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# All-Female Family Bonds in Latin Epic

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2012

ALL-FEMALE FAMILY BONDS IN LATIN EPIC  
NIKOLETTA MANIOTI

Material abstract

This thesis deals with the representation of all-female family bonds in Virgil's *Aeneid*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* and Statius' *Thebaid*. The themes of sisterly unanimity, love and marriage, loss and mourning, and storytelling, provide the framework within which I investigate the literary models in epic, tragedy and other genres, of each episode featuring all-female interaction. Furthermore, I demonstrate how the Roman ideal of unanimity is combined with the Apollonian representation of Medea and Chalciope in the portrayal of Dido and Anna in Virgil, which then provides the basis for four often more extreme pairs of *unanimae sorores* in Latin epic. The final one in the series, consisting of the sisters-in-law Argia and Antigone, attests to a very Roman view about the power of adoptive relationships. In the same vein, the stories of Amata and Lavinia, and Ceres and Proserpina, are constructed around the Roman mother's expectations of her role in her daughter's marriage, while love stories including sisterly interference characterised by envy can be compared to specific examples of legendary Roman women. Roman mourning practices are present in all instances of heroines losing a mother, daughter or sister, and a specific analogy to the lament for Marcellus is identified in the Ovidian myth of Clymene and the Heliades. The suicide of Ismene after Jocasta's similar death, on the other hand, corresponds to the idea of a Roman daughter following the example set by her mother taken to its limits. Finally, sister storytellers behave similarly to Roman matrons while the stories they tell are once again influenced by the interaction of Ovid's contemporary women. Overall, I show how these epics can indirectly offer an insight into the lives of Roman women by modelling their mythical heroines both on literary tradition and on contemporary Roman ideals and practices.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Statement of Copyright .....	2
Acknowledgements .....	2
Dedication .....	2
Introduction.....	3
Chapter One – <i>unanimae sorores</i> .....	27
Chapter Two – Love and Marriage .....	119
Chapter Three – Loss and Mourning .....	209
Chapter Four – Storytellers .....	259
Conclusion .....	299
Note on editions.....	311
Bibliography.....	312

## **Statement of Copyright**

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In more personal terms, I would like to thank my parents for their love and support, and Keith Paton for his belief in me and his help in proofreading the final version of my work.

## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Donald Murray, who left us too soon.

## Introduction

*ue]rius hunc titulum matri tu, nata, dicasses,  
quam mater miserae nunc tibi, nata, facit.  
bis senos completam annos te, filia, matri  
eripuit miserae mortis in[i]qua dies.  
optestor manes meritaē sanctaeque patronae et  
comprecor, ut leni terra tegat tumulo.  
CIL VI 30110*

This rare example of poetic funerary inscription dedicated by a Roman mother to her twelve-year-old daughter immortalises female grief for a relative of the same sex, even though the text of the epitaph could have been composed by a man and it was probably a man who chiselled it on the marble tombstone. This male mediation applies to the majority of our knowledge of ancient women, as only rarely can one come across women authors who talk to and about women. Even then few instances are considered genuine,<sup>1</sup> while others have been interpreted as a male literary game.<sup>2</sup> Male authors, on the other hand, appear to be parsimonious in yielding information. Nevertheless, research in the fields of history, anthropology, sociology and gender studies has analysed ancient women's attitudes and beliefs, and explained their position in family and society based on their representations in historic, rhetorical and epigraphic sources.<sup>3</sup> Feminist

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<sup>1</sup> Sappho is one such example, addressing her beloved female friends in her poems, and talking about her love for her daughter (e.g. *ἔστι μοι κάλα παῖς χρυσίοισιν ἀνθέμοισιν / ἐμφέρηγν ἔχουσα μόρφαν Κλέϊς ἀγαπάτα, / ἀντὶ τᾶς ἔγωϋδὲ Λυδίαν παῖσαν οὐδ' ἐράνναν*, fr. 239 Page). For Roman examples, one has to wait until the Vindolanda letters of Sulpicia Severa dating around the 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, which I discuss in Chapter One with reference to Dido and Anna.

<sup>2</sup> Thus Hinds (1987b), who finds confirmation in the first line of [Tib.] 3.8 of the literary game that the 'friend of Sulpicia', to whom five extensive poems of the *Corpus Tibullianum* ([Tib.] 3.8-12) are sometimes attributed, engages in. The scholar also discusses some "worrying" (p. 46) indications of possible male authorship in the six shorter poems that pose as written by the poetess herself ([Tib.] 3.13-18).

<sup>3</sup> Of particular importance, especially for the purposes of this thesis, are the works of Pomeroy (1975), Hallett (1984), Rawson (1986), Cantarella (1987), Dixon (1988), Treggiari (1991) and Dixon

discourse in particular has contributed largely to broadening the scope of studying ancient women, introducing new perspectives, interrogating male biases in classical research and offering a new way to approach the ancient world that recognises gender limitations imposed by culture upon both men and women.<sup>4</sup> Both feminist and non-feminist studies, however, have been relatively unwilling to turn to poetry for information regarding Roman women, because of its predominantly fictional character and its constraint by genre limitations.<sup>5</sup> With this thesis I will show that it is possible to look to poetic texts in order to understand how Roman women were perceived by their male counterparts, not only in genres closely linked to Roman reality such as comedy and elegy, but also those strictly bound by the rules of literary tradition, such as epic.<sup>6</sup>

Due to their importance from Homer onwards, family ties have dominated studies of both Greek and Latin epic, but the focus of scholarship falls largely on either all-male bonds<sup>7</sup> or relationships between men and women. My purpose is to discuss all-female family bonds in Latin epic, a field that is both easily delineated due to its rarity of examples, and important for the study of such a male-focused genre which started life with the explicit intention to celebrate *κλέα ἀνδρῶν*.<sup>8</sup> The

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(1992). An overview of recent feminist scholarship on ancient women is given in McManus (1997) 49-90. The results of over forty years of research contributed to a number of books which offer both general and specific portraits of Roman women, such as Kleiner and Matheson (1996) and (2000), Frascetti (2001), D'Ambra (2007).

<sup>4</sup> McManus (1997) 59.

<sup>5</sup> For example, Hallett (1984) does occasionally resort to poetic texts, but she focuses on material which is very much placed in a Roman context; she points out, for instance, Iliia's affection for her half-sister in Ennius, or the intimacy of sisters in Plautus' *Stichus*, but is reluctant to see Dido and Anna's representation in a similar way, because they are Carthaginian (p. 181).

<sup>6</sup> In addition to that, as McManus (1997) 91-92 observes, studying gender in the *Aeneid* is challenging due to its long-standing association with male norms as well as its presence in the school curriculum, up until recently only available to men of the elite, since Roman times.

<sup>7</sup> For Latin epic one such example is Lee (1979).

<sup>8</sup> Keith (2000) discusses women in Latin epic but rarely in terms of their family bonds to each other.

limited number of occasions when women interact with their female relatives in Latin epic makes this a natural subject for intertextual study. In the corpus comprising of Virgil's *Aeneid*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* and Statius' *Thebaid*, the mother-daughter bond is only represented by three pairs (Amata and Lavinia; Ceres and Proserpina; Hecuba and Polyxena) and two groups (Clymene and Heliades; Jocasta, Antigone and Ismene). The relationship between sisters receives marginally more attention, with six pairs (Dido and Anna; Aglauros and Herse; Procne and Philomela; Medea and Chalcioppe; Argia and Deipyle; Antigone and Ismene) and three groups (the daughters of Minyas, the Muses, the daughters of Pierus). Finally, there are two variations, namely, the aunt-niece pair Circe and Medea in the *Argonautica*, and the sisters-in-law Argia and Antigone in the *Thebaid*.

In examining the passages featuring these women I will look at the impact of Greek epic and tragedy on their representation, and highlight the function of their ties within each epic. My conclusion will suggest that stories dealing with all-female family bonds offer new ways of reading the epics, creating connections between parts that are otherwise unrelated and balance the treatment of all-male and mixed-gender family ties. At the same time, I will identify aspects in the characterisation of these heroines that bear resemblances to Roman attitudes and beliefs known to us from other literary and epigraphic sources.<sup>9</sup> I will show how each epic poet incorporates elements of the Roman mother-daughter and sisterly bond in the depiction of his heroines, an attitude which is doubly paradoxical. Not

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<sup>9</sup> Information about all-female Roman family bonds from non-poetic sources has been analysed in many works on Roman women. Hallett (1984) 180-189, 259-262, Dixon (1988) and (1992) were particularly useful in my comparative discussion.



only are predominantly Greek mythical figures invested with real Roman characteristics, but the male poet goes out of his way to represent their feelings, attitudes and expectations, even though he himself had no personal experience, for instance, of how a mother would feel about her daughter's marriage or what a sister would confide in her female sibling.

### **Female family bonds in epic and tragedy**

Greek literature provides precedents for the composition of the *Aeneid*, the *Metamorphoses*, the *Argonautica* and the *Thebaid*, as well as for the representation of family ties, whether all-male, all-female or mixed-gender. Greek epic, in particular Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and Apollonius' *Argonautica*, forms the basis for Virgil and his successors and provides models for all types of relationships. Greek tragedy, where the family's centre-stage position is more than a metaphor, adds further influential examples, and together with Greek epic it will be the focus of my intertextual analysis in the main part of the thesis. Augustan and Imperial epic poetry also depends on lesser Greek genres, such as epyllia, epigrams, paradoxographic accounts, lyric and comedy, all of which included to a certain extent descriptions of family ties. Despite their current fragmentary state, the early Latin epics of Naevius and Ennius were important precedents for the poets in question, and their contribution to the representation of all-female family bonds will be discussed with reference to Virgil's Dido and Anna. Finally, where applicable, parallels will be drawn with Latin tragedy, comedy and elegy.

The family in all its manifestations is central to Homeric epic in terms of plot as well as narrative technique. From the dissolution of a marriage as the reason for

the Trojan War, to traditional epithets and formulaic descriptions tracing the origins of the heroes, family ties, both inherited and acquired, govern the world of men and that of gods in equal measure. The very first line of the poem defines the protagonist of the *Iliad* as the son of Peleus (μῆνιν ... Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος, *Il.* 1.1); Apollo is first introduced in the narrative through the names of his mother and father (Ἀθηνοῦς καὶ Διὸς υἱός, *Il.* 1.9). The same stress on family ties and lineage is found in descriptions of female figures, both mortal and immortal: Athene is addressed by Hera as αἰγιόχοιο Διὸς τέκος (*Il.* 2.157), while Laodice, whose appearance Iris assumes to fetch Helen to the walls, is defined through her relationship to Helen, as well as to her own husband and father (γαλόω, Ἀντηγορίδαο δάμαρτι, / τὴν Ἀντηγορίδης εἶχε κρείων Ἐλικάων, / Λαοδίκην, Πριάμοιο θυγατρῶν εἶδος ἀρίστην, *Il.* 3.122-124). Furthermore, life within Troy is arranged around the family: Priam's fifty sons and twelve daughters with their respective families live in the palace of the king (*Il.* 6.242-250),<sup>10</sup> while the homes of Hector and Paris are separate but at a short distance (*Il.* 6.313-317), allowing for the women to spend time together while the men fight the Achaeans; when Hector goes to find Andromache in *Iliad* 6, he asks her maids whether she has gone to visit any of her sisters-in-law (*Il.* 6.376-378). Similarly, family plays a major role in the narrative of the *Odyssey*, with the drama of *nostos* reaching its climax within Odysseus' household through the successive recognitions by his son, wife and father.

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<sup>10</sup> According to Woronoff (1983) 39, Laodice probably does not live in the palace, given the bad relationship between her family and that of her husband's; that would explain why she is so close to Helen, who is also seen inimically by the family of Priam, albeit for different reasons.

Most Homeric references to family define women through their bonds to men; all-female bonds are under-represented but nevertheless already present in the poems that Virgil and his successors pit themselves against. A glimpse at a mother-daughter relationship is given at *Il.* 5.370-417, when Aphrodite, wounded by Diomedes in battle, seeks refuge in her mother Dione's embrace.<sup>11</sup> Another, much briefer view is offered by the scene where Phaeacian Arete helps Nausicaa get ready for her washing trip (*Od.* 6.76-80).<sup>12</sup> Whereas the relationship between brothers (e.g. Agamemnon and Menelaus) and that of father-son (e.g. Odysseus and Telemachus) is emphasized throughout the two epics, the bond a mother has with her daughter, or that between sisters, do not receive extensive treatment, at least not in the case of major female characters such as Helen, Andromache or Penelope. In the case of Helen, of course, the situation she finds herself in makes such descriptions impossible in the *Iliad*, since her daughter is back in Argos. She does, however, describe herself abandoning "her beloved daughter" (παῖδα ... τηλυγέτην, *Il.* 3.175) in the same terms as leaving Menelaus (a deed deserving death, *Il.* 3.173-175; ἄτη, *Od.* 4.261-263). Andromache for her part can only lament the loss of her mother, who died (out of grief?) after Achilles killed her father and all her brothers (*Il.* 6.414-428). Finally, nothing is said of Penelope's mother,<sup>13</sup> but she has a sister, Iphthime, married in Pherae. It is this sister's form that Athena

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<sup>11</sup> A much briefer glimpse at the same bond is given in a simile (*Il.* 16.7-11) which, according to Gaca's re-interpretation (2008), depicts a mother slowing down in her flight from her pursuers in order to pick up her daughter who cannot keep up with her.

<sup>12</sup> Their relationship is one of two examples that Foley (2009) 109 provides for the marginalisation of the mother-daughter bond in ancient epic; the other is Amata and Lavinia, which will be shown in this thesis to hold a much more prominent position in Virgil's poem than the scholar allows.

<sup>13</sup> According to Apollodorus, her name was Periboia and she was a nymph (*Bibl.* 3.10.6); Apollodorus does not mention Iphthime.

chooses to assume when she appears to Penelope in a dream in order to reassure her of Telemachus' return (*Od.* 4.795-841).

Troy, however, provides examples of other all-female relationships, such as that between sisters-in-law, as in the scenes between Laodice and Helen, and Hector and Andromache's maids cited above. For Helen, being a sister-in-law is not always easy and painless, as she complains obliquely in her lament of Hector: only he and his father were warm to her, and only he defended her whenever his mother, brothers, sisters and sisters-in-law spoke ill of her (*Il.* 24.768-772).<sup>14</sup> Another such relationship is that between a nurse and her nursling; while it is not as direct as the bond between sisters or between mother and daughter, it often substitutes the latter, just as sisters-in-law may substitute actual sisters. Thus, in the *Odyssey* Penelope often asks advice from and shares her thoughts with her nurse and housekeeper Eurynome (*Od.* 17.495-504; 18.163-186), as well as, to a lesser extent, Odysseus' nurse Eurycleia, whom she addresses with the same kinship term, *μαῖα* (*Od.* 23.1-84).

The most extensive treatment of a mother-daughter bond in archaic Greek literature is found not in Homeric epic but in a work attributed since antiquity to the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, namely, the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*.<sup>15</sup> Themes roughly sketched in the epics, such as maternal and filial affection, return much reinforced in this context, where the loss of a beloved relative and its consequences are also explored. The female protagonists are still largely defined by their relationships to men, with Demeter being Zeus' "wife" and Persephone his

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<sup>14</sup> Woronoff (1983) 39.

<sup>15</sup> Foley (1994) discusses at length the central role of the mother-daughter relationship in the Hymn.

daughter, as well as niece of her new “husband” Hades. There is, however, a very obvious emphasis on emotions and attitudes characterising all-female interaction, such as the sharp pain of separation (*Hymn Dem.* 40) and the mutual joy at their reunion (*Hymn Dem.* 385-389). Some female familial feelings have also been registered by Hesiod, who describes the Muses as sisters “of one mind” (*Theog.* 60), as well as “a forgetting of ills and a rest from sorrow” for their mother Mnemosyne (*Theog.* 55).<sup>16</sup>

Finally, Apollonius’ representation of all-female family ties centers on Medea’s relationship to her sister Chalciope in Book 3 of his *Argonautica*. Their sisterly bond, which extensively influences Latin epic heroines such as Dido and Anna, is characterised by intimacy and affection: they live in the same palace (AR 3.247-248) and spend time in one another’s company when Medea is not serving at the temple of Hecate (AR 3.248-252); Chalciope even breastfed Medea and brought her up alongside her own sons (AR 3.732-735). Both sisters, however, manipulate their bond for their own purposes. Thus Chalciope asks Medea to help Jason in his trials for the sake of her own sons, and her sister pretends to care for them only when she agrees to do so, even though her real motive is her passion for the hero (AR 3.609-743).

Medea’s relationship to her mother Eidyia, on the other hand, is only hinted at, with a poignant lack of any interaction between them in the course of the narrative. As Medea tells her sister, it is through conversation with her mother that she knows about Chalciope’s role in her raising, but that exchange happens at some

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<sup>16</sup> This phrase, however, may also refer to mortal men, from whom the gift of the Muses, that is, song, removes all sorrow and distress, as is further explained at lines 98-103. There might have been some opportunity to explore female bonds in the *Catalogue of Women*, but there is nothing in the fragments to confirm such a hypothesis.

undefined point in the past (*ὡς αἰὲν ἐγὼ ποτε μητρὸς ἄκουον*, AR 3.735). The end of Medea's meeting with Jason is signalled as that time of day when she should be returning to her mother (AR 3.1138-1139), but it is Chalciope and not Eidyia who comes to greet her when she is back (AR 3.1155-1156). Finally, when Medea escapes with Jason, she leaves behind a lock of hair as a memorial for her mother and bids her farewell (AR 4.27-33), but once again Eidyia is not present, nor are her feelings for her daughter ever revealed.

Greek tragedy, on the other hand, offers a number of examples of female-only family bonds, which work as models for subsequent treatments in Latin epic. Most tragedies use the same myths as those explored by the Homeric epics (Trojan cycle), or were at least known to their author, such as the Argonautic saga and the Theban cycle. Unlike the Homeric poems, however, the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides have more opportunities to treat familial bonds thanks to their shorter length and scope, and their focus on a single event in a family's history. An example of the tragedians' representation of such relationships is the treatment of the events concerning Agamemnon's family in Mycenae. Love for a daughter and pain at her loss is given as a valid reason for murder: this is the case of Clytemnestra in Aeschylus, who describes Iphigenia as her "most beloved pain of labour" (*Ag.* 1415-1418), "the shoot she raised, the much-wept Iphigenia" (*Ag.* 1525-1526). The same character can have the opposite feelings for her other daughter, Electra, who is reduced to a slave in her own home after the murder of Agamemnon (*Choeph.* 132-135). This time, however, the feelings are mutual: Electra herself plainly declares that she hates her mother (*Choeph.* 241).

A similar portrait of the two women is painted by Sophocles, who also describes Electra as being reduced to a slave (*El.* 189-192) and hating her mother (*El.* 261-262). She does not even want to call 'mother' (*El.* 273-274) the woman who shouts abuse at her daughter whether she laments her dead father or threatens his murderer with Orestes' return (*El.* 285-298). Euripides' version of the myth follows along the same lines: in *Electra* the protagonist is filthy and dressed in rags (*El.* 184-185), leading a humble life married to a poor peasant, after being driven away from her home by her mother who considers her "secondary" to her children from Aegisthus (*El.* 60-63). She hates Clytemnestra so much that she would be happy to die once she had killed her (*El.* 281); she finally tricks her into the house where Orestes is waiting and she holds the knife as he kills their mother (*El.* 1224-1225). As for Clytemnestra's love for her other daughter, it is manifest in her reaction to the news of Iphigenia's imminent sacrifice (*IA* 886-888), as well as in her vain attempts to save her, first asking Achilles for help (*IA* 896-1035) and then confronting Agamemnon (*IA* 1106-1208).

Sophocles seems more interested than Aeschylus in the psychological analysis of his protagonists, as is clear from his creation of contrasting sister pairs: Electra is confronted by Chrysothemis in the cited play, in much the same way as Antigone in the homonymous tragedy is by Ismene.<sup>17</sup> Another example of sisters, this time exemplifying solidarity and common interests, was probably Procne and Philomela in the poet's fragmentary *Tereus*. Euripides for his part explores even more familial ties, from mothers and daughters (Hecabe and Polyxena in the *Troades*), to sisters-in-law (Andromache and Helen in *Andromache*), to nurses and

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<sup>17</sup> Antigone and Ismene reappear in Sophocles' posthumously staged play *Oedipus at Colonus*, where they complement rather than contrast each other.

nurslings (Phaedra and her nurse in *Hippolytus*). Titles of lost plays also point to an interest in such bonds concerning other mythological figures, or in alternative versions to the ones by other tragedians (e.g. Aeschylus' *Heliades* about the sisters of Phaethon, Sophocles' *Polyxene* and Euripides' *Antigone*), many of which influenced the representations of the same myths by Roman epic poets.

### Family bonds from Virgil to Statius

Family ties in the Virgilian *oeuvre* follow the general pattern that sees a theme gradually develop in the course of his three works, matching Virgil's "steady ascent in poetic ambition".<sup>18</sup> Their treatment is very limited in the *Eclogues*,<sup>19</sup> where Virgil offers a fleeting image of a mother and daughter as they are gathering apples in a garden;<sup>20</sup> similarly, there is a hint at Menalcas' fear of his father and stepmother, who might punish him if he loses any of his flock.<sup>21</sup> In the *Georgics* the word *mater* is often used to refer to plants and their propagation in Book 2,<sup>22</sup> and to cattle in Book 3;<sup>23</sup> this use does not apply to the word *pater*, which rarely appears in the poem's didactic part, and then it usually refers to Jupiter.<sup>24</sup> As expected in an epic or quasi-epic context, the word is used in the *epyllion* of Aristaeus referring to Apollo, the hero's father, and to Oceanus as the universal

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<sup>18</sup> Tarrant (1997) 58.

<sup>19</sup> Mentions of family bonds in the *Eclogues* are almost non-existent, not least because of the poems' strict focus on shepherds and their setting in remote pastures, unlike some of Theocritus' *Idylls* which are set in the city and include a wider variety of characters.

<sup>20</sup> *saepibus in nostris paruum te roscida mala / (dux ego uester eram) uidi cum matre legentem, Ecl. 8.37-38.*

<sup>21</sup> *est mihi namque domi pater, est iniusta nouerca, / bisque die numerant ambo pecus, alter et haedos, Ecl. 3.33-34.*

<sup>22</sup> E.g. G. 2.19 of laurels; G. 2.23, 2.55 of plants in general; G. 2.268 of vines.

<sup>23</sup> E.g. G. 3.187 of cows.

<sup>24</sup> E.g. G. 1.121, 1.283.



father of all Nymphs.<sup>25</sup> The maternal figure of Cyrene plays a crucial role here, as the poet explores at length the mother-son relationship; similarly, her sisters receive a relatively lengthy treatment in the description of their underwater palace (G. 4.334-385), which will become an important intertext for Ovid's storytellers in the *Metamorphoses*.

One of the ways to read the *Aeneid* is as a quest in search of a new family.<sup>26</sup> Aeneas, following the advice of his mortal father not only while alive but also after his death, and protected by his divine mother, needs to replace the wife he lost in Troy and find a substitute mother for his surviving son Ascanius. The gods direct him towards Latium, where he unknowingly breaks apart another family: Latinus offers his daughter Lavinia to Aeneas according to the will of the gods, which causes not only the war in Latium but also the death of her mother Amata as well as her cousin Turnus to whom she was originally promised. At the same time, as is expected in epic, family ties of all types are frequently used in the narrative with their function ranging from mere identification of a hero as his father's son, to characterisation (most importantly, Aeneas' filial devotion to Anchises), to activation of particular feelings and reactions (such as Venus' interventions in favour of her son, or Juturna's support to her brother Turnus).

Two female family ties are particularly showcased in the *Aeneid*: the sisterly bond and the mother-daughter bond. They both concern mortal women, as the goddesses in this epic are neither defined nor characterised by their family

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<sup>25</sup> (*si modo ... pater est Thymbraeus Apollo*), G. 4.323; *Oceanumque patrem rerum*, G. 4.382.

<sup>26</sup> As Oliensis (1997) 309 puts it, "Virgil's foundational epic focuses on familial reproduction".

relationships to other female deities, as they are to male ones.<sup>27</sup> Juno is Saturn's daughter (*Saturnia*, *Aen.* 1.23) and Jupiter's sister and wife (*Iouisque / et soror et coniunx*, *Aen.* 1.46-47), when she is not referred to by her own name in the text. Likewise, Venus is present in her own right as well as designated by her filial and maternal roles (daughter of Jupiter: *natae*, *Aen.* 1.256; mother of Aeneas: *mater*, *Aen.* 1.314). Their relationship to male characters therefore is frequently brought to the foreground, but nothing is said, for instance, of their bond to each other, which would be that between step-mother and step-daughter, even though there is no lack of opportunities.<sup>28</sup> By contrast, the sisters Dido and Anna in book 4, and the mother-daughter pair Amata and Lavinia in books 7, 11 and 12, are described in terms of family bonds not so much to men as to one another, and this is why they form part of my discussion in the present thesis.

Unlike Virgil, Ovid's non-epic works abound in descriptions of female family relationships. While kinship terms are used throughout to merely indicate a family tie,<sup>29</sup> a number of passages describe in detail how women related by blood treat each other, whether belonging to a Roman context or to the realm of myth and legend. Where Roman women are discussed, a mother is expected to send letters to her daughter (*Am.* 2.2.19); she is also the one to know when her daughter is ripe for marriage and to prepare her for the big day by combing her hair (*F.* 2.559-560). If the daughter has an affair, then her mother, but also her sister and nurse, would

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<sup>27</sup> Or, indeed, as is the case in the *Iliad*: Aphrodite is referred to not only by name, but also as the daughter of Zeus (*Διὸς θυγάτηρ*, *Il.* 5.131), the mother of Aeneas (*μητήρ*, *Il.* 5.313) and the daughter of Dione (*θυγατέρα*, *Il.* 5.371).

<sup>28</sup> E.g. when Juno and Venus plan Dido's infatuation with Aeneas at *Aen.* 4.90-128. Venus, however, disguised as a huntress asks Aeneas and his companions if they have seen her sisters (*Aen.* 1.321-324), and the image she conjures of a sisterhood of huntresses roaming the woods together does not seem to be unknown to the Trojans, as Aeneas' prompt answer (*Aen.* 1.326) suggests.

<sup>29</sup> E.g. *cui mater filia Phoebi* for Ariadne's mother, Pasiphae, at *Her.* 9.93; *filia Leda* for Helen at *Her.* 16.85; *soror* for Philomela at *F.* 2.629.

be interested in, as well as extract profit from it (*Am.* 1.8.91; *Rem.* 637). As far as legendary figures are concerned, a Sabine girl in distress is described calling out for her mother (*AA* 1.123), while Sappho's greatest concern is said to be her daughter's welfare (*Her.* 15.70), and her grief in the event of the latter's death is perceived to be inconsolable (*Her.* 15.120).

Such a reaction to loss also characterises Ovidian mythical figures, most extensively explored in the story of Ceres and Proserpina (*F.* 4.455-616).<sup>30</sup> Other narratives treat the affection and intimacy between sisters, such as Medea and Chalciope,<sup>31</sup> and solidarity, exemplified by Juturna's sister, Lara, and Anna's sister, Dido.<sup>32</sup> Even a divine daughter such as Hebe should obey her mother (*Her.* 6.67-68), while their mutual affection finds expression in sweet words, embraces, caresses and kisses, which Hermione laments the lack of (*Her.* 8.89-96) and Paris envies (*Her.* 16.255-256).<sup>33</sup> Finally, the heroines in their letters are concerned with funeral duties of mothers and sisters, with saying goodbye to their families, and with imitation of their mother's or sister's behaviour.<sup>34</sup> These themes are recurrent in the *Metamorphoses*, where passing mentions of such bonds in the poet's other works here become stories in their own right.

The lack of a theogony at the beginning of the *Metamorphoses* provides limited opportunity for the exploration of divine family bonds. If we take Book 1, for example, it is clear that in the world of demigods and men, all-male and mixed-

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<sup>30</sup> Also, loss of sisters: *Her.* 14.117-118. Loss of daughter: *Her.* 19.123-124. Reaction of her mother and daughter to Helen's abduction: *Her.* 8.77-80.

<sup>31</sup> Intimacy: *Her.* 12.64-68. Affection: *F.* 3.632 (referring to Lavinia's imaginary sister).

<sup>32</sup> *F.* 2.585-616 and 3.639-641 respectively.

<sup>33</sup> Cydippe also describes her mother's care in preparing her to attend a sacrifice at *Her.* 21.88-90.

<sup>34</sup> *Her.* 9.121-122 (mother's funeral duties); *Her.* 7.205-206 (sister's funeral duties); *Her.* 9.167 (Deianira saying goodbye to her sister before dying); *F.* 3.559-566 (Anna saying goodbye to her dead sister); *Her.* 17.43-48 (Helen rejecting Leda's model); *Her.* 14.57 (Hypermnestra contemplating of imitating her sisters).

gender family ties are prevalent, while the reader has to wait until the end of the book to find a mention of an all-female bond. The very first use of a kinship term comes when the divine creator assigns the winds their respective abodes in order not to tear the world apart with their quarrels (*tanta est discordia fratrum*, *Met.* 1.60), while the horrors of the iron generation are vividly depicted in terms of family relations gone wrong (*Met.* 1.144-148). Jupiter is referred to as *pater*,<sup>35</sup> and three extensive stories deal with husband-wife and father-daughter pairs. Deucalion's speech is a display of conjugal affection for Pyrrha and fidelity to the death.<sup>36</sup> A similarly affectionate relationship characterises Peneus and Daphne, with the father both granting his daughter her request for virginity and helping her escape Apollo. Finally, Inachus' despair for the loss of his daughter Io and his search for her all over the world resemble<sup>37</sup> and perhaps foreshadow Ceres' efforts which will feature four books later.

The end of Io's story brings about the beginning of Phaethon's, which is the first in the poem to introduce not one but two all-female family bonds, that between sisters, the Heliades, and that between the latter and their mother, Clymene. Ovid's epic also offers two extensive treatments of the mother-daughter bond in the stories of Ceres and Proserpina in Book 5, and Hecuba and Polyxena in Book 13. While there are frequent mentions of sets of sisters who play some small part in one myth or another (e.g. the daughters of Pelias in Book 7; the sisters of Meleager in Book 8), this thesis will focus on stories where such female figures are the actual protagonists. Two pairs of Athenian sisters, Aglauros and Herse in Book

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<sup>35</sup> *pater omnipotens* (*Met.* 1.154); *pater ... Saturnius* (*Met.* 1.163).

<sup>36</sup> *Met.* 1.350-353, 1.358-362; Deucalion and Pyrrha are also cousins.

<sup>37</sup> Fantham (2004-2005) 116.

2, and Procne and Philomela in Book 6, will be shown to share more than merely their place of origin, while the daughters of Minyas in Book 4 will be compared and contrasted to the Muses and the daughters of Pierus in Book 5.

The only surviving work by Valerius Flaccus is his epic on the Argonautic saga, in which family bonds are much more pronounced than in Apollonius' Hellenistic poem of the same title. Thus Jason's parents and their relationship to him, his brother and to Pelias, who is Aeson's brother, feature largely in Book 1; likewise, the house of Aeetes receives extensive treatment in the second half of the poem. As far as female bonds are concerned, while examples of the mother-daughter bond are very scarce, relationships between sisters are predominant in the two locations that the Argonauts stay for longer, namely, Lemnos and Colchis. The Lemnian women form a sisterhood of madness incited by the goddess of love, who sends her agent in the guise of one's sister, before appearing herself first disguised as a Lemnian woman, and then as one of the Stygian sisters, a Fury (*Arg.* 2). She later coordinates a double divine intervention, where she first helps Juno assume the form of Medea's sister Chalciope (*Arg.* 6) before resorting to the same device herself, disguised as the heroine's aunt Circe (*Arg.* 7). In my discussion of the two scenes I will show how both goddesses take the form of a sister figure in order to achieve the same effect that Apollonius' real Chalciope had on Medea, namely, accentuate her passion for Jason and thus ensure the success of his mission.

Statius' *Thebaid* is also concerned with family bonds due to its theme of fraternal strife, and both Argos and Thebes prove to be fertile ground for the poet's treatment of blood relationships as well as bonds acquired through marriage. While the plot focuses on the enmity between Eteocles and Polynices, and on the sides

that all other members of the two families have to take, there is also room for the discussion of all-female bonds. While the mother-daughter bond is restricted to one of potentially four pairs (Jocasta-Ismene), both sets of sisters are described, the Argive Argia and Deipyle in the first two books, followed by the Theban Antigone and Ismene in Books 7, 8 and 11. Finally, in Book 12 the sisters-in-law Argia and Antigone form a third pair, taking a bond that is relatively rare in epic to its extremes.

Statius does not make much of the opportunity to explore the bond further in the *Achilleid*, where Deidamia and her sisters spend much time together: they live in the same quarters in the palace (*Ach.* 1.750-751); they perform dances in honour of their father's guests (*Ach.* 1.821ff.); they are allowed outdoors in order to participate in Minerva's festival (*Ach.* 1.285ff.) and engage in Bacchic rites (*Ach.* 1.593ff.). There is, however, almost no interaction between them:<sup>38</sup> the only feeling Deidamia expresses for her sisters is her fear that they might know of her affair with Achilles (*Ach.* 1.562-563),<sup>39</sup> but the poet does not go into greater detail. Instead, he stresses the mother-son relationship between Thetis and Achilles. Likewise in the *Silvae* the poet only occasionally and briefly refers to female family bonds: Philomela is mentioned twice as Procne's sister;<sup>40</sup> the role of the mother in her daughter's upbringing is hinted at in *Silu.* 3.3.119-120; the love and affection between Statius' wife and her daughter (from her earlier marriage) is praised

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<sup>38</sup> A hint at their unanimity in terms of feelings might be seen in the description of the sisters weeping next to Deidamia as she stands on the walls watching Achilles depart for Troy (*Ach.* 2.23); it is not clear, however, whether each of them cries to express their solidarity to her sister or because she will miss her companion.

<sup>39</sup> It is perhaps indicative of their relationship that Deidamia does not confide in one of her sisters about her rape and consequent pregnancy, but in her nurse (*Ach.* 1.669-670).

<sup>40</sup> *quae Bistonio queritur soror orba cubili, Silu.* 2.4.21; *non murmure trunco / quod gemit et durae queritur Philomela sorori, Silu.* 5.3.83-84.

through comparison to that of birds for their young at *Silu.* 3.5.54-61. He does, however, express the view that blood relationships are not more important than those created through choice, not only when he laments the death of his friend's adoptive son (*Silu.* 2.1.84-88), but also at the loss of his own (*Silu.* 5.1).

Finally, it is necessary to explain why Lucan and Silius Italicus do not feature in this discussion. In contrast to the mythological poems of their predecessors and contemporaries, the two surviving epics that belong to the historic type allow very few women to appear and play any significant role, and with one exception, their relationship to family members of the same sex is not treated. The two major heroines in Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile*, Marcia and Cornelia, are defined as wives, that is, through their bond to men. Silius, on the other hand, focuses on mothers but only in relation to their sons (e.g. Imilce, wife of Hannibal and mother of his son; Massinissa's anonymous mother; Pomponia, Scipio's mother).<sup>41</sup> The exception is Silius' story of Dido and Anna (*Pun.* 8.60-201), where the poet combines Virgil's representation of Dido's last moments (*Aen.* 4.672-692) with the aftermath of her suicide as imagined by Ovid (*F.* 3.545-654), a reworking that I will discuss alongside Virgil's Carthaginian sisters.<sup>42</sup>

### **Roman data**

As the other aim of this thesis is to establish the connections between the poetic representation of mythical all-female family bonds and the respective Roman world inhabited by the epicists, I will now describe what evidence we possess for the latter which will form the basis of my comparisons throughout the

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<sup>41</sup> A recent discussion of the role of mothers in the *Punica* is Augoustakis (2008).

<sup>42</sup> See the end of the section on Dido and Anna in Chapter One.

rest of this work. The middle to upper-class woman in Rome of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC had a position largely different from that of her Greek counterpart, something already noticed in antiquity.<sup>43</sup> She was not confined to her room but was able to move more freely both indoors and outdoors,<sup>44</sup> and consequently come in contact with men, not least because of the public character of the upper-class Roman house with its constant flow of clients and visitors.<sup>45</sup> While there is extensive information about the Roman woman's legal position and her relationship to the male members of her family (her father, husband and sons), mention of female-only ties is found less frequently in historiography and oratory, and only in inscriptions do we get a sense of woman to woman interaction, although this is to a large extent formulaic and always mediated through men, as was mentioned at the beginning of this introduction. Mothers often bury their daughters and vice versa and occasionally even sisters dedicate an inscription to their female siblings.<sup>46</sup> While some epitaphs limit themselves to the name of the dead and their relationship to the dedicator, there are instances when the latter gives vent to her feelings for her beloved relative,<sup>47</sup> describing everyday details such as children's

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<sup>43</sup> As Nepos states in the preface to *De uiris illustribus, quem enim Romanorum pudet uxorem ducere in conuiuium? aut cuius non mater familias primum locum tenet aedium atque in celebritate uersatur? quod multo fit aliter in Graecia. nam neque in conuiuium adhibetur nisi propinquorum, neque sedet nisi in interiore parte aedium, quae gynaeconitis appellatur; quo nemo accedit nisi propinqua cognatione coniunctus* (Nepos, *praef.* 6-7).

<sup>44</sup> Greek women should not be imagined as imprisoned inside their own homes. It is, however, true, at least for respectable ones, that they only ventured outdoors to visit their neighbours, to participate in religious festivals, marriages and funerals, as well as to assist in childbirth [Foley (1981) 130].

<sup>45</sup> Severy (2003) 15. Certainly lower class women circulated even more freely and came to more contact with men [Criniti (1994) 86] because they often had to work to earn a living – which is also true for Greek women with a poor background, who worked in the fields and sold goods in the market [Foley (1981) 130].

<sup>46</sup> As Dixon (1988) 201 argues, “where daughters are commemorated, it is sometimes by mothers as sole dedicators”.

<sup>47</sup> E.g. *CIL VI 30110*, prefacing this introduction, where the daughter is described as being snatched away from her mother by *miserae mortis iniqua dies*.



chatter,<sup>48</sup> and stressing the closeness of their relationship with superlatives such as *carissima*, *amantissima* and *dulcissima*.<sup>49</sup>

Historiography, oratory and epistolography offer some further glimpses to the mother-daughter bond. Children of both sexes were entrusted to the mother's care until the age of seven,<sup>50</sup> when the boys would be handed over to their male tutors; but daughters remained in her care until they were given out in marriage, which suggests that she was responsible for teaching them the ways of the world.<sup>51</sup> Mothers often had a say in the choice of their daughters' husband,<sup>52</sup> or were at least consulted by the father.<sup>53</sup> More importantly, they seemed to keep contact with them even after the daughters moved to live with their husband's family, visiting each other and discussing important matters such as birth and childrearing, where the mother would offer her advice and support to her inexperienced

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<sup>48</sup> E.g. Anteus Chrysostom is described as a chatterbox in the epitaph dedicated by her parents, nurses and tutors (*CIL* VI 34421).

<sup>49</sup> E.g. *CIL* VI 35947 dedicated by Numisia Xanthe to Numisia Trophime, *filiae carissimae*; *CIL* VIII 2252 to Caecilia Bona, *unicae filiae*, by her mother; *CIL* VI 25927 by Saturnina to Extricata, *sorori carissimae ... sorori bene merenti*; *CIL* VI 11649 by Anicia Secundina to Anicia Prisca, *matri suae dulcissimae bene merenti*. There are also joint dedications: Iulia Silvanica (among others) dedicated *CIL* VIII 9116 to Iulia Romania, *sorori dulcissime*; *CIL* VIII 10666 was dedicated to Aemilia Victoria, *filiae dulcissimae et amantissimae*, by both her parents; a mother and a sister commissioned *CIL* VI 34075 for a *filiae carissimae* (her name is missing); the sisters Iulia Pudentilla and Iulia Ania dedicated *CIL* III 9176 to their mother, *matri dulcissimae*.

<sup>50</sup> This care was shared with the nurse and in the case of learned mothers probably also comprised of teaching them traditional Roman values [De la Rosa Cubo (2005) 271].

<sup>51</sup> This education may have also covered reading and writing, if Cavallo (1995) 521 is right in attributing Terence's description (*Eun.* 116ff.) to Roman and not Greek practice. However, as Rawson (1986) 30 notes, this situation has changed by the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, as an increasing number of upper-class mothers have given up breastfeeding, hiring a nurse instead, which would have had some effect on their bond to their children, and some daughters had tutors at home or went to school.

<sup>52</sup> Phillips (1978) quoted in Hallett (1984) 259; Dixon (1988) 62-63. As Dixon (1988) 221 argues, it was not a legal but social obligation for the daughter to accept the husband her mother chose for her. A mother was equally capable of breaking her daughter's marriage, as literary examples show: Plutarch tells the story of Caecilia Metella who caused the divorce of her pregnant daughter Aemilia, in order to offer her in marriage to Pompey (*Pomp.* 9), while Cicero speaks of Sassia who also broke her daughter's marriage in order to marry the man herself, and then offered her daughter's hand to her own stepson (*Clu.* 12-14). [Dixon (1988) 215].

<sup>53</sup> Hallett (1984) 144; Hanson (1999) 31, 33-34.

daughter.<sup>54</sup> Finally, daughters would look to their mothers for models of behaviour, trying to follow their example as closely as possible.<sup>55</sup>

As far as sisters go, they also seem to have been close, with the original etymology of the word *soror* from a root indicating a very intimate family relationship,<sup>56</sup> and thus emphasizing the strength of their bond. The importance of sisters in the Roman family has also been noticed in cult, in the festival of Matralia where only women were allowed to participate and each one of them prayed for the children of her sisters and brothers.<sup>57</sup> Another linguistic element that stresses the sisterly bond is the fact that maternal aunts were called *materterae*, a term explained as deriving from, as well as in fact meaning, *mater altera*, thus pointing to the original view of sisters as being responsible for each other's children.<sup>58</sup> Sisters visited each other after they got married, as Livy's tale of Fabia Minor and Fabia Maior shows (*AUC* 6.34); the same story, however, suggests that differences in their lot after marriage could also create tension between them. Finally, a characteristic of Roman sisters is that they usually share in the same name, the *nomen gentis* in its feminine form.<sup>59</sup> It seems that in public this *gentilicium* alone was considered to be enough to address or refer to them, while in the household they were given the designations *maior* and *minor*, or a cardinal (*prima*, *secunda*,

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<sup>54</sup> Dixon (1988) 211-212, 217-218.

<sup>55</sup> Hallett (1984) 260-261, who gives the example of the younger Arria in Tac. *Ann.* 16.34.2.

<sup>56</sup> Hallett (1984) 178 and n. 23.

<sup>57</sup> Hallett (1984) 185.

<sup>58</sup> Hallett (1984) 184-185.

<sup>59</sup> Salway (1994) 127-128, who also points out that *praenomina* and *cognomina* were in use but not widespread, and that after the system of *tria nomina* became the norm, women of the aristocracy acquired additional names. Peruzzi (1970) 67 suggests that Roman women did have a personal name which was, however, considered taboo to be pronounced outside the household; Cantarella (1987) 126 expresses a similar view.

*tertia*, etc.).<sup>60</sup> On occasion they were also distinguished from one another by assuming an appended genitive of their father's or husband's name,<sup>61</sup> such as Caecilia Metelli (Cic. *Diu.* 1.104) and Postumia Sulpici (Cic. *Att.* 12.11.1) respectively.

Certainly this information applies to a small percentage of the population, namely the few upper-class Roman families about whom our sources have written, and even that may have differed considerably from household to household. It is only a matter of speculation how lower-class women or those from other parts of the Empire treated their female relations. Nevertheless, given that the epic poets I will discuss share middle to upper-class background, it may be assumed that this was also their own personal experience.

### **Outline of treatment**

The first chapter will discuss epic sisters whose representation earns them the characterisation *unanimae*. Starting with Dido and Anna in the *Aeneid*, I will show how they share feelings, thoughts and actions in the course of Book 4, before becoming symbolically merged into one entity through Anna's ritual catching of Dido's soul as she expires. I will then move to passages in Virgil's epic successors based on his Carthaginian sisters, and discuss Ovid's Procne and Philomela and Statius' three pairs of sisters by blood and choice. In the analysis of their language and behaviour to one another I will show the influence of earlier Greek and Latin literature, especially epic and tragedy, and explain how they all reflect to a greater

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<sup>60</sup> Salway (1994) 126; Cantarella (1987) 124-126 seems to agree with Finley (1968) 131 that Roman women's lack of a personal name may imply that in Roman male conscience they were second-rate individuals.

<sup>61</sup> Salway (1994) 126.

or lesser extent the Roman experience of sisterhood and their relationship to their same-sex siblings. While all sister pairs discussed in this thesis and most of the sister-groups comprising of more than two members have personal names, I will suggest that the emphasis on unanimity or interchangeability between sisters in Roman epic is perhaps also related to the lack of individuality present among Roman daughters who all shared the name of their father's *gens*.

The second chapter will focus on the theme of love and marriage which pervades stories featuring all-female bonds in Latin epic. The Latin queen Amata and princess Lavinia will be the starting point of my discussion, once again with reference both to literary models and to Roman attitudes. It will be shown that their mother-daughter relationship forms an important intertext for Ovid's story of Ceres and Proserpina, especially as far as the Roman resonances are concerned. While mothers in Latin epic are worried about their daughter's marriage and the choice of their future son-in-law, sisters tend to participate in love triangles with their female siblings, as the comparison of Ovid's Aglauros and Herse, and Procne and Philomela in the second part of the chapter will demonstrate, with the predominant feeling being that of envy. Finally, I will turn to Valerius Flaccus in order to look at two variations of the theme: instead of a mother eager to make decisions about her daughter's marriage or a pair of sisters being involved in the same love triangle, Medea's sister and aunt, who are in fact Juno and Venus in disguise, try to accentuate her passion for Jason and turn her against her own family.

In the third chapter I will look at another major theme, loss and mourning, which is associated predominantly with women both in epic and in real life in

antiquity. The first three sections will look at Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: in Book 2 the Heliades' lament for their brother Phaethon balances that of their mother Clymene, who loses not only her son but also her daughters in the space of 100 lines. Female reaction to loss returns in Book 5, where Ceres laments the loss, temporary this time, of Proserpina, as if she were dead. Whereas the goddess' fear of losing her daughter quickly disappears, a mortal mother has to suffer the death of her last remaining child in the story of Hecuba and Polyxena in Book 13, which looks back to tragedy as well as to epic models ranging from Homer to Virgil and Ovid himself. The final section will turn to Statius to address the theme of female suicide and reactions to it by the protagonist's female relatives. Once again literary allusions will be pointed out alongside Roman practices as well as specific examples that the representation of epic heroines hints at.

Finally, the fourth chapter will introduce the theme of female storytelling, the most extensive examples of which are found in Ovid's epic. A comparison of the stories of the Minyads in Book 4 and the contest between the Muses and the daughters of Pierus in Book 5 will bring out important aspects of the sister bond as depicted not only by the poet in the representation of his heroines, but also by the storytellers themselves. The conclusion will tie all ideas together and suggest that female family bonds in Latin epic work on many levels, not only by forging connections with other texts and with other parts of the same poem, but also by creating characters whose affinity to Roman women make them more comprehensible and sympathetic for their audience.

## Chapter One – *unanimae sorores*

The discussion of female family bonds in Latin epic necessarily starts with Virgil's *Aeneid*, given that earlier mythological epic is not extant enough to justify a treatment of its own.<sup>62</sup> The prompt for this chapter is found at the introduction of Dido's sister Anna in Book 4, the very first time that a female protagonist is presented through her bond to a family member of the same sex. Up to that point, the women in the *Aeneid* are defined through their relationship to men: Helen appears as *Tyndarida* (*Aen.* 2.569), Aeneas leaves behind *coniunxque Creusa* (*Aen.* 2.651), and Andromache is, in Aeneas' words, *Hectoris Andromache* (*Aen.* 3.319). Even Dido is introduced as the wife of Sychaeus (*Aen.* 1.343) and the sister of Pygmalion (*Aen.* 1.346-347), in a description that abounds in kinship terms referring to her three male relations (*germanum*, *Aen.* 1.341; *coniunx*, 1.343; *pater*, 1.345; *germanus*, 1.346; *coniugis*, 1.354).

When, however, her sister Anna appears on stage,<sup>63</sup> she is defined through her family bonds to a woman: *sic unanimam adloquitur male sana sororem* (*Aen.* 4.8). Crucially, instead of being named straightaway, Anna is described as Dido's "soul-sharing" sister. The term is often used in Latin literature applied to a wide range of relationships, including but not limited to sisters,<sup>64</sup> and according to

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<sup>62</sup> They will, however, be included in the discussion when a figure in Virgil's *Aeneid* has a model traceable back to Ennius' or Naevius' poems.

<sup>63</sup> Up to this point Dido has been appearing, acting and speaking in public; now she is about to reveal her private feelings, which is, according to Donatus ad 4.8, the reason for introducing the *unanima soror*.

<sup>64</sup> It also applies to brothers, husbands and wives, and close friends; examples of each category to be found in Pease (1935) ad 4.8 s.v. *unanimam*. Nisbet and Hubbard (1970) 48 place the origin of the idea of sharing souls in Aristophanes' speech in Plato's *Symposium* 189c-193d; Greek examples include Eur. *Or.* 1045-1046 (brother and sister), Call. *Ep.* 41 and Meleager's imitation of it in *AP* 12.52 (lovers).

Strati's definition, *unanimus* entails "l'idea di un intimo nodo affettivo, fatto di profonde affinità psichiche, intellettuali, sentimentali, morali, emotive, che coinvolgono fino alle radici stesse della vita, un legame che dovrebbe essere insidiato solo dalla morte e che può giungere a confrontarsi audacemente con essa".<sup>65</sup> In this chapter I will examine how this definition, with its stress on affection, emotional and intellectual identification, and power that even challenges death, is verified by Virgil's representation of Dido and Anna's relationship, before looking at other examples of "soul-sharing" epic sisters who are based on this particular pair.

### **Soul-sharing Carthaginians: Dido and Anna**

Both Anna's introduction to the narrative and the beginning of Dido's speech are revealing about their bond and introduce themes that will pervade the whole treatment of the Carthaginian sisters:

*cum sic unanimam adloquitur male sana sororem:  
'Anna soror, quae me suspensam insomnia terrent!  
Aen. 4.8-9*

The phrase *unanima soror* in place of Anna's name suggests the nature and closeness of their bond, and justifies the choice of audience for Dido's confession of her feelings for Aeneas;<sup>66</sup> at the same time, the idea of sharing the same soul that is activated with the use of *unanimus* creates an expectation that Anna will understand how Dido feels better than anyone. The ideas of affection and near-identification in feelings or thoughts that the phrase *unanimam sororem* suggests,

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<sup>65</sup> Strati (2002) 484.

<sup>66</sup> Strati (2002) 497.

however, require confirmation from the rest of their story,<sup>67</sup> given that the two sisters' bond is not extensively treated in earlier literature.<sup>68</sup>

The introductory line also offers a first hint at the potential imbalance of Dido and Anna's relationship: as the latter enters the narrative, her function as the object of the sentence (*sororem*, *Aen.* 4.8)<sup>69</sup> indicates her place in the plot as well as in her relationship to her sister, and a comparison to Dido's introduction as the syntactical subject at *Aen.* 1.299 validates such a suspicion.<sup>70</sup> The beginning of Dido's speech finally reveals the sister's name, but instead of giving her an important syntactical function in the line, assigns her through the vocative (*Anna soror*, *Aen.* 4.9) the role of the listener, as Dido starts talking neither about Anna nor about their relationship, but about herself.

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<sup>67</sup> Which will prove Pease's statement that "Anna falls short of being completely *unanimam*" [Pease (1935) ad 4.8 s.v. *unanimam*] to be unfounded.

<sup>68</sup> The only references to pre-Virgilian treatments of the two sisters are found in Servius, who says that they featured in Naevius' *Bellum Punicum* (Serv. auct. ad *Aen.* 4.9: *cuius filiae fuerint Anna et Dido*, *Naevius dicit* = Naev. *Bel. Pun.* frg. 33 Baehr.). This mention of their names either simply belonged to the genealogy of the Carthaginians, without any connection to Aeneas [thus Griset (1961) 304; Wigodsky (1972) 30; Goldberg (1995) 54-55 is equally sceptical]; or it comes from a treatment of the events at Carthage when Aeneas was there, which would make Naevius the first to attribute the Punic wars to an ancient hatred between the two nations' ancestors [thus Oppermann (1939) 213; Marmorale (1950) ad frg. 23; Galinsky (1969) 189]. Servius also indicates that Varro had Anna and not Dido fall in love with Aeneas and commit suicide when abandoned (ad *Aen.* 4.682: *Varro ait non Didonem, sed Annam amore Aeneae impulsam se supra rogam interemisse*; ad *Aen.* 5.4: *sane sciendum Varronem dicere, Aeneam ab Anna amatum*).

<sup>69</sup> As Castellani (1987) 50 points out, comparing Anna's introduction to Juturna's at *Aen.* 12.138-9, also in the accusative.

<sup>70</sup> This could imply that of the two sisters Dido is the famous one; after all earlier versions of her story are known to later sources. Thus, in Hier. *Adv. Iov.* I 43, Dido is mentioned as a model of conjugal fidelity, remaining for ever faithful to her dead husband Sychaeus; it is possible that this is an ancient version that Varro (Atacinus) knew and followed [Griset (1961) 307]. This view agrees with the accounts found in historians such as Timaeus (*FGrH* 3b.566.82) and Pompeius Trogus (Just. *Epit.* 18.4-6), where she chooses to throw herself on a pyre rather than violate her oath of fidelity to her dead husband. As for the link between Dido and Aeneas, Starks (1999) 263 n. 25 argues that the existence of a citation in Charisius (*Inst. Gram.* 1: *Didun. Ateius Philologus librum suum sic edidit inscriptum 'An amauerit Didun Aeneas'*), despite its problems (both the dating of Ateius – whether or not he is the Ciceronian grammarian and rhetorician Suetonius mentions – and the nature and content of his work are debatable), does show "that the Dido-Aeneas affair probably predates Virgil by at least a few years and was a rhetorically rich topic for discussion".



After acknowledging the bond once again, the rest of the line firmly establishes the two Carthaginian women in a very specific tradition. Anna is Dido's confidante, the only person whom the latter trusts with her feelings and the content of her dreams, revolving, as the subsequent lines show, around Aeneas and his exceptional beauty, courage, military skill and suffering (*Aen.* 4.10-14). One genre that plays host to such female figures is tragedy: Dido and Anna thematically recall the Sophoclean sisters Antigone and Ismene,<sup>71</sup> or Electra and Chrysothemis, who discuss their thoughts in secret.<sup>72</sup> Dido and Anna's bond also resembles the relationship between the Euripidean Phaedra and her nurse, who listens to her alumna's erotic worries and advises her on how to overcome them.<sup>73</sup>

Far more explicit, however, is the use of the same motif as in the scene between the Apollonian sisters Medea and Chalciope in book 3 of the *Argonautica*,<sup>74</sup> which was then reworked by Ennius in the episode of Ilia's dream in book 1 of the *Annales*:<sup>75</sup> a woman confesses an erotic dream to her sister, to whom she is very close.<sup>76</sup> Accordingly, Anna is introduced as Dido's *unanima soror*, just as Chalciope is Medea's *ἀντοκασιγνήτη* (AR 3.642) who brought her up and even

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<sup>71</sup> Pease (1935) 50 n. 373; Pöschl (1961) 291 sees "a reflection of [ὡ̄ κοινὸν ἀντάδελφον Ἰσμῆνης κάρα], the first words of Sophocles' *Antigone*" in *unanima soror*, which however is not part of "Dido's address".

<sup>72</sup> Pease (1935) 50 n. 373.

<sup>73</sup> Pease (1935) 50 n. 373 also accepts the Euripidean nurse as a model for Anna. In fact, Seneca uses Dido and Anna's relationship precisely as a model for his representation of Phaedra and her nurse in his tragedy [Fenik (1960) 156; Fantham (1975) 2; Farron (1993) 107]. Armstrong (2006) 150 discusses the correspondences between another Apollonian female pair, Hypsipyle and Polyxo (not insignificantly, an alumna and nurse), to Dido and Anna.

<sup>74</sup> Pease (1935) 50 n. 374; Nelis (2001) 136.

<sup>75</sup> Anna's similarity to Ilia's unnamed sister is pointed out by D'Anna (1984) 180; Goldberg (1995) 99 briefly and Fernandelli (2002) 149-155 more extensively discuss Virgil's reworking of Ennius' dream scene later in the book (*Aen.* 4.465-473).

<sup>76</sup> The three pairs (sometimes with the addition of other sisters) are frequently discussed in this particular respect: Krevans (1993); Perutelli (1994); Goldberg (1995) 96-101; Scioli (2010). See section on Antigone and Ismene in this Chapter for a discussion of a Flavian reworking of these confession scenes.

breastfed her (AR 3.732-735), and just as Ilia's unnamed sister is the object of her vain search in her dream (Enn. *Ann.* 1 frg. 32-48 Sk.).<sup>77</sup> Not named herself when first introduced in the narrative, Anna is construed from the outset as the lesser member of this relationship (the conservative or unsuspecting sister, the devoted nurse) who is there to listen and advise, whereas Dido relies on her help, but perhaps will not necessarily reciprocate her unconditional love and trust.<sup>78</sup>

The characteristics of their relationship as outlined above, namely, the closeness of the two sisters, their somewhat unbalanced roles in this relationship, and the influence of earlier tragic and epic heroines on their representation, are recurrent in the four instances in the book that the two sisters appear on stage together. Their analysis will not only confirm the idea of unanimity between the two sisters, but also show that a number of Virgilian touches contribute to the creation of two women who appear to be more similar to the poet's own fellow citizens than embody the barbaric or the other. Far from being completely Romanised, there are elements in their characterisation which would certainly strike a chord with the poet's audience. This would lend additional value to the

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<sup>77</sup> Dido alone combines elements from a larger number of epic models, such as the Odyssean Nausicaa and Circe, the Apollonian Hypsipyle, and the Catullan Ariadne [Armstrong (2006) 149].

<sup>78</sup> I do not agree with the idea that the whole first encounter between Dido and Anna is an externalisation of Dido's feelings (a monologue turned into imaginary dialogue, in the same way that Athena's intervention to restrain Achilles in *Iliad* 1 is sometimes read), or a division of her personage into two selves, a rational ("Dido") and an emotional one ("Anna") [Hernández-Vista (1966)]. Both these views are highly problematic, because they postulate that Anna did not in fact exist. Yet this does not explain the plural verbs in the description of the sisters praying on the altars (*principio delubra adeunt pacemque per aras / exquirunt*, *Aen.* 4.56-57), or Dido's orders to the nurse to fetch Anna to which she responds as swiftly as she can (*Aen.* 4.634-641), let alone earlier versions either naming her alongside Dido or even attributing to her the role of Aeneas' lover, to which Virgil probably alludes at *Aen.* 4.421-423.

argument that Dido in Book 4 acts and talks in the manner of a Roman leader,<sup>79</sup> while evoking the sympathy and understanding of the audience.

Roman elements can be identified both in the arguments of the sisters' speeches and in their way of addressing each other, particularly through their choice of kinship terms or other forms of address. Dido's rejection of her surging passion for Aeneas in favour of a lifelong devotion to her dead first husband (*Aen.* 4.15-18 and 24-29) cannot but evoke the ideal of *uniuira* so praised in Roman society.<sup>80</sup> On the other hand, Anna's encouragement of this passion in favour of the joys of marriage and childbearing (*Aen.* 4.32-33) corresponds to Augustus' promotion of procreation and punishment of celibacy, which became law after Virgil's death but was certainly on his agenda much earlier, and formed part of an unsuccessful reform right after his triple triumph.<sup>81</sup> Thus, the two Carthaginian sisters seem to be taking part in the ongoing debate about marriage that characterised much of the Empire, but the sad outcome of Dido's embracing Anna's view and rejecting her status of *uniuira* perhaps works as a negative comment on the propaganda of the new Roman leader.

Furthermore, as far as their familial language goes, Dido and Anna seem to conform to both Roman and Greek practices, as a comparison to their literary models and to the (admittedly limited) information on Greek and Roman forms of address shows. For Romans the use of kinship terms such as *germanus* / *germana*

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<sup>79</sup> Monti (1981).

<sup>80</sup> DeWitt (1924) 177; Williams (1962) 45; Quinn (1963) 44; Phinney (1965) 356; Pomeroy (1975) 161; Monti (1981) 40; West (1983) 264 n. 22; Heinze (1993) 99 [= (1928<sup>4</sup>) 126], who also recognises Dido's insistence on *pudor* as a typically Roman characteristic; Williams (1995) 534. Cf. Rudd (1990) 154-162, who accepts that Dido adhered to this ideal but points out that the situation she finds herself in is very different from that of a Roman matron.

<sup>81</sup> Propertius' *El.* 2.7 is the main evidence for this reform, as Frank (1975) 43 notes.

and *frater / soror* rather than first names,<sup>82</sup> apart from being more common, seems also to have been a more affectionate way to address one's sibling.<sup>83</sup> It is almost impossible to know due to the scarcity of data from prose works regarding Greek sisters, but the general rule of siblings using first names to address each other probably applied to them too.<sup>84</sup> While poetry cannot be used to retrieve information about real life, it can be examined in comparison to our text, in order to see whether Virgil's models for Dido and Anna determine their choices on forms of address. In Greek poetry in general siblings use first names to address each other, but kinship terms may also be used in order to emphasise their bond.<sup>85</sup> These terms, denoting brothers or sisters usually of the same mother, would be either *κασίγνητος / κασιγνήτη*, which are mostly poetic,<sup>86</sup> or *ἀδελφός / ἀδελφή*, which are used equally in prose and poetry.<sup>87</sup>

As far as Virgil's specific models are concerned, tragic sisters such as Antigone and Ismene, Electra and Chrysothemis, display a preference for these kinship terms,<sup>88</sup> with the latter pair also addressing each other once with *φίλη*,<sup>89</sup> and the former calling each other once by name, either on its own or as part of a

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<sup>82</sup> *germanus-a-um* is used as an adjective for brothers and sisters of the same parents, and as noun (*germanus, germana*) to denote a full brother or a sister (*OLD s.v.*). *soror* is more generally applied to sisters, half-sisters, sisters-in-law, first cousins, and even unrelated female companions (*OLD s.v.*).

<sup>83</sup> Dickey (2002) 263.

<sup>84</sup> According to Dickey (1996) 227, "[t]he general rule for addressing siblings thus seems to be that they are usually treated as non-relatives, but that KTs [= kinship terms] can be used to emphasize the relationship or when the reader does not know the addressee's name." *φιλάτη* is the only attested address between sisters in Plut, *Mor.* 253d, while *ἀδελφή* is said by a goddess to her sister in Lucian, *Dial. Mar.* 12.1 (p. 270).

<sup>85</sup> Wendel (1929) 97, quoted by Dickey (1996) 227.

<sup>86</sup> *LSJ s.v.*

<sup>87</sup> *LSJ s.v..*

<sup>88</sup> *κασίγνητη*: Soph. *Ant.* 49, 544 (Ismene to Antigone); Soph. *El.* 329 (Chrysothemis to Electra). *ἀδελφή*: Soph. *El.* 461 (Electra to Chrysothemis); Euripides uses the term only to describe the brother-sister relationship.

<sup>89</sup> *φίλη*: Soph. *El.* 431, 986 (Electra to Chrysothemis); Soph. *El.* 916 (Chrysothemis to Electra).

more elaborate phrase.<sup>90</sup> On the contrary, the epic sisters Medea and Chalciope address each other only by name, but Medea refers to herself as Chalciope's *κασιγνήτη* and to the latter both by name and as her *ἀντοκασιγνήτη*.<sup>91</sup> Roman literary sisters, on the other hand, seem to display a preference for the kinship terms *germana* and *soror*. Ilia addresses her half-sister with *germana soror* (Enn. *Ann.* 1.38 Sk.) and *germana* (Enn. *Ann.* 1.44 Sk.), suggesting a closeness of bond, even though they are born of different mothers.<sup>92</sup> Sisters in Roman comedy also tend to address or refer to each other using both terms (*germana* and *soror*),<sup>93</sup> sometimes accompanied by a possessive,<sup>94</sup> and even a combination of all of the above,<sup>95</sup> but they do not address each other by name.<sup>96</sup>

Dido addresses or refers to Anna either by name (*Aen.* 4.20, 4.416, 4.421) or, much more often, by the kinship term appropriate for their relationship, in this case *soror* or *germana* (*Aen.* 4.420, 4.424, 4.435, 4.478, 4.492, 4.549), apart from one instance, when she uses a combination of the two (*Anna soror*, *Aen.* 4.9).<sup>97</sup> This

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<sup>90</sup> Ismene: *Ἀντιγόνη* (*Soph. Ant.* 11, *OC* 507); Antigone: *ᾧ κοινὸν ἀντάδελφον Ἰσμίνης κάρα* (*Soph. Ant.* 1).

<sup>91</sup> Chalciope: *Μήδεια* (AR 3.674). Medea: *Χαλκίοπη* (address: AR 3.688, 3.727; reference: AR 3.776, 3.903); *κασιγνήτη* (AR 3.733 of herself); *ἀντοκασιγνήτη* (AR 3.642 of Chalciope). *κασιγνήτη* is also used in *Od.* 4.810 (Penelope addresses her supposed sister, who is Athena in disguise).

<sup>92</sup> Cf. her first address as the daughter of Euridice, Aeneas' other wife (*Euridica prognata*, Enn. *Ann.* 1.34 Sk.).

<sup>93</sup> E.g. Anterastilis to Adelpasium: *soror* (*Poen.* 233), as well as: *germana* (*Poen.* 329)

<sup>94</sup> E.g. *mea soror*, Plaut. *Bacch.* 101.

<sup>95</sup> E.g. Philocomasium's imaginary twin sister: *mea soror gemina germanast uisa* (Plaut. *Mil.* 383).

<sup>96</sup> A comparison with funerary monuments erected by sisters to their female siblings would not help in our case, because the mention of the name of the deceased is a necessary element of the epitaph regardless of its use in real life.

<sup>97</sup> This is not the only occasion in the Virgilian oeuvre where this form of address (Name + Kinship Term) is used between sisters; at *G.* 4.354 the Nereid Arethusa addresses her sister with *Cyrene soror*, and at *Aen.* 11.823 Camilla calls her companion *Acca soror* (although the blood bond is absent in their case). In the second example it is remarkable that the address to *Acca* only differs in one sound from the one to *Anna*, both being in the very first sentence of the respective speeches, but in a different metrical position; it seems that Virgil purposefully echoes here Dido's address, uttered by another female 'victim' of Aeneas' destiny.

phrase, used again later in the narrative when Dido speaks to Sychaeus' nurse (*Aen.* 4.634), emphasises their bond, while at the same time bearing a strong resemblance to the Ciceronian construct *Quinte frater*.<sup>98</sup> Whether or not this is a deliberate echo of Cicero, it may reflect a Roman practice given that there is no equivalent combination in Greek. Dido's other choices suggest some similarity to her Hellenistic counterpart Medea who resorts to a variety of forms (name, kinship term, emphatic kinship term) when addressing or referring to Chalcioppe.

Anna, on the other hand, never calls Dido by name,<sup>99</sup> which immediately differentiates her from Chalcioppe in this respect and brings her closer to the sisters in Greek and Roman drama. Instead, she often uses the kinship terms *soror* and *germana* (*Aen.* 4.47, 4.675, 4.677,<sup>100</sup> 4.682), and once she addresses her sister in a very elaborate way at the beginning of her speech: *o luce magis dilecta sorori* (*Aen.* 4.31). This exclamation is far more significant than Dido's simple *Anna soror*, because it reveals Anna's unconditional love for her sister, stressing the inequality between them even further. At the same time, it responds not so much to Dido's address *Anna soror* (*Aen.* 4.9),<sup>101</sup> as to the immediately preceding expression, namely, *unanimam ... sororem* (*Aen.* 4.8), which Anna proves to be appropriate. By considering her sister to be more important than light, with the latter frequently

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<sup>98</sup> Cic. *Leg.* 3.26; *Diu.* 2.150. According to Dickey (2002) 261, Cicero probably addressed his brother in private either as *frater* (with or without the addition of an affectionate adjective), or by name. The phrase *Quinte frater* occurring in the cited passages was probably an artificial construct used only for clarity, namely, to ensure that his reader understood that his addressee was his brother Quintus.

<sup>99</sup> Not within the limits of the text; she probably does outside the text, according to *Aen.* 4.674 (*morientem nomine clamat*), although it is not possible to know which name she uses (*Dido* or *Elissa*).

<sup>100</sup> In that instance she refers to herself as Dido's sister.

<sup>101</sup> Thus Pease (1935) ad 4.31 s.v. *sorori*.

standing in for “life”,<sup>102</sup> Anna declares not only her affection for Dido but also her own defiance of death, an element of high importance in the definition of *unanimus* discussed above. This defiance, and consequently the pervasive theme of unanimity, returns at the end of Book 4, when Anna claims she would willingly have died alongside Dido, if only she had asked her to share her fate (*Aen.* 4.678-679).

Anna then resembles more the sisters of Greek tragedy and Roman comedy who prefer kinship terms to names when addressing their same-sex sibling; her affectionate phrase may be compared to Antigone’s address of Ismene ᾧ κοινὸν ἀντάδελφον Ἰσμῆνης κάρα (*Soph. Ant.* 1). There is also the possibility that such dwelling on one’s feelings may be particularly Roman, as some personal letters found in Vindolanda indicate. In her correspondence with her best friend Sulpicia Lepidina, Claudia Severa calls her “sister” and adds a number of affectionate expressions such as *anima / mea ... / karissima* (*Tab. Vind.* II 291, 12-14) and *soror / karissima et anima / ma desideratissima* (*Tab. Vind.* II 292, retro 1-3). It cannot be proven whether such phrases were in common use among Roman sisters,<sup>103</sup> although it seems reasonable to assume that Claudia Severa would not have used them unless they conveyed feelings that sisters would have for each other, since this is the way she viewed her relationship to her best friend. The similarity in spirit to Anna’s forms of address, especially the emphasis to the importance of the ‘sister’ to the speaker in the form of superlatives, as well as the insistence on the mention of *anima*, could suggest that Claudia Severa is writing with Virgil’s papyrus

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<sup>102</sup> Pease (1935) ad 31 s.v. *o luce* etc.; Heinze (1993) 222 [= (1928<sup>4</sup>) 270].

<sup>103</sup> Funerary inscriptions include phrases such as *carissima* or *dulcissima soror* (I give some examples in the Introduction), but this does not prove that they were used in everyday speech.

open before her. But even if this is the case, it still corroborates the argument that Anna speaks to Dido in a way that was considered correct between Roman sisters.

Greek epic and tragic influence, however, goes beyond the mere similarity in forms of address to shape Anna's figure into a multifunctional confidante in order to justify her characterisation as *unanima soror* at the beginning of the book. Anna's words manage to remove Dido's inhibitions and encourage her passion:

*his dictis impenso animum flammauit amore  
spemque dedit dubiae menti soluitque pudorem.*

*Aen.* 4.54-55

This effect, whether true or simulated, invites comparison not only to the quasi-identical outcome of Chalciope's exhortations to Medea (who exclaims ἐρρέτω αἰδώς, AR 3.785),<sup>104</sup> but also to the nurse's power over Phaedra, who first makes her alumna reveal her troubles and then convinces her that she knows the way to overcome them (Eur. *Hipp.* 284-524). Like the nurse, Anna unknowingly brings about Dido's destruction, encouraging a passion that has no future.<sup>105</sup> What prompts Anna's actions, however, is that deep understanding of Dido's feelings coupled with her unconditional love for her sister,<sup>106</sup> both of which are essential components of her status as *unanima*. The end of the first encounter, therefore, confirms the strength of the sisterly bond, at least as far as Anna is concerned; at the same time, the Apollonian model introduces negative aspects to their

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<sup>104</sup> Nelis (2001) 139.

<sup>105</sup> Nelis (2001) 137-138. In this respect, namely, as a sister trying to help her sibling but instead causing their death, Anna resembles Turnus' sister, Juturna [Barchiesi (1978) 104-105; West (1979); Castellani (1987)].

