

Spring 2014

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## Recommended Citation

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# Patterns of Rape in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

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Defended April 7, 2014

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## Abstract

The subject of rape is pervasive throughout Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The myths themselves are by no means originals of the poet; however, his treatment of these stories is remarkably divergent from his predecessors' in that he provides a uniquely female perspective by outlining both the victim's suffering and the barbaric nature of the perpetrator. In Ovid's representations of these rape myths, rape is never glorified, even when it is committed by the gods. The metamorphoses of female victims of rape in Ovid's epic are representations of the victims' emotional trauma, even for those who are able to evade rape. The metamorphoses of the male perpetrators symbolize their brutishness and unrefined power in committing the act of rape. Ovid further expounds the suffering of female victims in his depictions of victim blaming and secondary victimization at the hands of the goddesses. Ovid reexamines rape in these myths in depicting the ongoing torment victims of rape endure and the inexcusable injustice of rape itself.

## I. Introduction

Among the many narratives that appear in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, myths about rape are the most abundant. Ovid, of course, draws on ancient Greek myths, well known and already told numerous times before him. Yet, Ovid's portrayal of these age-old myths is remarkably divergent from his predecessors'. In her article "Seduction and Rape in Greek Myth," Lefkowitz asserts that the union of gods and goddesses with mortals in Greek mythology culminates in glory for these mortals and their family.<sup>1</sup> Regarding these myths, Lefkowitz is hesitant to term these unions an act of rape as they lack the violence of a legally defined rape and eventually culminate in a woman's consent; rather, she terms them seductions and abductions by the gods.<sup>2</sup> Ovid's iteration of these tales, on the other hand, does not express any differentiation between rape and seduction. In the *Metamorphoses*, violence and suffering mark these myths, and a woman's consent cannot be assumed. The male perpetrators are almost all represented in the same manner whether they are mortal or divine, allowing their actions, too, to be judged on equal grounds. Ovid tells a vastly different tale of rape that dwells on a female victim's suffering both at the hands of the perpetrators, divine or mortal, and the goddesses who too assume the victim's consent in copulating with the gods. Ovid shows an uglier, and arguably more realistic, side of rape and seduction than previously encountered. Rape in the *Metamorphoses* is presented as a horrific atrocity, regardless of the characters involved in the act.

But the pervasiveness of rape in Ovid's epic is unsurprising in the context of the political and social changes enacted in that time. The implementation of the Julian Laws during Augustus's rule marked a decisive shift in the regulation of Roman sexual behaviors from the locus of the home to that of the state. With the *Lex Iulia et Papia*, Augustus attempted to

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<sup>1</sup> Lefkowitz 1989: 17

<sup>2</sup> Lefkowitz 1989: 17, 21

encourage marriage and childbirth, particularly among the upper class, by offering incentives for those who obeyed, which mostly regarded the eligibility of someone to receive inheritances, and penalties for those who did not.<sup>3</sup> Members of the senatorial order were prohibited from marrying freedmen, actors, and children of actors.<sup>4</sup> Through the *Lex Iulia de Adulteriis Coercendis*, Augustus redistributed the power to punish an adulterous wife or husband from the family to the state.<sup>5</sup> Those convicted of adultery were no longer allowed to give their testimony in court, stand as witnesses to a will, or serve in the army and were also subject to exile.<sup>6</sup> Convicted women could not remarry and were forced to wear togas to mark their shame.<sup>7</sup>

Ovid seemingly responds to this legislation in his epic, whereby the narratives of rape are perhaps subtle objections against the regulation of sexual morality by the inflexible power of the law and the violent outcomes for the men and women convicted; such scenarios perhaps foreboded what may become of Rome itself when so much power over private lives rests in the hands of its corruptible government. In *Metamorphoses* 14 and 15, Ovid intimately links the historic and even modern political figures of Rome to the divine. Thus, in some ways Ovid renders the gods of his epic congruous to the Roman elite. Yet, the gods of Ovid's myth, especially in the narratives of rape, are often portrayed as the excessively cruel punishers or the voracious lovers, unconcerned with the effects of their actions on mortals, certainly not the noble figures one would want to be associated with. Ovid undoubtedly does not show political life positively through the gods who do far more harm than good against human beings and are often indifferent to their suffering. Ovid invites us to question the right of the authority allotted the gods, and indirectly the Roman elite, when they are incapable of exercising it justly.

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<sup>3</sup> McGinn 1998: 70, 72-3

<sup>4</sup> McGinn 1998: 72

<sup>5</sup> McGinn 1998: 141

<sup>6</sup> McGinn 1998: 142-3

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

With this attestation against the political climate of Ovid's time in mind, my main argument will focus on Ovid's portrayal of rape in the *Metamorphoses* as, above all, a dehumanizing act. Furthermore, rape is presented as highly preferential to the victim's perspective, principally in terms of the emotional trauma they endure as a result of rape or attempted rape.

My thesis falls into three parts: the metamorphosis of female victims, the metamorphosis of male perpetrators, and the phenomenon of victim blaming exhibited by goddesses against female victims. In my second chapter, I discuss how the physical affront and emotional toll of rape is depicted through the victim's metamorphosis. My third chapter deals with the figurative and literal metamorphosis of male rapists who effectively relinquish their human form in committing the act of rape. In my final chapter, I examine the occurrence of victim blaming and secondary victimization which female victims endure primarily at the hands of goddesses post metamorphosis. Ovid, in telling these widely known myths, rarely provides us with the full narrative; rather, expecting his readers to be able to supply the missing narration, he offers us succinct glimpses of these tales, glimpses that delve primarily into victim suffering. Ovid's unique retelling of these myths holds a distinct partiality that compels us to question our previous understanding of these same tales.

## **II. Female Metamorphosis: Representing the Emotional Toll of Rape**

The metamorphoses of the victims of rape or attempted rape are highly illustrative of the psychological toll of rape on them. In the *Metamorphoses*, the rape of a woman does not always end in a victim's transformation. However, the scenes in which transformation does take place are graphic and unsettling. Metamorphosis of female victims can be broken into two categories,

one in which a victim's metamorphosis acts as an escape from rape and the other in which metamorphosis is a result of a completed rape.

In the very first book of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid presents two nearly identical episodes of attempted rape and transformation in the myths of Daphne and Syrinx, except that the former is longer and more detailed (1.547-556, 1.706).<sup>8</sup> Both are nymphs and pledge themselves as chaste followers of Diana. Their enticing beauty catches the attention of a lustful god who chases them, Apollo after Daphne and Pan after Syrinx. Daphne and Syrinx, fearing their approaching pursuers, plea for their forms to be changed:

fer, pater, inquit, opem, si flumina numen habetis!  
qua nimium placui, mutando perde figuram! (1.546-547)

O help me father, if there is any power in the rivers, change and destroy the body which has given too much delight!<sup>9</sup>

donec harenosi placidum Ladonis ad amnem  
venerit: hic illam cursum inpedientibus undis,  
ut se mutarent, liquidas orasse sorores (1.702-704)

Until she came to Ladon's river, flowing peaceful along the sandy banks, whose water halted her flight, and she implored her sister nymphs to change her form

Both nymphs experience a sudden realization that their capture is inescapable in human form. In their fear, they beg for a change of form entirely, preferring this to rape. Their human form becomes a symbol of their vulnerability. Moreover, as depicted in Daphne's exclamation *qua nimium placui*, their form, in its beauty, is the cause of their predicament.

Still their transformation, while defending them from rape, does not protect them from male domination. Daphne and Syrinx lose the power of their speech which Ovid emphasizes

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<sup>8</sup> Rosati 2002: 274-5 suggests that the episode of Syrinx is Ovid's way of showing the reader his awareness of repetitiveness. Mercury tells the story of Syrinx to lull Argus to sleep. But Mercury's narration is cut off, and the episode is quickly wrapped up in a summary as if suggesting that Ovid wishes not to put his reader to sleep by recreating the same story.

<sup>9</sup> All translations taken from Rolfe Humphries 1960 with my own edits included.

through a form of para-speech for each.<sup>10</sup> Daphne's leaves seem to Apollo to nod assent when he adopts the laurel tree as his own: *factis modo laurea ramis / adnuit utque caput visa est agitasse cacumen* (then the laurel, with its branches, seemed to stir its treetop as if she nodded her head, 1.566-7), and Pan turns the reeds of the transformed Syrinx into his panpipes: *atque ita disparibus calamis compagine cerae / inter se iunctis nomen tenuisse puellae* (and [he] took the reed, bound them with wax, a tall and shorter one together, and called them Syrinx, still, 1.711-12). Their loss of human speech represents their subjugation. This is particularly clear in Syrinx's role as Pan's new instrument. Not only is Syrinx speechless, but any sounds that do emerge from her transformed body are controlled by the man she so desperately attempts to escape. While Daphne and Syrinx are able to escape rape, the fact that both Apollo and Pan claim ownership of their transformed bodies, Apollo by adopting the laurel tree as his own symbol (1.557-559), Pan by fashioning the reeds of Syrinx into his panpipes, represents their ultimate inability to escape the domination of men.<sup>11</sup> Syrinx and Daphne sacrifice their humanity to avoid male domination through sexual violence, only to be dominated through their speechlessness and the possession of the transformed bodies by their rapists.

Lack of voice is especially harrowing in respect to Daphne's metamorphosis, as the question of her sustained human consciousness Ovid makes purposefully unclear. Are the stirring branches Daphne's attempt at communication or simply a trick of the wind? This intentional ambiguity surfaces again in a later myth about tree metamorphosis when Dryope, while picking flowers, plucks one flower from which bloody drops fall: *guttas e flore cruentas / decidere* (bloody drops fall from the flower 9.344-5). This flower is Lotis, who, like Daphne and

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<sup>10</sup> Sharrock 2002: 100

<sup>11</sup> Syrinx's episode particularly demonstrates this as her story is narrated in the context of Argus guarding over a transformed Io. Keith 2009: 367 points out that the episode of Syrinx's rape is framed within a larger context of male dominance in this way.



Syrinx, was transformed to escape Priapus. The blood that drips from Lotis suggests that she might have maintained some human elements in her metamorphosis. If nothing else, the blood implies that Lotis suffers a human or animal wound, certainly not the wound of a mere flower, from which she might experience pain. Again, as a flower, she is without voice which, had she possessed it, would have prevented her plucking. The bleeding Lotis makes explicit the susceptibility of their transformed bodies. Lotis and Daphne are stationary and vulnerable to whatever harm may come their way, though in Lotis' case there is some power that punishes her second violation. In this way, a conscious yet voiceless and immovable form, which Ovid indicates is a distinct possibility, is especially disturbing.

