

MAIRÉAD MCAULEY : **MateMatermorphoses: Motherhood and the Ovidian Epic Subject.**

While in Virgil's Aeneid mothers are evoked sporadically only to be marginalized by the epic's forward narrative thrust, in his Metamorphoses Ovid pushes mothers centre stage, as subjects and protagonists of their own extended narratives, privileging rather than repressing their voices. This article surveys some of the interpretive and thematic possibilities of placing the maternal at the heart of a reading of Ovid's epic. It argues that Ovid exploits the metamorphic potential of maternity, its conflation of the boundaries of the body, inside and outside, self and other, and its association with paradoxical roles and extreme passions, to explore and redefine aesthetics and personal relations in the Augustan era. The intense psychic struggles and emotional monologues of Ovid's mothers, which are linked to motherhood as physical and bodily process, become key elements in this poem's unprecedented exploration of the contradictory and multiple nature of subjectivity itself.

Mots-clés :

Ovid – Metamorphoses – Roman Epic – Maternity – Mothers – Subjectivity – Gender – Alcmena – Niobe – Procne – Althaea – Hecuba