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Moralizing the Rape of Philomela in Late Medieval Commentary

Daniel M. Armenti

University of Massachusetts Amherst

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MORALIZING THE RAPE OF PHILOMELA IN LATE MEDIEVAL COMMENTARY

A Dissertation Presented

By

DANIEL M. ARMENTI

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

September 2020

Comparative Literature
MORALIZING THE RAPE OF PHILOMELA IN LATE MEDIEVAL COMMENTARY

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Daniel M. Armenti

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Languages, Literatures, and Cultures
For my parents and my sister
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ABSTRACT

MORALIZING THE RAPE OF PHILOMELA IN LATE MEDIEVAL COMMENTARY

SEPTEMBER 2020

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Directed by: Professor Jessica Barr and Professor Michael Papio

This dissertation examines the reception of the Philomela narrative from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* 6.424-674 by medieval commentators and authors, and how European academics during the 12th-14th centuries interpreted its central theme of rape. Through their engagement with the story of Philomela’s rape and her ingenuity in expressing her experience, medieval commentators and writers constructed a space in which they could propose diverse approaches to sexual violence, justice, and victimhood and survival. The commentaries, translations, and adaptions of Philomela’s narrative produced by medieval writers found their precedent in the episode from Ovid’s text, in which he dismantled the erotic structures of sexual violence and at the same time used the narrative to critique the rise of Augustus’ authoritarian regime on the Roman political stage. Medieval moralizations and retellings of Philomela’s story echo Ovid’s use of legal terminology, and they highlight the communal, institutional difficulties faced by survivors of rape in the cultures of late medieval Europe. Raped women during this period had little recourse to justice through their own testimony, and rape cases were usually brought forward on their behalf by male relatives. Victims of rape would be subjected to shame
imposed on them by their communities and by themselves, reinforced by popular narratives that often made the lines between love and rape ambiguous and that questioned the reliability of the rape victim’s experience. Philomela’s persistence in communicating her experience and her rage, joined with that of her sister Procne, provide a counter-narrative to the typical silencing that occurs in classical and medieval stories of rape, albeit one that ends in violence and destruction. The medieval reception and reiteration of Philomela’s story utilized the narrative of survival and revenge as a space in which to express and discuss new perceptions of the complex relationships between marriage, consent, victimization, and political agency. The result of these new understandings was an increasingly nuanced approach to the representation of women who survived sexual assault and the necessity of addressing the resulting trauma.

**Keywords:** Philomela, Procne, Tereus, Ovid, medieval commentary, classical reception, rape
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INTRODUCTION

Ovid’s version of the myth of Philomela is the longest narrative in the *Metamorphoses* to address the topic of sexual violence as it depicts the survival of the rape victim. With this narrative, Ovid critiqued modes of eroticization in early imperial Rome and the ways in which violence and silencing were aspects of an institutional power that attempted to define and control sexual action. The themes of rape, survival, and reciprocity, which are central to the myth, became important points on which the medieval reception of the Philomela story focused on the process of a hermeneutics of sexual violence: the conceptualization of rape is formed not just by terminology particular to a language that frames them but by its relationship with the cultural institutions of that people using that language. Medieval reception and reiteration of Philomela’s story utilized the narrative of survival and revenge as a space in which to express and discuss new perceptions of the complex relationships between marriage, consent, victimization, and political agency. The result of these new understandings was an increasingly nuanced approach to the representation of women who survived sexual assault and the necessity of addressing the resulting trauma.

This dissertation is split into two major sections, the first and third chapters, with the second chapter acting as a bridge between the two. In the first chapter, I present the Roman contexts in which Ovid wrote, and I analyze his longer rape narratives from the *Metamorphoses*, concluding with the story of Philomela. I demonstrate how Ovid consciously subverts the emperor Augustus’ moral and sexual agenda for the Roman people: the poet does so by emulating his literary predecessors who had fallen in line with that agenda as well as by
undermining Augustus’ use of divine and historical authority. I close the chapter by showing how Ovid uses the Philomela myth to question the eroticization of rape and to highlight the possibilities of speech in the face of violence. I argue that Ovid relates the figure of Philomela to the writing subject under an oppressive regime.

My second chapter aids the reader in bridging the millennium long period between the first and third chapters. I use this chapter to discuss my methodology in reading representations and moralizations of rape across time, and I highlight some of the difficulties of doing so. In this chapter I also introduce the forms and functions of medieval commentary and mythography (writing about myth), and I explain the subjective space this opened for medieval scholars who studied pre-Christian texts while in the context of a developing and then an established Christianity. In the second half of this chapter, I present the texts of the commentaries and mythographies that address the Philomela myth and how medieval academics prior to the 12th century retold and moralized the myth. It was during this period that several interpretational traditions of the myth were established, including interpretations of Philomela’s rape to be incest. Most of the commentaries from this period elide the sexual violence done to Philomela and her response in favor of addressing the murder of her nephew Itys and the metamorphoses of all the characters into birds at the end of the narrative.

In the third chapter, I demonstrate how commentaries and vernacular translations of the Philomela myth composed between the 12th and 14th centuries addressed the narrative of Philomela in order to construct moral conclusions about sexual violence, survival, and justice. I divide this chapter into three sections and present the commentary and translation traditions in roughly geographic terms for France, Italy, and England. This division also generally follows the chronological production of commentaries and vernacular translations of the Philomela myth and
more generally Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Many of the commentaries repeated the interpretational processes of the earlier commentaries; however, the late medieval commentators increasingly begin to focus on the character of Philomela and her response to her rape, and I argue that by the 14th century, commentators and writers were using her story as a space to explore the negative ramifications of rape and trauma. The vernacular translations and adaptations of the Philomela myth in turn paid much more attention to Philomela’s response to the violence done to her, to both her verbal response and her creation of the cloth that explained her assault. In shifting their focus to Philomela and the act of rape itself, these commentaries and translations pushed back against the conflation of eroticism and sexual violence that was popular across Western medieval cultural institutions, including in academia, law, and literary production.

Throughout his corpus of work, and especially in the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid repeatedly employed rape as a narrative device to discuss individual and structural power: the *Metamorphoses* alone presents approximately sixty instances of rape, and at least eighteen detailed rape narratives. ¹ Ovid’s numerous presentations of rape episodes allow him to establish thematic elements that cohesively bind these episodes together—in the majority of these representations of rape he employs erotic language, including in the story of Philomela, and in the majority of these episodes the victim of rape is silenced, either by the condition of her metamorphosis, as in the cases of Daphne and Io, or by the narrative itself, as it moves along to a new focus, as is the case for Proserpina, who never once speaks. It is in the variation that he gives to these narratives that Ovid is able critique the very elements he had previously

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¹ Amy Richlin puts the count at over fifty, and by my own count I have arrived at fifty-nine (“Reading Ovid’s Rapes,” *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome*, edited by Amy Richlin, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 158). I follow Paul Murgatroyd’s count and definition of *rape narrative*, as defined from instances of rape: “a passage of at least ten lines with at least three ‘functions’ and two ‘stages’” (“Plotting in Ovidian Rape Narratives,” *Eranos*, vol. 98, nos. 1-2, 2000, p. 75 and note 2).
established as standard to the theme, such as the application of erotic language to a depiction of rape and the silencing of the survivor. In the story of Philomela, for example, he undercuts the erotic imagery of the scene with an unflinching description of rape’s violence and portrays Philomela’s persistence in communication during and after her rape and mutilation.

The medieval reception of the myth of Philomela reveals the complexities with which sexual violence and rape were conceptualized in the Middle Ages, especially the concepts of consent and the social status of survivors. Some commentators transform her story of survival into one entirely of victimization and reciprocity, silenced by the violence done to her, and her story is subordinated to the violence done to her nephew Itys in revenge. Other commentators emphasize not only the horror of Philomela’s experience but her ingenuity and persistence in communicating it as an aspect of her survival. In both of these narrative streams, the commentators use Philomela’s situation as a platform to conceptualize the act of rape and the situation of rape survivors within the moral systems of the late Middle Ages.

The 12th century through the 14th century was a period of dynamic reform in the Middle Ages, which saw fundamental shifts in practice across many areas of cultural institutions, including law, academic practice, and language. Much of this shift was accompanied by an expanded attention to classical sources, especially the works of Ovid. The commentaries on the *Metamorphoses* became important sites in which scholars could propose moral interpretations of the classical work’s many episodes of sexual violence, which in turn could be systematized with

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2 Suzanne Edwards provides important distinctions between rape narratives and survival narratives: “Prescriptive discourses about rape have disciplinary aims, stabilizing what constitutes sexual violence in order to punish perpetrators, redress victims’ injuries, and redeem the unjustly accused. Discourses of survival, in contrast, concern themselves with the different ways that people come to terms with traumatic experience—including, but not limited to, the desire for justice” (The Afterlives of Rape in Medieval English Literature, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, p. 11). The pivot in some medieval interpretations of Philomela’s narrative away from her persistence to communicate her experience, but to understand the violence done to her as consequential to the murder of Itys, excludes the discourse of survival.
other areas of medieval knowledge, such as science and law. The conclusions of these moral commentaries were responded to, and at times contradicted, by early adaptations of Ovidian myth in vernacular languages. These adaptations themselves engaged in the activity of commentary through their process of translation, which helped to construct new hermeneutical communities in the shift from Latin to English, French, Italian, and other spoken languages. As these works addressed sexual violence and trauma, their authors not only proposed new terminology for these phenomena but critiqued their function within the moral systems of that period.

Central to this dissertation is the relationship between the reception of knowledge from the past and the creation of new hermeneutical systems from that reception, as it took place in the Middle Ages. There was no single unified method to this process, however, medieval scholars had many established practices they could follow, which I describe as they become relevant throughout this study. Scholarly practice in the several-century-long period of the late Middle Ages went through many transformations in its many centers of learning, and also drew heavily on practices established by earlier medieval scholars, who had also composed influential works of commentary, mythography, and biography of their classical antecedents. Therefore, because generalization of practice and knowledge in the Middle Ages would be reductive, it is important to acknowledge that the conclusions I arrive at in this study are not conclusive as such, but dialectic to the extent that these scholars were in constant conversation with each other and dialogic to the extent that the results frequently did not reach a synthesis. However, the various processes of knowledge during this period reveal a general movement towards an expanded

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3 We certainly do not want to run the risk of conceptualizing medieval culture as “monolithic,” which it was anything but. See Paolo Bagni, “Res ficta non facta: Il campo concettuale del commento,” Studi di estetica, vol. 1, 1973, pp. 113-63, esp. 114-15.
understanding of and response to sexual violence in the collective medieval mindset, and the necessity to address it with updated language.

Also central to this dissertation is the crime of rape. There are few other crimes that have such a complex history, in no small part because, although the crime is physical in nature and its results are in part physical (frequently there is injury, from the act of penetration itself and as a result of the attack; resultant pregnancy is an urgent concern in conceptualizations of rape), what determines the crime is intangible: at the basic level, the crime is a sex act committed against the will of an individual, which in this context is called *consent*. However, consent is itself a complicated concept, its definition variable to the time and community being discussed, as well as the individual from whom consent would be sought. The commentaries on and reiterations of the Philomela myth reveal this complexity, as the fundamental nature of Tereus’ crime is presented with several possible legal interpretations and as Philomela’s societal status after her rape is determined to be shameful, piteous, or non-existent.

Where the first central focus of this dissertation, reception, pertains especially to the second and third chapters, analysis of the representation of rape pertains to all parts of this study. The following section of this introduction presents terminology important to a discussion of rape and sexual violence, as well as the complications that arise in looking at the crime of rape across time (through the Roman, medieval, and modern periods).

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I.1 Terminology

A clarification of the terms used to describe rape is crucial in order to untangle the frequent ambiguity in its representation. This ambiguity is present even in a narrative which is clearly, on its face, an act of rape: describing Philomela’s rape, Ovid writes, “vi superat” ( “[Tereus] overcomes her by force,” Met. 6.525). Tereus’ violence emphasizes Philomela’s lack of consent, and his use of “force” (vis) is here a Roman legal term which was fundamental to a determination of a sex act as rape.\(^5\) However, this two-word phrase comes after long passages in which Ovid depicts Tereus wooing the girl and her father (although neither knows his true purpose). Moreover, the author uses language that prepares the audience for the erotic excitement of the scene, despite its violence, echoing language he uses in his love poetry (the Amores and the Ars amatoria), as well as from earlier episodes in the Metamorphoses, most notably the attempted rape of Daphne by Apollo, an episode he introduces to his audience with the label “Primus amor Phoebi Daphne Peneia” (“Phoebus’ first love was Daphne, daughter of Peneus,” Met. 1.452). Ovid’s language, which proposes a coincidence of love and violence, is taken up by medieval authors of Romance, whose male protagonists are so frequently conquered by love, which in turn causes them to rape the female characters they desire. It is in service to this confusion of love and violence that the legal bluntness of a statement along the lines of vi superat is frequently expressed in periphrase in medieval vernacular texts, in which a more euphemistic approach to the material heightens the excitement of the scene.\(^6\) It is as if the male characters themselves are confused about the boundaries of love and rape in such narratives, and

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\(^5\) Not just Roman law, but many medieval legal systems upheld the demonstrable use of force as constituent to a rape claim. See, for example, Edwards, Afterlives 81-82.

\(^6\) Statements such as “he had his way with her,” “faire sa volonté” (to do his will), and “faire son buen” (to do as he sees fit), are some examples of this. See Monica Brzezinski Potkay, “The Violence of Courtly Exegesis in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,” in Representing Rape in Medieval and Early Modern Literature, edited by Elizabeth Robertson and Christine M. Rose, Palgrave Macmillan, 2001, pp. 106-07.
the erotic language of the text implicates the audience also through the modes in which the
victim of rape is eroticized despite the violence done to her.  

Identifying the individual who grants legal consent also presents an occasion for
confusion. Our modern conceptualization of consent is that it is located in the individuals
engaged in sex. Classical and medieval representations take individual will into account, as the
use of force implies, or even direct statements such as contra voluntatem (against her will), but
most legal understandings of rape located a girl’s or woman’s consent—or a boy’s consent,
before he has reached majority—in the person of her father or the male head of the family
(paterfamilias) or her husband, and also in some cases her male guardian. In the context of the
Philomela myth, Ovid amplifies the ambiguity of who controls Philomela’s consent by appealing
to these legal determinations, and leading up to her rape he adds ambiguity about her own will by
figuring her in Tereus’ own erotic imagination as the object of seduction. As I discuss in Chapter 3,
this ambiguity leads some medieval commentators and translators to frame the sexual violence
as incest rather than rape. In turning to incest as a moral focus, the moral question of individual
consent is not eliminated: it is clear that Philomela is forced to have sex against her will, but the

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7 On this topic, Edwards writes: “As feminist critics over the last 25 years have shown, medieval texts and images
(and, all too often, criticism about them) sometimes code rape as seduction and thereby eroticize violence against
women. Yet the legal context suggests that calling seduction rape is another popular strategy for devaluing feminine
agency” (Afterlives 83, in this case the context she refers to is 14th-century English legal discourse about rape, as it
applies to the Wife of Bath’s Tale). See Mark Amsler, “Rape and Silence: Ovid’s Mythography and Medieval
Readers,” Representing Rape in Medieval and Early Modern Literature, edited by Elizabeth Robertson and
Christine M. Rose, Palgrave Macmillan, 2001, pp. 86, for a discussion of Ovid’s reuse of erotic language between
episodes of rape in the Metamorphoses. If Ovid and medieval authors confuse erotic action and violence in their
narratives, many of them seem to be aware of that confusion, as they critique it more or less explicitly. Among other
passages in the Metamorphoses, see Cyane’s rebuke of Pluto (5.414-18) which I discuss in Chapter 1.3; the 12th-
century Pamphilus de amore, which tropes rape as comedy, but also censures the eponymous rapist for his
intellectual simplicity, which leads to his confusion of love and rape; and many of the works of Chrétien de Troyes,
perhaps most of all his Percival, in which the protagonist must learn correct action. These passages do not excuse
the creation of the popular conceptions of rape which blend passion, seduction, and violence into an inextricable
mode, which are present in the very same texts, but their presence requires us to read those texts dialogically in
order to properly understand their complexities.
legal determination of the sex act pivots away from the question of consent in order to manage the fact that her assailant is also her brother-in-law and guardian.

Over the past fifty years or so, the cultural attention paid to rape and its definition by Western writers and scholars has changed greatly. In large part, this is due to the publication of Susan Brownmiller’s book *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (Simon & Schuster, 1975). In her foreword, she makes it clear that she belongs to a conversation that feminists began long before she began her work, but it is her book that especially launched the conversation into the public sphere. She offers the comment that rape is “a conscious process of intimidation by which *all men* keep *all women* in a state of fear” (Brownmiller 15, her emphasis). This assertion leads to the conclusion that rape is not essentially a crime of lust, but one of power and reassesses the crime of rape as not an act between individuals—“a sex crime, a product of a diseased, deranged mind”—but as a cultural, institutional problem that is inherent to the way we consider gender, power (or lack thereof), and erotics (Brownmiller 8).

Brownmiller’s comment decenters some of the commonly understood terms that are associated with rape, such as “consent,” “force,” and “victim.” When the crime is moved to a cultural process, it becomes difficult to know when an individual offense has occurred, because that offense is now understood as a state of being. If we accept Brownmiller’s definition as a cultural constant, the concepts of consent, force, and victimization are no longer applied to

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8 See also the discussion of this in the Introduction to Carine M. Mardorossian, *Framing the Rape Victim: Gender and Agency Reconsidered* (Rutgers University Press, 2014), in which she describes the attempts to have rape consciously prosecuted not as a sex crime, but as generic violent assault (6-7). In this dissertation, I hope to complicate this approach to the erotics of rape: it is hard to deny the truth of Brownmiller’s statement in the light of historical, erotic representations such as *Ars amatoria* 1.673-76 (quoted below). However, I would propose that there is some erotic aspect to the power and violence which must also be read into just such a representation, not as it speaks to a lust for the victim of the rapist, but as it responds to a kind of lust that the rapist has for himself. This opens up a series of topics that would draw me too far from my subject, but briefly: Is all violence then potentially erotic? Is the annihilation of the victim in the case of rape unique to rape, or does it exist in other violent acts? Is that annihilation a violent act itself, or just a condition that allows violence to be acted upon?
individuals but instead to ideological constructs of our society, such as gender and communication: all women are understood to be victims of rape; all gender relations are understood to be undercut by the use, or threat, of force; communication is understood as a vehicle for (masculine) violence, therefore consent cannot be given. Our understanding of these terms also changes intrinsically to match the definition: all victims are gendered female; force is manifest not only physically and emotionally, but verbally and institutionally.

These totalizing approaches to rape are useful in illustrating what has come to be defined as “rape culture,” that is, a recognition that it is not simply “sick” individuals that sexually assault others, but that there is a cultural norm, even encouragement of behavior that perpetuates acts of sexual assault and their acceptance, in which all members of the culture are complicit. However, there are troubling and troublesome implications of taking such an approach. To list a few of these complications: women are not universal victims any more than men are universal aggressors, patriarchy is not perpetuated by men alone but by the society as a whole, which is why it is understood to be structural. As a result, “structural masculinity” is harmed as much by patriarchy as “structural femininity.” Gender is not determined by what is done to somebody, and victimization should not “feminize” an individual as this harms both the individual and “structural femininity.” While we recognize that verbal communication can be a form of force and a vehicle of violence, and is so under the structures described above, it should be differentiated from physical force—not hierarchically, but as separate expressions that require different definitions and responses.

9 “Not only is the Sandusky sex scandal an instance of rape (which the FBI’s new definition of sexual assault finally acknowledges), but it also reveals the extent to which the function of rape as the visibly gendered and sexualized crime in our social imaginary has become to conceal the inherently sexualized nature of all violence in culture. The proliferating and conflicting formulations surrounding various instances of rape in culture reveal that it is structural femininity, not the female subject, that is rape’s victim” (Mardorossian 4, her emphasis).
Since Brownmiller wrote *Against Our Will*, there have been many re-examinations of the subject of rape, which center around more developed understandings of the terms discussed above—consent, force, and victim. Over the following pages I will give brief descriptions of each term and introduce the modern conversations that have been and are taking place around them, as well as provide context from classical and medieval literature to demonstrate similarity and contrast in the development of these terms.

### I.1.1 Consent

Many of the modern discussions concerning rape focus on how uncomplicated the concept of consent is, which is puzzling given how incredibly complicated the practice of consent actually is.\(^{11}\) In part, the difficulty that individuals might have in understanding consent can be attributed to longstanding Western concepts of consent: until the past several decades, consent was seated in the male head of the household, at least in the legal sense.\(^{12}\) The struggle against patriarchal determination of who gets to sleep with whom has not only had to contend with outdated institutions of forced and arranged marriages and with closely guarded virginity to ensure proper paternity, but also with practices that many in Western cultures still find charming: the groom-to-be asking the father-of-the-bride’s permission to marry; the father-of-the-bride

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11 Emmeline May’s blogpost (2 March 2015) on the subject, “Consent: Not Actually That Complicated” (rockstardinosaurpirateprincess.wordpress.com/2015/03/02/consent-not-actually-that-complicated/), approaches the subject through the metaphor of offering someone tea; this blogpost achieved widespread recognition through a video adaptation (12 May 2015) created by Blue Seat Studios (youtube.com/watch?v=oQbei5JGiT8). Fischel addresses some of the shortfalls of the ideas offered in this video, not to mention some of the misconceptions it perpetuates, not the least of which is the assumption that consent exists as a binary function with binary results, that with verbal consent sex is pleasurable and that without verbal consent sex is unpleasurable (11-13).

12 American law in all fifty states has allowed since only 1993 that a husband doesn’t control his wife’s consent (i.e. that forced sexual intercourse within marriage is legally considered rape); many states still favor lesser punishments for marital rape over non-marital rape. For an overview of the process by which this change in state laws came about, see Jennifer A. Bennice and Patricia A. Resick, “Marital Rape: History, Research, and Practice,” *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2003, pp. 228-46.
giving her away at the altar. As our cultural sexual practices and attitudes have dragged themselves forward to match modern sensibilities concerning individual sovereignty, our legal institutions have been equally slow to catch up.

Of course, the historical practice of consent should not be reduced to the most ritualized of legal practices. As I explain in my sections on Roman and medieval attitudes towards rape, despite the patriarchal control of sexual access to a female individual, there was a strong sense that the woman had a will of her own, and that it could be violated. We know this because most laws determining rape required there to be physical evidence that the woman resisted sexual intercourse. Lovers have had to negotiate the imprecise, extra-legal area that existed outside of sanctioned liaisons, and from a modern standpoint, the cultural models offered in such situations were not necessarily ideal. Ovid’s *Ars amatoria* encouraged extra-marital relationships, but also allowed for some highly objectionable conclusions:

> Vim licet appelles: grata est vis ista puellis:  
> Quod iuvat, invitae saepe dedisse volunt.  
> Quaecumque est veneris subita violate rapina,  
> Gaudet, et inprobitas muneris instar habet.  
> At quae cum posset cogi, non tacta recessit,  
> Ut simulet vultu gaudia, tristis erit.  
> Vim passa est Phoebe: vis est allata sorori;  
> Et gratus raptae raptor uterque fuit. (*Ars am.* 1.673-80)\(^{13}\)

The final line of this selection encourages the assailant while at the same time implicating the victim in her own assault; it inverts the complicity of the daughter/wife figure in the protection of her chastity under the patriarchal structure (under which we understand her to protect that chastity not for herself, but for the family unit).

\(^{13}\) “It’s all right to use force—force of *that* sort goes down well with the girls: what in fact they love to yield they’d often rather have stolen. Rough seduction delights them, the audacity of near-rape is a compliment—so the girl who *could* have been forced yet somehow got away unscathed, may feign delight, but in fact feels sadly let down. Hilaria and Phoebe, both ravished, both fell for their ravishers” (translated by Peter Green, *The Erotic Poems*, Penguin, 1982).
From medieval literature, the conclusion of the *Roman de la Rose* may be interpreted as the dreamer abandoning his courtly maneuvering, and taking the Rose by force; alternately, his fondling of the Rose can be read as the romantic conclusion of a lengthy campaign to woo her, when she finally grants him her consent. The 12th-century *Pamphilus de amore* concludes with the impatient Pamphilus raping the woman he spent most of the narrative wooing, Galatea, and then telling her that the fault lay with her and her seeming encouragement. These narratives were produced contemporaneously with narratives with more positive sexual negotiations, such as some of the *Lais* of Marie de France, and many of the romantic relationships in the romances of Chrétien de Troyes. Our conclusion should be that despite the absolutist approaches that legal institutions require, a complex conceptualization of sexual relationships is demonstrated in our historical literature.

The ability to give consent can be limited by the physical condition of the individual. Legally, minors (generally those younger than 18 years old in the United States, although the age of consent varies from state to state) are unable to give consent, or more correctly those who have reached majority are not allowed to accept consent from minors. Morally (as opposed to legally), this issue has somewhat more flexibility, as punishment of sex between minors, or between those just over the legal determination of majority and those just under it can seem unjustifiably harsh, depending on the circumstances. In any case, statutory laws have been created out of the concern that until maturity, the intellectual and emotional capability of a minor is deficient to the degree that their consent would be affected. Likewise, mentally and

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14 This second interpretation offers difficulties of its own, as Kathryn Gravdal has argued. It perpetuates the unhealthy attitude that if the lover puts in relentless effort, their desire will be reciprocated. If it is not reciprocated, the object of their desire shows themselves incapable of love at best and invites violence at worst. See *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law*, University of Pennsylvania, 1991, especially Chapter 4: The Game of Rape: Sexual Violence and Social Class in the Pastourelle, pp. 104-21.

15 *Pamphilus de amore* lines 704-20; for the text, see Keith Bate (editor), *Three Latin Comedies*, Toronto Medieval Latin Texts, 1976, pp. 63-89.
emotionally disabled individuals frequently do not have the legal capacity to grant consent, nor do others have the legal capacity to accept it. Those in altered states fall temporarily into this category as well, including individuals who are unconscious, drugged, or at certain levels of intoxication.

Historically, women regularly have been placed into the categories mentioned in the previous paragraph due to prevailing perceptions that they were intellectually and emotionally fragile (like a minor), and frequently (if not permanently) “hysterical” or insane in some way. This is reinforced by the trope that love is a kind of insanity itself, which reaches at least as far back as the Roman era; this idea was often accepted as an excuse for the rapacious male lover, but such “loss of reason” was thought of almost always as a characteristic, constant affliction in women. This “unreliability” of the female subject exists primarily as a threat to male interests, and from it springs the well-known trope of the woman who falsely cries rape. From this trope has arisen male authority’s general dismissal of accounts given by female victims who have been raped. It indicates a system of male-determination of rape itself, in which the state of mind of Helen, to take a well-known example, is irrelevant to the determination of her adultery with or

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17 For example, when Virgil described Orpheus and Eurydice’s journey out of the underworld: “cum subita incautem dementia cepit amantem” (“when a sudden madness [or forgetfulness] seized the unwary lover,” *Georgics* 4.488). The Latin term “dementia” is constructed from “de + mens,” literally “out of [one’s] mind,” from which modern Italian arrives at “dimenticare” (“to forget,” *Dizionari Garzanti Linguistica*, garzantilinguistica.it/ricerca/?q=dimenticare).
18 See especially Chapter 3.1 and this discussion as it applies to the roles of Tereus, Philomela, and Proone in the Old French *Philomena* and its allegorization in the *Ovide Moralisé*.
19 From the ancient Greek example of Phaedra to a plethora of medieval examples, such as King Arthur’s wife, Guinevere, in the *Lai of Lanval* and the *Roman de Silence*. The unbelievability of women is used against Lucretia by Sextus Tarquin in a reversal of this trope, in which as part of his threat against her is that he will kill her and a servant and claim that he found the two of them together unless she has sex with him. See Donna Zuckerberg, “He Said, She Said: The Mythical History of the False Rape Allegation,” *Jezebel*, 30 July 2015 (jezebel.com/he-said-she-said-the-mythical-history-of-the-false-m-1720945752); and Frances Ferguson, “Rape and the Rise of the Novel,” *Representations; Special Issue: Misogyny, Misandry, and Misanthropy*, no. 20, 1987, pp. 88-112.
her unwilling kidnaping by Paris: the crime is not determined by the woman, but by men who make a claim to be more able to discern right and wrong.\textsuperscript{20}

Our cultural acceptance of sexual practice and definition seems to be especially affected by the passage of time.\textsuperscript{21} Consider the relatively rapid, widespread acceptance of homosexual relationships in the United State over the past few decades (although I am sure it has seemed neither rapid nor widespread enough for our homosexual citizens) and the ratification of same-sex marriage by the United States Supreme Court in 2015. The periodic gaps in our legal institutions that legislate criminal sexual activity become incongruent with our modern perceptions of those crimes as they are labeled. Likewise, our conceptualization of how consent is sought, expressed, and received, has gone through significant changes over the past century.

We may consider, for example, the testimony of Sally Quinn, interviewed by Lisa Miller:

When I entered Smith College in 1959, no one ever talked about sex. Even among my closest friends—we didn’t know whether anyone had had sex (we presumed not). For me, having sex was entirely out of the question. “Making out” was permissible but also unmentionable. A girl might be attracted to a boy, and even aroused during making out, but she could never appear to want sexual contact; it had to just “happen”—and even then, it was necessary to protest at each new stage. “No” definitely did not mean “no.” I did some petting that I would characterize as “heavy,” but I never went so far that anyone would get the impression that it was okay to go all the way.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{20} It is from this persistent disbelief and denial of women’s lived experience that the #MeToo movement was founded by Tarana Burke (2006) and has reached global influence. See Carissa Harris, “‘For Rage’: Rape Survival, Women’s Anger, and Sisterhood in Chaucer’s Legend of Philomela,” The Chaucer Review, vol. 54, no. 3, 2019, pp. 256-57 and note 12; Abby Ohlheiser, “The woman behind ‘Me Too’ knew the power of the phrase when she created it—10 years ago,” The Washington Post. 19 Oct. 2017 (washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2017/10/19/the-woman-behind-me-too-knew-the-power-of-the-phrase-when-she-created-it-10-years-ago). For the international impact of the movement, see, for example, Meg Jing Zeng, “From #MeToo to #RiceBunny: how social media users are campaigning in China,” The Conversation, 5 Feb. 2018 (theconversation.com/from-metoo-to-ricebunny-how-social-media-users-are-campaigning-in-china-90860).

\textsuperscript{21} This is separate from a discussion of rape: rape is not a sexual practice, but an assault which uses sex as a weapon. What constitutes that assault in our moral and legal definitions is not uniformly defined but defined by a plurality of opinions and legal statutes. This is crucial to recognize because in that variance is the moral difference between mistake and aggression, and the legal difference between innocence and guilt. This does not only apply to the potential assailant, but to the potential victim as well—he or she exists also within the judgment of our moral communities and will understand him- or herself as a victim not only by his or her own judgment but by the judgment of these communities.

\textsuperscript{22} Lisa Miller, “Sally Quinn on When ‘No’ Didn’t Mean ‘No’,” The Cut, 20 Oct. 2015 (thecut.com/2015/10/sally-quinn-when-no-didnt-mean-no.html).
Quinn claims her attitude as common amongst the Smith College community, with some notable exceptions. She speaks about returning to Smith College ten years later for a reunion, when this attitude had changed greatly: men were allowed to visit campus, to visit in the dorms with the women, and attitudes towards sex were greatly relaxed, which is hardly surprising given the sexual culture of the late 60s and 70s. Moving to today, Smith College has a reputation for being a sexually progressive campus, where conversations about sexual preference and activity are encouraged among the community.

It is in communities like Smith College that an emphasis is placed on constant communication between partners about sexual relationships, and it is from such communities that changes to our concepts of consent develop. The difficulty in the interaction between such progressive communities that develop sets of “best practices” and other communities, which by dint of not being progressive on sexual conversations may be classified as “traditional,” is that there is a moral judgment that accompanies the proposed shift in behavior. We should be uncomfortable with Sally Quinn’s description of courtship because it no longer addresses, for many of us, a healthy approach to acquiring consent. However, we should not be surprised when in twenty-five years, the processes that we follow are criticized in the same way by the next generation.

1.1.2 Force

While consent is the expression of will on the part of a participant in a sexual act, one that would acknowledge a reciprocal consent from the other party or parties, force is the violent act that disregards that consent. As established above, the violence of the act of rape is inherent to it and does not require further physical harm to the subject than the act itself. The act of rape
or sexual assault is less frequently presented this way precisely because it is easier to understand as different from a consensual sex act when accompanied by overt physical violence. The marks of physical force would seem to indicate a violation of that consent, but such traces of violence are often not present: for example, if the victim was threatened or coerced, or if the victim was drugged or asleep at the time of the assault. Inversely, the traces of violence do not necessarily indicate the use of force, as a controlled or incidental violence may be encompassed by consent. This is why the two terms, consent and force, exclude the other: if consent was obtained, force cannot be said to have been used, and vice versa.

Legal cases of rape from the Roman and medieval periods allowed for nuanced understandings of the use of force, in which an absence of physical evidence was not necessary in its determination. Even when the female subject did not have the political agency to give her own consent, her individual will would be taken into account in the prosecution of the crime (often in the distinction of whether the sexual act was rape or adultery). Her body often would have acted as the physical evidence that force had been applied, with an understanding (in some but not all communities) that there could be circumstances when such marks would not be present. Absent this physical evidence, the door was open to doubt the account of the woman, doubt that could be allayed by expected behavior on her part: her public distress at the assault, and ideally an act of self-harm to express that distress. Lucretia’s suicide in Livy’s account is an explicit model for other women of an ultimate example of resistance, and despite her male relatives’ assurances that they did not consider her to be culpable in the slightest, such assurances are diminished in the context of the male, authorial voice that so exalts her example. The result

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is that there is an expectation that violence be used on the female body, regardless of whether the force used on the female subject was physical or verbal (threats or coercion).

From such framings of the use of force in narratives about control over sexual access, it is not surprising that the representation of rape in the West has overwhelmingly been depicted as a kind of struggle, in which there are a “victor” and a “victim.” This dynamic is present in the exclamations of several of the rapists in the Metamorphoses, who shout out their triumph in the moment of violence, as if they have won a battle.\(^{24}\) Such moments are problematic, not only because in the construction of such a militaristic metaphor the victor is framed as “deserving” of the “spoils,” but also because they apply also to narratives about obtaining consent from recalcitrant lovers as well. The lover-as-soldier is a common Ovidian construction, and in medieval literature the lover embarks on a “campaign” to woo the object of his desire. As Kathryn Gravdal points out, the same language of military campaigning is applied to the deeds of knights and heroes as a central characteristic of courtly love: the lover is often figured as a knight (adopting Ovid’s concept of the miles amoris) who must wage a campaign against the fortress of the Lady. The most famous example of this image is the narrative of the Roman de la Rose, which takes as its central allegory the campaign to reach the “Rose” at the center of her castle. This allegory may be read ambiguously as either wooing or rape, and therein lies the problem: the predominant historical metaphors for talking about love are terms of violence (second only, perhaps, to metaphors of madness).

The ambiguity between the act of courtship and the use of force is emphasized by the implicit promise of the use of force when words fail. This is certainly evident in literary tropes,

\(^{24}\) Salmacis, “Vicimus et meus est!” (“I have won and he is mine!” Met. 4.356); Tereus, “‘Vicimus,’ exclamat, ‘mecum mea vota feruntur!’” (“‘I’ve won!’ he cried, ‘my desires are borne away with me!’” Met. 6.513), my translations.
highlighted in the first three sexual assaults of the *Metamorphoses*, in which Apollo, Jupiter, and Pan all attempt to court female figures with words, and when the women attempt to leave they resort to physical force. The repetitive similarities in these episodes would seem to trivialize verbal approaches to love, but this must only be the case so long as one does not recognize the subjectivity of another and favors one’s own desire over the other’s sovereignty (that is, what happens to their bodies and their selves). The other conclusion must then hold force as the sole basis for human relationships and sovereignty to be determined not in the person of the individual, but in the subject of fear. As I argued in the section on consent, this sense of total threat that underlies all male-female relationships—Brownmiller’s “conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear”; Andrea Dworkin’s “Under patriarchy, every woman’s son is her potential betrayer and also the inevitable rapist or exploiter of another woman”—relies on the potential for force in every “failed” non-violent attempt to acquire consent. However, the implicit presence of force in verbal interactions renders those interactions hollow and justifies the skepticism with which some feminist theorists have viewed the separation between seduction and violence. Words become a mechanism of force itself, a prelude to the inevitable.

The shift of modern determinations of rape, from systems that are concerned about preserving patriarchal control over lineage and power to the individual’s concern for their own sovereignty, has in turn shifted the conceptualization of force away a means by which rape is conducted to a descriptor of rape itself. This resolves the ambiguity that previously existed in cases of coercion, which would theoretically offer a worse alternative to rape and thereby gain

25 See Chapter 1.3.1 for more details on these episodes.
non-willing consent, or in cases in which a person is not able to respond in any capacity, due to unconsciousness, for example. It does, however, raise questions about verbal interactions that have not traditionally fallen into the realm of coercion or violence: for example, in a case of manipulation, if an individual lies to another in order to obtain sex, is that an act of force? What if an individual claims to be someone they are not in order to gain consent? Such questions apply to Tereus’ deception of both Philomela and her father Pandion, from whom Tereus gains guardianship over his sister-in-law under false pretenses. Moreover, Ovid repeatedly demonstrates that force lies behind acts of speech throughout the *Metamorphoses* (Tereus is just one example among many), which questions the separation of speech and force as oppositional concepts.

Of more immediate concern to the project of this dissertation is the conflation of force and eroticism in representations of rape. As discussed above, there is a Western tradition of applying metaphors of violence to descriptions of love; in representations of rape, this language is, if anything, heightened. Aside from depictions of the rapist and the victim struggling against each other (a struggle that is often likened to what happens when a lover courts a lady), depictions of a lady in peril, either about to be raped, or abducted and in need of rescue, are intentionally eroticized to excite the imagination and to build up the expectation of sexual reward for the male figure who rescues her. This is simultaneous to the excitement of a male reader who might imagine himself in a position as a rescuer, deserving of a reward. Such representations

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27 We may return to Lucretia’s decision, for example, to submit to Tarquin when he threatened that if she fought back he would kill her and a male servant, put them in bed together, and declare that he had caught them together. By “consenting,” she found the opportunity to preserve her reputation. Of course, any fault that she might have incurred through this consent was then rectified by her suicide, which also clarified the concerns of patriarchy. See Melissa Matthes, *The Rape of Lucretia and the Founding of Republics*, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000, p. 27.

28 As Evelyn Birge Vitz argues, such scenes most likely excited the erotic imagination of some women in the audience as well (see “Rereading Rape in Medieval Literature: Literary, Historical, and Theoretical Reflections,” *Romantic Review*, vol. 88, no. 1, 1997, Section 2). Her larger point is that an all-encompassing conclusion about
provide a clear mandate for the male hero, with a clear reward: rescue the woman, and she will fall in love and reward you (i.e. sleep with you). This creates the trope that all damsels in distress are sexually available and willing, given the heroic actions of a man daring enough to rescue her. In other instances, the imagined debasement and rape of a female character is constructed as an erotic scenario, albeit not at all in a heroic sense: Gravdal recalls an episode from Wace, in which a giant rapes a maiden to death—the tenderness of the maiden, the size of the giant, become erotic elements in the representation which are integral to the death of the maiden (42).

Such representations of mixed force and eroticism must involve the male reader in order to be successful. They appeal to the diversity of male erotic attitudes that Ovid speaks to in his Amores and Ars amatoria, offering imagined opportunities to the “heroic” mindset of those “good” male readers who invest in the constructed system of task/reward, as well as the affirmation of male power. That male power is also relished by those who are aroused by the exhibitionism of such scenes, a power which is affirmed not by the task of rescuing the damsel, but by complicity in the violence against her. The popular appeal of such depictions should be worrisome not because it reveals something inherent to the sexual preferences of men, but because it seems to have eclipsed other, non-violent erotic representations, which would allow for non-violent possibilities in a cultural, erotic imagination. We should be concerned that such representations become our cultural expectations of eroticism and of related spheres, such as medieval readership and erotic expectation will inevitably be reductive. However, the popularity of such constructions, in which a female character is rescued by a male character which then leads to physical romance, has been remarkably long-lived as a staple of erotic storytelling, from as far back as at least the Roman period to the present day. The popularity of this construction over such a long period of time has inevitably shaped erotic imagination and expectation in Western cultures, leading directly to misogynist, extremist ideological movements, such as the incel (involuntary celibates) subculture. See Stephane J. Baele, Lewys Brace, and Travis G. Coan, “From ‘Incel’ to ‘Saint’: Analyzing the Violent Worldview behind the 2018 Toronto Attack,” Terrorism and Political Violence, 2 Aug. 2019, pp. 1-25; Alia E. Dastagir, “Incels, Alek Minassian and the Dangerous Idea of Being Owed Sex,” USA Today, 26 Apr. 2018 (usatoday.com/story/news/2018/04/26/incel-rebellion-alek-minassian-sexual-entitlement-mens-rights-elliot-rodger/550635002).
romantic relationships, or simply male/female relationships, or relationships where a gendering of partners emerges. Such expectations may become prescriptive to behavior, sliding from representation, which is victimless, to action, which can and does have victims. We can observe an historical expectation of violence against women in scenarios of rape, along with the prescription that they act “traumatized”; when the expected performance of trauma is not met, the rape claim is often responded to with disbelief.29

I.1.3 Victim

The term “victim” refers to the raped subject, the target of an assault and the sufferer of the trauma that remains from the use of force: it is the individual whose consent was disregarded. Throughout this dissertation I generally use the term “victim” rather than “survivor,” in part because I refer to literary characters, not to real individuals with the capacity to “survive.” However, I use the term survivor when discussing a character in a narrative whose representation is about survival and its processes.30 In this section I will explore the history of both terms (victim and survivor) and briefly discuss the current conversations that underlie their use.

The term “victim” comes from the Latin *victima*, the sacrifice (animal) in a ritual; it is also connected to the passive participle of the verb *vincere*, to win or to conquer—in

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29 Revealing this flattening aspect of erotic and sexualized violence represented in our popular media is one of the primary themes of Anita Sarkeesian’s “Tropes vs Women in Video Games” project. It is also worth noting that there are examples of these literary tropes moving into action, from the now almost parodical phrase “he hurts me because he loves me,” to the mass shooting in May 2014, which in the perpetrator’s mind was the appropriate response to repeated sexual rejection (Ian Lovett and Adam Nagourney, “Video Rant, Then Deadly Rampage in California Town,” *New York Times*, 24 May, 2014 [nytimes.com/2014/05/25/us/california-drive-by-shooting.html]; see also Baele, and Dastagir above). On the topic of disbelief due to the victim’s “failure” to perform trauma, see T. Christian Miller and Ken Armstrong, “An Unbelievable Story of Rape,” *ProPublica / The Marshall Project*, 16 Dec. 2015 (propublica.org/article/false-rape-accusations-an-unbelievable-story); and the recent Netflix show it inspired, *Unbelievable* (created by Susannah Grant, Michael Chabon, and Ayelet Waldman, performance by Kaitlyn Dever, Toni Colette, and Merritt Weaver, Netflix, 2019).

30 On some of these distinctions see Edwards, *Afterlives* 11.
is not inconsequential that Salmacis and Tereus cry out “vicimus!” (“I have won!”) at the very point of raping the objects of their desire, figuring Hermaphrodite as victus, Philomela as victa. The action of vincere, when considered in the military terms of “conquering” or the animal terms of a sacrificial victim, removes the subjectivity of the subject as well as their sovereignty and any agency that might regain them those lost concepts. The term essentially objectifies the subject for as long as it applies. Other implications belong to the term as well, namely that the victim is a figure that requires conquering, or requires sacrifice, playing into the tropes of masculinity and femininity discussed above in the section on force.

The configuration of “conqueror and conquered” in the relationship of lovers is founded on the idea that “love” is a struggle, and that that struggle goes through a formulaic process: the lover finds himself (he is specifically male) conquered either by the god Love or by the beauty and desirability of the female object—her beauty acts with an agency that is removed from her person and which oftentimes works against her will. In this way, the male lover becomes figured as a victim, who, once conquered, loses reason and is entirely blameless. Consider the conclusion of the Pamphilus,

sic peccasse tamen non mea culpa fuit
Et modo iudicium, si uis ueniamus ad equum;
aut modo sim liber aut ratione reus.
Ardentes oculi, caro candida, uultus erilis,
uerbula, complexus, bascia grata, iocus
fomentum sceleris mihi principiumque dederunt;
institit orator his mihi rebus amor,
his furor intumuit rabiesque libidinis arsit
hortanturque mihi facta nphanda sequi.
Iste meos sensus subuertit pessimus
per quem nostra tibi gratia surda fuit.
De quibus accusor merito culpabilis esses,
fons huius fueras materiesque mali. (704-16)\(^{31}\)

\(^{31}\)“But if I did sin, the fault was not mine! / Let us seek, if you wish, an impartial verdict. / Should I be judged guilty or be acquitted? / Your passionate eyes, white flesh, and noble features, / Your words, embraces, your sweet kisses, this spot, / These stimulated my crime, and gave it start. / Encouraged by these, my love overwhelmed me! / They
Any evil action on the part of the man can be displaced onto the passive agency of the woman, which overshadows her active will. Gravdal plays on this reversal of ravishment with the title of her book, *Ravishing Maidens*, in which “ravishing” can act as an active participle with either men or women as its agent (that is, “men ravishing women” or “women [who are] ravishing [men]”). This construction demonstrates the complicity of language itself in creating this false equivalency in male and female “victimization” and loss of agency (Gravdal 5).

What remains for the male figure is to reassert his agency by physically conquering the female, and, in doing so, correcting his metaphorical victimization with her actual one. The implication is that, once conquered, she too finds pleasure in her victimhood, under the complete power of the male. This belief has echoes of Ovid’s *Ars amatoria*, and as Gravdal points out, can be demonstrated in medieval texts, such as the *Clef d’Amours* (a 13th-century adaptation of Ovid’s work): “Pucele soudement ravie / A grant joie, que qu’ele die” (“A maiden suddenly ravished has great joy, no matter what she says,” translated by Gravdal [4-5]). There appears to be no set way for the female figure to regain her agency once she has become a victim (if she had any in the first place), and she must conform to the expectations of the genre, that is fall in love with her ravisher (if it is a romance), or demonstrate her virtuousness, ideally by dying (if it is an epic or a tragedy). Of course, comedy allows for an unresolved ending, in which the misfortune and distress of the lady is displayed for the enjoyment of the audience.32

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increased my passion, inflamed my fury of lust. / Thus urged, I committed this impious act. / And this, worst of distractions, so upset my mind, / That my good will was totally deaf to your pleas! / Rather, you deserve to be blamed of what you accuse me; / You were the source and heart of the evil,” translated by Thomas Jay Garbaty, “‘Pamphilus, de Amore’: An introduction and Translation,” *The Chaucer Review*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1967, pp. 108-34.

32 The ending of the *Pamphilus*, for example, which presents the assaulted Galatea with no option other than to marry her attacker, whom she now hates, or face the rejection of her family and society. Of course, part of the comedy of this situation is Pamphilus’ continued belief that she enjoyed the experience and that they are now lovers, an ironic comment on this trope, which relies on an audience that is laughing both at Galatea’s dire straits but also at Pamphilus’ ignorance in acting too closely to literary expectation.
It is because of this history, especially the assumption of a female gendered helplessness, that the term “victim” has become problematic for those working in the field of trauma and for those who have experienced it. For this reason, the term “survivor” has come to be used as a way to maintain the agency of the abused subject, to not have them continue to be placed in the reductive role of “victim,” and also to sustain the concept of agency within structural femininity. Amy Leisenring conducted a study of 40 women who were the subjects of domestic and sexual abuse in which she explored their preference for one term over the other: the biggest deciding factor in which term the abused subject used as a self-descriptor was the narrative that they constructed for themselves. Many of the women who were uncomfortable with the term “victim” expressed the paradoxical baggage associated with victimization, that to be a victim meant to be helpless, but at the same time culpable in their own victimization (Leisenring 307). This sense of self springs from the impossible position of the victim, who is a figure “deserving of sympathy” and has done nothing through their own fault, yet who is confronted with Western patriarchal representations of “domestic disturbances,” in which women are portrayed “as partially, if not completely, accountable for any violence they experienced at the hands of a spouse.”

This gender bias is exacerbated by views and practices coming from the legal community, in which “[c]riminologists have argued that victims play a role in their own victimization, while victim advocates … have charged that this conceptualization deflects

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33 Amy Leisenring identifies Kathleen Barry as one of the first theorists to employ the term “survivor” as a positive alternative to “victim.” Leisenring emphasizes that rather than the negative associations of being damaged, powerless, and unable to advocate for oneself that are assumed by victimization, “the term survivor is viewed by many to be more positive, as it implies qualities such as agency, coping, resistance, decision making, recovery, and survival” (“Confronting ‘Victim’ Discourses: The Identity Work of Battered Women,” Symbolic Interaction, vol. 29, no. 3, 2006, p. 312).

34 Such portrayals contributed to the American criminal justice system’s failure to recognize domestic violence as such until the early 1970s, labelling it “domestic disturbance” or “family maladjustment” (Leisenring 310).
responsibility from where it truly lies—with perpetrators of crimes.”35 Inevitably, this is tied to
gender; linking Elizabeth Stanko’s studies, “The Impact of Victim Assessment on Prosecutors’
Screening Decisions” and “Would You Believe This Woman? Prosecutorial Screening for
‘Credible’ Witnesses and a Problem of Justice,” Jennifer Dunn writes: “prosecutors draw on their
understandings of stereotypical notions of what type of person is credible. In later work, Stanko
 […] extends this analysis to female victims, arguing that gender stereotypes affect prosecutors’
assessments of convictability and thereby shape their decision making” (Dunn 288).36 We
recognize the perceived culpability of the female victim in the historical portrayals of rape
discussed above, in which women are granted a quality that provokes men to action. As a result,
those women who choose to identify as survivors tend to discard the aspects of weakness and
damage, and turn culpability on its head as a way to grant themselves the power to change their
situations; those women who choose to refer to themselves as victims willingly discard agency as
it applies specifically to culpability, and highlight that what happened to them was something
that somebody else did, that it was horrible in part because they were made helpless.37 This
second aspect of identifying as a victim also can be important also in trauma recovery, in which
the traumatized subject needs to recognize that their actions will not in the future invite a
repetition of the violence that they experienced.

Leisenring points out that “[l]egal work with battered women is organized around a false
dichotomy between victimization and agency—a dichotomy that characterizes popular

37 Leisenring quotes one of her subjects: “Paula, a thirty-seven-year-old white woman who was arrested after her alcoholic husband assaulted her, stated that she felt like a victim, a term she defined as ‘somebody that reaped the consequences of other people’s actions. Like, at the mercy of whoever, or everybody else, or whatever’” (316).
understandings of battered women, as well” (312). Once pointed out, it would take an act of willful blindness not to see this dichotomy ubiquitously present in the foundational literature of Western culture, both in the presentations of women as sexual objects and as objects of violence, and also in the insecurities of the masculine subjects that would repeatedly be portrayed in violent contest, but also subversively as sexual objects. When passivity is feminized and aggressiveness masculinized, the self-narratives constructed around success and failure bear the weight not only of the objects of those tasks, but of gender performativity and identity. For a man, victimization means emasculation; for a woman, it means the affirmation of her character.

When we consider the phenomenon of the victim, the trope of the “fallen woman” must be considered from a socio-economic perspective as well as a gendered construction. In actuality these are not separate issues, in that the perception of guilt and powerlessness associated with the female victim are implicit in the construction of her socio-economic value, and for the male victim there is an impossibility of victimhood. The commodification of the woman’s body frames the victim within the greater context of her community, which associates paternity with power, and the ability to produce a clear heir as a woman’s primary “value.”

The contract of marriage has historically been considered a contract not between a man and a woman but between two families, and one that guarantees as its product a child recognizable as an extension of both those family units. The threats to this guarantee are adultery and rape, specifically as the female partner is involved, regardless of the agency (or lack thereof) she exhibits in either case. The gendered imbalance of these situations is due specifically to concerns over patriarchy: if a male individual commits adultery or rape, these occur outside the bounds of the marriage contract and are therefore not of urgent concern to his family, aside from the social consequences in devaluing a female individual from another family. The female
individual, however, as the bearer of children, has no ability to determine paternity within her own body when she has had sex with multiple partners. Furthermore, her involvement in adultery or rape proves a failure in both her ability and her immediate family’s ability to ensure the guarantee of the contract (marriage) in which they had engaged, or in any that they would in the future.

It is this second consequence that leads to the “devaluation” of the female victim in societies in which consent is a patriarchal concern. The “purity” of the female individual is not in reference to the quality of her character, but to the quality of the character of her entire family unit and the integrity of their contracts. A woman in this position is not “fallen” because of an inherent moral failing on her part, but because she and her family are untrustworthy as a whole. Additionally, such a woman might then be seen as sexually available to an entire community because of that untrustworthiness in her and her family. This is structurally linked to our modern thinking on rape victims as at least partially responsible for the crimes committed against them: that if they had been more vigilant the crime could not have occurred. It is also connected to the guilt the family unit might feel at not being able to protect that member of the family. And it is connected to the practice of “slut-shaming,” or the moral evaluation of women who have numerous sexual partners as an expression of our community’s anxiety about her ability to honor any marriage contract she might make. These contracts were about guarantees of paternity, much more than they were about love.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{38} For historical examples of these concerns, we might once again return to the case of Lucretia, and also the extreme action taken by Verginia’s father, who kills her in order to protect the integrity of his paternal power (see Chapter 1.2.2). The sexual laws enacted by Augustus to regenerate the patrician class through control of sexual partnerships also responds to the anxiety of paternity (see Chapter 1.1).
I.2. Representation, Interpretation, and Context

This dissertation approaches the topic of sexual violence through its representation rather than its actual occurrence. Given the separation of an object from its representation, this provides an interpretive space that can be grasped with a bit more certainty than an actual sex crime: by definition, if an act of rape is depicted, the reader understands consent to have been broken categorically. The reader should also understand consent to be representational, rather than actual, and finally, the reader should understand the represented act as conforming to an expectation, a context, or a narrative sequence—it is, in a word, aestheticized. In its aestheticization, the scene of rape, in the literature that is the focus of this dissertation, is generally made “beautiful” or appealing through its representation, even when that representation is horrifying, as in the case of the rape of Philomela in the *Metamorphoses*. The depiction of the act of rape, as well as the survival of the victim (or its absence) and their continued presence (or lack thereof) in the narrative, does not have an isolated value inherent within the text but the reader supplies that value in response to their sensibilities about sex and sexual violence. It is this function that transforms Philomela into a narrative device that has symbolic weight as a victim rather than a character with an individual experience.39

The semiotics of rape provides the interpreter with varying options to pursue. Many modern Western cultures understand the act of rape, in both moral and legal contexts (if not also literary), as a private crime against individuals, and sexual violence as a general category of crime that has individual victims as its targets. In the recent past, as recently as the 1970s, legal institutions still viewed rape as a crime with communal dimensions, not enacted just against the

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individual victim, but against the patriarchal community, with secondary victims being the father or the husband of the victim. The development of the concept of the individual sovereignty of women, as well as an increasingly broad sensitivity to male victims of sexual violence, have led to a shift from the conceptualization of rape as a breach of social contract to its conceptualization as a breach of individual will, directly tied to a person’s communication of their own consent. As a result, it can be bewildering and uncomfortable for modern readers to engage with texts even from a past as recent as the mid-20th century (as with the earlier example of Sally Quinn). This variation in the spectrum of conceptualizing rape and the rape victim across time and geography affects the symbolic understanding of those concepts within their semiotic communities: rape as an expression of masculinity; rape as horror; rape as the foundation of nations; the rape victim as a location of shame and trauma, both communal and individual; the introduction of the term survivor to overcome that shame and trauma.

Once violence becomes represented in a narrative text, it becomes an art object, one whose aesthetic is tied to a fiction of violence that creates an appeal that actual violence lacks. Susan Sontag notes the difference in our reactions to depicted violence and actual violence against an individual (referring respectively to Goltzius’ etching The Dragon Devouring the Companions of Cadmus [1588] and a photograph of a soldier with his face shot off), “One horror has its place in a complex subject—figures in a landscape—that displays the artist’s skill of eye and hand. The other is a camera’s record, from very near, of a real person’s unspeakably awful mutilation; that and nothing else.” This separation creates a space for the reader that, in theory,

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40 This is supported by the widespread legal view, for example, that a husband could not rape his wife, given the understanding that he owned her consent (see note 34). The priority of incest in cases of familial rape (statutory and forced) likewise descends from the legal difficulty of prosecuting a rape case against a patriarch or guardian who controlled the consent of the victim.

41 Regarding the Pain of Others, Picador, 2003, pp. 41-42. Sontag herself wrestles with this final reductive statement “nothing else” throughout her text: while the photograph of the soldier without a face shows, but perhaps does not
exists without an individual victim, or any actual crime. It allows violence to become interpretable, for the violence to indicate something, such as, in the case of rape, patriarchal control (through the negative example of paternity) or censorship (through the silencing that so frequently accompanies literary acts of rape). The representation of violence gives it space to become exciting, horrifying, erotic, or a combination of these qualities, rather than a moment of individualized pain.

Despite the removal of this space from the manifestation of individualized harm, it is important to consider the harm that represented violence may cause as well. To return to Mardorossian’s discussion of structural femininity (see note 9 above), when she writes that “it is structural femininity, not the female subject, that is rape’s victim” (4), we may understand this in two ways: first, that in the representation of rape there is no “female subject,” but a female character, who is not real. Second, by this representation, that female character comes to signify not a woman but the female. In that shift towards generalization, the representation promotes a culturally gendered understanding of sexual violence, in which femininity is associated with victimization. This process leads to two further conclusions regarding representation: as discussed above, there can be a victimization of ideological concepts, such as structural femininity, which may affect aspects of our culture may. More particularly, in the representation of the rape victim (or survivor), there is an annihilation of the traumatized subject through acts of interpretation.

The erasure of the subject is similar to the effect of simulacrum as described by Baudrillard. As the real subject is represented and re-represented, the conceptualization of that subject moves further and further from its original manifestation: the representation replaces the

convey, the suffering of that individual, by dint of it’s being a picture and framed, it is potentially figured as art and perhaps entertainment, drawing it into the former category of the etching.
authentic subject in our memory. When the subject is “historical,” such as with Lucretia or Verginia, the individual women at the heart of those stories are replaced by the stories themselves, and in turn they may be interpreted as symbols useful for the construction of a political state (Rome). However, in instances of actual violence that are not reading from a mytho-historic past, there may still exist a traumatized subject, distinct from our inclination to interpret or represent him or her, who does not signify anything but him or herself. The representation of that survivor threatens to replace the possibility of an authentic victim with the more communicable representation of a victim, which focuses not on their individual trauma, but on the expectation of trauma that links them to a greater community of victims. Given all this, the writer might legitimately worry that through the act of representation, they have favored their message over the represented subject. Consequently, what we should worry about, as readers, is whether the act of interpretation is in itself an act of violence in complicity with the writer.

This concern may be allayed by the survivor’s self-representation, although such accounts have been, as evidenced by medieval and classical accounts of rape, controlled and erased by male writers and intermediaries. Philomela stands out in the Metamorphoses as a girl who responds to the violence done to her, in her rebuke of Tereus (6.533-49). Her refusal to be silenced is further demonstrated by her creation of the tapestry that conveys her experience, even

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42 “It is no longer a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor even of parody. It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself, that is, an operational double…” Jean Baudrillard, Simulations, translated by Paul Foss, Paul Patton, and Philip Beitchman, Semiotext(e), 1983, p. 4; see also The Evil Demon of Images, Power Institute, 1987.

43 In this political moment, I am repeatedly reminded of this inclination by the murder of Black Americans, often by the police. Behind the figures of Trayvon Martin, Sandra Bland, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and so many others, are the actual individuals of these men, women, and children. The events of their deaths and their place in a narrative of racial persecution supersedes their actual lives. Consider, for example, that at the time of writing this (7 July 2020), the Wikipedia articles for Eric Garner, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery are titled “Killing of Eric Garner,” “Shooting of Breonna Taylor,” and “Killing Ahmaud Arbery” rather than simply their names.

44 See Edwards, Afterlives 83, where she notes the tendency of criticism to code rape as seduction.
after her tongue has been removed. The involvement of the survivor in the process of authorship and self-figuration disrupts the potentially reductive process of symbolic refiguring, which further objectifies the victimized subject.  

Vitz, writing about rape in particular, responds to anxieties about the moral dimension in literary representation:

What of the deeper demand that the treatment of rape be “moral”? This raises the important question of the ethical status of fiction. But literature is famous for allowing human beings to fantasize about—to toy with, to try on for size—deeds and identities that they would not necessarily choose for themselves. Many writers have invited their public to explore with them, through imagination, the psychology of blasphemy, unbelief, incest, adultery and murder. (Vitz section 1)

The reader’s complicity in the violence of a text, or in the acts of representation and interpretation, is a point that we must move away from if we want to preserve the function of communication in general. Representation must maintain authentic elements from its represented subjects, not exist as an authentic object in and of itself. In that separation is a space that loosens moral obligation. It is therefore the task of the interpreter to notice and argue for both functions in a text, the presence of the authentic subject side by side with the representative object. This is precisely the recommendation of Christine Rose, writing about rape in the works of Chaucer:

Readers attuned to Chaucer’s use of rape must simultaneously hold figurative and real rape in their minds. It is the dialectic between the literary and the material that adds complexity to our response and power to the poetry and celebrates our own augmented powers as readers attuned to what the text includes and excludes.  

Rose’s argument emphasizes the role of the reader to reassert the victim’s experience that is elided by the trope of the narrative. In doing so, the reader may disrupt negative semiotic values.

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45 Accounts of rape by survivors have been and are crucial in reclaiming narratives that have been threatened with erasure, either by expectations of what a rape victim should be and how she should act, or by powerful institutions with their own interests at heart. See Susan J. Brison, *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self*, Princeton University Press, 2002; and Lacy Crawford, *Notes on a Silencing*, Little, Brown, and Co., 2020.

46 Christine M. Rose, “Reading Chaucer Reading Rape,” *Representing Rape in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, edited by Elizabeth Robertson and Christine M. Rose, 2001, p. 31. See also Robertson and Rose’s Introduction, p. 9.
that might be reinforced by a depiction of rape or victimization; the reader draws a line against their complicity with the text while still engaging with it.

Philomela, in the context of our classical and medieval sources, was regarded as a mytho-historical figure, occupying that space in the Greco-Roman conception of time just prior to formally recorded history. Medieval commentators of the myth emphasize its historicity (historicum, historiam, historialiter allegari, etc.), while acknowledging its fantastic elements (“de mutatione vero allegoricum,” [“but it is allegorical concerning their transformations”], in Arnulf of Orléans; “Ovidius describit hanc hystoriam…modo poetico id est ficticio,” [Ovid describes this historical event, although it is true, in a poetical, that is to say fictional manner”], in Giovanni del Virgilio).47 Although these labels are aspects of the form of commentary, to emphasize Philomela as an historical figure is to assert that the events of the narrative, although also formulaic, actually happened to an actual girl. To acknowledge her realness, her personhood, is to defy the repeated figuring of her as a character, to defy interpretation of her, and through interpretation, erasure. In this dissertation, I attempt both: to discuss what Philomela has meant as a figure to reading communities; to acknowledge that there was once a girl who was hurt, badly, but survived.

