

## To what extent are the characters in Ovid

### metamorphoses real and not stereotypical

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From the selected chapters, Ovid depicts the event of Scylla falling madly in love with King Minos of Crete and the attempted escape by Daedalus together with son Icarus resulting in the death of the young boy.

When Cephalus and the troops from Aegina returned to Athens, Minos had been waging war against King Nisus for six months. During that time, King Nisus' daughter, Scylla, became obsessed with Minos, his enemy. After trying to squelch her love, she gave in to it and killed her father. She took his purple lock of hair to Minos and presented herself as his bride and her country that he'd been fighting to conquer as her gift. Minos was horrified by her treachery, and he took his fleet and left. Scylla realized that she would be shunned from her own country and all others for her betrayal, and so she swam after Minos' ships. She was clinging to the bow of one ship when her father, who had been transformed to an osprey, attacked her and made her fall from the ship. She, too, was transformed into a bird.

Daedalus was an inventor, and he despised being in exile, so he decided to create wings for himself and his son, Icarus to escape. As they made their flight across the sky, he warned the boy however the naïve boy carried away with the freedom of his wings flew too close to the sun, and his wings melted. He was engulfed by the sea and drowned. In his memory, the sea where he drowned bears his name.

There are stereotypical elements to his writings, which include to some extent, Scylla and Icarus the typical children. This refers to Icarus more so than Scylla as he fulfills a conventional immature boy disregarding any advise administered to him whereas Scylla in a few aspects represents your mainstream hormonal adolescent girl.

For Scylla there is an orthodox heartthrob narrative yet it is abnormal due to its circumstances i.e. the fact she desires her father's enemy. She tries to rationalize her thoughts even though they are completely illogical. Ovid utilizes a hubristic phrase; 'she would swear that Phoebus stood in this way with his having been taken up.' This demonstrates how much respect she has for the man as well as her craving for him; Minos' skills have been compared to Apollo, the God of archery heightening his ability and appeal. She is extremely deluded prepared to 'do anything which Minos should wish. Another example of her infatuation is that Scylla even praises the birth of the king of Crete. She fears for his well-being so much that she is prepared to be disloyal to her nation to immediately stop the current affair. Scylla removes the purple lock of hair from her father's

head, which was the safeguard to the kingdom, and in doing also, takes off his head! In this way she does not satisfy a typical teenage girl, as most people do not turn into savage monsters to retrieve what they desire, stooping so low as to murdering their own blood. Scylla is so disturbed that she cannot understand why she appears unattractive to Minos.

Icarus is an archetypal boy as he is unobservant to his own dangers to the degree that he even 'hinders' the amazing work thus contributing to his own peril i.e. while studying his father at work inventing an escape mechanism. Daedalus warns his son about the possible hazards they are exposed to yet Icarus decides to deliberately discount this advice and do exactly what he was instructed not to. Icarus soon becomes vulnerable with his 'wax softening' and his 'wings unable to grip air' concluding with his fatal descent into the dark blue water. Icarus is an example of your stereotypical disobedient child yet is unable to discover his mistakes, as others are able to. It is an extreme case but highlights the possible consequences of an arrogant attitude towards genuine guidance.

Ovid depicts good and evil in a blurred manner although Scylla commits atrocious actions and Icarus is ignorant to his father's advice, Ovid does not condemn them and in a way even allows us to sympathize with the characters slightly. Scylla is initially a solitary figure that becomes love-struck with the wrong person. We are made aware that she is from a regal upbringing and therefore does not have a vindictive motive. The *teichoscopia*, which Ovid incorporates, shows Scylla to be an innocent young girl who later is actually not in control of herself, physically and mentally. She is caught in two minds and the audience almost feels sorry for her as she tries to justify her thoughts and actions e.g. she feels that Minos has the upper hand anyway so it is better to betray her country to prevent massacre together with the fact that Minos will be unharmed. Although with Icarus there is almost a feeling that his death was 'deserved,' when his father goes to retrieve him the situation becomes emotional. The wrecked Daedalus breaks down and you most definitely begin to empathize with the character although his son acted in a foolish way.

From the above paragraph one can conclude that Ovid does not portray good and evil in a black and white sense but rather in shades of grey most likely due to the narrative/objective approach.

Irony in his work includes the fact that the safeguard of the kingdom, the purple lock of hair, is in fact her pledge of love too. When Scylla presents the head of her father to Minos, he is repulsed by her and does not feel that his victory is honorable and so leaves immediately. This is satirical, as all the bloodshed that occurred did not contribute to the ultimate outcome. Additionally when Nisus dies, he is transformed into a sea eagle, which later goes on to attack Scylla as she desperately clings on to the ship of Minos. She falls off, but instead of drowning is also turned into a bird herself. Another example involves Icarus' involvement in 'hindering' his father's invention leading to the boy's eventual death.

In conclusion, there are formulaic rudiments to Ovid's poem yet from the evidence above one can see that his writings are original and do not mirror classic tales. It is an impartial piece, so there is an indistinct side to the poem, permitting the audience to form their own judgments. Generally I do not think that the statement 'Ovid Metamorphoses VIII is a poem with no real characters only stereotypes,' is reflective of this section, as I believe that stereotypes are based around opinion, which is not featured in the verse.

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