The detailed description of Daphne's metamorphosis similarly explores the trauma and vulnerability of transformation. In graphic detail Ovid expresses the rapidity of her metamorphosis, her immobility in her new form, and raises the question of human consciousness in her changed form:

vix prece finita torpor gravis occupat artus:  
mollia cinguntur tenui praecordia libro,  
in frondem crines, in ramos bracchia crescent;  
pes modo tam velox pigris radicibus haeret,  
ora cacumen habet: remanet nitor unus in illa. (1.548-551)

And hardly had she finished, when her limbs grew numb and heavy, her soft breasts were closed with delicate bark, her hair was leaves, her arms were branches, and her speedy feet rooted and held, and her head became a tree top, everything gone except her grace, her shining.

Using *vix*, Ovid expresses the abruptness of the transformation. So quickly does Daphne transform that she is not even afforded a chance to react to her metamorphosis. The immediacy of her metamorphosis is further illuminated by *torpor*. While *torpor* most superficially refers to the paralysis that seizes her limbs in her transformation from free moving human to planted laurel, Ovid draws on its other meanings as well. *Torpor* in the sense of stupefaction perhaps informs us of Daphne's fear in the onset of her metamorphosis. Is it her transformation that

paralyzes her limbs, or is it her fear that paralyzes her? In the sense of numbness, *torpor* suggests the transformation from human to non-human form, from sentient to insentient, from mobile to immobile. Thus the very first word of Daphne's metamorphosis signifies her loss of humanity.

Line 551 poignantly expresses Daphne's loss of human form by calling attention to her loss of mobility. Ovid juxtaposes *velox* with *pigris* which perfectly divides the first three and last three feet between the two words to visually portray her metamorphosis. The contrast is further dramatized, too, by the meter. The principle caesura following *velox* further delineates the contrast between the rapid and sluggish forms. Daphne's changed form replaces her ability of flight as a means of escaping Apollo; but, how effective is this method of escape?

Daphne's vulnerability as a laurel is demarcated in line 549: *mollia cinguntur tenui praecordia libro* (her soft breasts were closed with delicate bark). Her *mollia praecordia*, soft breasts, is set against *tenui libro*, tender bark.<sup>12</sup> *Tenui* stands out as a description that does not seem befitting for bark. Perhaps rough or hard would be more appropriate here, but Ovid intentionally uses a synonym for *mollia* to indicate Daphne's continued vulnerability post metamorphosis. This portion of the passage is also a bit peculiar in the verb Ovid uses to describe the transformation. In the other verbs Ovid employs, *crescent*, *haeret*, and *habet*, we can infer an anatomical change from human to tree form. Yet, *cinguntur* does not carry that same sense. Instead of her breast becoming the bark, it is surrounded by bark, as if her body is encased rather than changed. Daphne's *praecordia* perhaps is the one body part that remains intact, still human. As the center for emotions and feelings, her unchanged *praecordia* may likewise insinuate Daphne's retained human consciousness.

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<sup>12</sup> Martindale 2005: 208-209 argues that the episode of Apollo and Daphne is a poem about a poem. *Liber*, in addition to meaning bark, also signifies book or poem. The changed form, *mutando figuram*, also signifies the change in genre that occurs from the previous episode where Apollo, conqueror of Python, is the epic hero, to this episode where Apollo becomes elegiac lover.

Daphne's metamorphosis is pictured in a grotesque fashion, a mutilation of Daphne's delicate, female form. The brutality of her transformation is recalled in Book 9 when Dryope is transformed into a tree. As in the episode of Syrinx, Ovid manipulates former episodes, recreating earlier scenarios into new forms. Dryope's story closely mirrors Daphne's because she too is pursued by Apollo and ultimately turned into a tree. Dryope, unlike Daphne, is in fact raped by Apollo: *quam virginitate carentem / vimque dei passam Delphos Delonque tenentis / excipit Andraemon et habetur coniuge felix* (Andraemon took her, who was bereft of her maidenhood after she suffered the force of the god Apollo, master of Delphi and Delos, 9.331-3). With the precedent of Daphne's episode, Dryope's transformation into a tree, albeit years afterwards, seems to be the long postponed result of her earlier rape. Moreover, Dryope's transformation is preceded by the bleeding Lotis, a visual symbol of the very act of rape, particularly in regards to the rape of a virgin. The plucked Lotis serves both as a reminder of Dryope's rape and, at the very same moment, as the metaphorical rape of Lotis. In one instant, Dryope is remembered as victim and portrayed as rapist. Her scenario, in its cyclical nature of violence begetting violence, seems to recall the episode of Philomela in Book 6 in which she, the victim, in turn becomes the perpetrator. Again, Ovid titillates his readers by reshaping earlier episodes so that even the stories within the epic are equally subject to metamorphosis.

Daphne and Dryope both transform into trees but the rapidity of Daphne's metamorphosis is not granted in Dryope's, as if the delay in the time between rape and metamorphosis is echoed in her drawn out metamorphosis. The five lines Ovid provides for Daphne's metamorphosis is expanded to forty-three lines in Dryope's. The details of her suffering, while only insinuated in the episode of Daphne, are quite explicit in the episode of Dryope. Dryope, a mother with a small child, literally battles, *pugnat* (9.351), to move her body,

but her rooted feet prevent her. Her transformation is a bodily violation and she struggles in vain against it. Her torture is elucidated by the slowness of her transformation. In line 353, Ovid juxtaposes *paulatim* which modifies *premit* with *lentus* which modifies *cortex* to emphasize the sluggish, creeping pace of the transformation: *totaque paulatim lentus premit inguina cortex* (the bark came creeping slowly over the groin). Both the bark itself and the action of the bark are defined by slow motion. In the creeping pace of her metamorphosis, Dryope is able to fully understand and respond to her bodily change. However, her very grieving is interrupted by her metamorphosis when she attempts to rip out her hair and fills her hands with leaves instead (9.354-5).

Dryope's metamorphosis is depicted as a malicious attack on her womanhood and maternity. Ovid purposefully mentions the transformation of both her *inguina* (9.353), groin, and her *ubera* (9.358), breasts, to highlight the loss of her motherhood in her transformation. Unlike the virginal Daphne, Dryope is a mother when she is transformed, and the loss of her breasts in transformation indicates the loss of her ability to nurture her son. Particularly the image of the bark pressing towards her genitals exposes the horror of transformation and the degree of invasion Dryope experiences. Ovid renders Dryope's metamorphosis especially eerie because she speaks, even describing the changes as it occurs to her body, until the final moment of her transformation: *desierant simul ora loqui simul esse* (her mouth could say no more, could be no more, 9.392). In one moment Dryope is still somewhat human and speaking, the very next she is fully transformed and silent. Her metamorphosis seems to parallel slow suffocation which culminates in her silence, so that her loss of speech correlates with her complete loss of human form. Dryope, in her transformation, is stripped of her voice, of her ability to speak to her husband, to her father, and to her son. Ovid again pairs silence and suffering, indicating the

appalling nature of metamorphosis on these victims of rape. He further illuminates the dehumanizing nature of speechlessness.

Yet, Dryope, as a parallel to Daphne's metamorphosis, does not experience transformation as escape from rape. Rather, her metamorphosis, so much more vivid than Daphne's already graphic one, seems to recreate rather than transpose the violence of rape itself. Moreover, Dryope fights her metamorphosis, perhaps the way one might fight off a rapist, but she is ultimately both metamorphosed and silenced. Dryope does not beg for transformation as Daphne does, but it is forced upon her. Her suffering, too, is mostly emotional. She mourns by pulling her hair; she becomes afraid when the bark encroaches on her groin. Dryope's emotional reaction to her transformation is a plausible reaction to rape itself. Dryope experiences a clear psychological trauma in her metamorphosis which is depicted as a bodily invasion that seems to mimic rape.

Dryope is but one of many women in the *Metamorphoses* who experience suffering in their metamorphosed state after rape. The traumatic nature of rape Ovid elucidates in the metamorphoses of those victims who did experience rape. Rape is cause for both physical and psychological metamorphosis, where a physical metamorphosis is representative of a psychological change. The metamorphoses of both Cyane in Book 5 and Philomela in Book 6 exemplify this.

Cyane's metamorphosis is both a product of her own figurative rape and the grief she derives from the rape of Proserpina. In an attempt to bar Pluto from seizing Proserpina, Cyane emerges from the font whose name later becomes her own (5.411-4). Cyane is unsuccessful in

her endeavor; Pluto is described as plunging through the font in a language that, as Curran points out, reflects the violation of rape:<sup>13</sup>

haud ultra tenuit Saturnius iram  
terribilesque hortatus equos in gurgitis ima  
contortum valido sceptrum regale lacerto  
condidit. icta viam tellus in Tartara fecit  
et pronos currus medio cratera recepit. (5.420-4)

But the son of Saturn, burning with terrible anger, whipped the horses, whirled, with his strong right arm, the royal scepter, smote the pool open to its very depths, and the earth opened, and the chariot plunged through the new crater down to Hell.

The description of Pluto forging a hole through the fountain mimics the forcefulness of rape. The imagery of Pluto planting his scepter into the land replicates the image of penetration. The scepter is symbolic of Pluto's phallus. The scepter, as both a symbol of his masculinity and his regal authority is an indication to the reader of Pluto's dominance of Cyane in relation to both gender and political hierarchy. *Valido lacerto* emphasizes both Pluto's masculine strength and his intention of wounding the land, and by extension, wounding Cyane. The blow suffered by the land is reiterated by *icta*.

The rape even seems to transcend merely a figurative rape in Cyane's emotional response to it:

At Cyane raptamque deam contemptaque fontis  
iura sui maerens, inconsolabile vulnus  
mente gerit tacita lacrimisque absumitur omnis  
et, quarum fuerat magnum modo numen, in illas  
extenuatur aquas: (5.425-9)

Cyane grieved for both violations, girl and fountain, and in her silent spirit kept the wound incurable, and, all in tears, she melted, dissolving, queen no longer, of those waters.

In mourning for Proserpina's rape equally to the wounded font, the extent of the injury through Cyane's perspective is evident. Pluto, then, truly commits two rapes in very little time.

