in the fact that

Dares "the Phrygian," Joseph of Exeter, Benoît de Sainte-Maure, Guido delle Colonne, and the poet of the Gest Hystoriale, all claimed to be writing histories for the edification of their audiences. However, this second possible theory is weakened when one remembers that Scripture was also considered "history" during the Middle Ages, and it supplied much of the content of medieval drama. A third possibility may be discovered in the fact that the medieval poets based their portraits of Medea to a large extent upon Ovidian models from the Heroides and Metamorphoses, which are narratives. The question of choice of genres is an intriguing one which merits further examination. However, it is an issue which must be deferred until another time.

A point which may be more cogently discussed at this time is the enduring popularity of the theme of Medea from classical antiquity to the Fourteenth Century. As has been demonstrated, the figure of Medea is inseparable from that of Jason. The story of the Greek hero and his barbarian bride is the chronicle of the marriage bond, the relationship upon which society is believed to be based. In this context, the Pelasgian chieftain and the Colchian maid are perfect complements. He represents masculine beauty, bravery, order, and civilization. Jason leads the best men of his generation, who symbolize all of the essential qualities of civilized life, including Heracles, the monster-slayer and order-bringer, and Orpheus, the poet-musician. Medea, on the other hand, is every man's dream and nightmare. She is genuine beauty and power, and she possesses the dual capacity of bestowing life or death as she wills. She is an archetype of woman: passionate and strange, loyal in affection, relentless in her hatred, ultimately indefinable. She exhibits the feminine qualities which men have always sought to control

and contain in their obsession with order, but, as she demonstrates to Jason's sorrow and chagrin, man's dominance of woman can only be maintained with her consent, and only if man has the good sense to abide by the rules of relationship which he has established.

In Hesiod's Theogony, Medea is woman tamed by the hero with the approval of the gods, and she lives happily ever after with her husband. Pindar's Medea is all wisdom and prudence, whose advice is respected by the heroes who carry her off to Greece. Euripides examines another facet of the theme when his Medea, a faithful wife and loving mother, is betrayed by the man upon whom she must depend for everything and for whom she has done so much. In Euripides' play, Medea's revenge upon Jason does not touch him physically. There are a number of reasons why Medea leaves Jason's person unscathed.

First, Jason's crime is really against the social order; he disrupts the foundations of society when he severs his bonds with Medea and breaks his oath of fidelity. Ironically, Jason perceives his actions to be in accord with social codes of proper behavior. Jason is completely unable to comprehend Medea's response to his decision to set her aside in favor of Glauce. At the end of the play, Jason is left as an example of the kind of unfeeling moral blindness which leads to violent deeds and tragic endings, as the closing lines of the chorus (1416-1419) demonstrate.

Second, Jason's betrayal of Medea is committed in collusion with Creon, the King of Corinth, whose position of authority demands that he enforce the oaths that bind husband and wife. When Creon counsels the forswearing of marriage vows, he merits his death at the hands of the woman he wrongs. To an extent, Creon's death satisfies the indignation aroused by Medea's plight. It is also meant to show Jason the gravity

of his offense against Medea. Jason's ironic inability to understand the meaning of Creon's demise underscores its message for the audience.

In the same vein, Glauce, who as a woman should have been more sympathetic to Medea's situation, can be seen as violating the sanctity of the marriage bond by accepting the traitorous Jason. Glauce, in turn, is a traitor to her sex. She is never mentioned protesting her marriage to Jason, either for her own or her rival's sake. Rather, Glauce is presented by Creon and Jason as being enthusiastic about the match. It is curious that none of the treatments of the theme of Medea which have been examined provide a fully rounded portrait of Glauce (or Creusa, as she is known elsewhere) either in drama or narrative. Glauce's death can be seen as a warning to women to be true to their sex. At the same time it is part of the burden of tragedy which Jason must bear.

Finally, Jason is left untouched at the end of the play so that he might experience the full weight of Medea's revenge in the deaths of his children. Medea's slaughter of her sons in Euripides' drama is an unnatural, horrible yet savagely appropriate act. The boys are the fruit of the bond between Jason and Medea. They are also the seal and ratification of the marriage. Indeed, the boys represent the future both of Jason's house and society in general. When Jason abandons Medea, she realizes that their sons are in the gravest danger. Without Jason to support them, the boys have no valid place in the community. Also, as the emblem of relationship between Jason and Medea, they are the appropriate means of avenging Jason's faithlessness. In killing her sons, Medea commits a radical act of destruction, which Euripides attempts to show is both fitting and necessary, because Jason's betrayal of Medea is just as radical. It is this elemental quality of Euripides' portrayal

of the conflict between Jason and Medea that has fired the imaginations of so many poets and profoundly stirred the emotions of so many audiences through the ages.

