In Books 12-14 of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid tells the story of the Trojan war and its aftermath, including the journey of Aeneas to Italy. At this point there is a major break in Ovid’s narrative, since he turns from the chiefly ‘mythological’ period to ‘historical’ times. Scholarly opinion has, for the most part, seen a decline in the quality of Ovid’s work at this point. Part of the reason for this has been a failure to understand the difficulties encountered by Ovid when he reached this part of his narrative, and the means by which he overcame them.

In discussing any part of the *Metamorphoses*, one must always keep in mind the plan of the work as a whole, which is generally agreed to be the following: to provide a narrative of the ‘mythological-historical’ past which is (1) continuous from the beginning of time up to Ovid’s own day, (2) roughly chronological, (3) replete with metamorphoses, no matter how tenuously introduced, and (4) new and different in its treatment of older material.

In fulfilment of this plan, Ovid could hardly ignore the Trojan war, but the chief problem with incorporating it into his work was the rather full

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2. Those scholars who see a decline beginning with Book 12 are Crump (supra n.1) 210-11; Fränkel (supra n.1) 101-10; Wilkinson (supra n.1) 221-26, 237-38; and Otis (supra n.1) 280-81, 304-05 (see also pp.313-15 of the 1st ed.). The few who do not find the final four books inferior in quality to the preceding ones include W. Marg in *Gnomon* 21 (1949) 55-56; and G.K. Galinsky, *Ovid’s Metamorphoses: An Introduction to the Basic Aspects* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1975) 217-18. O.S. Due, *Changing Forms: Studies in the Metamorphoses of Ovid*, Classica et Mediaevalia 10 (Copenhagen 1974) 139-40, conveniently summarizes the different recent opinions.

3. See Wilkinson (supra n.1) 144-59; Ludwig (supra n.1) 75-86; E.J. Bernbeck, *Beobachtungen zur Darstellungsart in Ovids Metamorphosen*, Zetemata 43 (Munich 1967) 131-32; Otis (supra n.1) 45-49, 77-83; Galinsky (supra n.2) 1-109.
depiction of this period in earlier literary works, among which were the best known and most famous, the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and *Aeneid*. How was Ovid to tell the story of the Trojan war, and yet not repeat the contents of these works? How was he to give his narrative variety and keep the interest of his audience?

Much has been written about how Ovid used Virgil's *Aeneid* as a structural element in this part of the *Metamorphoses*. This is witnessed by the frequent appearance of the phrase 'Ovid's "Aeneid"' in Ovidian criticism. Scholars, however, have not recognized the importance of the *Iliad* in the overall design of these books. It is the purpose of this article to show how extensively the *Iliad* influenced Books 12-13 of the *Metamorphoses*, and how artfully Ovid integrated it into his narrative.

The contents of Books 12-13 may be outlined as follows:

### Book 12

1-38 Helen taken—ships at Aulis—sacrifice of Iphigenia  
39-63 Fama spreads the word of invasion  
64-72 Arrival at Troy—Protesilaus—general slaughter  
72-145 CYGNUS  
146-209 Pause in battle: [CAENEUS]  
210-535 [LAPITHS AND CENTAURS]  
536-76 [PERICLYMENUS]  
577-628 End of pause—10 years of war—death of Achilles

### Book 13

1-398 JUDGMENT OF ARMS—suicide of Ajax  
399-575 HECUBA  
576-622 MEMNON

As Ludwig has shown, Ovid used the Epic Cycle (primarily the *Cypria* and *Aethiopis*) as the chronological framework of his Trojan story. Certain events—Achilles' duel with Cygnus, the debate over his arms, the funeral of Memnon—are described in detail. This outline is further enriched with a summary of Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*, which presents some of the events after the fall of Troy.

Inserted into this framework in a pause in battle after the death of Cygnus are three stories from the period before the Trojan war: the *Caeneus, Lapiths and Centaurs*, and *Periclymenus*.