The symbol of the torn open font serves as a physical reminder to the emotional permanence of

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<sup>13</sup> Curran 1978: 222 notes that Pluto's entry into the earth and the effects upon Cyane reflect the language rape. He adds that Arethusa speaks of the penetration as a rape in the phrase *patuitque invita rapinae* (5.492).

the trauma of rape. Just as the land remains open forever from Pluto's blow, so too will rape plant itself perpetually in a victim's psyche, in this case Cyane's psyche. The emotional toll of her rape is also manifest in the phrase *inconsolabile vulnus*. Cyane cannot emotionally manage the injury suffered by her and ultimately cries herself into a fountain (5.429-437). Here literally Cyane is dissolved by her own tears, by her own grief. Much more passively than Daphne and Syrix, Cyane relinquishes her human form not to escape a physical trauma but rather to escape her irreparable sorrow from her subjugation; Cyane undergoes metamorphosis in order to escape her human consciousness which is a plague to her after her rape. Unlike Syrix and Daphne, Cyane as a watery fountain can no longer be held, can no longer be possessed in that same sense: *restatque nihil quod prendere posses* (till there was nothing for anyone to hold, 5.437). In this way, Cyane's transformed body, her formlessness truly, cannot be subjugated as Daphne's or Syrix's. She is immune to male dominance in this manner, but at the cost of her human consciousness and at the cost of any form at all. Cyane also suffers a type of silencing, but this occurs before her metamorphosis. Cyane is described as carrying her wound in her silent mind, *mente tacita* (5.427). Her silence, a condition of her grief, is still the result of her subjection. In some way it even foreshadows her transformation as her first step in relinquishing part of what makes her human.

The silence implicit in the aforementioned transformations is rendered far more explicit in the episode of Philomela at the end of Book 6. Philomela's story also stands apart in her metamorphoses. Her physical transformation into a bird is afforded meager detail. Rather, it is the psychological metamorphosis Philomela undergoes, as a result of her rape and her silencing, that Ovid makes the focus of the narrative.

Ovid provides scant details to Philomela's rape which stretches only a few lines. In the rape itself, far more attention is given to Philomela's speech:

et iam cum lacrimis, ubi sit germana, rogantem  
includit fassusque nefas et virginem et unam  
vi superat frustra clamato saepe parente,  
saepe sorore sua, magnis super omnia divis. (6.523-6)

He imprisoned her, now with tears, pleading where her sister was, and he disclosed to her his crimes. By force he conquered her, a virgin, alone; all the while she cried in vain for her father, her sister, and above all the great gods.

Ovid envelopes the act of rape itself in Philomela's words. Her fear and suffering as expressed through her questioning and shouting provide for the reader Philomela's perspective in the rape, even as she is the object of the action and even as the narration up to this point has been through Tereus' perspective. Moreover the act of rape occurring in the midst of her words emphasizes the failure of her own speech. Philomela, completely alone, is unable to prevent Tereus from dominating her even with her voice. However, Philomela's failure in speech with Tereus, in a private setting, nevertheless allows her to discover the power of her voice in public.<sup>14</sup> Philomela finds the power of her voice when she threatens Tereus that she will tell everyone of her rape (6.542-8). Yet, the moment Philomela discovers this power, Tereus strips her of it by severing her tongue (6.555-7).<sup>15</sup> Tereus even appears to derive sexual pleasure from her mutilated body.<sup>16</sup> In construing Philomela's rape, Ovid directly links female silence to female subjectivity. Tereus's sexual arousal at her mutilation, at the symbol of her silence, suggests that his domination over her rather than a satiation of his lust is his end. Philomela's silencing may perhaps be seen as a symbolic rape itself as the imagery of Tereus removing his sword from its sheath in line 551 evokes the image of rape.<sup>17</sup> Philomela undergoes ultimate domination by losing her ability to speak. More pointedly, as the text illuminates, this punishment Tereus

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<sup>14</sup> Joplin 1984: 28

<sup>15</sup> For an analysis on the simile of Philomela's severed tongue see Richlin 1992: 158-179.

<sup>16</sup> Curran 1978: 219

<sup>17</sup> Richlin 1992: 163



inflicts on her is worse even than death; Philomela is fully conscious and incapable of communicating the insurmountable torture she must endure where in death she would not have to emotionally confront her suffering at all.

Certainly, as Joplin notes, Philomela is able to find some solace through her newfound ability to communicate by weaving.<sup>18</sup> Joplin seeks to remember Philomela as the weaver, as a woman who “transforms revenge into resistance.”<sup>19</sup> Yet, Joplin’s insistence on remembering Philomela only as weaver and not as victim or vengeance seeker is problematic and perhaps a little shortsighted. While weaving provides Philomela an alternative form of communication, it cannot stand in place of human speech. This is all too evident when Philomela first reunites with Procne. Philomela wishes she were able to call upon the gods to testify that she was raped, but speechless attempts to use her hands instead (6.607-9). Even with her alternate medium, Philomela’s speechlessness is inhibiting and especially prevents her from releasing her emotional distress.

It is the combination of the traumatic experience of rape and her speechlessness that causes a significant psychological transformation in Philomela that makes her the vindictive character Joplin chooses to overlook. Philomela’s physical transformation seems unremarkable in respect to her psychological change from innocent maiden to malicious avenger. Rather, Philomela’s psychological metamorphosis marks her change and her physical metamorphosis seems to fix her permanently in this changed form. Philomela and Procne are transformed into birds whose feathers are stained in blood, *signataque sanguine pluma est* (6.670), specifically the blood that remained on their chests in their last moments as humans. The sisters, then, become remembered for their bloodthirsty vengeance, a mania brought upon them by Philomela’s rape,

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<sup>18</sup> Joplin 1984: 43

<sup>19</sup> Joplin 1984: 53

which Ovid renders equally bloody. Their transformation into birds is somewhat ironic, too, in that birds so often signify freedom and release. Yet, the sisters receive no relief from their turmoil. Philomela and Procne are turned into birds right as they are fleeing Tereus. As birds, their flight ever after signifies their flight from Tereus, flight from his vengeance. No freedom is awarded to Philomela and Procne in their metamorphoses, rather they seem to “fix in eternity the pattern of violation-revenge-violation.”<sup>20</sup>

Philomela’s true metamorphosis, her psychological metamorphosis, occurs after her rape when she becomes wroth and vengeful, delighting in blood. But, more than just a show of unflinching cruelty, Philomela’s metamorphosis informs the extent of emotional trauma rape causes. For Philomela, this metamorphosis is inescapable even in physical transformation, so pervasive are the effects of rape. Ignoring the violent Philomela, as Joplin does, is a failure to incorporate the most formative perspective that Ovid provides regarding Philomela’s rape. Her psychological metamorphosis is much like Cyane’s and even Daphne’s and Syrinx’s because it is the result of male domination and male force. Her silencing, too, is a representation of that domination, though hers is far more gruesome than the others’. But Philomela’s story is unique from the rest in its plausibility. There are no gods, no nymphs, only mortals, and metamorphosis is not symbolic for anything; instead it is a believable, even if exaggerated, reaction to an act as disturbing as abduction and rape. Ovid’s sentiment is obvious: rape changes its victims; rape can even turn them into monsters, as in the case of Philomela.

Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* is in many ways a psychological exploration, in that it concerns itself so much in the matters that produce change. Often metamorphosis corresponds to some psychological change. So is this the case for the metamorphoses of victims of rape. The psychological trauma of rape, even unsuccessful rape, manifests itself in metamorphosis. Daphne

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<sup>20</sup> Joplin 1984: 45

and Syrinx forgo their human forms out of desperation. Cyane dissolves from her body in her excessive grief. Philomela becomes sadistic in her revenge, and afterward the blood of her retaliation permanently brands her feathers. The transformations of these women are permanent to mirror the permanence of the psychological trauma. Their muffled forms represent their subjectivity to male dominance and its inevitability even for those who manage to escape rape. Metamorphosis for these victims is a lowering of forms because rape is a debasing, dehumanizing act. Rape either forces or causes most of these victims to relinquish their human form; rape causes Philomela to relinquish her humanity. Ovid is unprecedented in focusing on the emotional outcome of rape for a victim, in depicting rape in such a strong female perspective. Rape in these instances is not glorified or minimized by comedy.<sup>21</sup> Ovid reveals a much fuller scope of human emotions that results from so horrifying an experience.

### **III. Fire and the Beast: Rendering the Sexuality of the Male Rapist**

In a sociological essay, J.E. Robson argues that myths of bestiality and bestial rape are a didactic mechanism for teaching women to remain within the boundaries of civilization, both physically and symbolically, and to submit to sex in order not to be excluded from society.<sup>22</sup> Robson draws on two trends that appear throughout Greek myth: women are prone to be raped in the wilds and women who deny sex are metamorphosed.<sup>23</sup> Robson reads these myths about bestiality and bestial rape as reconfirming the social hierarchy of gender where a woman's sexuality is at the behest of a man's. "The resulting message for the girl, if we may call it this, is that since there is no escaping male control, a woman might as well submit in an appropriate

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<sup>21</sup> Curran 1978: 218 proposes that Ovid shows rape in two perspectives, as a violation against women and as a "grotesque caricature of masculinity."

<sup>22</sup> Robson 1997: 76

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

context, that is, within the context of the *mores* of human society and the city state.”<sup>24</sup> Robson views these myths, as cautionary tales, representing what women risk when they choose not to follow the societal expectation of marriage, namely rape and societal exclusion.

Perhaps in such myths as represented by other authors, these trends prove true. However, in aligning the rape myths of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* with his argument, Robson problematizes his theory.<sup>25</sup> While Ovid recreates age-old myths that do perhaps seek to reconfirm male superiority, his versions of these same myths, in fact, undermine such conventions. Male sexuality is defined in two aspects, as bestial and incendiary. Perpetrators in these myths turn both literally and figuratively into beasts, a transformation that does not glorify but rather debases them. Although Ovid sometimes portrays the desire of these perpetrators, the crux of their sexuality, as a force of fire, a natural force attributed to the divine, this force does not elevate the perpetrator, divine or mortal, but instead exposes their unrelenting and dehumanizing power. Ovid illustrates the anthropomorphic nature of the gods as perpetrators, but in doing so only highlights their unrefined might. Victims, seduced by these transformed gods, receive the sympathy of the reader while the gods, in their deceptiveness, generally become the objects of our disgust. Ovid highlights the predatory, deceptive, and dangerous aspects of perpetrators in his rape myths in correlating them with beasts and fire. Rape in the *Metamorphoses* is not a validation of male sexual dominance; rather, it is an act so base it is inhuman, as shown by the inhuman qualities of the rapists themselves.

Perpetrators are metamorphosed into beasts both literally and figuratively through Ovid’s use of simile. Similes are frequently used in narratives of rape to outline the predatory nature of the rapist by comparing the relationship of rapist and victim to that of predator and prey. In

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<sup>24</sup> Robson 1997: 77

<sup>25</sup> Robson 1997: 83-9 cites 14 examples of bestial rape from the *Metamorphoses*.

these similes perpetrators become relentless chasers of their helpless and frightful prey, typically gentle, nonaggressive creatures. Ovid begins this trend of the disturbing simile in the very first episode of rape in Book 1. The first simile appears when Apollo calls to Daphne, begging her not to leave:

Nympha, precor, Penei, mane! non insequor hostis;  
nympha, mane! sic agna lupum, sic cerva leonem,  
sic aquilam penna fugiunt trepidante columbae,  
hostes quaeque suos; amor est mihi causa sequendi. (1.504-7)

Don't run away, dear nymph! Daughter of Peneus, don't run away! Not does your enemy follow you; don't run away! The lamb flees the wolf, the deer the lion, the dove, on trembling wing, flees from the eagle. All creatures flee their foes. [But I, who follow, am not a foe at all.] Love makes me follow.