<sup>106</sup> A feeling she shares with the Euripidean nurse, but perhaps not with Chalciope, who above all wants to ensure the safety of her sons.



relationship, which are to reach their climax at the pyre scene near the end of the book.

Anna's arguments seem to interpret quite accurately Dido's Roman-like reasoning, especially in terms of safety from both Tyrian and Libyan enemies, and consideration for the wellbeing of her people. If, however, such thoughts are indeed what Dido nurses,<sup>107</sup> then not only is Anna's characterisation as *unanima* appropriate, but her sister is also concealing the truth by claiming to remain eternally faithful to her dead husband Sychaeus. The description of Dido's mind as *dubia* at the end of their conversation (*Aen.* 4.55) may confirm such a suspicion: while it may simply mean that she was "uncertain" or "wavering" as to her feelings for Aeneas, it is also possible for the meaning of "dubious", therefore, "not to be trusted", to resonate as well.<sup>108</sup> Their encounter then is similar to that between Medea and Chalciope, where both sisters conceal some part of the truth from each other, with Medea being explicitly keen to "try" her sister (*ἀντοκασιγνήτης περιήσομαι*, AR 3.642) and invest her words with "deceit" (*ἔειπε / τοῖα δόλω*, AR 3.686-687). Thus it seems that already at the end of their first scene together, Dido and Anna's relationship suffers from an imbalance in emotion and sincerity that informs the rest of the book, as well as the epic tradition from this point onwards.

Dido, in fact, overshadows her sister in their second meeting: she no longer expects to hear her opinion, but instead sends her to Aeneas to act as a go-

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<sup>107</sup> Heinze (1993) 100 [= (1928<sup>4</sup>) 128]; West (1979) 13. De Graft-Hanson (1976) 66-67 suggests that Dido's love for Aeneas is a later development, incited by the gods, and this is why she so readily accepts Anna's arguments in favour of this "marriage of convenience" as well as the course of action that involves trickery. This interpretation, however, completely ignores Dido's confession of her admiration for Aeneas and her explicit admission that she loves him (*solus hic inflexit sensus animumque labantem / impulit. agnosco ueteris uestigia flammae*, *Aen.* 4.22-23).

<sup>108</sup> OLD s.v.

between in order to make him change his mind about leaving. Her reason for sending Anna is that she appears to be particularly close to Aeneas:

... *solam nam perfidus ille*  
*te colere, arcanos etiam tibi credere sensus;*  
*sola uiri mollis aditus et tempora noras.*

*Aen.* 4.421-423

This seemingly innocent observation, however, probably inspired Ovid's version of the aftermath of the affair, where Anna is considered by Lavinia to be posing a threat to her marriage.<sup>109</sup> In fact, the juxtaposition of Anna's intimacy with Aeneas and the accusation of him being *perfidus*<sup>110</sup> suggests that Dido's comments are rather tinged with a hint of jealousy.<sup>111</sup> Anna immediately executes her orders responding to Dido's appeal to their relationship (*miserere sororis*, *Aen.* 4.435), which forms the climax to her repeated alternation of name and kinship term: *Anna* (*Aen.* 4.416) ... *soror* (*Aen.* 4.420) ... *Anna* (*Aen.* 4.421) ... *soror* (*Aen.* 4.424). Importantly, Anna does not speak in reply, with her silence indicating her subordinate position in the relationship;<sup>112</sup> she does, however, deliver the message to Aeneas:

... *talisque miserrima fletus*

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<sup>109</sup> *Ov. F.* 3.543-656.

<sup>110</sup> The accusation was made directly to Aeneas at *Aen.* 4.305; it ultimately originates in Ariadne's accusations against Theseus (*Cat. c.* 64.132-133). Starks (1999) 274 sees in it a reference to perfidy as a Roman stereotype of the Carthaginians which Dido transfers to Aeneas. Phinney (1965) 357 sees some irony in the fact that Dido accuses Aeneas of *perfidia* when she is the one who betrayed her loyalty to Sychaeus.

<sup>111</sup> *perfidus* here can either refer to Aeneas abandoning Dido for the promised land and wife, or imply more specifically that Dido suspects him of having an affair with her sister [thus Barrett (1970) 24, who acknowledges the objections to such interpretation, but finds it "perfectly natural" for Dido to have such a suspicion in her deranged state of mind]. See Chapter Two for the evolution of this theme in Ovid.

<sup>112</sup> Crucially, she says nothing to contradict Dido's comment about her intimacy with Aeneas; perhaps silence equals confirmation? Or is the comment actually innocent, implying that Anna, assuming the role of the tragic nurse, is the appropriate person to approach the man for whom her beloved sister suffers?

*fertque refertque soror. sed nullis ille mouetur  
fletibus aut uoces ullas tractabilis audit*

*Aen. 4.437-439*

Her words, however, are mixed with weeping, and the reader cannot hear them any more than Aeneas does.

With the mediation failed, Dido's emotional distress escalates and produces horrible omens (*Aen. 4.452-465*) and a nightmare about Aeneas (*Aen. 4.465-473*), neither of which she confides to her sister,<sup>113</sup> unlike her first dream. The scene is partly modelled on Medea's nightmare about Jason (*AR 3.616-632*) which she substituted in her speech to Chalciope with an imaginary dream about the latter's sons (*AR 3.688-692*). Here, Dido also lies to her sister but instead of changing the content of her nightmare, she invents a solution to her troubles by supposedly resorting to magic.<sup>114</sup> The element of deception is clear in Dido's description as she starts to speak: *maestam dictis adgressa sororem / consilium uultu tegit ac spem fronte serenat* (*Aen. 4.476-477*). Trying not to change the tone of her speech which would undermine her credibility, she continues to appeal to their bond through the repeated use of kinship terms, this time displaying even more affection than earlier (*germana ... (gratare sorori)*, *Aen. 4.478*; *cara ... germana, tuumque / dulce caput*, *Aen. 4.492-493*),<sup>115</sup> and she succeeds, as Anna suspects nothing and promptly executes her orders once again (*Aen. 4.500-503*). Her subordination now is brought to its limits, as not only does she not speak back to Dido, but this time her task

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<sup>113</sup> The lack of trust is quite emphatically pointed out by the narrator with reference to the omens: *non ipsi effata sorori* (*Aen. 4.456*).

<sup>114</sup> Nelis (2001) 141.

<sup>115</sup> This phrase echoes to a certain extent Antigone's address to Ismene that opens the Sophoclean play (*Ant. 1*).

involves mere actions, namely to prepare the pyre,<sup>116</sup> not words, not even ones muffled with tears.

At the same time as Dido disengages herself from their bond, Anna endorses even further aspects of her initial definition as *unanimia soror*.<sup>117</sup> So far she has proven to understand Dido's deepest desires and interpret her innermost thoughts, as well as expressing her affection for her sister in a very elaborate way. In the second and third encounter, however, Anna displays such devotion to Dido that she performs the tasks assigned her without voicing any counterarguments; in fact, she does not utter a single word, not even when Dido hints at her unusual intimacy with Aeneas. While this passivity may point to her subordinate position in their relationship,<sup>118</sup> it also speaks volumes about her unconditional love for Dido.<sup>119</sup> The clearest indication, however, of Anna's status as *unanimia soror* is her emotional identification with her sister which balances her lack of direct speech. While not having the opportunity anymore to express herself in affectionate addresses comparable to Dido's, Anna actually experiences the same distress as her sister, with her description as *miserrima* (*Aen.* 4.437) and *maestam* (*Aen.* 4.476) balancing her sister's (self) designation as *miseræ* (*Aen.* 4.315) and *maestæ* (*Aen.* 4.420).

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<sup>116</sup> What she believes to be a component of the magic rite to rid Dido of her passion for Aeneas, but what is in fact the setting for Dido's suicide. This can be read as the ironic visualisation of the effect of Anna's actions: not only did she encourage Dido's passion which will lead to her death, but she unknowingly prepared her sister's funeral pyre!

<sup>117</sup> It is important to note that this characterisation was applied to Anna alone at *Aen.* 4.8.

<sup>118</sup> Similarly, Chalciope almost disappears from the narrative once her meeting with Medea is over.

<sup>119</sup> This devotion may be viewed as the reason why Dido does not trust Anna with her plans for suicide and instead deceives her with the supposed magic rite [thus West (1979) 11]. Anna's devotion is not reciprocated; cf. Dido being all too quick to blame Anna for her troubles at *Aen.* 4.548-549: *tu lacrimis euicta meis, tu prima furentem / his, germana, malis oneras atque obicis hosti*. Phaedra also blamed her destruction on her nurse (far more appropriately) at Eur. *Hipp.* 682ff., as Fenik (1960) 153 n. 1 notes.

The final encounter, which overlaps with Dido's last moments, constitutes the culmination of Anna's characterisation as *unanima soror* throughout the book, while when considered against their first meeting, it offers an explanation for the treatment of the two sisters in this part of the poem. In a sort of inversion of the imbalance noticed until this moment, it is Anna who speaks and Dido who remains silent. Anna's words, however, work constructively for their bond, even though her sister's death is imminent. As she rushes to assist her and take her in her arms, she proves herself once again worthy of her initial description: her devotion to the death, inherent in her earlier claim that Dido is *luce magis dilecta* to her (*Aen.* 4.31), is now fully expressed as a complaint:

... *comitemne sororem*  
*spreuisti moriens? eadem me ad fata uocasses,*  
*idem ambas ferro dolor atque eadem hora tulisset.*

*Aen.* 4.677-679

She would happily have died alongside her sister, if only she were aware of her plans;<sup>120</sup> she accuses Dido of being cruel (*Aen.* 4.681) in deceiving her as well as turning her into an unknowing accomplice to her death.<sup>121</sup> Despite her accusations, however, her consistent use of kinship terms shows her affection for Dido,<sup>122</sup> which is also evident in her desire to perform appropriate funeral rites,<sup>123</sup> namely, to wash Dido's wounds and catch her last breath as she dies:

... *date, uulnera lymphis*

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<sup>120</sup> Anna's wish to die alongside Dido recalls Ismene's attempt to share Antigone's punishment (*Soph. Ant.* 536-537), as De Graff (1932) 149 points out.

<sup>121</sup> It is curious that Anna does not blame herself for her sister's suicide; Hightet (1972) 112 understands her preference for a complaint as producing a more pathetic result.

<sup>122</sup> Again, she uses *germana* (*Aen.* 4.675) and *soror* (*Aen.* 4.682), but not Dido's name – see, however, note 99.

<sup>123</sup> According to Hightet (1972) 231, Dido intended for Anna to be the first to reach her body and prepare it for burial.

*abluam et, extremus si quis super halitus errat,  
ore legam ...*

*Aen. 4.683-685*

Although the word *anima* or *animus* is not used,<sup>124</sup> a connection can be made to the ancient practice of kinsmen kissing the dying person to keep their soul in the family.<sup>125</sup> Anna announces that she will try to catch Dido's soul so that it does not fly to the winds, following a custom that seems to be particularly Roman.

When, however, Anna finally reaches Dido, holds her in her arms and starts to dry up the blood with her dress, the queen is described as *semianimis germana*; given the range of terms denoting a moribund person,<sup>126</sup> the choice of a compound of *anima* here cannot be unintentional. It seems rather to be an indication that the act announced by Anna a few lines before has indeed been performed,<sup>127</sup> Dido is thus left with half her soul, and it is that half which Iris will symbolically cut in the form of a lock in order to end her life (*Aen. 4.700-705*). The importance of this choice, however, is not unrelated to the figure performing the kiss: it is none other than Anna, the *unanima soror*, that the phrase *semianimem ... germanam* (*Aen. 4.682*) is intended to evoke. The inversion of the relationship is once again clear: while in the beginning of the book Anna was the syntactical object of Dido's actions, it is now her turn to be the syntactical subject in a sentence where her sister assumes a subordinate role.

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<sup>124</sup> According to Servius, however, this is what *halitus* here stands for: *muliebriter, tamquam posit animam sororis excipere et in se transferre* (Serv. Dan. ad loc).

<sup>125</sup> Pease (1935) ad 4.684 s.v. *extremus*, etc, gives a long list of passages where the practice of catching one's soul is described, all of which belong to Roman authors ranging from Cicero to Ambrose.

<sup>126</sup> E.g. *moriens* (which is used earlier, *Aen. 4.674*), *moribundus*, *semiuiuus*, *seminex* etc.

<sup>127</sup> Conington (1863) at line 684 actually suggests that Anna's caresses, described at line 686, aim at her catching her sister's soul.

More importantly, however, the word *semianimis* signals the approach of the climax in a process of identification of the two sisters. While Anna was metaphorically defined as *unanima soror*, in the course of the book she confirmed her aptitude for all aspects of such a characterisation: understanding of mind and heart; devotion and unconditional love; emotional identification; defiance of death and even willing share in the same fate. Now, by performing a ritual kiss in order to capture Dido's last breath, she effectively receives her sister's soul in her, literally becoming *unanima*. The inversion is now complete: as Dido dies, Anna lives on, true to her models,<sup>128</sup> but at the same time something of Dido survives in her, giving rise to stories about alternative lovers<sup>129</sup> and hatred perpetuating for centuries.<sup>130</sup> In a sequel to this account, Ovid and Silius present Anna as meeting Aeneas again in Italy, but while she is welcomed into his new home, Dido appears in her dream to warn her that Lavinia sees her as a rival, thus causing her escape and eventual deification in the form of Anna Perenna.<sup>131</sup> Virgil's treatment of the sisterly family bond offers the key to the explanation of conflicting versions in

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<sup>128</sup> Antigone, Phaedra and Ilia die, but their sisters and nurse survive.

<sup>129</sup> Already Varro's version treated an affair between Anna and Aeneas: Serv. in *Aen.* 4.682: *Varro ait non Didonem, sed Annam amore Aeneae impulsam se supra rogum interemisse; in Aen.* 5.4: *sane sciendum Varronem dicere, Aeneam ab Anna amatum*. It is possible that Ovid's sequel in the *Fasti* is informed by this story. Eustathius' mention of *Anna* as an alternative name for Dido alongside *Elissa* (on Dion. Perieg. 195) may come from a Hellenistic version where Dido was also called Anna, and Pease (1935) 49 n. 368, provides a list of scholars who endorse that version. There is also the view that Dido is effectively the Phoenician goddess Anat-Elishat, in whose name one can read Dido (*Elissa*) and Anna [Jackson Knight (1966) 438-439, referencing Paratore (1955) 71-82].

<sup>130</sup> Silius' Hamilcar boasts descent from Dido (*Pun.* 1.70-80), and Ennius speaks of *Poenos Didone oriundos* (*Ann.* 297 Sk.), although this may simply indicate metaphorical ancestry rather than bloodline.

<sup>131</sup> *Ov. F.* 3.543-656; *Sil. Pun.* 8.50-201; the latter is simply a combination of the Virgilian and Ovidian accounts. Silius' only innovation with respect to the relationship between Dido and Anna is the latter's representation as attempting suicide over Dido's body, but the poet's choice to reapply the topos of "three times" (used in Virgil for Dido's attempt to sit up, *Aen.* 4.690-691) for Anna's attempt to kill herself (*Pun.* 8.155-156), somehow cancels the pathos of her unanimity.

Dido's legend, while creating an influential, but not unproblematic,<sup>132</sup> sister pair that will inform the characterisation of many female epic figures to come.<sup>133</sup>

### **Sisters above all: Procne and Philomela**

While the portrayal of Dido and Anna also informs the representation of epic figures who are not sisters in aspects other than the theme of unanimity, in the sixth book of his *Metamorphoses* Ovid presents a sister pair who take the Virgilian definition of *unanima soror* to its limits, even if the phrase itself is not used to describe either of them. The episode of Procne and Philomela deals with family issues in a very comprehensive way: it comments on three relationships a woman may have with a man (father-daughter, husband-wife, mother-son),<sup>134</sup> before elevating the sisterly bond to a status of unchallenged superiority by using multiple variants of the same myth and reworking models found in earlier literature, including stories in the *Metamorphoses* itself.<sup>135</sup>

Ovid's version of Procne and Philomela draws extensively on Sophocles' lost tragedy *Tereus*, the fragmentary condition of which does not allow us certainty as

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<sup>132</sup> Virgil does not idealise the bond, but leaves it open to criticism, even though he does not explicitly judge the sisterly behaviour. Anna may understand what Dido wants, but is the advice she gives the right one? Judging by the result, a critic strictly observing the premise of unanimity might condemn Anna's behaviour both at encouraging her sister's passion and at not following her example when she commits suicide. But Virgil does not say that this did not happen. It is precisely this ambiguity that allows his successors to develop their own versions of the *unanimae sorores* without losing sight of the Virgilian paradigm.

<sup>133</sup> Not only epic: cf. Phaedra and her nurse in Sen. *Phaed.* [Fantham (1975)].

<sup>134</sup> See Chapter Two for a discussion of the theme of marriage that these bonds belong to.

<sup>135</sup> The investigation of parallel stories in the *Metamorphoses* has been so far limited to episodes which do not treat family bonds. In commentaries and discussions of the myth the most popular comparisons are those between Tereus and Philomela on the one hand, Apollo and Daphne on the other [Jacobsen (1984)]; between Philomela's woven message and Io's writing on the sand [Pavlock (1991) 39-40; Wheeler (1999) 51]; and between Procne's murder of Itys and Medea's killing of her children [Larmour (1990); Pavlock (1991) 43].



to how the tragedian depicted the sisterly bond.<sup>136</sup> It is clear, however, that in Sophocles as in Ovid Procne takes revenge on her husband Tereus, who raped her sister Philomela, by killing her son Itys and serving him up to his father.<sup>137</sup> In the end Tereus and Procne are transformed into birds, a hoopoe and a nightingale respectively.<sup>138</sup> The main elements of the story go as far back as the *Odyssey*: Penelope compares herself to Aedon, the daughter of Pandareus and wife of Zethus, who even in her new form as nightingale continues to mourn her son Itylus whom she killed for an unspecified reason (Hom. *Od.* 19.518-523).<sup>139</sup> In subsequent versions, however, where the filicidal mother is most often called Procne, the father Tereus and the child Itys, her motive is explicitly the crime her husband committed, namely, the rape of his wife's sister Philomela.<sup>140</sup> The episode covers about a third of *Metamorphoses* 6, allowing for an extensive presentation of the protagonists and consequently a better understanding of their relationship in comparison to other female characters of the epic. In fact this section of Book 6 has been thought of as a mini-tragedy<sup>141</sup> or a combination of tragedy and epyllion,<sup>142</sup> which not only confirms its debt to Sophocles' version, but also allows for

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<sup>136</sup> The myth was known to Aeschylus who mentions Tereus, his wife Metis (transformed into a nightingale) and their son Itys at *Suppl.* 60-67.

<sup>137</sup> As Curley (2003) 170-174 shows in his reconstruction of the fragments.

<sup>138</sup> It is in their new form that they appear in Aristophanes' *Aves*; according to the scholiast in *Arist. Au.* 100, the plot of Sophocles' *Tereus* included the transformation of Tereus and Procne into birds without specifying the species (but the scholion does not mention Philomela). There is also a fragment that describes Tereus as a hoopoe (Soph. *Ter.* fr. 581 R.), who is said to live apart from what are presumably the sisters in their new avian form [Curley (2003) 173].

<sup>139</sup> According to Pherecydes' version of the myth, quoted in Schol. in *Hom. Od.* 19.518, Aedon was then transformed into a nightingale and continued to mourn the death of her son.

<sup>140</sup> Thus Soph. *Tereus*; Boios in Anton. Lib. *Met.* 11 (where the protagonists are called Polytechnus, Aedon and Chelidon); Ps.-Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.193-5; Hyg. *Fab.* 45, as well as in brief mentions *passim* in Greek and Latin literature.

<sup>141</sup> Otis (1970) and Ortega (1970) cited in Bömer (1976b) ad 6.412-674. Galinsky (1975) 63-64 and 132, on the other hand, insists, quite unconvincingly, that there is nothing tragic in Ovid's representation of this myth.

<sup>142</sup> Cazzaniga (1951).

comparison with other similarly interpreted passages in earlier epic, such as *Aeneid* 4.

As in the case of Dido and Anna, the characterisation of Procne and Philomela is partly based on the familial language they use to refer to or address one another. When they speak to Tereus, Procne either refers to Philomela by the kinship terms *soror* (*Met.* 6.441, 6.442) or *germana* (*Met.* 6.444), while Philomela always uses *soror* (*Met.* 6.535, 6.537) to refer to Procne. Similarly, when their thoughts are described by the narrator, the kinship term *germana* (*Met.* 6.564) is Procne's choice, while Philomela uses both kinship terms (*sororem*, *Met.* 6.476; *germana*, *Met.* 6.523), as well as a combination of kinship term and possessive adjective (*sorore sua*, *Met.* 6.526), emphasising her affection for her sister. Finally, while Philomela does not have the chance to speak to Procne in person before her tongue is cut, and the content of her message is not disclosed to the reader (*purpureasque notas*, *Met.* 6.577), Procne addresses Philomela directly (*germana*, *Met.* 6.613) and also refers to her indirectly through her own designation as Philomela's sister (*cur non uocat illa sororem*, *Met.* 6.633). Based on these occurrences, it is clear that the importance of their bond is emphasised by the mere accumulation of such familial terms in very short speeches: in Procne's initial speech to Tereus (*Met.* 6.440-444) there are three words denoting Philomela as her sister in five lines, while in the first part of Philomela's speech to Tereus after her rape (*Met.* 6.533-538) the respective ratio is two words in six lines.<sup>143</sup> The examination of familiar language already points towards a sisterly bond that is particularly strong, and the analysis of their actions will confirm this impression.

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<sup>143</sup> If the word *poena* at the end of line 538 stands in for *Procne*, as I suggest below, then the ratio becomes 3 words in 6 lines.

The affection each sister has for the other is already highlighted by their shared wish to meet after five years of separation, during which Philomela remained at their father's house in Athens while Procne lived in Thrace with her husband Tereus and their son Itys. Both use flattery to convince the two men who could make this possible:<sup>144</sup> Procne directs it towards her husband who would go to Athens and ask for Philomela (*blandita uiro Procne ... dixit, Met. 6.440*), and Philomela towards her father who would accept Tereus' invitation on her behalf (*patriosque lacertis / blanda tenens umeros, Met. 6.475-476*). The choice of flattery as their means to persuasion evokes Dido's attempt to keep Aeneas in Carthage, as reported by Venus: *nunc Phoenissa tenet Dido blandisque moratur / uocibus (Aen. 1.670-671)*. Such an evocation of Dido's passion for Aeneas reveals the importance of the sister bond for both Procne and Philomela.

The more affectionate familial language used by Philomela encourages her comparison with the Virgilian Anna, who also uses more emotional phrases than her sister (e.g. *o luce magis dilecta sorori, Aen. 4.31*). Moreover, in both cases the eldest sister is involved with a man and wishes to see her younger sister,<sup>145</sup> Dido to confess her mixed feelings, Procne because she has not seen her for five years. Apart from this initially straightforward correspondence, however, the modelling of Procne and Philomela on the Carthaginian sisters proves to be more complicated. Dido may provide a model for both in the context of persuasion, but it is Philomela whom she resembles in her reaction to the crime perpetrated by the man she

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<sup>144</sup> Anderson (1972) ad 6.475-477 notes the similarity in the sisters' approach.

<sup>145</sup> It is not said that Dido is the eldest of the two, but she is the one to have been married and to rule in Carthage, which suggests her primacy. As for Procne and Philomela, the former's marriage to Tereus probably suggests that she is the eldest too; her name, according to Graves (1955), may derive from *πρωγονή*, i.e. first-born.

trusted. When Aeneas' intention to leave Carthage has been revealed, Dido accuses him of faithlessness (*perfide*, *Aen.* 4.305) and cruelty (*crudelis*, *Aen.* 4.311), describing his actions as outrage (*nefas*, *Aen.* 4.306); Philomela directs the same charges against Tereus: *o crudelis* (*Met.* 6.534); *perfide* (*Met.* 6.539); *utinam fecisses ante nefandos / concubitus!* (*Met.* 6.540-541).

Dido provides a model for both Athenian sisters in other ways too. Procne's description as excited by the Furies when she rushes out of the city to save Philomela (*furiisque agitata doloris*, *Met.* 6.595) echoes the Carthaginian queen's self-portrayal *heu furiis incensa feror* (*Aen.* 4.376).<sup>146</sup> On the other hand, Dido's designation as *infelix* and *misera*, not only in the course of her affair and after her abandonment by Aeneas, but also before she falls in love with him,<sup>147</sup> is reflected in the attribution of the same terms to Philomela both before she leaves Athens (*infelix*, *Met.* 6.485) and after her rape by Tereus (*infelix*, *Met.* 6.602; *miserae*, *Met.* 6.604). As for Anna, the helpful sister who would do anything for her sibling, even die alongside her (*Aen.* 4.678-679), she informs the behaviour not of Philomela but of Procne, who risks her life to save her sister, and then avenges the crime she suffered by turning against her new family, killing her innocent son to punish her guilty husband.

Just as the allusion to Dido's passion for Aeneas and the use of the Carthaginian sisters as common models for Procne and Philomela reinforce the idea of closeness between them, the latter's reaction at the moment of her rape (*frustra clamato saepe parente, / saepe sorore sua, magnis super omnia diuis*, *Met.* 6.525-

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<sup>146</sup> The predominant model for Procne in this scene, however, is another Virgilian character, namely, Amata, on whom see Chapter Two.

<sup>147</sup> *infelix*: *Aen.* 1.712, 1.749, 4.68, 4.450, 4.529, 6.456. *misera*: *Aen.* 1.719, 4.117, 4.315, 4.420, 4.429.

526) evokes another strong family bond treated earlier in epic, this time in the same poem. Given that the sisters' mother is not mentioned at all in this version, it is reasonable to understand that *parente* here stands for *patre*, and that Philomela calls out to her most beloved,<sup>148</sup> as well as to the gods, who are in fact the only ones actually able to help her in her distress. The phrasing, however, recalls a specific cry heard earlier in the *Metamorphoses*, uttered by another virgin at the moment of her rape: as Dis is carrying her off, Proserpina *et matrem et comites, sed matrem saepius, ore / clamat* (*Met.* 5.397-398). The alliteration of *s-* at *Met.* 6.526 corresponds to the repetition of *mat-* sounds at *Met.* 5.397-398, and as the latter reinforces Proserpina's insistence on calling out for her mother through the visualisation of the actual cry *mater*,<sup>149</sup> the former could point to the evocation of Philomela's sister through the use of the kinship term *soror*.

The dialogue with the earlier story is further established through the description of Procne with the same phrase that is used for Proserpina: when Procne reads her sister's message and realises the crime Tereus has committed, she is referred to as *saeui matrona tyranni* (*Met.* 6.581), which echoes Proserpina's description in the Underworld as *inferni pollens matrona tyranni* (*Met.* 5.508). The placing of the very rare phrase *matrona tyranni* at the same metrical position (end of the line) in the two texts stresses the connections between the two stories, established through the use of the same model for both sisters: as a violated girl Proserpina resembles Philomela, but as the queen of the Underworld she is similar to Procne. Through her own rape Proserpina is in a sense transformed from an

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<sup>148</sup> As Pavlock (1991) 38 puts it, Pandion and Procne are "the two persons to whom [Philomela] is most closely bound".

<sup>149</sup> On the mother-daughter relationship exemplified by Ceres and Proserpina see Chapter Two.

innocent maiden to the vengeful queen of the Underworld, the *regina Erebi* (*Met.* 5.543) who exacts a punishment that Ascalaphus probably deserves (*hic tamen indicio poenam linguaque uideri / commeruisse potest, Met.* 5.551-552). Through her sister's rape, Procne is turned into something resembling the Furies (*poenaeque in imagine tota est, Met.* 6.586),<sup>150</sup> the Stygian monsters sometimes identified with Persephone herself,<sup>151</sup> while her sympathetic reaction further emphasised the unanimity of the two sisters. In fact, this association with the infernal sisters is another element that unites Procne and Philomela, since their slaughter of Itys is described as a work of the Furies (*sicut erat sparsis furiali caede capillis, Met.* 6.657), and in that respect Tereus' invocation of precisely those goddesses to help him as he charges after the murderers (*uipereasque ciet Stygia de ualle sorores, Met.* 6.662) can only sound ironic.<sup>152</sup>

Not only are Procne and Philomela modelled on the same precedents, but they also share feelings, which is another indication that they can be described as *unanimae sorores* in the model of Dido and Anna. Procne sends Tereus to fetch her sister for a visit, describing this favour as a great gift:

... uel me uisendam mitte sorori,  
 uel soror huc ueniat! redituram tempore paruo  
 promittes socero; magni mihi muneris instar  
 germanam uidisse dabis ...

<sup>150</sup> The double meaning of this phrase (contemplating vengeance and turning into a personification of vengeance) is explained by Anderson (1972) ad 6.585-586.

<sup>151</sup> Demeter in the Arcadian city Thelpusa is worshipped as Demeter Erinys (*Paus.* 8.25.4, who cites Antimachus as a literary source for that equation [Gantz (1993) 68]) and associated with the Underworld, as Fontenrose (1959) 367-369 points out. According to Harrison (1891) 355, the two are identified in cult "through the medium of Persephone". Bernal (1991) 91 also draws connections between the three goddesses, through the interchangeability of Erinys and Demeter in the myth of Areion, and the identification of Persephone, Erinys and Nephthis. Persephone is called "dreadful" in Homer (*Il.* 9.457, 9.569).

<sup>152</sup> Gildenhard and Zissos (2007) 6-13 interpret these and other infernal elements in the episode as part of "a figuring of hell on earth" (p. 6).

Philomela is later depicted as having the same desire as her sister: *quid quod idem Philomela cupit ... / ... ut eat uisura sororem / ... petit* (Met. 6.475-477). Moreover, Procne's reaction to the false news of Philomela's death (Met. 6.566-570) parallels that of Philomela after her rape (Met. 6.531-533). Both sisters perform gestures of lament typical of funeral settings (tearing of clothes and hair, wailing, breast-beating, praying), but in neither case is there a dead person to mourn: Procne laments the death of her sister who is actually alive, while Philomela symbolically says goodbye to her lost virginity. The description of the two sisters brings them together through the use of the same verb *lugere*, while hinting at the paradoxical nature of their gestures by means of a figure of speech, *polyptoton* for Procne (*luget non sic lugendae fata sororis*, Met. 6.570) and simile for Philomela (*lugenti similis*, Met. 6.532). Finally, Procne is identified with her sister to such an extent that when she reads her message and realises she is still alive, she expresses neither her joy nor her anger verbally, but experiences the pain in silence:

*et (mirum potuisse) silet: dolor ora repressit,  
uerbaque quaerenti satis indignantia linguae  
defuerunt ...*

She thus symbolically participates in her sister's enforced silence and consequent pain (*os mutum facti caret indice. grande doloris / ingenium est*, Met. 6.574-575).<sup>153</sup>

The sisters' unanimity reaches its climax in the aftermath of Itys' murder, when they both wish to reveal to Tereus what he has been eating and enjoy the

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<sup>153</sup> There is also a similarity in reactions between Procne and Tereus, as Pavlock (1991) 42 argues: just as the king did not reply to Philomela's speech but acted in anger by cutting off her tongue, so Procne remains silent when she reads Philomela's message, and reacts, filled with anger, much later in the narrative.

effect that the realisation has on him. While Procne finally allows herself verbal expression of her anger and joy, postponed from the moment she read Philomela's message, she is not explicit about the crime but speaks in riddles:

*dissimulare nequit crudelia gaudia Procne  
iamque suae cupiens existere nuntia cladis  
'intus habes, quem poscis' ait. ...*

*Met. 6.653-655*

Philomela for her part also enjoys the scene but as her ability to speak has been taken from her, she proceeds to actions which in this case are more powerful than words and have the intended effect of revealing to Tereus the truth about Itys:

*prosiluit Ityosque caput Philomela cruentum  
misit in ora patris nec tempore maluit ullo  
posse loqui et meritis testari gaudia dictis.*

*Met. 6.658-660*

Thus the two sisters are in total emotional agreement while they complement each other in actions: Philomela performs the last act by throwing Itys' head to his father, and Procne has the last word by indicating to Tereus that he was cannibalising on his own son.

A final hint at the sisters' unanimity comes at the moment of their transformation, when all three protagonists of the story are turned into birds. Tereus is transformed into a hoopoe (*Met. 6.671-674*) and the two sisters into two other birds, about which it is only said that one likes the woods while the other prefers dwelling near houses, and that the signs of Itys' murder still remain on their plumage:

*... quarum petit altera siluas,  
altera tecta subit; neque adhuc de pectore caedis*



*excessere notae, signataque sanguine pluma est.*

*Met.* 6.668-670<sup>154</sup>

This lack of precision may comment on problems arising by the coexistence of different accounts of the myth in Ovid's time. Often in these narratives the transformation is explained by the correspondence to the names of the protagonists (as in the Hellenistic version that uses the names Aedon "nightingale" and Chelidon "swallow", Boios in *Ant. Lib. Met.* 11.11), or by the events of the story: thus, the swallow is sometimes the sister whose tongue was cut (ps.-Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 3.193), and likewise, the nightingale is connected to the mother of Itys, Procne, who continues to mourn him (thus Boios loc. cit.). It is true, however, that other versions do not provide such an explanation,<sup>155</sup> and that both Greek and Latin sources vary in their attribution of a specific form to the two sisters, not least Ovid himself, who has Procne turn into a swallow on some occasions, but refers to her as a nightingale elsewhere.<sup>156</sup> By allowing this ambiguity in the passage from the *Metamorphoses* Ovid not only hints at other variants of the myth, but he also takes the sisters' unanimity to its limits: they are so close in their affection for each other, in their shared emotions and complementary actions, that they become perpetually interchangeable. The *unanimae sorores* Procne and Philomela live on in poetry alternating their avian form and mourning the loss of Itys both as swallow and as nightingale.

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<sup>154</sup> Boios in *Ant. Lib. Met.* 11.11 gives similar descriptions for Procne who, in her avian form as nightingale, lives *παρὰ ποταμῶν καὶ λόχμας*, and for Philomela, who as swallow, is *σύννοικος ἀνθρώποις*.

<sup>155</sup> In *Hyg. Fab.* 45 Procne becomes the swallow and Philomela the nightingale, but there is no mention of laceration. Heraclitus the Paradoxographer (*De incred.* 35) gives a rationalised version of the myth, but refers to "stories" (*ἱστοροῦνται*) describing Procne turning into a swallow and Philomela into a nightingale.

<sup>156</sup> The respective passages are listed in Ciappi (1998) 145 n. 12. In Latin literature *philomela* often stands for "nightingale", for which the actual term is *luscinia*.

## Sisters by blood I: Argia and Deipyle

Writing in the shadow of Virgil, Flavian poets are also influenced by the representation of Dido and Anna in their female portraits.<sup>157</sup> As far as sisters are concerned, Valerius' use of the theme of unanimity is limited to the goddesses impersonating Medea's sister and aunt pretending emotional identification with her, in order to appear more credible in their disguise.<sup>158</sup> Statius, on the other hand, takes the Virgilian precedent to a different level in his *Thebaid* by introducing not one but three pairs of sisters, all of whom display characteristics that would justify to some extent their qualification as *unanimae*. As will be demonstrated in this section, he achieves such a characterisation by setting up a one-way correspondence between Dido or Anna and their Flavian counterparts, as well as by using all four Virgilian heroines (Lavinia in particular) as common models shared by each pair.<sup>159</sup>

Statius first treats the daughters of the Argive king Adrastus, Argia and Deipyle, who are destined to become the wives of the two exiles who arrive at his palace in Book 1, Polynices and Tydeus respectively. Unlike their Theban counterparts, the daughters of Oedipus, Antigone and Ismene, the Argive sisters are rarely mentioned before Statius' epic. Homer offers the earliest reference to the marriage between Tydeus and the daughter of Adrastus, who is not named (*Il.*

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<sup>157</sup> For Virgilian influences on Valerius' Medea, Chalciope and Circe, see Chapter Two; on Statius' Jocasta, Antigone and Ismene, see Chapter Three.

<sup>158</sup> On a discussion of divine disguise in Valerius' *Argonautica* in connection with the theme of love and marriage, see Chapter Two.

<sup>159</sup> I discuss the mother-daughter relationship exemplified by Amata and Lavinia in Chapter Two (with respect to the theme of Love and Marriage), and Chapter Three (with respect to Loss and Mourning).

14.121), but it is possible that the cyclic epic *Thebaid* dealt with the matter in more detail.<sup>160</sup> While the theme of marriage is a recurring one, Argia and Deipyle's names are not found in any of the tragedies dealing with the myth.<sup>161</sup> It is, however, clear from other sources that the predominant variant had the former marry Polynices and the latter Tydeus.<sup>162</sup> In Rome they only feature in Hyginus' mythological summaries, where they are described as the daughters of Adrastus and mothers, through Polynices and Tydeus respectively, to the Epigonoι Thersander and Diomedes (*Fab.* 69);<sup>163</sup> in one of the versions Argia is designated as the eldest of the two (*Fab.* 69.5), and she also appears as Antigone's helper to bury Polynices, fleeing when the guards come to arrest them (*Fab.* 72). This relative obscurity allows Statius to be inspired by a variety of epic precedents in his portrayal of the two women, but his use of one model at a time which informs the characterisation of both renders the Argive sisters practically interchangeable for a large part of the narrative.

Argia and Deipyle are first introduced in the poem in the same way as Lavinia was in the *Aeneid* (*Aen.* 7.50-52), namely, by reference to their father's lack of male progeny:

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<sup>160</sup> Unfortunately, its fragments do not reveal anything in this direction.

<sup>161</sup> Euripides (*Suppl.* 131-161) describes Adrastus' interpretation of the oracle that told him to marry his daughters (κόραι or παρθέναι) to a lion and a boar, and his decision to give their hands to Polynices and Tydeus. In the *Phoenissae* Antigone refers to the marriage of Tydeus to sister of Polynices' wife (135-137); Jocasta complains to her son about his marriage away from home (337-339) and Polynices tells her the story of the oracle predicting his and Tydeus' marriage to the daughters of Adrastus (παῖδες or νεάνιδες) (408-425); finally, right before the brothers' duel, Polynices prays to Hera mentioning his marriage to the daughter of Adrastus (1365-1366).

<sup>162</sup> Mnaseas perieg. in *Schol.* in Eur. *Phoen.* 410 (3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC); Diod. Sic. *Bibl.* 4.65.3; Ps.-Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.76, 1.103, 3.59. However, in Theocr. *Id.* 17.53-54 Argia, and not Deipyle, appears as the wife of Tydeus and mother of Diomede (unless Ἀργεία there simply means "woman of Argos", in which case it is Deipyle who is probably referred to).

<sup>163</sup> In their status as mothers of the *epigonoι* they are also mentioned in *Fab.* 71 (Argia), 97 and 175 (Deipyle).

*hic sexus melioris inops sed prole uirebat  
feminea, gemino natarum pignore fultus.*

*Theb.* 1.393-394

Virgil's *prolesque uirilis / nulla fuit* (*Aen.* 7.50-51) is echoed in Statius' *prole uirebat / feminea* (*Theb.* 1.393), who manages to turn the Virgilian *clausola* into its opposite while retaining the effect of the enjambment: not male but female progeny, not lacking but flourishing. Furthermore, just as Latinus receives a prophecy by his father Faunus that he has to marry Lavinia to a foreigner (*Aen.* 7.96-101), according to a prophecy given to Adrastus by Apollo, he is to marry his daughters to a lion and a boar, identified with the newcomers Polynices and Tydeus, because of the lion skin and boar teeth covering their shoulders (*Theb.* 1.482-492).<sup>164</sup>

Lavinia as a model is also recalled when the two sisters are summoned by their father and appear in front of Tydeus and Polynices for the first time:

*... noua deinde pudori  
uisa uirum facies: pariter pallorque ruborque  
purpureas hausere genas, oculique uerentes  
ad sanctum rediere patrem. ...*

*Theb.* 1.536-539

The two girls blush and turn to look at their father in modesty, while their faces display a mixture of colours, as they grow pale and red at the same time. This combination of white and red, as well as the act of blushing itself, echo quite clearly Lavinia's blush (*Aen.* 12.64-69), who reacts in such a way in front of Turnus. In both cases the maidens' reaction is due to the fact that they are being the object of male

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<sup>164</sup> According to Gantz (1993) 510, the recognition of bridegrooms through prophecy is a motif solidly rooted in folklore and represents an early element of the myth.

gaze, Argia and Deipyle of the strangers (*uisa uirum facies*, *Theb.* 1.537), Lavinia of the man who was originally promised her hand in marriage and is now evidently focusing his attention on her face (*illum turbat amor figitque in uirgine uultus*, *Aen.* 12.70).<sup>165</sup> In both cases, the virginal status of the girls is also emphasised: when Argia and Deipyle walk in the hall, they are designated as *utraque uirgo* (*Theb.* 1.533), and it is this word which describes Lavinia twice when she blushes in front of Turnus (*uirgo*, *Aen.* 12.69; *uirgine*, *Aen.* 12.70).

It is perhaps not without significance that Argia and Lavinia are both eponymous of their respective cities, Argos and Lavinium, although it is clear that the former took her name from her homeland while the latter would give hers to the city her husband Aeneas would found beyond the limits of the epic. As the two sisters are indiscriminately described until the moment when the necklace of Harmonia comes into view (*Theb.* 2.297-298), and only then do they follow separate paths that remain so for the rest of the poem, up to that point the name 'Argia' could stand for either of them, given that the preferred way to refer to them is by the designation *sorores* or *uirgines*.<sup>166</sup> Thus, the connections between the Argive sisters on the one hand (represented by 'Argia') and Lavinia on the other are not limited to thematic similarities but extend themselves to the fields of language and semantics.

The model of Lavinia continues to prevail in the representation of Argia and Deipyle in *Thebaid* 2. At the start of the book, Adrastus offers his daughters in marriage to Tydeus and Polynices, stressing the girls' modesty which, as he points

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<sup>165</sup> Statius seems to have understood Lavinia's blush in the *Aeneid* as her reaction to being viewed by Turnus: *non talis niueos tinxit Lauinia uultus / cum Turno spectante rubet* (*Silu.* 1.2.244-245).

<sup>166</sup> They are only named once at *Theb.* 2.203-204, but the stress there falls on their identification due to their equal beauty rather than their individuality.

out (*Theb.* 2.160-161), was witnessed at the banquet, as well as their popularity amongst suitors:

*has tumidi solio et late dominantibus armis  
optauere uiri – longum enumerare Pharaeos  
Oebaliosque duces et Achaea per oppida matres –  
spe generis, nec plura tuus despexerat Oeneus  
foedera Pisaeisque socer metuendus habenis.*

*Theb.* 2.162-166

The description of the sisters' hand as sought by many a hero as well as by their mothers, probably echoes that of Lavinia's popularity among the men of Italy: *multi illam magno e Latio totaque petebant / Ausonia* (*Aen.* 7.54-55). Just as Latinus rejects all other suitors, including Turnus, whom the queen champions, in favour of Aeneas, Adrastus here promises the two men that they will receive his daughters' hands in accordance with fate (*Theb.* 2.167-169). To strengthen this connection even more, one detail is added in the description of Adrastus' daughters: they are ready for marriage (*aequo pubescunt sidere natae*, *Theb.* 2.159),<sup>167</sup> just as Lavinia is said to be *iam matura uiro, iam plenis nubilis annis* (*Aen.* 7.53).

The Latin princess, however, is not the only figure that Argia and Deipyle are modelled on; when Adrastus sends Acaste, his daughters' nurse, to fetch them in order to present them to his guests, a new parallel can be identified, this time with an Ovidian story:

*... tum rex longaeus Acasten –  
natarum haec altrix eadem et fidissima custos  
lecta sacrum iustae Veneri occultare pudorem –*

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<sup>167</sup> Mulder (1954) ad 2.159 understands the phrase *aequo sidere* as "with equal beauty" and suggests that this equality between the sisters serves the purpose of keeping both sons-in-law happy and removes the danger of one of them feeling inferior to the other if his bride was less beautiful than the other one.

*imperat acciri tacitaeque inmurmurat auri.  
nec mora praeceptis ...*

*Theb.* 1.529-533

Acaste recalls Philomela's "trusted nurse" who accompanies her into the hall where her father Pandion is entertaining Tereus:

*inpetus est illi comitum corrumpere curam  
nutricisque fidem nec non ingentibus ipsam  
sollicitare datis totumque inpendere regnum*

*Met.* 6.461-463

The circumstances of the two stories are different, with Tereus eventually raping Philomela, while Polynices and Tydeus are officially given the hands of Argia and Deipyle. The parallel, however, is not only thematic: a nurse brings in a young virgin where her father entertains a man who is to have a sexual relationship with her (either legitimate or not),<sup>168</sup> with the protagonists doubled in the case of the *Thebaid*.

The spectacle of the women entering the hall attracts great attention, not only from the characters present, but also from the poets, who in both cases compare the women to goddesses. Here, Argia and Deipyle are compared to Minerva and Diana:

*... cum protinus utraque uirgo  
arcano egressae thalamo. mirabile uisu,  
Pallados armisonae pharetrataeque ora Dianae  
aequa ferunt, terrore minus. ...*

*Theb.* 1.533-536

There, Philomela is compared to the Nymphs of waters and trees:

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<sup>168</sup> There is no comparable scene in the *Aeneid*, where Aeneas and Lavinia are nowhere said to have seen each other.

*ecce uenit magno diues Philomela paratu,  
diuitior forma, quales audire solemus  
naidas et dryadas mediis incedere siluis,  
si modo des illis cultus similesque paratus.*

*Met.* 6.451-454

In both cases the simile is somewhat incomplete, in the sense that the poet leaves room for disagreement. Ovid compares the beauty of Philomela to that of the Nymphs but makes it clear that they do not use the same adornments and clothes. Likewise, Statius parallels Argia and Deipyle's beauty to that of Minerva and Diana, but explicitly declares that the goddesses are also frightening, a characteristic which the mortal women do not possess.

This simile also recalls two other epic women who, like Argia and Deipyle, are seen by men with whom they are about to enter in a sexual relationship: one is an Ovidian heroine similar to Philomela, namely, Herse in Book 2,<sup>169</sup> who is compared to Diana's lunar form when seen by Mercury (*Met.* 2.722-725), even though their affair is not eventually consummated.<sup>170</sup> The other is Dido who is compared to Diana when first viewed by Aeneas (*Aen.* 1.496-504);<sup>171</sup> the Carthaginian queen is thus established as another model for the representation of the Argive sisters. Moreover, the fact that Argia and Deipyle are sought in marriage

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<sup>169</sup> On their comparison see Chapter Two.

<sup>170</sup> Fredericks (1977) 249 explains Mercury's departure without sleeping with Herse as a result of his mercurial behaviour throughout the Book. Gildenhard and Zissos (2004) 66-67, on the other hand, interpret this curious action as Ovid's way of deconstructing yet another Athenian legend by denying the Cecropids a link to the gods.

<sup>171</sup> Dietrich (2004) 9-12 discusses all the parallels between Argia and Dido, starting with this simile, but concludes that in the end of the poem Statius makes it clear that Argia is not another Dido, as her predominant emotion is not *furor* but *fides* (p. 12).



by many suitors (*Theb.* 2.162-164), finds a parallel in Anna's words to Dido about the men who wished to marry her:<sup>172</sup>

... *aegram nulli quondam flexere mariti,*  
*non Libyae, non ante Tyro; despectus Iarbas*  
*ductoresque alii, quos Africa terra triumphis*  
*diues alit: ...*

*Aen.* 4.35-38

At the same time, the idea of *pudor* that the Argive sisters' nurse safeguards (*fidissima custos / lecta sacrum iustae Veneri occultare pudorem, Theb.* 1.530-531)<sup>173</sup> is emphasised in the beginning of *Aeneid* 4, where Dido connects it to honouring the memory of her dead husband Sychaeus:

*sed mihi uel tellus optem prius ima dehiscat*  
*uel pater omnipotens adigat me fulmine ad umbras,*  
*pallentis umbras Erebo noctemque profundam,*  
*ante, pudor, quam te uiolo aut tua iura resoluo*

*Aen.* 4.24-27

Likewise, the modesty of Argia and Deipyle is constantly stressed both by the poet (*pudori, Theb.* 1.536; *pudorem / deiectaeque genas. ... / ... modestia, Theb.* 2.231-233), and by their father (*quantus honos quantusque pudor, Theb.* 2.160).

Anna's words, however, manage to make Dido's *pudor* disappear (*soluitque pudorem, Aen.* 4.55) and it is only when Aeneas abandons her that the queen mourns for its loss:

... *te propter eundem*  
*extinctus pudor et, qua sola sidera adibam,*

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<sup>172</sup> Suggested as a parallel by Mulder (1954) ad 2.162 alongside *Od.* 1.245ff.

<sup>173</sup> Argia and Deipyle's nurse is described in terms similar to those used in the portrayal of Medea's nurse in Valerius Flaccus (*audit uirginei custos grandaeva pudoris / Henioche, cultus primi cui creditus aevi, Arg.* 5.356-357), although the Valerian intertext is even more prominent in the description of Menoetes, Argia's tutor (*olim hic uirginei custos monitorque pudoris, Theb.* 12.205).

*fama prior ...*

*Aen.* 4.321-323

On the contrary, Argia and Deipyle never lose their modesty,<sup>174</sup> as it is also referred to both at the description of their wedding in Book 2, and even in Book 12, when Argia seeks her husband's body on the battlefield. Then she is accompanied by Menoetes, *olim hic uirginei custos monitorque pudoris* (*Theb.* 12.205), and her cries are described as *modesto ... gemitu* (*Theb.* 12.239-240).<sup>175</sup>

Up to this point, the two sisters are designated either by the kinship term *natae* (*Theb.* 1.394, 1.530, 2.159), or by a collective noun (*prole ... / feminea*, *Theb.* 1.393-394; *utraque uirgo*, *Theb.* 1.533). The first moment when they are individualised by being given personal names is at the announcement of their wedding:

*ergo alacres Argi, fuso rumore per urbem  
aduenisse duci generos primisque hymenaeis  
egregiam **Argian** nec formae laude secundam  
**Deipylen** tumida iam uirginitate iugari,  
gaudia mente parant. ...*

*Theb.* 2.201-205

The attribution of names to the two young women, however, does not so much separate them as stress their similarities even more. The reason that Argia is mentioned first is perhaps to indicate her being the firstborn, although Statius is not explicit about this information.<sup>176</sup> There follows Deipyle's description as equal

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<sup>174</sup> Which confirms Vessey's idea (1973) 99 that the two are "figurative of chastity and modest obedience".

<sup>175</sup> Hall et al have Heinsius' emendation *molesto* at the end of line 239, but the transmitted *modesto* is more significant in this context, and it works well in juxtaposition with Menoetes, the guardian of Argia's *pudor*, now feeling shame (*pudet*, *Theb.* 12.237) for falling behind.

<sup>176</sup> The phrase *geminæ ... / ... aequo pubescunt sidere natae* (*Theb.* 2.158-159) could mean either that they are twins (taking *geminæ* literally), or that they are simply two daughters (taking its wider

in beauty to her sister, and their virtual identification is encouraged by the position of their names between words related to marriage (*primis hymenaeis* at the end of line 202 and *uirginitate iugari* at the end of line 204).<sup>177</sup> Furthermore, *tumida* carries connotations of pregnancy which is the expected outcome of the event.<sup>178</sup>

Their description during the wedding supports the idea of identification by evoking the same model, Lavinia, and by recalling their first physical appearance in Book 1 and their father's praises earlier in Book 2. Their modesty is once again stressed as they walk to the temple of Minerva accompanied by their mother and other Argive women, keeping their eyes downcast (*deiectaeque genas, Theb. 2.232*). Lavinia takes part in a similar procession, not to be joined in marriage to her future husband, but to assist to the prayers of the Latin women to the same goddess; nevertheless, her eyes are also fixed to the ground (*oculos deiecta decoros, Aen. 11.480*). The hint at the princess' modesty through the word *decoros* is now expanded to cover the whole of the Argive sisters' appearance (*uultuque habituque uerendo, Theb. 2.230; fusae super ora pudorem, Theb. 2.231; subit ... / uirginitatis amor, Theb. 2.232-233; modestia ... / confundit uultus, Theb. 2.233-234*). Once again they blush (*candida purpureum fusae super ora pudorem, Theb. 2.231*), as they did when they entered the hall where their future husbands waited (*Theb. 1.536-539*). In addition, they cry (*tunc ora rigantur honestis / imbribus et teneros lacrimae iuere parentes, Theb. 2.234-235*), further encouraging the

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meaning 'double, two'). A similar ambiguity concerns *aequo sidere*, which could be either a reference to seasons, thus implying the same age, or to luck, thus simply denoting shared good fortune. Mulder (1954) ad 203 admits it is a debatable matter, but adds that Argia in Statius plays a greater role than her sister Deipyle.

<sup>177</sup> Mulder (1954) ad 2.202 sees in the phrase *primisque hymenaeis / ... / ... iugari* an imitation of Virgil's description of Dido's marriage: *cui pater intactam dederat primisque iugarat / ominibus (Aen. 1.345-346)*.

<sup>178</sup> The phrase *tumida uirginitate* also evokes, according to Mulder (1954) 204, Lavinia's description as ready to be married quoted above (*Aen. 7.54*).

connection to Lavinia, who accompanies her blush with tears (*Aen.* 12.64). The quasi-identification of the two sisters, however, is additionally implied by what follows this description, namely, a long simile which compares them to Minerva and Diana, picking up the much briefer mention of their similarity in the previous book (*Theb.* 1.535-536).<sup>179</sup>

According to this simile, Argia and Deipyle look like Minerva and Diana when the two goddesses come down from the sky with their respective retinues (*Theb.* 2.236-239):

*tum si fas oculis non umquam longa tuendo  
expedias cui maior honos aut gratia, cui plus  
de loue, mutatosque uelint transsumere cultus,  
et Pallas deceat pharetras et Delia cristas.*

*Theb.* 2.240-243

This idea of interchangeability between Minerva and Diana, conferred by the comment that a spectator would not be able to tell them apart whether they kept their attributes or exchanged them, is transferred to Argia and Deipyle stressing their identification even more than the use of a common literary model can achieve. Certainly, the choice of goddesses lies in their virginal status which they share (for the moment) with the daughters of Adrastus. Similarly, Ovid's Proserpina is classified by Venus under the same category as Minerva and Diana (*Met.* 5.375-377). Therefore, not only does the poet insist on Argia and Deipyle's virginity both by making it the subject of their thoughts (*subit ... supremus / uirginitatis amor*, *Theb.* 2.232-233) and by comparing them to the virgin goddesses *par excellence*;

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<sup>179</sup> Vessey (1973) 138 sees this development as strengthening the idea of *pudor* which characterises the two sisters.

but he also identifies the two sisters with the use of the characteristics they have an equal share in, namely, virginity, beauty, and modesty.

Up to this point the Argive sisters share the same feelings and thoughts, thus encouraging the reader to see them as *unanimae*, in the model of Dido and Anna, even if Statius is not inspired by the Virgilian characters' specific behaviour. This near-identification, however, ceases to exist once the necklace of Harmonia is described which adorns only one of the sisters:

*tum donis Argia nitet uilesque sororis  
ornatus sacro praeculta superuenit auro.*

*Theb. 2.297-298*

The cursed necklace causes an inauspicious omen and prepares the reader for the sad outcome of the double wedding; the mention of that unique item, however, also draws a line between the two sisters, with Argia emitting a splendid light which overshadows Deipyle's appearance. From this moment onwards, the Argive sisters follow their individual paths, which cross a few times, without ever again achieving that former identification. Very soon Argia's love for Polynices unknowingly works against Deipyle's love for Tydeus when the latter is sent to Thebes to test Eteocles' loyalty:

*... multum lacrimis conata morari  
Deipyle, sed iussa patris tutique regressus  
legato iustaeque preces uicere sororis.*

*Theb. 2.372-374*

Although it is not explicitly said, Deipyle would have felt slighted when her tears were not as powerful as her father's commands and her sister's prayers.

The two sisters recede to the background, only to appear again together as they march towards Thebes among other Argive women to seek funeral for their beloved ones who fell in the battlefield; Argia leads the way (*Theb.* 12.113) with Deipyle following immediately afterwards:

*proxima* Lernaeo Calydonidas agmine mixtas  
Tydeos exequiis trahit **haud cessura sorori**  
Deipyle ...

*Theb.* 12.117-119

The daughters of Adrastus are described as walking very close to each other, in fact, keeping an equal pace, and it is the love for their husbands that motivates them both. Even though this brief mention reactivates their unanimity in terms of affection for each other and identification of intention, Argia soon leaves the group to head to Thebes alone while Deipyle follows the rest of the Argive women to Athens. They are only rejoined in the scene of the funeral itself right before the conclusion of the poem (*ut saeuos narret uigiles Argia sorori, Theb.* 12.804) where Argia tells Deipyle of her adventures as she, together with Antigone, gave Polynices the burial he was denied. With their husbands killed, all they have left is one another, and thus the poem comes full circle, offering a final glimpse of the Argive sisters side by side, occupying the intimate space of the end of the line.

### **Sisters by blood II: Antigone and Ismene**

Argia and Deipyle appear as early as Book 1 but the description of their relationship focuses almost exclusively on their near-identification in terms of beauty and modesty. On the contrary, their Theban counterparts Antigone and Ismene appear relatively late, but their bond is granted a lengthier treatment and

their dialogue offers the reader a more complete picture with regard to their unanimity. As in the case of the Argive sisters, they remain together for the most part of the poem, but go their separate ways towards the end of the poem, Ismene choosing death and Antigone glory.

Unlike Argia and Deipyle, Statius had a wealth of sources for inspiration in his representation of Antigone and Ismene's relationship.<sup>180</sup> Although Aeschylus does not go into detail about the two sisters' bond to one another,<sup>181</sup> Sophocles provides two somewhat contradicting portraits in his *Antigone* and *Oedipus Coloneus*. In the course of the homonymous play, Antigone appears as active and brave while Ismene seems to be more reserved and obedient to the ruler of the city. When, however, her sister is caught in the act of burying Polynices, Ismene claims that she helped her in order to share in her sister's fate (*Ant.* 536ff.).<sup>182</sup> While Antigone commits suicide in her prison (*Ant.* 1220-1222), nothing is further said of Ismene's fate,<sup>183</sup> and her function in the *Antigone* is limited to stressing by contrast the homonymous heroine's courage and defiance of human law. On the contrary, in Sophocles' posthumous production of *Oedipus Coloneus* the two sisters appear equally active<sup>184</sup> and their actions are often presented as complementing

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<sup>180</sup> They are commonly known as the daughters of Oedipus and Jocasta: Soph. *Ant.*, and *OC passim*; Eur. *Phoen. passim*; Schol. in Hom. *Od.* 11.271; Diod. Sic. *Bibl.* 4.64.4; Ps.-Apoll. *Bibl.* 3.55. There is, however, a variant in which the mother of all four children of Oedipus is not his mother Jocasta but his second wife Euryganeia (*Oedipodeia*, fr. 2 B./D.; Pherecydes in *Schol. ad Phoen.* 53; Ps.-Apollod. also knows of this version, loc. cit.).

<sup>181</sup> They appear to mourn their brothers at the end of the play (*Sept.* 861-1004), and Antigone declares her intention to bury Polynices (alone) despite the decree of the Cadmean authorities (*Sept.* 1026-1052).

<sup>182</sup> This precedent may be the inspiration for a similar scene in Book 12, where Antigone and Argia try to outdo one another by admitting responsibility for Polynices' burial.

<sup>183</sup> Some versions either have her killed by Tydeus (Pherecydes in *Schol. ad Phoen.* 53; Mimnermus in Aristoph. *gram. Arg.* 1 – because she was befriending Theoclymenus), or burnt in the temple of Hera by Eteocles' son Laodamas together with Antigone (Ion in Aristoph. *gram. Arg.* 1).

<sup>184</sup> Ismene goes all the way from Thebes to Colonus alone to warn her father about Creon's plans (*OC* 325ff), and she also offers to perform the expiatory rites on behalf of her father (*OC* 503-509).

each other. Oedipus praises both, Antigone for being his guide in his wanderings (OC 345-352), and Ismene for being the one who always brought him oracles in the past, as well as a faithful “guardian” now that he has been driven to exile (OC 353-356). At the end of the play, after Oedipus’ death, Antigone asks that they both be sent back to Thebes to stop their brothers’ bloodshed (OC 1768-1772).

The few, mostly sententious<sup>185</sup> fragments of Euripides’ *Antigone* and a comment on its content included in the hypothesis of the homonymous Sophoclean play<sup>186</sup> do not yield much information on the matter. His *Phoenissae*, on the other hand, only mentions Ismene once as being younger than Antigone (*Phoen.* 57-58), whereas the latter appears both on stage and in the words of other characters, somewhat overshadowing her sister. She performs a *teichoscopia* (*Phoen.* 88-201) together with her tutor, but later defends her maidenly modesty when her mother wants to take her outside their palace (*Phoen.* 1275-1276); she grieves for the death of her brothers (*Phoen.* 1435-1437), as well as for her fate after her mother’s suicide (*Phoen.* 1485ff.), wishing for a nightingale to come and join her weeping (*Phoen.* 1515-1518). She is no longer embarrassed despite her blush (*Phoen.* 1486-1489), and declares in front of Creon that she will bury Polynices (*Phoen.* 1657), which she performs beyond the limits of the play.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Collard and Cropp (2008) 157.

<sup>186</sup> According to 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC grammarian Aristophanes (*Arg.* 1), Euripides in his homonymous play had Antigone get arrested alongside Haemon for the burial of Polynices, then marry her fiancé and give birth to a son called Maeon.

<sup>187</sup> The majority of Greek sources attributes the burial of Polynices to Antigone, either describing the event or announcing that it is going to happen beyond the limits of the present work; Diod. Sic. *Bibl.* 4.65.9, however, ignores this version in favour of one where the pious people of Athens perform the burial of both Polynices and the rest of the Argive army. Callimachus also dealt with some part of the myth in the *Aetia*, but the fragmentary state of Book 4 does not permit a clear idea of the extent of his treatment. It is almost certain, however, that the idea of the split fires coming out of the common pyre of the two brothers goes back at least to frg. 105 Pf. [Pollmann (2004) ad 430-1].



Roman authors of various genres also make wide use of the Theban saga,<sup>188</sup> but the tragedies that survive either in full or in fragments do not explore the sister bond;<sup>189</sup> by Hyginus' time there are several versions circulating in the literary circles. He knows Antigone and Ismene as daughters of Oedipus and Jocasta (*Fab.* 67.6). Antigone and Argia buried Polynices, but when caught, Argia fled and Antigone was given by Creon to his son Haemon with the order that he killed her. Haemon entrusted her to some shepherds but when their son came to Thebes, Creon recognized him and despite the pleas of Hercules, Haemon had to kill Antigone and then committed suicide (*Fab.* 72).<sup>190</sup> Antigone also appears in a list of women who committed suicide (*Fab.* 243.8). Presumably, Statius had access to all of the above and used elements from different texts according to his own purposes. The myths concerning Antigone and Ismene, however, are not the sole sources of inspiration for the poet of the *Thebaid*; the Theban sisters are modelled on other female pairs equally if not more extensively than is the case with Argia and Deipyle. At the same time, their description is compared and sometimes contrasted with that of the Argive sisters, so that the reader of one pair keeps thinking of the other.

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<sup>188</sup> E.g. Prop. *El.* 2.8.21-24 (Haemon committing suicide over Antigone's grave).

<sup>189</sup> Accius wrote a number of plays (*Antigona*, *Epigoni*, *Phoenissae*, *Thebais*) all preserved in fragments. Presumably it was Sophocles' version that he took inspiration from [Collard and Cropp (2008) 159]. Seneca's tragedies *Phoenissae* and *Oedipus* also draw inspiration from the Theban myths, but the latter deals with earlier events of Oedipus' incestuous marriage, and the former is in fragmentary state and breaks off before the mutual killing of Eteocles and Polynices, thus allowing no speculation as to the role of Antigone, Ismene or Argia.

<sup>190</sup> Jouan and Van Looy (1998) 195-198 discuss the problem of the relationship of the version of Hyginus to the Euripidean *Antigone*, and conclude that the evidence of the hypothesis and the fragments does not agree with the mythographer's story. According to Collard and Cropp (2008) 158, it is widely agreed that Hyginus is following the homonymous play of Astydamos the Younger (*TrGF* 1 60 T 5).

The first reference to both sisters forms part of Polynices' thoughts as he sets off with the Argive army:

*iam regnum matrisque sinus **fidasque sorores**  
spe uotisque tenet, tamen et de turre suprema  
attonitam totoque extantem corpore longe  
respicit Argian: haec mentem oculosque reducit  
coniugis et dulces auertit pectore Thebas.*

*Theb.* 4.88-92

The love for his mother and sisters is juxtaposed to that for Argia, his wife – this implied comparison between Argia on the one hand and Antigone and Ismene on the other hand will become more explicit in Book 12, where Argia is almost equated to Antigone and comes closer to her than her own sister. Here, however, the way the Theban sisters are referred to, not by their individual names but by the collective phrase *fidae sorores*, suggests that they are almost one and the same person in Polynices' thoughts. This recalls the way the Argive sisters were first introduced in the narrative in Book 1; and as it will become clear from the subsequent references to them, here too we can infer the idea that Antigone and Ismene, in their representation as a pair and not as individuals, could be interchangeable.

When Polynices was setting off from Argos, he thought of his homeland, mother and sisters; when Eteocles talks about him later in the poem, he repeats this thought adding their father and himself as the people against whom his brother has come with his army: *hic pater hic genetrix hic **iunctae stirpe sorores**, / hic erat et frater* (*Theb.* 7.385-386). Once again the Theban sisters are referred to by their bond both to each other and to their brothers; the new phrase, however,

emphasizes the affection that goes with this family tie,<sup>191</sup> as well as its strength and depth. Not only does this expression stress the relationship of Polynices with his sisters with whom he shares the same parents; but it also points at the sisters' relationship to each other. As they are "bound by their race", their birth has ensured that they are closer to one another than anyone can be, thus once again matching their Argive counterparts.

Antigone and Ismene's first physical appearance in the narrative only comes in Book 7 where they accompany their mother Jocasta to the Argive camp with the purpose of convincing Polynices not to turn against his own homeland. When they enter the stage, they are described as *natae* (*Theb.* 7.479), because they are visualised through Jocasta, who brought them along not only to support her but also to blackmail Polynices through his love for his sisters.<sup>192</sup> For the same reason they are not individualised yet but denoted by such a general term as "daughters". Likewise, when Polynices comes to meet them, they are visualised through his eyes: *nunc ipsam urgens nunc cara sororum / pectora* (*Theb.* 7.495-496). As intended, their presence makes Polynices change his mind, and this is the moment when their names are first spelled out: *nunc rudis Ismenes nunc flebiliora precantis / Antigones* (*Theb.* 7.535-536). While this differentiation offers more information as to the character of the two sisters, it still does not reveal anything about their relationship to each other; at the same time, the independence they momentarily receive foreshadows the separation that seals their fate in Book 11. For now they are to be taken as inseparable, and this is achieved through the careful

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<sup>191</sup> Smolenaars (1994) ad 385, who sees in this phrase a parallel to the Sophoclean ᾧ κοινὸν ἀντάδελφον Ἰσμῆνης κάρα (*Ant.* 1).

<sup>192</sup> See Chapter Three on the discussion of the relationship between mother and daughters.

arrangement of their mentions in this scene, where the collective terms “daughters” and “sisters” provide a frame for their individual names: *hinc atque hinc natae* (*Theb.* 7.479); *cara sororum / pectora* (*Theb.* 7.495-496); *Ismenes ... / Antigones* (*Theb.* 7.535-536); *mediaeque sorores* (*Theb.* 7.557, visualised again through their bond to Polynices); *natas* (*Theb.* 7.610, visualised through their relationship to Jocasta).

The episode which provides most insight into the sisterly bond and allows for a comparison with other sister pairs in epic is found in Book 8. Once the poet has dealt with Tydeus’ duel with Ismene’s fiancé Atys, his attention shifts to Thebes where the daughters of Oedipus talk about the war and lament their family’s ills:<sup>193</sup>

*interea thalami secreta in parte **sorores**,  
par aliud morum miserique innoxia **proles**  
Oedipodae, varias miscent sermone querellas.  
nec mala quae iuxta sed longa ab origine fati,  
**haec** matris taedas oculos ast **illa** paternos,  
**altera** regnantem profugum gemit **altera** fratrem,  
bella **ambae**. ...*

*Theb.* 8.607-613

As before, they are collectively described, but with no fewer than three designations packed in one and a half lines (*sorores, par, proles*), creating the impression of a very intimate relationship. Antigone and Ismene also complement each other in their narrative of the family’s past misfortunes,<sup>194</sup> as the syntax points out (*haec ... illa ... / altera ... altera ... / ... ambae, Theb.* 8.611-613), while kinship

<sup>193</sup> According to Dominik (1994a) 59, the “juxtaposition of battle scenes [...] with brief scenes depicting the dejection of the Argives (8.363-72) and the lament of Ismene and Antigone (8.607-54) serves to emphasize the human cost of the supernaturally inspired war.”

<sup>194</sup> This scene “draws attention to the undeserved nature of their suffering”, but also showcases the “virtuous qualities of womankind” as innocent victims of the war [Dominik (1994b) 126-127].

terms valid for both, such as *mater, pater, frater*, go together with a plural verb (*miscent*) and an expression equivalent to *par* in meaning (*ambae*). This arrangement paired with a balanced distribution of half a line to each one (*Theb.* 8.611-612) confirms the sisters' indivisibility and identical behaviour, a trait shared with the other pair of the poem, namely Argia and Deipyle, for a considerable part of the narrative.

Furthermore, Antigone and Ismene's mourning is compared to the incessant lament of Pandion's daughters, Procne and Philomela (*Theb.* 8.616-620). The simile evokes another family tragedy the female members of which go on to lament: Procne and Philomela the death of Itys whom they killed and served to his father Tereus in revenge for his raping of his wife's sister; Antigone and Ismene the sins of their parents and the hatred of their brothers which brought upon them this war.<sup>195</sup> The Theban sisters, however, are less responsible for their misfortunes than the Athenian ones. Moreover, the image evoked connects this part of the narrative with the end of the epic, where another set of mourning women, the Argive widows, are also going to be compared to nightingales (*Theb.* 12.478-480).<sup>196</sup> At the same time the comparison to Procne and Philomela indicates how close Antigone and Ismene are, as sisterly solidarity never had a better champion than Procne: her love for her sister manages to overcome even her maternal love for her only son.<sup>197</sup> The ideas of harm, madness, and murder followed by infinite grief at the death of Itys that characterize the Athenian myth, however, are also activated in the

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<sup>195</sup> Micozzi (2001-2002) 269; Scioli (2010) 207.

<sup>196</sup> Micozzi (2001-2002) 269; Scioli (2010) 232-233.

<sup>197</sup> See the second section in this Chapter on Procne and Philomela as *unanimae sorores*.

narrative of *Thebaid* 8, preparing the reader if not for similar crimes from the part of Antigone and Ismene, then at least for similar sorrows.

Finally, the simile maintains the emphasis placed in the previous lines on recounting past grievous events: the daughters of Oedipus (*proles / Oedipodae*, *Theb.* 8.608-609) keep on retelling the Theban saga, just as the metamorphosed daughters of Pandion (*Pandioniae ... uolucres*, *Theb.* 8.616) continue in eternity their song as they weep for Itys. Not by chance Antigone and Ismene linger on the older events concerning Oedipus' marriage to Jocasta and his self-blinding, just as the birds tell of the *exordia* (*Theb.* 8.618) of their sad story, which cannot be but the rape of Philomela, the first event that led to all the rest. It is important to note, however, that unlike the Athenian sisters, who necessarily are the protagonists of their own story, the Theban girls do not mention their own plight in this war, but their lament is concerned with every other member of their family. A similar situation will arise twice more in the poem, when first Antigone and Argia will give each other their personal account of events pertaining to the war (*Theb.* 12.389-405), and then Argia will tell Deipyle what happened while she was trying to bury Polynices (*Theb.* 12.804).<sup>198</sup> In both cases female narrative is accompanied by lament, thus evoking once again the precedent of the daughters of Pandion.

Immediately after the simile, Ismene is granted direct speech in order to confide in her sister Antigone about an ominous dream she had concerning her future husband Atys. The theme of the dream as well as the way she describes it recall previous instances in epic where the heroine has a dream about the man she loves and sometimes narrates it to her sister. In Apollonius Medea dreams about

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<sup>198</sup> See next section on the competition between the two sisters-in-law in Book 12, a form of which is their storytelling.

