THE TYRANT AND BOUNDARY VIOLATIONS IN OVID'S TEREUS EPISODE

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Aberrant, self-destructive behavior is commonplace in the myths of the *Metamorphoses*, which depicts human folly in a variety of forms captured most vividly by transformation to nonhuman states of life. One of Ovid's darkest tales, the story of Tereus in book 6 reveals the incestuous lust of a man for his sister-in-law and the grim consequences that follow, a horrible revenge ending in the metamorphosis of all three protagonists into birds. The poet characterizes the brutal Tereus as a *tyrannus* (436, 549, 580) as well as a *rex* (410, 520). A rare term in the *Metamorphoses*, *tyrannus* describes authoritarian figures who in general act ruthlessly. Used of the gods, the word depicts Neptune (1.274), when he unleashes the rivers to flood the earth at Lycaon's crime, and Pluto (5.359, 508), when he quits Hades and abducts Proserpina. In the Trojan section, *tyrannus* describes Laomedon (11.203), who cheated Neptune of his payment for building the walls of Troy, and Polymestor (13.565), who murdered his guest Polydorus out of greed for the huge stores of gold belonging to Priam: both men are thus characterized by *libido*, which induces them to disregard *fides* in their relations with gods and humans.[1]

In the Tereus episode, Ovid reflects upon the tyrant's action as par excellence the dissolving of boundaries necessary for social life, in particular his total violation of order within the family. The views given imaginative form here are in accord with philosophical discussions of the tyrant in antiquity. Plato's vision of the tyrant, recently cited by Marcel Detienne in his brief discussion of the Tereus myth, emphasizes the outburst of primitive lusts usually occurring in dreams, when the beastly facet of the soul engages in incest with the mother, kills the father, sexually assaults god, man, or beast, and even cannibalizes one's own child.[2] While Plato shows the complete dissolution of boundaries in sexual conduct, Xenophon points out that the tyrant is hated by those to whom he is most closely connected by natural bonds.[3] Ovid's expression of these views questions the foundation of human social life.

From the very beginning of the episode, Ovid suggests that Tereus shows no concern for the social values underlying the institution of marriage. First, he underlines the strictly political nature of Tereus's union with Procne, for Pandion gave his daughter to the man as a reward for military services against invading troops (426–28). The scene of the wedding is Thrace rather than Athens. Since the poet notes that the Thracians have a proclivity for lust (459–60), he would seem to imply a lack of social restraints upon Tereus's innate *libido*. He associates the Thracians with lust

again in the very next episode, in which Tereus's fellow countryman Boreas burns with love for Erechtheus's daughter Orithyia and, when rebuffed as a suitor, immediately carries her off by force (675–721). In referring to the day of Tereus's wedding, Ovid characterizes the man as a tyrant: *quaque data est claro Pandione nata tyranno* (436).[4] A highly ironic echo of the phrase here describing the bride and groom occurs in the scene in which Tereus abducts Philomela in order to rape her: *cum rex Pandione natam in stabula alta trahit* ("when the king dragged the daughter of Pandion into a lofty hut," 521–22). The juxtaposition of *rex/tyrannus* and *Pandione nata(m)* creates an ironic parallelism in Tereus's relation to the two women: seizure of a woman by force readily substitutes for a legitimate marriage.

The deviations in the marriage ceremony itself suggest Tereus's lack of concern for that social institution. Juno Pronuba, Hymen, and the Graces were not present; instead, the Furies carried torches snatched from a funeral pyre and arranged the marriage bed, while an owl hooted on the roof of the chamber (428–31). For Ovid, such irregularities symbolize flaws inherent in a character. In book 10, a similarly ominous wedding introduces the highly problematical figure of Orpheus, whose excessive passion causes him to lose the opportunity to restore Eurydice to life and to renew the marriage that ended as it began. At that wedding, Hymen appeared but brought no propitious words or omens; the torches also sputtered, smoked, and refused to light (1–7). Ovid suggests that Orpheus's passion for Eurydice is essentially self-concern, for he not only refuses to heed Pluto's stipulation not to look back at his wife but, in despair at losing her a second time, rejects all relations with women in favor of a narcissistic involvement with young boys. In the episode of Myrrha, who yearns for a marital union with her father, a hooting owl signals her entrance into Cinyras's bedroom, where she fulfills her illicit desires without her father's knowledge (10.452–71). The ill-omened bird there is an emblem of a deep perversion of character, an incestuous passion that festers for a long time and is finally acted upon through the devious stratagem of the young woman's nurse.

Here, the absence of the traditional marriage deities at the wedding implies the lack of social bonds necessary to create a genuine, vital union. As the goddess of marriage, Juno is the mythological representative of the actual *pronuba* who joined the hands of the bride and groom in the *dextrarum iunctio* in the Roman marriage ceremony.[5] This important quasi-legal token symbolizes *fides*, the guarantee of trust essential to marriage as a social institution. Ironically, Ovid later refers to a *dextrarum iunctio* that Tereus does, in fact, perform with Philomela, when he has persuaded Pandion to allow him to take the young woman to Thrace under the pretext of uniting her with her sister, but actually with the intention of raping her (607).[6] Hymen, according to Catullus in poem 61, is the *dux bonae Veneris, boni coniugator amoris* (44–45); he thus insures a reciprocity suggested in the image of binding (in the root *iugo*) and in a moral emphasis (in the

word *bonus*) on the love uniting the pair.[7] This god, then, complements the Graces, the companions of Venus who attend to the physical charm that induces mutual pleasure and helps to promote procreative powers. Given the grossly abnormal nature of this wedding, with important symbolic deities absent and the Furies and owl present, it is particularly ironic that the Thracian people should make public thanks (*dis ipsis grates egere* 435) and declare the day, along with Itys's birthday, a festival (*festum iussere vocari* 437). By prefacing their jubilation with the word *scilicet* (454), the poet suggests an overly enthusiastic, automatic response to their ruler at the expense of proper ritual forms.