In this simile, the words of Apollo truly paint Daphne's perspective. Daphne herself, as represented by the animals of prey, becomes the subject of the passage while Apollo, in the form of various predators, is the object of her flight. The emphasis, then, is on Daphne's flight. Ovid here plays with perspective, allowing insight into Daphne's emotions through the perpetrator himself. Ovid juxtaposes gentle, innocent animals, lamb, deer, and doves, to violent beasts, wolf, lion, eagles; these images evoke significant pathos for Daphne. Moreover, Apollo, in negating the simile, still conjures the image of predator chasing prey, still effectively compares himself with what he wishes Daphne not to associate him. His negation that he is like the eagle, the bird of Jupiter, seems especially ironic since only a few lines later Apollo closely identifies himself with Jupiter as his father (1.517). The denial is insincere and, in turn, ineffective.

Several lines later, Apollo is rendered as the predatory animal he denies himself to be through another predator-prey simile.

ut canis in vacuo leporem cum Gallicus arvo  
vidit, et hic praedam pedibus petit, ille salutem  
alter inhaesuro similis iam iamque tenere  
sperat et extento stringit vestigia rostro;  
(alter in ambiguo est, an sit comprehensus, et ipsis

morsibus eripitur tangentiaque ora relinquit)  
sic deus et virgo: est his spe celer, illa timore. (1.533-9)

When a Gallic hound starts a rabbit in an open field, one runs for game, one safety, he, as one about to catch her, hopes to have her and draws close to her steps with outstretched nose; (she is in doubt whether she is caught, and she is delivered from those very jaws and leaves behind his striking mouth.) So ran the god and girl, one swift in hope, the other in terror.

This simile expresses the violence and fear of the chase, particularly in the phrase *ipsis morsibus eripitur*, ripped apart from his jaws. The simile outlines not only the chase, but the possible outcome for the prey, a particularly violent one that mirrors the physical violence of rape. Here, too, Apollo is not an eager lover, but a dog with gnashing teeth motivated by his hope for her capture. As Anderson proposes, *Gallicus* is Ovid's indication that he is a hunting dog.<sup>26</sup> Apollo, archer and god of the hunt, is lowered to a hunting dog, a grisly hunter whose job it is to tear apart the prey upon its capture. Daphne's fate, if she is captured, is rendered comparable to this, legitimizing her fear and her flight. Daphne, as a rabbit, is represented by a soft, tame creature whose fright arouses far more sympathy in this form. Ovid juxtaposes fear, *timor*, with anticipation, *spes*, cleverly to show two perspectives simultaneously.

These similes of predator and prey arise again in the story of Arethusa and Alpheus. Alpheus happens upon Arethusa as she is bathing in a spring. Arethusa runs from him, and in her narration describes her flight as doves fleeing a hawk: *ut fugere accipitrem penna trepidante columbae, / ut solet accipiter trepidas urgere columbas* (as doves with trembling wings flee the hawk, as the hawk so often presses on the trembling doves 5.605-6). Ovid expands on the eagle-dove simile presented in Apollo's speech, again playing with perspective by affording both hawk and dove the role as subject and object. Ovid is pleonastic in his repetition, emphasizing the panic of the doves and by extension Arethusa, particularly in the repetition of

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<sup>26</sup> Anderson 1997: 197. Notice, too, the anachronistic nature of the term *Gallicus*, applied to a time before Gaul would have even existed. Perhaps Ovid is contemporizing, even Romanizing, ancient Greek myth.

*trepidante...trepidus.*<sup>27</sup> Arethusa as the pursued victim becomes even more sympathetic than Daphne since the episode is narrated through her own perspective.<sup>28</sup>

Arethusa's experience as prey is not limited to the chase. Diana surrounds her in a cloud, and she sits and waits while Alpheus attempts to track her still:

quid mihi tunc animi miserae fuit? Anne quod agnae est,  
siqua lupos audit circum stabula alta frementes,  
aut lepori, qui vepre latens hostilia cernit  
ora canum nullosque audit dare copore motus? (5.626-9)

You ask me what my feelings were? A lamb hearing the wolves around the sheepfold howling would know the answer, or a little rabbit, hiding in berry-bushes, hearing the hounds come near enough to show their snouts and muzzles, while the poor creature huddles frozen in terror.

Arethusa describes herself essentially as a sitting duck. Terror is outlined by the sounds of the impending predator, the howling of the wolves and the barking of the dogs. Alpheus is probably the most persistent of the rapists, too. Alpheus refuses to leave, knowing Arethusa is somewhere in the cloud: *neque enim vestigia cernit / longius ulla pedem: servat nubemque locumque* (He would not leave, for he had seen no footprints farther along the trail, 5.630-1). He is more literally rendered hunter, tracking Arethusa's *vestigia*, footsteps, just as the dog tracks the *vestigia* with his nose in the simile comparing Apollo to a hound. Fear turns Arethusa into a stream of water, but unlike Cyane whose transformation protects her from further subjugation, Arethusa continues to be subjected to the possibility of male domination as Alpheus himself turns into a stream to follow her. Only when Diana breaks the earth and lowers Arethusa, as a stream, below the surface is she finally able to escape him (5.632-641). Arethusa, during her transformation, is clearly able to retain her consciousness as she is able to recall her transformation. Her position as prey continues beyond metamorphosis.

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<sup>27</sup> Anderson 1997: 561

<sup>28</sup> Note that the narration of Arethusa's rape, told to Ceres, is framed in a larger context of Calliope, who herself is victim to an attempted rape, narrating the rape of Persephone. Rosati 2002: 272.

The myth of Philomela and Tereus, perhaps the most gruesome of Ovid's tales of rape, also contains predator-prey similes that depict, rather than a chased prey, a prey that is caught and wounded:

illa tremit velut agna pavens, quae saucia cani  
ore excussa lupi nondum sibi tuta videtur,  
utque columba suo madefactis sanguine plumis  
horret adhuc avidosque timet, quibus haeserat, ungues. (6.527-530).

She shook and trembled as a frightened lamb which a gray wolf has mangled and cast aside, poor creature, to a safety it cannot quite believe. She is like a dove with her own blood all over her feathers, fearing the talons that have pierced and left her.

Ovid repeats the imagery of the lamb and wolf, the dove and eagle, yet instead of portraying the fear the prey experience, the simile provides insight into the physical violence of rape itself. Not only is the act of chasing comparable to the predator-prey relationship, but the catch itself is, too. More pointedly, the victim of rape is as wounded as the hunted prey. Particularly, the image of the dove's bloodied wings parallels and perhaps even foreshadows Philomela's transformation while also alluding to her loss of virginity.<sup>29</sup> In this simile she is a wounded dove whose feathers are stained by her own blood only to become another bird whose feathers are again stained by blood, though this time the blood is of Itys. Regardless, Philomela as a bloodied bird is ultimately the result of her aggressor, Tereus, who, unlike Apollo and Alpheus, does rape her, and multiple times. Her wounded state evokes a significant amount of pathos and also intensifies the predator-prey simile. Philomela does not merely experience fear like Daphne and Arethusa, but also the brutality of rape itself.

Ovid also renders the predatory nature of the perpetrators beyond simile. Ovid illuminates the fear of the victims, these symbolic prey, by describing intimate details of the chase scenes. In Book 1, Ovid manages to portray Daphne's perspective while narrating from

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<sup>29</sup> See Richlin 1992:163



Apollo's point of view: *inminet et crinem sparsum cervicibus adflat* ([He was] shadowed on her shoulder, breathed on her streaming hair 1.542). Ovid draws upon both meanings of *inminet*; Apollo is both nearing her physically, and threatening her. His approach is made even more horrific by the breath Daphne feels on her hair. While Apollo here is the subject of the verbs, sympathy resides far more with Daphne's perspective, especially in terms of her fear.

Perhaps even more disturbing is that Apollo acknowledges her fear. He calls to her and claims he is not her enemy because he understands that she runs out of fear. He must tell her not to be afraid, all the while chasing her. Apollo even seems to show signs of caring for her wellness: *ne prona cadas indignave laedi / crura notent sentes, et sim tibi causa doloris* (Unhappy fellow that I am, and fearful you may fall down, perhaps, or have the briars make scratches on those lovely legs, 1.508-9). This caring, however, is superficial because he continues to pursue her, knowing this can damage her – and ultimately it does. Moreover, this supposed concern for her pain is really concern for her damaged beauty. Her cares not at all for her emotional distress, which he clearly recognizes, but for her scratched legs, for a body that might be made less beautiful by the time Apollo finally does catch up with her.

In fact, even prior to this scene, Ovid depicts Apollo's obsession with Daphne's beauty in a predatory light:

spectat inornatos collo pendere capillos  
et 'quid, si comantur?' ait; videt igne micantes  
sideribus similes oculos, videt oscula, quae non  
est vidisse satis; laudat digitosque manusque  
brachiaque et nudos media plus parte lacertos (1.497-501)

He sees the long hair hanging down her neck uncared for, says, "But what if it were combed?" He gazes at her eyes – they shine like stars! He gazes at her lips, and knows that gazing is not enough. He marvels at her fingers, her wrists, her arms, bare to the shoulder

In only five lines, Ovid uses a verb for "seeing" four times, certainly not out of a lack of originality. While the term "male gaze" is a convention of third wave feminism that would not

have existed in Ovid's time, Ovid seems to have a clear understanding of the connection between male gaze and female subjectivity.<sup>30</sup> Daphne is reduced to her form alone, and her beauty as the fulcrum for Apollo's pursuit levels his supposed love for Daphne to but a pretense for his lust.<sup>31</sup> This is made all the more evident in his actual pursuit of her: *auctaque forma fuga est* (her beauty was intensified by her flight 1.530). Richlin argues that Ovid perpetuates models of patriarchy in the rape episodes within the *Metamorphoses*, and she cites the motif of fear beautifying victims to uphold this theory.<sup>32</sup> However, Richlin fails to account for the varying perspectives Ovid demonstrates. Apollo, not Ovid, finds beauty in Daphne's flight. Ovid, in portraying Apollo as more attracted by her fear, again paints Apollo as predator, delighted by the chase. Ovid provides for the reader multiple interpretations, some that even seem to contradict each other. Perhaps, as readers, we may sympathize with Apollo's appetites, perhaps instead we may grimace at its disturbing quality.