Jason (AR 3.616-644) but tells Chalciopie of an imagined night vision (AR 3.686-694); in Ennius Ilia retells her dream to her half-sister (*Ann.* 34-50 Sk.); Virgil's Dido talks to Anna about her earlier dreams (*Aen.* 4.9-14), but keeps the later and more disturbing ones to herself (*Aen.* 4.465-477); finally, Valerius' Medea also dreams about Jason but does not trust anyone with the details (*Arg.* 7.141-152). Elements shared by most of the previous dreams recur in Statius' description: Ismene narrates her dream in the first person (*inchoat Ismene, Theb.* 8.622);<sup>199</sup> her dream is about a man (*sponsum, Theb.* 8.627);<sup>200</sup> a relative is present in the dream (*mater, Theb.* 8.633);<sup>201</sup> the dreamer is being chased (*meque sequebatur, Theb.* 8.632);<sup>202</sup> she wonders about its prophetic quality (*quaenam haec dubiae praesagia cladis? Theb.* 8.633);<sup>203</sup> and most importantly for the purposes of this chapter, she confides it to her sister Antigone (*conubia uidi / nocte, soror, Theb.* 8.626-627).<sup>204</sup>

The share in these details is arguably enough to prove that Ismene's dream in the *Thebaid* belongs to this epic sequence,<sup>205</sup> despite several variations. In fact, the latter can be explained by the context. Firstly, the parent here, unlike previous cases, is not Ismene's father but Atys' mother (*repscens / mater Atyn, Theb.* 8.632-

<sup>199</sup> Cf. ἔειπε / τοῖα <Μήδεια> AR 3.686-687; *talia tum memorat lacrimans <Ilia>*, Enn. *Ann.* 35; *sic adloquitur male sana <Dido>*, Virg. *Aen.* 4.8.

<sup>200</sup> Cf. τὸν ξειῖνον, AR 3.619; *homo pulcer*, Enn. *Ann.* 38 Sk.; *hospes*, Virg. *Aen.* 4.10; *ferus Aeneas*, *Aen.* 4.466; *hospes*, Val. Flac. *Arg.* 7.143.

<sup>201</sup> σφωιτέρους δὲ τοκῆας, AR 3.625; ἐκ δ' ἄρα τοῦ νεῖκος πέλεν ἀμφήριστον / πατρί τε καὶ ξείνοις, AR 3.627-628; *exim compellare pater me uoce uidetur*, Enn. *Ann.* 43 Sk.; *supplex hinc sternitur hospes, / hinc pater*, Val. Flac. *Arg.* 7.143-144.

<sup>202</sup> Or wanders away from home; cf. ὄφρα δὲ μιν σφέτερον δόμον εἰσαγάγοιτο / κουριδίην παράκοιτιν, AR 3.622-623; *per amoena salicta / et ripas raptare locosque nouos. ... sola / postilla ... errare uidebar*, Enn. *Ann.* 38-40 Sk.; *semper longam incommitata uidetur / ire uiam*, Virg. *Aen.* 4.467-468; *modo Thessalicas raptata per urbes*, Val. Flac. *Arg.* 7.146.

<sup>203</sup> Cf. δειδία, μὴ μέγα δὴ τι φέρη κακὸν ἦδε κέλευθος / ἠρώων, AR 3.637-638; *his uerbis: "o gnata, tibi sunt ante gerendae / aerumnae, post ex fluuio fortuna resistet."* Enn. *Ann.* 44-45 Sk. (prophecy within the dream).

<sup>204</sup> Cf. ἀντοκασιγνήτης πειρήσομαι, AR 3.642; *germana soror*, Enn. *Ann.* 40 Sk.; *germana*, Enn. *Ann.* 46 Sk.; *Anna soror*, Virg. *Aen.* 4.9.

<sup>205</sup> Micozzi (2001-2002) 270-271 and nn. 30-33; Scioli (2010) 216-222.

633),<sup>206</sup> whose actions contribute to the ominous subversion of his and Ismene's wedding (*conubia*, *Theb.* 8.626). Commotion, fire and Atys' mother's terrible cries and attempts to get him back (*Theb.* 8.630-633) come to ruin the expected happiness of such a scene. Unlike all previous dreams, this one foreshadows trouble not for the dreamer herself,<sup>207</sup> but for the man she dreams of, Atys, who is about to die after being fatally wounded in his duel with Tydeus. At the same time, Ismene is conscious of the tradition in which her dream places her: at the end of her narrative she declares *nec timeo* (*Theb.* 8.634), aware that this is the reaction of all her predecessors and wishing to differentiate herself from them all.<sup>208</sup> Her link to her models, however, is very strong when it comes to the rest of her behaviour: in fact, there are two specific heroines that Ismene's characterisation looks back to, who redefine her relationship with her sister accordingly.

Ismene introduces the description of her dream about Atys with a series of rhetorical questions:

... *'quisnam hic mortalibus error,*  
*quae decepta fides? cur inuigilare quieti*  
*claraque per somnos animi simulacra reuerti?*

*Theb.* 8.622-624

These lines recall Dido's introduction of her speech to Anna with a series of exclamations concerning dreams she had about Aeneas:

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<sup>206</sup> In Medea's dream both her parents react to her love for Jason (*AR* 3.625, 3.630-632); Ilia dreams of her father appearing to deliver a prophecy about her future (*Ann.* 43-47 Sk.); finally, in Valerius Medea has to choose between Jason and her father, both of whom appear as suppliants in her dream (*Arg.* 7.143-144).

<sup>207</sup> Medea's dream prefigures her elopement with Jason and betrayal of her family; Ilia's her rape and death; Dido's her disastrous affair with Aeneas, her desertion and suicide.

<sup>208</sup> Fear is the predominant emotion of all other dreamers: Medea (*φόβω*, *AR* 3.633; *με* [...]) *ἐφόβησαν ὄνειροι* (*AR* 3.636); *δεΐδια*, *AR* 3.637; *noua ... formidine*, *Arg.* 7.144), Ilia (*exterrita*, *Ann.* 35 Sk.) and Dido (*quae me suspensam insomnia terrent*, *Aen.* 4.9).



... *quae me suspensam insomnia terrent!*  
*quis nouus hic nostris successit sedibus hospes,*  
*quem sese ore ferens, quam forti pectore et armis!*

*Aen.* 4.9-11

It is made clear at the end of *Aeneid* 1 that Dido falls madly in love with Aeneas at the instigation of Venus through her agent Cupid.<sup>209</sup> As for Ismene, a divine intervention is neither mentioned nor hinted at,<sup>210</sup> but her feelings for Atys are indicated earlier in the narrative, when their betrothal is mentioned, offering at the same time a brief portrait of the girl (*Theb.* 8.557-562).<sup>211</sup> While Atys appears to be attracted precisely by Ismene's neglect due to her mourning (*Theb.* 8.557-558), her feelings are described as matching his:

*ipse quoque egregius, nec pectora uirginis illi*  
*diuersa,<sup>212</sup> inque uicem, sineret Fortuna, placebant.*

*Theb.* 8.559-560

The litotes used to refer to Ismene's heart (*nec ... diuersa*) suggests a strong passion for the man she is promised to, and the addition of the conditional clause does not take the force away from the fact: *inque uicem ... placebant* (*Theb.* 8.560).

When it comes to the confession of her dream to her sister, however, Ismene acts very similarly to Dido, if not indeed more extremely. As the Carthaginian queen declares in front of Anna her everlasting faith to her dead husband Sychaeus, despite the fire of love for Aeneas that she recognises in her heart (*Aen.* 4.15-29), Ismene refuses to admit her love for Atys:

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<sup>209</sup> *Aen.* 1.657-722.

<sup>210</sup> There is in fact another dream Dido has in *Aeneid* 4 the theme of which comes closer to Ismene's portentous nightmare, as Hershkowitz (1994) 138 n. 27 points out.

<sup>211</sup> Hershkowitz (1994) 134-135.

<sup>212</sup> Hall et al. have emended the transmitted *diuersa* to *auersa*, but I don't think that their choice significantly alters the meaning of the phrase, which is that Ismene felt the same for Atys as he did for her.

*ecce ego quae thalamos nec si pax alta maneret  
tractarem sensu, pudet heu conubia uidi  
nocte, soror. sponsum unde mihi sopor attulit amens  
uix notum uisu? semel his in sedibus illum  
dum mea nescioquo spondentur foedera pacto  
respexi non sponte, soror. ...*

*Theb.* 8.625-630

The women's modesty is in both cases the argument with the most weight: Dido's wish that she may die *ante, pudor, quam te uiolo aut tua iura resoluo* (*Aen.* 4.27) is here condensed in the parenthetical phrase *pudet heu* (*Theb.* 8.626). The position of the phrase in the middle of the line aims at focusing the reader's attention to it, and achieves the same effect as Virgil allowing Dido to address her *pudor* directly. In addition, the centrality of *pudor* as the motive behind Ismene's actions points to her counterparts in Argos, Argia and Deipyle, whose modesty was exalted in the first and second books, when they still shared with Ismene and Antigone their status as virgins.<sup>213</sup>

The evocation of the earlier pair of sisters activates another model which characterises the latter from their first appearance in the narrative. Ismene claims to have had no say in the arrangement of her betrothal (*nescioquo ... pacto, Theb.* 8.629), in much the same way as another epic virgin princess, Lavinia. Her marriage to Aeneas is arranged by her father according to the will of the gods; Turnus calls it *thalamos ... pactos* (*Aen.* 10.649), and Latinus admits he was wrong in listening to Turnus and his wife who urged him to fight the Trojans when he had promised Lavinia's hand to Aeneas (*promissam eripui genero, Aen.* 12.31). Whereas Lavinia's

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<sup>213</sup> See section on Argia and Deipyle in this Chapter. Vessey (1973) 291-292 contrasts the happy scene of the Argive princesses' double wedding in Book 2 with Ismene's portentous dream of her marriage which comes true in Atys' death.

feelings for either Aeneas or Turnus remain obscure for the course of the epic,<sup>214</sup> Ismene refuses to admit any feelings, claiming that her modesty prevents her from thinking about marriage and attributing her glance at Atys to chance. This description contradicts the poet's explicit statement that their affection was mutual (*nec pectora uirginis illi / diuersa, Theb. 8.559-560*),<sup>215</sup> and raises the issue of trust between the two sisters: if Ismene does not trust Antigone with such a matter, then their bond may not be as strong as originally assumed.

This impression is encouraged by the use of language of deceit in the introduction to the Theban girl's speech (*'quisnam hic mortalibus error, / quae **decepta** fides? Theb. 8.622-623*) and at the end of her dream narrative (*quaenam haec **dubiae** praesagia cladis? Theb. 8.633*). The mention of deception and ambiguity conveys her belief that the dream was sent to deceive her; at the same time, it raises the suspicion that she might not be telling Antigone the whole truth about her feelings. Ismene's reaction to Atys' body being brought inside the palace is equally problematic: when her mother calls for her to go near him, *tollebat in ora / uirgo manus. tenuit **saeuus pudor** at tamen ire / cogitur (Theb. 8.644-646)*. Only once everyone is gone does Ismene go to Atys and perform the task expected from a widow:

*tum quia nec genetrix iuxta positusque beata  
morte pater, sponsae munus miserabile tradunt  
declinare genas. ibi demum **teste remoto**  
fassa pios gemitus lacrimasque in uulnera fudit.*

*Theb. 8.651-654*

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<sup>214</sup> See first section in Chapter Two.

<sup>215</sup> Hershkowitz (1994) 137-139 understands this inconsistency as due to Ismene's madness and compares her to the Ovidian Byblis whose feelings for her brother cause a similar behaviour.

The absence of witnesses (*Theb.* 8.653) includes Antigone, in front of whom Ismene passionately denied having any feelings for her fiancé. The younger daughter of Oedipus then does not wish to share her feelings with her older sister, and the personification of *saeuus pudor* as the force that holds her back merely echoes her speech to Antigone where once again modesty occupied central position in the line.

An explanation of Ismene's behaviour can be found in the corresponding attitudes of her models:<sup>216</sup> both Dido and Medea react in a similar way after having dreams or visions about the man they love. Dido does not tell Anna about her terrifying visions at the altars (*hoc uisum nulli, non ipsi effata sorori, Aen.* 4.456), nor does she entrust her sister with her nightmares about Aeneas (*Aen.* 4.465-473). Instead, she deceives Anna by pretending that she has a plan to get over her passion (*consilium uultu tegit ac spem fronte serenat, Aen.* 4.477). Her behaviour is to a certain extent modelled on Medea's in the Hellenistic epic:<sup>217</sup> instead of sharing her dream about Jason with Chalciopé, she tries to make her sister give her what she wants without admitting her passion (*αὐτοκασιγνήτης πειρήσομαι, AR* 3.642; *φῆ ῥα κασιγνήτης πειρωμένη, AR* 3.693), and speaks to her with deceptive words (*ἔειπε / τοῖα δόλω, AR* 3.686-687). Valerius' Medea, who looks back both to her Greek counterpart and to Dido, pretends that she does not know Jason and asks her sister to tell her who he is during their *teichoscopia* scene (*tunc his germanam adgreditur, ceu nescia, dictis, Arg.* 6.587).<sup>218</sup> Later she has nightmares about Jason but does not confess them to her sister (*Arg.* 7.141-152),

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<sup>216</sup> Micozzi (2001-2002) 273-274.

<sup>217</sup> Panoussi (2009) 191-192 and n. 31 shows how Dido's deception of Anna may also be based on Ajax's similar speech to Tecmessa (*Soph. Aj.* 646-692).

<sup>218</sup> On various levels of deception in *Argonautica* 6 and 7 see Chapter Two.

whom she only approaches with an apparently innocent curiosity about other members of their family who married foreigners such as Chalciope herself and their aunt Circe (*Arg.* 7.117-120).

Thus, Ismene deceives Antigone and hides the truth from her just as Dido does in the *Aeneid*, and the absence of positive characteristics comparable to Anna's does not allow the bond of the Theban sisters to become exemplary of unanimity. In Book 8 only Ismene's attitude is treated, while Antigone's feelings for her sister are not revealed. After this scene, where Antigone seems to represent an obstacle in the expression of Ismene's love for Atys, they will only appear again together in a single brief mention as they try to catch up with Jocasta who rushes to speak to Eteocles (*non comites non ferre piaae uestigia natae / aequa ualent, Theb.* 11.321-322). Nothing is said of Ismene, but Antigone reaches the walls and addresses Polynices, trying in vain to change his mind about the duel with their brother. Once the duel has taken place, however, the focus returns to Jocasta who commits suicide and then to Ismene who mourns her mother's death before following her example. In this case nothing is said of Antigone, confirming the separation of the two that is accomplished first during the Atys episode in Book 8 and then, more irrevocably, in Book 11.

Therefore, by failing to accompany their mother and contribute to her efforts, as they did in their first appearance in the poem, with the use of *piaae* (*Theb.* 11.321) evoking Antigone and Ismene supporting their aged mother (*Theb.* 7.479-481), the Theban sisters lose part of their unanimity. Then Ismene, who seems to have a more intimate relationship with her mother, witnesses her suicide and

follows her example.<sup>219</sup> Antigone, however, does not react to either death: she does not mourn her sister nor does she hold her lifeless body in her embrace as Anna did with Dido's. Instead, she is focused on her traditional duty of burying her beloved brother, and perhaps this is the reason why the definition of *unanima* does not apply to the Theban sisters. Their tragic pedigree is too strong to allow extensive modelling on Latin epic figures such as Dido and Anna, unlike that of the Argive sisters, whose tradition is not that restrictive, as was shown in the previous section.

### **Sisters by choice: Argia and Antigone**

Statius' female protagonists do not only exemplify blood relationships; bonds created through marriage are equally powerful, as this final section will show. At the beginning of Book 12 Argia leaves Deipyle and the rest of the Theban women in order to bury Polynices. On the battlefield in front of Thebes she finds not only the body of her husband but also a new sister in Antigone who has escaped her home and the attention of her guards for the same purpose. The two sisters-in-law monopolize the narrative in the central part of the book, and even though they never meet before then, in the course of the poem each one is evoked in the descriptions of the other, and their shared models prepare the reader for their eventual encounter. This unprecedented bond manages in the space of a single book to reach and perhaps even surpass in intensity the ones based on blood, and if not explicitly, then certainly in the conscience of many a student of

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<sup>219</sup> On the suicides of Jocasta and Ismene see Chapter Three.

the episode, Argia and Antigone are the ultimate *unanimae sorores* of the *Thebaid*.<sup>220</sup>

Leaving her mother and sister Antigone goes on the walls to address Polynices in a desperate attempt to make him change his mind (*Theb.* 11.354-358).<sup>221</sup> As she stands on the walls of Thebes she recalls Argia who earlier in the epic climbed up to the towers of Argos to watch Polynices depart:

... *tamen et de turre suprema*  
*attonitam totoque extantem corpore longe*  
*respicit Argian: ...*

*Theb.* 4.89-91

In both cases Polynices in the midst of his army sees and is seen by Argia and Antigone who stand at the top of tall towers, the height of which is equal to one another as the adjectives accompanying the respective expressions show: Antigone goes *summas ... ad arces* (*Theb.* 11.358), Argia is seen *de turre suprema*. Moreover, the word *turris* used to denote the position of the Argive princess in Book 4 is repeated in the description of her Theban counterpart in the latter's speech in Book 11: *'comprime tela manu paulumque hanc respice turrim, / frater* (*Theb.*

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<sup>220</sup> Bonds created by marriage are rarely as important as those a woman has with her natal family in Greek and Roman myth, as Visser (1986) points out when discussing Medea among other heroines. Even if the point of marriage in Greece and Rome was to forge ties between the male members of one's family with the male members of that of husband (p. 150), in most myths the heroines remain attached to their own brothers and fathers rather than preferring their husbands and their relatives over their own (p. 152); Alcestis is an obvious exception (p. 156). Their attitudes to their children are more ambivalent: some put them over everyone else (such as the Sabine women, p. 157), while others sacrifice their maternal affection for the sake of their natal family (such as Althaea and Procne, p. 158).

<sup>221</sup> Antigone's portrayal as a raging woman whose frenzy helps her go fast (*uolat*) recalls Jocasta's earlier description which compared her to the bacchant Agave (*Theb.* 11.318-320). Then neither the attendants nor Antigone and Ismene could keep up with the queen (*Theb.* 11.321-322); here Antigone's tutor, Actor, tries to walk as fast as his mistress but ultimately fails (*non duraturus*, *Theb.* 11.358), as Ganiban (2007) 166 points out. He adds that Antigone's appeal to Polynices has no precedent in the tragic tradition, and this is proof of the Statian Antigone's appropriation of roles originally belonging to Jocasta alone.

11.363-364).<sup>222</sup> Even more importantly, Antigone uses the same verb (*respice*) that earlier described Polynices looking back to see Argia on the tower of Argos (*respicit*, *Theb.* 4.91). In other words, Antigone asks her brother to repeat his earlier action but this time to look not at his wife but at his sister.

Her speech in fact has a similar temporary effect as the sight of Argia. The sight of his wife momentarily makes Polynices forget about Thebes (*Theb.* 4.91-92). Likewise, the words of his sister temporarily have the desired outcome of calming his anger and generating feelings of regret and shame (*Theb.* 11.382-387). In both cases the intervention of a third party is required to break the spell that those two women cast on Polynices. In Book 4 it is the shift of focus to bellicose Tydeus, while here it is the sudden breaking of the gates by the Fury who forces the two brothers to face each other and engage in their fateful duel.<sup>223</sup> Crucially for the purposes of this discussion, however, the description of Antigone and the beginning of her speech in Book 11 are a fine example of Statius' use of similar imagery for the two female figures which by evoking one when describing the other, prepares the ground for their meeting on the battlefield in Book 12.

As far as the tradition of the bond between Antigone and Argia is concerned, there appear to be two strands in literature and art. One keeps Argia in the background as the distant wife of Polynices, whom Antigone, the female protagonist of these versions, sees with indifference or apprehension. In all surviving tragedies dealing with the myth Antigone performs or plans to perform

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<sup>222</sup> Vessey (1973) 205 and n. 2 compares Argia's position *de turre suprema* with Antigone's *teichoscopia* which happens *turre ... sola* (*Theb.* 7.243).

<sup>223</sup> Vessey (1973) 273 compares Antigone's speech here to Jocasta's embassy to Polynices in Book 7 which also has a temporary effect (*Theb.* 7.536-538), but once again the intervention of a third party, there Tydeus, makes Polynices change his mind (*Theb.* 7.538-563).



the burial alone, and it is highly unlikely that Euripides' lost *Antigone* gave a helper's role to Argia.<sup>224</sup> The other strand, however, records a common attempt at the burial of the person they both love, and this is the version Statius follows; whether it was a late invention, Hellenistic or even Roman, one cannot say with certainty.<sup>225</sup> Statius' treatment has at least one precedent, summarised in Hyginus' version, if only to initially draw inspiration from. In the mythographer's resume (*Fab.* 72), Argia assists Antigone to Polynices' attempted funeral, but flees from the scene as soon as Creon's guards arrive. The only other source, a Roman sarcophagus of the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD,<sup>226</sup> has precisely captured the moment when the two women try to lift the corpse; it is not clear which of the two versions the artist had in mind (one where the guards apprehend both women, as in Statius,<sup>227</sup> or one where they arrest Antigone alone, as in Hyginus). This leaves *Thebaid* 12 as the only certain source of a version based on the collaboration of the sister and the wife in the burial of Polynices, or, in other words, the description of the sisters-in-law.

The presence of sisters-in-law at the funeral of a hero killed in battle in front of his city has only one precedent in Greek myth, namely, the lament for Hector in *Iliad* 24. At first sight, Argia corresponds to Andromache as the hero's widow, while Antigone matches Helen as the sister-in-law of the widow, who in Statius also

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<sup>224</sup> A brief comparison of the two *Antigones* is found in the hypothesis of the Sophoclean one attributed to the grammarian Aristophanes. We possess a few fragments that do not make any reference to Argia; neither does the brief scholium in *Soph. Ant.* 1350. According to Webster's reconstruction (1967) 182, Antigone would have been helped by Haemon in burying her brother. Pollmann (2004) 44 confirms that there is nothing to suggest the appearance of Argia in Euripides' play.

<sup>225</sup> Some scholars do, however, believe that the version is old, e.g. Berger-Doer (1984) 587 suggests that it may indeed go back to Euripides' *Antigone*.

<sup>226</sup> *LIMC* I 1 s.v. *Antigone*, No. 5 and 11.

<sup>227</sup> The possibility that the artist is following Statius cannot be ruled out.

happens to be the sister of the dead hero. Despite some important differences in the two epic scenes,<sup>228</sup> the Flavian poet intentionally evokes the Homeric sisters-in-law in his descriptions of Antigone and Argia, both in the final scene in Book 12 and in anticipatory glimpses of the two protagonists throughout the poem; he also benefits from the Homeric treatment of the bond in general.

There are frequent references to a “husband’s sister” or a “brother’s wife” in the impressively extensive household of Priam, and sisters-in-law seem to spend time with each other and have access to each other’s chambers. In one episode Venus takes the form of Laodice, Hector and Paris’ sister, in order to bring Helen to the walls of Troy (*Il.* 3.121-124). Laodice’s natural entrance to Helen’s room and her affectionate address (*νύμφα φίλη*, *Il.* 3.130)<sup>229</sup> indicate that the two women are on good terms with one another. Later, when Hector heads to his house to speak to Andromache and does not find her there, he asks the maids whether she has gone to see any of his sisters or the wives of his brothers, in other words, any of her sisters-in-law (*Il.* 6.378). Neither Helen nor Andromache, however, mentions their bond to one another in their speeches to Hector (*Il.* 6.344-358 and 6.407-439 respectively), or indeed in any other occasion.

While tragedy is more explicit in the expression of Andromache’s feelings for her sister-in-law,<sup>230</sup> the reader of the *Iliad* can only be contented with a nuance in Helen’s lament of Hector. There she complains that some of his relatives spoke ill of her:

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<sup>228</sup> Such as the fact that Helen is not blood-related to Hector; that Hector fights to defend his city while Polynices attacks it; that Hector’s killer is not his brother as in Polynices’ case, etc.

<sup>229</sup> “my sister-in-law”, lit. “dear young bride”, which may be an appropriate form of address for a sister-in-law (as it is in Modern Greek) as Kirk (1985) ad *Il.* 3.130 notes.

<sup>230</sup> In Eur. *Andr.* 103-107 Andromache calls Helen the destruction of Paris, Hector, Troy and herself; in *Troad.* 766-773 she attributes her paternity to a number of evils and curses her to die.

ἀλλ' εἴ τις με καὶ ἄλλος ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ἐνίπτοι  
δαέρων ἢ γαλόων ἢ εἰνατέρων εὐπέπλων,  
ἢ ἔκυρή – ...

*Il.* 24.768-770

The relatives are mentioned in a very general way, but the fact that the reference to “sisters-in-law” occupies most of line 769 may suggest an allusion to Andromache, who is Helen’s *εἰνάτηρ* (wife of one’s brother, or of one’s husband’s brother) rather than a *γάλως* (sister of one’s husband).<sup>231</sup> If she means Andromache who is present as these words are uttered, then Helen accuses Hector’s wife of animosity against her. Such a complaint may be all the more significant since it is precisely Hector whom Helen thanks in the subsequent lines for his display of kindness (*Il.* 24.771-772).

With the precedent of Andromache and Helen in mind, Statius plants a number of hints in the course of the poem in order to foreshadow the reworking of the Homeric scene in the final book. These hints evoke one or the other of the Homeric sisters-in-law in descriptions of Antigone and Argia so as to encourage the recognition of Andromache and Helen as models for both in the scene of Polynices’ burial. The first such clue is found in the second book where the eldest daughter of Adrastus is first named (*Theb.* 2.203). *Argia* and its Greek counterpart *Ἀργεία*, after her native city, echoes Helen’s frequent epithet in the *Iliad*, incidentally first used when she is first named also in that epic’s second book (*Ἀργεῖην Ἑλένην, Il.* 2.161). Like Argia, Helen comes from Argos and is the foreign bride in a city under siege.

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<sup>231</sup> Liddell-Scott ad loc. suggest that both terms are used to describe the bond of sisters-in-law regardless of the details of the marriage that produced it.

While Argia's name points towards Helen, her attitude in her native city recalls Andromache. Like her Trojan model, Argia tries to talk her husband out of the war.<sup>232</sup> In Book 2 she expresses her fears for Polynices' safety, explaining that she neither dreads a broken marriage nor her own untimely widowhood, but the death of her husband:

... *nil foedere rupto*  
*conubiisue super moueor uiduaque iuuenta,*  
*etsi crudus amor necdum post flammae toti*  
*intepuere tori: tua me, properabo fateri,*  
*angit, amate, salus. ...*

*Theb.* 2.339-343

While repeating Andromache's argument that this war is going to be her husband's doom (*φθίσει σε τὸ σὸν μένος*, *Il.* 6.407), she rejects the other means of persuasion that her Trojan counterpart used, namely, the references to her widowhood at the beginning and end of her speech (*ἦ τάχα χήρη / σεῦ ἔσομαι*, *Il.* 6.408-409; *θήης χήρην τε γυναιῖκα*, *Il.* 6.432). Furthermore, Andromache is evoked in Book 4, when Polynices sees Argia standing on a tower and looking at his departing army:

... *tamen et de turre suprema*  
*attonitam totoque extantem corpore longe*  
*respicit Argian; ...*

*Theb.* 4.89-91

As earlier, Statius is reworking a specific Homeric scene featuring Andromache who *ἐπὶ πύργον ἔβη μέγαν Ἰλίου* (*Il.* 6.386). Argia's curious designation in this

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<sup>232</sup> Ross (2004) xxxiii.

teichoscopia scene as *attonita*, a term often used to denote Bacchic frenzy,<sup>233</sup> can then be deciphered by reading her figure as another Andromache who in a similar context is *μαινομένη ἔϊκνῖα* (*Il.* 6.389).

Finally, as she mourns Polynices in Book 12, Argia considers her son Thessander<sup>234</sup> to be her only solace, taking Polynices' place in her bed which will otherwise remain unsullied by male presence (*Theb.* 12.347-348). This idea corresponds to Andromache's realization that Astyanax is her only hope and companion once Hector is dead, mentioned twice in her speech to him (*Il.* 6.407-408 and 432) and repeated in her funeral lament, where it suddenly dawns on her that her son too may die (*Il.* 24.732-737). Argia, however, twice insists on taking the blame for the war, which is not something Andromache ever did. The first such instance forms part of a cunning speech where she is trying to part from the rest of the Theban women without their objecting to her plan (*tantae quae sola ruinae / causa fui*, *Theb.* 12.198-199). If that was pure rhetoric, the second time that she admits her responsibility for the war cannot be discredited, since it is made to Polynices himself:

*quid queror? ipsa dedi bellum maestumque rogavi  
ipsa patrem ut talem nunc te complexa tenerem.*

*Theb.* 12.336-337

Argia's awareness of being the cause of war, even though she merely contributes to the course of events already decided by both gods and warriors, recalls Helen's

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<sup>233</sup> Thus, for instance, are the mothers of Latium described in *Aen.* 7.580, as they celebrate Bacchic rites with Amata; the same term forms part of a simile comparing Jocasta to a Theban Bacchant in *Sen. Oed.* 1005-1007.

<sup>234</sup> Statius spells his name as Thessander, but Hyginus refers to the same hero as Thersander.

speech to Hector when she assumes the blame for the war, allowing, however, for the role of the gods to come into the picture too (*Il.* 6.356-357).

In the same way that Statius' Argia finds correspondences both in Helen and Andromache, his Antigone can also be seen as a reworking of both Homeric heroines. Like Argia, Antigone finds herself on a tower to perform a *teichoscopia* similar to the one in *Iliad* 3 featuring Helen.<sup>235</sup> Antigone's role, however, is not to explain who the warriors are, as in the Homeric model, but to listen to her old companion pointing them out to her,<sup>236</sup> as the tragic tradition prescribed.<sup>237</sup> Antigone goes up on a tower again in the penultimate book to see Polynices amidst his army and convince him not to fight his brother in a duel. Her description as she goes *summas ... ad arces* (*Theb.* 11.358) recalls Andromache's *teichoscopia* (*Il.* 6.386-389), and her characterisation as *furens* (*Theb.* 11.357) can be explained, as in the case of Argia in Book 4, by the fact that her Homeric model was likewise depicted (*μαινομένη εἰκνῖα*, *Il.* 6.389). Thus, the use of the same Homeric models, who also happen to be sisters-in-law, and the *teichoscopia* scenes in which they both feature earlier in the *Thebaid*, not only foreshadow the final encounter of Antigone and Argia, but also evoke the Homeric lament of Hector in *Iliad* 24, a creative reworking of which is the episode of Polynices' burial.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Smolenaars (1994) 120; Ganiban (2007) 166-167.

<sup>236</sup> Phorbos in *Theb.* 7 explains who the Theban warriors are, unlike both Helen's *teichoscopia* and the tragic precedent of Euripides' *Phoenissae*, which are concerned with the hostile army (Greeks and Argives respectively). In this respect Statius' Antigone resembles Medea in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* 6, who also listens to someone else (in that case, Juno disguised as her sister) describing the heroes on the battlefield.

<sup>237</sup> Eur. *Phoen.* 88-201, where the old *paedagogos* describes the Argive army to Antigony, as Smolenaars (1994) 120 points out.

<sup>238</sup> McNelis (2007) 159 compares the ending of the *Iliad* which brings closure to the lamenting women with the corresponding episode of the *Thebaid* which far from offers Argia and Antigone the resolution they sought for.

In both epics, the wife is given primacy in the lament of her beloved one: in Homer Andromache is the first to lead the chorus of mourners (*Il.* 24.723), and Statius' Argia is the first to arrive at the scene and start her lament (*Theb.* 12.312-321). The sister-in-law of the wife, who in the *Thebaid* is also the sister of the deceased, comes later. As Antigone remarks, *haec prior* (*Theb.* 12.385), pointing to Argia; similarly, Helen speaks *τριτάτη* (*Il.* 24.761) after Andromache and Hecabe. This character also has a lesser part in the lamentation: in the Iliadic scene, Andromache had 21 lines (*Il.* 24.725-745), while Helen only 14 (*Il.* 24.762-775). Likewise, Argia is given 27 lines (*Theb.* 12.322-348), but here Antigone's personal lament is nowhere to be seen, only described later as a combined effort together with Argia (*Theb.* 12.387-390).

The Homeric sisters-in-law, however, are not the only models exerting influence on Statius' heroines; crucially, a number of epic mothers, daughters and sisters are also evoked in the representation of Argia and Antigone in Book 12. This blend of models not only produces a relationship which is far stronger than that between women merely bound through marriage,<sup>239</sup> but also explains their behaviour as dictated by their counterparts in earlier epic. A first hint as to the unique nature of this relationship comes from Argia's speech as she drifts off from the embassy to Theseus. Even though it has been interpreted as a cunningly formed appeal that intends to achieve her independence from the group of the Argive women, this is nevertheless the first time that the kinship between Argia and Antigone is spelled out:

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<sup>239</sup> It is remarkable that some scholars refer to Argia and Antigone as "the sisters": Dominik (1994b) 42 n. 61; Ganiban (2007) 211. Perhaps this strengthens my argument that the connotations of sisterhood created by the superimposition of various models make the reader believe for a moment that we have here a new, blood-related sister pair.

... *nec surda ferae pulsabimus urbis*  
*limina: sunt illic **soceri** mihi suntque **sorores***  
***coniugis**, et Thebas haud ignoranda subibo.*

*Theb.* 12.200-202

Argia expresses her expectation to find her parents-in-law (*soceri*) and sisters-in-law (*sorores / coniugis*) in Thebes in order to beg them for help. Presumably, she is unaware of the suicides of Jocasta and Ismene,<sup>240</sup> which explains the plural forms of the two kinship terms. Whatever the *ad hoc* purpose of these words, it is clear that Argia acknowledges the possibility of a meeting with her sisters-in-law when she arrives at Thebes, a statement that foreshadows her encounter with Antigone some 150 lines later.

Immediately preceding this statement, however, there is another, more powerful claim which prompts the investigation into the Latin epic models used for Argia and Antigone. Explaining her wish to go to Thebes alone, Argia says to the Argive women:

*me sinite Ogygias **tantae** quae sola **ruinae***  
***causa fui** penetrare domos et fulmina regni*  
*prima pati. ...*

*Theb.* 12.198-200

The idea of being responsible for the war, which is later more convincingly repeated in her lament of Polynices, is certainly an exaggeration,<sup>241</sup> but it still places Argia on the same plane as Lavinia in the *Aeneid*, who is also characterised as *causa mali tanti* (*Aen.* 11.480).<sup>242</sup> Argia was modelled on Lavinia for some of her

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<sup>240</sup> See Chapter Three.

<sup>241</sup> Pollmann (2004) ad 198-9.

<sup>242</sup> Again this could be thought to be exaggerated, as Lavinia does not actively cause the war, but it is indeed her hand Aeneas and Turnus are fighting for. In a reversal of this pattern, Argia is not the



earlier appearances together with her sister Deipyle, particularly in the scenes prior to their wedding.<sup>243</sup> In fact this is the last time that the virgin princess of Latium emerges as a precedent for the characterisation of the daughter of Adrastus. As Argia's status has long changed from that of a virgin princess to that of a mature woman, mother of a young boy and widow of Polynices, the poet begins to draw inspiration from more appropriate figures.

In particular, Argia's mourning gestures bring the Virgilian Anna to mind on more than one occasion. Argia's reaction to the sight of Polynices' body, after an original loss of consciousness, is to fall on him kissing his mouth and trying to collect the blood by wiping it with her hair and dress:

*... tum corpore toto  
sternitur in uultus **animamque per oscula quaerit**  
**absentem** pressumque comis ac **ueste cruorem**  
seruatura legit. ...*

*Theb. 12.318-321*

Anna also embraces Dido and tries to dry the blood from her wound with her dress:

***semianimemque sinu germanam amplexa fouebat**  
**cum gemitu atque atros siccabat ueste cruores.***

*Aen. 4.686-687*

The reader's impression that Statius had this precise image in mind is in fact further encouraged by his repetition of the Virgilian expression *ueste cruores* in the same metrical position and only with minor changes. Moreover, Argia's ritual attempt to

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person whom Eteocles and Polynices are fighting for, but she is the one who ultimately convinced her father to lead the expedition against Thebes.

<sup>243</sup> See the section on the Argive sisters in this chapter.

catch Polynices' soul by kissing his mouth<sup>244</sup> recalls Anna's announcement about what she will try to do when she reaches her dying sister: *extremus si quis super halitus errat, / ore legam.*' (*Aen.* 4.684-685). This act, however, is only meaningful in the case of Dido who has not yet expired (*semianimem*, *Aen.* 4.686); on the contrary, Polynices has been lying dead for a long time and consequently his soul is described as *absens* (*Theb.* 12.320).

Argia here seems to be reading Virgil's narrative on Anna and Dido in order to find out what to do next with her husband's dead body, and such an impression is encouraged by her words to Polynices: *huc attolle genas defectaque lumina: uenit / ad Thebas Argia tuas* (*Theb.* 12.325-326). He is expected to lift his head and look up to see Argia who is embracing him with her whole body (*Theb.* 12.318-319), which is exactly what Dido did when her sister Anna held her in her embrace (*Aen.* 4.686): *illa grauis oculos conata attollere rursus / deficit* (*Aen.* 4.688-689). But once again, while Dido is still in a position to do this, her eyes merely weighing down (*grauis oculos*), Polynices is dead and consequently his eyes are, somewhat ironically, designated as "weakened" (*defecta*). Thus, despite the thematic differences of the two episodes, Statius' debt to Virgil for this scene is intentionally advertised in the verbal and structural similarities of the four lines that describe a Latin epic heroine's lament for her husband and for her sister respectively.

Anna continues to influence the representation of Argia when it comes to her lament of Polynices. After all, both are in a sense responsible for the decisive change in the plot which prompts disaster for their beloved ones. Anna's words

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<sup>244</sup> The idea is explicitly used at *Theb.* 5.594-596 when Hypsipyle kisses the baby Opheltes: *ingeminat misera oscula tantum / incumbens animaeque fugam per membra tepentem / quaerit hians*. Pollmann (2004) ad 318-21 provides other parallels.

encouraged Dido's feelings for Aeneas (*Aen.* 4.54-55), which resulted in the fateful love affair between the Carthaginian queen and the Trojan hero. Likewise, Argia's conversation with her father Adrastus proves critical for his decision to lead the army against Thebes, as she herself admits over his dead body: *ipsa dedi bellum maestumque rogavi / ipsa patrem ut talem nunc te complexa tenerem* (*Theb.* 12.336-337). Both heroines act out of limitless love<sup>245</sup> and cannot foresee the consequences,<sup>246</sup> which are to a large extent already prescribed by fate and the gods. The point where the model of Anna ceases to work, however, is Argia's repeated admission of her responsibility, nowhere to be seen in the case of the Carthaginian woman. This is perhaps due to the simultaneous working of a different model here, namely, that of the Iliadic Helen.<sup>247</sup> But while Helen leaves some space for divine will in the formation of her destiny (*Il.* 6.357), Argia takes the whole blame on herself. Moreover, instead of reprimanding the gods, she thanks them in the following lines for helping her find Polynices' body (*Theb.* 12.338-339).<sup>248</sup> As the text makes clear, the pious and matronly Argia is thematically very different from the revolutionary and passionate Helen; after all, the brothers' duel is due to political and not erotic dispute.

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<sup>245</sup> It is clearly love and conjugal *pietas* that prompts Argia to speak to her father, as Vessey (1973) 132 notes.

<sup>246</sup> Argia commits what Dominik (1994b) 127 calls "a tragic error of judgement".

<sup>247</sup> Pollmann (2004) ad 336-7 suggests this association.

<sup>248</sup> Divine inculpation is a *topos* in funeral laments; Argia's unexpected thanksgiving, however, "accentuates the pious qualities" of the Statian heroine, according to Dominik (1994a) 131. Juno assists Argia both by asking Luna to shine brightly on the battlefield in order that Argia finds Polynices, and by dispatching Sleep to the guards so that Argia performs the funeral rites unimpeded (*Theb.* 12.299-311).

Dido as a model for Argia was mentioned earlier in the discussion of the two Argive sisters.<sup>249</sup> The end of Argia's speech brings her predecessor once again to the foreground, but this time in order to distinguish Statius' heroine from the Virgilian one. Dido claims that her grief for being deserted by Aeneas is accentuated by the lack of a son by him:<sup>250</sup>

*saltem si qua mihi de te suscepta fuisset  
ante fugam suboles, si quis mihi paruulus aula  
luderet Aeneas, qui te tamen ore referret,  
non equidem omnino capta ac deserta uiderer.'*

Aen. 4.327-330

On the contrary, Argia's only consolation for the death of Polynices is the existence of their son Thessander: *testisque dolorum / natus erit paruoque torum Polynice fouebo.*' (*Theb.* 12.347-348). Both women think of a son who is a smaller version of his father, which explains the attribution of the name of the latter to the former: *paruulus Aeneas, paruus Polynices.*<sup>251</sup> While the situation is more similar to the one experienced by Andromache in the *Iliad*, where a mother ponders on the future of her son in her lament to his dead father,<sup>252</sup> Argia's choice of words brings Dido to mind. The sons of the Carthaginian queen and the Trojan princess, however, do not offer the desired consolation to their mothers, the former being no more than a wish, the latter being killed after the sack of Troy. "Little Polynices", on the other

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<sup>249</sup> Dietrich's 2004 article discusses Argia among other Flavian heroines as a reworking of the Virgilian Dido.

<sup>250</sup> Dominik (1994a) 132; Dietrich (2004) 17; Pollmann (2004) ad 347-8.

<sup>251</sup> The idea of the son taking after the father is central to the episode of Procne and Philomela in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 6, on which see Chapter Two.

<sup>252</sup> Nowhere in the Homeric and Virgilian versions of Andromache's story is Hector's name used to signify his son; the poets either use the name Astyanax or a term such *παῖς* or *ὑιός*. The closest we can get to the idea of the survival of someone's appearance in their relatives, this time of Astyanax himself, and perhaps consequently of Hector, is in Andromache's address to Ascanius: *o mihi sola mei super Astyanactis imago. / sic oculos, sic ille manus, sic ora ferebat* (*Aen.* 3.489-490).

hand, not only appeared earlier in the narrative under his real name, Thessander, but he will also survive to participate in the second, successful expedition of the Epigonoi. Conscious as she is of the literary tradition of her story,<sup>253</sup> Argia is not even given the opportunity to worry about her son's future, thus receiving a better lot than both her Homeric and Virgilian counterparts were able to have.

While Argia receives an extensive treatment on her own, Antigone only appears in the narrative of Book 12 a few lines before she joins her sister-in-law. The description of Oedipus' daughter as she approaches the corpse of her brother has more than one thing in common with that of his wife, and the similarities in their appearance and echoes of earlier epic models encourage their viewing as real sisters. At the same time, the poet insists on drawing distinctions between the two heroines, an attitude that he pursues until the end of the episode and which takes the idea of rivalry between sisters-in-law to its limits.

Antigone is in fact introduced as "another Argia" (*ecce alios gemitus aliamque ad busta ferebat / Antigone miseranda facem, Theb. 12.349-350*), when she arrives wailing and carrying a torch, as Argia did.<sup>254</sup> Moreover, in the description of their pitiful state, the poet assigns the same term to both women: *miseranda* (*Theb. 12.313* of Argia).<sup>255</sup> A closer inspection of the text, however, complicates matters. In order to point out that Antigone looks and behaves the same way as Argia, the poet opts for the term *alius-a-um* which is often used to

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<sup>253</sup> Feeney (1991) 341-343 cited by Pollmann (2004) ad 329-32.

<sup>254</sup> Pollmann (2004) ad 349-51. Argia carrying a torch: *Theb. 12.268-269* (where she lights it again); *Theb. 12.270-277* (comparison to Ceres looking for Persephone); *Theb. 12.278-279* (Menoetes' advice to hide the light).

<sup>255</sup> Pollmann (2004) ad 349-51.

stress the difference between two items.<sup>256</sup> That was, for instance, the case in the *Aeneid* where the term accompanies the name of Achilles in order to designate Turnus who is similar but also very different from the Greek hero (*alius Latio iam partus Achilles, Aen. 6.89*). Thus, although the appearance of Antigone as she arrives at the scene resembles that of Argia a hundred lines earlier, the poet makes sure that there is a clear distinction between the two, at least for the time being.

The lines immediately preceding this characterisation, however, offer a portrayal of Antigone which not only recalls earlier epic heroines, but also echoes Argia's description earlier in Book 12:

*ergo deis fratrique moras excusat et **amens**,  
ut paulum inmisso cessit statio horrida somno,  
erepiti muris astu quo territat agros  
uirginis ira leae, **rabies** cui libera tandem  
et primus sine matre **furor**. ...*

*Theb. 12.354-358*

Antigone's predominant trait is that of *furor*, which through its association with Dido, forms yet another link to Argia. Indeed *furor* and its various derivatives characterise both the wife and the sister in their search for Polynices. Antigone's frenzy (*amens, Theb. 12.354*) is compared to a lioness' (*uirginis ira leae, Theb. 12.357*), appropriately described as orphan (*sine matre, Theb. 12.358*), since Jocasta committed suicide in the previous book.<sup>257</sup> The feelings of the animal are thus transferred to the Theban maiden and point to a rage without limits (*libera*

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<sup>256</sup> OLD s.v. *alius* 1 and 7a; 7b, with proper names: "a new, a fresh, a second, another", which is the case of Turnus in the *Aeneid*, as already Servius *ad Aen. 6.89* suggested. Another interpretation is that *alius Achilles* in the prophecy of the Sibyl corresponds to Aeneas himself, who will cause the death of Pallas just as Achilles was responsible for Patroclus' death [Kinsey (1979)]; or that both the Trojan prince and the Rutulian leader are foreseen as assuming the role of Achilles [Valgiglio (1987)].

<sup>257</sup> Pollmann (2004) ad 356-8.

*tandem*, *Theb.* 12.357). Similarly, in her search for her husband's corpse Argia is compared first to the crazy leader of the followers of Cybele (*dux uesana chori*, *Theb.* 12.226);<sup>258</sup> then to Ceres looking for her daughter Proserpina and wailing madly (*illius insanis ululatibus ipse remugit / Enceladus*, *Theb.* 12.274-275);<sup>259</sup> and finally to a frenzied woman possessed by a god (*attonitam*,<sup>260</sup> *Theb.* 12.278).<sup>261</sup> While the latter term is not applied to Antigone, it is found in the description of her mother Jocasta in her embassy to Polynices (*Theb.* 7.492). If Antigone indeed appropriates some of her mother's attitudes after her separation from her in Book 11, such as her second appeal to Polynices,<sup>262</sup> then it is not difficult to interpret some of her feelings as originating in her mother's character, and vice versa, some of Jocasta's traits as being bequeathed with her death to Antigone.

Earlier epic sisters, mothers and daughters are also frequently overwhelmed by *furor* and related feelings, especially in an erotic context. It is certainly a byword for Dido's behaviour in *Aeneid* 4,<sup>263</sup> but it is also applied, to a lesser extent, to the other Virgilian queen, Amata,<sup>264</sup> as well as to Medea in the Roman *Argonautica*.<sup>265</sup> Madness, on the other hand, seems to characterise women who suffer the loss of their beloved ones, not only in Virgil (Andromache, *Aen.* 3.307; Euryalus' mother,

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<sup>258</sup> Pollmann (2004) ad 224-7 stresses the fanatic aspect of Cybele's followers and glosses over the idea of insanity carried by *uesana*.

<sup>259</sup> Pollmann (2004) ad 270-7 brings parallels for the use of *insanus* to describe the effect of great grief to people.

<sup>260</sup> This is the second occurrence of the term applied to Argia (the first one was at *Theb.* 4.90, discussed above), and it can be seen as continuing the simile that compares her to Ceres and thus reworking *mutatis mutandis* the mother's desperate search for her daughter.

<sup>261</sup> Pollmann (2004) ad 278 describes Argia's actions as "verg[ing] on the subconscious or rather paranoid". I cannot understand then why she does not see the similarity with Antigone at 12.354ff. and insists instead on stressing the contrast between Antigone's frenzy and Argia's *pietas* [Pollmann (2004) ad 354].

<sup>262</sup> Ganiban (2007) 166.

<sup>263</sup> *Aen.* 4.65, 4.69, 4.101, 4.283, 4.298, 4.376, 4.433, 4.465, 4.474, 4.501, 4.548, 4.646, 4.697, 5.6.

<sup>264</sup> *Aen.* 7.350, 7.377, 7.386, 12.601.

<sup>265</sup> *Arg.* 6.667, 7.36, 7.154, 7.161, 7.315, 7.337, 8.54, 8.445.

*Aen.* 9.478), but also in Ovid (Clymene mourning the death of Phaethon, *Met.* 2.334; Ceres lamenting in a similar way the abduction of Proserpina, *Met.* 5.511).<sup>266</sup> Outside the realm of death and loss, Dido uses the word *insania* to describe her own psychological turmoil (*Aen.* 4.595). Finally, a woman in Bacchic frenzy or otherwise possessed by gods is often described as *attonita*. Ovid uses the term to describe Ceres hearing the news of Proserpina's fate from Arethusa (*Met.* 5.510). Philomela is also described as *attonita* as she is rescued by her sister Procne (*Met.* 6.600), another figure whose actions are characterised by *furor*.<sup>267</sup> In light of this, the comparison of Antigone and Ismene to Procne and Philomela in Book 8 may precisely point to their having in common with the daughters of Pandion more than just the narratives of past misfortunes.<sup>268</sup> Medea, on the other hand, is described as *attonita* when she is about to leave her homeland on Jason's boat (*Arg.* 8.132), although she does not seem to feel sad about her decision to desert her family as much as her mother and sister do (*Arg.* 8.140-174). Therefore, all symptoms related to *furor*, such as frenzy, madness and stupefaction, which apply to female epic figures, also characterize both Argia and her sister-in-law.

The subsequent lines continue this oscillation between similar and different, based both on intertextual models and on intratextual behaviour. Antigone is granted knowledge pointedly superior to that of her Argive counterpart:

... *nec longa morata,*  
*quippe trucem campum et positus quo puluere frater*  
*nouerat ...*

*Theb.* 12.358-360

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<sup>266</sup> On the theme of loss and mourning see Chapter Three.

<sup>267</sup> *Met.* 6.591, 6.595, 6.657.

<sup>268</sup> See previous section in this Chapter.



Naturally for a Theban, Antigone knows the topography of the battlefield as well as the exact position of Polynices' body. She was last seen on the Theban ramparts imploring him not to fight his brother; given that there is no description of her leaving the walls, she may well have watched the duel from there,<sup>269</sup> just as Helen did when Menelaus and Paris fought to settle their dispute in *Iliad* 3. Even if the text does not make any reference to Antigone's witnessing the duel, by pointing out that her speed is owed to her knowledge, the poet implicitly compares the Theban heroine's advantage to Argia's lack of it. In fact, the Argive princess wandered around the battlefield for hours in vain (*per campos errore fatiscere uano / inmeritam Argian, Theb.* 12.295-296), as she was *rudis atque ignara locorum* (*Theb.* 12.206). Her fruitless attempts at finding Polynices' body, described at length by the poet (*Theb.* 12.280-290), eventually earned the merciful attention of Juno who sent Luna to light up the scene.

Crucially, the first term used to describe Argia's ignorance, *rudis*, was applied earlier in the poem to Antigone (*Theb.* 7.253) and Ismene (*Theb.* 7.535). But while Antigone was equally "inexperienced" and "ignorant" when she asked her old attendant to describe the Theban army to her, she has now moved on to the status of an expert as far as the battlefield is concerned (*nouerat, Theb.* 12.360), even though the same virginal status accompanies her then and now (*Theb.* 7.246 and 12.362). On the contrary, the poet insists on Argia's lack of that knowledge, even though she is at least sexually more mature than Antigone. The term *ignara*, on the other hand, looks back to the *Aeneid* where it is twice applied in a negative form to Dido, referring to her experience of misfortune (*non ignara mali, Aen.* 1.630) and

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<sup>269</sup> Pollmann (2004) ad 360 takes this to be a certainty.

knowledge of the future (*haud ignara futuri*, *Aen.* 4.508). Thus, Argia's resemblance to the Carthaginian queen is merely superficial, as she has something that Dido lacks (a son), and lacks something that Dido has (knowledge and experience). Similarly, while Antigone seems to resemble her sister-in-law as she appears at the scene of Polynices' death, her knowledge, emphasized virginity and explicit otherness through the use of *alius*, differentiate her once again from Argia.

The status of both as mourners, on the other hand, brings them together. Antigone approaches the scene and sees Argia *atra sub ueste comasque / squalentem et crasso foedatam sanguine uultus* (*Theb.* 12.363-364).<sup>270</sup> She can tell that the woman in front of her is a mourner, even if she does not identify her as Polynices' wife, whom she has never met before. She does, however, recognize an epic heroine in a mourning context, who wears dark robes, like Procne when she hears the false news of Philomela's death (*Met.* 6.568); who scratches her face and dries out the blood from the wound with her clothes, like Anna (*Aen.* 4.673 and 687). Similarly, Argia cannot know what her husband's sister looks like, but she can identify her as a wretched woman who is there to lament someone: *si misera es – certe lacrimas lamentaque cerno* (*Theb.* 12.377). Perhaps even the ambiguity of *lamenta* is intentional in order to cover both possibilities, namely scratches and mourning clothes,<sup>271</sup> which would make up Antigone's appearance and which reflect in turn Argia's dark robes and her scratched face.

Now begins a competition that will continue in many forms until the end of the episode.<sup>272</sup> Argia and Antigone not only claim Polynices for themselves, but

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<sup>270</sup> On other Latin epic heroines' attitudes to lament and loss, see Chapter Three.

<sup>271</sup> Pollmann (2004) ad 377.

<sup>272</sup> Ganiban (2007) 208 sees this competition as a re-enactment of the brothers' duel.

they try to outdo each other both in storytelling and *pietas*. The first part of their rivalry is mainly expressed through dialogue, although there are a few significant actions which achieve more than words can do. Antigone asks Argia what she is doing there stressing that that night belongs to her (*Theb.* 12.366-367). According to tradition, of which both women are aware, this nocturnal attempt at Polynices' burial indeed belongs to his sister alone.<sup>273</sup> It is therefore expected from Antigone to wonder at someone else playing her role which was established from Greek tragedy onwards.<sup>274</sup> Argia's reaction is to remain silent and cover Polynices' face and her own with her cloak in fear (*Theb.* 12.367-369). Covering one's own face is topical of people grieving;<sup>275</sup> Argia, however, covers Polynices' face as well, perhaps in an attempt to make Antigone walk by without recognizing him.<sup>276</sup>

The initial tension continues for a few more lines, with the Theban girl asking questions and getting irritated by Argia's prolonged silence (*Theb.* 12.370-371). In the end, Argia decides to speak but not before she performs an action similar to her sister-in-law's verbal claim: she embraces the corpse of Polynices (*Theb.* 12.373) thus putting forward her own rights over the body of her husband. She then extends her hand in friendship (*Theb.* 12.378), which Antigone accepts calling herself a companion in evils to her brother's wife: '*mene igitur sociam – pro fors ignara – malorum / mene times?*' (*Theb.* 12.382-383).<sup>277</sup> These words have a similar ring to Anna's complaint to her sister Dido that she did not ask her to share

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<sup>273</sup> Pollmann (2004) ad 366-7.

<sup>274</sup> Heslin (2008) 115-116.

<sup>275</sup> This is the gesture of lament that the Sun resorts to after the death of Phaethon (*Met.* 2.330-332).

<sup>276</sup> Pollmann (2004) ad 366-7.

<sup>277</sup> There is an echo here of Dido's description as *non ignara mali* (*Aen.* 1.630), although the syntax is different in Statius: it is chance who is called ignorant here, not the protagonist.

in her death (*comitemne sororem / spreuisti moriens? Aen. 4.677-678*), and thus they create expectations as to the nature of the relationship between the two women in the *Thebaid*.

Argia puts forward as the reason for their alliance the fact that they have the same enemy in the face of Creon (*Theb. 12.375-376*). Presumably she still does not know who her interlocutor is; otherwise, she would have used their common interest for Polynices as a much stronger argument. It is only when she declares that she came to bury Polynices and reveals her line from Adrastus (*Theb. 12.378-380*) that Antigone interrupts her to exclaim that she is here for the same purpose. She then lays yet another claim on Polynices by explaining that the limbs Argia is holding and the funeral gestures she performs are “her own”: *mea membra tenes, mea funera plangis* (*Theb. 12.383*). At the same time, she rebukes herself for not arriving earlier at the scene, which resulted in Argia’s assuming the role traditionally associated with the sister of Polynices: *pietas ignaua sororis: / haec prior.*’ (*Theb. 12.384-385*). If there was a score in their competition so far, it would be a draw. Antigone gets three points, one for each thing that she designates as *mea*: the night traditionally belonging to her; Polynices’ limbs, through their blood relation; and, consequently, his funeral. Argia, however, also gets three points: one for covering herself and Polynices under the same cloth; one for being in direct contact with him by embracing his body; and another for being there first, as Antigone admits. So far, therefore, they are even, and this fact combined with their mutual interest in Polynices and shared hatred for Creon brings them closer than their origins and traditional bond of sisters-in-law allowed.

Their reconciliation is apparent in the following lines when the two women stop talking and start or rather resume their lament:

... *hic pariter lapsae iunctoque per ipsum  
amplexu miscent auidae lacrimasque comasque  
partitaeque artus redeunt alterna gementes  
ad uultum et cara uicibus ceruice fruuntur.*

*Theb.* 12.385-388

The concentration of terms denoting equity (*pariter*, *partitae*), togetherness (*iuncto* ... *amplexu*) and alternation (*alterna*, *uicibus*) points to Argia and Antigone's rejection of one's priority over the other and the acceptance of their bond through Polynices.<sup>278</sup> There is a movement between becoming one in their embrace of the corpse as their hair and tears are mixed, and reassuming their individuality as they take in turns to hold the head and mourn over the beloved face. Their equal share further extends to their words, which they resume immediately in order to remember Polynices and retell the story of their countries and the war:

*dumque modo haec fratrem memorat nunc illa maritum  
mutuaque exorsae Thebas Argosque renarrant,*

*Theb.* 12.389-390

Their mutual exchange of narratives (*mutua ... renarrant*) is further stressed by the symmetrical structure in the first line with the singular verb (*memorat*) applying to both as it is framed by a sequence of temporal adverb, pronoun subject and noun object. More importantly, this description recalls an earlier scene in the poem where Antigone and Ismene talked about the woes of their family and the war of

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<sup>278</sup>As Lovatt (1999) 138 puts it, "mutual grief makes the women allies, and their mourning is characterised by words of sharing (*pariter*, *iuncto*, *miscent*, *partitae*, *alterna*, *uicibus*, *Theb.* 12.385-88)." These terms, according to Ganiban (2007) 211, "contribute to the inseparability of the sisters (*sic*) in their frenzied actions".

their brothers (*Theb.* 8.610-613). The balance there is similar to the one used here, with about half a line granted to each speaker at a time. Moreover, the combination of the words *exorsae* and *renarrant* to describe the narrative process echoes the sequence *exordia ... adnarrant* applied to the Theban sisters through their comparison to nightingales (*Theb.* 8.616-620).<sup>279</sup> The invocation of the previous scene though these structural and verbal parallels encourages us to read this meeting as a repetition of the earlier one, but now Argia has substituted Ismene not only in the role of a narrative voice but also perhaps in the more crucial one of a sister.<sup>280</sup>

Soon, however, the balance of Argia and Antigone's alliance seems to be in danger as one of them claims more space for herself: *longius Argia miseros reminiscitur actus* (*Theb.* 12.391). In fact, although Argia's narrative here is both longer than Antigone's as well as quoted in full, she does not devote her speech to her relationship to Polynices, but to his bond with his sister Antigone: *te cupiit unam noctesque diesque locutus / Antigonem* (*Theb.* 12.396-397).<sup>281</sup> Or is she? According to Argia, above all else Antigone was the reason for Polynices' expedition to Thebes: his devotion to his sister surpassed not only his pretensions to the throne (*non ... amissos ... honores*, *Theb.* 12.394), his love for his homeland (*non gentile solum*, *Theb.* 12.395), and that for his mother (*carae non pectora matris*,

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<sup>279</sup> See the section on the Theban sisters in this Chapter.

<sup>280</sup> As Steiner (1984) 146 notes, in the reception of Statius' *Thebaid* one cannot fail to notice the replacement of Ismene's character by that of Argia, and it is only in the modern period when Statius' work was eclipsed that the Theban princess reclaims her Sophoclean position.

<sup>281</sup> Lovatt (1999) 139 reads Argia's speech as manipulating the truth in order to earn an ally, which is what Pollmann (2004) ad 396-7 also suggests, agreeing with Frings and Hoffmann who point out that these words do not correspond to an earlier passage and purely serve her need for Antigone's loyalty and assistance. However, I would not necessarily dismiss a statement as suspicious simply because it has not been mentioned before, as it may be more appropriate for Argia to say such a thing here than another narrator somewhere else in the poem.

*Theb.* 12.395), but also, and more importantly for the speaker herself, his love for his wife. In two similarly constructed and equally long arguments, Argia stresses Polynices' behaviour towards Antigone first at Argos (*Theb.* 12.394-397) and then at Thebes (*Theb.* 12.398-401). She then concludes with a statement about herself, less than a line long, which despite its brevity carries all the weight of her words and conveys more than just a hint of jealousy: *ego cura minor facilisque relinqui* (*Theb.* 12.397); *nos procul* (*Theb.* 12.402).<sup>282</sup>

Argia guesses Antigone's attempt to convince her brother to stop the war, although she cannot know for sure (*forsitan*, *Theb.* 12.398). She imagines, however, the scene, which is indeed very similar to the one she featured in, where she stood on the walls as Polynices was setting off for Thebes:

*tu tamen **excelsa** sublimis forsitan **arce**  
ante nefas Graias dantem uexilla manipulis  
uidisti teque ille acie **respexit** ab ipsa  
ense salutatam et nutantis uertice coni:*

*Theb.* 12.398-401

Both Argia in Book 4 and Antigone in Book 11, as well as the imagined Antigone here, stand on a very high tower on the walls of their respective cities. In all three cases Polynices is in the field among his warriors and looks up to see the woman on the walls. All three descriptions contain the crucial terms *arx / turris* and *respicio*, repeated almost unchanged, thus encouraging the similarities of the two women and the forging of an intimate relationship in the final book of the poem.

Argia's final words concern her wonder at the lack of effect of Antigone's prayers; once again she guesses an attempt from the part of Polynices' family to

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<sup>282</sup> Pollmann (2004) ad 402 sees a correspondence between Argia's *nos procul* and Antigone's *haec prior* at *Theb.* 12.385, which perhaps brings back the balance between them.

persuade him against the duel (*extremas ... iras, Theb. 12.402*), and focuses in particular on Antigone's role in it: *nilne tuae ualuere preces? tibine iste negauit / oranti?'* (*Theb. 12.403-404*). This realisation follows up from Argia's earlier monologue where she wondered how the tears of his family did not manage to move Polynices (*Theb. 12.330-332*). While the references to *lacrimae* and *preces* look back to Book 7 and Jocasta's embassy together with Ismene and Antigone, the final question is directed to Antigone alone who of all people was supposed to be her brother's favourite and therefore capable of changing his mind.<sup>283</sup>

The implication that Argia is given more space to express herself than Antigone finds its climax at the end of this scene: as soon as the sister of Polynices started to narrate her part of the story, she is interrupted by Argia's companion who urges them to proceed with the burial as it is nearly dawn:

*... causas ac tristia reddere Fata  
coeperat Antigone: fidus comes admonet ambas:  
'heia agite inceptum potius: ...*

*Theb. 12.404-406*

Rather than explaining this interruption as the poet's way of avoiding repetition of things already mentioned,<sup>284</sup> this can be seen as a graphic way of giving Argia supremacy in this exchange of stories which resembles a poetic contest. In fact, in the beginning an almost equal share of space is allotted to the topics of the two women's stories: brother – husband, Thebes – Argos (*Theb. 12.389-390*). Soon this amoebaeon exchange (*mutua, Theb. 12.390*) becomes a monologue where Argia monopolizes the podium, even if the best part of her 12-line long narrative in direct

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<sup>283</sup> Pollmann (2004) ad 403-4.

<sup>284</sup> Pollmann (2004) ad 403-4.



speech focuses on her sister-in-law (*Theb.* 12.392-404). Finally, as Antigone starts her narrative, she is only granted one full line in indirect speech before she is cut short by Menoetes' advice to finish what they have started, namely, the burial of Polynices. It comes as no surprise that the interruption comes from Argia's companion who shifts the attention of the audience from Antigone's entry in the competition to his own champion, who is the agent of the *inceptum* (*Theb.* 12.406).

The rivalry resumes after a brief interval during which Antigone and Argia turn to actions again in order to perform Polynices' funeral rites. As in the mutual lament scene (*Theb.* 12.385-390), the two women act in harmony; instead of being described individually, plural forms and a simile are employed, bringing in the idea of real sisters in action. While carrying the corpse to the nearby river to wash before the burial, Antigone and Argia are compared to the sisters of Phaethon as they tended to their brother's funeral:

*sic Hyperionium tepido Phaethonta sorores  
fumantem lauere Pado: uixdum ille sepulcro  
conditus et flentes stabant ad flumina siluae.*

*Theb.* 12.413-415

The choice of words in this description echoes the previous extant version of Phaethon's story found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, of which this appears to be a very condensed summary.<sup>285</sup> It is, however, the Nymphs and not his sisters that offer him burial there, while the ritual purification with water falls on the river who receives him, Eridanus (*Met.* 2.324-327).

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<sup>285</sup> E.g. *fumantem* – *fumantia* (*Met.* 2.325); *sepulcro* – *sepulcro* (*Met.* 2.343); *conditus* – *ossa ... condita* (*Met.* 2.337).

This is not the first time in the poem that Polynices is compared to Phaethon<sup>286</sup> and the similarities between the two in terms of hubris and transgression of boundaries have already been pointed out.<sup>287</sup> Crucially, however, two women who are only sisters-in-law, Argia and Antigone, are here compared to actual sisters, the Heliades.<sup>288</sup> Statius himself believed in the power of elective bonds and their equivalence, in certain cases, to blood relationships, as his poem for his dead stepson in the *Siluae* shows.<sup>289</sup> His affection for the boy whom he explicitly describes as one he did not beget (*non de stirpe quidem nec qui mea nomina ferret / oraque; non fueram genitor, Silu. 5.5.10-11*) surpasses even that for a real son, as he later admits: *quo sospite natos / non cupii (Silu. 5.5.79-80)*. Far from being a personal preference of the poet, elective bonds were cherished in Roman society as the widespread practices of adoption and fosterage show. The adopting or fostering family seems to have been motivated not only from financial or political interest, but also by genuine affection for the child that was admitted in the household, and as inscriptions show, the new member of the *familia* was expected to feel and behave in the same way as a natural child would.<sup>290</sup> By comparing Antigone and Argia to the real sisters collectively known as Heliades, Statius implies that, at this point, with their rivalry set aside and their competitiveness forgotten, the two bereaved women indeed become sisters, as if

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<sup>286</sup> The other two passages where the story of Phaethon is used as an allegory for Polynices are *Theb.* 1.219-221 and 6.320-325.

<sup>287</sup> Pollmann (2004) ad 413-15.

<sup>288</sup> Henderson (1993) 186 sees this as proof that the two women enter a “comradely sorority”.

<sup>289</sup> Similar views are found in his epitaph for the adoptive son of his friend Melior (*Silu.* 2.1, esp. lines 84-88).

<sup>290</sup> Nielsen (1999) 249-262, who also discusses the first passage of the *Siluae* quoted above.

one of them were adopted by the (family of the) other, and remain so for the next few lines, until the magic is broken by the arrival of the guards.

Once the body is washed and kissed for the last time, the sisters-in-law manage to find a funeral pyre that is still burning, which happens to be the one on which Eteocles' body was placed (*Theb.* 12.420-423). Even though no less than four possible reasons for the existence of that pyre are given, the final one (*seu dissensuros seruauerat Eumenis ignes, Theb.* 12.423) both stands out through its position at the end of the passage, and foreshadows the event that will follow the use of that particular pyre to burn Polynices. In fact, as soon as the corpse is placed on the flames, they try to break apart: *exundant diuiso uertice flammae / alternique apices abrupta luce coruscant* (*Theb.* 12.431-432). The rivalry between the two brothers continues in their burial, with the flames trying to outdo each other (*uterque minax globus et conatur uterque / longius, Theb.* 12.434-435).

On realising the truth about the pyre, Antigone tries to placate the brothers' posthumous ire, specifically addressing Polynices:<sup>291</sup>

... *tuque exul ubique*  
*semper inops aequi iam cede – hoc nupta precatur*  
*hoc soror – aut saeuos mediae ueniemus in ignes.'*

*Theb.* 12.444-446

As Antigone points out, both his wife and his sister are begging Polynices to withdraw from this meaningless hatred, and once again they are given equal space in the line. But it is her threat that they fall in the flames that carries the most powerful implications in Antigone's brief speech. While the adjective *mediae*

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<sup>291</sup> Pollmann (2004) ad 444 explains this shift from both brothers to Polynices alone as a matter of affability of the latter. It is more reasonable, however, to expect Antigone to address him and not Eteocles not only because of their closer bond, but also because Argia, his wife, is present whose prayers would have no effect on Eteocles.

primarily indicates the movement of the two women “to the middle” of the flames, there is certainly an echo from a previous occasion when the same word was applied to Antigone and her sister Ismene (*mediaeque sorores, Theb.* 7.557). Thus, Antigone, viewing Argia as Ismene’s replacement, intends to act once again, this time *in extremis*, as a mediator in order to stop the brothers’ quarrel which continues even after their mutual killing.

In fact, they would have fulfilled their threats had it not been for the awakening of the guards by the commotion caused by an earthquake (*Theb.* 12.447-451). While Argia’s old companion trembles, neither of the two women is afraid to confess their deed and spurn once again the orders of Creon (*Theb.* 12.452-455). At this moment the competition<sup>292</sup> between them reaches its climax, as they get hold of the remains of Polynices<sup>293</sup> and claim the whole blame for themselves:

*... haec fratris rapuisse haec coniugis artus  
contendunt uicibusque probant: ‘ego corpus’ ‘ego ignes’  
‘me pietas’ ‘me duxit amor.’ ...*

*Theb.* 12.457-459

The earlier competition resumes, once again signposted by the carefully balanced space assigned to each contender, the equally balanced repetition of pronouns (*haec, haec, ego, ego, me, me* – one set per line), and the use of words indicative of amoebae exchange (*contendunt, uicibus*). By her actions Argia proves worthy of substituting Ismene, who in tragedy claimed to have helped Antigone with the burial in order to share her punishment (*Soph. Ant.* 536ff.). The renewed rivalry

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<sup>292</sup> Kytzler (1996) 33.

<sup>293</sup> Somewhat curious idea, as the poet has just described the corpse as completely devoured by the flames: *omne uident fluxisse cadauer, Theb.* 12.455.

between the two sisters-in-law, however, dispenses with the earlier respect in their amoebaeon song (*alternis ... reuerentia uerbis*, *Theb.* 12.461), giving its place to anger and hatred which reproduce the discord of the brothers (*iram odiumque putes, tantus discordat utrimque / clamor*, *Theb.* 12.462-463).<sup>294</sup> Significantly, the verb used here represents the opposite of unanimity (sometimes expressed as *concordia*) that the two sisters-in-law have achieved in this episode, thus contributing even further to the problematisation of their bond.

When the two women appear some two hundred lines later, they are brought to Creon in order to be executed:

*saeuus at interea ferro post terga reuinctas  
Antigonen uiduamque Creon Adrastida leto  
admouet. ambae hilares et mortis amore superbae  
ensibus intentant iugulos regemque cruentum  
despiciunt ...*

*Theb.* 12.677-681

They seem to have calmed down since their last appearance on stage and there is no sign of anything resembling anger or hatred. While they are both named, the rest of the description does not focus on one of them but treats them once again as a pair through the use of plural forms. Their contempt for Creon is still obvious in their attitude, as is their lack of fear of death. In fact, they offer themselves as victims for a sacrifice, in a description that verbally recalls other equally fearless female epic figures such as the Ovidian Polyxena (*iugulumque simul pectusque retexit*, *Met.* 13.459) and even more closely Philomela:

*adreptamque coma flexis post terga lacertis*

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<sup>294</sup> Pollmann (2004) ad 462-3, who points out that, unlike Eteocles and Polynices, Antigone and Argia here try to destroy themselves and not each other.