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CHAPTER 1: ROMAN RAPE NARRATIVES

1.1 Rape, Law, and Augustan Rome

In this chapter, divided into three sections, I analyze Ovid’s approach to the figure of Philomela in *Metamorphoses* 6, and how he utilizes her story as a focal point for the embarrassment of rape narratives in that text; he also strongly ties Philomela’s rape and many of his other long rape narratives to the Augustan political and social agenda under which he wrote. Ovid’s approach to the subject of rape, through the context of Philomela, consciously deconstructs the genre-based erotic character of literary representations of rape and proposes a political dimension to such stories. Because of this focus on both the political and literary, in this first section I will discuss the political and cultural agenda of the first Emperor, Octavian Augustus, who focused much of his cultural reform on sexual policy. Indeed, so much of Octavian’s political legitimization is established by his repeated reference to religious iconography and Roman mytho-history that, in order to appreciate Ovid’s critiques of Roman character and power, it is important to first reckon with Octavian’s own strategies of representation. In this section I will also briefly discuss the Roman legal terms and rhetorical practice applicable to sexual crimes, as well as the related legal reforms that characterized Octavian’s social agenda. Such reforms acted in concert with his efforts to cast Roman culture as family-centric, with importance placed on the *paterfamilias*, a role he would occupy both politically as the head of state and divinely through his self-representation first as the god Apollo and later Jupiter.
This section will be followed by two others: the second section looks at sexual violence or the politics of sex as they are portrayed in Roman literature of the late Republican and early Imperial periods. Ultimately much of the prominent literature of the Augustan period was connected to Octavian’s projects of political and religious authority, whether it be through appreciation of his patronage, sympathy with his focus on conservative family values, or fear of his power. The second section provides a foundation for recognizing Ovid’s use and emulation of Roman literary tropes in his own works, and how his approach to earlier writers’ works—such as those by Virgil and Livy—demonstrates his appreciation for their writing at the same time that he explores divers conclusions to their themes. The third section of this chapter turns to Ovid’s writing in particular, in order to examine his use of rape and sexual violence as a repeated theme that spans all of his works but is especially prominent in the *Metamorphoses*. In this section, I will also perform a close reading of Ovid’s Philomela myth to establish fundamental elements that medieval writers and commentators will return to in their versions of the myth and in their commentaries.

Ovid’s work was both responsive to the socio-political situation in which he lived and constantly referential to the literary world from which he drew his material. Throughout this chapter I argue that Ovid’s writing was provoked by and provoked the authorities alongside whom he worked. The Philomela narrative in particular, with its prominent themes of sexual violence and acts of expression, provided Ovid with a vehicle to critique Rome’s political and cultural utilizations of rape.
The culturally pervasive character of Octavian Augustus’ regime is evident in the works of art, architecture, histories, and literature of the period from his rise into politics in 44 BCE, to his death in 14 CE. Octavian’s proposals in defining a “Roman” identity went beyond political control of the Republic; they constructed a new measure by which Roman citizens would evaluate themselves and their peers. As Augustus, Octavian’s proposals were no longer hypothetical, but reified into legal institutions, historical accounts, and the national myths told by the citizens and the subjects of the Empire.

Octavian’s turn towards a uniform cultural identity, a renewed sense of *romanitas* for citizens of the republic after almost one hundred years of civil war and military conflicts, was a markedly different approach from the dictatorships of the past. Unlike Sulla or Caesar, Octavian’s control over the Roman senate and people was by necessity more subtle—he would avoid for the most part the political terror by which Sulla ruled, and after initial resistance in his claims to inherit the honors owed to his adoptive father, he was careful not to become too reliant on the model of Julius Caesar either. Avoiding the practice of self-aggrandizement, Octavian adopted a political agenda of gaining honor through honoring the traditions, customs, and laws of the Roman Republic—as Octavian ascended, this practice became the expectation amongst the senatorial class of Rome, and as the concept of what “traditional” Roman imagery looked like changed to meet Augustan ideals, so did the actual art and architecture of the city (Zanker 2-3).

Turning away from military means to seize power within the city allowed Octavian to simultaneously adopt the more acceptable precedents of Caesar’s regime and to combat the

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48 For a comprehensive vision of Augustus’ political project through cultural imagery, see Paul Zanker *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, translated by Alan Shapiro, University of Michigan Press, 1990.
propaganda of his early political rivals, such as Antony and Sextus Pompey. While his claims for his adoptive father’s political honors were denied to him, Caesar’s name allowed Octavian to capitalize on his predecessor’s connection to the goddess Venus, cultivated through lineage and honorifics, a popular enough activity during the first century BCE amongst Roman nobles. The Julian line’s connection to her through Aeneas’ son Iulus led Caesar to construct the Temple of Venus Genetrix, honoring both her and himself. Octavian was sure to inherit any prestige that his new family name might bring, and he also encouraged early on a connection between himself and the god Apollo, strengthening that connection through the commission of statues associating him with the god, either in aspect or imagery. Apollo was a particularly appropriate god on which to model himself: his domains were considerably diverse, granting Octavian some flexibility in the interpretation of his character—his connection to music and shepherding gave him the qualities of order and leadership respectively; to medicine and prophecy the qualities of healing and piety; to archery his military strength. In addition to these qualities, Octavian seized upon the renewal of the Saturnian “golden age,” which was in turn seized upon by writers in the decades after he had adopted the name Augustus.

Octavian would also assume a particular character as the son of the apotheosized Julius Caesar, who was elevated to godhood in 42 BCE. This allowed Octavian to add divi filius (son of the god) to his name. Octavian later, when he was Augustus, associated himself with Jupiter as well, accepting the title pater urbis, or pater patriae (a title previously accepted by the elder

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50 For example, the statue of Augustus at Prima Porta does both: Augustus is posed in the Apollo’s typical manner, and his breastplate depicts the god as well; see Zanker 48-51.
51 See especially Virgil’s Eclogue 4, which strengthens Augustus’ image as Apollo and the son of Jupiter/Caesar. See also Aen. 6.792-94: “Augustus Caesar, divi genus, aurea condet / saecula qui rursus Latio regnata per arva / Saturno quondam” (“Caesar Augustus, son of the deified, who shall bring once again an Age of Gold to Latium, to the land where Saturn reigned in early times,” translated by Robert Fitzgerald).
Caesar), echoing the role of Jupiter as *paterfamilias* to the gods. Octavian’s use of Caesar’s name granted him considerable access to these titles, but only after establishing himself against the oppositional forces of Brutus, Sextus, and then Antony. Indeed, Antony’s rhetoric attempted to use Octavian’s advantage against him, claiming that as a political power in the struggle for Rome, Octavian was a “youth who owed everything to his name,” underscoring his inexperience and lack of achievements when, in 44 BCE, he returned to Rome to claim not only Caesar’s inheritance, but his position as well.

Octavian’s attachment to his deific models was shared by his rivals as well, each of whom cultivated their own associations with patron gods: Sextus Pompey fostered a connection to the god Neptune, allowing his naval victories to amplify this image, aided as well by a series of coins connecting his profile to that of the sea god; Antony first portrayed himself as a new Hercules, but when the imaged proved to lack the versatility that Apollo offered to Octavian, he transformed himself into Dionysus, allowing for a far more diverse mythology to affect his character. Dionysus, like Apollo, was a son of Jupiter, and promised the foundation of a new golden age which had been brought to an end by the war between the titans and the Olympian gods (Zanker 50-51). The parallels to the Roman civil wars would have been apparent to the Roman public, and any promise of new order was certainly welcome. Moreover, the status of Dionysus as the son of Jupiter put Antony in the same arena as Octavian to claim the inheritance of Caesar’s power. Finally, the symbolism of progressive liberality—painted as a stereotype of a wine-soaked, Eastern decadence by traditionalist conservatives—that came along with using the

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53 “May I succeed in attaining the honors and position of my father to which I am entitled” (Cicero, *Ad Atticum* 16.15.3; cited in Zanker 33).
god as a model appealed to large portion of the Roman public and stood well-opposed to the conservative piety Octavian had in mind for his vision of *romanitas*.

Antony’s choice to cultivate a Dionysian image for himself further exacerbated the divide between the development of an eastern culture versus western culture amongst the Roman people. This battle for cultural dominance was fought in the practice of the arts, architecture, rhetoric, and ultimately behavior. Where Antony became notorious (or perhaps famous is a better word, in order to reflect the great popularity he held within the city of Rome) for his orgiastic parties and a scandalous union to Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, Octavian encouraged a return to “traditional” Roman values of propriety, stoicism, and *virtus*. The East/West dichotomy of the burgeoning Empire allowed Octavian, who maneuvered to remain in Rome throughout this period, to reframe Antony as the outsider, shifting the Roman populace’s consciousness as “Western” away from Antony’s position in the East (Eder 31).

To construct this Western style, Augustus turned to antique imagery, rejecting many of the influences of Hellenism in favor of archaic Roman visual models—Augustus would not only mimic the examples of traditional Roman art that populated the city, but actively encouraged the recollection and reclamation of the past in literary arts as well, as part of an equally energetic campaign of ideological reform of Roman morality. Under his influence, the works of certain writers, such as Virgil and Livy, rose to prominence, and offered the Roman audience appropriate models of behavior from their ancestry—one was expected to not only appear Roman, but to act Roman.

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54 Zanker provides an example of earlier Roman encounters with Greek art—he points out the Roman discomfort with depictions of the nude body, and how this was seen as an invitation for corruption. This did not, of course, prevent the adoption of this style of art or Roman commissions for sculptures in the nude (5).
By way of example, under the influence of Augustus the tradition of wearing a toga by free citizens was reinforced, and Greek and eastern style tunics, such as those favored by Sextus and Antony, fell out of favor. After Antony’s defeat, and the end of any real opposition to Augustus’ power, the commission of nude statues, those in eastern style dress or attitude, and even statues with a military focus, were replaced on a popular scale by politically and religiously symbolic statues of citizens in togas (Zanker 5-7, 162-66, 239). Livy’s attention to the toga in his history of Cincinnatus can be read as a contemporary preoccupation, rather than a concern of Roman society specific to Cincinnatus’ time:

After an exchange of greetings they requested he don a toga to hear the senate’s decree, which they prayed might prove auspicious for himself and for his country. “Is everything all right?” he asked in wonderment, as he bade his wife Racilia fetch his toga quickly from the farmhouse. After he had wiped off the dust and sweat from his person and stepped forth clad in the toga, the delegation saluted him as dictator and gave their congratulations. (Ab urbe 3.26, translated by T. J. Luce)

The passage places emphasis on the toga as appropriate for the senatorial assembly, framing the occasion in the language of religious piety; it also combines the underlying Roman attitude towards “hard work,” the myth of farmer/soldier/citizen, with civic duty to the Republic in its time of need.

Livy’s histories also depicted Augustus’ preoccupation with adultery amongst the Roman patrician class: in his account of the rape of Lucretia, she declares, “I absolve myself of wrong, but not from punishment. Let no unchaste woman hereafter continue to live because of the precedent of Lucretia,” and then stabs herself (Ab urbe 1.58). Subsequently there is the account of Verginia, who is the object of Appius Claudius’s plot to claim her as a slave and then rape her. Rather than allow his daughter to be taken by Claudius, her father Verginius turns to his daughter, saying, “I am asserting your freedom in the only way I know how,” and then stabs her
(Ab urbe 3.48). We can see that the concern in each of these episodes is not the rape that Lucretia suffered, nor the imminent rape of Verginia. Jill Harries comments on these accounts:

For both, the preservation of the purity or chastity of the woman matters more than her life. In the case of Lucretia the story gains added point, as the exemplary matrona insists on killing herself, despite her husband’s adherence to the legal position (in Livy’s day) that she had not consented and was therefore innocent. The Livian stories were a part of Augustus’ moral message. Women were expected actively to support the honour system, not merely to acquiesce in it.55

In each case, the potential for dishonor eclipses the physical violence enacted on these women; further violence absolves that dishonor. Both these accounts also highlight the Augustan moral message attached to uncontrollable lust: in the case of Lucretia, the ultimate result (apart from her death) was revolt, indicating the social dissolution that accompanies personal dissolution; similarly, in the case of Verginia, the result (apart from her death) is again revolt, and further violence. Perhaps Verginius’s words to Claudius best reflect the Augustan concern for morality regarding sex: “Animals and wild beast fornicate indiscriminately. Is that your aim?” (Livy 3.47). Both stories also carry important moral lessons regarding the sovereign power of the Roman familial unit, which ought not to be breached even by those of higher social standing. The killing of Verginia by her father underlines the control expected from a Roman paterfamilias and emphasizes that the crime is not against her but against the family, and thus against him.

The Latin language, as has been pointed out by many scholars,56 has no single term for “rape” in the context by which it is commonly understood today, broadly that a sexual act has

been performed on an individual against their will. This is not to say that Romans did not have a sense that rape was an assault against the individual will of a person, especially a woman or child. Roman poetry, as much as it turns away from that moment of violence in its imagery, also develops a euphemistic vocabulary for personal violation: a woman may be *rapta, compressa, oppressa, superata*, etc. (“stolen,” “held or pressed [i.e. subdued],” “conquered”).

The crime of *raptus* in Roman law was distinct from that of *stuprum* (that is, they would have carried different processes in court, regarding evidence, testimony, and punishment). While *stuprum*, or *stuprum per vim*, seems to have been reserved especially for legal usage, *raptus* was not a not as specialized a term until it was used in reference to the abduction of a person (which we see evidence of in the *Metamorphoses*). Also, while *raptus* might be used broadly, for kidnapping, rape, or even theft (of objects), *stuprum* was specifically a sexual violation, connoting a violation of proper sexual norms. Nguyen describes that it “covered any irregular or promiscuous sexual act including acquaintance rape, seduction, and homosexuality, as well as forcible rape.”

These terms were dynamic, changing in legal definition as the politics and culture of Rome changed as well, and they reveal important cultural characteristics about the Roman hermeneutical community that developed them, namely that the act of rape was the

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57 Or from Brownmiller, whose definition specifically covers the female perspective: “if a woman chooses not to have intercourse with a specific man and the man chooses to proceed against her will, that is a criminal act of rape” (8). Brownmiller does not use the term “consent” in this definition here, and I follow her in my definition as well. The purpose of these definitions is to underline the individual as an unwilling participant in a sex act, and the expression of that will is a different discussion. See my Introduction.

58 Nguyen 83. For a detailed presentation of the crimes covered by the charge of *stuprum*, see Craig A. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 103-30. See also Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society* 29-31 and Harries 110-11 for discussions of *stuprum*, both before and after the establishment of the *Lex Iulia de adulteriis* (c. 15 BCE). *Stuprum* was distinct from *adulterium* in several criteria, the most pertinent here that if the victim was a woman and married, the charge of *stuprum* clarified that the sex act was against her consent; if the woman or girl was unmarried, the crime would by default fall under *stuprum*, whether the sex act was by or against her consent. See Caroline Dunn, *Stolen Women in Medieval England: Rape, Abduction, and Adultery, 1100-1500* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), for an example of the flexibility of the medieval term *raptus* (her examples are particular to England) (19-20).
objectification of a woman (rapta as a term refers also to stolen goods) as much as it was a masculine-affirming act of the rapist: the terms compressa, oppressa, and superata—as well as another commonly used term, victa (conquered)—portray in equal parts the woman as an enemy to be overcome with violence and the man as the agent of that action. The possibility by which an individual might be punished under Roman law was determined by terms that generally focused more on the preservation of the familial unit, rather than concern for the individual victim or punishment for the rapist.

Ultimately Augustus passed a series of laws, concerned primarily with the promotion of Roman familial cohesion and growth. These included the Lex Iulia de adulteriis (18 BCE), which redefined sexual crimes, and essentially outlawed extramarital affairs amongst the Roman upper class—it also attempted to remove response to those crimes, such as retribution for infidelity, from private family members, including the paterfamilias; the Lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus redefined what would count as a legal marriage across social boundaries, thereby redefining what “legitimate” offspring might be; and the Lex Papia Poppaea, which penalized celibacy by restricting the possibility of the childless to be considered in wills (Harries 95-101).

With these laws especially, and with the program of moral reform fostered in Augustan literature, the shift from Augustus’ public project of recovery from the civil wars to a remodeling of citizens’ private lives became apparent. While Augustus could act as a model and leader of the new Roman citizenry according to his positions (as princeps, “tribune of the people,” and pater patriae), the true success of his reforms was that the people of Rome adopted the ideology that they were participating in the reformation of Roman identity after its dissolution and confusion in repeated civil wars (Eder 30-31; Gruen 62-64, 67-68). To return to one of my initial assertions, the degree to which the term “totalitarian” might be applied to the case of Augustan
Rome is to be debated; however, the omnipresence of Augustus in all spheres of life, in the political, private, religious, and military, indicates the success of his project to reorient under his own definition the identity of the Roman citizenry.
1.2 Writing Rape in Augustan Rome

In the previous section, I discussed Octavian Augustus’ project of social and legal reform as he maneuvered himself to take control of the Roman state, and his reliance on symbolic representation through public works projects and religious association. In this section, I turn to Roman literature of the 1st century BCE, and how subjects of sex and violence, especially rape, were represented in the popular literary works of that time. The Roman literature of this century goes through extraordinary transformations, from the lyric poets’ experiments with gender and gender role reversal to the nationally programmatic literature of Virgil and Livy, behind whom Augustus finds another avenue to represent his moral agenda. It is into this latter environment that Ovid rises to prominence as a member of the generation after Virgil and Horace, and his work reflects the influences of those previous schools of poetry, even as he modifies them to his own style.

At the core of Ovid’s writing there seems to have been a perversity that would not allow him to silence his persistent voice of opposition. The *Metamorphoses* stand as a clear example of the ample plurality that existed in Ovid’s concept of the world, as he makes space in the poem for a vast chorus of voices and perspectives. Gianpiero Rosati notes that “about a third of the length of the poem, including about 60 of the episodes (and in increasing proportion from the beginning to the end of the poem), is narrated not by the external narrator, but by about 40 internal narrators,” a fact that deemphasizes the authority of the reported events of the narrative and constructs complex dialogic themes that seem often to support contradictory conclusions.59

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Ovid’s imp of perversity also extended to the works of his contemporaries, often adapting Virgilian and Livian narratives to his own style, and in doing so critiquing their essential messages; but in critiquing these two authors, Ovid frequently found himself at odd also with the Augustan social agenda and the emperor’s project of the reconstruction of the Roman state and people.

A frequent topic in Ovid’s writing is rape, a topic I will investigate more fully in the third and final section of this chapter with a particular focus on Ovid’s Philomela narrative. In order to understand the literary context in which Ovid deployed his use of sexual violent language—not only in narrative form, but didactically in the *Ars amatoria*—the following section focuses on the role played by rape, sexual violence, and eroticized violence in Roman literature, and how, despite Augustus’ social conservatism, it played a central role in the renewed mythologizing of the Roman people after the civil wars of the late Republic.

### 1.2.1 Rape in Roman Literature of the 1st Century BCE

Sexual topics in Roman literature, especially combined with adulterous and violent themes, appear to have reached the height of popularity during the 1st century BCE.\(^6\) This is particularly evident in the writing of Ovid, who returned to the theme of rape again and again throughout his work, most notably in his *Ars amatoria*, *Metamorphoses*, and *Fasti*. Many of Ovid’s predecessors and contemporaries of the 1st century BCE were likewise drawn to depictions of sexual violence in their works: the poets Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius, Virgil, and

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Horace each participated in a shared aesthetic of sexual violence in lyric poetry; Cicero discussed rape in his *De legibus* (book 2), drawing on the foundational myth of Lucretia’s rape; as I briefly discussed in the previous section, Livy utilized episodes depicting rape as catalysts for political change in the narrative of his histories.

The first century BCE was a socially dynamic period, in which sexual freedom reached a height not seen before among the upper classes. This freedom was not limited solely to women but can also be read into the actions of men from this period, regarding sexual predilection/activity and gender identity. The effect that this liberty had on the poetry of Romans was that erotic themes were not necessarily concerned with the subject of procreation, but rather with recreation and pleasure. This helps to explain, in part, the relative emancipation of women, at least regarding sexual choice. Rather than valued only as objects for childbearing, women could be partners in the social activity of sex for the sake of pleasure. Sex had the potential to be an activity free of the anxieties surrounding paternity (barring accidental pregnancy), and therefore social restriction such as marriage and even class, so long as the couple was reasonably discreet. Perhaps most importantly for poetic production was the acknowledgment that women could have and seek pleasure during sex, and therefore have a

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63 For Romans, the question of gender identity was largely associated with sexual activity, particularly the activities of men. There is quite a bit to say on this topic, which is not entirely relevant to my thesis—for details of Roman gender and sexual identity, see Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, especially the final chapter, “Sexual Roles and Identities” 177-246.
subjective purpose within the relationship, which would necessitate a level of mutual consent between lovers, or at least its illusion.64

This is not to say that concerns about paternity, sexual mores, or power dynamics disappeared entirely—they persisted as an important counterpoint for the lyric poets of the 1st century as a way to play with their anxieties about self and identity. The result in the poems of Catullus and Propertius was the expression of erotic obsession, mixed with fears of masculine inadequacy. This is particularly evident in many of Catullus’s poems about Lesbia, in which Catullus might portray himself as cuckolded, insulted, or powerless in light of the power of his lover (consider poems 11, 51, 72, 75, 79, 83, 92); Propertius shares a similar relationship with Cynthia (for example, 1.8A-B, 1.11, 2.9A, 2.16, 2.32, 4.8). Ultimately, then, the figure of the woman is significant primarily as a location for the reacquisition of a lost “masculine,” even “heroic identity” (Greene, “Gender and Elegy” 362-64).

While these poets find no recourse in persuading a recalcitrant lover, and as such turn to expressions of their own suffering (and in the case of Catullus to write some truly shocking verses denigrating Lesbia) Ovid takes a new approach. Where Propertius conquers his rival in the “heroic” contest of masculinity, Ovid’s nemesis is Amor, the god of love himself. More correctly, Amor was Ovid’s enemy, but the poet has already lost the battle against him by the beginning of the Amores (1.1, 1.2). Defeated (victus) the poet is welcomed into the god Amor’s empire,65 and wages a new war against the wills of reluctant lovers, especially those whom he,

64 There is much evidence that this change in the status of women was for the most part a literary device which allowed poets to play with their own gender power roles. As Greene notes, “The Roman elegists…appear to elevate women to a singularly exalted stature—a stature women did not enjoy in real life” (357). As such, the presence of the woman’s voice is largely absent from the lyric poet’s work, replaced by the poet’s own mediations—Greene gives an example of Propertius watching Cynthia sleep (“Gender and Elegy” 359-60 [Propertius 1.3]).
65 “Adspice cognate felicia Caesaris arma – / qua vicit, victos protegit ille manu” (“Consider the successful wars of your cousin Caesar—as he conquers, he protects the conquered with his power,” Am. 1.2.51-52, my translation). In the final line, I take manu with protegit almost in a familial sense: the protected territory is welcomed into the
Ovid, desires (Am. 1.9). The woman desired becomes not the location for masculine rivalry, but the proving ground for the enterprising lover, an object to be conquered and seized. The lover, one of those conquered (victos) by Love, will in turn make it his project to conquer the objects of his own desire, making the lover both conquered and conqueror.

Ovid liberally uses military terminology to describe his approach to love, even when he claims to have relinquished it: “ferrea cum vestris bella valete modis” (“farewell cruel warfare and your meter,” Am. 1.1, my translation). The first elegy of the Amores may be read as a recusal from epic topics, but then the poet undercuts this idea by transforming the struggle typical to the genre to be against the god Amor, and subsequently for love itself to be a kind of warfare; Am. 1.2, 1.9, and 2.1 reassume the martial themes, while also remaining true to the elegiac characteristic of the defeat of the author.

The shift of focus from a male rival to a female prize transitions from a metaphorical “battle” between male and female lovers, centered around individual consent, to real battle with physical consequence. Ovid’s depiction of the Rape of the Sabine Women (Ars am. 1.100fv) makes this slide explicit. His representations of explicit sexual violence in the Ars amatoria also reflect a shift in the author’s literary environment away from the lyric sources that guided his early work towards direct responses to the popular literature of the Augustan period, which was more in line with the Emperor’s social program.

Roman legal system of provinces. These lines recall Propertius 2.16.41-42—see Peter Green’s note on this line (The Erotic Poems p. 270—although he changes the sense of manu from Propertius’ more literal sense “with his hand”).

“Militat omnis amans, et habet sua castra Cupido; Attice, crede mihi, militat omnis amans” (“Every lover is a soldier, and makes his camp with Cupid; Atticus, believe me, every lover is a soldier,” Am. 1.9.1-2, my translation).

Green, in his introduction to The Erotic Poems, offers the possibility that Ovid’s inability to serve in a military capacity led to a self-conscious focus on the heroism of love as an alternative to exploits on the field of battle (28-30).
1.2.2 Virgil, Livy, and Rape as a Catalyst for Reform

In response to the success of Augustus and his project of national reform, much of the artistic community in Rome created work that would conform to the ideologies of the eventual Emperor and his political supporters. In addition to political and social reform, Augustus encouraged patronage of the arts, and the most influential writers were sponsored by close friends of Augustus: Maecenas stood behind the poets Virgil, Propertius, and Horace; Virgil and Horace would find further success in the attentions of Augustus himself, who commissioned the Aeneid from Virgil, and the Carmen saeculare from Horace on the occasion of the Secular Games. Unsurprisingly, the works of these poets ideologically conformed to the Augustan agenda, or at least did not directly contradict it.

The presence of the Augustan political agenda is undeniably present in Virgil’s work, especially in his Aeneid, but also standing behind his Eclogues and the Georgics. All three works draw on the new mythology Augustus created for himself as the leader of the Roman people in a new age of prosperity, order, and peace; however, there is a tension that underlies each of these texts that may act as a warning against the political and physical violence that a new age of peace will be founded upon. In the background of the pastoral Eclogues are the land appropriations executed by Octavian as promised to his veterans for their service against Brutus and Cassius; the Georgics adopt a cyclic pattern of violence and destruction counter-balanced by peace and growth—to the extent that the poem is didactic concerning farming practices, it is more accurately symbolic, founding each practice of growth on an act of destruction to fuel creation.

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68 See Wendell Clausen’s introduction to the first Eclogue: “‘Freedom’ (libertas) and ‘slavery’ (servitium, servitus) were established political metaphors, and libertas had acquired a current significance: it was the slogan of Octavian and his party. Virgil deliberately confuses the private with the public sense of libertas, and by so doing solves his literary problem, that of expressing gratitude to Octavian in the pastoral mode. Not gratitude for a personal favor—Titus has a purely poetic existence—but a disinterested, larger gratitude, expressed ‘Tituri sub persona’ as to a god, for the restoration of peace and order” (Virgil, Eclogues, translated by Wendell Clausen, Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 31-32).
and order; the *Aeneid* tells the story of the foundation of the Roman people, formed out of two other peoples locked in war with each other.

All three of these works are important for understanding Virgil’s interaction with the Augustan construction of *romanitas*, but I want to focus especially on an episode of the *Georgics*. Virgil’s works do not contain a substantial use of sexual themes, and where he does employ them, they are primarily concerned with the tension between individual relationships and a broader socio-political or natural harmony. The *Aeneid*, for example, relies upon Aeneas losing his wife (Book 2), mistakenly “marrying” Dido (Book 3), leaving her (Book 4), and the complications surrounding his engagement to Lavinia (the rest of the text). Only one of his sustained narratives directly concerns rape as a central theme: in the fourth book of the *Georgics*, the shepherd Aristaeus attempts to rape Eurydice, the wife of Orpheus; as she flees, she is bitten by a snake and dies from its poison. Orpheus travels to the underworld and persuades Pluto and Proserpina to allow Eurydice to return with him to the land of the living, under the rule that he not turn around to look at her. Orpheus, forgetting the rule in his excitement or worry, turns, and Eurydice’s shade returns below. Orpheus, devastated, produces music that disturbs the natural order of the world—although it proposes a new order based on his voice—until at last he is killed by bacchae (*Georg.* 4.453-527).

Virgil composed this narrative in which rape is the central incident, but it is only used to explain the problems that relate to the greater theme of the *Georgics*: Aristaeus’ life is disrupted when his bees die off from illness and starvation; this personal catastrophe reflects the greater

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69 For example, the practice of *bugonia*, which Aristaeus learns in order to replenish his beehives: killing oxen and leaving their bodies in a leafy grove; when Aristaeus returns after some time, bees burst out of their rotting flesh (*Georg.* 4.537-58).
problem of nature being disrupted by the distraught Orpheus. So although the attempted rape of Eurydice and her death are central to the narrative, the problem to be fixed is not the harm done to her, or Orpheus’ loss. Rather, Aristaeus’ sacrifice to Orpheus in apology (which addresses these two matters) is the step that must be taken to rectify the central issue of the narrative, which is the shift from order to disorder. It is significant that it is through Aristaeus’ piety (religious sacrifice) that he is able to undo the harm he has caused, and to nominally understand that there was a direct correlation between his attempt at rape and the loss of his bees. The episode mirrors the ritualized piety of this sort emphasized by Augustus as an ameliorative for the chaos of the civil wars and the return to normalcy for the offices of the Republic, not to mention Augustus’ insistence that sexual liberality was in no small part responsible for the dissolution of the Roman people.

The use of rape as a symbol of greater political or natural disorder was picked up as a repetitious theme in the histories of Livy. There are four prominent instances of rape in these histories: the rape of Rhea Silvia by the god Mars; the rape of the Sabine women by the men of Rome; the rape of Lucretia by Sextus Tarquinius; the attempted rape of Verginia by Appius

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70 Bees were common natural examples of order and harmony, and symbolic of human civilization—the loss of Aristaeus’ bees shows the extent to which disaster has fallen upon him. See L. P. Wilkinson, *The Georgics of Virgil*, new edition, University of Oklahoma, 1997, pp. 100-107, 175-82. Wilkinson also notes this particularly medieval interpretation of *bugonia*: “In Book 4 the young bullock killed for the regeneration of the stock of bees is Christ, the resultant bees are mankind reborn, and the room with four windows where the act is performed is the cross with its four arms of charity, humility, obedience and patience” (285, my emphasis).

71 Titus Livius (b. 69 or 64 BCE) most likely began his histories, the *Ab urbe condita*, c. 30 BCE, and continued to write them until the year of his death, 17 CE (T. J. Luce’s introduction to *The Rise of Rome*, esp. xi-xiii). All four of the prominent instances of rape which I discuss are presented in the first three books of the *Ab urbe condita*, composed well before the introduction of Augustus’ (still Octavian) legal reformations, but just after Antony’s defeat at Actium in 31 BCE, and Octavian’s return to the city. I find it likely, agreeing with Rex Stem, that Livy was not anticipating the Augustan reforms, but was contemplating Roman morality upon the composition of his work (“The Exemplary Lessons of Livy’s Romulus,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, vol. 137, 2007, pp. 439n16). The model of Livy’s work was taken up by Ovid in his *Ars amatoria, Metamorphoses*, and *Fasti*, and responded directly to the reforms of Augustus.
Claudius of the *decemviri*. Each of these episodes becomes a point of crisis that resolves in a
civil and political change for Rome—the victims are secondary to the act of rape (or its attempt)
and its consequences. While Livy maintains the constant theme of political change, he introduces
other elements that are particular to each episode: the rape of Rhea Silvia continues (after Venus
through Aeneas) the line of divinity in Roman citizenry through the birth of Romulus and
Remus, and rectifies the unjust expulsion of the rightful king of Alba Longa, Numitor, by his
brother Amulius; the rape of the Sabine women emphasizes the connection of justice and
necessity, along with Roman political agency in their policy of expansion; the rapes of Lucretia
and Verginia are ultimately about internal, republican agency in the face of tyranny, and the
triumph of virtue (Matthes 26-28).

Livy does not extend the eroticism of the women’s bodies to his reader, nor for the most
part does he eroticize the acts of violence themselves, maintaining legalistic terminology and
passive forms: the narrative as it leads to violence and the moment itself are sterilized by the
reportage of the writer. The event of Rhea Silvia’s rape has already passed by the time the
narrative focuses on her: “*Vi compressa Vestalis cum gemenum partum edidisset, seu ita rata seu
quia deus auctor culpae honestior erat, Martem incertae stirpis patrem nuncupat.*”

Livy’s use of “*vi compressa*” in this instance is the only indication of sexual misconduct, and its role in this
passage is to expiate any guilt that might be interpreted on to Rhea Silvia’s character as much as
it is to describe the crime. The allure of Rhea Silvia for the rapist derives, the reader must

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72 See James A. Arieti, who writes, “In the early books of Livy’s *Ab Urbe Condita* rape precedes the major political
developments” (“Rape and Livy’s View of Roman History,” *Sexual Violence in the Greek and Roman Worlds*,
73 See also Stephanie Jed, *Chaste Thinking*, University of Indiana Press, 1989.
74 “Once the Vestal, having been taken by force, had given birth to twins, she named Mars the father of their
uncertain lineage, either because she really believed it or because a god as the agent of the misdeed was more
honorable,” *Ab urbe* 1.4, translation by T. J. Luce, my emphasis.
suppose, from her lineage (descended from Aeneas) and her untouchable status as a Vestal Virgin, but other than that no description is given of her.\textsuperscript{75}

The subsequent three episodes are far more detailed but still largely describe the circumstances, rather than the act itself. Livy offers more explanation for the causes of rape, which is especially necessary in the case of the rape of the Sabines: the citizenry of Rome was made up of men expelled from their native cities, offered asylum by Romulus (\textit{Ab urbe} 1.8). They had no standing marriage contracts with neighboring towns, and their ambassadors were rebuffed when they were sent to secure these contracts. Insulted, Romulus established games in honor of Neptune, which drew many peoples from neighboring cities, including the entirety of the Sabine population. During the distraction of the games, the unmarried Roman men carried off unmarried women for wives ("iuventus Romana ad rapiendas virgines discurrit," \textit{Ab urbe} 1.9).

Livy’s choice of words in this case conceals any lust in this act: the women were taken (\textit{raptae}) at random (\textit{forte}), although the Romans were discerning and restrained enough to only take those unmarried; likewise, the prettiest were taken to men in senatorial families by plebian gangs ("quasdam forma excellentes, primoribus partum destinatas, ex plebe homines quibus datum negotium erat domos deferebant," \textit{Ab urbe} 1.9). The culmination of the episode is that the most beautiful woman ("unam longe ante alias specie ac pulchritudine insignem") was taken to a specific senator, Thalassius, which was the origin of a Roman marriage ritual.\textsuperscript{76}

Overwhelmingly, Livy uses the term \textit{raptus} to describe the action, which emphasizes the literal

\textsuperscript{75} The question of what constitutes erotic interest or the erotic imagination for readers is something I investigate further in the next section on Ovid’s writing and in Chapter 3 in the medieval context; however, there is a strong sense in Roman writing that the act of debasement or the overturning of virtue proves fertile ground for the erotic imagination—for example, Tarquin’s desire for Lucretia heightened by her reputed chastity (\textit{Ab urbe} 1.57). For information on the role of Vestal Virgins in the Republic and early Empire, see Sarolta A. Takács, \textit{Vestal Virgins, Sibyls, and Matrons}, University of Texas Press, 2008.

\textsuperscript{76} The cry of the gang "to Thalassius’ house!" (\textit{Thalassio!}) might explain the ritual exclamation \textit{Talassio} at Roman weddings ("inde nuptialem hanc vocem factam"; see Luce’s note to page 14 [343n14]).
action of the moment of carrying the women away from their families and de-emphasizes the sexual aspect of rape, unlike the “vi compressa” of Rhea Silvia’s episode and the resulting children.

The relative non-violence of this mass-rape—or “seizure,” to follow the Latin more correctly—feeds directly into Romulus’ necessary response against what seems to be Roman villainy. Romulus refocuses the blame upon the parents of the raped women, accusing them of pride (superbia) in their unwillingness to allow intermarriage with the Romans. He makes this argument directly to the Sabine women, granting them the appearance of agency and mutual respect. Livy uses Romulus’s intervention to further undermine the idea that the rape was lust-driven, but instead that it was a rational response to a necessity of state. The new husbands’ words that they had acted out of desire and love were likewise undermined, stated as excuses crafted to seduce the victims: “accedebant blanditiae virorum, factum purgantium cupiditate atque amore, quae maxime ad muliebre ingenium efficaces preces sunt” (“Persuasion was added by the husbands, who blamed their deed on desire and love, which are entreaties of a nature especially appealing to women,” Ab urbe 1.9, translation by T. J. Luce). The Sabine women are persuaded and appear once again several chapters later to unite the Romans and Sabines who have been warring: “si adfinitatis inter vos, si conubii piget, in nos vertite iras; nos causa belli, nos volnerum ac caedium viris ac parentibus sumus; melius peribimus quam sine alteris vestrum viduae aut orbae vivemus” (“If the union between you, if our marriage is loathsome to you, turn your wrath towards us; we are the cause of this war, of these wounds and slaughter between husbands and parents; better we should die than live widowed or bereft without one or the other
of you,” *Ab urbe* 1.13, translation by T. J. Luce). In this plea, Livy demonstrates the moral characteristic of a Roman woman to place her own body in peril for the good of the republic.

In the cases of Lucretia and Verginia, the woman’s body becomes the location for ideological combat with the republic at stake. More than the stories of Rhea Silvia and the Sabine women, the episodes of Lucretia and Verginia parallel each other, enough so that Livy notes it as well: “Sequitur aliud in urbe nefas, ab libidine ortum, haud minus foedo eventu quam quod per stuprum caedemque Lucretiae urbe regnoque Tarquinios expulerat, ut non finis solum idem decemviris qui regibus sed causa etiam eadem iperii amittendi esset” (“Another violation occurred in the city, born of lust, with a result no less horrible than that which had expelled the Tarquins, because of the rape and death of Lucretia, from the city and leadership; the *decemvirs* may not have met just the same end as the kings, but the cause for losing their power was indeed the same,” *Ab urbe* 3.44, translation by T. J. Luce). The cause of lust in the violence against these two women contrasts with the “rationalized” necessity of the rape of the Sabine women, and the divine motivations behind the rape of Rhea Silvia. Livy describes the rapists in similar language—Sextus Tarquin: “Ibi Sex. Tarquinium mala libido Lucretiae per vim stuprandae capit; cum forma tum spectata castitas incitat” (“There seizes Sextus Tarquin an evil desire to forcefully rape Lucretia; her chastity observed at that time urges him on,” 1.57); Appius Claudius: “Ap. Claudium virginis plebeiae stuprandae libido cepit” (“A desire seized Appius Claudius to rape the plebeian girl,” 3.44). In both cases Livy writes the men as passive agents to an external force, which “seizes” (*capit, cepit*) them, in the case of Tarquin a force that explicitly comes from Lucretia’s characteristics. Livy’s use of terminology is also indicative of the intention of the aggressors: Tarquin and Claudius are connected to *stuprum* (through the gerund

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77 See Julie Hemker, “Rape and the Founding of Rome,” *Helios*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1985, pp. 41-43.
form *stuprandae* in both cases), which implies a sexual deviance on their parts (*stuprum* being a crime committed by a male offender). Tarquin relies on force (*vim*) to rape Lucretia, where Claudius uses his superior status to corrupt the law, a fact which is emphasized by the description of Verginia as *plebeia*.

Like the Sabine women, Lucretia and Verginia are written as betrayed by their own beauty and chastity, Verginia’s description contained in the very line in which her father stabs her rather than let her fall into the Claudius’ hands: “*scelus Appi, puellae infelice formam, necessitatem patris deplorant*” (“[The people] lament Appius’s wickedness, the girl’s unlucky beauty, the father’s necessity,” *Ab urbe* 3.48). The admittance of passive accountability by the Sabine women (“*nos causa belli*”) foresees this descriptive pattern and is part of Livy’s technique to grant the victims of rape greater respectability in their status as “unchaste” (or their lost status as “virgin”): the physical descriptions of a female character become distanced from her being so that she does not become complicit in her own rape. However, paired with this is the victimization of the male aggressors, who are likewise undermined by female desirability. It is this trope that Ovid will repeatedly return to in his love poetry, and which becomes a staple of medieval literature of ravishment.

Livy seems to construct a narrative that is inescapable for the players involved—the rapist, the victim, or the family. The inevitability of these situations is exacerbated by the disparity of power between the rapist and the victim, or more correctly the *paterfamilias* of the victims. The rape of Lucretia becomes Collatinus’ failure to protect and control his family and honor, and therefore political interest; Verginius demonstrates his willingness to sacrifice his daughter on the altar of his agency when an unjust legal proceeding threatens to strip it away. Lucretia demonstrates this as well with her suicide, eliminating the possibility for questionable
paternity in Collatinus’ descendants as well as potential accusations that she might not have resisted Tarquin’s assault strongly enough.

The primary concern in these narratives is the rights of paternity, which Livy connects to republican ideals. The preoccupation with paternity undermines the apparent agency of the Sabine women and Lucretia in their own stories, as their motivations fall in line with the patriarchal agenda. Melissa Matthes writes,

Tarquin’s rape of Lucretia is more than the exercise of his political power. Sextus, as son of the tyrant, hopes to establish his right of succession through the rape. Lucretia’s rape is a patriarchal repetition; just as Rhea’s rape gave birth to a line of monarchs, Sextus, through his rape of Lucretia, is seeking to maintain that lineage. He is reenacting a founding claim to authority. (27)

Tarquin, a character embedded in the narrative who mirrors the reader’s consciousness of past events, actively joins his political aspirations with a paternal bid for power, enacted on the body of Lucretia.78 Just so when Verginius declares, “hoc te uno quo possum . . . modo, filia, in libertatem vindico” (“In the only way I can, daughter, I assert your freedom,” Ab urbe 3.48), before stabbing her in the heart—Verginia’s body becomes the one place upon which her father may express his own political freedom.

In these episodes, we see an undertone of eroticism that resides in the other two episodes as well: the chastity, the virtue, and the unwillingness of a woman seem to make her more attractive in the Livian construction. This erotic aesthetic is connected ultimately to patriarchal value, as they respond to the concerns of paternity and power (e.g. the chaste and virtuous woman ensures paternity; the unwilling woman provides a challenge to be conquered, proving masculinity for the rapist). Ultimately, the connection of the erotic and power clarifies the position of the crime of rape uncomfortably spanning the gap of lust and the political: as the two

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78 Reliance on the audience’s foreknowledge or familiarity with the content of the work is a typical strategy employed by Ovid as well, as I will discuss below. See Rosati 274-75, 283-85.
concepts are brought together, it becomes increasingly clear that the role of power is central, and that desire for control of another’s body is inherently patriarchal. The act of rape in this context, and the erotic value attached to it, is entirely about power, itself the target of lust; the excuse of the woman’s beauty as desirable is merely that, an excuse, and one utilizes aesthetic to distract from politics.

1.2.3 Ovid’s Transgressive Verses

Ovid’s early poetry, the Amores and the Heroides (both most likely published and revised between 20 BCE and 10 BCE), while not in line with Augustan ideology does not contradict it to a noticeable extent. Although he pushes the boundaries of the Julian Laws with some of the poetry of the Amores (for example, 1.5, 3.14), it is not so outrageous as to stray from themes already touched upon by elegists such as Tibullus or Propertius—erotic poetry at this time most likely was still seen as innocuous, especially when it was not overtly programmatic, as when Ovid composed the Ars amatoria. Some of the poetry of the Amores would have been approved under Augustan ideology, such as 2.13 and 2.14, which come down strongly against abortion, notably even in cases of rape. Ovid utilizes Virgilian nomenclature to make his point, as when he uses of the name “Ilia” for Rhea Silvia).

Ilia si tumido geminos in ventre necasset,
casurus dominae conditor Urbis erat;
si Venus Aenean gravida temerasset in alvo,
Caesaribus tellus orba futura fuit. (Am. 2.14.15-18)80

79 Kimberly Bell notes that Virgil had changed the name of Romulus’ mother from Rhea Silvia to Ilia, recalling another name of Troy, “Illium,” and the variation of Ascanius’ other name, “Ilulus”: “This transformation of Rhea Silvia’s name to Ilia unites the seemingly disparate traditions of both Aeneas and Romulus as founding fathers of Troy, while it associates Romulus more directly with Trojan heroes” (“‘Translatio’ and the Constructs of Roman Nation in Virgil’s ‘Aeneid’,” Rocky Mountain Review, vol. 62, no. 1, 2008, pp. 11-24 [18].

80 “Had Ilia ripped those twins from her swollen belly / Our City’s Founder would have been lost. / Had Venus aborted the unborn Aeneas, no Caesars today would / Exist in the world,” translated by Peter Green, The Erotic Poems.
Horace’s death in 8 BCE left Ovid the premier poet of the Empire, and rather than follow Horace’s characteristic caution with his poetry, Ovid became more perverse in his opposition to the Augustan moral program. The *Ars amatoria*, a didactic poem on how to seduce effectively (or in Augustan terms, how to commit adultery), was revised and republished with an extra book added; the *Metamorphoses* was undertaken, and the first draft completed by the year of Ovid’s exile in 8 CE. Ovid attests that the reason for his exile was a “song and a mistake” (“carmen et error,” *Tristia* 2.207). It is commonly thought that the song was his *Ars amatoria*, although a strong argument may be made for the *Metamorphoses* as the work more outrageous to an Augustan audience.  

Aside from the obvious support of adulterous behavior championed in the *Ars amatoria* and the *Metamorphoses*, in both these later works Ovid repeatedly introduces figures that had been and were associated with Augustus’ political power, such as Romulus, Apollo, and Jupiter, as sexual predators; he also undermines the Augustan architectural social projects by casting their roles in his own counter-moral agenda. This is notable in the *Ars amatoria* when Ovid ties the physical space of theaters to adultery:

Sed tu praecipue curvis venare theatris:  
Haec loca sunt voto fertiliora tuo.  
Illic invenies quod ames, quod ludere possis,  
Quodque semel tangas, quodque tenere velis.  
Ut redit itque frequens longum formica per agmen,  
Granifero solitum cum vehit ore cibum,  
Aut ut apes saltusque suos et olentia nactae  
Pascua per flores et thyma summa volant,  
Sic ruit ad celebres cultissima femina ludos:  
Copia iudicium saepe morata meum est.

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81 In *Tristia* 2, Ovid continues to write, “Altera pars superest, qua turpi carmine factus arguor obsceni doctor adulterii” (“But the first charge stands: that through an improper poem / I falsely professed foul adultery,” 2.211-12, translated by Peter Green, *The Poems of Exile*, University of California Press, 2005). This seems to indicate a particular work was used in a legal way against him; see Peter Green’s Introduction to Ovid’s *Erotic Poems*, pp. 38-40. Alternatively, Jo-Marie Claassen takes “carmen” in a more general sense, as Ovid’s “poetry” broadly speaking; see *Displaced Persons: The Literature of Exile from Cicero to Boethius*, Duckworth, 1999, p. 29.
Rome’s very architecture becomes complicit in its citizens’ adultery, subverting one of Augustus’ primary spheres of communicating his moral imperatives. Ovid moves on to associate the search for a sexual partner with the act of hunting, a common Ovidian trope that looks forward in the text to the violence of rape. This violence is held off momentarily by the almost Virgilian figures of ants and bees working, which subverts the language of *Georgics* into a new language of adultery: adultery becomes a kind of work and certainly an organized activity engaged in by citizens, not deviants. This activity must then also counter the claim Virgil makes in *Aeneid* 4.86-89, that love stills the work on the city of Troy: here, love is the work of the city.

It is the connection of Romulus as the author of the rape of the Sabine women, and as the author of the “tradition of adultery” in this context, that would have been especially objectionable: “Primus sollicitos fecisti, Romule, ludos, / cum iuvit viduos rapta Sabina viros” (“Such incidents at the games go back to Romulus— / men without women, Sabine rape,” *Ars am.* 1.101-02, translated by Peter Green). Linked to the use of Romulus in these lines is also the concern for the generation of children to repopulate the city of Rome: Ovid can’t help but emphasize the link between the population of the city under Romulus (“men without women”),

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82 “But the theatre’s curving tiers should form your favorite / Hunting-ground: here you are sure to find / The richest returns, be your wish for lover or playmate, / A one-night stand or a permanent affair. / As ants hurry to and fro in column, mandibles / Clutching grains of wheat / (Their regular diet), as bees haunt fragrant pastures / And meadows, hovering over the thyme, / Flitting from flower to flower, so our fashionable ladies / Swarm to the games in such crowds, I often can’t / Decide which I like. As spectators they come, come to be inspected: / Chaste modesty doesn’t stand a chance.” See also Stephen Hinds, *The Metamorphosis of Persephone*, Cambridge University Press, 1987, p. 34.

83 “Non coeptae adsurgunt turres, non arma juventus / exercet potusve aut propugnacula bello / tuta parant: pendent opera interrupta minaæque / murorum ingentes aequataque machine caelo” (“Towers half built rose / No farther: men no longer trained in arms / Or toiled to make harbors and battlements / Impregnable. Projects were broken off, / Laid over, and the menacing huge walls / with cranes unmoving stood against the sky,” translation by Robert Fitzgerald).
and the legal institutions meant to boost the birth rate of Romans under Augustus. Such a comparison between the actions of Romulus and the Julian Laws and the *Lex Papia Poppaea* would seem to mock the foundations of Augustan legal institutions and national myth.

Contrary to the version of this episode portrayed by Livy, Ovid’s version focuses on the lust of the men and the erotic description of the women’s bodies and reactions. The men and girls become animals, with the typically Ovidian couplet, “Ut fugiunt aquilas, timidissima turba, columbae/ ut fugit invisos agna novella lupos” (“Like doves in a terrified mass flee eagles, like a young lamb flees hostile wolves,” *Ars am.* 1.117-18, translation by Peter Green); the women pale and react in various ways: they freeze, they run, they tear their hair, they cry for their mothers (1.120-24); their fear and resistance ultimately makes them more desirable: “et potuit multas ipse decere timor” (“Their own fear gave many of them beauty,” 1.125). These descriptions become characteristic of Ovid’s erotic constructions of rape—the action is focused on the theme of pursuit, the power of the male figure that inspires fear in the female. The scene of sexual assault itself is absent, left implied and eroticized by aesthetic expectation.

It is telling of the nature of eroticism that both Livy and Ovid base the erotic imagination regarding rape in the victimization of virtue. For Livy, the allure of chastity for evil men lies in their power to overturn it, although Lucretia’s desirability appeals also to her husband, and it is through his boasting of her virtue and beauty, and then comparison with his companions wives that Tarquin will first encounter her (*Ab urbe* 1.57). But where for Livy the intention behind the act of rape is where the moral weight of the act lies, rather than in the act itself, Ovid undermines intention and rationality with the act. When justified and “rationalized” as in the rape of the Sabine women, no Roman man is overcome with lust in Livy’s account, whereas in the *Ars amatoria* not only Roman men of the narrative are seduced by the terror of the Sabine women
but the Roman audience as well. In this, Ovid is consistent in his later message that women will be grateful to their rapists and that such violent attentions actually honor the woman’s attractiveness:

Vim licet appelles: grata est vis ista puellis:
Quod iuvat, invitae saepe dedisse volunt.
Quaecumque est Veneris subita violata rapina,
Gaudet, et inprobitas muneris instar habet. (Ars Am. 1.673-76)\(^{84}\)

The depictions of women’s fear in these passages is styled to appeal to a male audience which seeks an excuse to desire. The subsequent acquiescence of the Sabine women, reinforced by the lines above, gives that excuse, with the only contradiction in the probability of an ironic reading.\(^{85}\)

Ovid demonstrates his awareness of Augustan policy and legal institutions by repeatedly associating them with acts of sexual violence. The *Metamorphoses* seem at first to fall in line with Augustan associations with the gods: midway through the first books, the gods come together as a council to discuss the offences of Lycaon (1.163-252). Thomas Habinek writes, “Ovid presents the council of the gods in *Metamorphoses* 1 in such a way as to call to mind the meeting of the Roman senate as well as the primacy of Augustus, as *princeps*, within it.”\(^{86}\) In this case, Ovid emphasizes the association between Jupiter and Augustus with an apostrophe to the latter, which also laments the assassination of Caesar (1.199-208); however the same apostrophe

\(^{84}\) “It’s all right to use force – force of *that* sort goes down well with / the girls: what in fact they love to yield / they’d often rather have stolen. Rough seduction / Delights them, the audacity of near-rape / Is a compliment,” translation by Peter Green.

\(^{85}\) This consistency of eroticized violence will break down in the similar eroticization of the fearful Philomela in the sixth book of the *Metamorphoses*. This conclusion is counter to the conclusion of Hemker, who sees a contradiction in the depiction of the raped Sabine women and the later lines of the *Ars amatoria*, although I agree with her description of Ovid’s intention. She writes, “on a deeper level, the poem criticizes the philosophy of those who subscribe to the narrator’s attitudes towards women. Ovid shows that the definition of heroic manhood espoused by Livy has tragic consequences for those who are its victims” (46).

also raises questions about the magnitude of response in Roman foreign policy and in Augustus’ response to personal threats, reflected in Jupiter’s choice to eradicate the entire human race with a flood following his punishment of Lycaon.  

Augustus’ patron god Apollo is also initially presented favorably, as the destroyer of the Python that was created by the very flood meant to cleanse the earth of corruption. Again, Ovid seizes upon the association between the god and Augustus, this time through Apollo’s establishment of the sacred games: “neve operis famam posset delere vetustas, / instituit sacros celebri certamine ludos, / Pythia de domitae serpentis nomine dictos” (Then to ensure / The centuries should have no power to dull / The lustre of that deed, Apollo founded / The sacred games, the crowded contests, known / As Pythian from that serpent overthrown,” Met. 1.445-47). This reference to the creation of the Pythian games are a clear reminder of Augustus’ renewal of the Ludi Saeculare, soaked in the imagery of Apollo, Diana, and Jupiter.

Having established these associations between the gods and Augustus, the remainder of the first book of the Metamorphoses is primarily concerned with Apollo’s rape of Daphne and Jupiter’s rape of Io. The lines beginning the narrative of Daphne and Apollo are “primus amor Phoebi Daphne Paneia, quem non / fors ignara dedit, sed saeva Cupidinis ira” (“Apollo’s first love was Daphne, Peneus’s daughter, which was not sparked by blind fate, but by Cupid’s savage wrath,” Met. 1.452-53, my translation). The phrase primus amor is particular to Apollo, but also generally applied to the poem: it is the first erotic union of a couple portrayed in the epic. Deucalion and Pyrrha are a piously connected couple and establish amor as not descriptive of a familial or dutiful relationship but of an erotic and violent one. It cannot be by mistake that

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87 HABINEK 51-52; see also William S. Anderson’s notes on this section, in Ovid’s Metamorphoses Book 1-5, University of Oklahoma, 1997, pp. 168-76.

Ovid chooses Apollo to be the first of the gods overthrown by Cupid’s arrows: the god who was so pointedly used by Augustus as a symbol for virtue, and the god already established in Ovid’s earlier poetry as his own muse (Amores 1.1, 2.1).

The subsequent undermining of Jupiter can be read in the high number of rapes he perpetrates throughout the Metamorphoses—Book 1: Io; Book 2: Callisto, Europa; Book 4: Danae; Book 6: Europa, Asterie, Leda, Antiope, Alcmene, Danae, Aegina, Mnemosyne (all displayed on Arachne’s loom); Book 10: Ganymede. When his own daughter, Proserpina, is raped by his brother Pluto, Jupiter’s response is to redefine rape: “sed si modo nomina rebus / addere vera placet, non hoc iniuria factum, / verum amor est” (“If we allow / things proper names, here is no harm, no crime, / but love and passion,” Met. 5.524-26, translation by A. D. Melville). Ovid uses Jupiter’s role as the lawgiver of the gods, especially in light of his authority in Book 1, to give his words more weight than simply a father making a legal choice about the legal union of his daughter: this redefinition of rape must apply to Jupiter’s earlier activities and act as an argument on his own behalf. External to the text, Jupiter’s redefinition of sexual violence as love mirrors inversely Augustus’ legal redefinition of love as sexual violence, in the Lex Iulia de adulteriis.

Ultimately, the contexts in which Ovid presents his rape narratives, especially in his selection of agents of rape, respond directly to political and social contexts of Rome under Augustus. His descriptive style and aesthetic choices draw heavily on his elegiac predecessors, and he uses this aesthetic as a way to undermine the nation-building literature of Livy and Virgil. Roman elegy, typically concerned with questioning the masculine role of the poet and playing with themes of rape and sexual violence, provided Ovid with a subversive approach to take on the Augustan concept of “Roman virtue” and “renewal.” Like Virgil’s and Livy’s works, Ovid’s
national writing suggests a vision of Rome founded on rape and violence. But unlike his literary predecessors, Ovid eroticizes these founding events and insists that the very figures, both historical and divine, whom Augustus exalts as examples of Roman virtue and piety were complicit in that eroticization.
1.3 Contextualizing Philomela in Ovid’s Rape Narratives

In the first five books of the *Metamorphoses*, there are at least seventeen instances of rape or attempted rape; these vary in their length, presentation, and purpose in the text. In the sixth book, if we take each image on Arachne’s loom as a separate instance, the count doubles; that book then concludes with two additional instances, one of which is the graphically violent rape of Philomela (the other is the rape of Orithyia by Boreas). The violence in the rape of Philomela is out of character from Ovid’s previous (and many) depictions of rape, from which the victim emerges without mutilation or descriptive injury, if perhaps pregnant or metamorphosed as a signifier of trauma. The victim’s emotional anguish is rarely depicted, and he or she never directly responds to the attacker. In contrast, Philomela is serially raped, her distress is depicted in detail, she responds to her attacker, and is mutilated, only to be raped again. The only aspect of her story that remains consistent with previous episodes is that the erotic language that Ovid has used to describe many of the earlier instances of rape remain present in this narrative as well. Ovid uses this combination of established rhetoric and brutally violent imagery to undermine the eroticism of Philomela’s rape, and by the extension the many previous eroticized instances of rape that he had established in the previous five and a half books.

In the previous section, I discussed the presence of rape in Roman literary representation and how the as a common theme it related to the Augustan socio-political agenda. Ovid’s works set him apart from his contemporaries in the exaggerated frequency with which he returned to

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89 I differentiate in these instances from Paul Murgatroyd’s definition of a “rape narrative,” for which he presents specific criteria (see “Plotting in Ovidian Rape Narrative” 75-92). My count here follows Amy Richlin, “Reading Ovid’s Rapes” 158-79. The length of these instances ranges from a mention in a single line to the long narratives of Proserpina and Philomela.
the theme of rape and the variations with which he approached it. His repeated approaches to
historical and mythological events that centered around rape indicate a counter-Augustan agenda
which suggested a critique of the uniform Roman identity the emperor was so eager to construct.

In this section, I turn to Ovid’s thematic use of rape imagery, specific to the *Metamorphoses*,
beginning with the narratives of Daphne and Apollo (1.452-567) and Proserpina and Pluto
(5.385-571), which act as rhetorical foundations for the narrative of Philomela, Tereus, and
Procne (6.424-674). The comparison of the two earlier narratives with the latter allows the reader
to understand the manner in which Ovid establishes thematic expectation and then overturns it,
requiring an adjustment in the reader’s relationship to the material: what had previously been
erotic becomes horrific, and what had before been a depiction of power becomes instead a
depiction of abuse and atrocity. In reversing erotic expectations of power, Ovid makes an
implicit critique of Augustan methods of self-representation, not to mention the silencing of
subjects who find themselves at odds with the project of restrictive national character.

Ovid’s use of rape as a prominent theme in his work is two-fold. As I argue above, his
representations of sexual violence are identifiably political, as his scenes emulate and respond to
the politically performative scenes of rape in Livy’s works. As he associates erotic aesthetic with
subjective power, he undermines the Livian representation of sexual violence as solely
communal. Instead, Ovid’s representations of rape are conceptualized as individual and deeply
personal: the female victims are objectified, silenced, and sacrificed to the erotics of power.

Fathers—such as Peneus and Pandion—are unable to save their daughters and have their
masculine expectations subverted through their weeping; or, like Jupiter and again Pandion,
become complicit in the rape of their own daughters through their legal right as *paterfamilias*.
Mothers and sisters and other members of the female community express rage (Ceres, Procne),
recall their own objectifications and victimizations (the Muses, Cyane, Arethusa), and provide an alternate space for expression (Arachne, Philomela). Ovid’s insistence on the personal aspect of rape denies the appropriation of female trauma from which to build a masculine community in the way that Livy does from Rhea Silvia, the Sabine women, Lucretia, and Virgins—more often, the trauma of the individual becomes the trauma of the community, as we see with Io and Callisto as they are punished after their assaults, with Ceres as she changes the natural order of the seasons with her sadness, and Philomela and Procne as the entire family collapses into violence.

1.3.1 Daphne

The first rape narrative of the Metamorphoses (begun with the words primus amor) is the story of Daphne and Apollo (1.452-567), a story primarily erotic in nature and serious (as opposed to comedic) to the extent that it deals with the struggle of desiring without reciprocation and being desired without consent. However, as with much of Ovid’s work, when the serious elements of the episode are frustrated one after another, it becomes possible to read comedic aspects into the episode. Likewise, due to Ovid’s emulation of Virgil’s second Eclogue, there is an element of intellectual play involved that must also be intended for the educated reader to recognize.

With this episode, Ovid establishes several criteria crucial to his rape narratives. Apollo falls in love with Daphne just after having seen her (“Phoebus amat visaeque cupit conubia Daphnes,” Met. 1.490), in a series of figurae invoking fire:

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\text{utque leves stipulæ demptis adolentur aristis,} \\
\text{ut facibus saepes ardent, qas forte viator} \\
\text{vel nimis admovit vel iam sub luce reliquit,}
\]
sic deus in flammas abiit, sic pectore toto
uritur et sterilem sperando nutrit amorem. (1.492-96)

The sequence of Apollo “seeing and loving” and Ovid’s use of fire-related vocabulary
(“adolentur, facibus, ardent, flammata, uritur”)—customary language signifying erotic love in
Latin poetry—become a regular construction in the numerous, subsequent episodes of rape in
the *Metamorphoses* and other later Ovidian works. This narrative sequence acts as a foundation
to eroticize the episode as a whole, as it builds up from the visual trigger to both the verbal and
physical pursuit of Phoebus’ object of desire (Daphne). The shift from internal process to
external action—Apollo’s recognition of his own lust and then contemplation of how to
proceed—is largely absent from Ovid’s other treatments of rape (as can be read in the rape in
Proserpina), but it will resurface to a much greater extent in the narrative of Tereus and
Philomela.