In his account of the first stages of Tereus's lust for Philomela, Ovid reveals the man's perversion of social bonds through an ironic identification with familial roles. In order to take Philomela back to Thrace, he makes his plea on his wife's behalf so compelling that in addition to a remarkable eloquence he even produces tears as if reflecting Procne's own feelings (*addidit et lacrimas, tamquam mandasset et illas* 471).[8] Besides wholeheartedly acting the part of his wife's representative, Tereus identifies with Pandion as he is embraced by his daughter: *quotiens amplectitur illa parentem,/ esse parens vellet* ("As often as she embraces her parent, he would like to be her parent," 481–82). When Pandion asks Tereus to care for Philomela with a father's love (499), the poet ironically reveals that paternal affection for the Thracian is synonymous with incest. Although maintaining a sense of proper familial affection by addressing the man as *care gener* (496), the old king seems to perceive the danger of allowing his daughter to depart with Tereus: *timuitque suae praesagia mentis* ("He feared the forebodings of his mind," 510).

All pretences of respect for family bonds disappear as soon as Tereus sets off with Philomela. He immediately speaks in the manner of a conquering warrior whose prayers for victory have been answered: "*Victimo exclamat "mecum mea vota feruntur!"* (513). After the man drags the girl off to the forest upon their arrival in Thrace, Ovid describes his victim in a simile traditionally found in an epic context:

> illa tremit velut agna pavens, quae saucia cani
> ore excussa lupi nondum sibi tuta videbatur,
> utque columba suo madefactis sanguine plumis
> horret adhuc avidosque timet, quibus haeserat, ungues.
>
> She trembles just like a frightened lamb which, wounded and ripped by the mouth of a gray wolf, does not yet believe itself safe and as a dove whose wings are wet with blood shudders and fears the eager talons to which it has been fastened. (527–30)

Like the epic hero on the battlefield, Tereus treats Philomela as an enemy to be overcome.[10] His misapplication of *virtus* has a close parallel in the account of Sextus Tarquinius's assault on the virtuous Lucretia in the *Fasti*. In the earlier narrative, Ovid similarly uses the wolf and lamb analogy to portray the aggressor's violence and the victim's fear:[11] *sed tremuit ut quondam stabulis deprensa relictis/ parva sub infesto cum iacet agna lupo*

"But she trembled as at times when a little lamb has left the stables and lies caught under a menacing wolf," 2.799–800).

Much like Livy's version, Ovid's account of the rape of Lucretia is a critique of tyranny, in part by identifying the Tarquin's son with the king himself. The youth, for instance, boasts that he is the son of the king and a Tarquin (796). The poet also apostrophizes the villain as the destroyer of his own kingdom: *heu quanto regnis nox stetit una tuis!* ("Alas, how much one night cost your kingdom!", 812). As an extension of the tyrant, the young man is an embodiment of unrestrained *libido;* his lack of limits in sexual conduct is analogous to his father's aggressive seizure of wealth.[12] In rejecting traditional morality, the tyrant obliterates all boundaries between right and wrong. Here, the perverse Sextus is actually sexually aroused by Lucretia's *pudicitia* and even threatens to make her appear to be the immoral one: *falsus adulterii testis adulter ero* ("I, the adulterer, will be a false witness of adultery," 808). Much like Philomela in the *Metamorphoses*, Lucretia is so distraught at her injury that she resembles a mourner at a funeral (813–14). Although morally innocent, that noble woman commits suicide to expiate the violation of her honor. Paradoxically, this unfortunate act has the positive consequence of motivating her husband and father along with Brutus to drive out the Tarquin and institute the republic.

In the *Fasti* passage itself, Ovid associates the Roman rape with the myth of Tereus. Almost as an epilogue to that story, he mentions the appearance of the swallow and refers to Procne's pursuit by Tereus (853–56). The *scelus* of the Roman tyrant which recognizes no bounds in the sexual sphere is symptomatic of a lack of limits that undermines all political and social order. Tyranny is incompatible with maintaining the values underlying social life: while the tyrant merely travesties *virtus, pietas,* and *ius,* those virtues survive in early Rome because the men who really represent them expel the Tarquin. Against the background of the *Fasti* passage, the Tereus episode does not sustain the firm antithesis between moral and immoral forces but instead reflects the darker side of human social existence.

Tereus's lust and his brutal rape of Philomela have an analogue within the *Metamorphoses* that further suggests his unrestrained violence and its destructive effects. Commentators note that several narrative elements, especially similes, recall Apollo's pursuit of Daphne in book 1.[13] Many of the apparent similarities, however, reveal significant differences between the two aggressors and their victims. The simile of a wolf chasing a lamb in the earlier episode is put humorously into the mouth of Apollo himself to assure Daphne that his intentions are not sinister (1.505). Although the poet ironically implies the god's predatory nature by comparing him to a Gallic hound after its prey (533–38), the gap between appearance and reality is essentially comical. Apollo's speech to the nymph is ridiculously inept as persuasion: it is a narcissistic self-glorification based on his domin-

ion over important lands, his descent from Jupiter, his prophetic powers, marksmanship, medicine, and music; his mention of the lyre especially heightens the irony of his total failure to allay the girl's fears.[14] Whereas the god of eloquence absurdly fails to persuade, Tereus says virtually nothing to Philomela by way of approach but only tersely acknowledges his intention (*fassusque nefas* 524). He relies strictly on force, which Ovid makes all the more repugnant by rhetorically emphasizing the girl's defencelessness, for the correlatives in the phrase *et virginem et unam* strengthen the link between the two words in sense through their very lack of grammatical equivalence: "He took the girl all alone by force" (524–25).