*uincla pati cogit; iugulum Philomela parabat  
spemque suae mortis uiso conceperat ense:*

*Met. 6.552-554*

The arrival of Theseus' messenger brings the scene to a close without explicitly stating that the two women are spared. As only Argia reappears (*Theb.* 12.804), it is often presumed that she is the one to survive,<sup>295</sup> while for Antigone the messenger's interruption came too late. Nowhere in the tradition is the survival of Antigone recorded, and the ambiguity here may point to the reader's knowledge of this fact.

Or it may mean that Argia survives because this is the prize for winning the competition that runs through Book 12 between her and her sister-in-law. Argia and Antigone come even in their initial match, which combined words and actions prior to their lament for Polynices. During that lament, however, Argia shines through her narrative performance of the war, even though she dedicates most of her story to her rival in the contest. Furthermore, her greatest achievement is to become something she was not, namely, a sister for the daughter of Oedipus, a feat acknowledged not only by the poet who compares them to the Heliades, but also by Antigone, who admits her to play the role of Ismene in the final mediating embassy to Polynices. Thus, Argia is unanimously declared the winner of this competition and granted a future, while for Antigone no one will ever know, but silence rarely means living happily ever after.

## **Conclusion**

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<sup>295</sup> Antigone dies: Heslin (2008) 118 recognizes the possibility that she dies; for Dietrich (2009) 190 her fate "is, of course, well known from tragedy". Antigone survives: Vessey (1973) 133; Pollmann (2004) ad 462-3 presumes she survives, despite the lack of a mention later in the poem.

In this chapter I have discussed five pairs of sisters in terms of their unanimity, that is, their near-identification in terms of emotions, thoughts and actions. In the course of Book 4 the Virgilian Anna proves worthy of being described as Dido's *unanima soror*:<sup>296</sup> she knows what her sister thinks and hopes for, and expresses her wishes on her behalf; whether that is the best course of action is another matter. For better or worse, Anna is so devoted to Dido that she does not question her decisions or realise when she is being tricked. She experiences Dido's sadness and distress, and her affection for her sister is such that she would not hesitate to die alongside her, if only she were asked; the fact that she does not follow her example is problematic if one were too strict about the limits of unanimity. Virgil opts for a happy ending in this respect: instead of shared death, the *unanimae sorores* of the *Aeneid* become one, as Anna receives Dido's soul in her, offering her a way to survive and allowing at the same time for the interchangeability of epic sisters in Virgil's epic successors. Through an analysis of the passages featuring the Carthaginians' interaction, I have shown how epic and tragic models are intertwined with Roman attitudes of women and sisters in particular, showing the way in the treatment of female family bonds and setting the challenge for the poets to come.

Both Ovid and Statius accept this challenge and take it to its limits, albeit in different ways. Without calling them *unanimae*, Ovid reproduces the positive aspects of Carthaginian sisters' bond in his own version of Procne and Philomela,

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<sup>296</sup> It is not possible to say that Dido is worthy of the same title, as her behaviour towards Anna is more often than not the opposite of unanimous. She does confide her visions and nightmares in her; she hints at Anna and Aeneas having an intimate relationship that is perhaps not appropriate; she blames Anna for encouraging her; and she deceives her by making her unknowingly contribute to the preparation of her funeral pyre.

who are already in Greek myth singular examples of sisterly solidarity. The horrible decision of a mother to kill her son in order to avenge her sister is explained through the meticulous characterisation of the daughters of Pandion: they experience the same feelings, even when they are apart, and their wish to see each other overcomes all obstacles, even Philomela's imprisonment and lack of speech. The poet of the *Metamorphoses* also introduces a new way to bring the sisters together, namely, the use of common models which renders them interchangeable, contributing even more to their status as *unanimae*. Procne and Philomela's unanimity is perpetuated not through their ritually becoming one, as in the case of the Virgilian sisters, but through their transformation into a swallow and a nightingale without clarification from the part of the poet as to which heroine turns into which bird.

As for Statius, he starts by applying the principles of Virgilian unanimity to two pairs of sisters, the Argive Argia and Deipyle, and the Theban Antigone and Ismene. The former pair is assigned all positive qualities of their predecessors: they act as one and seem to be characterised by equal beauty, modesty and virginal chastity; once they are married, however, they follow separate paths which sometimes lead to a clash of interests. On the contrary, the daughters of Oedipus inherit more of the sinister qualities of the Carthaginian sisters. When they appear with Jocasta they are similar to the Argive princesses; when, however, they are in the intimacy of the room they share, the apparent balance gives way to Ismene taking centre stage and monopolising speech, while Antigone is there like Anna, to listen and be deceived. Finally, Statius experiments with a third pair formed by Argia and Antigone, sisters not by blood but by choice. With their appearance,



actions and words they achieve unanimity to a greater extent than their status as sisters-in-law traditionally allows. Statius seems to suggest that identification in intention may create as powerful a bond as nature can. Thus, Antigone and Argia are each worthy of the title *unanima soror* in their relationship to one another, but once again, as in the case of their Virgilian models, only one survives to tell the tale.

## Chapter Two – Love and Marriage

This chapter looks at female family bonds in their interaction with the opposite sex; it investigates epic women's participation in love triangles together with a female relative, as well as their attitudes towards marriage, especially when it comes to the choice of a future husband. I offer a close reading of passages from Virgil's *Aeneid*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*, which feature six pairs of mothers and daughters, sisters, or their variations, highlighting the intertextual dialogue between these texts and earlier Greek and Roman poetry. In particular I discuss two treatments of the mother-daughter bond, Amata and Lavinia in the *Aeneid*, and Ceres and Proserpina in the *Metamorphoses*. I then move on to Ovid's sister pairs of Aglauros and Herse, and Procne and Philomela, before turning my attention to Medea's sister Chalcioppe and aunt Circe in the *Argonautica*. Through an analysis of the themes of love and marriage in each case, I show how the epic poet combines elements from literary figures with general attitudes and views of his contemporary Roman women, as well as drawing specific parallels between his female protagonists and historic or legendary figures.

### **Mothers and daughters I: Amata and Lavinia**

The Latin queen Amata and princess Lavinia are Virgil's only mother-daughter pair, just as Dido and Anna are the only sister pair of the epic.<sup>297</sup> Their bond not only reflects characteristics of mythical mothers and daughters, but it also evokes ideals and attitudes of mothers and daughters who belong to the realm of

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<sup>297</sup> On whom see Chapter One.

Roman legend and history. Amata and Lavinia feature in a number of episodes in *Aeneid* 7, 11 and 12, which offer hints at their relationship to other characters as well as to one another. As was the case with Dido and Anna in Book 4, the first scene (*Aen.* 7.45-58) sets the tone, determines the reader's expectations and reveals important aspects of their characterisation that will recur in the course of the poem. Lavinia is the first to be mentioned, as the only daughter of king Latinus, who reigns in Latium but lacks male progeny:

*sola domum et tantas seruabat filia sedes  
iam matura uiro, iam plenis nubilis annis.  
multi illam magno a Latio totaque petebant  
Ausonia; ...*

*Aen.* 7.52-55

Like Anna in book 4, Lavinia is not named in her first appearance on stage;<sup>298</sup> unlike the Carthaginian, however, she is not introduced by means of her relationship to a female relative,<sup>299</sup> but as Latinus' daughter (*filia*). The subsequent lines follow the same pattern, introducing Amata by means of her relationship to Latinus and without mentioning her name:<sup>300</sup>

*... petit ante alios pulcherrimus omnis  
Turnus, auis atausque potens, quem regia coniunx  
adiungi generum miro properabat amore;*

<sup>298</sup> She has been mentioned or named in the prophecies of Creusa, the Sibyl and Anchises (*regia coniunx*, *Aen.* 2.783; *coniunx*, *Aen.* 6.93; *Lavinia coniunx*, *Aen.* 6.764 respectively). Her name can even be read as early as the proem of the poem (*Laviniaque ... / litora*, *Aen.* 1.2-3).

<sup>299</sup> That is, her mother; the first word of line 52 (*sola*) as well as the preceding two lines (*filius huic fato diuum prolesque uirilis / nulla fuit, primaque oriens erepta iuuenta est*, *Aen.* 7.50-51) preclude her introduction as someone's sister.

<sup>300</sup> Dido was introduced as the queen of Carthage (*regit*, *Aen.* 1.340; cf. *regia coniunx* for Amata at *Aen.* 7.56), and then her brother and husband are mentioned (*germanum fugiens*, *Aen.* 1.341; *huic coniunx Sychaeus erat*, *Aen.* 1.343). Crucially, however, Dido is named in the first line of her introduction (*Aen.* 1.340). Heinze (1993) 299 points out this phenomenon of "late naming of names [that] occurs so frequently in the case of less important figures that it cannot be mere chance", and explains it as the poet's intention to name and fully present his characters only when they appear on stage, or have a part to play in the plot.

By bringing the two women into the narrative without explicitly linking them with a blood tie, and by defining them instead in relation to a man, Latinus, the poet hints at a rather unusual mother-daughter relationship. It is certainly different from that between Dido and Anna, with the latter being introduced in Book 4 precisely through her bond to the former (*unanimam ... sororem*, *Aen.* 4.8).

A slight confusion may even arise from the description of Latinus' wife as *regia coniunx*, because the phrase has been used earlier in the poem to indicate Lavinia in Creusa's prophetic speech: *illic res laetae regnumque et regia coniunx / parta tibi* (*Aen.* 2.783-784). It is only once the whole sentence is read that the meaning of the phrase here is revealed: the reference is not to Aeneas' promised bride but to her mother, whose introduction in these lines completes the image of the royal family, revealing that she already has a favourite among her daughter's suitors, Turnus. The focus falls on the bond that such a marriage will create not between the couple, but between the mother of the bride and the latter's new husband (*adiungi generum*, *Aen.* 7.57), leaving the opportunity of a hint at her own relationship with her daughter unexplored. Furthermore, the positioning of Lavinia's most prominent suitor between her mention and that of her mother, who is his most passionate champion,<sup>301</sup> literally contributes to the peculiar nature of their relationship, while creating suspense as to the outcome of the suit and its connection to the arrival of the Trojans in Latium. The fact that Latinus' daughter is

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<sup>301</sup> The phrase *miro ... amore* (which Servius ad *Aen.* 7.57 glosses *noua intemperantia*) has incited a huge debate as to its meaning and implications for Amata's feelings for Turnus. Zarker (1969) 3 sees an allusion to the queen's name *Amata* in the phrase *miro ... amore*, pointing out at the same time the peculiarity of this phrase as applied to the feelings of a future mother-in-law for a future son-in-law.

not formally identified here with Aeneas' prophesied *regia coniunx*, an Italian named Lavinia, creates the possibility that the *filia* of line 52 may not be relevant to the Trojan's future.

Lavinia is finally named as she appears standing next to her father who sacrifices to the gods following an obscure omen about her future: *castis adolet dum altaria taedis, / et iuxta genitorem astat Lauinia uirgo* (*Aen.* 7.71-72). Still defined by her relationship to Latinus, the revelation of her name now brings Lavinia centre-stage confirming her identification with Aeneas' promised wife and creating expectations for a more detailed characterisation. The girl's only action, however, is the decoration of the altars combined with a rather passive presence next to her father (*astat*). The way that her name is mentioned is ambivalent: she is *Lauinia uirgo*, "the girl Lavinia" but also "the Lavinian girl", in the same way that the shores of Latium where Aeneas lands are called *Lauinia ... litora* (*Aen.* 1.2-3) and the land is referred to by Mercury as *Lauinia ... arua* (*Aen.* 4.236). Furthermore, no personal traits are included in her physical description:<sup>302</sup> her long hair (*Aen.* 7.73), ceremonial dress and crown decorated with precious stones (*Aen.* 7. 74-76) would apply to any princess present at a solemn ritual. Finally, the absence of her mother from the scene, while not necessarily significant,<sup>303</sup> does not allow any speculations on their bond. So far Lavinia emerges as a passive figure that simply stands by without expressing any opinion in matters that directly concern her. On the

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<sup>302</sup> Cairns (1989) 160-163 compares Virgil's image of Lavinia to generalising descriptions of virgins in Greek Lyric, where the lack of precision served to avoid "malicious interpretations and gossip".

<sup>303</sup> Amata is absent (that is, not mentioned as present) either because the sacrifice is performed in response to an omen foreseeing the arrival of a foreign husband (*Aen.* 7.68-69), therefore Lavinia is the person directly concerned; or because the will of the gods as expressed through the three omens is explicitly against Amata's choice of a husband (*Aen.* 7.58), therefore her presence at their interpretation is not appropriate or even desirable.

contrary, her mother is endowed with a dynamic personality from the outset, as she appears in the narrative with strong preferences about her daughter's marriage. Their relationship is only to be deduced from the context, as they are not presented as mother and daughter in the introduction and omen scenes.

What these episodes do, however, is to programmatically highlight the importance of family relationships by means of the intricate network of bonds used to describe each of the four Latin protagonists. The movement from one to the other form a circle that Aeneas will have to break to fulfil his destiny: Latinus (father of) Lavinia (promised wife of) Turnus (favourite suitor of) Amata (wife of) Latinus.<sup>304</sup> Simultaneously, the theme of marital arrangements and the ensuing conflicts position the second half of the poem in a very specific tradition, with precedents in the *Iliad* as well as in Euripides' tragedies. The situation in Latium where an engagement is about to be broken by the arrival of another man, against whom the spurned lover is going to wage war, is clearly reminiscent of the cause of the Trojan War, where a marriage was broken and another forged, with the spurned first husband waging war against the second. While the outcome of the war is reversed, with Aeneas, superficially corresponding to Paris, winning the war and marrying Lavinia,<sup>305</sup> the thematic links of its causes encourage the continuous dialogue between the two epics. On the other hand, the indication that the gods' decision on the girl's marriage is contrary to what her mother wants cannot help but point towards Euripides' Clytemestra and Iphigenia, foreshadowing a marital

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<sup>304</sup> *Latinus ... huic ... sola ... filia ... illam ... petit ... Turnus ... quem regia coniunx, Aen. 7.45-55.*

<sup>305</sup> Lavinia only superficially corresponds to Helen, since their differences by far surpass their similarities. As James (2002) 146 notes, it is not Lavinia's beauty but her dynastic function that Aeneas is after. Moreover, although both are aware of being the reason for the war, Helen rages against the matter, while Lavinia looks down in embarrassment [Della Corte (1972) 254].

dispute with dire consequences between Amata and Latinus, even though the groom he supports is not Death as was the case with Agamemnon.

The next scene featuring Amata (*Aen.* 7.341-372) describes Allecto's attack on her as instigated by Juno in order to set in motion the wheels of war in Latium. As the Fury approaches, the Latin queen is finally named and her interest in the marriage further explored:

... *tacitumque obsedit limen Amatae,  
quam super aduentu Teucrum Turnique hymenaeis  
femineae ardentem curaeque iraeque coquebant.*

*Aen.* 7.343-345

Notably she is not introduced as Lavinia's mother; in fact only once in the poem is she defined by her role as *mater*,<sup>306</sup> unlike Dido whose relationship to Anna is often brought to mind through the use of *germana* and *soror* instead of her name. Nevertheless, Amata's behaviour both thematically and verbally recalls that of Dido;<sup>307</sup> as both queens are prey to *furor* inflicted by an external agent,<sup>308</sup> their description abounds in similar attributes and imagery. Yet, although Dido is not prepared for the surge of passion following Cupid's attack (*Aen.* 1.712-722), just before the attack of the Fury Amata's heart is already filled with worries and anger,<sup>309</sup> and she is described as *ardens* (*Aen.* 7.345), a characterisation typical of Dido in the early days of her passion.<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> In her speech to Latinus Amata describes herself as *mater* (*Aen.* 7.361) in a text abounding in kinship terms – see below, p. 126.

<sup>307</sup> La Penna (1967); Fantham (1998) 140-149.

<sup>308</sup> In Dido's case it is erotic madness instilled in her through Cupid's touch; in Amata's it is caused by the poison of Allecto's snake; the two attacks bear verbal as well as thematic similarities.

<sup>309</sup> Amata is psychologically predisposed for the attack of Allecto: La Penna (1967) 314; Zarker (1969) 7; according to Fantham (1998) 139, this also applies to Turnus.

<sup>310</sup> *ardescitque tuendo*, *Aen.* 1.713 (although it is Ascanius, that is, Cupid in disguise, whom Dido is watching, not Aeneas, and her passion is not yet kindled by his touch); *ardet amans Dido*, *Aen.* 4.101 (before the incident at the cave).

Amata is worried that her plans for her daughter's marriage might not work out, and angry at the arrival of the Trojans which prompted Latinus' offer of Lavinia's hand to Aeneas. Her Euripidean model comes thus into full view, as she faces a situation similar to Clytemestra's, whose husband also made a decision about the fate of their daughter which she most passionately rejects. Amata boils with wrath before confronting Latinus in an attempt to change his mind;<sup>311</sup> when she starts speaking, however, she suppresses her rage and talks "softly" and "as a mother would":

*mollius et solito matrum de more locuta est,  
multa super natae lacrimans Phrygiisque hymenaeis  
Aen. 7.357-358*

These lines also spell out for the first time in the epic the relationship between the two women, emphasising the mother's interest in her daughter's marriage, which is the reason for Amata's tears. The terms *matrum* (Amata's status) and *natae* (Lavinia's) appear to reflect each other, as they are positioned in the middle part of their respective lines and preceded by words that create a vertical alliterative effect (*mollius-multa, solito-super*). This elaborate structure bears resemblance to the description of Dione and Aphrodite before their speeches in *Iliad* 5:

*ἦ δ' ἐν γούνασι πίπτει Διώνης δὶ Ἀφροδίτη,  
μητρὸς ἔῃς· ἦ δ' ἀγκὰς ἐλάζετο θυγατέρα ἦν  
Il. 5.370-371*

The goddesses' relationship is emphasised in lines 370-371 first by the juxtaposition of their names in the first line, then by the appropriate kinship terms occupying the

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<sup>311</sup> Notably, the effect of Allecto's attack is not yet complete (*necdum animus toto percepit pectore flammam, Aen. 7.356*), and therefore cannot be held solely responsible for Amata's imminent behaviour.



beginning and end of the second, and finally by the overall chiasmic structure of both. Thus, an expectation is created that Amata and Lavinia's bond, although not discussed before, shares some if not all of the characteristics of its Homeric precedent.

The examination of Amata and Lavinia's relationship, however, is more challenging, as there is no verbal exchange at all between them. Virgil, unlike Homer, does not allow for a dialogue to take place between the mother and the daughter,<sup>312</sup> and it consequently falls on their actions or on Amata's speeches to other people to provide some clues about their feelings. The queen's address to Latinus is a case in point, where the kinship terms used at *Aen.* 7.357-358 recur, now flanked by her daughter's name and her virginal status:

*'exsulibusne datur ducenda **Lauinia** Teucris,  
o genitor, nec te miseret **nataeque tuique?**  
nec **matris** miseret, quam primo Aquilone relinquet  
perfidus alta petens abducta **uirgine** praedo?*

*Aen.* 7.359-362

In an elaborate construction of two almost symmetrical questions of two lines each, the mother-daughter relationship is placed in the centre,<sup>313</sup> while the princess' designation *Lauinia uirgo*<sup>314</sup> is split into its components, each being the penultimate word in its own line. The queen's insistence on the importance of her family is not limited to her bond to Lavinia but also covers Latinus as well as more remote relatives. Her speech lingers on the feelings of the whole family (*nec te miseret **nataeque tuique?** / nec **matris** miseret, *Aen.* 7.360-361) if Aeneas abducts*

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<sup>312</sup> This lack of communication also differentiates them from Dido and Anna.

<sup>313</sup> In equally long lines of 15 syllables.

<sup>314</sup> Also at *Aen.* 11.479.

Lavinia in the same way that Paris carried off Helen (*Aen.* 7.363-364). She then shifts her focus to Turnus and supports his candidacy not merely with her personal preference but also with arguments that correspond to the will of the gods. Even if only rhetorically, Amata sees herself as another Leda whose precious daughter is taken away from her; this appeal for sympathy is coupled with an argument for marriage in the family: *quid cura antiqua tuorum / et consanguineo totiens data dextera Turno?* (*Aen.* 7.365-366). Not only has Lavinia been repeatedly promised to Turnus, but he is also a member of their extended family, a status, it is implied, that should be preferred over a complete stranger;<sup>315</sup> at the same time, he happens to draw his origins also from abroad (*Aen.* 7.371-372), which would agree with the omens speaking of an *externum uirum*.<sup>316</sup>

Amata's supplication of Latinus is unsuccessful, just as Clytemestra failed to convince Agamemnon not to sacrifice Iphigenia. As the poison instilled earlier by the Fury takes effect, the next scene sees the queen raving like a Bacchant in the city:

*tum uero infelix ingentibus excita monstris  
immensam sine more furit lymphata per urbem  
Aen. 7.376-377*

Her description recalls the behaviour of Dido both after she acknowledged her passion for Aeneas (*uritur infelix Dido totaque uagatur / urbe furens*, *Aen.* 4.68-69) and when she realised that he will abandon her (*saeuit inops animi totamque incensa per urbem / bacchatur*, *Aen.* 4.300-301). Notably, both queens are time and again described as *infelices*. Amata's *furor*, however, is not erotic, and in her

<sup>315</sup> Turnus' candidacy as a non-outsider serves, in Amata's mind, the best interests of their community as well as their family [Fantham (1998) 142].

<sup>316</sup> As Fantham (1998) 142 notes, Amata reinterprets the oracle to fit Turnus' description.

divinely inspired madness, her aim remains that of uniting Turnus with Lavinia. For this reason she resorts to extremes: under the pretext of Bacchic rites, she removes Lavinia from the city (*Aen.* 7.385-388), seemingly reversing the story of Demeter and Persephone, which, like the abduction of Helen, Amata does not wish to see being repeated. While Demeter's daughter was abducted by Hades and hidden in the Underworld where he married her and made her his queen, Amata herself abducts her daughter and hides her in the woods in order to prevent Aeneas from marrying her and making her his queen.

Under the influence of Allecto's poison, she simulates Bacchic rites (*simulato numine Bacchi, Aen.* 7.385)<sup>317</sup> and even offers Lavinia to the god in a sort of sacred marriage,<sup>318</sup> before enacting her wedding ceremony with Turnus in his absence (*Aen.* 7.398). She then appeals to the Latin matrons who have joined in the Bacchic rites for support:

*clamat: 'io matres, audite, ubi quaeque, Latinae:  
si qua piis animis manet infelicis Amatae  
gratia, si iuris materni cura remordet,  
soluite crinalis uittas, capite orgia mecum.'*

*Aen.* 7.400-403

Amata, whose actions in this scene physically involve her daughter (*natam ... abdit, Aen.* 7.387; *natae ... canit hymenaeos, Aen.* 7.398),<sup>319</sup> addresses the Latin women by the one title she has in common with them, that of mother. Although she does not mention Lavinia, she makes it clear that her actions in which she encourages

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<sup>317</sup> Amata's Bacchic frenzy, like that of Dido's, has nothing to do with Bacchic inspiration, but is entirely due to Allecto's influence over her [Fantham (1998) 143-144].

<sup>318</sup> Panoussi (2009) 129 highlights the peculiarity of Amata's action, which seems to deny Lavinia her "right to marriage" altogether.

<sup>319</sup> Lavinia's passivity in this scene, also visible in the syntax as she only appears in oblique cases (*natam, Aen.* 7.387; *uirgine, 389; natae, 398*), strongly contrasts the activity of her mother.

the matrons to participate are both motivated by, and aim at serving the purposes of, her relationship with her daughter. Once again the structure of the lines contributes to this effect, with *matres* and *materni* surrounding the name of *Amata*, which in itself somehow echoes the kinship term she embodies (*mater*).

The two women recede in the background for the best part of the next four books, but a brief glimpse of them is given in Book 11, in a scene reworking Hecabe's supplication of Athene in *Iliad* 6.<sup>320</sup> Amata is accompanied by the Latin matrons as she prays to Minerva to spare their city, just as Hecabe was in the midst of Trojan women (*Il.* 6.286-311). Whereas in the Homeric text the company of the queen were old women (*γεραιαί*, *Il.* 6.296), here they are figures designated through their role as mothers, as well as her daughter Lavinia:

*subuehitur magna **matrum** regina caterua  
dona ferens, iuxtaque comes Lauinia uirgo,  
causa mali tanti, oculos deiecta decoros.  
succedunt **matres** et templum ture uaporant*

*Aen.* 11.478-481

The structure of the line suggests the importance of the maternal role, as the mention of the *matres* forms a circle surrounding Lavinia (and Amata, here designated as *regina*). The phrase *Lauinia uirgo* and her proximity to her mother (*iuxtaque comes*) recall the fire omen scene where she was also described by the same phrase in the same metrical position standing next to her father (*iuxta genitorem*, *Aen.* 7.72). Her stance in both passages suggests a close relationship with either parent, at least from her part, as well as passivity and obedience.

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<sup>320</sup> As Moskalew (1982) 169 notes, the scene also recalls Virgil's description at *Aen.* 1.479-482 (where the same event of the Trojan war appears depicted on the temple of Juno in Carthage).

Although Lavinia does not speak, there is an indication of her feelings in her facial expression: the description of her eyes as downcast is intentionally placed next to her designation as the cause of the war,<sup>321</sup> suggesting her realisation of the fact. At the same time, downcast eyes stand in for modesty, which is expected from an unmarried girl appearing in public, which is what the adjective *decoros* seems to suggest.<sup>322</sup> In epic this reaction usually characterises young maidens meeting the man they (will) love, as in the case of Hypsipyle and Medea in front of Jason in Apollonius' *Argonautica* (ἐγκλιδὸν ὄσσε βαλοῦσα, AR 1.780 and 3.1008 respectively). Lavinia's eyes, however, could also indicate her disapproval of her mother's actions, as they resemble the eyes of Minerva in Virgil's earlier reworking of the Iliadic scene as part of his *ekphrasis* of Juno's temple in Carthage. There the goddess, described in the Homeric text as shaking her head in refusal (ἀνένευε δὲ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη, Il. 6.311), reacts to the prayers of the Trojan women by fixing her eyes to the ground: *diua solo fixos oculos auersa tenebat* (*Aen.* 1.482). Iphigenia likewise keeps her eyes fixed to the ground when she appears before her father after his plans for her sacrifice have been revealed (ἐς γῆν δ' ἐρείσασ' ὄμμα, Eur. *IA* 1123),<sup>323</sup> punishing in this way the man whom she had greeted expressing her desire to look into his eyes (ποθῶ γὰρ ὄμμα δὴ σόν, Eur. *IA* 637). Finally, Dido punishes Aeneas for his desertion by fixing her eyes to the ground, when he meets her in the Underworld (*Aen.* 6.469).<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>321</sup> The beginning of the line is identical to *Aen.* 6.93, where the Sibyl describes Lavinia.

<sup>322</sup> The combination of downcast eyes and modesty contributes to the portrait of Lavinia as a figure completely different from Helen, according to West (1975) 358.

<sup>323</sup> Formicula (2006) 82.

<sup>324</sup> The line is identical to the one describing the reaction of Minerva at *Aen.* 1.482.

The next scene creates further interpretative issues concerning the characterisation of the two women. The model of Hecabe for the Latin queen continues, with Latinus being cast in the role of Priam, as they beg in vain Turnus not to fight Aeneas (*Aen.* 12.10-80) in an episode reworking the supplication of Hector (*Il.* 22.33-92).<sup>325</sup> Unlike his model whose silence is enough to suggest the failure of the entreaty, Turnus does speak to both Latinus and Amata, and although he is not their son, he addresses them with the kinship terms *pater* (*Aen.* 12.13, 50) and *mater* (*Aen.* 12.74). While Latinus remains relatively calm and does not let his feelings carry him away into fully endorsing the role of Priam,<sup>326</sup> Amata's passionate address to Turnus casts her as his mother, in particular when she reveals how much he means to her (*Aen.* 12.57-59), to which Lavinia reacts by crying and blushing (*Aen.* 12.64-66). The girl's blush is open to interpretation, as the numerous attempts at breaking its code show. It could reveal her love for Aeneas following the mention of his name in her mother's final sentence.<sup>327</sup> Alternatively, it could display either her maidenly embarrassment, picking up her downcast eyes in book 11,<sup>328</sup> or her protest at her mother's inappropriate feelings for Turnus.<sup>329</sup> Finally, it could confirm her own love for Turnus and share in her mother's agony for the outcome of the duel,<sup>330</sup> a reading that seems to match Turnus' own

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<sup>325</sup> Anderson (1957) 29.

<sup>326</sup> E.g. he mentions Lavinia's marriage and describes his earlier actions as madness.

<sup>327</sup> Todd (1980). The view that her reaction to the sound of Aeneas' name reveals her love for him seems highly implausible, especially given the fact that all heroines who blush do so either at the *sight* of their lover, or at the thought/mention of a man they have at least seen once (as does Medea when Chalciope mentions "the stranger": *φοινίχθη δ' ἄμυδις καλὸν χροῶα*, AR 3.725), which is not the case with Lavinia.

<sup>328</sup> Woodworth (1930) 186.

<sup>329</sup> Burke (1976) 26.

<sup>330</sup> Zarker (1969) 15; Lyne (1987) 116-119 interprets Lavinia's tears as her reaction to her mother's feelings for Turnus, and her blush as due to the realisation that by reacting, she revealed her own love for him.

interpretation of her blush, which intensifies his desire for both her and battle (*Aen.* 12.70-71).<sup>331</sup>

Lavinia's reaction is indeed similar to that of other epic heroines in front of a man they love. Hypsipyle in Apollonius looks down and blushes before she addresses Jason for the first time:

... ἡ δ' ἐγκλιδὸν ὄσσε βαλοῦσα  
παρθενικάς ἐρύθηγε παρηίδας: ἔμπα δὲ τόνγε  
αἰδομένη ...

AR 1.790-792

Medea also blushes when she sees him face to face (*θερμὸν δὲ παρηίδας εἶλεν ἔρευθος*, AR 3.963), and looks down when she tries in vain to speak to him for the first time (*ἡ δ' ἐγκλιδὸν ὄσσε βαλοῦσα*, AR 3.1008). Like Medea, whose blush and downcast eyes are separated by 45 lines of text, Lavinia's reaction spans two books. In book 11 she keeps her eyes firmly on the ground as she walks with her mother and the Latin matrons to the temple; Turnus is mentioned as preparing for battle as soon as the prayer to Minerva is over (*Aen.* 11.486), perhaps suggesting that he was up to that point watching the procession. In book 12 she blushes,<sup>332</sup> not only for

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<sup>331</sup> Turnus is "disturbed" by the love: *illum turbat amor*; whose love? If it is Lavinia's, then that puts her blush into context – she would be another Medea. If it is Turnus', then he is inflamed by what he thinks is a clear indication of Lavinia's feelings (her blush). If, as DiCesare (1974) 211 suggests, it is Amata's love, then this explains the disturbance – Turnus hears Amata's words and reacts by fixing his eyes on the girl, his own object of desire, who in the meantime also reacts by blushing. Cairns (2005) 203, however, believes that Turnus did not nourish such an illusion, because he knew that Lavinia did not blush for love (but because her marriage was discussed in her presence, an argument based on her similarities to the Callimachean Cydippe, pp. 198-203).

<sup>332</sup> According to Fantham (1998) 147, Lavinia blushes because she "face[s] her lover and know[s] she is the prize of this contest". For Formicula (2006) 87-95, Lavinia's silence is imposed by her modesty/shame, but her blush offers a non-verbal expression of her conflicting thoughts about Aeneas, Turnus, her parents and herself; ultimately, like Iphigenia, she willingly accepts to be "sacrificed", which in her case involves realising the impossibility of her marriage to Turnus and fulfilling Aeneas' destiny.

being watched, but also for monopolising the conversation of both Turnus and her parents; crucially she does not address Turnus on either occasion.<sup>333</sup>

Whatever Lavinia's feelings may be,<sup>334</sup> what is significant is the positioning of her blush between Amata's and Turnus' speeches, just as her description in the procession comes between her mother's and Turnus'. Lavinia's blush is therefore directly related to her relationship to these two people, and in particular to what her mother has just said to Turnus. Amata's plea does not include a single mention of Lavinia; instead, she asks Turnus not to fight fearing he might die and then she, that is, Amata, will be left alone in old age; she also threatens to kill herself rather than accept Aeneas as her son-in-law. Lavinia then may react in this way to her mother's threat to commit suicide without caring how her daughter would feel; but she also may well weep and blush at her mother's selfish words and her near-disownment of her daughter in favour of the man whom she would prefer as son-in-law.

Amata's threats are realised when she commits suicide under the false belief that Turnus is dead (*Aen.* 12.598-603). Her mode of death by hanging<sup>335</sup> evokes that of Jocasta<sup>336</sup> and Phaedra, both of whom committed some form of incest and in despair took their own lives. This idea is reinforced not only by the

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<sup>333</sup> For Lyne (1989) 80-81, her silence is as good as confirmation for her love for Turnus.

<sup>334</sup> Oliensis (1997) 308 opts for an interpretation of Lavinia's blush as "a lateral manifestation of the contagion of desire", "a metonymic spread of fire, from Turnus [*ardentem*] to Amata to Lavinia [*flagrantis*] and back to Turnus [*ardet*]". I am not sure I understand how the fire spreads through Amata, unless we bring in the fire imagery used earlier for her frenzy. Syed (2005) 135 accepts all possibilities.

<sup>335</sup> Fantham (1998) 148 sees no problem with Amata's choice of means for her suicide, as hanging, at least in Greece, might simply indicate that the woman could not find a sword or bring herself to use it.

<sup>336</sup> Thaniel (1976) 76-77 identifies a number of thematic similarities between Amata's suicide and that of Jocasta in Soph. *OT* 1234-1264, although the verbal reminiscence in *Aen.* 12.603 of Homer's description of the latter's suicide is even stronger (*ἀψαμένη βρόχον αἰπὸν ἀφ' ὑψηλοῖο μελάθρου*, *Od.* 11.278).



poet's characterisation of her death as hideous (*nodum informis leti trabe nectit ab alta*, *Aen.* 12.603), but also by her own description of her behaviour as *crimen* (*se causam clamat crimenque caputque malorum*, *Aen.* 12.600).<sup>337</sup> Although this is the second instance in the poem when a queen commits suicide, Dido's death by Aeneas' sword in Book 4 is both differently motivated and far more heroic.<sup>338</sup> Crucially, the reason behind Amata's suicide is her self-blame for the supposed death of Turnus; the phrase she uses, however, is *causa ... malorum* (*Aen.* 12.600), which echoes the description of Lavinia as *causa mali tanti* twice before.<sup>339</sup> At her death, therefore, Amata seems to be acting as an incestuous lover, as well as, for the first and last time, as a mother, putting right Lavinia's condemnation as the reason for the war in Latium.

Lavinia is the first to mourn her mother's death (*filia prima manu flauos Lauinia crinis / et roseas laniata genas*, *Aen.* 12.605-606), resembling in this respect Anna who was the one to reach Dido and witness her final moments,<sup>340</sup> although in both cases it is the attendants who first raise the alarm.<sup>341</sup> This is Lavinia's final act in the poem, as her marriage with Aeneas lies beyond its limits; her mourning gestures, however, speak louder than her silences to indicate her love for her

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<sup>337</sup> As Thaniel (1976) argues, Amata belongs to a long literary tradition of epic and tragic women hanging themselves because of shame associated with a grave, usually god-inspired, error, although as the examples he cites show, it is not necessary that the person dying be the same as the one who committed the error. If Amata sees herself as Leda when talking to Latinus, there is another reason why she should commit suicide at the end of the poem, as Helen's mother hanged herself out of shame for her daughter's elopement with Paris: e.g. Eur. *Hel.* 200-202 (*Λήδα δ' ἐν ἀγκύραις / θάνατον ἔλαβεν αἰσχύ- / νας ἐμᾶς ὑπ' ἀλγέων*).

<sup>338</sup> Their suicides, however, had similar effects on their respective cities (*Aen.* 4.663-671 are thematically and verbally similar to *Aen.* 12.607-611).

<sup>339</sup> *Aen.* 6.93 and 11.480.

<sup>340</sup> Cf. Anna's reaction: *unguibus ora soror foedans et pectora pugnīs* (*Aen.* 4.673).

<sup>341</sup> Dido's suicide: *conlapsam aspiciunt comites, enseque cruore / spumantem sparsasque manus. it clamor ad alta / atria*, *Aen.* 4.664-666; Amata's suicide: *quam cladem miserae postquam accepere Latinae*, *Aen.* 12.604.

mother, in a relationship that probably was as unbalanced as that of the Carthaginian sisters in Book 4. Anna is certainly more active than Lavinia, although she too spends large part of the story in the background and in silence. What they do have in common is their commitment to a relationship in which the other member is too self-absorbed to engage fully. Even if Lavinia does not speak,<sup>342</sup> a comparison to Anna's reaction to Dido's death, made legitimate by the similarities between the two queens, suggests that the Latin girl feels as much affection for her mother as did the Carthaginian woman for her sister. Amata's behaviour, however, cannot simply be explained through her assimilation of Dido's characteristics; her representation is due to a combination of her literary models, both inter- and intratextual, and her Roman counterparts. As was the case with Dido and Anna, Amata and Lavinia display characteristics that echo those of Roman mothers and daughters known through literary and non-literary sources; their share in Roman elements, however, is less surprising than in the case of the Carthaginian sisters, because Amata and Lavinia are proto-Roman women and not the barbarian other.

While Lavinia's attitude is similar to that of a Roman daughter, whose opinion on marriage was not usually asked, especially if she was very young,<sup>343</sup> and whose acceptance of her mother's choice was expected as well as won her praise,<sup>344</sup> such lack of involvement is in fact characteristic of any daughter in the ancient world. Amata's behaviour, on the other hand, recalls that of a Roman

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<sup>342</sup> Lyne (1989) 79-80 argues that Virgil intentionally depicts Lavinia as silent, because her love for Turnus would be too sensitive a matter to discuss in epic.

<sup>343</sup> Rawson (1986) 21. There are, however, indications, as Clark (1981) 202 notes, that Roman daughters expressed their opinion about the choice their father made, as Cicero wonders about Tullia (Cic. *ad Att.* 5.4.1 and 6.6.1), or even joined forces with their mothers to pick a husband without waiting for the father's choice, as did Tullia and Terentia for the former's third marriage (Cic. *ad fam.* 3.12.2).

<sup>344</sup> Dixon (1988) 221.

mother,<sup>345</sup> who had a say in the choice of her daughter's husband,<sup>346</sup> and was expected to react if she was not at least consulted in the matter.<sup>347</sup> Amata's strong views on the choice of Lavinia's husband (*Aen.* 7.56-57), her rage at Latinus' decision that obstructs her plans (*Aen.* 7.344-345), and her appeal to him *solito matrum de more* (*Aen.* 7.357), as well as her attempts to delay the wedding and her appeal to the other Latin mothers to protest against the violation of her *ius maternum* (*Aen.* 7.402), assimilate her to such historic figures as Aemilia and Cornelia. The former is described by Livy as reacting in anger how at hearing that her husband Scipio had arranged their daughter's marriage without consulting her first (*AUC* 38.57).<sup>348</sup> Cornelia's letter to her son Gaius Gracchus is as emotional, sensitive to the feelings of all family members, and privileging blood ties over political goals, as Amata's speech to Latinus.<sup>349</sup>

Once the similarities with these Roman female models become evident, a new light is shed on Amata's characterisation in the poem. The role of Lavinia's mother is clearly not the only one Amata plays in the *Aeneid*, and it certainly does not seem to be the one she considers the most important. She is depicted as Turnus' potential mother-in-law to be, but she already treats him as her son-in-law,

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<sup>345</sup> Brazouski (1991) 133-134, although I do not agree with her idea that the Latin matrons band together and support Amata because they fear that their own husbands will follow the example of Latinus.

<sup>346</sup> Dixon (1988) 215; Brazouski (1991) 129; Hanson (1999) 31.

<sup>347</sup> Brazouski (1991) 132 identifies the reason for Amata's reaction in Latinus' failure to consult her before offering Lavinia's hand to Aeneas, and interprets *ius maternum* as her right to prenuptial consultation.

<sup>348</sup> Of particular importance are the phrases *muliebriter indignabunda nihil de communi filia secum consultatum*, and *non ... expertem consilii debuisse matrem esse* (*Liv. AUC* 38.57). Balsdon (1962) 173-174 claims that the story is not true but it reflects a real Roman sentiment. Gagé (1963) 241 points out another parallel in Livy's story of the girl from Ardea, where a mother chooses her daughter's husband, a patrician, but her preference is ignored by the girl's tutors, who promote the suit of a plebeian; the court gives the case to the mother, but the tutors abduct the girl, and civil war ensues between the two factions (*AUC* 4.9).

<sup>349</sup> Hallett (2002) 166.

even if the wedding with Lavinia has not taken place yet. Both when Turnus is introduced in the narrative as the princess' most prominent suitor in Book 7 (*quem regia coniunx / adiungi generum*, *Aen.* 7.56-57), and when he listens to the queen's appeal in Book 12 (*ardentem generum moritura tenebat*, *Aen.* 12.55), the use of the kinship term *gener* indicates that the focalisation is through Amata's eyes, who almost sees his marriage to Lavinia as a *fait accompli*.<sup>350</sup> The importance of this acquired bond, which would only be realised if Turnus married Lavinia, explains Amata's excessive desire to promote his suit (*properabat*, *Aen.* 7.57). It also justifies her anxiety concerning the marriage not of her daughter but of the man who will take her (*Turni hymenaeis*, *Aen.* 7.344; *Phrygiisque hymenaeis*, *Aen.* 7.358), which is given full vent in Amata's speech to Latinus. It may also, to some extent, explain the dependence of her own future on Turnus as expressed in her emotional appeal to him in Book 12. The neglect of Lavinia's feelings, however, and the use of their common bond as another argument in the service of her promotion of Turnus, would suggest that Amata considers her prospective kinship with him as more important than her role as Lavinia's mother, a preference which contradicts the significance that she places on blood bonds in her speech to Latinus. If a kinsman is preferable to a stranger as a son-in-law, that is, the existing family bonds are more important than those created by marriage, then surely her role as Lavinia's mother should mean more to her than her role as Turnus' mother-in-law.

There is, certainly, the possibility that Amata's interest in Turnus goes beyond him being her favourite future son-in-law. A combination of the description

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<sup>350</sup> As Zarker (1969) 6-7 notes, the third use of *gener* with reference to Turnus is found in Amata's speech to Latinus: *si gener externa petitur de gente Latinis* (*Aen.* 7.367); this term, however, might be referring to Turnus' future relationship to *Latinus*, who is the addressee here.

of her preference as *mirus amor*, and her declaration to die alongside him as lovers do, has led many scholars to argue that Amata is in love with Turnus and wants him for herself, not for Lavinia, with her erotic passion managing to surpass even maternal love.<sup>351</sup> The problem with this explanation, however, is that it does not account for Amata's mode of suicide by hanging on the model of Jocasta and Phaedra, or her self-blame described as *crimen*. At this point it is helpful to consider the importance that Amata places on family bonds: in her speech to Latinus, she stresses her blood tie to Turnus (*consanguineo ... Turno*, *Aen.* 7.366), which is then confirmed by the king himself in his appeal to the man (*cognato sanguine*, *Aen.* 12.29). Although Virgil does not confirm this, Servius comments no less than three times that Amata and Turnus' mother Venilia were sisters,<sup>352</sup> which would make the queen his *matertera*. In absence of her sister, a *matertera* would be responsible for the former's children.<sup>353</sup> As Amata's kinship places her in the role of "another mother", her interest in Turnus' marriage is thus legitimised and even her *mirus amor* for him contextualised.<sup>354</sup> Their blood relationship would also explain Virgil's change of her name from the traditional *Amita* to *Amata*;<sup>355</sup> as Venilia's sister, she can no longer be called *Amita*, which coincides with the term for "paternal aunt".

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<sup>351</sup> Zarker (1969) 10, 18; Di Cesare (1974) 128, 223; Burke (1976); West (1975) 191; Voisin (1979) 262; Lyne (1987) *passim*; Oliensis (1997) 307.

<sup>352</sup> Serv. *ad. Aen.* 6.90, 7.366, 12.29.

<sup>353</sup> Hallett (1984) 184-185.

<sup>354</sup> Bettini (1979) 26; as Lyne (1983) 63 n. 4 notes, "[t]he sentiment belongs most naturally to a parent or equivalent who loses or has the prospect of losing an only child".

<sup>355</sup> That was her name in Dionysius: τῆς Λατίνου γυναικὸς Ἀμίτας ἀνεψιὸν ὄνομα Τυρρηγόν (AR 1.64.2), where Turnus (Τυρρηγόν) is described as her ἀνεψιός ("cousin" or "nephew"). The author of the *Origo Gentis Romanae* (4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> c. AD) knows Turnus as Lavinia's cousin, the son of her mother's sister (*Amatam, Latini regis uxorem, cum indigne ferret Lauiniam repudiato Turno, consobrino suo, Troiano aduenae collocatam, Turnum ad arma concitauisse*, OGR 13.5), which appears to be Cato's version (cited earlier, OGR 12.5), but then quotes Piso as considering Turnus Amata's maternal cousin, the son of her mother's brother (*Piso quidem Turnum matrulem Amatae fuisse tradit*, OGR 12.8).

Amata therefore puts above all her blood bond to Turnus and acts *in lieu* of his mother, promoting his case regardless of the feelings of her daughter, whose relationship she uses to serve her own purposes. She progressively becomes Turnus' mother, as the appeal scene in Book 12 shows, and addresses Turnus in a way that would only be appropriate for a mother.<sup>356</sup> Her speech completely excludes Lavinia, because it is Turnus, not she, who is the hope for the continuity of the family. This is the only way that her maternal love for Lavinia can be overcome, namely, by substituting it with maternal love for Turnus,<sup>357</sup> as her status of *matertera* is taken to its extremes. Then, if Amata is indeed in love with Turnus, the fact that she is his maternal aunt certainly constitutes incest, and even more so in her own eyes, since she sees herself as Turnus' mother. This would explain both the self-blame for the committing of a *crimen*, and her assimilation to Jocasta, a mother who married her son.

A close parallel for this love triangle can be found in Cicero's portrait of Sassia, Cluentius' mother (*Clu.* 11-16);<sup>358</sup> Sassia is reproached at length by the orator for falling in love with her son-in-law Melinus, who is also her sister's son. Burning with incestuous love, Sassia makes Cluentia divorce Melinus so that she could marry him instead, and the daughter cannot but obey her mother. The situation bears many similarities to that in Latium: like Lavinia,<sup>359</sup> Sassia's daughter is described as ready for marriage (*nubilem filiam*, *Cic. Clu.* 11) when she is given to

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<sup>356</sup> Bettini (1979) 26.

<sup>357</sup> West (1975) 193-194 discusses the "extremely maternal feelings" Amata has for Turnus, her "surrogate son".

<sup>358</sup> Sassia is mentioned only in passing by Brazouski (1991) 131, as one of three examples in Cicero of "mothers who influenced their daughter's marriage plans", but she refers to a different passage that describes how Sassia made Oppianicus marry her daughter against his will.

<sup>359</sup> *iam matura uiro, iam plenius nubilis annis*, *Aen.* 7.53.

her maternal cousin (*quae ... nupsit A. Aurio Melino, consobrino suo, ibid.*). Sassia's passion, depicted with the same fire imagery as that of Amata's *furor*, is able to overcome all bonds and moral restraints (Cic. *Clu.* 12).<sup>360</sup> Cluentia's reaction to her mother's actions also resembles Lavinia's as she remains silent (*nefarium matris paelicatum ferre non posset de quo ne queri quidem se sine scelere posse arbitraretur, Cic. Clu. 13*) and wastes away in tears (*maerore et lacrimis consenescebat, ibid.*).

Taking into consideration the three family roles assumed by Amata in the story, together with her epic, tragic and Roman models, as well as the respective models for Lavinia, the peculiarity of their relationship, hinted at from the outset, no longer comes as a surprise. Amata's complicated relationship to Turnus overshadows that to Lavinia, not allowing her to express any maternal feelings for her daughter. Perhaps for this reason the latter's characterisation appears incomplete, with her silence and limited reactions (downcast eyes, tears, blush) her only means to indicate her thoughts, albeit in the most obscure and ambiguous way. Virgil's Amata and Lavinia would not deserve the title of epic mother and daughter *par excellence*, but they certainly influence the representation of female figures in the poet's successors. I will now move on to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in order to discuss his depiction of a mother-daughter pair who in their Greek form provide a model for the Virgilian characters in the first place, namely, Ceres and Proserpina.

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<sup>360</sup> Sassia *flagrare coepit amentia, ... inflammata ferri libidine* (Cic. *Clu.* 12), which echoes Amata's descriptions as *ardentem* (*Aen.* 7.345), *necdum animus toto percepit pectore flammam* (*Aen.* 7.356), *feruida* (*Aen.* 7.397), *demens* (*Aen.* 12.601).

## Mothers and daughters II: Ceres and Proserpina

At their contest against the daughters of Pierus (*Met.* 5.300-678), the Muses' representative Calliope sings of the story of Ceres and Proserpina, a myth first treated extensively in the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*.<sup>361</sup> While in other accounts the story is told by the poet himself, in the *Metamorphoses* it is Calliope who gives an account of a mother-daughter relationship first to an audience comprising of her sisters, their rivals the daughters of Pierus, and the judging Nymphs, and then, with the anonymous Muse acting as a mouthpiece, to her half-sister Minerva (and the readers of the poem).<sup>362</sup> The Greek counterparts of the protagonists of the song, Demeter and Persephone / Kore, are the archetypal mother-daughter pair, as their names suggest. Their maternal and filial associations also apply to Ceres and Proserpina in the *Metamorphoses*, evoking specific literary models and creating connections with Roman ideas about the mother-daughter bond.

The use of familial language and forms of address highlights their relationship, as is often the case with female family bonds in Latin epic. Thus, when Proserpina is not referred to by name or by her divine identity,<sup>363</sup> she is described as the daughter of Ceres and a maiden. Not only does Ceres use the kinship terms *nata* and *filia*,<sup>364</sup> but the narrator and other characters also follow her example.<sup>365</sup> In fact, the occurrence of kinship terms (or equivalent, such as Arethusa's *tua*, *Met.*

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<sup>361</sup> Ovid draws mainly on the hymn for his two versions (here and in *Fasti* 4), but he also includes elements from other versions (found e.g. in Diod. *Bibl.* 5.2.3, 5.68.2; Cic. *In Ver.* 2.4.106-107); Hinds (1987a) discusses the various parallels.

<sup>362</sup> On the contest and the family ties between narrators and audiences see Chapter Four.

<sup>363</sup> *Proserpina*: *Met.* 5.391, 5.505, 5.530, 5.554; *Persephone*: *Met.* 5.470 (also later in the poem: *Met.* 10.15, 10.730); *dea*: *Met.* 5.379, 5.396, 5.414, 5.566, 5.570.

<sup>364</sup> *nata*: *Met.* 5.516, 5.518; *filia*: twice at *Met.* 5.522.

<sup>365</sup> *Met.* 5.376; 5.438, 5.444, 5.524, 5.533, 5.572.



5.505, and Ceres' *meo ... sanguine*, *Met.* 5.514-515<sup>366</sup>) outnumbered that of other ways of reference or address,<sup>367</sup> highlighting the filial bond that Proserpina exemplifies. As for Ceres, aside from her name and divine status,<sup>368</sup> the kinship term *mater* or the synonymous variant *genetrix* are used both for references and addresses to her, even if not more frequently than the other two titles.<sup>369</sup> Nevertheless, the insistence on their bond through the use of familial language plays with their function in Greek myth and the ancient etymologies of their names. In the latter *Δημήτηρ* is derived from the Greek word for "mother",<sup>370</sup> and she is associated in cult with the protection of married women;<sup>371</sup> by using *mater* as an alternative for Ceres the narrator firmly establishes her association with the maternal and matronly role that her Greek counterpart has.<sup>372</sup> Persephone, on the other hand, has the alternative name *Κόρη*, which emphasises her relationship with her mother as well as her maidenly aspect.<sup>373</sup> Both that name and the connotations it carries are evoked by the emphasis placed on Proserpina's filial status, through the use of the kinship terms *nata* and *filia* not only as forms of

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<sup>366</sup> According to Dickey (2002) 357, *sanguis* with *meus* or another modifier is used in high poetry for individual men or (more often) groups. Hor. *Carm.* 2.20.5-6 refers to himself as *pauperum / sanguis parentum*, that is, "son of poor parents"; in the same way, *meo ... sanguine* here is equivalent to *mea nata*.

<sup>367</sup> 11 occurrences compared to 5 of her name and 5 of her divine title.

<sup>368</sup> *Ceres*: *Met.* 5.341, 5.343, 5.376, 5.415, 5.533, 5.572, 5.655, 5.660; *dea / diua*: twice at *Met.* 5.345; 5.452, 5.454, 5.462, 5.472, 5.527, 5.642.

<sup>369</sup> *mater*: twice at *Met.* 5.397; 5.438, 5.509, 5.515, 5.567; *genetrix*: *Met.* 5.490; a total of 6 occurrences compared to 9 of her name and 7 of her divine title.

<sup>370</sup> The etymologies point either to a connection to the earth [*γῆ μήτηρ*, *P. Derv.* 18 cited in Ley (2004)], or to the function of giving (*διδούσα ὡς μήτηρ*, *Plat. Crat.* 404.b.8-9).

<sup>371</sup> Ley (2004).

<sup>372</sup> As Ceres is not etymologically connected to motherhood, the Italian goddess acquired this association through her identification with the Greek Demeter (< *μήτηρ*). The association with *mater* was an easy one to make given that the Romans first came in contact with the Doric form of her name (*Δαμάτηρ*) used by the people of *Magna Graecia*; the Sicilian setting of the myth in Ovid encourages such a thought.

<sup>373</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood (2007).

address but also as substitutes for her name, as well as on her virginity, through the use of *uirgo*, its derivatives and their synonyms.<sup>374</sup>

The stress on Proserpina's virginity aims not only at highlighting her plight as the victim of Dis' lust,<sup>375</sup> but also at evoking the alternative name Persephone is known by, namely, *Κόρη*, which can be translated into Latin as either *uirgo* or *filia* or *puella*.<sup>376</sup> Thus, *uirgo* can be imagined as written with a capital V and understood as referring not only to her virginal status but also to Proserpina's other Greek name. It is not clear whether the rape happens before she descends into the Underworld, although the image of flowers falling on the ground when she is seized has been interpreted as implying that much.<sup>377</sup> She certainly cannot be considered a virgin in the Underworld given that Arethusa at *Met.* 5.507-508 describes her as *matrona*, applied only to married women, and *inferni ... regina tyranni*, highlighting the bond through which she acquired her regal status.<sup>378</sup> Thus, when she eats the pomegranate, one should read *ieiunia Virgo / soluerat* (*Met.* 5.534-535). Perhaps even at the very start of Calliope's song, where *uirgo* has clearly the function of a complement (*Cereris ... filia uirgo, / ..., erit, Met.* 5.376-377), it could still be read with a capital V. Given that in cult *Κόρη* is associated with the goddess' maidenly aspect while *Περσεφόνη* refers to her status as the wife of Pluto and queen of the

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<sup>374</sup> *uirgo*: *Met.* 5.376, 5.489, 5.534; *uirgineum ... dolorem*, *Met.* 5.401; *puellari studio*, *Met.* 5.393; *puerilibus ... annis*, *Met.* 5.400.

<sup>375</sup> Thus evoking the sympathy of the audience (the Nymphs in the first instance, and Minerva in the retelling); on this see Chapter Four.

<sup>376</sup> Similarly in the other Ovidian version of the story Ceres is described as calling out *modo Persephone modo filia* (*F.* 4.483), where *filia* can be seen as *Filia* = *Κόρη*.

<sup>377</sup> Salzman-Mitchell (2005) 171.

<sup>378</sup> *regina* can in turn be seen as translating her cult title *Δέσποινα*, which applies to her infernal and rather terrifying aspect [Sourvinou Inwood (2007) s.v. Persephone / Kore].

Underworld,<sup>379</sup> the implication here would be that if Venus and Cupid do not act, the girl's name, *Virgo*, will not evolve into *Proserpina*.

Beyond the use of familial language, Calliope's depiction of the mother-daughter bond focuses on the two goddesses' reactions to the rape and the subsequent events, with the themes of love and marriage being predominant in the Muse's narrative.<sup>380</sup> As any young girl, Proserpina is very close to her peers, with whom she spends time playing and picking flowers (*Met.* 5.391-394);<sup>381</sup> at the moment of her abduction, however, she calls out not only for them but also for her mother (*et matrem et comites, sed matrem saepius, ore / clamat, Met.* 5.397-398), whereas in the *Hymn to Demeter* it was her father Zeus whom she appealed to for help.<sup>382</sup> While Proserpina passively accepts her fate, without attempting, however, to conceal her fear and sadness in the Underworld (*illa quidem tristis neque adhuc interrita uultu, Met.* 5.506, as Arethusa describes her), Ceres scours the earth to find her daughter (*Met.* 5.438-486) until she comes across Arethusa who has actually seen her.

Ceres' initial reaction to Proserpina's whereabouts (*Met.* 5.504-508) is to be rooted to the spot as if she were a stone statue or a Maenad: *mater ad auditas stupuit ceu saxea uoces / attonitaeque diu similis fuit (Met.* 5.509-510).<sup>383</sup> The

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<sup>379</sup> Sourvinou Inwood (2007) s.v. Persephone / Kore; Persephone may mean "bringer of destruction", therefore suggesting infernal qualities rather than virginal innocence; *Etym. Magn.* s.v. derives her name from *φέρω* and *φόνος* (with an intermediate stage *φερσεφόνη*), interpreting it as "the woman whom the murdered are brought to". Chantraine (1968) s.v. stresses the obscure etymology of both parts of this apparently compound noun.

<sup>380</sup> An analysis of the themes of loss and mourning can be found in Chapter Three.

<sup>381</sup> Typical of the epic maiden, she appears picking flowers in the company of the Acheloids (Sirens); a similarity to Homer's Nausicaa and Apollonius' Medea is obvious.

<sup>382</sup> She also calls out for Ceres at *F.* 4.447-448; preference for the mother over the father agrees, according to Hinds (1987a) 61, with Roman practice.

<sup>383</sup> *attonitus* is used to describe the effect of a miraculous event, a divine apparition or an intense emotion like fear (*passim* in Livy, Virgil and Ovid); it also belongs to the sphere of possession of a

second simile is a traditional element of the story, found more explicitly both in the Homeric Hymn, where it belongs to the reunion of mother and daughter (*Hymn Dem.* 386), and in the other Ovidian account, where it describes Ceres' reaction to the echo of the cries emitted by Proserpina's companions at the moment of her rape (*F.* 4.457-458).<sup>384</sup> Here, however, the comparison to a Maenad is connected to Ceres' reaction at finding out who had raped Proserpina; it is additionally preceded by another simile, that of a stone statue (*ceu saxea*, *Met.* 5.509), and the two rework the description of Ariadne as a stone statue of a Bacchant in Catullus: *saxea ut effigies bacchantis* (*c.* 64.61).<sup>385</sup> Catullus' stone Maenad is thus split into two comparisons, a stone statue and a Maenad, with the narrating Muse achieving a spectacular result. Not only does she redouble the effect Arethusa's words have on Ceres, virtually turning her at once into a raving Maenad and a stone statue, but she also shows off her erudition<sup>386</sup> by invoking the particular image of the Catullan Ariadne in a similar context of loss of a loved one.<sup>387</sup>

The double simile is also effective when its components are considered individually. Ceres' resemblance to a statue<sup>388</sup> brings her closer to her daughter, who in Arethusa's description is completely immobile, unlike all the earlier and later glimpses we have of her:

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prophet or follower by a god (e.g. *Hor. Carm.* 3.19.14-15 *attonitus ... uates*; *Virg. Aen.* 7.580 *attonitae Baccho ... matres*). According to Hinds (1987a) 75, it is this specific meaning that is implied here, paralleling Ceres to a Maenad.

<sup>384</sup> In the previous lines Ceres is precisely described as *attonita* (*F.* 4.455).

<sup>385</sup> Hinds (1987a) 76.

<sup>386</sup> That could be Calliope's erudition, if the song is indeed reported word-for-word, or her anonymous sister's, who is now retelling the story to Minerva; it is impossible to tell if and to what extent she changed the original song in her new performance.

<sup>387</sup> While for Ariadne the loss of Theseus is irremediable, the goddess Ceres will request her daughter back and achieve her purpose even if under conditions; the theme of loss in this episode is briefly discussed in Chapter Three.

<sup>388</sup> Hinds (1987a) 76 interprets this as an allusion to Niobe's complete petrification at the loss of all her children in Book 6.

*uisa tua est oculis illic Proserpina nostris:  
illa quidem tristis neque adhuc interrta uultu,  
sed regina tamen, sed opaci maxima mundi,  
sed tamen inferni pollens matrona tyrrani.'*

*Met.* 5.505-508

Proserpina's image recalls that of her Greek counterpart, who is described as sitting next to Hades when Hermes arrives (*Hymn Dem.* 342-344); both descriptions suggest immobility, as if what Arethusa or the reader sees is a sitting statue of the goddess, like the one that was used in her cult. Thus, Ceres' reaction to the image of her daughter that Arethusa verbally reproduces for her is to assume a similar posture, which emphasises the power of affection between the two, at least as far as Ceres' feelings are concerned.

At the same time, the comparison to a Maenad, taken together with the subsequent description of Ceres as mad (*dolore / pulsa graui grauis est amentia*, *Met.* 5.510-511), links her not only to her counterpart in the *Fasti* (*mentis inops*, *F.* 4.457), but also to the Virgilian Amata, another mother reacting to the news of her daughter's (prospective) abduction. In a skilful reworking of the scene from the *Aeneid*, Ceres behaves very similarly to the Latin queen but in reverse order. First she reacts to the news by resembling a mad Bacchant, recalling Amata's later description as she raves in the city (*sine more furit lymphata per urbem*, *Aen.* 7.377); *furit* corresponds to Ceres' *attonitae*, as they both belong to the realm of divine possession,<sup>389</sup> and *lymphata* combines the ideas of madness and Bacchic

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<sup>389</sup> One of the specific meanings of *furor* is what according to Cicero (*Diu.* 1.31.66) happens "when the soul is stirred by divine instigation".

frenzy which in the Ovidian depiction are split into two distinct images.<sup>390</sup> Amata's subsequent "simulation" of Bacchic rites (*simulato numine Bacchi*, *Aen.* 7.385) is also echoed in the song of Calliope: in the description of Ceres as *attonitae similis*, the simulation by the mother in the earlier poem becomes a simile about the mother in the later one.

Then Ceres does what Amata did first, namely, she approaches the father of her daughter and tries to convince him against the marriage he has decided without her consent. The goddess uses her maternal love for Proserpina as her first argument, closely followed by an appeal to Jupiter's paternal love for their daughter:

*'pro' que 'meo ueni supplex tibi, Iuppiter,' inquit  
'sanguine proque tuo. si nulla est gratia **matris**,  
**nata patrem** moueat, neu sit tibi cura precamur  
uilior illius, quod nostro est edita partu.*

*Met.* 5.514-517

Ceres insists on kinship terms and highlights how equally important Proserpina is for both her parents through the use of the phrase *proque meo ... / sanguine ... proque tuo*.<sup>391</sup> Likewise, Amata appealed to Latinus' paternal feelings and asked him to pity both their daughter and her mother, with all three kinship terms contained in two lines: *o **genitor**, nec te miseret **nataeque** tuique? / nec **matris** miseret* (*Aen.* 7.360-361). Furthermore, Ceres' rejection of Dis as unworthy for her and Jupiter's daughter,

*... quod rapta, feremus,*

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<sup>390</sup> The original meaning of *lymphatus* is "mad with fear", but it is also found in what is clearly a Bacchic context, e.g. *Pac. fr. trag.* 422 *lymphata aut Bacchi sacris commota*; *Cat. c.* 64.254-255 *cui Thyades passim lymphata mente furebant / euhoe bacchantes*.

<sup>391</sup> A similar appeal to Jupiter's paternal feelings is made at *F.* 4.587-588.

*dummodo reddat eam! neque enim praedone marito  
filia digna tua est, si iam mea filia non est.'*

Met. 5.520-522

not only verbally corresponds to her similar statement in the *Fasti* (*at neque Proserpina digna est praedone marito, F. 4.591*), but also echoes Amata's rejection of Aeneas as Lavinia's future husband: *quam primo Aquilone relinquet / perfidus alta petens abducta uirgine praedo?* (*Aen. 7.361-362*). In these and the following lines (*Aen. 7.363-364*) Amata envisions Aeneas as another Paris who has come to take her daughter away, which is exactly what Dis has already done. Moreover, the matchmakings in the two stories are conceived and orchestrated by the same goddess, Venus, whose request for an illustrious future for her son takes form as the latter's marriage to Lavinia and the beginning of a new race in Latium, and whose dream to rule the world with the power of love passes through Dis' rape of Proserpina and their subsequent reign in the Underworld. Finally, both Ceres and Amata adhere to the idea that a mother expects to have a say in her daughter's marriage, and therefore react badly when their "maternal right" is refused to them.<sup>392</sup> In that respect Ceres resembles a Roman upper-class mother, who also expected to participate in the choice of her future son-in-law, and sometimes reacted badly if she was not consulted on the matter.<sup>393</sup>

Unlike Latinus, however, who has already offered Lavinia's hand to Aeneas, Jupiter appears not to have known in advance about his daughter's abduction,

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<sup>392</sup> It is the fact that Ceres was not asked her opinion about the marriage of her daughter that informs both Cyane's comment to Dis (*non potes inuitae Cereris gener esse, Met. 5.415*) and Ceres' arguments to Jupiter (*neque enim praedone marito / filia digna tua est, si iam mea filia non est, Met. 5.521-522*), *pace* Johnson (1996) 139, 139 n. 37, who understands these passages as evidence of Proserpina's "right to sexual self-determination".

<sup>393</sup> Dixon (1988) 215; Brazouski (1991); Treggiari (1991) 134; Hanson (1999) 31.

unlike his counterpart Zeus in the Homeric Hymn; he nonetheless approves of the action since it was caused by love and the son-in-law in question is his brother and equal (*Met.* 5.525-529). It is crucial, however, that Ceres does not suggest an alternative husband for her daughter, thus distancing herself from the Roman ideal of marriage, as well as from Amata who is promoting Turnus' suit. An argument about common blood such as the one the Latin queen employs in favour of Turnus (*consanguineo*, *Aen.* 7.366) cannot be used against Dis, as he is the brother of both Jupiter and Ceres. Thus, by focusing predominantly on herself in her speech to Jupiter,<sup>394</sup> Ceres appears to imply that it is her personal affection for her daughter that objects to her marriage, probably not just to Dis but to anyone. Furthermore, in declaring that she does not mind about the rape so long as Proserpina comes back to her (*Met.* 5.520-521), she seems to wish for her daughter a life similar to her own, namely, to be independent despite having slept with another god. Certainly, neither Lavinia nor Proserpina is destined to be abandoned after their abduction, as was Catullus' Ariadne. Instead, the Latin princess will become Aeneas' wife and queen of Latium, while the goddess will be Dis' wife and queen of the Underworld. Nevertheless, it is the same fear of abduction followed by desertion that motivates both mothers in their speeches to their daughters' fathers.

As Ceres recalls Amata in her reaction to a marriage she was not consulted upon, so her daughter Proserpina resembles the Latin princess Lavinia. Like her Virgilian counterpart, Proserpina's voice is never heard in the episode and her thoughts are rarely disclosed to the reader, leaving room for both misunderstanding and suppositions. As far as her voice is concerned, in the

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<sup>394</sup> At *Met.* 5.514-522 almost every line contains at least one reference to herself, a pronoun, verb or possessive adjective.



Homeric Hymn Persephone's cries to Zeus for help are described indirectly and heard not by their intended recipient but by Hecate and Helios (*Hymn Dem.* 20-27); Demeter does hear her daughter's second cry, emitted from the Underworld but still not given in direct speech (*Hymn Dem.* 38-39); at the end of the story, however, Persephone retells her experience to her mother in the first person (*Hymn Dem.* 406-433). Similarly, in the *Fasti* she urges her companions to collect flowers (*F.* 4.431-432) and then cries out to her mother as she is abducted (*F.* 4.447-448).<sup>395</sup> On the contrary, in the *Metamorphoses* neither Proserpina's cries nor their echo is ever heard; their description provides only an indirect hint at her having a voice at all:

... *dea territa maesto*  
*et matrem et comites, sed matrem saepius, ore*  
*clamat, ...*

*Met.* 5.396-398

This sequence of *mat-* sounds may be the poet's way to visually depict Proserpina's cry '*mater*', suppressed in the narrative due to Calliope's poetic choices: the prominence given to eye-witnessing Nymphs who point the way to Ceres rules out the possibility of the mother directly hearing her daughter's cries.<sup>396</sup> Likewise, the connection established between Ceres and Amata suggests a similar correspondence between Proserpina and Lavinia, the most distinguishing characteristic of whom is her constant silence.

Another point in common between the two stories is the insistence on the two girls' innocence, which serves different purposes in each narrative. The

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<sup>395</sup> What her mother hears, however, is the echo of her companions' cries (*F.* 4.453-455). Ovid further emphasises the lack of communication between Ceres and Proserpina when he describes the mother's cries dying out without reaching her daughter's ears (*F.* 4.483-486).

<sup>396</sup> On the prominence of the Nymphs in the contest see Chapter Four.

references to Lavinia present an oscillation between *uirgo* and *regia coniunx*,<sup>397</sup> emphasising her current ideal status of a virgin who is at the same time ripe for marriage (*Aen.* 7.53), and her future role as the wife of Aeneas and queen of Latium.<sup>398</sup> Likewise, Proserpina is called *uirgo* throughout the episode, even though she stops being one after a certain moment in the story; this word may well stand in for *Proserpina*, as it corresponds to her alternative Greek name *Κόρη*, but some connotations of ‘virgin’ and ‘maiden’ remain. Even after she has become the wife of Dis and queen of the Underworld (*regina ... opaci maxima mundi, / ... inferni pollens matrona tyranni, Met.* 5.507-508; *regina Erebi, Met.* 5.543), she still retains the childish simplicity (*cultis dum simplex errat in hortis, Met.* 5.535) that characterised her at the start of the episode, when her only preoccupation is the loss of her flowers at the moment of her abduction:

*conlecti flores tunicis cecidere remissis,  
tantaque simplicitas puerilibus adfuit annis:  
haec quoque uirgineum mouit iactura dolorem*

*Met.* 5.399-401<sup>399</sup>

In fact, Lavinia’s blush in front of her parents and Turnus (*Aen.* 12.65-69), a further indication of her innocence, is reproduced here in terms of colours: the mix of white lilies and roses that Lavinia’s face recalls (*mixta rubent ubi lilia multa / alba rosa, Aen.* 12.68-69) corresponds to the mix of white lilies and violets (*aut uiolas aut candida lilia, Met.* 5.392) that Proserpina is collecting. Moreover, just as Lavinia’s character is hard to decipher, Proserpina’s feelings also remain

<sup>397</sup> *Lavinia uirgo: Aen.* 7.72; 11.479. *uirgo* (without her name): *Aen.* 12.69. *regia coniunx: Aen.* 2.783. *Lavinia coniunx: Aen.* 12.17; 12.937. *coniunx* (without her name): *Aen.* 6.93.

<sup>398</sup> *uirginitas* is also one of the Roman criteria, alongside *pudicitia*, used in the selection of an ideal bride, according to Treggiari (1991) 105-106.