The images and emotions of the impending predator that are illustrated in the episode of Daphne and Apollo are also reconstructed in Arethusa's narration of her rape:

vidi praecedere longam  
ante pedes umbram, nisi si timor illa videbat;  
sed certe sonitusque pedum terrebat, et ingens  
crinales vittas adflabat anhelitus oris. (5.614-617)

I saw before me, or my fear made me see, his lengthy shadow running ahead, and oh, but I was frightened at the sound of his feet and the way his labored breathing blew on the back of my hair.

Unlike in the episode of Daphne and Apollo, only Arethusa's perspective is shown. She, like Daphne, feels her perpetrator's breath on her hair (1.542). Yet, here, her fear is explicitly stated rather than merely inferred. As narrator, Arethusa is also able to provide more details of her

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<sup>30</sup> See Keith 1999: 216-220 for a discussion on male gaze in the context of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis.

<sup>31</sup> Keith 2002: 249 calls attention to the conflation of genres in this episode, namely epic and elegy, where Apollo represents the elegiac lover and Daphne the elegiac *puella* who spurns her lover. The language Ovid employs here seems more fitting for love poetry than epic. Perhaps this language reflects this intrusion of elegy into Ovid's epic. In this passage, Apollo seems to take on the role of dotting elegiac lover.

<sup>32</sup> Richlin 1992: 162

chase from her own perspective. The dark shadow of her follower and the sound of his loud footsteps are exceptionally horrifying. Arethusa's fear at her nearing pursuivant is haunting but more importantly very relatable. Richlin's argument seems to ignore these aspects of Ovid's rape episodes. As is evident in the description of flight, Ovid does not glorify rape or male dominance in any way. Curran more precisely observes that flight "was for Ovid the consummate means for the expression of the terror of the victim, the predatory appetite of the rapist, and the dehumanizing reduction of a woman to the level of hunted animal."<sup>33</sup> Even outside of simile, Ovid constructs rapists as predators, victims as prey.

The episode of Aesacus and Hesperia, however, complicates this interpretation. In this episode, Aesacus spots Hesperia as she dries her hair in the sun (11.769-770). Hesperia darts away from him again in a simile that reflects the predator-prey relationship: *visa fugit nymphe, veluti perterrita fulvum / cerva lupum longeque lacu deprensa relicto / accipitrem fluvialis anas* (Now, as she saw him, she was gone, a deer fleeing the tawny wolf, a bird, caught far from her pool, surprised by the hawk, 11.771-3). Ovid repeats the imagery of the defenseless deer and bird contrasted to their vicious predators, the wolf and hawk. The suddenness of her flight, expressed by *veluti*, remarks on the intense fear Hesperia experiences at Aesacus' arrival. This scene seems to follow the trope of both Apollo and Alpheus; however, the ending diverges. Rather than be saved from rape by transformation, Hesperia is bitten by a poisonous snake in her flight and dies (11.775-6). The simile becomes literal; Hesperia, the hunted prey, is killed.

While the chase scene parallels the predatory aspects of the other perpetrators, Aesacus' reaction to Hesperia's death is stirringly unusual for a predator:

piget, piget esse secutum!  
sed non hoc timui, neque erat mihi vincere tanti.  
perdidimus miseram nos te duo: vulnus ab angue,

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<sup>33</sup> Curran 1978: 233

a me causa data est. ego sum scelerator illo (11.778-9)

Oh I repent, repent! I did not know that my pursuit meant death. It was not worth to win at such a cost! We have destroyed you, serpent and I: one gave the wound, the other the cause. I am the guiltier.

Aesacus' admission of guilt is novel and unparalleled. Apollo only mourns the loss of Daphne's flesh, but shows no signs of acknowledging his own fault in the matter. Apollo even recognizes that his pursuit of Daphne could injure her, but continues nonetheless. Alpheus, even after Arethusa's transformation, continues to pursue her. But Aesacus does not carry this same level of egocentricity. True, Aesacus does not consider Hesperia's danger in chasing her, an inarguably predatory quality of his. Still, he is certainly less self-interested than Apollo, who does consider Daphne's danger and simultaneously disregards it. Furthermore, Aesacus, unlike Apollo, shows genuine remorse for her death, even acknowledging that his part in her death is weightier than the poisonous snake's. Aesacus' genuine remorse is fully realized in his attempt at suicide by projecting himself off a cliff into the water (11.783-4). Aesacus certainly carries the predatory nature of other perpetrators in the beginning of the episode, but becomes a sympathetic character in his response to Hesperia's death. Does Aesacus' repentance absolve him of his former misdeed? His guilt, though, is never truly relieved. Aesacus, in his suicide attempt, transforms into a diving bird (784-795). As in Daphne's episode, Aesacus' metamorphosis raises the question of retained consciousness. Death, which would be a release from his guilt, is not granted to him, but rather he endures a tormented existence in which he attempts the act of suicide again and again.

Few other female victims suffer death as Hesperia does.<sup>34</sup> Some, like Daphne, Syrinx, and Arethusa, are transformed. Others, like Cyane and Philomela, are raped and later transformed. But, for Hesperia, death takes her before metamorphosis or Aesacus can, almost as

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<sup>34</sup> The scene recalls the death of Eurydice, wife of Orpheus, who too is killed by a snake bite (10.10).

if her story is an alternate tale to that of Daphne's. Would Aesacus have mourned as much for a transformed Hesperia? Aesacus shows humane qualities that these other perpetrators seem to lack. Ovid, in fact, refers to him as *Troius heros*, Trojan hero, though he never actually battled, as was made explicit in the beginning of the episode (11.773). Aesacus is not able to gain victory over Hesperia even. Perhaps Ovid mocks the idea of hero by making use of the term where it most certainly does not apply. Possibly, though, Ovid here is redefining the idea of hero. Aesacus demonstrates a quality rare among Ovid's heroes, an honest concern for a woman and the courage to face up to the consequences. His remorse is what defines him even in metamorphosis where he is destined to an everlasting cycle of incomplete suicides. So again does physical metamorphosis reflect a psychological shift. Aesacus, the hero, is newly defined by his regret.

Aesacus, however, is a rare exception. The brutality of the gods and men who pursue and rape young women is described pervasively not only in predatory similes and images, but also in flame imagery. As a precedent for all other rape episodes in the rest of the epic, the symbol of fire is first introduced in the story of Apollo and Daphne. Apollo is described as loving, *amat*, Daphne and desiring, *cupit*, her (1.490). Following this is a simile of fire burning crops:

utque leves stipulae demptis adolentur aristis,  
ut facibus saepes ardent, quas forte viator  
vel nimis admovit vel iam sub luce reliquit,  
sic deus in flammis abiit, sic pectore toto  
uritur (1.492-6)

As stubble burns when the grain is harvested, as hedges catch fire from torches that a passer-by brought too near, or left behind in the morning, so the god burned, with all his heart

Desire is compared to fire, but fire here is a destructive force by which materials, vulnerable to the flame, are burned unintentionally. The fire that encapsulates Apollo's desire is utterly destructive as it burns a field crops, a common symbol of both female fertility and the woman's

body in ancient Greek myth.<sup>35</sup> Here, Ovid seems to be drawing on this association, allowing us to connect Apollo's devastation of the crops to the devastation of Daphne's body. Apollo as god of the sun is inherently associated with fire. Yet, the fire from the sun is a natural force that provides warmth, light, and most importantly the ability for crops to grow. This is a fire that sustains and generates life. However, Apollo lacks these nourishing qualities as a symbol of fire in this episode. With desire as his kindling, Apollo demolishes the land rather than promotes fertility. In his lustful state, Apollo's power of fire, derived from his association with the sun, is inverted from a source of life to a source of destruction.

Similar fire imagery reappears in the episode of Alpheus as he spots Arethusa: *tanto magis instat et ardet* (All the more he pressed and burned 5.602). Ovid directly links fire to beast in constructing Alpheus. Only two lines later the pursuing Alpheus is described as wild, *ferus* (5.604). Fire and beast imagery recur in Book 6 during the episode of Philomela. Tereus is seized by unbridled desire, *effreno capitur amore*, a phrase that is embedded in descriptions of fire and burning (6.465). Like Apollo, Tereus burns at the sight of Philomela:

non secus exarsit conspecta virgine Tereus,  
quam si quis canis ignem supponat aristas  
aut frondem positasque cremet faenilibus herbas. (6.455-7)

And Tereus looked at her, and in that moment took fire, as white grain burns, or dry leaves burn, or hay stored in the hay-mow

The description of burning closely mirrors that of Apollo, especially in the repetition of *aristas*, grain. Furthermore, Tereus' fire, his susceptibility to such extreme desire, is attributed to his Thracian nationality: *flagrat vitio gentisque suoque* (a double fire burnt in him, his own passion and his nation's, 6.460). Tereus' *innata libido*, innate desire, informs us of the barbaric nature of his love (6.548). Tereus, then, is construed as doubly barbaric compared to Alpheus and Apollo. Perhaps this explains the more violent nature of his rape episode. His desire even is

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<sup>35</sup> duBois 1988: 52, 57

treated as uncivilized, indicated by *effreno*. A bridled animal is under control, and functions as a symbol of civilization. Tereus, with his unbridled desire, is uncivilized in his actions and thus closer to an animal state.<sup>36</sup> Ovid overtly connects desire with the bestial in this phrase, and also connects desire with fire in his simile. While bestial imagery illuminates the subhuman qualities of the rapists, their desire as a force of nature shows their might. Ovid constructs frightening human and divine characters who hold the power of the gods but are without the moral capacity to wield such power and control.

The primal, destructive qualities that define these rapists accentuate their abandonment for higher levels of cognition in the act of overpowering women. The description of Aesacus tragically encapsulates this concept. Aesacus, in his pursuit of Hesperia, is twice called *amens*, out of his mind, a word which was etymologically derived from *a mente* (11.777 and 11.787).<sup>37</sup> Ovid also clearly plays on the word *amens*, which so closely resembles *amans*. Aesacus is quite literally out of his mind in love. Aesacus exhibits this same quality of discarding his mental faculty to pursue a destructive emotion that, in this episode, has tragic consequences for them both.

This motif does not differ even for the most powerful god of all. While Robson argues that the metamorphosis of gods into animal form is a mark of sophistication and cunning, in the *Metamorphoses* is rather representative of their savagery.<sup>38</sup> The predatory actions of rapists can assume tragic or horrific proportions. They can also be comic, as a way showing how degraded the gods in particular can be when they are in amatory pursuit. This comic tone is apparent in the episode of Europa in Book 2 in which Jupiter transforms into a bull in order to seduce her. Ovid

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<sup>36</sup> Anderson 1997: 197 notes that *admisso ...passu* in line 533 of Book 1 is often used with *equo* to mean “at full speed,” i.e. the horse has been given the reins. In this context, Anderson suggests that Ovid refers to a hunting dog on a leash that is set loose, an animal no longer in the control of a human. Apollo is like Tereus in this way.