While the poet seems to compare Philomela to Daphne by an extended simile detailing the beauty of a nymph,[15] the contrast between the two is crucial. Even though each calls upon her father poignantly in the moment of crisis,[16] their motivations are far different. Daphne begs for release from human life. By being unable to accept her sexuality and adamantly refusing marriage, she reflects her nature as a huntress outside of the norms of civilization.[17] Philomela, on the other hand, cries out for her father and sister because of her emotional need for the two persons to whom she is most closely bound. Furthermore, she calls last and most often (*super omnia* 526) upon the gods, who are concerned with justice and requite wrongdoing. By contrast to Daphne, Philomela is highly civilized. even the simile comparing her to a nymph distinguishes her by *cultus* and *paratus* (454), the visible signs of her refinement. Finally, whereas her counterpart has tried to escape marriage, this young woman is abruptly cut off from the possibility of marital life and the creation of a new family by Tereus's rape.[18]

In the scenes with both Pandion and Tereus, Philomela represents the value of *pietas* that preserves boundaries within family relations. As W. S. Anderson notes in his commentary on this episode, piety has important thematic implications from beginning to end.[19] Initially reluctant to let his daughter go, Pandion yields mainly because of the bond of affection between the two sisters: *quoniam pia causa coegit* (496). Similarly, he expects Philomela to return as soon as possible out of pious respect for him (*pietas ulla est* 503). The young woman expresses her commitment to proper family relations in her strong censure of Tereus after the rape. Her first words show a concern for her father's devotion: *nec te mandata parentis/ cum lacrimis movere pias?* ("Didn't my father's orders along with his pious tears move you?," 534–35). Most important, she decries Tereus's impiety for dissolving the boundaries between sister and wife: *omnia turbasti: paelex ego facta sororis* ("You have thrown everything into confusion: I have become a rival of my own sister," 537). By designating herself as a *paelex*, she especially reveals her strong sense of isolation from her family. As a linguistic equivalent of a basic dissolution in the family structure, *paelex sororis* is a strikingly paradoxical phrase; later, it reemphasizes Philomela's feelings of shame before her sister (609).[20] The term has legal connotations implying an injury inflicted on the legitimate wife. In this case, it is technically incorrect since it refers to a woman who actually cohabitates with or is kept by a married man.[21] Yet it effectively conveys Philomela's abhorrence at being outside of the proper social structure, for the *paelex* was socially a marginal figure, forbidden by an ancient law supposedly dating from Numa's reign from touching the altar of Juno, the patroness of marriage.[22]

Given her deep anguish over the breakdown of family relations, it is hardly surprising that Philomela offers herself in a manner that suggests a sacrificial victim when she sees Tereus unsheathe his sword. Her posture in particular implies a sacrificial gesture: with hair pulled back and hands bound, she offers her neck (*iugulum Philomela parabat* 553), the part of the animal that is pierced in a sacrificial ritual. Her willingness, moreover, recalls that a proper victim must not struggle. The young woman's sacrificial gesture, however, is left incomplete as Tereus chooses another method than death to allay his fears and anger at her reproaches. At this point, Ovid again describes Tereus as a tyrant: *talibus ira feri postquam commota tyranni/ nil nec minor hac metus est* ("after the anger of the fierce tyrant was aroused by such words and his fear was no less," 549–50). His first response is particularly brutal and inhuman: he mutilates her by cutting out her tongue to keep her from telling of his deed so that he may resume his role as Procne's husband. Yet this act also has the incredibly perverse effect of stimulating his lust even more, for he immediately took her several times over (561–62).

By his act of mutilation, Tereus is associated with a divine agent in the *Metamorphoses*. When he gets possession of Philomela alone, the lustful king is aligned with the king of the gods by a simile comparing him to the *Iovis ales*, which grasps its victim and deposits it in the nest (516–17). By removing the organ through which humans differentiate themselves from the beasts, he assumes a power otherwise belonging to the gods. This is the only instance in the poem in which a human agent metamorphoses another individual into a form of life incapable of speech. A close analogue is Jupiter's transformation of Io into a heifer when, frightened by Juno's suspicions, he dreads retribution for his infidelity. The two victims have interesting similarities. Like Philomela, Io is unable to express herself through speech. While retaining her human intelligence and emotions, she tries to speak to her father but succeeds only in producing the lowing of a cow (1.638–39). Using her wits to communicate, she writes her name in the sand with her hoof and thus informs her father of her fate. In this episode, Philomela also devises a strategy of communication: she employs her skill at weaving so as to reveal her own misfortune to her sister. More violent in his lust than Apollo, Tereus shows a very different response to his victim than Jupiter. The god in fact pities Io as a cow guarded by the menacing Argus and later tormented by a gadfly sent by Juno. In order to restore the girl to her proper form, he promises his wife never to touch Io again. The man, by contrast, feels no remorse after mutilating Philomela and, as we have seen, is even further aroused by the barbarity and so continues to violate her. The consequences for the two women are also very

different. After a period of self-alienation in her animal state, Io regains her human form and gives birth to a wondrous child named Epaphus. Philomela becomes more radically transformed from an innocent maiden into a vengeful fury who mimics her violator in the perversion of family bonds and ritual.

Tereus's mutilation of Philomela further represents boundary dissolutions as the poet imaginatively transfers the organ of speech from the human to the animal realm. In an image often criticized as too grotesque, Ovid compares the severed tongue to a mutilated snake:[25] *utque salire solet mutilatae cauda colubrae,/ palpitat et moriens dominae vestigia quaerit* ("And as the tail of a mutilated snake is accustomed to leap, it shudders and seeks the tracks of its mistress as it perishes," 559–60).

