CHAPTER 5

# Philomela Again?

The story of Procne, Philomela, and Tereus at first seems to lack the kind of links to contemporary Roman ideology and spectacular praxis that formed the starting points for our reading of the Pentheus tale. Yet it is in part the deliberate turning aside of such recognizably Roman features within the narrative that gives it its programmatic importance for understanding the dialogue Ovid creates between the visual experience of metamorphosis his text offers and the world of civic ritual and spectacular performance. The tale's obviously tragic parallels, even as they confirm its status as a Greek, as opposed to Roman, story will draw our attention from the arena to the theater, another mode of spectacle that enmeshed the spectator in a complex fixing of the borders between reality and representation. I begin by arguing that Ovid's treatment of ethnicity and gender in the episode recalls anxieties that recur specifically in discussions of the effects of theatrical performance and that, as we saw in the preceding chapter's treatment of the Pentheus episode, focusing these anxieties through the phenomenon of metamorphosis "textualizes" them, allowing his poem to comment on the theatrical experience and to reproduce it. One factor that accentuated the potential seams between what happened on a Roman stage and the real-world experience of its spectators was precisely that these foreign performances were so carefully integrated into the civic life of the Roman state. As the next stage in my argument, I try to demonstrate that Ovid creates a similar effect within his narrative by correlating a tragic view of the narrated events with other discursive frameworks: in particular, the rape of Philomela is read against the foundational historical episode of Lucretia and also embedded within the Roman ritual calendar. This last perspective emerges from the intertextual relationship between the *Metamorphoses* and the contemporary *Fasti* and further reinforces their complementarity as two sides of Ovid's great cultural project.

Let us begin with a brief sequence at one of the crucial turning points of the story that brings to the fore the entire episode's complex construction of the cognitive and emotional effects of looking. Procne, having just recovered her mutilated sister Philomela, deliberates on a course of

revenge against the husband who raped her. At just this moment, her son Itys arrives.

> *Peragit dum talia Procne,*
> *ad matrem veniebat Itys; quid possit, ab illo*
> *admonita est oculisque tuens inmitibus "a! quam*
> *es similis patri!" dixit nec plura locuta*
> *triste parat facinus tacitaque exaestuat ira.*
> *ut tamen accessit natus matrique salutem*
> *attulit et parvis adduxit colla lacertis*
> *mixtaque blanditiis puerilibus oscula iunxit,*
> *mota quidem est genetrix, infractaque constitit ira*
> *invitique oculi lacrimis maduere coactis;*
> *sed simul ex nimia mentem pietate labare*
> *sensit, ab hoc iterum est ad vultus versa sororis*
> *inque vicem spectans ambos "cur admovet" inquit*
> *"alter blanditias, rapta silet altera lingua?*
> *quam vocat hic matrem, cur non vocat illa sororem?*
> *cui sis nupta, vide, Pandione nata, marito!*
> *degeneras! scelus est pietas in coniuge Tereo."*
> *nec mora, traxit Ityn, veluti Gangetica cervae*
> *lactentem fetum per silvas tigris opacas,*
> *utque domus altae partem tenuere remotam,*
> *tendentemque manus et iam sua fata videntem*
> *et "mater! mater!" clamantem et colla petentem*
> *ense ferit Procne, lateri qua pectus adhaeret,*
> *nec vultum vertit.*
>
> (6.619–42)

While Procne was deliberating, Itys came to his mother. She was reminded by his presence what power she had and, regarding him with cruel eyes, said, "Ah, how like your father!" Speaking no more, she prepares her terrible crime and boils with silent rage. But as her son approaches her and wraps her neck in his small arms and joins kisses to a child's endearments, the mother indeed is moved and hesitates, her anger broken. And her eyes grow damp despite themselves with involuntary tears. But as soon as she senses that her mind stumbles from excessive piety, she turns again from him to the countenance of her sister. And, gazing at them both in turn she says, "Why can the one use endearments while the other is silent with her tongue ripped out? When he calls me mother, why can she not call me sister? See, daughter of Pandion, to what husband you are married. You fall off from your birth! In the case of a husband like Tereus, piety is crime." Straightway she dragged off Itys, as a tiger of the Ganges drags the nursing offspring of a deer through the dark forests. And when they reached the secluded part of that lofty palace, while Itys stretches out his hands and, now seeing his doom, calls out "mother! mother!" and seeks to embrace her neck, Procne cuts him down with a sword, where the breast and side meet, and she does not turn away her face.



Procne here faces the familiar tragic dilemma of deciding who she is, mother or sister.[1] Not only does the conflict between family roles and the emotions they inspire, anger and love, appear in her own eyes, alternately cruel and tearful, but the very question of which figure Procne will become seems to result from where she directs them. However, the emphasis on vision testifies to much more than its power to stir the emotions. Procne channels the effective demands made by the sight of each figure through a complex measuring of likeness and difference between them.[2] Itys is unlike Philomela, largely because, being articulate, he need not rely simply on the visual impression he presents. Most important, in looking at the figure of her son, she stresses a seen likeness to his father against the likeness to herself on which her son's audible appeals to her as mother insist. The recognition of Itys as his father overlaps with an intellectual recognition of what sort of man Tereus is, which is itself expressed in visual terms (*vide*) as if to stress its indistinguishability from the visual stimulus of Itys' countenance. Gazing at Itys becomes a process of objectification: Procne looks on him as increasingly alien to the point where he comes to signify someone who is not there and loses his power to express his subjectivity through speech by calling her *mater*.

But if Procne comes to regard Itys as a sign of the otherness of her husband, her language stresses the equally unnatural identity she takes on with her sister, the other object of her gaze, whose speech she must supply rather than disregard. In fact, the very line in which she recognizes her husband in her son makes her indistinguishable from her sister. The

[1] Cf. Tarrant 2002a.353–54, who sees the collapse of distinct family relationships in the episode as a recollection of Ovid's Chaos. The importance of what I here treat as a doubling of family roles was, as "boundary violation," highlighted as a major theme in the episode by Barbara Pavlock 1991. Pavlock stresses how such violation of category boundaries colors Tereus as a tyrant, comparable to the Roman Tarquins responsible for the native analogue of this crime, the rape of Lucretia. As her term "violation" implies, she sees Tereus very much as the agent whose crimes set these distortions in motion; the deformation of Procne that leads to her revenge offers a vision of the ultimate consequences of tyrannical cruelty. My own emphasis by contrast is on the role of representation in effecting change, and while not presenting Tereus as a victim, I stress his own role as spectator transformed by what he sees. In relating our two positions, I would also like to point out that for the Romans the tyrant was already a tragic role. Cf. Livy's presentation of the anomalies and transgressions that characterize the reign of Tarquin as "tragic." See Feldherr 1997.

[2] Cf. Hardie 2002c.269: "Procne ... is strengthened by the difference that she perceives between Itys and his aunt Philomela, the difference between speech and speechlessness."

vocative "daughter of Pandion" that seems to mark the expression as a soliloquy, points out that her sister Philomela could be described in precisely the same terms, and both have united sexually with Tereus.[3] Thus, Procne's role as mother of Itys is the only one that distinguishes her from Philomela, and in rejecting her child as "other" she takes another step toward becoming her sister, looking as she would look and speaking as she would speak. This climactic moment, therefore, juxtaposes the two opposed ways of viewing we have been tracing throughout the poem, an objectification that decouples appearance from identity versus a powerful identification with a seen presence that unites spectator and spectacle and allows her to take on the voice of the silent image.

Procne seems to have fulfilled Cadmus's destiny in turning into what she sees. Yet that disturbing prophecy also depended on the gazer taking on a form alien from himself and being gazed upon in turn. So here, having seemingly positioned herself as viewer in a way that reestablishes her integrally as what she was, a daughter of Pandion, by looking at someone like her, Procne together with Philomela is suddenly seen to have changed her fundamental identities. Philomela becomes anomalous precisely because of her too close similarity to her sister. Both have shared the bed of the same man, so that neither has a single role in relation to the other, or, to accentuate Philomela's own view of the situation, she has become her own sister's "other woman" (6.606). Procne, far from returning to an original state of virginal innocence as an Athenian princess, will be figured in the text as Indian tigresses as a direct result of her identification with Philomela.[4] More important, it is just at this moment that the wife begins to resemble her husband most closely: if seeing a sister appears to establish an identity between viewer and viewed, simultaneously restoring the viewer to an original identity, a characteristic modus operandi for Tereus was a deceit that made things different from what they seem, so that what gave the appearance of piety was in fact crime. Here, though, the sisters themselves are about to devise their own trap of false appearances, concealing the presence of Itys in the meal, and pretending that the father's act of consuming it will be the performance of a cult ritual (*pietas*) rather than criminality (*scelus*). A trace of this paradox, that the affirmation of identity through gazing has the power to transform the self into its own antithesis, emerges when Procne's apostrophe to the daughter of Pandion

[3] As Anderson 1972.217–18 points out, variants of the story survive that actually have Tereus wed Philomela under the pretense that Procne has died (Apollodorus 3.14.8, Hyginus *Fab.* 45).

[4] It was in fact just this desire to see Philomela that sets the tragedy in motion in the first place, as the echoes of the language of Procne's first conversation with Tereus poignantly remind the reader.



is followed by the cry *degeneras,* which in different ways describes all four protagonists of the episode with equal aptness: the raped Philomela; Procne, whose hesitation seems to her a sign of baseness; Itys, who too clearly shows the traces of his descent from Tereus; and Tereus himself, who has fallen away from the ideal husband he appeared to be.[5]

The multiple identities Procne simultaneously assumes in this short passage give her experience, for all the text's emphasis on ethnic difference, some powerful resonances for Ovid's Roman audience. First of all, her situation well describes the paradoxical place of the Roman wife in the structure of the family, for in most Roman marriages the wife always remained legally a member of her own birth family and therefore a stranger within her husband's home and in this respect alien even to her own children. Yet the tensions Procne enacts here also bear comparison to a more general experience we have come to see as shared by all genders in Ovid's audience: the issue of who Procne is at once depends on and determines whom she sees and how she sees them, whether she identifies with Itys or Philomela. Her decision thus magnifies that crucial aspect of the reception of fiction brought into focus by metamorphosis, the choice between the objectifying and the sympathetic point of view. But beyond figuring this hermeneutic choice, Procne's performance here once again projects it onto a recognizable component of Roman public life, the theater. Her speech reproduces one of the best-known, indeed archetypal, moments in ancient drama, Medea's monologue debating whether to punish Jason's adultery by murdering their children.[6] And the dramatic representation that seems to emerge from the text at this

[5] Cf. also the comment of Gildenhard and Zissos 1999a.169: "With her redefinition of central moral signifiers, Procne abandons the world of *pietas*, of Athenian family values, in which she grew up and where words had standard meanings and ethical value. Instead she acknowledges her presence in a universe which lacks any moral dimension."

[6] The intertext has been frequently recognized. See esp. the comments of Anderson 1972.230–31, Pavlock 1991.43, Curley 1997 and Larmour 1990. Indeed, the entire episode weaves together the central elements of the two most famous tragedies of the Augustan age, Varius's *Thyestes* (so Tarrant 2002a), describing the other mythological banquet when a father eats his sons, and Ovid's own *Medea*. Of course, the real Medea is waiting in the wings at this point in the *Metamorphoses* to appear at the beginning of the subsequent book. For a fuller discussion of the thematic links between the narratives of Procne and Medea, see Newlands 1997.192–95.

Pavlock 1991.46 introduces another very apt tragic parallel, Agave from the Bacchae: "Like Agave, [Procne] becomes carried away by her participation in the Bacchic rites and then cannot perceive her child for what he really is, but instead dissolves the distinction between father and son." If we consider that from an Ovidian perspective playing the role of a bacchant could also mean acting as one from Euripides' *Bacchae*, the conflation between the fiction Procne has contrived and the institution of drama develops an even greater intensity.

moment is also, importantly, a spectator. Thus, Procne's own transformations, as she looks from one character to another, invite the audience to investigate similarities to what they experience when they look at her. She is at once playing a part in a drama and enacting what happens when we watch such a performance.