Apollo’s first recourse, after Daphne immediately flees from him, is to call out to her in a
lengthy address in an attempt to persuade her to love him. While the greater part of this speech
proclaims his own virtues, his use of comparative figures at the beginning of the address
foreshadows common pairings of predator and prey that Ovid will repeatedly use to describe the
pursuit or threatening of women by men:

“nympha, precor, Penei, mane! non insequor hostis;
nympha mane! sic agna lupum, sic cerva leonem,

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90 “Just as when the dry stalks are burned once the harvest has been brought in, or as a hedge lit by a torch, which a
traveler by chance either held too close or discarded still smoldering at dawn, just so was the god consumed in
flames, just so was his heart set alight, and he sustained himself hoping for a fruitless love,” my translation, here and
in the future unless otherwise stated. Compare with 3.370-74, when Echo first sees Narcissus: “ergo ubi Narcissus
per devia rura vagantem / vidit et incaluit, sequitur vestigia furtim, / quoque magis sequitur, flamma propiore
calescit, / non aliter / quam cum summis circumlita taedis / admotas rapiunt vivacia sulphura flammata” (“Now when
she saw Narcissus wandering / In the green byways, Echo’s heart was fired; / And stealthily she followed, and the
more / She followed him, the nearer flamed her love, / As when a torch is lit and from the tip / The leaping sulphur
grasps the offered flame,” translation by A. D. Melville).
91 For examples, Virgil, *Aeneid* 4.2, 23; Catullus 51.10.
92 See *Met*. 5.395, in the rape of Proserpina: “paene simul visa est dilectaque raptaque Diti” (“she was seen, desired,
and seized nearly at once by Dis”); and *Fasti* 3.21, the rape of Rhea Silvia: “Mars videt hanc visamque cupit
potiturque cupita” (“Mars sees her, and once seen desires her, and desired she is seized”).
sic aquilam penna fugiunt trepidante columbae, 
hostes quaeque suos; amor est mihi causa sequendi.” (1.504-07)⁹³

And shortly after he has finished his unsuccessful attempt to woo her, the narrator describes the chase:

utra canis in vacuo leporem cum Gallicus aruo 
vidit, et hic prae dam pedibus petit, ille salutem, 
al ter inhaesuro similis iam iamque tenere 
sperat et extento stringit vestigia rostro, 
al ter in ambiguo est an sit compr ensus et ipsis 
morsibus eripitur tangentiaque ora relinquit. (1.533-38)⁹⁴

In this scene, Apollo initially sets up these figures as counter examples to his own actions and the activity of love, implying that such metaphors are inappropriate as descriptors. However, they are immediately reversed in their application, which harms Apollo’s credibility certainly, but also makes “love” into a violent act and animalizes those engaged. From this point on, these hunting analogies are repeatedly used in the Metamorphoses’ rape narratives, reliably using the figures of the wolf and the lamb, the bird of prey and the dove, and the hound and the hare.⁹⁵

These analogies serve not only to heighten the action of the episode, but also to add to the physical desirability of the pursued character: Daphne’s hair becomes disheveled, and she has become pale (1.540-43), imagery that Ovid uses frequently in his rape narratives, but also as

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⁹³ “Nymph, please, Daphne, wait! No enemy pursues you; wait nymph! The lamb flees the wolf, the deer the lion, doves with anxious feathers the eagle, each animal has its foe; but my reason for following you is love.”
⁹⁴ “Just like when a Gallic hound has spotted a hare in an empty field, and it dashes forward for its prey, the hare for its life, he seems just about to catch her, and now he hopes to grasp her and he grazes her feet with his extended snout, she is uncertain whether she’s been caught, but rescued from those very teeth she leaves the grasping mouth behind.”
⁹⁵ Virgil’s influence here is evident: see Eclogue 2.63-65, “torva leaena lupum sequitur, lupus ipse capellam, / florentem cytisum sequitur lasciva capella, / te Corydon, o Alexi; trahit sua quemque voluptas.” (“the savage lioness pursues the wolf, the wolf himself the goat, / the hungry goat the flowering trefoil, / in this way Corydon pursues you, Alexi; their desire drives each of them,” my translation). Ovid uses this analogy in his other works as well: Ars amatoria 1.117-18; Tristia 1.74-78.
alluring characteristics a woman might have generally and as external symptoms of love in both men and women. In this case, the chase itself augments these erotic characteristics:

Plura locuturum timido Peneia cursu  
fugit cumque ipso verba imperfecta reliquit,  
tum quoque visa decens. nudabant flamina vestes,  
et levis impulsos retro dabat aura capillos;  
aucta fuga forma est. (1.525-30)

The eroticization of resistance on the part of the female protagonist in this case is mirrored in later episodes in which the victim resists her attacker; in other cases, her desirability is enhanced by her fear or her flight. The construction of the erotic elements of this passage invite the reader to agree with the narrator’s assertion and to become excited by the description; much of its erotic possibility relies on the reader’s interest and acceptance of complicity.

The scene of Apollo’s pursuit of Daphne falls into the pastoral mode with Ovid’s emphasis on natural imagery, but even more so by Apollo’s rather lengthy address to Daphne (21 lines), imploring her to stop while simultaneously complementing her beauty, and then turning to himself as a desirable lover with appealing qualities—stylistically the address shares much with Virgil’s second Eclogue. The use of this address and the subsequent violence of the chase

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96 See Met. 1.477; and also Am. 1.5  
97 “Daphne fled him while he was still speaking, running in fear, and left him and his unfinished words behind, and even then she seemed beautiful. Gusts of wind were blowing aside her robes, and the light breeze was pushing back her loosened hair; her flight increased her beauty.”  
98 For example, when the Sun rapes Leucothoe, Met. 4.230: “ipse timor decuit” (“her fear became her”); Arethusa in her flight from Alpheus, 5.603: “et quia nuda fui, sum visa paratior illi” (“and because I was naked, I seemed more ready for him”). Ovid uses this trope in his other works as well: Fasti 2.757, 5.608; Ars Amatoria 1.126 (see Richlin 162). I agree with Richlin against the arguments of Leo Curran and Julie Hemker that the narrator uses these passages to display an empathy for the victim’s fear; the frequency with which Ovid uses descriptive passages in this way signals that they are used as literary devices of erotic description that obscure the authenticity of the victim’s situation in favor of the rapist’s—and the reader’s—desire. See Leo C. Curran, “Rape and Rape Victims in the Metamorphoses,” Arethusa, vol. 11, 1978, pp. 229-30; and Hemker 45.  
99 For an explanation of the pastoral category, see Paul Alpers, The Singer of the Eclogues: “It has become a commonplace to say that pastoral is a mode, not a genre. This observation bears witness not only to the way pastoral cuts across generic distinctions—so that we have pastoral lyrics, pastoral dramas, pastoral novels, and so on—but also to the way in which ‘mode’ has become an indispensable critical term. When we speak of the ‘pastoral mode’ or ‘the Augustan mode’ or ‘the metaphysical mode’ or ‘the allegorical mode,’ we mean more than styles and conventions: we mean these as reflecting, expressing, and encoding certain outlooks on life,” (University of California Press, 1979, pp. 6-7). Ovid’s use of mode within the epic form and genre is divers, and it is important to
frame the episode as one particularly interested in the use of poetic expression and possible recourse with the failure of poetry. The tension between the “civilized” and the “rural” that Ovid writes into the scene are focused on the failure of Phoebus’ address and his subsequent reliance on physical pursuit, the contrast between speech and violence. Ovid will play with this mode several times throughout the *Metamorphoses*, but more immediately in a series of failed attempts by other gods to utilize this same form of address, who, foiled, fall back on rape to achieve their goals.

The first of these is Jupiter’s rape of Io, followed by the framed narrative of Pan’s rape of Syrinx. Both of these narratives contain the formula read in the myth of Apollo and Daphne—the god sees the nymph, loves her, then rapes her; however each episode becomes progressively shorter, and although the gods attempt to follow the pastoral example, Jupiter is given only a few lines (*Met.* 1.589-97) to woo Io before she runs, and Pan is given none at all (1.699-701). The result is humorous and increasingly satirical rather than pastoral, as the idealized opportunities to persuade with words and song are foiled by female characters who are aware of their meta-narrative situation and actively resist it. This model repeatedly shows the failure of eclogic poetry, and by extension all speech, to sway an unwilling lover to change her mind. Future episodes of rape largely lack these verbal attempts on the part of the lover, who instead immediately relies on his (or her) force or cunning to assault the victim. The next several incidents portray this: Jupiter assumes Diana’s form to rape Callisto, and the form of a bull to lure away Europa; Neptune’s attempts to woo Crow are referred to but are quickly dismissed,

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100 Notably 13.789-869, when Polyphemus sings an embarrassingly bad parody of an eclogue to the nymph Galatea before murdering her lover Acis.

101 For the narrative function of this series of pursuits and assaults (Phoebus–Jupiter–Pan), see Rosati 274-75.
“vidit et incaluit pelagi deus, utque precando / tempora cum blandis absumpsit inania verbis, / vim parat et sequitur” (“the god of the sea saw me and burned for me, and after he wasted useless time begging me with flattering words, he turned to force, and pursued me,” 2.574-76).

Such episodes do not focus on the act of rape itself as the central point of the narrative, but more frequently on the use of rape to progress another plot, such as the birth of a child (Callisto, Danae), a metamorphosis (Crow, Salmacis and Hermaphroditus), or as a way to display the characteristic of a god (the splendor of the sun when he rapes Leuthocoe; the power of Bacchus when he transforms into dolphins the sailors attempting to rape him). In this way, Ovid often uses rape as a device in his storytelling rather than the end of his narratives—the focus of the plot always concludes away from the victim, and more often than not the act of rape is merely a pretext for a different narrative.

In some cases, the details surrounding the violence in an episode are not wholly unconcerned with sex, and Ovid employs a pattern of parental, especially paternal, concern that highlights the value young women have in being able to produce the next generation of a family: Peneus says to Daphne, prior to Apollo’s assault, “generum mihi filia, debes / ....debes mihi, nata nepotes” (“you owe me a son-in-law, daughter, you owe me grandchildren,” Met. 1.481-82); this is echoed by Inachus’ lament upon discovering that Io has been changed into a cow, “at tibi ego ignarus thalamos taedasque parabam, / spesque fuit generi mihi primas, secunda nepotem. / de grege nunc tibi vir, nunc de grege natus habendus” (“and I, unaware, was preparing for you a wedding, and I had hope first for a son-in-law, then a grandchild. Now you must have a husband and child from the herd,” 1.658-60). Juxtaposed with the sexual violence that occurs in narrative context of these scenes, we are confronted with the idea that the trauma of rape affects both the personal being of the victim and the communal space of the family. In this latter
conceptualization of the father-as-victim, Ovid appeals to the Augustan preoccupation with securing future generations, although he does so by undermining the power of the paterfamilias to preserve his own sovereignty over his family in confrontation with a greater power. The insertions of the father’s voice in these instances is a reminder that the stakes of sexual violence are themselves diverse, not necessarily at odds, but possibly competing for attention as the father’s concern for family eclipses the victim’s concern for self.

1.3.2 Proserpina

Rape is frequently a social issue in the _Metamorphoses_—the consequences of the violence are judged not only by the victim and her family, but also by the surrounding community, requiring response. The story of the rape of Proserpina (5.385-571) addresses the especially the social aspect of rape. It allows, for the first time in the greater narrative, that a “female voice” through the character of Proserpina’s mother, Ceres, seek judicial recompense for rape. It is also the first narrative to directly addresses rape itself as an unjust or immoral activity—as opposed to Juno’s censures of Jupiter, which are more concerned with fidelity, or Peneus and Inachus, who do nothing to attempt to rectify their daughters’ situations, but whose lamentations give them up for lost along with future generations.

The story of Proserpina’s rape, as we read it in the _Metamorphoses_,\(^\text{102}\) is part of a double-framed story: Minerva returning from Seriphos stops by Helicon to speak with the muses. An unnamed muse relates two stories to Minerva, the first about the muses’ near escape from rape at the hands of Pyreneus, king of Thrace (5.269-293), still so recent that it affects the speaking muse: “et nondum tota me mente recepi” (“I still haven’t fully recovered,” 5.275); the second is

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\(^{102}\) Ovid has another version of the rape of Proserpina in the _Fasti_ 4.417-620 which I do not discuss here.
the muses’ contest with the Pierides (5.294-678). In this contest, the muse Calliope had chosen as her song an account of the rape of Proserpina, which is then reproduced by the unnamed muse for Minerva and for Ovid’s audience, a story in which the nymph Arethusa recounts her own experience of rape (5.577-641). Rosati writes:

Every change of speaker … introduces a new voice, which, however, is controlled by each of the voices that precede it, beginning with the primary narrator, the external narrator; and it is certainly not always easy either to preserve one’s awareness of the precise narrative situation in which each story is located, or to perceive the subjective intentions or effects of distortion produced by the play among narrative voices. (272)

However, the overlay of female testimony along with the constant presence of a female audience—Minerva listening to the muses, Ceres listening to Arethusa—proposes a communal response to rape in which women regain their voices. The shared experiences of the many female characters of these interwoven narratives constructs a positive model for mutual understanding, reinforced by the ability of the muses to reproduce the experiences of other women alongside their own. The inclusion of these experiences within the narrative about Proserpina reconstructs the details that are elided by the conventions of the genre, in which the rape of and trauma to Proserpina are left out. The muse is able to reinsert these details by describing her own trauma, the trauma of Cyane, and the details of Arethusa’s assault, as well as the desperation of Ceres’ search for her missing daughter.

Proserpina’s rape does not follow the formula of the Daphne and Io: Pluto makes no attempt to address her, nor is there any chase or pursuit; the emphasis is on the description of Proserpina, her innocence and helplessness in the face of Pluto’s abduction of her. Ovid repeatedly uses legal terms related to raptus, the crime of abduction.\(^{103}\) The one similarity to the

\(^{103}\) The legal use of raptus, and its variations (rapta, raptor, etc.), meaning “seized” or “stolen,” is used to refer to the seizure of persons only twice previously in the Metamorphoses: when Europa is kidnapped by Jupiter (3.3) and immediately after Perseus rescues Andromeda (4.758). It is used in this sense seven times in the fifth book alone: lines 395, 402, 416, 425, 471, 492, 520.
formula found in the assault on Daphne is that Ovid describes Pluto’s process of falling in love through a progression similar to that of Apollo and Jupiter: “paene simul visa est dilectaque raptaque Diti” (“Almost as soon as she was seen, she was desired and taken by Dis [Pluto],” *Met.* 5.395). While the episode does not show her being sexually assaulted, the details of the episode heavily imply it, including the mention of flowers spilling out of her dress (5.399), and that her girdle is shown to Ceres by Cyane (5.469-70). The focus of much of the action in this narrative is not on Proserpina and Pluto, but instead on the reactions of those around them, namely Cyane, Ceres, Jupiter, and Arethusa.

As Pluto carries Proserpina away in his chariot, Cyane blocks his way and admonishes him:

> “nec longius ibitis!” inquit  
> “non potes invitae Cereris gener esse; roganda,  
> non rapienda fuit. quod si componere magnis  
> parva mihi fas est, et me dilexit Anapis;  
> exorata tamen, nec, ut haec, exterrita nupsi.” (*Met.* 5.414-18)

Cyane’s warning to Pluto presents her own experience as an example of correct action, of consenting marriage, counter to rape and the use of force—her final line emphasizes the contrast between appropriate and inappropriate action, calling to attention by apposition the difference between *exorata* (wooed) and *exterrita* (terrified), as if Pluto had somehow gotten the words confused.

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104 Andrew Zissos makes the argument that much of the violence of this episode is transferred onto the character of Cyane and that there is a “conflation” of her experience with that of Proserpina. This conflation, or displacement of trauma, allows the narrator (the muse) to avoid a distasteful scene, and perhaps a difficult one for her to relate given her own recent brush with assault, while still allowing her (and Ovid) to convey some of the trauma of sexual violence (“The Rape of Proserpina in Ovid *Met.* 5.431-661: Internal Audience and Narrative Distortion,” *Phoenix*, vol. 53, no. 1-2, 1999, pp. 100).

105 “‘You will not get far!’ she said, ‘You cannot be Ceres’ son-in-law against her will; that girl should be asked for, not stolen. If I am permitted to compare small things to great ones, Anapis loved me; nonetheless, I was wooed, and not, like that girl, married out of fear.’”
Pluto’s response to Cyane’s verbal and physical imposition is violent—more than that, it’s highly suggestive of the sexual violence so frequently absent in literary representations of rape:

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 cratere recepit. (Met. 5.420-24)\(^\text{106}\)

The language Ovid uses in these lines is blatantly sexual in its imagery and proposes both a masculine subjectivity (“valido…lacerto”) and a regal one (“sceptrum regale”), arguing for an association of rape with power, both personal and political. The shared experience of both female characters—the initial victim in Proserpina and then the victimization of Cyane when she attempts to prevent a crime not just against the person of Proserpina but against an accepted order—underlines the communal repercussions of such a crime. As we read further (5.425-37), we see that it is both the assaults on herself and on Proserpina that cause Cyane’s dissolution, and the combination of the two that makes her inconsolable (Hinds 92). The incident also proposes a series of communal conclusions to the use of force in cases of rape: that there is a role that (male) lovers can fulfill properly through speech rather than violence, and that it has had success, as in Cyane’s relationship with Anapis; but that a female communal attempt at intervention often provokes more violence, inevitably sexual.

Subsequently, Ceres discovers the evidence of Proserpina’s abduction and wreaks havoc on the land of Sicily itself. The nymph Arethusa approaches her, having witnessed the encounter between Cyane and Pluto, and begs her to stop: “terra nihil meruit patuitque invita rapinae / nec

\(^{106}\) “Pluto no longer held back his wrath—he urged his terrible steeds forward into the depths of her waters, and plunged his royal scepter into her, hurled by his powerful arm; the stricken earth opened a way to Tartarus, and received the rushing chariot into the center of the opening.”
sum pro patria supplex: huc hospita veni” (“this land is not at fault and was opened unwillingly for the abduction, nor do I plead for it as my own land: for I came here a stranger,” Met. 5.492-93). This scene is the twin of Cyane’s confrontation with Pluto, in which the nymph is motivated by the wrong enacted by a divine agent—in this second case, Ceres upon the land of Sicily; Arethusa’s concern for a land admittedly not her own (although beloved by her) mirrors Cyane’s concern for Proserpina, who is not her own daughter, yet the violence done to both nevertheless distresses the nymphs. Like Cyane, Arethusa has her own story to tell, but unlike Cyane she withholds it from Ceres until after Proserpina’s story has resolved:

mota loco cur sim tantique per aequoris undas
advehar Ortygiam, veniet narratibus hora
tempestiva meis, cum tu curaque levata
et vultus melioris eris. (5.498-501)\(^{107}\)

This “hora tempestiva” arrives in 5.577-641, after the decision has been made that Proserpina will marry Pluto and split her time between the lands of the living and the dead. Arethusa’s choice of timing is more than her recognition of the dramatic tension of the situation (see Rosati 283-85), but shows good structuring on the part of the framing narrators and the author as well (Calliope, the unnamed muse, and Ovid)—Arethusa’s story about her arrival in Sicily is about her own experience with rape, when she was attacked and fled from Alpheus. This story ends with the lines, “Delia rupit humum caecisque ego mersa cavernis / advehor Ortygiam, quae me cognomina divae / grata meae superas eduxit prima sub auras” (“Diana broke open the earth and I, immersed in those dark caverns, was borne to Ortygia, which beloved to me bears the same name of the goddess who first led me out to the air above,” 5.639-41). These lines have a different connotation if read during Arethusa’s earlier address to Ceres: while placed after the

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\(^{107}\) “The reason why I was moved from my home and was carried through the waves of so great a sea to Ortygia, the right time will come for my story, when your worries are lifted and the cares removed from your aspect.”
resolution of where Proserpina would spend her time, it affirms the relief she will feel when she returns each year from under the earth to a land she finds dear (*grata*). However, if we imagine that Arethusa’s story before Proserpina’s return was certain, the emphasis would be on Arethusa’s, and by extension Proserpina’s, attraction to her new home, her satisfaction at her adopted environs. Arethusa’ initial choice to pass over her story displays her awareness of how her own situation relates to that of Proserpina, and a sensitivity to Ceres, who might not welcome a story suggesting that her daughter may have already acclimated to or even come to love the underworld.

The objections of Cyane and Ceres’ unwillingness to cease advocating for her daughter shifts this narrative significantly away from the construction of previous rape narratives, in which moral and emotional concerns were portrayed only by the victims and their fathers as an extension of that victimization, and no ruling power offered judgment over the situation, nor was it sought. With the rape of Proserpina, the moral and emotional consequences are maintained—the distress of Proserpina, and her body as object of the assault; the resultant distress and fear of her mother Ceres—but two new elements are introduced: the communal implications from the interventions of Cyane and Arethusa and the other the legal implications of Ceres’ confrontation with Jupiter. First, more than just the immediate family, others have become involved in the abduction, as witnesses, and in the case of Cyane, as another victim of assault; indeed, the land itself suffers from Proserpina’s abduction: at the hand of Pluto, who opened it forcefully to return to the underworld, and at Ceres’s hand when she vented her anger at her loss. Second, once Arethusa has told Ceres how Pluto abducted Proserpina, Ceres

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108 The exception to this is Callisto, whom we see excluded from the company of Diana. I read this as a particular consequence of Diana’s archetypal significance, and less representative of a general legal/social consequence. There is space to argue otherwise, that Callisto’s loss of virginity and Diana’s exiling of her is representative of the stark divide between women’s status as virgins and as sexually experienced (even from rape) for the Roman audience.
approaches Jupiter as the leader of the gods and as Proserpina’s father, and asks for his judgment on Pluto, seeking the return of her daughter.

Cyane’s and Arethusa’s objections to the violence of the gods offer one type of response because they stand as external but interested parties to witnessed violence. It implies that there is an external and framing system of morality that exists outside of personal damage—if this is not codified to the extent that it might be termed legal, it can be recognized as a communal or social moral awareness. The first consequence of this communal moral awareness is that the witnesses of violence have stepped forward to interpose their voices and bodies between the perpetrator and victim in order to rectify the situation. It is in this imposition that community is constructed, and it is indicative of an alternative to force that it is consistently a female figure that imposes herself in this way. The community morality is not opposed to masculinity, however, but to the use of an egoistic force, wielded by those with the power to stand separate from that community, as is the case with Pluto and Ceres as gods. The concern that the community addresses is powerful authorities’ actions (in this case, those of the gods) that ignore the moral structures that community; this concern extends to the trauma that such disregard causes. Gender reasserts itself in the differing reactions of Pluto and Ceres: Pluto, when confronted in his use of force, employs more force and perpetuates violence; Ceres moderates her approach and adopts the methods of the community that confronts her, turning to speech to make a “legal” address to authority, Jupiter.

Once Ceres has gathered the evidence of her daughter’s abduction and heard the testimony of Arethusa, she turns to Jupiter, who is both arbiter of the gods and Proserpina’s father—both positions would carry legal connotations for Ovid’s audience, as would Ceres’ use of certain legal speech (‘‘pro’que ‘meo veni supplex tibi, Iuppiter’ inquit, / ‘sanguine proque
tuò’’; “I have come before you, Jupiter,” she said, “pleading on behalf of my child, and yours,”

Met. 5.514-15). As paterfamilias, Jupiter has certain legal obligations regarding Proserpina,
including the decision of her marriage, her protection, and in a more abstract sense, her honor,
which would be connected to his own (Brundage, Law, Sex, and Christian Society 23; Harries
86, 95-101). Ceres appeals to all three of these obligations in her supplication to him:

“Si nulla est gratia matris,
nata patrem moveat, neu sit tibi cura, precamur,
vilior illius, quod nostro est edita partu.
En quaesita diu tandem mihi nata reperta est,
Si reperire vocas amittere certius, aut si
Scire ubi sit reperire vocas. Quod rapta, feremus,
Dummodo reddat eam; neque enim praedone marito
filia digna tua est, si iam mea filia non est.” (5.515-22)\(^{109}\)

Ceres pushes these obligations through her tight grouping of familial vocabulary in the first few
lines, saying matris nata patrem (mother–daughter–father) one after the other. Her series of
redefinitions—“knowing” into “found,” and “found” into “lost”—will be used against her in
Jupiter’s reply, however, as he proposes his own modification of terms.

Jupiter’s first line of response affirms his obligation, but he quickly moves on to occupy
the legal authoritative role in which Ceres’ supplication has cast him, first to give judgment as a
father, and then as a ruler of the community of gods:

“commune est pignus onusque
nata mihi tecum; sed si modo nomina rebus
addere vera placet, non hoc iniuria\(^{110}\) factum,
verum amor est; neque erit nobis gener ille pudori,

\(^{109}\) If the pleas of a mother mean nothing, perhaps our daughter shall move the father; I beg you not to love her less
because she was born from my womb. Behold, the daughter I had sought so long has at last been found, if you call
‘found’ more rightly ‘lost,’ or if you call ‘knowing where she is’ ‘having found her.’ But her theft I will bear, so
long as she is returned; for no thief is a worthy husband for your daughter, even if she’s no longer mine.”

\(^{110}\) Iniuria had several interpretations and could refer to both physical (or material) harm and harm to honor. I follow
Harries’s statement: “The offence of iniuria referred to various kinds of insulting and offensive treatment, some, but
not all, causing physical harm. The ideology of the offence is rooted in Roman beliefs in the importance of honour
and reputation—which was the reason for the inability of a wife to bring a suit on behalf of her husband, as she had
no honour to worry about” (49). Given the nature of the “affair” that Jupiter refers to, I think “dishonor” is the most
appropriate translation of the term in this case. Its use here as an actionable legal term should be noted.
Setting aside Jupiter’s self-interest in the redefinition of “rape” as amor (although this should make the reader reconsider the “primus amor Phoebi Daphne Peneia” of book one and Jupiter’s subsequent view of himself, following Apollo’s example), we can read in his response little interest in Proserpina herself, referring to her as pignus (pledge, security, guarantee) and onus (burden, load), but in doing so, he recognizes his legal obligation to her. The second section of his response is concerned with the possibility of the match itself and seeks to rehabilitate Pluto’s character in the eyes of Ceres. This also, however, reveals possible concerns that Jupiter might have regarding the imposition of his will on Pluto, given that Pluto is beholden to him only in agreement on the results of what was literally luck of the draw, not a debated and then agreed-upon decision, or difference in power. His final invocation of the law of the Parcae (Fates) provides him with a legal escape from having to address any perceived iniuria from Proserpina’s abduction. His recourse to this pre-established law likewise allows him to negotiate his role as both paterfamilias and arbiter of the gods, without compromising his own honor.

In review of Jupiter’s intervention and its relationship with the communal interventions of Cyane and Arethusa, Ovid proposes a conceptualization of law that is largely dependent on force, and which is able to loosen the semantic value of terminology to a degree that speech

111 Referring to the drawing of lots between Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto, to determine their domains and hierarchy. 112 “Our daughter is a joint interest and burden to us both; but if it is just agreed to attach the proper name to this affair, there is no dishonor is done, rather, it is love; nor will such a son-in-law shame us, goddess, if only you are willing. If nothing else, how magnificent he is, to be Jove’s brother! But that’s not all, for does he not submit to me only because of luck? But if it is your desire to divide such a union, Proserpina will return to the upper world, yet under the certain condition that she has not taken a single bite to eat; for such is the provision regarding the law of the Fates.”
becomes an extension of that force. A victim becomes a wife in the eyes of the law when it is convenient to the law, and dishonor becomes honor. Ovid’s undermining of legal speech through his passage is a direct attack on the Augustan laws that did the inverse of Jupiter’s intent, in making marriages between certain social classes and concubinage illegal and prosecutable under infraction of sex law.\footnote{Specifically the \textit{lex Julia de maritandis ordinibus}, a law that regulated marriage between the social orders, which ruled that marriage between freeborn citizens and those in lower social orders (freed slaves and their families, prostitutes, actors, etc.), as well as convicted adulterers and adulteresses was no longer legally legitimate. This legal redefinition, in combination with the criminalization of adultery (that is, it became a public crime rather than private, and as such possible to ignore) with the \textit{lex Julia de adulteriis}, is reflected and inverted by Jupiter’s own redefinition here, as it suits him. See Grubbs 83-84.} However, Ovid’s construction of a communal morality proposes an alternative authority that finds its strength not in the force to back it up but in consensus, which finds its expression in speech. That communal authority is fragile in confrontation with force, but of value in its elimination of violence through its proposal of consent (by Cyane in lines 414-18; and by Ceres in her insistence that “no thief is a worthy husband”), contrary to the perpetuation of that violence through law, which is the use of force in disguise.

\subsection*{1.3.3 Philomela}

Many of the differences in the narrative of Philomela and Tereus from previous narratives of rape must derive from the shift in Ovidian subjects from ontological mythology to historical mythology: it is one of the few rape narratives in the \textit{Metamorphoses} in which gods are not participants, and as such the allegorical dimensions of the myth cannot be applied to the characters as if they represent natural or ideological forces. The story stands in apposition to that of Proserpina, the central narrative of the previous book. Unlike Pluto, whose power allows him to seize Proserpina with impunity, without fear of even other gods, Tereus finds it necessary
despite his individual exceptionalism to conceal for days his intention to rape Philomela, and then afterwards, out of fear of communal judgment, he mutilates her and holds her prisoner.

Ovid emphasizes that the protagonists of this episode are human by repeatedly depicting ritual signs of agreement and consent at the beginning of the narrative. This begins with the marriage of Procne and Tereus, and although it is an unpropitious marriage according to the gods, it won’t be invalidated by human law (“conubio Procnes iunxit”: “[Pandion] joined [Tereus] and Procne in marriage,” Met. 6.428). Subsequently, upon Tereus’ arrival in Athens we see the two rulers clasp hands, “dextera dextrae / iungitur et fausto commititut omine sermo”\(^{114}\) (“they joined hands and conversation united them in hopeful beginnings,” 6.447-48); upon Tereus’s and Philomela’s departure we will see another clasping of hands:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{utque fide pignus dextras utriusque poposcit} \\
\text{inter seque datas iunxit natamque nepotemque} \\
\text{absentes pro se memori rogat ore salutent;} \\
\text{supremumque vale pleno singultibus ore} \\
\text{vix dixit timuitque suae praesagia mentis.} \\
\end{align*}
\] (6.506-10)\(^{115}\)

This pledge is the last that Tereus must give before he sails away shouting his victory (“‘vicimus!’ exclamat ‘mecum mea vota feruntur’”; “‘I’ve won!’ he cried, ‘my desires are borne away with me!’” 6.513).\(^{116}\) The presence of these rituals in the text exists as much to vilify Tereus as he breaks each of them with his assault on Philomela, as it exists to show the restrictions placed on him as a mortal—he must work within their confines, until he is removed from the legal system that binds him (that is, until he removes Philomela into nature).

\(^{114}\)\textit{fausto...omite}: literally “happy omen” or “good sign,” this line precedes Tereus asking to take Philomela back to Procne.

\(^{115}\)“He sought their pledge in faith and joined his daughter and son-in-law, their hands given to each other, and asked that they remember him to those absent; and he could barely give a final “farewell,” his mouth full of sobs, and he feared the foreboding of his mind.” My translation.

\(^{116}\)Compare to 4.356, when Hermaphroditus dives into Salmacis’ pools, she exclaims, “vicimus et meus est!” (“I have won and he is mine!”); also to 10.442-43, in which her nurse congratulates Myrrha, who has tricked her father into sleeping with her: “‘gaude, mea’ dixit ‘alumna; vicimus!’” (“‘rejoice, my child!’ she said, ‘We have won!’”)
However, in this narrative Ovid also undermines the semantic value of the terms that should construct inviolable oaths and bonds of trust between characters, which, in the case of marriage, are communal institutions. His language repeatedly creates an ambiguity for the reader about the relationship of Tereus and Philomela: his use of the word *pignus* (*Met.* 6.506), used previously to refer to the stolen Proserpina—here it becomes the pledge to guard Philomela with “fatherly love” (“patrio ut tuearis amore,” 6.499) and return her quickly—positions Philomela precisely as a marriageable and political object. This characterization is immediately followed by a line that echoes the joining of Procne and Tereus (6.428), “iunxit natamque nepotemque” (“he joined his daughter and his son-in-law,” 6.507), which pivots around the same verb, “iunxit” (he joined [them]). On the one hand, Ovid’s use of the term *iunxit* can be read without specialized terminology and as an action by a father passing the care of his young daughter to a trusted guardian (and family member); on the other hand, the prior establishment of that term to refer to a union of marriage reflects Tereus’ internal imaginary process in which he has access to the object of his desire in Philomela. The force of Tereus’ imagination shifts from the internal into a reality in which the narration itself becomes complicit, through the ambiguous interpretation of Pandion joining Tereus and Philomela in marriage. It is not only the character of Tereus who is convinced of his right to access Philomela, the narration is as well.

The narrative can only arrive at this point after the lengthy process of exploring Tereus’ erotic imaginary and establishing the divide between his internal interpretation of reality and reality itself, even if that divide is at times blurred. For example, Pandion’s attachment to his daughter is written as excessive, and Tereus’ observation of it suggests incest and the eroticization of that incest. Having pleaded with Pandion to return to Thrace with her, Philomela begs as well—“quid quod idem Philomela cupit patriosque lacertis / blanda tenens umeros”
(“Philomela desired the same thing, charmingly wrapping her arms around her father’s shoulders,” *Met.* 6.475-76)—a line sexually suggestive in the close association of *cupidit* and *patriosque*. As she throws herself onto Pandion, and Tereus watches:

spectat eam Tereus praectectatque videndo
osculaque et collo circumdata bracchia cernens
omnia pro stimulis facibusque ciboque furoris
accipit, et quotiens amplexcitur illa parentem,
esse pares vellet. (neque enim minus impius esset!). (6.478-82)\(^{117}\)

Tereus’ projection of himself onto the character of Pandion combines Pandion’s already questionable attachment to his daughter with Tereus’s lust for her, all framed by Tereus’ observational subjectivity. Tereus imagines the father-daughter relationship as a fantasy and even revels in the idea that incest would not impede his lust. During the farewells given several lines later, the male characters are again projected onto each other, when Pandion asks Tereus to guard Philomela with a “fatherly love” (6.499), now twisted by Tereus into a new meaning. Likewise, the familial connection between Tereus and Philomela is reinforced with Pandion’s use of “natamque nepotemque” (“daughter and son-in-law,” 6.507).

In the establishment—or at least encouragement—of an incestuous connection between Tereus and Philomela, Ovid heightens the outrage of the sexual assault and also foreshadows the revulsion of incest in future episodes. That same revulsion will reoccur in two other narratives concerning incest—the story of Byblis (*Met.* 9.450-665) and the story of Myrrha (10.298-502). Couched within each of these stories lie short arguments for incest: on the hypocrisy of the gods who marry their siblings (Byblis, 9.497-500) and on the hypocrisy of nature, in which we observe any number of animals mating with their offspring (Myrrha, 10.319-331). In these two

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\(^{117}\) “Tereus watches and anticipates her, seeing her kisses and her arms encircling her father’s neck, and seeing accepts it all as a goad, his lust’s fuel and food; and whenever she embraced her father, he desired to be her father (nor would he be less wicked!).”
stories, the narrator (Ovid) addresses his audience directly, noting the revolting nature of the material, an internal commentary that is not applied to the actions of Tereus, with all his complicated relations to Philomela, nor to Pluto despite his being Proserpina’s uncle. Discarding the latter situation as outside of mortal social structures, the primary difference in Tereus’ and Philomela’s episode is the narrator’s implicit encouragement to adopt Tereus’ perspective, as opposed to the explicit critique of Byblis’ and Myrrha’s arguments. As Tereus’ subjectivity pervades the narrative, the reader is made complicit also through its erotic language, at least until Philomela’s voice interrupts.

The narration’s use of erotic language in this first section of Philomela’s narrative stands side by side with the oaths Tereus makes simultaneous to breaking them and in the context of implied incest. Philomela is reintroduced to Tereus—and the reader—in terms of natural and civilized beauty:

\[
\text{ecce venit magno dives Philomela paratu}, \\
\text{divitior forma; quales audire solemus} \\
\text{naidas et dryadas mediis incedere silvis,} \\
\text{si modo des illis cultus similesque paratus. (Met. 6.451-54)}^{119}
\]

These lines anticipate the location of Philomela’s eventual assault and imprisonment (“mediis…silvis”: “in the middle of the woods”), while recalling the fate of so many of the nymphs of the first two books of the *Metamorphoses*. Tereus certainly mirrors the previous rapists who, upon seeing the objects of their desire, become enflamed: “non secus exarsit conspecta virgine Tereus, / quam si quis canis ignem supponat aristis / aut frondem positasque cremen faenilibus herbas” (“having seen the maiden, Tereus was consumed with fire, as when

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118 We should also not be blind to the fact that Myrrha and Byblis are female and Tereus male when we consider the instigators of incest. The revulsion at Byblis’ attempt and Myrrha’s success might be read as horror that women may exercise choice partner and invert normal social order, rather than a revulsion of taboo sexual relations.

119 “There came Philomela, rich in great finery, more rich in beauty; we are used to hearing of her like, Dryads and Naiads who tread in the deep forests, if you were to give them similar and crafted ornament.”
someone sets fire to dry stalks, or burns leaves and grass stored in a barn,” 6.455-57). These lines are a clear reminder of lines 1.492-96, which describe Apollo’s attraction to Daphne. Lines 6.461-71 marks a change in the formula, however, as Tereus reflexively recognizes what he feels, that it is wicked, but nevertheless embraces his intention to rape Philomela. Rather than follow through on his initial impulse—“aut rapere et saevo raptam defendere bello” (“or to abduct her, and abducted, to defend her with savage war,” 6.464)—Tereus chooses deceit over force of arms. In service to this deceit he recalls his wife, her name invoked twice over four lines:

iamque moras male fert cupidoque revertitur ore
ad mandata Procnes et agit sua vota sub illa.
facundum faciebat amor, quotiensque rogabat
ulterius iusto, Procnen ita velle ferebat. (6.467-70)\(^{120}\)

His use of Procne’s name as a tool for deceit, proposes security in the already established agreement of marriage and also disguises his own desire, as the last two lines make clear; it also establishes him as a member of the larger familial community, one who has an interest in maintaining the integrity of that community. His trustworthiness is only strengthened by his willingness to use tears to sway Pandion—“addidit et lacrimas, tamquam mandasset et illas” (“he even added tears, as if she had commanded those as well,” 6.475).

Tereus’ use of deceit in this long passage is extraordinary on two counts: first, for Ovid’s Roman audience, there would have been an absurdity in the characterization of Tereus \textit{commanded} by his wife or in his active decision to use deceit over force, given the stereotype of Thracians as savage and the prior description of Tereus as a military hero. His use of tears even mimics Pandion’s own tears (“pleno singultibus ore,” 5.509), disrupting the contrast of Thracian

\(^{120}\)“And now he delays no longer, and returns with passionate speech to Procne’s intentions, and advances his plans under her own. Love made him eloquent, and if he at times sought what was beyond proper, he would claim it was Procne’s desire.”
and Athenian character. Second, this is a demonstration of language to persuade successfully, as it had so often failed to do in the narratives of Apollo and Jupiter in the first book of the *Metamorphoses*, and yet that success is immediately abused. Ovid’s warning here is clear, if perhaps obvious, that language is not itself inherently non-violent; as with the reinforcement of law by violence, language may also be used by individuals in the service of force. More than any other passage, this would justify Daphne’s, Io’s, and Syrinx’s inclination to run rather than listen.

The location of Philomela’s rape follows the pattern of sexual assaults occurring in wild landscapes, although it is parodically twisted. The “mediis…silvis” from line *Met.* 6.453, used to describe her beauty in comparison with naiads and nymphs, becomes transformed with the line, “in stabula alta trahit, silvis obscura vetustis” (“he drags her to a hut, hidden deep in the ancient woods,” 6.521), a frightening metamorphosis of the landscape which realizes the established *locus amoenus* as a *locus terribilis*. The landscape of the scene becomes complicit in her rape by its isolation from the civilization which allowed such a genre-based romanticization of nature in the first place. Consequently, when the reader of the *Metamorphoses* returns to such scenes as the rapes of Daphne and Proserpina, the pastoral aesthetic of the landscapes in those scenes must become suspect as well.

The aesthetic construction of Philomela’s rape relies heavily on earlier narratives in the *Metamorphoses*—this begins with Tereus’ cry of victory on his ship (“vicimus!”), and continues with two scenes of Tereus and Philomela as predator/prey pairs: the first at lines *Met.* 6.516-17, “non aliter quam cum pedibus praedator obuncis / depositus nido leporem Iovis ales in alto” (“not unlike when an eagle has borne with its hooked talons a hare to its high nest”); second, after she has been raped:

illa tremit velut agna pavens quae saucia cani
ore excussa lupi nondum sibi tuta videtur,
Whereas the use of these metaphors in the rape of Daphne was dynamic and anticipatory (“hic praedam pedibus petit”) the metaphors used for Philomela’s rape speak much more to the unexpectedness of the attack and her helplessness in the face of it. The impossibility of a chase (“nulla fuga est capto”; “there is no flight for the captive,” 6.518) is offset by her verbal pleading:

\[
\text{atque ibi pallentem trepidamque et cuncta timentem }
\]
\[
\text{et iam cum lacrimis ubi sit germana rogantem }
\]
\[
\text{includit fassusque nefas et verginem et unam }
\]
\[
\text{vi superat, frustra clamato saepe parente, }
\]
\[
\text{saepe sorore sua, magnis super omnia divis. (6.522-26)122}
\]

This scene is unique among Ovid’s episodes of sexual assault in that he portrays, vividly, action concurrent to the act of rape itself—the narrative does not turn away to leave the scene to the audience’s imagination, or conclude his description with “vi superat,”123 but grants Philomela a voice that persists through the assault. The persistence of Philomela’s voice disrupts the elements of the erotic aesthetic in contrast to Ovid’s earlier portrayals of rape, which seem sterilized, incomplete, or edited, out of an agreed upon decorum that such things will not be shown.124 This

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121 “She trembled like a frightened lamb which, cast away, wounded by the slavering mouth of a wolf, does not yet feel safe, or like a dove is terrified, its feathers wet with its own blood, and still fears the ravenous claws in which it was grasped.”
122 “And there, pale and trembling and fearing everything and then asking tearfully where her sister was, he cornered her and revealed his wickedness to her, a maiden, alone, he took her by force, calling over and over for her father, her sister, often to every god above.”
123 Vis in Roman law was the general term for force or violence (Harries 107; see also note 57 in Chapter 1.1 on stuprum). Compare to the rape of Io, Met.1.600: “tenuitque fugam rapuitque pudorem” (“[Jupiter] halted her flight and stole her chastity”); or the rape of Callisto, 2.436-38: “sed quem superare puella / quise Iovem poterat? superum petit aethera victor / Iuppiter” (“But how could any girl defeat any man, especially Jove? Victorious, Jupiter sought the upper heavens”).
124 For example, Horace, Ars poetica: “Ne pueros coram populo Medea trucidet, / aut humana palam coquat extra nefarius Atreus, / aut in avem Procne vertatur, Cadmus in anguem. / Quocumque ostendis mihi sic, incredulus odi” (“Let Medea not butcher her sons in front of the audience, nor wicked Atreus cook up human bowels on-stage, nor let Procne turn into a bird, nor Cadmus into a serpent. Whatever you show to me in this way, unbelieving I will hate it,” lines 185-89).
distasteful aspect of the scene arises again in lines 6.561-62, when Tereus rapes her several more times after cutting out her tongue. Ovid accomplishes this without diverting radically from the pattern set by his earlier rape narratives: like Daphne, she pales ("illa expalluit," 1.543), and cries out for her family, although Daphne’s cries for her father grant her a type of salvation, as he grants her a new form as a tree; Proserpina’s cries for her mother go unheard, but the audience is not shown a scene of sexual assault—rather, Ovid crafts a scene that deflects the reader’s attention away from sexual assault, that instead focuses on abduction. In Philomela’s narrative, however, the placement of Ovid’s phrase, “vi superat” does not signal the end of the assault but the beginning of it, one in which Philomela does not disappear but in fact plays an increasingly active role.

The rape itself is bracketed by Philomela’s complaint and the hunting metaphors mentioned earlier (Met. 6.516-17 and 527-30). The sequence of these images creates an incongruity between the reader’s experience of earlier rape narratives and the present one. The result is seen in the second of the two metamorphoses, in which Philomela remains transformed into prey, but of an unclear desirability: has she escaped, as the metaphor suggests? Moreover, if she has escaped, the implication must be that Tereus, as the predator, was not satisfied in the end. As the narrative moves away from its literary precedents, a possible reason stands in contrast to the examples proposed by the assaults perpetrated by the gods: he is not able to absence his body from the scene any more than Philomela can, and she does not metamorphose, she does not hide herself, and she doesn’t stay quiet:

mox ubi mens rediit, passos laniata capillos,
[lugenti similis, caesis plangore lacertis,]
intendens palmas “o diris barbare factis,
o crudelis” ait, “nec te mandata parentis
cum lacrimis movere piis nec cura sororis
nec mea virginitas nec coniugialia iura?
The structure of the Philomela’s response is systematically legal: she cannot begin until she regains her “mind,” in which Ovid’s use of *mens* allows her (or would allow her if she were not a woman) the basic prerequisite and faculty to testify; after this, she offers her testimony and her own body as evidence, in the process of testifying, shaming herself; her speech itself recalls the oaths Tereus made and legal barriers that he crossed—“te mandata parentis; mea virginitas; coniugialia iura”—which are then followed by the legal position that rape has put Philomela into, as rival to her sister, invoking the terms *paelex* (mistress, referring to herself) *coniunx* (husband, referring to Tereus), pushing Procne to the edge of each line (*sororis; Procne*). Her following

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125 These lines are considered *addita*; a common variation is *Procne* rather than *poena* (see Ovid, *Metamorphoses* note to line 6.538); also the passage on William of Orléans and this line in Chapter 3.1.2.2.
126 “As soon as her mind returned, she tore her disheveled hair, like one in mourning, striking her arms while crying out, she stretched forward her hands and said, “O barbarian, heartless, when you acted cruelly were you not moved by the devoted, tearful commands of my father, nor my sister’s love, nor my maidenhood, nor the laws of marriage? You have upset everything; I have been made your mistress against my sister, you are twice a husband and my enemy owed punishment. Why don’t you, liar, take my life, since no other crime remains for you. If only you had, before you unrightfully lay with me! I would be a shade empty of crime. Nevertheless, if the divinities watch these things, if the powers of the gods are worth something, if all has not been lost to me, you will pay someday for what you did to me. My shame on display, I will tell of your deeds. Given the opportunity, I will charge you amongst people; but if I am held in these woods, I will fill the branches with my cries and move the listening stones. Let the heavens hear me, and the gods, if there are any in it.”
127 Pavo Filaković and his co-authors draw an inherent connection between women’s (in)capacity (both legal and mental) to manage their affairs, and the incapacity of insane people. In both cases, the subject would not be considered legally competent (Filaković et al. 464).
lines emphasize her feeling that she too is complicit in the wrong done to Procne and give a sense that she has no recourse to redeem her own honor except through accepting her shame.\(^{128}\)

Philomela’s appeal to the gods, joined with her earlier pleas for their aid still recent from *Met.* 6.526, highlights their absence in this narrative, even more so with her final statement, “si deus ullus in illo est” (“if any gods are there [in heaven]”); recourse to justice in this episode relies entirely on mortal institutions, and prepares the audience for the subsequent actions of Procne in revenge. Philomela’s promise to bring forward her claim against him amongst people (“in populos”), appeals to the audience’s knowledge of Roman history and literature, especially those familiar with Livy’s writing, and provides a mechanism for Philomela to rehabilitate her character by aligning it with that of Lucretia. Furthermore, by relating the actions of these two women, Ovid provides the reason for Philomela to not kill herself (which is a possibility, given Philomela’s words in lines 6.539-40), which is that it is her testimony—the same that displays her shame—that will exonerate her. Consider that Lucretia must protect her reputation from Sextus Tarquin, who threatens to kill her and spread the lie that he discovered her *in flagrante* with a slave; her body becomes secondary to her character: “ego me etsi peccato absolvo, supplicio non libero; nec ulla deinde impudica Lucretiae exemplo vivet” (“although I absolve myself of guilt, I am not free from punishment; henceforth no unchaste women shall live by the example of Lucretia,” *Ab urbe* 1.58, translation by T. J. Luce). Philomela feels that she too must testify, and it would be expected by Ovid’s audience in such a serious episode—in essence her speech to Tereus here acts as that testimony for the audience. Of the over sixty incidents of rape

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\(^{128}\) Although Ovid writes his character with this sense of shame, the legal standard was that women would not be considered guilty in clear cases of rape. According to Harries, “Roman law, unlike some systems, did not blame the woman, provided she was of respectable status” (88). However, “Social attitudes were surprisingly mixed,” especially in the period when Ovid wrote, given Augustus’ social conservatism (Harries 88-89). The presence of shame in this instance recalls that felt by Livy’s Lucretia, as well as reinforces the possibility of communally enforced shame, as with Callisto and her expulsion from Diana’s retinue.
in the *Metamorphoses*, Philomela is the only victim to addresses her assailant, with the exception of Caenis in Book 12, or to speak of the assault to others, with the exception of the Muses and Arethusa.\(^{129}\)

Philomela’s final promise, to “fill the branches with her cries and move the listening stones,” appeals much more to the Ovidian system of performance and audience response present as a theme throughout the *Metamorphoses*. This is not an empty threat to Tereus: having learned from earlier episodes, both characters would be aware that the landscape could act as a reliable witness that could later condemn Tereus for his crime. We can also read a shift in power regarding Philomela’s ability to express herself as a mortal: if her words can in fact “move the listening stones,” she will have achieved the ability of Orpheus or Arachne, whose power of expression in weaving likewise transgresses the mortal/divine divide. Her claim in this case anticipates the tapestry she weaves depicting her rape, which she will send to Procne—it recollects the depictions of rape on Arachne’s tapestry at the beginning of the same book and emphasizes the inherent link between weaving and words.\(^{130}\)

Tereus’ reaction is anger and fear, in equal parts: “talibus ira feri postquam commota tryanni / nec minor hac metus est, causa stimulatus utraque” (“After such words, anger shook the savage tyrant, nor less was his fear, and he was urged on by both,” *Met.* 6.549-50). He binds her arms, cuts out her tongue with his sword, and rapes her several more times (6.562-63). Separated from the body, Ovid has the tongue move on its own, seeking to return to Philomela:

\begin{verbatim}
  radix micat ultima linguae,
  ipsa iacet terraeque tremens immurmurat atrae,
\end{verbatim}

\(^{129}\) There is the example of Cinyras, whose daughter Myrrha tricks him into sleeping with her—his reaction upon discovery reflects literally the speechlessness of women raped in the text: “verbisque dolore retentis” (“words held back in pain,” 10.474). Compare to note 132 below.

\(^{130}\) See Rosati 275-76; see also Amelia van Vleck for Philomela as a model for this mode of expression in medieval literature, “Textiles as Testimony in Marie de France and Philomena,” *Medievalia et Humanistica*, vol. 22, 1995, pp. 31-60.
The loss of her tongue removes the strength of her threat for Tereus—it would seem to eliminate her power to express her testimony to the various communities she had named (people, nature, the gods); it also reinstitutes the literary precedents of the woman’s silence after she has been raped. The violence Tereus employs when the expected silence is broken by Philomela is excessive to the extent that it resembles the punishments enacted by the gods on their mortal challengers earlier in Book 6, such as Niobe, or Marsyas, or the *exempla* on Minerva’s tapestry. The result is that we read Philomela not just as a victim, or even as an opponent to Tereus’ power, but as a character who transgresses laws of expression internal to the narrative itself. In Tereus’ character, we witness a self-figuring as a potential god that recalls the internal processes in the earlier part of the story, when his desire for Philomela warps the narrative to his interpretation of actions. The “appropriate” setting for an erotic rape is reestablished through his use of force—Tereus’ choice to rape Philomela again reads as nothing so much as a maniacal desire to fulfill an internal expectation of (divine) power, the sign of which is not the attainment of any actual power but its appearance. Perhaps, however, if we grant that Philomela’s character has resisted narrative precedent, it is also a way for the narrator to reassert control over the form of the narrative and to attempt to reassure his audience that this time rape will silence her.

Read in this way, Philomela’s creation of the tapestry as a persistent expression of her subjectivity is a direct challenge to the narrator—who, after all, describes his own work with the

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131 “The stump of her tongue throbs; the tongue itself lies trembling and muttering on the black earth, and it pulses like a maimed serpent’s tail twitches, and dying, seeks the feet of its owner.”
verb *deducere*, a term associated with textile production\(^{132}\)—and a narrative that has to this point constrained her by its genre-based expectations. The tension between narrator and victim is made even stronger by Philomela’s use of words on the cloth, “purpureasque notas filis intexuit albis, / indicium sceleris” (“she wove crimson letters into the white threads, evidence of the crime,” *Met.* 6.577–78), in contrast to Arachne’s transgression through her use of image. Philomela’s tapestry inserts a material counter-narrative into the flow of the spoken narrative of the poem that has attempted to silence her, an object that can be referred to—and is, by her sister Procne.

The remainder of Philomela’s narrative indeed does not proceed as previous rape narratives had: Procne discovers Tereus’ assault on her sister, whom she rescues, and together they butcher Itys—Procne and Tereus’ son—and serve him as a meal to his father; ultimately they metamorphose into birds and the entire familial unit, the joint houses of Thrace and Athens, dissolves. In this conclusion, Ovid constructs a moral of dissolution as a result of rape that stands in sharp contrast to the nation-building myths of rape found in Livy. The victim (or victims, to include Procne as an aggrieved party) is denied a legal recourse or even a voice with which she might establish a sympathetic community as in the case of Ceres, Proserpina, Cyane, and Arethusa. The overwhelming emotion of the narrative is not despair, as read in the cases of Io or Callisto, but of fury.

In that fury there is the construction of a kind of community through the mutual rage of the two sisters, but a rage that still must overcome the shame of Tereus’ rupturing of their relationship: Philomela, at first, is unable to meet her sister’s eyes, a reminder of her self-description as now made a “mistress” (*paelex*) against her sister:

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\(^{132}\) William Anderson describes this in his note on line 1.4 of the *Metamorphoses*, “ad mea perpetuum deducite tempora carmen,” with Virgil’s *Eclogue* 6.5 in particular as a model, although, admittedly, scholarly consensus of this reading is debated (151-52).
Unlike Callisto, who was cast out of her community by Diana, or the many other victims of rape at the hands of Jupiter, who were then subsequently punished by Juno, Philomela’s shame is immediately set aside with Procne’s call to action, “‘non est lacrimis hoc’ inquit ‘agendum’” (‘this is no time for tears,’ she says, ‘but for action,’” 6.611). While such a cry might echo the calls to arms of Brutus and Verginius, Ovid transforms its impact here, having it come from the mouth of a woman certainly, but also in its result, which is the disintegration of the family and no sense of community, even among the sisters, who as birds go their separate ways, divided by the urban and the rural.

Ultimately, the story of Philomela offers a response to the long rape narratives that preceded it. In Philomela is a victim who is unwilling to be silenced, but also a character who is unwilling to have her story dictated by convention and who resists eroticization. The construction of a communal justice to rape in Philomela’s story is suspect—in no small part due to the precedent of Proserpina’s story, in which the presiding authority (Jupiter) sides rather with the assailant than the victim. The power of violence is underlined by Tereus on the one hand, as he uses it to force the narrative itself to match his will, and by Procne, who uses it to take revenge through the destruction of another subject less powerful than herself, her own child. Language also has power in this narrative however, and although it is not sufficient on its own to create justice for Philomela, it allows her to reframe herself, to de-objectify herself and to argue

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133 she uncovered her poor sister’s ashamed face and embraced her; but Philomela could not meet her eyes, seeing herself as made a mistress, with her face cast down to the ground, she testified and swore by the gods that that shameful man had abducted her by force, using her hands in place of her voice.
not just with the character of Tereus for her own subjectivity but with the author and the audience as well. Represented, and in that representation reduced, she resists representation.

1.3.4 Conclusion

The subject of rape in the *Metamorphoses*, especially the rape of Philomela, is intimately connected to the limits of artistic expression, both visual (writing, weaving) and oral (speech, song). In the same way that Ovid’s rape narratives are not separated from each other, but together form a dynamic meta-narrative for the “character” of rape, the presence of narratives concerning artistic expression are not isolated, but integrate with each other to form a complex narrative of what it means to be an artist in the context of the *Metamorphoses*. Just as Ovid’s rape narratives are concerned with socio-moral and political ramifications, his narratives about artists reveal a preoccupation with political ramifications concerning the production of art. On the one hand, this allows him to issue a critique of Augustus’ long-running campaign of self-representation through building projects and religious iconography in Rome; on the other, it offers Ovid a way to defend his divergence from the Augustan program and the plurality of the Roman people. In many ways it anticipates his exile—perhaps even responds to it, when we consider that he revised the *Metamorphoses* during that exile.

The coincidence of the themes of artistic production and rape in the narrative of Philomela strongly links the politics involved in the production of art with the powerlessness of the rape victim. Philomela’s case is special, in that as a rape victim and as an artist she is able to disrupt the normal power dynamic, shaming Tereus into hiding his crime, and then revealing the crime even once she had been “silenced.” This disruption is not normally the case in either theme: the rape victim is only rarely seen again, and then often unable to express him or
herself\textsuperscript{134}; the artistic contest contains a similarly violent process of silencing, often by means of metamorphosis (seen especially in Book 6). Philomela’s role as both victim and artist encourages the reader to consider the similarities of these themes and the possibility that, by using them in parallel, Ovid has embedded in the \textit{Metamorphoses} a commentary on the process, constraints, and ultimate consequences of his own artistic production.

Overwhelmingly the victims of sexual assault in the \textit{Metamorphoses} are women; overwhelmingly it is through physical violence or the threat thereof that these women are assaulted. Often, it is upon male figures that they must rely, especially on fathers who seem at every turn to disappoint their daughters’ cries for help; it is by male characters that they are abused, and frequently (although not always) by male characters that they are judged. The mortal artists in the contests of the \textit{Metamorphoses} are judged not by their peers but their opponents— their silence is imposed not only as an expression of power over a defeated rival, but as an assurance that there will be no further production of their expression. It is this act of silencing that acknowledges the power of the victim’s voice: the mortal artists’ work rivaled that of their divine opponents and offered an alternative interpretation of the system of the world. The rape victim’s voice, or testimony, if her voice may be recovered, is powerful enough to overthrow the assailant. The recognition of that power is the recognition that there is legitimacy in the victim’s subjectivity; otherwise, there would be no power in it and nothing to fear.

\textsuperscript{134} Io for example can only moo and stamp the two letters of her name into the dust on the ground (\textit{Met.} 1.646-50).
CHAPTER 2: ESTABLISHING A PRACTICE OF COMMENTARY

2.1 Transmission and Commentary on Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*

The importance of Ovid’s work to academic production in the so-called *aetas ovidiana* of the 12th-13th centuries cannot be overstated, but his influence over the preceding millennium was also crucial to the development of the commentary traditions and the techniques of vernacular adaptation and translation that are the focus of the second half of this dissertation. Through the two sections of the following chapter, I discuss some of the methods through which classical knowledge was received in the long period between Ovid’s life and the *aetas ovidiana*, and more particularly the Philomela myth.

Ovid’s story of Philomela, Tereus, and Procne persisted as a popular topic in mythographies and moral commentaries throughout the long course of the Middle Ages, was one of the earliest episodes from the *Metamorphoses* to receive a vernacular adaptation, and reached its height of influence as a source for Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus*. F. T. Coulson writes, in the introduction to his study on the Philomela myth in medieval traditions, the legend of Procne, Philomela, and Tereus from Ovid’s Met. 6.412-667 exerted a lasting influence on the Latin and vernacular poetic traditions of the medieval and renaissance periods. Chretien de Troyes, Dante, Gower, Petrarch and Chaucer included treatments of the myth in their poetry, while Medieval Latin poetry encompassed many allusions to and fuller treatments of the episode. In general, previous studies have focused on the relationship of the medieval or renaissance treatment of the myth to the classical model. However, no one to date has examined the tradition of Latin commentary and gloss on the *Metamorphoses* from late antiquity to 1600 to determine whether the modes of reading this section of the epic during that period may have informed the individual poet’s ethos. (Coulson, “Procne and Philomela” 181)
Coulson’s article provides a useful guide to the various medieval academic approaches to Ovid’s text and indeed provides the foundation for the present study. Where Coulson’s work approaches the commentary traditions from a perspective of medieval academic theory, this dissertation considers the utility of those commentaries, and additionally the adaptations of the Philomela myth as exegetical works, utilized in political, social, and legal context.

As I demonstrated in my previous chapter, Ovid criticized Augustus’ socio-political agenda through a focus on the theme of rape and sexual abuse in the Metamorphoses; the episode concerning Philomela disrupts earlier established patterns of eroticism and authority in thematically similar episodes. Following this precedent, medieval approaches to this episode reveal the political, social, and legal concerns of rape and power for the scholars and writers who treated Ovid’s text. The commentators and the writers who translated or adapted Philomela’s myth demonstrated a sensitivity to the story as it applied to the language and contexts available to them, namely, an awareness that they were interpreting a text with pointed social and legal implications in a different socio-political situation than the one under which it was composed. On the part of the commentators, this was done employing a language that was nominally the same (Latin) but which had in fact transformed in form and meaning. These differences, however, offered opportunities for variation in interpretation of the myth, opportunities which in turn allowed medieval authors to apply their own critiques of societal institutions concerning rape. In order to highlight this, when discussing these authors’ works, I will focus on how they portray, or fail to portray, Philomela’s (and Procrne’s) recourse to justice, and how they choose to account for Ovid’s erotic language as it is paired with sexual violence.

I have broken this second chapter into two sections, and as a whole it acts more as a bridge or an interlude between the first and third chapters. In this first section, I discuss the
contexts under which the reception of classical literature was complicated during the Middle Ages, as scholars navigated not only the interventions of time and language, but the paradigmatic shift of paganism to Christianity, which pervaded all aspects of knowledge. The formal practice of commentary was fundamental to the reception of classical texts in the Middle Ages, so I discuss this practice as well as the importance of rhetorical exposition as an element of that practice. In the second section of this chapter, I provide a summary of the salient interpretations of the Philomela myth from the end of antiquity to the 12th century, when academic focus on Ovid reached its zenith. Although scholars during the intervening seven or eight centuries did not treat Ovid’s works with the same zeal as later commentators, the mythographies and commentaries written during this period would have a significant impact on later scholars of Ovid’s texts: many of the formal characteristics of the commentaries produced during these intervening centuries became accepted practice for the commentaries of the late Middle Ages.

2.1.1 Sexual Violence across Time

Before focusing on the Middle Ages and its reception of the Philomela myth, a more general discussion is necessary of how literary sexual violence has been interpreted and utilized across long periods of time and how associated conceptualizations and terminology have shifted as well. There are several political and literary implications that are raised by the language employed by Ovid and his presentation of events in the narrative of Philomela. At the same time that he maintains the erotic elements present in his many other depictions of rape, he combines those elements with the graphically violent mutilation of the victim, the unrepentant rationalization of the aggressor, and the resultant filicide and cannibalism. Aspects of Philomela’s narrative parody the idealized, pastoral depictions of Daphne’s narrative and the
The violence central to Philomela’s narrative raises further questions: What is the connection between violence and language, particularly here where we see language employed by Tereus as an inevitable path to that violence? What is the connection between expression and authority? With the power to express do we maintain power over our world? Do we maintain power over ourselves? Although the repeated representations of rape seem to indicate that language does not possess the power of self-protection, the aggressor’s repeated attempts to silence the female victim indicates his fear that there is a threat, and power, seated in the victim’s voice. And when that voice is recognized to contain a subjectivity, moreover one with power, a final question arises: Who controls the consent of a speaking subject?