While the simile is bizarre and breaks the mood of violence and pathos, the snake is an appropriate image for the transformed Philomela. In literary contexts, the snake is often a negative image of the female because of its ability to envelop, enclose, and swallow.[26] Ovid implies the sinister quality of constriction, for example, in Salmacis's attack upon Hermaphroditus by comparing the nymph to a serpent caught by an eagle and entwining its coils around the bird's head and claws (4.361–63); the youth is thus radically transformed by being left in a permanent state of fusion with his aggressor. The poet also prominently associates the *colubra* with two female figures that have awesome powers of transformation. In the Ino episode, the snakes on the Fury's head represent her ability to maddden, as she changes Athamas from a loving father to the murderer of his own son and causes Ino to leap into the sea in panic with her other child (4.481–543). Ovid suggests that the Gorgon's head with its terrifying snaky locks is itself an image of metamorphosis, for Minerva changed Medusa's exceptionally beautiful hair into serpents after Neptune raped the girl in the goddess's temple (4.796–803). Perseus effectively employs this vehicle of metamorphosis, which transfixes an individual into an eternal image of himself, at a particular moment of his existence: the hero in book 5 monumentalizes the hubris of Phineus and company for their disruption of his wedding celebration.

In its context here in the Tereus episode, the snake image may seem innocuous since the simile, in part through elegiac vocabulary (*domina, vestigia*), sympathetically depicts the tail's effort to reattach itself to the body of the snake. But this image also implies the transformative powers of the snake, which can grow back its tail once it has been severed. Philomela too, in a sense, generates a new tongue by substituting her weaving skills for her lost vocal powers. With its negative background in the *Metamorphoses*, the snake image applied to Philomela has a sinister undercurrent. Her figuratively restored tongue will, in fact, be devoted to recording lawless passion and violence.

By evoking images of death, Ovid suggests that Philomela has indeed been radically transformed by the man who destroyed her familial bonds as well as her virginity. When Procne receives Tereus's false story about

her sister's death, she immediately replaces her sumptuous regal garments with mourning garb and, after having a cenotaph built, offers *piacula* to the Manes of her supposedly dead sister. Ovid describes the *sepulchrum* here as *inane* (568). Although the tomb is in vain and the ritual useless, the poet suggests that Philomela is in some sense dead by applying the verb *fleo* as an appropriate response: *et luget non sic lugendae fata sororis* ("And she laments the death of her sister not thus to be lamented," 570). He has, furthermore, already hinted at the young woman's figurative death. As Philomela prepares to castigate Tereus, she is compared in appearance to a mourner for a dead person: *passos laniata capillos,/ lugenti similis caesis tingore lacertis* ("having torn her disheveled hair in the manner of a mourner, her arms bruised from beating," 531–32). She thus resembles Lucretia in the *Fasti* (2.813–14), who is similarly compared to a woman grieving for her dead son, figuratively the *pudicitia* she so highly valued. By omitting a specific object here, the poet implies even more strongly that Philomela mourns for her own symbolic death.

More specifically, the young woman's method of communication with her sister reflects her ambivalent state. Ovid briefly but suggestively describes Philomela's artwork: *purpureasque notas filis intexuit albis,/ indicium sceleris* ("She wove dark red forms on white fabric, evidence of the crime," 577–78). Scholars generally assume that the young woman weaves red letters onto a white background as a message stating the facts of the rape and mutilation to her sister.[27] Yet, rather than a message in words, the tapestry is more likely to be a graphic narrative, only figuratively a *carmen scribile* (582). Ovid may indeed be deliberately ambiguous about this tapestry in order to convey the nature of a nonverbal narrative. Like the *gramma* that Apollodorus says the woman wove into her robe, *notae* can certainly refer to the letters of words.[28] But the term may also denote distinguishing marks or signs characterizing a person or thing.[27] In this context, it is useful to recall that Ovid himself narrates the rape scene in large part through graphic pictorial images, namely the three extended similes in which the predator animal (eagle, wolf, bird of prey) attacks its victim (rabbit, lamb, dove). The poet's own descriptions are reminiscent of Arachne's tapestry depicting erotic violence through animal images. The great weaver produced a brilliant work of art in a fluid movement from subject to subject with a lifelike realism and with attention to the psychology of the victims.[28] Since Arachne's story begins book 6, her representation of the lust of the gods (*caelestia crimina* 132) may stand as the archetype for subsequent protests against the selfish use of power by authoritarian figures in the middle books.

Appropriate to a graphic narrative, this tapestry utilizes the red and white colors prominent in the visual images of erotic experience that Ovid creates throughout the *Metamorphoses*. According to Catherine Rhorer's perceptive analysis of the Pyramus and Thisbe episode, the poet employs these colors to convey not only the loss of sexual innocence but also a more profound transformation of the characters whose flight from the city and

the necessary restraints of social life brings them to ruin.[29] To some extent, the red and white colors in Philomela's tapestry evoke the shocking reality of an innocent maiden's defilement and gory mutilation. Yet they also hint at a deeper change in the victim from pristine innocence to an immoral vengefulness. Ovid can call this artifact a *carmen* because it not only represents the events which he himself relates in the narrative, but it is also a substitute for the literal voice that Philomela no longer has. It resonates with the anger of her speech to Tereus, which she concluded by claiming that if kept shut in the woods, she would fill the very woods with her reproaches (546–47). While there she rebuked Tereus as *barbarus* from a justly moral point of view, here Ovid ironically states that the woman weaves on a *barbarica tela* (576), symbolically representing her assimilation of the tyrant's ferocity.

The poet may, furthermore, be playing on the active and passive meanings of *miserabile* as a description of this *carmen*, which not only tells an unhappy story but should also elicit pity. The phrase echoes Vergil's description of Orpheus after he has lost Eurydice a second time: the bard in the *Georgics* is compared to a nightingale, the *philomela* in nature, lamenting the loss of her young at the hands of an insensitive farmer by perpetually singing a *miserabile carmen* (4.514).[30] Vergil informs his passage with a deep pathos: unfortunately weak when he violated Hades's stipulation not to look back at Eurydice on their way out of the underworld, Orpheus sings so eloquently of his love for his wife that he even enchants the beasts and trees. Here, however, the *carmen miserabile* does not arouse the cathartic emotion of pity in its recipient. Like Tereus's reaction to Philomela's outburst against his savagery, Procne's response is at first silence, then a vehement anger. The tapestry as an artifact inscribing the rape and mutilation fails to contain violence but instead helps to promote it.