To understand the significance of the explicit theatricalization of this episode, we must first examine more closely Roman conceptualizations of what watching a play could do to its audience. Ruth Webb's discussion of late antique responses to the theater provides an especially suggestive summary of some of the issues involved. Although she treats a later period in the history of the Roman stage, the concerns she illustrates about the effects of dramatic performance draw on ideas going back at least as far as Plato and amply demonstrated for early imperial Rome. Webb sees in the early Christian polemic that paints the theater as a snare of immorality haunted by pagan demons a reflection "of the experience of the theatre audience, an idea of the theatre as a domain outside normal experience where the spectator is caught up in something Other at a certain risk of alteration to him or herself."[7] To understand the terms of this alteration, Webb goes back to Platonic conceptions of mimesis developed in *Republic* 3 (esp. *Rep.* 3.393–96). There Plato worries that (male) actors themselves are assimilated to what they represent, becoming habituated to extreme and debilitating emotion by imitating those who suffer from it. This idea of the alienation of the actor from himself through mimesis emerges in the miracles of imitation chronicled in texts like Lucian's *On the Dance* (19), where pantomime performers astonish even the most skeptical spectators by seeming really to become such different characters as Ares and Aphrodite. But the moral dangers of imitation apply not only to the performers; Christian writers in particular express the fear that merely by watching men portray women, the male members of the audience themselves will be effeminized.[8] Thus, the situation of Procne, as she becomes different from herself, enraged and "degenerate," in the act of looking reproduces anxieties about the effect of theatrical performance on its spectators. More dangerously still, Procne at that moment in which she is both spectator and visualized as a performer enacting "Procne" suggests the communicability of this effect to those who watch her even as she herself crosses the barrier that ideally separates spectator from actor.

[7] Webb 2005.3.

[8] Webb 2005.6–9, citing esp. Gregory Nazianzen *Carmina* 2.2.8, 2.2.94–97, and the counterarguments of Libanios to such a position, *Orat.* 64.70. See also now Lada-Richards 2007.64–78.



In Rome anxieties about the theater especially involved questions of gender and ethnicity, as is revealed in Juvenal's discussion of Greek actors' ability to portray women:

> *an melior cum Thaida sustinet aut cum*
> *uxorem comoedus agit uel Dorida nullo*
> *cultam palliolo? mulier nempe ipsa uidetur,*
> *non persona, loqui: uacua et plana omnia dicas*
> *infra uentriculum et tenui distantia rima.*
> (*Sat.* 3.93–97)

> Is anyone better when he plays the part of Thais or when the actor takes the part of the wife or of Doris, adorned with no cloak? The woman herself seems to speak, not an actor. And you would say everything below the belly was smooth and void, parted by a slender crack.

I introduce this passage in particular into the discussion because its description of the moment when the audience accepts the fiction of the performance, when the actor seems to become what he imitates, so vividly recalls the language of Ovidian metamorphosis, with its catalog of transformed body parts and the introduction of an imaginary spectator (even the rhythm of that final half line, *tenui distantia rima*, has an Ovidian flavor).[9] For Juvenal, the excellence of the actor lies in a mimesis so perfect that he appears actually to turn into what he plays. At one level the ease with which Greek actors seem to lose their male genitalia can be easily parsed as an attack on their masculinity—especially if one bears in mind the Greek Plato's fear that actors become like what they imitate. But Juvenal's explicit concern is a much more insidious danger to Roman society. Because the Greeks are such good mimics, they make excellent parasites, deceiving their hosts through flattery and taking on a variety of deceptive roles not on the stage but in actual social interactions. While Romans marvel at the Greeks' ability to confuse reality and illusion on

[9] The phrase *tenui rima* itself has an Ovidian precedent at *Met.* 4.65, describing the crack in the wall separating Pyramus and Thisbe, and Ovid four times in the *Metamorphoses* makes up the second half of the hexameter with *tenui* + a tri- or quadrisyllabic adjective ending in *-a* + the disyllabic noun modified by *tenui* (1.549, 3.161, 6.127, 11.735), a pattern whose precedent perhaps occurs in Catullus 64.113, *tenui vestigia filo*. Vergil, by contrast, never uses this pattern: his preferred position for *tenui* is at the start of the second half of the second foot.

Earlier in the passage as well, Greek skill at role-playing is likened specifically to metamorphosis: *in summa non Maurus erat neque Sarmata nec Thrax / qui sumpsit pinnas, mediis sed natus Athenis* (3.79–80). While the most obvious referent of the allusion is of course Daedalus, the lines could indeed be read as the moral of the Procne and Philomela story.

stage, they miss their ability to transform the real space of the Roman city into a world of playacting that ultimately dissolves its ethnic identity and creates a "Greek Rome" (3.61). Juvenal's purpose here, then, is to draw the curtain and expose the fraudulent illusionism that threatens Rome's own integrity—making you not believe in the fictions that the Greeks try so hard to produce. As this invective reminds us, the Greeks do not lack male genitals; on the contrary, their lust threatens every member of the Roman *familia*, the wife, the virgin daughter, the son who was once chaste, even the old grandmother (3.109–12).

The mechanism for Rome's ethnic transformation as Juvenal describes it is admittedly less direct than the one Webb finds in the fear that looking at someone playing a woman effeminizes the spectator.[10] This difference makes sense given that the satirist here aims to alert his audience to the infiltration that is happening offstage rather than on. But the result is similar: the spectator society loses its ethnic distinctiveness, and at the same time its individual members are stripped of the sexual roles that give them status as members of the freeborn community of citizens. But Juvenal's re-creation of the theatrical experience also helps point out the other side of its sociopolitical potency. Of course, dramatic performances would never have played an important role in Roman public life if they posed such a threat to the integrity of the *populus Romanus*. Because the theater itself was so strongly marked off as Greek, it also allowed Roman audience members a wonderful opportunity to remind themselves of how different they were from both the Greek scenes that were set before them in tragedy and comedy and the actual Greek actors who played them.[11] The Roman theater, I suggest, offers a double potential for either catalyzing an awareness of who the audience member really is or blurring the distinctness of that identity through recognition of a likeness to the figures on stage, or perhaps simply through acceding to the fictions produced there. Far from enforcing a simple message about the nature of the audience's Romanness, I imagine the theatrical experience derived its civic power from the dynamic tension between these possible readings. Again, Juvenal's strategy[12] in the third satire suggests how an awareness of difference between Greece and Rome comes from a view of the theater that stresses the reality of the performance as opposed to the reality it

[10] A position reconstructed from the response in Libanios, *Orat.* 64.70.

[11] One favorite example of how theatrical spectacle offered a context for making display of distinctively Roman virtue comes in Valerius Maximus's (2.4.2) explanation of why the Romans originally provided no seats for watching plays: it was to put on display their own masculine ability to endure standing up.

[12] Or rather the strategy of the character Umbricius, for the whole satire is itself a "dramatic" monologue.



imitates, showing that the Greek actors are not what they seem. But I doubt whether matters were quite so simple. For merely to enter the fiction on stage strips the actors of what Webb sees as their uncanny power to seem to be one thing *while* being another. In this way, the focus on the realities of performance that appear to insulate the spectator from the performers' deception may serve also to highlight the true miracle of their achievement, which appears only when we keep the actors' bodily presence fully before our eyes. Seeing a male actor as a woman is less weird than seeing a male actor become a woman.

After suggesting that Procne's soliloquy mobilizes theater as well as a "spectacular" analogue to deciphering the hermeneutic options offered by the poem, I want first to illustrate how often motifs of acting and performance appear in the entire episode and how they suggest transformations in sexual and ethnic identity. It is not that Ovid presents the Philomela story as a drama—though one should remember that the story begins in Athens, the very epicenter of dramatic production—but that he makes it unclear where acting begins and ends, as appearances, words, and actions mask, invert, and also reveal the real intentions of characters and outcomes of the "drama." Ovid's manner of portraying the narrative focuses on moments, like the brief speech with which we began the chapter, where being and seeming overlap, and correspondingly when the positions of actor and spectator are doubled—just those moments, in other words, where the social dangers posed by actors become most intense. After that, I move beyond the argument about theater per se to show that Ovid's Philomela narrative in the *Metamorphoses*, when taken together with the treatment of the same myth in the *Fasti*, draws attention precisely to the possibilities for the reception of Greek mythic fictions in the context of the official rhythms of the Roman religious calendar. Ovid's two poetic narratives thus combine to interweave fiction and reality.

The first device to makes us think about the relationship of appearance and reality, while it has nothing to do with performances on the part of human actors, is itself a distinctive feature of the tragic drama, and its very presence helps to frame the characters in the story as distanced from the audience's perception of things, as if on stage. The device is dramatic irony: because of the dramatic situations in which characters find themselves, their words and actions bear a significance opposite to what they understand and intend. Tereus and Procne marry one another, but as so often in tragedy, this is a wedding that is no wedding.[13] Hymenaeus, the god of marriage, is absent, Gratia is absent. But the Eumenides are

[13] A tragic allusion also discussed by Hardie 2002c.260.

there, and their presence, in Athens, alone makes one think of tragic models.[14]

Procne's first speech points up the characters' own misunderstanding of their condition and recalls another of the Athenian drama's classic deployments of irony.

> *... blandita viro Procne "'si gratia" dixit*
> *"ulla mea est, vel me visendae mitte sorori,*
> *vel soror huc veniat: redituram tempore parvo*
> *promittes socero; magni mihi muneris instar*
> *germanam vidisse dabis."*
>
> (6.440–44)
>
> Procne sweet-talked her husband with these words: "If I have any charm, either send me to see my sister, or let my sister come here; promise your father-in-law that she will come back in a short time; you will give me something like a great gift (the image of a great gift) to have seen my sister."

Procne begins with an invocation of her *gratia*, yet the poet has just remarked that she has none (*non illi gratia*, 6.429). Present, though, is a divinity who is almost the diametric opposite of Gratia, but whose name on the page looks suspiciously like Gratia's, Gradivus, the male god of war who is Tereus's father. That this verbal icon, *gratia*, should summon up a reality at odds with it points up the disjunction between seeming and reality throughout her speech. Seeing her sister looks like a great favor, but it will be a disaster instead. Furthermore, this emphasis on seeing, the first time the motif occurs in the episode, perhaps connects Procne's misconception of her situation to the position of Sophocles' Oedipus, who thinks he sees when he is blind, and in fact blinds himself in part

[14] An owl turns up as well sitting on the rooftop of the home, "and by this bird (with such an omen) they are married" (6.432). The last line for those with foreknowledge of the transformation that will end, or eternalize, this fatal union, produces unbearable comic irony (Anderson 1972.210). It thus opens a chasm between the external and internal audience, but beyond its focalizing effect, it bears a more serious thematic importance. The owl itself hovers between the literal and the figurative—really there, but also a transparent poetic device for designating a doomed marriage. When the bride Procne becomes a swallow, she flies up to the roof of the palace, the same vantage from which the owl watches her wedding. If we see this owl as real—as an indication of the real circumstances of her wedding to which she is blind at the time—then her metamorphosis provides an apt closure to the story: the metaphorical bird that begins her story becomes the reality it predicts, and at the same time the illusions and deceptions that characterize every event of her marriage are at an end. Or, if we see the owl as a figurative one, a stock poetic device, then her metamorphosis marks her own reincorporation into the world of fictional literary representation, as though she blended into the pages of a book. I explore the consequences of these two strategies of reading the final metamorphoses at a later stage in the discussion.



to avoid the terror of seeing a sister who is also a daughter. In Procne's case as well, family roles will redouble one another in horrifying ways. Her language here already suggests a reciprocity between herself and her sister ("either send me to her, or her to me," 6.441–42) that anticipates the moment when Philomela's rape by Tereus makes her at once a sister and a rival to Procne. And as we have seen, the last viewing of Philomela mentioned in the text makes both sisters like one another as murderesses but most unlike the people that they would want to be.

The speech that predicts the dark consequences of seeing and the divergent realities that lurk under identical signs also puts in motion a set of performances that in turn transform those who watch them and, brilliantly, forms the Aristotelian first action in a plot that will lead from Procne's blind wish to see through a series of moments of vision to the final catastrophe when Tereus realizes too that he is what he sees, that he has consumed the body of the son whose head Procne shows him. This fusion of the spectator and the object of his gaze, who is often in some important sense an actor, bears comparison with that ideal moment in the Roman theater when the spectator becomes permeable to the representation he watches.

