

this sense: Medea's services are such, that, with regard to moral conscience, no relish can be taken in their recollection; what becomes meaningful is the recombination of the Catullan structure, which reunites the two extremes of the sentence (line 1; lines 5–6), eliminating the central attestation of one's purity (lines 2–4).

One might further note the erotic import of the terminology employed, *voluptas*, *gaudia ferre*, whereby the joy of restating one's services is presented almost as a replacement for the denied erotic pleasure¹³—Catullus too probably exploited this import of the terms,¹⁴ in view of the close connection between *ex hoc amore*... and *gaudia. haec sola* may also take on this meaning: 'all that remains to me, the sole joy I can get from you *by now*'.¹⁵ It is noteworthy how this nuance reproduces the tone of Euripides' verses, which themselves have been interpreted by Di Benedetto¹⁶ as twisting an erotic pattern from Sapphus' poetry, with which the woman welcomed the beloved (Eur. *Med.* 467; 472ff. cit.; cf. Sapph. fr. 48 L-P); here too the erotic pleasure gives way to the joy of insult.

The distich at once translates Euripides and connects itself to the tradition of Roman love-poetry, in its concerns for the theme of ingratitude and for the concept of *meritum* as applied to the erotic field. The outright polemic¹⁷ remains, however, closer to the tragic model; Ovid's elegiac Medea employs the thematic repertoire and the vocabulary of Latin erotic poetry with unusual violence, and by her insulting harshness places herself at the extremes of the elegiac spectrum. The peculiarity of Medea's epistle among the *Heroides* arises from this struggle between the tragic literary mould which dominates her character and the elegiac code which Ovid takes pleasure in making her aggressively distort.

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A NOTE ON OVID, *METAMORPHOSES* 11.48

[.....] *obstrusaque carbasa pullo*
naides et dryades passosque habuere capillos.

These lines come from the passage describing the mourning of the natural world

alii, tibi me laudare necesse est, / pro quo sum totiens esse coacta nocens: by the end of the long narrative section opened by our couplet 23–4, the 'merits' have proved themselves what they really are, a series of crimes (*totiens...nocens*). The point is made explicit by Hypsipyles: *Her.* 6.137–8 *quid refert, scelerata piam si vincit et ipso/crimine dotata est emeruitque virum?*

¹³ Cf. *Her.* 18.55.

¹⁴ See K. Quinn, *Catullus. An Interpretation* (London, 1972), p. 121.

¹⁵ Medea's expression may assume, finally, a twofold ironical implication. Just as Dido states that she wants to 'waste words' in a vain prayer (*Her.* 7.5–8), but then engages in a strenuous *suasoria*, so Medea, in spite of her purpose of relishing the sole pleasure of the reminder, will not exclude from her letter a prayer—however short-lived—for the restoration of her status as a wife (cf. 195 *redde torum*); the supplication will be soon overcome, in turn, by the announcement of the revenge (209ff.; cf. F. Spoth, *Ovids Heroides als Elegien* [München, 1992], p. 87 n. 9). A sinister implication might also lie in the ironical prefiguration of a different *voluptas* and of other *gaudia* which Medea will get from Jason: the joy of vengeance. In Seneca, after killing her children, Medea says that she feels a great pleasure, increased by Jason's presence: *Sen. Med.* 991–4; cf. 896 (cf. also Eur. *Med.* 1131; 1362). *Gaudere* is a stock-term for the joy of victory and revenge (cf., in this epistle, line 161); *gaudia* denotes the joy of vengeance in Ovid's Procne-story in the *Metamorphoses*, which has many contacts with that of Medea: *Met.* 6.653–4; cf. 658–60.

¹⁶ V. Di Benedetto, *Euripide: teatro e società* (Torino, 1971), pp. 38–9, n. 42.