As he describes Procne's reception of this tapestry, Ovid hints at its ability to transform an individual. The collocation of words indicating her act of unrolling the web is suggestive: *evolvit vestes saevi matrona tyranni* (581). By framing the words for "wife" with the phrase "fierce tyrant," the poet implies an association with the man's savagery, so forcefully represented in Philomela's weaving. The tapestry has a paralyzing effect, for the natural response to a sister's misfortune, crying out and weeping, is suppressed (582–84); it also immediately provokes a dissolution of boundaries in the moral sphere: *sed fas nefasque/ confusura ruit* ("But she rushes forth about to blur right and wrong," 585–86). Even before Procne performs any specific act, Ovid implies her equivalence with Tereus. She becomes dehumanized, an image of revenge (*poenaeque in imagine tota est* 586). Her first deliberate action takes the form of a perversion of traditional ritual, pretending to participate in a Bacchic festival. Ovid describes her equipment—a vine garland, a deerskin cloak, and a thyrsus staff (591–93)—as *furialia arma*. At this point in the poem, after Bacchus has revealed the consequences of scorning his divinity to Pentheus and the daughters of

Minyas, Procne's abuse of the god's ritual here is highly problematical: it initiates the impiety that symbolizes a total breakdown of civilized values.

Although joining the women to disguise her intentions, Procne seems to be transported by her Bacchic weapons. In this scene, she recalls Agave, whose unmitigated fury the poet described in the story of Pentheus in book 3. Like her model in Euripides's *Bacchae*, Agave completely loses control as she participates in the Bacchic rites. As part of a *turba furens* (3.716), she is enraged at the violation of the *orgia* by an intruder and in her madness cannot distinguish her own son from a wild boar.[31] In contrast to Euripides, Ovid implies that there is no return to humanity, for this character does not regain her senses and experience some kind of therapeutic understanding of her act at the end. Procne, too, is carried away by a fury that she cannot control (*terribilis . . . furiisque agitata doloris* 595). Taking part in the *trieterica* along with the Thracian women, she traces a path into the recesses of the forest, the scene of Philomela's rape and mutilation as well as her present confinement. Like Euripides's Bacchants, she assimilates a ferocious nature and assumes aggressive male activities. As Procne approaches her sister, Ovid foreshadows her later unleashing of violence by describing her action with the verb *rapio*. He uses the form *rapit* (598) as she retrieves Philomela and the passive *raptae* when the young woman has been disguised with the Bacchic trappings. This word throughout the *Metamorphoses* connotes sexual aggression as well as more general violence. Two forms of *rapio* similarly depict Tereus when he considers abducting Philomela: *aut rapere et saevo raptam defendere bello* ("or to seize her and to defend his seizure of her with fierce war," 464). In the subsequent scene in which the two women have been reunited, the poet observes that Procne embraces her sister and then aggressively blots away the girl's tears: *fletum ororis/ corripiens* (610–11). When she ponders the appropriate punishment for her husband, the woman also employs the phrase *membra . . . rapiam* (616–17) to convey her thought of castrating the man for his injury to her sister. The uses of *rapio* thus unfold the process of Procne's assimilation of violence and barbarity all too similar to her husband's savagery.

As a second tragic analogue, Medea epitomizes the violation of familial boundaries, dissolving the most sacred bonds between mother and child. Euripides's heroine completely loses her humanity because she kills her children in a calculated effort to injure Jason by preventing him from perpetuating his family line and thus from extending his *kleos* into posterity. As Anderson notes, Procne echoes Medea when she considers burning the palace, but even then outdoes her model as she wishes to thrust Tereus directly into the flames (*artificem mediis immittam Terea flammis* 615).[32] Like Medea, too, she wavers at the prospect of killing her son as her maternal instincts temporarily overcome her anger (627–28), but then decides to proceed with her plan. Ovid vividly plays on the problem of boundary violation within the family structure. First, Procne cannot even distinguish her son in essence from his father. As she exclaims *"a! quam/ es similis*

patri!" (621–22), she perceives the boy as merely a reflection of Tereus. The woman herself articulates a similar boundary dissolution when she equates piety with crime: *scelus est pietas in coniuge Tereo* ("Piety to my husband Tereus is wickedness," 635). By identifying Itys with his father, she views piety only as a wife to her husband rather than as a mother to her offspring. Ironically, it is Procne who really mirrors Tereus as she drags her son off to his death: *veluti Gangetica cervael lactentem fetum per silvas tigris opacas* ("just as an Indian tigress drags the suckling offspring of a deer through the dim forest," 636–37). As she acts out her revenge metaphorically in the forest (*per silvas*), the woman has fully assimilated her husband's primitive barbarity. She even goes one step further in the terms of the simile, which recalls the animal hunting analogies used of Tereus in the rape scene. For the poet implies an act of improper hunting: the tigress plunders the young of a deer, which because of its tender age was considered sacred to Artemis and inappropriate as prey.[34]

In her murder of Itys, Procne violates the boundaries between man and beast, especially by making a perverse mockery of traditional ritual. After she plunges the sword all the way through his side, her sister contributes her part by slitting the boy's neck, ironically recalling sacrificial procedure. Dionysiac *sparagmos* is also implied in a particularly grotesque form, for the limbs that have been cut off are even roasted and boiled while still retaining life:

> vivaque adhuc animaeque aliquid retinentia membra
> dilaniant: pars inde cavis exultat aenis,
> pars veribus stridunt . . .
>
> They tear apart the limbs still alive and retaining something of life; then part leaped in the bronze pots, part hissed on the spits. (644–46)

Ovid alluded to cannibalism earlier in book 6 by the appearance of Pelops in mourning for Niobe with his unique marble shoulder (403–05), a memento of his own father's bizarre sacrificial meal in which he served up the boy's flesh to the gods. That violation of boundaries in dietary practices caused the gods unwittingly to partake of food in the manner of animals. Here, the poet has Procne lure Tereus into her trap by fabricating a specious native ritual in which only the husband was to be present: the suggestion of a parody of fertility rituals makes this feast even more perverse. The banquet is in a sense a counterpart to the deviant marriage ceremony at the beginning of the episode. Tereus's pathetic victim now serves the function of the Furies who replaced the usual deities at that ritual, for she appears like an Erinys with hair sprinkled with blood: *sicut sparsis furva caede capillis* ("her hair drenched with blood of the Furies," 657).