<sup>399</sup> Hinds (1987a) 89 interprets the new reference to Proserpina’s simplicity as implying that she is punished for insisting on being *simplex* and not having learnt from previous mistakes.

ambivalent. Initially, she seems to express more sadness (*maesto / ... ore, Met. 5.396-397; dolorem, Met. 5.401*) than fear (*terrata, Met. 5.396*), but when Arethusa sees her in the Underworld, she looks equally sad and afraid: *illa quidem tristis neque adhuc interrita uultu (Met. 5.506)*. The reason for her sadness, however, is not stated in the song of Calliope, unlike the Hymn where she is explicitly described as missing her mother (*Hymn Dem. 35-36, 344*). Given that her childish simplicity follows her into her new environment, it is not impossible to suppose that she is still upset about losing her flowers.<sup>400</sup>

Passivity and immobility also characterise both girls, visualised in the syntax in oblique cases and passive constructions. Proserpina is seen and raped by Dis (*uisa est dilectaque raptaque Diti, Met. 5.395*); Cyane recognises her (*deam, Met. 5.414*), tells Dis off for abducting her instead of asking her hand in marriage (*roganda, / non rapienda fuit, Met. 5.415-416*), and mourns her fate (*raptamque deam, Met. 5.425*). The girl is also sought by her mother (*filia matri / ... est ... quaesita, Met. 5.438-439; natam / ... quaerebat, Met. 5.444-445*), who finds out eventually that she was raped (*raptam / scisset, Met. 5.471-472*). When she is seen by Arethusa in the Underworld (*uisa ... est, Met. 5.505*), instead of actions, only her facial expressions and her new roles are reported (*Met. 5.506-508*). Likewise, Lavinia is described as being wooed by many suitors (*illam, Aen. 7.54*); she merely stands by her father at the sacrifice (*Aen.7.72*), and is seen as being crowned by fire (*uisa, Aen. 7.73; accensa, Aen. 7.75*). In her simulation of Bacchic frenzy Amata hides her in the woods (*natam, Aen. 7.387*) and sings the song of her wedding to Turnus (*natae, Aen. 7.398*). Finally, when Lavinia cries and blushes in front of her

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<sup>400</sup> The loss of her flowers has been interpreted as symbolising her loss of virginity [Salzman-Mitchell (2005) 171]; this, however, has nothing to do with her feelings for her mother.

parents and Turnus, she does not move: it is merely her facial expression that changes (*accepit uocem lacrimis Lauinia matris / flagrantis perfusa genas, Aen.* 12.64-65).

Lavinia's silence, innocence and passivity are thus employed in the Ovidian narrative in order to characterise Proserpina. As a result, the lack of undisputed evidence for Lavinia's feelings for Amata up to the moment of the latter's suicide finds a parallel in Proserpina's portrayal in Calliope's song. While the expression of Ceres' maternal affection reaches from the incessant quest for her daughter to the punishment of the earth for concealing Proserpina from her, Proserpina's filial feelings are much more limited and only surface at the beginning and the end. It is her mother whom she calls for in her distress (*matrem saepius ... / clamat, Met.* 5.396-397), and it is due to her reunion to Ceres that she is happy once again (*uertitur extemplo facies et mentis et oris, Met.* 5.568). In the meantime, however, no mention is made of her missing her mother, as was the case for the Greek Persephone, nor does she give verbal expression to her filial emotions, as does her counterpart at the start of the *Fasti* episode and at the end of the Hymn.

Unlike Lavinia, however, whose feelings for her mother remain obscure throughout the *Aeneid*,<sup>401</sup> Proserpina's happiness at her reunion with Ceres suggests that her affection for her mother is as strong as that of Ceres for her, even if she does not express it as often. The simile describing her change of mood from *maesta* to *laeta*, namely, an image of scattering clouds (*Met.* 5.570-571), corresponds to that describing Ceres' gloominess earlier in the poem, that is, an image of gathering clouds (*Met.* 5.512-513), creating the impression that the

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<sup>401</sup> Her expressed distress at Amata's suicide is almost topical (*Aen.* 12.605-606).

similes could perfectly describe either goddess in each case.<sup>402</sup> While reproducing traditional material (*Hymn Dem.* 434-437),<sup>403</sup> this emotional identification also recalls the earlier momentary assumption by Ceres of the posture of Proserpina, when the mother resembled a stone statue at hearing from Arethusa the still description of her daughter in the Underworld (*Met.* 5.504-508). Such correspondence can be further explained through the goddesses' occasional identification in cult,<sup>404</sup> as well as through their modelling on Amata and Lavinia, whose common designation as *regia coniunx* may cause some confusion between the two.

This portrayal of Proserpina may also reflect the status of the narrator and her audience.<sup>405</sup> As far as her filial image is concerned, however, Proserpina, like Lavinia, seems to conform to the ideals of a Roman daughter, whose parents often decide on her marriage without asking her opinion, and whose mother would sometimes react if she were not consulted on the matter. When Arethusa describes Proserpina as a *matrona* in the Underworld,<sup>406</sup> Ceres is expected to be both reassured<sup>407</sup> and happy, given the prominent position of the matrons not only in their family but also in Roman society:

*sed regina tamen, sed opaci maxima mundi,  
sed tamen inferni pollens matrona tyranni*

*Met.* 5.507-508

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<sup>402</sup> Hinds (1987a) 96.

<sup>403</sup> Hinds (1987a) 97.

<sup>404</sup> The two goddesses are jointly invoked by the Athenian women, and while Demeter is particularly associated with married life [Ley (2004)], Persephone is also worshipped in some regions as a patroness of marriage and children [Sourvinou Inwood (2007)]. A late etymology (Isid. *Orig.* 8.11.60) even supplies *Proserpina* as an alternative name for *Ceres*.

<sup>405</sup> See Chapter Four.

<sup>406</sup> A term very rarely used as an epithet for goddesses, according to Bömer (1976a) ad 5.508.

<sup>407</sup> According to Cahoon (1996) 56, this portrayal of Proserpina as powerful, regal and matronly is intended as a consolation to Ceres.

In fact, the chiasmic arrangement of Proserpina's new roles as well as the references to the Underworld emphasise her important position in both the private and the public sphere of the infernal microcosm. Ceres, however, only pays attention to the first part of the description that focuses on her daughter's fear and sadness; her matronly status is overlooked not because it is not important to her mother,<sup>408</sup> but because the latter has not had the opportunity to participate in the decision about it. Only after she has complained to Jupiter and he, taking her wishes into consideration, has intervened between his brother and sister to settle the matter; indeed only after the *raptor* (*Met.* 5.402) has become *coniunx* (*Met.* 5.567)<sup>409</sup> and the marriage has thus been legitimised, does Ceres find her consolation: *alma Ceres, nata secura recepta* (*Met.* 5.572).

Thus, similar to their Roman counterparts, the two most important mothers in Augustan epic wish to have an active part in the arrangement of their daughters' marriage and confront the father of their child if he has failed to consult them. As the next section will show, sisters in the same poems tend to participate, willingly or not, in love triangles comprising of one of their siblings of the same sex and a man who comes from another land.

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<sup>408</sup> Proserpina cannot be a *matrona* in the full meaning of the word, as in mainstream myth she and Dis do not have any children.

<sup>409</sup> Ceres declares that she will not have her daughter marry a bandit (*praedone marito / ... digna ... mea filia non est*, *Met.* 5.521-522); *maritus* here merely designates the role anyone would assume on marrying Proserpina, but what actually describes Dis is *praedo*. Jupiter likewise thinks of him as a future son-in-law, but only on condition that Ceres also agrees: *neque erit nobis gener ille pudori, / tu modo, diua, uelis* (*Met.* 5.526-527).

## Sisters I: Aglauros and Herse

In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* the well-known myth of the daughters of Athenian king Cecrops who opened the basket containing Erichthonius that Minerva had entrusted to them, is the first of three stories narrated by the crow in order to discourage the raven from becoming an informant of Apollo (*Met.* 2.547-568). Later, the poet himself describes Mercury's infatuation with one of the Cecropids, Herse, the attempt of her sister Aglauros to become rich by exchanging access to her for gold, and the double punishment she received both from Minerva for opening the basket and from Mercury for blocking his way to his beloved (*Met.* 2.708-835). The third sister, Pandrosos, does not play a very active role in the plot of the second episode, which provides an insight into the sisterly bond for the pair Aglauros-Herse.

Ovid's debt to Callimachus' *Hecale* for both the structure and the themes of this section of Book 2 is long acknowledged.<sup>410</sup> The Roman poet, however, combines that account with other versions of the Cecropids' transgression,<sup>411</sup> and adds a new episode, Mercury's love affair with Herse and Aglauros' transformation into stone, which is arguably influenced by a Callimachean story where Hermes turned Pandrosos into stone for not allowing him access to her sister Herse (*PHerc.* 243 II 1-6).<sup>412</sup> Whether or not that story was originally part of the *Hecale*, it seems

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<sup>410</sup> Hollis (1990) 225-226, 229-231; Keith (1992) *passim*.

<sup>411</sup> The various versions (Eur. *Ion* 270-274; Amelesagoras in Antigonos Carystius, *Hist. Mir.* 12; Euph. fr. 9 Powell; Hyg. *Fab.* 166; Apoll. *Bibl.* 3.14.6; Paus. 1.18.2, 1.27.2) offer a range of options as to the responsibility of the transgression and the punishment of the sisters. A reconstruction of the development of Aglauros' myth is offered by Sourvinou-Inwood (2011) 24-134.

<sup>412</sup> [...] Καλλιμ[α-] / [...] υφους, Πάν-/[δρο]σον δε και λι-/[θο]ν, διότι την ἀ-/[δε]λ[φ]ήν {π} Ἐρσην / [οὐ] προήκατ' ἀντῶ. *PHerc.* 243 II 1-6 in Henricks (1983) 37. The affair between Hermes and a Cecropid later produces a son, either Cephalus (Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.14.3, affair with Herse), or Ceryx (Marcellus of Side, *IG XIV* 1389 I 32.54, Herse; Paus. 1.38.3, Aglauros; Poll. 8.103, Pandrosos). According to Kron (1981) 285, the latter tradition goes back at least to the time of Peisistratos;

that Ovid saw its relevance in this context and after substituting Aglauros for Pandrosos made the most of this opportunity to explore the sisterly bond, the frailty of which was hinted at in the narrative of the crow. While the Cecropids were then introduced in the same way as in the Callimachean epyllion, that is, by their relationship to their father (*uirginibusque tribus gemino de Cecrope natis, Met. 2.555*),<sup>413</sup> when they came to be named, their bond to each other was both highlighted and put to the test. While Callimachus' narrator seemed interested in the crime the *maidens* committed,<sup>414</sup> Ovid's crow concentrated on the tension created between the *sisters*, as two remained obedient to the orders of the goddess and one chose to transgress them:

*... commissa duae sine fraude tuentur  
Pandrosos atque Herse; timidas uocat una sorores  
Aglauros ...*

*Met. 2.558-560*

Moreover, Aglauros accused her sisters of cowardice, which implies that she considered herself to be fearless, not only of the potential danger but also, and more importantly, of the goddess' reaction.

When the Cecropids appear next in the narrative, the attention falls on two of them, Aglauros and Herse: as Mercury goes to find Herse with whom he has fallen in love at first sight, the arrangement of their rooms in the palace makes it so

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Parker (1988) 197 also accepts its antiquity (regardless of who the mother of Ceryx is), and locates the formation of the more complex affair story to some post-classical point in time. Wimmel (1962) 333 sees an explanation for the motif of jealousy between the sisters in the tradition linking on the one hand Hermes and Herse (Apollod.), and on the other, Hermes and Aglauros (Paus.) – but he is unaware of the Callimachean papyrus and thus argues that Ovid invented the participation of Aglauros in the affair story (p. 327). Henricks (1983) 42 believes that Ovid found the story of the love affair between Hermes and Herse and the punishment of her sister in a Hellenistic source, whether Callimachus or another poet; Luppe (1984) 110-111 and Keith (1992) 124 both agree.

<sup>413</sup> Cf. *Κεκροπίδ[η]σιν*, Call. *Hec. fr.* 70.5 Hollis.

<sup>414</sup> Call. *Hec. fr.* 70.12-13 Hollis.



that the first person he meets is her sister Aglauros. The god asks for her help in order to approach his beloved in a way reminiscent of the elegiac lover (*faueas oramus amanti, Met. 2.747*),<sup>415</sup> and offers his divine connections in exchange for her solidarity: *tu tantum fida sorori / esse uelis prolisque meae matertera dici* (*Met. 2.745-746*). From his perspective, Aglauros' role as sister involves facilitating his affair with Herse, a service for which she will gain the honour of being called the maternal aunt of Mercury's children. Crucially, Herse has not yet seen the god and therefore cannot be assumed to harbour any feelings for him yet. Thus, Aglauros' solidarity with her sister is called for in advance and by the third, male part of this equation; at the same time, the choice of new bond that Mercury offers as a reward raises issues concerning the future of all persons involved.

Contrary to Greek attitudes, the role of maternal aunt is particularly honoured in Roman society: not only is the bond between the *matertera* and her nephews and nieces exceptionally strong, as is evident by its paronymy from *mater altera*;<sup>416</sup> but her position in the family is also celebrated in the festival of Matralia, where mothers prayed for their sisters' children but not their own.<sup>417</sup> By highlighting this new role Mercury destines Aglauros for a much cherished position in his prospective family; but this family will never exist as he does not intend to marry Herse, so that his is actually an empty promise. On the other hand, as the stress moves from Aglauros' relationship to Herse to that to the latter's prospective children by the god, it evokes another duty of Roman *materterae*, namely, that of

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<sup>415</sup> Moore-Blunt (1977) and Barchiesi (2005) note the elegiac elements ad *Met. 2.746-7, 814, 815*; Knox (1986) 28 points out Mercury's self-confidence (*tanta est fiducia formae, Met. 2.731*) as similar to the confidence of the elegiac lover; finally, Gildenhard and Zissos (2004) 85-86 briefly discuss the shift from a New Comedy situation into the parody of a Roman elegiac one.

<sup>416</sup> Fest. 136.

<sup>417</sup> Hallett (1984) 185.

raising their dead sisters' children.<sup>418</sup> Thus, either the god offers a reward that has no effect, or he hints at Herse's potential death which will leave the care of her children to their maternal aunt.

Although it was not part of his plan when he arrived in Athens, Mercury's approach to Aglauros may be seen as a reversal of a scene between Dido and Anna in *Aeneid* 4. There Dido asks her sister to act as a mediator between herself, who is still passionately in love, and Aeneas, who has given up his love in favour of his destiny. Here, it is Mercury who, being passionately in love, asks Herse's sister to intervene and grant him access to his beloved, who does not even know him. The links to the triangle Dido-Aeneas-Anna can go even further: the reason Dido sends Anna to Aeneas is that the latter seems to have confidence in her sister and share his thoughts with her:

*... solam nam perfidus ille  
te colere, arcanos etiam tibi credere sensus;  
sola uiri mollis aditus et tempora noras.*

*Aen.* 4.421-423

This does not exclude the possibility that Aeneas sometimes asked Anna to intervene with Dido, which creates a parallel between the Virgilian figures and Ovid's Mercury asking Aglauros to intervene with Herse. Chalcioppe is also evoked here, as another epic sister who mediates between her sibling and the man with whom she will eventually fall in love (AR 3.475-487, 3.609-615). Even though Jason does not ask her directly, it is on his behalf that Chalcioppe's son Argus begs his mother to secure her sister Medea's help, an act which is prompted by interest but will result in a love affair.

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<sup>418</sup> Hallett (1984) 184-185.

The similarities between the heroines in Apollonius, Virgil and Ovid extend themselves to the description of the lovers-to-be. When Aeneas first sees the Carthaginian queen among her retinue, she resembles Diana among the mountain nymphs (*Aen.* 1.498-500), and as the goddess stands out from her companions (*gradiensque deas **supereminet omnis**, Aen.* 1.501), so does Dido walking towards the temple:

*regina ad templum, forma pulcherrima Dido,  
incessit magna iuuenum stipante caterua*

*Aen.* 1.496-497

Similarly, when Mercury first sees Herse, she is taking part in the procession of the maidens towards the Acropolis (*Met.* 2.711-713), and also stands out from her companions:

*quanto splendidior quam cetera sidera fulget  
Lucifer et quanto quam Lucifer aurea Phoebe,  
tanto uirginibus **praestantior omnibus** Herse  
ibat eratque decus pompae comitumque suarum.*

*Met.* 2.722-725

Furthermore, the goddess to whom Herse is compared, Luna, is another form of the same deity, Diana, whom Dido resembled in the earlier poem. The tradition of these similes goes back to Homer, where Nausicaa among her maids is compared to Artemis who stands out among the nymphs (*Od.* 6.102-109), and more importantly to Apollonius, whose Medea is also compared to the same goddess (*AR* 3.876-886) in a reworking of the Homeric scene which provides Virgil with not one but two precedents to draw upon.<sup>419</sup> Medea's heart leaps and her feet are rooted to the spot when she sees Jason (*AR* 3.962-965), a theme picked up by Virgil who

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<sup>419</sup> Clausen (1987) 19-20.

describes Dido as being stunned by Aeneas' beauty: *obstipuit primo aspectu Sidonia Dido* (*Aen.* 1.613). In Ovid it is the man to react: *obstipuit forma loue natus et aethere pendens* (*Met.* 2.726),<sup>420</sup> thematically recalling Medea's immobility, while verbally echoing the beginning of the line describing Dido. In fact, another reversal can be identified with regard to the Virgilian text: Aeneas was stunned and fixed to the spot at the sight of the reliefs decorating the temple of Juno, just *one* line before he sees Dido for the first time: *stupet obtutuque haeret defixus in uno* (*Aen.* 1.495); Ovid 'rectifies' that reaction by presenting Mercury as stunned and suspended in mid-air at the sight not of a work of art, but of Herse.

Aglauros' room is the first one Mercury passes as he heads to meet Herse; consequently she is the first to notice him and ask who he is and why he is there (*Met.* 2.740-742). Her curiosity does not surprise the reader, who knows her as the one to open the basket containing Erichthonius some 200 lines earlier. The narrator, however, gives a different reason for her transgression in a clear allusion to the story of the crow: it was not curiosity that made the daughter of Cecrops open the basket, but the same greed that now makes her ask Mercury for gold (*Met.* 2.748-749). With the god acting as an *amator*, the elegiac lover, Aglauros behaves like a *custos*, the guardian of the beloved who controls access to her (*tectis excedere cogit*, *Met.* 2.751),<sup>421</sup> or like a *lena*, her procuress who demands money in return for her services (*proque ministerio magni sibi ponderis aurum / postulat*, *Met.* 2.750-751). Other fictional characters that operate in a clearly Roman context as well as in the realm of the family may also influence her representation. Twice in

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<sup>420</sup> Like Odysseus who admits to be stunned at *Od.* 6.161.

<sup>421</sup> A *custos* may also expect to be rewarded for his help, e.g. Ovid promised Corinna's slave Bagoas honour, money and freedom in exchange for granting him access to his *puella* (*Am.* 2.2.39-40).

Ovid's earlier works members of the *puella's* family, namely her mother, sister and nurse, are said to profit financially from her relationship to the lover:<sup>422</sup> Herse's elegiac sister, Aglauros, is justified to expect a similar gain.

With Mercury's departure the narrative focus shifts to Minerva who realises she has not yet punished Aglauros for her transgression. According to the goddess' verdict, Aglauros displays two vices, disobedience to divine orders (*contra data foedera uidit*, *Met.* 2.757) and avarice (*ditem sumpto, quod auara poposcerat, auro*, *Met.* 2.759). The choice of Invidia as the goddess' agent who is sent to inflict the punishment can be justified by the nature of the earlier crime, which had to do with looking inside the basket and seeing something forbidden.<sup>423</sup> The action of *inuidere* prompts the attack of Invidia, who not only personifies envy, a characteristic of Minerva, the goddess who sends her,<sup>424</sup> but also causes her victim to *inuidere*.<sup>425</sup> The linguistic emphasis on visual terms in the entire episode has also been interpreted as foreshadowing the action of Invidia,<sup>426</sup> and strengthens the connection between "envying" and "seeing inside", which is a particularly Roman association, given that the Greek equivalents *φθονέω-φθόνοσ* are not etymologically related to words of seeing. This action pervades both Cecropid stories as well as the ones they frame, with which they share motifs of concealment and revelation, thus ensuring the unity of this section of the poem.<sup>427</sup> At the same time, the visual element intensifies the participation of the readers in the current

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<sup>422</sup> *Am.* 1.8.91; *Rem.* 637.

<sup>423</sup> As Dickie (1993) 19-21 points out, both Greeks and Romans associated curious people with envy, but Aglauros' transgression, at least as Minerva perceives it (*Met.* 2.759), goes beyond mere curiosity and into the realm of avarice.

<sup>424</sup> Feeney (1991) 245-247.

<sup>425</sup> Salzman-Mitchell (2005) 40.

<sup>426</sup> Feeney (1991) 245 and n. 215; Keith (1992) 126; Salzman-Mitchell (2005) 40-42.

<sup>427</sup> Keith (1992) *passim*.

tale, allowing them to see what is inside the basket without suffering the consequences.<sup>428</sup> Moreover, it invites them to read the main scene in the second episode as a work of art, while maintaining the emphasis on the ambiguous diptych *uidere in / inuidere*, that is exemplified not only by mythical figures but also by sisters operating in a clearly Roman context.

Mercury was looking down on Athens (*despectabat*, *Met.* 2.710) when he saw Herse and fell in love; as he goes to meet her, the narrator describes the arrangement of the girls' rooms in the palace of Cecrops:

*tris habuit thalamos, quorum tu, Pandrose, **dextrum**,  
Aglauros **laeuum**, **medium** possederat Herse.  
quae tenuit laeuum, uenientem prima notauit  
Mercurium ...*

*Met.* 2.738-741

Although the reader already knows the names of the three Cecropids (*Met.* 2.559-560), they are repeated here corresponding to the three rooms: Pandrosos' is on the right, Aglauros' on the left, Herse' in the middle. Since Aglauros is the first to see Mercury coming, he must pass in front of her room first on his way to Herse's middle room; this is how she can stand in his way and prevent him from getting to her sister unless he brings gold in return. Her role as an obstacle, however, could have worked without the description of the rooms. Although the attribution of the room to the left to Aglauros has been interpreted as a way to load her character with negative connotations,<sup>429</sup> since both in Greek and Roman thought that side is

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<sup>428</sup> Salzman-Mitchell (2005) 42.

<sup>429</sup> Chinnici (2002) 109; Barchiesi (2005) ad 2.737-9.

thought to be unlucky and foreshadowing disaster,<sup>430</sup> Ovid does not associate left with misfortune in his pre-exilic works.<sup>431</sup> In fact Rome is said to be founded on the left bank of the Tiber (*F.* 1.241-243),<sup>432</sup> while in another passage of the *Metamorphoses* the altar Perseus dedicates to Mercury is said to be the one on the right (*Met.* 4.754).<sup>433</sup> It is more plausible, therefore, to understand this description as necessary in connection with the overall emphasis on the visual.

The position of the terms “to the right”, “to the left”, “in the middle” on the corresponding parts of the two lines creates an effect which facilitates the reader’s process of visualisation.<sup>434</sup> This, however, is not Mercury’s perspective: if the god saw the rooms as left, middle, and right, there is nothing to prevent him from going straight towards Herse’s room. Instead, he had to pass from Aglauros’ room first, which implies that the description reflects an external view: as the readers imagine the scene, they ‘see’ Mercury moving from left to right along a corridor with three doors. The description thus turns into an *ekphrasis* of a work of art, such as a vase painting or a frieze: Mercury is the figure on the far left, depicted as moving towards the right; Aglauros is standing outside her door, blocking his way to the second door (and Herse?) in the middle of the composition, while the third door is that of Pandrosos’ room, depicted on the right. In this two-dimensional scene it is clear why Aglauros was successful in driving the god away: there is not enough

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<sup>430</sup> Unlike Greek thought, Roman divination originally considered left to be the propitious side [Poznanski (1978) 52], but this is reversed in Augustan and Early Imperial times under Greek influence [Guillaumont (1985) 161-162, 167-168].

<sup>431</sup> Poznanski (1978) 54.

<sup>432</sup> *cuius placidissima laeuum / radit harenosi Thybridis unda latus. / hic, ubi nunc Roma est* (*F.* 1.241-243) [Poznanski (1978) 60-61].

<sup>433</sup> Poznanski (1978) 55 interprets this choice either as an indication of Mercury’s association with the Underworld, or as “the result of a particular religious reasoning” [repeated in Poznanski (1985) 66].

<sup>434</sup> Chinnici (2002) 109. The effect is similar but slightly less successful in the passage from Book 4: *laeuum Mercurio, dextrum tibi, bellica uirgo, / ara louis media est* (*Met.* 4.754-755).

space for him to bypass her and get to the middle door, or else he will step outside the picture. It is in fact possible that actual artefacts showing Hermes / Mercury and the Cecropids have influenced this description;<sup>435</sup> besides, the east frieze of the Parthenon may have been an important prompt, alongside Callimachus' precedent, for Ovid to tell the two stories together. On Block IV Hermes is depicted sitting and looking at the direction of the Panathenaean procession, turning his back to the Arrhephoria ceremony shown on Block V. Involving two young girls carrying baskets with unknown content on their heads, the latter is interpreted as re-enacting the transgression of the Cecropids.<sup>436</sup> Thus, the earlier crime is represented on the same plane as the first episode of the second story, with the god remaining immobile and observing the procession in which he will see Herse and fall in love with her.

While Mercury may not step outside the scene, the reader is invited to look inside as the narrative continues to prepare the arrival of Invidia. Just as previously Aglauros opened the basket and saw Erichthonius and the snake inside (*uidit, Met.* 2.757), she now opens her door and sees Mercury inside the women's quarters (*notauit, Met.* 2.740). Both the baby and the god were not meant to be seen,<sup>437</sup> but they are, in the same setting, and by the same person who each time thwarts a divine plan, remaining hidden and getting to Herse respectively. Effectively, Aglauros' earlier transgression is repeated here, thus confirming that the appropriate punishment is the attack of Invidia. The act of seeing inside, however,

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<sup>435</sup> Two vases dating from 470-460 BC depict Mercury reaching to a girl (Herse) in the presence of another girl (Aglauros) and a man with a sceptre (Cecrops?): *LIMC* s.v. Aglauros 33a & 33b, 34. On both vases, as well as on a lekythos from 475-425 BC which only depicts the god and Herse (LA County Museum 50.8.10), the god moves from left to right.

<sup>436</sup> Barringer (2008) 102; British Museum, Parthenon Sculptures, East Frieze Blocks IV and V.

<sup>437</sup> Keith (1992) 125.



extends to the reader, who once again is allowed to commit the same transgression but without consequences: earlier, to witness what was inside the basket, even though it was a secret (*secreta*, *Met.* 2.556; *arcana profana*, *Met.* 2.755); now, to see what takes place in the innermost part of the palace, also qualified as secret (*pars secreta domus*, *Met.* 2.737), with the guidance of the *ekphrasis* which puts names on figures and doors. A similar process is repeated three times in the course of this episode, as the reader first sees inside the cave of Invidia (also hidden from view: *abdita*, *Met.* 2.762), then inside Aglauros' room, and finally inside the same corridor in the women's quarters where the story reaches its metamorphic conclusion.

Invidia attacks Aglauros (*Met.* 2.798-801)<sup>438</sup> and turns her into a version of herself by filling her heart with envy for her sister. Once again the stress falls on the idea of seeing inherent in the act of *inuidere*, as the monster makes her victim see into Herse's future affair with Mercury:

*germanam ante oculos fortunatumque sororis  
coniugium pulchraque deum sub imagine ponit  
cunctaque magna facit; ...*

*Met.* 2.803-805

The combined effect of the infernal deity's touch and the visions she creates torments Aglauros, but while the physical impact of Invidia's attack recalls descriptions of epic women in love, above all Virgil's Dido,<sup>439</sup> what is highlighted is the damage to Aglauros' bond with her sister through the accumulation of

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<sup>438</sup> As Hardie (2008) 105 points out, Invidia is very similar to the Virgilian Allecto, with the former's attack on Aglauros (*Met.* 2.797-801) verbally resembling that of the Fury on Amata (*Aen.* 7.346-353). Her assault on Turnus (*Aen.* 7.456-457) is also described in comparable terms.

<sup>439</sup> Dido is consumed by a hidden fire (*Aen.* 4.2) and burns in her wretchedness (*Aen.* 4.68); likewise, Aglauros is bitten by a hidden pain (*Met.* 2.805-806) and burns by a slow fire because of Herse's happiness (*Met.* 2.809-811).

references to the latter both by kinship term and by name: *germanam ... sororis* (*Met.* 2.803), *Herses* (*Met.* 2.809). The evocation of the Virgilian precedent in the same context as the description of envy between sisters could be significant, in that the earlier poet raises precisely that issue, admittedly in a very obscure way, when he presents Dido as asking Anna to soften Aeneas, pointing out that she and he have an intimate relationship (*Aen.* 4.421-423). Ovid may have perceived a hint of jealousy in Dido's words, which would reinforce the already sour tone of *perfidus* (*Aen.* 4.421) and give it a specific target, and incorporated other elements of her representation into his fuller portrait of an envious sister.

The association of Dido's feelings with seeing is present but not very strong in the *Aeneid*;<sup>440</sup> Ovid, however, may have turned to elegy for more concrete precedents. When Propertius peeps inside Gallus' bedroom (*uidi ego: ... / uidi ego te toto uinctum languescere collo*, *El.* 1.13.14-15), he envisages a nasty outcome for his friend's affair. This may be understood as prompted by envy, given not only his own emphasised solitude (*abrepto solus amore uacem*, *El.* 1.13.2), but also the position of this elegy right after the one where the poet talks about his relationship with Cynthia being envied by others (*inuidiae fuimus*, *El.* 1.12.9), with which it is very closely linked through thematic and verbal similarities.<sup>441</sup> In Propertius' elegies it is the (male) lover who provokes envy in other (male) lovers; in Ovid's episode this role falls on the (female) beloved, who is envied by her sister. Propertius seeks the cause for envy in some divine will (*num me deus obruit?* *El.* 1.12.9); Aglauros'

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<sup>440</sup> She watches Aeneas' preparations from her tower (*Aen.* 4.409-411), and invites Anna to witness his actions at the very start of her appeal for mediation (*Aen.* 4.416).

<sup>441</sup> Gallus cries holding his beloved's hands (*El.* 1.13.16), just as Propertius praises any man who could cry in the presence of his beloved (*El.* 1.12.15); the theme of the narrator's solitude is also highlighted in both elegies.

envy originates with Minerva and her infernal agent Invidia. Finally, an envious poet looks inside his friend's bedroom, just like Invidia allows Aglauros to look inside her sister's affair with Mercury. Propertian associations between envy and seeing thus furnish another model for the Ovidian protagonists in an episode both thematically and verbally indebted to elegy.

It is also among legendary Roman women, however, that Ovid's inspiration can be sought for the representation of the envious sister. Livy often attributes the reason for political changes in early Rome to actions of legendary women, and the access of plebeians to high offices such as that of a consul is no exception, prompted as it is by a daughter's complaint to her father about her sister's better luck in marriage (*AUC* 6.34.5-10).<sup>442</sup> When Fabia Minor, married to a plebeian, visits Fabia Maior, married to a tribune of the army, the latter laughs at her sister's ignorance of the honours accompanying the office. The younger sister's jealousy (*fortunatum matrimonium ei sororis uisum sique ipsam malo arbitrio ... paenituisse*, Liv. *AUC* 6.34.7) is described in a way that recalls what Aglauros thinks of Herse's happy marriage:

*germanam ante oculos fortunatumque sororis  
coniugium pulchraque deum sub imagine ponit*

*Met.* 2.803-804

The emphasis on seeing is prominent in both accounts. Furthermore, the pain caused by envy bites both Fabia's (*confusam eam ex recenti morsu animi*, Liv. *AUC* 6.34.8) and Aglauros' heart (*dolore / Cecropis occulto mordetur*, *Met.* 2.805-806).<sup>443</sup>

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<sup>442</sup> As Lanciotti (1995) 291 points out, the story shows not only the strong ties a married woman continued to have with her family of birth, but also, and more importantly, the new bonds created between her old and new families, which involved reciprocal obligation and offer of services.

<sup>443</sup> Chinnici (2002) 114 n. 34.

The suffering is so great that the Cecropid wavers between wanting to die, so that she does not see this union, or to tell their father all about the imminent affair:

*saepe mori uoluit, ne quicquam tale uideret,  
saepe uelut crimen rigido narrare parenti.*

*Met. 2.812-813*<sup>444</sup>

Fabia faces a similar dilemma, deliberating whether to conceal the reason for her grief (*auertentem causam doloris*, Liv. AUC 6.34.9), or reveal it to her father (*ut fateretur eam esse causam doloris*, Liv. AUC 6.34.9).<sup>445</sup> Like Aglauros, the choice is between silence and confession, but while the Roman woman opts for the latter, overcoming her worries about her sisterly affection (*nec satis piam aduersus sororem*, Liv. AUC 6.34.9),<sup>446</sup> the Athenian girl has a third option, which is to physically position herself between Mercury and her sister.

Aglauros' last action is to sit on the threshold and thus block the way to Mercury who is coming back with the gold she requested (*denique in aduerso uenientem limine sedit / exclusura deum*, *Met. 2.814-815*). She turns a deaf ear to his flatteries and pleas (*blandimenta precesque / uerbaque iactanti mitissima*, *Met. 2.815-816*), behaving like an elegiac *custos*, or even the often animate *ianua*, whose job it is to prevent the lover from getting access to the beloved, turning him into the *exclusus amator*. One of Propertius' poems gives voice to the door's experience, which in many ways resembles the role Aglauros plays in this mock-

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<sup>444</sup> The presence of a male figure holding a sceptre on two vases depicting Hermes, Herse and Aglauros (*LIMC* s.v. Aglauros 33a & 33b, 34) may suggest a Greek version of the myth where Aglauros did tell her father about the illicit affair. Hardie (2008) 106 reads this as the point where the episode does not become yet another story about tale-telling, as were the ones preceding it in Book 2.

<sup>445</sup> In fact one may read *auertentem <oculis> causam doloris*, that is, "turning <her gaze> away from the cause of pain", which makes it synonymous to Aglauros' *ne quicquam tale uideret*.

<sup>446</sup> McClain (1998) 16 defends Fabia's reaction by pointing out that she does not speak ill of, nor harm her sister, but all she asks for is equal honour and esteem, ideals any Roman should strive after.

elegiac episode.<sup>447</sup> In *Elegy* 1.16 the door blocks the way to the *puella*; the lover speaks to it with flatteries (*El.* 1.16.16) and offers it gifts in vain (*El.* 1.16.36); the door ends up being a victim of envy (*El.* 1.16.48). Like a *ianua*, Aglauros remains unmoved by the flatteries and gifts of the lover, whose divine status allows him to do much more than simply write poems complaining about his exclusion: Mercury reacts to Aglauros' threats by breaking the door open with his staff and transforming her into stone as she tries to get up to stop him from entering Herse's room. The petrified figure displays her last human emotion, envy, in the colour of the stone, thus retaining forever the marks of her double punishment, by Minerva and by Mercury, for seeing inside, not once but twice, something that should not be seen.

### **Sisters II: Procne and Philomela**

The theme of envy that forms the basis of the story of Aglauros and Herse returns in Book 6, once again in the context of sisters participating in a love triangle with a man. Ovid's story of Procne and Philomela in Book 6 follows the version established by the 5th century tragedians, according to which Tereus rapes his sister-in-law Philomela and is then punished by his wife Procne who kills their son Itys and serves him to his father.<sup>448</sup> The original myth, however, can be found in Homer, where Penelope describes how the daughter of Pandareos, now transformed into a nightingale, still mourns her son Itylus whom she killed "without

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<sup>447</sup> As Lowe (2008) 426 puts it, "Ovid employs the tropes of love-elegy as Aglauros is punished for making life difficult for Mercury the lover: [...] playing characters that the elegiac lover detests."

<sup>448</sup> See Chapter One.

thinking” (*Od.* 19.518-523). According to the scholia on these lines,<sup>449</sup> Aedon envied her brother-in-law’s wife (who is sometimes named as Niobe) for having more children than she did, but killed her own son mistaking him for that of her rival.

The sisters Procne and Philomela resemble the Virgilian Dido and Anna in their unanimity,<sup>450</sup> as well as in the fact that in both stories the eldest sister is involved with a man from another land, the Carthaginian queen with Trojan Aeneas, the Athenian princess with Thracian Tereus.<sup>451</sup> In the *Aeneid* Anna acts as a mediator between Dido and Aeneas, carrying her sister’s messages to him because, in Dido’s words:

... *solam nam perfidus ille*  
*te colere, arcanos etiam tibi credere sensus;*  
*sola uiri mollis aditus et tempora noras.*

*Aen.* 4.421-423

The description of Aeneas as *perfidus* in the description of his and Anna’s intimacy potentially alludes to Dido’s jealousy, even if it is not explicitly spelled out. It is the same accusation that Philomela directs against Tereus after he has raped her: *quin animam hanc, ne quod facinus tibi, perfide, restet, / eripis?* (*Met.* 6.539-540). The case in which *perfidus* is found in Philomela’s speech echoes curses against men who abandon their lovers;<sup>452</sup> in this story, however, *perfidia* concerns the obligations of a married man towards the family of his wife. Philomela in fact reminds Tereus of his promise to her father that he will bring her back safe and

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<sup>449</sup> The Scholia in Hom. *Od.* 19.518 give four similar versions of the story, all of which end with the transformation of Aedon into a nightingale.

<sup>450</sup> See Chapter One for a detailed comparison.

<sup>451</sup> See note 145.

<sup>452</sup> *perfide* appears in the same metrical position as *Met.* 6.539 in Cat. c. 64.132 (Ariadne to Theseus); Virg. *Aen.* 4.305 (Dido to Aeneas); Ov. *Her.* 7.79 (Dido to Aeneas), *F.* 3.473 (Ariadne to Theseus).

sound, as well as of his marital vows to Procne (*Met.* 6.534-536), and it is in this context that her accusation of *perfidia* should be understood. Equally, Dido calls Aeneas *perfidus*, not only because he is preparing to abandon her, but also, perhaps, because his intimacy to Anna is inappropriate for someone who, in Dido's eyes, is a married man.

The underwritten jealousy of *Aeneid* 4 thus surfaces in *Metamorphoses* 6, not just in the accusation of *perfidia*, but also more explicitly in Philomela's assessment of the situation after her rape:

*omnia turbasti: paelex ego facta sororis,  
tu geminus coniunx! hostis mihi debita poena.*<sup>453</sup>

*Met.* 6.537-538

In her own mind, Philomela has usurped the position of her sister and become her rival, *paelex*,<sup>454</sup> even if the use of passive verbs removes any responsibility from her character.<sup>455</sup> The idea of sexual rivalry continues the theme of *perfidia* with its evocation of Dido's obscure words, while at the same time pointing to two variants of the story, which Ovid knew and hinted at without explicitly following.

The idea of parallel marriages entailed in the phrase *geminus coniunx* recalls some versions of the myth in which Tereus lies to Procne's family, telling them that she is dead, so that they give him Philomela in marriage. In those versions either he

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<sup>453</sup> *Procne* has been proposed as an emendation for the MSS *poena* (but all emendations are summarily dismissed by Anderson in his 1977 edition). In his 1972 commentary ad 6.537-538 he argues for the preservation of *poena*, in order to avoid redundancy "for any *paelex* is automatically the wife's *hostis*". As it stands, it means that Philomela deserves the punishment of an enemy, which effectively amounts to the same idea as the one conveyed by the phrase *hostis mihi debita Procne*; the interchangeability of *poena* and *Procne* is made clear in Procne's later description *poenaque in imagine tota est* (*Met.* 6.586).

<sup>454</sup> As Pavlock (1991) 38-39 points out, by her self-characterisation as *paelex* and her attitude towards Procne Philomela expresses her "abhorrence at being outside of the proper social structure", as the *paelex* was marginalised in Rome and not allowed to come in contact with the altar of Juno.

<sup>455</sup> As Martín Rodríguez (2001) 120 puts it, "Procne, que manda a su marido en busca de otra mujer, acaba encontrándose con una *paelex* en la persona de su propia hermana".

hides Procne and takes Philomela into his house as his only wife,<sup>456</sup> or he violates Philomela but then sends her to another king and returns to Procne.<sup>457</sup> The allusion to that variant also applies to Philomela's reaction when she is saved by her sister and taken into the palace:

... *sed non attollere contra*  
*sustinet haec oculos, paelex sibi uisa sororis,*  
*deiectoque in humum uultu ...*

*Met.* 6.605-607

Philomela's feeling of guilt in front of her sister could be the result of a psychological reaction encountered in many victims of rape in the poem,<sup>458</sup> but the insistence on her self-characterisation as *paelex* suggests that Ovid is once again alluding to different versions than the one he has chosen to tell.<sup>459</sup> Thus, he has Philomela react to the rape as if it were a double marriage, although it is her death and not Procne's that Tereus simulates, and it is she and not her sister whom he removes from view. In fact, her fears may be justified by the way her father entrusted her to Tereus: Pandion used the typical formula for betrothals *hanc ego ... / [...] / do* (*Met.* 6.496-498),<sup>460</sup> and joined Tereus' and Philomela' right hands (*utque fide pignus dextras utriusque poposcit / inter seque datas iunxit*, *Met.* 6.506-507), a gesture that encourages the view that Ovid has another version in mind and constantly directs the reader's attention towards it.<sup>461</sup>

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<sup>456</sup> Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.193-195.

<sup>457</sup> Hyg. *Fab.* 45.

<sup>458</sup> Curran (1978) 223-224.

<sup>459</sup> The jealousy motif may go back to Sophocles' *Tereus*, as the hypothesis found on a papyrus fragment (*P. Oxy.* 3013, ll. 24-26) suggests: ἐπιγνοῦσα δὲ ἡ Πρόκνη τὴν ἀλήθειαν ζηλοτυπία τῇ ἐσχάτῃ / οἰστρηθεῖσα.

<sup>460</sup> Hill (1992) ad 6.496.

<sup>461</sup> According to Anderson (1972) ad 6.506-508, this gesture and the other references to Tereus and Philomela as husband and wife indicate Ovid's knowledge of the alternative version of the myth.



Philomela's phrase *geminus coniunx* (*Met.* 6.538), however, could be interpreted in a different way, if the original meaning of *geminus*, that is, "twin", was retained. Taken together with the mention of hostility from Procne's part, Philomela's words may allude to the original myth found in Homer. There, Aedon is envious of her sister-in-law's good fortune, and in an act of hostility attempts to kill one of the latter's children but mistakenly kills her own son; in that context the phrase *geminus coniunx* would point to the brothers Zethus and Amphion whose wives are involved in this rivalry. The former is named in the Homeric passage as the father of Itylus,<sup>462</sup> and he and Amphion are known as the twin sons (*gemini*) of Antiope who erected the walls of Thebes.<sup>463</sup> Finally, the evocation of the original myth concerning Aedon through the motif of envy on the one hand and the mention of twin husbands on the other may be further confirmed by the position of the Procne and Philomela story very soon after an extensive episode dealing precisely with the other of the twins, Amphion, and his wife Niobe (*Met.* 6.146-312).<sup>464</sup>

Ovid's search for inspiration is neither restricted to other versions of the same myth nor to sister pairs alone. Thus, one of Procne's models is Virgil's Amata, which perhaps gives some indications as to Ovid's reading of the mother-daughter

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<sup>462</sup> The scholia name Amphion as Aedon's brother-in-law, whose wife, Niobe or Hippomedousa, she envied (Schol. in Hom. *Od.* 19.518); one of the versions, repeated in Schol. in Hom. *Od.* 19.523, is attributed to Pherecydes (5<sup>th</sup> century BC). In authors who associated the nightingale with Tereus, e.g. Apollodorus, Zethus is married to Thebe (*Bibl.* 3.45).

<sup>463</sup> Amphion and Zet(h)us: Hom. *Od.* 11.260-265; Pher. in Schol. in Hom. *Od.* 19.523; Eur. *Herc.* 29-30; AR 1.735-741; Prop. *El.* 3.15.29-42; Hyg. *Fab.* 7, 8 and 9; Apoll. *Bibl.* 3.42-47; explicitly called 'twins' in Horace (*fratrum geminorum Amphionis atque Zethi*, *Ep.* 1.18.41) and Hyginus (*geminos parit*, Hyg. *Fab.* 7).

<sup>464</sup> Lines 313-423 relate material relevant to the story of Niobe: after three short episodes concerned with stories told by the people who were mourning Amphion and his family (*Met.* 6.313-411), the transition to Procne and Philomela is made through the explanation of the absence of the Athenians from the same event (*Met.* 6.412-423).

bond treated in *Aeneid* 7. Procne's initial silent reaction to Philomela's rape is followed by her near-transformation into a Fury, as she sets off to exact vengeance on behalf of her sister: *poenaque in imagine tota est* (*Met.* 6.586).<sup>465</sup> Her infernal aspect and her subsequent actions bring her close to Amata who also participates in a love triangle together with her female relative. In both cases a queen simulates Bacchic rites in order to go to the woods with other women and hide her relative: Amata hides Lavinia in the woods in order to prevent her marriage to a foreigner, Aeneas; Procne hides Philomela in the palace after saving her from the woods where she was imprisoned after being raped by a foreigner, Tereus.<sup>466</sup> The verbal similarities encourage the comparison of the two scenes: the effect of the Fury's attack which causes Amata's reaction in the first place (*infelix ingentibus excita monstris / immensam sine more furit lymphata per urbem*, *Aen.* 7.376-377), is echoed in the description of Procne's appearance as another Fury:

*concita per siluas turba comitante suarum  
terribilis Procne furiisque agitata doloris*

*Met.* 6.594-595

Unlike Agave in Book 3,<sup>467</sup> whose devotion to Bacchus is serious, both Amata and Procne use the rites as a cover (*simulato numine Bacchi*, *Aen.* 7.385; *Bacche, tuas simulat*, *Met.* 6.596), and in order to appear more convincing they both add the Bacchic cry *euhoē* (*Aen.* 7.389; *Met.* 6.597).<sup>468</sup> The description of Procne covering Philomela's face with ivy leaves (*natam frondosis montibus abdit*, *Aen.* 7.387)

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<sup>465</sup> Anderson (1972) ad 6.585-586.

<sup>466</sup> Ciappi (1990) 440-441. He also compares Procne to Ovid's Ino (*Met.* 4), whose portrayal is precisely modelled on Amata's representation in the *Aeneid*.

<sup>467</sup> Pavlock (1991) 43 draws the parallel between her and Procne.

<sup>468</sup> The maenadic motif is certainly present in Accius' *Tereus*, and may even go back to Sophocles' *Tereus*, as Ciappi (1990) 439 and Curley (2003) 181 suggest.

echoes Amata's act of hiding Lavinia in leafy woods (*uultum hederarum frondibus abdit*, *Met.* 6.599), particularly through the position of the crucial verb *abdere* at the end of the line.

As Amata's motives are not easily deciphered, the fact that Ovid models Procne's actions to save her sister on the Latin queen's actions to remove Lavinia from the city can be ambivalent as well as retrospective. The use of Amata as a model for a character whose sisterly devotion is limited neither by danger nor by any other family bonds may work retrospectively to show that perhaps the early readers of the *Aeneid* saw in her actions proof of her otherwise understated maternal affection. On the other hand, Procne's behaviour may assume a sinister quality through her association to a heroine who not only acts under the influence of a Fury, but also expresses her love not for her daughter but for her future son-in-law. Furthermore, Amata's feelings for the latter, though not explicit, may be seen as amounting to jealousy towards her daughter for being loved by the man her mother secretly desires, Turnus. Thus, another parallel can be constructed between the Virgilian figure and Procne, who, in her sister's mind, may feel jealous towards Philomela for being preferred by the man she is married to, Tereus.

The feeling of envy also creates a connection between the episode of Procne and Philomela in *Metamorphoses* 6 and that of Aglauros and Herse in Book 2; the two stories, however, have more than this theme in common to the extent that taken together they provide a compendium of Athenian sisterly behaviour.<sup>469</sup> Crucial to the reading of the two stories as complementing each other is Ovid's use

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<sup>469</sup> Fontenrose (1948) 152-153 argues that it was easy for the original Aegean swallow and nightingale story to be incorporated in the Athenian group of legends precisely because of the existence in that group of the story of Aglauros and Herse's rivalry for Hermes.

of the patronymic “Cecropian” to describe both sets of sisters, although it is strictly applicable only to Aglauros and Herse whose father is Cecrops. Aglauros, Herse and Pandrosos are introduced in the narrative as *uirginibusque tribus gemino de Cecrope natis* (*Met.* 2.555) and later Aglauros is described as *natarum Cecropis unam* (*Met.* 2.784), *Cecrope natae* (*Met.* 2.797) and *Cecropis* (*Met.* 2.806). As for Procne and Philomela, they are designated as “daughter(s) of Pandion” (*Pandione nata*, *Met.* 6.436, 634 for Procne; *Pandione natam*, *Met.* 6.520 for Philomela; *genitas Pandione*, *Met.* 6.666). When Tereus arrives at their homeland, however, he is said to reach *portus / Cecropios* (*Met.* 6.445-446), and at the moment of their transformation the two sisters are called *Cecropidae* (*Met.* 6.667). Certainly, Cecrops, who was the second king of Athens, can be reasonably expected to have given his name to places around Athens as well as to any members of his line, even if there is no blood relation between him and Pandion; the use of Cecrops’ patronymic, however, stimulates the search for connections between the two myths.

Even if the details are different, thematically both episodes deal with two sisters and a man from abroad forming a love triangle: in Book 2 the god Mercury flies to Athens and tries to sleep with Herse, but has to negotiate access to her with her sister Aglauros; in Book 6 the Thracian king Tereus sails to Athens and rapes Philomela, although he is already married to her sister Procne. Moreover, the visual element is important for both episodes:<sup>470</sup> looking inside the basket and finding out about its secret contents brings about Aglauros’ downfall, just as reading

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<sup>470</sup> On the visual element in the story of Aglauros and Herse see their section in this chapter; Salzman-Mitchell (2005) 139-140 and *passim* discusses the element of seeing in the story of Procne and Philomela.

Philomela's message and finding out about the secret rape causes Tereus' punishment by Procne; it is also by seeing Herse and Philomela that Mercury and Tereus fall in love with them.

The description of the two maidens as objects of their lovers' gaze, as well as the latter's reaction to this view, further strengthens the link between the two stories. Herse is compared to Diana in her lunar form, Phoebe, and the simile revolves around the idea of surpassing all her companions in beauty (*Met.* 2.722-725).<sup>471</sup> While an equal number of lines are given to the description of Philomela, she is not said to stand out, as in all previous uses of this type of simile, including that featuring Herse (*uirginibus praestantior omnibus Herse, Met.* 2.724), but she is simply compared to the Nymphs as they walk through the woods:

*ecce uenit magno diues Philomela paratu,  
diuitior forma, quales audire solemus  
naidas et dryadas mediis incedere siluis,  
si modo des illis cultus similesque paratus.*

*Met.* 6.451-454

By comparing her to inferior divine creatures such as the woodland nymphs, who are usually the goddess' companions, Ovid seems to suggest that Philomela is not as beautiful as other epic heroines. He also raises doubts as to the suitability of comparisons between a mortal woman's attire and that of a goddess (*si modo des illis cultus similesque paratus, Met.* 6.454).

Tereus' reaction to Philomela's appearance is nevertheless comparable to that of other male epic viewers, in particular to the description of Mercury's

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<sup>471</sup> A simile typical of epic heroines whose beauty is compared to Artemis' / Diana's: Nausicaa, *Od.* 6.102-109; Medea, *AR* 3.876-886; Dido, *Aen.* 1.498-504.

reaction when he sees Herse.<sup>472</sup> The god is stunned and almost stops in mid-air, as the fire of love is kindled in his heart:

*non secus exarsit, quam cum Balearica plumbum  
funda iacit: uolat illud et incandescit eundo,  
et quos non habuit, sub nubibus inuenit ignes.*

*Met. 2.727-729*

Tereus is described in the same terms when he beholds Philomela:

*non secus exarsit conspecta uirgine Tereus,  
quam si quis canis ignem supponat aristis  
aut frondem positasque cremet faenilibus herbas.*

*Met. 6.455-457*

In both episodes the simile of the girl's beauty is followed by another one on the man's fiery passion:<sup>473</sup> not only does the second simile take the form *non secus ... quam*, but the same verb, *exardescere*, is used in the same tense and placed in the same metrical position. Furthermore, the idea of fire is extended to cover all three lines with the verb-noun sequence of Book 2 (*incandescit, ignes*) being reversed in Book 6 (*ignem, cremet*).<sup>474</sup> Whereas Mercury reacts in a way expected by epic characters when exposed to the view of a woman whose beauty is equal to Diana's, the fact that Tereus reacts in the same way even though the object of his gaze falls short of this description, suggests that his passion is inappropriate not only in terms of morality (Philomela is his sister-in-law), but also in terms of epic convention. The

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<sup>472</sup> The simile describing Tereus recalls the one concerning Apollo when he falls in love with Daphne (*Met.* 1.492-496): Anderson (1972) ad 6.452-454 and 455-457; Wheeler (1999) 104, who also points out that this fact combined with the mention of Naiads and Dryads in Philomela's description causes the readers to think of specific Nymphs featuring earlier in the poem. In the Apollo and Daphne episode, however, the male reaction is not preceded by a simile highlighting the female beauty.

<sup>473</sup> The fire imagery has been convincingly argued to be a pervasive theme of the whole episode [Kaufhold (1997)].

<sup>474</sup> Another point in contact is their resemblance to elegiac lovers: for the elegiac elements in the earlier episode see section on Aglauros and Herse in this chapter; Tereus, as Anderson (1972) ad 6.461-464 points out, considers the behaviour of a man in love in comedy or elegy, who would bribe his beloved's companions or her nurse if not try to win the girl over with expensive gifts.

Thracian king has only negative qualities to pit against such figures as the heroes Odysseus, Jason and Aeneas, and the gods Apollo and Mercury, even when some of them abandon their beloved. He is also the only one to physically harm the woman he falls in love with, an outcome that is perhaps prepared by Philomela's less exceptional appearance than that of her earlier counterparts.

The parallelism between Mercury and Herse on the one hand and Tereus and Philomela on the other leaves for Procne the role of Aglauros. After Invidia's attack, especially after being exposed to distorted visions of marital happiness (*Met.* 2.803-805), Aglauros displays the characteristics of her attacker: she is sleepless and pines away as she becomes envious of her sister (*Met.* 2.806-809), just as Invidia never sleeps but pines away watching other people's happiness (*Met.* 2.779-781). Eventually, Aglauros places herself between Herse and Mercury, in order to prevent the love affair from happening in the first place. Similarly, when Procne finds out about the rape, she displays the characteristics of a Fury even though she has not been attacked by one,<sup>475</sup> and removes her sister from her prison in order to prevent the rape from happening again. She assumes the infernal goddess' appearance (*poenaeque in imagine tota est, Met.* 6.586), as well as her weapons (*furialiaque accipit arma, Met.* 6.591), and heads off to save her sister looking so transformed (*terribilis Procne furiisque agitata doloris, Met.* 6.595) that her sister is stunned to see her as she leads her to safety (*attonitamque trahens intra sua moenia ducit, Met.* 6.600).

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<sup>475</sup> The verbal similarities with Amata's actions and appearance after Allecto's attack encourage this impression.

Given the correspondences between the two stories, and the similarities between Invidia and a Fury in both appearance and mode of attack,<sup>476</sup> Philomela's fear that her sister might envy her is now seen under a completely new light. The theme of envy comes into the Procne and Philomela story not only through other versions of the myth that speak of double marriages and jealous sisters-in-law, but also through the intratextual dialogue with the Aglauros and Herse story. Crucially, the victims of both lovers' wrath are forever silenced. Mercury, the aspiring lover, punishes Aglauros for preventing him from entering a love affair with her sister by petrification; even if she tried to speak, no sound would come out of her mouth (*Met.* 2.829-831). Likewise, Tereus, the rapist, punishes Philomela for threatening to reveal the rape to her sister by cutting her tongue, even as she tries to speak (*Met.* 6.556-557).

While obedient or indifferent silence may characterise epic heroines such as Lavinia and Proserpina, whose mothers want to have the last word in their marriage, enforced silence of the type inflicted upon Philomela provides the motive for Procne to commit murder, as her sisterly affection surpasses both her marital and her maternal bond.<sup>477</sup> This happens in three stages and takes place inside Tereus' palace, where Procne has hidden her sister.<sup>478</sup> First she announces her determination to punish Tereus in the most horrible manner for what he did to

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<sup>476</sup> Invidia's attack on Aglauros (*Met.* 2.798-801) verbally echoes Allecto's attack on Amata (*Aen.* 7.349-356).

<sup>477</sup> Ciappi (1990) 445-450 analyses the correspondences between Procne and the Euripidean Medea, who also overcomes her maternal identity in order to punish her husband for spurning her for another woman; as well as the points of contact between Procne and the Ovidian Althea, whose love for her (male) siblings surpasses that for her son Meleager and leads to his death (*Met.* 8). The dialogue with Euripides' *Medea*, discussed also by Larmour (1990) 132-134 and Pavlock (1991) 43, encourages the idea of envy underlying the Ovidian episode, even though Philomela's fears that she would be considered a *paelex* by her sister do not materialise in this version of the myth.

<sup>478</sup> Boillat (1976) 77 discusses how Procne gradually overcomes first her conjugal *pietas*, then her maternal *pietas*, in favour of her *pietas* for her sister.



Philomela (*Met.* 6.611-618), enumerating tortures that recall Dido's curses against Aeneas (*Aen.* 4.381-387).<sup>479</sup> Then, with her conjugal *pietas* overcome, she notices her son's facial resemblance to his father (*Met.* 6.621-622),<sup>480</sup> which on the one hand justifies her to transfer her wrath from the husband onto the child,<sup>481</sup> and on the other hand weakens her connection to Itys. Epic children take after their fathers,<sup>482</sup> therefore Procne and Philomela, who resemble each other as daughters of the same father, Pandion, have a bond that is stronger than the one between Procne and Itys, since he resembles his father, Tereus.<sup>483</sup> Finally, Procne's decision about killing Itys relies precisely on Philomela's loss of her ability to speak:

... *ab hoc iterum est ad uultus uersa sororis*  
*inque uicem spectans ambos 'cur admouet' inquit*  
*'alter blanditias, rapta silet altera lingua?*  
*quam uocat hic matrem, cur non uocat illa sororem?*

*Met.* 6.630-633

In Procne's reasoning, Itys is guilty not only for resembling Tereus, but also, and more importantly, for being able to express verbally his relationship to his mother (*uocat ... matrem*) while Philomela cannot do the same for her bond to her sister (*uocat ... sororem*).

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<sup>479</sup> Pursuit and burning of his ships (*Aen.* 4.592-594); burning of his camp (*Aen.* 4.604-606); tearing Aeneas to pieces and throwing him to the waves (*Aen.* 4.600-601) as Medea did to her brother Absyrtus; and serving Ascanius up to his father (*Aen.* 4.601-602) as Atreus did to Thyestes' children [Ciappi (1990) 457-461 discusses the correspondences between the two stories as treated in the *Metamorphoses*, in Accius' Atreus and in Seneca's *Thyestes*], or indeed as Procne is about to do to Itys.

<sup>480</sup> As Salzman-Mitchell (2005) 147 points out, this is a "vital component in the ideology of the Roman family".

<sup>481</sup> Salzman-Mitchell (2005) 147.

<sup>482</sup> Thus, Dido hoped for a son who would look like Aeneas (*si quis mihi paruulus aula / luderet Aeneas, qui te tamen ore referret*, *Aen.* 4.328-329).

<sup>483</sup> Pace Pavlock (1991) 46 who interprets Procne's treatment of Itys as a reflection of his father as due to her being "carried away by her participation in the Bacchic rites".

In love triangles, therefore, it is the inherited family tie, and not the one created by marriage, that prevails, allowing a mother to deny her very self in order to avenge her sister. In the case of Aglauros and Herse, sisterly solidarity was hindered by the action of Envy; here, the very fact that Procne acts over and above as a sister provides the proof that she was never envious of Philomela, as the latter feared and as the multiple links with Dido, Amata and Aglauros caused the reader to expect.

### **Variations I: Medea and her sister Chalciope (Juno in disguise)**

Even though her feelings for her mother are merely hinted at,<sup>484</sup> Medea's relationship to her sister Chalciope and her bond to her aunt Circe receive extensive treatment in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* Books 6 and 7 respectively. Each time her sister and her aunt try to convince Medea to help Jason; in both cases, however, Medea's relatives are in fact goddesses disguised as mortals, with Juno assuming the form of Chalciope and Venus that of Circe. At the same time, there is something sinister in the representation of these Valerian family bonds, featuring characteristics appropriate to the Furies and establishing a dialogue with the Lemnian episode related in *Argonautica* 2, which also deals with sisters and disguise. Furthermore, the poet draws not only from the Apollonian intertext, but also from other versions of the myth as well as other blood-related epic heroines such as Dido and Anna.<sup>485</sup> The two bonds, therefore, constitute a variation from the

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<sup>484</sup> Medea is said to cling to her parents (*Arg.* 7.122-123) but whenever she expresses her feelings for one of them, it is always her father (*passim* in *Arg.* 5, 6 and 7). Her mother, on the other hand, emits a desperate cry, trying in vain to stop her leaving on Jason's ship (*Arg.* 8.143-170), but Medea's reaction, if any, is not given by the poet.

<sup>485</sup> See Chapter One on their unanimity.

norm in Latin epic, while at the same time belonging to the theme of love and marriage. Unlike the Ovidian sisters Aglauros and Herse or Procne and Philomela, the heroine's relatives in Valerius do not participate in love triangles, but have an active part in arranging her marriage by indicating the man they consider to be the right one for the heroine, as was the case with Virgil's Amata and Lavinia.

For the modern reader Medea and Chalciopé's first appearance together is in Apollonius' *Argonautica*,<sup>486</sup> which offers an extensive treatment of their sisterly bond and provides a very important model for Valerius Flaccus. In the Hellenistic epic Medea wishes to speak to her sister in confidence in order to find distraction from her passion for Jason (AR 3.641-644). She then deceives Chalciopé by inventing a dream about her nephews, on behalf of whom their mother appeals for help, threatening to haunt Medea as an avenging Fury if she fails to keep it secret (AR 3.681-704). Medea promises to help Jason and her subsequent joy at being asked to do precisely what she wanted in the first place, is soon to be replaced by shame and fear at Chalciopé's departure (AR 3.705-743).<sup>487</sup> In his Roman *Argonautica* Valerius combines various versions of the Argonautic myth in the sisters' representation, as well as resorting to female epic figures that either were

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<sup>486</sup> Medea features as Jason's bride in Hesiod (*Theog.* 992-1002); her sister who married Phrixus is called Iophossa in the *Great Ehoiai* (Frg. 255 MW), but according to Gantz (1993) 183, it is possible that this name was interchangeable in tradition with Chalciopé, as she is known to Apollonius. Herodorus in the 5<sup>th</sup> c. BC knows Chalciopé as the wife of Phrixus, but the reference lacks context (in *Schol.* in AR 2.1123). The plays dealing with their story (Soph. *Colchian Women*, *Medea* and *Phrixus*, Eur. *Medea* and *Phrixus*, as well as many other 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century comedies and tragedies called *Medea*) either do not mention Medea's sister or are too fragmentary.

<sup>487</sup> Diodorus Siculus (Bibl. Hist. 4.45.1) knows of a tradition according to which Medea's sister was not Chalciopé but Circe, and their mother was Hecate. Ovid's tragedy *Medea* survives only in a couple of fragments and we will probably never know what events it treated, although some scholars believe that Seneca's homonymous play draws heavily on it [Nikolaidis (1985) 386-387]. In his *Heroides* Medea and Chalciopé appear to be very close (*Her.* 12.62-66; 17.232), even though he does not mention Chalciopé at all in the *Metamorphoses*. Hyginus' accounts (*Fab.* 3, 21) follow Apollonius in all but the fate of Phrixus. Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.83 mentions Chalciopé as Aetes' daughter and Phrixus' wife, but Medea does not appear in the same context.

to a certain extent based on the Apollonian pair or were completely independent of such influence.

In the middle of Book 6 Juno assumes the form of Chalcioppe, Medea's sister, in order to make her fall in love with Jason. In the Hellenistic *Argonautica* there was no need for divine intervention through mortal disguise: on the one hand, Chalcioppe unwittingly promotes the divine plans, having her own reasons to ask for Medea's help; on the other hand, Hera is contented with delegating Aphrodite to deal with Medea's infatuation. Valerius' Juno, however, like his Venus, is based largely on her Virgilian counterpart and her agent, and both goddesses either intervene in a direct way or disguise themselves as mortals.<sup>488</sup> At the same time, Chalcioppe's sons are not in danger;<sup>489</sup> therefore there is no motive in the Roman poem for the mortal woman to contribute unwittingly to the divine plan. The description of the goddess' disguise (*Chalciopen imitata sono formaque sororem*, *Arg.* 6.479) indicates that whatever follows will deal with real feelings from the part of Medea and role-playing from the part of Juno. Not only does she look like Chalcioppe (*forma*) but she also sounds like her (*sono*); this could simply mean that she imitates the Colchian princess' voice and intonation. At the same time, it points to an imitation of speech *qua* content, namely that Juno utters words not only in the same frequency as Chalcioppe but also in the same vein: the *falsa soror* (*Arg.* 6.491) speaks as the real one is expected to speak.

Juno insists on Medea going to the walls to look at the heroes, and without letting her express her opinion, takes her by the hand and leads her there (*Arg.*

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<sup>488</sup> As Hardie (1990) 6 puts it, "for Valerius Flaccus the workings of Venus, of Juno, and of the Furies are practically indistinguishable."

<sup>489</sup> Aeetes does not consider them potential rivals as was the case in AR [Fucecchi (1996) 138].

6.482-494). In this *teichoscopia* scene,<sup>490</sup> Medea resembles Helen as she watches the Argive and Trojan armies from the walls of Troy (*Il.* 3.161-244),<sup>491</sup> and Juno's disguise as Chalciope to take Medea to the walls echoes Aphrodite's disguise as an old maid to take Helen *from* the walls (*Il.* 3.383-420).<sup>492</sup> Medea's fear and shudder at the sight of her 'sister' (*Arg.* 6.480-481) can then be seen as alluding to Helen's recognition of Aphrodite through her disguise.<sup>493</sup> There is, however, another, more striking precedent for the Valerian scene: just before the *teichoscopia* scene in the *Iliad*, Iris assumes the form of Laodice, Helen's sister-in-law, in order to convince her to go to the walls (*Il.* 3.121-145).<sup>494</sup> Not only is the movement in both cases from the protagonist's room in the palace towards the walls, but the figure whose form the goddess takes is that of a sister – or, in the case of Laodice, the closest to a sister Helen can get in a place other than her home.

Juno's meticulous study of the sister bond is evident in her actions and language: she meets Medea in the latter's intimate space (*atque hinc uirgineae uenit ad penetralia sedis, Arg.* 6.478), where a sister has unquestionable access. She addresses her as *soror* (*Arg.* 6.483) and stresses their common parentage (*nec nostro sola parenti / scis socias iunxisse manus? Arg.* 6.483-484), then she takes her by the hand and leads her to the walls (*nec enim dea passa manumque / implicat et rapidis mirantem passibus aufert, Arg.* 6.488-489). The physical contact recalls the

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<sup>490</sup> The combination of *teichoscopia* and the motif of the female spectator falling in love with the object of her gaze, has a number of precedents in Greek and Latin literature, from Pisidice in Parthenius, *fr.* 21, to Scylla in *Ciris* and *Ov. Met.* 8.6-151, combining elegiac and epic elements that contribute to the young woman's expression of solidarity to the hero [Fucecchi (1996) 147].

<sup>491</sup> Hershkowitz (1998) 97.

<sup>492</sup> Feeney (1991) 327; Hershkowitz (1998) 97.

<sup>493</sup> Hershkowitz (1998) 97-98, 259-260. Fucecchi (1996) 139 points to the encounter between Medea and Circe/Venus, where the former is more explicit in her presentiment as to the identity of her interlocutor.

<sup>494</sup> Fucecchi (1996) 139.

Apollonian encounter of the two sisters, where Medea and Chalciope cry on each other's lap (AR 3.705-708). Furthermore, the idea of the older sister's protective and motherly role, explicitly admitted by Medea in Apollonius (AR 3.733-735), is here summarised in the act of leading the younger sister by the hand as a mother would her child.

Sisterly unanimity is also studied and imitated: on the walls of Colchis they appear to be experiencing the same feelings of wonder and fear (*defixaeque uirum lituumque fragoribus horrent*, Arg. 6.504), or rather Medea experiences wonder and fear, and Juno pretends to feel exactly the same, as an epic sister would.<sup>495</sup> The simile that follows this description also corroborates the impression of sisterly solidarity and affection:

*quales instanti nimborum frigore maestae  
succedunt ramis haerentque pauore uolucres.*

Arg. 6.505-506<sup>496</sup>

The phrase *maestae ... uolucres* evokes the daughters of Pandion, Procne and Philomela, who continue to mourn Itys after their transformation into a nightingale and a swallow.<sup>497</sup> At the same time, Procne and Philomela are examples of sisterly *pietas* taken to its extremes, as the former does not hesitate to kill her son and feed him to his father in order to take revenge for the rape of the latter. Finally, a third model is evoked by the whole scene, a female figure famous for her sisterly affection, even if she directed it towards her male rather than her female sibling. By

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<sup>495</sup> See Chapter One for a discussion of unanimity between sisters.

<sup>496</sup> These lines seem to combine two Virgilian similes found at *G.* 4.473-474 (shadows of the dead) and *G.* 4.511-515 (grief of Orpheus), with an Ovidian image found at *Her.* 15.151-154, which deconstructs his predecessor's comparisons by spelling out the connection between birds hiding in the foliage with mourning birds and with the Pandionid sisters.

<sup>497</sup> The evocation of Procne and Philomela, who killed the former's son Itys and served him to his father, may point proleptically to Medea's own filicide.

pointing at the heroes and asking her sister about their identities (*Arg.* 6.577-578) Medea resembles Antigone in Euripides' *Phoenissae*: the Theban princess also performs a *teichoscopia* on the walls of her city, and an old servant explains who the people in Polynices' army are (*Phoen.* 88-201). Antigone in fact asks him to give her a hand to climb on the roof (*Phoen.* 103-105), which may be echoed here in Juno's grasping the hand of Medea and leading her to the walls, before playing the role of that tutor.<sup>498</sup>

Juno turns Medea's attention to Jason, just as her Apollonian model encouraged her sister's plan to help the hero without questioning her motives.<sup>499</sup> By acting according to her own interests, Chalciope could not foresee any risk in Medea's encounter with Jason, and while Medea stressed Chalciope's maternal attitude towards her, she failed precisely in that role by putting her egoism above her sisterly bond.<sup>500</sup> In that respect, therefore, Juno remains faithful to the attitude prescribed by her model. At the same time, however, she distances itself from the latter, as in this poem Chalciope's sons are no longer in danger therefore she should have no interest in matching Medea with Jason. While the reader remains well aware of the disguise, with the poet either spelling it outright (*falsae ... sorori*, *Arg.* 6.491), or referring to the character as Juno (*Iunone magistra*, *Arg.* 6.578; *contra aspera Iuno / reddit agens stimulis ac diris fraudibus urget*, *Arg.* 6.590-591),<sup>501</sup> Medea falls victim to divine manipulation, like many of her epic predecessors.

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<sup>498</sup> Briefly here, and more extensively at *Arg.* 6.590-603.

<sup>499</sup> Natzel (1992) 163.

<sup>500</sup> Natzel (1992) 163.

<sup>501</sup> These lines echo the Virgilian descriptions of Juno (*aspera Iuno*, *Aen.* 1.279) and her agent, Allecto (*stimulis agit*, *Aen.* 7.405).

In Virgil's epic the goddess of love twice orchestrates a plan that involves the unwilling cooperation of a female character, namely, Dido and – less directly – Lavinia. A similar story appears in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* with the same goddess arranging the match between Dis and Proserpina. With this episode Valerius positions himself very explicitly in this very same tradition, evoking in a single passage all three earlier victims. Medea's description as she goes to the walls (*ducitur infelix ad moenia summa futuri / nescia uirgo mali*, Arg. 6.490-491) recalls Dido for whom *infelix* becomes something of a byword in *Aeneid* 4. The Carthaginian is also *fati nescia* (*Aen.* 1.299), which is echoed here in *futuri / nescia ... mali*,<sup>502</sup> and performs a sort of *teichoscopia* when she looks from her tower down on the Trojan ships (*Aen.* 4.409-411).