Apollonius' portrait of the maiden Medea is complementary to Euripides' mature matron. Apollonius' Argonautica considers the question of how Medea's love for Jason began. Apollonius' Medea is caught by divinity and destiny and endures a hard-fought, but losing struggle against her desire for Jason. In addition, Apollonius demonstrates exactly what Medea did for Jason in Colchis and on the voyage home, and why Jason owes her his life and love. Prompted by her passion, Medea acts to preserve Jason, and his companions, the future heroes of Greece, from harm. Thus Medea's "crime" against her father, Aeetes, assures the future glory of Hellas by saving an entire generation of heroes, whose sons would one day accomplish the sack of Troy. For her generosity, Apollonius has Hera predict that Medea will be wed to Achilles in the Underworld. Thus Apollonius, like Euripides, gives his version of the theme of Medea a social dimension.

The Roman poets and philosophers from Ennius to Valerius Flaccus find the destruction which Medea causes more significant than her fidelity to Jason. Many of them label Medea a criminal. Only Seneca's drama preserves the social content of the Medea theme and portrays the heroine as a titanic avenger. Ovid prefers to focus on the devastating madness to which Medea's passion and enormities eventually lead. As has been demonstrated, Ovid's portrait of Medea was the one from which the Middle Ages borrowed most extensively. At the conclusion of Heroides XII, the audience is given a glimpse of Medea going mad. In Book VII of Metamorphoses, Medea is presented as fully aware of the moral meaning

of the choices she makes. Ovid provides a rather complete sketch of Medea, the witch at work, using her skills to rejuvenate Aeson and the nurses of Bacchus. However, Medea's crimes seem to dominate Ovid's presentation. Her betrayal of Aeetes by helping Jason to win the fleece, the deception of Pelias' daughters into participating in the murder of their father, the carnage at Corinth, and the attempt on Theseus' life all find a place in Ovid's narrative. Ovid indicates that there are two sides to Medea's character: one is life-sustaining, the other destructive. However, an insane rage inspired by her criminal passion for Jason takes complete control of Medea, who leaves the Metamorphoses in a whirlwind summoned by her magic arts.

When, in the Twelfth Century, Benoît de Sainte-Maure composes his portrait of Medea for the Roman de Troie with the help of the Ovidian version, the passion of the character is retained, but the criminality is purged. When he uses the concept of fin' amor to describe the love of Medea for Jason, Benoît completely rehabilitates both the desire and its effects. In Benoît's poem, Medea's love for Jason is ennobling. Medea's powers which are directed by that love are life-sustaining. The love-relationship is not an occasion for criminal activities for Medea, but rather for Jason, whose perjury to Medea is the greatest crime against love. This is an amazing revaluation when one remembers Benoît's source. In the Roman de Troie, Medea does not betray her father when she helps Jason, nor does she have to escape Oëtes' wrath by slaying her brother. Furthermore, Benoît's Medea is self-directed. She is an active participant in the pursuit of love, not a victim of passion. Medea and Jason plight their troth and consummate their relationship even before the winning of the fleece is attempted. Benoît

provides Medea with a number of symbols which represent life and perfection, for example the number five and the magic ring. They serve to reinforce Benoît's presentation of Medea as a positive character. Like Euripides and Apollonius, Benoît uses the story of Jason and Medea to represent the idea of relationship. However, in the medieval poem Medea's desire is portrayed as acceptable and noble, and her love for Jason saves his life. It is Jason whom Benoît blames for betraying Medea's love and perjuring himself. This evaluation of Jason's character will be sustained throughout the Middle Ages.

In the Thirteenth Century, the Medea theme is given a negative presentation, especially in Guido delle Colonne's Historia Destructionis Troiae. The unfavorable evaluation of Medea is all the more remarkable because Guido retains the substance of Benoît's portrait. The same material is provided with an antithetical interpretation. Guido's Medea is a type of willful disobedience to authority and insatiable lust, which, in Guido's opinion, are common feminine traits. In the Historia, Medea's future tragedy is presented as the result of her transgressions against parental authority and her inability to control her sexual urges. Another Thirteenth Century writer, Jean de Meun, draws upon both Ovid and Benoît, or perhaps Guido, for his characterization of Medea. Taken out of context, Jean's portrait might be seen as positive. However, Jean places his version of Medea's story in the mouth of La Vielle, who is an anti-type of fin'amor. La Vielle uses the tale of Jason's abandonment of Medea to try to persuade Bel Accueil that all men are deceivers and deserve to be treated accordingly. La Vielle portrays Jason as the paradigm of masculine treachery. However, the program of revenge to be taken upon men which is counseled by La Vielle includes deceit, infidelity,

promiscuity, and opportunism. Thus, because Jason's betrayal of Medea is being employed to justify female exploitation of love, Jean endows his portrait of Medea with an ironic dimension.