In this scene, Ovid plays up the horror of Tereus's boundary violation in consuming the flesh of his own son. Responding to her husband's request to have his son present, Procne blurs boundaries on the linguistic level with a cruel pun: *intus habes, quem poscis* ("You have within the one whom you seek," 655). Tereus is now utterly reduced from the tyrannical *superbia* with which he begins the banquet on his regal throne (*sedens sul-*

Tereus sublimis avito 650). After furiously pushing back the table from which he has taken the impious meal, he now weeps, desperately wishing to disgorge the food he has just consumed. As Tereus calls himself the *victum miserabile* (665) of his own son, the poet recalls the phrase *carmen miserabile*: his pain now equals his victim's. While expressing his sense of the most horrible of boundary violations, the man is ignorant of the full implication of his words, the inevitable end of a chain of violence that he himself set in motion. For this grotesque living tomb and monument is a counterpart of the memorial of Philomela's figurative death, the loss of so much more than her virginity. It also ironically recalls the *sepulchrum inane* that Procne built, a sad emblem of a sister's affection and grief.

While alluding to the two women's metamorphosis into the nightingale and the swallow,[35] Ovid refers specifically to the *epops* as Tereus's new form. This transformation appropriately sums up the paradox of his nature as a tyrant. By refusing to acknowledge boundaries in exercising his will, Tereus assumed powers belonging rightfully to the gods, especially Jupiter. As Burkert notes, the word *epops* is etymologically related to the characteristic of Zeus as the "overwatcher," that is, the supreme master.[36] Since his assertion of power was based on martial force, it is particularly fitting that Tereus as a bird should have the appearance of a warrior with his crested head and sword-like beak. Permanently bearing the marks of warfare, he ironically evokes his divine father Mars. As the inevitable extension of assuming limitless powers, Tereus the hoopoe figuratively consumes his own flesh; as Detienne has shown, this bird was supposed to feed on its own excrement.[37] The tyrant thus symbolically reenacts forever the ultimate boundary violation, eating the flesh of his own child. Even as he perpetually seeks revenge by pursuing the swallow and nightingale, he must likewise reveal his true nature and repeat the impious act that he was tricked into committing.

To sum up, Ovid reflects the consequences of the tyrant's failure to respect boundaries essential to human life by showing the larger breakdown of the very values on which society depends. In presenting Tereus as an archetypal tyrant who accepts no limits to his desires but instead assumes a godlike status, the poet imaginatively alludes to Tereus's lack of concern for the institution of marriage on his very wedding day and later his improper identification with family roles for his own self-gratification. In the narrative of the rape and mutilation of Philomela, he recalls Jupiter and Apollo in the *Metamorphoses* through predator imagery and suggestions of transformation implying that Tereus even exceeds the gods in his lust and brutality. Analogies with the young Tarquin further hint at a dark side to the effects of the tyrant's *libido*: true *fides*, *pietas*, and *ius* unfortunately may not assert themselves in opposition but may, in fact, be corrupted by the agents who seek to redress their wrongs.

What happens to the two women goes beyond exacting a just, if horrifying, revenge; both are transformed into inhuman creatures who blur the boundaries between human and beast. The tapestry representing Tereus's

hideous violation of his sister-in-law, ironically the victim's only means of informing her sister of the rape and mutilation, acts as a catalyst for the disintegration of the two women's civilized nature. The figurative violence that the poet implies through the verb *rapio* quickly yields to the extremely brutal murder and decapitation of Itys and the dismemberment of his body to prepare the flesh as food. Underlying this display of violence, their disintegration of *pietas* reveals the magnitude of their transformation since Ovid has elaborated with great poignancy the deep association of Pandion's family with that virtue. The poet makes the impiety of Procne's boundary dissolutions all the more forceful by comparing her to two tragic heroines who destroy their own families. Like Agave, she becomes carried away by her participation in the Bacchic rites and then cannot perceive her child for what he really is, but instead dissolves the distinction between father and son. The analogy to Medea, reflecting the extent of her fury at her husband, not only privileges revenge over sacred family bonds but also reveals a savagery that surpasses the tragic heroine's actions towards her children. Beyond her murder of Itys, Procne's act of impiety in serving his flesh to Tereus in a perversion of fertility ritual creates the most hideous boundary violations: verbally by her pun to Tereus and conceptually by making the man a living tomb for his son, she reflects the immeasurable distance from her pious act of constructing a *sepulchrum* for her sister. Philomela's own appearance as the image of a Fury with blood-stained locks makes the resemblance of the two sisters to the tyrant all the more appalling as she blurs the boundary between the perverted marriage ceremony and the grotesque fertility banquet. The family of Pandion has become indistinguishable from the barbaric Thracian who began as their antithesis.

Notes

1. Ovid also connects the tyrant's *libido* in the sexual sense with totally uncivilized behavior in referring to Boreas, a *tyrannus* (6.716) who lawlessly carries off Orithyia. On the subject of Tereus as a tyrant in the *Metamorphoses*, I wish to thank Bernard Frischer and the members of the Classics Department at UCLA for the opportunity to present an earlier version of this paper in 1987; also, Frank Romer and the two anonymous referees of this journal for their helpful comments.