Before fleshing out my suggestion by looking more closely at some of the links in this chain of spectacles and performances, let me sketch the sequence as a whole. The first speech of Procne is also the first presentation of direct discourse in the episode, the first moment when we move to the unmediated "dramatic" mimesis of action from mere epic narrative. As a result of watching Procne, Tereus goes to Athens, where he at once sees Philomela, and though having immediately fallen in love with her, simultaneously pretends to be fulfilling Procne's orders as he speaks to the king (6.444–510). The sight of Philomela, constantly renewed on the voyage back to Thrace, leads to rape and in turn to another false speech on the part of Tereus, when he pretends to Procne that Philomela has died (6.511–570). Meanwhile the mutilated and now dumb Philomela weaves a visual representation of what occurred, a *carmen miserabile* (6.582)—a tragedy—which, when her sister sees it, she recognizes as her own "*fortuna*" and, being struck dumb, takes on the characteristic of the sister she sees represented there (6.571–86).[15] Procne responds to

[15] *evolvit vestes saevi matrona tyranni / fortunaeque suae carmen miserabile legit* (6.581–82). The text of line 582, an important one for my argument, is not entirely certain. I follow throughout the reading given by the oldest surviving manuscripts and printed in Anderson's Teubner edition. The language is doubly striking: first, a genitive is only very rarely used in Latin to express the subject of a song (it much more commonly refers to its author, and occurs once as a defining or appositional genitive, "the song of the *Thebaid*"), and, second, the word *carmen*, "song," seems at odds with the emphasis on the purely visual aspect of Philomela's tapestry. Readings attested in later manuscripts have offered solutions to both

the sight of this woven tragedy by performing as a bacchant, in order to get from the palace to the woods. When she arrives there, she brings her sister into the performance by costuming her too as a worshiper of Dionysus (6.587–600). Back at the palace, Procne strips herself of her costume, but her sister refuses to look at her "seeming to herself the rival of her sister" (6.606). At this point, Philomela, the nonspectator, becomes a performer,[16] acting out the tragedy whose script she had previously sent her sister (6.601–9). After the resulting reconciliation comes the viewing of Philomela that makes Procne a murderess, as well as a deceiver in turn, feigning the ancestral festival, which would of course be an Athenian (dramatic?) festival, at which Tereus "takes his own innards into his belly" (6.609–51). Philomela then jumps out holding the head of Itys. This unmistakably theatrical revelation brings Tereus full circle, back to

difficulties, presenting *germanae* for *fortunae* and *fatum* for *carmen*. In the second case, I believe there are strong literary reasons for retaining *carmen*. First, the very strangeness of describing Procne here as "reading a song" helps alert Ovid's readers to the contrast between written and aural, which plays a thematically crucial role at the episode's conclusion, where marks or letters (*notae*) are substituted for song as the distinctive characteristic of the birds the sisters become. Second, the expression *carmen miserabile* already subtly anticipates the moment of transformation that, I suggest, reveals its special significance. For the phrase *miserabile carmen* is used precisely of the nightingale's song by Vergil (*G.* 4.514). It is unlikely that a copyist simply inserted a reminiscence of Vergil here for a number of reasons: the phrase appears in reverse order and in a different metrical position, and, as yet, there are no nightingales present in Ovid's text.

The reading *fortunae* seems less certain, and indeed the most recent edition, Tarrant's OCT, opts for *germanae*. The genitive is odd, but the syntactical oddness would correspond to the shock of its meaning—in reading Procne is said to discover neither the story of what happened to Philomela nor even the crime of her husband, which is what Philomela wanted to show, but a revelation of her own circumstances. *Germanae*, on the other hand, seems initially banal but does form a pointed contrast, heightened by assonance and chiasmus, with the *saevi tyranni* whose wife Procne also is. In the end, I prefer *fortunae*: it is certainly the *lectio difficilior*, and while unusual, not difficult to understand, especially in the environment of a phrase like *indicium sceleris*, used four lines previously to describe the very same tapestry. In both phrases, what the object shows appears in the same case, and this parallel in turn highlights the significant discrepancy between the intentions of the author at the moment of the work's creation (a revelation of crime done to her) and the meaning it takes on for its reader at the moment of its reception (a description of her own circumstances).

[16] Philomela's voicelessness, as well as the separation of gesture from words, in fact recalls a striking and modern theatrical innovation of Augustan Rome. She resembles a pantomime dancer, for whom gesture, especially hand gesture, takes the place of voice—*pro voce manus fuit*, 6.609—while the text was performed by a reciter. On the "corporeal eloquence" of the pantomime dancer, see Lada-Richards 2007.44–55. I note in particular her likening of the dancer's performance to witnessing a metamorphosis (53–54). If one can connect the "lamentable song" of Philomela's tapestry with her own silent dramatics and in turn with Ovid's poetic representation of them, with *notae* again taking the place of speaking presences, then each medium in its different way struggles to manifest—to transform itself into—voiced drama via its own silent semantic system.



his Aeschylean beginnings, invoking the Eumenides who have been there all along[17] and employing a well-known metaphor with many tragic parallels: calling himself the tomb of his own son, Tereus applies to himself the topos often used to describe the vultures who feed on corpses.[18] At this point Tereus, like Procne, enters this figurative world through metamorphosis into a bird (6.652–74).

One of the most straightforward examples of theatrical contagion, by which the act of performing violates the integrity of both performer and spectator comes when Tereus, returning to Athens at his wife's command, seeks permission for Philomela's visit. Recall that even Procne's own first speech signals her blindness to her circumstances and to the consequences of her request and was less the sincere expression of her desires than a piece of rhetoric crafted to influence her husband, the necessary agent of her "plot." She speaks "wheedlingly to her husband" (*blandita viro*, 6.440), and he immediately puts her plan into action with another, contrasting, speech act as he "orders" the ships that will take him from his native Thrace to her native Athens (6.444). No sooner, though, had Tereus begun to perform his wife's commands than Philomela's arrival makes him a spectator in his own right, setting up a new complication in the relationship between who Tereus is and who he seems to be. Ovid ensures that we, like Tereus, see this event as a spectacle, beginning with the exclamation *ecce*, and emphasizing the external appearance of Philomela, her *forma*, *paratus*, and *cultus*.

Tereus's reaction to this sight, in its objectification of Philomela and the possibility it offers the audience of sharing his enjoyment, stands as a textbook example of the "scopophilic" gaze made famous in film studies and well applied to this passage by Segal.[19] But two further observations help us place the scene within the episode's treatment of issues of theatricality and identity. First, like Procne in response to Itys, Tereus is carried away by a point of view that reduces its object to externals—Philomela's adornment and *forma* trigger his infatuation. And, second, such externalized viewing, with its focus on a display of wealth and costume that perhaps recalls the material opulence of theatrical performance so often castigated by Roman moralists like Pliny the Elder,[20] leads here too toward a regression into barbarism, though of course barbarousness has a

[17] On the role of the Eumenides in the episode, see now Gildenhard and Zissos 2007.

[18] *flet modo seque vocat bustum miserabile nati*, 6.665. The most outlandish version comes from Gorgias, where the vultures are simply glossed as "living tombs" (82 B5a D–K): tragic examples are Aesch. *Septem* 1020–21, Soph. *El.* 1487. Bömer 1976.117 argues that the line has its source in Accius's *Atreus* (*natis sepulchro ipse est parens*, fr. 226 Ribbeck), but see contra Liapis 2006.229, with further bibliography.

[19] Segal 1994.260.

[20] Cf., e.g., *NH* 36.113–15, with the discussion of Edwards 1993.143.

rather different relation to identity for a Thracian than for an Athenian. Whereas for Procne seeing Itys as other turned her into a being alien from herself, for Tereus this watching activates his own distinctive ethnic identity—at least from the perspective introduced by the narrator (6.458–60). And in this respect his response to the sight of Grecian splendors recalls a very distinctly Roman attitude.[21] He sees the wealth of Greece as *praeda* to be seized and is captured (*captus*, 6.465) by captive Greece like the fierce victor in Horace's tag (*Ep*. 2.1.156). Indeed, his nationalist response recalls in many ways the rape of the Sabine women, which Ovid himself set as a primitive theatrical performance and uses as an *exemplum* to persuade present-day Romans not to miss out on the *cultissimae* women coming to the theater to be seen themselves (*Ars* 1.97). After all, Tereus, like Romulus, is a son of Mars (6.427).[22]

But as we look back with our inner Roman to these foundational moments in our own cultural history, another, different spectacle takes shape that elicits quite a different response from the audience within the narrative. For the captive king now himself becomes a producer of images, both as an actor and as a creator of fictions. "He returns with lustful countenance to the orders of Procne *and performs his own vows with her as a pretext*."[23] His desire generates a discrepancy between seeming and reality in his own appearance, and the Athenian audience, with a theatrical sophistication completely different from the barbarous Thracian, looks past the physical presence of the actor whose *cupido ore* actually reveals his own intentions, to hear words and accept the fiction that the desires they express are those of the absent Procne. Accustomed, of course, to seeing men play women on the stage, they assume that is what is happening here. They need a Juvenal to remind them of the sexual danger posed in real life by this barbarian actor. It goes without saying that the sophisticated Romans of Ovid's own day, who in the *Ars Amatoria* have to be reminded of the primitive conditions in early Rome, might more naturally identify their own perspective with the cultivated Athenians, and the narrator gives them a further push in this direction by explicitly pointing out Tereus's barbarity even as he exposes his words as a performance.

The scene, then, anticipates Procne's encounter with Itys by contrasting a manner of viewing that "sees" only *formae* and seems to imagine a spectator "self" distant from and in control of the object of his gaze with

[21] Cf. especially the warning about the effects of the *spolia* from Syracuse in a speech Livy composes for Cato the Elder, 34.4.3–4.

[22] With the ambiguous presentation of Athens here, cf. the argument of Gildenhard and Zissos 2004 that Ovidian references to Athens over the course of the poem chronicle its displacement by Rome as the world city.

[23] *cupidoque revertitur ora / ad mandata Procnes et agit sua vota sub illa* (6.467–68). On the importance of theatricality in this scene, see Hardie 2002c.263–64.



another that accepts dramatic illusions, that hears voices, and so allows for the construction of a subjectivity within what one sees. Here though, these two responses become strongly associated with divergent ethnic identities, the first as "barbarian," the second as Greek. And while we have not yet identified the "subjectivizing" response as feminine, we can certainly say that Tereus's mode of seeing activates and is motivated by a very masculine desire.

Ultimately, both modes of viewing bear different threats to the spectators' own integrity, their ability to maintain a difference between self and other. Tereus, even as he plots the rape of Philomela, is already captured, *captus*. And this initial glimpse of Philomela begins a "plot" that will end in another act of viewing through which the king will learn all about the dangers of spectatorship. A key point in Tereus's erotic combustion comes when Philomela embraces her father to persuade him to assent to Tereus's plea. "Beholding kisses and arms wrapped around necks, he receives all these impressions as goads and torches and as food for his madness, and as often as she embraces her father, he would wish to be that father, nor would it be less impious," (6.479–82). The imagery of food[24] and of fathers embracing their children anticipates none too subtly the moment when Tereus will experience this metaphor as reality by literally engulfing his son, Itys. Here the desire to become what he sees, the father of Philomela, may seem to be an example of empathic watching, but as the narrator's ironic comment reminds us, it is nothing of the kind. When Tereus wishes that he were Pandion, the desire shows his complete absorption in outward signs; he wants to be doing physically what Pandion is doing; he certainly does not want to be doing it *as* Pandion. So too when Tereus becomes a maker of fictions, "*fingit*," what his imagination creates is not a subjective Philomela but simply a more intimate exterior; he imagines what she looks like naked (*qualia vult fingit quae nondum vidit*, 6.492). His own role as producer of fictions throughout the episode continues the tendencies of this first scene: he uses lies, false appearances like the *fictos gemitus* (6.565) with which he convinces Procne that her sister has died, to impose a barrier to the expression of Philomela's perspective. His lies, like the *inane sepulcrum* he contrives (6.568), are intended to be mere signs that make it impossible to recover a living presence within what they signify. Correspondingly, his physical transformation of Philomela herself, in ways that eerily anticipate her final metamorphosis, strip her of a voice and force her to rely on visual signs, the woven *carmen miserabile* she sends to her sister, even as her tongue becomes something to see rather than to hear.

[24] Hardie 2002c.263, n.10, nicely observes an allusion to the Lucretian characterization of love as appearance without substance.