¹⁷ Note, on the formal level, the harsh recurrence of *r* in the sequence *ingrato meritum exprobrare*; the impact of the prose-word *exprobrare*; the emphasis of the polyptoton *hac...haec*; the hammered style of the *dicolon*, *hac* (sc. voluptate) *fruar*, *haec...gaudia feram*.

following the death of Orpheus. A. D. Melville (*Ovid, Metamorphoses* [Oxford, 1986]) translates as follows:

[.....] and naiads wore,
and Dryads too, their mourning robes of black
And hair dishevelled.'

The MS. evidence is set out in W. S. Anderson's Teubner edition of the *Metamorphoses* (Leipzig, 1977). Anderson reads *obstrusaque* (FLMN¹e). The use of the word *obstrusaque* at *Met.* 11.48 is described as 'rare and striking' by G. M. H. Murphy (*Ovid, Metamorphoses Book XI* [Oxford, 1972]), who interprets *obstrusaque carbasa pullo* as 'linen robes edged with black (as a sign of mourning)'. *Obstrusaque*, however, is gibberish, a *vox nihili*, as E. J. Kenney has described it in conversation with me. The verb *obtrudo* means 'to thrust violently' and its participle *obtrusa*, found in one manuscript (see Hugo Magnus' edition of the *Metamorphoses* [Berlin, 1914]), does not make sense here.

Emend *obstrusaque* to *abstrusaque*. *Abstrudo* means 'to hide/conceal'. We can translate *abstrusaque carbasa pullo* / ... *habuere* as 'they wore their linen garments hidden beneath a dark robe'. *Pullum* is a neuter singular adjective used here as a noun. Examples of *pullum* meaning 'a dark garment' can be found at Liv. 45.7.4 (*pullo* + *amictus illo* + *Perseus ingressus est castra*) and at Ov. *Ars* 3.189 (*pulla decent niveas*). A dark cloak or mantle (worn over other garments) was a conventional sign of mourning or sorrow (OLD s.v. *pullus* b). *Carbasus* is the usual word to describe the linen garb traditionally worn by water-deities (*CARBASUS, pallium quo Fluvii amiciuntur* Non. p. 541M). The River-God Tiber wore a 'linen robe' (*carbasus*) at Virg. *A.* 8.33-4 (*eum tenuis glauco velabat amictu / carbasus*). *Carbasa* (pl.) means 'linen clothes'. The sorrowing nymphs put on a dark mantle over their customary linen clothes, thereby hiding their *carbasa* from view.

The use of the singular *pullo* alongside the plural *carbasa* requires some comment. *Pullis* (pl.) might seem more appropriate since the talk is of the mourning garments worn by a number of nymphs. Ovid, however, moves easily between singular and plural forms when the meaning is not in doubt (the same wound is referred to as *vulnera* and *vulnus* at *Met.* 10.187 and 189) and there is a parallel to *carbasa pullo* (pl./s.) in *velamina filo* at *Ars* 3.267. There is also the possibility that Ovid is using *pullum* in the singular here as a colour term ('their linen robes concealed in black'): compare Virg. *Ecl.* 2.41 (*sparsis ... pellibus albo*) and G. 3.56 (*maculis insignis et albo*). 'Linen robes concealed in black' still refers, of course, to sombre-coloured mantles on top of the nymphs' *carbasa*. The singular *pullo* is also attractive as implying uniformity of dress on the part of the mourning nymphs.

The variant reading *obscuraque* (EN²PUW) looks like an attempt to replace the meaningless *obstrusaque* with a word which makes sense in a context where the talk is of mourning (*obscuraque carbasa pullo* / ... *habuere* 'they wore their linen garments hidden by a dark robe'). *Obscuraque*, however, is less attractive than *abstrusaque* palaeographically and the participial *abstrusa* balances *passos* in a way that *obscura* (adj.) does not. The verbal aspects of *abstrusa* and *passos* also emphasize the actions of the nymphs in an appropriate way. Ovid almost certainly thought of water nymphs as chic females dressed in stylish *carbasa*. The beautiful nymphs are so upset at the death of Orpheus that the first thing they do is to hide their normal alluring garb. *Abstrusa* (participle) nicely draws attention to the nymphs' act of concealing their *carbasa* in a way that *obscura* (adj.) does not.