The subsequent comparison of Medea's face to white lilies evokes Proserpina in an intratextual dialogue with the previous book: there the goddess stood out from her retinue amid the spring flowers (*florea per uerni ... iuga duxit Hymetti / ... choros ... / ... Proserpina ... / altior ac nulla comitum certante*, Arg. 5.343-346), and here Medea is compared to lilies standing out among other spring flowers (*lilia per uernos lucent uelut alba colores / praecipue*, Arg. 6.492-493).<sup>503</sup> This combination of colours, however, is often used in poetry to describe blushes, especially of young women in front of men,<sup>504</sup> and the simile recalls Lavinia's reaction to the mention or thought of her future husband. While her face looks like a meadow where white lilies seem to turn red when mixed with roses (*aut mixta rubent ubi lilia multa / alba rosa, talis uirgo dabat ore colores*, *Aen.* 12.68-69),

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<sup>502</sup> Wijsman (2000) ad loc.

<sup>503</sup> Fucecchi (1996) 140.

<sup>504</sup> Including the Apollonian Medea, who blushes at the thought of Jason (AR 3.681-682).



Medea's face seems to retain its paleness, as the lilies stand out from the multicoloured flowers (*lilia per uernos **lucent** uelut **alba colores** / praecipue, Arg. 6.492-493*). This explains the choice of a verb such as *luceo* which evokes a bright white colour and is in this context almost the opposite of *rubeo*, which is found in the same metrical position in the Virgilian line.<sup>505</sup> Like Medea, Lavinia is led to the walls by a family member without expressing a wish to do so: she is obliged to accompany her mother and the other Latin women to the citadel in order to pray to Minerva (*Aen. 11.477-480*). Unlike the Latin princess, however, Medea does not keep her eyes downcast, but looks down on the battlefield, asks questions about the heroes and finally focuses her gaze on Jason. While she is explicitly characterised by virginal modesty in the previous book (*Arg. 5.356, 5.392*), there is no such preoccupation when she goes up to the walls to look at men,<sup>506</sup> once again resembling both the virginal Antigone whose tutor is much more concerned about her good reputation than she is (*Phoen. 88-95*), and the sexually mature Helen who rushes to the walls after Laodice's visit in *Iliad 3*.

Medea's characterisation from this point onward combines Apollonian and Virgilian models, testifying to Juno's knowledge of sisterly behaviour as well as to the poet's art of creative imitation. Just as Dido does nothing about her love for the newcomer, despite her dreams, until her sister talks to her and makes the modesty recede to the background (*Aen. 4.54-55*), Medea does nothing for her feelings for Jason, despite her dreams, until her sister comes to lead her to the walls. There, her behaviour changes and she tries to deceive her sister by pretending not to know

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<sup>505</sup> An image similar to the Virgilian one is used by Ovid to describe his *puella's* blush (*quale rosae fulgent inter sua lilia mixtae, Am. 2.5.37*).

<sup>506</sup> Medea's *pudor* will only appear again at the end of the episode in order to signal its loss rather than confirm its influence on her.

who Jason is (*Arg.* 6.587-590); this attitude looks back to Apollonius,<sup>507</sup> where she admitted in her monologue that she will use Chalciopé's love for her sons as a bait to make her ask for help (*AR* 3.641-644), and later she spoke to her with guileful words (*AR* 3.686-687).<sup>508</sup>

Modelled on the Apollonian Medea, Dido praised Aeneas' valour to Anna but hesitated to give vent to her true feelings; similarly, Medea here marvels, albeit pretending, at Jason's martial prowess. In fact, the Colchian princess asks after Jason's identity (*'quis, precor, hic, toto iam dudum feruere campo / quem tueor quemque ipsa uides? Arg.* 6.588-589) in a way similar to how Dido exclaimed about Aeneas:

*quis nouus hic nostris successit sedibus hospes,  
quem sese ore ferens, quam forti pectore et armis!*

*Aen.* 4.10-11

Moreover, as Anna offered arguments to justify a potential relationship between the Trojan hero and her sister (*Aen.* 4.31-53), so too it falls on the heroine's sister to point out Jason's advantages that make him stand out from the crowd. Since Medea has not openly admitted her love for Jason, Juno cannot imitate Anna's exhortations that she give in to the love passion,<sup>509</sup> but has to pretend that she shares her Hellenistic counterpart's ignorance.

While Juno's behaviour is adapted to suit perfectly what is expected from Chalciopé's character, the description of Medea burning with the fires of love looks back to Virgil and creates a parallel with his most influential female protagonist:

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<sup>507</sup> Fucecchi (1996) 149.

<sup>508</sup> ὁψὲ δ' ἔειπε / τοῖα δόλω, which is echoed here not in Medea's words but in those of 'Chalciopé': *fraudibus urget* (*Arg.* 6.591).

<sup>509</sup> As Fucecchi (1996) 138 points out, Valerius' Medea is not yet dominated by the foreign hero.

*at regina uirum (neque enim deus amouet ignem)  
persequitur lustrans oculisque ardentibus haeret;*<sup>510</sup>

Arg. 6.657-658

Dido's incipient passion was described in a similar way:

*at regina graui iamdudum saucia cura  
uulnus alit uenis et caeco carpitur igni.*

Aen. 4.1-2

The Carthaginian's worries recur in Medea's subsequent description (*castigatque metus et quas alit inscia curas* (Arg. 6.660),<sup>511</sup> where her inability to identify what she is worrying about (*inscia*) may be an alternative way to say that her passion is hidden (*caeco ... igni*). The same beginning of line as Arg. 6.657 was used when Dido realised that she had been deceived: *at regina dolos (quis fallere possit amantem?) / praesensit* (Aen. 4.296-297). The similarities in structure with Arg. 6.657-658 are also notable: both passages start with *at regina* followed by a disyllabic accusative, a poetic aside until the end of the line, and an enjambment with the second line which begins with the main verb. Through this Virgilian echo Valerius stresses the similarities between Dido and Medea, who will both passionately love a stranger who will eventually abandon them, as well as the differences. The structure of the Valerian passage brings Virgil's rhetorical question *quis fallere possit amantem?* to mind, and an expectation is created that Medea imitate her model and recognize the *doli* too.

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<sup>510</sup> There is another Virgilian echo here, namely Dido holding Ascanius (who is Cupid in disguise) and looking at Aeneas falling deeply in love with him at Aen. 1.717-718, as Wijsman (2000) ad 657 and 658 notes.

<sup>511</sup> Wijsman (2000) ad 660.

Indeed, it momentarily seems that Juno's disguise is going to betray her, as was the case at the start of the episode:

*fulsit ab inuita numen procul, et pauor artus  
protinus atque ingens Aetida perculit horror.*

Arg. 6.480-481

Then, Medea did not make much of her unusual reaction to her sister's appearance, but now she has a moment of wavering when she questions her sister's identity (*respiciens, an uera soror, Arg. 6.661*). Her hesitation, however, is immediately succeeded by certainty at her sister's true nature (*nec credere falsos / audet atrox uultus, Arg. 6.661-662*), in a scene that portrays Medea in continuous mood swings, as her passion starts to torment her. Apparently for Valerius the answer to Virgil's question is not *nemo*, but *dea imitata sororem*.<sup>512</sup>

Medea's trust in her sister is evident in the way she takes Juno's necklace and puts it on (*Arg. 6.668-674*): such intimacy and immediacy would have no place if she suspected any mischief. In fact, the goddess does not hand out the necklace but it is Medea who grabs it using at least a minimum of force:

*interdum **blandae derepta** monilia diuae  
contrectat miseroque aptat flagrantia collo*

Arg. 6.668-669<sup>513</sup>

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<sup>512</sup> The phrase *at regina* is also used at *Aen.* 4.504 (of Dido again) and *Aen.* 12.54 of Amata, as Wijsman (2000) ad 657 points out. If the latter is also evoked here, then this may be seen as preparing the subsequent scene of the necklace. I believe the structure similarities between *Aen.* 4.296 and the Valerian passage make the former the most important parallel together with *Aen.* 4.1-2.

<sup>513</sup> Medea gives the necklace back to Juno, troubled by the presence of a deity within it (*turbata ... / ... mole dei, quem pectore toto / iam tenet, Arg. 6.672-674*). Fucecchi (1996) 156 sees here the echo of the Virgilian scene featuring Cupid/Ascanius and Dido, and stresses the importance of Medea's active role in putting on the necklace (perhaps similar to Dido's embracing 'Ascanius'), as opposed to Amata's passive role of having the snake thrown to her by Allecto (p. 155).

The vicinity, however, of Medea's action (*dereptae*) to the description of Juno as *blanda* suggests that the goddess may have lured her to it, or at least treated her with so much affection that such an appropriation becomes natural. At the same time, Juno's true colours appear once again only for the reader to see: the effect of her necklace on Medea recalls the attack of Cupid on Dido (*Aen.* 1.712-722) and of Allecto on Amata (*Aen.* 7.346-356), confirming the new representation of the goddess in Valerius' poem, based on the Virgilian description of herself, Venus and their agents.

Passion aside, Medea returns to her virginal ways as she blushes at the realisation of her love: *extremus roseo pudor errat in ore* (*Arg.* 6.674). Her blush may point to the famous precedent of Lavinia, again in the presence of her family and perhaps at the thought of love (*cui plurimus ignem / subiecit rubor et calefacta per ora cucurrit*, *Aen.* 12.65-66). Contrary to Lavinia, Medea's modesty has its final physical expression: her *extremus ... pudor* seals Juno's plan with success, allowing her to disappear: *haec fantem medio in sermone reliquit / incepti iam Iuno potens securaque fraudis* (*Arg.* 6.679-680). The goddess, however, retains her disguise until the very end of her intervention; Medea does not look for her sister when she is gone (*uirgo nec ablatam sequitur quaeritue sororem*, *Arg.* 6.682): whatever her doubts or fears, from the beginning to the end of the *teichoscopia* scene she believed she was there with Chalciopé. Juno played her role so well that Medea does not seek the truth about her experience when she meets her real sister in the following book (*Arg.* 7.117-120). Furthermore, the result of Juno's disguise as Medea's sister, summarised here in the phrase *extremus ... pudor* (*Arg.* 6.674), is exactly the same as that of Anna's words to Dido (*soluitque pudorem*, *Aen.* 4.55).

## Variations II: Medea and her aunt Circe (Venus in disguise)

Despite all her best efforts, Juno's disguise is not completely successful in that Medea's passion may have been kindled but is not strong enough to burn on its own. Another divine intervention is required in Book 7 and the goddess in question is Juno's fellow conspirator, Venus, who is asked to help and does all she can to outdo her partner in deception. Venus herself is no stranger to disguise, having displayed her skills not only in *Iliad* 3, but also earlier in Valerius' poem. In Book 2 the Argonauts land on Lemnos and the poet is given the opportunity to relate the punishment the goddess brought upon the Lemnian women for their irreverence. There, Venus first sends a proxy, Fama, disguised as a Lemnian woman's sister (*Arg.* 2.126-173), before appearing herself in disguise as Dryope (*Arg.* 2.174-215). Juno then takes a leaf from Venus' book when she assumes the form of Chalcioppe in Book 6, an action which Venus here repeats emulating rather than imitating her divine counterpart, by assuming the form of Medea's aunt Circe.

There are several elements in this episode which suggest that Valerius is inspired not only by Medea and Circe's Apollonian representation, but also by other versions of the story. Circe appeared in the Hellenistic poem as the sister of Aeetes from whom Medea and Jason sought expiation for the murder of Apsyrtus (*AR* 4.662ff.); in that scene Apollonius presented Circe and Medea as not having met before, with the aunt recognising her niece by the glow in her eyes (*AR* 4.725-729). Diodorus Siculus, however, offers a different version of her myth, where Circe is the daughter of Hecate and her uncle Aeetes, and therefore Medea's sister (*Bibl. Hist.* 4.45.1); according to the same source, her mother and sister taught Medea the art

of magic (*Bibl. Hist.* 4.46.1) and discovered many of the drugs which she later used (*Bibl. Hist.* 4.50.6, 4.54.5).<sup>514</sup> In Latin elegy Circe and Medea sometimes appear together as examples of equally powerful witches, although there is no mention of their blood relationship.<sup>515</sup> Here, however, they are depicted in a very intimate relationship that goes beyond that of aunt and niece, and it seems that their bond was modelled on that of Medea and Chalciope, perhaps precisely under the influence of Diodorus' version.

Even though in Valerius it is Hecate who taught Medea the magical arts,<sup>516</sup> the relationship between the heroine and her aunt is portrayed as a very close one. Medea joyfully jumps up to greet Circe and covers her with kisses (*Arg.* 7.215-216), in a display of affection for her aunt whom she was discussing with her real sister earlier in the book (*Arg.* 7.120);<sup>517</sup> she cries on her lap as she confesses her love for Jason (*Arg.* 7.251-252); she accepts her kisses, comforting words and embrace (*Arg.* 7.254-257). These expressions of affection and intimacy are absent from the Apollonian narrative, as they would have no place at a meeting of two women who had never seen each other before. Valerius, however, needs someone who is really close to Medea in order that in her disguise Venus inspire the princess with a powerful passion for Jason, and not simply succeed, but do better than Juno. This is why he uses the model of Chalciope and Medea, not only as depicted in Apollonius'

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<sup>514</sup> Graf (1997) 31 suggests that Diodorus is following Dionysius Scytobrachion and points out that "the connection with magic and ghosts", represented by Circe and Hecate respectively, indicates the evolution of Medea's character "from being a simple *παμφάρμακος ξείνα* [Pindar's designation in *P.* 4.233] to a powerful witch".

<sup>515</sup> E.g. *Tib.* 2.4.55; *Prop.* 2.1.53-54.

<sup>516</sup> Pace Perutelli (1997) ad 212 who suggests that Medea learnt her magic from Circe; later (ad 238) he admits it was Hecate, as Medea herself claims at *Arg.* 7.238-239.

<sup>517</sup> Circe's appearance in this scene was prepared by Medea's questions to Chalciope [Stadler (1993) ad 210-215a].

Book 3,<sup>518</sup> but also as presented earlier in this poem. This double imitation causes repeated reworkings of epic contexts other than the *Argonautica*. Venus's disguise as Circe reworks Juno's as Chalcioppe which in turn reworks two Iliadic disguises, namely Iris' as Laodice and Aphrodite's as Helen's maid. Likewise, the fake Circe trying to convince Medea to help Jason recasts the fake Chalcioppe attempting the same which in turn recasts the real Chalcioppe doing something similar. One aspect of this re-reworking is the extent to which the most recent attempt is more successful than the previous ones. By choosing to impersonate Circe, Venus in Book 7 challenges not only Juno's earlier intervention but also her own (as Aphrodite) in *Iliad* 3.

At the beginning, her choice of disguise seems to be a good one: Medea can see no problem in Circe's sudden appearance in her bedroom. As she believed Juno to be her sister Chalcioppe, she just as easily believes Venus to be her aunt Circe, but the designation of both goddesses in this context of trust as "cruel" (*aspera luno, Arg. 6.590; saevae ... diuae, Arg. 7.216*) prompts the reader to compare the two in terms of their success and models.<sup>519</sup> Probably part of the reason why Juno's earlier attempt did not work is that the figure she chose to impersonate could not offer an example of similar experiences as can Circe. The arguments Juno used to convince Medea to go up to the walls and watch Jason were limited to curiosity (*Arg. 6.487*) and some sense of filial duty (*Arg. 6.483-486*). Venus, on the other hand, chooses a better disguise that can act as a role model as well as a trusty female relative.<sup>520</sup>

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<sup>518</sup> Stadler (1993) 79.

<sup>519</sup> Perutelli (1997) ad 216.

<sup>520</sup> As Stadler (1993) ad 241-3 notes, in this respect Medea is similar to Dido who confides in Anna about her passion for Aeneas at *Aen.* 4.20-23, but unlike her Apollonian counterpart who conceals her feelings from her sister.



Chalciope is older and more experienced, and in fact was married to a Greek, but Circe is a witch and this quality brings her closer to Medea and makes her easier to identify herself with, as does the prospect of leaving the homeland behind which, the goddess makes a point of stressing, has turned out well for herself (*Arg.* 7.232-234). When the princess assumes that Circe has come to see her out of love for her country (*patriae ... amor*, *Arg.* 7.222), it is her own feeling that she transfers to her supposed aunt, a feeling responsible for her own hesitation to give in to her love for Jason.<sup>521</sup> Medea, however, has no control over this identification with Circe, which is bound to work to the latter's advantage. Once the young girl has realised how similar their fates are, she will be easily convinced to follow her aunt's example and abandon her home and family, in her case to follow the man she loves. Venus also encourages Medea to engage in conversation with her; she does not rely on visual effects, such as the *teichoscopia* and Juno's embellishment and reinforcement of Jason (*Arg.* 6.602-612), but employs her narrative skills to create a connection between Medea and the Greek hero by inciting in the former compassion and concern for the latter (*Arg.* 7.259-283).

Venus' improvement in her character's approach to Medea recalls the same model that Juno's character, the fake Chalciope, evoked with her behaviour. The latter resembles Anna who achieved the dismissal of Dido's *pudor* by employing solely verbal and not visual arguments (*Aen.* 4.31-55). Venus' fake Circe also resembles Anna in that she encourages thoughts of marriage and gives advice to Medea in view of her relationship to Jason,<sup>522</sup> but she goes even further: when she

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<sup>521</sup> Stadler (1993) ad 220-222a.

<sup>522</sup> She refers to the youth of her interlocutor in the second line of her speech (*Arg.* 7.224) with the same word, *iuuenta*, as her Virgilian counterpart (*Aen.* 4.32) [Perutelli (1997) ad 223 ff.].

enumerates the possible suitors for Medea (*Arg.* 7.234-236), which corresponds to Anna's outline of Dido's choices if she dismisses her love for Aeneas (*Aen.* 4.35-38),<sup>523</sup> she adds her own experience of wedlock (*Arg.* 7.232-234). Admittedly Anna has no comparable experience, as there is no indication in the narrative that she is married. The echo, however, of her words to Dido in this passage from the *Argonautica* works on two levels. On the one hand, Venus does not need to add Anna's final question in her list (*placitone etiam pugnabis amori? Aen.* 4.38), since it is implied by the intertextual reference: here are Medea's options were she to dismiss her *placitus amor* for Jason. On the other hand, the suggestion that she concern herself with marriage gains weight from the fact that the person advising her already has such an experience and therefore offers a better model to imitate, which is not the case with Anna.<sup>524</sup>

Venus thus rectifies Juno's attitude in her disguise as Chalciope. Although Medea's sister could have been the most appropriate person to speak to her about marriage, especially to a Greek man, she does not mention it at all and limits her actions in directing Medea's gaze to Jason and encouraging her interest in him. Venus has taken this omission on board and manages to adapt more fully to her role as the heroine's confidante sister, though disguised as her aunt. At the same time she uses arguments that came out of Chalciope's mouth in Apollonius' narrative, and therefore would have been expected to appear in the speech of her

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<sup>523</sup> Perutelli (1997) ad 234 ff. notes that while Anna reproaches Dido for rejecting the suitors despite the dangers multiplying around her country, Venus tries to prevent Medea from thinking of marrying one of her neighbours. I think Anna's emphasis falls rather on the unappealing alternatives to a relationship with Aeneas, and the whole argument about the danger surrounding Carthage is meant to support precisely an alliance through marriage to the Trojan prince and not wedlock in general.

<sup>524</sup> Moreover, according to Perutelli (1997) ad 227 ff., the arguments used by Venus can be described as stoicising while those by Anna tend to be Epicurean, the differentiation being justified by Valerius' intention to make of Medea a nobler character than Virgil's Dido.

Valerian counterpart in Book 6.<sup>525</sup> Medea seems also to expect Circe to have an influence on her comparable to that of Chalciope, thus creating the impression that she sees something of a sister in her aunt's attitude. Earlier, Juno disguised as Chalciope achieves Medea's dismissal of *pudor* (*castigatque metus et quas alit inscia curas*, *Arg.* 6.660; *extremus ... pudor*, *Arg.* 6.674); here, it is Medea herself who in her plea for help asks Circe:

... eripe curis,  
unde metus aestusque mihi, quaeque aspera, mater,  
perpetior dubiae<sup>526</sup> iamdudum incendia mentis.

*Arg.* 7.241-243

While *dubiae ... mentis* recalls the context of Anna's words and their effect on Dido (*spemque dedit dubiae menti soluitque pudorem*, *Aen.* 4.55),<sup>527</sup> the mention of *curae* and *metus* echoes those Medea dismissed, apparently only for the moment, during the *teichoscopia* scene in the previous book, additionally stressing the failure of Juno's divine intervention.

By using the arguments and by adjusting her behaviour to match that of Chalciope, both the real and the fake one, as well as of other epic sisters, Venus' disguise as Circe creates the impression that she is Medea's sister rather than her aunt. This impression is corroborated by a comparison of the familial language used in the two episodes. While in Book 6 Medea and Juno (as Chalciope) address each other with the appropriate term, namely, *soror* (*Arg.* 6.483, 6.592, 6.676), in Book 7 Medea and Venus (as Circe) use terms which are primarily suitable for a mother-

<sup>525</sup> For example, Venus' desire not to be shut in the rough and unappealing Colchian land at *Arg.* 7.229-231 is influenced by Chalciope's wish to live at the extremes of the earth so that she would not hear of any disaster that befell her family at *AR* 3.678-680 [Perutelli (1997) ad 230].

<sup>526</sup> Kramer has *durae ... mentis*, which is the reading of V, but others [Courtney (1970), Stadler (1993) and Perutelli (1997)] accept Burman's emendation to *dubiae*.

<sup>527</sup> Perutelli (1997) ad 7.243.

daughter relationship, with the goddess calling Medea *nata* (*Arg.* 7.229), and the latter addressing her twice as *mater* (*Arg.* 7.242, 7.248). This choice creates both proximity to and distance from Medea. While *nata* is an affectionate term used by a mother to her daughter, therefore suggesting the closest possible relationship between the two women, it is often also used by nurses or more remotely related and usually older women, who in turn would respond to the address *mater*, which indicates respect and acknowledgement of authority.<sup>528</sup> By assuming the form of Medea's aunt and by encouraging in their conversation the use of terms appropriate to a mother-daughter or nurse-alumna relationship, Venus ensures more respect for her words and thus more success for her plan. By impersonating her sister and adhering to the rules of that relationship, Juno consequently fails in her attempt to convince Medea to help Jason. At the same time Venus probably looks back to a sister relationship in order to intensify the effect of her impersonation. Medea in Apollonius admitted that Chalciope raised and even breastfed her (*AR* 3.732-735), and in general the attitude of her elder sister towards her in the Hellenistic epic was highly motherly. Juno reduces the maternal portrait of the Apollonian Chalciope to her taking Medea by the hand to lead her to the walls, which also evokes a relationship such as the one between Antigone and her tutor. Venus, on the other hand, intentionally stresses the maternal aspect of the relationship between Circe and Medea in order to evoke the one between the Apollonian sisters which can be partly credited with the success of that encounter.

Venus' disguise as Circe, however, unlike Juno's, is not very convincing; in some way instead of surpassing Juno in skill, she appears not to have learnt much

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<sup>528</sup> Stadler (1993) ad 241-3; Perutelli (1997) ad 242.

since the first time she attempted such an intervention, namely, when she took the form of Helen's maid in *Iliad* 3. Initially Medea reacts with fear and shuddering to the appearance of her sister, which admittedly is far from perfect since a divine glimmer is seen through the mortal façade (*Arg.* 6.480-481). Later, Medea receives the sudden apparition of her aunt as a sort of dream vision, which she momentarily hesitates to believe in; despite rejoicing in seeing Circe, the underlying feeling is that of inexplicable sadness (*Arg.* 7.213-216). Whereas Juno acts convincingly as Chalcioppe to the extent that Medea herself dismisses her final doubts about the goddess' identity (*Arg.* 6.661-662), Venus cannot suppress her infernal appearance, as her victim does not fail to point out. Medea is not as good as Helen in telling a goddess under her disguise as a mortal woman; what she can do, however, is become cautious at the moment when Venus seems to be taking a new form, that of a Fury (*tristes thalamos infestaque cerno / omnia, uipereos ipsi tibi surgere crines, Arg.* 7.249-250).<sup>529</sup> This vision probably picks up her earlier illusions (*Arg.* 7.142-152), while looking back to Chalcioppe's threat to Medea in Apollonius that she would turn into an Erinys if she refused to help her sons (*AR* 3.703-704).<sup>530</sup> Once again, the Colchian princess expects her aunt to behave in a way her sister would in Apollonius. This expectation encourages the idea that Valerius does not simply see Circe as a distant relative, but as one very close to Medea, perhaps combining with the Apollonian version the one found in Diodorus where Circe is actually her sister.

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<sup>529</sup> Which, according to Hershkowitz (1998) 181, is the only means to achieve the maddening of Medea, something Juno was not capable of doing. Venus is certainly better off with Medea seeing a Fury in her than recognising her true identity, which is what happened with Helen in the *Iliad*.

<sup>530</sup> Stadler (1993) ad 248-50.

Once she has prepared the ground with words, Venus turns to action. Just as Juno first allowed Medea to watch Jason fight, and then lured her to take her necklace which instilled passion in her heart, Venus first stirs up the thought of marriage and then moves on to the attack, embracing and kissing Medea, thus inciting an even stronger passion. Both goddesses have something of a Fury in their behaviour: their attacks are based on the same two Virgilian models, Cupid's attack on Dido and Allecto's on Amata,<sup>531</sup> which are in themselves very similar. In addition to that, the description of their weapons in each case points to infernal monsters. Thus, Juno's *aurum furiale* (Arg. 6.670) corresponds here to Venus' *furialia ... / oscula* (Arg. 7.254-255), both of which unsettled Medea. Whereas after her Fury-like attack Juno simply disappears, Venus tries to keep Medea's mind free from worries by talking about different things: *uariis ... uocibus ambit / inque alio sermone tenet*, Arg. 7.256-257. With this diversion she removes all doubts about her identity and prepares the ground for the second part of her approach, a path not taken by Juno and which Venus believes to be the key to her mission's success.

Unlike Juno and like the Apollonian Chalciope Venus resorts to a narrative in order to make her point: she tells Medea of an imaginary meeting with Jason during which he begged her to mediate to the princess for help (Arg. 7.259-291). Chalciope in the Hellenistic epic had done something similar by telling her sister about her son's supplications (AR 3.719-723),<sup>532</sup> while Juno limited words to the absolute minimum letting the spectacle do the rest. Venus knows that Jason has to appear completely helpless in order that Medea, who has seen him fight and knows how brave he is, is convinced that he needs her assistance in his trials. In that

<sup>531</sup> Hardie (1990) 8-9; Stadler (1993) ad 254-8; Fucecchi (1996) 156; Perutelli (1997) ad 254 ff.

<sup>532</sup> Perutelli (1997) ad 259 ff.

sense, Venus' narrative comes as an undoing of Juno's visual lesson: Medea has to forget how successful a warrior Jason is, indeed to forget he is a hero and see in herself his only salvation.<sup>533</sup>

The goddess points out to her how impressed *she herself* was by Jason's appearance (*mirabar et ipsa*, Arg. 7.264),<sup>534</sup> and how moved *she herself* was by his wretched fate and suicidal threats (*ipsa mouerer*, Arg. 7.288), expecting Medea to experience the same feelings, as she did at the start of the episode. This expectation of unanimity is encouraged by an emphasis on her maternal aspect, which earlier involved the use of familial language appropriate to mothers and daughters. She warns Medea not to disappoint her (*ne falle, precor*, Arg. 7.288) and shows the princess that her aunt's mediation is doing her a favour and contributes in earning her praise (Arg. 7.289-291). This attitude looks back to the Apollonian Chalciopie and her maternal attitude towards her sister, and strengthens the impression that Venus here plays the role of Circe as if she were Medea's sister, especially given Medea's own expectations of unanimity from whom she believes to be Chalciopie (*nam te quoque tali / attonitam uirtute reor.*' Arg. 6.589-590). Venus' mention of Circe's expertise in magic potions (*uenenis*, Arg. 7.291) also contributes to this impression, tying together her own portrait as a witch (Arg. 7.212) and Medea's association with the same art ever since her introduction to the narrative in Book 5.<sup>535</sup> Thus the niece is encouraged to follow her aunt's

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<sup>533</sup> Perutelli (1997) ad 186 ff. notes that it is only through this false narrative that Jason can appear in such a melodramatic situation, in a poem that strives to restore the heroic aspect Apollonius denied his personage.

<sup>534</sup> Of course this can be read the other way round as a reminder to Medea that she has admired Jason before (at Arg. 5.374-375: *mirata tamen paulumque reductis / passibus in solo stupuit duce*), as Stadler (1993) ad 264 points out.

<sup>535</sup> Arg. 5.450. In fact, Medea already has a reputation for using *uenena*, as this is why her Albanian suitor came to Colchis in the first place: Arg. 6.157; also 6.276.

example, even though, or precisely because, her aunt talks and behaves more like her sister, who is the person Medea loves and trusts above all others. Finally, Venus offers the additional examples of Hippodamia and Ariadne, two heroines who betrayed their families in order to help the men they loved (*Arg.* 7.276-283),<sup>536</sup> as she asks from Medea something that goes beyond even Circe's experience, whose marriage to Picus (*Arg.* 7.232) was not the reason for but one of the consequences of her deserting her homeland.

Medea reacts by first rolling her eyes and taking a serious facial expression (*torserat illa graui iamdudum lumina uultu*, *Arg.* 7.292), recalling Dido's description when Aeneas announces his departure (*Aen.* 4.362-364),<sup>537</sup> as well as the Fury Allecto's description later in the poem (*Aen.* 7.448-449). The reader is thus reminded of Venus' infernal aspect that she tries so hard to keep hidden under her disguise. Medea barely manages to stop herself from attacking Venus:<sup>538</sup>

*uix animos dextramque tenens, quin ipsa loquentis*

*iret in ora deae: tanta pudor aestuat ira*

*Arg.* 7.293-294

The description of her burning rage recalls Dido's emotional state after she prepared her funeral pyre (*saeuit amor magnoque irarum fluctuat aestu*, *Aen.* 4.532) and before she turns against her sister in her monologue, accusing Anna of causing her ruin by encouraging her passion and precisely doing away with her

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<sup>536</sup> These examples work as an ironic anticipation of Medea's fate, as Stadler (1993) ad 276-81 notes: like Hippodamia, she will deceive her father; like Ariadne she will cause the death of her half-brother; and the underlying motif of the abandoned beloved exemplified *par excellence* by the daughter of Minos cannot escape the attention of the reader.

<sup>537</sup> Stadler (1993) ad 292-4; Perutelli (1997) ad 292. The combination *grauī iamdudum* also appears in the first line of *Aen.* 4, but there it is the woman's "worry" and not her "face" that is characterised as *grauis*.

<sup>538</sup> In this context Medea's urge to hurt Circe may also echo Dido's thoughts of tearing Aeneas apart (*Aen.* 4.600).



*pudor* (*Aen.* 4.548-549). This intertext further supports the idea that Medea's relationship to Circe is more similar to a bond between sisters than one between an aunt and niece, and explains why Venus uses various epic sisters as her models in her disguise.

Next, Medea tries to hide her head in the pillow to shun the temptation that comes with Venus' speech: *iamque toro trepidas infelix obruit aures / uerba cauens* (*Arg.* 7.295-296),<sup>539</sup> and wishes that the earth may open wide for her to hide and stop hearing her words: *rupta condi tellure premique / iamdudum cupit ac diras euadere uoces* (*Arg.* 7.298-299). Once again Dido's first encounter with Anna, where the Carthaginian queen wished to remain faithful to her dead husband and thus maintain her *pudor*, supplies the intertext (*Aen.* 4.24-27).<sup>540</sup> Medea's *pudor* urges her to stop hearing what she thinks is Circe's voice, but like Dido, that voice, coming out of the mouth of a sister, will eventually bend her resistance and result in the affair that Juno so desired but Venus, learning from the mistakes of the past, was the one able to make happen.

## Conclusion

This chapter looked into six cases of all-female family bonds in the poems of Virgil, Ovid and Valerius Flaccus, arguing that women in Latin epic are more often than not interested in the marriage of their female relatives. Mothers such as Amata in the *Aeneid* and Ceres in the *Metamorphoses* react badly when their

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<sup>539</sup> Kramer has lines 294-297 in a slightly different order: ... *aestuat ira / uerba cauens; horror molles inuaserat annos. / iamque toro trepidas infelix obruit aures / nec quo ferre fugam* etc. As Perutelli (1997) ad 296 notes, Medea's reaction is based on Aeneas' attitude towards Anna at *Aen.* 4.439-440.

<sup>540</sup> Stadler (1993) ad 296/7-9; Perutelli (1997) ad 298.

daughters' future husband is decided without their input, in the manner of Roman women such as Caecilia and Sassia. Lavinia is the example of a docile daughter who never utters her opinion but resorts to other means by which to imply what she thinks of the events unfolding around her. Based on the Virgilian heroine's representation, Proserpina in the *Metamorphoses* is equally evasive, moving away from her counterparts in the Homeric Hymn and the Ovidian *Fasti*.

When it comes to epic sisters, however, the pattern changes: they take part in triangles consisting of their same-sex sibling and a foreign man, with constant references not only to tragic models of sisterly behaviour, but also to emotions and events particular to the Roman context of elegy. The envy motif links the Ovidian stories of Aglauros and Herse, Procne and Philomela, evoking multiple variants of similar myths as well as Roman examples of envious sisters. Finally, in Valerius the two bonds and respective attitudes towards love and marriage are combined, with two goddesses disguising themselves as the sister and aunt of the protagonist. The analysis of the two episodes proves that effectively they are based on the same sister pair, the Apollonian Medea and Chalciope, enhanced with elements of maternal, filial and sisterly behaviour that the poet sources in the whole epic and tragic tradition preceding him. Love and marriage, the second theme discussed in this thesis, brings together stories that are otherwise not easily associated with one another, and provides a spectrum through which to view and appreciate the presence of female figures in Latin epics such as the *Aeneid*, the *Metamorphoses* and the *Argonautica*.



## Chapter Three – Loss and Mourning

Ancient women were traditionally associated with mourning, as it fell on them to lament the dead, whether their relatives or their compatriots.<sup>541</sup> In Greek epic and tragedy female figures often sing dirges in honour of a dead hero (e.g. Helen, Andromache and Hecabe in *Iliad* 24), they wear black to show their grief (e.g. Electra in the homonymous Euripidean play), and resort to gestures of lament such as tearing their hair, scratching their cheeks and prostrating themselves on the ground (e.g. Hecabe in the *Troades*).<sup>542</sup> This chapter looks at heroines in Latin epic who react to the loss of their female relatives either to death (Dido, Amata, Polyxena, Jocasta), abduction (Proserpina) or metamorphosis (Heliades). Through an analysis of the text, I will investigate parallels between them, identify their models in epic and beyond, and discuss the Roman elements that inform their representation.

### **Mourning the dead: Clymene and the Heliades**

While the myth of Phaethon, the son of the Sun, who took his father's chariot and risked burning the entire world, is well-known from Greek sources, the fate of his sisters is more obscure. It is, however, possible to trace its development up to Ovid's account in *Metamorphoses* 1 and 2. The story is first found in Hesiod, who mentions the Heliades shedding amber tears on the banks of the river

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<sup>541</sup> Alexiou (2002) discusses Greek mourners; Loraux (1998) focuses on mourning mothers, both Greek and Roman; Richlin (2001) and Corbeill (2004) 67-106 investigate the mourning gestures of Roman women; Dutsch (2008) examines the evidence for the Roman women's funeral song, the *nenia*.

<sup>542</sup> Lament in epic: Easterling (1991); Murnaghan (1999); Fantham (1999); Panoussi (2009) 145-173 (focusing on the *Aeneid*, esp. the laments of Andromache and the Trojan women); in tragedy: Foley (1993).

Eridanus (*frg.* 150 21-24 MW).<sup>543</sup> The fragmentary state of the two tragedies that dealt with the myth, Aeschylus' *Heliades* and Euripides' *Phaethon*, does not allow any safe speculations on how the tragedians portrayed them or their relationship to their mother.<sup>544</sup> In Euripides the latter appears either alone (in the prologue),<sup>545</sup> or with a man (Phaethon at the beginning of the play, Merops at the end), or with her housemaids (who are also the chorus), but no daughters are mentioned in the extant text. It is possible that, when Pliny cites Euripides as one of the poets who wrote about the fate of the Heliades (*N.H.* 37.2.31), he is referring not to *Phaethon* but to the poet's allusion to the girls' amber tears in *Hipp.* 735-741.<sup>546</sup>

In Hellenistic epic Apollonius describes their transformation into poplars that are still weeping when the Argonauts reach Eridanus (AR 4.603-611 and 624-626), and their mourning is hinted at in Aratus' astronomical poem in the description of the constellation River: *λείψανον Ἡριδανοῖο πολυκλαύτου ποταμοῖο* (*Phaen.* 360), which the 'translations' of Cicero and Germanicus explain

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<sup>543</sup> Diggle (1970) 22-27 convincingly argues that it is impossible to prove that Hesiod dealt with the Phaethon myth; his analysis shows that the combination of the fragment with Hyginus' phrase *harum lacrimae, ut Hesiodus indicat, in electrum sunt duratae* (*Hyg. Fab.* 154), makes the mention of the Heliades and their amber tears on the banks of Eridanus plausible.

<sup>544</sup> Diggle (1970) 28-29 interprets the lament of the Hadrian women (*Aesch. frg.* 71N, 104M) as a custom arising from the precedent of the Heliades. Pliny (*N.H.* 37.2.31) attributes the first mention of the Heliades' amber tears to Aeschylus (cf. *Aesch. frg.* 72N, 106M); the title of the play seems to indicate that the sisters formed the chorus, although, according to Diggle's reconstruction [(1970) 30-31], it might also point to their offer of help to Phaethon, resulting in his death, their subsequent penance, lament over his grave, and transformation into poplars shedding amber tears. The Heliades would be the ones to yoke the horses for Phaethon in Euripides, if the two reliefs from Casa Farnesina (no 23 *LIMC*) and Bolsena (no 4 *LIMC*) showing the scene and identifying the figures as the Heliades are indeed influenced by the Euripidean play [Diggle (1970) 205-206; Ciappi (2000) 145 n. 119].

<sup>545</sup> If she is indeed the one to deliver it, as Diggle (1970) 36-37 cautiously suggests.

<sup>546</sup> Diggle (1970) 5; he accepts that amber tears may have appeared in Euripides' *Phaethon*, but they would then be unrelated to Eridanus (n. 5). Neither the hypothesis nor the surviving fragments reveal the role of the Heliades in the play, but, according to Diggle (1970) 46, the end may have seen them transformed into trees weeping amber over their brother's tomb, which would then enrich the meaning of *Frg. inc. sed.* 6 (=782N) referring perhaps to a prophecy concerning Phaethon's final resting place: *ψυκτήρια / δένδρη φίλαισιν ὠλέναισι δέξεται* [Diggle (1970) 179].

and expand with a brief description of the weeping Heliades.<sup>547</sup> Diodorus Siculus (*Bibl.* 5.23.3-4) also recounts – in order to dismiss as untrue – their transformation into poplars and their amber tears, and it is as poplars or alders that Catullus and Virgil mention them in passing.<sup>548</sup> Finally, Ovid himself mentions their amber tears as an example of poetic licence at *Am.* 3.12.37 (*flere genis electra tuas, Auriga, sorores*). It becomes clear then that no earlier source deals with the relationship between the Heliades or between them and their mother, who is conspicuously absent from most scenes of lament. Ovid comes to rectify this absence of female interaction by offering an extensive treatment of Clymene and her daughters as part of his Phaethon myth.

The story covers the end of Book 1 and the first half of Book 2, beginning with a conversation between Phaethon and Clymene, and ending with the latter's lament for his death. Appended to it is the transformation of his sisters into poplars which explores further their relationship to their mother which was hinted at in Phaethon's speech to her, thus creating a full circle formed by family relationships: mother and son, mother and daughters. A similar story, that of the Hyades, appears at *F.* 5.159-182, also concerning the loss of the son and the lament by his mother and sisters, and ending with the transformation of the sisters after the death of their brother. This myth stresses the importance of the brother-sister bond (*uictus uterque parens tamen est pietate sororum*, *F.* 5.181), which also underlies the Ovidian version of Phaethon's story, thus making the former an important parallel for the latter. The myth of Hyas does not go into depth as far as the mother-daughter or sisterly bond is concerned, with Aethra and the Hyades merely sharing

<sup>547</sup> Cic. *Arat.* 34.146-149; Germ. *Arat.* 365-366.

<sup>548</sup> Cat. c. 64.290-291; Virg. *Ecl.* 6.62-63; *Aen.* 10.190; ps.-Virg. *Cul.* 129-130.

a line as well as their grief: *mater Hyan et Hyan maestae fleuere sorores* (F. 5.179).<sup>549</sup> Its more extensive and better-developed counterpart in the *Metamorphoses*, on the other hand, offers an early glimpse at the mother-daughter relationship which will be expanded at the end of the story into an almost independent episode dealing with family priorities.

Clymene and the Heliades first appear together in Phaethon's words to his mother, given in reported speech by the narrator:

*dixit et implicuit materno bracchia collo  
perque suum Meropisque caput taedasque sororum  
traderet orauit ueri sibi signa parentis.*

*Met.* 1.762-764

Phaethon tries to make his mother tell him who his real father is by appealing to her love for her daughters through the mention of their prospective marriage (*taedas sororum*). This brief allusion to her feelings for her daughters is followed by Clymene's revelation of her son's parentage and the way to reach his father's palace. The narrator, however, leaves open the possibility that she was perhaps not moved by his entreaties, but rather she was angry at his words which so obviously accused her of adultery (*ambiguum Clymene precibus Phaethontis an ira / mota magis dicti sibi criminis*, *Met.* 1.765-766). Thus her relationship with her daughters remains obscure, and the idea that she should wish more than anything to see them happily married is here given from her son's perspective, not her own.

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<sup>549</sup> Another parallel passage is that concerning the fate of Meleager's sisters, narrated by Ovid in *Met.* 8.533-546, who engage in gestures of lament similar to those of Clymene and the Heliades, before Diana pities them and transforms them into birds. In this story, however, there is nothing comparable to the *tricolon crescendo* of father's lament, mother's lament, sisters' lament, which is present in the Ovidian myths of Hyas and Phaethon.

Clymene and the Heliades recede to the background, only to reappear when Phaethon is brought down by Jupiter's thunderbolt, and news of his death reaches his parents. Phaethon's father, mother and sisters express their sorrow for his loss, just as Hyan is mourned by his mother, sisters and father (*mater Hyan et Hyan maestae flevere sorores / ceruicemque polo subpositurus Atlas, F. 5.179-180*). Whereas all members of Hyan's family are said to have wept for him, each of Phaethon's closest relatives mourns him in different ways, with their description creating a crescendo. Helios covers his face, a typical mourning gesture<sup>550</sup> which in cosmological terms produces an eclipse (*Met. 2.330-332*). Clymene's reaction surpasses that of Helios not only because it comprises of more elements, but also because it lasts longer than just a day. She first delivers a passionate speech lamenting her woes (*dixit, quaecumque fuerunt / in tantis dicenda malis, Met. 2.333-334*) and then tears her breast in grief and madness (*lugubris et amens / et laniata sinus, Met. 2.334-335*),<sup>551</sup> before wandering around the world in search for her son's remains (*totum percensuit orbem / exanimesque artus primo, mox ossa requirens, Met. 2.335-336*). When she reaches the tomb built by the Naiads on the banks of Eridanus, she prostrates herself on the marble, sheds tears and embraces the tombstone with naked breasts:

*incubuitque loco nomenque in marmore lectum  
perfudit lacrimis et aperto pectore fouit.*

*Met. 2.338-339*

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<sup>550</sup> Both male and female relatives of the dead are depicted with their head covered in Roman funerary art [Corbeill (2004) 79-80]. In Latin epic Juturna covers her head with a veil at the anticipation of Turnus' death (*Aen. 12.885*) [an action that Panoussi (2009) 65 attributes more to Roman sacrificial practice than to gestures of lament], and Cornelia does the same after witnessing the murder of Pompey (*BC 9.109*).

<sup>551</sup> *Laniare*, "to tear", is used with hair, body and garments as a technical term for lament. The term for breast-beating is *plangere*; as an alternative, *caedere* is sometimes used; although not a technical term, it conveys the same idea of striking [*OLD s.vv.*].



Taking up more space in the text as well as more time in the narrative than that of Helios, Clymene's mourning scene combines literary precedents and actual Roman practices concerning the lament of a relative.

Clymene is directly modelled on two mothers in earlier epic who are famously shown as mourning the death of their son, Hecabe in *Iliad* 22 and 24 and Euryalus' mother in *Aeneid* 9. Hecabe is the first to react to Hector's death by tearing her hair, casting off her veil and emitting loud shrieks (*Il.* 22.405-407); she then starts her lamentation focusing on Hector's death and the effect it has on her (*Il.* 22.430-436). When his body is brought in the city, together with Andromache she holds his head, tears her hair and cries in front of the city gates (*Il.* 24.710-714). Finally, inside the walls, a ritual lament takes place in three stages, where a female relative (Andromache, Hecabe and Helen) begins the dirge and the rest of the Trojan women follow (*Il.* 24.719-776).<sup>552</sup> Clymene's lamentation thus shares a number of elements with Hecabe's: both cry and hurt themselves, either by tearing their hair or their breasts. They also attempt physical contact with the body, with Hecabe being lucky to hold her son's head, and Clymene having to content herself with embracing his marble tombstone. Finally, both remove part of their attire,<sup>553</sup> and Clymene's *quaecumque fuerunt in tantis dicenda malis* may be understood as reproducing, beyond the limits of the text, Hecabe's two speeches expressing her immeasurable pain at her son's loss.

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<sup>552</sup> Murnaghan (1999) and Perkell (2008) interpret the three laments as contributing to the subversion of traditional heroic values.

<sup>553</sup> Clymene opens her dress to reveal her breasts, Hecabe casts off her head scarf. Clymene's act may also recall Hecabe's earlier gesture when she was trying to dissuade Hector from fighting Achilles by showing him the breasts that nourished him (*Il.* 22.79-89).

Euryalus' mother, who remains anonymous throughout the *Aeneid*, tears her hair at the news of her son's death and madly rushes to the walls to see and lament him:

*scissa comam muros amens atque agmina cursu  
prima petit, non illa uirum, non illa pericli  
telorumque memor, caelum dehinc questibus implet:*  
*Aen. 9.478-480*

Once again, self-harm, grievous madness and loud lamentation characterise both Ovidian mother and her epic model. Furthermore, Clymene's universal quest to find her son is comparable to Euryalus' mother's appearance at the walls of the Trojan camp. Finally, neither is able to touch her son, as Phaethon is buried and Euryalus is in the hands of the Rutulians; yet, they can see what remains of them, the marble tombstone of the former and the displayed mutilated corpse of the latter.<sup>554</sup>

The representation of the grieving Clymene also evokes, especially verbally, a number of female epic figures who mourn not their son but other members of their family. In *Aeneid* 12 Amata mourns what she believes to be the death of her nephew and would-be son-in-law Turnus, performing gestures similar to those of Clymene:

*... subito mentem turbata dolore  
se causam clamat crimenque caputque malorum,  
multaque per maestum demens effata furorem  
purpureos moritura manu discindit amictus*  
*Aen. 12.599-602*

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<sup>554</sup> Fantham (1999) 224-225 discusses the lament of Euryalus' mother as an example of a "dangerous voice", affecting the morale of the Trojan warriors.

Although not Turnus' mother,<sup>555</sup> Amata is overcome by grief, laments him in a state of frantic madness, and tears her dress apart; her reaction thus recalls that of Euryalus' mother three books earlier, and is in turn reworked into Ovid's representation of Clymene.

Anna's reaction to the death of Dido is also evoked in the Ovidian text. Although she is mourning her dying sister, Anna's affectionate embrace of Dido's body (*germanam amplexa fouebat*, *Aen.* 4.686), is echoed in Clymene's compromise with the inscription on the tomb bearing her son's name (*nomenque in marmore lectum / ... aperto pectore fouit*, *Met.* 2.338-339). Both Dido's sister (*foedans et pectora pugnis*, *Aen.* 4.673) and Phaethon's mother (*et laniata sinus*, *Met.* 2.335) also hurt their breast in grief. Finally, Lavinia's lament of her mother, Amata, both when the latter announces her intention to die (*accepit uocem lacrimis Lauinia matris / flagrantis perfusa genas*, *Aen.* 12.64-65), and after her suicide (*et roseas laniata genas*, *Aen.* 12.606), verbally resonates in Phaethon's mother's mourning gestures of covering the tombstone with her tears (*perfudit lacrimis*, *Met.* 2.339), and tearing her breasts (*et laniata sinus*, *Met.* 2.335).

Tragic mourners, especially mothers, can provide further models for Clymene. Even though an external narrator is missing from the plays, the limitations of first person speech can be overcome with ingenious devices. Every time the Euripidean Hecabe performs gestures of lament, either for the dead or for the fate of the living, she describes them in her speeches. When mourning her dead husband and sons, she lies prostrate on the ground, hitting her head, temples and flanks, and crying endlessly (*Tro.* 98-121). As soon as she finds out what will happen

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<sup>555</sup> On Amata assuming a maternal role towards Turnus, see Chapter Two.

to Cassandra, Polyxena, Andromache and herself, she beats her head and scratches her cheeks (*Tro.* 279-280), and she greets the news of Astyanax's imminent death by hurting her head and beating her breast (*Tro.* 793-794).<sup>556</sup> Finally, although the scene survives in a fragmentary state, the verbal aspect of the Ovidian Clymene's lament may be traced back to Euripides' *Phaethon* (*frag. inc. sed.* 3 and 4 D.), where the Ethiopian queen mourns over her son's body brought into the palace, before hiding it from her husband.<sup>557</sup>

Clymene's lamentation and its models evoke practices widely used in the Greek and Roman world; breast-beating, crying, verbal expression of sorrow, are all typical components of female lament, regardless of kinship or status, although in the Greek world it is usually the next of kin who perform these rites,<sup>558</sup> and they are always women.<sup>559</sup> Typically, the funeral included the wake (*πρόθεσις*) where anyone could come to the house to pay their respects to the dead; the procession to the tomb, where both men and women took part; the lamentation at the tomb which was the realm proper of women. Mourning gestures, cries and offerings characterised all stages but culminated in the final one.<sup>560</sup> A similar ritual took place in Rome, comprising of the following stages: *conclamatio*, performed by relatives; washing and dressing of the body carried out by women; *collocatio*, attended by everyone; *pompa*, attended by everyone – in aristocratic funerals actors impersonated the dead man and his ancestors; moaning and self-mutilation,

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<sup>556</sup> The chorus imitate Hecuba in describing themselves as beating their heads at the death of Astyanax (*Tro.* 1235-1236).

<sup>557</sup> Ciappi (2000) 160.

<sup>558</sup> Foley (1993) 103-106 discusses the development of aristocratic funerals from a very public occasion in Archaic Greece, in which not only relatives but also hired mourners participated, to a more restricted expression of grief after Solon's legislation, which subsequently gave rise to state funerals for the dead in wars.

<sup>559</sup> Alexiou (<sup>2</sup>2002) 6.

<sup>560</sup> Alexiou (<sup>2</sup>2002) 5-8.

performed by female relatives; singing of the *nenia* by hired professionals called *praeeficae*.<sup>561</sup> Given that Phaethon died away from home and was buried by the Naiads before the arrival of his family, the first two Greek or four Roman stages are omitted and the kinswomen, mother and sisters, begin straightaway the lamentation at the tomb.

Like Clymene, her daughters are also based both on representations of mythical and non-mythical mourning kinswomen. In fact Ovid often envisions the dead person's mother and sister mourning their loss together. As mentioned above, a mythical parallel is provided by Aethra and the Hyades (*mater Hyan et Hyan maestae flevere sorores*, *F.* 5.179). A comparable scene placed in a Roman context concerns the reaction to Tibullus' death, with his mother closing his eyes and bringing offerings to his ashes (*Am.* 3.9.49-50), and the sister sharing in her mother's grief and tearing her unkempt hair (*Am.* 3.9.51-52). Likewise, right after the mother's lament in the *Metamorphoses* comes that of Phaethon's sisters, which in turn surpasses that of the mother, as hers did the father's: the Heliades not only perform gestures different from Clymene's, but they also mourn incessantly for four months. In this respect, they are similar to the Hyades, whose *pietas* towards their brother earned them a place in heaven through transformation. The complexity of models underlying the representation of the Heliades, however, creates a wholly unexpected ending to their story, shifting its focus from Phaethon to them, and underscoring the importance of family bonds between the female members of the family.

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<sup>561</sup> Treggiari (1991) 484-485, 489-490; Corbeill (2004) 89-98; Dutsch (2008) 259.

Clymene's lamentation is followed up by that of her daughters, in what seems at first glance to be a repetition of their mother's mourning gestures:

*nec minus Heliades lugent et inania morti  
munera dant lacrimas et caesae pectora palmis  
non auditurum miseras Phaethonta querellas  
nocte dieque uocant adsternunturque sepulcro.*

*Met. 2.340-343*

Like Clymene, the Heliades cry, beat their breasts with their hands, lament aloud and prostrate themselves on the tomb, with the introductory words *nec minus* implying that their reaction to Phaethon's death is exactly the same as that of their mother's. There is, however, a difference, evident in the choice of tenses for the description of their respective lament: Clymene's actions are described by verbs in the perfect tense, while the Heliades reproduce the same act in the present tense. This choice prepares the ground for the subsequent explicit statement that they went on mourning for four months (*Met. 2.344-346*); nothing comparable is said of their mother, the implication being that she stopped.

Not only do the sisters perform their lament for longer, but there is also more variation than in their mother's mourning. They engage in breast-beating (*plangorem dederant, Met. 2.346*; this time described with the technical term *plangor*), prostrate themselves on the earth (*terra procumbere, Met. 2.347*) and tear their hair (*crinem manibus laniare, Met. 2.350*), with this final action placing them in the same situation as the grieving sister of Tibullus (*inornatas dilaniata comas, Am. 3.9.52*). The importance of this action lies not only in the fact that is mentioned last in a series of mourning gestures, thus encouraging the comparison

with the scene in the *Amores*, but also in the fact that it *is* their final act, as their transformation into poplars forces them to stop lamenting.

As Clymene's lament was based on epic maternal figures such as Hecabe and Euryalus' mother, her daughters are modelled on a Virgilian sister who, like them, mourns her brother Turnus, who, unlike Phaethon, is not dead yet when the lament takes place:<sup>562</sup>

*... cum lacrimas oculis Iuturna profundit  
terque quaterque manu pectus percussit honestum.*

*Aen. 12.154-155*

When Juturna learns that Turnus' doom is sealed, she sheds tears and beats her breast, as the Heliades do, in the same order, for Phaethon (*dant lacrimas et caesae pectora palmis, Met. 2.341*); nevertheless, she continues to help him. When towards the end of the poem she realises that there is no hope left, she picks up her lament where she left it and goes on to hurt her breasts again:

*infelix crinis scindit Iuturna solutos  
unguibus ora soror foedans et pectora pugnis*

*Aen. 12.870-871*

She also scratches her face and tears her hair, an action reproduced by one of Phaethon's sisters (*crinem manibus laniare pararet, Met. 2.350*).

The Heliades' assimilation of Clymene's actions is extended to cover the use of common models for their representation. Anna and Lavinia provide verbal echoes for both laments, although the similarities to Phaethon's sisters outdo those to his mother, not least because they share the same status with the former

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<sup>562</sup> According to Fantham (1999) 226, Juturna's lament of Turnus has to take place while he is still alive, because the poem is designed to end with his death and thus not leave room for a reconciliatory closure in the manner of the *Iliad*.

Virgilian figure (sisters) and the same age with the latter (young and as yet unmarried). Like Anna (*foedans et pectora pugnis*, *Aen.* 4.673), both Clymene (*et laniata sinus*, *Met.* 2.335), and the Heliades (*et caesae pectora palmis*, *Met.* 2.341), tear or beat their breasts. The Virgilian echo, however, is stronger in the sisters' lament, as in both cases the phrase takes up the second half of the line, and the structure is almost identical.<sup>563</sup> Similarly, the precedent of Lavinia (*manu flauos Lauinia crinis / et roseas laniata genas*, *Aen.* 12.605-606), resonates more emphatically in one of the sisters' attempt to tear her hair (*crinem manibus laniare pararet*, *Met.* 2.350), than it does in Clymene's tearing her breast (*et laniata sinus*, *Met.* 2.335). The Latin girl also furnishes a model for the use of the technical term for breast-beating: *resonant late plangoribus aedes* (*Aen.* 12.607). In this way the daughters of the Sun appear to be worthy counterparts of the Hyades in the *Fasti*: they surpass both parents in their *pietas* towards their brother, and thus earn their transformation, not only because they lament for longer, but also because their mourning gestures better incorporate mythical and non-mythical models.

While the lament scenes serve to measure the mother and the sisters against each other, the transformation of the Heliades, with which the episode ends, offers a better glimpse at their relationship with each other than the mention in Phaethon's speech did 400 lines earlier. The sisters initially appear acting as one, as the use of plural verbal forms shows:

*nec minus Heliades lugent et inania morti  
munera **dant** lacrimas et **caesae** pectora palmis  
non auditurum miseras Phaethonta querellas  
nocte dieque **uocant adsternunturque sepulcro.***

<sup>563</sup> (*et*) + participle + (*et*) + *pectora* + instrumental ablative of a word meaning "hands".



*luna quater iunctis inplerat cornibus orbem:  
illae more suo (nam morem fecerat usus)  
plangorem **dederant**; ...*

*Met. 2.340-346*

Their lament is well-structured and synchronised, perhaps pointing at their sisterly unanimity. Their common goal of lamenting the death of Phaethon thus resembles in a sense Dido and Anna's joint efforts at the altars of the gods in search for a favourable sign for the former's passion for Aeneas:

*principio delubra **adeunt** pacemque per aras  
**exquirunt**; **mactant** lectas de more bidentis*

*Aen. 4.56-57<sup>564</sup>*

Not long afterwards, however, the transformation of the Heliades begins, causing them to act on their own; or is it the other way round? It seems that one of the sisters, named for the first time as Phaethusa, stands out from their group and prostrates herself on the ground in what appears to be her own initiative:

*... e quis Phaethusa, sororum  
maxima, cum uellet terra procumbere, questa est  
deriguisse pedes; ...*

*Met. 2.346-348*

As soon as she does that, her transformation begins. The absence of any announcement or justification for it is notable, although the erudite reader may think of previous versions of the myth, where it was attributed to the Heliades' excessive grief for the loss of their brother.<sup>565</sup> As the first breaks up their circle, the

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<sup>564</sup> Unanimous sisters, usually found in pairs in Latin epic, share feelings, thoughts and actions; see Chapter One on such pairs, and Chapter Four on the play between togetherness and individualisation in groups of epic sisters.

<sup>565</sup> Diod. Sic. *Bibl. Hist.* 5.23.2; Philostr. *Im.* 1.11.4. According to one of two versions found in Hyginus, however, they were turned into trees not as a reward but as a punishment for yoking the horses to the chariot of the Sun (*Fab.* 153).

others follow: a second sister is named, the third is only indicated by her rank, and while Lampetie stops mourning to help Phaethusa (*ad quam conata uenire / candida Lampetie, Met. 2.348-349*), the other sister continues the lament by tearing her hair (*tertia cum crinem manibus laniare pararet, Met. 2.350*).

As the sisters perform individual mourning gestures, thus acquiring their independence from the group, which is realised in the attribution of personal names, they cause their own transformation to start (*deriguisse pedes, Met. 2.348; subita radice retenta est, Met. 2.349; auellit frondes, Met. 2.351*) which reverses that process of individualisation. In fact, as the metamorphosis takes place in distinct stages, the sisters gradually lose their individuality.<sup>566</sup> From *Phaethusa* and *Lampetie* the narrative moves to *tertia*, a number but still one of the Heliades, and then to pronouns devoid of any personal trait: *haec stipite crura teneri, / illa dolet fieri longos sua bracchia ramos (Met. 2.351-352)*. Perhaps the ambiguity in their number is also intentional: they may be three, or five, or even more,<sup>567</sup> but it will hardly matter once their transformation into poplars is complete. Their actions in this scene, however, offer important clues for the analysis of the bond between sisters, as well as between mother and daughters. Whereas initially the Heliades seem to be acting as one, which suggests some unanimity comparable to that of Dido and Anna, as soon as one takes an initiative in mourning, they acquire names and independence. This brief glimpse of individuality continues into the initial stages of their transformation, where one calls out to the others for help, another

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<sup>566</sup> The description of each girl corresponds to one stage in the transformation: the legs become rigid, the feet sprout roots, the hands sprout leaves, the legs are held within the trunk, the arms become branches. In the final stage (*Met. 2.353-355*) all individuality is lost as the body is covered by bark from thighs to waist, breast, shoulders and hands, leaving only the mouth free.

<sup>567</sup> The other versions vary between three (Schol. Hom. *Od.* 17.208), five (Tzetz. *Chil.* 4.363-366), or seven (Hyg. *Fab.* 154).

tries in vain to help her, while a third continues the mourning. There is an implication here that solidarity is not a shared characteristic, and this may explain the lack of a personal name for the third sister.

Finally, as their transformation reaches its climax, and it is implied that their own efforts to help each other have failed, their mouth is the only human part remaining which calls out for their mother:

*dumque ea mirantur, conplectitur inguina cortex  
perque gradus uterum pectusque umerosque manusque  
ambit et exstabant tantum ora uocantia matrem.*

*Met. 2.353-355*

The two separate panels, namely, the mother's lament and the sisters' lament, now converge. Already with the description of the early stages of their transformation, the focus gradually shifts from the mourning for Phaethon to the plight of his sisters. Their mother, who is presumably in the vicinity even though her lament is long over, hears their cries and comes immediately to assist them in any way possible:

*quid faciat mater, nisi, quo trahit inpetus illam,  
huc eat atque illuc et, dum licet, oscula iungat?  
non satis est: ...*

*Met. 2.356-358*

Clymene starts by going from daughter to daughter and giving them kisses to alleviate their sorrow, but *non satis est*. The phrase may be read in two ways: it may mean that embracing and kissing her daughters has no effect on their transformation, that is, it does not halt it. Alternatively, it means that Clymene is not satisfied with merely kissing her daughters goodbye, which after all is a mourning gesture that relatives perform on a dead person, but she wants to

intervene more actively and stop them turning into trees by pulling off the branches that were their arms. The blood that comes out of them and the pain it causes the still-feeling Heliades is so much that they ask their mother to stop and bid her goodbye, before their mouths are covered by bark, signalling the completion of the metamorphosis.

So far the narrator has granted neither Clymene nor her daughters direct speech, but only reported the content of their words. During the laments for Phaethon Clymene is described as *dixit, quaecumque fuerunt / in tantis dicenda malis* (Met. 2.333-334) and her daughters as *non auditurum miseras Phaethonta querelas / ... uocant* (Met. 2.342-343). As the transformation begins, Phaethusa tells the others how she feels, again without the reader actually hearing her voice: *questa est / deriguisse pedes* (Met. 2.347-348). Similarly, their pleas to their mother are concealed for the audience under *ora uocantia matrem* (Met. 2.355). In either case, the content of the speech is very precise and easy to reconstruct, which constitutes a development from the earlier vague descriptions *dicenda* and *querelas*. As their transformation approaches its climax, however, the Heliades' voice is finally heard without mediation:

*'parce, precor, mater,' quaecumque est saucia, clamat,  
'parce, precor! nostrum laceratur in arbore corpus.  
iamque uale' – cortex in uerba nouissima uenit.*

*Met. 2.361-363*

Like their names, the acquisition of direct speech at the very moment when their human nature is about to vanish accentuates the importance of the Heliades and makes them the protagonists of this episode, while the lack of it puts Clymene in second place.

At the same time, the shift of focus from Phaethon to his sisters recasts the prioritisation of family bonds which was centred on the son and his relationship to his mother and father. In fact, the end of this episode looks back to the beginning of the story, when the young man appealed to his mother's love not for him but for his sisters (*taedasque sororum*, *Met.* 1.763). Clymene is now given the chance to show how important her daughters are to her, as her attention turns from her lament for Phaethon to the transformation of the Heliades. Likewise, the sisters' plight makes them stop their mourning for their brother and care for each other in their distress, before appealing to their mother for help. The fact that the transformation concerns them and not Phaethon is also significant in this respect: not only does it cause the reader to empathise with the Heliades rather than with their reckless brother, but it also pays tribute to the tradition of both the Phaethon myth and the comparable stories of Hyas and Meleager, whose sisters' ceaseless lament produced through transformation an everlasting mourning. As Ovid himself narrates in the *Fasti*, the Hyades' tears still fall as rain from the sky after their metamorphosis. Similarly, according to Nicander, the Meleagrides mourned endlessly over their brother's tomb until Artemis pitied them and transformed them into guinea-fowl, who still mourn the loss of their brother (*Ant. Lib. Met.* 2.6-7).<sup>568</sup>

As the sisters' mouths are covered by bark and their metamorphosis into trees is complete, one final detail is given before the narrative moves on to Phaethon's friend Cycnus:

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<sup>568</sup> In his brief treatment of the Meleagrides (*Met.* 8.533-546) Ovid does not say whether they continue to mourn their brother in their new avian form. As Capizzi (1979) 156 points out, Pliny attributes amber tears to both the Heliades and the Meleagrides, tracing the origins of their transformation back to Aeschylus' *Heliades* and Sophocles' *Meleager* respectively (*NH* 37.2.31-41).

*inde fluunt lacrimae, stillataque sole rigescunt  
de ramis electra nouis, quae lucidus amnis  
excipit et nuribus mittit gestanda Latinis.*

*Met.* 2.364-366

Their tears keep falling but as they glide down the branches, they are transformed into amber beads destined to adorn Latin women as jewellery. The use of *Latinis* as the final word of the Heliades episode encourages the reading of this appendix to the Phaethon myth in Roman terms. Starting from the end, the information that amber jewels were worn by Latin women can be verified both through archaeological and literary evidence.<sup>569</sup> The association with marriage can also be confirmed through Ovid's own use of the phrase *ab arbore lapsas / Heliadum lacrimas* to mean "amber jewels" in his description of Pygmalion's statue (*Met.* 10.262-263): these jewels form part of the gifts the sculptor gives his creation as if she were a living bride.<sup>570</sup> Although the use of *nurus* here might be simply as a variant of *femina*, the association of the word with marriage is too strong to be ignored, with the theme of the Heliades' wedding thus coming full circle.

At the beginning of the story, Phaethon brought up the marriage of his sisters as one of Clymene's soft points; now, with their transformation into trees

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<sup>569</sup> According to Higgins (1961) 30, the Etruscans and the Greeks used amber in jewellery as early as the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, and the influence of both cultures is later discernible in Roman jewellery (pp. 178-180), even though the first Roman findings date from AD 20 [Grilli (1983) 17 n. 39]. Pliny (*N.H.* 37.2.30) reports that amber was very much in fashion among women of his time, and such a luxurious material that a small statue would be worth more than a healthy slave (*N.H.* 37.3.49). Similarly, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, Pausanias describes a statue of Augustus outside the temple of Zeus at Olympia made wholly of this material (*Gr. Descr.* 5.12.7). In his brief discussion of the Ovidian passage, Spekke (1957) 103 points out that amber was not yet traded to a large scale in Ovid's time, which suggests limited availability to well-off Romans. Grilli (1983) 17, however, reads these lines as proof that the fashion of which Pliny speaks was already active in Ovid's time.

<sup>570</sup> According to Griffin (1986) 148-149 n. 23, the Pygmalion story can be read allegorically as a representation of Roman marriage.

complete, this eventuality is thwarted, and so is their potential for procreation,<sup>571</sup> all too important in a myth revolving around parentage and family bonds. The mention of Latin brides at this point both evokes this lost opportunity and highlights their newly defined contribution to social life. They may not bear children, but they bring forth tears; they may not get married, but they are present in every wedding in the form of their crystallised tears which adorn the brides. This interweaving of roles such as mourning, marriage and procreation corresponds to the ideal characteristics of matrons in Roman society, not least because of their public aspect. Roman matrons were respected for their status as wives and mothers, which combined private and public roles. Moreover, one of their tasks was to mourn the dead, not only their kin but also those not related to them by blood, in public.<sup>572</sup> Similarly, the tears of the Heliades fall eternally becoming a public sight for passing travellers such as the Argonauts, and the final form of those tears, amber, is used in jewellery for brides in their most public appearance on their wedding day.

If the Heliades are similar to Roman matrons, can their mother Clymene also be interpreted in Roman terms? Certainly, her maternal affection both for her son and her daughter is a characteristic that would be expected from any ancient mother. Something that could be typically Roman, namely her interest in her daughters' marriage, is given in a very ambiguous way, as it is placed in the mouth of Phaethon, and her reaction to his words does not allow certainty as to her feelings. Her mourning gestures, on the other hand, counterbalance those of the

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<sup>571</sup> Wheeler (2000) 68.

<sup>572</sup> As Loraux (1998) 33 points out, unlike Greek women, who only mourned immediate relatives, Roman matrons mourned both in private and in public, with the latter environment frequently being used for political purposes.

Heliades, recalling a very specific private Roman lament: that of Octavia, mother of Marcellus.

The myth of Phaethon has already been seen as an allegory of issues concerning Augustan succession;<sup>573</sup> Phaethon, in particular, can stand in for Marcellus whose untimely death in 23BC shattered any plans Augustus may have had of making him his heir.<sup>574</sup> The use of the phrase *inania morti / munera* (*Met.* 2.340-341) to refer to the lament of Phaethon's sisters echoes Anchises' lament for Marcellus in the Underworld *fungar inani / munere* (*Aen.* 6.885-886), thus encouraging the reader to seek parallels between the two young men. The Sun recognized Phaethon as his legitimate son and allowed him, however unwillingly, to ride his chariot. Likewise, Augustus gave Marcellus his daughter Julia in marriage, made him a senator and allowed him to assume offices ten years before the legal age (*Dio H.R.* 53.28), presumably planning to pass on the rule to him at a later stage. Both youths die unexpectedly and their death is solemnly and publicly mourned by the men who gave them power, father and uncle/father-in-law respectively: the Sun covers his face for a day, and Augustus holds a public funeral accumulating honour upon honour for his nephew.<sup>575</sup> The two paternal figures are

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<sup>573</sup> Wheeler (2000) 68. The myth of Phaethon is further explored in later literature in the context of Imperial succession: thus, Lucan compares Nero to Phaethon in a highly disputed part of his poem to the *Bellum Civile*, as Heslin (2007) 18-19 discusses, and according to Suetonius (*Cal.* 11.1), Tiberius referred to Caligula as *Phaethontem orbi terrarum*.

<sup>574</sup> *pace* Jones (1977) 52-53 who describes Marcellus as Augustus' favourite successor, Southern (1998) 120 remarks that the latter did not adopt his sister's son and referred to him as *gener*, not as *filius*, in the *Res Gestae*. Gruen (2005) 42-43 cites Cassius Dio (*H.R.* 53.30) and argues that the *princeps* did not designate a successor at such an early stage, but instead tried to discredit the rumours, already circulating, that he was creating a blood dynasty.

<sup>575</sup> According to Dio (*H.R.* 53.30), he gave a laudatory speech and buried Marcellus in his mausoleum; he then named the theatre after him and ordered a statue, a garland and a chariot to be brought into the theatre at the time of the Roman festival. Brandt (1995) 13 argues that these honours do not offer a clear indication of Augustus' intentions for Marcellus' role in the imperial succession. Gleib (1998) 121 emphasises the use of Marcellus' death by Augustus for propaganda, contrasting his lack of emotional reaction to Octavia's perpetual grief.



brought even closer through their mutual association with Apollo; the latter is Augustus' patron god,<sup>576</sup> but he is also connected, and arguably identified, with Sol both in Roman thought in general, and in Ovid's work in particular.<sup>577</sup>

Augustus, however, can also be directly connected to Sol without the mediation of Apollo, if the anecdote transmitted by Suetonius can be judged independently of the Ovidian narrative. According to the biographer, Octavian's father had a vision of his yet unborn son who clearly resembled Jupiter (*cum fulmine et sceptro Iouis Optimi Maximi*, Suet. *Aug.* 94.6). The vision, however, continues: *ac radiata corona, super laureatum currum, bis senis equis candore eximio trahentibus* (ibid.). This points not to Jupiter but to Sol whose literary representations include a crown of rays (*at genitor circum caput omne micantes / deposuit radios*, Ov. *Met.* 2.40-41) and a chariot of white horses (*curru equis albis iuncto*, Liv. *AUC* 5.23.5; *et reuocant niueos solis euntis equos*, Ov. *Am.* 2.1.24). Finally, another parallel for Marcellus is provided by Icarus, whose story is depicted on the walls of the temple of Apollo at Cumae (*Aen.* 6.14-33).<sup>578</sup> Icarus is another young man who, like Phaethon, rose higher than was permitted and paid the price with his premature death. This common denominator brings Marcellus and

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<sup>576</sup> Or even his father, according to Atia's dream (Suet. *Aug.* 94.4). The most recent monograph on Augustus' relationship with Apollo is Miller (2009).

