

## Scylla and Minos Critique

The story of Scylla and Minos is as follows. The city of Alcatheo is being attacked by King Minos, he is doing this to test out the strength of his own armies before he attacks Athens. He wants to attack Athens since they are responsible for the murder of his son. Scylla the daughter of Nisus, the King of Alcatheo, watches the war from inside the city obsessively. Since she has watched the war day in, day out, she has knows all about the horses and clothes of the enemy, and in particular she has become obsessed with Minos. She watches admiringly everything that he does and she starts to fall in love him. She starts to say that she would do anything for him, and she imagines becoming his hostage, although she says that she would never betray her father's kingdom. However she begins to convince herself that that the war is in fact justly waged and that being defeated would not be such a bad thing. She then decides that in fact defeat is inevitable.

She now resolves to steal her father's magic lock of hair that ensures the safety of his kingdom, and hand it over to Minos, as she believes that no other woman would let something stand in the way of her love. She manages to steal it and she offers it to Minos, confident that he will thank her and now take her as a bride. He however does no such thing and rejects her and calls her a monster for being such a traitorous daughter. Minos then, having imposed terms on the city, sets sail for Crete, Scylla however is very upset at being rejected by the one she desires. She yells after Minos, angry at the realisation that now no one will accept her, neither her homeland, nor the neighbouring countries and now not Crete. She swims after the ships and clings onto one, her father however, now changed into an Osprey attacks her and she lets go. As Scylla falls into the sea she is changed into a bird, the Shearer, so named because of how she cut off her father's lock of hair.

Scylla's character seems to change throughout the story. She starts off in the story as just being an innocent young girl who is watching her father's city being attacked by the Cretans. Although she was "often accustomed to go up to that place" -the royal tower- ('saepe solebat ex illa'), and "watch...the struggles of harsh battle" ('spectare rigidi certamina Martis'), this seems like merely an innocent desire to see what is happening, since her homeland is being attacked after all, there seems to be no harm in her watching what is going on.

From this point on in the story, however, you can see Scylla's interest in King Minos begin to grow. She watches Minos "even more than was enough to know him", this shows how she has now become fascinated by the leader of the enemy, and is looking at him a lot, too much in fact. Scylla now begins to heap undeserved praise upon Minos, she says that no matter what he wore, "he was handsome" ('formosus erat'), she has never met him or seen him close up, yet she praises everything that he does, even going so far as to compare him to

Apollo 'sic Phoebum sumptis iurabat stare sagittis' – she would swear that Phoebus stood in this way with his arrows having been taken up. This is the highest praise that you could possibly give someone, comparing them to a god, yet Scylla has never met him, this shows her rapidly intensifying, unnatural obsession with him.

Later on, Ovid describes just how much Scylla's mental state has deteriorated. He describes her as "hardly her own self, hardly in control of a sound mind" – 'vix sua vix sanae'. This shows how crazed she is becoming, as she has become completely enraptured with Minos. She will do anything for Minos, and she even cold-heartedly begs that she might be rid of her father "If only the gods would grant that I might be without a father!" – 'di facerent, sine patre forem!'.

In my opinion, Ovid manages to tell this story effectively. He invokes pathos, as at the beginning of the story you feel sorry for Scylla, and even at the end you almost feel sorry that she is rejected and all her hopes crushed. He also makes you feel somewhat for Nisus, although he isn't mentioned a lot, since he has been betrayed by his daughter. Ovid develops Scylla's character well and entertains the reader by showing how her mental state deteriorates throughout the story and how she manages to convince herself that handing of her father's city to Minos is the right thing to do. All in all, Ovid does manage to make this story interesting and entertaining.