

Ovid Unseen 3: Medea worries about Jason

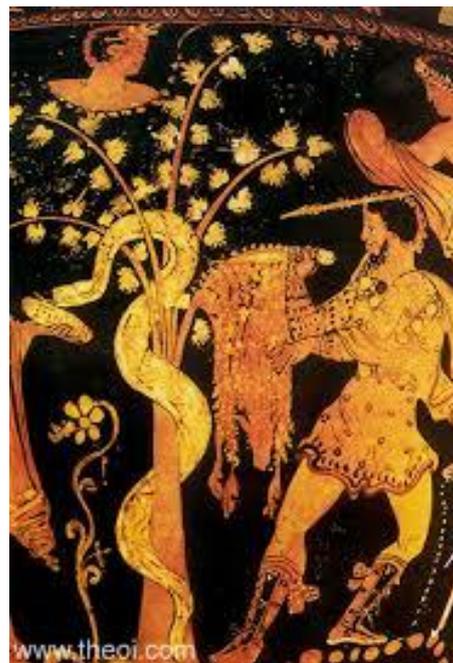
Ovid's Heroides 12

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Medea tells her lover, Jason, how she spent an anxious night worrying about his safety after her father, King Aeëtes, had set him three terrible tasks to win the Golden Fleece.

'My father, King Aeëtes, laid out the tasks you had to complete before you received the Golden Fleece: to yoke the bulls of Mars; to sow the field with the dragon's teeth; and to conquer the unsleeping serpent.'

dixerat Aeetes: maesti consurgitis omnes,
 mensa¹que purpureos deserit alta toros.
 tristis abis. oculis abeuntem prosequor udis
 et dixit tenui murmure lingua: 'vale!'
 ut positum tetigi thalamo male saucia² lectum,
 acta est per lacrimas nox mihi quanta fuit.
 ante oculos taurique meos segetesque nefandae,
 ante meos oculos pervigil anguis erat.
hinc amor, hinc timor est - ipsum timor auget amorem.
 mane erat et thalamo cara recepta soror
disiectamque comas aversaque in ora iacentem
 invenit et lacrimis omnia plena meis.



Jason, the Colchian Dragon and Golden Fleece, Apulian red-figure vase C4th B.C., Naples National Archaeological Museum

Vocabulary:

Aeetes, -is (m)	- King Aeëtes
consurgo, -ere, -surrexi, -surrectum	- arise, stand up (together)
purpureus	- gleaming, splendid, purple, crimson
desero, deserere, -ui, -itum	- leave behind, abandon
udus, -a, -um	- damp, wet
tenuis, -e (3 rd adj)	- slight, slender, faint
murmur, murmuris (m)	- murmur, whisper
thalamus, -i (m)	- chamber, bedroom, bridal-chamber
lectus, -i (m)	- couch, bed
ago, agere, egi, actum	- do, drive, act, 'spend' (time)
seges, segetis (f)	- see Ovid Unseen 2
nefandus, -a, -um	- unspeakable
pervigil, pervigilis	- wakeful, watchful
anguis, -is (m/f)	- snake, serpent
hinc ... hinc ...	- on one side ... on the other ...
disicio, disicere, disieci, disiectum	- scatter, disperse, dishevel

¹ Translate literally first – taking great care over agreement of nouns and adjectives - and then see if you can see what the poet is getting at. If you're not sure after this, leave the translation as it is literally.

² male saucia – literally 'badly wounded' – a metaphor (she's sick with love).