<sup>577</sup> Through their share of the epithet Phoebus, or through Diana, Apollo's sister, who is identified with Luna, Sol's sister [Ahl (1985) 196]; these correspondences, however, do not constitute conclusive evidence for Fontenrose (1940). According to Wheeler (2000) 67, the interchangeability between the two gods goes as far back as the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, with evidence in tragedy as well as pre-Socratic and Orphic doctrines. Without bringing Marcellus into the picture, Poulle (2002) discusses the use of the Phaethon myth by Julius Caesar and Augustus, and concludes with a positive reading of the Ovidian text as serving "la légitimité d'une filiation solaire" (p. 134). Miller (2009) 258-259 argues that Apollo and Sol, who were distinct in Roman thought until Horace's *Carmen Saeculare*, became interchangeable in the specific context of a new age from Virgil's time on; he notes, however, that "Ovid is so scrupulous in keeping Apollo and his solar counterpart distinct" (p. 352 n. 56).

<sup>578</sup> Dupont and Neraudau (1970) 274-275; Gleit (1998) 124.

Phaethon even closer.<sup>579</sup> These associations allow the reading of the Phaethon myth as an allegory for Marcellus' death; but what of the female presences in the Ovidian story?

In Virgil's biography it is said that the poet read out the second, fourth and sixth book of the *Aeneid* to Augustus and his family; during the recitation of the final book Octavia passed out at hearing her son's name (*VSD* 32). Servius reports a similar story: at the recitation of book 6, both the *princeps* and Octavia wept and asked for the poet to stop reading (*Serv. in Aen.* 6.861). Whether this story is true or more probably an invention of the biographer, it certainly reproduces early ideas about the reception of the *Aeneid* by the imperial household. In his reworking of Marcellus' death in his Phaethon myth, Ovid reinstates in the form of Clymene the maternal figure who is absent from the earlier epic. In fact Clymene's lamentation of her son at his tomb recalls Octavia's endless mourning of Marcellus as described by Seneca:

*nullum finem per omne uitae suae tempus flendi gemendique fecit  
nec ullas admisit uoces salutare aliquid adferentis, ne auocari  
quidem se passa est; intenta in unam rem et toto animo **adfixa**, talis  
per omnem uitam fuit qualis in funere, non dico non [est] ausa  
consurgere, sed adleuari recusans, secundam orbitatem iudicans  
lacrimas mittere.*

Sen. *Ad Marc.* 2.4

Clymene's absence from her son's death and search throughout the world, on the other hand, is remarkably similar to Livia's loss of Drusus:

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<sup>579</sup> Dupont and Neraudau (1970) 274 link Marcellus and Icarus through the theme of excess, and according to Gleis (1998) 123-124, the story of Marcellus in the *Aeneid* can serve as a warning against *superbia*. Rudhardt (1997), however, stresses the psychological aspects of the Phaethon myth in Ovid that are, in his view, privileged over the Greek versions' emphasis on *hubris* (p. 94).

*non licuerat matri ultima filii oscula gratumque extremi sermonem  
oris haurire; longo itinere reliquias Drusi sui prosecuta, tot per  
omnem Italiam ardentibus rogis, quasi totiens illum amitteret,  
inritata, ut primum tamen intulit tumulo, simul et illum et dolorem  
suum posuit, nec plus doluit quam aut honestum erat Caesare aut  
aequum saluo.*

Sen. *Ad Marc.* 3.2

Unlike Octavia, Clymene does not seem to continue lamenting her son; in that respect, she rather resembles Livia, whose grief is put aside the moment Drusus is buried.<sup>580</sup> Instead, the motif of incessant weeping is taken up by the Heliades, who literally remain *fixed* on their intention in their new form as trees.

Their mourning in unison before their transformation, and their loss of individuality after it, with the tears still being shed, may in fact point to the public lamentation for Marcellus, and indeed any important figure in Rome. Although we lack the particulars of his funeral,<sup>581</sup> Servius' comments (*huius mortem uehementer civitas doluit [...] cum ingenti pompa adlatus et in campo Martio est sepultus*, Serv. *in Aen.* 6.861) suggest a large participation where presumably unrelated matrons took on the lamentation. Anchises' anticipatory lament in the Underworld foreshadows a similar image (*quantos ille uirum magnam Mauortis ad urbem / campus aget gemitus*, *Aen.* 6.872-873). There is evidence for the matrons of Pisa mourning the death of Gaius Caesar in AD 2; the death of Marcellus 20 years earlier would probably also conform to this general practice of matrons mourning in public

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<sup>580</sup> The pseudo-Ovidian consolation, however, suggests that she resembled both Clymene and the Heliades in her weeping for Drusus: *sic fleuit Clymene, sic et Clymeneides, alte / cum iuuenis patriis excidit ictus equis* (*Cons. ad Liv.* 111-112).

<sup>581</sup> Propertius wrote a lament for Marcellus (*El.* 3.18), but he does not mention anything relevant to the actual funeral; the text of the *laudatio funebris* that Augustus read out is probably reflected in Anchises' lament at *Aen.* 6.870-881 [Brenck (1986) 18-19; Glei (1998) 122].

which characterised the late Republic and Early Empire.<sup>582</sup> The same situation seems to arise as with the episode's literary models: real Roman women provide a precedent for Clymene and the Heliades, with individual details being distributed among the Ovidian figures according to their specific function in the story as well as their literary tradition. Thus, the double lament of the Phaethon myth can be read as representing the two aspects of mourning Marcellus: the private lament of Octavia, represented by Clymene, and the public one of the Roman matrons, carried out by the Heliades.

### **Losing a daughter I: Ceres and Proserpina**

Another Ovidian mother who loses her child, this time only temporarily, is Ceres, whose story constitutes the Muses' entry in a singing competition between them and the daughters of Pierus in Book 5.<sup>583</sup> Her feelings are displayed in a crescendo, as the more she finds out about what happened to her daughter, the more distressed she becomes. When Ceres realises that Proserpina is missing, she embarks on a worldwide search for her, trembling with fear (*pauidae*, *Met.* 5.438).<sup>584</sup> She is restless (*inrequieta*, *Met.* 5.443) as her search continues through the night, and she only stops for a moment when she is tired and thirsty (*Met.* 5.446). Her initial fear and worry, however, turn into despair when she arrives at Cyane's pool and sees Proserpina's girdle floating on the water. Even though she

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<sup>582</sup> Loraux (1998) 33; Šterbenc Erker (2009) 156.

<sup>583</sup> I discuss other aspects of the story in Chapters Two (love and marriage) and Four (storytelling).

<sup>584</sup> Bömer (1976a) ad 5.438 observes that, unlike the *Fasti* version with its numerous hints to Ceres' insanity, the description of her pain and restlessness in the *Metamorphoses* is carried out by this single word.

now knows that Proserpina has been abducted,<sup>585</sup> as the narrating Muse does not fail to emphasise (*Met.* 5.471-472), Ceres' reaction is that of a mother who mourns her dead child:

*quam simul agnouit, tamquam tum denique raptam  
scisset, inornatos laniauuit diua capillos  
et repetita suis percussit pectora palmis.*

*Met.* 5.471-473

With gestures typical of lament in both Greece and Rome, she tears her hair and beats her breast with her hands at the loss of Proserpina who is in fact alive. Procne will perform similar gestures in the following book, when she hears from Tereus that Philomela is dead: she will tear her clothes, dress in black, bring offerings to an empty tomb and mourn a sister who actually lives at walking distance from her palace (*Met.* 6.566-570).<sup>586</sup>

Ceres' behaviour more specifically resembles a grieving mother who appeared earlier in the poem. Knowing that her son Phaethon is dead, Clymene also searches for him all around the world (*totum percensuit orbem*, *Met.* 2.335),<sup>587</sup> and engages in breast-beating (*laniata sinus*, *Met.* 2.335).<sup>588</sup> When Arethusa later tells Ceres about Proserpina's new life in the Underworld, the goddess is described as mad (*gravis est amentia*, *Met.* 5.511), which also recalls Clymene's characterisation as *amens* (*Met.* 2.334). Although both mothers grieve for the loss

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<sup>585</sup> Or realises, as Hinds (1987a) 86 understands it, what the abduction actually means, being aware of it from the start.

<sup>586</sup> Boillat (1976) 95 points out the excessiveness of Ceres' reaction: she knows that Proserpina cannot have died, as she is an immortal like herself. Nothing comparable can be said of Procne, who tragically falls victim to Tereus' cruel deception.

<sup>587</sup> Bömer (1976a) ad 5.439; Fantham (2004-2005) 116; Hardie (2002) 83 n. 48, who notes that Proserpina, like Phaethon, also "ends up divided ... between the worlds of the living and the dead".

<sup>588</sup> Ceres' lament also recalls that of Clymene's daughters, the Heliades, for their brother: her breast-beating, *percussit pectora palmis* (*Met.* 5.473) echoes theirs, *caesae pectora palmis* (*Met.* 2.341), and she tears her hair (*laniauuit diua capillos*, *Met.* 5.472) as they do (*crinem manibus laniare*, *Met.* 2.350).

of the children in similar ways, the crucial difference is that Clymene's son is dead while Proserpina is simply missing. Phaethon's mother can do nothing but continue her mourning (*Met.* 2.338-339), while Ceres, who is additionally a powerful goddess and not a mere Nymph, takes action by cursing the lands with destruction of their crops and infertility for hiding Proserpina from her (*Met.* 5.474-486).

The goddess' reaction to the news of Proserpina's new status as queen of the Underworld and wife of Dis (*Met.* 5.504-508) looks beyond the limits of this poem to female figures who have lost, or fear that they might lose, their beloved ones:

*mater ad auditas stupuit ceu saxea uoces  
attonitaeque diu similis fuit, utque dolore  
pulsa graui grauis est amentia, ...*

*Met.* 5.509-511

The double simile (*ceu saxea ... / attonitaeque ... similis*) reproduces the image of Ariadne as she watches Theseus abandon her on Naxos (*saxea ut effigies bacchantis, prospicit*, *Cat. c.* 64.61).<sup>589</sup> The combination of madness, divine possession and Bacchic frenzy, on the other hand, assimilates Ceres to Amata in terms of their involvement in the arrangement of their daughters' marriages,<sup>590</sup> and can also be related to the context of loss *through* a marriage they disagree with. In the earlier epic the queen's reaction characterised by frenzy and madness corresponds to her fear of losing Lavinia through her marriage to Aeneas who will take her away to his foreign land, as she earlier indicated in her speech to Latinus:

*nec matris miseret, quam primo Aquilone relinquet  
perfidus alta petens abducta uirgine praedo?*

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<sup>589</sup> I discuss the reworking of the Catullan simile in Chapter Two.

<sup>590</sup> On the theme of marriage see Chapter Two.

*Aen.* 7.361-362

Likewise, here Ceres' astonishment comes when she has found out that Proserpina is already considered as Dis' wife who has taken her away to his infernal kingdom, as she later indicates in her speech to Jupiter:

*... quod rapta, feremus,  
dummodo reddat eam! neque enim praedone marito  
filia digna tua est, si iam mea filia non est'*

*Met.* 5.520-522

Finally, both mothers' reaction to the loss, actual or prospective, of their daughter causes destruction on a scale dependent on their status: thus the mortal Amata eventually sets off the war in Latium,<sup>591</sup> while the divine Ceres causes the destruction of the lands and Sicily in particular.

### **Losing a daughter II: Hecuba and Polyxena**

While the Virgilian mother eventually gives up trying to stop the marriage and commits suicide, the order among the gods in *Metamorphoses* 5 is established by the mediation of Proserpina's father Jupiter, who settles the matter with a solution acceptable by all parties involved. Hecuba's story in Book 13 does not have such a happy ending: having lost all her other children, she now has to yield Polyxena too, to be sacrificed on the tomb of Achilles. Combining the motif of marriage with that of loss, this episode offers a last view on the mother-daughter bond in Ovid's poem, using both epic and tragic models and establishing a dialogue with other epic stories concerning all-female family bonds.

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<sup>591</sup> Even though the roles of Juno and Allecto behind her actions cannot be underestimated.

Their myth goes back to Homer and the Cycle, but while Hecuba features largely in the *Iliad*, Polyxena first appears in the *Iliupersis*,<sup>592</sup> then only in the *Aeneid*, in the mouth of Andromache who praises her death (*Aen.* 3.321). The pair is better explored in tragedy both Greek and Roman. Apart from the extant Euripidean plays *Hecuba* and *Troades*, Sophocles' *Polyxene* was well-known and much referred to in antiquity, although only a few fragments survive today; the same is true in the case of Roman tragedies dealing with the myth.<sup>593</sup> Catullus' version is very brief (c. 64.366-70) and with the exception of Hyginus' summary (*Fab.* 110), it seems that the only extensive treatment of the myth that survives is this passage in the *Metamorphoses*. It is difficult to assess to what extent Ovid was influenced by Sophocles' *Polyxene*, but it is possible that he drew as much from it as he did from *Tereus* for his account of Procne and Philomela in Book 6.<sup>594</sup> The affinities with Euripides' *Hecuba*, on the other hand, are much more obvious and often pointed out by commentators.<sup>595</sup> Yet, it will be shown in this section that the poet's choices for his representation of Hecuba and Polyxena were not restricted to the particular myth, but included other heroines, both from Greek and Latin sources, who shared an all-female family bond.

Ovid presents Polyxena and Hecuba's relationship as very affectionate and caring: the daughter takes care of the mother (*quam iam prope **sola** fouebat*, *Met.* 13.450) and the latter places all her hopes on the former (*postque tot amissos tu nunc, quae **sola** leuabas / maternos luctus*, *Met.* 13.514-515), although

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<sup>592</sup> Proclus in his summary of the epic (*Chrest.* 274) speaks of the Achaeans "slaughtering Polyxena on the tomb of Achilles".

<sup>593</sup> These counterparts are Ennius' *Alexander* and *Hecuba*, Accius' *Hecuba* and Pacuvius' *Iliona*, which may have influenced Ovid as well, according to Bömer (1982) ad 13.429-622.

<sup>594</sup> See Chapter Two on that story.

<sup>595</sup> *passim* in Bömer (1982) and Hopkinson (2000).



considerable emphasis is given to the fact that Polyxena is Hecuba's *only* surviving child. Nevertheless, their proximity is stressed by the way the poet chooses to represent the moment of the girl's separation from her mother (*rapta sinu matris*, *Met.* 13.450). This expression echoes earlier literary separations of mothers from their daughters, but there is also the implication of a deeper bond between the two that is activated by the choice of the word *sinus*. In fact this word, beyond its topical meaning of "bosom" or "lap", carries connotations of protection and care. Thus Polyxena is introduced to the narrative as a defenceless girl who is about to fall prey to male violence. In that respect, too, she is similar to other virgins featuring in Latin epic whose removal from the maternal protective wing entails manifold dangers.

This initial impression of Polyxena's fragility is soon corrected to suit the traditional image of the brave maiden who dares to face death and fall decently, as was established in Greek tragedy, namely in Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Troades*, and presumably Sophocles' *Polyxene*. Not only does her courage surpass her feminine nature (*fortis et infelix et plus quam femina uirgo*, *Met.* 13.451), but she stands up to her royal status (*memor ipsa sui*, *Met.* 13.453), and utters a speech that finds no parallel in the mouth of a virgin in Latin epic so far.<sup>596</sup> The relationship to her mother is displayed in Polyxena's appeal to the Achaeans to keep Hecuba away from the sacrifice:

*mors tantum uellem matrem mea fallere posset:  
mater obest minuitque necis mihi gaudia, quamuis  
non mea mors illi, uerum sua uita gemenda est.*

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<sup>596</sup> Virgilian and Ovidian virgins either do not speak at all (Lavinia, Proserpina), or they do, but only after they have lost their virginity (Philomela), as I discuss in Chapter Two.

Met. 13.462-464

Polyxena identifies Hecuba's maternal love in the latter's potential attempt to stop the sacrifice and in her fear for her daughter's death. Her own love for her mother is also evident both in her wish to hide the spectacle from Hecuba and in her worry for her mother's future. She uses the words *mater* and *genetrix* to refer to Hecuba, but she refers to herself as the daughter of Priam, admittedly when the argument requires that she appears in her status as the daughter of the king of Troy (*Priami uos filia regis, / non captiua rogat*, Met. 13.470-471). Finally, she asks for her dead body to be handed over to her mother without ransom:

... *genetrici corpus inemptum*  
*reddite, neue auro redimat ius triste sepulcri,*  
*sed lacrimis ...*

Met. 13.471-473

This plea could be read as Polyxena's hope for a reunion even if it has to be *post mortem*, in which she perhaps envisages the return to Hecuba's bosom at the moment of her funeral lament.

Once the sacrifice has taken place, the focus shifts to Hecuba and the realisation of Polyxena's wish: *quae corpus complexa animae tam fortis inane* (Met. 13.488). The virgin is back where she started at Met. 13.450, that is, in her mother's *sinus*, only now the embrace is *inane*, as Polyxena is dead. Hecuba addresses Polyxena with the appropriate kinship term that denotes their relationship:

*'nata, tuae (quid enim superest?) dolor ultime matris,*  
*nata, iaces, uideoque meum, tua uulnera, uulnus;*

Met. 13.494-495

She also identifies her experiences with those of her daughter: Hecuba's ultimate pain is Polyxena's literally final pain at the moment of her death, and the mother's metaphorical trauma is the daughter's fatal wound.<sup>597</sup> As if in response to Polyxena's words earlier on (*non mea mors illi, uerum sua uita gemenda est*, *Met.* 13.464), Hecuba laments her daughter's death but also mourns her own wretched fate as a slave of Ulysses (*Met.* 13.508-513). She then wishes for a royal burial for Polyxena (*Met.* 13.523-524), but knowing this is not to happen, she proceeds to wash the body and perform funeral rites on the beach (*Met.* 13.531-535). Her discovery of Polydorus' body, washed away on the shore, signals the end of the Polyxena episode and shifts the attention to Hecuba's final trial, revenge and transformation.

Ovid's representation of the mother-daughter bond in Book 13 looks back to other female figures operating in a similar context of separation, marriage and lament. A first parallel is established with *Aeneid* 7 which features the queen and the princess of Latium, a city under siege just like Troy in *Metamorphoses* 13. The attribution of the phrase *regia coniunx* to both Amata (*Aen.* 7.56) and Hecuba (*Met.* 13.483) further encourages such a comparison.<sup>598</sup> As her speech to Latinus shows (*Aen.* 7.359-372), Amata did not want to consent to Lavinia's marriage to Aeneas, which was decreed by fate and communicated to the girl's father by his father Faunus (*Aen.* 7.95-106). Similarly, as Polyxena's words show (*Met.* 13.462-464), Hecuba would not want to consent to her daughter's sacrifice, decreed by dead Achilles and communicated to the Achaeans in a vision (*Met.* 13.441-448). More

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<sup>597</sup> Fantham (2004-2005) 122 interprets this appropriation of feelings as part of Hecuba's egoistic lament.

<sup>598</sup> The lack of interest in epic influences is evident in the fact that neither Bömer nor Hopkinson mentions the parallel.

importantly, Amata expressed her fear of losing Lavinia in terms similar to those Ovid uses to describe Polyxena's separation from Hecuba. The Latin queen spoke of Aeneas the bandit seeking the seas with Lavinia while *she* is left behind (*nec matris miseret, quam [...] relinquet / perfidus [...] abducta uirgine praedo?* *Aen.* 7.361-362), an idea which is here reproduced in the phrase *rapta sinu matris* (*Met.* 13.450). The same motif of violent separation from the mother occurs in the story of Ceres and Proserpina in *Metamorphoses* 5: Proserpina is described as *rapta* (*Met.* 5.395, 5.425, 5.471), while Ceres refers to Dis' abduction of her daughter as typical of a bandit (*neque enim praedone marito / filia tua digna est, si iam mea filia non est*, *Met.* 5.521-522). Both Amata and Ceres display a selfish sentiment, as their words to the fathers of their daughters point rather to the offence they personally suffer. While evoking the two epic precedents, Ovid's account of Polyxena's *raptus* focuses on the pathos of the separation of the daughter from her mother, emphasising their mutual affection, rather than offering a unilateral view on the matter.

Amata and Ceres' separation from Lavinia and Proserpina respectively is closely connected to the theme of marriage, with the mother reacting in both cases either to avert a wedding that is yet to happen, as in the case of Amata (*Aen.* 7.359-372), or to express her disapprobation of one that has happened in the eyes of the male figures involved, Dis (*Met.* 5.507-508) and Jupiter (*Met.* 5.526-529).<sup>599</sup> The use of the technical term for marriage (*ducere*) to describe Polyxena being led to the altar of sacrifice (*ducitur ad tumulum diroque fit hostia busto*, *Met.* 13.452)

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<sup>599</sup> See Chapter Two on the theme of marriage.

suggests that her separation from her mother is also related to the same motif, albeit in a perverted way.<sup>600</sup>

Ovid probably knows the variant of the myth according to which Achilles asked Polyxena's hand in marriage in exchange for a truce, but was killed by Paris when he went to negotiate (Hyg. *Fab.* 110 and Serv. *in Aen.* 3.321).<sup>601</sup> Moreover, Lucretius' representation of Iphigenia's sacrifice (*DRN* 1.95-100) has been recognised as a model for the present scene.<sup>602</sup> It is also possible that a later version, according to which Polyxena was, like Iphigenia, lured to the sacrifice under the pretence of a marriage to Achilles (Sen. *Tro.* 938-948), has its inspiration in a combination of the two myths possibly dating before Ovid's time. While his description of Polyxena's sacrifice as marriage belongs to a wider spectrum of such ideas in ancient literature,<sup>603</sup> a notion of marriage after death may be hiding under the girl's appeal to the Achaeans to respect her virginity as she dies:

*uos modo, ne Stygios adeam non libera manes,  
ite procul, si iusta peto, tactuque uiriles  
uirgineo remouete manus. acceptior illi,  
quisquis is est, quem caede mea placare paratis,  
liber erit sanguis; ...*

*Met.* 13.465-469

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<sup>600</sup> Crucially, of the three virgin brides, Polyxena is the only one who is truly and irrevocably lost to her mother through her sacrifice.

<sup>601</sup> According to Gantz (1993) 659, the first text to talk about marriage may be Lycophron's *Alexandra* 323-324 (depending on the interpretation of those obscure lines). The scholar believes that the whole idea of an erotic theme which is absent from Classical tragedy was probably introduced some time after the fifth century, but the artistic and literary sources of the time do not allow a more precise dating.

<sup>602</sup> Keith (2000) 122-123 and n. 72.

<sup>603</sup> Burkert (1983) 58-67 and Dowden (1989) in general; Loraux (1987) 37-42 with a focus on tragedy; Panoussi (2009) 149-150 discussing Andromache's mention of Polyxena in *Aeneid* 3; in later epic: Keith (2000) 86-89 and Panoussi (2007) 121 on Lucan's use of the motif of marriage as funeral.

The idea of a free woman's death is perhaps merged here with the ideal of a virgin bride, a combination accentuated by the syntactical framing of the latter (*uirgineo*) by two references to the former (*libera; liber*). Polyxena wants to preserve her virginity (even if it is menaced only by touch) both because it helps her maintain her free status,<sup>604</sup> and because her death on Achilles' tomb opens the way to a *post-mortem* marriage to him, and she knows that the ideal bride should be a virgin.<sup>605</sup>

Later Hecuba says that a funeral will be her daughter's dowry (*funeribus dotabere, regia uirgo, Met. 13.523*), which echoes a Virgilian line said of Lavinia who is actually going to marry Aeneas (*sanguine Troiano et Rutulo dotabere, uirgo, Aen. 7.318*).<sup>606</sup> In fact, the similarities between the Latin and the Trojan princess are further supported by the fact that the tragic Iphigenia can be considered a common model for the two epic virgins. Again, however, the other Ovidian daughter comes into play in the context of an Underworld marriage. Both Proserpina and Polyxena leave their mothers to marry in the Underworld, the former to its king (*inferni pollens matrona tyranni!* *Met. 5.508*), the latter to the best of the Achaeans.

As this is a marriage *post mortem*, what remains for the living is to mourn the dead. Funeral lament provides yet another connection between this mother-daughter pair and a number of female figures in the two epics who mourn their beloved ones, whether actually dead or wrongly presumed as such. As Amata

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<sup>604</sup> Thus Bömer (1982) ad 13.457 and Hopkinson (2000) ad 13.464-7, who point the parallels to the respective lines in the *Hecuba*; Hopkinson additionally suggests that if the men touched the virgin that may have resulted in the victim in the sacrifice not being acceptable to the gods.

<sup>605</sup> Ideal of virginity: Pomeroy (1975) 64 (in general); Keith (2000) 123 (emphasising Polyxena's adherence to the Roman ideal).

<sup>606</sup> Hopkinson (2000) ad 13.523.

seems to care more about Turnus than about her own daughter,<sup>607</sup> it is he whom she mourns believing he has died in the last book of the *Aeneid*, characteristically tearing her clothes before she commits suicide (*purpureos moritura manu discindit amictus, Aen.* 12.602). This act is reproduced in the case of another woman falsely lamenting her relative's death, namely, Procne who believes that her sister Philomela is dead (*uelamina Procne / deripit ex umeris auro fulgentia lato, Met.* 6.566-567). Like Amata, Procne mourns for someone who is not really dead and builds an empty tomb (*inane sepulchrum, Met.* 5.568), just as Andromache does for someone whom she has actually lost forever, her husband Hector (*tumulum ... inanem, Aen.* 3.304). That tomb (*Hectoreum ad tumulum, Aen.* 3.304) is similar to the one Polyxena is sacrificed on, according to Andromache's own version of the story (*hostilem ad tumulum, Aen.* 3.322),<sup>608</sup> as it is found in the same metrical position following after an elision in her words as it had in the poet's earlier on. In his own description of Polyxena's sacrifice Ovid looks back to both Virgilian passages placing the word 'tomb' again in the same position in the line: *ducitur ad tumulum diroque fit hostia busto (Met.* 13.452).

As for the act of mourning itself, Hecuba rather resembles that mother of the poem whose daughter was earlier paralleled to Polyxena, namely, Ceres in *Metamorphoses* 5. The goddess, whose daughter is not dead, performs two typical gestures of lament, the tearing of her hair (*inornatos laniauit diua capillos, Met.* 5.472) and breast-beating (*repetita suis percussit pectora palmis, Met.* 5.473). Hecuba repeats these actions (*consuetaque pectora plangit, Met.* 13.491; *laniato*

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<sup>607</sup> See Chapter Two.

<sup>608</sup> Hopkinson (2000) ad 13.451-2 lists the verbal parallels between Andromache's words and the sacrifice scene in *Met.* 13.

*pectore*, *Met.* 13.493; *albentes lacerata comas*, *Met.* 13.534) but also expands her repertoire to include all possible mourning elements. She embraces the body (*corpus complexa ... inane*, *Met.* 13.488), sheds tears (*lacrimas in uulnere fundit*, *Met.* 13.490), gives the daughter kisses (*osculaque ore tegit*, *Met.* 13.491), sweeps the blood of her wounds with her hair (*canitiemque suam concreto in sanguine uerrens*, *Met.* 13.492),<sup>609</sup> as well as uttering a long lament (*Met.* 13.494-532).

Notably, apart from Hecuba, there is only one other female figure mourning a relative in Latin epic to be allowed to express her lamentation in direct speech, and that is Anna in *Aeneid* 4. In a speech full of kinship terms (*germana*, *Aen.* 4.675; *sororem*, 4.677; *soror*, 4.682), Anna expresses her sorrow for not being there when Dido killed herself and complains for being left out of her plan (*Aen.* 4.675-683). Finally, she asks for water to wash off the blood from her sister's wound:

... *date, uulnera lymphis*

*abluam et, extremus si quis super halitus errat,  
ore legam.'* ...

*Aen.* 4.683-685

Similarly, Hecuba affectionately addresses her dead daughter (*nata ... dolor ultime matris*, *Met.* 13.494; *nata, ... meum, tua uulnera, uulnus*, 13.495; *mea nata*, 13.521), complains about her fortune, and eventually asks for water to perform the same act using the same words in the exact same position in the line:

*quid moror interea crudelia uulnera lymphis*

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<sup>609</sup> There might be a corruption in the text, as Hopkinson (2000) ad loc. suggests; *uerrens* may be corrected into *uellens*, although the idea of tearing in this verb is not strong enough. I would, however, be tempted to keep the transmitted *uerrens*, not only because the act of tearing the hair is described later in the scene, *Met.* 13.534, but also because the sweeping of hair over the wounds in order to dry up the blood may recall Anna's similar gesture over Dido's body in *Aen.* 4.687 (there using her clothes instead of her hair).



*abluere et sparsos inmiti sanguine uultus?*<sup>610</sup>

*dixit et ad litus passu processit anili,*

*albentes lacerata comas. 'date, Troades, urnam'*

*Met. 13.531-534*

As for Anna's wish to "collect Dido's last breath in her mouth", it finds its counterpart in the description of Hecuba's kissing Polyxena's mouth (*osculaque ore tegit, Met. 13.491*), in both cases reflecting an ideal cherished and practiced by the Romans.<sup>611</sup> Moreover, it has been observed that Hecuba shifts the attention of the mourning from her daughter to herself and devotes large part of her speech wishing she was already dead like Priam and envisaging a bleak future in the service of Ulysses (*Met. 13.503-513 and 516-522*).<sup>612</sup> This also brings her one step closer to Anna, who focuses on her own exclusion from Dido's death-plan and the fact that her sister's end has brought about that of herself and the whole city: *extinxti te meque, soror, populumque patresque / Sidonios urbemque tuam (Aen. 4.682-683)*.

Hecuba's gestures of lament undoubtedly look back to Anna's mourning of Dido, that is, to the only other instance in a familial context where such actions are directed towards a woman who has actually died. The appropriateness of that particular context is also explained by the fact that a predominantly tragic myth, the sacrifice of Polyxena, is informed by the most tragic part of Virgil's epic, *Aeneid* 4. The same can apply to the dialogue with its two other intertexts, the Virgilian story of Amata and Lavinia, and the Ovidian episode of Procne and Philomela, which are also heavy with tragic influences, either by reworking tragedies of the

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<sup>610</sup> Bömer (1982) ad 13.531 points out the parallel phrase and quotes Pease's comment about the ritual purification of the dead body (Comm. ad loc.). Hopkinson (2000) ad 13.531-2 notes the Virgilian echo and the similarity in the situation: "one woman (Anna) tends to another (Dido) in death". The motif of washing Polyxena's dead body is already present in Eur. *Hec.* 609-613.

<sup>611</sup> Treggiari (1991) 484. See also the section on the Carthaginian sisters in Chapter One.

<sup>612</sup> Fantham (2004) 72.

same topic or by having their protagonists modelled on tragic heroines. Finally, the points of contact with the myth of Ceres and Proserpina demonstrate how the use of a particular recurrent theme, dealing with the loss of a female relative, establishes connections between parts of a poem that otherwise seem completely independent of each other, providing the reader with incentives to reinterpret earlier narratives and see later ones from a different perspective.

### **Losing a mother: Jocasta and Ismene**

The theme of loss of a female relative also informs the final section of this chapter; whereas I previously dealt with mothers losing their daughters either temporarily (to abduction) or permanently (to death), I will now focus on epic maternal figures who commit suicide in despair after all their attempts to bring about change in men's plans have failed. While very scarce in Homeric epic,<sup>613</sup> the theme of female suicide is found in abundance in tragedy,<sup>614</sup> both as allusions to well-known myths and as detailed descriptions of a heroine's suicide, usually as part of a messenger's speech.<sup>615</sup> Hellenistic literature also abounds in such scenes, ranging from Apollonius' epic to Parthenius' love stories.<sup>616</sup> Never, however, is a heroine's suicide followed by the description of the reaction to that event of her

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<sup>613</sup> Suicide is explicitly mentioned only with regard to a heroine that Odysseus sees in the Underworld, namely, Epicaste, Oedipus' mother (*Od.* 11.277-279). He also sees Phaedra (*Od.* 11.321), Ajax (*Od.* 11.469) and the phantom of Heracles (*Od.* 11.601), but does not mention their suicides. According to tragedy, Leda, Helen's mother, whom Odysseus sees among the heroines (*Od.* 11.298), also committed suicide.

<sup>614</sup> Loraux (1987) 7-30 discusses female tragic suicides.

<sup>615</sup> Heroines who commit suicide are Antigone (*Soph. Ant.*), Deianira (*Soph. Trach.*), Euadne (*Eur. Suppl.*), Eurydice (Haemon's mother in *Soph. Ant.*), Jocasta (*Soph. OT*), and Phaedra (*Eur. Hipp.*; Sophocles also wrote a *Phaedra*, which survives in fragments), to name but a few. Latin tragedy follows suit, often with an overwhelming emphasis on details (Jocasta's suicide taking place on stage at *Sen. Oed.* 1033-1041 is a case in point).

<sup>616</sup> AR 1.1063-1065 (Cleite); Parth. 4 (Oenone), 11 (Byblis), 28 (Cleite); Apoll. *Bibl.* 4.34.7 (Althaea).

female relative. Suicide is also a theme of Roman legend, the most famous example being Lucretia (Liv. *AUC* 1.58; Ov. *F.* 2.813-836). It becomes fashionable in the Early Empire when wives commit suicide together with their husbands who have lost the emperor's favour (as in the case of Seneca's wife, Tac. *Ann.* 15.63), or even set the example for them (as in the case of Arria, Plin. *Ep.* 3.16.6).<sup>617</sup>

In Latin epic it is Virgil who furnishes not one but two examples of female suicide, both of which cause the reaction of a female relative with whom the heroine is most closely associated in the epic. At Dido's suicide her sister Anna delivers a speech and performs mourning gestures (*Aen.* 4.672-687), while at Amata's her daughter Lavinia reacts non-verbally with tears, self-hurting and breast-beating (*Aen.* 12.605-607). Ovid also grants this type of end to some of his heroines (e.g. Ino in *Met.* 4.528-530, Althaea in *Met.* 8.531-532) but no female relatives react to their suicide.<sup>618</sup> He also uses the Virgilian models in other instances of loss, either temporary or permanent, as was demonstrated in the previous sections of this chapter. Finally, Statius' *Thebaid* offers two examples of female suicide, Jocasta in Book 11 and Evadne in Book 12, while alluding to a third one through a simile referring to the less well-known myth of Erigone.<sup>619</sup> Whereas Evadne's leap on Capaneus' funeral pyre is not dwelt upon for long (*Theb.* 12.800-802),<sup>620</sup> Jocasta's suicide receives extensive treatment from the narrator (*Theb.* 11.634-641). Before looking at the scene itself and its models, I will discuss the relationship between Jocasta and her daughters, Antigone and Ismene, as it may

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<sup>617</sup> Edwards (2007) 179-206 discusses female suicide in Rome with reasons and specific examples.

<sup>618</sup> The sisters of Meleager seem to weep rather for his death than for their mother's, as the narrator refers to them as *sorores* (*Met.* 8.535), not as *natae*; the women who react to Ino's suicide, on the other hand, are her companions (*Sidoniae comites*, *Met.* 4.543), not her relatives.

<sup>619</sup> Dietrich (2009) 190-193 reads Argia's mission to bury Polynices as a failed suicide attempt.

<sup>620</sup> The respective scene in tragedy takes up over 130 lines (*Eur. Suppl.* 980-1113).

explain the absence of the former and the presence of the latter at their mother's final hour.

Antigone and Ismene's first physical appearance in the narrative only comes in *Thebaid* 7 where they accompany Jocasta to the Argive camp.<sup>621</sup> It is acknowledged that Statius moves away from his tragic models by including the Theban princesses in Jocasta's expedition.<sup>622</sup> Apart from adding pathos to the episode,<sup>623</sup> this choice also provides the reader with a brief glimpse into the relationship of the two sisters with their mother. On the one hand, we see the two girls supporting their aged mother:

*hinc atque hinc natae, melior iam sexus, aniles  
praecipitantem artus et plus quam possit euntem  
sustentant. ...*

*Theb.* 7.479-481

The emphasis on their support and on Jocasta's advanced years indicates that without their help she would not be able to reach Polynices' camp. Physical support, however, is not the only reason that Antigone and Ismene are chosen to accompany their mother, as she could have done that with the help of servants. It is in fact acknowledged as a means of achieving the *captatio benevolentiae* of the court for the client of an orator to bring forth children (Pl. *Apol.* 34c). Similarly, Jocasta brings Antigone and Ismene with her in order to influence Polynices' decision by exploiting his love for his sisters. This is why they are referred to as

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<sup>621</sup> Perhaps as a reworking of the three person embassy as found in *Iliad* 9, where the three men (Odysseus, Ajax and Phoenix) have been substituted by the three female relatives of the angry warrior, there exemplified by Achilles and here by Polynices.

<sup>622</sup> Smolenaars (1994) ad 470-563.

<sup>623</sup> According to Smolenaars (1994) ad 470-563, "this offers the opportunity for the pathetic description in 479-81, contributes to the highly emotional character of the meeting (495f.) and is one of the causes of Polynices' decision (535f.). This dramatically effective element is taken from Livy's account of Veturia's expedition to Coriolanus [2.40]".

*natae*,<sup>624</sup> that is, through their relationship to their mother. For the same reason, namely, because Jocasta uses them as an implicit blackmail for Polynices, they are not individualised yet but denoted by a general term such as “daughters”; it does not matter who they are, as long as they move Polynices by their relationship to his mother.

Indeed, when they appear again, the focalisation has changed; they are no longer denoted by *natae* because now they are seen through their brother’s eyes: *nunc ipsam urguens, nunc cara sororum / pectora* (*Theb.* 7.495-496). As intended, their presence makes Polynices change his mind:

*ipse etiam ante oculos nunc matris ad oscula uersus,  
nunc rudis Ismenes nunc flebiliora precantis  
Antigones, uariaque animum turbante procella  
exciderat regnum: ...*

*Theb.* 7.534-537

Here for the first time in the epic, the Theban sisters are named and given individual characteristics. Antigone seems to be the one who understands better the consequences of the fraternal strife, contrary to her sister whose designation as *rudis* may indicate not only that she is the younger of the two (as in Eur. *Phoen.*), but also the most “inexperienced”.<sup>625</sup> This differentiation foreshadows the different paths they are going to follow later, not only in their general attitude towards the war, but also in their behaviour towards their mother. In the subsequent lines,

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<sup>624</sup> To this is added *melior iam sexus*, for which Smolenaars (1994) ad 479 accepts the explanation of Amar-Lemaire which contrasts the daughters’ *pietas* to their brothers’ *impietas*. However, this phrase points also forward in the narrative, where Antigone will go out to the battlefield to bury Polynices surpassing the weakness of her sex and proving true of the present characterisation; not by chance her counterpart and newly found sister, Argia, is precisely described as leaving her weak sex behind: *sexuque inmane relicto / tractat opus* (*Theb.* 12.178-179).

<sup>625</sup> Smolenaars (1994) ad 535. Antigone, however, is also described as *rudis* during the teichoscopia scene earlier in the book (*Theb.* 7.253), when her lack of experience is compared to her tutor’s ability to identify the warriors on the battlefield.

however, the poet returns to their designation first as sisters of Polynices (*mediaeque sorores*, *Theb.* 7.557, focalised through Tydeus) and then as daughters of Jocasta (*natas ipsamque repellunt*, *Theb.* 7.610, viewed through the eyes of the Argives),<sup>626</sup> to remind the reader that Jocasta is using her weeping daughters as a means by which to win Polynices' heart and convince him to stop the war.

The sisters appear later lamenting their family's misfortunes in the safety of their bedrooms; this time they are introduced through their bond to each other (*sorores*, *Theb.* 8.607) and to their father (*proles / Oedipodae*, *Theb.* 8.608-609). While they continue what they were doing in the previous book, namely, weeping, here Antigone and Ismene are compared to Procne and Philomela, who in their new avian form mourn the death of Itys (*Theb.* 8.616-620). The reference to the Pandionids evokes their story, from Statius' point of view most recently treated in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The simile is appropriate on many levels: it strengthens the idea of closeness between the two sisters by comparing them to a striking example of sisterly solidarity; it also suits the theme of marriage that prevails in Ismene's confession of her dream about her fiancé Atys.<sup>627</sup> Finally, it foreshadows the role of the two sisters towards the end of the poem: before curiously disappearing from the narrative they will each mourn the death of a loved one.<sup>628</sup>

Not by chance one of the latter, who is also the object of their current lament (*haec matris taedas <gemit>*, *Theb.* 8.611), Jocasta, appears as soon as

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<sup>626</sup> A choice which creates a symmetry of five triads: *locasta ... / [...] / hinc atque hinc natae* (*Theb.* 7.475-479); *matrem iterat, nunc ipsam urgens, nunc cara sororum / pectora* (*Theb.* 7.495-496); *nunc matris ... / nunc ... Ismenes, nunc ... / Antigones* (*Theb.* 7.534-536); *genetrix ... mediaque sorores* (*Theb.* 7.557); *natas ipsamque* (*Theb.* 7.610).

<sup>627</sup> The confession scene is discussed in Chapter One; see Chapter Two for the theme of love and marriage in the story of Procne and Philomela.

<sup>628</sup> Procne, Philomela and the nightingale, in which one of them turns into depending on the version of the myth, are widely used as symbols of grief and mourning from Homer onwards, as Loraux (1998) 57-65 briefly discusses.

Ismene has finished telling Antigone about her dream.<sup>629</sup> The dying Atys is now being carried into the palace; the queen is the first to see him and immediately calls for Ismene, as that is what the young man asks for (*Theb.* 8.641-644). Ismene's reaction is explicitly governed by her modesty (*tollebat in ora / uirgo manus, tenuit saeuus pudor, Theb.* 8.644-645), but it is her mother who urges her to attend to her dying fiancé, fulfilling his final wish:

... *at tamen ire*  
*cogitur: indulget summum hoc locasta iacenti*  
*ostenditque offertque. ...*

*Theb.* 8.645-647

Although Ismene is still a virgin, she is forced by circumstances as well as by her mother to behave as a married woman who has now become a widow.<sup>630</sup> The intervention of Jocasta finally liberates her daughter from the weight of the two conflicting Virgilian models that her characterisation during the confession scene evokes. There Ismene resembles Dido in confiding her dreams about a man to her sister as well as in insisting on the preservation of her modesty (*pudor*). She is also similar to Lavinia in that neither princess has a say in her betrothal, but both feel uncomfortable and refrain from revealing their true feelings about the men in question.<sup>631</sup> If these two models continue to be at work, Ismene would either have to die in madness after being loved and abandoned, like the Carthaginian queen, or accept her fate in silence and never confess her true feelings, like the Latin princess. The choice Jocasta offers, namely to become a widow without suffering

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<sup>629</sup> The other, Polynices, is Antigone's object of lament, both now (perhaps she is the one who *profugum gemit ... fratrem, Theb.* 8.612) and more extensively in Book 12.

<sup>630</sup> Hershkowitz (1994) 139-140 reads this "stunning transformation" of Ismene as an indication of her acceptance of the role of a wife and her sexual submission to Atys, who in a sense takes her virginity as he dies.

<sup>631</sup> A more detailed analysis of the confession scene is found in Chapter One.

the intermediate stage, makes it possible for Ismene to break from her models, and admit to her love without abandoning her *pudor* (*ibi demum teste remoto / fassa pios gemitus lacrimasque in uulnera fudit, Theb. 8.653-654*); in other words, she can be Dido without stopping being Lavinia. This episode puts Jocasta on the same level as her daughters, and presents her as a caring mother,<sup>632</sup> allowing Ismene to express her true feelings, which the poet had revealed to the reader but she had to keep concealed even from her own sister in the preceding scene. This affectionate behaviour is the only indication of Jocasta's maternal feelings towards one of her daughters, and it is significant for the outcome of their story that Ismene is the recipient of such feelings.

All three women appear again in a scene reminiscent of that in Book 7: the queen rushes to meet Eteocles and her daughters run along. This time they are not supporting her old limbs but, quite the opposite, trying to keep up with her pace:

*non comites, non ferre piae uestigia natae  
aequa ualent, tantum miserae dolor ultimus addit  
robur, et exangues crudescunt luctibus anni.*

*Theb. 11.321-323*

In fact, while Antigone and Ismene are once again described as *piae natae*, their piety which proved itself in the embassy scene of Book 7 here has no avail; Jocasta is unrealistically faster, resulting in them falling behind and eventually separating from her. This is clear in the following scene, where Antigone heads for the ramparts in order to address her other brother, Polynices, while Ismene's whereabouts are not mentioned. In other words, the paradox of the aged mother

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<sup>632</sup> The same act, of course, could be read as a simple social obligation: Jocasta feels she has to fulfil Atys' dying wish, regardless of Ismene's possible objections, something that is supported by the accumulation of terms describing the queen almost pushing her daughter towards the dying youth: *cogitur* (Ismene) (*Theb. 8.646*), *ostenditque offertque* (*Theb. 8.647*).



outdoing her youthful daughters in running causes a break in their relationship. Ismene, the focal point of the Atys scene, now recedes to the background, becoming a silent witness of her mother's suicide at the end of the book. Antigone, who has so far been a marginal figure, almost always appearing together with her sister,<sup>633</sup> will acquire independence and match her tragic counterparts. Finally, Jocasta will fulfil her traditional tragic role and commit suicide at the impending death of her sons.

The Theban queen, who is described as *amens* (315) and *misera* (322), is compared to Agave in Bacchic frenzy (*Theb.* 11.318-320), just as Dido and Amata displayed maenadic characteristics and behaviour.<sup>634</sup> The influence of both Virgilian models on Jocasta has repercussions on the representation of her daughters. Just as Dido in her fury does not need Anna as a confidante, and Amata monopolises the attention of the reader pushing Lavinia in the background, Jocasta runs faster than Antigone and Ismene, breaking the bond that held them together in the previous books. But while Antigone is now free to develop her own character, Ismene is once again bound by the double models that were dictating her behaviour in the Atys scene.

Indeed, even before the news of the duel's outcome reaches her, Jocasta, faithful to her double Aeneadic model as well as her tragic counterpart, commits suicide:

*olim autem inceptae clamore exterrita pugnae  
regina extulerat notum penetralibus ensem,*

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<sup>633</sup> The single time when she appears without Ismene is at the *teichoscopia* scene in *Theb.* 7.243-397, where she asks an old guardian (*senem*, *Theb.* 7.246) about the Argive army *turre ... sola* (*Theb.* 7.243).

<sup>634</sup> Dido: *Aen.* 4.298-303; Amata: *Aen.* 7.376-377, 385-391. Panoussi (2009) 123-137 discusses their maenadic characteristics.

*ensem sceptriferi spolium lacrimabile Lai.  
multaque cum superis et diro questa cubili  
et nati furiis et **primi coniugis** umbris  
luctata est dextra, et prono uix pectore ferrum  
intrauit tandem: uenas perrumpit aniles  
uulnus et infelix lustratur sanguine lectus.*

*Theb.* 11.634-641

Jocasta kills herself in despair without being certain that either of her sons is dead, as the fight has just started. Likewise, Amata decides to commit suicide because she falsely believes that Turnus has died, though the fateful duel has not yet taken place (*infelix pugnae iuuenem in certamine credit / extinctum*, *Aen.* 12.598-599). While Amata and the tragic Jocasta hang themselves (*Aen.* 12.603; *Soph. OT* 1263-1264), Statius' Jocasta uses Laius' sword which Oedipus took as a trophy when he killed him, as does Seneca's heroine (*Sen. Oed.* 1033-1041). Dido also uses a sword, and it is the one belonging to Aeneas, who like Oedipus was responsible for her ill-starred second marriage (*ensemque recludit / Dardanium, non hos quaesitum munus in usus*, *Aen.* 4.646-647). Both she and Statius' heroine pierce their breast (*Aen.* 4.689; *Theb.* 11.639-640), while their Senecan counterpart makes a point of plunging the sword in the womb that contributed to such a crime (*Sen. Oed.* 1038-1039). Finally, in her death-speech Statius' Jocasta mentions her first husband who is long dead, echoing Dido's words referring to her revenge for Sychaeus' death moments before her suicide (*ulta uirum poenas inimico a fratre recepi*, *Aen.* 4.656).

Jocasta's suicide poses a problem for Ismene's reaction. With her mother oscillating between Amata and Dido, all three of them killing themselves because of men, Ismene is expected to play the corresponding roles of Lavinia and Anna, which

for once are very similar. Ismene is an eye-witness of her mother's death and the first to mourn her:

*illius exili stridentem in pectore plagam  
Ismene conlapsa super lacrimisque comisque  
siccabat plangens: ...*

*Theb.* 11.642-644

In beating her breast, she resembles Lavinia who is the first to react to Amata's suicide (*filia prima ... Lauinia, Aen.* 12.605) and together with the other women engages in breast-beating (*resonant late plangoribus aedes, Aen.* 12.607). In embracing her mother's dead body and trying to dry up the blood, however, Ismene recalls Anna after Dido's suicide:

*semianimemque sinu germanam amplexa fouebat  
cum gemitu atque atros siccabat ueste cruores.*

*Aen.* 4.686-687

Despite these similarities with the Virgilian heroines, what happens next in the *Thebaid* once again breaks both with Greek myths concerning Ismene's fate<sup>635</sup> and with the Latin epic intertexts discussed above:

*... qualis Marathonide silua  
flebilis Erigone caesi prope funera patris  
questibus absumptis tristem iam soluere nodum  
coeperat et fortes ramos moritura legebat.*

*Theb.* 11.644-647

The simile compares Ismene to Erigone, the daughter of Icarius. The latter offered wine to his peasant neighbours who then got drunk and murdered him; Erigone

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<sup>635</sup> In Greek tradition she is either the only one of the Theban royal family to survive (Greek tragedy) or she dies at the beginning of the war; see note 183 for these versions.

mourned his death and then hanged herself.<sup>636</sup> The implication is that Ismene too will follow the same path.<sup>637</sup>

What Jocasta did in Book 8 was to allow Ismene to play two incompatible roles at once, to keep Lavinia's *pudor* while expressing her passionate feelings like Dido did. With her mother dead, Ismene must come up with an alternative herself. If she has to choose between her two epic models, she cannot select Lavinia, because what she did was mourn her mother and then get on with the marriage arranged for her; Ismene's fiancé, however, is dead, and no one else appears to be next in line. The only option, therefore, is Anna, who laments Dido's death but then lives on; or does she? In reality the poet does not mention her beyond *Aen.* 4.687, but the presumption is that she lives and rules over the Carthaginians. Ovid imagines her as an exile a few years later who meets Aeneas again, this time in Italy, and eventually becomes a local goddess (*F.* 4.557-654).<sup>638</sup> Likewise, Ismene disappears from the narrative, but this time the poet goes a step further, or rather, his heroine opts for the alternative. The image of Erigone as she prepares the noose to hang herself that is evoked through the simile speaks louder than words to suggest that Ismene, the traditionally sole surviving member of Oedipus' family, also commits suicide, following the example of her mother, taking to extremes what a good Roman daughter was expected to do.<sup>639</sup> Such an end not only confirms the power of the mother-daughter bond in Statius' poem, but it also stands out as

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<sup>636</sup> Hyg. *Fab.* 130; Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.14.7; Sophocles and minor tragedians also wrote plays about Erigone, but only titles and a couple of lines survive.

<sup>637</sup> Scioli (2010) 209 n. 15.

<sup>638</sup> A similar story, combining the Virgilian and the Ovidian narratives, appears later in Silius (*Pun.* 8).

<sup>639</sup> Roman daughters considered their mothers as models for their own behaviour [Hallett (1984) 260-261]. Perhaps there is a parallel here between Ismene and the younger Arria, who is eager to commit suicide alongside her husband like her mother had done with her father (Tac. *Ann.* 16.34).

the only instance in Latin epic where the loss of a mother leaves no other option to her daughter but death.

## Conclusion

Female loss and mourning in Latin epic is as prevalent as it is in Greek epic and tragedy, with the protagonists often being modelled on specific epic and tragic precedents, whether in the same or a different myth, and not necessarily sharing the same family bond. Thus, Clymene and the Heliades are to a certain extent based on their Aeschylean and Euripidean counterparts, but they also demonstrate qualities both thematically and verbally akin to those of Virgilian mourners such as Anna, Amata and Lavinia. Ceres' temporary loss of her daughter evokes not only her Greek counterpart in the Homeric Hymn, but also another mother in the same poem, Clymene. Hecuba and Polyxena's story, on the other hand, creates a dialogue with victims of tragic sacrifice such as Polyxene, but also Iphigenia. It re-evaluates the affinity of marriage and death that the Attic tragedians explored in many of their plays, while the characterisation of the protagonists looks back to Virgilian characters in a similar context of loss. As for the theme of female suicide, it pervades Latin epic from the *Aeneid* to the *Thebaid*, and establishes connections between the poems, and between the individual stories of their protagonists, while discussing the multiple expressions of maternal, filial and sisterly affection. Finally, as was the case with the theme of unanimity and that of love and marriage, Latin epic loss and mourning is closely linked to Roman gestures of lament, and even specific examples of women who have to deal with separation from their loved ones.

## Chapter Four – Storytellers

Storytelling is the final theme that will be discussed in relation to all-female family bonds in Latin epic. In its widest definition it characterises most epic sisters treated in the previous chapters: Virgil's Dido and Statius' Ismene confide in Anna and Antigone respectively about their dreams concerning men they secretly love; Ovid's Philomela weaves a message describing her rape for Procne to read; Valerius' Circe tells Medea about her imaginary meeting with Jason; Antigone and Argia tell each other their own version of the war, and at the very end of the *Thebaid* Deipyle hears from Argia what happened to her on the battlefield of Thebes.<sup>640</sup> There are, however, three sets of sisters in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* who singularly engage in the act of storytelling, either to pass the time, as in the case of the daughters of Minyas in Book 4, or to compete in a song contest, as do the daughters of Pierus who pit themselves against the Muses in Book 5.

In this chapter I will discuss the two stories identifying their respective models in Greek and Latin literature, as well as their correspondences to Roman practices as far as female attitudes and family relationships are concerned. I will show how internal narrative provides the frame for the representation of all-female family bonds, and serves to highlight the issues of unanimity and individuality among epic sisters. The dialogue established between the two episodes will also confirm the impression already present elsewhere in this thesis that Ovid uses this

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<sup>640</sup> On the contrary, there is no storytelling between mothers and daughters in the four epics in question, but this is not surprising given the limited verbal interaction between them, at least from the part of the daughter.

type of family relationships as a way to bind together myths which at first glance seem independent from one another.

### The daughters of Minyas

The whole of Thebes is celebrating the rites of Bacchus but for the virgin daughters of Minyas, whose devotion to Minerva keeps them indoors and occupied with chaste activities such as spinning and weaving (*Met.* 4.1-415). Only one story predating Ovid survives in Antoninus Liberalis' 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD compilation of myths (*Met.* 10):<sup>641</sup> according to the summary's heading, this account goes back to Nicander, who told of the Minyads in the fourth book of his *Heteroionumena*; the same tale was found in Corinna.<sup>642</sup> This Hellenistic version names the Minyads as Leucippe, Arsippe and Alcathe, and describes them as being married, thus agreeing to a large extent with the two subsequent accounts in Plutarch (*Quaest. gr.* 299E) and Aelian (*VH* 3.42).<sup>643</sup> The virginal status of the sisters, however, is not the only element that differentiates the Ovidian account from its predecessor and potential model. In the latter, the Minyads are punished for their irreverence by going mad and tearing apart Leucippe's son, before eventually being transformed into three different birds. In the *Metamorphoses*, however, no filicide takes

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<sup>641</sup> Aeschylus wrote a tragedy called *Xantriai*, Wool-carders, but it is not certain whether Ovid used it as a model [Bömer (1976a) ad 4.1-415; Rosati (2007) ad 4.1-415]. The only indications we have of its plot are that Pentheus' death was located on Mt. Cithaeron (*Schol.* in Aesch. *Eum.* 26), Lyssa inspired the Bacchantes (*Phot. Lex.* 326.19), and Hera appeared in disguise (*Schol.* in Aristoph. *Ran.* 1344; *Pl. Resp.* 381d). Based on the mention of Pentheus, Gantz (1993) 737 believes that the play is associated with him and not with the daughters of Minyas.

<sup>642</sup> Corinna probably wrote in the Hellenistic period rather than being a contemporary of Pindar [Robbins (2011) s.v. *Corinna*].

<sup>643</sup> Minor differences in the names of two sisters: *Arsinoe* in Plutarch; *Alcithoe* in Aelian.

place,<sup>644</sup> the element of madness is absent from their punishment, and the daughters of Minyas are all turned into bats.<sup>645</sup> Furthermore, Ovid only names two of the sisters, Alcithoe and Leuconoe, thus leaving their exact number undefined, as he did in the case of the Heliades in Book 2. In fact, the description of the two named Heliades, Phaethusa and Lampetie, was followed by that of an anonymous “third” sister, while here the mention of Alcithoe is followed by that of an anonymous sister, then of Leuconoe, before the narrative comes full circle back to Alcithoe.

The greatest Ovidian innovation consists of the Minyads’ status as narrators, going beyond the Greek versions where they prefer spinning and weaving to participating in the Bacchic rites.<sup>646</sup> Here one of the sisters who remains anonymous suggests that they also tell stories to each other in order to pass the time:

*e quibus una leui **deducens** pollice filum*

[...]

*‘utile opus manuum **uario** sermone leuemus*

*perque uices aliquid, quod tempora longa uideri*

*non sinat, in medium uacuas referamus ad aures.’*

*Met.* 4.36, 39-41

Scholarship has dealt at length with the Minyads’ narrative profile: even from the outset, they appear to comply with Callimachean precepts of slender poetry

<sup>644</sup> Filicide is, however, present in a couple of episodes framing this one: a few lines earlier Pentheus is torn to pieces by his mother Agave and her sisters in their Bacchic frenzy (*Met.* 3), as Rosati (2007) ad 4.1-415 points out; in the episode following the story of the Minyads Melicertes is killed by his mother Ino maddened by Tisiphone’s attack (*Met.* 4). A similar fate befalls Itys, who is cut to pieces by his mother Procne and her sister Philomela in their vengeful madness (*Met.* 6).

<sup>645</sup> Rosati (2007) ad 4.1-415 suggests that they all become bats because these animals not only hate the light of day, but also avoid open spaces and remain close to buildings.

<sup>646</sup> ἀπέβησαν ἐκτόπως φίλεργοι (*Ant. Lib. Met.* 10.1); αἱ μὲν περι τοὺς ἰστοὺς εἶχον, καὶ ἐπονοῦντο περὶ τὴν Ἐργάνην εὖ μάλα φιλοτίμως (*Ael. VH* 3.42).



(*deducere* being the technical term for both spinning a thread and creating Neoteric poetry)<sup>647</sup> and a variety of themes (*uario sermone, Met. 4.39*).<sup>648</sup> They also seem to prefer obscure stories<sup>649</sup> concerned with erotic adventures: the first narrator picks the story of Pyramus and Thisbe *quoniam uulgaris fabula non est (Met. 4.53)*. Alcithoe declares that she will not speak of Daphnis' *uulgatos ... amores (Met. 4.276)*, but of the effeminising powers of Salmacis' pool because *causa latet (Met. 4.287)*. Finally, it is not by chance that the words *amo* and *amor* appear 25 times in the three narratives.<sup>650</sup>

The daughters of Minyas' Callimachean aspirations as delineated in the introduction to their episode and confirmed in the course of the story evoke Virgil's similar announcement in his second proem of the *Georgics*. Alcithoe's rejection of Daphnis' *uulgatos amores* combines the Hellenistic poet's aversion for the "much frequented beloved" (*μισέω καὶ περίφοιτον ἐρώμενον, Epigr. 28.3*) and his disgust for "anything that is available to all" (*σικχαίνω πάντα τὰ δημόσια, Epigr. 28.4*), not directly but through the mediation of Virgil's announcement of his intention to try a new path because *omnia iam uulgata (Virg. G. 3.4)*. In fact the dialogue with the *Georgics* goes beyond the storytellers' poetics, with the setting recalling another Virgilian passage with Callimachean influences,<sup>651</sup> namely, the description of the Nereids in the epyllion of Aristaeus (*G. 4.334-349*). There a group

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<sup>647</sup> Salzman-Mitchell (2005) 165; Rosati (2007) ad 4.36 and 54.

<sup>648</sup> Rosati (2007) ad 4.39-41 points out that the use of *uarius sermo*, a Virgilian phrase (*Aen. 8.309*) that suggests the alternation of voices and the blending of literary genres, also evokes the etymology of the noun from *sero*, thus fitting in very well with the theme of weaving.

<sup>649</sup> Another Callimachean ideal: Wheeler (1999) 182; Rosati (2007) ad 4.43-52.

<sup>650</sup> With 18 occurrences *amor* is by far the most common noun in *Met. 4.1-415*, followed by *deus* (with 16 occurrences), and *corpus* (appearing 15 times). After *sum*, *uideo* is the most common verb with 22 instances.

<sup>651</sup> Thomas (1988); Jones (2005) 86.

of (more loosely defined) sisters sits in their underwater palace weaving (*uelleræ Nymphae / carpebant*, G. 4.334-335; *fusis mollia pensa / deuoluunt*, G. 4.348-349), and Clymene tells her captivated audience (*carmine quo captæ*, G. 4.348) love stories about the gods:

*... curam Clymene narrabat inanem  
Volcani, Martisque dolos et dulcia furta,  
aque Chao densos diuum numerabat amores*  
G. 4.345-347<sup>652</sup>

Likewise the daughters of Minyas sit in a circle spinning and weaving, taking turns to tell love stories, including precisely the one about Mars and Venus. But while the Nereids combine divine knowledge, Callimachean erudition and first-hand experience of love stories, the Minyads fall short of both the Virgilian poet and his characters whom they aspire to resemble, as they are neither sexually experienced<sup>653</sup> nor as knowledgeable as they boast to be, since they refuse to accept Bacchus' divine parentage.<sup>654</sup>

From the outset the Minyads are distinguished from the rest of the Theban women both in the poet's description and in their own words. An elaborate contrast linking the end of Book 3 with the beginning of Book 4 introduces the protagonists of the episode:

*talibus exemplis monitæ noua sacra frequentant  
turaque dant sanctasque colunt **Ismenides** aras.*  
Met. 3.732-733

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<sup>652</sup> A model for the story of the Minyads as well as an outline of the *Metamorphoses*, according to Rosati (2007) ad 4.171-189, who points out the role of *Mars and Venus* as a preface for other stories in both cases.

<sup>653</sup> It is tempting to think of Virgil's supposed nickname Parthenias (Serv. *in Aen.* pr. 7) in this context.

<sup>654</sup> Either they really do not know about Jupiter and Semele's affair, or they choose to ignore it despite the precedent of Pentheus, in which case they should have known better.

*at non Alcithoe **Minyeias** orgia censet  
accipienda dei, sed adhuc temeraria Bacchum  
progeniem negat esse louis sociasque **sorores**  
impietatis habet. ...*

*Met. 4.1-4*

While the other women are named *Ismenides* after a landmark of their country, the river Ismenus,<sup>655</sup> Alcithoe and by extension her sisters are introduced as “daughters of Minyas”. In fact, the emphasis on their relationship to their father is very apt in the context of their rejection of Bacchus on the grounds of false paternity (*progeniem negat esse louis*, *Met. 4.3*). These introductory lines also indicate the nature of their sisterly bond. Alcithoe represents them all by monopolising the verbs of this passage, but her sisters concur with her attitude towards Bacchus (*sociasque sorores / ... habet*, *Met. 4.3-4*), and consequently have an equal share in her crime of irreverence. The same contrast is repeated after the description of the Bacchic rites, but this time it is the Minyads as a whole who are distinguished from the Theban female population:

*‘placatus mitisque’ rogant **Ismenides** ‘adsis,’  
iussaue sacra colunt; solae **Minyeides** intus*

*Met. 4.31-32*

The isolation of the daughters of Minyas is highlighted by the use of *solae*, while the direct comparison to the Theban devotees of Bacchus is visible in the text with the names indicating the two groups occupying the second half of the fourth and the whole of the fifth foot of their respective lines.

The description of the Minyads that follows expands their earlier characterisation as *sociae sorores*:

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<sup>655</sup> Rosati (2007) ad 4.31-32.

*intempestiua turbantes festa Minerua  
aut ducunt lanas aut stamina pollice uersant  
aut haerent telae famulasque laboribus urgent;*

*Met. 4.33-35*

Their scorn of Bacchus is counterbalanced by an excessive devotion to Minerva that manifests itself in their wool-carding, spinning, weaving and urging their maids to work while remaining indoors. Their industrious activity recalls that of Roman matrons, whose ideal occupation was to sit in the midst of their maids engaged in the laudable act of spinning wool.<sup>656</sup> The narrator, however, does not praise the Minyads' choice but deems it "untimely" (*intempestiua ... Minerua, Met. 4.33*), because they spin and weave instead of participating in the Bacchic rites that are taking place on that very day.<sup>657</sup> The words of the anonymous sister in the subsequent lines confirm their belief in having made the right decision, while repeating the contrast between them and the other Theban women:

*'dum cessant aliae commentaque sacra frequentant,  
nos quoque, quas Pallas, melior dea, detinet' inquit,*

*Met. 4.37-38*

Her speech matches the narrator's description in the use of plural verbs to refer to the sisters' joint actions, encouraging the reader to view them as a unit, and voices, even if obliquely, their objection to the new god's cult (*nos ... Pallas, melior dea, detinet, Met. 4.38*).

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<sup>656</sup> Bömer (1976a) ad 4.34 and 35; this ancient Roman ideal is most famously exemplified by Lucretia in Liv. *AUC* 1.57 and Ov. *F.* 2.741ff. As Fischler (1994) 128 points out, Augustus' attempts to promote his regime as traditional extended to the image of his household and his female relatives in particular, who, as Suetonius informs us, spent their time spinning and weaving (Suet. *Aug.* 62.4), producing clothes that the *princeps* used to wear at home (*Aug.* 73).

<sup>657</sup> According to Bömer (1976a) ad 4.35, there is another dimension to *intempestiua*: the daughters of Minyas spin and weave in the light of day and not after dark, which is when Lucretia is busy with such activities (the contrast, however, is limited to this Livian figure, because hers is an excessive behaviour that does not characterise the average Roman matron).

While at this point in the narrative the Greek versions move to the punishment of the irreverent Minyads, Ovid delays that event for more than 350 lines, attributing a new role to the sisters, namely, that of internal narrators. The process of storytelling provides an opportunity for each sister to acquire her independence from the rest, which is evident in the presentation of the speakers and in the ways they deliver their tales. Their claim to chastity is contradicted, as it is hardly appropriate for these predominantly erotic stories to come out of the mouth of devotees of the virgin goddess.<sup>658</sup> What their tales also convey, however, are each narrator's views about the sisterly bond, as well as her attempt to artistically surpass earlier narrators, including her own sisters.

The introduction of the anonymous Minyad in the narrative makes her stand out from her siblings (*e quibus una, Met. 4.36*), just as Alcithoe earlier represented them all in their very first appearance in the poem (*sociasque sorores / impietatis habet, Met. 4.3-4*). A similar phrasing introduces all narrators and stresses the contrast one-many or group-individual. The daughters of Minyas may hold the same views about Bacchus and perform the same tasks of spinning, weaving and storytelling, but each one of them is unique in her way of telling her story as well as in the content of the story itself. When the anonymous Minyad has finished her suggestion, the others agree and ask her to make a start (*dicta probant primamque iubent narrare sorores, Met. 4.42*), in a line that once again separates one from the group. At the end of her story, it is the turn of Leuconoe to speak (*orsa est / dicere*

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<sup>658</sup> Leach (1974) 109-110, Newlands (1986) 146, and Rosati (2007) ad 4.43-52 agree that all Minyads tell unfortunate love stories, a choice that expresses their diffidence towards love which is to be expected from devotees of Minerva. There are, however, hints in their accounts that they either sympathise with the victims of love or even envy their situation, thus contradicting their profession of chastity – see below.

*Leuconoe; uocem tenuere sorores*, *Met.* 4.167-168), and after her that of Alcithoe (*poscitur Alcithoe, postquam siluere sorores*, *Met.* 4.274). In all four cases the word *sorores* is found at the end of a line which describes one sister standing out from the rest. Furthermore, the names of Leuconoe and Alcithoe occupy the same metrical position in two introductory lines that are both metrically identical and thematically close: one sister starts to speak and the others remain silent. This arrangement guarantees that each narrator monopolises the talk and thus briefly gains independence from her sisters, while the latter's silence represents their temporary submission to the storyteller.

The anonymous sister tells of the unfortunate love story of Pyramus and Thisbe, after discarding three other tales (*Dercetis, Semiramis* and *nais*).<sup>659</sup> Although she does not voice her thoughts, her selection process is described by the external narrator; the implied reason for her choice is the relative obscurity of this particular tale as opposed to the other three (*quoniam uulgaris fabula non est, Met.* 4.53).<sup>660</sup> While the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe touches only superficially on family ties, when it refers to the power of their fathers to forbid their children to marry (*taedae quoque iure coissent, / sed uetuerere patres, Met.* 4.60-61), the narrator has already hinted at her views about her relationship to her sisters. She

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<sup>659</sup> Virgil discards five stories in the second proem of the *Georgics* which can be grouped under three categories: myths about Hercules (his labours dictated by Eurystheas, Busiris, and the story of Hylas); the birth of Apollo and Artemis on Delos; the story of Pelops and Hippodamia (*G.* 3.4-8).

<sup>660</sup> The three discarded stories are known from earlier sources: Dercetis' transformation into a creature that was half-woman and half-fish is told by Diodorus Siculus (*Bibl. Hist.* 2.4.3), Semiramis' transformation into a dove is found in the historians Ctesias (*FGrHist* 688 F 1, p. 438, 23ff.) and Diodorus Siculus (*Bibl. Hist.* 2.20.2), and the story of the Naiad survives in a fragment by the Hellenistic historian Nearchus (*FGrHist* 133 F 1, c. 31, 6ff.). On the contrary, no version of the Pyramus and Thisbe story survives that predates Ovid, but a Hellenistic model concerning the etiology of the Cilician river Pyramus is postulated. Finally, there is a papyrus fragment (*PMich.* inv. 3793) dating from the 1<sup>st</sup> c. BC and containing a very similar story about Pamphilus and Eurydice, that would also draw on the same Hellenistic model as the Ovidian account [Rosati (2007) 4.55-166].

sees them as a whole (*nos, Met. 4.38*) who share the same life choices (*quas Pallas ... detinet, Met. 4.38*) and display their feelings for each other in the attention they are willing to pay to their stories: *in medium uacuas referamus ad aures (Met. 4.41)*.

Leuconoe is next to tell a story, but in her case no information is given as to her process of selection. She starts with the tale of Mars and Venus, famously treated in the *Odyssey*,<sup>661</sup> and continues with the unhappy story of Leucothoe and Clytie, two lovers of the Sun. Unlike her anonymous sister, Leuconoe does not explicitly express her views about her bond to her audience; the content of her stories, however, reveals her to be concerned with this matter, as it bears strong similarities to three narratives heard earlier in the poem.

The Sun witnesses a secret, Mars and Venus' affair, and rushes to reveal it to Vulcan:

*primus adulterium Veneris cum Marte putatur  
hic uidisse deus: uidet hic deus omnia primus.  
indoluit facto lunonigenaeque marito  
furta tori furtique locum monstrauit. ...*

*Met. 4.171-174*

This is what the crow did when she witnessed the Cecropids look into the basket containing Erichthonius (*abdita fronde leui densa speculabar ab ulmo, / quid facerent, Met. 2.557-558*): she rushed to tell Minerva (*acta deae refero, Met. 2.562*). Similarly, the raven revealed to Apollo that he witnessed the adultery of his beloved Coronis:

*... ales*

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<sup>661</sup> Ovid also narrates the episode in *AA 2.561-592*, also introduced as a well-known tale: *fabula narratur toto notissima caelo (AA 2.561)*.