Questions of power regarding language draw clear parallels to Ovid’s situation, as he wrote under the authority of the Augustan program, a program that eventually decided that his voice could no longer be tolerated, resulting in his exile. The analogy of authorial experience in the face of censorship expands the problems of subjectivity and voice that arise in the rape narratives of the *Metamorphoses*; this expansion allows for a literary device through the representation of rape that more generally evokes issues of individual sovereignty in the face of authoritarian suppression. At the same time, however, such a figurative reading of rape threatens to eclipse the female victim that exists at the center of almost every episode, by replacing her with the understanding that the victim represents a male subject whose voice has been stripped...
away by a violent authority. However, this kind of gender play, in which the male is figured in
the role of the female, also confronted Augustus’ cultural agenda in Rome, to regain a mythical,
non-sensual “manliness” of Roman character (even within women), and to promote the chastity
of female citizens in accordance with male sensibilities. The subversion of this approach—to
point out the “feminization” of the entire Roman population through its subjugation by a dictator
(in all but name)—ought to make the Augustan project paradoxical.135

Scholarship before the 20th century rarely remarked directly on rape as a persistent theme
in Ovid’s works, the Metamorphoses and his Fasti in particular. We understand from his
medieval critics, from the traditions of moral commentary and from pedagogical traditions that
excluded many of his works for this reason, that there was a sense of taboo regarding the explicit
depictions of sex present in his work and what was read as an explicit encouragement of
adulterous behavior.136 Certainly that taboo owed much to Christian condemnation of erotic
themes, and rape was almost always portrayed as an erotic act, motivated by lust. However, we
must also understand that the acts of seduction that characterize the Amores might have been
read as having the same semantic impact as rape, regardless of the willing female subject,
because the consent of the husband or father would be violated. This kind of compression of
erotic acts, the often vague legal distinction between adultery and rape, speaks more to a
Christian sensibility than a classical one, although it was by no means universal to medieval
readers. There were many terms in use to also indicate when a woman was raped against her

135 This kind of gender play was common to Roman lyric and elegiac poetry of the first century BCE, so it is not
surprising to see it adopted and adapted by Ovid to his own situation. See Mary-Kay Gamel, A Companion to
Catullus, University of Wisconsin Press, 2013, especially Chapters 6 and 7 (pp. 203-256); and Ellen Greene,
“Gender and Elegy” 357, 360-62, 367-69.
136 This notwithstanding, his corpus enjoyed immense popularity, no doubt in part due to that taboo. See the below
and in the next section for the popularity of Ovid’s work through the eleventh century, and all three sections of
Chapter 3 for Ovid’s reception in the later Middle Ages.
consent, that is, by force (Latin, *vis*), rather than a case in which she consented but her male guardian did not. The expression of consent or the lack thereof in medieval literature is often represented not as an expression of will by an individual character as it is as a kind moral *exemplum*.

Medieval representations of erotic activity often worked as a symbolically moral depictions than the collectively self-critical instances found in Ovid’s works, particularly in the *Metamorphoses*. We also see in the medieval shift a different set of concerns than those present in prominent classical models such as the rape of Lucretia (Livy’s *Ab urbe*; Ovid’s *Fasti*) and the rape of Proserpina (Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti*; Claudian’s *De raptu Proserpinae*): for the medieval writer, rape becomes an act often descriptive of male perseverance and heroism (consider Chrétien de Troyes’ Arthurian romances, such as *Yvain* and *Lancelot*, or the *Roman de la Rose*), and secondarily a humorous scenario to illustrate the ignorance of one or both of the participating characters (pastoral poetry; *fabliaux*; *novelle* and *exempla*; comedies, such as *Pamphilus*).

Medieval commentaries and adaptations of the Philomela myth were composed and interpreted in these contexts, with the *Metamorphoses* acting universally as the source text. As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, this source text is difficult because Ovid’s telling of the narrative undercuts itself and the theme of rape throughout the work: the character of Terenius occupies a role between romance and comedy (before descending into outright villainy), although the description of his actions relies on an self-reflexive perception of his character.

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137 See Gravdal, especially Chapter 2: “The Poetics of Rape Law,” pp. 42-71. Such a description of rape relies on the ambiguity in the structuring of love and rape, where on the one hand, the “rape” of a woman provides a challenge for a heroic protagonist to rescue her, and on the other hand, the protagonist is then reward with access to her once that rescue has been accomplished. In either case the woman’s subjectivity disappears or is discounted. Alternately, following the Ovidian model, the woman’s resistance, her unwillingness to give consent, is framed in heroic terms for the male protagonist to overcome, as he “wages a battle” or “overcomes defenses.”
Despite the occasional interventions of the narrator warning the audience of his intentions, Tereus does not act differently than other “heroic” lovers until he is confronted by Philomela’s character, a confrontation that had the potential for humor along the lines of the Pamphilus, excepting the formal rhetorical nature of Philomela’s rebuke and the subsequent violence of Tereus’ reaction.138

Ovid also creates an ambiguity in the relationships of the characters: Tereus rapes Philomela while simultaneously occupying the roles of potential lover and brother-in-law, and in the context of the pledges he and Philomela give to Pandion, her legal guardian. The depiction of Pandion is unsettling; he is “feminized” by his response to Philomela’s departure as he breaks down in tears. He is uncomfortably possessive: this is a possessiveness that becomes a point of erotic imagination for Tereus as he considers how to obtain her physically. The suggestion of incest is reinforced when Tereus’s later eats the flesh of his own son, Itys. Philomela positions herself as the rival to her sister but also as a legitimate victim with recourse to appeal. However, the figures to whom she might appeal are aspects of the landscape rather than people, the branches of tress, the listening stones. The potential judges in the narrative are the very figures who have been complicit in her predicament: her father Pandion, the king of Athens, who transferred her to Tereus’ power, and Tereus, who aside from acting as her guardian and brother-in-law, holds authority as the king of Thrace. The existence of the gods is questioned by Philomela in her rebuke, and indeed they remain entirely absent. The variability of these

138 Pamphilus [or Panphilus], de Amore was a popular Latin comedy (play), composed near the end of the twelfth century. The humor of the play revolves around the character of Pamphilus, a young man in love with Galathea, a young woman of standing. Galathea’s nurse conspires with Pamphilus to join the two of them in a room where, following Venus’ advice, Pamphilus rapes Galathea, who rebukes him tearfully as ignorant and uncouth. The parallels to Philomela are clear, although where the story turns to violence in the Metamorphoses, the play ends on a “happy” note, with Galathea’s nurse encouraging their union and asking them to remember her well (lines 769-80). For the Latin text, see Bate, Three Latin Comedies 61-89; for an English translation, see Garbaty, “Pamphilus, de Amore.”
relationships creates confusion in interpretation as the central question arises for medieval commentators wrestling a moral conclusion from Ovid’s text: Who controls Philomela’s consent?

For the modern reader, the convoluted intricacies of this case are flattened by the obvious wrong committed by Tereus and suffered by Philomela. To wonder why there might be a distinction between *adulterium*, *stuprum*, *incestum*, *vi superata*, or a more medieval term, such as *iacere contra voluntatem* (to lie with someone against their will), seems irrelevant to the immediate violence inflicted on the character. Likewise, to wonder who Tereus’ victim is seems beside the point, in the face of Philomela’s suffering. In this light, Philomela’s relationships to the characters of Pandion and Procne become problematic, as the value of each of them as individuals separates them and Philomela from the crime committed against the family; for the modern reader, the trauma inflicted on the family becomes secondary to that of Philomela.

**2.1.2 Form, Function, and Space of Medieval Commentaries**

The transmission of knowledge, and how we build upon the knowledge we receive from our antecedents, is at the heart of the medieval project of commentary. An understanding of the epistemological traditions of Europe relies upon the relationships that medieval European scholars proposed between Roman culture and their own. Medieval thinkers were aware that knowledge from the classical period had great value, but that this value was out of step in many ways with the paradigms under which they lived and thought. Moral and allegorical commentary was a mode through which classical knowledge could be transmitted into Christian contexts. This transmission allowed for both negative and positive reactions to classical concepts,
ultimately reinforcing the contemporary moral agenda that the commentator pursued, rather than solely seeking insight into the values of their ancestors.

Medieval scholars’ attention to the *auctoritas* of past writers and teachers displays a marked difference from how modern academics approach historically received works: in the Middle Ages, such texts bore an indisputable truth, acting as conveyors of reliable knowledge (Bagni 117). Scholars in various courts across the many centuries of the Middle Ages considered certain classical writers as *auctores* to whom could be referred reliably as conveying knowledge that was acceptable for use by Christian rulers, academics, clerks, and lawyers; while such canons had a rotating membership, certain classical authors were reliably followed, such as Virgil, Cicero, Seneca, and Statius.¹³⁹ The late 11th and 12th centuries in particular saw an increased attention paid to the greater works of Ovid, beyond the *Remedia amoris*, including more profane and sexually suggestive texts such as the *Ars amatoria* and the *Metamorphoses*.¹⁴⁰

Any “new” knowledge or methodology—for example the academic approaches practiced in the burgeoning cathedral schools and universities of Europe, or the renewed interest in Ovid’s more salacious texts—would need to conform to old ideas, found both in pagan authorities as well as biblical texts, and of course the doctors of the Church. It was around these authorities that academic curricula were built in the early universities as a way to provide a foundation of knowledge for students, who, rather than being taught to construct new theoretical approaches to material, would be required to demonstrate an understanding of the often contradictory knowledge that was presented in the authoritative texts.

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The importance of the commentary—the project of recontextualizing pagan texts for Christian audiences and also allowing scholars a space in which to engage in dialogic interpretative practices, both with the text and with each other—was critical to the longevity of the physical manuscripts that held them. The commentary, first of all, might provide the source text itself, in its original or in its Latin translation if the original was Greek or Hebrew; then the framing or catena commentary would interpret the text, perhaps presenting it as helpful or harmful, but in either case implicitly making the case for the preservation of the textual object. Above all, these commentaries would connect the subject text to the greater community of knowledge within the medieval corpus, because commentaries are always referential: first, they are explicitly referential in their authors’ abilities to relate similar, influential, or identical passages across works (a common practice in Servius’ commentaries, for example); secondly, they discuss apparent contradictions across subject texts (again, a common practice in Servius, but also common to the gloss commentaries, such as the Bursarii by William of Orléans); finally, they establish connections between pagan and biblical texts, thereby strengthening the authority of both sources.¹⁴¹

The history of the commentary tradition in Europe finds both pagan and biblical antecedents, and early Christian commentaries modeled themselves on those earlier examples both rhetorically and formally. The writing of mythographies, or collections of interpretative commentary on the natures and origins of the gods and heroes of pagan myth, was formalized to a certain extent as early as the fourth century, when the first mythographic commentaries by Christians authors were composed. Jane Chance writes that

¹⁴¹ For examples of these practices in Servius, see the next section, Chapter 2.2.1; for William of Orléans, see Chapter 3.1.2.2. Pierre Bersuire, in his 14th-century commentary Ovidius moralizatus, connects passages from the Metamorphoses to biblical passages as a fundamental aspect of his commentary; see also Chapter 3.1.3.
[t]he institutional [sic], insofar as the medieval mythographic tradition is concerned, involved a long history of specific interpretation or explanation of myth, particularly Graeco-Roman myth, many thousands of years old, reinterpreted by learned scholiasts in each successive generation to reflect their own often philosophical or theological interests and approaches.\textsuperscript{142}

This tradition of commentary, with “specific interpretation or explanation,” created a unifying curriculum for scholars to guide their studies and lectures, but also created an opportunity for the new Christian theologians to use an established language of figurative signification to grant authority to their religion, while simultaneously rejecting the profane content of those myths. The preservation of moral and allegorical meaning in relation to pagan divinities also preserved the philosophical processes of the Platonists and stoics: by adopting the symbols of pagan academia, they assured that their language would be accessible to Christian scholars. Through this repeated usage of established texts and rote interpretations, as Christianity moved into a more secure position in the mid to late Middle Ages, European scholars created a body of materials that represented a fossilized classical culture within the hegemonic medieval Christian culture. Indeed, despite the differences in the vernacular and in the native country of individual scholars engaged in study, this Latin-learned culture provided a unifying nexus out of which came what has been in the past termed “medieval.” (Chance 2: 3)\textsuperscript{143}

The unification of European academic knowledge around these texts is what made a perception of a “medieval culture” possible, even if that unified culture was collected around a practice of Latin learning rather than diverse cultures that each of the various “countries” expressed in their vernacular. As Chance explains, it is through the presence of this institutional knowledge, a

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\textsuperscript{143} This is with the caveat that medieval knowledge and practice should not be seen as a monoculture; as Chance indicates in this quote, the reception of classical texts varied by region, school, and individual. Her point is well taken that classical sources acted as a broad foundation—a term Bagni also uses repeatedly (113-16)—upon which medieval knowledge could unify without being uniform. I do disagree with Chance’s use of the term “fossilization” precisely because it does not take into account the dynamism in the discover and use of that body of materials, demonstrated not least of all in the way Ovid’s texts were approached, not to mention one of the essential functions of commentary, which was to reinvigorate these ancient texts for contemporary life.
\end{flushright}
knowledge that would coalesce into the physical institutions of the universities, that the commentator could express their subjectivity through their deviance from the established interpretation (through dissent or special insight). This was especially the case in the period between the 12th and 14th centuries: “Within those boundaries, the story of mythography and the historical and philosophical changes in this most conservative and least ‘literary’ of genres document an increasing insistence on the subjectivity of the commentator” (Chance 2: 5).

The freedom that these commentators exercised was granted through the “covering” that various modes of figurative interpretation of the profane literal allowed, and under that cover they were able to express the impermissible (2: 4-5). The formalization of an interpretative system that encouraged multiple modes of reading the same text allowed for a heterodox approach to scholarship, and did so without contradicting the accepted authorities. If anything, the flexibility that any individual scholar could bring to an interpretative practice created the possibility for previously taboo works to become curricular texts, as was the case with Ovid’s Metamorphoses. Chance’s description of this relationship between medieval scholars and their censoring community, their relationships with the strictures set in place by the necessity to conform to Christian paradigms, argues that the subjective became political through a differentiating speech act. The act of interpretation, using figurative modes, created a public

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144 Chance seizes on the term integumentum as a translation for “covering” in her description of this process, however integumentum is a more complicated term used in a variety of ways in medieval literary theory, and it should not be essentialized to a single term in English. The aspect of “covering” that is conveyed by integumentum is not as a protective cloak under which the commentator may write freely, but rather it was referred to by some medieval authors as the sensus literalis of a text behind which a true meaning might be found; that is, the covering was the text itself. However, this meaning also is not consistent, nor was the term employed universally by medieval scholars. The use of the term integumentum is discussed at length in Joseph A. Dane, “Integumentum as Interpretation: Note on William of Conches’s Commentary on Macrobius (I, 2, 10-11),” Classical Folia, vol. 32, no. 2, 1978, pp. 201-16.

145 In a general sense, this describes Foucault’s assertion that “while the human subject is placed in relations of production and of signification, he is equally placed in power relations which are very complex” (“The Subject and Power,” Critical Inquiry, vol. 8, no. 4, 1982, pp. 778). For the medieval subject, this relationship is no less complex and must also account for the subject in relation to an objective truth, which is God. More to Foucault’s point, the relationship of the writing subject to power in the context described above is one of self-reflexivity, as the
space in which private concerns could be discussed without necessarily putting the personal—whether that be the ideological autonomy of the subject or their physical person—at risk.\(^{146}\)

The result of the development of such a public space was an increased focus on texts that spoke more literally about sexualized and “feminine” subjects, of which the *Metamorphoses* is full.\(^{147}\) Political, public spaces that previously dealt with such subjects had primarily been governed by the Church and by jurists when the need for new practical legislation was called for. The space created by literary interpretation does not have the same stakes as an active political space, however, and potentially grants freedom to scholars to explore and test moral theories in a way that creates a foundation for humanist thought.\(^{148}\) The requirement for such a process is the realization that the representation of a taboo act is not the act itself, and that such representations are necessary if commentary on those acts is to exist in a moral sense rather than an authoritative sense. The difference in these approaches is a crime of private space (thought) as opposed to public space: the contradiction of a moral conclusion requires a private, subjective realization;

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\(^{146}\) The presence of a public space implies also the existence of a private space. No text has influenced my thinking on the conceptualization of “private space” so much as Hannah Arendt’s *The Human Condition* (University of Chicago, 1958), in which the differentiation of private space can be individual, descriptive of the activities of thinking, willing, and judgment (the first of which is reliant on a Socratic model), as well as sovereignty over one’s biological self; or communal in contrast to the political or the state, for example, the privacy of family. See especially Chapter 2: The Public and the Private Realm.

\(^{147}\) Chance on the “feminine”: “From an Aristotelian perspective, understood as the flesh; from an ecclesiastical perspective, carnality itself, embodiment; and in reference to the process of writing and exegesis, from an Augustinian perspective, textuality, *littera*, the literal level of the text, or its ‘body’” (2: 7)

\(^{148}\) If it appears that I am hedging a bit on the potential spaces created by literature and their relationship to our public and private spaces it is because I think those with political authority would frame this relationship in a very different way: that these literary spaces are private spaces that provide a testing ground for public policy, but are essentially, as forms of expression circulated in the public, inherently political in nature. This is the political concern that justifies censorship, which dictates that literature is not merely theoretical in its phenomena but a form of praxis with the potential for violence.
the contradiction of an authoritative conclusion is by its nature public, since it requires the interaction of the subjective individual and that authority (law).

The turn to the subjects of sexuality and femininity was by no means solely motivated by political and cultural necessities, of course, but also by private concerns, such as eroticism and entertainment, as well as empowerment and respect. There is certainly no reason why all motivations could not have been active simultaneously in the construction of new topics for commentary and medieval scholarship, but it has been a point of argument among modern scholars whether this focus was about political empowerment for the medieval academic as opposed to self-gratification through close attention to erotic subjects. In any case, whether it be misogynist eroticism, genuine concern for the subjectivity of women, or anti-authoritarian gender play for the author/subject, there is a clear expression of authorial subjectivity for the commentator that is distinct from the concerns of organized authority, in the form of the Church. In this context, the increased focus on Ovid’s erotic texts, including the *Metamorphoses*, during this period strongly implies that Ovid’s own uses of femininity as erotic and political was not lost on the medieval commentator, and that this connection would be modelled in their academic rhetoric.

2.1.3 Rhetoric, Common Language, and the Rise of the Vernacular

Under the Latin language system of education that characterized the Middle Ages of Western Europe, scholars of literature, legal clerks, and public functionaries all would have

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149 One need only think of Christine de Pizan’s anti-misogynist agenda in her composition of the *Cité des Dames*, for this final motivation.

150 Kathryn Gravdal, in *Ravishing Maidens*, especially the fifth chapter, “The Complicity of Law and Literature,” is firmly of the opinion that medieval writers’ and clerks’ attention detail was essentially pornographic; Evelyn Vitz offers a dissenting response in “Rereading Rape,” in which she warns against anachronistic tendencies in supplying intent to medieval modes of reading.
received the same foundational training in grammar, had the same authorities on rhetoric and
dialectic, and often would have functioned across many of these roles, working, for example, as
a clerk who also produced scholarship or composed new works of literature. The discipline of
rhetoric from this period was the formalized, foundational system of language which educated
medieval persons shared, until and after the flourishing of vernacular languages in the late
Middle Ages. The turn to vernacular languages for both literary and legal texts did not
immediately upend the traditional Latin-based education that bound scholars together across
Europe, but it began to reveal the fractures internal to that system as languages that had been
reserved for speech were used increasingly for written expression. Nowhere is this more evident
than in texts where the legal and the literary overlap, such as those in the commentary tradition.
Commentary on the Philomela episode from the *Metamorphoses* is particularly revealing
because its subject, while literary, so clearly relates also to law.

The enduring popularity of Ovid’s texts is well-attested and unsurprising when we
examine emerging trends in the literature of the Late-Antique/Early Middle Ages and the
following centuries. The adoption of a Christian paradigm throughout the population of Latin
readership had a profound effect not only on the popularity of certain topics over others—at least
a public rejection of pagan religious topics; a repudiation of graphic, erotic representation
but also an effect on the interpretation of literature and its uses. As much as early Christian
ideologues sought to establish their religion through the creation of new traditions and dogma,
many figures in the Christian community engaged in a robust reinterpretation and integration of
pagan thought and practice within their new paradigm. Latin was maintained as the language of
the Western Church, and the rhetorical traditions and great works of Latin literature were

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151 Neither of these were strictly followed in practice, evidenced by numerous texts that employ pagan figures and
the many graphically pornographic texts of the medieval period.
maintained as vehicles through which Christian religious practice (and censorship) could be enacted.

The practice of rhetoric in Latin medieval European education acted as the foundation for the many major institutional changes that followed the course of European history. The established authorities of rhetoric were Roman, primarily the legalistic and political rhetoric of Cicero (and the Pseudo-Cicero who composed the Rhetorica ad Herennium) and Quintillian in the century afterward. Late Antique rhetoricians, such as Aelius Donatus in the 4th century and Priscian in the 5th-6th, shifted their educational models away from legal subjects to focus more on formal aspects of grammar and style, which may have been a response to the influx of German speaking peoples into the Empire, but also to the influence and need of new Christian material as the religion came to predominate in the Latin-speaking world.\footnote{See F. J. E. Raby, A History of Secular Latin Poetry in the Middle Ages, Oxford University Press, 1934, 2 vols, especially Chapters 1-3; and A History of Christian-Latin Poetry, Oxford University Press, 1953, especially Chapters 1-4.} The need for a revision of style for Christian texts was noted by both Jerome and Augustine, both of whom were trained in rhetoric, Augustine himself teaching it for a time (Confessions, Book 3).\footnote{Jerome Letters/Epistoli 21.13 (see Raby, Christian-Latin Poetry 6); Augustine, Confessions 1.13 (see Raby, Christian-Latin Poetry 7).}

The early Middle Ages took the texts by these authors as guides to their own writing, as well as to speech acts in relation to legal cases and preaching, but the Latin of this early period drew on many other sources as well, especially with the introduction of Jerome’s Latin translation of Biblical texts, which had an immense influence on style, form, and content. Several centuries later, a major formalization of rhetoric took place in the Carolingian court of the 8th-9th centuries, side-by-side with the sweeping revisions to legal practice in that Empire as well as the classical turn in the arts, literature, and philosophy, and the establishment of many of the
cathedral schools, such as those in Chartres and Orleans. This renewal of Roman rhetoric was the foundation of the practice of the *ars poetriae*, *ars dictaminis* and the *ars praedicandi* of the later Middle Ages, which were practiced across the disciplines of literature, philosophy, religion, politics, and law. These contained many of the formal elements established by the classical Roman authors such as invention and delivery, and stylistic elements such as grammatical and metrical devices that could have objective effects on the language of a speech or a piece of writing.  

While grammar and rhetoric were technically separate disciplines in medieval education, they were in practice combined, as with dialectic in the writing of philosophical or theological texts. When we consider, for example, the scholastic process of debate in the 12th-century French university system, it is clear that the same skills that were required of a legal orator were crucial to the occupation of an academic as well. This also must have been true in the reverse, that legal scholars would have been required to have at least a passing knowledge of literary technique and theory, when we consider the reliance of Cicero, Quintilian, and the other classical rhetoricians, on mythological events and figures to act as models for their rhetorical examples.

We know from biographical evidence that many of the scholars who undertook commentaries or adaptations of classical poetry between the 12th-14th centuries had backgrounds in the legal profession or were at least familiar with the language required for it as publics clerks

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155 Many accounts attest to this method of academic debate, most famous for which perhaps was Peter Abelard. See the Introduction by Marilyn McCord Adams to *Ethical Writings*, translated by Paul Vincent Spade, Hackett, 1995, especially p. vii.

156 For example, the argument of Ulysses and Ajax over the armor of Achilles before the assembled Achaeans is common to the *Ad Herennium* and Cicero’s *De Inventione* as a series of legal arguments, and it is the opening episode of *Metamorphoses* 13 (lines 1-398).
associated with their municipalities. This was certainly true of Chrétien de Troyes, Pierre Bersuire, Giovanni del Virgilio, Albertino Mussato, Giovanni Boccaccio, and Geoffrey Chaucer. This overlap of poetic and legal expertise was owed in no small part to the process of a Latin education for men of letters, which would be based in the combination of grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric mentioned above. In the 13th century, the breakdown of this relationship between those strictly in the legal profession and those practicing other disciplines that relied on rhetorical training, such as philosophy (which included politics), poetry, and theology, was in part due to the implementation of vernacular systems of law, and to attempts at legal revision in the Latin language.\footnote{See Jesús Rodríguez-Velasco, “Political Idiots and Ignorant Clients: Vernacular Legal Language in Thirteenth-Century Iberian Culture,” \textit{Digital Philology}, vol. 2, no. 1, 2013, pp. 86-112, esp. 98. Rodríguez-Velasco’s primary examples are from the Spanish context, but similar processes of vernacularization were occurring throughout Western Europe between the 12th and 15th centuries (86-87).}

The result of these legal revisions, both grammatical and vernacular, was a fracturing of the rhetorical practice that had been common to European academia and led to a confusion of legal systems—a confusion in the sense that there was a lack of consistency across legal systems in terminology and form, but also confusion in the sense that multiple systems might exist at any given time, and rulings would be consistent not by a national or even urban standard, but by the court or magistrate who saw to the case. In the event of vernacular legal systems, which began to see prevalence in France and England during the 13th century, entirely new terminology had to be developed, which would likewise be understood differently from court to court.

However, the widespread revision of legal language, both in Latin and in the vernacular, provided an opportunity for literary scholars and poets to insert themselves into the process of that revision. This could come in the form of an argument for the merits of one system of law over another; it might have been through the creation of new definitions of an act itself (that is,
separate from a linguistic value), such as what might constitute the line between rape and seduction, or what kind of relationship could be considered criminal and why; poets certainly popularized new terminology and modes of rhetoric through their vernacular poetry and created new understanding of old terminology through their Latin poetry as well. It was in this space that the authors of the moral commentaries were able to create a space for their interpretations.

In the case of the Philomela narrative, the ambiguous status of Philomela in her relationship to Tereus, and then to her sister Procne subsequent to her rape, grants the commentator a wide range of options from which to make an assertion about the moral or legal conclusions of the episode. The opportunity for such a moral assertion is based in the form of the commentary; its rhetorical framework, which allows it to relate laterally to legal and philosophical (political) texts; and the content of that commentary, which refers to the source text (the *Metamorphoses*), but also supplants it with a new text. The extent to which the commentary replaces the text of the *Metamorphoses* depends largely on the commentary itself: gloss commentaries, such as William of Orléans’ *Bursarii super Ovidios*, require the presence of a version of the source text. But prose paraphrases, such as Giovanni del Virgilio’s *Expositio*, Pierre Bersuire’s *Ovidius Moralizatus*, and even Lactantius’ *Narrationes*, provide a text that stands alone without the presence of the *Metamorphoses* being necessary; the vernacular translations and adaptations entirely replace Ovid’s text by claiming to tell the story exactly as it appears in their source, either explicitly or implicitly.  

158 These texts carry out the prescriptions of the *artes poetriae* by turning the techniques of exegesis into techniques of topical invention. In this way they also redefine the terms of vernacular translation itself: they use the techniques of exegetical translation to produce, not a supplement to the original, but a vernacular substitute for that original,” (Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation* 179). This quote refers specifically to Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Legend of Good Women* and John Gower’s *Confessio amantis*, but applies to Chrétien de Troyes’ *Philomene* as well, and arguably to Giovanni Bonsignori’s *Ovidio Metamorphoseos vulgare*. See Chapter 3.3, where I discuss this at length.
The various patterns of interpretation found in the commentaries on Philomela’s story illuminate a range of moral and legal conclusions suggested by Ovid’s text. A common assertion by commentators is that incest is the central theme of the story; Philomela’s character is granted more or less recourse to justice (or alternately vengeance) or at times is only mentioned as an afterthought, as an element of Tereus’ narrative; she is eroticized, pitied, made into a monster, made clever, or made invisible, according to the interpretative agenda of the medieval writer. Such interpretations propose a moral conclusion that extends beyond the space of the literature, addressing or encouraging societal or legal behavior, a proposal that is made possible by a shared rhetorical system across textual disciplines.
2.2 Commentary of Late Antiquity

The Latin commentary tradition of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, particularly from the period of the second half of the 4th century through the first half of the 5th century, had a set of concerns separate from the commentary projects undertaken between the 12th and 14th centuries: the latter had distance from their classical antecedents and were composed under an established and dominant Christian paradigm; they were composed as an academic practice in association first with the cathedral schools, then universities, and finally as a humanist practice. The earliest commentaries, however, were composed still at a period of nascent growth for Christianity, during which Catholic dogma had still to establish its core tenets, and when it was by no means certain that Christianity would become the dominant religion of the European peninsula. In many ways we can read the composition of these commentaries by the likes of Macrobius, Fulgentius, and “Lactantius”159 as the attempt to maintain the systems established by Roman antiquity in the face of rising German, Christian medievalism. The threat to such systems were both intentional and unintentional: early Christian theologians understood the value of waging a culture war on pagan narratives and myths as a way to distinguish Christian systems of belief and cultural practice; they also understood the value of appropriation of those same myths, but when and how to appropriate securely was

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159 The unknown author of the *Narrationes*, a collection of summaries of all the transformations that take place in the *Metamorphoses*, composed sometime the 2nd and 5th centuries, has traditionally been referred to as Lactantius or Pseudo-Lactantius, and who ought to be distinguished from Lactantius Placidus, the author of the commentary on Statius’ *Thebaid*, and likewise the theologian Lactantius who was the author of the *Institutiones divinae*. It should be clear from context to which author I refer, however since I do not discuss the author of the *Institutiones in* this study, I will refer to the author of the *Narrationes* as Lactantius and the author of the commentary on Statius as Lactantius Placidus. See Chapters 1 and 2 of Alan Cameron, *Greek Mythography in the Roman World*, Oxford University Press, 2004, esp. p. 4.
bitterly debated. Likewise, the establishment of Germanic kingdoms on the Italian peninsula, Spain, and North Africa would have created a certain split from the previously Mediterranean Roman culture, one the Germans were not necessarily anxious to eradicate, but to maintain, if they could, some of the existing infrastructure, both political (law, governmental systems, etc.) and cultural (rhetoric, theater, etc.).

Nonetheless, there was a marked change in the character of writing in this early period, both in content and form. Academic output during the period reflects this turmoil, much of it concerned with either the clarification of new systems of belief or attempts to preserve older stories through either encyclopedic writing (Fulgentius, Lactantius), adaptation (Claudian’s De raptu), or cosmological/systematic writing (Macrobius, Martianus Capella), much of which relied on allegorical interpretative approaches to their subject matter. Commentaries of the kind that would focus on pagan narrative generally fell into the first two categories, with discrete entries written on characters from the verses of the Metamorphoses and the Fasti, or whole works adapting these older tales and offering a new, contemporary context for them amongst the readership.

Early medieval commentators approached the subject of rape, and sex in general, more conservatively than their Roman and Greek sources. The erotic aspects of the narratives are never addressed, and the actual event of rape is usually essentialized to a single word. In commentary on longer rape narratives, focus is not on the act of rape itself, but shifted to the

\[\text{160} \text{ As I note in my previous section, Jerome and Augustine recommend concrete breaks from antique writing, yet we see many of these commentaries come to the fore during the height of their influence or after their deaths.} \]

\[\text{161} \text{ Ernst Curtius sketches this history in the second chapter of his European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, esp. pp. 19-35, however, his statement, “The Germanic peoples … brought no new ideas with them,” is incorrect, evidenced by the many cultural and institutional changes established by assimilated and invading Germanic tribes, including to law, religion (Christianity), and literature. See Chapter 2 of James A. Brundage, The Medieval Origins of the Legal Profession, University of Chicago, 2008, esp. pp. 46-57; and Chapter 4 of Law, Sex, and Christian Society, esp. pp. 124-49.}\]
effect that act of violence has on family and community. In the case of the Philomela myth, any aspect of gender ambiguity is also elided, so Pandion’s and Tereus’ tears are never analyzed, nor is Procne’s resolve in killing her son Itys, just her monstrousness at having done so.

From this period, Claudian’s unfinished *De raptu Proserpinae* (late 4th century) stands as one of the more prominent adaptations to deal with a classical subject, and in many ways stands as an equal influence on the medieval tradition of the Proserpina myth as Ovid’s versions from the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti*. Claudian’s version amplifies aspects of Ovid’s texts, but eschews the earlier poet’s focus on Ceres’ distress, portrayed as tragic and justified in both of Ovid’s versions, in favor of the rights of authority for Jupiter and Pluto. It draws more on a version that we see in the brief summary of the myth given by Hyginus in the *Fabulae*:

PROSERPINA Pluton petit ab love Proserpinam filiam eius et Cereris in conjugium daret. lovis negavit Cererem passuram, ut filia sua in Tartaro tenebricoso sit, sed iubet eum rapere eam flores legentem in monte Aetna, qui est in Sicilia. In quo Proserpina dum flores cum Venere et Diana et Minerva legit, Pluton quadrigis venit et eam rapuit; quod postea Ceres ab love impetravit, ut dimidia parte anni apud se, dimidia apud Plutonem esset. (CLVI)

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162 For the manuscript tradition, see J. B. Hall’s Introduction to Claudian, *De raptu Proserpinae*, Cambridge University Press, 2004.
163 “PROSERPINA Pluto asked of Jove that he give his and Ceres’ daughter Proserpina to him in marriage. Jove denied that Ceres would allow her daughter to live in gloomy Tartarus but told him to seize her while she was picking flowers on Mount Etna, which is in Sicily. In that place, while Proserpina picked flowers with Venus, Diana, and Minerva, Pluto arrived in his chariot and seized her; afterwards, because Ceres asked it of Jove, she would spend half the year with her, and half the year with Pluto.” The Latin text from Hyginus, *Fabulae*, edited by Peter K. Marshall, K. G. Saur, 2002; the English translation is my own. The biographical information of Hyginus the mythographer, not to be confused with Gaius Julius Hyginus of the Augustan period, is largely unknown to us. While not well known during the later medieval period, Hyginus’ two extant works (the *Genealogiae*, commonly known as the *Fabulae*, and the *De astronomia*, although there is reason to believe that these were two separate authors) were popular sources for the early mythographers, certainly for the author of the *Narrationes* (see above, note 162). Some evidence indicates that Hyginus composed these works before the 3rd century BCE, While the popularity of Hyginus’ *Fabulae* waned after late Antiquity, it was an important source for other mythographic works and scholia, such as the *Narrationes* and Servius’ commentaries; see Alan Cameron, *Greek Mythography in the Roman World*, Oxford University Press, 2004, esp. pp. 11-13. For Hyginus’ impact on the late Middle Ages, see Gregory Hays, “Did Chrétien de Troyes Know Hyginus’ *Fabulae*?” *Romance Philology*, vol. 62, no. 1, 2008, pp. 75-81.
In this summary by Hyginus, we see the foreknowledge and approval of Jupiter—even the authorship of the assault is attributed to Jupiter, if not the action—the effective grant of consent to Pluto which makes the act of rape ambiguous for the premodern reader. In the first book of the De raptu, Claudian shifts focus away from the communal repercussions of sexual violence, choosing instead to explore the political problems of patriarchy that arise when a figure of authority is unable to find a suitable or willing spouse. The aspect of sexual crime in this version seems to be negated by Jupiter even before the rape itself, and certainly immediately after, when he prevents Pallas from attacking Pluto. Pluto’s seizure of Prosperina is practically elided in the text, granted less than two lines: “diffugint Nymphae: rapitur Proserpina curru / imploratque deas” (“the nymphs flee: Proserpina is hauled into the carriage and she calls out to her companion goddesses for help,” De raptu 2.204-05, my translation—she had been picking flowers with Venus, who is also to blame for this rape, Pallas, and Delia [Diana]). The third and final book features the wrath of Ceres and Jupiter’s persistent defense of Pluto (esp. 3.55-65).

Claudian’s attention to masculine authority in the De raptu addresses the political instability of the late Western Empire, but also establishes the harmony of natural imagery with political turmoil. Ovid engaged in this imagery of political instability as well, but to a much lesser extent and with distance between cause and effect. Most importantly, the subject of rape in the De raptu, despite expectations from the title, is not seriously touched upon; at worst, it is presented as a reasonable course of action when all marriage options are restricted by intractable and unreasonable opposition, in this case the goddess Ceres as is revealed in the second and third

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[164] Underlying the whole of Book 5 in the Metamorphoses is the war between the Olympians and the giants, a war that had concluded by the time of the rape of Proserpina, but which provides the reason for Pluto to be in Sicily, where he sees her for the first time; this also grants Venus the opportunity to “expand her empire,” by commanding her son Cupid to cause Pluto to fall in love. See Met. 5.346-84.
books of the text.\footnote{Hall notes that there is no central figure to the text, “the importance of Ceres does, it is true, become very marked as book III progresses, but for most of the time no one character is predominant” (110). He goes on to speculate that the unsuitability of the material for the epic genre, Proserpina’s abduction and Ceres’ search for her, was perhaps the cause for Claudian’s failure to complete the poem (111). This is not so difficult to imagine, if we conceive of Claudian’s distaste for a female protagonist, which seems to be the direction the third book takes with its focus on the actions of Ceres. Certainly, taking the narrative in the direction of a story about female reaction to rape could have been supported by the source material from Ovid’s \textit{Metamorphoses}, in which the series of female characters of the fifth book provide both the narration and content.} This reading masks a rationale for authority through aggressive threat and action: while Jupiter is undeniably the arbiter of ultimate authority, it is Pluto’s masculine aggressiveness, physicality, and ability to instill fear that win him the right to Proserpina.\footnote{See, for example \textit{De raptu} 1.32-47, in which Pluto threatens war against the Olympians and rather than acting as the prison guard of the titans rallies them under his banner to fight against Jupiter; or 2.151-202, in which Pluto erupts from the earth of Sicily to take Proserpina.}

Ceres, on the other hand, represents the worst of stereotypical female and motherly qualities—the irrational and damaging obsession with maintaining possession of her daughter, the unmeasured response and near destruction of the world when she loses Proserpina (the focus of the third book of the \textit{De raptu}).\footnote{Many of the qualities that we observe in Ceres recall Pandion and his own unwillingness to allow Philomela out of his sight, his strangely obsessive attention to her. The application of female stereotypes to the king of Athens is likewise a critique of the character and a common inversion in both classical and medieval literature; consider, for example, the king in Marie de France’s \textit{Les Deux Amanz}, who is unwilling to let his daughter marry, or the character of Tancredi in \textit{Decameron} 4.1, who kills her daughter’s lover and is given to weeping uncontrollably.} Ceres’ obsession with parental possession leads to another consequence of interpretation in rape narratives: the attachment of a parent to a daughter creates an infantilization of the latter that seems to have its “remedy” only in rape. The maintenance of the daughter’s \textit{virginitas}, her “girlhood,” is framed as a political problem in Claudian’s adaptation, but it also raises the issue of an action counter to Nature, namely that it is unnatural for a girl to remain forever a girl. This counter-to-nature narrative props up the interpretation towards incest that we read into father/daughter characters such as Pandion and Philomela, but in the case of the Proserpina it allows a series of excuses for the male characters of the story: Jupiter is the responsible parent who recognizes the necessity of his daughter’s growth (through sexual activity), and also her value as a political resource resolves the issue of Pluto’s
bachelorhood; Pluto is the agent of Proserpina’s growth, but he is also heroic in his ability to
right the natural order. This is especially true as the author, Claudian, emphasizes the connection
of Ceres to nature, and its disruption through her irrationality. Finally, the justifications of Jupiter
and Pluto in this narrative allow the male reader of the myth to enjoy the erotic symbolism of
“making a woman out of a girl” without guilt over a potential violence. This strengthens such a
cultural belief that is common to the Ovidian narrative, that the girl does not know what she
wants, and so all actions that flow from desire are licit.

2.2.1 Philomela

Regarding the myth of Philomela, there is no surviving lengthy adaptation along the lines
of Claudian’s De raptu Proserpinae; however, her story is frequently summarized in
mythographical collections of fabulae or referenced in scholia and catenated commentaries. In
this first category, the summary of Philomela’s story in Hyginus’ Fabulae contains some
significant variations in content from the version in Ovid’s Metamorphoses:

Tereus Martis filius Thrax cum Prognen Pandionis filiam in coniugium haberet, Athenas
ad Pandionem socerum venit rogatum ut Philomelam alteram filiam sibi in coniugium
daret, Prognen suum diem obisse dicit. Pandion ei veniam dedit, Philomelamque et
custodes cum ea misit; quos Tereus in mare iecit, Philomelamque inventam in monte
compressit. postquam autem in Thraciam redit, Philomelam mandat ad Lynceum regem,
cuius uxor Lathusa, quod Progne fuit familiaris, statim pellicem ad eam deduxit. Progne
cognita sorore et Terei impium facinus, pari consilio machinari coeperunt regi talem
gratiam referre. Interim Tereo ostendebatur in prodigiis Ity filio eius mortem a propinqua
manu adess; quo responso auditto cum arbitraretur Dryantem fratrem suum filio suo
mortem machinari, fratrem Dryantem insontem occidit. Progne autem filium Itym ex se
et Tereo natum occidit, patrique in epulis apposuit et cum sorore profugit. Tereus
facinore cognito fugientes cum insequeretur, deorum misericordia factum est ut Progne in
hirundinem commutaretur, Philomela in lusciniam; Tereum aute
dicunt. (XLV)\textsuperscript{168}

\textsuperscript{168} "The Thracian Tereus, son of Mars, while Progne, the daughter of Pandion, was still his wife, came to Athens
seeking his father-in-law to ask that he give his other daughter, Philomela, to him as his wife. He said that Progne
had passed on. Pandion granted him permission, and sent Philomela and with her some guards, whom Tereus threw
into the sea, and having obtained Philomela he raped her on a mountain. After he returned to Thrace, he sent
Clearly, Hyginus had sources other than or in addition to the *Metamorphoses*. As a summary, it is more direct with its information than the subtle implications that Ovid teases out in his poetry: Pandion, in Hyginus text, freely hands over his second daughter in marriage to Tereus, and there is the introduction of the characters Lynceus and Lathusa. The first of these variations directly addresses the problem of ambiguity in Ovid’s text and then resolves it with the explicit narratorial use of the term *pellicem* (*pellex*, a version of *paelex*; concubine or mistress) as soon as Philomela’s character is placed in relation to her sister. Both of these passages reveal the fabulist’s concern for Philomela’s socio-legal status as she is passed from one man to another, and as she transforms from a virgin with political value into a secret mistress and potential rival to her sister. Unlike in Ovid’s text, Philomela is given no voice to reconfigure this assessment or reassert her personhood as separate from the things done to her. Even her ingenuity at speech through her weaving is erased by the introduction of Lynceus and Lathusa, the second of whom intercedes on her behalf.

In another summary of Philomela’s story, from the *Narrationes* (6.7), the episode that depicts the story of Philomela follows its source in the *Metamorphoses* closer than the narrative presented in Hyginus’ *Fabulae*:

Tereus Martis filius, Thracum rex, cum auxilia multis regibus ferret, Pandioni quoque Athenis regnanti, cum a proximis civitatibus oppugnaretur, non defuit, quamobrem filiam Philomela to King Lynceus, whose wife Lathusa, because she was friends with Progne, immediately led the concubine to her. When Progne recognized her sister and Tereus’ wicked crime, they began to plot with equal resolution to return the favor to the king in kind. Meanwhile, it was shown to Tereus through portents about his son Itys that his death at the hand of a relative approached; when he heard this, he believed that his brother Dryas plotted his son’s death, and he killed his innocent brother Dryas. However, Progne killed her son Itys, born to Tereus and herself, and served him to his father in a feast and then she fled with her sister. Tereus, once he understood the crime, pursued the fleeing women, and it was accomplished by the pity of the gods that Progne was turned into a swallow, Philomela into a nightingale; but Tereus they say was made into a hawk.” My translation here and throughout, unless otherwise stated.

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169 Hyginus may have supplied the specifics of the metamorphoses for the sisters (Procne into a swallow; Philomela into a nightingale), or he may have followed an unidentified or generalized literary tradition; he does insist on Ovid for Tereus’ metamorphosis into a hawk. In any case, Hyginus has been identified as a source for much of the *Narrationes*. See Hayes 78-79.
suam Progne illi in matrimonium dedit. Quae deportata in mariti regno cum ex intercapidine sororem Philomelam desideraret, petit a Tereo, ut proficisceretur Athenas, sororem sibi ad sollemne sacrificium ut adduceret. Qui ut Athenas pervenit, soceri usus hospitio in Philomelae incidit amorem. Quam secum digressus mandato coniugis duxit in Thraciam et stabulis clausit, ut ad eam sine suspicione cuiusquam saepius commearet. Ac ne eloqui commissa posset, lingua truncavit et coniugi ementitus; dixit enim sororem eius interisse. At Philomela ea, quae lingua prodere non poterat, veste intexuit notis litterarum, quam soror per sacrificium ad stabula dedit uni perferendam. Qua inspecta illa cum coniugis libidinem casumque germanae conperisset, constituit itaque se sacra celebrare Libero patri et more bacchantis ad stabula venit sororemque raptam in regiam duxit. Filium Ityn interemit ac dapibus inmiscuit. Quibus expletus Tereus filium cum desideraret Ityn, novissime caput eius in sinum abiecerunt Itys dicentes: ‘intus habes quem desideras.’ Tereus cum intellexisset scelus scelere ultum esse, coniugem et sororem coniugis dum persequitur, deorum voluntate versi sunt in aves: Progne in hirundinem, Philomela in lusciniam, Tereus in epopem.\textsuperscript{170}

Of particular interest in this account are the descriptors of Philomela’s ordeal itself through the repetition of \textit{sacrificium}. The reason for her journey in the first part of the narrative, to join her sister for a religious ritual (\textit{sacrificium}), becomes transformed into her own sacrifice, or the sacrifice of an aspect of herself, such as her virginity or her tongue (and therefore language, through the metastasis of \textit{lingua}). Although never stated outright, it grants a sense of her character as a victim in a more traditional sense of the word, i.e. as a sacrificial victim. The violence done to her is only alluded to or minimized: there is no verb to explicitly describe that Tereus rapes her, and her mutilation is essentialized to a blunt, two-word statement, \textit{lingua}

\textsuperscript{170} "Tereus, son of Mars, king of Thrace, because he brought aid to many kings, including to Pandion the king of Athens when he was attacked by nearby cities, he did not desert him, and on that account he gave his daughter Progne to him in marriage. She was brought to the kingdom of her husband when after a time she wished to see her sister Philomela, and asked Tereus that he depart for Athens to bring her sister to her for [the event of] a holy sacrifice. So he went to Athens, and enjoying the hospitality of his father-in-law he fell in love with Philomela. He took her with him to Thrace, broke from his wife’s request, and held her in a stable, so that he might visit her often without anyone’s suspicion. Nor was she, hidden away, able to speak: he had cut out her tongue and lied to his wife; in fact he said that her sister had died. And Philomela, who could not produce language, wove a cloth with a pattern of letters, which she sent, announcing to her sister alone her [ordeal] at the stables. Once she had seen it she realized her husband’s lust and her sister’s disaster, so she resolved herself to perform the rituals of Liber and the manner of a bacchanal, went to the stables and led into the palace her stolen sister. She killed her son Itys and mixed him into the feast. Tereus had satiated himself when he desired Itys, and they threw Itys’s still-bleeding head into his lap, saying, “You have whom you desire inside of you.” Tereus, when he understood that his crime had been avenged with crime, pursued his wife and her sister until they were turned into birds by the will of the gods: Progne into a sparrow, Philomela into a nightingale, Tereus into a Hoopoe.” My translation.
truncavit; nor is she given space for her protest against the violence done to her. The collective weight of these details shifts the narrative towards a reading of Tereus in a more traditional heroic role, in which he becomes a decisive actor willing to carry out the tasks necessary to gain what he wants. The finale, of course, weighs morally on these actions, but we understand the aspects of horror in this version not to belong to Philomela, but to be the cannibalism of Itys and the wrath of Progne. Certainly the descriptive power of the author is reserved for Itys’ “still-bleeding head” and Progne’s devastating declaration of where Tereus can find the rest of him. The final details of the episode are common to contemporary and later commentaries, placing emphasis on the spiral of crime begetting crime—“Tereus cum intellexisset scelus scelere ultum esse”—however even this will be emphasized in later traditions as a consequence specific to the violence inherent within an incestuous relationship. We can read in this version that they are not so closely linked.

To turn to commentary in scholia form, glossing specific words or passages from the work of auctores, Servius, in his commentaries on Virgil’s works, treats the Philomena story in several instances: in Aeneid 3.51 he glosses Threicio regi: “Tereus, qui Philomelae sorori uxoris post inlatum stuprum linguam abscidit”\(^\text{171}\); and in Aen. 10.83, et potes in totidem classem convertere nymphas: “licet hoc mater deum fecerit, tamen Veneri inputatur, quia eius gratia factum est, ut illo loco quas illi Philomela dapes, cum Procne fecerit, sed propter Philomelam; aut certe quia Venerem dicit esse matrem deum.”\(^\text{172}\) Servius also, in his commentary on Virgil’s Ecloga 6.78-79, summarizes the story as a gloss explanation for the mention of Tereus:


\(^{172}\) Servius Grammaticus, *Serviani in Vergili Aeneidos libros IX-XII commentarii*, edited by Charles E. Murgia and Robert A. Kaster, Oxford University Press, 2018: “It is shown that the mother of the gods did this, yet this is ascribed to Venus, because it was done by her favor, just as in that place when Philomela with Procne made a
78. ... Tereus autem rex Thracum fuit, qui cum Atheniensibus tulisset auxilium ac Pandionis, Athenarum regis, filiam, Procnen nomine, duxisset uxorem et post aliquantum tempus ab ea rogaretur, ut sibi Philomelam sororem suam videndam accersiret, prefectus Athenas dum adducit puellam, eam vitiavit in itinere et ei linguam, ne facinus indicaret, abscedit, inclusam que in stabulis reliquit, eamentis coniugi eam perisse naufragio. illa tamen rem in veste suo cruore descriptam misit sorori: qua cognita Procne Itys filium interemit et patri epulandum adposuit. alii Tereum finxisse socero dicunt, Procnen uxorem mortuam, et petisse Philomelam in matrimonium, et hoc dolore compulsam Procnen occidisse filium et epulandum patri apposuisse. quas cum Tereus agnito scelere insequeretur, omnes in aves mutati sunt: Tereus in upupam, Itys in fassam, Procne in hirundinem, Philomela in lusciniam. quidam tamen rem in veste suo cruore descriptam misit sorori: qua cognita Procne Itys filium interemit et patri epulandum adposuit.

79. [...] atqui hoc Procne fecit; sed aut abutitur nomine aut illi inputat, propter quam factum est. et bene avis et hominis miscuit mentionem.

The long summaries elide details that will come into focus in the later commentaries and adaptations of the myth, in particular Tereus’s time in Athens, his difficulty and eventual success in convincing Pandion to allow Philomela to accompany him, and Pandion’s own attachment to his daughter. Notably, they also avoid the detailed description of Philomela’s rape, her response, and her subsequent mutilation. Without these details, the focus of the episode shifts away the interpretations possible in Ovid’s text: the connotations of incest are not present between any of the characters; moreover, because the rape itself is elided along with Philomela’s response, a sacrificial feast for that man, it was on Philomela’s behalf: certainly because of this they say that Venus is the mother of the gods” (134).

173 “78. [...] Tereus was the king of Thrace, who, after he had brought aid to Athens and Pandion, the king of Athens, had taken his daughter Procne as his wife and after some time was asked by her to fetch her sister Philomela in order to see her, he set out for Athens, and bringing the girl back during the journey he ruined her and cut out her tongue, so that she would not expose his crime, and he left her closed up in a stable, lying to his wife that her sister had perished in a shipwreck. Yet she sent her sister the affair described on a cloth in her own blood: once she learned of this, Procne killed her son Itys and placed him in front of his father as a feast. Others say that Tereus lied to the sister that Procne his wife was dead, and asked Philomela to marry him, and on account of the pain Procne was compelled to kill their son and place him before his father to eat. When the crime was realized, Tereus pursued the sisters, and all of them were transformed into birds: Tereus into a Hoopoe, Itys into a pheasant, Procne into a swallow, Philomela into a nightingale. Yet the sisters fled danger by ship and on account of their speed they wish to be called birds of flight. 79. [...] yet Procne did this; but either her name is misapplied, or it was credited to her by Virgil, on account of what was done. And rightly he mixed up the naming of people and birds.” Servii Grammatici qui ferunture in Vergilii Bucolica et Georgica commentariori, edited by Georg Thilo, Fasc. 2, Teubner, 1887; English translation my own. The inversion of Procne’s and Philomela’s transformations comes from the Greek tradition of the story, which Virgil appears to follow, and was not common to the reception of the myth in the Latin Middle Ages, as demonstrated by Servius’ “correction” of Virgil’s details. See Hayes 77.
more male-centric reading of the text is allowed by the commentators, which in turn makes Procne’s reaction of filicide all the more objectionable. Regarding the moment of rape itself in these summaries, there is the complete removal of Philomela’s protest in the moment of her assault—indeed, Hyginus and Servius raise the possibility that she went with him willingly, convinced that her sister had died; and rather than a horrific act prompted by the power of Philomela and his fear of the consequences, Tereus’s removal of her tongue is sterilized as an act that emphasizes his character as a liar.

Between these commentaries and summaries of Philomela’s ordeal and the much lengthier account of Proserpina by Claudian, we note that family as a larger concern is central to analysis of the myths about rape. This is especially true in the case of Prosperina, in which the internal commentary on and judgment of the various characters reveals a central problem which is not the rape itself, but the emotional failings of several characters in the face of political necessity: there is no gender play, as in the case of Pandion, with the father character of Jupiter, as he follows Ovid’s model of calculated consideration of a larger picture; the mother, Ceres, instead becomes the central problem to a proposed order, reframed by Jupiter as a correction of the disorder that arose from Pluto’s inability to find a spouse. Proserpina, the victim, is mostly absent—we might assume, if Claudian had concluded the narrative following Ovid’s model, we would read the predictable transformation of girlhood into womanhood. Philomela’s myth on the other hand focuses on the disruption of order caused by the aggressor, Tereus, and how this violence, propagated within the bounds of the family unit, causes a spiral of violence against the next generation. The inclusion of Itys’s murder and the subsequent feast on his body is closely tied to the violence perpetrated by Tereus on Philomela and is brought up in even the shorter comments on the myth. Unlike Proserpina, there is no hope of maturity, or perhaps even
humanity, that remains for Philomela at the end of these interpretations: she is granted no response, because Tereus cuts out her tongue preventatively rather than fearfully (*ne facinus indicaret*); where Lactantius grants her communication through weaving, Servius has her scrawl a message in her own blood on a cloth; and Servius points out that there is even some confusion as to who killed Itys, raised by authorial error or intent by Virgil in his eclogues. The scene of this family is not one of restored order and growth, but of total disaster.

When we consider the characters of Pluto in the *De raptu* and Tereus in these texts, there are notable similarities in their individual characters. Both are figured as kings of considerable power: Pluto is noted as such by Jupiter, and Tereus is described as coming to the weaker Pandion’s, and Athens’, aid. Their kingdoms likewise bear similar relations to the lands of their victims: the underworld is described as terrifying, unpleasant, especially in contrast to the paradisical setting in which we find Proserpina and her retinue of goddesses; Thrace is not described in such great detail in these few short commentaries, but its distance and its contrast to Athens, renowned for its civilized culture, forces it into a characteristic of barbarity. The most striking difference between Pluto and Tereus is not an inherent quality, but rather that Tereus makes an unjustifiable decision where Pluto is framed as making one that is entirely understandable within the contexts of antique and medieval courtship. That Tereus has a wife, and that he then chooses to rape his wife’s own sister, seems to be the primary downfall of the character; no possible marriage can come from his violence against Philomela, so it cannot be transformed into a political or economic gain. Because the victim of violence belonged already to that familial unit, we can understand the inclination to read the myth as a critique of incestuous desire.
We have early evidence that the reading of incest into the myth of Philomela was not particular to the medieval period. Martial, in the 1st century CE, wrote: “Flet Philomela nefas incesti Tereos, et quae / Muta puella fuit, garrula fertur avis” (“Philomela mourns the wrong of Tereus’s incest, and she who was silent as a girl, becomes loquacious as bird,” Martial *Epig.* 14.75, my translation; “Luscinia”—part of the series on birds). Martial’s epigram explicitly states what Ovid’s version of the myth hints at, but only if we grant *incesti* a post-classical interpretation. As Elizabeth Archibald points out,

The Romans did have a specific word for incest, though in classical Latin *incestum* had much broader connotations than its modern equivalent. In the sense of ‘unchaste behavior’ this term covered a variety of offences relating to pollution and incontinence, though clearly sexual incontinence was the most important.174 This makes it difficult to say with precision that Martial interpreted Tereus’s actions as a crime against family affinity and not simply as a very wrong act (the association of *nefas incesti* at the center of the line emphasizes the wrongness of the act), although context would seem to grant the first interpretation rather than the latter.

To be clear, Roman law, throughout its long and varied history, prohibited certain relationships, even when it was inconsistent in its terminology within particular revisions. Where charges of *adulterium* and *stuprum* would cover sexual relations between individuals inside of a greater social context, accounting for violence done but also legal access to another’s body (as granted by Roman marriage), *incestum* operates with an understanding of more particular contexts in which certain individuals may not be sexual objects. Affinity, either the degrees of

relationship by blood or by practice (adoption, tutelage or guardianship, which would later be passed on to god-parentage, and marriage, so in-laws), could determine this, or the sacred nature of the subject, such as a vestal virgin whose position required chastity (this concept of incestum would be passed on to laws concerning nuns under Christianity). For example, Orosius uses the term incest* eight times in his Historiarum adversum paganos and five of those uses refer to relations with vestal virgins rather than family members. Also significant is that of the three uses that do refer to sex between family members, two are closely associated with the term parricidi* (murder of a close relative), which strengthens the moral interpretation that the two crimes were connected. Certainly it supports a connection made between Tereus’ “incestuous” rape of Philomela and Procne’s murder of her own child.

Martial’s use of the word incesti highlights the familial connection between Tereus and Philomela but recalls other details of the story for those familiar with Ovid’s version that would grant a sanctity to Philomela’s character and the profane aspect of Tereus and Procne’s union: Philomela’s virginity and innocence and the absence of the connubial gods from the wedding of Tereus and Procne. Whatever the reason for his use of the term in this epigram, it becomes a common term in later commentaries on the myth, and it is explicitly commented on in some of the adaptations. Its presence in the second of these genres displays the propensity of medieval authors engaged in adaptation to incorporate the conventions of explicit commentary into narrative structures as a way to control interpretation: what begins as referential in Martial becomes descriptive in later centuries.

Isidore of Seville delves into this matter in several instances: “The judgment of incest (incestum) is made with regard to consecrated virgins or those who are closely related by blood, for those who have intercourse with such people are considered incestus, that is ‘unchaste’ (incestus); “Incestuous (incestus), so called from illicit intercourse—as if the word were incaustus (“not chaste”)—as one who defiles a holy virgin or someone closely related to himself” (X.1.143). For his presentation of degrees of affinity and marriageability, see IX.v-vii. Isidore of Seville, The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville, translated by Stephen Barney et al., Cambridge University Press, 2006.
The dismemberment, destruction, and sometimes consumption of male bodies in Greco-Roman myth is a motif that frequently arises in connection to female outrage. The butchering of Itys in the Philomela myth directly reflects the action taken in the less well attested story of Harpalyce, but it also recalls a similarity to the fury of Medea against Jason when she murders their two sons and to Dido’s final thoughts before committing suicide. The repetition of this theme across prominent myths and classical literary works establishes the retaliation against and destruction of male bodies as a common trope closely related to sexual violence enacted on female bodies. This theme sees repeated use in the *Metamorphoses*, as the mutilation of a male body is a reaction closely tied to the objectification of the female body, established first in the myth of Actaeon (*Met.* Book 3), or to the rejection of a feminine ideological order, such as bacchanalia, which is exemplified in the destruction of Pentheus (*Met.* Book 3) and Orpheus (*Met.* Book 11). All these myths may be grouped together, understanding the destruction of a male body as a response to a similar outrage on female bodies or feminized bodies: Procne, Harpalyce (not included in Ovid), Medea, Dido, and Diana are self-explanatory; Pentheus’ rejection of Bacchus as a new deity to be worshipped and his subsequent murder and mutilation by the female members of his household responds to the attempted rape of Bacchus by sailors earlier in that book; the rending apart of Orpheus responds to the death of Eurydice framed as a rape narrative, and then to his later rejection of female bodies.

With some overlap, there are also stories of parricide, mutilation, and cannibalism that relate directly to an incestuous subject, although it seems not to be an absolute connection. The

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176 This latter story was attested in the Greek writings of Euphorion and Parthenius, and preserved in the Latin tradition in a brief summary by Hyginus; nevertheless, it was referenced by Lactantius Placidus in his commentary on the *Thebaid*. See Cameron 108-09, 238, 291 (and note); Archibald 58.

177 “Non potui abreptum divellere corpus et undis / spargere? non socios, non ipsum absumere ferro / Ascanium patriisque epulandum ponere mensis?” (“Could I not then have torn him limb from limb / and flung the pieces on the sea? His company, / even Ascanius could I not have minced / and served up to his father at a feast?” *Aeneid* 4.600-02, translation by Robert Fitzgerald).
most overt of incestuous myths presented in the *Metamorphoses*—those of Byblis and Caunus, and Myrrha and Cinyras—lack the explicit violence and parricide present in this other family of myths. This may be because the deceit and sexual action are undertaken by the female protagonists in these cases, as opposed to male as in the cases of the Philomela and Harpalyce myths (Archibald 63-64). The close connection of the crimes of incest and parricide group together naturally to create a trope for the general disorder or dissolution of a familial unit, one that is at its base nature flawed, or worse, infertile, and therefore self-destructive.

As I mentioned above, there are strong thematic ties between the myths of Philomela and Harpalyce, enough that Lactantius Placidus will align them even more closely in his commentaries on the *Thebaid* by moving the story of Harpalyce to Thrace in order to strengthen that connection:

[[a] recenti[s] exemplo, ut ad tempus referatur.] recentiore [enim] exemplo id est siue quia prope erat Thraciae, in qua Procne, Pandionis filia, Terei uxor, in ultimo suam, quod maritus cum Philomela concubuisset, Ily filium, quem de Tereo suxeperat, interemit; siue propter Harpalycen, quam cum pater amasset et compressisset, illa filium ex incesso natum patri apposuit comedendum; quam opinionem secutus Vergilius ait: “patriisque epulandum apponere mensis.”

— Praetium quod aptum uideatur exemplum, maior necessitas persuasionis est, cum etiam uicinum docetur. Nam Thracia, quae Lemno uicina est, duobus maximis exemplis id est Procne uel Harpalyce Lemniades matres ad perficiendum nefas hortatur. De duabus ergo historis similibus quaueis ad rem aptari potest et aptata hortatur ad facinus. Nam sicut bona suasio bonis debet suscitari et asseri exemplis, sic et mala malis. Nullae enim rei argumenta desunt. Et est in utroque pugna: bona bonis, ut Vergilius: “si fratrem Pollux alterna morte redemit.”