<sup>37</sup> Maltby 1991: 29

<sup>38</sup> Robson 1997: 76

renders his metamorphosis as a true lowering of form. In this episode, he becomes a laughable character, far more concerned with his pursuit of sexual gratification than his more important duties as ruler of Olympus: *non bene conveniunt nec in una sede morantur / maiestas et amor* (hardly do majesty and love go well together or linger in one dwelling, 2.846-7). Ovid pits majesty and love against each other, as contenders for the same throne. Distinguishing love from *maiestas*, a word that encapsulates greatness and dignity, poignantly shows the ignobility of such a pursuit which Jupiter so readily indulges in. This concept is typified in the following image where Jupiter sets aside his symbols of power to become a bull:

sceptri gravitate relictā  
ille pater rectorque deum, cui dextra trisulcis  
ignibus armata est, qui nutu concutit orbem,  
induitur faciem tauri mixtusque iuvenis  
mugit et in teneris formosus obambulat herbis. (2.847-851)

Jove put down his heavy scepter: the great father, great ruler of gods, whose right hand wields triple forked lightning, and whose awful nod makes the world tremble, put aside his might, his majesty, took upon himself the form of a bull, went lowing with the heifers and ambles, a comely creature, in the tender grass.

Ovid pointedly juxtaposes Jove in his symbols of power and might, symbols that embody his divine power, against the trivial exploits of the mooing and grazing bull. Jove's transformation is undoubtedly a physical lowering of form. More significantly, his changed form to that of beast parallels his lowly pursuits of love, or rather rape. Perhaps, even, Ovid plays on the word *gravitas* to mean both the weight of the scepter and also the Roman virtue of seriousness. Jupiter, in his metamorphosis, becomes a foolish creature, exuding the very opposite of *gravitas*. He allows Europa to decorate his horns with garlands of flowers, this a god with the ability to shake the earth and wield lightning bolts (2.867).

Arachne, too, demonstrates the ignoble and often comic nature of these beastly but divine rapists in her tapestry. In her weaving contest with Minerva, Arachne portrays the many exploits of Jove, Neptune, Apollo, Bacchus, and Saturn who transform, often into beasts, to trick women



into copulating with them (6.103-126). Of the twenty myths Arachne weaves into her tapestry, thirteen depict the gods transforming into animals. These scenarios involve one of the gods turning into a human, a river, a bunch of grapes, or a flame, to name a few. Inarguably, the new forms these gods take on are of lower rank than their divine form. Certainly the myth of Semele suggests that gods cannot be among mortals in their full godly state.<sup>39</sup> Still, most of the forms the gods change into are a great many steps below the status of divine. Arachne renders the gods absurd merely by representing their comically animal deeds. The narration refers to the tapestry as *caelestia crimina*, heavenly crimes (6.131). Yet, Ovid is ambiguous about what this actually means. Is the tapestry itself a crime against the gods, or are the images on the tapestry the crimes of the gods? Either way, the humiliating nature of the artwork is illuminated, especially when posed against Minerva's tapestry which depicts the gods as powerful beacons of order and justice. In the description of Minerva's tapestry, Ovid first mentions the Areopagus, *scopulum Mavortis*, which was both mythologically and historically a locale for justice (6.70).<sup>40</sup> The twelve gods are seated upon their thrones, symbols of their regality, but here are also judges of Minerva and Neptune's contest to become the gods of Athens (72-3). Minerva displays the gods in their majesty, Arachne in their farcical love exploits. As in the episode of Jove and Europa, Ovid sets *maiestas* and *amor* in opposition to each other in the tapestry contest. Gods that are capable of such greatness lower themselves to pathetic creatures. Minerva's tapestry is framed by reminders of human insolence and divine retribution. One corner depicts Haemus and Rhodope, another Pygmy, the third Antigone, and the last Cinyras, all of whom defied the gods in some

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<sup>39</sup> When Jupiter reveals his true divine form to Semele, she bursts into flames (3.298-309)

<sup>40</sup> In Greek myth, the Areopagus was the location for the first murder trial; Ares was tried by Poseidon for the murder of his son. In ancient Greece, the Areopagus was the location where murder trials were held.

manner and in turn were transformed as punishment.<sup>41</sup> These scenes together are a testament to the might of the gods and to their ability, as higher beings, to punish mortals, and they are a foreshadowing of Arachne's demise.

Despite Arachne's brief victory, the brute power of the gods prevails. In an act of retaliation unbecoming of the refined, regal portraiture of the gods in her own tapestry, Minerva slashes Arachne's woven work and beats her head until, unable to bear it, she hangs herself; in a belated act of pity – or, as is equally feasible, a continuation of her cruelty – Minerva transforms Arachne into a spider (6.131-145). Minerva, in punishing Arachne, forsakes the ideal behavior of the just gods from her own work and embodies truly the gods of Arachne's tapestry who fail to abide by the morals they themselves impose on mortals and who show complete disregard for humans. In acting so, Minerva validates Arachne's portrayal of the gods. Minerva's tapestry is an idealism of the divine, an image of how the gods always ought to be seen and revered by men. Arachne's tapestry depicts the gods as they are outside of their role of divine judges.

Various scholars have identified Arachne with Ovid the poet, both of whom are artists struck down, even silenced, by far more powerful entities.<sup>42</sup> Joplin, in a resistant feminist perspective, interprets this episode as representative of the struggle of the female artist whose story is rewritten throughout history by the male.<sup>43</sup> Joplin lowers Minerva to pseudo-woman, a man's envisioning of what a woman should be.<sup>44</sup> Minerva, as a perpetuator of the status quo, of the ideals of Roman sexuality, obliterates proof in Arachne's tapestry of how the highest powers so greatly diverge from these ideals.

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<sup>41</sup> These myths are rather obscure, but Anderson 1972: 163-4 details each: Rhodope and Haemus were lovers who boasted that they were happier than the gods and so were turned into frigid mountains; Pygmy challenged Juno and changes her into a crane; Antigone quarreled with Juno who subsequently turned her into a stork; Cinyras' daughters, in the temple of the same goddess, claimed to be more beautiful than she so their limbs were turned into the stone steps that led up to the temple.

<sup>42</sup> Newlands 2004: 485

<sup>43</sup> Joplin 1984: 50-51

<sup>44</sup> Joplin 1984: 49

Ultimately, the gods in each tapestry are both true, although contradictory and partial, representations of the gods. Jupiter first enters the epic as a regal, authoritarian figure when in Book 1 he calls to council the gods (1.166-7). Jupiter, in punishing Lycaon for his immoral exploits, is a venerable god, a divine exactor of justice only to reappear at the end of the same book as a philanderer and rapist in the episode of Jove and Io. Jupiter and indeed all the gods are capable of behaving as both the fearsome, just gods of Minerva's tapestry one moment and as the reckless, amoral gods of Arachne's tapestry another moment. This in itself is a metamorphosis as the gods change through our perception of them.

Robson argues that in myths of bestial rape, women are the ones being linked with the animal and animal forces even though it is most often the perpetrators themselves who transform into animals.<sup>45</sup> But for Ovid's *Metamorphoses* this seems an over-simplification. Gods and men figuratively take on the role of predator or physically take on the visage of a beast while women are their helpless prey. Ovid does not render the acts of the perpetrators in any way dignified. These gods and men become rash submitters to their basest, most animalistic desires. Women, as their prey, become highly sympathetic while the perpetrators are depicted as hostile and unrelenting. When women are linked with animals they are rendered sympathetic, for the animals are non-predatory, gentle creatures. Robson also notes that the rapists, since they are divine, are symbols of civilization.<sup>46</sup> Yet these rapists so clearly leave behind their civilization in committing rape, as the episodes of Europa and Arachne indicate. Might and prestige are abandoned for lust, civilized activity abandoned for animalistic endeavors. The gods and men, rather, become far more associated to the uncivilized connotations of the animalistic in their transformation. In their metamorphoses into beasts, they relinquish their reasoning faculty so that

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<sup>45</sup> Robson 2002: 75

<sup>46</sup> Robson 2002:77

their actions are the result of their base and destructive desires. They are not the tamers of crude women, but the ones in need of taming themselves. Rather than reaffirmations of social norms or gender power relations, these episodes seem a testament that rape itself, even when performed by the gods, is a low act committed by low creatures. Although the similes of fire affirm the terrifying power these rapists carry in these lust driven states, the power of fire is also a reminder of the unjust employment of their divine authority in the act of rape. Divine rape in Ovid's poem usually means neither glory nor prestige, but simply debasement – and for the female victims terrible suffering.

#### **IV. Victim Blaming and Secondary Victimization in Ovid's Mythological World**

Joyce Williams, in her landmark essay “Secondary victimization: Confronting public attitudes about rape” delineates a societal phenomenon whereby women who have already been victimized through sexual assault undergo further victimization from social reactions to their rape, a phenomenon she terms secondary victimization.<sup>47</sup> Among the most common negative responses according to recent data, 70 to 80 percent of women who disclose a rape or sexual assault encounter victim blaming as a response from both informal support sources such as family members or friends and formal support sources like police officers, counselors, or physicians.<sup>48</sup> Other negative social responses include minimizing the trauma of the rape and disbelief and denial of the disclosed rape.<sup>49</sup> These disapproving reactions towards victims of rape foster an environment in which victims must essentially choose between social marginalization

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<sup>47</sup> Williams 1984: 69

<sup>48</sup> Ullman 2010: 67

<sup>49</sup> Ullman 2010: 74

and not disclosing their rape. Unsurprisingly, many victims chose not to report the crime out of fear of these negative social reactions from family and friends.<sup>50</sup>

While these psychological studies on rape victims are remarkably modern, the concepts behind them are truly ancient. Rape victims in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are frequently blamed for their rape and excluded from society because of it. Moreover, victims, anticipating negative social reactions, often blame themselves for their rape. But, even as Ovid draws on patriarchal conceptions of rape in mimicking these age-old scenarios, nothing in his language suggests these victims are deserving of their punishment. Ovid repaints common scenes of victim blaming and social exclusion, but does so in a way that highlights the victim's suffering. Ovid's depictions of social reactions to rape do not work to validate these responses, but rather undermine them in showing the full extent of their cruelty.

The episode of Medusa, perhaps one of the briefest episodes of rape, is narrated by Perseus after divulging in his heroic exploits. Accounting for his voice in this brief passage is essential to its understanding.<sup>51</sup> Perseus first remembers Medusa for her preeminent beauty:

accipe quaesiti causam. clarissima forma  
multorumque fuit spes invidiosa procorum  
illa, neque in tota conspectior ulla capillis  
pars fuit; (4.794-797)

Hear the cause of your question. She was very lovely once, the hope of many an envious suitor, and of all her beauties her hair most beautiful.