In support of my earlier claim that Ovid stresses the resemblance between the phenomenology of performance and that of narrative fiction, notice that the extended consequences of Tereus's seeing Philomela are also expressed in the language of fiction and credibility. Tereus, playing Procne's loyal husband, "is believed to be *pius*" (6.474). Later, Tereus's obsessive recollection of what he saw, his imprisonment in the spectacle of Philomela, extends to the imagination of what he did not (yet) see (*fingit quae nondum vidit*, 6.492). Here Tereus appears simultaneously as the creator of fictions and as their audience; he fashions for himself the rest of Philomela. Later he assumes the active role of "author" for both his female victims.[25] To Procne he narrates a false tale of Philomela's death, also dramatizing it with feigned laments (*dat gemitus fictos commentaque funera narrat*, 6.565). In the case of Philomela, instead of playing a new part he unmasks the brutal reality of his desires, but the result is to make his fictions real by imprisoning the living Philomela in the fantasies he has created.[26] Ovid had described Philomela to his audience as "like the dryads and naiads we are accustomed to hearing about walking in the midst of the forest" (6.452–53). The real circumstances in which Tereus traps his victim resemble the nightmarish realization of such a storybook world of bucolic fancy. From the cultivated city, he drags her to the deep, dark woods of Thrace.

So far we have seen in the Tereus story a realization of the darkest potentialities of tragedy, a virtual anthology of the genre extending from the *Oresteia* through the *Oedipus* and *Medea* to the *Bacchae*, dramatizing how the act of watching draws spectators toward union, literal and figurative, with the figures they see until social roles that must be kept distinct—mother and killer, for example—collapse together and all protagonists find themselves trapped in a recognizably tragic scene. But what is at stake for Ovid's poem in articulating this process as he does?[27] Is he simply exploring the dynamics of a mimetic form that played a role in Roman civic life which we tend to underestimate? Or, if, as I have suggested, Ovid's commentary on tragedy sets up a model to compare and contrast with the workings of his own fiction, what would be the results of such a comparison? What model of the psychological and civic effects of the *Metamorphoses* emerges? Does he share the Platonic anxiety that the mimesis of Procne will turn his audience into unbalanced, murderous

[25] Cf. the observation of Segal 1994.262 that Ovid's own disbelief that Tereus rapes the mutilated Philomela repeatedly (6.561) "refocus[es] the story on belief and evidence."

[26] The epic expression "painted ship" again potentially signals the threshold of illusion (6.511), as the ship that had first brought Tereus onto the foreign stage, where he enacts Procne's request, now carries Philomela back to the world of Tereus's fantasy.

[27] An important precedent for this line of inquiry, which nevertheless comes up with rather different answers, is offered by Gildenhard and Zissos 1999a.



swallows? If not, what are the terms in which it matters for his audience to become like or realize its difference from the figures in a story? This question strikes at the heart of my larger argument that Ovid overlays models of representation possessing the greatest immediacy in his own culture on mythical, foreign, and fantastic material. Some answers can be found by turning from the metapoetic aspects of the Tereus story to its thematic content to point out ways in which the issue of how to see a mythical character like Philomela relates to an audience's sense of itself in civic terms, of the distinctness of the Roman. My argument makes use of another Ovidian text, the *Fasti*, which more explicitly addresses the place of Greek narratives in the ritual life of the Roman state, and specifically of the suggestive references to Philomela within the account of the rape of Lucretia at the end of book 2. These references have benefited from much critical attention, but more of it has focused on what Philomela says about Lucretia than what Lucretia says about Philomela.[28] Here, I turn the tables by using the *Fasti* passage as a lesson on what it means to read Greek myths as Roman, and as a Roman.

My argument that Ovid's Tereus story was a narrativization of a dramatic performance and, in that medium, also provided a palimpsest for reading Roman concerns through and against a Greek plot recalls an earlier moment in the myth's reception at Rome: I have suggested allusions to a multitude of Greek tragedies in the episode, but a Roman audience would not have needed reminders of the *Medea* or *Oresteia* to see Ovid's plot filtered through tragedy. The *Tereus* was itself a tragic subject, treated in a lost work of Sophocles and in Latin by the late second-century BCE playwright Accius. The best-known event in the reception history of Accius's play came in 44 BCE when it was revived at the Apollonian games, four months after the assassination of Julius Caesar. The urban praetor for that year, who thus bore responsibility for the program at this festival, was none other than M. Junius Brutus, and his first choice was a play that aimed transparently at molding the public reception of his own deed: Accius's *Brutus*, a dramatization of the events that led his namesake to drive the Tarquins from Rome and establish the republic. But Brutus was away from Rome at the time of the games, and another tribune, C. Antonius, brother of the future triumvir, substituted another that he thought would be less inflammatory, the *Tereus*. Whatever Antonius's intentions, Cicero (*Att.* 16.2.3) reports that Brutus was pleased with the reception of the *Tereus*, which seems also to have mobilized public opinion in his favor. We cannot know, of course, what the audience saw in *Tereus* that helped galvanize its reaction, although most have speculated that that play itself portrayed Tereus as a stereotypical

[28] See esp. Newlands 1995 and Joplin 1984; an important exception is Pavlock 1991.

tyrant punished for his excesses.[29] It may also be that this effect was amplified by a recognition of the similarity Tereus's rape of Philomela offers to the plot of the Roman play for which it was perhaps known to be substituted, that they were thus reading Lucretia through Philomela.[30] In any case, the aspect of this affair important for my analysis is the audience's perception that contemporary Roman events could be read through the dramatization of Tereus's deeds, perhaps via an intermediary evocation of a Roman "drama" that comes nearer to a direct allusion to the present. And yet the substitutional quality of the *Tereus* will also be significant for my argument; the *Tereus* may resemble a Roman story but is not one, and the absence, for example, of a main character called "Brutus" was presumably what made it tolerable to Antonius where the other play was not.

Ovid's Tereus, too, contains many pointers toward historical events and cultural practices that distinguished Romans from barbarians, but it also allows for a focus on difference as well, and so provides Roman readers with an alternative to recognizing themselves among the play's protagonists. In fact, the narrative is remarkable not only for how often it evokes questions of ethnic identity but also for the variety of perspectives and criteria it presents for measuring who is a barbarian. The tale first seems to make an issue of its Roman reception precisely because it is so obviously foreign. Its main characters are two Athenian maidens abused by a figure decisively identified as a *barbarus* (6.515, 533, 576) and who bears the most un-Roman offices of *rex* (6.463, 490, 520, 614) and *tyrannus* (6.436,[31] 549, 581). The plot depends on a secret conspiracy among women of precisely the sort that a reader of Livy's account of the fall of the Tarquins, or of the bacchanalian conspiracy, would recognize as interrupting the continuities of Roman public life. And the women's plot achieves its end in a banqueting scene explicitly described as an imitation of Greek practice: Procne has invited Tereus to this solitary feast—a perversion already of the communality that was especially valued in the Roman *convivium*—under the pretense of an Athenian ritual.

[29] Lana 1958–59.357, n. 3; Erasmo 2004.99. Bilinski 1958.44 argues that the *Tereus* possessed a direct political message at the time of its first performance, as an attack on the demagogic tribune Saturninus in 103 BCE.

[30] See Degl'Innocenti Pierini 2002.134–36.

[31] This example—describing Procne as "daughter of Pandion given in marriage to the famous [evident?] tyrant," *claro Pandione nata tyranno*—is particularly interesting. Although the bracketing word order eventually makes clear that the tyrant is Tereus, grammatically it could also refer to the Athenian king Pandion. And indeed this ruler is just as much a *rex* as the Thracian (cf. 6.488 of the *regales epulae* that form the darkest anticipation to Tereus's later acts).



But Ovid's narrative does not simply offer his Roman audience another self-congratulatory confrontation with monstrous "others." For the dynamic of cultural opposition I have been tracing is itself dramatized within the text in a way that immediately complicates the strategy of Romanizing the Tereus story through an emphasis on ethnic difference. When the raped Philomela addresses Tereus as "proven a barbarian by polluted deeds" (*o diris barbare factis*, 6.533), we are reminded that the identification of the king as barbarian is in part focalized through the perspective of an Athenian, a member of a citizenry marked out for its wealth, social organization, and above all *cultus*, in whose eyes the Thracians were historically the barbarians' barbarians. And yet, just at this moment, Philomela adds a new element in the categorization of barbarians. The assumption that birth and race determine character, one that the narrator evoked at the moment when lust for Philomela overcame Tereus (6.459–60), seems to her demonstrated by Tereus's hideous actions. But if it is deeds that define the barbarian, then her own slaughter of Itys at least levels the playing field, as the much-noted simile likening these two blue-blooded Athenians to Ganges tigresses more than suggests. This textual emphasis on the instability of the category of the barbarian "other" becomes all the more complex for a Roman audience because the Ovidian story makes clear that the distinction between civilization and barbarism is itself a foreign import. It may be possible to read with an Athenian ethnic perspective, taking the archetypal *urbs* Athens—as it is arguably depicted on Minerva's tapestry at the start of book 6—as a stand-in for Rome. But repeated Roman anxieties about Greek culture, of the sort eloquently expressed by Juvenal, keep this elision of national identities from being automatic—especially in a case where the barbarian Tereus is the son of Mars or, to make the link to Romulus even closer, is "perhaps" the son of Mars (6.427).[32] This triangulation of different viewpoints on what defines a barbarian, making it possible to read Roman as Thracian or as Athenian, recalls the dramatization of contrasting perspectives on family roles when Procne chooses whether to be a mother to Tereus or a sister to Philomela, and ends up being neither.

That Ovid should engage his audience in questions about what it means to be a Roman and that these questions should mirror and arise from a character's anguished redefinition of family roles make perfect sense if we view Philomela's drama through the narrative for which the *Tereus* was substituted in 44 BCE, the rape of Lucretia. Much more than

[32] *Forte* here is perhaps "perhaps," or perhaps "fortuitously," or perhaps the neuter of *fortis* ("strong") modifying *genus*. In the latter case the word helps to affirm rather than cast doubt on his divine parentage: mighty descendants befit the god of war.

a lurid, outrageous, and "polarizing" episode from Roman legend, the Lucretia story led to a decisive transition in Roman history, the foundation of the distinctively Roman political structure that was the republic. And this transition, whose importance is fully described by Livy, had as its prerequisite the growth of affection toward wives and children that settled and united the scruffy shepherds and asylum seekers who made up Rome's first population:

> *neque ambigitur quin Brutus idem qui tantum gloriae superbo exacto rege meruit pessimo publico id facturus fuerit, si libertatis immaturae cupidine priorum regum alicui regnum extorsisset. quid enim futurum fuit, si illa pastorum conuenarumque plebs, transfuga ex suis populis, sub tutela inuiolati templi aut libertatem aut certe impunitatem adepta, soluta regio metu agitari coepta esset tribuniciis procellis, et in aliena urbe cum patribus serere certamina, priusquam pignera coniugum ac liberorum caritasque ipsius soli, cui longo tempore adsuescitur, animos eorum consociasset?* (2.1.3–5)

> There is no doubt but that Brutus, who earned such glory for the expulsion of a proud king, would have wrought a disaster for the state, if from his desire for a liberty still unripe he had wrested power from any of the earlier kings. For what would have happened if that riff-raff of shepherds and immigrants, exiled from its own peoples, having gained under the sanctuary of some inviolable temple if not liberty at least impunity, and released from the fear of kings, began to be stirred by the storms of demagoguery and, in a city still strange, to sow dissensions with the nobility before affection for wives and children and love of the land itself, to which they had grown accustomed over a long time, had bound together their spirits?

Ovid's Philomela provides an answer to Livy's rhetorical question, showing what happens when two immigrant women, loosed from fear of a tyrannical king and unmoored from the affections that bind them toward spouses and children, "sow quarrels with fathers." I have previously argued that Livy correlates the "metamorphosis" that produces the distinctively Roman state with a generic shift from drama to history. The public history of the Roman state extending over time frames and incorporates the overprivileging of personal passions that deforms family relations on the tragic stage.[33] While it would be simplistic to conclude that Ovid here complements Livy's narration by presenting the "tragic" disintegration of a foreign family as an implicit foil to the Roman response to rape as a symptom of tyranny, such a perspective provides a useful start-

[33] Feldherr 1997.



ing point for thinking about how Ovid raises the issue of Romanness in his narrative and parallels the way that Ovid's own Lucretia story, in the *Fasti*, encourages us to frame the Tereus story.