*(In Statii Thebaida commentum 5, 114; 174)*

178 “[From a recent example, to refer to that time.] With the more recent example it is either because it was near to Thrace, in which Procne, Pandion’s daughter, wife of Tereus, in her vengeance, since her husband had slept with Philomela, killed her son Ily, whom she had received from Tereus; or because of Harpalyce, whom once her father had loved and raped, and she served her son born from incest before his father to eat; Virgil followed such an opinion, saying: ‘and set him out to be feasted upon at his father’s table.’”

—Aside from such a seemingly apt example, there is a greater need for persuasion, when that area is taught. For Thrace, which is close to Lemnos, through the two greatest examples, being Procne or Harpalyce, exhorts Lemnian mothers to the perform wicked acts. From these two women, therefore, whatever woman in similar stories is able to be attached to the deed is apt to be exhorted to commit outrage. For just as good advice ought to be encouraged and seized upon by good examples, so evil begets evil. Indeed, evidence lacks for nothing. And the dispute is the same on both sides: good begets good, following Vergil: ‘If Pollux rescued his brother from death in turn.’”

Standing behind Lactantius Placidus’ commentary in this case is the nature of Thrace as a barbarian land, given to savagery and encouraging that characteristic in those who live there. Archibald notes several times that the theme of incest in classical myth was often associated with barbarian peoples, although this is an association in appearance only, as many of the motifs associated with incest myths—cycles of dismemberment, cannibalism, and parricide—involve figures associated Athens as well: Pandion, Proce, and Philomela; the line of Tantalus through Pelops, Atreus and Thyestes, Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, and Aegisthus; and Theseus, Phaedra, and Hippolytus. In confrontation with these persistent myths, the excuse that Thrace was a land of savagery feels thin, although such depictions persist in the late medieval commentaries and adaptations of the Philomela myth.

Contemporary to Lactantius Placidus, Claudian, and Servius (4th-5th centuries) there are briefer offerings concerning Philomela from a handful of authors. Ausonius, for example, in his Technopaegnion, writes: “intulit incestam tibi vim, Philomela, ferus—Thrax” (“A fierce man inflicted incestuous force on you, Philomela—Thrace,” 10.89). The brief mention of incest in the case of Ausonius reveals nothing about interpretation of the myth other than that it had come to be associated with this particular wrong, an unnaturalness or disorder similar in usage as in Martial’s epigram. It also shows how the myth and the crime might have become emblematic of the place, Thrax (Thrace), the monosyllabic ending word conforming to the form of the poem but demonstrating an emphasis on that final announcement.

Archibald writes, “Incest is sometimes presented in classical literature as a stereo- typically barbarian practice, though when Seneca’s Phaedra first reveals her passion for Hippolytus, the horrified nurse comments that not even barbarians would break the taboo (Hippolytus, 165–8)” (64; see also 17, 92-93 [Semiramis], 231). Ironically, it is in the “barbarian” (i.e. Germanic) legal codes that the earliest and most restrictive limits defining incest were set for the Christian world (32-34).
Returning to Orosius, a student of Augustine’s, in his *Historiarum adversum paganos* he directly addresses the Philomela myth in unambiguous terms: “Tunc etiam Terei Procnae et Philomelae incesto parricidium adiunctum atque exsccrabilius utroque conuiuiium per infandos cibos additum, cum propter sororis pudicitiam ereptam praecisam que linguam filium paruulum mater occidit, pater comedit” (“Then Tereus’, Procne’s, and Philomela’s killing of a family member was linked to incest and detestably both were made worse through the abominable food of the feast, when on account of her sister’s stolen chastity and cut-out tongue, the mother killed her little child and his father ate him,” 1.1.11.3). His agenda—evident from his title, *History against the Pagans*—shows itself in his rhetoric. His presentation of the story is essentialized to a list of its most shocking parts and weaves together the two phases of the myth to show cause and effect. The early mention of incest (*incesto*) becomes the binding element, and the moral cause for the spiral into violence and depravity, even if there is the secondary justification of Philomela’s chastity and mutilation. These details are subsumed by the primary theme of the account (*parricidium*) which is explicitly linked to the moral failure of incest. Rape as a legalistic or moral term is not raised except as a reference through “pudicitiam ereptam.” There is even greater attention paid to the removal of Philomela’s tongue through his earlier use of the phrase “infandos cibos,” in which the quality *infandos*, from the verb *fari* “to speak,” in this form “unspeakable,” resonates with Philomela’s condition.

The permanence of these commentaries and mythographies as supplements to the classical *auctores* is attested to by the increasingly formalized practice of scholarly commentary throughout the subsequent centuries. Although this practice tended to focus on writers other than Ovid until the 12th century, the fundamental activity of glossing pagan mythological knowledge made the *Metamorphoses* an invaluable source of knowledge. Yet, when we investigate later
mythographical texts, from the period of the 9th-12th centuries, it is clear that medieval commentators looked to the earlier commentaries and mythographies for much of their material.  

In the case of the Philomela story, the close similarities between the two texts of the First and Second Vatican mythographers indicates a shared source, or more likely that the Second Mythographer simply copied the First (Pepin 5). Below are their texts, side-by-side for comparison:

Mythographus I


Mythographus II


180 The three texts I present in the following paragraphs are believed to have been composed during this period: certainly Bernard of Utrecht’s commentary on the Ecloga Theoduli was written in the late 11th century; the texts by the first two of the three so-called Vatican Mythographers are more difficult to date, with the First Mythographer having flourished sometime between the 9th and 11th centuries and the Second Mythographer between the 11th and 12th centuries. See the Introduction to Ronald Pepin, The Vatican Mythographers, Fordham University Press, 2008, pp. 5-7.


182 “4. THE STORY OF TEREUS AND PROCNE. Tereus was king of the Thracians. He married Procne, the daughter of Pandion, king of Athens. After a short time she asked him to fetch Philomela, her sister, for a visit. He proceeded to Athens, and while he was bringing the girl back, he violated her on the way and cut out her tongue so that she would not tell of his wicked deed. Yet the girl sent the true story to her sister depicted in her own blood on a tapestry. When this accusation became clear, Procne killed her son, Itys, and set him before his father to be eaten. Afterward, all were changed into birds: Tereus into a hoopoe, Itys into a pheasant, Procne into a swallow, Philomela into a nightingale.”

183 “261. ON TEREUS. Tereus was King of the Thracians. He married the daughter of Pandion, King of Athens, whose name was Procne. After a short time she asked him to fetch Philomela, her sister, for a visit. He proceeded to Athens. While he was bringing the girl back with him, he violated her on the way and cut out her tongue so that she would not tell of his wicked deed. But the girl sent the true story to her sister depicted in her own blood on a tapestry. When this accusation became clear, Procne killed her own son, Itys, and set him before his father to be eaten. Afterward, all were changed into birds: Tereus into a Hoopoe, Itys into a pheasant, Procne into a swallow, Philomela into a nightingale.”
Several details stand out that connect these *fabulae* to earlier commentary: most prominent is the detail that Philomela used her own blood to write her story on the tapestry, which demonstrates that the authors were following Servius’ commentary on Virgil’s *Ecloga* 6.78-79. This is strengthened further by certain choices of phrasing, such as *duxisset uxorem*, used with the same tense and mood at the beginning of Servius commentary to describe Tereus’ marriage to Procne.¹⁸⁴

This phrase, *duxisset uxorem*, is of particular interest because in both cases the authors will reintroduce a variation on the phrase, applying it rather to Philomela: *abducere puellam* in the First Vatican Mythographer, *adducere puellam* in the Second Vatican Mythographer. The closeness of these phrases to Tereus’ initial action of *marrying* Procne recalls the ambiguity that Ovid introduced into the narrative regarding Philomela’s status in relation to her assailant. The semantic slide from verb phrases that mean “to marry” and “to escort” are problematic, in that they grant Tereus the benefit of doubt in the culpability of his actions; if married to Philomela, his legal right to her body is hinted at in these lines.

That Bernard of Utrecht, in his commentary on *Ecloga Theoduli*, follows this usage of *ducere uxorem*, and then its repetition in a new form of the verb, cannot be coincidence.¹⁸⁵ Huygens lists the First Vatican Mythographer as a source for Bernard’s commentary, and this emulation of the Philomela *fabula* supports that supposition, but also marks this detail, the

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¹⁸⁴ J. N. Adams describes the phrase *ducere uxorem* used often in Roman comedy (especially Plautus) to denote taking a wife or a prostitute, and I found the phrase used in other contexts as well, as Suetonius’ descriptions of Claudius’ marriages: “uxores deinde duxit Plautiam Urgulanillam triumphali et mox Aeliam Paetinam…”; and in regards to Agrippina, “…ad ducendum eam uxorem” (Claudius 26). See J. N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*, John’s Hopkins University Press, 1982, pp. 174-75. Regarding Servius as a source for the Vatican Mythographers, Cameron writes, “The Servian corpus is by far the fullest and most important source for those central medieval mythographic texts” (184).

ambiguity of Philomela’s legal relation to Tereus, as a fundamental aspect of the Philomela

Below is Bernard of Utrecht’s version:

[271] Fabula Therei. (lines 884-904 of the Commentum)

_Femina quid possit in malefaciendo Therei domus aspera novit_. Thereus enim
Tracum rex Atheniensis regis Pandionis natam uxorem duxit Prognes, quae sororis
Philomenae visendae capta desiderio ad eam adducendam misit maritum. Hic virginis
captus pulchritudine adductam viciavit, viciatam lingua truncavit, truncatam secretis locis
abscindit, dehinc domum reversus eam in via obisse mentitus est uxori. Quae cum postea
per telam sibi a Philomena missam rei deprehendisset veritatem, in ultione sororis filium
Ytim coctum patri ad comedendum apposuit, ob quae facinora Thereus in upupam,
Prognes in hirundinem, Philomena in lusciniam, Ytis in fasianum mutatus est. Hic verum
fuisse aiunt, excepta personarum mutatione, nam quod aves facti dicuntur fugitivos factos
fuisse constat.

Misterium.

Thereus upupa factus dicitur, quia a conspectu hominis remotus est et in desertis
ut illa avis vixit, Progne hirundo, quia in alienis pauper vivens edibus de sua semper
conquesta est miseria, soror autem facta est Philomena quia de eius erumna facta est
cantilena, Ytis vero fasianus quia patri factus est cibus: fasianus siquidem comestibile
sonat.187

Here again, we read the initial phrase _uxorem duxit Prognes_ followed later by _ad eam_

_adducendam_, referring to Philomela (here Philomena). On top of this, Bernard repeats the verb in
a passive form in the next line, _adductam_, as part of a series of verbs that shift to passive
participle to describe Philomela: _ducere/adducendam – adductam; viciavit – viciatam; truncavit_
– _truncatam_. The mimetic slide of the character from object to object, repeatedly defined by the

186 See the Introduction to Bernard D’Utrecht, _Commentum in Theodolum (1076-1099)_ , edited by R. B. C. Huygens,
Centro italiano di studi sull’alto medioev, 1977, p. 4.
187 “[271] The Tale of Tereus: _What a woman can do evilly the bitter house of Tereus knows_. King Tereus of Thrace
married his wife, the Athenian king Pandion’s daughter Prognes, who was taken by the desire to see her sister
Philomena and sent her husband to fetch her. Taken by the beauty of the maiden he despoiled the girl he was taking
back [adductam], cut out the despoiled girl’s tongue, hid the mutilated girl in a secret place, then returned home and
lied to his wife that she had died along the way. Afterwards, once she had learned the truth of things through a
woven cloth sent to her by Philomena, in revenge for her sister she set out their son Itys cooked to be eaten by his
father. On account of these crimes, Tereus was changed into a hoopoe, Procne into a swallow, Philomena into a
nightingale, and Itys into a pheasant. They say that this was true, except the transformations of the people, for it is
understood that those said to have been made into birds were made into fugitives. Mystery: It is said that Tereus was
made into a hoopoe, because it is removed from the sight of men and because that bird lived in deserts; Prognes was
made into a swallow because, poor, living in others’ houses she always bewails her misery; her sister however was
made a nightingale [philomena] because from her calamity was made a song; but Itys was a pheasant because he
was made food for his father: since pheasant is known to be edible.” My translation.
verbs done to her reflects ease with which women in these stories are defined not by their own actions or voices, but by actions and voices of their assailants.

Bernard of Utrecht’s approach to Philomela has been noted as particularly antagonistic, listing her, along with Medea and Phaedra, as examples of evil women (Chance 389; Amsler 87). In part, this accusation against Philomela relates to the lines of the *Ecloga* on which Bernard comments for this section:

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Mens robusta viri levitate cadit muliebri:
Ypomanes tractant, gustu sua membra cruentant.
Femina quid possit, Terei domus aspera novit,
Sci Medea suis infesta clade peremptis. (269-70)
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Bernard’s commentary on these lines insists on a reading in which women’s desirability has power over men, strengthened by his description of Tereus as *virginis captus pulchritudine*. The third line in this verse contains a double meaning in this context, especially following the first two: more obviously there are the actions of Procne and the violence of her revenge; but heavily implied is the downfall that he faced at the beauty of Philomela. Of course, this kind of interpretation plays heavily into the tropes proposed by Ovid himself in his love poetry; however, it provides a justification of defense for the rapist, who, finding himself referred to passively with the participle *captus*, offers a corrective in a cascade of his own violent and verbal objectifications.

### 2.2.2 Conclusion

From the commentaries and adaptations of the Philomela myth from the late classical period and the early Middle Ages, there is a general shift away from the implication raised by

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188 “The sturdy mind of man falls to the shallowness of woman / They deal in love potions, soaking their limbs with its flavor. / The bitter house of Tereus knows what a woman can do, / Medea knows, having killed her sons in unholy slaughter.” My translation.
Ovid in his version from the *Metamorphoses* to an explicit interpretation that read incest into the myth as a way of explaining the nature of Tereus’ crime. The commentary tradition from this period establishes several other details that will be repeated in the commentaries and adaptations of the late Middle Ages, especially the shift in focus away from Ovid’s more “psychological” approach to the characters to a social commentary on the necessities of appropriate behavior within marriage and family. This shift can be explained to some degree by the change of genres from poetry to exegesis, in which an “authentic” motivation of an individual character is eclipsed by a concern for what the character and his or her actions come to symbolize. In this way the internal deliberations of Tereus disappear, along with Philomela’s legalistic response to her assault and her ingenuity at communicating the story through her weaving. However, Claudian’s adaptation of the Proserpina myth also displays a shift within the genre of narrative poetry that indicates an interest more in the dynamics of social structure than the motivations of individuals.

The early commentaries and retellings remove detail in order to provide widely-applicable examples: the rape of Proserpina is a model for a cohesive family and the reconciliation of its members in the face of division; the rape of Philomela is a model of incest and demonstrates a family’s dissolution as a result of the crime.

An effect of this shift away from an individualistic narrative to a moral lesson in the retelling of the myth of Philomela is that the act of exegesis strips away the erotic elements of the text. An essential aspect of the erotic is the presence of the individual character—which is ironic, since the eroticism in the act of rape described in the story strips the character of her selfhood—both that of the victim and the rapist. The removal of detail, such as Philomela’s resistance and struggle, Tereus’s internal genius for wickedness, and Ovid’s reliably familiar metaphors of fire and hunting, removes the readers’ ability to insert themselves into the scene, either as the
aggressor or the victim. The actions of the two characters are held up for inspection, but not imagination.

The removal of the erotic in the genre of commentary (and, in these early examples, adaptation) would prove useful for that literary tradition in the later medieval period once Christian morality had an ubiquitous hold (although a notably non-binding quality) on the academic world. Such writing would be better protected against charges of immorality while still able to preserve the literal content of the pagan narrative and in that way its utility should be acknowledged. It would be an overstatement to claim this was the primary goal of the commentary project; however, it did dovetail nicely with its project of preservation and interpretation.
CHAPTER 3: LATE MEDIEVAL COMMENTARY

3.1 French Commentaries and Adaptations

In the next three sections I turn to the French, Italian, and English commentary traditions of the late Middle Ages, composed in Latin, as well as the early transitions into vernacular languages as adaptations and translations of the Philomela myth. Building on the mythographies and commentaries of the early Middle Ages, the commentaries of the later period, on the one hand, were more directly moralistic in their agendas, with commentators hoping to explicitly lay out a useful, moral interpretation for Christian readers of the Metamorphoses. The vernacular translations and adaptations of the Philomela narrative, on the other hand, were not always so explicit in their purpose. Where the commentaries are clearly didactic, aimed at an academic audience, the vernacular projects are disparate, changing in their form and practice over the three centuries that I consider. However, all of these works are connected through the use of the vernacular as a foundation for new hermeneutic communities that would arise through this period of the late Middle Ages and into the Renaissance. Works such as the Philomena in the 12th century and Arrigo Simintendi’s translation (Metamorfosi volgarizzate) of the Metamorphoses in the 14th century were experiments of language and literature, certainly, but they also contributed to the establishment of non-Latin terminology to describe and explain the occasion of sexual crime and its phenomena for their audiences, which for the first time were not a pan-European community of scholars but characterized as “French” or “Italian.”189

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189 For the basis of such a statement, see Copeland, especially Chapter 4, “Translation and Interlingual Commentary: Notker of St. Gall and the Ovide moralisé,” pp. 87-126.
When considering any given narrative or commentary on Philomela, the reader must seek to answer two questions about her character, which may exist in isolation from each other, but are more often than not linked: First, is the character of Philomela ultimately empowered in the text, either by her access to an appeal to justice or through the power of her own actions to ameliorate her situation, for example, her ingenuity in the creation of the tapestry (alternately, is she repeatedly disempowered, passive, or subsumed into the actions of others)? Second, is the violence against her eroticized? Much of my analysis is concerned with exploring these two questions, if not definitively answering them. The criteria for responding to the first are generally more easily determined, as Philomela’s role changes, more or less subtly, from one version of the myth to another, and the commentators react to her by different turns as they read her as a victim or as an agent of Tereus’ downfall. There are times when she disappears entirely from the narrative after her rape, in others she wields the knife against her nephew alongside Procne and throws his head into Tereus’ lap; frequently, her ingenuity at the loom is left out of the commentaries, although it always finds some mention in the vernacular translations and adaptations.

The second question is problematic, not so much because evidence of eroticization is difficult to uncover as because it becomes difficult to rule out any particular detail as erotic. There are literary practices that are established as erotic: Ovid’s use of hunting metaphors, for example, or the close detail paid to a character’s physical attributes, such as their skin, their hair, or their breath.\(^{190}\) Other details arise, however, that are questionable: Should incest be read as

\(^{190}\) See *Ars amatoria* 1.115-30, for example, for a combination of all of these elements. The male fantasy of domination, as well as being dominated, are discussed at length by Ellen Greene in the context of Ovid’s earlier poetry from the *Amores*; see Chapters 4 and 5 of *The Erotics of Domination: Male Desire and the Mistress in Latin Love Poetry*, University of Oklahoma Press, 1998, esp. pp. 104-05 and 112-13; see also Ellen Greene, “Gender and Elegy” 357-72, in which she writes, “In the cases of both Danae and Io, male sexual desire is explicitly linked to female captivity and silence” (367).
erotic? (Ovid certainly seems to make it be so.) Or violence, as in the examples of the Sabine women and Philomela herself? If so, how graphic can it be? What are the limits? Kathryn Gravdal goes so far as to suggest that the repetition of the word “law” (loi) in the Old French Philomena opens an erotic space for its readers, as they are granted permission to imagine themselves in Tereus’ role, empowered by the explicit approval of a political authority (law).  

Rather than arguing for an erotic actuality in every detail, it is more fruitful to consider whether there is an erotic potential in any detail. The blending of the erotic with violence, which includes both the threat of violence and its practice, fundamentally changes the presence of violence in the text, transforming it from a thing to be avoided to an element of erotic action. In the context of the Philomela story, when her rape and the violence that follows her rape is eroticized, the author is able to label such an event as “love” (amor, as Ovid writes regarding Daphne and Apollo); it allows the reader to sympathize with and imagine him or herself as a heroic Tereus or a helpless Philomela. This troping of rape in the story of Philomela makes the second half of the narrative incomprehensible, in particular the murder of Itys, as an outsized response to a misunderstood event: if the rape as Philomela can be read instead as a characteristic of the romantic genre, or even cast her consent in an ambiguous light, it reinforces a reading of Procne as a stereotyped “mad woman,” willing to kill her own child out of jealousy.

The emergence of an aesthetic is a fundamental aspect of a community’s sense of judgement: rape in literary representation as an erotic theme transgresses the boundaries of

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191 See Gravdal 63; I discuss her assertion at greater length below.
192 Evelyn Vitz cautions against overgeneralization when it comes to gendering the erotic fantasies of collective readership, and at whom the creation of scenes of erotic violence were aimed. See Vitz, Part 2: Rape and Sexual Fantasy.
193 I follow Gravdal in the definition of trope here: “By ‘trope’ I mean a literary device that presents an event in such a way that it heightens figurative elements and manipulates the reader’s ordinary response by suspending or interrupting that response in order to displace the reader’s focus onto other formal or thematic elements. The mimesis of rape is made tolerable when the poet tropes it as moral, comic, heroic, spiritual, or erotic” (13).
literature and proposes that the act of rape is itself erotic. This concern gives context to Augustus’ exiling of Ovid for having written an inappropriate song; it also gives context to the concern of the Church for the moral consequences of reading certain texts, such as Ovid’s love poetry. In turn, the tradition that rape is a libido-fueled crime also has necessitated the modern assertion that rape is not a crime of passion or lust, but of power; it has been necessary to repeat this assertion so frequently because so much of the narrative foundation of our Western conceptualization of rape states otherwise. The Philomela myth is an important element of that foundation, and the manner in which it was treated in medieval commentaries and adaptations is indicative of how those reading communities understood rape, the assailants who enacted it, and their victims.

The sections of this chapter progress roughly chronologically, starting with the Latin commentaries of the long 12th century, most of which were composed in France, especially in the Loire Valley, associated with Orléans school. From there I analyze the Latin commentaries of the 13th and 14th centuries composed by French authors (a determination I will discuss), culminating with Pierre Bersuire’s *Ovidius moralizatus*. I conclude this first section by returning to the 12th century, to consider Chrétien de Troyes’ French-language *Philomena* and its context as we have received it from its inclusion in the influential 14th-century *Ovide moralisé*. The second and third sections of this chapter focus primarily on the 14th century and the increasing popularity of vernacular languages to address and adapt Ovidian subjects. The second section, on

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194 See Hans-Georg Gadamer, who writes, “It is not only a question of narrowing the concept of the sense of community to taste, but of narrowing the concept of taste itself. The long history of this idea before Kant made it the basis of his *Critique of Judgment* shows that the concept of taste was originally more a moral than an aesthetic idea. It describes an ideal of genuine humanity and receives its character from the effort to take a critical stand against the dogmatism of the ‘school.’ It was only later that the use of the idea was limited to the ‘aesthetic’” (31, emphasis by author). See *Truth and Method*, translated by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, Continuum, 2011, esp. Part 1.

195 See the section on *Force* in my Introduction.
commentaries and adaptations by Italian authors, includes my readings of Giovanni del Virgilio’s two Latin commentaries on the *Metamorphoses* and Giovanni Boccaccio’s attention to the myth from his *Genealogia deorum gentilium* composed several decades later. I then return to a contemporary of del Virgilio, Arrigo Simintendi, who is the first writer to attempt a translation of the *Metamorphoses* in the Italian language. I compare Simintendi’s work with that of Giovanni Bonsignori, whose own Italian adaptation and moralization of the *Metamorphoses* was composed half a century later. The final section looks to England and the works of Chaucer and Gower, who each provided a version of the Philomela myth in the later part of the 14th century.

Over the course of this chapter, I argue that the Philomela myth is used by medieval scholars and authors to engage in the cultural reconstruction of how rape and sexual assault were understood by their communities. Medieval writers understood well the political agenda and language of Ovid, who was their primary source for the tale: by directly addressing his version of the narrative in their commentaries, they were able to bring new moral relevance to the myth in their own socio-political communities and respond to the varied and complex legal systems under which they wrote. Vernacular adaptation of the Philomela myth likewise allowed writers to establish a new, non-Latin terminology to discuss the crime of rape, and with that shift to propose novel and often sympathetic understandings of the personal trauma it would leave behind.

### 3.1.1 Background Literature

The moral and philological/grammatical traditions of commentary on the *Metamorphoses* that developed in the late-medieval French academy were influenced by, and they themselves influenced, a more general social change that was felt in the realms of education, law, and
literature. The narrative of Philomela and its interpretations lie at the intersection of these systems, and the interest of 12th-century scholars reflects the concerns, violent and sexual, at the center of the myth. The Parisian and Orléans models of commentary act as foundations for the other traditions of commentary that would arise in Italy and England and that would continue to develop in France as the European academy shifted towards humanist sensibilities and eventually into the Renaissance. These systems of commentary themselves arose from the popular models of commentary and rhetoric established during the Carolingian period (notably Remigius of Auxerre) as well as from classical models provided by the likes of Servius and Lactantius Placidus; however, the style of commentaries from this later period are distinct in character and display new approaches to reading and interpretation.\footnote{Copeland discusses some elements of this shift regarding the use of the \textit{accessus ad auctorum} in a commentary or the introduction to the author of the work, which also worked as a way to guide the reader’s path through the text with methods of interpretation and to explain the scope of the commentary (71-73); although, as Ralph Hexter points out, the scope of the interpretative process declared in the \textit{accessus} was only rarely followed (\textit{Ovid and Medieval Schooling}, Arbeo-Gesellschaft, 1986, p. 18 and note 16).}

The term “French” may itself be misleading in this case, so to clarify, I consider the commentary tradition that developed under the cathedral schools and university system associated with Paris, understanding that it has a distinct character from other schools of commentary that will develop, even concurrently. As such, the texts in this group are not strictly written by French authors as they would have been understood in the centuries in which they wrote: John Garland was English, for example, and Pierre Bersuire, writing in the 14th century, was from the region of Poitou, in that politically ambiguous area in what is now western France. Nonetheless, their studies at the University of Paris and their familiarity with their predecessors (Arnulf of Orléans, William of Orléans) place them firmly in this group. These commentaries follow a particular line of interpretation, one that was certainly influenced by the authors of late
antiquity and the earlier Middle Ages (such as the 9th-century Carolingian court, under which literary studies flourished), but which are also products of the so-called “renaissance of the 12th century,” a term that requires in and of itself particular attention.

In addition to the academically oriented commentaries on the *Metamorphoses*, I will also consider the French vernacular adaptation of the Philomela myth that is included in the 14th-century *Ovide moralisé*. This long text (in total about 72,000 lines) acts as a combined translation/adaptation of the *Metamorphoses* and allegorical commentary. Structurally, the author of the text either composed or selected previously composed vernacular French verse in order to adapt the entirety of Ovid’s text in octosyllabic verse. Each episode is followed by an allegorical commentary, also in verse and the French language, guiding the reader through an interpretation of the narrative they have just read. In the case of Philomela’s narrative, it is now widely believed that the author of the *Ovide moralisé* used Chrétien de Troyes’ *Philomena*, followed by his own commentary.197

The 12th century has been given the title of “renaissance” in modern medieval studies, a title that is perhaps deserved, given the notable focus in 12th-century intellectuals’ work to reengage with classical knowledge.198 This was a focus that was fostered and supported by the establishment of the major universities of medieval Europe, in Bologna, in Paris, and in Oxford.

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198 Charles Haskins’s *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* has been and continues to be a great influencer of this perspective, defining the long 12th century as a period beginning in the last third of the 11th century and concluding after the first quarter of the 13th century. The term “renaissance” applied to this period predates Haskins’s study, however, evidenced by Hastings Rashdall’s use in his three-volume work, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge University Press, 1895. See also Curtius 53-54.
Certainly a number of other innovations, literary, technological, and social were introduced into late medieval cultures, intellectual, and otherwise, but within intellectual pursuits, the attention paid to Ovid’s works, especially the *Metamorphoses*, changed the field of literary academia and had a great effect on other disciplines as well, notably law. As Haskins writes, “In the twelfth century the wide diffusion of Ovid is one of the surest indications of the classical revival” (108).

The period between the late pagan and early Christian mythographers and the mythographic projects of the late Middle Ages is poorly defined, in geography, era, and character, and as such requires some arbitrary interventions in order to distinguish the academic writing of the 12th century and later.\(^{199}\) Certainly the many centuries between the 7th and the 12th saw periods of strong literary production and reclamation of classical texts, such as the Visigoth kingdoms in Spain, Charlemagne’s court in France, and the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I’s cultural and political projects in Germany and Italy, which included the investiture of the University of Bologna in the middle of the 11th century. The 12th century saw a combination of factors that signaled a more substantive shift in academic culture: the establishment of university systems, gradual in the case of the University of Paris, as it developed out of the cathedral schools in Chartres, Troyes, and Orléans that lay outside of Paris, or more sudden in its creation, such as the University of Bologna; with the rise of the university systems, a focus on urban spaces as the home of academic knowledge, which increased the humanistic approaches to interpretation through partial autonomy from Church oversight (not the case in monastic and

\[^{199}\] Haskins provides greater detail on this topic in his opening chapter, although it is somewhat dated as recent scholarship has justifiably complicated terms such as *feudalism* not to mention *race* (“The Historical Background” 3-31). In no small part, it was an increase in willingness to engage with overtly pagan texts, Ovid especially, that defined the literary studies of the 12th and subsequent centuries; see generally Hexter’s invaluable study of the use of Ovidian texts in medieval schools, *Ovid and the Medieval Schooling*. For detailed discussions of the division of medieval literary academia between pre- and post-12th century, see the two essays that make up Part II: The Study of Classical Authors in the *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, edited by Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson, Cambridge University Press, 2005: Winthrop Wetherbee, “From Late Antiquity to the Twelfth Century” (99-144), and Vincent Gillespie, “From the Twelfth Century to c. 1450” (145-235).
cathedral schools); the larger reformation of legal systems, which was closely tied to the renewed study of Roman Law at the University of Bologna; and finally the widespread rise in the popularity of vernacular languages, not only among professional poets and musicians, but among academics who would compose works that translated, adapted, and emulated classical Latin works, or at least claimed to do so.

Within academia, the list of auctores saw a general shift towards Ovid’s texts, significantly with an interest in his Metamorphoses, which came to be appreciated as a treasure trove of pagan knowledge and mythology. In his overview of canonical authors, Curtius notes that Ovid’s inclusion in curriculum was by no means guaranteed prior to the 12th century and in many curricula through the 13th century, and when he was included, grammar courses tended to read only his Remedia amoris (“particularly recommended,” 50), the Fasti, and the Ex ponte (the second of which Curtius writes was merely “tolerated”) (49). Hexter likewise remarks the absence of Ovid’s works in common school texts prior to the 12th century and “the rapid increase in interest in Ovid” during that century.200 Curtius later discusses Ovid’s presence in the curricula of moral sententiae, and Haskins declares that the 12th century may be labeled the “Age of Ovid” (aetas ovidiana) when we consider the many works in Latin and vernacular that draw on Ovidian devices and subjects, such as Andreas Capellanus’ Art of Love, and Ovid’s influence on letter-writing through his Heroides, as evidenced by the famous letters of Abelard and Heloise and many of the subjects of the trobadors and Minnesänger (Curtius 58; Haskins 108). Evidence of Ovidian devices can be found also in the fabliaux, the romance genre (and every

200 Hexter 3-4, esp. notes 4 and 5. Contending with the lack of Ovidian witnesses prior to this period, David Gura, in his dissertation on Arnulf of Orléans, briefly discusses the subject of Ovid’s texts in circulation (A Critical Edition and Study of Arnulf of Orléans Philological Commentary to Ovid’s Metamorphoses, dissertation at Ohio State University, 2010, pp. 6-8).
other literature influenced by the tradition of Courtly Love), the tradition of moral *exempla*, and the genre of the *novella*.

With such a focus on Ovidian literature in the late Middle Ages, the rise of a commentary tradition that focused on his works marks a predictable development in academic discourse and is also a significant marker of the seriousness with which scholars were then approaching his writings. While many Ovidian subjects were considered in older mythographies such as those by Hyginus and Fulgentius, and in more contemporary mythographies such as those works by the Vatican Mythographers, the grammatical and moral practice of commentary that had existed previously as glosses to more acceptable canonical authors such as Virgil and Statius were now being composed on the text of the *Metamorphoses*. Both grammatical gloss commentaries and moral interpretative commentaries were aimed at an academic audience, providing reading aids for students of the classical text. Grammatical glosses provided syntactical, lexical, and referential (that is, directing the student to similar and connected passages or giving brief historical/literary background) aid to the reader. Moral commentaries generally provided prose paraphrase of a discrete section of the text accompanied by a moral/allegorical interpretation of the “lesson” intended by the author, or with a rationale for the events described—for example, the reasons for particular birds in the metamorphoses of Procne, Philomela, and Tereus.

The value of these commentaries is linked to the encyclopedic nature of the information contained in the *Metamorphoses*, a text that was seen as a kind of compendium of pagan knowledge by the scholars of the Middle Ages. In concert, these glosses and interpretative commentaries reveal the process through which classical knowledge was translated into medieval knowledge, at the level of particular terminology but also in the larger semantic

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201 For the first two Vatican Mythographers, see Chapter 2.2.1; I discuss the Third Vatican Mythographer at greater length below.
elements found in the practice of rhetoric. Another way to think about this process is that there emerged characteristic rhetorical forms to talk about subjects in the Metamorphoses: the inclusion of an *accessus ad auctorem* at the beginning of the commentary was common even before the 12th century, although it underwent significant change in the later period. But even within the commentaries, commentators had established practiced modes of approaching subjects: Arnulf of Orléans, for example, frequently employed labels to sections of information to clarify to the reader whether information in the text was “real” (*re vera*), “imaginary” (*fingitur*), “historical” (*historicum*), or “allegorical” (*allegoricum*); figures were understood symbolically through simple restatement (e.g. Arnulf 6.14, “Phebus i. Sapientia”: “Phoebus equals wisdom”) in order to construct allegoresis. Alternately, he engages in “etymological” interpretation of figures’ names in order to construct meaning from the narrative: for example, he derives “Castor and Pollux” as follows: “nam pol grece a polu vel a pollui dicitur et a perdendo, et Castor quasi cacon stuero i. malum eternum” (“For *pol* is said to come from *polu* or *pollui* [Latin, “to be shamed, polluted”] and from *perdendo* [Latin, “destroying, perishing”], and “Castor” is almost *cacon stuero*, that is ‘eternal disaster,’” Arnulf 6.8).

These guides to interpretation demonstrate a reading bias that goes beyond a pedagogical aid that is meant to improve a student’s grasp of Latin. Rather, the project of commentary, both moral and gloss, was fundamental to the systems of knowledge by which pre-Christian, pagan texts could be integrated into contemporary understandings of the world. The bias itself was by necessity tied to the Christian understanding of the world, but this understanding needs to be

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202 See Copeland on Remigius and the Carolingian *accessus*, pp. 66-76.
203 In this final practice he follows much older mythographers, whose grasp of the transition of words from Greek to Latin, or the meaning of Greek words themselves was frequently imaginative, if not outright wrong. For the Latin text of Arnulf of Orléans’ commentary, see the Appendix to Fausto Ghisalberti, *Arnolfo d’Orléans: Un cultore di Ovidio nel secolo XII*, Hoepli, 1932. My translation here and elsewhere, unless otherwise stated.
understood as the cohesion of the multiple systems of which it was composed: the moral system of the world would be at the forefront and closely connected to the legal systems by which it might be put into political practice, both for secular powers and for the Church (through canon law). As is evident in Arnulf’s commentary, there was a system of the natural and cosmological world, contingent on observations from ancient authorities and established Christian dogma. Finally, there was the system of literary interpretation, built around the practice of grammar and rhetoric, which had long laid claim to logic and moral discourse. Ultimately, the language used in these commentaries references the language of these other systems, and in that utilization helps to support those systems, even as those systems support the practice of interpretation.

This has practical consequences in situations where language concerning sexual violence and response become “interpretable” in a moral sense. When we read instances of sexual assault in Arnulf’s commentary, more often than not the victim is held accountable or is deficient in some aspect of nature as a moral conclusion of the violence propagated against her. In the first two instances of sexual assault, this is the case:

Of Daphne (Arnulf calls her Dane) he writes:

Virgines enim de virginitate sua in hoc seculo non merentur coronam nisi post suam mutationem id est post mortem eam accipiant. Sed tunc habent lauream coronam quam in hac vita meruerunt. Dane ideo filia Penei dei fluvii fingitur quia aqua est frigida, et pudicicia est filia frigiditatis sicut impudicicia caloris (1.9).

And of Io he writes:

Amata fuit a Iove, id est a deo creatore quia virgo. Tales siquidem amat deus que virginitatem conservando ad creatorem se erigunt. Que postea divirginata de numero virginum eicta, in bovem mutata id est bestialis facta (1.10).

204 “Young women in that period did not warrant a crown for their virginity unless they accepted it after their metamorphosis, that is, after their death. But then they have the laurel crown which they deserved in life. For that reason Daphne is imagined to be the daughter of the river god Peneus, because water is cold, and chastity is the daughter of frigidity, and by extension libido of warmth.”

205 “She was loved by Jove, that is by the god of creation, because she was a virgin. God loves such women, in fact, who hold themselves up by preserving their virginity for their creator. After she was un-virgined, she was thrown out of the ranks of virgins and changed into a cow, that is made into an animal.”
In these passages, we read Arnulf’s interpretational involvement in larger systems of knowledge from this period of writing, as he draws on contemporary natural science to explain the situations of the two characters. In Daphne’s case, Arnulf relates her metamorphosis to the element of water and temperature, and connects it to the moral term *pudicicia*—“pudicicia est filia frigiditatis sicut impudicicia caloris.” This terminology is common to contemporary texts, notably Andreas Capellanus’ *De Amore*, in which he uses the term in a negative sense to connote an unwillingness to have sex.\(^\text{206}\) Between these texts there is a tension between the negative (an unreasonable reticence to engaging in love) and the positive (“pudicicia”), but the scientific language to explain the quality remains consistent.

In the case of Io, Arnulf’s interpretation demonstrates the situation of the rape victim who was unsuccessful in her resistance of the assailant. Where he praises Daphne’s (Dane’s) successful resistance through her symbolic transformation into a laurel (“death”) and its association with being crowned, Io’s transformation into a cow symbolizes instead the loss of her virginity which makes her “bestial”: After she was “un-virgined” (“divirginata”) she was “discarded from the ranks of the virgins, changed into a cow, that is made bestial” Turning again to Capellanus, the term “bestia, bestialis” in the *De Amore* is used in the first book (sections 313, 541) as a metaphor for a lover desiring another, and then in the third book (sections 5, 10) as a negative attribute for someone unable to control their desire. For Io, the victim of Jupiter’s lust, to be interpreted in this way transforms the understanding of Io’s consent and moral nature, so that her resistance and distress are immaterial to her physical “devirginization”—that is, the

\(^{206}\) See Andreas Capellanus, *De Amore/Über die Liebe*, edited by Florian Neumann, Dieterich’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2003, sections 1.256, 270, 455, 540. It is from Capellanus’ usage that we understand “frigid” in the modern sense to describe a woman who “cruelly” refuses the advances of a man, as though it were a psychological problem (Merriam Webster, “abnormally averse to sexual intercourse”).

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commentator guides the reader to disregard individual intent and instead to consider physical effect. There also exists the possibility of a double entendre in Arnulf’s use of se erigunt, which I translate in this context to mean “[they] hold themselves up,” as in, they resist sexual advances by “standing strong”; the word may also be translated as “they stimulate/excite themselves,” giving the meaning an altogether different nature.

This kind of interpretation of the victim of rape is repeated in Arnulf’s reading of the section on Callisto (2.4): “Et eam que pulcra erat ante partum per partum deturpavit, unde fingitur eam mutasse in ursam que turpissima est. Postea filius eius cum adultus esset, audiens se filium adultere, eam interficere voluit” (“And he disfigured through birth she who had been beautiful before giving birth, from which we imagine she was transformed into a bear which is the most repulsive beast. Afterwards, once her son was an adult, hearing that he was a child of an adulteress, he wanted to kill her”). The victim, again of Jove, Callisto’s metamorphosis into an animal parallels her pre-raped and post-raped states, that is “pulcra” and “turpissima”; likewise, her son, the product of that violence, wishes to kill her on account of her adultery (“filium adultere”; “son of an adultress”) rather than a term that places the fault of the offending action on the male actor (stuprum or compressit for example). In both of these situations, the victims, Io and Callisto, are seen as more desirable before their assault—“Amata fuit a Iove, id est a deo creator quia virgo” to describe Io, and “pulchra erat” in Callisto’s case—observations that deflect Jupiter’s culpability on the one hand, and on the other show a clear moral association not with the victims’ innocence or intended resistance, but with the physical result. In other words,

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207 It is interesting to note also that in English there is no term for the Latin divirginata that is does not carry a poetic understanding of a woman’s loss of virginity after sex, referring to both the state of being (no longer “virginal,” which carries the ideological connotations discussed above) and the physical tearing of the hymen, which in the medieval period, and in many modern communities, is taken to be the proof of loss of virginity (although it is not). In translating divirginata I have preferred to add prefixes to the root word “virgin,” rather than use the more familiar, but in my opinion distasteful term “deflowered.”
the interpretation of morality in the instance of sexual assault is explained, in scientific (or natural-philosophic) and legal language, as contingent on the victim’s success or failure in remaining a virgin.

Interpretations of the rape of Philomela in these commentaries follow the same approach, certainly not endorsing Tereus’ actions, but largely dismissing the details of the assault in the episode in favor of an explanation of the murder of Itys and the transformation of the principal characters into birds. Of the Latin commentaries, only the gloss commentaries examine the elements of Philomela’s speech, where it is discarded entirely in the moral interpretations. The *Ovide moralisé* presents a vernacular “translation” of Philomela’s rebuke of Tereus, but the subsequent allegorical commentary also ignores the details of Philomela’s speech in favor of an interpretation of the metamorphoses themselves. In these cases, the absence of part of the event or the entire event of rape in the moments of academic discourse (rather than adapted prose) showed that these commentators did not consider her rape to be important. However, in those few cases that the commentators and authors do give space to either the rape itself (Arnulf of Orléans, for example, in his philological commentary) or Philomela’s response (William of Orléans; Chrétien de Troyes), there opens a greater cohesion in the text between Philomela’s trauma, Procne’s revenge, and Itys’ death.

It is possible to see the influence of the commentaries from the Orléans school on later works, influence which ultimately binds earlier and later commentaries together as an interpretative tradition. As I examine the texts of each of these commentaries, I emphasize these elements of the interpretation to demonstrate the path of influence that was passed down in the French academy, and in the case of the *Ovide moralisé*, in popular culture.
3.1.2 Philomela in the Commentaries of the *Aetas Ovidiana*

The prominent Latin commentaries on Ovid’s works from the period of the 12th and 13th centuries, referred to as the *aetas ovidiana*, feature the commentaries produced by scholars from Orléans, notably Arnulf and William, along with a third, Fulco. Several decades after this trio of commentators, John of Garland, a teacher at the Universities of Paris and Toulouse, composed his *Integumenta Ovidii*, a longform work in elegiac couplets that provided readers with a mnemonic key and an aid to understanding the whole of the *Metamorphoses*. Finally, to this group I add the Vulgate commentary on the *Metamorphoses*, which Wilken Engelbrecht associates with the trio of commentators from Orléans. Engelbrecht sees the composition of the Vulgate commentary as the end of the period of academic fervor surrounding Ovid’s works.\footnote{Wilken Engelbrecht, *Filologie in de Dertiende Eeuw: De Bursarii Super Ovidios van Magister Willem van Orléans*, 2 vols., Palacký University Olomouc Press, 2003, p. 1: 350. To clarify Engelbrecht’s point here, he does not claim that scholarship on Ovid ceased after this point—certainly the production of further commentaries in the 14th and later centuries contradicts that—but that the period known as the *aetas ovidiana* can be said to come to a close as the focus of scholarly texts swings in other general directions.}

Relatively little is known about the biographical details of these scholars, and what has been collected is contained in works of their contemporaries, often in invective or playful forms.\footnote{Frank T. Coulson, “*Metamorphoses in the School Tradition of France,*” *Ovid in the Middle Ages*, edited by James Clark, Frank T. Coulson, and Kathryn McKinley, Cambridge University Press, pp. 50. See Gura on the writings of Hugh Primas and Matthew of Vendôme (10-11).}

Currently, Fulco’s work lacks a critical edition, so I have set him aside in favor of the works by Arnulf and William. The commentaries composed by the latter two provide excellent examples of both the moral commentary and the gloss commentary forms. Moreover, Arnulf’s commentaries, especially his *Allegoriae* gained popularity among subsequent commentators, and it is possible to trace his interpretations in their own sub-tradition, including in the Vulgate commentary, the commentaries of Giovanni del Virgilio, and Pierre Bersuire’s *Ovidius Moralizatus*. Arnulf composed two commentaries on the *Metamorphoses*, the *Allegoriae*.
composed in short prose explanations of individualized sections of Ovid’s work, and another commentary, philological and grammatical in nature, with “such varied aspects as literary analysis, imagery, and background to the myths.”

Given the difficulty of access to the text of the latter commentary, here I will deal primarily with the text of Arnulf’s *Allegoriae*, relying on several notes from Coulson’s reading of the philological commentary; for William of Orléans I rely on Wilken Engelbrecht’s 2003 edition of the *Bursarii super Ovidios*.

### 3.1.2.1 Arnulf of Orléans

The text of Arnulf’s commentary on the Philomela myth from his *Allegoriae* is as follows:

> Quod de Tereo et Progne et Philomena dicitur totum est historicum. De mutatione vero allegoricum. Tereo eas sequente quia cito aufugerunt in aves mutate dicte sunt, sed in philomenam et in hirundinem pocius quam in alias quia ille aves pectora habent rubore notata quod est signum cedis antique. Que clausa fuerat in silvis ideo in philomenam, quia avis ilia pocius silvas habitat quam hirundo. Progne in hirundinem que domos habitat et urbes sicut solebat dum regina erat. Thereus quia velociter eas sequebatur, fingitur in avem esse mutatus sed in hupupam pocius quam in alien quia avis illa videtur irata sicut Thereus dum sorores insequeretur. (6.18)

Arnulf places the myth in the realm of history rather than mythology, subordinating the allegorical metamorphoses as indicative of the moral conclusions of the narrative. Unlike his

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210 See Coulson, “School Tradition” 54-55; and “Procne and Philomela 183. David Gura’s dissertation *A Critical Edition and Study of Arnulf of Orléans’ Philological Commentary to Ovid’s Metamorphoses*, is currently the only critical edition of this commentary and provides valuable information on the history and composition of the text as well as a manuscript study; he presents the edited text of the *accessus* and the glosses of books 3, 7, 8, and 11. No complete critical edition of the text currently exists.

211 “What is narrated about Tereus, Procne and Philomena is completely historical. What is said about their transformation is allegorical. Tereus followed them as they speedily fled. Procne and Philomena are transformed into the swallow and the nightingale since these birds have on their breasts a red mark which is a sign of the old slaughter. Philomena, who had been shut up in woodlands, is said to have been transformed into a nightingale since these birds (rather than the swallow) in particular inhabit woodlands. Procne is said to have been transformed into the swallow since such birds inhabit houses and cities, just as Procne did while she was queen. Tereus, because he pursued them swiftly, is thought to have been transformed into a hoopoe, and into that bird rather than any other since it shows its anger as did Tereus while pursuing the sisters.” English translation by Coulson, “Procne and Philomela” 183; Latin text from Ghisalberti, *Arnolfo* 218; English translation my own.
previous treatments of rape narratives—Daphne, Io, Callisto—Arnulf does not consider at all the event of sexual assault, nor does he connect it to the moral conclusions at which he arrives. Namely, these conclusions are the sequestration of Philomena in the forest, with no mention of the violence done to her, contrasted with Procne’s position as queen in an urban setting, both of them marked with red from the slaughter of Itys. Tereus is associated not with his criminal acts or his immorality but by his swiftness (velociter) and anger (irata), which may be read as heroic traits, and in the context of Itys, vengeful; the first of these adjectives is supplied in the 

*Metamorphoses* itself, velox (line 6.671), but irata recalls Tereus’ national character, Thracian.²¹²

As much as Arnulf closely examined earlier incidents of sexual assault in the characters of Daphne, Io, and Callisto, he passes over the subject entirely in the myth of Philomela. In part, perhaps, this is because of the close attention he pays in those previous myths to building parallel interpretations of rape and resistance. His focus on the other violent moment of the episode, the slaying of Itys, is not unpredictable, as earlier mythographers tended to subordinate Philomela’s rape as the instigating event that led to Itys’ murder and consumption. He maintains from his source (the *Metamorphoses*) the tension between the rural (“silvas”) and the urban (“domos…urbes”), which can be extrapolated to the larger tension between the Athenian and Thracian characters, and the inversion of those characters in the brutality that the women display in the murder of a (or their) child.²¹³ Notably, Arnulf maintains Tereus’ characteristically Thracian traits without employing more critical language to describe him: his swiftness and anger are more heroic than hubristic; the use of scelus from the version of the *Narrationes* is absent, nor is there the mention of filth (“fetidissimum, stercoribus, spurca”) read in later

²¹² See my discussion of Thracian “character” in Chapter 2.2.1.
²¹³ Namely, the stereotypes of civilization and barbarity, contrasted to the weakness of Athenian defenses versus Thracian defenses.
commentators, like Giovanni del Virgilio. Entirely absent is any hint of incest, which in the following centuries would become central to the moral dimension of the myth.

Turning to Arnulf’s philological commentary, Coulson describes its utility as varied, from providing simple explanations and synonyms for more difficult or rare words to offering longer, etymological histories of words (with inventive genius at times). In Arnulf’s focus on narrative detail in this work, the commentator conveys greater sensitivity to the extraordinary violence depicted in the narrative of Philomela. Coulson provides a scattering of Arnulf’s reactions to Ovid’s verses which demonstrate his shock, for example: “at 6.563, the verb sustinet, which serves to denote Tereus’ utter audacity in repeatedly raping Philomela, is glossed as ‘quod mirum fuit – which astounds one.’” Coulson continues his reading of Arnulf further down:

Lastly, it is worth pointing out that Arnulf is sensitive to Ovid’s careful character delineation of Procne and, in particular, her moral dilemma in either avenging her sister or killing her son Itys. At 6.626, Arnulf stress the maternal aspects of the scene as Itys hugs his mother and speaks childish endearments: “blandiciis puerilibus, ut est mammas – with childish endearments, such as «Mommy»”; Likewise, at 6.641-42, Arnulf underlines Procne’s immense cruelty in killing Itys without turning aside her face: “nec vultum vertit quod faciunt qui scelus abhorrentur. Immanem ostendit eius crudelitatem – nor did she avert her gaze, which those people do who abominate their deed. He underlines her great cruelty.” (Coulson, “Procne and Philomela” 184, all italics are maintained from Coulson’s text)

These moments—observed by Coulson—reveal a concern for the commentator that indicates a human reaction rather than a scholarly one, or more correctly makes the human reaction a part of the scholarly task. Observations such as this express a human reaction to representations of cruelty and expand the boundaries of a scholarly project to encompass those reactions. The presence of such comments in turn affects the reader’s experience of the work, having the text opened up to a community of more than academic interpretation but also of moral opinion. This enables both the text of the commentary and the commented text itself to become spaces of subjective expression, in fact spaces that resist the potential eroticization of the first moment
(especially when we recall that the erotic core of rape for the rapist is power) with the interjection of sympathy. Likewise, the latter comments on the killing of Itys portray the criticism of that violence, rejecting Proene’s process through which she arrives at “justice.”

The difference between Arnulf’s two commentaries reveals the flexibility of the commentary space in the relationship between the source material and the commentator. Arnulf’s *Allegoriae* firmly places him in conversation with other academic texts that precede his own, but also with his contemporaries, William and Arnulf among others, who champion Ovid’s continued relevance to medieval institutions. His philological commentary, however, puts him in direct contact with his readers and anticipates their reactions to the *Metamorphoses*, thereby guiding their reading to a more compassionate end, rather than allow the text to become a space for erotic excitement.

### 3.1.2.2 William of Orléans

A generation after Arnulf, William of Orléans composed his *Bursarii super Ovidios*, most likely just around the turn of the 13th century, from when we have the earliest known manuscript of the work (349). It is highly likely that William was familiar with the commentaries of his predecessors, Arnulf and Fulco, as he appears to engage with their ideas in his text. The title, as Engelbrecht explains, most likely derives from the Latin word *bursa* (purse or pocket)—just as one might find many useful things in a purse, this book contains many useful explanations of Ovid’s texts (Englebrecht 1: 351). The text of the commentary does not focus exclusively on any single work of Ovid’s but on his entire corpus, explaining and interpreting selections from them all—Engelbrecht calculates 7-9% of all his verse—most extensively from the *Heroides*. William’s explanations tend to be gloss commentaries of difficult passages and words, although
he also ventures historical and moral interpretations of passages as well, especially in his various accessus to the works. His section on the Metamorphoses largely avoids allegorization and instead focuses on textual variation, explanation of difficult Latin, and referential mythography (Englebrecht 1: 355).

His glosses on the verses pertaining to Philomela are as follows:

[Tereus, Progne & Philomela] [Met. 6,438] Usque adeo latet utilitas, Usque adeo, .i. assidue. Quasi dicat: Non adhuc poterat perpendere, que utilitas proveniret de tali coniugio. Vel aliter: Utilitas latet, .i. minuitur, usque adeo, .i. assidue, quia utilitas de festo nulla erat. | Vel: Utilitas latet eos, usque, .i. perfecte, quia stulti erant celebrando talem diem et sacrificando hominibus, quibus non est sacrificandum est iuxta illud: Nec sacri thuris honore humanum dignare caput [Met. 14,130-131]. [Met. 6,460] Flagrat vicio gentisque suoque. Construe: Flagrat in amore vicio, .i. propter vicium, genti sue cui insitum est a natura ut sit libidinosa, et suo, quia naturale est quod homines promoveantur ad libidinem. Vel aliter: Flagrat vicio gentis et suo, i. ad vicium et opprobrium sui et suorum. [Met. 6,484] Et successisse duabus id putat infelix, quod erit lugubre duabus, .i. sibi et sorori sue. Vel: duobus, .i. sibi et patri. [Met. 6,507] Natamque nepotemque, versus hypermeter. [Met. 6,511] Ut semel imposita est etc. Semel cum Tereo, quia in eadem navi. Vel: Semel, .i. perfecte et sine impedimento.

[Met. 6,538] Tu geminus conjunx! Hostis michi debita pena est! Construe: Tu es geminus coniunx, .i. coniunx duarum, mei scilicet et sororis, et geminus hostis, quia michi iniuratus es auferendo virginitatem et sorori mee preferendo ei aliam, michi debita pena est, de te scilicet, quia debes ex hoc puniri. Vel: Michi debita pena est, .i. debo ex hoc puniri, quia sum adultera et pelex sororis. Vel aliter: Tu geminus coniunx et hostis michi debita pena est ex hac iniuria. [Met. 6,549] Talibus ira feri postquam commota tyranni nec minor hac metus est. Hac, .i. in hac Philomena scilicet. Vel: Non minor metus, immo maior est ex Tereo, scilicet hanc, .i. propter hanc iram scilicet. Ira enim faciebat hunc timere magis ne ipsa revelaret adulterium, causa stimulatus utraque, .i. verbis ipsius, et hoc quod non minus timebat. Vel: Utraque causa, .i. ira et timore deripit etc. [Met. 6,609] Non capit iram, .i. non celat iram. Vel: Non capiit iram suam, .i. sibi convenientem. Immo trasgressa est iram humanam. [Met. 6,635] Scelus est pietas in coniuge Tereo. Construe: Scelus est, .i. videtur esse, pietas in coniuge Tereo, quia quociens male agit, videtur sibi bene agere. Vel aliter; Scelus in coniuge est pietas. Quasi dicat: Nocere Tereo ex pietate videtur provenire.

214 Terei in the Oxford edition of the Metamorphoses (edited by R. J. Tarrant, 2004), which clarifies the ambiguity of this ablative by making it genitive, meaning coniugi must refer to Procone.

215 [Met. 6,438] Thus always does advantage lie hidden. Thus always, that is continuously (assidue). Almost as if to say: Not yet was she able to assess carefully, and advantage might come into being from such a husband. Or otherwise: Advantage lies hidden, that is, advantage diminishes, thus always, that is continuously, because advantage of the festivities [celebrating the birth of Itys] came to nothing. | Or: Advantage hides from them, always, that is, completely, because they were foolish in celebrating such a day and sacrificing to men, to whom should not
William focuses on verses that are difficult to understand (438, 511, 549, 635), have possible textual variation or even questionable authority (484, the question of duabus/duobus; 538, it is doubtful that these are Ovid’s lines), or require some external knowledge (460, a historical trait of the Thracian people). In his selections, William distinguishes himself among commentators by considering some of the ambiguous aspects of the text. He notes the possibility that the gender of particular words in lines 483-85 (ambarum…duabus…duabus) changes the understanding of the selection. In fact, this section will be treated by the Italian translators of the 14th century as masculine. However, his explicit exploration of possible readings of these lines be sacrificed; that is connected to: Nor is a mortal worthy of the honor of sacred incense [Met. 14.130-31]. [Met. 6.460] He burns with the vice of his people and his own. Construe: He burns with love with the vice, that is, on account of vice, of his people for whom it is attached by nature that they are lustful, and his own, because it is natural that men are moved to lust. Or otherwise: He burns with the vice of his people and his own, that is, towards vice and his and his people’s disgrace. [Met. 6.484] And she, the unlucky girl, believes she has succeeded for the both of them [feminine], at what will be grievous for the two of them [fem.], that is, for herself and her sister. Or: for the two of them [masculine], that is, for herself and her father. [Met. 6.507] His daughter and his nephew, this verse is hypermeter [Met. 6.511] Once she was placed etc. Once with Tereus, because they were in the ship at the same time. Or: Once, that is, completely and without impediment. [Met. 6.538] You are twice a husband! I am owed justice from my enemy! Construe: You are twice a husband, that is, the consort of two women, me of course and my sister, and twice an enemy, because you have injured me by stealing my virginity and my sister by preferring another woman to her, I am owed punishment, of you, obviously, because you ought to be punished for this. Or: I am owed punishment, that is, I ought to be punished for this, because I am an adulterer and rival to my sister. Or otherwise: You are twice a husband and I am owed the punishment of my enemy for this injury. [Met. 6.549] With such words the wrath of the savage tyrant was provoked and no less his fear of that woman. Of that woman, that is, obviously, of that woman Philomena. Or: No less his fear, on the contrary, it is greater, on Tereus’ part, because this, that is, because of this anger. Indeed, anger made this man fear greatly lest she reveal his adultery, both caused him to act, that is, by her words, and this which he did not fear less. Or: On account of both, that is, from fear and anger he tears out etc. [Met. 6.609] She does not hold back anger, that is, she does not conceal anger. Or: She does not hold back her anger, that is, what is fitting for her. On the contrary, she has moved to the side of human anger. [Met. 6.635] Wickedness is duty in the spouse to Tereus. Construe: Wickedness is, that is, it seems to be, duty as regards my husband Tereus, because as often as she acts badly, it seems to her that she acts well. Or otherwise: Wickedness against my husband is duty. Almost to say: It seems like to harm Tereus out of duty is the right thing to do.” Latin text from Engelbrecht 2: 141 (William of Orléans, lines 621-647 of his section on the Metamorphoses). I have maintained his format with underlined verses and words as the targets of William’s explanations, those in Roman font as the explanations themselves, and those italicized as verses introduced for comparison or reference. In my translation, I convert all underlined text to italics.

216 See Tarrant’s note in Ovid, Metamorphoses, page 172; see also Coulson, “Procne and Philomela” 184-85. Regardless, William’s accounting for the verse demonstrates that addenda like this were incorporated into commentaries by medieval readers, who would struggle with Latin that contained a higher grammatical ambiguity or error but was nevertheless considered a part of the text.

217 Tarrant’s edition: “vincitur ambarum genitor prece; gaudet agitque / illa patri grates et successisse duabus / id putat infelix, quod erit lugubre duabus” (6.483-85); certainly the implication is that these feminine plural nouns refer to Pandion’s two daughters, rather than to himself and Philomela or Tereus and Philomela. He notes ambarum in
draws the meaning of the text away from one that potentially makes Philomela complicit in her own rape through the inclusion of a masculine subject. Instead, the reader is asked to consider that there are multiple possibilities, and in those possibilities that there is no sure moral lesson to create.

Unlike Arnulf and the majority of other commentators, William examines a part of Philomela’s rebuke of Tereus, albeit only a short piece (6.538). As I discuss in my note on the verse, its authority is questionable; however, it is one of the more memorable lines as it grants a kind of power to Philomela in her verbal demand for justice from her assailant while also drawing the reader into a legalistic conclusion about the crime. The first sentiment expressed in line 538 centers the problem of her assault on the precarious legal position in which such a sexual liaison will place Tereus, rather than on the violence she has just suffered, and will shortly suffer again, at his hand. Setting aside hostis for the moment, William’s reading of coniunx creates an equal obligation between Tereus and the two sisters, perhaps showing Philomela to amplify her position in the balance. Coniunx can be a broadly applied term, but in connection to Procne it would be appropriate to understand Tereus as “husband,” and in connection to Philomela as consort. However it is understood, the term as a legal value does not belong in the context of an unwilling relationship, so Philomela’s character must be read to accept her role as her sister’s rival, the use of coniunx implying that legal obligation which does not support more than one spouse. The ambiguity of hostis perhaps even supports this, if read as referring back to herself: “An enemy [to my sister] I am owed punishment.” William certainly entertains the idea

three manuscripts, and considering Simintendi’s and Bonsignori’s translations of this passage, it is reasonable to expect a medieval reader would have difficulty knowing exactly who is doing what in these lines. See Chapter 3.2.2. 

The ambiguity of Philomela’s involvement in this scene refers also to Ovid’s text as it stands on its own, without the aid of commentary. See Chapter 1.3.3.
by giving the possible interpretation explicitly: “debeo ex hoc puniri, quia sum adultera et pelex sororis.”