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4. See Bernbeck (supra n.3) 117; Due (supra n.2) 21-23, 36-42 (who, pp.18-19, calls these works 'models of reading'); Galinsky (supra n.2) 185.
5. See, for example, F.J. Miller, 'Ovid's *Aeneid* and Vergil's: A Contrast in Motivation,' *CJ* 23 (1927) 33-43; Coleman (supra n.1) 472; Galinsky (supra n.2) 217-51.
7. Ludwig (supra n.1) 65; Otis (supra n.1) 285-86; Due (supra n.2) 155.
In the chronological sequence of events, Ovid has ignored the contents of the *Iliad*; the ten years between Achilles’ defeat of Cygnus and his own death are summed up in the single line *iamque fere tracto duo per quinquennia bello* (12.584). It would seem, therefore, that this part of the *Metamorphoses* is a loosely organized mélange in which the *Iliad* plays no part at all. Nevertheless, I contend that this neglect of the *Iliad* is only a pretence, and that it, not the Epic Cycle, is the actual organizing principle for Ovid’s presentation of the Trojan war, operating behind the scenes to determine the choice and arrangement of the individual stories as well as the structure and tone of the entire narrative.

First, there are many short references to events in the *Iliad*; these occur primarily in the debate between Ajax and Ulysses over the arms of Achilles. In order to provide variety, Ovid presents these events from the point of view of the two antagonists. An example of this is the attack on the Greek ships by the Trojans in *Iliad* 15.220-18.242; Ajax magnifies his part in warding off destruction (*Met.* 13.5-8, 91-94), whereas Ulysses stresses the efforts of others, especially Patroclus (*Met.* 13.268-74, 352-53).

References to other events depicted in the *Iliad* appear elsewhere in Books 12-13, for example, the portent of the snake and nine birds turned to stone at Aulis; a flashback in the *Iliad* (2.299-330), it assumes its proper chronological place in the beginning of Ovid’s Trojan story (*Met.* 12.11-23).

A second way in which Ovid’s narrative is related to the *Iliad* is through expansion of short scenes which are found there. The best example of this is the *Lapiths and Centaurs* narrated by Nestor in the pause in battle after the death of Cygnus. This story is developed from a ‘kernel’ at *Iliad* 1.260-72.


10. Ludwig (supra n.1) 65; Due (supra n.2) 151.


12. Ludwig (supra n.1) 62. Other events include the death of Hector (*Il.* 22/*Met.* 12.591); Achilles’ near attack on Agamemnon with his sword (*Il.* 1.188-222/*Met.* 13.444); see also note 21 below.

13. Ludwig (supra n.1) 64, uses the term ‘die Keimzelle’ for the passage in the *Iliad*; cf. also Fränkel (supra n.1) 222, n.81 and Due (supra n.2) 150.
There Nestor, trying to convince Achilles and Agamemnon to listen to him, harks back to an earlier generation of men who did listen, men like Pirithous, Dryas, Caeneus, Exadius, Polyphemus, and Theseus, who, along with Nestor himself, battled the Centaurs. Playing upon Nestor's traditional long-windedness, Ovid has greatly expanded this short account, featuring these same heroes—except for Polyphemus, who is replaced by Peleus—in a detailed description of their exploits.

The following story, the Periclymenus, stems from the *Iliad* in a similar way. It is introduced by Tlepolemus, one of the listeners to Nestor's tale, who objects that Nestor left out the exploits of his father Hercules. Nestor explains by recalling his hatred of Hercules, who laid low Messene, Elis, Pylos, destroyed Nestor's home, and killed Nestor's eleven brothers, including Periclymenus, who turned into an eagle in a vain attempt to escape destruction. This story is derived from two short scenes in the *Iliad*. In the first, Tlepolemus meets Sarpedon in battle and boasts of his father Heracles, who sacked Troy (*II. 5.628-69*). The second is a short mention by Nestor that Heracles killed his eleven brothers (*II. 11.690-93*).

Thirdly, stories are related to the *Iliad* by similarity of theme and function. The most outstanding example of this is again the story of the battle between the Lapiths and Centaurs, which is a distorted reflection of the many battle scenes in the *Iliad*. In addition, the *Lapiths and Centaurs* takes up the slack of the ten years of war which Ovid only mentions, and makes the leap from its beginning to the tenth year less jarring. Not only does it mirror, therefore, the content of a large part of the *Iliad*, but it also serves the same function as the extensive description of battle there, which helps make the *Iliad* a summation of the whole war rather than an account of a few days in it (see below, p.28).