To better lay the groundwork for reading Philomela against the Lucretia of both annalistic history and etiological poetry, it is important to notice the particular emphasis Ovid places on the structuring of time in this portion of the *Metamorphoses*.[34] Livy had contrasted the self-renewing rhythms of the republic, when the magistrates are new every year, with the "long time" of the *regnum*, which can really be measured only at its end[35] but is the essential seedtime, so to speak, for the coming of *libertas*. Ovid begins the account of Philomela within an undifferentiated and amorphous time structure typical of this portion of his poem, where events are often temporally related to each other by casual synchronicity: Tereus enters the poem as the ally who helps the Athenians win the war that had kept their king from attending the funeral of Amphion, whose wife Niobe had been the subject of the poem's most recent narrative (6.424–25). But within the account of his marriage, an emphasis on annual repetitions clearly articulates the temporal relation of events: the beginning of the dramatic chain, Procne's appeal to Tereus (6.440–44), happens "after Titan had led the seasons of the cyclical year through five autumns" (*iam tempora Titan / quinque per autumnos repetiti duxerat annos*, 6.438–39). After Tereus has abandoned Philomela in the woods and returned to the palace, another annual cycle passes, marking a major break in the narrative: "The god had traversed twice six cycles with the year completed" (*signa deus bis sex acto lustraverat anno*, 6.571). Then, after Procne's "reading" of Philomela's tapestry sets events on course toward the final revenge, "it was time" (*tempus erat*, 6.587), or, more precisely, it was "the time when Sithonian daughters-in-law are accustomed to hold the triennial rites of Bacchus."

This emphasis on time has a number of important functions. First, it provides another context for highlighting the tragic cast of events. The ideas that all things come to light with time and that time has the power to overturn all human expectations underpin much Greek tragedy. Here the anticipations of sameness and regularity connoted by the annual cycle of the seasons emerge in Procne's own first assumption that Philomela's visit will form a short temporal interlude at the end of which things will return to the way they are: she bids Tereus promise Pandion that "Philomela will return in a short time," *tempore parvo*, 6.442, where the

[34] For a different interpretation of this pattern, see Segal 1994.269–71.

[35] Cf. the emphasis on reckoning up time as a marker of change in the last sentence of Livy's first book: *L. Tarquinius Superbus regnauit annos quinque et uiginti. regnatum Romae ab condita urbe ad liberatam annos ducentos quadraginta quattuor. duo consules inde comitiis centuriatis a praefecto urbis ex commentariis Ser. Tulli creati sunt, L. Iunius Brutus et L. Tarquinius Collatinus* (1.60.3–4).

word *tempore* "rolls around" in the same metrical position *tempora* had occupied four lines before to describe the passage of five years (6.438).[36] But this short time will never come to an end, and as a result Pandion will die "before reaching the final time of a long old age" (*ante diem longaeque extrema senectae / tempora*, 6.675–76).[37] Second, from a broader historical perspective the question of the repeatability of events becomes a significant issue in the narrative and recalls the language that designated these temporal transitions. But such temporal markers also summon up the dimensions of Roman time that give their essential structure to the two literary forms that provide crucial intertexts for his story: they recall both the annalistic model of history that records the sequence of events throughout the *longue durée* of Roman history and the annual cycle of festivals according to which those distant events are regularly remembered in the present—the subject of Ovid's own *Fasti*.

If we look first at the "diachronic" elements of Roman history, the rape of Lucretia that marks the beginning of the annual round of historical Roman time is not the only defining moment from the Roman past to appear in the episode. In each of the three main sections of the Tereus narrative (the "prologue" describing Procne's marriage, the abduction and rape of Philomela, and Procne's discovery of the crime and punishment of Tereus), this Greek myth recalls three important foundations of Rome, by Aeneas, Romulus, and Brutus. One measures the Romanness of the episode, then, by contrasting these events against those that originally gave a distinctive future to the Roman state: the doomed marriage of Aeneas and Dido, Romulus's rape of the Sabine women, and the foundation of the republic.

It is important to note, too, that in all of these Roman narratives the long-term historical consequences go together with, indeed depend upon, the proper interpretation of potential disruptions in the "timeless" phenomenon of Roman marriage.[38] In the case of Aeneas and Dido, the very sterility of their union, noted by Dido, helps mark it off from the fundamental aim of Roman marriage, the production of offspring—in a circular fashion, Aeneas and Dido have no future literally because they have no future. With the Sabine women, it is precisely the presence of such a future, guaranteed by offspring, that in their own eyes legitimates the violence which separated them from their families. Lucretia's violation by Sextus Tarquinius can never look like a marriage, for its victim is already a *matrona*; but the point here is to throw the blame for the destruction of the family unit on the tyrannical and soon-to-be-expelled Tarquin. In reading the Tereus narrative against these episodes that at once instantiate and depend upon particular views of the Roman family, we find again a double possibility for its interpretation. On the one hand, the otherness of this Thracian family chronicle helps to define the particular elements of the Roman stories that make the difference. And yet contrast can never be completely divorced from comparison. All three Roman narratives describe controversial, even shocking actions, whose foundational value comes from the adoption of a particular perspective on these potential crimes. Ovid's Tereus disembeds these tales of rape and violated marriage from the Roman historical context that shapes their reception. In doing so, he hints at what such stories might look when viewed within the "timelessness" of myth; for, as we shall see, Tereus's family is at once far away and long ago, and always present. When we turn our attention to the *Fasti*, we again discover that making their story Roman depends on keeping them out of the synchronic cycle that every year reinstantiates Romanness.

To give some substance to these rather abstract claims, let us look more closely at how Ovid's Tereus evokes and differs from these Roman narratives. The motif of the polluted marriage to a foreign princess looks back to the marriage of Aeneas and Dido. As Hardie has suggested,[39] Philomela's first apparition itself draws on the initial glimpse Aeneas catches of Dido in Vergil's poem. The second "marriage" between Roman and foreigner, the rape of the Sabine women, is suggested by Ovid's emphasis on the relationship between father-in-law and son-in-law in the long middle panel, the use of deception and performance to lure the victim, and the shared Martial ancestry of Tereus and Romulus. (The similarities with the Lucretia story, which I take as a given, are explicitly made by Ovid in the *Fasti*.)

Already it stands out that the accursed marriage Aeneas rejects provides the model for Tereus's legitimate marriage to Procne, while the Sabine marriage that will provide for Rome's future here parallels the sterile rape of Philomela. This reveals in turn a whole set of crucial differences that seem to keep Tereus off the path to Romanness. The foreign, urban, cultivated Dido whom Aeneas does not take with him to his new/old native land, herself fights shy of her threat to slaughter Ascanius and feed

[36] Counting inclusively in the Roman fashion, *tempore*, recurs after five lines so that the metrical cycles precisely parallel those of the seasons.

[37] If time mocks all human expectations, the characters in turn compensate by falsifying time, or by transforming its recurring moments into the means to their own ends. Thus, Philomela makes use of the Thracian bacchic ritual to disguise her recovery of her sister, and later concocts an Athenian festival as a pretext for her terrible banquet. Tereus by contrast had not only told the false story of Philomela's death but commemorated it by bringing offerings to her tomb, a phrase that to a Roman ear might have evoked the annual rituals of Parentalia.

[38] I am, of course, arguing not that Roman marriage practices do not change over time but that, like many Roman social customs, they were validated by being perceived as timeless.

[39] Hardie 2002c.260–62.

him to his father (*Aen.* 4. 602); Tereus loses a human future because Procne does not.[40] The sense of marital roads not taken accelerates as we move forward to the rape of the Sabine women. There the rape itself was motivated by a scarcity of women (Livy 1.9.1); Tereus by contrast already possesses a wife and has no motive other than the sexual desire that is never allowed to surface in the case of the Romans. Correspondingly, the aftermath of that rape led to the union of peoples precisely through the articulate intervention of the victims themselves. Here there are no such possibilities: the victim has been permanently silenced by her attacker. And, in the last of these parallels, Lucretia explicitly renounces any attempt to revenge herself on Tarquin, leaving that up to her male relations, whose actions in turn are what translate her sufferings from a personal to a political tragedy; Philomela lacks just those kinds of assistants. As her rape, unlike the story of the Sabine women, had merely separated her from her birth family without establishing her in a new *domus*, she can call on neither a husband nor a father to act on her behalf. Rather, she possesses only the *germana soror* of a Dido, a sister whose very similarity to her picks up on another of the major preoccupations of the episode, an endless return to likeness. By contrast the three Roman stories all decisively transform the state.

When we turn from the diachronic Roman backdrop of Ovid's Tereus story to the synchronic one suggested by treating the *Fasti* as an intertext, many of the same issues emerge, particularly the problematic repeatability of these mythical crimes. Ovid explicitly mentions Tereus and Procne just at the conclusion of his treatment of Lucretia, whose story is made the etiology for the *regifugium*, a ritual performed on February 28 that was associated with the expulsion of the Tarquins:

> *Fallimur, an veris praenuntia venit hirundo,*
> *nec metuit ne qua versa recurrat hiems?*
> *saepe tamen, Procne, nimium properasse quereris,*
> *virque tuo Tereus frigore laetus erit.*
> (*Fasti* 2.853–56)

> Am I mistaken or has the swallow, herald of the spring, arrived, and did she not fear lest winter, reversing his tracks, should somehow return? For often, Procne, you will complain that you were in too much of a hurry, and your husband Tereus will take pleasure at the chill you feel.

This however is the second of two closely correlated references to the myth that together give unity to an important series of festivals clustering

[40] See Hardie 2002c.262–69 on the allusions to Dido's perceptions of Ascanius throughout the episode.



at the end of February.[41] If the later passage welcomes Procne back into the poem, the first had chased her out: this occurs in the account of the Caristia, on the twenty-second, a celebration for the living members of the family focused on offerings to the Lares and contrasting with the celebration of the dead, the Parentalia, which had ended the day before. From this Roman festival of family unity the notorious bad guys of Greek myth, including the child-murderer Procne and her relations, are bid to keep off:

> *Tantalidae fratres absint et Iasonis uxor*
> *et quae ruricolis semina tosta dedit*
> *et soror et Procne Tereusque duabus iniquus*
> *et quicumque suas per scelus auget opes.*
> (*Fasti* 2.627–30)

> Let the brothers descended from Tantalus [Atreus and Thyestes] be absent, and the wife of Jason, and she who gave scorched seeds to the farmers [Ino] and Procne with her sister, and Tereus unjust to both, and whoever increases his wealth through crime.

The expulsion of Procne at this point becomes especially significant because it follows just after another episode with many parallels to Philomela's, that of the nymph Lara, the mute goddess, whose tongue is ripped out by Jupiter because she warns off Juturna whom the king of the gods plans to rape. Lara, though, suffers rape as well at the hands of Jupiter's son Mercury as he completes his father's punishment by escorting her to the underworld—hence, the Lares, twins sons of Lara, who feature in the festival of the Caristia.

One important effect of the double reference to Procne here is to enmesh the historical event of Lucretia's rape in a repetitive, synchronic structure. We have already seen how in Livy's account, the tale of Lucretia offered a foil to the normative family values that anchor the Roman state. As there the bonds of parent and child lead to *libertas*, so here the rituals that reinforce those bonds form an almost immediate prelude to the account of the fall of the Tarquins. The *Fasti* reinscribes this momentum from family to state within the annual calendar, and we see, again thanks to Procne, that it does so at what was originally the new year, a moment of vernal rebirth, giving an air of natural rightness and cosmic inevitability to the process. In both of these contexts—the cultural reinforcement of family ties and the natural coming of spring—a very positive model of synchronic repetition is at work: annual reenactments affirm Roman identity, expelling the foreign and making the members of the community closer to one another and their past.

[41] This structural function has been well studied by Newlands 1995.155–62.