What is certain is that in none of the possible interpretations of the verse is Philomela concerned for the outrage done to her own person. However, this is in line with the concerns of commentators, namely men, for whom a primary interest was not an exploration of trauma but an understanding of legal intricacies surrounding Tereus and Philomela’s positions in society after such an act. It is this inclination of male authorship which also provokes the socio-legal labels of adultera and p[a]elex, in the place of terminology that would express the personal trauma or pain of the character (e.g. victima, compressa). William’s focus on this line—mostly likely because of its grammatical and therefore interpretational ambiguity—is consistent with the complete rebuke that Ovid puts in Philomela’s mouth in the text of the Metamorphoses. The rebuke is formulated as a prelude to an accusation of rape and structured as such. Philomela’s rhetoric is legalistic and threatening rather than pitiful or emotionally wrought. It is not structured to evoke compassion or pity from the reader, and much less so Tereus, in whom it is meant to provoke fear and a correction of behavior—it must display not just power, but power understood by the target of her speech, Tereus. William links this conclusion to Tereus’ dual reaction of fear (“metus”) and anger (“ira”), although he notes the ambiguity of “hac” in referring to Philomela herself or back to his own anger in the comparative construction of fear. Regardless, his observation, “Ira enim faciebat hunc timere magis ne ipsa revelaret adulterium, causa stimulatus utraque, .i. verbis ipsius, et hoc quod non minus timebat. Vel: Utraque causa, .i. ira et timore deripit etc.” recognizes the power in Philomela’s threat as the motivator behind Tereus’ emotional response and subsequent violence.
Matching Tereus’ anger, however, is Procne’s, which William juxtaposes with Tereus’ in the very next line of his commentary, “Non capit iram. i. non celat iram. Vel: Non capit iram suam, i. sibi convenientem. Immo trasgressa est iram humanam.” William does not equivocate in his interpretation of this line: Procne’s rage is justified, human and therefore not just understandable, but “fitting” (convenientem [also “appropriate, pleasing, etc.”]). William’s inclusion, and then justification and humanization of Procne’s rage, is extraordinary in the space of these commentaries, which are more frequently focused on the horror of what she does with that rage. William’s placement of it in immediate contrast with Tereus’ unjustified rage emphasizes the unjustifiability of his actions. But it also constructs a space in which Philomela’s trauma may be understood outside of the masculine legal scope with which it is presented until this point; the “human rage” (“iram humanam”) of Procne undoes the objectification of Philomela and returns her humanity.219

3.1.2.3 John of Garland

The early part of the 13th century saw the ascent of the University of Paris which would eclipse the prestige and influence of the cathedral schools. Nonetheless, the works by the school of Orléans would act as models for the commentaries of the subsequent centuries. Also influential—perhaps because of its form and purpose as a didactic text220—were John of

219 The construction of a communal female space through the expression of rage in medieval texts is the subject of Carissa Harris’s article “‘For Rage’: Rape Survival, Women’s Anger, and Sisterhood in Chaucer’s Legend of Philomela,” The Chaucer Review, vol. 54, no. 3, 2019, pp. 253-69. She points out that “Women’s inordinate anger is a popular subject in medieval texts across genres” (256), which is certainly true of Procne in commentator’s observations of her character. Harris pairs the rage felt by Procne in Ovid’s text (and Chaucer’s) as not entirely destructive because it is constructed on a foundation of sisterhood (see esp. 260-63). I consider Harris’s arguments in greater depth in Chapter 3.3.

Garland’s *Integumenta super Ovidium* Metamorphoseos, or *Integumenta Ovidii*. As a commentary, the *Integumenta* is essentially different from those of Arnulf and William: it is a continuous poem in elegaic couplets that address each of the transformations in the *Metamorphoses*, usually within the space of one or two couplets (two or four lines). Because of its compact nature and poetic sensibility, the meanings proposed by Garland (and the grammar) are often more obscure than the text of the *Metamorphoses* itself.

John was employed as a professor of grammar at various stages of his life at the universities of Paris and Toulouse, during which time he was impressively productive, composing numerous educational and theological texts. As much as his *Integumenta Ovidii* was successful, in that it was studied by future generations of Ovidians, influencing the Vulgate Commentary, among others, and acting as a model for Giovanni del Virgilio’s *Allegoriae* in the 14th century, Coulson writes, “far from elucidating the poem, the singularly abstruse vocabulary employed by John often serves to obfuscate its meaning.” Yet even this difficult language appears to have been a didactic strategy for John of Garland, whose aim was to recall the great Latin fluency of the classical period. According to Ghisalberti,

dalla sua penna escono le numerose opere dottrinarie e beneficio della gioventù, intese a sorreggerne gli sforzi nella conquista di una elegante latinità, e insieme quel *Morale scolarium* che nel suo ‘parlar chiuso’ stimola lo studente, curioso di penetrarne il segreto stilistico, ad appropriarsene per sempre la massima che corregge il costume.

All that being the case for the larger work, the passage concerning Philomela (or as he puts it, *Tereus*) is a straightforward metaphor:

Historiam tangit describens Terea de quo
Musa sophocleo carmine grande canit.

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221 For a discussion of what is meant by *integumentum*, see Dane.
222 Coulson, “Procne and Philomela” 185. For the wide-ranging influence of the *Integumenta*, see Coulson, “Metamorphoses in the School Tradition” 64.
223 Ghisalberti, Introduction to *Integumenta Ovidii* 17.
John of Garland follows Arnulf in treating the narrative as historical, with the fantastic elements acting as figurative, moral elaborations. The priority of Tereus is not surprising and echoes the character’s prominence for the authors of other commentaries as well: Tereus is always mentioned first, or sometimes is the only character mentioned. The reader assumes the perspective of the narrative is tragic (“Musa sophocleo carmine”), given that Tereus himself is the topic of the Muse (“de quo…canit”), which must color the final distich of the selection. The metaphor of birds and love, both seeking solitude, recalls both Philomela and Tereus: recall that according to Arnulf, Philomela, once she was transformed into a nightingale, sought the woods, just as she had been kept there after her assault (“clausa fuerat”); Tereus likewise requires the seclusion of the woods to enact his crime, and in the light of the first two lines of the section, Garland seems to hinge the tragedy of the passage on the location of the stables in the woods.

However, the Latin *devia* (secluded spaces, out of the way places) is derived from the adjective meaning “wandering or straying” or “erratic,” and is connected to the noun *deviare* (to wander). With the focus on Tereus as the active character of the narrative, the moral would also seem to apply to him, his error in lusting after Philomela, or even his deviation of character, from that of a hero who relies on force to a hero who relies on cunning. The love that seeks seclusion in this context is not protective but aware of its own crime: it seeks an out-of-the-way place because it is wrong.

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[224 My translation: “[Ovid] mentions this [hi]story, describing Tereus about whom / The muse sings grandly in a Sophoclean song. / Poetic learning certainly discusses birds: / A bird seeks secluded spaces, love seeks secluded spaces.” Coulson’s translation: “Ovid touches upon history when he treats of Tereus, about whom the muse of Sophoclean tragedy grandly sings. Poetic learning to be sure provides a commentary on these birds, for just as the bird seeks out of the way places, so does love” (“Proene and Philomela” 185).]
Garland’s use of *amor* is indicative, also, of the way this narrative is categorized. As with the narrative of Daphne and Apollo, from Ovid’s label of *primus amor*, there is the central, unspoken issue of how to define love, both as a genre and as an act. While for Ovid and his medieval readers the gods Cupid and Amor were synonymous, the difference between love and superficial desire were not, although both terms *cupid* (desire) and *amor* (love) were applied as initial motivators of sexual assault. The application of *amor* seems not to differentiate between romantic love and violent lust; in fact, it is applied more frequently to situations of pursuit and violence than established relationship, such as that between Pyrrha and Deucalion, for example, from the first book of the *Metamorphoses*, or Philemon and Baucis from the eighth. It is just on the heels of Pyrrha and Deucalion’s tale that Ovid introduces the tale of Daphne and Apollo with the label of “*primus amor*” (1.452). So in this context, Garland’s use of *amor* associates error and love even more closely for the literary world of the Ovidian Middle Ages. The expectation within the genre becomes one that makes violence and love inseparable, at the same time as it sets the foundation for masculine action.

3.1.2.4 The Vulgate Commentary

Not long after John of Garland composed his *Integumenta*, sometime around 1250, an anonymous commentator engaged in a marginal and gloss commentary of the *Metamorphoses* that would come to be known as the Vulgate Commentary. Despite the importance of this work and its impact on the Ovidian commentary tradition, no full critical edition of the text has been undertaken.\(^\text{225}\) As a result, I must rely on descriptions from other scholars, especially Coulson,

\(^{225}\) Coulson has published editions of the creation myth from Book 1 and the Orpheus and Eurydice myth from Book 10 (University of Toronto, 1991) and the entirety of Book 1 (Western Michigan University, 2015).
who provides some content in his article on Philomela and Procne.226 This commentary is eclectic and demonstrates a familiarity with its predecessors, including Lactantius, Arnulf, and John of Garland. It would in turn be cited by later commentaries from the 14th century on, such as those by Giovanni del Virgilio and Pierre Bersuire. As with other gloss commentaries, the Vulgate Commentary’s primary objective is to clarify Latin terminology for the reader, as well as mythological figures. Arnulf’s philological commentary is an example of a similar project, both in its scope and execution, using gloss and marginalia to express the commentator’s interpretations. However, Coulson claims a unique position for this commentary over others “for its literary sensitivity,” in which the “commentator shows remarkable insights into style, technique, structure, characterization, and Ovidian influence on the poets of the twelfth-century Renaissance, particularly Alan of Lille, Bernard Silvester, and Walter of Châtillon.”227

Two notable lines from the Vulgate Commentary concerning the Philomela episode illustrate the anonymous commentator’s attention to the literary dimensions of his subject. The commentator connects two lines, 6.471 (“addidit et lacrimas, tamquam mandasset et illas”) and 6.566 (“et lacrimae fece fidem”), occasions when Tereus uses tears to persuade first Pandion and then Procne: “Et lacrime fecere fidem: Creditum est ei dicit actor quia lacrimatus est sicut apud socerum. Vnde supra: addidit et lacrimas tamquam mandasset et illas.”228 We might further note

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226 This was largely a practical decision: while the impact and tradition of the Vulgate Commentary is undeniable, this dissertation is not concerned with breaking ground with new manuscript studies. In these cases—here with the Vulgate Commentary, above with Arnulf of Orléans’ philological commentary, and in the subsequent section with Giovanni del Virgilio’s Expositio—I have largely relied on Coulson’s work to give me access to the text which I may interpret with my own agenda. All three of these texts would benefit from a manuscript study as well as a critical edition: Coulson has done some of this work on the Vulgate Commentary (Western Michigan University, 2015), and David Gura on Arnulf’s philological commentary, but to my knowledge nobody has undertaken an edition of Giovanni del Virgilio’s Expositio.

227 Coulson, “Procne and Philomela,” 186. See also Coulson, The Vulgate Commentary (Toronto) 7-12; in his introduction, Coulson provides examples of the commentator’s technique and style.

228 Coulson, “Procne and Philomela” 187; “Tears proved her death: The author says that he was believed because he cried as above with his father-in-law: He added tears as though Procne had ordered them” (Coulson’s translation).
that the use of the word “tears” (*lacrim[a]e*) is prominent throughout Philomela’s narrative; in addition to these two occasions (6.471, 6.566), Ovid uses the word in lines 6.495 and 6.505 as descriptors for Pandion’s reaction to Philomela’s departure, lines 6.523 and 6.535 as descriptors for Philomela in response to her assault, and the final two uses are in lines 6.611 and 6.628.

These last two instances are especially significant because they seem to encompass the other six uses while culminating in Procne’s decision to butcher Itys: at line 6.611 in the *Metamorphoses*, Procne tells the weeping Philomela, “Non est lacrimis hoc…agendum / sed ferro” (“This is no time for tears, but for iron”) as if to finally realize the deception behind Tereus’ repeated use of crying and its efficacy in contrast to the tears of Pandion and Philomela which had no effect whatsoever on Tereus. With this line Procne anticipates criticism that will necessarily be leveled at her for the decision to kill her own son by highlighting the inefficiency of expected female action (crying) and appeals to pity; if compassion is repeatedly ignored, the only recourse left is violence.

Only a few lines later, Procne will feel herself overcome by Itys’ love for her, so that she begins to waver at line 6.628, “invitique oculi lacrimis maduere coactis” (“her unwilling eyes filled with welling tears”), but she steels her resolve again by looking at her sister’s face. Again, here, the coming of tears to the female subject (Procne) represents authentic feeling and pain, both of which have been proved useless in the face of Tereus’ deception and aggression: the vision of Philomela’s face is a reminder of that inutility of tears, as it bears the physical evidence of the violence done to her. Tracking Ovid’s use of *lacrimae* in this narrative recalls the discomfort and emptiness found in rapists’ words from the first book of the *Metamorphoses*, with the ever-decreasing attempts of those male gods to persuade rather than use force. This is to the extent that we ought to note Ovid’s theme of the tension behind words and power: where
speech might be used by a wide range of characters, it is only truly effective for those with power to fall back on. Procne embodies this realization through her murder of Itys.

However, the commentator highlights Procne’s heartlessness, which undercuts the previous conclusion: “Nec uultum uertit, id est non auvertit oculos licet mater esset per quod ipsius impietas permaxima denotatur” (Coulson, “Procne and Philomela” 187).229 This remark firmly places him the commentary tradition of Arnulf, who noted of the same line, “nec vultum vertit quod faciunt qui scelus abhorrentur. Immanem ostendit eius crudelitatem.” The focus here, and in Arnulf’s commentary, on Procne’s cruelty falls squarely into the misogynist tradition, even if it does evoke a universal sentiment that mothers should not kill their own children. It falls back on the trope of deficiency in the nature of women rather than one of individual emotional distress, or that speaks to Procne’s resolve, even if she is still portrayed as monstrous: in Ovid’s text, the line “nec vultum vertit” (6.642) responds to the earlier line “ab hoc iterum est ad vultus versa sororis” (“she looked again from his face to her sister’s,” 6.630), where her uncertainty is still displayed in her glances between her son and her sister. Her fixed gaze while killing Itys displays the finality of her decision; our interpretation of that moment, either heartlessness or resolution, is the subject of the commentary, in which space misogyny is able to find a home.

3.1.3 The 14th Century, Pierre Bersuire, and the Ovidius moralizatus

By the mid-13th century the so-called aetas ovidiana had come to an end, although certainly neither the author’s popularity nor the attention paid to him by scholars had disappeared. In large part, the fanatical attention paid to Ovid as an auctor by medieval authors was amplified by the schools of the French tradition, and even after the midpoint of the 13th

229 “Nor did she avert her gaze: that is to say turn aside her eyes even though she was a mother, whereby her impiety is most clearly noted” (Coulson’s translation).
century, commentaries on the *Metamorphoses* continued to be composed, albeit primarily with repetitions of content as seen in the Orléans school, John of Garland, and the Vulgate Commentary. As with the long “renaissance of the 12th century,” it would be impossible to characterize the shift in character of academic writing as a whole across all western European cities during the 13th and 14th centuries. Still, some notable events had changed the landscape both in literature and law: first, the centuries-long series of Crusades, not to mention contact with Muslim kingdoms and cultures throughout the Mediterranean, would broaden the scope and popularity of encyclopedic studies of nature: for example, Vincent of Beauvais’ *Speculum maius*, Bartholomeus Anglicus’ *De proprietatibus rerum*, or even Brunetto Latini’s French-language *Trésor*. In part, this was because Europeans’ view of the world was forced to expand by new complex relations with other peoples and because this expansion of the world required explanation within the context of already accepted knowledge. The widespread growth of urban centers throughout the European peninsula also led to significant changes in the way people might live and work, as it became easier, and increasingly necessary, to learn a trade, as well as to read and write, meaning that a more pluralistic expression of experiences might be shared. Moreover, massive legal reforms continued throughout the period between the 12th and 14th centuries, including the adoption of the Justinian Code by Frederick II. The result was that between the 12th and 14th centuries, there were significant differences in the concerns of Europeans and in the projects they undertook to explain the world around them. Beyond an interest in pagan knowledge, which was revived in the 12th century, and the desire for a cohesive religious law, as undertaken by Gratian’s *Decretum*, the subsequent centuries saw an increase in

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230 See Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, esp. Chapters 5, 6, and 7, which discuss the projects of reforming Canon Law, and the parallel revival of Roman Law (177-79), the importance of Gratian’s *Decretum*, and the continuation of reforms enacted by the early Decretists.
Europeans’ inclination to describe the world around them and their human experiences, a shift that made commentaries composed during this time even more self-reflexive regarding how that pagan knowledge might be applied.  

It is therefore significant that, when Pierre Bersuire composes his commentary on the *Metamorphoses* in the early part of the 14th century, his approach differs from the earlier French tradition while also drawing on contemporary theories of Christian exegesis. As with previous commentaries, a central aspect of Bersuire’s work is its alignment with a larger discipline of knowledge, and Bersuire accomplishes this by demonstrating the four “senses” of interpretation that had become standard in the discipline of *grammatica* in the 13th and 14th centuries and to the practice of commentary: first, the *historicus* or *literalis*, depending on whether the topic was fictional or not, which would cover literal and metaphorical interpretation of the text; second, the *sensus tropologicus*, which dealt with moral instruction and ethics; third, the *sensus allegoricus*, a figurative sense that leads directly to Christian truths; fourth, the *sensus anagogicus*, which Ghisalberti describes as the sense “che esorta alla contemplazione delle cose celesti.”

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231 This is indicated by the works on nature and cosmological order mentioned on the previous page, as well as the encyclopedic works of Giovanni Boccaccio, such as the *De casibus virorum illustrium*, *De mulieribus claris*, *De montibus* and the *Genealogia deorum gentilium*, which explicitly connect pagan knowledge to the physical and moral geographies of the 14th-century world. In the cases of moral commentaries on the *Metamorphoses*, Pierre Bersuire and Giovanni del Virgilio present Ovid’s work exegetically and with direct reference to biblical text. See the Introduction to William Reynolds, *The Ovidius Moralizatus of Petrus Berchorius: An Introduction and Translation*, dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1971, esp. pp. 15, 22-23; and Fausto Ghisalberti, *L’Ovidius moralizatus*, Cuggiani, 1933, p6.

232 The work of Petrarch was especially influential on Bersuire, and he incorporated a systemization of the pagan Gods for his *Formis figurisque deorum* from Petrarch’s *Africa*, as well as from Johannes Ridewall’s *Fulgentius metaphoralis* (Reynolds 18-22).

233 Ghisalberti describes all four of these senses in *L’Ovidius moralizatus*, and on their establishment in the method of medieval interpretation, he writes, “Nel corso della sua secolare evoluzione da Origene in poi, questo metodo di interpretazione ebbe applicazioni varie, e le distinzioni tra l’un senso e l’altro furono talvolta regolate da criteri soggettivi, ma al tempo del Bersuire, dopo S. Tommaso e Dante, si può dire che il metodo della interpretazione quadruplice si era fissato nelle linee suddette” (“Over the course of their secular evolution from Origen until then [the 14th century], this method of interpretation had varied applications, and the distinction of one sense from another was sometimes ruled by subjective criteria, but by Bersuire’s time, after St. Thomas [Aquinas] and Dante, it can be said that the method of four-fold interpretation had been concretized along the lines stated above,” 7). See also Chapters 2.2.1 and 3.2 for a discussion of the four senses.
Ghisalberti goes further to state that Bersuire’s task was to “purify the profane content of the *Metamorphoses*” (“l’opera di purificazione del contenuto profano delle *Metamorfosi*”) rather than to follow the largely grammatical focus of Arnulf and John Garland, “il primo nell’intento di superare e soppiantare Lattanzio Placido, il secondo mirando a un sintesi poetica della glossa allegorica vulgata” (*Ovidius Moralizatus* 25). However, the influences of Arnulf and John of Garland are clear, even as he attempts to surpass them, as well as those of Fulgentius, Isidore of Seville, Rabano Mauro (*De rerum naturis*), and Albericus the Third Vatican Mythographer.

The *Ovidius moralizatus* is actually the fifteenth book of Bersuire’s much longer work, the *Reductorium morale*, an encyclopedic compendium on moral subjects modelled of those from the 13th century. Bersuire began work on the *Reductorium* at about the age of thirty when he moved to Avignon as a member of the Benedictine order around 1320. He finished the first edition of the text in the early 1340s, around the time he moved to Paris in 1343. He would revise the *Reductorium*, finishing it sometime before his death in 1362 and incorporating into it details from his friend Petrarch’s epic poem *Africa*, especially into the prologue of the *Ovidius moralizatus*, which gained a kind of autonomy as *De formis figurisque deorum*. The *De formis* displays Bersuire’s aptitude for incorporating interpretations from various other sources,

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234 Modern scholars appear swayed by his efforts: William Reynolds, who translated the *Ovidius Moralizatus* as his thesis in 1971, calls it “the culmination of the medieval moralizations of Ovid” (12); Coulson writes, “[The Vulgate Commentary] enjoyed an immense vogue throughout the later Middle Ages and foreshadowed the allegorizing/christianizing traditio on the *Metamorphoses* that found its full development in the *Ovidius moralizatus* of Pierre Bersuire” (*Vulgate Commentary* [Toronto] 5).

235 Fulgentius’ mythography was brought back into the scholarly eye by Johannes Ridewall, who composed the *Fulgentius Metaforalis*. A contemporary of Bersuire’s, Ridewall completed his moralization of the *Mythologiae* ca. 1330 (Reynolds 13). See Joannes Ridevallus, *Fulgentius Metaforalis: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der antiken Mythologie im Mittelalter*, edited by Hans Liebeschütz, Teubner, 1926.

especially the works of Ridewall, Petrarch, and the Third Vatican Mythographer,\(^\text{237}\) which he used to present collective information on each of his subjects and then offer moral, sometimes contradictory interpretations. The subsequent chapters of the \textit{Ovidius moralizatus} show a different approach, in which he omits stories he cannot moralize or allegorize, and at times adds in stories not included in the \textit{Metamorphoses} but that suit his subject matter.

Unlike his predecessors in the French tradition of moral commentary, Bersuire centers his interpretation around the subject of incest, a term that he uses in his summary as well as in his interpretation. He explicitly connects the occurrence of incest in this myth with a spiral of increasing violence that concludes with filicide and cannibalism. In addressing the theme of incest, he demonstrates his familiarity with Lactantius Placidus’ commentary on the \textit{Thebaid}, and by connecting that theme to the increase of violence, which is also found in the \textit{Narrationes}, he might associate the authors of the two texts thematically, supporting the common assumption that Lactantius Placidus was also the author of the \textit{Narrationes}.\(^\text{238}\)

As much as Philomela’s role in Bersuire’s interpretation is passive and described in straightforward, basic terms that do much to eliminate the eroticism of the narrative, his interpretation vilifies her for taking part in the spiral of violence after she has been raped. Turning to Bersuire’s text:


\(^{237}\) Although Ghisalberti states that Bersuire rejects Albericus’ (the Mythographer) conclusions (\textit{Ovidius Moralizatus} 26-27).

\(^{238}\) See Chapter 2.2.
bacchantium ad sacra bacchi se si mulauit ire: quae statim cucurrit sororem elinguem
videre: quam ad proprium palatium secrete ducens: ytim quendam filium suum & therei
coxit & in ultionem sororis patri redeunti comedendum dedit. Qui filium ytim petens:
ytim huc accersite dixit: cui cum progne responderet: quem petis intus habes: statim
philomena affuit: quae caput pueri in patris faciem proiecit. Tereus igitur videns scelus
scelere vindicatum sorores voluit occidere: sed fugientes progne in hirundinem:
philomena vero in lusciniam sunt mutatae. Thereus vero in hupupam est mutatus.
Pandion autem praefiliarum dolore est mortuus & filius eius ericteus pro eo rex effectus
est. Ista habent historialiter allegari contra incestuosos qui sub specie consanguinitatis
consanguineis abutuntur qui ideo proprium filium dicuntur comedere quia in carne
propra delectantur. Linguam vero dicuntur talibus abscindere inquantum
facti
terpitudinem & crimem nituntur celare. Illud tamen tela reuelat inquantum sequens
impregnatio crimen probat & prodict. Sed in aues postea mutantur inquantum quandoque
per confusionem fugere noscuntur hyrundines etiam & lusciniae dicuntur fieri inquantum
ad modulandum et cantandum solent tales malae mulieres prae caeteris occupari. Ipsi
vero mali hupupae quae scilicet in stercoribus nidificant fiunt. pro eo quod rem foedam et
ignominiosam faciunt & committunt. Pater vero praefilii dolores moritur inquantum amici
carnales tristes pro talibus efficiunt. Contra tales loquitur scriptura. Oseae.iii. dicens.
sanguis sanguinem tetigit: vbi dicitur sanguis sanguinem tangere quando propter
incestum consanguineae vel propinquae contingit homicidium prouenire.\textsuperscript{239}

\textsuperscript{239} \textit{Tereus, king of the Thracians, had Procne, the daughter of Pandion, king of Athens, as wife, and she had a very
beautiful sister named Philomela. And when Tereus arrived in Athens and saw her, he burned with love for her, and
under the pretense of kinship, he led her to Thrace in order to see her sister, where he raped her. And because she
fought against the act of incest, he cut out her tongue, and in the woods, in a dwelling where he kept his stables, he
imprisoned her under guard; and he told his queen Procne that her sister was dead. Therefore, since Philomela was
not able to speak, she wove a fabric on which she depicted the tale of all his deeds in a series with purple figures and
sent it to her sister by way of a slave or slave-woman. Her sister saw the fabric, and when she had figured out what
had happened, she pretended that she wanted to observe the rites of Bacchus; and when she had received permission
from her husband, she went out feigning the rites of Bacchus according to her [Athenian] custom: and as soon as she
could, she ran to see her tongueless sister, and she led her in secret to her own palace. She cooked her own son Itys
and served him to his father Tereus when he returned in revenge for her sister. And Tereus, seeking his son Itys, told
him to come, to which Procne responded, “the one you seek you have inside you!” Philomela at once appeared and
threw the boy’s severed head into his father’s face. Therefore Tereus, seeing this wickedness that was vengeance for
his own, wanted to kill the sisters, but as the women fled, Procne was changed into a swallow, but Philomela was
changed into a nightingale, and Tereus was changed into a hoopoe. Pandion died from his grief for his daughters,
and his son Erichtheus became king after him. Historically, these things should be set up as arguments against the
incestuous, who under the guise of kinship abuse kindred, who therefore are said to eat their own son, since they
delight in their own flesh. They are said to cut out the tongue in as much as they strive to hide the indecency of the
deed and crime, yet the web reveals it, in that the resulting pregnancy reveals and proves the crime. Afterwards the
evil women are changed into birds because they are known to flee in confusion and they are said to become
swallows and nightingales because evil women of this type before others are accustomed to occupy themselves
playing music and singing. Evil men are turned into hoopoes who make their nests out of filth, because they
undertake and accomplish a filthy and unnoble deed. The father dies of grief because the tragic carnal acts of an ally
have brought about such things. The Scripture speaks against such things. Hosea 4:2 says cursing, and lies, and
murder, and theft, and adultery overflowed, and blood touched blood, where it is said blood touches blood when a
murder comes to pass on account of incest with a female relative or close associate\textsuperscript{a} (my translation with invaluable
help from Prof. Teresa Ramsby). Latin text from Petrus Berchorius, \textit{Reductorium morale, Liber XV, cap. ii-xv}
The order of Bersuire’s presentation here is typical of how he systematizes his subjects from the *Metamorphoses*: he begins with a summary of the myth, followed by interpretation or a collection of interpretations, occasionally he will cite another mythographer, such as Fulgentius or Rabanus, and conclude with a moral/biblical connection, citing scripture. Unlike many of his other passages, however, Bersuire offers a relatively limited analysis of the Philomela myth, keeping himself to a primarily historical interpretation, which includes the straighforward metaphors of the characters’ metamorphoses, concluding with a scriptural passage supporting his reading of incest.

Bersuire’s summary of Philomela’s narrative shares the characteristic elision of detail in the first part of the story, skipping over much of the character-building that complicates the figures of Tereus and Pandion, and that might otherwise confuse the role of Philomela in her willingness to participate in Tereus’ plot. He quickly establishes that the value of interpreting this myth is in its moral lesson on incest, combining in the second sentence the terms *consanguinitas* (kinship) and *oprimere* (to suppress, crush down; here: to rape),240 a relationship that is explicitly confirmed in the next line, “Et quia incestui repugnabat.” Unlike the writers of the Orléans school, Bersuire gives no internal commentary on Tereus’ actions beyond boundaries of his explicit interpretation. Nor does he sensationalize Procne’s murder of her own son, although neither does he delve into the internal process of her decision as we read in the text of the *Metamorphoses*. The most dramatic section of the summary is Tereus’ discovery that he has been dining on Itys, although it is dramatic mostly in that Bersuire closely follows the details of Ovid’s text where in previous sections he provides very little detail at all; in fact, the irony-laden

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240 See Boccaccio’s use of the verb *oprimere* in Chapter 3.2.1.2.
words he recalls for Procne, “quem petis intus habes,” are a close inversion of Ovid’s phrase “intus habes, quem poscis” (“you have inside whom you seek,” Met. 6.655).

Bersuire’s interpretations of the narrative are almost entirely historical/metaphorical, and largely follow the moral commentary tradition of focusing on the metamorphoses of the characters as moral revelations (that is, the characters’ transformations into birds) rather than the violence of the narrative. Bersuire does, however, center his interpretation on the root cause of incest (“Ista habent historialiter allegari contra incestuosos”). This extends to each of Tereus’, Procne’s, and Philomela’s actions, as those “who under the guise of kinship abuse kindred,” and those “who therefore are said to eat their own son, since they delight in their own flesh.” Still, it is clear that the initial act of incest was when Tereus’ raped Philomela, taking advantage of their shared kinship. From this initial act, he constructs a series of escalations to demonstrate the ways in which the crime of incest tears a family apart, not just affecting the original victim (Philomela), but eventually destroying even her father.

Bersuire also makes reference to the possibility of future generations, through the impregnation of the rape victim (“impregnatio”), which goes on to prove the crime (“probat & prodit”). The pregnancy in this case undoes the genius of Philomela’s weaving, creating a metaphor out of the “web” (“tela”) for the biological process which well might be considered part of the trauma: looking back to previous rape scenes, involving gods and nymphs, Callisto in particular, the product of a child from rape is regarded as a painful moment for the victim (consider, for example, Arnulf’s interpretation of the disgust with which Callisto’s son regards her). This detail that Bersuire forces into the narrative must also relate to Itys, Tereus’ other child, who becomes the focus of female rage, inasmuch as he is a physical reminder of Tereus’

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241 See Coulson, “Procne and Philomela” 188, for the one-dimensionality of Bersuire’s interpretation.

As part of the series of escalations in violence that he observes, Bersuire does not differentiate between the characters of Procne and Philomela. As a result, in the series of lines in which he condemns incest, he also categorizes Philomela under the label of “evil women” (“malae mulieres”). Bersuire’s use of *tales* (that type, such) would seem to refer either to the kind of women who would murder and serve up their own children, which hardly seems like a common category, or more likely back to the previous sentence, that is, the kind of women who get pregnant outside of marriage. Certainly this interpretation fits more appropriately with the characteristic of those kinds of women who “play music and sing,” although this also relies on a stereotype of frivolity in connection to a supposed “adultery.” The conclusion leaves Philomela’s character no agency in the progression of her character, who is depicted first as evil for getting pregnant and then for fleeing.

Finally, Bersuire’s use of Hosea 4:2 in this passage connects the narrative with a biblical text that concerns marriage and fidelity. More particularly, the verse (2) that he quotes reinforces his interpretation of incest as the underlying issue in the myth. He guides the reader to this conclusion through an interpretation of the phrase “blood touches blood”: “vel propinquae contingit homicidium prouenire.” There is little historical commentary to support a consistent reading of Hosea as a text concerned with incest; typically it uses infidelity in marriage as an allegory for the faithlessness of the Israelites to God, with Hosea employing his own marital problems, infidelity and reconciliation, as the foundation of his prophecy.242 This passage raises its own issues in conjunction with the Philomela narrative, which in previous commentaries and

in the text of the *Metamorphoses* raises the concern of a Tereus/Philomela marital union while Procne has prior legal claim. It becomes difficult to understand who has acted with infidelity, especially in light of Hosea’s narrative of his wife’s infidelity: that is to ask, does Tereus occupy the role of the faithless spouse, or does Philomela enter as a bad actor, by her own admission in her rebuke of Tereus, although it is against her will? To turn back to Bersuire’s claim of incest, however, which is more relevant to his stated interpretation, the Latin phrase “sanguinis sanguinem tetigit” (or similar constructions) appear nowhere else in the Bible, so it cannot be coincidence when Elizabeth Archibald cites the English prose *Thebes*, which offers the same interpretation as Bersuire, in brackets: “For it was clearly shown in the case of these two, who were so horribly conceived against all nature and law; for as clerics say, when blood touches blood [when blood-relatives have intercourse], the resulting fruit is corrupt.” The subsequent statement about “fruit” supports Archibald’s comment here, and it is easy to understand how such a phrase could become descriptive of incestuous relationships, but there is nothing inherent to the passage from Hosea to indicate that; rather it seems to be more commonly interpreted as the idea that “bloodshed encourages more bloodshed.” So, while the author of the prose *Thebaid* and Bersuire share a common view that this line applies to a comment on incest, there is otherwise no indication that this was a commonly used passage to illustrate that conclusion.

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243 See Archibald 237 and also p. 75. The prose *Thebes* is a much shorter, prose summary of John Lydgate’s *Siege of Thebes*, itself an English adaptation of the conclusion of the Greek Oedipus cycle, known to Lydgate through a variety of sources, including Statius, Seneca, and the 12th-century French *Roman de Thèbes*. Archibald’s translation here is presented from a 15th-century English quote in its original which may be found in Friedrich Brie, editor, “Zwei mittelenglische Prosaromane: The Sege of Thebes und The Sege of Troy,” *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen un Literaturen*, vol. 130 (in two parts), pp. 40-52 and 269-85. The quote is found on p. 269. The text may be found online at the Internet Archive: archive.org/details/archivfrdasstu130brauuoft/page/40/mode/2up.

244 This is supported by a survey of English Bible translations of the passage. In the Latin tradition, it does not receive exceptional attention, but tellingly, Jerome in his *Commentarii in prophetas minores* writes: “sanguis sanguinem tetigit, siue sanguinem sanguini miscuerunt, ut augerent peccata peccatis, et nouis uetera cumularent” (“Blood touched blood, or blood mixed with blood, so that sins added to sins, and old sins piled onto new”); and Pope Gregory I wrote in his *Moralia in Iob*: “Sanguis ergo sanguinem tangit cum culpa culpam cumulauerit” (“Blood therefore touches blood when guilt piles onto guilt”). These sources can be found on the Library of Latin Texts, brepols.net/Pages/BrowseBySeries.aspx?TreeSeries=LLT-O.
Bersuire’s interpretation of incest as the central theme of the Philomela myth is a departure from previous commentaries. His focus on the theme is not entirely new, however, as it recalls older mythographical traditions, for example the commentaries of Lactantius Placidus, or the poetry of Ausonius or even Martial; and incest is strongly implied in the text of the *Metamorphoses* itself. But his commentary addresses this theme to a greater degree than that of any previous French author. We can note that Bersuire composed a commentary that resonates in many ways with that of his contemporary Giovanni del Virgilio, who, in addition to a similar focus on incest as a central theme of the narrative, utilizes a similar Latin vocabulary, especially notable in regards to the Tereus character’s transformation into a hoopoe, who builds his nest out of filth (“stercoribus”). Reynolds, however, found no influence from del Virgilio on Bersuire, who wrote a little less than two decades later (12). There is no certain way to speak to the coincidence of Bersuire and del Virgilio on certain elements in their writing without engaging in a much larger and detailed study of the language they use as well as the use of Latin across academia in Europe in the early 14th century. However, it is correct to note that the 14th century sees a marked shift in the commentary on the Philomela myth, with commentators more regularly interpreting Tereus’ action as incest more readily than rape. The focus on incest as a theme represents a general shift in how western European academics engaged with their sources, certainly the renewed interest in the *Narrationes* and commentaries of Lactantius Placidus, perhaps to the preference of Servius. But it also represents a shift to engage critically with the act of rape itself: in many of the earlier commentaries, the act is often mentioned with a single word. When a commentator addresses an act as incest, however, the criminality of kinds of sex

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245 See Chapter 2.2.1.
becomes central to the narrative and fundamental to understanding how and why the subsequent violence occurs.

At some level, the attention paid to an interpretation of incest must be due to the horror and disgust that accompany the crime: Ovid, through his narrator Orpheus, remarks on the distastefulness his material in his story of Myrrha (Met. 10.400-03). The level of detail that commentators give it in Philomela’s story, however, and the moral conclusion that an act of incest will cause the downfall of an entire family also indicate that commentators were thinking about institutional repercussions. In comparison of the crimes of rape and incest, the second was far worse, morally and legally: to be sure it was an act against nature and God, but legally the solutions to incest would have been much more restrictive. A victim of rape may be compensated (the dowry paid), the rapist may be physically punished, or the victim may even be married off to her rapist; the victim of incest had recourse to neither the first nor third of these options, and often relied on her assailant in a way to complicate the second option. (If the paterfamilias guilty of incest is killed or disabled, who then provides for the family?) Finally, the victim of incest will have the same difficulties to be married as a victim of rape, suffering the shame and taboo of the crime committed to her, the loss of her virginity, and even possibly a child to care for. These intricacies all arise in the fall of the Philomela’s larger family unit.

3.1.4 Ovide Moralisé and the Vernacular Turn

Rather than in the Latin language commentaries of the 12th century, it is in the vernacular, Old French Philomena that the discussion of incest finds its continuation from the classical period and late antiquity. Approximately 1,470 lines long, the poem was initially composed

246 See also Archibald for many examples of horror and disgust at incest in medieval literature, esp. 18, 42, and incest’s role in the Ovide moralisé on pages 86-88.
sometime before 1175 by Chrétien de Troyes, along with several other narratives from the Ovidian catalogue. It was later included in the *Ovide moralisé*, which was composed and compiled in the first quarter of the 14th century. Remarkable for its length and scope, it is a vernacular, Old French, verse adaption or translation of the *Metamorphoses*, along with allegorical commentary in verse. Rather than write entirely new material for the project, the anonymous author reused several older Ovidian poems, such as a version Pyramus and Thisbe and Chrétien’s version of the Philomela story. This being the case, it can be difficult to know whether to attribute the popularity of Chrétien’s *Philomena* to the time if its composition (12th century) or when its inclusion in the *Ovid moralisé* (14th century).

Chrétien’s *Philomena* itself offers an amplified version of Philomela’s narrative, including Tereus’ internal process of plotting to rape her, Philomela’s response to the rape, and her and Procne’s revenge. Part of the amplification of the material is done through the heavy-handed use of anachronism, as the author freely relies on 12th-century French standards for life at court as well as tropes strongly associated with the tradition of courtly love. Consider the long description (lines 125-212) of Philomela when she first appears in the poem (compared to the four lines of description, 6.451-54, in the *Metamorphoses*): her physical appearance includes typical French descriptions of her fair complexion (145, 151, 163), followed by a list of her aptitudes, such as surpassing Apollonius and Tristan in wisdom ten times over (175-76); she excelled at games, including chess (176-81), at falconry (182-87), at textile arts and depictions in weaving (188-193, a foreshadowing of her later communication via cloth), at reading and literary knowledge, as well as at composition and music, and at speaking (194-204); or the blantant

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247 We are able to date this from the opening lines of *Cligès*, in which Chrétien lists previous works, including a poem on Philomela. See Chrétien de Troyes, *Romans* 1226.

248 For the attribution of this section from the *Ovide moralisé*, see the introduction to the *Philomena* in Chrétien de Troyes, *Romans* 1226-28.
anachronism in the statement: “Tel est la costume as François / Que cil qui viaut la chose avoir…” (“Such is the character of the French, that whoever wants something…,” lines 280-81, my translation).

In other sections, Chrétien fundamentally changes the narrative. For example, when Procne receives her sister’s tapestry (following line 1236), she does not make an excuse to leave the city under the cover of Bacchic rites. Rather, she shadows the servant who brings her the tapestry back to the hut in the woods, and in a dramatic moment breaks the door down with her bare hands (lines 1256-57). Likewise, all passages in the Metamorphoses in which Philomela calls herself a mistress (paelex) or a rival to her sister as either Tereus’ lover or legal wife are eliminated in the French adaptation. These preoccupations of Philomela are revealed in her rebuke of Tereus after he first rapes her and then again just after Procne rescues her, but the younger sister will not meet the elder’s eyes out of shame (Met. 6.604-07). The elimination of these elements from the Ovide moralisé constructs more heroic characters out of the two sisters: Philomela no longer occupies an ambiguous space in which she is both victim and complicit in her own victimization; Procne is a character guided more strongly by passion than by her cunning, and, for better or worse, this aspect of her character softens her decision to butcher her son. In these characterizations, one set of female tropes—the distrust of women who claim they have been raped, the cruel and cold calculations of the emotionally injured woman—is traded for another—the persistence of the equivalence of femininity and victimization, the overwhelming passions to which women’s reason is enslaved. Yet, at the same time, the author grants both female characters reprieve from these stereotypes: Philomela takes active steps in the process of
her rescue, relying positively on both her intellect and her physical skill, and Procne’s cruelty is repeatedly attributed to Tereus as the catalyst rather than to a deficiency in her own nature.249

In addition to expanding and eliding his Latin source, Chrétien mimics Ovidian tropes as a part of his narrative. For example, when Tereus sees Philomela, “Que’Amors a vers lui prise guerre, / S’est angigniez et mal bailliz / Qu’au cuer li est li feus sailliz / Qui de legier art e esprant” (“Because Love declared war on him, he is deceived and ill-treated, for to his heart jumped a fire that easily catches and burns,” lines 238-41).250 In this passage, we read the character of Amor in the role of the “lover’s” antagonist, similar to the one he played in the Amores and the Ars amatoria, as well as the Ovidian use of militaristic language. Lines 240-41 are reminiscent of Ovid’s common metaphor of a flame that quickly catches and jumps to dry stubble in a field (162-63).

As is common to medieval literature, in the romance tradition as well as in shorter forms (fables, lais, fabliaux), the author inserts the occasional break from the narrative to discuss directly with the audience a subject related to the moral of the overall work or the section in which it is embedded.251 One notable passage in the Philomena has been discussed before by Kathryn Gravdal, lines 219-33:

Por ce, s’ele iert sa suer germaine,
N’estoit mie l’amors vilaine,

249 On this second point consider lines 1312-1322: “Tant la beisa et conjoï / Que Progné deüst estre ostee / Del panser ou ele iert antree, / Si con requiert droiz et nature / De tote humainne creature / Et si con pities le deffant, / Que mere ne doit son anfant / Ne ocire ne desmanbrer. / Mes quant li prist a remanbrer / Del traitor, del parjuré, / N’a pas l’anfant asseüré” (“[Itys] kissed and greeted her such that Procne might discard any thought of this or her hatred, as the reason and nature of every human requires, and also as pity forbids, that a mother ought not kill nor dismember her child. But when she began to recall the traitor, his treachery, she did not respond to the child”).


251 The author of the Roman de Silence, for example, does this on multiple occasions in the text to excoriate the loss of morality in 13th-century court life (see Sarah Roche-Mahdi, ed. Roman de Silence, University of Michigan Press, 1999); Marie de France prefaces her Lais with an explanation of the use of past knowledge (Lais, edited by Alfred Ewert and Glyn Burgess, Bristol Classical Press, 1995).
In this passage, we understand the narrator to turn to the audience to explain a complex legal point, and as Gravdal explains,

Repeating the word *loi* four times in the space of twelve verses, and dwelling on the lexicon of pleasure (*volante, deduit, plest, delite, plesoit a feire*), Chrétien allows the audience to infer that Tereus’s rape of Philomena was justifiable. Chrétien appears to provide Tereus with an excuse… Chrétien departs from Ovid in framing the sexual relations between Teresus [*sic*] and Philomena as a legal question and then offering a law that might protect Tereus. Chrétien departs even further from Ovid by drawing the reader’s attention away from the physical pain and emotional suffering of Philomena. He deemphasizes the grisly nature of Ovid’s tale and focuses on male rights, including the right to pleasure. (Gravdal 63)

Her reading of the passage’s effect is compelling, and made all the more so by the many other passages in this same work, and in many other works of the Romance genre, that reinforce the

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252 “For if she had been his sister, their love would not have been guilty, because one of their gods had established, according to the law they obeyed, that they could do anything they wished or desire. This law was theirs and in writing: if it pleased or delighted him, any man could do what he wanted without committing a wrong. The pagan world obeyed this law. Therefore [Tereus] could have defended his action, if it happened that anyone wanted to make a charge against him. But because he was doing what he pleased, no one could accuse him of wrongdoing. But now let us put their law aside” (translated by Gravdal). Gravdal addresses this passage in *Ravishing Maidens* 63. I would also point out that this is not the single occasion of Chrétien de Troyes directing attention to a supposed pagan practice—upon hearing (falsely) of her sister’s death, Procne rails against Death itself, which she concludes with: “Toz jorz mes an remanbremant / D’ire, d’angoisse et de dolor / Avrai dras de noire color, / Et par reison avoir les doi, / Qu’il est escrit an nostre loi / Que noire vesteüre port / Qui ire et angoisse a de mort” (“From now on, in memory of the rage, anguish, and grief, I will wear black, as is right, because it is written in our laws that those who suffer rage and anguish from mourning wear black,” my translation). Sections such as this create a perception of the “pagan” period as a pre-Christian, yet ordered era of laws, some of which were familiar and others of which were exotic.
innocence of the male protagonist. The fiction of the law itself creates an imaginary, yet historical space where the male is permitted not just access to sexual pleasure, but legal approbation. Note also that the passage bypasses entirely the question of consent and changes the central question instead to a question of social access. This intersects precisely with the 14th-century commentaries on the Philomela narrative that seem to focus entirely on the theme of incest in that myth and use that theme as the moral lesson for the reader. By allowing a hypothetical, but distinctly non-real space for the imaginary, the author of the Philomena addresses the same topic and condemns it by emphasizing it as pagan, but also makes it appealing through the “lexicon of pleasure” that Gravdal notes, and asks the reader if there is an inherent immorality in such desire, or one constructed by the whim of law.

Readers are frequently asked to participate in the erotics of the Philomena: unlike the less accessible Latin commentaries, which for the most part eliminate the possibility of eroticism in the fable through the shortening of the text and a focus on the more gruesome violence of filicide and cannibalism, the long-form narrative of the Philomena returns to the myth the space and details necessary for an erotic imagination to flourish. The description of Philomela’s rape substitutes metaphoric erotic description from the Metamorphoses (Ovid’s language of hunting and of animals killing other animals) for a longer description of Philomela’s physical distress, which is also eroticized:

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253 This theme is central to Gravdal’s book, and she presents concrete examples of its use in Chrétien’s work in Chapter 2: “The Poetics of Rape Law: Chrétien de Troyes’s Arthurian Romance,” pp. 42-71. There is some critical disagreement over the role of this passage in particular, whether its purpose, as Gravdal argues, is to grant the male readership erotic access to their imaginary, or whether the passage demonstrates a narrator at odds with his protagonist, who reminds the audience that Tereus’ actions fall outside acceptable limits both by contemporary law and Christian faith. For opposing viewpoints to Gravdal, see Adams, Violent Passions 66-72; Helen C. R. Laurie, The Making of Romance: Three Studies, Droz, 1991, pp. 17-19. My own sense is that the passage accomplishes a function different from what Gravdal proposes, that the repetition of loi here directs the audience’s attention to an external issue of legal reform in late 12th-century France, but this does not necessarily exclude her assertions about the creation of an erotic imaginary as well.
Lors li fet force et cele crie,
Si se debat et se detuert,
A po que de peor ne muert.
D’ire, d’angoisse et de dolor
Change plus de çant foiz color,
Tranble, palist et si tressue
Et dist qu’a male ore est issue
De la terre ou ele fu nee,
Quant a tel honte est demenee. (lines 798-803)254

The erotics of the passage rely more on Ovid’s *Ars amatoria* lines 1.119-26,255 while maintaining Philomela’s human reactions to her assault. Even afterwards, one of the most repulsive aspects of Ovid’s narrative—the cutting out of Philomela’s tongue, which still wriggles on the ground while Tereus rapes her again repeatedly (*Met.* 6.549-62)—is made less graphic: much less is said about her tongue, and Tereus leaves immediately after cutting it out (*Philomena* lines 844-57). The elision of these details diminishes the reader’s disgust for Tereus, although he is still called out by the narrator at lines 844-45 and 856-57, and it also has the effect of not entirely shattering the erotic imaginary of the scene. The silencing of the female character reasserts the dominating space for the male-centered audience.

Turning back to Gravdal’s point, many of the passages offer excuses for Tereus’ actions, if not explicitly, then by inference. As Adams describes, Tereus’ actions fall within the predictable guidelines of French *lais*, to the extent that there is an expected progression for the

254 “Then he uses force, and she cries out, struggles and resists, she almost dies of fear. From anger, anguish, and sorrow she changes color a hundred times over, she trembles, pales, and is covered in sweat, and curses the hour that she departed from the land of her birth, to be shamed with such disgrace.” My translation.

255 Sic illae timuere viros sine more ruentes; / constitit in nulla qui fuit ante color. / Nam timor unus erat, facies non una timoris: / pars laniat crines, pars sine mente sedet; / altera maesta silet, frustra vocat altera matrem: / haec queritur, stupet haec; haec manet, illa fugit; / ducuntur raptae, genialis praedia, puellae; / Et potuit multas ipse decere timor (“So this wild charge of men left the girls all panic-stricken, / not one had the same colour in her cheeks as before – / the same nightmare for all, though terror’s features varied: / some tore their hair, some just froze / where they sat; some, dismayed, kept silence, others vainly / yelled for Mamma; some waiked; some gaped; / some fled, some just stood there. So they were carried off as / marriage-bed plunder; even so, many contrived to make panic look fetching,” translated by Peter Green, *The Erotic Poems*).
lovestruck hero to attempt things first through words and wooing (“par amour”), and when that has failed, through force. Each step brings him inevitably closer to the use of force, which so much of the narrative has spent rationalizing by the time the event arrives. Consider the inclusion of a long passage in which the narrator meditates on the role of Love (lines 390-448): structured dialectically, the passage begins with the loss of speech and the overturning of wisdom (“tote a perdue la parole,” line 390; “Sa folie son savoir vaint,” 392), and the assertion that Love is to blame (“Cele qui tot vaint et destruit,” 394 [that which conquers and destroys everything]). The narrator then structures the passage dialectically with a series of questions and assertions: Can Love defeat victory (lines 397-98)? Is Love just or equitable (409-10)? Is Love wise (421)? The conclusions are a depiction of Love as an entity or force that is irresistible, indifferent to logic or justice, and in many ways paradoxical. Its effect on Tereus is that he is utterly overtaken by Love, and in that overtaking he is stripped of his wisdom and his reason to Love’s own purpose; the subsequent actions of Tereus might now be better attributed to Love itself. And if Tereus’ reason becomes a servant to Love, several other lines may be used to construct the victimization of Tereus himself: when he first sees Philomela, “Sa granz biautez son cuer li anble / Et sa tres bele contenance” (210-11); and in the passage on the nature of Love, the reference to the lover as veincu (vanquished, 395)—ironically, a term that will reappear in Tereus’ own thoughts a little later on, prompted by the devil (462): “Qu’a force prandre li etuet, / Se par amor vaintre nel puet / Ou par nuit mener an anblee” (“to take her by force, if he could not conquer her with love, or steal away with her at night,” 465-68).

256 In this progression, a characteristic of “Ovidian lais” that Tracy Adams notes (see her chapter, “The Mad Lovers of the Ovidian Lais” 37-73), we can read the progression also of the situations of Daphne and Apollo, Io and Jupiter, and Syrinx and Pan from the first book of the Metamorphoses.

257 The passage on Reason: “Fors de cestui pansé l’a mis / Reisons, que ne sai don li vint. / Esmervoil moi coman ç’avint / Que Reisons fist a cele foiz, / Car trop iert duremant destroiz” (“Reason set aside this thought [to take Philomela by force and kill everyone else], I don’t know how. I am astounded at the way Reason was able to act at that time, since [Tereus] was so badly distressed,” lines 476-80, my translation).
Adams considers the characters caught in these situations as typical of the genre of the Ovidian lai:

The Ovidian lais present love as an irresistible force and show their characters struggling helplessly against it. The paradigms they possess draw no distinction between amor as a dangerous and violent impulse and positive forms of the emotion. Viewing all amor as equally bad, the paradigms demand that the emotion be repressed in favor of rationality. However, this cannot be done. Repressed, the urge resurfaces, overwhelming. Its victims remain like children, futile in their fulminations. But the lais also suggest that with appropriate paradigms for working through the violent and mysterious ways of love, the characters would have survived. The relationship between the lais and the romances is that although they share philosophies of love, only the romances develop the notion of the *Magister amoris*, latent in the lais, to offer emotional regimes capable of managing that unruly emotion. Although they depict their lovers as victims, the romances show them working through their emotions to take a measure of control over themselves, even if amor itself remains beyond the control of the individual. The lais, thus, starkly reveal the basis upon which the romance builds its descriptions of love, and dispute the notion of courtly love as a discourse that idealizes women. (*Violent Passions* 73)

To this end, the Philomela myth is the perfect narrative to explore the consequences of the violent progression of love as it passes from character to character. This progression foreshadows the same progression of violence at the heart of the Philomela myth noted in the Latin commentaries, as Philomela and Procne in turn murder Itys and feed him to his father. 258

This may explain also how a 12th-century lai came to be included in the 14th-century compilation of the *Ovide moralisé*, especially when Chrétien de Troyes’ other Ovidian lais have been lost, since the *Philomena* exhibits prominent literary values from both centuries. To the extent that it corresponds to the discussions of Love as an overwhelming force, characteristic of 12th-century courtly literature, it matches well also with the 14th-century commentaries of Bersuire and Del Virgilio, who employ an overt analysis of incest to argue for their interpretation of the escalation of violence that takes place in the narrative—and in this, the passage from the

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258 For more on the lover as victim in Old French literature, see Gravdal’s Introduction for a discussion of the term *ravissement*, pp. 5-6. A term that comes into use in the 13th century, we clearly see its narrative precedent in this 12th-century text.
Philomena that explores incest as a historical legal issue makes the text all the more current. At
the conclusion of Chrétien’s text, the metamorphoses of the characters are described, beginning
in a mythographical fashion but concluding in a moral:

La si con plot as destinees
Avint une si granz meravoille
Qu’onques n’oistes sa paroille,
Car Tereüs devint oisiaux,
Orz et despiz, petit et viauz.
De son poing li cheï l’espee
Et il devint hupe copee,
Si con la fable le raconte,
Por le pechié et por la honte
Qu’il avoit fet de la pucele.
Procné devint une arondele
Et Philomena rossignos.
Ancore qui crerroit son los
Seroient a honte trestuit
Li desleal mort et destruit
Et li felon et li parjure,
Et cil qui de joie n’ont cure,
Et tuit cil qui font mesprison
Et felenie et traiçon
Vers pucele sage et cortoise,
Car tant l’an grieve et tant l’an poise
Que quant il vient au prin d’esté
Que tot l’iver avons passé,
Por les mauvés qu’ele tant het
Chante au plus doucemant qu’el set
Par le boschage : «Oci! Oci!»
De PHILOMENA leirai ci. (lines 1442-68)\(^259\)

Lines 1442-53 resemble the Latin commentary tradition, primarily the mythographical focus that
describes the metamorphoses themselves in metaphorical terms as an explanation of the

\(^{259}\) “Then, as pleased fate, a wonder came to pass, the likes of which you have never heard, for Tereus became a
bird, filthy and despised, small and vile. His sword fell from his hand and he became a crested hoopoe, as the fable
says, for the sin and disgraceful act that he made against the girl. Procne became a swallow and Philomela a
nightingale. Still whoever would believe her song, every unfaithful man would die and be destroyed in shame, and
the felons and liars, and those who deny joy, and those who commit injustice, and crime, and treason against wise
and noble girls, since she is so burdened and weighed down that when the beginning of summer comes, once winter
has passed, with the great hatred she has for those evil men, she sing as sweetly as she knows how through the
woods: «Oci! Oci! Kill! Kill!». Of PHILOMENA I will here fall silent.” My translation.

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characteristics of the three birds. However, where previous commentary (and contemporary works in the Orléans tradition, such as those by Arnulf and William) had tended to focus on Procne and Philomela’s metamorphoses as they appear in the Ovidian text, or attributed Tereus’ metamorphosis to his wrath and swiftness, here for the first time we read Tereus associated with filth and villainy (“orz et despiz, petiz et viauz”) as the moral behind his change. This also corresponds more closely with the 14th-century readings of the narrative, as both Bersuire and Del Virgilio use similar language to describe the feast, as does Boccaccio in the Genealogia when he writes “stercora cibus” (excrement is its food). Likewise, in the later 14th century, Giovanni Bonsignori will characterize the hoopoe as “filthy” (“puzzulente”). The author of thePhilomena also overturns an aspect of Ovid’s version of the myth, describing Tereus’ sword falling from his hand where the Latin of the Metamorphoses attributes the length of the hoopoe’s beak to a symbol of that blade: “facies armata videtur” (“it seems its face is armed,” line 674).

Lines 1454-68 are unlike any other account of the myth in literature or in literary commentary. The lines, for the first time in the narrative, give voice to a rage that is largely absent in Philomela’s character in the rest of Chrétien’s telling, as it crescendos from an accusation against men who would take advantage of young women to the ironically and threateningly stated “doucement” as she sings “Kill! Kill!” The passage does recall, however, the adaptation of Philomela’s rebuke of Tereus (Met. 533-48) from lines 807-32, in which she lets forth a list of accusations:

“Ha,” fet ele, “fel de puteire,
Fel envius, que viaus tu feire?
Fel mauves, fel desmesurez
Fel traîtres, fel parjurez,

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260 See the next section, Chapter 3.2.
Fel cuiverz, fel de pute loi,
Fel, …” (lines 807-12)

The narrator’s list echoes Philomela’s previous words, and bind the sympathy of the narrator more closely to Philomela’s rage than to the explanations of the commentators, who arguably criticize more greatly the murder of Itys than the rape of Philomela. In this case, Philomela’s rage seems justified and, by extension, even the murder of Itys seems an understandable if not reasonable, response to the violence done to her.

In the Ovide moralisé itself, the anonymous author/compiler offers an allegorical interpretation of the myth after its conclusion, or more correctly moral and even anagogical interpretations as it directs the reader to the Christian symbolism of the text, which explicitly draws the reader’s attention “towards the heavens.” (Recall, however, as Ghisalberti points out, that the boundaries between the interpretative senses is notoriously vague.) The commentator begins his interpretation by reiterating the metamorphoses of each character, although modifying their rationales somewhat: he focuses on Philomela’s captivity in the forest and her courteous nature, rather than her fury or resentment (3691-99); the entirety of Procris’s transformation is owed to her murdering her son and her fear of her husband in his anger (“pour la paour de son mari,” 3703), and the sin (“pechié,” 3700) of the narrative is transferred to her, rather than placed on Tereus (Philomena, line 1450); Tereus’ metamorphosis he attributes first to his actions towards Philomela, emphasizing the act of rape (“Et de desflorer la pucele,” 3712), but also to his militaristic characteristics (3711-18). This final description reverses Chrétien’s version, which seeks to undermine Tereus’ heroism, and only obliquely mentions Philomela’s rape (“Por

261 “‘Ah!’ she said, ‘perverted deceiver, insidious deceiver, what do you wish to do? Evil deceiver, outrageous deceiver, traitorous deceiver, lying deceiver, filthy deceiver, depraved deceiver, deceiver.’” As with the Ovidian version, the rest of this rebuke serves as a legal and moral reminder to Tereus of the oaths he had broken.
le pechié et por la honte / Qu’il avoit fet de la pucele”; “For the sin and the shame he did to the
girl,” *Philomena*, lines 1349-50).262

His “allegory” begins on line 3719 (“Or vous dirai l’aélegorie”): Pandion’s character
symbolizes God, Athens Heaven, with Procne as the soul made in God’s image, later the “nature
humaine” (3751), and Tereus the body (3728, 3744). The marriage of the soul he explains as the
attempt to replenish heaven (3740-41) after the war with the forces of the Devil, or Athens after
the war with the barbarians (3730-32), and the birth of their son symbolizes the successful,
honorable, and blessed life of the body and soul in harmony (3744-50). Procne’s desire to see her
sister, who signifies Love, demonstrates human nature’s inclination towards evil; love itself is
deceivable and flawed (“Philomena, qui signifie / Amour decevable et faillie,” 3755-56). The
following lines discuss God’s purpose in creating Love, meant for “sober use,” (3760, 3771);
however, the body exaggerates its use, going beyond measure, and allows love to overcome its
reason (3775-81). The commentator lingers (3785-3800) on the meaning behind Progne’s clothes
as she mourns Philomela, at the center of which the change in dress signals the soul’s (Progne’s)
turning away from a “sinful life” (“pecherresse vie,” 3795), as she sheds the clothes which she
had worn for the body’s (Tereus’) pleasure (“pour le cors qui l’amuse / et de vaine delice abuse,”
3797-98), forgetting the pleasures God had offered in favor of earthly pleasures. The
commentator goes on to contemplate the consequences of the murder and consumption of Itys
(the “fruit” of body and soul’s union), and their meaning for both the soul and the body.
However, in the last lines of the commentary the author turns again to Philomela and
metamorphosis:

Li cors puans hupe devient,
Plains de pullentie e d’orgure

262 The lines quoted in this paragraph correspond to the edition of Cornelis de Boër, *Ovide moralisé: Poème du
commencement du quatorzième siècle, Tome II (livres IV-VI)*, Johannes Müller, 1920.
Et de honie porreture,
Et li delit vain et muable
Devienent rousseignol volable (3836-40)\textsuperscript{263}

The role of “delight” (“delit”) itself throughout the allegorical commentary is one that depends on its origin, that is, whether it is earthly or divine, and that mutable characteristic places it firmly in a metaphor with the characteristics of a bird (“volable”; “flighty”).

The role of Philomela in the allegorical commentary is always one of temptation, leading to the corruption of both the body and soul; the commentator is clear that love and delight do not necessarily engender evil, but when removed from God’s presence the inclination is towards “earthly” or base pleasure. These conclusions distance the interpretation significantly from the character of Philomela as she appears in the 12\textsuperscript{th}-century text, implying again her complicity in the violence done to her—a predictable cause of her very nature—and undo the ingenuity she displays as a self-interested actor in the narrative. The interpretation entirely ignores her voicelessness or skill in weaving, and instead focuses on the corruption of Procne, spending fifteen lines on the significance of her mourning dress, a detail that is given three lines in Ovid’s text (\textit{Met.} 6.566-68). While the commentator unequivocally condemns Tereus for his role in the narrative, the effect of love on his actions is central to his downfall, as it causes him to set aside both reason and feeling (“I mist sa pensee et sa cure,” 3773). Procne’s righteous fury and heroic physicality are discarded for a tragic corruption of the soul as soon as it departs from God’s city.