The description of Medusa's beauty is in strong contrast to her hideous form which would have been more familiar to Perseus' avid listeners and even to us as readers. His focus on her beauty also seems to foreshadow her rape as in other episodes of rape, such as Apollo and Daphne,

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<sup>50</sup> Ullman 2010: 42

<sup>51</sup> See Liveley 1999 for the importance of accounting for the perspective of narrator in resistant reading. On Pygmalion and Orpheus she writes: "Thus the misogynist perspective displayed by both Orpheus and Pygmalion... may be regarded as an extreme point of view that the external narrator invites his readers to resist. The harsh condemnation of these women and the implied justification of their final punishment in this narrative might therefore be seen to present a distorted view of the character and the crime" (Liveley 1999: 202).

where the perpetrator's description of a victim's beauty precipitates her pursuit or even her rape. Perhaps Perseus' male voice stands in for the male voice of Medusa's actual rapist, Neptune. Beauty, as the impetus for Neptune's rape of Medusa, even becomes the apparent cause for her rape. The juxtaposition, too, of *causam* beside *clarissima forma* in line 794 allows the reader to visualize this even if the two words are not syntactically related. Perseus, as narrator, offers a clever explanation that seems to absolve Neptune of his crime by transferring the blame of rape onto Medusa, particularly in terms of her beauty.

In the description of her rape, Ovid manages to show the violation of rape while not straying from Perseus' impersonal voice: *hanc pelagi rector templo vitiasse Minervae / dicitur* (It is said that one day the god Neptune raped her in Minerva's temple, 4.798-9). *Dicitur*, as an impersonal verb, appropriately expresses Perseus' detachment from the episode; he is not particularly sympathetic to her rape. Perseus, as narrator, is subtly discredited in his detachment towards Medusa's rape where we as readers would expect his outrage. Still, the verb Ovid used for her rape, *vitiasse*, is powerful as it appears only once before in *Heroides* 11.37 to denote rape.<sup>52</sup> In *Metamorphoses* 4 this word seems to capture the double violation that is taking place in Medusa's rape, both of the body and of Minerva's temple, though the language truly stresses the latter.<sup>53</sup> As Anderson notes, the position of *vitiasse* in the middle of *templo* and *Minervae* emphasizes the "shocking affront" of the rape to Minerva and to her chastity.<sup>54</sup> Medusa's body is violated in the same regard as Minerva's temple is violated.

Minerva's accentuated fury presages her ultimate vengeance. Minerva transforms Medusa into a monster as punishment. Yet, Ovid renders the punishment so obviously incongruous for

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<sup>52</sup> OLD *vitio* 3.

<sup>53</sup> Joplin 1984: 50 proposes that the Medusa in myth may recall a real sacrificial victim. "The violence is transformed into rape, but the locus of the act – the altar – is preserved and the responsibility for the crime is projected onto the gods."

<sup>54</sup> Anderson 1996: 495

the crime. Perseus declares: *neve hoc inpune fuisset* (nor would this go unpunished, 4.800), a phrase that would feasibly anticipate Neptune's punishment. Set directly before the description of Medusa's punishment in which her hair, her prized attribute, is turned into hideous snakes (4.801), the phrase seems almost ironic. Minerva punishes the woman who was just victimized by Neptune, the woman who was likely worshipping Minerva before Neptune's intrusion.<sup>55</sup> Minerva, like Perseus, seems to blame Medusa's rape on her beauty by punishing the part of her that attracted Neptune in the first place. Ovid cleverly plays on the theme of fault and beauty in her transformation with the phrase *Gorgoneum crinem* (the hair of the Gorgon, 4.801). As *crinem* closely resembles *crimen*, crime, Ovid again subtly connects Medusa's beauty in the form of her hair to her rape while simultaneously suggesting the crime is the Gorgon's. Minerva, having shielded her face (4.799-801), is the false witness to the crime, an unsuitable arbiter as she delivers her punishment to the woman who, like herself, has been victimized.

Medusa, in her punishment, is not only deprived of her beauty, but of her ability to return to society. Perseus describes the remote location of her home in his journey to kill her:

astu  
 supposita cepisse manu perque abdita longe  
 deviaque et silvis horrentia saxa fragosis  
 Gorgoneas tetigisse domos passimque per agros  
 perque vias vidisse hominum simulacra ferarumque  
 in silicem ex ipsis visa conversa Medusa (4.776-781)

And he slipped away, going by trackless country, rough woods and jagged rocks, to the Gorgon's home. On all sides through the fields, along the highways, he saw the forms of men and beasts made stone by one look at Medusa's face.

Medusa is essentially banished from society because of her transformation. Her home is located out of the bounds of civilization, as indicated clearly by *devia*. She is surrounded by the stone bodies of all men and wild animals who gaze upon her. Ovid, in the parallelism of *hominum* and

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<sup>55</sup> See Anderson 1996: 496

*ferarum* subtly links man and beast, both predatory in their gaze, but now victims of Medusa's gaze. Medusa, in her home far from civilization, is entirely alone. She is incapable of reentering society for she would destroy every living creature within it. The crowded stone statues seem as much a cautionary sign to intruders as a tragic reminder for Medusa of her permanent solitude, all on account of her rape.

However, the anachronistic detail of events does not afford Medusa the appropriate sympathy her condition demands. As readers, we are introduced to Medusa post metamorphosis, already a savage monster and murderer. Only upon analysis can we as readers learn, too late, the unfair circumstance of both her transformation and her story, as story that deprives her of the reader's compassion which a linear tale would have granted. So does Medusa become further victimized by the narrator Perseus, the very man who decapitates her and makes her head the spoil of his heroic enterprise.<sup>56</sup> Perseus is an especially unfitting narrator for the tale of Medusa's rape, too, as the narrator of his own prior exploits, a tale brimming with the visual objectification of women.<sup>57</sup> In it, Andromeda, bound to the rocks, becomes the helpless object of Perseus' male gaze: *nisi quod levis aura capillos / moverat et tepido manabant lumina fletu, / marmoreum ratus esset opus* (if her light hairs had not moved in the breeze and her eyes were not filled with warm tears, he would have thought her a work of marble, 4.673-5). Perseus's visual objectification of Andromeda symbolically turns her into stone, while Medusa's visual objectification turns her onlookers into stone. Medusa's power in some regard is retaliation, a poetic justice whereby men physically become the stone statues into which they symbolically turn women with their gaze.

Callisto, like Medusa, becomes a victim of a god's lust while piously worshipping a maiden goddess through hunting. Callisto, a follower of Diana, falls victim to Jupiter when he

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<sup>56</sup> Keith 1999: 221

<sup>57</sup> See Keith 1999: 222



seduces her in the form of Diana (2.425).<sup>58</sup> Callisto's transformed psychology after the rape is immediately expressed in her sense of shame: *huic odio nemus est conscia silva* (she loathed the forest, the knowing woods, 2.438). The landscape as the location of her rape would naturally become a source of hatred for Callisto. However, *conscia* seems to reflect Callisto's own sense of shame as she supplies a consciousness to the inanimate forest. Callisto's discomfort in familiar surroundings foreshadows her ultimate exclusion from the chaste society of the followers of Diana. Newly deflowered, Callisto senses she no longer belongs in the woods which Ovid renders as symbolically virginal by mentioning no ax has ever befallen them (2.418). Her shame is further explicated when she rejoins Diana and the nymphs:

heu quam difficile est crimen non prodere vultu!  
vix oculos attollit humo nec, ut ante solebat,  
iuncta deae lateri nec toto est agmine prima,  
sed silet et laesi dat signa rubore pudoris,  
et, nisi quod virgo est, poterat sentire Diana  
mille notis culpam (2.447-452)

Alas! How hard it is not to betray a guilty conscious, by just one expression! She scarcely raised her eyes, she did not hurry, as once she did, to walk beside her goddess, to lead others, but her silence spoke, her blushes told her story; if Diana were not, herself, a virgin, she could have noticed a thousand signs of guilt.

*Crimen* and *culpam* both express Callisto's feelings of guilt and responsibility. While *crimen* first is ambiguous, whether it is her crime or Jove's, the following description of guilt-ridden gestures sways the reading towards the former.

This language of self-blame is paralleled by Philomela in Book 6. Philomela, having been raped by her brother-in-law, twice conceives herself as *paelex sororis*, a rival of her sister (6.537; 606). Upon first reuniting with her sister she, like Callisto, is unable to lift up her eyes out of shame (6.605-6). The text seems to suggest that Philomela actually considers herself to be at fault, yet her struggle to express to her sister that she was raped undermines this idea (6.607-8).

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<sup>58</sup> Sharrock 2002: 97 notes that Jupiter spots Callisto when he is surveying the land after Phaethon's fall, and fire courses through his veins. Fire has just laid waste the land, so the fire coursing through Jove's body is presumably as destructive.

Callisto and Philomela both fear in the response of others that they will be blamed for their rapes, fears that are substantiated by other instances of victim blaming present throughout the epic, as with Medusa and Io. For Philomela, this fear, while substantiated, is ultimately preemptive as she is completely believed by her sister. Callisto is not as fortunate. She is silent so that she will not be blamed for her rape, a concern that is legitimized by Diana's and the nymphs' reaction to her condition. When Callisto hesitates to remove her clothes to swim with the others, the nymphs, in a vile act of betrayal, rip them off of her, revealing her swollen womb, and showing forth her *crimen* (2.461-3). Again, Ovid uses *crimen*, to portray the point of view of society, or more particularly Diana and the nymphs who do not discern rape from an act of consensual sex. Curran, too, argues the first use of *crimen* at line 433 connotes Jupiter's crime while the second use connotes Callisto's crime from society's perspective.<sup>59</sup> Loss of chastity is Callisto's crime, no matter the occasion for its loss.

In this way, Diana and especially the nymphs, who Ovid insinuates are not chaste themselves, are excessively cruel (2.452). Callisto is banished from her own civilization and forced never to come near the sacred waters out of Diana's brash judgment (2.464-5). Callisto's banishment is her ultimate punishment. In fact, Juno's subsequent transformation of Callisto into a bear is but an extension of her exclusion from society. As a bear, Callisto loses her ability for human speech, and is only able to produce terrifying growls:

neve preces animos et verba precantia flectant,  
posse loqui eripitur: vox iracunda minaxque  
plenaque terroris rauco de gutture fertur. (2.482-4)

The power of speech might have been dangerous for her to plead with, so that was taken and her voice became an angry, threatening growl.