This kind of replacement by similarity is also found in the first long story,
the *Cygnus*. It is said there that Achilles
perque acies aut Cygnum aut Hectora quaerens
congreditur Cygno (decimum dilatus in annum
Hector erat). (12.75-77)

These lines suggest that the duel between Achilles and Cygnus is meant to represent the culminating duel of the *Iliad* between Achilles and Hector, which is virtually ignored by Ovid. Support for this interpretation is found in Achilles' boasting in the *Cygnus* of deeds for which he was renowned in the *Iliad* and which could not have been done in the early part of the war, when the contest with Cygnus took place. Also, after the death of Cygnus, Ovid has a pause in battle which corresponds to the pause in the *Iliad* (24.656-70, cf. 782-804) arranged by Achilles after the ransoming of Hector; in the *Cypria* (ap. Proclus, p.105 Allen) there is a peace treaty. Further, Ovid makes the death of Cygnus, not that of Hector, signal Achilles' own death. Neptune, the father of Cygnus, in grief over his son's death, instigates Apollo against Achilles, who in turn encourages and aids Paris in killing Achilles with his bow and arrows (12.580-611). This identification of Cygnus and Hector was surely facilitated by the frequent association after Homer of Cygnus, Hector, and Memnon as the three most famous victims of Achilles (Pind. *Isth.* 5.39-41, etc.).

The traditional association of Memnon and Hector just noted points to another thematic relationship between this part of the *Metamorphoses* and the *Iliad*. Ovid ends his story of Troy with the *Memnon*, in which Aurora obtains a special funeral for her son, Memnon. The part Achilles plays in his death is mentioned twice: Memnon is described as *Achillea pereuntem cuspide* (13.580), and it is said that he *primisque sub annis/occidit a forti (sic vos voluistis) Achille* (13.596-97). Ovid then, may have purposely ended his Trojan story with the funeral of Memnon to represent the end of the *Iliad*, which concludes with the funeral of Hector (24.776-804). An argument for this intention on Ovid's part is the fact that the *Memnon* finds its place at the end of his Trojan story by being displaced from its proper chronological position.

Similarity as a means of relating is not limited to individual stories. It lies

20. Ludwig (supra n.1) 62-63; Otis (supra n.1) 282; Due (supra n.2) 149.
24. Ludwig (supra n.1) 97, n.79; Galinsky (supra n.2) 85; Due (supra n.2) 157.
behind the entire structure of Ovid’s Trojan story. Ovid structures this part of the *Metamorphoses* around the figure of Achilles, who appears in his own person primarily in the first story, the *Cygnus*. Yet Achilles is the force which motivates most of the remaining activity in the narrative as a whole. Achilles is responsible for the telling of the *Caeneus*, the *Lapiths and Centaurs*, and the *Periclymenus*. Not only are these stories told during a pause in battle brought about by Achilles—

\[ \text{festa dies aderat, qua Cycni victor Achilles} \]

\[ \text{Pallada mactatae placabat sanguine vaccae— (12.150-51)} \]

but Nestor is inspired to tell the story of Caeneus (which leads into the other two stories) because of Caeneus’ similarity to Achilles’ victim Cygnus (12.164-72). Further, the figure of Achilles underlies the *Judgment of Arms* because it is his arms which generate the contest. He is responsible for part of the action in the *Hecuba*, since his shade demands the sacrifice of Polyxena (13.441-49). Finally, as noted above, he is the one responsible for the death of Memnon in the concluding story. Achilles, therefore, plays a role similar to the one he plays in the *Iliad*, where he appears in only part of the narrative, yet motivates the rest of the action in the story, though personally absent.

*Metamorphoses* 12.1-13.622, then, ostensibly based on the Epic Cycle with inserted ‘digressions,’ may justly be termed Ovid’s ‘*Iliad,*’²⁵ since it is Homer’s *Iliad* which is the integrating principle in the organization of his Trojan story, whereas the Epic Cycle merely provides the chronological framework. Ovid has reversed the procedure of the *Iliad*: it is a frequent observation that the *Iliad*, although it recounts only a few days in the war against Troy, mirrors the story of the entire war by incorporating scenes which belong at the beginning of the war and by anticipating future events;²⁶ Ovid, pretending to ignore the *Iliad* and to tell the story of the entire war, actually produces his own *Iliad* although allusion to well known episodes, expansion of short scenes, and similarity of theme and structure.