In the Fourteenth Century, versions of the story of Jason and Medea proliferate. As has been seen, Dante places Jason in Hell for seducing Hypsipyle and Medea. The Ovide Moralisé presents quite a complete, objective, and problematical account of Jason and Medea, which is interspersed with allegorical interpretations that figurally connect the classical story to Christian dogma. The Ovide Moralisé favors Medea and condemns Jason upon the criterion of fidelity in relationship. Boccaccio, on the other hand, is Medea's worst critic. His portraits of and references to Medea are consistently negative. For example, in Filocolo, the hero praises Jason for abandoning Medea because of her cruel nature. In the same work, Fiammetta condemns Medea for squandering herself and her skills because of her love for Jason. In the Genealogia Deorum Gentilium and the De Mulieribus Claris, Medea is condemned as a maleficus, a term which literally means "evil doer," but in the Thirteenth Century was used by temporal and ecclesiastical authority to denote "witch." In De Mulieribus Claris, Medea is presented as a paradigm of criminal passion and lustful feminine folly and Jason is viewed as a victim of Medea's unrestrained passion and violence. Boccaccio uses the story of Medea as an exemplum of how sin enters the soul when the eyes are given too much freedom.

When the theme of Medea is treated by Chaucer and Gower, both of whom knew the works of Guido and Boccaccio, an inversion of meaning as stunning as that between Benoît's poem and Guido's history takes place. While both Guido and Boccaccio make their Medeas examples of female sin-

fulness, Chaucer places his Medea among Cupid's saints because of her fidelity to Jason. For the same reason Gower elevates her to the heaven of Pallas-Minerva. Thus Medea becomes sanctified in the Legend of Good Women and the Confessio Amantis for a quality which has always been an integral part of the Medea theme, loyalty to Jason. Loyalty or fidelity has always been considered a cardinal virtue in lovers. In the Legend of Good Women, Chaucer develops the idea of an alternative religion of Love to its logical conclusion. The result is predictable, and, to a certain extent, dull. Chaucer's clever depiction of a heaven of Cupid and a legenda of Love's martyrs did not sustain his interest to completion. Chaucer's portrait of Medea in the Legend may indicate why this was so. It lacks all of the elements of the story which make Medea so fascinating, passionate and powerful. In the Legend of Good Women, Medea is too much a victim, and Chaucer relies too heavily on the memory of his audience to provide the details of the story. Chaucer attempts to be ironic, but his irony leaves too much to the imagination. Chaucer's Jason is an exemplary lecher, and his Medea is a mere prey of his lust.

Gower, on the other hand, displaying great erudition, uses a number of classical and medieval sources to construct his portrait of Medea. Gower leaves out of his account only the murder of Apsyrtus and the slaughter of Pelias, crimes for which it would be difficult for Medea to mount a defense. Furthermore, Gower has his Jason fall in love with Medea even before he is aware of how she can help him. Gower depicts a mutuality in the love of Jason and Medea which is unknown in any of the versions which precede, or are contemporary, with his. Jason's desire for Medea is as strong as hers for him in the Confessio Amantis.

This mutuality in passion makes Jason's decision to abandon Medea all the more culpable. In Gower's version, Jason is not constrained to love Medea by fear or fate. His oath of fidelity is freely given. Therefore Jason has no defense in breaking it. Thus Gower creates a Medea who is totally justified in her revenge. Because Jason arbitrarily severs the bond between them, he merits the full force of divine retribution which is administered through Medea's anger. Medea is rescued by Minerva from any retaliation by Jason and placed in heaven, where she bewails Jason's faithlessness, not the evils of love. Thus neither love nor Medea are suspect in Gower's Confessio Amantis. It is only when lovers do not abide by their oaths that misfortune occurs. In this Gower is very close in attitude to Euripides, who seems to be conveying the same warning. When a man wins a woman's heart, and binds himself to her with vows which declare his passion for her, then he must be faithful, or suffer the consequences.

This warning is the essential element of the Medea theme which has puzzled, frightened and stimulated so many generations of audiences. Medea represents the tragic possibilities which are realized when men disrupt the rules which they lay down for themselves in their relationships with women. Medea is beautiful, exotic, desirable, and unfathomable. She represents the ideal of woman in all of its facets and self-contradictions. Like Medea, all women have the power to bestow life, or take it away. Women may tempt men to love them, and desire to be in control, but men have been able to construct an elaborate system of societal norms which keep women in check and men in power. The story of Jason and Medea in all of its variations from Hesiod to Gower demonstrates that as long as men are true to their vows, and maintain the

codes of relationship with women which have been devised for the benefit of society, all will be well. However, if any man, like Jason, betrays his oath and disrupts the social order which men have created, then he runs the risk of unleashing a destructive fury of vengeance similar to Medea's in the heart of the woman he abuses. As the theme of Medea has shown from Euripides' drama to Gower's narrative, women are capable of exacting an appropriately dire revenge for any harm they may suffer because of the infidelity of the men they love.

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