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<sup>59</sup> Curran 1978: 224

Callisto cannot beg to be transformed again, nor is she able to communicate with others without frightening them. Her changed form, too, deprives her of the ability to lift her arms up to the gods in supplication (2.487). Even more cruelly, Callisto retains her human consciousness (2.485). Because of this, she frequently forgets that she is a bear and runs from other beasts, including other bears. Her own son, wandering through forest, comes upon her, but cannot recognize her and almost spears her as she approaches (2.496-504). Callisto is completely isolated from all versions of society, too frightful to be around humans and too frightened to be around animals.

Like Minerva, Juno punishes Callisto's beauty in addition to making her an outcast. Callisto's memorable beauty is signified in her very name which in Greek means very beautiful. Juno outwardly blames Jupiter's actions on her beauty, absolving the rapist of his crime while conveniently reassigning fault to the victim:

'scilicet hoc etiam restabat, adultera,' dixit  
'ut fecunda fores fieretque iniuria partu  
nota Iovisque mei testatum dedecus esset!  
haud inpune feres: adimam tibi namque figuram,  
qua tibi quaque places nostro, inportuna, marito' (2.471-5)

"Of course it had to be this way, no other, you adulterous bitch, to go get pregnant, to advertise the scandal by giving birth, to have a witness of Jove's disgraceful conduct. You will never get away with this unpunished. The form you so delight in, the lovely form that caught my husband's eye, I shall take from you."

In refiguring the blame of adultery from Jove to Callisto and her beauty, Juno accordingly punishes her beauty by vanquishing it. Juno in referring to Callisto as *adultera*, adulterer, strips her of her victimhood. Rape becomes a consensual act entirely, and an offense, indicated by the use of *iniuria*, against Juno both as the wife of Jove and as the goddess of marriage.<sup>60</sup>

Surprisingly, Juno does not deny nor ignore Jupiter's involvement in the crime; rather, she calls attention to it with *dedecus*. Still, *dedecus*, is nowhere near as forceful as *iniuria*; the suggestion

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<sup>60</sup> Anderson 1996: 288

is his crime was merely misconduct rather than an immoral or unlawful act. While Juno excuses Jupiter from his role as rapist, she does not deny his adulterous behavior. Yet, in a phrase that Minerva will allude to later in Book 4, Juno remarks that Callisto will not go unpunished, *haud inpune feres*. Female victims receive the brunt of retaliation from the goddesses, a retaliation that would far more logically be exacted upon the rapist gods. But, even in the realm of the gods, gender hierarchy retains a powerful influence. Juno and Minerva are incapable of directly punishing the male offenders, and instead these female rape victims become the outlet for the unexpressed vengeance of these enraged goddesses.

Juno, in fact, seems to punish Jupiter's victims partially as a means of indirectly retaliating against Jupiter himself, as in the case of Io. Jove, in an attempt to hide his rape of Io from Juno, transforms Io into a cow. But Juno, seeing through the ruse, asks to have the transformed Io as a present, to which Jupiter concedes, and orders Argus to watch over her (1.611-624). The metamorphosed Io is perpetually subjected to the male gaze, symbolically emphasized by the one hundred eyed Argus who only ever shuts two eyes at once. Her punishment parallels Callisto's, too, since she is deprived of human speech while retaining her human consciousness:

et conata queri mugitus edidit ore  
pertimuitque sonos propriaque exterrita voce est.  
Venit et ad ripas, ubi ludere saepe solebat,  
Inachidas ripas, novaque ut conspexit in unda  
cornua, pertimuit seque exsternata refugit. (1.637-641)

When she tried to plead, she only lowed, and her own voice filled her with terror. When she came to the river, her father's, where she used to play, and saw, reflection in the stream, her jaws and horns, she fled in panic.

Io's lack of speech prevents her from entreating Argus, from moving him towards compassion.

She is frightened of herself, both of her new, animal voice and even her visage. While Argus acts as a physical barrier, lack of speech is also a form isolation for Io. In the few moments she is granted the company of her family, while Argus is not chasing them away, Io still cannot truly

connect with them; her speechlessness prevents them from even knowing who she is (1.642). Her higher cognition, unequal to her animal form, is torture for Io. Terrified by her own reflection, she is reminded of her inhuman body, just as Callisto. The familiarity of the landscape cannot provide her comfort as long as she is in her foreign form. In fact, it is the familiar land that reminds Io of her own change. Jove watches her misery and literally cannot bear it, *ferre potest* (1.669). He is so moved to compassion that he has Argus killed, though this does not end Io's torment (1.669-670).

The misery of the transformed Io and Callisto is Juno's mechanism of emotional punishment against Jove. Io's misery twice moves Jove to compassion, first when he orders Argus' death, again when Io is plagued with the fly. Watching as her son almost murders Callisto, Jupiter transforms them both into constellations (2.505-507). Jupiter's ultimate pity saves both Callisto and Io from eternal torment. They are among the few to experience upward transformations. However, Callisto's punishment continues, when Juno begs Tethys not to allow her to touch the pure waters as a constellation:

gurgite caeruleo Septem prohibete triones,  
sideraque in caelo, stupri mercede, recepta  
pellite, ne puro tingatur in aequore paelax. (2.528-30)

Deny these seven stars your blue-green depths forever, drive off the stars taken into the sky for the price of shame lest that little whore be wetted by this pure water.

Juno recreates the original punishment Diana inflicts on Callisto, that she may never again touch the pure waters. Io reemerges into society a goddess, no longer stained by her rape, yet Callisto, as a constellation, continues to be tainted with her lost chastity, forever denied her victimhood. She remains a *paelex*, rival, to Juno, even in inhuman form. Ovid plays on *stupri* which was the legal term for rape.<sup>61</sup> Ovid grants Callisto the mercy and understanding for her victimhood that Juno

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<sup>61</sup> Harries 2007: 88

refuses. Nevertheless, upward metamorphosis does not ultimately wash Callisto of the stain of her rape.

Io, among all victims of rape, is the true exception. Rape does not permanently mark Io in anyway; her metamorphosis is temporary, and afterwards she is able to transition back into society rather seamlessly, save for some troubles with redeveloping her human speech. While Callisto does undergo an upward metamorphosis, she is not granted a return to her human form. Io returns exactly as she once was: *fitque quod ante fuit* (she became what she was before, 1.739). But Io, as a member of the Egyptian pantheon, is already an exception. She comes from outside the Greco-Roman sphere, outside its moral realm. In fact, her entrance into this world is detrimental for her, resulting in both her rape and her metamorphosis. Io's release from her heifer form occurs at the Nile, where she may return whole to her Egyptian roots. Only Io can escape the permanent stain of the sexually impure because she does not belong to those mores to begin with.

Callisto, Medusa, and all other female victims of rape, however, cannot escape the mark of impurity. The goddesses Diana, Minerva, and Juno, who inflict their cruelty these victims, are representative of the social mores of this mythological world, particularly in reference to female sexuality. Diana and Minerva, as celibate goddesses, and Juno, as goddess of marriage, defend the social importance of female chastity and punish unflinchingly those who defy it, not differentiating between sex and rape.<sup>62</sup> Feminine beauty becomes the justifiable excuse for a perpetrator's violent indulgence, and the consequential negation of a woman's status as victim by society. Female victims of rape subsequently become outcasts, and their metamorphosis is a symbolic rendering of their rejection from society. The unflinching rigidity in the gods'

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<sup>62</sup> Curran 1978: 225 writes that Juno in the *Metamorphoses* is the "embodiment, on the level of myth, of society's attitudes toward marriage and such related matters as virginity and adultery."

guardianship over these social rules paints them as callous beings. Ovid constructs these defenders of social law as so obviously flawed in their means of enforcement through the punishment of the victims. These goddesses, guardians of social standards, are rendered questionable representatives of moral custom, while the suffering victims move the reader to compassion. If the gods are the regulators of social order, perhaps, then, these episodes are admonitions against the regulation of such order left to the wrong hands, a message that would ring especially powerfully in a time when the Julian Laws were first enacted.

As is observed in modernity, rarely does the suffering of victims in Ovid's mythological world culminate with the rape itself. These women, forcibly drawn into the affairs of the gods, are doubly victimized, once by their rapists then again by the goddesses against whom truly the gods, and not their helpless victims, commit offence. A woman's beauty, often a source of pride, becomes a dangerous quality to possess. Victims are faulted for their beauty as the cause for their rape. Blamed for the very crime committed against them, victims of rape are physically ostracized through their metamorphosis, a symbolic representation of societal rejection. In rendering these victims, Ovid illustrates the complex sociological and psychological phenomena that coincide with rape, namely the emotional trauma a victim undergoes from both the rape itself and the societal response to the rape.

Ovid's seemingly modern understanding of gender and sexuality is perhaps best appreciated in the myth of Caeneus, the mythical hero who was once the beautiful woman Caenis. Raped by Neptune, Caenis is granted the wish to never again be able to suffer in this way, to no longer be a woman (12.202). Neptune, in addition to transforming her into the man Caeneus, also grants that s/he may never become wounded by iron (12.207). Caeneus, now impenetrable to all, becomes, in some sense, hyper-masculine. Yet, his rejection of his former

gender is problematic in the ancient world. Vergil, in fact, does not grant Caeneus a sustained male form after death in the *Aeneid*: *it comes, et iuvenis quondam, nunc femina, Caeneus / rursus et in veterem fato revoluta figuram* (and Caeneus went, a young man once, now a woman, turned back again by fate into her former shape, 6.448-9). Vergil rejects the possibility of transgender by claiming that it was fate which restored her original figure. Yet, Ovid is more forgiving of the fluidity of gender. Caeneus' death is unclear in the *Metamorphoses*. Perhaps he is crushed under the weight of the rocks, or perhaps he is turned into a unique bird, *avis unica* (12.531). His gender remains equally ambiguous as Ovid employs the Greek vocative, *Caeneu*, in addressing him (12.531), a form of indistinct gender. As all birds are feminine in Latin, we cannot make any judgments on gender based on his possible transformation, either. Ovid does not confine Caeneus into his original gender as Vergil, but allows for the uncertainty, perhaps even allows Caeneus himself to choose. Caeneus' potential metamorphosis upon death into a bird may also stand for his ultimate flight from the constraints of gender. This myth, though, is not merely an exploration of transgender, but also an insight to the dangers of restricting people by these rigid categories. Caeneus flees from his female gender, realizing the vulnerability to male sexuality and violence that is contingent with bearing a woman's form, particularly a beautiful one. Were this not the case, Caeneus may have had no reason to transform. Ovid not only explores the possibility of change, but even the motivation of such a change, that change itself is begotten out of the inflexibility of social mores. Such exploration is befitting the world of Ovid's epic, a realm in which the only consistency is change.



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