If this were all, Ovid had accomplished a literary *tour de force* in the art of variation. But he gives his ‘*Iliad*’ unity and significance in another way. He does not simply reproduce the *Iliad* in different form, he also offers a consistent and humane critique of both the *Iliad* and its chief concern, war.

Ovid deflates the Epic tradition through parody in the *Lapiths and Centaurs* with his depiction of the bizarre battle between men and half-human monsters, complete with gory fighting, grotesque wounds, and mock pathos and irony.²⁷ In the *Cygnus*, Achilles is depicted as a short tempered, yet in-

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25. Fränkel (supra n.1) 222, n.81, speaks of Ovid’s ‘own miniature *Iliad,*’ referring to the *Lapiths and Centaurs* only.
27. Otis (supra n.1) 350-51, 358-59; Coleman (supra n.1) 474-75; Galinsky (supra n.2) 126-29.
vincible buffoon who is stymied with frustration and bewilderment at Cygnus' invulnerability.28

Ovid’s condemnation of war is clear throughout his ‘Iliad’. He repeatedly shows how brute force mindlessly destroys everything that stands in its way, from the weakest and most helpless to the strong and seemingly invulnerable. In the beginning of his Trojan story, Iphigenia is sacrificed to allow the war-machine to begin moving (12.24-38); at the end, there are the senseless murders of Astyanax, Polyxena, and Polydorus (13.399-575). But the seemingly invulnerable are also destroyed by the application of immense power, as when Achilles conquers Cygnus by beating him to the ground and strangling him to death (12.132-45), and the Centaurs destroy Caeneus by burying him beneath trees and stones (12.496-533).

These stories which are not directly connected with the story of Troy are bound more closely to this section of the Metamorphoses by adoption of the same theme. In the Periclmenus, it is the destructiveness of Hercules which wipes out Nestor’s brothers and does not even allow Periclmenus to escape, although he has the power to change shape, and becomes a bird in order to escape. The Caeneus shows how Caenis was so traumatized by the attack of Neptune that she desired never to experience penetration again.

The ultimate futility of the reliance on brute force is expressed in the Judgment of Arms (carefully balanced against the Lapiths and Centaurs)29 in which the intelligent Ulysses overcomes the physically powerful Ajax, who can then only turn his sword against himself in frustration. This futility is symbolized in the concluding story, the Memnon, where the ashes arising from Memnon’s pyre turn into birds which form themselves into two groups and battle each other to the death—a bloody rite repeated each year.30

The realization that Ovid intended to criticize the negative effects of war should help to allay some of the adverse critical reaction to Books 12-13 of the Metamorphoses, and in particular to the much maligned Lapiths and Centaurs.31 Ovid not lose his grip at Book 12, but kept as firm and steady a hand on the material in his ‘Iliad’ as he did throughout the rest of his poem.

28. Due (supra n.2) 149.
29. Cf. Otis (supra n.1) 283: ‘Here the brute force that the Centaurs and Lapiths had so prodigally displayed is set in relief by one man’s ingenium.’ Elsewhere, p.359, Otis sees a parody of heroic aristea in Ulysses’ speech.
30. In contrast to the concluding story of Ovid’s Aeneid, the Ardea (14.574-80), in which Ardea, the hometown of Turnus, is destroyed, and a heron arises from its ashes, symbolizing rebirth and continuation (cf. Ludwig [supra n.1] 73).
31. Fränkel (supra n.1) 102; on p.222, n.83, he comments ‘The story is tedious as well as repulsive, and its dull cruelty . . .’; Otis (supra n.1) 283, finds it ‘on the whole tedious and otiose . . .’, and on p.314 (1st ed.) he characterizes it as ‘a frigid epic piece (marking almost the lowest point of the whole poem) . . .’; Galinsky (supra n.2) 126-29, thinks the story devoid of any spiritual dimension and that Ovid simply liked cruelty.