What the ritual expels is the symbolic *rex*; what the text first expels is Procne and her ilk. Just as much as it offers a negative foil to legendary events in the Roman past that lead up to the establishment of *libertas*, so too the tale of Procne and Philomela as Ovid tells it in the *Metamorphoses* seems tailored to contrast with key stages in the newly narrativized set of ritual processes that lead up to the *regifugium* in the *Fasti*. The Caristia marks the end of the *dies parentales*, during which marriage was forbidden: "Hide your torches, Hymenaeus and carry them away from the black fires. Sad tombs have other torches" (*Fasti* 2.561). The marriage of Procne and Tereus was characterized by a wedding shown as disastrous precisely by the confusion of marriage and funereal torches. Procne herself makes offerings to the dead like those of the Parentalia, but these rites too are misdirected within the narrative: they are given to the empty tomb of a false ghost "not thus to be mourned" (6.570). More striking still is the way the end of Procne's story undermines the ritual of the Caristia itself, which ends the Parentalia. Ovid's account of this festival focuses on vision and feasting as the ritual instruments of family unity:

> *Scilicet a tumulis et qui periere propinquis*
> *protinus ad vivos ora referre iuvat,*
> *postque tot amissos, quicquid de sanguine restat*
> *aspicere et generis dinumerare gradus.*
> (*Fasti* 2.619–22)

> It is pleasing to turn one's face away from the tombs and relatives who have died, and after so many have been lost look upon what remains of the line.

Procne finds no such pleasure in turning away from tombs, or in looking upon her offspring. And phrases like *ad vivos ora referre* (to carry back faces to the living) and *quicquid restat de sanguine* (whatever is left over of the blood) become almost unreadable unless one can indeed expel the images of Tereus's feast, and particularly his looking upon his own progeny, from the occasion the *Fasti* summons up.[42]

But if it is indeed so important that Roman rituals not invoke the myth of Procne, why then does the poet herald the return of the swallow at the moment commemorating the rebirth of the Roman state? The answer to this question takes us back to the semantic problems raised both in the "dramatic" scenes where characters assess the "likeness" of appearance to reality and, more pragmatically, in sorting out the similarities and differences between Thracian tragedy and Roman history. I suggest

[42] Seneca uses a very similar expression to describe the leftovers at his own Thyestean feast: *Quidquid e natis tuis superest habes, quodcumque non superest habes* (*Thy.* 1030–31).



that Procne can be brought back into Roman etiology only when she can be seen as uniquely signifying difference and that the *Fasti* connects her becoming such a sign with the processes of metamorphosis and textualization. And here is the most significant payoff from reading Ovid's two Philomelas together: Procne can be readmitted to the *Fasti* only once she has become a character in the *Metamorphoses*.

To begin this argument, let us return to the motifs of renaming and semantic confusion. Earlier I pointed to examples from early in the *Metamorphoses*' Procne narrative where Ovid's puns drew attention to characters' misperceptions: Procne appeals to *gratia* in a marriage where there is no *gratia*, but there is a Gradivus. A similar kind of wordplay in the *Fasti*, where near homophones take the place of one another, figures in the narrative that itself "conceals" the story of Philomela: the tale of Lara. Lara, who was originally called Lala, a name whose redoubled form alludes precisely to the character's crime of "repeating" things she should not,[43] enters the *Fasti* as the "silent goddess," another euphemistic substitute for her original name, worshiped by a witch whose aim is to bind up hostile mouths, *inimica ora* (*Fasti* 2.581). Lara or Lala thus comes into the story as a figure whose own silencing by Mercury leads to the silencing of others and the obscuring of the very verbal signifier that defines her.[44] But at the end of the narrative this unspeaking and unspeakable goddess emerges as the mother of two gods who are very visible in what follows, the Lares themselves. Thus, Lara can only reappear with a difference; we turn from the mother whose silence was one of the emblematic qualities of the Roman dead to gaze upon the eternally present, living male offspring, the twin Lares, who are not only distinguished by their own watchfulness but were even then becoming iconographically conspicuous at Roman crossroads.[45] I suggest that this rebirth of the Lara myth in terms of visible symbols ideally disembodied from their narratives parallels what happens to Procne. Her transformation from the figure who does precisely what Romans should not to the sign that projects the cosmic cycle of the year onto the history of the Roman state happens only after her metamorphosis. She is driven out as a woman to reemerge as a swallow.

But thanks to the strong emphasis Lara's story places on the shift from aural to visible signs, the metamorphosis described by Ovid's epic poem coalesces with the transformation wrought by that poem: Procne's be-

[43] *prima sed illi / dicta bis antiquum syllaba nomen erat / ex vitio positum* (*Fasti* 2.599–601). Note that Ovid alludes to, but never uses, this ancient form of the name.

[44] We may remember the similar incantatory power that Philomela's *carmen miserabile* has on its reader/viewer Procne, making her the image of her silent sister.

[45] *Fitque gravis geminosque parit, qui compita servant / et vigilant nostra semper in urbe, Lares* (*Fasti* 2.615–16). For examples of this iconography, see Hano 1986.

coming a swallow goes together with her inscription as a written "character" in the text. For the *Metamorphoses* too has made a significant transformation in the final form Procne takes on, one that itself substitutes what is seen for what is heard. Traditionally in Greek myth, where Procne was the nightingale and Philomela the swallow, the story of the birds' origins appeared in the nightingale's song, which repeated the name of Itys.[46] Ovid, though, has made the sign that links the timeless forms of the swallow and nightingale to the myth of Procne and Philomela the markings on the birds' breasts, which he describes as *notae* (6.670), a word that can also mean simply "letters."[47] Notice too that in making this switch he makes the birds that Procne and Philomela become recall only their crime: the suggestion of repentance in the lamentation for Itys disappears. So too does the potential for the spoken name to reanimate both the lost child and the mother whose articulate, human voice would thus survive her transformation. (Contrast again the case of Lara, where the surviving sons compensate for their mother's disappearance: these characters emphatically have no sons.) Indeed, Ovid seems to go out of his way not to name any of his protagonists once the metamorphosis begins, making them as unspeakable as Lara.

Another manifestation of this same shift comes in the description of Philomela's tapestry, which she produces because she has been stripped of her voice, as a *carmen miserabile*, a song that induces pity. Whatever her tapestry may be, a text or a visual image, it is certainly not a literal song. At best it is a prompt for one to be articulated by someone reading aloud; yet even here it fails, for it renders Procne too miraculously silent (*et—mirum potuisse—silet*, 6.583). The link between the miracle of silent reading here and the transformative silence of the swallow and nightingale is clearly signaled. The same word, *notae,* we have seen used of the birds' markings describes the marks Philomela makes on the tapestry (6.577), and they have the same function, a revelation of crime (*indicium sceleris*, 6.578), though now the victim has become the criminal. And even the phrase *carmen miserabile* seems a perfect description of the song that Ovid's nightingale has lost, a song that sympathetically repeated always the same word, the name of the lost son.[48]

The lost song of the nightingale represents in clearest form how the verbal slippage we once identified as simply a marker of tragic irony

[46] See Forbes-Irving 1990.248–49. Eustathius's commentary on the famous Odyssean refers to Procne's song as a lament for Itylos (19.518–23) and so makes the story explicitly an aetion for the songs of nightingale and swallow. On the Itys cry in Greek poetry, see Curley 1997.

[47] The "textuality" of this episode is a much-treated theme. See esp. Pavlock 1991.41–42 and Segal 1994.262–66.

[48] Cf. Pavlock's (1991.42) contrast between the graphic tapestry of Philomela, which moves only anger and the traditional association between the nightingale's song and pity.



comes to symbolize the silencing of voices Ovid effects through metamorphosis. Procne's near pun, evoking an absent *gratia* from the son of Gradivus, eerily predicts the final utterances made by any character in the episode. The frightened king cries out for his son: *Ityn huc accersite* (6.652): "Bring Itys here." Procne, as though mockingly misunderstanding her husband, begins with a deformation of the absent name, turning *Ityn* into the Latin adverb *intus* (6.555): "You have within whom you seek." Her linguistic substitution seems to give her the upper hand, even as she prepares to dispel his ignorance of the terrible truth she knows. And yet it is Ovid who takes the last word in this terrible game of verbal mutilation. No direct discourse appears again, and as if to make the point, Ovid describes how much the voiceless Philomela wishes to express her joy in words. But he does describe Tereus speaking, seeking his son and calling out for him "again and again." The Latin word used is *iterum* (6.656), so that, as the characters' own voices fade to silence, we can actually hear the Greek name disappearing into its Latin allomorph.

Two important points about the effects of Ovid's verbal metamorphosis emerge from this stunning wordplay. The first is the reassignment of roles: Ovid leaves ambiguous which sister becomes the nightingale, but that bird's song, which was after all *Itys* repeated, has been taken over by the most unlikely character of all, Tereus. So too, as we have seen, the visual, scripted image that closes Ovid's narrative presents no victims but only a series of criminals. This is the nightmarish final stage in the process of assimilation through looking with which we began the discussion, as each character takes on the role of the other by gazing at him or her. It appears not only in the exchange of roles among the participants as they undergo transformation but also in the transcription of the *notae* with which Philomela had accused Tereus onto her own guilty breast. Indeed, the very description of what precisely made those "notes" is itself ambiguous. They are marks of slaughter, cutting (*caedis*, 6.669); her feathers are "signed" by blood (6.670). Is this the blood she shed when Tereus cut out her tongue, or when she slew Itys? So too the hoopoe's protruding beak takes the place of a long blade. Is this the blade/phallus with which he first attacked Philomela, or that with which she revenged herself? In the final trace left by the episode, the two referents have been confusingly united in a single signifier. But the image of the birds' indecisive pursuit is also important for its very repetitive quality.[49] The verbs in the final lines are present but shift subtly from a "vivid" historical present to a description of qualities that the birds possess to this very day. Procne flies to the roof of her house, and swallows do habitually dwell

[49] Cf. also the comments of Hardie 2002c.272, who interprets the final metamorphosis as a "mimesis in the natural world of the repetitiveness of mimetic revenge."

there.[50] The chase is never concluded in the myth with the death of the women, and hoopoes chase swallows still. The animal repetition of the myth's conclusion also recalls how the transformation itself reenacts earlier moments: Tereus chasing Philomela with a phallic beak will always recall the rape, a crime made more horrible, as Ovid tells us, because it was repeated (6.561–62). The visualized birds thus come to seem as markers of the very interpretative effects that must be expunged from the story of Procne for it to be Romanized, the assimilation of differences and the resulting perpetuation of crime. But as she becomes emblematic of those fearful transformations of the self, Procne becomes increasingly distant from the human, as though her very form ends the possibility of perpetuating the process by signifying it. Her voice has safely been Romanized by being translated merely to the Latin sign for repetition, *iterum*. So in the *Fasti* the transcendence marked by spring may come for us, but for the swallow, who at line 2.853 becomes Procne again, winter is still lurking in the form of her Thracian husband Tereus, thrilled that she feels the chill blasts.

If the transformation of the protagonists in this story works to relegate them from recognizable human characters to occupants of a distant world of myth, the linguistic transformation of Greek voices to Latin script must always have been an unstable and reversible process. And the very contrast Ovid draws between writing and speech in the episode helps make this clear. For any ancient text is always potentially heard as well as seen. The voices of the characters embedded in the transcription of their words can always bring them back. Indeed, the image that Philomela sends to her sister is paradoxically called a *carmen*, a word that almost inevitably makes one hear the message as song. In any case, the purely visual form of the message acts as an instrument for the further transformation of its audience in the most nightmarish way:

> *evolvit vestes saevi matrona tyranni*
> *fortunaeque suae carmen miserabile legit*
> *et (mirum potuisse) silet: dolor ora repressit,*
> *verbaque quaerenti satis indignantia linguae*
> *defuerunt, nec flere vacat, sed fasque nefasque*
> *confusura ruit poenaeque in imagine tota est.*
> (6.581–86)

[50] So too, in terms of smaller-scale narratological problems, the tale's ending overrides the careful articulation of the narrative into stages that the "annalistic" frame evokes. The ending of the story, far from offering any resolution, merely opens the door for a perpetual replaying of the rape described in the central narrative panel.



> The wife of the savage tyrant read the piteous song of her fortune and (wonderful that she could!) was silent: grief checked her mouth, and words sufficiently expressive of her outrage were lacking to the tongue that sought them; nor was there time to mourn; rather she rushes, about to confuse lawful and unlawful, and is all absorbed in the image of crime.

