

## That Old Black Magic: Intratextuality Between *Metamorphoses* 7 and 14

Through language and specific allusions, Ovid establishes a clear relationship between Circe, whose presence is prominent in Book 14 of the *Metamorphoses*, and the poem's other major witch -- her niece Medea from Book 7.

Similarities in the formal characteristics of Books 7 and 14 set up interesting juxtapositions between human and divine magic. For example, Medea and Circe both have recourse to Cerberus, but Medea's aconite is essentially a Cerberean extract (7.406-19) while Circe is able to recreate a living Cerberus on Scylla's body (14.60-7). Divine magic is characterized by easy, living transformations while human magic involves a struggle to tame the elements. Furthermore, Medea's serious, tragic story is countered by Circe's almost comical use of magic.

The links forged by language and allusion between these two books also suggest deeper connections that inform our understanding of the *Metamorphoses* as a whole. Both witches appear at significant places in the work; Medea at its half-way point, Circe in the penultimate book. Ovid calls his poem a *carmen* in the very first lines of *Metamorphoses*, and the use of this same word for magical incantations helps to explain the presence of Medea and Circe at these pivotal points.

Indeed, both witches threaten to halt the narrative via magical *carmina*. Medea almost kills Theseus (7.404-24), while Aeneas is specifically warned to avoid an encounter with Circe (14.247). The founding heroes of Athens and Rome are threatened with destruction by witches shortly before they reach the lands they are destined to establish. The stories of Theseus and Aeneas will be told as poetic *carmina*, and these *carmina* will cease to exist if Medea and Circe succeed. The *Metamorphoses* depicts the witch characters in its own narrative as forces working against the poem itself.

In the end, however, Medea and Circe are themselves the object of poetic *carmina*. The careful relationships between Books 7 and 14 -- on structural, thematic, and metapoetic levels -- offer valuable insights and demonstrate to the reader that Ovid is ultimately in complete control of his own *carmen*.

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