2. M. Detienne, "Between Beasts and Gods," in *Myth, Religion and Society: Structural Essays by M. Detienne, L. Gernet, J.-P. Vernant, and P. Vidal-Naquet*, ed. R. L. Gordon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 220.

3. Xenophon's views about the mutual hatred and suspicion between tyrants and family members are expressed in *Hiero* 3.7–9 in the context of the importance of *philia* in human life. Vincent Farenga, "The Paradigmatic Tyrant: Greek Tyranny and the Ideology of the Proper," *Helios*, 8 (1981), 1–31, refers to Plato's example of the violation of family members by the tyrant Archelaus of Macedon, who murdered his uncle, cousin, and brother (*Republic* 471D), and has a provocative discussion of the proliferation of the tyrant's "otherness" throughout his realm as traditional modes of conduct and categories become inverted.

4. My citations of the *Metamorphoses* are from *Ovid's Metamorphoses, Books 6–10*, ed. William S. Anderson (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972). The translations are my own.

5. Edgar M. Glenn, *The Metamorphoses: Ovid's Roman Games* (Lanham, NY: University Press of America, 1986), pp. 77–80, also notes the importance of these deviations in the ceremony.

...t considers that they reflect Procne's reluctance to marry Tereus. On the *pronuba* specifically, ...y Gordon Williams, "Some Aspects of Roman Marriage Ceremonies and Ideals," *JRS*, 48 (1958), 16–29; on Juno Pronuba as patroness of marriage, Georges Dumezil, *Archaic Roman ...gion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 616–17.

6. Anderson (above, note 4), *ad loc.*, comments on the ambiguity of the gesture in this ...ontext as it reflects the handshake of the bride and groom in the Roman wedding. He considers ...is and other allusions to marriage as evidence that Ovid knew the versions that are preserved ...Apollodorus and Hyginus, in which Tereus actually married Philomela after claiming that Procne had died.

7. J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Continuity and Change in Roman Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), pp. 47–49, discusses Catullus's association of marriage with the concept of *foedus* ...the story of Ariadne's desertion by Theseus in poem 64 and in the account of Laodamia's ...stly consummation of her marriage before completing the proper sacrifices in poem 68.

8. On the connection of the Graces with fertility, see Jane Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study ...Greek Religion* (1903; rpt. New York: Meridian Books, 1958), p. 93.

9. Anderson (above, note 4), *ad loc.*, observes that Tereus "makes a great display of emotion ...of interpreting the feelings of his wife." Presumably, in her emotional state, Procne had encouraged Tereus to make her feelings vivid and forcible so that Philomela would be allowed to return to Thrace with him.

10. The archetypes for all three similes describing Tereus and Philomela in the rape scene occur in the *Iliad*. In Achilles's contest with Hector, the Greek is compared to a falcon swooping down upon a trembling dove (22.139–42); the Trojan, to an eagle darting after a delicate lamb or quivering rabbit (22.308–10); and Achilles vaunts to his opponent that the two are like wolves and lambs, perpetually hostile to each other (22.263–64). Ovid's readers would, of course, be familiar not only with Homer's version but also with Vergil's adaptations of these ...odes, especially in the dramatic encounter between Aeneas and Turnus in book 12 of the *Aeneid*.

11. My citations of the *Fasti* are from *Publii Ovidii Nasonis Fastorum Libri Sex*, ed. and trans. Sir James Frazer (London: Macmillan, 1929). The translations are my own.

12. On the parallels between Sextus and Tarquinius Superbus as drawn in Livy's account, see S. N. Philippides, "Narrative Strategies and Ideology in Livy's 'Rape of Lucretia,'" *Helios*, 10 (1983), 113–19.

13. Garrett A. Jacobsen, "Apollo and Tereus: Parallel Motifs in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*," *CJ*, 80 (1984), 45–52, summarizes the similarities between the two episodes and brings out the poet's intertest in revealing the seriousness of human life in contrast to the frivolity of the gods' existence.

14. See B. R. Fredericks, "Divine Wit vs. Divine Folly: Mercury and Apollo in *Metam.* 1–2," *CJ*, 72 (1977), 244–49, on the failure of verbal skills in Apollo's attempt to seduce Daphne.

15. Anderson (above, note 4), *ad loc.*, notes that Philomela's initial impact on Tereus recalls that of Daphne on Apollo, especially through the simile of her nymph-like charm at 452–54.

16. Jacobsen (above, note 13), p. 50, also observes the similarity of Philomela to Daphne in calling to her father but finds the significant difference in the contrast between the two males, the one a god who can rescue his daughter through metamorphosis and the other a human of ...ail in this instance.

17. On the connection between Daphne's rejection of love and her nature as a huntress, see Georgson Davis, *The Death of Procris: Amor and the Hunt in Ovid's Metamorphoses* (Rome: Ateneo, 1983), especially pp. 44–49.

18. Significantly, Philomela is one of only a few rape victims in the *Metamorphoses* who do not have birth; Tereus's monstrous actions stifle life and figuratively as well as literally, prevent procreation.

19. See Anderson (above, note 4), especially on lines 472–74 and 629–30.

20. Leo C. Curran, "Rape and Rape Victims in the *Metamorphoses*," *Arethusa*, 11 (1978), 223, referring to the attitude of the rape victim in the *Metamorphoses* towards herself, points out that Philomela perceives her own *crimen* and cannot look her sister in the face, in addition to using the negatively charged word *paelex* of herself.

21. Jean B. Plassard, *Le Concubinat romain sous le haut empire* (Paris: L. Tenin, 1921), pp. 18–19.

22. Lewis and Short, *Latin Dictionary*, cites Paul. ex Fest. p. 222 Muell. as the source for the prohibition against touching Juno's altar.

23. For example, Moritz Haupt, ed., *P. Ovidius Naso, Metamorphoseon* (1853; rpt. Dublin and Zürich: Weidmann, 1966), *ad loc.*, refers to Ovid's Alexandrian penchant for "das Schreckliche und Graessliche."