The tension between the 12\textsuperscript{th}-century text and the 14\textsuperscript{th}-century commentary that explicates it is apparent. Chrétien’s version of Philomela is by no means free of complication, as she is blatantly eroticized in the first half of the text, and the narrator employs every one of her virtues to this end. Whether (as Gravdal argues) or not (Adams) this eroticization is overturned in

\textsuperscript{263} “The body becomes a stinking hoopoe, full of putrification and offal, and of shameful rottenness, and delight, vain and changing, becomes the flighty nightingale.” My translation.
the latter half of the lai, as the author attempts to make a moral point about Love’s role in our actions, or about how we convince ourselves of the irresistible power of “love,” it would be reductive to read Philomela’s role in her rescue and revenge, or her outrage, as anything but agency. The allegorical commentator, conversely, barely pays her attention except as a passive force that drags both Procne and Tereus into ruin, and if the reader is not careful, implies the commentator, he or she may be ruined as well. These elements roughly stand in conversation with the periods in which they were written: the 12th-century obsession with the role of Love in popular narrative, and Chrétien’s criticism of that role as it appears in all of his romances; the 14th-century’s consideration of human “psychology” or at least the ambiguity of human passions that can lead one to either good or evil. The commentator’s use of Chrétien’s text and its reiteration in the 14th century demonstrate a continued interest in material concerned with sexual violence and the limitations that we ought to put on actions influenced by love, which may actually be self-interest. That both Chrétien’s text and the commentary by the author/compiler of the Ovide moralisé focus on the nature of love and the point at which descriptions of love turn violent reveal a medieval concern that the language of love has potentially harmful ambiguities in its terminology and conceptualization. The two authors approaches to arrive at this conclusion are different, but their writing demonstrates a conciousness of the problems that arrive when the term “love” applies to consensual romantic constructions as well as erotically motivated violent ones.264

It is worth considering whether there was a characteristic of vernacular writing that lent itself to anticipating the conclusions of Humanism, which would flourish in the 14th century with the writings of Petrarch and many other Italian authors. For all the new ways in which the Latin

264 See my Introduction, note 7.
language might be employed from century to century or author to author, the personal character of a mother-tongue, as well as the necessity to innovate in a language with no long-standing literary tradition, seems to me to be one of the foundational aspects of a humanist project. It cannot be said that the massive body of vernacular work from the 12th and 13th centuries, or even the 14th-century *Ovide moralisé*, might belong to the Humanist movement. However, these texts on Philomela anticipate those later Italian humanist (if not Humanist) commentators on and translators of Ovid, who were no doubt influenced, if not inspired by, their model in the *Ovide moralisé*. 
3.2 Italian Commentaries and Adaptations

The prominent Italian commentaries on the *Metamorphoses*—both in Latin and vernacular Italian—owe much to the commentaries from the French tradition, including Pierre Bersuire’s *Ovidius moralizatus* and the vernacular *Ovide moralisé*. The Italian projects were marked by the humanist movement that defined 14th-century Italian academic communities. Four authors give full attention to the Philomela myth, either as a part of a comprehensive commentary on, or adaptation of, the text of the *Metamorphoses*, or as part of a commentary on collected subjects from pagan antiquity. The first of these was Giovanni del Virgilio, a contemporary of Dante, who composed two commentaries on the *Metamorphoses*: the *Allegoriae librorum Ovidii Metamorphoseon* provided moral interpretation and commentary on the text which closely followed the commentary of Arnulf of Orleans (Coulson, “Procne and Philomela” 188-89); the *Expositio*, also in Latin, begins as a catenated, philological-gloss commentary but

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265 For the sake of differentiation, when I refer to this group of texts as a whole, I will refer to them as “Italian” and when I refer just to those in the Italian language, as opposed to Latin, I will refer to them as “vernacular.”

266 While numerous Italian (not to mention French and English) Renaissance commentaries, adaptations and translations owe much to the medieval commentary tradition, they have not been considered in this study because they belong to a distinct scholarly and hermeneutic genre. Scholarly practice in the Humanist movement, it should be acknowledged, owed much to medieval mythographers and allegorist, and through them Renaissance scholars became increasingly more concerned with philological accuracy and with providing evaluative conclusions based more broadly on subjective experience. On the origins of the Humanist movement, with the usual caveats regarding historical periodization, see Nicholas Mann, “The Origins of Humanism,” *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, edited by Jill Kraye, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 1-19. Mann argues convincingly that the early Humanists may be labeled as such as early as the late 13th century, and Ronald G. Witt seeks also to expand academic acceptance of when the Humanist period began: “I have attempted to show … that Petrarch’s influence on humanism was far different from what it is generally recognized to be, largely because he has been treated as the founder of a movement rather than the leader of its third generation. Disqualifying the contributions of earlier humanists with the labels ‘prehumanists’ or ‘protohumanists,’ modern historians of the movement have taken the measure of its development with Petrarch as the initiator,” (my emphasis); see *In the Footsteps of the Ancients: The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni*, Brill, 2001, p. 289. However, accounting for the several centuries straddled by the Humanist movement in Europe, it is important to acknowledge that Humanism developed from a medieval approach to literature and philosophy into a Renaissance approach, with no clear division between the two. This can be observed in the consistency of *auctores* that made up the school curriculum up through even the late 14th century (see Witt’s discussion of this topic, 33-34n4).
abandons this approach after the first two books, after which it becomes a prose paraphrase of its source material with added commentary and reactions by the scholar. The second was Giovanni Boccaccio, who offered his own commentary on the myth in the ninth book of his *Genealogiae deorum gentilium*, a wide-ranging study and exegesis of pagan mythology, followed by a rigorous defense of pre-Christian poetry and its study. He first briefly summarizes the myth as a *fabula*, under the heading of *Tereus*, in a manner similar to that of the *Narrationes* and other early mythographies. He then provides a brief interpretation of the events and follows the passage with an interpretation of the character of Itys as well. The last two are both Italian-language, prose adaptations of the *Metamorphoses*. Arrigo Simintendi wrote his *Metamorfosi volgarizzate* at some point before 1333, and Giovanni Bonsignori composed the *Ovidio metamorphoseos vulgare* around 1375. The presentations of the Philomela myth in these adaptations differ fundamentally from what we read in Chrétien de Troyes’ vernacular *Ovide moralisé*: In addition to being prose rather than a poetic form, the sections on Philomela in these Italian texts are meant to exist integrally as part of a comprehensive translation of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, rather than the compilation of episodes that vary in authorship, which constitute the *Ovide moralisé*. Given the proximity of dates between the compilation of the *Ovide moralisé* (1315-1328) and Simintendi’s version, it is unlikely that the Italian vernacular projects were composed coincidentally. The general move to vernacularize the *Metamorphoses* in the 14th century fits into the larger Humanist project that characterized the period.

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268 For a succinct presentation of the central goals of what came to be labeled “Humanism,” see the introduction to *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, edited by Ernst Cassirer, Paul Oskar Kristeller, and John Herman Randall, Jr., University of Chicago Press, 1984. While the academic movement was characterized by its study of the Greek and Roman classics, its impulse to contemporize and apply this learning to a cultural program and the demands of the present support the shift to vernacular languages for scholarly topics (3-4).
The humanist scope of the Italian commentaries and adaptations marks a notable split from the companion French projects. The *Ovide moralisé* and Bersuire’s *Ovidius moralizatus* rely heavily on scriptural references, a constant interaction with Christian orthodoxy, and moral interpretations that ultimately indicate a positioning of Ovid’s narratives in the context of a Christian paradigm. Of the four levels of interpretation proposed in so many of the moral commentaries—literal, allegorical, moral, and anagogical—these two texts regularly manage only the first two, occasionally the third, and almost never the fourth. Italian commentaries, by contrast focus heavily on the moral to the preference of the allegorical, to a degree that hints at the existence of a psychological interpretation, that is, meaning as it applies to the human individual through their subjective experience.

In Ronald Witt’s observations of the development of Italian Humanism, he notes a divide between the approaches in those texts that separate them from earlier medieval writing:

I had arrived at three […] conclusions: first, that humanism did not invade all literary genres simultaneously, but rather successively coopted one genre after another over almost two centuries; second, that the order of penetration was not a matter of happenstance, but that for reasons both intrinsic to the genre and arising from cultural precedent, the first genre affected was poetry; and third, that because it began in poetry, the origins of humanism were to be found not in rhetoric but in grammar, the traditional domain for poetry. (Witt 6-7)

Witt’s divide between the rhetorical and the grammatical leads him to conclude the existence of two conceptual centers of knowledge, founded on the two distinct disciplines: rhetoric operates as a skill for the public professional, such as lawyers and statesmen; grammar, on the other hand,

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269 See Chapters 2.2.1 and 3.1.3 for the establishment of these senses as interpretative approaches to material for early and late medieval authors. This approach was made into a distich by a 13th-century Dominican, Augustine of Dacia: “Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria / moralis quid agas, quid speres anagogia” (“The letter teaches facts, allegory is what you believe, / moral is what you do, anagogy is what you hope for”; see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Interpretation of Scripture: In Defense of the Historical-Critical Method*, Paulist Press, 2008, p. 94, modified translation).
is defined by Witt as having been a private pursuit, a tool of the intellectual and the critic. This is not to say that the humanist writers of the 14th century did not figure themselves as part of the scholarship of the previous centuries—to the contrary, Witt stresses that they saw themselves as part of an unbroken tradition (Witt 19-20)—however, there was a return to classical literary models that guided a different kind of interpretation, one that was less constructed around the public concerns of rhetoric, and more interested in the private activity of intellectualism.

Witt’s assertions about this divide between the disciplines of rhetoric and grammar confirm Rita Copeland’s observations about their mutual construction of a new vernacular practice during the late Middle Ages. In her study on the development of the commentary tradition, she writes

The rules by which orators compose have here become the rules by which grammarian-exeges read. As grammarians turn rhetorical strategies of composition into strategies of reading, taxonomy, and interpretation, they effect a passage from a prescriptive to a descriptive realm… The history of the distinction between the grammarian’s descriptive and the rhetorician’s prescriptive mode is actually one of mutual imprinting. Thus in medieval commentary the incorporation of rhetorical theories of argumentation into exegesis gives the hermeneutical function a heuristic force: commentary can act productively to effect a change on the text for new conditions of reading. (Copeland 64-65)

The practice of grammar is undoubtedly reliant on the recognition of rhetorical devices, but that recognition is not a practice unto itself, and in this approach, Witt distinguishes his argument from Copeland’s. Her “new conditions of reading,” however, lead directly to the practice of a narrative, vernacular “commentary” in the form of adaptation or translation that Witt sees as indicative of a separate process from previous rhetorical models.

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270 “The contrast between the grammarian and the rhetorician highlights two different approaches to knowledge and, potentially, two contrasting ways of life,” Witt 11.
Returning to Witt’s assertion of the private, specialist nature of grammatical practice, it is important to note that the public and private spheres are not so separate as to exclude each other. Witt describes the dynamic:

All literary genres have the potential to inform opinion on issues of public concern. It is obvious that even in a premodern world where public and private power intermingled and the institutions and technology for the creation of “public opinion” were lacking, those making decisions for the whole community could be influenced by whatever they read or heard. (Witt 10-11)

Copeland’s focus on rhetoric bolsters this conclusion somewhat, claiming a public role for rhetorical practice:

rhetoric is more than a method of inventing arguments, [this is] why it has four other functions—arrangement, style, delivery, and memory—that invest it with its particular kind of power to move minds and shape policy. As Quintilian reminds us, the art of rhetoric is realized in action (Institutia oratoria 2.17.26; 18.1–2). (Copeland 153)

In this way, she distinguishes rhetoric from dialectic, but when placed in the context of Witt’s conclusions, also from the practice of a grammatical approach to text, the aims of which generally apply internally to that text or to a textual space. Again, this returns us to the conceptualization of “knowledge” itself, and the processes through which it is formed. In the case of “private” interpretation, the target audience would by nature be specialized and fewer in number; however, this audience may care less about a programmatic moral and political agenda in favor of an authentic investigation of moral and political concepts prior to application. The “elitism” of such an audience is the clear target for the academic writings of Giovanni del Virgilio and Boccaccio, the former writing both in his capacity as a lecturer at the University of Bologna and as a private intellectual; Boccaccio’s production in the Genealogiae is indicative more of the encyclopedic projects of the late classical grammarians, and indeed this work owes much to the precedents of Isidore of Seville, Fulgentius, and the author of the Narrationes, and in recalling these much older authors he appealed especially to the most educated of his
contemporaries. The vernacular projects of Simintendi and Bonsignori are of interest, however, for several reasons: despite these authors’ rejection of Latin as their language of composition, they draw largely on Latin grammatical and rhetorical traditions that were distinctly Italian as opposed to French. Unlike their French and English counterparts, they indicate a move towards a practice of translation rather than adaptation.

Ultimately, I will demonstrate the following about the Italian tradition of the Philomela myth: first, that while Italian scholarship on the figure of Philomela owes much to the earlier French tradition, it is distinct, if not entirely in its content, then in its approach to composition; second, that its treatment of the character of Philomela is varied between texts and indicative of the underlying moral concerns that are raised by sexual violence and its effects on a community. This second point, and the Italians’ focus on historical-psychological interpretations of narrative, addresses the topic of “victimhood” in ways that had been previously ignored in the French tradition. Rather than disappearing from the narrative and the moral conclusions of the commentaries after the violence that has been done to her, Italian commentators and translators often give attention not just to her continued suffering but also to her active role in the murder of Itys. All the characters of this story are more prone to being guided by their emotions, and the Italian interpreters of the myth are consistent in their descriptions of those characters’ internal processes.

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271 For example, a characteristic of Italian rhetoric was that it had a secular orientation from the earliest stages of Humanism (Witt 441-42). For a lengthy discussion of Italian and French rhetorical traditions in contrast, see Chapter 3: Survival of the Classical Traditions in James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, esp. pp. 109-112.

272 See Chapter 3.3 for the distinction between Simintendi’s project of translation and what Copeland terms “secondary translation.”

273 I will clarify these differences below, but briefly, Giovanni del Virgilio’s interpretation in the *Allegoriae* owes its entirety to the French tradition (Coulson, “Proene and Philomela” 188-89), whereas his *Expositio* and the works of the other three writers distinguish themselves somewhat and align themselves more closely with older sources.
3.2.1 The Latin Texts: Giovanni del Virgilio and Giovanni Boccaccio

The more established and traditional form of commentary, written exclusively in Latin, became a codified practice in the period between the 11th and 13th centuries. Works in this form generally followed the previously discussed authorities: Servius for grammar; Fulgentius, Lactantius Placidus, the author of the Narrationes, and the Second Vatican Mythographer for information on pagan mythology and allegorization; and a handful of other authors, such as Isidore of Seville, for definitions and philological method. In the 14th century, Bersuire’s Ovidius moralizatus was not only indicative of contemporary sensibilities of mythographical commentary but also demonstrated the characteristics of the French grammatical tradition established in the 11th and 12th centuries. Just as Bersuire’s text reflected late medieval Latin conventions in an established French context, the Italian academics of the 14th century would participate in this genre with their own interpretative agenda. In this section I will turn to two Italian authors who wrote their commentary in Latin, Giovanni del Virgilio and Giovanni Boccaccio, to show how their projects, in some respects, acted as extensions of the French practice, but more how they distinguished themselves.

Taken together, the commentaries of Giovanni del Virgilio and Giovanni Boccaccio are emblematic of the kinds of Latin works produced at the beginning of the Humanist period in Italian scholarship. Despite the differences between each commentator’s focus—whether an interpretation of the Metamorphoses or a compilation of general pagan knowledge—the goal of each is to provide students and other scholars with guides to reading and interpretation. Unlike the French tradition, which sought to explicate Ovid’s text as a cohesive system that could prove useful within a Christian paradigm—this is a project that persisted through the 14th-century French texts of the Ovide moralisé and the Ovidius moralizatus—del Virgilio’s and Boccaccio’s
projects seek to make acceptable pagan knowledge as separate from a conclusion on faith, or even Nature as a phenomenon evidencing that faith: their projects apply to human reactions without reliance on these larger systems. In creating that divide between knowledge and faith, these authors make conclusions about the utility of morality learned from fiction, while acknowledging that the content itself need not be true. This is, at its heart, the difference between allegory and anagogy: what you believe to be true and what you hope to be true.

3.2.1.1 Giovanni del Virgilio and the Incestuous Dimensions of the Myth

Giovanni del Virgilio was working as a lecturer on Ovid at the University of Bologna when he composed, most likely contemporaneously, the *Expositio* and the *Allegoriae* (1322-1323).274 Both Latin texts were scholastic and didactic in nature, and they address different aspects of interpretation and treatment of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Ghisalberti writes of the two texts: “una esposizione continuata del poema, che ha carattere scolastico e divulgativo, e le allegorie da lui medesimo dettate in prosa e in versi, aventi uno scopo speculativo più elevato, non disgiunto dalla pretesa artistica e dal desiderio della emulazione” (Ghisalberti, “Giovanni del Virgilio” 5). The *Expositio*, after the first two books, which Giovanni del Virgilio explicated with a philological commentary, is a prose paraphrase of the *Metamorphoses*, in which he inserted his own reactions to the text and explanations of confusing passages. The *Allegoriae* were closer to French commentaries in form, with short summaries of the *fabulae* in prose, each followed by a moral-allegorical interpretation of the episode in meter. It seems likely that the texts were meant to accompany the course that del Virgilio taught at the University of Bologna,

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especially when we consider the simplified, expository language he employed (Ghisalberti, “Giovanni del Virgilio” 29).

In both works, del Virgilio borrowed much of his content, especially initially in the *Expositio*, from his predecessors in the French tradition of commentary, Arnulf of Orleans and John of Garland. Certainly we recognize John’s precedent of composing distichs in del Virgilio’s own in the *Allegoriae*, some of which were borrowed directly from Garland’s verses.\(^{275}\)

Generally his interpretative content is based in the writing of the French school initiated by Arnulf, and he focuses largely on historical and socio-moral interpretation rather than Christian allegoresis. Ghisalberti writes:

Maestro Giovanni astrae qui da ogni allegoria, ma facendosi forte della benaccetta interpretazione istoriale delle favole, trasforma l’antico e serio evemerismo della tradizione patristica in un realismo che sa di novella. Però nel far ciò egli non smarrisce il senso della misura, e sa quasi sempre mantenere alla favola mitologica il suo colorito pagano, grazie a quello scrupolo, che egli dimostra, di rispettare, pure ampliando o rimpicciolendole, la forma e la disposizione del poema ovidiano. Né egli la rompe affatto colla prassi esegetica del suo tempo. […] Senza questo lavoro preparatorio dei grammatici, senza l’esempio di quelle parafrasi frazionate nelle glosse che si leggono nei margini dei codici ovidiani, credo che la grande esposizione narrativa del nostro Giovanni, nella forma in cui la possediamo, non sarebbe stata possibile. (“Giovanni del Virgilio” 29-30)

Close readings of both the *Allegoriae* and the *Expositio* show this to be the case, especially in the first of these works, which sticks so closely to the Arnulfian interpretation that it might seem to have nothing to add in terms of content. However, del Virgilio’s introduction of the term *incestuosa* moves his commentary in a different direction from the historical and moral interpretations offered by the Parisian school of commentary.

\(^{275}\) “Non vi può esser dubbio che egli conobbe direttamente ed ebbe di continuo presente la silloge arnolfiana. Come apparirà dal confronto delle singole allegorie, essa costituisce il fondamento dell’intera compilazione. Ma, per quanto molto minori siano le affinità cogli *Integumenta*, tuttavia il fatto che egli s’ispiri evidentemente ad essi per talune interpretazioni tipiche esposte in certi distici, che non ha trovato tra quelli citati dai più diligent i glossatori, fa pensare che Giovanni non abbia ignorato il testo integro del suo predecessore inglese” (Ghisalberti, “Giovanni del Virgilio” 31).
The complete episode of Tereus, Procne, Philomela, and Itys from Giovanni del Virgilio’s *Allegoriae* (6.32) is short enough to be presented in full:

Trigesima secunda est de Tereo, Progne, Philomena et Ythi mutatis in aves. Nam Ovidius descriptit hanc hystoriam, que vera tamen, modo poetico id est ficticio. Posset tamen ad mores aptari. Unde per hoc quod Prognes conversa fuit in avem et Philomena etiam intellige velocitatem quam habuerunt in fugiendo a manibus Terei. Sed in speciali Prognes conversa dicitur in yrundinem propter duo quia sicut yrundo habet rubicundum pectus ad modum sanguinis, ita Prognes rubuit cede filii sui, et sicut yrundo manet in textis, ita Prognes etiam in civitate mansit. Sed quia Philomena fugit extra civitatem in nemora et quia non habet linguam ideo dicitur conversa in Philomenam avem, que non habet linguam et nemora tantum inhabitat, et quia toto tempore conquesta fuit de virginitate amissa. Sed Thereus quia fetidissimum peccatum commisit ideo dicitur conversus in upupam cristatam et stercoribus manentem quia ille cum esset rex et coronam gereret, sicut upupa, incestuosa libidine usus est violata uxoris sorore. Unde metrice dictum est:

Naso per historia inceustum condemnat amorem  
Et notat obscenus quam male finit amor.  
Pectore rubra trucem matrem designat hirundo  
Ampla velut quondam nunc quoque tecta colens.  
Et veterem renovat cantu Phylomena querelam  
Quodque latens coluit pergemit illa nemus.  
Tereus incesto turpi fit spurca volucris  
Upupa, quod signat crista tyrannis erat.  

The prose of del Virgilio’s entry follows precisely the structure of content found in Arnulf of Orleans’, beginning with the assertion that the myth is first to be understood historically, but has

276 «The thirty-second transformation concerns Tereus, Procne, Philomena and Itys, who are transformed into birds. For Ovid describes this historical event, although it is true, in a poetical, that is to say fictional manner. Yet it can have a moral interpretation. Hence understand that the transformation of Procon and Philomena into birds reflects their speed in fleeing the grasp of Tereus. In particular, Procne is said to have been changed into a swallow for two reasons: first, just as a swallow has a stain on its breast like unto blood, so Procne was stained with the slaughter of her own son; secondly, just as the swallow remains under roofs, so Procne too dwelled in a city. Philomena, on the other hand, since she fled outside the city into the groves and did not have a tongue, is said to have been changed into the nightingale, which has no tongue and inhabits only groves, and because she constantly lamented her lost virginity. Tereus is said to have been changed into the crested hoopoe, a bird that dwells in muck,” on account of having committed a most horrific crime, since when he was king and wore a crown, like the hoopoe, he committed incest, raping his wife’s sister. Hence we have the verses: Naso through his story condemns incestuous love. / And marks out how badly obscene love turns out. / The swallow with its red breast denotes the savage mother / Just as she once dwelled under broad roofs, so she continues to do so. / The nightingale renews the old lament with her song. / And she groans in whatever secret grove she dwells. / Tereus because of his base incest becomes the dirty bird hoopoe. / Whose crested plume reveals his tyrannical nature.” Translated by Coulson, “Procne and Philomela” 189. The Latin term stercoribus that Giovanni del Virgilio uses here means “filth” or “feces,” out of which the hoopoe builds its nest; this is a more precise than Coulson’s translation of “muck.”
an interpretable dimension derived from the transformations of the protagonists. Neither commentator explores the historical claim further, although del Virgilio here clarifies that we ought to understand that historicity as covered by poetic fiction (“modo poetico id est ficticio”). Demonstrating this concept, del Virgilio uses an interpretation from Servius’s commentary on the *Eclogues* (6.78),277 namely that the metamorphoses into birds represents the speed with which the women fled from Tereus. The differentiation between allegorical and moral interpretation is not present in these two texts: both authors are primarily concerned with connecting the metamorphoses of the characters to the moral interpretations of their actions. The subsequent eight lines of verse neatly summarize the previous prose, but, although they give a greater focus to the incestuous dimension of the text, they do not add anything significant to the previous section. It is impossible to read these elegaic couplets of commentary and not be reminded of John of Garland’s *Integumenta*, even though del Virgilio’s verses bear little resemblance to John’s in content. Del Virgilio’s poetry most likely performed a mnemonic function for his students, repeating in a condensed but musical form the information necessary for the interpretation of the myth.

To return to the prose section, in a side-by-side comparison, we may differentiate Arnulf’s and del Virgilio’s interpretations more readily:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arnulf of Orleans</th>
<th>Giovanni del Virgilio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Que clausa fuerat in silvis ideo in philomenam, quia avis illa pocius silvas habitat quam hirundo.</td>
<td>Sed quia Philomena fugit extra civitatem in nemora et quia non habebat linguam ideo dicitur conversa in Philomenam avem, que non habet linguam et nemora tantum inhabitat, et quia toto tempore conquesta fuit de virginitate amissa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progne in hirundinem que domos habitat et urbes sicut solebat dum regina erat.</td>
<td>Sed in speciali Prognes conversa dicitur in yrundinem propter duo quia sicut yrundo habet rubicundum pectus ad modum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

277 Referenced obliquely in Arnulf’s commentary: “cito aufugerunt in aves mutate dicte sunt.” See Chapter 2.2.1.
Arnulf attributes Philomela’s transformation into a nightingale (eponymously, “in philomenam”) to her previous time spent captive in the woods; likewise, Procne’s swallow reflects her urban nature as a queen. Del Virgilio relies on a post-factum explanation, both in the case of Philomela and Procne, whose habits are defined instead by the habits of those birds: Philomela “flees” (“fugit”), Procne “dwelled” (“mansit”). It is their physical descriptions that indicate more directly the past events of the myth, the nightingale supposedly lacking a tongue (a medieval belief) and the swallow bearing a red breast, the mark of Procne’s filicide. This last detail, taken directly from Ovid, “neque adhuc de pectore caedis / excessere notae, signataque sanguine pluma est” (“her plumage is still marked by his blood, the traces of the murder still unfaded on her breast,” Met. 6.669-70, my translation), indicates a return to the text on del Virgilio’s part in order to compose his commentary, rather than a total reliance on previous commentary traditions. A similar addition can be read in the interpretation of Tereus’s transformation, in which the detail of the bird building its home from filth (“stercoribus manentem”) is introduced, and “wrath” (“irata”) is replaced by “lust” (“libidine”); but the most significant addition is the introduction of the term _incestuosa_ (incestuous), both in the prose section and at the beginning of the section in verse, to describe the crime committed.

As discussed in the previous section (Chapter 3.1), which was dedicated to the commentaries and adaptations composed in France, the incestuous dimensions of the myth were
not widely investigated in late medieval commentaries of the 12th and 13th centuries. Del Virgilio instead refers back to mythographies from the Classical and Late Antique periods. His Allegoriae predates the Ovide moralisé by approximately one decade, and Bersuire’s Ovidius Moralizatus by a little less than two, a period of time that is sufficiently brief to suggest an interpretational trend.278 His use of the term “incestuous,” repeated in the prose and poetry, makes it fundamental to his interpretation of the myth, although he does not make it the central point of his reading, as Bersuire does in his commentary. Del Virgilio instead refers to incest as a way to enhance the moral outrage of the crime committed by Tereus. Elizabeth Archibald makes frequent note of the revulsion, or more importantly, the medieval belief in an instinctive revulsion, provoked in people confronted with the image of incest, and while incest on some occasions could be viewed as “titillating,” the direct condemnation of del Virgilio in this instance guides the reader to a conclusion of heightened outrage.279

Del Virgilio’s criterion for a charge of incest must derive from Tereus’ familial connection to Philomela, through his wife Procne, as his sister-in-law (“incestuosa libidine usus est violate uxoris sorore”). The moral outrage of del Virgilio’s reading is clearly connected to that interpretation of incest, highlighted by the use of “fetidissimum” and “stercoribus” in the prose, and “obscena” and “Tereus incesto turpi fit spurca volucris” in the verse section. He focuses the reader’s attention on Ovid’s repeated suggestions of incest, although to say that the

278 The circumstances of the composition of the Ovide moralisé are difficult to write about with certainty. What is most significant, as regards the 14th-century interpretation of incest in the Philomena, which was initially composed in the late 12th century, is not a date of composition but rather its date of inclusion in the larger collection of allegorized fables. This is to say, the importance of the French Philomena is doubled as it existed in two contexts: first, because when it was composed, the topic of incest was raised in few other texts; second, because of its inclusion in such an important, larger work, in which incest was an explicit topic of interest.

279 See Incest and Medieval Imagination for examples of revulsion to incestuous relations, pp. 24, 42, and 63; for the erotic possibilities of incest, see pp. 107, 128, and 229. Many of the episodes Archibald describes as exciting to medieval readers she labels as “near-miss” narratives, in which, most frequently, unwitting parents and children come close to sexual intercourse before they are informed of their relationship to one another at the last minute.
“story condemns it” perhaps goes too far.\footnote{Ovid suggests incest first in lines 6.478-82, as a part of Tereus’ erotic imagination, which is shared by the reader; the theme of incest is suggested again by the butchering and eating of Itys, an act that was frequently related to incest narratives (See Chapter 2.2.1; Archibald 58).} Certainly Ovid’s telling of the Philomela myth does not reach the level of condemnation seen in his telling of the Byblis and Caunus myth or the story of Myrrha; in both he offers judgement: of Byblis he writes, “Byblis in exemplo est, ut ament concessa puellae, / Byblis Apollinei correpta cupidine fratris; / non soror ut fratrem, nec qua debebat, amabat” (“Byblis is a warning to girls that they love appropriately, seized by desire for her brother, descendent of Apollo; not as a sister loves a brother, not as she should,” \textit{Met.} 9.454-56); and writing about Myrrha, Ovid is even more dramatic:

\begin{quote}
dira canam; procul hinc natae, procul este parente aut, mea si vestras mulcebunt carmina mentes, desit in hac mihi parte fides, nec credite factum, vel, si creditis, faci quotque credite poenam. \textit{(Met.} 10.300-03)\footnote{\textit{I will sing of awful things; stay far away, daughters, far fathers; or, if my songs delight your minds, let faith lack in this part, do not believe it happened, or if you do believe, believe also in the punishment for what happened” (my translation, here and elsewhere unless otherwise noted). These lines are spoken by Orpheus as part of a series stories about failed love, after he himself turns back and losses Eurydice. He sings these lines on the slopes of Mount Rhodope, a mountain in Thrace (he himself is Thracian). Ironically, just after these lines introducing Myrrha’s story, Orpheus sings: “gratulor huic terrae, quod abest regionibus illis, / quae tantum genuere nefas” (“I am grateful for this land, because it is far from those regions which gave birth to such sin,” those regions being Arabia, where the Myrrha’s story takes place; \textit{Met. 10.306-07})—ironic because so on so many occasions Thrace is described as savage and barbaric and also in the context of other myths that occur in Thrace, such as those of Philomela and Harpalyce which either suggest or contain incest. See also Ovid’s description of Tereus’ “innata libido” \textit{(Met.} 6.458).}
\end{quote}

It is interesting that del Virgilio’s commentaries on Byblis (\textit{Allegoriae} 9.23) and Myrrha (\textit{Allegoriae} 10.11) do not contain any of the condemnatory phrasing that he employs in interpreting the story of Philomela; rather, each commentary focuses on the theme of metamorphosis, with little mention of Byblis’s infatuation with Caunis (\textit{dilexit}) and a complete elision of Myrrha’s desires (in this second case, del Virgilio refers the reader back to Ovid’s text: “Mirra iacuit cum patre per modum in fabula contentum,” “Myrrha lay with her father through the means contained in the fable”). The absence of the mention of incest in these commentaries is puzzling, and suggests that del Virgilio’s focus in his commentary on the Philomela myth is
concerned more with the dissolution of familial relationships than with the crime of rape, inasmuch as he ties incest to filicide (and by extension cannibalism, even though it is not mentioned in the text). What makes this remarkable in the narrative of Philomela is that the two are combined as cause and effect, where in other instances of filicide (Medea in book 7, Meleager in commentary 8.6) del Virgilio remains silent in his condemnation.

As with earlier commentaries that focused on the subject of incest in the Philomela myth, the significance of Giovanni del Virgilio’s commentary is that rather than an exclusive example of evil women, it grants attention to crime of a sexual nature. By connecting that act of violence to the subsequent murder of Itys, the commentator directs the reader to consider the sequence of events in which Tereus’ actions are the initial cause. Despite this shift of attention to the repercussions of sex crime, the fact that incest is here the focus rather than rape does continue to occlude Philomela’s subjectivity as an aspect of the narrative: incest conveys nothing about consent, and while the medieval concept of a victim of rape is an individual (the raped woman or the male relative who controls her consent, or both) or a family as a whole, the victim of incest is more often than not figured as nature, God, or morality as an abstract concept. Although accounting for incest in this narrative draws the reader’s attention closer to the wrongness of Tereus’ act, it also covers up Philomela’s victimization.

The first two books of Giovanni del Virgilio’s other work, the Expositio, transition from a combined detailed gloss of Ovid’s language to a Latin prose paraphrase of the text, which del Virgilio continues through to the end of the fifteenth book. He dispenses with the rigid system of divisiones (which we still see in his Allegoriae) and adopts a style which is “qua e là più vicin[o]

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282 Archibald gives evidence to support this, see for example pp. 51 (the quote from Gerald of Wales), and pp. 84, 237 (Lydgate); of course, there are counter-examples, in which the condemnation of incest is entirely owed to human law, for example Archibald cites Augustine (24; see also 83), Byblis’ speech from Met. 9.487-516, and Myrrha’s speech from Met. 10.319-55.
Ghisalberti claims that del Virgilio’s faithfulness to Ovid’s text wanders off on tangents and salacious anecdotes; however, his paraphrase of Philomela’s narrative is detailed and faithful, “Né tutto va perduto dell’efficacia del racconto poetico” (“Giovanni del Virgilio” 25). Coulson is more critical of del Virgilio’s paraphrase, writing: “In the section on Tereus, Procne and Philomela, Giovanni’s prose often simplifies and clarifies for the reader Ovid’s more convoluted poetic exposition” (“Procne and Philomela” 189). More generously, Coulson praises del Virgilio’s paraphrase for the changes and embellishments he introduces; for example, the phrase: “Similiter Philomena incepit rogare patrem ut dimitteret eam ire et amplexabatur patrem, et Tereus eam respiciens dicebat ‘Vt essem suus pater’” (“Likewise Philomena asked her father to send her and embraced him again and again. Tereus as he watched her said, ‘Were I only her father,’” translation by Coulson, “Procne and Philomela” 190). As Coulson indicates, this passage introduces direct speech, transformed from the thoughts of Tereus in Ovid’s text. I would point out that the text varies predictably from Ovid’s in its simplification: it avoids distasteful material and it loses the explicit suggestion of incest, raised by Ovid’s “neque enim minus inpius esset,” leaving it here only to be implied.

Consider first Pandion’s farewell speech to Philomela and Tereus:

Set dum esset dies, posuerunt se in naui Tereus et Philomena, et dominus Pandion sociavit eos usque ad portum, recommendans Philomenam Tereon dicens: “O care gener, tu fers solatium mee senectutis qua propter te rogo quatinus sis sollicitus circa eam et eam quam citius potes michi remittas.” Idem dixit filie sue et precipiendo ei ut cito reueretur obsculabatur eam et priusquam ipsi recederent voluit quod ambo darent sibi fidem per tactum manuum, et dixit eis quod salutarent dominam Prognem filiam suam et nepotem suum Ithim. Et dum uellet eos commendare ad deum, in tantum aborte sunt lacrime quod non poterat exprimere, quod erat signum futuri mali. Dum autem separate essent a portu, cepit coletari Tereus exclamans se habere quod desideraret et uix se abstinuit a coytu in nau.

283 “At daybreak, Tereus and Philomena got on the boat and Pandion accompanied them to the harbor where he commended Philomena to Tereus saying; “Dear son-in-law, you carry off the solace of my old age, and so I beg you
This paraphrase strips away much of the confusion and emotional angst of Ovid’s text, but in that simplification it removes some of the ambiguity that is crucial to the nature of Ovid’s version. For example, del Virgilio smooths away the problematic aspects of Pandion’s farewell address in Ovid: “hanc ego, care gener, quoniam pia causa coegit, / et voluere ambae (voluisti tu quoque, Tereu) / do tibi” (“Dear son, because familial cause compels me, and both daughters wish it (and you too, Tereus), I give her to you,” *Met.* 496-98, my translation). There the author and reader share an obvious knowledge that Pandion’s character does not: Tereus’ evil intent, made clear by the aside “voluisti tu quoque, Tereu.” Furthermore, del Virgilio removes Ovid’s choice to have Pandion join the right hands of Philomela and Tereus as they promise to return: “utque fide pignus dextras utriusque poposcit / inter seque datas iunxit natamque nepotemque / absentes pro se memori rogat ore salutent” (“He sought their pledge in faith and joined his daughter and son-in-law, their hands given to each other, and asked that they remember him to those absent,” *Met.* 506-08). The *iunctio dextrarum* was a common symbol of the joining of lovers and an aspect of the Roman wedding ritual, which Ovid used to heighten the ambiguity in Philomela and Tereus’ relationship.  

By removing the scene, del Virgilio downplays the possible confusion of the consent dynamic in the narrative. Finally, the premonition “futuri mali” is de-personalized and aligned more closely with the failure of the invocation to God—a striking difference, as we will see, from Simintendi’s version, in which, despite his sobs, Pandion is able to take care of her and return her to me as quickly as possible.” And he further commanded his daughter to return soon and kissed her. Before they left he sought from them a pledge given in a handshake and bade them to greet his daughter Procne and his grandson Itys. And although he wished to commend them to God, his tears fell so freely that he was unable to speak, a sign of evil to come. As soon as they left the harbor, however, Tereus rejoiced shouting that he had his heart’s desire and scarcely could he keep from taking her aboard ship.” Coulson’s translation, “Procne and Philomela” 189-90.

284 The significance of the handshake is itself versatile, used for many different rituals and contracts; the joining of Tereus’ and Philomela’s hands takes advantage of that ambiguity, acting as a general contract to reassure Pandion and as a signal of consent in Tereus’ imagination. See Glenys Davies, “The Significance of the Handshake Motif in Classical Funerary Art,” *American Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 89, no. 4, 1985, esp. p. 635.
to choke out “A dio v’accamando!” The causality of Philomela’s disaster is thereby more closely connected to God’s absence in del Virgilio’s text, a detail that most certainly underlines Philomela’s implicit question from her rebuke in the *Metamorphoses*, “audiet haec aether si deus ullus in illo est!” (*Met.* 6.548).

The moments of Philomela’s rape are likewise minimized, and while del Virgilio maintains Tereus’ motivations for mutilating her—namely “wrath” (“ira”) and “fear” (“timor”; in Ovid: “metus”)—the details of Philomela’s resistance are removed (“ille indignantem et nomen patris usque vocantem / luctantemque loqui comprensam forcipe linguam / abstulit ense fero”; “Her tongue held firm with a pair of tongs, struggling to speak, scornful, and repeatedly calling out the name of her father, he removed it with a savage blade,” *Met.* 6.555-57, my translation): “Tereus autem dum videret eam ita clamantem, ira motus et timore, evaginavit ensem. Philomena autem prabat iugulum ut moreretur, set accepta forcipes evulsit linguam de ore eius ne amplius posset loqui. Et adhuc post hoc redibat ad eam et cohibat cum ea” (“Tereus moreover, seeing that she was screaming so, moved by wrath and fear, unsheathed his sword. Philomena showed her throat, ready to die, but Tereus, seizing some tongs, tore out by the root her tongue so she could no longer speak. And afterwards he returned to take her repeatedly,” translation by Coulson, “Procne and Philomela” 190). Most notably, the active participle “luctantem” is no longer present (del Virgilio’s use of “clamantem” stands in for Ovid’s “vocantem”), which leaves Philomela’s struggling to be implied. This shortening of the scene removes some of the other violent details of the episode as well, the such as the binding of her arms and the seizing of her hair (552-53), which emphasized Tereus’ control over her body. Finally, his use of “cohibat” is generic, certainly not connoting force or violence, which further downplays the individual violence done to Philomela.
Despite Giovanni del Virgilio’s attention to the role of sexual violence in the Philomela story, amplified relative to earlier commentaries, when we take his two texts together, the *Allegoriae* and the *Expositio*, the scenario that he presents is one in which the violence against Philomela is read more valuably in her symbolic role as a female victim, sexual object, and catalyst for further action in the narrative rather than as a female character whose trauma is itself a subject for consideration. Sympathy is reserved more strongly for Itys, and condemnation for Tereus’ misdeeds is tied more strongly to the result of his son’s murder than to his initial crime of rape. Consider how detailed his paraphrase of Procne’s decision to kill Itys is in the *Expositio*:

“ecce Ithis filius suus veniebat ad eam, et statim proposuit eum interficere. Et, dum respiceret eum torvis oculis, dixit: ha quam es similis patri. Quasi diceret ergo es dignus morte,” (“Her son Itys came to her there, and suddenly she conceived to kill him. And, while she gazed at him with pitiless eyes, she said: ‘ah, how you resemble your father’; almost as if to say, ‘you deserve death,’” Latin text from Ghisalberti, “Giovanni del Virgilio espositore” 25, English translation my own). Del Virgilio’s paraphrase doubles Ovid’s text: first he directly quotes from Ovid’s lines, “ad matrem veniebat Itys; quid possit, ab illo / admonita est oculisque tuens inmitibus ‘a! quam / es similis patri!’ dixit…” (Met. 6.620-2, my emphasis); then provides the guiding interpretation that transfers the father’s guilt onto the son. This greater passage creates tension with these lines by repeatedly employing familial titles (*filius suus, patri, matrem, sororem, maritum, filium*) in the space of relatively short text. Finally, del Virgilio contrasts the beginning of the passage, in which Itys takes on the mantle of his guilty father, by paraphrasing yet another Ovidian line: “Et statim indignata accepit filium per brachium et trahebat ipsum quemadmodum tygris trahit cervum per montes” (“And suddenly resentful, she seized her son by the arm and dragged him off, just like a tigress drags off a deer in the mountains”) Latin text from Ghisalberti,
“Giovanni del Virgilio espositore” 25, English translation my own). The result is as del Virgilio describes in the first three lines of his metered interpretation in the Allegoriae, moving from “incestuous love,” to a bad end caused by that “obscene love” and the stained, red breast of the “savage mother” (“trucem matrem”).

3.2.1.2 Giovanni Boccaccio: Mythographer

Giovanni Boccaccio presents the narrative of Philomela in his Genealogiae deorum gentilium (Genealogy of the Pagan Gods), a fifteen-book encyclopedia of pagan mythology and allegorical commentary, composed in the period between 1340 and 1366.285 The circumstances of Boccaccio’s project were that it was commissioned by King Hugo of Cyprus, although the writer was unable to complete the text to his own satisfaction before the king’s abdication (1358) and death (1359), mostly due to his involvement in other projects.286 The encyclopedic character of the work aligns it with several of Boccaccio’s other projects—De mulieribus claris, De casibus virorum illustrium, and De montibus—all of which recall the commentary tradition of late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages more than the moral commentary of the Parisian school and Boccaccio’s 14th-century contemporaries.287 In general, any single section of the Genealogia on an individual figure will contain a summary of the subject’s life and lineage, with perhaps

286 When we consider the twenty-year period between 1340-1360, we should acknowledge that some of Boccaccio’s most notable works were composed during that time, including the Amorosa visione, the Fiammetta (1343 or 1344), and the Decameron (1353), not to mention many other works. The breadth of material produced by Boccaccio during this period is astounding, as well as his versatility as a writer and a researcher; all of this is to say that his dedication to this work over the span of two decades is evidenced by the academic rigor evident in the final product, despite the detours along the way to its completion. See Osgood xii-xiii.
287 For a detailed description of Boccaccio’s use of his sources, see Solomon xvii-xxi; see also Osgood xiv-xv. None of these three other works contains significant commentary on the figures of Philomela, Procne, or Tereus.
indications of where Boccaccio obtained his information and a discussion of any contradicting information that he found in his sources, followed by an interpretation, either his own, or a presentation of another scholar’s.

Because the work approaches its subjects as a system of genealogies, Boccaccio largely contains the story of Philomela in the sections pertaining to Tereus, as a son of Mars (9.8, De Thereo III° Martis filio, qui genuit Ythim), and his son Itys (9.9, De Ythi Therei filio)—there are no sections devoted specifically to Philomela or Procne. However, occasionally the myth is referenced in other sections, most importantly in the section on Boreas (4.58), in which Boccaccio makes the following observation:

tracts fama matrimo contracti a Thereo, qui Pandyonis filiam habuerat in coniugem, cum audisset Orythiam Erichthonii Atheniensium regis formosissimam puellam esse cupidine captus eius petiit coniugium, quod cum illi negaretur, ob incestum commissum a Thereo in Phylomenam, quasi similis illi Boreas futurus esset, iratus.\textsuperscript{288}

Surprisingly, the reference to Tereus’s crime as one of incest is not repeated in the section devoted to Tereus himself. Instead, he spends far more attention, and some dramatic statements, on Procne’s rage and its results. Its absence in the section devoted to Philomela’s narrative is odd, considering the availability of prominent commentaries (i.e. those of Giovanni del Virgilio and Pierre Bersuire) that feature incest as the central object of interpretation. There is the possibility that Boccaccio employs the term \textit{incestum} in Book 4 as an amplifier of the crime of rape: he follows Isidore of Seville’s explanation that it refers generally to a sex act that offends God. In his commentary on the \textit{Divine Comedy}, Boccaccio reiterates Isidore’s definition, and

\textsuperscript{288} “lured by the report of the marriage agreed upon with Tereus, who had married the daughter of Pandion, when [Boreas] had heard that Orythia, the daughter of the Athenian King Erichthonius, was a very beautiful girl, he was overcome by desire and sought to marry her; and when this was denied to him on account of the incest Tereus forced upon Philomena, thinking that Boreas might intend to imitate him, he became angry.” translation by Solomon 1: 578-79.
presents it as closely connected to _stuprum_289—he employment of _incestum_ makes more sense in that context, as the crime central to the associated acts of Boreas and Tereus, than it does in Boccaccio’s telling of Tereus’ story in isolation, in which Boccaccio generally turns its focus away from the sexual dimensions of the myth.

Boccaccio’s summary of the events that take place before Procne discovers Philomela are descriptive rather than accusatory. After explaining that Tereus’ lineage descends from Mars,290 Boccaccio gives a generic explanation of his marriage to Procne and then of the rape and mutilation of Philomela. The violence done is essentialized into just a few lines, with quick pacing that removes detail and describes Philomela’s situation as one of boredom rather than desperation and trauma:

Quam speciosissimam virginem cum adamasset Thereus, eam in pastorali domo violenter oppressit; et mimitanti se eum accusaturam Progni linguam abscidit, et in domo illa clausa servavit, et veniens sordidatus ad Prognem Phylomenam maris nausea mortuam dixit.

289 See Boccaccio’s _Esposizioni sopra la Comedia di Dante_, edited by Giorgio Padoan, in _Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio_, a cura di Vittore Branca, Mondadori, 1965, vol. 6: “Commettesi ancora questo vizio tra uomo non sacro e femina sacra o tra uomo sacro e femina sacra o tra uomo sacro e femina non sacra: e deesi questo «sacro» intendere quella persona essere la quale ha sopra sé ordine sacro, sì come sono i cherici e le monache; e chiamasi questa spezie «incesto», il qual nome nacque anticamente dalla cintura di Venere, la quale è da’ poeti chiamata «ceston». Alla qual cosa con più evidenza dimostrare è da sapere che, tra gli altri più ornamenti che i poeti aggiungono a Venere, è una singular cintura, chiamata «ceston», della quale scrive così Omero nella sua _Iliada_: « _Et a pectoribus solvit ceston cingulum varium, ubi sibi voluntaria omnia ordinata erant, ubi certe amicitia atque cupidio atque facundia, blanditie que furate intellectum, studiose licet scientium » etc. E vogliono i poeti, con ciò sia cosa che a Venere paia dovere apertener ogni congiunzione generativa, che, quando alcuni ligittime e oneste nozze celebrano, Venere vada a questa congiunzione cinta di questa sua cintura detta «ceston», a dimostrazione che quegli li quali per santa legge si congiungono sieno constretti e obligati l’uno all’altro da cute cose convenientisi al matrimonio, e massimamente alla perpetuità d’esso; e per ciò che Venere similemente va a’ non ligittimi congiungimenti, dicono che, quando ella va a quelli così fatti, ella va scinta santa portare questa sua cintura chimata «ceston»: e quincí ogni congiunzion non ligittima chiamaron «incesto», cioè fatta sanza questo «ceston». Ma questa generalità è stata poi ristretta a questa sola spezie, per mostrare che, quantunque l’altre sieno gravi, questa sia gravissima e che in essa fiera mente s’offenda Idio, con ciò sia cosa che le persone a lui sacrate di così vituperevole vizio maculate sieno. Alcuni a questa spezie aggiungono il commettere questo peccato tra congiunti, il quale di sopra fu nominato «stupro»; e per avventura non senza sentimento s’aggiugne, per ciò che questo pare male da non potere in alcun tempo con futuro matrimonio risarcire, per ciò che, come la monaca sacrata mai maritar più non si puote, così nè tra congiunti può mai intervenire matrimonio, dove nell’altre spezie potrebbe intervenire.”

290 He cites Ovid, _Met._ 6.426-28: “Quem sibi Pandion opibusque virisque potentem / et genus a magno ducentem forte Gradivo / connubio Progne iuxit...” (“Powerful in wealth and resources and from a family descended perchance from great Gradivus [Mars], he was joined in marriage to Procne by Pandion,” translated by Jon Solomon).
Phylomena vero, carceris affecta tedio, in tela que sibi contigissent omnia acu scripsit et per ancillulum sorori misit.291

In the same line, Tereus “falls in love with” (“adamasset”) then rapes and mutilates Philomela. Philomela in turn acts out of “carceris…tedio,” a weariness of prison.

It is after this point that Boccaccio’s description becomes more florid, conveying the rage of Procne and her actions, as well as including minute details:

Que cum ficta letitia dolorem occultasset suum, instantibus orgiis Bachi, noctu, nam eo tempore a Bystoniis mulieribus celebrabantur, tyrsis et pellibus ornata intravit silvas, et Phylomenam eque ornatam eduxit in regiam, et accensa furore, cum multa excogitasset in virum, in Ythim parvulum filium illi applaudentem evomit iras, eumeque secto iugulo interemit, et coctum viro mane de more epulanti apposuit. Qui cum sepius rei inscius illum vocasset, eique respondisset continue Prognes ‘adest’; nec intelligeret ille, antequam a mensa consurgeret, Phylomena ex conclavi exiens illi in hoc servatum filii caput apposuit.292

As much as the first half of his summary is literarily dry, the second section, which focuses on the butchery and cannibalism of Itys, captures the emotional characteristics of Procne, includes even the detail of Itys “flattering her” (“applaudentem”) contrasted with her “vent[ing] her ire” (“evomit iras”) upon him. The passage goes on to recall the horror of the scene in which Tereus keeps asking for his son, whom he is in the process of eating, and Procne’s response: “He is here” (“adest”). The myth ends with the “fabled ending” (“fabuloso fine”) of the characters’ metamorphoses into birds.

291 “When Tereus fell passionately in love with this very beautiful maiden, he violently forced himself on her in a rural hut, and when she threatened that she would make accusations against him to Procne, he cut out her tongue, kept her closed up in that house, and came in tattered clothes to Procne to tell her that Philomena had died from seasickness. But Philomena, becoming weary of being imprisoned, spelled out with a needle everything that had happened to her and sent it through a serving maid to her sister,” Solomon 2: 408-09.

292 “Although Procne had hidden her grief with feigned happiness, as the orgies of Bacchus approached, at night—the time the Bistonian women celebrated them—she entered the forest outfitted with thyrsi and skins, led Philomena similarly outfitted to the palace. Her furor inflamed, although she had devised many things to do to her husband, she vented her ire upon her little son Itys, who was applauding her, and killed him by cutting his throat, cooked him, and served him to her husband for his regular morning feast. Not knowing of any of this, he frequently called for his son and Procne kept responding “He is here,” nor did he understand until he rose up from the table, whereupon Philomena came out from her chamber and put his son’s head, which had been kept aside, in front of him,” Solomon 2: 408-09.
The contrast internal to Boccaccio’s writing here is of interest because it shows an interpretative agenda that is concerned primarily with Tereus’s destruction, perhaps the destruction of the entire family, brought on by his own actions and their repercussions. This contrast conveys that the details of the crime, Philomela’s response to the crime, and even her involvement in the final plot were less compelling subjects than Procne’s wrath and the horror of cannibalism. Boccaccio’s interpretation is focused not on cause but result: the explanation of the metamorphoses of Philomela and Procne are much diminished in comparison to that of Tereus (Genealogia 9.8.3). Like Giovanni del Virgilio, Boccaccio uses a vocabulary of disgust to interpret Tereus’s transformation into a hoopoe:

Tereum autem ideo in upupam versum dixere, quia et cristata sit avis, et ululare cantus eius sit, et stercora cibus, ut per cristam insigne regii capitis designetur, et per ululatum filii perditi lamentationes, et per fetidum cibum asperranda atque fastidiosa memoria comestis natit.

We read the application of the terms *stercora* and *fetidum*, although specifically in regards to the meal rather than generally to Tereus’ behavior, as in Giovanni del Virgilio’s *Allegoriae*. Without the context of incest as an interpretative element of the *fabula*, these terms lack sexual content and in no way reference Tereus’ assault on Philomela.

3.2.2 The Vernacular Texts: Arrigo Simintendi and Giovanni Bonsignori

The two texts discussed in this section are vernacular Italian translations of the *Metamorphoses* in its totality, distinguished from works of mythography such as the early medieval *Narrationes*, which offered an unconnected series of *fabulae* which corresponded to the episodes of metamorphosis in Ovid’s text, Giovanni del Virgilio’s Latin prose-paraphrase of

293 “But they said Tereus was turned into a hoopoe because it is a crested bird, its song is a cry, and excrement is its food, so that in the crest is the emblem of a royal head, and in the cry are the lamentations for his lost son, and in the fetid food is the repellent and nauseating memory of the son he had eaten,” Solomon 2: 410-11
the *Metamorphoses*, or even the *Ovide Moralisé*, which was the narrative of the *Metamorphoses* retold as a series of unconnected episodes with attached allegories in vernacular French.

Simintendi’s *Metamorfosi volgarizzate* and Bonsignori’s *Ovidio metamorphoseos vulgare* were instead the earliest attempts, so far as we know, to translate the entirety of the *Metamorphoses* into a spoken language of the 14th century. During this period, compositions in vernacular languages were, with a few notable exceptions, still considered to address more frivolous subjects, building primarily on the previous French model, in which vernacular language was home to the genres of romance, *chansons de geste*, *lais*, *fabliaux*, and fable. In Italy, this dichotomy was undermined somewhat by the rise of “serious” work in the vernacular, such as Brunetto Latini’s *Tesoretto* (itself a translation of his earlier French vernacular work, the *Trésor*), Ristoro D’Arezzo’s *Composizione del mondo*, and Dante’s *Commedia*. However, despite the two examples of translation I give in this section, Latin as a language of poetic composition persisted in Humanist circles—Giovanni del Virgilio’s and Giovanni Boccaccio’s commentaries standing as cases in point—especially in the literary circles of Padova, in which Lovato de’ Lovati and Albertino Mussato, representing the first two generations of Humanists in that city, composed exclusively in Latin. Language, therefore, cannot be taken as a sole indicator of the Humanist turn, but rather an element of its approach.

Simintendi’s *Metamorfosi volgarizzate* and Bonsignori’s *Ovidio metamorphoseos vulgare* are remarkable as vernacular texts because they are among the first prose “translations” of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. The *Ovide moralisé* is in vernacular French but poetic, and for the reasons I give in the previous paragraph, it does not meet the criteria of “translation” but rather a

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294 Arrigo Simintendi’s translation of Book 6 of the *Metamorphoses* is found in *Cinque altri libri delle Metamorfosi d’Ovidio volgarizzate*, edited by Casimiro Basi and Cesare Guasti, Ranieri Guasti, 1848. Giovanni Bonsignori’s text is from *Ovidio Metamorphoseos Vulgare*, edited by Erminia Ardissino, Commissione per i testi di lingua, 2001. English translations of these two works are my own.
kind of adaptation. Latin commentaries increasingly tended toward prose summaries or paraphrase of Ovid’s original Latin, such as Giovanni del Virgilio’s two works or Pierre Bersuire’s *Ovidius moralizatus*, but these were certainly not translations. Despite del Virgilio’s attempt in his *Expositio* to make Ovid’s work more accessible to a Latin-reading audience, it did not enjoy the advantages of being as accessible as a vernacular text, and it seems unlikely that this accessibility would have been del Virgilio’s goal. Moreover, it would be an error to consider the use of the vernacular an audience-oriented approach over its inherent academic value. Projects of vernacular translation—as opposed to adaptation—provided another form of commentary on classical texts, one that allowed medieval writers to implement a grammatical approach through ancient, authoritative texts, while experimenting with rhetorical forms outside of their practical compositional applications. The result is a hybrid text that contains recognizable elements from both medieval and classical models, often blending the techniques of Latin rhetoric with tropes from vernacular genres such as French romance and the Italian novella tradition.

The vernacular translations of Simintendi and Bonsignori utilize both medieval and classical rhetorical approaches as well as the rigor of the grammatical investigations that mark the literature of the 14th century: Simintendi’s earlier text, which translated *verbum pro verbo*, is generally more detailed in its fidelity to Ovid’s language and mindful of his rhetorical play. Bonsignori’s translation generally allows for more freedom of language and reveals more characteristics of the Italian novella tradition—works like the 13th-century *Novellino*, Bosone da Gubbio’s *Fortunatus Siculus (ossia L’avventuroso ciciliano)*, and most famously Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Decameron*. To appreciate the differences between these approaches, consider the following example:
Simintendi’s translation accounts for each detail in Ovid’s original language, whereas Bonsignori elides certain aspects: no delay, the suckling fawn, the dark forest. In instances such as this, the translator’s choices are not necessarily clear, and while I could offer speculation on these elisions, it is more important to note that both authors, in maintaining the Ovidian metaphor, are interested in preserving some of his language through the process of translation, rather than adaptation.

Despite Simintendi’s and Bonsignori’s interest in preserving Ovidian rhetoric in the Italian vernacular, the practice of translation requires a reassessment and transformation of the hermeneutical foundations of the text through a shift to the semiotic structure of the translator’s target language from Latin. In the 14th century, because of the continued use of Latin as a literary language, much of this hermeneutical structure could be left in place, yet other aspects of the language would require change, and in that change was the space for an embedded commentary on its content. Consider, for example, the quote in the previous paragraph, in which Simintendi translates Ovid’s “per silvis…opaca” into “per le selve oscure,” an immediately recognizable phrase from the opening lines of Dante’s *Commedia*, which has little literal bearing on the line translated by Simintendi, but does convey a heightened sense of Procne’s moral confusion through the metaphor that had already been constructed by Dante’s earlier work. Simintendi’s

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295 And with no further hesitation, she dragged away Itys, just as the Indian tiger drags away a nursing fawn of a deer through the dark forest.
296 just as a tiger hauls away a deer up a mountain, so Progne hauled away her little boy
297 Bonsignori missed the opportunity to draw explicit comparison between Itys and a fawn, as well as his refusal to invoke Dantean phrasing, unlike Simintendi’s “osure selve”
and Bonsignori’s treatment of the content of the *Metamorphoses* are fundamentally different: consider, for example, Ovid’s apostrophe in lines 6.472-73: “pro superi, quantum mortalia pectora caecae noctis habent!” (“by the gods, human hearts hold such hidden darkness!”). Bonsignori entirely elides this and, frequently, other moralistic commentary throughout his translation, reserving such statements for the brief *allegorie* at the end of his narrative episodes. Simintendi includes this aside, however, and slightly but significantly modifies it “O iddii, quanto gli corpi degli uomini sono ciechi!” (“O gods, how blind are the bodies of men!”), deflecting Ovid’s assertion of the inherent evil in humans by asserting rather a deficiency of sense. Simintendi’s shift from the heart (Latin, *pectora*) to the body (Italian, *corpi*) places emphasis not on the organ so closely associated with love in vernacular poetry but on the entire body, suggesting that lust plays a role in this moral conclusion and linking it to the violence done to both Philomela and Itys.²⁹⁸

When this kind of close reading is applied to the character of Philomela, there are surprising differences that arise between the two translations. Despite the fidelity and attention to detail that Simintendi gives to his translation, the change of form from poetry to prose and the more rigid structure of Italian word order amplify the sense that Philomela is complicit in her own assault. This is uncomfortable—as it was meant to be in Ovid’s original text as well—as the wills and bodies of several characters are confused with each other:

E che diremo, che Filomena disidera quello che Terreo? e abbracciante lusinghevolmente il collo del padre, priega per la sua salute, e contro alla sua salute, d’andare a vedere la serocchia. Terreo raguarda lei; e, vedendola, pensa dinanzi e baci: e vedente le braccia atorneate al collo, tutte le cose ricieve per istimoli, e per flaccole, e per

²⁹⁸ The allegory given by the author of the *Ovide Moralisé* after the *Philomena* is helpful for understanding the semiotic role of the body in this context, in the relationship between Procne (soul), Philomela (love), and Tereus (body). See Chapter 3.1.4.
Simintendi’s translation of “quid, quod idem Philomela cupit” is equivalent, although directly invites audience participation in Tereus’s fantasy through the first-person plural “diremo.” A little further down, the phrase “she begs for her happiness, against her happiness” (“perque suam contraque suam petit ipsa salute,” *Met.* 477) follows up on the narrative’s earlier contradictions that marked Tereus’s character. The line in Latin is not only internally contradictory for Philomela’s character if translated as I just did, into English, but also Simintendi’s Italian, “priega per la sua salute, e contro alla sua salute,” is unclear at this stage in the narrative: “la sua salute” could be either “her” or “his” happiness in both cases, with a series of combinations that place the meaning in an ambiguous position from Tereus’s perspective, not to mention the perspective of an ungracious reader who might read this as Philomela begging for “[Tereus’] happiness” against the “happiness [of her father].” Furthermore, the Italian “salute” has a flexible meaning, with “happiness” being one possibility, but also “health” or “salvation,” which allows Simintendi to play with the phrase even more meaningfully: “she begs for her happiness, and against her own well-being.” Finally, Tereus’s stimulation at the affection between daughter and father acts as foundation for the greater incestuous dimensions of the text, and is translated faithfully by Simintendi with a minor change in the subject of the Latin verse, “neque enim minus inpius esset” (“nor would he be any less wicked”) from Tereus to Philomela, “non perciò di meno ella sarebbe suta sua” (“nor would she be any less his own”). This shift in subject

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299 “And what should we say, that Filomena desires the same as Tereus? And embracing enticingly the neck of her father, she begs for her happiness, and against her happiness, to go see her sister. Tereus watches her, and, seeing her, imagines being the object of those kisses; and seeing her arms around [her father’s] neck, he takes in everything as stimulation, fuel, and flame for his madness. And whenever she would embrace her father, Tereus would wish that he could be her father, and nor would she have been any less his.”

300 “ipso sceleris molimine Tereus creditur esse pius laudemque a crimine sumit”; “per lo sforzamento medesimo del male, Terreo è creduto essere piatoso; e dal peccato riceve loda” (“through the same force of evil, Tereus is believed to be faithful, and for his sin receives praise”).

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excuses Tereus somewhat by disassociating him from the adjective *inpius*, but it also softens Tereus’ heightened erotic excitement at the possibility of an incestuous relationship with Philomela as well, expressing Tereus’ desires in a romantically phrased figurative statement.

Bonsignori is less willing to engage with Ovid’s use of ambiguous language or to delve too deeply into the possibility of incestuous imagery: “Filomena, ciò udendo, pregò el padre che la cci lassasse andare ed abbraccia va lo padre; Terreo, raguardandola, dicea: ‘Volesse dio ch’io fosse suo padre, acciò che io fosse da così bella cosa abbracciato’” (“Filomena, hearing this, begged her father that he let her go with him and embraced him; Tereus, watching her, said: ‘If only I were her father, so that I might be embraced by such a beautiful thing’”). Bonsignori erases the ambiguity of Philomela’s complicity along with the contradictions in Tereus’ and Philomela’s actions through clear repetition of the object, *padre*, and by cutting the confusing line in which Philomela begs for and against her own benefit. Tereus’ desire is sanitized as he observes Philomela embrace her father: no longer is pleasure taken in spite of its disturbing circumstances, but separate from those circumstances, with emphasis on the actions of the bodies rather than their relationship. Certainly the character no longer seems to relish the opportunity to be even more sinister through an imagined incestuous act, with no statement equivalent to “neque enim minus inpius esset” included.