*sensit adulterium Phoebeius, utque latentem  
detegeret culpam, non exorabilis index,  
ad dominum tendebat iter ...*

*Met. 2.544-547*

In the earlier myth Minerva punished the crow by replacing her with the owl as her favourite companion (*ut dicar tutela pulsa Mineruae / et ponar post noctis auem, Met. 2.563-564*), and Apollo punished the raven by turning it black (*inter aues albas uetuit consistere coruum, Met. 2.632*). The two gods also punished the perpetrators of the transgressions: Aglauros was attacked by Envy for opening the basket and looking at the secret within, and Coronis was pierced by one of the god's arrows for committing adultery. Likewise, Vulcan punishes Mars and Venus for their adultery by constructing a trap that exposes them to the other gods. But while the crow and the raven were somewhat unfairly punished by the same gods whom they thought they did a service to by telling them about the transgression,<sup>662</sup> Leuconoe rectifies this action by attributing the punishment of the *index* in her story to one of the gods involved in the transgression itself, Venus: *exigit indicii memorem Cythereia poenam (Met. 4.190)*.

Seeing and revelation of secrets are not the only Ovidian themes that Leuconoe reworks in her narratives. Closely linked to these in Book 2 was the theme of envy, which the Minyad storyteller deftly weaves into her first story before exploring it in her second one. As the gods look at Mars and Venus

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<sup>662</sup> *acta deae refero; pro quo mihi gratia talis / redditur, ut dicar tutela pulsa Mineruae / et ponar post noctis auem, Met. 2.562-564; odit auem, per quam crimen causamque dolendi / scire coactus erat, Met. 2.614-615*. The crow certainly implies that she suffered injustice not only when she ironically describes her punishment as reward, but also when she brings in the story of Nyctimene who should have been punished for her actions but instead was rewarded by Minerva who gave her, in the form of the owl, the position once held by the crow. Wheeler (1999) 132-133 pinpoints the crow's focus on her victimised status in her reordering of events, which results in the raven's scepticism and decision to ignore the warning.



entangled in Vulcan's magic chains, one of them expresses his envy of their situation, no matter how degrading it is meant to be: *atque aliquis de dis non tristibus optat / sic fieri turpis* (*Met.* 4.187-188). Even though the god is not named, the well-known Homeric version of the story supplies his identity: it is Hermes who told Apollo that he would not mind being trapped in chains if only he could enjoy Aphrodite (Hom. *Od.* 8.338-342).<sup>663</sup> This hint to Mercury coupled with the idea of envy caused by something one sees cannot but recall a third story from Book 2, the punishment of Aglauros, which was not included in the narrative of the crow, but was picked up later by the external narrator (*Met.* 2.708-835).<sup>664</sup>

Aglauros' initial consent to Mercury's infatuation with her sister Herse was turned into envy after the attack of the homonymous monster instigated by Minerva, and accentuated by the visions she had of her sister's happiness and prospective marriage to the god (*Met.* 2.797-811). In her second story Leuconoe develops the same theme of a woman envying another for her affair to a god. As a punishment for exposing her adultery, Venus causes the Sun to fall madly in love with Leucothoe, thus spurning all his other lovers, including Clytie, whose bout of jealousy (*inuidit Clytie*, *Met.* 4.234) results in her revealing the affair to Leucothoe's father (*Met.* 4.234-237). Clytie's actions recall Aglauros' wavering between wanting to die and revealing everything to her and Herse's father Cecrops (*Met.* 2.812-813). Incited by envy, both women consider the affair to be a crime (*adulterium*, *Met.* 4.236; *uelut crimen*, *Met.* 2.813) deserving to be reported to the harsh father of the

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<sup>663</sup> According to Rosati (2007) ad 4.187-8, "[t]he entertaining Homeric conclusion [...] is compressed and castigated (Heinze 1960, p. 318) in Leuconoe's moralistic version". The other Ovidian account of the Mars and Venus story does not name the god either: *hic aliquis ridens 'in me, fortissime Mauors, / si tibi sunt oneri, uincula transfer!' ait* (AA 2.585-586).

<sup>664</sup> See Chapter Two on Aglauros and Herse.

girl involved (*parenti / indicat; ille ferox, Met. 4.236-237; rigido narrare parenti, Met. 2.813*), even though Aglauros eventually decides not to do so.

Even if Leucothoe and Clytie are not described as sisters by the narrator, the evocation of the earlier myth concerning Aglauros and Herse suggests that this is how they were perceived by the storyteller. In fact there is another version of their story that is explicit about their relationship: in the so-called Vatican paradoxographer, the Sun punishes Leucothoe's sister, who is not named, for revealing their affair by turning her into a sunflower; Leucothoe, who has been buried alive by her father, is transformed into frankincense (Anon. *Tractatus de transformationibus* 222.21-26 W). This is also the fate that befalls Leucothoe and Clytie in the Ovidian account. The date of the Greek source cannot be established with certainty, but it may be the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD;<sup>665</sup> some editors attribute the treatise to Phlegon of Tralles, who lived in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD and wrote a paradoxographic account *De mirabilibus*.<sup>666</sup> Perhaps he found this version of the affair where the two women are sisters in his sources which go at least as far back as Apollonius the paradoxographer of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC.<sup>667</sup> It is therefore possible that Ovid knew of this version but chose to have the internal narrator omit an explicit mention of Leucothoe and Clytie's kinship, and evoke it instead through the parallel story of Aglauros and Herse.<sup>668</sup>

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<sup>665</sup> Hansen (1996) 7.

<sup>666</sup> They are Holsten and Heeren, according to Westermann (1963) xli, who disagrees with this attribution, but his alternative suggestion of a certain Artemon of Magnesia as being the author of the treatise is deemed "unfounded" by the author of *Artemon* in *RE* II. Hansen (1996) does not include the treatise in his edition of Phlegon.

<sup>667</sup> French (1994) 301; Hansen (1996) 15.

<sup>668</sup> Alternatively, the paradoxographer's version may postdate Ovid's and indeed be based on it, thus suggesting that this is how the anonymous author perceived the relationship between the two Ovidian characters.

Leuconoe's second tale, therefore, ponders on the sisterly bond, reworking an earlier narrative and offering a different solution; with Leucothoe playing the role of Herse, Clytie that of Aglauros and Sol that of Mercury, the narrator explores what would happen if the choices the protagonists made were different. What if Mercury had not merely embellished himself and shown up at Herse's doorstep, where Aglauros could easily block his way? His better version, Sol, takes up the form of Leucothoe's mother, thus penetrating incognito into his beloved's room, and orders the maids to leave, thus ensuring the absence of witnesses or obstructers. The goal is thus achieved: Sol sleeps with Leucothoe, and she even seems to enjoy it: *at uirgo ... / uicta nitore dei posita uim passa querela est* (*Met.* 4.232-233).<sup>669</sup> What if Aglauros had not dismissed her thought of revealing everything to her father, and decided to sit in front of Herse's door barring the way to the divine lover? Her better version, Clytie, turns her rival (sister?) in to her father, who reacts by entombing her alive. Realising it is too late to save her, the god's reaction is to transform his beloved into frankincense, and to punish Clytie not by transformation, as Mercury did to Aglauros, but by completely ignoring her (*Met.* 4.256-258). This, however, was Mercury's reaction two books earlier, not towards Aglauros but towards Herse. Leuconoe rectifies this detail by shifting the object of the action, thus justifying what was a surprising reaction, namely, Mercury's walking away after all his attempts to secure access to Herse.

The second narrator not only lingers longer on family bonds than her sister, but she focuses particularly on those between the female members of the family

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<sup>669</sup> Fantham (2004) 47. Janan (1994) 440-441 highlights the ambivalence of the language in this passage that does not allow the reader/audience to be sure neither in what form Sol approached Leucothoe nor whether she was seduced, raped, or both.

and thus encourages the reader to detect similarities with the Minyads themselves. Leuconoe's name is very similar to Leucothoe's, which has been interpreted as foreshadowing the similarity of their respective destinies.<sup>670</sup> The narrator's sympathy for Leucothoe's plight combined with the admission that she was finally won over by the divine splendour of her lover, may even indicate that she envies her luck.<sup>671</sup> Moreover, the similarities between the setting in Leuconoe's story and that of the storytelling itself are far too strong to be ignored: the girl sits in her room (*thamos*, *Met.* 4.218) spinning and weaving among her maids:

... *et inter*  
*bis sex Leucothoen famulas ad lumina cernit*  
*leuia uersato ducentem stamina fuso*  
*Met.* 4.219-221

Similarly, the Minyads sit in their house spinning and weaving among their maids:

... *solae Minyeides intus*  
 [...]
   
*aut ducunt lanas aut stamina pollice uersant*  
*aut haerent telae famulasque laboribus urgent*  
*Met.* 4.32-35<sup>672</sup>

The common setting can be seen as prefiguring the Minyads' fate, when another god, this one with hostile intentions, is going to penetrate the security of their house and terrify them, until they are transformed into bats. It also suggests that Leuconoe further identifies herself with the protagonist of her story, intensifying her desire to have a similar experience.

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<sup>670</sup> Newlands (1986) 149.

<sup>671</sup> Fantham (2004) 47. Curran (1978) 221, on the other hand, suggests that Leucothoe may have realised that any resistance was futile, given the appearance and power of the god.

<sup>672</sup> Salzman-Mitchell (2005) 159.

As Sol assumes the form of Leucothoe's mother, the narrator is given the opportunity to briefly portray the mother-daughter relationship. The god benefits from the mother's access to her daughter's room (*thalamos deus intrat amatos / uersus in Eurynomes faciem genetricis*, *Met.* 4.218-219), and her affection expressed in kisses (*ceu mater carae dedit oscula natae*, *Met.* 4.222).<sup>673</sup> Above all, it is her right to be alone with her daughter and share secrets that seals his plan with success:

*'res' ait 'arcana est: famulae, discedite, neue  
eripite arbitrium matri secreta loquendi.'*

*Met.* 4.223-224

The intimacy between mother and daughter, and the emphasis on secrets in particular, sharply contrasts with the relationship between Leucothoe and Clytie, which the narrator constructs in the mould of that between the sisters Aglauros and Herse.<sup>674</sup> Clytie knows Leucothoe's secret but her own interest in the matter (*stimulataque paelicis ira*, *Met.* 4.235) prompts her to reveal it to the latter's father (*uulgat adulterium diffamatumque parenti / indicat*, *Met.* 4.236-237), with dire consequences.

Yet Leuconoe finds justifications for Clytie's action and sees her as a victim, suggesting that Sol's scorning of her is unfair:

*... quamuis amor excusare dolorem  
indiciumque dolor poterat, non amplius auctor  
lucis adit ...*

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<sup>673</sup> Sol realises what Paris expressed as a wish, being able to steal the kisses a mother gives her daughter, when he saw Helen kiss Hermione (*oscula si natae dederas, ego protinus illa / Hermiones tenero laetus ab ore tuli*, *Ov. Her.* 16.255-256).

<sup>674</sup> They are both characterised as *nymphae* (Leucothoe: *Met.* 4.244; Clytie: *Met.* 4.260), which further encourages their reading as sisters.

Thus Sol turns out to be almost as unlikable a character as Leucothoe's father, who is the only one to be explicitly vilified in the story (*ferox inmansuetusque*, Met. 4.237; *crudus*, Met. 4.240), while the 'sisterly' envy exemplified by Clytie is absolved and its consequences for both her rival and herself are seen under a positive light. In her new form as frankincense, Leucothoe can reach her lover through the air (*'tanges tamen aethera' dixit*, Met. 4.251), while Clytie as a sunflower continues to love Sol and consider him her own (*illa suum, quamvis radice tenetur, / uertitur ad Solem mutataque seruat amorem.*' Met. 4.269-270).

Contrary to the first and third narratives, the tales of Leuconoe are characterised by a concentration of Roman elements. The image of Leucothoe spinning and weaving in the midst of her maids, as well as assimilating her to the activities of the Minyads themselves, brings her closer to the ideal Roman woman who spends her time weaving in the company of her maids. A more specific model, in fact, is Lucretia who not only is described as spinning and weaving into the night with her maids, but was also raped by Sextus Tarquinius who first saw her engaged in this activity in her room (Liv. *AUC* 1.57 and Ov. *F.* 2.741-758),<sup>676</sup> just as Sol sees and then rapes Leucothoe.

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<sup>675</sup> Rosati (2007) ad 4.256-8.

<sup>676</sup> Salzman-Mitchell (2005) 99; Rosati (2007) ad 4.219-221. The passages are verbally and thematically similar: Lucretia, the Minyads and Leucothoe sit inside the house (*in medio aedium*, Liv. *AUC* 1.57; *solae Minyeides intus*, Ov. *Met.* 4.32), among their maids (*inter lucubrantes ancillas sedentem*, Liv. *AUC* 1.57; *famulae data pensa trahebant; / inter quas tenui sic ait illa sono*, Ov. *F.* 2.743-744; *famulas*, Ov. *Met.* 4.35; *inter / bis sex Leucothoen famulas*, Ov. *Met.* 4.219-220), spinning wool (*deditam lanae*, Liv. *AUC* 1.57; *lanaque mollis erat*, Ov. *F.* 2.742; *aut ducunt lanas aut stamina pollice uersant*, Ov. *Met.* 4.34; *leuia uersato ducentem stamina fuso*, Ov. *Met.* 4.221); Lucretia and Leucothoe are engaged in this activity even by night, at the light of a lamp (*nocte sera*, Liv. *AUC* 1.57; *lumen ad exiguum* Ov. *F.* 2.743; *ad lumina*, Ov. *Met.* 4.220); Lucretia and the Minyads urge their maids to work faster (*nunc properate, puellae*, Ov. *F.* 2.745; *famulasque laboribus urquent*, Ov. *Met.* 4.35).

Moreover, the way her father punishes her for her affair bears resemblance to that of Vestal Virgins who were buried alive if they compromised their virginity.<sup>677</sup> Finally, as was the case with Clymene and the Heliades, and Aglauros and Herse in Book 2, here too Ovid creates mythical figures that exhibit traits familiar to his Roman audience either through general experience of family bonds, or through specific examples of female familial behaviour. The intimacy between mother and daughter that is seen in the story of Leucothoe may be characteristic of any society. What is particularly Roman is their juxtaposition in Leucothoe's introduction to the narrative:

*gentis odoriferae quam formosissima partu  
edidit Eurynome; sed postquam filia crevit,  
quam mater cunctas, tam matrem filia uicit*

Met. 4.209-211

Their comparison in terms of beauty coupled with the accumulation of kinship terms describing their family bond literally realises the Roman ideal of the daughter following as closely as possible and even surpassing her mother's example.<sup>678</sup>

Last, Alcithoe tells the tale of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, choosing it for its novelty (*dulcique animos nouitate tenebo*, Met. 4.284), and consequently discarding other ones that are deemed well-known, such as the *uulgatos ... amores / Daphnidis* (Met. 4.276-277).<sup>679</sup> The engagement with her audience is far more extensive than in the previous two cases. Alcithoe interacts with her sisters,

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<sup>677</sup> Janan (1994) 435 n. 20; Rosati (2007) ad 4.239.

<sup>678</sup> Hallett (1984) 260.

<sup>679</sup> The other rejected stories are about the sex-changing Sithon, the transformation of Celmis into steel, the birth of the Curetes from rain, and the transformation of Crocus and Smilax into flowers; unlike her sister's discarded tales, however, the ones mentioned by Alcithoe, with the exception of *Daphnis*, are not known to us from any source prior to Ovid [Rosati (2007) ad 4.276-8, 279-80, 281-3].

expanding the distinction individual-whole that has been so far noticed every time a narrative begins. Not only do the sisters once again remain silent as one of them starts telling her tale (*poscitur Alcithoe, postquam siluere sorores, Met. 4.274*), but she distinguishes herself from the others in the explanation of her selection process, which this time is granted direct speech. A series of first person singular verbs (*taceo, Met. 4.276; nec loquor, Met. 4.279; praetereo, Met. 4.284*) is followed by a reference and an address to her sisters (*animos ... tenebo, Met. 4.284; discite, Met. 4.287*). This interaction with her audience becomes all the more significant when the content of her story is considered. Alcithoe continues to favour obscure erotic stories that were preferred by both her sisters, who offer her in return their full attention. She also touches on family ties, but, unlike the other two narrators, she focuses very explicitly on the sisterly bond.

Salmacis is introduced in the narrative as a highly unusual Nymph, who prefers isolation to the company of her sisters the Naiads:

*nympha colit, sed nec uenatibus apta nec arcus  
flectere quae soleat nec quae contendere cursu,  
solaque **naiadum** celeri non nota Dianae.*

*Met. 4.302-304*

Salmacis is only Nymph by name, as she does not fit in the definition of a Nymph:<sup>680</sup> instead of hunting, running and accompanying Diana, she prefers to bathe, lie on the shore of her pool, comb her hair and pick flowers (*Met. 4.310-315*). Her sisters try to change her mind, but in vain:

*saepe suas illi fama est dixisse **sorores**:  
'**Salmaci**, uel iaculum uel pictas sume pharetras*

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<sup>680</sup> As Rosati (2007) ad 4.302-4 puts it, Salmacis “presenta [...] tratti opposti all’*ethos* rustico e alla passione venatorio-atletica che contraddistingue questa tipologia di ninfe”.



*et tua cum duris uenatibus otia misce!'*

*Met. 4.305-307*

The juxtaposition of *sorores* and *Salmaci* emphasises their family bond, but their position at the end of the line and the beginning of the next one respectively makes the gap that separates them even deeper.

There is a clear parallelism here with the Minyads as a group: they are also *solae* (*Met. 4.32*), the only ones to be isolated from the Theban 'sisterhood', as the Bacchants can be described. Thus the attitude of Salmacis seems to reflect that of the Minyads themselves, creating expectations about other similarities between their stories. Alcithoe then would conceive of herself and her sisters as forming one unit, which contrasts with the many of the other Theban women. As for the outcome of the story, it involves the transformation of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus into one person that has both male and female features, a hermaphrodite, which was precisely the nymph's wish:

*... ita di iubeatis, et istum  
nulla dies a me nec me deducat ab isto.'  
uota suos habuere deos ...*

*Met. 4.371-373*

Instead of being punished for her excessive sexuality, Alcithoe's character is in a way rewarded for her choices,<sup>681</sup> namely, isolation from her sisters and pursuit of pleasure. Perhaps the narrator expects a similar reward for herself and the other Minyads.

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<sup>681</sup> In the sense that the gods realise what she wished for; this realisation, however, as elsewhere in the *Metamorphoses*, is painfully literal, so that the transformation of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus produces a single body and thus cancels the possibility of an erotic union [Rosati (2007) ad 4.371-7].

At the same time, Salmacis' isolation finds parallels in each Minyad's attempt at independence from her sisters while she tells her story, with the contrast one-many corresponding in this context to each narrator and her audience. A first level of independence is achieved with the silence of the others as one speaks. As the three sisters take turns to tell their stories, however, two more levels can be identified. While the anonymous first narrator perceives her sisters as a unit, including herself, Leuconoe chooses not to refer to their bond at all. Alcithoe then goes a step further and explicitly distinguishes herself from the group in her *praeteritio*. Furthermore, while the anonymous sister does not mention the sisterly bond in her narrative, Leuconoe's tale of Sol, Leucothoe and Clytie reworks that of Mercury, Aglauros and Herse in Book 2, hinting at a similar relationship between her characters. Perhaps she even implicitly suggests that envy between sisters may not be as condemnatory as was earlier described. With Alcithoe the sisterly bond is emphasised in her introduction and underlies the whole story, implying through the parallelism with the Minyads themselves that isolation from a sisterhood, constructed or real, may result in reward rather than punishment. Moreover, Salmacis' behaviour bears resemblances to that of a woman of the fashionable Roman aristocracy, who engages in activities of selfish pleasure.<sup>682</sup> She is thus contrasted to the image of the traditional Roman matron engaged in spinning and weaving that applies not only to another character in the stories of the Minyads, namely, Leucothoe, but also to the Minyads as a whole. If Alcithoe identifies herself and her choices with her character, then she isolates herself from her sisters even further.

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<sup>682</sup> Rosati (2007) ad 4.310-5.

Despite Alcithoe's expectations, the Minyads will not be rewarded, as Salmacis was, nor will they transform into something that will permit them to pursue their current activities, as was the case of Leucothoe and Clytie. On the contrary, they will be punished for their irreverence by the same god they spurned, with the poet recalling their crime in almost the same way as he did in the introduction to the episode (*adhuc **Minyeia proles** / urguet opus spernitque deum festumque profanat, Met. 4.389-390*).<sup>683</sup> After their attempts at independence, the sisters are once again one unit, and they remain so not only during their exposure to Bacchus' miracles (*Met. 4.391-406*), but also, and more importantly, during and after their transformation into bats:

*fumida iam dudum latitant per tecta **sorores**  
diuersaeque locis ignes ac lumina uitant,  
dumque petunt tenebras, paruos membrana per artus  
porrigitur tenuique includunt bracchia penna;*

*Met. 4.405-408*

Bacchus' punishment has three repercussions: first, it fixes the Minyads' unity as a group by turning them all into the same species, unlike other versions,<sup>684</sup> thus irrevocably thwarting their desire for independence from one another. Furthermore, in their new form not only are they no longer able to produce handicrafts, unlike other characters in the *Metamorphoses*;<sup>685</sup> but their voice is also

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<sup>683</sup> Cf. *solae Minyeides intus / intempestiua turbantes festa Minerua (Met. 4.32-33)*; the reader is reminded of their impiety also at the end of Leuconoe's story: *pars fieri potuisse negant, pars omnia ueros / posse deos memorant: sed non et Bacchus in illis (Met. 4.272-273)*.

<sup>684</sup> The other versions speak of three different flying animals: an eagle-owl, a little owl and a bat (Nicander in *Ant. Lib. Met. 10*), or a crow, a little owl and a bat (Ael. *VH 3.42*) – Plutarch does not mention the transformation. According to Rosati (2007) ad 4.414, the bat was preferred over the other species because not only is it nocturnal, but it also remains close to buildings, thus emphasising the choice of the Minyads to avoid the outdoors connected to the Bacchic rites.

<sup>685</sup> E.g. Arachne who continues to weave in her new form as a spider, even if her webs are no longer works of art.

downgraded to a high-pitched shriek (*minimam et pro corpore uocem / emittunt peraguntque leues stridore querellas*, *Met.* 4.412-413), thus depriving them of their ability to produce narratives.<sup>686</sup>

Finally, the transformation of the daughters of Minyas into bats is perhaps connected to their associations to Roman matrons in the course of the episode. While they appear to be chaste and laborious in the model of Lucretia, their unwillingness to comply with other obligations of that role such as the participation to public cult, here exemplified by the Bacchic festival, cancels their pretensions to matronly status and renders them liminal. Their ensuing transformation is not only appropriate to their preference for the indoors, as bats live near houses (*tectaue, non siluas celebrant*, *Met.* 4.414), but also to their questionable status, as bats were thought to be neither mice nor birds but something in-between.<sup>687</sup>

### **Minerva, the Muses and the daughters of Pierus**

The theme of blood-related female storytellers continues in Book 5 with the contest between the Muses and the daughters of Pierus. As each Minyad tells her story to her sisters in Book 4, a Muse here tells her stories to her half-sister Minerva, while the rest of her full-sisters are also present and listening. The Minyad sisters talked about their own bond as well as about that between mother and

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<sup>686</sup> Salzman-Mitchell (2005) 165. Rosati (2007) ad 4.412-3 discerns an ironic allusion to the Callimachean pretensions of the Minyads in the description of their newly acquired *minimam ... uocem* (*Met.* 4.412) and *leues ... querellas* (*Met.* 4.413). As the poem's first human artists [Leach (1974) 107], the Minyads strive for "[p]ersonal autonomy and the freedom to maintain an orderly vision from a position of personal detachment", and for this reason they are punished by Bacchus [Leach (1974) 111].

<sup>687</sup> As a fragment from Varro's *Menippean satires* suggests: *quid multa? factus sum uespertilio, neque in muribus plane neque in uolucris sum* (Var. *Men.* 13). In Pliny's classification bats belong to the *uolucres*, but they are the only winged creatures to bear young and breastfeed them (*N.H.* 10.61.168).

daughter, with Leuconoe touching on the relationship between Leucothoe and her mother (*Met.* 4.218-225), and Alcithoe dealing with Salmacis' bond with her sisters the Naiads (*Met.* 4.302-315). Likewise, the anonymous Muse highlights her relationship with her sisters with two stories that presented dangers to their safety and identity that were successfully overcome, namely, "Pyreneus" (*Met.* 5.273-293) and "The daughters of Pierus" (*Met.* 5.294-678). She also retells the winning story at the competition which was all about the mother-daughter bond: "Ceres and Proserpina" (*Met.* 5.341-661).

Extensive use of familial language is expected given the identities of the narrators and the audience, and highlights their mutual bond. Thus Minerva visits (her) *doctas ... sorores* (*Met.* 5.255), and *una sororum* (*Met.* 5.268) narrates first the incident with Pyreneus and then the contest. The representation of the Muses looks back to Hesiod's *Theogony*, where their descent from Zeus (*Μοῦσαι Ὀλυμπιάδες, κοῦραι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο, Theog.* 25) is described with the same phrase as that of Athena's a few lines earlier (*κούρην τ' αἰγιόχοιο Διὸς γλαυκώπιν Ἀθήνην, Theog.* 13),<sup>688</sup> which is perhaps reflected in Ovid's juxtaposition *deae dea* (*Met.* 5.300) referring to Minerva and the Muse respectively.<sup>689</sup> Yet their awareness that it is only one parent that they share is evident both in Minerva's address to the Muses as Mnemonids (*felicesque uocat ...*

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<sup>688</sup> Homer also refers to Athena and the Muses with similar phrases (*αἰγιόχοιο Διὸς τέκος, Il.* 1.202 and *Ὀλυμπιάδες Μοῦσαι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο / θυγατέρες, Il.* 2.491-492 respectively), but not in such close proximity as is the case in Hesiod.

<sup>689</sup> The poet here does not refer to the Muses as 'daughters of Jupiter', but he does so for Minerva: *loue nata* (*Met.* 5.297).

/ *Mnemonidas*, *Met.* 5.267-268) after their mother Mnemosyne,<sup>690</sup> and in the anonymous Muse's address to Minerva as Tritonian (*o, ... / ... Tritonia*, *Met.* 5.269-270) after her birthplace in North Africa.

Furthermore, the importance they place on their virginal status brings the daughters of Jupiter even closer:<sup>691</sup> Minerva, virgin goddess *par excellence*,<sup>692</sup> seeks the dwelling of the Muses, *uirgineum Helicon* (*Met.* 5.254), where they will tell her of their adventure with Pyreneus that still haunts their *uirgineas mentes* (*Met.* 5.274).<sup>693</sup> The story itself is very similar to her own near-rape by Vulcan, the miraculous outcome of which was the birth of Erichthonius. Even though the assault is not explicitly mentioned, the crow's description of Minerva's maternal care for the *prolem sine matre creatam* (*Met.* 2.553) and the poet's attribution of his paternity to Vulcan in an almost identical phrase later (*sine matre creatam / Lemnicolae stirpem*, *Met.* 2.756-757), suggest that this is the version Ovid had in mind. Thus, the first narrative of the Muse is a variant of Minerva's own experience, with the crucial difference that Pyreneus is a mortal man who assaults the goddesses, and not a god who preys on mortal or immortal women, as was the case with numerous stories earlier in the poem.

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<sup>690</sup> Minerva's reference to Mnemosyne cannot be interpreted as negatively charged, since the goddess has no mother and consequently no reason to be jealous of her father's children by other women.

<sup>691</sup> Johnson (1996) 140.

<sup>692</sup> In Book 2 she answers the pleas of the daughter of Coroneus: *mota est pro uirgine uirgo* (*Met.* 2.579); in Book 4 the Minyads' rejection of the Bacchic rites in favour of Minerva's *utile opus* (*Met.* 4.39) suggests their virginal status as devotees of a goddess who is later described as *bellica uirgo* (*Met.* 4.754). Certainly, the Muses consider her so, as she makes a cameo appearance in Calliope's song as one of the two goddesses Venus despises for being virgins: *Pallada nonne uides iaculatricemque Dianam / abscessisse mihi?* (*Met.* 5.375-376).

<sup>693</sup> The virginal status of the Muses may be questionable, since in Book 10 Orpheus boasts of his descent from a Muse (= Calliope) (*Met.* 10.148) – unless these are early days...

The use of familial language is coupled with that of plural forms to denote common actions and stress the unity of the sister-group, a device employed also in the case of the Heliades and the Minyads. Both Minerva and the Muses see the latter as a unified group that acts and thinks together, but for the purposes of conversation only one Muse is able to talk at any one time. Thus, Uranie welcomes her half-sister expressing the group's happiness to see her (*animo gratissima nostro es, Met. 5.261*); Minerva then praises them for their luck (*felicesque uocat ... / Mnemonidas, Met. 5.267-268*), to which an anonymous Muse replies by accepting the praise:

*uera refers, meritoque probas artesque locumque,  
et gratam sortem, tutae modo simus, habemus.*

*Met. 5.271-272*

As she goes on to describe their adventure with Pyreneus, however, she allows for her individuality to surface in the introduction (*nondum tota me mente recepi, Met. 5.275*)<sup>694</sup> to her story that is otherwise focused on the Muses as a unified group (*petebamus ... euntes / nostraque ... numina, Met. 5.278-279; motae / adnuimusque ... intrauimus, Met. 5.283-284; nos ... effugimus, Met. 5.288*). Finally, Calliope also uses the authorial singular in her introduction to the story of Ceres and Proserpina (*illa canenda mihi est; utinam modo dicere possim / carmina digna dea, Met. 5.344-345*), which does not include any reference to her sisters at all.

The family ties between narrators and audience, the ideal of virginity and the movement from unity to individuality bring the Muses closer to the other group

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<sup>694</sup> Perhaps also in the conclusion, as some manuscripts have *dixi* at *Met. 5.665*. Anderson's edition, however, follows the majority which have *dixit*, implying that it is the Muses' representative in the contest, Calliope, to speak once again.

of sisters-storytellers, the daughters of Minyas.<sup>695</sup> A further similarity pertains to the number of voices: three Minyads take turns to tell a story, and likewise three Muses speak, even if Calliope's song is (supposedly word-for-word) retold by her anonymous sister. This motif of the anonymous narrator is present in both episodes: *e quibus una* (*Met.* 4.36), later referred to as *primam* (*Met.* 4.42), that is, the first to speak, is the Minyad who told the story of Pyramus and Thisbe; similarly *una sororum* (*Met.* 5.268), later described as *Musa* (*Met.* 5.294, 337), tells Minerva of Pyreneus and the contest with the daughters of Pierus. The reason for this anonymity lends itself to interpretation.<sup>696</sup> Perhaps any Muse could accept Minerva's praise and tell her about Pyreneus and the contest, since it is a story in which they all participated equally and can report on it regardless of their individual characteristics, while the other two narrators are specifically chosen due to their suitability to the content or type of their stories.<sup>697</sup> The answer to the goddess' question about Hippocrene is more appropriately given by Uranie, since her associations with the heavens may evoke the astronomical poem of Aratus where the story was treated.<sup>698</sup> Calliope may have been selected by her sisters to represent them because she is the eldest (*e nobis maxima*, *Met.* 5.662), but the poet chose her because of her association with epic poetry<sup>699</sup> and the fact that her

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<sup>695</sup> It is perhaps not by chance that the two stories appear one after the other in Antoninus' summaries (Muses and the daughters of Pierus: *Ant. Lib. Met.* 9; the daughters of Minyas: *Ant. Lib. Met.* 10), which go back to Nicander's fourth book of the *Heteroioumena*.

<sup>696</sup> See p. 261 for a possible explanation of the first Minyad's anonymity.

<sup>697</sup> As Calliope's song is really a retelling of the actual performance at the contest, it makes no difference which of the nine Muses reproduces it for the new audience (Minerva and the readers of the poem): after all they all are the daughters of Mnemosyne, memory personified. On the other hand, this retelling may represent the return to unity for the Muses: Calliope's song is thus filtered back through the group in the indistinguishable voice of the anonymous Muse.

<sup>698</sup> Hinds (1987a) 15-16.

<sup>699</sup> Hinds (1987a) 125-126.



narrative of Ceres and Proserpina looks back to the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*,<sup>700</sup> which was composed in the epic metre and attributed to the *par excellence* epic poet.<sup>701</sup>

The way in which two aetiological narratives with Hellenistic models frame one that deals with a well-known story, previously treated in epic verse and concerning the love life of the Olympian gods, is also common in both episodes. The anonymous narrator in Book 4 sets off to explain the dark colour of the mulberry with the obscure tale of Pyramus and Thisbe (*quae poma alba ferebat, / ut nunc nigra ferat contactu sanguinis arbor, Met. 4.51-52*), just as Uranie explains the origin of the Hippocrene looking back to Aratus. In fact, in both cases there is allusion to the Callimachean precept of the *carmen deductum* concealed under another activity. The anonymous Minyad is described as spinning, an activity synonymous with composing poetry (*leui deducens pollice filum, Met. 4.36*), and Uranie is described as leading Minerva to the spring, which could have both a literal and a metaphorical sense (*ad latices deduxit Pallada sacros, Met. 5.263*).

Alcithoe's equally dark narrative explains why the pool of Salmacis renders men effeminate (*Met. 4.285-287*), just as the anonymous Muse's account of the contest answers Minerva's queries about the magpies, the transformation of whom appeared in Nicander's *Heteroioumena*.<sup>702</sup> Her story about Pyreneus, on the other

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<sup>700</sup> Richardson (1974) 72; Hinds (1987a) *passim*, in particular 72-98; Barchiesi (1999) 123.

<sup>701</sup> In this respect the anonymity of the narrating Muse next to Uranie and Calliope visualises the tension between individuality and collectiveness at a time when the association of the nine Muses with specific fields is still fluid.

<sup>702</sup> The Muses seem to have more liberty to adapt their Hellenistic models: their encounter with Pyreneus can be seen as an inverted variant of Callimachus' description of Theseus' stay with Hecale. The story of the contest in Nicander is separate from that of the flight of the gods to Egypt and their animal transformations (Antoninus Liberalis provides two distinct summaries, *Met. 9* and *28* respectively), which here is precisely the topic of their rivals' song. Finally, the transformation of

hand, matches the one about Salmacis in its obscurity.<sup>703</sup> Calliope's inset narrative reworks the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* concerned with the rape of Persephone by Hades, just as Leuconoe's first story dealt with the loves of Mars and Venus (*Met.* 4.171-189), first found in the *Odyssey*.<sup>704</sup> Her second story about Sol, Leucothoe and Clytie, however, resembles her sisters' accounts in its Hellenistic obscurity and aetiological elements, and in this respect can be compared to stories within Calliope's song that explain the earthquakes and volcanic eruptions in Sicily (*Met.* 5.346-358), the winged appearance of the Sirens (*Met.* 5.552-563) or the spring form of Arethusa (*Met.* 5.572-641). Moreover, the stories told by Leuconoe and Calliope are concerned with family issues. Venus' adultery with Mars and Ceres' say in the choice of her daughter's prospective husband fall under the category of marriage and its problems, while Leucothoe's father burying her alive for sleeping with Sol and Ceres' world-wide search for Proserpina after her abduction by Dis address the rape of a maiden and her family's reaction. Furthermore, Calliope accompanies her song with the sound of the lyre, the chords of which she plucks and strikes:

*Calliope querulas praetemptat pollice chordas  
atque haec percussis subiungit carmina neruis:*

*Met.* 5.339-340

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the daughters of Pierus into nine different birds in Nicander becomes metamorphosis into a single species (magpies) in Ovid.

<sup>703</sup> This passage is our only source for the Pyreneus story [Bömer (1976a) ad 5.269-293; Hill (1992) ad 5.273-293]. The connection between Salmacis and Hermaphroditus is only found in a 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC inscription from Halicarnassus which describes the font's warm welcome to the son of Hermes and Aphrodite [Isager (1998) 1-23; Lloyd-Jones (1999) 1-14].

<sup>704</sup> On the other hand, the two stories told by Leuconoe ("Mars and Venus" and "Sol, Leucothoe and Clytie") can be compared to the two tales of the anonymous Muse ("Pyreneus" and "The daughters of Pierus").

Her action recalls the Minyads spinning and weaving while telling their stories (*e quibus una leui deducens pollice filum, Met. 4.36; talibus orsa modis lana sua fila sequente, Met. 4.54; quae radio stantis percurrens stamina telae, Met. 4.275*).

The representation of the Muses with the help of familial language and their resemblance to the daughters of Minyas creates a sharp contrast with their opponents in the competition, another group of sisters also comparable to the Minyads but in a very different respect. The daughters of Pierus are introduced in the narrative through their parentage with a slight emphasis on their relationship to their mother through the description of her giving birth to them:

*Paeonis Euipe mater fuit: illa potentem*

*Lucinam nouiens, nouiens paritura, uocauit*

*Met. 5.303-304*

Crucially, they are not called *Pierides* even if the mention of their father would suggest that this should be the collective name by which they are known. It is possible that Ovid, who does not use the term for the Muses either,<sup>705</sup> tells the story of a contest aiming to prove who the real Muses are, in order to address the old problem of confusion between the Pierian Muses and the daughters of Pierus.<sup>706</sup> When the latter's mutual bond is finally spelled out, however, it is accompanied by their characterisation as vain and silly (*intumuit numero stolidarum turba sororum, Met. 5.305*), which not only prefigures their eventual destruction, but also directly compares them to the Muses who are introduced as

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<sup>705</sup> *Pierides* is another name for the Muses in both Greek and Latin literature (e.g. Hes. *Scut.* 206; Pind. *O.* 10.96; Eur. *Med.* 833; Theocr. *Id.* 10.24; Lucr. *DRN* 1.926; Hor. *Carm.* 4.8.20; Virg. *Ecl.* 3.85; Ov. *Am.* 1.1.6), referring of course to the region of Pieria where Olympus, one of their dwellings, is situated (hence "Olympian Muses" from Homer and Hesiod onwards), or where they were born according to Hesiod (*Theog.* 53-54).

<sup>706</sup> Outlined in Cicero's *ND* 3.54.

*doctas ... sorores* (*Met.* 5.255) and finds them wanting. Their introductory speech also presents them as a unified group but, unlike the words of the anonymous Muse, it does not contain any hint at individuality, insisting instead on the use of plural forms (*nobiscum*, *Met.* 5.309; *nec ... / uincemur totidemque sumus*, *Met.* 5.310-311; *uel nos ... / cedamus*, *Met.* 5.313-314).

The narrator understandably delivers a biased characterisation of her sisters' opponents,<sup>707</sup> who are irreverent not only to their rivals, as their challenge suggests, but also to the Olympian gods as a whole, as their choice of song shows. The daughters of Pierus thus appear as dissimilar from the Muses as possible, with their emphasised lack of discipline undermining their chances in the competition. First of all, they speak in one voice, appropriate to their characterisation as *turba* (*Met.* 5.305), while each time the Muses are required to speak, one of them comes forward (Uranie, the anonymous Muse, Calliope). Moreover, while the setting of the contest is gradually prepared with the election of the judges followed by their oath and the construction of seats (*Met.* 5.316-317), one of the daughters of Pierus simply steps up and starts singing (*tunc sine sorte prior, quae se certare professa est, / bella canit*, *Met.* 5.318-319). The Muses, on the other hand, wait to be called (*poscimur Aonides*, *Met.* 5.333),<sup>708</sup> and decide as a group to trust their representation to one among them (*dedimus summam certaminis uni*, *Met.* 5.337), Calliope, who takes time to prepare by tying her hair and testing the chords of her instrument (*Met.* 5.338-339).

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<sup>707</sup> Wheeler (1999) 83-84.

<sup>708</sup> The same insistence in order is displayed in the anonymous Muse's request for permission to continue her story at *Met.* 5.333-334 [Bömer (1976a) ad 5.333].

Not unforeseen is the reduction of the rival song to an 8-line summary (*Met.* 5.319-326) followed by five lines in direct speech (*Met.* 5.327-331),<sup>709</sup> while Calliope's song is given word-for-word and takes up more than 300 lines. Finally, not only the rival narrator but also her eight sisters remain anonymous throughout but for an adjective describing their dwelling (*Emathides*, *Met.* 5.669).<sup>710</sup> The anonymity of the daughter of Pierus as opposed to the identification of her rival with Calliope, is more important an omission than the anonymity of the second Muse who tells the story of the contest to Minerva:<sup>711</sup> for an artist (and this is what the daughters of Pierus see themselves as) having a name is synonymous to creative consciousness and authority.

Thus, Calliope's song is a valid entry in the competition precisely because her name accompanies it; on the contrary, the daughter of Pierus' anonymity goes together with a song which is of bad quality in a number of ways. Not only is it irreverent and thus most inappropriate to be sung in front of judging goddesses; not only is its theme as un-Callimachean as it could ever be;<sup>712</sup> but it is also a bad reworking of a tale already told in part both earlier in the *Metamorphoses* by Ovid

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<sup>709</sup> Cahoon (1996) 50. Leach (1974) 114-115 emphasises the unfair way in which the song of the daughter of Pierus is summarised and finds it possible for the account to have been approved both by the Nymphs had they not been partial to Calliope's song for its positive presentation of their kind, and by the readers had they been allowed to listen to it in its entirety. Similarly, Johnson and Malamud (1988) 32 explain the decision as prompted by solidarity to the Muses who are often described as Heliconian Nymphs themselves; the authors also suggest that the Nymphs may have feared a similar punishment as the one Midas underwent for daring to express his opinion in the contest between Apollo and Pan narrated later in the poem (*Met.* 11.173-179).

<sup>710</sup> The title of Antoninus Liberalis' summary of their story as told by Nicander is also *Ἡμαθίδες*; the text itself only calls them *αἱ θυγατέρες ... τοῦ Πιέρου* (*Ant. Lib. Met.* 9.2).

<sup>711</sup> Authority only matters when the story is about someone else; both tales told by the anonymous Muse concern a personal experience that she shares with her sisters, and consequently do not require individual authorial characteristics, as is the case with the origins of Hippocrene, the battle of gods and giants, or the rape of Proserpina.

<sup>712</sup> The daughter of Pierus' song on gigantomachy is the kind of poem that Augustan poets often mention in their *recusationes* but never write [Hinds (1987a) 128-131]; on the contrary, Calliope's song adheres to Callimachean principles, as is expected by the *doctas ... sorores* (*Met.* 5.255), and as the anonymous Muse points out at the end of the song (*doctos ... cantus*, *Met.* 5.662).

(gigantomachy, *Met.* 1.151-162) and in Hesiod's *Theogony* by no other than the Muses themselves (battle of the gods against Typhoeus, *Theog.* 820-868).<sup>713</sup> To adapt a story inspired by the Muses in order to enter a competition against them is not only a proof of the daughters of Pierus' foolishness (cf. *stolidarum turba sororum*, *Met.* 5.305), but it also adds insult to injury and makes the announcement of their punishment at the end of the contest (*Met.* 5.665-668) come as no surprise.

A comparison to the female storytellers of Book 4 further stresses the gap that separates the Muses from their opponents, as the latter seem to gather all the negative characteristics of the Minyad sisters. The daughters of Pierus' song extols the power of the giants and mocks that of the Olympian gods (*falsoque in honore Gigantas / ponit et extenuat magnorum facta deorum*, *Met.* 5.319-320). Combined with their challenge and insolent address to the Muses (*Met.* 5.308-314), it renders them as irreverent as the daughters of Minyas who despised the rites of Bacchus and denied him his divine nature (*Bacchum / progeniem negat esse Iouis*, *Met.* 4.2-3). The Minyads' impiety continued during and after their storytelling (*pars omnia ueros / posse deos memorant: sed non et Bacchus in illis*, *Met.* 4.272-273; *Minyeia proles / ... spernitque deum festumque profanat*, *Met.* 4.389-390). Similarly, the daughters of Pierus go on abusing the Muses even after their defeat in the contest, and ignore their threats for punishment (*conuicia uictae / cum iacerent*, *Met.* 5.664-665; *rident Emathides spernuntque minacia uerba*, *Met.* 5.669). A parallel with

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<sup>713</sup> In the beginning of the poem, Hesiod asks the Muses for inspiration and from that point on he assumes the role of their mouthpiece: *δότε δ' ἰμερόεσσαν ἀοιδίην ... εἴπατε ... ταῦτά μοι ἔσπετε Μοῦσαι ... καὶ εἴπαθ'...* (*Theog.* 104-115).

Arachne can also be drawn between the two sets of irreverent sisters,<sup>714</sup> but the daughters of Pierus are the ones more similar to her. In both cases mortal women challenge goddesses to compete against them (in a song contest here, a weaving competition in Book 6), and produce works that humiliate the gods by presenting them transformed into animals, while their divine opponents' entries extol their supremacy over mortals.

Furthermore, the sisters' punishment by transformation is uncannily similar: both the Minyads and the daughters of Pierus are turned into flying creatures that are incapable of producing song.<sup>715</sup> The high-pitched shrieks of bats and the raucous cries of magpies thus symbolise the loss of their ability to produce narratives that the sisters have to suffer. Unlike Arachne who still produces webs of a certain beauty in her new spider form, their storytelling is drowned in unintelligible sounds, and their creative ability forever taken away from them, as the only thing they can do is imitate other voices (*imitantes omnia, Met. 5.299*).<sup>716</sup> Notably the assumption of wings brings the daughters of Pierus closer not only to the Minyads, but also to the Muses themselves. The Minyads and the daughters of Pierus grow wings turning completely and irrevocably into bats and magpies respectively (*paruos membrana per artus / porrigitur tenuique includunt bracchia penna, Met. 4.407-408; pennas exire per ungues / adspexere suos, operiri bracchia*

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<sup>714</sup> See section on the Minyads in this Chapter for the parallels between them and Arachne.

<sup>715</sup> Salzman-Mitchell (2005) 169 argues that the Minyads' and the daughters of Pierus' downfalls are caused by their "desire to have a voice, which is in itself subversive of gender norms" and results in their transformation into flying creatures with unintelligible voices. This does not explain why the Muses are exempt from such punishment despite being female narrators themselves.

<sup>716</sup> As Hinds (1987a) 130 observes, this characteristic of the magpies may imply that the Muses considered the daughters of Pierus to be "the sort of unlearned poets in whom the subtle art of *imitatio* is reduced to slavish copying of tradition". In Rome magpies were considered to be as good, if not better than, parrots at imitating human voices (Plin. *N.H.* 10.42.118); their reputation of stealing shiny objects that is found in European folklore seems to be a later development.

*plumis*, *Met.* 5.671-672). On the contrary, the Muses merely acquire a means to escape the lust of Pyreneus (*uimque parat; quam nos sumptis effugimus alis*, *Met.* 5.288), and presumably reassume their original form once the danger is over.<sup>717</sup>

Furthermore, while no indication is given as to which type of birds the Muses momentarily turn to, suggesting that they retained their anthropomorphic characteristics while springing wings, Ovid has both groups of irreverent sisters transform into a single species, bats and magpies respectively. The Hellenistic versions of the two stories that go back to Nicander (*Ant. Lib. Met.* 10 and 9 respectively), however, described the Minyads turning into three and the daughters of Pierus into nine different birds. If the loss of individuality came to punish the Minyads each of whom tried to gain her independence from her sisters through her narrative, the transformation of all nine daughters of Pierus into a single species corresponds to their anonymity throughout the episode and their failure to strive for a personal voice.

The defeat of the daughters of Pierus in the competition, however, is not only due to their irreverence towards the gods both in their song and in their general behaviour. It also comes down to the form and content of the two songs, and their resonance with the audience both at the time of the contest (the Nymphs) and in the narrative present (Minerva). Since both the daughter of Pierus and Calliope combine themes from the epic tradition with a Hellenistic preference for the weird and obscure, it all comes down to the emphasis placed on truth as is

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<sup>717</sup> The episode contains another set of sisters, the Acheloids/Sirens, who are partly transformed into birds so that they can continue singing, but this comes not as a punishment [*pace* Cahoon (1996) 57-58] but as an answer to their prayers (*Met.* 5.552-563) [as Johnson and Malamud (1988) p. 37 n. 6. point out] – could there be an allusion to a story preserved in Pausanias (9.34.3) about a contest between the Sirens and the Muses?



established by that very same tradition.<sup>718</sup> Thus the daughter of Pierus gives a version of the gigantomachy in which the gods were defeated by the giants, even though all previous accounts speak of the opposite outcome in the battle, a version which the narrating Muse does not fail to brand as “false”, with possible meanings ranging from “inappropriate” to “lying” (*falsoque in honore Gigantas / ponit, Met. 5.319-320*).<sup>719</sup> In addition to that, the daughter of Pierus emphasises the power of Typhoeus and the cowardice of the gods, following up to that point the Hellenistic story attributed to Nicander (*Ant. Lib. Met. 28.1-3*), but stops short of the end of the story, where Jupiter hits Typhoeus with his thunderbolt and traps him eternally under Aetna (*Ant. Lib. Met. 28.3-4* and *Ov. Met. 5.346-361* as part of Calliope’s song). On the contrary, Calliope remains largely faithful to the story of Ceres and Proserpina as is known in its most extensive treatment (the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*), adding a number of Hellenistic details in satellite stories such as that of Arethusa.

The appropriateness of the story for the audience is also crucial in both the contest itself and its retelling to Minerva. The daughters of Pierus can neither expect to win by insulting the very gods to whom both their rivals and, more importantly, their judges trace their descent; nor for their song to be retold to an even more important goddess, Minerva, when she visits the setting of the contest.

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<sup>718</sup> The daughters of Pierus seem to exemplify the negative quality they accuse their rivals of possessing, namely, their ability to tell sweet lies (*desinite indoctum uana dulcedine uulgus / fallere, Met. 5.308-309*), which the Muses themselves admit in their first appearance in literature (*ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα, / ἴδμεν δ’, εὖτ’ ἐθέλωμεν, ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι, Hes. Theog. 27-28*). The daughters of Pierus, thus, are a sort of anti-Muses, equal in number, voice and skill but telling the opposite of their legitimate counterparts.

<sup>719</sup> Cahoon (1996) 50 interprets the Muse’s comments as ensuring that Minerva does not “suppose that she accepts this account as true”, which is implausible given the fact that the Muses have already narrated the gigantomachy story with the opposite outcome, and they cannot contradict themselves.

On the contrary, Calliope's song, revolving around the rape of the main protagonist and its consequences, strikes a chord in the hearts of all goddesses involved. The Muses themselves have just avoided the same fate at the hands of Pyreneus.<sup>720</sup> For their part, the Nymphs have frequently, not only in myth in general but also within the limits of this poem, suffered a fate similar to Proserpina's, being successfully assaulted by gods and men alike.<sup>721</sup> Finally, Minerva has managed to protect her virginity against Vulcan. With such experiences the audiences of this song sympathise with Proserpina<sup>722</sup> and rejoice at the happy outcome of her story, as well as approve of the song and allow it not only to win the competition that took place in the past, but also to be retold in full now for a new audience (Minerva and Ovid's readers) to hear.

Even as half-sisters, Minerva and the Muses are brought closer by their desire to preserve their virginal status, as well as by their success in artistic competitions over mortals. A final point in common is their experience of the maternal-filial bond, which creates a paradox in this episode. As was pointed out earlier, the Muse tells her half-sister of a competition between two groups of sisters, the winning entry being a song about the mother-daughter relationship. However, both the narrators (Muses) and the audience (Minerva) are excluded from motherhood through their persistence in remaining virgins. Furthermore, Minerva has no mother at all, as Jupiter swallowed Metis when he found out about

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<sup>720</sup> This experience has been interpreted as providing the inspiration for the topic of Calliope's song [Salzman-Mitchell (2005) 168]; it is not certain, however, that the first event narrated by the anonymous Muse is also the first one to take place.

<sup>721</sup> Salzman-Mitchell (2005) 183. Cahoon (1996) questions both the artistry of Calliope's song and the freedom of the Nymphs to independently judge it.

<sup>722</sup> Salzman-Mitchell (2005) 127, 170, 183; Johnson (1996) 141-144 points out that the Nymphs would sympathise not only with Proserpina but also with the two of their number whose stories are included in Calliope's song, namely, Cyane and Arethusa.

her potential to produce a child stronger than his father; thus, she has no first-hand experience of the relationship between a daughter and her mother. Virtually the same can be said of the Muses, who, despite being referred to as “the daughters of Mnemosyne”,<sup>723</sup> never appear together with their mother in myths, nor do they express any feeling for her. The only instance when Mnemosyne appears is when she gives birth to them in Hesiod (*Theog.* 53-62), where her feelings for her daughters are implicitly expressed.<sup>724</sup> Finally, a version of their myth mentions Eupheme as their nurse (Paus. *Gr. descr.* 9.29.5), implying the lack of a maternal figure in their infant years.<sup>725</sup>

This lack in maternal and filial relationships influences both the narrators’ and the audience’s view of the bond between Ceres and Proserpina, and may be one of the reasons behind the limited characterisation of Proserpina, who does not express her feelings towards her mother, unlike her Greek counterpart in the *Hymn to Demeter*.<sup>726</sup> On the other hand, Calliope’s song replays the personal experiences of unsuccessful sexual assault that both the Muses and Minerva have gone through, encouraging their sympathy for the protagonist and allowing them to enjoy a story with a happy ending, unlike that of the Nymphs’ rapes narrated throughout the poem. There might be an implicit sadness in the realisation that no mother would go to look for the Muses and Minerva, not only daughterless but also motherless eternal virgins, if they were lost or their marriage was arranged against

<sup>723</sup> Including twice in this particular episode: *Mnemonidas* (*Met.* 5.268); *Mnemonides* (*Met.* 5.280).

<sup>724</sup> The nine Muses were for their mother *λησμοσύνην τε κακῶν ἀμπαυμά τε μερμηράων* (Hes. *Theog.* 55).

<sup>725</sup> The names of the absent mothers, Metis and Mnemosyne, are both abstractions of mental capacities which their daughters then exemplify, Minerva as a goddess of wisdom and the Muses as repositories of memory.

<sup>726</sup> Her characterisation can also be explained in terms of intertextuality, whereby Ovid reworks the mother-daughter relationship found in the *Aeneid*, namely, the bond between Amata and Lavinia; on this, see Chapter Two.

their will. In any case, an old story about virginity and its loss, with its multiple examples (Proserpina, Cyane, Arethusa) and intertextual parallels (Ariadne, Lavinia),<sup>727</sup> is an appropriate narrative for the goddesses of memory and erudition to perform, for the ever-chased Nymphs to approve, and for the goddess of wisdom to hear.

### **Conclusion**

The episodes of the Minyads and, to a lesser extent, that of the daughters of Pierus problematise the sisterly bond, especially when viewed in relation to the Muses and other sets of sisters in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. This chapter focused on the activity of storytelling as a theme that connects the two stories while bringing to the fore various attitudes towards one's sisters. Through the discussion of intertexts found not only in earlier literature but in the poem itself I have demonstrated how it is possible for epic heroines to talk about bonds that concern them, such as that between sisters, and that between mothers and daughters, through seemingly irrelevant narratives about gods and nymphs.

The Minyads show both through the content of their stories and the manner of their performance a gradual tendency towards independence from their sisters, in a sense fighting against the unanimity that epic sisters have been advertising since Virgil's Dido and Anna. The daughters of Pierus, on the other hand, do not discuss family bonds in their song but their irreverent story and negligence of their audience are matched by their rejection of individuality. As the outcome of the competition shows, however, it is their Muses' acknowledgement

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<sup>727</sup> See Chapter Two.

of each sister's place in the whole that allows their individual characteristics to shine without undermining their status of *unanimae sorores*.

## Conclusion

In this thesis I have shown how the epics of Virgil, Ovid, Valerius Flaccus and Statius can indirectly offer an insight into the lives of ancient women by modelling the representation of their heroines' family bonds to one another both on literary tradition and on contemporary Roman ideals and practices. For this purpose I investigated the interaction of mothers, daughters and sisters in the *Aeneid*, the *Metamorphoses*, the *Argonautica* and the *Thebaid*, analysed their language, and explained their feelings for each other. I traced the influences that earlier literature, in particular epic and tragedy, had in their portrayal, and highlighted the dialogue established between each poet and his Roman predecessors. Furthermore, I looked into the use of Roman elements in the characterisation of mythical and legendary women who largely belong to the realm of Greek myth, and compared them to specific examples of Roman mothers, daughters and sisters. The conclusions of this research will benefit new interpretations of Latin epic as a genre more open to external influences than can be said for its Greek predecessors, and encourage the study of fictional women for the secrets they may reveal about their real counterparts.

### **Soul-sharing sisters**

Prompted by Anna's designation as *unanima soror* at the start of *Aeneid* 4, I used Strati's definition of *unanimus* in Chapter One in order to examine the relationship between sisters found in Virgil, Ovid and Statius. I have demonstrated how all pairs discussed are worthy of such a description, as their feelings, thoughts

and actions match those of their female siblings at least for some part of the narrative. Anna, Procne and Philomela experience the same feelings as their sisters in distress; Argia and Deipyle are equal not only in beauty but also in modesty; Dido and Ismene confide their erotic dreams to Anna and Antigone respectively, knowing that even if they do not spell out their feelings for the men involved, their sisters will understand and encourage them. Both Ovid in the *Metamorphoses* and Statius in the *Thebaid* also introduce new ways of bringing the sisters together, by reversing the correspondences and using common models. Thus it is Ismene who resembles Dido, while Antigone plays the role of Anna in *Thebaid* 8; Dido is a common model for Procne and Philomela, as is Proserpina; finally, Argia and Deipyle's characterisation, particularly in terms of modesty, is based on Lavinia.

While achieving unanimity, however, there is often a disputable or even sinister edge to the behaviour of these sisters. In the course of the epic reworking, the positive aspects of Dido and Anna's relationship are taken to their extremes in Ovid's Procne and Philomela, and Statius' Argia and Deipyle. In fact, Anna and Procne show how far the devotion of a sister can reach: she does not realise that she is deceived and unknowingly contributes to her sister's suicide (Anna); she offers to die alongside her sibling if only she be asked (Anna); she ignores all dangers in order to save her and manages to overcome not only her conjugal love, but also her maternal instinct in order to avenge her (Procne). Likewise Argia and Deipyle act and feel the same to such a degree that their interchangeability is unavoidable; however, it only takes a cursed necklace during their double wedding in *Thebaid* 2 to separate them in the poem, and their individual paths sometimes lead to a clash of interests.

The negative elements in the Virgilian sisters' characterisation, on the other hand, seem to influence the portrayal of Antigone and Ismene. When they appear with Jocasta they are similar to their Argive counterparts; in the intimacy of the room they share, however, the apparent balance gives way to Ismene taking centre stage and monopolising speech, while Antigone is there in Anna's role as a silent listener. Argia and Antigone form an extraordinary pair, in the sense that they are sisters-in-law, but their bond is transformed in the course of their encounter in *Thebaid* 12 to become as strong as that of sisters of blood. Once again, however, sinister aspects of their Virgilian model overshadow their bond: the implicit rivalry between Dido and Anna resurfaces in a new form in the competition established between the sister and the wife of Polynices, and it is the latter who emerges victorious, winning not only in storytelling but also in survival.

Ensuring the survival of his heroines appears to be in the mind of all three poets in question. In Virgil Anna ritually catches Dido's last breath, receiving her soul and giving rise to imaginative sequels such as Ovid's *Fasti* 3 and Silius' *Punica* 8. Procne and Philomela's unanimity is sealed in a different way through the transformation of one of them into a swallow and the other into a nightingale allowing for perpetual interchangeability. Finally, the *Thebaid's* Argive princesses are the ones to survive, as Antigone and Ismene's bond to one another never overcomes the limitations set by tradition to the house of Oedipus. After all Antigone and Ismene were never exemplary *unanimae sorores*, because the former's bond to Polynices always surpassed all others, even in stories where her relationship to Ismene is presented in a more benevolent way than in Sophocles' *Antigone*. Argia and Deipyle, on the other hand, manage to achieve sisterly



unanimity even though their personal thoughts about their mutual bond are never heard. The former also manages to become another woman's *unanima soror*, identifying with Antigone not only in appearance, thoughts and feelings, but also in the most important aspect that Ismene fell short both in this epic and in earlier accounts, namely, intention.

Roman models pervade the characterisation of these pairs of sisters, identifiable either in terms of generic views, or of attitudes of Roman women or sisters in particular. The evidence from epigraphic, historical and rhetorical sources suggests that sisters behaved in a way similar to that depicted in the three epics in question. Indeed one of their characteristics, their lack of individuality due to their sharing the same name, may be an incentive for their representation as *unanimae sorores* in Virgil and his epic successors. Rather than idealising their bond, however, Latin epic poets problematise the relationship between sisters of myth and legend, and make their portrayal as complicated as those of real Roman women, who in their attitudes to their sisters must have been both good and mean, affectionate and jealous, identifying with each other and longing for individuality.

Dido and Anna seem to express Roman views when they are discussing the former's passion for Aeneas: the queen's devotion to her dead husband Sychaeus recalls the ideal of *uniuira*, the woman who had only one husband, while her sister's views match those of the Augustan propaganda in promoting marriage and children. The ritual catching of Dido's soul at the end of *Aeneid* 4 is also a particularly Roman concept. In terms of familial language, Anna's *Romanitas* is evident in the way she only uses kinship terms, similarly to sisters in Roman comedy; she also addresses her sister with an extended affectionate phrase

comparable to those found in funerary inscriptions and the Vindolanda letters. The other sisters who are granted direct speech (Procne, Philomela and Ismene) resemble Anna in this respect. Furthermore, there appears to be a development of the pattern which is related to the form that sisterly unanimity takes in each poet. Ovid retains only the linguistic aspect of *Romanitas* from his Virgilian models, but produces the most extreme pair of *unanimae sorores* in Latin epic. Statius uses both Virgil's and Ovid's heroines as models for his three pairs, but at the same time as moving away from Roman sisterly behaviour he celebrates a particularly Roman belief, exemplified in the practices of adoption and fosterage, that selective bonds can be as powerful and significant as those formed by blood.

### **Attitudes in love and marriage**

Both literary and Roman models are also central in Chapter Two, where the discussion of female family relationships revolves around the themes of love and marriage. Three distinct attitudes are observed in Virgil, Ovid and Valerius Flaccus: an epic mother reacts to the choice of husband for her daughter when she is not consulted in the matter (Amata; Ceres); an epic sister participates in a love-triangle with her female sibling and a man from abroad (Aglauros, Herse, Mercury; Philomela, Procne, Tereus); and a goddess assumes the form of a female relative in order to convince the heroine to give in to her passion for the hero (Juno, Venus).

As far as the mother-daughter bond goes, Amata and Lavinia's relationship cannot be considered exemplary, as they rarely express any feeling for each other. Amata's passion (erotic, maternal, or otherwise) is directed to Turnus, her favourite future son-in-law, while Lavinia remains enigmatic for most part of the narrative.

Ceres and Proserpina, on the other hand, are affectionate to each other and their near-identification in times of distress resembles the unanimity found among epic sisters in the previous chapter. Compared to other versions of the story, however, Proserpina seems much more reserved in her interaction to her mother, which is arguably due to her being modelled on none other than Lavinia.

While based on earlier literary models, both mothers exemplify a particularly Roman behaviour when it comes to the decision as to their daughters' marriage. Roman mothers seem to have taken active part in the choice of husband for their daughters; if it was not a joint effort with the girl's father or even their own doing (as is the case of Cicero's wife, who chose Tullia's third husband without waiting for Cicero who had someone else in mind), they at least expected to be asked their opinion on the matter. In their reaction ranging from heated complaints to anger and destruction, Amata and Ceres particularly resemble Aemilia, who was furious at Scipio's decision to give away their daughter without talking to her first; Caecilia Metella, who broke her pregnant daughter's marriage in order to offer her hand to Pompey; and Sassia, who made her daughter divorce the man she loved so that Sassia would marry him instead. Lavinia's silence and tears specifically evoke those of Sassia's daughter who wasted away after her mother's initiatives.

Roman models also work side by side with literary allusions in the Ovidian representation of two pairs of Athenian sisters in *Metamorphoses* 2 and 6. I first looked at Aglauros and Herse who participate in a love triangle with the god Mercury, who falls in love with the latter but has to negotiate the fruition of his aims with the former. I then returned to Procne and Philomela, whom I discussed in Chapter One in terms of their unanimity, as they also form a love triangle with a

man from abroad, this time the Thracian king Tereus, who marries the former and rapes the latter. All four sisters share literary models, especially from epic and tragedy, and their episodes are further linked by the importance of the visual element in their plot. The presence of elegiac elements, on the other hand, points to a more Roman context while still dealing with Greek myth. Also characteristic of Roman elegy, the envy motif that links the two episodes together is ultimately traced back to Dido and Anna in Virgil's *Aeneid*, as well as (more prominently in the case of Procne and Philomela) to variants of their myth in earlier literature.

Finally, Valerius' representation of Medea and her female relatives combines the two patterns (mother concerned with her daughter's marriage, sisters involved in a love triangle) into a double reworking of the Homeric theme of divine disguise. Juno assumes the form of Chalcioppe, Medea's sister, and Venus that of Circe, the heroine's aunt, in order to encourage her passion for Jason and ensure her help in his trials. In the discussion of the two episodes in *Argonautica* 6 and 7 respectively, I have demonstrated how both disguises are based on the same model, the Apollonian Chalcioppe, who for Medea was both a sister and a mother figure; the Hellenistic epic also included the first instance of Chalcioppe's association with the Furies, which the Flavian poet takes to its limits by presenting both goddesses, but Venus in particular, as bearing infernal traits that are hard to conceal. By comparing the two interventions I showed that success is achieved only when the heroine is encouraged to identify with her relative in the manner of a *unanimis soror* and to emulate her example as a Roman daughter would look up to her mother.

## Reactions to loss

In the third chapter I looked at the theme of loss of their female relatives that mothers, daughters and sisters experience in Latin epic, and the mourning in which they subsequently engage. The three poems I discussed (*Aeneid*, *Metamorphoses* and *Thebaid*) offer a large variety of cases that can be grouped under two categories: permanent loss (through transformation, sacrifice or suicide) and temporary or assumed loss (through abduction or concealment). As was the case with the other two themes, female loss and mourning in Latin epic is often influenced not only by literary precedents but also by Roman practices and specific Roman models.

I started with loss through transformation in the story of Clymene and the Heliades, and showed how the lament for the son and brother is transformed into a vain attempt to prevent the loss of sisters and daughters. This double lament for Phaethon combines influences from not only from tragedies dealing with this myth, but also from the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid* that concern mourning for both male and female relatives. At the same time it incorporates gestures of lament typical of Greek and Roman practice, and points at a very specific model, the reactions to the death of Marcellus in 23BC which had both a private and a public aspect. I suggested that Clymene's lament represents the former, exemplified by Octavia, while that of the Heliades corresponds to the latter, especially through their metaphorical survival as poplars and the connection of their amber tears to Roman marriage.

Ceres and Procne both experience a temporary loss of their female relatives, which they treat in the same way as a mother and sister would the death

of their beloved ones. Both stories establish a dialogue between different genres as well as between episodes in the *Metamorphoses* itself: Ceres' lament of Proserpina looks back not only to the Homeric Hymn but also to the earlier Ovidian mother, Clymene. Likewise, Procne's mourning of Philomela creates connections with the goddess' plight in the previous book as well as foreshadowing the next instance of female loss, this time permanent, exemplified by Hecuba and Polyxena. As with most heroines in the poem, Polyxena is informed both by epic (Lavinia) and tragic protagonists (Polyxene and Iphigenia), especially through the emphasis on the relationship between marriage and death that pervades the episode.

Finally, I turned to female suicide in Latin epic, focusing on Statius' Jocasta and Ismene, both of whom commit suicide at the start of the duel between Eteocles and Polynices. The discussion of the models on whom Statius draws in his characterisation of the two heroines (Dido and Anna, Amata and Lavinia) led to an analysis of the mother-daughter bond within the theme of loss and mourning. I showed how Jocasta is emotionally closer to Ismene than she is to Antigone, while at the same time prescribing the behaviour of the younger daughter to a greater extent. She encourages Ismene to express her love for her fiancé, a secret that she does not even confide in her sister, and allows her to react to her own death without betraying her epic models. Ismene conforms to the Roman ideal of a daughter following her mother's example, but by committing suicide alongside Jocasta, she takes this ideal to its extremes in a way typical of Virgil's epic successors.

## Sisters telling stories

The fourth and final chapter of this thesis returned to sisters and unanimity, but from a different perspective, as now the predominant theme is storytelling and sister pairs give way to groups of three and nine. I discussed two stories, the daughters of Minyas (*Metamorphoses* 4), and the contest between the Muses and the daughters of Pierus (*Metamorphoses* 5), identifying their models in earlier literature, including the poem itself. I also highlighted the similarities and differences in the way sisters operate on two levels, within and without the narratives they choose to share with each other. A glimpse at the mother-daughter bond is given in Leuconoe's story, which also perhaps treats her protagonists Leucothoe and Clytie as sisters. Alcithoe gives a more detailed aspect of the sister bond in her story about Salmacis, while the mother-daughter relationship, exemplified by Ceres and Proserpina, is central to the song of Calliope that wins the competition on behalf of the Muses. In the case of the Minyads, the way each sister delivers her narrative is indicative of her views on the bond they share. The Muses' view on their bond to each other and to Minerva is also evident in the way they address each other or talk about themselves as a group. Interestingly, their song is about a bond that neither they nor their half-sister have ever experienced, but their emphasis on virginity strikes a chord not only with the judges of the competition but also with their divine audience.

The issues of individualisation and unanimity, which now takes the form of a unified group that acts as one, are at the centre of the two stories, with the mortal women either striving to be independent from each other and from everyone else (Minyads) or rejecting individuality altogether in favour of a common front against

the gods (daughters of Pierus). By giving the victory to Bacchus and the Muses respectively, the poet suggests that awareness of the right place for either behaviour is the key to success: the women of Thebes become a sisterhood to worship Bacchus, thus avoiding punishment, and the Muses acknowledge each other's expertise in a specific field, thus winning the competition. Finally, Roman elements are once again present in the episode of the Minyads, where both the sisters and one of the protagonists in their stories spend time together with their maids spinning and weaving in the manner of Lucretia and any respectable Roman matron.

### **Epic and women**

The importance of all-female family bonds in Latin epic is twofold. On the one hand, their study contributes to the understanding of the Roman epicists' creative approach to traditional material. They deemed interaction between heroines to be important and worth describing in detail, not to condemn its shortcomings or show its inadequacy compared to male interaction, but to offer characters who continue to inspire literature and art two thousand years after their creation; it is for this reason that the student of these texts today continues to find them challenging as well as rewarding. In each poem all-female family bonds serve a different purpose: in the *Aeneid* the sisters Dido and Anna in the first half, and the mother-daughter pair Amata and Lavinia in the second half of the poem, offer a counterpart to the numerous all-male and mixed relationships that dominate the poem from start to finish. In the *Metamorphoses*, on the other hand, episodes that seem unrelated at first glance are linked through their common models found in



earlier treatments of an all-female bond, as well as through references backwards and forwards to each other. The two divine interventions of *Argonautica* 6 and 7 explore the possibilities inherent in the sisterly bond as depicted in the Hellenistic poem, and take further the characterisation not only of the two goddesses involved but also of Medea herself as sister, daughter and niece. Finally, in an epic largely concerned with problems within the family, the multiple takes on the sister pair end the *Thebaid* on an optimistic note, with the Argive sisters Argia and Deipyle not only surviving the war but ensuring the continuation of Polynices' and Tydeus' line and giving birth to illustrious sackers of cities.

At the same time, the analysis of all-female family bonds shows that Latin epic is not only about tradition but also about dynamism and syncretism. Despite the mythical or legendary status of these epic heroines, the poets invest them with Roman characteristics, which contribute to the creation of figures that the audience may easily recognise and sympathise with. It is precisely the allusion to both general Roman attitudes and specific examples of Roman maternal, filial and sisterly behaviour, that makes the study of all-female family bonds in Latin epic useful as an indirect source of information about what is otherwise very rare glimpses at that part of Roman society. It also proves that Augustan and Flavian epic poets considered it important to include extensive treatments of all types of family bonds in their poems, creating connections not only to literature, in which most people in their audience would be well versed, but also to everyday practice, with which they would either identify or have some experience watching their own fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters.

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