The incongruous emergence of a character's "voice" from a written text anticipates an equally striking transformation of the reader who is made voiceless. While many scholars have shown that silent reading was not an unimaginable phenomenon in antiquity, the general expectation that texts were to be read aloud still gives the phrase the flavor of an oxymoron.[51] Thus, the silencing of Procne pairs a reciprocal reversal of the semantics of communication—articulate writing leads to silent reading—with an assumption by the reader of the physical effects of the "metamorphosis" Tereus has inflicted on the message's author, revealed in the not-quite-literal reference to the reader's *lingua*. And both of these transformations figure Procne's recognition that the referent of the tapestry's message is herself. The very close link between textual reception and metamorphosis here—for indeed Procne's "silencing" provides the essential intermediate stage between the episode's two transformations and is linked to both in terms of imagery and theme—should remind us that the interpretation of any metamorphosis in the poem is potentially divergent and changeable as each reader chooses to distance herself from or recognize herself in the transformed figure. In this way it is as hard to keep Philomela a bird as to keep her silent. And as each reader's sympathy may reanimate Philomela and Procne, so too the literal utterance of the graphic signs that "denote" their exclusion can always potentially bring them back: enunciating *iterum*, according to this perspective, makes each Roman reader a new Procne.

The way in which we understand the narrative's own relationship to the different fictional processes it represents proves an equally unstable basis for constructing a response to the issues it raises. For just as both Tereus and the Athenian women offer two competing focalizers within it, so too the Thracian king and his victim Philomela simultaneously offer two competing models for Ovidian authorship. The account of Philomela's tapestry as a *carmen*, its use of *notae*, and the very fact that it represents the same thing the *Metamorphoses* does—the rape of Philomela by Tereus—have often made this image attractive as a *mise en abyme*, figuring, like Arachne's tapestry at the beginning of this book, Ovid's poem as preserving the voices of silenced victims. But if we ally Ovid too closely

[51] Esp. now Gavrilov 1997 and Burnyeat 1997.

with the revelation of the truth in Philomela's tapestry, equally troubling conclusions follow, because this perpetuates the endless "transformation" of identities that erases all difference by making Athenians bestial barbarians and making victims murderers. Another alternative for construing the nature of Ovidian narrative can be gained from the equally self-referential language that clusters around Philomela's attacker: his imagination is stirred by his self-created fictions, as he first mentally "molds as he wishes" (*fingit*) the parts of her body he has not seen (6.492); and he conceals his crime by producing "made-up groans " (*gemitus fictos*, 6.565–66) and "telling" (*narrat*, 6.565) "false funerals" until his tears win "belief" (*fidem*, 6.566).

That Procne and Philomela's revenge also requires them to practice deceptions has sometimes appeared as a further blurring of difference in the episode.[52] But one might equally stress that their deployment of representation depends equally on recognition, on achieving the sign's identity with what it represents. Their tales possess a doubleness much like Ovid's, but it is a doubleness that can seem to entrap its authors as much as empower them, depending on Ovid's readers' consciousness of their status as representations. Again different ways of viewing the episode as drama sketch out two poles of response to Ovid's narrative. Procne's recognition of her sister through the written signs she receives begins two contradictory processes that anticipate precisely her later transformation into her sister. As the text becomes a song, a *carmen*, Procne perceives it as a song about herself, the *carmen suae fortunae*. At the same time that she sees herself in what she reads, though, we watch her from without and see her changed into Philomela precisely by losing the capacity to speak, by becoming an image herself (*poenaeque in imagine tota est*). Again at the moment when Procne views Itys as Philomela would, we see her in the very different form of an Indian tigress. But Procne's becoming an image, or rather our recognition of that "transformation" as a loss of her "self," ironically contrasts with the intention of the women as authors to impose a unity between appearance and reality. For Procne and Philomela's own plot uses dramatic fictions fundamentally to reveal what has been shut up inside as much as to conceal or imprison. From the moment when she crafts her *carmen miserabile*, the person that Philomela represents is herself. Her triumph comes as she again appears as herself brandishing the head of Itys and so exposing rather than concealing her crime.

That final moment of recognition, Philomela's emergence with Itys' head, brings to a climax the tension between these two modes of seeing and prepares for the final transformation that reveals what is at stake for Ovid in the contrasting responses he generates for his narrative. For

[52] As done by Hardie 2002c.267–72.



Procne, this marks the end of dissimulation (*dissimulare nequit*, 6.653) and the moment when Philomela wants most to give voice to her own pleasures. And yet Ovid simultaneously heightens the pressure on his audience to see both sisters as actors in a theatrical performance: Procne wants to deliver a messenger speech (*nuntia cladis*, 654), the only way such a scene could be presented in a tragedy. And Philomela, who had been dressed as a bacchant to effect her escape from the stable (6.598–59), now continues performing the *Bacchae*, as an Agave figure holding the head of a dismembered son. The scene indeed alludes to a moment of meta-theatricality in that play, when the actor playing Pentheus, having been dressed as a bacchant by Dionysus, returns as Agave—that is, as a man dressed as a woman.[53] And if we continue to superimpose a tragic performance onto Ovid's scene, then the head of Itys becomes the mask that would have represented the head of Pentheus. Imagining the scene literally enacted in this way draws attention to those two alternative ways of seeing drama. On the one hand we see a tragic character emerging inseparably as the performer, Philomela as Agave, on the other the mask, a mere theatrical sign, representing someone, Itys, who no longer has a body and so can never be there. For Tereus this is the ideal punishment for the time when he dreamed of playing the father and fed his madness only with the costume and form of Philomela. In place of being a foreign spectator, with the possibility of merely enjoying, appropriating, and manipulating the spectacle—a position that I would argue approximates an ideal "Romanizing" view of the foreign theater—he is revealed as himself a character in a drama, less an authentic son of Mars than a figure from the Greek stage.

But if the last step in this reading has seemed to suggest a "sympathetic" Ovidian narrator participating with the wronged Philomela to punish any would-be Tereuses in his own audience, it is important now to insist upon the obvious point that the *Metamorphoses* is not a drama. Indeed, the tragic scene is itself transformed by a phenomenon that could never be represented on the stage, a metamorphosis. Through this device, as was hinted at before in the tiger simile, all of the characters are clothed with forms that conceal human identities and, as opposed to the sequential progression of the drama, freeze them in a final action destined to be infinitely repeated. This transformation also in eerie ways continues the "fictions" of the other Ovidian author within the story, Tereus himself, who takes away the voices of the women he imprisons in his narrative as Ovid strips the birds of their songs. Because, as I have argued, it is

[53] Segal 1994.273–79 traces the bacchantic imagery in the episode; his emphasis, however, is less on the effect of allusion to the genre of tragedy per se than on how the slippage from bacchants to Furies affects our interpretation of the moral quality of female revenge.

precisely the dehumanizing of the birds on which a "Roman" reading of the episode depends, it is significant indeed that Ovid should align the most ideologically freighted aspect of the narrative with the actions of a character exposed as a liar whose fictions are believed. This may be another case where the diminution of narrative authority, the exposure of the fictionality of fictions, becomes important precisely as a distancing device—if Ovid's characters are explicitly false, all the more reason not to believe in them.

At first the externalizing, deliberately superficial aspect of the final metamorphosis seems opposed to the sort of internal mutability that Procne experiences in response to her sister's *carmen*. Applying the models of dramatic reception developed through our reading of the Juvenal passage, we might say that recognition of the protagonists of the story as what they have become through metamorphosis goes together with a location of the Ovidian audience as the external spectators of a securely demarcated dramatic spectacle, conscious above all of the barriers between the watchers and what they see—a play and not reality. The loss of human form, together with their imprisonment in textuality, as the letters on the page, especially in a narrative genre so transparently unbelievable as *fabulae*, helps to exaggerate the difference between the characters as subjects and the audience. Paradoxically the desire of the "Roman" reader to interpret the scene in this way becomes another point of similarity with Tereus. Hardie draws attention to the semantic similarity of the two parallel desires of Tereus after he has discovered what he has consumed.[54] He wants at once to call up the Furies to pursue Procne and Philomela, and to "eject the *diras dapes*," which thanks to hyperbaton become briefly synonymous with the contents of his stomach (6.663–64). Adding the emphasis to theatricality implicit in the gesture of calling up the Furies, we can interpret the ambiguity here as a suggestion that dramatization, by making it possible to substitute the outer for the inner, offers Tereus the chance to escape from himself by projecting his situation onto a representation that is fundamentally other—itself a plausible way of reading Roman emphases on the otherness of the theater. And indeed the metamorphosis that follows, which converts the sisters into hybrid females suggestively like and unlike the Furies evoked by the fiction-making Tereus, appears very much as something that results from an act of imagination on the part of the Ovidian audience, "you would think that they were flying, and flying they are." Though to perceive the Tereanness of this gesture means that one has already internalized the perspective of the "stage" figure Tereus, and thus experienced something of the discordant revelation that befalls the king when he looks at the mask of

[54] Hardie 2002c.271.



Itys and recognizes that what this external sign signifies is literally within him.

My argument that the sisters' metamorphosis both figures and facilitates the conversion of Greek myth to Roman *exemplum*, a process that fully emerges only when the *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti* are read together, sheds light on another underanalyzed aspect of the story as it appears in the former poem. For the rape of Philomela is followed by an episode featuring another Thracian *tyrannus*, Boreas, who abducts and violates one of a pair of Athenian sisters, Orithyia.[55] In this story, though, the arrows all point in the other direction: violence, *vis*, which is emphatically the means Boreas employs to gain his desires (6.690), leads not to the destruction of the family and the death of children but to the creation of the family and the birth of twin male children.

This new repetition of the Tereus story is no mere exercise in *variatio* but rather a further "metamorphosis" that reveals yet another possibility for putting Greek myth to ideological use in contemporary Rome and highlights the essential role of audience reception in giving such a different charge to such a similar story. Here the emphases on difference and exclusion that mark the ideal "Roman" reading of the story of Philomela give way to recognition of the present in the past and the translation of the strange and unbelievable into a sign of the transcendence of the here and now. For in addition to the contrast it offers with the barbarism of Thrace's royal family, the tale of Boreas and Orithyia and their upwardly mobile progeny closely evokes some notable elements of imperial iconography, especially those involved in the great imperial mystery of apotheosis.[56] Thus, where the first narrative presented un-Roman activities to be expunged from the public reception of the tale through conversion to a marker of unlikeness, the Boreas episode presents the same story inflected to offer a positive paradigm, predicting and validating Roman practices, provided that "sameness" is recognized. The figure of repetition, which in the first story signified the collapse into a criminally undifferentiated

[55] A connection developed in a different way by Segal 1994.277–78. And see Newlands 1997.

[56] My interest here is the central question in the "reception" of representations of apotheosis raised by Beard and Henderson 1998: how precisely does the viewer translate the fantastic mechanism of skyward conveyance used to figure apotheosis (by eagle, winged chariot, or, in the image that visually seems nearest to Calais and Zetes, by winged "angel," as on the Column of Antoninus Pius) into a statement about political reality? Literal upward mobility features already in sculptural images of imperial apotheosis from at least as early as the last decade BCE, with Julius Caesar figured in riding through the heavens in a winged chariot on the Belvedere Altar (whose other faces, interestingly, show the Lares, the figures to whom it was dedicated). On the representation of apotheosis in Augustan poetry and its connection to another sky-bound youth Ganymede, lifted by the agency of an eagle, see Hardie 2002a.

past, now takes on a much more "Roman" look as the terrible Philomela story itself is reenacted in a way that removes its horrific aspects to create a forward-looking *exemplum* in which the audience can see images of the differences that set Rome apart from historical cycles of rise and fall. To use the terminology of Philip Hardie's book, Philomela and her sister enter Rome as absent presences. By contrast, the offspring of Boreas and Orithyia offer real presences, figures whose presentation stresses the continuities between the foreign and the Roman, the verisimilar and the fantastic.

The most obvious way in which the Boreas narrative corrects the emphases of its predecessor is in its treatment of female perspectives, and this was an important ideological issue as well as a narratological one. The crucial difference between Philomela and Lucretia was precisely the absence of male relatives to transform the quality of the revenge enacted for the rape. In this case, Orithyia is never a focalizer in the narrative:[57] there is in consequence no available victim's perspective on which to hang a dissenting point of view—though, of course, the reader may choose to infer one. Not only is Orithyia not a viewer within the narrative; she becomes visible herself only through the male countenance of her sons. Procne could slay Itys because she failed to recognize him as anything but his father. Here this divisive way of seeing—divisive because it perceives patrilineality as exclusion—is shut down. Women, like the Sabine women, become agents in transforming rape to assimilation precisely by acknowledging their status as mothers, and this, as we have seen, becomes for Livy an essential stage in Romanization. Seeing likeness here is as beneficial as Procne's view of difference was destructive. This exclusion of women by the sons who represent and resemble them is enacted within the narrative in a way suggestive of the procedures of Ovid's narrative. For the most significant deed that these two mothers' sons perform will symbolically complete the revenge for Itys' murder. They will chase off the Harpies, another set of flying females—and Ovid refers to them as *volucres virgineas*—who pollute male feasts (7.4).