Bonsignori’s choices to avoid segments of Ovid’s narrative appear to be based in content rather than style. As shown in the previous paragraph, his inclination is to smooth out ambiguity or to clarify it by eliminating the more negative reading. Likewise, as demonstrated earlier, he leaves out lines that claim too direct a moral message, preferring to reserve such statements for the brief allegories at the end of each comprehensive narrative from the *Metamorphoses*. However, he regularly replicates Ovid’s metaphors for love: “ello ardea dentro come ardono le
stipe delle secche legne quando gli è messo el fuoco” (“he burned inside like twigs on dry logs burn when they are lit on fire”), compared to Ovid’s verse: “non secus exarsit conspecta virgine Tereus, / quam si quis canis ignem supponat aristis / aut frondem positasque cremet faenilibus herbas” (*Met.* 6.455-57). He also remains faithful to many of Ovid’s narrative comments: “e pensava Pandeon che aventura li dovesse de ciò avvenire, di che li avvenne el contrario” (“and Pandion thought that happiness would come to them from this, but this was the cause of just the opposite”), from Ovid’s verse: “gaudet agitque / illa patri grates et successisse duabus / id putat infelix, quod erit lugubre duabus” (“she rejoices and thanks her father, and the unlucky girl thinks that it has been a success, what will be a cause of mourning for the two sisters,” *Met.* 6.483-85), albeit again with a shift in subjectivity from Pandion to Philomela.

For Bonsignori, his translation of the scene of Philomela’s rape and its aftermath are particularly revealing of his approach to Ovid’s text. Whereas Simintendi’s translation models Ovid’s language closely, even at the level of his figurative language, Bonsignori’s translation of Philomela’s rebuke of Tereus’s assault on her is characteristically abridged. Bonsignori avoids the following elements: the tears and *emotional* weight of Philomela’s father and sister (although he maintains their legal claims); the sanctity of the institution of marriage and Philomela’s now problematic relationship with her sister; any mention of the gods or higher powers, including the Orphic power of Philomela’s speech (unlike Simintendi, who writes, “io farò muovere i sassi a pietà”; “I will move the stones to pity”). The removal of Philomela’s strong connections to her family, as well as her expression of concern that she has been made into a competitor to her sister, is displaced in Bonsignori’s translation to the moment when Procne rescues her, where he

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301 This is a common Ovidian metaphor; see Chapter 1.3.1.
focuses on Philomela’s damaged social position. In doing so he faithfully translates the scene of the sisters’ reunion from the *Metamorphoses*:

…sed non attollere contra
sustinet haec oculos paelex sibi visa sororis
diectoque in humum vultu iurare volenti
testarique deos, per vim sibi dedecus illud
inlatum, pro voce manus fuit. (*Met.* 605-9)

Filomena, non potendo parlare, li mostrava con cenni come Tereo l’avea violata e tutte le cose che erano accadute, e per la *vergogna* non ardiva de guardare alla sorella perché se reputava meretrice.  

The shift of Philomela’s self-appellation to prostitute (“meretrice” in Bonsignori; “puttana” or “paelex” in Simintendi), is displaced exclusively to a narrative description of her situation, with “meretrice,” translating somewhat more harshly and inexactely “paelex,” a term that means consort or concubine. Such a shift, which places the categorization of the character into the authority of the narrator rather than through the voice of the character herself, emphasizes the imposition of the social situation in which Philomela finds herself, unwillingly at odds with her sister, enforced by the rigidity of sexual norms. Moreover, both Bonsignori and Simintendi repeatedly apply “vergogna” or “shame or outrage” to Philomela. In Bonsignori’s translation, this descriptor is not something she claims for herself, as in Ovid and Simintendi, but is a situation that is forced upon her, by Tereus and then as an aspect of her “fallen” condition: “O crudele, che né lle preghe de tuo suocero, né la tua donna t’ha ritenuto che non me abbi fatta *vergogna*” (“O cruel man, for whom neither the begging of your father in law, nor your wife held you back from having done outrage to me”). The substitution of “vergogna” by both Simintendi and Bonsignori for the Latin “pudor” is indicative of the shift in perception of victims of rape,  

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302 “Filomena, not able to speak, showed by signs how Tereus had raped her and all the other things that had befallen her, and in *shame* she dared not look at her sister lest she consider her a whore.” (My emphasis)  
303 Although this was too scandalous for the 19th-century editors of the text who left it simply as “p.”
emphasizing the status of “shame” now applied rather than a recollection of lost honor, modesty, or “decency.” The vernacular translators’ recourse to this application of shame rather than stolen virtue reinforces cultural negativity and stigma associated with the victim, reinforces, at least in Simintendi’s case, the implication of complicity in their own victimization.304

In the differences between Simintendi’s word-for-word translations and Bonsignori’s looser but nonetheless particular attention to Ovidian style, we ought to question what we mean as we differentiate literary works as adaptation, paraphrase, or translation. Both Italian translators adhere to the rhetorical techniques of Ovid’s original to accomplish their works; it is as much in the details of word-choice as it is in their individual styles, each of their emphases, whether thematic (Bonsignori) or procedural (Simintendi).305 This is the realm of adaptation, however: the ars combinatoria that Boccaccio became famous for, the expertise of Ovid as well in his ability to weave other writers’ styles into his own work.306 The shift from medieval adaptation to the humanist and eventually renaissance translatio, however, owes itself to the processes of grammar, and the proposal of a hermeneutics particular to the rhetoric within the text. For a work to be successful as a translation, it must be recognizable as such in its performance, as the object of an internal commentary by the translator, but it must also be a text that may stand on its own—unlike commentary, it is not necessarily referential to its source. The

304 The Italian vergogna derives from the Latin verecundia, also meaning shame or modesty. Bonsignori uses the term and variations (vergogna, virgogna) frequently, as part of constructions of social shame (e.g. Book 1, Chapter 12, in his description of the fourth age, iron: “ed allora comenzo apartirse la fede, la vergogna, la castità, e la verità...”) and especially displays of sexual modesty: for example in the first book he applies the term to Daphne and twice to Io; in the second book, twice to Callisto, and so on.

305 Another way to think about this distinction is the intent conveyed by the work: Bonsignori’s thematic approach is still clearly wishes to represent the work in Italian as Ovid’s, with some minor intervention on his part as an aspect of the shift to the vernacular. Simintendi’s approach on the other hand is based in the project of the language itself, and in that focus, less on the content of the text.

characteristic of adaptation can be found in its performance as “retelling” the source text, rather than purporting to be that text itself. It is for this reason that the Ovide Moralisé is adaptation rather than translation: the title itself declares its intent to interpret Ovid’s work rather than reproduce it.\footnote{The case of texts that claim to faithfully reproduce their sources and in fact replace them is described in Rita Copeland’s \textit{Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation} and will be discussed at length in the next section, Chapter 3.3.}

Philomela has distinctly different characters in the two Italian language texts, according to the projects of translators. Simintendi’s Philomela maintains the Ovidian ambiguity, the potential for the eventual violence she engages in, but equally falls victim to the cruelty of Tereus and the circumstances of her trauma. Morally, we read a story of individuals pushed into communal violence because of a moral failure in one of those characters (Tereus). We read a story of how violence begets violence and there is escalation and horror in this violence. Turning to Bonsignori, Philomela is largely absent—even her response to and confrontation with Procne are suppressed under the author’s preoccupation with representing how a woman “falls.” The moral proposal in this work requires no ambiguity in Philomela’s character prior to assault. She must be blameless in order to allow his narrative turn its full moral weight. Likewise, he eschews the confusion of Ovid’s implications of incest, telling one story only at the expense of the source text’s efforts to link incest and cannibalism or to sow confusion about the intricacies of consent.

Because of this, the audience may accept the completely fabricated action of Bonsignori’s Philomela as she convinces Procne to murder her own son. Wavering when the little boy hugs and kisses her, Procne asks, “Perché me losenga costui?” (“Why does he please me so?”) Philomela responds with signs, “guarda che marito tu hai!” (“See what kind of husband you have!”) and slaps Itys, causing him to cry. Bonsignori writes: “Filomena percose el nepote acciò che la madre, vedendolo iroso, non l’avesse pietà” (“Filomena struck her nephew so that
his mother, seeing him upset, would not have pity for him”). The demonstrative violence by Philomela and the reversal of pity from Procne, are internally consistent with Bonsignori’s gender constructions throughout, although they constitute the contradictions that had been lacking in the initial meeting of Philomela and Tereus. The disgraced and injured girl must now rely on physicality rather than words, and Itys’s tears recall the repeated weeping by Tereus to give himself credibility in the face of his wrongdoing. This consistency with the rest of his translation allows the invented scene to incorporate well into the text with a new interpretative weight behind it.

In many ways, the character of medieval commentary prior to the 14th century was such that the details of the stories addressed by scholars were subsumed by the moral conclusions of those commentaries. The characters, the geography, and the understanding of a pre-Christian culture were considered to be less indicative of particular details so much as they illustrated the genre of the text and its moral conclusion. Italian commentaries demonstrate a shift in academic thinking about studied texts as literature. This was a shift that had begun in the French tradition but which receives particular attention under Italian commentators, whose writings argue that literature is in itself worthy of study, not necessarily as part of an interconnected moral system.308 This is most clearly demonstrated in the final two books of the Genelogiae deorum gentilium, in which Boccaccio composes a compelling defense of poetry, not just as a means to practice rhetoric but as a practice having value unto itself, to the benefit of the individual and the community. This shift, which is seen in the Italian texts discussed in this section, allows the translations of Simintendi and Bonsignori to be texts of academic interest—and for that matter,

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308 As Paolo Bagni writes, there is certainly the understanding of the “idea of literature” in the French commentaries of the 12th century; however, that literary space was not so valuable in terms of a study of literature for the sake of literature as it was in terms of a space to negotiate larger systemic ideas about existence (114).
the *Ovide Moralisé* as well—with academic value for their readers, and not merely entertainment. This shift also indicates that the situations of characters like Philomela in literature are demonstrative not necessarily of an allegorical lesson but of a particular social and physical situation, and that that situation may be considered in a context that could be applied to real people, with an understanding of the real repercussions of rape.
In this final section, I turn to the two English vernacular texts that contain versions of the Philomela myth, both composed in the last quarter of the 14th century: Geoffrey Chaucer in his *Legend of Good Women* devotes a segment to Philomela, Procne, and Tereus, and John Gower does the same in the fifth book of his *Confessio Amantis*.\(^{309}\) These versions of the narrative should be read not as a sudden appearance of Ovidian writing in the English tradition, but as connected fundamentally to both the French and Italian traditions that precede them; English authors, largely writing in Latin, were participants in and influencers of the French and Italian schools of commentary and thought, some of whom I have mentioned earlier, such as John of Salisbury (12th century) and John of Garland (13th century). The latter I include in the French tradition, since his *Integumenta* was so influential on continental approaches to the *Metamorphoses*, and he was so closely tied to the University of Paris. To this list must also be added Nicholas Trevet (13th-14th centuries), whose commentaries on Seneca in particular would resonate with the themes of tragedy and ethical consequence present in the Philomela myth.\(^{310}\) Scholars at English universities, however, seem not to have engaged as frequently in projects of mythography as their continental counterparts, and Ovidian scholarship written by English

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academics was, for the large part, focused in those centers of learning in France, Italy, Germany, and the Spanish peninsula.

If anything, vernacular literary traditions had a longer and more respected function in British intellectual circles than on the continent, with Latin works frequently translated or adapted into Old English or one of the still flourishing Celtic languages, such as Irish or Welsh\(^{311}\); after the 11\(^{th}\) century, Norman French was adopted by the English court as an official language, prominently enough that it was used for the 13\(^{th}\)-century statutes of Winchester (Saunders, “Classical Paradigms” 244-45). By the late 14\(^{th}\) century there was a vast corpus of Middle English literature, of which Chaucer and Gower were prolific authors. The vernacular literary projects of Chaucer and Gower not only translated established Latin auctores but emulated their contemporaries writing in French and Italian, by whom they were emulated in turn: they participated fully in the general shift of popular literature and its genres into vernacular language.

The form and genre of the Confessio Amantis and the Legend of Good Women declare their authors’ claims to a moral subject matter, and their use of vernacular language makes these texts immediately relevant to ethical conversations within their reading community as well as connecting them to the larger European shift in literature. There have been numerous studies of both the Legend of Good Women and the Confessio Amantis, as well as some recent, excellent studies on the Philomela narrative in each text individually and in comparison.\(^{312}\) These studies...

\(^{311}\) The court of Alfred is well known to have engaged in such projects of translation; see Janet M. Bately, “Old English Prose before and during the Reign of Alfred,” Anglo-Saxon England, vol. 17, 1988, pp. 93-138. Quite a few translations into Middle Irish were composed in the 12\(^{th}\) century, including versions of the Aeneid, the Pharsalia (De bello civile), the Thebaid, and an account of the wanderings of Ulisses (Meregud Uilix Macc Leiritis). See Robert T. Meyer, “The Middle Irish ‘Odyssey’: Folktales, Fiction, or Saga,” Modern Philology, vol. 50, no. 2, 1952, pp. 73 (73-78); he cites this information from Robin Flowers, The Irish Tradition, Oxford University Press, 1946, 137.

tend to look at the Philomela tradition in England as separate from traditions on the continent, with the exception being the influence of the *Ovide Moralisé*; however, we know that both authors, Chaucer and Gower, were familiar with the French and Italian commentary traditions and forms, and their vernacularization of Ovidian stories places them as part of the larger European academic project to utilize Ovid’s narratives to address contemporary socio-legal concerns. Unlike the vernacular translations/adaptations of Simintendi and Bonsignori, which were projects that explicitly translated or adapted the *Metamorphoses* in their entirety, Chaucer’s and Gower’s Philomela narratives are presented as part of thematic collections within the greater works in which they participate. Both works are presented as allegorical dream visions, and in addition to the general influence of that genre (from the *Dream of Scipio* to the *Roman de la Rose* and the many Italian examples) their use of short narratives as *exempla* recalls the encyclopedic works of Giovanni Boccaccio, such as *De mulieribus claris, De casibus virorum*, and the *Genealogia deorum gentilium*. When we understand that Chaucer’s and Gower’s texts belong to these formal genres that approached classical material, but in vernacular English rather than Latin, it is clear that these English authors wrote as participants in a broader European academic shift.

As with the previous sections of this chapter, this section will demonstrate coincidences of sexual violence and eroticism in versions of the Philomela myth and will also discuss how the texts portray a victim’s recourse to justice or vengeance. These two English versions of the text

“Classical Paradigms.” For Gower’s version, in addition to the aforementioned essays (which often compare Chaucer’s account of Philomela to that of Gower), see Mary C. Flannery, “Gower’s blushing bird, Philomela’s transforming face,” *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies*, vol. 8, 2017, pp. 35-50. For studies that demonstrate Chaucer’s and Gower’s classical sources, see Bruce Harbert, “The Myth of Tereus in Ovid and Gower,” *Medium Ævum*, vol. 41, no. 3, 1972, pp. 208-14; Conrad Mainzer, “John Gower’s Use of the ‘Mediaæval Ovid’ in the *Confessio Amantis,*** Medium Ævum*, vol. 41, no. 3, 1972, pp. 215-29. Finally, for a study of both authors’ approaches to translation and their use of vernacular rhetoric, see the final chapter, “Translation as Rhetorical Invention: Chaucer and Gower,” of Rita Copeland’s *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages*, pp. 179-220.
differ greatly in this second aim, as Chaucer concludes his narrative just at the point that Procne and Philomela are reunited; however, both versions are united in denying the reader an eroticized representation of Philomela’s rape through their use of declamatory language and their de-eroticization of Ovidian metaphor. Both versions also directly address the reader with a moral declared by the author—lengthier in Gower’s case—which align them more closely with the French *Ovide moralisé* than with Bonsignori’s translation of the *Metamorphoses*.  

In the context of vernacular production, *Confessio Amantis* and the *Legend of Good Women* have been singled out in their classification as “secondary translations” by Rita Copeland, who devotes a chapter to defining this term, built around these texts.  

This differentiates them, both in their authors’ practice and in the texts’ relationship to their source materials, from the translations of Simintendi and Bonsignori, although an argument might be made for the latter to fall under the classification of secondary translation as well. Copeland explains:

> These texts [*Confessio Amantis* and the *Legend of Good Women*] carry out the prescriptions of the *artes poetriae* by turning the techniques of exegesis into techniques of topical invention. In this way they also redefine the terms of vernacular translation itself: they use the techniques of exegetical translation to produce, not a supplement to the original, but a vernacular substitute for that original. (Copeland 179)

This substitution for the original acts as a literary supplanting, but crucially also a reconfiguration of the ethical dimensions of the texts, which is accomplished through the utilization of classical rhetoric to establish the academic authority of these vernacular projects. Copeland demonstrates that both Chaucer and Gower consciously invoke the exegetical techniques employed by their commentator predecessors to allow their prologues (or the frames

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313 “By comparison with Ovid’s account, Gower’s version of Philomela’s story in the *Confessio Amantis* is—somewhat surprisingly—much more preoccupied with the impact and significance of the transformations that take place at the end of the narrative” (Flannery 42).
314 See Copeland, Chapter 7: Translation as Rhetorical Invention: Chaucer and Gower, pp. 179-220.
of their dream-visions) to act as **accessus** for the bodies of their works. The *Confessio Amantis* and the *Legend of Good Women*, through their genre and content, already claim a moral subject matter, but when we understand them to connect in a similar exegetical project to that of the Ovidian commentaries of the continent, that ethical dimension becomes part of the greater pattern of a hermeneutical shift in conceptualizations of sexual violence, which I have described in the previous sections on French and Italian commentary traditions.

### 3.3.1 John Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*

The *Confessio Amantis* is structured as a **consolatio**, patterned in its premise on Boethius’ *Consolatio Philosophiae*: spiritually and emotionally lost Lover (Amans) finds himself in dialogue with Venus (taking on Philosophy’s role), who assigns him her priest, Genius, as his confessor. Where the **prosimetrum** of Boethius’ *Consolatio* breaks up the dialogue, Gower employs framed stories as **exempla** to underline Genius’s points to the Lover. Following the Prologue, the *Confessio* is divided into eight books, each focused on a particular sin and, in the case of the seventh book, the education of kings. In each of these books, the thematic sin is related in terms of love, and how the Lover might err by loving incorrectly—the **exempla** of each book amplify the metaphor of lover-as-sinner, as different aspects of the comparison are

315 “It is here that Chaucer defines the terms of translation as an overt act of exegetical appropriation. Translation is always, in one way or another, an act of appropriation; so what is important here is that Chaucer defines this appropriation specifically through the use of academic criticism. The academic language of the **Prologue** serves two related purposes. First, it identifies vernacular writing with the language of official culture, thus conferring this cultural privilege on Chaucer’s English texts. But in so inserting his vernacular writings into this academic critical discourse Chaucer also directs exegesis away from the **auctores** to his own texts. In applying these exegetical techniques to his own **Legend** he claims the status of **auctor**, thus constituting his translations as **auctoritates**” (Copeland 186).

316 See Peck’s Introduction to *Confessio Amantis*. On Genius, Peck observes that the character is largely modelled on the precedents of Alan of Lille’s character in of Genius in the *De planctu naturae* and Guillaume de Lorris’ and Jean de Meun’s character in the *Roman de la Rose* (xv).

317 Peck labels the books as following in the Contents: Prologus; I, Pride; II, Envy; III, Wrath; IV, Sloth; V, Avarice; VI, Gluttony; VII, Education of Alexander; VIII, Incest and Conclusion.
explored. Gower’s account of Philomela is the second-to-last story of the fifth book, on avarice, which contains tales of Greco-Roman origin—such as those of Vulcan and Venus, Jason and Medea, Theseus and Ariadne, and Hercules and Faunus—as well as two other stories of folk origin—the King and his steward’s wife, and Adrian and Bardus. The purpose of these short narratives is the instruction of the male dreamer, and in the case of Philomela’s narrative, while pathos for the plight of the female characters is a device that Gower employs throughout, the moral conclusion is primarily focused on the character of Tereus as a model of how avarice might cause the corruption of even a heroic man, blinded by lust to a degree that he is blind to the harm he engenders. In this we can read the influence more of Boccaccio’s *De casibus virorum* than of his *De mulieribus claris*, if not in content (neither work contains the Philomela narrative) certainly in theme.

In order to emphasize the reversal of Tereus’s character from hero to villain, Gower skips over elements from Ovid’s narrative, particularly the evil portents at the wedding of Tereus and Procne (*Met.* 428-32). Instead, Gower describes the Thracian king and his relationship with Procne in good terms:

> The fader of his pourveance  
> His doughter Progne wolde avance,  
> And yaf hire unto mariage  
> A worthi king of hih lignage,  
> A noble kniht eke of hi hond  
> So was he kid in every lond  
> Of Trace he hihte Tereüs;  
> The clerk Ovide telleth thus.  
> This Tereüs his wif home ladde,  
> A lusti lif with hire he hadde. (*Conf. Am.* 5.5563-72)

Gower also elides the reason for their marriage, a pact in order to defend Athens from its enemies. The essentialization of this reason into the quote below transforms it into a marriage of suitability rather than one of military advantage. This in turn transforms the relationship of Athens and Thrace into one of civilized equity rather than the Ovidian version, which presents Athens as a militarily weak center of culture and Thrace as a strong but savage kingdom, a depiction which is emphasized in commentaries previously discussed.
While the events of the narrative are largely the same as Ovid’s telling, the details and the tone vary greatly, not just from the *Metamorphoses* but from other probable source material, such as the *Ovide moralisé*. While in Athens, there is no hint that Tereus is unfaithful to his wife nor has plans to assault Philomela. It is only once Philomela is separated from the city and on the ship with Tereus that he succumbs to lust in a series of Ovidian emulations:

> Hi yhe myhte he noght withholde,  
> That he ne moste on hir beholde;  
> And with the sihte he gan desire,  
> And sette his oghne herte on fyre;  
> And fyr, whan it to tow aprocheth,  
> To him anon the stengthe acrocheth  
> Til with his hete it be devoured,  
> The tow ne mai noght be socoured  
> ...

> As he that lost hath alle grace,  
> Foryat he was a wedded man,  
> And in a rage on hire he ran,  
> Riht as a wolf which takth his preie. (*Conf. Am.* 5.5619-34)

The metaphor of the straw (*tow*) catching fire is familiar, especially from the Apollo and Daphne narrative, as is the progression from sight to desire, although here these passages are displaced in the Philomela narrative, reinitiating the concept of “first sight” to coincide with any lack of restraint on his power to exert his will.

Such a displacement emphasizes the loss of his rationality—“he no reson understood” (*Conf. Am.* 5.5640)—and strips away the cunningness of the character in the *Metamorphoses* who contemplates and deliberates the best way to rape Philomela for the better part of his stay in Athens. Gower reiterates this loss of reason in lines 5639-40, “…whanne he was so wod / That he no reson understood,” and then returns to a second Ovidian animal metaphor, “As if a goshauk hadde sessed / A brid, which dorste noght for fere / Remue…” As I argue in my first chapter, Ovid employs these metaphors to heighten the erotic representation of the scene, tying
Tereus’ character (and the so-inclined reader’s erotic imagination) to powerful hunting animals and Philomela’s desirability to prey animals (a hare, a lamb, a dove). Gower does otherwise, as he closely associates Tereus’ loss of reason to the savagery of the animals that commit violence and are unable to be swayed by human language or pity. The result is that there is little space for an erotic imaginative for a reader so inclined. The context in which these lines are framed discourages such a possibility even more.

The context of Philomela’s rape is framed by two uses of her voice, both recalling Ovidian lines. Lines 5.5635-36, “O fader, o mi moder diere, / Nou help!”319 gives Philomela somewhat more subjectivity than Met. 525-26 (“frustra clamato saepe parente, / saepe sorore sua, magnis super omni diuis”) by placing the plea in her own mouth. Gower likewise includes her rebuke of Tereus, which owes a great deal to Ovid’s language, moving through a promise to “telle out al mi fille, / And with my speche I schal fulfille / The wyde world in brede and lengthe” (Conf. Am. 5.5659-61), first to “the people,” and if she is held captive, then she will tell his deed to Nature (“Stones,” “brides”) and God (“goddess Ere”) (5.5667-75). Gower leaves out the details of the questionable lines Met. 6.537-38, in which Philomela frames herself as now a mistress (paelex) against her own sister. This may be because the version Gower read did not include those lines, or because he himself considered those lines suspect, perhaps prompted by the commentary of William of Orléans.320 However, he does not repeat Ovid’s scene of the two sisters meeting (Met. 6.603-09), in which Ovid again employs the term paelex and describes Philomela’s shame in her sister’s presence. Through this omission, Gower indicates he elided

319 In Gower’s version, Procne and Philomela’s mother is still alive, and her presence effectively erases the incestuous connotations between Pandion and his daughter.
320 See Chapter 3.1.2.2 for William’s difficulty with these lines.
that detail in Philomela’s speech for a greater thematic reason, that there be no distractions of ambiguous guilt in Philomela’s character.

Gower shifts the focus of Philomela’s shame slightly, so that it is no longer rooted in her relationship with her sister or her broader relationship with society as a victimized woman, but so that she is instead almost entirely consumed by the loss of her virginity. Shorter sections, lines 5.5651-53 and 5.5748-49,\(^{321}\) prepare for the long moral conclusion of Philomela’s metamorphosis into a nightingale, a transformation useful for concealing this shame:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Hir will was evere to ben hid, } \\
\text{And forto duelle in prive place, } \\
\text{That noman scholde sen hir face } \\
\text{For schame, which mai noght be lassed, } \\
\text{Of thing that was tofore passed, } \\
\text{Whan sche loste hir maidenhiede: } \\
\text{For evere upon hir wommanhiede, } \\
\text{Thogh that the goddess wolde hire change, } \\
\text{Sche thenkth… (5.5950-58)}
\end{align*}
\]

And

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{And thei seide hou in hir song } \\
\text{Sche makth gret joie and merthe among, } \\
\text{And seith, “Ha, nou I am a brid, } \\
\text{Ha, nou mi face mai ben hid: } \\
\text{Thogh I have lost mi Maidenhede, } \\
\text{Schal noman se my chekes rede.” (5.5983-88)}
\end{align*}
\]

As I noted, this shift from shame rooted in her relationships to shame over her lost virginity is slight but significant because it explicitly makes part of a woman’s anatomy into a metonym for her whole being, her maidenhead (“maidenhiede”) superseding her womanhood (“wommanhiede”), in relation to society and herself. Gower, through the narrator Genius, seems to construct this transformation out of concern that the male audience (Amans) understand the

\(^{321}\) “Bot whan sche to hirselven com, / And of hir mischief hiede nom, / And knew hou that sche was no maide”; “For thane I hadde noght forlore / Mi speche and mi virginite.”
personal repercussions of this kind of “theft” or destruction of the maidenhead. Indeed, the lesson seems well received by Amans, who vows to never act against his lady’s consent:

Mi fader, goddess forbode!
Me were levere be fortrod
With wilde ors and be todrawe,
Er I ayein love and his lawe
Dede eny thing or loude or stille,
Which were noght mi ladi wille. (6053-58).

However, the conclusive remedy for Philomela’s character, her joy at her ability to hide her shame, deserves scrutiny in its construction as a positive end for the character herself or as a moral conclusion for victims of sexual violence. The centrality of shame in this context overwhelms the physical harm done to Philomela and must be acknowledged as fundamental to the emotional trauma of the ordeal; there seems to be no other recourse than isolation and dissimulation to eliminate that shame. Most tellingly, her sense of shame is linked directly to her status as victim, in that her shame exists in correlation to her unwillingness in the act of sex. Essentially, the performance of shame in this representation both damned her as no longer a virgin at the same time as it exculpated her as complicit in her loss of virginity (that is, she did not commit adultery). While Gower constructs a moral conclusion that unquestioningly condemns acts of sexual violence and those men who perpetrate them, it presents victims with the paradox that they must either seek social isolation—a cruel reminder of Tereus’ own desire that Philomela remain hidden—or have their virtue questioned constantly by their community.

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322 Suzanne Edwards points to Augustine’s assertion in the City of God that women who suffer rape are blameless and remain chaste, and that shame “must not be read as a sign of their culpability.” She continues, “For this reason, Augustine describes his own argument as caught between ‘the claims of modesty [pudicitia] and reasoned argument’ (I.16). Reason should console ‘the claims of modesty,’ but it does not, and rather than dismissing women’s suffering as an error, Augustine strives to take that suffering seriously without also inadvertently promoting the notion that women bear moral responsibility for their own violations” (5–6). She also notes Augustine’s acknowledgment that despite this awareness, that the survivor of rape is blameless, the sense of shame and self-reproach is persistent, which is precisely what we read in Gower’s representation of Philomela’s character here. The impossible situation of “shame resistant to reason” in these cases is what leads to the continued suffering of the survivor, the signs of which are frequently read by her community as guilt.
Mary Flannery also notes the double-result of Philomela’s metamorphosis, although she does not frame it as a socio-moral paradox, but rather as a self-contradictory construction of victimized identity. Flannery writes, “Philomela’s animal transformation reflects and extends her emotional experience as a human, while Philomela-the-nightingale simultaneously embodies and eludes the trauma of Philomela-the-human” (37). Both the socio-moral reading and the conception of the reconstruction of a victim’s identity are built on the foundation of this contradiction of refuge and reminder, but also in the case of Philomela—as the subject of Flannery’s article—this contradiction becomes centralized on the physicality of her face. The removal of Philomela’s tongue, the mutilation of her face, looks forward to her transformation into a bird, as Gower writes “Bot sche with al no word mai soune, / Bot chitre and as a brid jargoun” (5.5699-5700; see Flannery 39-40), and signals a removal of her selfhood by force, which leaves the evident sign of her injury. Her eventual metamorphosis fulfills the potential of that mutilation by wholly remaking Philomela, transforming the forced change to her body into a welcome change. It also conceals the unwelcome betrayal by her own body which reveals the assault, when her cheeks blush in the presence of men. The metamorphosis returns her body to herself, albeit a different body, a body that still cannot act in a community.

Shame plays a central role in Gower’s version of the Philomela myth and he proposes an active response to its presence through Philomela’s expression of her trauma via her weaving and Procne’s rage. These responses combined provide consequence for Tereus, although at the cost of Itys’ life. Carissa Harris remarks on the potential power and community that might come through rage, noting that “Gower underscores the link between sisterhood, anger, and action,

323 Here I differ from Carissa Harris, who writes, “all three are transformed into birds, allowing the sisters to escape his violence and, as Mary C. Flannery notes, enabling Philomela to elude the shame that is so commonly felt by survivors” (259). While it is true that the Philomela-as-bird form conceals shame from society, Flannery writes that it is embodied in the bird form itself, which reminds us that shame has a personal dimension as well.
depicting the sisters’ shared fury as a righteous, legitimate response to Tereus’s predation.” (261). And indeed, the narrator does not censure Procne for the murder she commits nor does he villainize her as an unloving mother, but he moves decisively through the episode of Itys’ slaughter quickly and without outrage. However, to return to Harris’s argument, the shared rage of the sisters demonstrates a community that might be formed despite shame, a community that Gower prepares, in fact, in his elision of those moments of shame expressed by Philomela in Ovid’s version of the sisters’ reunion—the aversion of her face and eyes from Procne’s. Indeed, the elision here makes visible the fact that, across the many versions of this myth, despite the many depictions of Philomela’s shame—which is more often than not heightened in Procne’s presence—Procne is consistently portrayed as the figure of unquestioning support for Philomela, even when the expectations of the text might be otherwise.

Gower’s version of the Philomela myth is at its heart didactic—Genius includes it in a series of moral tales to the author-narrator Amans—and the moral warning in the story is constructed for its male audience. Consolation for the female victim of sexual assault or rape is beside the point in this narrative; so too is a transformative empathy in which the male assailant rectifies his violent behavior. The Lover’s promise to follow his lady’s will is not the realization of the male protagonist of the Wife of Bath’s Tale, in which women claim sovereignty as a realization of female subjectivity; rather the lover comes to understand the potential for violent consequences as a result of his own agency. Amans even suggests his own punishment, should he fail in this understanding, of being drawn and quartered. This understanding, along with the

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324 See also p. 259, “Procne’s act of filicide, which is both horrific and indefensible, illustrates how rage at rape can be both self-destructive and harmful to innocent bystanders if it is not directed with thoughtfulness and precision at the individuals and institutions responsible for the trauma.” Also on the empowering function of rage, see Shyama Rajendron, “Guest Post: Shyama Rajendron, Becoming Procne and the Power of Rage,” on Kevin Gannon’s blog, The Tattooed Professor, 5 Feb. 2018, thetattooedprof.com/2018/02/05/guest-post-shyama-rajendran-becoming-procne-and-the-power-of-rage/.
learning conveyed by the entire work of the *Confessio Amantis*, is perhaps the best that can be used as a guard against the sudden irrationality brought on by the love that struck down Tereus. It offers little consolation, however, to the victims of violence when that understanding fails.

### 3.3.2 Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Legend of Good Women*

Chaucer’s version of the Philomela myth is significantly different from that of Gower; it is significantly different from all other versions of the myth, in fact, because he narrates exclusively the first half of the story, up through the assault on Philomela and the reunification of the sisters, and then concludes the tale, seeming to close off the butchery of Itys and his consumption by Tereus, and the metamorphoses of all involved characters. We know from references in *Troilus and Criseyde* that Chaucer was familiar with the complete tale, so his conclusion at the moment of the sisters’ reunification cannot be read as a lack of knowledge of the source material nor as an accident (see Aloni 167). Like Gower’s version of the myth, Chaucer’s telling discourages the erotic imagination and seeks to create Philomela and Procne as unambiguously virtuous women and Tereus as an unambiguously villainous man. Unlike Gower, however, largely due to his adaptation of the narrative, Chaucer proposes a conclusion that does not contain the self-contradictory construction of victimhood interpretable in Philomela’s bird transformation. Chaucer’s conclusion, if not entirely positive, at least promotes a communal space for women’s suffering trauma and the possibility of consolation.\(^{326}\)


\(^{326}\) This reading should not blind us to Chaucer’s greater use of rape as a literary trope to a variety of effects, which often include negative depictions of women or promotes harmful action by downplaying the seriousness of sexual assault. See Christine M. Rose, “Reading Chaucer Reading Rape,” *Representing Rape in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, edited by Elizabeth Robertson and Christine M. Rose, Palgrave Macmillan, 2001, pp. 21-60; and Harris 254-55. For a study on the charges of rape brought against Chaucer by Cecily Chaumpaigne, see Christopher
The frame for Chaucer’s *Legend of Good Women* is that of a dream vision, in which the author is approached and reproached by the Queen of Love Alceste, who reprimands him for his negative depictions of women in his *Troilus and Criseyde* and in his translation of the *Roman de la Rose*. As a penance, he is urged to compose a work that portrays women in a positive light. In his revision of the Prologue (G), Chaucer gives a longer argument in the form of a list of works that might act as precedent:

> Yis, God wot, sixty bokes olde and newe
> Hast thow thyself, alle ful of storyes grete,
> That bothe Romayns and ek Grekes trete
> Of sundry wemen, which lyf that they ladde,
> And evere an hundred goode ageyn oon badde. (G 273-76)

These books include the works of Livy, Claudian, Jerome, Ovid, and Vincent of Beauvais—the promise of “sixty bokes” establishes more than sufficient authority for the subject. Just as Gower’s episodic and didactic *Confessio* was modelled on Italian encyclopedic volumes packed with *exempla*, such as Boccaccio’s *De casibus virorum*, Chaucer’s *Legend* takes as precedent those works of the anti-misogynist tradition, such as Ovid’s *Heroides* and Boccaccio’s *De mulieribus claris* (Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment* 267). That said, Chaucer’s frame for the nine narratives of the *Legend* grants it a different kind of authority as a dream vision, which removes it somewhat from the encyclopedic genre of Boccaccio’s work and gives it greater moral weight.

In his “Legend of Philomela,” Chaucer reinserts many of the elements that Gower set aside in his characterization of Tereus, and in fact the opening lines of the poem (*Legend* 7.2228-43) are focused on Tereus rather than Philomela:

> And, as to me, so grisely was his dede
> That, whan that I his foule storey rede,
> Myne eyen wexe foule and sore also.
> Yit last the venym of so longe ago,

That it enfecteth hym that wol beholde
The storye of Tereus, of which I tolde. (7.2238-43)

Even this collection, which purports to focus on female subjects, cannot avoid the convention of framing moral stories in terms of the male characters, good or evil. Tereus’ role from the beginning is one of evil, from this prologue through the introduction of his character as “kyn to Marte, / The crewel god that stant with blody darte” (2244-45) and the description of ill omens at his wedding to Procne (2249-56). Chaucer includes these details followed shortly by his lust for Philomela in quick succession, given the relative shortness of his version of this myth. When the reader encounters his oath to Procne that he will bring back Philomela—“Myself with hyre wol bothe come and gon, / And as myn hertes lyf I wol hire kepe”—the double meaning is unsubtle and heavy with foreshadowing. The pacing leaves little room to construct a romantic reading of Tereus’ imagination when he first encounters Philomela. Chaucer instead, following Ovid, turns to Tereus’ internal process on how to gain access to Philomela alone (2288-98), further bolstering the negative character depiction and distancing the possibility of his own victimization by Philomela’s beauty or a third agent in an incarnate Love.

Despite the shortened narrative, Chaucer maintains many of the Ovidian elements of the episode. Philomela takes it upon herself to beg to depart with Tereus (2284-85), and suggestively gives us a line in which she embraces her father (“And hym embraseth hith hire armes two,” 2287), although it is without any internal comment by Tereus that would make it explicitly incestuous. Chaucer also includes the Ovidian erotic metaphors the moment before Philomela’s rape:

And therwithal she wepte tenderly
And quok for fere, pale and pitously,
Ryght as the lamb that of the wolf is biten;
Or as the culver that of the egle is smittn,
And is out of his claws forth escaped,
Chaucer uses such lines differently than Gower, as the Tereus that Chaucer has created is in full control of his reason and will. The lines still invoke the savagery of the moment—especially in the context of the scene being displaced from a cabin or stables to a cave (2312)—and the helplessness of Philomela, and their apposition to Philomela’s statement, “Where is my sister, brother Tereus?” as a reminder of their familial connection heightens the wrongness of the act. When all of these elements combine, there is little space for an eroticization of this imagery, and it causes the lines to serve another purpose, perhaps to reference implicitly Tereus’ observations shifted into narrative expression. Most of all these lines emphasize Philomela’s lack of power in the situation in which she finds herself, lines that are echoed also in Chaucer’s version of the rape of Lucretia:

\[
\text{Ryght as a wolf that fynt a lomb alone,}
\text{To whom shal she compleyne or make mone?}
\text{What, shal she fyghte with an hardy knight?}
\text{Wel wot men that a woman hath no might. (Legend 1798-1801)\textsuperscript{327}}
\]

The Philomela narrative goes on to portray Tereus’ use of force as the culmination of his planning, ultimately necessitating a consideration of the relationship between reason and force.

\[
\text{By force hath this traytour don a dede,}
\text{That he hath reft hire of hire maydenhede,}
\text{Maugre hire hed, by strengthe and by myght}
\text{Lo! Here a dede of men, and that a right! (2324-2327)}
\]

As Saunders points out, Chaucer here portrays “the predicament of women” as passive in the face of men’s strength. This highlights the essential nature of patriarchal society: it is a structure in which women’s passivity is codified by the constant threat of violence (Saunders, “Classical

\textsuperscript{327} “Chaucer’s recognition of the woman’s lack of power is striking; while Ovid comments objectively that women must always lose in a struggle, Chaucer points directly to the way that men consciously play on female weakness” (Saunders, “Classical Paradigms” 254).
Paradigms” 260; *Rape and Ravishment* 274-75). This contrast between male power and female silence is reinforced by Chaucer’s decision to eliminate Philomela’s verbal rebuke of Tereus, moving her futile cries for help into its place (“She cryeth ‘Syster!’ with ful loud a stevene, / And ‘Fader dere!’ and ‘Help me, God in hevene!’ lines 2328-29). The narrative also follows through with Tereus cutting out her tongue, here not in fear of the words she has just uttered, but in anticipation of them (Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment* 274-75).

The conclusion of the poem touches upon two narrative constants in the Philomela myth: Philomela’s creation of the tapestry which reveals Tereus’ crime, and Procne’s subsequent rage and the sisters’ reunification. On the first point, Chaucer follows Ovid in writing that she weaves letters in order to tell the events that occurred (2355-60), and as Saunders (275), Aloni (165), and Harris (263-64) describe, the mode of weaving is realized here as a mode of “feminine” expression and power, “the tapestry becomes literally a form of speech, and thus a counterpart to male language, as well as a feminine art” (Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment* 275). In her use of letters, woven into the tapestry, Philomela converts the masculine medium of language into a woman’s art. But as Harris points out, it also indicates women’s difficulty in expressing the trauma done by sexual assault, and the new modes of expression that survivors employ to do so:

> It demonstrates how women’s anger at rape does not always manifest in ways that we might expect, for it can be expressed through weaving, embroidery, writing, and other art forms in addition to its more recognizable expressions of violence, raised voices, or physical resistance. (Harris 264)

When Procne receives the cloth, she is herself struck dumb with grief and anger: “No word she spak, for sorwe and ek for rage” (2374). Procne’s silence is closely associated with Philomela’s own (“Hire dombe sister sittynge hath she founde,” line 2377) and this link expands the trauma of male violence on affected female victims from the individual to the community.\(^{328}\) However,

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\(^{328}\) “Procne’s speechlessness reflects absolute identification with Philomela’s situation” (Aloni 166).
once reunited, Chaucer sets aside the story, writing “The remenaunt is no charge for to telle” (2384).

Chaucer’s reasons for ending the story here are debatable. From a perspective of composition and Chaucer’s intent, I am not entirely convinced by Aloni’s argument regarding the exclusion of the end of Philomela’s story, that it allows the text to focus “on the solace simultaneously given and received by the two women” (Aloni 166). She makes a comparison to a similar exclusion of revenge material from Medea’s narrative (“The Legend of Hypsipyle and Medea”) and while I agree that the exclusion promotes a greater focus on the virtue (and misfortunes) of the female characters in these stories, it does so at the cost of their vengeance, as horrible as that vengeance might be. As the filicide of both these narratives is left out, there can be no doubt that Chaucer’s aim is to present the characters as virtuous without complication.329 However, that his goal is to provide an example of female solidarity or that “by omitting the revenge scene, Chaucer allows Tereus to be upstaged by the two women” seems an overreach in the interpretation of authorial intent and is not supported by evidence in the narrative (Aloni 168). Rather, he rewrote these narratives with more palatable endings in order to make his characters more sympathetic in that rewriting. The effect of solidarity is a result, not a cause, of more easily sympathizing with characters who do not act so monstrously after they themselves are hurt. That said, Aloni makes a persuasive argument for the creation of a “communal feminine space contrasting with masculine territorial space” as the story, if not the authorial commentary, concludes with the sisters in each other’s arms. Chaucer prepares for this moment through earlier emphasis on the closeness of the two sisters, such as when Philomela cries out for help, first to

329 “This quality—goodness—is the one Chaucer chooses to emphasize in rewriting the legends” (Aloni 169).
her sister before calling out for her father and God. Finally, despite the removal of Procne and Philomela’s revenge from the story, there can still be read the presence of female rage and outrage. Harris indicates the presence of the furies at the wedding of Procne and Tereus, an Ovidian element left in by Chaucer, which becomes all the more significant in the absence of a description of Procne’s participation in the Bacchic rites (there is just a brief mention at line 2376) and in the absence of “the sister’s vengeful cannibalistic banquet” (264).

The most obvious effects of the removal of Procne’s revenge, however, are on the moral characters of the sisters and also on the traditional reading of the story as representative of the cyclical violence of sexual assault within a familial unit. The compassion of the reader is far less complicated in approaching the two female protagonists of this story, whose narratives are cut off before they murder and butcher a child and feed him to his father. This is certainly done at the expense of the sisters’ power, but perhaps only if we judge power in masculine terms that rely on force as right. The refusal to perpetuate violence in this case undoes the moral of cyclical violence that earlier commentators such as Pierre Bersuire, Giovanni del Virgilio, and Chrétien de Troyes emphasize in their accounts, and in doing so proposes alternate means to deal with trauma, with community and consolation. There are positives and negatives to such a conclusion, ones that ultimately, when examined, might calm the anxieties of Chaucer’s male audience: on the one hand, this conclusion raises the possibility of a space for women after trauma that does not require shame or death, as is so often recommended by representations of rape, if we recall Gower’s version of this myth; on the other hand, it discards the potential of women to engage powerfully in masculine terms, directly against the men that have caused and could cause such trauma. The conclusion is ameliorative rather than preventative, which perhaps given the

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330 “Philomela’s framing of her ‘syster’ as her first line of defense against rape points to the way that she views sisterhood as having the capacity to protect her from violence” (Harris 263).
narrator’s negative conception of the role of male power in the interactions of men and women in this work is the best that can be hoped for.

3.3.3 Conclusion

Gower’s *Confessio Amantis* and Chaucer’s *Legend of Good Women* propose radical new ways to read the Philomela myth, with significant changes to the narrative as it was read in the source material of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Both authors portray a morally unambiguous Philomela—a task that should not prove so difficult, and yet in a survey of roughly fourteen hundred years of commentary and adaptation of the material, is surprisingly elusive—but a different Philomela in each text. Procne likewise goes through a rehabilitation of character, most significantly in Chaucer’s version, but with surprising insistence also from Gower that she was justified in her act of filicide, or at least excused (*Confessio Amantis* 5.5891-98; 6003-22). But the texts, as secondary translations and commentaries of their authorial materia, propose divergent understandings of the consequences of Tereus’ actions. Gower’s conclusion provides an outlet for the wrong done to Procne but reinforces social strictures of shame and isolation on Philomela, just as it proscribes through example an expectation that the individual perform that shame for the benefit of self and society. Chaucer’s version softens this expectation in the compassionate community of Procne, who transforms from a symbol of feminine rage and vengeance into a figure of consolation and forgiveness; but it is also difficult to discard the implication that it reveals a world in which women have little or no recourse to justice.

Significantly, both texts provide examples of how to emulate Ovidian erotic language while at the same time discouraging the reader from placing Philomela within the erotic imagination. The brevity and pacing of Chaucer’s text accomplishes this in his version, and
Gower’s denunciations and discouragement of erotic possibility accomplishes it in his. This separation of the erotic from the male expression of power is a significant variation from the material of the *Metamorphoses*, and while it does not lessen the social consequences for Philomela as a young woman who has lost her virginity, it reinforces the idea that rape ought not to be viewed as a sexual act but as an act of power. This is important in the configuration of Philomela as a victim, and in the understanding of Tereus’ actions as selfish rather than as a fault of Philomela’s or prompted by a sudden madness of desire. But it is also important in its relationship with the male audience of these texts, explicitly male in the case of the *Confessio*, who are expected to learn and understand from the examples of these stories.

Corinne Saunders writes that “the profound rhetorical, emotional impact that the motif of rape could have in medieval writing [existed] precisely because there was a marked consciousness of individual and social, public and private trauma caused by rape and ravishment” (*Rape and Ravishment* 14). This consciousness pervaded the writing of medieval commentators as they proposed a cultural moral based in a text over a millennium old; it was in the mind of the translator who struggled to express properly established terms from Latin into French, Italian, English, and all the other emerging vernaculars, which may not yet have had such expressions; it was in the mind of the author who adapted that material to better fit the new social consciousness under which they wrote. The myth of Philomela was a popular subject, demonstrated by the many authors and commentators who explored, interpreted, reinterpreted, and rewrote it. The myth was popular precisely because it appealed to that consciousness of trauma, and the characters, human in a text full of gods, act so horrifyingly, sympathetically human that the narrative was employed, for better or worse, as a space of self-recognition and proposed rectification.
CONCLUSION

Before reassessing the hermeneutic spaces opened by the commentary traditions of the late Middle Ages, the semantic weight of rape as a literary device, or the development of these moralized representations of sexual violence into modern conceptualizations of rape, consent, and survival, I want to pick up where I left off in my introduction: with Philomela herself. The character of Philomela, always at the center of the literature discussed in these previous chapters, is also always decentered by that very literature. We encounter numerous ways that this decentering is accomplished: the repeated deemphasis of her speech and ability to communicate the violence done to her, the bending of her speech and other characters’ reactions to patriarchal concerns, or even narratives that entirely excise her from the sequence of events. The very moralization of her ordeal is an act of obscuration, in which the individual Philomela is reframed as “the rape victim,” and her defining feature is the violence done to her. It ought to be noted that the feature that seems to have drawn most medieval commentators’ attention to this story was the excessive violence it depicts, more often the violence done to Itys than to Philomela. The removal of her tongue is an anomaly in the aesthetic of rape, and the repeated deemphasis of Philomela’s character responds mimetically to that silencing.

A recuperation of Philomela’s character is difficult precisely because she is a character and not a person. The collective descriptions by Ovid and the medieval authors come together to indicate a symbol of sexual violence rather than an individual, all the more so in the Middle Ages because the medieval projects of commentary are explicitly moral. Even those texts that record her voice, her verbal rebuke of Tereus, focus on the larger social, legal, and patriarchal concerns.
(testimony as evidence, legal terminology sexual relations and status, shame) that underlie her personal ones (pain, helplessness, expressions of trauma).\textsuperscript{331} This is not to say that personal trauma and the desire for justice that arise from sexual assault are inextricable from a patriarchal agenda—they may coincide—but framed within a literary representation or moralization, Philomela’s voice, like Lucretia’s, responds directly to a masculine anxiety about her role post-rape in society’s structure.

It is instead the presence of the cloth that she creates (in those narratives and commentaries that include it) that indicates an independent subjectivity that desires recognition and insists on her expression, even when that expression seems to be denied to her. The cloth itself becomes symbolic of the difficulty and ingenuity exercised in a survivor’s recuperation of personal narrative. The content of the cloth manages this recuperation through referential rather than diegetic ecphrasis, referring readers back over the text they have read in order to refigure it as visual rather than verbal, and in its separation from the narrator’s verbal craft, Philomela wrests back control of her own story. In this way, the inclusion or exclusion of Philomela’s cloth rather than her voice is indicative of Philomela’s subjectivity or its absence in the narrative. The practice of creating a cloth witness is non-fantastical and has been used universally by women to “speak” the unspeakable—Rachel Cohen writes, “Remarkably, the ancient and widespread

\textsuperscript{331} The texts that record or address her rebuke are: Ovid in his \textit{Metamorphoses}, William of Orléans in his \textit{Bursarii super Ovidios}, Chrétien de Troyes in his \textit{Philomena} (reproduced in the \textit{Ovide moralisé}), Giovanni Boccaccio \textit{Genealogia deorum gentilium} (reports that she engaged in a verbal rebuke, but does not report her words), Arrigo Simintendi in his \textit{Metamorosi volgarizzate} (as a word-for-word translation of the \textit{Metamorphoses}), Giovanni Bonsignori in his \textit{Metamorphoseos vulgare}, and John Gower in his \textit{Confessio amantis}. There can be no quantification of the separation of Philomela’s personal trauma and the general legalistic language of these rebukes, but in considering Philomela’s tone in these passages it is possible to determine which authors/commentators/translators engaged more deeply in the empathetic practice of \textit{suasoria}: Ovid, for example, employs a number of interjections that disrupt the legal aspects of the rebuke in order to embody Philomela’s character; William of Orléans, on the other hand, focuses on a legal point, “\textit{tu geminus coniunx! Hostis michi debita pena est}!”
practice of making story cloths offers a road to recovery that is consistent with insights from current brain science.” She describes the therapeutic function of this creation:

These activities provide a sense of connection and solidarity with other women, and the relief that one is not alone in this predicament. Emotional safety and personal disclosure are enhanced when the hands are busy and there is no demand for eye contact. Creating images allows for unmediated self-expression. Hand sewing is calming, rhythmic and meditative. And like the recovery process, sewing happens at a slow and intricate pace. It may also foster a sense of mastery so needed by those who have been subjected to violence.332

Philomela’s other form of expression, in collaboration with Procne, is the murder and cooking of Itys. While the cloth she creates accomplishes a recuperation of Philomela’s personal narrative, Itys becomes the medium to express the two sisters’ rage at the violence that was done to her. This new act of violence itself becomes symbolic as Itys’ character becomes a substitute for his father, and his acts of innocence, such as his tears and his expressions of love for his mother, become instead present reminders of Tereus’ abuse. Itys is doubly erased by the act of symbolic construction, interpreted as Tereus by Philomela and Procne, but then interpreted again by the reader as we understand his role in the narrative to act entirely as a tool for reciprocity. Or as later medieval commentators note, a symbol of the escalating violence that was begun with the incestuous act of rape (“sanguis tangit sanguinem”).

Philomela’s three expressive acts—speech, weaving, and murder—each represented in detail in the text of the Metamorphoses, are emphasized or deemphasized by medieval commentators and translators in order to reinforce conceptualizations of rape as an event requiring moralization. Most of the commentaries on Philomela’s story elide the individualized trauma of her assault and her utilization of the cloth, both as a way to progress the narrative and

as a recuperation of herself, in favor of a moralized approach to the murder of Itys and the
metamorphoses of the characters into birds. This conceptualization of rape decenters the rape
victim/survivor’s trauma in favor of a trauma that affects instead the family as a whole. In that
space, the health and status of male members and paternity are prioritized by the myth’s focus on
the destruction of offspring. This is not a concern in the Philomela myth alone: recall that the
fathers of Daphne and Io, Peneus and Inachus respectively, explicitly lament the loss of potential
heirs (Met. 1.481-82, 658-60). The persistence of the elements of filicide and cannibalism
maintain the horrific violence of the episode, but more often than not cover and reference the
violence done to Philomela’s body.

The more Philomela’s acts of expression are deemphasized or stripped from the story, the
easier it becomes for authors of commentaries and adaptations to eroticize the events, precisely
because of her lack of subjectivity. Philomela’s verbal rebuke of Tereus in particular is effective
at interrupting the erotic function of the story in the Metamorphoses, and it becomes the act
within the narrative that prompts Tereus to cut out her tongue: her voice literally stops the
narrative with an exclamation that promises consequences and asserts that there was no
ambiguity in this act of rape, that it should not be confused with amor. The apposition of Tereus’
maiming of Philomela with the act of rape works to undo the ambiguous structures of rape that
Ovid had previously built up throughout the Metamorphoses to that point, clarifying for the
reader that his or her erotic imaginary is complicit in a violence that was hidden underneath a
veneer of romantic literary aesthetic. The fact that the removal of Philomela’s tongue is not
described in most medieval commentaries further indicates late medieval commentators’
ambivalence towards the individual repercussions of rape as they focused on the broader family
unit.
Where the late medieval commentaries on the *Metamorphoses* largely leave out Philomela’s speech, her creation of the cloth, and even her role in the murder of Itys (it is more often laid wholly at Procne’s feet), the authors of the vernacular translations and adaptations take to these elements of the myth with an attention that tends to amplify Philomela’s subjectivity through her acts of expression. Undeniably, part of this is due to the form and genre of the writing projects they were engaged in, which, unlike the short summary and referential form of commentary, allowed these writers greater space to focus on character rather than explicit moral commentary. The high degree of variance with which these translations/adaptations presented Philomela’s role in the narrative reveals how each writer viewed Philomela’s character in the story as constructed and motivated by particular elements rather than a singular, generic trauma. The variance in these elements extends from the structure of her verbal rebuke of Tereus (her rage in Chrétien de Troyes’ version; her readiness to die in Bonsignori’s), to the composition of the cloth (her use of sewn letters, in Simintendi’s and Chaucer’s versions; her use of images, in Chrétien de Troyes’ and Bonsignori’s; or both, as in Gower’s), and to her role in the killing of Itys (the complete absence of this part of the narrative in Chaucer’s version; Philomela’s slap in Bonsignori’s). The details of each vernacular retelling of the story argues for an individuation of Philomela’s character beyond her role as a symbol of rape victimhood.

What is evident from both the commentaries and translations is that the rape narrative at the core of the Philomela story relies upon and appeals to a hermeneutic, literate community that generally shared an institutional conceptualization of rape, even if the particular terminology used to refer to it was variable. Philomela’s literary function as victim, at its most basic, was not to regain subjectivity or demonstrate a social inequity but to prepare the reader for a larger narrative with a more meaningful moral conclusion about the disintegration of a familial unit.
more meaningful to the commentator and his agenda). These commentaries and translations—with the sole exception perhaps of Chaucer’s version—do not break the mold of eroticizing the rape victim or offering her a constructive reintroduction back into her community. For the medieval reader, the victim of rape is simultaneously a figure of shame and desire, a symbol upon which male power may be constructed and female voice may be removed. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Philomela’s story is that she refused to remain silent, although it can hardly be said that the result of her expression concluded positively.

The combination of violence and desire to construct an erotic imaginary were and continue to be an aspect of not just the romantic literary genre, but of structural misogyny in Western cultures. Christine de Pizan, in her Book of the City of Ladies (c.1405), addresses this issue as she contradicts the claim that women enjoy being raped:

I, Christine, then said, “My lady, I fully believe what you say and I’m sure there are many beautiful women who are upright, decent and fully able to protect themselves from the traps laid by seducers. It therefore angers and upsets me when men claim that women want to be raped and that, even though a woman may verbally rebuff a man, she won’t in fact mind it if he does force himself upon her. I can scarcely believe that it could give women any pleasure to be treated in such a vile way.

Her interlocuter, Rectitude, agrees with her and provides the exemplum of Lucretia. Rectitude’s retelling closely follows Livy’s account, including her suicide, but she supplies Lucretia with a reason that resists Livy’s patriarchal concerns: “Though I can absolve myself of sin and prove

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333 Narratives about the occurrence and threat of rape underpin the foundational literature of Europe, from the Greco-Roman epics (Iliad, Odyssey, and Aeneid), medieval romance, and the modern novel. On this last point, see Frances Ferguson, “Rape and the Rise of the Novel,” Representations; Special Issue: Misogyny, Misandry, and Misanthropy, no. 20, 1987, pp. 88-112.

334 Translated by Rosalind Brown-Grant, Penguin, 1999, p. 147. This assertion counters beliefs like those found in Ovid’s notorious lines from the Ars amatoria (1.673-76, presented below) and the assertion by William of Conches in his Dragmaticon Philisophiae that “Although raped women dislike the act in the beginning, in the end, however, from the weakness of the flesh, they like it. Furthermore, there are two wills, the rational and the natural, which we often feel are warring with us: for often what pleases the flesh displeases the reason. Although, therefore, a raped woman does not assent with her rational will, she does have carnal pleasure.” Cited in Suzanne M. Edwards, “Medieval Saints and Misogynist Times: Transhistorical Perspectives on Sexual Violence in the Undergraduate Classroom,” Teaching Rape in the Medieval Literature Classroom: Approaches to Difficult Texts, edited by Alison Gulley, Amsterdam University Press / ARC Humanities Press, 2018, p. 24.
myself innocent this way, I can’t get rid of my suffering and pain: henceforth no woman need live in shame and dishonour because of what has been done to me” (148). Although Christine cannot do away with the conclusion of suicide at the end of Lucretia’s story, she divorces it from an interpretation of the guilt or innocence for Lucretia’s character, turning instead to trauma (“suffering and pain”) as the motivating factor. Her concluding statement likewise diverges from Livy’s, in whose text Lucretia desires not to create a precedent that women hold themselves to a lesser standard, and in doing so implies that raped women ought to kill themselves to demonstrate their virtue. Christine’s Lucretia instead commits the act in the hope that no other women should need to, her demonstration of chastity being so convincing that female virtue would not in the future be questioned. Lucretia’s example, however, has not proven as influential as Ovid’s verse, against which Christine attempted to intervene:

It’s all right to use force – force of that sort goes down well with the girls: what in fact they love to yield they’d often rather have stolen. Rough seduction Delights them, the audacity of near-rape Is a compliment. (Ars am. 1.673-76; translated by Peter Green)

Christine’s explicit rebuttal of Ovid’s assertion, as well as her reappropriation of Livy’s Lucretia, gives us a rare example of a medieval woman’s voice in discussion with her auctores.336 Unsurprisingly, that voice urges reassessment of the processes by which knowledge is received from the past, as she demonstrates the real harm that gets done to women, individually and structurally, by following their examples. She does not propose outright dismissal of these

335 Compare to Livy’s Lucretia: “I absolve myself of wrong, but not from punishment. Let no unchaste woman hereafter continue to live because of the precedent of Lucretia” (Livy 68 [Ab urbe condita 1.58]).
336 Although not an unprecedented example of a medieval woman discussing the topic of rape, Marie de France, for example in her Fables (70, “the Fox and the Bear”), translated by Harriet Spiegel, University of Toronto, 1987. Although often mediated by male scribes, accounts of female saints’ lives, which frequently purport to convey the woman’s authentic voice, are rife with discussion of rape and sexual assault (see Suzanne M. Edwards, The Afterlives of Rape). And without a doubt there is an abundance of texts by women writers that is still largely unknown to us, which urgently requires rediscovery and editing.
commonly held sources—her *Book of the City of Ladies* relies on the same information held in those *auctores’* works—but that readers be aware of how they receive and utilize that knowledge. She demonstrates a constructive process of engaging these sources, and ultimately reminds readers that the choice of how they act need not rely on textual precedent but may be found in personal virtue.

Christine de Pizan’s *Book of the City of Ladies* is a project with a stated goal similar to that of Chaucer’s *Legend of Good Women*: to rehabilitate structural femininity (to return to Mardorossian’s term) from the attacks levelled against it by the misogynist tradition. The *Book of the City of Ladies*, along with Chaucer’s *Legend* and other compilations of historical, religious, and fablistic *exempla*, such as Boccaccio’s *De mulieribus claris* (a source for Christine de Pizan’s work), are not, strictly speaking, commentaries in the fashion of the moral commentaries composed between the 12th and 14th centuries. Rather than act as a commentary on a single classical text or *auctor*, texts in this form took as their subject the whole of textual authority, so far as it was known to that author, approached through a particular theme. The order of the *exempla*, and in the case of the *Book of the City of Ladies* the interjections of the narrator and her interlocutors (Reason, Rectitude, and Justice), clarify the author’s agenda. The result is an encyclopedic compendium of stories from all the various threads that came together to create a unified sense of European literature: Greco-Roman sources, both mythological and historical, biblical text and apocrypha, regional specific folk stories, and even novella (Christine comments on Boccaccio’s *Decameron* on several occasions). Christine’s text, however, does not present a section on either Philomela or Procne.

There are various possible reasons for the absence of Philomela’s story from Christine’s collected *exempla*: Christine may have found the story too distasteful, ultimately, with too many
internal opportunities to eroticize or sensationalize the violent acts contained within the
narrative, and without enough constructive content to warrant its inclusion amongst the other
exempla. A reasonable counter to this argument however is that she mentions other mythological
figures with questionable or destructive elements in their stories, such as Semiramus (who
marries her son; 1.15) and Medea (who murders her and Jason’s sons, although Christine does
not include this; 1.32, 2.56). I find another idea more convincing and appealing: for Christine’s
project of commentary, Philomela’s story does not need to be told because the girl has already
told it herself on her cloth. To drag the narrative out again, as so many commentators and writers
did, and I myself have done here, would be to displace once more a story that was not a
commentator’s to tell: by telling a story of rape, by telling this story of rape, perhaps we miss the
purpose of the story. Imagine the cloth, its texture urgent with figures we have never seen, words
we have never read, despite now having read this story so many different ways. Imagine the girl,
who cannot speak, who now has found another way to speak, and who will find yet another.

Now stop imagining the girl and let her be.
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