24. Philip E. Slater, *The Glory of Hera: Greek Mythology and the Greek Family* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), especially pp. 80–122, discusses the snake from a psychoanalytical point of view concerning male anxiety about the female: the image suggests a "narcissistic concern over self-maintenance and protection from ego-violation from others" as well as more generally a symbol of crucial boundary violations of life and death, and so forth.

25. See Anderson (above, note 4), *ad loc.*; F. J. Kenney, ed., *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, trans. A. D. Medville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 412, states: "Writing borders on the magical. Sophocles made Philomela weave a picture of her experience."

26. While Apollodorus clearly refers to a written message, Hyginus does not even mention a tapestry, for in his version Philomela is brought back to her sister by the wife of the king Lycus and then revealed her own story. The variants that Ovid presumably knew would have invited imaginative adaptation, including a possible ambiguity about the nature of Philomela's web.

27. The *OLD* offers the following definitions for *nota* relevant to this context: 1 d) "a natural sign (visible or not) by which one recognizes a person or thing," and 3 b) "(fig.) a mark of distinction."

28. See Eleanor W. Leach, "Ekphrasis and the Theme of Artistic Failure in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*," *Ramus*, 3 (1974), 102–42, for a thorough discussion of the qualities of Arachne's tapestry and its implications for Ovid's view of the artist.

29. Catherine C. Rhoter, "Red and White in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: The Mulberry Tree in the Tale of Pyramus and Thisbe," *Ramus*, 9 (1980), especially 82–85, on the Pyramus and Thisbe episode and its symbolic use of these two colors.

30. See, for example, M. C. J. Putnam, *Virgil's Poem of the Earth: Studies in the Georgics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 309–12, on the implications of this passage, especially the *philomela* as a symbol of sorrow and Vergil's adaptation of significant models in Homer's *Odyssey*.

31. Ovid neatly condensed Euripides's portrait of Agave in the *Bacchae*. On the latter's madness, see Charles Segal, "Euripides' *Bacchae*: The Language of the Self and the Language of the Mysteries," in *Interpreting Greek Tragedy: Myth, Poetry, Text* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), especially pp. 309–12. On her murder of Pentheus, Charles Segal, "The *Bacchae* as Metatragedy," in *Directions in Euripidean Criticism: A Collection of Essays*, ed. Peter Burian (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1985), especially pp. 163–76; Helen P. Foley, *Ritual Irony: Poetry and Sacrifice in Euripides* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 208–11.

32. Anderson (above, note 4), *ad loc.*, rightly contrasts Medea's thought of burning the palace with Procne's concrete emphasis on destroying the man by burning him up in his quarters.

33. Just as she cannot distinguish her son from his father, so she perceives the boy only as the complete antithesis of her injured sister: Itys is able to speak sweetly the name of mother while Philomela cannot utter the analogous term sister (632–33).

34. See P. Vidal-Naquet, "Hunting and Sacrifice in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*," in *Tragedy and Myth in Ancient Greece*, ed. J.-P. Vernant and P. Vidal-Naquet, trans. Janet Lloyd (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1981), p. 154.

35. Ovid does not specify which woman becomes the swallow and which the nightingale. Apollodorus, on the one hand, follows the older Greek tradition of making Procne the nightingale imitating the lugubrious sound of the boy's name, "*Itu*," and Philomela the swallow characterized by a twittering. Hyginus, on the other hand, reflects the later Latin tradition which reverses the two.

36. Walter Burkert, *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth*, trans. P. Bing (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 183.

37. Detienne (above, note 2), p. 216. D'Arcy W. Thompson, *A Glossary of Greek Birds* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895), pp. 54–57, discusses the association of this bird with filth and excrement in antiquity.

PETRONIUS: OUR CONTEMPORARY

Ernestine Schlant

Works of art do not exist in a vacuum.[1] Each generation interprets selective aspects of the artistic tradition and discovers in works of the past what seems most pertinent to its own concerns. *The Satyricon*, written in the mid-first century A.D., shares structural and linguistic devices with some of the major novels of the twentieth century, such as James Joyce's *Ulysses* or *Finnegans Wake*, Thomas Mann's *Joseph*-tetralogy or *Dr. Faustus*, Herman Broch's *The Death of Virgil*, or Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano*.[2] Common to these modern novels and *The Satyricon* is the fact that they draw on a long literary tradition; in so doing, they reveal themselves as highly self-conscious works of art. As the product of a *poeta doctus* or *eruditus*, they play with the tradition and make use of it in a multiplicity of ways, whether structurally, thematically, in the description of character, setting, or in dialogue.

My analysis falls into two parts. In the first, I will inquire into the social background of Petronius's character, Trimalchio. Presentation of this background goes beyond the "objective" portrayal of conditions: it involves the protagonist's mode of perceiving the world, and it finds expression in obsessive, though unconscious, behavior patterns. Against this social background, the existential dimension of the character appears psychologically illuminated in a manner that is acutely modern.

In the second part, I will demonstrate how Petronius uses "modern" literary techniques. While portraying the world through the confusing and confused perspective of his protagonists, he provides structure in which the apparent chaos becomes intelligible. The structure of the work ultimately criticizes the occurrences described in the work, and comments on them from a point of view that is directly opposite to that expressed through the events themselves.[3]

I. Trimalchio's World

Trimalchio is a freedman living in a town in Southern Italy. He is the host of the dinner-party that Encolpius, the narrator, and Ascyltus and Giton, his friends, attend. Trimalchio is extremely wealthy; his driving energy, gaudy behavior, and his abominable taste may seem typical of the *nouveau riche* he is. But his entire character, his generosity and crudeness, his bombastic ostentatiousness and obsessive anxieties, his achievements and his anger, his whimsicality and his excessive demonstrations of pitiful learning must be understood against the realization that he is an ex-slave[4] in Roman society in the first century of our era.

As Paul Veyne has shown in his article on Trimalchio, economic ventures