The second aspect of the Boreas story that invites contrast with its antecedent comes in the account of the metamorphosis itself. In the case of Tereus and the others, metamorphosis becomes a means of distinguishing the traces that these hideous events have left in the present from the events themselves, as well as marking off the whole narrative as something that does not happen every day. Swallows, nightingales, and hoopoes are unremarkable avian phenomena, but murderesses only change into them in myth. On the contrary, in the case of Boreas's sons their

[57] This is a focus of Newlands's (1997.203–7) important reading of the episode in relationship to those of Procne and Medea.



final form, winged youths, is that of a miraculous hybrid that cannot be naturalized within the world of experience but is easily glossed from artistic representations in the context, especially, of apotheosis. But if the product is miraculous and artificial, the metamorphosis itself represents no miraculous change in states. Feathers are simply a sign of puberty, like facial hair and pimples, and it is easy to recognize the anthropomorphic Calais and Zetes in their winged form; indeed, they really become themselves only once their wings sprout.

But how do these particular metamorphic processes relate to some of the ideological issues discussed earlier? Let me start with a couple of obvious connections between the Boreas story and Roman foundation myths. We have seen already how the narrative's quick transition from rape to offspring mirrors accounts of the rape of the Sabine women. But other events in the life of Rome's first king are equally present. Again, of course, the focus is on divine twins, and here, as elsewhere, fiction is even better than the real thing because this pair vents their violence only on monstrous feminized others in the course of a foreign naval expedition, without fratricide. That hint at imperial foundations—where the battle of Actium becomes the defeat of Cleopatra rather than of Antony—is also very important, another civil war story rewritten. In these respects, if the Philomela myth makes Roman stories look pretty good by comparison, the Boreas narrative hints at an ideal reading of Romulus's life, with all the troubling ambiguities purged. And while we leave the dynamic duo frozen perpetually in pursuit of Harpies, their very capacity for flight—together perhaps with the omission of any reference to their deaths—hints at the third "rape" that punctuates the career of Romulus, his assumption by his father into the sky.[58] Again the winged form of these youths is especially significant, as they always are what the miraculous imagery of apotheosis insists Romulus became. Finally, the emphasis on a natural continuity between the miraculous and the everyday does not invite speculation only on the specific phenomenon of apotheosis. Rome itself is a natural miracle. Livy's précis of all regal history strikes this note repeatedly, as civic identity grows through natural bonds, so the state itself follows an organic pattern of growth (2.1). When and where this developing organism becomes the stable *telos* of the cosmos is of course a big problem in Augustan thought, and it is significant that this second way of naturalizing Roman power, as a continuation of the effects of cosmic energies, emerges here as well. The *vis* that carries off Orithyia and engenders Calais and Zetes, is the North Wind, who drives the clouds, stirs the seas, makes the aether thunder—another little hint at Romulus's transfiguration, perhaps—and terrifies the dead beneath the earth.

[58] For the importance of rape imagery in Romulus's apotheosis, see Hardie 2002a.

This has been a long and discursive reading and has taken many twists that may have jolted my own audience's *fides*. But the length and importance of the Philomela episode in Ovid's poem warrant such extended analysis, and its explicit focus on problems of reading and interpretation, especially its likening of reading to a visual process, mean that it intersects with a number of phases of my argument. Rather than disembed its various strands, I have chosen to show how they all work together to shape the significance of the episode as a series of models for reading Ovid's text. The first stage of my discussion, the one that justifies its inclusion in a treatment of Ovid and contemporary spectacle, analyzed how the prominent references to drama in the story evoke the experience of being a spectator at a theatrical performance. This experience acutely presented Roman audiences with the alternatives of absorption in a culturally foreign aesthetic product or of a heightened awareness of a distance from the imitations on stage that reinforces membership in the real community of spectators. In this way, the problems of reception posed by the status of drama as mimesis contribute to its civic dimension as a context in which to be a Roman. And so here the explicit dramatization of the story complements a series of allusions to Roman etiological myth. In particular, the *Fasti*'s references to this Greek story allowed me to expand my argument in two directions. First, dramatic performances, which of course occurred in the context of annual rituals, became a synecdoche for all enactments of Greek myth in the here-and-now rhythms of Roman public life. The Philomela story and its sequel, thanks to their embedding in the *Fasti*, explore how the various alternatives for construing likeness and difference offered by the representation of myths translate into a kaleidoscope of possible ideological uses for Greek myth at Rome, while potentially interfering with and destabilizing one another.

This somewhat vague term "representation" points to the second important way that my reading involves the larger arguments of the book: the *Fasti*'s hint that Procne's new form matters to the place she occupies in the Roman calendar led to a demonstration that it is again metamorphosis that energizes within Ovid's narrative the dynamic possibilities for recognition and distance that in other contexts like drama or "fatal charades" give ideological and civic significance to the depiction of these events. On one level, Ovid's narrative comments on and explores how Greek myths can be integrated into the cultural and civic life of the Roman state. But his text is more than a commentary. It offers a representation that allows the reader an array of interpretative options while marking out what the ideological consequences of those options are.

This last point leads me back to the even larger claim with which I began my discussion of sacrifice in chapter 3. For beyond placing the text in dialogue with civic performances that were themselves representations—often of events generically similar to the ones depicted in the poem—I argued that metamorphosis also translated into literary form the visual dimensions of an even more central ritual act, sacrifice. The coexistence of another Ovidian poem about ritual helped clarify the interactions between literary representation and ritual experience: the two poems between them construct a complementary dynamic for the reception of Greek mythic narrative. The *Fasti* expands the significance of ritual practices by making them refer to a remarkably open and diverse range of narrative "causes." The *Metamorphoses* by contrast offers an abundance of narratives, often lacking specific nonliterary referents in contemporary social and political praxis, and shows how narrative alone can impact its audience's perceptions of issues ranging from theology to cultural identity with the immediacy and complexity of experiences like ritual. Given the importance of my claim about the "ritualization" of the text in the *Metamorphoses*, and because the Philomela story has given us a chance to study at close hand how the *Fasti* can guide our reading of one specific episode, I conclude by looking at the two parts of this final claim, showing briefly how the *Metamorphoses*' narrative of Procne explicitly explores the relationship between narrative, ritual, and fiction in ways that look to the *Fasti*, and then how, without any specific reference to sacrifice per se, the Philomela story too possesses a theological dimension by reconfiguring the relationship between man, beasts, and the gods.



We have already seen the importance of temporal cycles in the structure of the episode, and this emphasis extends to the commemoration of acts described in the poem. Indeed, the plot begins on such an "anniversary." The Thracians, ignorant of their own advantages, proclaim a festival (*festum*, 6.437) for the birth of Itys. Immediately we are told that five annual cycles had passed when Procne asks Tereus to fetch her sister, synchronizing the beginning of the plot proper with the recurrence of this festival. Obviously, it is the work of more than a day for Tereus to sail to Athens and back and imprison the mutilated Philomela in the woods, but again after this event the narrative refers to the passing of another year before the production of the tapestry. Thus, if we cannot say that the turning points of the story all recur in the context of the same annual celebration, we can claim that the cycling of the year significantly marks the interval between the event itself and its "reenactment" as representation.

But if the Ovidian narrative itself is hung on a ritual calendar, and this importantly does ensure that we see each event as a replaying, sometimes in dramatically different ways, of previous stages in the narrative, so too within the story the characters themselves use claims about ritual commemoration to mask their own behavior and drive their own plots. Most important, the festivals they invent are themselves false, so that here, literally, fiction and ritual overlap. Tereus demands mourning at the false

tomb of Philomela in a way that looks like a Roman Parentalia. Procne exploits a Thracian bacchic festival to whisk her sister, disguised as a bacchant, from her forest prison. And the sisters "falsely claim [*mentita*] that it is a rite of their ancestral custom [*patrii moris sacrum*], which it is proper [*fas*] that men alone attend" to lure Tereus the banquet where he consumes his own son (6.6.647–49). As the last example shows, the evocations of ritual are accompanied by wordplay that seems to summon up the *Fasti* itself, in juxtaposing fictive festival with the unspeakable acts that will take place there. Thus, when Tereus ceases to dissimulate his lust and reveals his plot, he is said to "confess the unspeakable" (*fassusque nefas*, 6.524). Procne, as she recognizes that crime and prepares her own equally unspeakable revenge, is said to be about to confuse *fas nefasque* (6.585–86), which she will literally do in performing what is *nefas* under the guise of what ritual propriety demands (*fas*). The character that is expelled from the *Fasti*, thus presides over a set of festivals that are themselves fictions, falsehoods that aim only to conceal—another way in which the *Metamorphoses* seems explicitly to offer a foil to its twin, the *Fasti*. For to read the festivals in that poem as based on falsehoods and masking criminality—or, as in the case of the Thracians' celebration of Itys' birthday, on a profound ignorance of what was good for them—would of course dramatically transform one's understanding of it. In this *Nefasti*, all commemoration becomes mere repetition, and the penetration of falsehood, which is the reader's privilege throughout, inoculates Ovid's audience against allowing the two poems to contaminate one another. Unless, of course, the readers locate their own point of view too deeply in the poem's fiction by identifying with a character like Tereus, in which case the festival he celebrates at the end becomes all too true, as it indeed makes the past present for him. Thus, the alternatives Ovid's poem presents for us here are to recognize the overlap between festival and fiction so that we are not allowed to mistake any of the rituals in the narratives as authentic rituals or, by entering the false perspective created by fiction, to experience, as the character within the poem, the mystical moment when Tereus realizes that he is another, that the begetter of his son is his consumer, and that the day that marks the child's birth, if we allow the suggestion of annual recurrence to carry us a little past strict chronology, is also the day of his death.

Tereus's awful banquet takes us back to the poem's first cannibal feast, Lycaon's attempted deception of Jupiter. And we shall indeed find the same "theological" questions raised here, though less directly. The last narratives in book six make no mention of sacrifice but, especially taken together, they do offer contrasting views of the placement of man. The Philomela narrative stands out in Ovid's poem for the almost total absence of the gods.[59] But the circumstances in which they are mentioned are telling. They are explicitly not there at the wedding of Tereus and Procne (6.428–9, the chthonic Eumenides are present, but the mortal characters do not see them); Phoebus aloft in his chariot marks out the times at which the various events take place (6.571); so too Pandion briefly invokes the gods as guarantors of Tereus's pledge to return Philomela (6.499), and Philomela herself after her rape links the existence of the gods with the certainty of Tereus's punishment: "If the gods above see these things, if the powers of the gods are real, if all things have not perished together with me, someday you will pay me penalties" (6.542–4). Philomela's plea makes us ask where the gods are, and a number of interesting answers are possible. Tereus will pay a price, and so perhaps the gods do exist. But since there is no sign that they take any hand at all in Philomela's revenge, one could also claim that her invocation serves all the more fully to point out their absence. Finally the link she makes between the existence of the gods and the question of whether death is the end of all suggests that we answer from an Epicurean perspective. Maybe the gods are watching, but they are merely watching. To enter into the world of the narrative would, then, be to recognize a world where man lives cut off from any gods but is always at risk of becoming a beast. More comfortingly, if the gods merely watch, then we too, who know all the things Philomela asks the gods to see, perhaps watch as gods. For throughout the narrative mentions of the gods help always to differentiate our understanding from that of the embedded characters. Again, the Boreas and Orithyia story helps sharpen these alternative answers to the question of divine presence through the contrast it offers with the preceding story. Here the gods are all too present: one of them as a rapist himself. This suggests the darkest possible answer to Philomela's story—why should gods who themselves rape Athenian maidens avenge an act like Tereus's? But the conclusion provides a more upbeat point of view, stressing that the union with the gods puts human offspring on the path to the skies.



[59] So especially Segal 1994.270.

# Playing Gods

## OVID'S *METAMORPHOSES* AND THE POLITICS OF FICTION

*Andrew Feldherr*

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